

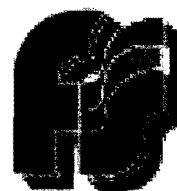
The Arabs Migration and Its Importance in the Historical Development of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Malaya

By:

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**THE ARABS MIGRATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE
IN THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE
LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH
CENTURY MALAYA**



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Introduction

Most Arabs who are settled in Malaysia today trace their roots from Hadhramaut, a piece of land situated at the southern extremity of the Arabian Peninsula.¹ Arabs of whatever origin, at least until recently, however, were perceived by Malays as the descendants of the Prophet, a genealogical link which elevated them to a noble ancestry, supernatural powers and an inherited missionary role.² With the title *Sayyid* or *Shaykh* added to their names, they reaffirmed their distinguished status which gained them a special respect as direct inheritors of the wisdom of Islam and possessors of an unexampled piety and religious merit.³

The most effectual factor in the Malays' respect for the Arabs, however, stemmed from the feeling of indebtedness to the community which had contributed to and influenced the development of their history and civilisation which was brought about by the process of Islamisation. As for the Arabs, the authority and respect they enjoyed were also contributed to by their hard work, sincerity and commitment to bringing about social change in the Malay community, and their capability of adapting themselves well to the society.⁴ Compared to the Chinese or the Indians, who also began to migrate to Malaya in the late nineteenth and early century, the Arabs were relatively prominent in the historical development of the Malay States during this period, looking at their various aspects of contribution. Arab religious scholars, especially their first few generations, were a prominent feature in Malay life, as were Arab entrepreneurs.⁵ They were also prominent for their role, since the early days of their presence, in the politics and administration of the Malay states.

Origins, Migration and Settlement

The Malay World has been known to the Arabs since early times from the trading activities of their merchants on the way to China. Despite these early contacts, their

apparent presence in the region was only recorded in 55AH/674AD by the Chinese who mentioned the existence of a Muslim settlement in East Sumatra, San-Fu-Chi (Palembang) headed by an Arab chief.⁶ In the following centuries, after the advent of Islam in the Middle East, a greater body of evidence was unearthed which further showed their presence in this region, such as the finding in Kedah of two silver coins of the Abbasid Dynasty from the reign of al-Mutawakkil (847-861AD). The finding of these coins, one on them dated 848AD, at least shows the existence of a trade link between the northern Malay state of Kedah and the Arab World during the ninth century.⁷

Later Arabs who came to this region generally traveled from the main city-port of Aden, in present-day Yemen. The emergence of Aden as an important city-port dated back to the fall of Baghdad in 1258 when some Arab trading activities were shifted there. Its importance as a trading centre was recorded by Marco Polo (1294) and later by Ibn Battuta (1325-1355), who visited and mentioned it as a prosperous city-port. A century later in 1443 when a Venetian, Nicolo Conti visited the port, he described it as "an opulent city remarkable for its buildings".⁸ The land in which the city-port was situated was also recorded in the Malay literary work, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, when on his journey to Rum, the Malay legendary hero Hang Tuah mentioned passing through it before entering the Red Sea.⁹ Aden continued to function as an important trading port in the following centuries and was also an important gateway for the Arabs of Hadhramaut who began to migrate to the Malay World, including Malaya, before the arrival of the Dutch in the seventeenth century.¹⁰

The Arabs of Hadhramaut or the Hadhramis originally belonged to the Kathiri tribe of Southern Arabian stock, but towards the close of the fifteenth century disputes erupted among members of the ruling family. As a result of this struggle they were left only with the eastern portion with its chief towns of Tarim and Saiwun under their control, while the western part with the ports of Shihr and Mukalla were controlled by its rival, the Qu'aiti Sultanate.¹¹ These major towns, Tarim and Saiwun, were identified as the chief centres of intellectual activity while al-Mukalla and Shihr were largely mercantile.¹² Since pre-Islamic times the Hadhramis have often been described as the most sophisticated and enterprising people in South Arabia, even though the area had a long history of tension and disaster. They also had a long history of migration to neighbouring Arab countries as well as to the distant countries of East Africa, India and

the Far East where in 1938 it was estimated that at least half as many Hadhramis lived outside Hadhramaut as did inside.¹³

When exactly the Hadhramis decided to migrate in large numbers to the Malay World is difficult to ascertain, but there were several reasons which explain its causes. The geo-political and economic situation of Hadhramaut itself was an important factor which encouraged this tendency in their struggle for survival. The arid lands which frequently suffered from long periods of drought followed by floods resulted in Hadhramaut being unable to supply enough food to its population. Over the previous centuries revenues obtained from transit commerce had also ceased to flow due to the decline in trade with the Far East. The difficulties faced in earning a living ultimately stimulated emigration as a way out in search for a decent livelihood.¹⁴ Since the early days, the Hadhramis were also tempted to go overseas not only to seek a living for themselves but also to carry on the tradition of remitting home annually such monies as would enable them to purchase the necessities (and often the luxuries) of life which could not be produced locally.¹⁵

Another reason for the migration of the Hadhramis was the prolonged conflicts among the tribes in the area and also the devastating war with the Wahhabis. The Wahhabis tried to eliminate what they considered to be incorrect practices of Islam, including those of the Hadhramis, and as a result many of their books were destroyed and mausoleums of their saints were demolished. The desire to avoid persecution and bitter ideological conflicts forced many Hadhramis to emigrate.¹⁶ In addition to the hostile and unfavourable conditions in their homeland, the conducive environment overseas was also a factor that encouraged them to migrate. In the early twentieth century there was an increasing demand for religious teachers, including in Malaya, following the opening of several Arabic religious schools. Hadhramaut which has a long history as an important centre of learning was never short of a supply of the 'ulama' whose influence and reputation extended overseas and provided a source of teachers for these schools.¹⁷ Despite all these causes, undoubtedly the overriding factor which led these Arabs to migrate was their search for happier livelihoods than those provided in their own infertile and impoverished homeland.¹⁸

Even though a steady trickle of Hadhramis had been migrating to Malaya prior to the British intervention, significant numbers of them did so only in the early nineteenth century. When Singapore came under British administration in 1819, the

Arabs were among its pioneering settlers. A substantial degree of Arab migration to the region, however, was most noticeable from the middle of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 partly explained the reasons for the increase in the migration since the port of Aden was situated in the middle of the shipping route. Aden, which reemerged as an important port between Europe and the Far East following the opening, enabled the Hadhramis to travel to and from the region with ease. The rapid economic growth experienced by the Malay States and especially Singapore under the British administration, also attracted many Arab entrepreneurs who wished to venture their fortune there.

Despite their relatively large-scale migration, the exact number of Arab migrants after the arrival of the British was unknown, except for the Straits Settlements where they were recorded.¹⁹ Available records show that the early Arab population was concentrated mostly in Singapore. In early January 1830 they were recorded as 28, all of them male, out of a total population on the island of 20,243 and this continued to increase steadily in the following decades.²⁰ In 1884, according to Van den Berg, who referred to the Straits Settlements census, out of the 1,637 Arab populations found in the Straits Settlements, 835 of them lived in Singapore.²¹ In the island, the early Arab population was concentrated in the area which used to be known as the Middle Road in a "quarter" bounded by Arab, Baghdad, Basrah and Jeddah Streets.²² In the Malay States, however, no record of their early population is available, even though they were widely distributed and demographically formed a very distinctive minority group in the village communities.²³

The Hadhramis who migrated to Malaya and elsewhere were generally divided into two groups. The first were the Sayyid group, who claimed that they were the descendants of the Prophet and traced their genealogy through the line of ʿIsa al-Muhajir, whose great grandson, ʿAli bin ʿAlawi, institutionalised the ʿAlawiyyah Sayyids in Hadhramaut in the early twelfth century.²⁴ These Arab Sayyids regarded themselves as having the highest descent and most notable religious status in the society.²⁵ Most of the Arabs who migrated to Malaya claimed to belong to the Sayyid ʿAlawiyyah or the Sayyid group.²⁶ As part of their family tradition the Sayyid group traced their genealogy through the patrilineal line whereby those who were born from an Arab father were considered to be Arab, even though the mother was not. Based on this criterion, the Sayyid group could be divided into those of pure Arab descent where both parents were Arabs, and "born Arabs" whose mothers were non-Arab. Since the number

of Arab women who migrated was small and intermarriage with the Malay women was common, the "born Arab" Sayyids were much greater in number.²⁷

The Arabs of the Sayyid group were a close-knit community and as much as possible tried to preserve their identity. To keep their family genealogy intact and their place of origin identified, they were recognised by their family names. In Kedah as elsewhere, where many of the migrant Hadhramis of this group settled, they were identified by their family names, the most prominent including those of al-Baraqabah, al-Shahabuddin, al-Junayd, al-Aidid, al-Sagoff, Ba Faqih, al-Kaff, al-Mahdali, al-Jamalullail, al-Qadri, al-^cAttas, al-Mihdar, al-Jufri, Al bin Yahaya and al-Idrus.²⁸ Apart from the Sayyid group, another group of Hadhramis who also migrated, but were much fewer in number, consisted of "scholars and holy men" (*mashayikh*, plural of *shaykh*) "tribesmen" (*qaba'il*, plural of *qabila*) and "the poor" (*masakin*, plural of *misikin*).²⁹ These Arabs normally used the title *Shaykh* which implies that they were not descendants of the Prophet, while there were also others who preferred to discard the use of any title.

Before World War II, the Arabs who migrated to Malaya and elsewhere tended to foster a close and lasting relationship with their countries of domicile, and they seldom broke the bonds with their homeland.³⁰ They normally preserved strong emotional and spiritual ties with Hadhramaut which were manifested in dress, language and intensity of religious life. Periodically they returned to their homeland to visit families, to make the pilgrimage and often ultimately to die.³¹ Those who finally decided to return and settle down in their homeland after long years of absence brought into existence in Hadhramaut a society of retired businessmen who had become almost more used to speaking Malay than their native tongue and who had on their walls pictures of Singapore, Penang or Batavia.³²

Even though the Hadhrami migration has long ceased, their presence can still be felt, represented by their descendants. They constitute an important component of the Muslim population of Malaysia and are increasingly closely becoming identified as part of the Malay community. Today the Arab descendents, most of them the off-springs from inter-marriages with the local Malays are important in their contribution as prominent political leaders, successful entrepreneurs and respectable individuals.

