

# The Súrat al-mulk and the Súrat al-mulúk

## A Preliminary Comparison

Sholeh A. Quinn

Throughout the course of their lives, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, founders of the Bábí and Bahá'í religions, respectively, addressed proclamatory letters to the rulers of the world collectively, and to specific individuals amongst them, especially those in various Middle Eastern regions. In so doing, they followed an ancient tradition of prophets addressing kings. The Báb addressed kings and rulers in the first chapter of one of his earliest writings, the *Qayyúm al-asmá*. This chapter is entitled the Súrat al-mulk, or Súrah (Chapter) of the dominion. Similarly, Bahá'u'lláh addressed the world's leaders in numerous of his writings, most notably, perhaps, in his Súrat al-mulúk, or Súrah (Chapter) to the Kings. Although Bahá'u'lláh does not specify a direct connection between his work and the Súrat al-mulk, numerous themes in the Súrat al-mulúk echo the Súrat al-mulk, as do the title and certain phrases of the Tablet.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast the Súrat al-mulk and the Súrat al-mulúk, focusing on the theme of kings and viziers in both of these writings. Such a comparison highlights and brings into focus the similarities and differences in the Bábí and Bahá'í religions, and the nature of their founders' attitudes towards notions of authority.

### Pre-19th Century Islamicate Kingship

The history of the Middle East generally and Iran specifically has a rich tradition of kingship, stretching far back into the pre-Islamic period. So that we may better understand the nature of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh's statements to kings, here follows a brief overview of the history of kingship in the Islamic world, with particular emphasis on Iran.

Iran had experienced a long history of kingship by the time

Islamic rule established itself in the country and put an end to the Sasanian dynasty. Successive Islamic dynasties that ruled over Iran, beginning with the Umayyads and the Abbasids, led to the articulation of new forms of authority and political legitimacy. Whereas kings had ruled as the *sháhansháh*, or king of kings, the caliphs based their legitimacy on their claim of succession to the prophet Muhammad. When the 'Abbasids came to power in the eighth century, they transferred the capital of the empire from Damascus to Baghdad, resulting in a strong Sasanian influence on their style of rulership. Indeed, 'Abbasid caliphs lived in palaces and held ceremonies similar to those of Persian kings.

We must look to the later 'Abbasid period, however, when the entire Middle East witnessed a long period of political fragmentation and decentralization, for movements in which Persian kingship was revived. Between the years 950-1258, as 'Abbasid rule diminished and gradually became restricted to the city of Baghdad, leaders who carved out territory for themselves and their descendants came to rule Iran, while at the same time acknowledging the religious authority of the caliph in Baghdad. These individuals claimed political authority for themselves and legitimized their rule through, for example, attaching old pre-Islamic titles such as *sháhansháh* ("king of kings") to their names, and forging genealogies showing descent from Iran's pre-Islamic kings.

In 1258, Hulagu Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan (Chingiz Khan), invaded the Middle East, sacked the city of Baghdad, which had long been a center of culture and learning, and brought an end to the Abbasid caliphate. The Mongols brought with them their own notions of kingship, based on nomadic and steppe principles of authority. The destruction of the caliphate meant that post-caliphal rulers had to work out other ways to legitimize their rule, often by combining pre-Islamic and/or Perso-Turko-Mongol forms of kingship.<sup>2</sup>

When the Safavid dynasty came to power in the 16th century, new ideas of political legitimacy and kingship emerged, which blended with older theories and currents. After the Safavids established Twelver Shi'ism as the official state religion in 1501, imposing it upon a country where the majority of the population was Sunni, a class of Shi'i religious clerics gradually became increasingly powerful and in challenged the way in which Safavid kings were legitimizing their rule. Safavid kingship rested on three main pillars: the Safavid ruler as head

(shaykh) of the Safaviyya Sufi order which brought the Safavids to power, the Safavid ruler as descendant of Músá al-Kázim, the seventh imam of the Twelver Shi'a and therefore ruler in the name of the Hidden Imam, and the Safavid ruler as the shadow of God on earth in line with pre-Islamic Iranian notions of kingship.

