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ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ/RESEARCH ARTICLE

A SUFI COSMOPOLITAN OF 19TH CENTURY: EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY OF FADL B. ALAWI FROM SOUTH INDIA TO ISTANBUL

Musthafa UJAMPADY

Doktora Öğrencisi, Tasavvuf, Ankara Üniversitesi, Ankara
Phd fellow, Dept. of Tasawuf, Ankara University, Ankara/Turkey

musthafaujampady@gmail.com

orcid.org/0000-0002-6320-038X

Abstract

This article is a genuine attempt to read the eventful life of Seyyid Fadl, among the prominent Shaikhs of Ba Alawiyya Sufi order in recent times. Fadl b. Alawi's years in South India, where was born and grew up, his early spiritual activities and anti-colonial struggles which molded his life as a global Muslim personality, his life on the Arabian peninsula, his years of emirate in Zafar and the life of Istanbul where he lived the last years of his lifetime was dealt with. It explains his service and loyalty to the Ottoman Caliphate, tremendous efforts to unite the Muslim world and put an end to the ongoing colonial invasions and his adventurous life journey as an engineer of the cultural-spiritual-political bridge established between the Indian and Anatolian lands and as a pioneer of Muslim unity. Other issues discussed are Fadl b. Alawi's Sufi ideology, the introduction of Ba Alawiyya Sufi order, which laid the foundation for his cosmopolitan personality and brave sociopolitical interventions in the 19th century. His works, especially dealing with Sufism are analyzed within the limit of the article. Most importantly, we debate the intellectual connection between Sufism and politics and the inspiration for Sufi intervention in anti-colonial struggles of 19th century, taking account of Seyyid Fadl's life.

Keywords: Sufism, Fadl b. Alawi, Ba Alawiyya, South India, Ottoman Caliphate, Politics, Istanbul, Cosmopolitan

19. YÜZYIL'DA ÇOK YÖNLÜ BİR SUFİ: GÜNEY HİNDİSTAN'DAN İSTANBUL'A FADL B. ALEVİ'NİN SIRADIŞI YOLCULUĞU

Özet

Bu makale, son dönem Bâ Aleviyye tarikatının önde gelen şeyhlerinden Seyyid Fadl'ın çalkantılı hayatını okumaya yönelik bir girişimdir. Fadl b. Alevi'nin doğup büyüdüğü Güney Hindistan'da geçirdiği yıllar, kendisini evrensel bir Müslüman şahsiyet olarak şekillendiren erken dönem manevi faaliyetleri ve sömürgecilik karşıtı mücadeleleri, Arap yarımadasındaki yaşamı, Zafar'daki emirlik yılları ve hayatının son yıllarını geçirdiği İstanbul'daki günleri ele alınmaktadır. Hint ve Anadolu toprakları arasında kurulan kültürel-manevi-siyasi köprüünün mühendisi ve Müslüman birliğinin öncüsü olarak maceralı hayatı, Osmanlı hilâfetine olan çok yönlü hizmeti ve sadakati, Müslüman dünyasını birleştirmek ve devam eden batı istilalarına son vermek amacıyla gösterdiği büyük çabaları incelenmektedir. Fadl b. Alevi'nin tasavvufi düşüncesi, 19. yüzyılda çokyönlü kişiliğinin ve cesur sosyopolitik müdahalelerinin temelini oluşturan Bâ Aleviyye tarikatının tanıtılması ele alınan diğer konulardandır. Makale sınırları dahilinde özellikle tasavvufu ilgili eserleri incelenmiştir. Çalışma,

Seyyid Fadl'ın hayatını esas almakla birlikte, tasavvuf ve siyaset arasındaki entelektüel bağlantıyı ve 19. yüzyılın sömürgecilik karşıtı mücadelelerde Sufi müdahalesinin ilham kaynağını tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tasavvuf, Fadl b. Alevi, Bâ Aleviyye, Usmanlı, Güney Hindistan, Siyaset, İstanbul, Kozmopolitan