Historical Contributions to Islamisation

The advent of Islam (622 A.D.) further motivated the Arabs to be more venturesome, spurred by the motive of spreading the new faith in addition to trading activities, and by 651 A.D. they had already sent their first embassy to China.³³ The rise of two powerful dynasties, the Umayyad Caliphate in the West (660-749 A.D.) and the Tang Dynasty in the East (618-907 A.D.) also encouraged the sea trade between the eastern and western parts of Asia and enabled the Arabs' trade to flourish significantly.³⁴ Following an abortive revolt in 878 A.D. against the Tang Emperor, a large number of Muslim traders, including Arabs emigrated in large numbers to the Malay World.³⁵

These emigrants took refuge at Kalah on the west coast of the Malay Peninsular, which some historians believe is the present-day Kedah (Merbok estuary).³⁶ The conclusion that it was Kedah, however, is inconclusive due to conflicting accounts given by various Arab geographers as to the site. Recent historical and archeological researches have come up with new suggestions concerning its most likely location, which include either Kelang in the Malay Peninsular or Takuapa in present-day Southern Thailand.³⁷ Despite the confusion that shrouds its location, what is certain is that Arab trading ships had fully penetrated the seas of South East Asia by the seventh century and continued to frequent those waters for almost the next thousand years.³⁸

Even though the Arabs were the most probable early preachers who converted the Malays to Islam, most orientalists who have studied the spread of Islam to the Malay World, have arrived at the conclusion that Islam was brought to the region by the Indians not the Arabs.³⁹ Despite the theories proposed by these orientalists, there were, however, several scholars who put forward the theory of the "Arab factor" in the introduction of Islam in the Malay World. One of the earliest to come up with this theory was Professor Keyzer of Delft Academy, one of the earliest scholars of Muslim law in Holland, who linked the coming of Islam with Egypt where the Shafii school has of old occupied an important place. Other Dutch scholars, Niemann and De Hollander, who also studied the Islamisation of the Malays also pointed out the role played by

Arabs, so did other scholars including John Crawford, William Marsden and the Portuguese historian, Diego de Couto.⁴⁰ T.W. Arnold who studied the propagation of the Muslim faith was also of the opinion that although the religion was introduced by missionaries from southern India, nevertheless proselyting efforts were also actively undertaken by Arabs.⁴¹

The study of the Islamisation of the Malays *vis-à-vis* the prominent role played by Arabs from the Middle East in the process, however, is far from complete if local traditions are not taken into account as being as important as archeological findings or cultural indications. Various native reports from the region, either in the form of written records or oral traditions, speak about past legacies, and although sometimes mixed with fictive elements, they indeed record the past history of this region.⁴² The use of local traditions in the study of the introduction of Islam to the Malay World, however, has been rejected by most orientalist and Western scholars.⁴³ They view the narratives preserved by local traditions that Islam was introduced to this region from Arabia as having no historical basis, and categorically believe that all the evidence points to India as the source whence Malays received the knowledge of their faith.⁴⁴

Looking at the Malay traditions, it clearly appears that the early Muslim missionaries who converted their forefathers to Islam were Arabs who came directly from Arabia. Most of them married native women after converting them to the faith and the role of preaching the new religion was then continued by their descendants. Some of them converted native rulers and married into their families and later inherited from them and became sultans or rulers of certain states; still others held religious offices such as *Qadis*, *Muftis* and religious teachers.⁴⁵ When the Muslim Kingdom of Perlak was founded in the early twelfth century, there is a tradition which says that it was established by Sayyid Abdul Aziz (ruled 1161-1188), an Arab who came from the Quraish tribe. His descendants are also said to have exercised a strong leadership influence in the kingdom until it was taken over by the family of the descendants of the local princes.⁴⁶ The presence of Arabs who exerted a strong influence in the northern

part of Sumatra was also reported by Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta who stopped there awaiting the change of monsoons on their world journeys.⁴⁷

Traditional Malay literary works are very explicit in their accounts of the influential role played by Arabs in the early history of the Malay kingdoms. In *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, the founder of the kingdom, Merah Silu is said to have seen in the dream the Prophet Muhammad and the arrival of Shaykh Ismail at its port sent by the ruler of Makkah to teach Islam to its people.⁴⁸ In *Sejarah Melayu* there is an account of an Arab, Shaykh Ismail from Makkah, who came to Samudra to spread the religion of Islam.⁴⁹ In another account an Arab from Jeddah, Sayyid Abdul Aziz, is said to have converted to Islam the Sultan of Melaka, later known as Raja Muhammad.⁵⁰ *Sejarah Melayu* also mentions the visit to Melaka of a Sufi master from Makkah by the name of Maulana Abu Bakar who brought with him the book "*Kitab Dur al-Mazlum (Durr al-Manzum)*" by Abu Ishaq (al-Shirazi).⁵¹

In another Malay literary work, *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, an Arab missionary, Shaykh Abdullah al-Yamani is said to have come directly from Arabia and converted to Islam the ruler of Kedah, who was subsequently known as Sultan Muzaffar Shah.⁵² Early descriptions of the role of an Arab missionary are also found in the Acehese chronicle, which reports that Islam was introduced into the northern tip of Sumatra sometime around 1112 A.D. by an Arab preacher, whose name is given as Shaykh Abdullah Arif. One of his disciples, Shaykh Burhanuddin, later continued Shaykh Arif's Islamic missionary works as far away as Priaman on the west coast.⁵³

According to Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, the Islamisation of the Malays has introduced the Arabs' intellectual culture, which they associated with a higher civilisation, to replace the mental stagnation of the earlier Hindu-Buddhist period.⁵⁴ One aspect of the culture introduced to and adopted by Malays following this process was the use of the Arabic script, known as *Jawi*, which for many years, perhaps for centuries, may have been developed and refined by Arabs who had learned the Malay language.⁵⁵ The process of Islamisation also led to a massive borrowing of Arabic from which

almost every word in Malay related to religious worship was obtained.⁵⁶ The extensive use of *Jawi* and the borrowing of Arabic had encouraged Malay intellectual progress and the broadening of their world view, in addition to providing a conducive environment for the deepening of their knowledge using the script as a medium.

In the traditional Malay society where Islam played a pivotal role in daily life, knowledge of *Jawi* and of Arabic determined one's religiosity and intellectual status in the eyes of fellow Muslims. This ability, however, was largely confined to those who had undergone a religious education, some knowledge of which was sufficient for them to be recognised as 'ulama'.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the Arabs had a tremendous advantage since their mastery in the language of the Qur'an made them generally accepted by Malays as authorities on the religion.⁵⁸ The acceptance of their authority had enabled them to play a dominant role in religious affairs of the Malay sultanates since their inception. The involvement of Arab religious scholars in providing their services in the religious affairs and establishments of the states were most apparent in Kedah, Trengganu and Johore.

In Kedah, the Arabs' influence in the state had its origin from the arrival from San'a' in Yemen of an Arab 'alim Shaykh Abdul Jalil al-Mahdani in 1122AH/1710AD who was appointed as religious teacher to the Sultan. Apart from being a religious teacher, during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Jiwa Zainal Azilin Muazzam Shah II (1710-1778) Shaykh Abdul Jalil was instrumental in the introduction of Kedah's Thirteen Laws. When he was appointed as the *Mufti* of Kedah, Shaykh Abdul Jalil was also responsible for formulating regulations for the Sultan and his officials based on the regulations of the Caliphs and Ministers of the Abbasid Caliphate.⁵⁹ In the early twentieth century when the post of *Shaykh al-Islam* was created in the state to advise the Sultan on the administration of religious affairs, the first appointee was Shaykh Muhammad Khayat, subsequently succeeded by Shaykh Abdullah Dahlan, both of them Arabs.⁶⁰

In Trengganu, the Arabs had been one of the distinct elements in its ruling class, who exerted a strong influence and were entrusted with the running of the religious affairs of the state.⁶¹ Traditionally, the most important Arab family there, who played an important role in running its religious administration, was the family of al-Idrus.⁶² The

earliest prominent member of their family was Sayyid Muhammad bin Zainal Abidin al-Idrus (1794-1878), also known as Tokku Tuan Besar. During the reign of Baginda Omar (1831 and 1839-1876) he was appointed *Shaykh al-‘Ulama’*.⁶³

Tokku Tuan Besar was a highly respected ‘alim in Trengganu and a prolific religious teacher. He was regarded as a pioneer in the writing of the traditional religious literature in the state and was also known as an expert in writing and teaching (*Ahl al-Qalam wal ahl al-Kalam*).⁶⁴ He wrote a number of religious books which were widely used in religious teaching in Terengganu such as *Kanz al-Ula*, *Jawahir al-Saniyah*, *Tahliyat al-Wildan*, *Mukhtasar*, *Fiqh Sullam al-Tawfiq*, *Targhib al-Sibyan*, *Sirat al-Nabawiyyah* and *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah*.⁶⁵ Apart from being appointed *Shaykh al-‘Ulama’*, Tokku Tuan Besar was also a respected leader and generally regarded as the head of the ‘ulama’ and the Arab community in Trengganu.⁶⁶ During his reign, Baginda Omar also appointed the son of Tokku Tuan Besar, Sayyid Muhammad Zain bin Sayyid Muhammad as a Minister with the title *Engku Sayyid Seri Perdana*.⁶⁷ During the reign of Sultan Zainal Abidin III (1881-1918), the ruler appointed Sayyid Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad al-Idrus (Tokku Paloh) as *Shaykh al-Islam*.⁶⁸

Another Arab family who also played a significant role in the development of Islam in Trengganu were the descendants of Sharif Muhammad bin Abdullah (Sharif al-Baghdadi) of Baghdad. Before he came to the state, Sharif Muhammad is said to have gone to Makkah, proceeded to Aceh, and later settled in Kampung Pauh, Kuala Brang.⁶⁹ The most famous of his descendants was his grandson, Shaykh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah, also known as Tokku Pulau Manis (1650-1736).⁷⁰ Shaykh Abdul Malik was a highly respected ‘alim in Trengganu and wrote a number of religious books such as *Kafiyah Niyyah*, *Kifayah*, *Hikam* and *Naql* which were used as texts for his teaching.⁷¹

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the early twentieth century, there were several prominent ‘ulama’ in Trengganu of Arab origin or closely associated with the Arabs like Chief Minister Sayyid Abdullah bin Muhammad Zain al-Idrus, Tokku Paloh and Tok Shaykh Duyong.⁷² Because of the presence of these prominent ‘ulama’, Trengganu during this period, like Aceh and Kelantan, was also known as the "forecourt of Makkah" (*Serambi Makkah*).⁷³ The tradition whereby Arabs were given preference in the religious administration of Terengganu prevailed until recently when in 1940, an Arab, Shaykh Hassan Yamani was appointed *Mufti* of the state.⁷⁴ After his

retirement in 1952, another Arab, Sayyid Yusof Zawawi was appointed as the new *Mufti*.⁷⁵

In Johore the Arabs, particularly those of the al-[°]Attas family, were also highly respected in matters related to religion. They were normally given the priority in holding religious posts, especially the post of the state *Mufti*. Available record shows that an Arab, Sayyid Ahmad al-[°]Attas was appointed as the *Mufti* of Johore in 1873. In 1883, the post was taken over by Sayyid Mohamad al-[°]Attas while Sayyid Salim Ahmad al-[°]Attas was appointed to the post of *Shaykh al-Islam*.⁷⁶ The longest serving Arab as a *Mufti* for Johore, however, was Sayyid Alwi Tahir al-Haddad who was appointed to the post on 8 March 1934, following the retirement of Sayyid Abdul Kadir Mohsin al-[°]Attas.⁷⁷ Sayyid Alwi was a respected [°]alim who prior to his appointment lived in Batavia where he was the Advisor to the Sayyid Society in Java, the *Ar-Rabitah al-[°]Alawiyah*.⁷⁸ While in office, he managed to gain the trust of Sultan Ibrahim of Johore and served for twenty seven years until he retired in early December 1961. During his tenure of office Sayyid Alwi was well-known for his staunch opposition to Qadianism, the *Kaum Muda* ideas and the practices of the *Tariqahs*.⁷⁹

Apart from Kedah, Terengganu and Johore, Arabs also contributed to the running of the religious administration of other Malay states. In Perak, Sayyid Hussain al-Faradz Jamalullail, who traced his genealogy to the Prophet, was reputed to have been the religious teacher of its first Sultan, Sultan Muzaffar Shah I when the Sultanate was established in the early sixteenth century.⁸⁰ In Kelantan where they were also highly respected by the community, during the reign of Sultan Muhammad II (1837-1886), an Arab from Hadhramaut, Shaykh Daud bin Shaykh Muhammad al-Bahrain was appointed from 1845 to 1855 as the *Mufti* of the state.⁸¹ During his reign, Sultan Muhammad II also embarked on an administrative reform whereby the Islamic judicial system and religious administration were improved. As a first step towards reforms, he appointed Sayyid Ja[°]afar bin Sayyid Alwi, an Arab from Hadhramaut to become a judge of the Criminal Court.⁸² During the reign of Sultan Mansor (1891-1900) Sayyid Muhammad bin Sayyid Alwi who was related to Sayyid Jaafar was also appointed to the post of judge, and was the third most powerful man in the state after *Dato' Maha Menteri* and *Dato' Paduka Raja*.⁸³