## Qajar Kingship

In the late-18th to 19th centuries, the Qajar dynasty ruled Iran. The Qajars were one of original Turkic Qizilbash tribes that put the Safavid Shah Ismá'il in power. The Qajars rose to power in the wake of political fragmentation and decentralized rule in Iran following the fall of the Safavids. In his biography of Násir al-Dín Shah (r. 1848-1896), Abbas Amanat characterizes the legitimacy of Qajar kings as having four major dimensions: (1) the pre-Islamic Persian dimension, (2) the Islamic/Shi'ite dimension, (3) the nomadic concept of power and leadership, and (4) the Western/European model of government.<sup>3</sup>

## The Súrat al-Mulk and the Súrat al-Mulúk: Some introductory information

The Báb revealed his Súrat al-mulk in 1844 in his home in Shiraz to Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrúí, who became his first major disciple. This first chapter of the *Qayyúm al-asmá'* (hereafter *QA*), it consists of some 960 words in translation. Although the *QA* has not been published or fully translated into English, Stephen Lambden has electronically published a partial translation and commentary of several chapters on his website, including a complete translation of the Súrat al-mulk.<sup>4</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this paper to outline the history of the word *mulk* and notions of sovereignty throughout Islamic history. Two examples, however, illustrate how the word has been used within the context of conceptions of sovereignty and authority. Qur'an 3:26 expresses the notion that God possesses true sovereignty and rulers derive it from him:

*Say: 'Lord, Sovereign of all sovereignty (málik al-mulk), You bestow sovereignty (mulk) on whom You will and take it away from whom You please; You exalt whomever You will and abase whomever You please. In Your hand lies all that is good; You have power over all things.'* (Q. 3:26)

A 17th century tract on kingship by Mullá Muhsin Fayd (Fayd

Káshání), known as the *Á'ina-yi sháhí*, written for the Safavid Shah 'Abbás II, also makes use of the word *mulk* in connection with the need for sovereigns to obey "revealed law":

Whenever the sovereign obeys the revealed law and follows its commands, the outward appearance of the cosmos, known as the "Kingdom" (*mulk*), follows the inward reality of the cosmos, known as the "Dominion" (*malakut*)....But whenever the sovereign does not obey the revealed law, intellects are made prisoners of the senses and the Dominion is subjected to the Kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh composed his *Súrat al-mulúk* in Edirne in fall-winter 1867[-68], so some 23 years, then, separate these two works. The *Súrat al-mulúk* appears to be the earliest surviving work of Bahá'u'lláh to address kings.<sup>6</sup> The translated text numbers some 15,000 words, making it roughly 15 times longer than the *Súrat al-mulk*. Much more scholarship exists on the *Súrat al-mulúk* than the *QA/Súrat al-mulk*.<sup>7</sup>

## Addressees

In an attempt to establish the primary similarities and differences between these two texts, what follows are some very basic comparative points, beginning with intended audience, or addressees. The Báb addresses several audiences in the *Súrat al-mulk*. These include three general groups and two specific individuals, as follows:

concourse of kings and the sons of kings  
 King of Islam [=Muhammad Shah]  
 Minister of the Shah [=Hájji Mírzá Áqásí]  
 servants of the all-merciful  
 people of the earth

Bahá'u'lláh, similarly, addresses more than one audience in the *Súrat al-mulúk*, but here we come to the first major difference between these two texts: the addressees the *Súrat al-mulúk* are far more varied and more specific than the addressees of the *Súrat al-mulk*. The audiences that Bahá'u'lláh addresses include the following:

people of the earth  
 kings  
 sultans

Christian kings  
 ambassador of the king of Paris  
 servant  
 people of the city  
 people  
 deputies (viziers Fuad and Ali Pasha?)  
 sultan (Sultan 'Abd al-Azíz)  
 king  
 Persian ambassador in the city (Hajjí Mírzá Husayn Khán,  
 the Mushír al-Dawlah, Persian ambassador in Istanbul)  
 people of the East (Iran)  
 shaykhs of the city (Istanbul)  
 hakims of the city and philosophers of the earth

