

THE BAHÁ'Í SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

Moojan Momen

On 12 March 1923, Shoghi Effendi sent to the Bahá'ís of America a listing of oriental terms and phrases spelled according a standard system of transliteration. He asked them henceforward to keep to this system in place of the previous arbitrary spellings that had been in use in Bahá'í publications¹. It was also sent to the British National Assembly in a letter dated 23 April 1925²; and to the German National Spiritual Assembly on 5 November 1925³. This listing appeared in the *Bahá'í Year Book* in 1926 (see Addendum One⁴). The list as published in the *Bahá'í Year Book* is not, however, exactly the present system as it contains no underlined pairs of letters (eg *sh*, *ch*, etc) and no dots under any letters. This was however, probably for typographical reasons, since books appearing as early as 1923 did use the full system (see below). In Volume 2 of the *Bahá'í World*, 1926-28, all of the features are present (see Addendum Two⁵). The listing as given in Volume 2 of the *Bahá'í World* remains substantially the same in every subsequent volume with the exception of a few words added to the list over the years. Also from *Bahá'í World*, Volume 2 onwards, a statement appears on the reverse of the title page to the effect that "The spelling of Oriental words and proper names in this issue of THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD is according to the system of transliteration established at one of the International Oriental Congresses."

From the June 1923 issue of *Star of the West*, we see attempts being made to introduce the system although these are at first very patchy. The first books that appear to be trying to put the system into use are Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* and Herrick's *Unity Triumphant* (the latter not entirely consistently), both published in 1923⁶. Although some books appearing in 1924 did not follow the system⁷, from this time on, books and other printed material published under Bahá'í auspices have followed this system.

¹ *Bahá'í Administration*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1968, p.43 ; see also p. 48 and p.56, which seems to indicate that the original list was later slightly amended.

² Cited in Addendum Four below. See also letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 11 November 1925, *Unfolding Destiny*, London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981, p. 39; there is also a note regarding accents on pp. 46-7.

³ *The Light of Divine Guidance: the messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'ís of Germany and Austria*, Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá'í-Verlag, 1982, p. 27.

⁴ *Bahá'í Year Book*, vol. 1 (April 1925-April 1926), New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1926, p. 131.

⁵ *Bahá'í World*, vol. 2 (1926-8), New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1926, p. 131.

⁶ J.E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* (London: George Allen and Unwin) and Elizabeth Herrick, *Unity Triumphant: the call of the Kingdom* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co). A pamphlet *Bahá'í Manuscripts* privately published by Charles Mason Remey in 1923 also appears to be using the new system. However, Mohammed Ali Alkany, *Lessons in Religion* (Boston: Tudor Press, 1923) and *Bahá'í Scriptures* (New York: Brentano's), both also published in 1923, do not use the system.

⁷ See for example *The Wisdom of Abdu'l Baha*, New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee.

Source of the Bahā'ī Transliteration System

Although the statement that the system is one "established at one of the International Oriental Congresses" has appeared in Bahā'ī publications since 1928, it was for a long time not clear exactly which of the International Oriental Congresses was meant. It would appear that Shoghi Effendi, on whose instructions the statement was inserted, never specified which Oriental Congress was being referred to.

Recently, I made an exhaustive search of the proceedings of the International Oriental Congresses and found what I presumed Shoghi Effendi must have been referring to. The Congress concerned was the 10th International Congress of Orientalists held at Geneva in 1894. The Royal Asiatic Society had been giving attention to the question of a uniform transliteration system for some time. In May, 1890, a committee of the Society had been set up to consider the matter. They looked at a number of the systems then current:

1. That used by F. Max Müller and the Oxford University Press for the Sacred Books of the East series;
2. That adopted by the Government of India on the recommendation of Sir W.W. Hunter;
3. That suggested by Sir M. Monier-Williams and published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* in 1890; also presented to the Berlin Congress of Orientalists;
4. That adopted by the Société asiatique of France;
5. That adopted by the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft;
6. That adopted by the Bengal Asiatic Society;
7. That adopted by the Pali Text Society.

This committee presented its report to the Royal Asiatic Society and it was adopted by the Council of the Society in May 1894. It was published in an Addendum to the Society's Journal in July 1894.

The Tenth International Congress of Orientalists was held September, 1894, at Geneva. During the opening session of the Congress, on 4 September, on the motion of Lord Reay, president of the Royal Asiatic Society and acting on behalf of it, a representative commission was appointed to look at the subject of transliteration.

The Commission consisted of a number of very eminent figures: Professor Charles-Adrien-Casimir Barbier de Maynard, who had occupied the chair in Turkish at the Ecole spéciale des langues orientales; then the Professor of Persian at the Collège de France (1875-1885); and was at this time occupying the chair in Arabic of the Collège de France as well as being deputy administrator of the Ecole des langues orientales and President of the Société asiatique;

Professor Dr Georg Bühler, a German specialist on Sanskrit and India at the University of Vienna;
 Professor Michael Jan De Goeje, specialist in Arabic and Islam at the University of Leiden;
 Professor Albert Socin, specialist in Arabic and Kurdish at the University of Leipzig;
 Professor Ernst Windisch, Sanskrit and Pali scholar from the University of Leipzig;

As well as a number of less eminent persons who had taken a special interest in the subject of transliteration:

Emile Senart, a French orientalist with a special interest in India;

James Burgess, who had been Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India and who had published a paper on the subject of transliteration of Indian languages;

Lt-Col. George T. Plunkett, Director of the Science and Art Institutions, Dublin, who had been on the Royal Asiatic Society committee on transliteration.

H. Thomson Lyon, a member of the Royal Asiatic Society and the author of an article on transliteration of Arabic in the Society's journal for 1890.

As much work had already been done on the subject of transliteration by the Royal Asiatic Society, the system that this commission recommended was very similar to the system already devised by the Society. The report of this commission was presented to the Congress at its final session on 12 September 1894 and was adopted by the Congress.

An addendum to the proceedings of the Congress (published by E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1897) contains the report of the Committee on Transliteration. This report suggests a transliteration system for Arabic, Sanskrit and Pali (see Addendum Three for the English translation of this report published in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, October 1895, pp. 879-882; the original is published in French; I have also included the report of the sub-committee for the transliteration of the Arabic alphabet, pp. 888-889)⁸.

Although the system adopted by the 1894 Congress is not identical to the Bahā'ī system, there are sufficient points of similarity to make it likely that this is the system to which Shoghi Effendi was referring. Shoghi Effendi has evidently used the permissible alternatives in every case where they recommend single letters (eg. *sh* instead of *s*; except for *j* where the alternative *dj* is primarily for the French). The only major ways in which Shoghi Effendi has deviated from this system is that it recommends *al-* in all cases for the Arabic definite article whereas Shoghi Effendi uses the double consonant in the case of the "Sun letters": *as-*, *ash-*, *ar-*, etc. Also Shoghi Effendi uses *v* instead of *w* for the Persian letter *vav*.

I sent a report of my finding to the Universal House of Justice and received a reply dated 22 October 1987 (see Addendum Four). About a year later, I received a further letter dated 16 October 1988, enclosing a copy of a page from a notebook kept by Shoghi Effendi at Oxford (see Addendum Five). This notebook clearly indicates that Shoghi Effendi had considered a number of alternatives in formulating the Bahā'ī system and also confirms that it is indeed the 1894 International Congress of Orientalists that he was referring to.

On this page from Shoghi Effendi's notebook, there is also reference to a Council meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society in October 1896. This refers to an addendum to the October 1896 issue of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* in which the system adopted by the 1894 International Congress of Orientalists is approved by the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society with a few minor emendations. These emendations were principally to avoid any overlap between the Sanskrit and Arabic transliteration systems (Addendum Six contains the system proposed by the Geneva Congress together with the emendations suggested by the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society). It will be seen that the emendations include allowing *v* for the Persian letter *vav*.

⁸ For further information regarding the workings of the transliteration committee, see the report by G.T. Plunkett in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, October 1895, pp. 890-92.

Some Problems of the Bahá'í Transliteration System

In 1978, I entered into correspondence with the Universal House of Justice over some problems relating to the Bahá'í System of Transliteration. These problems which will be familiar to those who have ever tried to use the Bahá'í system extensively are outlined in the text of my letter dated 15 August 1978. This and the reply of the Universal House of Justice dated 20 October 1978 is given in Addendum Seven. This led on to a further interchange of correspondence with a letter of mine dated 2 November 1978 and a reply dated 8 March 1979 (Addendum Eight).

A reading of this correspondence reveals that a number of useful principles and amendments are approved:

there is no need to transliterate the names of well-known places;

the use of *-a* to indicate the Arabic final *h*;

the freedom to choose Arabic or Persian forms of words and names;

the freedom to choose flat accents if desired, etc.

Some Peculiarities of the Bahá'í Transliteration System

One of the peculiarities of the Bahá'í transliteration system which is briefly alluded to in my letter of 15 August 1978 is the propensity to use the short vowel *i* in many situations where the standard Persian pronunciation would be *a*. Examples of this are: *siyyid*, *Karbilá*, *Mazindarán*, and *Adhírbáyján* where the normal pronunciation would give *sayyid*, *Karbalá*, *Mázarandán*, and *Adhārbáyján*.

This matter continued to puzzle me until one day I heard the late Hand of the Cause Mr Dhikru'llah Khadem say that Shoghi Effendi spoke Persian with an Isfahani accent. This was the result of Munrih *Khánum*'s marriage to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Munrih *Khánum* was from Isfahan. She had passed on her Isfahani accent to her four daughters and they to their children. And so presumably all of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's grandchildren, including Shoghi Effendi, spoke with Isfahani accents. I later asked a number of other Iranians who had met Shoghi Effendi, including Mr Abu'l-Qasim Afnan and Mr Ali Nakhjavani, and they also confirmed that Shoghi Effendi had an Isfahani accent. It struck me that this was the answer to the puzzle over this particular peculiarity. The substitution of an *i* for an *a* in the above examples would lead precisely to an Isfahani accent. Shoghi Effendi had written these words exactly as he spoke them.

