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# Scholarly Circles and the Transmission of Knowledge: Bahā' al-Dīn al-Āmilī (d. 1030/1621) and His Mobile Scholarly Circle in Safavid Iran

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## Abstract

The history of education and transmission of knowledge in Islamic societies has long recognized the importance of scholarly circles centered around scholars in medieval Muslim societies. As an illustration of the persistence of similar patterns of knowledge transmission in later periods, this paper focuses on the scholarly circle gathered around Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Āmilī (d. 1030/1621), the prominent Shiite scholar of the Safavid era, exploring the intellectual exchanges and personal interactions between this circle's members through the lens of the manuscripts they copied, read, collated, and studied. Drawing on information gleaned from manuscripts, I argue that Bahā' al-Dīn's highly mobile lifestyle, which was an offshoot of his socio-political engagements, rendered the scholarly circle around him into a mobile college, detached from localized madrasas and other educational institutions. This mobile scholarly circle helped propagate Shiite intellectual heritage in places far from the centers.

**Keywords:** Safavid; Bahā' al-Dīn al-Āmilī; manuscripts; Shiism; knowledge transmission; madrasa; mobility

The history of education and transmission of knowledge in Islamic societies has attracted considerable scholarly attention from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Following initial works by prominent scholars such as Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) and Julian Ribera (d. 1934), several influential studies were produced in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, affecting the field thereafter.<sup>1</sup> In 1981, George Makdisi published *The Rise of Colleges*, a comparative study of learning institutions in Islamic and European societies. In this book, Makdisi introduced the madrasa as “the Muslim institution of learning par excellence,” and presented an account of the evolution of the Islamic educational system from study-circles (*ḥalqa*) convened in mosques in the early centuries of Islamic history to the endowed madrasas widespread in the medieval period.<sup>2</sup> Makdisi's book was neither the first nor the only study on madrasas published around that time. In 1961, in fact, Makdisi himself had already published a study on madrasas in medieval Baghdad.<sup>3</sup> In 1975, Heinz Halm published an account of the

<sup>1</sup> For a literature review of studies on Islamic education published prior to 1980, see Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 292–311. For a broad literature review of studies in Western languages on knowledge and education in classical Islam, see Günther, “Islamic Education: An Introduction,” 1:7–18.

<sup>2</sup> Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 27.

<sup>3</sup> Makdisi, “Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad.”

emergence and spread of madrasas in Islamic societies and continued, in his later works, to pay attention to the importance of madrasas in Islamic education.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, with the publication of *The Rise of Colleges*, Makdisi came to be especially associated with the idea of the madrasa as the seminal “institution” of learning in the formalized education systems of Islamic societies; an idea that, as I discuss, did not withstand historical scrutiny.

More than a decade after Makdisi’s work, in 1992, Jonathan Berkey wrote *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*, in which he emphasized the informal and non-institutional character of medieval Islamic education. Arguing against Makdisi’s focus on the madrasa as the archetypal institution of higher education in Islamic societies, Berkey noted that the transmission of knowledge in Islam was, first and foremost, via teaching circles formed around a shaykh and built on his personal authority and the intensive relationship between him and his students. According to Berkey, such an informal system of education survived the establishment and spread of madrasas in Muslim societies, and “Islamic education remained fundamentally informal, flexible, and tied to persons rather than institutions.”<sup>5</sup> In 1994, in the same vein as Berkey’s study on medieval Cairo, Michael Chamberlain wrote a social history of education and knowledge transmission in medieval Damascus. In his book, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus*, Chamberlain emphasized the centrality of the teacher-student relationship in Islamic education and pushed Berkey’s ideas even further, arguing that madrasas in medieval Muslim societies had little to do with education. Rather than institutions of higher education, according to Chamberlain, endowed madrasas were instruments by which their elite founders sought to associate themselves with the prestige of knowledge (*ilm*), safeguard their properties, and exert their control and influence on society through scholars and their teaching posts in madrasas.<sup>6</sup>

The aforementioned works cultivated the idea of a dichotomy between the formal/institutional and informal/personal methods of education and knowledge transmission in Islamic history, which continued to permeate later studies. In this dichotomy, “formal” and “institutional” were usually associated with madrasas with fixed curricula and a system of granting degrees (*ijāzāt*), while “informal” was associated with the personal relationship between a teacher, his students, and the oral transmission of knowledge between them. In her 2018 PhD dissertation, Paula Manstetten attempted to go beyond this dichotomy by focusing on the “processes of institutionalization” instead of the “institutions” of learning. Elaborating on the shortcomings of the perception of Islamic education as inherently informal and personal, playing down the significance of madrasas and similar educational venues, Manstetten argued that, over time, Islamic education became more organized and structured, and the appearance of the madrasa was probably “just one, albeit important, outcome of a long process of institutionalisation.”<sup>7</sup> Manstetten nevertheless emphasized that the emergence and development of madrasas never replaced teaching in mosques, private homes, and the like.<sup>8</sup>

Modern scholarship on education and the transmission of knowledge in Islamic history has largely focused on the medieval period, but the outcomes of such scholarship have provided a framework for historical studies on Islamic education in later periods. In 2018, following the same line of scholarship, Maryam Moazzen wrote *Formation of a Religious Landscape*, an account of Shiite higher education in Safavid Iran.<sup>9</sup> In this study, Moazzen presented madrasas as the primary instruments that spread and consolidated Shiism in early modern Iran, and elaborated on Safavid monarchs’ establishment and support for madrasas as part of their religious policies of promoting Shiism among their largely Sunni subjects.

<sup>4</sup> Halm, “Die Anfänge Der Madrasa”; Halm, *The Fatimids and Their Traditions of Learning*, 71.

<sup>5</sup> Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 90.

<sup>7</sup> Manstetten, “Ibn ‘Asākir’s History of Damascus,” 19–35.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>9</sup> Moazzen, *Formation of a Religious Landscape*.

Moazzen's argument resonates with the now-largely-abandoned view of the establishment of madrasas in medieval Islamic society and their role in the revival of Sunnism after two centuries of Shiite dominance.<sup>10</sup> Her work is one of the few studies in European languages that provides information on madrasas in Iran during the Safavid era. In Persian, Aḥmad Pākatchī published, in 2021, a *long durée* encyclopedia article on madrasas in the Shiite context, including Iran of the Safavid period, which provides an informative overview of religious schools in various Shiite centers, their structure and curriculum, and their associated intellectual traditions and scholars.<sup>11</sup>

Avoiding insistence on a rigid dichotomy between formal and informal modes of knowledge transmission, the present study seeks to enhance our understanding of the transmission of knowledge in Safavid Iran by looking at the extra-madrassa side of education in the same Safavid context about which Moazzen wrote. This study focuses on the scholarly circle formed around Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad al-ʿĀmilī (953–1030/1547–1621), the prominent jurist, Quranic commentator, mathematician, and poet of the Safavid period, better known as al-Shaykh al-Bahā'ī. The case of Bahā' al-Dīn's scholarly circle in early modern Iran provides a vivid illustration of the persistence of the same patterns of teacher-centered knowledge transmission in the *ḥalqas* that scholars such as Makdisi, Berkey, and Chamberlain referred to as “study circles” or “teaching circles” in the context of medieval Islamic societies. I have chosen to use the more general term “scholarly circle” as a better designation for the *ḥalqa* of students and scholars around Bahā' al-Dīn, whose activities went beyond lecturing and studying to involve a great deal of travelling, book production, and entertaining exchanges between members.

As we shall see, what made Bahā' al-Dīn's scholarly circle particularly distinct was its “mobility,” a result of his extensive movements, largely due to his attachment to the Safavid court. Although Bahā' al-Dīn generally travelled many times throughout his life, whether as a child with his family or, later on, as a young scholar, this study focuses primarily on the last phase of his life, from 996/1588 until his death in 1030/1621, when he became closely associated with the court of Shah ʿAbbās I (996–1038/1588–1629). The focus on this period is simply due to the abundance of documentary evidence on Bahā' al-Dīn and his engagements with students during this period. There is only one earlier well-documented case, when his circle convened in Tabriz in 993/1585, which is also discussed.

This study draws on a corpus of manuscripts copied and/or read in Bahā' al-Dīn's scholarly circle. All the manuscripts cited in this study were made available to me in digital format. The variety of notes left in/on these manuscripts – including the marginal notes often left by students – and the scholarly certificates (*ijāzāt*, *balāghāt*, *qirāʾāt*, and *samāʾāt*) written by Bahā' al-Dīn for his students are used to situate him and the individuals around him in time and place, track their movements, and understand their interactions.<sup>12</sup> Traced here are the learned practices that, rather than being centered around a locality (madrassa), were centered around books as physical objects in which scholars documented their intellectual yet “informal” relationships. In particular, the handwritten notes in personal copies of individuals in this scholarly circle provide a first-hand image of education and knowledge transmission at a more personal and individual level.

In the manuscript citation, for folio numbers, I provide two numbers. The first number is what I have counted, also considering the commonly unwritten folia added for protection. The second number, which comes in brackets ([ ]), is the historical number appearing on

<sup>10</sup> The idea that the establishment of madrasas was a strategy to promote Sunni Islam after a period of Shiite dominance has been contested and modified by scholars such as Berkey, Chamberlain, and more recently Tor. See Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 130–31; Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 69–90; Tor, “The Religious History of the Great Seljuq Period,” 54–57.

