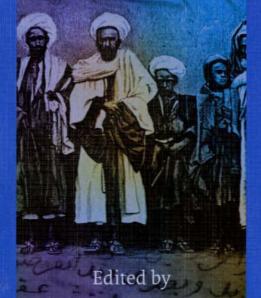
# The Hadhrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia

Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?



ed Ibrahim Abushouk & Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim

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# The Hadhrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia

Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?

Edited by

Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim



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 F 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.

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### 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. 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).2 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-Husayn ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and are given the title of saryid (pl. sāda).

## 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.3 They are ethnically classified into two major

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

Huub de Jonge, "Dutch Colonial Policy Pertaining to Hadhrami Immigrants", in Freitag and Clarence-Smith (eds., Hadhrami Traders, Scholar and Statesmen, 96.