CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Definition of Hadhrami Arab

The Malays close ties with the Arab community dates back as far as the early periods of trade-based contact. This relationship flourished and grew with the existence of the Arab community in the Malay world, both in Indonesia and Malaya. Gradually, the Malays converted into Islam, the religion of the Arabs. This strengthened the bond between the Malays and the Arabs, which then was revolving on religion and education. The 16\textsuperscript{th} century, marked the beginning of the intervention of colonial powers in Malaya, which threatened the relationship between the Arabs and Malas in later years. Most of the Arabs who migrated and settled in the Malay World, especially in Malaya in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century originated from Hadhramaut, Yemen. They consisted of the Sayyid and non-Sayyid.

The term Hadhrami refers to the people of Hadhramaut, Yemen. In this study, it refers to the Hadhrami Arabs from Hadhramaut, Yemen who claimed the descendant of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. through his grandson Husain, the son of Saidatina Fatimah r.a. The Sayyid or the Sadah, plural of Sayyid, is a title of respect used by the descendant of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. According to The New Encyclopaedia of Islam,\textsuperscript{1} Sayyid is a title of respect used for the descendants of the Prophet through his daughter Fatimah and ‘Ali bin Abi Talib. However, it is also used as a general title of address like sir, monsieur and mister. Sayyid is an Arabic word means lord and master. It is a title of respect used to indicate descendants of the Prophet, Muhammad.\textsuperscript{2} Nowadays, many people used it as a proper name. Sayyid means a prince, lord, chief or owner; one who is eminently by virtue of his personal qualities, his possession or his birth.\textsuperscript{3} Plural of sayyid is sadah. It derives from root word sa wa da which means leader, or chief from the Prophet Muhamad SAW‟s descent. The term has been used

throughout the Muslim World as a title of respect to indicate in particular the descendants of Prophet Muhammad SAW. However, this title is also used for Muslim saints. The term Sayyid, Sadah, and Hadhramis shall be used in this research interchangeably to refer to the Hadhrami Arabs.

Many of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya involved in trade. They managed to secure important positions in the Malay States and became successful entrepreneurs. Names like the Al-Kaff, Al-Saqqaf, Al-Junied and Al-Attas were among the most influential and wealthiest Hadhrami Arab families in Malaya. They were also actively involved in charity work such as endowing lands for burial grounds, establishing religious schools, building mosques and founding orphanage houses. This research examines the roles and contributions of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya from 1819 until 1969. It discusses the significant roles played by the Hadhramis in religion, education, economy, publication, politics and administration of the Malay states in Malaya. This study will also look into the British response on the role of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya. Subsequently, the research will explore and analyze factors that led to the decline of the Hadhrami Arabs’ role and influence in Malaya, especially in the middle of the 20th century, owing to the Second World War as well as the changes that took place in local politics that did not only affect the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the economy, but also their social status in Malaya.

Research Questions

In the Malay society, Arabs, especially the Hadhrami Arabs of Sayyid descent were highly regarded with respect and deference by the Malays for their piety and scholarship in Islam. The Islamization of the Malays was also a direct result of the significant role played by the Arabs. Trade is one of the factors that encouraged the Hadhrami Arabs

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4 Ibid.
5 A Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam, p 192. They are also called descendant of al-Sadah.
to travel overseas. In the due course, many of them settled down in foreign lands and build their own settlements. The Hadhrami Arabs' mass migration to the Malay World took place around the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly when Malaya in need of religious orientation and a role model to follow in order to strengthen their faith and understanding about Islam. Many of them succeeded in lives and attached to religious institution and administration held important positions, while others ventured into business becoming successful entrepreneurs. Apart from their commitments in businesses, they were also involved in philanthropic works such as building mosques, madrasah, and donating land for funeral grounds.

Therefore, this research attempts to study when the Hadhrami Arabs mass migration occurred in the Malay World and in particular to Malaya in the 19th and 20th centuries. Who are the Hadramis or the Hadhrami Arabs that had played significant roles in Malaya and contributed to the country's history. What are the factors that encouraged the Hadhrami Arabs' migration to Malaya and the significant roles played by them in the aspects of religion, education, economic, publication, and politics of the country. This study shall also highlight what they have contributed to the society in the aspects of religion and religious institution, education, publication, economics, politics and administration in Malaya.

The Hadhrami Arabs' survival in Malaya also deserves an explanation, on how they as a group of minority managed to prosper in Malaya and what are the factors that contributed to their success in the country especially in the economy. How the Hadhrami Arabs succeeded in holding important positions in the Malay states’ administration and politics, until certain extend, they have become rulers of several Malay states in Malaya such as in Perlis, Johor, Pahang and Terengganu. Most importantly, how the Hadhrami Arabs immersed into the Malay society, and later on be accepted as part of the community and considered as Malays. Why the British were
suspicious of the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the administration and politics of the Malay states in particular their good terms with the Malay rulers. Therefore, this research tries to answer the reason why the British were suspicious of the Hadhrami Arabs and also to examine how the British responded towards the roles played the Arabs in particular the Hadhramis in the aspects of religion, education, economy, politics, publication, and journalism in the 19th and 20th century Malaya. Last but not least, what are the factors that contributed to the decline of the Hadhrami Arab descent in Malaya after the Second World War, particularly in the economy. All these questions shall answer why the Hadhrami Arabs have become the focal point of this study.

**Research Objectives**

Based on the title of the research “The Roles and Contributions of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya, 1819-1969”, this research aims to explore the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in Malaya based on available sources. Therefore, this research is conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1) to study the historical background of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya and how the Hadhrami Arabs as a group of minority from Arabian Peninsula managed to integrate themselves in the Malay society; and be accepted as part of the community; and be considered as Malays;

2) to explore the roles and contributions made by the Hadhrami Arabs in religion, education, economics, publication, politics and administration of Malaya from 1819 until 1969;

3) to discuss the British response towards the role played by the Arabs in economy, politics, publication, religion and education in Malaya; and
4) to analyze factors and other contributing factors led to the decline of the Hadhrami Arab descents in Malaya on the aspects of administration, economy, and politics as well as the crisis of identity facing by the Peranakan Arab after the Second World War.

