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# Sacred immigrants and travelling rituals: Malabar in the Sufi cosmopolis of the Indian Ocean

Parappu Kadavath Matra Abdul Jaleel 

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore  
Email: [a.jaleel@nus.edu.sg](mailto:a.jaleel@nus.edu.sg); [jaliynu@gmail.com](mailto:jaliynu@gmail.com)

## Abstract

This article traces how the Yemeni-origin Sufi order of Ṭarīqa ‘Alawiyya and its ritual litany of al-Ḥaddād, with chants and prayers for the Prophet and his descendants especially from Hadramawt, became part of everyday Muslim devotional practices in Malabar through immigrant networks of Hadrami Sayyids. Competing, sometimes rivalling, and appropriating other Sufi religiosities, the Alawi order meaningfully involved within the theo-legal Sufi discourses that have been remoulding the Sufi cosmopolis in the Indian Ocean. By focusing on two notable early immigrant Sayyids in Malabar, this article argues that the successful placement of the ‘Alawī order within the Sufi cosmopolis and the permeation of the ritual was a complex socio-religious project that was brought forth by various aspects of the sacred genealogy, Alawī Sufi writings, Sufi activism, and the effective utilisation of Hadrami immigrant networks.

**Keywords:** Hadramis; Indian Ocean; Malabar; Sufism; Ṭarīqa ‘Alawiyya

## Introduction

The attempts to trace religious networks such as those of the Hadrami Alawī Sufis have succeeded in providing cultural contours to the Indian Ocean trade routes, which have been unfolding through a series of publications for the last three decades.<sup>1</sup> However, despite intense maritime interactions since centuries ago, Malabar has not been placed adequately in the debates on wider Arab Sufi networks in the Indian Ocean,<sup>2</sup> nor have

<sup>1</sup> A wide array of publications on Hadramis in diverse regions of the Indian Ocean has come out in the last few decades; see e.g. in *Hadrami Traders, Scholars and Statesman in the Indian Ocean, 1750s-1960*, (eds.) U. Freitag and W. G. Clarence-Smith (Leiden, 1997); N. Mobini-Kesheh, *The Hadrami Awakening: Community and Identity in the Netherlands East Indies, 1900-1942* (New York, 1999); L. Boxberger, *On the Edge of Empire: Hadramawt, Emigration and the Indian Ocean, 1880s-1930s* (New York, 2002); U. Freitag, *Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadramaut: Reforming the Homeland* (Leiden, 2003); A. K. Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1925* (London, 2003); E. Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (California, 2006); L. Manger, *The Hadrami Diaspora: Community Building on the Indian Ocean Rim* (New York, 2010). On the racial identification of Arabs, see S. K. Mandal, *Becoming Arab: Creole Histories and Modern Identity in the Malay World* (Cambridge, 2018); and on colonial law and Arabs, see N. Yahaya, *Fluid Jurisdictions: Colonial Law and Arabs in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca and London, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Despite having rampant connections and ubiquitous stakes, the Hadrami diaspora in Malabar still requires comprehensive research, although certain aspects of the community have appeared in the larger discussion of South Indian Muslims; see e.g. S. F. Dale, *The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922: Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 127–137. For their sociopolitical role in Malabar, see S. Dale, ‘The Hadrami diaspora in south

the sociocultural formations and ritual accretions of Mappila Muslim society through transregional contacts been parsed out systematically.<sup>3</sup> Although the commercial interactions of Malabar as a prime entrepôt in the east–west trade of the Indian Ocean have been expatiated,<sup>4</sup> its role in the development of a Muslim religious community has yet to be fully deciphered.<sup>5</sup> Prange brilliantly analysed the historical process of shaping ‘Monsoon Islam’ up to the sixteenth century, primarily through humdrum maritime trading communities and its human historical engagements with non-Muslim societies.<sup>6</sup> However, transregional Arab communities such as Hadrami Sayyids, who moved out of Southern Arabia with the Alawi Sufi order in the later centuries, are often pathetically enwrapped within the local nationalist and Marxist frameworks, stripping them of their transregional legacies.<sup>7</sup> The explorative realms of Sufi Islam that are employed by such Sufi communities in the non-Middle Eastern regions such as the Indian Ocean, where the majority of the community inhabit, thus, remain the least represented in studies of Islam and Muslims.<sup>8</sup> This article, therefore, traces the historical development and religious cultural trajectories of Hadrami Sayyid immigrants in Malabar and the permeation of the Alawi Sufi litany into Mappila devotionism. It mainly examines two early immigrant Sufi scholars, focusing on their diasporic writings and Sufi activities.

Being connected through multicentred networks of masters, disciples, texts, shared Sufi ideas, and values that expanded by cutting across geospatial and oceanic boundaries and often sought engagements with local patterns of spiritualities, Sufism can be conceived as an important form of a variety cosmopolitanism that existed in the premodern Muslim world.<sup>9</sup> The Sufi cosmopolis is defined not merely by the conflux of various networks of people bonded in organised or less organised Sufism, but also by a corpus of

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western India: the role of the Sayyids of the Malabar coast’, in *Hadrami Traders, Scholars and Statesman*, (eds.) Freitag and Clarence-Smith, pp. 175–197; see also A. Jaleel PKM, ‘The Hadrami Sayyid Diaspora in Kerala and Singapore: A Comparative Study’ (unpublished PhD thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2015); A. Jaleel PKM, ‘Religious rivalries in eighteenth-century Malabar: the diasporic writings of a Hadrami scholar’, in *Malabar in the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism in a Maritime Historical Region*, (eds.) M. Kooria and M. N. Pearson (Oxford, 2018), pp. 258–281.

<sup>3</sup> Mappilas have putatively been introduced as a creole society that developed through the conversion of indigenous people and the temporal intermarriages of Arab traders; see Dale, *Mappilas of Malabar*, p. 24; A. Wink, *Al Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World Early Medieval and Expansion of Islam 7th–11th Centuries* (Leiden, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 69–70; see G. Bouchon, ‘A microcosm: Calicut in the sixteenth century’, in *Asian Merchants and Businessmen in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea*, (eds.) D. Lombard and J. Aubin (Delhi, 2000), pp. 40–49; V. S. D’Souza, ‘Status groups among the Moplahs on the south-west coast of India’, in *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India*, (ed.) A. Imtiaz (Delhi, 1978), p. 24. Barbosa recorded the term ‘Mapulers’ for the indigenous Moors against the category of foreign ‘Pardesy’; see D. Barbosa, *Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1866), pp. 146–148. For Logan’s observations, see W. Logan, *Malabar* (Madras, 1951), vol. 1, p. 191.

<sup>4</sup> On the commercial networks of Malabar, see A. Das Gupta, *Malabar in Asian Trade 1740–1800* (Cambridge, 1967); A. Das Gupta, ‘Malabar in c. 1740’, in *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant 1500–1800: Collected Essays of the Ashin Das Gupta*, (eds.) A. Das Gupta et al. (New Delhi, 2001), pp. 421–456; G. Bouchon, ‘Sixteenth century Malabar and the Indian Ocean’, in *India and the Indian Ocean 1500–1800*, (eds.) A. Das Gupta and M. N. Pearson (Calcutta, 1987), pp. 46–56; R. Banerjee, ‘Mappilla mercantile network of Malabar in the 18th century’, in *Minorities on India’s West Coast: History and Society*, (ed.) A. Gupta (Delhi, 1991), pp. 151–201.

<sup>5</sup> For a general overview of cultural transmissions, see M. H. Ilias, ‘Mappila Muslims and the cultural content of trading Arab diaspora on the Malabar coast’, *Asian Journal of Social Sciences* 35 (2007), pp. 434–456.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. S. R. Prange, *Monsoon Islam: Trade and Faith on the Malabar Coast* (Cambridge, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> On the concept of nationalist Mappila, see M. T. Ansari, ‘Refiguring the fanatic: Malabar 1836–1922’, in *Muslims, Dalits, and the Fabrications of History: Subaltern Studies XII*, (eds.) S. Mayaram et al. (Delhi 2005), pp. 64–77; K. M. Bahaudhin, *Kerala Muslimkal Cheruthunilpinte Charithram* (Calicut, 1995). For the Marxist reading, see K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprising in Malabar, 1836–1921* (Delhi, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> S. Ahmad, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton and Oxford, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Peacock shows how Sufi cosmopolitanism produces continuity rather than diversity; A. C. S. Peacock, ‘Sufi cosmopolitanism in the seventeenth-century Indian Ocean: Shari’a, lineage and royal power in Southeast Asia

spiritual concepts, ideas, values, and moral camaraderie of brotherhoods that are elaborated on in the Sufi texts, enacted and circulated by Sufi figures individually or collectively across a vast swathe of lands in the Muslim world. This Sufi cultural expansion through wider transregional mercantile links in the Indian Ocean happened largely without exerting any political force and encompassed everything from social systems to political structures and from human values to material culture. Its universal metaphysical appeals, although they mostly sought continuity with Shari‘a, quite often valued local religious contexts and imbibed many indigenous cultural and devotional elements, reifying its sensitivity to diversity and changes. Theoretically, they sought explorative engagements with God, but practically they produced different outcomes in which some achieved greater success while others struggled irrecoverably. The framework of a Sufi cosmopolis accommodates such abundant continuities, subtle ruptures, and intriguing outcomes that shaped a *longue durée* of Sufi actors, texts, and practices.

At least since the early decades of the fourteenth century, the Sufi cosmopolis has been able to connect Monsoon Asia with an increased mobility of scholars, traders, texts, rituals, and sailors,<sup>10</sup> retaining shared ideas and values, and incorporating volatile Sufi experiences and dispositions. Other linguistic and legal forms of cosmopolises in the Indian Ocean that have been recently explained by historians also played crucial roles in structuring the Sufi cosmopolis in the region.<sup>11</sup> For example, the Arabic as a *lingua franca* of various mercantile communities and the Shāfi‘ī legal cosmopolis that regulated economic and religious interactions contributed greatly to the moulding of the Sufi cosmopolis, just like Persian. As we see below, in the competition between the local Sufi orders in Malabar, the fate of orders in the Sufi cosmopolis often was relegated *sub judice*, and legal parameters determined the course of Sufi cosmopolis, not vice versa. The Sufi cosmopolis in the Indian Ocean cautiously regarded the Shāfi‘ī legal discourses alongside theological concerns of the Ash‘arī school.<sup>12</sup> Reformulations evolved in the Sufi cosmopolis by such concerns involved not only refutations, but also accommodations of local elements, acquainted with its long co-existence with non-Muslim contexts, unlike the neo-Sufism thesis argued.<sup>13</sup>

In order to examine such thicker Sufi continuities and uneven fractures therein, this article pursues the Hadrami Sayyid immigrants whose lineage can be traced back to Prophet Muhammad, alongside a Sufi order that they preached: the Ṭarīqa ‘Alawiyya. It explicates how they succeeded in establishing successful networks in Malabar, eventually leading to the permeation of Alawi Sufi practices into Muslim devotionism in the region. To explain the deep ritual pervasion of the Southern Arabian Sufism in Malabar,

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and the Maldives’, in *Challenging Cosmopolitanism: Coercion, Mobility and Displacement in Islamic Asia*, (eds.) J. Gedacht and R. M. Feener (Edinburgh, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> On Monsoon Asia, see P. Mus, *India Seen from the East: Indian and Indigenous Cults in Champa*, (trans.) I. W. Mabbett, (ed.) D. P. Chandler (Caulfield, 2010); Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> In literary and cultural analysis, the concept of cosmopolis has been well attested; see S. Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley, 2006); R. Ricci, *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia* (Chicago, 2012); T. Petrů, ‘“Lands below the winds” as part of the Persian cosmopolis: an inquiry into linguistic and cultural borrowings from the Persianate societies in the Malay world’, *Moussons* 27 (2016), pp. 147–161. The Islamic law has been a recent addition; see M. Kooria, *Islamic Law in Circulation: Shāfi‘ī Texts across the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean* (Cambridge, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> A theological school in Islam named after Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī that became dominant in the Abbasid Caliphate and later in the Indian Ocean, making alliance with the Shāfi‘ī school of law; see W. M. Watt, ‘Ash‘ariyya’, in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (eds.) H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden, 1986), vol. 1, p. 696.

