The Development of the Babi/ Baha'i Communities

Baron Rosen's Babi/Baha'i archives present private letters and diplomatic correspondence from the nineteenth century, preserved among the prominent Russian scholar Baron Viktor Rosen's materials in the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg branch.

The materials cast light on the first studies of the Babi and Baha'i Faiths, new religious phenomena which, in Baron Rosen's time, were emerging in Persia. Iran has always been a strategic concern of Russia's geopolitical interests and the traditional importance which has been given to Persia has manifested itself in hundreds of documents and writings collected by the pre-revolutionary Russian diplomats and scholars. These documents, large parts of which have never been published before, reveal interesting information on the attitude of the Russian government towards religious and ethnic minorities as well as towards related issues within the Russian Empire and abroad.

Bringing together materials in Russian, English, Persian, Arabic, and French related to the Babi and Baha'i Faiths from Rosen's archive in the original languages with an English translation, this book will be of great interest to students and researchers in the fields of Iranian Studies, Religion, and Middle East Studies among others.

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Homa Katouzian

16 Domesticity and Consumer Culture in Iran
Interior Revolutions of the Modern Era
Pamela Karimi

17 The Development of the Babi/Baha'i Communities
Exploring Baron Rosen's Archives
Youli Ioannesyan

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To my beloved wife, Linda.

Contents

Figures

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Introduction

A brief look at the Babi and Baha'i Faiths as an object of study in nineteenth-century Russia and Britain

The Baha'i Faith is a monotheistic religion founded by Bahá'u'lláh in nineteenth-century Persia. There are an estimated 5 to 6 million Baha'is throughout the world, from different ethnic backgrounds, in more than 200 countries and territories. As pointed out by William Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, 'The new faith is a distinct religion, based entirely on the teachings of its founder, Bahá'u'lláh. It is not a cult, a reform movement or sect within any other faith, nor merely a philosophical system. Neither does it represent an attempt to create a new religion syncretistically by bringing together different teachings chosen from other religions' (Hatcher and Douglas Martin 2002: xiii). Its history goes back to 1844, when a young merchant in the Persian city of Shiraz, Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad proclaimed his mission as the bearer of a new divine revelation. He assumed the title 'Báb,' meaning 'the Gate,' and is considered by Baha'is to be the forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh, and Prophet-Founder of the Babi Faith. The Báb declared in his many Writings[1] that he saw his mission as one of alerting the people to the imminent advent of another Prophet, 'Him Whom God shall make manifest.'[2] The Báb addressed the issue of this Prophet on almost every page of his major doctrinal work, the *Persian Bayán.*

As the Báb gained followers and the Babi movement gathered strength, its doctrines inflamed the Shi'ih clergy. Their resentment led to the Báb's imprisonment, the persecution of his followers, his trial before the Muslim divines in Tabriz, and finally his execution in 1850. The Báb left his adherents in a state of constant expectation of the promised messenger. In the *Persian Bayán*, he urged his community to recognize and accept this bearer of a new divine revelation, wherever and whenever he chose to arise and make himself manifest. The only proof and sign of his prophetic mission should be his divine verses.

Among the prominent followers of the Báb was a Persian nobleman, Mírzá Husayn-'Alí (Núrí), known by the title 'Bahá'u'lláh,' meaning the 'Glory of God' (1817–1892). Although Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb never met, they corresponded. After the attempt on the Shah's life by two misguided Babis in 1852,[3] causing an upsurge of persecution, Bahá'u'lláh was put in an underground prison in Tehran

for four months. It was there, as he relates in his Writings,[4] that he first received a revelation, through a dream of a 'Maid of Heaven,' that he was the divine messenger promised by the Báb. When Bahá'u'lláh was exonerated of complicity in the plot against the Shah, the royal government – which was initially determined to execute him – released him from prison, but banished him to Iraq, which was part of the Ottoman Empire at the time. Bahá'u'lláh was thus sent to Baghdad, accompanied by some members of his family and companions. The exile in Iraq lasted from 1853 to 1863, until the Persian government succeeded in persuading the Ottoman authorities to banish Bahá'u'lláh further away from the Persian borders. Consequently, he was moved to Constantinople (Istanbul), and soon afterwards to Adrianople (present-day Edirne).