A number of other peculiarities remain unexplained. For example the persistent use of *-lyyi-* in such words as *Bahlyyih*, *Báblyyih*, etc. The original Persian has a doubled *y*, whereas the transliteration seems to indicate three *ys*: *i*, *y*, *y*. Consistency would demand that either the accent on the first *i* or else one of the two *ys* should be omitted. A number of much-used words and phrases also appear to be inconsistent: *Alláh-u-Abhá*, which should surely be *Alláhu Abhá*; *Shí'ih* which in this form is a collective noun but is often used as though it were an adjective (which should really be *Shí'i*). This in fact accords with Iranian pronunciation although incorrect grammatically.

ADDENDA

Addendum One:

Transliteration system outlined in *Bahá'í Year Book*, 1926 p.18

Addendum Two:

Transliteration system outlined in *Bahá'í World*, vol. 2, 1928 p.19

Addendum Three:

Report of Committee on Transliteration of 10th International Congress of
Orientalists held at Geneva in 1894 p.21

Addendum Four:

Universal House of Justice: Letter and Memorandum of Research Department,
dated 22 October 1987 p.26.

Addendum Five:

Universal House of Justice: enclosing a copy of a page
from Shoghi Effendi's notebook p.31

Addendum Six:

The Geneva Congress system as amended by the Royal Asiatic Society .. p.33

Addendum Seven:

First interchange of correspondence with the Universal House of Justice
on Transliteration p.40

Addendum Eight:

Second interchange of correspondence with the Universal House of Justice
on Transliteration p.47

Addendum Nine: 'Abdu'l-Bahá on Transliteration p.53

ORIENTAL TERMS USED IN BAHÁ'Í LITERATURE

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LIST OF ORIENTAL TERMS FREQUENTLY USED IN BAHÁ'Í LITERATURE, WITH MODERN TRANSLITERATION AND ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY

'Abádih	Dhabih	Kitáb-i-Aqdas	Rahím
'Abbás	Duzdáb	Kurdistán	Rahmán
'Abdu'l-Bahá	Farán	Láhibján	Rahmat
'Abdu'l-Hamid	Fárs	Lár	Rasht
'Abdu'l-Husayn	Firdawsí	Lawh	Rawhání
'Abdu'lláh	Ganjih	Luristán	Ridván
Abu'l-Fadl	Gilán	Mahcúbu'sh-Shuhadá	Rúhu'lláh
'Adasiyyih	Gul	Mahmúd	Sabzivár
Ádhirdáyján	Gulastán	Maqám	Sadratu'l-Muntahá
Afnán	Habíb	Mákú	Samarqand
Ághsán	Hadíth	Maláyir	Sangsar
'Ahd	Háji	Marághih	Sári
Ahmad	Hamadán	Marhabá	Sháh
Ahsá'í	Haydar'Alí	Marv	Shahid
Ahváz	Haykal	Masá'il	Shahmírzád
'Akká	Himmat-Ábád	Mashhad	Sháhrúd
'Alí	Husayn	Mashíyyat	Sharaf
Alláh-u-Abhá	Huvaydar	Mashriqu'l-Adhkár	Shaykh
Alváh	Ioráhím	Mázindarán	Shí'ih
Alváb-i-Salátín	'Ilm	Mihdí	Shíráz
Amin	Imám	Milán	Shushtar
Amru'lláh	Iqán	Mirzá	Simnán
Anzalí	Irán	Mishkín-Qalam	Sísán
Aqá	'Iráq	Muhammad	Sistán
Aqdas	'Iráq-i-'Ajam	Muhammarih	Siyyid
'Arabistán	Isfáhán	Mujtahid	Súfi
Asmá	'Ishqábád	Mulk	Sulaymán
'Aváshiq	Ishráqát	Mullá	Sultán
Ayádi	Ishtihárd	Munírih	Sultán-Ábád
Azal	Islám	Mustagháth	Sultánu'sh-Shuhadá'
'Azamat	Ismá'iliyyih	Nabíl	Sunni
'Azíz	Istarábád	Najaf	Súratu'l-Haykal
Báb	'Izzat	Najaf-Ábád	Tabriz
Bábu'l-Báb	Jalál	Náqidín	Táhirih
Baghdád	Jamál	Násiru'd-Dín	Tajalliyát
Bahá	Jamál-i-Mubáarak	Nawrúz	Takí
Bahá'í	Jásb	Nayríz	Tákur
Bahá'u'lláh	Ka'bih	Nishábúr	Tarázát
Bahíyyih	Kalimát	Núr	Tarbsiyat
Bahjí	Kamál	Pahlavi	Táshkand
Balúchistán	Karand	Qádiyán	Tawhid
Bandar-'Abbás	Karbilá	Qahqahih	Thurayyá
Bárfurúsh	Káshán	Qá'im	Tihrán
Basrih	Kawmu's-Sa'áyyidih	Qamsar	'Ulá
Bátúm	Kawthar	Qasr-i-Shírín	'Ulamá
Bayán	Kázim	Qawl	Urúmiyyih
Bayt	Kázimayn	Qayyúm	Vahid
Bírjand	Kirmán	Qazvín	Váhid
Bismi'lláh	Kirmánsháh	Qúchán	Valí
Bukhára	Khalkhál	Quddús	Varqá
Burújird	Khániqayn	Qudrat	Vazír
Búshir	Khayli-Khúb	Qum	Yá-Bahá'u'l-Abhá
Bushrúyih	Khurásán	Qur'án	Yahyá
Bushrú'í	Khuy	Qurratu'l-'Ayn	Yazd
Chihriq	Kitáb-i-'Ahd	Rafsinján	Zanján
Dawlat-Ábád			Zaynu'l-Muquarrabín

TRANSLITERATION OF ORIENTAL TERMS FREQUENTLY USED IN BAHÁ'Í LITERATURE

Arranged Alphabetically

Ábádih	Bahjí	Ibráhím	Láhiján
'Abbás	Balúchistán	'Ilm	Lár
'Abdu'l-Bahá	Bandar-'Abbás	Imám	Lawḥ
'Abdu'l-Ḥamid	Bárfurúsh	Iqán	Luristán
'Abdu'l-Husayn	Başrih	Irán	
'Abdu'lláh	Bátúm	'Iráq	
Abu'l-Faḍl	Bayán	'Iráq-i-'Ajam	Maḥbúbu'sh-Shuhadá'
'Adasiyyih	Bayt	Işfáhán	Maḥmúd
Ádhirbáyján	Birjand	'Ishqábád	Maqám
Afnán	Bismi'lláh	Ishráqát	Mákú
Aghşán	Bukhára	Ishthíhárd	Maláyir
'Ahd	Burújird	Islám	Marághih
Aḥmad	Búshir	Ismá'iliyyih	Marḥabá
Aḥsá'i	Bushrúyih	Istarábád	Marv
Ahváz	Bushrú'i	'Izzat	Masá'il
'Akká		Jalál	Mashhad
'Ali	Chihriq	Jamál	Mashiyyat
Alláh-u-Abhá		Jamál-i-Mubárah	Mashriqu'l-Adhkár
Alváh	Dawlat-Ábád	Jásb	Mázindarán
Alváh-i-Saláṭin	Dḥabih		Mihdí
Amin	Duzdáb	Ka'bih	Milán
Amru'lláh		Kalimát	Mírzá
Anzali	Farán	Kamál	Mishkin-Qalam
Áqá	Fárs	Karand	Muḥammad
Aqdas	Firdawsi	Karbílá	Muḥammarih
'Arabistán		Káshán	Mujtahid
Asmá'	Ganjih	Kawmu'sh-Şa'áydih	Mulk
'Aváshiq	Gilán	Kawthar	Mullá
Ayádi	Gul	Kázim	Munirih
Azal	Gulastán	Kázimayn	Mustagháth
'Ażamat		Kirmán	
'Aziz	Ḥabib	Kirmánsháh	Nabil
	Ḥadíth	Khalkhál	Najaf
Báb	Ḥájí	Khániqayn	Najaf-Ábád
Bábu'l-Báb	Hamadán	Khayli-Khúb	Náqidin
Baghdád	Ḥaydar-'Alí	Khurásán	Náşiru'd-Din
Bahá	Haykal	Khuy	Nawrúz
Bahá'i	Himmat-Ábád	Kitáb-i-'Ahd	Nayriz
Bahá'u'lláh	Ḥusayn	Kitáb-i-Aqdas	Nishábúr
Bahiyyih	Huvaydar	Kurdistán	Núr

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Pahlaví	Raḥmat	Simnán	Tawhid
Qādiyán	Raṣht	Sisán	Thurayyá
Qahqahih	Rawhání	Sístán	Ṭíhrán
Qá'im	Ridván	Siyyid	
Qamsar	Rúḥu'lláh	Súfi	'Ulá
Qasr-i-Shírin	Sabzivár	Sulaymán	'Ulamá
Qawl	Sadratu'l-Muntahá	Sulṭán	Urúmiyyih
Qayyúm	Samarqand	Sulṭánu'sh-Shuhadá'	Vahíd
Qazvin	Sangsar	Sunni	Váhid
Qúchán	Sári	Súratu'l-Haykal	Valí
Quddús	Sháh		Varqá
Qudrat	Shahid	Tabriz	Vazír
Qum	Shahmirzád	Ṭáhirih	
Qur'an	Sháhrúd	Tajalliyát	Yá-Bahá'u'l-Abhá
Qurratu'l-'Ayn	Sharaf	Takí	Yahyá
	Shaykh	Tákur	Yazd
Rafsinján	Shi'ih	Ṭarázát	
Rahim	Shiráz	Tarbiyat	Zanján
Raḥmán	Shushtar	Ṭáshkand	Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín

GUIDE TO TRANSLITERATION AND PRONUNCIATION
OF THE PERSIAN ALPHABET

ا	.....á	ک	.....k
ب	.....b	گ	.....g
پ	.....p	ل	.....l
ت	.....t	م	.....m
ث	.....th	ن	.....n
ج	.....j	و	.....v
چ	.....ch	ه	.....h
ح	.....h	ی	.....y
		ق	.....q
		'
	.....á		.....k
	.....kh		.....g
	.....d		.....l
	.....dh		.....m
	.....r		.....n
	.....z		.....v
	.....zh		.....h
	.....s		.....y
	.....sh		.....q

a.....as in account	i....as (e) in best	u....as (o) in short	aw.....as in mown
á.....as in arm	í....as (ee) in meet	ú....as (oo) in moon	

**ADDENDUM THREE: REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON TRANSLITERATION OF 10th
INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF ORIENTALISTS HELD AT GENEVA IN 1894**

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**TENTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
OF ORIENTALISTS,**

HELD AT GENEVA.