Obviously, it will take some time to identify all of the specific individuals listed here, a task that is beyond the scope of this short presentation. Some of the individuals have been tentatively or definitively identified by Taherzadeh and others. For example, the Sultan is the Ottoman Sultan Abd al-Aziz, the ministers include the well-known Pashas, Ali (grand vizier) and Fuad (the foreign minister); the Persian ambassador, Hajjí Mírzá Husayn Khan, the Mushir al-Dawlah. Another vizier that Bahá'u'lláh alludes to is Mírzá Buzurg Khan, the Persian Consul-General in Baghdad.<sup>8</sup>

## The Obligations of Kings in General

Turning now to one of the specific categories of addressees in the Súrat al-mulk and the Súrat al-mulúk, namely kings, the Báb's statements in the Súrat al-mulk to kings in general and to Muhammad Shah in particular are outlined most specifically in *QA* 1: 22-29. These verses form a discrete portion of the chapter, with a distinct beginning, middle, and end. This section opens with an address to kings and the sons of kings:

O concourse of kings and the sons of kings! (*yá ma'shar al-mulúk wa abná' al-mulúk*)

Lay aside, one and all [in truth, as befits the Truth] your dominion which belongeth unto God (*mulk Alláh*).<sup>9</sup>

The section concludes with a final emphatic call to kings in general, the same kings and sons of kings that the Báb addressed at the beginning of the section. This passage can be read with

QA 1:20 as the end of one complete sentence or phrase. In this final portion, the Báb specifies what it means for kings to lay aside their sovereignty (*mulk*):

And [O kings!] give aid towards victory before God through thy very own selves and thy swords (*bi-anfusikum wa asyáfikum*) in the shade of the Most Great Remembrance (*al-dhikr al-akbar*) for the sake of this pure Religion (*al-dín al-khálisú*) which is, in very truth, mighty.<sup>10</sup>

Here, the Báb expresses sovereignty in a complex manner. First and foremost, sovereignty belongs to God, and kings should lay aside their own sovereignty because, apparently, the eschaton has arrived. If kings have any interest in preserving their sovereignty or *mulk* in the next world, which appears to be the only place where they can enjoy any dominion whatsoever, then they must come to the assistance of the Báb in this world, aiding him to spread his religion by means of their swords. Much of what the Báb has to say about jihad and holy war, which is what the “swords” passage in the Súrat al-mulk alludes to, has to do with the expectations that his audience had of the messiah, the *qa'im*, conquering the world through force and propagating a universal Shi'i religion. In accordance with the predictions in Shi'i hadith literatures of eschatological holy war, the mahdi/*qa'im* was to embark on a universal jihad, and by making this statement, the Báb was tapping into the messianic atmosphere that had a distinct bearing upon his religious mission.

In addition to waging war on his behalf, the Báb also calls on kings to perform a second major task: that of distributing his writings to Turkey, India, and everywhere else: “O concourse of kings! (*yá ma'shar al-mulúk*) Deliver with truth and in all haste the verses sent down by Us, to the peoples of Turkey and of India and beyond them, with power and with truth, to lands in both the East and the West.”<sup>11</sup> In specifying the places of Turkey and India, the Báb could be referring to the two Sunni great empires of the early modern period: the Ottoman and Mughal empires.<sup>12</sup> In the Súrat al-mulk, these two tasks—waging war and distributing his writings—are connected and the Báb orders kings to accomplish both.

In these sections and elsewhere in QA1, then, the Báb's instructions to the kings of the earth can be organized into four separate and specific instructions. Kings must (a) lay aside their dominion, (b) aid the Most Great Remembrance [the Báb], (c)

give aid towards victory with their selves and their swords for the sake of this religion, and (d) Deliver the Báb's verses to the Turks and to India and then to the rest of the east and west.