On the eve of his departure from Baghdad to Constantinople (April–May 1863), Bahá'u'lláh declared to his followers that he was the 'Promised One' foretold by the Báb. Once in Adrianople, he began to publicly proclaim his mission, addressing *Epistles* and *Tablets* to the kings and rulers of the day, urging them to establish world peace, justice, and unity. Although most Babis gradually accepted Bahá'u'lláh as the one whom the Báb had repeatedly referred to as 'Him Whom God shall make manifest,' he faced fierce opposition within the Babi community, led by his half-brother, Mírzá Yahyá Subh-i-Azal, and a company of those who followed him. This latter faction became known as 'Azalis.'[5]

Fearing the further spread of the Baha'i teachings, the Persian ambassador to Constantinople exerted every effort to convince the Turkish authorities of the political and religious danger posed by the Baha'i exiles. Their apprehension, and the constant plotting on the part of Mírzá Yahyá and some of his supporters aimed at discrediting Bahá'u'lláh in the eyes of the Ottoman government caused the latter to 'resolve the question of the exiled community once and for all.' In 1868, Bahá'u'lláh and his followers in Adrianople were committed to perpetual imprisonment in the penal colony at Acre in Palestine. As Hatcher and Martin point out, 'Acre was chosen because it was confidently believed that Bahá'u'lláh could not survive the experience. In the 1860s the prison city was a pestilential place, a home for criminals from all parts of the empire ... Prevailing winds and tides washed the refuse of the Mediterranean onto its shores, creating a climate so unhealthy that a popular saying held that a bird which flew over Acre would fall dead in the streets ... The first two years of the Baha'is' imprisonment was a period of intense deprivation and hardship' (Hatcher and Douglas Martin 2002: 42). Bahá'u'lláh spent these two years strictly confined to the barracks. After the movement of troops required the use of the barracks,[6] Bahá'u'lláh and his family were transferred, under house arrest, to a succession of other dwellings in the city. Later, in 1877, he took up residence in a mansion of Mazra'ih for a period of two years, and was finally allowed to settle in Bahji, near Acre, where he remained until his death on 29 May 1892. It was there that Bahá'u'lláh received Professor E. G. Browne, of the University of Cambridge, one of the few Westerners known to have visited and written about him (see his letters in this book).

In his will and testament, Bahá'u'lláh named his eldest son 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844–1921), as his successor and the authorized interpreter of his teachings. He, in turn, named his eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957) to succeed him as Guardian of the Baha'i Faith. After the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the leadership of the Baha'i community passed to the Universal House of Justice, an institution ordained by Bahá'u'lláh in his Writings. The first election of this administrative body took place in 1963. It consists of nine members who are elected for a period of five years. The seat of the Universal House of Justice is on Mount Carmel, at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa.

All the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá form the Baha'i sacred scripture. The founder of the Baha'i religion left behind a rich spiritual legacy: books, epistles, and tablets, considered by Baha'is to be the revelation of God. The writings and talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the works of Shoghi Effendi are regarded as authoritative interpretation. Bahá'u'lláh's major Writings include *The Most Holy Book* (*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*), *The Book of Certitude* (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*) and many others, originally in Arabic and Persian, and now translated into some 800 languages.

The Baha'i message is of a global nature. It is not confined to a particular people, national, ethnic, or cultural group, but is addressed to humanity as a whole. This accounts for the fact that, although the new religion originally emerged in a Persian cultural milieu, it has gradually spread across national boundaries and attracted believers around the world from different ethnic backgrounds. In the Baha'i teachings, history is seen to be unfolding through a series of divine messengers, referred to as manifestations of God or divine manifestations, each of whom reflects the same divine reality, that is, God's will, and establishes a religion that is suited to the needs of the time and the capacity of the people in which it appears. These divine manifestations include Abraham, Krishna, the Buddha, Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Thus, religion is seen as a historical progression, corresponding to each stage of humanity's collective growth, and maturing in a manner similar to the phases in the life and development of an individual. This notion is defined as 'progressive revelation.' Humanity is understood to be in a process of collective evolution and spiritual progress. The current stage is described as that of adolescence, the stage immediately preceding full maturity, at which point humanity is challenged to recognize its organic oneness and gradually establish peace, justice, and unity on a global scale. The basic notion of universal harmony is expressed and reflected in all the major principles of the Baha'i Faith: the oneness of God, the fundamental unity of religion, the oneness of humankind, harmony between religion and science, the equality of men and women. Other principles include the independent investigation of truth, the spiritual foundation of society, universal education, the abandonment of prejudice and superstition, abolition of the extremes of poverty and wealth, and the adoption of an auxiliary international language.

