

This paper was originally published in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15 (1983), 157-183. It has been scanned in and there may therefore be errors on account of this. The original page formatting has been retained for ease of referencing.

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THE SOCIAL BASIS OF THE BABI UPHEAVALS IN IRAN (1848-53): A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

I. INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Iran was shaken by a series of serious upheavals caused by the Babi movement.¹ Although of short duration, these upheavals engulfed the entire country and had far-reaching effects in that they formed the first of a chain of events that led on the one hand, to the constitutional movement in Iran, and on the other, to the establishment of the now world-wide Baha'i Faith.

Sayyid `Ali Muhammad Shirazi (1819-1850) took the title, *the Bab*, in 1844 and advanced a religious claim. Initially this claim appeared to be only that he was in communication with the Hidden Imam (the Imam Mahdi),² and the claim was directed principally at the adherents of the Shaykhi school who had just suffered the loss of their leader, Sayyid Kazim Rashti, and were in search of another leader. After a few years, however, it became clear that the Bab's claim involved more than this. Almost simultaneously, in the summer of 1848, at his own trial in Tabriz before the Crown Prince, Nasiru'd-Din Mirza, and at a conference of his followers at Badasht in Khurasan, the claim was put forward that the Bab was in fact the Imam Mahdi returned and that he was the bearer of a new revelation from God which abrogated the Islamic dispensation, the Qur'an and the Shari`a.

Such a claim was a direct challenge to the Islamic hierarchy and was immediately followed by the raising of the Black Standard in Khurasan (see 11 below), an action that was seen as a challenge to the state. Shortly afterwards, there occurred the first of the major Babi upheavals at Shaykh Tabarsi in Mazandaran (October 1848-May 1849). This was followed by the first Nayriz upheaval (May-June 1850) and the prolonged Zanzan upheaval (May 1850-January 1851). The Bab himself was put to death in Tabriz on 9 July 1850. One and a half years after the termination of the Zanzan upheaval, there occurred on 15 August, 1852, an attempted assassination of Nasiru'd-Din Shah by a group of Babis. This led in the next few months to the arrest and execution of a large number of Babis in Tihran and elsewhere. A year later there was a second Nayriz upheaval (October-December 1853).

Following this bloody repression, the Babi movement went underground only to reappear two decades later as the Baha'i movement. The social and economic teachings of the Bab undoubtedly had widespread appeal and influenced the

nationalist and constitutionalist movements that were to emerge a few decades later to an extent that is at present insufficiently appreciated, as Keddie has pointed out.³

The manner in which the Bab was able within a very short space of time to amass a considerable number of followers has led some scholars to look for underlying social and economic factors as an explanation. And certainly there was plenty of cause for social unrest in Iran during the period 1800-1850.

Probably the first to examine the Babi movement from an economic and social viewpoint was Ivanov.⁴ Writing from a Marxist viewpoint, he has examined the situation in Iran at this time. Ivanov's description of the social and economic crisis in Iran at this time is well supported by evidence from other sources.

With regard to the balance of trade, Ivanov cites some interesting evidence. The principle trade route for Iran from 1830 to 1880 was the Istanbul-Erzerum-Tabriz route which carried most of the import and export trade. Ivanov's figures, taken from Russian sources on the overall trading balance for Tabriz for the period 1833-47, compare well with figures compiled by the British consul in Tabriz (see Table 1). These figures are for total foreign trade centered in Tabriz, including Russian trade, and demonstrate a large deficit to Iran.

TABLE I *Balance of the Trade with Europe and Russia at Tabriz*

	Total exports	Total imports	Annual deficit
Russian observer (a) annual average over period 1833-47	,260,306	,726,886	,466,580
British Consul (b) (Abbott) March 1844-March 1845	,369,057	,703,204	,334,147
British Consul (c) (Stevens) 1848	,343,738	,830,773	,487,035

(a) Calculated from Ivanov, quoted in Minorski, review of Ivanov, *Babidski Vostanii Iran* (see note 3), p. 879.

(b) *Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 53 for 1849, p. 357. (c) *Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 55 for 1851, p. 864.

The situation was also bad for Iran at Bushihr where there was an annual trade deficit of approximately ,74,000 on average over the period 1817 to 1823.⁵ The small trading surplus which there may have been in trade with Central Asia could not have made much difference to these figures. The size of this deficit in the balance of payments can be better appreciated when one remembers that the total revenue of the state at this time, in both cash and kind, was of the order of , 1,250,000.⁶

Such massive and continuing deficits meant, in practical terms, a considerable drain of gold and silver from the country. The economic consequences of this may for a number of years have been cushioned by the immense booty brought back from India by Nadir Shah. However, the continuing drain of gold and silver on account of these factors was beginning to be felt by the 1840's. Progressive debasement of the coinage and other factors led to an inflation rate of between 70 and 150 percent in the period from 1843 to 1861, with some important commodities such as wheat and barley tripling in price.⁷

Apart from the purely economic consequences of the trade with Europe, there was also the social disruption caused by the import of European manufactured goods leading to the decline and even death of many traditional local industries. Especially hard hit were Iranian merchants, who, hampered by a corrupt and extortionate administration, were no match for European mercantile firms that were favoured by trade agreements and protected by strong consular powers.

In addition to these social and economic factors, the two military defeats by Russia in 1804-13 and 1826-28, as well as Iran's humiliation at the hands of the English over Herat in 1838, were the first times that the vast superiority of the West and Iran's degradation from the glories of Safavid rule and Nadir Shah's conquests were clearly demonstrated to intelligent Iranians; a fact of which they were henceforth constantly reminded by the haughty demeanour and manifest power of European diplomatic and consular personnel. Moreover, the farcical proceedings of Haji Mirza Aqasi, Muhammad Shah's Prime Minister, the pervasive corruptness of the administration, the sorry state of the Army and the obscurantism and greed of most of the ulama could only serve to increase the general dissatisfaction and restlessness of the people.

Thus, Ivanov sees the Babi movement as "a popular mass movement, born out of definite social conditions and directed against the ruling class." Ivanov stresses the merchant-class background of the Bab and the influence this had on his teaching; such things as the high standing given to trade as a profession, the legalisation of interest, the inviolability of commercial correspondence. Ivanov then asserts that a new phase of the movement began with the emergence of Mulla Muhammad `Ali Barfurushi, who was of a peasant family and promoted such ideas as abolition of all taxes and of private property.⁹ He describes the Babi upheavals as risings of "peasants, artisans, urban poor, and small tradespeople" against feudalism and "enslavement of the country by foreign capital."¹⁰ He contends that it was the particular circumstances in Iran that led to the leadership of the movement by the lower clergy and small-trade bourgeoisie.¹¹

Keddie has pointed out the similarity between the Babi uprisings in Iran and the Taiping revolt in China. She has noted the similarities in the leadership of the movement, the nature of the revolts, the influence of Christianity and the West, the social content of the teachings of the two movements (including some elements of community of property, strict regulation of personal morality, and an enhanced position for women), and the nationalistic tendency (with the revival of the solar calendar and a Zoroastrian theory of elements).¹² Keddie has also referred to the social and economic impact of the West and the probable hastening effect this had on such movements as Babism.¹³

Avery has looked to "an element in the movement's origins of the protest of the south against the north, a protest articulated by merchants who were prospering from trade through Shiraz and its port of Bushire, and through the cities of Yazd and Kerman with their port Bandar Abbas, with both the Indian subcontinent and Mesopotamia"¹⁴ in order to explain the impetus acquired by the movement.

Finally, Kazemi has reviewed the economic, social, and political dislocation in Iran in the first half of the nineteenth century and has pointed out that many of the factors laid down by Max Weber as precipitating the emergence of a charismatic leader were fulfilled in Iran at this time.¹⁵

Although they have referred to the economic and social factors leading to the emergence of Babism, Ivanov, Keddie, and Kazemi have all been careful to stress the cultural, historical, and religious continuity of Babi teaching. They have noted the importance of the Shi`i doctrine of the Mahdi as well as the linking role of the Shaykhi movement in this continuity. Thus, as Kazemi has noted, unlike Weber's charismatic leader, the Bab did not stress the break with the past.¹⁶ Indeed much of the Bab's writings revolve around emphasising and explaining this continuity. However, we shall not explore that theme in this article.

In the present work, I shall attempt to make a more detailed analysis than any made hitherto of the social background of those persons who followed the Bab, and in particular those who participated in the Babi upheavals. I shall also consider the question of the contribution of social and economic factors to the spread of the Babi movement.

