THE HISTORY OF HADRAMI ARABIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Imam Subchi
UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta
imam.subchi@uinjkt.ac.id

Abstract

The Arab community has an important role in the process of Islamization in Southeast Asian. One of the Arab community that played an important role in the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia was merchant who came from the south of the Arab lands. This paper examines the development of the Hadrami Arab community in Southeast Asia. Using authoritative studies of literature, this paper discusses the development and revival, and the role played by the Hadrami Arab community in several fields such as economics, education, Islamic da’wah and politics in the 18th to 20th centuries. The method used by the Hadrami Arab community in the process of Islamization is by peaceful means, respect for locality, thus facilitating the process of adaptation and reciprocity of the local population in the Southeast Asian.

[Komunitas Arab mempunyai peran penting dalam proses Islamisasi di Kawasan Asia Tenggara. Salah satu kelompok masyarakat Arab yang berperan penting dalam penyebaran Islam di Asia Tenggara adalah para pedagang yang berasal dari selatan tanah Arab. Artikel ini mengkaji perkembangan masyarakat Arab Hadrami di Asia Tenggara. Dengan berbekal studi literatur yang otoritatif, artikel ini membahas tentang perkembangan dan kebangkitan, serta peran yang dimainkan oleh komunitas Arab Hadrami dalam beberapa bidang seperti ekonomi, pendidikan, dakwah Islam dan politik pada abad 18 sampai 20. Metode yang digunakan]
Imam Subchi: *The History of Hadrami*.................

*komunitas Arab Hadrami dalam proses Islamisasi adalah dengan cara damai, menghargai lokalitas, sehingga memudahkan proses adaptasi serta timbal balik dari penduduk lokal di Kawasan Asia Tenggara.*

**Keywords:** Arab Hadrami, Hadramant, Alawiyyin

**Introduction**

The development of the Hadrami Arab community today, has an important role in the development and journey of the Islamic mission in Southeast Asia. In this context, history has recorded the migration of the Hadrami Arab community to Southeast Asia cannot be separated from the spread of Islam and commerce. Commerce relations that existed long before the arrival of Islam made the spread of Islam easy to do in the Southeast Asian. Arab-Southeast Asian commerce which commodities such as spices, agarwood, mothballs, not infrequently makes the Arabian stop for a long time in the Southeast Asian. Some of them even chose to live in there. One of Chinese histories mentions that in the year 674 AD has found many Arab immigrants who stopped and settled on the west coast of Sumatera.¹ The Arab-Southeast Asian commerce is carried out through two channels namely *first*, the sea route which starts from Aden to Gujarat-Kambe-Sailon, and then goes to the islands of the Nusantara. *Second*, the land route that starts from Damascus to Khorasan-Balochistan-Bamir-Kasykar-Shina-Khutan-Gobi-Sangtu-Hansyau Desert then reaches Nusantara.²

After the arrival of Islam, Arab-Southeast Asian interaction continued in the form of Islamic commerce and propaganda. In the workshop about the history of the entry of Islam into Indonesia held in Aceh in 1978, the role of Arabian in spreading Islam in Indonesia


Imam Subchi: The History of Hadrami

was increasingly confirmed. In the conclusion of the workshop it was mentioned that Islam had entered Nusantara in the 1H century directly from Arab lands.³

One of the Arab community that played an important role in the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia was merchants who came from the south of Arab lands. Islam began to flourish in the South of the Arabian Peninsula in 9 AH after the Prophet Muhammad specifically sent Muaz bin Jabal to teach Islam to the people of Yemen. Those who have embraced Islam then spread Islam mission to the area of their commerce, ranging from Canton in China, Barus in Sumatera to the coast of the South China Sea. According to Chinese news in 745 AD a Po-see (Persia) village was established in Hainan and in 758 CE Muslim merchants from Arabia and Persia migrated from Canton to Malaka and Pasai after their villages and commercial buildings were burned down by Chinese people in Canton. In addition there is also the Tomb of Mahligai which is believed to be the oldest Islamic tomb in Barus, North Sumatera.⁴

One of important elements of Islam spread in Indonesia from South Arab merchants is the Hadramiyyin, namely from Hadramaut, South Yemen. Hadramaut is a region that stretches from the coastline that includes the cities of Mukalla and Shihr and the area which is in the vicinity of the valley or Wadi’al-Ayn, Da’wan and Hadramaut. In Wadi Hadramaut, there are cities Shibam, Sewun and Tarim which are known as centers of science and culture.⁵

Hadramaut is a region that has a special social stratification that places the Alawiyin in a very high position. Alawiyin are those who are attributed to Alawi bin Ubaiddilah bin Ahmad bin Isa al-Muhajir who were

born in the city of Yemen after their migration from Basrah.\(^6\) They are the descendants of Ali ibn Abi Talib and Fatimah az-Zahra who linked their *nasab* (origin) to the Prophet Muhammad. They generally have *lagob* (call) in the form of Sayyid, Syarif, or Habib and Sayyidah and Syarifah for their female *lagob*.\(^7\)

The Alawiyyin entered Hadramaut during the Abbasid Caliphate. They migrated from Basrah to Hadramaut because of intimidation and cruelty from the Abbasid Dynasty. Their migration was led by Ahmad ibn Isa ibn Ali Uraidhi ibn Ja’far al-Sadiq ibn Muhammad al-Baqir ibn Ali Zainul Abidin ibn Husein with a total of 70 immigrants. They migrated in 317 AH to Medina then migrated for the second time in 319 AH to Hadramaut Yemen. They then settled in Husaisah which was between Tarim and Seywun and lived there.\(^8\)

Hadramaut residents before the arrival of the Muhajirin led by Ahmad bin Isa al-Muhajir were adherents of the Khawarij Ibadhiyah who were very hostile to Ali. This made exclusivity among the Alawiyyin among them by marrying their children to the descendants of their brothers and the formation of a *naqabah* institution that functioned to guard religious affairs led by an oldest and pious family member. This institution was first established by Ahmad bin Isa al-Muhajir.\(^9\)

Like the Alawiyyin, the Alawi *mubajirin* were generally followers of the Ja’far Sadiq ibn Muhammad al-Baqir *mazhab* who are often claimed to be Shia Imami. After living in Hadramaut for a long time, the Alawi *mubajirin* followed the Imam Syafi’i *mazhab* although it is not known for sure when these occurred. However, one of the descendants of Ahmad ibn Isa al-Muhajir, Muhammad ibn Ali Ba’alawi or known as al-Faqih

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\(^7\) Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim genealogy and mobility across the Indian Ocean*, (Barkeley: California Press University, 2016).

