



FĀL-ASĪRĪ, ḤĀJJ SAYYED 'ALĪ-AKBAR

FĀL-ASĪRĪ, Ḥājj Sayyed 'ALĪ-AKBAR, prominent *mojtahed* of Shiraz (1256-1319/1840-1901; Encyclopædia Iranica | Articles). Born in Asīr, a village in the Galadār district of Fārs, he studied religious sciences there under Shaikh Moḥammad Asīrī before coming to Shiraz in the 1270s/1850s to study with Ḥājj Shaikh Mahdī Kojūrī, from whom he eventually received a license as a *mojtahed* (Fasā'ī, ed. Rastgār, II, p. 912). He married the daughter of Ḥājj Mīrzā Ḥasan Šīrāzī, the leading *mojtahed* of the time. In Shiraz he led the prayer at Wakīl Mosque, where he regularly preached, and for years he wielded great influence in the religious, political, and social affairs of the city. He was an arrogant man of fiery temper, who considered himself superior to all his peers of the time. He was harsh, bitterly blunt, and ruthlessly intolerant. He enforced the *šarī'a* precepts to the letter according to his own willful interpretation. He attacked the shops and residences of Jews and Christians, flogging them, destroying their stock of wine, and even threatening to massacre their entire community. He frequently attacked musicians and dancers, had their hair cut off, and smashed musical instruments (Sa'īdī, ed., pp. 139-40, 337-39, 406, 409). In 1317/1899 he and his followers destroyed the mausoleum built by a Zoroastrian philanthropist called Kōsrow over the grave of Ḥāfeẓ, despite the fact that a number of religious leaders of the city, including Fāl-asīrī himself, had been paid off by Kōsrow and had issued permission for the work. When the government decided to have the mausoleum rebuilt, Fāl-asīrī threatened to destroy it again and again “even if



the shah were to rebuild it a thousand times over” (Sa’īdī, ed., pp. 582-83).

Fāl-asīrī was an active opponent of the tobacco concession (see CONCESSIONS) and instigated a riot in Shiraz against it. As a result he was arrested, packed off to Bušehr, and then sent to Basra (Algar, p. 207). In protest, his followers sought sanctuary (see BAST) in the Wakīl Mosque, and a number of them died in clashes with security forces. (Sa’īdī, ed. pp. 378-79; Molkārā, pp. 183-84; Amīn-al-Dawla, pp. 149-50). Fāl-asīrī met Sayyed Jamāl-al-Dīn Asadābādī/Afgānī (q.v.) in Bašra (Amīn-al-Dawla, p. 151). According to Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan E’temād-al-Saltāna (*Rūz-nāma-ye kāṭerāt*, pp. 876-77), Fāl-asīrī was the real instigator of the protest movement and it was he who persuaded his father-in-law to issue a *fatwā* forbidding the use of tobacco, which eventually caused the cancellation of the concession. Fāl-asīrī returned to Shiraz in triumph in 1309/1892. He died in Shiraz on 29 Rabī’ II 1319/15 August 1901 and was buried there near the Ḥāfeẓīya. On the day of his death the *bāzārs* of Shiraz were shut down (Sa’īdī, ed., p. 646).

Fāl-asīrī had many opponents who accused his sons and son-in-laws of abusing his influence. He was once exiled to Isfahan in 1304/1886 for instigating a riot. Despite a letter from several religious leaders certifying his insanity, the governor of Isfahan, Mas’ūd Mīrzā Ẓell-al-Soltān, received him with honor and the shah sent him gifts from Tehran (Sa’īdī, ed., pp. 266, 273, 275-77, 285; Pīrzāda, I, pp. 36-38, 88-89).

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Figure 1. Alī-Akbar Fāl-asīrī. After Sa'īdī Sīrjānī, ed., *Waqāye'-e ettefāqīya*, facing p. 584.