

# History through Talisman: The Historical Value of a Newly Identified Safavid Treatise by Molla Jalal-e Monajjem-e Yazdi<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The present article's primary focus is on an occult sciences treatise that is not well-known by Safavid scholars. Occult science is the knowledge of forms, numbers, and letters. Compared with the traditional or conventional sciences, occult sciences have a long history in Iran dating back to ancient times. Occult sciences are esoteric sciences mostly with an unknown origin,<sup>2</sup> and are used to confront supernatural forces,

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<sup>1</sup>All translations in this article are mine.

<sup>2</sup>In the context of Shi'ism, the invention of some of these sciences, such as *Jafr* (the science of Shi'ite letters), has been attributed to Imam 'Ali. For more information on *Jafr*, see Hossein Ruhollahi, "Jafr," in *Dā'erat al-Ma'āref-e Bozorg-e Eslāmī*, vol. 18 (Tehran: Dā'erat al Ma'āref-e Bozorg-e Eslāmī, 1389/2010), 288–92; Gernot Windfuhr, "JAFR," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 14, fasc. 4 (New York: Brill, 2008), 367–71; Toufic Fahd, "Djafr," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam (New Edition)*

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intervene in world affairs, and predict the future.

In recent decades, European historians have reflected on occult sciences, especially in terms of their relationship with the modern world. From these historians' point of view, occult sciences were an essential feature of the Renaissance, the scientific revolution, and even scientific modernity. Some historians have even gone so far as to consider occult sciences as the driving force behind early European imperialism and colonialism, arguing that astrology, alchemy, and magic were tools for understanding and controlling the universe.<sup>3</sup>

But what happened to occult sciences in the Islamic world? Occult sciences (especially astrology, the science of letters, and geomancy) were recognized as formal knowledge and had been in the standard classifications of sciences under the “natural” category since the formation of Islamic sciences. However, after facing the opposing approaches of philosophers, theologians, traditionalists, and historians respectively—such as Ibn Sina, al-Ghazzali, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Ibn Khaldun—these sciences were marginalized.<sup>4</sup> Using a postcolonial perspective to consider the current approaches to Islamic occult sciences

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(Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1991), 375–78. In the non-Shi‘ite context, some angels, prophets, and sages are believed to have invented these sciences. For example, see Mohammad Baqer Tabataba ī Yazdi, *Nafahāt al-Asrār fi ‘Elm al-Raml*, lithograph edition (Najaf, Iraq: Dar al-Kotob al-‘Eraqiyyah, 1359/1940), 10. It is impossible to provide a universal definition of occult sciences, because different definitions can be given at different levels. For an example of a classical definition of occult sciences, see Seyyed Ahmad Sajjadi, “Olūm-e Gharībeh,” in *Da ērat al-Ma ‘āref-e Tashayyo‘*, vol. 11 (Tehran: Saied Mohebbi Publication, 1384/2005), 386–407. Matthew Melvin-Koushki is among the young generation of Islamist scholars who believe that the mathematically based occult sciences have mistakenly been considered the cause of Islamic civilization’s decline in an orientalist paradigm. For more information on his ideas, see his “Powers of One: The Mathematicalization of the Occult Sciences in the High Persianate Tradition,” *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, no. 5 (2017): 127–99.

<sup>3</sup>For an example of these intellectual endeavors, see this brilliant work recommended to me by Matthew Melvin-Koushki: Jason A. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

<sup>4</sup>The list of opponents of occult sciences is, of course, longer. For more information, see George Saliba, “The Role of the Astrologer in Medieval Islamic Society,” *Bulletine d’Etudes Orientales* 44 (1992): 45–67; Yahya J. Michot, “Ibn Taymiyyah on Astrology Annotated Translation of Three Fatwas,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 11 (2000): 147–208.

begs the following question: Why are occult sciences interpreted as a pioneer of modernity in the West while in the Islamic world, where these sciences were much more officially supported than in Europe, they are considered one of the leading causes of Islamic civilization's decline? Occult sciences, which were always accused of magic, inherently conflicted with religion. Hence, for survival in Iranian Muslim society, especially after the religious revival in the Safavid era, these sciences gained religious legitimacy and documented their principles and teachings in the actions and words of the prophets and imams. This is why some famous scholars, who naturally had to oppose these sciences within the framework of the discussions proposed by Ibn Sina and Ibn Khaldun, were themselves among the professionals in the field of occult sciences.

In the first centuries of Islam, the occult sciences, only parts of which were examined by scholars, became widespread, and the Persian texts of these sciences found their way into most Iranians' homes.<sup>5</sup> In this and the following periods, occult sciences affected almost all components of Iranian society from kings to the lower classes. This spread of occult sciences occurred for various reasons: the efforts of governments to control the world through occult sciences; the spread of millennial ideas; the inadequacy of formal sciences in solving everyday problems; and disappointment with the political, social, economic, and religious structures in place to solve Iranians' problems and with the consequences of foreign invasions, to name a few. Especially during the Qajar period, occult sciences were reduced to their most superficial form: unscientific folk beliefs.

With this consideration, this paper posits that traditional approaches to occult sciences, which reduce them to the level of superstitions by equating them with their popular dimension, should not diminish the research value of the occult sciences texts. Also, it is possible to study the traditions of occult sciences and the surviving books from a

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<sup>5</sup>Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Pseudo-Shaykh Bahai on the Supreme Name, Safavid-Qajar Letterist Classic," in *Light upon Light: Essays in Islamic Thought and History in Honor of Gerhard Bowering*, ed. Jamal J. Elias and Bilal Orfali (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2019), 256–90.

cultural perspective and offer an intellectual reading to understand the ancient Iranian cosmology.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the texts of occult sciences deserve research attention, including in the field of historiography, and the sources of occult sciences should be considered alongside other well-known historical research authorities.

The Safavid era, as has been said many times, marked the beginning of a new era in Iranian history. Though this period has been studied from different angles, certain issues have been less addressed. Cataloguing and publishing new manuscripts and paying close, accurate attention to some of the available texts unearths facts about this period that unfortunately have no place in Safavid's politicized historiographical sources. Based on the above considerations, this paper will examine a lithograph treatise on occult sciences that is not yet known as a historical source for this period—or at least, for reasons to be discussed, not taken seriously. The textual study of this treatise provides new, valuable findings from the Safavid era.

### ***Asrar-e Qasemi: A Timurid Occult Treatise with Safavid Elements?***

In an article entitled “The Cosmological Order of Things in Early Modern Safavid Iran,” Kathryn Babayan cites a treatise known as *Asrar-e Qasemi* in discussing the prevalence of magic and sorcery in the Safavid era.<sup>7</sup> *Asrar-e Qasemi*, Babayan points out, is known to scholars and historians as a late Timurid source. The original treatise is attributed to Molla Hossein-e Waez Kashefi (840–910/1436/37–1504/5), a scholar and author in the court of Sultan Hossein Bayqara in Herat. Kashefi, in his usual way of using both old and contemporary sources in his writing, explicitly mentions in the introduction that this work is, in fact, an anthology and translation of authoritative books of

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<sup>6</sup>In recent years, Rasul Ja'farian especially has tried to introduce them in his works as irrational and one of the causes of the decline of Islamic civilization generally and Iran particularly. For instance, see his “Neżām-e Ma’refatī-ye ‘Olūm-e Gharībeh: Morūrī bar Herz al-Amān,” Khabar Online Website, [www.khabaronline.ir/news/1211880](http://www.khabaronline.ir/news/1211880) (21 Azar 1397/12 December 2018).