<sup>11</sup> Pākatchī, “Ḥawzah ʿilmīyah.”

<sup>12</sup> A certificate written by Bahā' al-Dīn is often a license for transmission (*ijāzat al-riwāya*) coming after a reading or audition certificate (*balāgh*, *qirāʾa*, and *samāʾ*). There are a few cases where we have only an *ijāza* without a reading or audition certificate, or a reading or audition certificate without an *ijāza*. In this study, I use the terms “*ijāza*” (pl. *ijāzāt*) and “certificate” interchangeably for various types of scholarly certificates issued by Bahā' al-Dīn.

the manuscript's page, usually added manually by cataloguers or other earlier users of the manuscript. If a folio lacks a historical number, I have used "n.f." in place of the second number to indicate "not foliated."

### From Jabal ʿĀmil to the Safavid court

Bahāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad al-ʿĀmilī was born in Baalbek, in Dhū al-Ḥijja 953/February 1547.<sup>13</sup> He was born to a scholarly family from Jabal ʿĀmil, a mountainous, predominantly Shiite region in the south of present-day Lebanon, then under Ottoman rule. Bahāʾ al-Dīn came to Iran as a child, along with his father, Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd al-Ṣamad (d. 984/1576), a prominent scholar and representative of the Jabal ʿĀmil Shiite intellectual tradition.<sup>14</sup> Prior to migration, Ḥusayn had been a close student and companion of Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī (d. 965/1558), one of the most influential figures in the Shiite intellectual scene of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, who came to be known as "al-Shahīd al-Thānī" (the Second Martyr) after he was executed by the Ottomans.<sup>15</sup> Among the group of ʿĀmilī scholars who migrated to Iran throughout the Safavid period, Ḥusayn was a distinguished figure and played a pivotal role in the formation of a Shiite polity in Iran.<sup>16</sup>

Bahāʾ al-Dīn arrived in Isfahan in 961/1554 as a seven-year-old child. After living in Isfahan for about three years, he moved to Qazvin – the Safavid capital city at the time – following his father's appointment as the capital's *shaykh al-Islām*. After about seven years in Qazvin, Ḥusayn was appointed *shaykh al-Islām* of Mashhad and then Herat, resulting in Bahāʾ al-Dīn spending his childhood constantly moving between different Iranian cities, from Isfahan to Qazvin, Mashhad, and Herat. In this period, Bahāʾ al-Dīn was studying both the religious sciences, including Shiite classical sources, with his father and the rational sciences, including logic, mathematics, and medicine, with high-ranking Iranian scholars. Well versed in a combination of the Jabal ʿĀmilī intellectual tradition of Shiite law and hadith and the Iranian intellectual tradition of philosophy, theology, and mathematics, Bahāʾ al-Dīn gradually rose to prominence, particularly after the death of his father and father-in-law, ʿAlī al-Minshār, the *shaykh al-Islām* of Isfahan, in 984/1576. At this point, Bahāʾ al-Dīn replaced his late father-in-law as *shaykh al-Islām* of Isfahan, then an important provincial center.<sup>17</sup>

For a period of approximately two years between 991/1583 and 993/1585, Bahāʾ al-Dīn, who, in his late 40s, had become a scholar of some renown, went for the Hajj through Ottoman lands.<sup>18</sup> On his way back to Iran, he spent some time in Cairo, Jerusalem, and Damascus, meeting, studying, and conversing with prominent scholars. Bahāʾ al-Dīn returned to Iran through the Aleppo-Amid-Van route, arriving in Tabriz in early 993/

<sup>13</sup> Bahāʾ al-Dīn's life and career have been extensively written about from his time to the present. For a concise bio-bibliography, see Stewart, "Bahāʾ al-Dīn." For a detailed list of literature in Arabic and Persian on Bahāʾ al-Dīn, including historical sources and modern studies, see Raḥmatī, *Aḥvāl va āsār-i Bahāʾ al-Dīn ʿĀmilī*, 25–114. For a literature review of studies on Bahāʾ al-Dīn in European languages from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to 2008, see Stewart, "A Brief History," xi–xxviii. A wide range of the literature on Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī in Persian, Arabic, and English, including the sections on him in old sources and the modern studies to 2008, was reproduced in three separate collections in 2008, on the occasion of a congress held in Iran in his celebration. For the Persian collection, see Zamānī-nizhād, *Shinākht-nāmah-yi Bahāʾ al-Dīn ʿĀmilī*. For the Arabic collection, see Majmūʿah min al-muḥaqqiqīn, *Al-Shaykh Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī*. For the English collection, see Raḥmatī, *At the Nexus*.

<sup>14</sup> For Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd al-Ṣamad's life and career, see Stewart, "The First *Shaykh al-Islām*." For Ḥusayn's flight, first from Lebanon to Iraq and then from Iraq to Iran, see Stewart, "Ḥusayn's Flight from Lebanon to Iraq"; Stewart, "An Episode."

<sup>15</sup> For Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī and his execution, see Kohlberg, "Al-Shahīd al-Thānī"; Stewart, "The Ottoman Execution."

<sup>16</sup> For the ʿĀmilī migration to Safavid Iran, see al-Muhājir, *al-Hijrah al-ʿĀmilīyah*; Newman, "The Myth of the Clerical Migration to Safavid Iran: Arab Shiite Opposition to ʿAlī al-Karakī and Safavid Shiism"; Stewart, "Notes on the Migration of ʿĀmilī Scholars"; Abisaab, *Converting Persia*.

<sup>17</sup> Munshī, *Ālam-ārā*, 1:156–57; Stewart, "The First *Shaykh al-Islām*," 391–94; Stewart, "Bahāʾ al-Dīn," 31–33.

<sup>18</sup> For Bahāʾ al-Dīn's Ottoman trip, see Stewart, "Taḳīyah as Performance"; Lowry and Stewart, *Essays*, 34–37.

1585. Upon arrival, Bahā' al-Dīn spent a few months in Tabriz, where he engaged in teaching and scholarly activities with a circle of students and scholars who took lessons from him, copied books, read and collated their copies, and received *ijāza* from him.

Although Bahā' al-Dīn had already started teaching well before this date, this is the first time the documentary sources portray him at the center of a circle of scholarly and book production activities. The texts involved were *Arba'ūn ḥadīthan* (The Forty Hadith) authored by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Makkī (d. 786/1386), al-Shahīd al-Awwal, the prominent figure in the 'Āmilī Shiite tradition, as well as a book in the same Forty Hadith genre by Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd al-Ṣamad, Bahā' al-Dīn's father. In Ṣafar 993/February 1585, a student, 'Alī al-Jīlānī, audited Ḥusayn's *Arba'ūn* and received an *ijāza* on it.<sup>19</sup> Over a period between Rabi' II and Jumādā I 993/April and May 1585, an unnamed student read and collated a *majmū'a* (multiple-text manuscript) containing Ḥusayn's *Arba'ūn* and Ibn Makkī's *Arba'ūn*.<sup>20</sup> The *majmū'a* was copied some eight years earlier, in 985/1577, by 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Muqaddam, who was likely a professional calligrapher, evident from the handwriting. Now that a prominent scholar such as Bahā' al-Dīn – the son of one of the *majmū'a* texts' authors and himself a representative of the 'Āmilī intellectual tradition – was around, it was the best time to have the text collated and authenticated. In Jumādā II 993/June 1585, still in Tabriz, a student Bahā' al-Dīn referred to as "Mawlānā Jamshīd," likely a local, audited Ibn Makkī's *Arba'ūn* and received an *ijāza*. The text comes in a *majmū'a* copied two months earlier by Malik Ḥusayn ibn Malik 'Alī Tabrizī in Tabriz, perhaps as a product of the scholarly activity around these texts that flourished during Bahā' al-Dīn's presence in the city.<sup>21</sup>

Already a well-known scholar by this time, Bahā' al-Dīn's prominence came about through his involvement and association with the court of 'Abbās I (996–1038/1588–1629). In Dhū al-Qa'dah 996/October 1588, in Qazvin, the seventeen-year-old 'Abbās Mīrzā ascended the throne as "Shah 'Abbās the Great," ruling the Safavid realm for the following forty-two years. His reign came after an interregnum of more than a decade of weak rulers and precarious states. 'Abbās came to power while the Safavid state was suffering from Ottoman infringements in the northwest and Uzbek assaults in the northeast, aside from the troubles caused by unruly provincial governors.<sup>22</sup>

The early years of 'Abbās's reign coincided with the time of Bahā' al-Dīn's increasing involvement in the affairs of the Safavid court. Not yet the top jurist of the age or "the Seal of the Mujtahids" (*khātim al-mujtahidīn*), a title belonging to Mīr Ḥusayn ibn Ḥasan al-Karakī (d. 1001/1592–3) at the time, Bahā' al-Dīn was a prominent member of the religious establishment that helped Shah 'Abbās legitimize his rule and extend his control over the empire, which the shah actually had to reconquer.<sup>23</sup> In 998/1590, on behalf of Shah 'Abbās, Bahā' al-Dīn negotiated with Yūlī Beg, a rebellious provincial governor in the Isfahan region.<sup>24</sup> In 999/1591, along with several other influential figures, Bahā' al-Dīn went on a mission to Gilan to act as a liaison, negotiating a marriage alliance between one of the shah's sons and the daughter of the ruler of Gilan.<sup>25</sup> In 1002/1593–94, Bahā' al-Dīn negotiated a peace treaty with Sayyid Mubārak Musha'sha'i, the chieftain of the

<sup>19</sup> Maliki, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 267.