Bahá'u'lláh also commands the kings of the world to do certain things. Although his "list" is far more extensive than that of the Báb, we may also break these down into four general categories. Kings must: (a) Obey God and detach themselves from worldly things, (b) Fear God, (c) Be just, and (d) Reduce their armaments. The differences between these two lists are quite striking, as are the similarities. Perhaps the most significant is that whereas the Báb asks kings to come to his assistance with their swords, Bahá'u'lláh tells them to reduce their arms. The notion of the prophet waging a holy war and asking the kings of the world to come to his assistance to conquer that world is entirely absent from Bahá'u'lláh's writings. Instead, he states:

*Compose your differences and reduce your armaments, that the burden of your expenditures may be lightened, and that your minds and hearts may be tranquillized. Heal the dissensions that divide you, and ye will no longer be in need of any armaments except what the protection of your cities and territories demandeth. Fear ye God, and take heed not to outstrip the bounds of moderation and be numbered among the extravagant.*<sup>13</sup>

It is in fact significant to note that from the very outset of his mission, from the time of his messianic declaration near Baghdad in 1863, among the central teachings that Bahá'u'lláh announced to his audience was that the propagation of the religion by the sword was now forbidden.<sup>14</sup>

Historical context can explain this difference in emphasis only to a certain degree, since a short 22 yrs separate the two texts. Although the following points are true: (1) by the time the Báb had addressed Muhammad Shah a third time, in a tablet written from Bushihr some time in 1845, he did not bring up the issue of jihad, (2) At least five months prior to writing this letter, partly due to Mulla 'Alí Bastámí's imprisonment, the Báb had cancelled the gathering that his followers expected to take place in Karbala, where he would disclose something of his messianic role and wage that universal holy war, and (3) On 10 Muharram 1261/20 January 1845, the Báb had sent a letter to Mulla Husayn Bushrúí. In this letter, the Báb redirects his followers in the 'Atabat to leave that region and go to Shiraz.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, we also know that despite the changes in his

relationship with Muhammad Shah and what he demanded from that king, the Báb never ceased calling for jihad, as seen in a number of later tablets, such as the Persian Seven Proofs and the Persian and Arabic *Bayáns*.<sup>16</sup>

Beyond historical context, the differences in prophetic “mission” or religious purpose perhaps better explains the attitudes of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh to issues such as kingship and holy war. The Báb’s claims and concerns seem to have addressed to a large degree certain messianic expectations within Shi’i Islam and focused on creating the conditions for the coming of a second messianic figure whom he referred to as *man yuzhiruhu alláh* (“He whom God shall make manifest”). Bahá’u’lláh, however, envisioned a rather different future in which he was apparently not so constrained by Shi’i messianic expectations. While there is no doubt that a good proportion of what Bahá’u’lláh said is firmly rooted in Shi’i Islam, he was more able than the Báb to transcend it in fashioning his new global religion, partly because of the Báb.

Perhaps because some scholarship on the Bahá’í religion associates the religion of the Báb with the religion of Bahá’u’lláh, using phrases such as “Bábí-Bahá’í,” the tendency exists to forget how opposite, at times, these two religions were, and what different world views their founders held. ‘Abdu’l Bahá states the following about this:

In the Day of the manifestation of His Holiness the Exalted One (the Báb), the striking of necks (Q: 8:12), the burning of books and treatises (*kutub va awráq*), the destruction of places/sites, and general (universal) killing (*qatl-i ‘ám*) of all except such as believed and were steadfast, were clearly enunciated. However, in this amazing age (*qarn-i badí‘*) and exalted era, the foundation of God’s religion and the basis of God’s law is [to show] great mercy and tremendous compassion to all nations, and sincere heartfelt friendship, loyalty, and kindness to all peoples and communities and proclaim the unity of the world of humanity.<sup>17</sup>

## The Obligations of Specific Kings: Muhammad Shah and Sultan Abdul Aziz

### The Súrat al-mulk and Muhammad Shah.

In subsequent verses of the Súrat al-mulk, the Báb



specifically addresses Muhammad Shah, referring to him as the “king of Islam,” and asking for his assistance. Muhammad Shah Qajar (1808-1848) came to power in 1834. He grew up being tutored by a Sufi dervish, Hájjí Mírzá Áqásí, resulting in the king’s largely mystical religious persuasion. He was the third ruler of the Qajar dynasty, and succeeded his grandfather Fath ‘Alí Shah after being nominated successor in 1834. At this time, he went to Tabriz, where he became the governor of Azerbaijan, thereby gaining practical experience in kingship. Upon becoming king, Muhammad Shah placed his teacher Hájjí Mírzá Áqásí in an important ministerial position. He faced many challenges during his rule, both internal and external.<sup>18</sup>

