

split three ways: original Bábís, Azalí Bábís, and Bahá'ís. The Azalís are now extinct. After the death of the Báb, Mirzá `Alí Muhammad, in 1267/1850, one branch of the Bábí movement followed a young man called by the Bábí name of Subh-i Azal ("the Eternal Dawn"). After three Bábí followers attempted to assassinate Shah Násir ad-Dín in 1269/1852, the Bábís were repressed by the government (the talented Bábí poetess Zarrin Tájj, called Qurrat al-`Ayn, or "Coolness of the Eye" was executed, with others), and Subh-i Azal left Persia for Baghdad.

Subh-i Azal's leadership was successfully challenged by Bahá' Alláh ("The Splendor of God" 1233-1310/1817-1892) whose former, pre-Bábí name was Mirzá Husayn `Alí Núrí. Bahá' Alláh lost no time in declaring himself "the promised one" of the Báb's prophecies and founded Bahá'ísm, taking many of the Bábí followers with him.

In 1280/1863 at the request of the Persian government, the Ottomans imprisoned the Bahá'í chiefs, at first in Edirne (Adrianople), and then sent Subh-i Azal to Cyprus, and Bahá' Alláh to Acre (Akko) in Palestine. There was intrigue between the two factions; the Azalís went into decline and became extinct. The Bahá'í branch flourished, despite a heavy 19% levy on the revenue of its followers. After the death of Bahá' Alláh in internment at Acre in 1892, there were many schisms, firstly between his sons. One of them, `Abbás Effendi (1844-1921), who took the name `Abd al-Bahá ("Slave of Bahá' Alláh") discovered that he, too, had the gift of prophecy. A similar claim was later made by his son, Shoghi Effendi (d. 1957), but control of the organization was placed in the hands of a council.

The tomb of Bahá' Alláh in Haifa, Israel, is a shrine of Bahá'ísm. The sect itself, now denuded of traditional religious trappings and propounding an accommodating mixture of syncretism, humanism, world peace, and brotherly love, gained a certain following in Europe and, above all, in America, where it had been energetically promoted. In Iran, the Bahá'ís are now looked upon as heretical and are often persecuted with great rigor.

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Shaykhís. [first two paragraphs make no mention of Bábís or Bahá'ís and are excluded] ...The

successor to al-Ahsá'í was Sayyid Karím Rashti (d. 1259/1843), who claimed to be guided by the Hidden Imám in dreams. By this time the sect

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was already regarded with great suspicion by the authorities, and grounds for their concern were to grow when, after Sayyid Karím died, some of the Shaykhís found a new leader in the person of Mirzá `Alí Muhammad ash-Shirází.

The year 1260/1844 was believed to be the year in which the Twelfth Imám would return to the world; Mirzá went so far as to claim publicly to be the Báb ("door") — a more direct link than before — to the Hidden Imám. He was brought before the courts — such a claim having serious religious and political implications in Persia — and spent much of his career imprisoned. In 1848 he claimed to be the Twelfth Imám. He was shot by a firing squad at the age of thirty in Tabriz in 1267/1850, after his followers had caused riots.

In addition to claiming to be the spokesman, the Báb ("door"), to the Hidden Imám, and the Imám himself, Mirzá `Alí had in his brief career gone on to found a new religion. This incorporated modernist elements such as the equality of women and abrogation of the Koran, advocated the removal of the Ka`bah and the tomb of the Prophet, and proposed a bizarre set of pseudo-mystical practices centering on the numbers 19 (the lunar metonic cycle) and 28 (another lunar cycle). The number 19 is also the numeric value of the Divine Name al-Wahad ("The One"). The claims of the Báb expanded into prophethood and beyond. He also predicted a "promised one" who would fulfil his teachings.

The proselytizing of his followers led to civil disturbances, insurrection, and his own demise. The writings of the Báb are the Bayán, or "Explanation", and his followers, called Bábís, exist to this day in Iran in small numbers.

The question of his succession, in the characteristically unstable fashion of such doctrines, led to further developments. Some followed the Báb's original teachings, but a new group arose which was shortly to split into two new sects. The new group was led first by a figure called by the cult name of Subh-i-Azal ("Eternal Dawn"); and a schism occurred with the emergence of another leader called Bahá' Alláh ("The Radiance of God"), thus creating two sects, the Azalís and the Bahá'ís.

Not all the original Shaykhís had adhered to the Báb, and those who had not now proceeded, under the leadership of one Muhammad Karím, a descendant of the imperial Qajars, to form the "new" Shaykhís, of whom thousands still exist in Iran

today, along with the "Old Shaykhís", survivors of the Bábís, and the Bahá'ís....

[final two paragraphs make no mention of Bábís or Bahá'ís and are excluded]

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— Babis, Baha'is, Shaykhis (Used by permission of the curator)