The Delivery of the Lawḥ-i-Sulṭán and the Fate of Badí‘: Entries from the Diary of Náṣiri’d-Dín Sháh, 1869

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Among the most significant episodes in the ministry of Bahá’u’lláh are the revelation of the Lawḥ-i-Sulṭán—in which “the aims, purposes and principles of His Faith are expounded and the validity of His Mission demonstrated”[1]—and its delivery to Náṣiri’d-Dín Sháh by the seventeen-year-old Badí‘ in the summer of 1869. Until now, the story of the Tablet’s delivery has been known almost entirely from later-recorded documents and recollections from Bahá’í sources.[2] This research note introduces a source of a wholly different order: a series of entries in the private diary of Náṣiri’d-Dín Sháh himself that he wrote in the royal camp within hours of the events described.

It is rare that we possess for any of the Tablets Bahá’u’lláh addressed to the rulers of His day a contemporary witness to its arrival and unique that the witness is the very sovereign to whom it was addressed. In his diary, the Sháh records that he noticed the Tablet’s

1 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 172. The original language text of the Lawḥ-i-Sulṭán is published on the Bahá’í Reference Library (bahai.org/r/702595066). The English translation is published in Bahá’u’lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, beginning at #1.186, also available on the Bahá’í Reference Library (bahai.org/r/676145355).

2 See the account written by Muḥammad-Valí Khán-i-Tunukábuní (d. 1926), known by the title Sipahdár-i-A‘ẓam, in the margins of a copy of *Some Answered Questions*, and translated in H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahá’u’lláh: The King of Glory* 303–9; cf. the account related by Sipahdár-i-A‘ẓam in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Paris on 25 March 1913, as preserved in the diary of Ahmad Sohrab. See also Moojan Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* 254–5 (providing an English translation of a dispatch dated 10 July 1869 from E. de Bonnières, the French Minister in Tehran); Fáḍil-i-Mázindaráni, “Kitáb-i-Ẓuhúru’l-Ḥaqq,” vol. 5, 117; Abbas Amanat and Fereydun Vahman, eds., *Az Ṭihrán tá ‘Akká: Bábíyán va Bahá’íyán dar Asnád-i-Dawrán-i-Qájár* 221–32; Túraj Amíní, *Asnád-i-Bahá’íyán-i-Írán, Jild-i-Duvvum: Dawriy-i-Qájár tá Páyán-i-Sál-i-1304-i-Shamsí* 19–22; Mina Yazdani, *Awḍá‘-i-Ijtimá‘íy-i-Írán dar ‘Ahd-i-Qájár az Khilál-i-Áthár-i-Mubárakiy-i-Bahá’í* 92–5; Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh*, vol. 3, *‘Akká, The Early Years 1868–77* 174–203; Ḥisám Nuqabá’í, *Sharḥ-i-Ḥayát va Shahádat-i-Badí‘-i-Khurásání*; Maḥmúd Qavámí, *Du Kanz-i-Thamín*; Omid Ghaemmaghami and Shahin Vafai, *Exploring the Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Laws and Teachings of the Bahá’í Faith* 391, 397.

bearer twice in one day, ordered his arrest, and received and perused the Lawḥ-i-Sulṭán that same afternoon. He describes the Tablet's physical appearance and summarizes its contents in his own words. The next day, he refers to Badí''s interrogation, torture, and execution, and over the following days the search for his companions, which was still being pursued more than two weeks later. The passages are presented below in the original Persian, with an English translation and a few annotations.

The Diary of Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh

Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh (r. 1848–96) kept a personal daily journal for much of his long reign. Written for himself rather than for the court chroniclers, it records hunts, journeys, audiences, family affairs, and the business of state in colloquial Persian. The surviving volumes have recently begun to appear in critical editions, a number of them under the editorship of Majíd 'Abd-Amín for the Dr. Maḥmúd Afshár Foundation.[3]

The volume covering Rajab 1284 (October 1867) to Ṣafar 1287 (May 1870) includes the Sháh's journal of a summer excursion to the pastures and hunting grounds of Lár, Kujúr, and Núr in northern Iran. He set out from his palace at Níyávarán in Shimrán, north of Ṭihrán, on Tuesday, 18 Rabí'u'l-Avval 1286 (29 June 1869).[4] In the selections below, the Persian text follows the printed edition, including the editor's square brackets; the editor's footnotes are omitted and referred to in the annotations where relevant. Omissions are marked [. . .]. In the translation, square brackets mark my own additions.