Report of the Transliteration Committee.

(TRANSLATION.)

THE Committee appointed by the Congress to select a system for the transliteration of the Sanskrit and Arabic Alphabets has held several meetings. After having examined and discussed the systems which have hitherto been used, and taken note of the various improvements which have been suggested by members of the Congress and other savants, the Committee submit for the approval of the Congress, and with a view to general adoption by Orientalists, the systems shown in the two tabular forms annexed to this report.

They have taken as a basis for their work the report presented by a special committee appointed by the Royal Asiatic Society of London, and the systems of transliteration usually adopted in France, in Germany, and by the Bengal Asiatic Society. They do not pretend to have discovered a perfectly scientific system; it was necessary to give weight to established usages, and also to take into consideration the varying pronunciations which the letters of the Arabic alphabet have received in different Muhammadan countries. This is one reason for the alternative modes of transliteration proposed for certain letters, but the number

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for which these alternative methods are suggested has been kept as small as possible, and it is hoped that the Orientalists of every country will endeavour to still further reduce this number by conforming as much as possible to the system recommended by the Committee.

As regards the transliteration of Sanskrit, the differences of opinion have been much less, and only in the case of a very small number of letters has any difficulty arisen. In these instances the Committee have chosen from among the various equivalents proposed those which on the whole seem best suited for practical use.

To obtain uniformity each country and each society must make some concessions, and the Committee hope that the systems now proposed will be unanimously adopted and brought into general use.

BARBIER DE MEYNARD,
G. BÜHLER,
J. BURGESS,
M. J. DE GOEJE,
H. THOMSON LYON,

G. T. PLUNKETT,
EMILE SENART,
SOCIN,
WINDISCH.

GENEVA, September 10th, 1894.

TRANSLITERATION OF THE SANSKRIT AND
PALI ALPHABETS.

अ	a	उ	ū
आ	ā	ऊ	ū
इ	i	ऋ	rī
ई	ī	ॠ	rī
उ	u	ऌ	l
		ॡ	l

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ए	e	प	p
ऐ	ai	फ	ph
ओ	o	ब	b
औ	au	भ	bh
क	k	म	m
ख	kh	य	y
ग	g	र	r
घ	gh	ल	l
ङ	ṅ	व	v
च	ch	श	ś
छ	ch	ष	ṣ
ज	j	स	s
झ	jh	ह	h
ञ	ñ	ळ (in Pali -)	ḷ
ट	ṭ	ँ (Anusvāra, Niggahita)	ṁ
ठ	ṭh	ं (Anusvāra)	ṁ
ड	ḍ	: (Visarga)	ḥ
ढ	ḍh	× (Jihvāmūlyā)	ḥ
ण	ṇ	× (Upadhāntya)	ḥ
त	t	ऽ (Avagraha)	ḥ
थ	th	Uddatta	ˆ
द	d	Scarita	ˆ
ध	dh	Anuddatta	ˆ
न	n		

TRANSLITERATION OF ARABIC ALPHABET.

Recommended.	Recommended.
ا at beginning of word omit; hamza else- where ʾ	ع ʿ غ g permissible gh
ب b	ف f
ت t	ق q
ث t permissible th	ك k
ج j permissible dj	ل l
ح h	م m
خ h permissible kh	ن n
د d	و w
ذ d permissible dh	ه h
ر r	ي y
ز z	vowels َ a, ِ i, ُ u
س s	lengthened َ ā, ِ ī, ُ ū
ش s permissible sh	diphthongs َي ay and َـو au
ص s	e and o may be used in place
ض d	of i and u :
ط t or ṭ	also ē and ō in Indian dialects,
ظ z or ẓ	ū and ō in Turkish
	ل of article ال to be always l.

ADDITIONAL IN PERSIAN, HINDI,
AND PAKSHTŪ.

پ p	
چ c permissible ch	
ژ z permissible zh	
گ g	
TURKISH LETTERS.	
ک when pronounced as y ḳ is permitted.	
ن̄ n̄	

HINDI AND PAKSHTŪ.

ت or ت̣ ṭ
ڈ or د̣ ḍ
ر̣ or ر̣ ṛ

PAKSHTŪ LETTERS.

خ̣ ts
ځ g
ښ n̄
ښ̣ ksh

Also in India will be recognized ṣ for ث, ẓ for ذ, and z for ض.

PROPOSALS

OF THE

SUB-COMMITTEE FOR THE TRANSLITERATION
OF THE ARABIC ALPHABET.

1. The Committee agree upon the following:—

ب b — ت t — ح h — د d — ر r — ز z — س s —
ص s — ف f — ق q — ك k — ل l — م m — ن n —
ه h — پ p.

2. For ح they recommend *j*, but will allow *dj* to be used as a substitute.
3. For ض *q*, but allow *z* in India.
4. For ط *t* and for ظ *z*. This is to avoid upsetting the Indian accepted system—elsewhere *t* and *z* will suffice.
5. For ي *y* whenever ي is a consonant. Whilst fully appreciating the reasons why German Orientalists have preferred *j*, the Committee feel obliged to adopt the character used throughout India and by English, French, and many other writers and scholars.
6. ة at the commencement of a word need not be transliterated, *hamsah* in the middle or at the end of a word to be represented by ' above the line.
7. For ع ' above the line (a comma reversed).

8. For چ ز غ ش ذ خ ت
 ṭ ḥ ḍ ṣ g̣ ẓ c̣

but agree that *th kh dh sh gh zh ch* may be used as substitutes for the above.

They consider that *ẓ, ḥ*, etc., are better than *ṭ, ḥ, ị, ḥ̣*, etc., or any others in which the mark is placed above the consonant, as in this position the mark may be taken for the accent of a vowel, the cross of a *t*, etc.

They will allow in India as substitutes for the above *ث* and *ذ*.

9. For *و* as a consonant *w*.

10. For *گ* in Persian, Hindustani, and Turkish *g*.

That in Turkish books for beginners, if it be thought necessary to mark when the *گ* is to be pronounced as *y*, the sign *گ̣* should be used.

11. The Turkish *ک* to be *ḳ*.

12. That the Hindi and Pakstū characters be represented thus—

ت or پ ṭ — د̣ or ن̣ ḍ — ژ̣ or ر̣ ṛ

خ tṣ — گ̣ — ن̣ ṇ — ک̣ ḳ

13. The *ل* of the article *ال* always to be transliterated *l*.

14. That the vowel-points be *ā, ī, ū*.

The lengthened vowels *ā, ī, ū*. That *e* and *o* may be used in place of *ī* and *ū* in these languages in which it may be necessary. That *ū* and *ō* may be also used in Turkish, and *e* and *o* in Indian dialects.

That the so-called diphthongs *ای* and *او* be *ay* and *aw*.

G. T. PLUNKETT.

**ADDENDUM FOUR: UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: LETTER AND MEMORANDUM
OF RESEARCH DEPARTMENT , DATED 22 OCTOBER 1987**

Wixamtree, Sand Lane
Northill
Biggleswade
Beds. SG18 9AD
England

Dear Baha'i friends,

In 1978, I conducted some correspondence with you regarding the question of the Baha'i system of transliteration. At that time I wrote to you that I had been unable to find which Congress of Orientalists it was that Shoghi Effendi had been referring to when he stated that the Baha'is should use the system approved by the International Congress of Orientalists. As I had some time to spare in the Library of the School of African and Oriental Languages recently, I had another look through the reports of the various annual congresses and on this occasion, I went back further than I had done previously. I believe I have now found the Congress to which Shoghi Effendi was referring.

The tenth International Congress of Orientalists was held in Geneva in 1894. In the published proceedings of this Congress, there is an addendum giving the result of the proceedings of a Commission charged with finding a transcription system. The enclosed photocopies show their recommendations. You will see that Shoghi Effendi has used this system utilising their permissible alternatives in all cases where they recommend single letters. The only ways in which Shoghi Effendi has deviated from this system is that it recommends "al-" in all cases for the Arabic definite article, whereas Shoghi Effendi uses the doubled consonant in the case of the Sun letters - "as-", "ash-", "ar-", etc, also Shoghi Effendi uses "v" instead of "w" for the Persian letter "vav". You will also note that the recommendation, is for flat accents rather than accute. Unfortunately, the brief description on these pages gives no indication of what should be done with respect to the Persian idafa and other difficult situations which I highlighted in my previous correspondence. Shoghi Effendi presumably devised his own solutions to these cases.

With warmest Baha'i greetings,

Dr Moojan Momen

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

Department of the Secretariat

22 October 1987

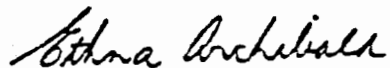
Dr. Moojan Momen
Wixamtree, Sand Lane
Northhill, Biggleswade
Beds. SG18 9AD
England

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The Universal House of Justice read with great interest your letter of 19 July 1987 about your discovery of further information in connection with the Bahá'í system of transliteration, and referred the matter to the Research Department. We are now directed to send you the enclosed copy of the memorandum prepared by that Department in response.

