The al-Bayān al-ʿArabī (The Arabic Bayān)

The al-Bayān al-ʿArabī (The Arabic Bayān) or 'The Arabic Exposition' of Sayyid ʿAli Muhammad Shirazi, the Bāb (1819-1850 CE) is an innovative, post-Islamic doctrinal-legal work expressive of the mid-late Bābī religion dating to the period of its author's imprisonment in Persian Adhrībayjan (NE Persia) in 1264/1848-9 CE. Like the Persian Bayān it is incomplete consisting of eleven seemingly complete wāḥids ("Unitlies") though the first wāḥid ("Unity") is not divided up into abwāb ("gates"). Wāḥids ("Unitlies") two until eleven (II-XI) each have nineteen abwāb ("gates"). It is thus incomplete by eight Wāḥids ("Unity") each of which should have nineteen abwāb ("gates"). The Arabic Bayān is more succinct than the Persian Bayān even though it extends for a further few Wāḥids ("Unitlies") by including all the early sections as well as those from VIII: 11-19 then the complete ninth and eleventh Wāḥids ("Unitlies") which are not included in the Persian Bayān at all.

The translation below and spanning successive web pages remains very much a beta version in progress. It is being made from various mss. Including the iraqi Bahāʾī supplied mss. utilized in making the semi-critical text printed in al-Ḥasanī, al-Bābīyyūn... (Sidon, 1953). Critical readings aside from this latter text will gradually be registered and assessed including one in the handwriting of the Bab himself. Parts of the translation below were last updated and corrected 16-09-09

The al-Bayān al-ʿArabī (The Arabic Bayān)

Trans. Stephen Lambden 2009-10

III

The Third Unity (al-wāḥid al-thāʾīth)

باسم الله الأUnmount القدس

In the Name of God, the Most Inaccessible (al-amnāʿ), the Most Holy (al-aqdas).

Bāb 1.

<table>
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<th>III:1</th>
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<td>ایها فاتوقن ، وانما الاول في الوحش الثالث ما انتم به توقتن ، ما يذكر به اسم شيء ملك في ولا تملك ذلك ما املك قال ان با خلق في الظهور الآخرة عن ملكي ایها فاتوقن</td>
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I, verily, I am God, no God is there besides Me. Aught else besides Me, If they guides unto My Guidance, are even as "mirrors" in which the "Sun" might be seen. If this other elevates thee, the same is indeed My creation! Say: 'O My creation! Be ye God-fearing before Me!'
[Now] As for the First section [Gate] of the Third Wāhiḍ (Unity):

Be thou befittingly assured that there is no mention therein (Wāhiḍ III : 1 of the Bayan) of a name (ism) of any single thing [such as] a Sovereign Ruler [King] (malik) [ruling] aside from Me. Such [a person] shall in no wise rule over that which I do rule! Say: ‘O my creation! In the era off the Ultimate theophany (al-Qūhār al-Âkhira) My dominion (mulk) is solely of Me Wherefore be ye among the ruled!

Bāb 2.

Now for the Second [Gate].

Whatsoever I cry out through Him is the Truth (al-ḥaq). He creates through Him whatsoever He Willeth for such is the Truth (haq). What is aside from the Truth (dun al-ḥaq) the same can be ransomed. Wherefore does He cry out with respect to every mode of negation and affirmation (kull nafy wa lâhâb) with the [creative imperative expression] "indeed Let it Bel" (qad kun) (cf. Q. 2:117; 3:42, etc). Then is indeed manifested the like of what was invoked! Say: ‘O My creatures! [Of this] Be ye absolutely assured!

Note of translator.

Like Persian Bayan III:2 this section of the Arabic Bayan concerns the creative power of the Divine word as cried out (n-t-q) or uttered by His representative. The Arabic synoplis prefacing Persian Bayan III:2 reads, "Though His Utterance (bi-qawlīh) He is able to create something (al-shay) through Him if, that is, He should cry out through Him (because His Speech (al-qawl) is the Truth (al-ḥaq))."