The Babi Upheavals

Of the four major Babi upheavals in the period from 1848 to 1853, unquestionably the most important was that at Shaykh Tabarsi, and this for the following reasons:

1. The Bab himself instructed Mulla Husayn to initiate this episode by raising the Black Standard in Khurasan and journeying westward. The Bab moreover issued a general call to his disciples to rally to the Black Standard
2. This episode involved the two leading disciples of the Bab, Mulla Muhammad `Ali Barfurushi, Quddus, and Mulla Husayn Bushru'i, and a total of nine of the eighteen "Letters of the Living," the first disciples of the Bab. The Zanzan and Nayriz upheavals involved none of the "Letters of the Living," and were each led by one of the Bab's prominent disciples. Two of the "Letters of the Living," the famous Tahira (Qurratu'l-'Ayn) and Sayyid Husayn Yazdi, the Bab's secretary, died in the Tihnan holocaust of 1852.
3. This episode evoked a widespread response from the Babis with groups setting out from all over the country to join Mulla Husayn. Many succeeded in doing so while others failed on account of the efforts of the royal troops. Among the latter were Sayyid Yahya Darabi who was later to lead the Nayriz upheaval, Mirza Husayn `Ali Nuri, Baha'u'llah, and several persons who later perished in the 1852 holocaust in Tihnan. There was no similar widespread support for the other two upheavals.

Thus, the participants at Shaykh Tabarsi may be considered as a representative cross-section of the most active and enthusiastic followers of the Bab. For this reason, and also because of the fact that the details of those participating have been more carefully recorded, more attention will be focused in this paper on this episode.

II. THE SHAYKH TABARSI UPHEAVAL: 1848 - 1849

In July 1848, Mulla Husayn Bushru'i, on the Bab's instructions, raised a Black Standard in Mashhad and set off westward. The implications of such an act for the religious hierarchy and for the government were, no doubt, obvious to all. First, there was the well-known tradition ascribed to Muhammad: "Should you see Black Standards coming from Khurasan, then go to them, for there you will find the Mahdi, Vicegerent of God."¹⁷ Second, it was from just such an action, the raising of a Black Standard in Khurasan, that the `Abbasids had succeeded in overthrowing the `Umayyad dynasty.

Mulla Husayn was not, however, challenged by the Government during his march from Khurasan--probably because it coincided with the confusion arising from the death of Muhammad Shah. Just outside Barfurush, however, there was a clash between the Babis and the populace which resulted in Mulla Husayn taking up positions around the Shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi and building defensive fortifications. The ensuing conflict lasted from mid-October 1848 to early May 1849.

Estimates of the total number of Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi differ widely. The higher estimates (such as 1,500 in the official court history, the *Nasikhu't-Tawarikh*,¹⁸) may be the result of exaggeration by the Shah's troops in order to allay their discomfiture over their failure to defeat a poorly armed, untrained group of civilians for such a lengthy period. The Babi and Baha'i histories seem to agree that Mulla Husayn had with him on arrival at Shaykh Tabarsi a little more than 300 men.¹⁹ However, a considerable number of Babis joined after this, including some from the surrounding villages.²⁰ I will discuss the probable total number of participants below.

In the second volume of his *Tarikh-i-Shuhaday-i-Amr*, Malik-Khusravi has gathered whatever names and biographical details are available on the Babi participants at Shaykh Tabarsi. His most important sources include three manuscript accounts by survivors of the episode,²¹ two histories based on accounts given by other survivors,²² the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, the *Tarikh-i-Jadid*, and a number of other sources.²³

Ia. Occupations of Babi participants at Shaykh Tabarsi. Table 2 shows the occupations of the Babi participants at Shaykh Tabarsi.

Ib. Total Number of Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi. The information provided by Malik-Khusravi may be supplemented from another source. One of the most important sources, the *Tarikh-i-Mimiyya* by Mahjur, gives an analysis by towns of origin of the 313 persons who accompanied Mulla Husayn as he entered Mazandaran from Mashhad. Such a list is not, of course, complete since this

TABLE 2 *Occupations of Babi Participants at Shaykh Tabarsi*

	Major ulama a	Minore ulama b	Nobility, landown- ers, & high gov- ernment officials c	Whole- sale mer- chants (tujjar)	sale mer- chants	Skilled Retail workers (guilded)d	urban urban	Unskilled Peas- (guilded)e	Unclassified workers f	h antr y g [c]	Total	[a]	[b]	
Khurasan, in- cluding Qa'in and Simnan	6	62	1	1	3	5	4	1	12	43	6	144		
Mazandaran and Gilan	4	28	7	0	0	7	1	5	9	19	10	90		
Azərbayjan	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	10		
Qazvin and Khamsa (Zanjan)	0	6	0	3	1	2	0	0	14	0	0	26		
Tihran and Qum	4	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	9		
Kashan and Mahallat	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4		
Isfahan	0	8	2	1	4	19	0	0	12	7	0	53		
Fars	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	12		
Yazd and Kirman	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	10		
'Iraq	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	4		
Origin un- known	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	3		
Totals	14	122	12	5	9	39	6	6	61	73	18	365		

a Includes three Mujtahids; three *Imam-Jum'as*, one Mutavalli-Bashi of Qum; two described as having a circle of tullab; one on account of his being called one of the *muhaqqiq-i-ahd*; one on account of his being said to have had *riyasat-i-dini* in his area; two on account of being young sons of the above. Finally there is one major Sufi *murshid* (of Tihran) who is not strictly speaking of the ulama but is put here as being a "religious leader".

b Includes all mullas (*akhunds*) and *tullab* (*talamidh*), also two *pishnamazes*. two *mutavallis*, and one *mu'azzin*. Of course many of the minor ulama engaged in other occupations. The only ones noted by Malik-Khusravi were: one hakkak (engraver) of Mazandaran, one *gandum-pak-kun* (wheatsifter) of Isfahan, and one attar (druggist) of Khurasan. These three have been included in this category.

c Includes one *mustawfi*, one Afsharid prince, and also seven Mazandarani who were members of an important landowning family.

d Includes one described as *dastmal-girih-zan* (marriage broker), two *sarrafs* (money-changers/brokers), and one who is described as being an agent for a wholesale merchant.

e Includes one man described as *payvand* (? grafter).

f Includes all retainers and personal servants.

g Includes one man, Aqa Bayk-i-Lur, who was presumably a tribesman.

h No information as to occupation available. These have been subdivided thus: [a] urban; belonging to large and medium-sized towns - see section 11c below. [b] rural; belonging to small towns and villages - see section 11c below. [c] unknown origin. Some twenty-six persons in the unclassified category had either "Mirza" or "Shaykh" in front of their names, indicating that they had at least received an education.

TABLE 3 *Town Origins of Participants: Comparison of the Lists of Mahjur and Malik-Khusravi*

	Mahjur	Malik-Khusravi
Isfahani	40	40
Ardistani	7	11
Shirazi	8	11
Kirmani	3	4
Mashhadi	22	5 (20) a
Bushru'i	24	22
Turbati	5	8 b
Hirati	14	8 c
Turshizi	10	6
Kakhaki	4	0
Miyami	19	31
Qa'ini	4	2
Tihrani	9	2
Kashani	6	0
Qumi	12	4
Sangsari	10	26
Karbala'i	5	1
Qazvini	10	16
Hamadani	6	0
Tabrizi	5	1
Zanjani	12/13 d	10
Kirmanshahi	3	0
Barfurushi	4	16
Bihnamiri	40	18
Shahrudi	3	0
Amuli	2	4
Shaykh Tabarsi	2	4
Khu'i	3	4
Kani	2	3
Yazdi	3	6
Shahmirzadi	9	6
Urumi	3	1
Indian	4	0

a Five persons are specifically designated as being Mashhadis by Malik-Khusravi, another fifteen are designated Khurasani which usually meant being from Mashhad. In Table 5 these have been entered in the fourth column.

b From villages in the area of Turbat-i-Haydari: Mihna, Dughabad, Fayzabad and 'Abdu'llahabad.

c These are included in the Khurasan figures in Table 5.

d See note 24.

represents a very early stage in this episode, but it serves as a check on Malik-Khusravi's list. I have compared the two lists in Table 3. 24

The principal discrepancies which appear between the two lists in Table 3 can be explained as follows:

1. Mahjur's list was compiled at a very early stage of the proceedings and many, especially Mazanadaranis, joined after this.
2. Malik-Khusravi's sources seem to display an ethnocentric bias in that non-Persian participants are not named. Thus, of five persons from Karbila, fourteen from Hirat, and four Indians in Mahjur's list, only one Karbala'i and eight Hiratis are named in Malik-Khusravi's sources.
3. Similarly, certain towns such as Kashan, Shahrud, Hamadan, and Kirmanshah are not represented in Malik-Khusravi's sources. This may be because of the absence of any survivors from that town who would have recorded the names of their fellow townsmen.

We may make a speculative attempt at completing Malik-Khusravi's list by adding each positive difference between his and Mahjur's list (see Table 4).