The House of Justice hopes that the results of the research done at the World Centre will be of assistance to you in your endeavours to solve the riddle of the source of the transliteration system on which Shoghi Effendi based the method now in use in Bahá'í texts.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,



For Department of the Secretariat

Enclosure

M E M O R A N D U M

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: 22 October 1987

From: The Research Department

THE BAHÁ'Í TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

With his letter dated 19 July 1987, Dr. Moojan Momen forwarded the report of a Commission "charged by the [Tenth International] Congress [of Orientalists] to adopt a system of transliteration for the Sanskrit and Arabic languages", which includes a transliteration system for Arabic upon which Shoghi Effendi may have based the method now used in Bahá'í texts.

The Research Department has compared the system proposed by the Transcription Commission with that described in "The Bahá'í World" volumes and agrees with Dr. Momen's observation that the two systems are very similar. It is indeed possible that the beloved Guardian adapted the Commission's proposal for his use. His secretary wrote in response to a query from an individual believer:

As to the origin of the transliteration used by Shoghi Effendi, this was decided upon by an international congress of orientologists and is now adhered to by the most eminent scholars.
(19 June 1931)

The variations between the Commission's transliteration system and that used in Bahá'í texts could be explained by postulating that, where the Commission permitted alternative transliterations, Shoghi Effendi adopted the variant which was easiest to reproduce on the typewriters of the day, e.g., th instead of t for ث, j instead of dj for ج, ç instead of t for ط.

With regard to the use of an acute accent (´) instead of a macron (—) on long vowels, it is interesting to note that carbon copies of early letters typewritten by Shoghi Effendi or on his behalf held in the World Centre Archives show that the accent on long vowels was generally made by typing a straight apostrophe above the letter in question. This involved only backspacing, rather than the backspacing and movement of the platen required to place a dash above the letter. On 23 April 1925, the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles regarding the revision of a folder as follows:

...Shoghi Effendi is desirous that the horizontal accents over the long vowels in the Persian and Arabic transliterated words should be replaced by vertical or nearly vertical ones, if possible, thus:

Bahá'í or Bahá'í instead of Bahā'I

and again, on 23 January 1926:

With regard to the accent on the letter a in the transliteration of Persian names and words and the difficulty of the publishers in having a vertical mark, Shoghi Effendi feels that in case having the regular vertical mark means too much trouble and expense it would be justified to replace it by the horizontal dash on the a, but if the trouble and expense would not be much, for the sake of uniformity throughout transliterations everywhere, it would be best to have the regular vertical mark.

Other variations between Bahá'í transliteration and the system offered by the Commission occur, as is pointed out by Dr. Momen: whereas the Commission recommends that the Lám of the Arabic definite article ل always be "l", the Guardian chose to assimilate the Lám of the definite article of the following consonant, when this is one of the "sun" letters, resulting in a doubling of that consonant. Furthermore, و is transliterated as w when it occurs as an element of a diphthong, as in "Naw-Rúz", but generally as a v when it occurs as a consonant, e.g., "Riḍván". Examples of consonantal vávs represented by w are rare, but do occur: "An-Núru'l-Abhá-Fí-Mufáwadát-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá" ("The Bahá'í World", vol. 5 (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1936), p. 474) and "waqf property" ("God Passes By", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1987), p. 357).

Shoghi Effendi enclosed a "list of the best known and most current Bahá'í terms, and other Oriental names and expressions, all properly and accurately transliterated" with his letter to the Western believers dated 12 March 1923. (The letter is published in "Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), pages 34-43.) The "full code" mentioned in the postscript to this letter was included with a letter dated 9 April 1923 addressed to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada. This indicates that the system upon which the Bahá'í system is based existed prior to 1923.

It is our understanding that, according to the proceedings of succeeding International Congresses, the problem of transliteration was not discussed again until the Thirteenth Congress in Leyden, 1931, which was after the Bahá'í transliteration system had been promulgated.

In this connection, the choice of language in the note regarding transliteration on the verso of the title page in "The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record", vol. 2, "April 1926-April 1928" (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1928) is also of interest:

NOTE: The spelling of the Oriental words and proper names used in this issue of THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD is according to the system of transliteration established at one of the International Oriental Congresses.

This note states that the system was "established" at one of the International Oriental Congresses, not "adopted". As we have no record that the Transcription Commission's recommendation was endorsed or adopted by the Tenth Congress, or by later Congresses, this may be an additional support for the hypothesis that the transliteration system adopted by Shoghi Effendi is based on this recommendation.

-3-

In support of the above hypothesis, it would be of value to ascertain, if possible:

Whether the Tenth, or a later, International Congress dealt with the system put forward by the Transcription Commission.

The membership of the Commission, since the universality and practicality of the system was emphasized by the Guardian's secretaries.

Turkish \ddot{a} = \ddot{m}

miscellaneous

	a	1	a	a
	b	u	b	b
	pu	u	pu	pu
	t	o	t	t
<u>a</u>	ti	ö	ti	ti, t
	j	e	j	dj, j
	ch	e	ch	ch, c
	h	e	h	h
kh	kh	e	kh	h, kh
	d	>	d	d
dh	g	>	dh	d, dh
	z	/	z	z
	zh	/	zh	z, zh
	o	u	o	o
	sh	ü	sh	sh, s
	s	ö	s	s, s
d	g	ö	d	d, g
dh	g	b	dh	t
	gh	e	gh	g, gh
	f	ü	f	f
q	k	ö	q	q
	k	ö	k	k
	g	ö	g	g
	l	o	l	l
	m	u	m	m
	n	ü	n	n
	u, w	u	u, w	u, w
	h	ö	h	h
	y	o	y	y

almost identical with the system of 1914
 but with \ddot{a} & \ddot{m}
 Fundamental Congress System. 1914
 + R. a. Soc. Council. Oct. 1896

ADDENDUM FIVE: UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: ENCLOSING A COPY OF A PAGE
FROM SHOGHI EFFENDI'S NOTEBOOK

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

Department of the Secretariat

16 October 1988

Dr. Moojan Momen
Wixamtree, Sand Lane
Northhill, Biggleswade
Beds. SG18 9AD
England

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

We wrote to you on 22 October 1987 on behalf of the Universal House of Justice concerning the Bahá'í system of transliteration, and enclosed a memorandum from the Research Department on this subject. We are now directed by the House of Justice to send you the enclosed copy of a page copied from a notebook kept by Shoghi Effendi when he was at Oxford University.

As you will note, the annotation made by Shoghi Effendi confirms your own conclusion about the International Congress of Orientalists of 1894. Shoghi Effendi also makes reference to the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society held in October 1896.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Athna Ardebali

For Department of the Secretariat

Enclosure

Turkish d = m

Miscellaneous

a	1	a
6	u	b
pu	uu	pu
t	o	t
o	ö	th
o	ö	th, t
j	e	j
ch	e	ch, c
h	e	h
kh	e	kh, k
d	>	d
dh	>	dh, d, dh
n	u	n
g	i	g
gh	i	gh, g, gh
o	u	o
oh	ü	oh, o
o	ö	o, ö, o
d	ö	d, ö, dh
t	b	t
dh	b	dh, b
gh	e	gh, g, gh
g	e	g
k	o	k
k	o	k
g	ö	g
l	o	l
m	u	m
n	u	n
nu	u	nu, w
h	o	h
y	o	y

Alphabet identical with the English alphabet
 By Prof. G. F. Johnson
 By Donald Ferguson, June 1944
 + R. A. Fox, revised, Oct-1996.

ADDENDUM SIX : THE GENEVA CONGRESS SYSTEM AS AMENDED BY THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

(5)

TABLE II.

TRANSLITERATION OF THE ARABIC ALPHABET
ADOPTED BY THE GENEVA CONGRESS.

[Notes in square brackets refer to pp. 6, 7.]

ا at beginning of word omit; hamza elsewhere ء [' or °, Note 8]	غ g permissible <i>gh</i>
ب b	ف f
ت t	ق q
ث t permissible <i>th</i>	ك k
ج j permissible <i>dj</i>	ل l
ح h	م m
خ h permissible <i>kh</i>	ن n
د d	و w [or <i>v</i> , Note 5]
ذ d permissible <i>dh</i>	ه h
ر r	ي y
ز z	vowels \bar{a} , \bar{i} , \bar{u}
س s	lengthened \bar{a} , \bar{i} , \bar{u}
ش s permissible <i>sh</i>	diphthongs $\bar{a}i$ and $\bar{a}u$
ص s [see Note 1]	[<i>ai</i> and <i>au</i> , Note 4]
ض d [<i>d</i> , Note 2]	e and o may be used in place of i and u
ط t or f [only t, Note 3]	also \bar{e} and \bar{o} in Indian dialects, \bar{u} and \bar{o} in Turkish
ظ z or s	
ع \bar{a}	ل of article آل to be always l.

PERSIAN.

Opening words of the Gulistān—

منت خدایرا عز و جل که طاعتش موجب قربتست و بشکر
ندرش مزید نعمت هر نفسی که فرو میرود ممد حیاتست و چون
تر نیاید مفترق ذات پس در هر نفسی دو نعمت موجودست و بر
در نعمتی شکری واجب.

Minnat ḥudāirā 'azza wa jalla kih ṭā'ataṣ mūjil-i-
qurbatast. Wa biṣukr andaraṣ mazid-i-ni'mat. Har nafas-i
kih farū miravad mumidd-i-ḥiyātast. Wa ḥūn bar niyāy-i
mufarriq-i-zāt. Pas dar har nafas-i dū ni'mat maujūdast.
Wa bar har ni'mat-i ṣukrī wājib.

(11)

The Council would take this opportunity of suggesting
the following scheme for the transliteration of Hebrew.

