Becoming Arab

Sumit K. Mandal uncovers the hybridity and transregional connections underlying modern Asian identities. By considering Arabs in the Malay world under European rule, *Becoming Arab* explores how a long history of inter-Asian interaction was altered by nineteenth-century racial categorisation and control. Mandal traces the transformation of Arabs from familiar and multi-faceted creole personages of Malay courts into alienated figures defined by economic and political function. The racialisation constrained but did not eliminate the fluid character of Arabness. Creole Arabs responded to the constraints by initiating transregional links with the Ottoman Empire and establishing modern social organisations, schools, and a press. Contentions emerged between organisations respectively based on Prophetic descent and egalitarianism, advancing empowering but conflicting representations of a modern Arab and Islamic identity. Mandal unsettles finite understandings of race and identity by demonstrating not only the incremental development of a modern identity, but the contested state of its birth.

SUMIT K. MANDAL is an Associate Professor in the School of Politics, History and International Relations at the University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus. A historian interested in the transregional architecture of Asian societies, Mandal does research on Muslim societies in the Malay world – in relation to the Indian Ocean – as well as contemporary Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. His writing has appeared in *Modern Asian Studies*, *Comparative Studies of South Asia*, *Africa and the Middle East*, and *Citizenship Studies*. Previously, he worked at the National University of Malaysia and Humboldt University in Berlin and held fellowships at New York University and Kyoto University. He is on the editorial board of *Philological Encounters*.

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Becoming Arab

Creole Histories and Modern Identity in the Malay World

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This book is the culmination of a long journey. It had its beginnings as a doctoral dissertation submitted to Columbia University in 1994 that I put aside following my return from the United States to Malaysia to start my first full-time academic job. For many years I carried the thought of revising the dissertation for publication. This became burdensome after a while and effectively disappeared eventually. I seemed to have started a new journey, a second life of sorts, and no longer believed it was practically and intellectually possible to return to the project. This was true until I was inspired by the friendship and scholarship of a handful of friends. The prospects of a book materialised again. Many people and institutions have to be remembered in this journey.

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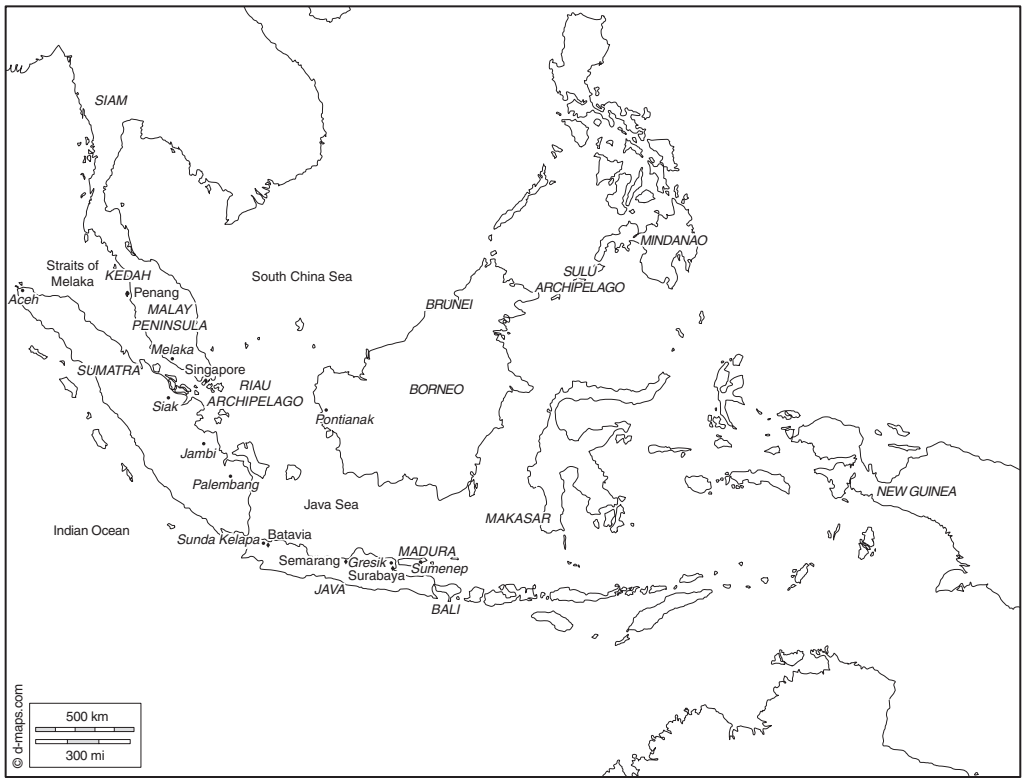
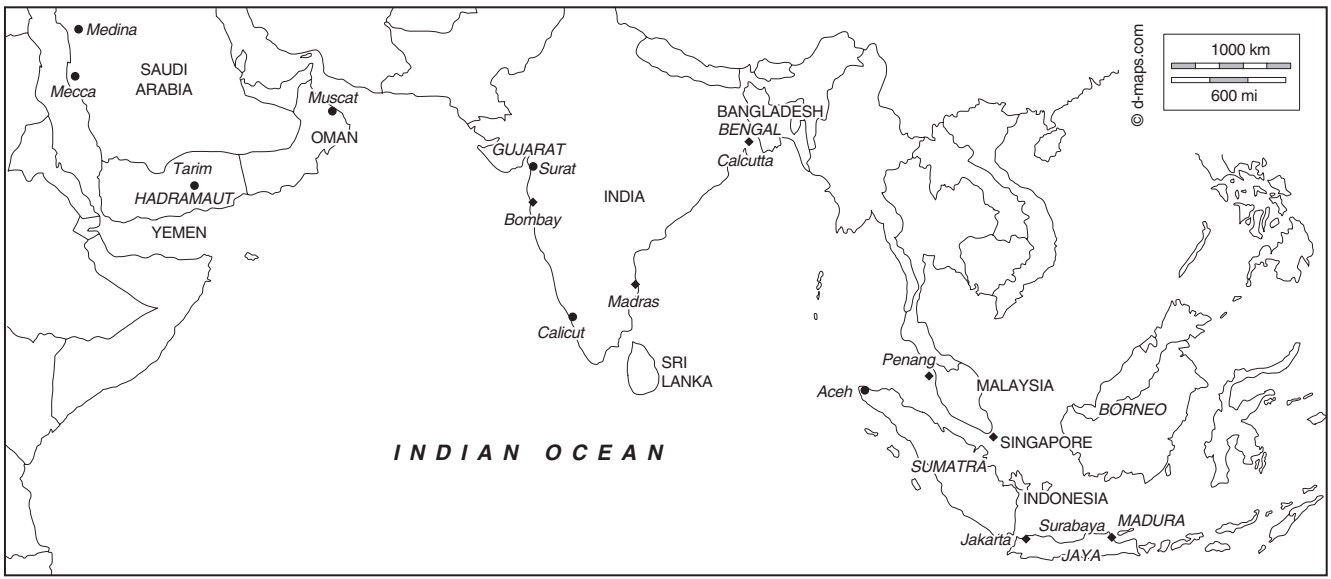
Note on Transliteration

This book concerns creole Arabs whose names typically represent the localisation of different transregional influences. I have thus retained the transliteration in Roman letters of names as they appear in the original Malay or Dutch rather than render them in their Arabic equivalent. Names are spelled in different ways as a result. For instance, 'Ḥasan' appears as 'Hasan' in the names of some individuals and 'Hassan' in others. However, I have used a standardised transliteration of Arabic terms that appear across materials in different languages. I also have retained in their usual Roman letters terms and names in Malay/Indonesian and place names with established English renditions.



Map 1. Old and new (colonial) port-cities of the Malay world, shown in lowercase italics and Roman letters, respectively



Map 2. Old cities and regions of the Indian Ocean against an outline of the borders of selected contemporary nation-states. New (colonial) port-cities are indicated by diamond-shaped markers.

Prologue

A descendant of the Prophet Muhammad died in Batavia sometime in the 1790s and was entombed on a strip of land adjacent to the bustling harbour of the Dutch-ruled city. Sayyid Husein Alaydrus, as he was called, was a learned Muslim from the Hadramaut in Yemen who, like many of his compatriots, had travelled across the Indian Ocean to its eastern shores. His gravesite came to be regarded as a *keramat* or Muslim shrine as a result of the great reverence many had for him, and became synonymous with the area of Luar Batang on the northern shoreline of Batavia, or Jakarta as it is known in its present manifestation as the capital of Indonesia. It appears that the site was already known for a reputable gravesite before Sayyid Husein's time, as a Chinese traveller leaving Batavia in 1736 writes of departing from the 'harbour of the sacred tomb'.[1] Today, more than two hundred years later, Sayyid Husein's tomb, and the mosque in which it is found, is one of the most well-known keramats in the Malay world and draws visitors from all over Indonesia as well as Malaysia and Singapore.

Hadramis like Sayyid Husein had been arriving in small numbers in the Malay world since the 1500s, and made an especially significant impact on its coastal polities around his lifetime. They came as traders, diplomats, and Islamic scholars, having honed their skills through sojourns in the Hadrami diaspora scattered across the Indian Ocean. They were prized by the sultanates of the Malay world as these relatively new Muslim polities sought interaction with and recognition from the wider Muslim world. By the end of the eighteenth century, Hadramis became an integral part of courtly life by assuming important positions and marrying into ruling families. In addition, they controlled much of the shipping between the Arabian Peninsula and the Malay world. Ships plied the route from Batavia to distant ports such as Muscat, making the

[1] Claudine Salmon-Lombard, 'Un Chinois à Jakarta (1729–1736)', *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, vol. 59 (1972), pp. 292–3.

long and sometimes difficult journey by staying close to the coastline of southern Asia.

The close interaction between Hadramis and the inhabitants of the Malay world led to the rise of creole communities that possessed Hadrami and local cultural attributes but were neither one nor the other. Creole Hadramis assumed multiple roles, frequently involved in sea-going trade, diplomacy, and the dispensation of knowledge on Islam. Among them were the ruling family of Perlis on the Malay Peninsula, Siak in Sumatra, and Pontianak in Borneo. There were also writers, including the well-known Munshi Abdullah. Creole Hadramis lived and travelled through the region and left their mark in the names of families, places, and mosques, besides the many keramats, as well as writings. Their transnational biographies epitomised a culturally fluid Malay world.

Sayyid Husein lived and died close to the port of Batavia, namely Sunda Kelapa, a site of interaction in the eighteenth century between diverse people from distant parts of the world. From the north came Chinese traders who had settled here before the arrival of the Dutch. From across the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean to the west came Persians, Gujaratis, and Arabs. Portuguese was so widely spoken in Batavia and the region as to serve as the lingua franca of the city. While the Dutch ruled the islands under their control from Batavia, their English rivals were emerging as a significant power in the region whose presence was felt in the city too. People of German, French, and other European origin busied themselves in a variety of trades and professions. From the Malay world came traders, sailors, soldiers, craftsmen, slaves, aristocrats, Islamic scholars, and others. The people gathered in Batavia brought with them a diversity of languages, music, skills, dress, architectural sensibilities, and faiths that shaped the character of city. Sayyid Husein's gravesite itself exemplified the intimate interaction between distant worlds that gave rise to the creole society and cultural practices. A Dutch scholar-bureaucrat observed in 1886 that the venerable Hadrami's tomb was then 'one of the principal places of pilgrimage' in the archipelago. Visitors to the site were 'not only the natives, but also Chinese and European mestizos' who came 'to make vows for success in their undertakings, for gaining children, and so forth'.[2]

Sayyid Husein's gravesite came to be attributed with the miraculous powers of a keramat because he accomplished a challenging task or performed a miracle for his community. We know little about what led to his prominence, as the historical documentation is scarce. However, as

[2] L. W. C. van den Berg, *Le Hadhramout et les colonies Arabes dans l'Archipel indien* (Batavia: Imprimérie du Gouvernement, 1886), pp. 162–3.

with other keramats, there are many stories that relate his superhuman feats. From these stories we learn that Sayyid Husein and his followers were imprisoned by the Dutch as the latter had become wary of his popularity and prominence in the community.[3] He was able nevertheless to leave the confines of his cell regularly without notice to lead his fellow prisoners in prayer, as he would appear to be asleep before the eyes of his guards at the same time. His followers are said to have buried Sayyid Husein's body at a Muslim cemetery in the city when he died, only to find it back in his room in Luar Batang afterwards. They realised after a few attempts at reburying him that it was the venerable Sayyid's posthumous wish to be buried in Luar Batang. His body remained in place once it was interred in the very location of his room. The stories of extraordinary acts filled the gravesite space and resonated with worshippers; they helped to ensure the continuity of the veneration of the shrine from generation to generation.

Sayyid Husein's time was one in which Dutch colonial power was not fully formed. His gravesite marks a rootedness in a notably hybrid cultural space and era for the Malay world. Near-contemporary records suggest that Sayyid Husein died sometime between 1796 and 1798, which puts it shortly before the momentous changes that would follow the bankruptcy of the Dutch East India Company in 1799.[4] The latter had established itself on Java and other islands by the time of Sayyid Husein's arrival but began to fail after its representatives in Batavia mismanaged its financial affairs. The Dutch Crown assumed control of the Company and its territories following the latter's bankruptcy. This handover signalled a gradual shift to stronger centralised rule and the gradual decline of the creole character of Batavian society. Controls were imposed over the interaction between Hadramis and local inhabitants in the nineteenth century with the increasing application of 'race' as the instrument of rule. The longstanding connections of Hadramis with the Malay world began to change significantly. It is here that this book begins.

[3] Adolf Heuken, *Mesjid-mesjid Tua di Jakarta* (Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Karya, 2003), pp. 51–2.
[4] Ibid., p. 48.

Introduction

> I hate all the demands of good manners. Nowadays I keep repeating that line: 'Much rather would I be an Arab Bedouin!' Oh for a healthy, strong, unfettered barbarity!
>
> Rabindranath Tagore (1892)[1]

> There probably has been no imperialism like that of Islam and the Arabs … Islam seeks as an article of faith to erase the past; the believers in the end honour Arabia alone; they have nothing to return to.
>
> V. S. Naipaul (1998)[2]

Negotiating Race Categories

This book examines the power and limits of race categories through a history of Arabs in the Malay world. It focuses on the racialised rule that came into being with the consolidation of European colonial power in the Malay world in the nineteenth century. Creole Hadrami communities, whose fathers came from Yemen, increasingly came to be understood as Arabs in the process. This marked a change in ways of identification that was of great and lasting significance. As the epigraphs suggest, the figure of the Arab has been the object of fascination and dread worldwide since the nineteenth century. Caricatures produced in the European encounter with Arabs travelled great distances with colonialism. The poet Rabindranath Tagore reproduced as his own the exoticised representation of the noble bedouin of the desert, in a letter written in Bengali to his niece. Forty years later, in 1932, he was able to fulfil his youthful fancy when he was entertained by bedouins in Iraq. Locating

[1] Rabindranath Tagore, Krishna Dutta, and Andrew Robinson, *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 31.

[2] Naipaul's views are from *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions among the Converted Peoples* (London: Abacus, 1999), p. 354. First published in London by Little, Brown and Company, 1998.

Tagore in the expansive and cosmopolitan history of the Indian Ocean, Sugata Bose sees the poet's travels and thinking as transcending the territorial and cultural divisions of the colonial era.[3] Although Tagore wrote when colonial racial policies were becoming entrenched, the fascination with which the poet beholds the bedouin emerged from a sense of affinity rather than exclusion. The figure of the Arab in this instance is permeable and expansive.

Quite the opposite is at work in the case of the writer V. S. Naipaul over a hundred years later. His view is an unflinching characterisation of the Arab as a colonising force set upon the world. This kind of perspective became a rather dominant representation of Arabs and Islam at the turn of the twenty-first century. Books that demonise Arabs, such as Raphael Patai's *The Arab Mind*, though discredited by many scholars, were influential in the United States.[4] Racialised narratives, of course, were typically associated with efforts to link Islam and terrorism.[5] In 2001, the political leadership of the United States launched a programme of security and military actions described as the War on Terror in retaliation for a series of dramatic aeroplane attacks on the country. Arabs and Muslims were subsequently represented, more frequently than in the past, as fanatics, misogynists, and terrorists, by mass media organisations with a global reach. The figure of the Arab here is impermeable and closed.

These observations would appear to be far removed from a book concerning Arabs in the Malay world, in the nineteenth century at that. The War on Terror discourse, however, associated Arabs and Muslims with such force of conviction that its ramifications were felt far afield. On the one hand, Muslims within the United States as well as those planning to visit or study in the country faced the intensified scrutiny of security authorities. On the other, Arabs who had lived for generations in Latin America found themselves the target of mass media coverage that linked them to terrorism.[6] Speculative and pernicious journalistic accounts were produced that racialised heterogeneous communities and faith practices in a language that was uncannily similar to those of the European colonisers, and that recall in more than one way the nineteenth century moment under study.

[3] Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 233–71.

[4] Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind* (Long Island City: Hatherleigh Press, 2002). First published in New York by Charles Scribners and Sons, 1973.

[5] Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: Islam, the USA, and the Global War against Terror* (New York: Pantheon, 2004).

[6] John Tofik Karam, 'Crossing the Americas: The U.S. War on Terror and Arab Cross-Border Mobilizations in a South American Frontier Region', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2011), pp. 251–66.

With the advent of colonialism, ideas of race and nation were advanced well beyond the confines of Europe, profoundly reordering and reinterpreting the historical dispersal of peoples around the world. This reordering was visualised in the map of the world, with individual nations variously coloured to represent clearly differentiated sites of belonging for all. Categorisation by race simplified the complex and interrelated cultural constitution of social groups, disrupted transnational connections, and thereby rendered the colonised governable. As ideas of race were intimately tied to notions of national belonging, colonisers not only identified separate racial groups but in doing so decided who belonged and who did not. Some were declared 'indigenous' and others 'foreign'. The latter were repatriated, if not in fact, then figuratively, through policies that erased their longstanding presence and ties to the local context – their indigeneity.

Societies reordered by colonialism have persisted in the independent nation-states that followed. The category of race has been thereby implicitly reproduced despite the widespread opprobrium with which it is held in significant parts of the world. Many more countries are represented with distinctive colours in the post-independence map of the world. People are seen to belong to specific nations rather than to be variously dispersed across them. Although there is an awareness of the transnational movement of peoples, and the culturally complex character of societies worldwide, the understanding persists of countries as homogeneous, multiracial, or based on an indigenous core.

Scholarship on diaspora has no doubt decentred such perspectives in recent years, but nation-bound thinking continues to exert a strong influence in academic work, more so in the countries of the Malay world itself – Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore for the purposes of this book. Additionally, such thinking dominates journalism and popular perceptions across the board. When transnational or diasporic movement is acknowledged, many still regard the notion of the ethnic or national core as being more authentic or historic, and interconnectedness as being a relatively recent phenomenon, namely the function of contemporary globalisation. Notions of an indigenous core and majoritarianism dominate thinking so much that the constructed character of majorities, as demonstrated by Dru Gladney, becomes invisible.[7] In the same breath, longstanding cultural interconnectedness and complex identifications are seen to be part of a distant past, and of little

[7] Dru C. Gladney, 'Introduction: Making and Marking Majorities', in Dru C. Gladney, ed., *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 1–9.

relevance to contemporary societies. The diversity that has resulted from contemporary globalisation notwithstanding, the dispersal of peoples and their modes of identification have assumed a complex shape for millennia.

By moving beyond the Middle East, where Arabs are understood to belong, and turning to the Malay world, this book unsettles the persistent pattern of viewing the world through the national and regional schemata that emerged from colonialism. People from the Hadramaut, the narrow valley on the southern edge of the Arabian peninsula, have migrated extensively to the littoral of the Indian Ocean in the last five hundred years. The transoceanic significance of their historical movement was disrupted only with the firm establishment of European power in the vast region. Hadramis, as they are commonly known in English, were a small but prominent part of the transregional flows of people that converged on the Malay world. Besides them, few other Arabs made this journey. The mostly male migrants married women from the places in which they settled, and distinctive creole communities emerged from the interaction that were neither Hadrami nor local (say Malay, Bugis, or Javanese). When European colonisers encountered these creoles, they regarded them as part of the Arab 'race' whose proper place was not in the Malay world but in the Middle East. Hence they categorised these creoles as 'foreign' despite their intimate cultural connection to the region. This process was profound, for it rendered longstanding creole communities resident in the region – Chinese and Indians, besides Arabs – anomalous to the 'indigenous' social context. Such categorisation was nevertheless not totalising in effect. Arabs responded in a number of ways, and charted their own course within and beyond the ruling categories.

The Power and Limits of Race Categories

Our ways of seeing the world have been profoundly shaped by racialised representations of colonised societies produced in the nineteenth century. Lithography, followed by photography, allowed for the replication and dissemination of images of races and social settings said to be typical of the colony. The dress, implements of work and trade, and physical appearance of the people portrayed, were transported to libraries, offices, and homes in Europe and the colony. These influential images would appear to represent the different races in their natural state, undisturbed by the growing regulation of life and work imposed by the colonial state. Christopher Bayly rightly cautions us against an evaluation of the past on the basis of representations 'unless it is grounded in a

study of political institutions and connections that make those representations possible'.[8] Representations in themselves, nevertheless, capture our attention, as the reproduced image has until somewhat recently been regarded as unadorned, and hence a reliable or truthful reflection of the colonised. Today, we view these images with a critical eye. We would take note, firstly, of how the idea of races as discrete social categories is visualised and reproduced through the images and, secondly, how these races are invoked as a condition natural to the colony. The part played by colonial discursive and political practices in the constitution of these categories – underscored by Bayly – is thereby rendered invisible. In this manner, the fiction of discrete racial groups is both normalised and reproduced for broad consumption. The task of uncovering the normalisation remains necessary, decades after the end of colonial rule, and so too an acknowledgement of the ongoing production and reproduction of race. Illustrations of Arabs of the colonial era are thus presented in this book as part of the narrative of the development of a race category rather than self-explanatory images.

In the chapters to follow, I examine closely the race categories introduced in Java – the political and economic centre of the Netherlands Indies – as the colonial state consolidated its bureaucratic and territorial control in the latter half of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, my purpose is to render visible the hand of the colonial state in the creation and application of race categories, and the attendant policing of residence, travel, and dress. The impact of these measures was profound. Social worlds composed of Arab and other creoles faced pressure to conform to the racialised norms instituted with growing force in the public life of Java. The face of the island was radically transformed as a result, in conjunction with economic, infrastructural, and technological change, especially in the urban areas of the north coast.

On the other hand, I assess critically the reach of the selfsame categories, as their significance has been overstated with lasting implications for the Malay world. Colonial categorisation led to the preponderance of racial identification in public life, but did not erase the creole altogether. Scholarship on the Malay world, however, has typically viewed the transformation of creoles into races in rather totalising terms. Colonial scholar-bureaucrats of the late nineteenth century, for the most part, simply could not see the creole and hybrid in their midst, as these lay outside

[8] Christopher A. Bayly, 'Representing Copts and Muhammadans: Empire, Nation, and Community in Egypt and India, 1880–1914', in Leila T. Fawaz, Christopher A. Bayly, and Robert Ilbert, eds., *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 193.

their racialised lines of vision. Nationalist historiography traced back the racial origins of modern nationalist movements to a glorious precolonial past, and thereby took nineteenth-century race categories to be self-evident. Colonial and nationalist writings, nevertheless, are only partially responsible for establishing the primacy of the view that racialisation was totalising. Much scholarship, produced within and beyond the nation-states of the contemporary Malay world, has perpetuated reified notions of race or ethnicity without much critical reflection. This scholarship has rested too comfortably on the grounds that Arabs, Chinese, Javanese, Malays, and other ethnic groups are natural and neatly bounded entities. Anthony Milner has noted, for instance, how the field of Malay studies has fostered the notion of a coherent Malay community.[9] Although the colonial beginnings of these categories are usually acknowledged, they are nevertheless reproduced rather uncritically, and the implications of this reproduction are left unexamined.

This book rests on the premise that colonial categorisation was powerful but not totalising. Races never amounted to the discrete entities desired by the coloniser. Consequently, we are in a position to see racial identification as a commanding project in a society that nevertheless had substantial social and cultural variation. Racial hierarchy then becomes a partially fulfilled fantasy rather than the state of colonial society itself. Indeed, as Ann Stoler reminds us, the very emergence of race politics was contingent on an evolving colonial practice rather than a carefully laid-out plan.[10] As we shall see, race categories were imposed on the culturally diverse population of Java only with difficulty, and with mixed results. Dutch colonial officers identified and enumerated discrete racial groups in the population by omitting the range of variation within and beyond them. Culturally hybrid forms of identification were nevertheless present, even if relegated to the margins.

The persistence of social and cultural variation is significant not merely as evidence of partial racialisation. Rather, it is a salient manifestation of 'sites of interaction' between the diverse peoples, languages, and cultures of the Malay world.[11] By representing interconnectedness, the creole margins raise questions about the exclusionary claims of race at

[9] Anthony Milner, *The Malays* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), p. 9.
[10] Ann L. Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1989), pp. 134–161.
[11] Tim Harper and Sunil Amrith, 'Introduction', in Tim Harper and Sunil Amrith, eds., *Sites of Asian Interaction: Ideas, Networks and Mobility* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 1–9.

the centre.[12] Correspondingly, Tim Harper's efforts to restore to Malay world historiography its diasporic dimensions expand our understanding of the past beyond the terms of race.[13] He acknowledges that race had become 'the primary category of belonging' in the British colony of Singapore in the late nineteenth century.[14] By drawing our attention to the diasporic convergences in the island state, however, Harper brings to light various conversations and shared spaces that point to other kinds of belonging.

At the same time, racial identification was not upheld by the coloniser alone, especially at the end of the nineteenth century. The racialised images which I discussed earlier, for instance, became part of the visual vocabulary not only of the coloniser, but of the colonised as well. In their respective work, Susan Bayly and Jonathan Glassman aptly caution against viewing racial identification as a European preserve, and an instrument of colonial exploitation alone. Bayly observes as follows: 'Abhorrent as their methods and teachings are to us today, it is important to understand the enormous influence of race theory both within and beyond Western intellectual circles, and enduring long after the colonial era.'[15] Comparing intellectual activity in French and British colonies, she shows how race thinking framed the reflections of Europeans on what they believed to be their own civilisational decline. At the same time, race undergirded the efforts of indigenous intellectuals to produce concepts of faith and nationhood to meet the challenges of colonial modernity, especially from the 1890s to the 1920s – widely experienced as a time of great intellectual ferment. In the case of the Malay world, Sandra Khor Manickam reiterates Bayly's observation by demonstrating how intellectuals drew from the race vocabulary of the British, but developed their own understandings and uses for it.[16]

[12] I found Thongchai Winichakul's discussion of the value of the margins in historical inquiry helpful here. See his 'Writing at the Margins: Southeast Asian Historians and Postnational Histories in Southeast Asia', in Abu Talib Ahmad and Tan Liok Ee, eds., *New Terrains in Southeast Asian History* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 3–29.

[13] Tim Harper, 'Globalism and the Pursuit of Authenticity: The Making of a Diasporic Public Sphere in Singapore', *Sojourn*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1997), pp. 261–92; 'Empire, Diaspora and the Languages of Globalism, 1850–1914', in A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico, 2002), pp. 141–66.

[14] Harper, 'Globalism', p. 286.

[15] Susan Bayly, 'Racial Readings of Empire: Britain, France, and Colonial Modernity in the Mediterranean and Asia', in Leila T. Fawaz, Christopher A. Bayly, and Robert Ilbert, eds., *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 291.

[16] Sandra Khor Manickam, 'Common Ground: Race and the Colonial Universe in British Malaya', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2009), pp. 593–612.

Drawing from his work on Zanzibar, the island off the eastern coast of Africa, Glassman shows how the racial hatred that surfaced in the 1950s to the 1960s was rooted in the political discourse of indigenous intellectuals. Scholars, he argues, mistakenly attribute race thinking purely to Europeans and the pseudoscientific terms they used to organise the colonised in a social hierarchy marked by biological characteristics. The role played by indigenous intellectuals in the production of forms of race discourses based on other kinds of exclusionary criteria, such as civilisational markers, is thereby erased. Racism in the post-independence era then is attributed to colonial rather than indigenous thinkers. Correspondingly, scholarship in the past few decades has tended to use the term 'ethnicity' rather than 'race' to describe social groups formed in post-independent nation-states. Oppressive forms of ethnic politics – racism in another guise – once again are understood to be solely the legacy of the colonial era and thus have little to do with the nation-states that followed. Glassman acknowledges that 'the links between colonial rule and contemporary ethnic politics are unmistakable'; however, 'they alone are not sufficient for explaining the often profound resonance of ethnic demagoguery, especially its ability to evoke ethnic violence'.[17] He believes that an adequate explanation of the persistence of race or ethnic politics in the nation-state requires a historical perspective that goes beyond a focus on the colonial state alone.

Bayly and Glassman are joined by others who emphasise the multiple sources – both European and colonised – of race thinking, over the conventional attribution to the colonial state. Significantly, this scholarly perspective paves the way for acknowledging and engaging exclusionary politics in independent nation-states with greater clarity. Naming indigenous forms of racial thinking is significant as it forces a reconsideration of what are often profoundly well-established notions of the national self. China, for instance, is not commonly associated with race thinking. Frank Dikötter has nevertheless demonstrated that racialised identities have been central to Chinese intellectual traditions.[18] He maintains, however, that scholars of China, indeed East Asia as a whole, have tended to view race as purely European in origin, and have thereby failed to recognise its Chinese forms.

Besides an exploration of Dutch thinking on race in relation to Arabs, I do not explore its local variants in any depth in the chapters to come.

[17] Jonathan Glassman, 'Slower Than a Massacre: The Multiple Sources of Racial Thought in Colonial Africa', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 109, no. 3 (2004), pp. 720–54.
[18] Frank Dikötter, 'Introduction', in Frank Dikötter, ed., *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1997), pp. 1–11.

I nevertheless acknowledge at some length the multiple sources of race thinking at the outset in order to complement my focus on the power and limits of race categorisation. The official histories of contemporary nation-states in the Malay world present race and racism in almost sacrosanct terms as the legacy of the colonial state's policy of divide and rule. Scholarship on the subject offers further nuance but has not departed considerably from the official readings, and provides little in the way of a critique of local racial discourses. This prompts us to ask further questions about the provenance of race and the quality of its exclusionary character.

The Quality of Boundaries

The present book is focused not only on the exclusionary politics of race but on gaining a better understanding of its cost by delving into race categories and the quality and intensity of the exclusion they produce. Among other things, we could ask: what do these categories represent across time and space? How do they work? For Malaysia, Singapore, and, in a different way, Indonesia, ethnic particularism has been central to the formal political system for some time. This in itself may be a source of insecurity for some ethnic groups but need not always be ruinous for them. In each country, the politics of ethnicity or race has had different outcomes, some evaluated favourably, others not. Reflecting on the Malay world in the late 1990s, Robert Hefner makes the observation that Indonesia, with a national heritage 'of inclusive and egalitarian citizenship', has only invited appeals to identity politics, while Malaysia, despite its 'democratic shortcomings', has managed 'to make progress in ethnic relations'.[19] Should Hefner's evaluation be correct, Malaysia has had a better record even though its formal politics is based on the recognition of ethnic groups as distinct components of the country. The question then is not the political or moral reprehensibility of the deployment of ethnic categories, but how deep or destructive this might be. Categories, as well as the essentialism that can underlie their exclusionary pretences, are frequently regarded negatively. At the same time, intermixing between groups and freedom from boundaries may be held up to be positive in a rather uncritical manner. In this connection, Joel Kahn helpfully reminds us that 'essentialism does not always

[19] Robert W. Hefner, 'Introduction: Multiculturalism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia', in Robert W. Hefner, ed., *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia* (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), p. 28.

imply exclusion' while 'cultural hybridity' does not 'guarantee genuine cosmopolitanism'.[20]

In developing a critical approach to categories, it is helpful to revisit the influential views of J. S. Furnivall. This colonial scholar-bureaucrat's well-known definition of the Netherlands Indies as a plural society is as follows: 'a society, that is, comprising two or more elements or social orders which live side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unit'.[21] Furnivall assumed the existence of separate social and economic spheres in the archipelago from precolonial times until the height of Dutch power in the Indies at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although he attributed the intensification of political and economic divisions loosely based on race to Dutch rule, he presented these divisions as a much more long-term and organic aspect of society: 'Thus, in Hindu-Java, besides the ruling race and subject race there was already a Chinese element, interested solely in commerce, in economic contact with local society but forming no part of it.'[22] And, for Furnivall, while the rise of a 'definitely Javanese' civilisation can be ascertained by the fifteenth century, the culture of the north coast remained outside its boundaries: 'In the ports, however, the Chinese still remained a race apart, and the growing number of Moslem Arab traders was introducing a new alien element.'[23] It would appear, then, that in Furnivall's terms, Dutch rule imposed a state structure, and exacerbated racial divisions, in a pre-existing plural society. In this view, racial identities were merely reinforced, rather than introduced newly.

In advancing his own views on pluralism in the region, Hefner observes that Furnivall did not give sufficient weight to the role played by the Dutch colonial authorities in shaping a plural society. Hefner develops a nuanced and close understanding of the different kinds of plurality that may be found in the Malay world in comparison to other regions. Nevertheless, he differs from Furnivall in degree rather than substance. Hefner makes the fair claim that social groups were bounded along ethno-cultural lines before the arrival of the Dutch colonial state, argues against the economism that informs the work of some scholars, and offers a convincing argument of his own for the present. However,

[20] Joel S. Kahn, *Other Malays: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Malay World* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2006), p. 167.
[21] J. S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1944), p. 447. See also The Siauw Giap, 'Group Conflict in a Plural Society', *Revue du Sud-Est Asiatique*, no. 2 (1966), pp. 216–17.
[22] Ibid., p. 8.
[23] Ibid., p. 14.

his historical reflection returns to a rather exclusionary position when he notes that 'Southeast Asia's mobile minorities tended to hold themselves apart from native society' during the colonial era.[24] While social groups could well be said to show degrees of separation before and after the establishment of the colonial state, the quality of the groupness is a significant matter. Knowing to what extent people held themselves apart, and how, is quite important. On the whole, it seems that Hefner assumes the quality of plurality in the precolonial and post-independence eras to be similar, if not the same, though he acknowledges, like Furnivall, the intervention of the Dutch.

An argument could be made that Arabs were socially distinct in different ways respectively before the establishment of the colonial state, during its consolidation in the nineteenth century, and at its height in the early twentieth. Harper asserts that Furnivall's plural society was constituted just as such a society was forming in the 1930s rather than an aspect of the *longue durée*.[25] In the 1900s, following decades of a racialised regime, we might expect a corresponding intensification of exclusionary ethnic boundaries. However, Harper's assertion raises doubts about this common assumption and tells us that the nineteenth century saw room for social interconnection despite the categorisation and control along racial lines. It was the period of maturing nationalisms in the interwar years that profoundly intensified ethnic identity. Harper's view is critical for coming to a better appreciation of the constraints and possibilities offered by the nineteenth century.

It comes as no surprise that the histories of contemporary nation-states in the Malay world are heavily focused on the twentieth century and the rise of nationalist movements. Nationalism tends to rest on the assumption that categories are neatly bounded and well defined, thereby reifying social groups, though with a different intent from colonialism. Conventional periodisation, such as the 'national' that follows the 'colonial' era, often paints in stark terms the eclipse of one age by another. Typically, the rise in ethnic nationalisms is located in the 1900s–1910s in Indonesian historiography, and about a decade later in the case of Malaysia and Singapore. These ethnic nationalisms are often seen to have sprung up as a natural response to nationalisms elsewhere. In addition, they are viewed as affirmations of already existing ethnicities. The representation of Malay identity, for instance, is understood to have preceded the rise of Malay nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s, when we know that the reverse is true. Efforts to unify different groups under the

[24] Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 17.
[25] Harper, 'Empire', p. 148.

banner of nationalism were actively sought, contradicted, and pursued well into the 1940s.[26]

Racial cohesion or antagonism occurred under particular conditions and were not necessarily apparent at the height of the race-making policies, including the residential segregation and other controls that had been instituted by the end of the nineteenth century. Takashi Shiraishi, for instance, offers a nuanced analysis of the specific conditions that produced anti-Chineseness in Java in the 1910s.[27] He links the rise of this racist politics to the end of the racialised controls on movement, and the growing capitalist competition between different groups – many of whom had complex and interconnected histories. His work shows that there was little that was natural about the racial antagonism. Analysis such as his, careful not to take for granted the category in question, or the racial hatred attributed to it, is somewhat rare. Shiraishi's argument only reinforces Harper's view that a plural society was taking shape at the time it was identified by Furnivall, rather than having been long in existence.

The focus on the twentieth century and nationalisms has naturally left the nineteenth century relatively unexplored in studies of the Malay world, though it has much to tell us about the quality of boundaries in the face of a racialising state. The work of G. William Skinner on creole Chinese, Jean Gelman Taylor on mestizo communities of Asian and European ancestry, and Engseng Ho on creole Arabs are important contributions to a sparse field.[28] By turning to the nineteenth century, and looking at the outcome of some of the developments of this period in the early twentieth, this book shifts the discussion of identity away from the focus on the twentieth century. Corresponding with the shift in temporal focus is a change in the political order, namely the end of empires and the beginning of nation-states, with profound implications for the position of different ethnic groups. As Aristide Zolberg observes, while

[26] Donna J. Amoroso, *Traditionalism and the Ascendancy of the Malay Ruling Class in Colonial Malaya* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre; Singapore: NUS Press, 2014).

[27] Takashi Shiraishi, 'Anti-Sinicism in Java's New Order', in Daniel Chirot and Anthony Reid, eds., *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), pp. 187–207.

[28] G. William Skinner, 'Creolized Chinese Societies in Southeast Asia', in Anthony Reid, ed., *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese in Honour of Jennifer Cushman* (St. Leonards, New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 1996), pp. 51–93; Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: Europeans and Eurasians in Colonial Indonesia* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

minorities were present in the *longue durée*, they were turned into 'political misfits' with the advent of nationalism.[29]

In this book, I keep an eye to the diversity within the gradually Arabised social groups that emerged in the course of the nineteenth century, paying attention to what the category 'Arab' itself meant over time. I am guided by the example of Ho, who is concerned with 'degrees of Arabness' rather than a shift from one discrete entity to another.[30] Instead of seeing cultural change as a totalising transformation, this notion allows for a nuanced understanding of the Arabness under study.

The Malay world is but one microcosm of the Hadrami diaspora linked to others, including the coastal regions of eastern Africa and western India, respectively. Hadrami communities were at once rooted in a variety of local contexts and part of the diaspora; they could draw from transregional family and trading networks, memories, and well-travelled paths.[31] This book then is concerned with a particular location within social histories that are immense in scale and variation. As I have used it thus far, the term 'Malay world' may quite rightly be seen to gloss over the cultural variation over the last millennium, as well as the well-established national differences of the modern era. My intention is not to create a supra-national category that has little salience, but to use an existing term that allows for a flexible framing of the longstanding interaction between wide-ranging polities and peoples. The term requires some elaboration.

The Malay World

The Malay world not only provides a social and geographical context, but also invaluable perspectives, for this book. We begin with the context. For students of Southeast Asian studies, the Malay world typically embraces the peninsula at the southernmost point of the Asian continent, and the archipelago that extends from here west to Sumatra, east to New Guinea, and northeast to Mindanao. These areas fall within the present-day borders of Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Timor-Leste, and the Philippines. Should we consider people who have ancestral links to the Malay world, however, we could also include Sri Lanka and

[29] Aristide R. Zolberg, 'The Formation of New States as a Refugee-Generating Process', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 467 (May 1983), p. 28.
[30] Engseng Ho, 'Before Parochialisation: Diasporic Arabs Cast in Creole Waters', in Huub de Jonge and Nico Kaptein, eds., *Transcending Borders: Arabs, Politics, Trade and Islam in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), p. 32.
[31] Michael Gilsenan, 'Out of the Hadhramaut', *London Review of Books*, vol. 25, no. 6 (2003), pp. 7–11.

South Africa, where political leaders, soldiers, criminals, and slaves were forcibly relocated by the Dutch. Similarly, we could add generations of Islamic scholars who have resided in Mecca, or the community of sailors who settled in Liverpool in the twentieth century.[32] Questions might justifiably be raised about the integrity and value of the notion of the Malay world when it is stretched as far and wide as this. The purpose, nevertheless, is not to include as many disparate elements as possible, but to demonstrate that the social context is not as self-evident as suggested by the apparent fixity of area studies and nation-states. Taking a flexible view of the boundaries of the Malay world, we are able to envision it as a region characterised by great mobility and transnational interaction on multiple scales.

The Malay world has provoked illuminating perspectives that meet the challenges of its fluid character. We consider only two here, namely the significance to this region of the sea, and how relations between groups might have been governed by a flexible kinship of sorts. Turning to the first perspective, we explore a cultural idiom that rests on a historical link between the region and the sea. Leonard Andaya, who has done extensive research on the *Malayu* (Malay, as it appears in ancient sources), traces the term and its maritime history to a distant time. As far as Andaya can determine, it 'referred first to the communities living in southeast Sumatra and later came to include those settled along both coasts and in the central and northern interior areas of the island'.[33] With the rise of the Sriwijaya empire in the late seventh century, Malayu played a significant role in a 'community of settlements conjoined through extensive and intensive economic and cultural interactions' that Andaya names the 'Sea of Malayu'.[34] This maritime network linked 'southern India and Sri Lanka to the Bay of Bengal, Sumatra, the Straits of Melaka, the Malay Peninsula, the Gulf of Siam, the South China Sea, the Lower Mekong, and central Vietnam'. In his view, the waters were of no small importance: 'The long and profitable interaction within this common "sea" produced a shared cultural idiom that helped shape Malayu identity.'[35]

Henk Maier complements Andaya's perspective with an argument about Malay language and literature that uncovers what might be a likely

[32] Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulamā' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 2004), pp. 2–3; Tim Bunnell, 'Post-Maritime Transnationalization: Malay Seafarers in Liverpool', *Global Networks*, vol. 7, no. 4 (2007), pp. 412–29.

[33] Leonard Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree: Trade and Ethnicity in the Straits of Melaka* (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), p. 14.

[34] Ibid., p. 22.

[35] Ibid., p. 14.

source of the cultural fluidity of the Malay world. Many have pointed to the Malay language, the lingua franca that facilitated trade in the archipelago, as the basis of this fluidity. The language, in this instance, need not only have been a means of communication, but was also an integral part of a space that enabled rich cultural crossovers, as we shall see later in this introduction. Maier reminds us, however, of the mutually unintelligible variants of the Malay language: 'the Malay that is used in, say, the interior of Patani … is so different from … that used in Jakarta … that even the assumption that we are dealing with one and the same language hardly seems tenable'.[36] He proposes rather a radical repositioning of Malay language and literature as an ever-changing set of relationships. I quote his argument at some length to do it justice:

> *Melayu* would not have been 'Malay' in character, however, had the term not been used in bewildering and ambiguous manners. 'Malay' referred to a group of people who were living in a rather clearly designated area, with a distinct language and a distinct set of manners. However, 'Malay' was also the name of a language that was widely used on the coasts of the Islands and the Peninsula beyond the 'Malay world' proper. And the two did not coincide. That lack of concurrence seems to have been the main reason that the same word Malay is so easily used as a collective term for the many cultures and numerous nations of the Islands: the term Malay Archipelago became an established expression which should cast doubt on every attempt by outsiders to define reality in clear-cut terms. The perfect echo of Malay writing, fluid and flexible, Melayu has forced us to negotiate identity, kinship, and belonging in every situation anew … The heterogeneity has been retained, and Malay writing is still a contested domain in which people are trying to figure out how to continue the *play of relatives*.[37]

In keeping with Maier, neither the Malay world nor the Hadramis who inhabit it are conveyed with ready-made identities in the chapters to follow.

Besides the perspectives offered by Andaya and Maier, I locate the present study in the Malay world for a number of reasons. As acknowledged by others, there is a relationship between the multiple centres of this cultural terrain, informed by the Malay language and an Islamic sensibility.[38] These interconnections existed before, during, and after colonial rule in different ways but have tended to be unacknowledged or denied

[36] Henk Maier, *We Are Playing Relatives: A Survey of Malay Writing* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004), p. 26.

[37] Ibid., p. 8. The final emphasis is mine.

[38] William R. Roff, *Studies on Islam and Society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009). See the fourth chapter, 'The Malayo-Muslim World at the Close of the Nineteenth Century'; Adrian Vickers, '"Malay Identity": Modernity, Invented Tradition and Forms of Knowledge', in Timothy P. Barnard, ed., *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Borders* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2004), 25–55.

in favour of national entities. In this book, however, the Malay world provides a means of envisioning the successive rise and fall of interconnections, and identifying relevant contexts on multiple scales – within and beyond the nation-state. Java, for instance, could be a meaningful context within present-day Indonesia, the Malay world, or the Indian Ocean. The Malay world might be likened to the Indian Ocean as a 'historical space that intermediates between the levels of nation and globe'.[39]

Furthermore, Ho shows us how the political culture of the Malay world is crucial to understanding the manner in which Hadramis became an integral part of the social fabric of the archipelago:

> Malay polities were absorptive, accumulative entities that actively incorporated foreign elements into their symbolic constitutions. Centuries of contact between Malay polities, on the one hand, and diasporic Hadramis and Buginese, on the other, bred mutual familiarity, which was expressed in shared cultural idioms that captured the delicate states of being 'separate, but not far away; close, but not touching'.[40]

Hadramis brought out the 'absorptive' character of the Malay world through the demonstrated ease by which outsiders became insiders. Such cultural fluidity inspires Kahn to describe Malayness as the ultimate creole culture.[41]

Kahn's efforts to address the mobility of people within the modern Malay world nicely complements the long-term historical texture that Ho provides. The former's migrants, cash croppers, and traders are described as 'other Malays' because their transnational movements defied the stereotypical portrayal of Malays as having an agrarian background. Other Malays engaged in commerce and regularly interacted with a variety of people – including Hadramis – and could have been of mixed ethnic ancestry; they commingled with what Harper considers 'overlapping diasporas'.[42]

Within the Malay world my substantive focus is on Java, as Hadramis settled in greater numbers on this island than anywhere else in the archipelago. It was also in Java – and neighbouring Madura, to be precise – that racialised controls were first imposed on the population.[43] Creoles as a social group were constrained as a consequence, though not eliminated, and call for some elucidation.

[39] Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*, p. 3.
[40] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 157–8. He cites Jane Drakard, *A Malay Frontier: Unity and Duality in a Sumatran Kingdom* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1990), p. 89.
[41] Kahn, *Other Malays*, p. 170.
[42] Harper, 'Empire', p. 149.
[43] The Dutch administered Java and Madura together by the end of the nineteenth century.

Creole Histories

To suggest as I have thus far that creoles constitute a self-standing synthesis of different cultural identities is potentially simplistic and misleading. Thomas Eriksen's rendering of the term 'creolisation' in the Mauritian context is helpful towards developing a more nuanced understanding.[44] He discusses the term as it applies to the state's system of social classification and the historical self-naming of particular groups, as well as a creole worldview with which people identify, whatever their official or social naming. Jonathan Friedman, however, is leery of the term, as the idea of the creole as constituted by the mixing of different ethnic groups rests on the assumption that ethnic groups are themselves homogenous entities.[45] He would rather propose that all identities are creole. For the purposes of this book, 'creolisation' refers to the emergence, from the interaction of disparate peoples, of a social group that is distinct but not divorced from its parent cultures. The term 'creole' allows us to acknowledge a type of groupness that is constituted by porous and changing rather than hermetic boundaries. It is a helpful rendering in English of the Malay word *peranakan*, which has long been used to describe a person born in the Malay world to a pair made up of an outsider and a local.

When the Malay world is understood as a longstanding site of interaction between wide-ranging polities and peoples, creoles might be viewed as its culturally fluid and mobile embodiment. The biographical trajectories of creole Hadramis thus offer potentially valuable insights. Abdullah al-Misri was a writer active in the early 1800s whose work we shall examine in greater depth in Chapter 1. His family history and personal ties extended across distant points of the Malay world. As a sea-going trader he led a life that was immensely mobile and involved travelling through the archipelago. As a secretary to a prominent creole Arab, he participated in diplomatic missions that took him further afield, including to the Kingdom of Siam. We can tell from his writing that Al-Misri had a good command of Malay and Arabic, and at least an appreciation of other languages. His writing is punctuated by translations between languages and explications of terms as they travel from one linguistic and cultural context to another; it reflects an immersion in multi-lingual settings in which translation was customary. Al-Misri not only contributed to the corpus of writing in Malay but also incorporated

[44] Thomas H. Eriksen, Tu dimunn pu vini kreol: *The Mauritian Creole and the Concept of Creolization* (Oxford: Transnational Communities Programme, University of Oxford, 1999). (This is a publication in a working paper series.)

[45] Jonathan Friedman, *Cultural Identity and Global Process* (London: Sage, 1994), pp. 208–10.

the terms and usages – a hodgepodge, frequently – of the emergent colonial order. This 'creole' tendency was often resisted by linguistic purists such as the famous writer Raja Ali Haji.[46]

Al-Misri's creole biography was not only the outcome of intercultural interaction but an indication of the extent and cultural dynamics of the Malay world. His family history, personal ties, and travels connected disparate places and charted the spread of the Malay world as a social and geographical space. His writing contributed towards creolising the Malay language, an act that signifies more than a linguistic transformation. Rather, it demonstrates how the scope of Malay was not limited to its function as a lingua franca that facilitated trade and communication. The language also facilitated the incorporation of diverse people and ideas that in turn expanded its lexical and semantic reach. It is in this sense that we might consider the language as a social space.

Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the Indonesian author, develops the relationship between people, language, and space into an illuminating perspective on the cultural dynamics of the Malay world. He accomplishes this in an introduction to an anthology of literature titled *Tempo Doeloe* (Old Times), with the instructive subtitle *An Anthology of Pre-Indonesian Literature*.[47] He focuses here on the cosmopolitan urban culture of the Netherlands Indies in the early 1900s, hence almost a century after Al-Misri's time. Pramoedya argues that the stories of the anthology are from an archipelagic rather than an Indonesian past, and thereby locates them in a social world before nation-states. In this way, he is able to chart a history for the stories that rests on creole rather than racialised histories.

Pramoedya notes that the feature that distinguished the early 1900s was the distinctive creole Malay language and literature that became an integral part of life in key colonial port cities such as Batavia. Not only creole Arabs but also others, creole Chinese and Europeans, were at the forefront of this modern, urban, and literate Malay world. Pramoedya's perspective is worth quoting at some length:

> I am inclined to include [these stories] in the category *lingua franca Malay*, *assimilative literature* or *pre-Indonesian* [literature], should the word literature be used at all. From a linguistic perspective, it is clearly not standard Malay but the Malay that was created through the meeting of a variety of nations and ethnic groups in the Archipelago, and was used only orally at the beginning … Lingua

[46] Barbara W. Andaya and Virginia Matheson, 'Islamic Thought and Malay Tradition: The Writings of Raja Ali Haji of Riau (ca. 1809–ca 1870)', in David Marr and Anthony Reid, eds., *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books [Asia] Ltd. for the Asian Studies Association of Australia, 1979), p. 122.

[47] Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Tempo Doeloe: Antologi Sastra Pra-Indonesia* (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1982).

franca Malay is a phenomenon unique to Southeast Asia because it was used and advanced by foreigners as they entered the Archipelago from Malacca as the base. At first it was used by foreign proselytisers, also from the Malacca base, to spread Islam. Hence it is no surprise that the old manuscripts of Interpretations of the Qur'an that can be found all along the north coast of the Island of Java are in Malay. What is more, the first Islamic King in Demak is understood not to have spoken Javanese but Malay.[48]

The author imputes a creole quality to the Malay language and its literature that is intimately tied to its social world. The language not only emerged from the meeting of diverse people but became a space they populated, in some respects. Harper aptly notes of this early twentieth-century moment that 'one did not so much understand [the language] as inhabit it'.[49] Pramoedya's creole history of biography, language, and context is a point of reference for the chapters to follow as I extend the author's insights to a century earlier, the early 1800s, though this was a very different cosmopolitan context.