Bāb 3.

Now for the Third [Gate].

Whenever [?? اَلْ حَقَ ] the Day of Resurrection is made manifest whatsoever previously existed is raised up [resurrected]. Then [also] is elevated whatsoever was previously revealed [sent down] at the very moment We authorize it. And We indeed are numbered among the patient ones (al-sâbîn).

Bāb 4

Now for the Fourth [Gate].

Whatsoever is sent down unto thee in thy eschatological [latter] days (akhirîfka) [the time of the Bab] is supremely greater (a`zam) than that which We sent down unto thee in thy earlier times. So be then [numbered] among the thankfull The Bounty (faṣl) which We sent down unto thee is greater than what was sent down unto thee in the past. This even as the magnificence (faṣl) of the Qurîn transcends that of the Injîl (Gospel[s]) or the fact that the bounty (faṣl) of Muhammad is superior to that of Jesus (faṣl Muhammad `âlî `îsî).

Say: ‘O My servant! My [eschatological] Theophany [Manifestation] (qūhârî) is at My Zenith [on My Ultimate Level of disclosure] (ft ukhrîlî) So be ye then among those in expectation thereof!
Báb 5

Now for the Fifth [Gate].

The graves of the [past] Wāḥid (Unity) (qubūr al-wāḥid) are uplifted when so authorized on the Day of My Theophany (zuhūr), when, through My Utterance (bi-qawfī), such of the past was indeed lifted up. This [thou would know] if, O My servanth, thou should return unto Me.

Báb 6

Now for the Sixth [Gate].

This concerns what He mentions about Him, a Name distinct from Allāh (ism min dun Allāh) which He created for Him. And there is not thereby a "third" (entity) betwixt these two. Say: 'I am indeed the True One (al-ḥaqīq). What is aside from Me He indeed created through Me (bihi) then before Me (illā). Say: 'O My servanth! My [eschatological] Theophany [Manifestation] (zuhūr) is indeed at My Zenith (If ukhrill). So be ye among those who are so aware.

Báb 7

Now for the Seventh [Gate].

[This indicates that] My creation can never comprehend Me lest it behold Me! And everything which was revealed with respect to the [eschatological] Encounter [Meeting] with Me (liqāṭi) [in the Qur'ān] the same is indeed [realized in] Myself in thy eschatological situation (iḥrinfikā) as in thy initial circumstance (awtalikā). Say: 'This [eschatological encounter with God through the Bab] is supremely greater than [entrance into] the [realms of Paradise (aẓām al-jannāt) [as thou would know] if, after the receipt of deep knowledge (ḥikma) (al-irfiān), thou were able to comprehend. Say: 'Thou shalt not envision a single expression of My love (shay' fi ḥubbī) save thou [first] comprehend what is indicated in this respect about My good-pleasure (ridāli). This unless, O my lovers! (ʿushshādī), you are able to envision [the messianic] He whom We shall make manifest as the Living One [One alive as a living messianic figure] (bī-hayy).

Báb 8

Now for the Eighth [Gate].

[This indicates that] whatsoever We created of everything (min kull shay') is within the Bayān [as thou would realize] should thou gaze therein.

Báb 9

[This indicates] that whatsoever We created of everything (min kull shay') is within the Bayān [as thou would realize] should thou gaze therein.

Now for the Ninth [Gate].

[This indicates that] Whatever is in the Bayán was assuredly sent down in the haykal al-Wâlîd [abjad'16] ("Zelligens constituting the Unity"). Additionally (thumma), thou (pl.) should recite this verse/ these verses (al-âyat):

"God beareth witness that He, verily, no God is there except Him, the All-Merciful, the Elevated Lord of the Throne [Celestial] (rabb al-kursâl al-manî'). God, no God is there except Him. the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting (al-muhaymin al-qâyûm).