TABLE 4 *An Estimate of Total Numbers at Shaykh Tabarsi*

	Malik-Khusravi	Positive difference between the 2 lists	Final total
Khurasan	144	2 Mashhadis 2 Bushru'is 6 Hiratis 4 Turshizis 4 Kakhakis 2 Qa'inis 3 Shahmirzadis	167
Mazandaran and Gilan	90	102 a	192
Azərbayjan	10	4 Tabrizis 2 Urumis	16
Qazvin and Khamsa	26	3 Zanjanis	29
Tihiran and Qum	9	7 Tihranis 8 Qumis	24
Kashan and Mahallat	4	6 Kashanis	10
Isfahan	53	53	
Fars	12	12	
Yazd and Kirman	10	10	
Kirmanshah and Hamadan	0	3 Kirmanshahis 6 Hamadanis	9
''Iraq	4	4 Karbila'is	8
India	0	4 Indians	4
Origin Unknown	3	3	
Totals	365	537	

a Since Mahjur's list applies only to Mulla Husayn's companions prior to their entry into Mazandaran, a different method has been used to obtain this figure. It is clear that a large number of Mazandarani villagers joined the Babis. The only figure I have found for these villagers is the reference to 120 Mazandarani under the Bihnamiri chief, Aqa Rasul (Browne, *New History*, p. 67). Therefore, I have subtracted the 18 Bihnamiris already listed in Malik-Khusravi from 120 to arrive at this number.

Thus, the number of Babi participants at Shaykh Tabarsi was probably between 540 and 600 (allowing for some others who may have joined after

Mahjur's listing and who were not named in one of Malik-Khusravi's sources). Malik-Khusravi's list probably represents approximately 65 percent of the Babi participants at Shaykh Tabarsi.

llc. Rural/Urban Origin of Babi Participants at Shaykh Tabarsi. Taking Malik-Khusravi and Mahjur as a basis, we may now assess the number of people at Shaykh Tabarsi from rural and urban backgrounds; see Table 5a.

TABLE 5a. *Rural/Urban Origin of Babi Participants at Shaykh Tabarsi*

	Large towns (>22,000)	Medium-sized towns (7,000-22,000)	villages (<7,000)	Small towns and Unknown	Outside Iran
Khurasan	7	13	118	15	14 a
Mazandaran and Gilan	0	24	155	13	0
Azərbayjan	8	6	2	0	0
Qazvin and Khamasa	13	13	3	0	0
Tihran and Qum	9	12	3	0	0
Kashan and Mahallat	0	6	4	0	0
Isfahan	41	0	12	0	0
Fars	'	1	0	0	0
Yazd and Kirman	10	. 0	0	0	0
Kirmanshah and Hamadan	9	0	0	0	0
'Iraq	-	-	-	-	8
India	-	-	-	-	4
Origin Unknown	-	-	-	3	
Totals	108	74	298	31	26

a The Khurasanis in the fifth column are from Hirat.

Source: This table was compiled on the basis of the list of towns given by Thomson in *Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 69* for 1867-68, pp. 507-15; reprinted by Issawi, *Economic History*, p. 28. Also in French in *Bull. Soc. Geog.*, 5e ser., vol. 18 (1869), pp. 15-40. This does not imply, however, that I agree with all the details of this list. (In Thomson's table there are 12 large towns with populations of greater than 22,000 and 23 medium-sized towns with populations 7,000-22,000.)

The grouping together of small towns and villages in Table 5a is not, however, totally satisfactory and so in Table 5b, I have repeated totals for other categories, but separated the category of small towns and villages into its component parts as explained in the notes below Table 5b.

It is worth noting the large contribution made to these totals by four small villages: Bushru'iyya in Khurasan (24 persons); Bihnamir²⁵ in Mazandaran (40 or more persons); and Shahmirzad (9 persons) and Sangsar²⁶ (26 persons), two adjoining villages near Simnan. Thus a total of 98 or more persons are from these four villages. Miyamay in Khurasan contributed a further 31 persons. The totals for Bihnamir and Bushru'iyya are probably underestimated.

TABLE 5b *Rural/Urban Origin of Babi Participants at Shaykh Tabarsi*

Large towns (> 22,000)	108
Medium-sized towns (7,000-22,000)	74
Small towns (2,000-7,000)	28 a
Villages	269
Tribesmen	1 b
Total	480
Origins Unknown and Outside Iran	
	57
Final total	537

a consisting of Ardistan (11), `Aliyabad (5), Qa'in (4), Mahallat (4), Tabas (1), Nayriz(1), Bajistan (1), Najafabad (1).

b Aqa Bayk-i-Lur

Concerning the 365 participants listed by Malik-Khusravi, the following additional information is available:

1. There were 54 survivors, a large number of whom (22) were, as may be expected, Mazandarani. This total of 54 however includes a number of persons who betrayed their comrades and thus managed to escape with their lives.
2. Malik-Khusravi only named some 13 persons as being Shaykhis, which may indicate that although in the early years Shaykhis were the majority of the Bab's followers (all 18 "Letters of the Living" were Shaykhis), by this time the Bab's appeal had widened considerably and former Shaykhis were no longer numerically important although of course the importance of such figures as Mulla Husayn Bushru'i and Mulla Muhammad 'All Barfarushi, both former Shaykhis, can hardly be overlooked. Also, there may be a tendency to underestimate the number of Shaykhis since they were not a clearly defined sect at this time and there were probably many who were inclined to Shaykhi views but were not formally listed as such. Indeed those mentioned as Shaykhis by Malik-Khusravi tend to be only those who had travelled to Karbala to study under Sayyid Kazim.
3. There were 34 Sayyids among the 365 listed by Malik-Khusravi.

III. THE NAYRIZ UPHEAVALS OF 1850 AND 1853

It is much more difficult to obtain information about the Babi participants in the Nayriz and Zanjan upheavals since these have not been studied in such detail as Malik-Khusravi's study of Shaykh Tabarsi. Concerning Nayriz, we know that it was a small town in Iran, which Lovett in 1872 estimated to have a population of 3,000.²⁷ It consisted of three quarters (*mahallas*)²⁸ and was famous principally for the growing of fruit.

The man who brought the Babi movement to Nayriz was Sayyid Yahya Darabi who was given the title *Vahid* by the Bab. Vahid was the son of one of the most famous of the contemporary ulama, Sayyid Ja'far Darabi, known as

Kashfi. Vahid received the usual theological training, but he was not apparently an adherent of the Shaykhi school.

Vahid had gone to Tihran in 1849 hoping to join the Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi, but was informed that the way was blocked by the besieging army. He remained for a time in Tihran at the house of Mirza Husayn `Ali, Baha'u'llah, and then in late 1849 set out for Yazd where he had a house. His presence in Yazd provoked an upheaval which at one time had the deputy governor of that town besieged in his own citadel. Eventually, Vahid's position in Yazd became untenable and he set out from Yazd toward the province of Fars. He travelled slowly, stopping at several villages to preach to the populace of Babism. He eventually reached Nayriz where he had previously married the daughter of Haji Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ali, the Imam-Jum'a of the Chinar-Sukhta quarter and a *qazi*.

Shortly after Vahid's arrival at Nayriz there was conflict between him and the governor, Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan. Vahid retired to a fort just outside Nayriz together with a number of companions; the Nayriz upheaval had begun.

As at Shaykh Tabarsi, the government troops, finding themselves unable to deal with the Babis, resorted to trickery in order to bring about the surrender of the Babis and then ordered a general massacre.

This first Nayriz upheaval was followed three years later by a second episode, every bit as bloody as the first, although this time the main fighting occurred in the hills outside Nayriz where the Babis took up positions and defended themselves against the troops. At the end of this conflict there was another general massacre and some 200 heads of Babis, as well as several hundred Babi women and children and about 80 Babi male prisoners were sent to Shiraz.

As I have stated previously, the sources for the two Nayriz upheavals are not very detailed. I have obtained most information from *Nabil's Narrative*, Nicolas' *Seyyed Ali Mohammed*, and Muhammad Shafi'-Ruhani's *Lam'atu'l-Anwar*.²⁹ To this I have added information drawn from a manuscript, *Vaqayi'-i-Hayratangiz-i-Nayriz-i-Mishkbiz*, by Shaykh Muhammad Husayn. The first two works are both based principally on a manuscript history by Mirza Shafi'³⁰ and mostly list names of the martyrs whereas the third work concentrates on the survivors of these two episodes. Unfortunately, however, none of these works give much biographical detail and hence the listing is very incomplete.

IIla. Occupations of Babi Participants at the Two Nayriz Upheavals. Table 6 gives the occupations of the participants in the two Nayriz upheavals. No attempt has been made to separate the two episodes because most of those participating in the second had also taken part in the first.

IIlb. Origins of Participants at the Two Nayriz Upheavals. Vahid himself, although described as Darabi, was in fact born and brought up in Yazd. Of the 337 persons listed in Table 6, seven are from Yazd, seven from Istahbanat, one from Bavanat, and the remaining 322 persons were Nayrizis. (See also comments in the next section.)