<sup>20</sup> MS Baghdad, al-Markaz al-waṭanī lil-makhtūṭāt 26245. Bahā' al-Dīn's *balāgh* notes appear on fols 46a [n.f.] and 87a [n.f.]. The image of the *balāgh* note on the second folio is cut, and so the date is not shown. Yet the date is provided in the catalogue entry of the manuscript by Ḥusayn 'Alī Maḥfūz in 1957, when he had the manuscript in his possession before its transfer to al-Markaz al-waṭanī. For the catalogue entry of this manuscript, see Maḥfūz, "Khizānat Ḥusayn 'Alī Maḥfūz," 51. The *majmū'a* has a third part (*Du'ā' al-'Alawī al-Miṣrī*), which was read and collated later in 996, not with Bahā' al-Dīn.

<sup>21</sup> Maliki, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 237–38; Dānish'pazhūh, *Fihrist-i Mishkāt*, 8:563.

<sup>22</sup> Savory, "'Abbās I."

<sup>23</sup> Stewart, "The Lost Biography," 205. Mīr Ḥusayn ibn Ḥasan al-Karakī was Sayyid Ḥusayn ibn Ḥasan al-Karakī, a grandson of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī (d. 940/1534).

<sup>24</sup> Stewart, "Bahā' al-Dīn," 37.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 38.



Musha‘sha‘ī dynasty who had rebelled in ‘Arabistān, a southwestern province of Iran.<sup>26</sup> In the same year, Bahā’ al-Dīn, along with other jurists, was involved in a meeting on the legality of the execution of several Nuqtawī leaders, the activities and growing influence of whom did not make Shah ‘Abbās happy.<sup>27</sup>

Bahā’ al-Dīn’s rise to prominence culminated in his emergence as the empire’s leading jurist, after the death of Mīr Ḥusayn al-Karakī of plague in 1001/1592–3, and ensuing appointment as *shaykh al-islām* of the Safavid capital, which Shah ‘Abbās moved from Qazvin to Isfahan.<sup>28</sup> In this position, which Arjomand describes as “the highest office of the state reserved for the hierocracy,” even though its supremacy was tacit and unofficial at this time, Bahā’ al-Dīn continued to serve the shah for the rest of his life, as an advisor/consultant, especially in matters of Shiite law.<sup>29</sup>

### The mobile scholar

Bahā’ al-Dīn’s responsibilities as *shaykh al-islām* of the capital and jurist-advisor attending to the affairs of the court did not prevent him from other scholarly engagements. In fact, scholarly activity continued to be his primary occupation and gained even more vigor in this phase of his life, during which his previous education came to maturation. A good part of Bahā’ al-Dīn’s intellectual contributions, especially in the religious sciences, were products of this period, often coinciding with his trips with the royal camp and sometimes within the context of court events.<sup>30</sup> He wrote, for instance, *Tuḥfa-yi Ḥātīmī* (The Precious Gift for Ḥātīm) in Persian on the astrolabe and its function, probably in Qazvin in 1004/1596, and dedicated it to Ḥātīmī Beg, the grand vizier who had inquired about the device.<sup>31</sup> In 1007/1599, in Mashhad, during the royal campaign against the Uzbeks in Khurasan, he finished *al-Ḥabl al-matīn* (The Strong Rope) on Shiite legal hadith. In Ṣafar 1015/1606, in the town of Ganjah in the Qarabagh region, as part of the shah’s military campaign in Azerbaijan, Bahā’ al-Dīn completed *Miftāḥ al-falāḥ* (The Key to Salvation) on daily rituals.<sup>32</sup> In Dhū al-Qa‘da 1015/1606, in Qum, he finished *Mashriq al-shamsayn* (The Rising of the Two Suns) on Shiite law.<sup>33</sup> In 1020/1611, in Azerbaijan, in the context of a conversation between the shah and the Ottoman ambassador who asked about the Shiite legal status of the consumption of meat slaughtered by People of the Book (meaning Jews and Christians), Bahā’ al-Dīn wrote *Ḥurmat dhabā’ih ahl al-kitāb* (The Illegality of Meat Slaughtered by People of the Book). The work was presumably sent with the Safavid

<sup>26</sup> Musha‘sha‘ī, *al-Rihlah al-makkiyah*, 55. Stewart briefly refers to the episode in Stewart, “Bahā’ al-Dīn,” 38.

<sup>27</sup> Khūzānī Ṣfahānī, *A Chronicle of the Reign of Shah ‘Abbas*, 144; Munshī, *Ālam-ārā*, 2:477; Ahmad, “The Safavid Rulers and the Nuqtawi Movement,” 1243–44; Stewart, “Bahā’ al-Dīn,” 38.

<sup>28</sup> Munshī, *Ālam-ārā*, 2:459; Stewart, “A Biographical Notice,” 569; Stewart, “Bahā’ al-Dīn,” 38. For the Safavid capital’s move from Qazvin to Isfahan, see Mazzaoui, “From Tabriz to Qazvin to Isfahan”; Blake, “Shah Abbās and the Transfer of the Capital.”

<sup>29</sup> Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 137. Bahā’ al-Dīn, for example, was the jurist who attended to matters related to the shah’s endowments, as Shah ‘Abbās made significant endowments of land, urban properties, jewellery, and books during his lifetime. For an episode of Shah ‘Abbās’s endowments under Bahā’ al-Dīn’s supervision, recorded in the narrative sources, see Munshī, *Ālam-ārā*, 2:761–62; Khūzānī Ṣfahānī, *A Chronicle of the Reign of Shah ‘Abbas*, 1:467–71.

<sup>30</sup> For a complete contextualized list of Bahā’ al-Dīn’s works composed in this period, see Stewart, “Bahā’ al-Dīn,” 39–45.

<sup>31</sup> Stewart dates the completion of this work to 1604–5 (1013 in the Persian calendar), the same date given in the introduction to the printed edition of the work. Stewart, “Bahā’ al-Dīn,” 27; Naba’i and ‘Adālatī, *Tuḥfa-yi Ḥātīmī*, 16–17. Nāji, however, dates the work to 1004/1595–6 and mentions two copies made in that year. Nāji, *Kitābshināsī*, 165. A manuscript I checked was also copied in Shawwāl 1004/May 1596, corroborating Nāji’s date. See MS Tehran, Majlis Library 3761.

<sup>32</sup> Stewart, “Bahā’ al-Dīn,” 27; Nāji, *Kitābshināsī*, 529. For the original draft copy with the colophon in Bahā’ al-Dīn’s hand, see MS Tehran, Malik Library 976.

<sup>33</sup> Stewart, “Bahā’ al-Dīn,” 27; Nāji, *Kitābshināsī*, 522.

envoy to Sultan Aḥmad (r. 1603–17) in Istanbul.<sup>34</sup> Around the same time, on the shah's order, Bahā' al-Dīn began working on a legal manual in Persian. Entitled *Jāmi'ī-ʿi ʿAbbāsī* (The Abbasid Compendium), the work remained incomplete in his lifetime, but was posthumously finished by a student to become the official Shiite legal compendium in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>35</sup>

Bahā' al-Dīn's extensive mobility, manifested, for instance, in the diverse localities where he completed his works, was a distinctive feature of his career, particularly in this phase of his life. While Bahā' al-Dīn's constant childhood moves were mainly dependent on his father's socio-political circumstances and career, Bahā' al-Dīn's mobility later in life was a direct offshoot of his attachment to the court of Shah ʿAbbās, himself a highly mobile ruler. Shah ʿAbbās lived more like a nomad, wintering (*qishlāq*) in Qazvin, Isfahan, Mashhad, Herat, Mazandaran, or Azerbaijan, and on the move conducting campaigns for the rest of the year. The shah would move not simply with his troops, but accompanied by what appeared as a mobile capital, i.e., a massive retinue of ministers, advisors, and administrative and religious representatives, including Bahā' al-Dīn and his entourage.<sup>36</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn often traveled with the royal camp in this phase of his life, save a few trips he seems to have made on his own.

In his travels, Bahā' al-Dīn appears as a scholar/teacher at the center of a scholarly circle, a small, moving madrasa, engaged in writing and teaching while his students busily copy, read, collate, and receive *ijāzāt* on the books. Bahā' al-Dīn's involvement in teaching, simultaneous with his trips in this period, is attested by the large number of scholarly certificates (*ijāzāt*, *balāghāt*, and *samāʿāt*) he wrote for his students in various places. Out of the 105 scholarly certificates he wrote throughout his life, 96 were written during the reign of Shah ʿAbbās in fourteen different localities, ranging from Mashhad, Marv, Qum, Qazvin, Isfahan, Semnan, Qarabagh, Tabriz, Farah Abad, and Georgia in Iran to Najaf, Karbala, Baghdad, and Kadhimiya in Iraq.<sup>37</sup> However, Bahā' al-Dīn's movements and scholarly circle went beyond the places he issued certificates. As we shall see, we learn of the group's other trips, for example, to Herat and Balkh, not through *ijāzāt* but through the notes his students left on their manuscripts.