The commandments of God revealed by the succession of divine manifestations are seen as falling into two categories: first, eternal laws, spiritual in nature, which never alter, such as the law requiring man to acknowledge and worship God, essential spiritual principles, such as love, compassion, moderation, respect for parents, etc., and the fundamental laws of unity, harmony, and attraction; and second, social laws, such as particular ordinances governing marriage, inheritance, education of children, etc. Both aspects are described as being divine in origin and must be obeyed, but succeeding manifestations may change or modify the social laws revealed by previous manifestations.[7]

The second half of the nineteenth century was characterized by an increasing interest in the Babi and Baha'i Faiths in Europe. Diplomats, Orientalists, and others were making contributions in every conceivable way to the study of this phenomenon: the emergence of a new religion, contradicting the prevalent view that the appearance of new religions was only possible in ancient times because it was thought to be characteristic of early forms of human society.

There was considerable interest in the Babi and Baha'i Faiths in Russia and Great Britain, countries whose political positions in Iran were exceptionally strong, and whose diplomats therefore had greater opportunities to collect materials on this subject at the very dawn of the religion's history. The establishment of the Russian Academic School of Oriental Studies served as a historic background and prelude to research in such fields as the Babi and Baha'i Faiths in tsarist Russia. It is with this school that the academic activity of V. R. Rosen (see p. 7) was directly connected. Therefore it would be relevant to touch upon the origin and history of Middle Eastern and Oriental studies in Russia and highlight their relation to the Western European academic school of research.

Oriental studies as a scholarly discipline first originated in Western Europe (primarily in colonial empires) in the eighteenth century and have undergone rapid development since the mid nineteenth. Although they were stimulated by foreign policy considerations, the process was not entirely politically motivated. Scholars and researchers collected and studied literary monuments to ancient Middle Eastern and Oriental cultures, making them available for Europeans, thus debunking Western Eurocentric concepts and stereotypes, and contributing to the mutual enrichment of civilizations. Oriental studies in Russia followed the same pattern, as they were closely related to, but not entirely determined by, the tsarist interests in the East. The Russian Empire was geographically located too close to Middle and Far Eastern regions, and its interests were too closely intertwined with those areas of the globe for Russia to be able to remain isolated from the processes which were unfolding in the neighboring Asian countries.

Russia's scholarly Oriental studies drew upon three major resources: (a) applied Oriental studies, which considered the country's needs in military and diplomatic spheres; it also included the missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Christian

Church in the East; (b) traditional (primarily religious) scholarly establishments of the Asian peoples under Russian rule; these tended to specialize in the study of the culture and history of different local ethnic groups, both native (within Russia's borders) and foreign (those inhabiting neighboring countries); (c) Western Oriental studies, which involved inviting Western scholars to Russia for work, as well as publishing studies of Western European researchers in Russian.

The history of Russian Oriental studies as an academic discipline goes back to 1720 when Peter the Great issued a decree concerning the establishment of a College for Foreign Affairs, which included an '*expedition*[8] of Turkish and other Asian languages.' The latter employed experts on Near Eastern languages. Some of them were engaged in the translation of manuscripts. In 1797 'a special Department for arranging affairs related to Asian peoples' was set up within the College for Foreign affairs. In 1802, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established by a royal decree, and in 1820, an Asian Committee was formed. It was within this structure that the Educational Department of Oriental Languages which trained staff for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emerged in 1823.

A great many graduates of this department became talented Orientalists and highly qualified professionals. Some devoted their lives to practical work, while others were engaged in academic activities. Applied and academic research in the field of Oriental studies was much in demand in the mid nineteenth century as a result of the colonial campaigns in Central Asia and Southern Caucasus. Russia's applied Oriental studies are considered to have owed much of their success to E. P. Kovalevski (1811–1868), a prominent diplomat and scholar, who began sending major scholarly-diplomatic expeditions to Asian countries to carry out significant research. The result of their work was very fruitful. N. V. Khanykov headed a scholarly mission to Iran and Afghanistan; N. P. Ignatyev[9] led an expedition to Khiva and Bukhara; and N. G. Stoletov headed a diplomatic mission to Bukhara and Afghanistan.

Military agencies made their own contribution to the development of Russia's applied Oriental studies. Military missions and agents provided detailed reports on the political situation, geography, ethnic composition, and religion of neighboring Asian countries. At the end of the seventeenth century, Russian navy officers kept diaries as they sailed to India, China, and South Asia, some of which were later published. An important military-diplomatic mission, headed by general A. P. Ermolov, visited Iran in 1817, resulting in a series of essays (in Russian): *The Ways and Troops of the Persians: A Brief Outline of Persia in the Military Aspect*, and other works. Considerable influence was left on Iranian and Afghan studies by I. F. Blaramberg, a military Orientalist and army general.