Even though many Arabs managed to win the favour of Malay Sultans and served as religious functionaries in their courts, since the early years of the twentieth

century, their most apparent role was in Islamic mission, establishing the religion among Malays and in inculcating its better understanding. Since by then many Arabs were relatively well off, they used their influence and wealth in the establishment of mosques, along with came religious activities. They taught religion in the mosques, gave Qu'ran-reading instruction, delivered sermons and lectures, led the Muslims in congregational prayers and sat on mosque committees. It is significant that it was the Arab religious teachers who made the mosque not only a place of worship but also a centre of learning.⁸⁴ Through their efforts, the early twentieth century also saw several religious schools being built in Malaya where with their wealth they established endowments from whose income these schools were maintained and the teachers were paid. This practice whereby the income from *Waqf* properties was used to maintain religious schools was the tradition used in the Middle East for the running of religious institutions which the Arabs imitated to run the schools they established here.⁸⁵

One of the most important Arabs who played a significant role in establishing a number of Arabic schools in Malaya was Habib (Sayyid) Hassan al-^cAttas.⁸⁶ In 1914 he founded Madrasah al-^cAttas in Johor Bahru and another in 1923, Madrasah al-^cAttas Ketapang, Pekan, being the first Arabic religious school in Pahang. In Singapore a wealthy Arab, Sayyid Omar al-Sagoff (1850-1927) established Madrasah al-Sagoff in March 1913.⁸⁷ Apart from these Arabic schools, other religious schools established by them were the al-Mashhor in Penang and al-Junayd in Singapore. The establishment of these schools in Malaya, also known as Arabic school or *madrasah* by the wealthy Arabs, was part of their desire to establish the Arab tradition in the land as well as to produce more efficient teachers educated in the Arabic medium. From these schools the students obtained a proficiency in Arabic which enabled them to understand the Arabic text well, thereby becoming better "authorities" in religious matters and extending better understanding of Islam to fellow Malays.⁸⁸

The wealthy Arabs who established these schools not only established endowments for their maintenance, but also provided them with high-qualify teachers brought from Arabia. One of the outstanding *madrasahs* established and endowed by Arabs whose teachers were imported from Arabia was Madrasah al-Mashhor in Penang. The *madrasah* was established in 1916, at first as a school teaching Qur'an and other basic Islamic knowledge. Its establishment was due to the efforts of several Arabs, among whom were Sayyid Mahzar Aidid, Sayyid Ali Bawazir, Sayyid Umar al-Sagoff, Sayyid Umar Mahzar and Sayyid Hassan al-Baghdadi. It was named Madrasah al-

Mashhor in honour of a respected Sayyid in the island, Sayyid Ahmad al-Mashhor. The first teacher at the school was Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Habshi.⁸⁹

Madrasah, al-Mashhor practiced a strong tradition where the preference for its teaching staff were Arabs. The maintenance of the policy resulted in a high standard of Arabic being taught; in fact was about the best in Southeast Asia. The high reputation attained by Madrasah al-Mashhor led to a rapid increase in its enrolment, with students coming from all over Malaya, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Brunei, the Philippines, Indonesia and even India. This distinction enabled the school to emerge as a leading centre for Arabic and Islamic education in the whole of Southeast Asia before World War II.⁹⁰

In addition to having the majority of its teachers imported from Arabia, Madrasah al-Mashhor also maintained, from its establishment, a tradition of appointing Arabs as *mudir*. After its earliest *mudir*, Sayyid Shaykh al-Hadi, left the *madrasah* in 1919, his place was taken over by another Arab, Shaykh Abdullah al-Maghribi. In 1923 the post of *mudir* was filled by Shaykh Abu Bakar al-Rafi' whose tenure in office in the 1920s and 1930s was generally regarded as the period of the school's highest reputation.⁹¹ During this period many graduates of the *madrasah* were sent to Cairo to further their studies.⁹² While in office, Shaykh Abu Bakar also brought about several improvements in the school's infra-structure and introduced new approaches in its teaching. As a progressive 'alim, Shaykh Abu Bakar also contributed to the moulding of the religious and political thoughts of his students and his reformist ideas were prevalent to a high degree among the students of the *madrasah*.⁹³ Beginning from the late 1930s, although the role of Arabs in religious affairs and the propagation of Islam still persisted, the Malays gradually became increasingly prominent, when a greater number of their students returned to Malaya after acquiring knowledge of Arabic and Islam in Makkah and Cairo.

The emigration of Arabs to this region during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Malaya had contributed to the historical development of Malaya which can be felt until today. One of the most important impacts is Islamisation. If not because of active role played by Arabs, the course of history of Malaya and its Malay population might be different from what is happening today. Being Arabs and as the race that Islam was revealed, they were highly regarded by the Malays which further facilitated the process of Islamising them. The Islamisation of the Malays resulted not

only their religion is the same as the Arabs, but also in a way other aspects of their such as their culture and world views which has a strong affiliation with them.

Political Involvements in the Malay States

Early Arabs who arrived in the Malay kingdoms and later in the Malay states played an active role not only in religious affairs, but in politics and administration as well. Their roles were noticeable virtually in all the Malay states, with their dominant involvement particularly evident in Kedah and Negeri Sembilan. The role they played, however, was nothing new because they had a long history of such involvement dating from the establishment of the kingdom of Melaka. In this kingdom, one particularly important political event which involves an Arab, as related by *Sejarah Melayu*, was the subversive role played by Maulana Jalaluddin, an Arab leader from the "land above the wind" in helping Raja Kassim and Seri Nara Diraja to topple Sultan Abu Shahid.⁹⁵ In the Melaka Sultanate, Arab religious scholars and Arabs who married into the royal officials class or the *Pembesar* and the royal family were categorised as part of the upper strata of its privileged class.⁹⁵ Apart from Melaka, another early Malay kingdom where Arabs are known to have exerted a substantial influence was Sulu.⁹⁶ In Aceh, apart from the Chuliahs, the Arabs had also always been an important element in the development of its political history.⁹⁷ Toward the end of the eighteenth century, Arabs were able to exert political influence in several Malay sultanates and they were even successful in carving out empires in Siak (Sumatra) and Pontianak (Kalimantan).⁹⁸

In the Malay states, the most significant Arab political influence, which is visible even to the present day, was in Kedah. Arabs' political involvement in the state may be traced back to the early eighteenth century, when the families of al-Jamalullail, Shahbuddin and al-Aidid began to settle in the State. Politically, the most influential of these families was the family of al-Jamalullail. The earliest member of the family said to have settled in the state was Sayyid Ahmad bin Sayyid Hussain Jamalullail who came to Kedah from Hadhramaut in 1148AH/1735AD. His influence in the state was further widened following his marriage to Sharifah Aminah al-Qadri of the Arab al-Qadri family. The family's most significant political role in the state, however, was played by Sayyid Ahmad's son, Sayyid Harun Jamalullail, an influential figure in the Kedah court who was awarded the district of Arau in 1212AH/1797AD.⁹⁹

The political role played by Arabs in Kedah, however, was intensified when the state was invaded by the Siamese. During the twenty one years (1821-1842) of Siamese occupation, the Arabs rallied behind the Sultan and were actively involved in the struggle to free the state from the invaders. In the struggle against the Siamese the Arabs also played a significant role in the resurgence of religious militancy with its call for Islamic unity following the conquest.¹⁰⁰ This resurgence led to the efforts by Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Shah II and other Kedah princes to regain possession of the state and took on the character of a *jihad* (holy war) against a power which was not only non-Malay but *kafir* (infidel) in nature. For nearly two decades, Kedah princes and the Arab leaders joined hands in their resistance against the Siamese which attracted the attention of Malays everywhere. Arab merchants in the Straits Settlements and even some Europeans lent covert support, and it was probably about this time that the Penang-based Red Flag society was formed as a rallying point for Islamic opposition.¹⁰¹

In 1240AH/1824AD, a military campaign was launched against the Siamese, headed by Sayyid Zainal Abidin, Sultan Ahmad's half-Arab nephew, popularly known as Tunku Kudin, who managed to recapture Kuala Kedah, though it was retaken by the Siamese, resulting in his own death.¹⁰² The defeat did not deter the Kedah royal family and another attack was planned assisted by an Arab, Shaykh Abdul Samad who had just returned from Makkah. In an unsuccessful offensive launched in 1244AH/1828AD Shaykh Abdul Samad was killed.¹⁰³ Apart from being actively involved in launching attacks against the Siamese, Arabs also played a prominent role in the foreign affairs of Kedah during the occupation. One of the Sultan of Kedah's trusted Arab emissaries was Shaykh Abdul Kadir Mufti bin Shaykh Abdul Jalil al-Mahdani who fled with the Sultan following the invasion. He was sent by the Sultan to Bengal to demand money owed by the East India Company for the lease of Penang.¹⁰⁴

In addition to supporting the Kedah royal family in its military struggle against the Siamese, the Arabs were also actively involved in an effort to regain Kedah's sovereignty through diplomatic means. Kedah finally regained its independence not through war, but through negotiation, which was actively conducted among others by Sayyid Hussain Jamalullail.¹⁰⁵ The loyalty of the Jamalullail to the Sultan and their contribution to the state's politics was rewarded when in 1843, with the approval of the Siamese, Sayyid Hussain Jamalullail, whose father, Sayyid Harun Jamalullail had earlier been appointed *Penghulu* of Arau, was made Sultan of a newly created state, Perlis.¹⁰⁶

The family of Jamalullail was the only Arab family to rule a Malay state, and is the ruling family of Perlis to the present day.

Through a long history of influence, the Arabs in Kedah were also accorded high status, equal to that of the royal family. Marriages between Arabs and the Kedah royal house were common and the offspring of these marriages were recognised as belonging to the royal family, even though some of them still retained the title *Sayyid* to symbolise their Arab origin. This relationship with the palace also made the Arabs a prominent elite group in Kedah.¹⁰⁷ The exceptionally high status they enjoyed put them in the category of the Malay ruling class, thus exempting them from the corvee system which was an obligation upon a commoner. When the police force was introduced in Kedah following the British intervention, the Arabs were not drawn to the service since becoming "the government's dog" was considered disgraceful and did not accord with their prestige. This special status attained by the Arabs was further recognised when in 1932, in order to strengthen the identity of the elite class in the state, a ruling was issued whereby the royal family were forbidden to marry anyone outside their circle without a written consent from the Sultan or his deputy with the exception of marriage with the families of the Arabs.¹⁰⁸

Another state where Arabs played a significant role in domestic politics was Negeri Sembilan. Contrary to their role in Kedah where they contributed to regaining the sovereignty of the state from Siamese occupation, in Negeri Sembilan they were responsible for bringing about British intervention. Prior to this time, the most prominent Arab in nineteenth century Negeri Sembilan politics was Sayyid Sha'aban bin Sayyid Ibrahim al-Qadri. As in other states, Arabs were highly respected in Negeri Sembilan and being an Arab ensured Sayyid Sha'aban an easy access to the Malay royal families, and he soon became son-in-law of Raja Ali after marrying, in turn, two of the latter's daughters.¹⁰⁹

In 1832, Raja Ali was declared *Yam Tuan Besar* after successfully overcoming challenges by other contenders for the position. Following his success, he appointed Sayyid Sha'aban as his heir-apparent with the title *Yam Tuan Muda*.¹¹⁰ Sayyid Sha'aban was more than a son-in-law of Raja Ali, being also his trusted adviser.¹¹¹ The appointment of Sayyid Sha'aban was contested by other Negeri Sembilan chiefs and the middle of the nineteenth century Negeri Sembilan saw widespread intrigue and tension in the state as a result of the power struggle. Following a dispute over the building of a

stockade to collect tolls at Simpang, which was the point where Sungai Rembau joined Sungai Linggi, war broke out and Sayyid Sha'aban was forced to retreat to Melaka by the combined forces of the ruler of Linggi, Dato' Muda Muhammad Katas. Even though Sayyid Sha'aban made several attempts to regain his post, until his death in early 1873, it was of no avail. His death marked the end of an early attempt by an Arab to dominate the politics of Negeri Sembilan. Although Sayyid Sha'aban failed to achieve his ambition to become ruler, his influence was deeply felt. One of his sons, Sayyid Hamid by one of the daughters of Raja Ali's, was in the 1870s appointed as *Yam Tuan Muda*.¹¹²