<sup>13</sup> For the debates on neo-Sufism, see J. O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (Boulder, 1982); R. S. O’Fahey and B. Radtke, ‘Neo-Sufism reconsidered’, *Der Islam* 70.1 (1993), pp. 52–87; J. O. Voll, ‘Neo-Sufism: reconsidered again’, *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 42. 2–3 (2008), pp. 324–328.

I investigate the litany of the Alawi Sufi order, Rātīb al-Ḥaddād—a routine religious ritual that prevails throughout the region with its conspicuous Hadrami provenance.<sup>14</sup> This eighteenth-century litany, composed by Hadrami Sayyid ‘Abd Allah al-Ḥaddād (1634–1720), is routinely recited after the night prayer in almost all Shafi‘ī mosques and often in the houses of religious families in Malabar, regardless of whether they belong to the Hadrami lineage and its Alawi Sufi order.<sup>15</sup> How did this Yemeni ritual become a part of Mappila devotionalism? What were the engagements of the Alawi order with the wider Sufi cosmopolis that was prevalent in the region? How did Alawis gain supremacy in the larger historical process? These are the questions that we follow below.

I conveniently take two potent nodes of early Hadrami networks in Malabar: Shaykh al-Jifrī (d. 1808) and Sayyid ‘Alawī (d. 1844). Since the project of entrenching the Alawi order and its rituals in the region was later continued by Sayyid Faḍl (d. 1900), a descendant of Sayyid ‘Alawī, his writings and activities also will be adduced. By explicating mainly the writings of Shaykh al-Jifrī and Sufi activities of Sayyid ‘Alawī, I will demonstrate how Hadrami immigrants wove the wefts of a transregional network locally and channelled the Alawi Sufism into routine Mappila rites in the region. Jifrī’s scholarly writings and Sayyid ‘Alawī’s Sufi political activities not only evoked a wider appeal for the Alawi order, but also engendered popular legitimacy for Hadrami immigrants, helping them to elevate fellow Hadramis as religious leaders in the inlands of Malabar. This article argues that the successful engagement of the ‘Alawī order within the Sufi cosmopolis and the permeation of the ritual were a complex religious project that was brought forth by various aspects of the sacred genealogy, Alawi Sufi writings, Sufi activism, and the effective utilisation of Hadrami immigrant networks.

I will begin with a brief analysis of conceptions and approaches to the study of Sufism in the Indian Ocean in order to visualise a Shāfi‘ī-Sufi cosmopolis. The next section will engage with the current historical understanding of Hadrami connections with Malabar, giving nuanced insights into their historical formation. In what follows, I will analyse two cases of Jifrī and ‘Alawī to explicate how both contributed to the expansion of the ‘Alawī Sufi networks and its rituals. Finally, I describe how the religious project of popularisation of Ḥaddād was successfully carried out by using a complex socio-religious synthesis of the sacred lineage, Sufi activism, and potent Hadrami Sufi networks in the inlands of Malabar. The hitherto less-utilised sources and writings that were produced by the diaspora and their disciples in different languages are employed as original sources for this study.<sup>16</sup> I render extreme critical vigour in comparing these sources with other evidence to ameliorate the potential hyperbole of ardent followers as well as the bias of colonial officials.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For interesting aspects of the ritual in East Africa, see A. K. Bang, *Islamic Sufi Networks in the Western Indian Ocean in the Western Indian Ocean (c. 1880–1940): Ripples of Reform* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 143–162.

<sup>15</sup> There are several sources on this eponymous figure ‘Abd Allah al-Ḥaddād, such as Shaykh bin Muhammad al-Jifrī, *Kanz al-Barāhīn al-Kasbiyya wa al-Asrār al-Wahabiyya al-Ghyibiyya li Sādāt Mashāyikh al-Tarīqa al-‘Alawiyya al-Husayniyya wa al-Shu‘aybiyya* (Egypt, 1864 copy with additional notes in the first pages, Ma‘ūnat al-Islam Arabic College, Ponnani), pp. 17–32; Muhammad bin Abū Bakr al-Shillī, *Mashra‘ al-Rawī fi Manāqib ‘Ala Sāda al-Kirām Āl Banī ‘Alawī*, 2 vols. (Miṣr, 1901), pp. 181–184; ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Muhammad bin Ḥusayn Al-Mashhūr, *Shams al-Zahira fi Nasab Ahl al-Bayt min Banī ‘Alawī Furū‘ Fāṭima al-Zahrā‘ wa-Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī Radiya Allahu ‘Anhu*, 2 vols. (Jeddah, n.d.), pp. 568–571.

<sup>16</sup> For excellent research on local sources from the Malay world, see T. Sevea, *Miracles and Material Life: Rice, Ore, Traps and Guns in Islamic Malaya* (Cambridge, 2021); and, from Malabar, see W. C. Jacob, *For God or Empire: Sayyid Fadl and the Indian Ocean World* (Stanford, CA, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Recent scholarship has succeeded to a greater extent in divesting such literature from the old positivistic enigma; see e.g. O. Safi, ‘Bargaining with Baraka: Persian Sufism, mysticism and pre-modern politics’, *The Muslim World* 90 (2000), pp. 259–287; O. Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Enquiry* (Chapel Hill, 2006); D. DeWeese, ‘Ahmad Yasavī and the dog-men: narratives of hero and saint at the

## The Sufi cosmopolis of the Indian Ocean

The distinctive transoceanic ecumene that Islam provided in the Indian Ocean, especially after the shift in the long trade routes from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea in the wake of the fall of the Abbasids, has already been read as an early form of *world systems* that existed before the European hegemony.<sup>18</sup> During the post-classical phase in which the massive popularisation of Sufi forms of religiosity that began in the thirteenth century, Sufi orders expanded to many far-flung regions such as the Indian Ocean through mercantile communities and mostly without being supported or coerced by political centres.<sup>19</sup> This placid process of emulation of Sufi ideas, values, and practices by indigenous societies in the region that paralleled mercantile activities had sometimes conveyed local religious cultural linguistic and legal elements, as is well attested in the literature.<sup>20</sup> Such larger networks of transregional actors of Sufis, texts, and shared values and ideas across a vast maritime region eventually shaped a cosmopolis of Sufism that demanded continuities along various bases, including conformity to legal requirements of the Shāfiʿī school, but also reflected regional diversities and internal ruptures as well.

With the expansion of organised Sufi orders to the Indian Ocean, the transregional shared space of Sufi cosmopolis did not merely transfigure with various indigenous cultural elements;<sup>21</sup> it also discoursed with the normative legal and theological realms that were provided by both the Shāfiʿī legal and Ashʿarī theological schools. For instance, persisting debates on theo-legal issues of Wujūdiyya in seventeenth-century Aceh reshaped the Sufi realms across the region.<sup>22</sup> In the competition between the Alawi and

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frontier or orality and textuality', in *Theoretical Approaches to the Transmission and Edition of Oriental Manuscripts*, (eds.) J. Pfeiffer and M. Kropp (Beirut and Würzburg, 2007); R. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (Princeton, 1978).

<sup>18</sup> See J. Abu Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 125-1350* (New York, 1989); K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge, 1985); P. Risso, *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean* (Oxford, 1995); M. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London, 2003); J. Voll, 'Transcultural/transstate networks in the Muslim world', in *Interactions: Trans-regional Perspectives on World History*, (eds.) J. H. Bentley et al. (Honolulu, 2005), pp. 30-47; Ho, *Graves of Tarim*; Kooria, *Islamic Law in Circulation*; C. Formichi, *Islam and Asia: A History* (Cambridge, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> For the significance of the neoclassical phase in Sufi historiography, see E. S. Ohlander, 'Sufism in medieval Muslim societies', *History Compass* 8.6 (2010), p. 521; L. Massignon et al., 'Taṣawwuf', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (eds.) Th. Bianquis et al. (Leiden, 1998), vol. 10, pp. 313-340; M. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago, 1974), vol. 2; A. Wink, *Making of the Indo-Islamic World*; Pearson, *Indian Ocean*; N. Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Malden, MA, 2012). On Sufism and Islamization, see e.g. A. H. Johns, 'Islamization in Southeast Asia: reflections and reconsiderations with special reference to the role of Sufism', *Southeast Asia Studies* 31.1 (1993), pp. 43-61. On the specific role of Arab migrants, see P. G. Riddle, 'Arab migrants and Islamization in the Malay world during the colonial period', *Indonesia and the Malay World* 29.84 (2001), pp. 113-128.

<sup>20</sup> In the South Indian context, for example, see S. Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 74-75; Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*.

<sup>21</sup> For the Kāzarūnī presence, see e.g. Abū 'Abd Allah bin Muhammad al-Lawātī Ibn Baṭūṭa, *Rihla ibn Baṭūṭa 'Ajā'ib al-Amṣār wa Gharā'ib al-Asfār* (Miṣr, 1905); H. Algar, 'Kāzarūnī', in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (eds.) E. van Donzel et al. (Leiden, 1995), vol. iv, pp. 851-852; M. van Bruinessen, 'Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani and the Qadiriyya in Indonesia', *Journal of the History of Sufism* 1.2 (2000), pp. 361-395; H. Malik, *The Grey Falcon: The Life and Teaching of Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani* (Leiden, 2018).

<sup>22</sup> See e.g. the seventeenth-century debates on Wujūdiyya between Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranirī (d. 1658) and 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkili (d. 1693) in Aceh. Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reform in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulamā' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 54-86. For legal crisscrossing in the Indian Ocean, see Yahaya, *Fluid Jurisdictions*; I. R. Hussin, *The Politics of Islamic Law: Local Elites, Colonial Authority, and the Making of the Muslim State* (Chicago, 2016); F. Bishara, *A Sea of Debt: Law and Economic Life in the Western Indian Ocean, 1780-1950* (Cambridge, 2016); J. Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary Across a Millennium* (Berkeley, 2017).