His trip to the holy cities of Iraq, from about Jumādā I 1003/January 1595 to Shaʿbān 1003/April 1595, is a clear example of Bahā' al-Dīn's scholarly circle on the move.<sup>38</sup> The trip seems to have been a personal pilgrimage, without any connection to the court, during a winter when Shah ʿAbbās was settled in Qazvin. It is well documented by manuscript notes, especially in al-Karakī's "*Kitāb al-ijāzāt*," a *majmūʿa* belonging to and largely copied by Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Karakī (d. 1041/1631–32), Bahā' al-Dīn's lifelong student and companion.<sup>39</sup> On this trip, we find Bahā' al-Dīn, on the one hand, engaged in writing and personal and spiritual reflection: he completed his work on prayer, *al-Ḥadiqa al-hilāliyya* (The Garden of the Crescent), which he had started writing earlier in Qazvin, and also composed several poems.<sup>40</sup> On the same original copy (*nuskhat al-aṣl*) of *al-Ḥadiqa al-hilāliyya* he was writing,

<sup>34</sup> Nāji, *Kitābshināsī*, 355; Stewart, "Bahā' al-Dīn," 43. For a study on this work, see Stewart, "Three Polemics," 404–12.

<sup>35</sup> Nāji, *Kitābshināsī*, 208; Stewart, "Bahā' al-Dīn," 43; Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 207.

<sup>36</sup> Shah ʿAbbās's mobility is clearly observable in, for example, Khūzānī Iṣfahānī, *A Chronicle of the Reign of Shah ʿAbbas*, which follows the history of his reign year by year, noting his moves, campaigns, and places he wintered (*qishlāq*) every year. Melville also mentions that "ʿAbbās was far more mobile than the rest of the dynasty." Melville, "Shah ʿAbbas and the Pilgrimage to Mashhad," 218.

<sup>37</sup> Maḥmūd Malikī has collected and edited Bahā' al-Dīn's *ijāzāt*, with their associated list of places and dates, in an extended article. See Malikī, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 222. A list of the geographical "spots" where *ijāzāt* were written would be longer as, in this list, all the *ijāzāt* written in different villages and localities near a city are clustered together under *ijāzāt* issued in that city.

<sup>38</sup> There is evidence of Bahā' al-Dīn and his companions in Iraq for the period from 14 Jumādā I 1003 (MS Yazd, Vazīrī Library 1708, fol. 45b [45b]) to Shaʿbān 1003 (MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987, fol. 50a. [150a.]), when they were on their return. Thus, the trip must have taken at least four months.

<sup>39</sup> MS Yazd, Vazīrī Library 1708. For a study of this manuscript, see Ṣadrāʾī Khūʾī, "Kitāb-i ijāzāt-i Karakī."

<sup>40</sup> According to the colophon in the original copy in Bahā' al-Dīn's hand, the work was completed in early Jumādā II 1003/February 1595 in Kadhimiya, west Baghdad. MS Tehran, Tehran University Library 1, fol. 35a [32a.]; also in Nāji, *Kitābshināsī*, 258.

Bahā' al-Dīn also wrote poems inspired by the Shiite shrines in Kadhimiya and his pilgrimage to Mecca in 991/1583.<sup>41</sup> In a *majmū'a* belonging to 'Abd al-Kāzīm al-Jīlānī, one of his students (who we will also encounter later), Bahā' al-Dīn also wrote pages of poems about different spiritual stops in Samarra, Karbala, and Najaf, as well as a short *ziyārah* (pilgrimage) text to be read upon visiting any of the holy shrines.<sup>42</sup>

Rather than a solitary scholar, preserving distance from his travel companions and sinking into his own spirituality and intellectual contemplation, Bahā' al-Dīn was actively engaged with his students, who read to him, listened to his lessons, and received *ijāza* from him. Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Karakī, for example, heard a variety of hadith from Bahā' al-Dīn at different locales and took extensive notes on their exchanges along the trip. Sayyid Ḥusayn particularly took note of the times and exact locations where he heard a hadith or lesson from Bahā' al-Dīn, such as "in Kāzīmāyn, on the shores of the Tigris, on the afternoon of Thursday, 14 Jumādā I 1003"; "on the night of Friday, 7 Jumādā II 1003, in Baghdad, facing the shrines..."; or "on 27 Rajab 1003, in Najaf, facing the shrine of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālīb."<sup>43</sup> Following a session in Baghdad in which Bahā' al-Dīn related a hadith to his circle, he read his students the poem he had just written on his copy of *al-Ḥadiqa al-hilāliyya*. Sayyid Ḥusayn took note of the occasion and copied the poem into his own manuscript.<sup>44</sup> On this trip, Sayyid Ḥusayn received several *ijāzāt* from Bahā' al-Dīn, including a comprehensive *ijāza* on all Bahā' al-Dīn's works and those Bahā' al-Dīn had an *ijāza* for through his father.<sup>45</sup> In Karbala, Sayyid Ḥusayn also took the chance to study with and receive *ijāzāt* from other scholars, who were either part of Bahā' al-Dīn's entourage or merely in proximity to and in intellectual exchange with him and his circle. This is how Sayyid Ḥusayn received an *ijāza* from Mawlānā Ma'ānī Tabrizī and heard hadith from Sayyid Ḥaydar Bīzuwuy, both scholars of Iranian origin.<sup>46</sup> Probably during the same trip, also in Karbala, a certain Jamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Sa'dī read aloud to Bahā' al-Dīn the work *Mukhtalaf al-shī'a* (The Points of Disagreement among the Shiite), a Shiite source authored by al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325) on Imāmī scholars' differing opinions in juridical rulings, and received an *ijāza* from Bahā' al-Dīn on all the works by al-Ḥillī.<sup>47</sup> 'Abd al-Kāzīm al-Jīlānī, who we already met, copied a treatise in Sha'bān, in Karbala, in the same *majmū'a* in which Bahā' al-Dīn wrote his poems.<sup>48</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn's other student, Ḥājji Bābā al-Qazwīnī, must also have been with him on this trip. We find Ḥājji Bābā having a local resident of Baghdad write a poem in Turkish for him in his *al-Mashkūl*, a manuscript Ḥājji Bābā had modeled and named

<sup>41</sup> MS Tehran, Tehran University Library 1, fol. 4a [1a].

<sup>42</sup> MS Qum, Mar'ashī Library 4250, fols 110b–112b [113b–115b]. For 'Abd al-Kāzīm al-Jīlānī and his works, see Mahdavi, "Astronomy in Safavid Persia," 178–214. Mahdavi refers to him as "Muḥammad-Kāzīm Tunikābunī," as this person is referred to as both "'Abd al-Kāzīm" and "Muḥammad-Kāzīm" in the sources.

<sup>43</sup> MS Yazd, Vazīrī Library 1708, fols 45b [45b], 47a [47a], and 51a [51a] respectively.

<sup>44</sup> MS Yazd, Vazīrī Library 1708, fol. 48a [48a].

<sup>45</sup> MS Yazd, Vazīrī Library 1708, fol. 3a [3a]. It is unclear why Malikī considers the *mujāz* in this *ijāza* to have been Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn Ḥusayn al-Mashhadī, see Malikī, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 258–59.

<sup>46</sup> MS Yazd, Vazīrī Library 1708, fols 45b [45b] and 48b [48b].

<sup>47</sup> Malikī, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 233–34. I have seen an image of this three-page *ijāza*, but not the manuscript. In the image, the place of the *ijāza* reads as Karbala and the date as 4 Rajab of a year of which only the "thousand" (الف) has remained and the rest is faded away. We know that in Rajab 1003/March 1595, Bahā' al-Dīn was in Karbala, see e.g., MS Yazd, Vazīrī Library 1708, fols 49b [49b] and 51a [51a]. Since the year 1003/1595 is the only year for which I have evidence of Bahā' al-Dīn's presence in Karbala, I considered 1003/1595 as the date of the *ijāza* to Aḥmad al-Sa'dī. Malikī gives the date of *ijāza* as "1000," which seems incorrect, as we have no evidence of Bahā' al-Dīn's presence in Karbala in that year.

<sup>48</sup> MS Qum, Mar'ashī Library 4250. The second treatise in this *majmū'a* was written in 'Abd al-Kāzīm's hand in Karbala, in "Sha'bān," based on the colophon, see fol. 14a [14a]. The year is not mentioned, but since Bahā' al-Dīn wrote poems on the *majmū'a* around Sha'bān 1003 in Karbala, the treatise may also have been copied in the same year. Regardless of the date, 'Abd al-Kāzīm's ownership of the manuscript is certain based on other marginal notes.



after Bahā' al-Dīn's famous anthology *al-Kashkūl* (The Dervish's Bowl).<sup>49</sup> Hājji Bābā noted that the poem was written in Sha'bān 1003/April 1595, when they were returning from pilgrimage with their teachers (*mashāyikhinā*).<sup>50</sup> Thus, it must have been a group of students, scholars, and teachers on a spiritual-cum-intellectual tour together.