Creole histories do not refer to the outcome of intercultural interaction alone. They concern social worlds that may be argued, with the Malay world as a frame of reference, to be constituted by the interconnectedness and mutual influence of peoples, languages, and cultures. This book brings a creole perspective to the study of Arabs and Islam, which has tended to rest on rather exclusionary race categories in recent times.

Arabs, Islam, and the Malay World

Scholars have tended to associate Islam with Arabs, and invest the relationship with particular meaning. Being from the land of the birth of Islam, Arabs have been understood to practise the faith in its unadulterated form. Beyond the centre, in regions regarded to be peripheral such as the Malay world, Muslims have been viewed to be syncretist as their faith accommodated pre-existing beliefs. The dichotomy between the centre and periphery has shaped perspectives on Islam in the modern world in significant and lasting ways.[50] Firstly, Arabs have been regarded as the benchmark, so to speak, of the faith. In this connection, Islam and Arabs have been easily rendered in caricatured terms given that knowledge about them in the Orientalist tradition has been frequently

[48] Ibid., p. 9.
[49] Harper, 'Empire', p. 152.
[50] See a discussion of such problematic dichotomies in Roff, *Studies on Islam*, pp. 3–4. The chapter that I cite, namely 'Islam Obscured? Some Reflections on Studies of Islam and Society in Southeast Asia', was first published as an article in *Archipel*, vol. 29, no. 1 (1985), pp. 7–34.

overdetermined by tendentious readings of texts. Secondly, Arabs have been endowed with considerable influence over other Muslims. When Islam at the centre has been equated with fanaticism, inflexibility, or even violence, Arab influence on others has been said to be pernicious.

William Roff casts doubt on notions such as the centre and periphery, offering instead a means of appreciating both the specific practices of different Muslims across time and space, and the demands of the textual imperatives contained in the body of Islamic law (*sharī'a*). He postulates the existence of a tension between the ideal and the real from the historical beginnings of Islam. This applies not only to the diverse societies that adopted the faith but also to the very Arabs said to be at the centre:

> If it be accepted that the *sharī'a* points to a discoverable but unrealisable ideal, of great – and dynamic – complexity, it follows that all Islamic societies (from the first generation in Arabia to the Indonesia or Morocco – or for that matter the Arabia – of the present) can exist only in approximation to that ideal.[51]

Rather than take Islamic law to be a 'discoverable but unrealisable ideal', however, the tendency has been to see it as a peculiarly Arab dogma. With the attribution to the land of the birth of Islam of a central role in the faith's subsequent development, Arabs are placed at the centre of the discourse. Our understanding of Muslim societies is thus distorted, as we are led to believe that Arabs, rather than specific cultural and political circumstances, give contemporary Islam its shape. Nevertheless, the centre–periphery dichotomy possesses an ostensible explanatory power that is alluring for both its simplicity and its ethnicised character.

The centre and periphery dichotomy is part of a language of partitioning the world into regions and nations that are distinct – contact between which is carried out by equally distinct ethnic groups. In this connection, Roff describes his own realisation that 'the terms "Southeast Asia" and "Middle East" were just part of a whole vocabulary of constructed geographical-cum-cultural categories that trap scholars within often hermetic carapaces'.[52] As we have seen, Hadramis were by no means confined to a specific region, or ethnically distinct. The idea of an Arab centre and a Malay periphery suggests demarcations that go against the grain of the mobility of Hadramis, and their complex and intimate relationship with the Malay world.

Drawing us out of the carapaces are scholars who offer insightful research on the transregional mobility and interconnected worlds of Muslims, as well as valuable frameworks for considering the different

[51] Ibid., p. 4.
[52] Ibid., p. xv.

scales involved. There are a number of illuminating and noteworthy efforts at drawing the Malay world and the Middle East into a common analytical focus.[53] Azyumardi Azra offers a picture of cosmopolitan, dynamic, and multiple historical flows in the transmission of Islamic thought to the Malay world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Michael Laffan provokes a rethinking of the sources of Indonesian nationalism by highlighting the traffic of Muslims and reformist ideas between Cairo and the Malay world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Engseng Ho demonstrates how the Hadrami diaspora became an integral part of the Indian Ocean region by being connected to specific contexts and maintaining transregional ties through genealogies.

The following chapters offer a critique of race categories through a history of Arabs in the Malay world. As the contrasting views of Tagore and Naipaul suggest, categories in themselves need not be damaging. The meaning and authority given to them, however, can be. The notion of the noble savage that Tagore romanticised would dominate representations of Arabs well into the twentieth century. Today, this representation has been practically eliminated in favour of a rigid association of Arabs and Islam, though not always filled with the vituperative contempt of Naipaul's language. The more expansive and inclusionary notions of race held by Tagore seem to have given way to the narrow and exclusionary renderings of Naipaul. We explore race categorisation against creole histories in this book in order to recover an ability to imagine a cultural fluidity that has been diminished. As we shall see, this fluidity has not been altogether erased.

The Framing of the Book

The study of Arabs, like that of other ethnic groups in the Malay world, would usually be viewed within the temporal and spatial terms of conventional notions of modernity and tied to the rise of the nation-state. It would typically be a history of an ethnic group that begins with the emergence of its organisational embodiment in the colonial era and ends with its incorporation into the independent nation-state. Temporally, this would usually be the period from the early twentieth century until the beginning of World War II. Spatially, this ethnic history would be contained within the political boundaries of the nation-state.

[53] Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism*; Michael F. Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The* Umma *Below the Winds* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*. For a collective effort at examining transregional connections, see Eric Tagliacozzo, ed., *Southeast Asia and the Middle East: Islam, Movement, and the* Longue Durée (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009).

This book departs from the conventional historiography by commencing its exploration of Arabness in the nineteenth century and concluding in the twentieth century, before the manifestation of nationalisms. At the same time, it locates the work of identity-making in a transnational Malay world. This temporal and spatial scope problematises modern identity and allows for a broader range of historical possibilities for considering the outcome of colonial categorisation.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part, consisting of Chapter 1, focuses on the creole Malay world and describes the absorption of Hadramis into a maritime social context characterised by translation, localisation, and porous ethnic boundaries. It identifies an intimacy and distance in the relationship between Hadramis and native Muslims that was of considerable significance historically and is consequently addressed in successive chapters.

The second part, made up of Chapters 2, 3, and 4, turns to the transformation wrought by the gradual consolidation of Dutch colonial power in the Malay world. These chapters focus on the narrowing of the economic and political roles of Arabs through regulations that confined them to specific urban quarters and restricted their mobility along racial lines. Arabs and other 'foreigners' such as Chinese and Indians were thereby alienated from 'natives'. Colonial subjects of diverse backgrounds – Javanese, Madurese, Sundanese, Betawi, Bugis, or Malay – became native in the process. The alienation of Arabs from natives was considered to be of particular importance as the former were understood to be a poor influence on the latter. I have used the term 'native' throughout the book to suggest both the production of a category of indigeneity through the homogenisation of a variety of ethnic groups and a contrapuntal relationship to Arabs. Although colonial categorisation and control achieved a measure of success, it did not render Arabness rigid and impermeable. The persistence of porous boundaries had important consequences.

The third part, consisting of Chapters 5, 6, and 7, examines the rise of modern Arab identity. These chapters turn to the shaping of the identity as it was driven not by colonial categorisation but by Arabs themselves. As agents of their own identity-making, Arabs embraced transregional links with the Ottoman Empire and recast their relationship to native Muslims before actively developing organisations, schools, and a press through which they negotiated colonial modernity. Modern Arab identity was thus the outcome of efforts not to imitate colonial modernity but to engage it.

Part I

A Creole Malay World

1 Lord Sayyids

> According to the story, Yang Dipertuan Muda Raja Jafar was a kind prince, very fond of his relatives and close friends and also of the Lord Sayyids, both those from Arabia and those born locally … He also enjoyed listening to the Lord Sayyids relating stories of kings of olden time from the lands above the winds.[1]

New faces began to appear in the ruling circles of the Malay world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They were both strange and familiar. Arabs had been present in the Malay-language literary imagination for hundreds of years. In the *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (The Story of Merong Mahawangsa), it is Shaykh Abdullah who intervenes in the court of Kedah, when once again it is faced with problems of moral and political balance that seem to recur in cycles. This time around, it is Islam rather than the previously tried and tested Hindu-Buddhist principles that brings about the return of the necessary balance in the person of the ruler, and therefore peace and prosperity in the kingdom. In Melaka to the south, Sayyid Abdul Aziz arrives in a ship from Jeddah and converts the ruler and the populace to Islam, as told in the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay History). In these and many other instances, Arabs are familiar didactic figures who represent the arrival of Islam, and the induction of the ruler and his people into the cosmology and ritual of the new faith.

When men arrived from the Hadramaut in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they were strangers who were to become familiar figures in the Malay world in the modern era. They stepped out of the stories of the past into the political, commercial, and Islamic life of the burgeoning coastal kingdoms. Arabs, including Hadramis, had been to the region in previous centuries, and were not completely foreign to its shores as a result. However, they do not appear to have formed long-standing communities in earlier times, and there is little in writing that

[1] Raja Ali Haji ibn Ahmad, *The Precious Gift (Tuhfat al-Nafis)*, translated and annotated by Virginia Matheson and Barbara Watson Andaya (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 220–1.

has been passed down about them, besides their archetypical recurrence in stories as proselytisers of Islam. We have a better picture, on the other hand, of those who arrived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this later era, Hadramis came in notable numbers and fostered close ties with the courts of several kingdoms in the Malay world, giving rise to creole Arab communities over time. As they were part of ruling circles, their lives are better documented then most.

The *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (The Precious Gift) is a history of the court of Riau, and records in some detail the significant presence of Hadramis. Notably, the Malay-language text identifies them as neither Hadramis nor Arabs, but *sayyid*, namely those who claim descent from the Prophet Muhammad. The ethnicity of the Hadramis in question is not the object; indeed, one wonders if it is relevant at all at this time. However, descent from the Prophet signified immanent qualities that were greatly valued. The Malay honorific *Tuan* (Lord) before the Arabic produced the hybrid term of respect, *Tuan Sayyid* (Lord Sayyids), used in the epigraph, which is taken from the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* itself. The resulting honorific acknowledged the high social status derived from both a revered line of spiritual descent and nearness to the temporal rulers. At the same time, sayyids embodied the link between the Malay world and the birthplace of Islam in the Arabian peninsula.

Aside from the high regard they enjoyed because of their genealogy, sayyids were much valued for their worldly talents. These gentlemen brought with them knowledge and skills accumulated through their membership in a diaspora that extended from the Hadramaut to the farthest reaches of the Indian Ocean. Besides the 'stories of kings of olden times' so appreciated by the Riau prince, then, sayyids possessed no small measure of awareness and experience of politics, diplomacy, and trade, and the Islamic scholarship they often kept up in tandem. Sayyids were thus valued in the Malay world much as they were in other regions of the oceanic expanse.

Hadramis arrived at the cusp of great change in the waters of the Indian Ocean, as European mercantile powers began to encroach on the cosmopolitan Islamic civilisation that had emerged on its many shores between 1500 and 1800. On the one hand, the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* describes how the Lord Sayyids became intimate members of the Riau court as it grew into one of the most significant sultanates of the region. They helped to shape a maritime society and economy lying on one of the busiest and most longstanding transoceanic trade routes in world history. As diplomats, traders, scholars, and rulers, they travelled throughout the Malay world. Their family networks not only spanned the seas of the region, but became intimately connected with the archipelago. The distinction made

in the epigraph between those born in Arabia and locally is meaningful, as it was usually the latter, the creoles, who played a visible role in public life. The stories themselves were in every likelihood derived from the 'mirror of princes' tradition in Islamic literature that offered counsel to rulers through the example of ancient kings.

On the other hand, the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* describes the growing power of the British and Dutch in the region. Both powers contended for influence over Riau from their respective bases in Melaka, on the peninsula, and Batavia, on the island of Java. Control over the archipelagic sultanate located to the south of the peninsula meant control over the historic trading passage. Importantly, however, Europeans were contenders rather than the dominant powers in the region. In these early years, rulers of the Malay world had the potential to defeat the Europeans in battle, and Bugis forces came very close to routing the British from Melaka. Times had changed when Raja Ali Haji completed the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* in the 1860s, thereby finishing the work begun by his father Raja Ahmad. Europeans were now in a stronger position in the Malay world.

In this chapter, we delve into the earlier era, from the 1700s to the 1800s, as we shall frequently return to it as subsequent chapters make their way into the latter half of the 1800s and the early 1900s. The Lord Sayyids came from lands that were *di atas angin*, a literal rendering of which is 'above the winds'. In the nautical worldview of the Malay world, the phrase refers to India, Persia, and the Arab lands to the windward of the archipelagic region.[2] The Lord Sayyids arrived after waves of others – Tamils, Gujaratis, and Persians, for instance. They were possibly one of the last Indian Ocean diasporas to develop ties with the region, and stood out from the others in significant ways in the last two hundred years of history. The Malay world then was a vibrant part of the cosmopolitan shores that stretched across the expansive ocean, both receiving people from and sending people across the waters, especially in the journey to and from the centre of Islamic scholarship, Mecca. We take a closer look at Hadrami sayyids next, given the conspicuous role they played in these waters.

Who Were the Sayyids?

As Ho has shown, the Prophetic line carried by sayyids is the basis upon which genealogical memories are constructed that link members of a diaspora spread across vast distances.[3] On the one hand, he demonstrates

[2] Ibid., fol. 22, n. 2, p. 317.
[3] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*.

how the line of descent has a transcendent quality, or even a sense of timelessness. On the other, he brings to life the particular shape it has given to creole Hadrami histories in different parts of the Indian Ocean. Taking a rather different tack, Abdalla Bujra focuses on the material basis of the elevated position of sayyids in the Hadramaut.[4] He notes that the socially stratified society had been economically tied to the migrations of Hadramis to India, eastern Africa, and the Malay world since the thirteenth century. Migrants from all levels of society succumbed to demographic pressure, unfavourable climate, and political conflict in the Hadramaut.[5] However, from the earliest times it was the wealthiest groups, almost exclusively sayyid, who were in a better position to undertake these migrations. Bujra argues that because the wealthy 'had the longest history of migration and the greatest experience in taking advantage of the new opportunities', the extension of the economic frontier reinforced the existing pattern of wealth distribution in the Hadramaut.[6] His views are borne out at least for the Malay world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as sayyids were then the most conspicuous of Hadrami migrants to the region.

Sayyids possessed a special status in the Hadramaut, derived not only from their line of descent, but from the role they carved for themselves as arbiters. Hadrami society had a contending centre of authority in those regarded as *shaykh*; the Arabic term in this instance does not refer to an elder or head but is a hereditary title. Sayyid and shaykh alike were shown considerable respect in the Hadramaut, among other things by having their hands and knees kissed, and being given the place of honour at receptions.[7] In the early decades of the twentieth century, a rather dramatic public debate and conflict developed in the Malay world in which a challenge was made against sayyid authority, fuelled to some degree by shaykh. Neither the groups involved nor the social divide that was precipitated were straightforward. Writing on Hadramis in the Malay world has frequently focused, however, on the dichotomy between sayyid and shaykh. Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk has cautioned against such readings.[8]

[4] Abdalla S. Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification: A Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

[5] B. G. Martin, 'Arab Migrations to East Africa in Medieval Times', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1974), pp. 370–1.

[6] Abdullah Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification*, p. 192.

[7] Robert B. Serjeant, 'South Arabia', in C. A. O. van Niewenhuijze, ed., *Commoners, Climbers and Notables* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), p. 232.

[8] Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk, '*Al-Manār* and the Hadhrami Elite in the Malay-Indonesian World: Challenge and Response', in Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk and Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim, eds., *The Hadhrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia: Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 188–9.

We shall return to the question of a challenge to sayyid authority later in this book. It is helpful, nevertheless, to state at the outset that neither the social context of the Hadramaut, nor Hadrami creoles in the Malay world, are well served by a simple sayyid–shaykh dichotomy.

For our purposes, two matters are important to keep in mind. Firstly, sayyids preserved their line of descent by upholding the Islamic principle of *kafā'a* (equality between marriage partners). This meant that a female descendant of the Prophet, namely a *sharīfa*, was barred from marrying anyone other than sayyid.[9] The sayyid lineage was incompatible with any but its own. In practice, a man was allowed to marry outside of a sayyid clan when no spouse of equivalent descent was available, but this dispensation did not apply to women. Nevertheless, sayyid adherence to kafā'a has waxed and waned across time and place. As Ho has shown, the social context has frequently determined the extent to which kafā'a is defended.[10] He makes the important argument that creolisation occurred widely at distinct moments in Malay world history. For instance, creole Arab communities were established in the seventeenth and eighteenth century following the rise of similar communities of Chinese and Europeans. Ho argues that it was precisely the high social standing of Arabs in particular Malay world localities in this era that encouraged the formation of creole communities.[11] When assimilation rather than creolisation proved more advantageous to social advancement, Arabs as well as other ethnic groups typically assimilated into the local community.

The second relevant matter is that Hadrami social practices were not only maintained but also altered in the Malay world. For instance, the honorific sayyid was used in reference to those who did not necessarily have a Hadrami pedigree. In addition, honorifics of Arabic origins were also known to be used to signify Arabness in general, at times rather indiscriminately. Appellations such as *sharīf* (denoting descent from the Prophet Muhammad through his son Hasan), and sayyid (denoting descent through the Prophet's son Husain in particular), were stripped of their specificity in Malay and became synonymous.[12] In addition, most Arabs were also commonly referred to as shaykh, without respect to sayyid/shaykh distinctions. The particular meanings of these titles and classifications mattered in light of their significance in the social hierarchy of

[9] Robert B. Serjeant, *The Saiyids: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered on 5 June 1956* (London: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1957), pp. 21–2; Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification*, p. 93.
[10] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, pp. 181–4.
[11] Ibid., pp. 168–73.
[12] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 190.

the Hadramaut. However, their meanings became quite different in the Malay world, on which context we now focus our attention.

Sayyids in the Malay World

Besides the creole sayyids whose names and activities are recorded, the other evidence of a longstanding sayyid presence is to be found in the names of communities throughout the region. For instance, one such case is in Pariaman on the western coast of Sumatra. Here, a longstanding community of acculturated Arabs was referred to as Jamalul Lail, a well-known sayyid patronymic, or as *sidi*, a term derived from 'sayyid'.[13] In Pontianak, on the western coast of Borneo, a similar community referred to themselves variously as 'Sharif People, Malay Arab, Aleidroes [another notable sayyid patronymic], or Malay Shaykh'.[14] There appears to be no evidence of communities that were named 'Hadrami' or 'Arab'.

As noted already, the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* says little about Arabs or Hadramis explicitly in the course of relating in some detail the vicissitudes of courtly life from the founding of a Bugis-Malay sultanate in Riau in 1722, until the coronation of its last ruler in the 1880s. Viginia Matheson and Barbara Andaya, in the notes to their translation of the work from Malay into English, describe the origins in the Hadramaut of an Al-Saqqaf (of the Singapore-based family with ties to Riau), the odd sea captain from Muscat, a gentleman from Bahrain, or Shaykh Abdurrahman, a teacher of astronomy of Egyptian origin based in Batavia – whom we shall encounter again. However, echoing the tone and language of the text, neither editor states the ethnicity of the many people of Hadrami descent in the text. They make note of the places of origin of the preceding individuals simply because their links to the Arabian peninsula are more readily identifiable, and in all likelihood they were new arrivals in relation to the generations that had become creoles in the Malay world.

On the rare occasion the Arabian origin of sayyids is mentioned, it is with little urgency. Most of the time, they are recognisable in the text only by the honorific before their names, frequently in combination with further Malay honorifics such as *Pangeran* (Prince), *Tengku* or *Engku* (for the immediate members of the ruling family), or *Tuan* (Lord – for prominent people without a royal lineage). 'Lord Sayyids' are frequently

[13] R. O. Winstedt, 'The Hadramaut Saiyids of Perak and Siak', *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 79 (Sept. 1918), pp. 49–54; Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 224.

[14] *Volkstelling 1930*, Deel VII: Chineezen en Andere Vreemde Oosterlingen in Nederlandsch-Indië (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, Department van Economische Zaken, 1935), p. 14. The names appear in the original as 'bangsa Sjarif, Melajoe Arab, Aleidroes or Melajoe Sec'.

mentioned in the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* as the object of the interest and affection of the rulers. Individuals frequently carried longer and fascinating hybrid honorifics derived from terms of Arabic and Malay origin. A famous gentleman in the world of diplomacy and shipping in the Malay world of the early nineteenth century, for instance, was the Surabaya-based Tuan Pangeran Sayyid Hassan bin Umar al-Habshi.

Lord Sayyids are a notable presence in the text of the *Tuhfat of al-Nafis*, though not by any means as an inflexible category, as the hybrid honorifics themselves suggest. Frequently, individuals were referred to by more than one name. The important diplomat, 'Lord Sayyid Engku Sharif Muhammad Zain al-Kudsi', for instance, was also called 'Sayyid Kuning'. This individual need not necessarily have been of Hadrami descent as 'Al-Kudsi' suggests origins in Jerusalem. Furthermore, Lord Sayyids did not occupy a place that was markedly separate from the rulers of Riau, at least not in terms of ethnicity. Yet, they were different because of their line of descent as well as their knowledge, skills, and experience.

Throughout the *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, sayyids are described as diplomats, traders, scholars, and rulers – roles that were often interchangeable. Unsurprisingly, they usually thrived in a particular region because of the patronage of the ruler. Therefore, their ascendancy in Sumenep was due to the ruler's friendly posture towards them and, similarly, they thrived in Palembang in every likelihood because of its policy of encouraging foreign settlers, who helped to make it a cosmopolitan trading city.[15] On the other hand, Arabs in Sumenep declined in prosperity, if not numbers, following the death of the prince who favoured them. Meanwhile, sayyids rose to the position of rulers in other places. They were dominant in the sultanate of Aceh after 1699, and assimilated into the ruling elites of Siak, Jambi, Perlis, Kubu, Riau, and Sulu. The Al-Kadri family established a creole Arab sultanate in Pontianak in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Abdullah al-Misri, whom we encountered in the Introduction, was a writer close to the sayyid rulers of Pontianak whose work offers glimpses into the creole world. From his name, we know that his ancestors came from Egypt and this marked him apart from the majority of creoles who were of Hadrami descent. He nevertheless belonged to circles of creole Hadramis described in the *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, in particular the Al-Kadris of

[15] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, pp. 118–19; William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*, reprint of third edition of 1811 with an introduction by John Bastin, Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints (Kuala Lumpur, etc.: Oxford University Press, 1966, first published in 1783), p. 362.

Pontianak. He was also witness to some of the broad changes instigated by an incipient Dutch colonial power in the Malay world. The Dutch East India Company went bankrupt in 1799, and its possessions were taken over by the Dutch Crown, thereby precipitating regional political change. The Dutch began to transform their mercantile enterprise into a colonial state, with Batavia as its capital. Besides his observations of early colonial transformation, Al-Misri also wrote a brief but noteworthy critique of genealogical hierarchy. We turn next to Al-Misri's writing to explore the creole character of the Malay world.

What Was Creole about the Malay World?

Al-Misri was born in Palembang, Sumatera, but expresses in his writing strong ties to Pontianak, Borneo, where his family, originally from Kedah in the Malay Peninsula, settled. From the dates of his writings and the references to historical events in them, it may be surmised that he lived from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. It would appear that he was based for some time in the early 1800s in Besuki in eastern Java, then a thriving coastal trading centre. His ties to Java did not end there, as he had a cousin in Batavia with whom he kept in touch. Al-Misri's family background and personal trajectory were markedly mobile.

Shaykh Abdurrahman bin Ahmad al-Misri, Al-Misri's cousin, is noted in the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* as a well-known scholar of astronomy who traded in Palembang and Padang before settling in Petamburan, Batavia, where he built a mosque and retired to a life of study.[16] He died in 1847 a famous man in Batavia – his reputation intact even as late as the 1880s – and much respected by the Governor General. He was buried near the mosque that he built.[17] He was also the maternal grandfather of Sayyid Oesman bin Yahya, who was born in Pekojan, Batavia, in 1822 and became an important Arab figure in the Netherlands Indies.

Al-Misri travelled throughout the Malay world for commercial purposes and on exploratory missions, bringing to his writing a rich experience of the region's various and overlapping cultural, geographical, political, and economic terrains. He lived in the throes of enormous transformations as the Dutch began to extend their reach in an unprecedented manner. The events of the time thus commanded his attention. Among the several manuscripts written by Al-Misri is *Hikayat Mareskalek* (The Story of Mareskalek), a didactic narrative on the rule of Herman

[16] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 162.
[17] Ibid., p. 163.

Willem Daendels, the Governor General during the French interregnum (1808–11).[18] It is the Dutch term '*maarschalk*' (marshal), used in reference to the colonial stalwart Daendels, that gives rise to '*mareskalek*' in Al-Misri's rendition. The text was copied in Tanjung Pinang, Riau, in 1827, from the original written between 1813 and 1816.

The author interweaves into his story some thirteen different recollections and observations on a range of issues from cultural matters to the emergent political economy of the region under the Crown – making salient observations about burgeoning marketplaces. His narrative follows the successive changes in government, from the Dutch, to the French, to the British, in the short period of 1808–16, following the defeat in Europe of the Netherlands by France, and subsequently of France by Britain, in the Napoleonic Wars.

Al-Misri opens his text by paying an emotive tribute to six individuals from Pontianak; each name is preceded by an elaborate hybrid title:

> Know, O all of you my kin, that I have drunk the water of the Pontianak River, and thus have been filled with a deeply felt yearning, an abundant love and passion, and longing [*hāmun wa gharāmun jammun wa ḥanīnun*], for the people who are in Pontianak, firstly Sri Paduka Maulana al-Sultan Sharif Kasim and Sri Paduka Pangeran Ratu Sharif Usman ibn Almarhum al-Sultan Sharif Abdulrahman and Paduka Pangeran Sharif Umar bin Muhammad and Sharif Shaykh bin Hamid Bā'abūd and Sharif Abdullah bin Muhammad as-Saqqāf and Sharif Hassan bin Umar Almarhum al-Habshi Bā'alwi The Most Dignified, as a result of the great yearning for them, all of them of noble descent [*jamī'ul-ashrāf*], I who am lowly write on this paper.[19]

The names are those of the creole rulers of Pontianak and include the Sultan, his son, and other notables. Searching for the words to express what he feels for them, he finds them in Arabic: 'an abundant love and passion, and longing [*hāmun wa gharāmun jammun wa ḥanīnun*]'. While Al-Misri begins his story with a traditional salutation in Arabic to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad, and quotes liberally from the Qur'an throughout his text, the brief appearance of the emotive Arabic fragment is telling. It would suggest that the language had a meaning for him that was not grounded in religious study and worship alone, as would be the case for perhaps the majority of Muslims in the archipelago. Arabic

[18] The untitled manuscript was given the title mentioned here by the Dutch Scholar H. H. Juynboll. See Monique Zaini-Lajoubert, ed., *Karya Lengkap Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Misri* (Jakarta: École française d'Extrême-Orient and Komunitas Bambu, 2008), p. 208.

[19] Monique Zaini-Lajoubert, ed., *Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Misri*, Naskah dan Dokumen Nusantara/Textes et Documents Nousantariens, no. 6 (Bandung: Angkasa and École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1987), p. 92.

possessed an added significance for him, one that was personal and intimate, reflecting perhaps a meaningful creole Arab upbringing.

The evidence of the importance of language and translation in his life is a substantive indication of his creole position, characterised by a closeness not only to members of his Arab but also to his Malay family, as well as travel and interaction in culturally diverse settings. In this connection, Ho asserts the following with regard to creole Arab communities: 'Despite its comparability with creole Dutch and Chinese society, that of creole Hadrami was profoundly different and unique in the way it maintained intense intimacy and clear separation in relations with indigenous affines'.[20]

The titles of the creole rulers of Pontianak carry the mark of diverse cultural influences with ease. They convey across space and time the sounds of Malay and Javanese in the marks of high royalty such as *Sri Paduka*, *Pangeran*, and *Ratu*, as well as the use of qualifying superlatives such as *Yang Maha Mulia* (The Most Dignified). They are complemented by forms of address for rulers derived from Arabic, such as *Sultan* and *Maulana*, the terms of respect sharif and shaykh, and conventions such as *Almarhum* (the deceased). These hybrid formations have become naturalised elements of the Malay language – so much so that few would notice their Arabic origins. The memory of the Sanskritic influence conveyed in the honorific *Sri* was forgotten even earlier. Titles much like those of the historical ruling house of Pontianak have been normalised in the present day in the naming of royalty (most obviously in Malaysia, where the institution of the sultanate has been better preserved in the post-independence era than in Indonesia). Ho, struck by the remarkable hybrid titles before the names of creoles, has described these formulations as 'agglutinative philological marvels'.[21]

Al-Misri himself was known by many names whose hybrid character perhaps nicely suited the various people and contexts to which he was connected:

> Shaykh Abdullah bin Muhammad Abu Bakar bin Shaykh Ibrahim al-Misri; Abdullah ibn Muhammad Abu Bakar Raja Bandarkhan bin Shaykh Ibrahim al-Misri; al-Shaykh Abd Allāh ibn Muhammad Abī Bakr ibn al-Shaykh Ibrahīm al-Misrī; Shaykh Abdullah; Abdullah; Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Misri; and Abdullah al-Misri.[22]

[20] Engseng Ho, 'Le don précieux de la généalogie', in P. Bonte, É. Conte, and P. Dresch, eds., *Émirs et presidents: Figures de la parenté et du politique dans le monde arabe* (Paris: CNRS editions, 2001), p. 93.
[21] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, p. 157, n. 2.
[22] Zaini-Lajoubert, *Abdullah*, p. 13.

He went by names in Arabic as well as Malay, with many more variations in the former. Language and translation were clearly central to his life and deserve further attention on their own terms.

A Life of Translation

Al-Misri frequently quotes the following verse of the Qur'an in *Hikayat Mareskalek*:

> Say: 'O God, Master of the Kingdom,
> Thou givest the Kingdom to whom Thou wilt,
> and seizest the Kingdom from whom Thou wilt,
> Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt, and Thou
> abasest whom Thou wilt; in Thy hand
> is the good; Thou art powerful
> over everything.'[23]

The language and substance of this verse would be unexceptional among those literate in the Islamic traditions in the nineteenth-century Malay world. The substance of the Qur'anic chapter in question – the subordination of the ruler to divine will – would have been discussed in some depth by scholars. The treatment of this subject in the classic works of Al-Ghazzali has been known to the Malay world at least since the eighteenth century. Notably, two translations of the twelfth-century philosopher's work into Malay were completed in 1789 and 1824, respectively.[24] The study of the Qur'an in Arabic was limited to small numbers of scholars in a social world in which the language was unintelligible to the great majority of people. Knowledge of the language and the Islamic traditions was nonetheless prized and well established within the archipelago, and sustained through diverse networks spread across the Indian Ocean, already a few centuries old by Al-Misri's time. The cultural capital afforded by this knowledge was important to the successful entry of Hadramis into the upper echelons of society.

Al-Misri's writing might be regarded as Arabicised rather than Arabic, to introduce the illuminating distinction made by Ronit Ricci to describe 'the wide range of instances in which Arabic influenced local languages, most often by combining with them rather than replacing them'.[25]

[23] *The Koran Interpreted*, translated by A. J. Arberry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 48 (chapter 3, verse 26).
[24] Andaya and Matheson, 'Islamic Thought', p. 115.
[25] Ronit Ricci, *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 15.

Translation and localisation were characteristic of the interaction between Arabic and a variety of languages within what Ricci calls the 'Arabic Cosmopolis', namely the transregional cultural geography that emerged through the spread of Arabicised texts in southern India and the Malay world. Authors such as Al-Misri never travelled beyond the archipelago but were local interlocutors in the transregional retellings and translations of not only the Qur'an but also 'stories of kings of olden time'. Ricci considers the Hadrami diaspora as a site in which the Arabic Cosmopolis and its 'literary neworks connected and overlapped with the Arabian world'.[26]

Al-Misri's handling of the Qur'anic chapter under discussion becomes less unusual against the background of the Arabic Cosmopolis. The author reiterates the whole or part of the chapter on a number of occasions throughout his writing, at one instance providing a Malay translation immediately following the Arabic, at other times paraphrasing its meaning. The chapter's meaning is integrated with the unfolding stories and rendered in different ways in them.

The chapter is translated not only literally from Arabic into Malay but semantically, reflecting the constant process of translation that would have characterised the culturally diverse port cities of the Malay world. Al-Misri wrote in *Jawi*, which is the Arabic alphabet modified to suit the Malay language. He makes substantial references to figures in the Islamic traditions whose thoughts are quoted in Arabic and, nearly always, translated into Malay or paraphrased. He would have found himself in circles almost certainly familiar with Malay, though inflected by the speech of different regions. There would have been among them speakers of Arabic (consisting of religious scholars, traders, and members of creole Arab communities), Bugis, Javanese, Sundanese, Chinese dialects, Dutch, and several other languages. In keeping with the oral tradition characteristic of the region, Al-Misri writes as if he were telling a story to an audience, thereby naturally lending a theatrical quality to his work. The Qur'anic chapter is rendered in the sounds of two languages and embedded in stories delivered with some flourish, as one would imagine the everyday conversations between people in the places the seafaring author frequented.

Al-Misri's flair and innovativeness with respect to language may be yet another outcome of his creole experience. The Qur'anic chapter is an exemplary instance of the kind of exhortation to the faithful that may have been better received when delivered by this bilingual (and possibly multi-lingual) trader through translations, summaries, and

[26] Ibid., p. 268.

dramatic stories than in the hands of a religious teacher. Al-Misri's facility with language may be measured not by translation alone but in his use of the spoken language of his time, absorbing into his stories a range of linguistic influences. Notably, he uses the Hokkien-derived Malay pronouns *gua* (I) and *lu* (you), most noticeable in Betawi (Batavian) speech, in his dialogues. The author's polyglot inclinations provide valuable texture to the observations he makes of the hybrid world around him, of which his critique of genealogical hierarchy is of particular importance.

A Critique of Genealogical Hierarchy

Through his stories, Al-Misri relates the folly of denigrating or excluding people based on claims to a higher social status by birth. He makes Governor General Daendels central to the telling by making him a white-skinned raja whose commanding presence is woven into the various and interconnected narratives of the *Hikayat Mareskalek*. As the story progresses, a surprise emerges. Not only is Daendels granted fluency in Arabic, but the knowledge of the Islamic traditions imputed to him could rival that of a scholar. Short of declaring him a good Muslim ruler, Al-Misri attributes to him the traits of one. He is described as more learned in Islam than the 'dark-skinned rulers' of the region about whom Al-Misri speaks with disdain.[27]

The author's stories clearly offer illuminations of rulership in the Islamic traditions, and the economic, political, and social issues with which it is invariably implicated. For these reasons his work may be considered didactic. Daendels thus serves as a vehicle by which Al-Misri delivers critical ideas drawn from Islamic texts. Monique Zaini-Lajoubert's contention that the work shows some kinship to the seventeenth-century didactic Malay text *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* (Crown of the Sultans) is thus borne out.[28] Al-Misri renders Daendels as a model ruler who is capable and just and possesses the right balance between a firm hand and a dedication to governing his people well. He may, therefore, rightfully reap the material rewards of their labour.

The author's placement of Daendels at the centre of his text is a literary device rather than an indication of the adulation of an inferior for his European 'race' superior. There is less of a sense at this time of overwhelming European domination, and local rulers remained meaningful points of reference. Europeans do not represent the pinnacle of

[27] Zaini-Lajoubert, *Abdullah*, p. 99.
[28] Ibid., p. 18.

human development, a notion that would be inculcated only gradually in the subject populations of the colony with the advance of racialisation. Colonial political and economic power at the time, while ensuring the relative dominance of the Dutch, was complemented by and even dependent upon local trade networks and rulers (such as the Sultan of Pontianak). The story of Baba Midun, to which we turn next, begins with an indication of how the Dutch cultivated local patronage. More pertinently, the story relates the triumph of the idea of equality among Muslims over genealogical hierarchy.

Baba Midun

Al-Misri describes Baba Midun as a relative of the historical Chinese figure named Majoor van Hir. Daendels not only granted the latter his request for large tracts of land in East Java, but also conferred upon him the title of 'Majoor', the Dutch for 'Major'. Not long afterwards, Baba Midun abandoned 'temple worship [*menyembah berhala*]' to embrace Islam and was thereafter appointed by the major as one of his officials. Baba Midun then requested the hand of the daughter of the nobleman Pangeran Sumenep and was refused because he 'was not of equal status [*tiada berkupu*]'.[29] The marriage proposal was rejected because it did not meet the requirements of kafā'a.

The story of Baba Midun's rejection is brought to the attention of Daendels, who is angered by it. He voices his response threateningly: 'If one has become a brother in the religion, let it not be said once again that their status is unequal, for this will surely bring great misfortune, I shall exile them from this land.'[30] Soon after, opposition to the marriage is withdrawn. Baba Midun is married to the princess of Madurese origin and the pair are taken on a grand parade that incorporates elements of the ceremonial tradition of the royalty in China. In the story, boundaries between ethnic groups appear to be more porous to social mobility than are genealogical barriers.

Porous Ethnic Boundaries

Given Baba Midun's newly acquired high social standing, Al-Misri notes that the Chinese as a whole are viewed with great esteem. Now that the Chinese were associated with the noble family of Sumenep through the princely groom, they, 'the tailors, the alcohol distillers, the cobblers,

[29] The term 'berkupu' is a rendering in Malay of the term 'kafā'a'.
[30] Zaini-Lajoubert, *Abdullah*, p. 110.

and even the pork butchers were ennobled'.[31] The author notes further: 'Till this day, all the Chinese are referred to as *Sampeyan*, meaning *Duli Tuanku* … some from the family of Majoor van Hir became *dipati*, *patih* and *temenggung*, therefore these honoured people were called by Malays *Tuanku*, while the Javanese said *Telapakan Sampeyan*, and Arabs said *Maulana*'. The story of Baba Midun indicates more surely the salience of language over ethnicity as a marker of identity and in turn helps to explain the social dynamics that allows for the porosity of ethnic boundaries. As in other instances where Arabs, or any other group, are mentioned in the text, the reference is often to the manner in which each would express a word or phrase. Hence, in the story, Al-Misri identifies the Javanese honorific '*Sampeyan* [Your Honour]' before translating it into the Malay '*Duli Tuanku*'. Then he observes that relatives of Mayoor van Hir were given the titles of Javanese nobility such as '*dipati*, *patih* and *temenggung*' and thereafter referred to by Arabs, Malays, and Javanese each in their respective manner as above. Al-Misri's language renders as much of the texture of the story as do the narrative details, enhancing the experience of the evolving drama. Events unfold as do new linguistic elements, altogether rendering a cultural topology that comfortably encounters and incorporates cultural differences.

Al-Misri describes a social world in which the standing of an ethnic group was seen not in essentialised terms but in relation to the measure of respect they gathered, especially through alliances with people in power. Being Javanese would appear to have meant no more a privileged position than belonging to any other group. Al-Misri offers an indication of the mutability of social status with an amusing anecdote about the groups favoured at the conclusion of the Baba Midun story. The author notes that the Javanese everywhere would say: 'Rather than suffer the misfortune of my child betrothed to a Malay, Bugis or Arab man, should I be so fortunate, surely my child will marry a Chinese Baba or a Dutch Senyor.'[32] Disparaged at one time, Chinese Baba such as Baba Midun were now much in favour. Claims to hierarchical and exclusionary genealogical barriers were nevertheless present in this social world, and Al-Misri draws attention to Hadramis in particular in this regard.

[31] Ibid., p. 111. The punctuation and italicisation that follow are my own.
[32] Ibid., p. 111. The latter two terms refer to creole Chinese and Dutchman, respectively. 'Senyor' is derived from the Portuguese 'Senhor'. 'Sinjo' is a variation that referred to

On Hadrami Claims to Hierarchy

Daendel's threat leads to the recognition of Baba Midun as a suitor equal to the Princess of Sumenep and advances the idea of the just treatment of Muslims over and above genealogical differences. Al-Misri's critique of claims to genealogical hierarchy extends beyond the story of Baba Midun and in one case is directed at Hadramis specifically. In a manuscript completed in 1818, the author, in his usual manner, quotes from the Qur'an and translates the Arabic verses into Malay. In the process, he gently mocks the attempts of Hadramis – though not naming them as such – to outdo each other with their pretensions to genealogical superiority. The gist of the quote is a reminder to human beings not to exalt themselves over others when Allah has already exalted those who submit to Him. However, in the Malay translation the following appears in addition:

> You did not want to obey My words but say that so-and-so who is the child of so-and-so is of a more noble people [*bangsa*] than the other, and that *Bā'īsā* is more noble than *Bāḥiḍir* and *Bāṣwīḥ* is more noble than *Bāgharīb* and *Bāḥafāni* is more noble than *Bāḥayāzī* and *Bāfaqīh* is more noble than *Ǧufrī* and *Ǧamāl al-Layl* is more noble than *Ǧamāl an-Nahar* and *'Abūd* is less than *'Aidīd* and *Al-Ḥabshī* is more noble than the people of *al-'Aṭṭās* and *al-'Aidrūs* is more noble than *as-Saqqāf* and so forth.[33]

Although Al-Misri does not explicitly refer to them as a group, the names mentioned and emphasised by me above are unmistakably of Hadrami origin.

Through the augmented text in Malay, Al-Misri might have wished to deliver his critique of genealogical hierarchy to a wider audience of Malay-speaking Arabs, Malays, and Javanese, as well as their mixed descendants, in order to assert the folly of self-aggrandisement, particularly in the name of Islam.[34] It is noteworthy that he chose to highlight Hadrami social hierarchy as it was refashioned in the Malay world. Besides observing that Malays and Javanese kissed the hand of even the 'lowest Arab', P. J. Veth suggested that the title sayyid or sharif was

creole Europeans and came to have a pejorative connotation in the more mature colonial state (see Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia*, n. 43, p. 225).

[33] Ibid., pp. 154–5. This quote is from an 1818 manuscript that is sufficiently closely related to the *Hikayat Mareskalek* that it was assigned the title *Hikayat Mareskalek II*. Zaini-Lajoubert, the editor, retitled the latter *'Arsy al-Muluk* (Throne of Kings) in order to avoid confusing the two manuscripts, given that *Hikayat Mareskalek* was itself a title assigned to the former by an earlier editor. See Zaini-Lajoubert, *Karya Lengkap*, p. 14.

[34] See Pieter Johannes Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling, geographisch, statistisch, historisch, voorafgegaan door eene algemeene schets des ganschen eilands*, vol. 1 (Zaltbommel: Joh. Noman en Zoon, 1854), pp. 247.

used among other things to 'maintain [Arab] superiority over the simple native'. It should nevertheless be noted that this is a colonial representation of Arabs that we shall address more fully in Chapter 4. Here, it is helpful to set aside the excesses of his language for a moment to observe that Veth, a nineteenth-century Dutch scholar of the Netherlands Indies, also cast the Hadrami social hierarchy in critical light. Al-Misri's writing locates a critique of genealogical hierarchy in an archipelagic world of translation, localisation, and porous ethnic boundaries within a larger transoceanic cultural geography. His work helps to establish the nuances of the social dynamics of the Malay world.

Distinctive Social Dynamics

The Malay world on the cusp of the colonial era was markedly creole, from what we have seen of the Hadrami presence in the archipelago. Prophetic genealogy as well as skills in diplomacy, trade, and religious affairs drew the attention of local rulers.

Sayyids rather than Arabs stand out as a distinctive category in this mobile, multi-lingual, and culturally diverse maritime context. On the one hand, the many marriages of sayyids into local ruling houses, and the prominent courtly roles they assumed, suggest an immensely fluid and adaptable propensity. Their genealogical claims gave them social prestige and high status in the archipelago. On the other hand, the same claims are exclusionary in nature and could become the basis of an assertion of superiority over any Muslim without a pedigree.

Al-Misri raises the question of inequality between Muslims by drawing attention to sayyid claims of genealogical superiority. The author views such claims disapprovingly as instances of self-aggrandisement that were in conflict with the faith. His critique is particularly biting when he points not only to the claim of superiority over other Muslims but to the hierarchy within sayyid clans themselves. The hierarchy within a hierarchy highlights a seemingly unending strata of claims to a superior status in the name of genealogical prestige. Al-Misri's 1818 critique of inequality was prescient, for it was to have lasting resonance, as we shall find out in the parts to follow.

As we conclude the first part of this book, it is worth underscoring that the purpose of the preceding pages has been not to create an idealised precolonial past but to highlight a distinctive social dynamics before the introduction of more inflexible colonial categories such as race. In the epigraph to this chapter, we learn, that besides the Lord Sayyids who are named, further distinctions are made between those born above the winds and those born locally. Although the Dutch did not care to

distinguish between the local and the foreign-born, these were important distinctions to creole Europeans, Chinese, and Arabs. Hence the existence of the widely used word 'peranakan' in Malay for creole, and interestingly, the absence of a word for race. The distinction made in the epigraph between peranakan and *totok* (foreign-born), then, is significant. It represents, by definition, a way of characterising people in terms of adaptation and change, rather than the unchanging primordial attributes that inform race thinking. This chapter does not mark the end of our attention to the creole Malay world in the face of the colonial state. This creole context was dominant in the precolonial era but does not disappear altogether. We shall return to the creole character of this world as we engage the gradual but powerful transformation wrought by colonialism.

Part II

Colonial Transformation

2 From Sea to Land

> One can see them in Batavia in the morning. A package on the back and walking stick in hand, they leave their quarter to stride through the city and its outskirts as they traversed the desert not so long ago. They are called *abā al-banākis* in Arabic, which means 'fathers of the packages'.[1]

When in 1824 the British and the Dutch agreed on dividing up their possessions around the world, a continuous line was drawn that ran through the Straits of Melaka, skirted Singapore, and cut across Borneo. British and Dutch territories fell generally to the north and south of the line, respectively. Famously, the British exchanged the island of Banda, noted for its supply of nutmeg to the world, for Manhattan, off the eastern coast of north America. The line that cut through the waters disrupted the Malay world, and led eventually to a lasting transformation of economic and social life in the region. Nevertheless, it was some time before this world receded to the margins and new colonial orders arose in its place. Raja Ali Haji had still to complete the *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, and the Lord Sayyids remained an integral and active part of the maritime culture that revolved around the Riau court on Penyengat island. Indeed, some sayyids would have a role in the transformations that unfolded under British and Dutch rule. As the image of the itinerant peddler in the epigraph and Figure 1 suggests, the representation of Arabs on the whole would change greatly, and vary between areas under Dutch and British control. What was common to both spheres, however, was the growing interest in the economic exploitation of the land through the intensification of agricultural production. Control over the land naturally became a priority; so too the annexation and conquest of more territory.

The sea-going world that Arabs helped to shape gave way to the land. By the end of the nineteenth century, the British and Dutch colonial spheres were firmly implanted through the establishment of state structures, capital cities, and the necessary infrastructure for communication and transportation on land. The sea naturally remained relevant to the archipelagic state, but its significance as the site of a vibrant and mobile

[1] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 144.

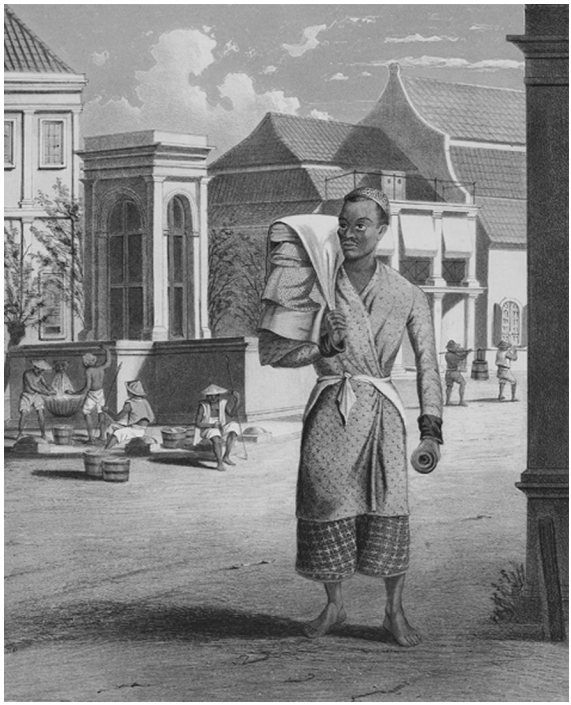


Figure 1. 'An Arab', lithograph based on a watercolour painting by A. van Pers, 1854

political culture declined. Until this time, political and economic power had been dispersed across different persons and locations in the Malay world, and small islands or towns figured meaningfully. Colonial rule, however, brought about a concentration of power in particular places. The islands of Siantan, Tambelan, and indeed the Riau archipelago itself, and the towns of Kota Tinggi, Kuala Selangor, and Siak, became marginal outposts in the process. Batavia, Surabaya, Singapore, and Penang rose instead as the key cities of the two colonial states. Power over vast territories was now centred in a few places.

The cost of the Anglo-Dutch treaty was great for the Malay world. The Riau sultanate was divided. Penyengat and the islands in its immediate vicinity fell under Dutch authority while Johor and Singapore came under the British. Riau, once a centre of the Malay world, became a tiny part of an archipelagic colonial state that absorbed even more islands in the course of the nineteenth century. The sultanate gradually turned into a backwater.[2] By the time the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* was

[2] Virginia Matheson and Barbara Andaya, 'Introduction', in Raja Ali Haji ibn Ahmad, *The Precious Gift (Tuhfat al-Nafis)*, pp. 1–8.

completed in the 1860s, Dutch interest in Malay language and literature had grown from intellectual curiosity to active involvement. Colonial scholar-bureaucrats henceforth played a major role in elevating Riau to an exemplary Malay literary centre, making its variant of the language the model for linguistic standardisation. The cosmopolitan court and society of the vibrant maritime polity, however, was left to wither away. In 1911, the Dutch eliminated the sultanate itself and exiled its last ruler.

To appreciate the shape and scale of the profound changes brought about by the move from the sea to the land, we need to consider in this chapter the rather broad sweep of time from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth century. The patterns of settlement of Arabs and their relationship with the local population was much transformed during this period. In keeping with the landward shift, we turn our attention from Riau to Java, where the intensification of agricultural production was undertaken on a grand scale, and at great cost to the island's peasant inhabitants. We consider the history and character of the maritime economy before turning to the social transformation of the nineteenth century in order to better grasp the changes put in motion.

The Maritime Economy

The arrival of the Lord Sayyids in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries lent a particular character to a Malay-world maritime economy that had been developing since at least the thirteenth century. Although Arab cartographers and seamen had encountered the region from as early as the seventh century, they actively explored it only much later. Between 1025 and about 1225, Arab and Chinese merchants began to scour the markets of the Malay world more openly as they looked for spices on the islands of the Java Sea.[3] As a result of these initial and auspicious explorations for spices, ports arose on the north and east coasts of Java, but there was minimal penetration of the hinterland by outsiders at this time. From the observations of European travellers such as Tomé Pires, we know that coastal cities such as Aceh, Melaka, Palembang, and Gresik had Arabs, Indians, Persians, and Chinese in their polyglot merchant communities after the fifteenth century.[4] Some of these communities had a long history of cosmopolitanism. For instance, a tenth-century

[3] Kenneth R. Hall, *Maritime Trade and State Development* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985), pp. 19 and 23.

[4] *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512–1515, and The Book of Francisco Rodrigues: Rutter of a Voyage in the Red Sea, Nautical Rules, Almanack and Maps, Written and Drawn in the East before 1525*, translated and edited by Armando Cortesão, vol. 2, The Hakluyt Society, second series, no. 90 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944).