<sup>7</sup>Kathryn Babayan, “The Cosmological Order of Things in Early Modern Safavid Iran,” in *Falnama: The Book of Omens*, ed. Massumeh Farhad and Serpil Bagci (London: Ashgate, 2009), 246–55.

the time in the field of occult sciences, including Sheikh Shahab al-Din Sohrevardi's *Hall al-Moshkelat*, Abu Abdollah al-Maghrebi's *Sehr al-'Oyun*, and Abu al-Qasem Ahmad al-'Iraqi al-Samavi's *'Oyun al-Haqā'eq* and *Izahal-Tara'eq*. Therefore, according to this information, Kashefi is the translator of *Asrar-e Qasemi* and not its author.<sup>8</sup> Many manuscripts and lithographs of this treatise remain, which shows the popularity of this work among the general public and professionals in the occult sciences.<sup>9</sup> This work is provided in five *maqsads* (destinations), corresponding to the five famous branches of occult sciences.<sup>10</sup> Each *maqsad* contains several *asl*s (principles), and each *asl* includes several *fasl*s (chapters).

In the same article, Babayan states that although Kashefi is considered to be the author of this treatise, the author should not be equated with the known Kashefi. In fact, according to Babayan, the author of *Asrar-e Qasemi* was actually a person named Molla Hossein Waez Kashefi who lived in the Safavid era. Considering the treatise content, he must have been a pupil of Sheikh Baha'i (953–1030/1547–1621), the famous Safavid scholar, because the author refers to Sheikh Baha'i as his “master.” Babayan also implicitly rebukes scholars who consider the treatise to belong to the Timurid period and the famous Kashefi, regardless of the treatise’s content. Babayan’s rebuke is aimed at the authors of a

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<sup>8</sup>This introduction has been repeated in various forms in different manuscripts and lithographs of *Asrar-e Qasemi*. For example, see Molla Hossein Waez Kashefi, *Asrar-e Qasemi*, MS no. 3090, Ketabkhaneh va Muzeheye Melliye Malek, Tehran; Molla Hossein Waez Kashefi, *Asrar-e Qasemi*, MS no. 12559/2, Ketabkhaneh, Muzeheye Markaz-e Asnad-e Majles-e Shora-ye Eslami.

<sup>9</sup>For a list of manuscripts of this treatise, see Mostafa Derayati, “*Asrār-e Qāsemī*,” in *Fehrestgān-e Noskhehā-ye Khatṭī Iran (FANKHĀ)*, vol. 3 (Tehran: Sazman-e Ketabkhaneh va Asnad-e Melli-e Iran, 1390–91/2011–12), 429–33. Based on the available catalogs, Derayati has identified fifty-seven manuscripts of *Asrar-e Qasemi*. The existence of recent versions shows the work’s continuous popularity. For example, Fakhr al-Din 'Ali Safi or Safi al-Din 'Ali, Kashefi’s son, in 928/1522 wrote a summary of *Asrar-e Qasemi* under the name of *Toḥfe-ye Khānī* or *Kashf al-Asrar* at the request of the ruler of Khorasan, probably Dormish Khan. On this version, see Fakhr al-Din 'Ali Safi, *Toḥfe-ye Khānī*, MS no. 1065/5, Ketabkhaneh, Muzeheye Markaz-e Asnad-e Majles-e Shora-ye Eslami; Fakhr al-Din 'Ali Safi, *Toḥfe-ye Khānī*, MS no. 3424, Ketabkhaneh va Muzeheye Melliye Malek.

<sup>10</sup>These five branches will be briefly described later.

series of articles in a special issue of *Iranian Studies* dedicated to the works and personality of Molla Hossein Waez Kashefi.<sup>11</sup>

In at least one article from this collection, *Asrar-e Qasemi* is attributed to the famous Kashefi. Based on it, the occult sciences in the Timurid era have been studied and analyzed. The article was written by Pierre Lory, director of the religious sciences section at École Pratique des Hautes Études. In this article, “Kashifi’s *Asrār-i Qāsimī* and Timurid Magic,” Lory bases his work on the offset printing of a lithograph *Asrar-e Qasemi* published by the late Mohammad Hassan Elmi.<sup>12</sup> This is the same version used by Babayan. Babayan is right in criticizing Lory. In his article, Lory examines *Asrar-e Qasemi* as a religious scholar and not a historian. Still, due to a lack of knowledge of Iranian history and occult sciences, he makes mistakes. For example, when examining the third *maqsad*, which is called “Limia” and deals with the names and talismans that lead to “strange actions and strange effects,” Lory continues to insist on dating this section and the entire text to a pre-Safavid period despite the text’s mention of names of relatively famous characters from the Safavid era. He even mentions some of these personalities, such as Shah Isma’il I (r. 907–30/1501–24) and Morshed Qoli Khan Ostajlu (d. 997/1589), but when he comes to the name of Baha’ al-Din Mohammad, Lory disregards the historical adventures and personalities that are all in the context of the Safavid era. Instead, Lory identifies this person as Baha’ al-Din Mohammad Naqshbandi (718–91/1318–89) and accordingly devotes a considerable part of the article to the influence of Naqshbandi Sufis in the spread of occult sciences and to their relations with the kings of the time.<sup>13</sup> Lory ignores the titles “Master” and “My Master,” which have been used many times for Baha’ al-Din Mohammad by the author of this *maqsad*, and also the various stories in which the author (Molla Jalal) played

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<sup>11</sup> *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 4 (2003).

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Lory, “Kashifi’s *Asrār-i Qāsimī* and Timurid Magic,” *Iranian Studies* 36 (2003): 531–41. Both Lory and Babayan mistakenly record “‘Elmi” as “‘Alami.” The lithographic version of *Asrar-e Qasemi* used by Babayan, Lory, and me is Molla Hossein Waez Kashefi, *Asrar-e Qasemi* (Tehran: Ketabforush-e ‘Elmi, n.d.).

<sup>13</sup> Lory, “Kashifi’s *Asrār-i Qāsimī*,” 537.

a role. Lory relates Baha' al-Din Mohammad Naqshbandi, who died in 791/1389, to the Kashefi of the late ninth century, leaving a gap of about 110 years. It is also strange that Lory ignores the details of the adventures narrated in this section and passes by several familiar, famous names, such as Shah 'Abbas I (r. 995–1038/1588–1629) and Shah Safi (r. 1038–52/1629–42).

Lory makes other mistakes, too. For instance, he considers *Hall al-Moshkelat*, attributed to an Indian sage named Hakim Tamtam,<sup>14</sup> to be the same as *Hall al-Moshkelat Shozur al-Zahab* by Ibn Arfa'R as (515–593/1121–97).<sup>15</sup> Maria E. Subtelny, the author of the “Kāshīfī” entry in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, was the guest editor of the *Iranian Studies* special issue on Kashefi. Without considering the above details, she acknowledges *Asrar-e Qasemi* as a Timurid occult treatise by Kashefi. Of course, her main source for this inaccurate comment is Lory’s article.<sup>16</sup>

The first scientific attention to the “Safavid Limia” in *Asrar-e Qasemi* was given by Jalal al-Din Homayi, which is problematic. My searches show that the content of the added “Safavid Limia” is also available in the form of an independent treatise entitled *Hall al-Moshkelat*<sup>17</sup> with

<sup>14</sup>A semi-mythical figure in the history of occult sciences, the pronunciation and meaning of whose name remain uncertain. Some have called him “Tamtam,” others “Temtem” or “Tomtom.” Most writers and practitioners of occult sciences know him as an Indian, but little other information is available about him. He has been credited with writing many works, but his most famous book is ‘Amal-e Kavakeb-e Sab’eh, which deals with the five branches of the occult sciences. Fuat Sezgin, *Tārīkh-e Negāreshhā-ye ’Arabī*, vol. 4 (Tehran: Khane-ye Katab, 1380/2001), 155–56; Anton Hauber, “Tomtom (Timtim) = Dindymus?” *ZDMG* 63 (1909): 457–72.

<sup>15</sup>Lory, “Kashifi’s *Asrār-i Qāsimī*.”