**Research Scope**

This research will tackle the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya, their roles and contributions in religion, education, economy, publication, politics and administration of the Malay States from 1819 until 1969. The study begins with the period of the founding of Singapore as a trading post by Stamford Raffles in 1819 until 1969, when the Yemen Government implements the policy of prohibiting Hadhrami Arab immigrants from returning home. Apart from that, the year 1819 was also a period when Raffles implemented the policy of making Singapore a free trading port which encouraged foreign merchants to trade in Singapore including the Chinese, Indian and Arabs. Singapore became a transit port; a hub for commodities exchange before proceeding to the East or the West to their intended destinations. This policy had not only attracted merchants and traders to operate their businesses on the island, but also at the same time, encouraged the influx of immigrants from China, India, Arab, and also European countries to populate Singapore and the Malay States. The Hadhrami Arabs in particular were among the Arab traders who came to trade in Singapore. The majority of them were Hadhramis from Hadhramaut, who came directly and indirectly from Hadhramaut, Yemen. Many of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya, particularly in, Singapore came directly from the Dutch East Indies or Indonesia today. The involvement of the Arab traders, particularly the Hadhrami Arabs in the Malayan waters was vital to the spice trade activity in the region. This inspired Raffles to include the Arabs in his plan in making Singapore a trading hub in the region. Raffles envisioned making Singapore a metropolitan city through the participation of merchants from all
over the world. Raffles had also added in his plan a particular area for the Arab settlement in the Singapore town plan known as Arab Kampong. “...The Arab population will require every consideration....” Therefore, with this recognition, the story of the Hadhrami Arab traders in Malaya began.

The involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya was something not thoroughly studied or researched on. Available literatures on them are quite limited and scarce. This research concentrates on the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in the Malay States: in religion, education, economy, publication, politics and administration of the Malays during the period. This research discusses their background and how they acquired such a position in the Malay States administration as well as their relationship with the ruling class and aristocrats. Further discussion highlights the role played by them in the Malay States administration and politics.

This study also covers the period of the British colonial rule in Malaya. A lot of changes occurred during the British colonial rule in Malaya. The policy introduced by the British affected the administration, economy, socio-cultural as well as the administration and political structure of the Malays. Some perceived and received these changes positively while there were those who revolted against the British due to certain issues that touched on Malay sentiment and honour. In this respect, this research also highlights significant roles played by the Hadhramis in dealing with British policies in Malaya. The period between 1941 and 1945 was a crucial time in Malaya. The breakout of the Second World War and the Japanese Occupation had crippled the administration and economy of Malaya. The Hadhrami Arabs’ economic activities were also badly affected due to the war. The policies introduced by the government in Singapore particularly contributed to the Hadhrami Arabs decline in later years. To some

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Hadhramis’, these policies caused them to lose their social status and identity in Malaya particularly in Singapore.

The climax of this study is in 1969 when the South Yemen achieved its independence in 1969. The communist regime that was in power in Yemen at this time, had pursued a policy that prohibited the return of the Hadhrami Arabs from abroad, including Malaya. This policy in a way affected the Hadhrami Arabs’ population in Malaya and their immigration. To limit the scope of study, this research only focuses on the Malay states in the Malay Peninsula, including Singapore, Penang and Malacca except Sabah and Sarawak.

**Research Methodology**

This study employs qualitative research methods. It uses library research method in collecting data related to the topic. The research also refers to primary sources that are accessible searched as from *The National Archive*, London, *The National Archive*, Malaysia and its branches as well as *The National Archive*, Singapore. These sources include records from the British Colonial Office (*Colonial Office CO*), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (*FCO*), the Government Gazette, Censuses, and General Adviser (*GA*). Setiausaha Kerajaan Negeri (*SUK*) files are also consulted to get information regarding the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in the Malay states’ administration. Newspapers and magazines are also referred to obtain information regarding the Hadhrami Arabs involvement in the publishing industry in Malaya whereas; they also provide details about their stand and approach in dealing with social issues in the society as well as economy and politics.

This research also refers to secondary sources from published and unpublished documents such as theses, books, articles, working papers, microfiches and microfilms, newspapers and journals from overseas and local libraries such as British Library,
London, National Library Board, Singapore, National Archive Library, Malaysia, University of Malaya Library, and Tun Sri Lanang Library. All the data are analyzed descriptively, analytically and critically using a thematic approach to observe the development of the Hadhrami Arabs involvement in Malaya.

**Significance of the Study**

This study could have a remarkable impact on the study of Malaysian history. All this while, the history of the Arab people in Malaya has not received appropriate attention from the respective bodies as such their roles and contributions to the history-making of the country is also overlooked. Thus, it is hoped that their efforts and contributions will be given proper recognition as they are part of the country’s history.

1. This study attempts to highlight the history of the Hadhrami Arab community in Malaya in terms of their roles, contributions and their survival in the Malay community.

2. It is hoped that the study will provide new and valuable information about the roles and contributions of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya in order to fill the gap in the academic studies.

3. The information gathered from the study could be used to support and strengthen the theory of the Arab factor in the social, economic and political development in Malaysia by highlighting the contributions of the Hadhrami Arabs; especially the Sayyids in the 19th and 20th century Malaya. This will also help create a new understanding and perspective of the people towards the Hadhrami Arabs in the history making of Malaysia.
Literature Review

There is a vast but scattered literature on the Hadhrami Arabs in the Malay World. However, literature reviews on the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya, particularly in the Malay states are quite limited and scarce. Available writings are focused on the involvement of several prominent Hadhrami Arab figures in the economy and selected religious scholars and figures such as Sayyid Mohammad Al-Saqqaf, Sayyid Hassan bin Ahmad Al-Attas, Sayyid Abdul Rahman Al-Idrus@Aidarus popularly known as Tok Ku Paloh and Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad Al-Hadi, a popular reformist and journalist. Other writings discuss about the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya in brief and in general terms. Therefore, this research is conducted to fill this gap, and to explore the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya that was overlooked by researchers in the past.