Arab writer described the merchant community of Palembang by the variety of languages spoken by the city's parrots.[5]

Changes in the Indian Ocean economy brought about by the increasing dominance of European powers affected the ebb and flow of ethnic groups to Java. A major turning point occurred when the British gained control over India's economy in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This development destroyed the subcontinent's 'core position in the traditional nexus of relations of the Indian Ocean economy' in the 'Islamic world economy'.[6] The principal economic centres of India shifted, for the most part, from its western to its eastern shores. Surat, Calicut, Hugli, and Masulipatnam declined in importance while Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta became significant as a consequence.[7] The decline of the Gujarat region and the rise of Bengal led to corresponding changes in the flows of traders to Java. Khojas, Muslim traders from Gujarat, had dominated maritime trade for centuries. The decline of Gujarat, as well as the imposition of a Dutch monopoly on spices, drove Khojas out of the Malay world by the nineteenth century. They were replaced thereafter by Bengalis. The presence of the latter was encouraged by the Dutch in the 1830s to fill a desperate need for contractors who would administer local agricultural cash crop production for a share of the profits.[8]

Arabs and other Muslims became prominent in the Malay world when the focus of oceanic trade shifted from Palembang to Melaka, and then to Aceh in the sixteenth century. The Muslim port cultures that emerged became important in the ongoing process of Islamisation.[9] Arabs gradually took the place of Gujarati merchants as the latter withdrew from the archipelago, and became pre-eminent in oceanic and inter-island shipping. In the early 1800s, their ships reached as far as Muscat and Mocha westward across the Indian Ocean, and Sulu and New Guinea, respectively, northward and eastward across the archipelago.[10] By 1850, Arabs owned 50 per cent of the ships in Java going by total tonnage, well above their nearest competitors in descending order: Chinese, Dutch, British, and native owners.[11] The frequency of owner and captain having the

[5] Oliver W. Wolters, *The Fall of Śrīvijaya in Malay History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 39.
[6] André Wink, '"*Al-Hind*": India and Indonesia in the Islamic World-Economy, c. 700–1800 AD', *Itinerario*, Special Issue: The Ancien Regime in India and Indonesia, vol. 12, no. 1 (1988), p. 67.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, p. 142.
[9] Anthony Milner, 'Islam and the Muslim State', in M. B. Hooker, ed., *Islam in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), p. 38.
[10] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, pp. 122 and 135.
[11] Frank J. A. Broeze, 'The Merchant Fleet of Java 1820–1850', *Archipel*, Numéro Spécial: Commerce et Navires dans les Mers du Sud, vol. 18 (1979), p. 257.

same family name suggests the existence of 'an Arab maritime-mercantile community, composed primarily of family groups'.[12] Shipping and trading went hand in hand for these families while their ships catered to trade beyond Arab networks. This was the maritime world to which Al-Misri and his creole Arab circles belonged.

Arab participation in the maritime economy was much diminished in the latter half of the nineteenth century largely due to the arrival of steam shipping. After reaching its peak between 1845 and 1855, Arab shipping was unable to compete with the growing domination of European-owned steamers.[13] Indeed, the Arab maritime fleet at Gresik, the one-time capital of shipping in the area, declined greatly as few Arabs still owned trading vessels after the expansion of steamship lines.[14] As European-operated steamships took over the oceanic trade after the 1870s, Arab shipping became increasingly restricted to inter-island trade. Eventually, the latter also declined as steamships began to ply the seas of the archipelago as well.

The end of the era of shipping led to the entry of Arabs into Java's hinterland in greater numbers as Dutch economic expansion was intensified under the Cultivation System introduced in 1830. They became involved in new kinds of economic activity that in many ways reinforced ethnic identity through the intensification of kin-based trading networks.[15] Arab economic activity broadly corresponded with that of Chinese and others (namely Indians), as will be evident in the following exploration of new economic activities. These groups typically appeared in colonial government statistics under the collective category 'Foreign Orientals'.

An Overview of New Economic Activities

Arab economic activity was transformed in the era of the intensive exploitation of Java's resources between 1870 and 1900 following the large-scale introduction of private capital. Arabs formed trading communities of uneven strength throughout Java that were for the most part less powerful than Chinese commercial networks. In general, Arabs mostly traded in linens, cloths, gold, and diamonds. They were far less involved

[12] Ibid., p. 266.
[13] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 148.
[14] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1905), s.v. 'Soerabaja'. Van den Berg places Gresik's decline in the latter part of the 1840s: see *Le Hadhramout*, p. 117.
[15] For a brief description of kin-based networks of Arabs in the archipelago, see Robert B. Serjeant, 'The Hadrami Network', in Denys Lombard and Jean Aubin, eds., *Marchands et Homme d'Affaires Asiatiques dans l'Océan Indien et la Mer de Chine, 13e–20e Siècles* (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Science Sociales, 1988), pp. 150–3.

in the lucrative sugar and peanut oil trade, the import and sale of paraffin, the purchase of agricultural produce, or the export of coffee.[16] While Chinese functioned almost exclusively as farmers of the government's revenues, few if any farming licences (*pachten*) were issued to Arabs by the Dutch.[17] In some instances, such as the Pekalongan and Palembang communities, Arabs were economically more powerful than the Chinese and possessed large capital; a handful were among the wealthiest in the region.[18] Early in the nineteenth century, a Dutch observer noted that two or three Arabs controlled the entire trade of Palembang and were also heavily involved in moneylending.[19] In Pekalongan in 1871, Chinese and Arabs conducted a lively trade in tobacco, rice, and linens.[20] By the end of the century, the trade in European linens was for the most part in the hands of Arabs who peddled their wares in possession of crucial travel permits.

According to the annual record of occupations kept by the Dutch, there were only a handful of Arab farmers of government revenues in the period from 1859 to 1871, while between twenty to seventy people each year were classified as landowners or those in their service. This accords well with the earlier observation that the Dutch tended not to issue farm licences to Arabs as much as they did to Chinese. There were thirty-six recorded as chiefs, officials, and 'priests' (*geestelijken*) in 1859, and 194 of the same for 1871, while the rest, those in other industries or without occupations numbered 1,643 and 3,697 in the same years. While some of the latter may have been itinerant traders, there is also a likelihood that they worked informally on the estates and businesses of wealthier Arabs in a variety of supervisory capacities.

While Java had the largest Arab population in the Indies, at the turn of the twentieth century more and more Arabs settled and made their fortunes in the *Buiten Bezittingen* (Outer Possessions), as the Dutch termed their territories outside Java. While Java's exports doubled, those of the Outer Possessions increased by six times between 1895 and 1914 as a result of great economic expansion in the region.[21] It is also noteworthy

[16] F. Fokkens, 'Onderzoek naar den Economischen Toestand der Vreemde Oosterlingen op Java en Madoera en voorstellen tot verbetering', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 17 Apr. 1896, no. 27, pp. 321, 340.
[17] Ibid., p. 454.
[18] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 134.
[19] W. M. F. Mansvelt, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij, 1824–1924*, vol. 2 (Haarlem: Joh. Enschedé en Zonen, 1924), pp. 64–5.
[20] *Koloniaal Verslag, Verslag van bestuur en staat van Nederlandsch-Indië, Surinam en Curaçao* (The Hague, 1848–1925), 1872, p. 210; 1892, app. C, no. 5.
[21] J. A. M. Caldwell, 'Indonesian Export and Production from the Decline of the Culture System to the First World War', in C. D. Cowan, ed., *The Economic Development of*

that Arabs were important in aiding the Dutch acquisition of trade and territories among the islands to the east of Java. At the behest of the colonial power, Arabs created commercial and political links with areas where the former had nominal or no control (including regions that were not Muslim). Van den Berg cited three men in particular in this regard.[22] Firstly, Sayyid Hassan bin Umar al-Habshi served as an emissary of the Dutch to the kingdoms of Bali and Siam on several occasions in the early nineteenth century. Secondly, Abdullah bin Abdurrahim al-Kadiri was established as a trader on Lombok from about 1866. And, finally, Sayyid Abdurrahman bin Abu Bakar al-Kadri entered the service of the Dutch in 1836 as customs officer in Kupang, and later established himself in Sumba and aided contact between the Dutch and this island. The Baädilla family in Banda Neira also played a very significant role in this regard.[23] In regions outside European influence, Arabs grew to be particularly important for the trade in forest products such as rattan, gutta-percha, gum, wax, and products of cottage industries; they often monopolised certain kinds of specialised trade, such as the trading of horses from Makasar.[24]

What were the economic and social conditions of Arabs elsewhere in the Malay world compared to those in Java? The relatively smaller settlements in the Malay Peninsula and Singapore provide for valuable comparison across colonial borders. Although thousands would pass through Singapore in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, relatively few Arabs settled here, in all likelihood because their entry was closely regulated. Five years after its establishment as a British colony in 1819, there were only fifteen Arab immigrants.[25] Some of the earliest to settle in Singapore were sayyid from such prominent families as the Alsagoff, Al-Junied, and Al-Kaf.[26] Some were drawn from precolonial sultanates such as Palembang. Under the leadership of these men, the Singapore settlement became the most prosperous in the region, growing to nearly

Southeast Asia: Studies in Economic History and Political Economy (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), pp. 94–5.

[22] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, pp. 193–4.

[23] V. I. van de Wall, 'Sjeich Said bin Abdullah Baädilla: Een Arabier van Beteekenis in de Groote Oost', *Nederlandsch-Indië Oud en Nieuw*, vol. 15 (1930–1), pp. 347–52.

[24] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, pp. 145–6; J. A. E. Morley, 'The Arabs and the Eastern Trade', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1949), pp. 169–70.

[25] Census figures for the Malay peninsula and Singapore that follow are from Morley, 'The Arabs', p. 175. Those for Penang are from Omar Farouk Shaeik Ahmad, 'The Arabs in Penang', *Malaysia in History*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Dec. 1978), p. 5.

[26] Charles B. Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*, 2 vols. (Singapore: Fraser and Neave, 1902). See vol. 1, p. 62, and vol. 2, pp. 564–5. For the Alsagoff family, see Syed Mohsen Alsagoff, *The Alsagoff Family in Malaysia: A. H. 1240 (A. D. 1824) to A. H. 1382 (A. D. 1962)* (Singapore: by the author, 1963), p. 9.

five hundred strong in 1871, and just under a thousand at the turn of the century. Penang was the next largest, with between three and six hundred Arabs in the period from 1870 to 1931. Melaka, which had long since declined as a commercial centre, had less than one hundred in the same period.

According to the colonial administrative officer Fokko Fokkens, unlike Europeans who placed a high value on their eventual return to the homeland, Arabs made the Netherlands Indies their second homeland and seldom returned to the Hadramaut.[27] Addressing the anxiety of Europeans in the colony about the presence of Arabs, the colonial scholar-bureaucrat L. W. C. Van den Berg states that the material interests of the latter led them to place great importance on 'the maintenance of public order before anything else'.[28] He adds that most of their wealth was not easily transferred or relocated in case of trouble because it was usually invested in stores, ships, lands, and other fixed assets. Practically none of those who had gained some prosperity ever returned to the Hadramaut, and rarely did they transfer their investments there. It is more likely, however, that there were also times of return, especially when family links were still strong, and their financial status was good. In general, Arabs were regarded as more conservative with their finances than the Chinese. They held on to their valuable investments in fixed assets and tended to invest their profits very cautiously, and were much less burdened by mortgages than the Chinese.[29]

In the 1880s, the centres with the most capital invested in commercial enterprises were, in order of increasing importance, Pekalongan, Batavia, Palembang, Surabaya, and Singapore.[30] Those who possessed a capital of 300,000 guilders or more did not number more than twenty-one, namely four in Batavia, two each in Pekalongan, Surabaya, and Palembang, one in Pontianak, and ten in Singapore.[31] Sayyid families dominated the economies in these centres through their long-established commercial networks. Some of the wealthiest families were based in Singapore and extended their influence and investments to the Malay Peninsula and the archipelago.[32] For a number of sayyid with well-established commercial networks and large capital, the Dutch and British colonies afforded

[27] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, p. 301; Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 132.
[28] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 173.
[29] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, p. 301.
[30] Ibid., p. 146.
[31] Ibid., pp. 157–8.
[32] Saadiah Said, 'Kegiatan Keluarga Alsagoff dalam Ekonomi Negeri Johor, 1878–1906', *Jebat*, vols. 7–8 (1977–9), p. 52.

opportunities for the growth of their commercial affairs and wealth. In this time, Arabs became closely identified with distinct economic functions that estranged them from the Javanese, and reinforced their separate 'racial' character. Arabs came to be viewed, for instance, as the archetypal middleman trader.

The Middleman Trade

As more of Java's interior was integrated with the centres of commercial life in the cities, Arabs were no longer confined to trading in the coastal cities of the north but became intimately connected to the economic life of the agricultural hinterlands. They, like the Chinese, found their niche in the role of economic middleman between the large European wholesalers in the cities and the growing numbers of consumers of manufactured goods in the interior. At the same time, although cash was increasingly becoming the basis of the rural economy, the peasantry did not find it readily available. Peddling a variety of small goods throughout the interior, Arab middlemen exploited these circumstances and made themselves indispensable to peasants by providing regular personal contact and offering loans. Sales of goods by Arabs were often forms of moneylending at high rates of interest that technically escaped the well-known proscription against usurious practices in Islam. Instead of actually loaning a villager money, an Arab sold him goods that he needed at a very high price, for which payment was accepted in instalments; this system often left villagers in perpetual cycles of debt until finally they yielded possessions such as household items, land, and so on to their creditors.[33]

Arabs, like the Chinese and others who functioned as middlemen, typically derived large profits from the sale of goods on credit or from the interest earned on loans. The middleman more than facilitated the exchange of goods between the city and the hinterlands; he was also a moneylender in an insidious system that kept peasants financially dependent. By the close of the century, the indebtedness of peasants – also petty notables and bureaucrats at times – became rampant and extremely deleterious to their economic well-being. With the greater need for cash in the second half of the nineteenth century, villagers preferred to borrow from an Arab moneylender because he was accessible. Unlike colonial

[33] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, p. 409; Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, pp. 136–9. See also Serjeant, 'The Hadrami Network', p. 152. The author observes that 'devices to conceal usury are common all over the Islamic world', including the Hadramaut.

banks, there were no formalities involved and the accumulation of debt was welcomed. Moreover, the lender usually had a personalised relationship with his creditors. Caught in perpetual cycles of debt, Javanese peasants seldom if ever possessed enough cash to repay their creditors because the rates of interest were usurious. The dire conditions late in the century are underscored when it is considered that in Buitenzorg (Bogor today), one of the earliest areas of Dutch economic exploitation, peasants had already become heavily indebted to Chinese moneylenders in 1805.[34]

Arab middleman traders purchased their goods on credit from wholesalers who, aside from a few Chinese, were mainly European. Hundreds of guilders worth of credit were issued on the basis of mutual trust every few weeks when the trader returned to clear his previous debt and restock his inventory. This intermediary trade was almost completely in the hands of Arabs and Chinese, who typically sold linens, batiks, small wares, paraffin, provisions, beverages, sugar, tea, iron, building implements, gambier, weaving yarn, tangled yarn, matchsticks, wax, and medicinal herbs (*jamu*). The Arab trader also purchased agricultural products such as rice, corn sugar, and potatoes, as well as forest products such as rattan, dyes, wax, and pepper, from Javanese and other petty traders. They sold these articles in *toko* (stores) located in the same city as the wholesaler or in the regional capitals of the interior. Typically, small toko and *warung* (stall) owners sold their goods on credit up to a sum of 30 to 40 guilders, which was repayable within one to three months. Goods sold on credit provided returns ranging between 20 and 25 per cent and were preferred over cash purchases, which earned no more than 5 to 10 per cent.[35]

At times, the systematic exploitation of labour was linked to loans. Arabs appear to have controlled networks that supplied bonded labour to a Singapore-based plantation owner named Sayyid Mohamed Alsagoff from as early as the 1880s.[36] Members of the Alsagoff family of Singapore were among the sayyids whose presence was valued in Riau in the maritime world of earlier times. In the late 1800s, Sayyid Mohamed, a leading member of the Alsagoff family, was involved in the economy of Johor as the sultanate underwent rapid development under the reign of Abu Bakar. As an intimate friend and financier to the Sultan, Sayyid Mohamed was able to obtain an agricultural concession on Kukup Island

[34] Peter Boomgaard, 'Buitenzorg in 1805: The Role of Money and Credit in a Colonial Frontier Society', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1986), pp. 33–59.
[35] The information in this paragraph is based on Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 17 Apr. 1896, no. 27, pp. 321–3.
[36] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 137.

in southwestern Johor in 1878. In the course of the next few decades, he cultivated rubber, coconut, coffee, and other cash crops; he also improved land and sea transportation to his concession for the shipment and distribution of these crops. All commercial matters, including the export of the crops, were handled by the family firm: Alsagoff and Company.[37] Sayyid Mohamed loaned money to pilgrims to Mecca on the basis that they would work on his Singapore estates and his concession in Johor upon their return in order to repay the loan. This arrangement ensured a steady pool of labour, as the would-be pilgrims were typically unable to repay the loan. Although the role of Arabs in the 'pilgrimage industry' is well known, the case of Sayyid Mohamed appears to stand out for its exploitative excesses as well as an indication that unfair lending practices permeated different strata of Arab society.[38] Besides the middleman trade, however, it is perhaps their role as landowners that epitomised the alienation of Arabs from natives in the move from the sea to land.

Landownership

Arabs purchased tracts of land and thereby initiated their long association with the ownership and development of property. Early in the nineteenth century, initially under the administration of Daendels, then under Thomas Stamford Raffles, village lands in Java were put up for sale when the government's coffers ran dry and in order to finance treasury reform. As we know from Chapter 1, Daendels was Governor General during the French interregnum (1808–11). Raffles took over from him and was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Java during the British interregnum (1811–16). Al-Misri refers to the historic land sales when he recounts the story of the land granted to Baba Midun and the ensuing drama of the rejection of the latter's marriage proposal by the noble family of Sumenep because he was considered to be of a lower status. Al-Misri also notes the gift of land near Gresik to Sayyid Alwi bin Shaykh al-Jufri around 1815, in lieu of a pension for the latter's services. At about the same time, a Chinese is said to have purchased Besuki, a very large estate with some two thousand inhabitants within which he was referred to as *Raja* (King).[39] The alienation of village lands created

[37] Said, 'Kegiatan', pp. 53–7. See also Alsagoff, *The Alsagoff*, p. 11.
[38] Edwin Lee, *The British as Rulers: Governing Multiracial Singapore, 1867–1914* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1991), pp. 165–7; Said, 'Kegiatan', pp. 58–9.
[39] Zaini-Lajoubert, *Abdullah*, p. 92; See also John Bastin, *Raffles' Ideas on the Land Rent System in Java and the Mackenzie Land Tenure Commission*, Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, vol. 14 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), p. 138.

economic and social divisions between landowning Arabs and Javanese peasants.[40]

The land sales gave private owners sizable power over people. As these were often large tracts of land containing entire villages, the possession of a private estate meant control over the people who lived within its boundaries. Fokkens regarded private estates as 'small states within the state where the owner has power over thousands and thousands of Natives'.[41] Van den Berg noted in the 1880s that many Arabs owned large tracts of land in Batavia that were 'sold by the government principally in the beginning of the century on the condition that the proprietor guaranteed to the natives the hereditary possession of their fields, their gardens, and their homes'.[42] By the time the colonial government began repurchasing and expropriating the private estates in the 1910s, however, their owners had become infamous for the exploitation of the inhabitants. Arabs developed a particularly poor reputation as they were prominent in the ownership of private estates and reports of such exploitation were widely known.

Fokkens noted in 1894 that Arabs typically invested the capital they did not immediately require for their business in assets such as houses, estates, and ships.[43] Ironically, the considerable ownership of fixed assets by Arabs both alienated them from natives and made them more solidly entrenched in Java than most Dutchmen. Evidently as a result of their conservative financial practices, Arabs purchased vast amounts of land in Java in the second half of the nineteenth century. They also came into possession of much property through the confiscation of the lands of debtors who were unable to repay their loans. Typically, rice, sugar, coconuts, and other crops were cultivated on these lands.[44]

The ownership of private lands by Arabs grew in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1847, on the eve of the issuance of regulations governing private estates, Arab ownership of private estates only amounted to one quarter of 1 per cent of the total. Europeans headed the list with some 76 per cent of the land to their names, then Chinese with 20 per cent, and natives with some 3.5 per cent – though far less per capita than the others.[45] At the end of 1892, the breakdown of the ownership of private estates by Foreign Orientals was as follows: Chinese owned 21,612 *perceelen* (lots) with a taxable worth of nearly 76 million

[40] Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, pp. 46–7.
[41] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, p. 484.
[42] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, pp. 150–1
[43] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, p. 301.
[44] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, s.v. 'Soerabaja'.
[45] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1848, p. 8.

guilders; Arabs owned some 3,030, worth just under ten million guilders; and other Foreign Orientals (mostly Indians) owned 139, worth half a million guilders.[46] These figures are best analysed in comparison with the total taxable worth of the land in that year, more than 166 million guilders. The Arab share of this is some 6 per cent, the Chinese is 46 per cent, and the rest is for the most part the European share. Considering the size of the Arab population around this time, one fifteenth the size of the Chinese, its per capita share of the taxable worth of the land was high. This suggests that the land owned by Arabs was smaller in portion but of great value.

After 1848, new private estates had regulations that prevented the forced use of the labour of inhabitants, though estates based on the earlier model continued to exist. This was the origin of the administrative distinction between the lands west of the Cimanuk river and those lying east of it. For the most part, the lands to the east of Java were better administered, hence there was less exploitation of their inhabitants.[47] There were over 400 private estates in Java in total. Of the 321 private estates to the west of the Cimanuk river in the early 1890s, 184 were in the hands of the Chinese, twenty-seven owned by Arabs, seventeen by natives, and ninety-three by Europeans. This amounts to about 57, 8, 5, and 29 per cent of these lands in the hands Chinese, Arab, native, and European owners, respectively. On the other hand, of the eighty-eight private estates to the east of the Cimanuk, fifty-three belonged to Chinese, twenty-three to Arabs, and twelve to Europeans. This comes to 60, 26, and 14 per cent of the lands in the hands of Chinese, Arabs, and Europeans, respectively.

Around 1900, Arabs started setting up companies in various aspects of the building industry, from brickmaking to house construction, as a natural outgrowth of the large investment in land. Typically, they would create housing estates on their land and rent or sell the property. The Akoewan brothers, Muslims of Indian descent in Semarang, whose business interests and social milieus were very much the same as those of the Arabs, were a notable example. They built very profitable businesses from selling shop-wares and trading in precious stones, and purchased private estates in the area.[48] At the turn of the century, they, like many Arabs, moved into the house-building industry and developed their properties, about which more will be said in the following section.

[46] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, pp. 301–4.
[47] Ibid., p. 508.
[48] C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje, 1889–1936*, vol. 2, edited by E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse, Rijks' Geschiedkundige Publicatiën, Kleine Serie 34 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), p. 1748.

Building Companies

Java's exports doubled in the 1900s and had increased by eight times by 1920, fuelling a period of postwar economic expansion that lasted until 1921.[49] Major Arab limited liability companies emerged in these years. Their entry into the business of building and renting houses followed from the vast amounts of property they had amassed by the late nineteenth century. The Bouwmaatschappij (Building Company) Badjoeber, for instance, was established in 1898 by a group of Arabs in Surabaya with a registered capital of 200,000 guilders at 500 guilders per share for the purpose of exploiting the shareholders' collective *eigendomsperceelen* (property lots) as well as those properties that would be purchased by the company. The following year in Semarang, the Bouwmaatschappij Said Mohamad Aljuffi (sic) was set up by two Arabs with a registered capital of 200,000 guilders at 1,000 guilders per share for the exploitation of *onroerende goederen* (immovable assets), specifically the building and rental of houses and the construction of other buildings. In 1900, another building company in the name of Said Aloei Almoenawar was formed in Semarang with a registered capital of 72,300 guilders and shares of 150 guilders each. Also in Semarang that year, the Akoewan brothers set up a construction firm with a registered capital of 400,000 guilders at 5,000 guilders per share.[50] These cases illustrate the substantial differences in capital investment and participation in the companies that were set up at this time. Although the ownership and control of by far the majority of these companies were in the hands of a few individuals or a family of considerable wealth, some companies were owned by moderately rich Arabs, either individually or by pooling resources.

Between 1898 and 1924, a period of some twenty-seven years, at least twenty-one Arab building companies were formed in Java (see Table 1). All but six of them were begun with capital in excess of 200,000 guilders, four of these possessed a capital of about 100,000 guilders, and only two fell well below. These were very large sums when it is considered that 75,000 guilders, in shares of 25 guilders, was required in 1908 to set up the first native-owned commercial organisation. Led by Tirthoadhisoerjo, this organisation published the pioneering newspaper *Medan Prijaji*. In addition, the Arab-Indian concern Setija Oesaha, which published *Oetoesan Hindia*, the unofficial voice of the significant native organisation Sarekat Islam,

[49] Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912–1926*, Asia East by South series (Ithaca: Cornell University Press for the Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1990), p. 27.

[50] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1899, app. D, p. 1; 1900, app. D, p. 3; 1901, app. E, pp. 2–3.

Table 1. *Limited liability building companies held by Arabs in Java, 1898–1924**

Year	Name of company	Location	Registered capital	Price per share
1898	Badjoeber	Surabaya	300,000	500
1899	Aldjuffi	Semarang	200,000	1,000
1900	Said Aloei Almoenawar	Semarang	72,300	150
1901	Alkaf	Surabaya	400,000	4,000
1904	Gebroeders Soenkar	Buitenzorg	200,000	1,000
	Salim Baloeil	Batavia	40,000	1,000
1905	Said Achmat bin Aljuffrie	Semarang	100,000	1,000
1907	Mashabi	Batavia	200,000	1,000
	Al Shahab	Batavia	100,000	2,000
1908	S. A. Alhabsy	Batavia	200,000	1,000
	S. A. Oen Alketirie	Batavia	200,000	5,000
1910	Alwakedie Badjenet	Batavia	250,000	10,000
1911	Almafroed Abdulla Hadad	Batavia	99,000	1,000
1917	Almenawar Assegaf	Batavia	100,000	1,000
1918	Roebaja Talip	Surabaya	500,000	1,000
1919	Alketerie	Surabaya	200,000	2,000
	Mashabi	Batavia	300,000	10,000
	Algeriah al Arabiah	Semarang	200,000	1,000
1920	Said Alim Algadrie	Pasuruan	500,000	5,000
1921	Sech Awal Bobsaid	Surabaya	500,000	5,000
1922	Ali Alhabsy	Surabaya	1,000,000	1,000

* This list was compiled by identifying those companies that had indubitable Hadrami surnames in the annual published listings, an inexhaustive method of assessment that became necessary as the records rarely indicate the owners' ethnicity. Note also that no Arab names were identified for 1902, 1903, 1906, 1909, 1912–16, 1923, 1924.

Source: *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1899–1924.

was started in 1913 with 50,000 guilders at 10 guilders per share. It is also a noteworthy comparison that a worker in an Arab-owned tile factory in Surabaya in 1904 earned an average wage of a fraction of a guilder per day.[51]

Arab construction companies grew steadily through the first decade of the twentieth century and expanded rapidly in the postwar years until 1921. Despite the expansion of house building in general there was a great housing shortage in the years preceding 1921, and budding colonials from the Netherlands were forced to wait for months before they found dwellings, usually at rather high prices. A very important reason

[51] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1905, app. AAA, p. 6.

that construction had not proceeded at pace was the high cost of materials, especially the 150 per cent increase in the price of the widely used teakwood between 1919 and 1920. To overcome the housing shortage, the Governor General proposed that private companies take over from the municipality or other corporations the task of building houses in large cities such as Batavia, Bandung, Semarang, and Surabaya.[52] These conditions appear to have benefited Arab construction companies a great deal, as the rise of Arab building firms was greatest in the years of the housing crisis, 1919–21, when five companies were formed, and lowest around the outbreak of the war, 1913–15, when there were none. Barring the years 1901–3, at least one company was formed per year between 1898 and 1912. Only one company was registered in the years 1922–4, due to the slowdown attributed to the high cost of materials and other factors.

Three of the above-named companies, Alwakedie Badjenet, Almafroed Abdulla Hadad, and Almenawar Assegaf, were also registered as trading companies, thus indicating the expansion and diversification of Arab enterprises in the 1910s. Only a few years earlier, in 1907, Imran Almaskatie had set up the first Arab trading company in Surabaya with a capital amounting to 30,000 guilders at 1000 guilders for each share. Following that, Badjenet Effendi in Buitenzorg, Al Aydiet and Baradja in Soerabaya, and Aboebakar Alatas and Hachim Alatas in Batavia were among the dozen or more companies set up between 1910 and 1923 with capital ranging from less than 100,000 to as much as 750,000 guilders. Like the construction industry, the development of trading companies shows the existence of commercial networks between Arabs in jointly owned companies such as Aletehad Altedjari (Union of Traders), which was registered in Pasuruan in 1919 with a relatively modest capital of 30,000 guilders.[53]

Besides construction and trading, companies were set up for a few other purposes. The company Rijstpellerij Alkaf (Alkaf Ricemill) was set up in Kraksaan, Pasuruan, in 1917 with a capital of 150,000 guilders and shares costing 1,000 guilders each.[54] There was also some investment in industries that complemented the construction industry, such as tile production. In 1904 seven of the nine manually operated tile works in Surabaya were owned by Arabs and natives and employed between two and forty workers daily. The other two were European- and Chinese-owned.[55]

[52] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1921, cols. 55–6.
[53] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1908, app. D; 1911–24, various appendices.
[54] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1918, app. F.
[55] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1918, app. F; 1905, app. AAA, p. 6.

Considerable wealth accumulated in the hands of Arab businessmen and landowners in Java in the economic boom leading up to the 1920s. For instance, around the middle of the decade, Arabs in Batavia paid the highest amount of income tax per capita in comparison to Europeans, Chinese, and natives, and were second only to Europeans in the payment of property taxes.[56] Their numbers were small but their incomes were high, and the properties owned were more highly valued. In numbers, 1,073 Europeans, 1,042 Chinese, 472 Arabs, and 163 natives paid property taxes in 1928. Fewer than 500 Arabs – or 17 per cent of the total, to be more precise – owned 20 per cent of the taxable land, and paid 22 per cent of the total tax. However, the concentrations of wealth become more evident when we compare the payments made per capita. Arab landowners paid 146 guilders on a per capita basis, while Europeans paid 152, Chinese paid 75, and natives paid 47.

Wealthy Arab families emerged in a number of major urban centres of the Malay world by the twentieth century, including Batavia, Semarang, Surabaya, Singapore, and Penang. Some commercial and social connections existed across colonial boundaries but these were no longer as active as they had been a century earlier. Notably, some Arab commercial houses in Singapore had transborder connections. Upon its establishment as a British port in 1819, this island began to develop as an important Arab commercial centre and transit stop, eventually replacing Aceh as the traditional point of entry into the archipelago.[57] The highest concentrations of Arab wealth in the archipelago were found here in the late nineteenth century. As in Java, one of the most significant economic activities of Arabs in Singapore was real estate and rent collection. Typically, Arabs transferred their commercial profits directly into real estate investments, and as much as 80 per cent of the community lived on revenue collected from house rentals before the 1920s.[58] The Alkaffs, one of the oldest families on the island, had commercial and personal connections with Java. Alkaff and Company was founded in 1904 on the fortunes amassed by Sayyid Shaik bin Abdul Rahman Alkaff, who was originally from Surabaya. The company acted as agents for Arab firms in Java that had investments in Singapore and represented Arab firms based in Aden as well as absentee landlords living in the Hadramaut.

[56] E. J. Eggink, *'Na 25 jaar': Beknopt Gedenkschrift ter gelegenheid van het 25-jarig bestaan der Gemeente Batavia* (Batavia: N. V. Indonesische Drukkerij en Translaatbureau, 1930), pp. 217–20.

[57] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 111.

[58] Jacqui Loh Chee Harn, 'The Arab Population of Singapore, 1819–1959', unpublished MA thesis, University of Singapore, Singapore, 1963, pp. 37–8, 43–5.

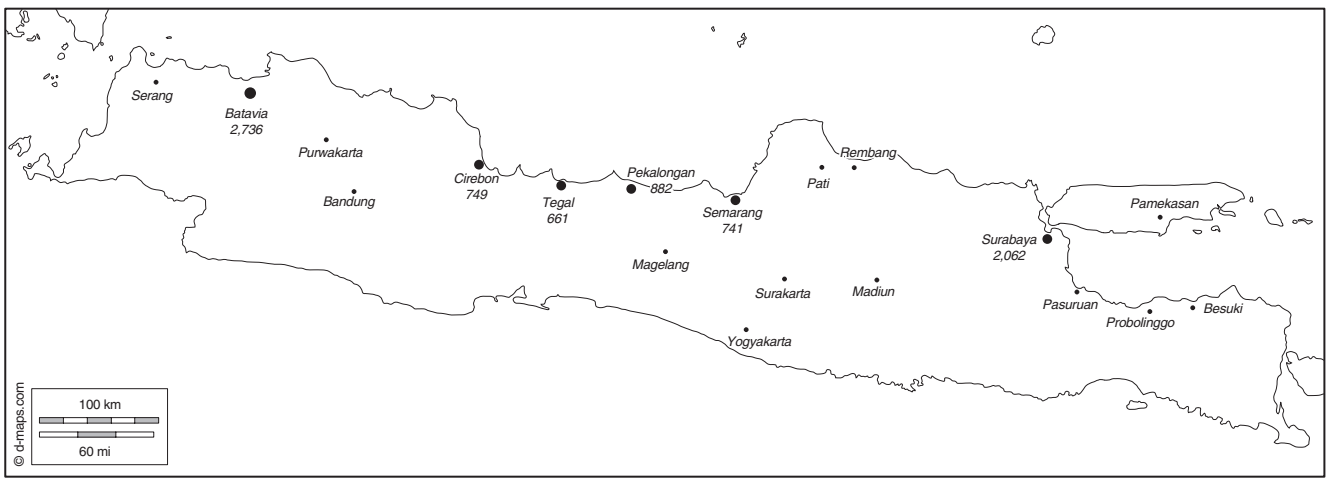
The wealth accumulated allowed a number of Arabs to fund pioneering newspapers, organisations, and schools in Surabaya, Batavia, Singapore, and Penang (to name but the major centres). These ventures were significant in giving shape to modern identities and will be further explored in Chapter 6. For the moment, we return to the transformation brought about by the move from sea to land, shifting our attention from economic activities to settlement and social relations.

New Patterns of Settlement and Social Relations

More and more Arabs migrated to Java following the imposition of Dutch colonial rule in 1800, and the first significant settlements arose after 1820. These nineteenth-century settlements were not only quantitatively but also qualitatively different from those of the past. As Dutch economic exploitation of the Javanese hinterland was intensified, Arab colonies formed in Surabaya, Semarang, and Batavia. These larger and more stable settlements were initially dominated by sayyid, but then, as the colonial economy expanded and became more complex, a greater number of poorer Arabs migrated. As a whole, Arabs began to shift their activities from the precolonial to the new commercial centres that grew under Dutch and British rule. Gresik the one-time centre of Arab trade and shipping in the region, was gradually overshadowed by neighbouring Surabaya after 1808 as the latter became a Dutch residency and important naval base, but fell into great decline around the middle of the century with the rise of steam shipping.

In 1893, there were Arabs in nineteen of the twenty-two residency capitals of Java, and most of the population lived within the confines of these cities (see Map 3). While the categories 'Arab' and 'foreign' are taken at face value here, just as they appear in colonial sources, they will be cast in more critical light in the next chapter. For the time being, we are invited to imagine Arabs as a cohesive if not homogenous ethnic category, despite what we have learned so far. In order of increasing size, the six largest population centres were Tegal, Semarang, Ceribon, Pekalongan, Surabaya, and Batavia; the last two were by far the biggest with over two thousand Arabs each.

Pasuruan, Probolinggo, Besuki, Magelang, and Pamekasan each had populations ranging from 100- to 300-strong. Fewer than 100 resided in Madiun, Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Rembang, Pati, Bandung, Purwakarta, and Serang, which were mostly inland. After the approximately 250,000 Chinese and 50,000 Europeans, Arabs were the third largest foreign population, with a total of over 16,000, while the Javanese formed the



Map 3. The nineteen residency capitals with Arab populations on the islands of Java and Madura in 1893, highlighting the six with more than 500 Arabs

bulk of the 25 million inhabitants of the island. Arabs were only a tiny fraction of the total population.[59]

Considering that Arab settlements arose in Java mainly after 1820 (after 1870 in the islands to its east), the demographic data for 1893 describes conditions that had changed a great deal in the preceding years.[60] While there may have been fewer than one thousand Arabs in all of Java around 1800, by the end of the century there were as many concentrated in one residency capital. The last four decades of the century in particular saw demographic, political, and economic changes of lasting effect, therefore it would be desirable to view the overall growth of Arab populations in the major residencies of Java during this period. The ten residencies with the largest Arab settlements were, in descending order, Surabaya, Batavia, Ceribon, Madura, Besuki, Pasuruan, Pekalongan, Semarang, Tegal, and Rembang (see Table 2). The names of all these residencies corresponded with their capitals but for Pamekasan, the capital of Madura. The vast majority of the Arab population of Java resided on its eastern flank, probably because it was here that the first settlements were formed. The population of this region only – the residencies of Surabaya, Pasuruan, Besuki, and Madura – totalled 6,723 in 1890. On the other hand, the population of Batavia and the five remaining residencies totalled 6,572 in the same year.

The doubling of the rate of increase in the Arab population between 1865 and 1870 heralded the beginning of a new era of substantial migration to Java (see Table 3). As a consequence, the total population of Arabs in Java more than doubled from 7,804 to 18,051 between 1870 and 1900. Besides the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which clearly contributed to the rise in immigration, this era also saw the heaviest exploitation of Java's economic resources by the Dutch. In addition, after the middle of the nineteenth century there was an upward trend in world primary product prices that made Java's export production increasingly valuable. Indeed, the only significant decline in the rate of increase of the population in these three decades occurred in the early 1880s and may have been precipitated by the economic crisis of 1884–5, when the expansion of agricultural production was checked due to falling world food prices.[61] The most substantial increase in the population occurred in the fifteen years following this crisis, 1885–1900, when the size of the Arab population rose by 6,622 while in the preceding fifteen years the increase had been only 3,625.

Among the most important transformations in the Arab settlements in the last few decades of the century was the increased presence of the

[59] This discussion is based on the population data in *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1895, app. A, pp. 2–3.
[60] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 111.
[61] Caldwell, 'Indonesian Export', pp. 74–7.

Table 2. *The ten residencies with the largest Arab settlements in Java between 1860 and 1905, in descending order*

	1860	1865	1870	1875	1880	1885	1890	1895	1900	1905
Surabaya	1,438	1,569	1,626	1,940	1,955	2,304	2,652	3,255	4,014	3,732
Batavia	800	618	952	879	1,003	1,035	2,410	3,279	3,063	2,772
Ceribon	543	663	816	1,102	1,231	1,411	1,560	1,526	2,089	2,705
Madura	983	960	979	1,171	1,516	1,425	1,564	1,524	1,774	1,586
Besuki	222	243	382	410	627	1,188	1,483	1,555	1,867	1,940
Pasuruan	333	418	546	710	835	935	1,024	1,186	1,607	1,926
Pekalongan	450	494	608	657	712	801	893	943	1,639	2,111
Semarang	509	443	358	692	717	720	738	819	916	854
Tegal*	89	165	204	172	257	380	592	691	-	-
Rembang	81	177	205	258	271	318	379	369	431	633

* No figures appear for Tegal in 1900 and 1905 because it had been incorporated into the residency of Pekalongan, hence the sharp increase in the latter population in those years.

Source: *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1860–1907.

Table 3. *Arab population of Java for every five years between 1860 and 1905*

Year	Population	Increase
1860	6,133	
1865	6,628	495
1870	7,804	1,176
1875	9,027	1,223
1880	10,506	1,479
1885	11,429	923
1890	14,293	2,864
1895	16,238	1,945
1900	18,051	1,813
1905	19,148	1,097

Source: *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1860–1907.

foreign-born (totok) as opposed to creoles (peranakan). As migration from the Hadramaut was almost exclusively restricted to men, 9,389 out of the 16,123 Arabs in Java in 1893 were male, or approximately 60 per cent of their total population.[62] As a rule, the important urban centres drew most of the new immigrants and thus showed a much higher presence of totok men. An instructive comparison could be made between the relatively new colonial centres and those with roots in precolonial times. In 1883, there were 457 totok and 198 peranakan men in the city of Batavia and 154 versus 28 in Tegal. The reverse was true in precolonial centres. In Palembang, for instance, there were 61 totok and 429 peranakan, in Pontianak there were 32 as opposed to 506, and in Gresik, the one-time centre of Arab shipping, there were 50 as opposed to 248. Surabaya, an old area of Arab settlement that thrived under Dutch rule, showed a more even distribution of these groups, with 218 totok and 220 peranakan. Batavia, a major centre of commerce with a relatively new Arab population, had the highest concentration of totok in the colony.[63] Not only had the colonial cities in Java gained in size over the older centres, but in the largest of them there was an increased presence of totok men. Compared against the total population of Arabs including women and children, however, the totok were very much in the minority.

Besides the increased presence of totok in the principal trading centres of Java, another major change was the arrival of non-sayyid in unprecedented numbers, thereby marking the end of the era of mainly sayyid

[62] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1895, app. A, p. 2.
[63] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, pp. 105–8, 111–12.

immigration.[64] With the increase in non-sayyid migration, the majority of those who migrated were poor and almost always arrived with the promise of employment, if not financial support, from richer Java-based Arabs. Although it was uncommon, some became agriculturalists in the outskirts of urban centres, where they lived and worked like the local populace. As material life in Java was a considerable improvement on that in their homeland, many totok never returned, and their Indies-born children, for the most part, no longer had any connection with the Hadramaut.[65]

Most immigrants came from the valley between Shibam and Tarim in the Hadramaut and had some links with a family or clan in the archipelago; this was particularly true for sayyid. Family and clan links came first, and communities arose of Arabs from the same area of Hadramaut as a result. Relatives and friends followed once a pattern of migration to an area had been established. While the large Batavian and Surabayan communities consisted of all Hadrami social classes, elsewhere it was not unusual for one group to predominate over long periods of time. Pekalongan, for instance, had a high concentration of sayyid families who were intimately connected to the important batik industry, whereas in Tegal the community was principally non-sayyid.[66] Most arrivals in the archipelago came through Singapore. Here, some Arabs made a business of accommodating newcomers and providing the means for them to reach their destination, under the condition that the fare and expenses would be repaid with interest at a later date. A young arrival who was able neither to find accommodation at the home of a fellow Hadrami, nor to afford to procure a house of his own, pooled his resources with others to obtain one.[67]

Only a handful of Arab women ever migrated to Java. The common explanation for this is that it was considered *'aib* (a disgrace) in Hadrami culture for women to leave their homeland.[68] This follows from the closeted life that women were said to lead. Alternatively, women could have resisted migration for fear of losing whatever status and power they might have held in the Hadramaut. Most women here were illiterate, besides some exceptions who had found access to learning and the daughters of some sayyid who were taught to memorise the Qur'an. However, it appears that they were relatively secure in the Hadramaut, and polygamy was not practised with the kind of frequency that it was in the diaspora.[69] Women did not migrate even as the conditions of travel between the Hadramaut and Java

[64] Ibid., p. 210.
[65] Ibid., pp. 132–3, 152, 173–4. See also J. M. van der Kroef, 'The Arabs in Indonesia', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1953), p. 306.
[66] Ibid., p. 115.
[67] Ibid., pp. 124–5.
[68] Serjeant, *The Saiyids*, p. 27.
[69] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 97.

Figure 2. Studio portrait of a creole Arab woman in Java whose appearance shows multiple influences, including native Muslim, Arab, and European styles, circa 1890

improved. It is noteworthy that women appear somewhat frequently in the lists of owners of ships and private estates in Java, though it is unclear if they were owners in name only or involved in the business. As women from creole families, however, they would have been familiar, for the most part, with a Malay-world context in which it was not exceptional for women to be involved in business and to be seen in public. Their dress reflected a distinctly local blend of transregional styles (see Figure 2).

The Colonial Economy and Racialisation

Colonial rule consolidated the shift from the sea to land and reshaped the urban and social landscapes of the Malay world. New urban centres like Batavia emerged to replace those such as Palembang that had played a significant role in the archipelago's history for more than a millennium. An extractive colonial economy shaped the character of the new cities and the people that inhabited them. The status and roles of Arabs in public life were greatly circumscribed, as they were marked as aliens and

expected to perform particular economic functions that cast them apart from Javanese, Sundanese, and others. From Lord Sayyids who were a multi-faceted and integral part of the maritime world, Arabs came to be increasingly represented in public life as outsiders and by their economic function: middlemen, moneylenders, and landlords.

The economic standing of Arabs, once significant as a result of their control of shipping, declined in the colonial economy as they were unable to obtain lucrative farming concessions from the colonial government. Chinese ascendancy, on the other hand, was achieved on the basis of such concessions, especially the most lucrative of them: opium farms. Without farming licences, Arabs did not possess the means to develop powerful Java-wide commercial networks like the Chinese and tended to occupy less profitable economic niches. The failure of opium farms in the economic crisis of 1884–5 led to a growing number of Chinese spilling over into other economic activities and thereby competing with Arabs.[70] This contributed further to the overall economic decline of Arab communities. Writing in 1894, Fokkens regarded the trading activities of Arabs as 'dispensable' because it was so similar to that of the Chinese and rather insignificant.[71]

The relatively inferior position that Arabs occupied in the colonial economy might be an explanation for their association with exploitative economic practices such as transactions that amounted to hidden forms of usury. The Arab 'usurer' was a rather persistent stereotype in the colonial and post-independence history of Indonesia. The Dutch frequently found culturalist explanations for this, arguing that Arabs were able to exploit Javanese peasants because they were held in some reverence by the latter. However, Arabs might have become ghettoised in usurious activity given the precipitous decline of fortunes from their earlier strength in shipping, a predicament worsened by their exclusion from lucrative farming concessions. Hence, Arabs in particular were remembered for usury, it would seem, though others were also involved in the exploitative practice.

The colonial economy encouraged the racialisation of Arabs in several ways. Firstly, Arabs became increasingly alienated from natives as the former profited from the colonial economy despite suffering a decline. Their standing was subordinate to Chinese and Europeans but well above the vast majority of natives in the economic hierarchy of the colony. The alienation of Arabs from natives was initiated early in the nineteenth century. Furnivall suggests, for instance, that Arabs and Chinese came to occupy economic roles apart from and above natives, in part, because of colonial policies such

[70] See chapter 9 in James R. Rush, *Opium to Java Revenue Farming and Chinese Enterprise in Colonial Indonesia, 1860–1910*, Asia East by South series (Ithaca: Cornell University Press for the Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1990).

[71] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 17 Apr. 1896, no. 27, p. 339.

as the importation of English cotton into Java. The introduction of cotton imports by Raffles 'replaced those woven at home, throwing the weavers out of work, and the cotton and indigo fields out of cultivation'.[72] The Javanese were unable to trade in this potentially cheaper and better import because they were 'shut out by the Chinese and, in some measure, by the Arabs'. As a result, Raffles' system was 'to depress the natives, and to strengthen the position of the Chinese and Arab moneylenders and merchants'.

Secondly, the longstanding pattern of sayyid migration and interaction with ruling elites waned, with significant consequences. For centuries, Arabness in the Malay world had been cast in the light of the value of the Prophetic lineage and the many worldly skills of sayyids. This was no longer plausible. On the one hand, the independence and strength of the ruling elites in question had been circumscribed. On the other, the political, social, and economic transformation wrought by colonial rule diminished the cultural capital of sayyids. This cultural capital was not, however, eliminated. Although the route to social ascendancy offered by Malay-world ruling elites was mostly closed, the colonial economy created new elites who valued the sayyid Prophetic lineage. At the same time, new hybrid groups, if not creoles, emerged that included in the mix not only sayyids but an unprecedented number of non-sayyids. As the path to social ascendancy now rested increasingly on wealth accumulation rather than Prophetic lineage, non-sayyids too found that they could aspire to a commanding social position. Their presence introduced competing social hierarchies and notions of Arabness.

Thirdly, new Hadrami migrants tended to serve narrow economic functions relative to the roles played by sayyids in the past. Both the kin-based arrangements and colonial policy encouraged the growth of bounded, if not racialised, commercial networks. New migrants spread out across Java as networks of middlemen traders that stood apart from the Javanese and were associated with a colonial economy that was detrimental to many. Added to this already alienated position, the newness of the migrants, or rather the absence of connections to the Malay world, furthered the racialisation, which was only intensified by instances of exploitative excesses. Negative stereotypes of Arabs arose as a result.

Besides stereotyping Arabs, racialisation engendered derogatory views of creolised and assimilated Arabs, and by extension natives. Van den Berg notes of the creole Arabs of Surabaya that they had retained their 'national character' more than those in any other place he had visited in the early 1880s.[73] Not only did many of them speak Arabic but it was a matter of honour to them to show that 'they had not become native'. He also mentions an acculturated group in Palembang – around fifty members of the

[72] Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, pp. 106–7.
[73] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 118.

Bafadhl family – that was no longer regarded as Arab by new migrants. He adds that 'the Arab colony of Palembang no longer recognise them as compatriots and call them *mutawaḥḥish* which means "turned savage".[74]

Hybridity in a Racialised Context

The racialisation encouraged by the colonial economy did not end interaction and mobility altogether. On the one hand, older patterns of intimacy between Arabs and the Malay world persisted, though in more circumscribed forms. The Lord Sayyids of the maritime past often remained significant in various roles, as we have seen in this chapter in the case of a number of emissaries of the Dutch. On the other hand, new forms of hybridity emerged.

Centuries of interaction between outsiders and local communities left an imprint on the northern coast of Java that shaped the Muslim quarters of cities in the colonial era. The Pekojan district of Batavia is a good illustration. Although it was a lively centre of Arab social and economic life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it derives its name from the Khojas who settled there earlier. Bengalis took their place after the migratory flows of Khojas tapered off. Similarly, Arabs replaced Bengalis. The name remains unchanged and commemorates the earliest wave of Muslim traders there. Arabs shared Pekojan with Javanese, Sundanese, and other Muslims of the archipelago – who constituted the majority in the district – and became prominent in the Muslim trading milieus that emerged here and in other cities across the island.

Communities of Arabs and Indians in particular interacted and overlapped in Java. There was a history of close interaction between Arabs and Gujaratis in the Indian Ocean that carried over to the Malay world. For instance, Arabs were based in Surat in Gujarat and were part of an Arab–Indian sea-going merchant culture that owned fleets of trading vessels.[75] As we know, Arabs and Indians were involved in some of the same areas of economic life in Java. Prominent members of the two communities also established a number of charitable and organisational ventures, as we shall see in Chapter 6. Arab–Indian interaction was particularly noticeable in Surabaya, where it flowered in the twentieth century. This phenomenon is exemplified in the close relations between two sometimes indistinguishable groups, the Suratis (from the city in Gujarat) and Arabs, and in the histories of families such as the Algadris of Pasuruan, who had among them Indianised Urdu-literate members from their long

[74] Ibid., p. 224.
[75] Ashin Das Gupta, 'A Note on the Shipowning Merchants of Surat, c. 1700', in Denys Lombard and Jean Aubin, eds., *Marchands et Homme d'Affaires Asiatiques dans l'Océan*

sojourns in India. Sayyid Alim bin Miran Algadri, the Lieutenant of Arabs in Pasuruan at the turn of the twentieth century, read Urdu.[76]

Arabs, Indians, Persians, and Chinese left a lasting Islamic cultural legacy that shaped the hybrid social and spatial landscape of cities such as Banten, Batavia, Ceribon, Pekalongan, Gresik, Surabaya, and Sumenep on the northern coast of Java. Wealthy traders donated land or a building for charitable purposes in the form of a *waqf* (religious endowment) and this in turn enabled the establishment of facilities for Muslims such as mosques. The Langgar Tinggi mosque in Pekojan is a fine example. Sharifah Masad Babrik Baalwi, who belonged to a wealthy Palembang family, left her very large inheritance to be administered as a waqf by Shaykh Said bin Salim Naum. The latter, who was appointed headman of Arabs in Batavia in 1849, donated land from the waqf for the purposes of building the Langgar Tinggi mosque and a Muslim cemetery in the Tanah Abang district. The mosque that was built sometime around 1830 incorporated Chinese, European, and Javanese architectural elements. This hybrid architectural style is considered quite typical of the architecture of Java in the nineteenth century, and variations of the same may be found not only in Batavia but also in Ceribon, Pasuruan, and Gresik (see Figure 3).[77] Lacquer work from Palembang decorated the *mihrab* (the niche indicating the direction of Mecca) inside the mosque and added another element to its hybrid character. Built at a time when the population of Arabs in the city was just growing, Langgar Tinggi not only illustrates the hybrid outcome of Malay-world interactions but also the eventful shift from Palembang to Batavia.