Sayyid Sha'aban and Sayyid Hamid were not the only members of Sayyid Ibrahim's family to hold positions of power and authority in Negeri Sembilan. Another member of the family who also played a prominent role in the state's politics was Sayyid Abdul Rahman bin Sayyid Ahmad al-Qadri, Dato' Kelana of Sungai Ujong (March 1873-January 1880). He was Sayyid Ibrahim's grandson and a British protégé, and the adversary of the conservative Dato' Bandar Kulop Tunggal.¹¹³ Sayyid Abdul Rahman was the Negeri Sembilan chief who was instrumental in bringing about the British intervention in Negeri Sembilan when on 21 April 1874 he together with Dato' Muda of Linggi signed an agreement of friendship with Andrew Clarke, Governor of the Straits Settlements. The signing of this treaty implied that their territories were put under British protection.¹¹⁴ Their action was resented by other chiefs of Negeri Sembilan, who under the leadership of Yam Tuan Antah struggled against the British, who they feared would deprive them most of their power.¹¹⁵

The struggle between Kelana and Antah drew the British deeper into the quagmire of Negeri Sembilan politics when they sided with the former, among other things by supplying him with Arab, Turkish and Egyptian mercenaries.¹¹⁶ Following the dispute over the area of Terachi, war broke out in December 1875 and the British openly decided to back the claim of Dato' Kelana to the land.¹¹⁷ In the war that ensued in which the British were actively involved, at first Yam Tuan Antah managed to score a number of victories, but his successes proved short-lived when a reinforcement of 500 well-armed men arrived from Lukut.¹¹⁸ Yam Tuan Antah had to retreat to Johore and was allowed to return to Negeri Sembilan only as *Yam Tuan* of Sri Menanti, not of the whole state. With this victory, the British gradually exerted their political influence over the whole state and in September 1886 the *Penghulu* of Jelebu, Sayyid Ali bin Zain al-Jufri, in conjunction with the lesser chiefs, signed a treaty which put his district under British protectorate. In 1889 the rulers of Rembau and Tampin joined the Sri Menanti

Confederacy of 1887 (Sri Menanti, Jempul, Terachi, Gunung Pasir, Ulu Muar, Johol and Inas) to make a confederation of Nine States, and all agreed to place their dominions under the British protection. Finally in 1895, the *Yam Tuan* of Sri Menanti together with the rulers of Johol, Sungai Ujong, Jelebu, Rembau and Tampin placed their respective states under British protection and asked for a British Resident.¹¹⁹

The Arabs from Hadhramaut also had a long history of influence in Perak, where all the four great posts of the state, except for that of *Temenggong*, have been at least at one time held by them. These Arabs were also accepted as part of the Perak royal family and were addressed as *Tengku*.¹²⁰ One of the earliest Arabs to have been trusted with the highest post in Perak was Sayyid Abu Bakar who during the reign of Sultan Iskandar (1752-1765) was appointed *Bendahara*.¹²¹ In nineteenth century Perak, successive Arabs had also been holding the post of *Orang Kaya Besar*, the last holder being Sayyid Jaafar. The last Perak great post held by an Arab was that of *Orang Kaya Menteri Sri Paduka Tuan*. The earliest known Arab appointee was Fakih Yusoff who was appointed to the post during the reign of Sultan Muzaffar Shah (1728-1754). During his reign two Arab brothers, Sharif Hussain and Sharif Abu Bakar, were also appointed to the post, the latter then being promoted to the post of *Bendahara*.¹²²

In Pahang when Bendahara Tun Ali came to the throne in 1806, he fostered a close relationship with the Arabs in the state by appointing Sayyid Umar, who was also his son-in-law, as Chief Minister. Following Tun Ali's death in 1857, Bendahara Mutahir was appointed the new ruler with the support of several Arabs like Sayyid Umar al-^cAttas and Sayyid Deraman Abdul Rahman.¹²³ The appointment of Tun Mutahir to the throne, however, was contested by his younger brother Tun Ahmad, whose campaign against his elder brother was also supported among others by an Arab chief, Sayyid al-Idrus.¹²⁴ His claim to the throne was also backed by other Arab families like the al-Khirid, al-Habsyi and al-Yahya.¹²⁵ Following the victory of Tun Ahmad and the death of Tun Mutahir, Arab influence in the state grew tremendously, especially those families who supported him. When Pahang came under the British protectorate, several Arabs were appointed as *Penghulus* because of their loyalty.¹²⁶

In Trengganu, the Arabs were also influential in the political and administrative affairs of the state. During the reign of Sultan Zainal Abidin III (1881-1918), when Trengganu was divided into various districts and its administration put under various chiefs who were the Sultan's close family and officials, an Arab was among those who

received an award. Tuan Bong or Sayyid Abu Bakar who was related by marriage to the Sultan's niece was given Ulu Trengganu.¹²⁷ When the Trengganu Uprising broke out in 1928, one of the instigators of the disturbances was Sayyid Sagoff, who in the event of its success was to be appointed the state's Chief Minister (*Wazir*).¹²⁸ In Selangor, when the Civil War of the 1870s in Kelang was fought between Tengku Kudin and Raja Mahadi, several Arabs were involved in support of both parties. One of those who were actively involved in the war was a warrior of Arab origin from Pontianak, Sayyid Mashhor bin Muhammad al-Shahab who supported Raja Mahadi.¹²⁹ On the side of Tengku Kudin during the war an Arab, Sayyid Zin was appointed by him as his chief of staff.¹³⁰

In Johore, even though Arabs were relatively less active in their involvement in state politics compared to other Malay states, they were entrusted with the conduct of its external relations. Sayyid Mohamad al-Sagoff was reputed to be a close confidant of Sultan Abu Bakar, who on a number of occasions accompanied him on his overseas visits. Because of his prominent role also in the economic development of Johore, Sayyid Mohamad was awarded the *Pingat Darjah Kerabat*, the first foreigner of non royal descent in the state to receive it, which implied that he was regarded as part of the royal family.¹³¹ During the reign of Sultan Ibrahim, the Caliphate Conference was held in Cairo in May 1926 to discuss the issue of the future of the leadership of the Muslim *ummah*. The Sultan, who was invited to the Conference, welcomed its convening but declined to attend it in person. Instead he sent Sayyid Hassan bin Ahmad al-^cAttas to attend the conference on his behalf.¹³² As in the case of Sayyid Mohamad al-Sagoff, Sayyid Hassan al-^cAttas was also awarded the *Pingat Darjah Kerabat* in 1926 which demonstrated his close relationship and his status as a trusted subject of the Johore royal house.¹³³

Despite the fact that Arabs had played an active role in the politics of the Malay States, varying in intensity from one state to another, their role gradually reduced when the British administration in these states became increasingly dominant. Even though Arabs were no longer an influential factor in the politics of the Malay sultanate, compared to their role in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, they managed to retain Perlis as the only Malay state where the Sultan is of Arab descent until to the present day. After Malaya achieved independence and when the Arabs were increasingly identified as Malays, they continued to play an active role in the political process which was now channeled through the mainstream Malay political parties.

Contributions to Economic Development

In addition to their interest in the political and religious affairs of the Malay states, Arabs were also noted for their economic involvement. During his visit to the East Coast Malay States in 1837-38 (1253AH) Abdullah Munshi recorded that there were Arabs in Pahang, who even though few in number, were highly respected, rich and mostly earned their living as traders.¹³⁴ From his account it is clear that Arabs were already actively involved in business activity decades before the introduction of a capitalist economy following the British intervention.

The British intervention in the Malay States enhanced the Arabs emergence as one of the most prominent entrepreneurs representing the Muslims in business activities, apart from the Indian Muslims, with their business interests well-established in Penang and Singapore. The late nineteenth century Singapore, where their business interest was most established, was described by the Dutch scholar L.W.C. van den Berg as "the most flourishing, though not the largest Arab colony in all the Indian Archipelago" and their numbers were said to be increasing year by year, as it was "the point by which all Arabs pass who go to seek their fortunes in the Far East".¹³⁵ One of the earliest and the most prosperous Arabs who made his fortune in trading ventures in Singapore when it was put under British administration was Sayyid Abdul Rahman al-Sagoff.¹³⁶ The business fortune of the al-Sagoffs in the island experienced a rapid expansion during the second generation of the family following the marriage of his son Sayyid Ahmad to Raja Siti, a daughter of a rich lady, Hadjee Fatimah.¹³⁷

When Sayyid Ahmad al-Sagoff died, his business was taken over by his son Sayyid Mohamad al-Sagoff. Sayyid Mohamad al-Sagoff emerged as one of the most famous member of the Arab families in Singapore. He managed to accumulate a huge fortune through his business connection not only in the Malay World, but also in Europe and the Middle East. His company Alsagoff & Co. exported commodities such as timber, rubber, sago, coconuts, coffee, cocoa and pineapples, while its imports comprised general merchandise for local consumption. Because of his tremendous leadership and success in the life of the day, Sayyid Mohamad became a celebrity not only in Singapore and Johore, the Riau Archipelago, the Moluccas and Celebes, but also further afield in the Middle East. He was entrusted by the Ottoman Government with the

position of Honorary Consul-General in Singapore and for his services he was received into the Osmanieh Order of the Ottoman Empire by Sultan Abdul Hamid II.¹³⁸

Sayyid Mohamad was also very effective in furthering the business ventures of the al-Sagoffs in Singapore, and after taking over the family business he was not only successful in accumulating wealth in the island, but also managed to make himself the most influential Arab in Johore, and a close friend and even a financial backer of Sultan Abu Bakar.¹³⁹ Sayyid Mohamad was a respected man of high leadership quality and reputed to be one of the richest men in the Straits Settlements.¹⁴⁰ He was also a generous philanthropist who contributed to a number of benefactions for the interest of Muslims in Singapore such as the founding of the al-Sagoff *Waqf* Fund, the Muslimin Trust Fund Association, the al-Sagoff Outdoor Dispensary and the Muslim Boys Orphanage.¹⁴¹ When he died on 3 July 1906 the sorrow at his death was echoed throughout the island and Johore. His funeral in Singapore was attended by prominent British officials, the Johore *Menteri Besar* and also Sultan Ibrahim. As a mark of respect, on the day of the funeral all government offices in Johore were closed and the flag at the Raffles Hotel was flown at half-mast.¹⁴²

Apart from the al-Sagoffs, there were also other famous Arab families in Singapore whose business activities dated back to the early days of the island. They included the families of al-Junayd, al-Kaff and al-Jufri. As for the al-Junayds the most famous member of the family was Sayyid Omar bin Ali al-Junayd. He was a native of Arabia who owned extensive business interests and realised a large fortune.¹⁴³ He was also a respected merchant in Singapore who endowed a large piece of land as a Muslim burial ground and built a mosque at Bencoolen Street.¹⁴⁴ As for the family of al-Kaff, the most famous was Sayyid Mohamad bin Abdul Rahman al-Kaff who traded in Singapore and Java.¹⁴⁵ Apart from Singapore, the Arabs were also well established in Penang where one of the island's earliest settlers, Sayyid Hussain al-Aidid, was reputed to be the richest man there.¹⁴⁶

The most important and lucrative business in which the Arabs were actively involved from the beginning of the twentieth century until World War II was the inter-island shipping trade in the waters of the Malay World.¹⁴⁷ One of the most prominent Arab merchants in Singapore who at one time owned several large trading vessels, and towards the end of his life some steamers, was Sayyid Massim bin Salleh al-Jufri.¹⁴⁸ Another business activity that was exclusively in the hands of the Arabs was the

pilgrimage industry. The Arabs were well suited to the industry since they had well-established business connections in Singapore and Penang, from which the pilgrim ships departed, and they also had good contacts in the Hijaz.¹⁴⁹ One of the Arabs who was highly appreciated not only for his running the business which provided Muslims with the needed service, but also credited for the sterling qualities of his assistance toward the pilgrims from Singapore to Makkah, was Sayyid Ibrahim Omar al-Sagoff.¹⁵⁰