"God Who, no God is there except Him, the King (al-mallik), the Sovereign (al-sulîm), the Victorious [Wrathful] (al-qâ'îrî), the Evictent (al-zâhirî), the Unique (al-fardî), the Transcendent (al-mumâna'). Unto Him belong the Most Beautiful Names (al-asmâ' al-Îhusnâ). Whosoever is in the heavens or upon the earth or whatsoever lieth between them render Him glory. Say: 'Glory be to God, above that which they falsely ascribe.'

"God Who, no God is there except Him, the True One (al-haqq), the All-Knowing (al-'alamî), the Upright (al-qâ'îm), the Powerful (al-qâdîrî). Unto Him belong the Most Beautiful Names (al-asmâ' al-Îhusnâ). Whosoever is in the heavens or upon the earth or whatsoever lieth between them do bow down before Him for He is the Mighty (al-ÎzÎzî), the Beloved One (al-maîbûb).

Note of the Translator

The exact sense of the haykal al-Wâlîd (translated 'the Zelligens constituting the Unity') or more literally 'The Haykâls / Scriptural Loci/ Embodiments / Temples/ Persons of the Unity') is uncertain. The Arabic term wâlîd has (without the definite article) an abjad numerical value of nineteen. The meaning might thus be the 'fullness' or pleroma of the nineteen persons or haykâls of the Bab and his eighteen letters of the living who form a Unity. This basic sense seems to have been the perspective of Gobineau and/or his assistant translators. The 1865 Les Religions... translation (in the Appendix) has the reasonable, though perhaps over-simplified and interpretive rendering "dans les (dix-neuf) personnes de l'Unité" ("in the [nineteen] persons of the Unity") (ed. Les Religiones, 1928 ed. page 412). This may be on the right lines though the context perhaps suggests something more profound to the effect that the Bayán is a revelatory completeness of great numerical magnitude in the light of its Zelligesic potency as a sign of the numerology of oneness incorporating the numbers 19 and 361. The word haykal ("temples", "embodiments", etc) may indicate "Zelligens" conceived as non-personified revelatory potencies which embody the power of revelation. They can be viewed as loci or 'personified', 'embodied' revelatory potencies of the Báb subsumed into that "Unity" (al-wâlîd) that engendered and sustains all existence. Haykâls may be thought of as revelatory, hypostatic loci configured as a unity according to a Bayán-centered scriptural universe of wâlîds ("Units"). In their nineteen-fold schemas of fullness, they express a complete revelatory pleroma, (Gk. "fullness"), a totality or kull ashâ' embracing "all things", absolutely "everything" as befits the final outpouring of God through his messianic Báb on the Day of God.

Having stated that the Bayán was sent down or revealed as a single completeness the Báb immediately counseled his reader to further recite some Qur'anic-type verses. The phrase "أيام جاءه" which I have rendered "Additionally (thumma) thou (pl.) should recite this verse (al-âyat)" would seem to indicate that the reader should supplement the Bayánic perfection with some Qur'anic style verses spelled out or re-revealed by the Báb. The Arabic verses forming the second segment of Arabic Bayán III: 9 are introduced by the singular (and plural?)
"the verse" (not the plural, "the verses" as one might expect) to introduce several quite lengthy Qur'ān rooted citations.

Bāb 10

Nay for the Tenth [Gate].

This concerns what is therein [see above, the Bayān] of these verse[s]. Thou should recite them according to the number of 361 (kull shay' = abjad 361 times ) if thou experience the spirit (al-rūḥ) and the breeze [of life] (rayḥān), otherwise thou should keep silent and then engage in contemplation. God beareth witness that He, verily, no God is there except Him. Unto Him belongs the creation and the command (lahu al-khalq wa-'amr). He causes life and makes to die then He causes death and brings to life. He Indeed is the Living One (al-hayy) Who does not die for in His grasp is the Kingdom of all things (malakūt kull shay'). He creates whatsoever He wills through His Command. He, verily, is Powerful over all things (kull shay').