<sup>16</sup>Maria E. Subtelny, “Kāšefī, Kamāl-al-Din Ḥosayn Wā’ez,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 15, fasc. 6 (New York: Brill, 2011), 658–61. While the present article was in the final stages of editing, Subtelny published an article on *Asrar-e Qasemi*, the main sections of which are related to Kashefi’s personality, *Asrar-e Qasemi* in the Timurid era, and the Safavid versions of *Asrar-e Qasemi*. The final part of the article introduces the idea that the “third maqsad” or “Līmīā” was written by Molla Jalal-e Monajjem. Maria E. Subtelny, “Kāshīfī’s *Asrār-i Qāsimī*: A Late Timurid Manual of the Occult Sciences and Its Safavid Afterlife,” in *Islamicate Occult Sciences in Theory and Practice*, ed. L. F. Leoni, L. Saif, M. Melvin-Koushki, and F. Yahya (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 267–313.

<sup>17</sup>Several treatises called *Hall-e Moshkelat* or *Hall al-Moshkelat* exist. It seems that this is

the same structure as “Limia”: they have two *fasls*, each *fasl* has four *no’s* (singular type), and each *no’* consists of four *qesms* (singular part). Therefore, to speak of the chapter on the talismans of *Asrar-e Qasemi* and *Hall al-Moshkelat*, without considering minor differences in writing, is to speak of a single text. The only difference is that, contrary to what Kashefi says, *Hall al-Moshkelat* has been attributed to Hakim Tamtam, and its translator is known as Abu al-Mahasen Mohammad ibn Sa‘d ibn Mohammad or Ibn Savaji (alive in 732/1332). Accordingly, Homayi—in his scholarly introduction to the *Konuz al-Moazzemin* that is attributed to Ibn Sina (370–428/981–1037), in the section “Evidence of attributing the treatise to Sheikh [Ibn Sina]”—deals with this treatise because of Ibn Savaji’s mention of *Konuz al-Moazzemin* in *Hall al-Moshkelat*. Homayi identifies Ibn Savaji, who we know now was an eighth-century writer and translator, as the author of *Hall al-Moshkelat* and contemporary of Shah‘Abbas I.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, Homayi does not mention the bibliographic specifications of the version of *Hall al-Moshkelat* that he is using.

Still, thanks to Iraj Afshar’s introduction to Estakhri’s *Masalek va al-Mamalek*, we know now that the basis for Homayi’s comment was a manuscript version of *Hall al-Moshkelat*. Ten years after Homayi’s critical edition of *Konuz al-Moazzemin*, Afshar published a Persian translation of *Masalek va al-Mamalek*, one of the alleged translators being Ibn Savaji. For reasons that are beyond the scope of this study,

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a general title for treatises that dealt with the complex issues of various fields of knowledge. *Hall al-Moshkelat*, however, is used here as a specific name. Derayati has identified six manuscripts of the relevant *Hall al-Moshkelat*; Mostafa Derayati, “*Asrār-e Qāsemī*,” in *Fehrestgān-e Noskhehā-ye Khatfī Iran (FANKHĀ)*, vol. 13 (Tehran: Sazman-e Katabkhaneh va Asnad-e Melli-e Iran, 1390–91/2011–12), 367–68. Therefore, caution is needed when discussing these treatises of the same name, which are also unified in subject. A relatively well-known treatise among these is attributed to Sheikh Shahab al-Din Sohrevardi. In occult sciences, Kashefi says in the introduction to *Asrar-e Qasemi* that he translated the “Limia” section of this book himself. However, my research shows that Sohrevardi did not write a treatise entitled *Hall al-Moshkelat*.

<sup>18</sup>Ibn Sina, *Konuz al-Moazzemin*, ed. Jalal al-Din Homayi (Tehran: Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli, 1331/1952), 12–13. Melvin-Koushki believes that *Konuz al-Moazzemin* was attributed to Ibn Sina in the Safavid era. Matthew Melvin-Koushki and James Picket, “Mobilizing Magic: Occultism in Central Asia and the Continuity of High Persianate Culture under Russian Rule,” *Studia Islamica* 111 (2016): 231–84, reference on p. 258; Melvin-Koushki, “Pseudo-Shaykh Bahai,” 267.

Afshar rightly considers Ibn Sa‘d as an eighth-century scribe and not the translator of *Masalek va al-Mamalek*. According to Afshar, in a private conversation with Homayi he warned the “master” of this mistake; while Homayi admitted this mistake, he did not rule out the possibility of distortion by scribes in adding Safavid stories to *Hall al-Moshkelat*. Accordingly, Afshar definitively considers *Hall al-Moshkelat* as one of Ibn Savaji’s writings and attributes the Safavid section’s addition to the later scribes. Neither Homayi nor Afshar mentions the possibility of Ibn Savaji copying or translating *Hall al-Moshkelat*.<sup>19</sup> The only other available information about Afshar’s attention to *Hall al-Moshkelat* relates to two years after the publication of the translation of *Masalek va al-Mamalek*; in an article in *Yaghma*, Afshar corrects his misconception that Ibn Savaji’s *Hall al-Moshkelat* had not been hitherto published until then and reports the existence of a lithographic version of *Hall al-Moshkelat*, which was published in 1312/1895 in Mumbai.<sup>20</sup> Afshar did not have access to this lithographic treatise, but he reconsiders his previous certainty of its authorship by Ibn Savaji. According to the information in this lithographic version, *Hall al-Moshkelat* was written by the Indian sage Tamtam, or at least attributed to him, and translated by Ibn Savaji.<sup>21</sup>

In her discussion on the identity of the author of *Asrar-e Qasemi*, Babayan rightly considers Sheikh Baha’ al-Din Mohammad to be Sheikh Baha’i, but she errs in attributing the treatise to one of Sheikh Baha’i’s pupils named Hossein-e Kashefi. Assuming the coherence of all parts of the treatise and to solve the problem of asynchrony between the life of Kashefi and the adventures of the Safavid era, she considers Kashefi’s student to be the writer of the talisman chapter, called here “Safavid Limia.”

<sup>19</sup>Abu Eshaq Ebrahim Estakhri, *Masalek va al-Mamalek*, ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Bongāh-e Tarjomeh va Nashr-e Ketāb, 1347/1968), “Notes” on 15–18. Apparently, this is the second edition of this book. According to Afshar, the first edition was published in 1340/1961; this edition was not available to me.

<sup>20</sup>Iraj Afshar, “Eṭtelā’ātī Darbāre-ye *Hall al-Moshkelāt*, Meṣbāh al-Hedāyah, Dorre-ye Nādereh, Varaqeḥ va Golshāh va Qaṣīdeh-ye Paris,” *Yaghma*, no. 189 (1343/1964): 33–35. Reference on p. 33.

<sup>21</sup>Derayati, *FĀNKHĀ*, vol. 13, 367.



Reflecting on the manuscripts and lithographs of *Asrar-e Qasemi* leads to the conclusion that the “Safavid Limia” chapter is also available as another independent treatise entitled *Hall al-Moshkelat of Indian Tamtam*, and contains precious information on the hidden part of the Safavid era. Strangely enough, this part of *Asrar-e Qasemi*, as well as *Hall al-Moshkelat* (of which many copies are available), has been almost completely disregarded by historians. Apart from Homayi, whose analysis included codicological aspects, only Ahmad Soheili Khansari has given “Safavid Limia” any attention. In an article on Molla Jalal-e Monajjem-e Yazdi (d. 1028/1619), Soheili Khansari refers to the Safavid material mentioned in “Limia” to prove the prevalence of occult sciences in this period, but he mentions his reference not as *Asrar-e Qasemi*, but as material presented by the author of *Kashf al-Raml* (*Discovery of Geomancy*). The only copy of *Kashf al-Raml* is kept in the library of Qom 'Azam Mosque, and its content does not include the Safavid data of “Limia” and contains information about only geomancy. The fact that Soheili Khansari does not mention the author of *Kashf al-Raml* reinforces the assumption that the author’s identity was not clear to him.<sup>22</sup> Another possibility is that perhaps this treatise, like *Hall al-Moshkelat*, contains the data in *Asrar-e Qasemi* but under a different name.