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Introduction

Today, a thought that is not historically valid and that there is no intellectual connection between Sufism and politics is constantly expressed. The assumption that politics excludes Sufi conceptions and that Sufis turn to worship by stepping down from world affairs in their own corner of conscience is almost a superstitious belief that dominates many of today's readers. However, it is clear that even living a solitary life away from the world and society in Sufi terms, can be handled differently in terms of political thought, and can be considered as a kind of "civil disobedience" against dominant and unjust structures. It is evident that, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the Companions and later Sufis-scholars were in charge of fighting against the oppressors and protecting the poor, the needy and the oppressed throughout their lives. The rise of Western colonialism in the 18th and 19th centuries presented Muslim societies with unprecedented regional and intellectual challenges, as the colonialists approached Islam as a threat. The Sufi orders took the charge of Islamic resistance and responded to the colonial presence in their societies through strong resilience and aggression. The Sufi sects and individuals stood together for the empowerment and unification of the Islamic world against western oppression and made tremendous efforts for the rise of the Muslim nations under the patronage of Ottoman caliphate. Political movements under the leadership of various Sufi orders played the main role in the unjust western colonization era. Moreover, considering that there are some sects and Sufis in the background of many rebellion movements both in the Ottoman state and other Muslim states, it is seen that the relationship between Sufism and politics is more complex than it is thought.

Here we take look at a South Indian mystic who was the best known in the modern Islamic world, whose adventurous journey as an engineer of the scientific-spiritual-political bridge established between the Indian and Anatolian lands, a pioneer of Muslim unity, Seyyid Fadl, among the prominent Shaikhs of Ba Alawiyya Sufi order of recent times. Although his cosmopolitan life raises the question of where the line between Sufism and politics is drawn, it would help us how Sufism has molded him as warrior of faith and truth and a sociopolitical reformer of 19th century, as his Ba Alawiyya predecessors had led a multifaceted life that encompassed the spiritual and political affairs of Muslims.

Anne Bang (2003) , Umar Khalidi (2004) , Engsang Ho (2003) , MH Ilyas (2007) , KK Sathar (2012) , Tufan Buzpinar (1993) and Jacob Wilson Chacko (2019) penned down important

works on the religious journeys of Ba Alawis to South India, the religious, cultural and political movements they have created in the region, and the sociopolitical consequences of their migration expeditions. They documented Seyyid Fadl's life, his political and intellectual contributions rather than his religious and spiritual activities. Seyyid Fadl's adventurous life as an ambitious politician was highlighted in those works and the influence of Ba Alawi Sufi tradition, which acted as a driving force for his sociopolitical interferences, was neglected. This attempt is believed to have succeeded in introducing the role of Sufis in the Islamic political arena of recent centuries to the academic world, taking account of Fadl bin Alawi's life, works and activities.

Sufi Heritage Of South India

South India is geography with a rich and old Islamic heritage. Its deep-rooted trade relations with Arab countries since pre-Islamic times have been a determining factor in terms of the emergence of Islam here.¹ Hundreds of Sufis coming from Arab countries, especially Yemen through commercial relations pioneered the spread of Islam and the introduction of Sufi ideology and orders. Yemen has become the meeting point of the lineage of many well-known Sufi orders in the region. Considered the most popular spiritual institutions of the region, Qadiriyya and Nakshbandiyya, entered the region through the Yemen road. They engaged in large-scale religious-scholarly exchanges with the Muslim community in the South India, especially in styles under the broad banner of religion. Thus, they built cultural legacies throughout their journeys and revived their religious and spiritual spaces there with the construction of mosques, dervish lodges, and religious schools. Thus a strong Sharia-based Sufi culture has been created and nurtured in the region. The last entry in that list was the Ba Alawiyya order.²

Ba Alawiyya Sufi Order

Ba Alawiyya is a Sufi order, which is rooted in the entire South Indian Islamic culture and has a wide area of influence in religious, social and political areas of the region. Ba Alawis' field of activities in the region for the last 3 centuries was not only limited to Sufism. They were equally active in the religious-socio-cultural and educational fields. Alawi tariqah or Tariqat-Sadah Al- Ba Alawi was founded in the 6/12th century. This Sufi order is formed by Alawi Seyyids, a branch of the prophet's descendants living in the Hadhramout region of Yemen. The moral codes, scientific and moral virtues and the preference of ascetic life inherited from the life of the Prophet (pbuh) were passed down to generations by the members of the Ahl-u bait, has gradually been shaped as an independent Sufi school. Based on the spiritual structure of Qadiriyyah and Shadiliyyah

¹ Haneef C Muhammad, "Güney Hindistandaki Dini Cemaatler ve Din Hizmetleri," in *İslam Dünyasında Din Hizmetleri ve Dini Kurumlar* (II. Uluslararası Öğreci Sempozyumu, Konya: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2015); Syed Mohideen Shah, *Islam in Kerala* (Thrissur: The Muslim Educational Association, 1972).