In general, Arabs were associated with the activities of spreading Islam in Malaya and the Malay World. Writings on the origins, background and history of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya have been studied by local and foreign scholars alike. Mahayuddin Haji Yahaya in his works traces the origin and history of the Hadhrami Arabs and their settlements in Malaya. His works provide a valuable insight to the study of Hadhrami Arabs with general ideas on their origins, background of the Sayyid families in Malaya, genealogy and factors which lead to their migration to the Malay World particularly in Malaya. However, in his works, Mahayuddin does not emphasize the roles played by the Hadhrami Arabs in the development of religion, their involvement in politics, administration and economy in Malaya. On the other hand, Omar Farouk Shaeik Ahmad studies about the Arab community in Penang. He touches on the issue of origin, history, pattern of Arab migration, their involvement in the

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economy, education, *dakwah* activity, and social lives but discusses rather briefly, about their participation in politics in Penang.\(^8\)

There are academic writings focus on Arab society in Malaya in specific districts or states such as the Arabs in the state of Kedah, Muar, Johor and in Jelebu, Negeri Sembilan. Nazirah Lee in her PhD thesis studies the Arabs in British Malaya in the Interwar Years from 1918 until 1941. In this study, she covers all Arabs who reside in Malaya regardless of their clan and descent and this include the *sadah* and shaykh as well as Arabs in general. She also touches on the background of the Arabs in Malaya that include their education and social life. This thesis also highlights the Arabs involvement in economics and administration that witnessed direct contact between the Arabs and the British in Malaya. While at the same time she also touches on the dynamic relationship between the Arabs and the Malays during the period of study.\(^9\)

The genealogical study of the Hadhrami Arabs is also done to trace the background of the ancestors and descendants of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya, such as Raja Haji Yahaya who studied the genealogy of Perak Royals who are connected with the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya, and R.O. Winstedt in *Hadramaut Saiyids of Perak and Siak*.\(^10\) Tun Suzana and Muzaffar discuss in detail the genealogies of the Sayyid descents in Malaysia. They relate the relationship between the *Ahlul Bait*, the families of Proph et Muhammad SAW with the genealogies of the Malay Sultanates in Malaya, the present day Malaysia, the Sultanates of Brunei, the Sultanates of Sulu, the rulers of Aceh, the rulers of Champa (Cambodia), Patani and Maguindanao, Philippines today. This book highlights the roles and contributions of the Sayyid descendants originated from Hadhramaut, Yemen who claimed the descents of the Prophet Muhammad as *da’ie* and rulers in the Malay World. From this book, it is learned that Tun Habib Abdul

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\(^10\) R. O. Winstedt, “Hadramaut Saiyids of Perak and Siak”, *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Kraus Reprint, Vaduz, 1965, Sept. 1918, pp. 49-54. See also Raja Haji Yahaya in *JRASSR*, p. 305. He studies genealogy of Perak Royals that have connection with the Saiyids from Hadhramaut, Yemen.
Majid, the Bendahara of Johor was one of the Ahlul Bait members and from him comes the genealogies of the Johor Sultanates (1699 – 1877), Pahang and Terengganu who ruled the states until today.\textsuperscript{11}

Faridah Romly in her thesis *Orang Arab di Kedah* studies about the Arab people in Kedah, discussing their genealogy, origin, and their involvement in the history-making of Kedah that include their participation in religion, society, economy and politics of Kedah.\textsuperscript{12} A. Rahman Tang Abdullah in his academic exercise focuses on the history of the Arab society in Muar. He highlights the Arabs' involvement in the aspects of religion, education, economy and social life of the Arab community in Muar. Meanwhile, Syed Zakaria bin Syed Hassan also focuses his study on the Arab society, specifically in the District of Jelebu, Negeri Sembilan. He touches on the historical background of the Sayyid, the Arabs who originated from Hadhramaut, Yemen who claimed the descendant of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. who reside in Jelebu, Negeri Sembilan.\textsuperscript{13}

Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas also discusses the genealogy of the Sayyid descents and their link with Hadhramaut, Yemen the country where their ancestors were originated and trace their roots to Qahtan from Hazarmaveth (Hadhramaut). Despite various claims, disagreements and uncertainties among genealogists about the Qahtan’s ancestry, they however, come to an agreement that Qahtan was one of the Children of Ismail. The Arabs were also concerned with the authenticity of their genealogical origins and keep records of it. This tradition is still strictly observed by the Bani ‘Alawi or the ‘Alawis of Hadhramaut and they keep it recorded in seven volumes known as *Shajarah al-Sadah Bani ‘Alawi* compiled by the *Rabitah al-‘Alawiyah* in Jakarta, Indonesia. The *Rabitah al-‘Alawiyah* has branches in the two Holy Cities, in Cairo and


\textsuperscript{12} Faridah Romly, *Orang Arab di Kedah*, Academic Exercise, History Department, National University of Malaysia, 1983/84.

in the Malay Archipelago.\textsuperscript{14} Al-Attas further discusses about the activity of spreading Islam in the Malay Archipelago by the Arabs that were mainly done by the Bani 'Alawi of Hadhramaut, the descendant of al-Husain in the 12\textsuperscript{th} and 16\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{15}