\(^8\) Marzuki Ali, *Peran Dakwah…*, p. 4.

al-Muqaddam is a person who is quite steeped of Imam Syafi’i mazhab and narrated many hadiths. Al-Faqih al-Muqaddam is also the founder of Tarekat Alawiyyah which is adopted by many Alawiyyin.\textsuperscript{10} The closeness of these two mazhab seems to have influenced the Islamic da’wah in the Nusantara by the Alawiyyin Hadrami. Both of them is a mazhab at the beginning of the spread of Islam in Indonesia and is proven by the role of the Syafi’i and Shia mazhab in politics in several Islamic sultanates in Indonesia as happened in the Peurlak and the Siak Indrapura Sultanate.\textsuperscript{11}

In the Hadramaut, the Alawiyyin occupied a respectable position, especially after the reduction of the followers of the Khawarij Ibadhiyah. Their interactions with Sunni-Syafi’i followers also make it easier for them to interact with the Hadramaut community. Because the Syafi’i mazhab give a special respect for the Ahlul Bait and makes it easy for them to accept the mazhab and its clerics. Teacher-student relationship occur between Alawiyyin and non-Alawiyyin cleric. These clerics were later dubbed the laqob of Masyayikh as a tribute to their nasab (origin). Besides Sayyid and Masyayikh there is also laqob Qabail which is generally a calling for the non-Alawiyyin Hadrami community. Related to these laqobs, Natalie Mobini Kesheh argues that there was a social stratification among the Hadrami community where the Sayyids were in the highest class followed by Masyayikhs and Qabail in the next class and the Dhuafa and Masakin groups at the lowest class.\textsuperscript{12} This social stratification carried in their migration to Indonesia.

The Sayyids began to migrate along with other Hadramaut residents by sea since the time of Muhammed Shahib Mirbath. Mirbath is an area in Oman located on the coast of the Hindia Ocean which is then embedded in its name. Alwi “amm al-Faqih” bin Muhammad Shahib Mirbath and

\textsuperscript{12} Natalie Mobine Kesheh, \textit{Hadrami Awakening…}, p. 22-23.
Muhammad “al-faqih muqaddam” bin Ali bin Shahib Mirbath are his descendants who became the grandfather of most Sayyids in Hadramaut and Indonesia. However, it is uncertain when the Sayyid Hadrami migrated to Nusantara.

Even so it is interesting to study the statement of Sayyid Zain bin Abdullah Alkaf which states that the Hadrami cleric was the preacher of the spread of Islam in Nusantara. Alkaf asserted that most of the earliest Islamic preachers on Java or better known as Wali Songo were Hadrami. Hamka even mentioned that the genealogical origins Wali Songo continued to Ahmad ibn Isa al-Muhajir and Muhammad ibn Ali Faqih al-Muqaddam. It is their offspring who according to him play an important role in the spread of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago.

In several lineages, the relationship between the Wali Songo people is connected with Sayyid Jamaludin al-Akbar or better known as Sheikh Jamaludin Jumadil Kubro. Sayyid Jamaludin al-Akbar has three children namely Sayyid Barkat Zainul Alam, Sayyid Ali Nurul Alam and Sayyid Ibrahim As-Samarqandi. Sayyid Barkat Zainul Alam is the father of Maulana Malik Ibrahim who is Sunan Gresik. While Sayyid Ali Nurul Alam, also known as Patih Arya Gajah Mada, was the Prime Minister of the Sultanate of Kelantan, he was the grandfather of Mr. Sayyid Syarif Hidayatullah’s path, or better known as Sunan Gunung Jati. As for Sayyid Ibrahim As-Samarqandi, he was a father and grandfather who sent Maulana Ishaq, Sunan Ampel, and other Sunan.

Not only that the descendants of Hadrami also played an important role in spreading Islam in the Malay and other Southeast Asian regions. This can be seen in the history of the Islamic sultanates in Southeast Asia. In the Chronicles of the Kings of Pasai, for example, it is told

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that Merah Silau, King of Samudra Pasai became a Muslim after in his
dream of meeting the Prophet Muhammad and was instructed to say
two sentences of syahadat. When he woke up, he also found himself
circumcised. In a dream he was also ordered to change his title to Malikul
Saleh. Not long after that, there came a person named Sheikh Ismail who
later taught about Islam. The king’s conversion to Islam was followed
by most of his subjects.