Similar, although probably less elaborate, pictures of Bahā' al-Dīn and his scholarly circle engaged in intellectual activities in locales across the Safavid realm can be drawn of many other trips in this phase of his life. This includes the several trips to Khurasan between 1007/1598 and 1011/1602 in the company of Shah 'Abbās, who was busy dealing with Uzbek assaults in the northeast; the period between 1013/1604 and 1015/1606, with the royal camp in Azerbaijan; the time between 1018/1609 and 1020/1611, along with the royal camp on military expedition, again in the northwest, in Qarabagh; and the time in 1023/1614, in Georgia, as part of the royal retinue.<sup>51</sup> The last episode, during which our documents show Bahā' al-Dīn and his circle, away from home in Isfahan, engaged in scholarly activities and intellectual exchange, took place in 1024/1615 in Mazandaran, at the time when the royal retinue came to winter in Farah Abad following the military expedition in Georgia. For the five final years of his life, Bahā' al-Dīn seems to have been more or less settled in Isfahan and continued teaching until a few months before his death.<sup>52</sup>

Bahā' al-Dīn's scholarly circle seems to have convened at either his residence or the various holy places they visited, as we saw, for example, with his Iraq trip. Indeed, despite the prevalence of madrasas in Safavid Iran, particularly in the capital Isfahan, we do not see Bahā' al-Dīn attached to any specific madrasa in either the narrative sources, his certificates, or the colophons of manuscripts copied around him.<sup>53</sup> This is particularly surprising considering that Shah 'Abbās founded mosque-madrasas with large charitable endowments and teaching positions assigned to specific scholars, such as Shaykh Luṭf Allāh al-Maysī (d. 1032/1622–23) and Mullā 'Abd Allāh Shūshtarī (d. 1021/1612–13), both scholars of lower ranks whose names have been associated with those mosque-madrasas until today.<sup>54</sup> During the reign of Shah 'Abbās, Bahā' al-Dīn was probably never a *mudarris*

<sup>49</sup> For information on Bahā' al-Dīn's *al-Kashkūl*, see Stewart, "Bahā' al-Dīn," 36–37. Hājji Bābā's *al-Mashkūl*, still in manuscript form and not edited or published, is held in the Majlis Library. See MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987. This manuscript was copied mainly by Hājji Bābā over a long period of time during Bahā' al-Dīn's life, and often in his proximity, so it provides an abundance of valuable clues about Bahā' al-Dīn and his life. For a study of this manuscript, see Bashari, "Hājji Bābā Qazvini."

<sup>50</sup> MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987, fol. 50a [150a].

<sup>51</sup> For Shah 'Abbās's campaigns in Khurasan between 1007/1598 and 1011/1602, see e.g. Khūzānī Ṣfahānī, *A Chronicle of the Reign of Shah 'Abbas*, 15–16; Savory, "'Abbās I." For the evidence on Bahā' al-Dīn and his circle in this period, see e.g., Maliki, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 240, 254, 262, 267, 278, 279, 281–82; MS Tehran, Majlis Library 231, fol. 7a [9]; MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987, fol. 84a [95]; MS Qum, Mar'ashī Library 4250, fols 97b–98b [96b–97b] and 99b–101a [101b–103a]. For Shah 'Abbās's campaigns in Azerbaijan in the period between 1013/1604 and 1015/1606, see e.g. Khūzānī Ṣfahānī, *A Chronicle of the Reign of Shah 'Abbas*, 17 and 411–15; Raḥmatī, *Ahvāl va āsār-i Bahā' al-Dīn 'Amili*, 42–43; Newman, "The 'Isfahan School of Philosophy,'" 178. For the evidence on Bahā' al-Dīn and his circle in this period, see e.g. Maliki, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 284, footnote 140; Nāji, *Kitābshināsī*, 529; MS Tehran, Malik Library 976, fol. 87b [n.f.]. For Shah 'Abbās's campaigns around Qarabagh region in the time between 1018/1609 and 1020/1611, see e.g. Khūzānī Ṣfahānī, *A Chronicle of the Reign of Shah 'Abbas*, 19–20. For the evidence on Bahā' al-Dīn and his circle in this period, see e.g., Maliki, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 260, 288; Stewart, "Bahā' al-Dīn," 27; Stewart, "Three Polemics," 404–12; MS Tehran, Tehran University Library 1793. For Shah 'Abbās's campaigns in Georgia in 1023/1614, see e.g., Khūzānī Ṣfahānī, *A Chronicle of the Reign of Shah 'Abbas*, 22. We have several certificates by Bahā' al-Dīn written in 1023/1614 in Georgia; two appear on a copy of Bahā' al-Dīn's short *tafsīr* entitled *Ayn al-hayāh*. See MS Tehran, National Library of Iran 3379, fols 58a [58a] and 64a [64a], and the other is mentioned in Maliki, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 238–39.

<sup>52</sup> For Shah 'Abbās's campaigns in Mazandaran at this point, see e.g., Khūzānī Ṣfahānī, *A Chronicle of the Reign of Shah 'Abbas*, 22. For the evidence on Bahā' al-Dīn and his circle in this period, see e.g., Maliki, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 229, 288–89; MS Tehran, National Library of Iran 3379, fol. 55b [55b].

<sup>53</sup> For Safavid madrasas, see Moazzen, *Formation of a Religious Landscape*, especially the first two chapters.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 43–45. Here, Moazzen also expresses surprise over the fact that Shah 'Abbās did not build any madrasas in honor of Mir Dāmād (d. 1040/1631) and Shaykh Bahā'ī, the two most prominent scholars associated with his reign. Moazzen notes that no madrasas or mosques became known by their names.

(lecturer) assigned to a teaching position in a madrasa, likely because his high status in the Safavid system and socio-political responsibilities were beyond those of a *mudarris* teaching at a school.

There are, instead, two references to the “*madras*” where Bahā’ al-Dīn used to teach. Hājji Bābā makes the first reference in the colophon of a copy of his *Ithnā ‘ashariyya fi al-hajj* (The Twelve-Chapter Treatise on Hajj), which he copied for himself in 1028/1619 in the shaykh’s “*madras*.”<sup>55</sup> The second reference comes in Iskandar Beg’s account of Bahā’ al-Dīn’s death, in which Iskandar Beg noted that the shaykh’s body was transferred to Mashhad to be buried, according to his will, next to Imam Riḍā’s tomb, in the same house that was Bahā’ al-Dīn’s “*madras*” when he resided in Mashhad.<sup>56</sup> Not a madrasa, a “*madras*” could mean any specified space, in a mosque or house, where students convened and he taught, wherever he happened to reside for a while. In any event, Bahā’ al-Dīn’s mobile lifestyle did not leave any room for a stationary teaching style, and his peripatetic teaching and scholarly circle were likely what best suited his life.

### Inside Bahā’ al-Dīn’s scholarly circle

Our sources shed some light on the composition of Bahā’ al-Dīn’s scholarly circle and its inner relationships. Rather than lecturing to a large population of fans and followers from all walks of life, Bahā’ al-Dīn seems to have been at the center of a small circle of students. The many certificates he wrote throughout his life are personal, written on personal copies of the individual students who studied with him in private gatherings or even individual lessons, sometimes at his house.<sup>57</sup> We rarely find certificates for the same date and same text given to several individuals, indicating that it was not a public lesson that many individuals attended and received *ijāzāt*.<sup>58</sup> This is in clear contrast to the practice reported for earlier periods; for example, the group certificates written for a long list of attendees from different social and professional backgrounds, as we see in the context of the public reading sessions in 13<sup>th</sup>-century Syria depicted by Konrad Hirschler.<sup>59</sup>

In the sources on Bahā’ al-Dīn’s life, whether historical narratives or modern studies, any individual who received an *ijāza* from Bahā’ al-Dīn is usually listed among his students. For instance, Muḥammad Qaṣrī notes that in Āqā Buzurg’s *al-Dharī‘a* nearly one hundred individuals are mentioned as Bahā’ al-Dīn’s students.<sup>60</sup> However, a closer look at the sources highlights a distinction between members of his circle and his more casual students. The traces left on manuscripts show that Bahā’ al-Dīn’s circle had an almost fixed core of long-term students, who remained with him for extended periods, whether on trips or in residence. The most prominent of this group were Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Karakī, Hājji Bābā al-Qazwīnī, and ‘Abd al-Kāzīm al-Jīlānī, all of whom we have already met. In a later account of Bahā’ al-Dīn’s life, Sayyid Ḥusayn is reported to have said that he was at Bahā’ al-Dīn’s service

<sup>55</sup> MS Mashhad, Āstān-i Quds Library 7414, fol. 14b [14b].

<sup>56</sup> Munshī, *‘Ālam-ārā*, 3:969.

<sup>57</sup> The two *ijāzāt* written for Muḥammad ibn Muẓaffar al-Ziyābādī, known as Taqī al-Ṣūfī, in Farah Abad in 1024/1615 are examples of *ijāzāt* given at Bahā’ al-Dīn’s house. Malikī, “*Ijāzāt al-Shaykh*,” 288–89.