Kondotty orders in Malabar,<sup>23</sup> as we see below, conformities with normative requirements and appropriations of explorative concepts from indigenous Shāfī Sufi scholars were detrimental to the success of the Alawi order and its ritual practices in the region. Such *theo-legal Sufi discourses* and the *articulatory labour* by religious authorities to connect with the Prophetic past have retrospectively been reshaping a Sufi cosmopolis that spanned wider coastal regions of the Indian Ocean.<sup>24</sup>

Likewise, the cosmopolis that Sufism had fostered in the region, as well as elsewhere, hosts a *longue durée* of texts and practices that circulated across broader geographies in longer periods. Sufi texts that moved into newer cultural contexts, engaging local cultural requirements and theo-legal discourses, were often reproduced in various forms of abridgements, commentaries, super commentaries, translations, and marginalia. For instance, the abridged versions of Sufi texts of al-Ghazzālī's (d. 1111) *Ihyā'* were reproduced in later centuries in the Indian Ocean regions, such as *Umda al-Aṣḥāb* by Ramaḍān al-Sahāliyyātī (d. 1489?) in Malabar; *Sayr al-Sālikīn* (1788), a free Malay adaptation by 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Palambānī in South Sumatra; and *al-Munjiyāt* by Salih Darat al-Samarānī (1820–1903) in Central Java. Similarly, local Sufi texts that were produced in Malabar, such as *Hidāya al-Adhkiyā'* by Zayn al-Dīn al-Makdhūm al-Kabīr (d. 1522), gained wider acceptance in Mecca and Southeast Asia as commentaries, such as *Kifāya al-Atqiyā'* and *Sulālim al-Fuḍalā'*, which were written by Meccan Abū Bakr Shaṭṭā aka Sayyid Bakrī (d. 1892) and Nawawī al-Bantānī (1811–1898), respectively.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, sociopolitical transformations that were happening in one part of the trans-regional Sufi cosmopolis induced ripples across the region. For instance, the Portuguese invasion of Malabar in the sixteenth century and the Dutch abolition of the Sultanate of Banten in the nineteenth century made massive horizontal expansions of Sufism to inland areas of the region, offering the community an alternative source of non-political authority in Sufi leaders.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, in the wake of the fall of the Mysore reign in Malabar and the rise of the mighty British rule, the Sufi cosmopolis that was dominantly occupied by Qādirī-Chishtīs required rectifications. As we see below, Alawi immigrants undertook the articulatory labour of refashioning the existing Sufi cosmopolis by introducing themselves as reinvigorated embodiments of the 'divine sovereignty', bolstered by the sacred

<sup>23</sup> The Kondotty Sufi order is said to have originated from Muhammad Shah, who hailed from Mumbai and settled in Kondotty of Malabar (where the present Calicut airport is situated) probably in the sixteenth century. Logan (1857) recorded that the first shrine was built there in 1541 and the present Tangal had been receiving an Inam from the British government; see W. Logan, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Other Papers of Importance Relating to British Affairs in Malabar* (Calicut, 1857), vol. 1, p. ccclviii. For religious polemics, see the collection of Fatwas sent from Hejaz on the order, anonymous, *Majmū'a Fatāwa al-'Ulamā' al-A'lām al-Muta'alliqa bi al-Firqa al-Mubtadi'a al-li'ām al-Zanādiqa al-Malā'in al-Rafa'a al-Mutashayyikha al-'Ibāhiyyin al-Wārida 'ilā Qarya Kondotty min Diyār Malaybār*, manuscript, not numbered, Jifri house, Calicut, n.d., p. 3; Jaleel PKM, 'Religious rivalries'; H. Randathani, *Mappila Malabar* (Calicut, 2008), pp. 139–141.

<sup>24</sup> I use the phrase 'theo-legal Sufi discourses' to refer to cross-disciplinary intellectual engagements with, especially in our case, the Shāfī school, the Ash'ari theology, Sufi ideas, and practices. By drawing on Hannah Arendt's critique of the Weberian notion of authority, Alatas brilliantly conceived the Islamic religious authority as such a hierarchical relationship that has been able to do the *articulatory labour* of connecting with the Prophetic past; I. F. Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority? Cultivating Islamic Communities in Indonesia* (Princeton, 2021), pp. 4–5.

<sup>25</sup> Abū Ḥamid Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut, 2005); Zayn al-Dīn Ramaḍān bin Sharaf bin Mūsā bin Muhammad al-Shāfī, *Umda al-Aṣḥāb wa Nuzha al-Aḥbāb*, manuscript, 94, Chāliyam, Maktaba al-Azhar; Abū Bakr Bakrī bin Sayyid Muhammad Shaṭṭā al-Dimiyātī, *Kifāya al-Atqiyā' wa Minhāj al-Asfiyā'* (Cairo, 1885); Shaykh Muhammad al-Nawawī, *Sulālim al-Fuḍalā'* (Cairo, 1885).

<sup>26</sup> See P. K. Yasser Arafath, 'Polyglossic Malabar: Arabi Malayalam and the Muhyiddeen Mala in the age of transition (1600s-1750s)', *JRAS* 3 (2020), pp. 1–23; M. van Bruinessen, 'Sufi "orders" in Southeast Asia: from private devotion to social networks and corporate action', in *Buddhist and Islamic Orders in Southern Asia*, (eds.) R. M. Feener and A. M. Blackburn (Honolulu, 2019), p. 136.

lineage and efficient to lead the host Mappila society in turbulent political circumstances.<sup>27</sup> By shedding the genealogical exclusivity of the Alawi order and preaching it in a Ḥaddādian model that was comprehensible to laymen,<sup>28</sup> Hadramis largely attracted massive followers. The Alawi order's capacity to engage meaningfully in the larger Sufi cosmopolis is one reason behind the persistence of Rātīb al-Ḥaddād as a part of routine Mappila religiosity despite *puritan* efforts that object to such novel rituals.<sup>29</sup>

Ho's excellent ethnographic and historical study pioneered new promising windows for approaching religious immigrants and their Sufi genealogical intersections in the Indian Ocean. Recent research has examined how the linguistic barriers that often surfaced in transregional linkages of the Indian Ocean were overcome by a lingua franca such as the Sanskrit cosmopolis, which was later replaced by Arabic and coalesced by several other cosmopolises.<sup>30</sup> I would count on the previous studies to understand the historical transregional and socio-religious trajectories of a Southern Arabian Sufism in the Indian Ocean. However, the wider socio-historical implications of the Alawi order require more nuanced approaches that coherently consider religious intricacies of the Sufi cosmopolis, the Alawi genealogies, its ethnic, sociopolitical paraphernalia, as well as immense complexities provided by Islam. Because of the limitations of this article, the analysis admittedly focuses on the coastal region of Malabar—one of the Sufi entrepôts in the larger Sufi cosmopolis.

Before we proceed further, let me explain the ritual of al-Ḥaddād. In most of the mosques in Malabar, prayer leaders (*Imāms*) would also lead the ritual in congregation after the night prayer of 'Ishā' and the rest of the attendees would recite it simultaneously or after his recital of each chant.<sup>31</sup> This litany consists of chants, prayers, and Qur'anic verses, and Prophetic traditions with special invocations for the Prophet, his family, the composer, and other Hadrami Sufis.<sup>32</sup> In Jami Masjid of Kannatippadi, near Vengara in the current Malappuram district of Kerala, where I resided as a participant observer,<sup>33</sup> Imam Fayḍī often speaks to people on the rewards of the routine recital of Ḥaddād litany explaining theological meanings of the lines, albeit not always alluding to its Hadrami origin. In my conversations with attendees there, I could observe that most of the participants were unaware of its Yemeni origin. However, they are used to reciting it, longing for the benefits that it is believed to bring in this life and the hereafter. Muhammad,

<sup>27</sup> For a brilliant analysis of divine sovereignty represented by Hadramis, see Jacob, *For God or Empire*. Muslim kingdoms in Southeast Asia competed to accommodate Alawi Sayyids for similar reasons; see Ho, *Graves of Tarim*, pp. 152–173; J. Kathirithamby-Wells, "Strangers" and "stranger-kings": the Sayyid in eighteenth-century maritime Southeast Asia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40.3 (2009), p. 591.

<sup>28</sup> In the context of Southeast Asia, see Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority*, p. 77.

<sup>29</sup> Conversation with Abdurahman Mangat Calicut on 1 May 2014. From the East African context, Bang observes that even Salafis view the Rātīb al-Ḥaddād as being less harmful; Bang, *Ripples of Reform*, pp. 148–159.

<sup>30</sup> See Pollock, *Sanskrit Cosmopolis*; Ricci, *Arabic Cosmopolis*; G. Sood, *India and the Islamic Heartlands: An Eighteenth-Century World of Circulation and Exchange* (Cambridge 2016); O. Cornwall, 'Alexander and the Persian Cosmopolis, 1000–1500' (unpublished PhD thesis, Columbia University, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> The time prescribed for the recitation of Rātīb is after the 'Ishā' prayer, except in Ramadan, when it is recommended before the night prayer; see 'Abd Allah bin Aḥmad Bā Sūdān, *Kitāb Dhakhira al-Ma'ād bi Sharah Rātīb al-Ḥaddād* (Miṣr, 1900), pp. 54–56.

<sup>32</sup> Rātīb literally means an ordering or structuring. For a commentary of the litany of al-Ḥaddād, see *ibid.* A summary is found in Bang, *Ripples of Reform*, pp. 146–148. For this implications of this ritual in Indonesia, see Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority?*, pp. 65–78. *Adhkār* is used in Islamic theology for chants made in the remembrance of God; see L. Gardet, 'Dhikr', in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, (eds.) B. Lewis et al. (Leiden, 1991), pp. 223–227. For a religious discussion, see al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā'*, pp. 348–360.

<sup>33</sup> The participant observation was performed during the fieldwork held from 2014 to 2017 in various mosques in the districts of Malappuram, Calicut, Kannur, and Kasarcode, where the ritual was regularly practised. I had the opportunity to attend the ritual in many of these places.

in his twenties and a regular attendee, told me that whenever he missed the Rātīb gathering in the mosque, he tried to compensate by reciting alone at home. ‘Why do you care that much to regain a lost day’s incantation?’ His reply was that this ritual was regarded as a highly rewarded one and he had once heard the Imam saying that people in earlier times had recited it for protection against contagious diseases such as plagues, and many notable scholars and Sayyids had encouraged people to routinise it.

### Patching networks: Arab immigrants and the Alawi Sufism in Malabar

This section primarily adduces that the formation of a particular Hadrami Sayyid community in Malabar before the seventeenth century cannot be substantially traced. The historical narratives often unproblematically generalise that the Hadrami immigration to the region had existed for centuries, often evidenced by the predominance of the Shāfi‘ī School as Hadrami handiwork.<sup>34</sup> Traditionalist scholars in the region attempt to legitimise their Sufi ritual practices by claiming an unstained and direct maritime conveyance of the religion from Arabia centuries ago,<sup>35</sup> especially from the sanctified geography of Hadramawt.<sup>36</sup> By reiterating strong religious and political linkages with Yemen, the scholars of Malabar were listed among the receivers of the Rasulid stipends of Aden in the thirteenth century, while, one century later, a request was made by the Qāḍī of Calicut to recite the Friday prayer (Khuṭba) in the name of the Yemeni sultan.<sup>37</sup> However, recent research has revealed that the expansion of the Shāfi‘ī school into the Indian Ocean had involved many Muslim micro-communities from Khurasan, Baghdad, Damascus, India, and Southeast Asia, as well as from Yemen.<sup>38</sup>

Other often-raised proof concerning the Hadramis in Malabar is that related to a mosque-based Islamic educational system in Tanur, where one Hadrami named Muhammad bin ‘Abd Allah al-Haḍramī worked as a scholar in the sixteenth century.<sup>39</sup> This writing in Persian on separate paper that is pasted on the margin gives a high

<sup>34</sup> See e.g. Wink, *Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, pp. 69–70; L. R. S. Laxmi, *The Malabar Muslims: A Different Perspective* (New Delhi, 2012), pp. 2, 7–10; O. Khalidi, ‘Sayyids of Hadramawt in medieval and early modern India’, *Asian Journal of Social Science* 32.2 (2004), pp. 329–351; A. Lathif, *The Concise History of Kayalpatnam* (Kayalpatnam, 2004); and R. E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends* (New Delhi, 1992); Ilias, ‘Mappila Muslims’, p. 444; A. D. W. Forbes, ‘Southern Arabia and the Islamicization of the central Indian Ocean archipelagoes’, *Archipel* 21 (1982), pp. 80–85; ‘Abd al-Ghafūr ‘Abd Allah al-Qāsimī, *al-Muslimūn fī Kayralā* (Malappuram, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> See P. Abubakr, ‘Hikmatinte Yemeni Sannidhyam’, in *Sunni Jilla Sammelana Souvenir*, (ed.) M. Al-Faydi (Malappuram, 2008), p. 32.