The Selections

1. Tuesday, 18 Rabí'u'l-Avval 1286 (29 June 1869)

Persian text (pp. 268–70)

روز سه‌شنبه ۱۸ ربیع الاوّل

صبح زود، یک ساعت به
دسته مانده در بالاخانهٔ نیاوران
به عزم ییلاق و تفرّج و شکار
لار، کجور [و] نور از خواب
برخاستم. [...]

3 The passages discussed here are in Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh, *Rúznámiy-i-Khāṭirát-i-Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh-i-Qájár, az Rajab 1284 tá Ṣafar 1287* 268–74, 288.

4 In academic works, it is standard practice to convert Islamic dates to Gregorian using the tabular (arithmetical) Islamic calendar, on the understanding that a date obtained this way may differ by a day or more from the date actually observed in a given locality. To establish the Gregorian equivalent of a date in the official lunar calendar used in Iran in the nineteenth century, one must consult newspapers or calendars in use in Iran at the time, or a book like Aḥmad Najmábádí, *Taqvím-i-Yikṣad va Panj Sáliy-i-Taṭbíqí*. My thanks to Siyamak Zabihi-Moghaddam for introducing this book to me. Najmábádí prepared his tables from calendars actually in use. He gives Tuesday, 11 Rabí'u'l-Avval 1286 as 22 June 1869 (340). It follows that Tuesday, 18 Rabí'u'l-Avval 1286 was 29 June 1869.

خلاصه رخت پوشیده آمدیم بیرون. دم در، نصرت‌الدّوله، محمّدرحیم‌میرزا حاکم شمرانات، ناصرالملک، حسنعلی‌خان، وزیر خارجه و غیره خیلی بودند [...] عرضه‌چی، گدا، درویش، مردمان عجیب و غریب خیلی بودند. غیاث میراب یک قفس کبوتر آورده بود، متصل جلو ما کبوترها را درمی‌آورد می‌پراند به هوا، معرکه بود. شلوق بازار عجیبی بود.

حضرات را هر طور بود از سر وا کرده، راندیم برای گل‌هندوَنک. منزل امروز چشمه چنار معروف است. [...] خلاصه راندیم؛ همه‌جا دوان دوان [تا] رسیدیم منزل. عرق زیاد کرده بودم. حرم کلاً آمده بودند. موچول‌خان بود، کاغذ عکس ساخته بود، خیلی راه رفتم تا عرق خشکید. حکیم نظرعلی دم سراپرده حاضر بود.

وقتی که می‌خواستیم منزل بیاییم، شخص بلند قامت سفیدپوشی را دیدم توی جمعیت، در قلعه ده ایستاده است. به علی‌رضاخان گفتم این مرد صبح هم نیاوران بود. حالا هم اینجا آمده است، بده این را فراش بگیرد کتش را ببندند ببرند شمران. او رفت و داد گرفتند. عصری که اندرون قرق بود، نشسته بودم دیدم عریضه نوشته است. یک پاکت بزرگی فرستاده است، نوشته بود اتفاقاً این شخص را که گرفتند، بروز داده است که من عریضه از جانب میرزاحسینعلی نوری بابی آورده‌ام برای شاه و خودم باید به دست شاه بدهم. تا اینکه عریضه را حکماً گرفته فرستادم. عریضهٔ بسیار بسیار مطوّل عربی فارسی در یک نیم‌ورق بزرگ کاغذ ترمه، بسیار خوش‌خطّ و یک‌قلم، و به طوری نوشته بود که سطور مساوی هم بود ــ در عرض و طول ــ، بسیار کار بود این طور نوشتن و اصل خلاصهٔ مضمون عریضه، اثبات حق بودن دین خودشان و اینکه مرا طلب کنید، مجلس از علمای خودتان ترتیب بدهید، با هم مجادله و بحث بکنیم و تبرّی از افساد و غیره و غیره؛ خیلی مطوّل بود؛ امّا من تعجّب از نظر خودم کردم که فهمیدم این شخص را باید گرفت و حبس کرد.