Another business venture where Arabs were actively involved was the plantation industry. The most prosperous Arab who made his fortune in this industry was Sayyid Mohamad al-Sagoff. Through his close relationship with Sultan Abu Bakar, Sayyid Mohamad was awarded in 1878 a land concession of 60,000 acres stretching between Sungai Permas and Sungai Pontian Besar to be used for cultivation (except opium).¹⁵¹ The concession, which was called "The Alsagoff Cucob Concession" by the British, was renamed the "Constantinople Estate" by Sayyid Mohamad.¹⁵²

The Constantinople Estate was a thriving economic area and to overcome its labour shortage, a Javanese work force was extensively used. Many of these Javanese worked as contract labourers and were provided with expenses to perform the Hajj on the condition that they would work on the estate for a certain period of time. In one of the estates, the Air Masin Estates, there were about two hundred Javanese employed as workers.¹⁵³ The Constantinople Estate was a self-contained settlement with its own facilities and marketplace. To facilitate transactions on the estate, the Sultan of Johore even gave permission to its management to issue its own currency, known as the Constantinople Currency. This currency, with denominations made up of 25 cents, 50 cents, \$1.00 and \$2.00, was printed by the Sa'aidi Press, Singapore.¹⁵⁴ The currency was first circulated on 1 May 1878, two months after Sayyid Mohamad was awarded the Concession.¹⁵⁵

Another Arab who made his fortune in the plantation industry was Sayyid Hassan al-^cAttas, who was also a highly respected Arab in Pahang.¹⁵⁶ Through his close relationship with Sultan Ahmad of Pahang he managed to secure 14,000 acres of land and accumulated wealth whose revenue he used to finance a number of educational institutions and other social benefactions for the Muslims.¹⁵⁷ His son, Sayyid Mohamad also ventured into the plantation industry and opened pepper and coffee estates in Muar.¹⁵⁸ In Kedah, the Arabs were also involved in agricultural ventures and were the major landowners in the state, especially in the districts of Yan and Kubang Pasu. The

Arab family who owned most of these agricultural lands were the al-Idrus, al-Baraqabah and al-Jamalullail.¹⁵⁹

The Arabs were also actively involved in business enterprises in Selangor, where after the conclusion of the Kelang War, Sayyid Zin in association with Tunku Kudin engaged in commercial undertaking from 1883 onward. They made business ventures related to a mangrove concession and in the Padi and Sago Planting Company where Tunku Kudin had a half interest.¹⁶⁰ The Arabs also invested in the property market and Sayyid Mohamad made an attempt to venture into the mining industry in Johore in the late nineteenth century.¹⁶¹

Arab entrepreneurs, particularly in Singapore were also actively involved in printing industry. In the 1930s, the Arabs were particularly active in the publication their own Arabic journals. Between 1931 to 1941, there were at least fifteen of them published in Singapore, ranging from those which lasted for just a few issues to those which survived for several years.¹⁶² The first Arabic journal published in Singapore was the weekly *Al-Huda* under the editorship of Sayyid A. W. Jilani. Sayyid A.W. Jilani was also the editor of two other journals, *Al-Akhbar* and *Al-Akhbar Al-Musawwarah*. Both journals were published in 1939 and ceased circulation prior to the Japanese invasion.¹⁶³ The Arabic journals published found their readership not only in Singapore but all over the Malay World and Hadhramaut.

The Arab involvement in the publishing industry, however, started much earlier and they had been active in sponsoring the publication of several Malay journals. When the first Malay reformist journal, *Al-Imam*, was published in 1906 the major role in bringing it into existence was played by Arabs, who not only contributed the editorials but also supported it through financial backing. The initial financial backer of *Al-Imam* was Shaykh Mohd. Salim al-Khalali, who was an Acehnese of Hadhrami descent. Another early financial backer of the journal was Sayyid Muhammad bin Aqil bin Yahya.¹⁶⁴

In Johore Bahru Sayyid Hassan established the Matbaah Al-Attas (Al-Attas Press) in 1927. The press was situated in Wadi Hassan with its main activity was the

publication of Malay, Arabic and English books. The most important achievement of Al-Attas Press was the publication a popular monthly journal, *Majalah JASA*.¹⁶⁵ The journal was first circulated in November 1927 under the editorship of Sayyid Zin b. Sayyid Hassan al-Attas. The journal ceased publication in September 1931.¹⁶⁶ *Majalah Jasa* discusses issues such lessons learned from history, contemporary developments and others.¹⁶⁷

In 1930 one of the al-Sagoffs, Sayyid Hussein bin Ali al-Sagoff, founded the first Malay daily newspaper, *Warta Malaya* with Onn Jaafar. Sayyid Hussein was also a well-known publisher who published weekly Malay pictorials, *Warta Ahad* and *Warta Jenaka*, apart from *Warta Malaya*.¹⁶⁸ When a weekly newspaper *Lembaga* (1933-1941) was published with Onn bin Jaafar as its editor, it was financed by Sayyid Alwi bin Abbas al-^cAttas.¹⁶⁹

As the Chinese and the Indians, the Arabs migration to Malaya in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Malaya also was mainly driven by economics pulled factor. In the absence of Malay trading class by the time of the arrival of the colonial powers, the Arabs from Hadhramaut was the most dominant Muslims, apart from the Indian Muslims which involved in the rapid economic expansion under colonial rule. At the beginnings of the colonial period the Arabs were not only at par with other immigrants in their economic competition, but at one time in the early stage even managed to emerged as noe of the most successful entrepreneurs in the Malay States. Apart from their entrepreneurial skills this success was also contributed to by their Islamic credentials for being Arabs, which allowed them to gain the trust of the Malay leaders.

Arabs active economic involvement diminished after World War II. The absence of good leadership and inability to rise again after the economic devastation resulted from the war resulted in the diminishing role played by Arabs in economic development of Malaya after the war. Despite the absence of a continuity, historically the Arabs has played a significant role in economic development of Malaya alongside with the

Chinese and the Indians, particularly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Malaya.

Conclusion

From contacts that were initially based on trading activities the Malays became converted to Islam. The Islamisation of the Malays elevated their bond with the Middle East, which no longer merely rested on a commercial basis, but now encompassed the important areas of religion and education which opened a new chapter in their relationship. Ancient times had seen an active Arab involvement with the East, but after Islamisation this became a two way traffic, and increasingly the Malays were making more journeys to the Middle East than did the Arabs to the Malay lands.

Although the Arab's earlier predominance was confronted by colonial powers which arrived in Malayan waters from the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Malays' attachment to the Middle East and the Arabs persisted. This was stemmed from the feeling of indebtedness to the community which had contributed to and influenced the development of their history and civilisation, brought about by the process of Islamisation. Even though the Arabs that migrated to the Malay States were mostly from Hadhramaut, they also played the same role as their predecessors and continued to enjoy high regards and respects by the Malays. From their political, economics and social involvements, the Arabs undoubtedly had played an important role in the historical development of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Malaya.



ENDNOTES

- ¹ Before 1968 the term "Hadhramaut" was applied chiefly to the South Arabian states of the Kathiri and Qu'aiti Sultanates. Since 1968, however, the term has been applied to the governorates of Shabwa and Hadhramaut of the Republic of South Yemen. The latter state united with North Yemen in 1990 and the area became part of the unified state of Yemen.
- ² Abdallah S. Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification. A Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town*, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 23. Even though most Arabs who came to Malaya traced their origin to Hadhramaut, a small number of them also came from Hijaz and elsewhere. In Malaya these non-Hadhrami Arabs also played a significant role as religious teachers and in the propagation of Islam among the Malays.
- ³ William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 1980, p. 41; W.H. Lee Warner, "Notes on the Hadhramaut", *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. LXXVII, No. 3, March 1931, p. 220.
- ⁴ Ismail Hamid gave an interesting example of an Arab woman in his village in Perlis before and during World War II who adapted herself well to the community and gained great admiration from fellow villagers. She was the only literate woman in the community, taught religious knowledge, and provided a form of entertainment to them by narrating Islamic histories. See the account of her in Ismail Hamid, *Arabic and Islamic Literary Tradition. With Reference to Malay Islamic Literature*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publication & Distributors Sdn. Bhd., 1982, pp. v-vi.
- ⁵ Abdullah Munshi who wrote around 1807 demonstrated to us an interesting example of the prominent role played by Arab religious scholars in Melaka and the Malays' high expectations of them. Following the death of his Qur'an teacher a successor had to be found and it was at this juncture that an Arab shaykh from Yemen, a certain Mu'alim Muhyil-Din domiciled in Aceh came to Melaka and astounded everyone by his skill in reciting Qur'an. To support his presence there forty or fifty students each agreed to pay him \$5.00 a year. Apparently he was an effective teacher, ensuring that his students understood the basic principles of recitation. After a year he returned to Aceh and his place was taken by Shaykh 'Alawi Ba Fakhir of Yemen who showed an extraordinary knowledge of Arabic and knew Malay. Melakan elders arranged his stay and fifty or sixty students signed up and paid \$5.00 each. He first lectured on the *Umm al-Barahin*, then on various other works of *fiqh* with special reference to ritualistic matters governing prayers and related aspects. See A.H. Johns, "Islam in the Malay World, An Exploratory Survey with Some Reference to Quranic Exegesis", in Raphael Israeli and Anthony H. Johns (eds.), *Islam in Asia*, Vol. II, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1984, p. 129; Yusof A. Talib, "Munshi Abdullah's Arab Teachers", *JMBRAS*, Vol. 63, Part 2, 1990, pp. 27-29.
- ⁶ See Syed Naguib al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement on the General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesia Archipelago*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1969, p. 11.
- ⁷ H.G. Quaritch Wales, "Archeological Researches on Ancient Indian Colonisation in Malaya", *JMBRAS*, Vol. XVIII, Part 1, 1940, p. 32.

- ⁸ J.A.E. Morley, "The Arabs and the Eastern Trade", *JMBRAS*, Vol. 22, Part 1, March 1949, p. 153.
- ⁹ Kassim Ahmad (ed. with new intro.), *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1993, p. 533. After ten days' sailing from Aceh Darul Salam, Hang Tuah is said to have reached Bab Mokha with the state of Abyssinia situated to its left.
- ¹⁰ R.B. Serjeant, *Studies in Arabian History and Civilisation*, London: Variorum Reprints, 1981, p. 25. (Chapter VII, "The Sayyids of Hadramawt").
- ¹¹ R.A. Cochrane, "An Air Reconnaissance of the Hadhramaut", *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. LXXVII, No. 3, March 1931, p. 210. For a discussion of the rise of the Kathiri and the Qu'aiti states, see W.H. Ingrams, *Aden Protectorate. A Report on the Social, Economic and Political Condition of the Hadhramaut*, London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1937 (Reprinted 1939), pp. 27-35.
- ¹² R.B. Serjeant, "Historians and Historiography of Hadhramaut", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 25, 1962, p. 239.
- ¹³ Abdallah S. Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification*, p. 4.
- ¹⁴ Joseph Kostiner, "The Impact of the Hadrami Emigrants in the East Indies on Islamic Modernism and Social Change in the Hadramawt During the 20th Century", in Raphael Israeli and Anthony H. Johns (eds.), *Islam In Asia*, Vol II, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1984, p. 208.
- ¹⁵ W.H. Lee Warner, "Notes on the Hadhramaut", p. 219.
- ¹⁶ Mahayuddin Haji Yahaya, "Latarbelakang Sejarah Keturunan Sayid Di Malaysia", in Khoo Kay Kim, et al., *Tamadun Islam Di Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1980, p. 73; Joseph Kostiner, "The Impact of the Hadrami Emigrants", p. 209.
- ¹⁷ Abdallah S. Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification*, p. 4.
- ¹⁸ R.H. Smith, "Notes On the Kathiri State of Hadhramaut", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. VII, No. 4, 1953, p. 503.
- ¹⁹ Take for example the case of Penang where the census recorded that the Arab population in the island was as follows: 1871 (322 out of the total population of 61,797); 1881 (521), 1891 (449 out the total population of 123,886), 1901 (473), 1911 (702), 1921 (520). See Omar Farouk Shaeik Ahmad, "The Arabs in Penang", *Malaysia in History*, Vol. XX1, No. 2, December 1978, p. 5.
- ²⁰ See *Singapore Chronicle*, No. 165, Thursday 15 July 1830. The census of the population of Singapore shows the number of each class of inhabitant taken on 1 January 1830.
- ²¹ William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, p. 40. Van den Berg, however, considered that the figure of 445 adult males in Singapore given was "much too high". He believed that there were "at the most 200 adult (male) Arabs actually settled at Singapore".