An Islamic legacy equally shaped the cultural artifacts of everyday life. The design as well as the commercial production of batik – the quintessential Malay-world print-making tradition – is noteworthy. Creole Arabs were well known for the production of batik in such centres of this enterprise as Pekalongan. They localised designs derived from the Muslim trading diaspora by emphasising 'stylization and abstraction' in order to abide by the proscription against figurative representation in Islam.[78] The distinctive batik sarongs they produced and wore favoured 'the popular floral designs of the trading worlds and other designs closely related to imported Indian textiles, particularly schematic, non-figurative patterns'.[79] It would follow that the manner in which Arabs dressed in

Indien et la Mer de Chine, 13e–20e Siècles (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Science Sociales, 1988), pp. 109–15.

[76] I am grateful to Hamid Algadri for sharing this information with me in an interview conducted in Jakarta on 23 July 1988.

[77] Jacques Dumarçay and Henri Chambert-Loir, 'Le Langgar Tinggi de Pekojan, Jakarta', *Archipel, L'Islam en Indonésie II*, vol. 30, no. 1 (1985), p. 55.

[78] N. Tirtaamidjaja, Jazir Marzuki, and Benedict Anderson, *Batik: Pola dan Tjorak – Pattern and Motif* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1966), p. 19.

[79] Robyn Maxwell, *Textiles of Southeast Asia: Tradition, Trade and Transformation* (Melbourne, Oxford, Auckland, and New York: Oxford University Press), 1990, pp. 325–7.

Figure 3. Sketch by O. G. H. Heldring of an Arab mosque in Gresik, Java, with Chinese, Javanese, and Arab architectural elements, between 1880 and 1883

Java was not always reflective of the Hadramaut. Borrowing elements from their sojourns in the Indian subcontinent and the archipelago, they developed a dress style that was distinctive. Significantly, the characteristic differences between the respective dress styles of sayyid and non-sayyid disappeared in the Indies.[80]

The Muslim quarters of colonial cities engendered a hybrid culture that drew from the past as it forged new pathways. Creole Arabs here developed distinctive dialects of Malay that showed an Arabic influence. In Batavia, for instance, the language absorbed numerous Arabic words, especially in the intimate language used by family members and friends. Many Arabic words had already been absorbed into the language through the translation of Islamic texts into Malay over the centuries. However, the rise of significant Arab settlements in Java appears to have introduced a new wave of perhaps different kinds of words, such as those pertaining

[80] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 188. See also n. 1, p. 101, and his illustrations of Arab dress styles in the Hadramaut and the Indies, respectively, app. 5–7.

to intimate social relations. There were also Malay words that came to be used in Arabic in Java. The term *banākis* in the description of the Arab peddler in the epigraph to this chapter, for instance, is an Arabic-language adaptation of the Malay word *bungkus*, meaning 'package'.[81]

Arabness Demarcated

Arabness was demarcated by narrow roles and representations as a consequence of the profound transformation of Java and the Malay world wrought by the move from sea to land. Nevertheless, older forms of hybridity persisted or were produced anew in the Muslim quarters of urban Java, and continued to shape social life. The racialisation of economic roles accentuated group boundaries and hierarchy despite the persistence of hybridity.

The colonial economy unleashed processes that reduced Arabs to an economic function, alienated them from natives, and diminished the value of the Prophetic lineage. Arabs came to be identified with particular economic and social roles and exploitative practices. This racialisation produced new hierarchies. Although sayyids were no longer likely to rise to prominence through a relationship with ruling families, a significant number achieved a new elite status through commercial success. These elites modified, if not replaced, the older sayyid hierarchy of the Malay world. To this remade sayyid superiority, however, was added a growing number of non-sayyids whose wealth made them an alternative, if not a competing, elite.

Modern identities began to take root as racialisation alienated Arabs from a history of porous boundaries and fluid interaction in the Malay world. Besides the racialised hierarchies among Arabs, a racialised hierarchy emerged between Arabs and natives that was only intensified by the economic gulf between the two. Although there were the poor among them, Arabs were on the whole economically better off than Javanese, Sundanese, and others. The latter tended to regard the former simply as 'Arab' without distinguishing between creole sayyids and the new sayyid and non-sayyid arrivals from the Hadramaut, as economic function became paramount.

Chapter 2 has demonstrated that an eventful transformation was brought about by broad changes in economic direction rather than straightforward racialising measures. Colonial intervention in the racialisation examined thus far was largely indirect. Arabs, especially new arrivals, participated in and gave shape to a racialised economy. Chapter 3, however, turns to racialisation through policies and bureaucratic mechanisms. Once the primacy of the land over the sea was established, the colonial state extended its power over spaces within its boundaries, and forcibly emplaced Arabs in specific sites. Narrow Arab roles and representations became narrower still.

[81] I am grateful to Engseng Ho for pointing this out to me.

3 Categorisation and Control

This chapter delves into the colonial bureaucracy that governed Arabs as a racial category, while paying attention to the tensions and inconsistencies in its workings. The lives of Arabs were subject to a complex of restrictive regulations that grew increasingly tight in the course of the nineteenth century. These regulations were intended to control economic access, hence their intensification following the economic expansion of Java in the latter half of the century. However, the legal and institutional edifice that emerged from the regulations became progressively and deliberately racial in design and objective. The economic and social hierarchies examined in the previous chapter were increasingly justified and understood in racial terms as a consequence. A racially stratified social order took shape and the policing of racial categories maintained what in colonial parlance was described as *rust en orde* (peace and order). There was nevertheless a tension between the ideal of a racialised society and the realities of economic and social life; the latter tended to disrupt racialised colonial fantasies. This does not mean that racialisation was inconsequential, as regulations in its name not only caused hardship for many Arabs but shaped the character of the modern identities they assumed. Rather, it proposes that racialisation emerged out of a practical need to control economic access, and evolved into a larger politics that became foundational to the colonial state.

Control over the mobility of Arabs was critical to the racialisation, as we shall see in the following examination of the relevant regulations, mechanisms, and politics. Besides their juridical status, the place of residence of Arabs was circumscribed by decree. The racialisation of Arabs thus hinged on a forced emplacement in a specific location. Travel passes were necessary in order to go beyond the designated area. Although regulations pervaded many aspects of their lives, those restricting travel and residence were the most consequential. Such measures had been imposed as a means of controlling subject populations since the time of the Dutch East India Company. However, they were reorganised and extended in scope in the nineteenth century. By the 1860s, they collectively became

the pass and quarter system (*pass- en wijkenstelsel*). This chapter examines the various efforts to regulate the mobility of Arabs with a view to understanding the state of Arabness in the face of bureaucratic control. We begin, however, by examining the categories that underpinned the racialisation.

The Making of Arabs and Foreign Orientals

From its political and economic stronghold in Java, the colonial state subjugated nearly all the remaining independent polities in the archipelago in the second half of the nineteenth century. In this period of the Netherlands Indies' most extensive territorial annexation, the population of the colony was divided into three categories by law: Europeans, 'natives' (*Inlanders*), and Foreign Orientals (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*). These juridical divisions ostensibly arose as a consequence of the distinct 'legal needs' (*rechtsbehoeften*) of each group. In practice, this tripartite political and legal system engendered and protected numerous privileges that were enjoyed only by Europeans and those elevated by law to this group.[1]

Other kinds of distinctions were made when Dutchmen, under the aegis of the East India Company, first surveyed the archipelago from the vantage point of Batavia. Then, people from Makasar, Bali, and other islands were referred to as Foreign Orientals in Batavian statutes while Chinese were regarded as natives.[2] The term 'Foreign Oriental' probably meant those outsiders whose place of origin literally lay to the east of Batavia. And Chinese were regarded as natives because Dutchmen had encountered them ever since their initial forays into Java.

Categories were redefined and standardised in the nineteenth century. In the Constitutional Regulation (*Regeerings-Reglement*) of 1818, the joint classification of 'Chinese, Moors, Arabs, and other foreigners who were not European' initiated these groups' estrangement, at least in name, from natives.[3] In a significant shift in perspective, the term 'Foreign Orientals' applied to these groups in the colonial era. Following the reorganisation of the census in 1859, 'Arabs' appeared for the first time as a self-standing category in the census report published in the *Koloniaal Verslag*, the annual review of colonial affairs. By the latter part of the century, 'Foreign Orientals' specifically denoted three categories: Chinese, Arabs, and other Foreign Orientals. The last was composed primarily of

[1] A. van Marle, 'De Groep der Europeanen in Nederlands-Indië, Iets over Ontstaan en Groei', *Indonesië*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Sept. 1951), p. 97.
[2] W. E. van Mastenbroek, *De Historische Ontwikkeling van de Staatsrechtelijke Indeeling der Bevolking van Nederlandsch-Indië* (Wageningen: H. Veenman en Zonen, 1934), p. 23.
[3] Ibid., p. 53, citing *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1818, no. 87, art. 96.

communities from the Indian subcontinent and their descendants who had previously been grouped with Arabs. Colonial administrative and statistical reports typically conformed to this classification, though those in the last group, due to their paucity, were frequently subsumed under 'Arabs' after 1859, or not considered at all. Population figures for 1892 provide some perspective on these groups' presence in Java: 264,065 Chinese, 15,590 Arabs, and 2,982 other Foreign Orientals.[4]

By 1870, legal and physical mechanisms dedicated to the administration of Foreign Orientals were firmly in place. The *Koloniaal Verslag* initiated a section in 1874 that dealt exclusively with this branch of government. Its purview is described in detail in the Government Gazette (*Regeerings Almanak*) of 1885 under the heading 'Bestuur over vreemde oosterlingen en volkplanters in den N.-I. Archipel' (Administration of Foreign Orientals and Settlers in the N.-I. Archipelago).[5] Here, Foreign Orientals are mentioned in the same breath as those classed in the identical category during Company rule: Malays, Bugis, and other 'settlers from the archipelago'. The consideration of the latter groups alongside the 'new' Foreign Orientals – Arabs and Chinese – reflects the persistence through the nineteenth century of loosely structured and ethnically diverse enclaves in spite of the delineation of clearer administrative boundaries. In numerous places these groups were hardly separable. Nonetheless, the groups formerly classed as Foreign Orientals were distinguished from Arabs and Chinese by the term 'settlers' in the interest of preserving orderly categories, if only on paper. Thus, the loosely determined and Batavia-centred social categories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were replaced in the colonial era by those that were 'racial' as well as Netherlands Indies-oriented. Consequently, colonial authorities considered Malays, Bugis, and others as 'native' to the colony, but classed Arabs and Chinese as 'foreign'. The assertion of the foreignness of Arabs in juridical terms compounded the alienation from the Malay world that began with rise of the colonial economy. However, the making of Arabs was not by the construction of categories alone, but through the regulation of their mobility.

The sharper definition of the laws regarding the travel and residence of Foreign Orientals, particularly the Chinese, began in the 1830s as the Cultivation System was initiated in Java. Proponents of this system successfully argued that Chinese economic activity in the interior had to be monitored in order that the Dutch might derive its

[4] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, s.v. 'Bevolking', by W. B. Bergsma.
[5] *Regeerings Almanak en naamregister voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Weltevreden, 1803–1920), 1885, pp. 79–81.

full benefits. The regulations imposed also resulted in the increased importance of revenue farms because holders of these government concessions were freed from travel or residential obligations. Revenue farming thus became the main avenue for Chinese economic activities in rural areas. As access to these markets required the intercession of a Chinese officer, and the approval of his Dutch superior, the Cultivation era made the position of the former more important, and increased the reach of the colonial rulers through his cooperative efforts.[6] The regulation of mobility thus lay in the hands of a parallel government consisting respectively of the pass and quarter system and the Dutch-appointed corps of officers. We turn to the travel and residential restrictions first.

The Pass and Quarter System

Natives and Foreign Orientals were required by the Dutch to carry passes for land or sea travel in Java from 1816 onwards. This regulation was superseded by an ordinance in 1863 that permitted natives unimpeded travel by land, though not by sea, while maintaining the previous restrictions on Foreign Orientals. New conditions for the use of travel passes were stipulated and remained in place with few modifications until the pass and quarter system's piecemeal dismantlement in the 1910s. Passes were valid for one year and issued gratis by a local official in keeping with these guidelines:

> They are granted for the sake of trade and industry, or for fulfilling some other lawful purpose, and may be refused when the applicant's temporary sojourn in the interior, or certain special areas, is inadvisable in the interest of public peace.[7]

Those who possessed an invalid pass, or none at all, risked arrest en route to their destination. When arrested, they were either allowed to resume their journey or transported back to their domicile pending an investigation by the local authorities.[8] As a rule, Foreign Orientals were exempt from passes only for movement within the heart of a regional capital, the confines of their quarter, or, where applicable, the village of their residence.[9]

Pass regulations were intended, among other things, as a means of controlling the movement of Arab and Chinese traders in the interior. When the presence of Foreign Orientals threatened Dutch commercial

[6] Rush, *Opium to Java*, pp. 87–8.
[7] *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1863, no. 83, art. 3, par. 3.
[8] Ibid., art. 4.
[9] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, pp. 245–6.

interests or contributed to the rampancy of usurious practices in the hinterlands, pass and quarter measures were abandoned for even more stringent steps. For instance, after 1820 Foreign Orientals were barred from travel within the Priangan regency without first obtaining written authorisation from the resident there.[10] This ban was imposed in order to prevent Foreign Orientals, principally Chinese at this time, from interfering with the Dutch coffee monopoly that had been particularly important in this region since the late eighteenth century.[11]

Further uses of passes followed from incidents that drew Dutch attention to Arabs in particular. Surakarta and Yogyakarta, the *Vorstenlanden* (Principalities), were regarded as special zones that Foreign Orientals entered only by authorisation from the Governor General after 1823.[12] These were the cities to which the royal households of Java were reduced, from the eighteenth century, following the encroachment of the Dutch on their power. Changes in colonial policy towards outsiders were prompted by the arrival of a Meccan Arab in Yogyakarta, where he came to be venerated as a religious figure. In 1836, following complaints by the Sultan about the increasing influence of this Arab, Dutch surveillance in the principalities now expanded to include these groups: 'Chinese, Moors, Arabs or other Foreign Orientals as well as those persons who professed to be pilgrims from Mecca'. The particular attention paid to returning pilgrims exemplifies the use of pass regulations in stemming undesirable religious influence. Mindful of the Java War (1825–30), and the many local revolts that followed, Javanese rulers and the Dutch were vigilant of insurrectionary activities inspired by Muslim teachers. Measures that restricted the movement of 'priests' (*priesters*) were in fact initiated well beforehand. By one Dutch account, these were instigated by the Sultan of Yogyakarta, who was wary of the presence of sayyids in his realm:

> He last complained to the government as early as 1810 regarding the many priests claiming descent from Mohamed who travel through his land as mendicants, and whose damaging speeches and peddling were grounds for suspicion. [He] requested that no priests be allowed to travel without a pass, and they be permitted to travel only when the need for such was legitimate and one was assured of their good behavior and opinions.[13]

[10] Ibid., n. x, p. 218.
[11] The Siauw Giap, 'Socio-Economic Role of the Chinese in Indonesia, 1820–1940', in Angus Maddison and Gé Prince, eds., *Economic Growth in Indonesia, 1820–1940*, Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, vol. 137 (Dordrecht, Holland and Providence, Rhode Island: Foris Publications, 1989), p. 160.
[12] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, pp. 215–17.
[13] Ibid., p. 220.

In response, the colonial government issued a decree in 1810 that required 'priests' to carry passes for travel in the principalities as well as between any two residencies in Java.[14]

Pass regulations were complemented by the quarter system because travel was more easily monitored once Foreign Orientals were barred from freely residing in rural areas and gathered together in enclaves located primarily in urban centres. Quarters were instituted by an 1866 ordinance designating obligatory residential zones for Foreign Orientals in compliance with the Constitutional Regulation of 1854 that states: 'Foreign Orientals settled in Netherlands India are to be assembled, so far as possible, within separate quarters under the leadership of their own headmen.'[15] Quarter regulations evolved from a similar practice under Company rule of assembling Foreign Orientals 'in order to keep a watchful eye on them and to have better control of them upon their arrival'.[16] Nonetheless, there was much greater zeal for enforcing them in the nineteenth century, increasingly informed by a racialising politics.

At the beginning of the colonial era many Chinese had slipped past the relatively benign surveillance of the previous regime and lived with the Javanese. By mid-century, the rebellion of Chinese in Krawang, a private estate near Batavia, where they lived outside preordained enclaves, reinforced the desire to keep Foreign Orientals strictly apart from the Javanese:

> The revolt of Chinese contracting parties in *Krawang* and the fear of Foreign Orientals that resulted … compelled the Government to pass a resolution whereby local authorities in *Java* were informed that a tendency was observed, here and there, for Foreign Orientals in *Java* at the time, such as the Malays, Bugis, Chinese, and so forth to assimilate with Javanese people. The Government deemed this [tendency] unsuitable and desired, on the contrary, the steadfast persistence of the ancient custom of assembling such Foreigners in separate quarters or neighborhoods under their own chiefs. Consequently, when the opportunity arose they had to be handled in this sense without any deviation.[17]

This administrative ideal was adhered to more scrupulously by the colonial government as the century progressed, though their zeal for its strict implementation fluctuated with economic needs. Repressive means were sanctioned by the government and used against the Chinese in the aftermath of Krawang to correct the unwelcome development of an ethnically

[14] Ibid., p. 221.
[15] *Staatsblad van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, 1854, no. 129, art. 73, par. 1.
[16] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, p. 163.
[17] Ibid., pp. 163–5.

mixed community. In 1846, however, following years of harsh treatment, Chinese and other Foreign Orientals were no longer barred from residing in the interior where quarters were non-existent but were compelled to live separately within certain neighbourhoods of administrative capitals. The purpose was 'to make smuggling unthinkable', above and beyond halting the intermixing of different ethnic groups.[18]

The quarter system of 1866 was the culmination of the ideal of rule by separation. Colonial authorities, however, frequently made accommodations or adjustments to suit their needs. Regional officials were empowered, for instance, to waive the residential regulations in the interest of agriculture, industry, revenue farms, and public works. Dispensations were also granted to those who lived in villages, private estates, or other locations at the time the ordinance was implemented, and these allowances applied to their descendants as well. These dispensations resulted in a 'generation' of Arabs and their descendants who were permitted to remain in rural areas. Arguably, the children of these Arabs tended to 'relapse' (*retomber*) into native society, as Van den Berg observed in 1886, far more than the descendants of migrants arriving after 1866, who were almost exclusively confined to urban enclaves.[19] Strong disincentives to residing in rural areas were put in place for Arabs in the last three decades of the century. Those who lived outside designated urban quarters without official acknowledgement incurred a penalty ranging from 25 to 100 guilders, and were forcibly relocated if they did not move to appropriate zones upon notification.[20] These fines were considerable sums if one considers that the majority of Arabs probably earned between 20 to 40 guilders per month in the archipelago as a whole in the 1880s.[21]

In conjunction with the establishment of the pass and quarter system, another ordinance in 1866 regulated the arrival of Foreign Orientals in the Netherlands Indies by imposing guidelines for their entry. These guidelines supplemented an 1837 ruling that required their presence before the local authorities within twenty-four hours of coming ashore, passports or safe-conducts, and statements of purpose, in hand.[22] Failure to appear resulted in a fine as high as 25 guilders. Upon meeting these requirements, an entry permit was issued to the newcomer for a maximum of six months, during which he was obliged to live with his compatriots in a designated quarter. A local official was authorised to demand that two prominent residents of the Netherlands Indies guarantee

[18] Ibid., pp. 165–7.
[19] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 110.
[20] *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1866, no. 57.
[21] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, pp. 125–6.
[22] *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1866, no. 56.

payment for the expenses of his stay and return passage should the government become liable for them.

The presence of a black market in entry permits in Singapore suggests that they were not procured easily from Dutch colonial authorities.[23] Once they were issued, an application for residency had to be made to the Governor General in order to remain beyond the duration allowed by the entry permit. The presentation of a statement from the applicant's headman certifying that he possessed a means of existence would secure him a permit in due course. This immigration ordinance accorded with a ruling in 1865 by the Minister of Colonies that clearly distinguished between the two previously interchangeable terms for Foreign Orientals: *Oostersche Vreemdelingen* and *Vreemde Oosterlingen*. In keeping with the increasing specificity of colonial categories, it was declared that the former be reserved for visitors to the Netherlands Indies, and the latter for those who were long-term residents.[24]

The three preceding ordinances, namely the travel pass (1863), residential restrictions (1866), and guidelines for new arrivals (1866), collectively regulated the mobility of Arabs. The ordinances enacted guidelines that had been set down by the Constitutional Regulation of 1854, the culmination of decades of Dutch concern over the legal definition and control of those regarded as Foreign Orientals. In sum, the daily lives of Foreign Orientals were governed by complex and far-reaching restrictions. A number of booklets in Malay were published from the 1880s onwards that guided them through the maze of regulations.[25] These publications reflected the urgent need for information on travel and residential restrictions as the control of Chinese movement became more rigorous in response to the onslaught of criticism levelled against the opium farm system.[26]

The Regulations in Practice

In practice, the pass and quarter system worked in quite another manner from the letter of the law. In Bagelen, Semarang, Pekalongan, and Surabaya, Dutch-appointed heads of each community travelled without

[23] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, p. 140.
[24] Ibid., pp. 117–18.
[25] A. J. Immink, *Atoeran Hoekoem atas anak negeri Tjina dan bangsa Arab dan lain-lain sebageinja di tanah Hindia-Nederland* (Batavia: Yap Goan Ho, 1889); *Boekoe peratoeran pas djalan teramat bergoena boewat orang Tjina, Arab, Kling dan laen-laen bangsa asing jang dipersamakan pada orang anak negeri*, comp. Redactie Hoekoem Hindia (Batavia: Tjiong Eng Lok, 1899).
[26] The, 'Socio-Economic Role', p. 171.

restrictions within the residencies. Elsewhere, those whom the Dutch considered of 'good standing and wide repute' (*goeden naam en faam bekend staande*) were allowed unhindered trips in the environs of their domicile.[27] This common formulation in the language of colonial officialdom described an elite who were favoured, among other things, to receive the lucrative market permits (*pasarkaarten*) issued by the heads of local administrations.[28] For the most part restrictive regulations were waived for these well-off families with whom the Dutch cultivated a cooperative relationship.

In the case of the aforementioned establishment of Arabs in rural areas well before the implementation of the quarter system, those whom the colonial authorities exempted from relocating to urban quarters were wealthy, socially prominent, and friendly to their authority. The verification of the date of residency, in order to determine eligibility to continue living in a particular district, was carried out by local administrative officers. Permission was granted to those Foreign Orientals of 'good standing and wide repute' who had lived in these villages for long durations and possessed a means of existence, family, and 'membership in the community [*geburgerd*]'. Those whom the Dutch found undesirable were not granted leave to stay.[29] The 'generation' of Arabs thus created was a small elite, members of which had typically procured private estates where they cultivated rice by employing the labours of villagers living on the land.

The dependence of numerous Arabs on itinerant trading tied their fate to the pass and quarter system. In 1893, as many as 219 traders spent most of the year away from their homes in the 3,072-strong Arab community of Surabaya, second only to that of Batavia.[30] As these itinerant traders were in all likelihood men, their significance in numbers becomes apparent in relation to the 1,791-strong male population. At least a ninth of the male population, then, were itinerant traders (the ratio would be higher in proportion to the number of adult men). Restrictions on movement were particularly stringent in Batavia, where great numbers of Arabs relied on itinerant trading for their livelihood.[31] As a result, pass and quarter restrictions were often a source of resentment in Surabaya, Batavia, and other principal Arab settlements in Java. At the end of the nineteenth century, opposition to these measures inspired concerted protests by Arabs against their continued and arbitrary application by colonial authorities.

[27] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, p. 248.
[28] Ibid., p. 257.
[29] Ibid., pp. 198–9.
[30] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1895, n. g, app. A.
[31] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 113.

Passes were ostensibly refused only when the presence of the applicant posed a threat to 'public peace'. In practice, the denial of a pass was a coercive means of revenue collection.[32] Typically, those with outstanding tax payments were denied passes. So too were those who were suspected by the authorities for their religious activities. Reflecting Dutch fears of Islam in the late nineteenth century, an Arab domiciled in Ceribon who had gone to Batavia and the Priangan regency, to 'awaken greater religious zeal among the people there', was barred in 1875 from obtaining a pass for any further trips.[33] In addition, pass policies were not administered uniformly. More than any other group, the Chinese were frequently granted exemptions from travel restrictions because of their role in opium farming. For instance, they possessed freedom of movement throughout the economically important district of Batavia-Buitenzorg while Arabs required passes even to leave the confines of their allotted quarter.[34] As a rule, passes were denied to those who had fallen into the disfavour of the authorities or were considered of 'ill-repute' (*slecht bekendstaande*).[35] In one such instance, an Arab was stripped of his pass in the Priangan because he was found in a location that was not, as stipulated, served by the railways. On another occasion, a pass was rescinded in the case of an Arab who had visited markets in the hinterlands although he was not a lawful resident of the Netherlands Indies.

In general, the regulations pertaining to obligatory residential quarters were adhered to poorly. Due to the inattentiveness of local officials, numerous Foreign Orientals resided outside their enclaves without official acknowledgement in several places other than Krawang.[36] The discovery from time to time of such 'undesirable' settlements led to expulsions. A particularly watchful eye was kept on the Priangan, where the presence of Foreign Orientals was permitted only under rigid strictures. The government's actions there further illustrate the manner in which policies regarding residential and travel restrictions were closely intertwined with economic concerns. In an effort to end widespread usurious practices, in 1879 the resident of the Priangan decided to force out all the Arabs who had been given special permission to reside there.[37] When this measure proved to be damaging to European commercial interests, the government intervened by curtailing the resident's actions. While some Arabs were ejected, the rest were allowed to stay in Bandung, Cianjur,

[32] Ibid., pp. 261–2.
[33] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1875, p. 3.
[34] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, pp. 244–5.
[35] Ibid., pp. 268–9.
[36] Ibid., p. 193.
[37] Ibid., pp. 204–7.

Table 4. *Foreign Orientals permitted to live outside the quarter system in the 1890s*

	In cities where designated quarters were present	In areas where quarters had not been designated for them	Right of residency granted because of their presence before 1866
Chinese	6,551	13,376	50,978
Arabs	496	125	1,955
Other Foreign Orientals	184	11	512

Source: F. Fokkens, 'Onderzoek naar den Economischen Toestand der Vreemde Oosterlingen op Java en Madoera', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 17 Apr. 1896, no. 27, pp. 276–7.

and Ciawi. Even if they had broken residential regulations previously, temporary permits for remaining in these places were extended to those Arabs who had lived and traded in the region for eight successive years without posing a threat to the authorities.

By the 1890s, there were 218 quarters designated for 174,980 Chinese, twenty-eight quarters for 12,859 Arabs, and two quarters for 1,155 Bengalis.[38] However, 2,576 Arabs, about one-fifth of the total population, lived outside the quarter system (see Table 4). The majority of them, 1,955 individuals, secured this right because of their residency in the area before 1866. Notably, only a very small number obtained permission to live outside the quarter system for other reasons. The paucity of Arabs in this regard was a result of their near exclusion from revenue farming and the consequent exemption from residential regulations. The most lucrative of these government concessions, the opium farms, were in the hands of the Chinese, nearly twenty thousand of whom were exempted from residential obligations.

The Fiction of Racial Coherence

The regulations governing mobility contributed to the racialisation of Arabs. Colonial representations of the process, however, tended to project an absolute outcome, as demonstrated by a map of Arab quarters. The map attached to Fokkens' 1894 report on the economic condition of Foreign Orientals shows twenty-eight clearly marked Arab quarters in the administrative capitals of Java and Madura.[39] It is entitled 'Kaart: Uitsluitend de plaatsen

[38] Ibid., pp. 276–7.
[39] Ibid., app. 5.

waar wijken voor vreemde oosterlingen voorkomen' (Map: Showing only the places where quarters for foreign orientals appear). Actually, Chinese quarters are identified and then locations where 'quarters for Arabs also exist'. Neatly marked circles and dots on the map belie the nature of Arabs' presence in Java. By their omission, the frequent presence of 'other Foreign Orientals' within the confines of Arab quarters was made anomalous if not non-existent. Similarly, the presence of large numbers of natives in every Arab quarter was not acknowledged.[40] Quarters for other Foreign Orientals, typically 'Moors' and 'Bengalis' from the Indian subcontinent, are identified only in Semarang and Surabaya although these groups were present in several other places. While size was an important criterion, the manner in which ethnic groups were assigned specific residential locations was unpredictable. Their history in these places and local administrative constraints may have been additional considerations.

The example of the large and important settlement of Arabs in Surabaya is instructive. Moors, Bengalis, and Arabs were not assigned separate zones but lived in an area in the vicinity of the Ampel mosque that was 'generally known' as the Arab quarter (see Figure 4).[41] Despite the indication on Fokkens' map of a separate quarter for other Foreign Orientals in Surabaya, the conditions of life in the Ampel area afforded a more fluid commingling of groups. As the population of Foreign Orientals rapidly expanded in late nineteenth century, the overlapping of quarters that resulted was officially acknowledged. When no further room for expansion of the Arab quarter was available in the environs of Ampel, it was extended into densely populated areas inhabited by natives.[42] Additionally, in numerous other locations in Java where separate residential areas for Arabs and Moors were non-existent, they were directed to live in Chinese enclaves. The naming of the Ampel area as the 'Arab quarter' fortuitously illustrates the more conscious use by the government, in other instances, of 'Arabs' as the catch all category for non-Chinese 'foreign' populations, perhaps as a means of simplifying their administration.

This kind of Arabisation of sorts took place in the designation of heads of quarters as well. In Semarang in 1859, the Arabs' Headman for a number of years was appointed to the new position of 'Hoofd der Arabieren, Maleijers en Bengaleezen, met den titel van kapitein der Overwalsche vreemdelingen met uitzondering der Chineezen en Mooren' (Headman of the Arabs, Malays and Bengalis with the title of captain of foreigners in general with the exception of the Chinese and Moors).[43] Some

[40] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 112.
[41] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, s.v. 'Soerabaja'.
[42] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, pp. 213–14.
[43] *Regeerings Almanak en naamregister voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1859.

Figure 4. Photograph of the Arab quarter in Surabaya showing a mosque built by the waqf of an Arab family (Bafadhl), 1902

sixty years later, in 1910, an Arab in Mojokerto held the title 'Hoofd van Vreemde Oosterlingen geen Chineezen zijnde' (Headman of Foreign Orientals who were not Chinese).[44] As Moors vastly declined in importance through the nineteenth century, Arabs and Chinese emerged as the two principal groups of Foreign Orientals. Noticeably, Arabs were appointed as headmen of ethnically diverse communities whose common thread was that they were 'not Chinese', hence the appearance in 1891 of a 'List of places where quarters were designated for Foreign Orientals who were not Chinese'.[45]

The 'anomalies' did not end there. As shown in Table 4, around 2,500 Arabs actually lived outside designated urban enclaves. Of these, nearly three hundred were domiciled in quarters designated for the Chinese while the vast majority lived in villages by special permission.[46] In addition, more than seven hundred Moors and Bengalis lived in Arab and Chinese quarters.

[44] *Regeerings Almanak en naamregister voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1910.
[45] *Regeerings Almanak en naamregister voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1891, app. GG, pp. 326–7.
[46] Ibid., pp. 276–7.

What, then, does the map suggest by clearly delineating 'Arab' quarters throughout Java? To the colonial authorities the map was a necessary fiction that created and spatially ordered the distinct 'racial' groups upon which the social order was built. Viewing it in the 1890s, the map persuaded the reader to believe that the quarters appeared to have sprouted in these locations quite naturally. Separate spheres for each ethnic group then seemed to be the logical outcome of multi-ethnic settlement in Java, and all indications of Dutch intervention in creating them became invisible. The numerous locations designated as Arab quarters were far from racially coherent. However, the fiction of coherence shaped colonial justifications for the pass and quarter system and the Dutch-appointed corps of officers, to which we turn next.

The Corps of Officers

Tomé Pires, the Portuguese apothecary, observed in the sixteenth century that foreign traders in coastal realms of the archipelago often resided in particular quarters under the leadership of one of their own. While the political advantages offered by the separation of ethnic groups may have been recognised by potentates in that era, these quarters probably emerged from ties of language and culture rather than by design. Notably, heads of such quarters were frequently influential in the courts of local rulers, as was Nina Chatu, the leader of Tamil Muslims in Melaka.[47] They were conferred honorary titles and held positions that were integral to the Malay world. Similarly, the Lord Sayyids, as we have seen in Chapter 1, were both close to the court and accorded a place of honour. This kind of accommodation of outsiders was not radically challenged under the Dutch East India Company in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when people were categorised primarily according to religion.

The leadership of foreign populations was greatly transformed under colonial rule. Upon designating racially segregated quarters for Foreign Orientals, the Dutch appointed chiefs through whom control over the resident populations was strictly enforced. This contrasted with British policy on the other side of the border – namely the Straits Settlements – where Arabs were placed under the direct authority of the colonial government.[48] Completely independent from the native administration, the chiefs of Foreign Orientals in Java reported directly to Dutch superiors.[49] Following East India Company precedent, an appointee was referred to as a headman (*hoofd*), or given the titular military rank of lieutenant,

[47] *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, pp. 287–9.
[48] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 121.
[49] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, s.v. 'Vreemde Oosterlingen'.

captain, or major in accordance with the size and importance of the community, as well as length of service and loyalty. Chosen for their standing in the Arab settlements, frequently they were also prominent members of Indies society who held functions in other aspects of colonial government, such as the courts of law.

Arab headmen wielded considerable power over members of their community in Java because they were an extension of the government. They were obeyed, Van den Berg argued, when their directives were sanctioned by law because failure to comply in these instances was punishable as an act of rebellion.[50] An officer's duties included the gathering of statistical information on the number of people under his jurisdiction, children born with birth defects, deaths, and relocations.[51] This information was submitted to the local head-official annually. In addition, the word of the headman determined a new arrival's eligibility for a permit to enter and eventually reside in the colony. Upon arrival in Batavia's port at Tanjung Priok, the individual would be taken by the authorities to the Arab officer, who would inquire about his identity and reason for visiting the Netherlands Indies.[52] The officer would then advise his Dutch superior as to whether the newcomer ought to be permitted to enter. Permission was granted largely in consideration of a prospective migrant's ability to support himself.

Notably, due to the busy traffic at Tanjung Priok, many escaped the notice of the authorities. When newcomers were met by relatives or friends, they would typically evade the formalities and board the train to their destination, to be eventually discovered in the hinterland without an entry permit.[53] Aside from a few deviations, the same formalities were observed upon arrival in Surabaya. However, Foreign Orientals were delivered to their respective headmen bound by rope in the 1890s; this kind of bureaucratic mishandling invited significant protests, to which we will turn in Chapter 5.[54]

The corps of Arab officers emerged slowly in the 1820s, after Arabs were considered a separate group by law from 'Moors', and their numbers and settlements began to increase. The first officer to appear in the listings of the Government Gazette was the Hoofd der Arabieren of Semarang in 1827, Sharif Aloewi bin Mohamat Segaf. While Van den Berg suggests the alternative year of 1819 for this appointment, there seems little doubt that Semarang was the first Arab settlement led by a headman

[50] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 128.
[51] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, s.v. 'Bevolking', by W. B. Bergsma.
[52] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, p. 133.
[53] Ibid., pp. 134–5.
[54] Ibid., pp. 138–9.

installed by the Dutch.[55] Palembang followed in 1830, Gresik in 1833, Pekalongan in 1839, Surabaya in 1841, and Batavia in 1846. Newer and less significant than the Arab maritime trading centres of eastern Java in the first half of the century, Batavia later became the largest and most important Arab settlement, where every social class of the Hadramaut was present, and the post of headman was strongly contested. Late in the century, the officer corps became more elaborate in Batavia and other major urban areas. The office of the headman was expanded into local administrative bodies consisting of a few officers ranked in a titular military hierarchy who oversaw large Arab communities. This demonstrates, once again, the process of state-building, and the subsequent concentration of people and power in the capital. Older centres of Arab settlement, like Riau, Pontianak, and Palembang, diminished in importance as colonial centres grew.

The Expanding Reach of the State

The growth and spread of Arab officers reflected the expanding reach of the state over the colony. As there were significant administrative changes after 1859, the corps of officers is discussed in two parts, namely the appointments made between 1827 and 1859, followed by those appointed from 1859 until the 1910s.

Arab officers were appointed in eighteen locations in the entire Netherlands Indies in the three decades between 1827 and 1857. Within Java there were fifteen appointments, while in the Outer Possessions merely three appointments were made in two locations: Palembang and Banjarmasin. By contrast, the appointment of Chinese officers expanded from thirteen to thirty-three localities in the 1830s alone.[56] In the case of the Arabs, the development of an officer system does appear to conform to the years of the Cultivation System from 1830 to 1870. Population data for this period is scarce but Arabs' presence in shipping, landownership, and cash crop cultivation, as well as peddling, has been documented in the previous chapter. The relatively modest size of Arab communities at this time may be inferred from the small number of officer appointments, with only one member of a rank higher than headman, the lieutenant in Ceribon.

The appointment of officers in the first half of the nineteenth century reveals certain important trends (see Table 5). It is striking, for instance, that the chronological establishment of the headman position almost

[55] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 116.
[56] Rush, *Opium to Java*, pp. 86–7.

Table 5. *Officers of Arabs in the Netherlands Indies between 1827 and 1858*

Semarang	1827	Hoofd der Arabieren	Sharif Aloei bin Mohamat Segaf
	1840	Hoofd der Arabieren	Sayyid IJahija bin Alwie bin Mohamad Alsegaf
	1851	Hoofd der Arabieren	Sayyid Hoesin bin Hassan Masawa
	1854	Hoofd der Arabieren, Maleijers en Bengaleezen, met den titel van kapitein der Overwalsche vreemdelingen met uitzondering der Chineezen en Mooren (1858)	Sayyid Abdulla bin Hoesin Masawa
Palembang	1830	Hoofd der Arabieren	Sharif Pangeran Abdul Ragman bin Hassan Alhabaschij
	1833	Hoofd der Arabieren	Pangeran Sharif Ali bin Aboe Bakar bin Saleh
Gresik	1833	Hoofd der Arabieren en Mooren	Sayyid Alie bin Achmat Segaf
	1843	Hoofd der Arabieren en Mooren	Shaykh Osman bin Salim Bahasoan
Pekalongan	1839	Hoofd der Arabieren	Sayyid Hoesin bin Salim Atas
	1845	Hoofd der Arabieren	Sharif Alie bin Mooksin Atas
Surabaya	1841	Hoofd der Arabieren	Abdul Kadier bin Ali bin Adjiem
Batavia	1846	Hoofd der Arabieren	Shaykh Said bin Salim Naum
Ceribon	1847	Luitenant der Arabieren (1850)	Shaykh Mohamat bin Oemar Sewet (or Soeïd)
Pasuruan	1848	Hoofd der Arabieren en Mooren	Shaykh Salim Fadal Bagawie
Sumenep	1850	Hoofd der Arabieren	Sharif Thalib bin Ahmad Albakhie (or Albaitie)
Madura	1855	Hoofd der Arabieren	Sayyid Hassan bin Abdulla bin Smit
Banyuwangi	1857	Hoofd der Arabieren	Shaykh Abdulla bin Achmad Bakresoe
Banjarmasin	1857	Hoofd der Arabieren	Shaykh IJoesoep bin Said Ganam

Source: *Regeerings Almanak van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1827–58 (with the exception of 1829).

completely departs from the precolonial centres of Arab settlement in Java. While certain precolonial settlements such as Gresik, where Arabs had a colony in the sixteenth century, and the eighteenth-century settlement of Palembang do receive Dutch-appointed headmen, the great majority of these appear in places whose fortunes were linked to nineteenth-century Dutch economic expansion in Java. Indeed, Semarang, where the first appointee is found, was the archetypical colonial shipping and commercial centre. Only two places outside of Java appear in this list: Palembang (from 1830 onward) and Banjarmasin (from 1857 onward).

Officers were appointed in increasing numbers in the Outer Possessions as the pass and quarter system was extended to those islands in the latter half of the century. Palembang, and to a lesser extent Banjarmasin, were important centres of Arab migration and influence before Dutch control, and the former, due to its proximity and continued close relations with Java-based Arabs, is often included in the scope of this book. Nonetheless, as discussed in Chapter 2, the nature of Arab contacts with precolonial and early colonial centres was quite different. The coming of Dutch rule to the Outer Possessions gradually transformed these contacts according to models that had been created in Java, and that had shaped the course of Arab settlement and influence on this island. Communities on the outlying islands whose governance had been the responsibility of the local ruler were increasingly placed under the supervision of Dutch-appointed Arab headmen. In the early 1870s, for instance, the governance of Arabs in a district of Banjarmasin was transferred from the *Ronggo*, a local chief, to an Arab headman.[57]

Although Arabs never developed a system of officers as powerful and elaborate as that of the Chinese, their numbers show a distinct turn after 1859 (see Table 6). In this year alone six headmen were appointed, in the capitals (*hoofdplaats*) Surabaya, Pasuruan, Banyuwangi, Pamekasan, and the departments (*afdeelingen*) Madura and Sumenep.[58] The second peak in appointments takes place in 1873 when a new name appears on the rolls for each of the capitals Pasuruan and Surakarta, and each of the departments Bangil, Malang, and Indramayu. It is unclear why the first peak of appointments takes place in 1859 precisely, however, the opening of the Suez Canal and direct steamer lines between Singapore and Aden resulted in the second peak in 1873. While one hundred Arabs were appointed to the post of headman in Java between 1827 and 1915, the bulk of these appeared after 1859. Fifty-three appointments were made in the three decades following 1859 compared to only fifteen in the three preceding decades.

[57] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1874, p. 19.
[58] *Regeerings Almanak en naamregister voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1859–61.

Table 6. *Officers of Arabs in the capitals and departments of four major residencies in Java, 1859–1915*

SURABAYA (city and suburbs)	1859	Hoofd der Arabieren	Sayyid Ibrahim bin Pangeran Sayyid Aloei Alhabassij
	1877	Kapitein der Arabieren	Shaykh Abdulla bin Awal Boepsaid [or Bobsaid]
	1895	Kapitein der Arabieren	Shaykh Mohamat bin Abdulla Boepsaid [or Bobsaid]
	1911	Kapitein der Arabieren	Shaykh Achmad bin Abdoellah Bobsaid
Gresik	1865	Kapitein der Arabieren	Sayyid Aloei bin Alie bin Achmad bin Sahabiedin Segaf
	1894	Luitenant der Arabieren	Sayyid Abdullah bin Abdulrachman bin Mohamad Ghaneman
	1909	Luitenant der Arabieren	Sayyid Achmad bin Abdoelkadir Assegaf
	1913	Luitenant der Arabieren	Sayyid Hoessin bin Moehamad bin Oemar bin Sjahab
Mojokerto	1874	Hoofd der Arabieren en Maleijers	Intjé Hoesin Mohamad Arief
	1910	Hoofd van Vreemde Oosterlingen geen Chineezen zijnde	Sayyid Acmad bin Abdoelkadir Assegaf
PEKALONGAN	1860	Hoofd der Arabieren	Shaykh Ahmad bin Mohamad Dzoebedien
	1864	Hoofd der Arabieren	Sayyid Mohamat bin Hoesin Atas
	1868	Hoofd der Arabieren (Acting)	Sayyid Aloewie bin Hassan Alatas
	1872	Hoofd der Arabieren	Sayyid Oemar bin Ali bin Moeksin Alatas
	1878	Luitenant der Arabieren	Shaykh Mohamad bin Mohamad Algarnock
	1883	Luitenant der Arabieren	Sayyid Moehsin bin Abdoellah bin Jahja
	1907	Luitenant der Arabieren	Sayyid Djen bin Mohamad bin Brahim bin Jahja
CERIBON	1860	Luitenant der Arabieren	Shaykh Abdoel Rachman bin Abdoel Kadir Almadani
	1865	Luitenant der Arabieren	Shaykh Mohamad bin Oemar Arfoan
	1866	Luitenant der Arabieren	Shaykh Salim bin Awab Attamimi
	1903	Luitenant der Arabieren	Sayyid Abdoelrachman bin Djapar Alhabsi
	1911	Luitenant der Arabieren	Sayyid Segaf bin Hasan Alhabsi

Table 6 (*cont.*)

Indramayu	1873	Luitenant der Arabieren	Shaykh Abdoelrachman bin Moehammad Djoewas
	1875	Luitenant der Arabieren	Shaykh Said bin Aboe Bakar Basliem
	1892	Luitenant der Arabieren	Shaykh Badar bin Hasan Badjri
	1896	Luitenant der Arabieren	Shaykh Ali bin Ombarak bin Doman
	1904	Luitenant der Arabieren	Sayyid Hoesen bin Abdoelkadir Al Idroes
BATAVIA (city and suburbs)	1864	Kapitein der Arabieren	Sayyid Mohamad bin Aboebakar Aijdiet
	1879	Kapitein der Arabieren	Sayyid Hoessin bin Mohamad bin Aboe Bakar Aijdiet
	1884	Kapitein der Arabieren	Shaykh Mohammad bin Hasan Babaheer
	1894	Kapitein der Arabieren	Sayyid Oemar bin Hasan bin Achmad Aijdiet
	1902	Kapitein der Arabieren	Shaykh Oemar bin Joesoef Mangoes
	1877	Luitenant der Arabieren	Shaykh Aboebakar bin Mohamad bin Abdulla Bamoesbah
	1887	Luitenant der Arabieren	Shaykh Said bin Ali Bahasoan
	1909	Luitenant der Arabieren	Shaykh Ali bin Abdoellah bin Aun
Buitenzorg	1914	Luitenant der Arabieren	Shaykh Aboebakar bin Abdoelah Abad

Source: *Regeerings Almanak van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1859–70, every five years from 1870 to 1920.

The administrative structure, scope, and tenure of the officers varied considerably from place to place. In Pekalongan, for instance, Sayyid Moehamad bin Moeksin bin Jahja was in charge of the town centre, and Sayyid Ibrahim bin Oemar Alatas handled the Keputran district.[59] From 1883 Sayyid Moeksin bin Abdoellah bin Jahja was placed in charge of the entire Arab community in the residency, and after 1907 he was assisted by Sayyid Djen bin Moehamad bin Ibrahim bin Jahja. As shown in Table 6, in a number of places one family controlled the position of Arab headman for several generations. In Surabaya, for instance, the Boepsaid

[59] Chantal Vuldy, 'La communauté arabe de Pekalongan', *Archipel, L'Islam en Indonésie II*, vol. 30, no. 1 (1985), p. 113.

family, whose earliest member arrived in 1680, formed a minor dynasty from 1877 onwards.[60]

The state extended its reach in a number of other ways in conjunction with the expansion of the officer corps. Driven by new arrivals from the Hadramaut, the rate of increase in the Arab population doubled in the 1860s. This created a need for official Arabic-language translators and interpreters who, in all likelihood, worked closely with Arab headmen. Sayyid Abdul Rachim bin Abdullah Alkadri and Shaykh Mohamad bin Hassan Babeheer were appointed to perform this function in Surabaya and Batavia, respectively, in 1863. They were probably the first to hold the position as no records of previous appointments are to be found in the Government Gazette. After these men, Shaykh Saleh bin Salim Basalmah was appointed to the position in Surabaya in 1867, followed by Sayyid Hoesin Edroos in 1895. Shaykh Said bin Ali Bahasoan, the Lieutenant of the Arabs, was appointed to the position in Batavia in 1895, and remained in it for more than two decades. He was assisted by Sayyid Moehamat bin Aloewi Salabia Alaijdroes after 1910. Shaykh Hassan bin Abdulla Bobsaid was appointed in Surabaya in 1903 and had a long career. Shaykh Abdul Rachman bin Oemar Gaitban was appointed in Semarang in 1904.[61] The appointments of translators and interpreters provide further confirmation of the growth of totok culture in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and date a rise in Arabic speakers to the 1860s.

In addition, the state extended its reach by conferring titles to Arab headmen, thereby coopting a longstanding Malay-world courtly practice. As we know from Chapter 1, Pangeran was an important honorific that was granted by a ruler to creole Arabs close to the court, and became an integral part of the long hybrid names of several notable sayyids. In the nineteenth century, however, the title became the highest distinction of the 'indigenous nobility' and was granted by the power of the colonial state.[62] For instance, the officers appointed in Palembang in the 1830s displayed their pre-eminence in the Malay world through the title. They were subordinated to the Dutch by the same token, as the title, besides other honours, was conferred on them by the colonial state in recognition of their support and loyalty during an uprising by the family of the deposed Sultan. The Dutch coopted numerous others in this manner.

[60] See also Abdul Rahman Patji, 'Asimilasi Golongan Etnis Arab: Suatu Studi Lapangan di Kelurahan Ampel, Surabaya', in M. Bambang Pranowo, A. B. Tangdililing, Ravik Karsid, Abdul Rahman Patji, and Burhanuddin, eds., *Steriotip Etnik, Asimilasi, Integrasi Sosial* (Jakarta: PT Pustaka Grafika Kita, for Yayasan Ilmu Ilmu Sosial, 1988), pp. 184–5.

[61] The information in this paragraph is taken from the *Regeerings Almanak en naamregister voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1865, 1868, 1905, 1910, 1915.

[62] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 180.

Sayyid Mohamad bin Aboebakar Aijdiet (Captain of Arabs in Batavia), for instance, was one of several Arabs who rendered political services to the Dutch. He was conferred the honorary title of Major in 1877, and two years later that of Pangeran.[63]

The Apparent Coherence of Officer Titles

The titles of the Arab officer corps display a growing coherence after 1859 as they change from signifying leadership over ethnically diverse to uniform enclaves. Only two of the thirty-six titles listed in Table 6 suggest the presence of non-Arabs, namely those in Mojokerto in 1874 and 1910, respectively. On the one hand, the presentation of coherent Arab communities under their own leaders firmly places them within a clear colonial bureaucratic structure. The coherence is also integral to the advancing racialisation that is reflected in colonial representations like the map of Arab quarters we have already discussed. Whereas the map emplaces Arab within designated spaces, the representation of the Arab officer corps fixes them in the social order of the colony.

On the other hand, the coherence belies the persistence of ethnic diversity and hybridity in the officers' wards. The lingering association of Arabs with other Muslims suggests the vestigial influence in the nineteenth century of earlier categorisations based primarily on religion. Under the Dutch East India Company, 'the population was classified *chiefly* by religion and the *race-criterion* came only in second-place consideration when differentiating communities'.[64] The titles from the time of the Dutch East India Company are instructive as they reflect the historical *longue durée* through the cultural traces they contain of the Muslim trading groups of the Indian Ocean. Although they demonstrate a concern with religious identification, they are somewhat expansive and indeterminate in character. The category 'Moors and Mohammedans' is a good example. Once widely used, it disappeared with the Government Gazette of 1820.

The racialisation advanced by the apparent coherence in the titles is demonstrated by the dissociation of 'Arabs' from categories such as 'Moors'. This category, like 'Mohammedans' and 'Bengalis' respectively, was necessarily indeterminate perhaps, as it referred to overlapping diasporas – and Muslims from the archipelago – that produced intermixed or hybrid communities. At the turn of the nineteenth century, for instance, Major Mohammad Alie is listed as Officer of the Moors, in

[63] Ibid.
[64] Mastenbroek, *De Historische Ontwikkeling*, p. 46. The emphasis is in the original.

addition to overseeing Mohammedans and the Native Military.[65] Moors included Arabs. The latter were considered a legally separate entity from the former only in 1818.[66]

The lists of officers named Arab headmen exclusively only with the increasing relevance of race and the growing presence of Arabs in quarters already inhabited by ethnically diverse Muslims. As a rule, Arabs were settled in or were assigned to quarters such as these throughout Java, and came to form the majority in them over the course of the nineteenth century. In Batavia, for instance, the transformation from an Indian Muslim into an Arab quarter took place gradually and was followed by the appointment of Shaykh Said bin Salim Naum – whom we encountered in Chapter 2 – as Arab headman in 1846. Arabs constituted a small population of 318 individuals (of whom 197 were men) in Batavia according to Raffles' census of 1815. However, they eventually outnumbered Bengalis, who had replaced Khojas earlier, in the quarter of Pekojan.[67] The population of Pekojan nevertheless remained intermixed if not hybrid. Arabs were themselves similarly diverse and this was a potential source of tensions.