א	'	צ	ṣ
ב	b	ק	q
ב	b	ר	r
ג	g	ש	š
ג	g	ש	š
ד	d	ת	t
ד	d	ת	t
ה	h	ז	= ^o (or z)
ה	h (or hh)	ח	ā
ו	v	ט	ē
ז	z	י	i
ח	h	כ	ō
ט	t	ל	a
י	y	מ	e
כ	k	נ	i
כ	k	ס	o
ל	l	ע	u
מ	m	פ	f
נ	n	צ	ṣ
ס	s	ק	q
ע	'	ר	r
פ	f	ש	š
פ	p	ת	=t
צ	p		

Dagges forte=double letter

(6)

ADDITIONAL IN PERSIAN, HINDI, AND PAKHSTŪ.	HINDI AND PAKHSTŪ.
پ <i>p</i>	پ OR پ <i>t</i>
چ <i>c</i> permissible <i>ch</i>	چ OR د <i>d</i>
ز <i>z</i> permissible <i>zh</i>	ز OR ر <i>r</i>
گ <i>g</i>	
	PAKSHTŪ LETTERS.
TURKISH LETTERS.	خ <i>ts</i>
ک when pronounced as <i>y</i> ,	ق <i>q</i>
ک is permitted.	ن <i>n</i>
ن <i>n</i>	ش <i>ksh</i>

Also in India will be recognized *z* for پ, *z* for د, and *s* for ر.

The above scheme contains, it will be seen, two schemes—one for the transliteration of Sanskrit, Pāli, and the allied alphabets, and one for the transliteration of Arabic and the allied alphabets. These two tables are inconsistent with one another on several points. In applying the Congress scheme, therefore, to the transliteration of Hindī (which is written both with Sanskrit and Arabic letters) the same word would have to be transliterated differently according to the alphabet before the transliterator. These points are as follows:—

(1) The sound represented in English by *sh* is represented in the first table by *z*, and in the second by *z* (*sh* being permissible). On the other hand, the *z* is used in the first table for the Sanskrit ञ (*sh*) and in the second for ص (*s*). The practical difficulties arising from this discrepancy are, however, so small that the Council would merely point out the discrepancy.

(2) The sign *q* is used in the Sanskrit table for च (the cerebral *d*), and in the Arabic table for ض (*dād*). This discrepancy could be avoided by selecting *q* for the *dād*.

(7)

(3) The alternative transliteration ḷ allowed for ḷ in the second table clashes with the use of the same sign in the first table. This alternative transliteration might be dropped out of Table II.

(4) The diphthongs ai and au in the first table are replaced by ay and aw in the second. It would be better to adhere to the first table.

(5) The transliteration v for the ṽ in the Arabic table clashes with that proposed for the ṽ in the Sanskrit table. Both v and w might be allowed for each of these letters.

(6) The sound represented by ch in the English orthography is transliterated c in the Sanskrit table, and ç (ch being permissible) in the second table. It would be more consistent to adopt c throughout.

There are also one or two other matters which are worthy of notice.

(7) The signs z and ẓ , and ḍ and ḍ̣ are each of them used in Table II as the transliteration of two different letters.

(8) No sign has been suggested in the Arabic table for the transliteration of the wasla. The comma above the line ' used in the table to represent the hamsa might be used for the wasla, and either a stroke or a circle above the line (' or °) might be used for the hamsa.

(9) No sign has been suggested in the Arabic table for the silent t . The sign ḥ might be used to represent this letter.

(10) A stroke beneath the line (thus ḳ or ṃ) might be suggested to signify that a letter written in any alphabet to be transliterated is not to be pronounced.

(8)

Subject to the suggestions above made, which will, the Council hopes, meet with the approval of Continental scholars, the following passages would illustrate the scheme as adopted by the Congress.

SANSKRIT.

Rg Veda : opening lines—

अ॒ग्निमी॒ळे पु॒रोहि॑तं॒ यच्च॑सं॒ दे॒वमृ॑त्वि॒जम् ।
 हो॒ता॒रं रत्न॑धा॒तमम् ॥
 अ॒ग्निः पू॒र्वेभि॑र्च॒र्षिभि॑री॒ड्यो नू॑त॒नैःकृत॑ ।
 स दे॒वो ए॒ह व॑चति ॥

Agnim ile puróhitam yajñásya devám rtvijam
 hótarāṃ ratnadhātamam.
 agniḥ púrvebhir řshibir řdyo nūtanair úta
 sá devāñ éhá vakṣati.

Nalopākhyāna : opening lines—

अ॒सीद् राजा॑ न॒लो नाम॑ वी॒रसे॑नसु॒तो ब॒ली ।
 उ॒पप॑न्नो गु॒णैरि॑ष्टे रू॒पवान् अ॒श्वको॑विदः ॥
 अ॒तिष्ठन् म॑नु॒जेन्द्रा॑णां मूर्ध्नि॒ दे॒वप॑तिर् यथा ।
 उ॒पर्यु॑परि॒ सर्वे॑षाम् आ॒दित्य॑ इ॒व ते॒जसा॑ ॥

Āsīd rājā Nalo nāma Virasenasuto bali
 upapanno guṇair iṣṭair rūpavān aśvakovidah
 atiṣṭhan manujendrāṇāṃ mūrdhni devapatir yathā
 uparyupari sarveṣām āditya iva tejasā.

(9)

PĀLI.

Dīgha : opening words—

ච්චචෙච්චනං චිතංසමසංභතවාදකානච්චරතභං
 දකානච්චනාලංකංදවානාමතපථථපනෙතාගොභිමහ
 තාහිපච්චසංසෙතපච්චංචචනෙතහිභිසංච්චපනෙහි

Evam me sutam. Ekam samayam bhagavā anturā ca
 Rājagaham antarā ca Nālandam addhānamaggapātipanno
 hoti mahatā bhikkhusaṅghena saddhim pañca matthehi
 bhikkhusatehi.

ARABIC.

Opening chapter of the Qur'an—

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ الرَّحْمَنِ
 الرَّحِيمِ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ اِهْدِنَا
 الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ
 عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ.

Ch. ix, v. 1.

بَرَآءَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى الَّذِينَ عَاكِفْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ.

Ch. x, v. 14.

وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا.

Bismi'llāhi'l-rahmāni'l-rahīmi. Al-ḥamdu lillāhi rabbi-
 'l-'ālamīna'l-rahmāni'l-rahīmi māliki yaumi 'l-dīni. Iyāka
 na'budu wa iyāka nasta'īnu. Ihdinā 'l-sīrāṭa'l-mustaqīma
 sīrāṭa'l-ladīna an'amta 'alaihim ḡairi 'l-maḡḍūbi 'alaihim
 wa lā 'l-ḍāllīna.

Ch. ix, v. 1.—Barā'atun mina'llābi wa rasūlihi ila
 'lladīna 'āhadtum mina'l-musrikīna.

Ch. x, v. 14.—Wa jā'athum rusuluhum bi'l-baiyināti wa
 mā kānū liyu'minū.

(10)

Notes—

Hamza at the beginning of a word is omitted, as pre-
 scribed on p. 5. Only the vowel is written. Ex. *asud*,
 a lion; plur. *usd*. *Insān*, a human being.

Hamza elsewhere = a stroke ' or circle °.

Wasla is represented by an apostrophe. See Note 8, p. 7.
 The diphthongs have been written *ai* and *au*, not *ay* and
aw. See Note 4, p. 7.

(9)

PĀLI.

Dīgha : opening words—

ච්චලෙච්චුතං චිතංසමසංභතමාඥජානග්චග්චරගඟං
ඥජානග්චජාලඤංඥචාජාමගචචර්චජොජාගොතිචඟ
නාභිසද්ධිසංඝෙජාසචිපංචමචෙතනභිච්චිතද්විසනෙභි

Evam me sutam. Ekam samayam bhagavā antarā ca
Rājagaham antarā ca Nālandam addhānamuggapātipanno
hoti mahatā bhikkhusamghena saddhim pañca matthehi
bhikkhusatehi.

ARABIC.

Opening chapter of the Qur'ān—

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ الرَّحْمَنِ
الرَّحِيمِ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ اِهْدِنَا
الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ.

Ch. ix, v. 1.

بَرَآءَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ.

Ch. x, v. 14.

وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا.

Bismi'llāhi'l-raḥmāni'l-raḥīmi. Al-ḥamdu lillāhi rabbi-
'l-'ālamīna'l-raḥmāni'l-raḥīmi māliki yaumi 'l-dīni. Īyāka
na'budu wa iyāka nasta'īnu. Ihdinā 'l-ṣirāṭa'l-mustaqīma
ṣirāṭa'llaḍīna an'amta 'alaihim ḡairi 'l-maḡḍūbi 'alaihim
wa lā 'l-ḍāllīna.

Ch. ix, v. 1. — Barū'atun mina'llāhi wa rasūlihi ila
'llaḍīna 'āhadtum mina 'l-mušrikīna.

Ch. x, v. 14.—Wa jā'athum rusuluhum bi'l-baiyināti wa
mā kānū liyu'minū.

(10)

Notes—

Hamza at the beginning of a word is omitted, as pre-
scribed on p. 5. Only the vowel is written. Ex. *asad*,
a lion; plur. *usd*. *Insān*, a human being.

Hamza elsewhere = a stroke ' or circle °.

Wasla is represented by an apostrophe. See Note 8, p. 7.

The diphthongs have been written *ai* and *au*, not *ay* and
aw. See Note 4, p. 7.

ADDENDUM SEVEN: FIRST INTERCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE ON TRANSLITERATION

The Universal House of Justice
P.O. Box 155
Haifa, Israel

15th August 1978

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

I am in the process of editing a book to be published by George Ronald. This will be a collection of essays by Prof. F. Kazemzadeh, Denis MacEoin, Peter Smith and myself, and is provisionally entitled Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History. It is hoped that it will stimulate some interest in the academic community and the essays are being written with this in mind.