<sup>58</sup> I have come across two Bahā’ al-Dīn *ijāzāt* written for more than one individual. The first is the *ijāza* given to Shaykh Luṭf Allāh al-Maysī, a contemporary prominent scholar, and his son Ja‘far, upon Shaykh Luṭf Allāh’s request (*iltamasa minnī*) (see Malikī, “*Ijāzāt al-Shaykh*,” 236–37; al-Faqīh al-‘Āmilī, *Mustadrak al-faqīh*, 308). The second is the *ijāza* Bahā’ al-Dīn wrote in 1024/1615 as a blessing for the three little sons of Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Karakī. This is also the only example I have found of an *ijāza* given by Bahā’ al-Dīn to underage children. A copy of this *ijāza* written in the hand of Sayyid Ḥusayn’s grandson – the son of one of the *mujāzūn* – appears in MS Yazd, Vazīrī Library 1708, fol. 139b [139b]. For an edition of this *ijāza*, see Malikī, “*Ijāzāt al-Shaykh*,” 243.

<sup>59</sup> Hirschler, “Reading Certificates.” For a history of *ijaza* and its development as a mode of knowledge transmission in Islamic cultures, especially in the early periods, see Davidson, *Carrying on the Tradition: A Social and Intellectual History of Hadith Transmission across a Thousand Years*, 108–51.

<sup>60</sup> Qaṣrī, *Simā‘ī az Shaykh Bahā’ī*, 22.

for forty years in residence and on trips (*Kuntu fī khidmatihī mundhu arbaʿīn sanat fī al-ḥaḍar wa-l-safar*).<sup>61</sup> We find Sayyid Ḥusayn often with Bahāʾ al-Dīn between 989/1581 and 1030/1621 (the shaykh's death), receiving some sixteen certificates from him throughout this period and traveling with him to, for instance, Iraq in 1003/1595, Mashhad and Herat between 1007/1598 and 1011/1602, and Mazandaran in 1024/1615.<sup>62</sup> Ḥājji Bābā was with Bahāʾ al-Dīn at least from 1001/1592, when Ḥājji Bābā copied a three-page poem by Bahāʾ al-Dīn in praise of the Twelfth Imam, until the shaykh's death in 1030/1621.<sup>63</sup> Ḥājji Bābā was with Bahāʾ al-Dīn on his trips, including the Iraq trip in 1003/1595, the Herat trip in 1010–1011/1601–2, and in a village near Qazvin in 1016/1607. Ḥājji Bābā received six certificates from Bahāʾ al-Dīn between 1007/1598 and 1028/1618.<sup>64</sup> ʿAbd al-Kāzīm was with Bahāʾ al-Dīn in Iraq in 1003/1595, as we have already seen, and received three certificates from him in Mashhad in 1008/1600, 1010/1602, and 1011/1603.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to the fixed core of students who remained in contact with Bahāʾ al-Dīn for long periods, his circle also had many members in its periphery, likely including local students who attended his teachings for short periods in the localities to which he traveled and Arab students from neighboring regions, who I discuss shortly.<sup>66</sup> In only a few cases, Bahāʾ al-Dīn's certificates were given without prior study, likely out of blessing and respect, to learned peers such as Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1631), the high-ranking jurist-philosopher; Shaykh Luṭf Allāh al-Maysī, the ʿĀmilī scholar teaching and leading prayers in Isfahan; and Sayyid Mājīd al-Bahrānī (d. 1028/1619), the Bahraini scholar who settled in Shiraz.<sup>67</sup> Although these scholars were part of Bahāʾ al-Dīn's intellectual network, I do not consider them to have been his students and part of his circle, as they did not study with him. These scholars had their own groups of students and scholarly circles, which sometimes overlapped with Bahāʾ al-Dīn's circle.

Bahāʾ al-Dīn's scholarly circle seems to have comprised several individuals who were/became scholars of some renown. In a list of “the great teachers and scholars of the period,” presented by Khūzanī in his contemporary chronicle, both Bahāʾ al-Dīn and many of his students – such as Ḥājji Bābā and ʿAbd al-Kāzīm – are listed.<sup>68</sup> In the same chronicle, in the account of the royal meeting with religious scholars to discuss the execution of Nuṣṭawī leaders in 1002/1593–94 in Qazvin, we find – along with Bahāʾ al-Dīn and Mīr Dāmād – two of Bahāʾ

<sup>61</sup> This is part of a longer biographical note about Bahāʾ al-Dīn that Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Karakī apparently wrote. It is reported by several modern scholars, although the original source of Sayyid Ḥusayn's note is not mentioned. See al-Ṣadr, *Takmilat Amal al-āmil*, 1:343; al-Muḥaddith al-Nūrī, *Khātimat al-mustadrak*, 2:228.

<sup>62</sup> Malikī gives a list of sixteen certificates for Sayyid Ḥusayn, see Malikī, “Ijāzāt al-Shaykh,” 244–57. The certificates were largely copied in Sayyid Ḥusayn's *Kitb al-ijāzāt* (MS Yazd, Vazīrī Library 1708). My understanding of Sayyid Ḥusayn's trips with Bahāʾ al-Dīn is based on the places certificates were issued.

<sup>63</sup> MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987, fol. 22a [186a/18a].

<sup>64</sup> Malikī, “Ijāzāt al-Shaykh,” 239–42. Three of Bahāʾ al-Dīn's *ijāzāt* for Ḥājji Bābā – one undated, one written in Ṣafar 1016/June 1607 in Āb-garm, a village near Qazvin, and one in Ramaḍān 1020/November 1611 in Isfahan – appear respectively in MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14232, fols 51a [51a], 32b [32b], 61b [61b]. For a short introductory note on this manuscript, including pictures of Bahāʾ al-Dīn's *ijāzāt*, see Ṣādiqī, “Chand iṭilāʿ az ṣāhibi Mashkūl.”

<sup>65</sup> Two of the *ijāzāt* for ʿAbd al-Kāzīm in Bahāʾ al-Dīn's hand appear in MS Qum, Marʿashī Library 4250, fols 97b–98b [96b–97b] and 99b–101a [101b–103a]. The third *ijāza* comes in MS Tehran, Majlis Library 2857, fols 4b–5a [3b–4a]. For an edition of these *ijāzāt*, see Malikī, “Ijāzāt al-Shaykh,” 279–81.

<sup>66</sup> In Jumādā II 993/June 1585 in Tabriz, for example, a student Bahāʾ al-Dīn referred to as “Mawlānā Jamshīd,” probably a local, audited Ibn Makki's *Arbaʿūn* and received an *ijāza* from Bahāʾ al-Dīn. The *ijāza* comes in a *majmūʿa* copied around the same time, when Bahāʾ al-Dīn was teaching in Tabriz on his return from his Ottoman trip. See Malikī, “Ijāzāt al-Shaykh,” 237–38; Dānishʾpazhūh, *Fihrist-i Mishkāt*, 8:563.

<sup>67</sup> For Mīr Dāmād, see Malikī, “Ijāzāt al-Shaykh,” 286. For Shaykh Luṭf Allāh al-Maysī, see Malikī, “Ijāzāt al-Shaykh,” 236–37; al-Faqīh al-ʿĀmilī, *Mustadrak al-faqīh*, 308. Sayyid Mājīd al-Bahrānī was the Friday prayer leader, an author and scholar of good renown in Shiraz, and had his own circle of students. He visited Bahāʾ al-Dīn at his house in Isfahan in 1016/1607–8, when Bahāʾ al-Dīn was ill. As reflected in the *ijāza*, it was a visit by a friend to a friend. Sayyid Mājīd asked Bahāʾ al-Dīn for an *ijāza* (*istajāza*), and Bahāʾ al-Dīn wrote this comprehensive *ijāza* for him. See al-Bahrānī, *Luʾuʿat al-bahrāyn*, 135–38; Malikī, “Ijāzāt al-Shaykh,” 272–74.

<sup>68</sup> Khūzanī *Iṣfahānī, A Chronicle of the Reign of Shah ʿAbbas*, 2:981–83.

al-Dīn's students, Ḥājji Bābā and Ḥājji Ḥusayn al-Yazdī.<sup>69</sup> Some of Bahā' al-Dīn's students were likewise present at the court meeting convened to conclude the shah's extensive endowments in 1023/1614.<sup>70</sup> The acceptance of these scholars at court meetings testifies to their high social status. Moreover, we are informed that Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Karakī, Bahā' al-Dīn's lifelong student, became the *mufti* of Isfahan and remained connected to the court well after Bahā' al-Dīn's death.<sup>71</sup>

Bahā' al-Dīn's scholarly circle embraced a cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual group of students, as evidenced from the traces left in books. A note in Ḥājji Bābā's *al-Mashkūl*, for instance, indicates the cosmopolitan nature of this circle. Giving a title to an amusing poem about the route Bahā' al-Dīn and his entourage traveled on an undated trip from Qazvin to Isfahan, Ḥājji Bābā referred to "the Arab and non-Arab" (*min al-ʿarab wa-l-ʿajam*) students with Bahā' al-Dīn.<sup>72</sup> In fact, following the establishment of Shiism as the official religion of the Safavid state, Iranian cities – including initially Tabriz, Qazvin, Mashhad, and Herat, and later on, throughout the 11<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Isfahan and (to a lesser extent) Shiraz and Yazd – took on a central role in Shiite education. As such, Shiite students from Arabic-speaking regions were attracted to these cities in search of learning.<sup>73</sup> Scholars of Arab background residing in Iran, such as Bahā' al-Dīn, facilitated the connection and intellectual exchange with visiting Arab students and scholars, welcoming them into their scholarly circles.<sup>74</sup>

Bahā' al-Dīn had several students in his circle who came from Arab regions to study with him for a short time. ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-ʿĀmilī al-Nabāṭī, a native of Jabal ʿĀmil and resident of Najaf, for example, spent some five–six months with Bahā' al-Dīn in Isfahan in 1012/1603, copying, studying, reading, and receiving certificates on Bahā' al-Dīn's books.<sup>75</sup> Sayyid Badr al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī al-ʿĀmilī was another Jabal ʿĀmilī student who, having spent some years studying with Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn al-Shahīd al-Thānī (d. 1030/1621) in Mecca, traveled to Iran and studied with Bahā' al-Dīn. In 1026/1617, Sayyid Badr received a comprehensive *ijāza* from Bahā' al-Dīn for the major Shiite sources and all of Bahā' al-Dīn's works.<sup>76</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn received students also from Shiite regions in the south of the Persian Gulf. One

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 1:144.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 1:468.