² Dr. V Kunhali, *Sufism in Kerala* (Publication Division, University of Calicut, 2004).

Sufi orders and the spiritual thoughts of Imam Ghazzali, it was founded by Muhammed bin Ali (1178-1256), known as al-Faqih al-Muqaddam.³ The method of the Alawi order is summed up as allegiance to Quran and Sunnah (Ittiba'ul Quran ve Sunnet) along with following the footsteps of salaf al-salih (Iqtida'u Selef-i Swalih). Ba Alawiyya, which adopts a moderate understanding of Sufism, is distinguished from other orders in terms of not encouraging the 'khalwa' (seclusion) for spiritual upbringing and not condemning the involvement of members in worldly activities. The administration of family, social and political affairs have been promoted, taking into account the concept of world-hereafter balance inspired by Ghazzali. It can be said that this kind of multifaceted personality, along with the vision of Ba Alawi order, which inspired the Ba Alawis to intervene in the spiritual, social and political spheres at the same time, was inherited from the Prophet (pbuh), who is the first example of the believers in all these spheres. The love and acceptance of Muslims towards them as a family of prophet have led them to realize that they have a religious responsibility in all matters of the community. It can be seen that, the political involvement of the Ba Alawis in Yemen and other areas and later in South India was firmly rooted in the spiritual and moral values they adopted. Thus, in the Comoros, Kilva, Zanzibar and Indonesia, the Ba Alawis exerted influence over the local sultans at various religious, social, and political levels. In 1891, Syed Ahmed Ba Alawi was the head of an important area, south of Mogadishu.⁴

Ba Alawis are generally members of the Shafi School in practice and the Ash'ariyya order in faith. This spiritual order has spread to Hadhramout and its surroundings and then to the whole Islamic geography by the hands of the great representatives over time, and has been transferred to future generations as the spiritual heritage of Ba Alawi seyyid families for centuries.⁵

The migration of Ba Alawis to South India in the 18th century has created remarkable changes in the spiritual-cultural lives of the Muslim communities as elsewhere on the Indian Ocean coast. Unlike Europeans, whose activities combined conquest and trade and maintained monopolies with navies, Ba Alawi immigrant mystics engaged in wide-ranging religious and cultural exchanges with the peoples of the Indian Ocean, particularly in styles under the broad banner of religion. The researchers called the Ba Alawi activities a unique school rather than a Sufi sect - the Alawi order or the Alawi path. Ba Alawis were the cosmopolitan Sufis, as the migration and the voyage were part and parcel of their lives. Members of the tariqah are present and active in the Arabian Peninsula, Africa, India and the Far East countries.

The first Ba Alawi, Seyyid Jifri reached South India in 1755. His successors Seyyid Hasan Jifri, Seyyid Alawi and Seyyid Fadl also spent their time and energies to convey the Ba

³ Amin Buxton, *Imams of the Valley* (Western Cape South Africa: Dar al-Turath Islami, 2012), 18; Engseung Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, California World History Library (University of California Press, 2006), 202.

⁴ Zaidi Habib Matsah, "Ba'alawi," accessed March 31, 2020, www.academia.edu.

⁵ Hussain Randathani Kallen, "Hadrami Sayyids in the Sufism of Malabar," accessed March 18, 2020, <https://www.academia.edu>.

Alawi spiritual teachings and Islamic principles to the people and raised hundreds of followers (mureeds) along with their political involvements and anti-colonial struggles.

Seyyid Fadl's Early Life And Journey

Seyyid Alawi's successor, Fadl bin Alawi (1824-1901) was born in Kerala and received his early religious and mystical education here. Seyyid Fadl, who grew up under the supervision of his father from an early age, had an extraordinary personality. Fadl was raised by his father within the scope of Ba Alawiyya mystical foundations. Thus, he specialized in Arabic, Quran, Hadith, Fiqh as well as tasawuf. Along with his father Seyyid Alawi, Kusay Haji and Abu Koya Musliyar were among those who guided him to the affiliation of Qadiriyyah and Ba Alawiyya sufi orders. Seyyid Fadl travelled Mecca and Yemen for higher religious studies. During his five years in Makkah and Yemen, he became associated with many Ba Alawi-Hadrami Sufis, scholars and intellectuals of the period, which helped him to improve himself intellectually and spiritually. Ijazet (Recognition of the Shaikh), an important stage in the spiritual journey, was rewarded by Sheikh Syed Abdullah b. Hussain b.Tahir (d. 1272), thus he was qualified to raise disciples (Mureed) in the way of Ba Alawi. He returned to Malabar in 1849. After father's death, all the spiritual and religious positions he held in Malabar moved to Seyyid Fadl. Fadl expanded the mosque in Mamburam and started religious and spiritual duties from there.⁶