The development of applied Oriental studies was matched by those of an academic nature. Russia's first Orientalist-academician (full member of the Academy of Sciences) was the Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) born German scholar, Gottlieb

Siegfried Bayer (1694–1738), who offered his services to the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1725. His professional interests were quite broad, covering a wide spectrum of Oriental disciplines. However, he devoted his whole life to a work entitled *Chinese Museum*, published in St Petersburg in Latin in 1730–1731. The first government establishment specializing in Oriental studies within the Academy of Sciences, the Asiatic Museum, came into being in 1818. This marks the beginning of Russian academic Oriental studies proper. Its director and caretaker was Christian Martin Joachim Frähn (1782–1851), a German-Russian numismatist, historian, and academician, born at Rostock, Mecklenburg-Schwerin.

The Asiatic Museum quickly established itself as the main institute for the collection and study of Oriental manuscripts and books in Russia, as well as a major international centre for Oriental studies. By the time of the Russian Revolution in 1917, almost a hundred years after its founding, the Asiatic Museum housed one of the most extensive collections of Oriental manuscripts and printed books in the world (see below). Frähn was succeeded after his death by B. A. Dorn (1805–1881), who headed the Asiatic Museum for almost 40 years. This academician was an eminent scholar, professor, broad specialist in the field of Iranian studies, and founder of Afghan studies in Russia, who contributed significantly to the formation and study of St Petersburg collections of Oriental manuscripts, coins, and books, and to the development of Oriental studies in Russia.[10] After Dorn, the Asiatic Museum was successively headed by V. R. Rosen (see more about him on p. 7), F. I. Videman, V. V. Radlov, and K. G. Zalemann. Studies in the Near and Middle East were primarily, but not entirely, aimed at reaching a better understanding of and addressing the problems of the peoples of the Asian provinces of the Russian Empire which were culturally close to those regions of the world. Particular attention was paid to the study of the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Russian diplomats and diplomatic mission staff in nineteenth century Iran were especially active in collecting materials relating to the emerging new religion. Russia's General Consul in Tabriz, A. M. Bezobrazov; General Consul in Astrabad, F. A. Bakulin; chief interpreter of the Russian mission in Tehran, I. G. Grigorovich, and others played a considerable role in the preservation and contribution of Babi and Baha'i manuscripts to the collections in the then capital of the Russian Empire, St Petersburg, and primarily to the collection in the Library of the Institute of Oriental Languages of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, later transferred to the Asiatic Museum. This academic establishment, which was also known as the St Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, now bears the name of the St Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IOM).

Among the European scholars whose contribution to Baha'i and Babi studies, including the publication of original texts, was exceptionally valuable were Russian Orientalists Baron V. R. Rosen, A. G. Tumanski, and British Orientalist E. G. Browne.

A Russian aristocrat of German descent, Baron Victor Romanovich Rosen (1849–1908) was an academic, professor of Arabic at the St Petersburg University, Dean of its Faculty of Oriental Languages,[11] Head of the Oriental Branch of the Russian Archeological Society,[12] and founder and editor of the *Zapiski Vostochnogo Otdeleniya Russkogo Archeologicheskogo Obshestva (ZVORAO)* (*Memoirs of the Oriental Branch of the Russian Archeological Society*).[13] Rosen translated several of the Baha'i Writings into Russian including the *Glad Tidings* by Bahá'u'lláh (Rosen 1893b: 183–192).

Born in Reval – present-day Talinn, the capital of Estonia, then a province of the Russian Empire – Rosen chose Oriental studies as his professional field. He soon became an outstanding expert in Arabic and Persian cultures, literature, Islamic, Christian, and finally Baha'i studies, and was one of the pioneers of research in this newly emerging scholarly area in Europe. He rose to a remarkably high position and was a recognized authority both in Russia and in the West. A full-time member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Rosen was also a corresponding member of several foreign academies and a member of academic societies such as the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences, the Royal Academy of Sciences in Amsterdam, the Institut de France, and an honorary member of the Royal Asiatic Society in London.