<sup>36</sup> The description of a sanctified geography of Hadramawt is abundant in Hadrami literature; see e.g. M. A. al-Shillī, *Mashra‘*, pp. 131–132; ‘Abd al-Qadir bin Shaykh bin ‘Abd Allah al-‘Aydārūs, *Tārīkh al-Nūr al-Sāfir ‘an al-Akbār al-Qarn al-‘Āshir* (Beirut, 1986), pp. 117–122; and al-Jifrī, *Kanz al-Barāhīn*, pp. 231–232.

<sup>37</sup> R. B. Serjeant, ‘Yemeni merchants and trade in Yemen: thirteenth and sixteenth centuries’, in *Asian Merchants and Businessmen*, (eds.) Lombard and Aubin, p. 67; E. Lambourn, ‘“India from Aden”: Khutba and Muslim urban networks in late thirteenth-century India’, in *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking in the Indian Ocean Realm c. 1400-1800*, (ed.) K. R. Hall (Lanham, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. Kooria, *Islamic Law in Circulation*, pp. 47–65.

<sup>39</sup> The note describes that the manuscript of *Tanbīh* had been copied and endowed in 1568 (975 A.H.) by ‘Abd Allah al-Haḍramī when he was a teacher there; see cover page of Abu Ishāq Ibrāhīm bin ‘Alī al-Fayrūzābādī al-Shirāzī, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh fī al-Fiqh al-Shāfi‘ī*, Manuscript no. 179, Maktaba Islāh al-‘Ulūm Arabic College, Tanur. Although Tanur has been a locality with a notable Muslim population at least since the sixteenth century, it reached its apogee as an Islamic learning centre only after the famous scholar ‘Umar Qāḍī was assigned as its chief mentor in 1822; see S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, *Shaykh Zainuddin Makhdum’s Tuḥfatul Mujāhidīn: A Historical Epic of the Sixteenth Century*, translated from Arabic with annotation by S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar (Calicut, 2005), p. 57; Barbosa, *Description of the Coasts*, p. 153; A.P. Muhammadali Musliyar, *Malayālathile Mahārathanmār* (Calicut, 1997), pp. 37–52.



possibility of its being a later additional note. Makhdūmī scholars in Malabar were often introduced as Sayyids with the Hadrami origin in several sources.<sup>40</sup> However, *Maslak al-Atqiyā'*, which is the earliest available text on Makhdūm al-Kabīr (d. 1522), written by his son 'Abd al-'Azīz in the sixteenth century, states that al-Kabīr's family migrated to Malabar from Ma'bar,<sup>41</sup> which might also refer to a place in South India.<sup>42</sup> The absence of Hadrami Sayyids in travel accounts such as those by Ibn Battuta, who was keen to record religious notables wherever he visited, is conspicuous.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, the silence of sixteenth-century Hadrami chronicles on Hadramis of Malabar, notwithstanding some accounts of their presence in ports such as Cambay, remains problematic considering Malabar's maritime links with Arabia.<sup>44</sup> Indigenous historical accounts of the sixteenth century such as *Tuhfa al-Mujīhidīn* and *Faṭḥ al-Mubīn* also do not mention Hadrami Sayyids, although *Tuhfa* mentions the Sāda among those who were held hostage and killed brutally by the Portuguese marauders in Malabar.<sup>45</sup> However, the seventeenth-century Hadrami genealogical text *Mashra'* mentions that one Sayyid Muhammad bin 'Umar (d.?) had entered Cannanore in northern Malabar and became the son-in-law of its Principal (*Sahib*) 'Abd al-Majīd.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī of Aceh had Sufi relations with Hadrami Sayyids of Gujarat such as Bā Shaybān in the seventeenth century.<sup>47</sup> In addition to the lack of reference to pre-seventeenth-century migrations, the known tombs that were assigned to Hadrami Sayyids in Malabar trace back only to the eighteenth century, showing no tangible evidence that their Malabari lineage stretches to a period beyond three centuries ago. Likewise, the non-Sayyid Hadramis in Malabar, having kept no historical records or genealogical charts, provide very little evidence to establish

<sup>40</sup> See e.g. E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern Asia*, 4 vols (Madras, 1909), p. 481; Miller, *Mappila Muslims*, p. 260; Forbes, 'Southern Arabia', p. 88. For the scholarly family of Makhdūms and Ponnani, where they settled, see H. Randathani, *Makhdūmum Ponnāniyūm* (Ponnani, 1998).

<sup>41</sup> 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Zayn al-Dīn bin 'Alī bin Aḥmad al-Ma'barī, *Maslak al-Atqiyā' wa Manhaj al-Aṣfiyā' fi Sharah Hidāya al-Adhkiyā'* (Calicut, n.d.), pp. 1–4.

<sup>42</sup> Although it was the name of a city in the north-west province of Yemen, Arab geographers such as Yaḥyā al-Hamwī, Dimishqī, and Abul Fida considered Ma'bar to be a place in South India; see Syed Muhammad Husayn Nainar, *Arab Geographers' Knowledge of Southern India: The Knowledge of India Possessed by Arab Geographers down to the 14th Century A.D. with Special Reference to Southern India* (Calicut, 2011), pp. 54–56. The absence of a lofty title of 'al-Yamani' alongside the appellation of 'al-Ma'barī' in *Maslak* and the claim in *Qaṣida Makhdūmiyya* by Makhdūm al-Akḥīr that the family hailed from Ma'bar in the Coromandel Coast that lies 'between Colombo and Kayalpatanam' complicates the story of the Hadrami origin of the Makhdūms; see Konganam Vīl Ibrāhīm Mawlawī, *Qaṣida al-Makhdūmiyya* (Ponnani, 1886), p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> The Hadrami minister in Ibn Battuta's accounts of Maldives at the south-west of Malabar did not seem to belong to the Sayyid lineage; see Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Rihla*, pp. 139–153.

<sup>44</sup> See 'Abd al-Qādir bin Shaykh bin 'Abd Allah al-'Aydārūs, *Tārīkh Nūr al-Sāfir 'an al-Akḥbār al-Qarn al-'Āshir* (Beirut, 1986), p. 488; and al-Shillī, *Mashra'*, vol. 2, pp. 117–119.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn bin 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Zayn al-Dīn bin 'Aī bin Aḥmad al-Ma'barī, *Tuhfa al-Mujāhidīn fi Ba'di Akḥbār al-Burtughāliyyīn*, (ed.) Ḥakīm Sayyid Shamsullah Qādirī (Hyderabad, 1931), p. 25; Nainar, *Shaykh Zainuddin Makhdūm's Tuhfatul Mujāhidīn*, p. 57. Although *Faṭḥ al-Mubīn* by Qāḍī Muhammad names notable persons who took part in the Chāliyam battle such as the Sufi figure Shams al-Dīn Muhammad al-Ḥimṣī (d. 1572) and the port leader 'Umar al-'Antābī, it does not refer to Sayyids; see Muhammad bin 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Kalikūtī, 'Qaṣida Faṭḥul Mubīn li al-Sāmīrī al-Ladhī Yuḥibbu al-Muslimīn', in *Faṭḥ al-Mubīn Paribhasha*, (ed. and trans.) Mankada Abdul Aziz (Calicut, 1996), p. 16; see also M. Shokoohy, *Muslim Architecture of South India: The Sultanate of Ma'bar and the Tradition of the Maritime Settlers on the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts* (Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Goa) (London, 2003), p. 168. Barbosa's description of foreigners does not specify their ethno-geographic composition; Barbosa, *Description of the Coasts*, p. 146.

<sup>46</sup> Due to the political strife that emerged in the royal family after the death of his brother 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Muhammad had to leave for Hyderabad, where he passed away; al-Shillī, *Mashra'*, vol. 2, pp. 16–17.

<sup>47</sup> Bruinessen, 'Sufi "orders" in Southeast Asia', p. 127; Azra, *Origins of Islamic Reform*, pp. 54–62.

any earlier immigration than that.<sup>48</sup> Despite Southern Arabia's centuries-old strong maritime links with Malabar, the eminence of a specific Hadrami Sayyid diaspora in pre-seventeenth-century Malabar has yet to be substantiated.

As the Alawi immigrants found many new diasporic centres in the nineteenth century—an era attested as an *age of steam and print*<sup>49</sup>—the Alawi order also began to grow into an influential Sufi path in the Indian Ocean.<sup>50</sup> By the time Shaykh Jifri—the Hadrami immigrant scholar in Calicut whom we discuss below—was writing his genealogical text *Kawkab* in 1794, his uncles, nephews, cousins, and other relatives had already migrated to various regions in South Asia and Southeast Asia.<sup>51</sup> In the depiction of migratory movements, Jifri shows that the region of Malabar was merely one node in the wider Alawi networks and that the notable Alawi Sufi masters such as Sayyid Muhammad (d. 1747) of Quilandi, alongside his relatives and followers, played crucial roles in the expansion of the Alawi order and its rituals in Malabar.<sup>52</sup>

Like the rich genealogical texts such as *Kawkab*, *Sharah Sabā'ik*, and *al-Shajara al-Aṣl* that were kept within the familial houses of Sayyids in Malabar, the Sufi documents of the licence (*Ijāza*) that list members of the Alawi Sufi order also provide details of the further settlement of Hadrami families and expansion of their Sufi order into inland areas of Malabar.<sup>53</sup> An *Ijāza* document that traces an Alawi Sayyid to his masters will show the path through which the Sufi order was conveyed and the personalised preaching of its ritual.<sup>54</sup> These Sufi records and texts not only provide historical notes on relatives,

<sup>48</sup> In the coastal regions of Calicut and Quilandi, I met people with ostentatious claims of Arabic lineage, not only from Hadramawt, but also from other regions of Yemen and Hejaz. However, most of them have no clear idea about their Arab surnames. Sayyed Abdulla Munaffar, a Hadrami descendant in Quilandi, has recorded the names of Hadrami non-Sayyid families there, such as 'Afif, Barghayba, Bāduwa, Bāsakrān, Bāmadīn, Bāsālim, Bāṭṭa, Bārāmī, Fakhkhār, Matrahān, Yāfī'i, and Hamadānī. I am thankful to him for his detailed conversations with me. See also Sayyed Abdulla Ahammad Munaffar, *Ahlu Bayt, Pravachaka Santana Parambara: Charitra Samgraham* (Calicut, 2002), pp. 40–41; see also Muhammad Koya Parappil, *Kozhikkotte Muslimkalude Chairthram* (Calicut, 1993).

<sup>49</sup> On Muslims in the age of print and steam, see J. L. Gelvin and N. Green, *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print* (California, 2014).

<sup>50</sup> D. van der Meulen and H. van Wissman, *Hadramaut: Some of Its Mysteries Unveiled* (Leiden, 1964); Ho, *Graves of Tarim*, pp. 152–194; Freitag, *Indian Ocean Migrants*, pp. 46–61.

<sup>51</sup> For example, Jifri details the names and locations of his nephews and cousins who migrated to southern part of Aceh and Banda Aceh; see Shaykh bin Muhammad al-Jifri, *Kawkab al-Jalil al-Rafi' al-Zahir al-Munir al-Durri*, manuscript, not numbered, Ma'ūnat al-Islam Arabic college, Ponnani, copied in 1933, pp. 78–81.

