Citizens of the World

A History and Sociology of the Baha'is

from a Globalisation Perspective

Margit Warburg

BRILL

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To Jens

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PREFACE

Citizens of the World represents many happy years of working with the Baha'is and the Baha'i religion. In both Denmark and worldwide, I have been privileged to enjoy the openness, willing assistanceship, friendship and hospitality of many Baha'is. I am particularly grateful to the supreme Baha'i leadership, the Universal House of Justice, who, as an extraordinary gesture, allowed me to spend many months doing research, field work and archival studies at the Baha'i World Centre in Israel.

It is with humility that I present my version of the Baha'is and their religion with this book. There are two reasons for my humility. One is that the subject is so rich and extensive that I invariably had to leave many aspects incompletely covered. My approach is that of a sociologist of religion not that of an Islamicist or a theologian, and this, of course, is reflected in my choice of subjects that are covered most extensively. The other reason for my humility is that because I am not a believer myself, there are parts of the religion that I can not fathom, although I know that they are central to the Baha'is themselves.

I began writing the first parts of the manuscript for this book at least ten years ago. Over the years, I have extracted material from the book, when it was still a manuscript, and published it in independent papers, encyclopaedic entries and books, mostly in Danish and English. However, when material from these publications is used again in this book, I often interpret it from a slightly different angle, as part of a new whole. The bulk of *Citizens of the World*, nevertheless, is published for the first time in the present book.

In general, I refer to my earlier publications, when it is relevant. The list below gives an overview of longer passages in this book that were published previously (not necessarily *verbatim*) in English:

- Chapter 2: The Baha'i review policy (approx. 2 pages).[1]
- Chapter 6: The history of the Danish Baha'i community (approx.

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[1] Margit Warburg, "Insiders and Outsiders in the Study of Religion", in Curt Dahlgren, Eva M. Hamberg, and Thorleif Pettersson (eds.), *Religion och sociologi. Ett fruktbart möte. Festskrift till Göran Gustafsson*, Lund, Teologiska Institutionen i Lund, 2002, pp. 329–339.

20 pages). Some of the material was presented previously in a
shorter version.[2] However, the text was thoroughly rewritten and
expanded in Chapter 6.[3] The section concerning the permission
given to the Danish Baha'i community to perform legally binding
marriages has been condensed from my previous discussion of this
issue.[4]

• Chapter 6: Data on the growth of Baha'i communities in Western
  Europe (Figure 6.1) plus a less elaborate use of the demographic
  equation (approx. 1 page).[5]
• Chapter 6: Some sociological data regarding the Danish Baha'is
  (approx. 1 page).[6]
• Chapter 7: Religious seekership and ways of joining (approx. 8
  pages).[7]
• Chapter 8: The concepts of knowing, doing and being (approx. 4
  pages).[8]
• Chapter 8: Extracts of interviews showing Baha'i globalist attitudes
  (approx. half a page).[9]
• Chapter 9: The description of *huququ'llah* (approx. 1 page).[10]
• Chapter 10: A brief description of the Baha'i World Centre (approx.
  1 page).[11]

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[2] Margit Warburg, "The Circle, the Brotherhood, and the Ecclesiastical Body:
Bahá'í in Denmark, 1925–1987", in Armin W. Geertz and Jeppe Sinding Jensen
(eds.), *Religion Tradition and Renewal*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 1991, pp.
201–221.

[3] The sections in Chapter 6 on the history of the Danish Baha'i community
form the basis for most of a book chapter published in 2004, see Margit Warburg,
"From Circle to Community: The Bahá'í Religion in Denmark, 1925–2002", in
Peter Smith (ed.), *Bahá'ís in the West. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 14,
Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2004, pp. 229–263.

[4] Margit Warburg, "Restrictions and Privileges: Legal and Administrative Practice
and Minority Religions in the USA and Denmark", in Eileen Barker and Margit
Warburg (eds.), *New Religions and New Religiosity*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press,
1998, pp. 262–275.

[5] Margit Warburg, "Growth Patterns of New Religions: The Case of Baha'i",
in Robert Towler (ed.), *New Religions and the New Europe*, Aarhus, Aarhus University
Press, 1995, pp. 177–193.

[6] Margit Warburg, "Baha'i: A Religious Approach to Globalization", *Social Compass*,
vol. 46, 1999, pp. 47–56.

[7] Margit Warburg, "Seeking the Seekers in the Sociology of Religion", *Social
Compass*, vol. 48, 2001, pp. 91–101.

[8] Margit Warburg, "Uncovering Baha'i Identity", in Erik Karlsaune (ed.), *Contemporary religiosity*, Trondheim, University of Trondheim, 1988, pp. 79–94.

[9] Warburg, "Baha'i: A Religious Approach to Globalization".

[10] Margit Warburg, "Economic Rituals: The Structure and Meaning of Donations
in the Baha'i Religion", *Social Compass*, vol. 40, 1993, pp. 25–31.

[11] Warburg, "Baha'i: A Religious Approach to Globalization".

In addition, miscellaneous material from Chapters 4, 6, 8 and 9 has been used previously in a number of publications in Danish, including a large chapter on the sociology of religion in a Danish textbook.[12] This material concerns:

- Chapter 4: An explanation of the millenarian aspects of the battles of Shaykh Tabarsi and Babism (6–7 pages).[13]
- Chapter 4: Some of the material on the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran after 1979, including an interview with an Iranian Baha'i woman (approx. 2 pages).[14]
- Chapter 6: Some sociological data on the Danish Baha'is (approx. 1 page).[15]
- Chapter 8: An analysis of the ordinance of the fast, and interviews with examples of Baha'i self-labelling terms (approx. 8 pages).[16]
- Chapter 9: Some of the material on the difficulties associated with being a Baha'i in Denmark (approx. 2 pages).[17]

All together, the contents of about sixty pages of the manuscript for the present book have been published before.

While I was writing *Citizens of the World*, I was asked to write a book on Baha'i for an Italian series of small handbooks on different religions. The book, *I baha'i*, was published in 2001.[18] As a handbook, its primary aim is not to present original research, but instead to give a general, broad, up-to-date presentation of the Baha'i religion. It therefore contains a chapter on the Baha'i history, a chapter on Baha'i doctrines, rituals and festivals, and a chapter describing

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[12] Margit Warburg, "Religionssociologi [Sociology of religion]", in Mikael Rothstein (ed.), *Humanistisk religionsforskning. En indføring i religionshistorie & religionssociologi*, Copenhagen, Samleren, 1997, pp. 135–246. Some of the Baha'i material was used in an earlier, shorter textbook chapter: Margit Warburg, "Baha'i", in Tim Jensen (ed.), *Minoritetsreligioner i Danmark—religionssociologisk set*, Copenhagen, Columbus, 1991, pp. 67–93.

[13] Warburg, "Religionssociologi"; Margit Warburg, "Millenarisme i religionsvidenskabelig belysning" [Millenarism in the perspective of the study of religion]. *Chaos. Dansk-norsk tidsskrift for religionshistoriske studier*, vol. 33, 2000, pp. 9–24.

[14] Margit Warburg, *Iranske dokumenter. Forfølgelsen af bahá'ierne i Iran* [Iranian documents. The persecutions of the Baha'is of Iran], Copenhagen, Rhodos, 1985.

[15] Warburg, "Religionssociologi".

[16] Margit Warburg, "Afholdenhedsidealer inden for baha'i [Ideals of continence in Baha'i]", in Lene Buck, Margrethe Haraldsdatter, Anneline Juul, Charlotte Schönbeck, and Oluf Scönbeck (eds.), *Idealer i religion og religionsforskning*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusculanum, 1997, pp. 101–113; Warburg, "Religionssociologi".

[17] Warburg, "Religionssociologi"; Warburg, "Baha'i".

[18] Margit Warburg, *I baha'i* [The Baha'is], Turin, Elledici, 2001.

the external face of the Baha'i religion in the form of its architecture, its mission and its activities in the United Nations System. The first four chapters of *I baha'i* were condensed from the corresponding passages in the manuscript prepared for *Citizens of the World*. No new information was added and the chapters contain very little primary material from *Citizens of the World*. The last chapter in *I baha'i*, called "Schism, Opposition, and Persecution", was written for the first time, and parts of this chapter were then incorporated in *Citizens of the World*, in Chapters 4 and 5 (about 3 pages).

The manuscript for *I baha'i* was sold by the Italian publishers to a publisher in Salt Lake City, Signature Books, to appear as a small book in 2003.[19] The text for this book was revised, condensed and made less academic in style by the publisher and myself.

In 2004, the completed historical material presented in Chapters 4 and 5 was used as the basis for the writing of a book chapter in French on the birth and development of the Baha'i religion.[20] In 2005, a presentation of my globalisation model, called the dual global field model (Chapter 3), was published in a chapter in an edited book on Baha'i and globalisation.[21]

In the long process leading up to the publishing of *Citizens of the World*, I have received much interest and help from many people, both inside and outside my field of specialisation. This began even long before I wrote the first pages, when I was conducting an interview survey among the Danish Baha'is. The survey included long personal interviews with 120 Baha'is, and it was clear from the outset that I needed skilled student assistants to do this along with me. Eva Boserup, Karen Graversen and Morten Warmind are thanked for their clever and polite tenacity in successfully conducting these important interviews. On different occasions, the two, three or four of us travelled together around Denmark and enjoyed each others' company when finally we could relax and eat dinner after having reviewed and typed the interviews of the day. Most of the interview

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[19] Margit Warburg, *Baha'i*, Salt Lake City, Signature Books, 2003.
[20] Margit Warburg, "De l'islam à la religion baha'ie", in Jean-François Mayer and Reender Kranenborg (eds.), *La naissance des nouvelles religions*, Geneve, Georg Editeur, 2004, pp. 145–182.
[21] Margit Warburg, "The Dual Global Field: A Model for Transnational Religions and Globalisation", in Margit Warburg, Annika Hvithamar, and Morten Warmind (eds.), *Baha'i and Globalisation*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2005, pp. 153–172.

data were subsequently entered into a computer database, and Rikke Nöhrlind did this part of the work with precision and a never-ending care for guarding against errors.

These interviews—as well as the rest of my study of the Danish Baha'i community—would not have been possible without the positive and interested participation of the Danish Baha'is. The many hours we have spent together have made this part of my professional life a memorable and enjoyable period. I owe special thanks to a number of Danish Baha'is who have supported the work on different occasions: Iraj Khodadoost, Edith Montgomery, Hans Raben, Ulla Rhodes, Leif Schiøler and Fereydun Vahman. Especially, however, I owe thanks to Lise Q. Raben, who from the very first day took interest in my study and supported it. We have spent many working hours together in a warm and studious atmosphere, and she patiently retrieved much valuable information when I asked for it, trusting our common understanding of professionalism. She read the entire manuscript at a late stage and pointed out some errors, misunderstandings and obscurities that I am glad have been amended. We did not always agree on my interpretations—but we both understood and appreciated that our relationship also was that of an insider-outsider relation.

The book is not only about the Danish Baha'is, but also about the Baha'is of the world. Everywhere I visited local Baha'i communities I was met by people who were open, trusting and willing to assist me in practical matters or to spend an hour or two in an interview. Some of these people appear by name in the book, others are made anonymous like most of the Danish Baha'is. I wish to thank them all for their cooperation.

My two periods of fieldwork at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa were made possible only through the positive support of the Universal House of Justice, and their constructive attitude to my many requests has made a significant, positive difference to this book. General support, however, is one thing; another is the indispensable day-to-day assistance that I received from several of the staff members in Haifa, who moreover showed hospitality and a keen interest in my work. I spent much of my time at the Baha'i World Centre Library, and I wish to thank William P. Collins and Louise Mould for their tireless and professional assistance and interest. Elizabeth Jenkerson is thanked for her great and informative help at the beginning of my first stay, and so are the young library assistants, who during a busy

day laboured a little extra to provide me with photocopies of material that I needed. Pamela Carr from the Statistics Department is
thanked for allocating many extra hours on collecting useful statistical data, and Judith Oppenheimer for extracting from the archives
a wealth of relevant letters and other archival material to and from
some of the early European Baha'is.

There is one person among the Baha'i World Centre staff to whom
I owe my deepest gratitude and that is David M. Piff. David was
always ready with new questions, answers and comments, all underpinned by his immense knowledge of Baha'i matters. His academic
interest in the religion pushed him to pursue a Ph.D. study at the
University of Copenhagen some years after I left Haifa, and here
we renewed once more our friendship, now as colleagues sharing a
keen interest in both major issues and telling minutiae of the Baha'is
and their religion. We have published several papers together, and
it has always been inspiring preparing them.

The staff of the National Baha'i Archives in Wilmette, Illinois is
thanked for the help provided when I worked in these archives on
two occasions.

I have, of course, discussed my work quite a few times with scholars whose work concerns the Baha'i religion. On different occasions—
and in particular at a conference called "Baha'i and Globalisation"
held in Denmark in 2001—I have appreciated the suggestions, commentaries and criticism from Juan Cole, Lynn Echevarria, Will van
den Hoonaard, Stephen Lambden, Todd Lawson, Zaid Lundberg,
Sen McGlinn, Moojan Momen, Wendi Momen, Robert Stockman,
Fereydun Vahman and Per-Oluf Åkerdahl. At the same conference,
my colleagues in the study of religion, Armin W. Geertz, Annika
Hvithamar, Mikael Rothstein and Morten Warmind, contributed with
many valuable comments and reflections on the topic, and I wish
to thank them all. At that conference, I did not have the chance to
meet with Anthony A. Lee, Denis MacEoin or Peter Smith, but on
other occasions I have appreciated their comments and opinions in
correspondence; and in the case of Tony, I also enjoyed his hospitality twice in Los Angeles, where I again could draw upon his extensive knowledge of Baha'i matters.

At the University of Copenhagen, there is one colleague above all
to whom I owe extraordinary thanks, that is, to Niels Kastfelt for
his long, warm and enduring friendship and unselfish willingness to

read and comment on my different papers regarding Baha'i and other topics throughout many years. Niels read the entire manuscript of *Citizens of the World* and came up with many shrewd suggestions for alternative approaches and for amending academic or linguistic obscurities. I am most grateful for his efforts and skills.

I have the good fortune of working at the University of Copenhagen with helpful colleagues and department heads supportive of my work. I am not only thinking of the many occasions of economic support for travels and field studies granted by the university over the years, but also of the positive attitudes of colleagues who were willing not only to listen and discuss, but also to substitute for me in classes when needed. I wish to thank my colleagues in the sociology of religion, Peter B. Andersen, Annika Hvithamar, Tove Tybjerg and Morten Warmind, for this invisible and yet important support. My thanks are extended to Una Canger; although she comes from a different field, her positive attitudes and never-failing enthusiasm of scholarship has always been stimulating. I also wish to thank Jane Mortensen for using her skill and persistence as a librarian to unearth some rather difficult bibliographical references. My thanks for this kind of invaluable professional help are extended to the Royal Library in Copenhagen, where I have spent innumerable productive working hours. Other productive working hours were spent at Løgumkloster Refugium, where beautiful surroundings, good food, and warm hospitality encouraged the process of writing. The retreat is also thanked for three grants supporting my stay at different periods.

The Research Council of the Humanities is thanked for grants twice supporting my fieldwork at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa. The Faculty of Humanities and the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies are thanked for a generous grant that allowed me to get assistance for the final linguistic improvements. Deborah M. Licht, who was assigned this task, has more than fully lived up to my expectations of professional linguistic advice.

The Baha'i International Community is thanked for providing several fine, copyrighted illustrations for this book. A number of other institutions and individual persons are also thanked for permission to reproduce copyrighted illustrations. These acknowledgments are implied when I quote the sources of the illustrations.

Finally, I wish to thank my husband Jens and children Rebecca and Valdemar who have supported me and helped me from the

beginning. They have visited almost all the local Baha'i groups around the world together with me, and this has been a positive and memorable experience for the whole family. Valdemar also spent many hours typing and checking figures for the statistical treatment of the interview study, and Rebecca patiently and meticulously assisted in the proof-reading of the bibliography. Jens was challenged by my thoughts of models of Baha'i and globalisation, and he transformed pencil sketches into computer-designed figures with a sharp eye to graphical aesthetics. Jens also checked and proof-read all table material, and he was always present to discuss the many aspects of my work. As in all good marriages, the spouse's support makes a crucial difference, and his support made it realistic for me to write this book. It is only fair that *Citizens of the World* is dedicated to him.

Margit Warburg
Copenhagen, October 2005

WHEN THE GLOBAL MEETS THE LOCAL

Dreary places can have their moments in history. South of Copenhagen Harbour there is an extensive common reclaimed from the shallow sea. For a short period, a specific location on this largely undeveloped piece of land caught global attention: from the 6th to the 12th of March 1995, the *Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development* was held here in the Bella Centre, a large modern exhibition complex of modest architectural significance. More than 14,000 participants attended the summit, among them state delegates from 186 countries and representatives from 811 non-governmental organisations (NGOs).[1] They were gathered to negotiate the final wording of the *Copenhagen Declaration*.[2] Statements were delivered by heads of states, United Nations officials, and representatives of intergovernmental or non-governmental organisations during the 14 plenary meetings on the agenda.[3] As one of only four representatives of religious NGOs, Mr. Jaime Duhard, a Baha'i from Chile, also gave a speech at the summit.[4]

A few kilometres from the premises of the official Copenhagen Summit, the newly abandoned naval base, *Holmen*, was the scene of the *NGO Forum '95*.[5] Inside a vast hall originally built for the overhaul of torpedo boats, there were exhibitions, restaurants, and separate

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[1] *FN's verdenstopmøde om social udvikling: København, 6.–12. marts, 1995. Beretning* [UN summit on social development: Copenhagen 6–12 March 1995. Report], Copenhagen, Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1995, p. 5; *Social Policy and Social Progress. A Review Published by the United Nations. Special Issue on the Social Summit, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995*, New York, United Nations, 1996, pp. 14–21.

[2] *The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. World Summit for Social Development*, New York, United Nations Department of Public Information, 1995.

[3] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995)*, United Nations A/CONF.166/9, 1995, pp. 96–119.

[4] The four religious NGOs that were represented by speakers were (in the following order): Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; World Council of Churches; Baha'i International Community; South Asia Caucus. *Report of the World Summit for Social Development*, p. 96. The name of the Baha'i speaker is reported in Ole Helbo, "NGO Topmøde", *Dansk Bahá'í Nyt*, April 1995, pp. 4–6, National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Denmark. (NSA-DK).

[5] The following is based on observations made and material gathered during my visit to *NGO Forum '95*, 5 March 1995.

rooms for lectures and workshops. In the main exhibition area, a
host of NGO representatives manned the many exhibition booths.
Some of them were very imaginative, some appeared to be based
on the philosophy that idealism might suffer if polluted by profes-
sionalism, and some were just plain and functional. Flyers, pamphlets
and documents were generously distributed owing to the competi-
tion for the attention of the public concerning the very diverse views
on the topic of the summit—and sometimes also on other issues only
remotely related to the summit.

Two of the booths were manned by people in blue sweatshirts
with "Bahá'í World Citizen" on their backs, and material with par-
ticular Baha'i views on global issues could be picked up here. The
Baha'is also had an exhibition in the "Global Village" hall, with the
theme "A Focus on World Citizenship and Global Prosperity", and
they were the sole organisers of the Children's Forum '95, with four
days of activities for children.[6] During the entire period of the *NGO
Forum '95*, the Baha'is organised more than twenty workshops, dis-
cussions and cultural performances.[7]

Over 250 Baha'i volunteers from Denmark and abroad worked on
the Baha'i contribution to the Copenhagen event.[8] The volunteers
had their local base in a villa on a quiet residential street in Hellerup,
an old, well-to-do suburb north of Copenhagen. Here, they carried
out administrative co-ordination, served meals, and provided other
necessary support.[9]

The villa, at 28 Sofievej in Hellerup, has been owned by the National
Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Denmark since 1955.[10] A passer-
by might not notice anything unusual about this well-kept, white
stucco house, which was originally built in the 1890s to accommodate
a large household. During the evenings or on Sunday afternoons,
the street outside the house is often filled with parked cars, and the
passer-by might then notice the thirty or more people going into the
house, looking as if they are attending a public cultural event. Many

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[6] *Participation of the Danish Bahá'í Community in the Process Surrounding the World Summit
for Social Development. December 1993–March 1995*, n.p. [Copenhagen], n.d., p. 11.
(NSA-DK).
[7] *NGO Forum '95 Official Calendar*, Copenhagen 3–12 March 1995.
[8] *Participation of the Danish Bahá'í Community*, p. 6.
[9] Helbo, "NGO Topmøde".
[10] *Endeligt Skøde* [Final deed], Title No. 16 *od*, Gentofte by, Hellerup sogn, Sofievej
28, Hellerup, 1 August 1955. (NSA-DK).

kinds of people, families with children, youngsters, and elderly single women are often evident; some of them have darker hair, are shorter in stature, and are more formally dressed than the average Dane. Everyone, however, is a Danish Baha'i coming to celebrate a Baha'i holiday or attending a meeting in this house, which the Baha'is call *haziratu'l-quds*.[11] See Photo 1—Haziratu'l-quds *in Denmark. The Baha'i centre at 28 Sofievej, Hellerup, Copenhagen.**

The 300 or so Danish Baha'is share with a claimed five million other people around the world the belief that the Iranian prophet Mirza Husayn-Ali Nuri (1817–1892), called *Baha'u'llah*, was God's "manifestation" on earth.[12] They also share the belief that their religion will establish a new world order of peace and harmony by unifying all humankind across nationalities, races and religions. For Danish and non-Danish Baha'is, the active Baha'i presence at the Copenhagen World Summit was not just another opportunity to show up—it was a high-priority task reflecting a core message of the Baha'i religion.

CITIZENS OF THE WORLD

Citizens of the World is a monograph on the Baha'is and their religion at a global level, at a national level and at an individual level. A broad, academic monograph on the Baha'i religion and its adherents has not been published since Peter Smith's *The Babi and Baha'i Religions* was published in 1987.[13] This book is still recognised as a standard work on the Babi and Baha'i history up to modern times; however, it does not cover to any great extent community life and religious practice among contemporary Baha'is. In contrast, most of *Citizens of the World* addresses contemporary Baha'i and is largely based on primary source material collected since 1979, during my study of the Baha'is in Denmark and around the world. This included half a year of fieldwork at the Baha'i world headquarter in Haifa, Israel. The book

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[11] From Arabic, meaning "the sacred fold".

* All colour photos and black and white photos are printed in two separate units in the back of the book.

[12] "Mirza" is a Persian honorific title that means "Mister", when placed before a name, and "Prince", when placed after a name.

[13] Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions. From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press and George Ronald, 1987.

thereby fills a lacuna in the academic literature on Baha'i, as is apparent in the literature review presented in Chapter 2.

The subtitle of the book, *A History and Sociology of the Baha'is from a Globalisation Perspective*, indicates that I have found it fruitful to analyse the Baha'i religion and its followers within a theoretical framework inspired by current studies of religion and globalisation. At the same time, the book has provided me with the opportunity to discuss religion and globalisation in more general terms. This has resulted, among other things, in a model for analysing transnational, centrally organised religions in a world undergoing globalisation; in this respect, the book can be seen as a contribution to the study of globalisation as such. It is this model that provides the globalisation perspective for many of the analyses of the empirical material.

Many transnational organised religions can be analysed from a globalisation perspective using the model. However, to discuss globalisation in relation to the Baha'is is *also* to grasp an essential aspect of the Baha'is and their religion. The Baha'i religion emerged and was shaped in a period (the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries) when globalisation began to influence economy, politics, and culture significantly in most parts of the world. Furthermore, the Baha'is are globalised in the sense that they live all over the world and share a religious belief in a future, united world order and civilisation.

Baha'is often label themselves "world citizens", for example on badges and in pamphlets, they sing songs about being world citizens, and they persistently suggest that the United Nations system should promote the idea of "world citizenship".[14] The aforementioned blue sweatshirts with "Bahá'í World Citizen" are typical in this respect. The term "citizen" alludes to Baha'u'llah's social teachings, which regard individuals as good citizens who share both privileges and duties in a global "good" society. The Baha'i ideas concerning global citizenship and the like will be presented, of course, but not expounded on in any great detail, because it would entail a more philosophical emphasis than I wish to pursue in this book. This also implies that the expression "citizens of the world" is not an overarching analytical concept—its use is limited to reflect an apt characterisation of the Baha'is in a number of contexts.

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[14] *World Citizenship. A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development*, New York, Baha'i International Community, n.d.

Thus, *Citizens of the World* builds on two premises. The first is an empirical one suggesting that the book meets a need for a general monograph on the Baha'i religion and the Baha'is, with emphasis on contemporary, sociological themes. The second is a recurrent hypothesis suggesting that it is fruitful to analyse the material in the book from a general perspective of globalisation and religion. This perspective is developed in Chapter 3, resulting in a model, called the dual global field model.

Chapters 4 and 5 together provide a general historical-sociological analysis of the Baha'i religion and its development into a global religion. The chapters draw upon the wealth of literature concerning the early periods of the religion. An important part of this literature was published after Smith's book, making a renewed treatment of the Baha'i history topical. This renewed treatment has again allowed for original thematic discussions of issues and phenomena relating to the development of the Baha'i institutions and the spread of the religion.

Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 analyse the Baha'i religion on the basis of a case study of the Danish Baha'i community, allowing an examination of the Baha'is on a specific, representative micro-analytical level. The historical-sociological approach from Chapters 4 and 5 is continued in Chapter 6, but with a focus on the qualitative and quantitative development of the Danish Baha'i community and its relation to the Baha'i world organisation.

In Chapters 7, 8 and 9, the initial diachronic approach switches to a synchronic analysis of the Danish Baha'i community and its members. The chapters address conversion, Baha'i daily life, and resource mobilisation. This synchronic approach is maintained in Chapters 10 and 11, while the focus turns to the general global level, treating important but, so far, less-studied aspects of the Baha'i religion. This includes a detailed treatment of the organisation and working conditions in the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa.

In the course of Chapters 4 to 11, my model for analysing transnational organised religions from a globalisation perspective—called the dual global field model—is applied recurrently with differing emphasis on its elements. The aim of structuring the chapters within a framework of the model is to achieve a comprehensive coverage of the globalisation perspective in a book that is laid out as a general monograph on the Baha'i religion. This should appear from the conclusions in Chapter 12, which also serves as a general summary of the preceding chapters.

The following two sections in this chapter briefly present the Baha'i religion and the globalisation perspective. These sections should serve as a helpful introduction to readers who are not acquainted with these topics beforehand. Since both sections summarise material that is expounded on in the rest of the book, I have kept references to the absolute minimum.

THE BAHA'I RELIGION—ONE OF THE OLD "NEW RELIGIONS"

In the Western world, there are hundreds of different religious groups in addition to the major Christian churches.[15] Most of the groups are tiny and ephemeral, but there are also some that occupy a more permanent and significant position in society. One of them is the Baha'i religion, which has been present in the West since the 1890s. Compared with most of the other relatively new religions of the West, the Baha'is at least seem to be important in quantitative terms: by the end of the 1990s, the number of registered Baha'is in Europe was 30,000–40,000 and in North America 120,000. Furthermore, in contrast to the Muslim and Hindu groups, which have grown mainly as a result of immigration, the Baha'is have been relatively success-ful in gaining the majority of its adherents among residents of Europe and North America.

On a global scale, the Baha'is have also been quite successful. According to official Baha'i sources, the number of Baha'is has grown from fewer than half a million in the beginning of the 1960s to more than five million in the 1990s.[16] These five million people make up about 0.1% of the world population, so in general, Baha'i members are sparsely spread throughout the world. The Baha'is often claim that they are the second-most widespread religion on earth, quoting

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[15] Eileen Barker estimated in the late 1980s that in Britain alone there were around five hundred groups, and 1,500–2,000 in North America. For comparison, Stark and Bainbridge counted 1,317 "cult movements" in Europe, but only 425 in the United States. See Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements. A Practical Introduction*, London, HMSO, 1989, p. 148, and Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *Religion, Deviance, and Social Control*, New York, Routledge, 1996, p. 124.

[16] See, for example, "Introduction to the Bahá'í Community", in *The Bahá'í World 1999–2000*, Haifa, Bahá'í World Centre, 2001, pp. 7–18. The numbers reported are probably maximum estimates, including also a certain proportion of inactive Baha'is.

a statement in the *1991 Britannica Book of the Year*.[17] There are considerable regional differences, however, and there are small countries in Latin America and Oceania where between one and ten per cent of the population are reported to be Baha'is.[18] It is, however, part of the Baha'i mission strategy to be present everywhere, even if only represented by a few believers. So within each country, the Baha'is have settled in small groups throughout the country, instead of being concentrated in particular cities.

The Historical Development of the Baha'i Religion

The Baha'i religion has its origins in religious currents within Shi'i Islam during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1844, a millenarian movement, called Babism, rose from these currents. The Babis provoked the Islamic establishment by insisting that their leader, Ali Muhammad Shirazi (1819–1850), called the Bab, was a new prophet and a source of divine revelations. This implied in principle that the age of Islam was over. The rapid growth of the Babi movement occurred in a general climate of public unrest, and from 1848 the Babis were engaged in a series of bloody fights with the Iranian government. By 1852, however, the movement seemed to have been crushed, and the surviving Babi leaders, including Baha'u'llah, were exiled to various cities in the neighbouring Ottoman Empire, first to Baghdad, in 1863 to Istanbul (Constantinople), and shortly after to Edirne (Adrianople) in the European part of present-day Turkey.

In the exile, a growing tension developed within the Babi community between Baha'u'llah and the nominal leader Subh-i-Azal (ca. 1830–1912), who was Baha'u'llah's younger half-brother. The tension led to a schism in 1866–1867 in Edirne, when Baha'u'llah openly declared that *he* was "He Whom God Will Make manifest". This was the title of the prophet whom the Bab had prophesised would appear in the future to complete his own mission. The majority of Babis soon

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[17] David. B. Barrett, "World Religious Statistics", *1991 Britannica Book of the Year*, Chicago, Encyclopædia Britannica, 1991, p. 299. The reliability of Barrett's Baha'i data is questioned in Chapter 5; however, it is probably reasonably correct that the Baha'is are present in 205 countries, second to the 252 countries in which Christianity is present.

[18] *The Seven Year Plan 1979–1986. Statistical Report*, Haifa, The Universal House of Justice, 1986, pp. 48–51. (BWC).

seemed to accept Baha'u'llah as their new prophet, while a minority of the Babis, called the Azalis, sided with Subh-i-Azal. The Azalis never developed further, but disappeared as a movement in the beginning of the twentieth century.

In 1868, the unrest following the schism in the Babi community in Edirne motivated the Ottoman government to exile Baha'u'llah, with his family and some of his followers, to Akko (Acre), north of Haifa in present-day Israel. Baha'u'llah remained there for the rest of his life, continuously working to change the Babi heritage into a new religion, Baha'i.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the administrative centre of the Baha'i religion moved to its present location in Haifa, where the Baha'is had begun in the 1890s to buy land on the slopes of Mount Carmel. Through systematic mission activity, initiated by Baha'u'llah's son and successor, Abdu'l-Baha (1844–1921), Baha'i gradually expanded outside its Muslim environment. Baha'i missionaries went to the USA and Canada in the 1890s and to Western Europe around 1900. Effective growth in Europe did not occur, however, until after World War II, when Abdu'l-Baha's grandson and successor, Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957), organised a Baha'i mission in Europe, assisted by many American Baha'is who came to Europe as Baha'i missionaries or pioneers, in the Baha'i terminology.

Figure 1.1 below portrays a brief chronology of Babism and Baha'i, showing the names of the leaders and some major historical events during the first expansive phase of the Baha'i religion. Shoghi Effendi was the last individual to lead the Baha'is. When he died in 1957, an interim collective leadership established the present supreme ruling body of the Baha'i religion, the Universal House of Justice.

The fact that the great majority of Babis recognised the theophanic claims of Baha'u'llah constitutes a strong element of continuity between Babism and Baha'i. The Bab occupies a central and visible position in the Baha'i religion, and his remains are buried in a splendid golden-domed shrine on the slope of Mount Carmel in Haifa. The Shrine of the Bab is considered the sacred centre of the world, and it is the architectural centrepiece of a remarkable complex of terraces and gardens, which also include the Baha'i administrative headquarter, the Baha'i World Centre. The year 1844, when the Bab made his declaration, is the year one according to the Baha'i calendar, which was devised by the Bab. The New Year begins on

Middle East

Figure 1.1. *Chronology of Babi and Baha'i leadership*

The Bab (1819-1850)

Declaration in Shiraz 1844

Babi movement crushed 1852
Exile in Baghdad 1853-1863

Baha'u'llah (1817-1892)

Exile in Edirne 1863-1868
Schism ca. 1866

Exile in Akko and
Bahji 1868-1908

Abdu'l-Baha (1844-1921)

Baha'i in the USA from 1894
Baha'i in Europe from 1899

Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957)

Systematic mission begins
after World War II

Interim leadership (1957-1963)

Universal House of Justice (1963-)

Worldwide expansion
from fewer than half a million
to five million at present

the traditional Iranian New Year, *Naw-Ruz*, at the vernal equinox. For example, the year 163 BE (Baha'i Era) begins on 20 March 2006 at sunset and ends on 20 March 2007 at sunset.[19]

The Baha'i Organisation

The Baha'is are well organised, with democratically elected bodies in a hierarchy of three levels. The basis is the local spiritual assembly, which is responsible for all the affairs of the local Baha'i community of a town or municipality. At the national level, the Baha'is elect a nine-member national spiritual assembly; the election takes place at an annual national convention by voting among the delegates. The world leadership is in the hands of the Universal House

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[19] A Baha'i year, therefore, in principle should be represented in the standard Gregorian calendar by two dates, here 2006–2007. For the sake of convenience, only one standard year is given, for example, in graphs or tables; it refers to the Baha'i year, which *begins* on 20 March at sunset in that year. Thus, 2006 represents 163 BE.

of Justice, a body of nine men elected for five-year periods by delegates (only men are eligible). The Universal House of Justice has the supreme religious and administrative authority in the Baha'i religion. It is seated in the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa.

The Baha'i organisation is called the Administrative Order and has doctrinal significance as a guideline for a future politico-religious world order, the *World Order of Baha'u'llah*. Its establishment and present form is discussed in greater depth in Chapters 5 and 10. There are no formal clergy or other ritual specialists in Baha'i, and the local Baha'i communities themselves organise their religious meetings and services.

The Baha'i Communities

The Baha'i communities of today share a distinct "Baha'i-ness", and it is easy to recognise the similarities of the different local Baha'i communities, regardless of their nationalities. The Baha'i centres are well-kept, neat houses or flats, often situated in middle-class or even more affluent neighbourhoods. Inside, there are the same pictures of the characteristic nine-angled Baha'i temples, the same calligraphy, the same literature, and the same way of arranging flowers on a lace doily situated below a picture of Abdu'l-Baha, showing him as a white-bearded man wearing a white turban and long mantle. See Photo 2—*The main room of the Baha'i Centre in Palermo, Sicily*.

The Baha'i leadership does not demand this conformity, and local differences are also visible, yet the air of a common, international Baha'i culture is salient. In most locations, the majority of the Baha'is are native to the country, but there is usually a significant contingent of foreign Baha'is as well, staying for shorter or longer periods in the country. In all these respects, the Danish Baha'i community is typical of Baha'i communities of Western Europe.

Baha'is do not have a reputation for zealous or colourful mission activity, and they are not accused of brainwashing or dubious economic transactions. The Baha'is do not engage in the controversial spending and fund-raising practices that characterise some religious groups; all Baha'i activities are exclusively financed through voluntary donations from the Baha'is themselves, and the Baha'is do not accept economic support from non-Baha'is. It is therefore hardly surprising that in Europe and North America Baha'is are not surrounded by controversies that result in headlines in the tabloid press. Indeed, it

is hard to find any public animosity against them in the West. This is in contrast to the situation in most Muslim countries, in particular Iran, where the Baha'is are not only regarded as heretics by the Muslim *ulama*, but also as representatives of a Western outlook that is perceived as a threat to traditional Islamic values.

Expatriate Iranian Baha'is make up a considerable percentage of most Western Baha'i communities. In Iran, the Baha'is constitute the largest religious minority, counting between 0.5 and 1 per cent of the Iranian population. The Baha'is of Iran have regularly been persecuted and even killed for their religious beliefs. In the first years after the Iranian revolution in 1979, the Khomeini regime orchestrated ruthless persecutions resulting in widespread destruction of Baha'i property and about two hundred killings. This made the Baha'is known to the public in the West, and for once, their condition roused political interest.

Contemporary Baha'i Beliefs and Religious Practices

The following exposition of contemporary Baha'i beliefs and religious practices reflects how the religion is presented officially by the Universal House of Justice, for example, in *The Bahá'í World* or in Baha'i dictionaries and other literature that comply with the official presentation of the religion. The exposition is, therefore, an idealised abstraction that does not include individual variations or variations due to time and place. Such variations are ubiquitous—in this respect, Baha'is are no different from followers of other religions.

The Baha'i faith is strictly monotheistic. According to Baha'i doctrines, the founders of major scriptural religions, such as Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Bab and Baha'u'llah, are human manifestations of an invisible and indescribable deity who is called God by the members of these religions. Evil is not a principle in itself, but is explained as the absence of good, as darkness is the absence of light.

The belief in Baha'u'llah as a manifestation of God is a fundamental tenet of Baha'i, and it is precisely this belief which places Baha'i outside the realm of Islam, both in the eyes of the Baha'is and in the eyes of the Muslims. It is parallel to the fundamental tenet dividing Jews and Christians, which is the belief in the divine nature of Jesus as Christ. Abdu'l-Baha is not a new manifestation of God, but he is recognised by the Baha'is as the authoritative and divinely

inspired interpreter of his father's writings, and he therefore has a special position above that of an ordinary man.

The writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha make up the Baha'i canon of sacred texts. These texts were written in Arabic or Persian; unlike the Muslim view of Arabic, however, the Baha'is do not consider Arabic and Persian holy languages, and Shoghi Effendi translated many of his predecessors' writings into English. Excerpts of Baha'u'llah's writings have been translated by the Baha'is into more than eight hundred different languages.[20] Among other things, this can be seen as quantitative evidence of the universalistic aspirations of Baha'i.

According to Baha'i teachings, every human being has a soul, and it is the possession of the human soul that distinguishes human beings from animals. Every individual has free will and is responsible for his or her behaviour, which means that fate is not pre-determined. Human souls exist because of God's love, and in return, humans must love God. The human soul has the gift of rational thinking and may be able to approach God by seeking an ever-increasing understanding of and love for the attributes of God. It is a Baha'i principle that every human being has the right and duty to pursue truth independently.

The Baha'i concept of the human soul is that the soul comes into existence at the time of conception and continues to exist after biological death. It is not reincarnated in another body, nor does it go to Heaven or Hell. However, these notions may be used to characterise the status of the soul in its new non-material form of existence in the "Abha Kingdom". In the Abha Kingdom, the soul may progress until it attains God's presence. Prayers for the dead may affect the status of the soul, but its status is also determined by how the person lived his or her life on earth. However, concerns about individual salvation of soul or body, either here or in the hereafter, do not occupy a prominent position in the Baha'i teachings. The Christian idea of original sin has no counterpart in Baha'i doctrines.

The Baha'i ethos is this-worldly and collective, being true to its origin in Islamic millennialism. The core activities in Baha'i religious life are the obligatory daily prayers and reading of the sacred texts, but it is also important to participate in communal religious life, to donate to the cause, and of course to proselytise among the vast sea

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[20] *The Bahá'í World 1998–99*, p. 317.

of unbelievers. Prayer and meditation are acknowledged ways of reaching spiritual insight, whereas spiritual techniques like asceticism or self-torture are rejected. Baha'i law forbids its followers to drink alcohol and take drugs, and it prescribes a yearly fasting period, but otherwise the Baha'is have retained none of the dietary prohibitions of Islam. The prescribed collective rituals are few: a brief wedding vow to be said aloud and a communal prayer for the dead; in fact, the Baha'is generally discourage the development of collective worship into formalised rituals.

All together, a comparison of the central doctrines of Baha'i and of Shi'i Islam shows both continuity and significant breaks. With regard to religious practice, central rituals resemble their Islamic counterparts, primarily prayer, fasting, pilgrimages, and visitations to holy places such as tombs.

Baha'i law has also retained many Islamic characteristics. The law contains prescriptions for daily prayers and the rules of fasting in the period of the fast, but it also elaborates on regulations for inheritance and parts of civil law, for the payment of tax, and for many other aspects of community affairs among the Baha'is. Baha'i law resembles the Muslim *shari'a* by being divinely ordained and by regulating not only religious life but also what would be considered secular life in a Western society. However, unlike some radical Muslim groups, the Baha'is do not insist that Baha'i law should pre-empt civil law; on the contrary, the Baha'is are obliged by Baha'i law to obey the government and the laws of the country. The Baha'i position is therefore that many parts of Baha'i law can only take effect when most of mankind have become Baha'is, and the future Baha'i World Order has been created.[21]

Social Teachings

According to their central doctrine of the unification of humankind, the Baha'is claim a number of social and ethical principles that might be called liberal from a North American political perspective. For example, official Baha'i doctrine condemns racial prejudice and stresses the principle of equal rights and opportunities for men and women. Baha'is insist on compulsory education and the elimination of the extremes of poverty and wealth.

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[21] William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith. The Emerging Global Religion*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1989, p. 140.

In their personal lives, Baha'is are expected to observe the general moral codes of the society within which they live. They praise cultural pluralism, and pictures of people representing the most diverse ethnic groups are favourite Baha'i icons, see Photo 3—*Baha'i icons on the web*. They are also actively engaged in environmental issues, and Baha'i views are clearly consonant with major trends in religious environmentalism.[22]

Globalisation and the Baha'i Message

Globalisation has become the standard term for describing how humanity in recent decades has experienced a historically unique global interdependency among people and nations. The political aspects of this global interdependency of humanity was certainly acknowledged by the participants of the Social Summit, because the word globalisation and the issues raised by globalisation are specifically mentioned in one of the paragraphs of *The Copenhagen Declaration*.[23]

Globalisation is more than its popular image of instant electronic communication and Western fears of a *jihad* against the familiar comfort of McWorld.[24] Globalisation is also more than internationalisation; the uniqueness of globalisation among other things is linked to the rapidly increasing supraterritorial connections between people and societies.[25] This "deterritorialisation" follows from the present, rapid integration of the world economy, facilitated by revolutionary innovations and growth in international transport and electronic communications.[26] Globalisation is multi-dimensional, encompassing different political, economic, and cultural trends in a world that is becoming "a single place", as one of the prominent globalisation scholars, the sociologist of religion Roland Robertson, has phrased it.[27]

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[22] Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, London, Sage, 1994, pp. 206–224.

[23] The relevant paragraph (p. 5) is quoted in full in the beginning of Chapter 3.

[24] The sentence alludes to the book by Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, New York, Times Books, 1995.

[25] Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization. A Critical Introduction*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000, pp. 41–61.

[26] Scholte, *Globalization*, pp. 99–101.

[27] Roland Robertson, "Globalization, Modernization, and Postmodernization. The Ambiguous Position of Religion", in Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett (eds.), *Religion and Global Order. Religion and the Political Order*, vol. 4, New York, Paragon House, 1991, pp. 281–291 (quotation p. 283).

Globalisation has significantly changed the rules and topics of international politics. Human rights, environmental problems, ethnic conflicts, health care, sexual equality and social development are examples of problems that were of little concern to classical diplomacy, because they were considered internal affairs. However, the series of eight United Nations world conferences from 1990–1996 demonstrated that with globalisation such "residual problems" were elevated from their traditional obscurity in international politics. For example, the *opening* paragraph of the *Copenhagen Declaration* reads:

> For the first time in history, at the invitation of the United Nations, we gather as Heads of State and Government to recognize the significance of social development and human well-being for all and to give to these goals the highest priority both now and into the twenty-first century.[28]

The sociologist Peter Beyer, another scholar studying globalisation, coined the above-mentioned term "residual problems" and noted that they present political opportunities to organisations and movements, including religious organisations working transnationally.[29] By using, in particular, the United Nations system, such organisations and movements may become recognised as players on the international political scene, where they can pursue their goals and offer their solutions.[30] Thus, more than 500 NGOs, including the Baha'i International Community, have consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC.[31] Usually, the solutions suggested by these transnational organisations concern humankind as a whole, which means a more or less conscious sharing of the allegory that "the earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens", to quote yet another globalisation thinker, who was introduced above: Mirza Husayn-Ali Nuri, better known as Baha'u'llah.[32]

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[28] *The Copenhagen Declaration . . .*, p. 3.
[29] Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, pp. 105–107.
[30] Scholte, *Globalization*, pp. 151–155.
[31] *Directory of Non-Governmental Organizations Associated with the Department of Public Information*, New York, United Nations, 1995. Other religious NGOs are for example: Baptist World Alliance, Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, a considerable number of Catholic organisations, Conference of European Churches, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Lutheran World Federation, Muslim World League, The Salvation Army, Soka Gakkai International, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Nations of Yoga, World Jewish Congress, World Muslim Congress.
[32] [Baha'u'llah], "Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd (Tablet of Maqṣúd)", in [Baha'u'llah], *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988, pp. 159–178 (quotation p. 167).

The call for the unification of the world has always been one of the most important parts of the Baha'i message. The Baha'is see this unification process as the culmination of the spiritual development of humankind achieved through the successive revelations of God's will in the prophecies of the different religions. In Baha'i thinking, all the major religions of the world therefore represent different stages in the spiritual evolution of human society towards a unified world civilisation.

But the unification is not only a call. The Baha'is share with other utopian thinkers a belief in historical determinism and in their own historical role. Thus, the Baha'is perceive themselves as the vanguard of a continuing historical process, which is destined to result in a new golden age for humankind, the "Most Great Peace". This process is aided by God's finger in history:

> The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy. Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present-day afflictions can never be the same as that which a subsequent age may require.[33]

God may provide the remedy, but it is up to people to take it, and Baha'u'llah urged for active involvement in society. Thus, he continued:

> Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements.[34]

The "Most Great Peace" can only be accomplished when the majority of people have become Baha'is. It is believed, however, that it is to be preceded by the "Lesser Peace", in which the nations of the world reach an agreement to abolish war and enter into a political unification of the world, consonant with the Baha'i call for the unification of humankind.

In several aspects, Baha'u'llah's thoughts on religion, state and society were revolutionary in relation to traditional Islamic social and political thinking in the second half of the nineteenth century, but in tune with reform thoughts among modernist Middle East intellectuals

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[33] [Baha'u'llah], *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983, p. 213. The quotation and its continuation below are also rendered in the official Baha'i yearbook, *The Bahá'í World 1994–95*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1996, p. 19.

[34] [Baha'u'llah], *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 213.

and dissident governmental circles.[35] However, Baha'u'llah went fur-
ther than advocating social and political reform in Iran and the
Ottoman Empire, the two major powers dominating the Middle East
at the time. Baha'u'llah addressed the entire world, offering a new
religion that aimed at accommodating all the religions of the world,
forming a future peaceful and prosperous world community, united
politically and religiously. On the one hand, this new religion rep-
resented a continuation of millenarian ideas within Islam since the
tenth century. On the other hand, its *shari'a* was also based on impor-
tant ideals of modernity, such as democratic government, international
law, religious liberty, and a break with traditional gender roles.[36] In
particular, Baha'u'llah's social vision was remarkable for its time,
through its "strong globalist perspective" and his goal of "achieving
a manageable, ongoing international peace".[37] James Beckford adds
that, in some sense, the faith of Baha'u'llah "foreshadowed globalization,
with its emphasis on the interdependence of all peoples and the need
for international institutions of peace, justice and good governance".[38]

Also today, the Baha'is see themselves as active participants in the
process of globalisation, following their own strategy for promoting
the religious and political unification of the world. Two high-ranking
Baha'i authors have commented on the Baha'is' engagement in issues
that many may find "political":

> While most people would probably agree that this Bahá'í goal [the
> unification of the world] is a worthy one, many would regard it as
> utopian to believe that such an ideal society could ever be actually
> achieved. Moreover, many people feel that religion should be concerned
> exclusively with the inner development of the individual, and they are
> surprised to find a faith that places so great an emphasis on mankind's
> collective life, on forms of social organisation, and on the achievements
> of social goals.[39]

The Islamic heritage in the Baha'i religion is easily recognisable, and
the whole concept of including detailed guidelines for good govern-

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[35] Juan R. I. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium. The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998.

[36] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, pp. 1–15.

[37] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, p. 110.

[38] James A. Beckford, "Religious Movements and Globalization", in Robin Cohen and Shirin M. Rai (eds.), *Global Social Movements*, London, The Athlone Press, 2000, pp. 165–219 (quotation p. 175).

[39] Hatcher and Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith*, p. 130.

ment in religious texts is Quranic above all. Yet, on crucial points, the Baha'i religion represents one of the most profound breaks with Islam. The claim that Baha'u'llah is a prophet and a "Manifestation of God" means that both Muslims and Baha'is regard the religion as being beyond the pale of Islam. Baha'u'llah's views on society and world order also broke with other fundamental tenets of Islam, such as the Islamic juridical distinction between believers and non-believers.[40]

CITIZENS OF THE WORLD—SCOPE AND CONTENTS

Considering the relative age and quantitative importance of the Baha'i religion worldwide, there are surprisingly few research monographs on modern Baha'i. As can be seen in the literature survey presented in Chapter 2, most studies of Baha'i deal with the emergence of the religion (and its predecessor Babism) in its Iranian context. Outside the Iranian setting, several authors have treated the early historical expansion of Baha'i in the West, whereas there is more limited coverage of the period after 1960, a time in which the largest expansion of the Baha'i religion has taken place.

The Globalisation Perspective

Relevant theories of religion and globalisation are discussed in Chapter 3, where I develop a general model for analysing transnational religious organisations from a globalisation perspective. The model owes much to Roland Robertson's model of the "global field", which is discussed therefore in some detail. My model is called the dual global field model, and it is used to structure the presentation and analysis of the material in the remaining chapters of the book.

The dual global field model operates with four Baha'i constituents: the *individual*, the *national Baha'i communities*, the *international Baha'i organisations* and *the Baha'i world*. These four constituents make up a square representing the Baha'i global field. Outside the Baha'i global field, there is another square, the general global field, and the two global fields share the *individual*, who is an actor in both global fields. The other three constituents of the inner Baha'i global field are juxtaposed

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[40] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, pp. 111–118.

with the other three constituents of the general global field proposed
by Roland Robertson: the *national societies*, the *world system of societies*
and *humankind*.[41] The model allows for a diachronic analysis, that is,
an analysis of the historical development of Baha'i, as well as a syn-
chronic analysis of Baha'i, namely, its present position in the world.

However, *Citizens of the World* is primarily a monograph on the
Baha'i religion and the Baha'is, and the reader should not expect
that globalisation is mentioned on every other page of the book. I
use the dual global field model in order to organise and analyse the
material in this book, and this is what is meant by an analysis from
a globalisation perspective. Of course, this approach cannot stand
alone. For a topic as broad and complex as an entire religion and
its adherents, it is necessary to adopt a more encompassing approach—
in other words, to apply a plurality of methods and theories in the
analyses. Later in this chapter, I discuss the implications of such a
methodological approach.

In the book, I also recurrently make use of the classic pair of con-
cepts *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, used by Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–
1936) to designate two ideal types of social relations.[42] Unfortunately,
it is not uncommon to see the two terms interpreted as a classification
scheme of two (ideal) types of society, the traditional (*Gemeinschaft*)
and the modern (*Gesellschaft*), but this simplistic view is not loyal to
their original meaning as two *complementary* ideal types of *social relations*
and *social acts*. In Chapter 3, I expound on the two terms and the
academic discussion of their meaning, including their relevance in a
discussion of globalisation. I also make use of Tönnies' concepts of
Gemeinschaft versus *Gesellschaft* in a graphic model, which I use later
to describe the balance of resources spent on different needs in the
long-term development of a religious community. In this model, *Gemein-
schaft* and *Gesellschaft* are symbolised by two axes perpendicular to
each other, and the development in resource allocation is represented
by a trajectory in the diagram.

The Making of Baha'i into a Global Religion

The Babi period saw the formulation of important doctrines, which
were later perpetuated in Baha'i and soon resulted in the decisive

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[41] Roland Robertson, *Globalization. Social Theory and Global Culture*, London, Sage,
1992, pp. 8–31.
[42] Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie*,
Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970.

secession of this new religious movement from Islam. The persistently strained relationship between the Baha'is of Iran and the powerful Shi'ite *ulama* owes much to the Babi past. The Babi heritage of Baha'i is salient in Baha'i sacred history rendered by Shoghi Effendi in his book *God Passes By*, which was originally published in 1944, at the centenary of the Bab's declaration. This book, more than any other doctrinal work, has shaped the Baha'is' comprehension of their own history.[43] Any understanding of Baha'i would be incomplete without an understanding of Babism and the situation of the Baha'is in Iran, and this is the topic of Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 treats the historical development of the Baha'i religion from the ruins of the Babi movement in the 1850s to its present worldwide organisation. The development of the Baha'i religion is a well-documented case of the making of a new religion. Baha'u'llah transformed the Babi *shari'a* and the millenarian expectations of the early Babis into a more far-ranging vision of a unified world civilisation. The doctrinal compatibility with Western ideas of modernity created the platform for Baha'i expansion outside the Muslim world. Baha'u'llah's visions and doctrines were propagated through the personal charisma of Abdu'l-Baha at the right time and place— in the period from the 1890s until World War I, the religious climate of North America was receptive to ideas adorned by exotic words and represented by an Oriental sage who had a long beard and wore a turban and a long cloak.

When Shoghi Effendi succeeded Abdu'l-Baha, he foresaw the need for strengthening the Baha'i organisation. He established the Baha'i organisational principles, called the Administrative Order. The Administrative Order has proved effective in preventing major schisms at critical phases in the expansion process, and the Baha'i leadership has been able to maintain a monopoly on the religious heritage of the two prophets, the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

In the period from 1963 to 1986, the Baha'i religion increased its number of registered adherents more than ten-fold, and since the 1990s, the Baha'is have claimed more than five million adherents. These figures have occasionally been disputed, however, and Chapter 5 ends with a critical examination of Baha'i membership data.

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[43] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995.

From the Global Perspective to the Individual

Chapters 6 through 9 draw mainly on my case study of the Danish Baha'i community. Chapter 6 contains a historical and demographic analysis of the development of this community, continuing the diachronic perspective of Chapters 4 and 5. Although charisma could be said to have been routinised by Shoghi Effendi to allow for carefully planned mission campaigns, charismatic individuals still prove to be decisive on the local level. Here, the making of a new religion with its particular traditions and community characteristics is repeated on a small scale, when those missionaries who had the right talents, formed a circle of the first believers around them. Chapter 6 is based on primary material, including a detailed demographic analysis of the Baha'i community over a period of more than fifty years. This analysis reveals a number of demographic trends that make it increasingly difficult for the Danish Baha'i community to maintain a net growth in the number of Danish-born members. In fact, demographic considerations show that the creation of a new major religion is a tremendous up-hill task, and it is no wonder that so few religious groups have been able to grow to any significant size.

Chapters 7, 8 and parts of Chapter 9 also draw upon primary material from the Danish Baha'i community, but are used in a synchronic analysis of the data. Chapter 7 discusses conversion to Baha'i, and the reliability of the informants' own conversion accounts as sources is critically assessed. The motives and circumstances that lead people to become Baha'is are extracted from qualitative and quantitative analyses of the conversion accounts, and the results are compared with established theories of conversion to new religions. The concept of the religious seeker—an ideal type of the potential convert—is scrutinised and reinterpreted in the light of the different attitudes and behaviour of the Danish Baha'is in the course of the conversion process.

Chapter 8 is concerned with the religious life of the Baha'is of Denmark and the issue of belonging to the Danish Baha'i community. The members' attitudes and behaviour regarding being a Baha'i are examined here. Religious traditions play a crucial role in the upholding of both individual commitment and the cohesion of the religious community. However, the study of the Danish Baha'i community shows how these traditions are malleable and open to re-interpretation, and this even extends to the central ordinances of prayer and

fasting. There are subtle differences between the native Danish Baha'is and their Iranian fellow-believers, but these differences seem mainly to be part of the general cultural differences between the two groups.

But spiritual values and religious traditions alone do not "make the world go 'round'". Money and other resources must be mobilised and put to use in a controlled manner to benefit both proselytising and the demands for running the community in general. In particular, the Baha'i leadership is faced with the crucial issue of achieving the proper balance between the resources spent on the different activities in order to satisfy the needs of both *Gemeinschaft*-oriented and *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities. This is the main theme of Chapter 9. Resources are provided by the individual Baha'is in the form of time, money and labour, and data have been collected to estimate quantitatively all three types of resources in the case of the Danish Baha'i community. The resources that the Danish Baha'is can spend on missionary activities are limited, and this influences the mission strategy. At the root lies the problem of a strained financial situation; this situation and the prospects of change are also discussed.

Global Centre and Global Periphery

Chapters 10 and 11 analyse the international Baha'i institutions and activities. Chapter 10 examines the Baha'i holy places and administrative centre in the Haifa area in Israel. Here, the Baha'is have built what I call a religious metropolis, which functions both as an administrative centre and as a place of pilgrimage. The remarkable architecture of the Baha'i religious metropolis reflects this dual function of being a centre of both the global Baha'i *Gemeinschaft* and the global Baha'i *Gesellschaft*. Two periods of fieldwork (one month and five months) enabled me to get an inside view of the daily activities of the Baha'i World Centre and its staff of eight hundred Baha'i volunteers.

Chapter 11 begins with a description and analysis of another type of remarkable Baha'i architecture, the Baha'i temples, which are placed around the globe, one on each continent. The results of field studies from the temples in Frankfurt, Kampala and Panama City are included. Local examples of Baha'i development projects in Africa and Central America are used to discuss the strategic challenges for the Baha'i mission work. The chapter concludes with both diachronic and synchronic analyses of how the Baha'is interact in their mission

activities on a global scale in the United Nations system. This leads
the reader back to the example presented at the beginning of the
book, the Copenhagen Summit and the very active presence of the
members of a religious minority who consider themselves to be "cit-
izens of the world".

The final chapter is a brief presentation of the main conclusions
drawn from the present study of the Baha'is.

<div align="center">STUDYING THE BAHA'IS</div>

Twenty-five years of a pleasant ethnographic relationship with the
Baha'is have provided me with the bulk of the material for this book.
This includes a broad interview study of the Danish Baha'i com-
munity in 1981–82, regular participatory observations from 1980
until today, and a follow-up demographic survey in 1999. I have
also made much use of material from fieldwork at the Baha'i World
Centre in Haifa in 1987 and 1988–89, archival studies in Chicago,
Haifa and Copenhagen, and from numerous visits to Baha'i institu-
tions and Baha'i communities around the world, including five of
their seven temples.[44] The intention with these international field
studies has been to broaden the scope of the study to a global level,
because early in my study of the Danish Baha'is, I soon realised that
the global and the local levels are intimately connected. Both levels
are equally important in order to comprehend the Baha'i religion, its
ideology, its believers, its organisation, its religious practice and its
strategy to gain influence and more adherents in a world undergo-
ing globalisation.

<div align="center">*Sources for the Study of the Baha'is*</div>

When I approached the Danish Baha'i community for the first time
in 1978, the group had never been studied before, and I had only
a loose impression of whom they were. I followed the group through
participatory observation at Baha'i holy days, and in 1980 I conducted
a few, unstructured pilot interviews among the Baha'is of Copenhagen,
including interviews with eight Baha'is who were among the first
members of the community. I also had several meetings with members

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[44] A list of these visits can be found in the bibliography, section B.

of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Denmark, and after some time they allowed me to conduct a general interview study of the Danish Baha'is, and they encouraged the members to participate. I prepared a detailed questionnaire, and in the period 1981–1982, three student assistants and I conducted 120 interviews with members of the Danish Baha'i community. Details about this interview study are given in Appendix 1.[45]

The intention of the interview study was to attain a broad knowledge of the Danish Baha'i community, and of the Danish Baha'is, their social and religious backgrounds, their religious lives, and their internal relationships. As might be expected, some of the questions in the questionnaire touched on very interesting issues, while other questions turned out to probe barren soil. As an example of the latter, I included several specific questions concerning relations between the Danish and Iranian Baha'is, but found no pattern common to the answers. This was in the heyday of the founding of minority studies in Denmark, and I had anticipated a complex relationship with some internal tensions. Instead, I realised through both the interviews and the participatory observations that the relationship between the two groups was smooth and non-controversial—and it still is.

In most of my publications on Baha'i, I have drawn on these interviews as an important source, but not the only source, of information on attitudes and behaviour of the Baha'is. The field trips to many Baha'i communities around the world and my continued close relationship with the Danish Baha'i community also taught me typical Baha'i manners and traditions.

My long-lasting study of the Baha'is, both in Denmark and abroad, has given me a good basis for judging when to generalise over time and when not to do so. In the 1970s, the Danish Baha'i community—like other Western Baha'i communities—experienced a considerable influx of new members, so that its size almost doubled over a few years. The community went through a transition and routinisation phase to meet the challenges of this rapid growth. From 1980 and on, however, the demographic situation became more stable with a

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[45] In the different chapters of this book, I often refer to particular questions from this interview study. Such questions are referred to in the text by "Q" followed by its number in the questionnaire. Thus, "Q14" refers to question number 14 in the questionnaire.

steady, slow growth in the number of members and a relatively lower rate of conversions and resignations. In fact, many of the Danish Baha'is whom I interviewed in 1981–1982 still make up an active core of the members.[46] All quantitative measures of community activity also show a remarkable stability in the entire period 1980 to 1999, indicating that much of the quantitative data on communal activities are representative of the situation today.[47]

Comparative demographic analyses of a number of European Baha'i communities show that in quantitative terms, the Danish Baha'i community has developed like other Baha'i communities of North Western Europe from the 1960s to the 1990s.[48] A wealth of primary data has been gained from fieldwork and archival studies around the world, not the least from the extensive fieldwork and archival studies at the Baha'i World Centre. The material corroborated my proposition that the results of the detailed analyses of the Danish Baha'i community are representative of Western European Baha'i communities and for the most part also of Baha'i communities elsewhere.

While most of the results and conclusions presented in *Citizens of the World* are based on data obtained through interviews, participatory studies, fieldwork and archival studies, my analyses of the historical development of the Baha'i religion naturally draw on the many excellent studies already published on the Babi and Baha'i histories.

The Baha'i Language

Issues concerning language warrant a comment. Most Western Baha'is are familiar with correspondence, sacred texts and prayers in English, and English is often used at Baha'i meetings all over the world. English is the working language of Baha'i worldwide; only at the Baha'i World Centre are both English and Persian the official languages.

The Bab, Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha authored the sacred Baha'i texts in Arabic or Persian, but the manuscripts have not been released in their original as authoritative texts. All manuscripts are carefully edited and translated into English before they are endorsed by the Universal House of Justice as authoritative texts and published by

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[46] See Appendix 1 for more details.
[47] See Chapter 8 for more details.
[48] Margit Warburg, "Growth Patterns of New Religions: The Case of Baha'i", in Robert Towler (ed.), *New Religions and the New Europe*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 1995, pp. 177–193.

acknowledged Baha'i publishers. These authorised English translations of the sacred texts are the basis for further translations into other languages, even including sometimes texts translated into Arabic itself.[49] The consequence of this policy is that the authorised English editions of the sacred Baha'i texts, and not the original texts written in Arabic or Persian, provide the relevant doctrinal basis for the beliefs and practices of Western Baha'is today.

Some Considerations on Methodology

In my study of the Baha'is, I apply different methods, theories and sources to examine meaningfully the many aspects of the subject. I agree with the Danish historian of religion Armin Geertz when he states that in the study of such complex subjects as human reality, it is necessary to apply a plurality of methods and theories.[50] This approach, of course, is not the same as eclectism; it calls for pragmatic, careful, methodological considerations. This is hardly a controversial viewpoint, yet is not without its pitfalls.[51]

Because theories can illuminate only part of reality, theories and theoretical concepts may be *complementary* to each other. Some patterns of reality are best illuminated and understood by applying one particular theory. Other patterns then may be barely visible; but if another theory is applied, these patterns stand out in stark contrast, while the first pattern vanishes. It is like the well-known phenomenon of illuminating an object in a dark room with lights of different colours: parts that were bright when using a red light are barely visible in green light, while other parts now appear bright. The images of the object are different, yet the results are not inconsistent; they

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[49] An example is given in Chapter 5.

[50] Armin Geertz considers in some detail the application of a plurality of theories and methods as a general methodological principle in the study of religion. Armin W. Geertz, *The Invention of Prophecy. Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994, pp. 28–30.

[51] Armin Geertz' methodological considerations have been challenged by his Danish colleagues Tove Tybjerg and Morten Warmind, who call for a more persistent attempt to use one recurrent theoretical approach, see Tove Tybjerg and Morten Warmind, "Armin Geertz' disputats" [Armin Geertz's doctoral thesis], *Religionsvidenskabeligt Tidsskrift*, vol. 23, 1993, pp. 105–115. My own position is that it is meaningless to state in general terms which of the two methodological strategies is the most fruitful; it must depend on the subject under study. It is important, however, that theories and methods must be chosen so that they do not lead to inconsistent conclusions. Otherwise, I find no obvious reason to disregard *a priori* a theory or method from the common toolbox of scholarship.

only highlight different parts of reality. This is a fundamental aspect of the scientific method; there is no such thing as a theory of everything.

Apart from the principle of complementarity there is an additional theoretical argument for applying a plurality of theories and methods. A complex subject often has to be studied at different *scales* to grasp its essential features, and the selection of the proper scale is important. For example, one could imagine conducting a study of the Baha'is of Europe by interviewing a random sample of people drawn from the entire population of European Baha'is. However, not only would this be rather impractical, it would also be an expression of poor methodology. This choice of scale, i.e., the European Baha'is together, would be inappropriate, because the sample of people interviewed would be culturally less homogeneous than the Danish Baha'is alone, and this would probably make it more difficult to distinguish particular Baha'i attitudes and behaviour. I suggest that a more profitable alternative is to study the Danish Baha'i community as a representative case of European Baha'i communities. The ability to generalise from this case study depends on the extent to which the Danish Baha'i community can be considered a representative case of a national Baha'i community. This issue is further examined in Chapter 6 and Chapter 9.

A final issue I wish to raise is that of quantitative versus qualitative methods. In the 1980s and through most of the 1990s, the advantages and drawbacks of the two kinds of methods were the topic of lively debates among social scientists. The debate suffered from the trenches dug between proponents of what were emotionally perceived as "soft" versus "hard" sociology, and I agree with Peter Abell in his critique of this strong polarisation of scholarship.[52] The two methods, of course, are complementary and so are the data obtained.[53] If possi-

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[52] Peter Abell, "Methodological Achievements in Sociology Over the Past Few Decades with Special Reference to the Interplay of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods", in Christopher G. A. Bryant and Henk A. Becker (eds.), *What has Sociology Achieved?*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1990, pp. 94–116; Margit Warburg, "Religionssociologi" [Sociology of Religion], in Mikael Rothstein (ed.), *Humanistisk religionsforskning. En indføring i religionshistorie & religionssociologi*, Copenhagen, Samleren, 1997, pp. 135–246.

[53] Will C. van den Hoonaard, *Working with Sensitizing Concepts: Analytical Field Research*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 1997, pp. 56–63; Ole Riis, *Metoder på tværs. Om forudsætningerne for sociologisk metodekombination* [Methods across. On the conditions for combining sociological methods], Copenhagen, Jurist- og Økonomforbundets Forlag, 2001.

ble and relevant to the issue studied, and if the available resources allow it, both methods can be combined with advantage, for example, in interview surveys. In my study of the Danish Baha'i community, 120 Danish Baha'is were interviewed. This number was sufficiently high to allow for quantitative analyses, but not so high that analyses using qualitative methods, in the form of in-depth interviews on specific topics, were made impossible. The analysis in Chapter 6 of the issues of gender, occupation and non-conformal religiosity, the discussion of the concept of seekership in Chapter 7, and the analyses in Chapter 8 of attitudes and behaviour related to the central ordinances of prayer and fast are illustrative for showing the advantages of combining quantitative and qualitative data analyses.

To summarise, I maintain that no single method or theory enjoys the status of the "best" in the study of such a complex subject as the Baha'is, and I therefore rely on the application of a plurality of methods and theories. If I were to make any programmatic methodological declaration, it therefore would be to adopt a methodologically agnostic position in a recurrent, critical confrontation with the sources.[54]

Issues of Terminology

Writing an academic book on the Baha'i religion makes certain choices concerning the use of internal Baha'i terms pertinent.[55] Siddhartha Gautama is better known from his title, Buddha, and Karol Wojtyła was generally called by his Catholic title and name, Pope Johannes Paul II. For the same reason, I have used the Baha'i names of the central religious figures, rather than their civil names (for example Abdu'l-Baha instead of Abbas Effendi). I have also generally used Baha'i terms for concepts particular to Baha'i; however, some Baha'i

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[54] The methodologically agnostic position that I advocate for should not be confused with Peter Berger's "methodological atheism", which is concerned with difference in premises between sociology and theology. Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York, Doubleday, 1967. This discussion has re-emerged in the 1990s, see Pål Repstad, "Theology and Sociology— Discourses in Conflict or Reconciliation under Postmodernism?", in Eila Helander (ed.), *Religion and Social Transitions*, Helsinki, Helsinki University Press, 1999, pp. 141–155.

[55] Margit Warburg, "Insiders and Outsiders in the Study of Religion", in Curt Dahlgren, Eva M. Hamberg, and Thorleif Pettersson (eds.), *Religion och sociologi. Ett fruktbart möte. Festskrift till Göran Gustafsson*, Lund, Teologiska Institutionen i Lund, 2002, pp. 329–339.

terminology so strongly expresses a personal acceptance of Baha'i beliefs that I have chosen not to follow the Baha'i practice in a few cases. For example, I have avoided the Baha'i habit of capitalising words like "His" and "the Writings" and the use of confessional synonyms and titles for the religious figures, such as "the Guardian" for Shoghi Effendi. I have also reduced the number of Baha'i terms that are capitalised according to official Baha'i spelling; as a general rule, only those Baha'i institutions and concepts that are proper nouns are capitalised, for example, the Universal House of Justice.[56]

Many Baha'i names and terms are of Persian or Arabic origin, and the Baha'is usually transcribe these words with full diacritical marks.[57] The most conspicuous difference between the Baha'i transcription system and modern academic transcription systems is that the Baha'is have retained an earlier practice of using the acute accent instead of the horizontal stroke over the long vowels: a, i and u. To achieve consistency and to facilitate recognition, I have used the 1923 standard Baha'i transcription system as the basis for the spelling of Baha'i terms and names throughout the book.[58] This principle extends to terms that are not only Baha'i terms, but are in general Islamic usage. Of course, in direct quotations, including titles in references, all names and terms are reproduced in the original, whatever transcription system may have been used. Since the same word may be transcribed differently when used in a Persian or Arabic context, apparent inconsistencies are inevitable.

However, for the convenience of most of the readers who have no particular interest in the details of transcription, I have generally omitted the diacritical marks of transcribed words in the text proper, as well as in the names of authors and publishers in the bibliography. To facilitate recognition, connecting dashes are retained, and apostrophes are used in place of both *ayn* (') and *hamzah* ('). When *ayn* (') is preceding the first letter, such as in the name 'Abdu'l-Bahá

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[56] An exception is the Administrative Order, which is capitalised for the sake of recognition.

[57] Marzieh Gail, *Bahá'í Glossary*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976; Moojan Momen, "The Baha'i System of Transliteration", *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin*, vol. 5, 1991, pp. 13–55.

[58] I have consulted standard Baha'i reference works, such as: Wendi Momen (ed.), *A Basic Bahá'í Dictionary*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1991; Glenn Cameron and Wendi Momen, *A Basic Bahá'í Chronology*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1996; Peter Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2000.

(spelled with full diacriticals), it is omitted for reasons of simplification, however, so that the name is rendered as Abdu'l-Baha. Since all the Baha'i names and words used in *Citizens of the World* are still easily recognised after this simplification, the use of full diacriticals would seem to be more of a formality than a help to the non-specialist reader.

I am not the first researcher in Baha'i studies who has adopted a simplified spelling without most of the diacriticals; Peter Smith used the form "Baha'i" instead of "Bahá'í" (and "Babi" instead of "Bábí") in his book on the Baha'i religion from 1987.[59] Juan Cole went further and decided to drop most diacriticals in his book on Baha'u'llah.[60] In Denis MacEoin's book, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, which was published in the series *Pembroke Persian Papers*, the main text (in the words of the series editor Charles Melville) is "kept as free of intimidating transliteration as possible".[61] This trend set by leading specialists studying the Baha'i religion is a refreshing liberation from the spelling orthodoxy of Baha'i research.

Baha'i literally means "a follower of Baha", that is, Baha'u'llah, but the word is also used by the Baha'is as an adjective, such as in "Baha'i Prayers". The Baha'is officially call their religion "the Bahá'í Faith", but the consequent use of this term in academic work has become a strong signal of personal membership in the religion. I therefore avoid it, except in a few cases where I wish to refer specifically to its teachings of faith. The older term "Baha'ism" is now almost abandoned, and the most neutral, acceptable term today seems to be "the Baha'i religion". This is a bit long, however, and I often use the noun "Baha'i" alone to designate the religion, drawing a parallel to most other religions, which are designated by one word only. However, since there are weighty arguments against introducing a new etic term when the emic term, "the Baha'i Faith", is equally understandable and precise, my use of "Baha'i" is not a crusade for renaming the religion, but is a practical and shortened term to be used interchangeably with "the Baha'i religion".[62]

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[59] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*.
[60] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, p. xi.
[61] Denis MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, London, British Academic Press, 1994, p. xiii.
[62] I would here like to thank Will van den Hoonaard, University of New Brunswick, for a stimulating discussion on this subject.

APPROACHES TO BABI AND BAHA'I STUDIES

The history of research concerning Babism and Baha'i reveals an uneven enterprise over time. Systematic scholarship began in the 1860s and reached a peak by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. From around 1920, however, academic studies of Babism and Baha'i ebbed out, and only a few works of lesser significance appeared, until the late 1970s, when a more consistent tradition for research into Babism and Baha'i developed.

The scholarship of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was carried out by non-Baha'i Orientalists, who were mainly spurred by their interest in the Babi movement. This historical-textual tradition experienced a renaissance in the late 1970s and is represented nearly exclusively by several productive scholars who are or have been Baha'is. The focus of their studies is primarily the historical development of Babism and early Baha'i or textual analyses of Babi and Baha'i writings.

Scholarship of Baha'i in the West is more fragmented and seems to have proceeded along several, not quite related tracks. This may have delayed the maturation of academic studies of modern Baha'i. A few sociologists of religion have conducted comparative studies that included Baha'i among other religious groups. For example, Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge compare the growth and geographical distribution of Christian Science, Theosophism, Liberal Catholicism, Divine Science and Baha'i in the "Roaring Twenties".[1] Other authors have been interested in Baha'i *per se*, and this literature to a large extent is composed of empirically-oriented community histories in the sociological and anthropological traditions. Most of these histories are the result of Master's or Ph.D. studies; however, as dis-

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[1] Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, "Secularization and Cult Formation in the Jazz Age", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 20, 1981, pp. 360–373; Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *Religion, Deviance, and Social Control*, New York, Routledge, 1996, pp. 109–111.

cussed later in this chapter, the early history of Baha'i in the USA and Canada is also treated in weighty volumes by senior researchers.

No comprehensive research history of Babism or Baha'i has been published, but in an unpublished manuscript of fifty-odd pages, Denis MacEoin gives a rather detailed overview of the development of Baha'i scholarship up to 1979.[2] One of the great advantages of his overview is that it includes the scholarship carried out in Iran. Among published works, Moojan Momen's compilation of Western sources of the Babi and Baha'i religions up to 1944 should be mentioned in this context, because of its long introductory chapter with a chronological survey of Western scholarship on Babism and early Baha'i and a useful appendix with short biographies.[3] Peter Smith's monograph *The Babi and Baha'i Religions* contains a short annotated bibliography covering the main literature until 1985.[4] Finally, the former chief librarian at the Baha'i World Centre, William Collins, has issued an extremely useful, comprehensive bibliography of English-language works concerning Babism and Baha'i up to 1985.[5] It includes an annotated compilation of Master's and Doctoral theses.

The following overview of the research history and literature on Babi and Baha'i studies reflects the scope of *Citizens of the World*, which means that emphasis is laid on the presentation and discussion of studies of modern Baha'i, primarily in Western societies. The intention is to provide broad coverage of the relatively modest number of published works and major theses that cover this topic, whereas the presentation of publications concerning the research history and literature on Babism and historical Baha'i is restricted to main developments.

The chapter ends with two special issues of importance to the research history. The first focuses on the current discussion of whether Baha'i is a religion, a sect of Islam, a new religious movement or maybe something else. The Baha'is themselves claim that their religion is a "world religion". The origin of Baha'i in a Shi'ite environment has traditionally lead scholars to place Baha'i in an Islamic context;

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[2] [Denis MacEoin], *The Development of Babi and Baha'i Studies up to 1979*, file index Pam 138–2333, n.d. (BWC-L).

[3] Moojan Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844–1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1981.

[4] Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions. From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press and George Ronald, 1987.

[5] William P. Collins, *Bibliography of English-Language Works on the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths 1844–1985*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1990.

however, its spread and development since World War II may justify a reassessment of this classification.

The other issue emerges from the fact that—with a few prominent exceptions—the study of Baha'i is dominated by scholars who are Baha'is themselves. A scholar's personal belief in Baha'u'llah as a manifestation of God, in principle, should be irrelevant to the quality and impartiality of his or her research. However, it is not irrelevant to the study of Baha'i that scholars who are also Baha'is are obliged to submit their work for preview. This problem and its possible academic consequences are worth discussing.

Early European Studies of Babism and Baha'i

Western public awareness of Babism arose quite early after the Bab's emergence as a religious leader in 1844.[6] This interest culminated with the persecutions following an attempted assassination of the Shah in 1852, when accounts of the atrocities suffered by the Babis were dispatched to Europe.[7]

The first academic paper on Babism seems to be a short report to the American Oriental Society by A. H. Wright in 1851. It was afterwards translated into German and published in the same year.[8] However, it was not until the 1860s that any substantial scholarship on Babism developed. Around 1860, the Orientalist Jean-Albert-Bernard Dorn (1805–1881) of St. Petersburg travelled in Northern Iran, and he was the first European scholar to collect manuscripts written by Babi scribes. Dorn's Babi manuscripts together with manuscripts acquired later by the Orientalist Nicolai Vladimirovich Khanykov (1819–79) made up a considerable collection of Babi manuscripts in St. Petersburg.[9] The Russian Professor of Oriental Studies Viktor

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[6] Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844–1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, pp. 3–14.

[7] Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844–1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, p. 11, pp. 128–146.

[8] A. H. Wright, "Bâb und seine Secte in Persien", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 5, 1851, pp. 384–385.

[9] B. Dorn, "Die vordem Chanykov'sche, jetz der Kaiserl. Öffentlichen Bibliothek zugehörige Sammlung von morgenländischen Handschriften", *Bulletin de L'Académie Impériale des sciences de St.-Pétersbourg*, vol. 8, 1865, cols. 246–300; B. Dorn, *Die Sammlung von morgenländischen Handschriften, welche die Kaiserliche öffentliche Bibliothek zu St. Petersburg im Jahre 1864 von Hrn. v. Chanykov erworben hat*, St. Petersburg, Buchdruckerei der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1865; B. Dorn, "Die wissenschaftlichen

Rosen (1849–1908) later edited and annotated the Babi manuscripts in the Dorn-Khanykov collection and also a number of manuscripts written by Baha'u'llah.[10] The first book on Babism was also written by a St. Petersburg Orientalist, Alexandr Kazem-Beg (1802–c. 1870), in 1865; his book was soon translated from Russian into French and appeared as a series of articles in *Journal Asiatique*.[11]

Josef Arthur de Gobineau

It was not, however, the professional Russian Orientalists, but a French amateur historian and philosopher who decisively influenced the future of Babi and Baha'i scholarship. Josef Arthur de Gobineau (1816–1882) was a French diplomat who had spent several years (1855–1858 and 1862–1863) as an envoy to Iran. Half of his book *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* from 1865 is devoted to a vivid description of the Babi movement, its doctrines, its principal leaders, and the major battles between the Babis and the government troops.[12] The introductory chapter in his book is entitled "Charactère moral et religieux des Asiatiques" and is rich in prejudiced, generalised comparisons between European and "Oriental" culture and thinking.[13] Passages with similar derogative comparisons between the different people of Iran litter his chapters on the Babi movement.[14]

Sammlungen des Grafen de Gobineau", *Bulletin de L'Académie Impériale des sciences de St.-Pétersbourg*, vol. 16, 1871, cols. 340–346.

[10] Baron Victor Rosen, *Les Manuscrits Arabes de l'Institut des Langues Orientales, Collections Scientifiques de l'Institut des Langues Orientales du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères*, vol. 1, St. Petersburg, Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1877, pp. 179–212; Baron Victor Rosen, *Les Manuscrits Persans de l'Institut des Langues Orientales, Collections Scientifiques de l'Institut des Langues Orientales du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères*, vol. 3, St. Petersburg, Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1886, pp. 1–51; V. Rosen, "Manuscrits Bâbys", in MM.D. Günzburg, V. Rosen, B. Dorn, K. Patkanof, and J. Tchoubinof (eds.), *Les Manuscrits Arabes (non compris dans le No. 1), Karchounis, Grecs, Coptes, Éthiopiens, Arméniens, Géorgiens et Bâbys de l'Institut des Langues Orientales, Collections Scientifiques de l'Institut des Langues Orientales du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères*, vol. 4, St. Petersburg, Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1891, pp. 141–255; Baron V. Rosen, *Pervyî sbornik poslanîî Babida Bekhaullakha* [A first collection of the tablets of the Babi Beha'u'llah], St. Petersburg, Imperial Academy of Science, 1908.

[11] Mirza [Alexandr] Kazem-Beg, "Bab et les Babis, ou Le soulèvement politique et religieux en Perse, de 1845 à 1853", *Journal Asiatique*, vol. 7, 1866, pp. 329–384, pp. 457–522; vol. 8, 1866, pp. 196–252, pp. 357–400, pp. 473–507.

[12] [Joseph A.] de Gobineau, *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, Paris, Librairie Académique, 1866, pp. 141–358.

[13] Gobineau, *Les Religions*, pp. 1–21.

[14] Gobineau, *Les Religions*, pp. 175ff.

Gobineau's outright racist ideas on European cultural superiority exerted much influence on the then current perceptions of Iran and other Asian countries at that time; but he was also a keen observer of Iran, and his book, for better or worse, was a remarkable success. A second edition was issued within a year, which was unusual for a book of that nature.[15] Gobineau's book also later inspired two of the most influential scholars in Babism and Baha'i, E. G. Browne and A.-L.-M. Nicolas.

E. G. Browne

Around 1884, the young British Orientalist Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926) read Gobineau's description of the Babis and became interested in them. This started his more than thirty-year-long involvement in Babi and Baha'i studies, with Browne quickly becoming a leading figure in the study of Babism. During several journeys to Iran, he acquired a large number of manuscripts and in Cambridge he established one of the most significant collections of Babi manuscripts.[16]

Browne visited Iran in 1887–88, and his travels are described in *A Year Among the Persians*.[17] In Iran, he met with Baha'is several times, and some of his primary written material and ethnographic observations were presented in 1889 in two well-written, very long articles, which are still classics with all their rich detail on Babi history, doctrines and literature.[18] In the same year, he also wrote a survey article on Babism, in an anthology on comparative religion.[19] In 1890, he travelled to the Middle East and visited Baha'u'llah in

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[15] Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844–1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, p. 22.

[16] Denis MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History. A survey*, Leiden, Brill, 1992, pp. 29–30.

[17] Edward Granville Browne, *A Year Among the Persians. Impressions as to the Life, Character, and Thought of the People of Persia Received during Twelve Months' Residence in that Country in the Years 1887–1888*, London, Century Publishing, 1984.

[18] Edward Granville Browne, "The Bábís of Persia. I. Sketch of their History, and Personal Experiences Amongst them", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, [vol. 21], 1889, pp. 485–526. Edward Granville Browne, "The Bábís of Persia. II. Their Literature and Doctrines", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, [vol. 21], 1889, pp. 881–1009.

[19] Edward G. Browne, "Bábíism", in W. M. Sheowring and Conrad W. Thies (eds.), *Religious Systems of the World. A Contribution to the Study of Comparative Religion*, London, Swan Sonnenschein, 1908, pp. 333–353.

his house outside Akko, as well as Subh-i-Azal in Famagusta.[20] Because Browne was the only European who ever met Baha'u'llah, his description of one of his interviews with Baha'u'llah is an often-quoted text among the Baha'is.[21]

In the following years, Browne edited and annotated a considerable number of Babi manuscripts, including a long account of the Babi battles in Zanjan.[22] Further, he edited three important, general narratives on the rise of Babism: *A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate the Episode of the Báb* (with full translation), *The Táríkh-i-Jadíd or New History of Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad the Báb* (with full translation), and the *Kitáb-i-Nuqtatu'l-Káf* (with a thorough synopsis comparing it with *The Táríkh-i-Jadíd*).[23] His last book on Babism and Baha'i is a diverse collection of source material published under the title *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion*.[24]

Browne had a keen understanding of Iran, and he is said to have radically transformed the study of Iranian literature and culture in nearly all aspects.[25] His work not only greatly advanced Babi and Baha'i scholarship, but interestingly, it also played a role in the spread of the religion itself. As Robert Stockman has shown, the first Baha'i missionary in the West, Dr. Ibrahim G. Kheiralla, made extensive use of Browne's works, which appeared just before Kheiralla

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[20] Edward G. Browne (ed., trans.), *A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate the Episode of the Báb. Edited in the Original Persian, and Translated into English, with an Introduction and Explanatory Notes*, vol. 2, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1891, pp. xxxix–xl.

[21] Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, pp. xxiv–xxvi, pp. xxxix–xl.

[22] E. G. Browne, "Catalogue and Description of 27 Bábí Manuscripts", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, [vol. 24], 1892, pp. 433–499, pp. 637–710; Edward G. Browne, "Some Remarks on the Bábí Texts edited by Baron Victor Rosen in Vols. I and VI of the Collections Scientifiques de l'Institut des Langues Orientales de Saint-Pétersbourg", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, [vol. 24], 1892, pp. 259–335; Edward G. Browne, "Personal Reminiscences of the Bábí Insurrection at Zanjān in 1850, written in Persian by Āqā 'Abdu'l-Aḥad-i-Zanjānī, and translated into English by Edward G. Browne", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, [vol. 29], 1897, pp. 761–827.

[23] Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative*; Edward G. Browne (ed., trans.), *The Táríkh-i-Jadíd or New History of Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad the Báb, by Mírzá Ḥuseyn of Hamadán, Translated from the Persian With an Introduction, Illustrations and Appendices*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1893; Edward G. Browne (ed., trans.), *Kitáb-i Nuqtatu'l-Káf, being the Earliest History of the Bábís compiled by Hájjí Mírzá Jání of Káshán between the years A.D. 1850 and 1852, edited from the unique Paris ms. suppl. persan 1071*, Leyden, Brill, 1910.

[24] Edward G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1918.

[25] R. A. N[icholson], "Edward G. Browne" [Obituary], *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 58, 1926, pp. 378–385.

left for the USA in 1892.[26] In fact, the bulk of Kheiralla's knowledge about Baha'i history and doctrine was obtained through his study of Browne. This is a fine example of how the adherents of a religion should not be regarded as merely objects of research, but that they can also act on and take specific advantage of this research. Conversely, the example shows that a scholar studying a contemporary religion may unwittingly contribute to the shaping of the same religion.

The Baha'i Ambivalence towards Browne

In the introduction to the *Táríkh-i-Jadíd* from 1893, Browne raised the issue of the reliability and authenticity of the *Táríkh-i-Jadíd* versus the *Kitáb-i-Nuqṭatu'l-Káf* as sources on the Babi movement. He thereby ignited a mixture of religious and academic polemics, which today still influences not only academic work, but also Baha'i attitudes toward their own history and the study of it. Several scholars have been engaged in this discussion, but by far the most detailed and convincing analysis is made by Denis MacEoin in his book *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, from 1992. In the following, I summarise the essential conclusions of his analysis.

The *Táríkh-i-Jadíd* is a late source (ca. 1880) written by Mirza Husayn Hamadani, a Babi and former governmental employee. Hamadani based his history on a number of sources, of which the main one was an earlier history attributed to Mirza Jani Kashani, a Babi merchant who was acquainted with the Bab and several of the other Babi leaders.[27]

In 1892, Browne acquired the Babi manuscript named *Kitáb-i-Nuqṭatu'l-Káf* (the "Book of the Point of the Letter *Kaf*") from a collection of Babi manuscripts originally owned by de Gobineau and sold to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in 1884.[28] The first portion of the manuscript is laid out as a doctrinal treatise, while the later sections contain what Browne soon assumed to be an early copy of Mirza Jani Kashani's history. Browne considered his discovery to be of immense importance, since at that time no other copies of this

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[26] Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America. Origins. 1892–1900*, vol. 1, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985, pp. 43–47.

[27] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, p. 151, p. 159, suggests that Mirza Jani Kashani's history was written in Baghdad about 1853–54 and he dates the first drafting of the *Táríkh-i-Jadíd* to 1879–1881.

[28] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, pp. 140–144.

history were known. However, Browne also discovered that the manuscript was at variance with the version of Mirza Jani Kashani's history that made up the core text in the *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*. Although the two texts for the most part are equivalent, several passages in the *Nuqtatu'l-Káf* that refer to Subh-i-Azal and his role in the Babi movement are not included in the *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*.[29] This led Browne to conclude that the discrepancies between the two histories were the result of a deliberate plot of the followers of Baha'u'llah to discredit Subh-i-Azal's claims to leadership.[30] The Baha'is hotly rejected Browne's conclusion and accused the Azalis of distorting the sources.[31] Thus, Abdu'l-Baha suggested that the Azalis had prepared a falsified version of Mirza Jani Kashani's history and had encouraged Browne to publish it.[32] This hypothesis was restated many years later by the Baha'i historian Hasan M. Balyuzi in his book *Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith*.[33] Balyuzi's viewpoints represent the closest one can come to a current, official Baha'i position on the controversy.

In MacEoin's opinion, neither Browne's nor Abdu'l-Baha's conclusions seem to hold. After a careful page-to-page comparison of the original manuscripts, MacEoin concludes that although some purging took place when the material from the *Nuqtatu'l-Káf* was re-used in the *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, the differences between the two texts for the most part cannot be explained as a result of tendentious editing by the author—or rather by the author *and* subsequent editors.[34] MacEoin sees no reason to follow the Baha'is in discrediting the *Nuqtatu'l-Káf* as a source, nor to suspect that it is an Azali forgery.[35] He reports that some twelve editions of the *Nuqtatu'l-Káf* are known to exist, which means that more than one version of Mirza Jani Kashani's history was in circulation when Hamadani wrote *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*.[36]

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[29] According to MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, p. 156, Browne's original comparison of the two histories, given in appendix II, pp. 360–368 of the *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, is somewhat misleading, however, because it does not allow a direct page-to-page comparison of the two Persian texts.

[30] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, p. xviii, p. xxix; Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Káf*, pp. xxxvi–xlvii.

[31] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, pp. 136–140, provides a detailed presentation of these disputes.

[32] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, pp. 139–140.

[33] H. M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1975, pp. 62–88.

[34] The *Táríkh-i-Jadíd* was heavily edited and exists in several recensions, cf. MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, pp. 158–161.

[35] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, p. 151.

[36] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, p. 147.

MacEoin's cautious suggestion is therefore that the differences may have been due to the fact that the author(s) of the *Táríkh-i-Jadíd* had access to a different version of Mirza Jani Kashani's history plus other sources.[37]

Juan Cole later added to the discussion of the authenticity of the Paris manuscript of the *Nuqṭatu'l-Káf* by stressing that its different recensions were produced in a culture with a manuscript tradition, where the copyist had the right to edit the manuscript, adding new relevant information, or dropping passages that seemed mistaken or no longer useful.[38] After reviewing the information given by MacEoin and others, Cole created a diagram that suggests the family relations between the different recessions of Mirza Jani Kashani's history, including the original (but undiscovered) version that probably was written in 1850 or 1851. Like MacEoin, Cole stresses the need for a critical edition of the various manuscripts.

In academic circles, MacEoin's careful analysis probably has had some impact, because today Baha'i scholars also draw upon the *Nuqṭatu'l-Káf* as a primary source to the Babi movement.[39] Nevertheless, the Baha'i leadership has consistently been sensitive about this issue, and even after all these years, Browne is still a sore point. On the one hand, Baha'is acknowledge the immense significance of Browne's pioneering work for Babi and Baha'i studies. On the other hand, Browne is criticised for so-called mistakes in some of his interpretations of texts and events.[40] The allegation permeating the Baha'i position is that Browne was led astray in his academic judgement by his sympathies for the constitutional movement in Iran around the turn of the century. This is also propelled in a major apologetic Baha'i work meant for academia.[41] Even in one of the introductory books

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[37] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, p. 158.

[38] Juan R. I. Cole, "*Nuqṭat al-Kaf* and the Babi Chronicle Traditions", *Research Notes in Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Studies*, vol. 2, no. 6, 1998, http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/notes/vol2/babihist.htm. Accessed 27 February 2002.

[39] An example is Sepehr Manuchehri, "Brief Analysis of the Features of Babi Resistance at Shaykh Tabarsi", *Research Notes in Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Studies, vol. 2, no. 10, 1998*, http://h-net2.msu.edu/~bahai/notes.

[40] Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne*, p. 6.

[41] Nicola Towfigh, "Ficicchias Europäische Gewährsleute. I. Der Orientalist Edward Granville Browne", in Udo Schaefer, Nicola Towfigh, and Ulrich Gollmer (eds.), *Desinformation als Methode. Die Bahāismus-Monographie des F. Ficicchia*, Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag, 1995, pp. 417–431 (English edition: *Making the Crooked Straight. A Contribution to Bahá'í Apologetics*, Oxford, George Ronald, 2000). The monograph referred to is Francesco Ficicchia, *Der Bahá'ismus. Weltreligion der Zukunft? Geschichte, Lehre und Organisation in kritischer Anfrage*, Stuttgart, Quell Verlag, 1981.

on Baha'i written by two prominent Baha'is, the authors have felt it necessary to devote several pages to a refutation of Browne's hypothesis concerning the significance of the *Nuqṭatu'l-Káf*, despite the fact that their book clearly addresses a much broader audience than academics studying Baha'i.[42]

Browne is buried at Elswick Cemetery in his hometown, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and in 1995 when I visited Newcastle to participate in a Baha'i conference, the organisers had arranged an excursion to Browne's grave.[43] I noticed that for the average, informed Baha'i, this ambivalent official Baha'i attitude towards Browne creates considerable uneasiness; for example, one of the local Baha'is found it most unsuitable to visit the grave. He also claimed that whenever he was near the graveyard he felt an atmosphere of coldness.[44]

A.-L.-M. Nicolas and Later Scholars

A.-L.-M. Nicolas (1864−1939), the son of a French diplomat, was born in Iran and lived there for thirty-five years. His studies of Babism were inspired by his father's critique of Gobineau's scholarship, and Nicolas soon absorbed himself in studies of the Bab's religious thinking.[45] He published a general history of Babism up to 1854, and he translated three of the Bab's major works: the *Seven Proofs*, the Arabic *Bayan*, and the Persian *Bayan*.[46] Within Babi studies, Nicolas' translations are considered to be of great value, also because of his subtle interpretations of difficult passages.[47]

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[42] William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith. The Emerging Global Religion*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1989, pp. 207−211.

[43] Field trip, *Irfán Colloquium*, Newcastle University, 8−10 December 1995.

[44] The sociologist of religion David Piff, who has made a thorough study of ca. 1,800 hearsays and other unofficial pieces of information circulating among Baha'is today, has noted that "coldness" is often associated with Baha'i enemies. David Michael Piff, *Bahá'í Lore*, Oxford, George Ronald, 2000, p. 61; David Piff and Margit Warburg, "Enemies of the Faith: Rumours and Anecdotes as Self-Definition and Social Control in the Baha'i Religion", in Eileen Barker and Margit Warburg (eds.), *New Religions and New Religiosity*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 1998, pp. 66−82.

[45] Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844−1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, p. 37.

[46] A.-L.-M. Nicolas (trans.), *Le Livre des Sept Preuves de la Mission du Bab*, Paris, Librairie Orientale et Américaine, 1902; A.-L.-M. Nicolas, *Seyyèd Ali Mohammed dit le Bâb. Histoire*, Paris, Dujarric, 1905; A.-L.-M. Nicolas (trans.), *Le Béyân Arabe. Le Livre Sacré du Bâbysme de Seyyèd Ali Mohammed dit le Bâb*, Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1905; A.-L.-M. Nicolas (trans.), *Seyyèd Ali Mohammed dit le Bâb. Le Béyan Persan*, Paris, Librarie Paul Geuthner, 1911.

[47] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, p. 4.

A few other scholars contributed to Babi and Baha'i studies, but not with the same profoundness as Browne and Nicolas. The influential French Orientalist Clément Huart (1854–1926) published *La religion de Bab*, largely based on Azali sources, and he contributed regularly with reviews or encyclopaedic entries on Babism and Baha'i.[48] In 1911, the German theologian Herman Roemer published as his doctoral dissertation a readable and objective history of Baha'i; the dissertation was published again in 1912.[49]

The Danish Professor of Iranian philology Arthur Christensen (1875–1945) was interested in the Babis and the Baha'is of Iran for many years. The Baha'is, however, were not his main area of research, and he mainly treated the subject in a number of minor articles and popular books—all in Danish and in reality with negligible influence on international scholarship.[50] Arthur Christensen also translated into Danish excerpts of the Bab's Persian *Bayan*, as well as excerpts of Baha'u'llah's *Kalimath-i-Maknunih* (Hidden Words), *Tirazat* (Jewels), and *Ishrakat* (Rays of Light), which were published in a chapter on Babism and Baha'i in a popular handbook of religion.[51] Arthur Christensen's concern with Babism and Baha'i was spurred not only by his scholarly interest in the history of religions, but also by his general political and cultural interest in contemporary Iran.[52] He shared the belief common among European travellers at that time that the

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[48] M. Clément Huart, *La religion de Bab. Réformateur persan du XIXe Siècle*, Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1889. A list of Huart's reviews appears in Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844–1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, p. 40.

[49] Hermann Roemer, *Die Bābī-Behā'ī. Eine Studie zur Religionsgeschichte des Islams*, Potsdam, Verlag der Deutschen Orient-Mission, 1911; Hermann Roemer, *Die Bābī-Behā'ī. Die jüngste mohammedanische Sekte*, Potsdam, Verlag der Deutschen Orient-Mission, 1912.

[50] A complete bibliography of Arthur Christensen's publications on Babism and Baha'i was published in Margit Warburg, "The Circle, the Brotherhood, and the Ecclesiastical Body: Bahá'í in Denmark, 1925–1987", in Armin W. Geertz and Jeppe Sinding Jensen (eds.), *Religion Tradition and Renewal*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 1991, pp. 201–221.

[51] Arthur Christensen, "Babi-Bahaismen" [Babi-Bahaism], in Arthur Christensen, Johs. Pedersen, and F. Pullich (eds.), *Religionernes Bøger*, Copenhagen, Gyldendal, 1928–30 [1929], pp. 275–299.

[52] One source concerning Arthur Christensen's career, including a bibliography covering most of his published works, is his obituary by K. Barr, "Arthur Christensen. 9. Januar 1875–31. Marts 1945", *Det Kgl. Danske Videnskabernes Selskab. Oversigt over Selskabets Virksomhed* [The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters. Proceedings of the Activities of the Academy] *Juni 1945—Maj 1946, avec un résumé en français*, Copenhagen, Munksgaard, 1946, pp. 65–102.

Baha'is were "the moral nucleus of the Persian people, the stem from which a rejuvenation and renewal of this extremely demoralised nation should be expected".[53] His general sympathies towards the Baha'is were also reflected in a conversation reported by the prominent American Baha'i Martha Root.[54]

By and large, academic research on Babism and Baha'i was at a standstill after the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Orientalists had apparently lost interest in the Iranian Baha'is, and the Baha'i religion had not yet gained a sufficient foothold in the West to attract any significant interest from scholars studying religious phenomena in modern societies. About half a century elapsed before academic research on Babism and Baha'i was effectively resumed in the mid-1970s.

There are a few exceptions to this. After a pause of twenty years, Nicolas published a few articles on works of the Bab.[55] In 1939, the Russian historian M. S. Ivanov analysed the Babi movement in his Ph.D. thesis from the University of Leningrad.[56] Ivanov's work, which is discussed in Chapter 4, is an early historical-sociological analysis of Babism and still of interest in Babi and Baha'i studies.

The works of authors with a declared anti-Baha'i stance make up a special category of literature, and their scholarly quality varies immensely. I will mention only three of the more significant examples of such works. Samuel Graham Wilson's polemic *Bahaism and Its Claims* from 1915 is based on Wilson's first-hand knowledge of the literature on Baha'i, supplemented with his impressions from personal

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[53] Arthur Christensen, "En moderne orientalsk Religion [A modern Oriental religion]", *Nordisk Tidsskrift för Vetenskap, Konst och Industri*, vol. 5, 1911, p. 357 (quotation translated by Margit Warburg). Christensen's view was not uncommon; in 1925, James Darmesteter wrote about the "religion of Babiism": "If Persia is to at all regenerate, it will be through this new faith." James Darmesteter, "Persia: A Historical and Literary Sketch", in G. K. Nariman (ed.), *Persia & Parsis*, Part I. The Marker Literary Series for Persia, No. 2, Bombay, Iran League, 1925, pp. 1–38 (quotation p. 35).

[54] M. L. Root, "Denmark's Oriental Scholar", *World Order*, vol. 1, 1935, pp. 271–274.

[55] A.-L.-M. Nicolas, "Les Béhais et le Bâb", *Journal Asiatique*, vol. 222, 1933, pp. 257–264; A.-L.-M. Nicolas, "Quelques documents relatifs au babisme", *Journal Asiatique*, vol. 224, 1934, pp. 107–142; A.-L.-M. Nicolas, "Le Báb astronome", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, vol. 114, 1936, pp. 99–101.

[56] M. S. Ivanov, *Babidskie Vosstaniya v Irane (1848–1852)* [Babi revolts in Iran (1848–1852)], Moscow, USSR Academy of Science, Institute of Oriental Studies, 1939.

contacts with Baha'is during his many years as a missionary in Iran.[57] Wilson's aim with his book was to warn against the "new and aggressive force" that had caused interest because of its "propaganda in the West", and "which is an enemy of the cross of Christ, and which has already deceived several thousands of our fellow Christians".[58] Writing in the same vein, William McElwee Miller, who had also been a missionary in Iran for many years, authored both a presentation of and a vigorous attack on Baha'i, largely based on Azali sources.[59] It is probably no coincidence that Wilson's book was reprinted in 1970, and Miller's book was published in 1974, at a time when the Baha'i religion was growing rapidly in the USA. The last example is a French doctoral dissertation from 1942 by Abd El-Rahman Tag, *Le Babisme et l'Islam*.[60] Tag applied a Muslim perspective, and the work concluded with a polemic attack on Babism, denoting it as paganism and a pseudo-religion—however, the author comforted himself with the thought that cultivated people who hold Islam dear to their hearts are on guard![61] The book is of historical interest only.

For the sake of completeness, a couple of the Western Baha'is who wrote popular books about their religion should be mentioned. Hippolyte Dreyfus authored a much used introductory book, *Essai sur le Bahá'isme* in 1908.[62] For the English-speaking audience, J. E. Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* from 1923 has served for

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[57] Samuel Graham Wilson, *Bahaism and Its Claims. A Study of the Religion Promulgated by Baha Ullah and Abdul Baha*, New York, AMS Press, 1970.

[58] Wilson, *Bahaism and Its Claims*; the first two quotations are from p. 11, the last one from p. 286. Many Christian missionaries in Iran saw the Baha'is as competitors to their own missions. Moojan Momen, "Early Relations Between Christian Missionaries and the Bábí and Bahá'í Communities", in Moojan Momen (ed.), *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 1, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1982, pp. 49–82.

[59] William McElwee Miller, *The Baha'i Faith: Its History and Teachings*, South Pasadena, William Carey Library, 1974.

[60] Abd El-Rahman Tag, *Le Babisme et l'Islam (Recherches sur les Origines du Babisme et ses Rapports avec l'Islam)*, Paris, Faculté de Lettres de l'Université de Paris, 1942.

[61] Tag, *Le Babisme et l'Islam*, pp. 489–490. Tag concludes concerning the doctrines of Babism: "ses doctrines, malgré les apparences qu'elle a cherché à lui donner, ne sont rien d'autre que du pur paganisme". On p. 496, he uses the word "pseudo-religion" twice and exclaims: "Le peuple s'instruit de plus en plus, et son esprit critique se méfie de plus en plus des propagateurs bâbis. Les gens cultivés à qui l'Islâm tient à cœur sont en éveil!"

[62] Hippolyte Dreyfus, *Essai sur le Bahá'isme. Son histoire, sa portée sociale*, 3rd ed., Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1962.

many years as the standard presentation of the Baha'i religion.[63] It is, however, outside the scope of this review to discuss this kind of literature further.

BABI AND BAHA'I STUDIES RESUMED

Since the late 1950s, scholars in Iranian philology and history have occasionally examined specific aspects of Babism or interpreted it in a broader context. Hamid Algar, Mangol Bayat, Kurt Greussing, and Nikki Keddie, in particular, have contributed to the understanding of Babism, and their work is discussed in the section "Babism Explained" in Chapter 4. In 1959, the Italian Professor of Oriental Studies, Alessandro Bausani, wrote a general survey of the religions of Iran; it contains an informative chapter on Babism and Baha'i.[64] Bausani's book is a classic in the study of Iranian religious history. His book was posthumously edited and translated into English in 2000.[65] Finally, the German Orientalist Annemarie Schimmel should also be mentioned for her interest in the poetry of the female Babi leader Qurrat'ul Ayn.[66]

The above contributions, however, were too few and unrelated to form a scholarly tradition in the study of Babism and Baha'i, like the one that existed among Oriental scholars in the late nineteenth century. An academic tradition of Babi and Baha'i studies resumed around 1975, when a group of young, mostly British students, who were all Baha'is, joined the ranks of professional Baha'i researchers.

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[63] J. E. Esslemont, *An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980. The book has been revised and reprinted a number of times, the last edition appeared as late as 1990. Newer, standard introductory books having the same authoritative position among the Baha'is are: John Ferraby, *All Things Made New. A Comprehensive Outline of the Bahá'í Faith*, London, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1975; William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith. The Emerging Global Religion*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1989.

[64] Alessandro Bausani, *Persia Religiosa da Zaratustra a Bahâ'ullâh* [The religious Persia from Zoroaster to Baha'u'llah], Milan, Il Saggiatore, 1959, pp. 458–492.

[65] Alessandro Bausani, *Religion in Iran: From Zoroaster to Baha'ullah*, New York, Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2000.

[66] Annemarie Schimmel, "Qurrat Al-'Ayn Ṭāhirah", in Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 12, New York, Macmillan, 1987; Annemarie Schimmel, "Iqbál and the Bábí-Bahá'í Faith", in Heshmat Moayyad (ed.), *The Bahá'í Faith and Islam. Proceedings of a Symposium. McGill University. March 23–25, 1984*, Ottawa, Bahá'í Studies Publications, 1990, pp. 111–119.

One of them, Peter Smith from University of Lancaster, arranged
a series of seminars, which were seminal in Babi and Baha'i studies.[67]
Among the researchers who joined these seminars were Juan R. Cole
(who resigned from Baha'i in 1996), Stephen Lambden, Denis MacEoin
(who resigned his membership to Baha'i around 1980) and Moojan
Momen.

The Islamicist Denis MacEoin concentrated on Babism and the
period leading up to it, and he became the most productive and know-
ledgeable scholar of Babism in modern times.[68] MacEoin's study on
charismatic authority is a remarkable historical-sociological study of
Babism and Baha'i in its Shi'i context.[69] Starting with the Bab, he
makes a sweeping analysis of charismatic authority in Shi'i Islam
from the death of the eleventh Imam to the authority claimed by
Khomeini after the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. In two sub-
sequent, extensive studies he treats the same theme, but in far more
detail and concentrates on the early Babi period (1844–1850), and
the period after the Bab's death in 1850 until Baha'u'llah publicly
announced his claim as a manifestation of God in 1866.[70] In par-
ticular, the second of these two works covers a period that has been
rather neglected in Babi and Baha'i studies.

In 1992, MacEoin published a comprehensive survey of the sources
concerning Babism, with detailed and critical comments to their pro-
venance and authenticity.[71] This book, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine
and History*, stands out as a basic reference for any serious scholarship
on Babism. In a later book, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, MacEoin
examines specific Baha'i practices, such as the origin and use of cal-
ligraphic symbols, and shows how they are rooted in the Babi past.[72]

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[67] [Peter Smith], *Bahá'í Studies Seminars at the University of Lancaster 1977–1980*, file
index Pam 140–37, n.d. [1980]. (BWC-L). This is a list of the 18 major papers
presented altogether at the four two-day seminars held at the Department of
Sociology, University of Lancaster.

[68] MacEoin's major articles on Babism are listed in the bibliography.

[69] D. M. MacEoin, "Changes in charismatic authority in Qajar Shi'ism", in
Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (eds.), *Qajar Iran. Political, social and cul-
tural change 1800–1925*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1983, pp. 148–196.

[70] Denis MacEoin, "Hierarchy, Authority, and Eschatology in Early Bábí Thought",
in Peter Smith (ed.), *In Iran. Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 3, Los Angeles,
Kalimat Press, 1986, pp. 95–155; D. MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims in
Babism (1850–1866)", *Studia Iranica*, vol. 18, 1989, pp. 93–129.

[71] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*.

[72] Denis MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, London, British Academic Press,
1994.

Besides his many original articles on Babism, MacEoin also contributed many entries on Babism and related subjects to *Encyclopædia Iranica* and *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*.[73] MacEoin's work, furthermore, extends from its centre of gravity in Babi studies and Iranology to general, but not always kind, commentaries on Baha'i and Baha'i scholarship.[74] Under his *nom de plume* Daniel Easterman, MacEoin has also occasionally mentioned the Baha'is in intelligent essays and entertaining action novels.[75]

The main contributions of Juan Cole, Stephen Lambden and Moojan Momen are also concerned with Babism or Baha'i in the Middle East.[76] Together with Peter Smith, whose major works are discussed in a later section, Cole and Momen have served as editors of several books in the series *Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, from the small Los Angeles based Baha'i publishing house Kalimat Press. This series, in which more than seventeen volumes have so far been published, contains many valuable studies concerning a wide range of subjects and a wealth of both empirical material and interesting theoretical contributions.

General Monographs, Surveys and Source Compilations

The historian Abbas Amanat obtained his D.Phil. degree from the University of Oxford in 1981, with a comprehensive examination of early Babism.[77] Based on his thesis, he published the most comprehensive book to date on early Babism, *Resurrection and Renewal. The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850*.[78] In this book, Amanat

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[73] Some, but not all, are found in the bibliography.

[74] Denis MacEoin, "Emerging from Obscurity? Recent developments in Bahaism", *Religion Today*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1986, unpag.; Denis MacEoin, "The Crisis in Bābī and Bahā'ī Studies: Part of a Wider Crisis in Academic Freedom?", *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, vol. 17, 1990, pp. 55–61.

[75] Daniel Easterman, "The New Religions: A Growing Force in Politics?", in Daniel Easterman, *New Jerusalems. Reflections on Islam, Fundamentalism and the Rushdie Affair*, London, Grafton, 1992, pp. 178–191; Daniel Easterman, *The Seventh Sanctuary*, New York, Doubleday, 1987, pp. 61–62.

[76] See the bibliography for these three authors' major contributions to Baha'i studies.

[77] Abbas Amanat, *The Early Years of the Babi Movement. Background and Development* (D.Phil. diss.), Oxford, University of Oxford, 1981.

[78] Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal. The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989.

traces the roots of Babism and the circumstances leading to its rise. He also investigates the Babi successes and failures in light of the recruitment strategy of the movement and the opposition against it. This book will undoubtedly remain the major standard reference in studies of Babism.

Juan Cole's book, *Modernity and the Millennium. The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*, analyses Baha'u'llah's writings in the broader context of the intellectual and political history of reform thinking in Iran and the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century.[79] Cole selects a number of themes that he considers central to modernity and to the Middle Eastern religious response to modernity, and he pursues these in a scriptural analysis of the developments in Baha'u'llah's and Abdu'l-Baha's thoughts. Cole's book provides a much-needed critical reappraisal of Baha'u'llah and his social teachings.

No general history of Baha'i based on primary sources has yet been written. Peter Smith's *The Babi and Baha'i Religions. From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion*, although largely based on secondary material, contains an informative and detailed survey of Babi and Baha'i history up to modern times.[80] The book includes a useful list of relevant books and articles in academic journals and a list of sacred writings, biographies and other sources written in or translated into European languages, primarily English. Smith's approach is sociological, but the themes are historical, and his interest is not only to trace the history of the Babi and Baha'i religions but also to analyse them within a sociological framework. This is most clear from his analysis of Babism as a millenarian movement, but also from his use of the sociological concept of "motif" in his analysis of the transformation of Babism to Baha'i, a theme taken up from Peter Berger.[81] Smith suggests that the organisational development of Babism and Baha'i is an example of the routinisation of charisma.

The early theses by Jalil Mahmoudi and Vernon Elvin Johnson are also historical-sociological in their scope, but they have now been surpassed by Smith's book.[82]

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[79] Juan Cole, *Modernity and the Millenium. The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998.

[80] Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions. From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press and George Ronald, 1987.

[81] Peter Smith, "Motif research: Peter Berger and the Bahā'ī faith", *Religion*, vol. 8, 1978, pp. 210–234.

[82] Jalil Mahmoudi, *A Sociological Analysis of the Baha'i Movement* (Ph.D. diss.), Salt

Surveys and Encyclopaedic Works

Peter Smith, Moojan Momen and I have published shorter monographs on the Baha'i religion, its history, doctrines and followers.[83] Denis MacEoin's survey article may also be consulted by the researcher wishing to get an overview of Baha'i.[84] Christian Cannuyer's handbook, *Les Bahā'īs*, in French, is useful; it is a broad, informative, but also slightly uncritical introduction to the religion.[85]

Peter Smith has written what undoubtedly stands as the leading encyclopaedic work on Baha'i.[86] The entries contain a wealth of information with reference to the sources, and some of the longer entries are articles in themselves.[87] This work succeeds, but does not make superfluous, the shorter, useful dictionary edited by Wendi Momen.[88] Another, longer dictionary, *Historical Dictionary of the Baha'i Faith*, however, does not match the quality of the two first books, mainly due to a careless and biased selection of sources, and it should be used with caution.[89] For a quick, reliable reference to particular historical events, *A Basic Baha'i Chronology* is a very useful handbook of about five hundred pages. Several thousand singular events in the Babi and Baha'i history are listed in this handbook with reference to the sources.[90]

Lake City, Department of Sociology, University of Utah, 1966; Vernon Elvin Johnson, *An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Baha'i World Faith* (Ph.D. diss.), Waco, Department of Religion, Baylor University, 1974.

[83] Peter Smith, *The Bahá'í Religion. A Short Introduction to its History and Teachings*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1988; Peter Smith, *A Short History of the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford, Oneworld, 1996; Moojan Momen, *A Short Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford, Oneworld, 1997; Margit Warburg, *I baha'i* [The Baha'is], Turin, Elledici, 2001 (a slightly shorter version in English is Margit Warburg, *Baha'i*, Salt Lake City, Signature Books, 2003).

[84] Denis MacEoin, "Baha'ism", in John R. Hinnels (ed.), *A Handbook of Living Religions*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985, pp. 475–498.

[85] Christian Cannuyer, *Les Bahā'īs. Peuple de la Triple Unité*, n.p. [Belgium], éditions Brepols, 1987.

[86] Peter Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2000.

[87] See for example the entry "expansion", which is the most detailed and comprehensive treatment of the geographical spread of the Baha'i religion. This entry takes up 18 of the 357 pages devoted to the entries from a to z.

[88] Wendi Momen (ed.), *A Basic Bahá'í Dictionary*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1991.

[89] Hugh C. Adamson and Philip Hainsworth, *Historical Dictionary of the Baha'i Faith*, Lanham, The Scarecrow Press, 1998; Margit Warburg, Review of Hugh C. Adamson and Philip Hainsworth, *Historical Dictionary of the Bahá'í Faith*, in *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 14, 1999, pp. 323–324.

[90] Glenn Cameron and Wendi Momen, *A Basic Bahá'í Chronology*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1996.

John Walbridge's *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time* is a thorough presentation of different aspects of the sacred in Baha'i.[91] The interpretation of Baha'i law and its practice is seen both historically and sociologically, making the book a leading comprehensive academic analysis of many Baha'i beliefs and practices.

Many popular books on the Baha'i religion also exist, of course. The authors of these books are usually active, high-ranking Baha'is.[92] As will be discussed at the end of this chapter, these books have a tendency to comply with the official Baha'i views on the history of the religion.

Published Sources of Babi and Baha'i History

A number of valuable source compilations and encyclopaedic reference works are available in English. Moojan Momen has published a comprehensive collection of Western sources covering the period 1844 to 1944.[93] This meticulous work is of considerable value to Babi and Baha'i history, although it must be borne in mind that the Western observers in general were in a marginal position to follow many of the events that shaped the history of the Babi and Baha'i religions.

Since 1925, the Baha'is have issued a comprehensive series of yearbooks, *The Bahá'í World*.[94] These volumes contain a great deal of material that is of value to the study of Baha'i history. Other useful sources are the different compilations of official messages from the Baha'i leadership.[95] Finally, on behalf of the Universal House of

[91] John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1996.

[92] Among the many introductory books to the Baha'i religion written by Baha'is, some of the more in depth include: Hatcher and Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith*; Peter Smith, *The Bahá'í Religion. A Short Introduction to its History and Teachings*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1988; Joseph Sheppherd, *The Elements of the Bahá'í Faith*, Shaftesbury, Element, 1992. Reference should also be made to two classical books mentioned earlier: Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, and Ferraby, *All Things Made New*.

[93] Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844–1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*.

[94] Ruhíyyih Rabbani, *The Priceless Pearl*, London, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1969, p. 209.

[95] Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America. Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Bahá'ís of North America 1932–1946*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1947; Universal House of Justice, *Wellspring of Guidance. Messages 1963–1968*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976; [Universal House of Justice], *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986. The Third Epoch of the Formative Age*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996; [Universal House of Justice], *A Wider Horizon. Selected Messages of the Universal House of Justice 1983–1992*, Riviera Beach, Palabra Publications, 1992.

Justice, Shoghi Effendi's widow Ruhiyyih Rabbani has edited a chronological collection of important correspondence covering the period from Shoghi Effendi's death in 1957 to the election of the first Universal House of Justice in 1963.[96]

The Baha'i historian Hasan M. Balyuzi has published biographies of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha.[97] They are hagiographic in their prose, but in particular the book on Baha'u'llah, which is based on an extensive study of primary sources in Persian and Arabic, contains a wealth of information that is not readily available elsewhere.

Memories from the early period in Akko and Haifa, such as the colourful recollections of Ustad Muhammad-Ali-i Salmani, who was Baha'u'llah's barber, or Browne's translation of a controversial history by Mirza Muhammad Jawad Qazwini, an opponent of Abdu'l-Baha, are under-exploited sources, which after a critical assessment could probably benefit historical research on the Baha'i colony in Edirne and Akko.[98]

Histories of Western Baha'i Communities

Historical studies of Western Baha'i communities based on detailed study of primary sources are first and foremost represented by Robert Stockman's *The Bahá'í Faith in America*, of which the first volume covers the period 1892–1900, and the second 1900–1912 (a third volume is planned to cover 1912–1921).[99] With these books, the introduction and early expansion of the Baha'i religion in the USA is thoroughly researched. An earlier, 140-page long article by Peter Smith covers the same period, but in less detail.[100] Richard Hollinger provides a

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[96] *The Ministry of the Custodians 1957–1963. An Account of the Stewardship of the Hands of the Cause*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1992.

[97] H. M. Balyuzi, *The Báb. The Herald of the Day of Days*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1973; H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh. The King of Glory*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1980; H. M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1971.

[98] Ustád Muhammad-'Alíy-i Salmání, *My Memories of Bahá'u'lláh*, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1982; Edward G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1918, pp. 1–112.

[99] Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America. Origins. 1892–1900*, vol. 1, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985; Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America. Early Expansion, 1900–1912*, vol. 2, Oxford, George Ronald, 1995.

[100] Peter Smith, "The American Bahá'í Community, 1894–1917: A Preliminary Survey", in Moojan Momen (ed.), *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 1, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1982, pp. 85–223.

well-researched overview of the later demographic and organisational development of Baha'i, primarily in the USA, but with brief references to a few other Western Baha'i communities.[101] A considerable number of histories on local North American Baha'i communities have appeared as individual theses or have been published in the Kalimat Press series *Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*; (volumes 1 to 5 were called *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*).[102]

Will C. van den Hoonaard has written a detailed historical record of the Baha'i community in Canada from 1898 to 1948.[103] His well-researched book is rich in valuable sociological and historical information concerning this religious community, which is the second largest Baha'i community in the Western world. Several of his examples and considerations are discussed and compared with my own study of the Danish Baha'i community in Chapters 6 and 7.

Jelle de Vries traces the history of Baha'i in the Netherlands from the first Dutch observations of the Babis and Baha'is of Iran, over the initial and not very successful attempts of establishing a Dutch Baha'i community in the period between the two world wars, to the renewal and expansion of the Baha'i presence in the Netherlands after World War II.[104] In particular, the study of the mission work and growth

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[101] Richard Hollinger, "Introduction: Bahá'í Communities in the West, 1897–1992", in Richard Hollinger (ed.), *Community Histories. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 6, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1992, pp. vii–xlix.

[102] William P. Collins, "Kenosha, 1893–1912: History of an Early Bahá'í Community in the United States", in Moojan Momen (ed.), *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 1, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1982, pp. 225–253; Mark Lloyd Perry, *The Chicago Baha'i Community, 1921–1939* (Ph.D. diss.), Chicago, University of Chicago, 1986; Roger Dahl, "A History of the Kenosha Bahá'í Community, 1897–1980", in Richard Hollinger (ed.), *Community Histories. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 6, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1992, pp. 1–64; Duane L. Herrmann, "The Bahá'í Faith in Kansas, 1897–1947", in Richard Hollinger (ed.), *Community Histories. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 6, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1992, pp. 67–108; Deb Clark, "The Bahá'ís of Baltimore, 1898–1947", in Richard Hollinger (ed.), *Community Histories. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 6, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1992, pp. 111–150; Will C. van den Hoonaard, "The Development and Decline of an Early Bahá'í Community: Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada, 1910–1925", in Richard Hollinger (ed.), *Community Histories. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 6, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1992, pp. 217–239; Peggy Caton, "A History of the Sacramento Bahá'í Community, 1912–1991", in Richard Hollinger (ed.), *Community Histories. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 6, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1992, pp. 241–280.

[103] Will C. van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada, 1898–1948*, Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996.

[104] Jelle de Vries, *The Babi Question You Mentioned . . . The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of the Netherlands, 1844–1962*, Herent, Peeters, 2002.

of the community in 1946–1962 provides several illuminating parallels to developments in Denmark.

Phillip Smith has examined the development of the British Baha'i Community up to 1950, with particular emphasis on its organisation.[105] I have also focused on the organisational developments in the treatment of the history of the Danish Baha'i Community.[106] Graham Hassall has written about the history of Baha'i in Australia, and Margaret Ross has discussed the Baha'i community of New Zealand in her M.A. thesis.[107]

Baha'i Theology

Adib Taherzadeh's four volumes, called *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, provide a comprehensive presentation of Baha'u'llah's writings and their theological meaning and implications.[108] It should be noted that normally the "writings" were Baha'u'llah's words recorded in a kind of shorthand by a scribe during moments of revelation. The records were afterwards transcribed and then approved by Baha'u'llah, but sometimes Baha'u'llah also wrote part of the text. A number of trusted Baha'is, including Abdu'l-Baha, were involved in the transcription work.[109] Normally, the translations of the writings by the

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[105] Phillip R. Smith, "The Development and Influence of the Bahá'í Administrative Order in Great Britain, 1914–1950", in Richard Hollinger (ed.), *Community Histories. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 6, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1992, pp. 153–215.

[106] Margit Warburg, "The Circle, the Brotherhood, and the Ecclesiastical Body: Bahá'í in Denmark, 1925–1987", in Armin W. Geertz and Jeppe Sinding Jensen (eds.), *Religion Tradition and Renewal*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 1991, pp. 201–221; Margit Warburg, "From Circle to Community: The Baha'i Religion in Denmark, 1925–2002", in Peter Smith (ed.), *Bahá'ís in the West. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 14, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2004, pp. 229–263.

[107] Graham Hassall, *The History of the Baha'i Faith in Australia, 1920–1963* (Honours diss.), Sydney, Department of History, University of Sydney, 1984; Hassall, Graham, "Outpost of a World Religion: The Bahá'í Faith in Australia, 1920–1947", in Peter Smith (ed.), *Bahá'ís in the West. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 14, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2004, pp. 201–226; Margaret J. Ross, *Some Aspects of the Bahá'í Faith in New Zealand* (M.A. diss.), Auckland, Department of History, University of Auckland, 1979.

[108] Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Baghdád 1853–63*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1975; Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Adrianople 1863–68*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1977; Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. 'Akká, The Early Years 1868–77*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1983; Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Mazra'ih & Bahjí 1877–92*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1988.

[109] Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Baghdád 1853–63*, pp. 21–29.

Bab, Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha, which are issued by the Universal
House of Justice and meant for devotional purposes, lack biblio-
graphical information. Taherzadeh's work is useful because it serves
as a systematic guide to Baha'u'llah's works, their dating and the
circumstances of their creation.

Other scholars who have examined particular aspects of Baha'u'llah's
writings include Juan Cole, who traces literary expressions of the
idea of religious pluralism in Baha'u'llah's works, and Christopher
Buck, who makes a careful exegesis of the *Kitáb-i Íqán* (Book of
Certitude), one of Baha'u'llah's major works.[110] Christopher Buck fur-
ther progressed the academic study of Baha'u'llah's writings with his
in-depth, comparative analysis of symbols in writings of early Syriac
Christianity and in the writings of Baha'u'llah, notably in the *Bisharat*
(the Glad-Tidings), a programmatic writing on central Baha'i prin-
ciples from the late 1870s or early 1880s.[111] Finally, in his book *Logos
and Civilization*, Nader Saiedi discusses, with an insider's view, sev-
eral of Baha'u'llah's most salient works, including the *Kitáb-i Aqdas*.[112]
As part of this discussion, he places Baha'u'llah's thinking in rela-
tion to Western Enlightenment and democratic ideals, on the one
hand, and Sufi thinking on the other hand.

Sen McGlinn is concerned with the mainly internal Baha'i discussions
on the relation between religion and state in a future Baha'i world
order.[113] According to McGlinn, secondary Baha'i literature usually
gives the impression that the Baha'i world order implies some kind
of Baha'i theocracy; however, McGlinn maintains that this impression
has no theological foundation.[114] This discussion is examined in
Chapter 5.

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[110] Juan R. I. Cole, " 'I am all the Prophets': The poetics of pluralism in Baha'i
texts", *Poetics Today*, vol. 14, 1993, pp. 447–476; Christopher Buck, *Symbol and Secret:
Qur'an Commentary in Bahá'u'lláh's Kitáb-i Íqán. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*,
vol. 7, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1995.

[111] Christopher Buck, *Paradise and Paradigm. Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and
the Bahā'ī Faith*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999.

[112] Nader Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization. Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of
Bahá'u'lláh*, Bethesda, University Press of Maryland, 2000.

[113] Sen McGlinn, "A Theology of the State from the Bahā'ī Teachings", *Journal
of Church and State*, vol. 41, 1999, pp. 697–724.

[114] Sen McGlinn, "Theocratic Assumptions in Bahá'í Literature", in Seena Fazel
and John Danesh (eds.), *Reason & Revelation: New Directions in Bahá'í Thought. Studies
in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 13, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2002, pp. 39–80.

In general, the tradition for a Baha'i theology is weak, and it was only in the late 1990s that an initiative was taken by the Kalimat publishing house to foster more systematic theological studies among Baha'i scholars.[115] This first anthology of Baha'i theological and philosophical essays on a more academic level includes, for example, discussions of the Baha'i theology of poverty and social justice, and the Baha'i doctrinal rejection of secular science.[116] The *Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* series has upheld this initiative and published two more volumes dedicated to Baha'i thinking.[117] Both are anthologies with weighty contributions from a range of leading Baha'i scholars.

BAHA'IS IN THE EAST

Since the time of the Babi battles, from 1848 to 1853, the Baha'is of Iran have had a strained relationship with the Muslim majority and the Iranian government. In periods, persecutions were unleashed upon the Baha'is; at other times the situation was more relaxed, the Baha'is were tolerated and quite a few even gained high posts in the state administration. MacEoin outlines this historical development in *A People Apart: The Baha'i Community of Iran in the Twentieth Century*, and he argues that a source of perpetual tension is that the Baha'is according to their own religious premises pursue the visions of messianic Shi'i Islam in the hope of creating a new world unified in one religion.[118]

A well-written, fact-oriented report on the Iranian Baha'i community and its situation after the Iranian revolution of 1979 was

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[115] J. A. McLean (ed.), *Revisioning the Sacred: New Perspectives on a Bahá'í Theology. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 8, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1997.

[116] Juan R. I. Cole, "Bahá'u'lláh and Liberation Theology", in J. A. McLean (ed.), *Revisioning the Sacred: New Perspectives on a Bahá'í Theology. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 8, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1997, pp. 79–98; Anjam Khursheed, "The Spiritual Foundations of Science", in J. A. McLean (ed.), *Revisioning the Sacred: New Perspectives on a Bahá'í Theology. Studies in the Babi and Baha'i Religions*, vol. 8, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1997, pp. 99–126.

[117] Seena Fazel and John Danesh (eds.), *Reason & Revelation: New Directions in Bahá'í Thought. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 13, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2002; John Danesh and Seena Fazel (eds.), *Search for Values. Ethics in Bahá'í Thought. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 15, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2004.

[118] Denis MacEoin, *A People Apart: The Baha'i Community of Iran in the Twentieth Century*, Occasional Paper 4, London, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1989.

issued by the London-based Minority Rights Group.[119] The most
comprehensive, updated survey of the Baha'is' situation in relation
to international conventions is Nazila Ghanea's copious documenta-
tion from 2002.[120] MacEoin carefully analyses the allegations directed
towards the Baha'is, but finds them unfounded and explains them
as resistance of the *ulama* towards the concepts of modernity repre-
sented by the Baha'is (for example gender equality).[121] Moreover,
Karen Pliskin analyses the rumours that prevailed during the revo-
lution, and she provides several good examples involving Baha'is.[122]

In the early 1970s, before the Iranian revolution, anthropologist
Michael Fischer carried out fieldwork in the Iranian city Yazd, which
is a traditional stronghold for Baha'is (and Zoroastrians). Fischer brings
the reader back and forth in time and space to place the microcosm
of Yazd in the perspective of both the development of Babism and
Baha'i and topical religious conflicts among factions of the revolution.[123]

In 1966 and 1971, the anthropologist Erik Cohen carried out field-
work in Akko among a group of Baha'is who never accepted the
leadership of Abdu'l-Baha, but followed his half-brother Muhammad-
Ali. The community was distinctly expatriate Iranian. Today, the
group has no active religious community life—in fact, there is little
social interaction between the six extended families that make up
the community. This, in Cohen's words, "residual religious commu-
nity" is probably doomed to disappear through intermarriage with
local Muslims, Jews and Christians.[124]

In 1989, Moojan Momen made a brief trip to Famagusta on Cyprus,
where he studied the activities and fate of the Azali group deported

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[119] Roger Cooper, *The Baha'is of Iran*, London, Minority Rights Group Report
No. 51, 1982.
[120] Nazila Ghanea, *Human Rights, the UN and the Bahá'ís in Iran*, Oxford, George
Ronald 2002.
[121] Denis MacEoin, "The Bahā'īs of Iran: The Roots of Controversy", *British
Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, vol. 14, 1988, pp. 75–83.
[122] Karen L. Pliskin, "Camouflage, Conspiracy, and Collaborators: Rumors of
the Revolution", *Iranian Studies*, vol. 13, 1980, pp. 55–81.
[123] Michael M. J. Fischer, "Social Change and the Mirrors of Traditions: Bahá'ís
of Yazd", in Heshmat Moayyad (ed.), *The Bahá'i Faith and Islam. Proceedings of a
Symposium, McGill University, March 23–25, 1984*, Ottawa, The Association for Baha'i
Studies, 1990, pp. 25–53. The paper is reprinted as part of Michael M. J. Fischer
and Mehdi Abedi, *Debating Muslims. Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*,
Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, pp. 222–250.
[124] Erik Cohen, "The Bahá'í Community of Acre", *Folklore Research Center Studies*,
vol. 3, 1972, pp. 119–141.

to the city in 1868.[125] The group consisted mainly of members of Subh-i-Azal's rather extensive family (he had a total of 17 wives, although not all at the same time). The Azalis made no attempt of proselytising among the Muslim Cypriotes, and Subh-i-Azal was merely regarded by the locals as a Muslim holy man. Momen finds Cohen's term "residual religious community" most fitting for this inwardly-focused group bound to dissolve within a generation.

Two excellent anthropological studies of Indian Baha'is were carried out in the 1970s, spurred by a considerable growth in conversions to Baha'i in the Malwa region of Central India. Drawing on their individual fieldwork in Malwa, the anthropologists William Garlington and Steve Garrigues analysed the converts' backgrounds and their patterns of recruitment and conversion.[126]

Baha'is in the West

In 1954, sociologist of religion Peter L. Berger obtained his Ph.D. degree from the New School for Social Research in New York, with a thesis titled *From Sect to Church. A Sociological Interpretation of the Baha'i Movement.*[127] His thesis represents the first sociological analysis of a local Baha'i community (in this case the New York Baha'i community), but it has remained unpublished, and except for one paper based on his thesis, Berger never returned to Baha'i research.[128] This is probably the reason why his Baha'i research has had relatively little impact; apart from Berger himself, in a theoretical article on church-sect dichotomy, only Erik Cohen and Peter Smith seem to have made use of his work.[129]

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[125] Moojan Momen, "The Cyprus exiles", *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin*, vol. 5–6, 1991, pp. 84–113.

[126] W. Garlington, "The Baha'i Faith in Malwa", in G. A. Oddie (ed.), *Religion in South Asia. Religious Conversion and Revival Movements in South Asia in Medieval and Modern Times*, London, Curzon Press, 1977, pp. 101–117; Steve L. Garrigues, *The Baha'is of Malwa: Identity and Change among the Urban Baha'is of Malwa* (Ph.D. diss.), Lucknow, Department of Anthropology, Lucknow University, 1976.

[127] Peter Ludwig Berger, *From Sect to Church. A Sociological Interpretation of the Baha'i Movement* (Ph.D. diss.), New York, Faculty of Political and Social Science, New School for Social Research, 1954.

[128] Peter L. Berger, "Motif Messianique et Processus Social dans le Bahaïsme", *Archives de socioloque des religions*, vol. 2, 1957, pp. 93–107.

[129] Peter L. Berger, "Sectarianism and Religious Sociation", *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 64, 1958, pp. 41–44; Cohen, "The Bahá'í Community of Acre"; Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*.

In the quantitative sociological tradition, James Keene conducted an early study of American Baha'is, with a comparative analysis of attitude patterns among 681 informants, of whom 112 were Baha'is.[130] After subjecting the data to factor analysis, he concluded that the Baha'is are more world-minded and peace-oriented than are the other informants (Jews, Protestants, Catholics and people without formal religious affiliation). His work has been criticised by Agehananda Bharati for being planned so that its hypotheses would be self-fulfilling.[131] This criticism is well-founded, because it is apparent that several of Keene's questions are distinctly in accordance with Baha'i doctrines; therefore, his application of a factor analysis of the answers would have a high *a priori* probability of statistically separating Baha'is from the other groups with respect to attitudes of being world-minded and peace-oriented.

In Montana, a splinter group of Baha'is, headed by "Doc" Leland Jensen, prophesised that a nuclear holocaust would be launched 29 April 1980 resulting in the annihilation of one-third of mankind. Both in the periods before and after that critical date, sociologists studied Jensen's group to test Leon Festinger's famous theory of cognitive dissonance.[132] In contrast to Festinger, Robert Balch *et al.* concluded in their often-cited paper that the group was unable to explain away the failed prophecy and that this resulted in a cognitive crisis.[133] Four participant-observer studies between 1980 and 1996 showed that while the followers had become more and more disillusioned immediately after the 1980 failure, a new culture of dissonance reduction later emerged, and the predictions of disaster became almost irrelevant.[134]

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[130] James J. Keene, "Religious Behavior and Neuroticism, Spontaneity, and Worldmindedness", *Sociometry*, vol. 30, 1967, pp. 137–157; James J. Keene, "Baha'i World Faith: Redefinition of Religion", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 6, 1967, pp. 221–235.

[131] Agehananda Bharati, "Baha'i Statistics and Self-Fulfilling Design. Comment on James J. Keene's 'Redefinition of Religion'", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 7, 1968, p. 281.