شب بعد از شام قورق شد، رحمت‌الله‌خان، میرشکار، کاظم‌خان فراش‌باشی، آقا ابراهیم [و] علی‌رضاخان و غیره بودند. سفارش در هوشیاری آنها در سواری و غیره شد. بعد خوابیدیم، محقّق هم امروز آمد. ...zèhra [زهرا] سلطان

Translation

Early in the morning, an hour before sunrise, I woke up in the upper chamber at Níyávarán, intending to go to the summer pastures, for the outing and the hunting of Lár, Kujúr [and] Núr. [. . .]

In short, I dressed and came out. Many people were gathered at the gate: Nuṣratu'd-Dawlih; Muḥammad-Raḥím Mírzá, governor of Shimránát; Náṣiru'l-Mulk; Ḥasan-'Alí Khán; the Foreign Minister; and others. [. . .] There were many petition-bearers (*'arḍih-chí*), beggars, dervishes, and peculiar people.[5] Ghíyáth the Míráb [water master] had brought a cage of pigeons and kept taking them out in front of us and releasing them into the air. It was quite a spectacle—a bazaar-like pandemonium.

Having gotten rid of these people somehow, we rode for Gul-Hindavanak. Today's campsite is known as Chashmiy-i-Chinár. [. . .] In short, we rode at a gallop all the way until we reached the camp. I had sweated a great deal. The whole harem had arrived. Múchúl Khán was there; he had prepared photographic paper. I walked about a good while until my sweat dried. Ḥakím Naẓar-'Alí was waiting at the entrance to the royal enclosure.

Just as we were entering camp, I saw a tall man dressed in white, standing in the crowd at Qal'ih-Dih. I said to 'Alí-Riḍá Khán: "This man was at Níyávarán this morning too, and now he has come here as well. Have the *farráshes* [royal attendants][6] seize him, pinion his arms (*katash-rá bibandand*), and take him to Shimrán." He went and gave the order, and they arrested him.

In the afternoon, while the inner quarters were cleared of men, I was sitting when I saw that ['Alí-Riḍá Khán] had written a report and sent a large envelope. He had written: "As it happened, the person they arrested has disclosed: 'I have brought a petition (*'aríḍih*) from Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alíy-i-Núrí, the Bábí, for the Sháh, and I must deliver it into the Sháh's hand myself.' In the end I took the petition by force and sent it."[7]

5 It was presumably among this crowd of petitioners at the gate of Níyávarán that the Sháh first noticed Badí' (see below). Bahá'í accounts relate that Badí' waited for three days and nights on a rock opposite the royal pavilion and that the Sháh noticed him through binoculars.

6 The *farráshes* (literally, "spreaders of carpets") were royal footmen or tent-pitchers who were responsible for outdoor and camp activities, carrying messages, and executing the Sháh's orders for arrests, punishments, and the like. They were headed by the *farrásh-báshí*, and their department, the *farrásh-khánih*, represented the executive and punitive power of the Sháh. See Abbas Amanat, "Courts and Courtiers vii. In the Qajar Period," *Encyclopædia Iranica* online edition.

7 In a footnote, the editor of the

It was a very, very long petition, in Arabic [and] Persian, on a large half-sheet of *tirmih* paper.[8] It was beautifully written in a single, uniform hand, and set out so that the lines were even, both horizontally and vertically; writing in this manner took great skill. The gist of the petition was to prove the truth of their religion; that "you should summon me and convene a gathering of your own divines (*‘ulamá*), so that we may debate and discuss together"; and a disavowal of sedition (*ifsád*), and so on and so forth.[9] It was very long. But I marvelled at my own insight, that I had perceived this person [Badí‘] ought to be seized and imprisoned.[10]

At night, after supper, the camp was cordoned off. Raḥmatu'lláh Khán, the *Mírshikár* [chief huntsman], Káẓim Khán the *Farráshbáshí* [chief of the royal attendants], Áqá Ibráhím [and] ‘Alí-Riḍá Khán, and others were present. Instructions were given that they be vigilant during the riding and so on.[11] Then we went to sleep. Muḥaqqiq also came

diary identifies Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí as Bahá'u'lláh. The Sháh consistently calls the Lawḥ-i-Sulṭán an *‘aríḍih*, a petition from a subject to the sovereign. This is precisely the word that, according to the Sipahdár's account, Badí‘ refused to accept, insisting that he had brought from his Lord a *farmán*—that is, a decree issued by a sovereign to his subjects.