Seyyid Fadl's spiritual teachings had an unprecedented impact on the South Indian people and they were instrumental in reaching of Ba Alawi Sufi thoughts to the larger masses. At the same time, following his forefather's footsteps, he actively interfered in sociopolitical affairs regarding native Muslims. He convinced the public that fighting against the colonial forces who had already invaded the area is an Islamic imperative and taught them that death during the independence war is martyrdom.⁷ He successfully combined his call for political movement with the features of the Sufi training and carried out his teachings within the framework of "self-purification" (Tazkiyah nefs-jihad against nefs) and propounded that this is the greater jihad, which is a necessary hurdle to be tackled before going for the anti-colonial struggles and the progress of the Muslim individual and the community. He emphasized that as the first stage of the methods of self-cleansing, one should be careful about both the Fard (obligatory religious duties) and Sunnah (voluntary religious duties). In his essay titled as "Uddat-ul Umara", Seyyid Fadl pointed out that the root cause of the defeat of the world Muslims against the

⁶ D. Muhammed b. Abu Bekir ba Ziyb, *Ishamat-u Ulamaa-i Hadramout fi Neshri-l Ulumi-l Islamiyya F-il Hind*, 206, accessed February 3, 2021, <http://archive.org/details/IshamatU>; Sha P, "Role of Mamburam Thangal in Malabar," accessed December 29, 2020, <https://www.academia.edu>.

⁷ Mohammed Abdul Sathar K.K, "History of Ba Alawis in Kerala" (PhD Thesis, Kerala, India, University of Calicut, 2015), 59, <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/48198>.

external invaders was the former's love of the material world and their spiritual depravity.⁸

During the resistance against the colonizers, Seyyid Fadl encouraged the people to read the classic Sufi texts such as "Nefaisu-l Durar", and thought that these works would be the source of inspiration that would strengthen the spirit of Islamic belief and resistance. It is also noteworthy that many of the fighters were members of Ba Alawiyya. In various instances of the resistance movement, before starting the uprisings, the fighters visited the Mamburam Ba Alawi lodge and resorted to the spiritual blessing of the Ba Alawis. They all paid tribute to Seyyid Alevi's tomb and received Seyyid Fadl's encouraging sermons. All of these cases confirm that the main source of the brave political intervention of Seyyid Fadl in the region is the Sufi tradition and teachings, which were transferred to them.

There are striking similarities between the colonial resistance plan of Seyyid Fadl and of the prominent Sufis of Northern India, who carried out their counter attacks against the British. The ulama and the Sufis never came to terms with the western government and opposed any party or organization or person that supported it. Thus, in 17th and 19th centuries the ulama and Sufis of North and South India opposed foreign rule and did their best to protect the interests of the oppressed. As Seyyid Fadl was in constant relation with Islamic movements going around the world, the Sufism-inspired resistance movements by Shah Waliyullah Dihlevi (1702-1762), Seyyid Ahmed Shahid (1786-1831), Shah Ismail Shahid (1781-1831) and other northern Indian mystics must have influenced the ideology of the Ba Alawis and especially Seyyid Fadl.⁹

Days Under Ottoman Patronage

Seyyid Fadl fought effectively against western colonists in India, where he spent his youth period, while upholding and preaching the Sufi traditions he had inherited. For this reason, he had to leave the land where he was born. It is said that the British expelled him and denied entry to India forever. Having come to the Arabian Peninsula in 1852 and settled in Mecca, Fadl b. Alawi established good relations with Ba Alawi Sufis, scholars, statesmen and Muslims coming from different regions for hajj pilgrimage. For a while, he made an emirate to the province of Zafar in Yemen upon the native people's request. Seyyid Fadl, in addition to being a devout mystic, is a member of a family of Ahl-ul bayt originating from Yemen and current representative of a prestigious Sufi tradition originated here. The Zafar people had great respect for Fadl's ancestors. This invitation from Zafar made him very happy and Fadl must have seen that it was the poetic justice of history that he was commissioned to return this sacred land, the venue for the legendary spiritual and social activities of his forefathers, to its former cultural prosperity. He fulfilled important responsibilities as the ruler of Zafar in the Yemen lands. Ending the

⁸ Fazal b. Ali Alevi, *Uddat-ul Umara*, accessed October 2, 2020, <https://ketabpedia.com>.