The works of Mahayuddin Haji, Yahaya Omar Farouk, Nazirah Lee, Syed Zakaria bin Syed Hassan and Faridah Romly are important and significant to the study of Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya. They provide a valuable insight and basic introduction to the study of Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya, which covered the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in several social aspects in Malaya. However, their works only discuss about the Arabs in certain states only. Omar Farouk and Faridah Romly study about the Arabs in general which include the Sayyid and non-Sayyid descent in Penang and Kedah. Mahayuddin Haji Yahaya specifically writes about the Hadhrami Arab descents of Sayyid descents in Pahang and Johor in general. Therefore a thorough study needs to be done to highlight and discover the presence of Hadhrami Arabs in other states in Malaya, their roles and contributions in the Malay States. While, Nazirah Lee tries to cover almost every aspect of the Arabs in Malaya that makes the study lacks of detail in certain issues such as the Arabs’ involvement in madrasah education and the conduct of haji activities by the Arabs in Malaya. Overall, this thesis provides a useful information regarding the Arab society in Malaysia. Further research needs to be carried out to study related aspects in detail.\textsuperscript{16}

W.H. Ingrams provides a valuable insight to the study of Hadhrami Arabs on their social, economic and political situation in Hadhramaut, Yemen. In his report, Ingrams touches on the social structure of the people of Hadhramaut which is basically centred on the social strata with the Sadah (plural of Sayyid) as the highest and

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\textsuperscript{14} Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, Historical Fact and Fiction, 2011, pp. 76, 79.  
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 79.  
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respected group in the society followed by the *Syaikh* or *Masyaikh*. The *Sadah* or the *Sayyids* consisted of the religious scholars and learned men. They were consulted by the people in matters related to religion. They were also the mediator in settling disputes or fights between clans in the society. He also mentions about the Hadhrami Arab emigrants outside Yemen such as in East Africa, East Indies (Indonesia today) and Malaya. Ingrams further writes that the Hadhrami Arabs who live in Singapore mainly originated from the towns of Tarim, Seiyun, and Shibam and many of them were the *Nahd* tribesmen.\(^\text{17}\)

Meanwhile, L.W.C. Van Den Berg studies about the Hadhrami Arabs in the Netherlands East Indies or Indonesia today. He provides detailed information on the Hadhrami Arabs in Indonesia who mostly originated from Hadhramaut, Yemen. In his writing, Van den Berg also briefly mentions about the Hadhrami Arab colony in Malacca, Penang, and Singapore. He says that the Hadhrami Arabs in Malacca were mostly born Arab with a mixed blood of an Arab father and local mother and many of them are poor. Meanwhile, those who have capital moved to Singapore to earn a better living, engaging in trade and the likes. The Hadhrami Arab colony continued to grow, as well as the number of Hadhrami Arab immigrants every year. Penang was one of the British colonies in Malaya that also witnessed the presence of the growth of the Hadhrami Arab colony on the island. However, their number was relatively small and they even did not have their own leader from their nationality.\(^\text{18}\)

‘Hadhramut and the Arab Colonies in the Indian Archipelago’ by L.W.C. Van Den Berg discusses issues concerning Hadhramaut of its population, geography, social, economy and political life. This book is divided into two parts where the third part is omitted (a dissertation). The first part is about the Arabs in Hadhramaut. L.W.C Van Den Berg mentions about significant roles played the Sayyids of hadhramaut who have


great moral influence over the people. He lists down names of Sayyid families in Hadhramaut as well as other names of family tribes including the Bedouins. The Sayyids are respected by the rest of the population because of their religious influence and noble status being the descent of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. However, the Sayyids in Hadhramaut are conservative and they oppose innovations be it material or intellectual in particular from Europe. The second part is about the diaspora Arabs in the Indian Archipelago, their migration abroad, survival in foreign lands, the remittances sending back home and censuses of the Arabs in diaspora particularly in Singapore, Malacca, Penang and Wellesley in 1874 and 1884.19

This book is a translation from Dutch to English. It provides a useful information regarding Hadhramaut of its political and social life particularly the political roles played by the Sayyids in the region. However, in preparing this book Van Den Berg himself did not visit Hadhramaut. Most of the information gathered are collected from his interviews with Arabs in Batavia who on frequent visits to Hadhramaut. He also refers to M. Mahommed bin Hassan Babahir, the chief of Arab colony in Batavia. Statistics are collected from local authorities as well as archives from Government reports in relation to the Arabs’ political roles in Hadhramaut, Yemen. Although this book provides quite a considerable amount of information regarding the Arabs in Hadhramaut and in the Indian Archipelago, but not much is mentioned about the Hadhrami Arabs of Sayyid descent in the Malay states.20

The involvement of the Hadhramaut Arabs in the administration of religion and educational aspects of Malaya prevails in almost every state in the country. Researchers like Heather Sutherland,21 Shahril Talib Robert,22 Muhammad Yusuf Hashim,
Mohamad Abu Bakar, and Shafie Abu Bakar are among those who studied and penned their works discussing issues related to the involvement of the elite group, religious scholars and figures, administrators and political figures in Malaya before and after the country achieved independence. Among them there were Hadhrami Arab religious scholars and figures that were in the service of the Malay States.

Heather Sutherland focuses his study on the status of the elite group in Terengganu in *The Taming of the Trengganu Elite*. He categorizes the ruling and social structure of the state into three stages; the first stage is the elite or *golongan atasan* or dignitaries that comprises of the sultan, administrators (officials) and the religious group (scholars). In the second stage, the group of the middle class comprising of the lawyers (who did not receive formal training) was also known as the representative (*wakil*) lawyers. The last and the lowest stage is the commoners or ordinary people, the *rakyat*. In this work he further discusses the role played by the religious elite group such as the Al-Idrus family who held important positions in the state as *mufti* and *Shaykh al-‘Ulama*. The Al-Idrus family originated from Hadhramaut, Yemen.