[132] Karl W. Schmiedeskamp, *How I learned to stop worrying and love the Bomb: An Ethnography of Speaking of a Millenarian Movement* (M.A. diss.), Montana, Department of Anthropology, University of Montana, 1982; Robert W. Balch, Gwen Farnsworth, and Sue Wilkins, "When the Bombs Drop: Reactions to Disconfirmed Prophecy in a Millennial Sect", *Sociological Perspectives*, vol. 26, 1983, pp. 137–158. Festinger's theory was first published in Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails. A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World*, New York, Harper & Row, 1956, pp. 25–30.

[133] Balch et al., "When the Bombs Drop".

[134] Robert W. Balch, John Domitrovich, Barbara Lynn Mahnke, and Vanessa

In my own studies of Baha'i, I have discussed the structure and meaning of donations within the Baha'i communities, interpreting these donations as rituals.[135] Two of my later works examine conversion patterns among Danish Baha'is, which is the main theme of Chapter 7.[136] Two other papers focus on Baha'i and globalisation, and the topics of these papers are incorporated and expanded in Chapter 3.[137] The study of Baha'i and globalisation received a boost when the first international conference dealing with this theme was held in Denmark in 2001.[138]

Important quantitative analyses of the growth of Baha'i are reported in an article by Smith and Momen and in a Ph.D. thesis by Arthur Hampson.[139] Anette Zahrai also quantitatively analyses statistical data on enrolments in the American Baha'i Community and examines the correlations between enrolment data and major sociological variables.[140] My study examining demographic developments in a number of European countries draws upon detailed statistical material from the Baha'i World Centre.[141] Among other findings, the study uncovers the crucial role of migration, in particular immigration from Iran,

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Morrison, "Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy. Coping with Cognitive Dissonance in a Baha'i Sect", in Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (eds.), *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem. Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, New York, Routledge, 1997, pp. 73–90.

[135] Margit Warburg, "Economic Rituals: The Structure and Meaning of Donations in the Baha'i Religion", *Social Compass*, vol. 40, 1993, pp. 25–31.

[136] Margit Warburg, Peter Lüchau, and Peter B. Andersen, "Gender, profession, and non-conformal religiosity", *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 14, 1999, pp. 277–290; Margit Warburg, "Seeking the Seekers in the Sociology of Religion", *Social Compass*, vol. 48, 2001, pp. 91–101.

[137] Margit Warburg, "Baha'i: A Religious Approach to Globalization", *Social Compass*, vol. 46, 1999, pp. 47–56; Margit Warburg, "The Dual Global Field: A Model for Transnational Religions and Globalisation", in Margit Warburg, Annika Hvithamar, and Morten Warmind (eds.), *Baha'i and Globalisation*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2005, pp. 153–172.

[138] Margit Warburg, Annika Hvithamar, and Morten Warmind (eds.), *Baha'i and Globalisation*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2005.

[139] Peter Smith and Moojan Momen, "The Baha'i Faith 1957–1988: A Survey of Contemporary Developments", *Religion*, vol. 19, 1989, pp. 63–91; Arthur Hampson, *The Growth and Spread of the Baha'i Faith* (Ph.D. diss.), Honolulu, Department of Geography, University of Hawaii, 1980.

[140] Annette Riis Zahrai, *Evolution of the Baha'i Faith in the United States since 1960/ Evolution du Mouvement Baha'i aux Etats Unis depuis 1960* (M.A. diss.), Paris, l'Université Paris X, 1986.

[141] Margit Warburg, "Growth Patterns of New Religions: The Case of Baha'i", in Robert Towler (ed.), *New Religions and the New Europe*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 1995, pp. 177–193.

for the overall growth of the Baha'i communities in Western Europe. These results are discussed and incorporated in Chapter 6 in a discussion of the demographic trends in the Danish Baha'i community. A comprehensive overview of the growth of Baha'i worldwide is found in Peter Smith's entry for "expansion" in his previously mentioned encyclopaedia.[142]

The monograph, by Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'í. The Religious Construction of a Global Identity* is an extensive empirical study of the greater Atlanta Baha'i communities.[143] Using a combination of fieldwork, archival studies, in-depth interviews with 38 informants, and data from a mailed questionnaire survey, he presents a broad range of results that are directly comparable to the situation of the Danish Baha'i community. When relevant, I refer to his results, which in general show that the two Baha'i communities are strikingly similar with respect to important patterns of every-day behaviour. McMullen places his empirical results in a wider context of Baha'i organisation and doctrines and additionally draws on Roland Robertson's ideas of "images of world order".[144] McMullen's work therefore is discussed again in Chapter 3.

In the 1980s, the Los Angeles Baha'i community suffered from internal ethnic tension and economic problems, and the national spiritual assembly took the unusual step of dissolving its local spiritual assembly. Juan Cole's analysis of this process and the subsequent debate gives a rare insight into some of the internal conflicts in the American Baha'i community.[145]

Several comparative studies of religious minority groups have included Baha'is. The studies by Stark and Bainbridge are mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. The psychologist Chana Ullman compared converts to four different religious groups in the Boston area (Jews, Christians, members of ISKCON, and Baha'is) with non-converts and found distinct differences in their reported psychological experiences

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[142] Peter Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2000, pp. 137–154.

[143] Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'í. The Religious Construction of a Global Identity*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2000.

[144] Roland Robertson, *Globalization. Social Theory and Global Culture*, London, Sage, 1992, pp. 75–84.

[145] Juan R. I. Cole, "Race, Immorality and Money in the American Baha'i Community: Impeaching the Los Angeles Spiritual Assembly", *Religion*, vol. 30, 2000, 109–125; Mike McMullen, "Response", *Religion*, vol. 30, 2000, 127–131; Robert H. Stockman, "Response", *Religion*, vol. 30, 2000, 133–139; Juan R. I. Cole, "Reply", *Religion*, vol. 30, 2000, 141–147.

from childhood.[146] Helen Ebaugh and Sharron Vaughn investigated conversion to three different religious groups (Catholic Charismatics, Christian Scientists, and Baha'is), with particular emphasis on the significance of the social network for conversion.[147] In a later study, Ebaugh and co-workers studied the relation between religious affiliation and reactions to life crises, comparing the same groups.[148]

Further, a number of Ph.D. theses have examined conversion to Baha'i and the construction of Baha'i identity in the USA. Unlike the above-mentioned comparative studies, these studies include empirical material from Baha'i communities only. Sandra Kahn carried out fieldwork as early as 1971–72, when she studied a wave of mass conversion to Baha'i, which was a particular phenomenon of the rural South in that period.[149] Jean Eleanor Bartlett considers conversion a kind of socialisation and tried to apply general sociological conversion models to her Baha'i material. However, she eventually created her own, rather pragmatic set of conditions defining conversion.[150]

June Wyman studied conversion to Baha'i and Baha'i identity in an ethnographical context, inspired by Clifford Geertz and David Schneider.[151] Her main suggestion is that American Baha'is interpret their religion primarily as a narrative, which facilitates the cultural construction of the individual as a member of the Baha'i community. Lynn Echevarria interviewed twenty senior Canadian Baha'is (11 women, 9 men) concerning their life narratives in an attempt to examine the identity construction of Canadian Baha'i women.[152] She

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[146] Chana Ullman, "Cognitive and Emotional Antecedents of Religious Conversion", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 43, 1982, pp. 183–192; Chana Ullman, "Psychological Well-being Among Converts in Traditional and Nontraditional Religious Groups", *Psychiatry*, vol. 51, 1988, pp. 312–322; Chana Ullman, *The Transformed Self. The Psychology of Religious Conversion*, New York, Plenum Press, 1989.

[147] Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh and Sharron Lee Vaughn, "Ideology and Recruitment in Religious Groups", *Review of Religious Research*, vol. 26, 1984, pp. 148–157.

[148] Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, Kathe Richman, and Janet Saltzman Chafetz, "Life Crises among the Religiously Committed: Do Sectarian Differences Matter?", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 23, 1984, pp. 19–31.

[149] Sandra Santolucito Kahn, *Encounter of Two Myths: Baha'i and Christian in the Rural American South. A Study of Transmythicization* (Ph.D. diss.), Santa Barbara, Department of Religious Studies, University of California, 1977.

[150] Jean Eleanor Bartlett, *Baha'i World Faith: A Case Study in Adult Socialization* (Ph.D. diss.), Riverside, University of California, 1984.

[151] June R. Wyman, *Becoming a Baha'i: Discourse and Social Networks in an American Religious Movement* (Ph.D. diss.), Washington D.C., Department of Anthropology, The Catholic University of America, 1985.

[152] Lynn Echevarria, *Working through the Vision: Religion and Identity in the Life Histories of Bahá'í Women in Canada* (Ph.D. diss.), Colchester, Department of Sociology, University of Essex, 2000.

concludes, among other things, that the Baha'i organisational prin-
ciples with group decision-making had allowed these women to
develop their engagement in leadership at a time (1950s and ear-
lier) when gender roles did not encourage this.

<div align="center">HISTORIES BY THE BAHA'I LEADERSHIP</div>

Since the late nineteenth century, the Baha'i leadership has encouraged
the writing of histories of their own religion. The earliest attempt
was a historical piece written around 1886 by Abdu'l-Baha; he gave
a later copy to E. G. Browne, who edited, translated and published
the history in 1891 with the title, *A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate
the Episode of the Báb*.[153] Browne's edition contains a wealth of useful
notes and additional manuscripts. The historical description covers
the period from the declaration of the Bab in 1844 to the arbitrary
execution of two Baha'is in 1879.[154] The history, however, is fairly
brief, and the book is as much a doctrinal as a historical exposition
of the development of the Babi and Baha'i religions.[155]

In 1888, Baha'u'llah encouraged one of his close associates of many
years, Muhammad-i-Zarandi, called Nabil-i-A'zam (the Most Learned),
to write the history known as "Nabil's Narrative". The author became
a Babi in 1848–49, and he based his history not only on his own
recollection but also on earlier manuscripts and interviews with sur-
viving witnesses to the events of the Babi period.[156] The first half of
Nabil-i-A'zam's history, which covers the period up to the end of
1852, was edited and translated into English by Shoghi Effendi under
the title *The Dawn-Breakers*.[157] As a source concerning Babism, "Nabil's
Narrative" is the most comprehensive and detailed account available,

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[153] Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative*. For a discussion of this history see also Browne,
Táríkh-i-Jadíd, p. xxxi and MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*,
pp. 169–170. The Persian text was first published anonymously in Bombay in 1890.

[154] The two Baha'is were brothers, Muhammad-Hasan and Muhammad-Husayn,
known in Baha'i literature as the "King of Martyrs" and "Beloved of Martyrs".
Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 200–201; Cameron and Momen, *A Basic Bahá'í
Chronology*, p. 110.

[155] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, pp. 169–170.

[156] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, pp. 166–169.

[157] Shoghi Effendi (ed., trans.), *The Dawn-Breakers. Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days
of the Bahá'í Revelation*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974. See Shoghi Effendi's
introduction, p. xxxvii.

but it is also partisan and hagiographic.[158] It is a drawback for the studies in Babi and Baha'i history that the original Nabil material on which Shoghi Effendi based *The Dawn-Breakers* is accessible only to the personnel associated with the archives in the Baha'i World Centre.[159]

Shoghi Effendi also wrote his own interpretation of the Babi and Baha'i history from 1844 to 1944 in *God Passes By*.[160] This book contains information on many events for which there seem to be no other available sources; but its academic value is limited by the lack of notes and precise descriptions of the sources used by Shoghi Effendi. The somewhat limited value of *God Passes By* as a historical source, however, should not distract from the fact that this book contains the basic interpretative understanding *within* Baha'i of the development of the Baha'i religion and its doctrines, and as such, it is an important text in the history of religions.

The Universal House of Justice has not issued a general Baha'i history, but one of its members, Adib Taherzadeh (now deceased), wrote *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*.[161] Over more than four hundred pages, Taherzadeh surveys the historical development of Baha'i from the time of the Bab to around 1990, while expounding on the meaning of the concept of "the Covenant". The history until 1944 closely follows Shoghi Effendi's *God Passes By* in the description of particular historical events, and as a source concerning the Baha'i history, Taherzadeh's work is of rather limited value.

History is, indeed, important to the Baha'i leadership, and many Baha'i authors regularly emphasise that the emergence of their religion is well documented.[162] In particular, *The Dawn-Breakers* and *God Passes By* have acquired, in general Baha'i thinking, a position representing something close to an absolutely "true" history of Babism and Baha'i.[163] Students of history of religions, however, would not only regard *The Dawn-Breakers* to be a history of the Babis, they would also recognise a myth of origin. The history was endorsed by

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[158] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, pp. 166–169.

[159] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, pp. 166–169.

[160] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995.

[161] Adib Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1995.

[162] See for example the introductory book by Hatcher and Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith*, pp. xiv–xv.

[163] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, pp. 130–131, pp. 166–169.

Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha and edited by Shoghi Effendi, and the
Baha'is therefore do not consider it just any history, but regard it
with particular reverence and above mundane academic criticism.
An example of this is a discussion in 1985–86 in the journal *Religion*
between Denis MacEoin on the one side, and Muhammad Afnan
and William S. Hatcher, on the other.[164] The discussion concerned
the element of *jihad* in the Babi fights. In this discussion, Afnan and
Hatcher (who are prominent Baha'is but not professional scholars of
Babism) clearly considered *The Dawn-Breakers* to have unusually high
authenticity as a source, out of proportion with what academic stan-
dards of criticism of the sources would allow.[165]

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT OR WORLD RELIGION?

In the tradition of sociology of religion, Baha'i fulfils all meaningful
criteria of belonging to the category "religion" (as opposed to non-
religion): Baha'i has a belief system concerned with transcendental
issues, a corpus of sacred writings, a characteristic and remarkable
religious architecture, and traditions for an organised religious life. The
religion also provides its believers with spiritual and moral guidance,
a sentiment of community and common interests, answers to meta-
physical speculations, and has *rites de passages* for important life events.
Consequently, these are the reasons why I denote Baha'i a religion,
regardless of whether "religion" is defined substantially or functionally.[166]

Moreover, the reverse has not been suggested in any serious aca-
demic discussions: Nobody has argued that Baha'i should be con-

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[164] Muhammad Afnan and William S. Hatcher, "Western Islamic Scholarship
and Bahá'í Origins", *Religion*, vol. 15, 1985, pp. 29–51; Denis MacEoin, "Bahā'ī
Fundamentalism and the Academic Study of the Bābī Movement", *Religion*, vol. 16,
1986, pp. 57–84; Muhammad Afnan and William S. Hatcher, "Note on MacEoin's
'Bahá'í Fundamentalism'" *Religion*, vol. 16, 1986, pp. 187–192; Denis MacEoin,
"Afnán, Hatcher and an Old Bone", *Religion*, vol. 16, 1986, pp. 193–195.

[165] Perhaps Stephen Lambden provides the most clarifying analysis of this prob-
lem in a one-and-a-half page note. Stephen Lambden, "An Episode in the Childhood
of the Báb", in Peter Smith (ed.), *In Iran. Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 3,
Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1986, pp. 1–31 (note 37).

[166] Per Bilde has reviewed 44 different definitions of "religion", see Per Bilde,
"Begrebet religion. Et indlæg i debatten om religionsvidenskabens objekt drøftet i
lyset af beslægtede begreber [The concept of religion. A contribution to the debate
on the object of religious studies in the light of related concepts]", *Chaos. Dansk-
norsk tidsskrift for religionshistoriske studier*, no. 15, 1991, pp. 3–24. Without going into
detail, Baha'i fulfils the criteria for belonging to the category of "religion", nearly
regardless of the definition applied.

sidered a secular organisation or movement. In religious polemics, however, academic arguments bear less weight, and in Iran, one of the weapons against Baha'i is to claim that Baha'i is not a religion:

> The statement that Baha'ism is not a religion is, according to Cooper, 'the most frequent reply if one asks any Iranian today why the Bahā'īs are being persecuted. It is the reply given by young militants serving as Revolutionary Guards, by conservative bazaar merchants and by many who are disillusioned with or even opposed to the present regime . . .' (Cooper 1982, p. 9). It is, as we have seen, the reply given by Ayatollah Khomeini in defence of his own position.[167]

However, to belong to the category of religion is one issue, but whether Baha'i should be denoted a religion on a par with the classic religions of the world, or a sub-form of a religion, is quite another issue. In the sociology of religion, the discussion of typologies of religious organisations or groups is part of ongoing and salient discussions. The Baha'i religion seems to be a complicated borderline case, and borderline cases are interesting because they challenge definitions.

A common feature of the typologies of religious groups is that it is the *relationship* between the group and the society that determines if the group should be called, for example, a church, denomination, sect or cult.[168] The relational nature of the typologies means that groups adhering to the same religion may fit into different categories in different countries and/or in different periods. For example, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon Church) is probably best classified as a church in the State of Utah, a denomination elsewhere in the United States and as a sect in Denmark. It is therefore almost meaningless to attempt to classify Baha'i as a sociological entity outside of a specific social context.

Denis MacEoin has argued that Baha'i should be regarded as a new religious movement—at least in the West—mostly because he has not found any better way to classify it.[169] This proposal started

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[167] MacEoin, Denis, "The Bahā'īs of Iran: The Roots of Controversy", *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, vol. 14, 1988, pp. 75–83 (quotation p. 76). The reference to Cooper is: Roger Cooper, *The Baha'is of Iran*, London, Minority Rights Group, Report No. 51, 1982.

[168] See for example a standard textbook in the sociology of religion, such as Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion. The Social Context*, Belmont, Wadsworth, 1997.

[169] Denis MacEoin, *A People Apart: The Baha'i Community of Iran in the Twentieth Century*, Occasional Paper 4, London, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1989.

a lively threaded discussion on the Internet, which lasted from 9
May 1997 to 31 March 1998, with contributions from Denis MacEoin,
Seena Fazel, Robert Stockman, Juan Cole, Will C. van den Hoonaard,
Stephen R. Friberg and Ismael Velasco.[170] Opinions were only partly
converging, and only a few of the contributors agreed with MacEoin.

The term "new religious movement" has become established in
religious studies, partly as an attempt to supersede the terms "cult"
and "sect", which often have derogatory connotations. One of the
problems with calling Baha'i in the West a new religious movement,
however, is that the religion does not have the typical characteristics
of a "movement" in the sociological sense of the word. Like several
other of the established new religions, Baha'i is far too well organ-
ised and routinised to be considered a "movement". Another trend
therefore is to use the term "new religions" for these same groups.

This does not solve another problem, namely that Baha'i is not
particularly "new". The term "new religion" is usually applied to
religions that have taken root in the West after World War II, and
many academic books on new religions omit Baha'i. Irving Hexham
and Karla Poewe do not follow this trend, but trace the new reli-
gions back in history a couple of centuries.[171] However, their book,
which is rich in historical and doctrinal details, does not mention
Baha'i at all. I am not criticising the book for this, just noting the
fact that Baha'i is not routinely included among the "new religions".[172]

The official Baha'i position is that Baha'i is the "youngest of the
world's independent religions".[173] The term "independent religion"
should be seen in contrast to the term "sect", and the distinction
between the two rests on doctrinal arguments, centred on the formal
break with Islam.[174] Baha'i was formed in the aftermath of a series

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[170] The debate has been compiled as: "Is the Baha'i Faith a "New Religious
Movement"?", http://bahai-library.org/essays/nrm.html, 12 Sep. 2000.
[171] Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, *New Religions as Global Cultures. Making the
Human Sacred*, Boulder, Westview, 1997.
[172] An exception is Jean-François Mayer and Reender Kranenborg (eds.), *La nais-
sance des nouvelles religions*, Chêne-Bourge, Georg Éditeur, 2004. The editors specifically
asked for a chapter on the Baha'i religion (Margit Warburg, "De l'islam à la reli-
gion baha'ie", in Jean-François Mayer and Reender Kranenborg (eds.), *La naissance
des nouvelles religions*, Chêne-Bourge, Georg Éditeur, 2004, pp. 145–182.
[173] See for example, *The Bahá'í World 1992–93*, p. 13; or Hatcher and Martin,
The Bahá'í Faith, p. xiii.
[174] The German Baha'i Udo Schaefer discusses whether Baha'i from a doctrinal
point of view is a sect or a religion. His position probably represents a mainline,
official Baha'i position on the matter. See Udo Schaefer, *Sekte oder Offenbarungsreligion?*

of schisms within the orthodox Shi'ite milieu, and the question is whether this new religious entity has separated itself so much from Islam that it makes sense to call it a religion in its own right.[175] Both Baha'is and Muslims agree that Baha'i is not a part of Islam. However, the academic tradition is inconsistent on this point, as judged from a survey of handbooks. Sometimes Baha'i is regarded as a special case within Islam, sometimes it is considered a religion of its own, and quite often it is forgotten altogether![176]

The Islamic heritage is very distinct in Baha'i doctrines and traditions. Until the late 1950s, the great majority of Baha'is lived in the "Islamic heartland" (Iran, the Middle East, Egypt, the Caucasus and Central Asia).[177] Thus, they were living in societies influenced by an Islamic culture, and to a large extent the Baha'is blended into this culture. It was also characteristic that many years after the Baha'is' doctrinal dissociation from much of the Islamic heritage through Babism, the Baha'i leaders had not severed all the ties with Islam. For example, Abdu'l-Baha attended the noon Friday prayer in the mosque as late as in 1921.[178] This may justify why, in particular, the older literature considers Baha'i to be a special case within Islam. However, Smith estimates that today the "Islamic heartland" is home to less than 7% of the total number of Baha'is worldwide, mainly due to rapid growth in South Asia, Africa and Latin America, all in countries where Islam is not particularly strong.[179] As a consequence of this separation from Islamic culture, Baha'i religious beliefs, behaviour and culture have changed. For example, when Baha'i pilgrims visit the Shrine of the Bab, only the Iranians tend to follow the traditional Shi'i manners and rituals connected with the visitation

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Zur religionswissenschaftlichen Einordnung des Bahá'í-Glaubens, Hofheim-Langenhein, Bahá'í-Verlag, 1982. Schaefer's work was translated into English in 1988 under the title *The Baha'i Faith. Sect or Religion?*, Ontario, Association for Baha'i Studies, 1988.

[175] A penetrating analysis of these schisms is found in Denis MacEoin, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Nineteenth-Century Shi'ism: The Cases of Shaykhism and Babism", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 110, 1990, pp. 323–329.

[176] Margit Warburg, "Religious Definitions and Religious Polemics: Baha'i in Popular Handbooks of Religion", presented at the *Conference on Anti-Baha'i Polemic*, Religious Studies Department, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 8–10 December, 1995. (Unpublished).

[177] "expansion", in Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 137–154.

[178] H. M. Balyuzi, '*Abdu'l-Bahá. The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1971, pp. 458–459.

[179] "Expansion", in Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 137–154.

of shrines.[180] I therefore suggest that there are good reasons for a reappraisal of the status of the Baha'i religion as a special case within Islam, now that Baha'i demographically has moved away from the hegemony of Islamic culture.

Finally, Baha'i (and former Baha'i) academics have discussed over the Internet whether Baha'i should be called a *world* religion or not, and several participants have challenged the term "world religion", considering it to be arbitrary.[181] I agree that in the study of religion, the term "world religion" is not useful, because it implies too many ill-defined criteria of what are "world" attributes and what are not. Furthermore, I maintain that a new term should not be introduced, unless it serves an analytical purpose, and I have not yet been convinced that a distinction between "world religions" and other religions can serve such a purpose.

However, the term appears to enjoy some popularity. For example, Baha'i was counted among the world religions when it was named on a stamp in connection with Sri Lanka's celebration of World Religion Day in 1985. See Photo I—Stamp from Sri Lanka celebrating World Religion Day, 20 January 1985.

To conclude, I propose that Baha'i is a religion (as opposed to a purely secular organisation), but hardly a *new* religion. Furthermore, it has separated itself so much from its Shi'ite hinterland that I find it more meaningful to regard it as a religion of its own, not a derivative of Islam. It is only because Baha'i is so much younger than the classic religions that some scholars seem to hesitate calling Baha'i a religion. This is probably why I and other sociologists and historians of religion occasionally rely on a useful oxymoron, suggesting that Baha'i is one of the old "new religions"!

The Review Controversy and its Background

Globalisation seems to have affected Baha'i studies positively in recent years. Isolated or small groups of scholars whose empirical field is Baha'i are entering new discussion *fora* on the Internet, new contacts are being established, and a lively debate is taking place. The Internet allows for an informal bypass of the conventional channels of publication, and it is probably a realistic avenue for establishing an inter-

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[180] MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, p. 58.
[181] See "Is the Baha'i Faith a 'New Religious Movement'?".

national milieu of academic Baha'i studies free of considerations other than those dictated by the scholars themselves.[182]

I am here alluding to a particular Baha'i practice in studies of Babism and Baha'i. All Baha'is are obliged to submit written works on their religion for approval before they are released, and this obligation also extends to studies meant for an academic audience.[183] Not only single publications, but also journals and book series devoted to Baha'i studies and edited by Baha'is are expected to comply with the guidelines on Baha'i scholarship laid down by the Universal House of Justice, and all publications must be submitted for review.

It is not surprising that the Baha'i review policy has led to serious conflicts now and then, and occasionally they have surfaced in academic journals. The best example is a debate between Juan R. I. Cole and Denis MacEoin in 1988–1991. It sprang from a disagreement about a "balanced" use of Azali and Baha'i sources in the study of Babism, but soon developed into a more general discussion about scholarship when the field of study, the Baha'i religion, is dominated by adherents of the religion under study.[184] MacEoin painted a gloomy picture of stifled academic freedom within Baha'i studies, a picture that Juan Cole found highly exaggerated, although he did not defend the review policy. Later, however, Juan Cole withdrew most of his opinions and has more or less sided with MacEoin in an attack on the review policy, discussing in detail some of its most salient negative effects.[185]

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[182] David Piff, "The Globalization of Information: Baha'i Constructions of the Internet", in Margit Warburg, Annika Hvithamar, and Morten Warmind (eds.), *Baha'i and Globalisation*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2005, pp. 195–219.

[183] [Universal House of Justice], "The Policy of Prepublication Review. On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, enclosed to a letter to an individual dated 5 October 1993", *The Bahá'í Studies Review*, vol. 3, 1994, pp. 43–45; [Universal House of Justice], "Further Comments on Bahá'í Scholarship. From a letter on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated 19 October 1993", *The Bahá'í Studies Review*, vol. 3, 1994, pp. 46–49.

[184] Juan R. I. Cole, Review of Peter Smith (ed.), *In Iran: Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 3, in *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, vol. 14, 1988, pp. 230–231; MacEoin, "The Crisis in Bābī and Bahā'ī Studies"; Juan R. I. Cole, "'The Objectivity Question' and Baha'i Studies: A Reply to MacEoin", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 18, 1991, pp. 82–85; Denis MacEoin, "A Few Words in Response to Cole's 'Reply to MacEoin'", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 18, 1991, pp. 86–87.

[185] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, p. 223; Juan Cole, "The Baha'i Faith in America as Panopticon", 1963–1997, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 37, 1998, pp. 234–248; Juan R. I. Cole, "Fundamentalism in the Contemporary U.S. Baha'i Community", *Review of Religious Research*, vol. 43, 2001, pp. 195–217.

To the extent that I can judge it, the review policy does not in
general seem to be much of a hindrance to serious research by most
Baha'i authors. However, when it comes to sources on the central
figures of Baha'i, the Universal House of Justice is particularly anxious
to maintain control. For example, in connection with the publica-
tion of the memoirs of Ustad Muhammad-Ali-i Salmani (Baha'u'llah's
barber), the normal review process was supplemented with an extra
review and a demand from the Universal House of Justice to omit
certain passages—a demand that created much agitation, and some-
how was not fully complied with by the publisher, Kalimat Press.[186]

It should be realised that academic freedom is a rare flower; most
private and public institutions apply some form of review-before-
release policy. However, the Baha'i review policy causes considerable
distress among Baha'i academics with a liberal attitude. In particu-
lar, the U.S. Baha'i community has suffered from a number of inter-
nal conflicts over the issue of intellectual freedom.[187] One therefore
may ask what the Universal House of Justice gains by upholding
this policy and other measures to curb intellectual liberty, such as
surveillance of Internet discussion groups.[188] In my opinion, the main
issue is a fundamental difference between scholars and the Baha'i
leadership in their perceptions of the nature of academic scholarship,
where the position of the latter is expressed in the Universal House
of Justice's exposition of the Baha'i doctrine of the harmony of science
and religion. This issue is discussed in the following.

The Harmony of Science and Religion?

In a letter to the participants in the Baha'i Studies Seminar held in
Cambridge in 1978, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

> The principle of the harmony of science and religion means not only
> that religious teachings should be studied with the light of reason and

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[186] Salmani, *My Memories of Bahá'u'lláh*; Juan R. I. Cole, "The Censorship of
Salmani's Memoirs by the Baha'i Authorities: Historical Documents from 1982",
Documents on the Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Movements, vol. 6, no. 1, 2002, http://www.h-net.
msu.edu/~bahai/docs/vol6/salmuhj.htm. Accessed 6 January 2004.

[187] K. Paul Johnson, "Baha'i Leaders Vexed by On-Line Critics", *Gnosis*, no. 42,
1997, pp. 9–10; Cole, "Fundamentalism in the Contemporary U.S. Baha'i
Community"; Karen Bacquet, "Enemies Within: Conflict and Control in the Baha'i
Community", *Cultic Studies Journal*, vol. 18, 2001, pp. 140–171.

[188] Cole, "Fundamentalism".

evidence as well as of faith and inspiration, but also that everything in this creation, all aspects of human life and knowledge, should be studied in the light of revelation as well as in that of purely rational investigation.[189]

By emphasising that the scriptures of the Baha'i religion are the guidance for all kinds of studies, and that conclusions should comply with the doctrines, the Universal House of Justice takes a clear stance in the dilemma between academic freedom and acceptance of religious premises. The Universal House of Justice openly acknowledged this when they expounded on the policy of prepublication review in 1993, instead of beating around the bush.[190]

What is immediately at stake in the dilemma between academic freedom and acceptance of religious premises are possible conflicts with doctrines that can be tested empirically, not those doctrines that concern transcendental issues. Using the famous case of Galileo versus the Pope as an example, it was not the belief in Jesus as the son of God that was at stake, it was a doctrine that turned out to be in conflict with observations and theories of astronomy. Likewise, none of the controversies that I have read about in Baha'i studies challenge the belief in Baha'u'llah as both a man and a manifestation of God.

However, the position of the Universal House of Justice was sharpened in June 1999 at the inauguration of the chair for Baha'i Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. At this occasion, a member of the Universal House of Justice, Dr. Peter Khan, gave a speech on some aspects of Baha'i scholarship.[191] According to the speaker, the concept of Baha'i scholarship was normative in its scope, and it should be seen in contrast to "narrow definitions of legitimate scholarly activity in some disciplines within the academic community".[192] Concerning the study of the Baha'i religion itself, Khan described the field of comparative religion as dealing with "discernible phenomena, observable events, and practical affairs", which took no

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[189] [Universal House of Justice], "Comments on Bahá'í Scholarship. On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated 3 January 1979. To the Participants in the Baha'i Studies Seminar held in Cambridge on 30 September and 1 October 1978", *The Bahá'í Studies Review*, vol. 3, 1994, pp. 38–42 (quotation p. 39).

[190] [Universal House of Justice], "The Policy of Prepublication Review".

[191] Peter Khan, "Some Aspects of Bahá'í Scholarship", *The Bahá'í World 1999–2000*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 2001, pp. 197–221.

[192] Khan, "Some Aspects of Bahá'í Scholarship", p. 213.

account of the spiritual forces. He continued by claiming that academic scholarship in the study of religion rests on a dogma of materialism or atheism, quoting the Universal House of Justice by saying:

> . . . dogmatic materialism today insists that even the nature of religion itself can be adequately understood only through the use of an academic methodology designed to ignore the truths that make religion what it is.[193]

> This approach, although understandable, is quite impossible for a Bahá'í, for it ignores the fact that our worldview includes the spiritual dimension as an indispensable component for consistency and coherence, and it does not beseem a Bahá'í to write . . . about his Faith as if he looked upon it from the norm of humanism or materialism.[194]

The reason for this warning is that such an approach:

> . . . leads to these authors' drawing conclusions and making implications which are in conflict with the Bahá'í teachings and with the reality of the Faith.[195]

I would like here to adduce that Peter Khan's argument rests on a misunderstanding. There exists no such doctrine in the academic fields of comparative religion and sociology of religion that the nature of religion can be understood through a materialistic approach *only*. The prevalent doctrine—if it could be called so—is rather that there are aspects of the phenomenon called religion that cannot be analysed through scientific methods. An example from my own study of the Danish Baha'i community may be illustrative. One of the informants told the interviewer that many years before her conversion to Baha'i she had her most important spiritual experience: One night when she was in deep prayer she saw a cone-shaped light pointing towards her chest, and she was filled for a moment by the Holy Ghost. A sociologist of religion can faithfully note her account, and it may be accepted as important for her conversion to Baha'i, if she says so. In fact, we do not question that the Holy Ghost was present, because what is important for our analysis is that she held that belief, and it was true for her. We can use her account of the experience, but we abstain from discussing if the Holy Ghost was *really* present. It

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[193] Khan, "Some Aspects of Bahá'í Scholarship", p. 200.
[194] Khan, "Some Aspects of Bahá'í Scholarship", p. 200.
[195] Khan, "Some Aspects of Bahá'í Scholarship", p. 201.

is simply not possible to study whether this was the case or not through scientific methods.

It seems that it is this limitation of the scientific method that explains why Peter Khan claims that academics who are Baha'is should not comply with their academic tradition. In principle, a similar claim might face scholars adhering to any religion. It is a pertinent issue in the study of religion in some Muslim countries, and also, within Christianity, the conflict did not end with Galileo. It was only a little more than a century ago that a Scottish Professor of the Old Testament, William Robertson Smith, was dismissed from his chair, because his use of historical criticism in interpreting passages of the Pentateuch had angered the Scottish Free Church.[196] As I show in the following, some of the contemporary debates among Christian scholars on the issue of the historicity of parts of the Bible perhaps provide even better parallels to and a deeper understanding of the tension between the official Baha'i position and the academic prerequisites for historical research.[197]

A Parallel in the Study of Christianity

The example that I discuss here is taken from Thomas L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives. The Quest for the Historical Abraham* from 1974.[198] Thompson sets out to challenge a widely accepted thesis that says that "the historicity of the biblical traditions about the patriarchs has been substantiated by the archaeological and historical research of the last half-century".[199] The current issue for most biblical scholars is therefore *not* the historicity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as such, but the dating of the patriarchal period.[200] However, Thompson's investigations lead him to affirm that the text of *Genesis* is not a historical document, but rather a collection of literary traditions.[201] He therefore concludes that the narratives about Abraham's

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[196] Margit Warburg, "William Robertson Smith and the Study of Religion", *Religion*, vol. 19, 1989, pp. 41–61.

[197] MacEoin is grinding the same axe and refers briefly to a crisis in the 1980s in the Church of England concerning the historicity of the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. See MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, 1992, p. 129.

[198] Thomas L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives. The Quest for the Historical Abraham*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1974.

[199] Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, p. 1.

[200] Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, p. 2.

[201] Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, p. 3.

journey from Ur are not based on an original tradition about a per-
son Abraham, but is a historiographic reconstruction from several
independent and conflicting sources.[202] This reconstruction in the lit-
erary tradition of Israel served political and religious purposes.[203]

In the present context, the most interesting part of Thompson's
book is the last section, with the title, "Historical and Christian
Faith". Thompson argues against a trend among Old Testament
scholars who suggest that the historicity of texts about the biblical
patriarchs constitutes the foundation of the Christian faith, and he
quotes one of the spokesmen for this trend, Roland de Vaux: "if the
historical faith of Israel is not founded in history, such faith is erro-
neous, and therefore, our faith is also".[204] Therefore, in de Vaux's
opinion, a close relationship between "religious history" and objec-
tive history must be maintained.[205]

Thompson, who is a professed Christian, rejects the position taken
by de Vaux, because it has the consequence that "revelation is under-
stood as a series of interventions in history by the divinity, which acts
have been recorded and passed down through many generations".[206]
Thompson warns against calling de Vaux's position "fundamentalist",
as it is often accused of being; it is rather "a deistic and positivistic
historicism, which seeks in its reconstruction of a "biblical history"
the "real revelation".[207] Thompson rejects this historicism from a
position of belief stating that the Bible itself is constitutive of faith:
"The question of whether the Bible is a true source of faith will not
be decided on the basis of the Bible's historical acceptability".[208]

Thompson's analysis of his opponents' position seems to me to be
that they have taken a stand strikingly similar to what the Universal
House of Justice states as being central to Baha'i scholarship. The
parallel to current debates within Christian theology puts some of
the problems within Baha'i studies in a perspective.[209] These discussions

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[202] Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, p. 315.
[203] Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, pp. 314–315.
[204] Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, p. 327.
[205] Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, p. 327.
[206] Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, pp. 329–330.
[207] Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, p. 327.
[208] Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, p. 328.
[209] It is noteworthy that both Thomas Thompson and I coincidently raised the
above issues on a conference on tolerance and academic freedom of expression, 24
February 2005 at the University of Copenhagen. We immediately agreed on the
parallel.

seem to be a general and persistent topic for religious studies within at least the Christian and Islamic traditions. The problem is that it is still sensitive if not dangerous to question established interpretations of sources to the formative age of a religion. Much of the legitimacy of a religion is derived from events of this period, and control of the history can therefore be crucial. That is precisely what is at stake in the case of the controversial sources to Babi and Baha'i history, as well as concerning the sources to the construction of Abraham.

DEVELOPMENT OF A GLOBALISATION PERSPECTIVE

Globalisation is a term that refers to the fact that contemporary nations and their citizens to varying degrees are involved in a world-wide process of integration, where money, goods, cultural items and people are moving more and more freely across borders. This integration would not be possible without revolutionary technological innovations in physical transport, electronic communication and data processing. Internationalisation of the economy and rapid growth in international communications are salient features of globalisation, but a global political integration of societies is also a discernible feature. The latter is propelled by, among other things, the need for an ordered liber-alisation of world economics through international legally binding arrangements. Milestones in that respect were the creation of the World Trade Organisation in 1995 and the Montreal Protocol, which regulates the use of compounds that deplete the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere.[1]

In the sociology of religion, discussions on globalisation and religion are intertwined with current general discussions on globalisation, and this chapter, therefore, begins with a very brief overview of the generally accepted characteristics of globalisation. From this overview, the discussion narrows down to the study of religion and globalisation. Much of the chapter is centred on a critical evaluation of Roland Robertson's global field model, because this is the basis for my subsequent establishment of a new model, the dual global field model. It is this latter model that I claim can be used for analysing transnational religious organisations in the process of globalisation.

The chapter ends with a brief review and discussion of the classic concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, which historically have their origin in the sociological understanding of societal relations in modern states. In the study of globalisation, Roland Robertson pro-

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[1] *Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Final Act*, United Nations Environment Programme, Na. 87–6106, 1987.

posed to extend the use of these concepts to the global level.[2] At the micro-level, I also find the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* illuminating, for example, for understanding the problems that face a religious group coping with the demands for survival and growth. To illustrate this, I propose a graphical model of the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* relation, and this model is used in Chapter 9 for describing and analysing how a religious group may balance its resources to meet its different kinds of needs.

Characteristics of Globalisation

Globalisation has become a hot topic both inside and outside academia during the last two decades or so. According to a literature survey conducted in 1995, the number of publications in the social sciences that contained the word "globalisation" (or "globalization") in their titles or abstracts had increased from three in 1984 to more than a hundred *per year* a decade later.[3] In 1998, I surveyed three bibliographical data bases in the social sciences (*International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, Sociofile*, and *Social Science Citation Index*) and found that the number of works indexed in the period 1987–1997 with the key word "globalisation" exceeded 1,100 in the first-mentioned data base alone. In the *Social Science Citation Index*, the number of works had tripled since 1995, reaching 200 new records in 1997.

A repeated survey in 2005 showed that the rise in number of publications had continued: in the period 1998–2004, *International Bibliography of the Social Sciences* listed nearly 2,500 references to globalisation, *Sociofile* (now *Sociological Abstracts*) listed nearly 5,000 references, and *Social Science Citation Index* listed more than 3,000. The literature has

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[2] Roland Robertson, *Globalization. Social Theory and Global Culture*, London, Sage, 1992, pp. 61–84.

[3] Rosabeth Moss Kanter and Todd L. Pittinsky, "Globalization: New worlds for social inquiry", *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol. 40, 1995, pp. 1–20. The spelling of globalisation with an 's' or a 'z' seems to be more than just an issue of British or American usage, however: during a discussion at the symposium "New Religions and Globalisation. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives" held 23–26 September 2002 in Aarhus, Denmark, Roland Robertson suggested that the choice of spelling form is also used to signal agreement or disagreement with Anthony Giddens' approach to globalisation (spelling with an 's' means agreement). I have chosen to ignore this supposed convention, and my choice of 's' simply reflects consistency with British spelling.

proliferated particularly since 2000: according to the *Social Science Citation Index*, the number of publications reached a level of around 500 per year in each of the years 2001–2004.

Outside the narrow academic circles of globalisation discussions, books such as Benjamin Barber's *Jihad vs. McWorld* made the cultural challenge of globalisation a topic of dinner-table conversations, and thereby enhanced the risk of "globalisation" becoming a wizard term that explains everything and hence nothing of scholarly interest.[4] However, I do not want to throw the baby out with the bath water by suggesting that the term should be abandoned in research. A popular and often too inclusive use of the term globalisation does not preclude its analytical potential.

Considering the significance of economics and politics in the process of globalisation, it is not surprising that most globalisation studies are founded in political and economics theories. Results from the bibliographical surveys (1998 and 2005) mentioned above indicated that the works on globalisation were roughly divided equally between economics, political science and sociology. Much of this literature is irrelevant to studies dealing with religion and globalisation, however. Indeed, the study of religion and globalisation represents a very modest share of the thousands of references concerning globalisation from other angles. For example, in the *International Bibliography of the Social Sciences*, only 11 (1%) of the publications in 1987–1997 on globalisation were also indexed under "religion". In 1998–2004, the number was still modest, 30 records all together. Conversely, a search in a database concerning the study of religion, *Atla Religion*, retrieved 186 works from 1967 to 1997 that were indexed under "globalisation", but three quarters of these references concerned issues of internal interest to the Christian mission. The same pattern was observed for the period 1998–2004, where 552 publications were indexed under "globalisation". Even in a broader cultural perspective on globalisation, only a few hundred entries in the databases could be said to deal with globalisation in a way relevant to the present study. Of these, only a handful seems to have contributed significantly to the theoretical understanding of globalisation and religion.

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[4] Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, New York, Times Books, 1995.

The Historical Uniqueness of Globalisation

There is an abundance of empirical evidence suggesting that the modern world undergoes a historical process characterised by an unprecedented global interdependency among peoples and nations.[5] This process can be traced back several hundred years and it began to accelerate starting around 1870.

It is true that earlier historical periods have some structural similarity to globalisation; for example, the integration of the cultures around the Mediterranean during the Roman Empire is such a parallel.[6] However, what distinguishes globalisation of today from, for example, the age of the Roman Empire is that cross-cultural interaction between societies as well as between individuals now takes place on a global scale and with an unparalleled intensity and speed, supported by innovations in transport and communication. Intercontinental transport and travel all around the globe is possible within 24 hours, and communication by telephone, fax and e-mail is instantaneous. Numerous alternative routes of communication are available and utilised, and this has made it more difficult for established

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[5] See, for example, Albert Bergesen, "From Utilitarianism to Globology: The Shift from the Individual to the World as a Whole as the Primordial Unit of Analysis", in Albert Bergesen (ed.), *Studies of the Modern World-System*, New York, Academic Press, 1980, pp. 1–12; Marjorie Ferguson, "The Mythology about Globalization", *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 7, 1992, pp. 69–93; Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash, "Globalization, Modernity and the Spatialization of Social Theory: An Introduction", in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities*, London, Sage, 1995, pp. 1–24; Jan Aart Scholte, "Beyond the Buzzword: Towards a Critical Theory of Globalization", in Eleonore Kofman and Gillian Youngs (eds.), *Globalization: Theory and Practice*, London, Pinter, 1996, pp. 43–57; Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization. A Critical Introduction*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000, p. 3, pp. 62–88.

[6] Edward A. Tiryakian, "From Modernization to Globalization", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 31, 1992, pp. 304–310; Bryan S. Turner, "The Concept of "The World" in Sociology: A Commentary on Roland Robertson's Theory of Globalization", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 31, 1992, pp. 311–318; Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Globalization as Hybridization", in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities*, London, Sage, 1995, pp. 45–68; Margit Warburg, "New Age og gamle dage. Religion og globalisering i dag og i hellenistisk-romersk tid" [New Age and old days. Religion and globalisation today and in Hellenic-Roman age], in Per Bilde and Mikael Rothstein (eds.), *Nye religioner i hellenistisk-romersk tid og i dag*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 1999, pp. 39–52; Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "Orbis terrarum Romanus est: Globalization Processes in the Roman Empire", in Armin W. Geertz, Margit Warburg, and Dorthe Refslund Christensen (eds.), *New Religions and Globalization. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press (forthcoming).

gatekeepers to maintain control, among other things. For example, with globalisation, trans-world relations have become much more significant to people than they were before, and this has meant that the nation states have lost their previous near-monopoly on cultural projects that strengthened national solidarity.[7] Thus, in Europe, the days are gone when the national, state-owned TV-channel could unite the whole nation, evening after evening, and the popular music culture has also lost much of its previous national character. A transnational public sphere has formed and offers a place for an increasing number of movements and organisations appealing to an audience across the globe.[8] Likewise, the traditional positions of Christian majority churches in the European countries have been weakened by the emergence of new religions with Christian, Muslim or other backgrounds.

All this indicates a historically unique compression of space-time into a single world space, a process that Roland Robertson has allegorically described as the world becoming a "single place".[9] Manuel Castells further developed this theoretical compression of space-time into a description of the electronic network society in which both space and time acquire new, additional qualities: space is not just contiguous physical space but also becomes structured by the flow of information, and time is no longer shaped by the rhythmic pattern of daily life.[10] Other globalisation scholars have also emphasised this compression of space-time as a most distinctive aspect of globalisation.[11] The consequence is that the space demarcated by a person's social relations—the person's social space—to some extent

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[7] Scholte, *Globalization*, pp. 159–183.

[8] John A. Guidry, Michael D. Kennedy, and Mayer N. Zald, "Globalizations and Social Movements", in John A. Guidry, Michael D. Kennedy, and Mayer N. Zald (eds.), *Globalizations and Social Movements. Culture, Power, and the Transnational Public Sphere*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 2000, pp. 1–32.

[9] Roland Robertson, "Globalization, Modernization, and Postmodernization. The Ambiguous Position of Religion", in Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett (eds.), *Religion and Global Order. Religion and the Political Order*, vol. 4, New York, Paragon House, 1991, pp. 281–291 (quotation, p. 283).

[10] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1998, pp. 410–428, pp. 445–468.

[11] Scholte, *Globalisation*, pp. 45–56; Ankie Hoogvelt, *Globalization and the Postcolonial World. The New Political Economy of Development*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, pp. 120–143.

becomes independent of physical space. In Arjun Appadurai's words, human relations become deterritorialised.[12]

Thus, globalisation is a much more pervasive process than the mere internationalisation of economy and mass culture, and it may be perhaps the proper place to eradicate the possible misunderstanding that the two are equivalent terms. I agree with Lorne Dawson, Jan Aart Scholte and others that globalisation is a distinctive, qualitatively new, and important development in world history, which warrants the use of a special term to denote it, globalisation.[13]

Approaches to Globalisation

Many of the general, theoretical discussions on globalisation grew out of and are still intimately bound to a discussion and possible reassessment of the concept of modernity.[14] Anthony Giddens, a central figure in this discussion, considers globalisation as both an extension and a consequence of modernity—others, like Roland Robertson and Jan Nederveen Pieterse, challenge this view, arguing that it implies that globalisation is then nothing more than westernisation.[15] It is, however, beyond the scope of the present introduction to pursue this issue. Most scholars agree that modern (Western) technology and culture are salient in globalisation, but also that the current discussions

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[12] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000, pp. 37–39.

[13] Lorne L. Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements and Globalization: A Theoretical Prolegomenon", presented at the International Society for the Sociology of Religion Conference, Toulouse, France, July 10, 1997. (Unpublished); Scholte, *Globalization*, pp. 62–88; Yves Brunsvick and André Danzin, *Birth of a civilization. The shock of globalization*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 1999.

[14] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*; Anthony D. King, "The Times and Spaces of Modernity (Or Who Needs Postmodernism?)", in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities*, London, Sage, 1995, pp. 108–123; Göran Therborn, "Routes to/through Modernity", in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities*, London, Sage, 1995, pp. 124–139; Robertson, "Globalization, Modernization, and Postmodernization".

[15] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991, pp. 10–34; Tony Spybey, "The Constitution of Global Society", in Christopher G. A. Bryant and David Jary (eds.), *The Contemporary Giddens. Social Theory in a Globalizing Age*, Houndmills, Palgrave, 2001, pp. 147–167; Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity", in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities*, London, Sage, 1995, pp. 25–44; Pieterse, "Globalization as Hybridization".

of globalisation do not imply simple cultural homogenisation like the earlier "westernisation" or "modernisation" theories.[16] If modernity and globalisation are linked, at least "multiple modernities" rather than "modernity" are involved, and local cultural particularities are often seen to be emphasised simultaneously with an acceptance of global cultural themes.[17] Globalisation therefore may result in cultural *homogenisation* as well as *heterogenisation* through "an increasingly globe-wide discourse of locality, community, home and the like."[18] Thus, it is not a question of either homogenisation (by the force of the global) or heterogenisation (by the force of the local)—both these tendencies are empirically influential.[19]

From World System Theories to Globalisation Theories

Many of the scholars who contributed to the discussions of defining and delimiting globalisation during the late 1980s and the 1990s were influenced by the world-system thinking pioneered by Immanuel Wallerstein in the 1970s and 1980s. Wallerstein's historical world-system analysis emphasised the role of the capitalist world-economy in creating a separation of the nation states into three geo-political divisions: core, periphery and semiperiphery.[20] Following Wallerstein, many globalisation scholars apply the long historical view and trace present-day globalisation back to earlier epochs in European history, usually around 1500.[21] For example, Robert Wuthnow leans heavily on

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[16] Ferguson, "The Mythology about Globalization", pp. 79–82; John H. Simpson, "Globalization and Religion. Themes and Prospects", in Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett (eds.), *Religion and Global Order. Religion and the Political Order*, vol. 4, New York, Paragon House, 1991, pp. 1–17.

[17] Scholte, *Globalization*, pp. 161–164.

[18] Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity", in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities*, London, Sage, 1995, pp. 25–44 (quotation p. 31).

[19] Robertson, "Glocalization", p. 27; Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, pp. 32ff.

[20] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System. Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York, Academic Press, 1974; Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System II. Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750*, San Diego, Academic Press, 1980; Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System III. The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730–1840s*, San Diego, Academic Press, 1989.

[21] William R. Garrett and Roland Robertson, "Religion and Globalization. An Introduction", in Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett (eds.), *Religion and Global Order. Religion and the Political Order*, vol. 4, New York, Paragon House, 1991, pp. ix–xxiii; Roland Robertson, "The Globalization Paradigm: Thinking Globally", in David G. Bromley (ed.), *Religion and the Social Order*, vol. 1, *New Developments in Theory and Research*, Greenwich, Jai Press, 1991, pp. 207–224.

Wallerstein in a sweeping analysis of the possible conjunction between various forms of religious renewal and critical changes in world order during the last five hundred years.[22] The core-periphery relation also serves as the point of departure for the anthropologist Ulf Hannerz' theory of creolisation.[23] In fact, Wallerstein stands as a great inspirator in the globalisation discussion, also for those who are otherwise critical of his Marxist-inspired, mono-centrist approach.[24]

John W. Meyer largely agrees with Wallerstein, but he puts more emphasis on the nation states as political actors in a world system. He proposes that Wallerstein's economic, unipolar approach alone cannot account for the persistency of the modern states, and he argues that there is an international system of rules, which legitimates and supports the authority of rationalised nation states.[25] Globalisation may change the rules and empty the states of some of their traditional functions, but by all probability, an international system supportive of the particular role of states will continue for a long time and set the scene of world politics.[26]

Wallerstein's approach focuses on the forces of economy in shaping globalisation, but as emphasised by Robertson (and most other critics of Wallerstein), this is a rather narrow approach, and other dimensions of globalisation are needed "to 'thicken' the study of the world as a whole."[27] In his critical review of the current approaches to globalisation, Scholte is therefore on a par with Robertson when he maintains that globalisation must be studied as a multi-dimensional

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[22] Robert Wuthnow, "World Order and Religious Movements", in Albert Bergesen (ed.), *Studies of the Modern World-System*, New York, Academic Press, 1980, pp. 57–75.

[23] Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the Social Organisation of Meaning*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1992, pp. 217–267. Creolisation is mentioned on pp. 264–266.

[24] Albert Bergesen, "From Utilitarianism to Globology: The Shift from the Individual to the World as a Whole as the Primordial Unit of Analysis", in Albert Bergesen (ed.), *Studies of the Modern World-System*, New York, Academic Press, 1980, pp. 1–12; Frank J. Lechner, "Cultural Aspects of the Modern World-System", in William H. Swatos, Jr. (ed.), *Religious Politics in Global and Comparative Perspective*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1989, pp. 11–27; John H. Simpson, "Globalization and Religion. Themes and Prospects", in Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett (eds.), *Religion and Global Order. Religion and the Political Order Volume IV*, New York, Paragon House Publishers, 1991, pp. 1–17.

[25] John W. Meyer, "The World Polity and the Authority of the Nation-State", in Albert Bergesen (ed.), *Studies of the Modern World-System*, New York, Academic Press, 1980, pp. 109–137.

[26] Mohammed A. Bamyeh, *The Ends of Globalization*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000, pp. 1–8.

[27] Robertson, "The Globalization Paradigm" (quotation p. 215).

phenomenon, which involves, among other things, economy, gover-
nance, technology and rationalist knowledge.[28] This view is also close
to that of Anthony Giddens, who suggests four dimensions of glob-
alisation (the global information system, the global nation-state system,
the global capitalist economy, and the global military order) in an
analysis of the development of the nation states in a global nation-
state system.[29]

    Sociologist Peter Beyer also highlights the need for a multi-dimen-
sional approach to studying globalisation in the theoretical section
of his book *Religion and Globalisation*, and he therefore instructively
reviews four major contributors to the study of globalisation and reli-
gion.[30] These four scholars, whose approaches outline four different
dimensions of globalisation, are Immanuel Wallerstein (global econ-
omy) and John W. Meyer (global polity)—both briefly introduced
above—plus Roland Robertson (global culture), and Niklas Luhmann
(global society).[31] Except for Roland Robertson, whose work is pre-
sented more comprehensively below, these authors do not directly
address the position of religion in a world undergoing globalisation,
only obliquely, to use Beyer's expression.[32] The same could be said
about Anthony Giddens, who occasionally treats religion and its
resurgence in modern society, but has not given it special attention
with regard to globalisation.

    It is also indicative of the peripheral role of religion in most the-
oretical approaches to globalisation that standard textbooks on glob-
alisation typically devote less than two per cent of many hundreds
of pages to the role of religion in globalisation, and these few pages
deal primarily with a discussion of Islamic reactions to westernisation
and modernisation.[33] A symposium held in 2002 on "New Religions

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    [28] Scholte, *Globalization*, p. 3.
    [29] Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence. Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1985.
    [30] Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, London, Sage, 1994.
    [31] In an earlier review concerning the themes of globalisation and religion, Simpson concentrated on presenting the different approaches to the study of globalisation in the works of Wallerstein, Meyer and Robertson, respectively, while Luhmann is dis-cussed in a longer note. Simpson thus agrees with Beyer that these four authors represent the different important perspectives on religion and globalisation devel-oped so far. Simpson, "Globalization and Religion. Themes and Prospects".
    [32] Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, p. 30.
    [33] John Baylis and Steve Smith (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics. An intro-duction to international relations*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 40–43, p. 100, p. 151, p. 457, pp. 460–467; David Held and Anthony McGrew (eds.), *The*

and Globalisation. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives" indicated, however, a rising interest in discussing theoretical approaches to the study of religion and globalisation.[34]

Roland Robertson's Concept of Relativisation

Among the students of globalisation, the sociologist of religion Roland Robertson is a particularly significant contributor to the understanding of religion and globalisation. He has been interested in the issue of globalisation since the mid-1960s, although the word globalisation was not used then.[35] Robertson claims that his broad cultural approach makes his treatment of globalisation different from that of Wallerstein and other world-system theorists who have dominated much of the early globalisation discussion.[36] His ambition is to present a cultural analysis of how both individuals and groups are coping with making sense out of a world undergoing globalisation, or to use his headline: "Coming to Terms with the World as a Whole".[37]

Globalisation brings foreign people, foreign goods, and foreign customs in close contact with local people, the local culture is contrasted with the foreign, and all individuals involved must find their own position in this process. In a seminal paper from 1985, Roland Robertson and JoAnn Chirico proposed that this cultural interaction between the local and the global implies a *relativisation* of individuals as well as of societies. By relativisation they meant "a process involving the placing of sociocultural or psychic entities in larger categorical contexts, such that the relativised entities are constrained to be more self-reflexive relative to other entities in the larger context."[38]

Relativisation should not be thought of as being confined to mind and speech—it influences the social actor in all respects. Communities

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Global Transformations Reader. An Introduction to the Globalization Debate, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, pp. 6–7, pp. 49–50, p. 63, pp. 83–84, p. 196, p. 200, p. 234, p. 359, p. 454, pp. 456–457. These two books are widely applied textbooks; the former refers mainly to Islam (pp. 460–467), the latter has scattered references to Christianity, Islam and Hinduism.

[34] Armin W. Geertz, Margit Warburg, and Dorthe Refslund Christensen (eds.), *New Religions and Globalization. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press (forthcoming).

[35] Robertson, "The Globalization Paradigm", pp. 207–208.

[36] Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 14–15.

[37] Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 25.

[38] Roland Robertson and JoAnn Chirico, "Humanity, Globalization, and Worldwide Religious Resurgence: A Theoretical Exploration", *Sociological Analysis*, 1985, vol. 46, pp. 219–242.

and individuals today can not escape the fact that to an increasing
extent they encounter others and are presented with alternative atti-
tudes towards even fundamental issues of society and with different
ways of doing things. Some of these alternatives are attractive, some
are repulsive, but with certainty, they are conceived of as pertinent.
Relativisation means that fundamental values and mental images of
society and culture to an increasing extent are contrasted with a
complex of different values and images, and that they—more or less
explicitly—are interpreted, debated and acted upon in this context.

Since religion deals with fundamental cultural values and images,
Robertson and Chirico centred their discussion around processes of
relativisation to account for the resurgence of religion in the mod-
ern world. Religious groups may oppose or endorse the trends of
globalisation, but they cannot avoid them, and the resurgence of reli-
gion therefore is not just a manifestation of resistance to the increased
relativisation following globalisation.[39]

Peter Beyer's Approach

Peter Beyer's position in the globalisation discussion is inspired by
Niklas Luhmann, although Beyer also draws upon Robertson. Following
Luhmann, Beyer perceives globalisation as the culmination of a
long-term change in the differentiation of society. With functional
differentiation, societal systems have evolved that define and organise
themselves in a communicative interaction with other similar systems
in the world. Examples of "systems", according to Luhmann, include
the educational system, the legal system, the health care system etc.

From this Luhmannian platform, Peter Beyer analyses some of the
issues that are facing religious groups when differentiation and glob-
alisation bring about increased relativisation.[40] When a religion domi-
nates in a given society, its followers often insist on representing the
moral codes of the society as a whole. Increased relativisation, how-

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[39] Lorne L. Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements
and Globalization: A Theoretical Prolegomenon", *Journal for the Scientific Study of
Religion*, vol. 37, 1998, pp. 580–595; James A. Beckford, "Religious Movements and
Globalization", in Robin Cohen and Shirin M. Rai (eds.), *Global Social Movements*,
London, The Athlone Press, 2000, pp. 165–219.

[40] Peter F. Beyer, "Globalism and Inclusion: Theoretical Remarks on the
Non-Solidary Society", in William H. Swatos, Jr. (ed.), *Religious Politics in Global and
Comparative Perspective*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1989, pp. 39–53; Beyer, *Religion
and Globalization*, pp. 70–96.

ever, may deprive religious moral codes of their former hegemony. Beyer proposes that as a consequence of this, religious communities can choose one of two options if they are to continue to have a public role: the liberal option or the conservative option.[41] In brief, the liberal option is to embrace particular aspects of the globalisation process, accept pluralism as a consequence of globalisation and attain a benign, ecumenical attitude towards other religions. The conservative option implies that relativisation and pluralism are seen as negative and must be counteracted by insisting that "the others" are models of evil and negations of one's own moral codes.

Elsewhere, I have expanded on Peter Beyer's theoretical perspective of liberal versus conservative religious options, both in a specific analysis of Baha'i and in a general discussion of its usefulness in globalisation studies.[42] My analysis of the Baha'is, in particular Baha'i thoughts on a possible future Baha'i theocracy, has been discussed somewhat critically by Sen McGlinn.[43] This issue is discussed more in depth in Chapter 5.

A possible third option, which Beyer does not discuss, namely detachment from the public arena, will lead to loss of influence in public affairs. This may be acceptable to some religious groups, such as Old Order Amish, but certainly not to many other religious organisations. As discussed by Rudolph, religious groups are indeed part of civil society, and they are both visible and influential.[44]

In a later paper, Beyer looks at the major religious traditions that have secularisation and differentiation as a common problem.[45] Beyer proposes that these religious traditions constitute a global religious system, which develops through inter-religious discussions of common issues in *fora* such as the Parliament of World Religions held in 1993 and in 1999. In 1993, this Parliament succeeded in presenting a

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[41] Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, pp. 70–96.

[42] Margit Warburg, "Baha'i: A Religious Approach to Globalization", *Social Compass*, vol. 46, 1999, pp. 47–56; Margit Warburg, "Religion and Globalisation, or Globalisation and Religion?", in Armin W. Geertz, Margit Warburg, and Dorthe Refslund Christensen (eds.), *New Religions and Globalization. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press (forthcoming).

[43] Sen McGlinn, "A Difficult Case: Beyer's Categories and the Bahá'í Faith", *Social Compass*, vol. 50, 2003, pp. 247–255.

[44] Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "Dehomogenizing Religious Formations", in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (eds.), *Transnational Religion and Fading States*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1997, pp. 243–261.

[45] Peter Beyer, "The Religious System of Global Society: A Sociological Look at Contemporary Religion and Religions", *Numen*, vol. 45, 1998, pp. 1–29.

common declaration on a global ethic.[46] Discussions continue on the formulation of universally acceptable rules of ethics based on considerations of doctrinal agreement between different religions.[47] The Baha'is also take initiatives in that direction, as is briefly mentioned in Chapter 11.

Quite a few scholars of religion have examined a particular empirical field in the light of globalisation.[48] However, it must be concluded that very few globalisation theorists—with Roland Robertson and Peter Beyer as the notable exceptions—have really addressed the issue of religion and globalisation from a general theoretical angle.[49]

ROLAND ROBERTSON'S GLOBAL FIELD MODEL

A cornerstone of Roland Robertson's perspective on the study of globalisation and religion is his globalisation model, which he first developed with JoAnn Chirico in 1980.[50] Robertson and Chirico began developing the model, called the global field, by considering individuals and national societies as the two primary social actors in

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[46] Richard H. Roberts, "Globalised Religion?: The 'Parliament of the World's Religions' (Chicago 1993) in Theoretical Perspective", *Journal of Contemporary Religions*, vol. 10, 1995, pp. 121–137; Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 108–109.

[47] Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes, *The Study of Religion in an Age of Global Dialogue*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2000.

[48] The books edited by Garrett and Robertson and by Wade Clark Roof, respectively, contain a number of such contributions. Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett (eds.), *Religion and Global Order. Religion and the Political Order*, vol. 4, New York, Paragon House, 1991; Wade Clark Roof (ed.), *World Order and Religion*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1991. Newer examples are: Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, *New Religions as Global Cultures. Making the Human Sacred*, Boulder, Westview, 1997; Mikael Rothstein (ed.), *New Age Religion and Globalization*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2001; David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2002.

[49] William Swatos builds on Robertson and Chirico, "Humanity, Globalization, and Worldwide Religious Resurgence", and attempts to integrate the contributions from Wallerstein and Meyer, by formulating what he denotes as a loose set of hypotheses; see William H. Swatos, Jr., "Ultimate Values in Politics: Problems and Prospects for World Society", in William H. Swatos, Jr. (ed.), *Religious Politics in Global and Comparative Perspective*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1989, pp. 55–73. However, he does not seem to have pursued this lead later.

[50] They presented the model at a conference in 1980. It was published in 1985 in Robertson and Chirico, "Humanity, Globalization, and Worldwide Religious Resurgence", see Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 31, note 2.

the globalisation process. Their original contribution to the classical sociological issue of individuals versus society included in the pattern of relativisations two additional empirically-based constituents of the world called the "world system of societies" and "humankind". The world system of societies is the system of international diplomacy and its institutions such as the United Nations and other supra-national political bodies. Humankind is the six thousand million human inhabitants of the earth.

Robertson and Chirico maintain that with the process of globalisation these two global entities—the world system of societies and humankind—have become increasingly significant in determining how individuals and national societies conceive of the world. They argue that one outcome of globalisation is that an individual's identity is no longer solely tied to his/her national society (which in many but not all cases is congruent with the nation state)—individuals increasingly tend to get cultural inspiration from other societies or identify themselves with humankind as a universal concept. Likewise, in a globalised world, the national societies are both politically and, with respect to cultural identity, heavily related to other national societies and to the world system of societies, represented by the United Nations and other supra-national political bodies.

Robertson and Chirico's global field model (with slight modifications, which are discussed below) is shown in Figure 3.1. The model is a square that ties together the four entities at its corners: individuals, national societies, the world system of societies and humankind. The left vertical arrow symbolises the relation between individuals and national society, which is a classical object of study in sociology. The right vertical arrow stands for the relation between the world system of societies and humankind—a relation that Robertson denotes, without further explanation, as "*Realpolitik*-humanity problematic" (He might have been considering, for example, the Western powers' resistance against fair trade conditions for agricultural products from Africa, South Asia and Latin America). The two vertical relations are connected with four processes of relativisation, as shown on the figure (the horizontal and oblique arrows).

Since its introduction, the model has been altered in significant ways by Robertson, although these changes have not eased the presentation and discussion of the model. For example, when describing the global field model in 1992, Robertson used the term "selves" instead of "individuals" in the figure itself, but in the text he used

Figure 3.1. *Roland Robertson's Global Field Model*
(Adapted from Robertson, *Globalisation*, 1992)
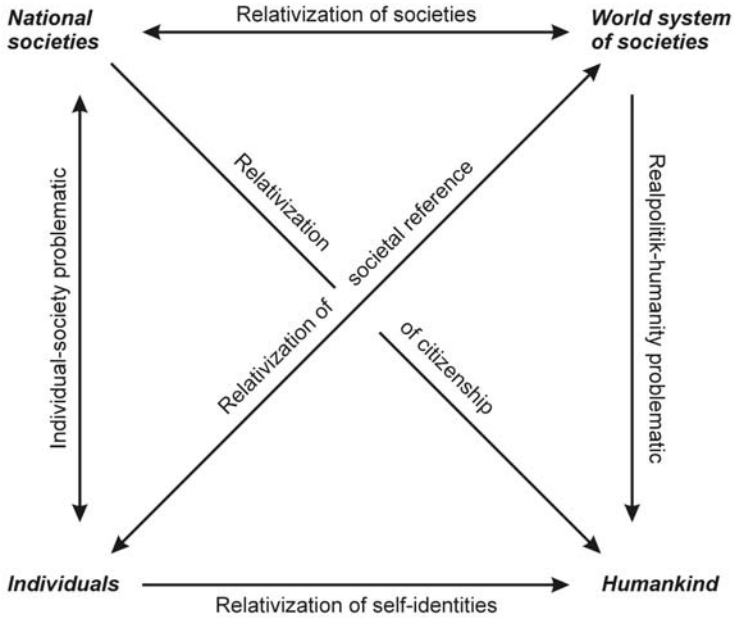
both terms, and in the later chapters and in a subsequent publication he continued to use the term "individuals", which he also used in an earlier work.[51] "Selves" was used the first time the model was proposed in 1985.[52] As discussed below, I wish to emphasise the social actor in the model, and I therefore do as Robertson largely does and use the term "individuals", which I find is the most apt expression of the two for a personal social actor. In general, I am sceptical about Robertson's trend of de-emphasising social action in favour of more cognitive aspects of globalisation, when the goal is to understand and analyse religion and globalisation.

The final version of the global field model from 1992 was drawn

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[51] Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 25–31; Robertson, "The Globalization Paradigm", 1991; Robertson, "Glocalization", 1995; Roland Robertson, "Religion and the Global Field", *Social Compass*, vol. 41, 1994, pp. 121–135.

[52] Robertson and Chirico, "Humanity, Globalization, and Worldwide Religious Resurgence".

as a fully symmetrical figure with double-pointed arrows at each cor-
ner.[53] However, I find this graphical use of arrows debatable, because
only three of the four reference points (individuals, national societies
and the world system of societies) represent social actors in the true
sense of this concept, although this was Robertson's explicit intention:

> To put it yet another way, my model is conceived as an attempt to
> make analytical and interpretative sense of how quotidian *actors*, col-
> lective or individual, go about the business of conceiving of the world,
> including attempts to *deny* that the world is one.[54]

Individuals are social actors, of course. Governments act on behalf
of the national societies, and governments together can act as well,
usually in conjunction with the institutions of the world system of
societies. The fourth reference point, humankind, is not a social actor,
however, because there is no institution to act on behalf of humanity.[55]
Processes and relations involving humankind, therefore, should be
perceived as unidirectional, from one of the other three corners to
humankind. To emphasise this, I have omitted arrows pointing *away*
from "humankind", as shown in the figure.

   Robertson and Chirico also considered this issue of whether to
use one-way or two-way arrows in the model:

> Finally, it must be very strongly emphasized that, even though for the
> *present* purposes we have schematically indicated processes of rela-
> tivization in terms of one-way arrows[,] the implication of our discus-
> sion is that the global-human circumstance *per se* can be most fruitfully
> represented analytically in terms of an entire series of two-way arrows.[56]

They did not substantiate this "implication", however. In 1992,
Robertson left the far from trivial choice between one-way or two-
way arrows untouched and did not explain why he now prefers two-
way arrows all around.

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[53] Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 27.
[54] Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 26. The first emphasis is mine, the second is
Robertson's.
[55] Simpson concludes that Robertson's view of the world as a system pragmati-
cally implies that "Selves, societies, and the system of nation-states are autonomous,
underwritten actors operating in a milieu of minimal formal constraint," thereby
indicating that "humankind" is not an actor. See Simpson, "Globalization and
Religion. Themes and Prospects", p. 12. Tiryakian also notes that Robertson could
have addressed the question of action more in depth; see pp. 309–310 in Tiryakian,
"From Modernization to Globalization".
[56] Robertson and Chirico, "Humanity, Globalization, and Worldwide Religious
Resurgence" (quotation p. 238). The comma in brackets is my addition.

A Theory or a Model?

When reviewing the discussion of Robertson's approach, it appears that it is not entirely clear whether it has resulted in a theory of globalisation, or in an analytical model of the interactions between what Robertson calls "the basic and most general ingredients" of the world of today.[57] William Garrett and Lorne Dawson both call it a globalisation theory, while Edward Tiryakian sees it as a contribution to globalisation analysis.[58]

Without denying the importance of economy or politics in shaping world affairs, Robertson wishes to emphasise a socio-cultural logic as a driving force in global change. This speaks for calling his approach a theory or at least a "theory sketch", to use John Simpson's words.[59] Several critics have argued that if Robertson's global field is regarded as a theory, its implicit cultural monism may make it suffer from the same reductionism that Robertson criticised in his discussion of Wallerstein's theory.[60] Robertson seems to be conscious of that, because he attempts to distinguish between what he calls the forces or mechanisms of globalisation (which largely seem to be economics) and the "disputed terms in which globalization has occurred and is occurring" (which seems to refer to political and cultural principles that are disputed, such as human rights).[61] His main concern is the discussion of the "disputed terms", which he finds have been neglected in the study of globalisation.[62] His distinction, which is not elaborated further, seems to be equivalent to a Marxist distinction between basis and superstructure.

The issue of theoretical reductionism raised above is less pertinent if Robertson's approach is regarded as an analytical model. As men-

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[57] Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 77–78.

[58] William R. Garrett, "Thinking Religion in the Global Circumstance: A Critique of Roland Robertson's Globalization Theory", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 31, 1992, pp. 296–303; Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements and Globalization"; Tiryakian, "From Modernization to Globalization".

[59] John H. Simpson, "Globalization, the Active Self, and Religion: A Theory Sketch", in William H. Swatos, Jr. (ed.), *Religious Politics in Global and Comparative Perspective*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1989, pp. 29–38 (indirect quotation p. 30).

[60] Robertson's critique of Wallerstein is found in Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 68–69, p. 75. The critique of Robertson is found in Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, pp. 31–33, in Tiryakian, "From Modernization to Globalization", and in Turner, "The Concept of 'The World'".

[61] Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 28–29.

[62] Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 29.

tioned, in Robertson's own presentation of the global field figure, he is specifically denoting it a *model* of "the global whole" or of the "global-human condition".[63] Then, the question of whether it is true or false need not be posed—the pertinent issue instead is how *applicable* is the model in empirical analyses. To my knowledge, this has not been seriously tested yet, neither by Robertson himself nor by others. In 1989, Swatos presented and discussed Robertson and Chirico's model and concluded that "more work needs to be done".[64] In 1992, Tiryakian also called for "rigorous analyses grounded in empirical evidence".[65] In 1995, Jonathan Friedman reviewed Robertson's revised model (from 1992), and he also indicated that the model had not been evaluated empirically.[66] Dawson subsequently challenged in general terms its applicability for the study of new religious movements and his critique will be expounded on later in this chapter.[67] Finally, Lene Sjørup has referred to Robertson's four constituents of the global field in an analysis of how the Roman Catholic Church has negotiated women's sexual and reproductive health and rights in different *fora*, but her main concern was not to evaluate the model.[68]

This lack of interest in empirical applications of Robertson's model is puzzling, not the least because Robertson and Chirico initially meant to use the model for analysing the place of religion in the globalisation process, which they found was a central issue.[69] I propose that a reason for this apparent lack of applicability might be that the model is majority-oriented and therefore does not adequately

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[63] Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 25–27.

[64] William H. Swatos, Jr., "The Kingdom of God and the World of Man: The Problem of Religious Politics", in William H. Swatos, Jr. (ed.), *Religious Politics in Global and Comparative Perspective*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1989, pp. 1–9 (quotation p. 4).

[65] Tiryakian, "From Modernization to Globalization" (quotation p. 310).

[66] After his presentation of Robertson's model, Friedman continues with a discussion of relativisation and other important issues in the globalisation debate, and he never returns to evaluate the model empirically. Jonathan Friedman, "Global System, Globalization and the Parameters of Modernity", in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities*, London, Sage, 1995, pp. 69–90.

[67] Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements and Globalization".

[68] Lene Sjørup, "Religion and Reproduction: The Vatican as an Actor in the Global Field", *Gender, Technology and Development*, vol. 3, 1999, pp. 379–410.

[69] Robertson and Chirico, "Humanity, Globalization, and Worldwide Religious Resurgence".

consider that many religious organisations, even the larger ones, represent transnational *minority* groups.[70] This embodies my main argument for expanding it to what I call the *dual* global field model. Before making this expansion however, the different components and features of Robertson's global field model must be critically clarified.

AN EVALUATION OF ROLAND ROBERTSON'S GLOBAL FIELD MODEL

My own assessment of the central elements of Robertson's global field model is, in brief, that it is appealing and insightful, but also that the clarification of the underpinnings of its plausibility and analytical usefulness is a task often left unfinished by Robertson himself. This comment should by no means overshadow Robertson's pioneering achievements in the study of religion and globalisation. However, Robertson rarely evaluates his theoretical concepts, including the details of the global field model, using empirical evidence, but moves on, treating many topics at the same time in a broad, associative discussion with numerous other authors from different fields. A similar critique of Robertson's way of presenting his approach has been raised before.[71] My reason for emphasising this critique is that this limitation has necessitated that I devote considerable space to a simultaneous presentation and substantiation of some of the details in Robertson's global field model and other parts of his approach to globalisation, in order to develop the basis for my own dual global field model.

The "Societal Level" in Robertson's Global Field Model

I will begin by discussing Robertson's choice of the term "national society". His use of this term instead of "nation state" (which in many cases would be congruent with "national society") is motivated by his wish to view globalisation in a broad cultural perspective.[72] In Robertson's discussion of what he calls the "structuring of the world", he is critical of placing the nation state as one of the entities

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[70] Garrett raises the critique that the model fails to account for ethnicity; see Garrett, "Thinking Religion in the Global Circumstance". This is another, more indirect, way of noting the majority-orientation of the model.

[71] Tiryakian, "From Modernization to Globalization".

[72] Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 58.

in a world system model that deals with the cultural aspects of globalisation, and he therefore coins another unit of analysis, the "national society".[73] He is here in agreement with Ulf Hannerz, who also stresses that it is often misleading in the study of contemporary cultural processes to equate "society" with the state.[74] However, the term "national society" needs more support from arguments than Robertson immediately provides in his establishment of the global field model.

One argument in favour of the term national society is that most modern states are multinational, and minority groups constitute different and clearly identifiable cultural entities within the borders of the state. However, it should be realised that any local group cannot be recognised as a *national* society in the model. In a parallel discussion about defining ethnicity, this issue has been considered by Richard Jenkins, who points to the difficulty of classifying ethnic identity among identities ranging from the one based on the local community to the national and even continental levels.[75] Robertson does not really discuss this, but I suggest that in relation to the state, the "national society" must have some kind of special political autonomy in a particular territory. The degree of internal autonomy may range from permission to use the group's own language to near independence with the group's own flag and national football team (like Greenland in relation to Denmark). Without any kind of such autonomy, the word "national society" seems to me to have little meaning.

Some of the contemporary international conflicts, such as the war in Kosovo and its aftermaths, the wars in Chechnya, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, involve non-state entities that nevertheless are recognised players on the global political scene. This also speaks for the term national society.

Robertson also might have had a better argument for his model if he had discussed the nature of the "world system of societies" in more detail. I agree with Beyer in his critique that Robertson has

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[73] Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 49–57.

[74] See p. 126 in Ulf Hannerz, "Scenarios for Peripheral Cultures", in Anthony D. King (ed.), *Culture, Globalization and the World-System. Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1991, pp. 107–128. See also Beyer's discussion on this in Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, p. 32.

[75] Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity. Arguments and Explorations*, London, Sage, 1997, pp. 40–43.

elaborated too little on what he means by this term.[76] As I see it, an example of the "world system of societies" of today would be the United Nations System and its associated organisations. In a historical analysis, it is obvious to equate the "world system of societies" with institutions such as the League of Nations and other more or less institutionalised historical systems of international diplomatic relations since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

Although only states can have a seat in the General Assembly, the United Nations System is a political forum for a host of non-state organisations as well.[77] By the rules of classical diplomacy, the direct interaction of individuals and interest groups with the world system of societies should not take place, because both individuals and interest groups are represented by the state. However, as discussed by Scholte, in recent decades, private citizens (individuals in the model) and interest groups to an increasing extent can bypass the state and interact directly with the world system of societies, using non-governmental organisations as a main vehicle for this.[78] By "interest groups", I mean not only trade associations and the like, but also, for example, lobby groups for indigenous peoples, which offer these small "national societies" a political platform. An example is the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, which is a political intranational organisation representing the Inuit people of four arctic states and working for the political and cultural interests of these people.[79] Such cross-state indigenous peoples' organisations are gaining increasing support from the United Nations System, and this is another indicator of the weakening of traditional state sovereignty with globalisation.[80] It also speaks for the use of "national societies" instead of nation states.

There are more than five hundred transnational NGOs that have consultative status at the United Nations System through ECOSOC (The Economic and Social Council). The Baha'i International Community is one of them, having obtained its consultative status in 1970.[81]

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[76] Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, p. 31.

[77] Donatella della Porta and Hanspeter Kriesi, "Social Movements in a Globalizing World: an Introduction" in Donatella della Porta, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Dieter Rucht (eds.), *Social Movements in a Globalizing World*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999, pp. 3–22.

[78] Scholte, *Globalization*, pp. 151–155.

[79] "Inuit Circumpolar Conference", http://www.inuit.org.

[80] Scholte, *Globalization*, pp. 166–169.

[81] Peter Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2000, p. 69.

Most of these NGOs represent groups of individuals who share a particular professional, religious, cultural, or political interest in the work of the NGO. It is furthermore interesting that the United Nations System not only allows these NGOs a platform for expressing their views—these are often idealistic programs for the benefit of humanity as a whole—but that the United Nations System also officially assigns the NGOs a crucial role complementary to the role of the nation states. In connection with the series of world summits, the United Nations secretary general expressed this view explicitly.[82] In fact, the United Nations summits meant a significant break with the state monopoly on representing political opinions internationally, and they may signal the emergence of what Susanne Rudolph calls a transnational civil society.[83] The process of relativisation between "individuals" and the "world system of societies" is thereby mediated in *both* directions, showing that it is justified in the global field model to use a double-headed arrow between these two actors.

Totality and Dynamics of the Global Field Model

The issue of totality concerns the following obvious question: if the model is meant to be a model of the world, can there be anything *outside* it in a sociological sense? Robertson is well aware of this problem and emphasises that the model does not attempt to be the basis for a total analysis of all present and potential actors of a global field.[84] Rather, the model facilitates an analysis of how the interactions or relativisations may vary in particular cases.[85]

It is also essential to consider the dynamics of the model. Robertson emphasises that his global field model is a model of the relativisations between four major, basically contemporary empirical constituents of a globalised world.[86] However, the content and strength of the relativisations between "individuals", "national societies", the "world

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[82] In the United Nations document *The World Conferences*, 1997, which summarises the achievements of the summits, the significance of the NGOs is emphasised repeatedly in the preface and the introduction. *The World Conferences. Developing Priorities for the 21st Century*, New York, United Nations Department of Public Information, 1997.

[83] Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "Introduction: Religion, States, and Transnational Civil Society", in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (eds.), *Transnational Religion and Fading States*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1997, pp. 1–24.

[84] Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 25–26.

[85] Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 26.

[86] Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 26.

system of societies", and "humankind" change with time, and they do so because the contents of the four constituents are historical and change with time. This is the diachronic or dynamic aspect of the model and it is apparent below in the discussion of the historical development of the global field. For example, the world system of societies in the form of the United Nations System is different, more complex and more influential than was its predecessor, the League of Nations.

Robertson's Global Field Model in a Historical Perspective

Robertson illustrates the diachronic, dynamic aspect of his global field model when he discusses globalisation in a historical perspective. He links globalisation with European history from the Renaissance until today, dividing the historical process of globalisation into five phases.[87] Robertson denotes the first of the five historical phases of European history the "germinal" phase and he proposes that it lasted from the early fifteenth to the mid-eighteenth century, that is, roughly the period from the first attempts at exploring the globe to the beginning of the Enlightenment.[88] According to Robertson, during this period there was an accentuation of concepts of the individual and ideas about humanity, which means that two of the reference points in the global field model were conceptualised. The "incipient" phase was next and it lasted from about 1750 to the 1870s. In this period there was a shift towards the ideas of the homogenous nation state, citizenship and formalised international relations, ideas that address the other two reference points.

Robertson calls the third phase the "take-off" phase, and this covers the fifty years of European imperialism at its heyday from the 1870s to the 1920s. In this period, the globalising tendencies developed into a system with distinct conceptions of and relations between the four reference points of the global field: individuals, national societies, the world system of societies and humankind. The subsequent two phases, called the "struggle-for-hegemony" phase and the "uncertainty" phase, lasted from the 1920s to the 1960s and from the 1960s until today. The last half of the last phase coincides with the period when globalisation was broadly discovered by academia.

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[87] Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 57–60.
[88] This is approximately the same period that is covered by Wallerstein's two first volumes of *The Modern World System*.

Robertson's five phases in the globalisation process imply that the expansion of European culture and power since around 1500 was a dominating force leading to globalisation. This assumption is prevalent among globalisation theorists—however, as pointed out by the historian A. G. Hopkins, other regions of the world were not passive recipients of European culture and power in the period after 1500. Hopkins criticises the current globalisation discussion for having a pronounced Western bias and argues that the process of globalisation until ca. 1850 was also accelerated by the economic and political expansion of several Asian states and empires, notably China and the Mughal Empire of India.[89]

After around 1850, however, Western economic and military dominance became so overwhelming that it is reasonable to regard Western influence as a principal, although not the only, force of globalisation. It is a global reality that today all societies are affected by (but have not always accepted) a capitalist mode of production, Western ideas on rationality and the "good" society, the concept of universal human rights, and Western technology. These are essentially products of European culture and power since the Renaissance, and there is no justification in denying that globalisation is strongly flavoured by European (Western) culture. As pointed out by Beckford, Western religious ideas, notably those represented by Protestant sects, have played a historical role in globalisation as well.[90]

Robertson does not claim that his division in historical phases is anything more than an outline, which awaits more detail and more analyses to be conducted. One problem is that he underestimates the non-European factor in globalisation, cf. Hopkins' critique, which reduces the analytical potential of his periodisation, in particular the first three phases. The sketchy nature of Robertson's historical divisions of globalisation notwithstanding, his emphasis on the crucial significance of the period from about 1870 to about 1925 seems generally accepted.[91] During those years, all parts of the world began to feel the impact of international economy, and for the first time in history,

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[89] A. G. Hopkins, "The History of Globalization—and the Globalization of History?", in A. G. Hopkins (ed.), *Globalization in World History*, London, Pimlico, 2002, pp. 11–46.

[90] Beckford, "Religious Movements and Globalization".

[91] Jan Aart Scholte expands the period to cover the hundred years from the 1850s to the 1950s, but this does not contradict the significance of the central period 1870–1925, see Scholte, *Globalization*, pp. 65–74.

instant long-distance communication (telegraph, radio) between peo-
ple became possible. Robertson also lists a number of changes and
cultural innovations that he finds are indicative of this take-off phase,
such as the inclusion of a number of non-European societies in "inter-
national society", the appearance of the first "international novels",
a rise of ecumenical movements, the development of global compe-
titions (the Olympics, the Nobel prizes), the implementation of world
time zones, and the near-global adoption of the Gregorian calendar.[92]
Robertson has been criticised for his neglect of the role of technol-
ogy in the globalisation process; this neglect is surprising, because it
would have strengthened his arguments.[93]

The Emergence of Baha'i and the Take-off of Globalisation

It is notable that the period between 1870 and 1925 coincides with
the period from Baha'u'llah's open claim of prophethood in 1868
to the death of Abdu'l-Baha in 1921. It was during this period that
Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha formalised the Baha'i principles for
world unity. In 1868, the Baha'i leadership began to address the
Baha'i message *outside* the Shi'i context when Baha'u'llah wrote a
series of letters to various heads of states. By the end of the period,
Baha'i had attained a firm foothold in the West, and it had effectively
transgressed the borders of Shi'ism.

   This synchrony between the take-off of globalisation and the emer-
gence of Baha'i on the world scene should not be dismissed as
insignificant. A letter from Abdu'l-Baha illustrates that already in the
first decade of the 1900s, he was acutely aware of the process that
is now called globalisation and of the factors promoting this process.[94]

> In cycles gone by, though harmony was established, yet, owing to the
> absence of means, the unity of all mankind could not have been achieved.
> Continents remained widely divided, nay even among the peoples of
> one and the same continent association and interchange of thought
> were well nigh impossible. Consequently intercourse, understanding

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[92] Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 59.

[93] Tiryakian, "From Modernization to Globalization", p. 309; Scholte, *Globalization*,
pp. 99−101.

[94] The letter is subsequently known as "Seven Lights (or Candles) of Unity". It
was written by Abdu'l-Baha to Mrs. J. E. Whyte of Edinburgh, after she and her
husband visited Abdu'l-Baha in Akko in March 1906. Excerpts of the letter are
quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Selected Letters*, Wilmette,
Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991, pp. 38−39. See also H. M. Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Bahá. The
Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1971, pp. 355−362.

and unity amongst all the peoples and kindreds of the earth were unattainable. In this day, however, means of communication have multiplied, and the five continents of the earth have virtually merged into one. Individual travelling to all places and the exchange of ideas with all the people is facilitated and practicable to the greatest degree; it is such that each person through published news is able to be informed of the condition, religions and ideas of all nations. In like manner all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved.[95]

During the take-off phase of globalisation, Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha developed a firm doctrinal commitment to a process leading to a unified world, and this commitment became a central pillar of Baha'i. The very idea of a unified world would probably not have fallen on fertile soil much before the take-off phase, when the impact of globalisation had not yet begun to be felt among potential proselytes. In the late nineteenth century, the climate for this idea was more receptive. An indication of this was the convening of the first World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, which for the first time brought different religious traditions of the world into a dialogue.[96] One might further speculate that if Baha'u'llah had been a prophet of the twentieth century instead, the globalisation trend would have become so pronounced that the message from the embryonic Baha'i religion probably would have met greater competition from other movements with similar messages.

Further, the next historical phase according to Robertson, the struggle-for-hegemony phase, could be said to coincide both in meaning and in time with the administrative consolidation phase in Baha'i. This began with Shoghi Effendi's administrative reforms in 1923 and was largely accomplished with the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963. However, since Robertson is rather brief and unspecific in his characterisation of this phase, the parallel will not be pursued.

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[95] Quoted from Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 360–361.
[96] Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America. Origins. 1892–1900*, vol. 1, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985, pp. 31–33.

Development of the Dual Global Field Model

Robertson's dynamic-historical view on globalisation and his global field model form in my view a good basis for analysing the development of the Baha'i religion in a world undergoing globalisation. The emergence of Baha'i is concurrent with a crucial development phase in globalisation, and Robertson's model allows both synchronic and diachronic approaches in an analysis.[97] However, as also mentioned earlier in this chapter, I consider his global field model to be too majority-oriented to take into account that the Baha'i organisation and its members represent one of the world's many transnational religious minority groups.[98] It is therefore necessary to clarify the characteristics of transnational religious groups before they can be fit into Robertson's global field model. In particular, it is necessary to address the problem that they *cannot* be considered national societies.

Transnational Imagined Communities

In one sentence, Robertson suggests that global consciousness, by which he must mean the relativisation of individuals towards humankind, has partly to do with the world as an "imagined community".[99] The concept "imagined community" was originally coined in 1983 by Benedict Anderson in his analysis of nation states and nationalism.[100] Although Anderson did not use the term *Gemeinschaft*, it is the *Gemeinschaft* aspect of society that he addressed by conceiving nation states as "imagined communities", whereby he could argue for the strength and persistence of the nation state as an empirical fact.

The imagined community *par excellence* is the nation state; however, the concept could be extended to communities whose members are residents of many different countries, but who have a feeling of commonness, of sharing a history and a destiny with other members world-wide, even though they do *not* have a common national back-

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[97] Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 26.

[98] Scholte mentions Baha'i as an example of what he calls "confessionally based supraterritorial communities", see Scholte, *Globalization*, p. 176.

[99] Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 183, with reference to Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition, London, Verso, 1994.

[100] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

ground. I call such groups *transnational imagined communities*.[101] Many Baha'is have this feeling of commonness across national boundaries—it is also part of Baha'i ideology—and the Baha'is undoubtedly qualify as forming a transnational imagined community. Baha'i is not the only example; the Mormon church, Jehovah's Witnesses and Soka Gakkai are also examples of minority religious communities that are represented in many countries around the world. In fact, many religions are global in character, and their ideas travel the world.[102] If investigated, their adherents could fulfil probably in most cases the criteria of belonging to transnational imagined communities.

Qua their nationality, members of transnational imagined communities are also members of that imagined community, which is the national society. It is unlikely that more than a few people, if any, perceive humanity as the only community to which they belong. As Peter Beyer has remarked: "Few if any of us are simply 'citizens of the world'. Most of us also have local or particular roots which greatly influence our social action."[103] This means that in some situations, members of transnational imagined communities think and act as national citizens, in other situations as members of their transnational imagined community. This is well-known among, for example, the national minorities of the European countries, and throughout history, the national majorities have repeatedly interpreted this as questionable national loyalty. However, seen from the perspective of the minority, it is not a question of loyalty (unless, of course, there are specific conflicts of interest at stake), but of thinking and acting in two *complementary* modes, which is characteristic of many minorities and other social sub-groups with a distinct identity. According to Bryan Turner, the situation of belonging to two different imagined communities may actually become more common with globalisation.[104] This is in line with the observation that the influence of transnational religions has not diminished with globalisation, on the contrary.[105]

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[101] José Casanova has used the same expression in a discussion of the transnational character of Catholicism and Pentecostalism. José Casanova, "Religion, the New Millennium, and Globalization", *Sociology of Religion*, vol. 62, 2001, pp. 415–441.

[102] Hexham and Poewe, *New Religions as Global Cultures*, pp. 41–58.

[103] Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, p. 32.

[104] Turner, "The Concept of "The World".

[105] Rudolph, "Introduction: Religion, States, and Transnational Civil Society".

The Dual Global Field Model

Using Baha'i as an example, I will now propose a model that incorporates transnational imagined communities into the global field model. In the model, the transnational imagined community of Baha'is world-wide can be seen as a smaller replica of the global field model, but now exclusively within a Baha'i context: the "National Baha'i communities", the "International Baha'i institutions" and "The Baha'i world" are the three reference points of the model; the fourth being the individuals.

Figure 3.2 shows what I call the "dual global field model" adapted to account for Baha'i: the outer square is the general global field originating from Robertson's model and altered slightly as discussed, the inner square is the Baha'i global field. The general field (solid lines) and the Baha'i field (broken lines), share the *individuals* who have the ability in their relativisations to switch between the general mode and the Baha'i mode. The two global fields are further connected by processes of *interactions* at the societal level (the two short double arrows in the top of the model) involving the different Baha'i organisations.

Figure 3.2. *The Baha'i dual global field model*
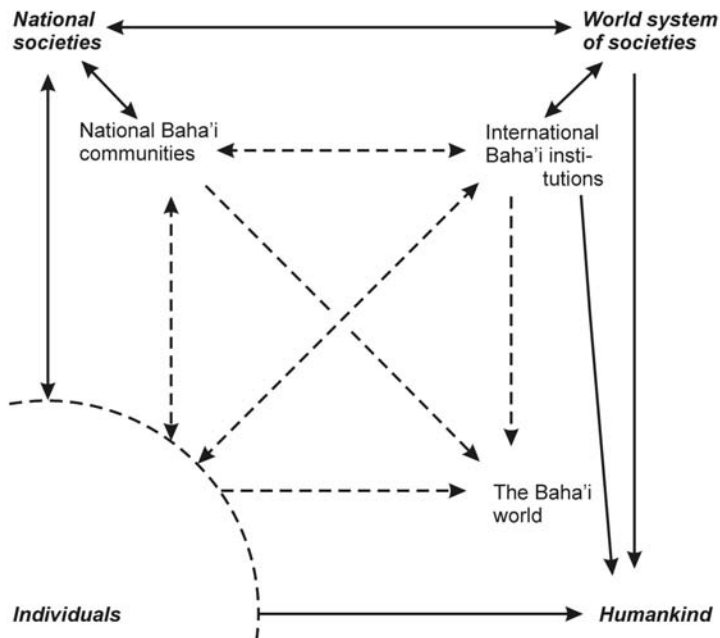
The interactions with the national societies occur via the respective national Baha'i communities, which are represented by the national spiritual assemblies. It is noteworthy that in some cases the Baha'is operate with national Baha'i communities that are not geographically congruent with the nation states. For example, the Baha'is have formed national spiritual assemblies of Greenland, Sicily and the Canary Islands, and these assemblies are independent of the national spiritual assemblies of Denmark, Italy and Spain, respectively. Politically, the three islands or island groups have some kind of special autonomy granted by the states of Denmark, Italy and Spain, respectively. This illustrates that for these three nation states and for the Baha'is, Robertson's term "national society" might seem a meaningful entity, which fits very well with an analysis of Baha'i and globalisation.

The interactions with the world system of societies (primarily the United Nations System) occur via the New York based Baha'i International Community, which has a consultative status in the United Nations System and refers directly to the Baha'i World Centre.

In the model, there is also an arrow pointing from the "International Baha'i institutions" to "Humankind" to indicate that the Baha'i leadership addresses humankind with Baha'i views on world affairs and co-ordinates mission plans worldwide.

The historical development of Baha'i over time can be depicted as a gradual evolution and expansion of the Baha'i global field (the inner square of the dual global field model). In the Babi period, the Baha'i global field was not even a square, because the interaction between the Babis and the world outside the heartland of Shi'i Islam was negligible. The Baha'i global field was only fully developed with the expansion of the Baha'i religion worldwide and the consolidation of ties with the United Nations System in the 1970s. Ultimately, the Baha'i goal is for most of humanity to become Baha'is. In the model, this would mean that the inner square expands until it almost merges with the outer square in the Most Great Peace.

Generalisation of the Dual Global Field Model

The model above is developed specifically for analysing Baha'i from a globalisation perspective. However, it is important to clarify to what extent it can be generalised to other transnational religions, including many of the new religions whose members are scattered over many countries but share a distinct sub-culture and organisation of their own. This is particularly relevant in light of Lorne Dawson's

conclusion that there is a need for more careful case studies of new religious movements to evaluate the potential of Robertson's approach for understanding these groups in a world undergoing globalisation.[106] Dawson specifically finds Robertson's analyses problematic concerning the new religious movements that are privatised and not engaged in political actions.[107] I agree that it is highly probable that many of these new religious movements do not fit into the generalised dual global field model. For example, the New Age sub-cultures share a definite transnational character and ties among believers reach across the globe.[108] However, due to the lack of any local or global central organisation for New Age believers, New Age cannot fit the dual global field model. In the absence of an organisation representing the believers the interactions with the national society and in particular with the world system of societies is very weak or non-existent.

Thus, a prerequisite for analysing transnational religious organisations using the dual global field model is that all four corners of their inner global fields must exist: the individuals, the national religious communities, the international religious organisations and the world of believers. Thus, the members of a transnational religion must have established a world organisation to represent them collectively; otherwise the "the international religious organisations" do not exist. Centralised religious organisations such as the Catholic Church, the Mormon Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, and, of course, Baha'i clearly fulfil this prerequisite. Conversely, for an analysis of decentralised religious movements with a global reach, such as Pentecostalism and various other charismatic movements rooted in Pentecostalism, the dual global field model may be less suitable.[109] As I have discussed elsewhere, the dual global field model may be extended to non-religious transnational organisations representing minority groups, for example the Inuit Circumpolar Conference mentioned earlier.[110]

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[106] Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements and Globalization".

[107] Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements and Globalization".

[108] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Prospects for the Globalization of New Age: Spiritual Imperialism Versus Cultural Diversity", in Mikael Rothstein (ed.), *New Age Religion and Globalization*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2001, pp. 15–30.

[109] David Martin, *Pentecostalism*; Coleman, Simon, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity. Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

[110] Warburg, "Religion and Globalisation, or Globalisation and Religion?".

Figure 3.3. *The dual global field model*
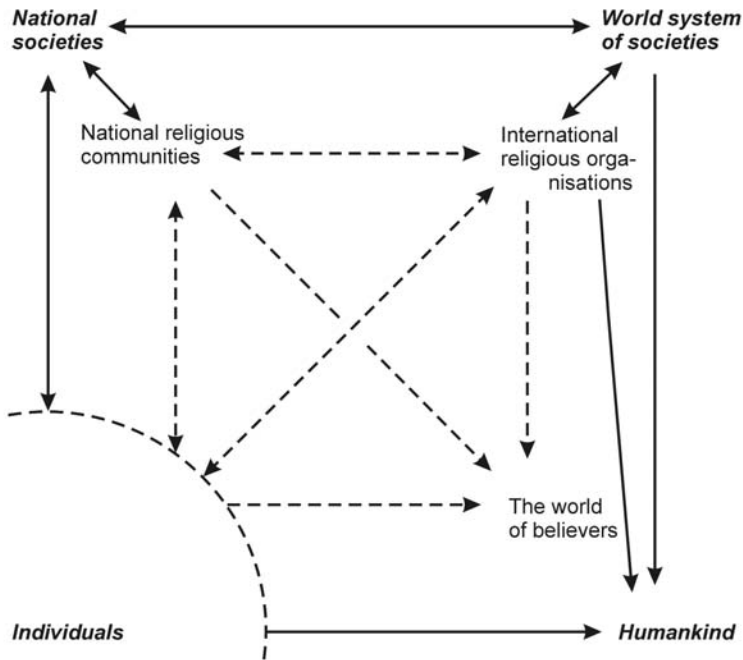
Summary of the Elements of the Dual Global Field Model

In summary, the dual global field model proposed here is composed of the following elements and conclusions from the above discussion:

- The model includes the four constituents of Robertson's global field: individuals, national societies, the world system of societies and humankind.
- The connecting arrows of relativisation in Robertson's global field model are modified, because only three of the four constituents can be regarded as social agents, while the fourth, humanity, is not.
- It is stated that the global field model should be regarded as an analytical model of four salient constituents of the world of today and not as a theory of globalisation.
- In the evaluation of Robertson's global field model, arguments are presented for accepting Robertson's term "national society" instead of nation state, and the meaning and content of the "world system of societies" is underpinned.

- Robertson divides the development of the global field into historical phases, of which the crucial one coincided with the emergence of Baha'i on the global scene. This allows for the application of both diachronic and synchronic views.
- Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities is used to argue that Baha'is (and members of several other religious groups) orient themselves within two imagined communities: the national society and the *transnational* imagined community of Baha'is world-wide.

The Baha'i dual global field model in Figure 3.2 constitutes the recurrent globalisation perspective concerning the Baha'is through-out the rest of the book.

Chapters 4 and 5 follow the creation and evolution of the inner Baha'i global field to its present status with all four corners established. Chapters 6, 7, 8 and to some extent 9 deal with the upper left cor-ner of the inner Baha'i global field, the national Baha'i communities, exemplified by the Danish Baha'i community. Chapter 10 examines the Baha'i World Centre and thereby covers the upper right corner of the inner Baha'i global field. Finally, in Chapter 11, I discuss and analyse some of the characteristic ways that the Baha'is seek influence in society at large. In the dual global field model, this process runs along the three arrows that connect the inner Baha'i global field with the outer, general global field at its upper left and right cor-ners ("national society" and the "world system of societies"), and at its lower right corner ("humankind").

<div align="center">COSMOPOLITANISM AND THE DUAL GLOBAL FIELD MODEL</div>

The Baha'is have often been characterised as cosmopolitan; when Browne discussed the Baha'i position in the Iranian constitutional revolution of 1905, he even saw them as too cosmopolitan:

> Bahá'ism, in my opinion, is too cosmopolitan in its aims to render much direct service to that revival. "Pride is not for him who loves his country", says Bahá'u'lláh, "but for him who loves the world". This is a fine sentiment, but just now it is men who love their country above all else that Persia needs.[111]

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[111] Edward G. Browne (ed., trans.), *Kitáb-i Nuqtatu'l-Káf, being the Earliest History of the Bábís compiled by Ḥájji Mírzá Jání of Káshán between the years A.D. 1850 and 1852, edited from the unique Paris ms. suppl. persan 1071*, Leiden, Brill, 1910, p. lii.

Browne saw the revolution as initiating a positive and exciting national revival of Iran, and his characterisation of the Baha'is reflects his disappointment with their generally passive role in the constitutional movement.

Sociologist Robert Merton distinguishes between cosmopolitans and locals in a study of power and influence among the citizens of a small town on the Atlantic coast of the USA.[112] Merton's distinction is applied on a national level and it is based on considerations of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.[113] Ulf Hannerz later views the cosmopolitan-local distinction in a global perspective and discusses the values of cosmopolitans versus those of the locals.[114] The two ideal types are characterised pragmatically; cosmopolitanism, for example, is associated with high international mobility, transnational interactions and competence in relating to different cultures. Hannerz points to the increasing significance of the transnational cultures of various professions, such as business people, diplomats, and scientists in mediating cross-cultural contacts.[115] In many instances, this development has meant that the cultural differences within national societies have deepened, in particular among countries on the periphery of the global economic and political order.[116]

Sociologist Rosabeth Moss Kanter applies the cosmopolitan-local distinction to individuals as well as to groups.[117] She emphasises the relativisation of the local with the global, and in her perspective, cosmopolitans are ready to participate in a globalised world while locals attempt to retreat from it whenever possible.[118] Kanter is concerned with private businesses and their working conditions in the global economy, but many of her thoughts apply to other private organisations, which of course also include religious organisations.[119]

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[112] Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, New York, The Free Press, 1968, pp. 446 ff.

[113] Johan Asplund, *Essä om Gemeinschaft och Gesellschaft* [Essay on Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft], Gothenburg, Korpen, 1991, pp. 33–35.

[114] Ulf Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture", in Mike Featherstone (ed.), *Global Culture. Nationalism, globalization and modernity*, London, Sage, 1990, pp. 237–251.

[115] Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture".

[116] Hannerz, Ulf, "Scenarios for Peripheral Cultures".

[117] Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *World Class. Thriving Locally in the Global Economy*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1995.

[118] Kanter, *World Class*, pp. 22–25.

[119] Margit Warburg, "Religious groups and globalisation. A comparative perspective", in James Beckford and James Richardson (eds.), *Challenging Religion. Essays in Honour of Eileen Barker*, London, Routledge, 2003, pp. 47–55.

Kanter agrees with Hannerz that cosmopolitanism cannot thrive without interaction with the local, and contrary to popular belief, cosmopolitan individuals are often interested in and committed to local community affairs.[120] True cosmopolitans may down-play their particular national ties and weaken the relativisation with the *national* society, but relativisation with the world system of societies and with humankind is never the only relationship, there is always some relativisation with the *local* community.

This positive interaction with the local community, however, is not only a matter of personal choice. Kanter gives several examples of successful globally working companies that consciously commit some of their resources to local civic affairs to demonstrate that they are also part of the local community and empathetic to its needs.[121] The Baha'is have also understood that successful promotion of cosmopolitanism must be based on respect for and use of the local culture. For example, in the Baha'i proposal for a United Nations campaign for world citizenship it is stated:

> Based on the principle of the oneness of the human race, they [the programs for promoting world citizenship] should cultivate tolerance and brotherhood, nurturing an appreciation for the richness and importance of the world's diverse cultural, religious and social systems and strengthening those traditions that contribute to a sustainable, world civilisation. They should teach the principle of "unity in diversity" as the key to strength and wealth both for nations and for the world community.[122]

What is expressed in the above is not only Kanter's recipe for successful entrepreneurship in a globalised economy, it is a world-view different from both that of "Jihad" and of "McWorld". The individuals who try to embody world citizenship find that they must be cosmopolitans with a commitment to the local. True cosmopolitans thrive best when they are, what I would call, "cosmolocals".[123]

It seems that the Baha'is have not propagandised in vain for the adoption of the principle of "unity in diversity". The following series

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[120] Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans"; Kanter and Pittinsky, "Globalization: New worlds for social inquiry".

[121] Kanter, *World Class*, pp. 174–197.

[122] *World Citizenship. A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development*, New York, Baha'i International Community, n.d., p. 3.

[123] Cosmolocals are "glocalisation" personified, see Robertson, "Glocalization", on this theme.

of stamps issued by Singapore in 1999 illustrates this. See Photo II—
Stamps from Singapore with Baha'i slogan "Unity in Diversity".

In conclusion, the dichotomy between localism and cosmopoli-
tanism can be used in the dual global field model to characterise
the relativisations between individuals and national societies, on the
one side, and the relativisations with the world system of societies
and humankind, on the other side. Extreme localism views these rela-
tivisations negatively; extreme cosmopolitanism ignores them. Soft
cosmopolitanism ("cosmolocalism"), however, infers a positive atti-
tude towards relativisations between the local and the global.

GEMEINSCHAFT AND GESELLSCHAFT REVISITED

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Robertson brings the
classic concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* into the discussion of
religion and globalisation.[124] His approach is used by the sociologist
of religion Michael McMullen for characterising the Baha'i religion
in a world undergoing globalisation.[125] For that reason alone, a crit-
ical look at *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* should be deserved; however,
the discussion also yields what I have found to be a useful analytical
tool in the study of the activities of (religious) groups.

It was the German philosopher and sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies
who introduced the two fundamental sociological concepts, *Gemeinschaft*
and *Gesellschaft*, in his book from 1887.[126] Tönnies' work, however,
was largely overlooked, and it was only after it was re-issued in 1912
that *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* began to be recognised for what it is,
a classic in social and political theory. One reason for its slow accep-
tance may be that Tönnies' profound thinking on the essential con-
cepts of sociology and their relations was presented in an archaic
German, with long, even tortuous arguments, which in many cases
can only be fully appreciated by readers with an almost encyclopaedic
knowledge of European history and philosophy.[127]

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[124] Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 61–84.
[125] Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'í. The Religious Construction of a Global Identity*, New
Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2000, pp. 64–65, pp. 155–156.
[126] Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie*,
Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970.
[127] Harris in Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, pp. ix–xxx. Tönnies' work has
been translated twice into English: Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and association*

Gemeinschaft and *Gesellschaft* as Ideal Types

Tönnies idealised the development of European society from its tradi-
tional medieval form to its modern form as a development from
Gemeinschaft to *Gesellschaft*.[128] This idea was later generalised and incor-
porated into the modernisation theories of the 1950s and 1960s to
describe and predict historical changes in non-Western societies.[129]
The evolutionist view on modernisation implies the assumption that
historical changes in third-world countries also follow a generalised
pattern. This has led to substantial critique of modernisation theories.
The critique, which concerns the inductive ambition of the modernisa-
tion theorists, does not preclude however the use of *Gemeinschaft* and
Gesellschaft deductively as a tool for analysing empirical changes in
social relations.[130] In fact, Tönnies goes beyond this idealisation of
European societal development and conceives *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*
as ideal types (*Normalbegriffe*) independent of both space and time:[131]

> Ich nenne nun all Arten Verbundenheit, in denen Wesenwille über-
> wiegt, Gemeinschaft, alle, die durch Kürwillen gestaltet werden oder
> wesentlich bedingt sind, Gesellschaft, so daß diese beiden Begriffe die
> Modalitäten der Verbundenheit ihrem Wesen und ihren Tendenzen
> nach bedeuten.
>   Somit werden die beiden Namen ihrer Mitbedeutung, selber ver-
> bundene Einheiten oder sogar kollektive und künstliche Personen zu
> bezeichnen, hier entkleidet: das Wesen von Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft
> zieht sich vielmehr durch alle Arten der Verbundenheit hindurch, . . .[132]

According to Loomis' translation:

> I call all kinds of association in which natural will predominates
> Gemeinschaft, all those which are formed and fundamentally condi-
> tioned by rational will, Gesellschaft. Thus these concepts signify the

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(Gemeinschaft und gesellschaft) (ed., trans. Charles P. Loomis), London, Routledge and
Kegan Paul, 1974; Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*. Edited by Jose
Harris, translated by Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis, Cambridge, Cambridge
University Press, 2001. The translation by Loomis follows the German original text
closely, while Harris has made a more free translation, seeking to clarify obscuri-
ties and making the text more immediately comprehensible.
    [128] Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 245–256.
    [129] See for example Robertson's brief discussion, *Globalization*, pp. 62–64.
    [130] See also Rudolf Heberle, "The Sociological System of Ferdinand Tönnies: An
Introduction", in Werner J. Cahnman (ed.), *Ferdinand Tönnies. A New Evaluation. Essays
and Documents*, Leiden, Brill, 1973, pp. 47–69.
    [131] Heberle, "The Sociological System of Ferdinand Tönnies".
    [132] Ferdinand Tönnies, "Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft", in Alfred Vierkandt (ed.),
Handwörterbuch der Soziologie, Stuttgart, Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1931, pp. 180–191
(quotation p. 186).

model qualities of the essence and the tendencies of being bound together. Thus both names are in the present context stripped of their connotation as designating social entities or groups, or even collective or artificial persons; the essence of both Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft is found interwoven in all kinds of associations, as will be shown.[133]

Thus, the paired concepts of *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* are essentially two different *ideal types of social relations*, created and sustained by two different types of willed actions.[134] Tönnies denotes these willed actions *Wesenwille* and *Kürwille*.[135] The two terms are roughly translated as "natural" or "essential" will and "rational" or "arbitrary" will, respectively. *Gemeinschaft* relations are created and sustained by *Wesenwille* (natural will); they are unspecific mutual bonds of obligations, rather than means to ends, and the people involved share a common fate. *Gesellschaft* relations are created and sustained by *Kürwille* (rational will); in *Gesellschaft* relationships, the coherence depends upon agreements and contracts, and obligations are limited and specified. *Gemeinschaft* is based on the sentiments of kinship, neighbourhood and friendship; *Gesellschaft* is based on rationality and calculation. This, however, should not lead to the misunderstanding that, for example, natural will is irrational.[136] Nor should one make the mistake to equate *Gemeinschaft* with informal groups and *Gesellschaft* with formal groups.[137] The fact that a group of people know each other well and are bound together by sentiments of loyalty does not exclude that formal rules play a role. On the contrary, *Gemeinschaft* relations are often best served when people also obey formal rules, as anybody who tries to gather a family with two adolescents around the dinner table at a specified time knows well! This obviously is more important for larger groups than it is for a family.

The paired concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are applicable on both a macrosociological level and a microsociological level.[138] On

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[133] Tönnies, translated by Loomis, *Community and Association*, pp. 17–18. See also Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, p. 238.

[134] Heberle, "The Sociological System of Ferdinand Tönnies".

[135] Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 85–124.

[136] Heberle, "The Sociological System of Ferdinand Tönnies"; Harris in Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, pp. xlii–xliii.

[137] Werner J. Cahnman, "Introduction", in Werner J. Cahnman (ed.), *Ferdinand Tönnies. A New Evaluation. Essays and Documents*, Leiden, Brill, 1973, pp. 1–27 (quoting Tönnies p. 13); Heberle, "The Sociological System of Ferdinand Tönnies".

[138] Tönnies does not explicitly consider that distinction, but it can be deduced from his use of the two terms *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. See Heberle, "The Sociological System of Ferdinand Tönnies".

the macrosociological level, the two concepts are ideal types of struc-
tural relations within a given social entity (a business, a religious group,
a nation etc.).[139] On the microsociological level, the structural rela-
tions are less obvious and it is probably more clarifying to talk about
"*wesenwillige*" and "*kürwillige*" attitudes and behaviour, respectively.[140]

Robertson's Use of Gemeinschaft *and* Gesellschaft

Robertson dusted off Tönnies' intentions for *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*,
as being ideal types of social relations, independent of space and time,
and he applies them accordingly in his approach to understanding
religion and globalisation.[141] He is particularly interested in what he
calls "*globe-oriented* ideologies, doctrines and other bodies of know-
ledge", and he stresses the diversity of perceptions of world order
represented by these ideologies, which he found included many reli-
gions.[142] As a tool for classifying these ideologies, which harbour both
pro- and antiglobalism tendencies, he delineates four major ideal
types of "images of world order", two that are *Gemeinschaft*-oriented
and two that are *Gesellschaft*-oriented.[143] These are further refined by
making logical combinations of centralisation versus decentralisation
and symmetry versus asymmetry within each major type.

Robertson seems to regard most *religious* world images as *Gemeinschaft*-
oriented, but yields few arguments in support hereof. Rainer Wassner
takes the opposite position and argues that many new religious move-
ments are *Gesellschaft*-oriented because of their individualistic character.[144]
Michael McMullen suggests that the Baha'i religion is unique among
religious movements in its response to globalisation, with its combi-
nation of both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* elements of the typology.[145]

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[139] Tönnies uses the term "normal type" (*Normalbegriffe*), but it stands essentially
for the same concept as "ideal type".

[140] See p. 55 in Heberle, "The Sociological System of Ferdinand Tönnies".

[141] Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 13–14.

[142] Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 79–80. Emphasis is Robertson's.

[143] Robertson, *Globalization*, pp. 75–84.

[144] Rainer Wassner, "Tönnies' Religionssoziologie und die neuen religiösen
Bewegungen. Ein Stück Angewandter Soziologie", in Lars Clausen and Carsten
Schlüter (eds.), *Hundert Jahre "Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft". Ferdinand Tönnies in der inter-
nationalen Diskussion*, Opladen, Leske and Budrich, 1991, pp. 439–452.

[145] McMullen characterises the Baha'i religion as a particular combination of
Robertson's categories Global *Gemeinschaft* 2 and Global *Gesellschaft* 2, "both of which
jointly universalize individual and collective identity, as opposed to the more heav-
ily-researched fundamentalist movements, which "tribalize" identity". See McMullen,
The Bahá'i, pp. 64–65, pp. 155–156.

This suggestion does not seem particularly convincing, since a mix of Robertson's world image types in the right proportions probably would fit the ideology of *any* globally-oriented movement of today.

In my view, the use of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* as a basis for a comparative classification of religions, once and for all, is not particularly productive. I find it more fruitful to stress that globalisation brings about an increased relativisation on all levels (this is Robertson's key point), and any religious group will have to accommodate to this by readjusting its relations internally and externally. Because social relations usually have both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* aspects, this readjustment may lead to a (temporary) change in the general orientation of the group from being more *Gemeinschaft-* to being more *Gesellschaft*-oriented, or the reverse. In the following, I develop this viewpoint.

The Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft Aspects of Modern Societies

Tönnies regarded the nation state of the late nineteenth century as the most universal *Gesellschaft*-type association, created to keep law and order and to protect the interests of untamed capitalism.[146] Tönnies also saw the paradox that in the end, the state could not disregard *Gemeinschaft*, but he was rather pessimistic about the prospects of this occurring.[147] However, modern welfare states have inherited the obligation of providing social security—an obligation that in pre-modern societies was left to the local communities, that is, to *Gemeinschaft*. The European welfare states seem to have defied Tönnies' pessimism and in their most developed versions may be likened to *Gemeinschaft*.[148]

Still, however, the impersonal rationality of the state, which is expressed in laws and public administration, means that it also embodies a pure *Gesellschaft*-type association of individuals. Although many citizens may be engaged in the victories and defeats of the national football team (*Gemeinschaft*), the same people are also engaged in formal contracts with the nation state, such as tax-paying or the buying and selling of real estate (*Gesellschaft*). Modern societies are thus both

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[146] Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 59–61, pp. 228–233.
[147] Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 231–233, pp. 247–249.
[148] Robert A. Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition*, London, Heinemann, 1967, p. 74. Sweden is maybe the most illustrative example, denoted *Folkhemmet* (Home of the People) by successive social democratic governments.

Gemeinschaft and *Gesellschaft*, whether they are nation states or "national societies". In Robertson's terminology, the relativisation between individuals and the modern nation states is both *Gemeinschaft*-oriented and *Gesellschaft*-oriented.

Local communities are also knit together by both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. In a well-functioning local community, the two aspects are, in fact, synergistic rather than antagonistic in the eyes of most citizens. This is because most people have realised that no community, even the smallest one, can thrive on the informal, organic ties of *Gemeinschaft* alone—formal rules are needed for regulating the affairs of the community, and they are by definition *Gesellschaft*. *Gesellschaft* may even promote *Gemeinschaft* rather than make it retreat; for example, the boundaries of present-day municipalities are administrative boundaries that usually have been drawn more or less arbitrarily; but if redrawing is attempted, local patriotism is roused on the issue of living in this or that municipality. On a large scale, the prominence of the Constitution of the USA in American nationalism and American civil religion is a good example of how *Gesellschaft* nurtures *Gemeinschaft*.

In the following, I expound on this conclusion, stressing that since all social relations have both a *Gemeinschaft* aspect and a *Gesellschaft* aspect, the two should be seen as *complementary* ideal types of social relations, rather than as two *contrary* ideal types. The complementarity of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* has been stressed before by other researchers. For example, the Swedish social psychologist Johan Asplund emphasises that *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are ideal types that cannot be mixed, but constitute two different aspects of society.[149] I would like here also to refer to Mildred Schachinger, who argues that simplistic views of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* as classificatory terms are quite commonly forwarded in the literature and may be traced to an early critique of Tönnies by Talcott Parsons in 1937.[150]

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[149] Asplund draws a comparison with the pictures commonly used in psychology, where the effect of the optical illusion means that you can see either one or another motive but not both at the same time. Asplund, *Essä om Gemeinschaft och Gesellschaft*, pp. 40–43.

[150] Talcott Parsons, "A Note on *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*", in Werner J. Cahnman (ed.), *Ferdinand Tönnies. A New Evaluation. Essays and Documents*, Leiden, Brill, 1973, pp. 140–150. The chapter is reprinted from Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action. A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers*, New York, The Free Press, 1968, vol. 2, pp. 668–674.

Schachinger, however, finds that this influential critique is based on a reductionist interpretation, which runs contrary to Tönnies' own explicit intentions with the two terms.[151] It should be added that Parsons himself has abandoned his earlier critique; in a later article, he concludes:

> If the concepts are defined analytically rather than as fully concrete types, this is consonant with Tönnies' position that *Gemeinschaft* as well as *Gesellschaft* is a permanent and constitutive element in the total social structure of a society.[152]

A Model of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft as two complementary ideal types

I will now develop the discussion of complementarity a little, proposing a graphical representation of the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* relation. To illustrate what I mean by complementarity, Figure 3.4 and Figure 3.5 may be instructive. Figure 3.4 places *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* at the two ends of a straight line, indicating them to be *contrary* principles. An organisation, for example a religious group, which is mainly *Gemeinschaft*-oriented in its outlook and activities, would be placed on the line to the left of the centre point, like the circle A. Another group, which is largely *Gesellschaft*-oriented in its outlook and activities, would be represented by the circle B to the right of the centre point. In qualitative terms, it could be suggested that the more *Gemeinschaft*-oriented a group is, the less *Gesellschaft*-oriented it is, and *vice versa*.

The alternative, complementary view on *Gemeinschaft*-oriented versus *Gesellschaft*-oriented group activities can be illustrated qualitatively

Figure 3.4. Gemeinschaft *and* Gesellschaft *as contrary ideal types*

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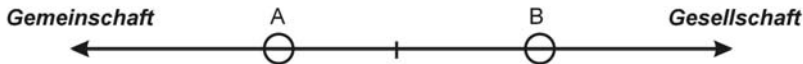
[151] Mildred Schachinger, "Tönnies in the Literature: The Reductionist Approach of Talcott Parsons", in Lars Clausen and Carsten Schlüter (eds.), *Hundert Jahre "Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft". Ferdinand Tönnies in der internationalen Diskussion*, Opladen, Leske and Budrich, 1991, pp. 527–536.

[152] Talcott Parsons, "Some Afterthoughts on *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*", in Werner J. Cahnman (ed.), *Ferdinand Tönnies. A New Evaluation. Essays and Documents*, Leiden, Brill, 1973, pp. 151–159 (quotation p. 159).

Figure 3.5. Gemeinschaft *and* Gesellschaft *as complementary ideal types*

Gemeinschaft

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Ⓑ
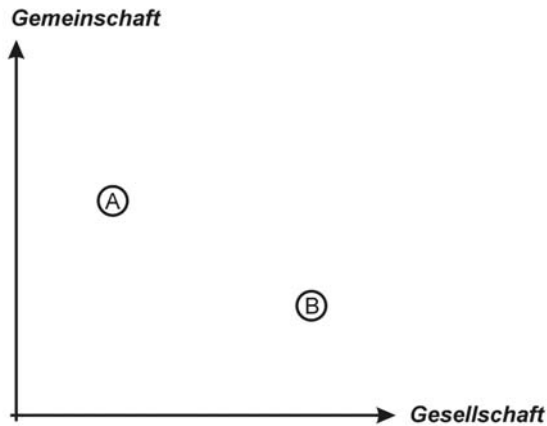
Gesellschaft

by Figure 3.5. Here, a *Gemeinschaft* axis is drawn perpendicularly to a *Gesellschaft* axis. The position of group A is closer to the *Gemeinschaft* axis than to the *Gesellschaft* axis and it symbolises a group that is predominantly *Gemeinschaft*-oriented in its outlook and emphasises *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities more than *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities. The reverse is the case with another hypothetical group represented by B: this group is closer to the *Gesellschaft* axis than to the *Gemeinschaft* axis, which means that with respect to outlook and activities it is more *Gesellschaft*-oriented than *Gemeinschaft*-oriented. Among religious groups and organisations, group A, for example, could be a convent or a religious commune such as Damanhur in northern Italy, while group B could be Scientology.

The terms *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities and *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities are ideal types meant for understanding, for example, the activities that a religious group may engage in to sustain and develop itself. This discussion is resumed in Chapter 9, where I analyse how available resources may be allocated for different purposes: those that tend to strengthen the *Gemeinschaft* aspects of the local Baha'i community and those that are used for *Gesellschaft* purposes. This issue is important in the sociology of religion and is of a general nature that extends beyond studies of religion and globalisation.

CHAPTER FOUR

RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN IRAN

The southeastern third of Iraq and nearly all of present Iran, except for the border areas with Turkey, constitute the heartland of Shi'i Islam.[1] The Shi'ites were the losers in the power struggle with the Sunni Muslims when the Shi'ite leader Husayn, the son of Ali, was killed with his followers in 680 at the plain of Karbala in Iraq. The Shi'ites regard Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law Ali and his descendants through Fatima, Muhammad's daughter, as the only rightful rulers of the Muslims.

The majority of Shi'ites acknowledges a line of eleven rulers, *imams*, including Ali and descending from him. When the eleventh *imam* died in 873, his supposed son and successor disappeared mystically and remained hidden from all except for a line of four "gates" (sing. *bab*) who acted as his intermediaries. At the death of the fourth *bab* in 940, this period of concealment, the "lesser occultation", ended. Subsequent claimants to the rank of *bab* have generally not been accepted, and the Hidden Imam is believed to have entered the "greater occultation", from which he will eventually return as the *Mahdi* (the "rightly guided one") or *Qa'im* ("riser") and lead his people towards the day of judgement and resurrection. Millenarian expectations are thus prevalent among Shi'ites, and the Baha'is have drawn upon this legacy.

The history of the Babis is not only the history of one of the most important millenarian movements within Shi'i Islam, it is also part of the repeated history of modern Baha'is. They read and re-read Shoghi Effendi's translations and interpretations of the events that led to the emergence of the Baha'i religion. Furthermore, the persecutions

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[1] This following brief historical introduction is based on Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal. The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989, pp. 1–29; Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam. Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984, pp. 27–65; Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam. The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985, pp. 105–171.

of the Baha'is in Iran after the revolution in 1979 are also rooted in
the Babi past. Any monograph on the Baha'i religion in fact would
be incomplete without fairly thorough coverage of the brief historical
period from 1844 to 1853, which saw the rise, culmination and col-
lapse of Babism.

A number of professional historians and Islamists have researched
the period extensively. Therefore, when I examine the Babi history
as a sociologist of religion, it is not with the ambition of retrieving
and adding new empirical material. It is with the aim of presenting
to the non-Baha'i specialist the fascinating history of the Babis, and
later showing the Babi heritage in modern Baha'i and its role in the
creation of a common Baha'i identity.

A SHI'I STATE

Shi'i Islam became the state religion of Iran in 1501 with the rise of
the Safavids as the ruling dynasty. Its first ruler, Shah Isma'il, was
the young leader of the militant Safavid Sufi order, which had its
stronghold in the city of Ardibil in northern Iran.[2] The collapse of
Safavid rule in 1722 was followed by a period of political unrest
and economic decline. The rise of the Qajar dynasty (1796–1925)
at the end of the eighteenth century initially meant a return of rela-
tive security and peace, but a downward trend began again during
the nineteenth century, as the Iranian government deteriorated through
rivalry, court intrigues and nepotism. Wars and diplomatic pressure in
the first half of the 1800s forced the Iranian empire to yield to the
great powers, primarily Russia and Britain. Border territories were
lost and trade privileges were conceded to the Europeans, so that
domestic merchants and craftsmen had to compete with the import
of cheaper European merchandise. Thus, the first steps of integrating
Iran into the world economy were taken in what Roland Robertson
called the "incipient" phase of globalisation (1750–1870).[3] The result
of economic decline and governmental mismanagement was public
unrest, and central authority was in many places non-existent.

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[2] Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 101–102; Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*,
pp. 105–112.
[3] Roland Robertson, *Globalization. Social Theory and Global Culture*, London, Sage,
1992, pp. 57–60.

Iran's economic and political decline in the beginning of the 1800s spurred the ruling class to attempts of administrative reform. These were, however, largely unsuccessful and hardly addressed the underlying social and economic issues.[4] Another group that might have had the power to engage in reform was the Shi'ite clergy, the *ulama*, who enjoyed a certain independence and authority.[5] However, in line with Shi'ite orthodox thinking at that time, they maintained a sharp division between the secular authority that resided with the Shah and their own monopoly on religious knowledge and authority.[6] The majority of the *ulama* were therefore indifferent or negative towards secular reform and instead explained that the social problems were a result of moral weakness and a sign of the impending doom, from which a rejuvenation of Islam would occur with the return of the *Imam Mahdi*.[7] Thus, the initiative to address the challenges was left to heterodox movements on the fringes of Shi'i Islam, and unlike the secular reformers of the ruling class, individuals in these movements sought renewal within the realm of religion.

THE SHAYKHI MOVEMENT

One of the religious movements that emerged and gained influence in early nineteenth century Shi'i Islam was the Shaykhi movement, named after its founder, Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i (1753–1826).[8] The

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[4] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 27–28.

[5] Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, pp. 221–237.

[6] Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, pp. 223–229.

[7] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 29.

[8] Much has been written on the Shaykhi movement from which Babism evolved. The present exposition is based on: Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 33–105; Denis MacEoin, "Early S̲h̲ayk̲h̲í Reactions to the Báb and His Claims", in Moojan Momen (ed.), *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 1, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1982, pp. 1–47; D. M. MacEoin, "Changes in charismatic authority in Qajar Shi'ism", in Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (eds.), *Qajar Iran. Political, social and cultural change 1800–1925*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1983, pp. 148–196; Denis MacEoin, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Nineteenth-Century Shi'ism: The Cases of Shaykhism and Babism", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 110, 1990, pp. 323–329; Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 220–232. Since there is general agreement among these authors on the main developments and events, no particular references are given except in cases where the opinion of one particular author is conveyed.

Ahsa'i's dates (1753–1826) are those reported by Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, p. 226, and by MacEoin, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Nineteenth-Century Shi'ism"; however, Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 48, gives 1756–1825. All

Shaykhis taught that religious inspiration and knowledge could be acquired through direct contact with the prophet Muhammad and the *imams*. However, this esoteric doctrine was not acceptable to the *Usulis*, who represented the dominating orthodox trend in Iranian Shi'ism, and around 1822 the *Usuli ulama* broke with Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i.[9] Although Ahsa'i still considered himself to be positioned in the *Usuli* tradition after this break, the Shaykhis from then on were regarded by most of the *ulama* as heterodox.[10]

Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i was succeeded in 1826 by Sayyid Kazim Rashti (d. 1844), who, like his predecessor, had established a teaching circle at Karbala in Iraq, where Shaykhism had its stronghold. Rashti introduced a concept of cyclical prophethood, in which the first cycle of prophets had ended with Muhammad, and the second had just begun with Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i as the messenger of God.[11] According to Shaykhi belief, the new prophetic cycle implied that the Imam might soon return, or if not the Imam himself, then his agent, a person who could claim to be the *bab*. This Shaykhi concept of cyclical prophethood is maintained as a central Baha'i doctrine, and it is one of the clearest examples of Shaykhi thinking in modern Baha'i.

Another important religious innovation by Rashti was the doctrine of the Perfect Shi'a, which teaches that there will always be one man in this world who can act as the intermediary between the Hidden Imam and mankind. The doctrine, which has its counterpart in the Sufi concept of the Perfect Man, is also known as the Fourth Support, where the number four refers to Shaykhi thinking that three of the five traditional supports or pillars of Shi'i Islam have been merged into one (knowledge of God). To this support, plus the two remaining Shi'i supports of the Imamate and Divine Justice, a fourth support

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three authors agree on the dates 1166–1241 AH. Amanat's date of 1756 is not correct, since 1166 AH begins on the 8th of November 1752 and ends on the 28th of October 1753, see G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, *The Muslim and Christian Calendars being tables for the conversion of Muslim and Christian dates from the Hijra to the year A.D. 2000*, London, Rex Collings, 1977, p. 51.

[9] MacEoin, "Changes in charismatic authority", p. 164.

[10] Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, pp. 252–253.

[11] Rashti's career and doctrines are presented in considerable detail by Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 56–69. Rashti's concept of cyclical prophethood resembles the Isma'ili idea of cyclical revelations. See Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 58–59.

was added, the Perfect Shi'a.[12] The Hidden Imam can express his will through the Perfect Shi'a when he meditates, so the Perfect Shi'a acts as a mouthpiece. It is tempting to see a Baha'i parallel to the Perfect Shi'a in the particular station of Abdu'l-Baha, who is the "perfect Exemplar of His Faith, to be endowed with superhuman knowledge, and to be regarded as the stainless mirror reflecting His [Baha'u'llah's] light".[13]

In the early 1840s, the Shaykhi movement experienced increased internal tensions and split on the issue of how soon to expect the return of the Imam.[14] The religious climate at that time was receptive to the idea of the imminent emergence of a *bab* as God's messenger and gate to the physical remanifestation of the Imam. Prophecies were aired on the importance of the year 1260 AH (22 January 1844 to 9 January 1845), which was 1000 lunar years after the disappearance of the twelfth imam in 260 AH (873–874).[15]

Sayyid Kazim Rashti died in January 1844 and the Shaykhis were thrown into a leadership crisis, because no single individual was able to mobilise sufficient support to become Rashti's successor. Several leading Shaykhis claimed leadership and subsequently broke away with their followers; the most significant of these groups was the branch of Shaykhis who acknowledged Muhammad Karim Khan Kirmani (1810–1871) as their leader.[16] However, other leading Shaykhis held the view that some of Rashti's allusions indicated that they should seek leadership from among those Shaykhis who did not belong to the inner circle of the movement.[17]

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[12] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 54; Edward G. Browne (ed., trans.), *A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate the Episode of the Báb. Edited in the Original Persian, and Translated into English, with an Introduction and Explanatory Notes*, vol. 1–2, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1891, vol. 2, pp. 242–244; Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, p. 228.

[13] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995, p. 242.

[14] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 68–69.

[15] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 89–102; MacEoin, "Early Shaykhí Reactions", p. 22.

[16] Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, p. 229; MacEoin, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Nineteenth-Century Shi'ism". Karim Khan Kirmani later became one of the Bab's fiercest opponents, see MacEoin, "Early Shaykhí Reactions", pp. 7–11, pp. 28–37. In the course of time, Karim Khan Kirmani's group developed into the leading Shaykhi direction of today, see Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 230–231.

[17] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 155.

Iran 1850–1900

The Bab and the First Babis[18]

Sayyid Ali Muhammad Shirazi (1819–1850) was born in Shiraz, in
southwestern Iran, into a family of merchants. When Ali Muhammad
was a child, his father died, and he was brought up by a maternal
uncle. He received an elementary education in the local Quranic
school, but left school prematurely to work in the family business as

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[18] This section is mainly based on Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 109–207,
and D. M. MacEoin, "Babism", in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol.
3, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988, pp. 309–317. Further Biographical
details of the Bab are given by D. M. MacEoin, "Bāb, Sayyed ʿAlī Moḥammad
Šīrāzī", in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. 3, London, Routledge &
Kegan Paul, 1988, pp. 278–284.

a trade agent. Already as an adolescent, Ali Muhammad was inter-
ested in religious and esoteric topics, and although his formal edu-
cation was rudimentary, he is said to have studied Sufi and Shaykhi
works, as well as astrology and mathematics.[19] In 1840 or 1841, his
religious interests apparently motivated him to leave the family busi-
ness, and he went to Karbala where he came into contact with the
Shaykhi leader Sayyid Kazim Rashti. Ali Muhammad Shirazi's con-
tacts with Shaykhism profoundly shaped his beliefs, and he became
acquainted with several members of the Shaykhi community.[20]

Ali Muhammad returned to Shiraz in 1842, where he became
increasingly engaged in prayer and in the writing of verses. His
reported talent for producing an uninterrupted flow of verses was
later seen as proof of his divine claims.[21] According to Amanat, it
was in this period that Ali Muhammad gradually became convinced
of his divine mission, and Amanat further argues that he probably
not only confided with his closest family concerning his speculations,
but also alluded to his future claims in a letter meant for a wider
circle of Shaykhi students.[22]

A Meeting in Shiraz

In May 1844, one of the leading Shaykhis, Mulla Muhammad Husayn
Bushru'i (1814–1849) came to Shiraz in his search for a successor
to Sayyid Kazim Rashti.[23] In Shiraz, he and his followers met with
Ali Muhammad.[24] The meeting was probably not accidental, con-
sidering that Ali Muhammad was well-known among the Shaykhis,
and that he earlier "had honoured me [Bushru'i] with his friend-
ship during a journey which we made together to the Holy Shrines".[25]

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[19] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 118.
[20] MacEoin, "Early Shaykhí Reactions".
[21] Shoghi Effendi (ed., trans.), *The Dawn-Breakers. Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days
of the Bahá'i Revelation*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974, p. 61, p. 90; Amanat,
Resurrection and Renewal, p. 172.
[22] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 149–151.
[23] D. MacEoin, "Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrū'ī", in C. E. Bosworth, E. van
Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs, and Ch. Pellat (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 7,
Leiden, Brill, 1991, pp. 440–441; more details are given by Amanat, *Resurrection and
Renewal*, pp. 156–162.
[24] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 167–170.
[25] Quoted from Edward G. Browne (ed., trans.), *The Táríkh-i-Jadíd or New History
of Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad the Báb, by Mírzá Ḥuseyn of Hamadán, Translated from the Persian
With an Introduction, Illustrations and Appendices*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,
1893, p. 34.