IIlc. Total Numbers of Babi participants at the Two Nayriz Upheavals. As usual, there are a good many estimates of the total number of Babi participants

TABLE 6 *Occupations of Babi Participants at Nayriz*

Occupation classification	Number participants
Major ulama	6a
Minor ulama	60b
Nobility, landowners, and high government officials	11c
Wholesale merchants (<i>tujjar</i>)	0
Retail merchants (guilded)	6
Skilled urban workers (guilded)	9
Unskilled urban workers	3
Peasantry Unclassified (urban)	5d
Unclassified (rural)	0
Unclassified (origin unknown)	227e
Total	337

a Consists of Vahid himself two *Imam-Jum`as*, one *Shaykhu'l-Islam* of Bavanat, and two young sons of one of the *Imam-Jum`as*.

b One of the Mullas listed here is also said to have been a guildler (*muzahhib*).

c Includes two relatives of the governor and two *kadkhudas*.

d These were five agriculturalists who lived in Nayriz and worked the orchards there. To call them peasants is probably not wholly accurate.

e Includes one *darvish*. Most of these would have been fruit-growers.

in these upheavals. For the first upheaval, the *Nasikhu't-Tawarikh* states that initially, 300 Babis occupied the fort and that later their numbers grew to 2,000.³¹ Hasan-i-Fasa'i, in the *Fars-Nama Nasiri*, states that initially there were 500 Babis and that their numbers swelled to more than 3,000.³² According to Nicolas' Babi source, the number was 700-800.³³ There are fewer figures for the second upheaval. Nicolas states that at the end of this episode 603 women and 80 male prisoners were taken captive to Shiraz.³⁴ *Nabil's Narrative* gives the numbers as 600 women prisoners, 180 males prisoners and 180 male "martyrs"; a total of 960.³⁵

We may arrive at an estimate of the numbers of Babis involved in the Nayriz upheavals by a different means. We know that on Vahid's arrival at Nayriz almost the whole of one of the town's quarters, the Chinar-Sukhta quarter,³⁶ together with some people of the other quarters, flocked to hear him speak and became his followers; Nabil gives the numbers as 1,000 persons of the Chinar-Sukhta quarter and 500 from other parts of Nayriz.³⁷ Now, it cannot be assumed that all of those who flocked to Vahid in the heat of the moment after his address in the mosque continued to follow him once it became clear that an armed conflict was inevitable and that their lives would be at stake. Nevertheless, this gives us an estimate for the population of the Chinar-Sukhta quarter that compares well with Lovett's statement that the town's population was 3,500 spread over three quarters.³³ By the time of the second episode, the town had become sharply polarized, with all the Babis living in the Chinar-Sukhta quarter.

From these different statements, I would be inclined to put the Babi population of Nayriz participating in the two upheavals at about 1,000. The number of persons that Vahid brought with him to Nayriz was insignificant beside this. They are stated to have been 72 persons, 39 of whom 20 were from Istahbanat⁴⁰ and many of the rest from Yazd. At least five ulama from Istahbanat participated in the second episode.⁴¹

We may assume, moreover, that from a sociological point of view, the followers of Vahid consisted of a representative cross-section of a quarter in a small town.

IV. THE ZANJAN UPHEAVAL 1850-1851

The Babi leader in the Zanzan episode was another man of extraordinary capacities. His name was Mulla Muhammad `Ali Zanzani, and before the rise of Babism he had been called Hujjatul-Islam, and he was later named by the Bab Hujjat. Hujjat's father was one of the leading ulama of Zanzan, and Hujjat had acquired the usual theological education with the ulama of Karbala and Najaf before returning to Zanzan, on his father's death, in order to take up his father's position. But there was already the element of friction between Hujjat and the mujtahids of Zanzan because in `Iraq Hujjat had espoused the doctrines of the anti-mujtahid Akhbari school. The ulama of Zanzan complained to Muhammad Shah, who brought Hujjat to Tihiran to be examined. Hujjat acquitted himself well before an assembly of ulama and returned to Zanzan with the King's favour. Then came the advent of Babism and Hujjat's enthusiastic avowal of it. This added fuel to the complaints of the ulama of Zanzan, and eventually, after a comparatively minor incident, violence broke out and the town was divided into two halves, the eastern half being in the hands of the Babis.

This episode lasted longer than the others, some eight months in all. Zanzan was a much larger and more important town than Nayriz, and the number of Babi participants was greater. This time the siege ended not so much by treachery, as by the gradual attrition of the Babis.

Unfortunately, our sources for Zanzan are even poorer than for Nayriz and Shaykh Tabarsi. I have used *Nabil's Narrative* and Nicolas' *Seyyed Ali Mohammad* (both of these use the manuscript history of Husayn Zanzani, and the latter has in addition a history by Aqa Naqd-`Ali). I have also used Aqa `Abdu'l-Ahad Zanzani's memoirs translated by Browne.. These sources yielded only sixty-eight names and very little biographical information.

Iva. Occupations of Babi Participants at Zanzan. Table 7 gives the occupations of the Babi participants at Zanzan.

IVb. Origins of Babi Participants at Zanzan. Of the 68 names, all were from Zanzan barring two. One of these was a Shirazi and one was from Baku.

IVc. Total Numbers of Babi Participants at Zanzan. As usual, the Muslim sources have exaggerated the number of Babis present, presumably once again to

TABLE 7 *Occupations of Babi Participants at Zanjan*

Occupation classification	Number participants
Major ulama	5a
Minor ulama	5
Nobility, landowners, and high government officials	7b
Wholesale merchants (<i>tujjar</i>)	1
Retail merchants (guilded)	3
Skilled urban workers (guilded)	9
Unskilled urban workers	3
Peasantry	0
Unclassified (urban)	0
Unclassified (rural)	35
Unclassified (origin unknown)	0
Total	68

a Consists solely of Hujjat and his family.

B Includes one physician (*tabib*) and one surgeon (*jarrah*), both of whom also owned property.

make light of the inability of the Shah's troops to take the town. The *Nasikhu't-Tawarikh* gives the grossly inflated figure of 15,000 Babis,⁴² which is several thousand greater than the probable total population of Zanjan at this time. Nabil estimates a total of 1,800 "martyrs"⁴³ with 500 women prisoners at the end of the siege,⁴⁴ and 100 women and children taken prisoner earlier in the siege;⁴⁵ a total of 2,400 which does not take into account a number of desertions from the Babi side that were reported to have occurred. Shaykh `Ali Bakhsh gives the figure of 3,000 including deserters,⁴⁶ and Aqa `Abdu'l-Ahad states that there were 3,000 of whom about 1,000 deserted when Hujjat explained to them their probable fate.⁴⁷ Aqa `Abdu'l-Ahad also states that there were sixty barricades with 19 men at each barricade.⁴³ This would require 1,140 men, and if we assume an equal number of women were involved, a total of 2,280.

All in all it would appear that if we take a total of 2,250 Babi participants, excluding deserters, we would not be far wrong. In the Babi accounts there is only slight support for the contention that there was widespread involvement of Babis from villages surrounding Zanjan as Ivanov has stated.⁴⁹

From the point of view of the social background of the Babi participants, in all probability this consisted of a representative cross-section of the population of a medium-sized Iranian town. An interesting social comment on the Babis of Zanjan is to be found in the history of Mirza Husayn Zanjani, a survivor of the episode:

And as for the Babis, whichever of them were of the poorer classes of the town, or the traders or the sayyids or the *tullab* or others resisted the enemy with complete constancy, and began to build fortifications. Some who were of the rich, and wealth had become a veil for them, went over to the side of the Muslims, and these were those whose place had always been at the head of the assembly or in the front of the *mimbar*.⁵⁰

V. THE TEHRAN EPISODES OF 1850 AND 1852

There were two major episodes in Tehran. The first, in 1850, is known as the "Seven Martyrs of Tehran" whereas the second in 1852, following an attempt on the life of the Shah, was a much more serious affair involving the arrest and execution of a large number of Babis.