<sup>71</sup> al-Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, 2:327–28.

<sup>72</sup> Ḥājji Bābā wrote the title in a mix of Persian and Arabic as follows:

“سوانح سفر از قزوین بجانب اصفهان لیهاء الملة والدين محمد سلمه الله تعالى و لتلاميذه الذين معهم من العرب و العجم”

Following the title comes a half-page poem in Persian enumerating more than ten stops on the way from Qazvin to Isfahan and what happened when the group passed through, MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987, fol. 156b [136b].

<sup>73</sup> Jaʿfariyān, “Ravābit-i ʿulamā-yi Īrān va Baḥrayn,” 34–36; Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 131. Sayyid Niʿmat Allāh al-Jazāʾirī (d. 1112/1700), a native of the Basra region who studied in Shiraz and Isfahan, is an illustrative example of an Arab student who came to Iran to study during the Safavid period. Born some twenty years after Bahā' al-Dīn's death, Sayyid Niʿmat did not coincide with the shaykh, but Sayyid Niʿmat's time was close enough to give a very good picture of the life and experience of an Arab student in Safavid Iran. For Sayyid Niʿmat's original autobiography in Arabic, see al-Jazāʾirī, *al-Anwār al-Nuʿmāniyah*, 4:259–277. For a study and English translation of the autobiography, see Stewart, “The Humor of the Scholars.” The general idea of Shiite scholarly mobility and ample historical examples, including examples from the Safavid period, are presented in Newman's *Twelver Shiism*. See Newman, *Twelver Shiism*, 156.

<sup>74</sup> Jaʿfariyān, “Ravābit-i ʿulamā-yi Īrān va Baḥrayn,” 42.

<sup>75</sup> For a biographical note on this person, including the books he copied and certificates he received, see al-Faqīh al-ʿĀmilī, *Mustadrak al-faqīh*, 298–302. Nāji mentions two manuscripts copied by this person in 1012/1603. See Nāji, *Kitābshināsī*, 227 and 268. Malikī lists four *ijāza* by Bahā' al-Dīn for ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Nubāṭī, all issued in 1012/1603. See Malikī, “Ijāzāt al-Shaykh,” 268–69. There is a *majmūʿa* containing two parts: Bahā' al-Dīn's commentary on Ḥasan ibn al-Shahīd al-Thānī's *al-Ithnā ʿasharmajmūʿaah* and *al-Wajīzah*. Both sections were copied by ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Nubāṭī and read to Bahā' al-Dīn, and they carry reading certificates in his hand. See MS Mashhad, Āstān-i Quds Library 2729, fols 30a [56] and 35b [65].

<sup>76</sup> al-Faqīh al-ʿĀmilī, *Mustadrak al-faqīh*, 372–76; Malikī, “Ijāzāt al-Shaykh,” 235–36. Bahā' al-Dīn's two other Jabal ʿĀmilī visiting students were Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Tibnīnī al-ʿĀmilī (See al-Faqīh al-ʿĀmilī, *Mustadrak al-faqīh*, 361)

such student was Muḥammad ibn Manṣūr al-Ṣā'igh, from al-Aḥsā', who traveled to Iran with his brother around 1024/1615. In this year, he finished copying Bahā' al-Dīn's commentary on *Zubdat al-usūl* (The Essence of the Principles [of Jurisprudence]), a work also authored by Bahā' al-Dīn, for the shaykh's library.<sup>77</sup> In the same year, also in Isfahan, Manṣūr al-Ṣā'igh copied a *majmū'a* containing several texts, including Bahā' al-Dīn's *al-Ithnā 'ashariyyāt*, and heard and collated the text in Bahā' al-Dīn's presence.<sup>78</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn's two students from Bahrain were Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī, who received *ijāzāt* in 998/1590, 999/1591, and 1000/1592, and 'Alī ibn Sulaymān al-Baḥrānī, who played a pivotal role in the spread of the science of hadith in Bahrain after returning from his educational stay in Iran.<sup>79</sup>

Bahā' al-Dīn's circle was also linguistically diverse. Most of its members, whether Arab or non-Arab, must have known Arabic, as it was the language of the religious sciences. 'Abd al-Kāẓim al-Jīlānī, a native of the Iranian northern province of Gilan, for example, composed works in Arabic.<sup>80</sup> While visiting Arab students may have known only Arabic, especially if their stay in Iran was not long enough to learn the local language, Iranian residents of the circle knew Persian and may also have been familiar with Turkish.<sup>81</sup> Ḥājji Bābā al-Qazwīnī, a native Iranian likely of Turkish background, wrote in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish in his *al-Mashkūl* and composed poems in both Persian and Turkish.<sup>82</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn himself was obviously well-versed in both Arabic and Persian, as he wrote books and composed poems in both languages. I have not come across any evidence of his familiarity with Turkish, even though the absence of evidence does not necessarily mean he did not know the language. He also composed a two-line poem in "*rājī*" – an old local dialect of the Iranian central regions – which appears in Ḥājji Bābā's *al-Mashkūl*.<sup>83</sup>

and Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥasan al-Mashgharī al-Āmilī (See al-Faqīh al-Āmilī, al-Faqīh al-Āmilī, *Mustadrak al-faqīh*, 365; Malikī, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 259.

<sup>77</sup> MS Qum, Mar'ashī Library 5900. For the note by Muḥammad ibn Manṣūr al-Ṣā'igh, see fol. 95a [95a].

<sup>78</sup> MS Tehran, Majlis Library 7079. For the note by Muḥammad ibn Manṣūr al-Ṣā'igh, see fol. 2a [n.f.].

<sup>79</sup> Malikī, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 277, 270; al-Baḥrānī, *Lu'lu'at al-baḥrayn*, 14.

<sup>80</sup> For a list of al-Jīlānī's works, see Mahdavi, "Astronomy in Safavid Persia," 183–84.

<sup>81</sup> In the autobiography of Sayyid Ni'mat Allāh al-Jazā'irī, an Arab student in Safavid Iran, we find him and his brother arriving in Shiraz knowing not even a word of Persian. Just to ask a simple question, they had to memorize half a sentence each and ask it together. Al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-Nu'māniyah*, 4:263; Stewart, "The Humor of the Scholars," 62. In general, Iranian society at the time was bilingual, if not multi-lingual. Persian was the official language of the court, correspondence, and administration, as well as the literary and common spoken language of society. Turkish was also widely present in Safavid Iran. It was the spoken language at the court and the Qizilbash military across the country. For Persian in the Safavid period, see Gūdarzi, "Fārsī dar Īrān-i Šafaviyah." For Turkish in the Safavid period, see Naṣīrī and Naṣīrī, *Farhang-i Naṣīrī*, 14–25.

<sup>82</sup> Ḥājji Bābā's *al-Mashkūl* is a mix of Arabic and Persian, with occasional poems in Turkish. For his own poems in Persian, see, for example, MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987, fols 62a [55a] and 71b [64b]. For a two-line poem by him in Turkish, see fol. 50a. [150a.].

<sup>83</sup> The poem reads as follows:

خرم آنان که هر از بر ندانند      نه حرفی وانویسند نه بخوانند  
چو مجنون سر نهند اندر بیابان      از این کوکل رمند آهو چرانند

A quick search on the web shows that the poem is commonly attributed to Bābā Ṭāhir (d. ca. 423/1032) and not to Shaykh Bahā'ī (our very Bahā' al-Dīn). In Ḥājji Bābā's *al-Mashkūl*, nevertheless, the poem is clearly attributed to Bahā' al-Dīn. In *al-Mashkūl*, the poem appears in two spots: once written in Bahā' al-Dīn's hand, noted to be his composition and in Pahlavi "*Li-kātibihi al-'abd Bahā' al-Dīn bi-lisān al-fahlawī*" (see MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987, fol. 134b [167b]), and another in Ḥājji Bābā's hand, attributed to Bahā' al-Dīn and said to be in "*rājī*" (see MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987, fol. 125a [102a]). "*Rājī*" and "*fahlawī*" probably refer to the same family of dialects of the Pahlā/Fahlā regions in western, central, and northern Iran, as well as to the genre of *fahlavmajmū'aāt* in poetry, which is "an appellation given especially to the quatrains and by extension to the poetry in general composed in the old dialects of the Pahlā/Fahlā regions." On *fahlavīyāt*, see Tafazzoli, "Fahlavīyāt."