However, having examined the content of the section “Limia” of *Asrar-e Qasemi* and *Hall al-Moshkelat*, I can claim that the significant parts of their Safavid information were written by Molla Jalal-e Monajjem-e Yazdi, the official astrologer at the court of Shah 'Abbas I. Later, unknown writers added material to this treatise and put it in the form of Kashefi’s *Asrar-e Qasemi* or Tamtam’s *Hall al-Moshkelat*. In the following sections, this paper examines this position by using the text and hypertext of the added Safavid materials in *Asrar-e Qasemi* and other related sources.

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<sup>22</sup>Ahmad Soheili Khansari, “Jalāl al-Dīn Mohammad-e Yazdī, Monajjem-e Shāh ‘Abbās-e Bozorg,” *Honar va Mardom*, no. 167 (1355/1976): 28–31; Anonymous, *Kashf al-Raml*, MS no. 1280/1, Ketabkhaneh-ye Ayatollah Borujerdi, Qom.

## Codicological Aspects of *Asrar-e Qasemi*

It is tough to speak of clear boundaries in authorship, copying, and translation in premodern Iran due to the vastness of these areas and the scarcity of classical specialized or study sources. This difficulty becomes accentuated when considering that in the area of copying of premodern knowledge in general, only the taste and knowledge of the authors and scribes or the kind of audience determined the content and form of the treatises. This is especially true of the occult or hidden sciences, which required familiarity with many principles, mysteries, and subtleties, particularly after the Safavid era, during which these sciences became popular. The study of occult sciences treatises shows a bizarre mess and endless plagiarism, making it very difficult to decide on the authenticity and distinguish and identify works in this field.

Occult sciences had a specific scientific framework. However, after the fall of the Safavids and a distancing from scientific foundations, the field experienced a kind of empiricism and populism. Therefore, practitioners of occult sciences immediately gained experience in each of the components of these sciences and tried to add their personal experience to the experience of the dignitaries and masters. In this way, they did not follow any codified, specific method. Also, occult sciences were prevalent in the period under study. As a result, the production of a significant volume of literature related to these sciences was accompanied by many changes and transformations. These changes were variously made by ordinary people, scribes, and professionals in the field of occult sciences. In many cases, the scope of these distortions is such that it is almost impossible to separate the original text from the appendices.

Following these preliminaries, some codicological considerations can be made in connection with *Asrar-e Qasemi*. Talking about manuscripts or lithographs of this work means talking about numerous treatises, each of which is different from the others due to distortions and changes. Nevertheless, *Asrar-e Qasemi*'s original structure has been preserved, and the distortions and manipulations have been carried out in an

almost-certain framework. Examination of Kashefi's introduction and several other manuscripts of this treatise shows that Kashefi designed his translation in a five-part structure. According to this structure, occult sciences are divided into the sections of "Kimia" ("alchemy"), "Limia" ("talisman"), "Himia" ("appropriation of impacts of seven planets, spirits, and sprites"), "Simia" ("to form a mental image as real"), and "Rimia" ("prestidigitation"). According to believers, these sciences are called *Khamse-ye Mohtajabeh* ("five secrets") or *Kollohu Ser* ("all of it is secret").<sup>23</sup>

As mentioned before, various textual and hypertextual signs indicate that the third *maqsad*, under the title "Limia," is an addition by Shah 'Abbas I's official astrologer, Molla Jalal, an annotation on the margins of *Asrar-e Qasemi* which has gradually merged with the original text and replaced the original in later versions.<sup>24</sup> To clarify this issue, manuscripts dating back to before the period of Shah 'Abbas I have been examined. According to the contents of various catalogs of manuscripts, only one manuscript of *Asrar-e Qasemi* dates back to before the time of Shah 'Abbas I. This manuscript is a copy dated to the tenth century, and it is currently kept in the Library and Central Documentation Center of the University of Tehran as No. 299 from the Faculty of Theology. This version is remarkable in two ways. First, its

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<sup>23</sup>For a brief but valuable review of Kashefi's works and approach to the field of occult sciences, see Mostafa Gohari and Mohammad 'Ali Kazembeiki, "Važiyat-e 'Olūm-e Gharībeh pas az Ḥamle-ye Moghol; Motāle'eh-ye Moredī: Āsār-e Mollā Ḥossein Vā'ez-e Kāshefī," *Tarikh va Farhang*, no. 95 (1394/2015): 137–57. These definitions have more or less been accepted by scholars of occult sciences in different eras, and as mentioned, this division is one of the most common classifications in the classical definitions of occult sciences. For example, see Molla Ahmad Naraqi, *Ketāb al-Khazā'īn*, ed. Hasan Hasanzadeh Amoli and 'Ali Akbar Qaffari (Tehran: Ketabforushi-e 'Elmīeh Eslamīeh, n.d.), 97. Naraqi has documented this definition in the words of the icon of occult sciences in the Safavid era, Sheikh Bahā'i. For more information on the nature of these sciences, see Mohammad Hossein Tabatabāī, *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qurān*, vol. 1 (Qom: Esma'īlian, 1371/1992), 244.

<sup>24</sup>Merging text and margins was common practice for scribes. For information on how to do this, and tips for distinguishing text from margins, see Najib Mayel Heravi, *Naqd va Taṣhīḥ-e Motūn* (Mashhad: Bonyad-e Pejuheshha-ye Eslami, 1369/1990), especially the third chapter, "The Scribe and His Manipulations," 66–82.

author is Safial-Din’Ali, Kashefi’s son, who tried to provide a summary narration of the original text. Second, this version does not include the “Limia” added in the Safavid era. Although Kashefi definitely organized *Asrar-e Qasemi* into five sections—the introduction of almost all manuscripts and lithographs confirms this—there is no “Limia” section in most pre- and post-Safavid manuscripts. I suspect that due to the religious sanctity of witchcraft and jurisprudential strictures regarding its teaching in Muslim societies, the scribes removed this section deliberately from the original text. This means that most of the treatises of *Asrar-e Qasemi*, including “Safavid Limia,” are lithograph versions. Although I have not been able to obtain manuscripts of “Safavid Limia” or Tamtam’s *Hall al-Moshkelat*, the existence of manuscripts, including the one available to Homayi, shows that these additional sections are also available in manuscript form, and after the arrival of the lithographic technique, such manuscripts became more popular.

The comparison of the text of “Safavid Limia” with that of the other four sections shows significant differences in style and writing, which further supports the claim that another person wrote this section at a different time from the time of Kashefi. Thus, “Safavid Limia” is a separate entity in the context of occult sciences. It can be compared to an island in the sea of *Asrar-e Qasemi*. In addition to the difference in prose, “Safavid Limia” differs in combining the teachings of talismans with Safavid experiences and adventures.

According to Kashefi, he arranged and translated *Asrar-e Qasemi* at the request of a similarly named person called Amir Seyyed Qasem. Speculations on this subject by catalogers and scholars are significant in terms of the time this treatise was written. Some have equated Kashefi’s patron with Seyyed Qasem Anvar (d. 837/1433) and, aware of the asynchrony of the lifetime of Seyyed Qasem Anvar and that of Kashefi, have concluded that Kashefi dedicated the book to his patron’s soul.<sup>25</sup> But there are two points to consider. First, although

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<sup>25</sup>For example, see Hassan Anusheh, “Qāsem Anvār,” in *Da’erat al-Ma’āref-e Tashayyo’*, ed. Ahmad Sadr Hajj Seyyed Javadi (Tehran: Saied Mohebbi Publication, 1386/2007), 446–47.