Va. "The Seven Martyrs of Tehran," 1850. In Tehran in 1850, a number of Babis were arrested and seven put to death. These seven are named by Nabil as follows:⁵¹

1. Haj Muzza Siyyid 'Al Shīrazī, a merchant (*tajir*).
2. Muzza Qurban-'Alī Barfurush, a Sufi *murshid* of the Ni'matullah order.
3. Haj Mulla Isma'īl Qumī, an *akhund*.
4. Siyyid Husayn Turshīzī, a mujtahid.
5. Haj Muhammad Taqī Kirmanī, merchant (*tajir*).
6. Siyyid Murtida Zanjanī, merchant (*tajir*).
7. Muhammad Husayn Maraghi'ī, a government official.⁵²

Of these seven men, Browne has written, echoing the words of the authors of the *Tarikh-i-Jadid* and the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*:

They were men representing all the more important classes in Persia—divines, dervishes, merchants, shopkeepers, and government officials; they were men who had enjoyed the respect and consideration of all; they died fearlessly, willingly, almost eagerly, declining to purchase life by that mere lip-denial, which, under the name of *ketman* or *takiya*, is recognised by the Shi'ites as a perfectly justified subterfuge in case of peril; they were not driven to despair of mercy as were those who died at Sheykh Tabars and Zanjan; and they sealed their faith with their blood in the public square of the Persian capital wherein is the abode of the foreign ambassadors accredited to the Shah.⁵³

Even in the geographical spread of their hometowns, these seven men represented all Iran, with one of them each being from Fars, Mazandaran, Khurasan, Adharbayjan, Kirman, Khamsa and Qum. It would have been difficult to have picked seven men who were more representative of all that was most respected in mid-nineteenth century Iran.

W. The Tehran Executions of 1852. Following the disturbances of 1850, there was a period of one and a half years in which the Babi movement appears to have become quiescent. A group of the Babis of Tehran, however, plotted to assassinate Nasiru'd-Dīn Shah, whom they held to be responsible for the death of their leader and their comrades. This single episode hardly justifies Ivanov's sweeping statement that after the defeat of the previous uprisings, the Babi leaders turned to terrorism.⁵⁴

The assassination attempt failed and there ensued a large number of arrests and executions. We have been given, however, two somewhat contradictory pictures of the executions. One account states that some thirty or forty men were arrested and most of these executed individually by various groups of government officials and other bodies. On the other hand, Gobineau speaks of large numbers of Babis, including women and children marching, *en masse*, to their death at the

TABLE 8 *Occupations and Geographical Origins of the Babis Executed in Tihran in 1852*

	Major	Minor	Nobility, landown ers, & high gov- ernment officials	Whole- chants (tujjar)	sale mer chants (guilded)	Skilled Retail ()	urban workers guilded)	Unskilled urban workers	Unclas- Peas- workers	Unclas- sified entry (urban)	Unclas- sified (origin rural)	unknown)	Total
Khurasan	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	6		
Mazandaran and Gilan	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	7a	
Azərbayjan	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	
Qazvin and Khamsa	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	
Tihran and Qum	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Kashan and Mahallat	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Isfahan	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	4	
Fars	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	5b	
Yazd and Kirman	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
Totals	2	9	4	2	2	1	1	0	2	7	6	36	

a Those listed for Mazandaran are persons arrested in Takur after Mirza Yahya's abortive attempt to instigate an uprising there to coincide with the attempted assassination of the Shah. These were brought to Tihran and executed there.

b Two of those from Fars were arrested after the first Nayriz upheaval and had been held in prison in Tihran since that time.

hands of the official executioners.⁵⁵ There is some support for Gobineau's version in a newspaper account of 400 Babis having been put to death.⁵⁶

If, however, the second view is correct, it is surprising that no names or even descriptions of these other martyrdoms have been given in any Babi, Baha'i or Muslim source. Nor is there any reference to them by the ministers of foreign powers in Iran. I am therefore inclined to take the view that the first version is the more accurate. My source of names for this episode is the thirty-five listed in the newspaper *Ruznama-yi - Vaqai'ivya-yi-lttifaqiyya*⁵⁷ to which I have only added the famous Babi heroine, Tahira, Qurratul-'Ayn. Biographical details of these martyrs was obtained from various sources; in particular, the third volume of Malik-Khusravi's *Tarikh-i-Shuhada-yi-Amr*.

Vc. Occupations of the Babis executed in Tihran in 1852. Table 8 gives the occupations and geographical distribution of the Babis executed in Tihran in 1852.

VI: CONCLUSIONS

From the information accumulated above, it is possible to discern features of each episode. The Zanjan and Nayriz episodes were localised urban upheavals centered on one charismatic personality who had been converted to Babism and succeeded in attracting a large proportion of the populace of the town to the new movement and thereby exciting the opposition of the ulama. There is little evidence from the various accounts of the upheavals or from the names analysed in this paper for supposing any major degree of support among the peasantry or any large-scale movement of Babis from other parts of Iran to support their co-religionists.

The upheaval at Shaykh Tabarsi was altogether of a different character. Here with the raising of the Black Standard in Khurasan, there was a definite challenge to the existing order. The most enthusiastic of the Babis from all parts Iran came to enlist under Mulla Husayn's banner.

The attempted assassination of the Shah may be described in contemporary terms as an act of urban terrorism planned by about twelve Babis in Tihran. Apart from an abortive attempt by Mirza Yahya to incite an uprising in Takur, Mazandaran, to coincide with the attempted assassination, there is little other evidence of any widespread participation by the Babis in this episode.

Via. A Comparative Analysis. The listings presented here are not of course a representative cross-section of the Babis. They are almost certainly favour of the influential classes, the ulama and merchants, and against the poorer classes.

Because the Shaykh Tabarsi upheaval involved the participation of Babis from all over Iran-- persons whom we may consider as the most enthusiastic of the new community even if not representative of the whole community^C and because our figures for it are more complete than for the other upheavals, it would be worthwhile to examine these figures more closely. In trying to compare these figures with those for Iran as a whole at that time, we are of course greatly hindered by the lack of information about mid-nineteenth century Iran.

Figures for the total population of Iran at this time vary widely from Thomson's estimate of 4,400,000 (in 1867)⁵⁸ to Blau's 10,000,000 (in 1850).⁵⁹ But various writers throughout the last half of the nineteenth century were more agreed on the relative proportions of urban, rural and nomadic peoples (see Table 9a).

The most striking difference to be noted from Table 9a is the lack of nomads among the Babis. If, for the time being, the nomads are excluded and the figures analysed further, Table 9b is obtained.

Although it may appear from Tables 9a and 9b that there is some preponderance in favour of towns as against villages among the Babis as compared to the overall population of Iran, this is found not to be the case if the figures are subjected to statistical analysis. Using Multinomial Distribution Theory, it is possible to show that the null hypothesis (that there is no difference between the sample and the total population) is correct when:

TABLE 9a *Population of Iran Compared with the Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi*

Source	Total Population	Towns	Villages	Nomads
Blau, 1857a	10,000,000	30%	40%	30%
Thomson, 1867b	4,000,000	22.7%	38.6%	38.6%
Mounsey, 1870c	5,000,000	20%	50%	30%
Schindler, 1884d	7,654,000	25.6%	49.4%	24.9%
Mean		24.5%	44.5%	30.8%
Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi		43.8%	56.0%	<1%

a Blau, see note 59, p. 1.

b Thomson, see *Source* note to Table 5a.

c A. H. Mounsey, *A Journey through the Caucasus and the interior of Persia*, London, 1872, pp. 96-97.

d A. H. Schindler, quoted in Mr. Dickson's report, *Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 76 for 1884-85, p. 7.

k

$\frac{3(n-1)}{e-1} \sum \frac{(e_i - e)^2}{e}$ #Value Of χ^2 distribution with k-1 degrees of freedom

where k = number of categories

n = observed frequency in the sample

e = the expected frequency of the population

Applying this formula in order to determine whether there is any significant difference between the Babis at Shaykh T. Tabarsi and the overall population of Iran as represented in Thomson's figures (see Table 9b; I have ignored Schlinder's estimates on account of the problems outlined in note c of Table 9b), one obtains the following result:

$$\frac{(22.5 - 20.7)^2}{20.7} + \frac{(15.4 - 10.7)^2}{10.7} + \frac{(5.8 - 5.5)^2}{5.5} + \frac{(56.0 - 62.9)^2}{62.9} = 3.00$$

χ^2 values for 3 degrees of freedom are:

Level of significance	0.02	0.05	0.20
χ^2	9.84	7.82	4.64

Thus, even at a 20 percent level of significance (where one would expect to detect even small differences), the distribution of the Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi according to whether they came from a large town, medium-sized town, small town, or village does not significantly differ from that of the general population of Iran as estimated by Thomson (excluding the nomadic element). In other words, there was no bias toward either urban or rural background among the Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi.

TABLE 9b *Population of Iran Compared with Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi (excluding nomadic tribesmen)*

	Thomson, 1867a	Schindler, 1885b	Shaykh Tabarsi
Large towns (>22,000)	20.7%	12.9%	22.5%
Medium-sized towns (7,000-22,000)	10.7%	2.5% ^c	15.4%
Small towns (2,000-7,000)	5.5%	18.7%	5.8%
Villages	62.9%	65.9%	56.0%

a Calculated from Thomson, see *Source* note to Table 5a.

b Calculated from Schindler, see note to Table 9a.

c This is almost certainly an underestimate since Schindler does not give in his table a number of small towns such as Barfurush, San, Quchan, Turshiz, etc., which would have increased this figure at the expense of small towns.

