

transliteration and asked them henceforward to keep to this system (BA 43). He sent similar letters to other National Spiritual Assemblies over the next few years. The list appeared in the Bahá'í Year Book in 1926 (p. 131), though with many of the diacritical marks missing, probably for typographical reasons. A corrected table appeared in Bahá'í World 2:213-14. This listing has been reprinted in substantially the same form in every subsequent volume with the exception of a few words added to the list over the years.

From the June 1923 issue of Star of the West, attempts were 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 1923. Although some books appearing in 1924 did not follow the system, from this time on, books and other printed material published under Bahá'í auspices have followed it.

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." This refers to the Tenth International Congress of Orientalists held in September 1894 at Geneva, which, at the recommendation of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain, adopted a system similar to one that had been adopted by the Society. In adapting this system for Bahá'í use, Shoghi Effendi used the permitted alternative of two letters in all but one case where the Congress recommended single letters (e.g. sh instead of s\$(1); except for j where the alternative dj is primarily for the French). Shoghi Effendi deviated from the Congress's system in his handling of the Arabic definite article by using the double consonant in the case of the "Sun letters": as-, ash-, ar-, etc., instead of "al"--following the pronunciation rather than the Arabic spelling. Also Shoghi Effendi uses v instead of w for the Persian letter vav.

One of the peculiarities of the Bahá'í transliteration system 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, Mázindarán, Mihdí, and Ádhirbáyján where the normal pronunciation would give Sayyid, Karbalá, Mázarandán, Mahdí, and Ádharbáyján. It would appear that this is due to the fact that Shoghi Effendi spoke Persian with an Isfahání accent learned from his grandmother Munírih Khánum. She was from Isfahan and passed on her accent to her daughters and grandchildren.

There are several other peculiarities. For example, the persistent use of -íyyi- in such words as Bahíyyih, Bábíyyih, etc., in place of the more correct -íyi- or -iyyi-. A number of much-used words and phrases also appear to be inconsistent: for example, Alláh-u-Abhá, which should be Alláhu Abhá. Arabic words, names, and phrases are often spelled as though they were Persian; for example, Kitáb-i-Aqdas instead of Kitábu'l-Aqdas.

3. Current Bahá'í practices and policies At present, the Bahá'í transliteration system is followed by Bahá'í publishers and individuals in all languages using the Roman alphabet. The only major exceptions are scholarly works written for publication by non-Bahá'í publishers following their own system of transliteration.

Two letters from the Universal House of Justice, dated 20 October 1978 and 8 March 1979, have developed the Bahá'í system of transliteration with the following additional principles: there is no need to transliterate the names of well-known places; -a or -ah can be used to indicate the Arabic tá marbútah; either Arabic or Persian forms of words and names may be used; and flat accents may be used.

Attempts have been made to have similar standardization for languages using other scripts, such as Japanese and Chinese.

Bibliography

For further details, see M. Momen, "The Bahá'í System of Transliteration" Bahá'í

Studies Bulletin 1991 5/1-2:13-55. J.E. Esslemont, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1923. Elizabeth Herrick, Unity Triumphant: The Call of the Kingdom, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1923.

Note:

1. This should be an "s" with a little "v" on top

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