Beyond intellectual pursuits, likely the prime reason students gathered around Bahā' al-Dīn, his circle was tied together by a deep degree of friendship and sociability. The fact that the group often traveled together for extended periods, with the teacher and his students experiencing life together and holding lessons enroute, provided a learning atmosphere less rigid and formal than the madrasa. This is reflected in the students' personal notes on their books. On one of their trips, in Rabi' II 1010/October 1601, probably on their way to Mashhad with Shah 'Abbās's on-foot pilgrimage, at breakfast in a village near Semnan, Bahā' al-Dīn related a hadith on cheese and walnuts to Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Karakī and made him a cheese and walnut sandwich. The breakfast preceded a reading session on the same day in Semnan, where Sayyid Ḥusayn attended and audited parts of al-Ṭūsī's (d. 460/1068) *al-Taḥdhīb al-aḥkām* (The Orderly Arrangement of Legal Rulings) read by some students (*ba'd al-ikhwān*).<sup>84</sup> Several months later, in Shawwāl 1010/April 1602, we find Bahā' al-Dīn and his circle in Herat, gathering together, reading poems, and writing notes for remembrance in their notebooks.<sup>85</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn wrote several poems for Ḥājji Bābā in his *al-Mashkūl*, following which Ḥājji Bābā also composed and wrote a poem in the same style.<sup>86</sup> In one of the gatherings, in a garden in a village near Herat, which may have been in the presence of Bahā' al-Dīn, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, a young member of the group (*al-akh al-shābb*), sang a song in a sad voice that deeply affected Ḥājji Bābā, making him record the poem in his *al-Mashkūl* and take note of his feelings.<sup>87</sup> From Herat, in 1011/1602, along with the royal retinue, Bahā' al-Dīn's circle traveled to Balkh. The group was overtaken by a severe storm on the way and experienced hard conditions, which the teacher and students described in poems.<sup>88</sup> In Ṣafar 1016/June 1607, we find Bahā' al-Dīn and his circle in Āb-garm, a village with hot springs near Qazvin. The lessons were going on as Ḥājji Bābā read Bahā' al-Dīn's *al-Ithnā 'ashariyyāt* to him and received an *ijāza*.<sup>89</sup> During their stay, Ḥājji Bābā also took note of a meeting they, probably along with Bahā' al-Dīn and his entourage, had with Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Daylamī, a local governor. It was a cultural gathering where poems were exchanged, and Mīrzā Ibrāhīm recited poems both of his own composition and by the late Malik Maḥmūd Daylamī.<sup>90</sup>

A final point to be made about Bahā' al-Dīn's scholarly circle is the affectionate and supportive relationship between him and his students. In Dhū al-Qa'da 1012/April 1604, at a time when Bahā' al-Dīn was about to leave Isfahan to join the royal camp in Azerbaijan, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥayy, a young student (*al-walad*) who had just finished reading some of Bahā' al-Dīn's works to him, noted the sorrow and sadness he and his peers felt due to the shaykh's departure, and added a few lines of poetry to the copy on which Bahā' al-Dīn wrote an *ijāza*.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, writing about Bahā' al-Dīn after his death, Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Karakī noted the great love and friendship between him and the shaykh.<sup>92</sup> In turn, Bahā' al-Dīn's support for his students is evidenced by the fact that he sometimes accommodated those who studied with him at his house, especially visiting students and

<sup>84</sup> MS Yazd, Vaziri Library 1708, fol. 102b [102b].

<sup>85</sup> MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987, fol. 56b [49b]. On this page, Ḥājji Bābā wrote several poems, noting that the poems were written in Shawwāl 1010/March 1602 in Gāzurgāh, near Herat, during the time with their (two?) teachers and masters:

في خدمة مشايخنا و ساداتنا خلد هما الله تعالى أيام افاداتهما و افاضتهما على ؟ الأحباء الأصفياء ...

<sup>86</sup> MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987, fol. 134b [167b].

<sup>87</sup> MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987, fol. 9a [5a].

<sup>88</sup> MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987. For Bahā' al-Dīn's poem about the storm in Balkh, written in Ḥājji Bābā's hand, see fol. 68a [n.f.]. For Ḥājji Bābā's own poem written in his hand, see fol. 91a [102a].

<sup>89</sup> MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14232, fol. 32b [32b]; Maliki, "Ijāzāt al-Shaykh," 240.

<sup>90</sup> MS Tehran, Majlis Library 14987, fol. 160a [41a]. Malik Maḥmūd is prayed for in "*rahimahu Allāh*."

<sup>91</sup> MS Qum, Mar'ashī Library 6592, fol. ? [135]. In some of his *ijāzāt*, such as this one, Bahā' al-Dīn refers to the *mujāz* as "*al-walad*," which I have taken as an indication of the *mujāz*'s young age, in contrast to other *ijāzāt* in which the *mujāz* is referred to with words such as "*al-shaykh*," "*mawlānā*," "*al-akh*," etc.

<sup>92</sup> al-Ṣadr, *Takmilat Amal al-āmil*, 1:343.

scholars who came from other places. Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī al-‘Āmilī al-Mashgharī, a native of Jabal ‘Āmil, for example, traveled to Isfahan, stayed at Bahā’ al-Dīn’s place, and studied with him until the shaykh’s death.<sup>93</sup> In another instance, in a letter Bahā’ al-Dīn sent with his young student (*al-walad*) Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Māzandarānī to an acquaintance whose copy of *Rasā’il al-Ṣābi* happened to reach Bahā’ al-Dīn, he asked the receiver of the letter to show kindness to Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, insisting that the utmost attention be given to the young boy’s needs.<sup>94</sup> The note may have functioned as a recommendation letter for Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, who was from a very poor family.<sup>95</sup> Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Mazandarani (d. 1086/1675) became a prominent scholar of Safavid Iran in the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I portrayed the circle of students and scholars that convened around Bahā’ al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī in Iran of the Safavid period, shedding light on this circle’s religious and intellectual activities. Bahā’ al-Dīn’s scholarly circle illustrates the persistence of the same informal and non-institutional modes of education and knowledge transmission in Muslim societies that scholars such as Makdisi, Berkey, and Chamberlain noted in the medieval period of Islamic history. The intellectual exchange in Bahā’ al-Dīn’s informal circle, which convened all over the place, whether during his trips or in residence, presents the informal modes of education that contributed to the transmission of Shiite sources and spread of Shiism in Safavid Iran, alongside the more formal and institutional education that the many madrasas of the Safavid period offered.

In the story of Bahā’ al-Dīn and his scholarly circle, we see him as a mobile scholar, traveling from Qazvin to Mashhad, Isfahan to Azerbaijan, Semnan to Qum, and Qarabagh to Mazandaran. Far from an Ibn Baṭṭūṭah-style traveler exploring new places and discovering new cultures, and hardly in the typical style of a scholar traveling to distant places in search of knowledge, Bahā’ al-Dīn’s travels were an inevitable part of his responsibilities as a *shaykh al-islām* and high-ranking scholar of the Safavid court, which was itself highly mobile. Nevertheless, Bahā’ al-Dīn took full advantage of his travels, propagating the knowledge he amassed in previous years, particularly his extensive knowledge of Shiite hadith and law rooted in the ‘Āmilī intellectual tradition, which stretched back to al-Shahīd al-Thānī. Wherever he traveled, Bahā’ al-Dīn was surrounded by students, whether those in his entourage or locals, who copied his latest books, read their books to him, and received certificates.

The case of Bahā’ al-Dīn’s scholarly circle seems to be similar to other scholarly circles of Safavid Iran. As alluded to in this paper, we know that contemporary Shiite scholars – such as Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh Luṭf Allāh al-Maysī (in Isfahan), Mullā ‘Abdullāh Shūshtarī (initially in Mashhad and later in Isfahan), and Sayyid Mājīd al-Baḥrānī (in Shiraz) – had their own scholarly circles. At the same time, other scholarly circles likely convened in Shiite regions beyond the Safavid realm: for example, in the holy cities of Iraq, India, Bahrain, and even Mecca, as we saw in the case of Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn al-Shahīd al-Thānī. Forming the nodes of the broader Shiite intellectual network of the early modern period, these circles were in intellectual and scholarly exchange with one another, and students seem to have moved freely between them. What gives Bahā’ al-Dīn’s scholarly circle a distinctive character was its mobility, which aided the propagation of knowledge beyond intellectual centers. Further study of these scholarly circles could shed considerable light on the broader Shiite intellectual network and its ways of collaboration and knowledge transmission in this period.

<sup>93</sup> Malikī, “Ijāzāt al-Shaykh,” 259; al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, 1:78.

<sup>94</sup> MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Aşir Efendi 317. The manuscript was owned by a certain ‘Ilmī al-Kātib, whom Bahā’ al-Dīn knew. Bahā’ al-Dīn got the copy and read it, but returned it to ‘Ilmī after noticing the book belonged to him, according to his ownership note. Bahā’ al-Dīn addressed ‘Ilmī in a letter on the last page of the same manuscript, sending it to ‘Ilmī with Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ.

<sup>95</sup> Kirmānshāhī, *Mir’āt al-aḥwāl*, 102.

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