One of Rosen's greatest achievements and contributions to Oriental studies was the establishment of *ZVORAO* (*Memoirs*), of which he remained editor for the rest of his life. Rosen died at the age of 58, leaving behind scores of published works, including descriptive catalogues of manuscripts. The first volume of the *Memoirs* came out in 1886, equaling such long-standing European scholarly journals as the *Journal Asiatique*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gezellschaft*, *Giornale della Società,* and *Asiatica Italiana.*

Rosen prepared for publication in the original Arabic and Persian a volume of Epistles by Bahá'u'lláh and left detailed descriptions of many Babi and Baha'i manuscripts which now belong to the manuscript collection of the IOM. The descriptions are extensively illustrated by lengthy extracts from the texts of the manuscripts. Rosen also properly identified some important Epistles, such as the *Súriy-i-Mulúk* (the *Súrih of the Kings*) revealed by Bahá'u'lláh. He encouraged his students, A. G. Tumanski and others, to collect and study materials related to the Babi and Baha'i Faiths. E. G. Browne paid tribute to his Russian colleague and pointed out 'the extreme value of the materials which he has made accessible to scholars, and the exceptional claim which he has on the gratitude of all Orientalists' (Browne 1892b: 322).

Alexander Grigoryevich Tumanski (born in 1861), who came from an old Lithuanian aristocratic family, was Rosen's student. As a young captain in the Russian Imperial army, while serving in the Turkistan region (Ashkabad: now Ashgabat, capital of Turkmenistan), he came into close contact with the recently established

Baha'i community there. He undertook a trip to Persia arranged by the Baha'is and sanctioned by the Russian authorities to collect information about the Baha'is in Persia. He was accompanied on his trip by his young wife, and his journey to Persia at that time was an adventure. Among Tumanski's good friends was the prominent Baha'i scholar Abu'l-Fazl Gulpáygání. Tumanski was the first translator of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* into a European language, namely Russian (Tumanski 1899). Among his other publications of Baha'i Writings in the original, accompanied by his Russian translation, was *The Will and Testament of Bahá'u'lláh* (Tumanski 1893). According to Professor Akimushkin of St Petersburg, Tumanski fled with his family to Turkey after the so-called Bolshevik October Revolution and died in 1920 in the Princes' Islands. His descendents live in Belgium.

It is interesting to quote Tumanski's own account of how he first became interested in Baha'is and Baha'i studies:

> In the summer of 1890, as a student of the officers' courses under the Educational Department of Oriental Languages, I was required to go to the military training camp. Driven by the desire to practice my colloquial Persian in summer as well as to get to know the Babis better, I requested to be allowed to go to the military training camp in the Transcaspian Region instead of to Krasnoye Selo;[14] the request was granted as a favor to me, provided that I went there at my own expense.
>
> Much to my regret, I did not tell anyone of my intention to apply myself to Babi studies before my departure and for this reason I had no opportunity to become acquainted with works by E. G. Browne. Even Baron V. R. Rosen's works became known to me thanks to I. F. Gotvald, whose cordial welcome in Kazan I remember with much appreciation.
>
> The only way in which I can justify myself is that I was not aware of what precisely would greet me in Ashkabad. I had obtained my first information about the Babis from the *Nouvelle Géographie Universelle* by [Élisée] Reclus[15] at a time when I was still preparing for the entrance examination at the Oriental Languages courses. It was then that I was amazed by this religious struggle which is possible in this age, if not in Europe at least in Asia.
>
> In the winter of 1889–90 a telegram was published in the newspaper *Novoye Vremya*,[16] which said that the four Shi'ih Persians who had been condemned to death by hanging by the military tribunal in Ashkabad for murdering a Babi had their sentence mitigated at the request of the Babis themselves, their death penalty being changed into penal servitude for life. It was then that I decided to go to Ashkabad for the summer and made myself familiar with Prof. Kazembek's book: *The Báb and the Babis* S[aint]-P[eters]b[urg] 1865 as my preliminary guide. The reason why I did not tell anyone about my project was that I was not sure whether my trip would provide anything new in this field or not. Furthermore, [I was wondering] what kind of Babis I would find in Ashkabad: whether they were knowledgeable in their own teaching or not, all this was unknown to me. Therefore I kept silence.

> Arriving in Ashkabad on 29 June 1890, I was able without difficulty to become acquainted with the most interesting Babis. Due to their meritorious lifestyle they [were] accepted by Russians most favorably. Some of the wealthiest Babis are even permanent members of the city public assembly. That is why making their acquaintance was not difficult at all. Seeing my desire to get to know their religious teaching better, three of them were eagerly vying with one another to help me in it ...
>
> (Tumanski 1892: 314–315, translation mine)

As Baron Rosen remarked in his description of Tumanski's undertaking: '... Mr. Tumanski left [for Turkistan] without having a chance to become aware of Mr. Browne's memoirs, which he studied on his return. Therefore he is completely independent in his judgments, which makes them all the more precious' (*Collections Scientifiques* ... 1891, VI: 243, translation mine). In about two years after his first summer trip to Ashkabad, Tumanski went there again for military service. It appears from his letters that he spent a total of 6–7 years in the Transcaspian Region.