In the administration and political aspects, the Hadhrami Arabs were among those who were actively involved in the affairs of the Malay states in Malaya. Hussain Baba bin Mohamad discusses how Perlis, also known as Kayang, some time ago as a small district under the governorship of Kedah had come to be an independent state ruled by descendants of Hadhrami Sayyid in the middle of the 19th century. It also discusses how Sayyid Hussain helped the Sultan of Kedah to protect Perlis and Kedah

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26 Ibid., p. 44.
against the Siamese attack. It was through him that the descendant of Jamalullail rules Perlis from then until today.²⁷

While Julie Tang Su Chin exclusively discusses about the establishment of the state of Perlis that is ruled by Hadhrami Sayyid descent in the middle of the 19th century until today, as well as the roles played by Sayyid Hussain in bringing peace to the state.²⁸ Julie also illuminates the factors that contributed to the appointment of Sayyid Husain Jamalullail as the ruler of Perlis. Several other researchers and historians have presented various hypotheses on this issue. Ahmad Ismail and Yazid Mat,²⁹ Mohd Isa Othman,³⁰ Haji Buyong Adil,³¹ and Hussain Baba bin Mohamad³² are among those who studied the history of Perlis, which indirectly involved the Hadhrami Arabs’ presence in Kedah and Perlis. Besides, the close relations between Sayyid Hussain and the royal family of Kedah could have contributed to his appointment as the ruler of Perlis.³³ Whereby, Arau had been given by the Sultan Dhiauddin to Sayyid Harun, his son in law (the father of Sayyid Hussain) as a marriage gift and the area is to be inherited by his offspring forever.³⁴

Haji Buyung Adil also briefly touches on the political and administrative positions held by several Hadhrami leaders in Negeri Sembilan such as Sayyid Abdul Rahman (1872-1879) who was appointed Datuk Kelana of Sungai Ujung.³⁵ In Tampin, the Al-Qadri families controlled the district of Tampin when Sayyid Sha’aban was made its first ruler, the Tengku Besar Tampin. In Jelebu, Sayyid Ali bin Zin al-Jafri held the position of Datuk Penghulu Jelebu. Khoo Kay Kim also discusses about the involvement of Sayyid Abdul Rahman bin Sayyid Ahmad al-Qadri in The Dato’ Bandar

of Sungai Ujong in the politics of Sungai Ujong when he was appointed as Datuk Kelana.\textsuperscript{36} These works provide useful information regarding the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the state administration and politics in Negeri Sembilan. However, these writings do not focus specifically on the Hadhrami Arabs.

Mohammad Redzuan discusses the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the administration and politics in the Malay states. This work is important because it provides preliminary studies on the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the state administration in Malaya, with many of them holding important positions in the Malay States. His study covers the states of Kedah, Perlis, Perak, Terengganu, Kelantan, Pahang, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Johor. However, his writings only focus on the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the Malay states for a limited period of time. A thorough and comprehensive study needs to be carried out to find further information on their involvement in Malaya until at least in the mid 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{37}

Mohammad Redzuan also discusses the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the Malay politics in Malaya up to the 1940s. This time he focuses on the roles played by the Hadhrami Arabs in the politics in Malaya before the Second World War. There were Hadhrami Arabs who were pro British and some were discreetly against them. Despite the loyalty shown by the Hadhrami Arabs towards the British administration in Malaya, still the latter were suspicious of the Hadhrami Arabs, particularly during the tensed period of the First World War.\textsuperscript{38} This study provides important perspective of the British towards the Hadhrami Arabs’ attitude and standpoint concerning the politics of Malaya during the period of study. However, his study only covers the period before the Second World War meanwhile; this research studies the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement

in the Malay politics until the year 1969. Further discussion needs to be carried out to see the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in the Malay politics after the Second World War.

Nurfadzilah Yahaya in her Master’s thesis studies the British colonial views of the Arab elite in Singapore from 1819-1942, tries to discover how the Arab elites managed to keep their identity of Arabness despite being born of mixed descent; of Malay and Arab parent. Even though there were rumours about the Arab elites in Singapore who at times were suspected as anti-British, yet there were wealthy Arab elites who tried to keep a good rapport with the British, especially in politics, for the sake of their business ventures in Malaya.\(^\text{39}\)

There are also other writings that touch on the issue of the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in politics and administration in Malaya, albeit with very brief and very general discussion. The information on them can be found in *Sejarah Negeri Sembilan*, *Sejarah Terengganu*, *Sejarah Kedah* and *Sejarah Johor* by Buyung Adil,\(^\text{40}\) *History of Kelantan 1890-1940* by Shahril Talib Robert,\(^\text{41}\) *Sejarah Tentang Syed di Negeri Sembilan: Satu Kajian di Daerah Jelebu* by Syed Zakaria bin Syed Hassan\(^\text{42}\) and *Temenggung of Muar* by R.O. Winstedt.\(^\text{43}\) These works provide information on the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the Malay States administration and politics from which we can glean the Hadhrami Arabs’ relationship with the Malay rulers as well as the British.

After all, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, by William R. Roff helps a lot in understanding the Malay political background in Malaya for the period covered in


\(^{41}\) Shahril Talib Robert, “The Trengganu Ruling Class in the Nineteenth Century”.


study.44 Readings on the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya in later periods are not tackled by many, especially after the Second World War and post-independence in Malaya. Sayyid Muhammad Khairudin Al-Junied touches on the role played by Hadhramis in Singapore in the 20th century by highlighting the involvement of the Al-Saqqafs or Al-Saggofs in dakwah or the propagation of Islam in Singapore, publication and politics. Names like Sayyid Ibrahim bin Omar Al-Saqqaf, Sayyid Ahmad bin Mohamed Sayyid Esa Al-Menoar, Sayyid Ali Redha Al-Saqqaf, Sayyid Shabuddin and Sayyid Ja’afar Albar were among the Hadhramis who were actively involved in politics in Malaya and Singapore.45

Syed Shaykh Al-Hadi was one of the Hadhrami Arab figures whose interest prevailed in the work of reform or islah through publication and education. Sayyid Shaykh Al-Hadi was not only a reformist, but also a teacher and journalist. He contributed to the establishment of several madrasahs as well as founding reformist journals in Malaya such as Al-Imam, Al-Ikhwan and Saudara.46 Aljah Gordon in The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh Al-Hady highlights the works of islah or Islamic reform by Syed Shaykh Al-Hadi in his effort to bring progress in the Malay society that was portrayed in the publication of journals such as Al-Imam, Saudara and Al-Ikhwan. Ian Proudfoot,47 William R. Roff,48 Nik Ahmad Nik Hassan49 and A.M. Iskandar Haji Ahmad50 were among those who compiled and wrote on the publishing industry in Malaya. From these works, one can gather information on Hadhrami Arabs who became funders, editors and journalists as well as owners of publishing companies.