Bāb 11

Nay for the Eleventh [Gate].

This [section concerns] what was revealed therein [the Bayān] as the initial verse [of the Bayān] (al-iyyāt al-awwal) namely, Bism Allāh al-ʿamma al-aqdas ("In the Name of God, the Most Inaccessible, the Most Holy"). Thou should thus direct thy gaze towards the "Letters of the Unity" (ḥurūf al-wāḥid).

Note of the Translator

What is meant by the حروف الوحد the 'Letters of the Unity' (ḥurūf al-wāḥid) is again, not immediately obvious. It may simply be the persons who make up the nineteen strong Bāb Wāḥid (Unity), namely the Bāb and the eighteen 'Letters of the Living'. Alternatively, if the ḥurūf al-wāḥid, 'Letters of the Unity' are in some sense those implied in the new, doubly apophatic, nineteen letter basmala spelled out in Arabic Bayān III:11 ( بسم الله الامنع الأقدس ) then the matter is rather more complicated.

Bāb 12

Nay for the Twelfth [Gate].

This [section concerns] what is stipulated concerning the Point (al-nuqta) for thou should strive to comprehend the [mystery of the] initial letters (ḥurūf al-awwal) [of the new basmala]? They Indicate Man yuzhīru-hu Allāh (Him Whom God shall make manifest*) [and] the 'Letters of the Living' (ḥurūf al-hayy) who are nigh unto Him. They are even as "Mirrors" (miral) before the "Sun" (al-shama). This thou should strive to establish relative to all of the Names

https://web.archive.org/web/20160409154318/http://www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk...
and Attributes (al-asmā’ wa-l-ṣifāt) [of God] for it is the very Essence of the Bayan (jawhar al-bayan). He Himself mentions it on the part of His Lord that thou might be moved to comprehend it. I, verily, I am God, no God is there except Me, the Manifest (al-zāhir), the Sovereign (al-sultan). Say: ‘What is other than Me is My creation. Wherefore should all serve Me’. Say God is indeed God! thy Lord! And thou, O kull shay’ ([Babi] ‘Everything’-Pleroma), no one among you should subscribe to polytheistic ways about God, thy Lord! Thou shalt not instigate any faction (shi’a ‘m) against God, thy Lord, the All-Merciful.

Bab 13

Now for the Thirteenth [Gate].

[This section concerns the directive that] Thou shall in no wise enquire about either My origins-beginnings (awwālī) or My ultimate destiny (al-ukhraj) except by means of a letter (fil-ṣūkāb). This to the end that everyone might operate according to Thy directives [courses of action] (masālik) perchance Thou might be accounted among the cultured.

Bab 14

Now for the Fourteenth [Gate].

This [section directs]: Preserve ye indeed! everything that hath been sent down in the Bayan. This as if it were a dawn-breaking ornament amongst the Scriptural Tablets (ta’līr fi al-awwāl). Not something written as detached (muqatta’at) [aside from other Divine revelations] such that one besmirches its ornamented status (ta’rāz). Thou should also preserve it [all the revealed words] in the most elevated of tomes [volumes] (’alā al-jild). Whoso operates in a manner other than as directed, by His very Might! such an one shall have his efforts veiled away though he shall not be numbered among the veiled ones.

Bab 15

Now for the Fifteenth [Gate].

This section declares] Believe ye in [the messianic] Him Whom We shall indeed make manifest (= Man yuzhiru-hu Allāh) on the Day of Resurrection (yawm al-qiyāma)! This in such wise that in all the worlds thou be numbered among the believers in Me and in My verses (ayat). Otherwise seek ye forgiveness of Him then be contrite before Him.

Bab 16

Now for the Sixteenth [Gate].

[This section declares that] Thou shalt not act save in accordance with what We have sent down unto thee. Neither shalt thou stipulate [command] anything except [it be] through Me Myself. Say: ‘He, verily, is indeed the
“Sun" (al-shams). We have indeed made thyself and thy writings (āthār) even as “mirrors" in which one might envision whatsoever thou consider beloved. This since thou, in very truth, have been counted among the receptive.