8 *Tirmih* paper was apparently a fine luxury paper that took its name from the prized Kirmání textile. The Sháh was clearly struck by the fine quality of the paper. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, in a talk recorded by Badí‘ Bushrú'í in Haifa on 25 September 1915, confirms the Sháh's account in stating that the copy of the Lawḥ-i-Sulṭán delivered to the Sháh was written on *tirmih* paper (‘Abdu'l-Bahá, utterance quoted in Badí‘ Bushrú'í, *Dar Ẓill-i-Shajariy-i-Míthág* 248). My thanks to Mina Yazdani for alerting me to this passage.

9 The Sháh's summary corresponds closely to the Lawḥ-i-Sulṭán. On the request to meet the clergy, compare Bahá'u'lláh's wish that "this Servant be brought face to face with the divines (*‘ulamá*) of the age, and produce proofs and testimonies in the presence of His Majesty the Sháh" (*Summons* #1.221). On the disavowal of sedition, compare Bahá'u'lláh's statements in the Lawḥ-i-Sulṭán that from His arrival in ‘Iráq, He had "forbidden all to engage in dissension (*fasád*) and strife" (#1.208), that "this Servant had no mischief (*fasád*) in mind and had never associated with the sowers of sedition (*fasád*)" (#1.216), that "[s]edition (*fasád*) hath never been pleasing unto God" (#1.213), and that His "purpose hath not been to foment sedition (*al-fasád*)" (#1.258)—the word *fasád* (also pronounced *fisád*) is a cognate of *ifsád*, the word used by the Sháh.

10 The Sháh's self-congratulation suggests that Badí‘ was arrested on suspicion, before he had made his purpose known.

11 Káẓim Khán, chief of the royal *farráshes*, is the officer who, in the Sipahdár-i-A‘ẓam's account, took charge of Badí‘ and directed his torture. The instruction to be vigilant may reflect the alarm caused by the arrest.

today. . . . *zèhra* [Zahrá] Sulṭán.[12]

2. Wednesday, 19 Rabí'u'l-Avval 1286 (30 June 1869)

Persian text (pp. 271–72)

روز [چهارشنبه] ۱۹ [ربیع الاوّل]

در منزل توقف شد. عکس‌هایی که در نیاوران انداخته بودم به کتاب چسباندم ــ زنانه ــ. طولوزون، یحیی‌خان و غیره بودند، کتاب دونکِشُت خواندم. عکس فرستادهٔ میرزاحسینعلی بابی که اسمش میرزا بدیع و خراسانی بود، عکاس انداخت. شخصی است جوان، بلندقد، مهیب، لباس سفید داشت، عمامهٔ کوچک سفید به روی فس عثمانی بسته. تحقیقات زیادی علی‌رضاخان [و] آقا ابراهیم از او کرده بودند؛ جواب‌های عجیب و غریب داده بود و اعتراف به مذهب بابی کرده، میرزاحسینعلی را عیاذاً بالله خدا و پیغمبر می‌داند. بعد بردند فراش‌خانه قدری شکنجه کردند که رفقای خود را بروز بدهد، چیزی نگفته بود، بردند به انبار طهران. بعد شب حکم شد خفه‌اش کردند، به درک واصل شد. ...Shirasi [شیرازی] کوچک

Translation

We remained at the camp. I pasted into the album the photographs I had taken at Níyávarán (those of the women). Ṭúlúzán, Yaḥyá Khán, and others were there. I read the book *Don Quixote*. The photographer took a photograph of the courier of Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí [Bahá'u'lláh], the Bábí, whose name was Mírzá Badí', and [who was] from Khurásán.[13] He is a young man, tall and imposing (*muhíb*). He was wearing white clothes, with a small white turban wound over an Ottoman fez.[14]