<sup>52</sup> On Sayyid Muhammad, see Shaykh bin Muhammad al-Jifri, *Natija Ashkal Qadāya Maslak al-Jawhar al-Jawhīriyya wa Burhān Sulṭān Mashā'ikh al-Ṭarīqa al-'Aydārūsiyya al-Qādiriyya*, manuscript, not numbered, Ma'ūnatul Islam Arabic College, written in 1784, Ponnani, pp. 17–18. Shaykh states that Muhammad 'had been regularly reciting the poem of "Ilzam Baba Rabbak" after the Ratib', which denotes Rātib al-Ḥaddād; see al-Jifri, *Kanz al-Barāhīn*, p. 527. Quilandi has been one of the areas inhabited largely by Hadramis in Malabar. For details, see *Sadat Directory* (Quilandi, n.d.); Rahmatullah Saqafi, *Keralathile Sayyid Kudumbangal* (Calicut, 2006), p. 101.

<sup>53</sup> See e.g. Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Koya al-Shālīyātī, *Sharah Sabā'ik al-'Arab fi Ma'rifa Qabā'il al-'Arab wafi Ma'rifa Awlād al-Rasul*, manuscript, not numbered, Maktaba al-Azhar, Chaliyam; and anonymous, *al-Shajara al-Aṣl al-Nūrāniyya wa Ma'dīn al-Asrār al-Rabbāniyya*, manuscript, not numbered, Edarikode, Muḥdār bin Cherukunhikoya. These texts trace the expansion of families such as Shihāb, Jifri, Jamal al-Layli, and 'Aydārūs in Malabar. I am grateful to Sayyid 'Alawī Tungal Kannadiparamb, Sayyid Unais Tungal Melmuri, and Agati Ustad in Malappuram for providing copies of significant genealogies and many other valuable sources on Hadramis in Malabar.

<sup>54</sup> For instance, one Sufi *Ijāza* notes that Muhammad bin Ḥusayn Shihāb (d. 1956) had given the recital licence of the ritual to Muhammad al-'Idid (d. 1953), while he received his own from Aḥmad al-Jifri (d. 1930), indicating the passage of the Rātib among individuals of different locations and generations; see the diary of Muhammad bin 'Abd Allah al-'Idid (d. 1953), manuscript, not numbered, personal library, Salim 'Idid Munniyur, Tirurangadi, f. 14v. I am very grateful to Salim 'Idid for sharing these precious materials.

teachers, Sufi masters and dates of their birth and demise, but also contain information regarding the ritual practice for adopting a Sufi order and taking the Bay'a (pledge), in which the disciple's hand is placed below the master's.<sup>55</sup> This was locally known as Kai Kodukkal.<sup>56</sup> Many instances of such Sufi taking-hand ceremonies by Hadrami leaders in Malabar have been reported in official British records, including one in which a witness attests that Sayyid Faḍl had provided special incantation during the ceremony.<sup>57</sup> However, since the permission for reciting the litany of Ḥaddād was often conveyed to large groups of people through public licencing (*Ijāza 'Āmma*), the above *Ijāza* documents that mostly record personal conveyances may not be very helpful for explaining its transformation into a widely recited popular litany in Malabar.<sup>58</sup> The following sections therefore provide in-depth accounts of two individuals who played an important role in the massive popularisation and public licencing of the Alawi ritual in Malabar: Shaykh bin Muhammad al-Jifri (d. 1808, henceforth Jifri) of Calicut and Sayyid 'Alawī bin Muhammad bin Sahl Mawaladdawīla (d. 1844, henceforth Sayyid 'Alawī) of Mamburam.

### Replicating the Alawi version: Jifri's engagements with the Sufi cosmopolis

This section will narrow down the analysis into how Alawi immigrants such as Shaykh Jifri could successfully bring the Yemeni Sufi order into an overarching position in the Sufi cosmopolis of the region through his writings. Jifri wrote extensively about the sublimity of Alawi Sufism and the necessity for popularising the rituals and litanies that were associated with the order, such as the Rātib al-Ḥaddād. His texts, such as *Kanz*, *Kawkab*, and *Naṭīja Ashkāl*, intensely promoted the Alawi order and its rituals, and Jifri directly gave *Ijāza* to his immediate Hadrami relatives, such as Sayyid 'Alawī, and other disciples, such as Qāḍi Muḥyiddīn (d. 1844).<sup>59</sup> However, the mass proliferation of the Alawi order indeed adopted different strategies, often by appropriating contents from the Sufi cosmopolis in the region and at times negating or repudiating certain others. As we will see in the following story, Jifri's refutation of the Kondotty order often borrowed the existing explorative and normative teachings of the Qādirī order and the Shāfi'ī school that was promoted by local scholarly families such as the Makhdūmīs and Kālikūtīs.<sup>60</sup> Before we discuss such dynamics within the Sufi cosmopolis, it would be useful to know how Jifri managed to attain a key position among early Alawi immigrants through his diasporic as well as scholarly endeavours.

Hailing from Hāwī of Tarīm, Jifri left for Malabar in his early twenties.<sup>61</sup> In the north-west of Calicut, he met the 'Aydārūsī Sufi master Sayyid Muhammad of Quilandi, who

<sup>55</sup> See al-Jifri, *Kanz al-Barāhīn*, pp. 523–526. For details of Mawlid held in the name of Mamburam Tangal, see C. A. Innes, *Madras District Gazetteers: Malabar and Anjengo*, (ed.) F. B. Evans (Madras, 1908), p. 195.

<sup>56</sup> Logan's report on 7 February 1885 to the government explains in detail the hand-taking ceremony; see no. 1169, Judicial Dept, 2 May 1885, Regional Archives, Calicut, p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> Although this incantation is not named in the text, it might be either Rātib al-Ḥaddād or the litany by Faḍl, which is locally known as Pukoyante Rātib (the litany of Pūkoya); see e.g. *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages in Malabar for the Years 1853–59* (Madras, 1863), vol. 2, p. 164 (hereafter, CMO); On Mawlid's praising Sayyid 'Alawī and the annual ritual of Nercha at Mamburam, see Innes *Malabar District Gazetteers*, p. 195.

<sup>58</sup> Public licencing (*Ijāza 'Āmma*), given to a group of people, was widely made in the case of the Rātib al-Ḥaddād; see Bā Sūdān, *Kitāb Dhakhīra*, p. 53, 56. However, the *Ijāza* does not now seem a prerequisite for the recitation in Malabar and elsewhere.

<sup>59</sup> See e.g. the description of the Tariqa chain and ritual conveyance recorded in a note before the introductory section of *Kanz*; al-Jifri, *Kanz al-Barāhīn*, pp. ii–iv.

<sup>60</sup> Kalikūṭī scholars were primarily associated with the Qāḍī house of Calicut; see e.g. Parappil, *Kozhikkotte Muslimkalude Chairthram*.

<sup>61</sup> Jifri's arrival in Malabar has not been recorded accurately. Since he had received Tariqa from Muhammad (d. 1747) in Malabar, he would have reached Malabar before the early half of the eighteenth century; see al-Jifri,

passed away in 1747 and was buried in Valiya Jāram.<sup>62</sup> His other Sufi master was none other than the progeny of the author of the Alawi litany, Rātīb al-Ḥaddād, Ḥasan al-Ḥaddād (d. 1768).<sup>63</sup> Jifri's rise into a prominent Arab figure in the second half of eighteenth-century Malabar witnessed the advent and fall of the Mysore regimes and the eventual conquest of the region by the British. At least in the first two decades after his arrival in Calicut, Jifri could retain cordial relations with the Hindu King Zamorin.<sup>64</sup> When Malabar fell into the hands of Mysore rulers, Jifri's political affiliation also shifted clearly, as he showered praises upon Mysore sultans in their anti-British fight.<sup>65</sup> This political shift for him was necessary when he saw that Calicut, under Zamorin, was ailing in the face of the imminent colonial threat from the British. The policy rendered by the Mysore regime could also have instigated Jifri, as the shrine of his Sufi master in Quilandi had been one of the recipients of the Inams that were distributed to religious shrines by Tipu.<sup>66</sup>

With his significant religious position close to the political echelons, Jifri could strengthen the Alawi diasporic networks in Malabar by accommodating and facilitating the settlement of new Sayyid immigrants from Hadramawt.<sup>67</sup> Jifri's relatives, such as his cousin Ḥasan bin 'Alawī bin Shaykh al-Jifri (d. 1756), as well as Ḥasan's nephew Sayyid 'Alawī of Mamburam, were all accommodated and recruited as religious leaders for the inland areas of Malabar.<sup>68</sup> Several later immigrants were also enrolled by Jifri and raised as local religious leaders for the inland areas,<sup>69</sup> expanding the influence of

*Natīja Ashkāl*, pp. 17–18. On his life, education, and Sufi scholarly engagements, see 'Aydārūs bin 'Umar al-Ḥibshī, 'Iqd al Yawāqīt al-Jawhariyya wa Simṭ al-'Ayn al-Dhahabiyya bi Dhikr Ṭarīqa al-Sādā al-'Alawiyya (Kharnfash-Misr, 1900), vol. 1, p. 69; Shihābuddīn Abu al-Sa'ādā Aḥmad Koya al-Malaybārī, 'Asmā' Mu'allifīn fi Diyār al-Malibār', in *Majmū' Khams Rasā'il*, (ed.) 'Abd al-Naṣīr Aḥmad al-Shāfi'ī al-Malaybārī (Oman, 2013), p. 41; 'Abd al-Naṣīr al-Malaybārī al-Shāfi'ī, *Tarājim 'Ulamā' al-Shāfi'iyya fi al-Diyār al-Hindiyya* (Jordan, 2010), p. 100; Jaleel PKM, 'Religious rivalries', pp. 259–262.

<sup>62</sup> Jifri begins his *Natīja Ashkāl* with this Sufi figure; Al-Jifri, *Natīja Ashkāl*, pp. 17–18. Jifri was also associated with the Naqshabandī order. For details, see al-Ḥibshī, 'Iqd al Yawāqīt', p. 69.

<sup>63</sup> On Ḥasan, see al-Jifri, *Kanz al-Barāhin*, pp. 12–13; Shaykh bin Muhammad al-Jifri, *al-Hafawāt al-Ṣādirāt min al-Khayālāt al-Waridāt*, manuscript, not numbered, Jifri House, Calicut, pp. 391–402. Jifri probably met Ḥasan after his Hajj pilgrimage in 1773 when he visited the homeland with his brother Sayyid 'Abd Allah (d. 1774); see 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Alīm bin Mirān Labba, *al-Kawkab al-Dhurri fi Manāqib al-Qutb Shaykh Jifri* (Calicut, 1911), p. 9. Al-Jifri's *Hafawāt* indicates that the pilgrimage was done through the Muscat port; see al-Jifri, *al-Hafawāt*, p. 36.

<sup>64</sup> However, we cannot confirm the popular claim that Shaykh was well received by the Hindu Zamorin and that the huge mansion, which was big enough to accommodate many new immigrant Alawi relatives and foreign Alawi students, was really endowed by the Hindu king; see Sayyid Unais Melmuri, *Sayyid Shaykh Jifri* (Calicut, 2007).

<sup>65</sup> See al-Jifri, *Hafawāt*, pp. 165–167.

<sup>66</sup> See the list of properties in the Inam register compiled by J. W. Robinson, Regional Archives, Kozhikode, nos. 29, 126. In another Hadrami case of Sayyid Abdool Rayman Hydross Peergad, son of Syed Maostapha of Cochin, Logan notes that he had been given land by Hyder Ali an Enaum, 'the produce of which may yield 400 Rupees, in the Calicut talook'; see Logan, *Collection of Treaties*, p. 116. During my visit to the Jifri house in 2015, I observed a bench upon which Tipu is believed to have sat during his royal visit, which has been preserved.

<sup>67</sup> Most of them migrated and settled through family networks, married within local communities or the daughters of early immigrants, and found religious careers in the region; for details, see Jaleel PKM, 'Hadrami Sayyid Diaspora', pp. 163–169.

