

The Early Years of the Guardianship



Transition to the Guardianship

- Abdu'l-Baha ascended on November 28, 1921.
- Ill for several weeks, he had directed that Shoghi Effendi be summoned to Haifa, but his family delayed communicating this to avoid interrupting his academic work.
- Due to this, and delays in his travel documents, he didn't arrive in Haifa until December 29, 1921.

Expecting the Election of the Universal House of Justice

- Most Baha'is expected the immediate election of the Universal House of Justice, so the appointment of a Guardian was a shock.

The Will and Testament was read

to Shoghi Effendi shortly after his arrival;

to 9 members of the family on January 3, 1922

to the public in Haifa on January 7, 1922

On January 16, the Greatest Holy Leaf cabled Baha'i communities that Shoghi Effendi had been "appointed Guardian of the Cause and President of the House of Justice."

Consulting about the Election of the Universal House of Justice

- Shoghi Effendi circulated only excerpts of the Will and Testament to the full Baha'i community, minimizing the parts he referred to him.
- He then summoned prominent Baha'is from Germany, the UK, Iran, Burma, France, India, and the United States to come to Haifa to consult about the future of the Cause, including the possibility of electing the Universal House of Justice.

Consulting about UHJ Election

- Shoghi Effendi had determined from a careful study of the Writings that the Universal House of Justice could not be immediately elected.
- Many of the Baha'is he summoned favored immediate election of the UHJ, but the discussions allowed him to educate them about the necessary steps that had to precede this and to gather information about the size, nature, and commitment of communities in different places.

Other Consultations

- The seizure of Baha'u'llah's house in Baghdad
- The forceable seizure of the keys to Bahji by partisans of Muhammad `Ali
- The development of properties at the Baha'i World Centre.

World Centre Properties



Initial Instructions to Baha'i Community

- Shoghi Effendi requested a census of the Baha'i community of Iran, and appears to have had one done of North America.
- He directed that LSA's be formed in all communities with 9 or more believers.
- He directed specific communities to form NSA's.

The Work Style of Shoghi Effendi

- He seems to have developed this when he was `Abdu'l-Baha's secretary.
- Many accounts indicate that throughout his ministry he worked continuously, slept very little, and often ate little.
- Periods of intense work were punctuated by extended vacations, usually involving physical exercise, rest, and minimal contact with the Baha'i community.

Leaving Haifa

- Shoghi Effendi left Haifa with a cousin in April 1922 for an extended vacation, leaving the Greatest Holy Leaf and the LSA of Haifa in charge of the community's affairs.
- Not a typical vacation to recover from overwork.
- He had to come to terms with the responsibilities that had been thrust upon him.

Secretarial Support

- Returning in December 1922, he began looking for secretarial support to keep on correspondence.
- Persian/Arabic secretaries: his father, Mahmud Zarqani, `Azizu'llah Bahadur.
- English-language secretaries: John Esslemont (1924-25); Ethel Rosenberg (1926-1927); and family members at various times.

Measures to Reduce Correspondence

- Instructed Baha'i communities to issue newsletters and circulate them to other communities. The LSA of Haifa included stories from all of them in its newsletter, thereby providing a global news source.
- Establishing a Baha'i Bureau in Geneva to represent Baha'is in forums and to international organizations there.
- Encouraged Baha'is to write to local and national Baha'i institutions with questions and issues.

Initial Priorities

- Developing the Baha'i Administration
- Developing the Baha'i World Center Properties
- Teaching

Baha'i Administration

- By 1928, there were 12 in Europe, 49 in North America
- He directed that NSAs be elected by delegates were in turn elected by community members using proportional representation. By 1925 there were 5.
- Temporary “Central Assemblies” and “District Assemblies” were elected in place of NSAs and LSAs where such elections were not viable.

Establishing Membership Requirements

- Shoghi Effendi wrote in 1925 that:
- Baha'is must recognize the stations of the Bab, Baha'u'llah, and `Abdu'l-Baha
- And they must practice “unreserved acceptance of and submission to whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen.”
- Many of those considered Baha'is previously did not necessarily meet these criteria. It was important in Baha'i elections that the voters be committed believers.

Development of World Center Properties

- 1922 Shrine of the Bab lit up for the first time.
- 1924 Water pump installed for gardens around the Shrine of the Bab.
- 1926 Construction of pilgrim house completed.
- 1929 Three rooms added to the base of the Shrine of the Bab
- 1929 Family of Muhammad `Ali vacated Bahji and renovation work began.

Teaching

- 1923: Sent Fadil-i Mazindarani to North America and `Abdu'l-Husayn Avarih to Europe to stimulate teaching.
- 1926: Approved the US NSA's Plan for Unified Action with no suggested changes.
- 1929 Sent Yunis Khan Afrukhtih to Europe as a travel-teacher.
- 1930 Began encouraging translations of *Baha'u'llah and the New Era* and financially supporting their publication.
- 1930 Began directing activities of individual travel-teachers and encouraging pioneering over travel-teaching.
- 1931 Approved the second Plan for Unified Action in the US.

Translations

- 1920s:

Words of Wisdom

The Hidden Words

The Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Baha,

Tablet to Dr. Forel

- 1930 Kitab-i Iqan

- 1933 The Dawn-Breakers

- 1935 Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah

- 1936 Prayers and Meditations

Changes in the 1930s

- The death of the Greatest Holy Leaf (1932)
- The expulsion of Husayn Afnan (1933) and gradually other members of the family.
- The Arab Revolt (1936-1939) in Palestine.
- Shoghi Effendi's marriage to Ruhiyyih Khanum (1937)

Later Guardianship

- In 1937, Shoghi Effendi for the first time prepared a teaching plan with goals that he had selected: The First Seven Year Plan (for the US and Canada). For the rest of his ministry he would launch a series of these culminating in the Ten Year Crusade. He was, thus, more directly in charge of teaching and other efforts.
- During the war years, Ruhiyyih Khanum and her father, William Maxwell, were his primary assistants. It would be some years before he obtained the assistance that he had been seeking from the beginning of his ministry.