⁹ K.K, "History of Ba Alawis in Kerala," 21.

centuries-long tribal conflicts and political anarchy, Fadl made a miraculous political change there and started to base the administration with religious principles under the patronage of the Ottoman Islamic caliphate. Although Fadl succeeded in building a self-sufficient and prosperous welfare state based on the Houta model villages established by his Ba Alawi predecessors in Yemen, this achievement did not last long and he had to leave the place due to the tribal wars in the region, the constant intervention of the British authorities, and the severe drought that shook the territory.¹⁰

Meanwhile, Seyyid Fadl came to Istanbul and re-established connections with the Ottoman caliphate of the period. Fadl was appointed as chief advisor to Ottoman Caliph and awarded with ministry and state medals (Fazl Pasha) by Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Seyyid Fadl became the Sultan's senior adviser on matters in the Indian subcontinent and Arab geography and initiated many plans to improve the Ottoman administration in this region. Fadl's advice on the reforms to be carried out in the Hejaz and Arabian Peninsula was highly appreciated by Sultan. In the new consultancy system developed by Sultan Abdul Hamid, Fadl has been one of the four main advisors responsible for Ottoman relations with the Islamic world.¹¹ During this period, Fadl did many attempts to end the regional conflicts in Yemen and bring political stability under Ottoman patronage, but he couldn't succeed, and this move led the historians later to portray him as an ambitious politician, rather than a Sufi scholar who was concerned about the prevailing condition of his ancestor's nation and epicenter of Ba Alawi Sufi heritage. "I like giving to people and not taking anything back from them. I came to Istanbul not to gather the material world, but to serve my religion and help Muslims."¹² -These words of his own summarize the life of a cosmopolitan mystic who dedicated himself to the service of Islam and the Muslim communities.

Seyyid Fadl was in constant contact with the Ottoman Empire, especially during the colonial struggle, together with the scholars and Sufis in Anatolia. Ba Alawis sought to become the voluntary ambassadors of the Ottoman government in distant geographies such as South India and Java, and appealed to the global Islamic audience, calling for a Muslim political union under a legal caliphate. By the middle of the 19th century, modern imperial domination currents that intersected with Islamic conceptions of sovereignty in unforeseen ways in time and space emerged, and most of them targeted Muslim geographies. In the text entries of the work titled "Uddat-ul Umara", which acknowledges that Seyyid Fadl has gathered together, it is stated that the book is "embellished" with a prayer for "the Ottoman State, the source of the pride of states and eternal happiness". However, at the bottom of every page, a prayer for a universal Ottoman sovereignty was added, which is presumably added when it was published in

¹⁰ Jacob Wilson Chacko, *For God or Empire: Sayyid Fadl and the Indian Ocean World* (Stanford University Press, 2019), 63; Maruf Toprak, "Life and Sufi Views of Fadl b. Alevi, Among Alawi sheikhs of the Recent Times." (Master's thesis, Uludağ University, Turkey, 2018), 18, <http://acikerisim.uludag.edu.tr>.

¹¹ Anne K. Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1925*, 1 edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2003), 68.

¹² Toprak, "Life and Sufi Views of Fadl b. Alevi, Among Alawi sheikhs of the Recent Times.," 27.

1857.¹³ Considering the complex origins of Uddat, it is understood that this Arabic work addresses the global Islamic audience. He also called on to restructure an ongoing unjust imperial policy against Muslims and to be a supporter of the Ottoman state. The quotations of al-Haddad, one of the Ba Alawi pioneers, form a large part of a compilation of hadiths and historical examples emphasizing the importance of maintaining a recognizable Muslim identity and rejecting imitation of Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and polytheists. It has been emphasized that imitation will lead to doomsday for the Ummah and only wise rulers who practice "religious divine politics" (al-Siyasa al-Shar'iyye al-Ilahiyya) can provide a universal Islamic order. Another work of Seyyid Fadl titled as "Tanbihul-Ukala' li suluk-is s-Suada" (1881), nicknamed the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II as the caliph of Islam. Under each of the first eighteen pages of the work, two hadiths regarding the obligation to obey the caliph are cited. For instance, "He is despised by God who despises the Sultan. Anyone who betrays the Sultan will be betrayed by Allah." In the margin on page 13, it is emphasized that obeying Sultan Abdulhamid is religiously necessary because he is the caliph of Allah on earth. -The virtues of the Ottoman sultans, the religion of Islam and their services to the Muslims were mentioned in the "Al-Fuyuzat-il Ilahiyya va Anavr-il Nabaviyya".¹⁴ In short, Seyyid Fadl called on to restructure an ongoing unjust imperial policy targeting Muslims and realized that the only way to achieve that is to strengthen Ottoman state and widen its reach and acceptance. Seyyid Fadl, who came under the patronage of the Ottoman sultans after his expulsion from South India, further expanded his efforts in this direction.