Tensions within Arab Communities

Arab headmen often faced two sources of tensions in the communities under their charge that challenged their collective representation as a coherent racial group. Firstly, tensions arose from the cultural differences between creole Arabs and those born in the Hadramaut. Van den Berg observed that one of the most common sources of disharmony between competitors for the post of headman was the antipathy of Hadramaut-born Arabs towards creoles.[68] We have already noted in Chapter 2 how the former no longer regarded their long-assimilated brethren in Palembang as compatriots.

Secondly, tensions arose when the Dutch made appointments without taking into account the Hadrami social hierarchy. As we know from Chapter 2, sayyids recovered their elite status through economic success after their ties to Malay-world courts dwindled. At the same time, non-sayyids were able to constitute an alternative, if not competing, elite, by similar means. The rise of a non-sayyid economic elite in itself was the source of some animosity. It was only compounded when sayyid families

[65] *Regeerings Almanak en naamregister voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1803, p. 66.
[66] Mastenbroek, *De Historische Ontwikkeling*, p. 53.
[67] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 112.
[68] Ibid., p. 129.

were placed under the leadership of non-sayyids whom they deemed to be of lowly origins. It was observed in the 1880s that one of the most common causes of rifts over appointments came from the antipathy felt by the sayyid poor towards rich merchants of 'low extraction'.[69] The appointment of Shaykh Sungkar in Tegal was one of a number of instances that went contrary to the Hadrami social hierarchy.[70] The tensions that arose from such 'inversions' manifested themselves dramatically in public life in the 1900s, and form the subject of Chapter 7.

As reflected in the officer corps, racialisation produced exclusionary structures but not the neatly bounded social categories imagined by the colonial state. As the representation of the quarter and its leadership was Arabised, neither intermixing and hybridity, nor social and cultural differences among Arabs, came to an end. The disjuncture between bureaucratic structure and social outcome suggests the need for a further examination of the power and limits of colonial racial fantasies. Although racialisation did not eliminate ethnic diversity and cultural hybridity, its impact was significant. What was its reach? How did Arabs respond to it? We consider first its reach.

The Reach of Racialisation

Racialised representations of the social order were in themselves significant despite their lack of correspondence with the prevailing intermixing and hybridity. These representations were fictions that had consequences, for they produced and propagated a colonial racial order with Europeans at the pinnacle, Foreign Orientals in the middle, and natives at the bottom. Laws and mechanisms governing mobility emerged in the first instance out of the need to control economic access to the advantage of the Dutch, and then came to be understood in racial terms. The racialisation of the apparatus controlling mobility signified the imposition of a secondary order of control. Although racialised representations did not reflect the social reality, they provided the necessary fiction to justify and drive the control. The imagined coherence of both the map of Arab quarters and the wards of the officer corps thus represented and produced the racialised object of colonial control.

It would follow that racialised representations in public life were critical to colonial control, and sumptuary laws were enacted to ensure compliance with racially appropriate behaviour. In 1872, it was declared illegal for the inhabitants of Java 'to appear in public attired in any manner

[69] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 129.
[70] Vuldy, 'La communauté arabe', p. 113.

other than one's own ethnic group', Chinese had thus to keep their queues, and Arabs to wear their turbans and 'native' dress.[71] As printing technology advanced, descriptive and imaginative tableaus reproduced ideal 'types' of ethnic groups that were colourfully identified by their respective physical appearance and dress.[72]

Racialised representations of domestic life were also of consequence. Fantasies of race were tied up with gender inequalities, and the legal status of mixed children (*Indo*) with a Dutch father was policed in the interest of preserving the pre-eminence of Europeans in the colonial social order. Ann Stoler has argued that 'colonial authority and racial distinctions were fundamentally structured in gendered terms'.[73] Like the mobility of Arabs, the control of interethnic sexual relations achieved limited success. The increasing dominance of the Dutch metropolitan centre in the affairs of its colonies in the nineteenth century, however, led to the redoubling of strivings for racial purity in the Indies. Concubinage with native women became less acceptable as a result of the calls for the 'purification' of Dutch communities in the colonies, declaring an end to nearly two centuries of mixed unions. Concubinage and the birth of Indo children persisted nevertheless, though marriages with Dutch women became more commonplace, and native sexual partners disappeared from public life. The policing of sexual relations in this manner reinforced the twin myths of European racial exclusivity and supremacy. Indo children were officially declared 'European' only when their Dutch fathers chose to recognise them legally, and in this manner the exclusive character of Europeans in the colony was preserved, if only by statute. The power of Dutchmen to elevate the social position of their Indo children often resulted in separation from their mothers and the corresponding disempowerment of these women, and gave force to the myth of European racial supremacy.[74]

Besides representations, the laws and mechanisms controlling mobility made the impact of racialisation consequential. The category Arab (in conjunction with Foreign Orientals), the pass and quarter system, and

[71] Rush, *Opium to Java*, p. 14.

[72] John Bastin and Bea Brommer, *Nineteenth Century Prints and Illustrated Books of Indonesia with Particular Reference to the Print Collection of the Tropenmuseum Amsterdam: A Descriptive Bibliography* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1979). Many tableaus and portraits from the Indies are assembled by the authors; for Arabs see, in particular, plates 200, 209, 213, on pp. 277 and 280–1.

[73] Ann Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures', in Jan Breman, ed., *Imperial Monkey Business: Racial Supremacy in Social Darwinist Theory and Colonial Practice*, Centre for Asian Studies Amsterdam monograph series no. 3 (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1990), p. 36.

[74] This discussion of concubinage is based on Marle, 'De Groep der Europeanen', pp. 481–500; Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable', pp. 39–44; and Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia*, pp. 75–7.

the officer corps were bureaucratic instruments that drove the racialisation. The pass and quarter system controlled mobility. The officer corps performed various functions including the collection of census data. Altogether these mechanisms enforced the notion of a separate and 'personal' administration of each ethnic group. The popular premise espoused by the colonial officialdom in the late nineteenth century was 'like over like is humane [*soort over soort genade is*]'.[75] This thinking echoed the rise, around the same time, of the doctrine of 'separate and equal', which reversed the gains made after the American Civil War towards establishing equality between blacks and whites in the United States.

The racialisation of colonial polities through the creation of gateways has been described by Benedict Anderson as follows: 'The flow of subject populations through the mesh of differential schools, courts, clinics, police stations and immigration offices created "traffic habits" which in time gave real social life to the state's earlier fantasies.'[76] Situating the role of census-takers in this transformation, he adds that their real innovation was 'not in the *construction* of ethnic-racial classification, but rather in their systematic *quantification*'.[77] The power of the census in this regard is illustrated by an incidental note in the margins of a census of the population of Java and Madura. Although 'Arabs' had been recorded in Surakarta since 1859, and numbered around forty-strong every year for four years beforehand, in 1871 Arabs disappeared altogether from the census. When asked for clarification regarding this discrepancy, 'the resident asserted that there are properly speaking no Arabs in Surakarta'.[78] No Arabs were counted in the following year either. However, in 1873 they reappeared for unexplained reasons. While it remains unclear if there were indeed Arabs in Surakarta in the intervening years, the census-taker was endowed with the power to order the colonialist's vision of the world. By the stroke of a pen, Arabs could disappear or reappear on the list. The power of quantification in shaping traffic habits is underscored when those interrupted years are viewed as an exception that did not disrupt the ordered continuum of Arab presence in Surakarta. Charles Hirschman has demonstrated a similar phenomenon in the census reports of the British-controlled Malay world.[79]

[75] Lea E. Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism: The Genesis of the Pan-Chinese Movement in Indonesia, 1900–1916* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960), p. 8, citing Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, p. 89.

[76] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 1991), p. 169.

[77] Ibid., p. 168.

[78] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1872, n. f, app. A.

[79] Charles Hirschman, 'The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology', *Sociological Forum*, vol. 1, no. 2 (Spring, 1986), pp. 330–61;

Racialisation stymied what was evidently a strong tendency towards hybridity, intermixing, and assimilation. There is a chance that Arabs might have largely assimilated into native society had it not been for the racialised laws and mechanisms. Van den Berg observed a high degree of assimilation in the 1880s, especially among the poorest Arabs, in spite of the institutionalised impediments.[80] In addition, numerous requests by creole Arabs to be officially recognised as Native were denied even though the applicants were qualified to be so acknowledged.[81] Some have argued that Chinese, in all likelihood, would have assimilated as well.[82] Racialisation had its limits but its reach was sufficient to give shape to the racial separations that underpinned colonial rule. It was driven, however, not by laws and regulations alone, but by narratives.

Racialised Narratives

Racialised rather than political and economic narratives of Arabs gained ascendancy among Dutch bureaucrats in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The rise of Arabs was not attributed to their role in niches of the colonial economy, as we have seen in Chapter 2, but to their connivance and cleverness. Negative stereotypes followed, such as the portrayal of Arabs as usurers. The observation that Arabs were more ornery or cruel than the Chinese towards the Javanese in the hinterlands became commonplace. Dutch colonial officers frequently noted that moneylending was the chief occupation of all Arabs and most Chinese; however, the latter were more mild-tempered in their dealings.[83]

In sharp contrast, the Dutch portrayed natives as naive and unenterprising people who were easily preyed upon by Arabs. Colonial bureaucrats attributed the exploitation of natives by Arabs to the manipulation of a 'cultural' affinity with the Javanese because of a shared faith. Stereotypes based on exploitative economic practices thus went hand in hand with the idea that Arabs exercised power and influence over natives vis-à-vis Islam. This view posited the existence of innate religious bonds between natives and Arabs and was strongly reinforced by Dutch scholarship on Islam in the archipelago, and forms the subject of Chapter 4.

Civil servants also singled out Arab opposition to Dutch policy and commonly regarded this in vaguely racialised terms. A report on the

'The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia: An Analysis of Census Classifications', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3 (Aug. 1987), pp. 555–82.

[80] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 110.

[81] Ibid., p. 216.

[82] The Siauw Giap, 'Group Conflict', pp. 195–6.

[83] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, pp. 418, 425.

Ceribon residency claimed in 1871 that Arabs possessed a 'greater desire to oppose the government' than the Chinese.[84] This was especially true in Indramayu, where they had refused to meet their 'very moderate trade tax [*bedrijfsbelasting*]' in 1870, and had been forced to pay only following legal action. By insisting that the tax was moderate, and thus reasonable, the report implies in racialised terms that Arabs were irrational. In 1866, another report observes that Arabs in the districts of Madura and Sumenep often exhibited 'a spirit of resistance'. This became particularly noticeable since they had been subjected recently to further 'police regulations' (*politiebepalingen*) – principally the pass and quarter system – and the trade tax.[85] Cursorily acknowledging the political and economic constraints that resulted in Arab opposition, the language of these reports tended to define Arabs in racialised terms as 'troublesome'. What spelled trouble to Dutch authority, however, was the nascent assertiveness of Arabs, which leads us back to the question of how the latter responded to the racialisation.

The Response of Arabs

Probably as early as the 1880s, elite Arabs began to assert their stakes more concertedly in a colonial social order that encumbered them with regulations, if it did not disfavour them altogether. By the early 1900s, these elites criticised the racialisation and made colonial officers aware of their dissatisfaction with it. They frequently claimed mistreatment at the hands of officials, especially those who administered the pass and quarter system. C. Snouck Hurgronje, the scholar-bureaucrat who advised the Indies government on Arab affairs, wrote in 1904 that:

> [Arabs and Chinese] point out that the 'European' by virtue of ancestry or law are favoured far more than they without a single earnest motive that can be advanced in its defence. [On the contrary,] people of very different origin and colour are classed in the said group, who through usurious interest rates, intimidation, deception, and so forth, render themselves guilty of exploiting natives, indeed by the very same vices that one accuses the Chinese and Arabs of. Especially since the great increase of 'Europeans' who are a burden and a pestilence [*plaag*] to the native people, the accusers never fall short of telling examples in support of their argument.[86]

The Arabs who made their grievances known tended to be those who had achieved economic, social, and some political prominence in the Indies, often with the blessings of the Dutch; they were not resisting the colonial state (see Figure 5).

[84] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1871, p. 3.
[85] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1866, p. 5.
[86] Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, pp. 1570–1.

Figure 5. Photograph taken by Atelier Kurkdjian of members of the Arab community of Surabaya before a ceremonial arch erected to mark the inauguration of Queen Wilhelmina, with the Bafadhl mosque partially visible in the background, 1898

There were several routes by which Arabs achieved an elevated status in colonial society, namely economic success, appointment to the officer corps, and Dutch backing. As we know from Chapter 2, a number of Arab families came to constitute an economic elite as a result of their considerable wealth in the form of landholdings and business interests. Additionally, there were those who came to some political prominence as headmen. In these men, the Dutch established a subordinate administrative and political elite with whom they developed a long and mutually beneficial relationship. Arab officers remained a useful and loyal administrative body on the whole, and in some places one family monopolised the position for long periods. Although the different Hadrami social classes were represented in the officer corps, sayyids tended to be overrepresented and were usually highly regarded by the Dutch. Furthermore, the Dutch cultivated families of 'good standing and wide repute' by giving them privileges such as

unencumbered mobility. The wealthy, those appointed as officers, and those favoured by the Dutch were at times the same families.

Racialisation might be said to have provoked a nascent modern Arab identity in the colony through the coalescence of elites around Dutch mistreatment. The complainants were not attacking either the Dutch or racialisation itself, but seeking better treatment by the colonial bureaucracy. Therefore, they asserted themselves largely within the terms of the racialised colonial order and produced a semblance of a bounded sense of Arabness. The racialisation might thus be said to have produced the object of its labours. Put in Anderson's terms, 'traffic habits' gave life to what were once the state's fantasies. The path taken by Arabs did not diverge greatly from that of the Chinese, as the latter too asserted themselves against colonial mistreatment in a similar manner. The making of a modern Arab identity, however, took a different course in one significant area, namely the ties between Arabs and native Muslims.

Tensions and Closeness between Arabs and Native Muslims

The Dutch made overly simplistic and exaggerated claims about the closeness of Arabs and native Muslims. However, close and significant ties did develop between the two in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The visual evidence of an Arab headman representing his person as Arab and native respectively in successive studio portraits (see Figure 6) hints at lingering precolonial patterns of belonging to both worlds. The ties that took shape in the late nineteenth century, however, were a far cry from the bonds between Arabs and the ruling elites of the Malay world in the precolonial era. First of all, there was a substantial gap between Arabs and the majority of the population of Java as a result of the relatively better economic standing of the former on the whole. Secondly, the gamut of measures controlling Arab mobility hindered their active and easy interaction with natives. Thirdly, the exploitative economic practices of Arabs in the hinterland led to widespread negative stereotypes of them.

Against the many factors that discouraged intimacy between the two, there were those that fostered close ties. Firstly, there was consequential contact between Arabs and natives in their areas of residence. Arabs frequently settled in places such as Pekojan in Batavia before the pass and quarter system was instituted and became part of the neighbourhood's hybrid legacy. Native Muslims were a part of this long-established neighbourhood and constituted also the majority of the population of the Arab quarters established under colonial rule. By around 1870, Arabs married better-off native Muslims, and creole communities emerged anew

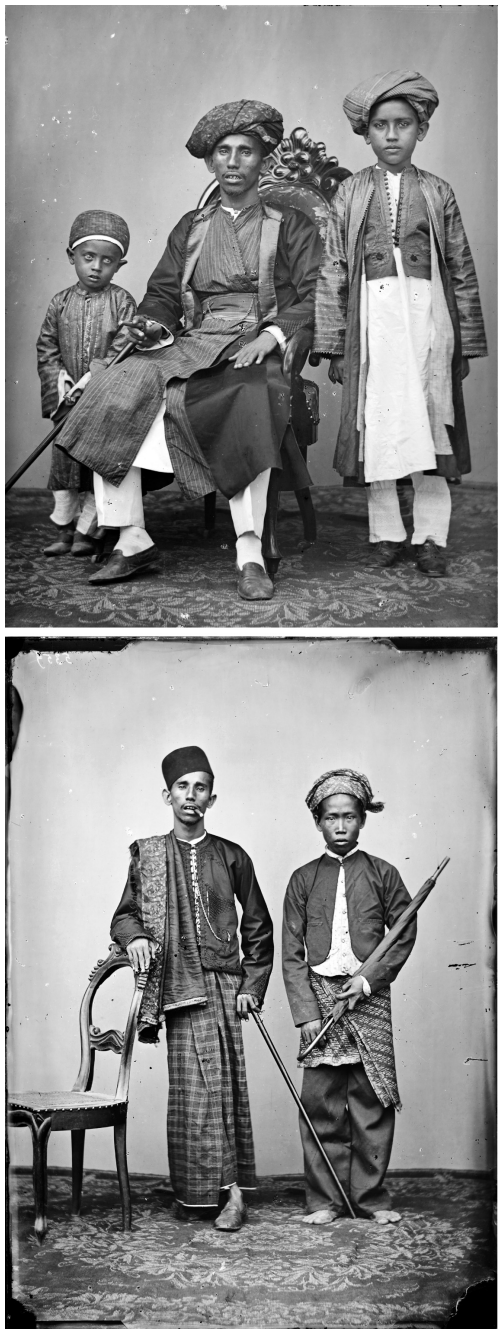


Figure 6. Studio portraits of the Headman of Arabs in Tegal fashioning himself after Arab (above) and native Muslim (below) styles, between 1865 and 1875

in the urban Muslim milieus in question. Arabs no longer possessed the prestige they had in the ruling circles of the Malay world, and had been much less sought after as spouses for some time. Van den Berg observed in the 1880s that 'more and more the Arabs have to *fall back* [*se replier*] on the natives belonging to the bourgeois classes'.[87] No longer able to marry into the ruling elites, Arabs pursued the 'lesser' route of marriage with Javanese, Madurese, and others, mostly from trading backgrounds. Such unions nevertheless remained unpopular in the highest ranks of the officialdom. Javanese regents (*bupati*) who once placed great value on the marriage of their daughters with Arabs, now discouraged them as a result of Dutch antipathy towards such unions.[88]

Secondly, Chinese economic competition provoked the rise of trading networks and increased social interaction between Arabs and native Muslims. As we know from Chapter 2, Chinese possessed opium licences and thereby occupied the more profitable niches of the colonial economy relative to Arabs. On the whole, the latter busied themselves in commercial activities on a smaller scale that were similar to those of better-off native Muslims. When the colonial state took over the opium trade in the 1900s, Chinese 'sought to place their money in the local industries, small shops, and commerce [and] trod heavily upon the economic domain of Arabs, Sumatrans, and a handful of Javanese merchants and entrepreneurs'.[89] Arabs and native Muslims were pressured into forging closer trading ties by the influx of Chinese capital, with considerable implications for the subsequent shape of Arabness.

Arabness Remade

Racialisation provoked the coalescence of elites who were the early embodiment of a modern Arab identity. While there were rebels, aristocrats, religious scholars, and traders in Java who in some measure represented different degrees of Arabness, it was an Arab elite, mostly wealthy landowners and traders, who began to forge a modern identity by asserting their stakes in the colonial political economy. In different ways, this process was driven by both the Dutch and the Arabs.

On the one hand, the colonial officialdom brought to the fore this elite rather than others by favouring, if anyone, those Arabs who were 'respectable', wealthy, and inclined towards the colonial state. On the whole, Arabs were disfavoured as Islamic problems, if not suspected of

[87] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 210. Emphasis added.
[88] Ibid., p. 208.
[89] The, 'Socio-Economic Role', p. 171.

usury or other economic evils, and swift action was taken against those who posed a potential threat to Dutch rule. Descendants of Arabs, recognisable from their family names, appeared in the reports of minor – and distinctively 'native' – revolts that took place in the 1900s in Batavia and elsewhere, usually as a result of the oppressive conditions within private estates.[90] The Dutch no longer usefully regarded as Arab these poorer rebels from the 'lower classes'.

On the other hand, elite Arabs began to assume a position of leadership over natives as the two were drawn closer within urban Muslim milieus in the final decades of the nineteenth century. As we know from Chapter 2 and this chapter, elite Arabs remade sayyid superiority through the wealth and status they attained in the colonial social order. They now refashioned the Hadrami social hierarchy with a vision of themselves as leaders of native Muslims. Sayyids came to the fore given their revived social prestige, wealthy networks, and Dutch favouritism. Although non-sayyids became members of economic elites as well, sayyids dominated public life until the early twentieth century.

'Arab' came to mean the wealthy leaders of urban Muslim milieus, and sayyids more specifically. It is noteworthy that Van den Berg suggests that it was those classes of high social standing in the Hadramaut, namely sayyid, who were most able to preserve their Arab character in the Indies.[91] The making of Arabs as leaders of native Muslims, however, did not emerge from the wholesale transfer to the colony of the authority that sayyids possessed in the Hadramaut. Rather, it had to do with the remaking of sayyid prestige within the terms of the colonial social order. The sayyid leaders who emerged were mono-dimensional relative to those of the Malay world a century earlier, as their mobility was considerably more restricted. Although shaped by the terms of racialisation, these sayyids were for the most part creole themselves and participated in a diverse, if not hybrid, Muslim public life.

The Instantiation of Racial Categories in Space

Chapter 3 has shown that the power of racialisation lay in the forcible emplacement of Arabs in space. Racialisation was not a juggernaut that overrode intermixing and hybridity among Arabs. Rather, it had its start as a means of controlling Arab economic activity to suit the interests of the Dutch, and evolved into an overarching colonial politics.

[90] Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Protest Movements in Rural Java: A Study of Agrarian Unrest in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[91] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, s.v. 'Arabieren', by L. W. C. van den Berg.

Pragmatic economic concerns were nevertheless prioritised over racialisation throughout the latter's expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century. Restrictions were lifted when Dutch economic interests were hurt and for selected Arab families. However, racialisation made an impact on colonial society through the forcible emplacement of Arabs. The pass and control system was thus an instantiation of colonial racial categories in space. Whereas the shift from the sea to the land reduced Arab mobility to the land, racialisation furthered the process by confining it to the urban quarter. At the same time, racialisation provoked a nascent modern Arab identity whose development forms the subject of the third part of this book.

Before we proceed to questions of modern identity, we conclude our examination of the colonial state by turning to the body of knowledge on Arabs and Islam, as well as an apparatus of surveillance that emerged in conjunction with it. In Chapters 2 and 3 we have seen how racialised controls on mobility followed on the heels of narrowing social and economic roles. In the next chapter, we turn to scholar-bureaucrats who produced a constricting representation of Arabs and Islam that further inhibited Arabness.

4 Scholarship and Surveillance

> But these so auspicious times for the Arab are over, and the greatest obstacle to his complete elevation above the Indies peoples under his spiritual influence is truly the establishment of Netherlands authority. The more that takes root, the more his influence decreases and does not flourish. That authority is the moral counterweight against all his endeavours. Social intercourse with Europeans has instilled more enlightened [and] clearer ideas in many Javanese, and that counterweight is so great that the Arab … is completely reduced to a [socially] subordinate position and must find his living through some trade.[1]

Arabs occupied a curious place in the Dutch colonial imagination. Neither European nor 'native' Orientals, they and the Chinese were categorised in the middling rubric of Foreign Orientals. On the one hand, the tripartite legal and political division of the populace in the Netherlands Indies accorded with racial divisions only in very general terms.[2] Yet, in the Indies as in other European colonies, racial ideology remained foremost among the ideologies of imperial rule. It permeated the culture of the Dutch rulers and fostered their assertion of political, economic, and social supremacy over natives. The colonial administration came to view its ethnically diverse and hybrid subjects in neatly racialised boxes. Furthermore, controls on mobility imposed on colonial subjects helped to give life to racialised fantasies. Calling for greater attention to 'the privileged role of culture in the modern imperial experience', Edward Said has highlighted 'the extraordinary global reach of classical nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European imperialism'.[3] Leaving few aspects of peoples' lives or territories untouched, the imperial rhetoric of power

[1] E. Hardouin, *Java's Bewoners in hun Eigenaardig Karakter en Kleederdracht*, illustrated by E. Hardouin, written by W. L. Ritter and with a foreword by M. T. H. Perelaer (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1872), p. 34. The quotation is from the chapter on Arabs by W. L. Ritter that first appeared in print in 1855 in the earliest edition of this book, which had a different title: *Java. Tooneelen uit het leven, karakterschetsen en kleederdragten van Java's bewoners*.

[2] Marle, 'De Groep der Europeanen', p. 102.

[3] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 5.

surrounding race, gender, religion, language, and land became an integral part of the cultural realities of coloniser and colonised.

This chapter explores racialised representations of Arabs and Islam in colonial Java. Much like the views of Naipaul discussed in the Introduction, colonial authorities attributed to Arabs a particularly prominent role in the history and spread of what the Dutch regarded as an insidious faith, namely Islam. Keeping with Orientalist wisdom, to Dutch scholar-bureaucrats, 'Islam was supposed to define [the] racial and cultural characteristics' of Arabs.[4] This racialised attribution necessitated the surveillance and control of Arabs in the colony. The ostensible power and influence of Arabs over natives needed to be constrained in particular. This chapter focuses on colonial scholar-bureaucrats as they played a major role in consolidating the racialised association of Arabs and Islam through their writings and advice to the colonial government. Before turning to the scholar-bureaucrats, however, it is useful to consider a range of cultural representations of Arabs.

An instructive and overwhelmingly unfavourable portrayal of Arabs' cultural 'place' is found in an essay by Wilhelm Leonard Ritter. A popular Indies writer with a multi-faceted career, Ritter (1799–1862) lived in Batavia after 1837 and wrote for the local press as well as the *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Journal for the Netherlands Indies). He was best known for his 1856 publication *De Europeaan in Nederlandsch Indië* (The European in the Netherlands Indies), which epitomises the colonial culture of racism.[5] Ritter also wrote the text for a book of illustrations on Java's inhabitants in which the fascinating essay 'De Arabier' (The Arab) is complemented by a striking illustration of an Arab trader by Ernest Hardouin, a French painter and draughtsman (see Figure 7).[6] Unfettered by the possibly mitigating influence of academic convention, Ritter's essay is a vituperative diatribe against Arabs that reflects the deep-seated anxiety and hatred harboured by his European contemporaries. Besides its significance as a widely read work in its time, this essay stands out because of the sheer scarcity of descriptions of Arab society before the appearance of Van den Berg's book in 1886. Ritter moulds three interrelated evils – the religious, economic, and sexual exploitation of natives – into the demonic character of 'The Arab'. He claims that Arabs beguiled natives for fraudulent commercial gain by manipulating

[4] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 41. (First published in 1978.)

[5] Bastin and Brommer, *Nineteenth Century Prints*, n. 517, p. 177. Among other things, he was a founding member of the *Tijdschrift voor Nijverheid* (Journal of Industry) in 1854. For a glimpse of some of his observations and ideas see Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable', pp. 39–40 and n. 7, p. 41.

[6] Hardouin, *Java's Bewoners*, p. 30.

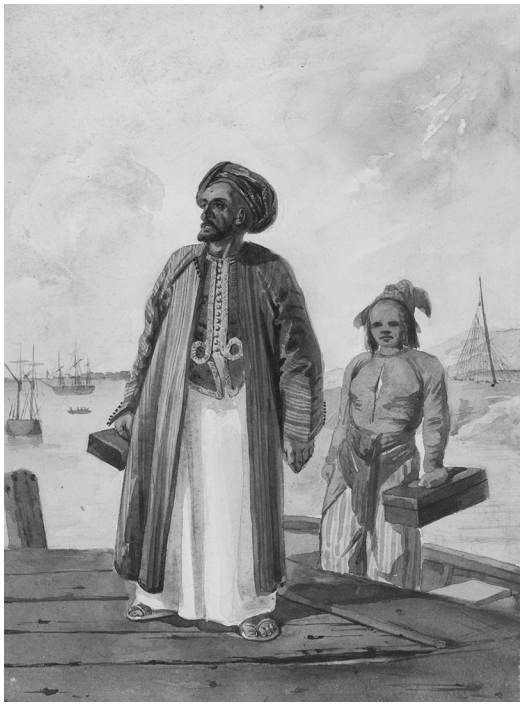


Figure 7. 'An Arab in Java', watercolour painting by Ernest Hardouin, circa 1851

the great reverence of the latter for them.[7] In paragraph after paragraph, he vilifies Arabs for their pretensions to a special relationship with Islam and their claims of noble descent from the Prophet. Echoing the familiar Orientalist preoccupation with Arabs' sexual lives, he further diminishes them as human beings by attributing to them an uncontrollable and insatiable sexual appetite which he implies was sanctioned by Islam. To Ritter, the Arab was 'most certainly the greatest lecher [*wellusteling*] of all the people of the Indies Archipelago', hence the existence of widespread polygamy and concubinage among them.[8]

A second revealing portrayal of Arabs in the Indies is found in a short story by E. du Perron seventy years later.[9] As an Indo, Du Perron was himself in an unusual place in between worlds. 'Het Spook van de Arabier'

[7] Ibid., p. 32.
[8] Ibid., p. 35. For an analysis of such European sexualisations of Arabs see Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 311–12.
[9] E. Du Perron, 'Het Spook van de Arabier', in Robert-Henk Zuidinga, ed., *Indisch Letterland: Verhalen uit Twee Eeuwen Nederlands-Indische Literatuur* (Amsterdam: Sijthoff, 1988), pp. 29–44. (First published in 1987.)

(The Ghost of the Arab), published in 1920, tells the story of the ghost of an elderly man named Aboe Saggaf who haunts the house inhabited by an Indo family. In order to rid the house of the ghost, a quest ensues for an object located inside it that continues to 'shackle him to the earth' due to his 'unscrupulousness' in life.[10] It is not an accident that the plot of this story turns on a piece of property that belongs to an Arab, an unnamed nephew of the dead man. As we have learned, Arabs were prominent as landlords in Java, especially in such Batavian neighbourhoods as Meester Cornelis, where this story takes place. That Du Perron chose this particular guise to evoke resentment and fear of Arabs reflects the reputation a considerable number of them had earned as ruthless landlords, usurers, and so forth by the 1900s. The story implies that Arabs were a race prone to such evils. Du Perron imbues their character with the loathsome aspects of the exploitative practices in which they, and incidentally, Europeans, Indos, and Chinese, were involved. Depicted as unscrupulous, deceitful, and mean, the Arab is a clearly dislikable figure in the story. The family, it claims, would certainly not have moved in had they known 'that an Arab had died in this house'.[11] It is made plain that there was something particularly dreadful about an Arab dying there rather than anyone else. Interestingly, while native magic is used in order to locate the object that had imprisoned the spirit of the dead man on earth, not a word is mentioned about Islam. Although it did not pervade the life Du Perron observed at the interstices of native and European worlds, Arabs' relationship with Islam had certainly assumed importance in the politics of colonial rule.

An important manner in which the longstanding fascination with Arabs and Islam became embedded in European culture, politics, and society was through institutions of learning. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this fascination was moulded by the utilitarian concerns of imperial expansion. Falling outside of the older Orientalist disciplines such as Semitic and Indo-European philology, the 'new' languages and cultures of the regions forcibly colonised by Europeans were added to the university curriculum. In *Orientalism*, Said makes an argument linking scholarship on the formerly colonised world to the military, corporate, and political interests of European nations and the United States.[12] He shows that an extensive corpus of knowledge on Arabs and Islam was engendered and summoned in the service of European imperial expansion. In this regard, 'Theses of Oriental backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality with the West most easily associated themselves early in the nineteenth century with ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality'.[13] Training in the

[10] Ibid., p. 38.
[11] Ibid., p. 31.
[12] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 41, 253–4, 300–2.
[13] Ibid., p. 206.

languages, cultures, geographies, and other aspects of the colonies had thus become increasingly relevant to colonial rule. Providing the expertise for governing colonies as well as indoctrination in the tenets of the civilising mission, academic institutions were instrumental in the ascendancy of European imperial powers.

With British and Dutch imperial expansion in the archipelago, Arabs and Islam came under the increasing scrutiny of scholars. From merchant-scientists such as William Marsden to scholar-bureaucrats like C. Snouck Hurgronje, the communication of information and observations about Arabs and Islam in the archipelago became much more institutionalised. Marsden laid the foundations in the later eighteenth century for the gathering of scientific knowledge on the archipelago. Over a hundred years later Snouck Hurgronje made scholarship on and the surveillance of Arabs and Islam critical to the proper governance of natives under Dutch rule. The figure of the Arab in European writings on the archipelago became increasingly represented as a problem, as colonial rulers trained and incorporated scholar-bureaucrats into the regime as a result of the growing systemisation of government. Borrowing selectively from the Orientalist tradition, Arabs and 'their' religion were considered alien influences upon the inhabitants of the archipelago.

Unlike the Arabic-speaking territories seized by Europeans from Ottoman rule, however, Arabs were not the principal concerns of the Dutch in the Netherlands Indies. Here, they emerged as problems only in relation to the governance of natives and thus were peripheral to Dutch rule. With growing claims to erudition in scholarship, the 'Arab' was progressively endowed with characteristics and motives that were antithetical to the nature of 'natives'. As the self-appointed guardian of the latter, the Dutch believed that it was their duty to protect natives from the detrimental influence of Arabs and Islam. It was during the Java War (1825–30) and Padri War (1821–38) in Sumatra that Dutch colonial authorities 'made their first acquaintance with Islam as a politico-religious problem for the military and for civil servants'.[14] It was following these wars, and the ensuing rebellions against Dutch authority, that Islam became increasingly the subject of scholarly inquiry, though often in a cursory and disdainful manner. Although Arabs or Arab influence had been vaguely inculpated through the century for those acts against Dutch rule that were labelled Islamic, a formative phase in the problematisation of Arabs took place in the 1880s. The formal emergence of the

[14] B. J. Boland and I. Farjon, *Islam in Indonesia: A Bibliographical Survey 1600–1942, with Post-1945 Addenda*, Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Bibliographical Series 14 (Dordrecht, Holland: Foris Publications, 1983), p. 6.

Arabieren quaestie (Arab question) may be located in this decade because L. W. C. van den Berg was dispatched by the colonial government to investigate Arab settlements in the Netherlands Indies from 1884 to 1886. Over a decade later, F. Fokkens and C. Snouck Hurgronje located this 'question' within the bounds of economics and Islam, respectively. This chapter illustrates the emergence of the 'Arab question' by relying in large part on the works of these three men while paying attention to their roles in formulating institutional responses to Arabs.

Before turning to the writings and policy recommendations of the three men, however, it is necessary to illustrate the ways in which Arabs became associated with Islam in European scholarship on the Malay world. For this purpose, I turn first to the investigations of three British merchant-scientists, William Marsden, Stamford Raffles, and John Crawfurd, who pioneered the study of the peoples and languages of the archipelago. These three men's works became the foundations for the development of scholarship and teaching on the Indies in the Netherlands. Secondly, I examine the writings and careers of the Dutch scholar-bureaucrats produced by institutions dedicated to the training of colonial civil servants. These scholar-bureaucrats attributed the causes of the economic and religious damage inflicted by Arabs on natives to the nature of the former race. While the Chinese were racialised in similar ways, the estrangement of Arabs from the lives of natives became more specifically attributed to religious factors.

First Encounters with Arabs and Islam

Three men in the service of the British East India Company, William Marsden, Thomas Stamford Raffles, and John Crawfurd, were the first to systematically gather information on the languages and cultures of the peoples of the archipelago.[15] Although they were preceded by others who wrote about Islam in the archipelago, notably François Valentyn and George Werndly, the works of these merchant-scientists were much more influential in the development of scholarship on the subject. While Marsden's connection to this region grew out of his service in the British East India Company in the late eighteenth century, Raffles and Crawfurd were more directly relevant to the scholarship and administrative policy of Dutch colonial rule in Java. The latter were part of the conquering force that seized Java from the Dutch – under French overlordship as a consequence of the Napoleonic wars – and established the British interregnum there between 1811 and 1816. Nearly all the published works of these three men were translated into Dutch, and available in the

[15] Boland, *Islam in Indonesia*, pp. 4–5.

Netherlands in the first half of the nineteenth century.[16] Marsden's *The History of Sumatra*, first published in 1783, placed him at the forefront of this trio and established a standard for what was considered scientific work. In 1830, Crawfurd wrote in praise of Marsden that the latter's work was 'the most laborious, accurate, able and original; and previous to whose writings we possessed neither correct nor philosophical accounts of these singular countries'.[17] Indeed, Marsden himself states that he had not intended to 'write an entertaining book' but to enrich the knowledge of his time 'with facts to serve as data in [philosophers'] reasonings which are too often rendered nugatory [by] the misconceptions, or wilful impositions of travellers'.[18] In keeping with Marsden's spirit, Raffles and Crawfurd, and the Dutch scholar-bureaucrats who came after them, resisted writing entertaining books. Immersed in their somber civilising mission, they developed and advanced the study of Islam and Arabs in the archipelago.

Marsden (1754–1836) was born in Ireland. In 1771, at the age of sixteen, he took a job with the British East India Company in Bengkulu, West Sumatra. He started work on his book *The History of Sumatra* on his return to London in 1779 and published it four years later. Oddly, few references to Arabs are made in the book. Yet, in the manner of the Orientalists of his day, he reifies Islam and Arabs as he locates the 'Arabian' influence in the life and legends of the peoples he studied. Speculating about the probable origins of this influence in Sumatra, he freely interchanges 'Mahometan religion' and 'Arabian faith', thus making an indissoluble link between Arabs and Islam.[19] The nature of this link assumes special relevance when he argues that notable differences existed between the practice of the faith in Sumatra and in its land of origin. Observing that Malays 'did not appear to possess much of the bigotry so commonly found amongst western Mahometans', he adds: 'Even in regard to the practice of ceremonies, they do not imitate the punctuality of the Arabs and others of the mussulman faith'.[20] That Arabs' 'bigotry' and 'punctuality', or by inference religious rigour, stood in sharp contrast to the Malays' laxity in this matter became an

[16] John Bastin's introduction to William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*, Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. ix. (Reprint of the third edition of 1811. First published in 1783.)

[17] John Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago, Containing an Account of the Manners, Arts, Languages, Religions, Institutions, and Commerce of its Inhabitants*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co., 1820), p. 81, as cited in John Bastin, introduction to Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*, p. ix.

[18] Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*, p. vii.

[19] Ibid., p. 345.

[20] Ibid., p. 346.

influential premise in colonial scholarship and politics. At the heart of the assertion of this dichotomy was the contradistinction between Arabs as evil and Malays as good.

The reification of Arabs and Islam rendered it impossible for Europeans such as Marsden to appreciate the important and complex histories of either one in the archipelago. To them, Arab exploitation of natives seemed irreconcilable with the widespread adoption and influence of Islam among the latter. Hence, Arabs were portrayed as twin evils, capable at once of spiritual and economic destruction of the innocent and naive Malays, as well as inciting and influencing them to commit fanatical acts (such as uprisings against European rule in the name of Islam). In the one instance in which Marsden describes Arab settlers, he contrasts the damage they wreaked with the extraordinary influence they wielded among the inhabitants of Palembang. 'The Arabian priests', he notes, though 'in the constant practice of imposing upon and plundering the credulous inhabitants, are held by them in the utmost reverence'.[21]

By attributing to Arabs a religious rigour, the mark of their foreignness in the Malay world, Marsden initiated the separation and estrangement of the figure of 'The Arab' from 'natives'. Others would refine and build upon this dichotomy in the century that followed. Inspired by Marsden to study the Malay language and local customs, Raffles also made significant observations of Arabs and Islam in his own research on the archipelago.[22] Nevertheless, the two men had different missions. In his book, Marsden described the history of European settlements and commerce only in so far as it was 'connected with the accounts of the native inhabitants, and the history of their governments'.[23] Raffles, on the other hand, was avowedly driven in his life and writings by the grand concerns of early-nineteenth-century British mercantile expansion.

A young Lieutenant-Governor Raffles (1781–1826) was left in charge of governing Java at the start of the British interregnum in 1811. He saw himself as a representative of British values to the 'mild and simple people' over whom he presided, and as the faithful servant of his Prince Regent, to whom he dedicated *The History of Java* (published in 1817, and partially translated into Dutch in 1836).[24] One of the most articulate proponents of the 'idea of complementarity between commerce and civilisation', Raffles' first and foremost concern was the economy.[25]

[21] Ibid., p. 362.
[22] Boland, *Islam in Indonesia*, p. 5.
[23] Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*, p. vii.
[24] Thomas Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 1, first published in 1817, Oxford in Asia Hardback Reprints (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. v–vii.
[25] Henk Maier, *Fragments of Reading: The Malay Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (Alblasserdam: Offsetdrukkerij Kanters, B. V., 1985), pp. 39–40.

Although he regarded Arabs as barely civilised, they were a necessary evil in his grand design for the liberalisation of the region's economy and the upliftment of natives:

> Let the Chinese and Arabs still trade eastward. Without them, the trade would be reduced to less than one-third of even what it is at present, for it is only through the stimulus which they give to the industry of the country that its resources are to be developed: but let their trade be regulated; and above all, let them not be left in the enjoyment of immunities and advantages, which are neither possessed by Europeans nor the indigenous of the country. Since the reduction of the Dutch influence in the east, several of the ports formerly dependent on them have almost become Arab colonies. The evil is obviously increasing every day and can only be checked by encouraging the native population, and regulating on equal terms the duties of the Malayan and other eastern ports.[26]

He was describing, among other things, the activities of the network of Arabs connected with the Riau court, principally the Sultan of Pontianak and his relatives. According to Raffles, then, the surveillance and control of these Arabs' commercial activities was essential in perpetuating their commercial usefulness to the British, as well as protecting the interests of natives. As shown in Chapter 2, however, Raffles' own policies had led to the economic ruin of the Javanese in the first quarter of the century. The introduction of Indian textiles, for instance, led to the increased power of Arab and Indian traders and the downfall of Javanese cloth production and trading. Thus, Raffles' policies had contributed no less to the rise of the Arab 'evil' than did the downfall of Dutch control on the eastern islands.

While Arabs had proven useful to Raffles in commercial matters, there was nothing redeeming about their ostensible influence in religious affairs. The latter had to be checked. More emphatically than Marsden, Raffles described Islam as the religion of Arabs and noted the difference in its form and practice in Java, while articulating an interventionist policy with regard to Arabs and Islam:

> The Maláyus … though accustomed to look up to the Arabs as their religious instructors, seldom hesitate to admit the superiority of both the Europeans and the Chinese, both to themselves and to the Arabs, in the arts of life and general science; and it is certainly our interest to encourage them in this mode of thinking, and to prevent the increase of *the Arab influence* among them.[27]

It was widely believed that the inhabitants of the Malay world were predisposed to revere Arabs because of the latter's relationship with Islam.

[26] Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 1, p. 229. See also p. xvii.
[27] Ibid., p. 235. Emphasis added.

This idea was advanced without much scrutiny in Dutch colonial culture throughout the nineteenth century. Raffles noted the proclivity of local rulers for the Lord Sayyids but could not see that the Arabs who played a public role in the Malay world of his time did so because they were assimilated in significant ways. He saw Arabs in racialised terms as immutable figures. By Raffles' and most Europeans' estimation, the reverence of Arabs was dangerous and damaging to natives because it rendered them vulnerable to all kinds of exploitation by Arabs. They had to be saved from their own folly. Raffles believed he could encourage natives along a course that made them amenable to British overlordship, and prevent the rise of Arabs and their religion. The paternalistic and calculated intervention he advocated became the hallmark of Dutch colonial policy as it grappled with preventing the ostensibly undesirable sway of Arabs and Islam over natives.

Raffles was clearly influenced by classical Orientalist conceptions of Islam. For instance, his elaboration of the figure of 'The Arab' went hand in hand with the view of Islam as an intolerant religion that had been spread by the sword. In his view, such a religion was antithetical to the mild temper of his native wards. Classical Orientalist claims such as that of Islam's doctrinal advocacy of violence were woven into Raffles' observations and arguments in significant ways. A good illustration of this is his discussion of the causes of piracy, the scourge of European seaborne commerce in his time:

> In addition to other causes, which I shall not stop to specify, the state of the eastern population and the intolerant spirit of the religion of Islam have eminently tended to increase [piracy]. The Arab Sheikhs and Sayeds, whatever doctrines they failed to inculcate, never neglected to enforce the merit of plundering and massacreing the infidels; an abominable tenet, which has tended more than any other doctrine of the *Kóran* to the propagation of this religion. Numerous and various are the tribes of the Eastern Isles which have not embraced the religion of *Islam* to this day, and consequently are reckoned infidels: cruizes [sic] against such were, and are, constantly certain of receiving the approbation of all the Arab teachers.[28]

Failing to offer other explanations for the piracy, which include the regionwide political and economic shifts that resulted from European incursions, Raffles blamed Islam and its Arab teachers. Resting squarely on a reification of Arabs and Islam, culturalist analyses such as this became more commonplace in the course of the nineteenth century. Turning to Crawfurd, then, the figure of 'The Arab' begins to acquire a familiar and predictable shape.

[28] Ibid., pp. 232–3.

Crawfurd (1783–1868) studied medicine in Edinburgh before joining the British-Indian army as a doctor. When transferred to Penang in 1808, he began studying the Malay language and cultural practices. A colleague of Raffles, he was part of the expedition against the Dutch in Java, and upon its victory occupied a number of important administrative positions during the British interregnum.[29] His experiences during this period led to the publication in 1820 of his *History of the Indian Archipelago* (translated into Dutch in 1823). Although Crawfurd noted very little about Arabs in this book, his remarks reveal certain premises that were commonly shared in his time. Noting that '*Arab* settlers are more considerable from their influence than their numbers', he attributes the introduction of Islam to the archipelago to them.[30] Crawfurd's assumption that Arabs were directly connected to the presence of Islam was one that endured through much of the nineteenth century. Arguments in support of alternative routes for the Islamisation of the region were made only much later in the nineteenth as well as the twentieth century.

Crawfurd's observations also reveal the premises of the scientific culture that he shared with Marsden and Raffles. From the superior vantage point of European civilisation, he too described Arabs as a destructive influence upon natives and attributed ignominious qualities to the character of their race. They were foreign, and incompatible with the 'simple natives':

> Of all the nations of Asia who meet on this *common theatre*, the Arabs are the most ambitious, intriguing, and bigotted. They have a strength of character which places them far above the simple natives of the country, to whom in matters of religion, they dictate with that arrogance with which the meanest of the countrymen of the prophet consider themselves entitled to conduct themselves.[31]

These remarks, when anchored to the distant date of 1296, which for him marked the beginnings of Islam in the region, gave the relationship of Arabs with natives historical depth, hence it was not merely something of a passing nature. In Crawfurd's further elaboration of Arab character he makes the telling distinction between 'genuine Arabs', who were 'spirited, fair, and adventurous merchants', and the 'mixed race', who were 'of a much less favourable character, and [are] considered as a supple, intriguing, and dishonest class'.[32] The latter, he claimed, were a substantial presence in the archipelago as a result of the many marriages

[29] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, s.v. 'John Crawfurd'.
[30] Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, vol. 1, pp. 138–9.
[31] Ibid., p. 139.
[32] Ibid., p. 139.

between Arab men and local women. Crawfurd's remarks about creoles accorded with notions of racial and cultural purity. To the 'true' Arab or Malay he attributed commendable though disparate 'essences' that became degraded when 'mixed'. This perspective was based on his belief in the existence of mutually exclusive ethnic groups on different rungs of the ladder of civilisation that, in the view of the merchant-scientist, were debased by commingling. Raffles, for instance, disdained the syncretism of the Javanese: 'Their profession of Mahometanism has not relieved them from the superstitious prejudices and observances of an anterior worship: they are thus open to *the accumulated delusion of two religious systems*.'[33] Still, Crawfurd's 'common theatre' posits the archipelago as a meeting place of several civilisations. This view was superseded in the late nineteenth century by the Eurocentric perspective of colonial powers who saw the region as exclusively Dutch or British 'theatres'.

The descriptions of Arabs by Crawfurd, and certainly by Raffles, inconsistent and indiscriminate as they were, reflected the burgeoning military, political, and technological power of the world that produced them. Born during the Scottish Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century, they served the highest civilisation known to them. As Maier notes, they 'never betrayed any uncertainty about the adequacy of their analyses and judgments of the phenomena they described'.[34] Theirs were the 'tools' of a superior civilisation. Although viewing the archipelagic world with disdain, these men believed 'that human nature was uniform at all times and in all places' and hence took the study of its languages and cultures seriously in their effort to improve the lot of its people in the scale of civilisations.[35] The generations of scholar-bureaucrats who followed, however, made fewer claims in the name of universal humanism. These scholar-bureaucrats were trained in the new colonial disciplines, indoctrinated in Eurocentric civilising missions, and dedicated to the service of their respective nations' imperial agendas. Arabs and Islam became subjects of study as well as problems and hindrances to colonial rulers.

Dutch Scholar-Bureaucrats

Besides the physical and legal estrangement of Arabs by the colonial government, the foreignness of Arabs and Islam in Java became a widely

[33] Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 1, p. 245. Emphasis added. See also William R. Roff, 'Islam Obscured? Some Reflections on Studies of Islam and Society in Southeast Asia', *Archipel, Islam en Indonésie I*, vol. 29, no. 1 (1985), p. 22.
[34] Maier, *Fragments of Reading*, p. 44.
[35] Ibid., pp. 47–8.

accepted idea in the nineteenth century. Through newspapers, pamphlets, children's books, school textbooks, travelogues, and the lithograph illustrations that increasingly accompanied them, Arabs were described as an alien group in Indies society. Perhaps nowhere else was their alienisation of greater consequence than in the writings of Dutch scholar-bureaucrats. Dutch scholarship remained focused on elucidating linguistic, cultural, and racial separations between natives on the one hand, and Arabs and Islam on the other, despite the long-established and hybrid presence of the latter in the archipelago. Placing Arabs and Islam on the margins of Indies society as a reified and dangerous threat was critical to the politics and culture of colonial rule.

After the restoration of Dutch rule in Java in 1816, the Indies government became aware that the officials of the Binnenlandsch Bestuur (Civil Service) required a basic knowledge of the language and culture of the lands they occupied.[36] This knowledge had become particularly important as Raffles' introduction of the land rent system in 1813 had heightened the need for direct dealings between administrative officials and the Javanese peasantry. The development of academic institutions, and the making of scholars dedicated to the colonising mission may largely be situated in the development of language studies. Language was both the stumbling block in the colonial encounter with the colonised, and an important tool for attaining mastery over them. It was also linked in important ways to ideas about the place of human beings in the scale of civilisations, and, in the late nineteenth century, to scientific racism. In the theories of race that emerged, it was 'assumed that if languages were as distinct from each other as the linguists said they were, then too the language users – their minds, cultures, potentials, and even their bodies – were different in similar ways'.[37]

A decree in 1811 first promoted the Javanese language by encouraging Dutch officials to become acquainted with it.[38] This policy was supported by Raffles during his tenure as Lieutenant-Governor of Java. In the three decades following this decree, numerous measures were taken that emphasised the need for the acquisition of Javanese as well as Malay language skills. For instance, in 1819, assistant-residents, as well as secretaries of residencies and native courts, on the threat of salary decrements, were required to acquire a spoken facility in the language of their district within a year, and to achieve oral and written fluency

[36] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, s.v. 'Opleiding van Indische Ambtenaren'.
[37] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 233.
[38] John Hoffman, 'A Foreign Investment: Indies Malay to 1901', *Indonesia*, no. 27 (Apr. 1979), p. 73.

within two years.[39] Notably, in 1826, every civil servant was ordered to procure Cornelis P. J. Elout's translation of Marsden's Malay grammar and dictionary. As exemplified by this order, the Netherlands Indies government promoted the ascendancy of Malay, the lingua franca of the archipelago, over Javanese, as the former gradually gained in use among the colonial officialdom and cosmopolitan urban dwellers, as well as the Javanese.[40] Indeed, against the background of institutional and policy changes rooted in language use between 1819 to 1839, 'Malay in Western script and print was being linked with the Indies government's aim of extending and unifying its control throughout the archipelago'.[41] With this in mind, Dutch scholar-bureaucrats paid close attention to the Riau court, given its literary fame. Eventually, it was the variety of Malay spoken here that they regarded and held up to others as the standard. Parallel to the promotion of Malay, the founding of colonial academic institutions in the Netherlands and Java was also linked to growing Dutch military and political supremacy in the nineteenth century.