<sup>68</sup> Muḥammad 'Alī Musliyyār, *Tuḥfa al-Akhyār fi A'yān Malaybār*, MS not numbered, Personal Library of Muhammad Ali Musliyyār, Nellikkutt, not dated, p. 12; Abū al-Fayḍ Aḥmad bin Nūr al-Dīn al-Mullawī al-Bangī, *al-Nafahāt al-Jalīla fi Manāqib al-Qutb al-Ghawth al-Sayyid 'Alawī bin Muhammad Mawlā al-Dawīla* (Chemmad, 2010), pp. 11–14, Dale, 'Hadrami diaspora', pp. 177–178.

<sup>69</sup> Among the immigrants hosted by Jifri were 'Alī al-Ḥaḍramī of Shihāb al-Dīn (arrived in 1767), 'Abd al-Rahmān Musāwī (d. 1842) of Ponnani (arrived in 1796), and Ḥusayn Sīthikoya al-Bafaqī (arrived in 1771); see Musliyyār, *Tuḥfa al-Akhyār*, pp. 10–26.

Alawi networks in the hinterlands of Malabar. One of the crucial connections that Jifri made in establishing the order would be that with his nephew Sayyid ‘Alawī, who became a prominent Sufi political figure in the anti-British movements in Malabar in the nineteenth century.<sup>70</sup> Both ‘Alawī and his son Faḍl rose to become religious stalwarts in the region, attracting many Malabari scholars and affluent as well as lay Mappilas to the Alawi order, thereby spreading the Alawi Sufi networks and its rituals into inland areas.<sup>71</sup> By initiating more indigenous scholars and laymen, they were transcending the Alawi genealogical exclusivity in a Ḥaddādian paradigm that argued for popularising the order into non-Sayyids.<sup>72</sup>

In the new diasporic location of Malabar, Jifri also wrote Sufi genealogical texts such as *Kawkab al-Jalīl* that helped Alawi immigrants not only to reconnect with the familial Sufi lineage of the homeland<sup>73</sup> Hadramawt, but also to reassert the Alawi claim over the sacred religious lineage that connected them to the Prophet. Such texts etched a prestigious place for Alawi Sufis in the Sufi cosmopolis, and induced political and material benefits for the diaspora. He wanted more clearly to compete and compromise with the ideas, practices, and contents of the existing Shāfi‘ī Sufi cosmopolis, where the Qādirī order dominated with the overwhelmingly popular vernacular texts such as Muḥyiddīn Māla. At the same time, he repudiated others such as the Kondotty order for its problematic practices of prostrations before Sufi masters and use of hashish.<sup>74</sup> Such orders and their practices gave Jifri a sense of urgency to preach the Alawi order and take normative restrictions of Sharī‘a into focus. For Hadrami scholars such as Jifri, the situation resembled the period of the origin of Rātīb al-Ḥaddād in the homeland, when Sayyid ‘Abd Allah al-Ḥaddād set out to compile the litany to resist the ritual expansion of Zaydi Shiite groups to Hadramawt in 1660.<sup>75</sup> With the heretic Kondotty order, a similar religious threat was perceived by Hadramis in eighteenth-century Malabar, inducing them to popularise the Ṭarīqa ‘Alawiyya and its litany of Rātīb al-Ḥaddād. Jifri foresaw that the best way to abjure the Kondotty order was to supersede it by introducing the Alawi Sufi order and highlighting the characters of its masters in his two texts: *Natīja Ashkāl* on the ‘Aydarūsī Qādirī order (1784) and *Kanz al-Barāhīn* on the Alawi Madyanī

<sup>70</sup> The Alawi Sufi chain mentions that Sayyid ‘Alawī had accepted the order from Shaykh al-Jifri (d. 1808); see al-Jifri, *Kanz al-Barahin*, p. ii; and Dale, ‘Hadhrami diaspora’, pp. 177–181.

<sup>71</sup> Colonial authorities traced such influential Hadrami figures; see e.g. *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages in Malabar for the Years 1849–1853* (Madras, 1863), vol. 1, pp. 221–230; and S. Alavi, ‘“Fugitive Mullahs and outlawed fanatics”: Indian Muslims in nineteenth century trans-Asiatic imperial rivalries’, *Modern Asian Studies* 45.6 (2011), pp. 1337–1382.

<sup>72</sup> Regarding the Ḥaddādian paradigm that promotes inclusivity in the Alawi order and its implications in Indonesia, see Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority*, pp. 65–106. Among significant non-Alawis who were initiated to the order by Jifri in Malabar are Qāḍī Muḥyiddīn (d. 1844) of Calicut and ‘Abd al-Qādir bin ‘Umar Labba al-Qāhirī; see al-Jifri, *Kanz al-Barāhīn*, p. ii.

<sup>73</sup> See al-Jifri, *Kawkab al-Jalīl*, pp. 3–5. These material benefits included marriages with noble families and political gains through marital relations as attested well in the case of Southeast Asia; Ho, *Graves of Tarim*, p. 98. In Malabar, some Hadramis married into the royal Ali Raja family of Cannanore; see Musliyyār, *Tuḥfa al-Akhyār*, p. 33. For political legitimacy through Sufi leadership in Morocco, see A. Hammoudi, *Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism* (Chicago, 1997).

<sup>74</sup> See al-Jifri, *Natīja Ashkāl*, pp. 5–17; and *Kanz al-Barāhīn*, pp. 460–465. The practice of prostrating before the Sufi master was a matter of contention in Malabar, even in the late nineteenth century; see *Majmū‘a Fatāwa*, ff. 2r–4r.

<sup>75</sup> The context that led to the formation of Ḥaddā Rātī has been described by Sayyid Bā Sūdān; see Bā Sūdān, *Kitāb Dakhira*, p. 53; Faḍl bin ‘Alawī Mawladdawīla, *Sharah al-Wird wa al-Rātīb al-Shahīrayn* (n.p., 1961), p. 26. Contemporary political and scholarly interest in the Zaydi sect has increased in the wake of the Houthi movement and civil war in Yemen; see e.g. H. H. Albloshi, ‘Ideological roots of Huthi movement in Yemen’, *Journal of Arabian Studies* 6.2 (2016), pp. 143–162.



order (1785).<sup>76</sup> These texts adopted larger ideas of Sufi-legal normativity that prevailed in the existing Sufi cosmopolis by referring to not merely globally renowned Shāfiʿī Sufi figures such as al-Ghazzālī, al-Yāfiʿī, and al-Haddād, but also indigenous writings from Malabar such as *al-Adhkiyā*.<sup>77</sup> Such appropriations gained the Alawi order a prominence in this Sufi rivalry and a continuity with what local scholars had already been standing for over centuries in terms of legal normativity.

At the same time, Jifri wanted to replicate a Hadrami middle ground that sought a position between Shiite ritualism and Wahhabi purification claims.<sup>78</sup> He found colleagues and masters in Hadramawt who were trying to prevent the deviant rituals of Zaydi Shiites and never went for any extreme purification project as Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb had done in Nejd.<sup>79</sup> In Malabar, Jifri also lambasted the Shīʿī Muharram rituals that prevailed among the Bohra communities in Calicut<sup>80</sup> and, as early as 1804, he unleashed one of the earliest criticisms of Ibn Wahhab's puritan thoughts from the Indian Ocean in his *al-Irshādāt*.<sup>81</sup> Taking the cue from the scholars of Hadramawt, Jifri wanted to have a pre-emptive Alawi critique of Wahhabism in the region, as Malabar then apparently showed no sign of the Wahhabi influence.<sup>82</sup> In resistance to the nascent Wahabi thoughts or Shiite-heretic Sufi orders, Jifri attempted to replicate the Alawi Shāfiʿī approaches in Malabar through writings that promoted the teachings, quotes, and activities of Alawi scholars and Sufis, including the eponymous ʿAbd Allah al-Ḥaddād.<sup>83</sup> He saw this normative middle path as a shared realm of the Sufi cosmopolis in which the Malabari scholars, such as the Makhdūms of Ponnani and the Qāḍīs of Calicut, as well as Hadramis could easily intersect. In later centuries, Hadramis and Malabaris coalesced in the Sufi cosmopolis, repudiating both the Shiite rituals and the Wahhabi puritanism. By linking to the sacred lineage, hosting immigrants in Calicut, mentoring them in the Sufi order, and etching shared realms of interactions within the Sufi cosmopolis, Jifri could successfully set up a favourable ground for massive Sufi expansion in Malabar. The following section will explain how Sayyid ʿAlawī utilised this fecund field and accelerated the permeation of the Alawi rituals into Islam in Malabar.

### Sayyid ʿAlawī and the popularisation of the Alawi ritual

At the time that Sayyid ʿAlawī enhanced Sufi activities in early nineteenth-century Malabar, the writings and activities of early Hadrami immigrants, as stated above, had already been successful within the Sufi cosmopolis of the Indian Ocean. Sayyid ʿAlawī

<sup>76</sup> See al-Jifri, *Kanz al-Barāhin*, p. 461.

<sup>77</sup> E.g., in his rebuttal to the Kondotty order, he utilises Yāfiʿī's conceptualisation of Shāfiʿī normativity; al-Jifri, *Natīja Ashkāl*, p. 14. For references to *al-Adhkiyā* by Jifri, see Jifri, *Hafawāt*, p. 124.

<sup>78</sup> However, this position has not always been exclusive to Hadramis.

<sup>79</sup> For details on Salafi ideologies preached by Muhammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792), see M. Cook, 'On the origins of Wahhabism', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2.2 (1992), pp. 191–202; and for the collection of Wahhab's works, see ʿAbd al-Aziz al-Rumi (ed.), *Muʿallafāt Shaykh Muhammad bin ʿAbd al-Wahhāb* (Riyad, 1976).

<sup>80</sup> He equates Shiites with the perpetrators of the Karbala incident, as he viewed the ʿĀshurā ritual as the hurting of their departed souls; see al-Jifri, *Hafawāt*, p. 90.

<sup>81</sup> This anti-Wahabi litany, written in 1804, barely 12 years after Ibn Wahhab's demise in 1792, was later published with commentary by Malabari scholar, al-Shāliyatī; see Shihābuddīn Aḥmad Koya al-Shāliyatī, *Sharah al-Irshādāt al-Jifriyya fi al-Radd ʿAla al-Dalālat al-Wahābiyya* (Calicut, n.d.).

<sup>82</sup> However, regions such as Hadramawt in Southern Arabia were facing the heat of Wahhabi military and political expansion in neighbouring regions; see M. al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 20–21. The Hadrami references that Jifri quoted were *Miṣbāḥ al-Anām* and *Sayf al-Bātir*, written by ʿAlawī bin Aḥmad al-Ḥaddād (1749–1817) in 1802; see al-Shāliyatī, *Sharah al-Irshādāt*, p. 12; ʿAbd Allah bin Muhammad bin Ḥāmid al-Saqāf, *Tārīkh al-Shuʿarāʾ al-Ḥadramī* (n.p., n.d.), vol. 3, pp. 43–46.