In the Súrat al-mulk, Muhammad Shah’s destiny is quite exalted, the Báb claims, if he comes to his assistance:

O king of Islam (Muhammad Shah r.1834-1848) (lit. “king of the Muslims”, *malik al-muslimún*)! Aid thou, with the truth, after having aided the Book, Him Who is Our Most Great Remembrance (*dhikriná al-akbar*), for God hath, in very truth, destined for thee and for such as circle round thee, on the Day of Judgment [Resurrection] (*yawm al-qiyáma*), a responsible position in His Path. I swear by God O [Muhammad] Shah! [lit. O thou king!] If thou showest enmity unto Him Who is His Remembrance (*dhikr*), God will, on the Day of Resurrection, condemn thee, before the kings, unto hell-fire, and thou shalt not, in very truth, find on that Day any helper except God, the Exalted.<sup>19</sup>

The Báb’s commands to Muhammad Shah here are not at all vague; on the contrary, he lays out quite explicitly what he expects from the king in terms of assistance. The Báb makes certain promises to the king regarding the positive outcomes that would result from his compliance, and at the same time warns him of the consequences of disobedience. Specifically, Muhammad Shah should: (a) not show enmity to the Báb, otherwise he’ll receive hell fire on the day of resurrection before the kings, (b) Purge the sacred land from the people of opposition (*ahl al-radd*), (c) submit to the Báb, (d) subdue the countries, (e) not let his sovereignty deceive him because he will eventually die, and (f) be content with the commandment of God.

Continuing with his request to kings in general, he commands Muhammad Shah to help him by waging a holy war against various regions, starting with Iraq and continuing to other

countries. Muhammad Shah should do this because, the Báb says, the king has been “mercifully invested” with sovereignty, and complying with the Báb’s request will reward him in the next world:

Purge thou, O [Muhammad] Shah, the Sacred Land (*al-arḍ al-muqaddas*) from such as have repudiated the Book (*ahl al-radd*), ere the day whereon the Remembrance of God (*al-dhikr*) cometh, terribly and of a sudden, with His potent Cause (*al-amr al-qawiyy*) by the leave of God, the Most High.”<sup>20</sup>

The Báb then broadens his request to the king, requesting that he subdue “the countries”:

God, verily, hath prescribed to thee [Muhammad Shah] to submit unto Him Who is His Remembrance (*al-dhikr*), and unto His Cause (*al-amr*), and to subdue, with the truth and by His leave, the countries, for in this world thou hast been mercifully invested with sovereignty (*al-mulk*), and wilt, in the next, dwell, nigh unto the Seat of Holiness, with the inmates of the Paradise of His good-pleasure. (*jannat al-riḍwán*, lit. Garden of Riḍwán).<sup>21</sup>

The Báb ends his address to Muhammad Shah by reminding him of his own limited sovereignty, stating that he will eventually die and that true sovereignty rests in the hands of the “Remembrance”:

Let not thy sovereignty (*al-mulk*) deceive thee, O [Muhammad] Shah, for ‘every soul shall taste of death,’ [Q. 3:182] and this, in very truth, hath been written down as a decree of God.

Be thou content with the commandment of God the True One, inasmuch as sovereignty (*al-mulk*) as recorded in the Mother Book (*umm al-kitáb*) by the hand of God is surely invested in Him Who is the Remembrance (*al-dhikr*).<sup>22</sup>

### The Súrat al-mulúk and Sultan Abdulaziz

The monarch whom Bahá’u’lláh addresses most extensively in his Súrat al-mulúk is Sultan Abdu’l Aziz (r. 1861-1876), the thirty-second sultan to reign over the Ottoman empire where Bahá’u’lláh was exiled at the time he composed the Súrat al-mulúk. The Ottoman empire during this time was faced with challenges from its European provinces, in the form of revolts and insurrections in Bosnia and in Greece, leading to the

intervention of European powers. In general, the borders of the Ottoman empire had shrunk in comparison with earlier centuries, and the empire had entered a period of “transformation.” In addition to France, other powers that had influence and designs on the Ottoman empire were Britain and Russia. Sultan Abdul Aziz was the thirty second Ottoman sultan. He was brother to the previous Sultan, Abdul Mecid (r. 1839-1861), whom the Báb had addressed in a Tablet that has been translated by Necati Alkan.<sup>23</sup> In addition to the external challenges that I have already outlined, he continued with the Ottoman program of reforms, known as the *tanzimat*, which included attempts at military, educational, and governmental reforms, largely based on European models.