Sufi Or Reformist?

Along with various religious, moral and political duties in Jeddah, Egypt and Turkey, Seyyid Fadl was also known as the bearer of the Ba Alawiyya order in Anatolia, raised followers through both the Ba Alawiyya and Shadiliyya Sufi orders and endeavored to pass on this valuable heritage to the next generations until the end of his life.¹⁵ During the last two decades of Fadl's life in Istanbul, he turned out to be more devoted to the Ba Alawiyya Sufi path, he wrote more than twenty works in different sciences, especially Sufism. Most of his work was based on the spiritual heritage that Ba Alawis have formed over the centuries and their history. It is understood that although he was one of the important Sufi and political figures in the period he lived, he did not receive the attention he deserved in the Islamic literary world.

Fadl bin Alawi has been a figure that the British government was afraid of due to his fierce anti-colonial activities in India until the end of his life. Accordingly, he was always followed by the British officials, tried to be shown as insignificant and discredited before the official authorities, and eventually many of the services he planned to do were

¹³ Wilson Chacko, *For God or Empire: Sayyid Fadl and the Indian Ocean World*, 48.

¹⁴ Seema Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2015), 115.

¹⁵ Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*, 68.

prevented. His efforts to strengthen the Islamic unity and Ottoman domination caused him to be shown as an ambitious and greedy politician by his opponents. This picturisation of colonialists was copied by orientalists and later reflected in most of the modern day studies about him.

Seyyid Fadl has called upon the Muslim world to follow the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (sa) and to restore the Islamic unity. It has been claimed that Jamaledin al-Afghani and Ibn Wahhab had an important influence on his religious ideology and activities. However, his Ba Alawi followers and the Sufis of the time rejected such cases. They showed that the Sufi greats, especially Ba Alawis were involved in social and political affairs from the earliest times, whenever Muslim Ummah required them. Therefore, Ba Alawi Sufi tradition and their political experiments in Yemen in early periods played the role of driving force for the political movements of Seyyid Alawi and Seyyid Fadl. It is wrong to associate Fadl, who stood for the Muslim unity under the Ottoman rule with Ibn Wahhab, who started the Arab political approach against the Ottomans. The Ba Alawiyya Sufi tradition, which he represented till death and the Ratib, Moulid organized by him and dhikr collections compiled by him were contradicting to the typical Wahhabi ideology.¹⁶ It should also be taken into account that Seyyid Fadl declared at the beginning of his work titled Uddet-ul Umara, which he published while serving the Ottoman State, that he followed the Ba Alawi Sufi path faithfully.

Seyyid Fadl had constant contact and exchanges of ideas with Islamic religious-political movements going in other parts of India and in the Islamic world. That included Jamaluddin al-Afghani and other contemporaries.¹⁷ All those relationships were part of his sincere effort to unite Muslim Ummah and put an end to colonial tortures that targeted Muslim world and Islamic institutions. Seyyid Fadl was a typical Ba Alawi Sufi scholar capable of carrying out spiritual and social leadership at the same time. The prevention of religious and spiritual activities in South India and the targeting of the Muslims and religious movements by the colonists who were carrying the ghost of crusades, made the struggle and resistance inevitable. As stated earlier, Seyyid Fadl's teachings and efforts after that, aimed at the freedom of belief, religious-socio-cultural development of Muslims in particular and revival of Muslim unity and brotherhood starting from the self-purification of themselves (tazkiyah nafs), while himself upholding the traditional Tasawuf-based ideology of Ba Alawiyya.