<sup>83</sup> See e.g. al-Jifri, *Hafawāt*, pp. 29–36.

utilised this advantage to rearticulate connections with Prophetic traditions through Sufi activities and to execute various projects such as mosque building, preaching of Alawī rituals, fighting deviant orders, and mobilising people politically against the colonial powers. He not only personally conveyed the Alawī order to relatives, scholars, and laymen in the region, but also leveraged the prevailing favourable conditions of the Sufi cosmopolis in the region to promote it publicly.<sup>84</sup> Born in *circa* 1750 in Tarīm, Sayyid ‘Alawī set out to Malabar at a young age—probably 15 to 17—to join his immigrant uncles.<sup>85</sup> He soon grew into an unfathomably influential religious Sufi figure who was based in Tirurangādi—the former centre where his late uncle was buried.<sup>86</sup> As the British stretched their imperial paraphernalia, they felt insecure due to Sayyid ‘Alawī’s towering charisma and eventually became suspicious of him and his progeny Faḍl after many uprisings against the colonial government in the nineteenth century.<sup>87</sup> ‘Alawī rejuvenated the interest in local Sufi figures who were greatly revered by locals and the Qaḍīs of Calicut, such as Shaykh ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Ḥimṣī (d. 1572) of Calicut.<sup>88</sup> Visits to a shrine by a Sufi Sayyid leader such as ‘Alawī were conceived of as a major sign of the sublimity of the one buried within it.<sup>89</sup> Simultaneously, he and his son Faḍl continued to repudiate ‘heretic’ orders. Citing the increasing fraudulence in the majority of existing Sufi orders, Faḍl criticised them as being merely hollow soulless decorations that lacked the unique values that the Sufi cosmopolis had been retaining for centuries.<sup>90</sup>

Unlike his uncle Jifrī or son Faḍl, who published more than 20 texts, mostly on the Alawī order and its significance, ‘Alawī did not write much.<sup>91</sup> However, he became widely appealing to Mappila society through his reconstructions of the Prophetic past by using Sufi activities. While the sacred lineage often linked immigrants to ruling echelons in many places,<sup>92</sup> the Sufi stories that circulated orally around figures such as ‘Alawī attracted masses. The sacred lineage, alongside Sufi activities, garnered a unique place for the Alawī order in the Sufi cosmopolis. The popular legitimacy that Hadrami immigrants such as Sayyid ‘Alawī and his son Faḍl garnered in Mappila society was so conspicuous that sometimes the powerful machinery of the imperial state became dysfunctional against them.<sup>93</sup> When the British government decided to exile Sayyid Faḍl, the then-district magistrate H. V. Conolly sought mediation with him instead of proceeding with military force, mainly due to the risks involved in banishing ‘a person thoroughly venerated’ by Mappilas.<sup>94</sup> Conolly further described the extent of divinity

<sup>84</sup> For details of ‘Alawī’s Sufi linkages, see Faḍl Pasha bin al-Gawth ‘Alawī bin Muhammad bin Sahl Mawladdawīlā Bā ‘Alawī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-Ḥanīfā al-Samḥā* (Miṣr, 1899), p. 16.

<sup>85</sup> Written in 1887 with the help of Sayyid Faḍl, *Nubdha* records that Sayyid ‘Alawī was born in October 1753, grew up in Tarīm with sublime characters, and set out for Malabar at age 15 on 7 February 1768; Aḥmad bin Abī Bakr bin ‘Abd Allah bin Sumayṭ, *Nubdha Muḥtawaya ‘Alā Ba ‘ḍi Manāqib al-Ghawth al-Shahīr wa al-Quṭb al-Munīr ‘Alawī bin Muhammad bin Sahl Mawladdawīlā* (Beirut, 1889), p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> Dale, ‘Hadhrāmī diaspora’, pp. 177–178.

<sup>87</sup> See e.g. *CMO*, vol. 1, p. 222.

<sup>88</sup> On this Sufi figure, see Qāḍī Muhammad, *Nubdha Yasīra min Manāqib Shams al-Dīn Muhammad*, manuscript, not numbered, 1588, Imbichi Koya Tangal Personal Library, Calicut; al-Kalikūtī, *Faṭḥ al-Mubīn*, p. 16.

<sup>89</sup> Sayyid ‘Alawī’s frequent visits to the Shrine of Ḥimṣī were later cited as evidence of the sublimity of the buried saint and this was reiterated in public discourse; see e.g. <https://pravasirisala.com/archives/2335>.

<sup>90</sup> See e.g. his Faḍl bin al-Gawth ‘Alawī bin Muhammad bin Sahl Mawladdawīlā al-‘Alawī al-Ḥusaynī, *Īdāḥ al-Asrār al-Alawīyya wa Minhāj al-Sāda al-Alawīyya* (Miṣr, 1899), pp. 112–113.

<sup>91</sup> Faḍl’s position in the Ottoman palace might have helped him to publish numerous texts in Istanbul; see e.g. Faḍl Pasha bin al-Ghawth ‘Alawī bin Muhammad bin Sahl Mawladdawīlā Bā ‘Alawī Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-Ḥanīfā al-Samḥā* (Istanbul, 1899).

<sup>92</sup> See Ho, *Graves of Tarim*, p. 98; Kathirithamby-Wells, ‘Strangers’, pp. 568–569.

<sup>93</sup> Jacob, *For God or Empire*, p. 45.

<sup>94</sup> See *CMO*, vol. 1, pp. 255–258.

that lower orders ascribed to Faḍl: ‘They swear by his foot as their most solemn oath. Earth on which he has spat or walked is treasured up. His blessing is supremely prized.’<sup>95</sup> Neither colonial authorities nor later scholars adequately addressed the sources of legitimacy that these influential Sufi figures amassed in Malabar. However, the oral circulations of miraculous stories were largely reported during their lifetimes. Conolly wrote in 1851: ‘Marvellous stories are told of his supernatural knowledge. His blessing is supremely prized.’<sup>96</sup> One report from 1852 describes the popular belief ‘that the untold secrets of the heart are open to his (Faḍl’s) view’ and his blessing’s ‘reputed efficacy towards their future reward’.<sup>97</sup> Such popular images of Sayyid leaders were so pervasive that even the authorities had to include frequent questions regarding miraculous acts that appeared in depositions by local Muslim witnesses.<sup>98</sup>

Moreover, various texts that described miraculous activities of ‘Alawī, although mostly written after his death, were abundantly disseminated in Malabar, engendering prominence for Hadramis in the Sufi cosmopolis of the region.<sup>99</sup> Sayyid ‘Alawī was often described in these stories and writings as miraculously salvaging his fellows from shipwrecks, bringing economic and physical blessings, solving familial problems, and bringing down unjust land lords and British officials.<sup>100</sup> For Mappilas, Sayyids remained victorious in the competition between the two modes of sovereignty—the British imperial regime and the Hadrami divine authority. As later reflections of ‘local and individual devotion towards stationary and settled Shaykhs’,<sup>101</sup> these pieces of literature became so influential among the Muslim community that the British even considered confiscating those that perpetuated the legendary memory of anti-British martyrs.<sup>102</sup> The belief in the sacred lineage and miraculous activities of Hadramis led Mappilas to not only seek their blessings for everyday religious and social issues, but also execute various projects under the Alawi leadership.<sup>103</sup>

The translation of this sacred legitimacy into many socio-religious and political projects that were carried out during the time of Sayyid ‘Alawī was a complex process. As mentioned, the Sayyids’ approval and reverence of certain figures such as al-Ḥimṣī of Calicut gained popularity for the shrine, but they also wanted to emphasise the need to adhere to the shared values that were adopted in the Sufi cosmopolis and were lacking in many orders such as the Kondotty. Signifying such values, Faḍl entitled one of his Alawi texts *al-Ṭariqa al-Hanifa al-Samḥā* (*The Upright and Tolerant Path*), as he recommended reciting the Alawi ritual litany on a daily basis or, if that was not possible, at least on Thursdays

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 222; Panikkar views this belief in supernatural powers as being crucial for the Sayyids’ popular legitimacy; see Panikkar, *Against Lord and State*, p. 197.

<sup>96</sup> CMO, vol. 1, p. 222.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, p. 289.

<sup>98</sup> See CMO, vol. 2, pp. 157, 162–164.

<sup>99</sup> These include hagiographies, mawliids, and ballads; see e.g. Mullakormat Mammad Kutty, *Sārasar Guna Tiru Tarula Māla* (n.p., 1911); Muhammad Haji, *Sayyid ‘Alawī Māla* (Tirurangadi, 1909). The numerous hagiographies on Sayyid ‘Alawī include: Arikal Aḥmad Musliyyār’s *al-Minḥa al-Qawī*, Karāṭt Kunhipāri Musliyyār’s *Faṭḥ al-Kabīr*, and Chāppanagādi Ḥasan Musliyyār’s *Mawlid fi Manāqib Sayyid ‘Alawī*. For details, see Moīn Malayamma and Mahmood Panangangara, *Mamburam Tangal: Jivitham, Āthmīyath and Porāttam* (Chemmad, 2010), pp. 104–108.

<sup>100</sup> For such stories, see Sumayṭ, *Nubdha*, p. 16; and al-Bāngī, *al-Nafahāt*, p. 35. A deposition by Hajee Abdool Rahimon of Cannanore on 31 October 1855 gave similar accounts; see CMO, vol. 2, pp. 162–164.

<sup>101</sup> S. Digby, ‘To ride a tiger or a wall? Strategies of prestige in Indian Sufi legend’, in *According to Tradition: Hagiographical Writing in India*, (eds.) W. M. Callewaert and R. Snell (Wiesbaden, 1994), p. 100.

<sup>102</sup> The ballad *Cherūr Padappātu*, for example, was confiscated by the British upon the realisation that it immortalised the celebrated martyrdom of anti-British fighters in the region. For an orientalist reading, see F. Fawcett, ‘War songs of the Mappilas of Malabar’, *Indian Antiquary* 30 (1901), pp. 499–508, 528–537.

<sup>103</sup> Dale, ‘Hadhrami diaspora’, pp. 179–181.

and Mondays.<sup>104</sup> The main agency that propelled the Sufi cosmopolis, Faḍl writes, was always the basic value of ‘Istiqāma’ (uprightness), and not miraculous activities.<sup>105</sup>

Politically, Hadramis utilised the egalitarian values of Sufi cosmopolis to fight against exploitative landlords who colluded closely with British officials. The Alawi Tariqa assumed a non-elite format, transfusing such values into the complex caste-driven social systems in the region,<sup>106</sup> as Faḍl advised his followers from the lower background not to use honorific titles for the higher caste and refrain from consuming their leftovers.<sup>107</sup> Thus, in the turbulent political decades after the fall of the temporal Mysore rule, the immigrant Arab descendants of the Prophet were perceived as capable of offering a religiously appealing sacred political authority for Mappila laymen and lower-caste Hindus, with the potential to thwart the Western imperial power. Their inherent Sufi conceptions of ‘life-as-other’, as Jacob illustrates, traversed the terrain of modern sovereignty that was pursued by these empires and sceptical rationalists.<sup>108</sup> Description of such political nuances of these sacred resources in anti-colonial struggles and the continuing significance of Hadrami Sayyids in Muslim politics in Kerala would be difficult here.<sup>109</sup> Given the emphasis of this article on the Alawi Sufi ritual expansion, it suffices to ask how such religious political authority of Hadramis facilitated the entrenchment of the Alawi Sufism in the larger Sufi cosmopolis of the Indian Ocean.

In religious terms, Hadramis extensively utilised this public legitimacy to build many mosques in the hinterlands, where they routinely read the litany, extending the influence and enhancing the position of the Alawi Tariqa in the Sufi cosmopolis. Sayyid ‘Alawī either instructed, laid the foundation, or directly undertook significant projects for constructing numerous mosques across the region. During the first half of the nineteenth century, approximately 35 mosques from Tazhekode in the eastern region of the current Malappuram district to Naduvannur in the north of Calicut district were known to have direct connection with Sayyid ‘Alawī.<sup>110</sup> The majority of these mosques are still managed by the descendants of individuals who are associated with Sayyid ‘Alawī and the presence in them of the tombs and shrines of his disciples gives further credibility to the idea that several mosque projects were carried out by Hadramis.<sup>111</sup> As there was a substantial increase

<sup>104</sup> Bā ‘Alawī, *al-Tariqa al-Hanifa*, pp. 19–24.