In connection with this book, a problem has arisen over the matter of transliteration. As you are no doubt aware, the system of transliteration at present in general use in the academic community is somewhat different to that used in Bahá'í books. No system of transliteration is completely satisfactory but the present Bahá'í system suffers from great inconsistencies and it is these inconsistencies which have been the principle cause of criticism such as that levelled by Elwell-Sutton at Balyuzi's Muhammad and the Course of Islam in a recent issue of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (a copy is enclosed for your information). The Bahá'í system is said to be based on a system worked out at one of the Congress of Orientalists. However I have been unable to find any such system in the Proceedings of these Congresses. In any case, it is not so much in the basic system as in its application that inconsistencies arise in present Bahá'í usage.

The principal problems are as follows:

(1) The system ought to be consistent as to whether it is a system of transcription of pronunciation (i.e. it conveys the information of how a word sounds) or a system of transliteration (i.e. it conveys the information of how a word is written). The main problem of the Bahá'í system lies in the fact that it has taken a system that was designed for the transliteration of Arabic words and has applied it to the transcription of Persian pronunciation. In making this transformation, the Bahá'í system has fallen between the two stools and is at present neither entirely a system of transliteration (thus you have Abu'l-Qasim and Dhi'l-Hijjih rather than Abú'l-Qásim and Dhú'l-Hijjih) nor a system of transcription of the Persian pronunciation (thus the letters

d, dh, and th have no resemblance to the Persian pronunciation which is z, z and s respectively; Mazindarán is pronounced Mazandarán etc.).

(2) The Bahá'í system uses Persian pronunciation and usage even in Arabic expressions and the names of Arabs and Arabic books. Thus Ibnu'l-Arabí wrote al-Futúhátu'l-Makkíya and not Futúhá-i-Makkíyyih as it appears in Bahá'í books. Similarly Shaykh Ahmad was an Arab and should be called al-Ahsá'í and not i-Ahsá'í. But there are inconsistencies even in this usage in Bahá'í books; thus we have Kitáb-i-Aqdas but Kitábu'r-Rúh (both of which are Arabic books).

(3) In the Persian idáfa construction after a word ending in -ih or the long vowels, -ú, -á, -í, the yi sound follows the ending and is not a part of it; thus ríshiy-i-dirakht implies that ríshih has had an h changed to a y, whereas the h has gone and the buffer sound yi has been added. Ríshi-yi-dirakht conveys the structure of this construct better. Similarly, one would have 'Alí-yi-Bastámí.

(4) Normal Bahá'í usage is inconsistent as regards the use of final hamza; thus we have Qayyúmu'l-Asmá' and Siyyidu'sh-Shuhadá' but 'Abdu'l-Bahá and 'Ulamá (with no final hamza indicated).

(5) The Bahá'í system looks somewhat strange and antiquated with oblique accent marks instead of flat ones which are almost universal now, e.g. Báb instead of Bāb.

Thus the present Bahá'í system has many inconsistencies, and while this is acceptable in the corpus of books that exist at present, it presents great problems and confusion to a writer who wishes to transliterate a word that has not previously been transliterated in a Bahá'í publication. Thus this system which was originally introduced in order to eliminate variation and confusion in transliteration in Bahá'í books may in fact in the long run itself create variation and confusion. This is not to say however that the Bahá'í system does not have some advantages over the system currently in use among orientalists; thus, for example, the use of underlining sh, dh, etc. is more scientific than omitting this as orientalists do and of course the Bahá'í system is a better guide to Persian pronunciation than the system used by orientalists.

If it is desired, however, to have a system that transcribes Persian pronunciation, there is in existence a much better, more consistent system,

see H. Busse's History of Persia under Qajar Rule. On the other hand it would involve fewer changes in the present system and be more in keeping with the present trend among orientalists if the Bahá'í system were to be altered so as to become consistently a system of transliteration.

Consequently, for the book that I am now editing, and for any future books aimed at the non-Bahá'í academic community, I would like to propose using the present Bahá'í system but with the following alterations made so as to make it a system of transliteration, to eliminate inconsistencies, and to bring it more into line with the system currently in use as far as the format is concerned.

(1) To standardize all names and expressions using the Arabic 'idáfa construction so that they are connected by u (which is what the Arabic grammatical form requires). This would only affect a very few names such as Náṣiru'd-Dín (instead of Náṣiri'd-Dín).

(2) To transliterate all Arabic names and expressions according to Arabic usage and grammar and not Persian, e.g. Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsá'í, Yá Sáhiba'z-Zamán (Instead of Sáhibu 'z-Zamán).

(3) In words and names derived from Arabic which end in o in Arabic and o in Persian, to be transliterated -a where an Arabic name or expression is intended (e.g. Madína) and -ih for Persian names (e.g. Rúzbih).

(4) To keep more closely to grammatical form in Arabic names and expressions, e.g. Mu'tamadu'd-Dawlih (instead of Mu'tamidu'd- Dawlih), Abu-Badí' (instead of Aba-Badí') .

(5) To use flat accents instead of acute, e.g. Bāb instead of Báb.

(6) To separate more clearly the components of a Persian idáfa construction in which the first component ends in -ih, -á, -ú, -í. e.g. 'Alí-yi-Kaní rather than 'Alí-i-Kaní.

(7) To eliminate certain usages such as Mazandarán (rather than Mazindarán).

(8) Common place-names such as Baghdad and Shiraz require no transliteration.

(9) To drop the final hamza in all cases, e.g. Qayyúmu'l-Asmá.

(10) To use w for the silent و, e.g. Khwarazm.

This seems a very large list of alterations but in practical terms, the effects that it will have on Bahá'í texts would be very slight. The suggested change in accenting would not alter the appearance of the text greatly and the other changes occur relatively infrequently. Thus for example, I counted only 25 changes (other than accenting) in the Prologue and first three chapters (59 pages) of Balyuzi's The Báb.

Thus with comparatively minor changes in form, one can remove most of the problems and inconsistencies in the present Bahá'í system and bring the system more into line with that followed by most other publications in this field. This is particularly important in a work of the nature of that which I am editing since it is our intention to send the book to a number of learned journals for review and it would be regrettable if this and other books published were to be met with the same sort of criticism as that which has been levelled by Ellwell-Sutton.

If you desire any clarification of the points raised in this letter, I will be in Haifa during the summer,

Warmest Bahá'í greetings,

M. Momen

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

Department of the Secretariat

October 20, 1978

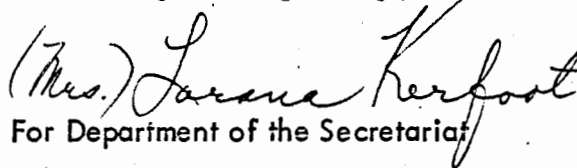
Dr. Moojan Momen
14/15 Shelby Row
Cambridge
England

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Your letter of 15 August 1978 making various recommendations about the transliteration of Arabic and Persian terms into the Roman alphabet was referred by the Universal House of Justice to an ad hoc committee.

The report of that committee has now been presented and the Universal House of Justice has instructed us to send you the enclosed copy for your comments, which it will be glad to receive.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,


For Department of the Secretariat

Enclosure

MEMORANDUM

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: October 13, 1978

From: Ad hoc Committee

Subject: Transliteration - Dr. Moojan Momen's letter of 15 August 1978

There is no doubt that a number of inconsistencies and anomalies have crept into the practice of Bahá'ís in transliterating Arabic and Persian terms. We feel Dr. Momen's letter presents a very helpful approach to overcoming these, although we differ with him in a number of his specific recommendations. We shall make a few general observations first on the matter of transliteration and shall then comment on the recommendations listed on page 3 of his letter.

- 1) It is of great practical value to Bahá'ís to have a system that can transliterate both Arabic and Persian. Our Holy Writings are in both languages and thus the same term sometimes appears in Persian and sometimes in Arabic. While, therefore, the system is basically one of transliteration, we feel that it is an advantage rather than otherwise for it to be able to indicate in various minor ways the difference between Persian and Arabic usages, especially in the pronunciation of vowels.
- 2) It must be remembered that the system is for use not merely for English publications, but for publications in all those languages using the Roman alphabet, except for Turkish. If, therefore, we are to consider the current usage of orientalists, we should consider that of orientalists writing in German, French, Spanish, Italian, etc. as well as those writing in English.
- 3) The primary purpose, however, is not for scholarly works, but to provide a system which can be used by all Bahá'ís writing in the Roman alphabet. In other words, while it should be possible for scholars to know immediately from the transliterated form how a word was written in the original text, the system is primarily intended for use by laymen. This influences our views in a number of ways, which will be apparent in our specific comments below. It is for this reason, for example, that we favour showing the assimilation of the Arabic definite article in the spelling, as the present system does, although this is a departure from strict "transliteration".
- 4) An important factor is continuity. The present system is now well known to those Bahá'ís who use the Roman alphabet, therefore any changes should be minimal.
- 5) On Dr. Momen's ten specific recommendations we have the following comments.
 - 5.1) We do not see the virtue in standardising the spelling of names as suggested. This is one of the instances where we value the ability of the present system to indicate the Persian pronunciation of what is otherwise an Arabic word. The Persians say "Náṣiri'd-Dīn" and we prefer it to be spelt that way.

Cont'd/....