Analyzing Fadl's Works On Tasawuf

The content and nature of Seyyid Fadl's works during his stay in Istanbul reveals his religious views and ideologies. Et-tarikatul-hanifetul s-semha (True and Merciful path), one of the works that Fadl compiled during his stay at Istanbul, sheds light on the Ba Alawi spiritual heritage. The work is a comprehensive guide about the long chain of

¹⁶ Wilson Chacko, *For God or Empire: Sayyid Fadl and the Indian Ocean World*, 70.

¹⁷ K.K., "History of Ba Alawis in Kerala."

Seyyids and saints of Ba Alawiyya, their wise teachings, Ba Alawi dhikr forms and the basic correctness of the Alawi order.

Contemporary Ba Alawi representatives, such as Ahmad Ibn Sumayt of Zanzibar and Abdul Rahman al-Mashur, had constant relations with Seyyid Fadl and they engaged in active exchanges of Sufi and religious thoughts. In this context, it is noteworthy that the Seyyid Fadl, who had a scholarly relationship with Ahmed Zayni Dahlan, the famous Shafii scholar of the time and the imam of the Haremein, was active with the historical Dahlan-Hadrami spiritual web, which was strengthened by the Ba Alawis of Hadhramout. The Al-Ahdals and Ba Alawis along with Dahlan, had a key node in the vast Islamic knowledge transmission network centered on Mecca and spread across the Islamic world, their connections were stretching from Basra to the west. From the mid-nineteenth century until his death, Seyyid Fadl had long been part of this network. Seyyid Fadl travelled various geographies and went on spiritual journeys to the Ba Alawi Sufi lodges and thus became attached to the consolidated global spiritual networks of the Ba Alawi Sufis.¹⁸

The prominent representatives of Ba Alawiyya at the time, Abdul Rahman al-Mashur and Ahmad Ibn Sumayt went to Istanbul to continue spiritual studies with Fadl. Seyyid Fadl also went to Zanzibar to visit Ibn Sumayt in 1911, it is understood that their connection with each other went beyond being obviously contemporary Sufi figures. Rather, this relationship takes shape as a deep sheikh-disciple bond within the framework of Ba Alawiyya tradition. At the time of the birth of Ibn Sumayt's son, he was with Seyyid Fadl and Fadl announced to Ibn Sumayt the birth of his son and called him 'Umar' long before the news of birth reached Istanbul.¹⁹

During their time together in Istanbul, both Ba Alawi mentors collaborated on writing about the Ba Alawi tradition and the biography collection of ancestors. This work titled as 'Izahu'l-esrari'l-ulwiyya ve minhaju's-Sadeti'l-Alawiyya' is an important study aiming to introduce young generation with the tradition of their ancestors. While the author was writing his book in the 1890s, he must be concerned that the new generations loosing ties to their roots and spiritual tradition. The work was published under Ottoman patronage and it is said to have an Ottoman translation on its margins.²⁰ The work is written in a typical Sufi pedagogical manner, starting from what is required to cleanse the soul and presents the way of living Islam in terms of Sufism. In the last chapter, Ba Alawiyya mysticism is explained in three sub-sections. The first is related to the origin of Ba Alawiyya and the chain of sheikhs. Secondly, it discusses about the Islamic morality (akhlaq). The third part introduces the reader to various modes (Hal) the positions (maqam) of the spiritual journey.

¹⁸ Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*, 73.

¹⁹ Buxton, *Imams of the Valley*, 84.

²⁰ Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*, 73.

Fadl and Ibn Sumayt also wrote a hagiographic narrative about the former's father, The title was "Nubzetun ala-bazi menakibi'l-gavsi'-Sheheer ve'l-qutbi'l-muneer Alawi ibn Mohammed Sahl Mawladdevila al-Alawi al-Husaini al-Hadrami". This work was published in Beirut in 1886 in a multilingual print with an Ottoman Turkish translation.

Seyyid Fadl, through his spiritual training, molded hundreds of scholars and Sufis. Many of them became famous in the Islamic world as Ba Alawi flag bearers after Fadl and Sufi philosophers: Allama Arif Ahmad b. Hasan al-Attas (d. 1334), Allama al-Musnid Sheikh Abu Bakr b. Shihab al-Aidarusi Hyderabad (d. 1341), Sheikh Hussain b. Muhammad al-Hibshi (d. 1330, Shafi'i Mufti of Makkah), Alawi b. Abdurrahman al-Mashur, Saleem b. Ayderus b. Salim al-Bar, Ahmed b. Abubaker b. Sumayt.²¹ So, as Anne Bang and Wilson Chacko have stated²², there is no point in stating that Fadl's religious ideology was influenced by the reformist and pan-Islamist movements that emerged in the Islamic world around the 19th century. Seyyid Fadl's writings reassure his allegiance and loyalty to the Ba Alawi spirituality and traditional Islam.