most versions state that Seyyed Qasem originally ordered the treatise's translation, the famous title "Anvar" is never mentioned. Second, the prayer sentences after Seyyed Qasem's name confirm that he was alive at the time of the translation of the book, and the later scribes did not confuse Seyyed Qasem with the famous Seyyed Qasem Anvar or quote prayers for the person to be forgiven. However, another group of catalogers, considering the history of Kashefi's life and the death of Seyyed Qasem Anvar, and perhaps the points mentioned above, believe that this Seyyed Qasem was one of the rulers of the Safavid government, but do not provide further information.<sup>26</sup> My research shows that this Amir Seyyed Qasem most likely must have been Mirak Jalal al-Din Qasem, one of Sultan Hossein Bayqara's *sadrs* ("a person who controls religious affairs") and a contemporary of Kashefi.<sup>27</sup> Also, a unique report in Tonekaboni's *Qesas al-Olamā*, although it may be from popular knowledge and not historically significant, is very interesting due to its close connection with the Safavid context of "Limia." According to this report—which questions all the previous accounts of the work's spiritual patron, particularly Qasem Anvar—Sheikh Baha'i, after returning from a long journey, brought with him a strange science, and at this time, a Qasem came to him, and he performed miracles like those of the sheikh. The sheikh was astonished, and Qasem, in response, called his extraordinary deeds magical and considered the sheikh's works genuine. So the sheikh asked him to renounce the promotion of magic, and if he wished to write down this knowledge, to use the "pen

<sup>26</sup> Apparently, the source of this claim is Aqa Bozorg-e Tehrani's *Al-Zari'ah elā Taṣānīf al-Shī'ah*, and other catalogers have quoted this without sufficient research. Aqa Bozorg Tehrani, *Al-Zari'ah elā Taṣānīf al-Shī'ah*, vol. 2 (Najaf, Iraq: Matba'at al-Ghora, 1355/1936), 54; Ahmad Monzavi, *Fehrestvāre-ye Ketābhā-ye Fārst*, vol. 5 (Tehran: Markaz-e Da'rat al-Ma'aref-e Bozorg-e Eslami, 1380/2001), 3938–39; Derayati, *FANKHĀ*, vol. 3, 429.

<sup>27</sup> Mirak Jalal al-Din Qasem was Sultan Hossein Bayqara's *sadr* for about four years from 898 to 901/1493 to 1496. For more information about Qasem, see Ghias al-Din Khandmir, *Habib al-Sīyar fi Akhbār-e Afrād al-Bashar*, vol. 4, ed. Seyyed Mohammad Dabirsīyaqi (Tehran: Khayyam, 1380/2001), 323–24. This identification of Mirak Jalal al-Din Qasem is also mentioned by Gohari and Kazembeiki, "Vāzīyat-e 'Olūm-e Gharībeh," 151. The identification can be disputed because this Mirak is unknown in spiritual circles of the time, and the order for such a person to write a work with the characteristics of *Asrar-e Qasemi* would have been somewhat exceptional. However, given the present options, this Mirak is the most likely person.

of secrets” or the secret language that “the incompetent people” could not comprehend. Hence, Qasem wrote a book called *Asrar-e Qasemi*.<sup>28</sup>

### **“Safavid Limia”: Some Historical Inconsistencies**

The assessment of “Safavid Limia” includes important codicological and historical points. The first is the textual coherence of “Safavid Limia.” As mentioned earlier, in the classical texts of occult sciences, “Limia” discusses talismans; “Safavid Limia” is committed to the same thing. Yet this is not the same as narrative coherence. The purpose of writing “Safavid Limia” was to provide instructions for making talismans and not to narrate history, but the author’s commitment to accompany the instructions with historical evidence and examples to prove the effectiveness of amulets transforms the work into a valuable source of knowledge about the Safavid era’s hitherto-hidden aspects. Accordingly, this article attempts to consider the work’s historical aspects, regardless of the data related to occult sciences, which, of course, deserves attention. What is remarkable about the historical parts of “Safavid Limia” is that the characters, events, and places, except in a few cases, have a definite identity and can be proven to have existed. Also, the internal and historical logic of the narration is acceptable and removes the suspicion that information on Safavids might have been added in the post-Safavid period.

Of course, this text, like all other historical texts, has not been spared from distortions and changes over time. It is noteworthy that the historical inconsistencies of this text mostly relate to the entry of inaccurate historical popular information regarding events from before the author’s time, the author, in my opinion, being Molla Jalal-e Monajjem-e Yazdi. For example, take the author’s reliance on the popular accounts of Genghis Khan, Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili,<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Mohammad ibn Soleiman Tonekaboni, *Qeṣṣat al-Olamā*, ed. Mohammad Reza Barzegar Khaleqi and ‘Effat Karbasi (Tehran: ‘Elmi va Farhangi, 1383/2004), 302.

<sup>29</sup>In particular, Sheikh Safi al-Din can be judged to be similar to other Sufi saints. The followers of these spiritual leaders often narrated and composed many extraordinary stories about them after their death. Ibn-e Bazzaz-e Ardabili’s *Safvat al-Ṣafā* can be considered the main source of this type of narration about the sheikh. Tavakkol ibn Isma’il Ibn-e Bazzaz-e Ardabili, *Safvat al-Ṣafā*, ed. Gholam Reza Tabatabai Majd (Tehran: Zaryab, 1376/1997).

Khajeh Nasiral-Din Tusi, Plato, and Aristotle, which, without historiographical rigor and in the usual way of writing occult texts, have found their way into “Safavid Limia.”<sup>30</sup> The important point is that almost all of these personages are part of the long chain of scholars of occult sciences, and in the Persian occult culture, they and their works are repeatedly mentioned. However, proof of the personages’ words and deeds is impossible, and they should be evaluated in their universe of discourse. The consciousness of Safavid-era Iranian scholars, including historians, of the lives of non-Iranian figures such as Aristotle, Plato, and Alexander the Great could not be of today’s “scientific” type and was limited to teachings prevalent in popular rumors. Also, the characterization in the folk tales of the day, such as *Eskandarnāmeh* by Manouchehr Khan-e Hakim, which has created a vivid but imaginary image of Alexander the Great, Aristotle, and Plato, has been very influential in informal narratives of these characters, including in “Safavid Limia.”<sup>31</sup>

Another historical inconsistency in “Safavid Limia” is the reporting of events which, although not popular, have no parallel in historiographical texts. This inconsistency has two aspects. The first involves the few events that are definitively recorded in historiographical texts because of their breadth and fame, and the second involves events that, by their very nature, require a kind of secrecy and are thus not entered in historiographical texts. Hence, the lack of a parallel for such events in connection with the royal harem or events inside the court cannot be considered a weakness in “Safavid Limia” or undermine its authenticity. In fact, this disconnect may be a strength in that the text shows us angles from the Safavid era that are unique and acceptable in terms of the era’s historical logic. The small account of events related to the period after the death of Molla Jalal, and the inclusion of prayer phrases implying Molla Jalal’s death, should be attributed to the scribes of the text and

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<sup>30</sup>For example, see Kashefi, n.d., 92–93, 95–96, 104, 106, and 111–112.

<sup>31</sup>For examples of the characterization of Alexander the Great, Aristotle, and Plato, which is ironically dealt with in terms of occult sciences, especially spells and marvelous events, see Manouchehr Khan-e Hakim, *Eskandarnāmeh*, ed. ‘Alireza Zakavati Qaragozlu (Tehran: Sokhan, 1388/2009).

common additions after the author's life. The mention of previously unknown people in "Safavid Limia" simply reinforces that knowledge of Safavid-era figures is mostly limited to those involved in politics and other areas related to politics. And it seems natural in a text that has a close connection with the hidden layers of intra-court social life to mention those whose names have not appeared in other well-known texts of this age and who have not been the subject of historiographical attention.