- 5.2) Here again, the same applies, as Persians generally, when pronouncing Arabic words, do not normally observe Arabic grammatical rules.
- 5.3) We agree with this recommendation: to use the ending -a when the word is in an Arabic context and -ih when it is in a Persian one.
- 5.4) Our comment is the same as in 5.1 above.
- 5.5) Here we refer to our point 3 above. The system is intended for day-to-day use by ordinary Bahá'ís, and only secondarily by orientalists. Far more typewriters use the acute accent than the flat accent. Although the acute accents may look strange and antiquated to orientalists, they are much more familiar and natural to the average reader. Here, however, since the purpose of the accent is merely to indicate a long vowel, we see no objection to permitting Bahá'í orientalists to use the horizontal accent (or indeed a circumflex or any other accent) in their scholarly works if they so wish, although, as stated above, we prefer the acute accent and this should be retained for general Bahá'í usage.
- 5.6) We do not agree with this recommendation, but perhaps Dr. Momen would like to discuss it with his publishers. We feel that the effect on the average reader of spelling 'Alf-yi-Kanī' as 'Alf-yi-Kanī' might be to cause him to stress the 'yi' unconsciously.
- 5.7) We see no reason to eliminate certain usages in transliterating place-names, as some are pronounced in two ways and both are good usage. A similar case in English is the alternate spellings 'farther' and 'further'.
- 5.8) The Guardian himself left untransliterated place-names such as Mecca which have a well-established English usage. Others, such as Baghdād, Shīrāz and 'Akká he did transliterate. We feel this is a matter of judgement that must be left to the author and publisher and may well vary from country to country, or even from book to book depending upon the context and the audience for which it is written.
- 5.9) The hamza is dropped in Persian but not in Arabic. Thus, Qayyúm'l-Asmá', being an Arabic form, needs a hamza at the end, but the Persian form, Qayyúm-i-Asmá does not require it. In quotations from the Writings one should use the Arabic or Persian forms of such names in accordance with the original. If the original uses Arabic, one should transliterate accordingly, and so with Persian. In original writing an author, we feel, should be free to use either as he wishes, as both are current in Bahá'í literature. Thus, although the Most Holy Book is written in Arabic, it is much more common to refer to it in other places by the Persian variant of its name, the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, and this, we feel, is entirely permissible.

Memorandum: Dr. Momen's letter 15.8.78

Page 3

5.10) As such silent letters are very rare we feel it can be left to the decision of individual authors and publishers whether or not they should be transliterated. Our preference is to omit them.

**ADDENDUM EIGHT : SECOND INTERCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE
UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE ON TRANSLITERATION**

58 Birdwood Road
Cambridge CB1 3SU
2nd November 1978.

Universal House of Justice
P.O. Box 155 Haifa
Israel

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Thank you for your letter of 20th October 1978 forwarding the report of the ad hoc committee on transliteration.

It is somewhat difficult for me to comment on this report since the whole of the report is based on premises which differ from those of my original letter. My primary consideration in drafting this letter was to eliminate the inconsistencies which arise from the fact that the present Bahá'í system is neither wholly a system of transliteration of the written word nor wholly a system of transcription of pronunciation; it is perched somewhere between the two stools and must inevitably fall between them on occasion (as is pointed out, in the review by Elwell-Sutton of Mr. Balyuzi's book Muhammad and the Course of Islam). I feel that as there is unquestionably going to be a great growth in the volume of literature produced by Bahá'í scholars and as this will involve increasing use of names and terms borrowed from Persian and Arabic sources, it is important to eliminate inconsistencies at this stage rather than have to do it later.

The ad hoc committee, on the other hand, seems to regard the ability of the present system to include elements of Persian pronunciation as being of greater importance despite the inconsistencies that such a flexibility entails. The ad hoc committee also considers that the present system aids the layman although I must admit that when the inconsistencies of the present system allow for example both Futuhát-i-Makkiyyih (God Passes By, p. 122) and Futuhata'l-Makkiyyah (Balyuzi, Muhammad p.280) and even Marághihí and Marághí'í in the same book (Nabí'l's Narrative, Wilmette 1962, p.432 and 458), I wonder whether the present system is being of service even to the layman.

Having made these general comments, I will now pass on to consider the specific points made by the committee.

1) See above.

2) The systems in general use among French and German orientalists are even further removed from the Bahá'í system than the system used by English-speaking orientalists. The proposals of my original letter would tend to close the gap a little.

3) I have made no objection to showing the assimilation of the Arabic definite article since the correct form in the Arabic is to place a shadda over the first letter of the word the definite article of which is to be assimilated, in my opinion both Al-Shams and Ash-Shams are correct transliterations of النس and since the Baha'í system has favoured the latter, I see no objection to continuing it.

4) I have borne in mind the factor of continuity in putting forward these proposals, in that I have kept them to the minimum necessary to ensure consistency. Otherwise there would have been a large number of other points I would like to have raised: for example, I doubt whether there is any benefit in indicating the idáfa in Persian names. Why not just Mulla Husayn Bushrú'í? After all you do not write Tarázu'lláh-yi-Samandarí, although this is how Persians would pronounce the name.

5.1) In fact neither i nor u correctly transcribes the sound made by Persians in the middle of Naşiru'd-Dín. Most Persians elide this vowel into a very short indistinguishable sound. The point is made clear by referring to a title that has not previously been transliterated. If one were to take the title سام الدوله Persians would disagree as to whether this should be transliterated Şá'rimu'd-Dawlih or Şárimi'd-Dawlih. Whereas the truth is that the connecting vowel is an intermediate sound and either u or i would do. Thus inconsistencies will inevitably arise and both forms may turn up in different writers' works. Lastly, may I point out that the voluminous encyclopaedic dictionary Dihkhudá's Lughat-Námih points this word thus: Naşiru'd-Dín, in over 100 entries under this name including Naşiru'd-Dín Sháh (Volume for p. 158-166).

5.2) The committee's comment on this point was: "Here again, the same applies, as Persians generally, when pronouncing Arabic words, do not normally observe Arabic grammatical rules." I would ask the question why when transliterating a word from Arabic into Latin characters for an English book we are obliged to approach the matter from the point of view of how a Persian would have pronounced the Arabic word. I realise that the Baha'í Faith originated in Persia but I wonder to what extent we are justified in Persianising everything. Shaykh Ahmad was an Arab and undoubtedly called himself Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsá'í. Similarly we have Persianised Turkish names. Thus I doubt whether Kibrisi Mehmed Paşa knew any Persian at all but his name has been Persianised to Muhammad Pásháy-i-Qibrisí. The logical extension of this would be to have Luváy-i-Gitsingir and Hippulít-i-Dirayfús. Moreover I wonder how Arabs and Turks feel about this Persianisation of their language and their names.

If the aim is to bring everything to the way Persians would pronounce it, why not adopt a system designed particularly for that. There is in existence a very good system which transliterates q as z, i as e, u as o, etc., much closer to the Persian pronunciation than the present Baha'í system.

5.5) I query the statement that "Far more typewriters use the acute accent than the flat accent". Typewriters in England and America are certainly not sold with an acute accent mark, whereas all typewriters have a hyphen mark which can be moved up to form a horizontal accent.

5.6) This point is fully explained in point 3 on page 2 of my previous letter. Despite the committee's comment, I feel that the greater clarity of Mullá 'Alí-yi-Kaní overrides the advantages of Mullá 'Alíy-i-Kaní. For example I wonder how many lay Bahá'ís will immediately recognize that the first component of, Qibliy-i-'Álam is the word Qiblih with which they are probably familiar.

5.7) I would accept the committee's point that both usages occur. But once again some degree of definition and consistency is required. A useful standard would be Dikhudá's Lughat-Námih (despite its incompleteness) or for geographical names Farhang-i-Jugráfiya'i-yi-Írán (published by the Geographical Committee of the Iranian Army General Staff). The latter work gives Mazandaran incidentally.

In conclusion, I can only repeat the point made at the beginning of this letter: the principal point is whether we are interested in eliminating inconsistencies or maintaining some degree of flexibility with regard to pronunciation. I think the point regarding Persianisation is also worth further consideration as it affects other areas also.

With loving Bahá'í greetings

M. Momen

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

Department of the Secretariat

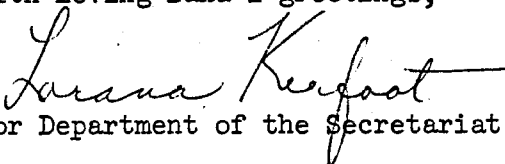
March 8, 1979

Dr. Moojan Momen
14/15 Shelby Row
Cambridge
England

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Consideration of your letter of 2 November 1978 was delayed due to pressures of the work load at the World Centre, but the Universal House of Justice now instructs us to send you the enclosed copy of the report of the ad hoc committee.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,


For Department of the Secretariat

Enclosure

MEMORANDUM

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: February 27, 1979

From: Ad Hoc Committee

Subject: Transliteration - Dr. Moojan Momen's letter of 2 November 1978

The committee found it helpful to receive Dr. Momen's further comments and agrees that our earlier report, being based on premises different from those on which his letter of 15 August 1978 was based, brings us to different conclusions which we hope we set out clearly in our report of 13 October. It is our feeling, however, that we are not too far apart in our thinking and that the results to which our premises necessarily lead offer a considerable amount of leeway to scholars.

With respect to obvious errors, such as the erroneous transliteration of Marághih in the third paragraph of Dr. Momen's letter of 2 November 1978, these require correction and it would be very useful if Dr. Momen would draw to the attention of the World Centre any such errors which appear in basic Bahá'í works.

We wish to comment on a few of the numbered points in Dr. Momen's letter:

- No. 4: We feel that Dr. Momen has illustrated perfectly the type of flexibility which the Committee regards as desirable and which the Universal House of Justice has permitted; e.g.
- Place names and other words that have a current form in a western language do not have to be transliterated—for instance, Mecca, Islam, etc.
 - In many cases we use personal names as the individuals transliterate them; e.g. Zikru'lláh Khádem, Jalál Kházeh, etc.
 - It is useful to leave the idáfa in such cases as Mullá Husayn-i-Bushrú'í, where the idáfa designates the geographical area from which he came. In the second example Dr. Momen gives, the idáfa may be dropped, since "Samandarí" is not merely a descriptive word but is Mr. Samandarí's surname.
- No. 5.1: The standardization of "u" rather than "i", as in the examples given by Dr. Momen, could be recommended to the Universal House of Justice as it is admittedly inconsistent in Bahá'í books at present. In all such cases the Committee recommends following the vowel pointing used in some reasonably authoritative Persian dictionary such as Dihkhudá's "Lughat-Námih".
- No. 5.2: The Committee's recommendation was, not to Persianize indiscriminately, but to leave Bahá'ís free to use either the Arabic or Persian form as they prefer and, in translations, to use whatever is the form used in the original. The original Writings of the Faith, in Persian, are permeated with Arabic to the point where the two languages at times seem inter-laced.