Seyyid Fadl passed away in 1900 in Istanbul, fulfilling an eventful and creative life journey, engaging in various moral and political duties in India, Yemen, Jeddah, Egypt and Turkey. The Ottoman Sufi community, Sultan Abdul Hamid II, Minister of Justice Abdurrahman Pasha, Treasury Minister Hasan Fehmi Pasha, Vizier Rıdvan Pasha, Seyyid Abdullah Pasha from Mecca, Sheikh Zâfir Efendi from foreign affairs, Sheikh Hamza Efendi, chief of staff Sefik Bey and state treasury guard Seyyid Şerif Bey and thousands of people attended the funeral procession of Seyyid Fadl at the historic Aya Sophia Mosque on October 26, 1900.²³ The presence of those dignitaries shows the influence of Seyyid Fadl in Ottoman religious and political arenas.

Conclusion

Seyyid Fadl, was a unique figure who stood against the exploitation of Arab-African lands by the British invaders in the 20th century and made tremendous efforts to unite India, Arabia and the Ottoman Empire within this movement. In Seyyid Fadl's biography by Wilson Chacko Jacob titled as "For God or Empire: Syed Fadl and the Indian Ocean World", has argued that his activities were the reflection of the prevailing dynamics of history, politics and religion. Seyyid Fadl, who lived a multi-faceted life as a spiritual guide, warrior, ruler, and leading adviser to the Turkish sultan, was a man of many personalities. It is interesting to see how he applied the integration of political-spiritual arenas, have influence on multiple spheres, being a cosmopolitan Fakir (Sufi).

Fadl's political experiments in South India conditioned his understanding of Seyyid power in the context of the survival of the Muslim community, where the sovereignty

²¹ ba Ziyb, *Ishamat-u Ulama-i Hadramout fi Neshri-l Ulumi-l Islamiyya F-il Hind*, 201.

²² Wilson Chacko, *For God or Empire: Sayyid Fadl and the Indian Ocean World*, 71; Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*, 64.

²³ Toprak, "Life and Sufi Views of Fadl b. Alevi, Among Alawi sheikhs of the Recent Times.," 25.

given to his noble personality as a member of Ahl al-bayt. His time in exile exposed him to a different kind of geopolitical environment, and on a very different scale, he began to shape his role as a mystic-Seyyid, political guide, with a deep sense of past/tradition, with an anxious eye towards the future and the problems faced by Muslims. Unlike the western records of Fadl's life, local hagiographies relate religious devotion, social isolation, political activity, and spiritual abilities (miracles) under one unified heading. The dimensions, which bring together the various dimensions of Seyyid Fadl's life and inspire them, can be classified as Islam, Islamic Ethics and Sufi Tradition. The extraordinary life of Prophet (pbuh) as a complete pioneer in all fields and areas was inherited to the many generations of Ahl al-bayt by blood relation, while Ba Alawiyya played an important role in building a structural foundation and the moral code to his cosmo political interventions.

As it is evident in the life of Seyyid Fadl, Sufis has avoided any political contact and did never kept desire for positions and roles. At the same time, they did not hesitate to warn those in power when they turned against the interests of the people and always rushed to the rescue of Islamic societies whenever they were in danger. On the other hand, all the Sufi orders included the service of religion and the people as an important factor of Sufi way. Therefore, Sufis did not refrain from intervening in politics in any Islamic geography when it was required. Actually, Seyyid Fadl in South India and others put one foot in the Sufi tradition, they are affiliated to, and the other in the service of Islam strictly on the basis of the moral foundations and ethics. It is important in terms of the spiritual-political situation of Islamic geographies today to have a close look at how they managed to maintain the multi-directional religious life, which they took as an example from the Prophet (sa). Seyyid Fadl is a golden example of this, taking the Ottoman sultans' political-religious services in Istanbul, fulfilling his spiritual duties as a flag bearer of Ba Alawiyya Sufi tradition orally and verbally and traveling around the Islamic world with the goal of uniting Muslims in the political arena. The analysis of Seyyid Fadl's legacy would never have been complete without the deep study of the influence of the Ba Alawi Sufi way of life, which molded all aspects of his cosmopolitan life, inspired his sociopolitical activism and laid the foundation for his ethics and values.

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