In those portions of the Súrat al-mulúk intended for the Ottoman Sultan, Bahá'u'lláh comments appear to fall in o'ne of approximately three general categories. The sultan must (1) choose his advisors carefully, (2) fear, listen to, and obey God, and (3) be a good and just king. Bahá'u'lláh of course elaborates quite extensively in each of these categories. Perhaps he states the most about justice. Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes the notion of justice in his comments to kings in general and to the Ottoman Sultan in particular. The theme of justice runs throughout his works, including the earlier Arabic Hidden Words, the first entry starting “The most beloved of all things in my sight is justice...”

The idea of a just king goes far back into Iran's pre-Islamic history. It is perhaps best known through the notion of the “circle of justice,” elaborated in the medieval Islamic period. In a recent article, Linda Darling succinctly summarizes this circle of justice by quoting the ninth century Sunni Muslim theologian and *adab* (belles letters) writer Ibn Qutayba's *'Uyún al-akhbár*:

There can be no government without men,  
 No men without money,  
 No money without cultivation [or, prosperity],  
 And no cultivation [or, prosperity] without justice and  
 good administration.”<sup>24</sup>

Countless treatises have been written elaborating on this theme, which form a genre of advice literature called “Mirrors for Princes.” These texts often appear in the form of a wise man

or sage giving advice to a king. NiŌám al-Mulk's *Siyásatnámah*, for example, outlines the rules for kingly conduct, explaining how the king should treat ambassadors, make kingly appointments, and engage in other official kingly activities.<sup>25</sup> In these models, responsibility for maintaining the circle of justice begins with the king and then continues to the subjects and the army. The Báb, however, in the *QA*, inserts into the circle of justice, the sovereignty of God as mediated through him, the Báb. As representative of the Hidden Imam, he ultimately possesses true sovereignty. Thus, the king's sovereignty does not depend on maintaining an army, but in this instance using that army to come to the Báb's assistance. Otherwise, his sovereignty is subject to removal, at best.

In the Súrat al-mulúk, however, Bahá'u'lláh does not ask the Ottoman sultan to give up his kingship. Rather, he asks the sultan to behave with justice:

*Let My counsel be acceptable to thee, and strive thou to rule with equity among men, that God may exalt thy name and spread abroad the fame of thy justice in all the world. Beware lest thou aggrandize thy ministers at the expense of thy subjects. Fear the sighs of the poor and of the upright in heart who, at every break of day, bewail their plight, and be unto them a benignant sovereign. They, verily, are thy treasures on earth.*<sup>26</sup>

In many other places in the Súrat al-mulúk, Bahá'u'lláh encourages the king to take care of the poor in his midst--again echoing one of the Hidden Words--and treat his people with justice.

## The Obligations of Ministers (Viziers)

In addition to Muhammad Shah, the Báb also addresses the king's vizier, Hájjí Mírzá Áqásí, in the Súrat al-mulk. He states,

O Minister of the Shah! (*wazír al-malik*) [Hájjí Mírzá Áqásí c.1783-1848] Fear thou God, besides Whom there is none other God but Him, the Sovereign Truth, the Just, and lay aside thy dominion (*al-mulk*), for We, by the leave of God, the All-Wise, inherit the earth and all who are upon it (cf. Q.19:41), and He shall rightfully be a witness unto thee and unto the Shah [King] (*al-malik*).<sup>27</sup>

Were ye to obey the Remembrance of God (*al-dhikr*) with absolute sincerity, We guarantee, by the leave of God, that

on the Day of Resurrection, a vast dominion (*al-mulkan 'azíman*) shall be yours in His eternal Paradise (*jannat al-'adn*, Garden of Eden).<sup>28</sup>

Here, the Báb's message to Hájjí Mírzá Áqásí is almost exactly the same as his message to Muhammad Shah. Like Muhammad Shah, Áqásí must give up his dominion and obey the Báb. If he does this, he will be granted a vast dominion in God's "eternal paradise." The Báb does not say anything about the relationship between king and vizier.