A similar story is also contained in Malay History which tells of the
conversion of the King of Tengah, ruler of Malaka. He was ordered to
say the two sentences of syahadat by the Prophet through dreams and
when he woke up himself circumcised. Not long after it, Sayyid Abdul
Aziz came to teach more about Islam. By Abdul Aziz, the title of the
king was changed to Sultan Muhammad Shah. The people of Malaka
then followed their king to embrace Islam.\(^\text{16}\)

Meanwhile, the story of Islamization in Pattani (Thailand) began
when the king, Phaya Tu Nakpa, suffered prolonged skin pain that
no physician could cure. Then the king made the announcement that
anyone who could cure the disease would be taken as a son-in-law. When
the announcement was heard by Sheikh Said of Pasai, he conveyed
the message, that he intended to cure the king’s illness but he was not
interested in being taken in by the son-in-law. As a substitute, he asked
the king to convert to Islam after recovering. When the message was
delivered, the king was willing to fulfill the conditions proposed by Sheikh
Said before. The Sheikh then went to the king and tried to cure his illness.
But after recovering, the king apparently did not fulfill his promise until
two years later, the king suffered a similar illness. Called again Sheikh Said
to cure the king. The same conditions were repeated again and the king
agreed to convert to Islam. Apparently the king reneged on his promise

\(^{16}\) Russell Jones, Ten Conversion Myths from Indonesia (Holmes & Meier
Sturgus Bastin and Roelof Rootvink (eds.), Malayan and Indonesian Studies: Essays Presented
after recovering. The following year the king experienced the same pain again. After the third time, only the king fulfilled his promise, converted to Islam and then followed by all the ministers and his people.\textsuperscript{17}

Sayyid Abdul Aziz, Sheikh Ismail, and Sheikh Said Al-Yamani are clerics from Yemen who are most likely connected to Sayyid Hadrami. However there is no definitive proof of these genealogies. The role of the Hadrami propaganda began to surface in the 17th century. The best known among them is Nur al-Din bin Ali bin Hasanji al-Humaidi al-Aidrusi al-Raniri. Al-Raniri’s father was a Hadramaut immigrant from Ranir, India while his mother is Malay.\textsuperscript{18}

Although there is no strong evidence of the identity of Hadramiyyin, the early Islamic propagators in Indonesia, but at least the identity of Alawiyyin is attached to the embedding of names and titles that are on them. The title Sayyid as attached to the names Sayyid Jumadil Kubro and Sayyid Ali Nurul Alam and Sayyid Abdul Aziz are titles that are pinned for the Alawiyyin in Hadramaut. Other titles attached to names such as Maulana and Sharif are titles that are also identical to the Alawiyyin as embedded in Maulana Malik Ibrahim (Sunan Gresik), Maulana Ishaq, Maulana Ainul Yaqin (Sunan Giri), Maulana Makhdom Ibrahim (Sunan Bonang) and Syarif Gresik), Maulana Ishaq, Maulana Ainul Yaqin (Sunan Giri), Maulana Makhdom Ibrahim (Sunan Bonang) and Syarif Hidayatullah (Sunan Gunung Jati). In addition, the names of \textit{Ahlul Bait}, which became the original names of many of the early propagators of Islam, were very identical with the Alawiyyin. Ali Rahmatullah (Sunan Ampel), Ja’far Shodiq (Sunan Kudus), and Qosim (Sunan Drajat) are names that are synonymous with \textit{Ahlul Bait} Rasulullah SAW.

As mentioned earlier about the opinion that Walisongo were early Alawiyyin who were pioneered by Sayyid Jamaludin Husaini Jumadil Kubro and their patterns of integration with indigenous communities.

\textsuperscript{18} Azyumardi Azra, \textit{Jaringan Global…}, p. 139.
The arrival of the next Alawiyyin group is more likely to be exclusive and maintain their identity. The arrival of this group was spearheaded by the Ba’lawi family of al-Faqih al-Muqaddam and Habib Abdurrahman bin Alawi Ammul Faqih. They established many sultanates or were appointed sons-in-law by Sultan like Habib Abdurrahman Basyaiban who were taken by the son of Cirebon Sultan’s son, Syarif Idrus Alaydrus who founded the Kubu Sultanate and the Al-Qadri family who founded Pontianak Sultanate.¹⁹

These two groups bring different concepts in interacting with the indigenous population. Both of these patterns of interaction cite the concept of Ali Badri divided into Integrativeism and Yemenism. The Integrativeism is a school developed by Sheikh Jumadil Kubro bin Maulana Ahmad Jalaluddin bin Abdullah Azamatkhan bin Abdul Malik bin Alawi Ammul Faqih bin Muhammad Shahib Mirbath. Sheikh Jumadil Kubro who is not purely a descendant of Hadrami (he was born from the blood and culture of mixed Indians and Chinese) made a mission concept that assimilates with the indigenous community. This integration not only pattern in the process facilitates the spread of Islam mission, but also makes the descendants of Sayyid Jamaludin Husaini Jumadil Kubro difficult to recognize as Ba’lawi. In their da’wah living in the style of the local community, they did not introduce themselves as the Ba’lawi family or the Azamatkhan family.

The Yamanism is a mazhab that identifies the Alawiyyin in Nusantara with the culture and figures of the Yemeni Alawiyyin and their place of origin in Hadramaut. They are very strong in maintaining their traditions and customs. They generally use their Ba’lawi family clan and wear their Sayyidan title. They are what we now know as Habibs in Indonesia today.²⁰

The migration of the Hadrami to other regions took their tradition with them. The big wave of their arrival in Indonesia began in the 18th

century. Actually before the 18th century there was a migration of Arab communities but their origins were not identified. Since 1820 the Hadrami colonies began to emerge in various major trade centers along the north coast of Java. The initial census of the Dutch East Indies government in 1859 showed that there were at least 7,786 *mubajir* Arabs who were in the Dutch colonial territory at that time (Aceh was not subdued by the Dutch at that time). Even though the census data cover Arabic ethnicity in general, the majority of *mubajir* Arabs are from Hadramaut. This number continued to grow until close to eighty thousand before the Japanese occupation.

The majority of immigrants come from the Katiri region and in particular from the Wadi Hadramaut which stretches from Shibam and Tarim. On their arrival in Indonesia they usually settled in an area where they could find relatives or other immigrants from the same village in the ancestral land.\(^{21}\) This close relationship is very influential in establishing intimacy, finding work and maintaining their traditions.