Bushru'i stayed for several days in Ali Muhammad's home, and they conversed eagerly on different religious subjects, including the issue of a successor to Rashti. During one of these discussions, Ali Muhammad asked if Bushru'i could not see the right qualities of a successor in Ali Muhammad's own person. In the beginning, Bushru'i was not convinced, but after days of lengthy conversations and demonstrations of Ali Muhammad's skills in theological writing, Bushru'i finally acknowledged his claim to the title of *bab* on the evening of the 22nd of May 1844.

Different Conversion Accounts

The declaration of the Bab and Mulla Husayn's conversion is a crucial event in Babi and Baha'i history. The above description is based on what Amanat has found to be the most plausible account after weighing carefully the different and, on some points, conflicting sources.[26] The same event is also described at length in *The Dawn-Breakers*, and it differs from Amanat's account on three points:

- Mulla Husayn and Ali Muhammad did not know each other beforehand, but met accidentally outside the gate of Shiraz, where Ali Muhammad invited Mulla Husayn to his home.[27]
- The conversion of Mulla Husayn, meaning his acceptance of Ali Muhammad's claim of being the Bab, took place in the course of one night, the 22nd of May 1844, not over a period of several days.[28]
- The intellectual scepticism and emotional struggles that Mulla Husayn underwent according to Amanat are not prominent in *The Dawn-Breakers*. Instead, this source describes Mulla Husayn's conversion as a sudden and overpowering experience:

> This Revelation, so suddenly and impetuously thrust upon me, came as a thunderbolt which, for a time, seemed to have benumbed my faculties. I was blinded by its dazzling splendour and overwhelmed by its crushing force.[29]

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[26] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 166–167.
[27] Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 52.
[28] Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 55–65.
[29] Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 65.

Walbridge has discussed the differences between the two conversion stories, but reaches no conclusion as to which is most plausible.[30] Older secondary Baha'i literature usually quotes the first version of Mulla Husayn's conversion, which is the one that took several days of intellectual struggle. For example, in the classical but still much used introductory book by J. E. Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, which was first published in 1923 and has been reprinted several times, the conversion is described as follows: "After some days of anxious investigation and study, Mulla Husayn became firmly convinced that the Messenger long expected by the Shi'is had indeed appeared."[31] A similar passage in Browne's translation of Abdu'l-Baha's *A Traveller's Narrative* must have been Esslemont's source, given that in the same section he refers to *A Traveller's Narrative* in general.[32] Furthermore, Esslemont's draft of the first chapter of his manuscript was sent to Abdu'l-Baha for approval, so there is no doubt that when Esslemont wrote his book, the official Baha'i perception of the conversion was that it was a lengthy process.

In newer introductory books, however, the conversion is described as having taken place during the night of the 22nd of May, thus complying with the story in *The Dawn-Breakers*, which was published in 1932.[33] This exemplifies the central doctrinal position of *The Dawn-Breakers* as a "sacred" source to the Babi history. Amanat's comment is that some later sources, including *The Dawn-Breakers*, "give a more supernatural sense to their accounts to make it more comparable to the traditional concept of prophetic revelation".[34] This point is resumed and discussed in Chapter 7 on conversion to Baha'i.

Letters of the Living

Mulla Muhammad Husayn Bushru'i became the Bab's first disciple and later developed into a great Babi leader under the name of

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[30] John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1996, pp. 219–220.

[31] J. E. Esslemont, *An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980, p. 14.

[32] Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, p. 241.

[33] John Ferraby, *All Things Made New. A Comprehensive Outline of the Bahá'í Faith*, London, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1975, pp. 186–187; William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith. The Emerging Global Religion*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1989, pp. 6–7.

[34] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 167, note 96.

Babu'l-Bab ("Gate of the Gate").[35] In Baha'i history, he is usually known as Mulla Husayn, and this name is used here as well. After his conversion, Mulla Husayn lectured and preached in the neighbouring mosque, and he succeeded in winning several Shaykhis for the cause of the Bab.[36] These in turn convinced others, in the beginning mostly among the Shaykhis, but later also among the Shi'ites in general.

Shaykh Ahmad Ahsai's cosmological thinking included speculations on the significance of combinations of particular letters and their numbers. The Bab continued this tradition, and he attributed particular significance to the number nineteen. The Bab later called eighteen of the first converts the "Letters of the Living" (*huruf-i-hayy*), and together with the Bab himself, they constituted the first "unity" (*vahid*) of 19.

Among the Letters of the Living, four individuals played a particular leading role in expanding and organising the Babi movement.[37] These were Mulla Husayn, Mulla Ali Bastami (?–1846), who was the Bab's second convert, Fatima Zarrin Taj Baraghani (1814–1852), also called Qurratu'l-Ayn ("Solace of the Eyes") or Tahirih ("the Pure One"), who was a female radical Shaykhi scholar and poet, and Mulla Muhammad Ali Barfurushi (?–1849), best known as Quddus ("The Most Holy").[38]

<center>FAILURE IN IRAQ</center>

In 1845, shortly before the Bab had planned to leave Shiraz for a pilgrimage to Mecca, he instructed some of his followers to go to Karbala and wait for his return from Mecca. The Bab was convinced that his appearance in Karbala would be a signal for the advent of the Imam.[39] Mulla Ali Bastami was among those who had gone to

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[35] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 166–174.

[36] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 175–177.

[37] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 179.

[38] The year of the birth of Mulla Muhammad Ali Barfurushi is uncertain: Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 181, argues that 1819 or 1820 is the most likely, while MacEoin gives the year 1824, see D. MacEoin, "Muḥammad ʿAlī Bārfurūshī", in C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs, and Ch. Pellat (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 7, Leiden, Brill, 1991, p. 422.

[39] Denis MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War", *Religion*, vol. 12, 1982, pp. 93–129.

Karbala to spread the teachings of the Bab, and soon large crowds of expecting adherents gathered while arms were purchased for the preparation of *jihad* (holy war).[40] Bastami, however, was arrested and imprisoned, and in 1845 he appeared before a joint Sunni-Shi'ite tribunal in Baghdad—an unusual reconciliation of Sunni and Shi'ite clergy.[41] The tribunal issued a *fatwa* (a religious judgment) condemning the Bab as blasphemous and an outright unbeliever; however, because the Sunni and Shi'i *ulama* could not reach an agreement, Ali Bastami was not sentenced to death.[42] Instead, he was handed over to the Ottoman authorities after his interrogation and sentenced to forced labour in the Ottoman imperial dockyards in Constantinople, where he died.[43]

After Bastami's arrest, Qurratu'l-Ayn seems to have played the leading role in Karbala. Residing in Rasthi's home in Karbala, she lectured and expounded on the doctrines of the Bab. She claimed authority as the incarnation of Fatima, a position apparently acknowledged by many Babis.[44] In addition to being a woman demanding status in a male domain, her reputedly radical opinions and behaviour, such as lecturing unveiled before men, surrounded her with much controversy.[45]

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[40] MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War".

[41] Moojan Momen, "The Trial of Mullā ʿAlī Bastāmī: A Combined Sunnī-Shīʿī Fatwā against the Bāb", *Iran*, vol. 20, 1982, pp. 113–143.

[42] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 220–238; Momen, "The Trial of Mullá ʿAlí Bastámí".

[43] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 235–237.

[44] MacEoin, "Babism"; Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 295.

[45] Qurratu'l-Ayn's personal life, career, and outstanding role in the Babi movement have interested several scholars of Babism. Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 295–331; MacEoin, "Babism"; Denis MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History. A survey*, Leiden, Brill, 1992, pp. 107–116; L. P. Elwell-Sutton and D. M. MacEoin, "Ḳurrat al-'Ayn", in C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, B. Lewis, and Ch. Pellat (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 5, Leiden, Brill, 1986, p. 502. E. G. Browne wrote an overview of her life, with examples of her poetry, in a long (8 pages) note in *A Traveller's Narrative*. He was obviously fascinated by this female Babi leader; his introduction to the note has the style of Victorian romance rather than of unbiased scholarship: "The appearance of such a woman as Ḳurratu'l-'Ayn is in any country and any age a rare phenomenon, but in such a country as Persia it is a prodigy—nay, almost a miracle. Alike in virtue of her marvellous beauty, her rare intellectual gifts, her fervid eloquence, her fearless devotion, and her glorious martyrdom, she stands forth incomparable and immortal amidst her countrywomen. Had the Bábí religion no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient—that it produced a heroine like Ḳurratu'l-'Ayn." Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, pp. 309–316 (quotation p. 309). The name Tahirih is also today given to many girls among the Baha'is, and for Baha'i women she is said to be "the most widespread

In June 1845, the Bab returned to Shiraz in Iran from his pil-
grimage to Mecca. However, he did not go to Karbala as planned,
probably out of fear of the consequences of the *fatwa* issued against
him in connection with Ali Bastami's trial.[46] The Bab's failure to
show up in Karbala to signal the expected return of the Imam had
a strong negative effect on his followers and their high messianic
expectations. It is likely that it did away with the possibility of mass
conversion among the Shi'ites of Iraq, even in the fairly receptive
climate of Karbala.[47] When Qurratu'l-Ayn was arrested in 1847 and
forced to leave Karbala for Iran, the Bab lost all his remaining
influence within the centre of gravity of Shi'ism.[48] In the following
years, the further development of Babism became essentially an inter-
nal Iranian affair.

OPPOSITION AND REVOLT

In the summer of 1845, the governor of Shiraz had the Bab put on
a summary trial and placed on house arrest to avoid unrest. However,
in September 1846 the Bab managed to escape to Isfahan, where
he was protected by the friendly governor of the province, Manuchir
Khan. When the governor died, the Bab was arrested again in the
beginning of 1847 and placed under surveillance in the fortress of
Maku in northwestern Azerbaijan. However, he was not cut off from
contact with his followers, and the Babi movement grew despite the

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model of the ideal woman within the Baha'i community". Susan S. Maneck, "Women
in the Baha'i Faith", in Arvind Sharma (ed.), *Religion and Women*, Albany, State
University of New York Press, 1994, pp. 211–227 (quotation p. 217). Maybe she
is also a role model for Iranian women in general. Thus, in her book on Iranian
female writers, Farzaneh Milani has a chapter with a biographical and literary
analysis of Qurratu'l-Ayn, her poetry, and her claimed significance as a symbol of
women's emancipation. Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words. The Emerging Voices of Iranian
Women Writers*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1992, pp. 77–99. In 2004,
Kalimat published an anthology with 18 contributions to the study of her life and
thinking, and a selection of her poetry reworked into English. See Sabir Afaqi (ed.),
*Táhirih in History: Perspectives on Qurratu'l-'Ayn from East and West. Studies in the Bábí and
Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 16, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2004; Banani, Amin (ed., trans.),
*Táhirih: A Portrait in Poetry. Selected Poems of Qurratu'l-'Ayn. Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í
History*, vol. 17, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2004.

  [46] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 243, pp. 251–252.

  [47] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 252–254; MacEoin, "The Babi Concept
of Holy War".

  [48] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 308–309.

increasing opposition from the *ulama*. The sociologist of religion Peter Smith estimates the total number of Babis in the late 1840s was 100,000 or about 2% of the Iranian population.[49] This figure, which is considered the absolute maximum, is the average of a very uneven distribution, however, and the concentration of Babis in some of the northern larger towns was considerable, while there were almost no Babis among the nomadic people.[50]

Right from the beginning, the Bab's claims were bitterly denounced by those *ulama* of Shaykhi observance who had rallied under the leadership of Karim Khan Kirmani.[51] The reactions of the non-Shaykhi *ulama* in Iran were more varied; most were against the Babis, but quite a few lower-ranking members of the *ulama* joined the movement.[52] In the beginning, the government was rather indifferent, but as Babism gained in popularity, the government gradually began to consider the Babis a source of public unrest and a danger to the state. This was not without reason, since the Bab's claim of being the Hidden Imam in principle meant a claim on both religious and political leadership; his claim might nullify the legitimacy of the rule of the Shah.[53]

The Babis grew more and more radical with the increased opposition. In late 1847, in the northern Iranian town of Qazvin, the tensions erupted in the first fights between adherents and opponents of the Babi cause. This first bloody Babi conflict was partly a family affair, because Qurratu'l-Ayn's uncle was an ambitious local religious leader in Qazvin and a strong opponent of the Babis, and he was instrumental in instigating the fights.[54]

Early in 1848, the Bab's teachings were carried to the extreme, from the perspective of the Shi'ites. A letter was circulated among his closest followers and in this letter the Bab declared himself to

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[49] Peter Smith, "A Note on Babi and Baha'i Numbers in Iran", *Iranian Studies*, vol. 17, 1984, pp. 295–301.

[50] Peter Smith and Moojan Momen, "The Bábí Movement: A Resource Mobilization Perspective", in Peter Smith (ed.), *In Iran. Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 3, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1986, pp. 33–93; Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 368–370.

[51] MacEoin, "Early Shaykhí Reactions"; Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 286–294.

[52] Moojan Momen, "The Social Basis of the Bábí Upheavals in Iran (1848–53): A Preliminary Analysis", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 15, 1983, pp. 157–183.

[53] Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 170–171.

[54] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 316–324.

be the Hidden Imam and the Islamic *shari'a* abrogated.[55] According to Shi'i thinking, this announcement meant that the Bab was to lead the faithful in the final battle against the unbelievers, and expectations of apocalyptic upheavals spread rapidly among the Babis.[56] The Babi cause was approaching a crucial turning point.

In May 1848, the Bab was transferred from Maku to a stricter confinement in Chihriq, near Urmia in western Azarbayjan, only to be brought to Tabriz two months later for interrogation by a council of *ulama* and state officials under the supervision of the crown-prince, Nasiri'd-Din Mirza.[57] At the trial, the Bab repeated his claim of being the Hidden Imam, with all its further grave religious implications, namely the abrogation of the Islamic *shari'a*. In theory, this would put an end to Islam and to the function of the *ulama* in Iranian society. The *ulama* were "the institutional expression of the power of Islam, the expositors and guardians of its doctrine and the enforcers of its law (the *shari'a*), and among their functions were the rebuttal of heresy and innovation."[58]

The Bab's claims were contested by the council, who demanded proof, which the Bab refused to give. The Bab thereby failed to convince the *ulama*, lost his case and was publicly humiliated.[59] The *ulama* did not win a complete victory, however. The Bab's public popularity led the council to act cautiously and indecisively, and instead of sentencing him to death, the Bab was sent back to Chihriq where he remained until 1850.

The trial of the Bab for heresy was quite unusual because of the heavy state involvement, which shows the importance of the case.[60] However, despite the fact that this trial was organised by the Iranian government, the state had only interfered hesitantly, and the chief opponents in the conflicts were still the Babis and the *ulama*.

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[55] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, p. 82; Denis MacEoin, "Hierarchy, Authority, and Eschatology in Early Bábí Thought", in Peter Smith (ed.), *In Iran. Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 3, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1986, pp. 95–155.

[56] MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War".

[57] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 187–193.

[58] H. Algar, "Bābism, Bahāism, and the Ulama", in H. Algar, *Religion and State in Iran in 1785–1906. The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969, pp. 137–151 (quotation pp. 137–138).

[59] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 385–393.

[60] Denis MacEoin, "The Trial of the Bab: Shi'ite Orthodoxy Confronts its Mirror Image", *Occasional Papers in Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Studies*, no. 1, 1997, http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/bhpapers/babtrial.htm.

The Road of No Return

In the summer of 1848, while the trial was taking place, an important Babi gathering was improvised in a small town, Badasht, in northern Iran (see the map above). Several outstanding Babi leaders were present, among them Quddus, Qurratu'l-Ayn, and Husayn Ali Nuri (Baha'u'llah), but not Mulla Husayn, and for the first time this gave an opportunity to review the tenets and strategy of the Babi movement.[61] Not all the Bab's adherents were ready to accept his claim of being the Hidden Imam, however. The discussions between radicals, whose prime advocate was Qurratu'l-Ayn, and moderates, including Quddus, were heated, and the movement was on the verge of splitting.[62] However, in the end, Quddus and most of the other Babis present sided with Qurratu'l-Ayn, which meant that the Islamic *shari'a* was declared abrogated as an official Babi doctrine.

There is little doubt from the descriptions of the Badasht meeting that it concluded in the nullification of the Islamic *shari'a*. In the *Nuqṭatu'l-Káf*, it is reported (in Browne's summary):

> The abrogation of the laws of the previous dispensation is announced, and laws in general are declared to be necessary only till such time as men have learned to comprehend the "Doctrine of the Unity" (*Tawḥíd*) by which is meant the recognition of the true nature of the "Point", or Divine Manifestation of the age" [the "Point" is one of the Bab's self-acclaimed titles].[63]

In *The Dawn-Breakers*, it is expressed as follows:

> . . . obsolete conventions which had fettered the consciences of men were boldly challenged and fearlessly swept away. The way was paved for the proclamation of the laws and precepts that were destined to usher in the new Dispensation.[64]

According to the latter source, Baha'u'llah was instrumental in bringing about this process to its conclusion.[65] The account of Baha'u'llah's important role in this early radical break with Islam establishes a

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[61] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 324–328.

[62] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 325–328; Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent. Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1982, pp. 87–131; Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, pp. 355–360; Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 292–298.

[63] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, p. 357.

[64] Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 298.

[65] Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 292–298.

doctrinal continuity between the Babi movement and the Baha'i religion. This interpretation, which is also clearly expounded in *God Passes By*, is consonant with the Baha'i preference of emphasising Babi-Baha'i continuity and placing the ultimate break with Islam as early as possible.[66]

In September 1848, Muhammad Shah died, and Nasiri'd-Din Shah—the crown prince who supervised the Tabriz trial—acceded to the throne. At that time, the Babi movement seemed to have turned decisively hostile to the Qajar state.[67] The government apparently assumed that the Babis attempted an armed insurrection and decided to initiate a systematic military suppression of the Babi movement. From October 1848 to the beginning of 1851, the campaign resulted in a series of battles between the Babis and the government troops. In these battles, the most important of which took place at the site of Shaykh Tabarsi and in the towns of Nayriz and Zanjan, the Babis fought well and bravely, but finally succumbed. A cautious estimate is that between 2,000 and 3,000 Babis were killed during the battles and in the subsequent executions.[68] The Zanjan uprising was the longest and bloodiest of all the battles, and most of the Babi defenders, approx. 2,000, fell in fierce combat against 20,000 soldiers from the army.[69]

The Millenarian and Mythological Aspects of the Battles of Shaykh Tabarsi

In a classic article from 1966, Yonina Talmon characterises millenarian movements as revolutionary, this-worldly (in the sense that their religious expectations are believed to be fulfilled in this world), collective and engaged in the ultimate battle between good and evil.[70] Babism

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[66] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 32–33. See also Hatcher and Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 29–30; Denis MacEoin, "From Babism to Baha'ism: Problems of Militancy, Quietism, and Conflation in the Construction of a Religion", *Religion*, vol. 13, 1983, pp. 219–255.

[67] MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War"; Denis MacEoin, "Aspects of Militancy and Quietism in Imami Shi'ism", *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, vol. 11, 1984, pp. 18–27.

[68] Denis MacEoin, "A Note on the Numbers of Babi and Baha'i Martyrs in Iran", *Baha'i Studies Bulletin*, vol. 2, 1983, pp. 84–88.

[69] John Walbridge, "The Babi Uprising in Zanjan: Causes and Issues", *Iranian Studies*, vol. 29, 1996, pp. 339–362.

[70] Yonina Talmon, "Millenarian Movements", *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, vol. 7, 1966, pp. 159–200.

around 1848 fulfilled all these criteria. It had developed into a mass movement in strong opposition to existing secular and religious authority. The leader of the Babi movement, the Bab, had declared himself to be the Hidden Imam, who in Shi'i thinking should lead the final battle to conquer the world, and he was accepted in this capacity by most of his followers.[71] In practice, Babism had no centralised leadership; it was led mostly by local *ad hoc* leaders, and the imprisonment of the Bab did not severely curb the spread of the movement. In fact, the only instance when a centralised leadership was attempted was at the Badasht meeting, and this was improvised, brief and without the participation of the Bab himself.

In several respects, the battles of Shaykh Tabarsi from October 1848 to May 1849 represent the culmination of Babism. The battles of Shaykh Tabarsi took place shortly after the Bab had announced that he was the Hidden Imam, and the millenarian expectations among the Babis had grown to their heights. Several of the first generation of leading Babis fought and died in the Shaykh Tabarsi battles, first and foremost Mulla Husayn (Babu'l-Bab) and Mulla Muhammad Ali Barfurushi (Quddus). When the later battles at Nayriz (May-June 1850, October-December 1853) and Zanjan (May 1850 to January 1851) took place, most of the first leaders had been killed or imprisoned, and local religious and political factors became decisive for the outcome.[72] Even the bloody Zanjan uprising was a local affair isolated from the main developments within the Babi movement.[73]

The battles of Shaykh Tabarsi, however, were not only a culmination of Babi millennialism. The accounts of the battles, the mythology around them, and their fatal outcome are also central to modern Baha'is' understanding of their own history. In the following, I describe and discuss the battles of Shaykh Tabarsi with both perspectives in mind, that of millennialism and that of posterity's use of the battles in the Baha'i sacred history. A readily available source recounting the battles, the *Tárikh-i-Jadíd*, describes many instances of millennialism

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[71] MacEoin "The Babi Concept of Holy War"; Peter Smith, "Millenarianism in the Babi and Baha'i Religions", in Roy Wallis (ed.), *Millennialism and Charisma*, Belfast, The Queen's University, 1982, pp. 231–283; Juan R. I. Cole, "Millennialism in Modern Iranian History", in Abbas Amanat and Magnus Bernhardsson (eds.), *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, London, Tauris, 2002, pp. 282–311. See also MacEoin, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy".

[72] Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions. From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press and George Ronald, 1987, pp. 26–29.

[73] Walbridge, "The Babi Uprising in Zanjan".

expressed by the besieged Babis, and I use some of them as illus-
trative examples.[74] The Baha'i sacred history, first and foremost, is
presented in *The Dawn-Breakers* and in *God Passes By*.[75] As discussed
in Chapter 2, for the Baha'is in general, these books have a special
authoritative position coming from the hands of Shoghi Effendi, and
I shall show that the millenarian past of the Babi movement was
seen by Shoghi Effendi as an important part of the historical heri-
tage of the Baha'i religion.

Preparing for the Coming of the Mahdi

In the summer of 1848, Mulla Husayn (Babu'l-Bab) was not present
at the Badasht meeting, but was staying in Mashad in his home
province of Khurasan, one of the strongholds of the Babi movement.[76]
Following the order of the Bab, Mulla Husayn is reported to have
raised the black standard, and a large group of Babis rallied around
him.[77] In Shi'i tradition, the prophet Muhammad is quoted as saying
that the raising of a black standard in Khurasan is one of the specific
signs of the coming of the Mahdi, so the Bab's order was a clear
millenarian signal.[78] By 22 July 1848, Mulla Husayn and a company
of 202 armed Babis left Mashad and marched westward towards the
province of Mazandaran.[79]

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[74] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, pp. 44–86; Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp.
324–368, pp. 378–400. The *Táríkh-i-Jadíd* and the *Nuqtatu'l-Káf* follow each other
reasonably well in the description and interpretation of those events that are dis-
cussed in the following, cf. Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Káf*, p. xliii; MacEoin, *The Sources for
Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, p. 157. For a reference to other sources to the bat-
tles, see Edward G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion*, Cambridge,
Cambridge University Press, 1918, pp. 237–243; MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī
Doctrine and History*, pp. 161–163; Juan R. I. Cole, "*Nuqtat al-Kaf* and the Babi
Chronicle Traditions", *Research Notes in Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Studies*, vol. 2, no. 6,
1998, http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/notes/vol2/babihist.htm. I have previ-
ously used passages from *Táríkh-i-Jadíd* in a discussion of Babi millennialism in a
Danish textbook: Margit Warburg, "Religionssociologi [Sociology of religion]", in
Mikael Rothstein (ed.), *Humanistisk Religionsforskning. En indføring i religionshistorie & reli-
gionssociologi*, Copenhagen, Samleren, 1997, pp. 223–227.

[75] Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*; Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*.

[76] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 273–283.

[77] Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 324–325. Earlier sources do not, how-
ever, support that the Babis carried a black standard on their way. See Siyamak
Zabihi-Moghaddam, "The Babi-State Conflict at Shaykh Tabarsi", *Iranian Studies*,
vol. 35, 2002, pp. 87–112.

[78] Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, p. 168; MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of
Holy War"; see also Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 351.

[79] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 393; Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp.
324–325.

However, when the band of Babis came to the town of Barfurush in Mazandaran, there were serious skirmishes with the local population, and the Babis had to retreat into a nearby, rather inaccessible forested area.[80] Here, they established themselves in and around a shrine erected over the tomb of Shaykh Ahmad ibn Abi Talib Tabarsi. The shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi is described by Browne as a simple building, ca. 8–16 m, with a small portico in the front, situated in a grassy enclosure, 50–60 m in diameter, and surrounded by a hedge.[81] See Photo III—*Shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi*.

The Babis immediately began to fortify the site, reportedly living in peace and harmony with each other while waiting for the governmental troops to attack:

> Then *Jenáb-i-Bábu'l-Báb* said, "If ye be united in spirit, it is contrary to the dictates of self-devotion and single-heartedness to make any distinction in these perishable possessions during the few brief days for which a respite may be granted to you. Forsake, then, all such distinctions, and, for this short while, share what ye have in common." So they appointed a steward and a cook; and at breakfast and supper they sat round like brethren, one plate containing a uniform portion being placed before every two of them. Thus did they live happily together in content and gladness, free from all grief and care, as through resignation and contentment formed a part of their very nature.[82]

When the Babis were attacked by the governmental troops for the first time, they became anxious, but after an encouraging speech by Babu'l-Bab (Mulla Husayn), the reaction among them was to put their trust in God rather than in armed resistance:

> Such was the effect of these words that our hearts became filled with strength, and so ready were we to lay down our lives that without flinching we joyfully exposed our breasts to the fire of the malignants. The enemy's horsemen galloped round about us in great numbers, but, though they fired many shots at close quarters, none of us suffered any injury, and it almost seemed as though their erring bullets were testifying to the error of their ways.[83]

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[80] Zabihi-Moghaddam, "The Babi-State Conflict at Shaykh Tabarsi".

[81] Browne visited this location in 1888, and gave a vivid description of it. Edward Granville Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians. Impressions as to the Life, Character, and Thought of the People of Persia Received during Twelve Months' Residence in that Country in the Years 1887–1888*, London, Century, 1984, pp. 616–619. Browne also sketched a plan of the site and made drawings of the shrine; these are reproduced in *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, in the plate between p. 56 and p. 57.

[82] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, p. 55.

[83] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, p. 56.

The quoted passages fit with typical millenarian expectations. With the advent of the Imam, a perfectly good and perfectly happy new world would rise out of the decaying old world, and the besieged Babis were the vanguard preparing the way by their exemplary behaviour. The communal sharing of food and other possessions is a typical millenarian trait. The end is approaching, and the material world is losing its significance. The predestined creation of the new world was a guarantee—God was on the side of the Babis—so even the fiercest attacks by the enemy would miraculously be futile.

It is also a characteristic millenarian trait that there was a sharp division between friend and foe, us and them, with no neutrals, and that the contrast between the pious Babis and their enemies was described in black-and-white:[84]

> For it was customary with the garrison of the Castle to keep vigil during the last third of the night, to read and pray aloud with fervent devotion to the Just and Gracious Lord. Far otherwise was it in the royalist camp, where wine-bibbing, foul and licentious acts, dice-playing, and utter neglect of spiritual exercises universally prevailed.[85]

During the siege, another of the Babi leaders, Quddus, arrived with a crowd of followers, so that finally between 540 and 600 Babis were involved in the battles at Shaykh Tabarsi.[86] The Babis made several successful sorties against the enemy, and they found comfort in their tribulations and confirmation of their faith from many reports of miracles and extraordinary events, such as:

- Mulla Husayn fought with superhuman strength, killing nearly three hundred enemies in one onslaught alone.[87]
- In another incident, he fought with a soldier who took shelter behind a tree. In a single stroke with his sword, Mulla Husayn cut through the tree, the man behind, and his musket.[88]
- When water supplies were scarce, Quddus predicted that it would rain and snow that night, so that the water supplies could be replenished, and so it did.[89]

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[84] Talmon, "Millenarian Movements".
[85] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, p. 71.
[86] Momen, "The Social Basis of the Bábí Upheavals in Iran".
[87] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, p. 68.
[88] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 40; Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 414.
[89] Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 361.

- Because of a wound in the mouth, Quddus was unable to eat solid food, but he thrived on a diet of tea and broth for three months without loss of colour or bodily strength.[90]
- A young man returned from battle, and when he removed his belt, his comrades saw that hundreds of the enemy's bullets had been caught by the belt instead of wounding him. This happened again after the next battle, and Quddus interpreted this as a sign of God that the young man should be spared martyrdom, and Quddus therefore sent him back to his mother.[91]

The last story, which is reported to be based on an unpublished Persian manuscript, has been circulating in an electronic discussion forum. It is an example of how the miraculous events of Shaykh Tabarsi are also part of Baha'i lore today. This is not the only example; a Baha'i author of an article on the Shaykh Tabarsi battles concludes that the surprising strength by which the Babis could withstand an overwhelming enemy force is evidence of the superior, spiritual nature of the Babi movement.[92]

The End of the Battles

The turning point of the battles came when Mulla Husayn was mortally wounded during an otherwise successful Babi sortie and attack by night on the camp of the governmental troops.[93] Quddus now took over the command after Mulla Husayn, while the governmental troops received reinforcements and more artillery from Tehran, and Shaykh Tabarsi now was permanently besieged.[94]

According to the *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, Quddus spoke to his companions preparing them for death and departure from the world:

> "We came hither to shew forth God's truth, not to live gluttonously. If the aim in view were to maintain in luxury these perishable bodies, had you not in your own homes all manner of delicate foods? Why then did ye forsake these to come hither? But if you came to

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[90] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, p. 68.
[91] David Michael Piff, *Bahá'í Lore*, Oxford, George Ronald, 2000, pp. 299–300.
[92] Sepehr Manuchehri, "Brief Analysis of The Features of Babi Resistance at Shaykh Tabarsi", *Research Notes in Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Studies*, vol. 2, no. 10, 1998, http://www2.h-net.mse.edu/~bahai/notes/vol2/tabarsi.htm.
[93] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, pp. 70–72.
[94] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, pp. 74–85; Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 385–397.

die, then you need not fodder and provisions." To this his compan-
ions replied, "Whatever your orders may be, we are ready to obey
them." Then said he, "Give the rice to the horses and sheep and cat-
tle for them to eat it." . . . So the Bábís, eager to obey the commands
of *Jenáb-i-Kuddús*, took no pains to husband their resources, so that in
a little while their provisions were exhausted; while, inasmuch as the
enemy had surrounded the Castle on all sides, they could not go forth
to procure fresh supplies.[95]

In the end, the Babis were defeated just as much by hunger as by
the armed strength of their opponents, so from a military point of
view, such an order of wasting supplies would have been a grave
mistake. However, Quddus' order—which is not found in the cor-
responding passage in *The Dawn-Breakers*—should not be seen as a
singular decision taken by a Babi desperado. Instead, I suggest that
it can be explained in the logic of millennialism, where the severing
of material ties to this world, such as destruction of one's own prop-
erty or similar antinomian acts, are not uncommon as a means of
showing the downfall of the old world and the advent of the new.[96]
It is the culmination of millenarian expectations and approaching
martyrdom, which the author of the *Táríkh-i-Jadíd* is conveying.

During this final phase of the siege, the governmental troops
attacked several times, aided by artillery bombardments, but the
Babis held out, and according to the chronicles, they inflicted heavy
losses on their enemy.[97] Only after a total of nine months of fighting,
the weakened and starving garrison of Babis decided to surrender

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[95] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, pp. 78–79.
[96] Talmon, "Millenarian Movements". An exemplary historical incidence of destruc-
tion of property in connection with millenarian expectations is the mass slaughter
of cattle among the Xhosas in South Africa in 1857. The Xhosas were threatened
by the expansion of white settlers and cattle diseases, but prophecies told them that
the Xhosa ancestors would rise from their graves and throw the white man back
into the sea. The Xhosas therefore killed their cattle and destroyed the crops in
confidence that their ancestors would help them to restore freedom and wealth.
J. B. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise. Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement
of 1856–7*, Johannesburg, Raven Press, 1990. Also, Peter Worsley's study of the
Melanesian cargo cults from the late nineteenth century to the 1950s contains fre-
quent reports of the killing of pigs and other destruction of wealth in response to
millenarian prophecies. Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound. A Study of 'Cargo'
Cults in Melanesia*, New York, Schocken Books, 1974, pp. 52–52, p. 104, p. 111,
pp. 150–151, pp. 154–155, p. 167, p. 200.
[97] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, pp. 79–85; Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp.
386–396.

in return for a promise of free leave given by the commander of the governmental troops.[98] However, the commander broke his oath, and almost all the surviving Babis were massacred.[99]

The Historical Symbolism of Shaykh Tabarsi

The chronicles of the battles of Shaykh Tabarsi are full of historical symbolism. For the fighting Babis, the religious drama of the battle of Karbala was re-enacted at Shaykh Tabarsi, and they were themselves the latter-day equivalents of the heroic martyrs.[100] In *The Dawn-Breakers*, Mulla Husayn is quoted as saying to his companions just before their arrival at the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi: "We are approaching our Karbilá, our ultimate destination."[101] The same episode is described in the *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, where Mulla Husayn is quoted as saying:

> "In this place will the blood of God's soldiers and saints be shed, and many a pure spirit shall be quenched in dust and gore." And most of his companions knew what he intended to signify.[102]

The Baha'is also later draw upon the symbolism of Shaykh Tabarsi. The historic scene of besieged defenders fighting bravely against an overwhelming enemy force seems ideal for symbolising and promoting the spirit of the group or the nation. Rather than yielding to the evil forces, the encircled group of the few but chosen decides to fight against all odds. Whatever the outcome, their fighting shows to the world that their cause is the right one. Over and over in history, this type of historic drama, these acts of remembrance, have delivered the raw material for an identity-building mythology. The Jewish zealots at Masada in 74 are central to modern Israel's self-understanding as a military power. Davy Crockett and the Texans' last fight at Fort Alamo in 1836 is an important part of the American frontier myth. In 1838, in South Africa, a battle took place between a group of several hundred Boers in a wagon fort and an army of more than 10,000 Zulu warriors. Against all odds, the Boers withstood the attack. Before the battle, the Boers had vowed that if God gave

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[98] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, pp. 79–85.
[99] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, pp. 85–87.
[100] Smith, "Millenarianism in the Babi and Baha'i Religions"; Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 43.
[101] Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 342–343.
[102] Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, p. 55.

them victory, they would commemorate the day every year, and since then the so-called battle of Blood River has been an essential part of Afrikaner identity.[103]

The battles of Shaykh Tabarsi have the same role in Baha'i mythology. In *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi summarises the highlights of the battles over three pages, piecemeal and in an exclamatory prose, starting each incident with "We remember . . .", "We are amazed . . . ", "We are struck with wonder . . .", "We are stirred . . ." etc.[104] This is not story-telling in the conventional form. Shoghi Effendi here builds and emphasises a Baha'i identity based on a collective Baha'i remembrance of this "stirring episode, so glorious for the Faith, so blackening to the reputation of its enemies—an episode that must be regarded as a rare phenomenon in the history of modern times".[105] It should be seen in this light that according to the history in *The Dawn-Breakers*, Baha'u'llah also had *his* part in the Shaykh Tabarsi drama. He inspected the fortification before the siege had begun, and he also later attempted to join the defenders, but was arrested on his way and punished by the bastinado.[106]

THE BAB'S TEXTS AND DOCTRINES

The Bab's writings are difficult to read because of his lack of punctuation and his perplexing, idiosyncratic and ungrammatical style.[107] Despite their ambiguity, MacEoin considers the Bab's works to be the most important body of sectarian writings produced in Islam: "In quality they vary immensely from the innovative and sublime to the downright eccentric and puerile. And yet it is hard to deny their passion or creativity."[108]

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[103] T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom. Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975, pp. 6–7, pp. 198–20, pp. 247–248.

[104] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 40–42.

[105] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 42.

[106] Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 348–349, pp. 368–372. In the *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, pp. 64–65, Baha'u'llah's attempt to reach Shaykh Tabarsi and his arrest is described briefly and there is no indication that he ever reached the location. According to Browne, the incident is not contained in the *Nuqṭatu'l-Káf*. See Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, p. 362.

[107] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, p. 12. Browne also notes the Bab's obscure and ungrammatical style, see pp. 905–906 in Edward Granville Browne, "The Bábís of Persia. II. Their Literature and Doctrines", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, [vol. 21], 1889, pp. 881–1009.

[108] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, p. 102.

One of the Bab's early works was the *Qayyumu'l-Asma* from 1844, which was a commentary on a single chapter of the Quran, *sura* 12, the *sura* of Joseph. However, it also had the wider scope of presenting an original attempt to re-interpret Islam partially.[109] It was in the *Qayyumu'l-Asma* that for the first time in writing he declared himself to be the *bab*.[110] He generally emphasised a strict adherence to the Islamic *shari'a*, and discussed at length the conditions for waging *jihad*, but also made his own extension and intensification of certain of its laws.[111] Thus, although some of the Bab's ideas were heterodox, he mainly argued within the frame of orthodox Shi'ism. The Bab must have considered the *Qayyumu'l-Asma* to be of great significance for the initial expounding of his ideas, because in the early years of Babism, the *Qayyumu'l-Asma* was widely used in the mission.[112]

The Bayan

The Bab's most important work, the Persian *Bayan* ("explanation"), was written in 1847–1848 during his imprisonment in Maku. In comparison with the *Qayyumu'l-Asma*, the Bab's thinking had now radicalised and was clearly heterodox. In the *Bayan*, the Bab claimed for himself a status much higher than his previous title of *bab*; he was now the Hidden Imam in person.[113] According to Shi'i thinking, the title of Hidden Imam would allow the Bab to declare the Islamic *shari'a* abrogated, and the *Bayan* was, in fact, an announcement of new Babi laws and ritual observances.[114] These Babi laws were to supersede Islamic law and to regulate the affairs of a future Babi state comprising five central provinces of Iran.

As a continuation of the Sufi and Shaykhi tradition of esoteric knowledge, the Bab developed an elaborate system of numerology (*gematria*) and construction of talismans.[115] The Bab had concluded

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[109] B. Todd Lawson, "Interpretation as Revelation: The Qur'ān Commentary of Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb (1819–1850)", in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988, pp. 223–253.

[110] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, p. 57.

[111] MacEoin, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy"; MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, pp. 6–7; MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War".

[112] MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War".

[113] MacEoin, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy".

[114] MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, pp. 9–14.

[115] Denis M. MacEoin, "Nineteenth Century Babi Talismans", *Studia Iranica*, vol. 14, 1985, pp. 77–98; MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, pp. 14–21.

that nineteen was a particularly significant number, and this number
therefore became the base unit for different kinds of measure and
taxation in the future Babi state.[116] The Bab also introduced a new
calendar with nineteen months, each of nineteen days. In this cal-
endar, the year one is 1844, the year of the Bab's declaration.

The Bab's concept of God was also further developed in the *Bayan*.
It shared with other heterodox Shi'ite movements certain Gnostic
and neoplatonic features, notably that the divine essence (God) is
unknowable, indescribable and inaccessible.[117] The revelations of God
take place through intermediaries, prophets who are both divine
manifestations of the "Primal Will" and human.[118] The Bab was the
latest in a succession of such divine intermediaries, starting with Adam
and including the prophets Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. However,
the Bab would not be the last, because he taught that another prophet
or rather "him whom God shall make manifest" (*man yuzhiruhu'llah*)
should appear in the future.[119] With him, the present cycle of prophe-
cies would be fulfilled.

The Bab declared in the *Bayan* that his own manifestation took
place at eleven minutes past two in the morning, on 5 *Jumada al-Ula*
1260 AH (22 May 1844).[120] From that time, the Day of Judgement
for the Quran had begun, because Islam had then achieved its per-
fection.[121] In other words, the Bab unequivocally stated in the *Bayan*
that the time of Islam was over. As mentioned above, this radical
proclamation was also contained in the circulating letter to his fol-
lowers in early 1848.

The central doctrines on the nature of God and the successive
revelations are preserved in Baha'i, which teaches that Baha'u'llah
is the *man yuzhiruhu'llah*. The Babi calendar is also used by the Baha'is;
otherwise many, but not all, of the Bab's prescriptions and ritual

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[116] Browne, "The Bábís of Persia. II. Their Literature and Doctrines".
[117] MacEoin, "Bāb, Sayyed 'Alī Moḥammad Šīrāzī".
[118] D. MacEoin, "Maẓhar", in C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, B. Lewis, and
Ch. Pellat (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 6, Leiden, Brill, 1991, pp. 952–953.
[119] Browne, "The Bábís of Persia. II. Their Literature and Doctrines" (quotation
p. 914).
[120] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 170. In his translation of the Persian Bayan,
Nicolas erroneously gives the equivalent Gregorian date as the 12th of May 1844.
A.-L.-M. Nicolas (trans.), *Seyyèd Ali Mohammed dit le Bâb. Le Béyan Persan*, Paris, Librarie
Paul Geuthner, 1911, p. 69, note 2.
[121] Nicolas, *Le Béyân Persan*, p. 69.

practices of Babism were abrogated by Baha'u'llah.[122] However, some symbols and rites of Babi or pre-Babi origin have continued with few alterations in Baha'i.[123]

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THE EXECUTION OF THE BAB AND THE
COLLAPSE OF THE BABI MOVEMENT

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From 1849 with the Bab in prison and with the deaths of both Mulla Husayn and Quddus at Shaykh Tabarsi, other Babi leaders became increasingly involved in directing the course of the Babi movement. Among these were the two half-brothers Mirza Husayn Ali Nuri (1817–1892), later called Baha'u'llah ("Glory of God"), and Mirza Yahya Nuri (ca. 1830–1912), later called Subh-i-Azal ("Morn of Eternity"). They were both early converts to Babism, but were not among the Letters of the Living. Unlike most other Babi leaders, they did not belong to the *ulama* or the Shaykhi movement. Their father, who died in 1839, was a wealthy landowner from the district of Nur in Mazandaran and belonged to the local nobility. The family had influence at the court of the Shah, and the two Nuri brothers were clearly among the most socially distinguished Babis.[124]

In 1850, the Babis were almost totally defeated, and the Iranian government, now determined to put an end to the Babi movement, arranged for the Bab to be brought from Chihriq to Tabriz for execution. At noon, the 9th of July 1850, the Bab was executed by shooting, as was one of his disciples.[125] The bodies were thrown in a dry moat outside the city, but were later recovered by the Babis. The remains of the Bab were then concealed for nearly fifty years until they were brought to Haifa to be buried in the Shrine of the Bab on Mount Carmel. Today, the martyrdom of the Bab is commemorated by the Baha'is on the 9th of July, preferably at noon; in Middle Eastern countries, however, this holy day is observed according to the lunar calendar.[126]

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[122] Baha'u'llah, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The Most Holy Book*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1992, p. 159.

[123] MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, pp. 48–52, pp. 59–60.

[124] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 57–58.

[125] The sources are conflicting, and the execution might have taken place the 8th of July. See Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 402; Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp. 229–230.

[126] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp. 227–230.

Shortly before the Bab's execution, Subh-i-Azal had risen to become a principal authority in the Babi movement.[127] He was held in high esteem by the Bab, probably because of his ability to write what the Bab regarded as divinely-revealed verses.[128] It seems likely that Subh-i-Azal was designated to be the Bab's successor, because the Bab called Subh-i-Azal the "mirror" (of the Bab's thinking) who could explain what had not yet been explained, prior to the appearance of the *man yuzhiruhu'llah*.[129] In the confusion following the execution of the Bab, Subh-i-Azal did not succeed, however, in exercising his authority to unite the Babis firmly around him. A considerable number of other Babis also claimed spiritual authority, and some even claimed to be the *man yuzhiruhu'llah*, so the Babi movement became increasingly fragmented.[130]

Subh-i-Azal's wider role in the Babi movement is still an issue of debate in Baha'i studies; in particular, there is disagreement over whether Subh-i-Azal was designated as the Bab's successor for good, or only, as the Baha'is officially maintain, as a cover for Baha'u'llah.[131]

In August 1852, a small group of Babis in Tehran unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate the Shah—an event that was reported in several European newspapers and in diplomatic reports.[132] Many Babis, including Baha'u'llah, were arrested, and about fifty of them were executed, some after cruel torture.[133] Baha'u'llah, who clearly was not involved in the assassination attempt, avoided execution, however, and was instead put into a subterranean prison cell in

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[127] D. MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims in Babism (1850–1866)", *Studia Iranica*, vol. 18, 1989, pp. 93–129.

[128] MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims".

[129] MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims"; cf. the quotations in Browne, *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, p. 381, on this matter from the *Nuqtat'ul-Kaf*.

[130] MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims".

[131] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 28–29.

[132] Moojan Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844–1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1981, pp. 128–132.

[133] Several eyewitnesses have described these tortures; the most famous of these descriptions is probably the account written the 29th of August 1852 by an Austrian officer and dispatched to a military magazine. The account is translated by Browne in *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion*, pp. 267–271, and reproduced with full biographical details in Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844–1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, pp. 132–134. The dramatic events are also described in the diary notes of Lady Mary Sheil, the wife of the British Minister in Tehran. Lady [Mary] Sheil, *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia*, New York, Arno Press, 1973, pp. 273–282.

Tehran.[134] According to Baha'u'llah's late writings, it was during this imprisonment in 1852 in Tehran that he had his first vision of his divine mission.[135]

At the time of the assassination attempt on the Shah, Subh-i-Azal was involved in an abortive attempt to create a rebellion in his home province of Nur.[136] Subh-i-Azal avoided arrest and succeeded in escaping from Iran to Baghdad. Many Babis chose to follow suit, left Iran and joined Subh-i-Azal in Baghdad, and before long, there was a sizeable Babi community in this city.[137]

After four months of imprisonment, Baha'u'llah was released at the intervention of the Russian ambassador, whose legation secretary was Baha'u'llah's brother in-law.[138] Refusing an offer of exile in Russia, he went to Baghdad, and in January 1853, he joined the Babi exile community there.[139]

Back in Iran, the Babis did not attempt further insurrections, except for one armed upheaval in October–December 1853 in Nayriz. In the following years, occasional individual attacks on Babis occurred, mostly as isolated incidents, but periodically more systematic persecutions swept the country.

Babism Explained

The brief but dramatic and passionate history of the Bab and Babism has inspired a number of scholars of Iranian history and society. This has resulted in several interpretations of the events, several explanations of why the Babi movement erupted, and different conclusions as to the degree of involvement of the various groups of Iranian society. Although there is a general consensus among scholars that Babism was a millenarian movement, it is obvious that the complicated interplay between the millenarian motif and other significant historical and social factors allows different interpretations of the ideas and acts that fuelled Babism.

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[134] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 58.
[135] Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to The Son of the Wolf*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988, pp. 21–22; cf. also Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 101.
[136] MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims"; Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh. The King of Glory*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1980, pp. 90–93.
[137] MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims".
[138] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 58–59.
[139] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 58–59.

The Issue of Babi Jihads

In a long and illuminating article, "The Babi Concept of Holy War", from 1982, Denis MacEoin analyses the Bab's writings with a view to resolve one of the central issues in the study of Babism, namely the element of *jihad* in the Babi battles. A particular tradition has grown within Shi'i Islam for an inclusive use of the concept, so that *jihad* can be waged not only against non-Muslims (as allowed in Sunni-Islam), but also against all non-Shi'ites.[140] In particular, when the Hidden Imam returns, all true believers shall rally behind him and go to war to purify the earth, ridding it of unbelief.

In the Bab's *Qayyumu'l-asma*, there are plenty of considerations on how, when and against whom the forthcoming *jihad* shall be waged. In compliance with his declared status as the gate to the Hidden Imam, the Bab was awaiting permission from the Imam to "rise up in the cause".[141] However, the Bab also instructed his followers to adopt non-violent confrontation with their opponents, and MacEoin concludes that there is no evidence that an offensive *jihad*, which would be the conversion of Shi'ites to Babism by the sword, was ever declared.[142]

In the Persian *Bayan*, in which the Bab declared that he himself was the Hidden Imam, he did not make specific statements on the waging of *jihad*, but MacEoin finds that the harsh guidelines for dealing with non-Babis leaves a picture of a future Babi state in Central Iran in perpetual holy war with the infidel outer world.[143] The Babi sources describing the actual battles that took place support the view that the Babis considered for example the battles of Shaykh Tabarsi as defensive *jihad*s, in which the Babis fought against a government that they saw as an enemy of the truth.[144]

The question whether or not *jihad* was ever encouraged by the Bab is controversial because of the later official Baha'i interpretation of the Babi movement and its causes. The picture of zealous Babis spreading the religious message with sword in hand is at variance with the noble and pacifist doctrines of Baha'i. In a subsequent pene-

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[140] MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War".
[141] MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War".
[142] MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War".
[143] MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War".
[144] Siyamak Zabihi-Moghaddam, "The Bābī-state conflict in Māzandarān: Background analysis and review of sources", in Moshe Sharon (ed.), *Studies in Modern Religions, Religious Movements and the Bābī-Bahā'ī Faiths*, Leiden, Brill, 2004, pp. 179–225.

trating analysis, MacEoin shows how the Baha'is coped with this problem, first by dissociating themselves from the Babi past and later by emphasising the martyrdom rather than the battle.[145]

Babi Communism?

The element of *jihad* in the battles, of course, does not rule out that other factors played a role, as well. Many contemporary Western observers saw in the Babi movement the same revolutionary and communist tendencies that swept over Europe in the very same years.[146] For example, the Christian missionary Henry A. Stern calls the Bab "the Persian socialist" in his travel account from 1854.[147] The Russian historian M. S. Ivanov takes up the communist theme in his Ph.D. thesis, *Babidskie Vosstaniya v Irane* [Babi revolts in Iran], from University of Leningrad in 1939.[148] Ivanov points out that Muhammad Ali Barfurushi (Quddus) was of a peasant family, and that his preaching indicated proletarian revolutionary ideas, such as the abolition of the right of private property.[149] He concludes in his thesis that the Babi movement contained two tendencies: a democratic popular movement supported by the peasants and small craftsmen and represented primarily by Quddus, and a movement supported by the merchants and landowners and represented by among others the Bab himself.[150] Ivanov ends by ascribing the failure of the Babi movement to the lack of organised leadership, thus seeing in this a confirmation of Comrade Stalin's words that "peasant rebellions can only have a successful outcome if they are merged with worker's

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[145] MacEoin, "From Babism to Baha'ism".

[146] Kurt Greussing, "The Babi movement in Iran 1844–52: from merchant protest to peasant revolution", in János M. Bak and Gerhard Benecke (eds.), *Religion and rural revolt*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1984, pp. 256–269.

[147] Henry A. Stern, *Dawnings of Light in the East; with Biblical, Historical, and Statistical Notices of Persons and Places Visited During a Mission to the Jews in Persia, Coordistan, and Mesopotamia*, London, Charles H. Purday, 1854, pp. 260–262.

[148] M. S. Ivanov, *Babidskie Vosstaniya v Irane (1848–1852)* [Babi revolts in Iran (1848–1852)], Moscow, USSR Academy of Science, Institute of Oriental Studies, 1939. In 1995, Annika Hvithamar, a student of sociology of religion, University of Copenhagen, Department of History of Religions, wrote an 18-page unpublished synopsis in Danish of Ivanov's thesis, with page references to the Russian original. I have used this synopsis as a source, and my page references are to Ivanov's thesis. Annika Hvithamar, *Babi-opstandene i Iran 1848–1852* [Babi revolts in Iran 1848–1852] [Synopsis in Danish of M. S. Ivanov, *Babidskie Vosstaniya v Irane (1848–1852)*], University of Copenhagen, Department of History of Religions, 1995 (unpublished).

[149] Ivanov, *Babidskie Vosstaniya v Irane*, p. 81.

[150] Ivanov, *Babidskie Vosstaniya v Irane*, p. 137.

rebellions and if the workers lead the peasants."[151] Ivanov's work represents the earliest serious attempt of a sociological analysis of Babism, and his mastering of both the Persian and the Russian sources, among which are several reports from the Russian ambassador in Tehran, means that his thesis contains information of considerable historical interest.

Later scholars of largely Marxist orientation also pursue the class struggle theme. The historian Kurt Greussing emphasises how the merchant class suffered from the Iranian policy of conceding trade privileges to Britain and Russia. He points out how the Bab in the period up to 1848 primarily directed his message to the domestic merchant class and urban elite, who had suffered from the Iranian foreign policy.[152] After the Bab's imprisonment, other leaders took the message to the lower urban classes and the peasantry.

A Search for Other Explanations

To analyse Babism mainly as class rebellion in religious disguise is undoubtedly a simplification. The historian Mangol Bayat sees the Babi movement in a broader perspective of dissent in nineteenth century Iran, and she regards Babism as an important stage in the development from a religious towards a more political and secular form of opposition.[153] In her chapter on the history of the Babi movement, she stresses the reform thoughts in Babism and concludes that its religious doctrines led the followers "into a radical activist commitment to better their lives now; and by pushing them to realize their aspirations and desires, Babism could, and did, lead to a revolutionary social movement irreconcilably hostile to the established political and religious order".[154] Her evolutionary perspective on dissent is contested by Amanat in a review, but her analysis of Babism represents a serious attempt of interpreting the overt revolutionary aspects of Babism within a religious frame of thinking.[155]

The social thought in Babism contained elements concurrent with Western progressive thinking, such as improved status for women,

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[151] Ivanov, *Babidskie Vosstaniya v Irane*, p. 141.
[152] Greussing, "The Babi movement in Iran 1844–52".
[153] Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, pp. 87–131.
[154] Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, p. 109.
[155] Abbas Amanat, Review of Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent, Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran*, in *Iranian Studies*, vol. 17, 1984, pp. 467–475.

and this has led to speculations on the extent of Western influence.[156] Ivanov sees the coincidence in time between the culmination of the Babi revolts and the 1848 revolutions in France, Austria and Germany as evidence of a revolutionary wave sweeping both the East and the West.[157] This interpretation yields under scrutiny, however. Both Momen and Smith reject the possibility that Western influence was significant, arguing that despite the growing influence of the European powers on the Iranian economy, the cultural contact with the West was very limited.[158] Keddie also concludes her discussion with a "warning against considering the "modern" features of Babism a result of Western *ideological* influence" (Keddie's emphasis).[159] The Babi movement must be understood in its own historical and religious setting, which means that it was an internal Shi'i affair.[160]

Iranian philologist Peter Avery suggests that Babism could be seen as an expression of protest of southern Iran against northern Iran.[161] Around 1800, the governmental seat was moved from Isfahan in the centre of Iran to Tehran in the north. This meant a relative economic set-back for the southern trading centres, which according to Avery explains the (assumed) significant participation of the merchant class from southern cities in the Babi movement.[162] However, as discussed below, Avery's hypothesis of a south-north tension cannot find much support in the sources.

The Context is Religion

Most of the above explanations rest on Western sociological ideas of the importance of class struggle and economical deprivation. However, the use of such concepts to explain Iranian society in the 1840s, so profoundly shaped by Islamic ideas, may not be particularly relevant, and in general the explanations are not convincingly supported by the sources.

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[156] Nikki R. Keddie, "Religion and Irreligion in Early Iranian Nationalism", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 4, 1962, pp. 265–295.

[157] Ivanov, *Babidskie Vosstaniya v Irane*, p. 140.

[158] Momen, "The Social Basis of the Bābī Upheavals in Iran; Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 56.

[159] Keddie, "Religion and Irreligion in Early Iranian Nationalism", p. 272.

[160] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 56; MacEoin, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy", p. 329; Peter Smith and Moojan Momen, "The Baha'i Faith 1957–1988: A Survey of Contemporary Developments", *Religion*, vol. 19, 1989, pp. 63–91.

[161] Peter Avery, *Modern Iran*, London, Ernest Benn, 1965, pp. 53–54.

[162] Avery, *Modern Iran*, p. 54.

The personal backgrounds of nearly all the Babis who were actually participating in the battles at Shaykh Tabarsi are enumerated by Momen after a careful study of the Persian sources. He concludes that between 540 and 600 Babis fought at Tabarsi and that they were of a very mixed background.[163] Geographically, they came from all parts of Iran, and they represented most of the Iranian society with respect to occupation. Underrepresented groups among the Babis were primarily the nomadic tribes, who at that time made up one quarter of the Iranian population.[164] Momen's data cannot support Ivanov's (and to some extent also Greussing's) hypothesis of a special contingent of peasants and petty craftsmen, nor do they indicate any particular influence from the South, as proposed by Avery.[165]

There is no doubt that the political and economic conditions in Iran in the mid-nineteenth century constituted fertile soil for a radical movement such as Babism. However, at the same time there is no reason to explain away the religious motives of the Babis. What fuelled the movement were primarily religious ideas prevalent in Shi'i Islam.[166] Perhaps the best way of presenting this is to follow MacEoin and describe the rise of Shaykhism and Babism as a conflict within orthodox Shi'i Islam—a conflict that eventually had to be resolved by a religious schism, so that the Babis became heterodox in the eyes of the *ulama*.[167] It is characteristic that this orthodox schism did not imply a complete rejection of existing religious ideas and beliefs; on the contrary, both parties insisted on the same religious traditions.

In line with this, Amanat concludes about the early conversions to the Babi movement:

> At least at this early stage, recognition was less a commitment to a set of ideas and beliefs than devotion to the person of the Bab as a charismatic saint. The obligation to seek and support the Proof of God required believers to search for the Qā'im and his companions and helpers and to recognize them once any indication of them appeared.[168]

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[163] Momen, "The Social Basis of the Bābī Upheavals".
[164] Momen, "The Social Basis of the Bābī Upheavals".
[165] Momen, "The Social Basis of the Bābī Upheavals".
[166] Even if some of the Babi messages could be called political in a Western perspective, this may not be the proper term in a society with little or no separation between "religion" and "politics".
[167] MacEoin, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy".
[168] Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, p. 173.

Clearly, the Babis and later the Baha'is saw 1848 as the time of the ultimate break away from Islam. The historian of religions, however, would rather notice the long, occasionally irregular evolution from an orthodox-heterodox conflict deep within Shi'i Islam to a global religion appearing much in line with Western liberal ideas. The Babi period constitutes the bridge between Shi'i Islam and Baha'i, both historically and doctrinally, and Baha'i cannot be understood properly without an understanding of Babism.

BABISM FROM A GLOBALISATION PERSPECTIVE

The general deterioration of the political and economical situation in Iran during the first half of the nineteenth century was partly a consequence of globalisation in its incipient phase. Both the world order situation and the Babi movement were congruent with Wuthnow's observation that "the broadest and most successful outbreaks of religious militancy have been among cadres in the periphery during periods of deep polarisation and conflict in world order."[169] Globalisation can not stand alone as an explanation for Babism, however. As concluded above, Babism was primarily a religiously motivated movement *within* a Shi'ite context and worldview, and the Bab was a deeply preoccupied religious thinker caught in conflict between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in Shi'i Islam.

In 1844–45, the Bab's attention was focused on Karbala, the sacred centre of Shi'ite geography. This did not preclude, however, that the Bab was also thinking in global terms, beyond the Shi'ite world. In the *Qayyumu'l-Asma*, the Bab called for the whole world's attention concerning his message.[170] In the terminology of the dual global field model (see Chapter 3), he conveyed his message both to humankind as a whole ("O people of the earth", in *sura* 1, verse 38), and to what was close to a world system of societies, namely an assembly of kings:

> O concourse of kings! Deliver with truth and in all haste the verses sent down by Us to the peoples of Turkey and of India, and beyond them, with power and with truth, to lands in both the East and the West.[171]

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[169] Robert Wuthnow, "World Order and Religious Movements", in Albert Bergesen (ed.), *Studies of the Modern World-System*, New York, Academic Press, 1980, pp. 57–75.

[170] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, p. 57.

[171] *Qayyumu'l-Asma*, *sura* 1, verse 32–33. I wish to thank Stephen Lambden for drawing my attention to certain passages in *Qayyumu'l-Asma* and for providing me

It is known that the Bab wrote several letters to Muhammad Shah, and in one of them, he asked the Shah to convey the Bab's message to other rulers of the world.[172] Besides the passages in *Quyyamu'l-Asma*, this appears to be the only other known case of the Bab trying to address the world system of societies, and from 1848, after the trial in Tabriz, this avenue was closed for good.

With the failure in Iraq following Ali Bastami's arrest in 1845 and Qurratu'l-Ayn's expulsion from Karbala in 1847, the Babis lowered their global ambitions, and Babism soon turned into a particular Iranian movement. In the terminology of the dual global field model, the Bab and the Babis became seriously engaged in the national society only. By 1848, in reality, only the left side of the Baha'i global field in the dual global field model had come into existence and for the rest of the period from 1848–1853, no further expansion of the Baha'i global field took place.

THE SPECIAL POSITION OF THE BAHA'IS IN IRAN

The relation between the Iranian Baha'i community and the Iranian society has always had a much more complex nature than has the relation between any other Baha'i community and the national society to which it belongs. This complex relationship was moulded during the Babi period, and as described by Denis MacEoin in *A People Apart: The Baha'i Community of Iran in the Twentieth Century*, it is still a deeply controversial issue in Iran.[173] In Eliz Sanasarian's words, "the Bahai issue remains the ultimate test for anyone with liberal and reformist claims on governance in Iran."[174]

The far majority of Babis in Iran followed Baha'u'llah and not Subh-i-Azal after the split in 1867. On the instructions of Baha'u'llah, the Baha'is of Iran attempted to uphold a delicate position of a

his translation of its first *sura*. Stephen Lambden, e-mail, 3 September 1998 (unpublished). See also Stephen N. Lambden, "The Messianic Roots of Babi-Baha'i Globalism", in Margit Warburg, Annika Hvithamar, and Morten Warmind (eds.), *Baha'i and Globalisation*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2005, pp. 17–34.

[172] MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History*, pp. 58–59.

[173] Denis MacEoin, *A People Apart: The Baha'i Community of Iran in the Twentieth Century*, Occasional Paper 4, London, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1989.

[174] Eliz Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 159.

non-violent opposition to the Iranian state. Both Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha advocated in writing for reform in Iran, in particular for the abolition of absolute rule in favour of a constitutional monarchy.[175] Baha'u'llah did not forbid Baha'is to enter politics (unlike what Shoghi Effendi did later), and in the 1880s and 1890s a number of Baha'is held high positions in the government.[176]

However, the Baha'i position was threatened because of the continued, general hostility against them, with periods of relative tolerance interrupted by mob persecutions, many arbitrary arrests and killings in every decade.[177] Furthermore, it did not improve the Baha'is' situation that they eventually did not speak out against the unpopular Shah regime in the period leading up to the constitutional revolution of 1905.[178] As mentioned in Chapter 3, in the section on cosmopolitanism, it was a great disappointment to E. G. Browne that the Baha'is abstained from direct involvement in the constitutional movement. In 1903, some of the worst persecutions since 1852 were unleashed, with killings of Baha'is in several cities. A British medical doctor commissioned by the Church Missionary Society described the riots in Yazd in a couple of letters. At the beginning of the riots, he was visiting a Baha'i home, attending a severely wounded patient:

> The shouts of the mob got louder and louder, like the roar of an angry wild animal. Then the door gave way and with a rush, the house was stormed. It was an exciting moment; my patient died of a shock and another man was killed in the house. . . . The hospital on Saturday afternoon might have been a field hospital after a battle. I had a very busy time with gun-shot wounds and sword and knife cuts. . . . In all from seventy to 100 people have been killed and a large amount of property looted. We do not know yet the full extent of the havoc that has been made.[179]

During the Pahlavi regime (1925–1979), the Baha'is again entered into an unstable relationship with an autocratic government, but now

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[175] Cole, "Iranian Millenarianism and Democratic Thought"; Juan R. I. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium. The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998, pp. 79–108.

[176] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, p. 97.

[177] Moojan Momen, "A Chronology of some of the Persecutions of the Bábís and Bahá'ís in Írán 1844–1978", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 18, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1986, pp. 380–392.

[178] MacEoin, *A People Apart*, pp. 12–19.

[179] Quoted from Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844–1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, pp. 389–390.

they enjoyed longer periods of relative tolerance and optimism was growing among the Iranian Baha'is.[180] For the Iranian state, the Baha'is represented a group of citizens who were generally better educated than the average Iranian and many Baha'is found employment within the educational and health care sectors. Some even gained high posts in the state administration. However, there were also persecutions, on smaller and larger scale. In 1926, a district governor in the province of Azarbayjan suspended all civil rights for the Baha'i community and reportedly encouraged the following methods of persecution:

> a) Refusal to allow Bahais to go to the bath.
> b) No transactions with Bahais are permitted to Moslem merchants.
> c) Constant abuse.
> d) The cutting down of all trees belonging to Bahais.
> e) The withholding of water supplies from the land of Bahais.
> f) Refusal to allow Bahais to obtain proper drinking water.[181]

In 1955, nation-wide persecutions broke out again, Baha'i centres were demolished, Baha'i property was looted, and Baha'is were molested, raped, some killed and their dead bodies mutilated.[182]

The Baha'is and the Ulama

The negative relations between the Babis and the dominating *Usuli ulama* did not improve when the Babis became Baha'is. The Baha'is of Iran have maintained pronounced anti-*ulama* sentiments, and the Baha'i leaders have repeatedly expressed anti-clerical views, directed at the *ulama*.[183] The *ulama*, on their side, have succeeded in maintaining and spreading anti-Baha'i feelings in the Iranian society, and the 1955 pogrom against the Baha'is showed that these feelings were strong.[184] When representatives of the *ulama* came to power with the

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[180] MacEoin, *A People Apart*, pp. 19–24.

[181] Quoted from Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844–1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, p. 473.

[182] This can be seen from a survey of Glenn Cameron and Wendi Momen, *A Basic Bahá'í Chronology*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1996, for the year 1955.

[183] MacEoin, *A People Apart*, pp. 18–19; Denis MacEoin, "The Bahā'īs of Iran: The Roots of Controversy", *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, vol. 14, 1988, pp. 75–83.

[184] Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavī Period*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1980, pp. 76–90.

Iranian revolution of 1979, these feelings were exploited once more and as vigorously as ever.

Denis MacEoin argues that a source of perpetual tension between the *ulama* and the Baha'is is that the Baha'is pursue the visions of messianic Shi'i Islam, but on their own religious premises.[185] In line with Shi'i eschatology, the Baha'is wish to create a new world unified in one religion; however, they also believe that the time is ripe to create it, because the redeemer (the Bab) was here. It is precisely this position that is unacceptable to the Shi'ites. Furthermore, this issue was raised at the trial against the Bab in Tabriz in 1848, and it is still an unacceptable position, because to accept it is to acknowledge that the end of the time of Islam has come to pass.

Popular Feelings Against the Baha'is

Among, in particular, less-educated Muslim Iranians, prejudices about the Baha'is flourish. Some of the common prejudices concerning Baha'is include their inclination to "apostacy, association with the West and Israel, pro-monarchism, and an elite club bent on self-promotion and propaganda".[186] The negative feelings towards the Baha'is, moreover, are further amplified by the belief that the Baha'is are religiously unclean (*najes*).

The concept of ritual purity/impurity in Iran can be traced back to pre-Islamic Zoroastrism, and the issue of pollution (*nejasat*) is much more elaborated among the Shi'ites than among the Sunnis. It became more widespread in Iranian society with the writings of the Shi'i theologian Muhammad Baquer Majlesis (d. 1699), who prescribed the rules for how Muslims should behave in the presence of non-Muslims.[187] Non-Muslims are *najes*, which means that physical contact with a non-Muslim, or food or drink from a non-Muslim, should be avoided. Even indirect contact may pollute; for example, it has been reported that a Muslim after receiving money from a Jew washed the unclean Jewish money before he could have it in his pocket.[188] The codes concerning pollution vary considerably, both locally and socially. Today, many Muslims do not consider these

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[185] MacEoin, *A People Apart*, p. 27.
[186] Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran*, p. 53.
[187] Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran*, pp. 23–24.
[188] Walter Fischel, "The Bahai Movement and Persian Jewry", *The Jewish Review*, vol. 7, 1934, pp. 47–55.

rules important, but others do, and the codes of pollution have had significant consequences for the non-Muslim population in Iran. A few examples can be seen in the following:

After the Islamic revolution in 1979, non-Muslim food shop owners such as bakers or sandwich-sellers had to put up signs stating "especially for minorities", as a warning to Muslims.[189]

The Armenian owned Coca-Cola plant was confiscated, and the Armenian workers were fired and replaced by Muslims. The reason was that non-Muslims could not touch the bottles or their contents.[190]

A young Iranian Baha'i girl in high school, whom I interviewed, had moved to Denmark after the Iranian Revolution. She told me that all the students in her school had been asked to give blood to the wounded soldiers from the Iran-Iraq war. When she heard about the need for blood, she went immediately to the school nurse to get an appointment for the next day. However, the class prefect had talked to the teacher about it, and they had agreed that her unclean blood should not be offered to the Muslim soldiers.[191]

Another informant told me about a *mulla* who had confiscated an apartment from a wealthy Baha'i family. Before he took over the apartment, he had to make it religiously clean. Relatives and friends to the unfortunate Baha'i family watched as the *mulla* had the whole apartment, including all the furniture and carpets, washed using a fire hose.[192]

Most of the Iranian population know very little about the Baha'is, and besides prejudices, all kinds of rumours circulate. Apparently, the Baha'i doctrine and practice concerning equality of the sexes nourishes fantasies, because one of the quite common rumours I have heard is that when the Baha'is have an assembly meeting, they turn off the lights. Then, the men put on the women's clothes and the women put on the men's clothes![193]

The Case of the Anti-Baha'i Society in Yazd

In the early 1970s, before the Iranian revolution, anthropologist Michael Fischer carried out fieldwork in the Iranian city Yazd, and he gives

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[189] Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran*, p. 86.
[190] Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran*, pp. 84–85.
[191] Margit Warburg, *Iranske dokumenter. Forfølgelsen af bahá'ierne i Iran* [Iranian documents. The persecution of the Baha'is of Iran], Copenhagen, Rhodos, 1985, p. 19.
[192] Warburg, *Iranske dokumenter*, p. 19.
[193] Warburg, *Iranske dokumenter*, p. 20.

a vivid description of the relations between the Baha'is and the local branch of the Shi'i Anti-Baha'i Society, *Anjoman-e Imām-e Zamān* (it Arabicised its name to *Ḥujjatiyeh* after the revolution).[194]

Another observer of the Anti-Baha'i society in Yazd, Mehdi Abedi, tells in a rare autobiography about his own joining with the society, when he was a young, enthusiastic Muslim student before the revolution:

> I did not know much about Baha'is before this time. Children in the alleys would sometimes chant, *Tū pīr-e bābi ridam* ("I shit on the Babi saint"), and my father had told me that the "Babis" (he did not distinguish Babis and Baha'is) did not say their prayers, and were *najes* (impure).[195]

The Anti-Baha'i Society was led by Dr. Paknejad, a physician and owner of a weaving factory.[196] The society operated from a mosque across the street from the Baha'i centre, and its strategy was to recruit young men to infiltrate the Baha'i community, pretending to be potential converts. One of the aims of the infiltrators was to snatch rare Baha'i books for the society:

> I befriended Kamran, a young Baha'i. We said to each other, "If I can show you the truth, will you accept it," and each of us said yes. . . . Kamran then gave me a rare edition of the *Iqān* (Certitude), published in Cairo. Paknejad recognized it as the original unedited version, and appropriated it. Kamran tried mightily to persuade me to give it back, arguing that were he to have done the same to me, I would never accept his religion; that I was clearly not acting on my own conscience but was being manipulated by others; and that he had borrowed it to show me only with great difficulty, arguing that I was an educated and sincere friend. I remained unmoved, and pointed out that the book was no longer in my hands, but that it now belonged to the library of the Imām-e Zamān.[197]

During the revolution, one of the leaders of the Yazdi Baha'is, Nurullah Akhtar-Khavari, was executed.[198] He had given Paknejad private

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[194] Michael M. J. Fischer, "Social Change and the Mirrors of Traditions: Baha'is of Yazd", in Heshmat Moayyad (ed.), *The Bahá'í Faith and Islam. Proceedings of a Symposium, McGill University, March 23–25, 1984*, Ottawa, The Association for Baha'i Studies, 1990, pp. 25–53. The paper is reprinted as part of: Michael M. J. Fischer and Mehdi Abedi, *Debating Muslims. Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, pp. 222–250.

[195] Fischer and Abedi, *Debating Muslims*, p. 50.

[196] Fischer and Abedi, *Debating Muslims*, p. 49.

[197] Fischer and Abedi, *Debating Muslims*, pp. 52–53.

[198] Fischer and Abedi, *Debating Muslims*, p. 49.

tutorials in English, but was paid back by his pupil, who harassed him and did not use his influence to prevent the killing. The execution was filmed for television, but when it was discovered that viewers were repulsed by the scene, the broadcast was suppressed.[199]

The Persecutions of the Iranian Baha'is in the 1980s and 1990s

The persecutions following the Iranian revolution of 1979 made the situation for the Baha'is of Iran even worse than it had been before. It sent reverberations around the Baha'i world; the destruction of the flourishing Baha'i community of Iran was quite evident, and thousands of Iranian Baha'i refugees sought new lives among the Baha'i communities of the West. In fact, the persecutions of the Iranian Baha'is have had a profound demographic and cultural impact on the Baha'i communities outside Iran.

In the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Christian, the Jewish and the Zoroastrian religions are mentioned as legal minority religions, but the Baha'is are not, although the Baha'is still constitute the largest religious minority in Iran with approximately 300,000 members.[200] This passage has created one of the important judicial arguments for denying the Iranian Baha'is their civil rights. They are considered to be "unprotected infidels", which has paved the way for legal measures on a par with the infamous Nuremberg laws passed in Hitler's Germany in 1935. Not all the laws that provided the basis for depriving Baha'is of civil and human rights were new. During the time of the Shah, Baha'i also was not one of the recognised religions, and according to the law, only members of recognised religions could be employed by the state. However, during the time of the Shah, this law was not applied strictly and many Baha'is were employed by the government, including in high positions.

One of the most efficient ways to commit non-bloody persecution is to deprive people of opportunities for education and employment. Such means provide an additional advantage for the regime in that they draw less international attention than do bloody persecutions. Some of these types of events are summarised below:[201]

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[199] Fischer and Abedi, *Debating Muslims*, p. 49.
[200] Smith, "A Note on Babi and Baha'i Numbers in Iran".
[201] The descriptions of the persecutions is based on Roger Cooper, *The Bahá'ís of Iran*, London, Minority Rights Group (Report No. 51), 1982; Warburg, *Iranske dokumenter; The Bahá'í Question. Iran's Secret Blueprint for the Destruction of a Religious*

- In 1979, a decree was issued barring Baha'i students and professors from admission to or employment at any university in Iran. In 1987, the Baha'is established their own higher education programme and a Baha'i Institute of Higher Education. By 1996, several hundred students were enrolled, and eleven had graduated with the equivalent of a bachelor degree. In 1998, 36 faculty members of the institute were arrested in cities across the country. The professors have been released, but the items that had been seized were not returned: 3 classrooms, 70 computers, textbooks, tables and benches.
- In 1979, the government started dismissing Baha'i civil servants without compensation.
- In 1979, the Ministry of Education required that all Baha'i teachers be dismissed.
- Early in the 1980s, the trading licenses of Baha'i businesses were revoked, the assets of businesses run by Baha'is were confiscated, and bank accounts of Baha'i businessmen were frozen. In the late 1990s, the issuance of business licenses to Baha'is were delayed.
- Baha'i farmers were denied admission to farmers' co-operatives.
- In 1982, more than 10,000 Baha'i public servants were dismissed and the pensions of retired Baha'i civil servants were terminated.
- In 1984, some of the dismissed Baha'i civil servants were told to repay the salaries they had received during their lifetime employment.
- In 2002, the Iranian parliament approved a bill concerning so-called "blood money", which is economic compensation to be paid by an offender to the relatives of a crime victim. Traditionally, if the victim was Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian or a woman, the payment to the relatives was only half of the amount given to the relatives of a male Muslim victim; now the bill provided equal compensation in these cases.[202] However, if the victim is a Baha'i, the new rules do not seem to apply. For example, in a court case involving a Muslim who killed two Baha'is with his careless driving, the judge ruled that "blood money is not applicable to them [the Baha'is]."[203]

Community. An Examination of the Persecution of the Bahá'ís of Iran 1979–1993, New York, Baha'i International Community, 1993.

[202] "Iran OKs Equalizing 'Blood Money'", http://www.guardian.co.uk/world-latest/story/0,1280,-2143346,00.html. Enclosure, Lise Raben (the Danish Baha'i community) to Margit Warburg, 13 November 2002 (unpublished).

[203] Translation, from Persian, of the Ruling of the Public Court (District One) in Minu-Dasht, 10 March 2002. Enclosure, Lise Raben (the Danish Baha'i community) to Margit Warburg, 13 November 2002 (unpublished).

Baha'i property has been confiscated, looted and destroyed:

- In March 1979, the house of the Bab in the city of Shiraz was
  taken from the Baha'is and given to a Muslim cleric. In September
  1979, a group led by *mullas* and officials of the Department of
  Religious Affairs destroyed the house. Since then, a number of
  other Baha'i holy places have been destroyed.
- Baha'i cemeteries have been bulldozed, and Baha'i graves dug up.
- Thousands of private Baha'i homes have been confiscated.
- Baha'i community properties have been transferred to the state.
- A major Baha'i savings company, with 15,000 Baha'i sharehold-
  ers and investors, has been taken over by the government.

Bloody persecutions have occurred on a narrower scale, but with
severe consequences. Since 1979, almost 1,000 Baha'is have been
imprisoned and in most cases, they have had no or only mock trials.
In prison, they have been beaten, lashed, and flogged; they have had
fingernails and teeth pulled out, and they have been forced to witness
the torture of family members and friends. Many of the imprisoned
Baha'is have been urged to recant their faith and have been promised
that they would be released if they converted to Islam. This demon-
strates beyond doubt that they are persecuted because of their reli-
gious beliefs.

The arrested Baha'is are generally met with charges of apostasy,
heresy, holding meetings for the youth, gathering for Baha'i meet-
ings in private houses, organising children's art exhibits, Zionist Baha'i
activities, but also prostitution, adultery and immorality. The Baha'is
are commonly charged with being imperialists, Zionist agents or spies.
The last-mentioned charges in part arise from the location of the
Baha'i World Centre, which is located within the borders of the state
of Israel. So, when Iranian Baha'is want to go on pilgrimage, they
go to Israel, and when they send money to the Baha'i World Centre,
they send it to Israel. Actually, "Zionist agent" is used so often as
an accusation against the Baha'is that the words "Zionist agent" and
"Baha'i" have become almost synonymous.

An illustrative example is from the leading Tehran newspaper,
Kayhan 16 July 1980. It reproduces the verdicts from the Islamic
Revolutionary Court in Tabriz, which led to the execution of 14
persons, including two Baha'is. One of the verdicts runs like this:

> Yad'ullah Astani, son of Ahmad and chair of the Baha'i council in
> Tabriz is accused of having collaborated actively with the rotten Pahlavi-

regime and the now dissolved SAVAK [the secret police of the Shah regime] with the purpose of oppressing the fighting Muslims. He is charged with spreading prostitution, undertaking other unforgivable things, and having direct connection with the occupying power in Israel [i.e., the Israeli government] and international Zionism, with the purpose of oppressing noble Muslims anew. He is further charged with sending detailed reports with cultural, political, geographical and military information to Israel, to collect money and transfer it in support of Israel, to rebel against Islam and the Muslims by direct collaboration with Israel, and to have travelled frequently to Israel to accomplish the ominous plans of Zionism. He is condemned as an opponent of God and the Messenger of God, and he is thus the corruption of the world.[204]

It is interesting that the pronounced anti-Zionism is intertwined with the charges of being a potential suppressor of the Muslims and an opponent of God. In the logic of the *ulama*, this implies a death sentence. However, the systematic playing on anti-Zionist and anti-Western attitudes is likely to reach a wider audience in Iran than the traditional accusations of heresy. Few Iranians today probably would acknowledge that the heretic doctrines of the Baha'is justify such drastic measures as death penalty.

The charges of immorality, prostitution and adultery were founded in the fact that the Iranian authorities until recently did not recognise Baha'i marriages as legal marriages. This meant that Baha'i children were born out of wedlock, that is, they were illegitimate children. This lack of recognition also implied that imprisoned Baha'is had no right to receive visits from their spouses, and a husband or wife could not claim the body of an executed spouse.

On 3 May 1982, I interviewed Mrs. Mihri Mavadat who had fled from Iran after the execution of her husband:

> The afternoon my husband had been put in jail, four guards came to our house. They wanted to search it. I was very friendly towards them and asked if they wanted tea, but they stole and destroyed whatever they could. They took all the money, jewellery, our car, our passports, carpets, photographs, paintings, they destroyed the frames; and since they were Baha'i paintings, they also cut the paintings; they stole our big collection of coins. But, first of all, they took the books. They are, of course, against all intellectuals, so they removed all our books. They took all our Baha'i books, and we had many, because my husband was fifth generation Baha'i and I am third generation Baha'i, but we

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[204] Translated from Warburg, *Iranske dokumenter*, pp. 134–137.

had many other books. They took all my law books, all my husband's
textbooks on engineering, and our three children's university books.
The four guards worked for 5–6 hours destroying and stealing from
our home . . .[205]

Mrs. Mavadat's husband was put in the infamous Evin jail. One
morning, when she heard that three Israeli spies had been executed,
she went to the place where they disposed of the executed prisoners'
corpses. One of the bodies in the pile was her husband. His crime
was written with a felt pen in one word on his thigh: "Baha'i".

   Since 1979, more than 200 Baha'is have been killed in prison or
executed, usually after only a summary trial or no trial at all. Fifteen
others have disappeared and are presumed dead. Many kinds of
Baha'i activity seem to be a reason for execution: for example, in
June 1983, ten Iranian Baha'i women, including two teenage girls,
were hanged, convicted of teaching Baha'i children's classes. It is
indicative of the strategy of the Iranian regime that half of the exe-
cuted Baha'is were members of national and local spiritual assem-
blies of the Baha'i community.

Figure 4.1. *Number of Baha'is killed in Iran, 1978–1998*

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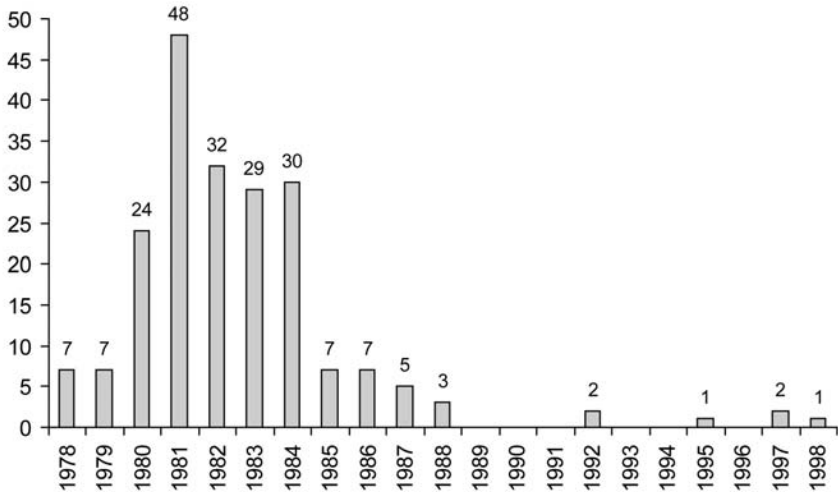
   [205] Translated from Warburg, *Iranske dokumenter*, pp. 28–29.

As can be seen from Figure 4.1, executions reached a peak in the early 1980s. The Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations has passed 18 resolutions on human rights violations in Iran, all mentioning the Baha'is, and since 1985, the General Assembly of the United Nations has approved 13 resolutions. Most observers agree that it has not been without effect that the international community and the news media have appealed to Iran, calling for an end to the bloody persecutions. However, the figure indicates that the killings have not stopped entirely.

THE MAKING OF A GLOBAL RELIGION

By 1853, the Babi movement seemed to be defeated for good. There were no more Babi insurrections after the second Nayriz fights, and the surviving Babi leaders had fled into exile in Baghdad. The Babi colony in Baghdad, however, was to be the spiritual and organisational nucleus for the renewal and transformation of Babism.

The Baha'i religion emerged from this nucleus, and in the course of the subsequent one-and-a-half centuries, it grew into a global religion. During this process, the new religion went through phases of schisms and consolidation, through phases of geographical and cultural transgressions, and through changes in leadership style, from charismatic authority to legal authority. The Baha'i organisation also developed in this process.

Concurrently with the organisational and demographic development of the Baha'i religion, the Baha'i leadership consciously developed its doctrines, rituals, sacred places, places of worship and religious feasts. Gradually, the leaders created the sacred canopy of the Baha'i religion, the canopy that gives Baha'i religious traditions and Baha'i community life their particular character, and separates the Baha'i world from the rest of humankind.

The Baghdad Exile 1853–1863

In the Babi community in Baghdad, Subh-i-Azal adopted a solitary and secluded way of life, allowing only a few trusted persons to have access to him.[1] He seemed to have left the practical leadership to his older half-brother, Baha'u'llah, who soon became the leading intermediary between Subh-i-Azal and the Babi community. Furthermore, Baha'u'llah was effective in building up a network between

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[1] D. MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims in Babism (1850–1866)", *Studia Iranica*, vol. 18, 1989, pp. 93–129.

the scattered Babi communities in Iran and the Babi leadership in Baghdad.[2]

It is not surprising that the division of responsibilities between the two brothers could not last without creating tensions. In April 1854, Baha'u'llah left the Babi community in Baghdad and headed for the Kurdistan mountains, in the present northern Iraq, to live alone for several months as a dervish. Later, in Sulaymaniyya, a town in the present northern Iraq, Baha'u'llah came into contact with the local Sufis and won respect as a mystic.

Retreating to the Kurdistan mountains, Baha'u'llah did what many great religious leaders had done before him: he withdrew to the wilderness for a long period and then returned to create order. Such a withdrawal and return can be considered a *rite de passage* leading to religious innovation. This pattern and similar parallels between Baha'u'llah and other founders of religions are often emphasised in the Baha'i literature.[3]

In March 1856, Baha'u'llah returned to Baghdad and apparently took over the *de facto* leadership of the Babis. The Baha'i literature generally interprets this change in power being due to Subh-i-Azal's cowardice and incompetence as a leader; he was not equipped to lead the Babis after their utter defeat in Iran. However, in the light of Shi'i traditions, this picture of Subh-i-Azal's leadership may need some modification. Baha'u'llah's strong leadership is acknowledged by both Azali and Baha'i sources, but this does not necessarily contradict Subh-i-Azal's leading spiritual position.[4] Azal's inaccessibility was within the Shi'i tradition of hidden leadership, originally set by the occultation of the twelfth Imam, and apparently encouraged by the Bab in his instructions regarding his successor.[5]

Early Writings of Baha'u'llah

The time away from the Babi community was important to Baha'u'llah: several of his works were written during or immediately after that

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[2] Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions. From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press and George Ronald, 1987, p. 61.

[3] H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh. The King of Glory*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1980, p. 114; *The Bahá'í World 1992–93*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1993, p. 55.

[4] MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims".

[5] MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims".

period, and there is a distinct Sufi influence in his thinking. Baha'u'llah became convinced that concentration on inner spirituality was the way to reinvigorate Babism. In Sulaymaniyya, Baha'u'llah wrote an important poem, the *Ode of the Dove*, in which he allegorically described his encounter with God's spirit in the form of a female figure, the Heavenly Maiden; this figure also appears in other of Baha'u'llah's mystical writings.[6] The mystical element in Baha'u'llah's thinking became an important part of Baha'i, and his later social teachings supplemented it, but never replaced it.[7]

Walbridge gives an illustrative analysis of Baha'u'llah's mystical, Sufi-inspired works from the Baghdad period, setting them in the frame of Sufi thinking and Persian literary traditions.[8] Among these, *The Hidden Words* and *The Seven Valleys*, which were written around 1858, are important and popular Baha'i texts, translated into English in the first decade of the twentieth century.[9] According to Shoghi Effendi, *The Hidden Words* and *The Seven Valleys* rank next to Baha'u'llah's most important work from the Baghdad period, the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*.[10]

The *Kitáb-i-Íqán* (Book of Certitude) was written in Baghdad in 1861–1862. It is an apology of the Bab's position as the Hidden Imam and the prophecy of the next Manifestation of God, the *man yuzhiruhu'lláh*.[11] Addressing a Muslim audience, it bases its arguments on an exegesis of the Quran in order to substantiate these claims regarding the Bab. For example, Baha'u'llah had to overcome Islamic doctrinal obstacles to the Bab's claim of being the source of a new divine revelation after Muhammad. His solution was an elaborate

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[6] Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Baghdád 1853–63*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1975, pp. 62–64, p. 125; John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1996, pp. 159–165.

[7] Juan R. Cole, "Bahá'u'lláh and the Naqshbandí Sufis in Iraq, 1854–1856", in Juan R. Cole and Moojan Momen (eds.), *From Iran East and West. Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 2, Los Angeles, Kalimát Press, 1984, pp. 1–28.

[8] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp. 150–169.

[9] William P. Collins, *Bibliography of English-Language Works on the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths 1844–1985*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1990, pp. 3–6; Baha'u'llah, *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985; Baha'u'llah, *The Seven Valleys*, Oxford, Oneworld, 1992.

[10] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995, p. 140; Baha'u'llah, *The Kitáb-i Íqán. The Book of Certitude*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983.

[11] Christopher Buck, *Symbol and Secret: Qur'an Commentary in Bahá'u'lláh's Kitáb-i Íqán. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 7, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1995, p. 12, p. 54.

reinterpretation of the famous term "Seal of the Prophets", which according to Islamic thinking means that there can be no other prophets after Muhammad, but was made possible through this reinterpretation.[12]

The *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, however, was not only a break with Islam. Using Christopher Buck's words, it provided the believers with "an eschatological bridge into a new religious worldview".[13] It was the first of Baha'u'llah's works to appear in print, and it has played an enormous role in the Baha'i mission work.[14]

BAHA'U'LLAH'S DECLARATION AND THE SPLIT OF THE BABIS 1863–1868

The Babi community in Baghdad had grown considerably during the years after 1853, and around 1860, the Babis in Iraq had acquired such prominence that the Iranian government began to fear a renewal of Babi upheavals.[15] The Iranian government succeeded in persuading the Ottoman authorities to remove the Babis from Baghdad, and in the spring of 1863, Baha'u'llah and Subh-i-Azal were ordered to go, with their families and a group of followers, to Istanbul (Constantinople).[16] They left Baghdad in May 1863 and arrived in Istanbul in August the same year.

Ridvan

Before Baha'u'llah left for Istanbul, he spent the last days in his tent, which was erected in the Najibiyyih Garden on the outskirts of Baghdad. According to the Baha'i sources, he met there with friends and local dignitaries during a period of twelve days, from 21 April to 2 May 1863.[17] The Baha'is believe that during these twelve days in this garden—which posterity has called the Garden of *Ridvan* (Paradise)—Baha'u'llah informed his family and his closest disciples that he was the one whom God would make manifest, the *man*

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[12] Buck, *Symbol and Secret*, pp. 55–62.
[13] Buck, *Symbol and Secret*, p. xxvii.
[14] Buck, *Symbol and Secret*, p. xxi, p. 17.
[15] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 65.
[16] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 66.
[17] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 149–155.

yuzhiruhu'llah. The days are celebrated as "the holiest and most significant of all Baha'i festivals", with the first, ninth and twelfth days as major holy days, on which work is prohibited.[18] Elections to the various Baha'i assemblies are held during the Ridvan period.

The Baha'is are fully aware that the specific details of this central event in Baha'i history are scant.[19] Baha'u'llah's declaration was first openly announced to the Babis in the spring of 1866, three years after the departure from Baghdad.[20] However, MacEoin's study of the sources referring to the Baghdad period indicates that the Ridvan declaration, although shrouded in Baha'i mythology, is consistent with what other sources describe concerning the development in Baha'u'llah's claims.[21]

According to Baha'u'llah, he became aware of his divine status during a vision when imprisoned in the dungeon in Tehran in 1852.[22] During the first years of the 1860s, Baha'u'llah claimed that he was the Imam Husayn returned, but soon made a stronger claim that he was the *man yuzhiruhu'llah.*[23] At first he did not make these claims publicly, but there is enough evidence in the sources to suggest that shortly before he departed from Baghdad in 1863, he had begun to circulate, within a closed group of followers, his claim to a divine status that was bound to conflict with Subh-i-Azal.[24]

The Manifestations of God and the Unity of Religions

The pivotal Baha'i doctrine on the unity of the revealed religions is based on Baha'u'llah's final and most far ranging claim that he embodied the messianic figures of the four religious traditions that predominated nineteenth-century Iran: Judaism, Zoroastrism, Christianity and Islam.[25] With the later expansion of Baha'i to cultures based

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[18] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 238. Quotation from Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 151.

[19] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 149–155; Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp. 235–236.

[20] Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Adrianople 1863–68*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1977, pp. 301–305; Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 67.

[21] MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims".

[22] Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988, pp. 21–22; cf. also Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 101.

[23] MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims".

[24] MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims".

[25] Christopher Buck, "A Unique Eschatological Interface: Bahá'u'lláh and Cross-

on other religious traditions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, Baha'i doctrines have adapted to this situation and have appealed to *their* past traditions.[26]

In the Baha'i doctrines—which are congruent with the Babi doctrines on this central point—the founders of religions, such as Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus, Muhammad, the Bab and Baha'u'llah, are all human manifestations of an invisible and indescribable God. The "Manifestations of God" are pure abstractions inseparable from God, yet

Poster made by Danish Baha'is illustrating that all religions are expressions of the same spiritual truth. The word "enhed" means unity (©The Danish Baha'i community)

Cultural Messianism", in Peter Smith (ed.), *In Iran. Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 3, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1986, pp. 157–179.
    [26] Buck, "A Unique Eschatological Interface".

they are embodied in individual human beings.[27] Baha'u'llah's reve-
lations represent, however, the culmination of the present prophetic
cycle, when "all the Dispensations of the Past have attained their
highest, their final consummation".[28] Adib Taherzadeh explains the
nature of Baha'u'llah's revelations as follows: "The mystical inter-
course between God, as the Father, and His chosen Mouthpiece,
the Prophet, as the Mother, gives birth to Divine Revelation which
in turn brings forth the Word of God."[29] Thus, in Baha'i doctrine,
the prophet acts as the mouthpiece of God, roughly the same as
within Islam, however the words conveyed by the prophet are not
God's words *verbatim*, but rather are influenced by the prophet, his
personality, time and cultural background.[30] God is *manifested* in the
prophet, which means, on the one hand, that all Manifestations of
God have the same pure and abstract essence, but, on the other
hand, that "each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality,
a definitely prescribed mission, a predestined revelation, and spe-
cially designated limitations."[31]

The Schism in Edirne

The presence in Istanbul of Baha'u'llah, Subh-i-Azal and their fol-
lowers was soon considered a political risk by the Ottoman govern-
ment. By 1 December 1863, the Babis were ordered to move to
Edirne (Adrianople) in the European part of Turkey. They lived for
nearly five years in this provincial town, and several of Baha'u'llah's
important letters (tablets) are from this period. The relationship
between Baha'u'llah and Subh-i-Azal deteriorated further, and after
Baha'u'llah in 1866 openly declared that he was the *man yuzhiruhu'l-
lah*, the split between the Babis widened.[32] On the initiative of
Subh-i-Azal, a public theological dispute was to take place between
the two in the Sultan Selim mosque.[33] The holding of such a debate

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[27] D. MacEoin, "Maẓhar", in C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, B. Lewis, and Ch.
Pellat (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 6, Leiden, Brill, 1991, pp. 952–953.
[28] Quoted from Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 99.
[29] Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Baghdád 1853–63*, p. 21.
[30] Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Baghdád 1853–63*, p. 22.
[31] Baha'u'llah as quoted on p. 68 in the article, "Bahá'u'lláh" in *The Bahá'í World
1992–93*, pp. 47–94.
[32] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 168.
[33] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 168.

in the mosque was a common way to settle theological disputes.[34] However, Subh-i-Azal never turned up, and this completed the break in September 1867. A minority of Babis followed Subh-i-Azal and were called Azalis, while the majority acknowledged Baha'u'llah as their leader. They were soon known as Baha'is, which means the "people of Baha" (Baha'u'llah).

In the history of the Baha'i religion, the significance of the events in September 1867 can hardly be overestimated. Juan Cole has analysed the sources to the crucial showdown between the two leaders to look for an explanation as to why Subh-i-Azal did not follow-up on his own challenge.[35] According to Cole, Subh-i-Azal had called for what is known in Persian as a *mubahalih*, a traditional ritual during which two opponents confront each other with curses in the hope that God will send a signal demonstrating the truth of one or the other. The *mubahalih* is a separation ritual; it divides truth from untruth, and the two parties must separate forever. In traditional Shi'i circles—and the Babis were rooted in these traditions—the two separating parties would regard each other as ritually impure afterwards and they would shun each other. The Azali Babis, in particular, were occupied with the concept of purity and pollution. Cole suggests that because the two half-brothers and their followers already *de facto* had broken with each other, Subh-i-Azal believed that they both already perceived the other as ritually unclean, and that Baha'u'llah therefore would not face Subh-i-Azal in the mosque. Subh-i-Azal miscalculated this development, however, because at that time, Baha'u'llah had already expressed in his writings the need to abandon the concept of ritual impurity, and he was therefore playing by new rules. Cole sees Baha'u'llah's moves in September 1867 as crucial for turning the tide, because when the news spread that Subh-i-Azal failed to engage in the *mubahalih*, many Babis deserted him and turned to Baha'u'llah.

In 1867, Baha'u'llah began to address letters and statements to various heads of state, in which he explained his own mission and praised or denounced their rule.[36] The first of these, the *Suriy-i-Muluk*

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[34] Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Adrianople 1863–68*, pp. 291–292.

[35] Juan R. I. Cole, "The Azālī-Bahā'ī Crisis of September 1867", in Moshe Sharon (ed.), *Studies in Modern Religions, Religious Movements and the Bābī-Bahā'ī Faiths*, Leiden, Brill, 2004, pp. 227–251.

[36] Juan R. I. Cole, "Baha'u'llah's Tablets to the Rulers", *Research Notes in Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Studies*, vol. 2, no. 9, 1998, http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/notes/vol2/kings.htm.

(Chapter of the Kings), addressed the heads of state collectively and contained the first open proclamation of Baha'u'llah's mission.[37] The *Suriy-i-Muluk* is an important Baha'i text, and its centenary was celebrated by a brief ceremony in Edirne.[38] In the terminology of the dual global field model, the *Suriy-i-Muluk* represents the first Baha'i document addressing the world system of societies.

Baha'u'llah's Houses in Edirne

Baha'u'llah lived in different places in Edirne during his five-year stay there. Three of the five houses that he occupied do not exist today, but their sites can be identified. The other two houses and their premises have been bought by the Baha'is, and they are places of pilgrimage.[39]

One of the houses, the House of Rida Big, has been restored to the original condition that existed when Baha'u'llah lived there for one year (1866–67). The house has plastered walls painted in off-white and the outer woodwork is light grey. It has a courtyard surrounded by a high wall and flowerbeds in classic Persian style. Baha'u'llah's residential rooms are on the upper level of the house. When I visited the house in November 1996, I left my shoes outside and followed the caretaker of the house up the stairs. He opened a door to the first room, a salon measuring 4 × 7 m. Then he kneeled down, kissed the carpet and left me alone. Inside the salon, were three other doors leading to three adjacent rooms, each measuring 4 × 5 m. Concealed doors led to bathroom facilities, and from one of the rooms there was access to other smaller bedrooms and a back staircase. The walls were painted in pastel lilac, pink and green. All the rooms were furnished with carpets, couches below the windows, and vases on the floor holding artificial red and white roses. Portraits of Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi stood in some of

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[37] Cole, "Baha'u'llah's Tablets to the Rulers"; Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Adrianople 1863–68*, pp. 301–336; Juan R. I. Cole, "Iranian Millenarianism and Democratic Thought in the 19th Century", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 24, 1992, pp. 1–26.

[38] [Universal House of Justice], *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986. The Third Epoch of the Formative Age*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996, pp. 98–99, pp. 104–106.

[39] The description of the houses is based on field notes from my visit to Edirne, 17–18 November 1996, supplemented with information from a booklet about Baha'u'llah's stay in Edirne: Anthony A. Reitmayer, *Adrianople. Land of Mystery*, Istanbul, Baha['i] Publishing Trust, 1992.

the niches, but except for a calligraphy on one of the walls, the walls were bare. It was indeed a place fit for contemplation.

Only the ruins of the foundation are left of Baha'u'llah's other house, the House of Izzat Aqa, in which Baha'u'llah lived from June 1867 to his departure for Akko in August 1868. A caretaker couple live in a small new house beside the ruins, and they keep the gardens from growing wild.

At present, the houses are visited by around 1,000 Baha'is a year, but there is no organised pilgrim's programme. The visitors arrive individually or in small groups after having received permission from the Baha'i World Centre. Baha'u'llah's house in Edirne has the potential, however, of becoming an important Baha'i place of pilgrimage. Edirne is of great historical significance to the Baha'is because it was here that this new religion was first openly announced to the world, and the city has a Baha'i community of about 75 members, so there are locals who could help organise a pilgrimage programme.

Baha'u'llah's Exile to Akko 1868–1892

The Turkish authorities had been concerned for some time about the state of affairs in Edirne, because of the growing Babi colony and the split of the Babis into two parties in 1867. In 1868, they ordered the deportation of both Baha'u'llah and Subh-i-Azal, along with their followers.

Baha'u'llah and about seventy of his followers were sent to what was then a remote part of the Ottoman empire, the old fortress town and harbour of Akko (Acre) in the province of Syria (now part of Israel) on the Mediterranean coast.[40] Initially, Baha'u'llah was imprisoned with his family in a fortress, where his cell is preserved, but in 1870 he was allowed to live in custody in the town. In 1877, he was granted more freedom and could move outside of Akko, first to the mansion of Mazra'ih, and in 1879 to the larger and more accommodating mansion of Bahji, north of Akko. Here, he spent the rest of his life, living in semi-seclusion, seeing only followers and occasional visitors.[41]

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[40] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 67–69.
[41] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 69.
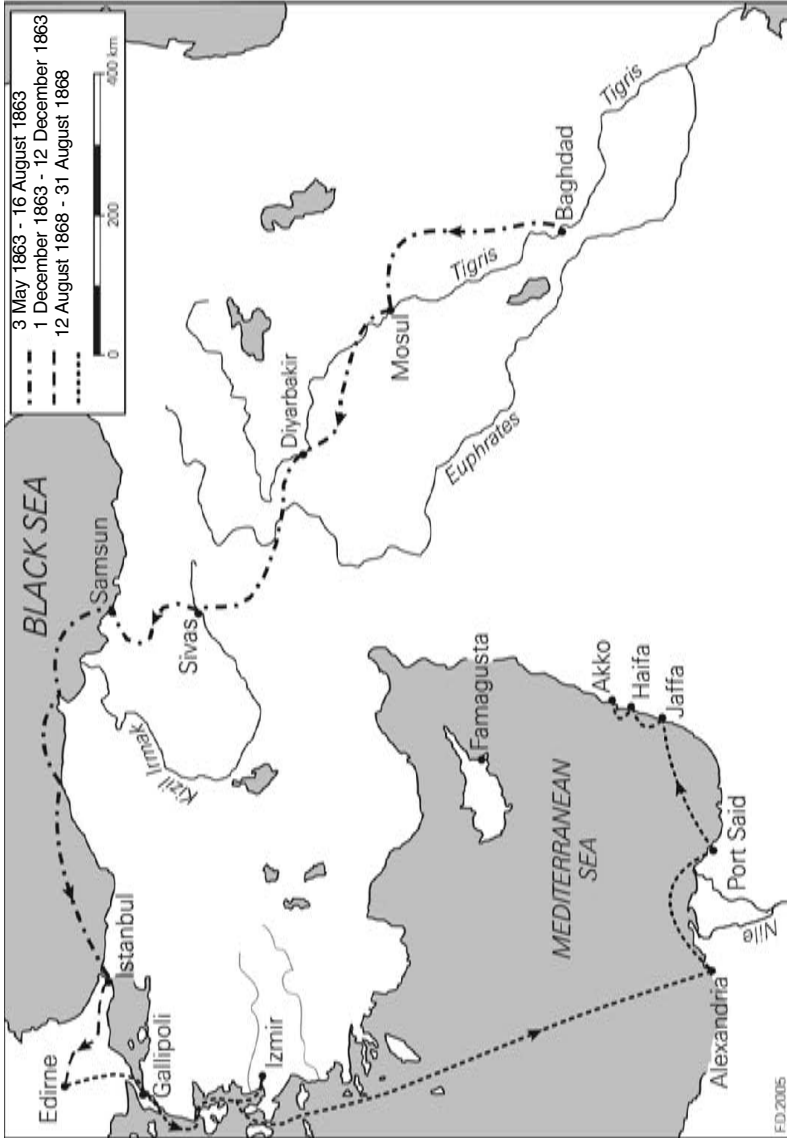
Baha'u'llah's three deportations, 1863–1868

Baha'u'llah died 29 May 1892 and was buried in a room adjacent to the Bahji mansion.[42] The room was later designated as his shrine, and it became the Baha'i *qiblih*, i.e., the direction to face in prayer.[43] Baha'is regard it as the holiest place on earth.[44]

Subh-i-Azal was sent with his family and a few adherents to a similarly distant place, Famagusta on Cyprus, where he stayed for the rest of his life. He did not attempt to organise a local Azali community with himself as leader, and people apparently regarded him as a Muslim holy man.[45] He died in 1912 and is buried in a small shrine on the outskirts of Famagusta. When I visited the site in 1996, a local Baha'i, Mr. Elrol Olkar, told me that, in the 1960s, a wealthy Iranian woman flew in from Iran, claimed that she was a relative of Subh-i-Azal and arranged for the shrine to be built.[46] I also met the 86-year-old grandson of Subh-i-Azal, Mr. Rida Ezel, who still functioned as caretaker of the rather neglected shrine. See Photo 4—*The Interior of the Shrine of Subh-i Azal, Famagusta, Cyprus.*

The Azali Babis represented the orthodox core of the Babi movement, and in Iran they continued to oppose the Qajar state. Several Azalis, individually, were among the nationalist reformers and played a role in the constitutional movement.[47] As an organised religious community, however, Azali Babism stagnated. There may be one or two thousand people left in Iran who still consider themselves to be Azalis, but any organisation seems to have ceased to exist.[48]

Baha'u'llah's Writings from 1868 to 1892

Baha'u'llah's writings from the Akko period comprise what Baha'is consider the most central book in their canon, the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, written in Arabic around 1873 (parts of it may have been written already in 1868).[49] However, the first translation into English authorised by

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[42] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 243.

[43] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 47.

[44] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 116.

[45] Moojan Momen, "The Cyprus exiles", *Bahā'í Studies Bulletin*, vol. 5–6, 1991, pp. 84–113.

[46] Field notes, Famagusta, 10 February 1996.

[47] Nikki R. Keddie, "Religion and Irreligion in Early Iranian Nationalism", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 4, 1962, pp. 265–295.

[48] D. M. MacEoin, "Azali Babism", in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. 3, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987, pp. 179–181.

[49] Kamran Ekbal, "Islamische Grundlagen des Kitāb-i Aqdas—Mit neuen Erkenntnissen zu seiner Datierung", in Johann Christoph Bürgel and Isabel Schayani (eds.),

the Universal House of Justice was issued as late as in 1992.[50] Until
then, its contents had not been accessible to Western Baha'is, except
in the form of various extractions and an edited synopsis issued by
the Universal House of Justice.[51] Translations into languages other
than English are planned or completed, and these translations are
based on the authoritative *English* edition. Even the Arabic edition
will be based on the English edition.[52] This shows that the Baha'is
have abandoned the Islamic idea of a particular holy language, as
discussed in Chapter 1.

   With his claim that he was *man yuzhiruhu'llah*, Baha'u'llah abro-
gated the Bab's *shari'a* and with the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* he gave his adher-
ents a new one. There are, indeed, major differences between
Baha'u'llah's and the Bab's *shari'a*; in general, Baha'u'llah dispensed
with many of the strict ordinances in the Persian *Bayan*, such as the
prohibition of music, the destruction of certain books and the harsh
treatment of non-believers, and he explicitly forbade the waging of
jihad.[53] The Shi'ite and Babi concepts of ritual uncleanness of people
and objects, such as bones and fur, were also specifically abrogated.[54]

   Baha'u'llah kept the Bab's calendar and the use of nineteen as a
holy number, and he also continued some of the practices and doc-
trines that were not specific to the Babis, but were general Islamic
practices. Thus, the rituals of prayer, fasting and pilgrimage are pre-
scribed in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* and resemble their Islamic equivalents.[55]

Iran im 19. Jahrhundert und die Enstehung der Bahā'ī-Religion, Hildesheim, Georg Olms,
1998, pp. 53–89.
   [50] Baha'u'llah, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The Most Holy Book*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre,
1992. A previous translation into English by Earl E. Elder and William McE. Miller,
from 1961, is not considered authoritative by the Baha'is. Earl E. Elder and William
McE. Miller (eds., trans.), *Al-Kitáb al-Aqdas or The Most Holy Book by Mīrzā Husayn
'Alī Bahā'u'llāh*, London, The Royal Asiatic Society, 1961. Peter Smith mentions
that an early (unpublished?) translation circulated among the American Baha'is.
Peter Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2000,
p. 44.
   [51] [Universal House of Justice], *A Synopsis and Codification of The Kitáb-i-Aqdas the
Most Holy Book of Bahá'u'lláh*, Haifa, Bahá'í World Centre, 1973. Shoghi Effendi's
authoritative compilation of Baha'u'llah's writings, *Gleanings from the Writings of
Baha'u'llah*, from 1935, contains the opening passages of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* on pp.
330–333, but with no reference to the original source of the text.
   [52] Suheil Bushrui, *The Style of the Kitáb-i Aqdas. Aspects of the Sublime*, Bethesda,
University Press of Maryland, 1995, p. 19.
   [53] Universal House of Justice, *Synopsis and Codification*, p. 48.
   [54] Baha'u'llah, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 22, p. 47.
   [55] Denis MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, London, British Academic Press,
1994, pp. 38–42, pp. 51–59.

Baha'u'llah placed some doctrinal questions and their answers in an appendix to the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. The questions were posed by one of Baha'u'llah's secretaries, Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin, who was well trained in Islamic law. Baha'u'llah thereby initiated the creation of a formal corpus of interpretation of Baha'i law. This codex formation is an ongoing process in the Baha'i religion.[56] Also today, questions from individual Baha'is and the answers to these questions are disseminated to the Baha'i world as part of the official messages from the Universal House of Justice. The majority of these messages up to the beginning of the 1990s have been compiled and published in separate volumes covering a span of years.[57] These compilations are meant to be studied by the Baha'is, alone or in company, as authoritative texts.[58]

Baha'u'llah also authored many short pieces or letters, so-called tablets, and in these, he expounds on the concepts and doctrines of his new religion, including its social and economical teachings. The Universal House of Justice has published many of these tablets in English.[59] Baha'u'llah also emphasised the unity of the world, and several of his statements on this matter are immensely popular among modern Baha'is, for example, "Of one tree are all ye the fruit, and of one bough the leaves. Let not man glory in this that he loveth his country, let him rather glory in this that he loveth his kind."[60]

Baha'u'llah's social teachings and his views on government and international relations appear in, for example, the "Lawḥ-i-Dunyá" (Tablet of the World), in which he praises constitutional government, such as that of the British.[61] His thoughts were expounded, in 1875,

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[56] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp. 249–250.

[57] Universal House of Justice, *Wellspring of Guidance. Messages 1963–1968*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976; [Universal House of Justice], *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1968–1973*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976; [Universal House of Justice], *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986. The Third Epoch of the Formative Age*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996; Universal House of Justice, *A Wider Horizon, Selected Messages of the Universal House of Justice, 1983–1992*, Riviera Beach, Palabra Publications, 1992.

[58] Universal House of Justice, *A Wider Horizon*, pp. 243–252.

[59] [Baha'u'llah], *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988.

[60] [Baha'u'llah], "Iṣhráqát (Splendours)", in [Baha'u'llah], *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988, pp. 99–134 (quotation pp. 127–128).

[61] [Baha'u'llah], "Lawḥ-i-Dunyá (Tablet of the World)", in [Baha'u'llah], *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988, pp. 81–97.

by Abdu'l-Baha in his treatise *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, which
was written when he was 31 years old and living with his father
during his custody in Akko.[62] The book was meant for a Persian
audience and it appealed strongly for reform in Iran. During the
1870s, the Iranian Shah was willing to discuss political reform—
later, this was not an option—and the text clearly shows that the
Baha'i political and social thinking were already well developed.[63]
Abdu'l-Baha addresses issues such as the establishment of a "Union
of the nations of the world", international law, disarmament, par-
liamentarism, the advancement of general education, the abolition
of extreme wealth and poverty, and the useful exploitation of sci-
ence and technology for the welfare of humankind.[64] Abdu'l-Baha's
book was lithographed in Bombay in 1882, thus making it widely
available to the public. Most of the Baha'i thinking of today on
social and economic issues can be traced to this work, also the criti-
cism of Western materialism and moral deprivation.

Baha'u'llah's last work, which bears the cryptic title *Epistle to the
Son of the Wolf*, was written in 1892 shortly before his death, and it
is of particular significance for understanding Baha'u'llah's thinking.[65]
It is a kind of anthology of material selected by Baha'u'llah himself,
and therefore has "a special place in the hierarchy of all Bahá'u'lláh's
books".[66] The book combines several topics in one long text with-
out chapters: a summary of Baha'u'llah's teachings, with many ref-
erences to his previous writings and to passages from the Bible and
the Quran; accounts of past events, such as the stay in prison and
the break with Subh-i-Azal; and appeals to the authorities to stop
persecuting him and the Baha'is of Iran for things that they were
unjustly accused of.

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[62] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust,
1990.

[63] Juan R. I. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium. The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in
the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998, pp.
81–86.

[64] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 23–25, pp. 31–36, pp. 59–71.

[65] Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*; Taherzadeh, Adib, *The Revelation of
Bahá'u'lláh. Mazra'ih & Bahjí 1877–92*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1988, pp. 368–377.
The name "Son of the Wolf" was a nickname given to Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi.
He was the son of Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, who was called "the Wolf". Both
father and son were among the fiercest opponents of the Babis and Baha'is of Iran.

[66] Marzieh Gail, "Introduction", in Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. x.

ABDU'L-BAHA AND THE COVENANT

Baha'u'llah left a testament, the *Kitáb-i-'Ahd* (The Book of Covenant).[67] In this, he appointed as his successor his eldest son, Abbas Effendi (1844–1921), later known as Abdu'l-Baha, and he demanded obedience to him from all Baha'is, including members of his own family and the Bab's family, who were specifically named in the *Kitáb-i-'Ahd*.

Abdu'l-Baha's succession, however, was challenged by his half-brother Muhammad-Ali, who managed to alienate most of Baha'u'llah's own family and close associates from Abdu'l-Baha. This was the case with Mirza Javad Qazvini, one of Baha'u'llah's scribes and close associates. He was present when Baha'u'llah's will and testament was read, and he later accused Abdu'l-Baha of concealing parts of the testament and assigning himself a higher status than intended by Baha'u'llah.[68] Although the majority of Baha'is outside Akko accepted Abdu'l-Baha's leadership, the followers of Muhammad-Ali constituted the majority in Akko, where some of their descendants still live.[69] The adherents of Muhammad-Ali exerted a considerable local influence for many years, and a series of disputes concerning ownership of Baha'i property etc. were resolved as late as 1952.[70]

The particular Baha'i doctrine of the covenant has developed from the appointment of Abdu'l-Baha as the leader of Baha'i. Abdu'l-Baha is called the "Centre of the Covenant", because the Baha'is regard his appointment as a covenant made between Baha'u'llah and his followers.[71] This covenant is called the Lesser Covenant, because it is believed to function within the framework of the Great Covenant, which the Baha'is exemplify with the covenant made between God and Abraham.[72] The Great Covenant is the binding agreement made

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[67] Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah*, pp. 219–223.

[68] Edward G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1918, pp. 74–84.

[69] Erik Cohen, "The Bahá'í Community of Acre", *Folklore Research Center Studies*, vol. 3, 1972, pp. 119–141; Michael M. J. Fischer and Mehdi Abedi, *Debating Muslims. Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, p. 224.

[70] Cohen, "The Bahá'í Community of Acre". From information gathered during my fieldwork at the Baha'i World Centre in 1988–89, it is my impression that there are still ongoing disputes over certain pieces of personal belongings.

[71] Adib Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1995, pp. 99–147.

[72] William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith. The Emerging Global Religion*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1989, p. 127.

between God and humankind, in which God promises a succession of prophets, or in Babi and Baha'i terminology, manifestations of God. In return, people are obliged to recognise and accept the prophet when he arrives and to live in accordance with his teachings.[73]

Absolute commitment to Baha'u'llah's covenant is a central doctrine in Baha'i, and disobedience to the covenant is the most severely denounced act among Baha'is.[74] In the later schisms of Baha'i history, accusations of "covenant-breaking" have prepared for and justified excommunication of Baha'is who challenged the authority of the Baha'i leadership. In reality, few Baha'is have been excommunicated as covenant-breakers—there are no official figures, but at the Baha'i World Centre, I heard that the number of Baha'is who have been excommunicated, through the entire history of the religion, is around 1,600. Nevertheless, the subject of covenant-breaking invokes strong feelings among modern Baha'is and seems to have set in circulation a considerable amount of unofficial discourse.[75] Covenant-breakers are seen to incarnate negations of virtues that the Baha'is perceive themselves as having, and talking about covenant-breaking seems to have an identity-building function among the Baha'is.[76]

Abdu'l-Baha is recognised by the Baha'is as the authoritative interpreter of his father's writings. He is not a new manifestation of God, but an ordinary human being, yet specially chosen by God.[77] It is through Abdu'l-Baha that Baha'u'llah's teachings can be understood, and Abdu'l-Baha's writings therefore belong to the Baha'i canon of sacred writings. In particular, Abdu'l-Baha must be credited for presenting Baha'i in a form that was appealing to Westerners. His early work was concerned with reform, for example, the *Secret of Divine Civilization*, which is discussed above. Abdu'l-Baha was also the anonymous author of the history that Browne translated in *A Traveller's*

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[73] Hatcher and Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 127–129.

[74] Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 253–262.

[75] June R. Wyman, *Becoming a Baha'i: Discourse and Social Networks in an American Religious Movement* (Ph.D. diss.), Washington D.C., Department of Anthropology, The Catholic University of America, 1985, pp. 141–143; David Michael Piff, *Bahá'í Lore*, Oxford, George Ronald, 2000, pp. 59–69.

[76] David Piff and Margit Warburg, "Enemies of the Faith: Rumours and Anecdotes as Self-Definition and Social Control in the Baha'i Religion", in Eileen Barker and Margit Warburg (eds.), *New Religions and New Religiosity*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 1998, pp. 66–82.

[77] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 240.

Narrative.[78] His writings comprise works on the themes contained in Baha'u'llah's thinking, and his many letters and recorded public talks were part of his efforts to spread the Baha'i message to the West.[79] See Photo *IV—Abdu'l-Baha. Leader of the Baha'is 1892–1921.*

State and Religion in Baha'i Thinking

In *Modernity and the Millennium*, Juan Cole describes Baha'u'llah's and Abdu'l-Baha's thinking on state and religion.[80] Drawing on numerous quotations from the writings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha, Cole concludes that they both advocated religious liberty and a civil government, not a theocratic state, in contrast to what Shi'ite tradition would encourage.[81] Cole's position finds support in McGlinn's analyses of the issue of state and church in the writings by Baha'u'llah, Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.[82]

However, in the modern Baha'i secondary literature, the principles of the Baha'i organisation generally describe the future "World Order of Baha'u'llah" as including a merging of religious and secular rule. This has also been noted by Sen McGlinn who writes:

> Yet many writers, including both anti-Bahā'ī polemicists and the Bahā'ī secondary literature, have claimed that the Bahā'īs ultimately aim to establish a world theocratic government in which their own administrative institutions would replace national governments and provide an international government. This is the reverse of what Bahā'u'llāh taught. An extensive review of this secondary literature, as part of the research for this essay, has not disclosed any single reason for the almost universal misrepresentation of Bahā'u'llāh's views.[83]

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[78] Edward G. Browne (ed., trans.), *A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate the Episode of the Báb. Edited in the Original Persian, and Translated into English, with an Introduction and Explanatory Notes*, vols. 1–2, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1891.

[79] Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks. Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1911*, London, Cromwell Press, 1995; Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace. Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982; Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1993.

[80] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*.

[81] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, pp. 33–44.

[82] Sen McGlinn, "A Theology of the State from the Bahā'ī Teachings", *Journal of Church and State*, vol. 41, 1999, pp. 697–724; Sen McGlinn, "Theocratic Assumptions in Bahá'í Literature", in Seena Fazel and John Danesh (eds.), *Reason & Revelation: New Directions in Bahá'í Thought. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 13, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2002, pp. 39–80.

[83] McGlinn, "A Theology of the State from the Bahā'ī Teachings", 1999 (quotation p. 710).

The present book is not concerned with a discussion of Baha'i the-
ology in any greater depth. As a sociologist of religion, I only reg-
ister the prevailing views among leading Baha'is of today, who are
in a position to promulgate the official Baha'i position on this mat-
ter. Such Baha'is, for example, are authors who write in the official
year book, *The Bahá'í World*, or are authors of leading introductory
books that have gone through the internal Baha'i review process.
Generally, they explain that in a future world society based on Baha'i
principles, the Baha'i Administrative Order will apply on secular
matters as well. McGlinn's reading of the secondary literature also
leads him to conclude that Baha'i authors in general do not accept
the separation of state and church in a future Baha'i commonwealth.[84]
However, since it is a hot issue among many Western Baha'i intel-
lectuals, I would like to point out some possible clues as to why the
secondary literature does not agree with Cole's and McGlinn's own
interpretations.

Both Cole and McGlinn use, among other evidence, a passage
from Baha'u'llah's *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* to demonstrate that
Baha'u'llah advocated for the separation of state and church.
Baha'u'llah here quotes the famous sentence in *Mark* 12:17 about
what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God, and expounds on
its meaning.[85] Later, Abdu'l-Baha addresses the same theme in a talk
delivered in Paris in November 1911:

> With political questions the clergy, however, have nothing to do!
> Religious matters should not be confused with politics in the present
> state of the world (for their interests are not identical).
>
> Religion concerns matters of the heart, of the spirit, and of morals.
>
> Politics are occupied with the material things of life. Religious teach-
> ers should not invade the realm of politics; they should concern them-
> selves with the spiritual education of the people; they should ever give
> good counsel to men, trying to serve God and human kind; they should
> endeavour to awaken spiritual aspiration, and strive to enlarge the
> understanding and knowledge of humanity, to improve morals, and to
> increase the love for justice.
>
> This is in accordance with the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh. In the Gospel
> also it is written, 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's,
> and unto God the things which are God's'.[86]

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[84] McGlinn, "Theocratic Assumptions in Bahá'í Literature".

[85] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, p. 35; McGlinn, "A Theology of the State
from the Bahā'ī Teachings" (quotation p. 707); Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the
Wolf*, pp. 89–90.

[86] Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks, pp. 164–165. Paris Talks* is one of the most popular

Here Abdu'l-Baha is obviously on the side of a separation of secular and religious rule. However, it can hardly be without Shoghi Effendi's consent that in the introduction to Shoghi Effendi's *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (which was issued for the first time in 1938, and has been reprinted several times since then), Horace Holley concludes:

> The command, "Render unto God that which is of God, and unto Cæsar that which is of Cæsar," has been annulled by the law of the oneness of humanity revealed by Bahá'u'lláh.[87]

Horace Holley was not just anybody in the Baha'i religion; he was a "Hand of the Cause" (see later) and secretary of the American national spiritual assembly for many years. He was also Shoghi Effendi's closest collaborator in the production of the year-book series, the *Bahá'í World*.[88] As seen before in the history of religions, central texts have repeatedly been reinterpreted in the course of the making of a religion, and it can hardly be denied that the interpretation of 1938 bears a certain official weight in a Baha'i context.

Now, Abdu'l-Baha gave many talks, and with careful eclecticism, it is possible to find support for both views. One year after he gave his talk in Paris, Abdu'l-Baha spoke in New York, on the 29th of November 1912:

> He [Baha'u'llah] has ordained and established the House of Justice, which is endowed with a political as well as a religious function, the consummate union and blending of church and state. This institution is under the protecting power of Bahá'u'lláh Himself. A universal, or international, House of Justice shall also be organized. Its rulings shall be in accordance with the commands and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, and that which the Universal House of Justice ordains shall be obeyed by all mankind. This international House of Justice shall be appointed

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and widely used Baha'i books since its first publication in 1912. The written talks are based on notes taken from the French translation of Abdu'l-Baha's talks. Juan Cole has published a translation from Persian manuscript of the talk quoted above. Juan R. I. Cole, "'Abdu'l-Baha on Democracy and the Separation of Religion and State", *Translations of Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Texts*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2002, http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/trans/vol6/absiyas2.htm. The above citation has very much the same content in Cole's translation. I have chosen to quote the version that the Western Baha'is have known for about ninety years, that is, the version from *Paris Talks*.

[87] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Selected Letters*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991, p. vii.

[88] Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 182.

and organized from the Houses of Justice of the whole world, and all
the world shall come under its administration.[89]

It should be noted that the recorded talks of Abdu'l-Baha, such as
this and the previous text, are not authoritative Baha'i writings.
Nevertheless, they might still be influential, and it is with good rea-
son that McGlinn focuses on the phrase "the consummate union
and blending of church and state" in his discussion of Baha'i theo-
cratic assumptions, where he argues that this and other key passages
are later, non-authoritative editorial revisions.[90]

The above discussion indicates that popular and intellectual Baha'i
views diverge with regard to the scriptural foundation with which
the Baha'is might establish a theocracy in the future, if they even-
tually have the chance to do it. For the time being, it belongs to
the realm of millenarian utopias, and since the Baha'is work, in con-
junction with others, to promote a global, political process towards
peace, social development and international law, the issue of a pos-
sible Baha'i theocratic vision is low on their agenda.

However, one is still free to speculate on possible Baha'i theo-
cratic aspirations.[91] Daniel Easterman (Denis MacEoin's *nom de plume*)
has done so, pondering over the fact that the head of state of Samoa,
Susuga Malietoa Tanumafili II, is a Baha'i.[92] Easterman stresses that
as a confirmed Baha'i, Malietoa Tanumafili would be expected to
"render unquestioning obedience" to the Universal House of Justice.[93]
Samoa has a democratic rule, and Malietoa Tanumafili's position is
like the king in a constitutional kingdom, so in principle, there could
be a conflict of loyalties.

During fieldwork in Samoa in 2002, I interviewed a number of
Samoans on the issue of their head of state being a Baha'i. The
Baha'i religion is well-known in Samoa, about 5% of the popula-
tion are registered Baha'is, and there is a Baha'i temple near the

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[89] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 455.

[90] McGlinn, "Theocratic Assumptions in Bahá'í Literature".

[91] See, for example, Denis MacEoin, "Baha'ism: a religious revolution in the
making?", *New Humanist*, June 1987, pp. 9–11; Moojan Momen, "Baha'ism: bene-
volent or totalitarian?", *New Humanist*, September, 1987, p. 30; Denis MacEoin, [no
title], *New Humanist*, Sept. 1987, pp. 30–31.

[92] Daniel Easterman, "The New Religions: A Growing Force in Politics?", in
Daniel Easterman, *New Jerusalems. Reflections on Islam, Fundamentalism and the Rusdie
Affair*, London, Grafton, 1992, pp. 178–191.

[93] Easterman, "The New Religions" (quotation p. 190).

capital, Apia.[94] The head of state seems to enjoy considerable popu-
larity. Most of the Samoans I interviewed know that Malietoa
Tanumafili is a Baha'i, but in general it matters little to them (some
said that some Christian ministers were openly disapproving of his
conversion, but that could not be confirmed). As head of state, he
attends services occasionally at all the major congregations in Samoa,
not only at Baha'is services. I asked the secretary of the national
spiritual assembly of the Baha'is of Samoa if the head of state could
be elected to a spiritual assembly.[95] The answer was that this was
not possible, "the king is exalted", and his role in the Baha'i com-
munity is ceremonial. Concerning relations with the Universal House
of Justice, the secretary of the national spiritual assembly informed
me that the head of state's relationship was special; for example,
once a year the Universal House of Justice sends a personal letter
to him. The letter is received by the national spiritual assembly, but
unlike all other correspondence from the Baha'i World Centre, the
letter passes unopened to him. Nobody knows, of course, if he receives
covert instructions from the Universal House of Justice, but it seems
highly unlikely that the Baha'is would do such a thing; it does not
serve any imaginable sensible purpose and would be bound to erupt
into a scandal if discovered.

Susuga Malietoa Tanumafili II became a Baha'i in 1968, and
being the only head of state who is a confessed Baha'i, the Baha'is
are obviously proud of him. The possible conflicts of loyalty have
been handled so that he is placed *de facto* outside the Administrative
Order, unlike any other individual Baha'i. He cannot be elected to
any administrative position, nor has the national spiritual assembly
the same authority as it has in relation to any other individual Baha'i.
Perhaps this is the model that the Baha'i leadership envisage in pos-
sible future situations, if and when a head of state converts to Baha'i.

The Expansion of the Baha'i Religion

In Baha'u'llah's lifetime, Baha'i was undoubtedly an Iranian religion.
The great majority of the Baha'is lived in Iran, and the community

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[94] In 1986, 4.34% of the Samoan population were registered Baha'is. *The Seven
Year Plan 1979–1986. Statistical Report*, Haifa, The Universal House of Justice, 1986,
p. 51. BWC.
[95] Interview with Steven Percival, secretary of the national spiritual assembly of
Samoa, 8 August 2002.

in Akko was essentially an Iranian exile colony. Thanks to an effective network of couriers, Baha'u'llah kept contact with his adherents in Iran, and during the 1870s and 1880s, the Baha'is of Iran gradually consolidated themselves as a religious minority.[96] They began to convert new first-generation Baha'is, in particular among the better-educated or upwardly mobile strata of Iranian society.[97] The Baha'is also had some success in gaining converts among other religious minority groups in Iran, specifically among the Zoroastrians and the Jews.[98]

There were also quite a few Baha'is among other expatriate Iranian communities in Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Egypt and India, especially in Bombay. A flourishing Baha'i community was established in Ashkabad in Russian Turkestan during the 1880s by Iranian fugitives.[99] At the time of the Russian revolution in 1917, the Ashkabad community numbered 4,000 Baha'is, including 1,000 children.[100]

In the course of the 1870s and 1880s, the Baha'i religion spread from Bombay to other places in India and to several other countries in South and Southeast Asia. The Baha'i missionary, Jamal Effendi, was the leading figure in this growth. He had the training of a Sufi sage and travelled dressed as such; this gave him a prestigious position among the Muslim trading population of Indian origin.[101] However, judging from the data provided by Peter Smith, the

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[96] Moojan Momen, "A Preliminary Survey of the Bahā'ī-Community of Iran during the Nineteenth Century", in Johann Christoph Bürgel and Isabel Schayani (eds.), *Iran im 19. Jahrhundert und die Entstehung der Bahā'ī-Religion*, Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1998, pp. 33–51.

[97] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 93–97.

[98] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 93–97; Susan Stiles, "Early Zoroastrian Conversions to the Bahá'í Faith in Yazd, Iran", in Juan R. Cole and Moojan Momen (eds.), *From Iran East and West. Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 2, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1984, pp. 67–93; Walter Fischel, "The Bahai Movement and Persian Jewry", *The Jewish Review*, vol. 7, 1934, pp. 47–55; Susan Stiles Maneck, "The Conversion of Religious Minorities to the Bahá'í Faith in Iran. Some Preliminary Observations", *Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, vol. 3, 1991, pp. 35–48.

[99] M. Momen, "The Baha'i Community of Ashkhabad; its Social Basis and Importance in Baha'i History", in Shirin Akiner (ed.), *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia*, London, Kegan Paul, 1991, pp. 278–305.

[100] Momen, "The Baha'i Community of Ashkhabad".

[101] Moojan Momen, "Jamál Effendi and the early spread of the Bahá'í Faith in South Asia", *The Bahá'í Studies Review*, vol. 9, 1999, pp. 47–80; Moojan Momen, "Jamál Effendi and the Bahá'í Faith in Asia", in John Danesh and Seena Fazel (eds.), *Search for Values. Ethics in Bahá'í Thought. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 15, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2004, pp. 161–205.

number of Baha'is in India and Southeast Asia was probably not more than a couple of thousand until after World War II.[102]

Baha'is Go West

The expansion of Baha'i to the West began during Abdu'l-Baha's leadership. In December 1892, a Baha'i missionary of Syrian Christian background, Ibrahim G. Kheiralla, went to the USA and gained his first converts in Chicago.[103] During the subsequent years, he succeeded in converting several hundred Americans in eastern and midwestern cities. The converts were mostly women of mainstream Protestant backgrounds and interested in alternative religious movements, such as Theosophy, Swedenborgianism and various Hinduistic traditions; Baha'i was probably accepted as a part of these trends of the time.[104]

However, Kheiralla promulgated Baha'i in a way that soon turned out to be inconsistent with Abdu'l-Baha's interpretation of Baha'i beliefs. In 1900, Kheiralla and the majority of the American Baha'is were at odds, and the resulting crisis took several years to overcome. By 1906, the American Baha'i community had grown to 1,280 more or less firm adherents.[105] In 1912, when Abdu'l-Baha was 68 years old, he personally made an eight-month tour to North America to assist the mission and to consolidate the religion. In the subsequent years, the Baha'i religion became firmly established in the USA and Canada with a membership base hovering between 1,000 and 2,000 in the USA.[106] In Canada, there were from 30 to 50 Baha'is in the same period.[107]

Abdu'l-Baha encouraged the North American Baha'is to proselytise, and in a series of letters written in 1916–1917, called *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, he prepared the mission year plans that later became the backbone of the Baha'i mission.[108]

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[102] Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 151–153.
[103] Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America. Origins. 1892–1900*, vol. 1, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985, p. 26.
[104] Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America. Origins*, pp. 101–103.
[105] Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America. Origins*, pp. 158–184; Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 102.
[106] Robert H. Stockman, "The Bahá'í Faith in America: One Hundred Years", *World Order*, Spring 1994, pp. 9–23.
[107] Will C. van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada, 1898–1948*, Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996, p. 302.
[108] Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*.

Abdu'l-Baha's journeys to the USA and Canada in 1912 stirred up a significant but temporary interest in Baha'i in the North American public.[109] Although a number of religious propagandists from the East toured the USA at that time, it is easy to recognise Abdu'l-Baha as one of the sources of inspiration to a satirical essay by the Canadian humorist Stephen Leacock (1869–1944), "The Yahi-Bahi Oriental Society of Mrs. Rasselyer-Brown".[110] In this minor contribution to the sociology of religion, Leacock portrays Mr. Yahi-Bahi, the celebrated Oriental mystic, as a mixture of a Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist religious man, who has just arrived in town:

> He was so celebrated that nobody ever thought of asking who he was or where he came from. They merely told one another, and repeated it, that he was *the* celebrated Yahi-Bahi. They added for those that needed the knowledge that the name was pronounced Yahhy-Bahhy, and that the doctrine taught by Mr. Yahi-Bahi was Boohooism.[111]

Now, Stephen Leacock continues, the incredibly wealthy Mrs. Rasselyer-Brown held a *salon*:

> . . . where people of education and taste are at a liberty to talk about things they don't know, and to utter freely ideas that they haven't got. It was only now and then when one of the professors from the college across the avenue came booming into the room, that the whole conversation was pulverized into dust under the hammer of accurate knowledge.[112]

Of course, Mrs. Rasselyer-Brown felt compelled to arrange a meeting with Mr. Yahi-Bahi in her home:

> Mr. Yahi-Bahi was tall. His drooping Oriental costume made him taller still. He had a long brown face and liquid brown eyes of such depth that when he turned them full upon the ladies before him a shiver of interest and apprehension followed in the track of his glance.[113]

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[109] Moojan Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844–1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1981, pp. 327–329; Hussein Ahdieh and Eliane A. Hopson, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in New York. The City of the Covenant*, New York, The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of The City of New York, 1987; van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, pp. 43–50.

[110] The essay was published in 1914 in the first edition of Stephen Leacock, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1984, pp. 57–77. I wish to thank my colleague Morten Warmind for drawing my attention to it. van den Hoonard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, p. 60, has also noted Leacock's satire.

[111] Leacock, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, pp. 62–63.

[112] Leacock, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, p. 62.

[113] Leacock, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, p. 67.

Mr. Yahi-Bahi, of course, could not speak English, but conveyed his message through an interpreter, Mr. Snoop, who:

> . . . went on to disclose, amid deep interest, the general nature of the cult Boohooism. He said that they could best understand it if he told them that its central doctrine was that of Bahee.[114] [. . .] As a first step to all this, Mr. Snoop explained, each neophyte or candidate for holiness must, after searching his own heart, send ten dollars to Mr. Yahi-Bahi.[115]

Inevitably, the whole story wound up around the predictable topic of religion and money. With regard to this, Leacock's description does not hold, however, because Abdu'l-Baha and the Baha'is did not collect any money from the people attending his talks. A minor detail is that, although Abdu'l-Baha was tall, he was also noted for his blue eyes, not the "liquid brown eyes" that made ladies shiver in Leacock's imagination. Otherwise, taking into account the mild exaggerations that satire allows, any reader of the literature on the early American Baha'i communities will probably find that some of the communities in the great cities were not totally at variance with Mrs. Rasselyer-Brown's group of idle, rich, open-minded ladies and gentlemen.