Bahá'u'lláh, however, has a great deal more to say--more than I have time to go into--about ministers, or viziers, and their relationship to the ruler. He tells ministers of the state, for example, to "keep the precepts of God, and to forsake your own laws and regulations, and to be of them who are guided aright." The specific ministers whom Bahá'u'lláh alludes to in the *Súrat al-mulúk* are the deputies whom he addresses as the *wukalá* include the Ottomans Fu'ad Pasha and Ali Pasha. Bahá'u'lláh strongly admonishes the ministers for their role in his banishment, and then unlike the Báb, who tells Hájjí Mírzá Áqásí to lay aside his dominion because everything belongs to God, Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes that that he does not wish to rob them of their possessions:

*O concourse of Ministers of State! Do ye believe in your hearts that We have come to divest you of your earthly possessions and vanities? Nay, by the One in Whose hand is My soul! Our intention hath been to make clear that We oppose not the commands of the sovereign, nor are We to be numbered with the rebellious.*

## Conclusions

Although the specifics changed from the era of the Báb's religion to the subsequent Bahá'í era and from the commands of the Báb to the commands of Bahá'u'lláh, kings, neither in general nor specifically, complied. Evidence from the Báb himself suggests that Muhammad Shah never received or read the *QA*. In 1844, Mulla Husayn Bushrúí, the Báb's first major disciple, who, according to Nabil's history, was present in his home when he revealed the *QA*, went to Tehran.<sup>29</sup> During that trip, he apparently attempted to present the king with a copy of the *QA* and a letter that the Báb had written to the king, but the Báb states in a later communication, to be discussed below, that he knew the letters were intercepted and did not reach the king.<sup>30</sup> We do know, however, that he did not comply with the

Báb's requests: he did not wage a holy war on behalf of the Báb, nor did he disseminate his writings or give up his dominion.<sup>31</sup> I have not been able to find any evidence of Sultan 'Abdu'l 'Aziz having received or read the Súrat al-mulúk, let alone having complied with Bahá'u'lláh's admonitions. Rather, he had Bahá'u'lláh ultimately banished to the prison city of Acre. At the end, the sultan was deposed on 30 March 1876 and a few days later, he committed suicide.

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*Author's Note:* I am grateful to Dr. Stephen Lambden for suggesting this interesting topic to me as a possible research topic, and for his valuable assistance throughout the preparation of this paper. I take full responsibility for all errors.

<sup>1</sup>Stephen Lambden, "The Messianic Roots of Bábí-Bahá'í Globalism," in *Bahá'í and Globalisation*, ed. Margit Warburg, et. al. (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2005), 31-32. See, for example, the phrase "yá mash'ar al-mulúk" in both texts.

<sup>2</sup>See John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, rev. and exp. edition (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 4.

<sup>3</sup>Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>4</sup>Stephen Lambden, [www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-THE%20BÁB/QAYYUM%20AL-ASMA'/Q-ASMA.001.htm](http://www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-THE%20BÁB/QAYYUM%20AL-ASMA'/Q-ASMA.001.htm). For scholarship on the QA, see Todd Lawson, "Interpretation as Revelation: The Qur'an Commentary of Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad Shirazi, the Báb," in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, ed. A. Rippin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 223-253; Todd Lawson, "The Qur'an Commentary of Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad, the Báb (1819-1850)," unpublished PhD thesis, McGill University, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>William Chittick, "Two Seventeenth-Century Persian Tracts on Kingship," in *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 275.

<sup>6</sup>See Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2002), 185-234. Hereafter cited as *Summons*. Of course, the full Arabic text has been available for some time and is available from the World Centre texts website. Bahá'u'lláh, *Alváh-i názilah khiṭáb bi-mulúk va rú'asá-yi 'arΩ* (Tehran: Mu'assasah-i Millí-i Maṭbú'át-i Amrí, 124/1977), 2-152.