We are, unfortunately, insufficiently informed of the social structure in Iran to be able to perform a similar analysis with the data of Table 2 with respect to occupations. But in view of the fact that 37.3 percent of the 365 persons listed by Malik-Khusravi were ulama, one must suspect a strong bias towards this group. It has been said that the ulama who were converted to Babism were principally the minor ulama. However, in this group of 136 ulama there were three mujtahids, and that cannot be far from the normal proportion of mujtahids to *akhunds* and *tullab*. It would be true to say, however, that the leadership among the Babes was vested in the minor ulama group to a large extent.

Vib. The Role of Women. Most accounts of Babism are agreed that one of its major social thrusts was toward an amelioration of the social position of women. The Bab himself does not seem to have written a great deal on this theme, apart from enacting certain laws placing restrictions on divorce.⁶⁰ However, the proceedings of the famous Babi heroine, Tahira (Qurratu'l-'Ayn) and in particular her symbolic act in discarding the veil at the conference of Badasht, as well as the evident approval of her actions by the Bab, would indicate that this was a basic feature of the Babi movement.

There were no women among the Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi and this is not surprising in view of the circumstances of the siege. At Zanzan and Nayriz however, the women played an important role. During the Zanzan episode, the British consul, Abbott, visited the scene of the operations and reported to Shiel, the British minister: "They [the Babis] fight in the most obstinate and spirited manner, the women even, of whom several have been killed, engaging in the strife."⁶¹

It was during the Zanjan upheaval that a latter-day Joan of Arc arose in the person of Zaynab, a young Babi girl who donned the apparel of the men and participated in the fighting with such courage and success that she soon became the terror of the royal troops and was put in command of one section of the Babi defences.⁶²

At Nayriz also, the women played an important part, Nabil records: "The uproar caused by their [the Babis'] womenfolk, their amazing audacity and self-confidence, utterly demoralized their opponents and paralysed their efforts."⁶³

It would seem that in the second Nayriz upheaval, the Babi women outnumbered the men, whose ranks had been thinned by the first episode.

Vlc. Other Social Groups. It is worth recording here the absence from the Babi lists of any persons from the main religious minorities; Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. Indeed the only reference that I have seen to any of these groups being converted to Babism (as distinct from the numerous conversions to the Baha'i Faith later on) would appear to be the result of a mistake.⁶⁴

We have already noted the almost complete absence of any of the nomadic tribesmen who formed a large part of the country's population. Indeed, there does not seem to have been any effort made by the Babis themselves to reach this part of the population. There is also what some may regard as a surprising sparsity of Sufi *darvishes* in the Babi lists—only two at Shaykh Tabarsi and one of the "Seven Martyrs of Tihiran."⁶⁵ In this context, it is interesting to note that according to Mahjur, when Lutf-'Ali Mirza joined Mulla Husayn's party dressed in the garb of a *darvish*, he was instructed by Mulla Husayn to change his clothing.⁶⁶

Vld. The Social Basis of Babism. If we may now turn our attention to the various statements made by Ivanov, Kazemi, and others, we can examine these statements in the light of the facts presented above.

Taking into consideration the fact that the classes indicated by Ivanov as constituting the bulk of the Babi movement (peasants, artisans, urban poor, and small tradesmen) must also have represented the vast majority of the population of Iran at this time, one can find little evidence to support Ivanov's ideas. Although one would agree with Ivanov that leadership of the movement was vested in the minor ulama, one is forced to point out that quite apart from the leadership, a good part of the following was of the same category. Although the Bab himself was a member of a mercantile family, there is little evidence that merchants whether wholesale (*tujjar*) or retail played a prominent role. All in all, Bausani seems to be nearer the mark when he writes: "The Bab's followers were drawn not only from the lower classes and the growing middle class of traders, but even from the aristocracy."⁶⁷

Much of Ivanov's thesis is based on an obscure and difficult passage in the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* ⁶⁸ in which, according to Ivanov's interpretation, Mulla Muhammad 'Ali Barfurushi asserts before the Babis gathered at the Conference of Badasht that the "old order had died away and the believers were freed of the old duties,"⁶⁹ and that property was usurpation and whoever was willing to renounce it was relieved of the obligation to pay taxes.⁷⁰ On a closer examination of the text, however, it would seem that there are no grounds for even asserting that

this passage represents a speech made by Mulla Muhammad `Ali (rather the one of the lengthy and obscure digressions which the author of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* frequently makes). Although it cannot be denied that Mulla Muhammad `Ali was of peasant origin, his theological training at Mashhad and Karbala would have tended to make him identify with the ulama class rather than the peasants and certainly whatever is extant of his writings confirms this view of him as one of the ulama concerned with theological issues rather than a peasant revolutionary concerned with social ones.⁷¹ Even in the case of Tahira who is usually thought of as a champion of women's advancement, there is little evidence of such preoccupations in her writings.⁷² She would first and foremost appear to have been a zealous advocate of the Bab's religious claims and only secondly a social reformer.

Ivanov referred to the effect that the West may have had as a catalyst in promoting Babism. He refers to the Babi upheavals as a popular rising against feudalism and enslavement to foreign capital.⁷³ The main groups feeling the effects of the West in Iran at this time were the craftsmen and artisans who were being deprived of their livelihood by the influx of Western manufactured goods; the wholesale merchants who were increasingly unable to compete with the Western merchants (who were backed by powerful consular authorities); and, to a lesser extent at this stage, the peasant classes who were being forced into greater poverty by the increasing demand by landlords for payment in cash rather than in goods.⁷⁴

Although it is true that there was a group of craftsmen and artisans at Shaykh Tabarsi and, in particular, a group of eighteen who came from Isfahan, the latter represented less than half of the total number coming from Isfahan (forty-two) and even nine of them were builders (*banna*) whose livelihood could hardly have been affected by Western competition. If the resentment of craftsmen and artisans were an important factor in the Babi upheavals, one would have expected a much larger number of persons from the important manufacturing towns of Isfahan, Kashan, Yazd, Hamadan, and Shiraz. Moreover, one may have expected Babi disturbances within these towns.⁷⁵ We have already note that there was no large-scale participation by the merchant class who, in any cast as Kazemi has pointed out,⁷⁶ had little to gain and much to lose by joining the Babis. Although it is true that a number of peasants and villagers joined the Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi, this seems to have been more at the instigation of local religious leader who had been converted to Babism rather than out of desire for social reform. This was certainly the case at Bushru'iyya, Sangsar, and Shahmirzad, whereas the case of Bihnamir is even more remarkable in that the forty or more persons from the village who joined the Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi did so under the leadership of the local landlord, Aqa Rasul Bihnamiri, and therefore could hardly be regarded as peasants "rising against feudalism"⁷⁷ as Ivanov would have them.

It should be noted, by way of a parenthesis at this point, that although the Babis were frequently accused by government and religious sources (and the Europeans in Iran who usually reflected these sources)⁷⁸ of being communist and preaching anarchy, immorality, and the community of property and even of

wives, the accusations should not be taken too seriously as there is in Iran almost a tradition of accusing any heterodox movement of holding these views. The Isma`ilis and the Mazdakites were similarly accused.⁷⁹ As Gobineau has pointed out:

It is a type of accusation made respectable by its antiquity, and one may perhaps regard it as the mark of the oldest religious hatred in the world.... It was used against the Ophites (?), the Carmatians, the disciples of Mani, and others; the Muslims have used it against the Nusayris and, as we see, against the Babis. Thus generalised this argument loses its value, and after one reads the laws of His Sublime Highness [the Bab], it becomes evident that we must consider it simply as an insult.⁸⁰

With regard to the accumulation of community of property among the Babis, there would seem to be some justification for this. Thus in Aqa `Abdu'l-Ahad's account of the Zanzan upheaval there is the following:

After this His Holiness the Martyr [Mulla Muhammad `Ali Zanjani, Hujjat] commanded his followers that they should all be as one family and one household, and that all things, from eatables to clothing, whatever there was, should be divided for use; and his followers did even as he commanded so that they even opened their houses to one another, and passed in and out in unity and concord.⁸¹

Similarly the Babis in Shaykh Tabarsi are reported to have pooled their money in order to pay for food which was then prepared and served to all.⁸² But these actions were taken under extreme circumstances at a time when hostilities had become inevitable and cannot therefore be taken as representing normal policy. With respect to this moreover, Curzon has commented:

Nor does there seem to be any greater justice in the charges of socialism, communism, and immorality, that have been so freely levelled at the youthful persuasion. Certainly no such idea as communism in the European sense, i.e., a forcible redistribution of property, or as socialism in the nineteenth century sense, i.e., the defeat of capital by labour, ever entered the brain of the Bab or his disciples. The only communism known to and recommended by him was that of the New Testament and the early Christian Church, viz., the sharing of goods in common by members of the faith, and the exercise of almsgiving, and an ample charity. The charge of immorality seems to have arisen partly from the malignant inventions of opponents, partly from the much greater freedom claimed for women by the Bab, which in the Oriental mind is scarcely dissociable from profligacy of conduct.⁸³