A Persian in Paris

Baha'i was introduced to Europe by American Baha'i missionaries in 1898–99, and Baha'i communities were established in London, Manchester, Paris and Stuttgart.[116] In 1911, Abdu'l-Baha visited London and Paris as part of his efforts to spread the Baha'i religion to the West. In Paris, he and his escort of 14 Iranian and Egyptian Baha'is stayed for six weeks in a rented apartment on 4 Avenue de Camoëns, which is situated in the prestigious 16th *arrondissement*, with the Eiffel Tower around the corner and across the Seine. With his base in this elegant entourage, Abdu'l-Baha gave talks to groups of Europeans.[117] On 19 November 1911, he encouraged the Baha'is in their ambitious task to promote the millenarian visions of the Baha'i religion:

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[114] Leacock, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, p. 68.
[115] Leacock, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, p. 68.
[116] Robert H. Stockman, "The Bahá'í Faith in England and Germany, 1900–1913", *World Order*, 1996, pp. 31–42.
[117] *Sur les pas de 'Abdu'l-Bahá à Paris*, Paris, Librairie Bahá'íe, 1998.

> We work and pray for the unity of mankind, that all the races of the
> earth may become one race, all the countries one country, and that
> all hearts may beat as one heart, working together for perfect unity
> and brotherhood.
> . . .
> Doubt not that God is with us, on our right hand and on our left,
> that day by day He will cause our numbers to increase, and that our
> meetings will grow in strength and usefulness.
> . . .
> Work! Work with all your strength, spread the Cause of the Kingdom
> among men; teach the self-sufficient to turn humbly towards God, the
> sinful to sin no more, and await with glad expectation the coming of
> the Kingdom.
>   Love and obey your Heavenly Father, and rest assured that Divine
> help is yours. Verily I say unto you that you shall indeed conquer the
> world!
>   Only have faith, patience and courage—this is but the beginning,
> but surely you will succeed, for God is with you![118]

The millenarian confidence in divine help was just as present in
Abdu'l-Baha's talk as it was in Mulla Husayn's flaming speeches to
the defenders of Shaykh Tabarsi. However, Baha'u'llah had lifted
these visions of the future world order out of the Babi worldview
by his re-interpretation of central doctrines in Islam. The result was
a new religion aiming at organising the emerging globalised world.

   The apartment at 4 Avenue de Camoëns was spacious and com-
fortable, but all existing European Baha'is actually could have been
squeezed into the apartment to listen to Abdu'l-Baha that day in
November.[119] Not more than one hundred Europeans had at that
time declared themselves to be Baha'is.[120]

   Altogether, Abdu'l-Baha visited the continent three times, in 1911,
1913 and 1914.[121] The success with respect to new proselytes, how-
ever, was limited. In Britain, for example, there were no more than

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[118] Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 99–101.
[119] On 9 November 2002, I visited the apartment, which is now owned by the
French Baha'i community, and interviewed Mr. M. Salehpour, the caretaker of the
apartment. The living area is about 200 m². There are two very large rooms across
from each other in the apartment, plus several medium-sized rooms adjacent to the
large rooms. I have no doubt that this apartment, for example, could accommo-
date a reception with one hundred guests (they would be crowded, though).
[120] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 106; E. G. B. [Browne], "Sir 'Abdu'l-Baha
'Abbas. Died 28th November, 1921", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, [vol. 52],
1922, pp. 145–146.
[121] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 106.

50 active Baha'is in the period up to 1920.[122] The German com-
munity seemed to be the most vital, thanks to the efficient mission
of Alma Knoblauch, an American, German-born, Baha'i.[123] After
World War I, the German community experienced serious schisms,
but remained vital until the Hitler regime forbade all Baha'i activ-
ities in 1937.[124]

In ten other European countries (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, The
Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and
Portugal), the number of Baha'is altogether was approximately 60
before World War II.[125] Many of these Baha'is, who lived as isolated
Baha'is in their home countries, had lively contact with each other
and formed a kind of transnational, European Baha'i community.

The Foundation of the Baha'i World Centre

From 1868 to 1910, the spiritual and administrative centre of Baha'i
was located in Akko and its vicinity. Although Baha'u'llah's custody
was lifted in 1877, the Ottoman government never allowed him to
travel outside the local area; however, these travel restrictions were
not enforced upon his family and followers. This meant, among other
things, that Abdu'l-Baha could travel and represent the Baha'is in
business affairs. After 1877, the Baha'is were even allowed to pur-
chase land, and several Baha'i families became farmers in Galilee
and Golan.[126] Abdu'l-Baha bought his own house in Akko, and he

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[122] Phillip R. Smith, "What Was a Bahá'í? Concerns of British Bahá'ís 1900–1920",
in Moojan Momen (ed.), *Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions. Studies in Honor of the
Late Hasan M. Balyuzi*, vol. 5, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1988, pp. 219–251.

[123] Stockman, "The Bahá'í Faith in England and Germany, 1900–1913".

[124] Hermann Grossmann, "Die Ausbreitung und Gegenwätige Aktivität der
Baha'i-Religion, insbesondere in Amerika und Europa", *Zeitschrift für Religions- und
Geistesgesichte*, vol. 10, 1958, pp. 386–397; Stockman, "The Bahá'í Faith in England
and Germany, 1900–1913"; Jelle de Vries, *The Babi Question You Mentioned . . . The
Origins of the Bahá'í Community of the Netherlands, 1844–1962*, Herent, Peeters, 2002,
pp. 166–167.

[125] The approximately 60 Baha'is are estimated as follows: according to an inter-
nal Baha'i report, the number of *new* Baha'i converts (post-war converts) as of
1 March 1950 in all ten countries together was 238, and the total number of all
Baha'is "old and new" was 324, including 28 American pioneers listed by name.
This means that the number of "old" European Baha'is was 324–238–28 = 58 by
1 March 1950. Edna True, *Annual Report of European Teaching Committee*, 7 March
1950. (NBA-US).

[126] Idit Luzia, "The Bahai Center in Israel", in Ruth Kark (ed.), *The Land That*

and his family did not move with Baha'u'llah to the mansion of
Bahji in 1879.

When Abdu'l-Baha succeeded Baha'u'llah as leader of the Baha'is,
travel restrictions, however, were also imposed on him, and from
1901, his freedom of movement was confined to the city of Akko,
only to be lifted for good after the Young Turk revolution in 1908.[127]
Abdu'l-Baha soon after moved his family to nearby Haifa, where
the Baha'is owned some land on Mount Carmel, and there he began
to establish what later became the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa.
Today, the Mount Carmel site contains both the Baha'i adminis-
trative headquarter and the landmark of the city of Haifa, the Shrine
of the Bab with its golden dome.

After World War I, the Ottoman Empire yielded to the forma-
tion of new states and territories in the Middle East, and Abdu'l-Baha
became a prominent local religious leader in Palestine under British
mandate. In 1920, the British knighted him in acknowledgement of
his skills and services for the local community of Haifa.[128]

Shoghi Effendi and Routinisation of Leadership

Abdu'l-Baha died 28 November 1921, and in his testament he
appointed his grandson Shoghi Effendi Rabbani (1897–1957) as his
successor, with the official title of "Guardian of the Cause of God"
(*vali amru'llah*). Again, the issue of succession in Baha'i was challenged
by other members of the family, and this time also by some lead-
ing Western Baha'is.[129] During his first years in office, Shoghi Effendi

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Became Israel. Studies in Historical Geography, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990,
pp. 120–132.
    [127] David S. Ruhe, *Door of Hope. A Century of the Bahá'í Faith in the Holy Land*,
Oxford, George Ronald, 1986, pp. 67–71; Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 264–272.
    [128] B.[rowne], E. G., "Sir 'Abdu'l-Baha 'Abbas. Died 28th November, 1921",
Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, [vol. 52], 1922, pp. 145–146.
    [129] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 117–126. One of the leading oppo-
nents of Shoghi Effendi was the American Ruth White, who claimed that Abdu'l-Baha's
will and testament had been forged in a conspiracy between Abdu'l-Baha's half-brother
Muhammad-Ali and Shoghi Effendi, with the former in effective control. Ruth
White, *The Bahai Religion and Its Enemy. The Bahai Organization*, Rutland, Tuttle, 1929,
pp. 119–127. In consideration of the fact that Shoghi Effendi was persistent in his
legal battles with the Muhammad-Ali adherents in Akko over the issue of control
of Baha'i property, White's case seems rather improbable. Nevertheless, her ideas
won some acceptance and were later resumed by Hermann Zimmer, the German
leader of the splinter group, the "Freien Bahais". Hermann Zimmer, *Eine Testa-*

had considerable difficulties with the opposition among certain factions of the American Baha'is, in addition to the Muhammad-Ali adherents in Akko. Eventually, he succeeded in gaining complete control over the Baha'i communities world-wide and over the Baha'i property in Palestine/Israel.[130] In the course of that process, Shoghi Effendi excommunicated virtually all his closest family members.[131]

Shoghi Effendi's period as leader of the Baha'is represents an interesting and illustrative case of routinisation of leadership within a religion. In the beginning of the 1920s, the Baha'i organisation was loose, informal and based on the charismatic authority of Abdu'l-Baha.[132] Shoghi Effendi was a quite different type of leader than Abdu'l-Baha was. Educated at the American University in Beirut and later at Oxford University, he was familiar with Western thinking and culture and was fluent in English. He shunned the role of extroverted leadership and engaged himself in the tremendous task of establishing an organisation and a bureaucracy that could cope with the workload that would come from the future expansion of Baha'i.

In 1937, Shoghi Effendi married a Canadian Baha'i, Mary Sutherland Maxwell (1910–2000), who was given the honorific title *Amatu'l-Baha* (maidservant of Baha) and the name Ruhiyyih Khanum.[133] Living in Haifa for the rest of her life, she played a prominent role in the development of the Baha'i organisation right up to her death. With her queen-like status and behaviour, she also personified the union of the Iranian and Western components of Baha'i, and she was the last link to that past when Baha'i leadership was also a family affair.[134]

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mentsfälschung wertet die Bahai-Religion ab in den politischen Shoghismus, Stuttgart, Weltunion für Universale Religion und Universalen Frieden—Freie Bahai, 1971 (English translation: Hermann Zimmer, *A Fraudulent Testament Devalues the Bahai Religion into Political Shoghism*, Stuttgart, World Union for Universal Religion and Universal Peace—Free Bahais, 1973).

[130] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 117–120, pp. 122–126.

[131] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 125.

[132] See pp. 136–142 in Peter Smith, "The American Bahá'í Community, 1894–1917: A Preliminary Survey", in Moojan Momen (ed.), *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 1, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1982, pp. 85–223.

[133] The title Khanum, meaning "madam", is usually added to her name.

[134] This characterisation of Ruhiyyih Khanum's position as a queen in the Baha'i World Centre is not mine alone, but based on observations and interviews during my fieldwork in Haifa in 1988, and in 1988–89. My personal impression of her stems from a meeting on 11 February 1988, when Ruhiyyih Khanum invited me for lunch in her home at 7 Haparsim, Haifa.

The Administrative Order

Shoghi Effendi asserted the authority of his administration by making the organisation and its administrative guidelines an integral part of Baha'i doctrines. In this process, he elevated the Baha'i organisation to become a derivative of the covenant of Baha'u'llah. He also gave the organisation a new name, the Administrative Order (of the Faith of Baha'u'llah).[135] A consequence of this was that rules for the election of administrative bodies became religious ordinances, just like the rules for prayer, fast or personal conduct. This is amply demonstrated in the booklet *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, which is a widely used synopsis of all Baha'i laws and administrative guidelines as set down by Shoghi Effendi.[136] In his own words, he had created an organisational system that was "by virtue of its origin and character, unique in the annals of the world's religious systems".[137] The "[Bahá'i] administrative system offers, Bahá'ís believe, the only satisfactory arrangement between individual and community, between free will and authority, equilibrating the prerogatives of each."[138]

A characteristic feature of the Administrative Order is that decisions of binding character are taken by a board, not by individuals. The process of collective decision-making is called "consultation", among the Baha'is, and it is a term used very often. This consultation principle dates back to Baha'u'llah's efforts to develop a religious organisation in which the power of the clerical hierarchy was reduced. His aim was an internal democratisation of the Baha'i community, and it was an effort much in tune with organisational reforms among other religious minorities, for example the Armenian Christians

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[135] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 143–157.

[136] [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration. A Compilation*, London, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976. A detailed description of the procedures and by-laws of the various administrative bodies in the Administrative Order is found in [Universal House of Justice], "The Universal House of Justice. 1. The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 18, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1986, pp. 453–460; [Universal House of Justice], "The Hands of the Cause of God. 1. The Hands of the Cause of God and the Extension of their Functions into the Future", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 18, pp. 473–480; [Universal House of Justice], "2. A Model Declaration of Trust and By-Laws for a National Spiritual Assembly", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 18, pp. 538–460; [Universal House of Justice], "2. By-Laws of a Local Spiritual Assembly", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 18, pp. 564–567.

[137] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 326.

[138] Marzieh Gail, "Introduction", in Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. vi–vii.

of the Ottoman Empire.[139] The Ottoman *millet* system, where the civil judicial authority rested with the minority group itself, with minimal involvement of the state, meant that such reforms could be made openly. In Iran, however, the Baha'is had to be low key in the 1880s when setting up their consultative bodies, to avoid being targeted by the authorities as potential nests of political conspiracy.[140]

Shoghi Effendi concentrated on establishing the Administrative Order in the USA, the only country apart from Iran where there was an appreciable Baha'i population in the 1920s (about 1,500).[141] Shoghi Effendi spent many years and much effort to promote the organisational changes towards a more formal structure with a national spiritual assembly as the supreme board of the American Baha'i community. All available sources indicate that he exerted a strong personal influence in this process through his vast correspondence with and guidance to various Baha'i communities as well as to thousands of individual believers.[142] It was a transformation that resulted from a deliberate policy formulated by Shoghi Effendi, and the changes were executed only gradually and not without internal conflicts.[143] Some American Baha'is objected to the formalisation of the Baha'i organisation and what they felt was undue centralisation, and in particular the authority of the national spiritual assembly was repeatedly challenged through the 1920s and 1930s.[144]

As a result of Shoghi Effendi's policy, the American Baha'i community came to dominate the development of Baha'i in the West and to set many of its organisational standards during the first half

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[139] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, 1998, pp. 91–97.

[140] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, 1998, pp. 94–95.

[141] According to Robert Stockmann, National Baha'i Centre, Wilmette, Illinois, there were about 1,500 Baha'is in the United States in 1926. Rob[ert] Stockmann, "Re: Baha'i Growth", hhtp://bahai-library.org/essays/membership.stats.html. Accessed 3 August 2002. It seems evident that the other Western countries, with their much smaller Baha'i populations (less than one hundred), could not fully implement the Administrative Order at that time.

[142] Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America. Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Bahá'ís of North America 1932–1946*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1947; [Shoghi Effendi], *Directives from the Guardian*, New Delhi, Baha'i Publishing Trust, n.d.; [Shoghi Effendi] *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*.

[143] Shoghi Effendi *God Passes By*, p. 329; Loni Bramson-Lerche, "Some Aspects of the Development of the Bahá'í Administrative Order in America, 1922–1936", in Moojan Momen (ed.), *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 1, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1982, pp. 255–300.

[144] Bramson-Lerche, "Some Aspects of the Development of the Bahá'í Administrative Order in America".

of the twentieth century. Shoghi Effendi actually proclaimed that the USA "may well deserve to be recognized as the cradle of the Administrative Order which Bahá'u'lláh Himself had envisaged and which the Will of the Center of His Covenant [Abdu'l-Baha] had called into being".[145]

It cannot be denied that the Administrative Order is noteworthy, if perhaps not "unique", cf. the quote above from Shoghi Effendi. Instead of separating the administration from the religious life, the Baha'is have integrated the two, creating a "sacred bureaucracy". This makes sense for a religion of Islamic background.

With the organisational consolidation of the Baha'i community of the USA (and Canada, which shared the national spiritual assembly with the USA from 1922 to 1948), the Baha'i religion had for the first time gained a stronghold outside the Middle East, both with respect to membership and financial basis. In some respects the Baha'i administration in Haifa had a position like that of an exiled government with two bases to attend to, Iran and North America. In a long letter written in 1938, Shoghi Effendi described the American Baha'i community as "separated by vast distances from both the focal-center of its Faith and the land [Iran] wherein the preponderating mass of its fellow-believers reside."[146]

Shoghi Effendi's Writings

Shoghi Effendi's authorship was not confined to administrative matters, but extended to all aspects of expounding and promulgating the Baha'i teachings, in particular the teachings on the Baha'i principles for a new world order, the "Most Great Peace". He communicated most of these teachings in letters and essays, which were later compiled into the book *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, referred to above. Two of his other books, *God Passes By* and *The Dawn-Breakers*, are presented in Chapter 2. These two books are important, not only because of their central doctrinal position in setting the standard for how the Babi and Baha'i history is rendered by most Baha'i authors, but also because of their significance in sustaining a global

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[145] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 329.
[146] Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, New Delhi, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1968, p. 6.

Baha'i identity. As shown in Chapter 4, these histories are the Baha'is' *own* history of their struggles, sufferings and victories; they are not august scholarly treatises meant to contribute to the academic understanding of the Baha'i history.

Shoghi Effendi also provided Western Baha'is with numerous translations into English of the Baha'i sacred writings, the first and most central parts of Baha'u'llah's writings.[147] The writings of Shoghi Effendi do not belong to the sacred corpus of Baha'i writings, but his interpretations of Baha'i law are binding.[148]

Shoghi Effendi's Creation of Baha'i "Sacred Language"

No particular language has sacred pre-eminence in the Baha'i religion. However, Shoghi Effendi introduced a particular style, which in some ways plays the role of "sacred language". In the following, I provide several brief examples of Baha'i stylistic innovations, which in different ways carry a distinct code of Baha'i-ness. Such codes support the believers and strengthen their recognition of a certain text as a Baha'i text.

When Shoghi Effendi translated Baha'u'llah's writings into English, he chose a form of expression "reminiscent of the style used by the seventeenth-century translators of the Bible".[149] For a British or an American reader, this particular Bible style (King James English) is a tradition of English and American Christianity, so by leaning towards this style, Shoghi Effendi gave the Baha'i texts a character of established religion and solemnity. Such anachronisms are common in Western Christianity; for example, in Danish churches, inscriptions are often written with the German hand abandoned elsewhere long ago. This signifies that the words are not trivial and their authenticity and power is augmented by their apparent longevity. Shoghi Effendi's "high Baha'i English" is, in fact, an excellent example of an "invention of tradition", since Shoghi Effendi consciously selected an outdated, "authentic" religious style.[150]

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[147] Shoghi Effendi's translations include *The Kitáb-i Íqán*, *The Hidden Words*, the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, parts of *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, and many of Baha'u'llah's prayers and tablets.

[148] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 21.

[149] See the introduction to *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 9.

[150] E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Shoghi Effendi's translations have served as a model for later trans-
lations, and a particular archaic English Baha'i style is characteris-
tic not only of the translated writings but also of many official
messages from the Baha'i World Centre of today. However, when
examining the styles of the various messages from the Universal
House of Justice, it is noteworthy that the internal messages are still
written in Shoghi Effendi's "high Baha'i English", while external
messages, such as reports on the persecutions of the Baha'is of Iran,
follow modern English usage.

Shoghi Effendi used an opulent style in his letters, even when
attending to topics that non-Baha'is would deem mundane admin-
istrative directives. However, the Baha'i Administrative Order is a
sacred bureaucracy, and such matters demand a "sacred language".
The following is an example from a letter addressed to Baha'is of
the West in 1947. The letter is typical both in the choice of par-
ticular words ("unprecedented", "harbinger", "epoch-making") and
by the breath-taking lack of even a single full stop in a long section. In
the letter, Shoghi Effendi urged for the creation of European confer-
ences and summer schools as part of the European Baha'i mission work:

> Such summer schools and conferences, initiated and conducted by one
> of the most important agencies of the highest administrative institu-
> tion in the North American Bahá'í community, gathering together as
> they will Bahá'í representatives of various races and nations on the
> continent of Europe, will, by reason of their unprecedented character
> in the evolution of the Faith, since its inception, constitute a historic
> landmark in the development of the organic world-wide Bahá'í com-
> munity, and will be the harbinger of those epoch-making world con-
> ferences, at which the representatives of the nations and races within
> the Bahá'í Fold will convene for the strengthening of the spiritual and
> administrative bonds that unite its members.[151]

The closing words, "strengthening of the spiritual and administrative
bonds that unite its members", also indicate how Shoghi Effendi deemed
administrative matters in the Baha'i religion to have a high status.

Shoghi Effendi communicated many of his brief messages by cable-
gram, and despite technological advances in communication, this has
developed into another Baha'i stylistic tradition. For at least the last
twenty-five years, there have neither been the technological nor the

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[151] Shoghi Effendi to Baha'is of the West, 5 June 1947, GC001/104/00032.
(BWC-RD).

economical constraints on electronic communication that earlier dictated the particular cablegram style of terse messages with capital letters and truncation of non-significant words. Nevertheless, the Universal House of Justice occasionally still uses the cablegram style in some of its messages; thus another tradition was invented when the Universal House of Justice decided to keep these stylistic inconveniences when the telegraph became obsolete.[152] The tradition may remind the Baha'is that the Universal House of Justice carries on the functions of the guardianship that Shoghi Effendi incarnated.

It is also noteworthy that condolences from the Universal House of Justice in this cablegram style with capital letters are engraved on several of the tombstones in Baha'i cemeteries, such as in the graveyard in London where Shoghi Effendi and many other prominent Baha'is are buried, or in the Baha'i cemetery at the Baha'i temple outside Kampala, Uganda.[153] The use of these verbatim inscriptions in uppercase letters on a tombstone indicates that the style and form of these messages are revered by the Baha'is. See Photo V—*Baha'i tombstone with inscription in telegram style, New Southgate Cemetery, London.*

The final example of the Baha'i "sacred language" is the Baha'i transcription system, which uses the acute accent to distinguish between the long and short "a", "i" and "u". In 1923, Shoghi Effendi standardised the Baha'is' transcription of Persian and Arabic words, and he followed international standards adopted by the Oriental scholars of that time. However, the Baha'is continued to use the acute accent as a transliteration mark long after it was superseded internationally by the horizontal stroke. To write the Persian and Arabic terms with an acute accent has thus become a tradition of Baha'i (holy) language, although this was probably not intended by Shoghi Effendi in the first place.

Expansion in Europe

After World War II, a systematic Baha'i mission began in Europe. The initiative was taken by Shoghi Effendi with the launching of

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[152] See Universal House of Justice, *A Wider Horizon*, 1992, pp. 224–225, for a characteristic example from 1990.

[153] Observations from my visits on 23 March 1993 and 23 August 1998 to New Southgate Cemetery and Crematorium in London and from my visit on 12 February 2000 to the Baha'i temple outside Kampala, Uganda.

"The North America's Second Seven Year Plan" (1946–1953), in which one of the objectives for the American Baha'i community was "the initiation of systematic teaching activity in war-torn, spiritually famished European continent".[154] A "European Teaching Committee" was set up in 1946 at the national Baha'i centre in Wilmette, north of Chicago. It was chaired by Miss Edna M. True and was responsible to the national spiritual assembly of the USA. A European auxiliary office staffed by Mrs. Etty Graeffe was opened in Geneva, where the International Baha'i Bureau had existed since 1925, but practically without function during the war.[155] As early as 1946, Edna True and Etty Graeffe toured Europe and visited the Baha'i communities in the different European countries.[156]

The task of the European Teaching Committee was to co-ordinate the mission activities in ten European "goal" countries: Denmark, Norway, Sweden, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Portugal. American missionaries, called pioneers, were sent to these countries.[157] All the missionaries corresponded regularly with Edna True, who co-ordinated the mission resources, including money and transfer of pioneers. The missionaries soon succeeded in establishing viable Baha'i communities in all of these countries; for example, in Denmark, 32 new Baha'is enrolled in the period 1947–1950. In the ten goal countries together, the number of new Baha'i converts as of 1 March 1950 was 238.[158]

The number of European Baha'is at that time was so limited that relations among them were usually informal and often private, too. For example, the American missionary in Denmark, Dagmar Dole, told Edna True that the daughter of a Danish Baha'i now had a job as an au-pair girl in the home of Marion Hofman, a prominent English Baha'i.[159] Most of the national Baha'i communities were very small, such that it was with good reason that a Danish Baha'i referred to the Danish group as "our family", as noted by Dagmar Dole.[160]

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[154] Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America*, 1947, pp. 87–89 (quotation p. 88).
[155] *Annual Bahá'í Reports*, 1946–47, p. 22. (NBA-US). The International Baha'i Bureau is described in Chapter 11.
[156] *Annual Bahá'í Reports*, 1946–47, p. 22. (NBA-US).
[157] *Annual Bahá'í Reports*, 1946–47, pp. 21–23. (NBA-US).
[158] Edna True, *Annual Report of European Teaching Committee*, 7 March 1950. (NBA-US). The number of new Baha'i converts in Denmark in the same period was 18.
[159] Dagmar Dole to Edna M. True, 17 May 1949. (NBA-US).
[160] Dagmar Dole to Edna M. True, 3 August 1948. (NBA-US).

In reality, the Baha'is of Europe formed one international community rather than a group of national Baha'i communities. A similar pattern is observed also today for many new religious movements with few and dispersed members.

Virtually all the missionaries and what the Baha'is call travelling teachers were Americans, and all external administrative matters and correspondence were conducted in English. This meant that Baha'i, although of Iranian stock, gained its position in Europe as an essentially Americanised religion. In this respect, Baha'i followed a typical pattern of foreign religions (such as many of the new religious movements from India) entering Europe not directly from their home countries, but via the USA.[161]

During the 1950s, the European Teaching Committee in the USA was the directly responsible agent for European affairs, and the influence from the Baha'i organisation in Haifa was mostly indirect. However, individual believers were able to communicate with Shoghi Effendi directly, and he often followed the details of the mission work. For example, in 1949, there was discussion about an American Baha'i pioneer, Miss Nancy Gates, being transferred from Denmark to Greenland. The entire correspondence concerning her case involved the following persons and administrative bodies: Nancy Gates, Dagmar Dole, the local spiritual assembly of Copenhagen, the European Teaching Committee with Edna True, the national spiritual assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, the national spiritual assembly of the Baha'is of Canada (who had been assigned Greenland in the co-ordinated mission), and Shoghi Effendi.[162] This example shows

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[161] James A. Beckford and Martine Levasseur, "New religious movements in Western Europe", in James A. Beckford (ed.), *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*, London, Sage, 1991, pp. 29–54.

[162] Dagmar Dole to Edna True, 14 September 1949; Nancy Gates to Edna True, 17 October 1949; Edna True to Nancy Gates (with copy to Dagmar Dole), 20 October 1949; Nancy Gates to Edna True, 22 October 1949; Dagmar Dole to Edna True, 24 October 1949; Edna True to Nancy Gates, 28 October 1949; Edna True to Nancy Gates, 6 November 1949; Edna True to the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Copenhagen, att. Dagmar Dole, 6 November 1949; National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States through Horace Holley to Edna True, 9 November 1949; National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States through Horace Holley to Edna True, 9 November 1949 (citing a cablegram from Shoghi Effendi: "Advise you release Gates for Greenland"); National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada through the secretary, Laura K. Davis, to Edna True, 9 November 1949; Nancy Gates to Edna True, 27 November 1949; Dagmar Dole to Edna True, 12 December 1949. All correspondence from NBA-US.

both Shoghi Effendi's involvement in minutiae and also how even the transfer of one missionary had bureaucratic consequences for a fair part of the Baha'i administration of the world.

A CRISIS OF SUCCESSION

The international Baha'i community's situation changed dramatically when Shoghi Effendi died in 1957 during a visit to London. Shoghi Effendi was childless, and he had not appointed a successor while he was alive, nor was anyone indicated in any papers left.[163] The Baha'i hereditary leadership tradition could continue no longer, as all other male descendants of Baha'u'llah had either died or had been excommunicated, and the institution of the guardianship as it was established by Abdu'l-Baha, in principle, was defunct.

Shoghi Effendi's Grave in London

Shoghi Effendi's death in London meant that he had to be buried nearby, since Baha'i laws require that the place of burial should be no more than one hour's travelling distance away.[164] He was buried in the Great Northern London Cemetery (now New Southgate Cemetery and Crematorium); later, the Baha'is bought the area around his grave, and it has become a popular place of pilgrimage for Baha'is. See Photo 5—*Shogi Effendi's grave in London.*

I have visited the cemetery and the grave twice, 23 March 1993 and 23 August 1998, and I interviewed the caretaker of the grave both times. The record of visits in the guest book from January to July 1998 showed that the grave had been visited by about 6,000 Baha'is in this half-year period, which means that there must be some ten to twelve thousand visitors per year. In fact, more Baha'is visited Shoghi Effendi's grave than any other of the Baha'i pilgrimage places, including the Baha'i shrines in Israel. It is obvious that this has to do with its practical location, and I was told that many Baha'is passing through London's Heathrow Airport take a short stopover to visit the grave. Many Baha'is, in particular Iranian Baha'is,

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[163] *The Ministry of the Custodians 1957–1963. An Account of the Stewardship of the Hands of the Cause. With an Introduction by the Hand of the Cause, Amatu'l-Bahá Ruḥíyyih Khánum*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1992, p. 8.

[164] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 79.

take some pebbles from the grave with them, or they may take leaves from the flowers growing there. According to one of my British informants, this behaviour has been adopted by non-Iranian Baha'is as well.

The visits to the grave are obviously endorsed by the Universal House of Justice, but because Shoghi Effendi has no special divine position, it is unlikely that the grave will be given the same sacred status as for example the house of Baha'u'llah in Edirne. The Baha'i visits to Shoghi Effendi's grave, however, will by all probability remain individual Baha'i rituals, and I propose that they should be seen as a continuation of the Islamic tradition of visiting tombs of important religious persons.[165]

Interim Leadership

Immediately after Shoghi Effendi's death, a body of 27 leading Baha'is, the "Hands of the Cause", decided to elect from among themselves a nine-member committee, called the custodians, whose task was to manage temporarily the affairs of the Baha'i community.[166] One of the main goals set up by the custodians was to promote the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, the supreme legislative Baha'i body envisaged by Baha'u'llah and described in more detail by Shoghi Effendi.[167] The dual functions of the guardianship as the supreme interpreter of the texts and the Universal House of Justice as the supreme legislator were merged into one with the establishment of the present institution of the Universal House of Justice in 1963.[168]

Many Baha'is were disturbed by the idea of a collective leadership of Baha'i with no single person serving as the supreme head; the custodians' plans were met with some resistance.[169] In the spring of 1960, one of the custodians, the American Charles Mason Remey,

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[165] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 112, p. 118; MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, p. 58.

[166] The Universal House of Justice has issued a compilation of relevant documents pertaining to this period, *The Ministry of the Custodians*. One of the custodians was Shoghi Effendi's widow, and in the introduction, she gives her personal account of the course of events in this critical period.

[167] Baha'u'llah, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 35; Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Selected Letters*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991, pp. 143–157.

[168] [Universal House of Justice], *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986*, pp. 83–90.

[169] Even today, this issue gives rise to hearsay and other unofficial lore among the Baha'is, see Piff, *Bahá'í Lore*, pp. 101–103.

claimed himself to be the natural choice for a new guardian, since he was appointed by Shoghi Effendi as the president of the International Baha'i Council, a board set up by Shoghi Effendi in 1950 and announced as a forerunner of the Universal House of Justice.[170] Remey's claim was not acknowledged by the other custodians, and he then pronounced himself to be the "Guardian of the Orthodox Baha'is".[171] As with earlier leadership successions, this attempt to challenge the appointed Baha'i leadership also resulted in the formation of yet another splinter group.[172] When the Universal House of Justice was formed in 1963, it underpinned the idea of a collective leadership by deciding that it did not have the power to legislate in a way that would make it possible to appoint a new guardian.[173]

The Universal House of Justice and the Baha'i Organisation

Since its establishment in 1963, the Universal House of Justice has continuously exerted a massive influence on many issues, from major policy decisions, to correspondence with individual Baha'is who seek guidance. Thus, the traditions of the guardianship laid down by Shoghi Effendi are still carried out as a dominating activity of the Universal House of Justice.

The Universal House of Justice consists of nine men (women may not serve), who are elected every fifth year, in Haifa, at a gather-

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[170] Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 200.

[171] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 130–131; Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 292–293.

[172] Even before Remey's death in 1974, his followers had split into a number of groups that struggled over the issue of succession. The main group followed Joel B. Marangella (1918–), who claimed that Remey appointed him as the third guardian. On 25 August 1980, I interviewed Marangella's son, Joel Jani Marangella (1947–). It was quite evident from that interview that the Orthodox Baha'is was an organisation with no communal religious life. In Montana, a group of Reymite Baha'is joined "The Baha'is Under the Provisions of the Covenant", an apocalyptic group headed by Leland Jensen (1913–1996). This group was studied by sociologists interested in the implications of failed prophecies, see Robert W. Balch, Gwen Farnsworth, and Sue Wilkins, "When the Bombs Drop: Reactions to Disconfirmed Prophecy in a Millennial Sect", *Sociological Perspectives*, vol. 26, 1983, pp. 137–158; Robert W. Balch, John Domitrovitch, Barbara Lynn Mahnke, and Vanessa Morrison, "Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy. Coping with Cognitive Dissonance in a Baha'i Sect", in Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (eds.), *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem. Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, New York, Routledge, 1997, pp. 73–90.

[173] Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 429–441, in particular p. 437.

ing of representatives of all the national spiritual assemblies of the world. Individually, the members of the Universal House of Justice have no special spiritual authority. When convened, however, the members of the Universal House of Justice are believed to be spiritually guided in their joint decisions and thus infallible. All the letters and messages from the Universal House of Justice therefore have divine authority—indeed, the messages prove their own divine origin:

> The messages themselves are sufficient proof that the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh is unbroken, that the channel of divine guidance remains open, and that "the Day which shall not be followed by night" has at last dawned upon the world.[174]

The Universal House of Justice sends many letters and messages collectively to all Baha'i communities. The yearly Ridvan Message in April from the Universal House of Justice is the most important of these collective communications. It may be likened to a prime minister's New Year speech; it is read aloud when the Baha'is assemble to celebrate Ridvan and it is usually translated and reproduced in the local Baha'i newsletter. At other times of the year, the messages from the Universal House of Justice may expound on some of the Baha'i doctrines or bring greetings to Baha'i conferences. Still other messages may outline new mission plans, call for more missionaries to certain tasks or bring news, such as the dedication of a temple, reports on the persecutions of Baha'is in Iran, or the passing of a prominent Baha'i.[175]

The Present Baha'i Organisation

The organisational diagram in Figure 5.1 gives an overview of the bodies of the present Baha'i organisation, including the administrative links to the shrines of the two founding prophets and to the Baha'i temples. The terms the "Institutions of the Rulers" and the "Institutions of the Learned" are used by the Baha'is to designate the two branches of the Administrative Order proper.[176]

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[174] Foreword to *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986*, p. xxxi.

[175] The 456 entries contained in [Universal House of Justice] *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986* include "virtually every major message of the Third Epoch" (p. xxx), and give a comprehensive view of the issues dealt with and the frequency with which the Universal House of Justice makes its announcements.

[176] [Universal House of Justice], *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986*, pp. 214–217.

Figure 5.1. *The Baha'i Administrative Order and associated institutions*
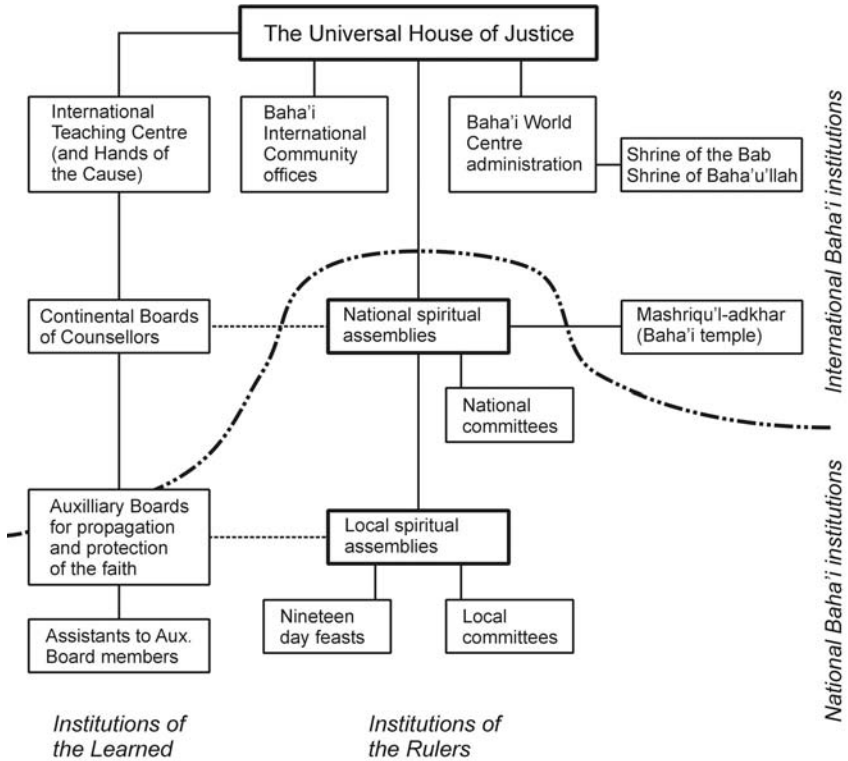
On the national level, the Baha'is elect a nine-member national spiritual assembly; the election takes place at an annual national convention, by voting among the delegates, and considerable power is vested in this assembly. By 2004, the Baha'is included 183 national spiritual assemblies, of which a few were regional spiritual assemblies, covering several countries.[177]

The basic administrative unit in the Administrative Order is the local spiritual assembly. Provided a Baha'i community within particular civic administrative borders (usually a municipality) numbers at least nine adult Baha'is (Baha'is of 21 years and above), once a year they elect nine members to a local spiritual assembly. The voters cast nine votes by secret ballot, and canvassing for particular

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[177] *The Bahá'í World*, 2003–2004, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 2005, p. 241.

candidates is discouraged.[178] The local spiritual assembly has the responsibility for all local community affairs, including arranging religious feasts and organising the expansion and consolidation of the Baha'i community through proselytising and education. The nineteen day feasts are the regular assembly meetings for all the Baha'is— these religious feasts were institutionalised by Shoghi Effendi and are considered part of the Administrative Order.

Although the local Baha'i community has considerable freedom in organising its religious life, the Baha'i organisation does not follow congregational principles like those of some Protestant churches with extensive local religious autonomy, because the spiritual authority in the Baha'i religion is centralised in Haifa.

This three-level organisation, based on local spiritual assemblies, national spiritual assemblies and the Universal House of Justice, is called the Institutions of the Rulers. The communication between the three levels of the organisation is tight and well-organised. For example, each year the national spiritual assembly gathers statistical information and reports on activities from each of the local spiritual assemblies. These data are compiled on a special form with several pages, the *Annual Statistical Report*, which is sent to the Baha'i World Centre by the end of August each year.

The Universal House of Justice bases its work on information and administrative support from the Baha'i World Centre administration. The administrative staff in Haifa has grown considerably since the mid-1980s, and today at least eight hundred persons work at the Baha'i World Centre.

The Institutions of the Rulers have complete authority, also in spiritual guidance. In particular, Shoghi Effendi emphasised the strong authority of the national spiritual assemblies in all matters concerning the members of the national Baha'i community.[179] This ruling organisation is supplemented with a considerable number of specialised bodies concerned with the propagation of the religion, called the Institutions of the Learned (the left branch of the diagram). The supreme body among these is the International Teaching Centre, whose members are appointed by the Universal House of Justice.[180]

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[178] [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration. A Compilation*, London, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976, pp. 46–47.

[179] [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 75–77.

[180] Initially, the International Teaching Centre consisted of two types of mem-

The International Teaching Centre supervises the "Continental Boards of Counsellors", five decentralised bodies whose members are appointed by the Universal House of Justice, each having responsibility for a continent (Africa, North and South America, Asia, Australia and Oceania, and Europe). They in turn appoint "Auxiliary Board Members", who in turn appoint assistants.

The Institutions of the Learned are reminiscent of the *ulama*—the class from which many Babis were recruited—but now stripped of all formal power with respect to deciding what is right and wrong in religious matters.[181] Members of the Institutions of the Learned are in reality quite influential, but they exert their influence only through the prestige that their offices carry, and the individual members have no executive power.[182]

International relations with the non-Baha'i world were strengthened from 1967 when the Universal House of Justice took direct charge of and began an expansion of the Baha'i International Community. This agency, which represents the Baha'is in the United Nations System, is the external face of the Baha'i organisation.[183] It is described as "an international non-governmental organization which encompasses and represents the worldwide membership of the Bahá'í

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bers, those who were appointed by the Universal House of Justice and had the title of counsellor, and those who had the title "Hands of the Cause". This title goes back to the late 1880s when Baha'u'llah appointed four outstanding Baha'is as "Hands of the Cause", whose task was to help him, in his exile, and maintain contact with the Baha'is of Iran, see Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 175–177. Abdu'l-Baha did not nominate any further "Hands of the Cause", but instead used the term as an honorific title to be given posthumously. This tradition was continued by Shoghi Effendi until the 1950s when he revived the original purpose of the title and appointed twelve "Hands of the Cause" in 1951, seven more in 1952 and a further eight in the subsequent years until shortly before his death in 1957. According to Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament, new "Hands of the Cause" can only be nominated by the individual serving as "guardian", so no new "Hands of the Cause" could be appointed after Shoghi Effendi's death. As of March 2006 there is only one living "Hand", and with his passing, the institution will disappear.

[181] Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 27.

[182] Shoghi Effendi specifically stated that no individual Baha'i, no matter how eminent she or he may be, is above assembly jurisdiction. See [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 19.

[183] The Baha'i International Community was formed in 1948 and until 1967 it referred to the Baha'i community of the USA on behalf of all national Baha'i communities. Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 69. The term Baha'i International Community is also the label used when the Baha'is as a world organisation deal officially with governments, the United Nations and non-Baha'i organisations.

Faith".[184] It has two Offices of Public Information, one in New York next to the United Nations Building, and one in Haifa. Both of them are directly subordinate to the Universal House of Justice.

For the sake of completeness, the Shrine of the Bab, the Shrine of Baha'u'llah and the *mashriqu'l-adhkar* (the Baha'i term for the Baha'i temple institution) are shown in the diagram with links to those administrative bodies that have the responsibility for running the shrines and temples. Formally, however, the shrines and temples are not part of the Administrative Order.

In Figure 5.1, a broken line separates the international Baha'i institutions from the bodies of the national Baha'i communities. There is, of course, some arbitrariness in this division. For example, I have chosen to include the Baha'i temples among the international institutions. Although the temples formally belong to and are administered by a particular national Baha'i community, the fact that the temples so far are distributed one on each continent as "mother temples" indicates that they should be placed among the international Baha'i institutions. An additional argument is that the funds needed for the construction of the temples are procured from sources throughout the Baha'i world.

The Baha'i Organisation in the Dual Global Field Model

Figure 5.2 shows how the different administrative bodies displayed in Figure 5.1 can be understood in terms of the dual global field model. In the dual global field model, developed in Chapter 3 and presented in Figure 3.2, the Baha'i organisation is placed in the upper part of the inner Baha'i global field, with the entities "National Baha'i communities" and the "International Baha'i institutions" in its two corners. These two entities correspond to the two parts of the diagram in Figure 5.1, the one below and the one above the broken line dividing the national from the international Baha'i organisation. Thus, the institutions below the broken line are represented by the "National Baha'i communities" in the upper left corner of the dual global field model, while all the institutions above the broken line are represented by the entity "International Baha'i institutions" located in the upper right corner of the model.

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[184] Quoted from the colophon of *One Country*, the quarterly newsletter of the Baha'i International Community.

Figure 5.2. *The major Baha'i institutions in the dual global field model*
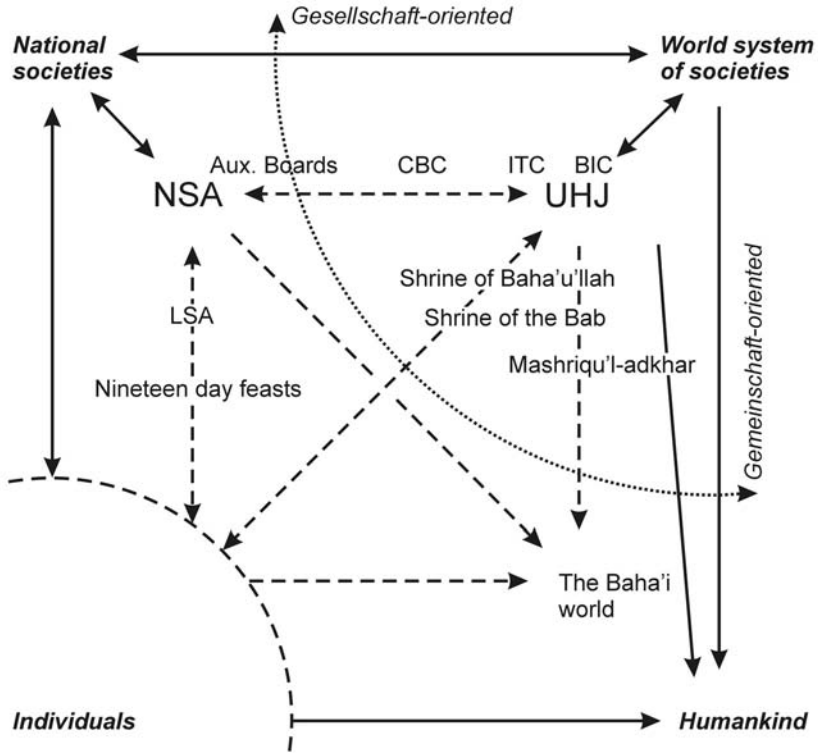
Abbreviations:
Aux. Boards = Auxilliary Boards for propagation and protection of the faith
BIC = Baha'i International Community
CBC = Continental Board of Counsellors
ITC = International Teaching Centre
LSA = Local spiritual assembly
NSA = National spiritual assembly
UHJ = Universal House of Justice

Along the upper horizontal axis of the inner Baha'i global field
are the "Institutions of the Rulers", with the national spiritual assem-
blies and the Universal House of Justice placed in each corner of
the Baha'i inner global field. This horizontal relation between the
national spiritual assembly and the Universal House of Justice is the
backbone of the Administrative Order and is *Gesellschaft*-oriented. The
"Institutions of the Learned" are placed above this axis. The two
shrines of the Haifa-Akko area and the Baha'i temple institution

(*mashriqu'l-adkhar*) are not administrative bodies, but are places vis-
ited by Baha'is. They are placed therefore around the arrows that
link the Universal House of Justice with the individuals and the
Baha'i world, respectively. The visits to the shrines and temples are
important for strengthening the global Baha'i *Gemeinschaft*. The
mashriqu'l-adkhar also reach over the arrow that links the Universal
House of Justice with Humankind, to indicate that the temples are
meant to serve all, Baha'is and non-Baha'is.

GLOBAL EXPANSION

The formation of many new national spiritual assemblies was a high
priority goal in the "Ten-Year International Baha'i Teaching and
Consolidation Plan 1953–1963", and with the decision to establish
the Universal House of Justice at the end of the period, this goal
became newly important.[185] The ambitious expansion of the organ-
isation succeeded. In 1953 there were 12 national spiritual assemblies,
but in 1963, when the first election for the Universal House of Justice
was held, there were 56, and all of them participated in the election.[186]

The process leading to the formation of many new national spir-
itual assemblies was an important organisational change towards
Baha'i becoming a global religion. Concomitant with this change,
Baha'i increasingly became a religion of the Third World, with par-
ticular appeal to ethnic minorities.[187]

To expand the religion further, the Universal House of Justice
launched four more plans following Shoghi Effendi's ten year plan
(1953–1963): a nine year plan (1964–1973), a five year plan (1974–1979),
a seven year plan (1979–1986) and a six year plan (1986–1992).[188]

The period from 1963 to 1986 was characterised by a consider-
able centralisation of power within the Baha'i organisation. For exam-
ple, during this period the various mission plans were exclusively
drafted at the Baha'i World Centre, and they contained detailed

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[185] "Ten-Year International Bahá'í Teaching and Consolidation Plan 1953–1963",
The Bahá'í World, vol. 12, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1956, pp. 256–257.
The achievements of the plan are documented in a printed, internal report, *The
Bahá'í Faith 1844–1963. Information Statistical & Comparative Including the Achievements of
the Ten Year International Bahá'í Teaching & Consolidation Plan 1953–1963*, [Haifa],
Hands of the Cause Residing in the Holy Land, [1963]. (BWC).
[186] *The Ministry of the Custodians*, pp. 429–430.
[187] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 191–192.
[188] The plans are published in the following places:

goals for the expansion of the religion. However, in 1986, the goals
of the six year plan from 1986 to 1992 for the first time largely
were formulated in dialogue with the national spiritual assemblies.[189]
This change in the policy of the Universal House of Justice was a
clear signal of an initial decentralisation, with more power being
given to the national spiritual assemblies.

The period of 1992–1993 (149 BE) marked the centenary of
Baha'u'llah's death and this year was declared the "Second Baha'i
Holy Year".[190] The biggest Baha'i event of that year was the Baha'i
World Congress held 23–26 November 1992 in New York City.
About 30,000 Baha'is from 180 countries were gathered in the Jacob
Javits Convention Center.[191] I participated in the congress and media
event, which showed a strength and internationalism that I had not
seen before among the Baha'is. It was, indeed, the largest and most
diverse gathering of Baha'is ever. The opening ceremony included:
an address by New York City Mayor David Dinkins, who declared
Monday, November 23, 1992 "Baha'i World Congress Day"; the
reading of a letter from President George Bush; a message from the
Universal House of Justice; a 400-voice choir assembled from 36
nations; and a procession of Baha'is from all parts of the world, in
their native dress. Two hours of taped highlights from the first three
days of the Congress plus a two-hour live transmission from the

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The nine year plan (1964–1973) in Universal House of Justice, *Wellspring of Guidance*, pp. 22–27.

The five year plan (1974–1979) in the internal booklet *Analysis of the Five Year International Teaching Plan 1974–1979*, n.p., Universal House of Justice, 1975. (BWC)

The seven year plan in Universal House of Justice, "The Seven Year International Teaching Plan 1979–1986. 1. The Launching of the Seven Year Plan", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 18, pp. 81–85. The internal report, *The Seven Year Plan 1979–1986. Statistical Report*, Haifa, The Universal House of Justice, 1986, gives a detailed and professionally presented statistical survey of the accomplishments of the Seven Year Plan. (BWC)

The six year plan (1986–1992) in (among other places) the booklet *The Six Year Plan. Selected Messages from the Universal House of Justice*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991. The achievements of the plan are documented in a printed, internal report, *The Six Year Plan 1986–1992. Summary of Achievements*, [Haifa], Baha'i World Centre, 1993. (BWC).

[189] *The Six Year Plan*, pp. 11–12; *The Six Year Plan for Denmark 143–149 1986–1992*, n.p., National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Denmark, November 1986. NSA-DK.

[190] *The Bahá'í World 1992–93*, pp. 95–102. The first Baha'i holy year was in 1952–53 in commemoration of Baha'u'llah's first vision.

[191] *Bahá'í World Congress News*, Monday, November 23, 1992; *The Bahá'í World 1992–93*, pp. 98–102.

Javits Center were featured by satellite connection to ten countries on five continents. Numerous ancillary events were held throughout Manhattan. From among these, I went to a special museum pavilion with five large rooms at the New York Hilton. These settings recreated the sights and sounds of 1912 New York, when Abdu'l-Baha visited the city. I also enjoyed a concert at Carnegie Hall saluting jazz musician Dizzy Gillespie, a Baha'i for over twenty years. See Photo VII—*Baha'i World Congress in New York, November 1992*.

After the holy year, a three year plan (1993–1996) and a four year plan (1996–2000) were launched.[192] At the completion of the four year plan, there was a brief twelve month plan, which prepared for a new series of plans, starting with a five year plan (2001–2006) on April 2001.[193]

Growth in Numbers

Since the establishment of the Universal House of Justice in 1963, the number of Baha'is grew from less than half a million world-wide in 1963 to a reported more than five million in 1992–93, whereupon the growth apparently levelled off.[194] In particular during the first half of the 1970s, a very rapid growth was seen in many Western countries. For example, during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, the American Baha'i community grew slowly from a few thousand after World War II to about 10,000 in the beginning of the 1960s.[195] Then, in the wake of the youth rebellion, membership soared—partially through mass conversion—from 18,000 in 1968 to 63,500 in 1975.[196] Since then, the relative growth in number of registered members has been more moderate.

The same pattern, although to a lesser degree, was seen in many European countries. In 1952, the number of European Baha'is was still only about 1,400, and in the West altogether there were not

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[192] The achievements of the three year plan are documented in a printed, internal report, *The Three Year Plan 1993–1996. Summary of Achievements*, [Haifa], Baha'i World Centre, 1997. (BWC). The achievements of the four year plan are briefly summarised in *The Bahá'í World 2000–2001*, pp. 31–35.
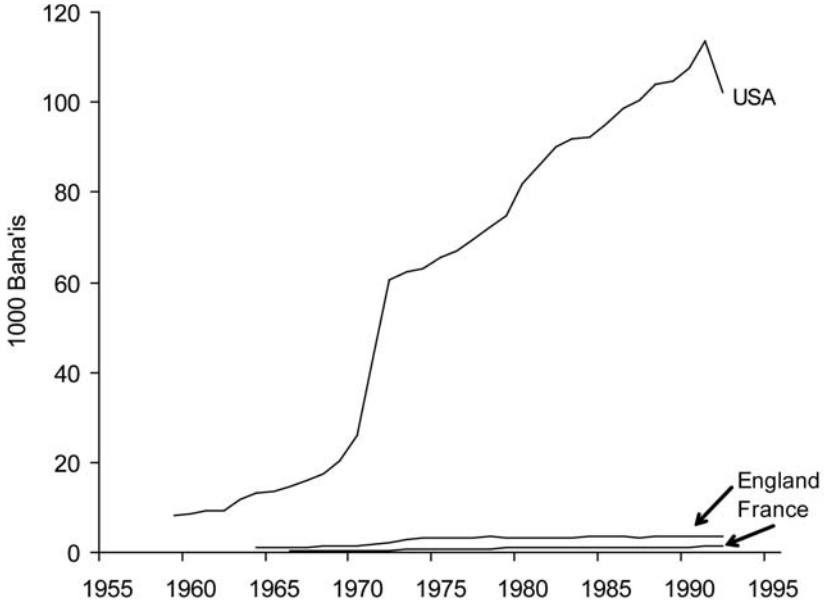
[193] *The Bahá'í World 2000–2001*, p. 34; *The Bahá'í World 2001–2002*, pp. 29–31.

[194] In the yearbook series, *The Bahá'í World*, it is stated every year since 1992–1993 that the number of Baha'is in the world is "more than five million".

[195] Stockmann, "Re: Baha'i Growth".

[196] Stockmann, "Re: Baha'i Growth".

Figure 5.3. *Growth of the Baha'i religion in the USA, England and France,*
1959–1992

more than 10,000 Baha'is.[197] By 1963, the number of European
Baha'is had doubled to 2,800.[198] Then, the growth accelerated, and
by 1986 there were 21,900 registered Baha'is in Europe.

Figure 5.3 illustrates these differences in demographic development.
By 1990, the number of Baha'is in the USA had grown to 108,000,
which corresponds to 434 Baha'is per million inhabitants. This figure
is put into perspective by comparison with the data for two big
European countries, England and France, where membership by 1990
had grown to only 3,500 and 1,250, respectively.[199] These figures cor-
respond to only 69 and 22 Baha'is per million inhabitants.

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[197] Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 142, p. 148.
[198] The membership data are from the internal reports of membership data sub-
mitted each year from the national spiritual assemblies to the Baha'i World Centre.
The data were generously provided by the Baha'i World Centre. (Baha'i World
Centre, Department of Statistics).
[199] Membership data from Baha'i World Centre. (Baha'i World Centre, Department
of Statistics).

Figure 5.4. *Growth of the Baha'i religion, 1963–1986*
("Western": Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand)
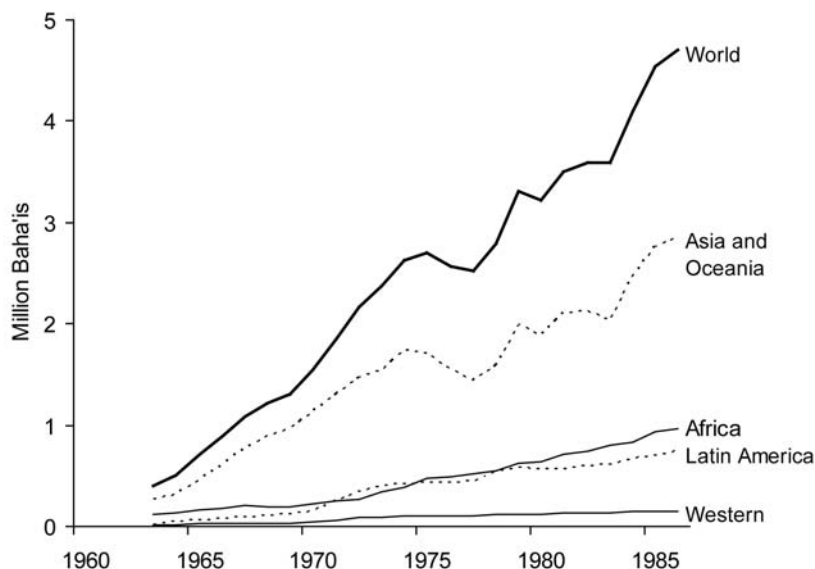
A closer study of the membership data for a number of other
West European countries shows that England and France represent
the upper and lower end with respect to the number of Baha'is per
million inhabitants in 1990 (data not shown). It therefore can be
concluded that on the average, the Baha'i mission has been roughly
ten times more successful in the USA (434 Baha'is per million inhabi-
tants) than in Western Europe (typically about 40 Baha'is per mil-
lion inhabitants). The only exception to this is the small island state
of Iceland, where the number of Baha'is in 1992 corresponded to
about 800 Baha'is per million inhabitants.[200]

In quantitative terms, the American Baha'i community dwarfs any
of the European Baha'i communities. On a world basis, however,
even the American Baha'i community constitutes a minor fraction
(about 2%) of all Baha'is, and Western Baha'is as a whole make up
only 3% of the Baha'is world-wide. Figure 5.4 shows the massive

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[200] Margit Warburg, "Growth Patterns of New Religions: The Case of Baha'i",
in Robert Towler (ed.), *New Religions and the New Europe*, Aarhus, Aarhus University
Press, 1995, pp. 177–193.

growth in the number of registered Baha'is in the period 1963–1986, in particular in Asia and Africa. For the period after 1986, no data on membership have been released by the Baha'i World Centre (the data I received personally from the Baha'i World Centre covering the period up to 1993 were for selected countries only).

During my fieldwork at the Baha'i World Centre, I studied the administrative handling of the statistical report forms (which are the same for all the countries), and I have discussed the various sources of error involved in the statistics with the responsible statistician. I also compared the Baha'i World Centre data on Denmark with my own data procured from sources in Denmark, and I found no systematic deviations. Since I have an independent source of the data from Denmark, and since there is no reason to assume that the Danish forms have been treated differently from all the other forms, I must conclude that the data from the different countries are reliable to the extent that the original sources are reliable. Thus, the Universal House of Justice could easily publish overview statistics of membership data if they wanted.

However, the Universal House of Justice does not report the number of Baha'is for different countries or regions. This is unfortunate, since no reliable independent sources about the number of Baha'is seem to exist. For example, the *World Christian Encyclopedia* edited by David Barrett and co-workers has become established as a kind of authority on membership data on different religious organisations around the world, and this source quotes a world Baha'i population of about 6.3 million in 1995, which is more than the five million officially claimed by the Baha'is.[201] A closer scrutiny of the encyclopaedia shows that the figures reported for some Western countries are grossly exaggerated. For example, the encyclopaedia reports an estimated 1,600 Baha'is in Denmark in 1995 and 682,000 Baha'is in the USA in 1995.[202] The Baha'is themselves do not acknowledge such numbers; the number of registered Baha'is in Denmark in 1995 was about 240 and in the USA about 130,000.[203] The *World Christian*

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[201] David. B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson (eds.), *World Christian Encyclopedia. A comparative survey of churches and religions in the modern world*, vol. 1, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 4.

[202] Barrett *et al.*, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, p. 236, p. 772.

[203] The data for Denmark are taken from Table 6.1. The data for the USA are from Stockmann, "Re: Baha'i Growth".

Figure 5.5. *Number of Baha'i localities worldwide, 1956–2001*
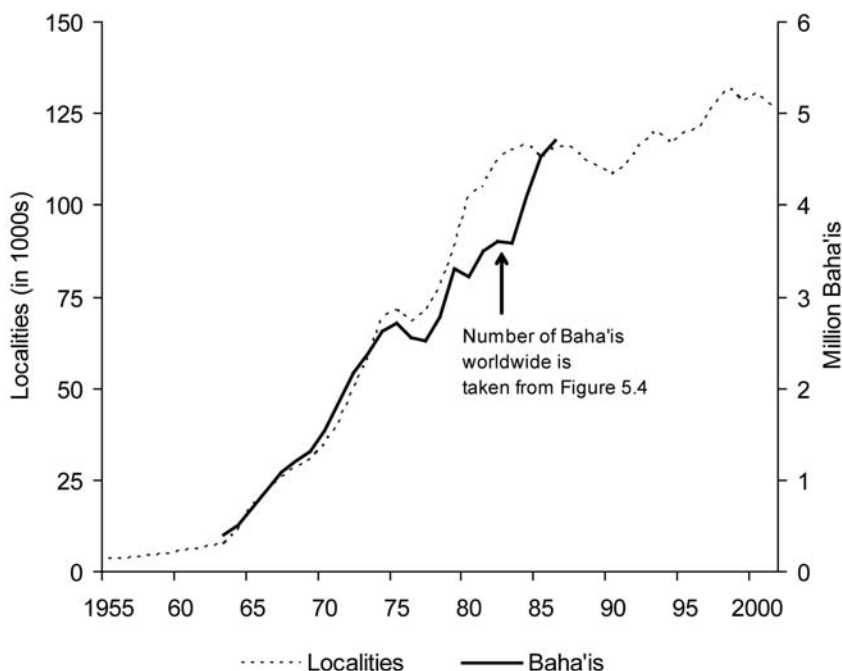
Encyclopedia therefore clearly is not a reliable source of Baha'i mem-
bership data, as has also been noted by MacEoin.[204]

The only publicly available documentation that the Baha'is pro-
vide on the growth of their religion is yearly, brief statistics on the
number of localities and local spiritual assemblies published in *The
Bahá'í World.* I have estimated the growth after 1986 from such data
as follows: Figure 5.5 (the broken curve) shows the growth in total
number of localities in the period 1956–2001.[205] For comparison, the
solid thick curve represents the growth in membership up to 1986,
taken from Figure 5.4. The almost parallel course of the two curves
(except for some deviations in the early 1980s) suggests that the two
variables, number of localities and number of Baha'is, are linearly

[204] Denis MacEoin, "Baha'ism", in John R. Hinnels (ed.), *A Handbook of Living
Religions*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985, pp. 475–498.
    [205] The internal statistical reports sent from each national Baha'i community to
the Baha'i World Centre define localities as municipalities where at least one Baha'i
lives.

correlated. In fact, the correlation is remarkably strong (r = 0.97), which means that it makes sense to project the growth by assuming a constant proportionality between the number of localities and the number of Baha'is. In 1986, the number of Baha'is was reported to be 4.74 million and the number of localities to be 116,700. Since that time, the growth in localities has slowed down considerably, and by 2001, the number of localities had only increased to 127,400.[206] Using these figures, the estimated number of Baha'is in 2001 is 5.17 million. This fits with the general statement, "more than five million", so a conservative estimate would be that in 2001 there were about 5.1 million registered Baha'is in the world.

Are Membership Data Inflated?

Researchers occasionally question the official Baha'i data on membership, suggesting that they are exaggerated.[207] In particular, criticism has been aired with respect to the unpublished, internal data for the American Baha'i community, where a staggering 30–50% of the members do not seem to have confirmed addresses.[208] Extrapolating from the American data, the number of Baha'is in the world has been suggested to be no more than three million.[209]

The issue of inflated membership data may be even more pertinent in many non-Western countries. For example, India is claimed by the Baha'is to be the home country of close to two million Baha'is, most of them living in rural areas.[210] In an Internet discussion of the

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[206] The sources to this are: *The Seven Year Plan 1979–1986. Statistical Report*, pp. 43–45. (BWC); *The Bahá'í World 2000–2001*, p. 278.

[207] MacEoin, "Baha'ism", pp. 475–498; Juan R. I. Cole, "The Baha'i Faith in America as Panopticon, 1963–1997", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 37, 1998, pp. 234–248.

[208] In the USA, 77,396 Baha'is were registered in 1978, but only 62% of them had confirmed addresses, see Cole, "The Baha'i Faith in America as Panopticon". Newer data confirm this situation; for example, Robert Stockman reports that in 1998 there were around 138,000 registered Baha'is in the USA (not counting Alaska and Hawaii), and about half of them had confirmed addresses. Stockmann, "Re: Baha'i Growth".

[209] "The Bahai Faith & Religious Freedom of Conscience", http://www.fglaysher. com/bahaicensorship/FalseStats.htm. Accessed 6 February 2003.

[210] "expansion", in Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 137–154; Susan Maneck, "Conversion Movements within Hindu Village Culture", http://bahai-library.org./unpubl.articles/hindu.conversion.html; M. Vijayanunni, "Census of India 1991, Series-1, India, Paper 1 of 1995. Religion", New Delhi, Census Commission, 1995, Appendix A, *Documents of the Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Movements*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1999, http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/docs/vol3/incens/incens.htm.

Baha'i membership data, the statistics for India (and other countries of the developing world) were strongly disputed.[211] One of the reasons for claiming that the official figures are inflated is that the Baha'i communities of India have not been consolidated after initial mass enrolments. Many of the Baha'i converts seem to be only loosely attached to the new religion and traditional Hindu beliefs and practices are upheld side by side with Baha'i principles.[212] In addition, the villagers enrolled were often illiterate and lacked the necessary resources to build up a local Baha'i community.[213] In fact, the Indian Baha'i community seems to have seriously overextended its resources just by the work involved in maintaining a minimum of Baha'i principles and practices among the many village Baha'i communities.[214] Reports are conflicting, though, and one observer found that the activity level among the Baha'is in a large rural district of India was much higher than he had anticipated.[215]

Do such observations warrant the criticism of the membership data? The number of adherents who are active participants in their local Baha'i communities, of course, will always be smaller than the number of registered Baha'is. As with other voluntary organisations, some members become more active than others, but the fact that there is no fixed membership subscription means that there is no economic motive for inactive Baha'is to take the initiative to resign membership. Inactive Baha'is, however, are not expelled just because they are inactive in community life, since in principle they could still be believing Baha'is. Some of the Danish Baha'is I have interviewed do fit that description. Since these Baha'is have had no contact with the Baha'i organisation for years, it is pertinent to ask if they still can be considered members of the Baha'i *community*, particularly if their addresses are no longer valid. Conversely, however, it could be argued on the basis of the Baha'i declaration of faith that to be a

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[211] "The Bahai Faith & Religious Freedom of Conscience", http://www.fglaysher.com/bahaicensorship/FalseStats.htm. Accessed 6 February 2003.

[212] William N. Garlington, "Bahá'í Bhajans", *World Order*, vol. 16, 1982, pp. 43–49; Margit Warburg, "Conversion: Considerations before a field-work in a Bahá'í village in Kerala", in Asko Parpola and Bent Smidt Hansen (eds.), *South Asian Religion and Society*, London, Curzon Press, 1986, pp. 223–235; Maneck, "Conversion Movements within Hindu Village Culture".

[213] Maneck, "Conversion Movements within Hindu Village Culture".

[214] Maneck, "Conversion Movements within Hindu Village Culture".

[215] Charles Nolley and William Garlington, "Notes on Baha'i population in India", http://bahai-library.org/essays/india.html.

Table 5.1. *Regional indicators of growth and activity level among the Baha'is worldwide*

Region	Number of localities[a]			LSA activity level, 1986[b]			
	1986	1992	Growth	All	Feast	Fund	Active
Europe	2,848	4,093	44%	715	627	547	82%
USA and Canada	8,273	8,529	3%	1,918	1,401	1,306	71%
Australia and New Zealand	625	501	−20%	211	188	195	91%
Western World	11,746	13,123	12%	2,844	2,216	2,048	75%
India	34,070	29,443	ᶜ0%	15,448	1,089	362	5%
Other Asia, including:	14,660	21,676	48%	2,076	597	487	26%
Bangladesh	*1,977*	*4,973*	*152%*	*200*	*27*	*19*	*12%*
Philippines	*5,496*	*7,300*	*33%*	*671*	*83*	*102*	*14%*
Japan	*341*	*392*	*15%*	*55*	*22*	*16*	*35%*
Africa	35,657	33,270	−7%	7,258	2,175	1,044	22%
Latin America	18,297	18,941	4%	4,582	760	455	13%
Oceania	2,277	3,593	58%	646	359	200	43%
Non-Western World	104,961	106,923	2%	30,010	4,980	2,548	13%
World	116,707	120,046	3%	32,854	7,196	4,596	18%

[a] The sources to the data are *The Seven Year Plan 1979–1986. Statistical Report*, pp. 139–159 (BWC) and *Statistical Tables*, revised version, January 1994 (BWC-SD).
[b] The first column gives the total number of local spiritual assemblies, the second and third columns give the number of assemblies which observe feasts and contribute with money to the national fund, respectively. The activity level is calculated as the average of these two numbers relative to the total number of local spiritual assemblies. The source to the data is *The Seven Year Plan 1979–1986. Statistical Report*, pp. 139–159.
[c] The number of localities in India dropped with more than 4,500 in the period 1986–1992 due to revised civil areas of jurisdiction (which meant that localities counted separately in 1986 now counted as the same locality). Taking this into account, the real growth in number of localities was about 0%. The source to the data is *Statistical Tables*.

Baha'i is a matter between you and God, not between you and the Post Office!

A Suggestion for a Reassessment of Baha'i Membership Data

The discussion above indicates a need for estimating the number of active Baha'is in different regions of the world. In Table 5.1, I have compiled some key figures from internal Baha'i reports that allow such an estimate to be made.

The three columns to the left in the table show the number of localities in 1986 and 1992 for different regions of the world. Additional data from 1996, which are not shown in Table 5.1, confirm the relatively high growth in Europe and the decrease in Africa: in 1996 there were 5,915 localities in Europe and 32,074 localities in Africa.[216]

The columns to the right in Table 5.1 are the total number of local spiritual assemblies, the number of assemblies that were active with respect to observing the Baha'i feasts and the number of assemblies that contributed money to the national Baha'i fund. An average activity level in percent is calculated from the average of the two last figures, divided by the total number of local spiritual assemblies. This definition of activity level is based on the reasonable conclusion that a local spiritual assembly that does not observe the feasts nor donate any money should be considered defunct. The members of such a community may still believe in Baha'u'llah, but they are inactive with respect to the consolidation and growth of the Baha'i religion.

It is striking how different the activity levels are in the different regions of the world. The majority of the Baha'is of the "Western World" (Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) are counted as active (75%), while only a minority of the "Non-Western World" are counted as active (13%). India represents the absolute low point with only 5% active, which in fact fits with an unofficial estimate of only 100,000 active Indian Baha'is out of nearly two million.[217] The table also contains data from two other Asian countries with large Baha'i populations, Bangladesh and the Philippines. Bangladesh experienced a very high growth, while the growth in the Philippines was below average in the period 1986–1992. Both countries showed the same low activity level (12% and 14%), so neither

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[216] [Universal House of Justice], *The Three Year Plan 1993–1996. Summary of Achievements*, p. 165. (BWC). For the regions other than Europe and Africa, it is not possible to separate the data.

[217] Searches on the Internet using the browser Google and the key words "statistics" and "bahai" have retrieved several discussion threads dealing with claims that the official Baha'i statistics are inflated. On 31 October 2002, I retrieved a thread containing a message from nima_hazini@my-deja.com, stating: "2 million are claimed in India but insiders say the true number of real Baha'is there is closer to 100,000. Indians like to 'join' things, but go on being Hindus." The thread does not appear to be retrievable anymore, so the address does not appear in the bibliography.

rapid nor slow growth seems to be an explanation for a low activity level. The figures for Japan are also interesting: the country is rich, the population is well educated and the Baha'i community of Japan is quantitatively comparable with European Baha'i communities.[218] Yet, the activity level is modest, 35% compared with 82% in Europe.

Iran would probably have shown a completely different pattern from the other Asian countries, but the persecutions following the Iranian revolution have meant the dissolution of the Iranian Baha'i community as an organised entity.[219]

There is no simple explanation for what seems to be a solid fact, namely that the majority of Baha'i communities of Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are active. In the rest of the world, the far majority of the Baha'i communities are in reality not very active.[220]

Table 5.2. *Regional changes in the number of local spiritual assemblies worldwide*

| Region | Number of local spiritual assemblies[a] | | | | |
	1979	1986	1993	1997	2001
Africa	4,535	7,258	5,904	4,309	3,808
North and South America	[b]5,424	6,500	5,931	4,050	3,152
Asia	12,473	17,524	7,419	5,489	2,948
Australia and Oceania	[c]578	857	876	952	856
Europe	614	715	845	998	976
World	23,624	32,854	20,975	15,798	11,740

[a] The sources to the data are *The Seven Year Plan 1979–1986. Statistical Report*, p. 45 (BWC); *The Bahá'í World 1992–93*, p. 311; *The Bahá'í World 1996–97*, p. 314; *The Bahá'í World 2000–01*, p. 278.
[b] The data do not allow a separation of USA and Canada from the rest of the countries of that region.
[c] The data do not allow a separation of Australia and New Zealand from the rest of the countries of that region.

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[218] In 1986, the number of local spiritual assemblies in Japan was 55 (Table 5.1). For comparison, the figures for a number of European countries were: Denmark (11), France (38), West Germany (103), Italy (54), the Netherlands (29), Norway (17), Spain (48), Sweden (25), Switzerland (32) and England (and Wales) (170). *The Seven Year Plan 1979–1986. Statistical Report*, pp. 139–159. (BWC).
[219] Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 208.
[220] There are a few exceptions to this, of course, and the general pattern is that the small Baha'i communities are more active than the large ones. *The Seven Year Plan 1979–1986. Statistical Report*, pp. 139–159. (BWC).

This conclusion is further corroborated by the data in Table 5.2, which shows the regional changes in the number of local spiritual assemblies for the years 1979, 1986, 1993, 1997 and 2001. Europe is the only region in which the number of local spiritual assemblies was larger in 2001 than in 1986 (separate data for the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are not available, unfortunately). It is remarkable that those regions of the world with the lowest activity level in 1986 have also experienced the largest relative drop in number of local spiritual assemblies since then. This probably reflects the negative consequences of a mission strategy of mass conversions without subsequent consolidation in many Third World countries during the 1970s and the 1980s.

An obvious explanation of the trends shown in Table 5.2 is that when a Baha'i community becomes inactive, it probably no longer elects a local spiritual assembly. The community therefore no longer is counted in the statistics of local spiritual assemblies—yet, it is still counted as a *locality* in the statistics. This resolves the apparent contradiction between the reported slight increase in number of localities world-wide and the dramatic drop in number of local spiritual assemblies, from a total of nearly 33,000 in 1986 to less than 12,000 in 2001.

Considering together the data reported above in the figures and tables, I can propose an estimate of both the total and the active Baha'i population as of 2001.[221] The estimates in Figure 5.6 of total numbers of Baha'is are based on projections from the trends in numbers of localities (Table 5.1), and the number of Baha'is considered active are then estimated according to the percentages calculated in Table 5.1.

The percentage of active Baha'is in the world is only about 18%, corresponding to less than one million of the more than five million Baha'is. The number of Western Baha'is is estimated to be 175,000, a mere 3.4% of the total Baha'i population of 5.1 million. However, 75% of the Western Baha'is are considered active, and these approximately 130,000 active Baha'is constitute 15% of the approximately 900,000 active Baha'is of the world.

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[221] Figure 5.6 differs slightly from the corresponding figure in Margit Warburg, *I baha'i* [The Baha'is], Turin, Elledici, 2001, p. 71, due to a more detailed estimate of the Baha'i population.

Figure 5.6. *Estimated world Baha'i population in 2001.*
Total about 5.1 million; active Baha'is about 0.9 million (18%)
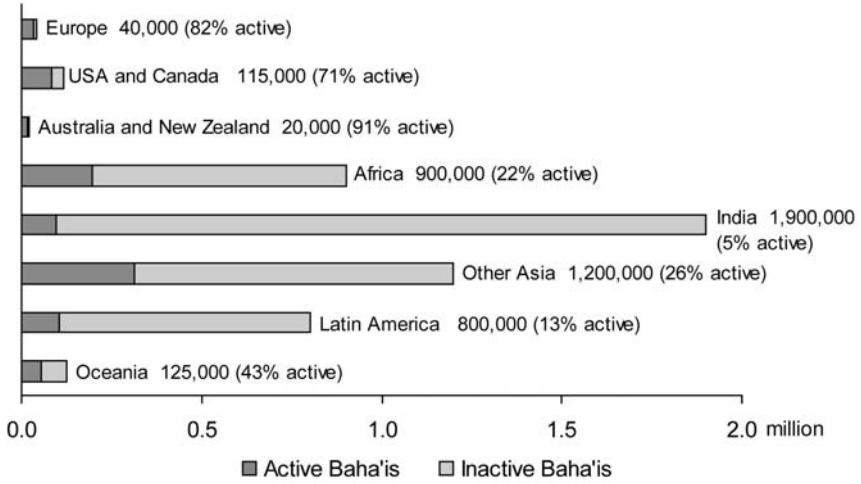
The figures for Europe warrant commentary. I have estimated the number of European Baha'is to be 40,000; this may appear high, but it is actually a conservative estimate based on a projection of the considerable growth in localities, from 2,848 in 1986 to 5,915 in 1996. On a strictly proportional basis, the number of Baha'is should have been about 45,000 in 1996 (there were 21,900 in 1986). On the other hand, the number of local spiritual assemblies (Table 5.2) has not kept pace with the development in number of localities, so 40,000 seems realistic.

A further bias in these figures may arise from the fact that the Baha'is world-wide have begun to follow a long-standing Iranian practice of counting *children* born of Baha'i parents as Baha'is.[222] In Western Baha'i communities, the practice has been that believers cannot formally declare themselves as Baha'is before the Baha'i age of maturity, which is 15 years of age.[223] The format of the report forms to the Baha'i World Centre was changed in 1980 to provide more complete statistical information, and all children born of Baha'i

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[222] Pamela Carr, Baha'i World Centre, Department of Statistics, personal communication; Denis MacEoin, "Emerging from Obscurity? Recent developments in Bahaism", *Religion Today*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1986, unpag.

[223] Wendi Momen (ed.), *A Basic Bahá'í Dictionary*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1991, p. 152.

parents since then have been reported separately. The Baha'i World Centre seems to have included children in the reported total number of believers from at least around 1986; in many cases, the number of children was computed from official population statistics because of lack of reported data.[224]

It is obvious that membership data are affected by such a redefinition of who is a Baha'i. However, I have come to the conclusion that any possible purging of the figures by *excluding* children (to the extent that they are included in the above figures) would be fairly arbitrary, and I have therefore abstained from that. The data for the Danish Baha'i community (see Table 6.1 in Chapter 6) indicate that registered Baha'i children make up 15–18% of the population of Baha'is above 15 years of age. In many non-Western countries, this proportion would be higher, of course. The only safe conclusion that can be drawn is that if it was possible to exclude children in a reliable way, so as to get the numbers of Baha'is above 15 years of age, the proportion of Western to non-Western Baha'is would increase.

In conclusion, does Figure 5.6 mean that the official Baha'i numbers are inflated? It all depends on the definition of Baha'i membership. In the West, the prevailing norm is that if you are member of a minority religious group you are expected to be active in that group. In the eyes of many Western Baha'is, most of the Baha'is of non-Western countries are therefore not "real" Baha'is living up to Western standards of activity and willingness to donate to the cause.

Of course, the Universal House of Justice must have realised that the percentage of apparently inactive Baha'is in India, Africa and Latin America is very high. Inactive Baha'is constitute a burden rather than a resource for the Baha'i administration. As discussed above, Baha'is do not lose membership status, just by being inactive. Since these inactive Baha'is have not formally resigned, the Universal House of Justice would have to adopt the radical policy of instructing the national spiritual assemblies to remove inactive Baha'is from the membership lists (this is done unofficially in some Baha'i communities), if the goal was to count only active Baha'is. I therefore conclude that the issue of inflated official membership data stems from the present practice of not expelling inactive Baha'is; the numbers are not rooted in any sinister manipulation of data. Figure

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[224] *The Seven Year Plan 1979–1986. Statistical Report*, p. 48. (BWC).

5.6, rather, indicates that the Baha'i resource base is not very strong, and this is obviously of paramount importance for a religion with the ambition of becoming the world religion of the future.

FROM THE GLOBAL STUDY TO THE CASE STUDY OF THE BAHA'IS

In Chapters 4 and 5, the historical development of the Babi and Baha'i religions is presented and analysed. In the terms of the dual global field model, the chapters deal primarily with the formation of the inner Baha'i global field, and its expansion globally, qualitatively and quantitatively. In Chapter 6, the expansion in Europe is treated through the history of the Danish Baha'i community and its demographic development. The Danish Baha'i community also serves as a representative case in the subsequent synchronic analyses in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, which all are primarily concerned with the left side of the dual global field model.

THE MAKING OF A BAHA'I COMMUNITY

Community life is invariably local. In the chapters that follow, I analyse some of the global Baha'i traditions and community characteristics, as they are manifested on the local level. As mentioned before (Chapter 1 and Chapter 5), the Danish Baha'i community is taken as a representative case of a Western Baha'i community, and later in this chapter, this proposition is argued further.

The present chapter begins with a historical-sociological description and analysis of how the Danish Baha'i community came into being and its sociological characteristics.[1] The chapter concludes with a quantitative analysis of the demographic development of the Danish Baha'i community. This type of analysis is rare because of the quality of the data, and the results illustrate some general demographic constraints that govern the future development of any mature, proselytising religious group. The conclusions from the demographic analysis are discussed again in the conclusion to Chapter 9 in regards to resources and the prospects of growth, both among the Baha'is in Europe and globally.

The First Danish Baha'i

The first twenty-two years of Baha'i in Denmark is the story of one dedicated and stubborn woman, Johanne Sørensen (1891–1988). She was a hospital nurse who had become a Baha'i in 1925 during a stay in Honolulu.[2] She returned to Denmark the same year, and

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[1] Much of this material is also published in Margit Warburg, "From Circle to Community: The Bahá'í Religion in Denmark, 1925–2002", in Peter Smith (ed.), *Bahá'ís in the West. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 14, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2004, pp. 229–263. An earlier, shorter paper on the same topic is Margit Warburg, "The Circle, the Brotherhood, and the Ecclesiastical Body: Bahá'í in Denmark, 1925–1987", in Armin W. Geertz and Jeppe Sinding Jensen (eds.), *Religion Tradition and Renewal*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 1991, pp. 201–221.

[2] Interview with Johanne Høeg (born Sørensen), 11 March 1980. See also Agnes Baldwin Alexander, *Forty Years of the Baha'i Cause in Hawaii 1902–1942*, Honolulu, National Spiritual Assembly of the Hawaiian Islands, 1974, p. 29.

since she was the only Baha'i in the country, she started corre-
sponding with Shoghi Effendi, in order to seek advice and support.
Stimulated by Shoghi Effendi's emphasis on translating Baha'i litera-
ture, she spent much of her time, money and efforts on translating
and publishing Baha'i literature into Danish. However, her transla-
tions did not bring in any new converts, and it was only after World
War II, with the fresh arrival of American pioneers, that the num-
ber of Danish Baha'is was greater than one.[3]

   Johanne Sørensen's lack of success was not exceptional in Europe.
In Denmark, Norway and Iceland, the Baha'i religion was intro-
duced by single women, native to their countries, who all translated
selected Baha'i texts as part of their mission.[4] However, all three
women failed to attract any converts, and they remained the only
Baha'is in their home countries for many years. The obvious ques-
tion raised is whether these three parallel cases, in three closely
related countries, have some sociological features in common.

The Role of the Charismatic Missionary

In an earlier paper, I discuss whether it is sociologically meaningful
to draw a parallel between the foundation of a new religion by a
prophet and the spread of an existing religion into a new country
by the first missionary.[5] For the sake of good order, it should be
emphasised that to the adherents of the religion the two situations

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[3] I have found, however, a letter written 8 September 1939, which indicates that
there was another Baha'i living in Denmark before World War II. The letter is
from Mr. Stefano Barta, a Hungarian artist who lived in Denmark as early as 1937.
The letter is addressed to Shoghi Effendi and is in Esperanto. Mr. Barta wrote,
among other things (translation by BWC-RD): "According to my views, the gath-
ering together of humanity in one family was always the highest ideal; for that rea-
son I have been for a decade an ardent Esperantist. Now I find the same universal
love in the Baha'i Faith, that is why I will voluntarily join this beautiful, divine
religion" (BWC-RD GA001/096/320). Mr. Barta's presence in Denmark has not
been recorded by the Danish Baha'is, and it is not known what became of him.

[4] In Norway, the first Baha'i was a nurse, Johanna Schubarth, who became a
Baha'i in 1919 during a stay in the USA. "Johanna Schubarth", *The Bahá'í World*,
vol. 12, 1956, pp. 694–696. In Iceland, the first Baha'i was Hólmfrídur Arnadóttir,
a school teacher and Theosophist, who became a Baha'i in the 1930s. *Saga Bahá'í
trúarinnari í megindráttum. Stutt samantekt um uppruna, thróun og megininntak Bahá'í trúarin-
nar* [History of the Baha'i religion in outline. Short overview of the origin, devel-
opment and fundamentals of the Baha'i religion], Reykjavik, Andlegt thjódrád Baha'ia
á Íslandi, 1985, p. 11. (Unpublished).

[5] Warburg, "The Circle, the Brotherhood, and the Ecclesiastical Body".

are fundamentally different, which means that the proposed parallel is valid only from a sociological point of view. The sociological reason for drawing a parallel between the founding of a religion and the introduction of a religion into a new geographic area is that there are characteristics common to the two situations:

• The religion has been hitherto unknown to the public at large.
• Both the founder and the first missionary/missionaries have a monopoly on information about the new religion.
• Both the founder and the first missionary/missionaries communicate with each convert directly.
• For the new converts, the founder and the first missionary/missionaries are both sole mediators of religious knowledge, direct from superior authority.

The sociologist of religion Joachim Wach discusses the development of founded religions in his *Sociology of Religion*.[6] Wach proposes that founded religions pass through three developmental phases, which he denotes "the circle", the "brotherhood" and the "ecclesiastical body". He develops these terms by drawing on empirical rather than theoretical arguments, and he illustrates the three phases with numerous examples, including the Babi and Baha'i religions.[7] The circle is formed by the first believers surrounding a founding charismatic prophet. After the death of the prophet, the new religion undergoes a routinisation of charisma and passes gradually through the subsequent phases.

In his work, Wach implies that charisma is a causal personal quality. According to Peter Worsley, charisma should be interpreted as an interactional phenomenon between the leader and the followers.[8] The leader's personal qualities are not thereby disregarded, because the leader is ascribed charisma, but only if he or she is successful in striking an emotional chord in the audience members and providing proof of his or her ability to fulfil their aspirations. The

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[6] Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1971, pp. 130–145.

[7] Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, p. 132, p. 138.

[8] In two large sections of his book, Worsley gives a clear and thorough presentation and critique of the concept of charisma, from Weber to later, popular uses of the term as a synonym for a particularly attractive personal appeal. Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound. A Study of 'Cargo' Cults in Melanesia*, New York, Schocken Books, 1974, pp. 274–180, pp. 285–197.

sociologists of religion Roy Wallis and Eileen Barker both argue that charismatic legitimised leadership is not created instantaneously, but evolves through this interactive process between leader and adherents.[9] According to Barker, the adherents thus can be taught that the leader is charismatic.

The Solitary Danish Baha'i

In the case of Baha'i in Denmark, the general conditions facing Johanne Sørensen were comparable to that of a founder: the religion was unknown and only Johanne Sørensen had access to the supreme authority (Shoghi Effendi). Her direct access to Shoghi Effendi as the supreme authority is clearly reflected in the extensive correspondence between Johanne Sørensen and Shoghi Effendi through many years.[10] Hence, Johanne Sørensen undoubtedly embodied Baha'i doctrinal authority. As discussed below, she also translated Baha'i texts and other material that had been used with success elsewhere in the Baha'i mission.

One obvious drawback for Johanne Sørensen was that she had no training in proselytising. Moreover, it seems likely that she lacked the personal qualities generally associated with charisma. Other Danish Baha'is described her as a modest, shy person who detested publicity—a picture that also fits with her niece's characterisation of her as mild-mannered and a little too introverted.[11] It is telling that when she finally succeeded at recruiting a married couple in 1951–52, she was assisted by other members of the Danish Baha'i community.[12]

The scarce information that I have on the solitary Norwegian and Icelandic Baha'is indicates that they also likely did not possess the personal qualities associated with charisma.

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[9] Roy Wallis, "Charisma and Explanation", in Eileen Barker, James A. Beckford, and Karel Dobbelaere (eds.), *Secularization, Rationalism, and Sectarianism. Essays in Honour of Bryan R. Wilson*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993, pp. 167–179; Eileen Barker, "Charismatization: The Social Production of 'an Ethos Propitious to the Mobilisation of Sentiments'", in Eileen Barker, James A. Beckford, and Karel Dobbelaere (eds.), *Secularization, Rationalism, and Sectarianism. Essays in Honour of Bryan R. Wilson*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993, pp. 181–201.

[10] The correspondence consists of 54 letters from Johanne Høeg and 56 letters from Shoghi Effendi over the period 1925–1957, which are stored at the Baha'i World Centre, Research Department (BWC-RD), index GA001 and GC001, respectively.

[11] Interview with Anna Frandsen, a niece to Johanne Høeg, 16 August 1999.

[12] Johanne Høeg to Shoghi Effendi, 1 March 1952. (BWC-RD GA001/108/01045).

Thinking of Johanne Sørensen in relation to the dual global field model, she was an individual Baha'i member who had no national Baha'i community with which to interact, because she had not been able to create one. The upper left corner of the Baha'i field was simply missing, and her lifeline to Baha'i was the oblique arrow between the individual and the Baha'i international institutions in the form of her correspondence with Shoghi Effendi and her meetings with Baha'is from other countries.

This lifeline was not a fragile thread, however, as illustrated by the following few examples from Johanne Sørensen's correspondence. In 1927, she accompanied the prominent Baha'i missionary Martha Root during her visit to Denmark.[13] In 1929, Johanne Sørensen made a long trip to Haifa and Cairo.[14] In 1932 she received financial support for her translations from the USA.[15] In the period 1933–1935, she met on different occasions with other Baha'is from abroad, among them were Mr. and Mrs. Romer, Mr. and Mrs. French, Miss Irwin, Martha Root, Johanna Schubarth, Mrs. Goldmann, Mrs. Ericksen, Florence Norton, and Margrethe Walekær.[16] In fact, Johanne Sørensen was part of a global network, which mainly included women who were dedicated to the spread of the new global religion.

In 1945, Johanne Sørensen married a physician, Dr. Høeg, and moved from Copenhagen to the provinces.[17] Here, she lived rather isolated, with little personal contact with city life, and as discussed later, she played only a secondary role in the establishment of the Danish Baha'i community in Copenhagen after World War II. See Photo 6—*Johanne Høeg, born Sørensen (1891–1988). The first Danish Baha'i.*

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[13] Johanne Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 14 March 1927. (BWC-RD GA001/ 083/00621); "Miss Martha Root in Northern Europe", *Baha'i News Letter*, no. 19, 1927, pp. 6–8.

[14] Johanne Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 5 June 1929. (BWC-RD GA001/086/ 00110); Shoghi Effendi to Johanne Sørensen, 15 June 1929. (BWC-RD GC001/ 086/00041).

[15] Johanne Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 27 June 1932. (BWC-RD GA001/ 088/00568).

[16] Johanne Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 8 August 1934; Martha Root to Shoghi Effendi, 31 May 1935; Johanne Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 12 August 1935; Johanne Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 6 September 1935. (BWC-RD GA001/ 091/00299; 092/00110; 092/00190; 092/00246).

[17] The Høegs lived in several places in the provinces: Herning (Jutland), Jerslev (Jutland), Thurø (an island south of Funen).

Issues of Translation

Already in her first letter to Shoghi Effendi, Johanne Sørensen
expressed her deep desire to acquire more literature on Baha'i and
make it available in Danish, so that other Danes could become
acquainted with the religion.[18] Shoghi Effendi sent her some litera-
ture and encouraged her to make translations into Danish.[19] In 1926,
she translated and published two introductory pamphlets, and in
1932 she paid for the translation and publication of J. E. Esslemont's
book, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*.[20] Shoghi Effendi also brought her
into contact with a Danish-American Baha'i, Emily Olsen, who in
1903 had translated Baha'u'llah's *The Hidden Words* into Danish.[21]
However, Johanne Sørensen reluctantly declined using Emily Olsen's
translation, which she found unnatural and sometimes even incom-
prehensible.[22] She therefore decided to make fresh translations of
central Baha'i texts, and Shoghi Effendi supported her wish to have
Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i-Iqan* translated, provided she could find some-
one who could do it well.[23]

   The lengthy correspondence with Shoghi Effendi shows that Johanne
Sørensen was dedicated to her self-declared mission of translation,
and that she was aware of the problems of indirect translations, in
this case from Persian via English to Danish. Once, she asked Shoghi
Effendi if she should have someone check Esslemont's translations
from the Persian and the Arabic; Shoghi Effendi answered that since

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[18] June [Johanne] Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 7 December 1925. (BWC-RD
GA001/082/00365).

[19] Shoghi Effendi to June [Johanne] Sørensen, 18 December 1925. (BWC-RD
GC001/082/00151).

[20] [Baha'u'llah], *Bahá'u'lláh og hans Budskab* [Baha'u'llah and his message],
Copenhagen, Arnold Busck, 1926; *Hvad er Baha'i Bevægelsen?* [What is the Baha'i
movement?], Copenhagen, Arnold Busck, 1926; J. E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh og den
nye Tid* [Baha'u'llah and the new era], Copenhagen, Nyt Nordisk Forlag, Arnold
Busck, 1932.

[21] Mrs. Geo. Olsen (Emily Olsen), *De skjulte Ord. Aabenbarede af "Baha'-Allah"* [The
hidden words. Revealed by Baha'u'llah], Chicago, The Bahai Publishing Society,
1903. The book was translated into Danish from the English translation of the
Persian by Anton Haddad. It is in black-letter print, and it is probably the first
Baha'i text in Danish.

[22] June [Johanne] Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 13 February 1926. (BWC-RD
GA001/082/00542); June [Johanne] Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 16 February 1926.
(BWC-RD GA001/082/00543).

[23] Johanne Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 5 June 1929. (BWC-RD GA001/086/
00110); Shoghi Effendi to Johanne Sørensen, 15 June 1929. (BWC-RD GC001/
086/00041).

the sources might be very difficult to retrieve, a correct translation from the English would do.[24] In the same letter, he urged her to "use great care in cho[o]sing the translator for the 'Iqán, for a bad translation is very misleading and it is the very basis of the troubles we are having in the West."

In 1932, Johanne Sørensen established contact with the Danish professor in Iranian philology, Arthur Christensen (1875–1945), who was interested in the Baha'is of Iran and who had published a number of articles about them.[25] On her request, he reviewed her translation of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* in a leading Danish newspaper, and she therefore suggested to Shoghi Effendi that Arthur Christensen should translate Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i-Iqan* from Persian to Danish.[26] Shoghi Effendi supported this suggestion, despite the fact that he had just finished his own translation into English.[27] Arthur Christensen, however, politely declined doing the translation and referred Johanne Sørensen to his younger colleague Kaj Barr (1896–1970).[28] Kaj Barr agreed to translate the *Kitab-i-Iqan* from the Persian for a fee of DKK 600 (EUR 80), and he also agreed to translate two other Baha'u'llah texts.[29] However, it was not until 1949, when Barr succeeded Christensen, that he finished the *Kitab-i-Iqan*.[30]

This delay proved to be problematic, because by that time, Johanne Høeg was no longer in authority. She sent Barr's manuscript to the

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[24] Johanne Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 5 June 1929. (BWC-RD GA001/086/00110); Shoghi Effendi to Johanne Sørensen, 15 June 1929. (BWC-RD GC001/086/00041).

[25] Johanne Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 16 June 1932. (BWC-RD GA001/089/00803); Johanne Sørensen to Arthur Christensen, 26 June 1932. (Royal Library, Copenhagen, Utilg. 319).

[26] Johanne Sørensen to Arthur Christensen, 26 June 1932 and 10 November 1932. (Royal Library, Copenhagen, Utilg. 319); A. Christensen, "En moderne Verdensreligion" [A modern world religion], *Berlingske Tidende*, 7 November 1932, pp. 7–8; Johanne Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 20 December 1932. (BWC-RD GA001/089/00542).

[27] Shoghi Effendi to Johanne Sørensen, 5 January 1933. (BWC-RD GC001/089/00269). The *Kitab-i-Iqan* was first translated by Shoghi Effendi in 1931.

[28] Johanne Sørensen to Arthur Christensen, 23 January 1933; Arthur Christensen to Johanne Sørensen, 24 January 1933; Johanne Sørensen to Arthur Christensen, 26 January 1933. (Royal Library, Copenhagen, Utilg. 319).

[29] Johanne Sørensen to Shoghi Effendi, 6 April 1933. (BWC-RD GA001/089/00791); Baha'u'llah, *Tre daglige Pligtbønner* [Three daily mandatory prayers], Hjørring, Baha'i Bog-Fond, 1947; Baha'u'llah, *De skjulte Ord* [The hidden words], n.p. [Hjørring], Baha'i Bog-Fond, 1948.

[30] Johanne Høeg to Shoghi Effendi, 28 October 1949. (BWC-RD GA001/102/00302).

newly formed local spiritual assembly in Copenhagen for approval. Although at that time she was a member of the translation committee, the spiritual assembly overruled her and did not approve of Barr's translation. The leading American Baha'i missionary at that time, Dagmar Dole, reported the affair to the European Teaching Committee, criticising Barr's work, and the publication process was terminated.[31] Judging from the correspondence, it appears that Barr's academic, direct translation seemed wrong in comparison with Shoghi Effendi's "high Baha'i English"; the assembly members felt that the style of Shoghi Effendi's English translations should be considered the standard for the translation style of Baha'u'llah'a writings.

Johanne Høeg appealed to Shoghi Effendi, who had supported her choice of Barr, but it was in vain.[32] Through his secretary he advised her, with regard to Barr's translation, that she would have to accept the fact that the European Teaching Committee had made its decision based on the recommendation of the local spiritual assembly in Copenhagen. It was obvious, however, that the affair was embarrassing, because the letter ended with:

> All steps forward in life, and in the Faith too, involve "growing pains" and adjustments being made. The same is true of the development of the administration. It is a great step forward, but a hard one, for it involves mastering the Bahá'í way of doing things, and learning to put aside personalities and obey the majority. But the Danish friends will soon learn this and, he [Shoghi Effendi] believes, render great services.[33]

Shoghi Effendi's decision in all probability was motivated by the need to uphold the authority of the Baha'i administration. It is also likely that by that time he had realised the need for better control of translations, an issue that he had mentioned to Johanne Høeg already in 1929.[34] It would have been impossible, in practice, for him to control Barr's translation, and any amendments would also

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[31] Dagmar Dole to Edna True, 25 May 1949; Edna True to Dagmar Dole, 4 June 1949, National Baha'i Archives, Baha'i National Center, Wilmette, Illinois, USA. (NBA-US).

[32] Johanne Høeg to Shoghi Effendi, 28 October 1949. (BWC-RD GA001/102/00302).

[33] Shoghi Effendi through R. Rabbani to Johanne Høeg, 25 December 1949. (BWC-RD GC001/106/157).

[34] Shoghi Effendi to Johanne Sørensen, 15 June 1929. (BWC-RD GC001/086/00041).

have infringed on Barr's *droit moral*. The present Baha'i principle that authorised English translations of the sacred texts must be the basis for further translations into other languages can be seen as a logical solution to the dilemmas raised by involving a non-Baha'i expert like Professor Barr in the translation of core Baha'i texts.

The outcome of the matter was that none of the translations sponsored by Johanne Høeg have been accepted by the Danish Baha'is, and they are not in use. Fresh translations were made, and Professor Barr's contributions to the Danish Baha'i canon are now a part of history.

The Period of American Mission 1946–1949

As part of the second seven year plan, from 1946 to 1952, Shoghi Effendi gave the American Baha'i community the responsibility of working for the establishment of Baha'i communities in several European countries, including Denmark.[35] This task was co-ordinated by the European Teaching Committee, which was responsible to the national spiritual assembly of the USA.[36] Several American pioneers and "travelling teachers" were sent to Denmark and stayed there for varying lengths of time.[37] Amelia Bowman stayed for a short while in the autumn of 1947, and Alice Dudley for a few months in 1948.[38]

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[35] Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America. Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Bahá'ís of North America 1932–1946*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1947, pp. 87–89.

[36] *Annual Bahá'í Reports Presented to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada for the Year 1946–1947*, Wilmette, National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, [1947], pp. 21–23. (NBA-US).

[37] Anders and Helga Nielsen came as pioneers on 16 October 1946, but soon left again. Etty Graeffe and Marion Little visited Denmark as travelling teachers in October 1946 and early 1947, respectively. *Bahá'í News*, no. 194, April 1947, p. 7. (NBA-US); *Bahá'í News*, no. 199, September 1947, p. 7. (NBA-US). Another travelling teacher was the later Hand of the Cause Dorothy Baker, who spoke to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Copenhagen, January 1948. *Bahá'í News*, no. 194, April 1947 p. 7. (NBA-US); I. Hjelme, "Strejflys", *Bahá'í Nyhedsbrev*, no. 19, 2–20 March 1978, p. 8; and interview with Inger Hjelme, 10 April 1980. (NBA-DK). Dorothy Baker also gave a speech at the Danish Council for Peace, which was reported in a leading women's journal. "Set og sket" [Seen and passed], *Tidens Kvinder*, vol. 26, 24 February 1948. Note that information from the Danish Baha'is on historical events is reported using the full name of the informant, unlike the anonymous information stemming from the interview survey of the 120 Danish Baha'is.

[38] I. Hjelme, "Strejflys", *Bahá'í Nyhedsbrev*, no. 19, 2–20 March 1978, p. 7; Alice

Three missionaries stayed for longer periods: Dagmar Dole (1947–1951), Eleanor Hollibaugh (1947–1948), and Nancy Gates (1948–1950).[39]

The Charismatic Missionaries

Among the Baha'i missionaries, Dagmar Dole and Eleanor Hollibaugh had the greatest influence on the first Danish Baha'is. One of the early Baha'is wrote to the European Teaching Committee and told the chairperson, Edna M. True, that "Dagmar is wonderful to convince people that the Baha'i Faith and teachings are the only and right things to believe in and to live up to."[40] Eleanor Hollibaugh, however, suited the Danes just as well: "Eleanor is very greatly loved here, by all of the Baha'is and by a good many other people also. She has an unusual personality and approach to the Cause, that appealed greatly to the Danish people."[41] Furthermore, my interviews with those Danish Baha'is who knew Dagmar Dole and Eleanor Hollibaugh indicated that the two Americans indeed had highly extroverted personalities, which added to their success in gathering around them the group of newly converted Danish Baha'is.[42]

The two women also had quite different characteristics. Eleanor Hollibaugh has been described to me as "a stylish bird, red-haired, wearing nylons, and very enthusiastic".[43] She was an actress and had been married to an actor whom she had divorced. Although she was 58 years old, she dressed and used make-up exactly as Danes would have expected of a Hollywood actress. Dagmar Dole was quite different. She was an intellectual and is remembered as "a calm, steady lady wearing a dress and low-heeled shoes".[44] She meant so much to the Danish Baha'is that after her death in 1952, a foundation was established in her name by the Danish Baha'i

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Dudley, *Unfinished Journey*, n.p., n.d. [between 1974 and 1979], vol. 1, pp. 1–8. (BWC-L).

[39] Interview with Jean Deleuran, 13 March 1980; Dagmar Dole to Edna True, 22 October 1948. (NBA-US).

[40] Lilly Quistgaard to Edna True, 26 June 1949. (NBA-US).

[41] Dagmar Dole to Edna True, 22 October 1948. (NBA-US).

[42] Nine of my informants converted in the years 1947 to 1951. Six of them specifically mentioned Dagmar Dole as important concerning their conversions, and three of them also mentioned Ellinor Hollibough.

[43] Interview with Tove Deleuran, 11 March 1980.

[44] Interview with Tove Deleuran, 11 March 1980.

community.[45] In 1998, the Danish Baha'i community celebrated the fifty-year anniversary of her arrival in Denmark.[46]

The two Americans and their cause appealed to a group of people who were oriented towards humanistic rather than religious ideals.[47] They usually had an international outlook and they welcomed the many contacts with the American missionaries and the travelling teachers from different countries. For them, the Baha'i missionaries embodied a new world with new ideals for society. It was significant, for example, that both Dagmar Dole and Eleanor Hollibaugh were middle-aged, single women. In the late 1940s, it was unusual to see single women exhibit such a degree of independence as these two Baha'is. Those working for women's rights and equality were often members of idealistic organisations, such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, One World, or the Save the Children Fund. The American Baha'is gave talks at meetings of these organisations, where many future Baha'is heard about the religion for the first time.[48]

There are striking similarities between the way the first Danish Baha'is converted and a pattern of conversion to Christianity that has been seen in many African countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In general, it appears that the converts were attracted by the cultural style the missionaries represented.[49] The Danes were attracted to the style of the emancipated, independent and idealistic American Baha'is, in much the same way that many Africans were attracted to the power of the Europeans, their literacy and their culture of "modernity". It is also notable that the Americans, by making presentations to idealistic organisations, accommodated themselves to already existing cultural traditions in Denmark. Christian missionaries used a similar method in Africa and South

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[45] I. Hjelme, "Strejflys nr. 7", *Bahá'í Nyhedsbrev*, no. 9, 20 August–7 September 1978, pp. 15–16.

[46] Participatory observation, 11 January 1998.

[47] This description of the appeal of the American missionaries is based on my interviews with 8 early Baha'is, in particular the interviews with Tove Deleuran, 11 March 1980, and Jean Deleuran, 13 March 1980.

[48] Interview with Inger Hjelme, 10 April 1980.

[49] J. D. Y. Peel, "Conversion and Tradition in Two African Societies: Ijebu and Buganda", *Past and Present*, vol. 77, 1977, pp. 108–141; Robert W. Hefner (ed.), *Conversion to Christianity. Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993.

America when they adapted Christianity to local cultural traditions in the process of evangelisation.[50]

A parallel example can also be drawn from van den Hoonaard's study of the history of the Canadian Baha'i community. In 1919, all the Baha'is of Saint John, New Brunswick, were also participants in social reform movements, and the Baha'i principles had been promulgated in a cultural environment open to change. However, when these reform movements began to wane a few years later, the Baha'is had difficulty organising themselves without these networks, and the group virtually was non-existent after 1925.[51]

The extensive correspondence between the missionary in Denmark, Dagmar Dole, and the chairperson of the European Teaching Committee in the USA, Edna True, documents in great detail how Dagmar Dole was the ever-present centre and authority among the Danish Baha'is. She reported back in detail to Edna True and the European Teaching Committee about the mission work, about all organised activities in the group, about enrolment of new members, and about internal problems as well as positive experiences both among the Danish converts and among the pioneers.[52] She also asked Edna True for assistance, advice, literature and money when needed. Mingled with the business matters were personal remarks, such as inquiries about the well-being of Edna True's mother, or personal greetings to other Baha'is.

In one of her letters to Edna True, Dagmar Dole described a Baha'i gathering in the flat where she lived.[53] The Danish Baha'is arrived in the late afternoon, some for supper, some later, and the evening activities eventually included 17 Baha'i participants. It was an informal gathering, and Dagmar Dole was the happy centre of believers surrounding her that night. Her own account of the evening fits with many of the early Baha'is' descriptions of Dagmar Dole as

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[50] Some semantic aspects of this phenomenon are discussed in: Godfrey Lienhardt, "The Dinka and Catholicism", in J. Davis (ed.), *Religious Organization and Religious Experience*, London, Academic Press, 1982, pp. 81–95, pp. 81–95; Peter Rivière, "'The Wages of Sin is Death': Some Aspects of Evangelisation among the Trio Indians", *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, vol. 12, 1981, pp. 1–13.

[51] Will C. van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada, 1898–1948*, Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996, pp. 110–117.

[52] Dagmar Dole wrote about 40 letters and notes to Edna True in the period 1948–1949. The letters and Edna True's replies are all stored in European Teaching Committee Records. (NBA-US).

[53] Dagmar Dole to Edna True, 24 November 1948. (NBA-US).

the ever-inspiring centre of the Danish Baha'i community: "Everybody was attracted to her. You could always come to her at any time, and she always had the time."[54] In Wach's words, Dagmar Dole embodied "final spiritual and disciplinary authority", an authority she also extended towards Nancy Gates, a young Baha'i missionary who for some time shared Dagmar Dole's flat.[55]

When a new Baha'i converted, Dagmar Dole reported this to the European Teaching Committee by enclosing the declaration cards. Shortly after, the new Baha'i received a standard letter signed by the chairperson of the committee, Ms. Edna True (see below).[56] This procedure undoubtedly strengthened the awareness of belonging to a global community. It further illustrates that the Baha'i communities in the West were then also based on individual, recorded membership and that already at that time, the Baha'i religion was a thoroughly organised, transnational religion.

It is worth briefly focusing on this letter. The style of the first paragraph carefully follows Shoghi Effendi's slightly opulent literary tradition; typical idioms such as "our hearts are rejoiced", "greatest blessing" and "our beloved Faith", with a capital F, are included. The entire paragraph is focused on conveying warm feelings regarding the core message: "this wonderful new spiritual venture which you have entered upon". The this-worldly, collective side of the Baha'i religion—the new Baha'i world order—is not the focus here; it is the new convert's individual, spiritual engagement that is greeted with mild "love-bombing" in a foreign, but comprehensible language.

The second paragraph states that each new Baha'i receives a small book with Baha'i writings. The book was in English, not in Danish, despite Johanne Høeg's attempts to procure translations of central writings.[57] The reasons for this surprising neglect of Johanne Høeg's

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[54] Interview with Lisbeth Andersen, 15 April 1980.

[55] Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, p. 137. In the fall of 1949, Dagmar Dole criticised the appearance and behaviour of Nancy Gates, and Nancy Gates was then transferred to Greenland. Dagmar Dole to Edna True, 14 September 1949, 24 October 1949; Edna True to Nancy Gates, 6 November 1949. (NBA-US).

[56] The letter exists in at least seven identical versions addressed to different Danish Baha'is, dated 24 June 1948, 8 July 1948, 2 November 1948, 6 April 1949, 27 April 1949, 27 May 1949, and 13 April 1950. (NBA-US).

[57] The book is not specified in the letter, but according to a letter of thanks, it was a prayer book by Baha'u'llah. Else Fischer to European Teaching Committee, 20 February 1949. (NBA-US).

work remain obscure. The new Baha'is also received two photos, one of Abdu'l-Baha and the other of the Baha'i temple in Wilmette, near Chicago. All this symbolised that the new Baha'i was greeted as member of a *global* organisation, and any particular national connotations were absent.

Standard letter from Edna True to all new Danish Baha'is

[Date]

[Name and address]

Dear Bahá'í friend:

Our hearts are, indeed, rejoiced by the news of your acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith and we want to send you warm greetings and best wishes in this wonderful new spiritual venture which you have entered upon. This is the greatest blessing that can be vouchsafed to any of us in this day and we know that yours will be the bounty of rendering great and valuable service to our beloved Faith.

We are sending you, as a little token of our Bahá'í love and greetings, a small volume of Bahá'í Writings and special pictures which were brought out at the time of our Centenary in 1944, of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and of our House of Worship in Wilmette, the grounds of which He dedicated when He was here in 1912.

With warm Bahá'í love and best wishes,

Faithfully,

EUROPEAN TEACHING COMMITTEE

Chairman

CC: Miss Dagmar Dole, Correspondent
    Bahá'í Group of Copenhagen

Source: National Baha'i Archives, Baha'i National Center,
Wilmette, Illinois, USA.

THE DANISH BAHA'I COMMUNITY 1949–2001

The Baha'i missionaries' efforts during the years 1947–1950 resulted in an increase to 35 Danish Baha'is.[58] This was well above average compared to other European countries.[59] What was perhaps even more important for the vitality of the group was that no one resigned their membership in that period. However, several people, in particular foreign Baha'is, left the country, which was felt as a strain on the community.[60] When Eleanor Hollibaugh was transferred to the Netherlands in 1948, Dagmar Dole was the only experienced Baha'i missionary left in Denmark.[61]

On the 21st of April, 1949, the Danish Baha'is elected their first administrative body, the local spiritual assembly of Copenhagen. A Baha'i children's class was established, and optimism among the Danish Baha'is was further nourished by their holding of the Third European Baha'i Teaching Conference, 24–27 July 1950, and the First European Teaching Summer School, 28–30 July 1950. The conference and the summer school were held in Elsinore and were attended by 177 Baha'is from twenty-two different countries.[62]

All this took place in Copenhagen, far away from Johanne Høeg. She had little influence on the developments, and it was difficult for her to adapt to the new administration.[63] She formerly had been the

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[58] This and other figures on the growth and demographic composition of the Danish Baha'i community are taken from Table 6.1, which is presented and discussed later in this chapter.

[59] In Chapter 5, it is mentioned that in all ten "goal countries" together, the number of new Baha'i converts as of 1 March 1950 was 238; however, this figure should be seen from the perspective that the population of the goal countries together was about twenty-five times greater than was the Danish population alone. Had the Danish number of converts corresponded to the average in Europe, there would have been about ten Danish converts.

[60] Dagmar Dole to Edna True, 8 June 1949. (NBA-US).

[61] Jelle de Vries, *The Babi Question You Mentioned . . . The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of the Netherlands, 1844–1962*, Herent, Peeters, 2002, p. 207.

[62] European Teaching Committee, "First Baha'i Children's Class in Denmark", *Bahá'í News*, no. 228, February 1950, p. 9; Elsa Steinmetz, "The Third European Teaching Conference Copenhagen, Denmark July 24th through 27th, 1950", *Bahá'í News*, no. 236, October 1950, pp. 10–12; Charlotte Stirratt, "The First Baha'i European Summer School Copenhagen, Denmark July 28 through 30, 1950", *Bahá'í News*, no. 236, October 1950, pp. 12–13; I. Hjelme, "Strejflys nr. 3", *Bahá'í Nyhedsbrev*, nr. 2, 9–27 April 1978, p. 16; "Strejflys nr. 4", *Bahá'í Nyhedsbrev*, no. 3, 28 April-16 May 1978, pp. 15–16; "Strejflys nr. 5", *Bahá'í Nyhedsbrev*, no. 4, 17 May–4 June 1978, p. 11. (NBA-DK).

[63] This was confirmed by most of the early Danish Baha'is. Interviews with Inger

only Baha'i in Denmark and had enjoyed the privilege of corre-
sponding directly with Shoghi Effendi. Now it seemed to her as if
the young Baha'is did not care about the elderly woman living in
the provinces: "The other Baha'is believe that it all began with them,
but it is not so. I was the first."[64] To her disappointment, she could
not become a member of the local spiritual assembly, because of a
formality (she lived in Jutland), but she served on the translation
committee.[65] In Max Weber's terminology, the *Veralltäglichung* (rou-
tinisation) of the religion had become a problem to Johanne Høeg.[66]
For the rest of her life (she died in 1988), she remained fairly iso-
lated from the Danish Baha'i community, although the community
acknowledged her pioneering role and hung a portrait of her at the
Baha'i centre in Copenhagen.

The Stagnation Phase 1951–1961

The summer of 1951 was "very decisive" because Dagmar Dole left
Denmark for Italy.[67] The "circle" lost its centre, and the Danish
Baha'is now faced a new and by no means easy challenge, "because
unconsciously we had leaned so much against her that the change
was indeed pronounced."[68] The small, young Baha'i community had
to stand on its own feet, and the Baha'is spent most of their time
together trying to consolidate the group. Because there were only
thirty-eight people (apart from Johanne Høeg in the provinces), a
series of characteristic small-group features emerged. The people with
the strongest personalities became informal spiritual leaders, and
cliques, friendships and enmities flourished. The consequence was
that recruitment declined. In the words of an early Baha'i, "we felt
that we were grinding to a halt," and there was a general feeling
of stagnation.[69] The membership figures confirm this feeling: the steep

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Hjelme, 10 April 1980; Palle Bischoff, 14 April 1980; Lisbeth Andersen, 15 April
1980; Kaya Holck, 6 May 1980.
   [64] Interview with Johanne Høeg, 11 March 1980.
   [65] Johanne Høeg to Shoghi Effendi, 26 November 1949. (BWC-RD GA001/
105/00331); Dagmar Dole to Edna True, 24 October 1949. (NBA-US).
   [66] Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*, Tübingen,
J. C. B. Mohr, 1972, vol. 1, p. 275.
   [67] I. Hjelme, "Strejflys nr. 6", *Bahá'í Nyhedsbrev*, no. 8, 1–19 August 1978, p. 14.
(NBA-DK).
   [68] Hjelme, "Strejflys nr. 6".
   [69] I. Hjelme, "Strejflys nr. 7", *Bahá'í Nyhedsbrev*, no. 9, 20 August–7 September
1978, p. 16. (NBA-DK).

increase in membership ceased and a plateau was reached, during the last half of the 1950s, of around fifty Baha'is. Another indication of the crisis was that the first of the early Baha'is resigned in 1953, and 12 more resigned in the subsequent years.

It is interesting to note how closely the evolution of the Danish Baha'i community follows Wach's description of the crisis caused by the passing of the religious founder:

> With his passing, new problems appear. What is to be the meaning of discipleship, now that there is no more a master? Personal discipleship, originally a *sine qua non*, can no longer be a prerequisite although the remaining disciples gain considerably in prestige and authority.[70]

In the same period, the first half of the 1950s, most of the European Baha'i communities were requested by the Baha'i administration in Haifa to organise themselves according to the municipal boundaries of their home countries.[71] It was a general Baha'i administrative policy to be implemented, and it meant that local spiritual assemblies must be formed within existing civic boundaries, provided at least nine Baha'is lived there. Baha'is living outside the municipality could participate in the nineteen day feasts held by the local spiritual assembly, but they could not be engaged in its administrative work.[72] For the Danish Baha'i community, this policy meant that the Baha'is of Copenhagen were split into six different municipalities, each with its own Baha'i locality.[73] This development was a difficult adjustment for the small group of people accustomed to working closely together for a good many years, and some of them clearly expressed their realisation that the community had reached an organisational turning point:

> We all felt that it left a great void, and it is my impression that Copenhagen were the first to get through the hard time following, while Gentofte found themselves most forsaken, and they only became

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[70] Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, p. 137.

[71] Cable from Baha'i World Centre to Edna True, chairman of the European Teaching Committee, 1 February 1953. (BWC-RD GA004/063/00158).

[72] See for example a letter from Baha'i World Centre to The Local Spiritual Assembly of Paris, 20 February 1953. (BWC-RD GC001/109/00189); letter from Baha'i World Centre to National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, 21 June 1953. (BWC-RD GC001/110/00062).

[73] I. Hjelme, "Strejflys nr. 9", *Bahá'í Nyhedsbrev*, no. 11, 27 September–15 October 1978, unpag. (NBA-DK).

really happy again when shortly after they got their own local spirit-
ual assembly.[74]

It was felt as a serious change, because we now had to convert faith
into active effort".[75]

The distress felt by the Danish Baha'is, in fact, was shared by other
European Baha'i communities, for example in Italy and Switzerland
(the two countries shared a national spiritual assembly). This was
reflected in lively correspondence to and from the Baha'i adminis-
tration in Haifa.[76] Some of the same problems were experienced by
the Canadian Baha'i community in the first years of the Seven Year
Plan (1937–1944). Several new local spiritual assemblies were formed,
but since they often were dependent on a few active individuals,
some of the new assemblies were unable to maintain commitment
among their members in the years that followed.[77]

Looking back with sociological hindsight, the new policy was proba-
bly implemented prematurely in Denmark, because a membership
basis of less than fifty seems too little to develop a more complex
organisation. The arrival of a group of 17 Iranian Baha'is in 1961
was therefore a needed boost in membership.

The Iranian Immigration 1961–1971

Shoghi Effendi had several times requested Baha'is, in particular
from the USA and Iran, to move to those countries in greatest need
of new blood.[78] While American Baha'i pioneers had been instru-
mental in establishing the Danish Baha'i community, only a few
Iranian Baha'is had gone to Denmark, and those who did soon left
again.[79] The arrival of 17 Iranian missionaries in 1961 was a unique
event that meant an influx of foreign Baha'is who possessed knowledge,

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[74] Hjelme, "Strejflys nr. 9".

[75] Interview with Palle Bischoff, 14 April 1980.

[76] European Teaching Committee to Shoghi Effendi Rabbání, 23 January 1953.
(BWC-RD GA001/110/166); Baha'i World Centre to European Teaching Committee,
3 June 1953. (BWC-RD GC001/110/00043); Baha'i World Centre to Ugo Giachery,
Italy, 3 June 1953. (BWC-RD GC001/110/00044).

[77] van den Hoonard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, pp. 177–181.

[78] Shoghi Effendi, "The Summons of the Lord of Hosts" (circulatory letter of 30
June 1952), in Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950–1957*, Wilmette,
Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971, pp. 30–39.

[79] The first two Iranian Baha'is came in 1956, but they left the year after. One
more came in 1957 and left in 1958.

insight, and experience with the religion at a level hitherto unknown to the Danish Baha'is.[80] The Iranian Baha'is were born into Baha'i families, they knew the religion from early childhood, and their religion was an inseparable part of their entire cultural background. They had, therefore, an internalised Baha'i lifestyle and greater ethnic and religious affiliation. This was not shared to the same extent by the Danish Baha'is, who almost all had converted as adults through personal conviction.

The two groups, the native Danish Baha'is and the Iranian immigrants, thus had rather different backgrounds, and furthermore, the two groups differed in several ways with respect to both religious attitudes and religious behaviour. But differences do not necessarily lead to problems, and the relationship between the two groups seems to have been, and still is, smooth and non-controversial. This is, of course, as it ought to be according to basic Baha'i principles, so this seems to be one of the not so frequent cases in the sociology of religion, where behaviour is in accordance with the religious texts!

By March 1962, the Danish Baha'i community had grown to about 60 members, which allowed the formation of 5 local spiritual assemblies all together.[81] The goal that was set in the Ten Year Plan (1953–1963) had been reached, and in April 1962 (*Ridvan*), the Baha'is formed *The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Denmark*. The Danish Baha'i community was therefore able to be represented in 1963 in Haifa for the election of the first Universal House of Justice.

Rapid Growth in the 1970s

In the beginning of the 1970s, the Danish Baha'i community experienced an extraordinary growth in membership: the number of members increased more than seventy per cent in just three years, from March 1971 to March 1974. Eighty Danes converted to Baha'i in this period, and the overwhelming majority of these new Baha'is were young and single (this is shown in a cohort analysis later in

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[80] A similar development occurred in the Netherlands, where 38 Iranian Baha'is arrived in the course of 1961. As was the case in Denmark, this boosted the growth of the Baha'i community considerably, see de Vries, *The Babi Question You Mentioned*, pp. 277–279.

[81] *Semi-annual Report as of March 15, 1962* [to the Baha'i World Centre], Enskede, Sweden, National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Scandinavia and Finland. (NBA-DK).

this chapter). This increase in enrolments must be ascribed to the growing interest in religious renewal that came in the wake of the youth rebellion in 1968–1969. It was an international trend that affected all Western Baha'i communities.[82] Data for the USA also show that an overwhelming number of new Baha'is in this period were young, single and well educated.[83]

Figure 6.1 shows the development in membership of five northern European countries: England (including Wales), Sweden, The Netherlands, West Germany and Denmark. By calculating the number of Baha'is per million inhabitants, it is possible to make a meaningful comparison of the changes in membership demographics in these countries. In all five countries, the number of Baha'is more than doubled during the first half of the 1970s. The growth curves for Sweden, The Netherlands, West Germany and Denmark are strikingly similar, which is a strong argument for considering the Danish Baha'i community as representative of other West European Baha'i communities, cf. the discussion in Chapter 1.[84] In these four countries, there was steady growth in the number of Baha'is in the period 1975–1992. In England, the number of Baha'is per million inhabitants was considerably higher in the period up to 1975, but then the numbers stagnated, and the other four countries approached the membership level in England.

Within the Danish Baha'i community, this wave of conversions created two generations of Baha'is: the "old" Baha'is, who were tied together by the informal, personal network, and the "new" Baha'is, who did not yet have strong personal relations to other Baha'is. It is probable that a considerable number of these new Baha'is never succeeded in establishing an attachment to the Danish Baha'i community, because the number of resignations also rose sharply, from

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[82] Margit Warburg, "Growth Patterns of New Religions: The Case of Baha'i", in Robert Towler (ed.), *New Religions and the New Europe*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 1995, pp. 177–193.

[83] Annette Riis Zahrai, *Evolution of the Baha'i Faith in the United States since 1960 / Evolution du Mouvement Baha'i aux Etats Unis depuis 1960* (M.A. diss.), Paris, l'Université Paris X, 1986, p. 68.

[84] Figures from the Netherlands also indicate an ethnic composition similar to that of the Danish Baha'i community. In April 1962 there were 136 Baha'is in the Netherlands of which 31% were Iranians and 6% of other nationalities, see de Vries, *The Babi Question You Mentioned*, p. 292. In Denmark there were 22% Iranians and 4% of other nationalities by the end of 1961 (based on Table 6.1).

Figure 6.1. *Demographic development of five North European Baha'i communities, 1960–1992*
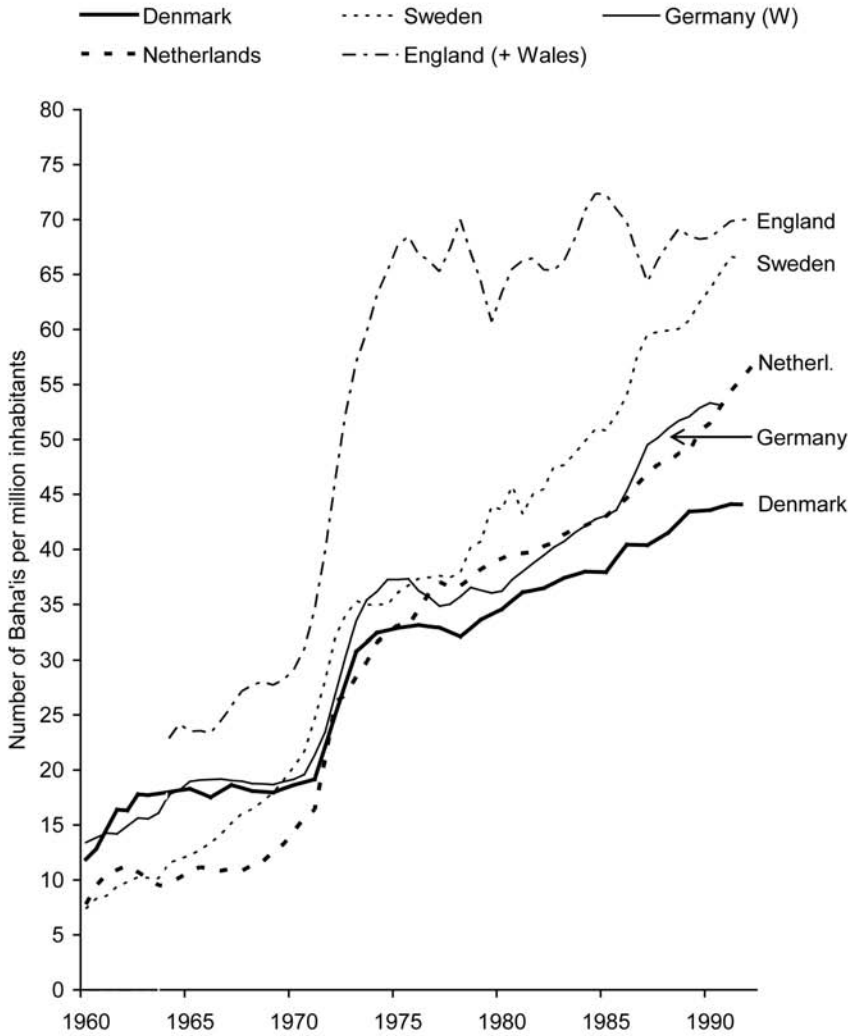
an average of 1 per year in the 1960s to 14 in 1972–1973 and 10 in 1973–1974. The number of local spiritual assemblies increased from 5 in 1970 to 10 in 1973, but in the following years it decreased again to around 8, and this is an indication that some of the gain in membership in the first half of the 1970s was fleeting.

In addition to the many conversions in the 1970s, immigration of non-Danish Baha'is also contributed significantly to the growth, and the number of Iranians and Baha'is of other nationalities in Denmark doubled during the 1970s.[85]

Acknowledgement from the State 1972–1979

During the 1970s, routinisation of leadership became more pronounced in the Danish Baha'i community, partly as a structural response to the weakening of the informal network caused by the increase in membership. The Danish Baha'is now also sought to formalise their position as an organised religious community by seeking official recognition by the State.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Denmark had already been registered as an association, but this had primarily a legal consequence in that the name of this Baha'i assembly was protected; it did not provide any official recognition of the Danish Baha'i community as a *religious* community.[86] In Denmark, such recognition could (and still can) only be obtained indirectly through a paragraph in the Marriage Act of 1969.

This indirect procedure has its historical background in the first free Danish constitution of 1849, which gave the Evangelical-Lutheran Church preferential status as a national church. However, a sentence in the constitution foreshadowed that the position of other religious communities should be regulated by law. This sentence has been brought forward in all the later revisions of the constitution, but a law has never been passed.[87] Notwithstanding, a few traditionally established religious communities in Denmark by administrative decree have acquired the status of "recognised religious communities".[88] This

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[85] Warburg, "Growth Patterns of New Religions: The Case of Baha'i".

[86] *The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Denmark*, registration number 2459, 8 May 1963. (Danish Commerce and Companies Agency, Copenhagen).

[87] *Danish Constitution of June 5, 1953*, §§ 4, 67–70.

[88] These are the Reformed Congregations (Danish Reformed, French Reformed and German Reformed), the Roman Catholic Church, the Jewish Community, the

recognition means, among other things, that their marriage cere-
monies have the same legal status as that of the Evangelical-Lutheran
Church, and it is also the basis for privileges such as tax exemp-
tions on real estate and on members' personal contributions.[89] "New"
religious communities cannot be recognised in the same sense of the
word, because with the passing of the Marriage Act of 1969, there
is no longer a legal basis for administrative recognition of a religious
community as such. The "recognition", however, is indirectly achieved
if the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs has granted the right to per-
form a legally binding marriage ritual to priests or other ritual experts
whose names and credentials are specified in a petition from the
community. Thus, the right is not given to the community itself, it
is given to particular individuals who function like a priest in a
church wedding. However, the practical consequence is that tax privi-
leges and the like are usually granted to the community only if one
of its "priests" has been granted the right to perform a legally bind-
ing marriage ritual.[90]

   The marriage law only specifies a few requirements for the grant-
ing of this ability to perform a marriage ritual, which is essentially
based on a general administrative judgement by the Ministry of
Ecclesiastical Affairs.[91] Since 1998, this administrative judgement has
been based on recommendations from a board of university experts;
before that, a century-old tradition dictated that the Ministry of
Ecclesiastical Affairs referred the case to the Bishop of Copenhagen
Diocese.[92]

   In 1972, the secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the
Baha'is of Denmark wrote to the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs in

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Methodist Community, the Swedish "Gustav" Congregation of Copenhagen, the
Orthodox Russian Congregation of Copenhagen, St. Alban's English Church of
Copenhagen, the Danish Baptist Community, and the Norwegian Congregation.
Roesen, August, *Dansk Kirkeret* [Danish canon law], Hillerød, Den Danske Præste-
forening, 1976, pp. 353–355.

   [89] Margit Warburg, "Restrictions and Privileges: Legal and Administrative Practice
and Minority Religions in the USA and Denmark", in Eileen Barker and Margit
Warburg (eds.), *New Religions and New Religiosity*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press,
1998, pp. 262–275.

   [90] Warburg, "Restrictions and Privileges".

   [91] Warburg, "Restrictions and Privileges".

   [92] Warburg, "Restrictions and Privileges". The expert board has set up guide-
lines for applications, see *Vejledende retningslinjer udarbejdet af det rådgivende Udvalg vedr.
Trossamfund* [Consultative guidelines drafted by the advisory board on religious com-
munities], 2nd revised edition, January 2002, http://www.km.dk/publikationer/
20020912_retningslinier.pdf. Accessed 19 January 2004.

order to clarify the conditions under which the Danish Baha'i com-
munity could perform such legally binding marriage rituals.[93] This
letter opened a long correspondence between the two parties, which
ended in March 1979 when the Ministry allowed the Danish Baha'i
community to perform legal marriages, provided a marriage ritual
was formalised and a petition was delivered to the Ministry in each
individual case.[94] In consideration of the strong anti-clerical Baha'i
ideology, it is somewhat ironic that the Danish Baha'i community,
as part of this procedure, had to accept the assigning of priestly
functions to some of its members in order to become "recognised".

The Iranian Refugees 1979–2002

The year 1979, however, was not only the year of legal recognition
of Danish Baha'i marriages. In Iran, the year also marked the begin-
ning of severe persecutions of Baha'is and many other groups con-
demned as enemies of the new Islamic Republic. Thousands of
refugees came to Europe in the following years, and many obtained
the right of asylum in Denmark. The great majority of the Iranian
refugees in Denmark were political opponents of the Khomeini regime
or deserters from the service, but a considerable number of Baha'is
also arrived. Many of the Baha'i refugees went on to Canada and
the USA, but quite a few stayed in Denmark.[95] Since 1979, the num-
ber of Iranian Baha'is in Denmark has almost tripled, from 29 to
about 85.

   The atrocities of the Iranian regime were regularly publicised in
the Danish mass media in the beginning of the 1980s, and for the
first time the persecutions of the Iranian Baha'is were reported in
wider circles. Following the advice of the Universal House of Justice,
the Danish Baha'i community issued press releases and letters to the

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[93] The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Denmark (through Kamma
Jørgensen) to the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, 31 August 1972, file 1. kt. 661.
(Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Copenhagen).

[94] The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs to the National Spiritual Assembly of the
Baha'is of Denmark, 16 March 1979, file 1. kt. 6629–4. (Ministry of Ecclesiastical
Affairs, Copenhagen).

[95] It is estimated that about 25,000 Baha'is left Iran after the revolution in 1979,
and that 12,000–14,000 of them went to the USA. Richard Hollinger, "Introduction:
Bahá'í Communities in the West, 1897–1992", in Richard Hollinger (ed.), *Community
Histories. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 6, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press,
1992, p. xlviii.

newspapers in order to inform about the Baha'i religion and its suppression in Iran, or to correct misunderstandings.

Since the late 1990s, the situation has eased a little for the Iranian Baha'is, but persecutions are still taking place, and Baha'i refugees come to Europe sporadically. In October 2002, a group of 35 Iranian Baha'is suddenly arrived in Denmark as part of Denmark's international obligation to receive a certain quota of refugees. For the time being, they are living in Denmark and have thereby boosted the group of Iranian Baha'is in Denmark by 40%. If they stay in Denmark permanently, they will significantly alter future membership demographics of the Danish Baha'i community.

Ambitions of Growth

Following the rapid growth in the first half of the 1970s, there was a period of stagnation in the late 1970s (see the curve for Denmark in Figure 6.1). Since 1980, however, there has been a moderate, but steady growth in total membership, so that by 20 April 2002, the Danish Baha'i community reported 257 members above 15 years of age.[96]

This growth in membership, however, did not lead to a strengthened organisation of the Danish Baha'i community as measured by the number of local spiritual assemblies. In the period from 1980 to 2002, the number of local spiritual assemblies did not increase, but oscillated irregularly around an average of 9 assemblies.[97] The Seven Year Plan 1979–1986 specified a number of qualitative and quantitative goals for the Danish Baha'i community, including that there should be 15 local spiritual assemblies in Denmark, and thus this goal was far from met. In the Three Year Plan 1993–1996, the goal for the number of local spiritual assemblies was moderated to 13, of which 3 should be new assemblies in provincial towns outside the Greater Copenhagen area.[98] This goal was also not reached; on the contrary, in the period 1993–1996 the total number of local spiritual assemblies sank to 8, and the number of provincial local spiritual

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[96] *Annual Statistical Report*, 31 August 2002. (NSA-DK).
[97] Based on the *Semi-annual Statistical Reports* to the Baha'i World Centre 1980–1988 and the *Annual Statistical Reports* to the Baha'i World Centre 1989–2002. (NSA-DK).
[98] *Progress Report for the Danish Bahá'í Community 150 & 150 BE* [to the Universal House of Justice] [Copenhagen, 1995]. (NSA-DK).

assemblies decreased from a total of 4 to 2. So, if evaluated in rela-
tion to the plans, the ambitions of growth were not fulfilled.