<sup>105</sup> On the normativity, Faḍl mentions that the Sufi sainthood (Alwilāya) is nothing other than the uprightness (al-Istiqāma); see al-Ḥusaynī, *Idāh*, p. 117; for a detailed discussion on *Idāh*, see Jacob, *For God or Empire*, pp. 119–139.

<sup>106</sup> In most of the 31 incidents, which were mostly led by Hadramis, mentioned by T. L. Strange in Malabar, economic, labour, caste, and gender exploitations prominently figured; see CMO, vol. 1, pp. 399–439.

<sup>107</sup> See e.g. *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 276.

<sup>108</sup> Jacob, *For God or Empire*.

<sup>109</sup> E.g. the leadership of the IUML in Kerala had been revolving around Hadrami families such as al-Bāfaqī and al-Shihāb for the last few decades; see R. Santhosh and M. S. Vaisakh, ‘Muslim league in Kerala: exploring the question of being secular’, *Economic and Political Weekly* LV.7 (2020), p. 52.

<sup>110</sup> Among the mosques that were connected to Sayyid ‘Alawī in and around Tirurangadi are the Vadakke Masjid of Tanur, the Chappanangadi Juma Masjid, Puthanangadi Masjid in Vengara, Koramkulangara Masjid in Kacheripadi, Venniyur Juma Masjid, Munnur Odungatt Chinakkal Juma Masjid, Ponmundam Juma Masjid, and Perincheri Masjid. I have visited most of these mosques. For details, see K. K. Muhammad Abdul Kareem, *Malabarile Ratnangal* (A. R. Nagar, 2004), p. 22; K. K. Muhammad Abdul Kareem, *Mamburam Tangal* (Tirurangadi, 1957), pp. 46–49; Raḥmatulla Saqāfi, *Qutubussaman Mamburam Tangalum Keralathile Sayyid Kudumbangalum* (Ernakulam, 2013), pp. 68–73; P. K. Muhammad Kunhi, *Keralathile Muslim Pallikal: Samanwaya Shakshikal* (Kozhikode, 1988), p. 4; Malayamma and Panangangara, *Mamburam Tangal*, pp. 166–169. Although I could identify most of these mosques and visited several of them, I could not find the exact date of establishment for all nor estimate the actual cost for completing each project in the nineteenth century. In addition, in some undocumented waqf endowments, new deeds have been written to facilitate the management of waqfs.

<sup>111</sup> E.g., in Puthanangadi mosque and Venniyur mosques, we find that the descendants of the individuals who were associated with Sayyid ‘Alawī and built these mosques held prominent positions within the managing

in the Muslim population and number of mosques in nineteenth-century Malabar,<sup>112</sup> the mosques provide a link in explaining the intricate intrusion of the ritual into the routine practices of Mappilas.<sup>113</sup> The establishment of mosques on a large scale in Malabar under the aegis of Hadrami Sayyids in turn facilitated the public performance of the Alawi ritual, and they continue to be significant sites for its congregational routine performance.

How did Hadrami immigrants succeed in mobilising people, manpower, and funds for establishing religious structures in a strange diasporic land such as Malabar?<sup>114</sup> As mentioned earlier, alongside the success of the early Hadrami writings in fetching genealogical privilege for the Alawi order in the Sufi cosmopolis, the stories of miracles that circulated around Sayyid immigrants during their lifetime itself evoked the wider legitimacy and support that they needed for constructing mosques and preaching the Rātīb. As many written pieces of work on Sayyid ‘Alawī would explain, uncanny healing or blessings by Sayyids often generated huge endowments that were devoted to the building of mosques and religious shrines, as in the case of Kodinhi mosque near Tirurangādi.<sup>115</sup> Relying on the sacred resources of the Alawi Tariqa, both affluent persons and the poor alike heeded Sayyid ‘Alawī’s call for funding or manpower for building mosques,<sup>116</sup> which greatly facilitated the public preaching of Alawi rituals.

Another strategic step that was taken by Sayyid ‘Alawī was the employment of fellow Hadrami Sayyids as religious leaders in these new mosques, developing them into centres of Muslim socio-religious and political activity. Many religious leaders were designated to these mosques by Sayyid ‘Alawī from the Hadrami network itself: he sent ‘Aydarūs Tangal to Vadakkumuri of Parappur and ‘Abd Allah Bāfaqī to Mambad<sup>117</sup> and, from his close relatives, Valiyākathodukayil Sayyid ‘Abd al-Qādir as Qāḍī to Kodinhi Masjid and the latter’s brother Sayyid Ḥabīb to Ponnundam.<sup>118</sup> By predominantly appointing Hadramis to positions in these mosques, Sayyid ‘Alawī was not only expanding Hadrami Sufi networks to inland areas, but also manipulating the legitimacy that was invested in Hadramis as Sayyids and Sufis. Since most of these appointees were Sufi Sayyids, who were esteemed for their Sufi

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committee; interview with Bāpputty Musliyār of Venniyur Mosque and Abdullah Irfānī of Puthanangadi mosque in 2023.

<sup>112</sup> Letter from the Principal Collector of Malabar to the BOR, Settlement Report of Fusly, 1242 (1832/33) dated 15 January, vol. 4817 (1834), pp. 30–35; cf. Arafath, ‘Polyglossic Malabar’, p. 11.

<sup>113</sup> Bā Sūdān, *Kitāb Dhakhira*, p. 53.

<sup>114</sup> Similar economic questions can be found in the official reports, for which the answer from his devotee is: ‘As rich people come to him he asks them to give a certain portion of their money to beggars and he was not seen taking anything from anyone but paid with his own hand’; see CMO, vol. 2, p. 164.

<sup>115</sup> ‘Feeling satisfied with the healing by Sayyid ‘Alawī, a landlord named Musak granted acres of land for building the mosque in Kodinhi’; interview with Kodinhi mosque imām Hyderali Fayḍī on 18 March 2017. See also the letter by Sayyid ‘Alawī Mawladdawīla to Valiyākathodukayil Sayyid ‘Abd al-Qādir bin Aḥmad, dated 17 February 1837; S. A. Jifri collections, unnumbered doc., Personal Library of Salīm ‘Idid Tangal, Munniyur. Another supporting document from the same source is a Fatwa requested by residents of Kodinhi to Putiyakathu Muhammad Makhdūm of Ponnani in 1883.

<sup>116</sup> E.g. Anchukandan ‘Usmān Ḥājī, one of the disciples who sought blessings from Sayyid ‘Alawī of Mamburam for his third Hajj pilgrimage, was advised instead to build a mosque in his native place Puthanangādi, Vengara, and his descendants still hold crucial positions in the managing board and have been Mutawallī of the mosque for many decades; see Rahmatullah Saqafi, *Mamburam Tangalum Keralathile Sayyid Kudumbangalum* (Ernakulam, 2013) p. 88; also, interview with ‘Abd Allah al-Irfānī, Mudarris, Puthanangadi mosque, Vengara on 14 July 2022.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87. The story of designating ‘Aydarūs Tangal to Vadakkumuri was reproduced in the calendar that was published by the mosque committee in 2015.

<sup>118</sup> However, this is not to claim that mosque appointments were exclusively for Hadrami Sayyids, which was against the Haddādiān inclusive tradition. Sayyid ‘Alawī also appointed non-Sayyid scholars such as Abū Bakr of Kannanchery; Malayamma and Panangangara, *Mamburam Tangal*, pp. 151–165. In the later periods, non-Hadrami scholars such as Qutbī Muhammad Musliyār (d. 1966) and Chappanangadi Bāppu Musliyār (d. 1978) became great preachers of the Alawi litany in Malabar.



genealogical significance in the Sufi cosmopolis, their advocacy for the ritual of Ḥaddād in these new mosques held greater appeal for the public compared with local scholars.<sup>119</sup> By appointing Sufi Sayyids as religious leaders for these inland mosques, the Hadramis managed meticulous allocation and effective consumption of their network resources. The routine nature of reciting the litany, as recommended by its composer, further contributed to its prominent position within the religious Sufi cosmopolis of the region. Therefore, the Hadrami Alawization project of Islam in Malabar hinged upon such complex socio-historical political and genealogical factors in which the sacred resources of the Sayyid lineage and Sufi stories, egalitarian ethos, theo-legal Sufi realms, and optimum utilisation of such diverse resources played variegated but exigent roles in the Sufi cosmopolis.

## Conclusion

The historical tracing of the ritual permeation of a Southern Arabian Sufi order into Mappila devotionism helps to unravel how Yemeni immigrants and their Sufi-sacred and other resources were crucial in determining the trajectories of the Sufi cosmopolis in the region. As multiple forms of devotional expressions, legal thoughts, and cultural varieties strived within diverse cosmopolises of the Indian Ocean, the Alawi Sufis also made variegated engagements with such theo-legal Sufi realms. Hadrami Sayyids such as Jifri, 'Alawī, and Faḍl aspired to carve out a clear niche for the Alawi order within the wider spectrum of the Sufi cosmopolis by promoting writings on the significance of the Alawi Sufi path, appropriating local Sufi contents, networking new immigrants, employing egalitarian Sufi values, building mosques, and promoting its rituals. In the diasporic location of Malabar, they successfully replicated the Hadrami Sufism, projecting it as a path that occupied a middle range between Shī'ism and Wahhabi puritanism. The Alawi writings not only made appropriations of elements in the existing Sufi cosmopolis, but also competed with/rivalled others. Hadramis, in most of these regions, promoted the Ḥaddādian model of Alawi Sufism, making its narratives and rituals more accessible and legible for laymen against the labyrinthian Sufi theories and the genealogical exclusivity that was once preached. Transfusion of egalitarian values of the Sufi cosmopolis to the caste structures of the region was crucial, not merely in expanding the religion, but also in increasing its political stake. 'Alawī and Faḍl utilised their popular legitimacy to advocate the Sufi normativity and implement various sociopolitical projects in the region. By building numerous mosques in the hinterlands and appointing fellow Sayyids and local followers to positions in these mosques, they further enhanced the massive expansion of the Ḥaddād ritual and ensured a diligent position for the Alawi order in the Sufi cosmopolis.

These Yemeni religious immigrants and their remarkable influence in various socio-political and religious realms of the Indian Ocean left multifarious impacts for understanding both host and immigrant communities in the region. Primarily, due attention should be given to the explorative Sufi experiences of Muslim religious societies outside the Middle East, such as those in the Indian Ocean. Tracing of the Alawi order and the Sufi explorative meanings that it carried help in dissecting the intricacies of the religious, cultural, political, and commercial impacts that Hadrami Sufis made through their networks, not only in the Indian Ocean, but also wherever they emerged as being influential. Likewise, they remind us of the pitfalls in relying exclusively on

<sup>119</sup> The network resource theories explain this homophily principle: where the actors share similar resources, the least effort is required to produce even better outcomes; see Nan Lin, *Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action* (New York, 2001), pp. 48–49.

colonial sources that depict host and diasporic societies as producers and consumers of religious ‘fanaticism’. Extending our views to the rich sources that were left by Hadrami immigrants, their disciples, and followers in the region would help us to dissect the many placid socio-religious impacts of parallel ‘divine sovereignty’ and its transregional sacred resources of authority that were fostered in the Sufi cosmopolis. This transregional perspective of a Sufi cosmopolis not only reinvigorates the centuries-old maritime cultural linkages of the community that was subdued in the colonial, nationalist, Marxist iterations. It also provides opportunities to move away from a state-centric reading of Islam in India, where Sufism is mostly conceived as a parallel structure to Muslim states.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Torsten Tschacher, ‘Challenging orders: *Tarīqas* and Muslim society in Southeast Asian India and Lañka’, in *Buddhist and Islamic Orders in Southern Asia*, (eds.) Feener and Blackburn, p. 76.

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