'Alí-Riḍá Khán [and] Áqá Ibráhím interrogated him at length. He gave strange and bizarre answers, and he confessed to adhering to the Bábí religion. He regards Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí, God forbid, as God and Prophet. Then they took him to the *farrásh-khánih* [quarters of the royal attendants] and tortured him somewhat, so that he would reveal

12 The Latin-script words at the end of an entry record the name of the wife with whom the Sháh spent the night.

13 Badí', whose given name was Áqá Buzurg, was from Níshápúr in Khurásán; the title Badí' was conferred on him by Bahá'u'lláh. That the Sháh knew him by this title implies that Badí' gave it as his name. At least two photographs of Badí' were taken. The diary dates the taking of these photographs to the day of Badí''s execution.

14 The editor glosses *fis* as the cap of the Ottomans and Egyptians. Badí''s dress is consistent with his having travelled from Ottoman territory.

the names of his companions. He said nothing. They took him to the *Anbár* of Ṭihrán.[15] Then at night the order was given, and they strangled him (*khafih-ash kardand*). He was dispatched to hell.[16] . . . *Shirasi* [Shírází] Kúchik.

3. Thursday, 20 Rabí‘u’l-Avval 1286 (1 July 1869)

Persian text (p. 273)

[. . .] آقا ابراهیم فرستاده بود
عرض خلوتی دارم. رفتم دم
در؛ آمد گفت: سرباز
سوادکوهی امروز رفته بود
نیاوران یخ بخرد، در درّه‌های
بی‌راههٔ سوهانک و قوچک،
دو نفر مرد سفیدپوش مثل
شخص دیروزی دیده بود.
پرسیده بودند: آن آدم دیروزی
را که شاه گرفت چکار کرد؟
شنیدیم داغش کرده بودند؟
خلاصه از سرباز سؤالات
کرده بودند؛ بعد رفته بودند.
فرستادیم اگر پیدا بکنند بگیرند.
[. . .]

Translation

[. . .] Áqá Ibráhím sent word that he had something to report in private. I went to the entrance, and he came and said: “A soldier from Savádkúh went to Níyávarán today to buy ice. In the trackless valleys of Súhának and Qúchak he saw two men dressed in white, like the person from yesterday. They asked him: ‘What did the Sháh do with that man from yesterday whom he seized? We heard they had branded him [with hot irons] (*dághash kardih búdand*)?’ In short, they questioned the soldier and then left.” We sent men to seize them if they could find them. [. . .][17]

4. Saturday, 22 Rabí‘u’l-Avval 1286 (3 July 1869)

Persian text (p. 274)

در لواسان اطراق شد. هنوز
خستهٔ ورجین هستم. آقاباشی ـ
حسین‌خان ـ از شهر آمده بود،
صحبت‌های عجیب و غریب
می‌کرد. با موچول‌خان نشسته
خیلی عکس چسباندم.
فراش‌هایی که رفته بودند
گل‌هندوَنک بابی پیدا بکنند،

15 The editor explains that the *Anbár* was the harshest prison of the capital, to which political offenders and those to be treated with the utmost severity were sent, citing *Táríkh-i-Bí-Durúgh* 85.

16 Later sources relate that Badí‘ was branded for three successive days, that his head was then beaten with the butt of a rifle, and that his body was thrown into a pit; they date his martyrdom to July 1869. The diary instead places his death by strangulation in the *Anbár* on the night of 19 Rabí‘u’l-Avval (30 June 1869), about a day and a half after his arrest.

17 The identity of these two men in white is unclear. Their question shows that within a day or two of Badí‘’s arrest word had reached them that he had been branded, which corroborates the form of torture to which Badí‘ was subjected, as described in other accounts. “Yesterday” is a loose term, since Badí‘ was arrested two days earlier, on 18 Rabí‘u’l-Avval.