Viewed from a comparative perspective, the slow but steady growth
of the Danish Baha'i community during the 1980s and 1990s might
not indicate such poor achievement, after all. Although the number
of other new religious groups in Western societies may have grown
steadily since the late 1960s, the individual groups may not have
grown much in size.[99] One explanation for this is that with the matu-
ration of a group that originally consisted of young converts, the
demographic changes usually lead to a slowing down of growth or
even a decline in membership.[100]

The number of adherents of new religious groups is often smaller
than public notions would indicate. For example, in 1978, Eileen
Barker found that there were (only) 517 Moonies in Britain, and she
noted: "It is understandable that people confuse visibility with quan-
tity."[101] At the same time, there were 3,182 registered Baha'is in
England alone, but the amount of publicity surrounding them was
insignificant in comparison.[102]

Proper demographic analyses of most religious groups are difficult
to make because of insufficient access to data. Few groups make
public reports of their number of adherents, either because of restric-
tions imposed by the organisation or by the sheer lack of and dis-
interest in demographic data within the group itself. For the sociologist
of religion, the Danish Baha'i community provides a fortunate excep-
tion in this respect, however. Through my privileged access to mem-
bership files and the competent help from the secretary of the Danish
Baha'i community, I have been able to make a complete census of
all members in 1981 and in 1999. For both years, the census included
information on gender, national background and place of residence.
For all married persons, furthermore, it was noted whether the spouse
was a member of the Danish Baha'i community or not. The cen-
sus of 1999 also contained information on year of birth, year of de-
claration, and whether or not a person came from a Baha'i family.

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[99] Gordon Melton, "Modern Alternative Religions in the West", in J. R. Hinnels
(ed.), *A New Handbook of Living Religions*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1997, pp. 594–617.
[100] Eileen Barker, "Plus ça change . . .", *Social Compass*, vol. 42, 1995, pp. 165–180.
[101] Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie. Choice or Brainwashing?*, Oxford, Basil
Blackwell, 1985, p. 27.
[102] Data on membership for England per June 1978. (Baha'i World Centre,
Department of Statistics, Haifa).

With this information plus data from archival sources, in particular the statistical reports from the Danish Baha'i community to the Baha'i World Centre plus additional unpublished sources, I have been able to construct a complete record of the demographic changes of the Danish Baha'i community since its very beginning, i.e., the moving of people into the community by enrolments and immigration and out of the community through emigration, resignments and deaths.[103] These demographic changes are registered for each of the three groups of nationalities: native Danes (DK), Iranians (IR) and other nationalities (ON). These records are shown in Table 6.1; this table is the basis for many of the other figures and tables of the present chapter.

As discussed in Appendix 1, the classification into three groups of nationalities (native Danes, Iranians and other nationalities) is based on pragmatic and easily applicable criteria, since all those who might be classified as Iranians and other nationalities were first-generation immigrants. All second-generation immigrants (Baha'is born in Denmark of non-Danish Baha'i parents) are classified as Danes.

Moving Towards Multi-ethnicity in the 1990s

Figure 6.2 is based on Table 6.1 and shows the growth in members of the Danish Baha'i community since 1945. The three thin-lined curves represent the number of members belonging to each of the three groups: native Danes, Iranians and other nationalities. The sum of these (the bold curve) gives the total number of Baha'is.

The stagnation period in the 1950s and the immigration of Iranian Baha'is in 1961, discussed above, are readily apparent in the figure. The figure also shows that the number of native Danish Baha'is has remained constant, around 130 during the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, the entire increase in membership during the 1980s and 1990s can be ascribed to the growth in Baha'i members with national backgrounds *other* than Danish. This has resulted in considerable demographic change, so that by 1999, only 50% of the 252 members of

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[103] These additional sources were: *Bahá'í Nyhedsbrev* [Baha'i Newsletter], 1978–1992; *Dansk Bahá'í Nyt* [Danish Baha'i News], 1992–1999; *Bahá'í Nyt* [Baha'i News], 1999–2003; Annual reports from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Denmark, 1963–2003; Annual progress reports [to the Universal House of Justice], 1987–1995. (NSA-DK).

Table 6.1. *Demographic changes in the Danish Baha'i community on a yearly basis, 1945–2002*

BE	AD	Immigration DK	IR	ON	Emigration DK	IR	ON	Enrolments DK	IR	ON	Re-sign	Die	+/- DK	+/- IR	+/- ON	Err. cl.	Total DK	IR	ON	T	Cd.	Y	NSA rp.	UHJ rp.
	1925–45							1					1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1				
	1946												0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1				
	1947			3	1		1	1					1	0	2	2	2	0	2	4				
	1948			6	1		4	12					11	0	2	2	13	0	4	17				
	1949			1				5					4	0	1	1	17	0	5	22				
	1950			1	2	2	1	14					14	0	-1	-1	31	0	4	35				
	1951				2	1	2	7					5	0	-1	-1	36	0	3	39				
	1952		2	2	1		1	9			1		8	0	0	0	44	0	3	47				
	1953				3		1	4					0	0	-1	-1	44	0	2	46				
	1954			1	1			2			1		1	0	0	0	45	0	2	47				
	1955							5			1	1	4	0	0	0	49	0	2	51				
	1956		2		2	2		4			4		-3	2	0	0	46	2	2	50				
	1957		1			2		3			2		1	-1	0	0	47	1	2	50				
	1958				1	1		4			1		2	-1	0	0	49	0	2	51				
	1959							3					-1	0	0	0	48	0	2	50				
	1960		2			2	2	10			4	1	9	0	0	0	57	0	2	59				
	1961		17	1	3			2					-1	17	1	1	**56**	**17**	**3**	**76**				
	1962–63	2	1		3	5		10					7	0	0	0	63	17	3	83				83
120	1963–64		1	2	3	3		4			1		6	-4	0	0	69	13	3	85				91
121	1964–65		1	2	1			4			3	1	1	-2	0	3	73	11	3	87		87		87
122	1965–66			1	3			1				1	-6	1	0	2	69	12	3	84		84		88
123	1966–67			1	1		1	1		1		**1	1	0	1	4	74	12	4	90		90		
124	1967–68		2	3	1			1			1	2	-3	0	1		71	12	5	88		90		98
125	1968–69			1	1			4	1		5		-1	1	1		70	13	6	89		88		
126	1969–70		2	3	1		1	4				**1	3	0	2	-1	72	13	8	93				
127	1970–71	3	1	5	1		2	1			1		0	2	1		72	15	9	96				
128	1971–72		7	3	1		2	29			14		31	-1	1	-1	102	14	10	126		95		94
129	1972–73		5	4	1		1	30			10		16	7	1		118	21	14	153		125		128
130	1973–74	1	2	3		4	5	21			4	1	10	1	4		128	22	12	162		154		155
131	1974–75		1	4	1	1	3	9			2		3	0	-2		131	23	13	167		163		
132	1975–76		2	3	2	2	4	8			2	1	3	2	1	-1	134	23	12	169		168		164
133	1976–77	1	2	3	3	3		3			6	2	-6	2	3	-2	126	25	15	166		167		166
134	1977–78	1	2	4	2	2	1	11			7	4	-1	1	2	-4	121	26	17	164		163		165
135	1978–79		3	2	3	1		12			5	1	3	3	1	1	124	29	18	171				167

...continued from previous page

Table 6.1. *Demographic changes in the Danish Baha'i community on a yearly basis, 1945–2002*

BE	AD	Imm DK	Imm IR	Imm ON	Emig DK	Emig IR	Emig ON	Enrol DK	Enrol IR	Enrol ON	Re-sign	Die	+/− DK	+/− IR	+/− ON	Err. cl.	Tot DK	Tot IR	Tot ON	T	Cd.	Y	NSA rp.	UHJ rp.
136	1979–80			3			2	13			8	1	4	0	1		128	29	19	176	51	13	165	171
137	1980–81		4	1	3	2		15			6		6	2	0		**134**	**31**	**19**	**184**			184	169
138	1981–82			7	1	5	6	9			7		1	0	1		135	31	20	186	56	15	188	187
139	1982–83		6	6			1	5		2	7		−3	1	7		132	32	27	191	54	10	195	182
140	1983–84		1	5	2	1	1						−2	0	4	−2	128	32	31	191	55	8		191
141	1984–85		5				1		1	2	4	1	0	6	1		128	38	32	198	51	7		191
142	1985–86		10				2	5	1		5		0	11	−2	−1	127	49	30	206	58	8	218	209
143	1986–87		3	2	2		1	3			0	**3	−4	3	1		123	52	31	206	62	9		215
144	1987–88		4	2		1	2	7	3		4		5	3	−1		128	55	30	213	62	10	236	213
145	1988–89		8	1		2	3	6	3		**5	**3	1	9	3		129	64	33	226	61	9	242	235
146	1989–90		1			3		7	3	1			1	1	−1	−1	129	65	32	226	61	13		226
147	1990–91		1	1	1	1		4	1		4	*1	3	2	2	**1	133	67	34	234	56	15	234	231
148	1991–92					1		2	**1	**1		*1	1	1	−2	−1	133	68	32	233	53	21		235
149	1992–93							6			2		6	0	1		139	68	33	240	51	22		241
150	1993–94	1		3		3		3		1		*1	3	−3	4		142	65	37	244	53	20		245
151	1994–95		2	4	5	2	3	2	4		4	*3	−9	3	1		133	68	38	239	49	14	235	238
152	1995–96		6	2	2	3	3	9	1		1	6	0	4	−1		133	72	37	242	40	17	239	246
153	1996–97		8	3	1	4	1	3	1	1	2	2	−2	5	2		131	77	39	247	44	19	245	247
154	1997–98		7	5	3	3	4	3	2		2	2	−7	6	3		124	83	42	249	42	15	247	258
155	1998–99				3	1	2	2	1	3	4	3	2	0	1		**126**	**83**	**43**	**252**	42	15		241
156	1999–00	8	2	1	8	3	1	1	0	0	0	#3	0	−2	−1		126	81	42	249	41	10		246
157	2000–01	5	5	0	2	1	0	3	1	3	3	3	0	5	3		126	86	45	257	41	12		240
158	2001–02	6	0	6	8	1	0	2	0	1	2	*6	−7	−2	7		119	84	52	255	38	18		257
Sum, total		29	123	113	77	59	72	347	25	17	135	53	123	84	51	−3								
Sum, 137–155		3	66	49	22	32	34	89	23	12	50	24	3	54	23	−4								
Average, 137–155 BE																	131	58	33	221	53	14		

Numbers in **bold** are from the list of 1961 (Kaya Holck) and from the census of 1981 and 1999. The *dotted lines* indicate the period of 19 years used in the demographic analysis.

Abbrev.: DK = Danes; IR = Iranians; ON = Other nationalities; T = Total (15 years and above); Err. cl. = Error of closure. Cd. = Children (below 15 years); Y = Youths (15–20 years, NB: Youths are included in total); rp. = reports.

Notes: * Including one Iranian; ** Including one or other nationality; # Including one of each.

Figure 6.2. *Demographic composition of the Danish Bahá'í community,*
1945–2002
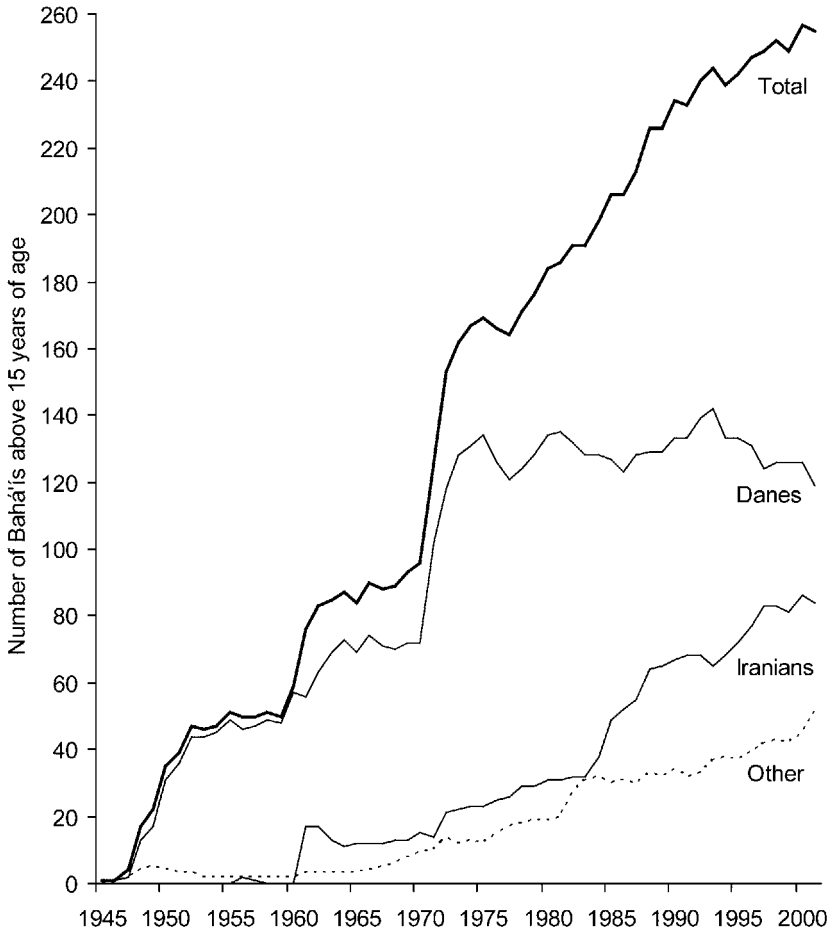
the Danish Baha'i community were native Danes (126 Baha'is), 33%
were Iranians (84 Baha'is, not counting second-generation Iranians
born in Denmark), and the remaining 17% had other national back-
grounds (42 Baha'is). In 1980 by comparison, 73% of the members
were native Danes (128 Baha'is), 16% were Iranians (29 Baha'is) and
11% had other national backgrounds (19 Baha'is). Thus, the multi-
ethnicity of the community was quite pronounced during the last
two decades of the twentieth century.

    This demographic change at first glance may seem surprising, con-
sidering that during the 1980s and 1990s, 72% of the 124 newly
enrolled Baha'is were native Danes.[104] If recruitment were the only
factor affecting the demographic composition, the proportion of native
Danes should still have been above 70%.[105] In order to understand
what may have happened, a more thorough demographic analysis
is required. As a starting point, I will present a brief sociological
profile of the Danish Baha'i community at the beginning of the
period of steady growth during the 1980s and 1990s. This profile
helps to explain the demographic trends of the 1980s and 1990s,
and it also serves as a background for several of the subsequent
analyses in Chapters 8 and 9. The source of the sociological profile
is the interview survey of 120 Danish Baha'is, cf. Appendix 1.

A Sociological Snapshot of the Danish Baha'i Community

To draw the sociological profile of the Danish Baha'i community,
which could be considered a sociological snapshot of the commu-
nity in 1982, I analysed some major sociological variables, such as
family structure, educational background, socio-economic status and
occupation.

    Table 6.2 summarises the marital status of the Danish Baha'is
compared with the Danish population in general. The main difference
is the relatively high proportion of divorced people among the
Baha'is.[106] Of the 61 married Baha'is, 42 (22 women, 20 men) were
married to another Baha'i, meaning that for 69% of the married
Baha'is, their spouses were also Baha'is. In comparison, McMullen

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[104] This can be calculated from Table 6.1.
[105] In this hypothetical calculation, migrations, resignations and deaths are ignored.
[106] The difference is statistically significant (P < 0.01).

found that 78% of the married Atlanta Baha'is were married to another Baha'i.[107]

Ethnic diversity is commended among the Baha'is. In the current study, one-third of the marriages between Baha'is included spouses with different national backgrounds. Except in one case, each of these "mixed marriages" included one spouse who was a native Dane. Furthermore, this relatively large group of Danes married to "foreigners" is extraordinary, because Denmark is so ethnically homogeneous, and this was even more so in 1982.

Table 6.2. *Marital status of Danish Baha'is, 1982*

Marital status	Danish Baha'is			Danish population[a]
	Women	Men	All	
Single	19	14	33 (28%)	30%
Married	33	28	61 (51%)	56%
Divorced	11	9	20 (17%)	6%
Widowed	5	1	6 (5%)	8%
Total	68	52	120	100%

[a] Henning Hansen (ed.), *Levevilkår i Danmark. Statistisk oversigt 1984—Living Conditions in Denmark. Compendium of Statistics 1984*, Copenhagen, Danmarks Statistik and Socialforskningsinstituttet 1985, p. 42.

Table 6.3 gives an overview of the family and household patterns among the Danish Baha'is. The Danish Baha'i community in 1982 apparently was very much like the Danish population.

Table 6.4 shows the types of vocational education obtained by the Danish Baha'is. The data are compared with those of the Danish labour force in 1980 and 1997.[108] The Danish Baha'is in 1982 were characterised by a considerably higher level of theoretical vocational education than was the Danish population, both in 1980 and in 1997. There was also a lower percentage of Baha'is without any vocational education.

A comparatively high level of education has also been reported for other Western Baha'i communities, but the information is scattered:

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[107] Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'í. The Religious Construction of a Global Identity*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2000, p. 31.

[108] The comparison with the 1997 figures (15 years later than the 1982 data) is a simple way of compensating for the fact that the Baha'is on average were younger than the Danish population in general and for that reason alone would be expected to be better educated.

Table 6.3. *Family and household patterns among the Danish Baha'is, 1982*

	Danish Baha'is		Danish Population[a]
Single living, age <30 years	22	} 44%	48%
Single living, age 30+ years	31		
Married couples, no children in household	24	20%	19%
Sum, living in households with no children	77	64%	67%
Single adult with children in household	6	5%	6%
Married couples with children in household	37	31%	27%
Sum, living in households with children	43	36%	33%
Total	120		

[a] Henning Hansen (ed.), *Levevilkår i Danmark. Statistisk oversigt 1984—Living Conditions in Denmark. Compendium of Statistics 1984*, Copenhagen, Danmarks Statistik and Socialforskningsinstituttet 1985, p. 46.

Table 6.4. *Types of vocational education among the Danish Baha'is, 1982*

Type of education	Danish Baha'is				Danish pop.[a]	
	Women	Men	All		1980	1997
Academic	3	5	8	(7%)	2%	4%
Medium theoretical	12	8	20	(17%)	4%	8%
Short theoretical	21	7	28	(23%)	5%	5%
Long practical	3	9	12	(10%) } 15%	29%	31%
Short practical	6	0	6	(5%)		
Subtotal	45	29	74	(62%)	40%	48%
Receiving education	7	11	18	(15%)	8%	9%
None	16	12	28	(23%)	52%	43%
Total	68	52	120	(100%)	100%	100%

[a] Weighted average of women and men. Henning Hansen (ed.), *Levevilkår i Danmark. Statistisk oversigt 1984—Living Conditions in Denmark. Compendium of Statistics 1984*, Copenhagen, Danmarks Statistik and Socialforskningsinstituttet 1985, p. 118; *Statistisk Årbog* 1998, Copenhagen, Danmarks Statistik, pp. 98–99.

in Norway, 30% of the Baha'is had an academic education in 1973, and among the Atlanta Baha'is, 65% had a bachelor degree or higher in 1994.[109] For the USA as a whole, in 1999 more than 50% of the

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[109] Bitten Linge, *Baha'i i Norge* [Baha'i in Norway] (M.A. diss.), Bergen, Department of History of Religions, University of Bergen, 1974, p. 90; McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, p. 29.

Baha'is were college educated, which is far above the national average.[110]

Data on secondary education (these do not appear in the table) indicate that one-third of the native Danish Baha'is had a high school degree, and two-thirds of the Iranian Baha'is had a high school degree; in comparison, 12% of the Danish population in general had a high school degree in 1982.[111] The high proportion of well-educated Iranians is noteworthy and fits with my general impression of the Iranian Baha'i diaspora as being derived from the middle- and upper-class strata in Iran.

Five questions in the survey (Q14 to Q18) yielded data on the Danish Baha'is' occupational area, and these are compiled in Table 6.5. It is noteworthy that the proportion of public employees among the Baha'is (55%) was much higher than among the Danish work force in general (29%). In particular, the social, education and health care (SEH) professions were markedly over-represented among the Danish Baha'is. The same pattern was observed in the American Baha'i community in 1999.[112] Conversely, skilled workers and farmers were strongly underrepresented.

In a separate study, my colleagues and I pursued these observations further.[113] The conversion accounts of the Danish Baha'is (see Chapter 7) showed that many of those Baha'is who were in the social, education and health care professions had become interested in Baha'i while at work. A quantitative analysis of the European Value Study of 1990 demonstrated that "non-conformal religiosity" *in general* was much more prevalent among social, education and health care professionals than it was among the rest of the population (three to five times as many, which is a substantial difference).[114]

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[110] National Teaching Committee of the United States, *Issues Pertaining to Growth, Retention and Consolidation in the United States*, Evanston, Baha'i National Center, December 12, 1999, http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrcole/bahai/1999/growth23.htm, p. 10, p. 12. Accessed 31 October 2002.

[111] Henning Hansen (ed.), *Levevilkår i Danmark. Statistisk oversigt 1984. Living Conditions in Denmark. Compendium of Statistics 1984*, Copenhagen, Danmarks Statistik and Social-forskningsinstituttet, 1985, p. 102.

[112] National Teaching Committee of the United States, *Issues Pertaining to Growth, Retention and Consolidation in the United States*, p. 12.

[113] Margit Warburg, Peter Lüchau, and Peter B. Andersen, "Gender, profession, and non-conformal religiosity", *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 14, 1999, pp. 277–290.

[114] "Non-conformal religiosity" refers to that which is not in compliance with the

Table 6.5. *Distribution of Danish Baha'is according to industry, 1982*

Sector of work	Danish Baha'is				Danish population[a]
	Women	Men	All		
Private sector:					
Farming, fishing	0	3	3	(3%)	8%
Manufacture, construction	6	11	17	(18%)	27%
Trade, service	7	15	22	(23%)	33%
Public sector:					
Social and health care	25	7	32	(33%)	29%
Education	9	2	11	(11%) } (55%)	29%
Other public sector	7	3	10	(10%)	
Undefined:	1	0	1	(1%)	3%
Subtotal	55	41	96	(100%)	100%
Never in the labour force	13	11	24		
Total	68	52	120		

[a] Henning Hansen (ed.), *Levevilkår i Danmark. Statistisk oversigt 1984—Living Conditions in Denmark. Compendium of Statistics 1984*, Copenhagen, Danmarks Statistik and Socialforskningsinstituttet 1985, p. 31.

It was particularly noteworthy that non-conformal religiosity was as widespread among *men* as among women in these professions, which is not the case for the rest of the population. This indicates that the female-dominated professional environment of most social, education and health care work places exerts a strong socialisation to non-conformal religiosity. It is generally acknowledged that non-conformal religiosity is more prevalent among women than among men.[115]

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dominant traditions of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church and prevalent interpretations of its doctrines, for example, belief in reincarnation; see Warburg *et al.*, "Gender, profession, and non-conformal religiosity". For a general presentation of the European Value Study of 1990, see Sheena Ashford and Noel Timms, *What Europe Thinks. A Study of Western European Values*, Aldershot, Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1992, pp. 138–155.

[115] See for example James A. Beckford, "Holistic Imagery and Ethics in New Religious and Healing Movements", *Social Compass*, vol. 31, 1984, pp. 259–272; Barbara Bergbom, Kaj Björkqvist, and Nils G. Holm, "A Cross-Cultural Investigation of World View: Student Samples from Ten Countries", in Nils G. Holm and Kaj Björkqvist (eds.), *World Views in Modern Society. Empirical Studies on the Relationship between World View, Culture, Personality, and Upbringing*, Åbo, Religionsvetenskapliga skrifter nr. 29, Åbo Akademi University, 1996, pp. 29–46; Meredith B. McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1988, pp. 18–31; Ole Riis, "Patterns of Secularization in Scandinavia", in Thorleif Pettersson and Ole Riis (eds.), *Scandinavian Values. Religion and Morality in the Nordic Countries*, Uppsala, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1994, pp. 99–128.

However, our study indicates that socialisation at work may out-
weigh the effect of gender with respect to non-conformal religiosity,
and this finding therefore has implications both for gender studies
and the study of conversion to new religions and other forms of
non-conformal religiosity.

The observed bias in occupational area among the Baha'is sug-
gests that they would be classified well above average according to
social class. In Danish social science research, five social groups are
used conventionally for classification.[116] A previous analysis of social
stratification among the Danish Baha'is showed that the two lowest
social groups were underrepresented among the Baha'is (46% ver-
sus 58% of the Danes in general), while the two top social groups
were over-represented (26% versus 12% of the Danes in general).[117]
The higher social status of the Danish Baha'is, however, is not
reflected in income distribution—on the contrary, there is a tendency
for the highest levels of income to be underrepresented among the
Baha'is, see Figure 6.3. This cannot be explained, for example, by
a higher frequency of part-time jobs among the Danish Baha'is.[118]
It can probably best be explained by the higher frequency of pub-
lic employees, and the higher proportion of women among the 120
Baha'i informants.

The sociological profile of the Atlanta Baha'i community is much
like the Danish one: the Atlanta Baha'is are well-educated, hold pre-
dominantly white-collar jobs (only 13% are skilled and unskilled work-
ers), but their income levels are only about average.[119]

A DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE DANISH BAHA'I COMMUNITY

The overall growth in members of the Danish Baha'i community is
the net result of demographic changes that are often considerable.
The Baha'i community gains members through recruitment of new

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[116] Erik Jørgen Hansen, *Fordelingen af Levekårene. Hovedresultater fra velfærdsundersøgelsen.
Bind I. Teori, metode og sammenfatning / The Distribution of Living Conditions. Main Results
from the Welfare Survey. Part I. Theory, Method, and Summary*, Copenhagen, Teknisk for-
lag, 1978.

[117] Margit Warburg, "Religionssociologi" [Sociology of religion], in Mikael Rothstein
(ed.), *Humanistisk religionsforskning. En indføring i religionshistorie & religionssociologi*, Copen-
hagen, Samleren, 1997, pp. 135–246.

[118] The frequencies for both women and men were not different from the pop-
ulation in general (men 6%, women 46%). Hansen, *Levevilkår i Danmark*, p. 137.

[119] McMullen, *The Baha'i*, pp. 29–32.

Figure 6.3. *Income distribution among the Danish Baha'is, 1982*
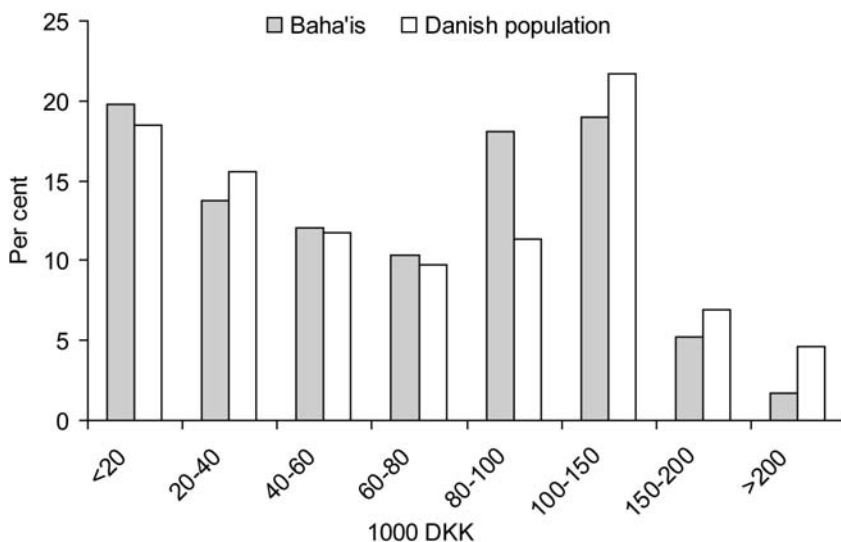
believers and through immigration of Baha'is from other countries. Conversely, the community loses members through resignations, deaths and emigration. Overall growth depends on these demographic changes according to the demographic equation developed below.[120]

The Equations of Demography

The variables of population demography are typically births, deaths, immigration and emigration, and these variables are linked together by the basic demographic equation shown in the box below.[121]

The Basic Demographic Equation:

Growth = births − deaths + immigration − emigration + "error of closure"

There is often obvious uncertainty when assessing the exact numbers of births, deaths, etc. for a specified period (for example one

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[120] This is a more elaborated equation than the one I present in Warburg, "Growth Patterns of New Religions: The Case of Baha'i".

[121] Colin Newell, *Methods and Models in Demography*, London, Belhaven Press, 1988, p. 8.

particular year). Therefore, a correction term, the so-called "error of closure", is added to the basic demographic equation to make the numbers fit with the observed growth.[122] Even for small populations, inaccuracies in the statistics necessitate the use of an "error of closure". To make the equation fit, this term can be positive or negative. The average value of the error of closure over a series of years should be close to zero if the statistics are reliable and free of bias.

The variables in the demographic equation can be whole numbers (number of persons) calculated for a particular period. When all the variables are divided by the overall average number of people in the population for the given period, the terms in the demographic equation will express the *rates* of births, deaths, etc. Rates are usually given as percent; for example, in Denmark the average number of births per year is 67,000. With a population of around 5,300,000 this results in a birth rate of (67,000/5,300,000) × 100% = 1.26%.

The basic demographic equation, with modifications, can be used for an analysis of the demographic changes in the Danish Baha'i community, or for any religious community that keeps track of its members. The variable "births" is substituted by "enrolments", and the term "resignations" is added to account for this additional source of loss of members besides "deaths". In order to refine the analysis, I propose to make a distinction between "endo-enrolments", which are the enrolments of grown-up children from Baha'i families and "exo-enrolments", which are the enrolments of people having no close family background in Baha'i. This results in the demographic equation for religious groups that is shown in the box below.

The Demographic Equation for Religious Groups:

Growth = endo-enrolments + exo-enrolments + immigration − emigration − resignations − deaths + "error of closure"

Endo-enrolments in a religious group are parallel to births in a conventional demographic analysis of a population. Endo-enrolments minus deaths gives a measure of the *intrinsic growth* of the commu-

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[122] Newell, *Methods and Models in Demography*, p. 8.

nity, where "intrinsic growth" is the parallel to the term "natural growth" in population statistics. In many Western societies, such as Denmark, the number of births and deaths for a long period of time have balanced each other, so natural growth has been small or even negative. According to Table 6.3, the Baha'is of Denmark have a family structure that is not different from the population at large. Thus, in the long run, the rates of birth and death in the Baha'i families will be like those of the general population in Denmark.

Since the number of endo-enrolments by definition will be equal to or smaller than the number of births (not all Baha'i children convert to Baha'i when they grow up), it is only to be expected that the intrinsic growth of the Danish Baha'i community should approach zero or even be negative with the maturation of the community. In the long run, the Danish Baha'i community, or any other European Baha'i community, cannot grow or even maintain its size through intrinsic growth. The decline in membership of the Jewish and the Baptist communities in Denmark are illustrative of the trend that occurs when intrinsic growth becomes the main source for growth.[123]

Next, the number of exo-enrolments can be compared with the number of resignations. One can likely assume that resignations are prevalent among exo-converts, but rare among the endo-converts who have been socialised in the Baha'i community from childhood.[124] Therefore, in the case of the Danish Baha'i community, the number of resignations among exo-converts should be close to the total number of resignations. When the (estimated) number of resignations among exo-converts is subtracted from the number of exo-enrolments, the result is the number of *stable exo-enrolments*.[125]

The rates of immigration and emigration have always been much higher among the Baha'is than among the population in general,

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[123] Jacques Blum, "Jødedommen ud af skabet" [Judaism out of the closet], *Udsyn. Tidsskrift om jødisk liv, Israel og Mellemøsten*, no. 1, 1998, pp. 7–9; Jacques Blum, *Frivillighed og hemmelighed. Nogle nødtvungne og åbne betragtninger over baptistsamfundets situation i Danmark 1976* [Voluntarism and secrecy. Some reluctant and open considerations on the situation of the Baptist community in Denmark], Copenhagen, Føltved, n.d.

[124] I know of only a few resignations among Danish Baha'is who were second-generation Baha'is.

[125] The number of stable exo-enrolments is estimated with a high degree of reliability because of the long span of years investigated and because the uncertainties associated with the estimates of exo-enrolments and resignations among exo-converts partly or fully cancel each other.

and this has meant that migration has had a major influence on the demographic balance of the Danish Baha'i community.[126] Immigration may also have an indirect positive effect on growth because it may strengthen mission, as was probably the case with the Iranian immigration in the 1960s. The Baha'i leadership encourages the Baha'is to go abroad as 'pioneers' for proselytising. Since not all pioneers return to their home countries, one consequence of the Baha'i mission policy might be that in the long run there will be more emigrants than immigrants among the native Danes, while there will be increasingly more immigrants with non-Danish backgrounds.

On the global scale, however, migration is just a reshuffling of Baha'is around the world, and it does not contribute directly to any growth in the total number of Baha'is. This can only be brought about through exo-enrolments, that is, enrolment of Baha'is through successful mission among the general population of non-Baha'is. Thus, it can be concluded that the number of *stable exo-enrolments* is the only real long-term source of growth for a religious group with negligible intrinsic growth.

Based on the above discussion, the demographic equation for religious groups may be rearranged, so that it consists of the above-mentioned three composite demographic variables: *intrinsic growth*, *stable exo-enrolments* and *net migration*:

The Demographic Equation for Religious Groups (re-arranged):

Growth = net migration + intrinsic growth + stable exo-enrolments + "error of closure"
 where:
 Net migration = immigration − emigration
 Intrinsic growth = endo-enrolments − deaths
 Stable exo-enrolments = exo-enrolments − resignations

These composite variables can be estimated with more or less certainty for any religious group, and the above equation is generally applicable for analysing the growth (or decline) of religious groups with a defined membership.

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[126] Warburg, "Growth Patterns of New Religions: The Case of Baha'i".

The Change in Ethnic Composition

The extended demographic equation now can be used to explain the change in the ethnic composition of the Danish Baha'i community during the 1980s and 1990s.

Table 6.6. *Demographic balance changes in the Danish Baha'i community, 1980–1999*[a]

	Danes	Iranians	Other nat.	Total
Average no. of members in period	131	58	33	222
Enrolments (exo- + endo-)	89	23	12	124
Immigration	+3	+66	+49	+118
Emigration	−22	−32	−34	−88
Diff. = net migration	−19	+34	+15	+30
Net migration rate	*−0.76%*	*+3.1%*	*+2.4%*	*+0.71%*
Endo-enrolments	25	22	1	48
Deaths	19	3	2	24
Diff. = intrinsic growth	+6	+19	−1	+24
Intrinsic growth rate	*+0.24%*	*+1.7%*	*−0.2%*	*+0.57%*
Exo-enrolments	64	1	11	76
Exo-enrolment rate	*2.6%*	*0.1%*	*1.8%*	*1.8%*
Resignations	48	0	2	50
Diff. = stable exo-enrolments	+16	+1	+9	+26
Rate of stable exo-enrolments	*+0.64%*	*+0.1%*	*+1.4%*	*+0.62%*
Error of closure	−5	0	+1	−4
Grand total demographic movement	−2	+54	+24	+76
Control:				
Total no. at beginning of period	128	29	19	176
Total no. at end of period	126	83	53	252
Increase = grand total of movement	−2	+54	+24	+76

[a] Data from Table 6.1 and National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Denmark, current membership file 1999 (NSA-DK). The period covers 19 years (137–155 BE).

Table 6.6 shows that, in the case of native Danes, the net migration rate in this period was negative (−0.76%), meaning that more Danish Baha'is left the country than (re-)entered it. For the other two ethnic groups, the net migration rate was positive (+3.1% for the Iranians and +2.4% for the other nationalities).

The next row in Table 6.6 shows that intrinsic growth is small for the native Danes and for the other nationalities. For the group of Iranians, there is appreciable intrinsic growth stemming from immigrant Iranian Baha'i children who have come of age and have registered as Baha'is in Denmark.[127]

The third row includes the number of exo-enrolments and resignations for the three different groups. Although the number of exo-enrolments among the native Danes is relatively high, its contribution to growth is reduced because of the many resignations, resulting in a fairly low rate of stable exo-enrolments. Over a twenty-year period, there were only 16 stable exo-enrolments out of a total of 64 exo-enrolments among the group of native Danes. Thus, only 25% of the Danish converts remained Baha'is, which shows that resignations among the Danish Baha'is has been a serious hindrance to growth. This should be compared with the figures for the group of other nationalities. Although their exo-enrolment rate is lower than it is for the Danes, the rate of *stable* exo-enrolments is higher because there were only a couple of resignations among this group. For the Iranians, exo-enrolments are an insignificant source of growth, as expected.[128]

The demographic balance in Table 6.6 explains why there has been virtually no growth among the Danes: the number of stable exo-enrolments among the native Danes just compensate for the losses through migration and death, leading to a meagre net growth of three persons over the entire period 1980–1999![129] In contrast, the two other ethnic categories have had large positive net migrations, accounting for about 60% of the total growth. For the group of Iranians, intrinsic growth has also contributed significantly to the

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[127] The intrinsic growth for the Iranians may be over-estimated, because I have not always been able to assess if young Iranians who become members are born in Denmark or abroad. In the first situation, they should have been classified as Danes, since Baha'i children born in Denmark in principle are counted as native Danes when they grow up and become members. These conversions therefore are not counted as Iranian endo-enrolments even when both parents are Iranians.

[128] I know of only one exo-enrolment among Iranian Baha'is in Denmark. This was a Muslim spouse who converted to Baha'i after marriage. All the rest of the 23 Iranian enrolments in Table 6.8 are therefore endo-enrolments.

[129] In Table 6.1, the error of closure for the number of native Danes in the same period is −5 in total. When the net growth of +3 is corrected by the error of closure term of −5, the result is −2. This explains why the calculated number of native Danes in Table 6.1 dropped from 128 to 126 in the same period.

total growth, while stable exo-conversions account for the rest of the growth among the Baha'is of other nationalities.

The considerable effect that migration has had on the ethnic composition of the Danish Baha'i community can be illustrated as follows: in 1980, there were 73% native Danes, 16% Iranians and 10% other nationalities. If net migration is set to zero for all three groups, keeping the values of the other two variables (intrinsic growth and stable exo-enrolments), the Danish Baha'i community in 1999 would have consisted of 65% native Danes, 22% Iranians and 13% other nationalities. The real figures for 1999 were: 50% native Danes, 33% Iranians and 17% other nationalities. Thus, most but not all of the change in ethnic composition can be explained by migration.

Later in this chapter I return to these observations and discuss the consequences of this phenomenon for the future development of the Danish Baha'i community.

The Change in Gender Ratio

Another important demographic change in the Danish Baha'i community has been the change in gender ratio. Table 6.7 shows that the gender ratio in the Danish Baha'i community gradually evolved from an almost 2:1 ratio of women to men in the 1950s to an even balance in the 1990s. However, when the figures for Iranians and non-Iranians are considered separately (data not shown), it appears that the Iranian arrival contributed significantly to this reduction of gender ratio bias. The Iranian immigrants have a more even distribution of the sexes, as would obviously be the case for any group where most members are not first-generation converts. Thus, in 1981, there were 58% women and 42% men among the group of 153 non-Iranian Baha'is, of which the far majority (88%) were native Danes, while the Iranians had a more even gender ratio (48% women, 52% men).

I discuss elsewhere this greater acceptance of Baha'i by Danish women than by Danish men, until 1981.[130] One factor influencing this was that the Baha'is were particularly successful in recruiting new Baha'is among people engaged in the social, education and health professions, as discussed above. These professions had a female

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[130] Warburg *et al.*, "Gender, profession, and non-conformal religiosity".

Table 6.7. *Development in gender ratio in the Danish Baha'i community
—all nationalities, 1951–1999*

| Year | Number and percentage of Baha'is above 15 years | | |
	Women	Men	All
1951[a]	25 (64%)	14 (36%)	39
1959[a]	33 (66%)	17 (34%)	50
1962[a]	46 (63%)	27 (37%)	73
1981[b]	103 (56%)	81 (44%)	184
1991[c]	115 (51%)	112 (49%)	227
1997[c]	121 (49%)	126 (51%)	247
1999[b]	128 (51%)	124 (49%)	252

[a] Data from membership file, Kaya Holck private archive (NSA-DK).
[b] Data from National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Denmark, current membership file 1999 (NSA-DK).
[c] Estimated from data in *Semi-annual Statistical Reports* and *Annual Statistical Reports* [to the Universal House of Justice] (NSA-DK).

majority and many of these women were interested in religious alternatives.

From the last half of the 1980s, however, the recruitment pattern shifted remarkably. During the ten-year period 1987 to 1996, 80 new Baha'is enrolled. There were 21 youths (below 21 years of age) and 59 adults. There is no information on the gender ratio of the young Baha'is, but the group of 59 adults consisted of 34 men and 25 women.[131] Thus, more men than women had enrolled in this period, and this must have contributed significantly to the relatively rapid attainment of an even gender balance during the 1990s.

The Ageing of the Community

Table 6.8 gives an overview of age distributions in the Danish Baha'i community in 1981 and 1999. The table specifies 10-year age intervals for women and men for the whole community, as well as for Danes and Iranians separately.[132] The table clearly shows that the

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[131] Data compiled from the *Semi-annual Statistical Reports* [to the Universal House of Justice], 1987–1988 and the *Annual Statistical Reports* [to the Universal House of Justice], 1989–1996. (NSA-DK).
[132] The "other nationalities" are not shown in the table; the figures can be calculated from the data given, but there is no particularly interesting pattern in the figures.

mean ages of both ethnic groups and both sexes have increased considerably during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1981, the median age was 36 years; in 1999, the median age had increased to 48 years, which indicates that the community on average was *older* than the Danish population (the median age of the Danish population, *excluding* children below 15 years, was 44 years in 1998). Some of the factors that have led to this ageing are identified in the following.

Table 6.8. *Age analysis of the Danish Baha'i community, 1981 and 1999*

Year	Age interval	All Wm.	Men	All		Danes Wm.	Men	All		Iranians Wm.	Men	Danish populat.[a]
	15–24	9	6	15	(13%)	4	4	8	(9%)	3	2	18.9%
	25–34	22	20	42	(35%)	19	12	[b]31	(36%)	1	4	19.6%
	35–44	10	11	21	(18%)	8	7	15	(17%)	1	1	16.3%
1981	*45–54*	9	5	14	(12%)	5	1	6	(7%)	2	3	13.5%
	55–64	10	7	17	(14%)	10	7	[c]17	(20%)	0	0	13.5%
	65–74	6	2	8	(7%)	6	1	7	(8%)	0	1	11.1%
	75+	2	1	3	(3%)	2	1	3	(3%)	0	0	7.1%
	Sum	68	52	120	(100%)	54	33	87	(100%)	7	11	100%
	Median	38	35	36		40	36	38		30	34	42
	15–24	21	19	40	(16%)	11	8	19	(15%)	4	9	18.7%
	25–34	7	19	26	(10%)	5	12	17	(13%)	1	7	15.1%
	35–44	21	25	46	(18%)	9	8	17	(13%)	5	9	17.4%
1999	*45–54*	28	26	54	(21%)	14	15	[b]29	(23%)	10	7	17.9%
	55–64	17	15	32	(13%)	7	7	14	(11%)	8	5	12.6%
	65–74	22	14	36	(14%)	11	6	17	(13%)	9	5	9.7%
	75+	12	6	18	(7%)	9	4	13	(10%)	2	2	8.6%
	Sum	128	124	252	(100%)	66	60	126	(100%)	39	44	100%
	Median	50	45	48		51	46	48		55	42	44

[a] The age distribution and the median age for the Danish population of 15+ years of age was calculated from general statistical tables for the respective years. Such tables are published yearly in *Statistisk årbog / Statistical Yearbook*, Copenhagen, Danmarks Statistik.
[b] The enrolment wave of the 1970s.
[c] The pioneer generation.

The age distribution of the Iranian group must have been strongly affected by migration, otherwise the median age of the women and the men could not have changed the way it did. Between 1981 and 1999, the median age of the Iranian women increased from 30 to 55 years, a difference of 25 years. The median age of the men increased only from 34 to 42, a difference of 8 years. If there was no migration, the median ages should have changed approximately equally.

The age distribution of the group of Danish-born Baha'is is remarkable. In 1981, the community had particularly many members who were 25–34 years old. Most of them were among the young converts who joined in the wake of the youth rebellion (1970–1974). In 1999, this cohort (the "baby boomers") still dominated numerically, but now as middle-aged people (45–54 years), which explains why the median age of the Danish-born Baha'is increased from 38 to 48 years in the period 1981 to 1999. Since the year of enrolment is known for the 120 informants (Q2), it can also be determined that the wave of young converts in 1970–1974 meant a considerable, but *temporary*, rejuvenation of the Danish Baha'i community at that time:

- 42 informants were members before 1970. The median age of these informants in 1981 (the base year for calculating the age distribution) was 51 years. Thus, at the beginning of 1970, the median age was 51–11 = *40 years*.
- 81 informants were members before 1975. The median age of these informants in 1981 was 37 years. Thus, by the beginning of 1975 the median age had dropped to 37–6 = *31 years*.
- For comparison, the median age of the Danish population, *excluding* children below 15 years, was *42 years* in 1976 (see *note a* in Table 6.8).

The demographic change towards an older community has also meant that fewer Baha'i parents are of the age when they have small children. Table 6.1 shows that the number of registered Baha'i children dropped from around 60 in the late 1980s to around 40 by the end of the late 1990s. The Baha'is are urged to register their children in the yearly statistical reports, so there is no doubt that this drop is real. It presents a serious challenge to the community, because it makes it more difficult, for example, to hold regular children's classes. It is therefore indicative that, in the 1980s, the number of local spiritual assemblies that held children's classes regularly was on the average 2.3, but this dropped to 0.6 in the 1990s.[133]

It is noteworthy that the same demographic change occurred in the USA, and this has raised the same concern:

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[133] These figures can be calculated from the *Semi-annual Statistical Reports* [to the Universal House of Justice], 1981–1988 and the *Annual Statistical Reports* [to the Universal House of Justice], 1989–1999. (NSA-DK).

The predominant Baby Boomer base of the community is rapidly age-
ing and the existing core of Baha'i youth is insufficient to ensure the
stability of the existing community or to sustain its momentum of
growth.[134]

Prospects of Crisis or Growth

In the following, the demographic equation for religious groups is
used to examine the prospects of future growth and the conditions
for the Danish Baha'i community. I am especially interested in esti-
mating the effect of different exo-enrolment rates on the future size
of the three national groups of the community, because the exo-
enrolment rate is the one variable that is the direct result of mission.

The basis for estimating the prospects of future growth are the
demographic trends in the 19-year period from the end of 1980 to
the end of 1999. As mentioned, this period was characterised by a
small, but steady growth of the Danish Baha'i community. Because
this recent period covers a long span of years with stable trends in
the demographic variables, it is a fair basis for making projections
about the future prospects of growth in the number of members of
the Danish Baha'i community. The conclusions from these projec-
tions are discussed again in Chapter 9.

The key variables used in such projections are the intrinsic growth
rate, the net migration rate and the rate of stable exo-enrolments—
the sum of these gives the net growth rate for each of the three
groups: Danes, Iranians and other nationalities. These three vari-
ables over the period 1980–1999 are summarised in Table 6.9. For
use in projections, however, these figures should not be carried for-
ward uncritically as best estimates of future trends—it is necessary
to evaluate whether the variables can be expected to deviate in the
future from their past, observed values.

As discussed above, the number of members of religious groups
with a family pattern and age distribution like that of the Danish
population in general will invariably decrease if there are no sources
to growth other than intrinsic growth. My best conjecture is there-
fore that the intrinsic growth among the native Danish Baha'is is

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[134] National Teaching Committee of the United States, *Issues Pertaining to Growth,
Retention and Consolidation in the United States*, p. 15.

Table 6.9. *Summary of observed growth rate terms for the Danish Baha'i community, 1980–1999*

	Danes	Iranians	Other nat.	Total
Average no. of members	131	58	33	222
Net migration rate	−0.76%	+3.1%	+2.4%	+0.71%
Intrinsic growth rate	+0.24%	+1.7%	−0.2%	+0.57%
Rate of stable exo-enrolments	+0.64%	+0.1%	+1.4%	+0.62%

likely to stabilise slightly below zero, around −0.2%. However, the rate would increase slightly, if the rate of stable exo-enrolments rose significantly from the present, because most people convert at a comparatively young age, before they have children (see more on this in Chapter 7). The migration rate of the Danes will probably continue to be negative (Danish Baha'is leave the country for mission), but numerically less significant with the ageing of the community (it is primarily young people who emigrate). A likely estimate is −0.5%. Finally, the rate of stable exo-enrolments may vary from zero to any positive number, depending on the future success of the Baha'i mission among the non-Baha'i Danes.

For the Iranians, intrinsic growth, which was +1.7% in 1980–1999, will still be positive, since it is sustained by immigration of Baha'i families with children, as discussed above. Intrinsic growth for the Iranians will depend on the future migration rate for the Iranians. This was +3.1%, and in the long run it is likely that it will decrease with the prospects of improved political conditions in Iran and the recent tightening of Danish immigration laws; a cautious estimate is a net migration rate of +2% among the Iranians. However, unexpected events such as the aforementioned arrival of 35 Iranian Baha'is in 2002 may topple such estimates. The best estimate of the future intrinsic growth rate among the Iranians would be that it is lowered proportionally, from 1.7% to 1.7% × 2.0/3.1 = 1.1%. The rate of stable exo-enrolments is likely to remain zero among the Iranians because very few if any non-Baha'i Iranians in Denmark can be expected to convert to Baha'i.

For the other nationalities, intrinsic growth is probably around zero. The group consists both of a small number of immigrant Baha'is (who may bring their children) and to an increasing extent first-generation converts among non-Baha'i immigrants. The net migration rate of the other nationalities is estimated to continue to be +2.4%.

This variable may decrease because of restrictions on emigration from non-European countries; conversely, it may increase because of higher mobility of populations within the future enlarged EU. As with the Danes, the rate of stable exo-enrolments may vary from zero to any positive number, depending on the future success of the Baha'i mission among the non-Baha'i immigrants in Denmark.

Demographic Scenarios

In the following, I sketch three different possible *scenarios* of the future demographic development of the Danish Baha'i community, based on demographic projections up until the year 2025. Such projections are the calculated consequences of given assumptions; they are not predictions, since nobody can predict the future. I cannot in principle rule out the possibility that somehow most of the Danish population in the future would convert to Baha'i. However, I have taken for granted that under all likely circumstances, the projected number of Baha'is in 2025 will constitute only a minute fraction of the Danish population, so that the hindrance to growth is not a lack of potential proselytes! This simplifies the calculations greatly, because the future number of members can then be found in the same way that compound interest calculations are made. This is exponential growth and it means that every year, the number increases by a constant proportion determined by the net growth rate.[135]

There is one modification that is needed when using this method to determine the growth of the three different national groups of Baha'is. As mentioned, I have defined second-generation Baha'is (i.e., Baha'is of foreign ancestry but born in Denmark) as Danes and not as Iranians or other nationalities. The contingents of *new* second-generation Iranian Baha'is and Baha'is of other nationalities in the period 1999 to 2025 must therefore be transferred to the group of Danes in the projections. The number of these new second-generation Baha'is can be estimated to be roughly 43% of the total numbers in 1999—details are given in the note.[136] This results in 36

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[135] $N = N_0 \times (1 + r)^n$, where N is the future number of members, N_0 is the number in 1999 (the base year for calculations), r is the rate in % divided by 100, and n is the number of years of the period of projection (for 2025, n = 26).

[136] The calculation is based on the following arguments, which run parallel for the group of Iranians and the group of Baha'is of other nationalities, and will be

second-generation Iranians and 18 second-generation Baha'is of other nationalities, and these numbers then are subtracted from the numbers of Iranians and other nationalities calculated by the exponential growth model. In return, they should be added to the number of Danes; however, because I have noticed over the years that many second-generation Baha'is, in particular the Iranians, choose to emigrate from Denmark, I have decided only to add about 75% of the second-generation Baha'is to the group of Danes. That adds an extra 40 Baha'is in the group of Danes in 2025.

Given the above assumptions and methods of calculation, the three scenarios for the demographic development of the Danish Baha'i community can now be drafted, as shown in Table 6.10.

Scenario A is a projection until year 2025 of the current levels of stable exo-enrolments. The rates of stable exo-enrolments are +0.6% for the Danes, 0% for the Iranians and +1.4% for the other nationalities. The resulting net growth rate for the Danes is −0.1%, while the two other groups have positive net growth rates of +3.1% and +3.8%, respectively.

Scenario B is a scenario based on a four-fold increase in the rate of stable exo-enrolments among the Danes to 2.4%, while the rates of stable exo-enrolments among the other nationalities remain the same. As discussed shortly, this is not unrealistic and has been achieved previously. The higher exo-enrolment rate will also affect intrinsic growth positively in the long run, so intrinsic growth for the Danes is therefore estimated to rise from −0.2% to zero, like that of the group of other nationalities.

Scenario C implies a ten-fold increase in the rate of stable exo-enrolments to 6.0% among the Danes. This means a virtual boom

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exemplified by the Iranians. It is assumed that the first-generation Iranian Baha'is give birth in Denmark to so many children who become Baha'is that they can keep pace with the number of Iranian Baha'is who die. In other words, if there was no migration and if second-generation Iranians were counted as Iranians, the size of the group of Iranians would be stable, meaning that the intrinsic growth rate for the Iranians would be zero. It is also assumed that all second-generation Iranians become Baha'is at the age of 15 (which they normally do). The population statistics concerning Denmark suggest a life expectency of about 60 years from the age of 15. This means that an Iranian Baha'i who has become a Baha'i at the age of 15 will live on the average 60 years before he or she dies. Therefore, 26/60 or about 43% of the group of Iranians will have died in the 26 years from 1999 to 2025. To keep the size of the group of Iranians stable, the number of new second-generation Iranian Baha'is should also be 43% of the total number of Iranians.

in enrolments like that of the early 1970s. This can probably only be achieved if the general climate for conversion to Baha'i becomes as receptive as it was in that period, and it also requires that it can be maintained for a longer time frame. Since it is primarily young people who convert, a high conversion rate would mean a rejuvenation of the group of Danes. This also means that the emigration rate will increase because there is an overrepresentation of young people among the emigrants. The estimated net migration rate therefore is assumed to be −1.0%, instead of −0.5%. Intrinsic growth is not expected to rise higher than +0.2%, because it takes nearly a generation for young converts to have children who become of age. The positive climate for conversion, however, will also affect conversion among other nationalities (except the Iranians), so the rate of stable exo-enrolments among the other nationalities should increase too, for example to 4.0%.

The long-term consequences of the three scenarios for the growth and demographic composition of the Danish Baha'i community appear in Table 6.10. In the year 2025, scenario A will lead to the Danish-born Baha'is constituting only 42% of the Danish Baha'i community (and nearly one-fourth of them will be second-generation Baha'is from the groups of Iranians and other nationalities). Although this might be ideologically acceptable to the Baha'is, it means that the Danish Baha'i community is slowly becoming an immigrant religious group. The fate of Ahmadiyyah may illustrate this trend. In the first ten years of Ahmadiyyah in Denmark (the first Dane converted in 1955), it was a group of largely Danish converts, but now has become an almost all-Pakistani immigrant religious group. In 1994, there were about 350 Ahmadiyyah members in Denmark, and only about 30 of them were native Danes.[137] It is realistic to assume that the same trend would put the Danish Baha'i community in a less favourable position with regard to attracting proselytes among the majority population.

Scenario B shows that even a significant increase in the rate of stable exo-enrolments among the Danes only stabilises the present

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[137] Hanne Aa. B. Ejsing, *En religionssociologisk fremstilling af Ahmadiyyah-Islam, med særligt henblik på medlemssammensætningens og organisationens udviklingstendenser fra 1960–1994* [Ahmadiyyah-Islam in the perspective of sociology of religion, with a particular view of membership composition and development trends in the organisation, 1960–1994] (B.A. thesis), Department of History of Religions, University of Copenhagen, 1994, pp. 17–18. (Unpublished).

Table 6.10. *Demographic projections for the Danish Baha'i community in the 21st century*

	Danes	Iranians	Other nat.	Total
Base figures:				
Number of members in 1980	128	29	19	176
Per cent of total	73%	16%	11%	
Number of members in 1999	126	83	43	252
Per cent of total	50%	33%	17%	
Scenario A: Current low trends of success with proselytising				
Intrinsic growth rate	−0.2%	+1.1%	0.0%	
Net migration rate	−0.5%	+2.0%	+2.4%	
Rate of stable exo-enrolments	+0.6%	0.0%	+1.4%	
Sum = net growth rate	*−0.1%*	*+3.1%*	*+3.8%*	
Numbers in year 2025[a]	173	148	95	416
Per cent of total[b]	42%	36%	23%	
Scenario B: Medium success with proselytising				
Intrinsic growth rate	0.0%	+1.1%	0.0%	
Net migration rate	−0.5%	+2.0%	+2.4%	
Rate of stable exo-enrolments	+2.4%	0.0%	+1.4%	
Sum = net growth rate	*+1.9%*	*+3.1%*	*+3.8%*	
Numbers in year 2025[a]	246	148	95	489
Per cent of total[b]	50%	30%	19%	
Scenario C: Booming success with proselytising				
Intrinsic growth rate	+0.2%	+1.1%	0.0%	
Net migration rate	−1.0%	+2.0%	+2.4%	
Rate of stable exo-enrolments	+6.0%	0.0%	+4.0%	
Sum = net growth rate	*+5.2%*	*+3.1%*	*+6.4%*	
Numbers in year 2025[b]	511	148	198	857
Per cent of total	60%	17%	23%	

[a] The numbers take account of the fact that second-generation Baha'is are counted as Danes. As discussed in Chapter 6, in this case 36 Baha'is are subtracted from the Iranians and 18 Baha'is are subtracted from the group of other nationalities, while 40 Baha'is are added to the Danes.
[b] Percentages do not add to 100% because of rounding.

situation to where about one-half of the Baha'is are Danes. This is because the net growth rate of the group of Danes is still lower than that of the other two groups, despite the rate of exo-conversion being higher among the Danes. The only reason the proportion of Danes has not dropped below 50% is that second-generation Baha'is are counted as Danes, also when both parents are foreigners.

Scenario C, where the rate of stable exo-enrolment increases to

6.0%, is the only scenario which will reverse (although slowly) the tendency of the Danish Baha'i community becoming an immigrant religious group. By 2025, the proportion of Danish-born Baha'is will increase from 50% to 60%.

A few words of caution might be needed here. As mentioned earlier, these scenarios are only projections of demographic assumptions. Such projections are useful because they tell something about the *limits to growth*. For example, the scenarios project that in the period up to 2025, the proportion of Danish-born Baha'is can never reach the same level as in 1980, even in the case of a booming success with the Baha'i mission. I have here equated "booming success" with a rate of stable exo-enrolments of 6.0% (scenario C), and I suggest that this is probably a realistic upper limit for the Baha'i mission.

To obtain a rate of 6.0% requires a ten-fold increase of the present rate of 0.6%. If it could be projected that only about 25% of the exo-enrolments ultimately resulted in *stable* exo-enrolments (Table 6.6), the exo-enrolment rate among Danes should be four times higher, or 24%. This may sound high, but it should be born in mind that it could be achieved if every Baha'i—not only among the group of Danish-born Baha'is, but among them all—were able to convert on the average *one* Dane every *eighth* year![138]

The above calculations also point to the importance of keeping new converts as members of the Baha'i community. For example, if the proportion of stable exo-enrolments to total conversions, which is a measure of the stability of conversions, could be raised from 25% to 40% through a more effective socialisation of converts, it would mean that the same growth as above (6%) could be achieved with a considerably lower exo-enrolment rate, *in casu* 15%. On top of this comes an endo-enrolment rate of about 1.5% needed to keep intrinsic growth above zero, so the total enrolment rate among the Danes in this example should be above 16.5%. Enrolment rates above that, in fact, were achieved in the years 1960, 1962, 1971, 1972 and 1973 (the two highest rates being 40% in 1971 and 29% in 1972). Furthermore, in the five year period 1977–1981, the total enrolment rate among the Danes was on the average nearly 10%.

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[138] If every Baha'i converted a Dane every eighth year, it means that every year the Baha'i community would increase its membership by one-eighth. The new members would all be native Danes, and since native Danes make up about half of the Danish Baha'i community, this increase would correspond to one-fourth of the group of Danes, or 25% (1/8 divided by 1/2 = 1/4).

Even if the stability of conversions is not raised from the present 25%, such an enrolment rate would match the 2.4% of scenario B.

All these considerations show that the Danish Baha'i community in certain years has demonstrated a considerable potential for growth, but also that there are limits to growth. Given the patterns of migration and the fact that intrinsic growth among the Danish-born Baha'is is zero or even below that, it is difficult to envisage that the Danish Baha'i community will become a quantitatively significant religious group in Denmark in the foreseeable future. Even under the most optimistic assumptions (scenario C), the number of Baha'is in Denmark in 2050 would be projected to be less than 3,000, which is a meagre 0.07% of the (present) population of Denmark of 4.35 million aged 15 years or above. However, if the time span is increased further to one or two centuries, and the growth rate is maintained, the Baha'i religion may eventually become a major religion, also in Denmark. As Rodney Stark convincingly has shown, Christianity needed only to grow at a pace of 40% per decade (an annual growth rate of 3.4%), to increase from an obscure cult of about an estimated 7,500 members in the year 100 to become the majority religion in the Roman empire by the year 350.[139] This was obtained with a smaller growth rate than in scenario C—but it was over a period of a quarter of a millenium. Religious expansion through mission simply takes its time.

THE STRATEGIC CHALLENGES OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC EQUATION

The foregoing demographic analyses and projections are illustrative of the strategic challenges facing the Danish Baha'i community and any other proselytising religious minority group in Denmark and other countries with a stable population. If the leadership of a religious group has a policy of reaching a significant long-term growth, it needs to carefully attend to the first five of the six demographic variables of the extended demographic equation—realising, of course, that the last one is beyond influence: *immigration, emigration, endo-enrolments, exo-enrolments, resignations and deaths*. In the above discussion,

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[139] Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity. A Sociologist Reconsiders History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 3–13.

much focus has been on exo-enrolment and with good reason, because as I demonstrated, endo-enrolments alone cannot sustain a community with a family structure like the one of the European populations. Exo-enrolments mean that new Baha'is convert to the religion, and this subject is treated in Chapter 7.

It is, however, also essential that once new members are recruited, they must remain *active members* who will work for the further development of the community, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Otherwise, the community cannot contribute to the global growth. A low *resignation rate* is the demographic indicator of stable conversions—exo- as well as endo-enrolments. Both the Baha'i community and the individual Baha'is must attend to the issue of achieving *stable conversions* and take care that everybody maintain their feeling of belonging to the Baha'i community. Even the few strong individualists among the Baha'is who abstain from communal activities, but nevertheless consider themselves to be very much Baha'is, must do something to maintain their affiliation to the Baha'i religion, such as praying or reading from the Baha'i texts. In Chapter 8, this issue of belonging to the Danish Baha'i community is pursued from the individual's point of view.

But the Baha'is must also be willing to do more than just be active in community life. If the group does not work continuously—and work hard—for a favourable demographic balance, it will invariably decline. The necessity of keeping a certain minimum *exo-enrolment rate* calls for systematic proselytising, which is an activity that demands investments of much time, much labour and usually also money. But the Danish Baha'i community would also suffer severely if there were too little attention on keeping a high *endo-enrolment rate*. This is a question of socialisation of children, and it demands resources too. The issue of choosing between activities that strengthen community life for existing members and activities directed towards recruitment of new members is discussed in Chapter 9. This discussion is part of the development of a resource mobilisation approach in the light of *Gemeinschaft* versus *Gesellschaft*. In this context, Chapter 8 provides some of the concrete data needed for taking the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* dichotomy beyond the pale of generalities.

People May Leave for Many Good Reasons

The relatively low stability of conversion among the native Danes is
evidently a serious issue. Only 25% of the new native Danish Baha'is
remain Baha'is for the rest of their lives, which means that three
out of four new Baha'is eventually resign from the Baha'i commu-
nity. The low proportion of new members who remain members
might be interpreted as an effect of ineffective socialisation of new
members, and it is probable that the Danish Baha'i community
should consider this issue to their advantage.

However, it should be realised that belonging to the Baha'i com-
munity is a complex matter concerning more than just socialisation.
For example, I personally know some former Baha'is whose crucial
reason for resignation was loss of belief in the existence of God.
Some intellectual Baha'is of the USA and the UK have resigned
because they disagree with the Baha'i policy towards academic stud-
ies of the Baha'i religion and this reason also has nothing to do with
poor socialisation—or for that matter some other reason that might
be conjectured from a "deeper" interpretation of motives and back-
grounds of those who resigned. I shall not pursue this further, but
simply conclude that it would seem to me to be a sociologistic
simplification to view such explicitly expressed reasons as a result of
poor socialisation.

People may leave for many good reasons, including ones that text-
book sociology does not address.

BECOMING A BAHA'I

Within the history and sociology of religion, there is a tradition of classifying shifts in religious affiliation in terms of how radical they are. This tradition can be traced back to A. D. Nock's classic analysis of religious patterns of the Roman Empire. According to Nock, shifts in affiliation to what he calls exclusive new religions, e.g., Christianity and Judaism, are denoted as conversions, while shifts in affiliation to non-exclusive mystery cults are called adhesions.[1] Moreover, today, many scholars distinguish between conversions, which are religious changes that imply profound shifts in religious orientation, and less radical changes of religious affiliation, for example, Americans joining a new Protestant denomination.[2] The distinction is further refined with James Beckford's model of five types of religious affiliation, ranging from the adept to the client.[3]

The Baha'i communities of Western Europe are small, relatively unknown religious minority groups that, from a Western cultural context, have unfamiliar doctrines and strange words. Thus, it is appropriate to call the process of becoming a Baha'i a conversion, classifying the study of this process in a theoretical framework of recruitment and conversion to religious minority groups and new religious movements in general.

THE STUDY OF CONVERSION TO NEW RELIGIONS

The study of conversion became a major theme in the sociology of religion starting in the early 1970s. This research to a large extent

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[1] A. D. Nock, *Conversion. The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1933, pp. 1–16.

[2] Thomas Robbins, *Cults, Converts and Charisma: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*, London, Sage, 1988, pp. 64–65; Richard Machalek and David A. Snow, "Conversion to New Religious Movements", in David G. Bromley and Jeffrey K. Hadden (eds.), *Religion and the Social Order. The Handbook on Cults and Sects in America*, Greenwich, Jai Press, vol. 3B, 1993, pp. 53–74.

[3] James A. Beckford, *Cult Controversies. The societal response to new religious movements*, London, Tavistock, 1985, pp. 75–87.

was clearly motivated by public interest in and concern over the spectacular emergence of several new religious movements with exotic or controversial backgrounds. Much of the early research was dominated by a psychopathological view on conversion—a view spurred by the assumption that "spiritual apotheosis is an unnatural and problematic phenomenon which entails esoteric processes," as Robbins sarcastically phrases it.[4] David Bromley and Jeffrey Hadden suggest that this early approach to the study of conversion was a perpetuation within the social sciences of Freud's view of religion as "psychopathology" and Marx's view of it as "false consciousness".[5] In the eyes of the public, however, it was also disturbing that sons and daughters of the well-educated middle class were turning away from their parental heritage and becoming zealous members of religious groups with colourful clothes, communal living and conspicuous new ways of proselytising. The intense atmosphere of newcomer socialisation, which was characteristic of some of the religious milieus of the 1970s, fuelled ideas that these youngsters were "brainwashed" into conversion.

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a considerable flow of publications on approaches to understanding conversion. The flow of this type of publication ebbed out during the 1990s, concurrently with the abatement of the issue in public debate. One of the later, major contributions is Lewis Rambo's *Understanding Religious Conversion*, from 1993, and his approach demonstrated that the field now seemed to have moved considerably beyond the scope of the social psychology pathologist.[6] Although several of the different theories and approaches concerning the analysis of conversion have been criticised and abandoned, the end result for the sociology of religion is not the victory of one theory, it is rather the inspiration from several theories that has given a more consistent and balanced understanding of conversion to new religions in modern Western society.[7]

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[4] Robbins, *Cults, Converts and Charisma*, p. 63.

[5] David G. Bromley and Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Exploring the Significance of Cults and Sects in America: Perspectives, Issues, and Agendas", in David G. Bromley and Jeffrey K. Hadden (eds.), *Religion and the Social Order. The Handbook on Cults and Sects in America*, Greenwich, Jai Press, vol. 3B, 1993, pp. 1–48 (indirect quotations pp. 13–14).

[6] Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993.

[7] See for example, Robbins, *Cults, Converts and Charisma*, or Lorne L. Dawson,

I begin this chapter with a brief discussion of the most significant theoretical contributions to the sociological study of religious conversion, with an emphasis on the concepts used in the analyses of the material from the present study of conversion to Baha'i. I show in these analyses that the material collected concerning the Danish Baha'is both challenges and confirms some of the sociological hypotheses on conversion to new religious movements. In that respect, although not a general review of conversion studies, the chapter is also meant to contribute to the discussion of conversion in general.

A central part of the empirical data consists of the conversion accounts given by the Danish Baha'i informants in the current interview study. The reliability of such personal accounts as sources concerning the conversion process has been debated, and this issue therefore is discussed in some detail before the analysis of the material proper.

Conversion is a Process

In the sociological study of conversion, one of the widely accepted tenets is that conversion should be regarded and analysed as a process. In 1965, the sociologists John Lofland and Rodney Stark proposed a conversion process model that became extremely influential. The model arose from Lofland and Stark's study of fifteen early American converts to the Unification Church, from which they identified seven sequential, necessary and sufficient stages of the conversion process.[8] Initially, a person must (1) experience enduring, acutely felt tensions, (2) within a religious problem-solving perspective, (3) which lead her/him to define herself/himself as a religious seeker. Then follows (4) an encounter with the religious movement at a crucial turning point in life, during which (5) an affective bond is formed (or which pre-existed) with one or more members of the group, followed by (6) external attachments becoming weaker, and (7) the new convert having intensive interactions within the group.

Numerous studies have been published in which the Lofland-Stark process model is applied to empirical material from diverse religious

Comprehending Cults. The Sociology of New Religious Movements, Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 72–101, for a review of the most influential theories of conversion.

[8] John Lofland and Rodney Stark, "Becoming a world-saver: a theory of conversion to a deviant perspective", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 30, 1965, pp. 862–874.

groups. Moreover, modifications have been suggested when the model did not fit the data.[9] Bartlett's work concerning Californian Baha'is also belongs to this category of process model evaluations.[10] The model was re-assessed by Lofland in 1978 and subsequently elaborated under the umbrella of an "exchange theory of religion" by Stark and Bainbridge in *A Theory of Religion* from 1987. However, its basic elements have been preserved, and the above presentation suffices for the following.[11]

Some of the assumptions behind the first stages of the Lofland-Stark model are challenged by Richardson and Stewart, and its general applicability is more fully discussed in a comparative study by Greil and Rudy, who suggest that not all seven stages are equally significant when different religious groups are compared.[12] Greil and Rudy conclude that the Lofland-Stark model is most useful when applied to groups such as the Unification Church or ISKCON, which they characterise as "stigmatised" and involving a "radical discontinuity of social roles".[13] Greil and Rudy classify these groups as Type One and state that seekership and the neutralisation of extra-group attachments are characteristic of conversion to Type One groups. Stark and Bainbridge call the Type One groups "high-tension religious movements" and they state that their elaboration of the original Lofland-Stark model is directed towards such groups.[14]

In contrast to Type One groups are the Type Two groups, such as Nichiren Shoshu, which allow their members to continue with extra-group activities. In both types, however, intensive interaction with members of the group and the formation of affective bonds are important elements of the conversion process.[15]

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[9] Robbins, *Cults, Converts and Charisma*, p. 80.

[10] Jean Eleanor Bartlett, *Baha'i World Faith: A Case Study in Adult Socialization* (Ph.D. diss.), Riverside, Department of Anthropology, University of California, 1984.

[11] John Lofland, "'Becoming a World-Saver' Revisited", in James T. Richardson (ed.), *Conversion Careers. In and Out of the New Religions*, Beverly Hills, Sage, 1978, pp. 10–23; Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*, New York, Peter Lang, 1987, pp. 200–238.

[12] James T. Richardson and Mary Stewart, "Conversion Process Models and the Jesus Movement", in James T. Richardson (ed.), *Conversion Careers. In and Out of the New Religions*, Beverly Hills, Sage, 1978, pp. 24–42; Arthur L. Greil and David R. Rudy, "What Have We Learned From Process Models Of Conversion? An Examination Of Ten Case Studies", *Sociological Focus*, vol. 17, 1984, pp. 305–323.

[13] Greil and Rudy, "What Have We Learned From Process Models Of Conversion?" (quotations p. 317).

[14] Stark and Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*, p. 238.

[15] Greil and Rudy, "What Have We Learned From Process Models Of Conversion?"

I agree with Greil and Rudy and with Rambo that there is no such thing as *the* conversion process; hence, no single process model will fit all conversions.[16] Nevertheless, according to Lofland, the Lofland-Stark model was never specifically meant to have universal validity, and it is probably better characterised as one out of several possible typified conversion processes.[17] For example, Rambo's model of conversion borrows from the Lofland-Stark process model, but eliminates the more problematic assumption of a specific sequence of events in the conversion process.[18]

Conversion: Who is in Control?

Since the 1970s, the brainwash hypothesis has remained a popular explanation of otherwise unexplainable conversions, despite the fact that it is repeatedly challenged by sociologists of religion. However, the brainwash hypothesis was dealt a heavy blow by Eileen Barker's study of conversion to the Unification Church, one of the most controversial of the new religious movements. Paraphrasing the title of her book, she reports that affiliation to the Unification Church is far more of a choice made by the individual than it is an effect of a hypothetical brainwashing.[19] Nevertheless, the brainwash hypothesis is hard to kill. A summary of the critique of the brainwashing thesis is given by Richardson, who concludes that it is an ideologically founded metaphor without scientific support.[20] In a detailed and balanced discussion of the issue of brainwashing, Dawson ends with this terse conclusion: "Are the followers of NRMs brainwashed? There is not much reason for believing so."[21]

Brainwashing is one thing, but socialisation is another, and the potential convert is usually subjected to social pressure from the group. This is part of the mission strategy; some groups expose the

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[16] Greil and Rudy, "What Have We Learned From Process Models Of Conversion?"; Rambo *Understanding Religious Conversion*, p. 5.

[17] Lofland, "'Becoming a World-Saver' Revisited".

[18] Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, pp. 16–19.

[19] Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie. Choice or Brainwashing?*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1985.

[20] James T. Richardson, "A Social Psychological Critique of 'Brainwashing' Claims about Recruitment to New Religions", in David G. Bromley and Jeffrey K. Hadden (eds.), *Religion and the Social Order. The Handbook on Cults and Sects in America*, Greenwich, Jai Press, vol. 3B, 1993, pp. 75–97.

[21] Dawson, *Comprehending Cults* (quotation p. 123).

converts to intense, all-day experiences in retreats and camps, while other groups, like the Baha'is, just continue to invite people to various events. There is, however, little substance in concluding that converts are involuntary victims of a coercion they cannot resist.[22]

To regard converts as passive, involuntary victims of an uncontrollable social environment, however, can also be seen as a sociological generalisation of a famous conversion story, which among other things reveals (*Acts* 9, 3–21) that St. Paul the apostle unintentionally embarked on his radical new course after divine and therefore irresistible interference.[23] A lesser known, but in a Baha'i context just as relevant, example of a "Pauline" conversion experience is the conversion of the Bab's first adherent, Mulla Muhammad Husayn Bushru'i. In Chapter 4, it is noted that this conversion account is rendered in two versions: one stresses Mulla Husayn's intellectual scepticism and emotional struggles, the other emphasises divine revelation. The first reports:

> After some days of anxious investigation and study, Mulla Husayn became firmly convinced that the Messenger long expected by the Shi'is had indeed appeared.[24]

The other description is from *The Dawn-Breakers*, where Mulla Husayn is said to have described his experience to a fellow-Babi, Mirza Ahmad-i-Qazvini as follows:[25]

> This Revelation, so suddenly and impetuously thrust upon me, came as a thunderbolt which, for a time, seemed to have benumbed my faculties. I was blinded by its dazzling splendour and overwhelmed by its crushing force. Excitement, joy, awe, and wonder stirred the depths of my soul. Predominant among these emotions was a sense of gladness and strength which seemed to have transfigured me. How feeble and impotent, how dejected and timid, I had felt previously! Then I could neither write nor walk, so tremulous were my hands and feet. Now, however, the knowledge of His Revelation had galvanised my being. I felt possessed of such courage and power that were the world,

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[22] Barker, *The Making of a Moonie*, pp. 232–259.

[23] James T. Richardson, "The Active vs. Passive Convert: Paradigm Conflict in Conversion/Recruitment Research", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 24, 1985, pp. 163–179.

[24] J. E. Esslemont, *An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980, p. 14.

[25] Shoghi Effendi (ed., trans.), *The Dawn-Breakers. Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974, p. 52.

> all its peoples and its potentates, to rise against me, I would, alone
> and undaunted, withstand their onslaught . . .[26]

As discussed in Chapter 4, both versions may be plausible, and this
topic is not resumed here. In the present context, it is more inter-
esting to note that the Baha'is' most central conversion story is ren-
dered through Shoghi Effendi in the form of a spiritual experience,
which is strikingly like that of Paul's experience of trembling, weak-
ness and recovery from his sudden glimpse of insight. For many
Christians, this kind of conversion serves as an ideal of what true
conversion should be like.[27] The pioneer of the psychology of reli-
gion, William James, compiled in 1902 many personal accounts of
conversion experiences, and it is interesting that most of them are
presented as decisive and rather sudden psychological clarification
processes that seem modelled after the Pauline conversion experience.[28]

However, in its historical context, Mulla Husayn's conversion was
not a conversion to a new religion; it was a re-orientation within
the Islamic belief system. In that context, intellectual struggle also
seems a plausible process of conversion. As I show later, the con-
version accounts of many Danes have an element of intellectual strug-
gle, in which the converts comfort themselves with the Baha'i doctrine
that the Baha'i religion represents the eternal truths of all revealed
religions. This means, for example, that the converts do not have
to give up their belief in the divine nature of Jesus Christ. So, it
seems that both conversion accounts may serve as ideals for Westerners.

The Concept of the Religious Seeker

One of the ideas introduced with the Lofland-Stark model and other
process models is that the potential convert is a *seeker*. The word
"seeker" is part of everyday language, and it has a long tradition of
use as a self-labelling term in religious groups.[29] For the Baha'is, it

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[26] Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 65.

[27] John Lofland and Norman Skonovd, "Patterns of Conversion", in Eileen Barker
(ed.), *Of Gods and Men. New Religious Movements in the West. Proceedings of the 1981
Annual Conference of the British Sociological Association. Sociology of Religion Study Group*,
Macon, Mercer University Press, 1983, pp. 1–24.

[28] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature. Being
the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1901–1902*, New York,
University Books, 1963.

[29] Members of some of the 17th-century Puritan groups in England and New
England called themselves "Seekers". The Quakers later developed from the Seekers.

is part of their ideology to see the potential convert as a seeker of spiritual truth.[30] This quest for spiritual knowledge and truth is expected to continue also after conversion (the Baha'i term for this process is deepening), and the word seeker in itself has positive connotations in a Baha'i context. Seekership for the Baha'is is an intellectual endeavour, and Mulla Husayn's conversion complies with this notion of seekership, as discussed above.

Sociologists of religion have borrowed the term seeker and apply it widely in conversion studies—however, its scholarly use has not always led to a systematic, independent delimitation of "seekers" from "non-seekers".[31] In many of the classical studies of conversion, the term "seekers" is applied as a virtually all-inclusive term for prospective converts. Thus, in the Lofland-Stark study, all converts are considered seekers prior to their contact with the group, and the same is the case with the UFO cult study by Balch and Taylor.[32] Roger Straus, who studied seeker behaviour among college youths, proposes that "contemporary sociocultural actuality increasingly requires every individual to become a seeker of some kind and to some degree."[33] Colin Campbell proposes that a "cultic milieu" exists; this milieu is unified by a common ideology of seekership, and all individuals participating in the cultic milieu share a quest for esoteric enlightenment of some kind.[34]

With reference to Colin Campbell, Roy Wallis characterises many new religious groups as "more or less temporary associations of 'seekers' organised around some common interest".[35] It is clear from

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[30] Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'i. The Religious Construction of a Global Identity*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2000, pp. 15–21.

[31] I present this discussion in an abbreviated form in, Margit Warburg, "Seeking the Seekers in the Sociology of Religion", *Social Compass*, vol. 48, 2001, pp. 91–101.

[32] Lofland and Stark, "Becoming a world-saver"; Robert W. Balch and David Taylor, "Seekers and Saucers. The Role of the Cultic Milieu in Joining a UFO Cult", in James T. Richardson (ed.), *Conversion Careers. In and Out of the New Religions*, Beverly Hills, Sage, 1978, pp. 43–64.

[33] Roger Straus, "A Situation of Desired Self-Change and Strategies of Self-Transcendence. Changing Oneself: Seekers and the Creative Transformation of Life Experience", in John Lofland (ed.), *Doing Social Life. The Qualitative Study of Human Interaction in Natural Settings*, New York, John Wiley, 1976, pp. 252–273, p. 269.

[34] Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization", *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, vol. 5, 1972, pp. 119–136.

[35] Roy Wallis, *The Road to Total Freedom. A Sociological Analysis of Scientology*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1977, p 14.

Wallis' use of the term seeker that he *a priori* considers seeker behaviour as predominant among the members.[36] Jeffrey Kaplan denotes the Branch Davidians and other radical religious groups as "groups of seekers", and referring to Colin Campbell, he proposes that these groups constitute a "confederacy of seekers".[37]

In the above-mentioned comparative analysis of a number of early studies concerning conversion to new religious movements, Greil and Rudy report that there is "evidence of seekership" in six of the ten cases examined, but they do not discuss further the definition of seekership.[38] Thomas Robbins' later review of the Greil and Rudy study quotes this finding, but does not expound on it.[39]

In other conversion studies, "seeker" is one of several categories that informants can use to label themselves.[40] This approach dates back to Charles Glock and Rodney Stark, who introduced (but did not make use of) distinctions between "believers", "seekers" and "nonbelievers", using as a criterion the degree to which individuals were concerned with "discovering the purpose and meaning of life".[41] In *A Generation of Seekers*, from 1994, Wade Clark Roof defines seekers somewhat differently, namely as people who have rejected a religious identification, yet characterise themselves as "spiritual".[42] A problem with self-labelling is, of course, that when people are asked if they would label themselves as "spiritual", they may have different definitions of the word.

Eileen Barker's analysis of seekership motives among the Moonies is a prime example of a conversion study in which seekership is not only a descriptive term but is applied analytically as a sociological variable. She first discusses possible motives of seekership (spiritual, political, self-fulfilment, philosophical etc.), and then she describes a questionnaire that lists various existential values and life goals to

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[36] Wallis, *The Road to Total Freedom*, pp. 13–16.

[37] Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America. Millenarian Movements from the Far Right to the Children of Noah*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1997, pp. 164–177.

[38] Greil and Rudy, "What Have We Learned From Process Models Of Conversion?" (quotation p. 315).

[39] Robbins, *Cults, Converts and Charisma*, p. 82.

[40] Kimmo Kääriäinen, "Religiousness in Russia after the Collapse of Communism", *Social Compass*, vol. 46, 1999, pp. 35–46.

[41] Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension*, Chicago, Rand McNally, 1965, p. 27.

[42] Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers. The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation*, San Francisco, Harper, 1994, pp. 80–81.

gauge the type and strength of seekership among members of the Unification Church and a control group.[43] She reports that a quest for a vague "something, but didn't know what" was far more common among the active members of the Unification Church than it was among the control group.

McMullen notes that some of the Atlanta Baha'i converts did not describe themselves as seekers in the sense that they were looking for a religious alternative when they became involved with Baha'i.[44] In his study, McMullen therefore distinguishes between "seekers" who were motivated out of dissatisfaction with their then current religious affiliation and understanding, and people who simply became attracted to the Baha'i religion without expressing any such dissatisfaction.[45] In McMullen's study, the seekers constituted the far greater majority, but he gives no specific data on this proportion.

The above brief review indicates a need for clarification of the term seekership. If seekership is defined and applied as a proper sociological variable in an analysis of conversion, the potential social significance of the difference between seekers and non-seekers can be investigated, thereby refining our understanding of conversion. Later in this chapter, I present a pragmatic definition that has enabled me to establish a meaningful way of distinguishing seekers from non-seekers among first-generation Danish Baha'is.

The "Active" Convert

As early as 1976, Roger Straus described the youth generation as curious and creative experimenters of transcendental "trips", not as passive and pitiful persons who converted to new religions as pseudo-solutions to real-world problems.[46] In several other studies emerging from the critique of the psychopathological definition of conversion, the view was advocated that conversion is a psychologically normal process that can be analysed as a process exerted by *active agents*.[47] Lorne Dawson later elaborated on what he saw as the

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[43] Barker, *The Making of a Moonie*, pp. 225–231.
[44] McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, pp. 27–28.
[45] McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, p. 28.
[46] Straus, "A Situation of Desired Self-Change and Strategies of Self-Transcendence".
[47] Balch and Taylor, "Seekers and Saucers"; Richardson, "Active versus Passive Converts".

imprecise term "active conversion", and he suggested that it should be analytically conceived of as a "reflectively monitored conversion".[48]

Dawson's "reflectively monitored conversion" implies that religious conversion is a normal and, in the eyes of many, also sensible change in a person's life resulting from his or her reflections over a religious issue. This is congruent with the concept of seekership as the Baha'is and other religious groups see it. "Reflectively monitored conversion" is also a parallel to the concepts and thoughts of the "intellectualistic" theory of conversion suggested a decade earlier by Robin Horton and J. D. Y. Peel. They analysed conversions to Christianity and Islam in West Africa under the assumption that when presented with new messages, converts select some of the new ideas and adapt them to make them meaningful in light of their own past experiences.[49] In brief, the theory views "the process by which individuals come to label themselves Christian (or Muslim)" as a rational process (that is, a process involving the intellect) exerted by active agents, on the individual as well as on the social level.[50] This position is emphasised again later by Peel:

> However inevitable or necessary the conversion-process, once it has occurred, may seem to us to be, we must never forget it is governed by the reasons or criteria of value of the converts. They are not automata, but become Christians because in some way Christianity fulfils some traditional criterion better than the ethnic religion: it may seem more consistent with experience, more rational, more in tune with the spirit of the age, more powerful, more morally uplifted, etc. It is essential to understand these criteria, as they are likely to continue to underlie Christian profession. Moreover, the converts do not accept the missionary package lock, stock and barrel: they select and they make their own decisions about what is important and what is not.[51]

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[48] Lorne Dawson, "Self-Affirmation, Freedom, and Rationality: Theoretically Elaborating 'Active' Conversions", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 29, 1990, pp. 141–163 (quotations p. 160).

[49] Robin Horton and J. D. Y. Peel, "Conversion and Confusion: A Rejoinder on Christianity in Eastern Nigeria", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 10, 1976, pp. 481–498.

[50] J. D. Y. Peel, "The Religious Transformation of Africa in a Weberian Perspective", *International Conference on Sociology of Religion, Acts of the 12th Conference*, The Hague, 26–30 August 1973, pp. 337–352 (quotation p. 343).

[51] J. D. Y. Peel, "The Christianization of African society: some possible models", in Edward Fasholé-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings, and Goodwin Tasie (eds.), *Christianity in Independent Africa*, London, Rex Collins, 1978, pp. 443–454 (quotation p. 447).

This eclectic characteristic of conversion has led to the rise of indige-
nous versions of Christianity, a development that has been regarded
as peculiar to Africa, but is essentially no different from the cultural
selections and blending of old and new when Europe was Chris-
tianised.[52] The same eclectic process takes place when Westerners con-
vert to new religions of Eastern origin. An example from Baha'i
conversions is that Danes tend to interpret and follow the ordinance
of the fast differently from how the Iranians do, as is discussed in
detail in Chapter 8. Will van den Hoonaard also gives a number of
instructive examples of this eclectic aspect of conversion among the
first Canadian Baha'is.[53]

The Social Environment

The introduction of the view of converts as active agents represents
a needed corrective for the tendency to place great emphasis on the
influence of the social environment as an explanation for conver-
sion. Among such approaches, one of the most influential is the
"social network analysis" launched in 1980 by Snow, Zurcher and
Ekland-Olson in a comparative study of the conversion patterns to
different religious groups.[54] The study was based on a review of nine
earlier quantitative studies of the mode of joining various groups,
plus supplementary data on recruitment to Nichiren Shoshu and
ISKCON provided from the groups' own publications. One of the
variables in the study was the role that the social network played in
the joining. Converts were considered to be recruited from inside
the social network, if the contact with the religious movement was
established through the potential convert's relatives, friends or col-
leagues. However, if the joining was the result of a meeting with a
total stranger or a response to an advertisement for a meeting or
the like, the recruitment was classified as happening outside the exist-
ing social network.

Snow *et al.* report that joining from inside the social network was
predominant in most religious groups (typically 60–90% of the

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[52] Peel, "The Christianization of African society".

[53] Will C. van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada,
1898–1948*, Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996, pp. 29–42.

[54] David A. Snow, Louis A. Zurcher, Jr., and Sheldon Ekland-Olson, "Social
Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential
Recruitment", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 45, 1980, pp. 787–801.

conversions), but ISKCON was a remarkable exception. In two separate studies, more than 95% of the ISKCON converts were recruited from the street, which by definition is outside the social network.[55] They conclude that if a movement is based on its adherents' full participation in the group, which was the case for ISKCON at that time, it will attract members primarily from public places, and conversely, if it does not demand full-time participation, it will likely attract members through extra-movement interpersonal networks.[56] Since Baha'i in that respect resembles Nichiren Shoshu rather than ISKCON, the Snow *et al.* proposition suggests that new Baha'is would be recruited mainly inside the social network.

Snow *et al.* also note that many converts (both intra-network and extra-network recruits) were what they call "structurally available", i.e., they were often young, single and in a transitional role (such as that of students or newcomers to town).[57] Wallis and Bruce criticise this concept of structural availability as something that could not be assessed *a priori*, but only in retrospect.[58] While I agree that a critique of Snow *et al.*'s loose definition is justified, it is nevertheless reasonable to assume that the obligations and the social ties that follow from raising a family or having a job make people less flexible in their life situation. It is possible to test empirically if conversion tends to coincide with major *pre-defined* social variables that can be expected to attenuate the options for a major change in social life. Marital status is an obvious example of such a social variable. In this way, structural availability can be turned into a meaningful concept in the study of conversion, and this is shown later in this chapter.

Together, the active convert plus the social environment represent the balanced view that conversion is affected by an interplay of individual and contextual factors.[59] Converts—and active converts, too—should be considered social individuals whose choices are influenced

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[55] Snow *et al.*, "Social Networks and Social Movements".

[56] Snow *et al.*, "Social Networks and Social Movements". The two groups, ISKCON and Nichiren Shoshu, belong to Type One and Type Two groups, respectively, in Greil and Rudy, "What Have We Learned From Process Models Of Conversion?".

[57] Snow *et al.*, "Social Networks and Social Movements".

[58] Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, "Network and clockwork", *Sociology*, vol. 16, 1982, pp. 102–107.

[59] Richard Machalek and David A. Snow, "Conversion to New Religious Movements", in David G. Bromley and Jeffrey K. Hadden (eds.), *Religion and the Social Order. The Handbook on Cults and Sects in America*, Greenwich, Jai Press, 1993, vol. 3B, pp. 53–74.

by the social environment of the conversion process, as well as by
individual factors.[60]

Conversion Accounts as Sources

The British sociologist of religion James A. Beckford notes, in 1978,
that many of the conversion accounts rendered in interviews with
members of Jehovah's Witnesses were similar and consonant with
internal ideals of the conversion process for Jehovah's Witnesses.[61]
Beckford's explanation is that conversion accounts are retold in the
light of the present, not the past:

> Accounts of conversion are constructions (or reconstructions) of expe-
> riences which draw upon resources available at the time of construc-
> tion to lend them sense. They are not fixed, once-and-for-all descriptions
> of phenomena as they occurred in the past.[62]

Beckford's article was followed by contributions from other sociolo-
gists who all questioned the use of conversion accounts as sources
concerning converts' motives and reasoning during conversions that
happened in the past. The accounts are by their nature backward-
looking, self-reflexive, personal constructions, which are also coloured
by the circumstances of the retelling.[63] Richard Machalek and David
A. Snow go a bit further, arguing that because many converts are
motivated both to see and to report themselves as having undergone
a profound change, accounts of conversion are an "unreliable source
of information about any real personal effects of the conversion
process".[64]

For the sake of completeness, I should add that Beckford's inter-
pretation of the conformity of the Jehovah's Witnesses' accounts is

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[60] Eileen Barker, "Will the Real Cult Please Stand Up? A Comparative Analysis
of Social Constructions of New Religious Movements", in David G. Bromley and
Jeffrey K. Hadden (eds.), *Religion and the Social Order. The Handbook on Cults and Sects
in America*, Greenwich, Jai Press, vol. 3B, 1993, pp. 193–211.

[61] James A. Beckford, "Accounting for Conversion", *British Journal of Sociology*, vol.
29, 1978, pp. 249–262 (quotation p. 261).

[62] Beckford, "Accounting for Conversion", p. 260.

[63] James A. Beckford, "Talking of apostasy, or telling tales and 'telling' tales", in
G. Nigel Gilbert and Peter Abell (eds.), *Accounts and Action. Surrey Conferences on
Sociological Theory and Method*, Aldershot, Gower, 1983, pp. 77–97.

[64] Machalek and Snow, "Conversion to New Religious Movements" (quotation
p. 66).

an indication of, but not proof of, retrospect construction. The affiliation process for Jehovah's Witnesses is carefully controlled by the group, thus in practice only those who conform to the conventions of the Watch Tower movement convert.[65] In principle, therefore, the conversions may have taken place as retold later.

This objection does not negate the criticism raised by Beckford and others. Undoubtedly, conversion accounts are not reliable sources regarding several important aspects of the conversion process. However, seeing conversion accounts as mere narratives should not lead to the nearly ideal post-modern conclusion that conversion accounts cannot yield *any* objective information. As with any other source, the reliability depends on what is asked from the accounts. It is not conceivable that all details of the conversion history are re-interpreted in hindsight—for some details, the informant has no reason to intentionally render an account that distorts "facts". I propose that for the analysis of conversion accounts, the views of sociologist George W. Brown should be applied. He convincingly argues that personal accounts can generally be taken as trustworthy with regard to what he calls *situational* causality. Here he is referring to the informant's statements about where she/he was at the time in question, whom she/he met, and what she/he said or did at that occasion.[66] The issue of the fragility of human memory remains, of course, but there is no immediate reason to believe that such circumstances are invented. The problem arises with what Brown calls *distal* causality, which is the case when there is considerable distance in time or space between a set of circumstances and the informant's later reaction.[67] Here, Brown is in agreement with Beckford, who questions the practice of looking for individual converts' motives, predispositions, attractions etc. in their conversion accounts.[68] These factors would all be fruits of distal causality.

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[65] James A. Beckford, *The Trumpet of Prophecy. A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1975, pp. 186–189.

[66] George W. Brown, "Accounts, meaning and causality", in G. Nigel Gilbert and Peter Abell (eds.), *Accounts and Action. Surrey Conferences on Sociological Theory and Method*, Aldershot, Gower, 1983, pp. 35–68.

[67] Brown, "Accounts, meaning and causality".

[68] Beckford, "Talking of apostasy".

Causality Analysis of a Baha'i Conversion Account

The differences between distal causality and situational causality can be illustrated by an analysis of the following, quite typical, conversion account from a Danish Baha'i, to whom I asked the question "How did you become a Baha'i?" (Q27):

> I first heard about Baha'i when I was a young assistant nurse, for a short period, at Skodsborg Sanatorium (a sanatorium north of Copenhagen). I met a Norwegian girl there who told me about the book by Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era.* I went to the library to look for it, but could not get hold of it. Later, in 1974–75 [the informant was born in 1952, so she was around 23 years old at that time], I was having my trainee service as part of my education as a librarian, in Sønderborg [in southern Jutland], and I found the book there. However, I did not know that there were any Baha'is in Denmark, so I left it at that. The next time I saw anything related to Baha'i was [in 1979] when I arrived by air in Søndre Strømfjord in Greenland, because at the airport the local Baha'is had put up a notice [about Baha'i]. I was working at the library in Søndre Strømfjord and courses in Greenlandic were arranged there. I enrolled in such a course, and so did two Danish Baha'is. Through these two I became a Baha'i.[69]

In this account, there are four events separated in time and space: the meeting with the Norwegian girl, finding Esslemont's book in the library, seeing the notice at the airport in Greenland and attending the course in Greenland where she met the two Baha'is. The informant's account is probably trustworthy with regard to the situational causality around these events, such as the information that she heard about Esslemont's book from a colleague at Skodsborg, and that she did find the book at the library in Sønderborg. In her account, the informant does not single out one of the events as crucial, which implies that they all were important for her conversion. It is questionable, however, whether one can accept at face value the implicated distal causality in the above account, namely that the first two events were decisive for the actual conversion in Greenland.

Beckford describes the convert's creation of distal causality (without using the term) using a succinct expression: "In particular, special significance is attached to the meaning of certain events and experiences in the pre-conversion life, and the conversion account

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[69] Interview with a 29-year-old woman, 16 June 1981.

gathers them together in an *encapsulated review*."[70] Was the book *really* that important, the researcher may ask, since the informant did not pursue the issue by contacting a Baha'i community. Her reasoning that in 1974 she did not know that there were any Baha'is in Denmark is similar to some of Snow *et al.*'s informants. They explained that they did not initially join a political or religious movement with which they sympathised because they did not know anybody in the movement or did not have enough time.[71] I quite agree with Wallis and Bruce's critique of Snow *et al.*; these informants were caught in an inconsistency between their beliefs and their actions, an inconsistency that they tried to resolve with an acceptable rationale.[72] Therefore, little can be inferred about the librarian's motives for *not* contacting, for example, the Baha'i community in Århus when she was in Sønderborg.[73]

The above problems can be further elucidated by the following hypothetical situation: had the informant been asked to identify which of the four events was the most crucial, she might have mentioned the meeting with the Norwegian girl. The interviewer cannot assess this statement, but must faithfully note that this distal causality means that the informant had met Baha'i through a colleague, in other words, through her personal network. However, both the informant and the interviewer would agree that what initiated the final process towards conversion was when the informant met the two Baha'is at the language course in Greenland several years later, rather than the meeting with the Norwegian girl. Meeting the two Baha'is at the language course was what I will call the informant's *decisive encounter* with Baha'i. If the decisive encounter is taken as the criterion of the onset of the conversion process, the informant was recruited to Baha'i by a chance meeting with Baha'is outside her personal network.

One way or another, in a systematic study, either the informant's own judgment or the decisive encounter must be chosen as defining the onset of conversion, if the two criteria disagree. The first implies the risk of analysing on the basis of distal causality; the other implies

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[70] Quote from Beckford, "Talking of apostasy, or telling tales and 'telling' tales", p. 87 (my emphasis).

[71] Snow *et al.*, "Social Networks and Social Movements".

[72] Wallis and Bruce, "Network and clockwork".

[73] Århus is less than 200 km from Sønderborg, and the connections with public transport are good.

the weakness of attributing significance to circumstances that the informant herself would regard as insignificant. In consideration of the weighty criticism against analysing the conversion process on the basis of distal causality, I have chosen—reluctantly—to base the analysis on the situational causality of the decisive encounter. Having chosen that, the time span from the decisive encounter to the day of declaration gives a measure of the duration of the conversion process. The decisive encounter also defines the situational causality concerning the onset of the conversion process.

PREVIOUS BAHA'I CONVERSION STUDIES

Since conversion studies occupy such a prominent position in the sociological literature on new religions, it is somewhat surprising that there are relatively few studies examining conversion to Baha'i.

Peter Berger's Ph.D. study from 1954 was the first sociological study on Baha'i. In a brief questionnaire, 90 informants were asked the following: "Please [. . .] tell briefly what aspects of the Baha'i Faith attracted you most at first".[74] Berger reports that the informants were attracted by the major doctrines, such as religious unity, progressive revelation, world unity, and brotherhood, followed by the Baha'is' progressive and scientific faith, their promise of the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy, and their views on social order. The informants thus answered much in accordance with Baha'i doctrinal priorities, and his study could be said to corroborate Beckford's scepticism discussed above. Berger also uses a number of conversion accounts from early Western Baha'is to illustrate the influence of the charismatic personality (*in casu* Abdu'l-Baha) on conversion—a theme that forms an important part of his conclusion.

As part of her Ph.D. thesis in anthropology from 1984, Jean Eleanor Bartlett interviewed 23 individuals from a Baha'i community in southern California.[75] She compared their conversion accounts with the theoretical predictions of the Lofland-Stark process model, and found that they did not conform very well to several of the predictions. For example, only 4 of the informants followed all the seven

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[74] Peter Ludwig Berger, *From Sect to Church. A Sociological Interpretation of the Baha'i Movement* (Ph.D. diss.), New York, Faculty of Political and Social Science, New School for Social Research, 1954, p. 144.

[75] Bartlett, *Baha'i World Faith: A Case Study in Adult Socialization.*

steps in the Lofland-Stark process model, and only 11 out of the 23 informants could be classified as "religious seekers".[76] Furthermore, on average they were not the single, young persons in a transitional role or in a state of occupational marginality, as typified in the Snow *et al.* study.[77] Bartlett ascribes these differences to the "unexotic nature, openness to non-Baha'i, inclusiveness and firm set within the society" of the Baha'is and their religion.[78] She reports that joining inside the social network was dominant, with only 27% recruited at public places, and she concludes rather pragmatically that people converted to Baha'i when they were not strongly attached to any particular religious community, or were dissatisfied with the one to which they belonged.[79] She also postulates that there was some arbitrariness in why they converted to Baha'i and not to other congregations that she believes resemble Baha'i, such as the Unitarians or Quakers.[80] There seems to be some truth in this proposition regarding the USA, where changing religious affiliation from one congregation to another is a more common and relatively uncontroversial social act than it is in Europe. Thus, Wade Clark Roof reports, on the basis of figures from the 1988 General Social Survey, that 29% of the American population had switched their religious preference at least once.[81] Similarly, McMullen reports that one-fifth of his informants indicated—without being specifically asked—that they had switched their religious affiliations at least once before they joined Baha'i.[82] In European countries, however, it seems less likely that "there might be a circulation of individuals through groups that are close to each other in beliefs and practices."[83] As I report later, less than 5% of the Danish converts in the current study had been members of religious groups before they became Baha'is, other than the one they were brought up in.

The sociologists of religion Helen Ebaugh and Sharon Lee Vaughn conducted a study of conversion to three different religious groups

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[76] Bartlett, *Baha'i World Faith: A Case Study in Adult Socialization*, pp. 126–136.

[77] Bartlett, *Baha'i World Faith: A Case Study in Adult Socialization*, pp. 144–145.

[78] Bartlett, *Baha'i World Faith: A Case Study in Adult Socialization*, p. 154.

[79] Bartlett, *Baha'i World Faith: A Case Study in Adult Socialization*, p. 144, p. 156, p. 161, p. 173.

[80] Bartlett, *Baha'i World Faith: A Case Study in Adult Socialization*, p. 160.

[81] Wade Clark Roof, "Multiple Religious Switching: A Research Note", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 28, 1989, pp. 530–535.

[82] McMullen *The Bahá'í*, p. 18.

[83] Bartlett, *Baha'i World Faith: A Case Study in Adult Socialization*, p. 162.

(Catholic Charismatics, Christian Science and Baha'i) in Houston, Texas. Like Bartlett, they found that joining Baha'i through the social network was important, with only 7 out of 41 informants (17%) recruited outside the social network.[84]

Chana Ullman is a psychologist who is interested in the emotional factors behind conversion. She conducted interviews with 40 religious converts from four religious groups, including Jews, Catholics, Baha'is, and members of ISKCON. Her control group consisted of 15 Jews and 15 Catholics who had been affiliated with their religions from childhood. She proposed that childhood stress and emotional turmoil, in particular an unavailable or rejecting father, should be considered predisposing factors for conversion.[85] This is parallel to the acute and persistent tensions within a religious problem-solving perspective, which constitute the first steps in the Lofland-Stark process model. In her book, *The Transformed Self. The Psychology of Religious Conversion*, she again reminds sociologists that converts are influenced by past emotional experiences as well.[86] She does not disregard the sociological factors, however. On the contrary, using a whole chapter, she addresses the issue of social influence on conversion and describes two cases of conversion to Baha'i to illustrate her points, for example, how social acceptance by the new group is important for the conversion process.[87]

June Wyman's Ph.D. study in anthropology focuses on the cultural meaning of conversion accounts as constructions of the self.[88] She conducted field studies in the Washington D.C. Baha'i community, and her analysis of the data begins with the popular Baha'i notion that ideal conversion is an arduous process involving both intellect and feelings, which in Baha'i terminology is called conversion "through the heart" and "through the mind". She reports that a common theme in these accounts was the successful completion

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[84] Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh and Sharron Lee Vaughn, "Ideology and Recruitment in Religious Groups", *Review of Religious Research*, vol. 26, 1984, pp. 148–157.

[85] Chana Ullman, "Cognitive and Emotional Antecedents of Religious Conversion", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 43, 1982, pp. 183–192.

[86] Chana Ullman, *The Transformed Self. The Psychology of Religious Conversion*, New York, Plenum Press, 1989, p. 94.

[87] Ullman, *The Transformed Self*, pp. 100–103.

[88] June R. Wyman, *Becoming a Baha'i: Discourse and Social Networks in an American Religious Movement* (Ph.D. diss.), Washington D.C., Department of Anthropology, The Catholic University of America, 1985, p. 97.

of both processes to make up a whole self.[89] Her study thus is not concerned as much with the routes to conversion, as with how the rendering of conversion accounts (and other accounts of personal religious experiences) constitute an important part of the social glue of a Baha'i community. This is consistent with the findings of David Piff, who studied oral lore among Baha'is and concluded that the telling of conversion stories is an important element in building a Baha'i identity.[90]

McMullen's study, which is presented above in the section on the religious seeker, provides useful sociological data on the religious background of the converts, and he also gives several illustrative examples of his informants' reported motives for conversion and their intellectual and emotional struggles in coping with the conversion process.[91] McMullen's results are particularly useful as comparative material for the current study on conversion among the Danish Baha'is.

Will van den Hoonaard's historical-sociological study of the Canadian Baha'i community deals with both motives of conversion and the sociological setting of the early converts, in particular from the period before World War II.[92] The parallels with the early conversions to the Danish Baha'i community are discussed in Chapter 6.

Conversion to Baha'i—A Study of the Danish Baha'i Community

The conversion accounts in the present study were obtained by asking the 120 informants "How did you become a Baha'i?" (Q27), a question that the informants generally were eager to answer.[93] Usually a conversation developed, during which the informants expounded

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[89] Wyman, *Becoming a Baha'i*, p. 73.

[90] David Michael Piff, *Bahá'í Lore*, Oxford, George Ronald, 2000, pp. 80–84.

[91] McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, pp. 15–33.

[92] van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada, 1898–1948*, pp. 29–42, pp. 85–100.

[93] In this respect, the Danish Baha'is seem to be quite like the American Baha'is, who, according to Wyman, are eager to retell the circumstances around their conversion. Wyman interprets this as a way of constituting Baha'i identity and social cohesion within the group, see Wyman, *Becoming a Baha'i*, pp. 95–98, pp. 162–163. In my field studies, I have found, for example, that at the yearly Baha'i summer schools, Danish Baha'is also tell each other how they converted.

on details of their routes of conversion, if necessary, guided by further questions from the interviewer.

The interviews were not oriented *a priori* towards a possible confirmation of the Lofland-Stark process model. In fact, I followed Lofland's desire to look at the conversion process directly, rather than wearing the "tinted spectacles wrought by Lofland and Stark" during their study (these are Lofland's own words).[94] Snow *et al.*'s social network/structural availability approach, on the other hand, was considered to be an analytically fruitful approach. Therefore, the interviewers sought to pursue this with additional questions, so that full information on pre-existing social ties at the time of conversion could be derived from all the accounts. The conversion accounts are, of course, only part of the source material for the analyses. In addition to the general sociological data concerning the informants, the data from the questions on religious background (Q25–26), reactions from the family (Q29), and past contact with other religious groups (Q77–79) have been utilised.

Entering the Baha'i Community

It is usual in Western Baha'i communities that when a person wishes to join, he or she has to sign a declaration card stating that he or she believes in Baha'u'llah as God's manifestation on earth. After this, the new convert is a full member of Baha'i with all rights and duties and can from then on be elected to any office.

The *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* begins with the following statement:

> The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation.[95]

This first duty is the fundamental, doctrinal basis for entering (or leaving) the Baha'i religion, and the signing of the declaration card is therefore not only a membership entry, it is the Baha'i profession of faith, ritualised in the form of an administrative act. Only adults can become Baha'is; the minimum age for "declaring" oneself is fifteen years, the age of maturity in the Baha'i religion.

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[94] Lofland, "'Becoming a World-Saver' Revisited" (quotation p. 22).
[95] Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The Most Holy Book*, Haifa, Bahá'í World Centre, 1992, p. 19.

The significance of the declaration card criterion for membership of Baha'i can be illustrated by the fact that when Baha'is are moving to a Baha'i community in another country, they have to show their credentials in the form of an ID-card issued by the home Baha'i community. Only when they can procure this written documentation that they are indeed Baha'is, are they recognised as members of the foreign Baha'i community and allowed to vote and to participate in the nineteen day feasts. The rule is strictly upheld in the West, even in the case of the Iranian Baha'is who came to Europe and North America as refugees in the 1980s. Iranian Baha'is have told me moving stories about how they lost their credentials during their flight and had to wait for months to get new credentials from Iran. In the meantime, they were not admitted as Baha'is.

The above shows that the declaration cards are not only individual tokens of a personal affiliation to the Baha'i religion, they also function as controls of admittance to the Baha'i community. The declaration has to be accepted by the community, and for example, during the early expansion of Baha'i in Denmark, the American missionaries were warned of accepting Baha'i memberships too quickly; they were to give the applicants time to show their "firm adherence" to Baha'i.[96] Will van den Hoonaard also reports several examples of this policy from the Canadian Baha'i community, and he tells a story that clearly illustrates that the act of declaration is not only a personal expression of belief in Baha'u'llah, but also serves the purpose of control.[97] He describes a woman who discussed her enrolment during an interview. When she informed the Baha'is that she wanted to join, they requested that she write a letter of intent to the local spiritual assembly, stating her belief in the Bab, Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha, and that she had read some specified Baha'i literature. A committee talked with her and then asked her to step outside while they discussed her case. She described her thoughts while waiting outside:

> I knew that whether they accepted me or not, I was a Baha'i—the [Bahá'í] Faith belonged to everyone. Why be formal about it?, I thought. They couldn't keep me out, so why bring me in? It was my right.[98]

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[96] Edna True to Dagmar Dole, 1 July 1948. (NBA-US).
[97] van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, pp. 165–169.
[98] van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, p. 90.

It is my impression that this type of policy was abandoned years ago, and I have no report of its use in Denmark.

The declaring is for most Baha'is the primary act of the conversion process.[99] Among Western Baha'is, when someone declares herself/himself as a Baha'i, she/he often receives hugs and congratulations from the other people present. For example, one Danish woman described her conversion, which occurred after she debated with herself for half a year over whether or not to become a Baha'i. One day, she attended a religious feast at the Baha'i centre in Hellerup, north of Copenhagen. Her friend decided to sign at that occasion, and suddenly she said: "I could do the same." She reported that "everybody was extremely happy and overjoyed" as a result.[100] Wyman notes that among American Baha'is a "declaration is greeted with joy". The "new believer" is kissed, hugged, congratulated, and sometimes given a spontaneous gift (for example, a Baha'i calendar), and she remarks that this treatment is so predictable that some potential converts deliberately avoid making their declarations in the presence of others.[101]

The Conversion Process

The duration of the conversion process—which I define as lasting from the decisive encounter to the act of declaration—could be estimated from most of the conversion accounts. It varied considerably among the informants (detailed figures not shown). For 20% of the Danish informants, the process took less than one month; it took between one month and less than half a year for 34%; and for the remaining 45%, it took half a year or more.[102]

During the conversion process, a socialisation to Baha'i takes place—a socialisation that continues after the declaration, of course. From the conversion accounts, it could be deduced that for 27% of the informants, the *reading of Baha'i literature* was a particularly impor-

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[99] For 35 of the 120 Danish Baha'i informants, the day of declaration was so important for them that without being specifically asked about their day of declaration, they nevertheless volunteered that information.

[100] Interview with a 66-year-old woman, 4 December 1981.

[101] Wyman, *Becoming a Baha'i*, p. 78, p. 100.

[102] The percentages are based on 64 of the 88 conversion accounts from which information on the duration of the conversion process could be derived.

tant part of the socialisation process. Many of them reported that the reading of Esslemont's book or a Baha'i prayer book was decisive.[103] However, most of the informants mentioned *meetings* with the Baha'is as being particularly important, either meetings in the private homes of Baha'is (40%) or in places such as libraries and Baha'i centres in Denmark (38%).[104]

Any group pressure for conversion seems in general to have been minimal or even absent. One informant told that before he converted, he participated in most of the local Baha'i meetings and events for about a year. Nobody urged him to declare, and he had to ask for it himself.[105] Another informant said: "In February, I signed after having applied for it myself."[106] A third informant said: "I called [name of a Danish Baha'i] myself and enrolled."[107] A fourth informant reported that after having had contact with Baha'i for a couple of years, he decided to declare. He then invited the local Baha'is to a fine dinner in his home and announced: "Well, let's get it over with!"[108] This lack of significant group pressure on potential converts, in fact, is not challenged by any of the conversion accounts; and only one informant said that she felt some pressure from one particular individual, but she reacted simply by avoiding him.[109]

These accounts should not lead one to the conclusion that interpersonal factors in the conversions were absent. For example, an early Danish Baha'i played a strong role in the recruitment for the Danish Baha'i community, and he has been described to me as having a charismatic personality. His influence is illustrated by data from the current interview study: of 77 Danish first-generation Baha'is, as many as 18 mentioned him (and his wife) as specifically important for their conversion. Then followed a foreign pioneer, Franzisca Schilder (named by 8 informants), a Dane (named by 7), Dagmar Dole (named by 6), two Danes (each named by 6 informants), a further three Danes (each named by 5), one Iranian (named by 4), and

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[103] J. E. Esslemont, *An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980.

[104] The percentages add up to more than 100%, because, for example, 13% of the informants indicated that *both* reading and participation in meetings were of particular importance.

[105] Interview with a 62-year-old man, 1 July 1981.

[106] Interview with a 30-year-old woman, 12 January 1982.

[107] Interview with a 60-year-old woman, 31 July 1981.

[108] Interview with a 46-year-old man, 18 August 1981.

[109] Interview with a 66-year-old woman, 13 January 1982.

Ellinor Hollibough (named by 3 informants). The 6 persons who mentioned Dagmar Dole make up two-thirds of the 9 informants who converted in the period she was in Denmark. The rest of the names were mentioned by three or fewer informants. In total, 49 of the 77 Danish first-generation Baha'is reported that minimally one non-family member among the Baha'is was important for their conversion, and 27 of the 49 mentioned an Iranian Baha'i or another foreign Baha'i. In a time of globalisation, it also should be noted that 14% of the informants (12 out of 88) had their decisive encounter with Baha'i while outside their home countries.

The Religious Backgrounds of the Converts

Table 7.1. below gives an overview of the religious background of the 120 informants. All 18 of the Iranian Baha'is were "born" into the religion (many came from families that had been Baha'is for three or four generations). Ten Danish and four other foreign Baha'is were second-generation Baha'is. Thus, 32 informants were "born" into Baha'i families and 88 informants were first-generation converts. Of these 88, 35 were men and 53 were women. The proportion of first-generation Baha'is was 73% (88 out of 120); as a comparison, McMullen found that 70% of the Atlanta Baha'is were first-generation Baha'is.[110]

Table 7.1. *Religious background of the members of the Danish Baha'i community*

	Danes		Iranians	Other
Evangelical-Lutheran church	55	(71%)	0	1
Lutheran, strongly religious	6	(8%)	0	0
Christian, non-Lutheran	7	(9%)	0	6
Other non-Christian	1	(1%)	0	4
Irreligious or atheist	8	(10%)	0	0
Total first generation Baha'is	77	(100%)	0	11
Second-generation Baha'is	10		18	4
Total	87		18	15

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[110] McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, p. 18.

It can also be seen in Table 7.1 that the 88 converts consisted of 77 people with Danish nationality and 11 of other, non-Iranian nationalities. The religious upbringing of these 11 converts was diverse and very different from the Danes'.[111]

A considerable majority, namely 55 of the 77 Danish first-generation converts, were raised as members of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, but without any particular religious commitment in the home (Table 7.1, first row). An additional 8 converts were raised in irreligious homes (Table 7.1, fifth row); so, all together, 63 of these informants had no strong religious upbringing. For 6 of the 77 Danish first-generation converts, at least one parent was active within the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, and the remaining 8 had a religious background in one of the Danish minority denominations.[112] This means that at a maximum, 14 (18%) of the Danish converts had had distinct religious upbringings. One of them, who was raised as a Baptist in Jutland, gave the following account:

> I have been a Baptist all my life. I married a Baptist, and I have always had Baptist friends. I knew a lady in Copenhagen. She used to be a Baptist but became a Baha'i, and she told me a lot about Baha'i. It all began in 1970, but I did not want to abandon Jesus Christ. I had been 100% Baptist; I attended everything and was very active, so there would be much that I would have to renounce, in case [. . .] But Baha'i grew in me, it was a process, and I understood that I did not have to reject Jesus Christ.[113]

She is one of the not so few informants who struggled over the question of the belief in the divine nature of Jesus. In every aspect, her background and considerations stand in contrast to the background and motives for joining Baha'i given in the following account by a young man raised in an irreligious home in Copenhagen:

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[111] The religious affiliations during childhood of the 11 Baha'i converts of a nationality other than Danish or Iranian were: Norwegian Evangelical-Lutheran Church (one), Catholic Church (three), Episcopalian (one), Baptist (one), mixed Methodist/Catholic (one), Jewish (one), Hindu (one), Muslim (one), and Buddhist (one). Their religious affiliations largely reflect their particular nationalities.

[112] Of the 8 Danish converts with a religious background other than the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, four came from "homogeneous" homes, in which the parents shared denominational affiliation (two Baptist homes, one Pentecostal, one Jehovah's Witnesses), and four came from "heterogeneous" homes, all with one parent being a passive member of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark.

[113] Interview with a 52-year-old woman, 21 September 1982.

I have always been interested in religion from early childhood, even though my father and mother held their distance [from religion]. The reason was primarily fear of death and of the world in general. When I was 15–16 years old, I became a member of *Radikal Ungdom* [the youth section of a centrist party that historically has been opposed to the church], but I also discussed religious issues on my way home from the meetings. I felt attracted to the Unitarians and read a little about Baha'i. I lived with my parents in Hellerup close to the Baha'i centre, and I had often noticed the house. It was the international humanism that was attractive to me. One day I went to the house on Sofievej, met with [names of three Baha'is], and through conversations and reading I became a Baha'i.[114]

Themes of Conversion—in Retrospect

The two conversion accounts quoted above exemplify two different categories of Danish Baha'i converts, not only with respect to religious backgrounds, but also with respect to what the informants claimed had preoccupied them during conversion to Baha'i. A qualitative analysis of all the conversion accounts from the 88 first-generation Baha'is indicated that in many of the conversion accounts, the informants emphasised one of three themes, which I call "leaving", "joining" and "clarification".

The first theme is represented by those who, like the former Baptist quoted above, were professed Christian believers and very conscious about the change from one religion to another, about *leaving* their Christian faith. Several of these people said that they went through grave considerations about their relation to Jesus:

I liked that Baha'i was a progressive religion, recognising other religions. I also liked that the Baha'i community could not receive money from outsiders. However, I also had a bad conscience about failing as a Christian, if I should have to accept that Christ was not the son of God.[115]

The following two accounts from Danish women illustrate the difficulty of disengagement from the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark:

I found it very difficult to withdraw from the National Church. I felt that I deserted it, but I found some comfort in the thought that it was the same God.[116]

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[114] Interview with a 31-year-old man, 1 July 1981.
[115] Interview with a 66-year-old woman, 4 December 1981.
[116] Interview with an 83-year-old woman, 2 December 1981.

> It was very difficult to withdraw from the National Church. Even if I was not brought up very religiously, I felt as if I broke with my parents. Furthermore, the minister who had just buried my father was the same one I would have to go to in order to resign from the National Church.[117]

Other informants told me that leaving Christianity was a serious problem for them in relation to their families. In fact, 21% of the 88 first-generation Baha'is reported that Baha'i was regarded by their family members as a "false religion". Such difficulties with becoming a Baha'i are discussed in more detail later.

In total, about one fourth of the first-generation converts felt their disengagement from Christianity as a personal burden in some way or another. Conversely, this means that for a majority of the Baha'i converts, their dissociation from Christianity apparently did *not* seem to be a major issue, either personally or in relation to their families. The accounts given by these converts are generally focused on the issue of *joining*. Many of the informants who belong to this group said that they were attracted by the humanistic ideals of Baha'i, such as was the case with the previous account provided by the young man, and with the following accounts, also by Danish men:

> In the beginning, I was not religiously interested. [. . .] I accepted the ideas from a political point of view, a society where there was room for religions, a unified plan—politically, socially and with new perspectives. I saw the Baha'i community as close to that and I was fascinated by the global thinking.[118]

> When I was a student in the late 60s, I saw an ad in the newspaper: The Baha'i library is open every Tuesday. [. . .] I had no idea what it was and went there. They were very nice people and I went there occasionally the following years. I also met my future wife. Everybody was very nice. It was not so much the writings that got me started, but the atmosphere. I thought that I must try to be like that . . .[119]

During the course of the conversion process, some informants have experienced what could be termed a *clarification*:

> A very early morning—I remember it was on my son's birthday—I woke up and sat looking at the sunrise. While I sat watching it, I realised that I would sign.[120]

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[117] Interview with a 50-year-old woman, 5 January 1982.
[118] Interview with a 44-year-old man, 19 January 1981.
[119] Interview with a 34-year-old man, 11 August 1982.
[120] Interview with a 69-year-old woman, 21 June 1981.

> I met my husband at a party in his sister's home. We fell in love, and
> he told me half a year later that he was a Baha'i. I did not believe
> it, because I thought that religious people dressed in black gowns, and
> were dull and boring. I read a little about Baha'i, but it was some-
> what heavy and difficult, even if it seemed true. [. . .] One evening
> the two of us saw the Jesus Christ movie with Max von Sydow, and
> seeing that faith was there, I thought—yes, Baha'u'llah had to be the
> prophet in our time.[121]

Several informants said that they realised the Baha'i principles were
what they had believed all their lives, which can be seen as exam-
ples of clarification. Thus, a woman said that after having heard a
talk by one of the early Danish Baha'is, she knew that she had
always been a Baha'i.[122] Similar statements were expressed by the
following two Danish men:

> I had nothing else to do that night (and I had just been separated
> from my wife), so I went to the Baha'i centre. I thought it was some
> Indian thing with a guru, but when I heard about it, I felt that I had
> been a Baha'i all my life without knowing.[123]

> One day I was waiting for my son to come home (it was half a year
> after my divorce). When he came home, he asked me if I believed in
> God, and I said I did. So he gave me Esslemont.[124] Three days later,
> when I had read the book, I said to him that he had better enrol me,
> because what was written in this book was what I had thought and
> felt all my life. My son had been a Baha'i for seven years, but we
> had never talked about religion before. I was not interested in sects.[125]

The three themes of leaving, joining and clarification refer to the
informants' intellectual and emotional struggles in coming to terms
with Baha'i in a conscious, self-reflective process, a process that also
is emphasised by McMullen.[126] To an overwhelming degree, they
present a picture of active, well-functioning individuals who go through,
in Dawson's words, a "reflectively monitored conversion".[127]

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[121] Interview with a 53-year-old woman, 16 February 1982.
[122] Interview with a 44-year-old woman, 25 June 1981.
[123] Interview with a 36-year-old man, 18 August 1981.
[124] J. E. Esslemont's book, *An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, which was translated into Danish in 1932, was often used in the Baha'i mis-
sion work. J. E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh og den nye Tid* [Baha'u'llah and the new era],
Copenhagen, Nyt Nordisk Forlag, Arnold Busck, 1932.
[125] Interview with a 62-year-old man, 17 June 1981.
[126] McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, pp. 21–28.
[127] Dawson, "Self-Affirmation, Freedom, and Rationality", p. 160.

The "Born" Baha'is

The majority of the 32 Baha'is who were raised in Baha'i homes gave conversion accounts that were rather brief and non-dramatic. The following accounts, the first from an Iranian and the second from a Danish "born" Baha'i, are typical. The Iranian was a young man whose great-grandmother and three out of four grandparents were Baha'is:

> I became a Baha'i through my upbringing. As a child I also joined the nineteen day feasts, maybe I didn't understand so much, but I realised that it was good. If you had asked me when I was five years old, I would have said—yes, I was a Baha'i. Signing didn't mean much, I didn't care, and I did so, when I was 16 years old.[128]

A young Danish woman whose parents converted to Baha'i before she was born described her upbringing as follows:

> I have always been a Baha'i—through my parents. All Baha'is were heartfelt and warm when I came to meetings as a kid. Actually, I was tied emotionally, before I became so objectively, if I can put it that way. I have always known that I would become a Baha'i, but for a period I felt that I was not good enough. When I turned 15, I signed.[129]

Family Reactions

The Danish Baha'is' different religious backgrounds not only influenced the themes of conversion, they also gave rise to different reaction patterns from the informants' families when told that the informants had become Baha'is. Some families were understanding, but typically, informants with no strong religious upbringing were met with misunderstanding, ridicule and patronising attitudes. Many family members thought that becoming a Baha'i was weird, and sometimes the very idea of being religious was met with strong negative reactions:

> My father read a book, and when he came to give it back, he said that he had never heard such rubbish. My husband detested religion, and he was afraid that I would become a fanatic. Moreover, he felt it was embarrassing, so I never asked Baha'i friends home. He also

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[128] Interview with a 22-year-old man, 22 October 1982.
[129] Interview with a 20-year-old woman, 29 March 1982.

made me promise that I would never raise my children in the Baha'i faith. [. . .] He always asked why I at least did not find an established religion.[130]

Others were more indulgent, except that they disliked the principle that Baha'is are forbidden to drink alcohol:

My parents have always regarded me as a little crazy, someone who did strange things, and this Baha'i was just one of them. They are unappreciative about it, but we do not discuss religion, and they do not bother me. The only thing that they find difficult is the alcohol [prohibition], because I do not drink at family parties, and my father is a home brewer.[131]

Reactions from families were in some cases more intolerant than lenient. The following account shows a particularly grim mixture of unappreciative and intolerant behaviour:

My parents said that we agree on many things in Baha'i, but that is no reason for becoming a member of a club. My mother caressed my hand, saying "Tut! Tut!" Once, my father said: "Well, it is OK with alcohol prohibition, but are you not permitted to eat with a spoon?" And then he offered me a strawberry soaked in liquor on a spoon.[132]

For the minority of Danish Baha'is coming from strongly religious homes, the issue of Christian belief was often the sore point ever returned to:

My father and I always quarrelled about Baha'i. It has been an issue ever since I became a Baha'i. He went on and on saying that I had abandoned my faith, but I said: Which faith? My father had started in the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, then he went over to the Oxford movement, then he became a Baptist, and he died as a member of the Pentecostal movement. All through my childhood, I remember these Oxford meetings, and I hated them! But when I became a Baha'i, my father conceived of me as a pagan, because he believed that after Jesus there would be nothing, everything else was false.[133]

These quotations form part of a general pattern showing that conversion to Baha'i was met with mixed, but mainly negative reactions from the families. As seen in Table 7.2, 48% of the first-generation

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[130] Interview with a 65-year-old woman, 13 January 1982.
[131] Interview with a 29-year-old woman, 16 June 1981.
[132] Interview with a 34-year-old woman, 15 January 1982.
[133] Interview with a 61-year-old man, 24 February 1982.

converts were met with positive reactions, while 70% experienced
negative reactions of some kind. Moreover, most of the informants
who reported that they met with positive reactions from some fam-
ily members, also received negative reactions from others. In fact,
only 19% were met with only positive reactions. It is also indicative
of the negative climate that 9 of the informants reported that they
did not tell some or all of their family members about their con-
versions to Baha'i, generally out of fear of their reactions, or because
they knew that it might hurt them.

Table 7.2. *Reactions from family members on conversion reported by
84 first-generation Baha'is*

Type of reaction	Number	Per cent[a]
Positive or accepting reactions	40	48%
Indifferent, overbearing reactions	18	21%
Any of the below negative reactions	59	70%
Not understanding, negative	34	40%
Baha'i tabooed	16	19%
Family became afraid	14	17%
Teasing, ridiculing	12	14%
Informant considered crazy	11	13%
Family alienated	9	11%
Only positive or accepting reactions	16	19%

[a] In 4 cases, nobody in the family was informed, therefore the percentages are
based on 84 and not 88 first-generation converts. The percentages do not add up
to 100 because many informants gave multiple answers

It is noteworthy that the reactions were so overwhelmingly negative,
considering that membership in the Baha'i community is compati-
ble with normal jobs and family life (except the problem with drink-
ing, of course). However, the general climate towards new religions
was pretty harsh in the 1980s in Denmark.[134] Like one of the infor-
mants quoted above, many reported that their families found the

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[134] The negative attitude to a large degree even was extended to mainstream
Christianity. A woman who was very active in the national Evangelical-Lutheran
Church—of which 93.6% of the Danes were members in 1981—told me anecdo-
tally that the 1980s was a period when she was embarrassed to read *Kristeligt Dagblad*
(The Christian Daily) in public.

Baha'i principles acceptable or even agreed with them—what they did not like was that these principles were set in a religious frame.

Young and Free?

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, the concept of structural availability was used by Snow *et al.* to describe the fact that many of the converts in their study were young, single and in a transitional role (such as that of a student or a newcomer to town), and this observation has been reported in other studies of new religions.[135]

The preconceived idea of the young, single convert is only partly personified by the Danish Baha'i converts. Forty-one of the 88 Baha'i converts, or a *little less than half* (47%), were under 30 years of age and single when they converted. Nineteen were single, but 30 years and above, and 28 were married. Of the married converts, 6 were married to a Baha'i, while the remaining 22 (8 men and 14 women) were married to a non-Baha'i when they converted. These 22 converts (25%) were thus in a position that hardly would comply with the ideal of a structurally available person. This is far from an insignificant proportion of the sample that, with respect to marital status, could be considered less than structurally available (they were not young and single), but nevertheless converted to Baha'i. These categories of structural availability are discussed again later in connection with the analysis of seekership.

This finding is put into perspective further by analysing the cohorts of converts, that is, the converts grouped according to the period in which they converted. Of the 88 converts, 10 converted before 1960, 8 converted in the period 1960–1964, 10 in 1965–1969, 33 in 1970–1974, 18 in 1975–1979, and 9 in 1980–1982. The high influx of new converts between 1970–1974 is remarkable with its high pro-

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[135] For example, James V. Downton, *Sacred Journeys. The Conversion of Young Americans to Divine Light Mission*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1979, wrote on p. 229 that 41 "premies" committed to Divine Light Mission were from 19 to 29 years old, with an average age of 23. Eileen Barker reported in *The Making of a Moonie*, p. 209, that 80% of the full-time Moonies were under 30 years of age and less than 7% of them were married before they joined. In contrast, the Home-Church Moonies were distinctly older and only one-fifth had not married. The pronounced difference in sociological profiles between the full-time Moonies and the Home-Church Moonies is an excellent reminder that young, single individuals are not the only sociological category that becomes involved in new religious movements.

portion (76%) of young singles in this cohort, as discussed in Chapter 6.[136] Outside the period of 1970–74, 55 persons converted, and of these 16 (29%) were young and single, 15 (27%) were older, but single, 6 (11%) were married to a Baha'i, and one-third (18 or 33%) were married to a non-Baha'i. These 18 people were Danes, meaning that as many as 38% of the 48 Danes who converted outside the period 1970–74 were less structurally available, as judged from their marital status.

According to Snow *et al.*'s original concept of structural availability, conversion is also associated with being in a transitional position.[137] However, only 36% (32 of the 88) converts described their situations around the time of their conversions in such a way that I define them as having been in a transitional phase of their lives. This can hardly be called a strong corroboration of Snow *et al.*'s proposition. Typically, these informants had just moved to a new town or had graduated from school. The accounts below from two Danish women are illustrative:

> The first time I met Baha'i was in 1975–76, and the whole process of becoming a Baha'i took a few weeks. I had just moved to Nakskov [a provincial town in southern Denmark] with my husband, who had finished his education and got his first job in the town [the informant herself was unemployed]. The Baha'is in town had rented a shop and in the window I saw some nice looking home-made and naive posters which I liked. I had never heard about Baha'i before and became very curious. At first I was critical, but I could not find anything wrong with the religion. It seemed logical that Jesus would be one in a series of prophets, the last one being Baha'u'llah. I talked with the Baha'is in the shop and I saw them as wonderful people. I asked a lot of critical questions, because at that time I was very interested in Chinese communism. I borrowed a book and was invited to a talk, but I had not yet read the book before I received a letter asking me to return the book. In the evening I was invited to a meeting and I discussed different topics. [. . .] I had to try this, when I could see that it was true . . .[138]

> I was an au-pair girl in England, and in the evenings I went to a school to learn better English. I met a Baha'i at the school who told me about the religion. I also met other Baha'is who were nice and open. Even if I could identify with the writings, I did not sign, because

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[136] In fact, were it not for this extra intake of young singles, the conversion rate in 1970–1974 would have been about average.

[137] Snow *et al.*, "Social Networks and Social Movements".

[138] Interview with a 35-year-old woman, 16 June 1981.

I wanted to hear it and read it in my own language. When I came home, I wrote to the Danish Baha'i community and got an invitation to a public meeting. [. . .] Slowly I joined in by talking to people. Once a week I received education at the home of another Baha'i and in the months of September and October 1969, I joined a lot of public meetings. 11 November 1970 I signed.[139]

Only a few informants converted when in a personal crisis; the two clearest examples are quoted below:

My sister is married to a Baha'i and she is also a Baha'i herself. There was one particular time I was having a really difficult period in my marriage. Just before my sister declared, she also had a difficult time, and she had got a lot of help from the Baha'is. She told me that the Baha'is would support me like they had supported her. So I signed. And all of them were more than sweet, they were so adorable. When I felt OK again, I more or less dropped out.[140]

One day I was very depressed and sat fishing by the river. I was beginning to have an alcohol problem. A Baha'i neighbour passed by, and we talked for a long time, and very quickly I was certain that Baha'i could help me to get a firm grip on my life; that it would make me capable of disciplining myself.[141]

Snow *et al.* also predicted that people recruited from the street (outside the social network) would be structurally more available.[142] This could not be confirmed by the present data, because when the 88 informants were split into 2×2 groups—"in a transitional position" and "not in a transitional position" versus recruited "inside" or "outside the personal network"—there was no correlation between the two factors.[143] This does not rule out that being in a transitional phase may have been important for individual informants, but it is not a general prerequisite.

It is, however, not surprising that a fair proportion of the converts were structurally available, in the way Snow *et al.* used the term. For example, when a man explains: "I had nothing else to do that night (and I had just been separated from my wife), so I went to the Baha'i centre"—it is hard to deny that this man was struc-

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[139] Interview with a 34-year-old woman, 19 October 1982.
[140] Interview with a 30-year-old woman, 20 October 1982.
[141] Interview with a 27-year-old man, 8 September 1981.
[142] Snow *et al.*, "Social Networks and Social Movements".
[143] Thus, of the 32 informants who were recruited while in a liminal phase, 11 (34%) were recruited outside their social networks; of the 56 other informants, 20 (36%) were also recruited outside their social networks.

turally available. And the woman who was bored working in a small seaside resort was—well, she was undoubtedly available:

> They (the Baha'is) kept inviting me, and we had such a nice time. [. . .] Anything was better than sitting home doing nothing.[144]

It is much more interesting that a fair proportion of the Baha'is converted when they were in a stable life situation with family ties, that is, in a situation when they were *not* structurally available. A general conclusion from this study of the Danish Baha'i community is therefore that structural availability is a questionable sociological determinant for conversion to Baha'i.