### **On the Safavid Authenticity of "Safavid Limia"**

"Safavid Limia" is full of stories and personalities that are historically provable, and the details of the events are so related to the Safavid time and context that there is little doubt about their authenticity. Looking for signs that confirm the identity of the author of "Safavid Limia" as Molla Jalal-e Monajjem Yazdi is a more useful endeavor.<sup>32</sup> An examination of all the events in the work indicates that they took place during the reign of Shah 'Abbas I. Therefore, the author must have been a contemporary of this king, and because of the nature of these events, which necessitated access to the first circle of the shah's entourage, the author was probably close to the shah. Throughout the text, the author often introduces himself theoretically and practically as Sheikh Baha ī's pupil, which shows humility considering that Molla Jalal and the sheikh were approximately the same age. Because of the sheikh's scientific superiority, this pupil–master relationship is believable. Sheikh Baha ī, whom a historian of the time of Shah 'Abbas I called "the mystic

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<sup>32</sup>Detailed historical information on Molla Jalal-e Monajjem and his family is lacking, and studies are limited to articles, introductions, or parts of books. The most important of these works are the following: Seyyed Sa'id Mirmohammad Sadeq, "Tarikh-e 'Abbasi," in *Dāneshnāmeh-ye Jahān-e Eslām*, vol. 6, ed. Gholam Ali Haddad Adel (Tehran: Bonyad-e Daerat al-Maaref-e Eslami, 1380/2001), 234–35; Molla Jalal Monajjem-e Yazdi, *Tarikh-e 'Abbasi*, ed. Maqsud 'Ali Sadeqi (Tehran: Negarestan-e Andisheh, 1399/2020), especially 17–21; Qolamreza Mehdi Ravanji et al., "Tārikhnegāri va Tārikhnegari-ye Khāndān-e Monajjem-e Yazdī," in *Tarikhnegari va Tārikhnegari*, no. 18 (1395/2016): 89–110, especially 91–94; Ali Asghar Mossadeq, "La famille Monajjem Yazdi," *Studia Iranica* 16 (1987): 123–29; Derek J. Mancini-Lander, "Memory on the Boundaries of Empire: Narrating Place in the Early Modern Local Historiography of Yazd," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2012), 404–30.

of eternal knowledge and the knower of secret and revealed sciences,”<sup>33</sup> was one of the greatest scholars of occult sciences at that time. His involvement in making amulets—albeit within Sharia—for Shah ‘Abbas and the court elites is considered quite probable, and numerous historical reports in Safavid sources, including *Tarikh-e Abbasi* by Molla Jalal-e Monajjem-e Yazdi and *Tarikh-e Abbasi* by his grandson, Molla Jalal II, indicate a close relationship between him and Shah ‘Abbas in various fields, especially occult sciences.<sup>34</sup> Several works in occult sciences have been attributed to Sheikh Baha ī,<sup>35</sup> and his involvement in mathematics, astronomy, and astrology, which were considered requirements of occult sciences at their high level, could be another sign of the sheikh’s prominent position in this context.<sup>36</sup> The long and continuous association of Molla Jalal and Sheikh Baha ī and the overlap of their spheres of activity necessitated a kind of closeness. And because of the sheikh’s knowledge and charisma and his position with the shah, a pupil–master relationship was required between the sheikh and Molla Jalal. These common experiences, in terms of occult sciences, constitute the plot of the narratives in “Safavid Limia.”

<sup>33</sup>Eskandar Beik Torkaman, *Tarikh-e ‘Alam Ara-ye Abbasi*, vol. 2, ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1382/2003), 967.

<sup>34</sup>For example, see Molla Jalal II, *Tarikh-e Abbasi*, MS no. 4204, “Chapter Ten,” fol. 39a–52a, Ketabkhaneh-ye Markazi va Markaz-e Asnad-e Daneshgah-e Tehran, Tehran. This treatise was published by Rasul Ja’farian under the title *Ma asurer Abbāsī*. But it is not clear why the editor attributed the treatise to Mohammad Saleh Yazdi, the grandson of Molla Jalal, despite the author’s explicit mention of his name as “Jalal,” which he was called by Shah ‘Abbas I. For more information, see Ja’farian, *Ma asurer Abbāsī*, in *Mīrās-e Bahārestān*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Ketaibkhaneh, Muzeh va Markaz-e Asnad-e Majles-e Shora-ye Eslami, 1388/2009). Maqsud ‘Ali Sadeqi and Daryush Rahmanian are preparing a new edition of this treatise.

<sup>35</sup>The sheikh’s most famous writings on occult sciences are collected in *Kashkul*, a work on various topics. Many manuscripts, lithographs, and new editions of this work are available. For example, see Sheikh Baha ī, *Kashkul-e Sheikh Baha ī*, trans. Bahman Razani (Tehran: Arastu, 1363/1984). Some works of occult sciences titled “Sheikh Baha ī Kashkul” have also been attributed to the sheikh, but in principle, such attributions cannot be trusted. See also Tonekaboni, *Qeṣāṣ al-‘Olāmā*, 302–3.

<sup>36</sup>Among them are these works by the sheikh on mathematics and astronomy: *Khulāṣat al-Hesāb*, *Tashrīḥ al-Aflāk*, *Resāle-ye A’māl-e Ostorlāb*, and *Resāleh fī enna Anvār al-kavākeb Mostafādahō men al-Shams*.

Moreover, two important textual signs prove that “Safavid Limia” was written by Molla Jalal. First, the author mentions himself in two different places in the text. In the first *qesm* of the second *fasl* of the second *no‘*, which is dedicated to making the talismans of “‘Eqd al-Lesan” (“tying the tongue”), he introduces himself as “Aqall-e ‘Ebadallah, Jalal-e Monajjem Bashi” (“the least slave of the God, Jalal, the astrologer”). In the second *qesm* of the third *no‘*, one of the characters, to prove the correctness of his testimony in the presence of Shah ‘Abbas, refers to “Molla Jalal-e Monajjem” as a witness. The account is narrated in first person a few lines earlier, and according to the number and identity of the characters related to it, the witness could be Molla Jalal. A brief review of other references by Molla Jalal to himself, especially in *Tarikh-e Abbasi*, with phrases such as “Jalal-e Monajjem,” “Molla Jalal-e Monajjem,” and “Molla Jalal” shows the similarity of the context of these references in both works, especially concerning the phrase “Molla Jalal-e Monajjem” mentioned in “Safavid Limia.”<sup>37</sup> Second, I have obtained a copy of *Tohfat al-Monajjemin (A Gift to Astronomers)*, the astronomical work of Molla Jalal, which belonged to him personally. In the note of its acquisition, on the date of Jumada t-Tania 1010/December 1601, he mentions himself with the phrase “Aqall-e ‘Ebadallah, Mohammad Ibn Abdollah al-Monnajjem al-Yazdi,” which is remarkably similar to the style of the first mention in “Safavid Limia.” These two<sup>38</sup> textual signs played a decisive role in identifying the author of “Safavid Limia” as Molla Jalal.

Another point that helps to substantiate this claim is the writing style of “Safavid Limia,” which bears an undeniable resemblance to some parts of *Tarikh-e Abbasi*. The reason this resemblance is not found in all parts lies in genre differences: *Tarikh-e Abbasi* is a historical work with a general audience and a royal patron, and “Safavid Limia” is a set of private notes on an occult sciences treatise with a small audience. Naturally, the first work had to be written according to the criteria and methods of complicated court writing and literature, and in continuation

<sup>37</sup>For example, see Monajjem-e Yazdi, *Tarikh-e Abbasi*, 208, 214, 227, 230, 244, and 280.

<sup>38</sup>Molla Jalal Monajjem-e Yazdi, *Tohfat al-Monajjemin*, MS no. 6982, Ketabkhaneh, Muzeh va Markaz-e Asnad-e Majles-e Shora-ye Eslami, fol. 2a.

of the tradition official Persian historiography. Nevertheless, Molla Jalal's style in *Tarikh-e Abbasi* is simple and fluent in comparison with that of his counterparts, especially the author of *Tarikh-e 'Alam Ara-ye Abbasi*. Also, in several parts of this work, Molla Jalal, especially in the narration of the shah's close relations with the courtiers, almost completely abandons the order and etiquette of court writing, as if he is having a common conversation with the audience.<sup>39</sup> The writing style of these sections bears a striking resemblance to the prose of "Safavid Limia." "Safavid Limia" had a special audience, and there was no need to use long-winded prose to convey meaning. Also, the story's language provides evidence of the history of talisman use in the Safavid court, which required narrative prose. These characteristics of the writing style make "Safavid Limia" an unfamiliar part of *Asrar-e Qasemi*, distinguishing it from Kashefi's prose.