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Talib Samat and Abu Bakar Hamzah explore the life of Sayyid Shyakh Al-Hadi a prominent literati and 'ulama’ who played significant role in promoting the idea of reforms or Islah and Tajdid movement in the early period of the 20th century through education and publication. More study needs to be done to find further information regarding the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the publishing industry in Malaya and their contributions towards the nation building and independence in the 20th century Malaya.51

Apart from their involvement in the politics and administration in Malaya, the Hadhrami Arabs were also actively engaged in business and trade, and business ventures in Malaya and the Malay Archipelago as well, as trans-ocean businesses between Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Among the works which deal with the early trade contact between the Arabs and the Malays is an article by Rita Rose Di Meglio.52 In the study of Arab community’s involvement in trade and economy in Malaya, more light has been shed on their business and trade activities in the Malay Archipelago such as in Indonesia (Dutch East Indies) and Singapore.

William G. Clarence-Smith in his article ‘Hadhrami Entrepreneurs in the Malay World, c. 1750 to c. 1940,’ describes the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in trade and business ventures in the Malay World particularly in Singapore and Indonesia. He studies how and why the Hadhrami entrepreneurs came to play such a significant role in the economy of the Malay World when many of them were reported multimillionaires in Indonesia and Singapore. Many of the Hadhrami Arabs involved in business ventures traded spices, cotton textiles, engaged in inter island shipping, as well as the pilgrim industry. They were also reported to be involved in money lending business. William also touches on the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in agriculture in Malay

Peninsula, which, according to him was almost non-existent except for the Al-Saqqaf family’s involvement in Johor and Singapore.53

In his other work ‘The Rise and Fall of Shipping in the Indian Ocean, c.1750 – c.1940’, William G. Clarence-Smith touches on the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the shipping industry trading commodities in the Malayan waters in mid 18th century until 20th century employing mostly Javanese crews members with Arab captains. Shipping was a profitable business to the Arabs before they faced stiff competition with European shippers in the 1880s when steamships were introduced and dominated mostly by the European big companies. In general, this article provides a useful information regarding the Hadhrami Arabs involvement in the shipping business in the Malay world. Yet, not much is mentioned about the involvement of Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya, particularly in the Malay Peninsula.54

Meanwhile, in Malaya, there are writings on the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in trade and business activities in Malaya focusing on certain leading figures who were prominently known in the society. Among them were the Al-Saqqaff, Al-Kaff and Al-Junied families. Mohd. Sohaimi Esa discusses about the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in the economy of Johor in the 19th until early 20th century Malaya.55

In his other work *Ekonomi Orang Arab di Johor (1862-1942)*, Mohd. Sohaimi Esa specifically discusses the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the economy of Johor. This book contains four chapters discussing about the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in the economy of Johor. The first chapter touches on the historical background of the Hadhrami Arabs, their voyages, trade and migration in the Malay World. Chapter two discusses about the Hadhrami Arabs' involvement in the economy of Johor before the British interfered in the state administration (1862-1914). In chapter three he touches on

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the Hadhrami Arabs' involvement in the economy of Johor during the British era that he considers as the first stage from 1914 until 1926. In the last chapter, Mohd Sohaimi discusses the Arabs' involvement in the economy of Johor from 1926 until 1942. Several issues are discussed by Mohd Sohaimi regarding the Kukup Concession, conflicts between the state of Johor and Kukup Concession and its trustees.\(^{56}\)

Mohd Sohaimi Esa discusses the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the economy of Johor in his Master thesis ‘Penglibatan Individu-individu Arab dalam Ekonomi negeri Johor (1862-1942) in which many of them concentrated in Johor Bahru Town.\(^{57}\) This study provides important background of the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the economic sector in Malaya particularly in Johor. The book and the thesis provide an interesting and detail information regarding the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the state of Johor. However, it only covers a limited period of time from 1862 until 1942 and focuses on the state of Johor only. Therefore, this research tries to fill the gap to study the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in economy in other Malay states and also to cover the period after the Second World War until 1969.

Saadiah Said focuses her writing on the involvement of the Al-Saqqaf family in the economic activities on Johor in particular Sayyid Mohamad Al-Saqqaf. She also explores the close relationship between Sayyid Mohamad Al-Saqqaf and the Sultan Abu Bakar of Johor. Sayyid Mohamad was awarded Pingat Darjah Kerabat Johor (DK), a special award that was only given to Johor royalties. Through this relationship, Sayyid Mohamad Al-Saqqaf was granted with a concession land in Kukup, Pontian for agricultural purpose. Apart from that, the Al-Saqqaf family was also actively involved in pilgrimage activity and matters related to it such as being a hajj agent or hajj broker


or *shaykh haji* by providing transportation to potential *hajj* to Hijaz. These works provide useful information on the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the economic sector in Malaya. However, these works focus on certain states only. Therefore, a thorough study is needed to explore the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in other Malay states in Malaya.