He attributed the alleged excess to the number of Arabs in transit to the Netherlands Indies. His own figure of 580 male and female Arabs in Singapore includes children only if more than ten years old.

- ²² J.A.E. Morley, "The Arabs and the Eastern Trade", p. 167.
- ²³ The earliest recorded census of their population was made in 1891 for the state of Perak (51), Selangor (27) and Negeri Sembilan (20). See J.A.E. Morley, "The Arab and the Eastern Trade", Appendix C, p. 175.
- ²⁴ Mahayuddin Haji Yahaya, "Latarbelakang Sejarah Keturunan Sayid", pp. 13-14.
- ²⁵ Abdullah S. Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification*, p. 13.
- ²⁶ Mahayuddin Haji Yahaya, *Sejarah Orang Syed Di Pahang*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1984, p. 26. Despite the fact that most Hadhramis who migrated to this region claimed to belong to the status group, Roff believes that most of them were actually common folk from the towns with a primary interest in small-scale trade. See William R. Roff, "South-East Asian Islam in the Nineteenth Century", in Ann K.S. Lambton & Bernard Lewis (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. 2, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. 170.
- ²⁷ Take for example the case of the Straits Settlements where in 1921 only 370 out of 1,858 Arabs were born in Arabia; in the Federated Malay States, 107 out of 656; and in the Unfederated Malay States, 238 out of 1,802. See J.E. Nathan, *The 1921 Census of British Malaya*, London: Waterloo & Sons Ltd., 1922, p. 91.
- ²⁸ Faridah Romly, "Orang Arab di Kedah", B.A. Thesis, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1983/84, pp. 63-64.
- ²⁹ The division of Arabs into two social groups is discussed in Safie Ibrahim, "Islamic Religious Thought in Malaya", PhD. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1987, pp. 145-146. See also W.H. Ingrams, *Aden Protectorate*, pp. 36-41.
- ³⁰ This bond was clearly evident in the Kathiri State where many Arabs in Malaya originated. Extensive social and commercial ties bound these two widely divided regions together and its economy became almost wholly dependent on funds remitted to Saiwun and Tarim from the extensive Far East business holdings of several great Kathiri families. Their contribution to the prosperity of the state was observed by a Dutch explorer, D. van der Meulen who visited Hadhramaut in May and June 1931. He recorded that when his entourage reached Horeida, the tribal village of the family of al-^cAttas, they saw many beautiful houses and mosques which were built from the wealth accumulated in Java and Singapore. In the village they also found a large number of Dutch subjects, many of whom spoke Malay, and one even frequently heard the language being spoken on the streets. See D. van der Meulen, "A Journey in Hadhramaut", *The Moslem World*, Vol. XXII, No. 3, July 1932, p. 387.
- ³¹ William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, p. 42.
- ³² J.A.E. Morley, "The Arabs and the Eastern Trade", p. 144-145.

- ³³ See J.V. Mills, "Arab and Chinese Navigators in Malaysian Waters in About A.D. 1500", *JMBRAS*, Vol. 47, Part II, 1974, p. 7.
- ³⁴ Uka Tjandrasmita, "The Sea Trade of the Moslems to the Eastern Countries and the Rise of Islam in Indonesia", in *Studies in Asian History*. Proceedings of the Asian History Congress 1961, (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1969), p. 93.
- ³⁵ Syed Naguib Al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement*, p. 11.
- ³⁶ George Fadlo Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951, pp. 71 & 78; S.M. Yusuf, *Studies in Islamic History and Culture*, p. 139. For a discussion of the accounts of Arab geographers about the location of Kalah, see G.R. Tibbets, "The Malay Peninsula as Known to Arab Geographers", (*Malayan*) *Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol. 8, 1956, pp. 24-33.
- ³⁷ For an enlightening discussion of the candidature of Kelang as the possible location of Kalah, see S.Q. Fatimi, "In Quest of Kalah", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, September 1960, pp. 62-101; see also his article, "Peace, Unity and Universality", *Intisari*, Vol. 1, No. 1, n.d., p. 28; and Brian E. Colless, "The Traders of the Pearl", Vol. 1X, p. 24. Paul Wheatley, who also tried to identify the exact site of Kalah, however, arrived at a conclusion that none of these places fit all the accounts given by various Arab geographers. He concluded that Kalah could be any place along the coast from the Mergui Archipelago to the west coast of the Malay Peninsular. See Paul Wheatley, "Desultory Remarks", note F, pp. 68-70; For a discussion of the archeological evidence, as opposed to literary findings, for the candidature of Pengkalan Bujang in Kedah and Kakhaio Island near Takuapa in Southern Thailand, see Alastair Lamb, "A Visit to Siraf An Ancient Port on the Persian Gulf", *JMBRAS*, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, July 1964, pp. 1-19; for the candidature of Kakhaio Island see also Lamb's article, "Takuapa: The Probable Site of Pre-Malaccan Entreport in the Malay Peninsula", in John Bastin and R. Roovink (eds), *Malayan and Indonesian Studies*, Oxford: At Clarendon Press, 1964, pp. 76-86.
- ³⁸ Paul Wheatley, "Arabo-Persian Sources", p. 10.
- ³⁹ Ismail Hamid, "A Survey of Theories on the Introduction of Islam in the Malay Archipelago", *Islamic Studies*, Vol. XX1, No. 3, 1982, p. 89.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- ⁴¹ See T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam. A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*, Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1979, pp. 368-369.
- ⁴² Ismail Hamid, "A Survey of Theories", p. 94-95.
- ⁴³ One of them was J.C Bottom who leveled the most extreme criticism against Malay histories. He wrote that "History to the Malays has not until recently been either a science or an art, but and entertainment. Accuracy, completeness, organised exposition were not the vital principles; what best pleased were legend, fantasy and pleasant hotchpotch of Court and port gossip". See J.C. Bottom, "Malay Historical Works", in K.G. Tregonning (ed),

Malaysian Historical Sources, Singapore: Department of History University of Singapore, 1962, p. 38.

- ⁴⁴ T.W Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 370.
- ⁴⁵ Ismail Hamid, "A Survey of Theories", pp. 94-95.
- ⁴⁶ Slamet Muljana, *Runtuhnya Keradjaan Hindu-Djawa dan Timbulnya Negara2 Islam Di Nusantara*, Jakarta: Penerbit Bhratara, 1968, p. 132.
- ⁴⁷ J.A.E. Morley, "The Arabs and the Eastern Trade", p. 154.
- ⁴⁸ G.W.J. Drewes, "New Light on the Coming of Islam to Indonesia", *Bijdragen van het Koninklijk Instituut*, Vol. 124, 1968, pp. 437-438; See also W.G. Shellabear, *Sejarah Melayu*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd., 1984, pp. 41-42.
- ⁴⁹ See W.G. Shellabear, *Sejarah Melayu*, pp. 40-42.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-56.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115. According to *Sejarah Melayu*, *Kitab Dar al-Mazlum* was written by Abu Ishaq in Medinah. After it was completed, he requested one of his students, Maulana Abu Bakar, to bring it to Melaka so that its teaching could be disseminated there. In Melaka, the arrival of the book was greeted with high regard and even Sultan Mansor Shah learned its content, taught by Maulana Abu Bakar himself. Realising the importance of the book, the Sultan ordered it to be sent to Pasai to be translated into Malay. See also Yahya Abu Bakar, "Melaka Sebagai Pusat Islam Abad ke XV Masihi", *Sari*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1983, pp. 37-38.
- ⁵² Ismail Hamid, "A Survey of Theories", p. 95.
- ⁵³ Syed Naguib Al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement*, p. 11.
- ⁵⁴ The explanation given by Syed Naguib al-Attas of mental stagnation during the Hindu-Buddha period is particularly enlightening. His argument rejects the views advocated by several Western orientalist who placed special significance on the period in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago before the introduction of Islam. See Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, *Islam Dalam Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan Melayu*, pp. 12-19.
- ⁵⁵ W. G. Shellabear, "The Evolution of Malay Spelling", *JSBRAS*, July 1901, p. 77.
- ⁵⁶ W.A. O'Sullivan, "The Relation Between Southern India and the Straits Settlements", *JSBRAS*, July 1901, p. 67.
- ⁵⁷ For a description of knowledge of writing in relation to Arabic in the traditional Malay society, see Kassim Ahmad (Intro. and Annotated), *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd., 1981, pp. 27-28. Munshi Abdullah visited Trengganu as part of his visit to the East Coast states of the Malay Peninsular in 1837/38.

- ⁵⁸ Omar Farouk Shaeik Ahmad, "The Arabs in Penang", p. 6; Rahmat Saripan, "Kegelisahan Sosial Pada Tahun-Tahun 1920-an Di Trengganu", in Dato' Haji Mohd. Salleh bin Haji Awang (MISBAHA) and Mohd. Yusof Abdullah (eds.) *Pesaka II*, Trengganu: Lembaga Muzium Negeri Trengganu, 1984, p. 6; Khoo Kay Kim, "Perkembangan Pelajaran Agama Islam", in Awang Had Salleh (ed), *Pendidikan Ke Arah Perpaduan. Sebuah Perspektif Sejarah*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd., 1980, p. 1.
- ⁵⁹ Muhammd Hassan b. Dato' Kerani Muhammad Arshad, *Al-Tarikh Salasilah Negeri Kedah*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1968, pp. 117-123.
- ⁶⁰ Othman Ishak, "Some Aspects of the Administration of Islam in Kedah", in Asmah Haji Omar (ed), *Darulaman. Essays On Linguistic, Cultural and Socio-Economic Aspects of the Malaysian State of Kedah*, Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia Cawangan Kedah, 1979, p. 186.
- ⁶¹ See Shaharir Talib Robert, "The Trengganu Ruling Class in the Late Nineteenth Century", *JMBRAS*, Vol. 50, Part 2, 1977, pp. 37-40.
- ⁶² The earliest of the al-Idrus family to settle in Trengganu was Sayyid Zainal Abidin, a grain merchant from Java who arrived there at the end of the eighteenth century.
- ⁶³ Abdullah Zakaria bin Ghazali, "Perubahan Dalam Pentadbiran Trengganu 1893-1942", *Warisan*, No. II, 1982, p. 67 (Footnote no. 28).
- ⁶⁴ Mohd. Yusri Salleh, "Islam Dalam Pentadbiran Di Trengganu. Suatu Tinjauan Sehingga Tahun 1930", B.A. Thesis, University of Malaya, 1986/87, pp. 31-33.
- ⁶⁵ Shafie Abu Bakar, "Peranan Ulama dan Kesannya Terhadap Sikap AntiPenjajahan Dengan Rujukan Kepada Pengajian Tasawwuf Sayid Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad (Tok ku Paloh) Berasaskan Karangannya *Ma'arifi al-Lahfan*" in Rahmat Saripan, et al., *Masyarakat Melayu Abad Ke-19*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1991, pp. 188-189.
- ⁶⁶ Mohamad Abu Bakar, "Riwayat Hidup Tok Ku Paloh Anakanda Tok Ku Tuan Besar", Cenderamata Memperingati Tokoh Ulama Silam Yang Ke-IV, Sayyid Muhammad bin Zainal Abidin al-Idrus, Fakulti Pengajian Islam, UKM, 20-21 June 1981, p. 22.
- ⁶⁷ Abdullah Zakaria bin Ghazali, "Perubahan Pentadbiran Trengganu 1839-1941, *Warisan*, No. 3, 1982, p. 37.
- ⁶⁸ Sayyid Abdul Rahman al-Idrus (known as Tokku Paloh) was born in 1817 in Paloh not far from Kuala Trengganu. He was the second son of Sayyid Muhammad from his wife Hajah Aminah. Tokku Paloh learned religious knowledge locally and in Makkah where his teachers included Sayyid Ahmad Dahlan and Sayyid 'Abdullah 'Ali al-Zawawi. While in Makkah he was also introduced to the Tariqah Naqshbandiyah which he practiced upon returning to Trengganu. Tokku Paloh was married to Makku Andak, the aunt of Sultan Zainal Abidin III. He died in 1918. For his life, see Mohammad bin Yusuf, "Sayid Abdul Rahman bin Sayid Muhammad (Tokku Paloh)", *Malaysia Dari Segi Sejarah*, No. 13, 1984, pp. 52-56; Mohamad Abu Bakar, "Riwayat Hidup", pp. 22-30