<sup>7</sup>For example, Adib Taherzadeh, in his *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, devotes an entire chapter to this work. See Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1977), 301-336. More recently, Juan Cole includes an extended discussion of the Súrat al-mulúk in his *Modernity and the Millenium*, placing it in the context of Ottoman constitutionalism. Juan Cole, *Modernity and the Millenium* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 109-139.

<sup>8</sup>Taherzadeh, 312.

<sup>9</sup>The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, trans. Habib Taherzadeh (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1976), 41 (hereafter cited as *SWB*).

- www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-THE%20BÁB/QAYYUM%20AL-ASMA'/Q-ASMA.001.htm
- <sup>10</sup> www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-THE%20BÁB/QAYYUM%20AL-ASMA'/Q-ASMA.001.htm
- <sup>11</sup> QA 1: 34-35; www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-THE%20BÁB/QAYYUM%20AL-ASMA'/Q-ASMA.001.htm
- <sup>12</sup> I am grateful to Professor Todd Lawson for bringing this point to my attention.
- <sup>13</sup> *Summons*, 189.
- <sup>14</sup> For an extended discussion of Bahá'u'lláh's reducing armaments, see Cole, 125-126.
- <sup>15</sup> Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: the Making of the Bábí Movement in Iran, 1844-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 251.
- <sup>16</sup> See Denis MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War," *Religion* 12 (1982), 108-109.
- <sup>17</sup> 'Abdu'l Bahá, *Makátíb-i haQrat-i 'Abdu'l Bahá* vol. 2 (Iran: Mu'assasah-i Millí-i Maṭbú'át-i Amrí, 1330/1912), 266.
- <sup>18</sup> For more details, see *EI2*, "Muhammad Shah," from which this brief sketch was drawn.
- <sup>19</sup> SWB, 41-2; www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-THE%20BÁB/QAYYUM%20AL-ASMA'/Q-ASMA.001.htm
- <sup>20</sup> SWB, 42; www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-THE%20BÁB/QAYYUM%20AL-ASMA'/Q-ASMA.001.htm The "sacred land" (*al-ard al-muqaddas*) the Báb refers to here must be the 'Atabát region. Although the official translation of this passage includes a parenthetical gloss equating the "sacred land" with Tehran, other evidence from the Báb's writings, including elsewhere in the QA itself, lends weight to the notion that he actually means Iraq. See, for example, SWB, 69.
- <sup>21</sup> SWB, 42; www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-THE%20BÁB/QAYYUM%20AL-ASMA'/Q-ASMA.001.htm
- <sup>22</sup> SWB, 41; www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-THE%20BÁB/QAYYUM%20AL-ASMA'/Q-ASMA.001.htm
- <sup>23</sup> This translation has not yet been published.
- <sup>24</sup> Linda Darling, " 'Do Justice, Do Justice, for That is Paradise': Middle Eastern advice for Indian Muslim Rulers," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 22 (2002), 3.
- <sup>25</sup> See Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government, or Rules for Kings* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).
- <sup>26</sup> *Summons*, 212; *Alvah*, 40-41.
- <sup>27</sup> SWB, 42-43.
- <sup>28</sup> SWB, 43.
- <sup>29</sup> Muhammad Nabil Zarandí, *The Dawnbreakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*, trans. and ed. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1932), 55.

<sup>30</sup> See Denis MacEoin, "The Bábí Concept of Holy War," *Religion* 12 (1982): 105. According to MacEoin, a copy of this letter exists in the INBA collections 4011C pp 332-36 and 5006C pp 367-69. See Denis MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bábí Doctrine and History: a Survey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 58 and 192. The INBA collections containing this first letter of the Báb were unavailable to me.

<sup>31</sup> It is unclear the degree to which the Báb expected him to do so. In the *QA*, the Báb makes claims in line with various expectations found in the massive heritage of Shi'i Muslim messianic traditions. Numerous Imami messianic hadith informed the religiosity of the Báb's first followers. These individuals were Twelver Shi'is who had certain expectations of the Qá'im, such as his waging of a universal jihad. See MacEoin, "The Bábí Concept of Holy War," 93-129; Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, 33-69; Lambden, "The Messianic Roots," 17-34.