The evidence surrounding the dominance of the discourse of occult sciences during the reign of Shah 'Abbas I is definitive. The teachings of the Noqtaviyah sect influenced Shah 'Abbas from the beginning of his reign, and he even became a follower of Darvish Khosrow for a while, which eventually led to the destruction of the Noqtaviyah for political reasons. But the shah highly valued the occult sciences, to the point that he even changed some of his tough political decisions. For example, according to one of the accounts of *Tarikh-e Abbasi* on the events of 1002/1594, the rebel 'Abd al-M'omen Heravi presented the shah with a copy of *Jafra Jame'* attributed to Imam 'Ali, which is considered one of the most important works of Shi'ite occult sciences. As a result, the rebel was freed from punishment, and even "the government of some localities of Isfahan was handed over to him."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>For examples of Molla Jalal's simple and narrative prose in *Tarikh-e Abbasi*, see the following: p. 531 on the shah's game with Amir Heidar Kashi, Baba Soltan Qomi, and Molla Jalal; p. 562 on the raising of the lid of the Qezqani Arab's pot in Ardabil in front of the shah; and p. 551 on the dispute between Mir Heidar Mo'ammeli and Qazizadeh Davari. Molla Jalal's prose style has also been discussed in Shahin Farabi and Mehri Edrisi, "Barresi-ye Tatbiqi-e Dīdgāhā-ye Tārikhnegāri-ye Eskandar Beik-e Monshī va Mollā Jalāl-e Monajjem-e Yazdī," *Jostarha-ye Tarikhī*, no. 1 (1394/2015): 89–108. Reference on p. 97.

<sup>40</sup>For information about Shah 'Abbas' Noqtavi tendencies, see Behzad Karimi, "Bāzkhāni-ye Zamān va Keyhān dar Jonbesh-e Noqtavieh: Ta'ammolī dar Revāyathā-ye Tārikhnegārāneh-ye 'Aṣr-e Ṣafavī," in *Zamānnegārī va Keyhānbāvarī dar 'Aṣr-e Ṣafavieh* (Tehran: Qoqnoos,

Also, beyond the shah's personal character and temperament, the relationship of the pragmatic aspects of his personality with occult sciences in a broad political context is evident in the sense that, in principle, the continuation of a kingdom depends on the simultaneous support of both physical and metaphysical forces. That is why kings set up observatories and welcomed astronomers, astrologers, fortune-tellers, and magicians to seek supernatural forces' support and ensure the monarchy's continuity.<sup>41</sup> It was along this line that Shah 'Abbas undertook the plan to rebuild the Maragheh Observatory and entrusted its implementation to Sheikh Baha'i, the well-known scholar of occult sciences; 'Alireza 'Abbasi, the eminent calligrapher of the court; and Molla Jalal, his astrologer. Although this plan was never implemented, it shows the dominance of occult sciences over the court of Shah 'Abbas and also the connection between the sheikh and Molla.<sup>42</sup>

The study of the personalities and events mentioned in "Safavid Limia" shows their historical authenticity. More than all the signs provided to prove that this work was written in the Safavid era by Molla Jalal, the historical identity of characters and events and their intertwining with historical information is highly plausible and credible. Many of the characters in "Safavid Limia" are not included in the histories of the time: women, courtiers, accountants, and agents known only by their name; commanders and junior officers; children and wives of high officials; and the unknown actors of occult sciences. These marginalized people exist alongside the most prominent personalities, including Shah 'Abbas, Ghias al-Din Mansur Dashtaki (866–948/1462–1542), Sheikh Baha'i, Khalifeh Soltan (1001–64/1593–1654), and Allahverdi Khan (d. 1022/1613). They exist in an atmosphere full of hidden competition to overcome the enemy, escape from death and financial troubles,

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1396/2017), 79–104. For the forgiveness of Heravi, see Monajjem-e Yazdi, *Tarikh-e 'Abbasi*, 216.

<sup>41</sup>According to various accounts, including Molla Jalal's *Tarikh-e 'Abbasi*, Shah 'Abbas, who is ironically considered one of the most pragmatic Safavid kings, repeatedly sought his astronomer's advice to make decisions on personal, political, and even military issues. See, for example, p. 203, 204, and 286.

<sup>42</sup>Molla Kamal, *Zobdat al-Tavārīkh*, MS no. 9544, Ketabkhaneh, Muzeh va Markaz-e Asnad-e Majles-e Shora-ye Eslami, fol. 90a.

escape the king's wrath, control women, gain power and wealth, and use spells to unite with loved ones. These readable events operate in the hidden spaces of Safavid history, access to which has been made possible thanks to "Safavid Limia." The juxtaposition of the names of famous and unknown people whose historical identity can nonetheless be traced through firsthand sources minimizes the possibility that "Safavid Limia" was forged. If "Safavid Limia" had been forged, the narrator would have had to resort to mentioning only the famous personalities of the time to make the narrative believable, not those whose historical identity could be proven only with an in-depth exploration of contemporary sources. Examining all these characters and events in detail is beyond the scope of this article. Therefore, a selection of them will be presented in this final section, and the details will be left to the research publication of "Safavid Limia," which I am currently preparing.

Women are one of the main actors in "Safavid Limia." Although their identities have been obscured in significant cases for cultural reasons, some have been given time to express themselves through a text originating in a patriarchal culture. An example of this group is Varsaq Khanom, one of the harem women of Shah 'Abbas and then Shah Safi, who played a role in the marriages of the king and his children. According to "Safavid Limia," when Shah 'Abbas intends to marry his daughter to the Khalifeh sultan, Varsaq Khanom takes the news of the shah's consent to this marriage to the Khalifeh sultan's house.<sup>43</sup> There is little information in other sources about this woman, who was influential in the harem's internal relations, but this little knowledge shows that she had a role to play in this area.<sup>44</sup> "Safavid Limia" also has other interesting references to her.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Molla Jalal Monajjem-e Yazdi, "Limia," in Molla Hossein Waez Kashefi, *Asrar-e Qasemi* (Tehran: Katabforushi-e 'Elmi, n.d.), 91.

<sup>44</sup>According to the sources, she was the wife of Shah Qoli Soltan Kholafa, a person close to Shah 'Abbas. After Shah Safi ascended the throne, Varsaq Khanom was sent to bring the daughter of Tahmures Khan, the Kakht governor, who had married Shah Safi, to Iran. Mohammad Yusof Valeh Qazvini, *Iran dar Zamān-e Shāh Safi va Shāh 'Abbas-e Dovvom*, ed. Mohammad Reza Nasiri (Tehran: Anjoman-e Asar va Mafakher-e Farhangi, 1382/2003), 285; Mohammad Taher Vahid-e Qazvini, *Tārīkh-e Jahān Arā-ye 'Abbāsī*, ed. Seyyed Sa'íd Mirmohammad Sadeq (Tehran: Pejuheshgah-e 'Olum-e Ensani va Motale'at-e Farhangi, 1383/2004), 221.

<sup>45</sup>Monajjem-e Yazdi, "Limia," 92.

“Safavid Limia” refers to other forgotten historical figures, too. One of the spells in the text protects against an accountants’ audit or, as it was known, *taqrir*. As Molla Jalal himself writes, he provides this talisman at the request of Mehdi Qoli Mirakhor<sup>46</sup> and Mowla Mozaffar Monajjem<sup>47</sup> and under the guidance of Sheikh Baha ī to save Mir Shams al-Din ‘Ali, the minister of Isfahan, from an audit by accountants. Little information about this Mir Shams al-Din ‘Ali is available in Safavid historiographical sources, except a brief reference by Molla Jalal in *Tarikh-e Abbasi*.<sup>48</sup> Another rare mention of his name can be found in the documents of Astan-e Qods-e Razavi, which, along with recent information, confirms his historical authenticity.<sup>49</sup> There is another reference to Mir Qiyas al-Din, an ordinary Mostowfi who was mentioned only once in *Tarikh-e ‘Alam Ara-ye Abbasi* and who, by resorting to this spell, became the accountant of Isfahan.<sup>50</sup> Among the other forgotten historical figures in “Safavid Limia” is Hossein Beig Akhteh ‘Omar. This person, whose title suggests that he was a *yuzbashi* (the commander of one hundred soldiers in the army), is mentioned only twice in Safavid historical texts, including in *Tarikh-e Abbasi*, which could be another sign that Molla Jalal wrote “Safavid Limia.”<sup>51</sup>

Very little information is available on the wives and children of Safavid nobles. What is available in the sources, especially historiographical ones,

<sup>46</sup>Mehdi Qoli Beik Mirakhor was Shah ‘Abbas I’s *mirakhor* (“person responsible for royal stables”). Eskandar Beik Torkaman, *Tarikh-e ‘Alam Ara-ye Abbasi*, vol. 3, ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1382/2003), 942.