The Concept of Seekership Among the Danish Baha'i Converts

Several of the Danish Baha'i informants described themselves as religious seekers, using this term in full accordance with the Baha'i terminology, in which people who are exploring Baha'i are denoted "seekers".[145] Some reported that they had been exploring a broad spiritual and religious panorama: astrology, chiromantics, Ananda Marga, yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Scientology and Jehovah's Witnesses. As one of these informants reported: "Episcopalian Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons—I seek all religions."[146] In the following, I briefly outline some data concerning patterns of seekership.[147]

Previous Contact with other Religious Groups

Of the 77 Danish first-generation converts, only 3 (4%) had been members of religious groups other than the one in which they were raised (Q79).[148] As discussed in connection with the summary of Bartlett's study of Californian Baha'is, this low proportion is hardly surprising when compared with findings from studies of Baha'i in

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[144] Interview with a 35-year-old woman, 15 January 1981.
[145] Wyman, *Becoming a Baha'i*, p. 75; see also MacMullen, *The Bahá'í*, pp. 15–29.
[146] Interview with a 46-year-old woman, 14 June 1982.
[147] The material in this section was originally the basis for Warburg, "Seeking the Seekers in the Sociology of Religion".
[148] One had been a member of the Pentecostal Movement, one of a Spiritist circle, and one had been initiated into Transcendental Meditation. In addition to these

the USA. To change religious affiliation from the majority church (the Evangelical-Lutheran Church) to one of the minority denominations or groups is not common in Denmark, nor in most other European countries.[149] The same pattern was observed for the 11 converts of nationalities other than Danish or Iranian: before they became Baha'is, none of them had been members of any other religious groups, other than the one they were raised in.

Although only 3 of the 88 first-generation converts had been members of other religious groups, half (41 out of 88; 47%) reported that they had had some kind of *contact* with other religious groups and movements before joining Baha'i (Q78). Of the 41 converts who had had contact with other religious groups, 18 had had contact with one group beside Baha'i, and in many cases their answers indicated that they had not initiated that contact themselves. The remaining 23 had had contact with more than one group (often 3 or more).

Most of the 41 converts had had contact with the significant Christian denominations and sects, such as the Catholic Church, Baptist Church, Pentecostal congregations, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. It is interesting to note that only 12 had had contact with new religions (in a Western context), in particular Transcendental Meditation and Buddhism (yoga was also often mentioned). Using the crude typology of Type One and Type Two new religious movements proposed by Greil and Rudy, it appears that all 12 converts had had contact with the less extreme Type Two new religious movements only.[150] In many ways, it is hardly unexpected that Baha'i and the more controversial new religious movements do not seem to appeal to the same clientele.

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three, one had been a Methodist for a brief period as a two-year old infant, and one had been affiliated with Indre Mission, which is a conservative movement within the Danish national Lutheran church. The last two informants are not considered as having (in reality) been members of other religious groups.

[149] Calculations of the rate of change in formal religious affiliation for different countries around the world indicate that in the period between 1970 and 1980, there were considerably fewer changes in formal religious affiliation in the European countries than there was in the USA. James T. Duke, Barry L. Johnson, and James B. Duke, "Rates of Religious Conversion: A Macrosociological Study", in Monty L. Lynn and David O. Moberg (eds.), *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 5, Greenwich, Jai Press, 1993, pp. 89–121.

[150] Type One are those new religious movements that are stigmatised and involve a radical discontinuity of social roles, such as Unification Church, ISKCON, and Divine Light Mission, and Type Two are not stigmatised and do not require a radical change of the convert's social role, see Greil and Rudy, "What Have We

In order to investigate the possible meaning of religious seeker-ship among the Baha'is, I distinguished seekers from non-seekers as follows: the 23 persons who had had contact with at least *two other* groups, in addition to Baha'i and the one which they were born into, showed what I consider *seeker behaviour*. This definition limits seeker behaviour to those persons who seek contact with organised religious groups, like the Danish Baha'i community; it does not include persons who seek more diffuse religious milieus. In addition to the Baha'is who were defined as seekers by this kind of behaviour, there were quite a few people who told the interviewer, *without being asked*, that they had always been interested in religions and religious issues. The following examples are typical:

> I was very interested in yoga. But yoga had scared me, and now I had decided to seek the truth and nothing else.[151]

> Before I became a Baha'i, I had been a confirmed Christian, and I had been brought up as a Christian, but I was also interested in philosophy, Indian religions and such things.[152]

> I have always read about other religions, in particular the religions of the East, primarily Hinduism ... But once I was a communist and a Marxist.[153]

> I was looking for the truth and had realised that it could not reside within Christianity alone, because that would be unjust to those living before the Christian era. I became aware that there were sects in all religions but also fundamental similarities.[154]

Such persons expressed what I consider *seeker attitudes*, and they were also classified as seekers. In total, there were 39 informants who were defined as seekers, either by showing seeker behaviour and/or by expressing seeker attitudes.[155] The other 49 first-generation converts were classified as non-seekers.

Learned From Process Models Of Conversion?". Greil and Rudy did not place Scientology in their typology, which is unfortunate since 3 of the Danish Baha'i converts had had contact with Scientology. I would propose to regard Scientology as a Type Two new religious movement, although it is controversial in the eyes of the public, because it does not demand social exclusiveness.

[151] Interview with a 55-year-old woman, 16 June 1981.
[152] Interview with a 30-year-old man, 17 December 1981.
[153] Interview with a 69-year-old woman, 21 June 1981.
[154] Interview with a 55-year-old woman, 16 June 1981.
[155] Twenty-six informants expressed seeker attitudes, minus the 10 who were included among the 23 informants who exhibited seeker behaviour. This makes up the total of 39 Baha'i seekers.

My criteria for defining seekers are *pragmatic* in the sense that they were established with the purpose of analysing this particular material. However, using these criteria, seekership becomes a sociological term that is neither tied to any particular religious group, nor based on the converts' possible self-identification as seekers.[156]

Seeker behaviour thus defined is a well-known historical phenomenon. For example, the Christian convert Justin of Nablus, from the second century, would also by the present definition be a distinct seeker. He turned from the Stoics to the Pythagoreans, followed by giving Platonism a try, until he finally came to Christianity at the end of a disappointing intellectual search.[157] Separated in time by nearly two millennia, Justin's career is strikingly similar to that of quite a few modern, intellectual Baha'is who, for example, may have gone from Marxism and Atheism, to search further among Indian religions and philosophies, and then more or less by coincidence ended their quest by hearing about and studying books about Baha'i. This may then have been followed by contact with the Baha'i community and more reading and discussions with Baha'i intellectuals, before finally making the decision to enrol.[158]

Seekership and Ways of Joining

From the analysis of the conversion accounts, the different ways of joining were assessed for each of the 88 first-generation Baha'is. Joining from inside the personal network was defined as joining through family/relative, spouse, future spouse, friend, teacher/schoolmate and colleague. Outside the network was defined as occurring by chance meeting, response to an advertisement in the mass media, and response to a local announcement, for example on a noticeboard at the local library.

Overall, I found that the majority of the Danish Baha'is (65%) joined Baha'i from within their social networks. Comparative data for American Baha'i communities show that in the USA, affiliation to Baha'i also occurs predominantly from within the personal network.[159] When the way of joining is specified in more detail, the

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[156] Bartlett, *Baha'i World Faith: A Case Study in Adult Socialization*, p. 151, noted that half of the Californian Baha'is in her study identified themselves as seekers.

[157] Nock, *Conversion*, pp. 255–257.

[158] Paraphrased from an interview with a 69-year-old woman, 21 June 1981.

[159] Bartlett, *Baha'i World Faith: A Case Study in Adult Socialization*, p. 173: 78% were

similarities between the different Baha'i communities are striking—
the only noticeable difference is that joining through friends seems
to be more important for the American Baha'is than it is for the
Danish Baha'is. A cautious conjecture may be that it was (and is)
more usual to discuss religion among friends in the USA than it was
(is) in Denmark, where religion is not so openly spoken about.[160]

In a separate analysis, I found that there was no significant gen-
der related difference in the pattern of joining for the first-genera-
tion Baha'is (the data are not shown in the table). Of the 35 men,
14 (40%) were recruited outside the social network; of the 53 women,
17 (32%) were recruited outside the social network.

However, there was a significant difference between the 39 seek-
ers and the 49 non-seekers with respect to whether joining had taken
place inside or outside the personal network. Table 7.3 gives a detailed
overview of the different ways of joining for all 88 first-generation
Baha'is, and for the 39 seekers and 49 non-seekers. As can be seen
in the table, 51% of the seekers were recruited inside the social net-
work, while as many as 76% of the non-seekers were recruited that
way.

To explain this finding, one can look closer at the data for join-
ing *outside* the network. Joining outside the network may occur as
the result of a chance meeting or as the result of the informant con-
tacting Baha'i on his or her own initiative after having read an
advertisement or the like. As appears from Table 7.3, the propor-
tion of seekers who were recruited after a chance meeting was 18%,
which is not significantly different from the 22% of the non-seekers
who were recruited that way. The significant difference between seek-
ers and non-seekers mentioned above therefore originates from the
fact that twelve (31%) of the seekers, but only one (2%) of the
non-seekers, were recruited as a result of their own initiative in con-
tacting Baha'i. This difference is highly significant (P < 0.001).

This result can be explained as follows: both non-seekers and seek-
ers may be recruited through the social network, and the probabil-
ity of bumping into Baha'i (chance meeting) is probably of the same

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recruited inside the personal network; Ebaugh and Vaughn, "Ideology and Recruitment
in Religious Groups": 83% were recruited inside the personal network; McMullen,
The Bahá'í, p. 17: 78% were recruited inside the personal network.

[160] 14% of the Danish Baha'is were recruited through friends. Ebaugh and Vaughn,
"Ideology and Recruitment in Religious Groups", found 29% and McMullen, *The
Bahá'í*, p. 17 found 40%.

Table 7.3. *Ways of joining reported by 88 first-generation Baha'is*

Way of joining (decisive encounter)	All	Seekers	Non-seekers
Inside personal network:			
Family and relatives	10	2	8
Spouse and future spouse	12	5	7
Friends	12	4	8
Teacher, schoolmate	9	3	6
Colleague	14	6	8
Total inside personal network	57	[a]20	[a]37
do., % of all first-generation Baha'is	65%	51%	76%
Outside personal network:			
Mass media, advertisements	5	5	0
Exhibition, note, billboard	8	7	1
Sum = all advertised routes of recruitment	13	[b]12	[b]1
do., % of all first-generation Baha'is	15%	31%	2%
Outside personal network:			
Chance meeting	18	7	11
do., % of all first-generation Baha'is	21%	18%	22%
Total outside personal network	31	[a]19	[a]12
do., % of all first-generation Baha'is	35%	49%	24%
Sum = all first-generation Baha'is	88	39	49

[a] Significant difference between seekers and non-seekers ($\chi^2 = 4.58$; $P < 0.05$)
[b] Significant difference between seekers and non-seekers ($\chi^2 = 12.0$; $P < 0.001$)

order of size for both groups. But it seems logical that only *seekers* react to public advertisements etc. If you are a seeker, it makes sense to react to an advertisement or the like, but if you are not a seeker, the chances that you react to the same advertisement are evidently much smaller.

This relation between seekership and ways of joining opens up an alternative way of explaining the Snow *et al.* conclusion. Because ISKCON demanded exclusiveness from society by its adherents, it mainly gained new members by joining from outside the network.[161] It seems more obvious to conclude that the mission strategy of ISKCON (street mission) leads to ISKCON largely attracting seekers. Greil and Rudy found, in fact, that conversion to ISKCON

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[161] Snow *et al.*, "Social Networks and Social Movements".

(together with Unification Church, Divine Light Mission, a UFO cult and two Christian movements) was characterised by a pattern of religious seekership (the exact definition of a seeker was not given, though).[162]

A Generation of Seekers?

Wade Clark Roof studied the generation of "baby boomers" (born 1946–1962) in the USA, titling his book *A Generation of Seekers*. As mentioned previously, he classifies highly-active seekers as people who reject a religious identification, yet characterise themselves as "spiritual". He found that 9% of the "boomers" met this definition.[163] However, a question that Roof does not address is whether seekership is something particular to the baby boom generation, or if there always has been a certain contingent of seekers in each generation. By classifying the first-generation Baha'is into Roof's categories of boomers (born 1946–62) and pre-boomers (born 1928–1945), I found 54% seekers among the 39 boomers and 45% among the 22 pre-boomers (the remaining 27 converts were born before 1928).[164] Thus, there was no significant difference in the percentage of seekers between the two generations of converts. The result, of course, does not reveal anything about the distribution of seekers among the population at large, but the hypothesis of seekership being a characteristic of the baby boom generation is not particularly persuasive, when it concerns those that do convert to a new religion, such as Baha'i.

Seekership Correlations

A cohort analysis shows that, in general, no period was unusual with respect to the proportion of seekers (data not shown). Even in the period 1970–74, when many young singles converted, the data cannot support the common picture of the convert at that time being a young *seeker*: the 25 young converts from that period consisted of 14 seekers (56%) and 11 non-seekers (44%). This is not statistically

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[162] Greil and Rudy, "What Have We Learned From Process Models Of Conversion?".

[163] Roof, *A Generation of Seekers*, pp. 80–81.

[164] The definition of boomer and pre-boomer generations is from Roof, *A Generation of Seekers*, pp. 265–266.

different from the proportion of seekers among the other 63 infor-
mants, of which 25 (40%) were seekers and 38 (60%) were non-
seekers.[165]

   It is also noteworthy that the classification as a seeker has no rela-
tion to whether or not a person is young and unmarried, the prime
example of what Snow *et al.* call a structurally available person. Table
7.4 clearly shows that seekers are evenly distributed among what I
define as different categories of availability, according to age and
marital status.

Table 7.4. *Marital status at the time of conversion reported by*
88 first-generation Baha'is

	All	Seekers	Non-seekers
All first-generation Baha'is	88	39	49
Single, below 30 years	41	20	21
Single, 30 years and above	19	7	12
Married to a Baha'i	6	2	4
Married to a non-Baha'i	22	10	12
do., % of all first-generation Baha'is	25%	27%	24%

In Chapter 6, the area of profession of members of the Danish Baha'i
community is discussed, and it is noted that there is an extraordi-
narily high proportion of female Baha'is in the social, education and
health care professions. In fact, 62% of all Baha'i women who had
ever worked were employed in such professions.[166] A cross-tabula-
tion of the women's category of profession versus seeker classification
(the table is not shown here) indicates a statistically significant asso-
ciation between seekership and being a woman in the non-academic
social, education and health care professions. Thus, among the 53
female converts, there were 20 (38%) who were defined as seekers,
and 57% of the 21 women employed in the social, education and
health care professions were seekers, while only 25% of the rest of
the women were seekers.[167] This association is consistent with the

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[165] $\chi^2 = 1.33$ (df = 1); P > 0.2.
[166] Margit Warburg, Peter Lüchau, and Peter B. Andersen, "Gender, profession,
and non-conformal religiosity", *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 14, 1999, pp.
277–290.
[167] $\chi^2 = 4.29$ (df = 1); P < 0.05.

stereotype of the female health-care worker pursuing a religious quest.[168] This particular concentration of female seekers in the social, education and health care professions was not evident in the male converts. No relative over representation of seekers was observed among the men in the social, education and health care professions (the data are not shown here).[169]

Seekership Psychology?

Taken together, the above results indicate that seekership, when defined by behavioural and attitudinal criteria, is not related to general sociological/demographic variables, such as age, marital status (structural availability) and period of conversion. Seekership is probably psychologically driven, rather than being influenced by the social environment.

To illustrate this notion further, I suggest examining an analogy to religious seekership, namely the search for a spouse. To search systematically for a spouse is not unusual for someone who has been a member of the "Lonely Hearts Club" for a long time; finding a partner for life becomes not only topical, but pressing. All singles who are prepared eventually to marry might meet their future spouses at parties of friends or families, that is, through their social networks, or they might meet their true loves by sheer luck (the chance meeting). Any devout viewer of TV movies can confirm that Hollywood thrives on chance meetings between prospective lovers! However, only the *marital seekers* would respond to marriage advertisements or join clubs for singles. Therefore, generally only marital seekers are recruited for matrimony through advertisements etc., just as only religious seekers are recruited to Baha'i through the analogous channels.

There is, in fact, more than a superficial analogy between the process of joining and converting and the process of falling in love and getting married. The patterns of both processes are correlated with sociological/demographic variables, such as class and age, and both processes usually involve a significant reorientation of life. It is therefore interesting to note that one of the few other significant sociological differences between seekers and non-seekers that I have found in my sample of informants is with respect to number of

[168] Warburg *et al.*, "Gender, profession, and non-conformal religiosity".
[169] Warburg *et al.*, "Gender, profession, and non-conformal religiosity".

marriages: 10 out of 32 seekers who had ever married, had married twice or even three times, while only 3 of 37 non-seekers had married more than once.[170] So, being a seeker seems to imply a generally higher willingness to undertake drastic changes in life.

By the same token, it might be expected that seekers would have a greater tendency to leave Baha'i than would non-seekers. This was not the case, however. My follow-up studies showed that of the 39 seekers, 24 were still active Baha'is in 1990 and 21 were still active in 1999. Of the 49 non-seekers, 36 were still active Baha'is in 1990 and 29 were active in 1999. The proportion of seekers among the informants still active thus has remained constant through these years (44% in 1982, 40% in 1992, and 42% in 1999, calculated from the above data), which does not support the prediction that Baha'i seekers would be more likely than Baha'i non-seekers to seek other religious pastures. It would be pure conjecture, however, to attempt to explain why most of the seekers apparently seem to have settled in comfortably with Baha'i, since I have not tracked the people who have left the religion. Perhaps for the seekers who stayed, the right "spouse" was found in the form of the Baha'i religion.

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[170] The difference is statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 4.59$ (df = 1); $P < 0.05$.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BELONGING TO A BAHA'I COMMUNITY

In a democratic society, such as in Denmark, it is a voluntary deci-
sion to be a Baha'i. As discussed in the previous chapter, conver-
sion to Baha'i is a voluntary, individual process driven by a number
of motives and influenced by the social environment. No decrees
and no overt discriminatory acts from the society at large hinder the
conversion process or force the Baha'is to reconsider their mem-
bership in the Baha'i community. Accordingly, there is no external
pressure that might strengthen or weaken solidarity among the Baha'is,
and it is entirely up to the Baha'is themselves to uphold the coher-
ence of their community and the commitment of the individual mem-
bers, in other words, their belonging to the Baha'i community.

Individual attitudes and individually-centred behaviour are insufficient
to build a community, of course. A community life sustained by
communal activities is, in fact, crucial for most people to uphold a
sense of belonging. This is the case also for the Baha'is, for exam-
ple, as June Wyman shows in her study of an American Baha'i com-
munity.[1] Communal activities that serve to strengthen the adherents'
belonging to the Danish Baha'i community are, first and foremost,
the events organised by the local Baha'i communities in association
with the feasts and holy days.

However, stressing the significance of communal activities should
not lead to the sociologistic simplification that Baha'is who do not
engage themselves in communal activities are only weakly attached
to the Baha'i community. Among Baha'is, there is a tradition of
praising the solitary Baha'i, in particular if the person is an active
pioneer (missionary).[2] Nevertheless, even Baha'is who totally abstain

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[1] June R. Wyman, *Becoming a Baha'i: Discourse and Social Networks in an American
Religious Movement* (Ph.D. diss.), Washington D.C., Department of Anthropology, The
Catholic University of America, 1985.

[2] This should be seen in light of the Baha'i mission strategy, which puts strong
emphasis on the opening of new geographic areas to the religion. The Baha'i mis-
sion in Canada is an illustration of this, see Will C. van den Hoonaard, *The Origins
of the Bahá'í Community of Canada, 1898–1948*, Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University
Press, 1996, pp. 181ff.

from participating in communal Baha'i activities, for one reason or another, must do something to maintain their feeling of belonging to the Baha'i religion, such as praying and fasting, two of the fundamental ordinances of Baha'i religious practice. As shown later, the act of praying seems to be of such significance to the Baha'is that if a Baha'i does not pray, he/she appears to be seriously questioning his/her belonging to Baha'i.

In the present chapter, I show how belonging to a Baha'i community was manifested among the Danish Baha'is in the beginning of the 1980s. This is made evident from analyses of attitudes and behaviours related to both individual and communal religious life. Later interviews with both Western and Iranian Baha'is, during field studies abroad in the 1980s and 1990s, indicate that many of the attitudes found among the Baha'is of Denmark are shared by Baha'is internationally. In Chapter 9, I further argue that the conclusions drawn from this study with respect to collective behaviour, to a large extent, are representative and generally valid for the Danish Baha'i community through the 1980s and 1990s, and probably also today.

Belonging by Knowing, Doing or Being

The phrase "belonging to a Baha'i community" means primarily membership in a Baha'i community. This is consistent with Grace Davie's use of the word "belonging" in her study of church membership and religiosity in Britain.[3]

"Belonging" also alludes to the studies of rural Britain conducted by Anthony Cohen and other anthropologists, who perceived it as an awareness of one's commitment to a particular culture different from that of the others'.[4] Such connotations of the word are often expressed by the Baha'is in their attitude and commitment to a cause that they know is followed by a minority. So, belonging includes both the formal aspect of registered membership and the aspect of identity, and except for a few inactive Baha'is, these two aspects of belonging are congruent.

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[3] Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945. Believing without Belonging*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994, pp. 93–116.
[4] Anthony P. Cohen (ed.), *Belonging. Identity and social organisation in British rural cultures*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1982. Cf. Anthony Jackson (ed.), *Anthropology at Home*, ASA Monographs 25, London, Tavistock Publications, 1987.

I can now introduce three dimensions of belonging—"knowing", "doing" and "being".[5] The dimensions of "knowing", "doing" and "being" are manifested in both attitudes and behaviour, and they are not mutually exclusive, instead, they supplement each other. Sometimes one dimension is particularly emphasised, sometimes another, depending on the specific context.

The terms "knowing", "doing" and "being" were originally proposed by the socio-linguist Joshua A. Fishman in a theoretical discussion of ethnicity.[6] I suggest, however, that the terms may also be useful in an analysis of belonging to any group with a strong feeling of identity, and they therefore can be applied in an analysis of belonging to most religious minority groups, including the Danish Baha'i community.

Following Fishman, "knowing" is a worldview that helps to clarify eternal questions, rationalises human destiny and offers a guide to universal truths.[7] For the Baha'is, "knowing" therefore involves knowledge of the scriptures, rules and traditions, as well as reasoning, which is the intellectual preoccupation with the religious teachings, including their consequences for daily life. The following three native Danish Baha'i informants, for example, show typical intellectual, "knowing" attitudes in their replies to the question "What does it mean to be a Baha'i?" (Q82):

> It is to be religious, first and foremost. It means to believe in the Bab and in Baha'u'llah, and to believe in a supreme principle that has to do with eternal life and the immortality of the spirit. It is an attitude of life, which implies, among other things, that a world society must be established.[8]

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[5] This perspective is a revision and expansion of my earlier proposal that a person can predominantly belong to Baha'i in three ways, which are called "knowing", "doing" and "being". Margit Warburg, "Uncovering Baha'i Identity", in Erik Karlsaune (ed.), *Contemporary religiosity*, Trondheim, University of Trondheim, 1988, pp. 79–94; Margit Warburg, "Afholdenhedsidealer inden for baha'i" [Ideals of continence in Baha'i], in Lene Buck, Margrethe Haraldsdatter, Anneline Juul, Charlotte Schönbeck, and Oluf Schönbeck (eds.), *Idealer i religion og religionsforskning*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusculanum, 1997, pp. 101–113.

[6] Joshua A. Fishman, "Social Theory and Ethnography: Neglected Perspectives on Language and Ethnicity in Eastern Europe", in Peter F. Sugar (ed.), *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe*, Santa Barbara, ABC-Clio, 1980, pp. 69–99.

[7] Fishman, "Social Theory and Ethnography", p. 90.

[8] Interview with a 38-year-old man, 13 September 1982.

> To be a Baha'i also means to take a position on social issues such as the position of women and racial discrimination, and this is not necessarily so within other religions.[9]

> It is a kind of attitude of life. You accept it and you try to understand everybody. You try to receive everything positively and openly from the beginning and maybe only criticise afterwards.[10]

"Doing" is performing acts—and in some cases *not* performing particular acts—that have the meaning and purpose of preserving, confirming and augmenting collective identities.[11] The examples below are illustrative:

> As a Baha'i, you must try to create unity and understanding among everybody regardless of skin colour and nationality. It is to work to promote unity in the world.[12]

> The purpose of a religion is to organise people and help them to do their duty and to be kind.[13]

> It is so much [to be a Baha'i]. In Denmark where everything is permitted, it means a lot to me. It means that I can stay away from sex [before marriage], alcohol, and hash. I am very glad that I can do this.[14]

Still others are "being" Baha'is, they know in their hearts that they are Baha'is. "Being" is the feeling that you stand close to your fellow Baha'i, just because he or she is a Baha'i. In Fishman's words, it is a "feeling of being related to others as closely as to brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents, sons and daughters".[15] Below are some typical "being" statements:

> To be a Baha'i is to have a position where you feel safe and certain. You take part in the establishment of a world society to the benefit of all humankind.[16]

> It is a way of living, it is my daily life. It is a joy that may be best compared with that of being in love.[17]

The dimensions of "knowing", "doing" and "being" are dimensions of belonging, which could be described allegorically as being a Baha'i

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[9] Interview with a 24-year-old woman, 2 July 1981.
[10] Interview with a 44-year-old woman, 25 June 1981.
[11] Fishman, "Social Theory and Ethnography", p. 88.
[12] Interview with a 61-year-old man, 30 June 1981.
[13] Interview with a 17-year-old man, 23 September 1982.
[14] Interview with a 30-year-old man, 16 October 1982.
[15] Fishman, "Social Theory and Ethnography" (quotation p. 85).
[16] Interview with a 55-year-old woman, 16 June 1981.
[17] Interview with a 33-year-old woman, 19 October 1982.

with the head, the hands and the heart. Not surprisingly, many Baha'is combine these dimensions of belonging and gave answers to the question "What does it mean to be a Baha'i?" that were combinations of two or more of these dimensions. Other Baha'is just echoed basic Baha'i doctrines, first and foremost to believe in Baha'u'llah and to follow the Baha'i laws. Such answers could not be classified meaningfully according to the dimensions of "knowing", "doing" and "being". Finally, one informant apparently did not accept the implications of the question "What does it mean to be a Baha'i?", since she replied succinctly:

> Baha'i is not something that I am, Baha'i is something that I believe in.[18]

However, 36 of the informants gave answers that could be classified mainly as expressing one of the three attitude dimensions of "knowing", "doing" and "being". A quantitative analysis of these answers showed a pronounced difference between the Iranian and the non-Iranian Baha'is. Sixteen of the non-Iranian Baha'is—but none of the Iranians—expressed "knowing" attitudes when asked, "What does it mean to be a Baha'i?" The prevailing "knowing" attitudes expressed by the non-Iranians fit with an intellectual attraction to Baha'i, which for many Danish Baha'is was reported as an important motive when they converted. Only one Iranian and five non-Iranians expressed "doing" attitudes. Finally, seven of the eight Iranians expressed distinctly "being" attitudes, while only seven of the 28 non-Iranians expressed such attitudes.[19] The prevailing "being" attitude among the Iranians complies with a feeling of kin connection to fellow Baha'is, and quite a few Iranian Baha'is, in fact, can trace their families back to the early Baha'is, while non-Iranian Baha'is obviously cannot do that.

The Ordinances of Prayer, Fasting and the Making of a Will

From a doctrinal point of view, the belief in Baha'u'llah and the obligation to follow the laws prescribed by Baha'u'llah should be

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[18] Interview with a 33-year-old woman, 9 June 1981.
[19] The difference in prevalence of "knowing", "doing" and "being" attitudes between Iranian and non-Iranians is statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 10.93$ (df = 2), $P < 0.01$.

fundamental to belonging to the Baha'is.[20] Of primary interest in the present study is the observation that 59 of the 120 Baha'i informants, or 49%, stated—among other things—that to follow the Baha'i laws was constitutive of being a Baha'i. Such answers were given by 9 out of 18 Iranian Baha'is (50%), and by 50 out of 102 non-Iranian Baha'i informants (49%). Thus, there was absolutely no difference between the Iranians and non-Iranians, which in this case is noteworthy, considering that most of the non-Iranian informants had a background in mainstream Lutheran Protestantism (see Table 7.1). These informants, therefore, had not been socialised from childhood to obey religious laws and prescriptions, unlike the Iranians who were all "born" into the Baha'i religion. This result indicates that, in the Danish Baha'i community, the new converts are socialised quite efficiently into acknowledging basic Baha'i principles. This observation is investigated in the following.

Prayer and fasting are two fundamental religious observances in the Baha'i religion, and in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the prescriptions of prayer and fasting are placed immediately after the initial confession of faith in Baha'u'llah.[21] In Shoghi Effendi's words, prayer and fasting constitute "the two pillars that sustain the revealed Law of God", and he stresses that observance of the laws of prayer and fasting are "a spiritual and vital obligation enjoined by Bahá'u'lláh upon every believer who has attained the age of fifteen".[22] Because of the doctrinal prominence of prayer and fasting, the study of the Danish Baha'is' attitudes and behaviour with respect to prayer and fasting therefore should uncover some fundamental elements of belonging to Baha'i.

Prayer—the Unchallenged Duty

Baha'is are obliged to pray daily, and they may choose between three different prayers.[23] A Baha'i can read or say the short prayer

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[20] In total, 83 of the 120 Baha'i informants mentioned, among other things, the belief in Baha'u'llah and/or to follow the Baha'i laws.

[21] Baha'u'llah, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The Most Holy Book*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1992, pp. 21–25.

[22] [Shoghi Effendi] *Principles of Bahá'í Administration. A Compilation*, London, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976, pp. 8–9.

[23] John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1996, p. 46; [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 7.

at noon or choose to read or say the medium-length prayer three times: in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening. The third option is the long prayer to be said once in twenty-four hours at any time. According to Shoghi Effendi's instructions, the Baha'is are entirely free to choose any of the three prayers, but must follow the accompanying ritual prescriptions.[24] Thus, ablutions must be performed before the prayer is said, and the person praying must face the Baha'i *qiblih*, which is the Shrine of Baha'u'llah in Bahji, north of Haifa.

The Baha'i daily prayers are unmistakably Islamic in their origin, but they differ in their details.[25] For example, Baha'u'llah dispensed with most of the ritual purity precautions surrounding the Islamic prayer (*salat*), such as avoiding contact with fur or bone.[26] He also specifically confirmed the Bab's prohibition on congregational daily prayer, as it is practised among Muslims when the call for prayer comes five times a day.[27]

The basic prescriptions for the daily prayers and other prayers were laid down by Baha'u'llah in *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, and before the publication of the English edition of *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* in 1992, Western Baha'is had access to Shoghi Effendi's rendering of the ordinances of prayer in *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*.[28] All Baha'is therefore should know that it is obligatory to pray at least once a day; or to put it conversely, if they pray less often, they are violating a central Baha'i prescription.

According to the informants in the current study, only six of them (3 women and 3 men, who were all Danes) reported that they never prayed (Q72). One informant did not answer the question, probably a mistake, since the informant was otherwise an active Baha'i. Of the remaining 113 informants (65 women and 48 men), 88 (78%) answered that they prayed daily, 13 informants prayed a couple of times a week, and 12 informants answered that they prayed less often. In Table 8.1, these three categories are cross-tabulated against

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[24] [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 7.

[25] John Walbridge gives an informative and concise overview of the different Islamic, Babi and Baha'i prayers. See Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp. 30–55.

[26] Baha'u'llah, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 22. See also Denis MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, London, British Academic Press, 1994, p. 59.

[27] Baha'u'llah, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 23.

[28] [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 7–8.

national background, and it appears that there was no difference between the three national groups with respect to the percentage who prayed daily.

Table 8.1. *Informants' reported behaviour with respect to prayer*

	Danes	Iranians	Other	Sum
Pray daily	63	13	12	88
	72%	72%	80%	74%
Pray a couple of times a week	9	2	2	13
	10%	11%	13%	11%
Pray, but less than the above	8	3	1	12
	9%	20%	7%	10%
Never pray	6	0	0	6
	7%	0%	0%	5%
Sum	ᵃ86	18	15	119

ᵃ No information on one Dane.

Daily prayer is a well-known ritual among people raised in both Muslim and Christian traditions, if not from personal experience, then as common cultural knowledge. It therefore was not surprising that there were no differences between the three national groups with respect to their observing the daily prayers. There was a high prevalence of informants carrying out this central religious act regularly. This may be interpreted as meaning that, in relation to praying, a "doing" attitude is prevalent among the Baha'is, regardless of their national background. Conversely, if a Baha'i never prays, the data clearly indicate that he or she is losing religious commitment: none of the six informants who never prayed attempted to fast, two of the six later resigned, and a further two did not participate in any nineteen day feasts or celebrate any of the holy days in 1980–81.

It is noteworthy that an internal survey of the American Baha'i community in 1999 indicated that 82% of the American Baha'is prayed daily.[29] This suggests that the above findings are representative of a broader scale.

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[29] National Teaching Committee of the United States, *Issues Pertaining to Growth, Retention and Consolidation in the United States*, Evanston, Baha'i National Center, December 12, 1999. http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrcole/bahai/1999/growth23.htm, p. 18. Accessed 31 October 2002.

There was, however, a gender difference with respect to the prevalence of praying. Among the 65 women who prayed more or less regularly, 86% reported that they prayed daily, while only 67% of the 48 men did so.[30] This gender difference is particularly pronounced among the Iranians; 100% of the women prayed daily, while only 55% of the men did so. This difference should be seen as further evidence that women are religiously more active than are men in general, and this, of course, holds also within Baha'i. Interestingly enough, however, this gender-related difference in religious behaviour was not observed for fasting.

Fasting—Open to Interpretations

During the nineteen days of *Ala*, the fasting month, Baha'is must abstain from eating, drinking and smoking from sunrise to sunset.[31] These prescriptions are essentially the same as the Muslims have during Ramadan, and the ordinance of fasting is well known among Iranians. Children, persons above seventy years of age, travellers, sick people, women who are menstruating, and women who are pregnant or nursing children are all exempted from fasting (but they can do so if they want).[32] People engaged in heavy labour are also exempted, but are advised to eat "with frugality and in private".[33]

In the interview, the 120 informants were asked to answer yes or no if they had fasted during the fasting month of *Ala*, and they were also asked to expound on their answers (Q72).[34] The informants were specifically asked to give their reasons for *not* keeping the fast, but many also volunteered other responses to this question. The 85

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[30] This difference is statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 5.01$ (df = 1); $P < 0.05$.

[31] Baha'u'llah, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 25, p. 179; Walbridge, John, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp. 67–71.

[32] [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 9–10. More details are given in Baha'u'llah, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, pp. 23–25, p. 129, pp. 173–174, p. 179; these are summarised in [Universal House of Justice], *A Synopsis and Codification of The Kitáb-i-Aqdas the Most Holy Book of Bahá'u'lláh*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1973. The rule that menstruating women are exempted was not rendered in *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*.

[33] Baha'u'llah, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 129.

[34] The following analyses of the answers from Q72 were published in Danish previously: Margit Warburg, "Religionssociologi" [Sociology of religion], in Mikael Rothstein (ed.), *Humanistisk Religionsforskning. En indføring i religionshistorie & religionssociologi*, Copenhagen, Samleren, 1997, pp. 135–246 (the data are analysed, pp. 173–181, and used to illustrate a quantitative analysis supported by qualitative data). The same material appeared in Margit Warburg, "Afholdenhedsidealer inden for baha'i".

comments regarding their answers were particularly valuable, because
they showed that the Baha'is interpreted the ordinance of fasting in
several ways, when posed the question: "Do you fast during the fast-
ing month?" For example, the comments showed that one-fourth of
the informants (31 informants) had started to fast, but had given it
up before the end of the prescribed period. Thirteen of these infor-
mants emphasised their attempt to fast and replied "yes", the other
18 focused on the fact that they had not completed the fast, and
therefore had to say "no" to the question of whether they fasted or
not.

    Based on all the answers and comments given, it was possible to
divide the informants into eight groups, as shown in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2. *Summary of answers to the question: "Do you fast during the
month of fasting?"*

Group of answers	Number	Sum
1) Did not fast because of sickness	11	
2) Did not fast because of other doctrinal legitimate reasons	2	13
3) Deliberate rejection of fast	13	
4) Accepted the fast in principle, but gave up in advance	16	
5) No particular reason for not fasting[a]	10	39
6) Started to fast, but gave up within less than 9 days	24	
7) Started to fast, but gave up after 9 days or longer[b]	7	
8) Completed the fast period of 19 days[c]	37	68
All informants		120

[a] This included one informant who did not know that the fast was mandatory.
[b] This included two Iranian women who interrupted the fast during menstruation.
[c] The figure includes those informants who simply answered "yes" without further
comments.

Thirteen informants—who were all native Danes—told the inter-
viewer that they did not fast, because they were exempted from fast-
ing. These informants all prayed regularly and, except for one, they
all participated in communal events, such as the Baha'i holy days.
The reasons given for not fasting were age, chronic sickness, medi-
cation, or pregnancy—all these reasons are mentioned in the Baha'i

law.[35] Data from these 13 informants therefore were not included in subsequent analyses, because they were not *obliged* to fast. This left 107 informants, of whom 39 never began the fast for a number of other reasons, while at least 68 started the fast. Thirty-seven of these 68 informants completed the fast. There were no differences between men and women with respect to keeping the fast: 67% of the men and 60% of the women fasted on some or all of the days of the fasting month (data not shown).

Table 8.3 includes a cross-tabulation of the behaviours of the 107 informants who were obliged to fast and their national backgrounds. It appears that there were pronounced differences between the three national groups: with one exception, all Iranian Baha'is had fasted, although not necessarily for the entire period, while only a little more than half of the Danish Baha'is (54%) had done so. Baha'is of other nationalities fell in between the other two groups with respect to keeping the fast. These differences are statistically significant.[36] An explanation of the difference between the Iranians and the Danes may be that all the Iranians were brought up with the tradition of fasting, while a religiously prescribed period of fasting was unfamiliar to the majority of Danes having a Protestant or irreligious background. This indicates that the issue of keeping the ordinance of fasting is not simple, but may be influenced by a complex of religious and cultural traditions.

Table 8.3. *Informants' reported behaviour with respect to keeping the fast*

	Danes	Iranians	Other	Sum
Keep the fast, more or less	40	17	11	68
	54%	94%	73%	64%
Abstain for non-legitimate reasons	34	1	4	39
	46%	6%	27%	36%
Sum = all who were not exempted[a]	74	18	15	107
	100%	100%	100%	100%

[a] 13 Danish informants explained that they were exempted from fast.

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[35] Baha'u'llah, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, pp. 23–25, pp. 173–174, p. 179.
[36] Among the native Danish Baha'is, 3 had been members for less than a year; one of them had fasted, the other two had not, with no particular reason stated. It is not clear from the interviews whether it had been possible for them to fast, that is, if they were members during the fast month. Omitting these 3 informants from the data set, however, does not affect the statistical significance: $\chi^2 = 9.84$ (df = 2); P < 0.01.

From the individual comments made by the 17 Iranian Baha'is (7 women, 10 men), it appears that all seven women had fasted, but three of them not through the entire fasting period. Their reasons for interrupting the fast were menstruation and "sour stomach".[37] Ten of the eleven Iranian men had fasted, but four of them not through the entire fasting period.[38] Their reasons for giving up were fatigue and stomach problems.

It is clear from these answers that the Iranian Baha'is accepted the ordinance of fasting. The comment made by one Iranian is illustrative of this: "I fast because Baha'u'llah has said so." This Iranian informant had no doubt that the ordinance of fasting should be followed. All these observations lead to the conclusion that the Iranians show a "doing" attitude towards the ordinance of the fast—the Iranians do not dispute their duty to fast, they all started fasting, and those who gave up, only did so because of personal discomfort.

Many of the non-Iranian Baha'is gave the same reason for giving up the fast as the Iranians did, namely physical discomfort. Some of the informants who did not fast had simply given up in advance, because they knew that they could not do it. Like the Iranians, these Baha'is did not challenge their duty to fast. Their attitudes towards the fast stand in contrast to the attitudes among the other group of informants (all non-Iranians), who stated that they *deliberately* had chosen *not* to fast from the beginning (see Table 8.2). It should be noted that this group of 13 Baha'is includes Baha'is who were active in other ways.[39] Some of the reasons they gave were:

> I derive no spiritual or physical benefits from it.[40]

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[37] It is interesting that *none* of the Danish women mentioned menstruation as a reason for not fasting. In total, 30 of the Danish women who were obliged to fast did not fast or interrupted it before the fasting period was over. Twenty of them were below 50 years of age (18 were below 45 years of age). The odds are that about two-thirds, or 12–13, of these 20 women must have menstruated during the 19-day period of the fast. Perhaps the Danish women did not know or had forgotten that menstruating women are exempted from fasting (menstruation is not mentioned in *Principles of Bahá'í Administration* as a legitimate reason for not fasting, cf. note 32). Of course, they may also have been shy about the issue, or maybe they did not accept menstruation as a legitimate reason for not fasting.

[38] The eleventh man said that it was impossible for him to fast because he was a student.

[39] Nine of them prayed daily, and ten of them participated regularly in Baha'i communal events.

[40] Interview with a 34-year-old man, 11 August 1982.

I have an austere daily life. I do not need the ecstasy and am not attracted by it. I do not want to go wild.[41]

I practice other forms of self-control. I do not smoke and I buy as little as possible.[42]

I am against fasting when you have to perform physical labour. You can cut down on material things.[43]

In these answers, the ordinance of fasting is interpreted as an issue of personal benefit or as a more general ordinance of continence. The last quotation is particularly interesting, because it exemplifies what I perceive as a very Danish (as opposed to Iranian) attitude towards religious law. The quotation gives what is formally a doctrinally legitimate reason for not fasting, namely hard labour, but it is not argued that way. Instead it is stated first as a *personal* choice, followed by the striving for continence by other means, in this case, cutting down on material things.

Three other informants' comments concerning why they did not fast also indicate that, for many Danes, obedience to religious laws is unfamiliar and often disapproved of:

People would think that I am half-witted.[44]

In my circles [at work] I do not want to explain about the fast.[45]

No, partly for physical reasons, partly by conviction. The fasting does not go with the Danish climate.[46]

However, the Danish way of handling the religious obligation of fasting should not be seen as conscious disobedience to the law of Baha'u'llah; rather, it is an innovative exposition of the doctrinal purpose of the fast. In *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, Shoghi Effendi explains the fast with these words:

The fasting period, which lasts nineteen days, starting as a rule from the second of March every year and ending on the twentieth of the same month, involves complete abstention from food and drink from sunrise till sunset. It is essentially a period of meditation and prayer,

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[41] Interview with a 59-year-old woman, 9 June 1981.
[42] Interview with a 44-year-old man, 19 January 1981.
[43] Interview with a 33-year-old woman, 20 August 1981.
[44] Interview with an 18-year-old woman, 11 June 1982.
[45] Interview with a 27-year-old woman, 25 May 1982.
[46] Interview with a 66-year-old woman, 4 December 1981.

of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make the necessary readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires.[47]

The purpose of the fast—"a reminder of abstinence"—is explained in the above quotation by Shoghi Effendi. However, some of the Baha'is of Danish nationality transform the purpose and make the fast one of a number of possible means to teach oneself "abstinence from selfish and carnal desires". This reflects a predominantly "knowing" attitude among these Baha'i informants in relation to the ordinance of fasting. None of the Iranians interpreted the ordinance of fasting in this way; they accepted it as a religious duty, having a "doing" attitude with respect to this ordinance. The previously mentioned comment made by the Iranian, "I fast because Baha'u'llah has said so," certainly also reflects a "doing" attitude with respect to the ordinance of fasting.

As can be seen in Table 8.2 (row 5), there were ten informants—all of them of Danish nationality—who gave no particular reasons for not fasting. Three of them did not pray either and must be regarded as about to lose their ties to the Baha'i community. The other seven informants prayed, five of them daily; so, clearly they must have felt that they belonged to the Baha'i religion. However, when they were asked why they did not fast, their comments indicated that for these Baha'is the fasting was simply not a topical issue:

I don't know. I have never taken a position on the question. No reason, maybe indolence.[48]

Well . . .[49]

I don't know why I do not fast.[50]

Such attitudes cannot be meaningfully categorised as "knowing", "doing" or "being". Although the seven informants all prayed and therefore followed this part of the Baha'i law, for some reason or other they simply had not been socialised concerning an awareness of the importance of the other pillar of their faith, the fast. However,

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[47] [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 9.
[48] Interview with a 27-year-old woman, 10 June 1981.
[49] Interview with a 46-year-old man, 18 August 1981.
[50] Interview with a 27-year-old man, 8 September 1981.

these Baha'is represent the exception, since the answers and comments to the question of keeping the fast showed that the greatest majority of the Danish Baha'is knew and accepted the ordinance of the fast—although they may not have always followed it.[51] In light of this, it can be concluded that in the Danish Baha'i community, new converts are socialised quite efficiently into acknowledging not only the ordinance of prayer, but also that of the fast.

However, it is one thing to accept the general principles; their interpretation is another. The above analysis indicates that the attitude dimensions of "knowing", "doing" and "being" with respect to the fast are manifested in varying strengths among the members of the Danish Baha'i community. In particular, there were some significant differences between the Iranians and the other national groups with respect to keeping the ordinance of the fast. Thus, belonging to a Baha'i community is interpreted and manifested in different ways, even with regard to such fundamentals as the ordinances of prayer and fasting.

Making a Will

The ordinance of making a will is prescribed in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, verse 109: "Unto everyone hath been enjoined the writing of a will."[52] The *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* also contains elaborate laws of inheritance, which are applied if the person dies without leaving a will.[53] However, the duty to make a will was not expounded in Shoghi Effendi's synopsis of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, nor is it mentioned in the older introductory Baha'i literature.[54] Furthermore, it is not a widespread practice in Denmark to make a will and testament. All these factors may explain the low proportion of positive answers to the question about making a will (Q73): only 22 of the 120 informants, or 18%, had written a will and testament. There was, however, no difference between the Iranians and non-Iranians with respect to following the ordinance

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[51] Eighty-seven Danish informants in total, minus the above seven, minus the three who did not pray either, came to seventy-seven.

[52] Baha'u'llah, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 59.

[53] Baha'u'llah, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, pp. 26–28, pp. 153–156, pp. 182–188.

[54] See for example J. E. Esslemont, *An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980; John Ferraby, *All Things Made New. A Comprehensive Outline of the Bahá'í Faith*, London, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1975; [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*.

of making a will, so the low proportion probably can not be explained as ignorance only by the Western Baha'is.[55] Even fewer (13 informants, or 11% of the 120 informants) had stated in their wills how they should be buried, although Baha'is are urged to do so, not the least because cremation is forbidden for Baha'is.[56] Cremation is very common in Denmark; more than 70% of all funerals are cremations, and the percentage is above 90% among the inhabitants of Copenhagen.[57] Thus, the low proportion of informants who had stated how their burial should be performed is noteworthy.

The situation in the Danish Baha'i community is probably representative for many Baha'i communities, because since 2000, the Universal House of Justice has more systematically encouraged the Baha'is to fulfil this obligation, and the American Baha'is have even made an instruction folder for this purpose.[58]

My suggestion is that the situation with respect to the ordinance of making a will is typical for all laws and prescriptions that, in the eyes of Westerners (and Westernised Iranians), are not commonly associated with religion. They are ignored or forgotten even in cases where their fulfilment hardly would present any serious difficulty.

Attitudes of the Individual Belonging to Baha'i

In the study, the 120 informants were asked the following four open-ended questions concerning their general attitudes with regard to being a Baha'i and possible differences between Baha'is and non-Baha'is:

– What does it mean to be a Baha'i? (Q82)
– What is a good Baha'i? (Q83)
– Are Baha'is different from other people? (Q84)
– Do you expect different things from other Baha'is than you do from people who are not Baha'is? (Q85)

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[55] Only 4 of the 18 Iranians had made a will.
[56] Ferraby, *All Things Made New*, p. 280; [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 15.
[57] *Danske Krematoriers Landsforening* [National Association of Danish Crematoria], [statistical information], Copenhagen [2002]. (Unpublished).
[58] *The Writing of a Will*, Evanston, Baha'i National Center, Office of the Treasurer, 2000.

The informants' responses to these four open-ended questions were analysed semantically, leading to the formulation of 33 key descriptive attitudes, such as "a Baha'i shows tolerance," "a Baha'i is unselfish," "a Baha'i is a good role model," and "a Baha'i should follow the Baha'i laws." The responses from informants were then analysed again, and the semantic content of the interviews was classified by designating the responses as belonging to one or more of these key attitudes. Specific statements and illustrative quotations were also noted for each informant. Subsequently, for each key attitude, I calculated the percentage of informants who made statements that corresponded to that attitude. In order to analyse the influence of ethnicity, these data were computed for the Iranian and non-Iranian Baha'is separately.[59]

World Citizen and Liberal Attitudes

The analysis of the answers to the four open-ended questions revealed that one-third of the informants (39 informants) mentioned that to believe in and work for the "unification of mankind", "world peace", a "world government", and the like, played an important role in being a Baha'i. Baha'i doctrines encourage Baha'is to focus on world society matters as one of the top priorities, and "world citizen" attitudes and behaviour are seen as a Baha'i ideal. Such statements also reflect the essential Baha'i doctrine of world unity, as expressed by Shoghi Effendi, who wrote about the Baha'i new world order:

> . . . a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship—such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Baha'u'llah, an Order that shall come to be regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age.[60]

A similar message is conveyed in the words of Marzieh Gail, who wrote the introduction to the 1953-edition of the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*:

> The world community is His primary concern. Religion has often, in the past, produced the good individual. The primary object of Bahá'u'lláh's religion is to produce the good society. His administrative system offers, Bahá'ís believe, the only satisfactory arrangement

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[59] Some of the following data were published earlier in Warburg, "Religionssociologi [Sociology of religion]", pp. 170–173.

[60] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Selected Letters*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991, p. 41.

between individual and community, between free will and authority, equilibrating the prerogatives of each.[61]

The following are typical responses to the question "What does it mean to be a Baha'i?"; the statements show how the fundamental aspects of belonging to Baha'i blend with a concern for world unity:[62]

> That you believe in unity as a progressing development. That you believe in unity and the United Nations. That you recognise all religions. It means that you can always find a place to stay overnight, and that you can travel everywhere in the West. It means a certainty. I would never have met so many different people if I were not a Baha'i. For example, I had never spent time with a medical doctor before. It means that I have become more free.[63]

> To have an attitude of life. To be aware that you yourself (and others) are divine. To be able to use the divine force for the benefit of all humankind. You do that by participating in [Baha'i] arrangements— it concerns the building of society, not just something for myself.[64]

> Baha'i liberates me from the chaotic worldview I would have suffered under. Now I know that there is no chaos. It is a help to make choices that are not self-centred. It is a way to live, so that we can have a civilisation where torture and shameless competition do not exist, and where we may find a more humane society. It gives me a better social conscience. It is a confirmation that life has meaning.[65]

> You feel like a person without prejudices and you believe that the whole world is one country without borders. Through Baha'u'llah's teachings, you learn to remove barriers that are due to race, colour and religion. [. . .] Unity is easier to obtain today, because technology has made communication easier.[66]

> Baha'i is an education that teaches man to think and live globally and what it means to be human. You continuously go deeper into the understanding of the Baha'i teachings, and what you learn, you transform into daily life. One person cannot grasp an entire world religion.[67]

> Baha'i is the answer to the needs of humankind.[68]

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[61] Marzieh Gail, "Introduction", in Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988, pp. i–xix (quotation p. vi).

[62] Some of these quotations, as well as several other remarks, also conveyed an impression of "optimism" and "tolerance", two key attitude terms expressed by 19% and 16% of the informants, respectively.

[63] Interview with a 25-year-old man, 4 February 1982.

[64] Interview with a 29-year-old woman, 12 January 1982.

[65] Interview with a 65-year-old woman, 13 January 1982.

[66] Interview with a 44-year-old man, 9 September 1981.

[67] Interview with a 32-year-old woman, 10 September 1981.

[68] Interview with a 36-year-old woman, 12 October 1982.

These attitudes towards a world society are confirmed by behaviour reported in answers to other questions in the questionnaire. Thirteen of the 120 Baha'is (11%) were members of the Danish United Nations Association, a traditional peace movement organisation that was established before the mass movements for nuclear disarmament that emerged in the 1960s (Q81). Considering that the Danish United Nations Association had about 500 individual members in Denmark (in 1996), the proportion of Baha'is in this association is remarkably high. The Danish Baha'is' voting pattern in the national election in 1979 (Q87) also showed a distinct preference for left wing and centrist parties, which included idealistic support of international engagement as part of their programmes. Fifty-six percent of the Danish Baha'i votes went to small left wing or centrist parties; in comparison, the same parties received a total of 20% of Danish votes in general.

Personal international relationships and frequent contact with other Baha'is internationally were also important to the Danish Baha'is. Within a period of one year, 31 Baha'is had visited other Baha'is abroad (Q39), and within a period of just one month, 49 Baha'is had spent time with one or more foreign Baha'is who had been visiting Denmark (Q40). Finally, there was a high frequency of transnational marriages among the members of the Danish Baha'i community (of the 21 Baha'i couples who participated in the study, seven included spouses of different nationalities, see also Chapter 6).

These observations indicate that "citizen of the world" attitudes and behaviours are prevalent among the Baha'is. It is likely that in future studies concentrating on, for example, Baha'i identity, the term "citizen of the world" could be developed analytically as a "sensitizing concept".[69] This would be an open concept that could structure information gathered through further interviews and field work among the Baha'is.[70] The term "citizen of the world" has the characteristics of a "sensitizing concept", since it is likely that most Baha'is would share the idea of world citizenship as an important aspect of their identity, but its precise character would also vary with the individual. Such studies, however, would be more qualitative and more

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[69] Herbert Blumer, "What is Wrong with Social Theory?", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 18, 1954, pp. 3–10.

[70] Will C. van den Hoonaard, *Working with Sensitizing Concepts: Analytical Field Research*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 1997, pp. 35–46.

anthropological than the present historical-sociological approach to understanding the Baha'is.

Personal Virtues Said to be Characteristic of Baha'is

Baha'is are urged in many ways to uphold positive, social roles, to get an education, to engage in a profession, etc. In the interviews, 39% of the Iranian Baha'is, but only 3% of the non-Iranian Baha'is, reported that Baha'is are expected to show "social competence", which they exemplified as being able to stand up and make a speech, or show initiative and leadership.[71] This reflects the traditional position in Iran of the Iranian Baha'is as a well-educated group, where comparatively many of the Baha'is in the cities have held positions in academia, civil service, liberal professions (lawyers, doctors) and business. In the Baha'i Friday schools in Iran, the Baha'i children are taught about social competence, and they are trained in giving speeches. Such differences between Baha'is and non-Baha'is with respect to educational level and social competence, however, are not apparent in the West, and "social competence" is virtually absent in the statements among the non-Iranians.

Between 10% and 30% of the informants also identified a number of other positive personality traits and behaviours in their self-definitions, such as "honest", "open" (or "broad-minded"), "warm", "loving", "unselfish", "respectful", "hospitable", "helpful" and "polite". "Honest" had the highest prevalence of all these terms (30%), even above "open" (or "broad-minded") (28%), which is an important attitude that appears to be more congruent with the way Baha'i is presented, promoted and popularised in the West. In particular, it was the Iranians who perceived Baha'is as being honest: 61% of the Iranians referred to this key attitude, which was the highest prevalence of all the key attitudes present in the interviews with the Iranians.[72] Two other key attitudes, namely "loving" and "polite", also were markedly more prevalent in the interviews with the Iranians than with the non-Iranians.[73] These three key attitudes seem to reflect

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[71] This difference is statistically significant (Fisher's exact test, $P < 0.001$).

[72] The prevalence of the term "honest" in the interviews of the non-Iranians was only 25%, and the difference between Iranians and non-Iranians, in this case, was statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 6.83$ (df = 1); $P < 0.01$.

[73] The prevalence of the term "loving" in the interviews was 39% and 12%, respectively; the difference between Iranians and non-Iranians was statistically

a difference between Iranian and non-Iranian Baha'is concerning self-definition, and they therefore are discussed more thoroughly in the following.

Iranian Virtues—Baha'i Virtues—Cream of Society

Baha'u'llah specifically praised honesty and politeness as Baha'i virtues:

> Adorn your heads with the garlands of trustworthiness and fidelity, your hearts with the attire of the fear of God, your tongues with the absolute truthfulness, your bodies with the vesture of courtesy.[74]

The greater prevalence of references to the term "polite" among the Iranians than among the non-Iranians therefore might be founded in a greater awareness among the Iranians of the laws of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. However, in that case, it might be expected that there would be greater references to another key issue that is also mentioned in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, namely the discouragement of backbiting:

> Ye have been forbidden to commit murder or adultery, or to engage in back-biting or calumny; shun ye, then, what hath been prohibited in the holy Books and Tablets.[75]

This verse, and its somewhat surprising (at least to a Western audience) juxtaposition of backbiting with murder, is well known among Baha'is. The overall prevalence of references concerning "no back-biting" was 13%, but it was mentioned by only 6% of the Iranians and 14% of the non-Iranians. So, to ascribe the Iranians with a higher degree of scriptural compliance in general is maybe not a valid explanation.

On several occasions, both in Denmark and abroad, I have interviewed Baha'is of Iranian and American backgrounds on the meaning of honesty, politeness and other perceived Baha'i virtues. Many of the Baha'is abroad whom I interviewed belong to what I would call the elite of the Baha'i community. They are generally highly educated, often hold good positions in society or hold high administrative posts in the Baha'i community, have been on mission in

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significant ($\chi^2 = 6.53$ (df = 1); $P < 0.05$). The prevalence of the term "polite" was 39% and 5%, respectively; the difference between Iranians and non-Iranians was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 16.0$ (df = 1); $P < 0.001$).

[74] Baha'u'llah, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 62.
[75] Baha'u'llah, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 26.

other countries or have worked at the Baha'i World Centre, and
many come from established Baha'i families. Their attitudes there-
fore reflect what might be called "high" Baha'i culture. They gen-
erally agreed that prominent (Iranian) Baha'is have the following
characteristics: they are well-educated, they are related to some of
the early Babis, there is unity in their families (no divorces), they
have made sacrifices, they are humble (but in a very self-confident
way), and they are well versed in the Baha'i faith and its scriptures.
Children with a solid Baha'i upbringing are taught courtesy, humil-
ity, trustworthiness, self-sacrifice and unity. Some also claim that
wealth is characteristic, while others, mostly Western Baha'is, claim
it is not.

I also learned that honesty means more than to be candid and
tell the truth; it also means, for example, that Baha'is do not lie,
steal or cheat in business. Several Iranian Baha'is have told me that
in Iran you can always trust a Baha'i in business interactions.
Underlying this, of course, is a prevailing prejudice among (Iranian)
Baha'is that cheating in business is not an unseen phenomenon in
Iran, or in the Middle East in general. The following two answers,
to the question "Are Baha'is different from other people?" (Q84),
are illustrative in this respect:

> They do not cheat, and they do not get into fights, which are com-
> mon in the streets of Iran. It is generally known that Baha'is are
> honest.[76]

> In Turkey there is also the difference that a Baha'i is honest and in
> particular not corrupt. One of my husband's cousins became a lawyer.
> He hung a picture of Abdu'l-Baha on the wall behind his desk, and
> everybody told him that this was probably too dangerous. However,
> he said that he [Abdu'l-Baha] had helped him through his studies, so
> he would go on helping him. And this happened; the cousin is suc-
> cessful today.[77]

The implication of the story is that clients must have felt that the
advantage of having an honest lawyer outweighed the disadvantage
of that lawyer being a Baha'i, so in the long run, the portrait of
Abdu'l-Baha turned out to be good advertisement!

Politeness is highly valued among Iranians in general, and it there-
fore is not unexpected that Iranian Baha'is stress this virtue. For

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[76] Interview with a 17-year-old man, 23 September 1982.
[77] Interview with a 33-year-old woman, 19 October 1982.

example, during my field work at the Baha'i World Centre (and in other field work), I learned about the Persian term *tarof* (*ta'arof*). It is a noun with an Arabic root, and it refers to a specific type of polite behaviour that in the eyes of many Westerners is described as (over-) flattery, complimentary, or even fishing for compliments. For example, if one person persists in offering another person food, and the other person persists in saying no thank you, both sides are exhibiting *tarof*.[78] At the Baha'i World Centre, I once noticed two Iranian gentlemen who were repeatedly offering each other the chance to enter a room first. It took, if not an eternity, at least a minute before one of them yielded and entered the room!

Unity is a very important ideal in the Baha'i religion, and this ideal colours the behaviour of most Baha'is, because it is also interpreted as meaning that internal conflicts and lengthy disputes should be avoided. The Baha'i teachings praise group discussions as part of decision-making or individual guidance, and they even have a special word for it, "consultation". As mentioned in Chapter 5, consultation has its roots in Baha'u'llah's organisation of the first Baha'i communities in Iran. Consultation is an important part of the culture of Baha'i management and it is encouraged in all situations of decision-making, also in family matters.[79] Consultations aim at reaching a unanimity of views, and in cases where voting is necessary, everybody should support the outcome. If, for example, a local spiritual assembly reaches a decision with which one of the members does not agree, for the sake of unity, this person should give up his/her personal opinion. The idea is that after a while, the decision will turn out to be the right one, and the disagreeing person will realise that.

During my field work at the Baha'i World Centre, an American informant made an ironic remark about this emphasis on unity: "If two Baha'is disagree whether the earth is flat or round, it is better that they agree that it is flat than for one of them to say it is round and the other one to say it is flat."[80]

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[78] Frank Lewis and Puran Stevens, *Iranian Refugees in America: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, [Wilmette], National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, 1986.

[79] Patricia Wilcox, *Bahá'í Families. Perspectives, Principles, Practice*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1991, pp. 86–115.

[80] Interview with a Baha'i World Centre staff member, 30 December 1988.

Many of my Baha'i informants were of the opinion that there is no perfect Baha'i other than Abdu'l-Baha. He is the "perfect exemplar", the one whom they ought to resemble the most. Abdu'l-Baha has also written that Baha'is must strive to be the "cream of society":

> Then know thou that, verily, the people of Baha' must needs [sic] be distinguished from others in all respects, until they become the lamps of the True One among the creatures and the stars of guidance shining from the Supreme Concourse.[81]

Thus, whatever their education or social background, Baha'is should be the elite, just like the nobility. An informant at the Baha'i World Centre described it as *noblesse oblige*, meaning that the Baha'i elite are nobility and they are very much aware of it.[82] My informant went on to say that:

– As a Baha'i you should not even get a parking ticket.
– Why?
– Because you are a Baha'i.

Overall, this brief qualitative and quantitative analysis of attitudes concerns what could be termed "proper" Baha'i behaviour. The results presented seem to indicate that, in general, the Iranian Baha'is put more weight on personal conduct and social competence than do the non-Iranians, who instead emphasise their own personal development. Elite Baha'is, both Iranians and non-Iranians, however, seem to agree that Baha'is should conduct themselves according to the highest standards.

DISPLAYING A BELONGING TO BAHA'I

The display of symbols and items shows a belonging to Baha'i, which is not only a way of confirming a Baha'i identity to oneself and to fellow-Baha'is, but is also a signal to non-Baha'is that a person is a Baha'i. So, for example, when a Baha'i wears a Baha'i ring or hangs a portrait of Abdu'l-Baha at home, he/she in a small way strengthens his/her Baha'i identity and also assists in the mission work by making Baha'i better known to others.

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[81] Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, vol. 3, New York, Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1930, p. 682.
[82] Interview with a Baha'i World Centre staff member, 11 January 1989.

There are a few common visual symbols of Baha'i. The Baha'i religion is often symbolised by a nine-pointed star, in accordance with the special status of the number nine. The star together with a globe of the world comprise the current standard logo on the homepages of the Baha'is, see Photo 3 *Baha'i icons on the web*. Books and pamphlets describing the religion often bear the nine-pointed star on the front. There is no fixed form prescribed for the star, and the star or other nine-sided shapes are seen in many Baha'i illustrations and in art created by Baha'is. The following illustration by a Danish Baha'i is an example of how the nine-pointed star together with the globe can be elaborated to convey a distinct Baha'i message.

Star and globe logo elaborated by a Danish Baha'i
The symbol to the left with the many flowers illustrates the Baha'i motto of "unity in diversity". The symbol in the middle with the divided plate illustrates the Baha'i principles of social justice. The symbol to the right illustrates the Baha'i principle of harmony between science and religion (Source: Pamphlet by Jørgen Lykke, the Danish Baha'i community, n.d., ©Jørgen Lykke)

The Baha'is use two other symbols that are more esoteric than is the nine-pointed star. One is "the Greatest Name", an Arabic calligraphy of the invocation *ya baha'u'llah*, meaning "O Glory of the All-Glorious".[83] It is considered the most sacred symbol in Baha'i and has a prominent place in the Baha'i temples. The calligraphy in the form of a framed print is often also hanging on the wall of Baha'i centres and in many private Baha'i homes.

The other symbol is the "ringstone symbol", designed by Abdu'l-Baha.[84] The ringstone symbol is engraved on finger rings and other Baha'i jewellery, and is worn by many Baha'is.

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[83] The best-known calligraphy was made by an eminent Iranian calligrapher, named Mishqin-Qalam. This particular calligraphy, which is illustrated here, is in practice the official version of "the Greatest Name".

[84] According to Abdu'l-Baha, who designed and explained its symbolism, the
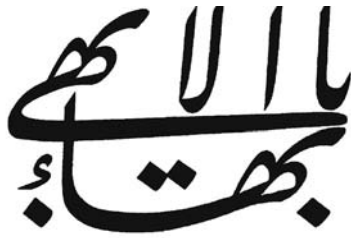
The Greatest Name

Almost all the informants confirmed that they wore a Baha'i ring
or similar jewellery; only six informants said that they never wore
any Baha'i jewellery (one person did not answer this question, so

The ringstone symbol

the total number of informants here is 119). Only about half of those
who wore such jewellery did so publicly (54 of 113 or 48%), how-
ever. All seven of the Iranian women wore a Baha'i ring in public,
while only three of the eleven Iranian men did so. Among the non-
Iranians, the difference between the sexes was less pronounced: 47%
of the women and 39% of the men wore a Baha'i ring in public.
The question of wearing a Baha'i ring in public was not correlated
with whether or not colleagues at work knew that the informants
were Baha'is (Q21), so it may be conjectured that decisions about
wearing Baha'i rings in public were not motivated by reluctance to
or shyness about admitting to being a Baha'i.

The informants were also asked if it was possible to infer from
the appearance of their homes that they were Baha'is. Most of them

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central figure consists of three horizontal strokes, which represent the world of God,
the manifestation or will (of God), and the world of man. The vertical line is also
the manifestation that joins God and mankind. The two stars represent Bab and
Baha'u'llah. See Wendi Momen (ed.), *A Basic Bahá'í Dictionary*, Oxford, George
Ronald, 1991, p. 198.

confirmed that this was possible from various items displayed (see Table 8.4). Fifty-seven percent of the informants had a picture of Abdu'l-Baha, 46% had a calligraphy of the Greatest Name, 32% had a picture of a Baha'i temple or of the Shrine of the Bab, and 15% had an illustration of the ringstone symbol. Many had other items as well, in particular Baha'i calendars were common (39%).[85] One quarter of the informants (24%), mostly among the very young, said that their homes did not display any particular items showing that they were Baha'is.

Table 8.4. *Items displayed in the homes showing that the owner is a Baha'i*

	All (N = 120)	Non-Iran. (N = 102)	Iranians (N = 18)
Picture of Abdu'l-Baha	57%	52%	[a]89%
"The Greatest Name"	46%	50%	[b]22%
Picture of temple, Shrine of the Bab or similar	32%	29%	44%
Ringstone symbol	14%	15%	11%
Nothing at all	24%	26%	11%

[a] Significant difference on the 0.05 level between non-Iranians and Iranians.
[b] Significant difference on the 0.01 level between non-Iranians and Iranians.

As can be seen in Table 8.4, there is a statistically significant difference between non-Iranians and Iranians concerning the picture of Abdu'l-Baha. Of the 102 non-Iranians, 52 (51%) reported having a picture of Abdu'l-Baha, whereas 16 of the 18 Iranians (89%) reported having this type of picture. As mentioned, according to the Baha'i doctrines, Abdu'l-Baha is the "Perfect Exemplar", a concept that is probably more familiar to Iranian Baha'is than to Baha'is from a non-Shi'i background.[86] I therefore suggest that for the Iranians, the portrait of Abdu'l-Baha symbolises a central religious ideal. The Danes and other non-Iranians may not appreciate the same symbolism, and for them the picture is simply a portrait of Abdu'l-Baha.

With regard to the Greatest Name, 51 of the non-Iranians (50%), but only 4 of the Iranians (22%), had this symbol displayed. A possible explanation could be that the Danes and other non-Iranians,

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[85] Among the various items, some also mentioned "Baha'i books", but since most Baha'i books are not that conspicuous, books were not counted as positive answers.
[86] The doctrine of the "Perfect Exemplar" is expounded in Chapter 4.

who are unable to read the calligraphy, see it as a symbol that
signifies the Iranian origin of Baha'i. It is also exotic, mystical and
therefore most fitting as a religious symbol.

<div align="center">MARKING THE BAHA'I YEAR</div>

The Baha'i calendar, with its nineteen months, each of nineteen
days, was devised by the Bab. The names of the nineteen months
originate from a Shi'i dawn prayer recited during the Muslim fast-
ing month, Ramadan.[87] The days of each month are numbered from
1 to 19, and each day has the same name as that of the corre-
sponding month; for example the fourth day is called *Azamat*, just
like the fourth month. A new day begins at sunset following the tra-
dition of the Muslim and Jewish calendars. However, unlike the
Muslim calendar (which is a lunar calendar), the Baha'i calendar is
a solar calendar like the traditional Persian calendar. Since 19 times
19 is 361, four or five days must be added to complete the solar
year of 365 days (or 366 days in leap years). These days, the inter-
calary days or *Ayyam-i-Ha*, are inserted between the eighteenth and
the nineteenth month. The New Year is the ancient Iranian Zoroastrian
New Year, *Naw-Ruz*; it is celebrated at the vernal equinox (the 21st
of March). *Naw-Ruz* is the national Iranian New Year, celebrated by
all Iranians, independent of creed, and it is therefore not specifically
a Baha'i New Year.

   There are, however, also particular Baha'i holy days in the Baha'i
year.[88] The twelve-day period of *Ridvan* to commemorate Baha'u'llah's
declaration is the most important, and the first, ninth and twelfth
days of *Ridvan* are particularly celebrated. The Declaration of the
Bab and the dates of the birth and death of the Bab and of Baha'u'llah
are also commemorated as major holy days. Including *Naw-Ruz*, there
are altogether nine major holy days in the Baha'i year, and it is
obligatory for the Baha'is to suspend work on these days. There are
also two minor holy days, the Passing of Abdu'l-Baha, and the Day
of the Covenant, but work does not have to be suspended on these

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[87] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 185.
[88] Walbridge gives detailed and systematic information concerning the origin of
the Baha'i holy days, their symbolic meaning and the traditions usually associated
with their celebration. See Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp.
206–247.

days. The days of *Ayyam-i-Ha* are not holy days as such, but Baha'u'llah gave instructions that during the *Ayyam-i-Ha*, the Baha'is should "provide good cheer for themselves, their kindred and, beyond them, the poor and needy..."[89] In modern Baha'i communities, the period has developed into a children's feast.
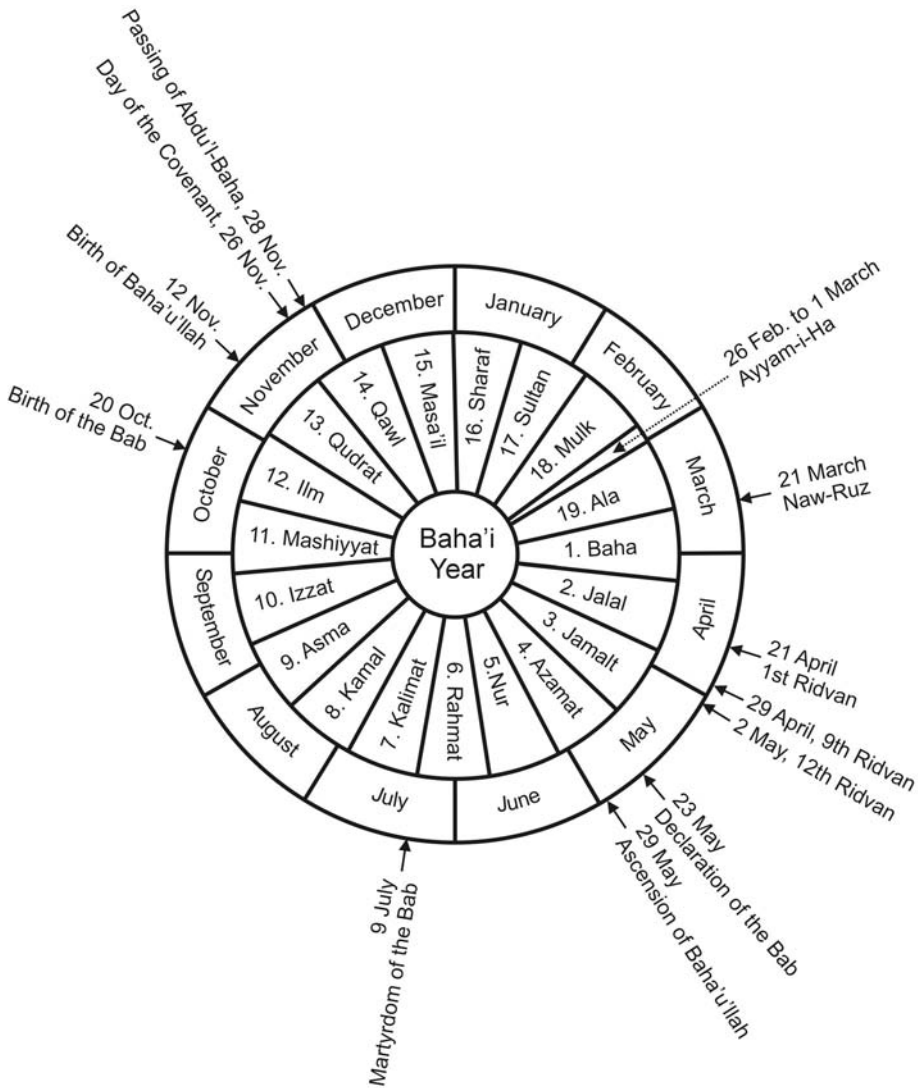
The Baha'i calendar (©Margit Warburg)

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[89] Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 25.

The illustration on the previous page gives an overview of the
Baha'i calendar. The inner circle represents the Baha'i year with 19
days in each month, and 4 intercalary days, *Ayyam-i-Ha*. The outer
rim represents the Gregorian calendar. The figure is drawn to scale;
for example, February is represented by a smaller arc than is March.
Differences of one day can be distinguished. Note for example that
the Baha'i month *Sharaf* begins on the 31st of December (or more
precisely, on the evening of the 30th of December).

Celebration of the Baha'i Holy Days

The Baha'i holy days are celebrated regularly by most of the Danish
Baha'is. According to the answers from the informants, *Naw-Ruz* and
Ridvan were celebrated by two-thirds of the Baha'is, the five holy
days associated with Bab and Baha'u'llah were celebrated by about
half of the Baha'is on the average, and the two minor holy days
(the Passing of Abdu'l-Baha, and the Day of the Covenant) were
celebrated by about forty percent.[90] There are only few prescriptions
concerning the holy days; for example the hour at which to begin
the commemoration of the Declaration of the Bab, and the Ascension
of Baha'u'llah, respectively, or the prescription that a particular text
should be read at the Martyrdom of the Bab.[91]

In principle, a holy day may be celebrated alone; however, the
proportion of informants who reported that they had celebrated the
holy days alone was generally low, between 5% and 10%. Of these,
half or more also reported that they had also participated in a com-
munal event with other Baha'is. This clearly shows that for the
Baha'is, the typical way of celebrating the holy days is by partici-
pating in a communal event with other Baha'is. In Copenhagen, the
celebration of the holy days is often arranged in the Baha'i centre
on Sofievej, north of Copenhagen, and usually thirty or more Baha'is
participate. Similar organised feasts, although on a smaller scale, are
held around the country, usually in private homes.

One of the participating local Baha'i communities is responsible
for the programme, which typically has a session with prayer and
chanting (a melodious prayer performed in Arabic or Persian), one

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[90] Statistics regarding the holy days are based on answers to Q66 and Q67 from
117 informants, excluding three recently converted Baha'is who had not been mem-
bers for a full year.

[91] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 221, p. 243, p. 230.

or two speeches on a topic related to the particular event that is being celebrated, and some entertainment. The programme ends with the serving of tea and cakes, or even a complete meal that often will include Iranian dishes.

In general, the Baha'i holy days are social and joyous gatherings. Below is an example of a programme of a Baha'i holy day held in Copenhagen in 1990. In this case, it was the celebration of the Birth of Baha'u'llah, which begins on the evening of the 11th of November:

- Welcome.
- Reading from Baha'i scriptures in Danish, in English, and in Persian. Chanting of prayers in Persian.
- A speech by an Iranian Baha'i on the legends about the birth of all the great prophets, from Moses to Baha'u'llah.
- A speech by a Danish Baha'i on how the religion has progressed since the days of Baha'u'llah.
- A sketch played by four young Baha'is. The primary character in the sketch was a depraved detective wearing a fedora and with a distinct Philip Marlowe look. He had been given the job of finding the gate to God, and the reward was eternal life. He went to a number of places, meeting a Muslim *mulla* (who was turned into a slight caricature), an attractive young woman in a burger bar, and a woman in a book shop who ended by giving him *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*.
- A religious song by a group of children, boys and girls of different ethnic backgrounds.
- Tea and an abundance of cakes of various sorts.

The holy days associated with the deaths of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha are arranged according to a similar scheme, but are more solemn in tone. Below is my impression of the commemoration of the Ascension of Baha'u'llah:

> *The Ascension of Baha'u'llah, 28th of May 03:00−04:45 a.m., 2000*
> The commemoration took place in the Baha'i centre on Sofievej. It had to begin at 3 a.m., corresponding to the time that Baha'u'llah died.[92] It was dark, windy and cold outside, and people entered the room in a quiet, devout, but not sad mood. On the windowsill there was a lonely rose in a vase, with a candle on each side. On a low marble table in the middle of the room there were four candles in

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[92] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 243.

brass candlesticks, and in the centre was a shallow bowl filled with
water. Two big rose flowers were floating on the water.
    The ceremony consisted of the reading of different texts in Persian,
Arabic, English and Danish. The reading itself lasted 1 hour and 15
minutes, a long period of reading for a Baha'i ceremony. To start
with, the texts were about Baha'u'llah who caught a fever and died.
Later, they were about Abdu'l-Baha who took over the leadership of
Baha'i in accordance with the covenant of Baha'u'llah. This transition
coincided with the first traces of dawn and the first few cheeps from
the birds outside. Gradually as the reading proceeded towards the end
of the ceremony, the sky became lighter and lighter, and the bird song
increased. This was a commemoration of death and rebirth.
    Afterwards, chicken broth with noodles was served.

Naw-Ruz is celebrated as a New Years party. People are dressed up,
Baha'u'llah's *Naw-Ruz* message is read, there may be music and
fireworks, and the selection of cakes is even richer than usual.

    The Baha'is also have other regular feasts and events. For exam-
ple, the United Nations Day on the 24th of October is often cele-
brated with a special Baha'i arrangement, including public invitations
to non-Baha'is. The main event is normally a lecture, a film may
be shown and, of course, there is a social gathering with food or
tea and cakes. This day seems to have the potential of becoming a
secular holy day for the Baha'is, much as different national inde-
pendence days or constitutional days have for other citizens.

Participation in Organised Baha'i Holy Days

Using the data from the interviews, a more detailed analysis of atten-
dance at the Baha'i holy days and the nineteen day feasts can be
conducted. The analysis, among other things, also addresses the issue
of passivity with respect to attending these communal activities.

    Table 8.5 presents the percentage of informants who reported that,
in the year 137 B.E. (1980–81), they celebrated the holy days by
participating in a communal event with other Baha'is (Q67). More
than half of the Baha'is participated in *Naw-Ruz* and *Ridvan* events,
and between 43% and 50% participated in celebrations of the five
holy days associated with Bab and Baha'u'llah. Events on the two
minor holy days were attended by about forty percent, and *Ayyam-
i-Ha* by about sixty percent.

    There is a clear and systematic difference between non-Iranian
and Iranian participation as shown in Table 8.5: in all cases, the
percentages for the Iranians are considerably higher than they are

for the non-Iranians.[93] The differences between Iranian and non-Iranian participation are statistically significant with respect to the commemoration of the Ascension of Baha'u'llah and the Passing of Abdu'l-Baha.

However, the observed differences between the Iranians and the non-Iranians might have been influenced by the fact that, at the time of the interviews, 17 out of the 18 Iranian informants lived in the Greater Copenhagen area. On any holy day, several communal Baha'i events are announced in the Greater Copenhagen area, so everyone has a possibility of participating without having to travel a long distance. The situation, of course, is not the same for an isolated Baha'i living in Jutland. The observed differences between the Iranians and the non-Iranians therefore simply might be a consequence of geographic location.

In order to investigate this hypothesis, the average participation rates for the five major holy days associated with the Bab and

Table 8.5. *Participation rates in communal Baha'i events at the holy days*

	Dates	All[a] (N = 117)	Non-Iran.[a] (N = 99)	Iranians (N = 18)
Naw-Ruz	21–3	56%	53%	72%
One or more days of *Ridvan*	21–4...2–5	61%	59%	72%
Declaration of the Bab	23–5	49%	46%	67%
Ascension of Baha'u'llah	29–5	44%	39%	[b]72%
Martyrdom of the Bab	9–7	43%	39%	61%
Birth of the Bab	20–10	45%	42%	61%
Birth of Baha'u'llah	12–11	50%	47%	67%
Average of the above five holy days:		*46%*	*43%*	*66%*
Day of the Covenant	26–11	40%	37%	56%
Passing of Abdu'l-Baha	28–11	42%	37%	[b]67%
Ayyam-i-Ha	25–2...28–2	61%	58%	78%

[a] 3 newly enrolled Baha'is are not included.
[b] Significant difference on the 0.05 level between non-Iranians and Iranians.

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[93] The systematic difference between the celebration rates of Iranians and non-Iranians is statistically significant. A simple and not too inaccurate estimate of this is constructed by summing up all the χ^2-values: $\Sigma\chi^2 = 21.5$; df = 10; P < 0.05. See Richard Startup and Elwyn T. Whittaker, *Introducing Social Statistics*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1982, p. 136.

Baha'u'llah were calculated for the Greater Copenhagen area alone
and compared with the same data for the whole country. For the
greater Copenhagen area, the difference in average participation rates
between the Iranians and the non-Iranians was 14 percentage points.
For the whole country, the same difference was 23 percentage points
(Table 8.5). Thus, more than half of the observed difference between
Iranians and non-Iranians with respect to celebration of the holy
days is not related to geography, but there are no qualitative data
from the interviews that might shed further light on this.

The high average rates of participation shown in Table 8.5 rep-
resent a wide variation of activity among the individual Baha'is, how-
ever. As can be seen in Table 8.6, it appears that 31 (26%) of the
117 informants did not participate in any collective commemoration
of the holy days; of these, 29 were non-Iranians and only 2 were
Iranians. At the other end of the range it can be noted that 24
(21%) said that they celebrated *all* the major holy days; of this group,
16 were non-Iranians and 8 were Iranians. This difference is statis-
tically significant.[94]

Table 8.6. *Frequencies of participation in Baha'i holy day arrangements among
Danish Baha'is*

	Number of informants		
	All[a]	Non-Iran.[a]	Iranians
None of the holy days	31	29	2
1 or 2 holy days	12	9	3
3 or more, but less than 5 major holy days	24	22	2
At least 5 major holy days, but not all	26	23	3
All major holy days	24	16	[b]8
Sum	117	99	18

[a] 3 newly enrolled Baha'is are not included.
[b] Significant difference on the 0.05 level between non-Iranians and Iranians.

This conclusion can be put into perspective by analysing the answers
to Q86: "Do you agree with the following statement: You cannot
be a good Baha'i unless you observe the holy days?" None of the
Iranians agreed with the statement, while 16 non-Iranians did agree.

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[94] $\chi^2 = 8.843$ (df = 1), P < 0.01.

Interestingly, there was a clear tendency for those 16 "hard-liners", on average, to have celebrated *fewer* holy days than had the rest, and 6 had not celebrated any holy days at all. It might be tempting to interpret this as hypocrisy, but I find it more persuasive to consider it a piece of evidence for a difference in belonging. The Iranians probably all *know* that observation of the holy days is not a prescribed, fundamental religious duty like that of prayer and fasting. The 16 non-Iranians here apply a doing attitude, assuming that observing the holy days makes you a better Baha'i.

As mentioned above, work is suspended on the major Baha'i holy days. This, however, was not followed generally by the Danish Baha'is. Rather few, between 8% and 13%, of the informants reported that they took a day off from work on each of the holy days. In general, it is not difficult in Denmark to take a day off, so the low figures show that this ordinance is not important for the Danes belonging to the Baha'i religion.

Nineteen Day Feasts

The nineteen day feasts, which form the backbone of Baha'i religious life, are usually held on the first day of each Baha'i month. Only Baha'is are allowed to participate in the nineteen day feasts, whereas the Baha'i events on holy days are open to visitors—visitors are, indeed, welcome. The nineteen day feasts originally developed from a feast of devotion and a shared meal, which the American Baha'is held regularly from around 1905, after inspiration from Abdu'l-Baha.[95] The present form of the nineteen day feasts was institutionalised by Shoghi Effendi and consists of three parts: first a devotional session, followed by an administrative part, and finally a social gathering with food served.[96] Formally, nineteen day feasts are only held in Baha'i communities that have local spiritual assemblies, but groups with less than nine Baha'is can hold a feast on the first day of each Baha'i month if they like. Nineteen day feasts are also open to Baha'is from other communities.[97]

A typical nineteen day feast may have the following programme. At the start of the evening, individual Baha'is read aloud from the

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[95] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp. 207–208.
[96] [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 52.
[97] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp. 209–210.

Baha'i writings; usually the host has arranged what is to be read and by whom. Then the secretary of the local spiritual assembly provides general information and news on Baha'i matters, and the treasurer may present an abstract of accounts or at least make some comments on the financial situation of the community, before collecting anonymous donations. The meeting continues with the exchange of greetings and maybe some talk about the contents of the recent community newsletter, or an upcoming Baha'i arrangement. Before having tea with cookies, which marks the end of the evening, one or two Baha'is might open a discussion on how to promote the faith or some other topic of general importance.

Table 8.7 shows the frequency of participation in the nineteen day feasts among the 117 informants in the year 137 B.E. (1980–81) (Q66). The first column shows the overall figures, and in the two next columns, the figures are given for non-Iranians and Iranians, respectively. The last three columns show the figures according to the informants' organisational status: 1) member of a group with a local spiritual assembly; 2) member of a group with no local spiritual assembly; and 3) isolated Baha'i.

As seen in the table, it appears that there were 19 Baha'is (all non-Iranians) who did not participate in any nineteen day feast. The organisational status for 6 of them was "isolated", and since there were only 16 isolated Baha'i in total, this indicates one possible (and likely) cause for not participating in nineteen day feasts.[98] However, the table also shows that being isolated does not *preclude* participation in nineteen day feasts.

Nineteen day feasts are often held in private homes (Q65). Seventy-seven of the 117 Baha'is (66%) reported that they had hosted a nineteen day feast at least once. This indicates a broad commitment among the Danish Baha'is with regard to these communal events, and that the responsibility for hosting the feast is also carried by many: only 19 Baha'is reported that they had hosted more than 6 nineteen day feasts (Q65).

As was the case with the celebration of the holy days, the Baha'is are generally diligent participants in the nineteen day feasts. The *average* frequency of participation was 11 feasts out of a possible 19

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[98] There was a statistically significant positive association between being isolated and not having participated in a nineteen day feast (Fisher exact test P < 0.025).

Table 8.7. *Frequencies of participation in nineteen day feasts among Danish Baha'is*

	Number of informants			Local affiliation to:		
	All[a]	Non-Iran.[a]	Iranians	LSA	Group	Isolated
None	19	19	0	6	7	6
1 to 4 feasts	14	12	2	1	10	3
5 to 8 feasts	16	14	2	7	6	3
9 to 12 feasts	15	11	4	8	7	0
13 to 16 feasts	22	18	4	14	5	3
17 to 19 feasts	31	25	6	22	8	1
Sum	117	99	18	58	43	16

[a] 3 newly enrolled Baha'is are not included.

(data not shown). In contrast to the holy days, there was no significant difference between Iranians and non-Iranians with respect to their participation in the nineteen day feasts.

Conferences and Other Special Events

During 1980-81, the Danish Baha'i community arranged a number of conferences and other special events for the internal education of its members (Q76). Table 8.8 summarises participation in these conferences; in total, more than half of the Danish Baha'is (65 of 117, 56%) participated in at least one of the conferences. Furthermore, 34 informants reported that they participated in a study class (Q75). Twenty-four of these informants also participated in one of the conferences, while 10 did not. Thus, 75 of the 117 informants (64%) had participated in at least one internal educational activity during the last year. One-third (40 out of 120) of the Danish Baha'is reported that they had held a lecture at a Baha'i arrangement (Q62), and Baha'is of all three national categories were well represented among the lecturers.[99] This indicates that the internal education of the Danish Baha'is is a high-priority activity that engages the majority of members.

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[99] Thirty percent of the Danes, 44% of the Iranians and 40% of the Baha'is of other nationalities reported that they had held at least one lecture at a Baha'i arrangement.

Table 8.8. *Participation in conferences and other special Baha'i events*

Event	Period	Number	Per cent of all[a]
Deepening conference, Copenhagen (1½ days)[b]	22–3...23–3	27	23%
Deepening conference, Århus (1½ days)	29–3...30–3	6	5%
Summer school, Bjødstrup (7 days)	3–8...10–8	21	18%
Deepening conference, Copenhagen (1½ days)	1–11...2–11	20	17%
Winter school, Kirke Hyllinge (4 days)	24–12...28–12	17	15%
Youth conference, Odense (2½ days)	30–1...1–2	24	21%
Week-end, Kirke Hyllinge (2½ days)	23–1...25–1	25	21%
Participated in at least one of these conferences		65	56%
National convent, Copenhagen (2½ days)	25–4...27–4	49	42%

[a] All = 117 of the 120 informants. 3 newly enrolled Baha'is are not included.
[b] Since these events usually involved all-day programmes with boarding, one day can be estimated to equal about 8 hours in company with other Baha'is, exclusive meals and breaks.

DIFFERENCES IN ACTIVITY LEVEL

As seen in Table 8.7, there were 19 Baha'is who did not participate in any of the nineteen day feasts. A closer study of the interview data for these 19 informants showed that 16 of them also did not participate in any Baha'i holy day arrangement, nor in any other communal activities such as summer schools, firesides etc. These 16 Baha'is (8 women, 8 men; 13 Danes, 3 Baha'is of nationalities other than Danish or Iranian) were coded as "socially inactive", but as stated in the beginning of this chapter, this does not automatically mean that they belong to the Danish Baha'i community only marginally. Thirteen of these 16 Baha'is prayed (six of them daily), three of them completed the fast (four more began the fast), and three of them were active in some other ways as Baha'is (Q69 and Q70), for example conducting individual mission, reading Baha'i writings, or

socialising privately with other Baha'is. In reality, only the three individuals who did not pray at all were inactive Baha'is, in the sense that they did not do anything at all as Baha'is. One of them later resigned, the two others are still members.

Three inactive Baha'is out of 120 informants is only 2.5%. However, it is evident that the percentage of inactive Baha'is must be considerably higher; some of the Baha'is who were not included in the study declined to participate because they felt that they were no longer Baha'is. A cautious estimate that can be made based on the Danish Baha'is' responses to the interview study is that at least 10% of all registered members of the Danish Baha'i community at that time (184 members in 1981) might be regarded as inactive.

After a closer scrutiny of the data discussed above, it appears that the division between "socially inactive" Baha'is and the other Baha'is could be refined further. The participation frequencies regarding the nineteen day feasts distinguish two other discernible groups apart from the "socially inactive": those informants who had participated in less than 9 of the nineteen day feasts (1 to 8 feasts, corresponding to row numbers 2 and 3 in Table 8.7), and those who had participated in at least 9 of the feasts. A cross tabulation with the data from the participation frequencies in the holy days (Table 8.6) indicated that frequent participation in holy days was strongly correlated with participation in the nineteen day feasts. There were 50 Baha'is who participated in at least five of the major holy day feasts (see the two bottom rows in Table 8.6). Forty-seven of these Baha'is also participated in nine or more nineteen day feasts. The last three participated in 1–8 nineteen day feasts—these three Baha'is were all affiliated with groups that had no local spiritual assembly, which may explain why they did not participate in many nineteen day feasts. These 50 Baha'is were then classified as "highly active". Twenty-one Baha'is had participated in more than 9 nineteen day feasts but in less than 5 holy days, and were classified as "medium active". Finally, 30 Baha'is who had participated in 1 to 8 nineteen day feasts and in less than 4 holy days were classified as "minimally active".[100]

In summary, this classification of the 117 Baha'is yielded four groups of religious activity level: "inactive" (16 Baha'is), "minimally active" (30 Baha'is), "medium active" (21 Baha'is) and "highly active"

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[100] The group also included the three Baha'is who had not participated in a nineteen day feast but who were active in other ways.

Table 8.9. *Correlation between participation level in religious feasts and other activity indicators*

Activity level[a]	All	None	Minimal	Medium	High
Number of informants	[b]117	16	30	21	50
Per cent of all	100%	14%	26%	18%	43%

Other activities	Per cent of all	Per cent on each participation level			
Collective mission:					
Held fireside at home	66%	0%	53%	95%	82%
Public mission in last year	52%	0%	30%	62%	78%
Wrote publicly in last year	16%	0%	17%	14%	22%
Other collective activities:					
Committee member	44%	0%	27%	48%	66%
Convent participant	42%	0%	13%	52%	68%
Study class participant	26%	0%	7%	48%	44%
Summer school etc.	56%	0%	43%	43%	86%
Spoke at a Baha'i event	34%	0%	20%	24%	58%
Socialising with Baha'is:					
Baha'is abroad in last year	30%	0%	13%	24%	52%
Foreign Baha'is in last month	[c]41%	0%	31%	48%	58%
Danish Baha'is in last month	[c]82%	13%	83%	95%	96%
Individual Baha'i activities:					
Pray daily	74%	38%	63%	81%	88%
Keep the fast (more or less)	57%	44%	40%	57%	72%
Pilgrimage to Haifa[d]	38%	13%	20%	43%	52%
Read all of Baha'i Newsletter	56%	19%	53%	57%	68%
Baha'i items displayed in home	[c]76%	25%	60%	81%	90%
Wear Baha'i ring in public	[e]45%	13%	23%	48%	68%
Individual mission in last month	64%	25%	53%	67%	82%

[a] The activity level refers to how often the informants participate in religious feasts, see p. 369.
[b] All = 117 of the 120 informants. 3 newly enrolled Baha'is are not included.
[c] Missing data from one informant; thus all = 116 informants.
[d] Both 9-days and 3-days pilgrimage.
[e] Wear a Baha'i ring or other Baha'i jewellery regularly and in public.

(50 Baha'is). As shown in Table 8.9, the 50 Baha'is in the highly active group were active in all other respects as well. They were active internally; nearly all of them participated in the summer school, and they delivered the majority of talks at Baha'i events. In other words, these 50 Baha'is constituted a core of members. They were followed closely by the medium active group, who in many respects were also quite active; for example, they participated in study classes and arranged firesides just as frequently as the group of highly active Baha'is. The minimally active group of Baha'is, who had been assigned to this group based on their minimal social activity, nevertheless were active in some respects. They had a comparatively high frequency of participation in the summer school, and more than half of them had hosted a fireside. In Chapter 9, I return to these observations in a discussion of the differences in time resources that individual Baha'is are willing to spend on communal Baha'i activities.

As evident in Table 8.10, there is a strong correlation between activity level and organisational status. Isolated Baha'is are in general much less active in communal Baha'i events than are the Baha'is affiliated with a local group, especially if the local group is big enough to have a local spiritual assembly. It is reasonable to assume that this correlation reflects an underlying causal relationship; being an isolated Baha'i in a formal organisational sense also tends to lead to isolation from Baha'i community life. This suggests that the Baha'i policy of forming groups according to municipal boundaries—which is discussed in Chapter 6 and which causes some Baha'is to become "isolated"—may be counterproductive in that respect.

Table 8.10. *Correlation between activity level and affiliation to a local Baha'i group*

Activity level[a]	None	Minimal	Medium	High
Number of informants	16	30	21	50
Per cent of all[b]	14%	26%	18%	43%
Organisational status of the informants	Per cent on each participation level			
Group with LSA[c] (58 informants)	10%	14%	24%	52%
Group with no LSA (43 informants)	9%	37%	9%	44%
Isolated (16 informants)	38%	38%	19%	6%

[a] The activity level refers to how often the informants participate in religious feasts, see p. 369.
[b] All = 117 of the 120 informants. 3 newly enrolled Baha'is are not included.
[c] LSA = local spiritual assembly.

BELONGING TO THE BAHA'IS—A SKETCHY PROFILE

According to the current study, Danish Baha'is define themselves as people who believe in Baha'u'llah, follow the Baha'i laws and see world unity as an ideal that they believe in and work for. The Iranians and the non-Iranians differed with respect to certain attitudes on Baha'i virtues, but this did not have much to do with differences in the perception of Baha'i doctrines; rather, it seemed to reflect the very different situations of living (as a Baha'i) in Iran and (as a Baha'i) in a Western society like Denmark.

The Danish Baha'is were generally active Baha'is; there was a marginal group of inactive Baha'is, but otherwise, they all followed at least one of the basic ordinances, that is, to pray. The great majority (85%) prayed regularly, at least twice a week. With respect to the other basic ordinance, that of fasting, 64% of the Baha'is at least started to fast (but only a little more than half of this group completed the fasting period). The overwhelming majority (87%) had participated in some Baha'i communal arrangement within the last year, and on average, the participation rate in any of the nineteen day feasts or holy day events was about 50%. This means that, on average, all over Denmark, half of the Baha'i community is present every time nineteen day feasts or holy days are celebrated.

This high participation rate in the communal celebration of the Baha'i holy days is a strong indicator of the significance of the holy days for the Baha'is' commitment to their community and its cause. As shown above (Table 8.9), the participation rate in the Baha'i holy days was a characteristic measure of the general activity level of the Danish Baha'is. Conversely, if a large proportion of the Baha'is never showed up for these events but still remained members, there would be reason to doubt that the Baha'i holy days played an important role in strengthening the sense of belonging among the Baha'is.[101] The same could be said about the nineteen day feasts—the regularity with which these feasts are held is considered a measure of the health of a Baha'i community, and if they are not attended by

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[101] The fact that the Universal House of Justice asks for yearly statistics regarding the arrangement of holy days shows that the Baha'i leadership considers it important that the holy days are celebrated on a communal basis.

the Baha'is to a great extent, their postulated central position in the Baha'i organisation does not reflect reality.[102]

General activity level with respect to the organised celebration of the holy days seems to be fairly constant over time. In the twenty-year period from 1980 to 1999, data from the annual reports of the Danish Baha'i community show that in this period both the number of local spiritual assemblies and the frequency of those assemblies that celebrated the holy days have not increased, but have gone up and down only slightly and irregularly.[103] This strongly indicates that the quantitative data on the celebration of holy days obtained through the current study represent a general picture of the past several decades.

The Danish Baha'i community thus is characterised by generally high activity level among its members, who are also well aware of what the religion is about. They meet with each other regularly, and it is noteworthy that as many as 81% of the informants said during their interviews that they had met with other Danish Baha'is within the last month (Q40). This is characteristic of a group with relatively few, but dedicated members. To count the dedicated but few is not a Baha'i ideal, however—the Baha'i religion is meant to be for everybody.

In the following chapter, I discuss how the Baha'is manage their resources and how they organise and carry out their mission work in order to become the future religion of the world.

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[102] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 211.
[103] The data are shown in Table 9.1, Chapter 9.

MOBILISATION OF THE BAHA'IS

Religious groups do not live by spirit alone. In the material world, it is necessary for the Baha'is to organise labour and spend money for diverse purposes, such as preparing feasts, printing and issuing newsletters, planning internal meetings, translating Baha'i texts, painting kitchens in Baha'i centres, or educating new members. Furthermore, the Baha'is must do more than just work to support the internal functioning of their community—they must also face the world, both collectively and individually, because mission is an important part of Baha'i life.

Some of these activities are organised by local spiritual assemblies, other activities by national spiritual assemblies or by one of the many committees that are typical of Baha'i communities. Some activities, not the least being a substantial part of the mission, depend on individual initiative.

However, Baha'is are not expected only to *work* for the cause. They need to spend time on communal gatherings, prayer and contemplation, reading, socialising with friends in the community, and travelling to other Baha'i communities—all those *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities that tend to strengthen the individual's belonging.

In Chapter 3, I expound on Ferdinand Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* dichotomy and stress that it expresses two different types of social relations. *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities strengthen sentiments of community and friendship within the group; the holding of a religious feast might be an example of this. *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities are based on rationality and calculation; copying and mailing the group's newsletter could be an example of this. *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are ideal types, and a particular activity will always contain both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* elements—it is the *relative* significance of *Gemeinschaft* versus *Gesellschaft* that characterises the activity as either mainly *Gemeinschaft*-oriented or mainly *Gesellschaft*-oriented.

Both kinds of activities are important, of course. The community must fulfil the members' expectations of *Gemeinschaft*—otherwise, in the long run, they will become passive or even resign. However, the

functioning of the organisation must not be jeopardised by neglecting the need for administrative efficiency and management of resources. To assemble for communal prayer and glossolalia are *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities, which are likely to be important for members of a Pentecostal church—however, the members also appreciate the *Gesellschaft*-oriented act of ensuring that the electricity bill is paid without too much fuss so that prayer and glossolalia do not have to take place in the dark. Proper payment of bills does not happen by itself; in all communities there is a need for rational planning and management, and this is a *Gesellschaft*-oriented activity. An illustrative example of what may happen because of arbitrary and unpredictable management is apparent in Robert Balch's study of the economic and organisational dissolution of a religious hippie commune, the Love Family.[1]

In a classification of activities as mainly *Gemeinschaft*-oriented or mainly *Gesellschaft*-oriented, one should also consider that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder". What at a first glance might seem a *Gesellschaft*-oriented activity may carry so much symbolic value to the group members that it would be better to classify it as *Gemeinschaft*-oriented. An example of this is the well-known barn raisings of the Old Order Amish. All male community members participate in the work of raising the barn, so that instead of paying professional carpenters to do the job, advantage is taken of an abundant resource among the Amish, namely free labour provided by neighbours. Superficially seen, the barn raising could be called a *Gesellschaft*-oriented activity, because it is a rational way of saving scarce economic resources. However, the raising of a barn is also an important ritual that expresses community solidarity, so it might also be classified as *Gemeinschaft*-oriented. The barn raising exemplifies what is stressed in Chapter 3; no act is purely *Gemeinschaft*-oriented or *Gesellschaft*-oriented—transactions between people have an element of *Gemeinschaft* as well as of *Gesellschaft*.

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[1] Robert Balch, "Money and Power in Utopia: An Economic History of the Love Family", in James T. Richardson (ed.), *Money and Power in the New Religions*, Lewiston, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988, pp. 185–221.

The Dilemma in Resource Allocation

To strike the "right" balance between activities that strengthen *Gemein-schaft* and *Gesellschaft* is a challenge to the community as a whole, and thus it is a strategic issue for the leadership—in the case of the Baha'is, the national spiritual assembly and the local spiritual assemblies. Shoghi Effendi may have been considering the Baha'i communities' need to address both kinds of activities when he institutionalised the nineteen day feasts. As described in Chapter 8, the nineteen day feasts not only are the backbone of the local Baha'i administration, and therefore a *Gesellschaft*-oriented activity, but they also serve to strengthen Baha'i *Gemeinschaft*.

One crucial task for the leadership of the community is to determine how to mobilise *resources* most effectively and allocate them for different tasks. On the most basic level, the dilemma for the Baha'is is how much of their resources should be allocated for mission, how much for the *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities that keep the community going, and how much for the *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities, without which there would be no community life.[2]

Three Types of Resources

Resources are not just pecuniary in nature. In the Danish Baha'i community there are three different kinds of resources to be considered: time, labour and money. In the following, I define and expound on the characteristics of these resources and how they are assessed quantitatively. These considerations are not specific to the Baha'is, but can immediately be applied to most other religious communities as well as to secular, voluntary organisations, for example political parties.

Time is the sum total of hours that the individual Baha'is spend doing any kind of activity that has to do with Baha'i, except time spent on labour, see below. Time can be spent in roughly the following three ways, of which only the first two represent a communal resource. First, time spent in communal activities, such as religious

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[2] The dilemma is also discernible in Richardson's approach, but he does not use the terms *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. James T. Richardson, "An Introduction", in James T. Richardson (ed.), *Money and Power in the New Religions*, Lewiston, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988, pp. 1–20.

feasts, is a resource from a community perspective, because participation in a feast is an act that strengthens *Gemeinschaft* among fellow members. Because successful mission eventually strengthens the community, time spent on individual mission should also be considered a resource from a community point of view. Finally, although time spent on individual praying and reading may be important for fostering an individual's belonging to the Baha'i community, it is not considered a communal resource.

Labour is represented by the number of hours of unpaid work performed by Baha'is in support of their community. Labour is typically evident in activities that strengthen *Gesellschaft*, such as administrative work or routine manual labour, for example gardening. However, it should be borne in mind that volunteers who work together, for example, on the repair of a Baha'i centre, not only provide *Gesellschaft*-oriented labour to the Baha'i community, but also carry out a common activity that to some extent strengthens *Gemeinschaft* among the Baha'is involved.

Time and labour are both measured in person-hours. The distinction is that the person-hours classified as labour (for example gardening), in principle, could be carried out by paid personnel, while it is not conceivable that Baha'is would be paid to arrange a communal feast on a Baha'i holy day, for example.

Money, of course, represents the financial resources at the community's disposal. The Baha'i leadership has always been well aware of the significance of money for the Baha'i cause. Baha'u'llah was preoccupied with the economic situation of the Baha'i communities in Iran, and he ensured the distribution of wealth to Baha'is in need.[3] Abdu'l-Baha praised wealth earned rightfully and expended with due care to those in need.[4] Shoghi Effendi prescribed that the Baha'i communities must not accept economic contributions from non-members (with the exception of money for charitable re-distribution), and he referred to money as "the life-blood" of the Baha'i administration.[5]

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[3] Juan R. I. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium. The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998, pp. 93–95.

[4] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990, pp. 24–25.

[5] [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration. A Compilation*, London, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976, pp. 91–95.

The different kinds of resources to a limited extent can substitute for each other; for example, some of the voluntary labour can be substituted with money used to hire professionals, thus saving some of the time resources of the community. In general, however, the different resources cannot be reduced to the one variable of money.

Further, all three kinds of resources are usually *limited*. A typical complaint is: "If only people had more time, and were more willing to work for and give money to the cause . . .!" Meagre resources are never a trivial problem, and members' unpaid labour can only partly compensate for money that is not available. As I show in this chapter, it appears as if this is the situation facing the Baha'is, both in Denmark and elsewhere. For example, in the Danish Baha'i community, several of the most active members' time must be spent on administrative and manual maintenance work because of inadequate funding, from all the members, to pay for such services.[6]

Stretching Resources?

The suggestion that the Danish Baha'i community is suffering from limited resources is corroborated by a survey of the annual reports sent by the Danish national spiritual assembly to the Baha'i World Centre. In addition to membership data for all the counties in Denmark, the national spiritual assembly records the number of local spiritual assemblies that hold certain regular activities. The activities noted on the form are:

- Observe feasts and holy days
- Hold assembly meetings regularly
- Give to the national fund
- Hold children's classes (up to age 11)
- Hold junior youth classes (ages 12–14)
- Have youth activities (ages 15–20)
- Have teaching activities regularly
- Have deepening activities regularly[7]

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[6] This problem, which will be discussed more in detail below, is explicitly stated on p. 12 in the Minutes from the National Convention, April 1995. (NSA-DK).

[7] Deepening activities usually refer to study circles on different aspects of the Baha'i religion, first and foremost the more philosophical aspects of the faith derived from its sacred writings.

These different types of activities require some explanation. First of all, it should be noted that, with the exception of *teaching* activities, which is mission, all these reported activities are internally directed. For example, the classes and activities for Baha'i children and Baha'i youth and the deepening activities are all concerned with the socialisation and education of the Baha'is. The registration of these activities in the annual reports to the Baha'i World Centre shows that the Baha'i leadership in Haifa has recognised how crucial they are for upholding the vitality of the local Baha'i communities.

A Trend of Stagnation

The data from the annual reports of the Danish Baha'i community in the twenty-year period from 1980 to 1999 have been compiled and analysed, and the results are summarised in Table 9.1. First, it should be noted that the number of local spiritual assemblies has not increased over the years, but has oscillated irregularly around an average of 9 assemblies. The *average* frequencies of the various activities mentioned above (last column of Table 9.1) are therefore a reliable measure of the activity level over this span of years. The observation of feasts and holy days and donations to the national fund are the most frequent of the reported activities. With a few exceptions, virtually all local spiritual assemblies reported year after year that these activities occurred on a regular basis. The holding of assembly meetings was not nearly as common—in particular during the first half of the 1990s, the reported activity was low. Subsequent to that period, the majority of the local spiritual assemblies held their meetings regularly, which means at least once a month.

The six lower rows of Table 9.1 concern mission and the socialisation of young and/or new Baha'is. Most local spiritual assemblies did not manage to hold these activities on a regular basis. Thus, teaching activities were arranged regularly by only about 40% of the local assemblies, on average. Children's classes and deepening activities were arranged only irregularly and on average by only one or two assemblies. Activities for the junior youth and youth were sporadic.

The results of a trend analysis of the major variables that characterise the activity level are shown in Table 9.2. For all kinds of activities arranged by the local spiritual assemblies, the figures show either no change over time or for two variables a slightly decreasing trend (children's classes and teaching activities). This absence of any significant

Table 9.1. *Summary of statistical reports from the Danish Bahá'í community to the Bahá'í World Centre, 1980–1999*

	Report of 19..	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	Average
Bahá'is of 15 years and above	Total no. of Bahá'is reported	171	169	187	182	191	191	209	215	213	235	226	231	235	241	245	238	246	247	244	258	219
	No. in Greater Copenhagen area	101	108	106	109	104	120	112	96	105	117	111	120	119	124	130	133	132	133	130	131	117
	No. in provinces	70	61	81	73	87	71	97	119	108	118	115	111	116	117	115	105	114	114	114	127	102
	do., % of total no. of Bahá'is	41%	36%	43%	40%	46%	37%	46%	55%	51%	50%	51%	48%	49%	49%	47%	44%	46%	46%	47%	49%	46%
LSAs	Total no. of LSAs	9	7	8	8	11	9	10	9	9	11	10	11	9	12	8	8	7	8	7	9	9.0
	No. in Greater Copenhagen area	6	6	6	6	8	6	5	6	5	6	5	7	5	8	5	5	5	6	5	6	5.9
	No. in provinces	3	1	2	2	3	3	5	3	4	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	2	2	2	3	3.2
Localities	Total no. of localities	48	48	50	48	46	49	56	57	57	57	54	52	53	54	60	60	62	54	52	51	53.4
	No. in Greater Copenhagen area	19	19	19	19	16	19	20	20	20	18	18	20	19	18	18	18	20	20	19	20	19.0
	No. in provinces	29	29	31	29	30	30	36	37	37	39	36	32	34	36	42	42	42	34	33	31	34.5

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Table 9.1. *Summary of statistical reports from the Danish Baha'i community to the Baha'i World Centre, 1980–1999*

	Report of 19..	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	Average
	Observe feasts and holy days	9	9	8	6	11	16	10	9	8	9	10	10	13	12	8	8	2	6	6	8	8.9
	Hold assembly meetings regularly	9	8	5	6	11	8	9	9	7	0	2	3	1	1	0	2	2	5	4	6	4.9
	Give to the national fund	9	8	8	9	10	14	10	9	8	9	10	10	13	12	8	8	7	7	6	7	9.1
	Hold children's classes (age up to 11)	3	2	1	2	6	1	2	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	1.5
Number of LSAs which	Have junior youth classes (age 12–14)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.3
	Have youth activities (age 15–20)	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.3
	Have women's activities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.0
	Have teaching activities regularly	7	7	8	7	4	1	1	2	6	4	3	3	0	1	0	0	5	3	4	6	3.6
	Have deepening activities regularly	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0	4	1	0	0	1	4	1	2	2	1.5
	Notes:						a		b	c									d			

Abbrev: LSA = Local spiritual assembly

Notes: a Prior to this year the teaching activities were registred as "have extension teaching goals"
b Last year for registration of women's activities
c New principle for counting no of LSAs which hold assembly meetings. By "regularly" is meant at least once a month
d No information available from Copenhagen City and Viborg (group > 9, but no LSA)

change with regard to the observation of feasts and holy days, dona-
tions to the national fund, and deepening activities indicates that the
period of the interview study is representative of other years with
respect to these central communal activities. This strengthens the
findings of the present study by making it easier to draw solid con-
clusions—however, for the Danish Baha'i community, it is less com-
forting that the general activity level has stagnated between 1980–1999,
despite the fact that the number of members has increased by 43%
in the same period.[8]

From the data presented in Table 9.2, it can be concluded that
the Danish Baha'i community has not been able to increase the
mobilisation of members' time and labour during the period
1980–1999. As shown later, the same holds for the mobilisation of
money; a standstill is observed here as well.

THE RESOURCE MOBILISATION APPROACH

Emerging social movements, including religious movements, are usually
characterised by organisational fluidity, and they are propelled by
the participants' personal dedication to the common cause. The rise
of such movements has inspired different explanations emphasising
the role of shared ideas in collective action.[9] The resource mobili-
sation approach seeks to direct the attention to the less conspicuous
(but no less significant) economic and organisational aspects of social
movements, in particular the more enduring movements.[10]

The Baha'i organisation is based on legal authority, rational planning
and modern bureaucracy, and it seems both obvious and compatible
with a major vein in Baha'i management culture to seek inspiration
from the resource mobilisation analyses.

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[8] The number of Baha'is increased from 176 to 252, as shown in Table 6.1.

[9] Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, "Introduction:
Opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes—toward a synthetic,
comparative perspective on social movements", in Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy,
and Mayer N. Zald (eds.), *Comparative perspective on social movements. Political opportuni-
ties, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,
1996, pp. 1–20.

[10] William A. Gamson, "Introduction", in Mayer N. Zald and John D. McCarthy
(eds.), *Social Movements in an Organizational Society. Collected Essays*, New Brunswick,
Transaction Books, 1987, pp. 1–7.

Table 9.2. *Trend analysis of activity level in the Danish Baha'i community, 1980–1999*

	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Ave-rage	Trend[a]
Number of Baha'is	171	258	219	increasing
Number of local spiritual assemblies	7	12	9.0	no change
Number of local spiritual assemblies which:				
Observe feasts and holy days	2	[b]16	8.9	no change
Give to the national fund	6	[b]14	9.1	no change
Hold children's classes (age up to 11)	0	6	1.5	decreasing
Have teaching activities regularly	0	8	3.6	decreasing
Have deepening activities regularly	0	4	1.5	decreasing

[a] The trend is increasing or decreasing if the correlation coefficient (activity versus year) is significantly different ($P<0.05$) from zero.
[b] For some years the reported number is higher than the total number of local spiritual assemblies. This must mean that also the activities of groups are occasionally reported.

The pioneers in resource mobilisation analyses are Mayer Zald and colleagues, who also coined the term "resource mobilization".[11] The focus of their interest is social movements that are not short-lived phenomena, but seem to be able to raise support year after year. Their approach is to treat social movements as organisations that seek to attract new resources, often in competition with other movements oriented towards the same resource base.[12] "Movements may largely be born of environmental opportunities, but their fate is heavily shaped by their own actions."[13] Like different industrial companies occupying a particular economic niche, social movements and religious organisations must also find a societal niche where they can attract the necessary resources for their activities.[14] When Billy

[11] John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory", *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 82, 1977, pp. 1212–1241. The paper is reprinted in: John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory", in Mayer N. Zald and John D. McCarthy (eds.), *Social Movements in an Organizational Society. Collected Essays*, New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1987, pp. 15–42.

[12] Mayer N. Zald and Roberta Ash Garner, "Social movement organizations: Growth, decay, and change", in Mayer N. Zald and John D. McCarthy (ed.), *Social Movements in an Organizational Society. Collected Essays*, New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1987, pp. 121–141.

[13] McAdam *et al.*, "Introduction: Opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes", p. 15.

[14] J. Miller McPherson, "A theory of voluntary organization", in Carl Milofsky (ed.), *Community Organizations. Studies in Resource Mobilization and Exchange*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 42–76.

Graham, for example, began to preach on television, he obviously
found a niche hitherto unoccupied, and it was his ability to mobilise
support from a large number of local churches that constituted the
resource base for his campaigns.[15]

Assumptions of Rationality

The resource mobilisation approach can hardly be called a theory;
it is a pragmatic approach for identifying and analysing the resources
that a group has at its disposal. However, underlying the resource
mobilisation approach may lie an assumption of rational behaviour,
which should be critically examined.

It should be possible to acknowledge rationality without embrac-
ing the entire school of rational choice theory and its far-reaching
concept of rationality. This theory was pioneered by Rodney Stark
and William Bainbridge around 1980.[16] However, it would be un-
founded and insulting to deny the rationality of, for example, con-
versions and religious behaviour in the great majority of situations.
Steve Bruce puts it succinctly in his careful but devastating critique
of the rational choice approach in the study of religion, stating that
the problem with rational choice is that the rationality claimed is
economic rationality, not rationality itself.[17] However, I also find that
some of the debate regarding the rational choice approach shows
tendencies of undue polarisation in the study of religion; much like
what happened in the earlier debate between so-called soft and hard
sociology, where all kinds of emotional or motive-based arguments
were allowed to muddle an academic discourse.

Several critics of the resource mobilisation approach have targeted
the assumption of rationality from another angle, stating that the
resource mobilisation approach underplays the fact that a social or
religious movement may rise on a wave of emotions, which may

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[15] Norris R. Johnson, David A. Choate, and William Bunis, "Attendance at a Billy
Graham Crusade: A resource mobilization approach", *Sociological Analysis*, vol. 45,
1984, pp. 383–392.

[16] Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, "Towards a Theory of Religion:
Religious Commitment", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 19, 1980, pp.
114–128; Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*, New
York, Peter Lang, 1987.

[17] Steve Bruce, "A Critique of Rational Choice Approaches to Religion", in Eila
Helander (ed.), Religion and Social Transitions, Helsinki, Helsinki University Press,
1999, pp. 28–38.

lead to critical deviance from the most "rational" strategy.[18] The actions taken by the Babis during the siege of Sheykh Tabarsi are illustrative in that respect, as discussed in Chapter 4. It is also true that more mature movements may act less "rational" when mobilising resources, because other considerations prevail, such as internal democracy and public reputation (political parties are the obvious examples).[19] To shareholders' dismay, sub-optimal organisational structures and strategies are also not uncommon among commercial enterprises, the ideal-type organisation for the resource mobilisation approach. It seems prudent, however, not to let such examples lead one astray into a position where it is assumed that organisations, including religious organisations, in general do not act rationally in their mobilisation and management of resources.

Resource Mobilisation Studies in the Sociology of Religion

Within the sociology of religion, resource mobilisation studies have examined some hitherto little researched aspects of religious movements and organisations, notably their financial and commercial practices.[20] Different types of religious organisation (church, denomination, sect, or cult) can be expected to use different methods for raising money, member participation, or voluntary labour; for example, Scientologists take fees for their services (auditing), while traditional denominations might earn money by renting their properties for secular purposes.[21]

An example of successful mobilisation of member participation was a Methodist church that had the unusual ability to attract many people to its congregation and to engage them in church life. Some of this success apparently had to do with the management of the congregation. Members were systematically socialised into what the church stood for, the congregational life was organised in small groups, where people knew each other and worked together on a

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[18] Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements. An Introduction*, London, Blackwell, 1999, p. 9.

[19] della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements*, pp. 160–163.

[20] John A. Hannigan, "Social movement theory and the sociology of religion: Toward a new synthesis", *Sociological Analysis*, vol. 52, 1991, pp. 311–331.

[21] Steve Bruce, "Funding the Lord's work: A typology of religious resourcing", *Social Compass*, vol. 39, 1992, pp. 93–101.

common activity, and there was considerable freedom to choose from among the activity groups.[22]

Moojan Momen and Peter Smith used the resource mobilisation approach in their broad, detailed and illuminating analysis of the Babi movement.[23] Another important example of the resource mobilisation approach is Patricia Wittberg's study of the rise and decline of Roman-Catholic religious orders.[24]

Some of the new religious movements have considerable potential as innovative entrepreneurs in raising money, as exemplified by the financial strategies of the Unification Church, ISCKON and the People's Temple.[25] It is hardly surprising that scholarly interest has concentrated on analysing such groups; however, to draw a sharp line between religious activities and business activities has less scholarly significance than it does political significance.[26]

Surveying existing resource mobilisation studies I, however, have not come across studies that try actually to quantify and analyse the different kinds of resources (time, labour and money) within the same study. Nor have I seen such analyses developed further using the ideal types of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

In the following, I begin with an assessment of the resource base of the Danish Baha'i community. Next, I interpret and develop the issue of resource allocation to mission using the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. In this, I build on the qualitative, graphic model from Chapter 3, which illustrates the complementary nature of *Gemeinschaft*-oriented versus *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities. In so doing,

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[22] Gerald L. Wilson, Joann Keyton, G. David Johnson, Cheryl Geiger, and Johanna C. Clark, "Church Growth through Member Identification and Commitment: A Congregational Case Study", *Review of Religious Research*, vol. 34, 1993, pp. 259–272.

[23] Peter Smith and Moojan Momen, "The Bábí Movement: A Resource Mobilization Perspective", in Peter Smith (ed.), *In Iran. Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 3, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1986, pp. 33–93.

[24] Patricia Wittberg, *The Rise and Decline of Catholic Religious Orders. A Social Movement Perspective*, Albany, The State University of New York Press, 1994.

[25] David G. Bromley and Anson D. Shupe, Jr., "Financing the new religions: A resource mobilization approach", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 19, 1980, pp. 227–239; John R. Hall, "Collective welfare as resource mobilization in Peoples Temple: A case study of a poor people's religious social movement", *Sociological Analysis*, vol. 49, 1988, pp. 64–77.

[26] Thomas Robbins and David Bromley, "Social experimentation and the significance of American new religions: A focused review essay", in Monty L. Lynn and David O. Moberg (eds.), *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 4, Greenwich, Jai Press, 1992, pp. 1–28.

I combine a qualitative perspective with a quantitative perspective on resources, and this is applied in the remainder of the chapter in a study and analysis of the Baha'i mission in Denmark.

The Resource Base of the Danish Baha'i Community

The resources that are at the disposal of the Danish Baha'i community are roughly estimated in the following.

Time

In Chapter 8, the frequency of participation in the holy day feasts and in the nineteen day feasts are analysed in detail. The data from Table 8.5 and Table 8.7 allow a relatively precise estimate of the total number of person-hours spent at all the feasts per year.[27] If the average feast, including preparations etc., takes three hours, it can be estimated that, in one year, 117 Baha'is spent about 1,500 hours at holy day feasts and about 3,500 hours at nineteen day feasts.[28] All the hours spent at the holy days count as a mainly *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activity. The nineteen day feast consists of three parts: devotion, followed by business issues and then a social gathering, see Chapter 5. In accordance herewith, 1,500 of the 3,500 hours spent at nineteen day feasts are considered as spent on *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities, while the remaining 2,000 hours count as *Gemeinschaft*-oriented.

The participation in special events (summer schools, deepening conferences etc., cf. Table 8.8) amounted to about 3,300 hours altogether.[29] These hours are considered to be mainly *Gemeinschaft*-oriented, but since I know that some practical business is dealt with when people meet, 300 hours of the 3,300 hours are considered *Gesellschaft*-oriented.

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[27] As mentioned in Chapter 8, the number of informants was 117 Baha'is, not 120, because 3 Baha'is had been members less than a year and were therefore omitted from all analyses regarding participation both in Chapter 8 and in the present chapter.

[28] The total number of participants in the holy day feasts was almost 500 (calculated from the raw data referred to in Table 8.5) and in the nineteen day feasts 1,150–1,200 (calculated from the raw data referred to in Table 8.7). Multiplying these figures by 3 hours gives 1,500 and 3,500 person-hours, respectively. When it does not give rise to misunderstandings, I use "hours" interchangeably with the more technical term "person-hours" in the text.

[29] The hours are calculated as the sum of person-hours spent at each event. For example, 27 Baha'is participated in the deepening conference in Copenhagen, which

The participation in the national convention amounted to 1,000 hours, of which half (500 hours) is estimated to be *Gesellschaft*-oriented.[30]

The Danish Baha'is have set up a considerable number of committees, and committee work involves a wide circle of Danish Baha'is (Q74). Forty-one of the 117 informants reported that they served on one or more committee (this does not include any of the spiritual assemblies). Examples of committees are the national teaching committee, the Iran committee, the *haziratu'l-quds* committee (maintenance of the Baha'i centre), the book sales committee, the translation and editing (of Baha'i literature) committee, the summer school committee, and the library committee. These committees are responsible for carrying out the specified tasks indicated, and committee work is largely a *Gesellschaft*-oriented activity.

Supplementary information on the number of hours spent on committee work, mission and various other communal activities can be obtained from Q70, "What did you do last week that had to do with Baha'i?" Eighty-two of the 117 informants mentioned a lot of different activities that were clearly community-oriented. The remaining 35 informants did not participate in a communal activity *that* week. Since the question referred to "last week", that is, not referring to a particular week of the year, the activities reported are fairly randomly distributed over the year.[31] The answers, which are summarised in Table 9.3, should therefore represent typical activities in the Danish Baha'i community. The number of person-hours spent on these activities can be crudely estimated by multiplying the number of Baha'is who participated by the hours of duration.[32] In order to convert all the above person-hours to a yearly basis, they should then be multiplied by 45.[33]

Baha'is also see each other in private, for birthday parties, dinners etc. From the interviews, it could be concluded that the Baha'is

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took $1\frac{1}{2}$ days. Each day is defined as 8 hours of communal Baha'i activity (see note b in Table 8.8). Twenty-seven participants, times 1.5 hours, times 8 hours of activities results in 324 person-hours. The sum is rounded to the nearest 100 hours.

[30] The calculated 980 person-hours are rounded to 1,000 hours.

[31] This is a consequence of the fact that the interviews were conducted fairly randomly over a period of more than a year (June 1981 to November 1982, cf. Appendix 1).

[32] Except voluntary labour, which is estimated to be 38 hours in total.

[33] The 52 weeks in a year are reduced by 7 weeks to take into account vacations and sickness.

Table 9.3. *Individual participation in Baha'i communal activities*

During the last week before interview	Number of informants	Per cent of all[a]
Largely Gemeinschaft-*oriented activities:*		
Participated in a Baha'i meeting (any feast or other arrangement)[b]	30	26%
Participated in a study class or deepening meeting (2 hours)	9	8%
Participated in a fireside (2 hours)[c]	15	13%
Socialised with other Baha'is (3 hours)	11	9%
Largely Gesellschaft-*oriented activities:*		
Mission work (3 hours)	26	22%
Writing articles to newspapers etc. (3 hours)	9	8%
Planning and committee work (3 hours)	33	28%
Voluntary labour for the Baha'i community (38 hours in total)[d]	12	10%
No communal activity	35	30%

[a] All = 117 of the 120 informants. 3 newly enrolled Baha'is are not included.
[b] The person-hours spent on these arrangements has already been estimated.
[c] A fireside is social arrangement in the home and open for non-Baha'is. Its function in the Baha'i mission is discussed later in this chapter.
[d] The number of hours spent on voluntary labour is crudely estimated from the qualitative information given in the interviews.

socialise privately to some extent (Q41), but in general most of the people they see in private are non-Baha'is: fifty-eight percent of the informants said that they mostly saw non-Baha'is in private. Even in the case of the Iranians, only half of them said that they mostly saw other Baha'is. This indicates that the Baha'is do not form a closely-knit community, but are members of external, personal networks, too, and it fits with the observation in Chapter 7 that the major avenue for joining is through the personal network. However, the time spent on private socialising, in particular with non-Baha'i family and friends, cannot reasonably be called a resource from a Baha'i community perspective and I have not included private socialising in the estimate of time resources.

Together with the data on participation in the nineteen day feasts and holy days, a total estimate of the person-hours spent on the different communal activities can now be made. Table 9.4 shows that the 117 Baha'is spent 23,900 hours in one year on communal activities. On the average, this was 204 hours per Baha'i per year,

Table 9.4. *Total person-hours per year spent by all Danish Baha'is together on Baha'i communal activities*

Type of communal activity	Person-hours[a]
Participation in nineteen day feasts (devotional + social part)	2,000
Participation in Baha'i holy day arrangements	1,500
Participation in national convent (devotional + social part)	500
Participation in Baha'i summer school, conferences etc.	3,000
Participation in study class or deepening meeting	800
Participation in firesides	1,400
Socialising with other Baha'is	1,500
Sum of mainly Gemeinschaft-*oriented activities:*	*10,700*
Meetings (convent, business part of nineteen day meetings, other meetings)	2,300
Planning and committee work	4,500
Voluntary labour for the Baha'i community (38 hours weekly)	1,700
Sum of mainly Gesellschaft-*oriented, internal activities*	*8,500*
Public mission activities	3,500
Writing articles to newspapers etc.	1,200
Sum of mainly Gesellschaft-*oriented, external activities (mission)*	*4,700*
Sum of all mainly Gesellschaft-*oriented activities*	*13,200*
Total person-hours spent on communal activities	23,900

[a] Based on 117 of the 120 informants. 3 newly enrolled Baha'is are not included.

or about 4½ hours per week.[34] Of the 23,900 hours, 10,700 hours, or 45%, were spent on mainly *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities, which included all kinds of communal feasts, deepening activities, and general socialising with other Baha'is. There were 8,500 hours (35%) spent on mainly *Gesellschaft*-oriented, *internal* activities, which included largely administrative work. The *Gesellschaft*-oriented, *internal* activities here included 1,700 hours of labour—this figure is discussed in the subsequent section. Forty-seven hundred hours, or 20%, were spent on mainly *Gesellschaft*-oriented, *external* activities, that is, mission in a broad sense.

There are many uncertainties concerning the above estimated figures. Some of them are derived from qualitative questions in the questionnaire, and the figures may well be off by 50%. But they are certainly not several hundred percent off. I know from many years of studying the Danish Baha'is that the average Baha'i does not work

[34] The 52 weeks in a year are reduced by 7 weeks to take into account vacations and sickness.

for free for 100 hours per year. The estimated balance of their time, with 45% spent on *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities and 55% on *Gesellschaft*-oriented, also appears probable to me. Therefore, I do not think that the time resources are grossly underestimated.

The above-mentioned 4.5 hours per week of time spent on communal Baha'i activities does not include individually-oriented religious activities, such as prayer and reading. If each Baha'i used 30 minutes each day on prayer and reading, this would amount to 3.5 hours per week. So, for the *average* Baha'i, 8 hours per week (4.5 hours plus 3.5 hours) is devoted to his or her religion. This figure, of course, reflects the mean of a wide distribution of time devoted by the individual Baha'is. However, the figure of 8 hours per week suggests that there may be potential converts (sympathisers with the Baha'i principles) who are simply so busy with their careers and/or private hobbies that they never become seriously involved in the Baha'i community and therefore never begin the conversion process. One of the informants, in fact, alluded to this when she talked about the difficulties she had met as a Baha'i (Q30):

> If I ever talk about it [Baha'i], people say: "Well, is it about religion? We do not want to bother hearing about it." Besides, people are too busy; there are other things they want to use their spare-time for. They want to go away for a week-end or go camping. They do not want to go to church.[35]

With respect to church-going, her observation is entirely correct. In 1981, only 13% of the Danish population went to church regularly, that is, at least once a month.[36]

Labour

Labour consists of those *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities that a non-Baha'i might be paid to do, at least in principle. The 38 labour hours per week (Table 9.4) were spent mostly on secretarial tasks such as: "Mailed Baha'i newsletter all day—solicited offers for accommodation for the summer school—fetched and read Baha'i newsletter proofs—drafted concepts—wrote letters for the secretary—assisted

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[35] Interview with a 29-year-old woman, 20 October 1982.
[36] Peter B. Andersen and Ole Riis, "Religionen bliver privat" [Religion turns private], in Peter Gundelach (ed.), *Danskernes værdier 1981–1999*, Copenhagen, Hans Reitzel, 2002, pp. 76–98.

the secretary—wrote the minutes of the assembly meeting". This
kind of labour obviously could have been done by a qualified, hired
secretary. Work such as providing child care during a meeting, act-
ing as a treasurer, and cleaning the Baha'i centre could also have
been paid for. To avoid being too restrictive, I have also included
translation work and teaching in the Baha'i Sunday school among
the hours spent on labour. It is unlikely that the Baha'i community
would ever pay for such services, but it is nevertheless *work*, although
a kind work that needs special qualifications as a Baha'i.

   The business part of the meetings, the planning of communal
arrangements, the communication with the Baha'i World Centre,
etc. are core activities in the Administrative Order; they are an inte-
gral part of being a Baha'i, and a particular Baha'i knowledge is
required to do this kind of work. These hours therefore were not
included in the category of labour.

   There are about 1,600 effective working hours in a year, so the
1,700 person-hours of voluntary labour correspond to a little more
than one fully employed person. If the hours were paid for instead,
it would reduce the largely administrative work by 20%.

Money

The primary source of income generated in the Baha'i community
comes from the ordinary, voluntary donations of the members, but
the Danish Baha'i community also has extra income from money
bequeathed. The voluntary donations can be given to the national
fund, that is, the fund that the national spiritual assembly uses for
covering the general expenses of the Baha'i community and for other
purposes of their choosing, including donations to international causes.
Typically, the national spiritual assembly has an obligation to donate
certain sums to such purposes, thus giving the international Baha'i
organisation a firmer basis for its budgeting.

   Individual Baha'is may also give earmarked donations, either to
the national spiritual assembly or, more commonly, to various inter-
national Baha'i funds, in particular the Arc Fund, which partly financed
the building activities at the Baha'i World Centre.[37] Finally, the
Baha'is may pay the voluntary, religious tax, called *huququ'llah*.

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[37] McMullen reports that more than half of the Atlanta Baha'is gave money to
the Arc Fund. Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'í. The Religious Construction of a Global Identity*,

Huququ'llah means the "right of God", and it is a continuation of the traditional Islamic religious "tax", or alms for the poor, the *zakat*.[38] *Huququ'llah* was made compulsory for Baha'is in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*. However, Baha'u'llah only implemented the payment of *huququ'llah* very slowly from around 1878. From the 1890s, the Iranian Baha'is could pay *huququ'llah*, but it was not until 1984 that the Universal House of Justice decided that the time was ripe for all Baha'is to be allowed to pay *huququ'llah* and the system is now gradually being implemented world-wide.[39] The payments are made through local *huququ'llah* representatives to the trustee of the *huququ'llah* fund at the world centre. From the air of solemnity surrounding the description of *huququ'llah*, and from the principle of exclusion applied so carefully by the Baha'i leaders, it can be seen that the payment of *huququ'llah* is made into an act of considerable religious prestige.

Huququ'llah is based on more elaborate calculations than tithing or other percentage-of-income principles. The main principle is that 19% of the *surplus* of a person's annual income or increase in fortune is paid as *huququ'llah*.[40] *Huququ'llah* is paid to a special account administered by the local *huququ'llah* representative. No useful information on the payments from the Danish Baha'is is available, and the payments do not enter the balance sheets.

In an analysis of the economy of the Danish Baha'i community, it is necessary to separate donations to international purposes from donations to the national fund. The national fund is used to cover the various expenses of the Danish Baha'i community. Table 9.5 shows the average annual expenses covered by the national fund in

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New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2000, p. 83. A direct comparison between his figures and the figures in Table 9.5 (shown later) is not possible, however.

[38] Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, pp. 93–94.

[39] *Ḥuqúqu'lláh: A Study Guide*, London, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1989, pp. 11–16. Information on *huququ'llah* is taken from this source, unless otherwise indicated.

[40] The individual Baha'i calculates his or her income for the year and deducts what he or she considers necessary living expenses, including the acquisition of indispensable assets, such as housing, or the payment of assets used for his or her business. The Baha'i is then to pay *huququ'llah*, if the remaining liquidable assets have a value above 19 *mithquals* of gold. This is equal to 69.2 grammes of gold, which roughly has the value of EUR 1,000. Nineteen percent of this is paid as *huququ'llah*, and the payment is calculated from the number of whole units of 19 *mithquals* of gold. That the number nineteen is the basis for the calculations demonstrates the sacred nature of *huququ'llah*.

Table 9.5. *Average annual expenses of the Danish Baha'i community, 1995–2000*

Item	DKK[a]	Per cent of total	
Secretariat	62,700	23.2%	
Baha'i newsletter	29,600	11.0%	
Publishing activities (average surplus)	−2,000	−0.7%	
Baha'i centre, property expenses	29,300	10.9%	
Other real estate property (temple site)	4,100	1.5%	
Interests on short loans	9,800	3.6%	
Basic expenses in all	*133,500*		*49.5%*
Domestic mission activities in all	*72,400*		*26.8%*
Donations to Universal House of Justice	25,000	9.3%	
Other donations to international purposes	39,100	14.5%	
International donations in total	*64,100*		*23.7%*
Sum	270,000		100%

[a] 1,000 DKK is approximately 135 EUR.

the six-year period 1995–2000.[41] Of the annual turn-over of DKK 270,000 (EUR 36,000), about half went to cover basic expenses of running the community, about one quarter was spent on domestic mission activities and the remaining one quarter was transferred as international donations.