The very first institution dedicated to Indies studies, the Instituut voor Javaansche taal (Institute for Javanese language), was founded in Surakarta, Java, in 1832. Besides the study of language, this institute offered courses in Javanese history, laws, and institutions. Until the establishment in 1842 of the Koninklijk Akademie tot opleiding van burgerlijke Ingenieurs (Royal Academy for the training of civil engineers) in Delft, which replaced the Surakarta institute, no facility for training Indies-bound civil servants existed in the Netherlands. In a four-year course, the institute at Delft taught Dutch, Javanese, Malay, Mohammedan and native laws, the ethnography of the Netherlands Indies, geodesy and surveying, and engineering and hydraulics.[42] While the Royal Academy continued training civil servants, in 1851 a closely related institution, the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Neërlandsch Indië (Royal Institute for Linguistics and Anthropology of the Netherlands Indies) was formed in Delft and thereafter became an important centre for colonial scholarship. In 1864 the Royal Academy's task of training civil servants was transferred to a government institute established for this purpose in Leiden, with links to the Rijksuniversiteit (State University) there.[43] Changes in institutions and programmes took place through the nineteenth century, but

[39] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, s.v. 'Opleiding van Indische Ambtenaren'.
[40] Hoffman, 'A Foreign Investment', pp. 73–6.
[41] Ibid., p. 76.
[42] Sirtjo Koolhof, 'Een Vergeten Pionier: Mr. S. Keyzer (1823–1868)', *Jambatan: Tijdschrift voor de Geschiedenis van Indonesië*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1991), p. 55.
[43] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, s.v. 'Opleiding van Indische Ambtenaren'.

some form of training in the languages and cultures of the Indies was available in Delft, Leiden, and, after 1860, the Gymnasium Willem III in Batavia.[44] Alongside the expansion of academic institutions and training, a number of significant periodicals related to the study of the Netherlands Indies emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century. Two journals appeared in Batavia, *Tijdschrift van Nederlandsch-Indië* in 1838 and *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* in 1853, while *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, published by the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology, was started in Delft in 1853.[45] By the close of the century, the State University of Leiden had brought to the field of Islam in the Indies graduates with a classical Orientalist training as well as a zeal to inform and serve the Dutch imperial mission. In the course of training colonial civil servants, the Delft institute became important to the initial development of studies of Islam in the Indies. The journal *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, which published articles on all aspects of Indies society, was originally closely associated with this institute. Hence, the works of scholars associated with Delft such as J. Pijnappel, S. Keijzer, L. W. C. Van den Berg, and A. W. T. Juynboll frequently appeared in its pages.[46] Following a discussion of Pijnappel below, I shall turn briefly to another Delft scholar, G. K. Niemann. Along with De Hollander and Veth, discussion of whom follows below, these four men were united in the view that Indies Islam was of Arab origins.

J. Pijnappel (1822–1901) wrote an article about the Arabic-Malay alphabet in which he argued that the character of the Arabic language, and hence the nature of Arabs themselves, was incompatible with natives. In the footsteps of Taco Roorda and A. Meursinge, two pioneering scholars of the Indies, Pijnappel was the third professor appointed to teach Malay and Indies ethnography at the Royal Academy. He believed that the Arabic script that had been used to write Malay for several centuries had better be replaced by the Dutch alphabet:

> Just as Arabs have imported their alphabet where this was possible, I inveigh that it is indeed permissible for us to do the same with our own. The importation of the Arabic alphabet has had more important consequences than one would suspect. The Malay language itself has experienced the influence thereof, and through the borrowing of a number of Arabicisms lost much of its own particularity.[47]

[44] Hoffman, 'A Foreign Investment', pp. 74–5.
[45] Boland, *Islam in Indonesia*, pp. 22–4.
[46] Ibid., pp. 12–13.
[47] J. Pijnappel, 'Over het Arabisch-Maleische alphabet', *Bijdragen tot Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1860), p. 242.

Pijnappel's work rests on the assumption that Arabs were a foreign influence in the archipelago. Significantly, through the active introduction of 'their' alphabet, Arabs were ascribed powers over natives that were analogous to the kind of authority possessed by the Dutch. Passive and defenceless as they were, natives had played no role in the adoption of the Arabic alphabet, while the corruption of the Malay language itself had met with no resistance from them. Pijnappel saw no contradiction, however, in substituting the Arabic with the Dutch alphabet, for it was the colonisers' self-appointed task to intervene on behalf of natives, and stem the further deterioration of Malay.

Pijnappel's reference to the 'corrupting' influence of Arabic can be attributed to the links between race and linguistic theories. His foreboding was one of the decline of not only the Malay language, but Malays themselves. The attribution of an unusually destructive power to the Arabic language has been a cornerstone of the modern Orientalist tradition – the belief 'that Arabic as a language is a dangerous ideology'.[48] We need only look further in Pijnappel's article to see why:

> [T]he use of the [Arabic alphabet] for writing has undoubtedly narrowed the bond between the people to whom the Arabs have given their religion. Now that they have acquainted themselves with Arabic letters through writing, the Malays have with little difficulty made a part of the culture of the Arabs their own. And worst of all, the Koran, which anyone who can merely write, studies after his own fashion, has imbibed them with more leaven for fanaticism than desirable.[49]

Two conclusions seem obvious and pertinent from his analysis. Firstly, Arabs were responsible for the introduction of Islam to the region. In a later work, Pijnappel attributed the origins of the 'Arabian religion and overlordship (*heerschappij*)' in the archipelago to Arab trader-missionaries who came via the Persian and Indian coasts (especially the Malabar coast in western India).[50] Secondly, Arabic's relationship with Islam had made it a dangerous 'tool' in the hands of natives. Hence, his proposal for the use of the Dutch alphabet was part of a grander design, the cessation of several centuries of Java's contacts with Arab and Islamic civilisations. To this end, Pijnappel's call for the systemisation and organisation of the Malay language was of some significance.

[48] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 320. See also p. 287.
[49] Pijnappel, 'Over het Arabisch-Maleische alphabet', p. 242.
[50] J. Pijnappel, 'Over de kennis, die de Arabieren voor de komst der Portugeezen van den Indischen Archipel bezaten', *Bijdragen tot Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1872), pp. 157–8. See also M. B. Hooker, 'The Translation of Islam into South-East Asia', in M. B. Hooker, ed., *Islam in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), p. 4.

As part of the nineteenth-century Dutch movement for the standardisation of Malay, Pijnappel expostulated to his scholarly audience that the Arabic alphabet was 'completely unfit' for the proper and systematic writing of the language.[51] Malay would be far better served by the Dutch alphabet. Calls for the standardisation of Malay in this manner were 'partly influenced by renewed concern about Islamic militancy'.[52] Pijnappel hoped through the use of the Dutch alphabet that 'gradually a number of Arabic words shall disappear from [Malay]; something that should portend nothing but good'.[53] The demise of the Arabic-Malay alphabet, therefore, signified not only the end of a cumbersome method of expressing Malay, but also the curtailment of an overall militant Arab-Islamic influence.

Far from the position of the merchant-scientists, Pijnappel's proposed abolition of the Arabic script illustrates how much European cultural and political supremacy had come to be unquestioned in his time. With the Dutch alphabet in place, he claims, 'the whole study of Malay will experience thereof the good influence'.[54] He clearly believed, however, that his proposal was more than an academic matter, as Malays themselves would be elevated by the 'good influence' of Dutch. He was further distinguished from the merchant-scientists by the greater academic specialisation and self-consciousness of his work. Pijnappel arrived at the conclusion that Arabic and Malay were incompatible through a systematic linguistic inquiry. Arabic, he argues, is a 'princely language and is far above any comparison with Malay in its sophistication'.[55] However, there was simply nothing linguistically in common between the two. Through scholarly reasoning, unalterable racial and cultural differences between Arabs and natives were established and given sound scientific underpinnings. The scholarly work of Pijnappel and others in the second half of the nineteenth century became inextricably linked to the governance of natives. Appointed to institutions funded by the government and designed to train colonial civil servants, these scholar-bureaucrats typically developed interests that served to maintain Dutch overlordship in the Indies. Pijnappel identified Arab influence in the lives of natives and roundly called for its repression based on a philological analysis. Others, such as Niemann, focused increasingly on the relationship of Arabs and natives through the systematic study of Islam.

[51] Pijnappel, 'Over het Arabisch-Maleische alphabet', pp. 239–40.
[52] Hoffman, 'A Foreign Investment', p. 77.
[53] Pijnappel, 'Over het Arabisch-Maleische alphabet', p. 242.
[54] Ibid., p. 240.
[55] Ibid., p. 241.

George Karel Niemann (1823–1905) published an introduction to Islam in the archipelago in 1861 in which he claimed that Islam in this region was derived directly from the Arabs of the Hadramaut.[56] After his studies at the Athenaeum Illustre in Amsterdam, where his first loves were Arabic and Hebrew, he began to turn his attention to the Indies with some initial guidance from P. J. Veth. He held a lectureship in Malay, Javanese, and Indies-related subjects at a Catholic missionary institution in Rotterdam from 1848 to 1873, then was appointed professor at the Royal Academy.[57] His theory on the origins of Islam in the archipelago was probably influenced by the relatively large numbers of Hadramis present in the Indies at the time of the publication of his work, and did not find much of a following in the subsequent writings of Dutch authorities. However, the belief that Arabs (particularly Hadramis) first proselytised Islam in the region was a popular European misconception that found confirmation in the scholarship of authorities such as Niemann who initiated the study of Islam in the Indies.

After studying at the Faculty of Letters of the State University of Leiden, Joannes Jacobus de Hollander (1817–86) argued for the Arabian origins of Islam in the Indies in the same year that Niemann advanced his thesis.[58] More than Niemann, De Hollander was influential on the thinking of colonial officers through the body of work he produced on the Indies, and his teaching career at the Royal Military Academy at Breda. After a career teaching Oriental and European languages at the Academy, he was made professor and assumed the task of teaching the history, geography, languages, and ethnography of the Indies. De Hollander proposed his theory of Islamisation in an introduction to the geography and people of the Netherlands Indies designed for use at the Academy.[59] This and other texts written by him, typically also designed for the training of colonial officers, made him one of best-known scholars of his time. Among his major accomplishments was a textbook for the study of the Malay language and grammar that appeared as early

[56] George Karel Niemann, *Inleiding tot de kennis van den Islam*, *ook met betrekking tot den Indischen Archipel* (Rotterdam: M. Wijt en Zonen, 1861). For discussions of this author see G. F. Pijper, *Studiën over de Geschiedenis van de Islam in Indonesia*, *1900–1950* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), p. 6; Boland, *Islam in Indonesia*, pp. 11–12; Hooker, 'The Translation of Islam', p. 4.

[57] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, s.v. 'George Karel Niemann'.

[58] For a discussion of the 'Arabian thesis' of the Islamisation of the archipelago see Hooker, 'The Translation of Islam', pp. 4–5.

[59] Joannes Jacobus de Hollander, *Handleiding bij de Beoefening der Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch Oost-Indië*, 4 vols., historische leercursus ten gebruike der Koninklijke Militaire Akademie (Breda: Nys, 1861–4).

as 1845, and was republished several times over the course of the nineteenth century.[60]

Aside from his views on Islam, De Hollander makes observations about the people of the Indies that indicate the growing acceptability of social divisions based on race. Like the laws of the colonial state at this time, De Hollander makes the distinction between 'foreign' and 'native' races in an 1868 publication intended for secondary school education. He distinguishes 'the properly-speaking natives [*inboorlingen*]' from 'a great number of foreigners [*vreemdelingen*] to be found here, of whom the Chinese and the Arabs are the most important'.[61] Then, steeped in the language of race, and armed with statistics, he elaborates on the particularities of each group. The Chinese, Arabs, and Indians are distinguished from each other by size, function, and location. Arabs, he states, presently 'keep themselves busy chiefly with trade or fill priestly positions'.[62] Reiterating familiar Dutch concerns, De Hollander adds: 'As fellow-countrymen of the Prophet they arrogate to themselves a superiority over the natives which at least in outward appearances is readily acknowledged by the latter.' Arabs occupied 'priestly positions' largely in the imaginations of the colonialists: so much is clear even in the occupational records maintained by the colonial state discussed in Chapter 3. Nevertheless, in the eyes of such men as De Hollander, Islam was one of the 'racial' attributes of Arabs that they exploited in order to gain supremacy over native Muslims. There is an unusual acknowledgement in his observations of the possibility that the latter may think otherwise of the former beyond 'outward appearances'.

The well-known scholar P. J. Veth (1814–95), whom we encountered in Chapter 1, wrote one of the best descriptions of the paradigmatic rise of Arabs to positions of power in the archipelago in his study of western Borneo.[63] While he too shared the contemporary perception that Arabs were influential in the affairs of native Muslims, his observations surrounding the founding of Pontianak, and its ethnically diverse maritime world, added an illuminating political and economic context to the study of Arabs. He studied Malay, Arabic, and other languages, and wrote evocatively and prodigiously about an area of the world that he had never

[60] Joannes Jacobus de Hollander, *Handleiding bij de Beoefening der Maleische Taal- en Letterkunde*, 2 vols., Sixth edition edited by R. van Eck (Breda: Broese en Co., 1893). (Voor rekening van de Koninklijke Militaire Academie.)

[61] Joannes Jacobus de Hollander, *Aardrijksbeschrijving van Nederlandsch Oost-Indië: Vooral ten Gebruike bij het Middelbaar Onderwijs* (Amsterdam: Seyffardt's Boekhandel, 1868), p. 25.

[62] Ibid., p. 26.

[63] P. J. Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, pp. 246–68.

actually seen. In an 1849 publication, Veth highlights the role of Arabs in a passage that reiterates the classic Orientalist portrayal of the spread of Islam by the sword:

> But the most important and thoroughgoing revolution in the condition of the Indies Archipelago was brought about by a third Asiatic nation [after the Hindus and Chinese]. We mean the Arabs, though perhaps we prefer to use the general name Moslems, thereby encompassing all the different nations of Western Asia who accepted the religion and laws of Mohammed [when] conquered by the weapons of the Caliphs. [These nations] became bonded in a sort of cultural unity [*volkseenheid*] through a similarity of institutions which lasted for some time, though later national differences struck to tear asunder the powerful state.[64]

British and Dutch scholars attributed to Arabs a might that they believed was derived from their historical relationship with Islam.

Gaining ascendancy, especially in the late nineteenth century, this racial and politico-religious characterisation of Arabs reveals Dutch anxieties about the mounting rebellions that appeared to possess strong Islamic undertones. Arabs and Islam were controlled and watched with care, if not held responsible for these revolts as well as the growth of the many-faceted yearnings for progress and political change that were expressed in the growing pan-Islamic movement. They became a key problem in the minds of the Dutch, and therefore some of the most capable scholar-bureaucrats were employed to address the matter, as we shall see in the following section.

The Arab Question: Van den Berg, Fokkens, and Snouck Hurgronje

L. W. C. Van den Berg (1845–1927) was commissioned by the Governor General of the Netherlands Indies to write a report on Arabs settled there. The work that was published in 1886, *Le Hadhramout et les colonies Arabes dans l'Archipel indien*, was written in French because it had a wider readership than Dutch. It was thought to be of sufficient importance that an abridged version was issued in English in 1887 for British colonial consumption.[65] Van den Berg was born in Haarlem in 1845,

[64] P. J. Veth, *Een Blik op den Indischen Archipel*, Overgedrukt uit de Bijdragen tot Bevordering van de kennis en den bloie der Maatschappij: Tot Nut van't Algemeen. (Amsterdam, 1849), p. 5.

[65] L. W. C. van den Berg, *Hadthramùt and the Arab Colonies in the Indian Archipelago*, translation by C. W. H. Sealy of the Introduction and First Part, and extracts from the Second Part of the 1886 publication in French (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1887). The first part is a survey of the Hadramaut based on secondary sources and the information provided to the author by Arabs in the Netherlands Indies. The British Political Agent in Aden had requested permission from the government in the Indies to translate it with British interests in the Hadramaut in mind, see 'A Review of *Le Hadhramout et les*

and completed his studies at the Faculty of Law in Leiden in 1868. In 1869, he left for the Netherlands Indies to work as assistant secretary to the Judicial Council in Semarang. At the time of the research for *Le Hadhramout* he held the post of Specialist Adviser and gave routine advice to the Governor General and his staff, and conducted long-term research projects.[66]

The Dutch had a host of reasons for commissioning a work on Arabs. They had become very concerned about pan-Islamism because of its ostensible disruptive influence in different parts of the world.[67] In the colony itself it was throught that uprisings were the work of pan-Islamic agitators who had brought home fanatical ideas unfamiliar to the Javanese, or that these agitators were frequently foreigners – possibly Arab. The latter possibility became increasingly real to the Dutch with the news that an Arab, Habib Abdurrahman Azzahir, was a leader of the Acehnese in their long war against Dutch imperialism. In this regard, Van den Berg's appointed task reflected a great change in Dutch colonial policy. His surveillance of Arabic-language sermon books in Madiun in 1885, under the guise of scholarly inquiry, clearly spearheaded an increasingly interventionist colonial policy with regard to Islam.[68] In a proposal for a research project towards 'a monograph on the Arabs, their land of origin, their economy, social relations, way of life, and so forth', Van den Berg noted that the study would greatly benefit the government's understanding of the pan-Islamic movement, and suggest steps in order to contain it.[69]

In *Le Hadhramout*, Van den Berg concluded that Arabs were mainly harmless traders whose primary interest was the peaceful conduct of their commercial activities and the security of their investments (primarily in fixed assets like land). Indeed, they were traditionally loyal allies of the Dutch. He also concluded that pan-Islamism was not a threat to

colonies Arabs dans l'Archipel indien by L. W. C. van den Berg', *Indische Gids*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1887), p. 1772.

[66] Karel A. Steenbrink, Preface to L. W. C. van den Berg. *Hadramaut dan Koloni Arab di Nusantara*, translated by Rahayu Hidayat, Seri Indonesia Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies (INIS), vol. 3 (Jakarta: INIS, 1989), pp. xi–xiii.

[67] 'A Review of *Le Hadhramout*', p. 1773. That pan-Islamism was a concern of the time is revealed indirectly by this reviewer when he noted that it was of interest to the Indies government to know that the chiefs of the Hadramaut acknowledged Ottoman sovereignty only in name. Hence, 'the Turkish Consul, who has been accredited in Batavia for some years now, does not exercise the least authority over Arabs settled in the Netherlands Indies'.

[68] Onghokham, 'The Inscrutable and the Paranoid: An Investigation into the Sources of the Brotodiningrat Affair', in Ruth T. McVey, ed., *Southeast Asian Transitions: Approaches through Local History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 137.

[69] Steenbrink, Preface, p. xv.

Dutch political authority and that those who subscribed to pan-Islamist journals from abroad were only a literate minority.[70] And importantly, most Arabs had too much invested in economic activities to afford political instability. On the contrary, he added that Arabs were a law-abiding and powerful influence against religious and political radicalism among natives. While this conclusion was explicitly directed to the Dutch public of the Indies who saw in every Arab a potential fanatic, he treated Arabs with greater circumspection in his secret recommendations to the government. Van den Berg believed that Arabs exercised very little religious influence on the Javanese in the nineteenth century because of the end of exclusively sayyid immigration, and the increasing numbers of Arabs of 'low class' (*bas étage*) who emigrated.[71] Both these factors much reduced the prestige of Arabs in the eyes of the Javanese. Interestingly, he omits his own previous observation of the changes in the relations of power introduced by the Dutch, and their openly stated dislike of Javanese contact with Arabs. He wished to put an end to the *idée fixe* of many Europeans that Arabs had considerable prestige among the Javanese simply because they were compatriots of the Prophet. Like Ritter, he believed that the days of Arabs' rise to positions of political power were long gone. According to Van den Berg, the popularity of Islamic mysticism among the Javanese, which stood in strong contrast to the norms of the Hadramaut, clearly indicated the slight influence of Arabs upon the religious life of the archipelago. In Batavia, Arabs were opposed to Islamic mysticism and believed that those involved in such activities were for the most part unseemly individuals who exploited others for money.[72]

Interestingly, Van den Berg notes that Arabs and native Muslim scholars did not necessarily get along:

> Let us mention further, traits which are unworthy of the Arabs such as their vindictive character, their taste for legal proceedings, their incessant quarrels with the indigenous clergy about the Mohammedan religion. These quarrels displease the Dutch authorities who especially in accordance with the colonial charter abstain from all interference with religion. Also, they do not have the *special knowledge* necessary to settle questions of this nature.[73]

Van den Berg's observation on the lack of specialised knowledge about Islam reflected the still-underdeveloped state of the Dutch administrative apparatus and scholarship in this regard. His efforts to rectify the

[70] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, pp. 244–67.
[71] Ibid., pp. 209–12.
[72] Ibid., p. 212; L. W. C. van den Berg, 'Over de devotie der Naqsjibendijah in den Indischen Archipel', *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. 28 (1883), p. 161.
[73] Ibid., pp. 131–2. Emphasis added.

lack of specialised knowledge on Islam were bolstered by the arrival of C. Snouck Hurgronje in the Netherlands Indies.

Before turning to Snouck Hurgronje, it is worthwhile to introduce the contrasting perspective on Arabs – one unrelated to Islamic issues – of the colonial officer Fokkens. Upon completing his studies in Delft in 1874, Fokkens was posted to the General Secretariat (Algemeene Secretarie) in Java. After assuming a number of positions and completing investigations on *landrente* – a tax on the harvest imposed on natives (1885) – obligatory services of natives in Kedu (1888), and further research on obligatory services in all regions of Java and Madura (1889), in 1893 he continued the research on the economic conditions of Foreign Orientals in Java and Madura that had been initiated by W. P. Groeneveldt, the one-time Adviser of Chinese Affairs. This research appeared as a confidential report in 1894 in which he condemned Arabs' economic activities and proposed ending further immigration of Arabs and Chinese in the interest of native welfare.[74] Fokkens recommended implementing better controls on the activities of Foreign Orientals and argued for their improved treatment, as many complaints had arisen as a result of their separation by race from the moment of arrival and their frequent mishandling at the hands of the officialdom. Given his concern for the plight of the Javanese who constituted the vast majority of the poor in Java, Fokkens' recommendations have been viewed as a precursor to the Ethical Policy (Ethische Politiek) of the early 1900s, the stated objective of which was to improve the standard of living of the native underclass.[75]

Like Fokkens, C. Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936) favoured an end to Arab immigration, but came to this conclusion by a markedly different route. Analysing Arabs almost exclusively in terms of Islam, Snouck Hurgronje minimised the importance of their economic activities that Fokkens found so deleterious to natives' well-being. His perspective on the place of Arabs in Java was also a considerable departure from Van den Berg's analysis in *Le Hadhramout*. Snouck Hurgronje believed that the presence of Arabs among Javanese Muslims tended to encourage a stricter adherence to Islamic prescriptions and, importantly, an unfavourable attitude towards European rule. Van den Berg, on the other hand, had come to the opposite conclusion. Foremost among colonial experts in Islam and Arabic, Snouck Hurgronje reified 'The Arab' in religious terms and replaced the commonplace European hysteria about Islam and Arabs with scholarly circumspection and bureaucratic surveillance.

[74] Fokkens, 'Onderzoek', 8 Sept. 1894, Mr. 887/1894, Vb. 7 Apr. 1896, no. 27, pp. 245–6.
[75] Alexander Claver, *Dutch Commerce and Chinese Merchants in Java: Colonial Relationships in Trade and Finance, 1800–1942* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 161 and 244.

Aside from addressing popular misconceptions with erudition and arrogance, he established an enduring critique of Arabs based on Islam that marked a departure from the economic and political critiques prevalent since the early nineteenth century. As an adviser to the government between 1889 and 1906, he identified Arabs principally as a politico-religious problem because of their pan-Islamic sympathies and their influence among native Muslims of the urban milieus on Java's north coast. Although Snouck Hurgronje and Fokkens reached their conclusions about Arabs in different ways, they shared the contemporary liberal spirit of concern for the welfare of natives. Both men thus saw Arabs as a problem in relation to natives. In this regard, Snouck Hurgronje stuck to the long-held idea of Arabs and Islam as foreign accretions, though refining it in his acute observations and analyses of the politico-religious life of the Javanese.

Snouck Hurgronje capped the development of scholarship on natives and Islam with new zeal and foresight, and was among the first European scholars of Islam to pay serious attention to the Malay world instead of relegating it to the periphery of Islamic studies. He was followed in this course by G. F. Pijper and G. W. J. Drewes, as well as the Frenchmen A. Cabaton, G. H. Bousquet, and L.-C. Damais.[76] A scholar of Arabic and Islam, and stalwart defender of liberal Dutch colonialism, Snouck Hurgronje gave official policy on Islam and natives a characteristic shape in his capacity as Adviser of Native and Arab Affairs.[77] He was a part of a generation of Orientalists such as Ignaz Goldziher, Duncan Black Macdonald, Carl Becker, and Louis Massignon who exemplified 'what was best and strongest in the tradition during the period roughly from the 1880s to the interwar years', and for whom 'manifest differences in their methods emerge as less important than their Orientalist consensus on Islam: latent inferiority'.[78] This generation of late-nineteenth-century Orientalists were also united in their service to the European imperial mission, and as such 'Macdonald and Massignon were widely sought after as experts on Islamic matters by colonial administrators from North Africa to Pakistan', while Snouck Hurgronje was their Dutch counterpart.[79]

It is useful to take the perspective of Bousquet, the French colonial Islamic expert, in evaluating Snouck Hurgronje. Mainly, the former makes the illuminating link between Snouck Hurgronje's intense

[76] Denys Lombard, 'L'Horizon Insulinindien et son importance pour une comprehension globale de l'Islam', *Archipel, L'Islam en Indonésie I*, vol. 29, no. 1 (1985), p. 36.
[77] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 263.
[78] Ibid., p. 209.
[79] Ibid., p. 210.

academic training in Islam and Arabic, and the apparently exaggerated importance he placed on these matters in his advice to the government:

> The extremely favorable light in which the authorities view everything that is Arabic or concerns Moslem orthodoxy, reform and the like, is probably due in part to Snouck Hurgronje's posthumous influence … but, greatly daring, I would say that he himself somewhat exaggerated the importance of the orthodox Arab element. In any event, his successors have very definitely committed this error. Taking Indonesian Islam as a whole, my direct impression of it was that it is less affected by Arab influences and less orthodox than I had been led to believe by Snouck Hurgronje's books and especially those of his successors. The intensive training in Islamology which orientalists received at Leiden under Snouck Hurgronje's supervision, the great demands which he made especially in the field of Arabic, and their intensive study of Arabic texts naturally make these orientalists feel more at home in orthodox Arab circles in the Indies.[80]

His academic training also lent a didactic and critical style to his policy recommendations and writings. In an 1886 article 'Twee populaire dwalingen' (Two common errors) Snouck Hurgronje explained the difference between the actual practices of Muslims and common European misconceptions.[81] On the question of veiling, for instance, he noted that the practice was not as common among Muslim women as Europeans seemed to believe. While explaining how veiling was an important characteristic of certain Muslims, he noted that Syrian women, bedouins, and Muslim women of the Netherlands Indies were unaccustomed to the practice. He concluded that Islamic law was not upheld literally by Muslims.

In another instance, Snouck Hurgronje criticised the author P. A. Daum for granting to his protagonist the title 'Sayyid', which according to Snouck Hurgronje 'only Arabs of direct descent from Mohammed have the right to'.[82] However, as Gerard Termorshuizen has indicated, many an Arab in the archipelago, and certainly someone as pious as the protagonist in the novel, was referred to as 'Sayyid'. If in the past the Dutch officialdom's awareness of Arabs was murky at best, Snouck Hurgronje clearly instructed them otherwise, sometimes pedantically, by carefully describing differences between the Arabs of various Hadrami backgrounds.

[80] G. H. Bousquet, *A French View of the Netherlands Indies*, translated by Philip E. Lilienthal (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 20.

[81] C. Snouck Hurgronje, 'Twee populaire dwalingen, verbeterd door Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje', *Bijdragen tot Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*, vol. 35, no. 3 (1886), pp. 356–77.

[82] Gerard Termorshuizen, *P. A. Daum: Journalist en romancier van tempo doeloe* (Amsterdam: Nijgh and Van Ditmar, 1988), p. 445. My thanks to the author for kindly sending me a copy of the relevant pages.

As we approach the end of the nineteenth century, from as early as the 1870s with Van den Berg, we encounter learned exegeses and 'corrective' writings on Islam.[83] Snouck Hurgronje himself provided much general information on Islam to counter those who made 'errors' such as assuming that Islam in Java was akin to Arabic culture and religious practices, and that the presence of Arabs in the colony was the reason for the spread and existence of Islam in the region. Much to the dismay of Snouck Hurgronje, this body of knowledge was not always heeded by the administration. While Snouck Hurgronje's prescriptions were corrective, he nonetheless analysed Arabs' place in the Netherlands Indies in terms of Islam. He dismissed their importance in economic terms, and saw their political threat only within an Islamic framework. This analysis was inherited by future advisers of the Bureau for Native and Arab Affairs for whom Snouck Hurgronje's ideas were extremely influential.[84]

The Bureau for Native and Arab Affairs

Snouck Hurgronje was the pioneering adviser of the Kantoor voor Inlandsche and Arabische Zaken (Bureau for Native and Arab Affairs), established in 1899.[85] The Bureau conducted research and surveillance on Arabs and Islam in the wake of Van den Berg's own pioneering research in the 1880s, and had roots in earlier administrative formulations that tended to focus on Muslim affairs.[86] Snouck Hurgronje brought new zeal and commitment to the study of Islam and natives. He applied his knowledge to serve his government in the capacity of adviser by pursuing carefully crafted policies with regard to Islam in which a few Arabs were to play a significant role.[87] However, as the name of the office suggests, the matter of concern was not pan-Islamism itself but the

[83] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 40–1.
[84] Pijper, *Studiën*, pp. 8–10.
[85] Wd. Gouvernements Secretaris, 'Instructie voor den Adviseur voor Inlandsche en Arabische Zaken', Vastgesteld bij besluit van 14 February 1899 no. 30, Mr. 109/1899; H. Aqib Suminto, *Politik Islam Hindia Belanda: Het Kantoor voor Indlandsche Zaken* (Jakarta: Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial, 1985), p. 102.
[86] For instance, Van den Berg's administrative title in 1878 was 'Ambtenaar voor de beoefening van Indische Talen, Adviseur voor Oostersche Talen en het Mohammedaansche Regt' (Officer for the Study of Indies Languages, Adviser for Eastern Languages and Mohammedan Law); see Steenbrink, Preface, p. xiii. Eastern languages in this instance probably included Arabic.
[87] Harry J. Benda, 'Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and the Foundations of Dutch Islamic Policy in Indonesia', in Adrienne Suddard, ed., *Continuity and Change in Southeast Asia: Collected Journal Articles of Harry J. Benda*, Southeast Asia Studies Monograph Series, no. 18 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 83–92. (Reprint from *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 30, no. 4 (1958), pp. 338–47.)

relationship of natives with Arabs, and perhaps the potentially dangerous political alliance between these two. It is significant that Arabs and natives were placed together under the surveillance of the Bureau even though in overall politico-legal terms they were treated separately.

The Bureau is the clearest example of the institutional embodiment of the association of Arabs and Islam. Objectified as an 'Islamic problem', Arabs were placed under the purview of a separate office from the Chinese (for whom a bureau was also created). Arabs, however, were placed under the same office as natives. The reason for this is explained not merely by the relative paucity of Arabs but by the special relationship that the Dutch believed the natives possessed with Arabs and Islam. The union of Arabs and natives in the Bureau, however, took place in an era in which these two social groups were becoming increasingly distinct from each other through the application of more than half a century of racialised rule. Snouck Hurgronje's advice to the Indies government on natives and Arabs was mutually exclusive for the most part, though both these groups were policed under one body. In this matter also we note a striking difference in perception in the eyes of scholars of Islam such as Snouck Hurgronje, and economy-oriented policy-makers such as Fokkens. The Dutch historically had viewed the closeness and similarities of Arabs and natives in terms of Islam (though noting their undesirable influence on the latter), and their divergence in terms of economic behaviour. However, the former probably drew far greater attention and provoked unusual steps, such as the appointment of Sayyid Oesman to the Bureau as an honorary adviser.

Sayyid Oesman

Sayyid Oesman was born in Pekojan and educated in Mecca and the Hadramaut. He was the maternal grandson of Shaykh Abdurrahman bin Ahmad al-Misri, the astronomer we encountered in Chapter 1. In the 1880s, Sayyid Oesman was a widely respected Islamic scholar in Batavia who was friendly towards Dutch authority (see Figure 8). Snouck Hurgronje appointed him to the post of honorary adviser to the Bureau in 1891, though he had already assisted Van den Berg in his research on Arabs at least a decade earlier. Sayyid Oesman, however, understood this appointment to mean that he had been made the State *Mufti* (Islamic Jurist) of the Netherlands Indies, a view that was not sanctioned by the colonial administration.[88] While religious leaders had been coopted

[88] Nico Kaptein, *Islam, Colonialism and the Modern Age in the Netherlands East Indies: A Biography of Sayyid 'Uthman (1822–1914)* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 268.

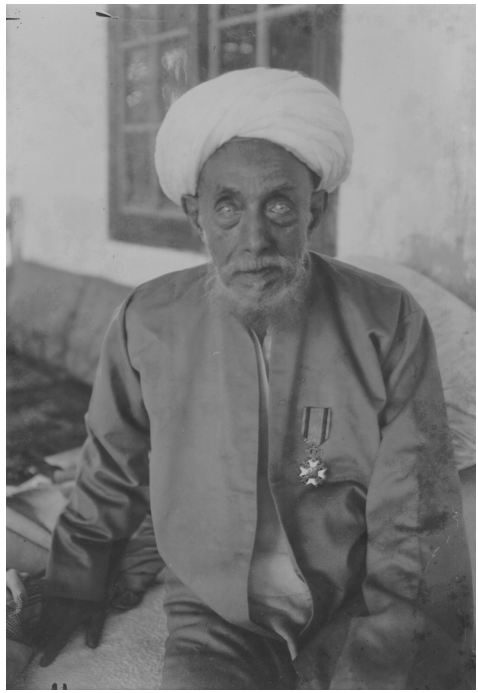


Figure 8. Photograph taken by H. Hinso of Sayyid Oesman wearing a Dutch decoration, circa 1900

by the Dutch from as early as the East India Company until the early nineteenth century, Arabs were favoured in this regard by the late nineteenth century.[89] The Dutch started paying established Islamic scholars after the Java War (1825–30), and in this manner left the surveillance of Islam, *haji* (those who had performed the pilgrimage to Mecca), and so on, to local Muslim officials.[90] In one instance, an Arab who knew

[89] Karel A. Steenbrink, 'Priests, Popes and Penghulus: A Review of Dutch Names for Indonesian Muslim Leaders', in Gerrit Schutte and Heather Sutherland, eds., *Papers of the Dutch-Indonesian Historical Conference held at Lage Vuursche, The Netherlands, 23–27 June 1980* (Leiden and Jakarta: Bureau of Indonesian Studies, 1982), p. 88; Peter Carey, 'Aspects of Javanese History in the Nineteenth Century', in Harry Aveling, ed., *The Development of Indonesian Society: From the Coming of Islam to the Present Day* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), p. 98.

[90] Carey, 'Aspects', p. 77; M. C. Piepers, 'Gelijkstelling van Vreemde Oosterlingen met Europeanen; mémoire sur le droit civil, pénal et fiscal auquel sont soumis les Sujets Ottomans résidant aux Indes Orientales Néerlandaises; notes sur la pratique de la religion mahométane aux Indes Orientales Néerlandaises', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, vol. 2 (1898), p. 814.

nothing about Islam but desired the position of *imam* (religious leader) found Dutch support for his ambitions.[91] However, in Sayyid Oesman the Dutch found an Arab scholar of Islam who was willing to aid them in their efforts to rule over their many Muslim subjects.[92] He was well suited to the task as he was different from his predecessors given his fluency in Arabic as well as local languages.[93] His versatility in languages reflected his creole background and upbringing in the hybrid Muslim quarter of Pekojan. Sayyid Oesman wrote and translated many works that were published in Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, and Arabic. Between 1871 and 1886, he became influential among not only Arabs but a great number of Muslims in the Indies.[94]

Not only did Sayyid Oesman give his blessings to Dutch rule in Java, but Snouck Hurgronje used tracts written by him to combat Islamic 'problems' by circulating them widely at opportune moments. This was the case in an 1892 effort to counteract the spread of copies of *wasiat Nabi* (the last admonition of the Prophet), which incited a return to piety by claiming that the signs had emerged of an approaching Day of Judgement.[95] The government subsidised the reproduction of a brochure written by Sayyid Oesman that condemned these Arabic inscriptions attributed with magical powers. Copies of the brochure were sold below the market price and in some instances distributed free of charge. Nevertheless, Snouck Hurgronje made every effort to propagate the pretence that Sayyid Oesman was an impartial figure whose advice on Islamic matters the colonial government took to heart. He claimed that Muslims throughout Java were convinced that Sayyid Oesman 'did not write anything he could not account for', and that no other scholar was able to counter the weight of his authority.[96] Understanding the value of this authority, he carefully distanced the government from the works which he used in his propaganda against rebellions or political organisations based on Islam. Lithographed at Sayyid Oesman's own printing press alongside a relatively high volume of the booklets for which he had become well known, the works intended to serve the government's interests did so rather inconspicuously.

[91] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 159.
[92] C. Snouck Hurgronje, 'Sajjid Oethman's gids voor de priesterraden', *Verspreide Geschriften van C. Snouck Hurgronje*, vol. 4, pt. 1, bibliography and registers compiled by A. J. Wensinck (Bonn and Leipzig: Kurt Schroeder; Leiden: Brill, 1924), pp. 283–303. First published in 1894.
[93] A. Buno Heslinga, 'Said Oethman', *Weekblad voor Indië*, vol. 10, no. 47 (8 Mar. 1914), pp. 1123–5.
[94] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, pp. 164–5.
[95] Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, pp. 1520–1; Kaptein, *Islam*, p. 125.
[96] Ibid., p. 1514.

Snouck Hurgronje made the following evaluation of the venerable sayyid in 1886:

> For the time being, [it] is merely observed here, that an Arab like Othmān ibn Jahja is of more worth to us than many 'liberal' wine drinking regents. We take it as our duty to draw general attention to this ally of our authority, whose fair appreciation, in due time, can be of incalculable use.[97]

By making Sayyid Oesman honorary adviser to the Bureau, the colonial scholar-bureaucrat consciously elevated an Arab rather than a native to a position of some influence and standing in the colony. It would appear that Snouck Hurgronje appealed to the enduring belief that Arabs had influence over natives in making the appointment. However, the influence in this instance would not be damaging to colonial interests but would extend Dutch paternalism over natives through the figure of Sayyid Oesman.

The Instantiation of Racial Categories in the Imagination

Chapter 4 has demonstrated how the intellectual labours of numerous scholar-bureaucrats produced a narrative of Islam that narrowly delimited Arabness. These intellectual labours corresponded to the controls imposed on mobility examined in Chapter 3. Whereas the pass and quarter system instantiated racial categories in space, the intellectual production of scholar-bureaucrats instantiated the same in the colonial imagination.

The efforts of scholar-bureaucrats established Arabs and Islam as foreign to the Malay world and thereby reinforced racialised boundaries. In the colonial imagination, Arabs came to be seen as a vehicle by which Islam influenced natives negatively. This was the culmination in representational terms of the alienation that began with the reduction of Arabs to an economic function and the imposition of constraints on their mobility. The representation of Arabs as a destructive force shaped the thinking of other scholar-bureaucrats as well as that of the Dutch-reading public in the Indies, and added to the general anxiety over Arabs and pan-Islamism. This anxiety echoed the state of ruling circles in other European colonies and Europe itself.

An emergent modern Arab identity took a complex shape. On the one hand, the boundaries between Arabs and others in the colonial social

[97] C. Snouck Hurgronje, 'Een Arabisch Bondgenoot der Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering', in *Verspreide Geschriften van C. Snouck Hurgronje*, vol. 4, pt. 1, bibliography and registers compiled by A. J. Wensinck (Bonn and Leipzig: Kurt Schroeder; Leiden: Brill, 1924), p. 85.

order became more impermeable. Correspondingly, the mobility and versatility of Arabs was greatly curtailed. On the other hand, an Arab identity emerged from intermixed and hybrid urban Muslim milieus within the broader context of a culturally diverse colony. Racialisation narrowed the scope of this identity but did not eliminate the diverse cultural elements that pertained to it. Intermixed and hybrid contexts not only persisted under the colonial state, but were the sites from which Arabs asserted a modern identity.

The racialised worldview of the scholar-bureaucrats blinded them to the significance and dynamism of urban Muslim milieus, in particular, the fruitful interaction between Arabs and natives. Snouck Hurgronje, for instance, reduced natives to an inert mass, and saw no way for their 'betterment' but through a paternalistic philosophy based on *Associatie* (association) with Europeans.[98] He and other scholar-bureaucrats were thus unable to properly appraise the incipient organisational initiatives of Arabs and natives.

Arabs became advocates of social change in the early twentieth century. They expressed yearnings for progress, were moved by the political awakening of Chinese and natives, and developed significant organisational and institutional foundations based on Islamic ideas. The signs of this development were evident in the close interaction between Arab and native Muslim traders discussed in the preceding chapter.

Chapter 4 concludes this book's examination of the racialised controls and representations of the colonial state. Whereas Chapters 2, 3, and 4 have shown how Arabness came to be constrained by the terms of racialisation, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 will turn to how Arabs negotiated and overcame these terms. As we shall see next, Arabs began to break out of the tangible and intangible walls erected around them by reaching out to the Ottoman Empire.

[98] Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, p. 246.

Part III

Modern Identity

5 Turning to Istanbul

> Thus, Muslims are truly not to blame when united in their hearts by the love of their sovereign, the great Caliph, the Ottoman Sultan, they rise to defend him. Their spiritual and material existence rests on the stability of his kingdom and there is no other way than through this power for them to vindicate those rights that they may still possess.
>
> Sayyid Saif al-Dīn al-Yamanī, Singapore, 21 Rajab 1315
>
> *Thamarāt al-Funūn*, 10 Sha'bān, 1315 [1898][1]

We turn our attention in this chapter to the agency of Arabs in a period of significant social change. Arabs looked towards the Ottoman Empire near the end of the nineteenth century and thereby identified themselves with a declining power whose historical might and reach was perhaps more meaningful to Muslims around the world at this time than any other. On the one hand, Arabs were provoked to identify with an expansive cultural geography as a means of escaping the enormous constraints on their mobility in the colonial social order. On the other hand, they sought in the burgeoning Islamic modernity of Istanbul models for their own progress. In the same breath, the orientation towards Istanbul consolidated their position of leadership over native Muslims and gave a distinctive shape to an emergent modern Arab identity. The broad transregional trajectory of Arab politics at this time thus developed in conjunction with the cultivation of a more distinct notion of Arabness than in precolonial times. An emergent Arab leadership drove the eventful orientation towards Istanbul.

An Arab leadership began to take shape from the corps of headmen, landowners, and wealthy traders in Batavia, Surabaya, Semarang, and other major cities in Java as the nineteenth century drew to a close. This emergent leadership found common cause in their opposition to the systematic and intensified mistreatment at the hands of the colonial

[1] Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, pp. 1539–40. This excerpt is part of a long article translated from Arabic into Dutch by Snouck Hurgronje.

officialdom. Rigid political control of Arabs and Chinese followed the economic depression of the middle of the 1880s. As the pass and quarter system was applied with greater ferocity, there were widespread charges of the ill-treatment of Arabs and corruption in the ranks of the petty officials who administered it. Complaints mounted about the terribly unsanitary conditions in many areas designated for Foreign Orientals in the major trading centres. These hardships had become 'topics of daily conversations in the Arab and Chinese quarters'.[2] As conditions became worse, wealthy Arabs with considerable stakes in the colonial political economy complained about their mistreatment to the government to no avail. In addition, Chinese capital, freed by the closure of opium farms in the 1880s, presented an especially formidable challenge to the economic niches that Arabs controlled. Although prominent Arabs had been loyal subjects of the Dutch, there was cause for a good deal of disgruntlement, if not disaffection, among them in the 1890s.

The political awakening of Arabs was not solely a response to intensified policing and declining economic opportunities but also a desire for social change. In the 1890s, the signs were everywhere of a promising age, and every aspect of life was undergoing change. Besides travel, communication, and knowledge, even seeing, reading, and listening were being revolutionised. Pramoedya Ananta Toer brings this moment to life through the musings and wonderment of his protagonist Minke about the world that was changing before the latter's eyes:

> One of the products of science at which I never stopped marvelling was printing, especially zincography. Imagine people can reproduce tens of thousands of copies of any photograph in just one day: pictures of landscapes, important people, new machines, American skyscrapers. Now I could see for myself everything from all over the world upon these printed sheets of paper.[3]

Aside from inspiring a precocious young Javanese, scientific progress translated into the unprecedented geopolitical significance of Japan, as the country shaped itself as a modern Asian nation. In recognition of Japan's new-found technological, economic, and military might, the Dutch granted European legal status to all the Japanese residing in the Netherlands Indies in 1899. Shortly thereafter, Arabs and Chinese demanded the same privilege from the colonial rulers without success.

[2] Ibid., pp. 1570–1.

[3] Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *This Earth of Mankind*, translated by Max Lane (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 17. This is the first book in a tetralogy narrating the rise of anti-colonialism and nationalism in the Netherlands Indies through the figure of Minke, who is based on the pioneering journalist Tirthoadhisoerjo.

Summing up the meaning and significance of *kemajuan* (progress) at this time, the recognition of Japanese as 'Europeans' heightened some Arabs' awareness of the importance of European education and technological expertise.[4] For them, the Arab settlements in Java seemed economically, politically, and educationally backward, and conditions did not seem any better in Muslim communities throughout the world. A few Arabs were also inspired to institute changes in the Hadramaut, where the conditions of material life were much inferior to those of Java. Thus, a group of Batavian Arabs formed a society in 1884 with the goal of introducing artesian wells, and employed Javanese personnel attached to the government service for the purpose.[5] On a visit to the Hadramaut, an Arab proposed that the Sultan of Saiwun set up a college of mathematics and physics. Notably, this proposal was abandoned out of fear of the opposition of those sayyids who strongly resisted such innovations.

Driven by a desire for education and progress, Arab elites in Java gravitated towards Istanbul, then the centre of Islamic civilisation and modernity. The initial phase of Arab political development from 1890 to 1914 was greatly shaped by this orientation, and through it Arabs embraced the pan-Islamic movement and its press. The day-to-day problems faced by Arabs in Java were reported in detail through letters published in the Arabic press abroad, and found a hearing with the Ottoman government through the offices of the Turkish Consul in Batavia.[6] Newspapers and journals published in Istanbul, Cairo, Beirut, and Paris provided the venue and language for articulating a critique of Dutch rule in the Indies. Moreover, the press disseminated ideas about Islamic modernism upon which Arab organisations and educational institutions were founded. In the following pages, we examine Arab agency in fostering a new Muslim political culture that was broadly oriented towards Istanbul, then we consider the outcome of the relationships established between the Malay world and the Ottoman Empire.

A New Muslim Political Culture

Arabs helped to foster an unprecedented politics in the Malay world by embracing the Ottoman Empire as a counterpoint to Dutch power and disseminating modernist Muslim ideas emanating from Mecca and

[4] See Ahmat Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855–1913)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1995), pp. xii–xiii, 79–80, and 106–7, for the meanings of kemajuan and the development of a kemajuan-oriented press.

[5] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, pp. 81, 96.

[6] Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, p. 1585.

Cairo. They extended the reach of the transregional influence emanating from Istanbul and the major centres of Islamic intellectual life in the sprawling empire. As Laffan has noted, the initiatives of Arabs and native Muslims mirrored each other in imagining and creating the channels for the movement of modernist ideas from Arabic-speaking centres to the Malay world.[7] Arabs and native Muslims began to have common aspirations and struggles as a result of reading the periodicals from Cairo, Istanbul, Beirut, and elsewhere. They were frequently inspired and led by young men who had studied in centres of modernist Islam with the financial support of a wealthy Muslim elite in the colonies. They localised the ideas emanating from the distant modernist centres and gradually engendered a new Muslim culture. British-ruled Singapore emerged as an important centre of the intellectual ferment among Muslims in general, and a site from which claims about the Dutch mishandling of Arabs in Java could be made.

The impetus for the new Muslim political culture was the turn to Istanbul. The signs of this new orientation among Arabs appeared in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1873, a group of forty Arabs wrote to the Ottoman Sultan with the news that members of their community in Batavia and Semarang had been imprisoned by Dutch authorities.[8] Had there been an Ottoman representative in the Netherlands Indies, they wrote, the Dutch would not have dared to take such actions. Those who composed this letter could hardly have been unaware of the appointment in 1864 of Sayyid Abdallah al-Junied, a wealthy Arab trader, as the first Ottoman Consul in British-ruled Singapore.[9]

The message sent to Istanbul did not fall on deaf ears. In the 1860s and 1870s, Sultan Abdul Aziz renewed the claim to the caliphate that was first made a century earlier in the negotiations at the end of the war with Russia.[10] The assertion of caliphal authority was advanced further following the enthronement of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1876. Faced with the annexation of significant Ottoman territories by European powers in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the Sultan counted on the reinvention of the caliphate as a counterweight to European political and military encroachment. By actively cultivating the image of himself as the centre of political and religious authority for Muslims

[7] Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood*, p. 3.
[8] G. S. van Krieken, *Snouck Hurgronje en het Panislamisme*, Oosters Genootschap in Nederland, no. 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), p. 20.
[9] Anthony Reid, 'Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2 (Feb. 1967), p. 271.
[10] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 106. (Reissued with a new preface; first published in 1962.)

throughout the world, he hoped to force those European nations that had Muslim inhabitants in their colonial territories to be more guarded in their policies towards the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the concerns of Muslims in Java, Aceh, Singapore, and elsewhere in the Malay world found a receptive audience in the Ottoman court in this era. Indicative of Istanbul's interest in the affairs of the archipelago, a government translator was entrusted with the task of translating from Arabic into Malay in the 1890s.[11] And following the elevation of the Japanese to the politico-legal status of Europeans, the Ottoman government complained to the Dutch ambassador in Istanbul that Arabs in Java, as Ottoman subjects, ought to have been similarly elevated.[12] Limited for the most part to Singapore and Batavia, Ottoman political representation and influence in the region increased towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The appointment of a member of the Al-Junied family as the Ottoman Consul in Singapore is a worthy illustration of the role played by prominent Arabs in the expansion of Ottoman influence. Arabs in Singapore, like their counterparts in Java, were typically one or more generations removed from their Hadramaut-born forefathers. The Al-Junied family had been among the first Arab merchants to settle in Singapore following its occupation by the British in 1819. Sayyid Omar bin Ally al-Junied had come in 1820 from Palembang to Singapore, where he formed a business partnership with his uncle, Sayyid Mahomed bin Haroun al-Junied.[13] By the time of his death in 1852, at the age of sixty, Sayyid Omar had become one of the most prominent merchants in Singapore.[14] He donated land for the creation of a cemetery and built the mosque on Bencoolen Street. Other members of his family remained important in the Muslim community of Singapore and carried on a tradition of contributing towards charitable causes. His son, Sayyid Abdallah, constructed the mosque in Kampong Malacca. It was this gentleman, the scion of an Arab trading family with roots in Palembang and one of Singapore's most prominent Muslims, who in 1864 was made Ottoman Consul. He thus became the representative of an Islamic power that had assumed a position of great importance to Muslims in the region.