The prominent British Orientalist E. G. Browne is too well known both in the West and in the East to need a long introduction here. However, it is relevant to make a few comments regarding his contribution to Babi and Baha'i studies. The numerous works of this scholar, which appeared from the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, have preserved their value up to the present day.These include translations and commentaries, and the publication of important and interesting documents. I will mention some of them: *The Bábís of Persia*; *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb*; *The Táríkh-i-Jadíd or New History of Mírzá 'Alí Muhammad the Báb*; *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion*; *Kitáb-i Nuqṭatu'l-Káf, being the Earliest History of the Bábís Compiled by Ḥájjí Mírzá Jání of Káshán*. Browne was most remarkable in his deep penetration into the subtlest nuances of theological and metaphysical subjects and his illuminating explanations of many core concepts of the religious teachings. However, though the British scholar, like his Russian colleagues tried to base his studies on primary sources, he widened the definition of this term to encompass an extremely broad range of sources. Trusting unconditionally the materials coming from circles biased against the Baha'is, he hastily and uncritically borrowed extensive data from them for his works and relied on it in his judgments, ignoring obvious contradictions which this data contains.[17] This tendency made Browne's research in the field of Babi studies much more profound and well substantiated than in the field of Baha'i studies, which he regarded as being of secondary importance (see his letters to Rosen in this book).

However, the limitations of Browne's approach were compensated by the works of both Rosen and Tumanski, who focused their endeavors completely on Baha'i studies. For this reason the scholarly activities of Russian Orientalists on the one hand, and those of Browne's on the other, can be regarded as complementary. This impression is largely confirmed by their correspondence which reveals in what close cooperation the three scholars were working together and with what

willingness they exchanged information and materials and discussed their plans.[18]

Baron V. R. Rosen's archive in the Russian Academy of Sciences and this book

Baron V. R. Rosen left to posterity a vast collection of unpublished materials which, among other purposes, are of extreme value for the study of the Babi and Baha'i Faiths, as well as for research on Babi and Baha'i studies in Europe, especially for those interested in a historical perspective. These materials are preserved in the St Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St Petersburg, Russia). They comprise Rosen's correspondence with A. G. Tumanski, E. G. Browne (the larger part of the collection), G. D. Batyushkov, academic S. F. Oldenburg, V. I. Ignatyev, S. Voirot, and I. Kheyru'lláh.

Of special importance are manuscripts (and copies of manuscripts), official reports of Russian diplomats from Persia on the Babis, and reports from Adrianople on the Babis residing there at the same time that Bahá'u'lláh was exiled in that city.

It would also be relevant to say a few words about the other key figures (besides the three prominent Orientalists), whose work figures in the above-named collection.

1. Academic Sergei Feodorovich Oldenbourg, who mentions the Babis in his letter to Rosen.
2. Vladimir Ivanovich Ignatyev – another of Rosen's university students, a diplomat working in Tehran, Ashkabad, and Bukhara.[19]
3. Georgiy Dmitrievich Batyushkov – Persian and Arabic scholar and diplomat working in Tehran in 1893–1899, and author of a short book on the Babi and Baha'i Faiths (Batyushkov 1897).
4. Sébastian Voirot – a French Baha'i.
5. Ibráhím George Khayru'lláh (Kheiralla) – the first Baha'i teacher in America.
6. Mírzá Abu'l-Fazl Gulpáygání – a prominent Baha'i scholar, a former Muslim master teacher in a religious seminary in Tehran, who became a devoted Baha'i.

I will now briefly describe the materials in Rosen's archive collection related to our subject which are presented or introduced to the reader in this book:

1. Tumanski's correspondence with Rosen (in Russian), which date from 1892 to 1899. These comprise over 21 letters and a newspaper article dealing with a wide range of issues: the Babi community in Ashkabad, the translation of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (and related issues), Tumanki's trip to Persia and some information he gathered there about the Baha'is, and other subjects. The article written by Tumanski on the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh was published in the

newspaper *Kavkaz*. The author gives in it an unbiased account of the history of the Baha'i Faith and calls Bahá'u'lláh 'a prophet';