Gobineau has written of the Bab having come into contact with Jews and Christians in his youth⁸⁴ while Keddie states that "the Bab was probably influenced by Christian ideas."⁸⁵ It would seem to me that there was very little opportunity for the Bab to come into any significant contact with the West. Although the redoubtable Christian missionary, Henry Martyn, had visited Shiraz in 1811, there were no resident Europeans there from that time until the 1860's. It is true that the Bab was for a number of years in Bushihr, where there was a British Resident of the East India Company. But at this time the staff at the Residency was very small and there is no evidence that the Bab had direct dealings with them. Similarly, it is doubtful whether any of the other disciples of

the Bab had any contact with Europeans in this period when there had not as yet developed the widespread presence of European consuls, missionaries,⁸⁶ and merchants that characterised Iran toward the end of the nineteenth century. Nor with the lack of printing facilities in Iran, was there yet any opportunity for the diffusion of European ideas by this means. Although it is tempting to look to the widespread revolutionary ferment in Europe, which came to a climax in 1848, for parallels with the Babi movement, the vast mass of Iranians at this time were totally unaware of what was happening in Europe and completely unaffected by the revolutionary propaganda.

We can find little in our analysis to support Avery's contention of there being an element of the protest of the south against the north in the Babi upheaval. By far, the largest groups in the Shaykh Tabarsi episode were from Khurasan and Mazandaran as may be expected from the fact that Mulla Husayn began his march from Khurasan and ended it in Mazandaran. Moreover, of the other two upheavals, Nayriz was in the south, but the larger and more prolonged Zanzan upheaval was in the north.

What then can be said about the social basis of Babism from our analysis? We know that the Babi doctrine was spread through Iran principally by the eighteen "Letters of the Living" who were all minor ulama, having been the *tullab* of Sayyid Kazim, the Shaykhi leader. The "Letters of the Living" and other emissaries of the Bab moved from town to town and village to village, in each place converting a few persons. Those converted to Babism were drawn from all social classes with a preponderance from the ulama, who also provided the leadership of the movement. The manner of preaching varied from one emissary to another. Some would teach the new religion cautiously and secretively! whereas others, particularly after about the year 1847, taught the new religion openly and even from the *mimbar*.

In most places; only a handful of persons would be converted to the new religion, but occasionally there would occur the conversion of a large number of people in one town and this was usually due to the conversion of an important local figure, often one of the leading ulama, who would bring in those who followed him in religious matters. This is what happened in Zanzan where Mu Muhammad 'Ali's conversion led to about one-quarter of the town becoming Babis; and also in Nayriz where the conversion of Haji Shaykh 'Abdu'l-'Ali (a *qazi*) and *Imam-Jum'a* of the Chinar-Sukhta quarter, as well as the fame and influence of Vahid, his son-in-law, led to the conversion of about one third of the town. These were the two largest towns in which such a course of events occurred, and as we know, a violent upheaval ensued in each case. In some other smaller places, a similar phenomenon occurred. In Sangsar and Shahmirzad, the conversion of the prominent local religious leader, Aqa Siyyid Ahmad, caused the conversion of a large number of persons. In Bihnamir, by contrast, it was a result of the conversion of a local landlord, Aqa Rasul, that a large number of persons was converted.

Although it seems probable that there was at this time great social and economic dislocation in Iran, and this undoubtedly induced a spirit of turmoil which would facilitate the spread of any new message, the message brought

The emissaries of the Bab seems to have been primarily a religious one rather than a social one. The conversions that occurred would appear to have been more on the basis of a conviction in the Bab's divine inspiration and an acceptance of his claim rather than out of enthusiasm for a programme for social reform or by way of social protest. The majority of Babis tended to this religious element, and this includes the most important leaders of the Babis and, of course, the Bab himself. Even the armed conflicts which occurred at Shaykh Tabarsi, Nayriz, and Zanjan would seem to be considered by the Babis who participated in them either as the necessary concomitant of the advent of the Mahdi who would conquer the earth, or as measures of self-defence against the attacks of their enemies, but only to a very minor extent as a means of bringing about political or social reform.

There were a few persons, however, who joined the Babi movement as a means of overturning the existing state of affairs and introducing a new social order. The author of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* may have been one such person with his reference to the renunciation of property and abolition of taxes as well as his abusive references to the Qajars. Another such person was the Yazdi Lutigari leader, Muhammad `Abdu'llah, who had been in revolt against the government for a number of years before adopting Babism. It would seem that this minority revolutionary-reformist strain in Babism continued into the second half of the nineteenth century as the Azali branch. Mirza Yahya, Subh-i-Azal, had himself been of a revolutionary turn of mind. He was closely involved in the plot to assassinate Nasiru'd-Din Shah in 1852, and just before this plot was implemented, he had left for his native Takur in Mazandaran to organise a simultaneous Babi uprising in that region. The Azalis were later to produce such notable reformists and constitutionalist figures as Shaykh Ahmad Ruhi, Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, and Mirza Yahya Dawlatabadi. There was a tendency in the Azali branch to become further and further removed from religious matters and such figures as Shaykh Ahmad Ruhi and Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani were openly atheistic in their later writings.

The majority of Babis, who as we have noted were mainly concerned with religious matters, went on in later years to become followers of Mirza Husayn `Ali, Baha'u'llah. Baha'u'llah himself was much opposed to violence and armed conflict as a means of advancing the new religion. One of his first acts when assuming leadership of the movement was to forbid the taking of life by his followers under any circumstances; he was later to forbid *jihad*. The fact that the Babis under Baha'u'llah were quite content to lay aside their weapons and no further uprising occurred despite the growth of the movement, is a further indication that the majority of the Babis were not motivated by considerations of revolt or social reform. The Baha'i branch became increasingly removed from political activity and more concerned with religious issues.

BEDFORDSHIRE
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NOTES

Author's note: This is a revised version of a paper that was presented at the Third Baha'i Studies Seminar at the University of Lancaster, England, in April 1979. I am grateful to Peter Smith for his suggestions about the paper and to Iraj Saniee for assistance with statistical analysis.

1. On the history of the Babi movement see: J. A. de Gobineau, *Les Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, 1st ed. (Paris, 1865), 10th ed. (Paris, 1957), pp. 131-319 and Appendix; E. G. Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative, written to illustrate the Episode of the Bab* (Cambridge, 1891); idem, *The Tarikh-i-Jadid; or, New History of Mirza Ah Muhammad the Bab* (Cambridge, 1893); idem, *Kitab-i Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* (Leyden, 1910); A.-L.-M. Nicolas, *Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit le Bab* (Paris, 1905); *Nabil's Narrative: The Dawn-Breakers*, trans. ed. Shoghi Effendi, (Wilmette, 111., 1962); H. M. Balyuzi, *The Bab* (Oxford, 1973); M. Momen, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions (1844-1944): Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford, 1981).
2. Regarding the Bab's claims, see M. Momen, "The Trial of Mulla `Ali Bantami: A combined Sunni-Shi`i fatwa against the Bab," *Iran*, 20, (1982), 140-142.
3. N. Keddie, "Religion and Irreligion in early Iranian Nationalism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 4 (1962), 274-75.
4. M. S. Ivanov, *Babidski Vostanii i Irane (1848-1852)* (Moscow, 1939); idem, "Babism" and "Bate i Uprisings" in *Great Soviet Encyclopedia, Vol. 2*, (New York, 1973), p. 521. See also V. Minorsky, review of Ivanov's *Babidski Vostanii*, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 11, 4 (1946) 878-880.
5. Calculated from C. Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran (1800-1914)* (Chicago, 1971), pp. 90-91.
6. Calculated from India Office estimates made in 1836, quoted in Issawi, *Economic History*, p. 361. In considering the balance of trade, it is impossible, of course, to assess the amount of smuggling that occurred.. Most authorities seem agreed that overall its effect on the balance of trade was in Iran's favour. However, this must be set against the large amount of money spent by Iranian pilgrims in `Iraq, as well as the pious benefactions made to the Holy Shrines there.
7. Issawi, *Economic History*, p. 342.
8. Ivanov quoted in Minorsky's review, p. 878.
9. Ibid., pp. 879 - 880.
10. Ivanov, "Babi Uprisings," p. 521.
11. Ibid
12. Keddie, "Religion and Irreligion," pp. 268-270.
13. Ibid., p. 270.
14. Avery, *Modern Iran* (London, 1965), p. 53.
15. F. Kazemi, "Some Preliminary Observations on the Early Development of Babism," *Muslim World*, 63 (1973), 119-122.
16. Ibid., p. 122
17. See, for example, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad* vol. 5, (Cairo, 1313/ 1896), Hadith of Thawban, p. 677. See also *Nabil's Narrative*, p. 351.
18. Lisanu'l-Mulk, *Nasikhu't-Tawarikh*, quoted in Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, p. 179.
19. See, for example, 'Abdu'l-Baha in Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, p. 37; and *Nabil's Narrative*, p. 354.
20. Other estimates of the total number of Babis include those of Farrant, British Charge d'Affaires: about 500; Dolgoruki, Russian Minister: 1,500; Ferrier, French Agent: 1,200; Mackenzie, British Consul, Rasht: 400-500. For details see M. Momen, *Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 91-99.
21. Lutf-`Ali Mirza Shirazi, Mir Abu-Talib Shahmirzadi, and Haji Nasir Qazvini.
22. *Nabil's Narrative*, based on the accounts of five survivors; and the *Tarikh-i-Mimiyya* by Siyyid Husayn Zavari'i, Mahjur, based on the accounts of three survivors.
23. M. A. Malik-Khusravi-Nuri, *Tarikh-i-Shuhaday-i-Amr*, 3 vols. (Tihran, 130 B.E./ 1973). For list of sources relating to Shaykh Tabarsi see vol. 1, pp. 16-18.
24. I have compared Mahjur's list in three sources: Fadil Mazandarani, *Zuhuru'l-Haqq*, vol. 3 (n.p., n.d.), p. 124n; manuscript (F28, Browne Collection, Cambridge University Library), p. 18; manuscript used by Malik-Khusravi, p. 18. There are no discrepancies in the numbers cited save that the third-named source gives the number of Zanjanis as 13 rather than the 12 given in the other two sources.