Money is Tight

As is evident from Table 9.5, money is tight in the Danish Baha'i community. After deducting the international donations, only a little over DKK 200,000 per year is available for running the community affairs. An analysis of the income structure over the years confirms the resource problems of the Danish Baha'i community, as shown in Figure 9.1. The average sum of contributions was DKK 400,000 (EUR 54,000) per year in the period 1990–2000, but with a *negative* trend. Despite the fact that the number of Baha'is *increased* by about 5% in this period, the sum of all donations actually dropped by an average rate of nearly DKK 9,000 per year. However, the international donations were spared this drop (the decrease was only

[41] The Baha'i fiscal year follows the Baha'i calendar. The Gregorian dates refer to the year BE that started the 21st of March that year. The different items varied little in this period, which followed immediately after a reduction in secretarial costs.

Figure 9.1. *Donations from Danish Baha'is for national and international purposes, 1990–2000*
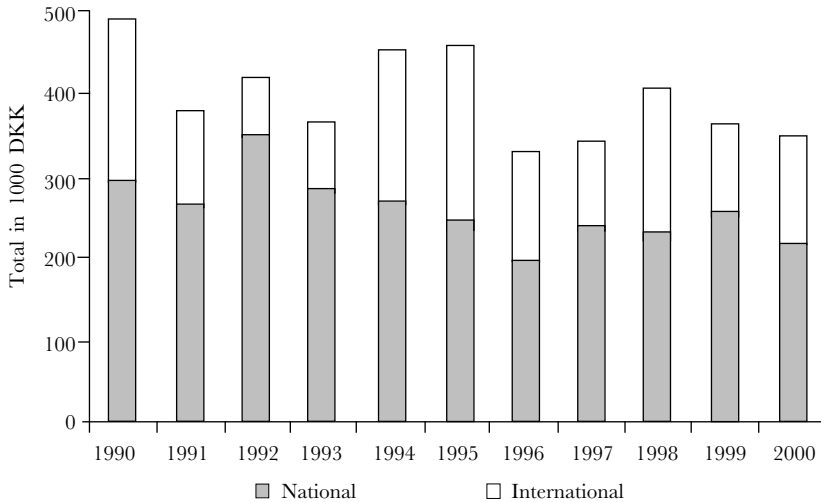
DKK 500 per year), and they remained almost constant, close to an average of DKK 140,000 (EUR 19,000) per year. Instead, the financial resources of the national spiritual assembly grew increasingly tighter, with a drop of DKK 8,500 per year, on the average.

The above figures do not take into account the effect of inflation, which over the same period was 22.7%.[42] If it is assumed that all the donations should have kept pace with inflation, the donations should have *increased* by about DKK 9,000 per year, instead of the observed decrease of DKK 9,000 per year. This difference constitutes a financial shortfall of DKK 18,000 (EUR 2,400) *every year relative to the previous year*. On top of this, the small increase in members by itself should also have resulted in more contributions. So, the actual financial mobilisation of the Danish Baha'is became increasingly more troubled in the late 1990s.

The figures are put in further perspective when calculating average contributions from individual Baha'is. The total average contribution per Baha'i per year was DKK 1,650 (EUR 220). This is double the amount that members of the Lutheran National Church paid in church tax.[43] By comparison, however, members of the Jewish

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[42] Price index 1990: 269.6; price index 2000: 330.7.

[43] In 1995, the average taxation base in Denmark was DKK 103,700. The average church tax was 0.8%, which corresponds to an average church tax of DKK 800. Only registered members of the National Church pay this tax.

community in Denmark paid DKK 3,600 per year in 2001 (young people and pensioners paid less, though).[44]

It is no wonder that during the 1990s, the Baha'i treasurer regularly and politely reminded the Danish Baha'is about the life-blood of the cause. The national spiritual assembly also tried to increase donations by encouraging the Danish Baha'i to engage in long-term contracts for donations, an arrangement that allows a favourable income tax reduction. Another attempt to boost donations was the encouragement of Baha'is to take out voluntary subscriptions to the Baha'i newsletter. None of these measures turned the tide, however.

The drop in income led the national spiritual assembly to enter into an inevitable course of budget cuts. By the end of the year 1994–1995, the Baha'i community decided not to pay any salary for the part time secretarial help given by a member. This measure gave immediate savings of DKK 110,000 (EUR 14,700) per year, but it also meant a further strain on the resources.[45] The work load was taken over by voluntary labour, and the responsibility for running the secretariat is now shared by two people. Other savings were obtained by mobilisation of voluntary labour; for example, in 1991, the centre was thoroughly repaired using members' unpaid labour, which saved the community about DKK 200,000 (about EUR 27,000).[46]

Over the years, the Baha'is have cut their coat according to their cloth. Table 9.6 shows the key figures from the accumulated balance sheets of the period 1990–2000. The small surplus of DKK 95,000, which has allowed a depreciation of a relatively costly cash credit, would not have materialised were it not for the extraordinary donations during the period. If the ordinary donations were the only income, there would have been a deficit of DKK 100,000 instead. This would have been serious, because the Danish Baha'i community

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[44] *Bekendtgørelse vedrørende fastsættelse og betaling af ligningsbidrag til Det mosaiske Troessamfund i 2001* [Notice concerning establishment and payment of subscription to the Jewish Community in 2001], Copenhagen, the Jewish Community of Denmark, 2001. (Unpublished).

[45] Annual report 1994–95, p. 3. (NSA-DK); Minutes of the national convention, April 1995, p. 12. (NSA-DK).

[46] Annual report 1987–88, p. 2. (NSA-DK); Annual report 1991–1992, p. 5. (NSA-DK).

Table 9.6. *Accumulated balance sheet of the Danish Baha'i community, 1990–2000*

Item	DKK
Current donations for the community expenses	3,360,000
Extraordinary donations (largely inheritances)	198,000
Sum, at the disposal of the national spiritual assembly	3,558,000
The above sum was used for:	
– running the community and domestic mission	2,923,000
– passed on for international purposes	540,000
– surplus (depreciation of current loans)	95,000
Balance	3,558,000
Additional donations earmarked for international purposes	990,000

has few liquid assets; all of its major assets are in real estate. If the national spiritual assembly had not taken the serious, but wise decision to cut the secretarial assistance, the community would probably have had to sell the Baha'i centre.

Resource Optimisation in Mission

As discussed in Chapter 6, demography dictates that if a religious group wishes to grow in number of members, it is essential to carry out efficient mission. Mission is also the major option for increasing the available resources. New members mean more person power and more income in the future, but they are only gained by investing existing resources.

In the following, I discuss the issue of resource management in connection with mission. The discussion in particular concerns the constraints that are imposed by the need for the group to uphold a certain balance between *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities and *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities in the group's use of its resources. As expounded in the beginning of this chapter, *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities are activities that strengthen sentiments of community and friendship within the group, while *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities are activities based on rationality and calculation, which mainly serve the material and organisational needs of the group. Since a particular activity will always contain both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* elements, it is the *re ative* significance of *Gemeinschaft* versus *Gesellschaft* that characterises the activity as either mainly *Gemeinschaft*-oriented or mainly *Gesellschaft*-oriented.

Mission in public space as a more permanent activity requires formal organisation, rational planning and money to be efficient. Although proselytising may strengthen *Gemeinschaft* among those adherents involved in a certain mission activity together, a lot of their attention is directed towards people who at least initially have no close ties to the religious community that the missionaries represent. Mission in the form of public events therefore is defined as a predominantly *Gesellschaft*-oriented activity. Individual mission, such as mission carried out through conversations with colleagues at work, is also a *Gesellschaft*-oriented activity, because it does not strengthen social relations with the other members of the community.[47] The same applies to the lonely missionary working in the unexplored mission field, as exemplified by the isolated Baha'i pioneer.

Resources are always limited, and when a group increases its mission activities, it will usually have to reduce other activities. Unfortunately, the time spent on other *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities, typically administration and management, can rarely be reduced sufficiently to compensate fully for the extra time spent on mission. The consequence is that when a religious community such as the Danish Baha'i community decides to put emphasis on mission, it will usually be, at least partly, at the expense of activities that strengthen *Gemeinschaft*.

For a limited period of course, the required additional resources for increased mission efforts might be mobilised by increased exploitation of the present members. Generally, however, the safest option for the religious organisation is to economise with the existing resources rather than attempt to increase them through exploitation of the members. The latter option carries the risk that, after some time, members might feel over-exploited, burned-out and become distinctly passive.[48]

Below, I illustrate these considerations with a mode that uses as an example a hypothetical group that wishes to increase its mission efforts by launching a mission campaign. It is an idealised example

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[47] The individual's feeling of belonging to the religious community, of course, may be reinforced by the situation, but that is different from strengthening social relations with co-religionists.

[48] Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie. Choice or Brainwashing?*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1984, p. 258.

chosen for the sake of clarity—in fact, mission campaigns are not particularly typical of the Baha'is—but the model derived has general validity for mission and resource management.

A Model of Mission Campaigns and Resource Allocation

The launching of a mission campaign usually demands a re-allocation of the existing resources. This can be illustrated by the graphic representation of the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* relation proposed in Chapter 3, Figure 3.4. This figure shows how different religious communities could be placed in the diagram according to the relative significance of *Gesellschaft* versus *Gemeinschaft* orientation. This graphic representation can be made more sophisticated if the distance from the zero point represents the amount of resources (Figure 9.2). Keeping the amount of resources constant means keeping a constant distance from the zero point—hence, when a mission campaign is launched and more resources are spent on this *Gesellschaft*-oriented activity, the circle representing the community must move along a circle path downward to the right, keeping the same distance from the zero point (path A).

   If the mission campaign succeeds, new members will be enrolled. The new members are gradually socialised to the religious community and they should thereby be able to contribute to the community with their personal resources. However, the socialisation of the

Figure 9.2. *Mission campaign and change in the balance between* Gemeinschaft *and* Gesellschaft
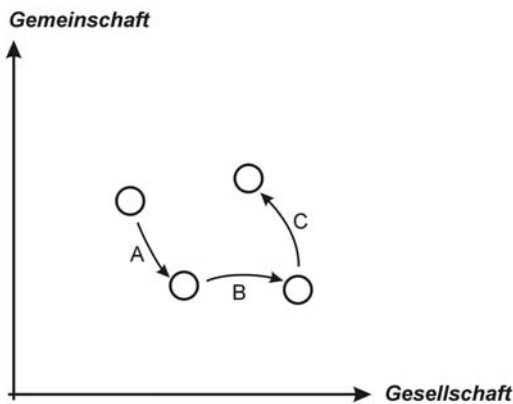
new members draws upon resources from the older members, so it takes some time before the organisation experiences a net gain in available resources after the enrolment of new members. Furthermore, in the beginning, the new members can mainly contribute with *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities, because the skills required to work on strengthening *Gemeinschaft* are only gradually learnt during the socialisation process. On the graph, this means that the circle moves largely parallel to the *Gesellschaft* axis so that its distance from the zero point increases (path B).

The result of a successful mission campaign thus represents a movement along path A and path B, which means that the available resources increase. However, the resources devoted to strengthening *Gemeinschaft* are less than before, even though there are more members than before, and it can be assumed that the members' demand for *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities is not adequately fulfilled. To remedy this, the organisation will have to allocate more resources to the strengthening of *Gemeinschaft*. The circle now moves along path C at a constant distance from the zero point, until a new ratio of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is reached.

The Ratio of Gesellschaft *and* Gemeinschaft *in the Baha'i Mission Plans*

The above course of events is described as occurring sequentially, but in practice they are running partly in parallel. The members' energies might be concentrated on mission in short vigorous campaigns, but this is not the Baha'is' usual strategy. The year-long Baha'i mission plans rather call for steady work, and it is obvious that the Baha'i communities cannot place all emphasis on mission without sacrificing the consolidation of the members already enrolled. As discussed in Chapter 5, failure to consolidate gains in new members is a likely explanation for the high degree of passivity observed among the Baha'is of India, Africa and Latin America. The Baha'i leadership on all levels has obviously learnt this lesson, as can be seen from the goals set up in the plans over the years. These goals are summarised (partly in my own words) in Table 9.7.

As can be seen in the table, the first two plans focus on quantitative expansion, while the later plans reflect the Baha'is' increased awareness of the need to strengthen engagement in community life itself. Thus, in the Five Year Plan 1974–1979, the Danish Baha'i community formulates 10 goals, of which 4 are concerned with

Table 9.7. *Summary of goals for Danish Baha'i community in the four Baha'i mission plans, 1974–1996*[a]

Five Year Plan 1974–1979:
1. Increase number of localities to 50, at least 2 in each county
2. Increase number of local spiritual assemblies to 15, including 1 on the island Bornholm
3. Increase number of incorporated local spiritual assemblies to 8
4. Purchase a local Baha'i centre in Nuuk, Greenland
5. Establish a local spiritual assembly in Greenland and increase number of localities there to 4
6. Develop a consistent programme for the increased publication of Baha'i literature in Danish
7. Develop a programme for translation and publication of Baha'i literature in Greenland
8. Extend the use of radio and TV for proclamations of the Faith
9. Special attention to visitors from Greenland and the Faroe Islands
10. Assist the national spiritual assembly of Iceland in consolidation on the Faroe Islands

Seven Year Plan 1979–1986:
1. Increase number of local spiritual assemblies to 15
2. Increase number of localities to 60
3. Establishment of 3 local spiritual assemblies in Greenland
4. Establishments of children's classes
5. Increase the range of Baha'i literature in Danish
6. Increase the use of mass media for proclamations of the faith
7. Adoption of teaching goals by local spiritual assemblies
8. Collaboration with the national spiritual assemblies of Norway, Sweden, and Germany
9. Consolidation of Baha'i community life (deepening classes)
10. Assistance with mission in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, and Georgia
11. Assistance with mission in the Faroe Islands

[a] Sources: *Annual Report* 1978–79, pp. 3–4 (NSA-DK); *Semi-annual Statistical Reports* [to the Universal House of Justice], 1 July 1985 (NSA-DK); *The Six Year Plan for Denmark. 143–149 1986–1992*, n.p., National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Denmark, November 1986 (NSA-DK); *Progress report for the Danish Baha'i Community 150 & 150 BE* [to the Universal House of Justice], 1995 (NSA-DK).

Table 9.7. *Summary of goals for Danish Baha'i community in the four Baha'i mission plans, 1974–1996*[a]

Six Year Plan 1986–1992:

1. Increase the number of proclamations, particularly in schools and educational institutions. Improve the use of the media
2. Develop means and aids to help individual mission, including holding workshops
3. Individuals encouraged to hold firesides and observation of the holy days. Individuals encouraged to discipline themselves
4. Encourage observation of holy days on an inter-community basis and arrange joint nineteen day feasts between groups and isolated Baha'is. Establish regular deepening activities and arrange regular contact with isolated Baha'is
5. Establish children's classes and develop textbooks. Establish a magazine for children
6. Hold seminars and issue newsletter on Baha'i family life, parental training and child education
7. Develop deepening classes, firesides and seminars specifically for Baha'i youth. Participate in European youth activities
8. Produce and publish Baha'i literature [specified]

Three Year Plan 1993–1996:

1. Strengthening individual believers through regular conferences, encourage morning praying and reading, improve reading at nineteen day feasts, and arrange universal participation in organised events. Encourage financial contributions
2. Greater orientation towards the non-Baha'i world through contact and collaboration with non-Baha'i organisations. Establish an office for external affairs
3. Enhanced mutual support and increased mobility within the community (schools, youth arrangements)
4. Better administrative planning and execution of decisions
5. Ensure geographical spread in Denmark through organised mission in selected towns. Establish new local spiritual assemblies in three provincial towns (Ikast, Vejle and Holbæk)
6. Assistance to international mission by sending at least 15 pioneers and traveling teachers abroad. Assist with literature to the Baltic states and Poland. Support the Faroe Islands and Greenland financially

mission in Denmark and 5 with mission activities in Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Only one goal, formulating a programme for the publication of Baha'i literature in Danish, could be said to have some direct benefit to those Danes who already were Baha'is. In the Seven Year Plan 1979–1986, the most important goal is quantitative expansion of the Danish Baha'i community to 60 localities in Denmark and organisational strengthening by the establishment of 15 local spiritual assemblies. Only two of the eleven goals are concerned with strengthening community life (establishment of children's classes and arrangement of study classes). In the subsequent Six Year Plan 1986–1992, however, five of the eight major goals are formulated around issues of strengthening the identity and active participation of members and ensuring the socialisation of children. In the Three Year Plan 1993–1996, only two of the six major goals are *directly* concerned with mission. However, the goal "Greater orientation towards the non-Bahá'í world in the activities" indirectly benefits the mission work, which leaves 3 major goals for strengthening community life.

It is evident from Table 9.7 that the various Baha'i mission plans reflect an increased awareness over time of the need to consolidate the community. Or to use the above model of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* complementarity, the goals of the plans indicate a re-allocation of the resources to be spent on *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities instead of *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities. If for the sake of simplicity all mission-oriented goals are counted as *Gesellschaft*-oriented, and the goals that are directed towards those who are already Baha'is are counted as *Gemeinschaft*-oriented, the ratio between them characterises the particular year plan. All the year plans can then be placed in a *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* diagram, as shown in Figure 9.3. As before, the distances from the zero point represent the resources designated by the Danish Baha'i community, and these are taken as being proportional to the number of members at the start of the plan. The change in strategy in 1986 between the 7-year plan and the 6-year plan is very distinct in this graphic representation.

BAHA'I MISSION PRACTICE

The Baha'i term for mission taking place in public places is *proclamation*. Sixty informants reported that they had participated in a proclamation in 137 BE (1980–81) (Q63). Many of them referred to

Figure 9.3. *Balance between* Gemeinschaft *and* Gesellschaft *in the goals of the year plans for the Danish Baha'i community, 1974–1996*
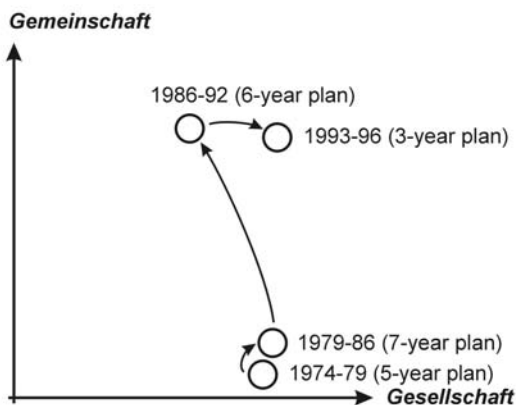
identical events, so the total number of proclamations carried out by the Danish Baha'is was much less than 60, probably not more than 30. This does not seem like a particularly impressive amount. Meetings and exhibitions at public institutions are by far the most common form of proclamations. Twenty-five informants had arranged exhibitions at public libraries and twenty-three had arranged lectures and events at other localities open to the public. Thirteen informants had attended an information booth at a mall. Four informants had held invited lectures arranged by, for example, an adult education association. The overt street mission typified by the ISKCON mission is rarely used by Baha'is, and only three informants mentioned circulation of pamphlets on the street.

The extent of individual mission can be assessed from answers to the question: "Within the last month, have you had the opportunity of describing Baha'i to one or more non-Baha'is?" (Q36) Seventy-seven (64%) of the informants gave a positive reply. This percentage was independent of gender and national background. On the follow-up question, "if yes, had he/she/they heard about Baha'i before?", 28 said "yes", and 49 said "no". The data indicate that individual mission is a common activity of the Danish Baha'is.

Referring to the question "Is there anybody at your workplace who knows that you are a Baha'i?" (Q21), 77 said yes, 23 said no,

and for 10, the question was not relevant.[49] If only the Baha'is who held a job at the time of the interview are considered, the percentages were even higher: 91% said that colleagues knew they were Baha'is. It is evident that the workplace is a potential field of recruitment (16% of the first-generation Baha'is were recruited through a colleague). It is not surprising that among those Baha'is whose present colleagues know that they are Baha'is, 97% (34 out of 35) confirmed in the interview that they had talked about Baha'i within the last month.

It is also part of Baha'i mission practice to communicate about Baha'i using public media. To the question "Have you written about Baha'i in any newspaper, magazine or periodical in the period 1980–81 (137 BE)?" (Q80), 19 informants gave a positive reply. Of these, seventeen were Danes, one was Iranian and one was of a third nationality.

The Danish Baha'i community does not have vast resources for mission, thus they cannot organise big mission campaigns. The year 1992–93, the centenary of Baha'u'llah's death, was dedicated by extraordinary arrangements, and the strain on resources was substantial.[50] The organisation of a bigger event, the NGO conference during the Social Summit in 1995, could only be handled because many volunteers from other countries came to Copenhagen. Furthermore, for an entire year, the secretariat of the Danish Baha'i Community was reinforced by a German Baha'i giving a "year of service" as a full-time, but unpaid administrative assistant.[51]

In the day-to-day mission work, the Baha'is therefore prefer low-cost mission methods, such as exhibitions and lectures at local libraries, individual mission and publication of articles. Another popular method of Baha'i mission that is not very resource-demanding is the *fireside.*

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[49] There is considerable geographic difference, however, between eastern and western Denmark, as defined by the conventional divide of the country along the Great Belt. East of the Great Belt, 70 out of 81 (86%) said yes, while west of the Great Belt, 17 out of 29 (59%) said yes ($\chi^2 = 8.37$, df = 1, P < 0.01).

[50] As seen in Table 9.5, the average yearly expenses for mission activities in Denmark were DKK 72,400 (EUR 9,700) in the period 1995–2000. According to the balance sheet of 1992–93 (NSA-DK), it appears that the same expenses were DKK 107,637 (EUR 14,400), which is about 50% higher than the average in 1995–2000.

[51] See Chapter 11.

Firesides have become established worldwide as a favourite mission method among the Baha'is, and they are briefly examined in the following.

<center><i>Firesides in the Danish Baha'i Community</i></center>

Firesides are informal meetings held regularly, usually in private homes, with 2–10 people attending. Baha'is are encouraged to bring friends who are not Baha'is, and it is common that one or two of the participants at a fireside are non-Baha'is. Often, one of the Baha'i participants will give a brief talk on a particular topic, but the meeting may soon turn into a question and answer session, during which some Baha'i principle is clarified for the proselytes and novices. By attending firesides, Baha'is can enter into a discourse with other Baha'is on defining and redefining what it means to be a Baha'i, and the presence of non-Baha'is is not crucial for the proceedings of the fireside.

In the middle of the 1990s, the Danish Baha'i community initiated a variant of the firesides in the form of open house arrangements held at the Baha'i centre every Wednesday evening. As with firesides, a speaker introduces a particular topic, but the entire session is less private than the firesides, and it is publicly advertised.[52] In the year 1995–96, 49 such open house arrangements were held, and the average number of Baha'i participants ranged from 6 to 8, while the average number of non-Baha'i participants ranged from 1 to 4.[53]

The prevalence of firesides among the Danish Baha'is can be illustrated by the following information reported in the interviews. Fifty-two informants reported that they had hosted at least one fireside in 137 BE (1980–81) (Q64). Thirty-two of these 52 informants had hosted less than 10 firesides, and 20 had hosted 10 or more (the highest number reported was 52, that is, once a week). So, firesides are a commonly used mission method. They are also comparable in form with recruitment through personal networks, which is the most common way for new Baha'is to join, cf. Chapter 7. Roughly half

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[52] Annual Report of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Denmark 1995–96. (NSA-DK).

[53] Annual Report of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Denmark 1995–96. (NSA-DK).

of the firesides were attended by some non-Baha'is, and only 6 of the 52 informants who had hosted firesides reported that there were no non-Baha'is present.[54]

Among the 52 informants who reported that they had held firesides, there were 13 married couples. Assuming that the couples hosted the firesides together, these 26 individuals should be counted as residing in 13 Baha'i homes. Thus, a total of about four hundred (393) firesides were held in 39 different Baha'i homes in 1980–81, or an average of 10 firesides for each of the 39 homes during that year.

The number of non-Baha'is attending the firesides varied greatly. Most informants reported that less than 10 non-Baha'is attended during the year, but 9 informants reported that 10 or more non-Baha'is had attended their firesides during the year. The number of non-Baha'is attending appears to add up to 295. However, since individuals who might have attended firesides in two different homes were counted twice, the number of non-Baha'is contacted through firesides during the year must have been somewhat lower, probably between one- and two-hundred individuals. The majority of these non-Baha'is will never become Baha'is, according to a study of dropout rates by Bird and Reimer.[55] They found that more than 80% of the individuals who had participated in Baha'i meetings did not continue to attend after a while.

The efficiency of firesides as an avenue of recruitment, in fact, can be estimated. As expounded on in Chapter 7, 35 out of 88 first-generation Baha'is (40%) reported that meetings in Baha'i homes were important for their conversion to Baha'i. Thus, in 1980–1981, 393 firesides were held, and in the subsequent two years 16 Danes converted. Projecting from information about conversion patterns, firesides should have been important for about 40% of these 16 new converts, which means that about three new conversions per year may be ascribed to the holding of firesides. The efficiency rate of firesides, that is, the number of conversions per fireside held, is thus quite low, less than 1%. Were it not for the other functions of

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[54] There are many "do not know" answers to this question, so the number is likely an underestimate.

[55] Frederick Bird and William Reimer, "Participation Rates in New Religious and Parareligious Movements", in Eileen Barker (ed.), *Of Gods and Men. New Religious Movements in the West. Proceedings of the 1981 Annual Conference of the British Sociological Association Sociology of Religion Study Group*, Macon, Mercer University Press, 1983, pp. 215–238.

firesides, they would seem to be resource-demanding and not a par-
ticularly fruitful mission strategy. However, from the perspective of
resource allocation, where the ratio of *Gemeinschaft*- and *Gesellschaft*-
oriented activities is focused upon, for the Baha'is, firesides have a
distinct advantage over mission in public places. They are a low-cost
method of mission, but with the additional advantage of providing
social and educational activities within the group.

External Assistance

It is common among all proselytising religions to have an organised
programme for sending out missionaries, and the Baha'is are no
exception to this—on the contrary. Many Baha'is move for varying
periods of time to other parts of the country or abroad to assist local
Baha'i communities in their mission work. The Baha'i term for such
missionaries is *pioneers*, and their task is called pioneering, not mission.

   The names and nationalities of the international pioneers sent out
or received are reported by the national Baha'i communities in their
annual reports to the Baha'i World Centre. These international pio-
neers represent a considerable resource, and the history of the Danish
Baha'i community proves their crucial significance for the growth
and development of the community. As described in Chapter 6, the
pioneers of the late 1940s established the community, a feat that the
first Danish Baha'i (Johanne Høeg) could not have accomplished by
herself. Moreover, the arrival of 17 Iranian pioneers in 1961 revi-
talised the stagnant community of the 1950s.

   National Baha'i communities may sometimes make requests to the
Baha'i World Centre for pioneers, and conversely they may formu-
late or be assigned quantitative goals with respect to the number of
pioneers to be sent out. For example, in the Three Year Plan
(1993–1996), the Danish Baha'i community had set a goal of send-
ing at least 15 pioneers and travelling teachers abroad.[56]

   Table 9.8 presents summary statistics concerning the international
pioneers during the Seven Year Plan of 1979–1986. As seen in the
top rows of the table, it appears that Europe received the lion's share
of the international pioneers in comparison to the other continents.
The heavy allocation of resources to the European continent becomes

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[56] "Progress report for the Danish Baha'i Community 150 & 150 B.E." [to the
Universal House of Justice] [Copenhagen, 1995]. (NSA-DK).

Table 9.8. *World-wide mission statistics of Seven Year Plan, 1979−1986*[a]

	Africa	Americas	Asia	Australasia	Europe	Denmark
Number of pioneers:						
Received	746	980	671	256	1041	22
Sent	159	1370	1544	130	491	6
Difference	+547	−390	−873	+126	+550	+16
Number of Baha'is:						
By 1979	603,000	665,000	2,264,000	70,000	19,000	171
By 1986	969,000	857,000	2,807,000	84,000	22,000	206
Increase	366,000	192,000	543,000	14,000	3,000	35
Increase in %	61%	29%	24%	20%	16%	20%
Mission effort indices:						
Received per 10,000[a]	10	13	3	33	508	1,170
Increase per pioneer	491	196	809	55	2.9	1.6
Sent per 10,000[b]	2	18	6	17	240	320

[a] Source: *The Seven Year Plan 1979−1986. Statistical Report* (BWC).
[b] Based on average number of Baha'is in the period 1979−1986.

even more conspicuous when it is related to the *number* of Baha'is. The mission effort indices (the last three rows) show that, per 10,000 Baha'is, the European continent had about 500 international pioneers, which means that 5% of the European Baha'i population were registered as international pioneers. This is fifteen times the proportion of international pioneers received by Australasia and fifty times the number received by Africa—the other two continents that received more pioneers than were sent out. However, the *effect* of this enormous investment in Europe was quite meagre, since the relative growth of its members was the lowest compared to the other continents. If the effect of pioneering is assessed as the increase in number of members per pioneer received, there is an even more meagre result: there were less than three new enrolments per pioneer in Europe, compared to from fifty to several hundred on the other continents. The effect in Denmark was even below that of Europe.

Considering the small population of Baha'is in Europe, the number of pioneers sent out by the European Baha'i communities is quite impressive (see bottom row of Table 9.8). Of the 491 pioneers sent out, 181 (37%) were from the United Kingdom, which was the only European country that received fewer pioneers than were sent out.[57]

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[57] The United Kingdom only received two pioneers. *The Seven Year Plan 1979−1986. Statistical Report*, Haifa, The Universal House of Justice, 1986, p. 159. (BWC).

Germany, which has the largest Baha'i community in Europe, only sent out 104 pioneers and in return received 135. It is indicative of, although not proof of, the effect of the pioneers that, in Germany, the number of Baha'i localities increased by 16% during the plan period, while the number of localities in England *decreased* by 9%.[58]

The Danish Baha'i community received 22 pioneers, thereby continuing a tradition of having a substantial contingent of foreign pioneers in the community. The annual reports document that many of the pioneers left Denmark after a few months, sometimes because they could not find work.[59] Others stayed for a year or two, and still others settled permanently in the country. Only a few of the non-Danish Baha'is in Denmark considered themselves to be international pioneers, however: among the 18 Iranians interviewed in 1981–82, 8 denoted themselves pioneers, and among the 15 Baha'is of other nationalities, only 4 did so (Q35). People have different motives for moving to another country, and some of the common motives expressed by the non-Danish Baha'is were classic (Q31). The Iranians moved to Denmark primarily to get an education or, in the case of some of the younger women, to get married (the fugitives were only beginning to arrive at that time). Many of the Baha'is of nationalities other than Danish or Iranian reported that marriage was a major reason for coming to Denmark.

Twenty-eight of the 87 Danish informants reported that they had done pioneering work. Seventeen of these could be classified as "home front" pioneers, which is the Baha'i term for Baha'is who move to a particular place in their home country with the (intended) purpose of proselytising. The remaining 11 had pioneered for fairly long periods (at least a year) in other Nordic countries, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Finally, one informant had been a pioneer in Tanzania.

In summary, of the 120 Baha'is interviewed, 12 non-Danish Baha'is (8 Iranians and 4 Baha'is of other nationalities) and 11 Danish Baha'is were or had been international pioneers. These 23 Baha'is represent one-fifth of the interviewed Baha'is, which indicates that international pioneering is not a rare experience among the members of

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[58] See *The Seven Year Plan*, pp. 156–159. As shown in Chapter 5, the growth in number of localities and the growth in number of Baha'is followed each other closely in the period of the Seven Year Plan.

[59] This was also a major problem for foreign pioneers living in Sicily, according to my interview with members of the Palermo Baha'i community, 22 July 1999.

the Danish Baha'i community. This is not unique to Denmark—
Table 9.8 shows that during the Seven Year Plan of 1979–1986,
about 2.5% of the European Baha'is went abroad as international
pioneers. During the later plans, this number grew considerably, and
it can be estimated from the data in Table 9.9 that during the Three
Year Plan of 1993–1996, as many as 6–7% of the European Baha'is
left their home countries to become international pioneers. The num-
ber of pioneers coming *to* Europe from countries outside Europe is
not known; for the Danish Baha'i community, the number is small,
judging from the *Annual Statistical Reports*.[60] If the trend observed in
Denmark is representative of Western European countries, the period
of the Three Year Plan marked a significant change in the Baha'i
mission strategy vis-à-vis Western Europe. The shift was from a sit-
uation in which international pioneer resources were being invested
in Western European countries, to a situation in which these coun-
tries were sending out more pioneers than they were receiving. It is
probable that most of these pioneers were sent to Eastern Europe,
since the mission activities in these countries expanded rapidly after
the fall of the Wall.

Table 9.9. *World-wide mission statistics of Six Year Plan, 1986–1992 and Three Year Plan, 1993–1996*[a]

	Africa	Americas	Asia	Australasia	Europe	Denmark
Six Year Plan—number of long-term pioneers:						
Received	423	524	714	188	982	19
Sent	101	1091	397	187	521	11
Six Year Plan—number of short-term pioneers (in pioneer-months):						
Received	1013	1524	4579	352	1901	
Sent	166	3890	653	478	1182	
Three Year Plan—number of long-term pioneers:						
Received		(no data)				4
Sent	324	7089	1689	559	2109	4

[a] Sources: *The Six Year Plan 1986–1992. Summary of Achievements* (BWC);
The Three Year Plan 1993–1996. Summary of Achievements (BWC);
Annual Statistical Reports [to the Universal House of Justice] (NSA-DK).

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[60] (NSA-DK).
[61] I wish to thank Robert Stockman, 12 December 1995, for drawing my atten-
tion to this circulating joke.

To be an international pioneer carries considerable prestige among the Baha'is, even if the pioneer demonstrates no or only a few success stories. Many of the first Baha'i missionaries who "opened" a new country are celebrities in Baha'i history, and in particular, Shoghi Effendi used to give such individuals honorific titles when they were alive or posthumously.

The following joke, which circulates among the Baha'is, indeed is a loving-ironic tribute to the solitary Baha'i missionary, the archetypal hero or heroine in Baha'i history.[61]

> There is a story about a Baha'i who once decided to go pioneering to the South Pacific. He was on a plane to the country he was to pioneer in when the plane crashed in the ocean. Miraculously, he survived the crash and swam to a small island. He soon found he was the only person on the island, which fortunately had coconut trees, so he was able to eat and drink.
>
> He began to seek a way to be rescued from the island. He prayed and prayed that somehow God would show him a way off the island. One day he was sitting on the beach fishing and he saw a bottle floating in the waves. It occurred to him that perhaps he could retrieve the bottle and write a message, which he could put in the bottle and throw into the sea. Perhaps someone would find the bottle and rescue him.
>
> So the man swam out, retrieved the bottle and brought it to shore. He was surprised to find that the bottle was already sealed up and had a piece of paper in it. He opened the bottle and pulled out the paper, which had a message on it:
>
> "Stay at your post. Shoghi."

The Stony Mission Field

In Chapter 7, I discuss the reaction of families to informants' conversions, and I conclude that the reactions were surprisingly negative, despite the fact that membership in the Baha'i community is compatible with "normal" jobs and family life. I also conclude that for those individuals with no Christian objections to the religion, the Baha'i principles seemed in most cases to be quite acceptable in themselves. For many, the main objection was rather that these principles were formulated as part of a religion.

From a mission point of view, it is a greater obstacle when people do not want to hear about religion at all. The following two accounts exemplify how Danish Baha'is typically experience the attitudes of the majority (Q30).

Sometimes people look at me as if I was a creature in an aquarium, when I say that I am religious. For several years, I was a member of the local school board, and one evening, when we were discussing the lessons in religion classes, I told the others that I was a Baha'i. People stopped talking, and I felt that I had said something naughty. Then some of them said, "I did not know that you were religious." Fortunately, I am a nice-looking woman whom they regard as fairly normal, otherwise it would have been worse.[62]

You know, when you are talking about religion, the air freezes. At work, the others often talk about me being a Baha'i, but they would never dream of asking me about it. Usually, they notice the first time they see that I do not drink alcohol; but when I explain that it has something to do with religion, they stop asking, and it seems that everybody at the lunch table is relieved when I stop talking about it. If they on rare occasions want to hear about it, after all, they seem shy. They may say, "It's not to embarrass you, but . . ." And there is nothing I would like more than to talk about Baha'i.[63]

The Baha'is I have met are generally open about their religious beliefs and most of them like to talk about it, for example, to their colleagues. However, when I interviewed them, many reported that their Baha'i membership was met with negative attitudes, even among people they knew well. Table 9.10 summarises some of the difficulties experienced by the Danish Baha'is, and it appears that the negative attitudes are as much concerned with religion in general as they are concerned with the Baha'i religion in particular.

This negative climate may be particularly pronounced in Denmark, as the following account indicates:

Friends and colleagues will by no means talk about Baha'i. They do not comment on it. It reminds me of a situation when I was lying in bed at the hospital, reading my prayer book. On one occasion, it fell down onto the floor, just as a Dutch nurse entered the room. She asked what it was, and I explained that it was a prayer book. Then she exclaimed: "This, I have never seen before at a Danish hospital. In the Netherlands, it is quite common, but I have never seen it in Denmark."[64]

Since the 1980s, the Danish population in general, and not the least the generation born between 1928 and 1954, seems to have become more interested in religion broadly defined, at least to some extent.[65]

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[62] Interview with a 52-year-old woman, 16 February 1982.
[63] Interview with a 33-year-old woman, 19 October 1982.
[64] Interview with a 53-year-old woman, 5 March 1982.
[65] 61% of the Baha'i informants in the current study belong to this generation.

Table 9.10. *Difficulties experienced by being a Baha'i in Denmark*

Type of difficulty	Number	Per cent[a]
Met by negative attitudes towards the religion:		
Baha'i is considered too strange	27	23%
Religion is embarrassing	25	21%
"You should not believe that you are special [being religious]"	24	20%
Baha'i is considered a false religion	18	15%
Religion is considered fanatic	14	12%
Difficulties with any of the prohibitions	53	44%
Prohibition on alcohol consumption	51	43%
Informant drinks anyhow	*18*	*15%*
Prohibition on sex before marriage	5	4%
Informant reacts by not telling that she/he is a Baha'i	21	18%

[a] Responses from all 120 informants. The percentages do not add up to 100 because many informants gave multiple answers.

In 1981, the frequency with which this generation attended church was below the average, but it later (1999) approached the average frequency of the Danish population as a whole.[66] Among the Danish population, belief in a particular spiritual force and belief in reincarnation have also increased in this period (spiritual force: from 27% to 38%; reincarnation: from 13% to 17%).[67] However, no studies have addressed whether this higher involvement in religion has lead to a more receptive climate in Denmark with respect to open discussions of religious beliefs.

The Baha'is also face prejudices and opposition to Baha'i life. For example, the prohibition against drinking alcohol was one of the most frequently mentioned difficulties in relationships between Baha'is and non-Baha'is in Denmark (Q30). In recent years, the general attitude in Denmark may have become more positive towards not drinking alcohol at parties, but in the 1980s it was a major problem, according to 43% of the informants (Table 9.10). One interpretation is that dogmatic teetotalism is perceived by the majority as a kind of anti-social and maybe even un-Danish behaviour in a country

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[66] Andersen and Riis, "Religionen bliver privat".
[67] Andersen and Riis, "Religionen bliver privat".

where beer drinking is part of the national culture. The following excerpts are illustrative:

> Alcohol is the difficult thing. People say that I am a bore when I do not drink. They say that I am a bad sport. When very close friends say so, I feel it particularly hard. There was one occasion when I was very happy coming home after a Baha'i summer school, where we all had lived a Baha'i life; and then I became depressed, because what was the good of it in daily life? I told that to my friend, and she said: "I quite understand you. It must be hard to go around believing that you are so much better than everybody else." There was also a fellow student who said: "For me, it doesn't add up that you are religious, you appear so normal!"[68]

> I have been teased, in particular at the tennis club. I believe that 95% of it is good-natured, but not the last 5%. They tease me on two subjects: women and alcohol. When we shower after tennis they might say: "If you don't date women, why do you wash?" Or if I tell them about Baha'i, they say: "No chicks, no beer—that's not me!"[69]

An Iranian Baha'i woman who was married to a Danish man, also a Baha'i, told me a shocking account about Danish intolerance. The account also exposes some typical attitudes of Iranian Baha'is, cf. Chapter 8:

> I find that the Danes are very—how shall I put it—impolite. For example, shortly after I had arrived [in Denmark] we were at a party, and the host was very rude. He was, even according to Iranian circumstances, a very wealthy man; he was married to a woman from the embassy, and he was one of my husband's friends, so I expected him to be nice. When we arrived, he was handing out drinks, all with alcohol, and I said that I would like to have a glass of water, instead. This really made him cross, and he said: "Water is what we piss in— now drink something proper!" I said again, no thank you, and explained that it was because my religion prohibited it. Then he said: "Forget about your fucking religion, you must be crazy!" I didn't know what to do or say. And my husband didn't come to my aid. I thought, "this man really needs God to help him," and my entire body was trembling. The things he said, nobody in Iran would ever say. No one would use those kinds of words. Not even to a man, and never to a woman. If I tried to think of a situation when you might use words of that kind, it could only be to a street girl, never to a lady. So, that's why I describe him as impolite. Since then, I have encountered this situation many times here in Denmark.[70]

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[68] Interview with a 19-year-old woman, 29 March 1982.
[69] Interview with a 50-year-old man, 21 October 1982.
[70] Interview with a 24-year-old woman, 13 September 1982.

Further examples seem unnecessary here, and would approach national flagellantism.

<center>PROSPECTS OF INCREASING MOBILISATION</center>

In the following, I summarise and draw some conclusions from the present resource mobilisation analysis of the Danish Baha'i community, incorporating some of the conclusions from the demographic analyses in Chapter 6.

Proselytising religious groups must mobilise sufficient resources for the *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities that keep the members engaged and for the *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities that keep the organisation going. In addition, they must mobilise resources for the mission. Since mission is largely a *Gesellschaft*-oriented activity, increased mission demands a reallocation of existing resources, in particular those that are used for *Gemeinschaft*-oriented activities. This is illustrated by the graphic model in Figure 9.3. However, if too many resources are allocated for mission activities, the members may feel over-exploited and eventually become passive or even resign. The ratio between *Gemeinschaft*-oriented and *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities is therefore an important strategic balance for a religious group that wishes to attain stable growth.

Efficient mobilisation of resources and wise spending of resources are ideal goals that proselytising religions do not always live up to, and often both internal and external factors necessitate that fewer resources than desired are used for the purpose of recruiting new members from outside.[71] This seems to be the case for the Danish Baha'i community: the growth in membership slowed in the 1990s, and I show in the present chapter that from 1980 to 1999 the Danish Baha'i community did not increase quantitatively the kind of activities that strengthen the community and help it to grow (Table 9.1). Over the years, this shows up as a significant reduction in those resources that the Danish Baha'i community could mobilise.

A subsequent, quantitative analysis confirmed the impression that the resource base of the Danish Baha'i community is not very strong— in particular, the financial resources are meagre, as they are in many other voluntary organisations. This has meant that the Baha'is have had to make use of their members' unpaid labour for administration,

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[71] James T. Richardson, "An Introduction", in James T. Richardson (ed.), *Money and Power in the New Religions*, Lewiston, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988, pp. 1–20.

maintenance and other work for which a more wealthy organisation would have had the financial resources. This has again put further strain on the resources of time and money that might have been allocated for mission, which for the Baha'is is the only method for increasing long-term, available resources.

In Chapter 6, I present a number of scenarios on the demographic development of the Danish Baha'i community. At least one clear-cut conclusion can be drawn from these scenarios, namely that throughout the last twenty years, the rate of stable exo-enrolments among native Danes has been low (0.64%, see Table 6.6), resulting in a standstill in the number of Danish-born members. So, despite the fact that the Danish Baha'is have plans for systematic mission work and also allocate some resources to this, the result does not live up to either the Baha'is' own mission plans, cf. the discussion above, or to a goal of real growth in Danish-born members, as out-lined in the alternative growth scenarios in Chapter 6. The Danish Baha'i community therefore is seriously confronted with the ques-tion of how to mobilise more resources for mission and use them more effectively so as to reverse the current trend of stagnation.

The Baha'is have attempted to circumvent the diminishing resources for mission by emphasising firesides as a major mission strategy. In consideration of the large number of firesides held, it seems unlikely, however, that any further expansion of this mission strategy will pay off. A major drawback of the firesides is that they do not give the Baha'i community the same conspicuous public presence as Baha'i proclamations do.

From the analysis of the resource base of the Danish Baha'i com-munity, it appears that the members spend a reasonable amount of *time* on Baha'i activities. However, as shown in Table 9.4, only 3,500 out of 23,900 hours (15%) are spent on public mission, and the obvi-ous question is if more time could be mobilised for mission. Table 9.11 contains a portion of Table 8.9 and as can be seen in the last column in Table 9.11, it appears that among the 50 Baha'is who were the most active, 78% had been engaged in public mission. Assuming that this represents a practical maximum effort, it can be determined what the quantitative effect would be if the activity level could be increased more generally. However, there is probably no chance that the inactive Baha'is would engage in mission, but it might be possible to increase participation in public mission from 30% to 60% for the group with minimal activity level and from

Table 9.11. *Correlation between participation level in religious feasts and other activities*

Activity level		None	Low	Medium	High
Number of informants		16	30	21	50
Activity	Number	Per cent of informants on each participation level[a]			
Committee member	51	0%	27%	48%	66%
Convent	49	0%	13%	52%	68%
Study class	31	0%	7%	48%	44%
Summer school etc.	65	0%	43%	43%	86%
Speak at Baha'i event	40	0%	20%	24%	58%
Holding fireside	77	0%	53%	95%	82%
Public mission	61	0%	30%	62%	78%
Write publicly	19	0%	17%	14%	22%

[a] Figures extracted from Table 8.9. "Participation level" is defined in Chapter 8, p. 370.

62% to 78% for the medium group. The overall effect would be a 20% increase in the time spent on public mission. Twenty percent of 3,500 hours is 700 hours, which is not very much, indeed; furthermore, this extra time for mission requires a broad mobilisation among, in particular, those Baha'is who are not so active today. This mobilisation would again require an investment of time spent by the most active Baha'is, however.

Another way of reallocating time resources for mission would be to reduce the amount of voluntary labour that might be paid for, primarily secretarial work. The Baha'is involved in this administrative work could probably use their time more efficiently on mission, in particular in the planning of mission and internal mobilisation of the less active Baha'is to expand their activities on the mission field. Paid secretarial help (half-time) would liberate another 800 hours, but it would cost about DKK 120,000 (EUR 16,000) per year.

In total, it should be possible therefore to increase the number of person-hours spent on public mission by 1,500 hours (700 plus 800 hours), from 3,500 hours to 5,000 hours. This represents a 40% increase in the time resources allocated for mission. However, to turn the stagnation into a significant positive growth, the enrolment rate should increase by 400% to 1000%, according to the growth scenarios of B and C presented in Chapter 6. Such an increase cannot be expected to result from only a quantitative increase in time

resources of 40%; the calculations suggest that a qualitative increase is also needed. In other words, a more *efficient* mission is needed.

Public mission also costs money, so more financial resources must be allocated for mission. On the average, the Baha'is used DKK 72,400 (EUR 9,700) per year on public mission (see Table 9.5), and if the extra 1,500 hours are to be financed on a proportional basis, the budget for mission must be increased by 1500/3500 × 72,400 = DKK 31,000 (EUR 4,100). Additional money, of course, would increase the efficiency of the mission. The Danish Baha'is probably could develop many clever methods if the budget for mission was doubled to about DKK 150,000 (EUR 20,000) instead of the present DKK 72,400 (EUR 9,700).

Thus, basically it boils down to an extra DKK 200,000 (EUR 26,800) per year for the national fund—DKK 120,000 (EUR 16,100) to pay a half-time secretary and DKK 80,000 (EUR 10,700) for mission—to make a significant difference with respect to the prospect of growth. Compared with the actual level of donations of DKK 400,000 (EUR 53,600), the average donations therefore would have to increase by 50%, or from DKK 1,650 (EUR 220) to around DKK 2,500 (EUR 335). This is still less than what the members, for example, of the Jewish community in Denmark are paying. A difference between the Jewish community and the Baha'i community is the absence of a formal taxation system for channelling money to the Baha'i national fund. Income is therefore unpredictable, and the possibility of earmarking funds further adds to the uncertainty. Making a budget under the donation system is thus an arduous task for the national spiritual assembly, and it seems insufficient for the mobilisation of financial resources.

Seen from the perspective of the individual Baha'is, however, the earmarking of funds is a privilege and a means of power that ordinary taxpayers would envy and ministers of finance would detest! Only the Baha'is, however, can decide whether this privilege given to the Baha'is by Shoghi Effendi is worth its negative consequences for the Baha'i economy.[72]

It may be a particularly Danish, or perhaps European, problem for the Baha'is that their members in general sit rather tightly on money for the cause. As a whole, the American Baha'is give more

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[72] Peter Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2000, pp. 160–162.

than three times the amount of money than do the average con-
tributors to Christian churches.[73] Philanthropy, however, is a much
more salient aspect of American culture than it is of Danish culture,
where people are accustomed to having collective goods paid for
with taxes. So, the Danish Baha'is may be encountering an unex-
pected side-effect of the Scandinavian welfare system.

   The limited economic resources, however, are not only a prob-
lem for the mission work, but may also seriously influence the ratio
between *Gemeinschaft*-oriented and *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities. The
insufficient financial resources lead to the diversion of the members'
time and labour towards routine *Gesellschaft*-oriented tasks and impair
the efficient use of the resources for mission.

The Danish Case—Part of a Wider Crisis?

I shall conclude the analysis of resource mobilisation in the Danish
Baha'i community with some reflections on the demographic situa-
tion of the Baha'is both in Europe and world-wide. Although there
has been some growth among the Baha'is in Europe during the
1990s, the demographic data for Denmark, analysed in Chapter 6,
show that the entire growth has been among immigrants. Among
the native Danish Baha'is, the exo-enrolment rate is too low and
the resignation rate too high to give any significant growth. Apart
from a standstill in the number of Baha'is of native Danish back-
ground, this development has also led to an ageing of the commu-
nity, so that the median age by 1999 was higher than the population
in general (48 years compared with 44 years for the Danish popu-
lation in general).

   On several occasions in this book, I argue that the demography
of the Danish Baha'i community is not special, but is probably rep-
resentative of at least northwest Europe. The three scenarios pre-
sented in Chapter 6 are therefore also indicative of the future
development in Europe. If real expansion is the goal, the prospects
are not good. In Chapter 6, some of the results from the demographic

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[73] National Teaching Committee of the United States, *Issues Pertaining to Growth,
Retention and Consolidation in the United States*, Evanston, Baha'i National Center, December
12, 1999. http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrcole/bahai/1999/growth23.htm, p. 18.
Accessed 31 October 2002.

analysis of the Danish Baha'i community can be compared with results from the USA from 1999, and the conclusions are strikingly similar. This also speaks for drawing general conclusions from the Danish material.

On a global scale, the situation appears to be even more critical, with a rapid decline in the number of local spiritual assemblies and low activity levels observed for most regions of the world. As I suggest in Chapter 5, this may reflect an expansive mission strategy in the 1980s with too little emphasis on follow-up and consolidation of the members already enrolled. As discussed in the present chapter, the goals in the year plans in the 1990s were reformulated towards more *Gemeinschaft*-strengthening activities to consolidate the Baha'i communities. The low growth in new members during the 1990s appears to be a logical consequence of this strategic re-orientation.

There are, of course, also local causes for a decline; for example, the decline in Africa can probably be ascribed to the current deepening crisis of the continent, marred as it has been by civil wars, economic decline, AIDS epidemics, and bad governance. As an example, the flourishing Baha'i community of Uganda suffered catastrophically from the Idi Amin regime in 1971–1979. During my visit to the Ugandan Baha'i community, I was informed that before Idi Amin, there had been 70,000 Baha'is in Uganda, and that today, even after a comparatively long period of recovery, there are only 10,000 Baha'is.[74]

Insufficient Mobilisation of Money?

I would suggest that a major factor behind the impending crisis in membership is a financial crisis, and I have several arguments to support this. The first is, of course, that the economic analysis of the Danish Baha'i community indicates that the voluntary contributions from the members not only are too low to pay for needed administrative work, but also that the contributions are steadily declining. I also argue that the activity level is quite high among the Danish Baha'is; what they need is more money to free key personnel from internal tasks so that more resources could be put into mission.

Efficient mission also requires more money, in particular if the Baha'is wish to enter into new avenues of recruitment other than

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[74] Field notes, visit to Kampala Baha'i Temple, 12–13 February 2000.

the traditional, low-cost but time-consuming firesides. In an internal report, the national teaching committee of the American Baha'i community has made a careful and balanced analysis of the possibilities of improving the current low rate of enrolment.[75] One of their recommendations is to put much more emphasis on new media for reaching prospective Baha'is, and they conclude that there is an urgent need for new books, videos and other materials. This costs money, however. The same applies for the Internet; it costs money to make and maintain an appealing home page. Thus, lack of money in the Danish Baha'i community and probably also in other European Baha'i communities may be a serious hindrance to future growth.

On a more global level, other factors may have lead to the apparent financial crisis. One is the Iranian Islamic regime, which has taken a large toll on the Iranian Baha'i community. Iranian Baha'is have traditionally contributed much to their cause, and Iranians paid *huququ'llah* long before Western Baha'is did, as discussed above. The suppression of the Iranian Baha'i community since 1979 has had serious negative consequences for the economy at the Baha'i World Centre.[76] It is unlikely that other Baha'i communities could make up for this; probably only the Baha'i community of the USA has a membership base that could match the Iranian one with respect to mobilisation of financial resources.

The international contributions from European Baha'is appear insufficient to compensate for the assumed overall decline in international contributions. Over a ten-year period, the Danish Baha'i community was able to collect about EUR 133,000 (DKK 990,000, see Table 9.6) for international purposes, including the Mount Carmel projects. The number of adult Danish Baha'is make up about one per cent of the European Baha'i population, so proportionally, the European Baha'is should have contributed about EUR 13 million during the 1990s. In the same period, USD 250 million (EUR 250 million) was spent on the construction of the terraces and stairs on Mount Carmel.[77] This suggests that the European contributions to

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[75] National Teaching Committee of the United States, *Issues Pertaining to Growth, Retention and Consolidation in the United States*.

[76] Peter Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2000, p. 161.

[77] "Reshaping 'God's holy mountain' to create a vision of peace and beauty for all humanity", http://www.bahaiworldnews.com/story.cfm?STORYID=79. Accessed 6 January 2004.

international purposes and the Mount Carmel projects have been but a trickle compared with the contributions from the rest of the Baha'i world. However, the calculation also suggests that the Mount Carmel projects have put a considerable strain on the Baha'i economy, and there may be sound economic reasons behind the decision of the Universal House of Justice to postpone the construction of the fifth and last building of the Arc, the International Baha'i Library. I am also aware that cuts in the staff of the Baha'i World Centre have been initiated, a reliable indicator of a tight economy.

In conclusion, the present performance in terms of growth and mobilisation of economic resources does not appear sufficient for rapid growth in the near future—a growth that, like the growth in the first half of the 1970s, could lift the Baha'i communities of the West up to a new level of membership base and organisation. In their internal report, the American Baha'i community argued that in many ways the general sociological and religious climate in the USA should be receptive for a renewed rapid growth like that of the 1970s.[78] The report based its arguments on professional market surveys and analyses, not on wishful thinking. It remains to be seen if the American Baha'is can reap from this apparently more fertile field of mission. In the case of the European Baha'i communities, insufficient resource mobilisation, however, may cause them to miss their chance, even if the European field of mission should turn out to be more fertile in the coming years.

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[78] National Teaching Committee of the United States, *Issues Pertaining to Growth, Retention and Consolidation in the United States*.

THE BAHA'I WORLD CENTRE

The Mediterranean coast of Israel forms a smooth curve from the Lebanon border in the north to Gaza in the south. The smooth curve is broken by protrusions in only two places in the north: at the promontory of Mount Carmel, with the city of Haifa, and by a rocky peninsula, with the old fortress city of Akko, twelve kilometres further north. Between them lies the Bay of Haifa, with the fertile Jezre'el Valley stretching inland to the east. The protrusions also mark the two most holy places of the Baha'i religion: the Shrine of the Bab on Mount Carmel and the Shrine of Baha'u'llah north of Akko.

The Shrine of the Bab and the administrative buildings of the Baha'i World Centre are major features of the Haifa townscape. In the Haifa area, the Baha'is furthermore own a site for a future Baha'i temple on the top of Mount Carmel, two houses on Haparsim Street in downtown Haifa and a Baha'i cemetery. The Baha'i presence is also very visible in Akko and vicinity (the Baha'is call the city by its Arabic name, Akka). Two of the houses in the old part of the city have been bought by the Baha'is; they have been carefully restored and stand out against the worn, grey-brown adjoining houses. In the pilgrimage season, buses full of visitors arrive at these and other important Baha'i locations in Akko and vicinity, including the mansion of Bahji and the Shrine of Baha'u'llah (see the map below). In total, the Baha'is own, within the Haifa-Akko area, about 25 sites that are of religious significance to them.[1] The Baha'is may sometimes be overlooked in other places in the world, but at least the inhabitants of Haifa and Akko are very well aware of their existence.

The Baha'i premises in Israel make up the spiritual and administrative centre of the Baha'i community worldwide. This can be

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[1] The best and most detailed description of all the Baha'i sites in the Haifa-Akko area is given by David S. Ruhe, *Door of Hope. A Century of the Bahá'í Faith in the Holy Land*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1986. The information provided in the following is generally taken from this reference, supplemented with information from Adib Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1995, and Peter Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2000.

Important Baha'i locations in the Haifa-Akko area

seen immediately from the spectacular architecture of the Baha'i shrines and the administrative buildings of the Baha'i World Centre. In the first part of this chapter, I present and discuss these buildings and their symbolism for the Baha'is.

The Universal House of Justice holds the supreme religious authority over all the Baha'is in the world, it holds the custody of the Shrine of the Bab and of the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, and it is also the supreme body of the Baha'i organisation, the Administrative Order. The powers and duties of the Universal House of Justice are listed in the "Constitution of the Universal House of Justice".[2] According to the foreword of the constitution, called the "Declaration of Trust", the Universal House of Justice holds special responsibility for the preservation of the sacred texts, the organisation of the Baha'i mission, the development of the Baha'i organisation worldwide, the development of its spiritual and administrative centre in

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[2] "Constitution of the Universal House of Justice", *The Baha'i World* 1979–1983, pp. 453–455.

the Haifa-Akko area, and for the elucidation and clarification of all doctrinal matters.

From a sociological perspective, the dual function of being both the highest spiritual authority and the highest administrative authority means that the Universal House of Justice is faced with the task of attending to both global Baha'i *Gemeinschaft* and global Baha'i *Gesellschaft*. This requires an organisation that simultaneously can handle individual cases of guidance, provide facilities and administrative support for pilgrimages to the holy places of the Haifa-Akko area, and cope with the administrative and strategic issues facing an international organisation that seeks to expand its influence. To fulfil this, the Baha'is have set up a central organisation that has a relatively flat structure and much internal networking, yet is fully controlled by the collective leadership of the nine men who have been elected as members of the Universal House of Justice and function as directors at the Baha'i World Centre.

The Baha'i World Centre has expanded through the years to become the workplace for more than eight hundred Baha'is who provide their professional skills to serve the administrative machinery of that centre. This local Baha'i community in Haifa has no other duties, and its relationship with the Israeli society is distant, yet amiable. The relations—official and unofficial—between the Baha'is of Haifa and Israeli society illustrate Kanter's observation that a positive interaction with the local community is one of the essential elements of a successful, globally working business.[3]

Leaders on the Move

In the Haifa-Akko area, many of the houses and other locations owned by the Baha'is are historical sites that represent periods of Baha'u'llah's and Abdu'l-Baha's lives after Baha'u'llah's deportation, with his family and some followers, to Akko in 1868, cf. Chapter 5. At that time, the city was in rather poor shape, having suffered from wars and bombardments in the first half of the nineteenth century, and its combined citadel and barracks served as a prison. In the first

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[3] Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *World Class. Thriving Locally in the Global Economy*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1995, pp. 174–197.

two years after their arrival in August 1868, the 67 deportees, including Baha'u'llah and his family, were held as Ottoman state prisoners in this prison-complex.[4] Baha'u'llah and his family occupied several rooms on the upper floor in the north-west wing of the prison, and the room given to Baha'u'llah is preserved as a Baha'i holy place.[5]

The conditions of their confinement were harsh in the first months and then gradually were eased. In November 1870, Baha'u'llah was released from the prison and allowed to live in custody in Akko.[6] He occupied different houses for short periods, moving from one to the next one with the increasing need for space to accommodate family, assistants and visitors. In September 1871, he rented the House of Udi Khammar, the eastern half of a double house facing a small square. This accommodation was expanded when he rented the western part of the house and joined the two houses together.[7] Baha'u'llah lived for nearly six years in this fused double house, named the House of Abbud. The house has been bought and restored by the Baha'is, and it is an important place of pilgrimage, partially because it was in this house that the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* was written.[8]

In 1877, Baha'u'llah was allowed to leave Akko, and for two years he occupied the mansion of Mazra'ih, about 7 km north of Akko and 2 km southeast of the seashore resort of Nahariyya. In 1879, he moved to the mansion of Bahji, about 2.5 km north of Akko, where he spent the remainder of his life. In the same period, several Baha'i families moved out of Akko and settled as farmers in the country around Lake Kinneret.[9] Some of the Baha'is even founded a village at a place called Adassiya, and more than thirty Baha'i families lived in this village.[10] Most of the land, however, later was sold or exchanged for other land.[11]

Baha'u'llah's son, Abdu'l-Baha rented and then, in 1881, bought a plot of land by a small river near Akko. He developed it into a

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[4] H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh. The King of Glory*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1980, pp. 277–279.

[5] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 30–31.

[6] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, p. 37.

[7] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 39–40, pp. 51–54.

[8] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 39–40, pp. 46–48.

[9] Idit Luzia, "The Bahai Center in Israel", in Ruth Kark (ed.), *The Land That Became Israel. Studies in Historical Geography*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990, pp. 120–132; Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 207–210.

[10] Luzia, "The Bahai Center in Israel".

[11] Luzia, "The Bahai Center in Israel".

garden called Ridvan (Paradise).[12] Baha'u'llah often visited the garden, which is highly praised among the Baha'is for its beauty.

Abdu'l-Baha and his family did not move with Baha'u'llah to Mazra'ih and Bahji, but continued to live in Akko in the House of Abbud. In 1896, he moved to the main building of the former Governorate of Abdu'llah Pasha in the northwestern part of Akko.[13] This building was the centre of the Baha'i religion during the period of its first expansion to the West, and here Abdu'l-Baha received the first pilgrims from the United States in 1898.[14]

During the 1890s, Abdu'l-Baha engaged himself heavily in buying land for the construction of the Shrine of the Bab on the north slope of Mount Carmel, west of old Haifa and just above the colony of the German Temple Society.[15] The colony occupied the strip of land between the foot of Mount Carmel and the seashore. The main street of the village in Haifa, Carmel Avenue (now Ben Gurion Avenue), stretched from the mountain to the sea, and it was later to delineate the axis of the Shrine of the Bab. On each side of the street, the solid stone houses built by the Temple families still remain.

In the beginning of the 1900s, Abdu'l-Baha bought a plot closer to the Temple colony for a new residence. In 1907, his family moved into this house, Haparsim No. 7 (Haparsim means the Persians' [street] in Hebrew).[16] After the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, the restrictions on travel that had been imposed on Abdu'l-Baha were lifted as a result of the general release of political prisoners. And in 1910, Abdu'l-Baha also moved from Akko to Haifa, living at Hapasim No. 7 for the remainder of his life.[17] The House of Abdu'llah Pasha in Akko was then abandoned by the Baha'is until they bought it in 1975 and developed it into another Baha'i place of pilgrimage.[18]

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[12] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 95–101.

[13] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 60–74.

[14] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 61–66.

[15] The German Temple Society (*Tempelgesellschaft*) sprang from Pietistic and Adventist movements in Germany in the 1800s. The society's programme was to build Christian communities in Palestine, and in 1868–69 the settlement was founded at the foot of Mount Carmel (half a dozen other settlements were founded throughout Palestine in the following years). By the end of Ottoman rule, the Temple colony in Haifa numbered 700 people. Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 189–193; *The Bahá'í World 1994–95*, pp. 70–73.

[16] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 145–149.

[17] Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 237.

[18] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 73–74.

The house at Haparsim No. 7 in Haifa was also the spiritual and administrative centre of the Baha'i religion during the leadership of Shoghi Effendi. When Shoghi Effendi died in 1957, his widow, Ruhiyyih Khanum (1910–2000), continued to live in the house until her death, while the Baha'i administration moved across the street to Haparsim No. 10, the former Western Pilgrim House. From 1963 to 1982, No. 10 served as the seat of the Universal House of Justice, and from 1982 to 2001, the International Teaching Centre occupied the building.

Abdu'l-Baha's move in 1910 marked the establishment of the Baha'i administration in Haifa, with the Shrine of the Bab as its central sacred place. Whereas the purchases of the different houses seemed to be dictated primarily out of practical considerations, the development of the Shrine of the Bab and the other remarkable Baha'i architecture on Mount Carmel has been the result of careful planning. As early as the first years of the British Mandate period (1920–1948), the town-planning authorities of Haifa were positively engaged in the Baha'is' building plans on Mount Carmel, and this tradition continued under the Israelis.[19] In the 1990s, the Israeli State and the Municipality of Haifa began a restoration of the Temple Society houses and the area around them, and this work was also coordinated with the Baha'i building activities on Mount Carmel.[20]

THE SHRINES

In *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi explains how the decision was reached to build the Shrine of the Bab on Mount Carmel:

> Bahá'u'lláh's tent, the "*Tabernacle of Glory*," was raised on Mt. Carmel, "*the Hill of God and His Vineyard*," the home of Elijah, extolled by Isaiah as the "*mountain of the Lord*," to which "*all nations shall flow*." Four times He visited Haifa, His last visit [in 1891] being no less than three months long. In the course of one of these visits, when His tent was pitched in the vicinity of the Carmelite Monastery, He, the "*Lord of the Vineyard*," revealed the Tablet of Carmel, remarkable for its allusions and prophecies. On another occasion He pointed out Himself to

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[19] H. M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1971, p. 447.

[20] *Bahá'i Shrine and Gardens on Mount Carmel, Haifa, Israel. A visual journey*, Haifa, Haifa Municipality and MOD Publishing House, n.d. [2001], pp. 75–78.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, as He stood on the slopes of that mountain, the site
which was to serve as the permanent resting-place of the Báb, and on
which a befitting mausoleum was later to be erected.[21]

The site where Baha'u'llah was standing is said to be where a group
of tall cypresses stands behind the shrine.

Developing the Shrine of the Bab

By the end of the 1890s, Abdu'l-Baha had succeeded in buying all
the necessary land from the sometimes reluctant owners of the rele-
vant sites on Mount Carmel.[22] Abdu'l-Baha then asked the Baha'is
in Iran to transfer the remains of the Bab from Tehran so that
everything was ready for a burial on the indicated site.[23] The cas-
ket with the Bab's remains arrived on 31 January 1899 and was
temporarily kept in the House of Abdu'llah Pasha in Akko.[24] In the
same year, Abdu'l-Baha laid the foundation stone to a square mau-
soleum with nine rooms.[25] When the first six rooms of the shrine
were complete in 1909, the marble sarcophagus containing the cas-
ket was placed in the centre room of the mausoleum.[26] In the same
year, the Eastern Pilgrim House was erected close to the shrine; this
house served for many years as accommodation for pilgrims, and
today it is a meeting place for them.[27]

   The Shrine of the Bab is the central building of the axis repre-
sented by extending a line from the main street of the Temple colony
up the mountain slope. It was Abdu'l-Baha's plan to develop this
axis into a series of terraces and stairs, and he had a clear vision
of how it was going to be, at a time when only the six first rooms
of the base of the Shrine of the Bab were completed:

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[21] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995, p. 194;
see also Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 133–135. The italicised passages are quotations
from [Baha'u'llah], "Lawḥ-i-Karmil (Tablet of Carmel)", in [Baha'u'llah], *Tablets of
Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988, pp.
1–5.
[22] Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 224–225.
[23] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 274; Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, p. 136.
[24] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, p. 136.
[25] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, p. 136.
[26] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 276. The remaining three planned rooms
were added by Shoghi Effendi in 1929 and served as archives until the International
Archives building was finished. Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, p. 154, p. 168.
[27] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 177–178.

> The Shrine of the Báb will be constructed in the most exquisite fash-
> ion and will appear with the utmost beauty and magnificence. Terraces
> will be built from the bottom of the mountain to the top. Nine ter-
> races from the bottom to the Shrine and nine terraces from the Shrine
> to the summit. Gardens with colourful flowers will be laid down on
> all these terraces. A single street lined with flower beds will link the
> seafront to the Shrine. Pilgrims who arrive by ship will be able to see
> the dome of the Shrine from a long distance out at sea.[28]

When Abdu'l-Baha designed the Shrine of the Bab, he relied on a
thousand years of Islamic architectural traditions: this type of con-
struction with a square basement covered by a dome has been the
most popular form of mausoleum in most of the Islamic world since
the ninth century.[29]

During and immediately after World War II, Shoghi Effendi had
the mausoleum expanded to its present state with nine rooms and
a granite colonnade around the square basement. The central room
is the vault with the Bab's sarcophagus, and in another of the rooms,
the sarcophagus of Abdu'l-Baha was placed when he died in 1921.
On top of the basement, Shoghi Effendi built an octagonal super-
structure crowned with a golden dome, in accordance with Abdu'l-
Baha's vision, referred to above.[30] The octagonal structure is an
established element in Islamic architecture, with the Dome of the
Rock as probably the most famous example, while the colonnade is
a blend of Western and Islamic stylistic details. See Photo 7—*The
Shrine of the Bab*.

The Shrine of the Bab, with its golden dome halfway up the first
steep slope of Mount Carmel, attracts the attention of everybody
approaching Haifa from land or from sea, and it has become the
landmark of Haifa.[31] An anonymous observer has definitely caught

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[28] Abdu'l-Baha quoted by Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 225–226.

[29] Doğan Kuban, *Muslim Religious Architecture. Part II. Development of Religious Architecture in Later Periods*, Leiden, Brill, 1985, pp. 27–33.

[30] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 140–145.

[31] The following is indicative of the position of the Shrine of the Bab as the "official" landmark of Haifa. In 1998, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs devel-
oped a series of 32 large aerial photos of different natural and man-made features from all over Israel. Through Israeli embassies, the Ministry arranged for the exhi-
bition of these photos at various public places to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Israel. On the 6th and 7th of November 1998, I saw the exhibition at a major library in Copenhagen (Gentofte Main Library). The only photo from Haifa showed the Shrine of the Bab, and the title of the photo was "Baha'i temple". With the opening of the terraces to the public, this position of central landmark is undoubt-
edly consolidated.

some of the characteristic architectural elements of the Shrine of the Bab in the description below, but apparently overlooked that its basic design is distinctly Islamic:

> Its structure is a marvellous blend of eastern and western styles. The granite columns proclaim the glory of classic Roman architecture; the Corinthian capitals are reminiscent of ancient Greece, while the arches bring the flavour of the Orient.[32]

Continuing a tradition in Islam, the Shrine of the Bab is first and foremost a place of pilgrimage. It is open to the public in the morning, but during the afternoons and evenings it is accessible to Baha'is only; several of the nine rooms of the basement, such as the vault with Abdu'l-Baha's sarcophagus, are always closed to the public. There is no public access to the upper storeys of the Shrine of the Bab. All visitors are requested to take off their shoes when entering the colonnade around the basement, and unlike other tourist attractions in Israel, there is no vending of post cards and ice cream.[33]

The Terraces

Abdu'l-Baha's vision of the axis of the Shrine of the Bab also called for the construction of "nine terraces from the bottom to the Shrine and nine terraces from the Shrine to the summit", as quoted above. In the early 1950s, the first flight of stairs and terraces was constructed descending from the Shrine of the Bab down to the foot of Mount Carmel.[34] Shoghi Effendi envisaged the terraces to be a public attraction, but until completion, they were closed at each end by gates.[35] The construction of the upper part of the axis with nine terraces connected by flights of stairs was initiated in 1987 and completed in 2001. At the same time, the lower stairs were renovated and the terraces expanded with fountains and plantings. The stairs and the terraces are surrounded by gardens stretching one kilometre up the slope of Mount Carmel. On each side, the gardens close to

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[32] *Bahá'í Shrine and Gardens*, p. 11.
[33] In 1986, 80,000 tourists per year visited the Shrine of the Bab. In 1992, the number had increased to 112,000 tourists per year. The figures are based on fieldwork notes from Haifa and New York.
[34] Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 320.
[35] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 140–145. Shoghi Effendi described his plans for the terraces in *God Passes By*, p. 346.

the stairs are exquisitely cultivated, and further out they gradually blend with the natural vegetation of the mountain.

The positive attitude of the Israeli authorities towards the terraces and gardens project is reflected among other things in the agreement concerning Hatzionut Avenue, which runs across the projected flight of upper terraces. To make an uninterrupted pathway from the Shrine of the Bab to the upper terraces, the Municipality of Haifa agreed that Hatzionut Street, one of Haifa's main thoroughfares, should be lowered by five metres to allow the construction of a broad pedestrian bridge. This proved to be one of the most difficult tasks of the project, and the progress of the work to lower Hatzionut Avenue was reported in every issue of *The Bahá'í World* from 1994 to 1999.

The terraces and gardens were inaugurated on 22 May 2001, which is also the day the Baha'is commemorate as the Declaration of the Bab. Three thousand Baha'i representatives from all over the world participated, together with some 600 non-Baha'i guests, including Israeli political leaders and ambassadors from more than 30 countries.[36] After the inauguration, the terraces were opened to the public for the first time, and they are now one of the major tourist attractions of Israel. In the period June 2001 to February 2002, 54,000 tourists came on group tours to visit the terraces.[37]

The Symbolism of the Shrine of the Bab

It took one hundred years and a lot of money to realise the visions of Abdu'l-Baha, from the time he laid the foundation stone of the Shrine of the Bab until the inauguration of the terraces. To give an idea about the money involved, the construction costs of the terraces alone were USD 250 million (EUR 250 million) in the period 1992–2001.[38] The sum does not include the cost of building the Shrine of the Bab or the purchase of the land itself (about 0.2 km²).

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[36] "Official Opening of the Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb", *The Bahá'í World 2001–2002*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 2003, pp. 37–73.

[37] "More than 54,000 have toured the Baha'i Terraces on Mount Carmel since June opening", *Bahá'í World News Service*, http://www.bahaiworldnews.org/story.cfm?STORYID=134. Accessed 24 May 2002.

[38] "Reshaping "God's holy mountain" to create a vision of peace and beauty for all humanity", http://www.bahaiworldnews.com/story.cfm?STORYID=79. Accessed 6 January 2004.

Religious organisations often spend a great deal of money on build-
ings. These buildings in many cases are exquisitely designed, with the
purpose of expressing strong symbolism, but they usually also serve
practical purposes. The Sultan Selim Mosque in Edirne or the Cathedral
of Reims are architectural masterpieces and powerful symbols of the
religions they represent, but they also serve to provide space and
shelter for large congregations. One might ask, therefore, what a
relatively small religious organisation such as the Baha'i community
gains by spending so much money on a construction project that at
first glance seems to have little "practical" function in the Baha'i
religion.

When Abdu'l-Baha placed the remains of the Bab on Mount
Carmel, it was a powerful, symbolic act. By successfully claiming the
remains of the Bab, Abdu'l-Baha effectively demonstrated to his
opponents, Muhammad-Ali and his followers, that it was Abdu'l-
Baha who was the rightful heir to the legacy of the Bab. The choice
of site was also symbolic, since Mount Carmel is not just any mountain;
it is a very significant religious location, revered by Jews, Christians
and Muslims. It is the mountain of the prophet Elijah; he report-
edly successfully contested the prophets of Baal here.[39] The moun-
tain is praised several times in Baha'u'llah's writings, notably in the
"Tablet of Carmel".[40] The account of how Baha'u'llah pointed out
the specific site for erecting the Shrine of the Bab clearly fulfils the
role of the myth of origin, explaining why this location is a holy
place. Shoghi Effendi added to this myth of origin, with a bold reli-
gious loan, when he declared that the transfer of the remains of the
Bab to Mount Carmel marked the return of the prophet Elijah to
a place not far from the cave named after him.[41]

The Baha'is see the Shrine of the Bab as the sacred centre of the
earth, and in this respect it plays the same role as the Kaaba in

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[39] *I Kings*, Chapter 18.
[40] [Bahá'u'lláh], "Lawḥ-i-Karmil (Tablet of Carmel)".
[41] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 276–277. Close to the western tip of the
mountain, below the Stella Maris Carmelite Monastery, there is a cave that has
been the location of cult activity since antiquity. Graffiti in Greek indicate that it
was the centre of a fertility cult in the second century before the Common Era.
The cave is called the Cave of Elijah, but it has been venerated also by Christians,
Druzes and Muslims. Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 186–188. In 1988, I visited the cave,
which today is also an important place of pilgrimage for Sephardic orthodox Jews.

Islam. Thus, in the "Tablet of Carmel", Baha'u'llah compared the Shrine of the Bab with the Kaaba:

> Hasten forth and circumambulate the City of God that hath descended from heaven, the celestial Kaaba round which have circled in adoration the favoured of the God, the pure in heart, and the company of the most exalted angels.[42]

With these words, Baha'u'llah indicated that the shrine was both a centre and a symbol of origin of the new religion, as the Kaaba is to Islam. It is significant that Shoghi Effendi quoted this sentence in *God Passes By* when he described the entombment of the Bab's remains in 1909.[43]

The Baha'i sacred geography is made up of nine concentric circles, with the outermost and first circle being the entire planet. The second circle is "The Most Holy Land", the third is the "Vineyard of the Lord, the retreat of Elijah" (Mount Carmel), the fourth is the land on Mount Carmel owned by the Baha'is, the fifth is the courtyard of the shrine, the sixth is the shrine itself, the seventh is the chambers of the shrine, the eighth is the vault, and the ninth and innermost circle is the sarcophagus containing "that inestimable Jewel, the Báb's Holy Dust".[44] The "holy dust" is so precious that, according to Shoghi Effendi, Abdu'l-Baha declared that the very earth surrounding the shrine is endowed with religious potency.[45] This explains why sweepings from the floors of the shrines are collected and kept at the Seat of the Universal House of Justice.

The Shrine of the Bab is also the centre of the axis of terraces stretching all along the slope of Mount Carmel. The architect of the terraces envisioned the eighteen terraces, with the Shrine of the Bab in the middle, as a monument to the Bab, surrounded by his eighteen disciples.[46] As described earlier, there are nine terraces below the Shrine of the Bab and nine above it. Including the platform of the shrine, this makes 19 terraces in total. The architecture therefore is based on the two numbers of special significance to the Baha'is,

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[42] Baha'u'llah, "Lawḥ-i-Karmil (Tablet of Carmel)", pp. 3–5 (quotation p. 4).

[43] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 278.

[44] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 144–145; MacEoin, Denis, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, London, British Academic Press, 1994, p. 57.

[45] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, p. 145.

[46] *Bahá'í Shrine and Gardens*, p. 28.

9 and 19, which indicates the religious importance of this particular flight of stairs. The Shrine of the Bab is located midway between the descending and the ascending stairs. Moreover, I suggest that the shrine and the flight of stairs could also be said to symbolise both the Baha'i historical links with the past, as well as their prospects for the future. Turning downward to the past, the religious legacy of the Bab goes all the way back in history through the imams and Ali to the prophet Muhammad, and then further back to the mythic founding father shared with the Muslims, Christians and Jews, the patriarch Abraham of Ur.[47] Turning upwards to the future, the Shrine of the Bab is facing not only a set of terraces pointing to the sky, but also to the left of the seat of the future world government, the administrative buildings of the Baha'i World Centre.

Abdu'l-Baha foresaw that when the terraces were completed:

> The kings of the earth, bare-headed, and the queens, will walk up the street of the Shrine carrying bouquets of flowers. With bowed heads they will arrive as pilgrims, and prostrate themselves at the sacred threshold.[48]

When the rulers of the world come as pilgrims to prostrate themselves at the shrine, which for the Baha'is represents the sacred centre of the earth, the establishment of the future world government will be close at hand. In fact, it has been said by some Baha'is today that when the stairs and the Arc are completed, the Lesser Peace will be near.[49] The axis of the Shrine of the Bab symbolises this vision of the global power of the global religion Baha'i; I see this as the ultimate value for the Baha'is when they constructed this remarkable piece of religious architecture.

The Shrine of Baha'u'llah

The Shrine of Baha'u'llah is located in a quiet garden along the coastal highway about 2.5 km northeast of Akko. The garden is easily overlooked from a passing car, surrounded as it is by a citrus

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[47] According to Baha'i belief, Baha'u'llah was a descendant of Abraham through Abraham's third wife, Katurah (*Genesis* 25, 1–6), see Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 22.

[48] Abdu'l-Baha quoted by Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 225–226.

[49] David Piff and Margit Warburg, "Seeking for Truth: Plausibility Alignment on a Baha'i Email List", in Morten T. Højsgaard and Margit Warburg (eds.), *Religion in Cyberspace*, London, Routledge, 2005, pp. 86–101.

plantation. The garden is circular in shape with well-kept paths of small pebbles and flowerbeds in a grove of old olive trees. It gives the impression of a calm, recreative park, rather different from the more formal beauty of the gardens at the Shrine of the Bab. It is common to see local families relaxing in the garden.

In the centre of the circle stands the mansion of Bahji and the adjacent Shrine of Baha'u'llah. The shrine consists of one rather small room, always containing live flowers. Like the Shrine of the Bab, the Shrine of Baha'u'llah is open to the public in the morning hours, while only Baha'is can enter in the afternoon. Visitors are asked to remove their shoes outside, before walking along a small lane to the entrance door of the shrine.[50] The entrance area was expanded in 2001 with courtyards, a new visitors' centre and a monumental gate.[51]

The area and buildings surrounding the Shrine of Baha'u'llah at Bahji were developed much later than the Shrine of the Bab, because conflicts with Muhammad-Ali and his followers prevented Abdu'l-Baha from taking control of the premises at Bahji. It was only in 1929 that the British Mandate authorities recognised Shoghi Effendi's claim to Bahji and handed over the keys to the property; even then, conflicts over property continued until the 1950s.[52]

Like the other houses occupied by Baha'u'llah, the mansion itself, a whitewashed house with blue shutters, has been made into a place of pilgrimage with museum-like displays of Baha'u'llah's and his family's personal belongings, artefacts connected to particular historical events, and photos of different memorabilia with early pilgrims and other prominent Baha'is all over the world.

Two Shrines—Two Symbols

The Shrine of Baha'u'llah and the Shrine of the Bab are very different. The dominant visibility of the Shrine of the Bab in the centre of the axis of terraces and gardens on Mount Carmel stands in contrast to the seclusion of the Shrine of Baha'u'llah. Following

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[50] I have visited the shrine twice, in 1987 and in 1988.
[51] "Bahá'í World Centre", *The Bahá'í World 2001–2002*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 2003, pp. 111–112.
[52] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 113–120.

my interpretation that the Shrine of the Bab represents the historical focus of the religion, both backwards in time and as an indicator of the future, Baha'u'llah's shrine expresses the timeless, core values of the religion. An indication of this is that the Baha'i direction of prayer (the *qiblih*) is the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, not the Shrine of the Bab. In this respect, the Shrine of Baha'u'llah plays the same role as the Kaaba in Islam, that of defining the direction of prayer. However, in Islam the Kaaba is also the sacred centre of the world, and as mentioned, in the Baha'i religion this position is held by the Shrine of the Bab. By dividing the symbolic roles of the Kaaba into two parts, and assigning a part to each shrine, the Baha'is indicate that the religion has two founding prophets who are both important, yet historically and doctrinally they fulfil different roles.

The Administrative Buildings of the Baha'i World Centre

When Shoghi Effendi became head of the Baha'i religion, after Abdu'l-Baha, he continued to buy land in the Haifa area, thereby expanding Baha'i property east of the premises of the Shrine of the Bab and up the mountain side. He developed this area into the gardens and administrative buildings of the Baha'i World Centre. These gardens are not open to the public and can only be entered by invitation. The main driveway goes through a broad wrought-iron gate with a gate-keeper; the other entrances are only accessible on foot.

The Gardens of the Baha'i World Centre

The Baha'i gardens in Haifa are dominated by green lawns, red flowers and low hedges bordering the flowerbeds, which are laid out in geometric shapes similar to a European baroque park, but with more organic shapes than the austere linear baroque geometry. Walls, stairs and paths are occasionally decorated with impressive pedestals displaying peacocks, eagles and bronze or marble jars. The top layer of the paths in the gardens consists of pebbles or crushed red tile, and walking is not permitted off the paths, and there are no benches to sit on. The gardens in Bahji resemble the ones in Haifa with no benches and a strict orderliness. However, olive trees dominate in Bahji, whereas cypresses are predominant in Haifa; this may be one of the reasons why the Haifa gardens seem more official and the

Bahji gardens more meditative. The overall impression of utmost tidiness is striking in both gardens.[53]

The local Israelis call the gardens around the Baha'i buildings the Persian gardens (*Haganim Persan*). However, no ordinary gardens in Iran look like these Baha'i gardens. Moreover, Shoghi Effendi actually developed a special Baha'i garden and flower culture, which is a special blend of garden styles from both the East and the West, and which has served as an ideal garden type for the Baha'is. For example, an important common feature, introduced by Shoghi Effendi and adopted by Baha'i communities around the world, are the flowerbeds in the shape of stars. Surprisingly, the beds are eight-pointed stars— not nine-pointed stars, as might be expected. According to Shoghi Effendi's widow, Shoghi Effendi made the stars eight-pointed and not nine-pointed for the sake of convenience. She interpreted this as indicative of Shoghi Effendi's humour, lack of fanaticism and sense of practicality.[54]

The architect of the gardens and terraces comprising the axis of the Shrine of the Bab, Fariborz Sahba, has been faithful to the special garden aesthetics developed by Shoghi Effendi. The gardens surrounding Baha'i temples and meeting houses all over the world are inspired more or less by the gardens at the Baha'i premises in Israel. Even in a poor mountain village in a province of Panama, where many of the inhabitants were Baha'is, I noticed in February 2001 that the primitive wooden Baha'i meeting room was surrounded by a lawn with well-maintained flowering bushes, quite unlike the slightly shabby look of the rest of the village.

Three small marble shrines or monuments are placed in a central section of the gardens east of the Shrine of the Bab. They were erected by Shoghi Effendi in the 1930s over the remains of prominent

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[53] In Daniel Easterman's thriller novel *The Seventh Sanctuary*, the main figure expressed mixed feelings about the tidiness of the gardens around the Shrine of the Bab: "They were too formal, too well cared for, too oriental. It was as if anything wild had to be cut out. Order became everything. Keeping things tidy grew to be an end in itself." Daniel Easterman, *The Seventh Sanctuary*, New York, Doubleday, 1987, p. 62. Daniel Easterman is the *nom de plume* of Denis MacEoin, the Islamicist and expert in Babism who broke with the Baha'is in the beginning of the 1980s.

[54] Amatu'l Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum, *Service at the World Centre*, talk given to the Youth at the World Centre, 10 October 1985, 7:30 p.m., at the seat of the Universal House of Justice. 20 November 1985. (BWC-L).

members of his family.[55] This memorial place, called the Monument Gardens, holds a special position in the master plan of the Baha'i World Centre:

> The conjunction of these three resting-places, under the shadow of the Báb's own Tomb, embosomed in the heart of Carmel, facing the snow-white city across the bay of 'Akká, the Qiblih of the Bahá'í world, set in a garden of exquisite beauty, reinforces, if we could correctly estimate its significance, the spiritual potencies of a spot, designated by Bahá'u'lláh Himself the seat of God's throne.[56]

Shoghi Effendi recovered the remains of his family despite opposition from Muhammad-Ali's branch of Baha'u'llah's family in Akko.[57] Shoghi Effendi thereby demonstrated that he had the legitimate right to the Baha'i leadership, just as Abdu'l-Baha did when he took possession of the remains of the Bab and placed them in the Shrine of the Bab. The religious potency of the monuments is reflected in the Baha'i lore that if one prays for the fulfilment of specific wishes at the grave of Navvab (Baha'u'llah's first wife), she will intervene with Baha'u'llah to urge that one's wishes be granted.[58]

It was Shoghi Effendi's plan to place the Baha'i administrative buildings on the mountainside in what he called a "far-flung arc" surrounding the Monument Gardens.[59] He was thinking big in his plans for these "world-shaking, world-embracing, world-directing administrative institutions ordained by Bahá'u'lláh and anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá".[60] Shoghi Effendi interpreted a passage in the *Tablet of Carmel* where Baha'u'llah spoke of God who "ere long" would sail his ark on Mount Carmel, and he declared that when these buildings were erected, the prophecy in the *Tablet of Carmel* would be fulfilled.[61]

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[55] The monuments are: the shrine of Bahiyyih Khanum (1846–1932), who was a sister to Abdu'l-Baha and an important supporter of Shoghi Effendi; a monument over the tomb of Munirih Khanum (1847–1938), who was Abdu'l-Baha's wife; and a twin monument erected over the tombs of Asiyh Khanum Navvab (1820–1886), Baha'u'llah's first wife and mother to Abdu'l-Baha, and Mirza Mihdi, Abdu'l-Baha's full brother (1848–1870). Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 155–167.

[56] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 348.

[57] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, p. 162. Muhammad-Ali, Abdu'l-Baha's younger half-brother, did not acknowledge Abdu'l-Baha as leader of the Baha'is after the death of Baha'u'llah in 1892.

[58] David Michael Piff, *Bahá'í Lore*, Oxford, George Ronald, 2000, p. 232.

[59] John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1996, p. 148.

[60] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, p. 170.

[61] Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, pp. 170–171.

In later letters and messages, Shoghi Effendi made a major point of this prophecy of the ark, as well.[62] He therefore may have phrased a careful pun when he talked about a "far-flung arc", because in Baha'i terminology the place is simply called "the Arc". As discussed in Chapter 9, for many years Baha'is all over the world have made donations to the Arc Fund, which has financed the construction of the administrative buildings of the Arc.

International Archives Building

The first of the buildings to be erected in the Arc was the International Archives building, which was completed in 1957. It was designed in the style of a Greek temple, and Shoghi Effendi thereby set a standard for the other administrative buildings, which all show a distinct classic inspiration in their architecture. The vault of the International Archives holds original scriptures from the Bab, Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha. During my fieldwork in 1988–89, I was informed that the vault contains about 64,000 manuscripts (tablets) by Baha'u'llah, 57,000 tablets by Abdu'l-Baha, and 90,000 letters and notes written by Shoghi Effendi. The International Archives also serves as a museum and a place for pilgrimage, because in this building the most precious relics of the Baha'i religion are maintained: the garments of the Bab, samples of Baha'u'llah's hair and blood, the sword of the famous Babi leader Mulla Husayn, various original manuscripts, etc.[63] Particularly important items are the portraits of Baha'u'llah and the Bab. These portraits are not shown to non-Baha'is, and they are normally only shown to Baha'is when they come on pilgrimage to Haifa.[64]

Seat of the Universal House of Justice

The dominant building of the Arc is the seat of the Universal House of Justice, a three-storey neo-classic building, with a marble colonnade in the front, a roof with low inclination and a flat dome. It was

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[62] Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of the East, Naw-Ruz 111 BE (1954). (BWC-RD); Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, p. 171.

[63] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 347.

[64] Smaller replicas of the portraits are located in each of the Baha'i temples. They are shown only very rarely to Baha'is and only after permission from the Universal House of Justice. When I visited the Baha'i temples in Kampala in February 2000 and in Panama City in February 2001, I was told that the last time these portraits were displayed was in 1992 at the centenary of Baha'u'llah's death.
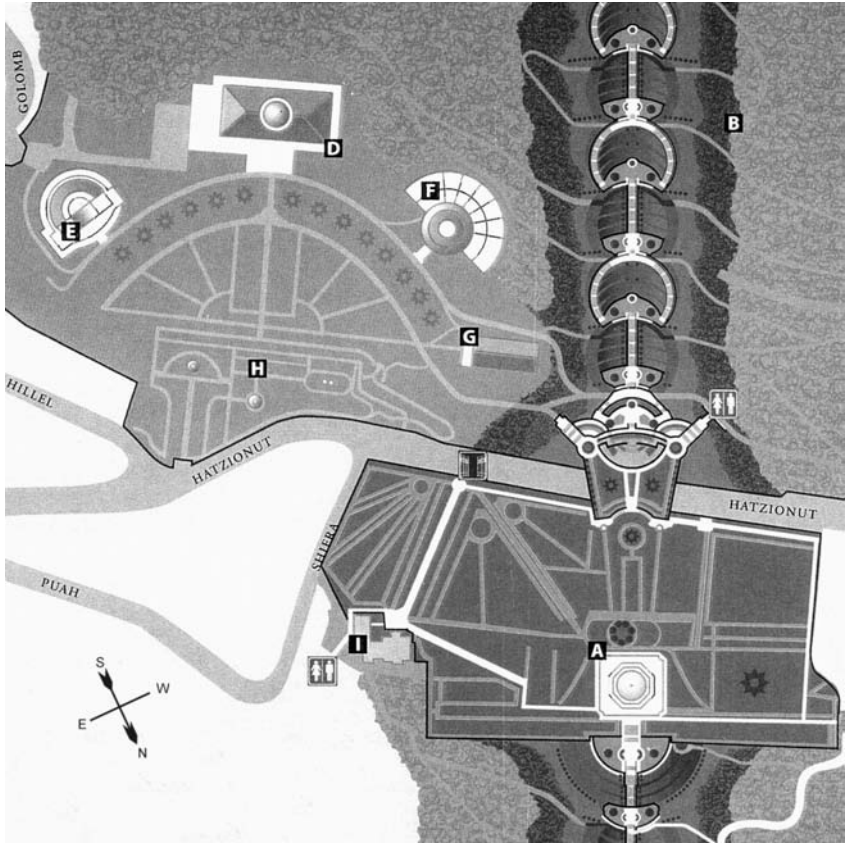
Baha'i World Centre with the Shrine of the Bab
Adapted from: "The Mount Carmel Terraces Official Opening" (folder with
information sheets, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, May 2001).
A: The Shrine of the Bab; B: Terraces; D: Seat of the Universal House of Justice;
E: International Teaching Centre: F: Centre for the Study of the Texts, G: International
Archives; H: Monument Gardens; I: Pilgrim House. © Baha'i International Community.

built in the period 1975–1982 and occupied in 1983.[65] The tiles of the roof are a bright bluish green, in sharp contrast to the shining white marble of the walls. On the front side facing the Bay of Haifa is a ceremonial entrance with broad stairs and columns in front. However, this entrance is not for daily use, and the normal entry to the building is a side entrance with a reception area. Inside, the building is characterised by white walls, staircases and panels of dark, fine wood, exquisite classic pieces of furniture, Persian carpets, and Chinese vases, both with and without flowers. The main hall is vast, with a floor of polished granite flagstones, and it can accommodate nearly one thousand people. See Photo 8—*Seat of the Universal House of Justice.*

The heart of the seat of the Universal House of Justice is, however, the "council chamber", which is the room that was built for the meetings of the Universal House of Justice. It is only at these meetings that the members of the Universal House of Justice collectively can reach decisions that are believed to be divinely inspired and of the highest religious authority in the Baha'i religion. The council chamber therefore is regarded with much awe by the Baha'is working at the Baha'i World Centre. For example, it is a custom among the staff members to lower their voices even when passing through the corridor leading to it. From this corridor, a two-wing staircase leads a few steps up to the entrance door of the council chamber. When the Universal House of Justice convenes, a member of the staff is sitting at the foot of the staircase, and this reminds everybody that a meeting is taking place.

I never had the opportunity to see the council chamber myself, but I have seen photos of it. The room is octagonal with a domed ceiling and doors leading out to a balcony above the ceremonial entrance, so that there is a direct view of the Bay of Haifa to Akko and the Shrine of Baha'u'llah. Above the balcony "The Greatest Name" is engraved, and behind there, space has been made for keeping the "holy dust" collected from the shrines of the Bab and of Baha'u'llah. I understood from the building manager of the seat of the Universal House of Justice that the council chamber is quite large and that in the centre of the room there is a big table with nine seats.[66] Along the walls are other chairs, tables and bookcases.

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[65] Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 45.
[66] Interview with the building manager, 24 November 1988.

When a new staff member is expected to work at the Baha'i World Centre for more than a year, he or she is invited to come alone to the council chamber to meet the Universal House of Justice. The new staff member is asked to say a prayer, and the members of the Universal House of Justice express their wishes for a happy stay serving at the centre. Normally, this is the only time staff members come to the room while working there and they will only see it again when they leave.

I have been told that meeting the Universal House of Justice in the council chamber often raises such great emotions that few staff members are able to remember what the room looked like. For example, a German woman in her forties arrived in November 1988. She told me that she had been looking so much forward to seeing the chamber; but when she arrived at the chamber, her heart was beating fast and she was so nervous that the only thing she could remember afterwards was a warm atmosphere.[67] She was not able to understand it, but she had heard that many other Baha'is had felt the same. An Iranian woman told me that when her son was in the chamber, he almost fainted.[68] These reactions should be interpreted in the context that being in the council chamber alone with the assembly of the members of the Universal House of Justice is to be physically close to the channel of divine inspiration.

Staff members who have work to do in the chamber and who go there more regularly, apparently still feel the special atmosphere of the room. Both secretarial aids and librarians at the centre have told me that when they go into the chamber, for example to pick up a book, they prepare themselves. One staff member told me that he felt the same type of power he might feel if he was in a church. Another staff member said that often before entering he would apologise to God, explaining that he only went into the chamber because of his job. Moreover, I asked three of the house members if the council chamber felt special to them. One of them agreed with the staff members, saying that it was special, and one said that the holiness of the room was associated with the meetings of the Universal House of Justice, but that he also believed that something might be in the air.[69] The third member said that the council chamber

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[67] Interview with staff member, 27 November 1988.
[68] Interview with staff member, 25 December 1988.
[69] Interview with Glenford Mitchell, 11 January 1989, and with Ian Semple, 8 January 1989.

would be the same in any location, because the important issue was the presence of Baha'u'llah.[70]

International Teaching Centre and the Centre for the Study of the Texts

The two other buildings of the Arc are the International Teaching Centre and the Centre for the Study of the Texts. The construction work on these two major buildings plus an extension of the International Archives were initiated in 1987, and the work was completed in 2001.[71] These construction activities occurred at the same time as the establishment of the terraces of the Shrine of the Bab; from 1987–2001, the Baha'i premises on Mount Carmel were a huge, busy construction site. The progress of the work was reported regularly in the national Baha'i newsletters around the world, and it was given a separate chapter in each of the volumes of the year-book series, the *Bahá'í World*. This indicates how important the ambitious building programme was for the Baha'is.

The front of the International Teaching Centre has a colonnade slightly similar to that of the seat of the Universal House of Justice. The backside, which faces the main entrance gate to the gardens of the Arc, is a half circle and holds a large auditorium with seating for about four hundred.[72] The Centre for the Study of the Texts is a more unusual piece of architecture, and its construction was quite an engineering challenge, because it is half-buried into the steep slope of the mountain. This required the excavation of 125,000 m³ of rock and the construction of a steel-reinforced supporting wall 30 metres high.[73] The entrance is a circular portico with eight Ionic columns, and the building appears much smaller than it actually is, because most of the building is buried under the ground.

The fifth building of the Arc is going to house the International Baha'i Library, but its construction is pending.[74] According to the architectural plans, it will look like the International Archives Building placed at the opposite end of the Arc, thus completing the symmetry,

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[70] Interview with Hushmand Fathe-Azam, 12 January 1989.

[71] *The Bahá'í World 1992–93*, pp. 169–176; *The Bahá'í World 2000–2001*, pp. 109–114.

[72] *The Bahá'í World 1998–99*, pp. 65–66.

[73] *The Bahá'í World 1993–94*, p. 70.

[74] "International Bahá'í Library", http://library.bahai.org/gc/intrm.html. Accessed 2 May 2002.

with the seat of the Universal House of Justice in the middle (see the map above).[75]

The main buildings of the Baha'i World Centre are undoubtedly of high technical and architectural quality. The architectural style of these grand buildings is borrowed mostly from Western classic revival, but also from modernism, postmodernism (for example the curved shapes and arcs of the International Teaching Centre), and from the architectural traditions of the Middle East. At the same time, they clearly convey an impression of a multinational or international organisation with high aspirations and expectations of influence, as indeed would be fitting for a prospective world government. For example, two French reporters who visited the Baha'i World Centre in the late 1980s had the impression that they were visiting the United Nations or UNESCO.[76]

Although the Baha'is to my knowledge have not directly copied the style of the government buildings in Washington D.C., it is striking how similar the two places are. The buildings are austere, symbols of the ideals of humankind, and although they are post-war buildings, they are not typical in style for that period, but signal eternity and universality. It is telling that the Universal House of Justice specifically ordered that the seat of the Universal House of Justice should be constructed with the same type of marble as had been used on the Acropolis in Athens, because "the Parthenon has retained its beauty for 25 centuries."[77]

Indeed, the Baha'i complex in Israel is remarkable among religious establishments, and parallels can be drawn to the Vatican in Rome or to the Mormon headquarters in Salt Lake City. It is particularly interesting to compare the Baha'i and the Mormon headquarters because of the structural similarities between the two religions: they both originated in the nineteenth century, both have a centralised religious authority residing at a religious headquarters, both are active in mission all over the world, and they are not so different with

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[75] Circulatory letter of 31 August 1987 from the Universal House of Justice to "the followers of Baha'u'llah throughout the world". (BWC).

[76] Colette Gouvion and Philippe Jouvion, *Les jardiniers de Dieu. A la rencontre de 5 millions de Bahá'ís*, Paris, Berg International, 1989, p. 25.

[77] *The Seven Year Plan 1979–1986. Statistical Report*, Haifa, The Universal House of Justice, 1986, p. 1. (BWC).

respect to number of followers (the Mormons count 11 million, the Baha'is 5 million). The Mormon headquarters are dominated by monumental buildings in neo-classic style, serving both religious and administrative needs, and there are beautiful, well-kept gardens to please the eye. In Salt Lake City, there are also numerous historical sites, like Brigham Young's home, which remind the believers of their heroic past. Many tourists are welcome to see most of buildings, yet the Mormons uphold an exclusivity and limited access to some of the places, like the Baha'is do.

THE BAHA'I WORLD CENTRE IN THE DUAL GLOBAL FIELD MODEL

In a broad sense, Chapters 6 to 9 were concerned with the relation between individuals and a national Baha'i community. This relation is represented by the left vertical axis of the inner Baha'i global field in the dual global field model.

The Baha'i World Centre is the seat of supreme authority of all the international Baha'i organisations. These organisations are placed in the upper right side of the inner Baha'i global field in the dual global field model. The two other social agents of the Baha'i global field are the individuals and the national Baha'i communities. The slanting double-headed arrow in the dual global field model represents the relation between the Baha'i World Centre and the individuals, and I show below that this relation is largely *Gemeinschaft*-oriented. The relation between the Baha'i World Centre and the national Baha'i communities is represented by the horizontal double-headed arrow, and this relation is largely *Gesellschaft*-oriented, reflecting the Baha'is' concern for the Administrative Order and its formal procedures. Because the paired concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are two ideal types of social relations, any real activity will always contain both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* elements, and it is the relative significance of *Gemeinschaft* versus *Gesellschaft* elements that characterises the activity as either *Gemeinschaft*-oriented or *Gesellschaft*-oriented. As discussed below, the different and complementary nature of these two relations plays a crucial role in making Baha'i a global religion.

Global Baha'i Gemeinschaft: *The Concern of Individual Baha'is*

When individual Baha'is communicate with the Baha'i international organisations, they normally follow the line of command through their

Figure 10.1. *The Baha'i dual global field model (from Figure 3.2)*
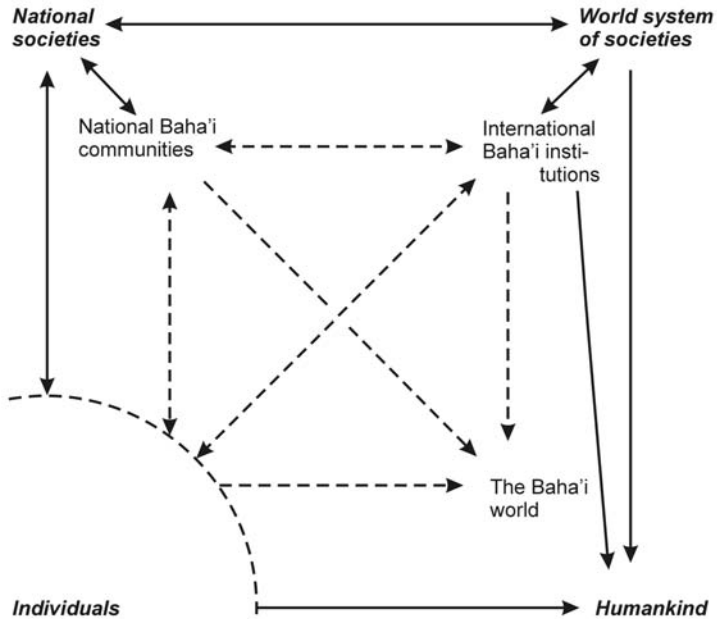
local spiritual assembly and their national spiritual assembly.[78] In the dual global field model, this line of command is represented by the vertical double arrow between the individual and the national Baha'i community, followed by the horizontal double arrow between the national Baha'i community and the international Baha'i organisations.

However, a tradition dating back to Baha'u'llah is that every individual Baha'i has the right to communicate in writing with the Baha'i leadership and ask for guidance on a variety of spiritual, personal and administrative issues. This tradition continued under Shoghi Effendi, as well as with the Universal House of Justice, and the slanting double arrow in the dual global field represents this communication. This interaction between the individual believer seeking religious guidance and the supreme religious authority strengthens the global Baha'i *Gemeinschaft*, because it places all believers on the same level with regard to access to the spiritual authority of the Universal House of Justice.

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[78] [Shoghi Effendi] *Principles of Bahá'í Administration. A Compilation*, London, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976, pp. 17, 75–77.

Individuals also interact directly with the Baha'i international organisations when they go on pilgrimage to the Baha'i shrines and other places in the Haifa-Akko area. The pilgrims visit the most holy Baha'i places in the world, and they see in person the members of the Universal House of Justice. The Baha'i pilgrimage represents for many Baha'is a peak in their Baha'i life. The Baha'i pilgrimage is an act that strengthens the individual believer's feeling of belonging to the Baha'i world, and it is therefore a strong *Gemeinschaft*-oriented act.

Global Baha'i Gesellschaft: *The Concern of the Universal House of Justice*

The Universal House of Justice must allocate resources for the *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities of devising and implementing the internationally co-ordinated mission and consolidation plans. This includes the Baha'i relations with the UN System and other entities of the *outer* field of the dual global field. Written answers to individual letters from Baha'is seeking religious guidance also require considerable administrative support behind the scene. Furthermore, all Baha'is can apply to participate in organised pilgrimages to the shrines in Haifa, which taps the administrative resources of the Baha'i World Centre even further. Thus, the pilgrimage, which in itself concerns the global Baha'i *Gemeinschaft*, must be supported by *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities in the background. Finally, the activities regarding relations with the Israeli authorities and the local Haifa community, including the very resource-consuming building activities at Mount Carmel and the development of the Baha'i administration itself, are also activities that are mainly *Gesellschaft*-oriented.

THE BAHA'I PILGRIMAGE

When residing in Edirne, Baha'u'llah had instructed his followers to make pilgrimages to the Bab's house in Shiraz and/or to his own house in Baghdad.[79] However, it is impossible today for Baha'is to access these houses: the Bab's house in Shiraz was demolished in 1979 after the Iranian revolution, and the Baghdad house was seized

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[79] According to Walbridge, this pilgrimage can be seen as the Baha'i *hajj*. See John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1996, pp. 112–119.

by Shi'i religious authorities in 1922.[80] In fact, the Baha'i scribe Nabil-i-Zarandi is the only Baha'i known to have visited both houses.[81]

Baha'u'llah often received visitors in his home, and in particular in the last ten years of Baha'u'llah's life, many Baha'is travelled from Iran and other countries to see him in Bahji.[82] After Baha'u'llah's death, these visits evolved into the present Baha'i pilgrimage to the Haifa area. Abdu'l-Baha made clear that the purpose of the pilgrimage was to pray at the shrines of Baha'u'llah and of the Bab, and when Shoghi Effendi stated that the two shrines were more holy than the Bab's and Baha'u'llah's houses, he endorsed the *de facto* position of the Haifa pilgrimage as the most important pilgrimage today.[83]

Many of the early pilgrims recorded their experiences, and some were published.[84] For the early Baha'i communities in the West, these accounts played an important role in the spreading and consolidation of the religion.[85] This tradition of pilgrims keeping notes has continued, and the Baha'i World Centre Library has a large collection of unpublished pilgrims' notes, which await to be researched.

The Pilgrims' Programme

The pilgrimage is a greatly desired experience for many Baha'is. However, because there is capacity for only a limited number of pilgrims, prospective pilgrims have to apply—and wait, usually for years, before being allowed to participate in this event. Pilgrimages start on Mondays, every fortnight in the pilgrimage season (which extends

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[80] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp. 113–114.

[81] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 113; Denis MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism*, London, British Academic Press, 1994, pp. 52–59.

[82] Moojan Momen, "A Preliminary Survey of the Bahā'ī-Community of Iran during the Nineteenth Century", in Johann Christoph Bürgel and Isabel Schayani (eds.), *Iran im 19. Jahrhundert und die Entstehung der Bahā'ī-Religion*, Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1998, pp. 33–51.

[83] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, p. 116.

[84] Among these are Thornton Chase and Arthur S. Agnew, *In Galilee and In Wonderland*, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1985; Helen S. Goodall and Ella Goodall Cooper, *Daily Lessons Received at 'Akká January 1908*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979; Julia M. Grundy, *Ten Days in the Light of 'Akká*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979.

[85] Peter Smith, "The American Bahá'í Community, 1894–1917: A Preliminary Survey", in Moojan Momen (ed.), *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 1, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1982, pp. 85–223.

from the end of October to the end of July), and last nine days.[86] When I was at the Baha'i World Centre, about two thousand Baha'is per year followed the organised pilgrimage in groups of one hundred per fortnight. The number was later increased to one hundred and fifty, which is about the maximum that can be accommodated within the programme.[87]

The group of Baha'is on pilgrimage stay at local hotels in Haifa, and Baha'i guides who can speak Persian, English, German or French take the pilgrims by bus to the holy places. During the nine days, the pilgrims visit the Shrine of Baha'u'llah and the Shrine of the Bab, and they are shown most of the other historic buildings and monuments that are important to their faith. In the International Baha'i Archives building, the pilgrims see the portraits of the Bab and of Baha'u'llah, one of the highlights of the pilgrimage. The pilgrims also visit the many places in and around Akko that are connected with the lives of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha.[88] However, they are discouraged from exploring Akko on their own; the explanation is that part of the population there (descendants of Muhammad-Ali and certain Arab groups) is hostile to the Baha'is.[89]

In the evenings, the pilgrims gather in the Pilgrim House near the Shrine of the Bab. Here, they listen to talks given by a member of the Universal House of Justice, by a member of the International Teaching Centre, or by one of the Hands of the Cause. The talks are held in English and cover subjects such as teaching (mission), mass teaching, consolidation, consultation and assembly behaviour.

An important event during the pilgrimage is the "pilgrimage tea", which occurs on the second day of the pilgrimage after the pilgrims have paid their first visit to the Shrine of Baha'u'llah in the morning. The pilgrims meet at 3:30 p.m. in the central reception hall in the seat of the Universal House of Justice, and have tea and socialise

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[86] Much of the information on the pilgrimage is based on my notes from my fieldwork at the Baha'i World Centre in 1987 and in 1988–89. This includes a booklet with the official programme for the pilgrims and other information: *Program of Pilgrimage and other useful information*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, n.d. (BWC). The programme of pilgrimage has essentially remained the same since then.

[87] *The Bahá'í World 1999–2000*, p. 40.

[88] "Program of Pilgrimage and other useful information", Baha'i World Centre [n.d.].

[89] The Universal House of Justice to Baha'i World Centre staff, 16 October 1986. (BWC).

among themselves for about 25 minutes.[90] Then the tables are cleared
and the staff who helped serve the tea leave the room. At 4:00 p.m.,
the members of the Universal House of Justice arrive and are seated
at a podium at one end of the room. After opening prayers in English
and Persian, one of the house members speaks to the pilgrims. He
welcomes them on behalf of the Universal House of Justice and
speaks for ten to twenty minutes about the significance of Baha'i pil-
grimage. After a closing prayer, all the members of the Universal
House of Justice descend from the podium and mingle with the pil-
grims seeking to greet each individual. This part of the ceremony
can be seen as a symbol of the principle that when the nine men
of the Universal House of Justice are convened sitting apart from
other people, they are a holy body, but as individuals they are ordi-
nary men, shaking hands with the pilgrims. The entire ceremony is
over before 5:00 p.m., and the pilgrims leave the room, exiting the
building through the ceremonial entrance.

On the last evening of the pilgrims' programme, they meet once
more in the Pilgrim House, but this time not to listen to a talk.
Most of the house members and their wives, most of the members
of the International Teaching Centre and their spouses, and many
staff members are present. The Pilgrim House is situated next to the
illuminated Shrine of the Bab, and on this evening the shrine is
open on two sides to make room for the many visitors. Slowly and
in a dignified manner everybody walks up to the shrine, takes off
their shoes and prays. One of the members of the Universal House
of Justice recites or chants a prayer.[91]

The Significance of the Baha'i Pilgrimage

The Baha'i Pilgrimage is an *exclusive* experience, because only Baha'is
are allowed as participants (accompanying non-Baha'i spouses or chil-
dren are allowed, however, to participate in part of the pilgrimage).
This obviously strengthens the Baha'i global *Gemeinschaft*, because
when on the pilgrimage, one is a part of a large, diverse group of
people from many different countries, and all of these people are

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[90] The description of the pilgrimage tea is based on several of my own partici-
pation studies in 1988–89 and corroborated by information contained in a message
from David Piff. David Piff to Margit Warburg, e-mail, 6 June 1997. (Unpublished).
[91] The description is based on my own participatory study.

Baha'is. During the pilgrimage, people, who had not known each other before, become close and share experiences that they all know are central to being a Baha'i. During the pilgrimage, the pilgrims have a chance to *see* the very important historical places that they have read about. To see Baha'u'llah's cell in the jail where he lived for two years, to see his slippers beside his bed, is to realise that he did exist, to feel the truth in the writings, and to see that the religion is true.

The pilgrimage links crucial events of Baha'i history with concrete places in the cities of Akko and Haifa to instil in the pilgrims a common recollection, a "landscape of urban memory".[92] This landscape of urban memory is shared by Baha'is who have been on the pilgrimage and shared again with other Baha'is when pilgrims return to their home communities:

> When one is here as a pilgrim, one is trying to see what they do here in order to take it home and do likewise. Here, I have seen how much work they put into everything and how much they beautify everything around them.[93]

This may also explain what one Baha'i told me about her experience as a pilgrim: "I felt that this was home."[94]

However, the exchange of impressions works both ways, because the pilgrimage also brings the staff of the Baha'i World Centre closer to Baha'is elsewhere. This was already realised by Shoghi Effendi when he talked about the "flow of pilgrims that constitutes the life-blood of that center".[95] The staff is encouraged to socialise with the pilgrims in the Pilgrim House at the evening talks. Before a new group of pilgrims arrives, the staff can check the list of names of the pilgrims and see if they know any of them—this is once more a way of strengthening global *Gemeinschaft*. Especially the younger staff members working temporarily at the Baha'i World Centre often participate in these evenings and meet the pilgrims. When I was in

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[92] Smitri Srinivas, *Landscapes of Urban Memory. The Sacred and the Civic in India's High-Tech City*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2001, pp. xxv–xxvi, pp. 27–35, pp. 245–252.

[93] Interview with a Baha'i pilgrim from Greenland, 28 December 1988.

[94] Interview with an English woman in her early sixties, who was a participant in the Baha'i World Congress in New York, 23 November 1992.

[95] Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, New Delhi, Baha'i Publishing Trust, [1968], p. 4.

Haifa, I often counted 30–40 staff members out of approximately 100 persons listening to the talks, which typically took about one hour, including questions. However, the staff are discouraged from taking the pilgrims sight-seeing or to private social arrangements, thereby risking a disturbance of the pilgrims' programme and their concentration on the pilgrimage.[96] The staff are also instructed not to discuss their work at the Baha'i World Centre with the pilgrims.[97]

Working at the Baha'i World Centre

Most religious organisations are able to mobilise resources of skills and labour by appealing to the solidarity and religious sentiments of their believers, and the Baha'is are no exception to this. The people working at the Baha'i World Centre are all Baha'is (except some of the manual workers, who are paid locals), and they live and work quite isolated from Israeli society at large. The Baha'i group at the Baha'i World Centre constitutes a closed community, which also exhibits some utopian-communal ideals, similar to a convent or other religious commune. For example, the staff members serve a common cause, they do not receive a salary, but only a modest allowance, and the Baha'i World Centre provides them with almost all their necessities: housing, food, laundering, insurance, entertainment, even auto repairs and car washing. While working at the Baha'i World Centre, they do not receive private mail at their home addresses; all mail, even family letters, is sent to: Baha'i World Centre, P.O. Box 155, Haifa. To work at the Baha'i World Centre is not like any ordinary work, because it is *also* considered a religious service. It means that "you must leave your ego at the airport," as expressed by a former staff member, who obviously understood that work at the Baha'i World Centre implies a separation from ordinary life.[98]

In most ways, however, the staff is occupied with the usual administrative tasks associated with any headquarters of an international organisation. In my opinion, this combination of communal ideals

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[96] The Universal House of Justice to Baha'i World Centre staff, 16 October 1986. (BWC).

[97] The Universal House of Justice to Baha'i World Centre staff, 16 October 1986. (BWC).

[98] Interview with a former staff member, 23 November 1992, New York.

and modern effective administration in general is interesting in the study of religious organisations, and I also find that it is important for understanding the strong position of the Baha'i World Centre in the Administrative Order.

Senior Staff Recruitment

In the days of Shoghi Effendi and the first years of the leadership of the Universal House of Justice, the administrative headquarters was at Haparsim No. 10, which was a workplace of moderate size. I have heard that in those years, the Baha'i World Centre was characterised as a place of retirement for old Baha'is, everybody knew each other, and most of the staff were single Baha'is who had some means of their own. To be asked to work in Israel was a kind of favour. However, with the completion of the seat of the Universal House of Justice in 1983, more staff were needed, and in particular more professionals were needed. As a result of more systematic recruitment, the number of staff rapidly increased from about 216 in 1981 to about 444 in 1988.[99] The growth has continued at a slightly slower pace since then, reaching about eight hundred by 2001, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter.

Many staff members are recruited through the personal network of present or former staff members. Other staff members, in particular professionals and young volunteers, might respond to an announcement in a Baha'i periodical. For example, in *The American Bahá'í*, there are always a number of positions open to Baha'is, either at the Baha'i World Centre or at the American Baha'i National Center in Wilmette, that are advertised. The American Baha'i National Center is a workplace of considerable size, with about 100–150 full-time employees, including many potential, qualified volunteers for the Baha'i World Centre. However, the centre in Wilmette is a very different type of workplace, because the people working there get an ordinary salary and are part of the society around them. It is common that members of the Baha'i World Centre staff have worked in Wilmette before, and many have been full-time pioneers in their own country, or in other countries.[100]

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[99] *Annual Report 1 May 1987 to 30 April 1988*, Administrative Development Office, 10 July 1988. (BWC).

[100] Piff, *Bahá'í Lore*, p. 5.

Table 10.1. *National background of Baha'i World Centre staff, 1988*[a]

Geographical area	Number	Per cent of staff	Per cent of Baha'is of the world[b]
Iran	80	28%	6%
USA	20	42%	2%
Canada	21	7%	<$\frac{1}{2}$%
United Kingdom	26	9%	<$\frac{1}{2}$%
Other English-speaking countries	18	6%	
Total English-speaking	185	65%	
Continental Europe	13	5%	<1%
Non-Western countries	5	2%	>90%
Total	283	100%	

[a] Based on the number of holders of Israeli visa permitting residence for more than 18 months. Listing of *A3/A4 Visa Holders at the Bahá'í World Centre*, 4 December 1988 (Ministry of Religious Affairs, Religious Community Section, Haifa).
[b] Estimated percentage of Baha'is out of the total Baha'i population in the world. The data are adapted from Peter Smith and Moojan Momen, "The Baha'i Faith 1957–1986: A Survey of Contemporary Developments", *Religion*, vol. 19, 1989, pp. 63–91.

Information about service at the Baha'i World Centre is also often given at Baha'i conferences. I joined such a recruitment meeting in New York at the second Baha'i World Congress on 23 November 1992, where 30,000 Baha'is participated. Among other things, I noticed that the rules for working in Haifa had not changed from the time when I did my fieldwork.

Applicants for a position at the Baha'i World Centre must get a medical examination, and since they do not receive an ordinary salary, they must negotiate an agreement with the Baha'i World Centre on the payment of any mortgages or other debts. Some sell their houses before moving to Haifa. Most of the positions are temporary, and usually a period from 6 months to 2.5 years is agreed upon. It is possible to apply for extensions, and some of the staff members have lived and worked at the Baha'i World Centre nearly all their working lives.

Table 10.1 shows the national backgrounds of the senior staff who were working at the Baha'i World Centre when I was doing my field studies there. In 1988, the senior staff was almost exclusively recruited from among Iranian Baha'is and Baha'is from English-speaking countries, in particular the USA. The same pattern is seen among the members of the Universal House of Justice: all past and present

members of the Universal House of Justice have been either Iranians or from an English-speaking country.[101]

It is striking how skewed the distribution of nationalities is, in comparison with the Baha'i population at large. The pattern of recruitment, however, reflects the two cultural and religious traditions that have dominated the history of Baha'i in the twentieth century, and they blend into the particular Baha'i culture at the Baha'i World Centre. This culture is disseminated to other Baha'is through the renewal of staff members and by the thousands of pilgrims, and it is a main source for the Baha'i culture among the elite Baha'is, cf. Chapter 8.

Some of the Iranian staff are traditionally conservative, as the following account illustrates. Once, a group of young Baha'is held a party in their living quarters in downtown Haifa. They played their music rather loudly, but the windows were closed so passers-by would not be bothered. Nevertheless, some of the conservative Iranians heard the music and complained to a particular house member, who is said to support the view that even the most conservative member of the Baha'i World Centre staff should feel comfortable. The young people were then told that they should behave themselves as Baha'is in Haifa, and it was not proper to play such loud music, because with all the hardships the Baha'is had suffered in Iran, the Baha'i community was a "community of mourning".

Junior Staff and Labourers

A special group of staff members at the Baha'i World Centre is comprised of young adults. It is quite common among devoted young Baha'is to work for twelve months at the Baha'i World Centre.[102] Many of them have just graduated from high school and after this year of service they go directly to college, but the friendship and spiritual contacts gained in Haifa may last for the rest of their lives. These youths make up a group of around 150 persons from many different countries, and they have an internal newsletter at the Baha'i

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[101] Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 347–348. Smith notes that 16 men altogether have served, of these there were 5 Iranians, 7 Americans, 2 British, 1 Canadian and 1 Australian.

[102] This is one way of giving a "year of service" to the Baha'i cause. Such volunteer service for youths is also very common among other organised minority religions, like the Mormons or the many Protestant free churches of Europe.

World Centre called *Youth Newsletter*. Most of them are assigned to work as cleaners, gardeners, maintenance workers, security staff, internal postmen, or as other unskilled labourers, but there are also some who have qualifications to fill skilled positions.

Not unexpectedly, this period away from home often leads to love and marriage, indeed to such a degree that there is a saying among the young people that the reason for coming to Haifa is to get married.[103] When noting this, I do not wish to convey any impression that the atmosphere is that of happy communal love! The Baha'i laws allow parents to influence the choice of their children's spouses (they have to give their consent to marriages), and as with many other religions, the Baha'i laws also indirectly favour early marriage by prescribing that sexual activity must take place only within the framework of heterosexual matrimony.[104] Baha'i parents, of course, are well aware of this, and they encourage their adult children to go to the Baha'i World Centre both to strengthen their Baha'i identity, but also maybe with the ulterior motive of getting suitable spouses for them.[105]

A third category of staff includes the local workers. They mostly perform manual labour in the gardens and in building maintenance, and they are hired to make up for the shortage of Baha'is volunteering their labour for manual jobs, or because they have special skills. There are between fifty and one hundred people in these types of positions. The majority are Israeli Arabs, while some Israeli Jews and Druzes are hired as security guards. The Arab gardeners work side by side with the young Baha'i volunteers, but there is not much contact between the Arab workers and the youths coming from all over the world. A major reason is, of course, that they normally do not speak a common language.

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[103] I was also told about young Baha'is who wanted to work in Haifa, but who did not apply, because they were afraid that their Baha'i friends at home would think that they wanted to get married!

[104] Baha'u'llah, *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, p. 26, p. 181.

[105] This is also the situation for many other religious minorities; in the home country, the selection of potential partners for marriage is often quite limited, and to send youth to locations abroad, with this issue in mind, is a common practice, for example among European orthodox Jews.

Working Conditions

None of the Baha'i staff, not even the senior staff, gets an ordinary salary graduated according to job descriptions. Instead, everybody gets an allowance that is determined by standard objective evaluations of costs and needs. When I stayed at the Baha'i World Centre, short-term staff received a general allowance of USD 90 (EUR 90) per month.[106] Staff with long-term agreements received a lower general allowance, USD 75 per month, but in return they were given USD 60 per month for clothing and USD 150 per month for vacations. In addition, they were given tickets for one trip per year to their home countries. Senior staff were provided with a car, including fuel. Meals eaten at the cafeteria in the Baha'i World Centre are free; all other household expenses are refunded every fortnight when receipts are submitted. I was told that in 1988 the average household expenses for individual staff members was USD 2,000 per year. Housing, insurance and school fees for children are provided for and paid separately by the Baha'i World Centre.[107] A typical flat for a family with children has three or four rooms, with a kitchen and a bath; such a flat might also be shared by four young Baha'is. The Baha'is own quite a few residential houses and about 300 flats, so the Baha'i World Centre is a major real estate owner in Haifa.

Most of daily commodities can be obtained at reasonable prices from an internal store located in the basement of the seat of the Universal House of Justice. Purchases are not paid for in cash, but instead are registered as household expenses. The Baha'i World Centre owns some orchards outside Haifa, where mangoes, oranges, tangerines, grapefruits, avocados etc. are grown, and this fruit is simply placed outside the "shop" so that everybody can take what they need. Like in other utopian communities, one gets the feeling of self-sufficiency.

The Baha'is live modestly, but they are not poor. As discussed above, nearly all the staff members come from Western countries or from Iran, they are often well educated and they must know English.[108]

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[106] The amounts given are 1988 figures; it was not possible to get more recent figures.

[107] Some of the older Baha'i children go to an international school in Tel Aviv. If parents send their children to college, for example, in the USA, the tuition fees for undergraduate studies are also paid by the Baha'i World Centre.

[108] Piff, *Bahá'í Lore*, p. 5.

Most of the staff thus represents the middle class, and by and large, their standard of living does not differ much from what they are used to at home.

A formalised pension arrangement for retired staff members does not exist, but I was told that nobody would be without help if they have worked there for many years. Until now, it has been settled from case to case.

The members of the Universal House of Justice share working conditions with the rest of the staff, and they deliberately stress this in different ways. Their wives work; they stand in line for lunch at the cafeteria like any other staff member, and sit at the same tables; all in all they behave modestly and live modest daily lives. Although their houses are somewhat bigger and are located in a wealthier neighbourhood than those provided for the rest of the staff members, they do not live better than most university professors, for example.[109] There is no extravagant spending among the Baha'i leadership.

Officially, everybody works on weekdays, which in Israel includes Sunday through Thursday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30, and Friday a half a day, including a 1.5 hour lunch break and two coffee breaks. However, most of the staff work more than these 44 hours per week. I rarely saw anyone prolong a break, but it was quite common to see people extend their workdays. The atmosphere in the Baha'i World Centre reflects the fact that everybody can always work a little more, and that they are happy to do so. Quite often, e-mails are sent out looking for volunteers to do extra jobs: bake a cake, help in the cafeteria during lunch, help in the household store or at the switchboard. Staff may also be summoned outside their normal working hours. This happened, for example, to a young Danish woman who was asked on her day off to come to the seat to serve tea for a Danish Baha'i guest.

My general impression was that work at the Baha'i World Centre was well organised, and to my knowledge there were few misunderstandings, high job satisfaction and sufficient internal information sharing. There was, however, more work than the staff could really accomplish. The reason for this was first of all that the Baha'i World Centre was clearly understaffed. For instance, there was only one

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[109] I have dined twice in the home of one of the house members, so I have seen the homes for myself.

person who kept track of all the pilgrims in the pilgrimage season. She told me that she could use at least one more person to help her with the task, and that if she had been working for a private company, she would have quit two weeks after she started. She suggested that in any other job she would call it exploitation. Another example concerns the world conference at the Baha'i World Centre in April 1988; there were 800 participants from abroad, but no extra help was hired, before, during or after the conference.

Everyday Life

The daily life of the staff is filled with work, and in their spare time they socialise with each other. Dining with other staff members' families is common, and people also invite each other to weddings and other important events. In the pilgrimage season, there are lectures every night, and during the weekends there are joint picnics or excursions to places nearby in Israel. People also sometimes gather for a deepening. The staff does not have nineteen day feasts, but the holy days are celebrated, and the availability of the shrines makes holy days very special. An example is described below.

Abdu'l-Baha died 28 November 1921 at around 1:00 a.m., and the Ascension of Abdu'l-Baha is therefore commemorated at that hour.[110] The following is my impression of how this holy day was observed at the Baha'i World Centre in 1988.

> Early in the evening on 27 November, the Baha'is stood in long lines waiting outside Abdu'l-Baha's house at Haparsim 7, in order to enter and see the bedroom in which he died, look at his bed, meditate, pray and leave again.
>
> At 11:30 p.m., the ceremony started at the seat of the Universal House of Justice. Pilgrims, staff members and spouses were gathered there, all together around 600 people dressed in dark clothing. They all entered the building by the ceremonial entrance, which is usually closed. Inside, everybody was seated in comfortable chairs in the big reception hall. After a while, Ruhiyyih Khanum entered the room accompanied by the house member who was chairman of the Universal House of Justice that week. As always, when she enters any room everybody rises. The two of them sat facing all the others present.
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> A committee had arranged a session with prayers and chanting in English, Arabic and Persian. After this session, all 600 people walked

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[110] Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp. 245–247.

out into the garden, down the mountain through a wrought-iron gate
that is normally locked, but was open that night, crossed Hatzionut
Avenue and went by a path lined with palm trees to the Shrine of
the Bab. The shrine is normally closed during the night, and it is only
illuminated in the evening, not at midnight. However, on this night
the doors were opened to both the vault of the Bab and the vault of
Abdu'l-Baha. The vaults were candle-lit, and the shrine with its golden
dome was illuminated from the outside. Many Iranian Baha'is cried
and prostrated themselves at the threshold to the shrine. The cere-
mony concluded with prayers, of which one was said by Ruhiyyih
Rabbani, and then everybody went quietly home.

The Internal Baha'i World Centre Organisation

The Universal House of Justice could not fulfil its duty of being the
highest religious authority without being assisted by an efficient
organisation to handle the paperwork involved. During my fieldwork,
I experienced considerable openness and few restrictions with respect
to exploring the organisation and understanding how it functioned.
This was done informally, because I was not able to obtain any
organisational chart of the Baha'i World Centre organisation, nor is
such a chart available to the Baha'is outside the Baha'i World Centre.
As mentioned, the staff is specifically instructed not to volunteer
information to the pilgrims about the operation of the offices.[111]
Maybe it is felt that this might lead to an *Entzauberung* of the religious
authority of the Universal House of Justice, to use Max Weber's
term.

On the basis of numerous enquiries and discussions during and
after my fieldwork, and by consulting many internal documents—
including the phone list, of course—I have drawn the organisational
chart displayed in Figure 10.2, which I believe represents the essen-
tial nature of the organisation as it functions today. The chart is not
exhaustive, and the number and names of committees and depart-
ments change with time, but its principal structure is accurate, to
the best of my knowledge.

The diagram can be viewed as an expansion of the upper central
part of the organisational diagram shown in Figure 5.3, named "The

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[111] The Universal House of Justice to all World Centre Friends, 16 October 1988.
(BWC).

Figure 10.2. *The Baha'i World Centre organisation*
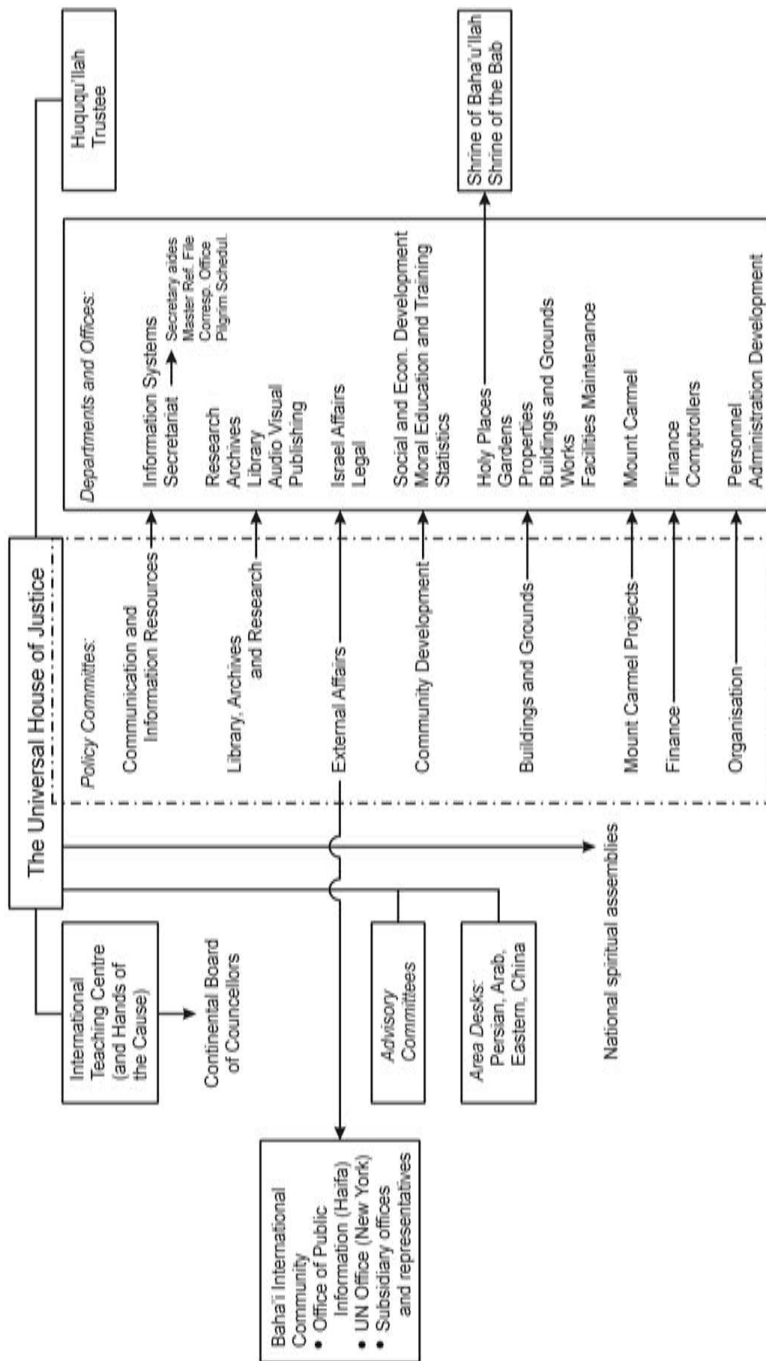
Baha'i Administrative Order and Associated Institutions". The diagram depicts the administration, which directly supports the Universal House of Justice, and the institutions and holy places for which the Universal House of Justice is directly responsible. These include the Baha'i International Community (which has an Office of Public Information at the Baha'i World Centre), the International Teaching Centre, the Huququ'llah Trustee, and the holy places of the Haifa-Akko area.

The nine members of the Universal House of Justice do not work like the top managers of a traditional hierarchical organisation, each having a line of staff to supervise. They do have individual areas of responsibility, but many decisions of a principal character are channelled through "policy committees" (shown in the big dotted box in the organisation chart, Figure 10.2). These committees normally consist of three members of the Universal House of Justice, with one member serving as a convenor. The committees are superior to the departmental co-ordinators, who manage the different departments or sub-departments at the Baha'i World Centre, cf. Figure 10.2. However, there are many practical decisions that involve several departments but do not require the presence of a policy committee. "Management committees" led by the departmental co-ordinators usually handle such issues.[112] For example, the co-ordinators representing Library, Archives, and Research sometimes meet with the senior archivist and the senior librarian to discuss subjects of mutual professional interest.