Since its arrival, the Hadrami seemed to integrate easily with the local community. The similarity of religion is the main factor of this convenience. Hadrami has been integrated thoroughly in three or four generations. Marriage between Hadrami immigrants, the majority of men and indigenous women, is also inevitable. This is due to the natural conditions and culture of the Hadrami community at that time which made it impossible to sail for women. Their marriage to indigenous women also opened the way for them to interact with the local community. The relationship between them and the indigenous makes consider the indigenous community as the *akwal* or family.

In some areas, the way for the Hadrami community is increasingly open with the marriage of some of them with the royal families in Indonesia. Among them even managed to establish their own sultanates such as in Kalimantan and Maluku. Their descendants with these final

women give birth to descendants who later became known as muwallad or mixed offspring, which distinguishes them from the aqhah or walaidi who are the origin descendants. These muwallad are now living integrated among the existing communities.

Development of Hadrami Arab Community in Southeast Asia

The development of the Hadrami Arab community in Indonesia was increasing especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. In 1860 there were 8,909 inhabitants of Arab descent in Indonesia. This number increased to 13,000 to 27,000 Arab minorities in the period 1870 to 1900. Rapid growth occurred both due to migration factors and birth factors. During the 1920s there were 45,000 Arabian and increased to 71,335 Arabian in 1930. This number is expected to increase to 80,000 during the Japanese occupation.

At the beginning of the 19th century the Hindia-Belanda government divided the region into a quarter system which divided the population areas based on their tribes. The Arab population along with other foreign Muslim residents lived in Batavia in an area known as Pekojan. In 1880 the number of Arab population increased dramatically making Pekojan a “truly Arab region.” Aside from Batavia, the Arab population is also the majority foreign resident who lives in 35 regions of which 23 of them are in Java and the remaining 12 are outside Java. They lived in Lumajang and Kraksaan (1874), Ambarawa and Buleleng (1883), Jambi (1889), Manado and Gorontalo (1894), Ampenan (1895) and Denpasar (1908).

In Batavia—except to Pekojan—the Arab population also lived among Europeans and Indo-Europeans on the outskirts of the Krukut River and other Tanah Abang, scattered in native villages. After the

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24 Ibid., p. 99.
abolition of the quarter system in 1919, most of the Arab population who lived in Pekojan which was already too dense moved to Krukur, Petamburan and Tanah Abang. From there their population spread to surrounding areas such as Sawah Besar, Jatinegara, Tanah Tinggi and Condet. Now there are almost no Arab population left in Pekojan.²⁵

Similar to Indonesia, the development of the Hadrami Arab community in Southeast Asia was also greatly influenced by their role in the spread of Islam. As mentioned earlier Hadrami figures early Islamic propagators such as Sayyid Ibrahim As-Samarkandi (son of King Champa, Thailand), Sayyid Ali Nurul Alam (Minister of Kelantan, Malaysia), Sheikh Ismail (propagator of Islam in Pasai), and Sayyid Utsman al-Yamani (Spreader of Islam in Pattani, Thailand) is a pioneer in the development of the Hadrami Arab community in Southeast Asia. The role of their da’wah facilitates the migration of Arab community in general and the Alawiyin in particular both from Hadrami or not to the Southeast Asian region.

The Hadramiyyin especially from the Alawiyin are highly respected in Malaysia. Many of them are appointed officials and muftis which are the highest religious position. In northern Malaysia those who had been appointed as important officials were Sheikh Abdul Jalil al-Mahdani who was appointed Mufti Kedah in 1710, Sayyid Harun Jamalulail who was appointed as penghulu (district head) in 1797, Sayyid Husein Jamalulail who was appointed Sultan of Perlis in 1843 for his services ending the colonization of the Thai people, and Sayyid Abu Bakr. In the East and South of Malaysia there is Sayyid Muhammad Al-Aydrus who was appointed as Sheikh al-Trulama in Trenggananu, Sayyid Muhammad Zayn who is the son of Sayyid Muhammad was appointed as minister with the title of engku Sayyid Seri Perdana. In Kelantan a Hadrami named Sheikh Daud bin Muhammad al-Bahrayn was appointed as the mufti of the

state. There is also Sayyid Ja’far bin Sayyid Alawi who was appointed as a criminal judge. His brother, Sayyid Muhammad bin Sayyid Alawi was appointed as a judge and became the third most powerful person in the Sultanate of Kelantan during the reign of Sultan Mansoer. Besides them, there are still many Hadramiyyin who play important roles in other Malaysian states. It is their role that makes the Arab Hadrami population growth in Malaysia increasingly rapid.

Contrast to Malaysia where the Hadramiyyin plays many roles in religious and state offices, in Singapore the Hadramiyyin withdraw more in commerce. Families who played a large role in commerce in Singapore were the al-Kaff, al-Saqqaf, al-Junaid and Bin Talib families. The first presence of Hadramiyyin in Singapore occurred during Raffles spearheaded by Muhammad bin Harun al-Junayd, a Hadrami merchant from Palembang. The growth of Arab community tends to be slow in Singapore from 15 people in 1824 to 3471 in 1957. The Alkaff family became the richest, they founded Alkaff & Co which is probably the largest property company in Singapore. The al-Junayd family itself is one of the main merchants and owns many buildings. They are the main suppliers of clothing and are also involved in the spice commerce. The clothing commerce was also dominated by the Bin Talib family. While the Al-Saqqaf family is generally a merchants of agricultural products such as rubber, sago, coconut and coffee.

As is the case in Singapore, the livelihood of the Hadramiyyin in almost the entire Southeast Asian region is a merchant. Commerce also makes them have a higher welfare than other people. As is the case with the ethnic Chinese, trade among the Hadramiyyin also occurs between their peers and outside them. However, in contrast to the Chinese, their commerce with indigenous community tends to be easier, especially in countries that are predominantly Muslim.