یک درویش گرفته بودند آورده
بودند. بعد از تحقیقات معلوم
شده بود که درویش بدذاتی
است و این دو شب در
گل‌هندوَنک در پیش شاگرد
آشپز علی‌رضاخان خوابیده
است، شاگرد آشپز را هم
گرفتند. [. . .]

Translation

We stopped and camped at Lavásán. I am still exhausted from [the journey to] Varjín. The Áqá-báshí, Ḥusayn Khán, had come from the city and was telling strange and bizarre things. I sat with Múchúl Khán and pasted a great many photographs [into the album]. The *farráshes* who had gone to Gul-Hindavanak to find a Bábí had seized a dervish and brought him. After investigation it emerged that the dervish was a rogue (*bad-dhát*), and that for these two nights he had slept at Gul-Hindavanak with the apprentice of 'Alí-Riḍá Khán's cook. They seized the cook's apprentice too. [. . .][18]

5. Friday, 6 Rabí'u'th-Thání 1286 (16 July 1869)[19]

Persian text (p. 288)

[. . .] شب بعد از شام قورق
شد، به کسالت گذشت. شب
enis... [انیس‌الدّوله]

آقاابراهیم [و] علی‌رضاخان
آمده از بابی صحبت کردند.
بعضی آدمها که این دو آنور
فرستاده بودند، خبرهای دروغ
آورده بودند.

Translation

[. . .] At night, after supper, the camp was cordoned off. [The evening] passed in indisposition. Night: . . . *enis* [Anísu'd-Dawlih].

Áqá Ibráhím [and] 'Alí-Riḍá Khán came and talked about the Bábí[s].[20] Some men whom these

18 The search for Badí''s associates thus continued for at least three days after his execution. Whether the dervish had any connection to Badí' is not stated. Together with the entry for 20 Rabí'u'l-Avval, it shows that Badí''s arrest set off a search for his companions around the royal camp that lasted several days and that the court was ready to detain anyone suspected of contact with them, even a servant in the household of one of the Sháh's own companions. The matter surfaces once more, more than two weeks later, in a marginal note (see the next excerpt).

19 The diary gives the weekday as Friday, which, counting from Tuesday, 18 Rabí'u'l-Avval (29 June 1869), corresponds to 16 July 1869. The entries for the preceding days place the royal party near the Núr River.

20 The editor notes that these two sentences are a marginal note in the manuscript and that at least two words are effaced. Since it is written in the margin, the note was evidently added after the entry itself. The phrase "*az Bábí ṣuḥbat kardand*" can mean either "talked about the Bábís"

two had sent over there (*án-var*) had brought false reports.[21]

Conclusion

These entries give us, in the Sháh's own hand and on the very days in question, a record of the arrival of the Lawḥ-i-Sulṭán at the royal camp, a description of the copy the Sháh received, his summary of its message, and the fate of its bearer. They confirm a number of details of the narrative from other sources, including the role of Káẓim Khán, the torture used to force (unsuccessfully) Badí‘ to name his companions, reports of his branding, and his photograph. On other points the entries diverge from other accounts, notably on the manner of the delivery of the Tablet, the place and manner of Badí‘'s death, and, by a few days, its date.

or "talked about the Bábí," that is, Badí‘ himself.

21 Áqá Ibráhím and ‘Alí-Riḍá Khán are the two men who interrogated Badí‘ (see the entry for 19 Rabí‘u'l-Avval), and it was Áqá Ibráhím who brought the report of the two men in white (20 Rabí‘u'l-Avval). The note suggests that, more than two weeks after Badí‘'s execution, they were still pursuing the matter through agents. The term "*án-var*" (literally, "that side") does not say where these agents had been sent. Since the royal party was by then near the Núr River, it may refer to the Ṭihrán side of the mountains, where Badí‘'s companions had been sought. The diary does not say what the false reports concerned.