Cont'd/....

To: The Universal House of Justice

February 27, 1979
Page 2

No. 5.2 (cont'd.):

Turkish, of course, presents a special case, as that language now has its own official Romanized spelling.

As to the transliteration of the Persian form of western names, this would not be relevant in cases where the correct western name is known beyond doubt, but it might be an excellent safeguard in the many instances where it is uncertain. In instances of ambiguity perhaps the transliteration of the original could be given in a footnote if not set out in the body of the text.

- No. 5.5: The Committee referred not only to English and American usage but to usage of all western languages having the Roman alphabet. It is felt that to acquire in English-speaking countries a typewriter with an acute accent does not present a real difficulty.
- No. 5.7: The Committee gratefully acknowledges Dr. Momen's recommendation concerning reference works to establish standards and increase consistency.
-

ADDENDUM NINE: 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ' ON TRANSLITERATION

I am grateful to Stephen Lambden for drawing my attention to an important preliminary to the development of the Bahá'í Transliteration system. This was a statement by 'Abdu'l-Bahá' regarding the spelling of the name of "Bahá'u'lláh" and of "Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár". This was published in the *Star of the West*, shortly before 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing (vol. 12 (George Ronald reprint, vol. 7), September 1921, pp. 168-170).

STAR OF THE WEST

TABLET FROM ABDUL-BAHA

O thou STAR OF THE WEST!

Be thou happy! Be thou happy! Shouldst thou continue to remain firm and eternal, ere long, thou shalt become the Star of the East and shalt spread in every country and clime. Thou art the first paper of the Bahais which is organized in the country of America. Although for the present thy subscribers are limited, thy form is small and thy voice weak, yet shouldst thou stand unshakable, become the object of the attention of the friends and the center of the generosity of the leaders of the faith who are firm in the Covenant, in the future thy subscribers will become hosts after hosts like unto the waves of the sea; thy volume will increase, thy arena will become vast and spacious and thy voice and fame will be raised and become world-wide—and at last thou shalt become the first paper of the world of humanity. Yet all these depend upon *firmness firmness, firmness!*

(Signed) ABDUL-BAHA ABBAS.

TABLET FROM ABDUL-BAHA

O ye apostles of BAHÁ 'ULLAH—May my life be a ransom to you!

Similarly, the Magazine, the STAR OF THE WEST, must be edited in the utmost regularity, but its contents must be the promulgator of the Cause of God—so that both in the East and the West, they may become informed with the most important events.

(Signed) ABDUL-BAHA ABBAS.

Editorial Staff: ALBERT R. WINDUST—GERTRUDE BUIKEMA—DR. ZIA M. BAGDADI
Honorary Member: MIRZA AHMAD SOHRAB

Vol. 12

Ezzat 1, 77 (September 8, 1921)

No. 10

Tablet from Abdul-Baha regarding spelling of Sacred Name

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Jean Masson (Chicago)—Unto her be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!—Care of his honor, Mr. Roy Wilhelm (New York):

He Is God!

O thou harbinger of the Kingdom!

Thy letter has been received. Its contents indicate that thou art occupied in writing a book in answer to the one who has written against the Truth. Thou asked as to how ye should spell in English the blessed name of His Holiness, BAHÁ 'ULLAH and also Mashreq 'Ul-Azkar. Ye should spell them thus: BAHÁ 'ULLAH and Mashreq 'Ul-Azkar.

It is my hope that in writing this book thou wilt be confirmed. The language, however, must be very lenient and mild. Thou shouldst write it with the utmost politeness. Thou shouldst not look at the expressions of that hostile person, because he was a man full of prejudice and very impolite. Anybody who is endowed with a slight sense of fairness understands that what this person has written is based on the utmost self-interestedness and enmity. This very fact is a sufficient proof showing his fallacy.

Unto thee be the Glory of Abha!

(Signed) ABDUL-BAHA ABBAS.

(Translated by Aziz 'Ullah Khan S. Bahadur, Haifa, Palestine, April 29, 1921.)

Haifa, Palestine,
May 17, 1921.

Miss Jean Masson,

My dear Bahai sister:

I am sorry your letter to the Master was kept so long unanswered. It was

due partly to the sickness of the Beloved and partly to his thousand-sided occupation. However, I am glad at last there offered some opportunity when your letter was presented and a Tablet was revealed.

As to the spelling of the two names, BAHA 'ULLAH and Mashreq 'Ul-Azkar, the standard is given by the Master in this same Tablet of yours. The explanation is that BAHA 'ULLAH is composed of two words, Baha and Allah (Glory and God). BAHA 'ULLAH means the Glory of God. Now the *U* signifies *of*. This vowel, when introduced between these two words, joins them together, but in pronunciation the *A* of Allah is dropped and replaced by the same *U*-vowel. We put an apostrophe between the two words in order to show that a letter, i. e., *A*, is dropped and we capitalize the *U* because it replaces the *A* of Allah which is in capital.

Mashreq 'Ul-Azkar is also composed of two words, Mashreq and El-Azkar (Mashreq—dawning place; El—the; Azkar—mentions or prayers or communes). Again *U* signifies *of*. When we put these two words together the *E* of El is dropped in pronunciation and

so that *U*-vowel takes its place. We put an apostrophe to show that the letter *E* is dropped and we capitalize the *U*-vowel because it replaces the *E* of El which is in capital.

I had the pleasure of reading your pamphlet on the Mashreq 'Ul-Azkar. I admired the style of your writing and the tactfulness you have exhibited in it. It is sanctioned by the Master. You will kindly send us many copies for distribution. It is written in a way that will not arouse jealousy in the outside readers.

Will you kindly remember me to our revered sisters, Mrs. True, Arna True, Dr. Appel and Mrs. Houser? Also to our dear brother, Dr. Bagdadi.

With Bahai love and greeting, I remain,

Your brother in the Covenant of God,

Aziz 'Ullah S. Bahadur.

The Tablet above concerning the spelling of the sacred name, BAHA 'ULLAH, and of Mashreq 'Ul-Azkar, settles conclusively a matter that has long created among American believers a friendly divergence of opinion.

The original spelling of the name of the Blessed Perfection, as given to Americans, was, as we know, BAHA ULLAH, sometimes BEHA ULLAH. Some of us, in the early days of the Cause in the West, found difficulty in its correct pronunciation. We did not seem to understand, some of us, that 'a' and 'u' have other sounds in the English language besides long 'a' and long 'u,' hence that most sacred name was often, out of our ignorance, pronounced incorrectly and sometimes irreligiously.

If there is one name that is the perfection of the beautiful, the musical, pronounced, enunciated correctly and sacredly, it is BAHA 'ULLAH. Pronounced incorrectly, irreverently, it is sacrilegious. So to aid us in our ignorance, our difficulty in the enunciation

of Arabic letters, one of the friends, Mr. Roy Wilhelm, I believe, supplicated Abdul-Baha to settle the difficulty, suggesting that the letter 'o' instead of 'u' would aid Americans in arriving at the correct pronunciation.

Abdul-Baha responded to the effect that the name of the Blessed Beauty should be spelled BAHA 'O'LLAH. This Command has been adhered to religiously by most of the friends in America, though some have always regarded the original spelling, BAHA ULLAH, with deepest reverence and longing.

European Bahais seem never to have adopted the American spelling, nor have European scholars outside the Bahai ranks. Manifestly the new spelling was given only to Americans to aid us in our immaturity, our Bahai childhood.

Today, however, we have passed beyond the period of our infancy in the Bahai Cause. Persian and Arabic terms and words have grown singularly and beautifully familiar to us. And many of us have felt for long that we have

matured sufficiently to be given the correct spelling, at least of BAHĀ 'ULLĀH. We have felt also that a unified spelling of the sacred names throughout the Bahai world would make for the universal unification, which is one of the basic principles of the Bahai Cause. We have felt, also, not only that there should be a standardized spelling in all Bahai literature, but that Bahai literature should be the most perfect literature in the world, so elevating it above all criticism by scholars and the unfriendly.

Being engaged upon a most important work in the interest of the Bahai Cause, a work which, when completed, must compete scholastically, as well as historically, with all literature inimical to the Cause, I supplicated Abdul-Baha for the correct spelling of BAHĀ 'ULLĀH and Mashreq 'Ul-Azkar. Mashreq 'Ul-Azkar has also passed through various etymological changes in our American terminology in our effort to arrive at its correct spelling.

In response to this supplication came the Tablet above, with the very clear letter of explanation by Aziz 'Ullah S. Bahadur, stating explicitly the correct spelling of both words.

"Ye should spell them thus: BAHĀ 'ULLĀH and Mashreq 'Ul-Azkar."

The STAR OF THE WEST, standing as

it does for the pure Teachings, the pure creative Word, is the logical medium for the dissemination throughout the Bahai world of this explicit instruction as to the spelling of the two names. It is vastly important that we should have a standardized spelling of all oriental Bahai terminologies and at some future date, through this same medium, a list will be given with the correct spelling from the pen of the supreme Authority, Abdul-Baha.

As to the pronunciation of BAHĀ 'ULLĀH and Mashreq 'Ul-Azkar, not much need be said. But let us remind ourselves that by accenting the final syllables of the words we express in our voice somewhat of the reverence that is in our hearts.

Let us remind ourselves also that the first 'a' in Baha corresponds in sound most closely to the 'a' in 'ask,' and the 'U' in 'Ullah' to the 'u' in 'full.'

Divided into syllables, then, we have:

BA-HĀ 'UL-LĀH'.

Mash-req' 'Ul-Az-kar'.

I am sure it is as deep a satisfaction to every American Bahai, as to myself, to have revealed the authorized spelling of these two names, that of the Manifestation of God and the great Bahai Institution.

Jean Masson.