<sup>47</sup>Mowlana Mozaffar Jonabadi or Gonabadi was a famous astrologer of Shah ‘Abbas I’s time. Torkaman, vol. 3, 1038 and 1075; Vahid-e Qazvini, *Tārīkh-e Jahān*, 319.

<sup>48</sup>Monajjem-e Yazdi, *Tarikh-e Abbasi*, 545.

<sup>49</sup>According to the documents in the Markaz-e Astan-e Qods-e Razavi, Mashhad, he was the minister of Isfahan during the reign of Shah ‘Abbas I. For more information, see Doc. no. 33181.

<sup>50</sup>Eskandar Beik Torkaman, *Tarikh-e ‘Alam Ara-ye Abbasi*, vol. 1, ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1382/2003), 162.

<sup>51</sup>Hossein Beig Akhteh ‘Omar is mentioned in only *Kholāṣat al-Tavārikh* and *Tarikh-e Abbasi*. In the first instance, he’s mentioned on the occasion of the murder of his brother, Shah Qoli Beik, by Shah Isma‘il II on 21 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 994/28 June 1576 in Qazvin. See Qazi Ahmad Qomi, *Kholāṣat al-Tavārikh*, vol. 2, ed. Ehsan Eshraqi (Tehran: Daneshgah-e Tehran, 1383/2004), 622. Molla Jalal refers to him as Hossein Beig Yuzbashi, who became known as Akhteh ‘Omar after being taken out of a well. Monajjem-e Yazdi, *Tarikh-e Abbasi*, 89.

centers on the men's political activities. But in "Safavid Limia," names of these sometimes-influential but now-forgotten people are found in several places. Apart from Varsaq Khanom, Molla Jalal includes Shah 'Abbas's wife and daughter (without mentioning their names), the daughter of the shah's physician, the daughter of Seyyed Beig Kamuneh, the daughter of Qarachqai Khan, and some other court and non-court women. Molla Jalal narrates stories from them that show the domination of occult sciences in the royal harem and among government-affiliated women, an interesting topic in itself.<sup>52</sup>

"Safavid Limia" also refers to many unknown or little-known professionals in occult sciences who occasionally appeared in court circles on important and unimportant business and became influential. Although there were varying ranks for these people, all of them, even those whose performance in the occult sciences was not very successful, are mentioned with the prestigious titles of "Mowla," "Molla," and "Mowlana."<sup>53</sup> Among the professionals mentioned is Ghias al-Din Mansur Dashtaki, one of the leading scholars of the early Safavid period and one of the most famous scholars of occult sciences, to whom many talismans have been attributed. Dashtaki grew up in the intellectual space of the Shiraz school. The claim that he was part of the field of occult sciences is valid, given his knowledge of and occupation in mathematics and astronomy, which were among the general requirements of the occult sciences.<sup>54</sup> Noteworthy here is Shah Isma'il's order—reminiscent of Shah 'Abbas's idea—to Dashtaki to rebuild the Maragheh Observatory, which, although not implemented, is a sign of Shah Isma'il's interest in receiving help from divine forces, as well as a confirmation of Dashtaki's knowledge of the occult sciences.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Monajjem-e Yazdi, "Limia," 85–86, 90, 92, and 95.

<sup>53</sup>For example, in Monajjem-e Yazdi, "Limia," 83–85 and 87–88.

<sup>54</sup>For details of Dashtaki's works in these areas, see Parvin Baharzadeh et al., "Dashtakī, Ghīās al-Dīn Manṣūr," in *Dāneshnāmeh-ye Jahān-e Eslām*, vol. 17, ed. Gholam Ali Haddad Adel (Tehran: Bonyad-e Daerat al-Maaref-e Islami, 1391/2012), 728–33.

<sup>55</sup>For more details of this decree, see Qazi Ahmad Qomi, *Kholāṣat al-Tavārīkh*, vol. 1, ed. Ehsan Eshraqi (Tehran: Daneshgah-e Tehran, 1383/2004), 296. The origin of the dispute between Dashtaki and Mohaqeq-e Sani about redirection of the qibla (direction of the Kaaba in

## Conclusion

This paper has primarily focused on drawing historians' attention to the historical value of occult sciences texts generally and to the importance of the added section of "Limia" (called here "Safavid Limia") to the copies of the famous treatise *Asrar-e Qasemi* particularly. The first part of the essay reviewed the first scientific and codicological attention given to "Safavid Limia." Based on this section's data and a thorough codicological-historical discussion, claims were made that "Safavid Limia" dates back to Shah 'Abbas I's era and was written by Molla Jalal Monajjem-e Yazdi. Due to its containing rare historical information, "Safavid Limia" has historical value. In order for these claims to be taken seriously, the authorship of "Safavid Limia" in the period under discussion and the identity of its writer must be proven by credible sources. Therefore, the paper discussed the textual and hypertextual implications of these propositions. "Safavid Limia" contains some historical inconsistencies, information taken from popular sources, and misinformation. But the text is not much different from even the authoritative historiographical texts of this period in this respect, and the paper covered reasons for the inconsistencies and use of popular sources in "Safavid Limia." In the final section, the article tried to reconcile the author's identity with the identity of Molla Jalal, and proposed the idea that this additional section could be considered a newly identified work by this Safavid historian-astrologer. The paper also used competent sources to examine the historical nature of

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the Great Mosque in Mecca) was Dashtaki's knowledge of mathematics and astronomy, which is famous and needs no explanation. See Haj Mirza Hasan Hosseini Fasa ī, *Fārsnāmeh-ye Nāṣerī*, vol. 1, ed. Mansur Rastegar Fasai (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1383/2004), 391. Dashtaki also taught students, including Amir Seyyed Fath Allah Shirazi and Mahmud ibn Mohammad Dehdar (whose pen name was 'Ayani), each of whom later became one of the greatest scholars of occult sciences. For more information, see Qasem Kakai, "Āshnā ī bā Maktab-e Shīrāz: Shāgerdān-e Ghīās al-Dīn Manṣūr-e Dashtakī-e Shīrāzī (3)," *Kheradnameh-ye Sadra*, no. 11 (1377/1998): 23–32. In fact, Dashtaki Shirazi can be considered the teacher of the most famous scholars of occult sciences in the Safavid era, because he is also known as Sheikh Baha ī's master through two intermediaries. See 'Abbas Zare'i Mehrvarz and 'Alireza Sufī, "Pejūheshī Tārīkhī darbāre-ye Khāndān-e Dehdār dar 'Ahd-e Ṣafavī," *Motale'at-e Farhangi*, no. 2 (1388/2009): 63–94.

the characters and events mentioned in “Safavid Limia.” The result mostly supported the original claim of the text’s authenticity. “Safavid Limia” can be considered an annotation by Molla Jalal to the “Limia” section of *Asrar-e Qasemi*, an annotation which has gradually found its way into the original text. Nor can “Safavid Limia” be accused of being fake. The context of the writing, the context and time of the text’s production, and the narrator’s appeal to little-known but actual historical characters make any motive and context for forgery by later scribes lacking in credibility. I hope that this article will be a small step toward demonstrating to historians the importance and historical value of occult sciences texts.