2. Browne's correspondence with Rosen comprises 49 letters, dated between 1889 and 1902; two letters are in Persian, and the remainder are in English. These letters also cover a wide range of issues and show the close cooperation with Rosen with whom Browne was researching the Babi and Baha'i Faiths. For example, these letters reveal that Browne used for his work both transcripts of the *Persian Bayán* from the St Petersburg manuscript collection, made available to him by Rosen;
3. Ignatyev's correspondence with Rosen comprises three letters (in Russian). These throw light on the stance of Russia's Foreign Ministry on the Babi/Baha'i issue and reveal the differences between the Foreign Ministry and the Russian authorities in Turkistan in this respect;
4. Batyushkov's correspondence with Rosen consists of three letters (in Russian), revealing Batyushkov's attraction to the Baha'i Faith and his protective attitude towards it;
5. Sébastian Voirot's letter (in French) throws light on the French Baha'i community of the time;
6. Kheyru'lláh, who was put in touch with Rosen by Browne, offers Rosen his book in his letter (in English);
7. Official reports of Russian diplomats in Persia on the Babis/Baha'is; one is in French, while the remainder are in Russian, but written in a Russian script specially modified to make its reading difficult. These reports, dated 1868–1890, cover the period 1855–1890. Among them is a report by the Russian Chargé d'Affaires in Tehran, Mr. Zinovyev, to Duke Gorchakov (in French);
8. 'The Babis in Adrianople' – a report by the head of the Russian Consulate in Adrianople based on eyewitness accounts; the report was compiled in Russian on Rosen's request;
9. Manuscripts:

   (a) The *Lawh-i-Sámsún* (in Arabic), also known as the *Lawh-i-Hawdaj* (Tablet revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in Samsun on his way to Constantinople). The manuscript is preserved in excellent condition;
   (b) The *Lawh-i-Javád* (three pages in Persian);
   (c) A chapter from the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* ('Chapter of Josef') in Arabic;
   (d) Prayers;
   (e) 'History of Hájí Muhammad-Rizá' – a history in Persian of the martyrdom of Hájí Muhammad-Rizá Isfahání in Ashkabad, manuscript in Abu'l-Fazl Gulpáygání's hand;

All the above manuscripts (except for the *Lawh-i-Javád*, included in Rosen's volume of Epistles by Bahá'u'lláh) have not so far been available to the general public, because they have been preserved in the Archive, which accounts for their excellent condition. They are not described in any published descriptive catalogue of manuscripts.

10. Two letters in Judeo-Persian[20] with a translation into standard Persian, giving an account of the events which happened to Babis (Baha'is) of Jewish background in Iran and the persecutions they suffered. One letter is addressed by Áqá Sulaymán-'Attár Hamadání from Tehran to Áqá Sulaymán-Shálfurúsh Hamadání in Ashkabad;
11. A letter written by Abu'l-Fazl Gulpáygání to Tumanski (in Persian) on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The letter is probably a transcript of Gulpáygání's original letter.

Two-thirds to three-quarters of these letters (except for a few from Brown and a couple of Tumanski's letters) are related to the Babi and Baha'i Faiths. Some extracts from the Russian language materials of this collection were previously quoted in Kuznetsova's article: 'K Istorii Izuchenia Babizma i Behaizma v Rossii (On the history of studies in the Babi and Baha'i Faiths).' Later the archive documents with quotes in English were briefly presented by me in: Ioannesyan, 'Baron Rosen's Archive Collection of Babi and Baha'i Materials.' The Russian part of these materials – the official reports of Russian diplomats, Tumanski's and Ignatyev's letters as well as one of the three of Batyushkov's letters translated into English, have been recently published in full in the book: *The Baha'is of Iran, Transcaspia and the Caucasus*, ed. by S. Shahvar, B. Morozov and G. Gilbar. The latter scholarly two-volume work is a significant and valuable contribution to Baha'i and Iranian studies.

However, neither the English, Persian, and Arabic language parts of this collection nor the originals of the Russian language section have so far been published or introduced to the reader (except for certain passages quoted by Kuznetsova, see p. 114).

The purpose of this book is to bring together in one work all the materials in Russian, English, Persian, Arabic, and French related to the Babi and Baha'i Faiths from Rosen's archive in the original languages supplied with an English translation (where necessary) and comments. These documents are closely interrelated since they all deal with the same issues and are addressed to the same person, that is, Baron Rosen. The book presents extensive quotes from all the above materials: private correspondence, diplomatic reports, and descriptions of manuscripts contained in the archive, accompanied by comments. All passages from the given correspondence relating to the Babi and Baha'i Faiths are quoted in the book.[21] Since the letters are complementary to the sender's or Baron Rosen's published works, throwing sometimes additional light on the issues discussed in these publications, the comments on them are primarily (but not entirely) intended to help the reader understand how a given letter or report relates to a particular published work. The publication of the quotes is authorized by the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences as certified by a special agreement. The materials in languages other than English (Russian, Persian, French, Arabic) are presented in their original and in the English translation made by Linda and Youli Ioannesyan.