In Indonesia the center of Arab commerce in the 19th century and early 20th century was Surabaya, which was also the center of the Arab community’s shipping industry. The commerce culture of the Arab community is very much felt in Surabaya, especially in the Ampel area which has an “Arab village” like in Pekojan Jakarta. The same thing also felt in Tegal and Batavia.\(^{28}\)

In Batavia (Jakarta) the main livelihood of the Arab community is commerce and being a moneylender. The commodities of them are cloth, batik and clothing. In addition, they also commerce furniture, precious stones, perfume, leather goods and food. Traveling Arab merchants are famous for allowing buyers to pay on credit. They also invest a lot in real estate such as houses, shops and land. The Arab community in Jakarta is very prosperous. In 1885 the real estate of their real estate reached 2.5 million guilders. Some of them have large and luxurious houses. 10 Arabs in 1904 owned 22 *particuliere landerijen* (private agricultural fields) on the edge of the city with an area of about 50 km\(^2\).\(^{29}\)

In addition, the Arab community also controls commerce along the north coast of Java. They are generally an Arab half-caste group with indigenous community known as the Kauman. One of their biggest commodities is clothing and *sarung*. Not only that they also become *batik* producers and have their own motifs known as Kaati Batiak.\(^{30}\)

In Malaysia at the end of the 18th century, the Hadramiyyin played an important role in the shipping industry. They become the owners of large ships that can load 150 to 500 tons. Their ships are much bigger than Chinese ships and are able to travel longer distances. Their ship also


Imam Subchi: The History of Hadrami

carries a lot of Muslims who want to go to Hajj\textsuperscript{31} to Makkah.\textsuperscript{32} Aside from being engaged in the shipping industry, they also invest in property, especially around the Penang area.\textsuperscript{33}

In Indonesia, especially Batavia, those who have large wealth generally are non-Alawi Hadramiyyin. Among them is Umar Mangqus who owns a lot of real estate and is a sugar exporter and has served as the Captain of the Arab Community. In addition there is also the Bassalama family who become landlords in Kwitang Oost. They are basically non-Alawiyyin Hadrami who have extraordinary wealth. However, their social status is still inferior to the Alawiyyin due to long-standing customs and traditions. This then created a conflict that led to the emergence of two Hadrami Arab community movements in Indonesia.

**The Hadrami and Islam Mission in Southeast Asia**

Since their first arrival in Indonesia the Hadramiyyin were merchant and spreaders of the Islam. They contributed greatly to the spread of Islam in Indonesia and countries in Southeast Asia. As mentioned earlier in a Walisongo opinion even attributed to the Hadramiyyin from the Azamatkhan family. Although not directly from Hadramaut, their grandfather Abdul Malik bin Alwi Ammul Faqih Azamatkhan was Alawiyyin Hadram who emigrated to Nasirabad India.\textsuperscript{34} They are the spreaders of early Islam in Indonesia.

In spreading the religion of Islam they established educational institutions which later became known as *Pondok Pesantren*.\textsuperscript{35} Based on the Hikayat Putro Nurul A’la written at that time it was found that in Peurlak

\textsuperscript{31} Hajj is an annual Islamic pilgrimage to Makkah, Saudi Arabia. It is a religious duty for Muslims that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime.

\textsuperscript{32} Ulrike Freitage and William G. Clarence Smith, *Hadrami Traders…*, p. 298-299.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 303

\textsuperscript{34} Marzuki Ali, *Peran Dakwah…*, p. 166.

\textsuperscript{35} *Pondok pesantren* are Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. They consist of pondok, mosque, santri, teaching of classical Islamic texts and kiai.
in the 11th century there was an Islamic education center that taught the *bakikat, makrifat, syariat, hikmah*, and philosophy. The education center is believed to be in the Cot Kala Dayah area.\footnote{A. Hasymi, *Sejarah Masuk dan Berkembangnya Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Al-Maarif, 1993), p. 165.}

After the collapse of the Peurlak Sultanate due to being attacked by Sriwijaya, the center of Islamic education turned to Pasai. It played an important role in the spread of Islam in the Nusantara. Clerics in Nusantara who wanted to study in Makkah at that time, generally studied in Pasai. One of the clerics who had studied at Pasai was Sunan Giri and Sunan Bonang who studied with Maulana Ishaq, Sunan Giri’s father. In addition Pasai also gave birth to many clerics who had a great influence in the Nusantara. Sheikh Said and Sheikh Safiudin before preaching to Pattani studied in Pasai. There is also the name Fatahilah or Fadlullah Khan who is a resident of Pasai.

Walisongo, which is often attributed to the Azamatkhan family, are the pioneers in the establishment of the Pesantren in Java. Pesantren in the form of *Surau* was first established in Gresik by Maulana Malik Ibrahim or better known as Sunan Gresik. Maulana Malik Ibrahim bin Sayyid Barkat Zainul Alam himself is recognized as his Kiai\footnote{Kiai is a Javanese expert in Islam.} of the Pesantren tradition in the Jawa.\footnote{KH. Saifudin Zuhri, *Sejarah Kebangkitan Islam dan Perkembangannya di Indonesia*, (Bandung: Al-Maarif, 1979), p. 263.} As a formal educational institution, the first Pesantren established founded by Raden Ali Rahmatullah bin Sayyid Ibrahim Assamarqandi or Sunan Ampel in the Ampeldenta, Surabaya. The land in Ampeldenta was a gift from King Brawijaya, who was the uncle of Sunan Ampel. The land was used as the center of Islamic *da’wah* for the community of Majapahit and especially for the princes and nobles of Majapahit. Among the Ampeldenta Santris\footnote{The Santri are people in Javanese who practice a more orthodox version of Islam in Pesantren.} were Raden Paku or Sunan Giri, Raden Makhdum Ibrahim or Sunan Bonang, and Raden Fatah.
Imam Subchi: *The History of Hadrami*.................

founder of the Demak Sultanate.