In the 1880s, Sayyid Mohamed bin Ahmed Alsagoff, an Arab from another influential Singapore family took over the post, and he was

[11] Ahmed Kiamil bin Abdoullah Kadri, described as *djoroebahasa dari bahasa Bawah Angin* (translator of the languages from Below the Winds). See the work translated by him from Arabic into Malay, *Idris Bek el Homra. Satoe tjerita jang benar dari Tanah Soetji dalam tahoen 1886* (Batavia: P. Lorck en Co., 1892).
[12] Krieken, *Snouck Hurgronje*, p. 21.
[13] Buckley, *An Anecdotal History*, vol. 1, p. 62.
[14] Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 563–4.

later received into the Osmanieh Order in honour of his services to the Ottoman court.[15] As we have seen in Chapter 2, through an exploitative system of loans to poor Javanese embarking on the pilgrimage to Mecca, this gentleman obtained a steady pool of labourers who repaid him by working at his plantation on Kukup Island, appropriately named Constantinople Estate. British authorities attempted to prevent abuses such as the detention of Javanese workers on the island after the expiration of their contracts. Nonetheless, they held Arabs such as Alsagoff in high regard for their support of the British colonial order, as well as their valuable political influence over the Javanese and Malays in Singapore.[16]

Although loyal to their British overseers, the Singapore families actively propagandised against the Dutch for their treatment of Arabs in Java, and the island became a gathering place for those engaged in anti-Dutch activities.[17] The criticism of the Dutch from Singapore and Java was largely voiced in the Arabic-language periodicals published in Cairo and Istanbul that were sympathetic to the pan-Islamic movement led by men such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. Wealthy Arabs in Java subscribed to the Paris-based *Al-ʻUrwat al-Wuthqā*, which was published by Al-Afghani himself and persistently called for Muslims throughout the colonised world to free themselves from their European oppressors. After the Dutch banned this periodical from Java it continued to be smuggled in through the small port of Tuban.[18] Besides *Al-Ǧawāʻib*, the pan-Islamist newspaper that had many subscribers in the Indies, Arabs in Java also read *Al-Iʻtidāl* and *Al-Insān* from Istanbul, *Al-Ǧanna*, *Thamarāt al-Funūn*, and *Lisān al-Ḥāl* from Beirut, *Al-Waṭan* from Cairo, and *Al-Ahrām* and *Rawḍat al-Iskandarīya* from Alexandria. At the turn of the century, a thoughtful dialogue on modernist Islam was sustained between readers from the archipelago and the editors of *Al-Manār*, the important journal from Cairo.[19]

Letters published in the Arabic press typically accused the Dutch of mishandling Arabs living in Java as well as those visiting for short periods. Although in both cases there were those who derived large incomes from businesses and landholdings, at times far surpassing the salaries

[15] Alsagoff, *The Alsagoff Family in Malaysia*, p. 11; Reid, 'Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam', p. 271.
[16] Lee, *The British as Rulers*, pp. 166–8.
[17] Reid, 'Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam', p. 271.
[18] Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900–1942* (Singapore and Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973), n. 4, p. 32.
[19] The information on Arabic newspapers in the Indies is based on Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, n. 1, p. 174. For *Al-Manār* see Jutta E. Bluhm, 'A Preliminary Statement on the Dialogue Established Between the Reform Magazine *al-Manār* and the Malayo-Indonesian World', *Indonesia Circle*, no. 32 (Nov. 1983), pp. 35–42.

of European colonial civil servants, they were subjected to the same policing as poorer Arabs. Officials in the Netherlands Indies had become notorious for their ill-treatment of Arabs, and the 'distinguished' among them refused to travel in the Dutch colony without obtaining special provisions in advance.[20] They complained to the Dutch about the poor treatment they received in the Indies and contrasted it with the free and unhindered travel they enjoyed in the neighbouring Straits Settlements and India, which were under British rule. The concerns of Singaporean Arabs about conditions in Java grew out of connections between families and commercial interests in both the Dutch and British colonies. However, it was also part of a new Muslim political culture.

The new political culture spanning the shores of the Java Sea and the Straits of Melaka was quite evident in Singapore, and the support of Arabs for a case of anti-Dutch resistance is a good illustration of this. Numerous Arabs rallied behind Aceh in the Dutch war against this independent region in northern Sumatra. In 1874, Singaporean Arabs appealed to Arabs in Java and the British Straits Settlements for funds, and successfully raised large sums of money in support of Acehnese forces.[21] About the time that the Aceh war ended, Singapore became an important meeting place for intellectuals from the region who were proponents of modernist Muslim ideas, as exemplified by the founders of the publication *Al-Imam* (The Leader).

A Pioneering Modernist Monthly

In 1906 the Dutch Consul in Singapore alerted the Governor General of the Netherlands Indies to the appearance of *Al-Imam*, a Malay-language monthly whose contents 'attest to a renewed religious fervor and pan-Islamist propaganda'.[22] Shaykh Mohamed Tahir Jalaluddin al-Azhari, born in Minangkabau, and the Arab Shaykh Mohammed bin Salim al-Kalali of Ceribon were respectively the editor and publisher of *Al-Imam*. The latter, the Consul notes, 'certainly played a role in the early years of the Aceh war'.[23] Two others contributed to the creation of this publication, Sayyid Shaykh bin Ahmad al-Hadi of Riau, who was of Arab descent, and Sayyid Hassan bin Alwi bin Sjahab, a native of the Hadramaut who 'had repeatedly found himself in trouble with the criminal authorities in the Netherlands Indies'.[24] The Consul requested

[20] Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, p. 1571.
[21] Reid, 'Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam', p. 276.
[22] Consul-Generaal te Singapore aan den Gouverneur-Generaal, 9 Aug. 1906, no. 1555, Pan-Islamitische Woelingen, A190 Dossier 451.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

that the Governor General turn his attention to this new publication as numerous copies of the premier issue had been sent to appointed agents throughout the Indies.

Of the four named by the Consul, Shaykh Mohamed and Sayyid Shaykh were particularly significant to the making of this new periodical as well as in engendering a new journalism. Creole Indian Muslims (*Jawi Peranakan*, as they were called) were responsible for the birth of Malay-language journalism in Singapore in the latter half of the nineteenth century. However, Arab funding and intellectual leadership grew to be important in the pioneering venture.[25] Both men had spent several years studying in the Middle East before they returned to commence their careers as journalists.[26] With *Al-Imam*, they produced the first periodical in the region devoted largely to matters concerning Islam, and the most influential among Muslims in the Malay world in the early part of the twentieth century.[27] Views were published on why Muslims had been overshadowed by Europeans in the modern world and methods were sought for the revitalisation of the community, showing pressing concern about marginalisation and inequality. William Roff has suggested that *Al-Imam* was a 'radical departure in the field of Malay publications' because of its ideas, its intensity of purpose, and its attempt to create a 'philosophy of action' in a society faced with the need for rapid social and economic change.[28]

Al-Imam was heavily influenced by the Egyptian modernist movement and, as such, called for the renewal of Muslim conceptions of the world. The writings of Sayyid Shaykh, who was very influential in Riau, Singapore, and later Penang, was imbued with this spirit of Islamic renewal. In the court of Raja Ali Haji, for instance, Sayyid Shaykh redefined the Malay conception of *ilmu* (knowledge) to include not only religious knowledge but also modern scientific and technological disciplines.[29] The movement towards localising the ideas emanating from Cairo was set afoot with the publication of *Al-Imam*. Thus began the translation of modernist Islam from Arabic into Malay in the region, and in the expanded readership a new community of Muslims was envisioned.

[25] William R. Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals Published in the Straits Settlements and Peninsular Malaya States: 1876–1941*, London Oriental Bibliographies, vol. 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 3.
[26] Barbara W. Andaya, 'From Rum to Tokyo: The Search for Anti-Colonial Allies by the Rulers of Riau, 1899–1914', *Indonesia*, no. 24 (Oct. 1977), p. 140.
[27] Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals*, p. 7.
[28] William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 59.
[29] Andaya, 'From Rum to Tokyo', p. 141.

As exemplified by Sayyid Shaykh, the leaders of the new Muslim communities were of mixed cultural heritage, and largely Malay or Javanese in their formation. Also exemplified by this pioneering journalist, however, was the increasing significance of the links to Arabic-speaking centres of modernity, learning, and Islam. Sayyid Shaykh was a creole Arab who, unlike most of his predecessors, was literate in Arabic and modernist Islamic theology and exemplified the growing importance of this facet of 'Arabisation' and 'Islamisation'.

Some have characterised the closing decades of the century as a time of increased conservatism in Islam, frequently attributing it to the rise in Arab immigration, among other factors.[30] However, it is probably more accurate to ascribe to these years a multi-faceted rise in consciousness of Islamic matters. This occurred through the increased traffic of Muslim intellectuals from the region to the Arabic-speaking centres of Islam, the rise of pan-Islamism, and the rise in the population of Arabs.[31] While the Ottoman world remained significant to Arabs throughout the early years of their emergence, this era of burgeoning anti-colonial politics was not bound by Islamic political and religious connections alone. Muslims from all over the world looked beyond the Ottomans in their quest for political and military aid. In the Malay world, the rulers of Riau turned not only to Istanbul but also to Japan, the emergent Asian power.[32] The primary objective was to reach out beyond the racialised circumstances of the colonial state to seek avenues for social change. This ultimately undermined Dutch authority.

Challenging the Legitimacy of Dutch Authority

Dutch authority had begun to wane in the eyes of some prominent Arabs around the turn of the century. Arab headmen in the service of the Dutch were seen to be collaborating with a European imperial power that had been harassing fellow Muslims. The headmen became very unpopular because of the corrupt and unfair treatment of those in their charge, and those who enjoyed the respect of their communities no longer sought the position.[33] The positions had once been coveted by the foremost Arabs, but Snouck Hurgronje claimed that around the

[30] Milner, 'Islam and the Muslim State'.
[31] Lombard, 'L'horizon insulinindien'.
[32] Andaya, 'From Rum to Tokyo', pp. 135–7.
[33] Adviseur voor Inlandsche en Arabische Zaken aan den Gouverneur-Generaal, 7 June 1901, no. 27, Hazeu collection, H1083, no. 10. Published in Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, pp. 1555–8.

turn of the century most headmen sought these posts only to further their own material interests by making use of the exemption from pass controls in order to pursue their commercial activities.[34] Performing the obligatory day-to-day tasks for those who bestowed gifts and favours while mistreating others, Arab headmen had become minor overlords in their own communities. On the other hand, the special privileges which they received as headmen had also given them reason to fear the wrath of fellow Arabs. In this era, complaints arose about not only their mishandling of appointed tasks but also their function as a bulwark against political organisation. In 1873, Arabs and Javanese in Singapore wrote letters to the Javanese rulers urging them to join in a holy war against the Dutch upon the imminent arrival of Ottoman warships dispatched to defend Aceh.[35] The letters were sent in the care of the headmen in Semarang and Batavia, who dutifully handed them over to their superiors. While the ships never arrived, the role of the headmen in such instances was noted and sharply criticised in the Arabic press by members of their community.

Arabic periodicals with a worldwide circulation published articles attacking the Dutch and detailing specific instances of hardships faced by Arabs. A particularly insightful letter was published in *Al-Manār* (The Lighthouse) on the auspicious occasion of the start of Ramadan in 1900. The writer's comments are interesting because they capture the spirit of this era while also providing a critical analysis of the system of rule by 'like over like' that was explored in Chapter 3:

> I would like to elucidate Dutch policy in [Java] and the treatment of the native population and guests like the Arabs, Chinese, Indians and Europeans. As for the native population, the government has already begun to make their affairs dependent on whosoever it elevates from among them and promotes as their chief … Officials of the Dutch government are put at ease because the Javanese save them the trouble of supervision, levying taxes, the administration of the interior, the capture of an escapee, deserter, thief, or other [criminals] … [Furthermore, the Javanese] are very ignorant about their religion and there are no schools and competent scholars to enlighten them about their religion and their world. Deterring them from instruction and study, the Dutch government has placed them under surveillance because it sees the advantage of the community remaining ignorant. How many a teacher have they hid from them, rejected or harmed? When the government knows of the appearance of a teacher, it keeps an eye on all his movements and never permits him to travel to the towns and villages of the interior.[36]

[34] Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, pp. 1513, 1525, 1528–9.
[35] Reid, 'Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam', p. 276.
[36] 'Min Jawa fī 24 Rajab al-Aṣab sana 1317', *Al-Manār*, vol. 2, no. 43 (1900), p. 683. My thanks to Mahmoud Haddad for his comments on my translation of this excerpt.

Muslims of the Malay world were much attuned to the modernist Islamic movement in Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century. *Al-Manār* was the most important journal to the modernists because at its helm were Muhammad Abduh and his protégé Rashid Rida, the initiators of the movement. Embracing modernist ideas, the writer of the letter implies that a renewed knowledge about Islam was necessary for the Javanese to free themselves from their oppressive conditions because Dutch rule was founded upon cultivating religious ignorance through obstructive measures.[37] Like others in his time, he also affirms that the Javanese needed to learn about the material and political conditions of their world as much as about Islam.

Around 1898, another incisive letter demonstrating the dissatisfaction of Arabs with Dutch policies was written by Saif al-Dīn al-Yamanī, or 'Sword of the Faith from Yemen', which was in all probability a pseudonym.[38] The paean to the Ottoman Sultan in the epigraph of this chapter is an excerpt from the letter in question. Snouck Hurgronje believed Saif al-Dīn to be a Singaporean sayyid who had been mistreated by Dutch authorities. The author of the letter draws attention to the exploitation and mishandling of new arrivals in Java by Arab headmen, to which the Dutch turned a blind eye. His lengthy list of complaints also includes the unfair handling of Sayyid Alawi bin Abdarrahman al-Masjhoer simply because he was a religious scholar, and the imprisonment of a Chinese convert to Islam for cutting his queue – an act that was disallowed by the sumptuary laws. The author then turns his attention to Surabaya, where Arabs had recently been required to buy a pass bearing a photograph simply for making a trip to the harbour to meet an incoming friend or relative. Remarking on this state of affairs, he notes that yet again the Dutch had devised a way to harass 'us'. While regulations had indeed become more severe in this era, the control of movement and residence had a long history in Java. New, however, was the Muslim community whose voice he represented and the critical perspective it inculcated with regard to Dutch rule. Saif al-Dīn also reflects a self-consciousness of himself and his fellow Arabs, particularly the sayyid, as leaders of Muslims in the region. At times mirroring the paternalism of the Dutch towards natives, the writer notes that several centuries ago the sayyid first converted the people of the archipelago to the 'noble Islamic religion'. The only exceptions to this civilising mission were 'the smaller

[37] The infamous Guru Ordonnantie (Teacher's Ordinance) was enacted in 1905 and decreed that written permission from a regent or equivalent authority was required before any Islamic religious education was provided in Java. See Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 175 and n. 60, p. 175.

[38] Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, pp. 1535–40.

races in Bali and in some mountainous regions of Sumatra and Borneo who remain heathen idol worshippers'. To this he adds, 'Had the Arabs not travelled to these parts, then the people would have remained in their coarse savage state'.[39]

Significantly, a segment of the emergent Arab community challenged the existing Dutch-inclined Islamic leadership. Sayyid Oesman was publicly questioned for the very first time through letters to *Al-Manār* that described the many misdeeds of this man in the name of Islam.[40] The respected Islamic scholar and stalwart defender of colonial policy towards Muslims was criticised for his support of Dutch rule. Among the instances that drew the ire of Batavian and Singaporean Arabs was his reading of a prayer on the occasion of the coronation of Queen Wilhelmina in 1898, at which time he was conferred the Orde van de Nederlandschen Leeuw (Order of the Netherlands Lion). Calling Sayyid Oesman 'a friend of the unbelievers', his opponents condemned him through letters to the Arabic press and pamphlets printed in Singapore.[41] Soon after the event, Arabs in the British colony distributed hundreds of copies of a lengthy Arabic pamphlet describing the 'magnificent' commemoration by Singaporean Muslims of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Sultan Abdul Hamid's reign in Istanbul. In direct contrast, the same day passed unmarked in Batavia as Sayyid Oesman busied himself with other activities. Also in honour of the coronation in the Netherlands, Ali bin Abdoellah wrote a lengthy panegyric to the Queen in the form of a *syair* (poem) in Malay that was printed at Sayyid Oesman's press and reminded its readers of the benevolence of Dutch rule.[42] Although his unabashed support for the Dutch was concealed from the masses of Muslims in Java, it was quite obvious in some Batavian and Singaporean Arab circles and publicised through their letters to the Arabic press abroad. They opposed Sayyid Oesman for cultivating acquiescence to Dutch rule and believed that Islam meant progress, renewal, and, for some, anti-imperialism.

Despite the mistreatment at the hands of the officialdom in Java, most Arabs remained devoted to their business ventures. Those Arabs who were critical of Dutch rule were a fairly small and wealthy group that was based in Batavia and had family and commercial connections with Surabaya, Palembang, Singapore, and other regional capitals. Snouck

[39] Ibid., pp. 1537.
[40] Bluhm, 'A Preliminary Statement', p. 37.
[41] Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, p. 1518. This event also showed that Sayyid Oesman did not enjoy the trust of all Dutchmen; see Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 40.
[42] Ali bin Abdoellah, *Gedicht van Ali bin Abdoellah ter eere van de troonsbestiging van Koningin Wilhelmina* (Batavia: Said Oesman [Sayyid Oesman], 1898).

Hurgronje kept a watchful eye on them and some he suspected were behind the mostly anonymous correspondence with pan-Islamist periodicals. He wrote in 1904 that for more than twenty years pan-Islamism had been gaining ground among Arabs in the Indies and most of its proponents were well-known Batavians:

> Strong supporters [of pan-Islamism] are not an Arab of unknown origin or a Meccan haji-recruiter. [On the contrary,] they are a number of prominent persons in the Hadrami community of Batavia such as Sayyid Ali bin Sjahab, a landowner in Menteng, Sayyid Abdalkadir Aidaroes, Sayyid Sahl bin Sahl, the landowner Sayyid Abdallah bin Aloewie al-Attas, Sayyid Moehammad bin Abdarrahman Seleibijjah, and many others.[43]

These men represented a predominantly creole sayyid class who wanted their sons – the new generation – to be equipped with European-style education in order to maintain the prosperity they had achieved and face the challenges of the modern world. At least three of the five named above sent their sons to Istanbul, Cairo, and Europe for schooling. Thus we turn to the outcome of the relationships forged between the Malay world and the Ottoman Empire.

Ottoman Entreaties

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman government recognised the importance of the wealthy Arab community of Batavia by posting a Consul to this city in addition to Singapore. Snouck Hurgronje regarded the activities of the Ottoman Consuls around the turn of the century with great suspicion and believed that their relationship with Arabs posed potential problems for the colonial government. On the other hand, the presence of the Consul in Batavia was mutually beneficial to both the Ottoman government and Arabs.

In 1898, Kiamil Bey, the Consul in Batavia, offered scholarships for study in Ottoman schools to the sons of certain notable Batavian Arab families.[44] Soon after, young men from the wealthy landowning families of Alatas, Alaidaroes, and Bin Sjahab in Batavia, and Badjened in Bogor, were sent from Java to the Ottoman Empire in search of a modern education. With the establishment of the Imperial Ottoman Lycée (secondary school) at Galatasaray in 1868, the Ottomans introduced European-style education for some of its subjects (see Figure 9).[45] In the following

[43] Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, p. 1573.
[44] Ibid., p. 1737.
[45] Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, second edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 121–2, 181–94.

Figure 9. Photograph taken by the Abdullah brothers of the main gate of the Galatasaray School in Istanbul, between 1880 and 1893

decades, it instituted great changes in government, communications, education, and the press that led to the making of Istanbul as a centre of a modern Islamic civilisation. When the young Arabs embarked on their education in Istanbul, some with Ottoman government scholarships in hand, it was a journey to a place that had gained a great deal of significance to Muslims. On the whole, they were ill-prepared for the experience. Only a few Arab students spoke any Turkish, or Arabic for that matter, before arriving in Istanbul, and their mother tongue, Malay, was of no use to them in this part of the world. However, some had learned the rudiments of a European language.

An illustrative experience is found in members of the Alatas family, who typically studied at Ottoman schools before pursuing an education in Europe. Omar bin Aloewie Alatas completed his studies at the Galatasaray School around 1907 and approached the Dutch consulate in Pera in order to obtain the requisite travel papers to study business in Europe. He hoped to join his nephew Osman, the son of the well-known Batavian figure Sayyid Abdoellah bin Aloewie Alatas, who had been studying medicine in Paris since around 1899.[46] Described as 'completely Europeanized and outstandingly fluent in French', Osman stated his preference for the temperate climate of Europe over the 'disagreeable'

[46] Tijdelijke Zaakgelastigde te Pera aan den Minister van Buitenlandsche Zaken, 15 Mar. 1907, no. 91, Pan-Islamitische Woelingen, A190 Dossier 452.

climate of the Indies, though he planned to return to his homeland eventually.[47]

Approximately between 1902 to 1907, Sayyid Abdoel Moetalib bin Ali bin Sjahab and Sayyid Abdoel Rahman Alaidaroes also studied at the Galatasaray School with a scholarship from the Ottoman government. In 1907, when they came to the Dutch legation in Pera to request financial help after having lost everything they owned, the Chargé d'Affaires described them as eighteen and nineteen years old, respectively, and 'of refined bearing'. With financial help from the Dutch government, Abdoel Moetalib returned to Java in 1907 while Abdoel Rahman left for Cairo, where he planned to study English and some Arabic. Apart from the Badjeneds and the Bin Soenkars, who were shaykh, most students studying abroad were sayyid at this time. The Badjened brothers, Said and Ahmad, arrived in Beirut in the middle of 1906 to pursue their studies at a Jesuit college, but were rejected because one of them was too old, and possibly also because their previous academic training had been insufficient. Eventually, they were enrolled in a Lazarite college in Damascus.[48]

At about the same time, three students arrived in Cairo. These were Ismail, the youngest son of Sayyid Abdoellah bin Aloewie Alatas, and Moehammed Hoesni Abdoelaziz, the son of Ahmed Effendi Abdoelaziz, a businessman of Turkish descent who lived in Batavia. Both students were born in Batavia and were about fifteen years old around 1908. The third, Abdoel Rahman Alaidaroes, arrived in Egypt in 1907 following his studies at the Galatasaray School, as we have already noted. This student was twenty years old and born in Batavia, where his father Abdoelkadir was a major landowner. All three were under the care of Ismail Raafat Bey, who was a teacher at the Nasrieh Training College, in all likelihood also the school in which they were enrolled.[49]

The activities of the Arab students abroad were kept under the watchful eye of Dutch consular officials given the general anxiety over Arabs and pan-Islamism. This is an indication of the power of the racialised representation of Arabs we have noted in the preceding chapter, as it was very likely to have been a misplaced anxiety in this instance. According to one official, the enrolment of the Badjeneds in a Syrian school, and

[47] Tijdelijke Zaakgelastigde te Pera aan den Minister van Buitenlandsche Zaken, 30 May 1907, no. 254, Pan-Islamitische Woelingen, A190 Dossier 452.

[48] Wd. Consul-Generaal te Beyrouth aan den Gezant te Constantinopel, 20 May 1907, no. 43/12, Pan-Islamitische Woelingen, A190 Dossier 452. For mention of the two young members of the Bin Soenkar family see Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, p. 1587.

[49] Naamlijst der Nederlandsch-Indischen Onderdanen, 30 Mar. 1908, no. 40, Pan-Islamitische Woelingen, Dossier 451 A190. The last name is from a second list with no date but it may be safely assumed to be from c. 1908.

their ignorance of Arabic, made them highly unlikely candidates for pan-Islamic causes.[50] The students' pursuit of an education abroad was much in keeping with the overall strivings for progress that were envisioned within the new Muslim political culture in Java. These strivings were pan-Islamist in as much as progress at the turn of the century seemed achievable through an orientation towards Istanbul. At the same time they were not necessarily anti-Dutch, as shown by the cordial relationship of elite Arabs with the colonial government. As noted above, Abdoel Moetalib and Abdoel Rahman, who came from an elite social and economic background in Batavia, found little difficulty obtaining financial help from the Dutch consular officer in Pera when they faced an emergency. And when Sayyid Osman Alatas returned to the Indies, he was given a reception by the Government Secretary.[51]

Enrolment in Ottoman schools initiated a novel and important era in the education of Arabs. The educational experiences of Arabs in European-style schools were unprecedented; there were practically no opportunities for such an education in Java, as colonial schools were restricted to those in the service of the government. There remained, however, the traditional option of an Islamic education in the Hadramaut and Mecca, as exemplified by the lives of the infamous Sayyid Oesman and the Batavian religious scholar Sayyid Ali Alhabsji. However, the Alatas, Alaidaroes, Badjened, and other families were in search of a cosmopolitan modernity that was antithetical to the orientation of religious authorities. This was facilitated by the Ottoman Consul in Batavia, whose efforts did not go unrewarded, as he won the support of some of the wealthiest Arabs for Ottoman causes.

Plans were made in 1903 for the railway linking Damascus to Mecca, and the construction was completed in 1908, thus extending the practical reach of the Ottoman government to the centre of Islamic religious life.[52] Designed in part to rally the support of Muslims throughout the world, the Hijaz railway was the kind of project that befitted the renewed claims of the Ottoman Sultan to the position of Caliph and protector of Islam. Rasim Bey, the Ottoman Consul in Batavia, solicited support for the railway in 1904 by placing an advertisement in Malay-language newspapers calling upon all Muslims to send donations.[53] On the whole,

[50] Wd. Consul-Generaal te Beyrouth aan den Gezant te Constantinopel, 20 May 1907, no. 43/12.
[51] Tijdelijke Zaakgelastigde te Pera aan den Minister van Buitenlandsche Zaken, 30 May 1907, no. 254.
[52] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 106.
[53] Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken aan den Gouverneur-Generaal, 12 Nov. 1904, no. 134, Vb. 12 Jan. 1905, no. W1. Published in Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, pp. 1663–6.

however, his endeavours were confined to the Arab community. He distributed lithographed posters in Arabic that cited various Islamic texts claiming that donations for a cause such as the Hijaz railway – begun by the Caliph in the interest of Islam – were a religious obligation for all Muslims, but particularly Arabs. Rasim Bey added that an Arab in Buitenzorg had contributed 10,000 guilders. At opportune moments during banquets to which the Consul was invited, he would place blank receipts for donations before the Arab guests. Typically, in such circumstances the guests felt obligated to contribute between 25 and 500 guilders. Large sums of money were collected through the Consul's efforts. As long as his 'pious work', Snouck Hurgronje notes sarcastically, was confined to the Arabs, there was no particular need for the government to take any action against him.

Rasim Bey's Arabic proclamation reveals the intricate relationships that existed between Snouck Hurgronje, Sayyid Oesman, the Ottoman Consul, and the growing factions of Arabs who were anti-Dutch. Rasim Bey approached Sayyid Oesman in order to have the proclamation lithographed at the sayyid's press. The Consul was certainly aware that the reproduction of his poster at Sayyid Oesman's press would grant his efforts greater credence. Indeed, he asked in addition if he might use Sayyid Oesman's name in the proclamation itself. This request was easily declined, because there was little or no support for the Hijaz project among the Dutch-oriented sayyid and orthodox Muslim circles that held Sayyid Oesman in high regard. Well before accepting the printing job itself, Sayyid Oesman consulted Snouck Hurgronje, who not only approved of it but encouraged him to accept it. Through his alienation of previous Ottoman Consuls, Snouck Hurgronje believed that the sayyid 'had given his mostly pan-Islamist enemies the opportunity to portray him as a friend of the unbelievers and an enemy of the Turkish Sultan'. This was one of the reasons for the decline in Sayyid Oesman's influence among many Arabs and some native Muslims in the preceding decade. Therefore, Sayyid Oesman agreed to print the proclamation in an effort to counter his unpopularity, though liking nothing of its contents.[54]

From the generous response to the Consul's entreaties it is clear that Sayyid Oesman's views on this matter were not shared by a good number of the wealthy landowning families in the Batavian Arab community. Contacts with Ottoman Consuls in Singapore and Batavia in recent decades, the education of their children in Ottoman schools, and the faith in

[54] Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken aan den Gouverneur-Generaal, 11 Dec. 1904, no. 146, Mr. 1326/05, Vb. 29 Mar. 1905, no. W8. Published in Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, pp. 1666–71.

the power of the Ottomans to come to their aid served to keep alive these families' orientation towards Istanbul. By making Istanbul their political and cultural centre, they saw new leadership roles for themselves in Java, an end to their ill-treatment by the Dutch, and the route to progress. These yearnings did not escape Rasim Bey. Although he hoped for the support of all Muslims in his proclamation soliciting donations for the Hijaz railway, he made a special plea to Arabs:

> O, Arabs! You who are extolled by Muslims for your noble descent from the defenders of the religion. [You] whose fathers were renowned for their religious zeal and protection of Islam[.] Now, this Hijaz railway, for whose completion we ask your generous contributions, is a purely religious cause. And the contributions to this glorious work fall under those acts of 'assistance to piety and devotion' that Allah has commanded upon us in His book.[55]

Arabs in turn sought Ottoman support in their efforts to be raised to the political and legal status of European in order to escape the hardships of Dutch colonial rule. They hoped that their recognition as Ottoman subjects would make them eligible for promotion to the more elevated status. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman government plainly regarded these Arabs as its subjects and, as noted earlier, complained to the Dutch on their behalf when the Japanese were given European status to the exclusion of the Arabs. Recognition as Ottoman subjects, however, required the Dutch government's acknowledgement that the Hadramaut, the professed homeland of the Arabs in question, was a territory under Ottoman control. Snouck Hurgronje advised the Dutch against honouring the efforts of the Arabs because the Ottoman government did not exercise any real authority over the Hadramaut.[56]

European status was much sought after for the freedom of movement and residence that it offered, and a number of famous cases of Arabs claiming this status arose in the first decade of the twentieth century.[57] For instance, Shaykh Salih Faqih Samkari had been given leave to enter the Netherlands Indies as an Arab in 1902. Following the refusal of the Dutch authorities to grant him a pass for travel in the Priangan regency, he reapplied with certification from the Turkish Consul Sadik Béligh Bey stating that he was of European descent as his great grandfather was Albanian. Based on the declaration of his European ancestry, which Snouck Hurgronje believed to have been

[55] Ibid.
[56] Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, p. 1526. See also his *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*, translated by J. M. Monahan (Leiden: Brill, 1931), p. 7. (First published in German in 1888–9.)
[57] Ibid., pp. 1737–8.

falsified, Shaykh Salih obtained a travel pass on his second try. This caused a great deal of vexation among 'far more respectable and honest' Arabs who, as much as it was desired, did not have the same freedom of movement.[58] Snouck Hurgronje may have been just as annoyed, for he believed that it was precisely this kind of 'mishandling' at the hands of the colonial officialdom that had led to a great deal of bitterness among Arabs. However, the quest for kemajuan among Arabs was not merely a response to the abuses of Dutch rule but an aspiration that was shared by the various colonial subjects in the opening years of the twentieth century in Java.

When some of the young Arabs who were studying in Istanbul returned to Java around 1904 in modern Turkish apparel – European in influence – and fez, they caused a stir in the neatly ordered public space of the colony. The startling open display of a new Muslim political culture defied sumptuary laws that had been in place since 1872. Arabs in Batavia had been seen in Turkish-style apparel in the 1880s, however, it was the return of the Bin Soenkar and Badjened sons in 1904 that provoked a controversy.[59] Turkish-style apparel had acquired a renewed political meaning in the interim (see Figure 10). Soon afterwards, Abdoel Rahman Alaidaroes also raised the eyebrows of Dutch officials. Notably in this instance, his father was unable to persuade him to discard his new-found apparel. Abdoel Rahman was promised the protection of the Turkish Consul from any legal action the Dutch officials might take against him. The Consul believed that Arabs who studied in Istanbul were unnecessarily harassed while Chinese and natives were forgiven for their lapses in matters pertaining to dress.[60]

The young returnees had developed a pro-Ottoman sensibility that was not necessarily bound by the terms of race but was powerfully vested with the symbolism of change, kemajuan, and an Islamic modernity. In addition, Abdoel Rahman's obstinacy in the face of his father's wishes may possibly be seen as the challenge of a new generation to an older and well-established Arab colonial elite (as noted already, his father was a wealthy Batavian landowner).

By 1900, there was neither widespread public support for the new Muslim political culture nor a press dedicated to it in Java. Therefore, critiques of the Dutch were still voiced in the Arabic-language Islamic press in Cairo and Istanbul. However, the members of the Badjened, Alaidaroes, and other families stood in sharp contrast to the likes of

[58] Ibid., p. 1717. See also p. 1574.
[59] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 188; Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, p. 1587–92.
[60] Snouck Hurgronje, *Ambtelijke adviezen*, vol. 2, p. 1587–92.

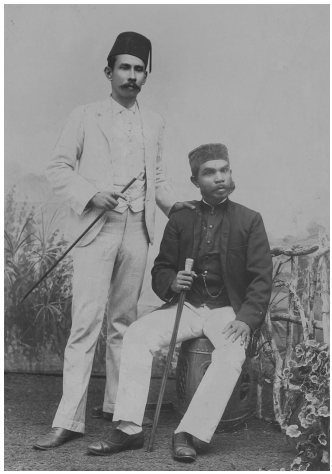


Figure 10. Studio portrait of a young Arab in European dress wearing a fez (standing left), Netherlands Indies, between 1901 and 1902

Sayyid Oesman and other Dutch-inclined Arabs, and sought to reshape their world by making their voices heard in the colony.

A Nascent Modern Identity

By extending the political horizon to Istanbul, a number of wealthy sayyids initiated an expansive move that broke the racialised mould of the colonial social order. It was a palpable rejection of the controls on movement and residence that they endured. Although they did not mount an explicit challenge to colonial power, the actions of these Arabs helped to undermine it. By breaking sumptuary laws, their fez-wearing sons defied the racialised colonial social order more explicitly. The number who gained an education at modern Ottoman schools was miniscule in comparison to the population of the colony. However, their mobility and aspirations to an Islamic modernity were symbolically significant and expanded the political imagination of many more colonial subjects. After all, the turn to Istanbul took place in conjunction with the rise of a new Muslim political culture. The move placed the challenges faced by Arabs in the colony within a wider transregional political frame that only grew in relevance thereafter.

At the same time, the orientation towards Istanbul contributed to the identification of a small and wealthy group of creoles, almost entirely sayyid, as the pre-eminent leaders of Muslims in the colony. There were

a number of reasons for this identification. Firstly, their wealth and status in the colony placed them in an economic and social position well beyond the reach of the vast majority of colonial subjects. They had the means to donate large sums towards causes not only in the colony but in the Ottoman Empire as well. Besides their economic status, they also managed to be regarded as Arabs of 'good standing and wide repute' in the eyes of the Dutch. They were thus de facto Muslim leaders of the colony. It comes as little surprise when Roff observes that Arab involvement in the pioneering modernist Muslim press of Singapore was a consequence of their position in the British colony as a wealthy and esteemed Muslim elite who saw themselves and were seen by most of their coreligionists 'as the natural spokesmen for the Islamic community as a whole'.[61]

Secondly, the Prophetic genealogy of the sayyids in question bolstered their claims to leadership. Although it helped to give sayyids an air of respectability, their genealogical distinction was not imperative to their rise in the colonial social order. The prestige of their line of descent thus declined. Sayyids began to restore this prestige as they initiated the turn to Istanbul and played an important role in the rise of the corresponding Muslim political culture. In some instances, they saw themselves as the bearers of a civilising mission over native Muslims because of their esteemed genealogy. The Ottoman Consul in Batavia extolled the noble descent of sayyids in order to encourage them to take the lead in donating to his causes; he thereby further affirmed the centrality of genealogical distinction.

The renewed prominence of sayyids occurred under such entirely different circumstances from the past as to suggest that they now constituted a novel social category altogether. When the Lord Sayyids rose to prominence in the courts of the archipelago they helped to shape a creole Malay world to which they belonged. The rise of sayyids following the turn to Istanbul, however, occurred in the context of racialised categories and controls that sought to alienate Arabs from natives. We know that these efforts were only partly successful, as intermarriage persisted in new forms and the residential quarters designated for Arabs consisted of a mix of people. This was nevertheless a far cry from the historical centrality of outsiders such as Arabs to Malay-world polities. The dominant politics of the colonial social order rested on a racialised hierarchy and the establishment of a distinction between the 'indigenous' and the 'foreign'. The restoration of the genealogical prestige of sayyids thus fed into the colonial idea of Arabs as both foreign and superior to natives. Sayyids were thus reconstituted within the racialised hierarchy of the

[61] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, p. 188.

colony in which they also tended to occupy a highly unequal economic and political position in relation to natives. The once intimate relationship between Arabs and the inhabitants of the Malay world was recast as a paternalistic relationship between sayyids and native Muslims.

A nascent modern identity took shape that was predicated upon the leadership of sayyids over native Muslims and, as we shall see, other Arabs. This identity was initially driven by the small group of sayyids who led the turn to Istanbul. They remained true to their dedication to the new Muslim political culture by establishing the first modern organisations and schools in Java. It is to these efforts and the corresponding consolidation of sayyid leadership that we turn in Chapter 6.

6 Sayyids Remade

Sayyids established organisations in Java in the first decade of the twentieth century that consolidated their position as de facto Muslim leaders. With large investments in property and other commercial ventures, they were a small but financially strong group that readily contributed funds to Arab and Muslim causes. They founded Djamiat Cheir (Charitable Association) in Batavia and saw this forerunner in organisational life become the focal point of the new Muslim political culture. Arabs and native Muslims discovered in this organisation a means of improving their lot in the colony. Its founders and sympathisers constituted a Java-wide network of like-minded people who established sister organisations that engaged modernity in a variety of ways. As we shall see in this chapter, much of their energy went into setting up schools that combined the standard offering of Dutch colonial schools with Islamic subjects. There was an urgency in their work as colonial schools were not open to them. Besides schools, they recognised the significance of newspapers and popular publications as agents of change and put their funds and talents behind these efforts as well.

A sayyid-driven modern identity began to take shape in which the restoration of genealogical prestige was intertwined with the rise of organisations. The somewhat damaged prestige of sayyids was gradually restored through charitable acts and the acculturation of hierarchical practices within institutions and social life. As founders and officer holders, they were in a position to shape organisational life to suit their interests. Sayyid genealogical prestige was thus restored not by a declared ideological struggle as much as it was by tacit means. The paternalistic relationship of sayyids with native Muslims was sustained through the organisations.

Sayyid organisational efforts nearly always had a broader constituency given that they were made in the name of Muslims rather than Arabs alone. They were sites of interaction between sayyids and native Muslims as well as between sayyids and non-sayyids. Schools in the Arabic-language medium, for instance, were established primarily but not exclusively for

Arabs. Arab-run schools had a considerable number of native students. Rather than taking an exclusionary tack, a modern Arab identity in the making was subject to the persuasion and pressure of other Muslims. Arabs and native Muslims thus became part of the ferment that Takashi Shiraishi has called 'an age in motion', when the zeitgeist changed from a concern with kemajuan to an insistence on *pergerakan* (movement).[1] The politics of the small group of sayyids who spurred the quest for an Islamic modernity in Istanbul became broader and more assertive. We consider next the pergerakan context that allowed organisations, schools, and newspapers to flourish.

Arabs in Motion

The beginning of the twentieth century brought new reason and hope for organisational life in Java as Dutch policies were liberalised. The Ethical Era, as it was called, has been described as a time when 'the air of progress to modernity was also inhaled by Chinese and Arabs'.[2] In keeping with the liberal times, travel and residential restrictions on Foreign Orientals were lifted in the 1910s. Nevertheless, precisely when interactions between ethnic groups were made easy, capitalist competition created sharp boundaries between them. Chinese and Arabs in particular were pitted against each other in places where they competed for business. One of the principal causes of conflict was the entry of Chinese entrepreneurs into the sugar, *kretek* (rolled clove cigarettes), and batik industries that had been the domain of native and Arab capital. The tensions between these two groups erupted in violence in 1912. Several Arabs and Chinese were mortally wounded and beaten up in clashes in Surabaya and nearby areas.[3]

Greater cooperation and contact between Arabs and native Muslim traders followed the conflicts between Arabs and Chinese. A historic example of cooperative efforts was the support given by the Badjened family of Bogor to the independent Javanese journalist Tirthoadhisoerjo. The latter cultivated a relationship with Arab-Muslim business circles in the hope that this wealthy and independent group would support his ambition of establishing a newspaper. After much difficulty, he obtained the funds to set up Sarekat Dagang Islam (Islamic Trading Union). Through this commercial enterprise, he was able to publish the first

[1] Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*.
[2] Ibid., p. 35.
[3] Voorgevallen zaken tydens de Chin.-Arabische onlusten te Soerabaja op 28 en 29 October 1912 (Totaal 34 zaken), 9 Dec. 1912, Mr. 152/13, Vb. 11 Mar. 1913, no. 9.

Javanese-run and politically independent Malay-language newspaper. Arabs supported his efforts mainly to advance their commercial interests. Nevertheless, they became linked to the most significant journalistic effort of the time by doing so.[4]

An outgrowth of Sarekat Dagang Islam, Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union) was founded in 1912 and became the first mass political movement in Java. This important organisation sparked off a sharp rise in political and cultural activity that collectively has come to be known as the age of pergerakan.[5] Arabs played significant roles as advisers, religious counsellors, and financial backers throughout the early years of Sarekat Islam, particularly in Surabaya. Their gravitation towards the organisation was precipitated by the Arab–Chinese clashes of 1912. As an indication of the support of Arabs for the organisation, Sarekat Islam meetings were held in the offices of Djamiat Cheir in Batavia as well as those of its sister organisation Al-Djamiat al-Cheiriah al-Arabiah (Arab Charitable Association, henceforth Al-Cheiriah) in Surabaya.

Arabs participated in the public and organisational life of the pergerakan, though not always with the same goals as natives. While much of the rhetoric of the emergent Arab identity turned on Islam, the driving force at this time was their commercial interests. Notably, Arab and native leaders drew closer through the organisations in the name of Islam that were established in the face of Chinese economic competition. We turn our attention to the pioneering Djamiat Cheir to delve into the beginnings of Arab organisational activity and the developments that it set in motion.

Djamiat Cheir

Djamiat Cheir was founded by sayyids in Batavia in 1903 as a mutual support and social organisation with the particular aim of setting up modern schools for Arab youth. The rise of the Chinese organisation Tiong Hwa Hwee Koan (Chinese Meeting Hall) in 1900 was an important impetus and inspiration for its establishment.[6] Chinese communities established organisations to run their own modern schools when their request for European status was denied in 1899. Subsequently, Arabs were motivated to set up schools through self-help associations as well.

For the most part, the founders of Djamiat Cheir were the same largely sayyid elite who had inspired and led the orientation towards Istanbul in

[4] Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Sang Pemula* (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1985), pp. 120–5.
[5] Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, pp. xi–xii.
[6] Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement*, pp. 58.

the last few decades of the nineteenth century. They included prominent property owners and traders from longstanding Batavian families who were familiar with the Islamic scholarly tradition and shared a common desire to introduce modern education for the young. The organisation's first administration was headed by Shaykh Said bin Ahmad Basandiet while Sayyid Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Shahab acted as his deputy, Sayyid Muhammad al-Fachir bin Abdurrahman al-Masjhur was the secretary, and Sayyid Idrus bin Ahmad bin Shahab the treasurer.[7] When these men convened to establish the organisation, some of their sons were studying in Cairo and Istanbul. By sending their sons to Ottoman schools, Arab elites had already inspired new desires in a community that was fairly closed to pursuing an education beyond the basic skills necessary for a career in business or as an Islamic scholar.

Although Djamiat Cheir was open to all Muslims, its members were mainly Arab. By 1915 the organisation had a membership that had grown from the original seventy to around one thousand. Notably, among its members in 1910 were two prominent natives: Ahmad Dahlan and Hasan Djajadiningrat. The former was an important Islamic scholar from Yogyakarta who in 1912 founded the Moehammadijah organisation on modernist Muslim principles. The latter was a member of an elite Sundanese family and one of the few natives who had received a higher education in Dutch.[8]

Through Djamiat Cheir, Arabs engaged the numerous cultural challenges that were part and parcel of the European-style educational methods they introduced in their schools. For the most part, the organisation faced a community that was unwilling to accept educational innovations. Van den Berg noted in the 1880s that Arabs in general showed far less interest in European education than the Chinese.[9] Some Arab communities remained extremely reluctant to accept the new educational methods that were introduced in the twentieth century such as the use of benches, blackboards, and books. They also objected to symbols associated with European modernity such as the uniform of a number of schools that consisted of a jacket, short trousers, socks, and shoes as well as a fez – now no longer objectionable to the colonial authorities.[10] However, Arab communities gradually became more open to European

[7] Husain Haikal, 'Indonesia-Arab dalam Pergerakan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (1900–1942)', unpublished PhD dissertation, Universitas Indonesia, 1987, p. 146.
[8] Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement*, pp. 58–61.
[9] Berg, *Le Hadhramout*, p. 130.
[10] Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken [Rinkes] aan den Directeur van Onderwijs en Eeredienst, 30 Mar. 1915, no. 61, Hazeu collection, H1083, no. 10, Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden.

ideas and institutions. D. A. Rinkes, the Dutch adviser at the Bureau of Native and Arab Affairs, dated the change to around 1912, at the onset of the pergerakan era.[11]

Changing Transregional Politics

Besides efforts to introduce modern schools, the weakening of the Ottomans as a world power influenced the forging of an Arab identity, especially in the years preceding World War I. Challenges to Istanbul posed by separatist national and religious movements in Arab countries began to change the political orientation of Arabs in Java. The centuries-old caliphate in Istanbul, besieged by European powers, faced rebellion within its own borders. The Young Turk Revolution in 1908 and the deposition of the Caliph Sultan Abdul Hamid II a year later signalled the end of an era. Even though a new Caliph was appointed and Istanbul remained a politically symbolic centre for Muslims until 1924, the new government was committed to Turkish nationalism as opposed to pan-Islamism.[12]

The revolt of Sharif Hussein of Mecca was a major challenge to the Ottoman Empire that had repercussions across the Muslim world. The spiritual and political head of Mecca initiated what has come to be known as the Arab Revolt with the goal of creating an Arab nation-state. In 1916, he successfully waged war against the Turkish troops stationed in Mecca and established military control over the holy city, thereby becoming a challenger to the Ottoman Caliph for symbolic leadership over Muslims around the world. In 1924, he declared himself Caliph after the Ottoman Caliphate was abolished. In the intervening years, Muslims found themselves in the unprecedented position of having to choose between loyalty to the Sultan in Istanbul or the Sharif in Mecca. The relatively straightforward identification of Arabs in Java with Istanbul in the preceding decades was over. Henceforth, the community's cultural and political identity would be contested between groups favouring one or the other orientation.

Arabs in Java followed the historic developments in the Ottoman Empire with concern, especially once World War I broke out. Stores were closed in anticipation of news and decisions that would affect their lives, businesses, and the colony; the *bendera bulan bintang* (crescent and star flag) was flown in support of Istanbul and Islam on Fridays.[13] The

[11] Adjunct-Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken [Rinkes] aan den Gouverneur-Generaal, 26 June 1912, no. 136, Hazeu collection, H1083, no. 10.
[12] R. J. Gavin, *Aden Under British Rule, 1839–1967* (London: Hurst, 1975), pp. 238–9.
[13] *Oetoesan Islam*, vol. 1, no. 23 (5 Aug. 1918).

community became politicised in a manner comparable to the Chinese in Java during China's nationalist revolution in 1911–12. For the most part, Arabs were united in their support for the Ottoman side during the war and formed organisations to provide moral and financial support for Istanbul.

The founding meeting of Alhilal Alahmar (The Red Crescent) – dedicated to Ottoman and Islamic causes – was held in 1912 at the offices of Djamiat Cheir in Pekojan, Batavia.[14] Sayyid Hasan bin Semit, a wealthy Madura-born trader, raised substantial funds for the Ottoman side during World War I in his capacity as the treasurer of the Alhilal Alahmar, until his efforts were ended by the government because they violated Dutch neutrality in the war.[15] Furthermore, prominent members of Djamiat Cheir such as Sayyid Moehamad bin Sjihab were part of the Java-wide network that came to the aid of Ottoman and Islamic causes. In 1912, he and Sayyid Mohamed bin Agil raised several thousand francs respectively in Batavia and Singapore on behalf of Libyan *mujahiddin* (fighters) who had taken up arms against the Italians in the Italian–Ottoman war.[16]

Djamiat Cheir's stated objectives were far from political. However, meetings of important native Muslim and Arab groups were held in its halls and its leaders continued to cultivate the link with the Ottoman Empire. As such, the organisation's activities became more than purely educational in nature. Its members and sympathisers, if not the organisation itself, were closely linked to other organisations and political activities. The following stanzas taken from the periodical *Al-Bashir* (The Herald) indicate the prevailing political tendency among Arabs. Its publisher and editor was associated with Djamiat Cheir and did not conceal an editorial stance in favour of the Germans following the outbreak of World War I:

> Al-Bashir brings stories
> Hope kind sirs you enjoy them
> London's news cannot be trusted
> May be said they are all lies
>
> Al-Bashir comes saluting you
> Hope it is greeted with joy
> Because it brings news
> Most certainly from the Germans[17]

[14] *Al-Moenir*, vol. 2, no. 19 (10 Dec. 1912).

[15] F. Tichelman, ed. *Socialisme in Indonesië: De Indische Sociaal-Democratische Vereeniging, 1897–1917*, Bronnenpublikatie, vol. 1: 1897–1917 (Dordrecht, Holland and Cinnaminson, New Jersey: Foris Publications, 1985), p. 651.

[16] *Al-Moenir*, vol. 1, no. 21 (20 Jan. 1912).

[17] *Al-Bashir*, 18 Dec. 1914, no. 17. The translation is of the fifth and sixth stanzas of a message in verse that appears below the Malay masthead of the periodical as shown in Figure 11.

The drive for education to which we turn next was led by Arabs who saw themselves as part of the political developments unfolding both in the colony and beyond.

Modern Schools

Djamiat Cheir established modern schools across Java between 1903 and 1915. The organisation began its efforts by raising money from members of the Arab community in order to erect primary schools with Arabic as the medium of instruction (modelled after the Chinese schools set up by the Tiong Hwa Hwee Kwan).[18] From these early efforts, Djamiat Cheir developed schools with a more comprehensive curriculum that attracted not only Arab but also native students. As the entry of natives into the schools established by the Dutch was restricted to a very small elite, the opening of Arab-run schools provided an invaluable educational avenue for natives as well.

Djamiat Cheir's schools became its most successful endeavour, not least because of a curriculum that blended Islamic and European educational practices. As an indication of its commitment to an exceptional education, the organisation recruited a highly trained teaching staff of diverse educational and geographical backgrounds between 1911 and 1912.[19] One of the most outstanding members of this group, Shaykh Ahmad Soerkati, was a Sudanese scholar who had studied in Mecca and established a scholarly reputation there. We shall encounter him again in the following chapter when we turn to a breakaway organisation that he founded.

There were only three modern Islamic schools in Batavia in 1913. The very first of these was set up in Pekojan, followed by those in Krukut and Tanah Abang, respectively. A fourth school was established in nearby Buitenzorg. At this time there were only a handful of modern Arab schools in Java as a whole. In 1908, Al-Cheiriah, whose name clearly suggests kinship with the pioneering Djamiat Cheir, started an Arab school in Surabaya along the lines of the Batavian school in the maze of narrow lanes that make up the Arab quarter of Ampel.[20] In Surakarta in 1911,

[18] Zeer geheime missive van den Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken aan den Gouverneur-Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indië, 13 May 1913, no. 46, in *Bescheiden betreffende de vereeninging* '*Sarekat Islam*' (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1913), pp. 34–5.

[19] Mahmud Yunus, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia*, second edition (Jakarta: Mutiara, 1979), pp. 307–8.

[20] 'Arabische Scholen', *De Indische Gids*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1908), pp. 1251–2. My thanks to Muhammad bin Hasyim Alhabsyi who suggested that these and other organisations bearing the adjective 'cheir' or 'cheiriah' were typically related. Each organisation was founded as a local branch because of regulations against the establishment of a Java-wide body.