Apart from their involvement in the economy, the Hadhrami Arabs also contributed to the establishment of several religious schools in Malaya that were popularly known as *madrasah*. *Madrasah* is also called *Sekolah Arab* or Arabic school. Sayyid ‘Ali bin Mohamed Al-Attas highlights the significant role played by Sayyid Hassan in promoting Islamic education in Malaya. Sayyid Hassan was a successful and wealthy Hadhrami Arab entrepreneur in Malaya who used his own wealth (accumulated from his business enterprises) to build several *madrasah* in Johor and Pahang. Rahim bin Osman in *Madrasah Masyhur al-Islamiyyah* discusses the involvement of the Arab community in Penang. Among whom were the Hadhrami Sayyids who took initiative to set up a religious school named *Madrasah al-Qur’an* in 1916 to teach basic knowledge about Islam, Qur’an recitation and Fardhu ‘Ain. This *Madrasah Al-Qur’an* served as a basic foundation for the establishment of *Madrasah Al-Masyhur* in 1919.

Sayyid Shaykh Al-Hadi was the person who was responsible in bringing big changes to the *madrasah* administration and its management. He introduced a new system of education that was totally different from the old one where students were taught with secular subjects aside from the religious ones. This writing highlights the significant role played by Sayyid Shaykh Al-Hadi in the modern religious education in Malaya. However, this writing only focuses on Sayyid Shaykh Al-Hadi’s contribution

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61 Rahim bin Osman, “Madrasah al-Masyhur al-Islamiyyah”.

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in the establishment of *Madrasah Al-Masyhur* in Penang with only brief information about his involvement in the establishment of *Madrasah Al-Iqbal* in Singapore and *Madrasah Al-Hadi* in Malacca. Further study needs to be done to study his involvement in other *madrasah* in Singapore and Malacca as well as other Hadhrami Arabs contributions in the religious education in Malaya.\(^62\)

On the subject of the British response towards the roles played by the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya, this research tries to look into several aspects such as religion, politics and administration, publication and economics that witnessed the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in the country. This research will also touch on the British policy and response towards the Middle East influence on the Malays through the political ideology, religious reform and pan-Islamic ideas. Apart from that, a discussion on the Turkish influence and its impact on the Malays are also worth mentioning. Mohammad Redzuan discusses about the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in the politics of Malaya, with some of them as pro British, while there were others who were anti-British particularly during the inter war years of the First World War and the Second World War in Singapore. There were Hadhrami Arab leaders who showed their support and loyalty to the British rule in Malaya.\(^63\) A selection of Malay newspapers and journals shall be referred to in order get a clear idea of the Malays’ perception of the political developments in Malaya.\(^64\)

Meanwhile, regarding the decline of the Hadhrami Arabs role and influence in Malaya, the research will look into several factors that contributed to the decline of the Hadhrami Arabs particularly after the Second World War. This decline also refers to the shrinking of political, economic and social domination of the Hadhrami Arabs in


\(^{63}\) Mohammad Redzuan Othman, “Conflicting Political Loyalties of the Arabs in Malaya”, p. 38.

\(^{64}\) This newspapers and journals would include the Malays view and thoughts on the political development that taking place in Malaya during the said period such as *Neracha, Pengasoh, Saudara* and *Al-Ikhwani*. 
Malaya. The aftermath of the Second World War resulted in the changes of government policies such as the introduction of the ‘Control of Rent Act 1947’ that caused the decline of the Hadhrami Arabs income in Singapore. The shortage of income also affected on the remittances contributed by the Hadhrami Arabs to their homeland, Hadhramaut.\(^65\) The Act froze all the rent of pre-war properties and it was put under the control by the government of Singapore. The ‘Control of Rent Act of 1947’ introduced by the authority was aimed to prevent landlords from raising rents in a way to take advantage of the shortage of housing in the island. This Act gave a big impact to the Hadhrami Arabs in Singapore as many of them were dependent on the income accumulated from the rental properties.\(^66\)

**Division of Chapters**

The Introduction part of the research discusses about the problem statements, scope of the study, objectives of the study, the significance of the study and literature review. Chapter one discusses about the background and the origin of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya as the majority of them originated from Hadhramaut, Yemen, and claimed themselves as descendants of Prophet Muhammad SAW tracing their genealogy back to Husain, the son of Fatimah. This chapter discovers the early trade contact between the Arabs in the Middle East and the Malays in the Malay World. This research will also refer to the census of the Arab Population in Malaya that were mostly carried out in Malaya from 1871 until 1931. This shows the increased number of the Arabs every year either from the external influx of the Arabs from the Middle East or through the intermarriage between the Hadhrami Arabs with the local women in Malaya that gave birth to a new generation of *Peranakan Arab*. This chapter will also touch on the

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Hadhrami Arabs’ social life where the majority of the Hadhrami Arab community in Malaya experienced a mix-culture of Arab and Malay. The majority of the Arabs in Malaya were from a mixed-marriage between Hadhrami Arab men and local women.

The second chapter discusses about the role and contribution of the Hadhrami Arabs in religion and religious administration, and religious education or madrasah in Malaya. This chapter explores the roles played by the Hadhrami Arabs in religion and religious administration, with many of them appointed to the position of mufti, shaykh al-Islam, qādī and religious teachers. There were Hadhrami Arabs who were involved in the establishment of madrasah in Malaya, such as Madrasah Al-Masyhur, Madrasah Al-Attas, Madrasah Al-Saqqaf (Al-Saggof), and Madrasah Al-Junied. These madrasahs were built through the efforts of the wealthy Hadhrami Arabs, in fulfilment or response to the social need of the ummah. They use the wealth accumulated from their business activities to build madrasah as well as to maintain the madrasah’s administration.