The trail of the Ampeldenta *Pesantren* was then continued by Giri Kedaton. Giri Kedaton is a *Pesantren* established by Raden Paku or Maulana Ainul Yaqin bin Maulana Ishaq bin Sayyid Ibrahim Assamarqandi, better known as Sunan Giri. The Santris of the Giri Kedaton not only come from Jawa but also from various regions in the Nusantara, these include Makassar, Bone, Dompu, Borneo, Ternate and Tidore. From these Santris then Islam spread throughout the Nusantara. Apart from being an education center, *Pesantren* Giri Kedaton is also a religious center. The leadership of Giri Kedaton from Sunan Giri to his successors has the role of *mufti*, the person authorized to issue *fatwa*. Moreover, the leader of Giri Kedaton not only authorized to issue *fatwa* but also played a role as the person who appointed and authorized the sultan’s power.

In addition to the Ampeldenta and Giri Kedaton *Pesantren*, were also established by Walisongo, including: *Pesantren* of Sunan Kudus which was established in Kudus, *Pesantren* of Sunan Bonang in Tuban, *Pesantren* of Sunan Muria in Gunung Muria, and Pesantren of Sunan Kalijaga in Kadilangu, Demak. The political involvement of the *Pesantrens* and the absence of a successor that is comparable to the Wali causes it is no longer active as centers of education.

Hadramiyyin mission in the next phase after the era of Walisongo was more involved in politics. This can be proven by the large number of Hadrami immigrants in this phase involved in Sultanate politics. Among them were those who were appointed sons-in-law by the Sultan such as Habib Abdurrahman Basyaiban who were taken by the daughter of the Cirebon Sultanate. And there were also those who founded the sultanates such as Syarif Idrus Alaydrus who founded the Kubu Sultanate and the Al-Qadri family who founded the Pontianak Sultanate.\(^40\) The second phase, which lasted from the 17th century to the mid-19\(^{th}\) century, was also marked by the migration of Hadramiyyin who adhered to the

\(^40\) Marzuki Ali, *Peran Dakwah*..., p. 163.
Yamaniyahism which revealed their identity through title and family name.

Although many Hadramiyyin were involved in politics or imperial politics, but in this phase, not a few clerics are engaged in the world of Islamic education. Among those who are quite well known are Nur al-Din bin Ali Al-Aidrusi ar-Raniri, Sayyid Abd al-Shamad al-Palimbani, Sayyid Husein bin Abu Bakar Al-Aidrus Luar Batang and Salim bin Abdullah bin Sumair who also lived in Singapore before Indonesia. Although their influence also reached the ranks of the empire, but their involvement in the world of *tasawuf* (Islamic mysticism) is more widely known.

Nur al-Din al-Aidrusi al-Raniri was a Hadrami immigrant who was born in Ranir (India) and came to Aceh in 1631 AD. He then served as Sheikh al-Islam during the time of Sultan Iskandar Tsani. Ar-Raniri is a follower of the *Tarekat* Al-Aidrusiyah who is known to try to harmonize the practice of *tasawuf* and submission to the sharia. As a Sheikh al-Islam and the influence of the teachings of his *tarekat*, which strongly maintained submission to the sharia, Ar-Raniri criticized the teachings of *tasawuf wujudiyyah* developed by Hamzah al-Fansuri and Syamsudin al-Sumatrani. He claims to understand *wujudiyyah* especially *wujudiyyah mulhid* which according to him is a *syirik*. Al-Raniri wrote a book *Tibyan fi Ma’rifah* which expressed his views on the difference between a true and vanity understanding of *tasawuf*. In his book he included Hamzah al-Fansuri and Syamsudin al-Sumatrani in the group of *syirik* people.

Very little information about Sheikh Abdus Shamad al-Palimbani’s devotion and presence. However, his father, Sheikh Abdul Jalil bin Sheikh Abdul Wahid bin Ahmad Al-Mahdani was a Yemeni immigrant and his mother was from Palembang. So Sheikh Abdus Samad al-Palimbani can be categorized as a *muwallad* rather than a native Hadrami immigrant.

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41 Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Global…*, p. 139-141.
42 *Syirik* is the sin of idolatry or polytheism.
Sheikh Abdus Samad is often identified with the *Tarekat* of Sammaniyah in Indonesia, especially in Aceh. The *tarekat* is famous for its *zikir* and recitation of the *Ratib Saman*.

Sayyid Husein bin Abu Bakr Al-Aydrus was also known as Habib Husein Kramat Luar Batang. He was born in Tarim, Hadramaut Yemen then moved to Batavia. There is no definite explanation of his migration to Batavia, but he died in 1789. After his death, his grave was saved by the Betawi people. His grave is close to the mosque that was built after he died. Based on the report of Van den Berg, the grave of Habib Husein has become a place of pilgrimage for Muslims and Chinese descendants with the aim of getting blessings. Not explained in depth about the role of Habib Husein’s *da’wah*, but until now the grave of Habib Husein Kramat Luar Batang is busy being visited by the public.

Although not a few Hadrami who focused themselves on education and the spread of Islam, but in this second phase the political movement became very identical with Hadrami’s identity at this time. During the Dutch colonialism that was increasingly widespread in Indonesia, the Hadrami were often suspected as the masterminds behind the rebellion. This suspicion was reinforced by a rebellion in Aceh under the leadership of Habib Abdurrahman Az-Zahir. He as described by Snouck Hurgronje was an Islamic reformist who could influence the policies of the Sultan of Aceh at that time. His extensive network with the Islamic world at that time and other colonial countries such as England made him very feared by the Dutch. He has many followers who are very loyal because of his influence and leadership. The ability and influence of Habib Abdurrahman Az-Zahir eventually had a wide impact on Dutch policy towards residents of Arab and Islamic descent in Indonesia.