All three: sources occasionally misspell names, e.g., Siyami for Miyami, Rumi for Urumi, etc.

25. Browne gives this name wrongly as Bahmiz, owing to a simple transposition of a dot. See *Tarikh-i-Jadid*, p. 67 and note, p. 364; and *Nuqtatul-Kaf*, p. 191.
26. Browne gives these two names wrongly as Shah-Mirza and- Dasak-sar. See *Tarikh-i-Jadid*, p. 104, and note I (which indicates how the mistake was made).
27. B. Lovett, "Surveys on the road from Shiraz to Baum," *Journal Royal Geographical Society*, 42 (1872), 203.
28. Ibid.
29. Tihiran (130 B.E./ 1973).
30. I am assuming that the history of Nayriz listed as an anonymous work by Nicolas (*Seyyed Ali Mohammed*, p. 51) is by Mirza Shafi' on account of the great similarity between Nabil's and Nicolas' version of events in the first Nayriz upheaval.
31. Lisanu'l-Mulk, *Nasikhu't-Tawarikh*, quoted in Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, p. 183.
32. H. Busse (trans.), *History of Persia under Qajar Rule* (New York, 1972), pp. 291-92.
33. Nicolas, *Seyyed Ali Mohammed*, p. 398.
34. Ibid., p. 422.
35. *Nabil's Narrative*, p. 644.
36. This quarter is named variously as "Chinar-Sukhta" by Nabil, "Chinar-Shahi" by Shafi'-Ruhani, and "Mahalla-yi-Bala" by Lovett.
37. *Nabil's Narrative*, pp. 478-79.
38. See note 27.
39. *Nabil's Narrative*, pp. 483-84.
40. Ibid., p. 481.
42. Lisanu'l-Mulk, *Nasikhu't-Tawarikh*, quoted in Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, p. 180.
43. *Nabil's Narrative*, p. 580.
44. Ibid., p. 573.
45. Ibid., p. 569.
46. E. G. Browne, "Personal Reminiscences of the Babi Insurrection at Zanjan in 1850," *Journal Royal Asiatic Society*, 19 (1897), 768.
47. Ibid., p. 809. *Nabil's Narrative* p. 568, also reports some desertions.
48. Browne, "Personal Reminiscences," p. 809.
49. Ivanov, "Babi Uprisings," p. 521. *Nabil's Narrative* (p. 550), however, describes Zaynab, the Babi heroine of the episode as a village maiden. Also Ferrier, the French Agent, in his report states that there were 6,000 Babis in Zanjan and triple that number in the surrounding villages. Ferrier's sources of information were not, in general, very good. See Momen, *Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 114-126.
50. Manuscript in private hands, p. 13.
51. *Nabil's Narrative*, pp. 446-58.
52. I have assumed that the Mirza Muhammad Husayn Tabrizi mentioned in *Tarikh-i-Jadid* (pp. 252, 255-56, and alternate reading in note on p. 256) is identical to Muhammad Husayn Maraghi'i, mentioned in *Nabil's Narrative*, p. 458.
53. Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, p. 216.
54. Ivanov, "Babi Uprisings," p. 521.
55. Gobineau, *Religions*, p. 267.
56. *Daily News* (London) and *Morning Post* (London), 1 November 1852. This report was based on accounts published in Istanbul newspapers which in turn were based on news arriving from Tabriz See Momen, *Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 12, 134.
57. Issue no. 82, 10 Dhu'l-Qa'da 1268 (27 August 1852), quoted in Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh*, vol. 3, pp. 56-65.
58. Thomson, *Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 69 for 1867-68, pp. 507-15.
59. E. O. Blau, *Commerciale Zustande Persiens* (Berlin, 1858), p. 1.
60. Persian Bayan (F12 and F13, Browne Collection, Cambridge University Library), Vahid 6, Surih 12. Trans. Nicolas, *Le Beyan Persan*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1913), p. 114-15.
61. Abbott to Shiel, 30 August 1850, enclosed in Shiel to Visc. Palmerston, 5 September 1850, FO 60 153, in Momen, *Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 11.
62. *Nabil's Narrative*, pp. 549_552

63. Ibid., p. 487.
64. See M. Momen, "Relations between Christian Missionaries and the Babi and Baha'i communities in the Middle East," in *Studies in Babi and Baha'i History*, forthcoming.
65. At Nayriz, there was a man who is just named as "Darvish" (Shafi'-Ruhani, *Lama'atu'l Anwar* p. 293). Similarly, Nicolas records the name of a man called Mashhadi Darvish *Seyyed A'i Mohammed*, p. 414).
66. Manuscript (F28. Browne Collection, Cambridge University Library), p. 12.
67. A. Bausani, *The Persians* (London, 1971), p. 166.
68. Pp. 145-53. See also Browne's comment on this passage, *Tarikh-i-Jadid*, pp. 356-57.
69. Minorsky's review, p. 880.
70. Ibid.
71. Manuscript (F43, Browne Collection. Cambridge University Library); manuscripts (Or. 5110 and Or. 6256, Oriental Manuscripts, British Museum). F43 and Or. 5110 are the same work, which appears to be a series of discourses or possibly letters. Or 6256 is an incomplete copy of the same work.
72. See letters by her in Browne, *Tarikh-i-Jadid*, pp. 434-41; and in Fadil Mazandarani, *Zuhuru'l-Haqq*, vol. 3, pp. 484-532; and also her poetry in E. G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* (Cambridge, 1918), pp. 343-51.
73. Ivanov, "Babi Uprisings," p. 521.
74. See N. Keddie, *Historical Obstacles to Agrarian Change* (Claremont, 1950), pp. 4-7. Also quoted in Issawi, *Economic History*, pp. 54-57.
75. Indeed, there were disturbances in these towns completely unconnected with the Babi movement. There were disturbances in Isfahan connected with Ahmad Mirza Safavi (see H. Algar, *Religion and State in Iran* [Berkeley. 1969], pp. 126-28); in Yazd, connected with Muhammad-'Abdu'llah who only became a Babi in the last few months of his life, having led an urban uprising that went on for several years; in Mashhad the Salar was in revolt against the Qajars and was in receipt of considerable assistance from the townspeople; on the death of Muhammad Shah there were disturbances in a number of urban centres including Shiraz, Kirmanshah, Tabriz, and even Tihiran.
76. Kazemi, "Preliminary Observations." pp. 130-31.
77. Ivanov, "Babi Uprisings," p. 521.
78. See dispatches of Shiel and Dolgoruki and other European sources quoted in Momen, *Babi and Baha'i Religions*, pp. 4-8, 44-45. 79Bausani, *The Persians*, p. 98. 80Gobineau, *Religions*, p. 313.
- 81 Browne, "Personal Reminiscences," p. 793.
82. Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh*, vol. 1, pp. 171-76.
83. G. N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, 2 vols. (London, 1892); see vol. 1, pp. 501-02.
84. Gobineau, *Religions*, p. 134.
85. Keddie, "Religion and Irreligion," pp. 268-69.
86. The American Protestant missionaries who arrived in 1834 confined their work to the Nestorian Christian villages around Lake Urmiyya. They therefore had almost no impact on the Muslim majority until 1872 when the Tihiran mission was set up and work among Muslims begun.