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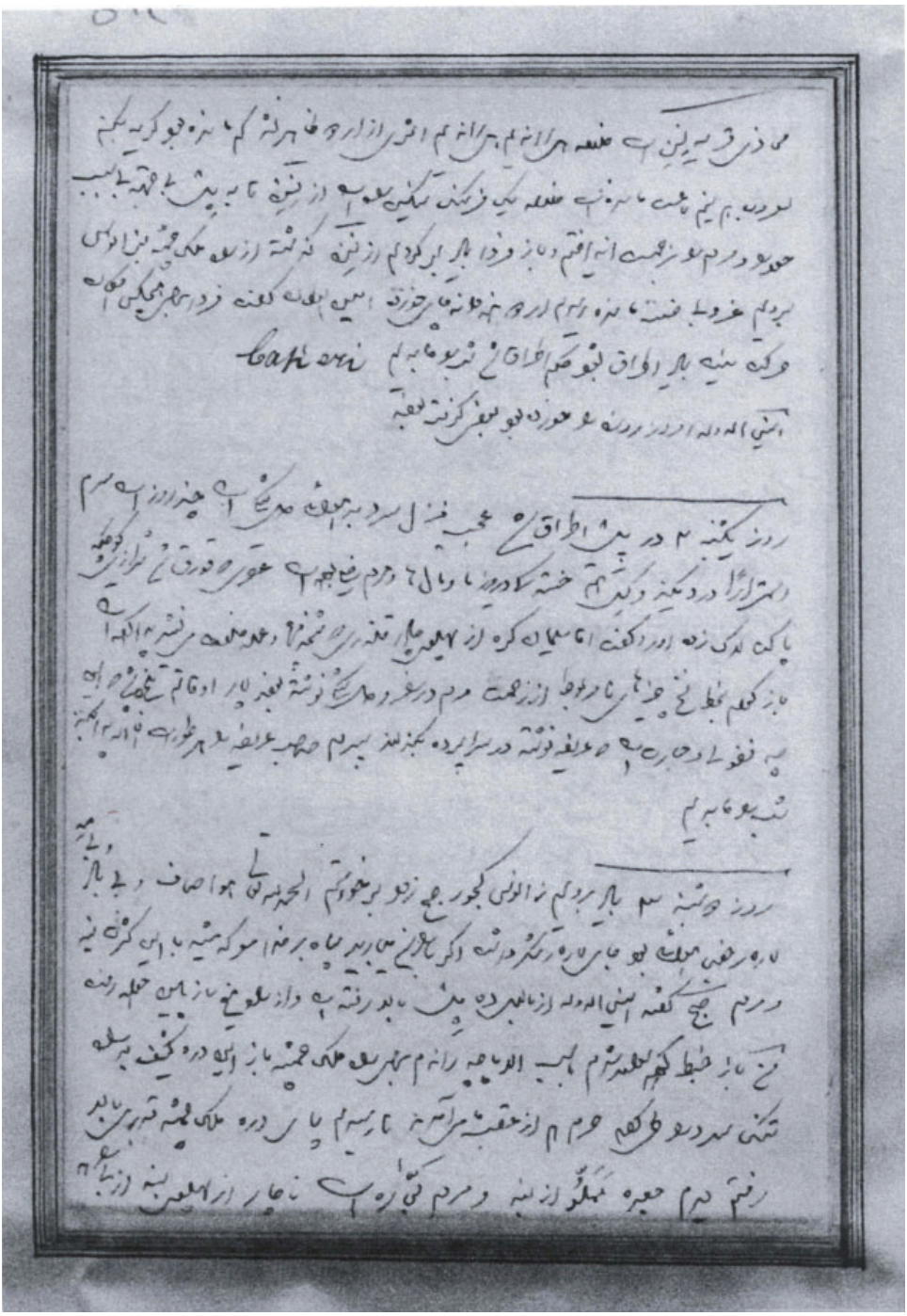
Badí' and his torturers. Picture taken, according to the Sháh's diary, on the same day as Badí''s execution (30 June 1869).



A page from the personal diary of Náṣiri’d-Dín Sháh, published in the back matter to *Rúznámiy-i-Kháṭirát-i-Náṣiri’d-Dín Sháh-i-Qájár, az Muḥarram 1291 tá Ramaḍán 129*3, ed. Majíd ‘Abd-Amín (Tehran: Intisháráti-Duktur Maḥmúd Afshár, 1399 Sh./2020–1).