

Book of Certitude: Tablet study outline

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Name of Tablet in Arabic or Persian: The book was originally known as Risaliy-i-Khal, Epistle to the Uncle, and later entitled by Bahá'u'lláh Himself as the Kitáb-i-Íqán.

Translation into English: The Book of Certitude. Translated by Shoghi Effendi, reprinted in many editions.

Significance of Name:

The original title, Epistle to the Uncle, is simply a literal reference to its recipient. Its later title, Book of Certitude, could be interpreted in many ways, the most obvious probably being that the book was designed to give certitude and assurance to the Báb's uncle for him to be able to recognize the Manifestation of God and the truth of the Bahá'í cause. It was of course successful, as Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad did become a Bahá'í. The book remains a source of proof and certitude for modern readers, which gives the title contemporary meaning, too.

Tablet was revealed in: Persian, with quotations from the Qur'an in Arabic

Name of Recipient:

The Báb's maternal uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad (Khal-i-Akbar, the Older Uncle, also translatable as The Greater Uncle) who with his brother Hájí Mírzá Hasan-Alí (Khal-i-Asghar, the Younger/Lesser Uncle) was visiting Karbilá.

Reason for Revelation of the Tablet:

In *_God Passes By_*, p. 138, Shoghi Effendi explains that the Íqán "was written in fulfillment of the prophecy of the Báb, Who had specifically stated that the Promised One would complete the text of the unfinished Persian Bayán, and in reply to the questions addressed to Bahá'u'lláh by the as yet unconverted maternal uncle of the Báb, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad..." Thus, the Íqán was revealed for at least two reasons that we know of: First, it fulfilled the Báb's prophecy about the revelation of the Bayán, thus indirectly proving Bahá'u'lláh's status as the foretold

Manifestation. Second, it was intended to foster certitude in the mind of its recipient and, presumably, in the minds of future readers.

Questions asked that are answered in Tablet:

The *Íqán* was revealed in response to four specific questions posed by Hájí Mírzá

Siyyid Muhammad, which can be summarized as follows:

The Day of Resurrection. Is there to be corporeal resurrection? The world is replete with injustice. How are the just to be requited and the unjust punished?

The twelfth Imám was born at a certain time and lives on. There are traditions, all supporting the belief. How can this be explained?

Interpretation of the holy texts. This Cause does not seem to conform to the beliefs held throughout the years. One cannot ignore the literal meaning of the holy

texts and scripture. How can this be explained?

Certain events, according to the traditions that have come down from the Imáms, must occur at the advent of the Qa'im. Some of these are mentioned. But none of these has happened. How can this be explained?" (Balyuzi, *_Bahá'u'lláh: King of Glory_*, 164-65)

The questions have been preserved, and a translation of them in their entirety can

be found at <http://bahai-library.com/histories/Íqán.questions.html>

Date of Revelation:

In *_God Passes By_* page 138, the Guardian writes that the *Íqán* was "revealed within the space of two days and two nights, in the closing years of that period

(1278 A.H. — 1862 A.D." The exact date is not known, but extensive research upholds the dating of the *Íqán* to this year. See, for example, Buck's *_Symbol and*

Secret_, pages 7-12. There are also several passages in the *Íqán* itself which indicate the date of its revelation, such as "these holy lights have, for eighteen

years, heroically endured the showers of afflictions." Adding eighteen years to the

beginning of the Bahá'í era, AD1844/AH1260, gives AD1862/AH1278.

Place of Revelation: Baghdad

Role of Amanuensis or Secretary: The *Íqán* was most likely dictated to Mírzá Áqá

Jan, as was the custom, and later a copy was made by Abdu'l-Bahá. For more detail

see Christopher Buck, *_Symbol and Secret_*, page 16.

Other Tablets revealed at about the same time:

According to Taherzadeh, the tablets revealed near the end of Bahá'u'lláh's stay in Baghdad, i.e. roughly contemporaneous with the *Íqán*, include Subhána-Rabbiya'l-A'la ("Praise to the Exalted Lord"), Lawh-i-Ghulamu'l-Khuld ("Tablet of the Youth of Paradise"), Hur-i-Ujab ("The Wondrous Maiden"), Az-Bagh-i-Ilahi ("From The Garden of Holiness"), Halih-Halih-Yá-Bishárát ("Hallelujah, Hallelujah, O Glad-Tidings"), Lawh-i-Ayyub ("The Tablet of Job," also known as *Súriy-i-Sabr*, "*Súrih of Patience*"), Lawh-i-Bulbulu'l-Firaq ("Tablet of the Nightingale of Bereavement"), *Súratu'lláh* ("*Súrih of God*"), and of course the Tablet of the Holy Mariner.

