

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STUDIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND ASIA

# The Hadhrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia

Identity Maintenance  
or Assimilation?

Edited by

Abd Ibrahim Abushouk & Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim

BRILL

# The Hadhrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia

Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?

*Edited by*

Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk  
Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON  
2009

*On the cover (top to bottom):*

- 1) The city of Hadhramaut, Yemen. Used by permission of the Ministry of Tourism, Republic of Yemen.
- 2) and 3) Genealogical tree of the Alawi Sayyids of Hadhramaut. Courtesy of Dr. Anne Katrine Bang, University of Bergen, Norway.
- 3) Hadhrami seamen. Courtesy of Prof. Daniel M. Varisco, Hofstra University, USA.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The Hadhrami diaspora in Southeast Asia : identity maintenance or assimilation? / edited by Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk, Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim.

p. cm. — Social, economic, and political studies of the Middle East and Asia v. 107.

Based on papers presented at the international conference, held in Kuala Lumpur on August 26–28, 2005.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-17231-9 (hardback : alk. paper)

I. Arabs—Southeast Asia—Congresses. 2. Hadramawt (Yemen : Province)—Emigration and immigration—Congresses. I. Abushouk, Ahmed Ibrahim. II. Ibrahim, Hassan Ahmed. III. Title. IV. Series.

DS523.4.A73H33 2009

305.892'75335—dc22

2009001096

ISSN 1385-3376

ISBN 978 90 04 17231 9

Copyright 2009 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.

Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Publishers,

IDC Publishers, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Koninklijke Brill NV provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA.

Fees are subject to change.

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

## CONTENTS

Acknowledgments .....	vii
Foreword .....	ix
<i>Dato' Seri Syed Hamid Albar</i>	
A Note on Transliteration .....	xv
Introduction .....	1
<i>Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk and Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim</i>	
I. Reflections on the Longevity of the Hadhrami Diaspora in the Indian Ocean .....	17
<i>Ulrike Freitag</i>	
II. Arabophobia and <i>tarekat</i> : How Sayyid Uthmān Became Advisor to the Netherlands Colonial Administration .....	33
<i>Nico J. G. Kaptein</i>	
III. Arab Hadhramis in Malaysia: Their Origins and Assimilation in Malay Society .....	45
<i>Abdul Rahman Tang Abdullah</i>	
IV. Tea and Company: Interactions between the Arab Elite and the British in Cosmopolitan Singapore .....	57
<i>Nurjadzilah Yahaya</i>	
V. Economic Crisis and State-Building in Hadhramaut, 1941–1949: The Impact of the Decline of Southeast Asian Remittances .....	81
<i>Christian Lekon</i>	
VI. The Decline of Arab Capitalism in Southeast Asia .....	109
<i>Rajeswary Ampalavanar Broien</i>	
VII. Entrepreneurial Strategies of Hadhrami Arabs in Southeast Asia, c. 1750s–1950s .....	135
<i>William Gervase Clarence-Smith</i>	

VIII.	<i>Al-Manār</i> and the Hadhrami Elite in the Malay-Indonesian World: Challenge and Response .....	159
	<i>Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk</i>	
IX.	The Ins and Outs of Hadhrami Journalism in Malaya, 1900–1941: Assimilation or Identity Maintenance? .....	191
	<i>William R. Roff</i>	
X.	Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hādī's Contributions to Islamic Reformism in Malaya .....	203
	<i>Hafiz Zakariya</i>	
XI.	Hadhramis within Malay Activism: The Role of al-Saqqāfīs in Post-War Singapore (1945–1965) .....	225
	<i>Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied</i>	
XII.	In the Name of Fatimah: Staging the Emancipation of the Hadhramis in the Netherlands East Indies .....	245
	<i>Huib de Jonge</i>	
	Glossary .....	263
	Archival Sources and Bibliography .....	267
	List of Contributors .....	287
	Index .....	291

## CHAPTER THREE

### ARAB HADHRAMIS IN MALAYSIA: THEIR ORIGINS AND ASSIMILATION IN MALAY SOCIETY

Abdul Rahman Tang Abdullah

#### *Introduction*

The term 'assimilation' is loosely used in this chapter to describe the process of the integration or indigenisation of the Hadhramis into Malay society in Malaysia from the time of their advent into the region up to the present day.<sup>1</sup> In this context, I may argue that this process of assimilation has a historical, social and political significance due to the fact that it gave the Hadhrami migrants special respect in the indigenous society, where they dominated the political discourse and held a variety of key posts ranging from chiefs of villages to paramount rulers at the apex of the Malay political structure (*kerajaan*).<sup>2</sup> The chapter examines first the significance of their ideology of descent, and, second, the process of their adaptation and assimilation in the Malay environment. Special attention will also be paid to their role in Malay society with a particular emphasis on those who trace their origins to al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and are given the title of *sayyid* (pl. *sādā*).

#### *Origins of the Hadhramis in Malaysia*

The vast majority of the Arab Hadhramis in Malaysia migrated from Hadhramaut in southern Yemen, and the rest came from other parts of the Arab world.<sup>3</sup> They are ethnically classified into two major

<sup>1</sup> Omar Farouk Bajunid, "The Arab Network in Southeast Asia: The Case of Penang", Paper presented at the 6th International Symposium on Population Movement in the Modern World: Population Movement Beyond the Middle East, Diaspora and Network", 23–25 January 2005, Osaka, Japan; "The Arabs in Southeast Asia: A Preliminary Overview", *Hiroshima Journal of International Studies*, vol. 2, 1996, 21–38.

<sup>2</sup> For further details, see Othman, "Hadhramis in the Politics", 82–94.

<sup>3</sup> Huub de Jonge, "Dutch Colonial Policy Pertaining to Hadhrami Immigrants", in Freitag and Clarence-Smith (eds.), *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars and Statesmen*, 96.