



ṢOHUR-AL-ḤAQQ

ṢOHUR-AL-ḤAQQ (variously also called *Tāriḵ-e Ṣohur-al-Ḥaqq* and *Ketāb-e Ṣohur-al-Ḥaqq*), the most comprehensive history of the first century of the Bahai faith yet written, compiled in nine volumes by Mirzā Asad-Allāh, known as **Fāẓel Māzandarāni** (1881-1957). In about 1924, shortly after his succession to the leadership of the Bahai community, Shoghi Effendi wrote to the Central Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Persia, asking them to gather materials towards the compilation of a general history of the Bahai faith. Initially this work was handed to a committee and Fāẓel served as the liaison between this committee and the Assembly, of which he was himself a member at the time. However, after the committee failed to make significant progress, Fāẓel took on the responsibility to compile this work himself.

Local assemblies throughout Persia were asked to prepare Bahai histories of their areas and to forward these to the Central Assembly. There thus exists a set of local Bahai histories written in the late 1920s and early 1930s, some about whole provinces such as Azerbaijan, Khorasan and Gilan; some about cities such as Isfahan, Hamadan and Yazd; and some on smaller Bahai communities such as those in Milān, Neyriz, Ābādeh, Sangsar, Nur and some of the villages around Yazd. Most of these histories were written by prominent Bahais in each locality. These materials were subsequently put at the disposal of Fāẓel, who also collected much material himself on his travels and through his contacts with old Bahai families who had kept important sources in their possession.

It appears that the early volumes of *Ṣohur-al-Ḥaqq*, on the era of the Bāb, had



been completed by May 1932, whereupon Fāzel asked the Central Assembly of Persia to ask the Assemblies in India, Iraq, Egypt, the United States and Europe to collect historical materials for this project (Shoghi Effendi, p. 107). The completion of the fourth volume of *Ẓohur-al-Ḥaqq* was mentioned in February 1936 (Fāzel, I, p. *qāf*), and in November 1936, Shoghi Effendi wrote to express his appreciation of the completed work, and his desire to see it published soon (Shoghi Effendi, p. 169). However, he could not have been referring to the completion of the ninth volume, since this final volume covers events as far as 1943.

The publication of this work was problematic since the Bahai community has, for most of its history, been prohibited from publishing books in Persia. In July 1939, Shoghi Effendi wrote that he hoped that, even if the whole work could not be published, portions of it could be distributed in some form (Shoghi Effendi, p. 197). There was, however, a short period of time during World War II when conditions in Persia appeared to become a little less restrictive for the Bahais. The Assembly took advantage of this opportunity to print the third volume of *Ẓohur-al-Ḥaqq* (532 pp.), which was one of the shorter volumes of this work and was ready at that time for publication. However, in July 1943 Shoghi Effendi wrote to prohibit the publication of further volumes, since the actions that had been taken were technically illegal and he did not want the Bahais to do anything unlawful (Shoghi Effendi, p. 254). As early as 15 September 1932, Shoghi Effendi had instructed in a letter that a committee be established to compare the history of the time of the Bāb which Fāzel had just completed with Nabil's narrative of that period (Zarandi, 1932), for he regarded that as one of the most complete and accurate primary sources for the period of the Bāb (Shoghi Effendi, pp. 101, 111-2). It appears that this was not carried out, since, after the publication of the third volume of *Ẓohur-al-Ḥaqq*, some Bahais wrote to Shoghi Effendi about discrepancies between the two histories. As a result, a small pamphlet was published in Persia in 1950, pointing out some 37 discrepancies.

After the death of Fāzel in 1957, the eighth volume was eventually published in two parts by the National Bahai Publishing Trust in Persia as a mimeograph (Tehran, 1974-5). The other volumes have not been published yet, but there are plans underway for their publication.

Ẓohur-al-Ḥaqq is a nine-volume work. The first volume deals with the period just before the appearance of the Bāb, and is taken up largely by an account of the Šaykī movement, led by Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī and Sayyed Kāẓem Raštī; the



second volume gives an account of the life of the Bāb and the history of the Bābi movement up to 1850; the third volume, which has been published, contains the biographies of the leading followers of the Bāb as well as a few of his main opponents; the fourth volume concerns the life of Bahā'-Allāh and the events of the period from 1851 to 1866; the fifth volume continues the biography of Bahā'-Allāh and the history of the Bahai faith from 1867 to 1892, and ends with a section consisting of biographies of the family of the Bāb and Bahā'-Allāh; the sixth volume consists of biographies of the principal followers of Bahā'-Allāh and of some of his main opponents; the seventh volume is the life of 'Abd-al-Bahā' and the main events of his ministry (1892-1921); the eighth volume, which has also been published, consists of biographies of the leading Bahais of the time of 'Abd-al-Bahā', and of some of his opponents; and the ninth volume is a resumé of events from 1921 up to the end of the first Bahai century (1943).

Fāzel employs a scholarly Persian prose style, as used by the classical Persian historians, with a heavy admixture of Arabic words and phrases. One of the valuable features of his work is that he frequently gives lengthy quotations, both in the text and as appendices and footnotes, from key historical sources that he had in his possession. There are also reproductions of some important documents as well as numerous historical photographs. As he was constantly traveling, Fāzel had entrusted many of the historical documents he had in his possession to certain friends. Due to the recent events in Persia, the persecution of the Bahais, and the confiscation of much of their property, these sources seem to have disappeared and cannot at present be traced.

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