Bāb 17

**III:XVII**

| ثَمُ الْثَّامِنِ مِنْ بُعُدِ الْعَشْرِ لَا تَكْتَمِنَّ أَثَّارَى الْأَحْسَنْ خَطٍّ عَلَى مَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِ لِمَقْتَدْرِهِنَّ. وَإِنْ يَكُنْ عَنْهُمْ دُونَ أَعْمَلُ خُطْبَةٍ بِحُبِّ عَلَمَهُمَا الْصَّبايَةَ حِينَ مَا يَتَأَبَّونَ |

Now for the Seventeenth [Gate].

This [section commands] that Thou shall not write out My [revealed] writings (āthārī) save in the most comely [beautiful] of scripts (ahsan al-khaṭṭ) as befits that which thou consider to be powerfully preordained [sacred writ]. If this should occur on anybody's part other than the supremely great script (dun a’zam al-khaṭṭ). He would nullify his knowledge. This unless, that is, such [penmanship] be [the work] of young girls (al-şabayā) at the time of their being educated.

Bāb 18

**III:XVIII**

| ثَمُ الثَّانِمِ مِنْ بُعُدِ الْعَشْرِ مِنْ يَنْشِئُ كَلِمَاتَهُ نَظَرًا كَلاًّ خَطٍّ لِنَفْسِكَ عَلَى أَجْبَرٍ خَطَّ ثُمَّ تَهَبُّ مِنْ تَشَاءٍ فَإِنْ ذَلِكَ |

Now for the Eighteenth [Gate].

Regarding that one [the scribe] who generates words for God (yansha’ kalimāt lilāh). Say: [Let him] Set himself the [task of operating with] the most-captivating of scripts (ajdhab al-khaṭṭ)’. Then thou shalt proceed as thou will for this indeed is a Balance (qustas), manifest and evident.

Bāb 19

**IXIII:X**

| ثَمُمَا عَشْرِ مِنْ بُعُدِ الْعَشْرِ إِنْ بْيَا عَبْدِي فَأَصَفَرُوا فِي مَلِكٍ فِي مَا نَزَّلَ عَلَى مَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِ لِمَقْتَدْرِهِنَّ تَجْدَينَ مِنْ يَكُنْ بِهِ خَطَّ الْأَرْضِ وَمَا عَلَيْهَا فَنَاتِهِ أَتْيَكُنَّ عَلَى أَسْمَى المُهِمَّهِنَّ الْقُوْمَ. وَكَلْ مَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَلَى الْخَطِّ لَمْ يَكُنْ إِلَّا الْتَّحْسِينِ بَأَرَوْجِ الْحُرُوفِ ذَلِكَ دِرِيَّتَكَ فَلْتَجْمَعِنَّ بَيْنَ الْحَسَنِينَ ثُمَّ ابْنِ فَاشْكُرْنِ |

Now for the Nineteenth [Gate].

This [section declares] O My servants! Be ye of the utmost sanctity in My dominion [earthly kingdom] (mulk)! for there was sent down unto Me that which thou can assuredly view as something powerfully ordained. Wherefore shall thou seek out the one who has the most beautiful of scripts on earth (bahā’ al-khaṭṭa al-arḍ); among, that is, such as exist thereon. Then thou shalt bestow upon him what will induce him to inscribe My Name, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting (al-muhaymin al-qayyūm). And everything that He commanded thee [though my revelations] He shall execute in the most elevated of scripts (a’lā al-khaṭṭ). This should not come to pass save in the utmost loneliness evident in the very spirits of the letters (bi’l-arwāḥ al-ḥurūf)! This task is [in accord with] thy quintessential propensities (dharriyyāt). So gather together then judge among those of preeminently beautiful [penmanship] thereafter render ye thanks unto Me!