Chapter three discusses about the roles and contributions of the Hadhrami Arabs in the economy and publication, highlighting the Hadhrami Arabs’ dominance in the economic sector in Malaya. The Hadhrami Arab families such as Al-Saqqaf, Al-Kaff and Al-Attas were among the big names in the economy of Malaya and reported among the richest individuals in Malaya. In terms of publication, the Hadhrami Arabs were also involved in the publishing industry in Malaya producing journals and newspapers such as Al-Imam, Al-Ikhwan, Saudara, Warta Malaya and Genuine Islam. These publications also served as a medium for the religious reformist group known as Kaum Muda in disseminating the idea of reform and pan-Islam in Malaya.

Meanwhile, the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in administration and politics of Malaya is discussed in chapter four. The authority and respect secured by the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya were due to their participation in the politics and administration of the Malay states. Their involvement in the politics and administration
was noticeable in almost all of Malay states, but it was mostly apparent in Perlis, Kedah, and Negeri Sembilan where the Hadhrami Arab religious scholars who married into the royal families and ruling class received privilege and special status in the society. These afforded them greater chances in being appointed to high positions in the Malay states administration and politics.

In chapter five, this research explores the British response on the role played by the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya where the Hadhrami Arabs’ prominence in the politics and administration of the Malay states resulted in their role being perceived with suspicion by the British. This was due to the British apprehension towards the Hadhrami Arabs, for fear that they would use their religious and political influence among the Malays to go up against the British administration in Malaya. This chapter will also look into the British reaction towards the Hadhrami Arabs’ participation in the Malay politics and administration, as well as religion, particularly the pilgrims industry which also benefitted the British.

Lastly, in chapter six the research discusses the factors that lead to the decline of the Hadhrami Arabs’ role and influence in Malaya. This decline also refers to the shrinking of the Hadhrami Arabs’ influence in politics, economic and social domination. The Hadhrami Arabs’ economic activities were also badly affected due to the war. The aftermath of the Second World War and the Japanese Occupation in Malaya had crippled the administration and economy of Malaya. The government policies introduced in Singapore also resulted in the Hadhrami Arabs’ decline in later years. Some Hadhrami Arabs felt that these policies were the reasons which caused them to lose their social status and identity in Malaya particularly in Singapore.

In the concluding part, the research summarises the important roles played by the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya as well as their contributions in the religion, religious administration, Arab school or madrasah, administration and politics of the Malay
The involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in the Malay states could be considered as an important part in the history making of Malaya particularly in the religious historiography that witnessed the lasting impact of the Hadhrami Arab scholars' contributions to the Malay-Islamic civilization as well as the Muslims thoughts in Malaya and Malaysia today.

**Conclusion**

In general, the Hadhrami Arabs played prominent role in Malaya and contributed significantly to the development of the country in the 19th and early 20th century. The most beneficial and lasting contributions of the Arabs were reflected in religious and intellectual development of the Malays by establishing *madrasah*, mosques, engaging in the administration of religion and politics. The early Hadhrami Arab immigrants in Malaya were respected religious scholars and successful entrepreneurs. Their scholarship in Islam earned them a reputable status in society and they also had been appointed to high positions such as *shaykh al-Islam*, *mufti*, *qādı*, and religious teachers. The prominent roles played by the Hadhrami Arabs in politics and administration of the Malay states also earned them authority and respect by the Malays.

However, in certain parts, the Hadhrami Arabs were seen dominating the economy of Malaya, which had caused dissatisfaction among the Malays. The Malays started questioning the role of the Arabs and criticized their sincerity in bringing up the changes in the society. Regardless of these sentiments, the Malays should recognize and appreciate the efforts made by the early Hadhrami Arab generations in bringing changes in the society such as establishing religious institutions from which the Malays benefitted in deepening their knowledge about Islam.

This study examines the significant roles played by the Hadhrami Arabs and their contributions in the aspects of religion, education, publication, economics, politics
and administration of Malaya from 1819 until 1969. This study employs a qualitative research method. Library research is used in collecting data from published and unpublished documents as well as records from the local archives and abroad such as The National Archives of London, British Library, London, The National Archives of Singapore, National Library Board, Singapore, The National Archives Malaysia and its branches, The University of Malaya Library, The National University Malaysia Library. All data are examined and analyzed descriptively, analytically and critically throughout the study. It explores how the Hadhrami Arabs, a minority group of immigrants from Hadhramaut, Yemen managed to prosper and held important positions in the Malay states’ administration, politics and the economy. This research spans from the period of the founding of Singapore as a trading post by Stamford Raffles in 1819 where he managed to attract Arab traders to trade and settle in Singapore. The year 1969 marks the end of this study when South Yemen became independent with a communist regime in power that practised a closed door policy regarding the Hadhrami Arabs migration and forbade those in the diaspora from returning home. Apart from their active involvement in the economy, administration and politics of the Malay states, the Hadhrami Arabs also contributed immensely in the field of religious education where several madrasah or Arab schools were built to cater the needs of Muslim children. Waqf or endowment funds were established from which income was collected to pay for the maintenance of madrasah, as well as for the teachers’ salary. In addition, they also build mosques and financing orphanage houses through the waqf fund as well as donating lands for the graveyards. However, the involvement of Hadhrami Arabs in the aspects of administration and politics of the Malay states had been looked upon with suspicion by the British. Thus, this study tries to examine how the British responded towards the roles played by the Hadhrami Arabs and their involvement in the administration of religion, madrasah education, publication, politics, administration,
and economics in Malaya. It also chronicles the Hadhrami Arab-British relations in the 19th and 20th century Malaya. Apart from that, the study also analyzed factors that led to the decline of the Hadhrami Arab descents in Malaya after the Second World War, particularly in politics and economy that eventually lead to the shrinking of Hadhrami Arabs’ dominance in the economy, as well as the crisis of identity faced by the younger generation of the Peranakan Arab. Nevertheless, based on the information gathered, the study could be used to support and strengthen the theory of the Arab factor in the social, economic, and political development in Malaya, by highlighting the contributions of the Hadhrami Arabs; especially the Sayyids in the 19th and 20th centuries, as they also contributed to the history of in the making of Malaysia.