- ⁶⁹ See Shafie Abu Bakar, "Latarbelakang Keagamaan di Terengganu", in Abdullah Zakaria Ghazali (ed), *Terengganu Dahulu dan Sekarang*, Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Muzium Malaysia, 1984, p. 11; Mohamad Abu Bakar, "Tok Syekh Duyong", *Purba*, No. 3, 1984, p. 45.
- ⁷⁰ Shaykh Abdul Malik Abdullah was born around 1650 in Hulu Trengganu. He received his early education in Aceh before proceeding to Hijaz where he stayed for about a decade. In Hijaz Shaykh Abdullah also acquired the Tariqah al-Shadhiliyyah. Upon returning to Trengganu after completing his studies he was appointed as *Shaykh al-'Ulama'* and as a *Mufti* whose religious rulings were sought. He died in 1736. For his life, see Shafie bin Abu Bakar, "Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah (Tuk Pulau Manis)", *Warisan*, No. 5, 1989, pp. 12-23.
- ⁷¹ Shafie Abu Bakar, "Institusi Syekh 'Abdu'l-Malik bin 'Abdu'llah. (Satu Corak Pengajian Tradisi Di Trengganu) dan Kitab-Kitab Padanya", M. Litt. Thesis, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1976/77, pp. 59-60.
- ⁷² His real name was Wan Abdullah bin Wan Mohd. Amin [1802-1889]. Even though he was not of Arab origin, he was closely associated with them and he used to travel to and from Makkah between 1832 and 1846. For his life, see Mohamad Abu Bakar, "Tok Syekh Duyong", pp. 47-65.
- ⁷³ Mohamad bin Abu Bakar, "Tok Syekh Duyong", *Purba*, No. 3, 1984, p. 47.
- ⁷⁴ Shaykh Hassan Yamani was born in Makkah on 23 September 1897, a son of Shaykh Said Yamani, a famous 'alim who taught at the Masjid al-Haram. He received his education in Masjid al-Haram and Madrasah Salatiyyah in Makkah. He came to Malaya in the 1930s and taught in several *madrasahs* in Perak, including Madrasah Idrisiyyah and Madrasah Il Ihya as-Syariff. He was appointed *Mufti* of Trengganu following the death of Orang Kaya Kamal Wangsa (Haji Wan Sulaiman bin Daud). Shaykh Hassan died on 11 January 1972 and was survived by a number of children, one of whom is Shaykh Zaki Yamani, former Oil Minister of Saudi Arabia. See MISBAHA, "Syekh Hassan Yamani, Mufti Negeri Terengganu 1940-1943, 1943, 1945-1952", in Muhammad Abu Bakar (ed. and intro), *Ulama Terengganu. Suatu Sorotan*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications & Distributors Sdn. Bhd., 1991, pp. 235-246.
- ⁷⁵ Sayyid Yusof al-Zawawi was born in Saudi Arabia in 1908. His grandfather, Sayyid Abdullah al-Zawawi, was the *Mufti* of Makkah. Sayyid Yusof was educated in Makkah and al-Azhar. He became the *Mufti* of Terengganu from 1952 to 1975. See Muhammad Abu Bakar, "Syed Yusof al-Zawawi, Mufti Terengganu, 1952-1975", in Muhammad Abu Bakar (ed. and intro.), *Ulama Terengganu. Suatu Sorotan*, Kuala Lumpur, Utusan Publication & Distributors Sdn. Bhd., 1991, pp. 248.
- ⁷⁶ See M.A. Fawzi Mohd. Basri, "Perkembangan dan Peranan Jabatan Agama Johor 1895-1940", *Malaysia in History*, Vol. 18, No. 1, June 1978, pp. 10 & 15.
- ⁷⁷ Pejabat Agama Johore, 68/34, National Archive, Malaysia (Johor Bahru Branch), 8 March 1934.

- ⁷⁸ MB 68/34, President of Johore Religious Department, National Archive, Malaysia (Johor Bahru Branch); British Consulate General Batavia to R.O. Winstedt, General Adviser, Johore, 15 May 1934.
- ⁷⁹ See Daeng Sanusi Daeng Mariok & Abdul Fatah Ibrahim, "Dato' Sayid Alwi Tahir al-Haddad, 1884-1962, Mufti Yang Tegas", in Ismail Mat (ed), *Ulama Silam Dalam Kenangan*, Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1992, pp. 109-118.
- ⁸⁰ R.O. Winstedt, "The Hadhramaut Saiyids of Perak and Siak", *JSBRAS*, September 1918, p. 51.
- ⁸¹ Ihsan Hardiwijaya Ibaga, "Ulama' dan Sistem Pondok di Kelantan Abad Ke-19", *Dian*, No. 120, May 1979, p. 23.
- ⁸² Abdullah Alwi Haji Hassan, "Kelantan Islamic Legal History Before 1909", *Malaysia in History*, Vol. 23, 1980, p. 12.
- ⁸³ See Mohamed b. Nik Mohd. Salleh, "Kelantan In Transition: 1891-1910", in William R. Roff (ed), *Kelantan. Religion, Society and Politics in a Malay State*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 27.
- ⁸⁴ Omar Farouk Shaeik Ahmad, "The Arabs in Penang", p. 6.
- ⁸⁵ See A.L. Tibawi, "Origin and Character of *Al-Madrasah*", *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 25, 1962, p. 232.
- ⁸⁶ Apart from being addressed as Sayyid, in addition the al-^cAttas family is also addressed as Habib, which means the beloved or the honoured. See Abdallah al-Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification*, p. 15. Habib (Sayyid) Hassan was born in 1832, a son of Sayyid Ahmad bin Sayyid Hassan al-^cAttas, a trader who arrived Pahang in the early nineteenth century from Hadhramaut. Habib Hassan received part of his education at al-Azhar University in Cairo and had lived in Egypt for twelve years. Upon his departure from Egypt he returned to Singapore where he taught at Madrasah al-Sagoff for two years before he moved to Garoet in the Praeanger Residency to teach at a school there. Like his father, Sayyid Hassan was also an influential figure in Pahang and managed to accumulate wealth through his entrepreneurial skill and his close relationship with the Pahang royalty. Sayyid Hassan was a generous man who used his wealth to finance religious education, built many mosques and donated lands for Muslim burial grounds in Pahang, Johore and Hadhramaut. He died on 21 March 1932. For his life and contributions to Islamic life in Malay society, see Sayyid Ali Mohammad al-Attas, *Almarhum Sayyid Hassan Ahmad al-^cAttas. Seorang Mujahid dan Pembangun Ummah*, Johor Bahru: Wakaf Almarhum Syed Hassan bin Ahmad Alattas, 1984, pp. 11-32; Mahayuddin Haji Yahaya, *Sejarah Orang Syed di Pahang*, pp. 90-91. See also CO 537/931, Marriot (Governor's Deputy) to Amery, 1 April 1925; enclosure *The Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence*, No. 28, April 1925.
- ⁸⁷ See *Neracha*, Vol. 3, No. 75, 5 March 1913 (front page); *Tunas Melayu*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 12 March 1912.
- ⁸⁸ M.A. Rauf, "Islamic Education", *Intisari*, Vol. II, No. 1, n.d. pp. 22-23.

- ⁸⁹ See Rahim Osman, "Madrasah Al-Masyhur al-Islamiyyah" in Khoo Kay Kim, et al., *Islam di Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1980, pp. 76-77.
- ⁹⁰ Omar Farouk Shaeik Ahmad, "The Arabs in Penang", p. 8.
- ⁹¹ See Rahim bin Osman, "Madrasah al-Masyhur al-Islamiyyah", pp. 78-79.
- ⁹² One of the students of the *madrasah* who through the initiative of Shaykh Abu Bakar al-Rafi' was provided with a scholarship to further his study in Cairo was Abu Bakar Ashaari. See *Ar-Rajaa*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1 August 1928, p. 14.
- ⁹³ Saliha Haji Hassan, "Dr. Burhanuddin al Helmi 1911-1969", *Jebat*, No. 14, 1986, p. 158.
- ⁹⁴ Yusoff Iskandar, "Masyarakat Melaka 1400 - 1511 T.M. Dengan Tinjauan Khusus Mengenai Orang-Orang Asing", *Malaysia: Sejarah dan Proses Pembangunan*, Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1982, p. 52.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53. Take for example Sayyid Muhammad, who was only a ship's captain (*Nakhoda*), but was awarded the title *Shah Andika Menteri* by the Sultan of Melaka for his role in luring Tun Tijah away from Pahang.
- ⁹⁶ Around 1450, an Arab missionary from Makkah and authority on Islamic jurisprudence and religion by the name of Abu Bakr arrived in Sulu from Johore. He created the Sulu Sultanate and adopted the title Paduka Mahasari Aulana al-Sultan Sharif al-Hashimi. All the succeeding Sultans of Sulu claimed descent from him and in fact no one could become Sultan unless he could prove that he was his descendant. See Caesar Adib Majul, "Islamic and Arab Cultural Influences in the South of the Philippines", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 7, No. 2, September 1966, p. 65.
- ⁹⁷ Dominant Arab influence in the Acehnese court could be seen for example when they successfully challenged the authority of Sultanah Kamalat Shah and forced her to abdicate in 1699. In 1702, they again proved their political power by replacing Sultan Badr al-Alam with a nominee from their own group. See Lee Kam Hing, "Foreigners in the Acehnese Court, 1760-1819", *JMBRAS*, Vol. 43, Part 1, 1970. p. 65-66. See also William Marsden, *A History of Sumatra*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford reprint, 1966, p. 454; Mohammad Said, *Atjeh Sepanjang Abad*, Medan: Published by the Author, 1961, p. 215.
- ⁹⁸ Justus M. van der Kroef, "The Arabs in Indonesia", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. VII, 1953, p. 304.
- ⁹⁹ Sayyid Harun Jamalullail was born in 1150AH/1737AD. He was a religious scholar and earned a living as a trader. He was married to Tengku Safiah, the daughter of Tengku Dziauddin. Through this marriage Sayyid Harun managed to exert a strong influence in the state. See Hussain Baba, "Sejarah Negeri Dan Raja2 Perlis", *JMBRAS*, Vol. 42, Part 2, 1969, p. 174.
- ¹⁰⁰ Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, London: Macmillan, 1982, pp. 119-120.

- ¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 119-120.
- ¹⁰² Muhammad Hasan b. Dato Kerani Muhammad Arshad, *Al Tarikh Salasilah*, p. 148-149.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 149-150.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 151.
- ¹⁰⁵ Hussain Baba, "Sejarah Negeri Dan Raja2 Perlis", p. 176.
- ¹⁰⁶ Sayyid Hussain Jamalullail was born on 10 January 1805, the eldest son of Sayyid Harun bin Ahmad Jamalullail. Sayyid Hussain ruled Perlis for thirty years until his death in 1873. See *ibid.*, p. 177.
- ¹⁰⁷ Mohammd Isa Othman, *Politik Tradisional Kedah 1681-1942*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1990, pp. 8-9.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 99.
- ¹⁰⁹ Khoo Kay Kim, "Syed Sha'aban bin Syed Ibrahim al-Kadri", *Peninjau Sejarah*, Vol II, No. 1, April, 1967, p. 40. Sayyid Sha'aban was born in Rembau. His father was a religious teacher of Arab descent and his mother a common Melaka lady. Meanwhile, Raja Ali was an important figure in Negeri Sembilan whose great grandfather was Raja Adil, the second *Raja* from Sumatra to become *Yam Tuan Besar* of Negeri Sembilan.
- ¹¹⁰ R.O. Winstedt, "History of Negeri Sembilan", *JMBRAS*, Vol. XII, Part III, October 1934, p. 63.
- ¹¹¹ Khoo Kay Kim, "Syed Sha'aban", p. 41.
- ¹¹² Ibid., p. 46.
- ¹¹³ Ibid., p. 46.
- ¹¹⁴ R.O. Winstedt, "History of Negeri Sembilan", pp. 69-71.
- ¹¹⁵ J.M. Gullick, "The War With Yam Tuan Antah", *JMBRAS*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 1954, p. 5.
- ¹¹⁶ R.O. Winstedt, "History of Negeri Sembilan", p. 71.
- ¹¹⁷ J.M. Gullick, "The War With Yam Tuan Antah", pp. 6-10; Abdullah Zakaria Ghazali, "Kebangkitan-Kebangkitan Anti-British Di Semenanjung Tanah Melayu", in Khoo Kay Kim (ed), *Sejarah Masyarakat Melayu Modern*, Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Muzium Malaysia, 1984, p. 5.
- ¹¹⁸ J.M. Gullick, "The War With Yam Tuan Antah", p. 16
- ¹¹⁹ R.O. Winstedt, "History of Negeri Sembilan", p. 74.

- ¹²⁰ R.O Winstedt, "The History of Perak", *JMBRAS*, Vol. 12, Part 1, January, 1934, p. 137.
- ¹²¹ Ibid., p. 140. In Perak, the *Bendahara* was the second most powerful man in the state. He acted as chief minister and commander-in-chief. He earned his revenue from tolls on the imports and exports of the Kinta river.
- ¹²² Ibid., p. 143.
- ¹²³ Mahayuddin Haji Yahaya, *Sejarah Orang Syed di Pahang*, pp. 96-97.
- ¹²⁴ W. Linehan, "A History of Pahang", *JMBRAS*, Vol. XIV, Part II, May 1936, p. 71.
- ¹²⁵ Mahayuddin Haji Yahya, *Sejarah Orang Syed di Pahang*, pp. 96-97.
- ¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 98.
- ¹²⁷ On this division of the state, see C.O. 273/351, John Anderson to the Earl of Crewe, Secretary of State for Colonies, Colonial Office, No. 303, 22 September 1909; enclosure W.L. Conlay Report, "Extracts From the Journal of the British Agent Trengganu for the Period 11 July to 31 August 1909", No. 53/09, 8 September 1909, pp. 19-22.
- ¹²⁸ Mohd. Sarim Haji Mustajab, "Pentadbiran Agama Dan Penentangan: Satu Penelitian Terhadap Hubungan Melayu-Inggeris Di Trengganu 1915 - 1939", *Jebat*, No. 15, 1987, p. 33; Haji Buyong Adil, *Sejarah Trengganu*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1982, p. 190.
- ¹²⁹ Haji Buyong Adil, *Sejarah Selangor*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1981, pp. 69-70.
- ¹³⁰ J.M. Gullick, "Tunku Kudin of Kedah", *JMBRAS*, Vol. 60, Part 2, 1987, p. 82.
- ¹³¹ Saadiah Said, "Kegiatan Keluarga Alsagoff Dalam Ekonomi Johor 1878-1906", *Jebat*, No. 6/7, 1977/78. p. 53.
- ¹³² See Pej. Agama 180/241, National Archive, Malaysia (Johor Bahru Branch). Letter from Sultan Ibrahim to the President of the Universal Caliphate Congress of Cairo, Egypt, 17 April 1926; and letter from the Sultan Private Secretary to the President of the Congress, 21 March 1926.
- ¹³³ Sayyid Ali Mohammad al-Attas, *Almarhum Sayyid Hassan bin Ahmad al-Attas*, p. 22.
- ¹³⁴ Kassim Ahmad, *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah*, pp. 11-12.
- ¹³⁵ L.W.C. van den Berg, *Le Hadhramout et les Colonies Arabes dans l'Archipel Indien*, Batavia: Government Printers, 1888, p. 122; cited from William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, p. 40.
- ¹³⁶ Syed Mohsen Alsagoff, *The Alsagoff Family in Malaysia*, Singapore: Published by the Author, 1963, p. 9.

- ¹³⁷ Hadjee Fatimah was a rich Malay lady with business connections in the Malay States and Celebes. When she died her fortune was inherited by her son-in-law Sayyid Ahmad. See Charles Burton Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*, Singapore: Frazer and Neave Ltd., 1902, p. 564.
- ¹³⁸ For the life and activity of Sayyid Mohamad al-Sagoff, see Syed Mohsen Alsagoff, *The Alsagoff Family in Malaysia*, p. 11. See also CO 273/126, letter from R.W. Maxwell (Acting Inspector-General of Police) to the Colonial Office, 12 March 1884.
- ¹³⁹ Saadia Said, "Kegiatan Keluarga Alsagoff", p. 53.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Singapore Free Press*, 3 July 1906. Property belonging to the al-Sagoff was also found in Jeddah. see CO 273/505, 17 August 1920.
- ¹⁴¹ Syed Mohsen Alsagoff, *The Alsagoff Family in Malaysia*, p. 11.
- ¹⁴² Saadia Said, "Penglibatan Keluarga Alsagoff Dalam Ekonomi Johor, 1878-1926", B.A. Thesis, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1979, pp. 62-63.
- ¹⁴³ Sayyid Omar bin Ali al-Junayd was the nephew of Sayyid Muhammad bin Harun al-Junayd who came to Singapore in the very early days of the settlement. Charles Burton Buckley, *An Anecdotal History*, p. 563.
- ¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 563. His cousin Sayyid Ali al-Mohamad al-Junayd who inherited the business fortune after his death was also a generous man who gave a piece of land at Victoria and Arab Street to Tan Tok Seng's Hospital, another for a Muslim burial ground, and built public wells.
- ¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 564. Sayyid Mohamad bin Abdul Rahman al-Kaff had no son and his estates and businesses were inherited by his younger brother Shaykh al-Kaff. His son Sayyid Ahmad bin Shaykh al-Kaff inherited very extensive landed property in Singapore.
- ¹⁴⁶ Sayyid Hussain Aidid was related to the Sultan of Aceh and came to Penang from Aceh in 1792. In Penang he established himself as a merchant and also as agent of the Sultan of Aceh. His big godown and office situated at the junction of Acheen Street and Beach Street was known as "*Rumah Tinggi*" or the high rise building, as in those days there were no building of three storeys high. This particular property was a useful indicator of his wealth. H.P. Clodd, *Malaya's First British Pioneer, The Life of Francis Light*, London: Luzac & Co. Ltd., 1948, p. 119.
- ¹⁴⁷ Their trading items were *batik* and other cloth products and a wide range of other goods such as spices, tobacco, coconuts and timber.
- ¹⁴⁸ Charles Burton Buckley, *An Anecdotal History*, p. 365.
- ¹⁴⁹ William R. Roff, "The Malayo-Muslim World of Singapore at the Close of the Nineteenth Century", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, November 1964, p. 80.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Genuine Islam*, Vol. 1, No. 6 & 7, June/July 1936. He was the grandson of Sayyid Mohamad

al-Sagoff. The appreciation was expressed by Shaykh Ali Mattar, the Manager of the Jeddah Pilgrim Office during a tea party on Friday evening, 17 July 1936 given by the Pilgrim Brokers' Association which was attended by pilgrim brokers, merchants and businessmen of the Arab, Malay and Indian communities of Singapore in honour of the appointment of Sayyid Ibrahim Omar al-Sagoff as Justice of the Peace.

- ¹⁵¹ See J/Pelb., National Archive, Malaysia (Johor Bahru Branch), "Alsagoff Concession Kukup", 15 March 1906. See also GA 253/24, National Archive, Malaysia (Johor Bahru Branch), "A Brief History of the Alsagoff Concession, Kukup, Johore", n.d.
- ¹⁵² Saadiyah Said, "Kegiatan Keluarga Alsagoff", p. 53.
- ¹⁵³ Arnold Wright, *A Twentieth Century Impression of British Malaya*, London: Lloyd's Great Britain Publishing Co., Ltd., 1908, p. 707.
- ¹⁵⁴ Khazin Mohd. Tamrin & Sukiman Bohari, "Orang Jawa Pontian: Kedatangan dan Kegiatan Dalam Aspek Sosio-Ekonomi dan Politik Tempatan", *Jebat*, No. 10, April, 1980/81, p. 40; For a sample of every denomination of the currency, see Saadiyah Said, "Penglibatan Keluarga al-Sagoff". Appendix, 6, 7, 8 & 9, pp. 149-152.
- ¹⁵⁵ On the size, nature, colour of the currency, see Saadiyah Said, "Penglibatan Keluarga Alsagoff", p. 99.
- ¹⁵⁶ Haji Buyong Adil, *Sejarah Pahang*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1984, p. 336.
- ¹⁵⁷ The land concession stretch from Kuala Pahang to Air Hitam and was awarded for cultivation for 99 years. See Sultan Pahang 33/1916, National Archive, Malaysia (Kuala Trengganu Branch), 1306AH/1888AD.
- ¹⁵⁸ A. Rahman Tang Abdullah, "Sejarah Masyarakat Keturunan Arab di Muar", B.A. Thesis, University of Malaya, 1991/92, p. 18.
- ¹⁵⁹ Faridah Romli, "Orang Syed di Kedah", p. 74.
- ¹⁶⁰ J.M. Gullick, "Tunku Kudin of Kedah", pp. 83-84; Haji Buyong Adil, *Sejarah Selangor*, p. 144.
- ¹⁶¹ See Saadiyah Said, "Penglibatan Keluarga al-Sagoff", 105.
- ¹⁶² For details of the Arabic newspapers published in Singapore, their editors, holdings and the number of issues published, see William R. Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals Published in the Straits Settlements and Peninsular Malay States 1876-1941*, London: Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 59-61.
- ¹⁶³ See *Ibid.*, pp. 59 & 60.
- ¹⁶⁴ See Abu Bakar Hamzah, *Al-Imam. Its Role in Malay Society 1906-1908*, Kuala Lumpur: Media Cendekiawan Sdn. Bhd., 1981, pp. 120-124.

- ¹⁶⁵ Aminudin bin Abd. Rashid, "Syed Hassan bin Ahmad al-Attas: Satu Kajian Biografi", B.A. Thesis, University of Malaya, 19915/96, p. 60.
- ¹⁶⁶ See William R. Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic*, p. 40.
- ¹⁶⁷ Aminudin bin Abd. Rashid, "Syed Hassan bin Ahmad al-Attas", p. 60.
- ¹⁶⁸ Syed Mohsen al-Sagoff, *The Alsagoff Family in Malaysia*, p. 39.
- ¹⁶⁹ Ramlah Adam, "Lembaga Malaya 1934-1941", *Malaysia Dari Segi Sejarah*, No. 8, April 1979, pp. 59-60.

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