Since these materials contain and touch upon so many varied subjects, it is impossible to classify them according to their content. For this reason, they are

arranged chronologically and sequentially based on their deposit, inventory and item numbers; sometimes the main subject of the letter or quote is emphasized. The materials in the Archive are registered under the following three numbers:

deposit (фонд)
inventory (опись)
unit (единица хранения).

All the quotes are given with a reference to the page. The numeral stands for the folio page number; 'a' indicates the folio front page, 'b' indicates the folio back page.

The transliteration of Persian/Arabic titles and personal names follows in general the Baha'i transliteration system with the exception of the subscript diacritical marks, which are not used in the work and the Persian *izáfih*, which is not placed between the components of complex personal names. This system enables the titles of Babi and Baha'i Writings to preserve the set forms (Arabic or Persian) in which each text is commonly known among the followers of the Baha'i Faith. At the same time, it for the most part matches Browne's transliteration which the British Orientalist employs in his letters published in this book. The terms 'Babi' and 'Baha'i' (whether in reference to the religion or to its followers) as well as geographic names do not have any diacritical marks. The terms and names influenced by Turkish pronunciation in the original documents (in the reports and letters from Turkey) are not transliterated either. However, all the quotes from English language sources (Browne's letters and published works) preserve the original transliteration of Persian/Arabic terms and personal/geographic names including the use of subscript dots. The same applies to the punctuation and quotation marks (the use of double quotation marks instead of singular). This accounts for an inconsistency in the rendering of certain personal/geographic names and terms: Tumansky/Toumansky, Jawád, Ashkabad/'Ishḳábád, Bâbýs, Bâby/Bábí, Behá'i, Ezelí(s), etc. in Browne's letters and quotes from his published works, while elsewhere in the book the corresponding forms are: Tumanski, Javád, Ashkabad, Babis, Babi, Baha'i, Azali(s).

Throughout the archival correspondences, the Baha'is are referred to as 'Babis' as was common practice in the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. I keep this term in the original texts but replace it with 'Baha'i' and 'Baha'is' where the latter are implied in my comments.

All the Common Era (CE) dates in the Russian (or French) language section of the collection follow the Julian calendar.

Notes

1 In this book, the initial capital letter in 'Writings' is used when referring to the works of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb (as they are considered to be the Holy Scripture in the Baha'i Faith). In other contexts, the initial capital letter is not used.
2 See Momen, W. 1989: 28.
3 See Cameron and Momen 1996: 55–56.

4 In the *Súriy-i-Haykal*, for example.
5 For more information about him, see Momen W. 1989: 243.
6 See Cameron and Momen 1996: 94.
7 See Momen W. 1989: 137. For more detailed information on the the Baha'i Faith, see Hatcher and Douglas Martin, op. cit., related entries in Momen W., op. cit., and other sources.
8 An old term applied to certain government establishments (derived from 'expediting one's responsibilities').
9 Not to be confused with V. I. Ignatyev, one of Rosen's correspondents.
10 See Kolesnikov and Luzhetskaya 2005: 15.
11 Baron Rosen was appointed Dean of the faculty in 1893.
12 Rosen became Head of the Oriental Branch of the Russian Archeological Society in 1885.
13 The *Memoirs* ... started to appear in 1886.
14 A small town near St Petersburg (see Tumanski's letters and my comments).
15 See Reclus 1875.
16 For this newspaper, see Ignatyev's letter # 3 and comments.
17 This is all the more surprising given the fact that Browne himself sometimes admitted that certain data he was using in his publications was unconfirmed or unsubstantiated; see, for example, Browne 1891, 2: 364.
18 In his published works and archive letters, Browne acknowledges the importance of the contributions of Baron Rosen and Tumanski.
19 According to N. A. Kuznetsova, he was also Russia's Consul in Rasht (Kuznetsova 1978: 96).
20 The Persian dialect (or several dialects) of Persian-speaking Jews, who use the Hebrew alphabet for the writing of Persian words.
21 The only exceptions are two diplomatic letters written in a specially modified Cyrillic script to make its reading extremely difficult.