Style, subject, and genre of the Tablet: [?]

I. Tone of Tablet

The *Íqán* seems to contain passages of both the tone of command and authority and of the tone of servitude, meekness and supplication.

II. Subject Covered by Tablet

1. Writings dealing with interpretation of the old Scriptures, religious beliefs and doctrines of the past.
3. Mystical Writings.
5. Tablets dealing with subjects of learning and knowledge, divine philosophy, mysteries of creation, medicine, alchemy, etc.
6. Tablets exhorting men to education, goodly character and divine virtues.

III. Literary Genre of Tablet:

2. Essay or book revealed as a letter to an individual.

Voice of Tablet: [?] Bahá'u'lláh (the *Íqán* was revealed before Bahá'u'lláh explicitly announced His station, so the tablet was at least at first glance revealed in the voice of Bahá'u'lláh).

Outline Contents of Tablet: The *Íqán* is too lengthy to outline here; see instead the list of themes, below.

Principal themes of the Tablet:

The Guardian summarizes the themes of the *Íqán* as follows, in *_God Passes By_* 139, in writing that the *Íqán*, "setting forth in outline the Grand Redemptive

Scheme of God,...proffered to mankind the 'Choice Sealed Wine,' whose seal is of 'musk,' and broke the 'seals' of the 'Book' referred to by Daniel, and disclosed the meaning of the 'words' destined to remain 'closed up' till the 'time of the end'."

The rest of the Guardian's summary of the Íqán has been ably outlined by a student as follows:

"proclaims unequivocally the existence and oneness of a personal God, unknowable, inaccessible, the source of all Revelation, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent and almighty"

"asserts the relativity of religious truth and the continuity of Divine Revelation"

"affirms the unity of the Prophets, the universality of their Message, the identity of their fundamental teachings, the sanctity of their scriptures, and the twofold character of their stations"

"denounces the blindness and perversity of the divines and doctors of every age"

"cites and elucidates the allegorical passages of the New Testament, the abstruse verses of the Quran, and the cryptic Muhammadan traditions which have bred those age-long misunderstandings, doubts and animosities that have sundered and kept apart the followers of the world's leading religious systems"

"enumerates the essential prerequisites for the attainment by every true seeker of the object of his quest"

"demonstrates the validity, the sublimity and significance of the Báb's Revelation"

"acclaims the heroism and detachment of His disciples"

"foreshadows, and prophesies the world-wide triumph of the Revelation promised to the people of the Bayán"

"upholds the purity and innocence of the Virgin Mary"

"glorifies the Imáms of the Faith of Muhammad"

"celebrates the martyrdom, and lauds the spiritual sovereignty of Imám Husayn"

"unfolds the meaning of such symbolic terms as 'Return,' 'Resurrection,' 'Seal of the Prophets' and 'Day of Judgement'"

"adumbrates and distinguishes between the three stages of Divine Revelation"

"expatiates, in glowing terms, upon the glories and wonders of the 'City of God,' renewed, at fixed intervals, by the dispensation of Providence, for the guidance, the benefit and salvation of all mankind"

"...by sweeping away the age-long barriers that have so insurmountably separated the great religions of the world, has laid down a broad and unassailable foundation for the complete and permanent reconciliation of their followers."

Tablet's relationship to other tablets:

The Íqán has been described by Bahá'u'lláh in one of His Tablets as the Siyyid-i-Kutub, "the Lord of Books." In *_God Passes By_* Shoghi Effendi characterizes the Íqán in itself and in relation to other works of Bahá'u'lláh as "Foremost among the priceless treasures cast forth from the billowing ocean of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation..." (138) He goes on to say " this Book, setting forth in outline the Grand Redemptive Scheme of God, occupies a position unequalled by any work in the entire range of the Bahá'í literature, except the Kitáb-i-Aqdas..." (139)

Biography or bio note of the recipient of the Tablet:

The Íqán contains references to many Manifestations of God, their apostles and disciples, the Imáms, and some historical Islamic figures. The primary recipient, of course was Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad. Mentions of and biographies of him can be found in Balyuzi's *_Bahá'u'lláh: King of Glory_* 344, 388, 405; *_Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh_* 35 (footnote), 121, 217-18, 220-21, 226-27, 229; *_The Báb_* 86-87, 107; and in Taherzadeh's *_Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh_* vol.1 153-59 and elsewhere, *passim*.

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