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Habib Abdurrahman Az-Zahir was actually only one of many Hadramiyyin who were involved in the Aceh War. Besides Habib Abdurrahman Az-Zahir, there are several other Hadramiyyin that were quite influential in the Aceh War, including Habib Tengku Teupin Wan, Habib Long, Habib Samalangan, Habib Cut and Habib Saunangan. They help each other with other Acehnese heroes such as Teuku Umar, Commander of Polim, Cut Nyak Dien and Imam Leung Bata in their fight against the Dutch. The Aceh War then lasted long enough until 1942 or when Japan arrived in Indonesia. It was their involvement in the Aceh War that influenced Dutch policy towards people of Arab descent in the Hindia-Belanda.

**Hadrami Arab Community Revival Movement in Southeast Asia**

The involvement of Habib Abdurrahman Az-Zahir and a number of other Hadramiyyins in the Aceh War made the Dutch tighten the movements of the Hadramiyyin in Indonesia. The Arab descent or other Islamic communities who had just returned from Arabia were monitored by their movements. The Dutch Colonial Government believed that the uprisings occurred because of the incitement of Arab descent. According to Snouck Hurgronje, Islam and Arab descendants are the main enemies of the Dutch. Hurgronje’s solution in dealing with Islam is to freedom Indonesia from the influence of Islam and Arab. The method to be achieved is to make it difficult for pilgrims to Makkah and try to stop the Hadramaut Arab immigrants. Another effort is to encourage Indonesian people to go to school in the Dutch and keep them away from madrasa, pesantren and schools established by Arab descent. As a result there will be a gap in social relations between graduates of Dutch schools and pesantren, so that this is expected to cause ideological divisions and social conflicts in the national movement.

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Another effort to keep the indigenous community away from Arab descendants by the Dutch was by pitting the Hadrami leaders with the teachings of Islam that had been developing in several regions in Indonesia. Divisive tactic is carried out by provoking and agitating and exposing the opinions of the ulama to attack religious ideas which have been enemies of the Netherlands. One of the Hadrami figures used as a tool for Dutch divisive tactic is Sayyid Utsman bin Yahya.

Sayyid Utsman bin Yahya was a descendant of Hadrami who was born in Pekojan, Batavia in 1862 AD. His father name Sayyid Abdullah bin Aqil bin Yahya while his mother Aminah binti Abdurrahman bin Ahmad al-Mishri. Since childhood he was raised by his maternal grandfather, Sayyid Abdurrahman al-Mishri. Sayyid Abdurrahman al-Mishri was an expert in *falak* (astronomy) and dedicated himself in correcting the direction of the mosques in Indonesia. It was from his grandfather that Sayyid Utsman bin Yahya studied religion. He then studied in Makkah under Sayyid Ahmad Zaini Dahlan, a Syafi’i *mufti* in there. After studying in Makkah for 7 years, Sayyid Utsman bin Yahya then he moved to Hadramaut and studied there to Habib Abdullah bin Husein bin Thahir, Habib Abdullah bin Umar bin Yahya, Habib Hasan bin Shalih al-Bahr, and Habib Alawi bin Saqqaf al -Jufrie. In 1882 he returned to Indonesia and devoted himself to Batavia. He then opened teaching at the Pekojan Mosque and wrote many works. He died in 1931 at the age of 69. The vastness of his knowledge made him one of the most sought-after scholars. Among the well-known students of Sayyid Utsman were Habib Ali bin Abdurrahman Al-Habsyi Kwitang, Habib Salim bin Jindan, Habib Alwi al-Haddad Bogor, Guru Marzuki and Guru Mansur.

He was classified as a productive cleric in his time. He writes in two languages, Arabic and Indonesian and many of his works are referred to by clerics until now. Among the most well-known works of Utsman

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49 Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Global…*, p. 142-144.
Imam Subchi: The History of Hadrami


Sayyid Utsman was greatly influenced by the thoughts of his teacher, Sayyid Ahmad Zaini Dahlan who was also a teacher of Indonesian clerics when studying in Makkah such as Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Minangkabawi, Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantani, Sheikh Saleh Darat, Sheikh Hasyim Asy’ari, and Sheikh Kholil Bangkalan. His opposition to the Naqshbandiyah Congregation and the Khalidiyah Congregation to ordinary people without being based on a strong understanding of the Shari’a was also based on the opinions of his teacher who also opposed the teachings of the tarekat by Sheikh Ismail al-Minangkabawi and Sheikh Sulayman Zuhdi Afandi. He even wrote several books to reinforce his opposition to the teaching of the tarekat in his books Nasiba al-Aniqah and al-Watsiqa al-Waffiya.52

In al-Watsiqa al-Waffiya Sayyid Utsman criticized the practice of the tarekat which was not based on strong sharia, which in his opinion

Imam Subchi: The History of Hadrami

constituted the practice of false *tasawuf*. He revealed some of the mistakes of the *tasawuf* masters (*mursyid*), namely the claim that they were able to transfer the secrets of *zikir*, they had met the Prophet Muhammad, they had known God and His secret, and they claim that by following a *tarekat* can be powerful and sacred. He also opposed the views of the *mursyid* who claimed his self to be *wali*. According to Sayyid Utsman the *mursyid* exploited the “stupidity” of their followers for their interests, wealth and social status. He then stated that the valid *tarekat* are those which have roots in the previous clerics such as the Al-Junaidiyah (Imam Junaid al-Baghdadi), Al-Alawiyah (Alawi Sayyid), Al-Ghazaliyyah (Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali), Qadiriyyah (Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani), Syadziliyyah (Sheikh Abu Hasan Al-Sayadzili), Rifa’iyyah (Sheikh Ahmad Al-Rifa’i), Naqsabandiyah (Sheikh Baha Al-Din Al-Naqsabandi), and Khalwatiyyah (Sheikh Ibrahim Al-Khalwati).