The Work Day of the Universal House of Justice

The Universal House of Justice assembles three days a week in the Council Chamber, usually Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. In principle, all nine members need to be present to reach decisions, but a quorum of less than nine is allowed for certain (unspecified) categories of business.[113] The agenda is not widely published, and I was not allowed to see it during my fieldwork. The chairmanship of the group changes every week, and this principle of rotation applies also to the chairmanship of holy day observances and the weekly morning meetings for prayers and announcements to the staff.

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[112] The management committees are not shown in Figure 10.2.
[113] *The Baha'i World* 1979–1983, p. 458.

Apart from participating in meetings, the individual house members prepare and read documents, and they give talks to the pilgrims and to staff members. The position also involves some travel. Most of the house members work at least 50 hours a week.[114]

Secretariat

Even in cases when individual members of the Universal House of Justice make decisions, they do so using material prepared by the relevant departments. The secretariat evidently plays an essential role in this process. Each member of the Universal House of Justice has a personal secretary aide, and she or he may have assistants. These secretary aides, six of whom were women and three were men in 1988, are as trained, competent, discreet and intelligent as one would expect any top secretary to be. Their main responsibility is also the same: they analyse incoming letters to determine who amongst the house members should handle the letter, and they often make a draft of the reply. The Department of the Secretariat also includes the Correspondence Office, where letters are drafted, proofread, copied, put in envelopes and mailed. Incoming and outgoing mail is registered in the Master Reference File.

Library, Archives and Research

The three departments of Library, Archives and Research have a particularly central function when the Universal House of Justice gives its individual or collective guidance to the Baha'i world, and they are therefore described briefly.[115]

The Baha'i World Centre Library is expected to collect whatever has been published on Baha'i, in all languages, and this goal has been pursued competently and diligently. The library is simply the best in the world for any student of Baha'i. When I was studying there, the library held 55,000 books (many of them duplicates or translations of the same book, however) and 400 journals (almost all of them internal Baha'i periodicals). In 1990, the library spent USD

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[114] Interview with three members of the Universal House of Justice: Ian Semple, 8 January 1989, Glenford Mitchell, 11 January 1989, and Hushmand Fathe-Azam, 12 January 1989.

[115] The description is largely based on my field work notes and interviews with the senior staff during and after my field work.

100,000 acquiring books and pamphlets, mostly by non-Baha'i authors, since Baha'i authors routinely donate copies of their books to the library. The head librarian estimated that if they had to pay for them instead, their worth would be at least USD 200,000.[116] Ideally, twelve persons work at the library, among these five librarians. Apart from collecting and filing published material on Baha'i, the library also provides information from this material to the Universal House of Justice, the International Teaching Centre, and other Baha'i World Centre departments.[117]

The primary task of the Research Department is to provide the Universal House of Justice with thoroughly researched material that elucidates specific doctrinal questions that arise. In the late 1980s, the Research Department received around 400 letters per year with questions from individual Baha'is or institutions on particular Baha'i matters. To assist in the handling of these questions, the department has established a computerised database containing all outgoing letters, dating back to Abdu'l-Baha. Shoghi Effendi (or his secretaries) alone wrote about 20,000 letters, so it is no trivial task to search for and ascertain consistency in doctrinal issues. Only the staff of the Research Department has access to these letters, and if anyone else wants to read any of them, they must submit a reasoned application. The applicant might then receive an edited excerpt of that particular letter, in which, for example, names would be erased to preserve anonymity. The department also researches material that is used by the Universal House of Justice for their regular messages, and it assists in producing translations and compilations on various topics. The staff is professional and several of the staff members have PhDs from Western universities.

The Archives Department is situated in the Archives Extension adjacent to the International Archives building and has custody of the original scriptures. In 1988, the department was staffed with twelve persons, of which half knew Persian and Arabic, the other half only English. Their goal is to make a computer-based inventory of the more than two hundred thousand pieces of written material, and to transcribe the material so as to make it accessible by

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[116] Interview with former Head Librarian William Collins, 24 November 1992.
[117] Interview with former Head Librarian William Collins, 24 November 1992.

computer. The prime client of the Archives is the Research Department, and as in the Library and Research departments, the staff is highly professional.[118]

An Example of an Administrative Case

In order to clarify the work involved in the guidance that the Universal House of Justice provides for individual Baha'is, one of the staff members and I created the following fictional example (the names of those involved are the members of the Universal House of Justice elected for the period 1988–1993):

> An American Baha'i sends a letter to the Universal House of Justice. He writes that he would like to be a pioneer in Denmark, and on his way to Denmark he wants to do some travel teaching in India. Furthermore, he has a question about Native Americans' prophecies. He thinks that some of them have been fulfilled with Baha'i. Lastly, he donates a book to the World Centre.
>   The letter arrives in the mailroom, and it is sent to the Master Reference File where it is indexed and analysed to determine the right person/persons for handling the letter. In this case, the right person is Mr. Mitchell, because the writer is an American, and Mr. Mitchell is responsible for North America. Mr. Mitchell therefore gets a yellow action copy. On this copy, it is shown who else has gotten a copy of the letter. Since the individual wants to go to Denmark, Mr. Semple will get a copy, and as he furthermore wants to go travel teaching in India, Mr. Fathe-Azam gets a copy. The Research Department also gets a copy because they must answer the question about the Native Americans' prophecies. The Library gets the book. Everyone mentioned, except Mr. Mitchell, gets a white copy. All those involved can ask to see the book. Everybody who should comment on the letter or answer questions does so, and they send their answer to Mr. Mitchell. In this case, Mr. Semple will probably say that it sounds like a good idea for him to go to Denmark. Mr. Fathe-Azam might agree that the American should become a travelling teacher, but he might also recommend that the American go to Uttar Pradesh. Mr. Mitchell, however, has the final responsibility for the letter of response. He (or his secretary) writes the letter and Mr. Mitchell's secretary signs the letter on behalf of the Universal House of Justice.[119]

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[118] Information provided through interviews and correspondence with Head Archivist David Piff in the period 1988–2000.
[119] Interview with a staff member, 21 December 1988.

Other Departments

The policy committee of External Affairs supervises among other things the Baha'i International Community Agency. This non-governmental organisation (NGO) is recognised by the United Nations and is the official face of the Baha'i organisation in all external relations with the world system of societies, cf. also Chapter 5. This agency is described in Chapter 11.

As the name implies, Social and Economical Development is responsible for the Baha'i development projects around the world. These are exemplified and discussed in Chapter 11, as well. The Department of Statistics collects and analyses among other things the data reported annually from the national spiritual assemblies, cf. Chapter 5 and Chapter 9.

The 60 member staff of the Office of Holy Places maintains the two shrines and other holy places in the Haifa-Akko area, and they assist when pilgrims visit these places. Thus, it is their job to see that the Baha'i pilgrims have a unique religious experience undisturbed by mundane organisational problems.

Seventy local workers and 30 Baha'i volunteers work in the Department of the Gardens.[120] The gardens belonging to the Baha'is in Israel cover a vast area, more than 500,000 m², with 5,000 cypresses, 35,000 geraniums, 8 km of hedges, and about 100 km of irrigation pipelines; these figures are from 1988 and do not include the axis of the Shrine of the Bab. The three main areas are the gardens on the slope of Mount Carmel, with the terraces along the axis of the Shrine of the Bab, the garden of the administrative buildings of the Baha'i World Centre, and the monuments and the garden of Bahji. The gardeners also attend the small garden near Bahji called Ridvan, and they take care of the five Baha'i cemeteries situated in Haifa, Akko, Ein Gedi, Jerusalem and Eilat.

The remaining departments in the Baha'i World Centre administration are concerned with functions that do not essentially differ from their counterparts in any big organisation. They therefore are not described further.

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[120] I have noticed that when the gardeners work near the seat of the Universal House of Justice, they are dressed unusually neatly for gardeners, and they always wear shirts, even in the summer.

Relations with the Outside Israeli Society

For the Baha'is, the Baha'i World Centre, with its associated institutions, is first and foremost the international religious and administrative headquarters of the religion, and the fact that it is situated in the State of Israel is a consequence of historical events. In some respects, Israel is a non-state to the Baha'is, because Israel is the only country in the world for which the Baha'i leadership has decided that no national Baha'i community must be formed.[121] So, there are no Israeli Baha'is living in Israel, and the Baha'is abstain from proselytising in Israel. The Baha'i staff and their families are also not permitted by the Israeli authorities to do paid work in Israel (according to their visas, the staff are considered to be foreign "priests").

The special position of Israel for the Baha'is indicates an emphasis on the universality of the Baha'i World Centre vis-à-vis the Baha'i communities all over the world. It may be seen as a Baha'i parallel to the special position of Washington D.C. as a federal district different from the other 50 states of the USA.

Official Relations

The Haifa office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs administers the official relationship between the Israeli authorities and the Baha'i World Centre.[122] This relationship is regulated in an agreement from 1987, which extends previous practice.[123] Its principles were laid down earlier, during the time of the British Mandate, and they were confirmed by Prime Minister Golda Meir in 1971.[124] Such an agreement is very important for the Baha'is, not only because it means that Baha'i holy places are granted the protection given to places of worship in Israel, but also for economic reasons.

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[121] The staff at the Baha'i World Centre are not recognised as belonging to an ordinary Baha'i community; they do not elect a local spiritual assembly, and they do not celebrate nineteen day feasts. Holy days are commemorated, of course.

[122] Interview with Dalia Yenon, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Religious Community Section, Haifa, 27 December 1988.

[123] Shimon Peres, Vice Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Donald M. Barrett, Secretary-General of the Baha'i World Community (transl. from Hebrew), 9 April 1987. Ministry of Religious Affairs, Religious Community Section, Haifa, file 0304487/02–031.

[124] Amatu'l Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum, "Service at the World Centre"; interview with Dahlia Yenon, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Religious Community Section, Haifa, 27 December 1988.

As part of the agreement, the Baha'i World Centre has submit-
ted a summary of the planned investment programme for the con-
struction of the buildings in the Arc and the terraces of the Shrine
of the Bab and for renovations and beautification of other Baha'i
property in Haifa and Akko. Including the ongoing costs of the
Baha'i World Centre operations, the total sum was estimated to be
USD 166 million for the ten-year period 1988–1997. Because of its
positive effect on tourism, this investment programme was classified
by the Israeli government as an "Approved Project", which entitled
it to be exempt from customs and VAT. These benefits amounted
to 18.8% of the money invested. In addition, the Israeli government
noted that the Baha'i World Centre pays one third of the normal
municipal taxes and found this to be a satisfactory arrangement.

The economic benefits that Israel derives from the presence of the
Baha'is are indeed substantial, because the Baha'i shrines and gardens
are a general asset to the city of Haifa, attracting 250,000 visitors per
year at the time of the signing of the contract in 1987. With the com-
pletion of the gardens, the number of tourists visiting Haifa was expected
to rise to 1.2 million a year, but the general decrease in Israeli tourism
starting around 2000 probably makes this figure too optimistic.

The Haifa office of Ministry of Religious Affairs confirmed that
they were very satisfied with the Baha'i mission policy in Israel, so
this undoubtedly contributes to the smooth relationship with the
Israeli government. This positive relationship has also been confirmed
when Israeli prime ministers have made official visits to the Baha'i
World Centre; for example, Yitzhak Rabin did so on 13 June 1994.
Another token of the amiable relationship is that in 1993 the Israeli
post office issued a stamp bearing the seat of the Universal House
of Justice. Another stamp was issued in connection with the open-
ing of the terraces in 2001.[125] See Photo 9—*Israeli stamp bearing the
seat of the Universal House of Justice*.

Unofficial Relations

The local Israelis and the staff of the Baha'i World Centre have lit-
tle contact with each other. Even the staff members who have lived
in the country for many years usually do not speak Hebrew or

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[125] *The Bahá'í World 2000–2001*, p. 114.

Arabic. It is not necessary for them, because they can get nearly all that they need inside the Baha'i World Centre.

Mothers with small children are the general exception to this insulation from the Israeli society. They are married to staff members, but usually do not work at the Baha'i World Centre, and their children attend the local Jewish or Arabic schools. Another general exception are the Iranian Baha'is with Jewish backgrounds. Some of these staff members have non-Baha'i Jewish relatives who have emigrated to Israel. According to Dr. Amnon Netzer from the Department of Indian, Iranian and Armenian Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, nearly every Iranian Jewish family in the world has some Baha'i relatives.[126]

With respect to looks, the Baha'is can be distinguished from middle class Israelis by the way they dress. The Baha'i men usually wear suits and ties, and are therefore easily distinguishable from most Israeli men, who dress casually. Further, the Baha'i women tend to dress more neatly, elegantly, and conservatively than do Israeli women. So, by Israeli standards, the Baha'is certainly overdress, in particular the men, but it must be admitted that overdressing is by no means difficult in Israel!

One of the rare examples of social contact between Baha'i World Centre staff and Israelis is an amateur, English-speaking theatre group in Haifa, consisting mainly of British, American and South African Israelis and English-speaking staff from the Baha'i World Centre. The theatre group puts on a play at least once a year, and the proportion of Baha'i actors must be quite large, considering that the group is known among the locals in Haifa as the "Ba-Haifa Theatre group". Fraternising with the Israelis, however, must not become closer than that. I have heard about one case where a young Baha'i man fell in love with a young Israeli woman and moved into her flat. He was sent home immediately.[127]

However, the general pattern is that both the Baha'is and the local Israelis are quite uninformed about each other. The Baha'is use the expression the "outside world" when referring to the local

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[126] Leora Eren Frucht, "Divine landscape", *Jerusalem Post*, 31 May 2001.

[127] The act was also immoral according to Baha'i standards: couples must not have sex before marriage, so that living together when unmarried is against the Baha'i laws.

Haifa community, and I found them surprisingly disinterested in
Israeli affairs. During my stay, general elections were held in Israel,
and my husband and I often discussed the political situation with
Israeli friends and university colleagues at non-Baha'i social gatherings.
The day after the election, I began a conversation with some Baha'is,
stating innocently, "Well, last night was a long night . . ." The Baha'is
I was speaking with did not understand to what I was referring.

The lack of contact gives rise to some gossip among the Israelis,
although of a more innocent type. For example, because of their
spectacular buildings, the Baha'is are believed to be rich and influential.
An Israeli woman said that "the leaders, who live on Harofe Street
[five members of the Universal House of Justice lived there], are so
influential that they have prevented the noisy bus from driving on
Harofe Street."[128] A local hairdresser whom I interviewed had many
Baha'i customers, but he knew very little about them: "They do not
believe in God. They believe in the beauty in a flower."[129]

Despite the limited contact, the Baha'is are well accepted among
the citizens of Haifa: "The Baha'is are not fanatical. They are polite
and they do nice things for Israel, so that tourists come."[130] A tourist
official felt that their religion was okay: "The religion is about peace,
and I want that too. So it is good that they moved their religious
headquarters from the United States to Israel. But I don't like the
golden dome. It is a hallmark of Haifa, but it is not Jewish."[131] In
the bank, the Baha'is are regarded as the bank's best customers,
because "they never complain."[132] The hairdresser agreed, saying:
"They are very special. Unlike Israelis who tell me that they don't
like the way their hair is done, the Baha'is never complain. They
say thank you, but then they may not come back."[133] The descrip-
tion fits with the Baha'i virtue of courtesy and reluctance to engage
in disputes—the latter is not particularly characteristic of the aver-
age Israeli!

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[128] Interview with an Israeli woman, 7 December 1988.

[129] Interview with an Israeli hairdresser, 10 October 1988.

[130] Interview with an Israeli neighbour to the Baha'is, on Abbas Street, 12
September 1988.

[131] Interview with a staff member from the Ministry of Interiour Affairs, Department
of Tourism, Haifa, 28 December 1988.

[132] Interview with an employee of Bank Leoni, Haifa, 12 September 1988.

[133] Interview with an Israeli hairdresser, 10 October 1988.

The Religious Metropolis

On 10 October 1985, Ruhiyyih Khanum, Shoghi Effendi's widow, gave a speech to the youth at the Baha'i World Centre. In this speech, entitled "Service at the World Centre", she referred to the remains of the Bab and of Baha'u'llah:

> You come here to serve the House of Justice and to serve the World Centre, but your orientation—your compass—must be on those bodies, and of course also the beloved Master, because this is the important thing, this is really why all of us are here, this is why it is the World Centre, this is why we have this building of the Seat of the House of Justice, the heart of the future administration of the planet, everything. Why? *Because of these two Bodies* [Ruhiyyih Khanum's emphasis]. This is the whole point of the thing. This is what we have to never, never forget.
>   And, it must colour your behaviour. . . .[134]

Among other interesting topics, the speech pinpoints the fact that the Shrine of the Bab and the Shrine of Baha'u'llah are the rationale for the establishment of the Baha'i World Centre in Israel. The Baha'i World Centre is therefore more than a headquarter staffed by professionals, it is also something to look up to and in which to find confirmation of faith. The shrines are the very reason why Baha'is come to Haifa on pilgrimage, making the place the focal point of the global Baha'i *Gemeinschaft*. Haifa is also the focal point of the global Baha'i *Gesellschaft*, being the administrative world headquarters of the religion, and the seat of its supreme religious authority. Finally, the Baha'i complex in Israel is a major architectural achievement with its own remarkable aesthetics.

As discussed previously in this chapter, the Baha'i World Centre shares the above characteristics with a few other religious headquarters of the world; the Vatican in Rome and the Mormon complex of buildings in Salt Lake City are the two obvious examples. I would suggest that the term *religious metropolis* seems fitting as a characterisation of all three of these headquarters.

In 1914, Abdu'l-Baha enthusiastically foretold what the Baha'i World Centre and its surroundings eventually might develop into. His fascination with the modern, illuminated city is typical of a time when

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[134] Amatu'l Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum, "Service at the World Centre", p. 5.

modernity and technological innovations, such as electric illumina-
tion, were celebrated:

> In the future the distance between 'Akká and Haifa will be built up,
> and the two cities will join and clasp hands, becoming the two ter-
> minal sections of one mighty metropolis. As I look now over this scene,
> I see so clearly that it will become one of the first emporiums of the
> world. This great semicircular bay will be transformed into the finest
> harbour, wherein the ships of all nations will seek shelter and refuge.
> The great vessels of all peoples will come to this port, bringing on
> their decks thousands and thousands of men and women from every
> part of the globe. The mountain and the plain will be dotted with the
> most modern buildings and palaces. Industries will be established and
> various institutions of philanthropic nature will be founded. The flowers
> of civilization and culture from all nations will be brought here to
> blend their fragrances together and blaze the way for the brotherhood
> of man. Wonderful gardens, orchards, groves and parks will be laid
> out on all sides. At night the great city will be lighted by electricity.
> The entire harbour from 'Akká to Haifa will be one path of illumi-
> nation. Powerful searchlights will be placed on both sides of Mount
> Carmel to guide the steamers. Mount Carmel itself, from top to bot-
> tom, will be submerged in a sea of lights. A person standing on the
> summit of Mount Carmel, and the passengers of the steamers coming
> to it, will look upon the most sublime and majestic spectacle of the
> whole world.[135]

Viewing Mount Carmel by night after the completion of the ter-
races, the Baha'is must be credited with an impressive accomplish-
ment of Abdu'l-Baha's vision of the Baha'i religious metropolis. See
Photo 10—*Mount Carmel by night with the Shrine of the Bab and the terraces.*

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[135] Quoted from Ruhe, *Door of Hope*, p. 135.

BAHA'IS GOING GLOBAL

In 1985, the Universal House of Justice stated in a message to all Baha'is that:

> The time has come for the Baha'i community to become more involved in the life of the society around it.[1]

This represents a new attitude for the Baha'is. As the statement acknowledges, in the beginning of the 1980s, the Baha'is were involved only to a limited extent in society as an organised community. As shown in the course of this chapter, there was a long period, roughly between Abdu'l-Baha's overseas travels before World War I and the 1980s, when the Baha'is were not particularly seeking to influence society. Of course, individual Baha'is could be notable members of society; one example is the internationally respected potter, artist and poet Bernard Leach (1887–1979), who became a Baha'i around 1940.[2] However, as a group, the Baha'is kept a low public profile.

In the present chapter, Baha'i involvement in society is exemplified and discussed. In some cases, the Baha'is have worked on their own, in other cases they have chosen to join forces with other groups and organisations. Like other proselytising groups, the Baha'is have been conscious about the advantages and disadvantages of spending resources on interactions with non-Baha'is in work that does not explicitly serve the Baha'i cause. As shown earlier, the Baha'is have only limited resources at their disposal. They emphasise that their work with non-Baha'is should help to fertilise barren mission fields and/or help gain wider recognition of the Baha'i religion among public decision

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[1] [Universal House of Justice], *A Wider Horizon. Selected Messages of the Universal House of Justice 1983–1992*, Riviera Beach, Palabra Publications, 1992, p. 148.

[2] "Bernard Leach", http://www.studiopottery.com/potters/leachbernard.html. Accessed 29 April 2003; Bernard Leach, *Drawings, Verse & Belief*, Park Ridge, Noyes Press, 1973; Peter Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2000, p. 225.

makers. In this respect, the Baha'is are no different from other pro-
selytising religious groups; they want to increase both their numbers
and their influence in society.

In the dual global field model, Baha'i involvement in society is sym-
bolised by the arrows that connect the inner Baha'i global field with
the outer, general global field. There are three such arrows, and the
involvement represented by these arrows is discussed in this chapter
using illustrative examples from around the world. The first arrow is
located in the upper left corner of the dual global field model (Figure
11.1) and it connects national Baha'i communities with national societies.
An example of this connection is the Baha'i involvement in development
projects, alone or in conjunction with local authorities. These projects
are co-ordinated by Baha'i bodies on the local or national level, and
the role of the Baha'i World Centre is limited to overseeing.

The second arrow connects international Baha'i institutions with
humankind. As discussed in connection with the development of the
dual global field model, "humankind" is not a social actor, so the inter-
action is a one-way process, as symbolised by the arrow pointing only
towards humankind. This one-way process of interacting with human-
kind in general is exemplified by the *masriqu'l-adhkar*, the Baha'i temple
institutions. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Baha'is cultivate
the visibility of their religion through a remarkable religious architecture.
The stairs and terraces of Mount Carmel with the Shrine of the Bab
in the centre are both a manifestation of the Baha'i desire for global
influence and an advertisement of the religion that is hard for any
visitor to Haifa to overlook. Moreover, the architectural showpieces
are not located only in Haifa; the Baha'is have erected seven temples
in other parts of the world, and these temples are likewise, although
on a lesser scale, visible symbols of the Baha'i religion. The temples
are intended to serve as a common location for worship, for Baha'is
and non-Baha'is; therefore, the temples address humankind in general.

The third arrow is located in the upper right corner of the dual
global field, and it connects international Baha'i institutions with the
world system of societies. The process of interaction represented by
this arrow is exemplified by the international activism that is so char-
acteristic of the Baha'is. The Baha'is have allocated much of their
resources to participation in the various *fora* allotted to the non-gov-
ernmental organisations in the United Nations System, and the Baha'i

Figure 11.1. *The Baha'i dual global field model (from Figure 3.2)*
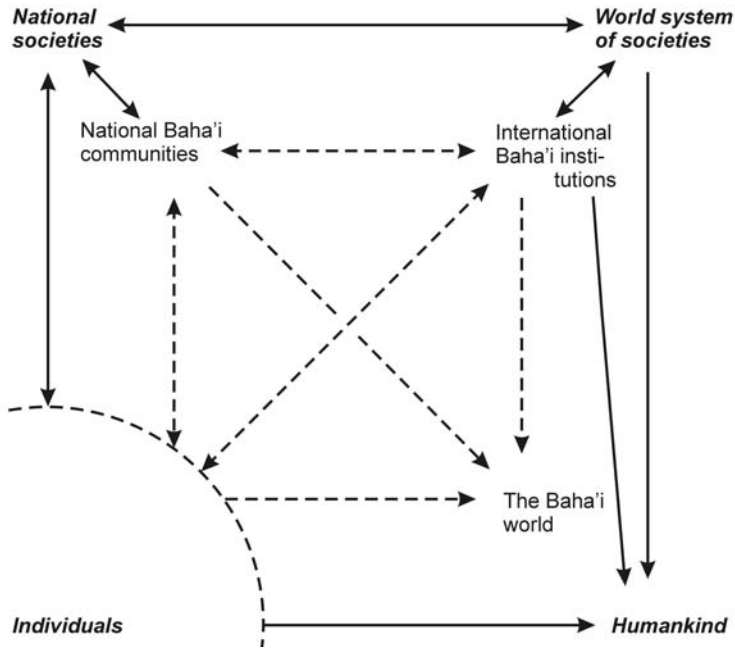
activities within the NGO framework are strongly coordinated with the Baha'i World Centre. Although the Baha'is' ulterior motive for this UN engagement may be proselytising, in many cases the primary tactical objective of these efforts seems to be to gain influence jointly with other NGOs rather than gaining new proselytes.

In the following, these three characteristic and different examples of Baha'i influence on society at large are analysed and discussed in more detail. The first section examines the Baha'i interaction with the national society (upper left corner of the dual global field model), the second examines the Baha'i interaction with humankind (lower right corner), the third examines the Baha'i interaction with the world system of societies (upper right corner). As is the case with the Baha'i World Centre, in general, this area has been investigated only sparingly in the literature up to now. The chapter closes with some considerations on what I have seen as an ideal goal for many Baha'is: To be citizens of the world.

INTERACTING WITH THE NATIONAL SOCIETY:
THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

In 1983, the Universal House of Justice initiated a policy of encouraging Baha'is to engage in social and economic development projects. These activities were aimed at a grassroots level and were seen as a reinforcement of the Baha'i mission.[3] In the same year, Baha'is were encouraged to give service to what were called "voluntary non-sectarian organizations"—a major change from the previous *de facto* policy of discouraging Baha'is from doing so.[4]

The Baha'i involvement in development work is generally like that of their main competitors, the Christian organisations operating in Africa, Asia and Latin America. However, it is evident from my study of the Baha'i development projects that the Baha'is have much fewer resources at their disposal than do most Christian organisations. The majority of Baha'i development projects have been simple, temporary activities, such as tree planting, health camps, and short-term training courses, but also some literacy and other general educational programmes.[5] In 2001, the Baha'is estimated that they were involved in more than 1,800 projects of this kind.[6] Further, there were nearly 400 ongoing projects, mostly schools, but there were also programmes concerning basic health care, immunisation, prevention of drug abuse, protection of the environment and microenterprise. Finally, about 45 Baha'i organisations and educational institutions have acquired the status of development organisations that manage and co-ordinate more complex sets of programmes in a local community or a region.

In the following, I give three examples of Baha'i development projects. The projects represent activities in different countries (Gambia, Uganda and Panama) and are organised in different ways.

A Computer School in Gambia

The first example of a Baha'i development project is the Baha'i computer school, which I visited in Banjul, Gambia in February 1999.

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[3] [Universal House of Justice], *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986. The Third Epoch of the Formative Age*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996, pp. 601–604.

[4] [Universal House of Justice], *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986*, pp. 611–612.

[5] *Report on Bahá'í Development Projects*, October 1987 (Baha'i World Centre, Department of Statistics, Haifa).

[6] *The Bahá'í World 2000–2001*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 2002, pp. 279–280.

It was run by an American Baha'i who was a missionary in Gambia.[7] Through his connections in the USA, he acquired a shipment of outdated but usable computers, and rented a house for the school. He then advertised that anybody with an A-level examination could apply for a free three-month computer course. Completion of the course gave the students greatly improved job qualifications, and it obviously filled a need. It was an immediate success, and the waiting list was long. A young Brazilian Baha'i, who was an electrical engineer, was assisting full-time at the time of my visit. The students used texts from Baha'i writings for some of their computer exercises, and I was told that during the last course, two of the seventy-odd students had converted. This development project sprung from the idea and initiative of one person, and the Gambian government was not involved. The national spiritual assembly of Gambia knew of the project, but it was the local spiritual assembly of Bakau (a suburb to the capital Banjul) that had rented the house and managed the school. See Photo 11—*Interviewing a Baha'i in Banjul, Gambia, February 1999.*

The computer school in Gambia is not the only example of this kind of project. I saw, for example, a sign advertising for a similar school in the outskirts of Kampala, Uganda. See Photo 12—*Sign outside Kampala advertising computer training on the Baha'i Hill in collaboration with the YMCA.*

A Health Care Project in Uganda

In Uganda, I found an example of a more complex project. Here, the Baha'is worked in close collaboration with the government on a health care project in the rural districts of Kumi and Soroti, 250–350 km northeast of Kampala. It was not feasible to visit the project area, so the information instead is based on three sources: a one-and-a-half hour interview with the executive director of the Uganda Baha'i Institute for Development, a detailed evaluation report of the project written by two staff members of the Institute of Public Health at Makarere University, and an article in *One Country*, with statements from key persons and observers of the project.[8]

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[7] Interview with Bob Arrington, 19 February 1999, in Bakau and visit to the Bakau Baha'i Computer Centre, Gambia.

[8] Interview with Brian Burriston, 12 February 2000, at the Baha'i temple in Kampala; Asingwiire Narathius and Fred Ssengooba, *An Evaluation of the Baha'i Health*

The project focussed on the training of personnel for an immunisation programme and instructors who encourage basic hygiene and first aid measures in the villages located in the project area, which is several hundred kilometres across. The project started on a very limited scale, but received a boost in 1993 when the Canadian Public Health Association funded the project with about USD 100,000. The project was then extended to cover twenty-odd parishes, largely in the Kumi district. The Uganda Baha'i Institute for Development organised the programme, including the training of community vaccinators and health workers and the establishment of village health committees. The training programme consisted of a 14-day initial course followed by two three-day brush up courses after three and six months, respectively. Two of the main goals of the project were to achieve sustainability and to get the involvement of both women and men. The government assisted through the District Medical Office, and the local hospital provided vaccines and paid a small allowance to the community vaccinators.

The Institute of Public Health at Makarere University evaluated the project as highly successful with great value for the money. Immunisation coverage increased within a year from 34% to 62%, reaching even distant villages. Sixty-seven volunteer health workers were trained to teach the villagers basic hygiene measures, and this led to a much higher prevalence of improved hygienic measures, such as protection of wells, digging of latrine and garbage pits, and the use of plate racks to avoid contamination of plates and kitchen utensils. According to the evaluation report, the goal of sustainability was largely reached and the far majority of the health workers were still active. Drop-out among them was largely due to external factors, such as the Ugandan government's inability to pay allowances in due time, or husbands of female health care workers who were against their wives' involvement in work outside the home. These kinds of obstacles are well-known in development work. At the time of the interview, fifty of the health workers were still active.[9]

Project. A Consultancy Report, n.p. [Kampala, Makerere University, Department of Social Work and Social Administration], October 1996. (Unpublished); Steve Worth, "In Uganda, community health workers effect long term changes", *One Country*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1999, p. 1, pp. 10–13.

[9] Interview with Brian Burriston, 12 February 2000, at the Baha'i temple in Kampala.

Although the project itself was successful, the director of Uganda Baha'i Institute for Development told me that the Baha'is of Uganda wanted to play down their involvement in social development projects of that kind.[10] They wanted to concentrate more on deepening arrangements for those who had already converted to Baha'i. From this conversation, I got the impression that the Baha'is probably realised that, despite the goodwill gained by such projects, the close involvement with the government impaired the Baha'i mission, and in reality they were working for the government for free. Such situations are also quite common in the Christian missions.

Community Broadcasting in Panama

The last project to be discussed is an educational programme for training elementary school teachers among the indigenous population of Panama. It is centred around a community radio station established by the Baha'is. In several countries in Central and South America, the Baha'is support such community radio stations as an essential part of development projects directed towards indigenous people. A radio station run by the community itself and broadcasting in the local language seems to be a way of encouraging the participation of the locals in the social and economic development of their community.

Kurt Hein studied the first Baha'i radio station in Ecuador.[11] The first transmissions began in 1977, and the radio was initially conceived of as a tool to strengthen the Baha'i communities in the region surrounding Otavalo, a provincial town about 80 km north of Quito. Thousands of people in this highland area converted to Baha'i in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[12] Communication by radio is a relatively efficient and low-cost way of reaching a dispersed, rural population, and radio receivers are cheap and abundant in Latin America. The Baha'is soon realised that to gain an audience, the broadcasting should be directed towards the population and include educational messages, news and music; it should do more than simply

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[10] Interview with Brian Burriston, 12 February 2000, at the Baha'i temple in Kampala.

[11] Kurt John Hein, *Radio Bahá'í, Ecuador. A Bahá'í Development Project*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1988.

[12] Hein, *Radio Bahá'í, Ecuador*, p. 17.

serve the mission by transmitting Baha'i texts and other propaganda.[13] When evaluated, the radio project in Ecuador was rated as a success, attracting 94% of the potential audience as regular or occasional listeners, and it seemed to spur among the population a wider involvement in local development.[14]

The Baha'i radio station in Ecuador has served as a model for other Baha'i radio stations in Latin America, including the one in Panama.[15] This was started in 1985 in the Chiriquí Province about 400 km west of Panama City, with the purpose of serving the Ngäbe Bugle (Guyamí) population living off the coast in the mountains.[16] With the radio station as the pivot, some development of the area has begun. For example, the Ngäbe Bugle live by subsistence economy, and the government does not provide them with schools. With the help of the Baha'is, the locals have established eight schools with ten teacher-trainees and fifteen children in each class. The teacher-trainees receive an intensive education three times a year (one month the first time and a fortnight the next two times), the rest of the time they study by themselves back in their villages. It is a difficult process, because the teacher-trainees are poorly educated before they start, and they lose income when they study. Books also present a problem; they cost money, and it is difficult to keep them in the humid climate. During the rainy season they may rot or be eaten by mice.

The long-term goal is to train teachers well enough so that they can pass official examinations and be employed and paid by the government of Panama. At present, they receive nothing from the government, and they have to rely on support from the community. Parents pay USD 5 per month to the school, and they are also supposed to give the teachers food and shelter.

There are now two radio stations in the area, one in the mountains in the village of Soloy with 3,000 inhabitants, the other at the foot of the hills in Boca del Monte with 4,000 inhabitants. Only Boca del Monte can be reached by ordinary car; from Boca del Monte there is a two hour trip by four-wheel-drive vehicles, although the

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[13] Hein, *Radio Bahá'í, Ecuador*, p. 148.

[14] Hein, *Radio Bahá'í, Ecuador*, pp. 90–130.

[15] Hein, *Radio Bahá'í, Ecuador*, pp. 151–153.

[16] The description of this project is based on an interview with Rosemary Baily, assistant secretary of the national spiritual assembly of Panama, 23 February 2001, and a field trip to the area on 26 February 2001.

distance is only about 30 km. Most of the other villages in the region can only be reached by foot or on horseback. The main radio station is the one in Boca del Monte; the smaller, older station is in Soloy. The equipment is quite modern; for example, the station in Boca del Monte has installed a new transmitter (1 kW), a gift from the Baha'i World Centre.

In February 2001, I visited both stations, accompanied by Mr. Bernadino Sanchez, a Ngäbe Bugle and the station manager in Boca del Monte. In Boca del Monte, the Baha'is had a meeting room, kitchen and dormitories. When I visited, a Baha'i youth camp was just about to finish a session.

After Mr. Sanchez showed me the facilities in Boca del Monte, he drove me up to Soloy where some of his family lived. Soloy has no electricity, so the radio station is powered by solar panels. The radio manager, Mr. Juan Bejeran, told me that he usually transmitted a mix of national and local news, music, educational programmes, announcements, moral education and Baha'i texts. The radio was also used as a substitute for telephone communication, because Soloy had no telephones. Often, people would show up and ask to send a message, such as calling for help for someone who had become ill.

Adjacent to the radio hut in Soloy there was a kindergarten, a meeting room, a kitchen and primitive dormitories for the teacher trainees. There was a local spiritual assembly in Soloy, and they had arranged the construction of a nine-sided spacious meeting hall in the middle of the village. Typical of the Baha'is, the grounds were well tended with flowers and trimmed bushes, quite unlike the rest of the village grounds.

In Chapter 5, I describe how consolidation of rural Baha'i communities in India, Africa and Latin America was a problem for the Baha'is. Reports from Panama confirm the general experience that consolidation of conversions among rural indigenous people is resource demanding. For example, I was told that the chief of a village may enrol all villagers collectively into Baha'i.[17] This was a mixed blessing, since the Baha'i administration had difficulties in coping with this large influx of new members, who for the most part lacked even a fundamental understanding of the Baha'i teachings and Baha'i manners. The claim that in 1986 1.27% of the population of Panama were

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[17] Interview with David W. Morris, after a service at the Baha'i temple in Panama, 25 February 2001.

Baha'is gives the impression of a more resourceful Baha'i community than what probably was the reality.[18]

The Significance of Development Projects in the Baha'i Mission

The Baha'is seem to do what they can to fertilise the mission field by initiating and running development projects such as the three projects discussed above. As in the history of Christianity and Islam, education and conversion are the twin sisters of efficient mission, offering the potential converts not just the prospects of knowing religious truths, but also a chance of improving their daily lives. The computer school in Gambia is illustrative in this respect. Another example is a primary school, from kindergarten to ninth grade, run by the Baha'is in Panama City. In 2001, the school had 21 teachers, of whom seven were Baha'is. School fees were lower than usual (USD 50 per month instead of USD 100–200) because the Baha'is worked for almost nothing. The curriculum included three courses in Baha'i principles in addition to the compulsory curriculum. The school claimed to have a good reputation, and for example, it offered attractive courses in GIS (geographical information systems), which qualified the students for many jobs afterwards.[19]

A common principle of the Baha'i development projects is the training of the local residents in a decision-making process according to Baha'i principles, the so-called consultation, cf. Chapter 5. Consultation refers to the process of reaching an acceptable group decision by following certain rules, such as to follow one's own conscience, to be moderate and courteous in expression, and to abstain from clinging to one's own ideas once they have been forwarded.[20] The consultation process aims at reaching consensus, and all are obliged to follow the decision and work for its successful outcome. Meditation and prayer are used as an aid to problem solving during the decision process. The training in consultation is thereby an important step in converting the locals to the Baha'i faith and the Baha'i way of organising a community.

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[18] *The Seven Year Plan 1979–1986. Statistical Report*, Haifa, Universal House of Justice, 1986, p. 51 (BWC).

[19] Interview with the principal of the school, 25 February 2001.

[20] *Social and Economic Development. The Bahá'í Approach*, New York, Baha'i International Community, n.d.

The Baha'is may gain some goodwill by participating in development projects organised by a government. The disadvantage of joint projects is that the mission itself may be downplayed and the Baha'is run the risk of working free for a government, as was exemplified in Uganda. In that case, the trade-off may be negative, because the Baha'is' resources are spent on too many activities that do not benefit the growth of the Baha'i community. It appeared that such considerations spurred the decision of the Baha'is of Uganda not to engage in such joint projects in the future.

The Baha'is obviously compete with other proselytising religions. In Panama, I interviewed a Baha'i representative of "Humanitas", a political umbrella organisation for the indigenous population of Panama, which my informant claimed was predominantly Baha'i-oriented in the way it operated.[21] For a Baha'i, my informant was unusually critical of the different Christian missions; he claimed that they took money from the villages to spend in the cities, while the Baha'is aimed at economic sustainability in the villages. It was not possible to judge his assessment as seen from the villagers' point of view; he may be right in his characterisation of the Christian missions and the Baha'i missions, but it may also be an expression of wishful thinking.

Baha'is also compete with Christian missions in other areas of the world. A cartoon drawn by a Hopi is an example of anti-mission propaganda, where the Baha'is are seen as joined with the Christian "white" missions.[22] Its political message is obvious; for the Baha'is, however, it should be encouraging that they have become so visible among the Hopis that some Hopi activists consider them a threat to their traditions. Moreover, the artist was not completely ignorant of the Baha'is in that they are represented by a woman who appears to be an Iranian. See Photo VII—*Satirical drawing by Hopi artist showing a Baha'i female missionary among other missionaries.*

Because the development projects are mainly of significance in non-Western countries, resources spent on development probably will not do much to improve the recruitment of new Baha'is in the West. In fact, it is unlikely that the idea of sponsoring projects or working

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[21] Interview with David W. Morris, Institute of the Humanitas, 25 February 2001.
[22] Armin W. Geertz, *The Invention of Prophecy. Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994, p. 315.

with community development in Africa, for example, will have more than marginal influence on an average Westerner's decision to enrol. This is based on my analysis of conversion motives among Danish Baha'is, which is corroborated by one of the conclusions of the internal report from the USA.[23] A survey of 305 American Baha'is indicated that Baha'i involvement in social reform was the *least* significant of ten factors contributing to the enrolment of present members. There is no reason to think that the situation in Europe would be different; development projects in general are the target of increased public criticism than previously. With respect to fertilisation of the mission field in the West, other strategies are needed.

ADDRESSING HUMANKIND: THE BAHA'I TEMPLES

A Baha'i temple with its accessory institutions is called *mashriqu'l-adhkar*, which means the "Dawning-place of the remembrance of God". The temples are envisaged to be the nuclei of entire local Baha'i communities, with social and educational institutions established around them.[24] This can be seen as a continuation of the tradition of the *medrasa* at the mosque, and it reflects the fact that in the Baha'i religion, like in Islam, there should be no sharp division between religious and secular life. The Baha'is hope that in the future the *mashriqu'l-adhkar* will become the "foundation for a new and higher type of human association".[25] Yet, only one of the temples has had a social institution associated with it, the Baha'i Home for the Aged, adjacent to the temple in Wilmette, near Chicago, from 1958 to 2001.[26]

The building of temples follows Baha'u'llah's command in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*:

> O people of the world! Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions. Make

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[23] National Teaching Committee of the United States, *Issues Pertaining to Growth, Retention and Consolidation in the United States*, Evanston, Baha'i National Center, December 12, 1999, p. 11. http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrcole/bahai/1999/growth23.htm. Accessed 31 October 2002.

[24] Shoghi Effendi, "The Spiritual Significance of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 18, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1986, pp. 569–570.

[25] Horace Holley, "The Institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. 1. Foreword", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 18, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1986, p. 568.

[26] "The Bahá'í Home (1958–2001)", http://www.kingdom-project.org/whats_kp/m_adhkar/bhome.html. Accessed 8 April 2003.

them as perfect as is possible in the world of being, and adorn them with that which befitteth them, not with images and effigies. Then, with radiance and joy, celebrate therein the praise of your Lord, the Most Compassionate.[27]

The Baha'i temples all conform to the same basic architectural plan prescribed by Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi: a circular, symmetrical, nine-sided building with a dome above the central room.[28] Light enters through windows in the sides and through openings in the dome. There are nine entrances to the building, and many other architectural details exhibit a symmetry based on the number nine.

In a letter, Shoghi Effendi explained why the temples have nine sides:

> Nine is the highest digit, hence symbolises comprehensiveness, culmination; also, the reason it is used in the Temple's form is because nine has the exact numerical value of 'Baha' (in the numerology connected with the Arabic alphabet) and 'Baha' is the name of the Revealer of our Faith, Baha'u'llah.[29]

The interior and exterior surfaces of the building are generally bare, except that they may be ornamented with abstract patterns in frets or fretwork. The calligraphy of the Greatest Name is placed in the apex of the dome or at some other conspicuous position. There may be a few decorations on the walls in the form of plaques with calligraphy, but no pictures or statues.[30] Typical of the Baha'is, there are the ubiquitous flower arrangements in the temples. The central room is furnished as a lecture hall, but apart from the arrangement of the chairs, there is no altar, *mihrab* or other structure that delineates a main axis of the building. The row of chairs are oriented so that the audience faces the Baha'i *qiblih*, the Shrine of Baha'u'llah.[31]

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[27] Baha'u'llah, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1992, p. 29.

[28] Duane L. Herrmann, "Houses as Perfect as Is Possible", *World Order*, vol. 26, 1994, pp. 17–31.

[29] From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 28 October 1949. Quoted in Helen Hornby (ed.), *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*, New Delhi, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983, p. 312.

[30] Wendi Momen (ed.), *A Basic Bahá'í Dictionary*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1991, p. 151.

[31] D. MacEoin, "Mashriḳ al-Adhkār", in C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, B. Lewis, and Ch. Pellat (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 6, Leiden, Brill, 1991, p. 720.

The Eight Temples

The first temple was built in Ashkabad in Turkmenistan (then Russian Turkestan), just north of the border with Iran. In this city, a flourishing Baha'i community was established during the 1880s by Iranian emigrants.[32] The foundation stone of the temple was laid in 1902, and the structure was completed a few years later. It was the most imposing building in the city, larger than any of the churches or mosques.[33] After the Russian Revolution, conditions deteriorated for the Ashkabad Baha'i community, and in 1928 the building was expropriated by the Soviet government, like other religious properties, and turned over to secular use. In 1968, the temple was severely damaged by an earthquake and subsequently demolished.[34]

The design of the Ashkabad temple was based on instructions from Abdu'l-Baha, and it inspired the American Baha'i community to build a temple of their own.[35] In 1908, the American Baha'is purchased a building on the shore of Lake Michigan, in Wilmette, north of Chicago, and in the 1920s construction work began.[36] The spectacular, nine-sided building of mixed Oriental and Western architectural style was completed in 1953.[37]

Since the end of World War II, six more temples have been erected in the following places: Kampala (Uganda), Langenhein, near Frankfurt am Main (Germany), Sydney (Australia), Apia (Samoa), Panama City (Panama) and New Delhi (India). Plans to build a temple in Santiago (Chile) are being drafted. The temple in New Delhi is the newest and biggest, having a diameter of 70 metres and a height of 41 metres.[38] The dome of the New Delhi temple is constructed from interlacing curved concrete shells, which make up the shape of a lotus flower.[39] It was completed in 1986 and quickly

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[32] M. Momen, "The Baha'i Community of Ashkhabad; its Social Basis and Importance in Baha'i History", in Shirin Akiner (ed.), *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia*, London, Kegan Paul, 1991, pp. 278–305.

[33] Momen, "The Baha'i Community of Ashkhabad".

[34] R. Jackson Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions, and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 4, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1987, pp. 10–17.

[35] Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions, and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, pp. 121–124.

[36] Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions, and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, pp. 135–145, p. 210.

[37] Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions, and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, pp. 285–289.

[38] *Bahá'í House of Worship. New Delhi, India* [folder with information sheets, n.d., n.p.]. (Unpublished).

[39] Sheriar Nooreyezdan, "The Lotus of Bahapur", *The Bahá'í World 1979–1983*, vol. 18, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1986, pp. 574–584.

became a major tourist attraction. The New Delhi temple design is highly symbolic for Baha'i understanding, where the ancient Indian attributes of the lotus flower are merged with Western architectural elements to become a universal symbol.[40] See Photo 13—*The Baha'i Temple in New Delhi.*

The Unique Baha'i Temple Architecture

Baha'i temple architecture relies heavily on the abstract aesthetics that were commanded by Baha'u'llah and highly praised among Baha'is. As Shoghi Effendi expressed it, the temple design should reflect "the delicate architectural beauty which the spirit of the Faith should engender".[41] The inspiration from and parallels to the design of the classic mosque are salient. Both religions prescribe a few essential details about the design and use of the houses of worship: in Baha'i, the circular shape, the nine sides with entrances and the central dome; in Islam, the *qiblih* orientation with the *mihrab*.[42] In both religions, the architectural tradition relies on geometrical abstract patterns and calligraphy for adornment of the interior; pictures and statues are forbidden, as mentioned. Other parallels are that no musical instruments are allowed during services, only the human voice, and that worship is not accompanied by rituals of offering or communion.[43]

With respect to the exterior design of mosques and Baha'i temples, local building traditions are characteristically incorporated, demonstrating in this case the inclusiveness of both Islam and Baha'i. Thus, in an iconographical analysis of mosque designs, Christer Hedin presents examples of mosques inspired by local synagogues, Byzantine churches, Buddhist stupas, a pagoda and a parasol (a Southeast Asian power symbol).[44]

In a comparative analysis of Baha'i temple design, Duane Herrmann conveys how the essence of the religion is expressed in the temple

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[40] Herrmann, "Houses as Perfect as Is Possible".

[41] Herrmann, "Houses as Perfect as Is Possible" (Shoghi Effendi is quoted, p. 19).

[42] Christer Hedin, "Islam: The Universal Religion as Expressed through Muslim Architecture", in Peter Schalk and Michael Stausberg (eds.), *"Being Religious and Living through the Eyes". Studies in Religious Iconography and Iconology. A Celebratory Publication in Honour of Professor Jan Bergman*, Uppsala, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1998, pp. 173–195.

[43] The prohibition of instrumental music was not always honoured by the North American Baha'is when the temple in Wilmette was put into regular use in the 1940s. Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions, and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, pp. 277–278.

[44] Hedin, "Islam: The Universal Religion as Expressed through Muslim Architecture".

architecture through its merging of local and universal architectural elements:

> The oneness of humanity is expressed in the architecture of Bahá'í Houses of Worship by incorporating indigenous cultural symbols and transforming them into universal symbols.[45]

The local symbols are seen mainly in some of the newer temples. The lotus-flower design of the temple in New Delhi is one example. The outer pillars of the Panama temple are made of reddish-brown brickwork laid in a pattern reminiscent of the decorations on Mayan temple walls. In the Apia temple, the pillars supporting the dome are narrow and the spaces in between the pillars are entirely in glass. From a distance, this architectural detail makes the temple look like the traditional Samoan house, the *fale*. The *fale* has no walls, only an elevated floor and wooden pillars supporting the raised thatch roof. See Photo 14—*A Samoan* fale *and the Baha'i temple in Apia*.

Despite the similarities between the mosque and the *mashriqu'l-adkhar*, there are distinct differences between them, first and foremost is the nine-sided regular shape of the latter.

Baha'i Sunday Temple Services

The Baha'i temples are all open to the public, and the devotional sessions that are held there are open as well. The devotional practice was basically established in the Ashkabad Baha'i community and has not changed much since the 1950s.[46] The pattern of services is generally the same in all temples: the core includes readings or chantings performed by different individuals, and the texts are selected to cover a particular topic, such as love, meditation, unity of mankind or trust in God.[47] No sermon is held.

The Baha'i chanting is a melodious recital of sacred texts in Persian or Arabic; it is typical of the Muslim tradition, while the choir is typical of the Christian tradition. There has been an ongoing discussion in the American Baha'i community regarding the use of

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[45] Herrmann, "Houses as Perfect as Is Possible" (quotation, p. 18).
[46] Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions, and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, pp. 14–16, p. 291.
[47] Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions, and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, p. 291.

hymns in Baha'i devotional practice.[48] This discussion may be particular to the American Baha'i community, as, for example, the Baha'is at the Kampala temple were proud—and with good reason—of their well-trained choir.

The following are three brief descriptions of public Sunday temple services that I attended.

> On Sunday, 1 May 1994, a service was held in the European *mashriqu'l-adhkar* in Langenhein, Germany. It began at 3 p.m. and lasted 25 minutes. Sixty-three people attended, one-third of whom were Iranians. Nine persons, Iranians and Europeans of both sexes, sat in the front row and performed the service; they rose one by one, went to the speaker's chair to read or chant. In addition to Baha'i texts, they quoted from the Bhagavad Gita, the New Testament and the Quran. Most passages were read aloud, in German, Persian, and one in French, but some were chanted in Persian or Arabic. There was no choir. The cosmopolitan scope of the service was evident from the fact that several religions, languages and nationalities were represented.

> On Sunday, 13 February 2000, a service was held in the African *mashriqu'l-adhkar* outside Kampala, Uganda. It began at 10:30 a.m. and lasted 40 minutes altogether. About 110 people attended, of which 75% were black, 17% were white and 8% were Persians. The readings at the service were exclusively Baha'i prayers and texts in English and Arabic. Between the readings there were Baha'i songs performed by a well-trained choir. After the service people went on talking for a while, and afterwards many joined a social gathering (tea and cookies were served) in the combined Baha'i visiting centre and meeting room adjacent to the temple.

> On Sunday, 25 February 2001, a service was held in the Latin American *mashriqu'l-adhkar* outside Panama City. It began at 10:00 a.m. and lasted 30 minutes. About 40 people attended, of which eight were members of the choir standing on the balcony. There were four Westerners and one Persian present, the rest were Panamanians (and a few other Latin American individuals) of all skin colours. The readings at the service were exclusively Baha'i prayers and texts in Spanish (one prayer in English). Between the readings there were Baha'i songs performed by a choir, which could have been better trained. After the service there was a social gathering, with the serving of fresh fruit salad and tea.

At all three services, I was informed that the programme and the number of people attending were typical of the Sunday services. It

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[48] Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions, and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, pp. 87–117.

was also typical that only one or two among the audience were non-Baha'is. These three services basically followed the same pattern of different people reading texts and prayers, chanting some of the prayers, and using choirs to provide for the musical part of the service.

The services in both Panama and Kampala were held on Sunday mornings, and the time of service together with the use of choirs gave these services more of a Christian air than the service at Langenhein. I also attended a service in Apia, Samoa; this service was very much like those in Uganda and Panama and therefore is not described further here.[49]

The Function of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar

The Baha'i temples are meant for devotion that addresses both the Baha'i world and the non-Baha'i world, i.e., the outer global field of the dual global field model. Each of the continents (except Antarctica, of course) has a Baha'i temple, thereby indicating that the Baha'is are present world-wide. Their remarkable architecture makes them conspicuous, the physical manifestations of the Baha'i religion. Like the mosques, the Baha'i temples are not sacred, but worldly places meant for peace, prayer and contemplation.

The Baha'i temples are the property of the national spiritual assembly of the particular country. The typical legal arrangement is that the grounds and buildings are owned by an endowment, and the national spiritual assembly regards its position as having the custody of a property belonging to all Baha'is of the world.[50] A temple committee supervises the function of the temple, the caretaker and the staff hired for maintenance.

Since the 1960s, the American Baha'is have had an ongoing discussion about the use of the temple in Wilmette, in particular whether the devotional sessions should be for the public in general and thereby support the mission, or primarily serve the religious needs of the Baha'i communities of the Chicago area.[51] My field trips to the temples in Frankfurt, Kampala, Panama and Apia indicated that the far majority of those who attended the Sunday services were local Baha'is,

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[49] Field notes, Samoa, 11 August 2002.
[50] Interview with Rosemary Baily, assistant secretary of the national spiritual assembly of Panama, 23 February 2001.
[51] Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions, and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, pp. 289–309.

and that very few non-Baha'is came to the services. The public in general, however, seems to visit the temples at other times. For example, the temple in Panama was visited by 25,000 people in 2000, an increase from 20,000 the previous year.[52] The number of visitors, around 500 per week, is much higher than would be expected based on the number of people (40) attending the Sunday service when I visited the temple. Considering that it was during the season in Panama with the most pleasant climate and therefore the peak tourist season, the numbers only make sense assuming that the Baha'i temple mainly serves as a place for individual visits, for Baha'is and non-Baha'is alike, rather than as a place of collective worship.

Christer Hedin concludes in his analysis of mosque architecture:

> The minbar and the minaret are manifestations of the dawa or the invitation call of the universal religion to humanity. Everybody is invited to come and listen. But nobody will be persuaded by eloquence directed to the emotional side of man for the mosque is a place of rational development.[53]

The meaning of the *mashriqu'l-adhkar* could be expressed with essentially the same words, substituting "minbar" and "minaret" with the nine entrances and the dome. However, the function of the *mashriqu'l-adhkar* as a place to visit, the "silent teacher" in Shoghi Effendi's words, is maybe not the optimal mission strategy for the Baha'is.[54] Armstrong-Ingram tells the following story, which may illustrate this:

> One day I overheard a visitor asking one of the Bahá'í guides what the building was built for. The Bahá'í replied that it was built for all those who would come to see it. Yes, replied the visitor, but what was it built *for*? The Bahá'í simply looked puzzled and had no reply, other than to repeat that it was for those who would come to see it. Like any Gothick folly, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár has become a conspicuous consumer of assets with no actual function other than to look pretty.[55]

It will be interesting to see if, when and how the Baha'is will make the *mashriqu'l-adhkar* more functional with respect to attracting new converts. Some proposals have been published on the Internet.[56]

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[52] Interview with Rosemary Baily, 23 February 2001.
[53] Hedin, "Islam: The Universal Religion as Expressed through Muslim Architecture" (quotation, p. 194).
[54] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995, p. 351.
[55] Armstrong-Ingram, *Music, Devotions, and Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, pp. 308–309.
[56] R. Jackson Armstrong-Ingram, "Exploring the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar", http://bahai-library.org/articles/mashriq.html. Accessed 11 January 2002.

It is therefore surprising that the Baha'i communities responsible for the running of the temples do not meet or in other ways share experiences on the function of the *mashriqu'l-adhkar*.[57]

INFLUENCING THE WORLD SYSTEM OF SOCIETIES

Since Baha'u'llah wrote his letters to the kings in 1867, the Baha'i leadership has regularly commented on developments in the world. Many of the messages have been meant for mainly Baha'i audiences; for example, most of Shoghi Effendi's writings compiled in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* were addressed to different Baha'i communities.[58] However, in 1967 the Universal House of Justice issued a special edition of *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh* and presented it to 140 heads of state. This was the first signal from the Universal House of Justice that it would resume the tradition from Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha of addressing the public and the governments of the world with statements on the Baha'i views of the world order. This special edition of *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh* and later statements are conveyed through the Baha'i representation in the United Nations System, and they are therefore part of the interaction between the international Baha'i institutions and the world system of societies in the upper right corner of the dual global field model.

In the following, I give several examples of the changing attitudes of the Baha'i leadership towards the world system of societies, and I place these examples in an overall perspective of world-rejecting versus world-affirming attitudes.

World-rejecting or World-affirming?

"World-rejecting" and "world-affirming" are two of the three terms in Roy Wallis' 1984 typology of new religious movements (the third is "world-accommodating", but this type is not relevant for the present analysis of Baha'i leadership attitudes).[59] According to Wallis, a *world-rejecting* movement views the prevailing social order negatively,

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[57] Interview with Rosemary Baily, 23 February 2001.
[58] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Selected Letters*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991.
[59] Roy Wallis, *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life*, London, Routledge, 1984, pp. 9–39.

distinguishes sharply between insiders and outsiders, and has strong millenarian expectations. This type of movement opposes a distinction between secular and religious life; it seeks a spiritual transformation of society and offers adherents a total institution regulating all of their daily activities. The *world-affirming* movement largely views the prevailing social order positively, and it rejects the dualism of the world-rejecting movement. It interacts with society and it may have political reform goals, but seeks to realise them through the spiritual transformation of individuals.

Wallis did not discuss the Baha'i religion, but for the rank-and-file Baha'is of today, I would characterise the religion as world-affirming. The Baha'is may be critical of present society, but they are not zealots, and active membership is compatible with normal careers and family life. However, as Roy Wallis notes, in world-affirming movements with a *world-transforming mission*, a world-rejecting ethos is likely to develop among the inner cadre of members.[60] In the case of the Baha'is, a world-rejecting ethos is also in doctrinal compliance with its origin in millenarian Shi'ism, and the religion therefore has the potential of harbouring both world-affirming and world-rejecting attitudes.

The Changing Attitudes of the Baha'i Leadership

Baha'u'llah's messages to the kings (*Suriy-i-Muluk*) were given in an authoritative voice and were a mixture of general counsel concerning good statesmanship and warnings of dire consequences if they "pay no heed unto the counsels which, in peerless and unequivocal language, We have revealed in this Tablet."[61] Among the counsels given by Baha'u'llah were calls for disarmament, moderation in state expenditure, fair trial and social justice. But as Taherzadeh notes, "The call of Bahá'u'lláh and his summons to the kings fell on deaf ears."[62]

In *Suriy-i-Muluk* and related letters, Baha'u'llah continued the strong element of millenialism from Babism, and he often referred to the collapse and even the approaching destruction of the world. "The process of the collapse of the old order is accelerating with the

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[60] Wallis, *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life*, p. 126.

[61] Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Adrianople 1863–68*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1977, pp. 304–311 (indirect quotation, p. 309).

[62] Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Adrianople 1863–68*, p. 309.

passage of time.”[63] Following this “universal convulsion” a glorious
future awaits, and “the sun of justice will rise from the horizon of
the unseen realm.”[64] The future calamities are said to be the direct
consequence of the rejection of Baha’u’llah’s claims, and Baha’is
believe that there is no other remedy for humankind than accept-
ing Baha’u’llah.[65]

It is part of Baha’i belief that a catastrophe will occur before
humankind accepts Baha’u’llah’s message and establishes the Lesser
Peace.[66] Peter Smith has noted, in his precise analysis of the millenarian
motif in Baha’i, that the popular concern among Baha’is about the
calamity may ebb and flow in response to the perceptions of the
world situation.[67] Speculations on the impeding calamity and its
nature are, in fact, an important theme in Baha’i lore of today.[68]

Abdu’l-Baha repeatedly referred to Baha’u’llah’s letters to the kings
in his public speeches during his travels to the West.[69] Abdu’l-Baha’s
style was, however, less of doomsday, sulphur and brimstone, and
more of a plea for letting humanistic ideals shape the world order—
a plea that was *also* a strong theme in Baha’u’llah’s thinking. For
example, Baha’u’llah often stressed the need for an international sys-
tem to uphold international peace and law:

> It is incumbent upon the Sovereigns of the world—may God assist
> them—unitedly to hold fast unto this Peace, which is the chief instrument
> for the protection of all mankind. It is Our hope that they will arise
> to achieve what will be conducive to the well-being of man. It is their

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[63] Baha’u’llah quoted by Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh. Adrianople 1863–68*,
p. 309.

[64] Baha’u’llah quoted by Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh. Adrianople 1863–68*,
p. 310.

[65] Baha’u’llah quoted by Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh. Adrianople 1863–68*,
pp. 309–310.

[66] William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, *The Bahá’í Faith. The Emerging Global
Religion*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1989, pp. 138–140; J. Tyson, *A Bahá’í
Approach: World Peace and World Government. From Vision to Reality*, Oxford, George
Ronald, 1986, pp. 79–87.

[67] Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha’i Religions. From Messianic Shi‘ism to a World Religion*,
Cambridge, Cambridge University Press and George Ronald, 1987, p. 143.

[68] David Piff and Margit Warburg, “Millennial Catastrophism in Popular Baha’i
Lore”, in Mikael Rothstein and Reender Kranenborg (eds.), *New Religions in a Postmodern
World*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2003, pp. 123–136.

[69] Abdu’l-Baha, *Paris Talks. Addresses Given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in 1911*, London, Cromwell
Press, 1995; Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace. Talks Delivered by ‘Abdu’l-
Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, Wilmette, Baha’i Publishing
Trust, 1982.

duty to convene an all-inclusive assembly, which either they themselves or their ministers will attend, and to enforce whatever measures are required to establish unity and concord amongst men. They must put away the weapons of war, and turn to the instruments of universal reconstruction. Should one king rise up against another, all the other kings must arise to deter him. Arms and armaments will, then, be no more needed beyond that which is necessary to insure the internal security of their respective countries.[70]

This theme was restated by Abdu'l-Baha on many occasions. In a short speech on 5 November 1912 in Cincinnati, Ohio, Abdu'l-Baha addressed "the people of Cincinnati and America generally" and ascribed to the United States a pioneering role as "worthy of raising the flag of brotherhood and international agreement".[71] The speech continues:

When this is done, the rest of the world will accept. All nations will join in adopting the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revealed more than fifty years ago. In His Epistles He asked the parliaments of the world to send their wisest and best men to an international world conference which should decide all questions between the peoples and establish universal peace. This would be the highest court of appeal, and the parliament of man so long dreamed of by poets and idealists would be realized. Its accomplishment would be more far-reaching than the Hague tribunal.[72]

Here, Abdu'l-Baha clearly expressed his generally positive attitude towards the world system of societies, in other words a world-affirming attitude. This also meant that political activity was not an activity to be shunned in all cases. For example, in a speech delivered in Boston on 23 July 1912, Abdu'l-Baha said:

The Bahá'ís must not engage in political movements which lead to sedition. They must interest themselves in movements which conduce to law and order. In Persia at the present time the Bahá'ís have no part in the revolutionary upheavals which have terminated in lawlessness and rebellion. Nevertheless, a Bahá'í may hold a political office and be interested in politics of the right type. Ministers, state officials and governor-generals in Persia are Bahá'ís, and there are many other Bahá'ís holding governmental positions; but nowhere throughout the world should the followers of Bahá'u'lláh be engaged in seditious movements.[73]

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[70] Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988, pp. 30–31.

[71] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 388–389.

[72] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 389.

[73] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238.

A significant change in the Baha'i leaders' attitude towards political involvement can be dated to around 1936 when Shoghi Effendi apparently adopted what was called a policy of "fallowing". This meant "leaving the public field uncultivated by a general propaganda" to await better times.[74] Witnessing the rapidly deteriorating world affairs in 1936, Shoghi Effendi had largely pessimistic expectations when he commented in detail on events taking place in the world system of societies, such as the withdrawal of Germany and Japan from the League of Nations.[75] In the letter called "The Unfoldment of World Civilization" from 1936, he painted—with good reasons—a gloomy picture of the state of affairs:

> The Great Depression, the aftermath of the severest ordeals humanity had ever experienced, the disintegration of the Versailles system, the recrudescence of militarism in its most menacing aspects, the failure of vast experiments and new-born institutions to safeguard the peace and tranquillity of peoples, classes and nations, have bitterly disillusioned humanity and prostrated its spirits.[76]

The world-rejecting aspect was pronounced in Shoghi Effendi's characterisation of world politics and the futility of engagement with it:

> What we Bahá'ís must face is the fact that society is disintegrating so rapidly that moral issues which were clear a half century ago are now hopelessly confused and, what is more, thoroughly mixed up with battling political interests. That is why Bahá'ís must turn all their forces into the channel of building up the Bahá'í Cause and its administration. They can neither change nor help the world in any other way at present. If they become involved in the issues the governments of the world are struggling over, they will be lost. But if they build up the Bahá'í pattern they can offer it as a remedy when all else has failed. . . . . . . We must build up our Bahá'í system, and leave the faulty systems of the world to go their way. We cannot change them through becoming involved in them; on the contrary, they will destroy us.[77]

For the rest of the ministry of Shoghi Effendi and the first years of the ministry of the Universal House of Justice, the Baha'i leadership

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[74] Helen Bishop, "Geneva Scans the European Community", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 7, 1939, pp. 108–113.

[75] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Selected Letters*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991, pp. 188–194.

[76] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 188.

[77] [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration. A Compilation*, London, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976, pp. 31–32.

maintained this world-rejecting view. This can be seen from, among
other things, the fact that the above quotation from the 1940s was
reproduced in the important handbook *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*
in 1950 and it was repeated *verbatim* by the Universal House of
Justice in a 1967 statement.[78]

Abdu'l-Baha's and Shoghi Effendi's somewhat different attitudes
towards political involvement—in its broad sense, not as partisan
politics—are illustrative of how the millenarian motif in Baha'i is
composed of a generally world-affirming view of the future and a
world-rejecting concern about the downfall of the present world
order. These attitudes were shared partly, but not fully, by the aver-
age Baha'is of the time. For example, Robert Stockmann concludes
in his analysis of the American Baha'i community that the period
from 1900 to 1912 was characterised by an involvement of Baha'is
in social and economic development projects greater than at any
other time in Baha'i history until the late 1970s.[79] This example indi-
cates a congruence between Abdu'l-Baha's more world-affirming atti-
tude and practical Baha'i work. It is interesting to compare this
conclusion with van den Hoonaard's discussion of Canadian Baha'is'
reactions to World War II.[80] After the outbreak of the war, Shoghi
Effendi issued a statement that asked the Baha'is not to assign blame
or take sides, even indirectly, in what was referred to as "the pre-
sent conflict". This statement followed the world-rejecting line from
1936, but it caused considerable dissatisfaction among the Vancouver
Baha'is and was intensely debated during 1940. Eight Baha'is removed
their names temporarily from the voting list because they could not
identify with the official Baha'i position. In the end, the community
decided to go into practical humanitarian work in connection with
the war, however.[81] This last example indicates that among the
Baha'is the general attitude towards involvement in society did not
fully follow the change in the official Baha'i position of 1936.

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[78] [Shoghi Effendi], *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 31–32; [Universal House
of Justice], *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986. The Third Epoch of
the Formative Age*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996, p. 128.

[79] Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America. Early Expansion, 1900–1912*,
vol. 2, Oxford, George Ronald, 1995, p. 388.

[80] Will C. van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada,
1898–1948*, Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996, pp. 259–264.

[81] van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, p. 264.

The high public profile of the Baha'is in the beginning of the 1900s undoubtedly also owed much to Abdu'l-Baha as a person who was evidently thriving in public. In contrast to Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi shunned publicity and never gave public speeches on world order. The Baha'i relation to the world system of societies, however, was never entirely neglected, as can be demonstrated by the case of the International Baha'i Bureau in Geneva.

The International Baha'i Bureau in Geneva

The International Baha'i Bureau was established in 1925 by Mrs. Jean Stannard, who had been in the East for some years.[82] It was Shoghi Effendi's idea to set up the bureau in Geneva—the city of the League of Nations—and Mrs. Stannard succeeded in getting it accepted as an international association with membership in "Féderation des Movements Internationaux". This gave some official status vis-à-vis the League of Nations and the possibility of attending the public sessions of the League.[83] The main purpose of the bureau, however, was to serve as an international distribution centre for Baha'i literature to the European countries and to be a kind of international meeting place for European Baha'is.

The International Baha'i Bureau was under the direct supervision of Shoghi Effendi, who also showed his interest in its activities by personally paying part of its then current expenses. Officially, the bureau was considered quite successful: public meetings were held every week, sometimes with the participation of guest speakers, and in both 1925 and 1926, the bureau hosted the Esperanto congresses.[84] Letters from one of the staff members, Ms. Anne Lynch, over an eighteen year period, tell of periods of authoritarian and wasteful management, however.[85] Judged from the low rate of expansion of Baha'i in Europe in the period between the two world wars, the

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[82] Emogene H. Hoagg, "Short History of International Bahá'í Bureau at Geneva, Switzerland", *The Bahá'í World 1930–1932*, vol. 4, New York, Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1933, pp. 257–261.

[83] Helen Bishop, "Geneva Scans the European Community", *The Bahá'í World 1934–1936*, vol. 6, New York, Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1937, pp. 130–135.

[84] Hoagg, "Short History of International Bahá'í Bureau".

[85] Thomas Linard, "Materials for the Geneva Baha'i Bureaus's History", *Documents on the Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Movements*, vol. 2, No. 1, 1998, http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/docs/vol2/geneva1.htm.

bureau seemed mainly to have had a symbolic value for the European Baha'i communities. Its existence and its relation to the League of Nations made the Baha'is visible as an international organisation—at least in the eyes of the Baha'is themselves.

Current International Baha'i Institutions

After World War II, relations with the world system of societies—now represented by the United Nations—were resumed at the organisational level.[86] The *Baha'i International Community* was formed in 1948 and it was recognised in 1970 by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) with consultative status.[87] This gave the Baha'i International Community a strengthened platform for interaction with the world system of societies, and the Baha'is participated in a considerable number of United Nations events through the 1970s and 1980s. The Baha'i International Community has offices at the United Nations in New York and Geneva, and representatives at the United Nations regional commissions and other offices in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Nairobi, Rome, Santiago and Vienna. The Baha'i International Community also has an Office of Public Information at the Baha'i World Centre, with a branch office in Paris. The Baha'i International Community offices serve as the direct extension of the Universal House of Justice in all relations with the international public and with the United Nations System. Several times a week, the New York office is in contact with the three members of the Universal House of Justice who make up the Policy Committee for External Affairs. The New York office has a staff of 16–18 people, and each year, the New York senior staff spend nine days at meetings at the Baha'i World Centre.[88]

The Baha'i International Community disseminates information and written material about Baha'i, and it publishes a quarterly newsletter, *One Country*, in English, French, Chinese, Russian, Spanish and German.

The *Landegg International University* (formerly the *Landegg Academy*), in Switzerland, is a relatively autonomous international Baha'i institution,

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[86] Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 149.

[87] "The Bahá'í Faith and the United Nations. 1. Summary of the Years 1947–1979", *The Bahá'í World 1979–1983*, vol. 18, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1986, pp. 393–395.

[88] Field notes from visit to Baha'i International Community, New York Office, 1 June 1999.

which reports directly to the Baha'i World Centre, although formally it refers to the Swiss national spiritual assembly.[89] In 1996, I visited the academy and interviewed the director of the institution.[90] It has a conference centre with modern meeting rooms, cafeteria and hotel facilities around an old country house that is beautifully situated, high above the south shore of Lake Constance and with a breathtaking view of the mountains. The Landegg International University has attempted to establish a network of unofficial relations with international non-Baha'i decision makers. For example, in 1990 Landegg hosted *The First International Dialogue on the Transition to a Global Society*.[91] The Director-General of UNESCO delivered the opening speech, and various non-Baha'i university professors, including Nobel Laureate Ilya Prigogine, participated. This approach, however, was later abandoned for economic reasons, and now the Landegg International University mainly serves as an international forum for Baha'i conferences and courses.[92]

Landegg reports having 80 associated faculty members and more than 160 students. Switzerland legally registered the name change to a university in 2001.[93] The curricula are quite extensive and include courses in management, community development, conflict resolution and "international governance", which qualify for the Master of Arts degree. Landegg has academic relationships with Beijing University, University of Maryland and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. At the two last-mentioned universities the Baha'is have co-sponsored chairs in Baha'i studies.

A Change towards International Political Involvement

The messages from the Universal House of Justice since the late 1970s indicate a gradual move towards a more world-affirming attitude. This may have been encouraged by the substantial growth in

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[89] Landegg International University is owned by a foundation, and the Swiss national spiritual assembly is represented on the board.

[90] Interview with Hussein Danesh, Landegg, 14 July 1996.

[91] Suheil Bushrui, Iraj Ayman, and Ervin Laszlo (eds.), *Transition to a Global Society*, Oxford, Oneworld, 1993.

[92] "About Landegg", http://www.landegg.edu/about/index.htm. Accessed 13 April 2004.

[93] "Landegg International University Accreditation Status", http://www.landegg.edu/about/status.htm. Accessed 13 April 2004.

membership in the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s. In 1983 the Universal House of Justice initiated the above-mentioned policy of encouraging Baha'is to engage in social and economic development projects, and these were seen as a reinforcement of the Baha'i mission.[94] From the mid 1980s, the Universal House of Justice also began a more activist policy of addressing governments and the United Nations System in a series of statements on issues of global significance. The Universal House of Justice did not, however, present the statements in public speeches—in fact, the Universal House of Justice rarely if ever appears in public. The statements were presented in booklets or pamphlets, often of exquisite printing quality, and the approach was clearly a strategy reminiscent of Baha'u'llah's letters to the kings.

The first and one of the most significant of these statements was *The Promise of World Peace* from 1985.[95] It is a booklet in blue and gold with a beautiful print on buff, thick pages and addressed "To the Peoples of the World". In this statement, the Universal House of Justice denounces the materialistic side of both capitalism and communism, and promulgates the Baha'i principles of unity and equality; however, the style of expression is markedly less opulent than the Shoghi Effendi inspired, high Baha'i English used in internal messages of comparable significance. Ten years later, *The Promise of World Peace* was followed by *Turning Point For All Nations* on the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations in 1995.[96] This document also criticises current world affairs, and it contains a number of specific recommendations for strengthening the United Nations System.

The downfall of the Soviet Union, although not mentioned directly in *Turning Point For All Nations*, gave further room for optimism in the Universal House of Justice's *Ridvan* Message in 1992. Much of this message is concerned with the importance of involvement in social and economic development works, and the Universal House of Justice notes that there is an increasing call upon the Baha'is "to participate with others in a range of projects associated with governments

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[94] [Universal House of Justice], *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986*, pp. 601–604.

[95] Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace to the Peoples of the World*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985.

[96] *Turning Point for All Nations. A Statement of Bahá'í International Community on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations*, New York, Baha'i International Community, 1995.

or with non-governmental organizations".[97] Apparently, the Baha'is have realised, like many other religious groups before, that it may be profitable to join with other social actors to promote a particular "single issue" politics, for example peace or Human Rights.[98] The Baha'is have systematically adopted this strategy in connection with the series of World Summits, as discussed below.

This is, in my view, a policy more consonant with the prevailing attitudes of Abdu'l-Baha in for example *The Secrets of Divine Civilization*. It is a clearly world-affirming behaviour, quite far from Shoghi Effendi's view cited earlier—that if Baha'is "become involved in the issues the governments of the world are struggling over, they will be lost".

Parallel with these world political initiatives, the Baha'is have advocated for religious unity in a number of ecumenical *fora*, for example in the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders in New York, 28–31 August 2000.[99] Subsequently, in April 2002, the Universal House of Justice issued an open letter to the world's religious leaders.[100] The letter was an appeal for strengthening interfaith relations and co-operation based on what the Baha'is see as common ground for the different belief systems. The Universal House of Justice acknowledges that this process so far has lagged far behind the global political co-operation.

In Chapter 1, I note that as one of only four *religious* NGOs, the Baha'is were allowed to make a statement at the Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995. This could not have occurred unless the Baha'i message, which was no doubt consonant with the general message of the summit, was supported by efficient lobbying before the conference. The change from a world-rejecting to a more world-affirming position therefore may be an indication of growing confidence among Baha'is and of a desire to become less isolated. As I see it, during the 1990s the Baha'is have become decisively more visible in international affairs, and this might lower the preoccupation with the calamity theme among the Baha'is.

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[97] [Universal House of Justice], *A Wider Horizon*, p. 99.

[98] James A. Beckford, "Religious Movements and Globalization", in Robin Cohen and Shirin M. Rai (eds.), *Global Social Movements*, London, The Athlone Press, 2000, pp. 165–219.

[99] "Address to the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders", *The Bahá'í World 2000–2001*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 2002, pp. 235–241.

[100] Universal House of Justice, *To the World's Religious Leaders* [Open letter], [Haifa], Baha'i World Centre, April 2002. (BWC).

The harbouring of both world-affirming and world-rejecting atti-
tudes is not particular to the Baha'i religion, but is prevalent in most
mature millenarian movements. The underlying millenarian tone of
civilisation critique and the promise of a new world are persistent
in the Baha'i message, regardless of the Baha'i leadership's chang-
ing relationship with the world system of societies.

The World Summits

The series of eight United Nations world summits from 1990–1996
indicates that most nations world-wide are expressing an increasing
political interest in common issues pertinent to the creation of a sus-
tainable human society on a global scale.[101] For example, in 1997
the French government supported a high-level study group under
the aegis of UNESCO to analyse globalisation and to report on pol-
icy recommendations.[102] Several of the organisations in the United
Nations System have contributed to the current discussions with
expert studies on globalisation.[103] In the Copenhagen Declaration,
the governments of the world directly mentioned the various issues
raised by globalisation, and their relevance to the discussions at the
Social Summit:

> Globalization, which is a consequence of increased human mobility,
> enhanced communications, greatly increased trade and capital flows,
> and technological developments, opens new opportunities for sustained
> economic growth and development of the world economy, particularly
> in developing countries. Globalization also permits countries to share
> experiences and to learn from one another's achievements and difficulties,
> and promotes a cross-fertilization of ideals, cultural values and aspirations.

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[101] The eight UN world conferences were: World Summit for Children in 1990,
New York; United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992,
Rio de Janeiro; World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, Vienna; International
Conference on Population and Development in 1994, Cairo; World Summit for
Social Development in 1995, Copenhagen; Fourth World Conference on Women
in 1995, Beijing; Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat
II) in 1996, Istanbul; World Food Summit in 1996, Rome. An overview of these
conferences is found in *The World Conferences. Developing Priorities for the 21st Century*,
New York, United Nations, 1997.

[102] Yves Brunsvick and André Danzin, *Birth of a civilization. The shock of globaliza-
tion*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 1999.

[103] See for example UNESCO, http://www.unesco.org/most/globalisation, or
*Human resource implications of globalization and restructuring in commerce. Report for discussion
at the Tripartite Meeting on the Human Resource Implications of Globalization and Restructuring
in Commerce*, Geneva, International Labour Office, 1999.

At the same time, the rapid processes of change and adjustment have
been accompanied by intensified poverty, unemployment and social
disintegration. Threats to human well-being, such as environmental
risks, have also been globalized. Furthermore, the global transforma-
tions of the world economy are profoundly changing the parameters
of social development in all countries. The challenge is how to man-
age these processes and threats so as to enhance their benefits and
mitigate their negative effects upon people.[104]

The official conferences had assigned companion conferences, which
provided the participating NGOs with a new public arena for exhi-
bitions, discussions and negotiations of declarations—a process par-
allel to the discussions and negotiations carried out by the governments.
This interplay and synergy between governments and NGOs is in
itself characteristic of the political conditions of a world undergoing
globalisation.[105] The United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-
Ghali, even talked about the "new legitimacy of the organizations
of civil society as actors on the international scene".[106] It is possible
that the Secretary General also saw an interest in bypassing the states
by calling upon the NGOs. With the NGOs in the role of mediators,
the process of relativisation between "individuals" and "world system
of societies" could now proceed in *both* directions, as indicated by the
slanting double arrow in the dual global field model.

The Baha'is were among the most active NGOs at the summits,
in particular at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992), at the
Social Summit in Copenhagen (1995), and at the Conference on
Women in Beijing (1995). Typically, the Baha'is involved themselves
in the preparatory processes right from the beginning, in order to
gain maximum influence. Baha'i representatives often seem to have
been elected as chairpersons for preparatory committees, as shown
for example in the preparation for the NGO Forum on Women in
Huairou, near Beijing, in 1995:

Bahá'í participation in the Forum also began years before the actual
event. The Director of the Bahá'í International Community Office for
the Advancement of Women, Mary Power, chaired the NGO Committee
on the Status of Women in New York from 1991 to 1995 and served

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[104] *The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. World Summit for Social Development*,
New York, United Nations Department of Public Information, 1995, p. 5.
[105] Riva Krut, *Globalization and Civil Society. NGO Influence in International Decision-Making*,
Geneva, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1997.
[106] *The Bahá'í World, 1995–96*, p. 152.

on the Global Forum Facilitating Committee responsible for organizing the Forum. Another Bahá'í, Giovanni Ballerio, chaired the NGO Forum Working Group of the Committee on the Status of Women in Geneva. A Bahá'í International Community representative also acted as Rapporteur for the Asia/Pacific NGO Working Group in Bangkok. All over the world, Bahá'í communities participated in the regional forums leading up to Huairou.[107]

The summits did not mean, however, that other United Nations related business was neglected. In the four-year period between 1994–1997, the Baha'i International Community was represented at about 195 meetings sponsored by the United Nations and delivered 81 reports and written statements, alone or jointly with other NGOs.[108]

The Earth Summit

The Earth Summit, officially abbreviated UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development), took place 3–14 June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. This conference became trend setting in several ways: it was unusually big and complex, and it was the first of the summits that had a parallel NGO conference officially attached. The NGO conference, called the *92 Global Forum*, received unprecedented attention from the press.[109] At this conference, the Baha'is were successful in attracting publicity, in particular because of their involvement in the Peace Monument.[110] See Photo 15—*The Peace Monument at the '92 Global Forum, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, 1992.*

The Peace Monument is a five-metre tall concrete construction with two slender pyramids standing on top of each other; the top one is inverted, so that the entire structure resembles an hourglass. The top base is covered with ceramic tiles showing the ringstone symbol, a Baha'i symbol originally designed by Abdu'l-Baha, cf. Chapter 8. The top base cannot be seen from the ground, however;

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[107] *The Bahá'í World, 1995–96*, p. 147.
[108] *Bahá'í International Community 1994–1997. Quadrennial Report to the United Nations Economic and Social Council*, n.p. [New York], 1 June 1998. (Unpublished).
[109] *The World Conferences*, p. 7, pp. 20–26.
[110] Sources to the Peace Monument are: "Bahá'í Involvement at the Earth Summit". *The Bahá'í World 1992–93*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1993, pp. 177–189; *Participation of the Bahá'í International Community Office of the Environment in the Process Surrounding the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED/Earth Summit), December 1989–June 1992*, n.p. [New York], Baha'i International Community, n.d. [1992], pp. 85–92. (BWC).

the Peace Monument stands in a central place in a park across from the Santos Dumont airport, and the ringstone symbol is meant to be visible from the air. In the middle where the two pyramids meet, there is a glass section, in which soil samples from countries all over the world were deposited during the inauguration ceremony. One-by-one, children representing many different countries poured 1 kg of soil through an opening in the top base down into the hollow structure of the monument, so that samples of different colours and structure formed a pattern that was visible through the glass windows of the middle section. Forty-two soil samples were deposited at the inauguration ceremony; later, additional samples were deposited. The soil samples were acquired by the different national Baha'i communities who approached their respective governmental authorities for samples. The soil samples were therefore official state gifts taken from places of special national interest. In Denmark, the sample was taken from the northernmost part of Jutland at the tip of land where the North Sea and Skagerrak meet.[111] The Peace Monument received considerable coverage by the press; the monument became accepted as the official monument of the Global Forum, and in reality of the entire Earth Summit, since the media presented it this way.

The Baha'is had a clear mission scope with their participation:

> The office of the Environment [of the Baha'i International Community] never saw UNCED as an end in itself, but rather as a vehicle for the dissemination of the Bahá'í Teachings as they relate to the issues of sustainable development, and a high-profile process through which the renown of the Bahá'í International Community and the Bahá'í Faith would be further established.[112]

And they were conscious about selecting a central religious Baha'i doctrine that had a chance of winning general approval:

> In all its efforts throughout the UNCED process, the Bahá'í International Community persistently promoted acceptance of the principle of *the oneness of humanity* as an essential prerequisite to the achievement of sustainable development.[113]

The Baha'is drafted a statement called "The Most Vital Challenge"; this statement was read at the plenary of the UNCED by a Korean Baha'i

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[111] Lise Raben (the Danish Baha'i community) to Margit Warburg, e-mail, 10 February 2004.

[112] *Participation . . . (UNCED/Earth Summit)*, p. 9.

[113] *Participation . . . (UNCED/Earth Summit)*, p. 49.

woman and on behalf of other religious NGOs. Only thirteen of over 1,400 accredited NGOs gave oral statements at this occasion. Through effective lobbying of the NGO Liaison Officer, the Baha'is succeeded in gaining access to the plenary on the condition that their statement was endorsed by major religious NGOs who participated in the UNCED, such as the World Conference on Religion and Peace and the World Council of Churches. This endorsement was obtained after a sentence mentioning Baha'u'llah was excluded from the statement.[114]

The statement ends:

> The fundamental spiritual truth of our age is the oneness of humanity. Universal acceptance of this principle—with its implications for social and economic justice, universal participation in non-adversarial decision-making, peace and collective security, equality of the sexes, and universal education—will make possible the reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind.[115]

It is difficult to imagine a more clear-cut promulgation of Baha'i principles, yet they were presented on behalf of many other religious NGOs, and the presentation was apparently received favourably by several government delegations.[116] In the internal Baha'i report on the UNCED, there is a fairly detailed assessment of the Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development, in which the Baha'is concluded that many of the principles of the declaration were akin to the principles promoted by the Baha'i International Community in the preparatory conferences of the Earth Summit.[117] In fact, this assessment led the Baha'is to conclude:

> Clearly, no NGO in the entire UNCED process on the international level was identified as closely with the *Earth Charter* as was the Bahá'í International Community.[118]

This Baha'i strategy of embracing other religious NGOs would clearly be classified as liberal in Peter Beyer's typology of strategies for religious organisations facing the challenges of globalisation.[119] The success of this strategy was attributed to the effective and determined participation in preparatory conferences, including the act of identifying

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114 *Participation . . . (UNCED/Earth Summit)*, pp. 53–55.
115 *The Bahá'í World, 1992–93*, p. 192.
116 *Participation . . . (UNCED/Earth Summit)*, pp. 56–57.
117 *Participation . . . (UNCED/Earth Summit)*, pp. 26–39.
118 *Participation . . . (UNCED/Earth Summit)*, p. 36. The Earth Charter was later to develop into the Rio Declaration.
119 Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, London, Sage, 1994, pp. 70–96.

early in the process the importance of this document. However, the Baha'is were also aware of several of their own shortcomings and mistakes during the process, some of which were due to inadequate training of the staff, others because of the need to save funds.[120] The resources spent were considerable, in particular in the form of working hours of both volunteers and the salaried staff of the Baha'i International Community.[121] There is no total estimate of hours worked, except for the Office of the Environment (12,340 hours), but a conservative estimate from the information provided would be 20,000 hours of professional service and 30,000 hours of volunteer assistance. Brochures in four languages (Portuguese, English, Spanish, French) were printed, 485,000 copies altogether, and additional materials, such as books, reprints, T-shirts, posters, buttons and displays, were also costly. The costs for the Peace Monument itself were defrayed by the municipality (donation of the site etc.), the constructor (at least USD 26,000 in construction costs), the artist, and the company making the ceramic tiles with the ringstone symbol.[122]

The Social Summit

The World Summit for Social Development took place 6–12 March 1995 in Copenhagen. The meeting represented in several ways a milestone in international politics: it was the largest gathering of world leaders in history, and it was unusual with its universality in scope and level of ambition.[123] The Baha'i International Community was eager to repeat the success they had had in Rio, both at the summit itself and at the parallel NGO conference.[124] In February 1994, the director of the Baha'i International Community in New York, Mr. Lawrence Arturo, met with the national spiritual assembly in Denmark, and a "summit task force" was appointed to organise the Baha'i presence at the NGO Forum '95, which ran from 3 to 12 March.[125] The

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[120] *Participation . . . (UNCED/Earth Summit)*, pp. 76–79.

[121] *Participation . . . (UNCED/Earth Summit)*, pp. 10–16.

[122] *Participation . . . (UNCED/Earth Summit)*, pp. 85–86.

[123] *Social Policy and Social Progress. A Review Published by the United Nations. Special Issue on the Social Summit, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995*, New York, United Nations, 1996, pp. 3–11.

[124] *Participation . . . (UNCED/Earth Summit)*, pp. 6–7; *Participation of the Danish Bahá'í Community in the Process Surrounding the World Summit for Social Development. December 1993–March 1995*, n.p., n.d. [Copenhagen, 1995], p. 1. (NSA-DK).

[125] The preparatory process is well described in *Participation . . . Summit for Social Development*, pp. 1–6.

main exhibition area, called the Global Village, was in the spacious "Torpedo Hall", and here the Baha'is rented two booths, one in the name of the Baha'i International Community, the other one for the European Baha'i Youth Council. Two central statements from the Baha'i International Community were widely distributed at the NGO Forum, *The Prosperity of Humankind* and *World Citizenship*.[126] See Photo VIII—*The Baha'i International Community booth at the NGO Forum '95, Social Summit, Copenhagen.*

An office dedicated to the organisation of the NGO Forum '95 was established at the Baha'i centre in Hellerup, north of Copenhagen, and from August 1994, three people worked there full-time, forming a Baha'i summit task force. From the very beginning, the task force involved other European Baha'i communities in the process. Another main concern of the task force was to get the Baha'is involved with other Danish NGOs. This was no easy task, because as the Baha'is wrote themselves, religious groups are always regarded with suspicion in Denmark.[127] At a large meeting where 150 NGOs were represented, the Baha'is succeeded, however, in getting a leading role in an NGO coalition, called the NGO Peace Group.

In the end, the Baha'is held a prominent position in the NGO Forum '95: of around 940 scheduled events, the Baha'is were present under their own name at 20 events, apparently more than any other NGO, according to the programme of the NGO Forum '95.[128] In addition to these, the NGO Peace Group, in which the Baha'is had an influential position, arranged three events. Table 11.1 gives an overview of all these events, as they were announced in the official calendar of the NGO Forum '95. Most of these events covered topics with a liberal tinge, such as ethnic and gender equality, social integration, global economic issues, sustainable development, the role of education, conflict resolution according to the Baha'i principles etc. It is clear from this overview that the Baha'is had many opportunities to promote the inclusiveness of their social and economic principles.

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[126] "World Summit for Social Development", *The Bahá'í World 1994–95*, Haifa, Baha'i World Centre, 1996, pp. 37–46; *The Prosperity of Humankind*, n.p., Baha'i International Community, 1995; *World Citizenship. A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development*, New York, Baha'i International Community, n.d.

[127] *Participation . . . Summit for Social Development*, p. 1. The author of the report inferred that this was probably the reason why the Baha'is' offer to assist the official NGO Forum Secretariat with voluntary labour was declined.

[128] *NGO Forum '95 Official Calendar*, Copenhagen 3–12 March 1995 (unpublished).

Table 11.1. *Survey of events organised by the Baha'is at the Social Summit, Copenhagen 1995*

Day March	Organisation	Title and issues to be discussed—according to the English text in the *NGO Forum '95 Official Calendar*	Type of event	Room capacity
3	The Swedish Baha'i Community	Multicultural society—majority vs. minority. *Education, youth, refugees*	Workshop	25–50
4	The Danish Baha'i community	Meditation room	Reflection, meditation	50–100
4	Baha'i Community of Venezuela Int. educator, principal's train	Emerging Nations: The essential role of education. *Panel discussion, basic criteria for an effective edu. system, values, universal access, 21st cent. needs*	Workshop	25–50
6	The Danish Baha'i Community	Children's Forum. *The role of young in social integration.*	Panel discussion	100–200
6	European Baha'i Business Forum	Creating a Stable Environment for Economic Growth	Workshop	25–50
6	Baha'i Community of Venezuela Int. educator, principal's train	Emerging Nations: The essential role of education. *Action planning on the basis of criteria developed in the first session*	Seminar	25–50
7	The Danish Baha'i Community	Children's Forum. *The role of young in social integration.*	Panel discussion	100–200
7	Baha'i International Community USA	Participatory Techniques for Social Integration: UNIFEM Project, Case-study. *Organizational behavioural change gender Integration*	Workshop	50–100
8	The Danish Baha'i Community	Children's Forum. *The role of young in social integration.*	Panel discussion	100–200
8	The Swedish Baha'i Community	Clashes of culture. *The role of women; the concept of family; the family structure in agricultural and industrial society*	Workshop	50–100

. . . continued from previous page

Table 11.1. *Survey of events organised by the Baha'is at the Social Summit, Copenhagen 1995*

Day March	Organisation	Title and issues to be discussed—according to the English text in the *NGO Forum '95 Official Calendar*	Type of event	Room capacity
9	The Danish Baha'i Community	Children's Forum. *The role of young in social integration*	Panel discussion	100–200
9	NGO Peace Group	Ethics of Peace. *Democratization of the UN (Women's Int. League for Peace and Freedom). Ethics of Peace (Baha'i)*		100–200
9	Baha'i International Community USA	Participatory Techniques for Social Integration Project Case-study. *Organizational behavioural change; gender integration*	Workshop	50–100
9	European Baha'i Business Forum	The Role of Business in Social Development	Workshop	25–50
10	NGO Peace Group	Resolution of conflicts. *The creative resolution of conflict (Baha'i)*	Workshop	100–200
10	The Swedish Baha'i Community	Education and social reconstruction. *Education, social integration, development, youth*	Workshop	25–50
10	European Baha'i Business Forum	Emerging Values for a Global Economy	Workshop	25–50
10	The Danish Baha'i Community	Omeja Lily [Omid Djalili] & Conrad Lambert. *Stand Up Comedy*	Cultural event	300–400
11	NGO Peace Group	Human Rights. *Human Rights (ex-Yugoslavia) (Baha'i)*		100–200
11	The Swedish Baha'i Community	From dominance to partnership. *Equality, human rights, education*	Workshop	25–50
11	European Baha'i Business Forum	Encouraging Entrepreneurship in Women	Workshop	25–50
12	The Swedish Baha'i Community	Violence and Social Education. *Violence and education*	Workshop	25–50
3–12	The Danish Baha'i Community	Open House at the Baha'i Centre		40

Costs and Benefits of Participation in the United Nations Summits

The Baha'is were apparently quite successful in gaining influence at the United Nations summits, an influence that stood far above the number of persons they represented. Both in Rio de Janeiro and in Copenhagen, the Baha'i activism appeared to be professionally organised and evaluated, and the Baha'i International Community must be credited with efficiency and determination in its lobbying work. The Baha'is concentrated on promoting main-line views, seeking to influence opinion leaders and arguing that the Baha'i principles offer possible solutions to the issues debated. At the same time, this strategy induced the sentiment among the Baha'is themselves that their principles are shared by so many that they are bound to become adopted by the majority, eventually.

However, this strategy may also backfire. Jim Beckford concludes in his book on religion in the advanced society of today that "it is nowadays better to conceptualize religion as a cultural resource or form than as a social institution".[129] What the Baha'is hope to offer the United Nations System is primarily a cultural resource, a well of ideas, concepts and worldviews, which may appeal so broadly that things begin to change. However, as exemplified at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the broad appeal can only succeed if the belief in Baha'u'llah is not part of the message, in that case "The Most Vital Challenge", where the Baha'is had to exclude a sentence mentioning Baha'u'llah. Like other religious groups working in broad NGO alliances, the Baha'i recipe for influence seems to be a self-imposed secularisation, meaning that the religious Baha'i profile is downplayed in favour of a more secular profile. This is in line with an observation made by one of the Danish informants, but in another context:

> My parents said that we agree on many things in Baha'i, but that that is no reason for becoming a member of a club.[130]

So, the risk of the Baha'i strategy is that the Baha'is may become too successful, in the sense that the messages carried forward are shared by so many others that it passes unnoticed that the Baha'is

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[129] James A. Beckford, *Religion and Advanced Industrial Society*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 171.

[130] Interview with a 34-year-old woman, 15 January 1982.

stand for not only these ideas, but that they actually offer a complete religion to go with the plans of reforming the world. People may simply ask: Why become a Baha'i if you already feel that you contribute to the improvement of world conditions through the generally accepted political channels?

A World Civil Religion?

The world summits constituted a considerable strain on the resources of the Baha'i communities involved and, compared with other significant international lobbyists, the Baha'is probably must make do with meagre resources. It remains to be demonstrated that the activism at the United Nations summits has led to any long-term strengthening of Baha'i as an organised religion. The Baha'is seem to have the ears of some international politicians, though most often from smaller third-world countries and rarely from Western powers. Unfortunately for the Baha'is, opinion leaders sharing the "political" Baha'i views usually do not buy the religion lock, stock and barrel.

Globalisation, among other things, has led to an intensification of the issue of establishing world civil religious values, such as human rights. The modern concept of human rights is rooted in the discussions of natural law of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, influenced by earlier Christian theological considerations on human nature. Human rights are core humanistic ideals in Western philosophical thinking, and they have widely attained a kind of higher moral status. I agree with James Spickard that this seems to have lifted human rights above ordinary articles in international conventions, with the result that in the eyes of many "human rights beliefs are essentially religious."[131] Other political and humanitarian values that are shared and praised by influential nations of the world may likewise eventually be regarded to have a similar status.

In his famous paper on American civil religion, Robert Bellah concluded:

> So far the flickering flame of the United Nations burns too low to be the focus of a cult, but the emergence of a genuine trans-national sovereignty would certainly change this. It would necessitate the incorporation

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[131] James V. Spickard, "Human Rights, Religious Conflict, and Globalization. Ultimate Values in a New World Order", *MOST Journal on Multicultural Societies*, vol. 1, 1999, http://www.unesco.org/most/vl1n1spi.htm.

of vital international symbolism into our civil religion, or, perhaps a better way of putting it, it would result in American civil religion becoming simply one part of a new civil religion of the world. It is useless to speculate on the form such a civil religion might take, though it obviously would draw on religious traditions beyond the sphere of Biblical religion alone.[132]

Many of the Baha'i teachings are congruent with American societal values, the international and universalist symbolism is salient, and inclusiveness of religious traditions is a hallmark for the Baha'is. Internationally, the Baha'is stand for idealistic principles that might gain broad acceptance. With Bellah's words in mind, the Baha'i vision of a new world order has similarities with a world civil religion. This, of course, is not the same as saying that such a world civil religion is a necessity for establishing a more peaceful and prosperous world than we have at present, nor that a possible world religion will be built on Baha'is principles.

Citizens of the World

In 1892, Baha'u'llah finished his last book, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*. In this book, Baha'u'llah summarised what he considered the most central parts of his teachings. Above all was the unification of mankind: "The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch".[133] This was a goal that "excelleth every other goal".[134] Baha'is are committed to work for this goal; it is a moral and religious plight, and it should be carried through by convincing both fellow citizens and political authorities about the virtues of the Baha'i principles for making the world a better and safer place to live in. This Baha'i vision of a unified world with a supra-national political authority raises, however, the question of universal rights and duties of the inhabitants of earth and the question of legitimacy of the world rule. The unification of humankind into one global polity therefore is intimately connected with the question of world citizenship.

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[132] Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America", *Dædalus*, vol. 96, 1967, pp. 1–21 (quotation, p. 18).
[133] Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 14.
[134] Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 14.

To Be a World Citizen

In a North Alaskan Baha'i community, the Baha'is have published a song about being world citizens:

World Citizens[135]

By Phil Lucas

CHORUS:

Glory in this: That you love your country:
Glory in this: . . . that you love mankind.
We're the fruits of only one tree,
And the leaves of just one branch.

World citizens, . . . World citizens
Unity. . . . . the world cries for unity
Its rays are dawning like the sun . . .
soon the world will be one!

CHORUS

In unity, . . . that's how the world should be:
All its peoples live as one . . .
 . . . like fragrant flowers in the sun!

CHORUS

When the Alaskan Baha'is are singing about world citizens and a humanity craving for unity, they are drawing upon a long tradition. The expression of being a citizen of the world is as old as it is inexact. The term *kosmou politês*, which in Greek means world citizen, was used already in antiquity as a self-labelling term by philosophers of the Cynic school.[136] It was further developed by the Stoics and has continued to influence Western philosophical thinking.

British merchants of the period of Enlightenment, who grew rich and influential from their entrepreneurial engagement in the cross-Atlantic trade of merchandise and slaves, also left behind them a

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[135] *The Great Alaskan Bahá'í Songbook*, vol. 1, n.p., National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Alaska, Office of Youth and Child Development, 1995. (Unpublished). I wish to thank David Piff for directing me to this song about world citizens.

[136] Martha Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism", *Boston Review*, vol. 19, no. 5, 1994, http://www.phil.uga.edu/faculty/wolf/nussbaum1.htm. Accessed 21 January 1998.

reputation of being "citizens of the world".[137] A citizen of the world was a man who was not confined by local tradition but who had a wider outlook and was free to engage himself in useful business anywhere. Their congenial descendants are the members of a new international social class of managers, entrepreneurs and financiers, who have become increasingly visible and powerful with the liberation of trade and financial barriers since the mid-1990s.[138]

In the wake of the Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995, the Danish foreign minister arranged a series of international seminars on the issue of social progress in the world. The seminars focused on "a reflection and dialogue on the moral principles and political orientation required by social progress for all".[139] The seminars also considered the meaning of "citizen of the world" and the role of such a personality in the process of building a world community. There are probably many different opinions about the qualities of a "citizen of the world", but in a Baha'i context, the views of the Social Summit seminars are interesting. Like the antique philosophers and the industrious merchants, the "citizens of the world" of the Social Summit seminars see no contradiction between an attachment to a local place and the sense of belonging to the world; citizens of the world are what I would call "cosmo-locals".[140]

In other respects, however, the general image of a citizen of the world has changed since the 1700s; it has become equated with more noble affairs than the striving to become a gentleman through profit on the trade of sugar, slaves and other commercial items. According to the Social Summit seminar, it is not the class of international businesswomen and -men who are labelled citizens of the world, but

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[137] David Hancock, *Citizens of the World. London merchants and the integration of the British Atlantic community, 1735–1785*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 20, p. 395.

[138] Hancock points to the striking similarities between the mode of operation of the British merchants of the eighteenth century and the present-day international business elite, both managing global operations on a loosely bound set of ventures and associations, and a strong emphasis on practical, flexible *ad hoc* action. Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 395–396. See also Jacques Baudot (ed.), *Building a World Community. Globalisation and the Common Good*, Copenhagen, Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000, pp. 108–111.

[139] Baudot, *Building a World Community*. Quotation from the preface, p. 5.

[140] Baudot, *Building a World Community*, p. 115; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 13–18. The expression "cosmo-locals" is briefly developed and discussed in Chapter 3.

a loose cosmopolitan group of new idealists concerned with the
miserable state of world affairs.[141] These idealists are apparently con-
vinced about the effect of a Kantian moral imperative:

> [Citizens of the world] are of the view that a planetary citizenhood is
> being slowly created when dedicated individuals participate in great
> causes such as the management of the global commons, the promo-
> tion of human rights, the alleviation of human misery, or the master-
> ing of scientific and technological progress.
>   [. . .] It is both idealistic and realistic to develop an intellectual under-
> standing of the contours of a future world citizenhood.[142]

The Baha'is had developed their own understanding of world citi-
zenhood earlier, in fact, much earlier. Juan Cole has noted that the
Baha'i thinking in terms of world citizens stretches at least back to
Baha'u'llah's long and important *Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd* written 31 December
1881.[143] Baha'u'llah here repeats his call for an international security
system and the adoption of a universal language, and he argues, in
the best of the tradition of Enlightenment, that through education,
people will perceive the kinds of measures that promote welfare,
security and peace for humankind. Baha'u'llah therefore praises those
leaders and ordinary persons, who listened to his message and recog-
nised the need for these international reforms:

> The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to pro-
> mote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth. In
> another passage He hath proclaimed: It is not for him to pride him-
> self who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the
> whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.[144]

So, the Baha'is could draw on a long tradition when, in June 1993,
they submitted to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable
Development a document called *World Citizenship: A Global Ethic for
Sustainable Development*.[145] With the document *Turning Point for All*

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[141] Baudot, *Building a World Community*, pp. 113–116.
[142] Baudot, *Building a World Community*, pp. 115–116.
[143] Juan R. I. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium. The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in
the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998, pp.
131–135; [Baha'u'llah], "Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd (Tablet of Maqṣúd)", in [Baha'u'llah],
Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust,
1988, pp. 159–178.
[144] [Baha'u'llah], "Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd" (quotation, p. 167).
[145] *World Citizenship. A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development*, New York, Baha'i
International Community, n.d..; *The Bahá'í World 1993–94*, pp. 295–304.

Nations, the Baha'is, already before the Social Summit, had formu-
lated a global political agenda very much in tune with the Social
Summit meaning of a "citizen of the world".

A Call for World Citizens

In a review of the development since the Copenhagen Summit,
researchers from the United Nations Research Institute for Social
Development conclude that social policy must be integrated with
economic development to the benefit of both.[146] However, they also
note that:

> there are simply no structures of global governance that can enforce
> many of the rules, or implement the social policies, associated with
> modern government. To this one must be added the absence of global
> institutions that meet the demand for democratic governance, which
> is still largely a national practice and highly valued.[147]

All this must sound good for the Baha'is. The basic Baha'i idea of
the unification of the world and most of the instruments and poli-
cies involved in this process towards what the Baha'is call the Lesser
Peace seem to be part of a broader trend. Within the United Nations
System and its associated institutions, such ideas are indeed pro-
moted all the time, as judged from the flow of relevant documents
and working papers. Only a cynic (a true citizen of the world accord-
ing to the ancient Greek philosophers!) might remark that the United
Nations bureaucracy thereby also creates arguments for its own benefit
and growth.

However, the concept, citizens of the world, now seems so widely
applied, in particular at festive occasions, that for the general pub-
lic the words do not bear any strong connection to Baha'i ideas, if
they ever have. The Baha'is may simply be facing the risk that their
high-profile ideas become so widely shared by so many people that
the particular Baha'i perspective will be overlooked. More than 14,000
international participants representing 186 countries attended the
Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. A few of them might

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[146] Thandika Mkandawire and Virginia Rodríguez, *Globalization and Social Development
after Copenhagen: Premises, Promises and Policies*, Geneva, United Nations Research
Institute for Social Development, 2000, pp. 28–29.

[147] Mkandawire and Rodríguez, *Globalization and Social Development after Copenhagen*,
p. 29.

have seen the young Baha'is at the *NGO-Forum '95* wearing their blue sweatshirts with "Baha'i World Citizen" on the back, but even without having paid the NGO-Forum a visit, the Copenhagen Declaration itself shows that the idea of world citizens was not alien to the state delegates. Paragraph 12 in the preamble of the Copenhagen Declaration reads:

> We commit ourselves to this Declaration and Programme of Action for enhancing social development and ensuring human well-being for all throughout the world now and into the twenty-first century. We invite all people in all countries and in all walks of life, as well as the international community, to join us in our common cause.[148]

See Photo 16—*Young Baha'is wearing world citizen sweatshirts, NGO Forum '95, Social Summit, Copenhagen.*

For seven days in March 1995, a dreary place in the backyard of Wonderful Copenhagen had its moment in history: "For the first time in history" heads of state and governments from nearly all countries of the world verbally recognised their common interest in the promotion of social development and social justice world-wide.[149] The Social Summit was a historical event of significant symbolic meaning because of its focus on issues that concerned people on the earth as *citizens*. The representatives of the governments spoke to the people of this planet as citizens, by calling upon their participation in the common cause. This is an important distinction: subjects are not invited to political participation, only citizens are. The address was symbolic, of course, because the rights of a citizenship are still largely confined to the individual national state. Nevertheless, all people in all countries were appealed to as if they were citizens—citizens of the world.

Who those citizens will be and how many of them will accept the Baha'i version of a world citizen, only the future can tell.

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[148] *The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. World Summit for Social Development*, New York, United Nations Department of Public Information, 1995, p. 5.
[149] *The Copenhagen Declaration*, p. 3.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Citizens of the World is a historical-sociological monograph on the Baha'i religion and its adherents from a globalisation perspective. In Chapter 1, I argued that there was a need for such a book and I also introduced the readers to the Baha'i religion. The chapter concluded with some methodological considerations concerning the study of such a complex phenomenon as a religion and its believers.

In Chapter 2, I presented an overview of the most important literature in the study of Baha'i. The chapter also addressed the current discussion of where to place Baha'i in a typology of religious groups. I concluded that Baha'i is hardly a new religious movement or a derivative of Islam, but is most meaningfully classified as a distinct religion. Finally, the chapter touched upon some of the issues in Baha'i studies stemming from the fact that scholars who are Baha'is themselves have to accept that their work is previewed.

The Dual Global Field Model and the Structure of the Book

The dual global field model was presented in Chapter 3, stemming from a discussion of theories on religion and globalisation. It is a general model of transnational religious organisations and globalisation, and as such, it should be seen as a contribution to the discussion of religion and globalisation.[1] In the present study of the Baha'is, I have also used a shifting focus on the different elements of the model as a way of systematising the analyses of the material from a globalisation perspective. This use of the dual global field model has provided a basis for a broad coverage of Baha'i, fulfilling the book's aim to be a monograph on this religion and its believers.

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[1] Margit Warburg, "Religion and Globalisation, or Globalisation and Religion?", in Armin W. Geertz, Margit Warburg, and Dorthe Refslund Christensen (eds.), *New Religions and Globalization. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press (forthcoming).

The Historical Development of the Baha'i Inner Global Field

The use of the dual global field model as a structuring principle began in Chapter 4, the first part of which included a diachronic perspective on the development of the Baha'i inner global field. The history of the Babis has been told in more depth by others, and the exposition in this part of the book did not claim to be original historical research in itself; it was meant to be an overview of the main development. Apart from a needed critical review of the most important literature on the Babi period, the chapter contained an original analysis of how the Baha'is understand and seek identity in the accounts of the Shaykh Tabarsi battles. By translating and editing *The Dawn-Breakers*, Shoghi Effendi gave the Baha'is a historical drama of bravery, suffering and death—a drama that Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, described as a "stirring episode, so glorious for the Faith".[2] This drama from the heroic past is part of the Baha'is' collective remembrance.

The general exposition of the history of the Baha'is in Chapter 5 included the development of the core doctrines of the Baha'i religion. Any monograph on Baha'i would be incomplete without at least a summarised presentation of the most important works by Baha'u'llah, Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi. In the same chapter, I also discussed the Baha'i thinking on state and religion and Shoghi Effendi's creation of Baha'i sacred language. I further considered and placed the different Baha'i administrative bodies in relation to the dual global field model.

Chapter 5 ended with an analysis of the Baha'i membership data, providing a new quantitative, detailed account of the number of Baha'is world-wide, including an assessment of the number of active Baha'is out of the claimed five million Baha'is. The resulting estimate of about one million active Baha'is was based on an analysis of the best available data from the Baha'is themselves. I hope that this conclusion will initiate a balanced and informed debate on how membership data of religious groups should be reported in an unbiased and informative way. It would also be interesting to compare these findings with data on other religions: if it is true that only 20% of the registered Baha'is are active members, would this be much different from the situation in most other religious organisations?

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[2] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995, p. 42.

A National Baha'i Community

The Danish Baha'i community served as the focus of the case study presented in this book. The case study in itself probably places the Danish Baha'i community among the most thoroughly researched Baha'i communities in the world, and it is a contribution to the tradition of community studies in anthropology and sociology of religion. However, the study of the Danish Baha'is has also yielded results that reflect some general trends in modern Baha'i, both on a European level and on a global level. This became obvious towards the end of the case study, where results from Chapters 6, 8 and 9 were viewed together in a discussion of the current situation of the Baha'is world-wide with respect to growth in membership.

The historical research into the Danish Baha'i community, which comprised the first half of Chapter 6, demonstrated the importance of the personal qualities of the first missionaries for building up a new religious group in a country. It also illustrated the importance of migration for a small religious group, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The influx of Iranian immigrants in 1961 gave a needed boost to the Baha'i community, but it also initiated a demographic change in the national and ethnic profile of the Danish Baha'i community. The detailed quantitative demographic analysis of the Danish Baha'i community showed in greater detail, than is normally seen for religious groups, the long-term effects of conversion and migration rates. I developed a demographic equation for religious groups to account for these observations and for projecting possible future demographic scenarios for the Danish Baha'i community.

In general terms, the demographic analysis indicated that small religious groups with strong international ties and a positive attitude towards migration of members, in the long run, might become dominated by nationalities other than that of the majority population. This presumably decreases the potential for attracting proselytes from the majority population, but more studies are needed.

The Level of the Individuals

The synchronic analysis began in Chapter 7, on the level of the individuals. In a Western society, conversion to a new religion is not dictated by a village chief or the head of an extended family, it is normally an individual affair. The study of conversion to Baha'i among the Danish Baha'i informants presented an opportunity to

address a number of issues of general interest in conversion studies. One of the issues was the question of the reliability of conversion accounts as sources; here I argued, in line with George W. Brown, for the need to distinguish between situational and distal causality in the interpretation of conversion accounts. While distal causality information may be problematic as a source because of the informant's later re-interpretation of the conversion process, situational causality may yield useful information about the conversion process.

The conversion accounts of the Danish Baha'is were used to quantify different ways of joining a religious group, inside or outside the personal network, and these results could be related to seekership behaviour. The concept of seekership is commonly referred to in conversion studies, and the present study provided a needed critical assessment of the definition of seekers. This definition was validated by data on seekers and non-seekers, based on their behaviour in contacting religious groups.

After conversion, the individual Baha'i must establish his or her belonging to the Baha'i community. This was the topic of Chapter 8. I suggested that belonging is manifested in the three dimensions called knowing, doing and being, and that these dimensions are reflected in both attitudes and behaviour. An illustrative example is the central religious ordinance of the fast, which the Danish Baha'is follow and interpret in different and sometimes unorthodox ways. In addition, I found that Baha'i attitudes are consonant with liberal and universalist values; Many Baha'is are concerned with world affairs and express a sense of belonging to the world—these are the kinds of attitudes characterised in this book as those of 'citizens of the world'.

The Level of the National Baha'i Community

The individual Baha'i's participation in the Baha'i community life strengthens his or her belonging and it is important for the cohesion of the group. The Danish Baha'is are socially quite active; only a minority are inactive in the sense that they never show up at the Baha'i feasts. However, more is needed than participation and the cosy feeling of Baha'i *Gemeinschaft* at a holy day arrangement; it is also necessary to mobilise the resources of the Baha'is, which was the central theme of Chapter 9. In order to run the Baha'i organisation and, not the least, to do efficient proselytising, the Baha'is

must contribute with their own resources in the form of time, labour and money.

The relative amount of resources spent on different needs in the long-term development of a religious community was analysed by a new graphic model, which presented *Gemeinschaft*-oriented and *Gesellschaft*-oriented activities as two axes perpendicular to each other. This model, which I introduced in the brief theoretical section on *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* in Chapter 3, stresses Ferdinand Tönnies' original perception of these paired concepts as complementary. A detailed resource analysis of the Danish Baha'i community showed that while the Baha'is on the average are fairly generous in spending their time on Baha'i activities, their willingness to spend money does not match the need for effective administration and proselytising. This seems to be part of a wider financial crisis in the Baha'i organisation world-wide and not particularly miserly Danish behaviour with respect to fuelling the Baha'i cause.

The Level of the International Baha'i Institutions

Chapter 10 on the Baha'i World Centre sharply moved the perspective from the local community level in the Baha'i global field to the international Baha'i organisation. This is a part of the Baha'i religion that has been sparingly treated in the literature, and the material deserves to be described and discussed in some detail. Chapter 10 provided a rare look inside a well-tuned religious organisation driven by hard-working, dedicated women and men. This organisation functions behind the scene; the scene itself is the spectacular religious metropolis that the Baha'is have established on Mount Carmel. It attracts both believers and non-believers by its unique architectural aesthetics with the Shrine of the Bab and the eighteen terraces as the centrepiece. The Baha'i religious metropolis harbours some of the most important places to visit on the Baha'i pilgrimage, and it is the home of the supreme religious authority of the Baha'i religion, the Universal House of Justice.

The Baha'i vision of the Most Great Peace, a world united in the image of the Baha'i organisation, spurs them to work for this utopian vision at all levels of society, thereby linking the Baha'i inner global field with the general, outer global field. Selected examples of these connections were presented and discussed in Chapter 11. Like other proselytising religions, the Baha'is combine mission with development

projects, and they have had some success with this strategy in many rural communities of the poorer countries of the world. In the West, the Baha'i strategy is in line with that of many other idealistic international non-governmental organisations. This strategy is a well-proven mix of daily lobbying and activism at spectacular international events. The Baha'is seem to have gained some influence in the promulgation of Baha'i principles in different calls orchestrated by the United Nations for making this world a better and more peaceful place to live in.

The Baha'is have been particularly active at the series of World Summits, where the United Nations System and international diplomacy gave civil society an unusual opportunity to influence the world system of societies. On those occasions, the Baha'is took it upon themselves to be a role model, in compliance with their doctrines and prevailing attitudes, the role model of citizens of the world.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW SURVEY

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW SURVEY

In order to conduct a systematic study focussing on the members of the Danish Baha'i community, I asked the Danish Baha'i community for access to their full list of its members. The national spiritual assembly agreed to this after some discussion, including an agreed upon procedure that would respect members who did not wish to participate.[1] I wrote a letter—in Danish and English—describing the planned survey and my study of the Baha'is in general. On 1 August 1980, the national spiritual assembly mailed this letter together with their own letter of support, in Danish or English, to each of the 183 persons who were registered adult members (21 years or older) on that date. The letter from the national spiritual assembly invited everybody to attend an information meeting to be held two weeks later at the Baha'i centre in Hellerup, north of Copenhagen. The meeting included brief presentations made by a member of the national spiritual assembly, two of my colleagues and me. About 80 members participated in the meeting.

Moreover, the letter from the national spiritual assembly specified that members who did not want to participate, and who informed the assembly of this at the latest 20 days after the issue of the letter, would have their names and addresses deleted from the list before I was allowed access to it. Only 10 Danish Baha'is actively refused to participate at that stage of the investigation.

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[1] The procedure and my communication with the Danish Baha'i community before the interviews began are discussed in more detail in Margit Warburg, "Formidling som en del af forskningsprocessen. Om et religionssociologisk forsk-ningsprojekt: Baha'i i Danmark" [Communication as part of the research process. On a research project in the sociology of religion: Baha'i in Denmark], in Karl Krarup and Olaf Rieper (eds.), *Formidling og anvendelse af samfundsforskningen*, Copenhagen, Nyt fra samfundsvidenskaberne, 1983, pp. 129–141.

Establishing the Group of Informants

In 1980–1981, I attempted to contact each of the 173 members on the list I had been given. In nine cases, no contact could be established because the addresses were not current. Six people replied that they did not consider themselves to be Baha'is, although they had not formally withdrawn. These 15 people therefore were not included among potential interviewees, and the list was thereby reduced to 158 potential participants.

Among these 158 people, three had emigrated permanently in the meantime and seven had left the country for a longer period, so they were not available for interviews, and one had died. This left 147 people who, in theory, were available for an interview. Among these, 22 declined to be interviewed, while 125 agreed; however, in five cases the interviews were cancelled eventually by the interviewee (usually because of lack of time). The result was 120 completed interviews from 147 potential interviewees, which gives a response rate of 82%.

Representativeness of the 120 Informants

In the spring of 1981, I obtained—with co-operation from the secretary of the Danish Baha'i community—a complete, anonymous record of the gender and national background of all the registered Baha'is. At that time, the community had 184 members, including those who had declined to be interviewed. This information enabled me to validate the representativeness of the interviewees, by comparing the gender and national background of the 120 informants with the distribution of the same variables for the total community of 184 Baha'is. The result is shown in Table A1.1, and it is immediately clear from the table that the distributions of gender and nationality (e.g., Danish, Iranian and other nationalities) among the interviewees are very close to what would be expected from a randomly drawn sample.

In 1992 and 1999, I examined the membership status of the same 120 informants (Table A1.2) and found that the majority of them were still members of the Danish Baha'i community (1992: 83 informants; 1999: 71 informants). As is apparent in Table A1.2, quite a few of the interviewees missing in 1992 and 1999 had emigrated,

Table A1.1. *Demographic data of the 120 Danish Baha'i interviewees (Numbers in parentheses are expected values for a sample of 120 persons randomly drawn from the population of 184 Baha'is in Denmark in 1981)*

Nationality	Number of Baha'is					
	Women		Men		All	
Danes	54	(51.5)	33	(35.9)	87	(87.4)
Iranians	7	(9.8)	11	(10.4)	18	(20.2)
Other nationalities	7	(5.2)	8	(7.2)	15	(12.4)
Sum	68	(66.5)	52	(53.5)	120	(120.0)

Table A1.2. *Later membership status of 120 informants originally interviewed in 1981–1982*

Status of informants	1992			1999		
National background	Danes	Other[a]	All	Danes	Other[a]	All
Still member	59	24	83	50	23	71
Emigrated	6	6	12	6	8	14
Dead	4	0	4	10	1	11
No voting right	3	0	3	3	1	4
Resigned	10	1	11	18	2	20
No information	5	2	7	0	0	0
Sum	87	33	120	87	33	120

[a] Both Iranians and other nationalities

most of them permanently, and with the passing of time, some had died. As late as 1999, only 20 of the 120 informants had resigned.

In the same period, 1981 to 1999, the total number of Baha'is grew only from 184 to 252, cf. Table 6.1. Seventy-one (28%) of the 252 members were from among the original informants. In the case of the native Danish Baha'is, 50 of the 126 members in 1999 (40%) were the original informants. In particular, the group of native Danish Baha'i informants, therefore, to a great extent (except with respect to age), can be considered to be representative of the group of Danes in the Danish Baha'i community in 1999.

The Interview Environment

The interviews with the 120 informants from the Danish Baha'i community were carried out as individual, personal interviews in the period from June 1981 to November 1982. The interviewers included three student assistants and me, and in nearly all cases, we conducted the interviews in the interviewees' homes. In a few instances, this was not possible; for example, one Baha'i insisted on the interview taking place in a shop where she worked, and some were interviewed at my office instead, for practical reasons. In those rare instances when the interviewee was not alone with the interviewer, the third person was in most cases an infant.

The average duration of the interviews was 2.0 hours, ranging from 0.6 to 4.0 hours. The interviews were conducted in Danish or English, according to the choice of the interviewee, and questionnaires in both Danish and English had been prepared. In two cases, a family member acted as interpreter between Persian and English. In general, the interviews went smoothly, also when non-Danish Baha'is were interviewed, and the number of really difficult interviews was limited to about three cases in all.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 87 questions, with half of them including sub-questions. Most questions were close-ended questions, with options of reply coded in advance; however, the interviewees were also encouraged to comment on many of these questions, and their comments were noted immediately by the interviewer. Some of the open-ended questions required only a brief qualitative answer, as was the case, for example, for Q14: *What is your present work* (earlier work if no present work)? ("Q14" refers to question number 14 in the questionnaire). These answers were recorded immediately by the interviewer. However, 27 of the questions called for answers that were more elaborate. Some of these were meant to be the basis for an unstructured mini-interview, such as Q27: *How did you become a Baha'i?* The answers to the extended questions were not audio-taped, but notes were taken, and the answers were recorded separately in writing by the interviewer the same day, immediately after the interview. Each completed interview therefore consists of a completed

questionnaire, usually with extra notes added, plus from 2 to 10 typed pages containing the extended answers.

When the interviews were completed, the questionnaires were edited to ensure anonymity before further treatment of the data.

Summary of the Questionnaire

The following is the English version of the questionnaire; questions are in italics, remarks to the questions, for example, that a question was only posed to the Iranian participants, are given in parentheses or in the footnotes.[2]

Q1. Interviewee's gender (this was noted by the interviewer).
Q2. *When did you become a member of a Baha'i community?*
Q3. *Where were you born?*
     In what year were you born?
     (If born outside Denmark) *In what year did you come to Denmark?*
     Of which country are you a citizen?
Q4. *What is your marital status?*
Q5. *Have you been married more than once? If yes, how many times have you been married?*
Q6. Questions concerning present (last) marriage.[3]
Q7. Questions concerning previous marriages.[4]
Q8. Questions concerning children.[5]
Q9. *Who lives in your household?*
Q10. *How many years did you go to school?*
     Did you leave school with an exam? (which)
Q11. *Which schools did you enter?* (only Danes)
Q12. *How did you do your military service? When?* (only men)
Q13. *Are you engaged in or have you completed your professional training?*

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[2] A few misprints and linguistic imperfections in the original version have been corrected.

[3] The question contained the following sub-questions, *When did you get married? Was it a Baha'i-marriage? Is your husband/wife a member of a Baha'i community? When did he/she become a member?* The questions served to distinguish between four cases, a) both husband and wife were already Baha'is when they married, b) both husband and wife became Baha'is after their marriage, c) the interviewee was a Baha'i at the time of marriage, and the spouse became a Baha'i in the course of their marriage, d) the spouse was not a Baha'i.

[4] The question contained the same sub-questions as in Q6, except for the addition of the question, *How did the marriage end?* (by divorce or by death of spouse).

[5] The question contained sub-questions concerning the number of children, the date of birth of each child, the names of each child, including asking whether it is a Baha'i name or not, and the sub-question, *Are the children Baha'is?*

Q14. *What is your present work?* (earlier work if no present work)

Q15. *Do you now have or have you had a part-time or a full-time job?*

Q16. *Describe your job in greater detail.*

Q17. *What is/was your job?*

Q18. *Is/was your place of work privately or publicly owned?*

Q19. *How many employees are/were there altogether at your place of work, including yourself?*

Q20. *Do/did you have anybody working under you at your place of work?* (If yes) *How many?*

Q21. *Is there anybody at your place of work who knows that you are a Baha'i?* (question framed in past tense, if interviewee has no present work) (If yes) *How many?*

Q22. *What was your income before deductions and taxes in 1980?*

Q23. (If interviewee is or was married) *What is the present/last job of your husband/wife?* (present or last spouse).

Q24. *Describe briefly the chief occupation of your father and mother during your own childhood and youth.*

Q25. *What is/was your father's religious standing?*

Q26. *What is/was your mother's religious standing?*

Q27. *How did you become a Baha'i?* (extended question)

Q28. *Can you name one or more persons who were particularly influential in making you become a Baha'i?*

Q29. *How did your family react when you became a Baha'i?* (extended question) (If family reacted negatively) *What did they object to when you became a Baha'i?*

Q30. *Do you experience difficulties in Denmark being a Baha'i?* (If yes) *Which?* (extended question)

Q31. *Why did you move to Denmark?* (extended question, only non-Danish Baha'is)

Q32. *Did you expect to stay temporarily or permanently when you came here?* (only non-Danish Baha'is)

Q33. *Do you now expect to stay in Denmark permanently?* (only non-Danish Baha'is)

Q34. *When you came to Denmark, what was your impression of the Danish Baha'i community?* (extended question, only non-Danish Baha'is)

Q35. *Do you consider yourself a pioneer?* (extended question, only non-Danish Baha'is) *What have you done as a pioneer?* (extended question, only non-Danish Baha'is)

Q36. *Within the last month, have you had the opportunity of describing Baha'i to one or more non-Baha'is?*
(If yes) *Had he/she/they heard about Baha'i before?*

Q37. *Have you been a pioneer?*
(If yes) *Where and when?*

Q38. *Have you been on a pilgrimage to Israel?*

Q39. *Did you visit countries other than your own in 1980?*
(If yes) *How many times?*
(If yes) *Did you contact local Baha'is?*

Q40. *Were you together with visiting Baha'is in Denmark in the last month? Were you together with any members of the Baha'i community in Denmark in the last month?*

Q41. *Are the majority of the people you see in private Baha'is or non-Baha'is?*

Q42. *Are any of your personal friends Iranian Baha'is?*

Q43. *Are any of your personal friends Danish Baha'is?* (only non-Danish Baha'is)

Q44. *Are any of your personal friends Danes who are not Baha'is?* (only non-Danish Baha'is)

Q45. *Are any of your personal friends Iranians who are not Baha'is?* (only Iranians)

Q46. *Do the Iranians keep to themselves?* (extended question)

Q47. *Are the Danes reserved with the Iranians?* (extended question)

Q48. *Has the relationship between the Danes and the Iranians changed during the years?* (extended question)

Q49. *Are there or have there been any problems?* (extended question)

Q50. *Why haven't there been very many Iranians in the national spiritual assembly?* (extended question)

Q51. *Is there any need of the Iranians and their knowledge about Baha'i?* (extended question)

Q52. *Do the Iranians have greater religious knowledge than the Danes do? In what way?* (extended question, only Danes and Iranians)

Q53. *Do you think one gets more out of being able to read the texts in the Iranian language—religiously speaking?* (extended question)

Q54. *Do you think there is any difference in the way Baha'i is practiced by the Iranians and the Danes?* (extended question, only Danes and Iranians)

Q55. *Have you yourself asked an Iranian for advice in matters concerning Baha'i?* (not Iranians)
(If yes) *What kind of advice?*

Q56. *Have you ever been asked for advice in matters concerning Baha'i?* (only Iranians)
(If yes) *What kind of advice?*

Q57. *Have you received professional assistance from another Baha'i in Denmark, for example in connection with construction, or has anybody recommended you for a position, or have you received professional assistance from a lawyer, an architect, or a medical doctor?*
(If yes) *What kind of assistance?*
Have you given professional assistance to another Baha'i in Denmark or in any other way helped a Baha'i by virtue of your position?
(If yes) *What kind of assistance?*

Q58. *Do you usually read the Baha'i newsletter?*

Q59. *Do you regularly read one or more newspapers?*
(If yes) *Which?*

Q60. *Do you wear a Baha'i-ring or any other Baha'i symbol?*
(If yes) *Always or on special occasions?*

Q61. *If a Baha'i visited you in your home, would he or she be able to guess from something in your home that you are a Baha'i?*
(If yes) *How?*

Q62. *Have you given a talk at a Baha'i meeting in the period 1980–81 (137 BE)?*

Q63. *Have you taken part in a public proclamation in the period 1980–81 (137 BE)?*

Q64. *Have you had firesides in your own home . . .?* (with sub-questions concerning the presence of non-Baha'is)

Q65. *Have you had nineteen day feasts in your own home in the period 1980–81 (137 B.E.)? How many approximately?*

Q66. *How many nineteen day feasts did you go to in the period 1980–81 (137 B.E.)—approximately?*

Q67. *What did you do on the various holy days last year?*[6]

Q68. *What did you do on 24 December 1980 in the evening?*

Q69. *Are there things you do in the course of the normal day especially because you are a Baha'i?* (extended question)

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[6] This question was normally answered by showing the interviewee a card on which he or she could indicate one or more of four possibilities for ten Baha'i holy days or holy periods. The four possibilities were 1) excused from working, 2) participated in a Baha'i meeting, 3) commemorated the day privately with others, 4) did not commemorate the day with others.

Q70. *What did you do last week that had to do with Baha'i?* (extended question)

Q71. *Do you fast during the month of fasting?*
(If not) *Why don't you fast?*

Q72. *How often do you pray?*

Q73. *Have you made a will?*
(If yes) *Have you mentioned in your will how the funeral arrangements should be?*

Q74. *Have you been a member of any committee in the period 1980–81 (137 BE)?*
(If yes) *Which?*

Q75. *Are you presently participating in any study groups?*

Q76. Questions concerning the informant's participation in any of nine specified Baha'i community arrangements in 1980–81 (137 BE).

Q77. *Were you baptised in the Danish national Lutheran church?* (only Danes)
Have you been confirmed in the Danish national Lutheran church? (only Danes)

Q78. *Were you in contact with other religious groups or movements before becoming a Baha'i?*
(If yes) *Which?*

Q79. *Have you been a member of other religious communities?*

Q80. *Have you written about Baha'i in any newspaper, magazine or periodical in the period 1980–81?*

Q81. *Are you a member of any associations or organisations apart from professional ones?*
(If yes) *Which?*

Q82. *What does it mean to be a Baha'i?* (extended question)

Q83. *What is a good Baha'i?* (extended question)

Q84. *Are Baha'is different from other people?* (extended question)

Q85. *Do you expect different things from other Baha'is than you do from people who are not Baha'is?* (extended question)

Q86. *Do you agree with the following statement: You cannot be a good Baha'i unless you observe the holy days?*

Q87. *Did you vote at the last general election (October 1979)? How did you vote?*

The questions roughly concerned the following issues:

1. Major social variables, *in casu* sex, age, nationality and marital status (Q1, Q3, Q4). With respect to nationality, an interviewed

Baha'i was classified by the interviewer as 1) Danish, 2) Iranian, or 3) Other nationality. The information regarding place of birth (in Denmark or elsewhere) sometimes supplemented with information on citizenship and ancestry were sufficient and easily applicable criteria, since all those who might be classified as Iranians and other nationalities were first-generation immigrants. For the later analyses, I decided as a principle that second-generation immigrants, defined as Baha'is born in Denmark of non-Danish Baha'i parents, should be classified as Danes.

2. Personal background, social status and general political orientation (Q5–20, Q22–24, Q59, Q87). These questions were formulated so that a comparative analysis of the Danish Baha'i community could be made with reference to statistical data on the Danish population in general.

3. Religious background and conversion to Baha'i (Q2, Q25–29, Q77–79).

4. Behaviour and activities as a Baha'i in the Danish Baha'i community (Q57, Q58, Q62–72, Q74–76, Q80).

5. Personal behaviour and attitudes as a Baha'i (Q60, Q61, Q73, Q82–86).

6. Personal relations to non-Baha'is and the community at large (Q21, Q30, Q36, Q41, Q44, Q45, Q81).

7. International contacts, pilgrimage and pioneering (Q31–35, Q37–40).

8. The relationship between Iranians and Danes in the Danish Baha'i community (Q42, Q43, Q46–56).

Data Treatment

With 120 completed questionnaires, plus an average of 3.6 A4 pages for the extended answers, the amount of data made it necessary to have a computerised database for easy access to any possible selection and combinations of data.

The answers to close-ended questions, including codes for location of residence, comprised 159 numerical variables altogether. The answers to open-ended questions together with the comments added during the interviews totalled 107 text variables, of which 21 were extended answers, while the remaining answers were recorded as brief answers in the questionnaire, not extending 78 characters. Some of the 21 extended answers were later condensed to brief text variables (78 characters or less). Many text variables were also later

analysed and coded as numerical variables. All numerical and brief text variables were placed in four data files and analysed by the software package FOSS (File Oriented Statistical System) developed by the Norwegian National Institute of Alcohol and Drug Research.[7]

Since I have argued in the book that the Danish Baha'i community is a representative case of at least a Western European Baha'i community, I decided to treat much of the quantitative data statistically to see if it was possible to generalise the findings to Western European Baha'is. In Chapter 6, I showed that Denmark, Sweden, West Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were comparable with respect to their historical development in membership, which was further support for the representativeness of the Danish Baha'i community. The five countries represented about 6,500 Baha'is in the beginning of the 1980s. I therefore based the statistical tests on the assumption that the 120 Baha'i informants were a sample taken from an overall population of at least 6,500 Baha'is. This overall population is sufficiently large enough compared to the sample to allow the application of conventional simple statistical tests without corrections.[8]

An example may be illustrative: in Chapter 8, I reported (Table 8.4) that 52 of the 102 non-Iranian informants, or 51%, had a picture of Abdu'l-Baha in their homes, whereas 16 of the 18 Iranians, or 89%, had a picture of him. One obvious conclusion is that, in the Danish Baha'i community, it is more common for the Iranians to have a picture of Abdu'l-Baha than it is for the non-Iranians. But, can this conclusion be generalised to the much larger population of Western European Baha'is? The χ^2-test indicated that the observed difference (51% versus 89%) was statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is probably a general pattern in the Western European Baha'i communities that it is more common among the Iranian Baha'is to have a picture of Abdu'l-Baha in their homes than it is among the non-Iranian Baha'is.

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[7] Arvid Amundsen, *FOSS. Fil-Orientert-Statistikk-System*, version 2.3., Halden, Halden Micro A/S 1987.

[8] Richard Startup and Elwyn T. Whittaker, *Introducing Social Statistics*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1982, pp. 69–75.

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Field Trips

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National Baha'i centre, London, England, 22 March 1993.
Shoghi Effendi's grave, London, 23 March 1993 and 23 August 1998.
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Participant Observations

Baha'i religious gatherings and other arrangements in Denmark, 1980–2003.
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Interviews

Denmark
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    Baha'i community, 1981–1982.
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    munity and refugees from Iran) about being a Baha'i in Iran, 1981–1984.
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