In addition to criticizing the practice of the *tarekat*, Sayyid Utsman was also a person who was strict on the issue of *bid’ah*. However, unlike Wahabis who tend to generalize *bid’ah*, Sayyid Utsman divided *bid’ah* into five parts. *First*, *bid’ah haram* that can bring a Muslim to *kafir* such as changes or additions to Islamic worship that are contrary to the Qur’an, Hadith, *Ijma*, and *Atsar*. *Second*, *bid’ah makruh*, which is all practices according to the sharia such as decoration of the mosque with floral motifs and such. *Third*, the *bid’ah mubah* is an act that did not exist in the time of the Prophet Muhammad but was allowed for Muslims like eating delicious food. *Fourth*, *bid’ah sunnah* or *hasanah* is a good deed not done during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, such as building a *wakaf* house for *sufi*. *Fifth*, *bid’ah wajib* is a *fardhu kifayah* which was never carried out in the time of the Prophet Muhammad such as opposing

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53 One of the interesting of Sayyid Utsman also included Ibn Arabi who was the pioneer of *Wihdatul Wujud* which was opposed by Ar-Raniri as one of *mursyid* who is validated. Sayyid Utsman bin Yahya, *Al-Watsiqah Al-Waffiyah fi Uluww Sya’n Thariqah Al-Shufiyah* (Batavia: tp., 1886).
Imam Subchi: The History of Hadrami

bid’ah experts.54

Sayyid Utsman not only criticized the tarekat and bid’ah conception by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, but also became the main opponent of their thoughts. Sayyid Utsman even wrote a paper specifically criticizing Wahhabism. Sayyid Utsman in a book entitled I'anah Al-Musytarsyidin ala Ijtinab Al-Bida’fi Al-Din described the Wahabis as the most frightening splinter groups. In the book he also criticized Abduh and Rasyid Ridha who tended to side with Wahabis especially in the matter of Sayyid.55

Sayyid Utsman was the one who strongly criticized the physical jihad movement in some areas and considered it a ghurur (delusion) of the true doctrine of Islam. He argued that their goal of jihad was deviating from sharia. He considers that the jihad movement in Banten and Bekasi is not a holy war. In his view there were no Indonesian clerics who taught specifically about jihad or carrying out the holy war against non-Muslims.56

Sayyid Utsman prefers non-physical movements in dealing with Dutch colonialism and takes accommodative-cooperative. This can be seen from his opinion above which emphasizes the importance of education and understanding religion properly which in the end is able to lead the community to a more effective resistance and less casualties. His opinion was later strengthened by his support for Sarekat Islam (SI)—the first Islamic organization that succeeded in gathering community strength in a non-physical movement. Sayyid Utsman specifically supported Sarekat Islam and wrote two works to defend SI, namely, Sinar Isterlam pada Menyatakan Kebenaran Syarekat Islam dan Selampai Tersulam pada Menyatakan Kebajikan Syarekat Islam. In his argument Sarekat Islam is an embodiment of the Qur’anic verse ta’awwun ala al-birri wa al-ta’qwa, helping each other

55 Azyumardi Azra, Jaringan Global…, p. 145-146.
56 Sayyid Utsman bin Yahya, Minhaj al-Istiqomah…, p. 24-25.
in goodness. Sarekat Islam is the implementation of Islamic doctrine.\textsuperscript{57}

Sayyid Utsman’s support for Sarekat Islam seems to be inseparable from the many Hadrami, especially the Sayyids who have a role in Sarekat Islam membership. He was a very determined person who defended the blood purity of Sayyid. Sayyid Utsman even specifically addressed the issue of the Sayyid \textit{kafaah} in his work \textit{Al-Qawanin Al-Syar’iyyah li Abl Al-Majalis Al-Hukmiyyah wa Al-Ifta’iyyah}. In the book he strongly opposed the marriage of Syarifah with non-Sayyid men both from Hadrami and another. According to him the marriage was punished invalid and \textit{fasakh}. Sayyid Utsman in many of his writings was the front man in the fight against those who criticized this status of Sayyid. He was also the one who brought the issue of \textit{kafaah} in the Islamic discourse in Nusantara.\textsuperscript{58} This in turn made the Hadrami split in their opinions which ultimately divided their unity.

The involvement of the Hadrami in the non-physical movement and tended to be cooperative with the Dutch government to be a pattern of the revival of the Hadrami community at the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. They are heavily involved in non-physical organizations and movements both those which were established directly such as Jamiatul Kheir and Al-Irshad or just involved in membership such as Sarekat Dagang Islam and Sarekat Islam.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The majority of Hadrami Arabs in Southeast Asia come from Hadramaut (South Yemen). They are divided into two groups, namely Sayyid who claims there is a blood relationship with the Prophet Muhammad, and non-Sayyid because there is no blood relationship with the him. At first they came to Southeast Asia because of economic motives. In some regions such as Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, etc. the Arab community has been very successful in commerce. In addition

\textsuperscript{57} Azyumardi Azra, \textit{Jaringan Global...}, p. 152.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid.}, p.144.
to commerce, they also spread Islam in their areas of diaspora. Some Islamic education institutions were established by merchant and cleric from Arabia. The Hadrami Arab Community also *da’wah* in politics, one of them is Sayyid Utsman. He is one of the Arabs who was an advisor to the Hindia-Belanda government, and very productive writing about Islam.
Imam Subchi: *The History of Hadrami*

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Imam Subchi: *The History of Hadrami*