Al-Djam'ijah al-Arabijah al-Islamijah (The Arab Islamic Association) school was set up under the leadership of Shaykh Awad Sjahbal.[21]

The sharp rise in the number of modern schools in the middle of the 1910s is evidence of the strong desire for an Islamic education that included a European-style curriculum. Between 1914 and 1915, schools set up by Arabs or natives with a modern curriculum were reported in about twenty places across Java, with a few on other islands. Aside from a few exceptions, these schools appeared to be viable institutions. Such schools had been set up or were in the planning stages throughout Java: in Batavia, Serang, Sukabumi, Bandung, Tasikmalaya, Majalengka, Cilacap, Banjarnegara, Ceribon, Cianjur, Tulungagung, Bangil, Sidoarjo, Gresik, Banyuwangi, Sumenep, Demak, and Surakarta. Graduates of the modern Islamic schools that had been set up in the preceding decade were often expected to start similar schools elsewhere. In 1915, the Penghulu, or district religious head, of Sukabumi awaited the return of his son, who was studying at a Batavian Arab school, to launch a modern school.

The schools tended to vary in character to suit the needs of students and teaching capabilities in particular localities. Typically, the school's curriculum depended on the wealth of the community in which it was located. All the schools desired capable teachers who were qualified to teach a European-style curriculum. However, it was easier and less costly to obtain Islamic scholars who had no such familiarity, hence the tendency towards offering mainly traditional religious studies in some places (Tulungagung and Cianjur).[22]

Batavia, Surabaya, Sidoarjo, Gresik, Surakarta, and Sumenep each had Arab-run schools by around 1915. The schools in Batavia and Surabaya had far fewer native students than elsewhere, which in all likelihood reflected the high concentrations of new migrants in these cities, and possibly the more exclusive character of the Arab quarters here in comparison to small towns. Most of the approximately two hundred students in the Sidoarjo school were native. Furthermore, about eighty of the 180 students in Gresik, and about half of the 140 students in Surakarta, were native. The native students who attended Arab schools came from circles of fairly well-off independent traders in urban centres who shared the same social position and Islamic orthopraxy as Arabs. However, a few children from poor families were provided with scholarships. A third

[21] Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 62.

[22] This discussion of schools for the years 1914–15 is based on Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken [Rinkes] aan den Directeur van Onderwijs en Eeredienst, 30 Mar. 1915, no. 61, Hazeu collection, H1083, no. 10, Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden.

group of students were the children of the higher ranks of religious officials in the interior, such as penghulu, who wished for a better education for their children than what was offered by the *pesantren* (traditional Islamic school) or the government school.[23]

Arab-run schools were different from those set up by the Javanese or Sundanese in two ways. First and foremost, as a far wealthier group, Arabs were capable of employing from abroad some of the finest teachers familiar with a modern Islamic curriculum. Secondly, Arabic was typically the medium of instruction in their schools while in the others it was Javanese or Sundanese. While there was little crossover between the two types of schools, at times Arabic was forsaken for the regional language at the early stages of a child's education. This measure was also for the benefit of the Arab students, as most of them, like their native Muslim classmates, spoke the regional language at home. In addition, certain subjects were taught in Malay when there was a shortfall of teachers.[24]

Djamiat Cheir engaged modernity through its schools and overcame the initial resistance of members of the Arab community to educational innovation. The rapid growth and success of the schools is evidence of the commitment of a significant number of Arabs to the enterprise. Similarly, they recognised the press as a significant modern arena and carved a space within it to represent their voices.

An Arab-Muslim Press

Arab-run printers were in existence as early as the 1850s in Surabaya and Palembang. Indeed, a printer in Surabaya was among the earliest non-European printers in the archipelago.[25] Later in the nineteenth century, Sayyid Oesman in Batavia and the Alhabsji family in Palembang were notable printers who owned mechanically operated lithograph machines. However, the greatest expansion of the world of print took place in the 1910s and 1920s with the growth of a variety of Arabic, Malay, and mixed-language periodicals.[26] Printers, publishers, and bookshops such as Sayyid Aloewi bin Djen Alhabsji Watzijn (sic; 1909), Setia Oesaha (Faithful Effort; 1913), Shaykh Salim bin Abdullah bin Marie (1915), Drukkerij 'Islam' ('Islam' Printers; 1918), Sayyid Moestafa bin Hasan Aldjoefri 'de Toekomst' ('the Future'; 1920), and Sayyid Hasan

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Nico Kaptein, 'An Arab Printer in Surabaya in 1853', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. 149, no. 2 (1993), p. 359.
[26] Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, 'The Arab Periodicals of the Netherlands East Indies, 1914–1942', *Bijdragen to de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. 152, no. 2 (1996), pp. 236–56.

bin Semit (1923) were established in Surabaya.[27] Besides being in relative abundance compared to the past, the newer presses were steam or motor driven.

Surabaya clearly emerged as the centre of Arab publishing and printing during the economic boom after World War I. Besides the financial strength of the Arabs in eastern Java and their greater numbers, Surabaya had also been the foremost centre for Arabic and Islamic publications since the nineteenth century. The city's strength in the early twentieth century was in Arabic-letter printers. By comparison, there were an insufficient number of such printers in Batavia in this period.[28]

Setia Oesaha in Surabaya became one of the most important Arab-funded printers.[29] With the capacity to print in Roman, Javanese, and Arabic characters, this printer was outstanding for the time. However, Setia Oesaha achieved its place in history as the publisher of the newspaper *Oetoesan Hindia* (Messenger of the Indies), the unofficial voice of the Sarekat Islam. In this connection, The Siauw Giap notes that the newspaper was founded 'to compete with Chinese owned newspapers for advertisement' and further the modernisation of the Arab community.[30]

Setia Oesaha's shareholders were wealthy and accomplished traders who were influential in shaping the course of the Sarekat Islam in Surabaya in its early years. They included Sayyid Hasan bin Semit, a leading businessman and benefactor, whose role in Alhilal Alahmar we have noted already. Typifying a general trend among Muslim businessmen of the time, he contributed large sums of money towards the establishment of new Islamic institutions besides Setia Oesaha. For instance, he guaranteed the considerable sum of 100,000 guilders for the establishment of an Islamic teacher-training college in Bandung.[31]

In 1914, the pages of *Oetoesan Hindia* represented a cross-section of burgeoning Arab-Muslim commercial enterprises. Roebaya bin Talip lured readers to his advertisement for batik goods with the unusual header '– 100.000 –'.[32] Sayyid Said bin Abdullah Marta and Co. advertised its newly opened store selling goods such as rice, groundnuts, soybean, and so forth. An advertisement from Ceribon announced the opening of the Hotel 'S.I.' in the Arab quarter; the name strongly suggests implicit support for Sarekat Islam. Another advertisement placed by the

[27] *Koloniaal Verslag*, 1910–24.
[28] *Tjermin Islam*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1 Dec. 1915).
[29] Zeer geheime missive van den Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken [Rinkes] aan den Gouverneur-Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indië, 13 May 1913, no. 46, in *Bescheiden betreffende de vereeniging 'Sarekat Islam'*, pp. 9–11.
[30] The Siauw Giap, 'Group Conflict in a Plural Society', p. 205.
[31] Tichelman, *Socialisme*, p. 651.
[32] *Oetoesan Hindia*, vol. 2, no. 129 (8 July 1914).

Arab-owned Islam Hotel in Semarang publicised its room rates.[33] A host of advertisements made claims about the curative powers of Arab and Indian Muslim *tabib* (doctors) and their medications. Drawing attention to the modern business needs of Arabs, an advertisement for a book titled *Ilmoe Pegang Boekoe* (Bookkeeping) by the Chinese Chief Bookkeeper in Semarang called attention to its great usefulness for traders.[34] Chinese businessmen placed advertisements in *Oetoesan Hindia* too, though their names and the few Dutch or Indo names that did appear were in the minority. The newspaper publicly represented the strength of the Arab-Muslim merchants of Surabaya.

In Batavia, Arab publications began in 1914 with the appearance of *Al-Bashir*, whose verses in support of the Germans in World War I we have already encountered. It appears to be the very first partly Arabic periodical published in Java. A biweekly periodical in Malay and Arabic (see Figure 11), it was initiated in Palembang and soon after moved to Batavia. It was edited by Sayyid Moehamad bin Hashim bin Tahir, who in late 1914 became the headmaster of the Djamiat Cheir schools in Batavia, and Abdul Challik bin Moehamad Said. It was published by Sayyid Hasim bin Moehamad Alhabsi, a batik trader. During Sayyid Moehamad's tenure as editor of *Al-Bashir* in Palembang, he taught Arabic at the Arabic-English School that he founded.[35] When he relocated to Batavia he brought *Al-Bashir* with him.

Significantly, the Arabic and Malay sections of *Al-Bashir* discuss very different issues. The header of the Malay section proclaims the periodical as the 'The Organ of Muslims and other peoples'. The content in Malay focuses very much on the war in Europe while also touching on the need for women's education, the means to sustain a marriage, and other issues concerning the local Muslim community as a whole. In sharp contrast, the header in Arabic says 'A newspaper serving the Arab community, the Arabic language and the [religious] community'.[36] The content of the Arabic portions includes stories about the Hadramaut 'homeland', developments within Arab organisations, and exhortations from leading Arabs in Batavia (usually sayyid who were associated with Djamiat Cheir) to an outline of progress for Muslims with Arabs at the helm.[37]

[33] *Oetoesan Hindia*, vol. 2, no. 166 (31 Aug. 1914).
[34] *Oetoesan Hindia*, vol. 2, no. 129 (8 July 1914).
[35] See the advertisement for this school in *Oetoesan Hindia*, vol. 2, no. 129 (8 July 1914).
[36] In Malay it said *Orgaan kaoem Moeslimin dan lain-lain bangsa*, and in Arabic *Ǧarida takhdimu al-'Arab wa al-'Arabiyya wa al-milla*.
[37] For an example of the hortatory style of writing, see 'Alī bin Aḥmad bin Shahāb, 'Al-Waṭan al-waṭan!!', in *Al-Bashir*, vol. 2, no. 19 (29 Jan. 1915).

Figure 11. Malay and Arabic mastheads, respectively to the left and right, of the periodical *Al-Bashir*, 1914

A second Malay-language Arab periodical, *Tjermin Islam* (Mirror of Islam), was started in Batavia in 1916 and lasted some six months. In contrast to *Al-Bashir*, this publication cast its stories in very broad terms. Its writers covered topics such as international Muslim brotherhood, European converts to Islam, and the Ottoman Empire. In addition, much attention was paid to Islamic theology and its place in the modern world. Its editorial direction reflected the most Europeanised segment of Batavian Arabs, specifically the elite sayyid families who sought education in the Ottoman Empire. Although written in Malay, it proclaimed the supremacy of the Arabic language. Indeed, in the first issue the editors regretted that they had to publish *Tjermin Islam* in the Roman alphabet as they wished they had been able 'to adorn it with the Islamic script'.[38]

Arab-Muslim publications maintained an interest in the wider Islamic world, particularly in the activities of centres such as Cairo, Istanbul, and Mecca. A news story noted the founding of a university in Egypt for the study of advanced history, religion, and mathematics.[39] The

[38] The original in Malay is as follows: '*di hiasi dengen hoeroef Islam*', *Tjermin Islam*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1 Dec. 1915).

[39] *Oetoesan Hindia*, vol. 2, no. 137 (20 July 1914). The story was taken from *Pemberita Betawi*.

report also showered praise on Taha Hussein, the well-known Egyptian author and modernist thinker who graduated from Al-Azhar University. The educational journeys of the young Malay-speaking Arabs who were sent to Ottoman schools were watched with interest. The progress of the Alatas brothers, for instance, was followed if not celebrated. Mohamad bin Abdoellah bin Aloewie Alatas, who had spent sixteen years studying abroad, was honoured in a report that appeared in 1908.[40] Another story appeared in 1917 in a newspaper that was not Arab-run but had a journalist who covered matters relating to Arabs. It reported about a dinner held in honour of the return of Ismail bin Abdoellah bin Aloewie Alatas from his studies abroad.[41]

The respective Arab-Muslim publications, though focusing on Islamic issues, reflected the activities and character of different audiences. *Oetoesan Hindia*, for instance, was similar in substance to major commercial newspapers of the time. Its stories catered to a broad readership in the colony. *Al-Bashir*, unique for its bilingual format, offered quite a different perspective for its Arabic-reading audience. For the first time, it appears, a cultural and political orientation towards the Hadramaut was articulated in public in Java. No doubt the shift had to do with the decline of Ottoman pan-Islamism. *Tjermin Islam*, though written in Malay, seemed somewhat colourless, as it was located neither in the local context nor in the politics of pan-Islamism in any depth.

The appearance of *Oetoesan Islam* (Messenger of Islam) in Surabaya in 1918 brought a strong focus on Arab-Muslim issues in the colony as well as pan-Islamist thinking. Sayyid Hasan bin Semit was its editor and publisher. Besides his pro-Ottoman sympathies, he was active in Sarekat Islam as a commissioner of Arab interests. The Malay-language newspaper also carried an Arabic name of the same meaning in its header, namely *Safīr al-Islām*. From its name alone it can be inferred that Sayyid Hasan desired an Islamic complement, if not alternative, to *Oetoesan Hindia*. Its content, appearance, and the name of its printer, the Hillal Drukkerij (Crescent Printer), represented the Arab-Muslim trading culture of Surabaya. From its perch within this dominant culture, *Oetoesan Islam* proclaimed itself the 'Voice of Muslims in the Netherlands Indies'. The header carried an additional message calling upon Muslims to treat the publication with respect as it contained verses from the Qur'an.[42]

[40] *Al-Imam*, vol. 3, no. 2 (30 July 1908), as cited by Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement*, n. 10, p. 34.
[41] *Pertimbangan*, vol. 2, no. 44 (24 Feb. 1917).
[42] *Oetoesan Islam*, vol. 1, no. 30 (7 Oct. 1918). The message appears from this issue onwards.

The newspaper spoke in favour of a renewed, rational Islam, and decried the Islam of the pesantren. Its stated mission was to inform the public that the origins of all knowledge was the Qur'an, especially since Muslims in the colony had begun to believe in the false notion, it claimed, of its European origins.[43] In general, letters to *Oetoesan Islam* raised such topics as the weakness of the pesantren educational system, the widespread ignorance about Islam among the Javanese, and the rational organisation of religion (inspired by the thinking of Al-Ghazzali).[44]

Sayyid Hasan's newspaper focused a great deal more on religious issues – paying much attention to *ibadah* (ritual acts of devotion) – than the other periodicals we have discussed. He highlighted the failure of Arabs as leaders and examples to native Muslims because of their neglect of Islamic obligations. In this regard, Arabs were seen by him, however 'misled' they might have been, as the guides to the proper observance of Islam for the Javanese. The growth of organisational life, schools, and newspapers led by sayyids represented a modern public face of Arabness in the urban spaces of Java. Sayyid Hasan was one of a number of people who played a role in shaping this public face, emphasising as he did the centrality of Arabs to the life of Muslims. We examine next the particular terms of the modern identity that emerged as a consequence.

The Terms of a Modern Identity

A modern identity was tacitly given shape by sayyid-driven organisational initiatives that institutionalised a paternalistic leadership of sayyids over native Muslims. At the same time, we know of explicit calls for such leadership by sayyid authors who published their views in *Al-Bashir* and *Oetoesan Islam*. The rise of sayyids in this regard took place at a time of political mobilisation not only by Arabs but by colonial subjects as a whole. As we have seen, Arabs followed the lead of Chinese organisations in overcoming the constraints of colonial society by establishing schools. The organisational dynamism of the pergerakan years tended to reflect the dominant racialised vocabulary of the colonial social order, and developed along racialised lines. However, the course taken by the respective modern identities that emerged were neither the same nor straightforward. As we delve into the matter, we shall find that the rise of a modern Arab identity was not without its tensions. We begin by examining the public face of Arabness as it emerged in newspaper accounts.

[43] *Oetoesan Islam*, vol. 1, no. 24 (12 Aug. 1918).
[44] See a letter from Komar in *Oetoesan Islam*, vol. 1, no. 23 (5 Aug. 1918).

The Public Face of Arabness

The announcements, advertisements, and news stories found in Arab-run newspapers in the 1910s demonstrate networks, if not communities, across Java that became the public face of Arabness. The messages published in *Oetoesan Hindia* in conjunction with the celebration of Lebaran (the feast at the end of the Islamic fasting month) are of interest in this regard. Prominent Arabs from all over the island directed their good wishes largely to other Arabs, it would appear, as their greetings were frequently expressed in Arabic.[45] Advertisements for a map demonstrate more clearly the shape and reach of an Arab network and deserve some further attention.

During World War I, *Oetoesan Hindia* carried advertisements in Arabic and Malay respectively for the map of Europe by Sayyid Mohamad bin Agil of Surabaya, whose pro-Ottoman stance has been noted already. Apparently, the map showed battle-sites, capitals, and such information as the names of royal families.[46] Money raised from the sale of the map was donated to Ottoman and Islamic causes. Besides indicating the tremendous reach of *Oetoesan Hindia*, a list of purveyors of the map reveals a network of Arabs who shared pro-Ottoman sympathies in Java and in a few locations elsewhere (the last three listed):

SURABAYA: Sayyid Mohamad. b. Saleh b. Agil, Shaykh Alie bin Mohamad. Asshibli, and Setia Oesaha, as well as a number of Arab and Bumiputra (indigenous) shops
BATAVIA: Sayyid Mohamad bin Abdurachman bin Sjahab in Pekojan
TEGAL: Sayyid Mohamad b. Alie Alhyed
PEKALONGAN: Sayyid Mohamad. bin Salim Alattas
SOLO (SURAKARTA): Sayyid Achmad bin Abdullah Assegaf
CERIBON: Sayyid Abdoellah b. Abdoerachman Arfan
SEMARANG: Islam Hotel (Sayyid Aldjoeffrie)
BANYUWANGI: Sayyid Abdoellah b. Oemar Alhadar
BONDOWOSO: Sayyid Hasan b. Hafid
SITUBONDO: Sayyid Oemar Hamdoen
PROBOLINGGO: Shaykh Ali b. Djabal
PASURUAN: Said Hadi bin Ali Alhamid
BANGIL: Shaykh Hoesin b. Oesman
MAKASSAR: Sayyid Alie b. Abdoerachman b. Sjihab
BANJARMASIN: Sayyid Abdoelah b. Mohamad Almoesawa
AMBON: Sayyid Achmad b. Chalib

As much as the language of the advertisement for this map was framed with a Muslim audience in mind, the above list suggests that the initiative

[45] *Oetoesan Hindia*, vol. 2, no. 160 (22 Aug. 1914).
[46] *Oetoesan Hindia*, vol. 2, no. 239 (10 Dec. 1914). A similar advertisement appears in vol. 2, no. 231 (30 Nov. 1914). Unfortunately, I have not seen a copy of this map.

for its production and distribution lay almost entirely within the hands of Arabs. Of the sixteen names that appear, fourteen are almost certainly Arab while the rest are probably Indian Muslim, Malay, or Javanese. Significantly, they are nearly all sayyid.

The illness in 1914 of a prominent sayyid, Habib Segaf bin Salim bin Sech Aboebakar of Probolinggo, offers further indication of the public face of Arabness.[47] The 'Habib' before his name is another form of address for sayyids. Arabs in Surabaya were informed of his illness by telegram and the news drew Arab visitors from all over eastern Java – Surabaya, Bangil, Bondowoso, and so forth. The ailing Arab appears to have been a respected Islamic scholar given the scale of the response to his illness. Besides the news of the illness, the publication of this story brought the dramatic response of Arabs to the knowledge of other Arabs in Java – invoking a Java-wide Arab network in their imagination – as well as the general readership. While native Muslims were part of the interested readership in the cases of the abovementioned map and the illness of Habib Segaf, Arabs appear to have dominated the stage – at least in the reports of *Oetoesan Hindia*.

The prevalence of sayyid networks in the press could simply be a reflection of the control or influence of sayyids over the institution. This would certainly have been true in the case of *Oetoesan Islam*, in which Sayyid Hasan bin Semit actively promoted sayyid ascendancy. *Oetoesan Hindia*, however, served a more general Muslim readership. If anything, it served traders – including those of other faiths – going by the prevalence of commercial advertisements. Furthermore, the leadership of sayyids in the public life of the colony was not authored by sayyids alone but by native Muslims as well. The genealogical prestige of sayyids mattered in no small measure, in conjunction with the organisational initiatives they undertook with native Muslims.

Genealogical Prestige

The notion of Arab leadership over native Muslims became the normative language that was embraced not only by sayyids but by native Muslims as well. This is illustrated in the sayyid-led mobilisation of Muslims against the newspaper *Djawi Hiswara* for publishing an article in January 1918 suggesting that the Prophet Muhammad drank liquor and smoked opium.[48] A number of Arabs found the article offensive and emerged at the forefront of the campaign. Following a large meeting in

[47] *Oetoesan Hindia*, vol. 2, no. 182 (22 Sept. 1914).
[48] Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, p. 106.

the building of Al-Cheiriah in Surabaya, a committee was formed to safeguard the honour of Islam against a future attack.[49] The heavily sayyid-dominated gathering promised contributions to the cause that amounted to 3,177 guilders.[50] Ten days later, another meeting was held. Between five and six hundred Arabs, including representatives from organisations in Batavia, Surakarta, Pekalongan, and Madura, were present in the audience, which numbered two to three thousand people.[51]

The developments precipitated by the offending article are noteworthy. Firstly, sayyids were at the forefront of an organisational initiative that involved both Arabs and native Muslims and broadened from Surabaya into a Java-wide mobilisation. Before this, sayyids had typically played supportive roles as advisers and financial backers in Sarekat Islam. They now helmed not only Arab-run organisations but broader efforts involving native Muslims as well. Secondly, the committee formed was given the name Tentara Kandjeng Nabi Mohamad (The Army of His Lordship Prophet Muhammad). The name of the Prophet was not modified by the Javanese honorific *Kandjeng* (Lordship) initially; this was appended following the request of committee members in Surakarta.[52] The mark of added reverence for the Prophet was implicitly directed at the sayyids in the committee as well. Furthermore, as the move was mooted not by Arabs but by native Muslims, it demonstrates how the latter embraced the idea of sayyid helmsmanship. The appropriation of the term 'Kandjeng' in this instance seems to mark a confluence of the rather entrenched language of social hierarchy present in both Javanese and Hadrami society.[53] The historical significance of Arabs to Islam became intertwined with genealogical prestige in the debates of the time and was also cast in a new vocabulary that emerged from nascent nationalist thinking. In different ways, the centrality of sayyids, genealogical prestige, or Arabs was emphasised.

[49] The key office holders of the organisation were as follows: O. S. Tjokroaminoto, Chairman; Sayyid Mohamad Saleh Chawasi, Vice-Chairman; and Shaykh Roebaja bin Ambarak bin Thalib, Treasurer. Six others were listed as advisers: Sayyid Aloewi bin Zen al-Djoeffri, Sayyid Hasan bin Semit, Hasan Ali Soerati, Sayyid Achmad bin Moehamad al-Moesawa, Sayyid Abdullah bin Oemar Albar, and Sayyid Segaf bin Aloewi Segaf.

[50] Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken aan den Gouverneur-Generaal, 14 Feb. 1918, no. 78, Hazeu collection, H1083, no. 76.

[51] Chef der Afdeeling Recherche aan den Wd. Chef van den Politieken Inlichtingendienst, 23 Feb. 1918, no. 98, Hazeu collection, H1083, no. 76.

[52] 'Vergadering Moeslimin Jang Terbesar', *Sinar Islam*, vol. 2, no. 10 (7 Mar. 1918), pp. 1-2. Haji Samanhoedi, the President of the SI in Surakarta, sent a telegram to a public meeting suggesting the change, and it was met with applause.

[53] I found an interesting expression of the fusing of Arab and Javanese notions of hierarchy in the title of the newspaper *Ningrat Arab* (Arab Aristocrat), which was published in c. 1927. I only found a reference to this newspaper in *Sawoenggaling*, vol. 1, nos. 3–4 (Mar.–Apr. 1927), and have been unable to locate it.

The Vocabulary of a Nascent Nationalism

The political debates in pergerakan circles were increasingly framed in terms of race and nation, both of which came to be poorly captured in translation by the Malay word *bangsa*. In the early decades of the twentieth century, this word was still largely used to mean a somewhat fluid or porous group of people who had something in common. Traders would qualify, for instance. In Al-Misri's story of the Chinese Muslim who marries a princess of Sumenep, as we recall from Chapter 1, bangsa is used to refer to nobility. Following the union, Chinese people are ennobled because they are of the same bangsa as the princess; they are now members of the nobility.[54] Bangsa gradually lost much of its fluid meaning and became more rigidly defined along the lines of race and nation with the growth of nationalism.

The discussion of bangsa and *agama* (religion) in *Oetoesan Islam* reflects the incipient significance of the vocabulary of nationalism because the implication in some of the discussions is that Islam is inseparable from 'race' or 'nation'. For instance, a certain S. S. Gito wrote a letter to the editor in which it is claimed that Islam is not based on bangsa. Rejecting the desire of some who wish to base Islam on bangsa, the author states that such actions would result in divisions in the peaceful bonds that have existed between Muslims of all nations. Should such efforts succeed, an 'Arab Islam', 'Javanese Islam', and so forth would emerge.[55]

This letter met with the approval of *Oetoesan Islam*, whose own editorial position on this matter is worthy of consideration. In an article titled 'Manoesia' (Humanity), the place of bangsa and agama were laid out using the analogy of a tree and its branches. God, it claims, made many kinds of human beings: Arabs, Dutchmen, Javanese, Bengalis, Chinese, and so on. As Islam was the greatest 'tree' to emerge from the Arab lands, however, it was the duty of Arabs, more than any other bangsa, to advance Islam: 'Because people in any one of those countries are only like the branches of the *Arab* people. It has become apparent, that because the tree has weakened, so have the branches.'[56] Similarly, a certain Matroes Arga wrote to *Oetoesan Islam* from Makassar on the topic of 'Bangsa dan Agama Islam [The People and Religion of Islam]' and stated the

[54] Zaini-Lajoubert, *Abdullah*, p. 111.
[55] *Oetoesan Islam*, vol. 1, no. 37 (16 Dec. 1918).
[56] *Oetoesan Islam*, vol. 1, no. 24 (12 Aug. 1918). Passages follow in the same article that remind the Arabs who form a large presence in the three cities Surabaya, Semarang, and Batavia that 'we Javanese people' have felt that Arabs in Java 'do not have a light burden when it comes to religious matters'; and that Arabs are viewed as a 'great mirror' of proper Islamic practices by bumiputra. 'Change your disgraceful ways', it admonishes the Arab community.

following: 'Who is it that spread the *Islamic Religion* in this our homeland? Most certainly, even a small child knows that it was none other than the *Arabs*.'[57] The writer believed that Arabs should, as the bringers of Islam to the Malay world, be dedicated to the creation of educational institutions based on Islam, and establish an organisational counterpart to the Christian Zending Vennootschap (Missionary Society). In support of his argument, he quoted the speech of Sayyid Hasan bin Semit at a Sarekat Islam meeting in Gresik in March 1918: 'It is sad if Arab people, who will live forever in India [the Netherlands Indies], do not think about the fate of Muslims who are under attack from missionaries.'

Matroes Arga argued that religion bound bangsa, therefore Arabs who came to the Indies should spread true education to the Javanese. Rather than evidence of this mission, however, the writer noted that Arabs had been associated with 'usurious loans and other things that make my people skinny'. This rather strong statement drew an editorial response that found agreement with the writer but with the proviso that not all Arabs knew religious law: 'There are those who are good and those who are bad, just like other people'. The editorial nevertheless strongly condemned Arabs who practised usury because it was against Islam. It claimed that a loan under usurious terms ought not to be repaid, noting, however, that such a step would be against the law in the Netherlands Indies. The editor thereby turned the attention away from Arabs to the colonial state in assigning responsibility for usurious loans.[58]

Matroes Arga's statement brought to the fore contradictory representations. One the one hand, Arabs were regarded by themselves and many others as the appropriate leaders of Islam. On the other hand, their business activities were frequently seen to contradict their faith. Idealisations of Arabs as genealogical or historical leaders of Muslims contended with negative reports of Arab economic activities.

Tensions in the Representation of Arabs

Despite the identification of Arabs as leaders of Islam, letters to *Oetoesan Islam* claimed that Arabs cared much more for their business interests than their faith. A. P. Latip wrote with shock and regret that the lower portion of the Bafadhl mosque on Ketapang Street in Surabaya (see Figure 4) – whose grand times he recalled with much nostalgia – had been rented out to a Chinese dentist. As he approached what he believed was the mosque he once knew, two men dressed in white appeared. Latip quickly approached

[57] *Oetoesan Islam*, vol. 1, no. 37 (16 Dec. 1918).
[58] Ibid.

them to request their 'blessings and prayers' on the assumption that they were Arabs who taught at the mosque. He was just about to kiss their feet to show respect but came to a sudden stop when he heard the men speaking in Chinese. The writer was baffled by the presence of Chinese at the bottom of the mosque because it was 'protected' by Arabs who were rich and learned. Indeed, a building nearby housed Al-Cheiriah.

The editor responded and explained that the men at the mosque, owned by a religious foundation (waqf), were not religious teachers but Chinese dentists. He claimed that he did not dare to pass any judgement on the issue of the mosque as there were numerous Arabs in Surabaya who were wealthy and learned. Nonetheless, he wondered sarcastically how it was that its caretakers, gentlemen who were so prominent in the Arab community, could not have known the state of affairs at the mosque. The response implies rather strongly that Al-Cheiriah should have lived up to its name and investigated the matter.[59]

Oetoesan Islam itself claimed that Arabs had neglected their duties as Islamic leaders and that this was evident during the Friday prayer. Discussing the inviolability of this prayer, the newspaper states that a Muslim must 'cease doing business' and go to the mosque upon hearing the call of the muezzin.[60] It appears that this admonition was directed at Arab traders in Surabaya, as the following passage spiritedly evokes:

> Many Arab shops remain open on Friday because on that day many Muslims from the villages who wish to fulfil their Friday Prayers at the mosque come to the Arab quarter to shop. As a result of the furious buying and selling that goes on by using plaid sarongs to entice people, there are stores that remain open until the hour of the Friday Prayer … About those Arabs who sell merchandise from village to village on Friday, little more need be said. We let the readers themselves decide if Arabs, who are looked upon as leaders of the Islamic religion by *bumi-putra* [the indigenous], do not have any shame?[61]

Arabs prioritised commercial activities over and above their faith. This was the view expressed in a variety of published opinions – including those of some Arabs.

Were Arabs pious or profiteering? There is a tension in representations of Arabs that gives colour to the nascent vocabulary of nationalism. On the one hand, the view of native Muslims was that Arabs were preoccupied with commercial rather than religious matters. The long reach of the colonial economy made itself felt here. No longer

[59] *Oetoesan Islam*, vol. 1, no. 23 (5 Aug. 1918). For the editor's response see vol. 1, no. 24 (12 Aug. 1918).
[60] *Oetoesan Islam*, vol. 1, no. 23 (5 Aug. 1918).
[61] Ibid.

the multi-faceted individuals who were integral to the maritime Malay world, Arabs were reduced to performing particular roles in the colonial economy. It followed that Arab and native Muslim traders established closer cooperation for economic reasons, namely concern about the competition posed by Chinese capital. Furthermore, Arabs provided financial support for Sarekat Dagang Islam, the precursor to Sarekat Islam, with commercial interests in mind. Native Muslims readily found in the fault lines of the economy a basis for framing Arabs – and commercial activity – as 'alien'. The signs are evident in this thinking of the acceptance by colonial subjects of colonial terms of difference. The editorial position taken by *Oetoesan Islam* on the Friday prayer reproduced these terms by establishing an 'indigenous' position that implies the 'foreignness' of Arabs.

At the same time, the closeness between Arabs and native Muslims was not lost, though it no longer resembled the intimacy of the maritime past. For the most part, the Arabs in pursuit of Islamic modernity in the preceding pages were creoles who emerged not only through intermarriage between Arabs and natives but from culturally hybrid urban Muslim quarters. Arab leadership and interests were placed at the forefront of their organisational and institutional initiatives, but natives were included in them in various capacities. Arab-run modern Islamic schools thus admitted native Muslim students.

The tensions in representations of Arabs reflected a relationship with native Muslims that was both close and separate, to paraphrase an observation made by Ho that was discussed in Chapter 1. On the one hand, a sayyid-driven quest for modernity brought together Arabs and natives in historic organisational and institutional initiatives with important results. On the other, genealogy and class ensured that Arabs remained a measure apart from natives. Wealth not only estranged an Arab elite from the majority of natives but enabled organisations and institutions to come to fruition. These in turn established Arabs in positions of leadership and patronage in relation to natives. Rather than disappear, the closeness with natives came to be governed by a paternalism.

An Identity Marked by Inequalities

Colonial categories and control contributed towards the making of a modern Arab identity that was marked to a greater extent by genealogical and economic inequality than by a 'racial' marker such as phenotype. Arabness was more clearly bounded in the colonial state than in the maritime Malay world. The making of a modern identity rested, however, on the development of a paternalistic relationship between sayyids

and native Muslims. Arabs initiated a position of leadership over native Muslims through the turn to Istanbul, and advanced this position by immersing themselves in the organisational dynamism of the times. Arab-led initiatives were readily embraced by native Muslims, especially the wealthier traders. On the one hand, alliances between the two grew out of shared economic concerns. On the other, native Muslims valued and even exalted the Prophetic genealogy of sayyids. Tacit expressions of reverence such as kissing the hand (and foot in some cases) of sayyids became tradition.

The consolidation of identity, however, took place through the insertion of inequalities in modern organisational life, thereby resulting in the institutionalisation and systematic diffusion of paternalistic practices. This development did not produce traditions of reverence alone but also tensions between Arabs and native Muslims. There were undercurrents of tensions among Arabs themselves. The constitution of a sayyid-driven identity rested on a paternalism towards not only natives but also non-sayyids. Organisations and institutions – schools in particular – were contested sites, as this was where the paternalism came to be formed and perpetuated, and, as we shall soon see, questioned. The tensions among Arabs came to be expressed in a forceful organisational challenge to Arab identity as it was hitherto known.

Sayyid-led organisational initiatives sought progress for Arabs and native Muslims by drawing from a transregional network of ideas and people that constituted Islamic modernism. Initiatives such as Djamiat Cheir schools were thus not only the bearers of paternalism but also the providers of a significant transformative education in an oppressive colonial environment. There were limits, however, to how much of the Islamic modernism sayyids would embrace. Arab identity, as represented by a paternalistic desire for progress, diminished in significance when sayyid claims to genealogical superiority – a foundation of the paternalism – came to be questioned by modernist Muslims. The next chapter brings the historical narrative of the book to a close by turning to the contested nature of Arab identity.

7 The Contested State of Modern Arab Identity

Modern Arab identity found its initial impetus in a commitment to a broad Muslim political culture that sought the upliftment of co-believers through transregional overtures to the Ottoman Empire. The sayyid-led Djamiat Cheir, in its initial years, was imbued with this ecumenical view of Muslim progress. The organisation embraced some of the modernist Islamic ideas that found a home among sayyid elites in the Malay world through subscriptions to periodicals published in Cairo, Alexandria, Beirut, and Istanbul. Its wealthy benefactors sent their sons to Istanbul in pursuit of a modern Islamic education. To realise the same in the Malay world, Djamiat Cheir established its own schools, and some of the most qualified teachers from Mecca and other major centres of scholarship were recruited to staff them. Like Tiong Hwa Hwee Koan, the Chinese organisation from which it took inspiration, Djamiat Cheir was a significant transformative force for Muslim subjects of the colony. Its schools extended the horizon for hundreds of young Muslims by allowing them to break the racialised constraints of the colony and absorb the relative wealth of knowledge opened up by the transregional discourse of modernist Islam.

The ecumenical politics of the early sayyid leaders gave way to a growing exclusionary politics in the 1910s. The latter was provoked by the internal dynamics of Arab communities but also the incipient emphasis on ethnic and national identity, and consequently indigeneity and foreignness. The racialising narratives and politics discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 now found a home among the colonised. In addition, there was sharpened contestation between those who identified with Arab nationalism and those loyal to the Ottoman Empire. The subsequent factionalism among Arabs contributed towards strengthening the divide between Arabs and natives as well. Narrower and more exclusionary identities emerged. The actors involved in the turn to Istanbul now occupied different positions on the ideological spectrum. Some, like Sayyid Abdoellah

bin Aloewie Alatas, remained ecumenical. Others embraced the more bounded terms of identity.

Transregional Islamic connections fed both sayyid exceptionalism and the spread of modernist Muslim politics. Sayyid initiatives found new affirmation as they identified themselves with the pioneer of Arab nationalism, the Sharif of Mecca, with whom they shared Prophetic descent. At the same time, new ideas from modernist Muslim centres such as Egypt found fertile ground in the Malay world. The influence of these ideas not only spread from a distance through published material but were embodied in the scholars hired from Mecca and elsewhere who introduced them into classrooms in the Malay world. A teacher hired by Djamiat Cheir, as we shall see in this chapter, helped to undermine sayyid authority and paternalism and inspired the rise of a shaykh-led organisation that became the counterpoint to sayyid predominance. This would appear to be ironic in the first instance. However, it becomes less so when we realise that a good number of sayyids broadly shared the modernist thinking of the teachers they hired. There was, however, a boundary that many of the sayyid benefactors of Djamiat Cheir would not cross. They would not accept modernist ideas that undermined their genealogical prestige, a cornerstone of the modern identity they had shaped.

This chapter concludes the examination of modern Arab identity by turning to its architecture and challenges to it. The representation of Arabness with sayyids at the helm obscured fault lines of genealogy and class that invited challenges if not conflicts. The question of genealogical primacy rested on inequality among Arabs and between Arabs and native Muslims. This inequality had a long history. As we know from Chapter 1, it was noted a century earlier by Al-Misri, who admonished sayyids for cultivating a hierarchy among themselves and between themselves and others. Scattered resistance to sayyid authority was already present in the Malay world. However, an organised challenge emerged only with the arrival from Mecca of Ahmad Soerkati and the shaykh-driven initiative called Al-Irsjad that he founded. Soerkati set in motion a novel representation of modern Arab identity.

This chapter offers some suggestion of the shape of the challenge to sayyid-led modern identity and thus problematises the history of becoming Arab in the Malay world. We begin with an examination of the architecture of this identity before turning in particular to marriage as a site of contestation that provoked a counterpoint to it. We then consider the establishment of organisations and schools that constituted the antithesis to a sayyid-led modern identity.

The Architecture of Modern Arab Identity

The rise of a modern Arab identity constrained but did not eliminate the fluid character of Arabness. Although the public face of Arabs became more exclusionary in character, it was not transformed into the exclusionary racial entity envisioned by Dutch scholar-bureaucrats and colonial political and legal strictures. Rather, modern Arab identity was itself hybrid.

How could Arab identity be more exclusionary and racialised in character and yet be hybrid? Firstly, as we recall, sayyid-led identity prioritised genealogy over race. Marriage across racial lines was allowed as long as the terms of kafā'a were fulfilled. Secondly, the representation of modern Arab identity was, at least in its infancy, rather fluid. It was marked by a drive for progress and education shared among Muslims rather than Arabs alone. Thirdly, Arab identity was constituted by hybridity because it emerged from a culturally diverse context in which there was fruitful interaction between Arabs and natives, never mind Indians, Chinese, and others. Colonial categorisation and separation of Arabs and natives along economic and political lines required policing on several fronts and was not very successful. The Arab quarters of Batavia, Surabaya, and other major cities had a hybrid imprint shaped by decades, and in some cases centuries, of interaction between different groups. This imprint did not disappear with the advent of a more exclusionary and racialised politics. Rather than being racially distinct, Arab quarters were the sites of culturally hybrid life. New arrivals from the Hadramaut grew in numbers in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and tilted the balance against creole Arabs in a number of places. However, creoles dominated the sayyid leadership driving the modern identity.

At the same time, the relationship between Arabs and native Muslims was marked not only by fruitful interaction but also by tension. If in the maritime Malay world sayyids were highly valued members of ruling houses, in colonial times they were paternalistic leaders of natives. Their Prophetic descent and superior position relative to natives in the colonial political economy bolstered their claims to leadership. The nature of the relationship between Arabs and natives began to change, however, with the incipient ethnic and national politics. Some natives accepted the paternalistic leadership of sayyids but others grew wary of it. The latter were influenced by the growing articulation of an indigenous – bumiputra – identity in contradistinction to a foreign, Arab identity. The potentially exploitative roles that Arabs filled in the colonial economy added to the tension, and the conditions were ripe for the alienation of them as exploitative outsiders.

Exclusionary and racialising politics nevertheless did not adequately express the era. Even as groups became divided along racial lines they frequently acted in their common interest as 'subject races' against the Dutch. The cooperative effort between the Badjened family and Tirthoadhisoerjo that resulted in the creation of Sarekat Dagang Islam is an example of a fruitful relationship between Arabs and natives. It is notable that one of the reasons for the demise of this cooperative effort resulted from the Dutch claim that a commercial association between Arabs and natives was not permissible because the law was applied differently for each of these groups in commercial matters.[1] Still, the pergerakan era saw people such as Sayyid Hasan bin Semit and Hasan Ali Soerati, Arab and Indian respectively, move from being Arab and Indian to being brothers of native Muslim pergerakan leaders. The ties between them reflected the historical intimacy between Arab and Indian traders that was discussed in Chapter 2. Major funders of Muslim initiatives, the two men participated in the building of Sarekat Islam in terms that cannot be narrowly labelled 'Arab', 'Indian', or 'native'. Similarly, Shaykh Awad bin Sahbal, an Arab who started a school in Surakarta in 1911, was listed as a permanent contributor to *Medan-Bergerak*, one of the leading newspapers of the pergerakan until 1919.[2] Not only do these men defy categorisation, they caution against the reification of Arabs, Indians, Chinese, the Dutch, and natives. They highlight the fluid character of Arabness despite the growth of a dominant representation of Arab identity under sayyid leadership. Exclusionary and racialising politics remained significant, however, and were driven by developments not only within the colony but across the Indian Ocean.

New Transregional Politics

The rise of Arab nationalism in the Hijaz was an impetus for exclusionary politics. In Chapter 6, we noted the significance of the rise of Sharif Husain to Arabs in the Malay world, but not its specific implications. In July 1916, a cable was sent to the Sarekat Islam branch in Batavia, carrying the news of Sharif Husain's victory over the Ottomans in the Hijaz. The Arab Revolt had begun in June the same year with the promise of support from the British, and concluded with the momentous defeat of the Ottomans.[3] With Mecca and Medina firmly within his grasp, Sharif

[1] Ahmat, *The Vernacular Press*, p. 117.
[2] *Medan-Bergerak*, vol. 2, no. 28 (10 Jul. 1919). After this issue Sahbal's name, as well as that of another person who may have been Indian or Arab, Syekh Rais Abdulazis, are no longer listed.
[3] *Pertimbangan*, vol. 1, no. 12 (22 Jul. 1916); William Ochsenwald, 'Ironic Origins: Arab Nationalism in the Hijaz, 1882–1914', in Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad

Husain set about claiming the caliphate on the grounds that the institution ought to be restored to its rightful heirs, the *ashrāf* – the more general Arabic term for the descendants of the Prophet in Islam.[4] In keeping with the times, this was not only a genealogical but also a racialised and national claim on an Ottoman faith and civilisation that had historically been hybrid. The Arab Revolt of 1916 saw the rise of the first Arab nationalist movement. Arabs and Muslims who once looked to Istanbul for leadership now contemplated the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. Sayyids were confronted with a new nationalist political identity in the face of a tottering Islamic empire.

The transregionalism that once spawned a broad and expansive politics now inspired a factionalism that contributed towards dividing sayyids and shaykhs. The broad orientation towards Istanbul that once guided a small group of sayyids was now faced with a new, racialised rallying call for sayyids. Many now supported the Arab nationalist cause under Sharif Husain rather than the Ottoman Sultan. A strong contingent of sayyids who had formed no previous alliance with the Sharif now rallied behind his cause, as the claim to the caliphate by fellow ashrāf accorded well with their own interest in preserving their paternalist position in the Malay world. This fed into not only an exclusionary sayyid status but the division between sayyids and shaykhs.

Sayyid–Shaykh Tensions

Colonial transformation resulted in inversions of Hadrami social hierarchy that created a fault line between sayyids and shaykhs. The reconstitution of sayyid prestige and authority in the early twentieth century rested on a paternalism towards not only natives but shaykhs as well. Sayyid paternalism in public life could also express itself in a disdain for people outside their genealogically elevated circle. Furthermore, sayyid authority became entrenched through such practices as the kissing of the hand and foot that were customary among Arabs and natives in Java.[5] From Chapter 6 we recall the letter written by a reader to *Oetoesan Islam*

Muslih, and Reeva Simon, eds., *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 189.

[4] Joshua Teitelbaum, *The Rise and Fall of the Hashimite Kingdom of Arabia* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2001), pp. 42–53; '"Taking Back" the Caliphate: Sharīf Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī, Mustafa Kemal and the Ottoman Caliphate', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 40, no. 3 (Nov. 2000), pp. 412–24. For the *ashraf* see Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, p. 33.

[5] Bertram J. O. Schrieke, 'De Strijd onder de Arabieren in Pers en Literatuur', *Notulen van de Algemeene en Directievergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, vol. 58 (1920), app. 6, p. 191.

regarding the untoward presence of Chinese men at a Surabaya mosque, whose feet he had planned to kiss as he mistakenly believed them to be sayyids. The practices and beliefs that constituted the veneration of sayyids were described by Rinkes, the Dutch scholar-bureaucrat, as 'usurped custom', not rooted in Islam.[6] However, these customary practices were part of the life of Muslims in Java. They were tacit forms of reverence of sayyids that came to be questioned by some.

As social ascendancy in the colony rested increasingly on wealth accumulation rather than Prophetic lineage, shaykhs too found that they could aspire to a commanding social position. As we have seen in Chapters 2 and 3, shaykhs and others lower in the hierarchy had risen up the colonial social ladder by taking advantage of commercial opportunities unavailable to them in the Hadramaut, and by appointment to the position of headman – frequently with administrative authority over sayyids. The presence of wealthy or influential shaykhs introduced competing social hierarchies and notions of Arabness. The rising power of shaykhs began to overturn the hierarchical order and resulted in scattered instances of conflict and dissatisfaction around the genealogical prestige of sayyids. While sayyids were a dominant face of Arabness in Java, there was growing resistance to their authority from shaykhs.

A case of the rejection of a paternalistic practice is noteworthy. A dispute arose when Shaykh Oemar bin Joesoef Manggoesj refused to kiss the hand of a sayyid, in defiance of the customary show of respect. The former was the Captain of Arabs in Batavia and legendary in Batavian circles for his wealth, notably in the form of property.[7] Sayyid Oesman declared in a fatwa that the act of kissing the hand of a sayyid was not obligatory, making him unpopular among those sayyids who guarded these customs closely. They could be assured nevertheless that the ninety-year-old scholar remained firmly opposed to the modernist Muslim thinking of the time.[8]

The inversions in sayyid–shaykh power relations did not mean that the spiritual and temporal authority of sayyids was eliminated in Java. Sayyids still possessed the most significant economic networks up to the end of World War I and, as we have seen in Chapter 6, this gave a modern relevance to their genealogical prestige. Shaykhs nevertheless became more assertive in representing their own politics, and marriage disputes

[6] Adviseur voor Inlandsche en Arabische Zaken aan den Directeur van Justitie, 5 Feb. 1915, no. 22, Hazeu collection, H1083, no. 10.

[7] Adviseur voor Inlandsche en Arabische Zaken [Snouck Hurgronje] aan den Gouverneur-Generaal, 7 June 1901, no. 27, Hazeu collection, H1083, no. 10; Schrieke, 'De Strijd onder de Arabieren', p. 191; Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 62.

[8] Buno Heslinga, 'Said Oethman', pp. 1124–5.

became a turning point for them. We thus focus our attention next on a key challenge to sayyid authority: marriage disputes that contravened a sayyid interpretation of kafā'a. One dispute in particular resulted in the rise of Al-Irsjad, the organisational counterpoint to sayyid-led modern identity.

Marriage As a Site of Contestation

Dramatic challenges to sayyid authority emerged from marriage disputes. A sharifah married an Indian Muslim with the consent of her father in Singapore in 1905 and created a scandal among sayyids because the marriage disregarded kafā'a. An Arab subsequently wrote to *Al-Manār* and asked if such a marriage was lawful in Islam. Upon receiving an affirmative reply, a debate ensued between some sayyids and Muhammad Rashid Rida, the renowned editor of the Cairene modernist Islamic journal. The Singapore-based scholar Sayyid Umar al-Attas proclaimed the marriage unlawful by claiming descent as the most important criterion of kafā'a. Rida, in his rejoinder, argued against descent and in favour of religious compatibility, freedom (from slavery), character, wealth, and parental consent.[9] The pivotal marriage dispute of the early twentieth century, however, was initiated by the cohabitation in Surakarta of a sharifah with a non-sayyid, a Chinese, to which we shall turn shortly. Marriage became a site of contestation because it tested the limits of sayyids' acceptance of the challenges of the times, including assertions of equality between Muslims.

A century earlier, Al-Misri had gently mocked the self-aggrandisement that lay behind sayyid pretensions to a position of superiority over non-sayyids. He had made this particularly salient by showing how it did not revolve solely around the exclusionary status of sayyids over native Muslims. Rather, it hinged on an internal hierarchy. In decrying claims to unequal status, Al-Misri relates a story in which a white-skinned raja rejects a claim to genealogical superiority by dismissing the application of kafā'a by the ruler of Sumenep to prevent the marriage of his daughter to a Chinese convert to Islam. We recall from Chapter 1 the white-skinned raja's words of admonishment: 'If one has become a brother in the religion, let it not be said once again that their status is unequal, for this will surely bring great misfortune, I shall exile them from this land.'[10] The Chinese weds the princess in a grand celebration, and 'the tailors,

[9] A. S. Bujra, 'Political Conflict and Stratification in Hadramaut', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 3, no. 4 (July 1967), pp. 357–8.
[10] Zaini-Lajoubert, *Abdullah*, pp. 110–11.

the alcohol distillers, the cobblers, and even the pork butchers were ennobled on that day'. It would be a mistake to draw a linear relationship between Al-Misri and the tensions among Arabs of the early twentieth century. The recapitulation of the anecdote is helpful, however, in highlighting the longstanding resonance of the question of inequality among Muslims in the face of claims to a special status based on Prophetic genealogy. In addition, it highlights the recurring theme of marriage as a site of contestation (and Chineseness as an Other to Arabness), to which we turn in greater depth by examining the positions of Sayyid Oesman and Soerkati, respectively.

From Sayyid Oesman to Soerkati

Sayyid Oesman was influential in shoring up the spiritual authority of sayyids. Given the official acknowledgement of his own high standing, his influence and thinking pervaded the colonial Islamic administration. This helped to ensure that his work remained entrenched well after his death in 1914. However, his work permeated society and endured because he wrote not only in Arabic but in Malay and other local languages, and produced helpful handbooks. For instance, he wrote a practical handbook expressly in Malay on the principal points of Islamic law for native Muslim officials in order to fulfil a need he believed was long overdue.[11] First published in 1881, the handbook sold out speedily and in 1894 he published a revised and expanded edition. The handbook was widely used by the officials of the *raad agama* – a religious council that adjudicated matters concerning family and inheritance in Islamic law – established by the Dutch throughout Java; and its rulings about Arabs were critical to how their status in Islamic law was rendered to Muslims of the colony.[12]

In chapter nineteen of the handbook, Sayyid Oesman lists a number of characteristics of birth, profession, and other factors by which spouses were ranked in Islamic law. Arabs were ranked higher that non-Arabs, the Quraysh tribe in particular was distinguished from other Arabs, and within this group the descendants of Muhammad's daughter, sharifs and sayyids, were an elevated class.[13] This position contrasted sharply with the modernist position that was iterated in the case of the marriage dispute

[11] Its title, in shortened form, was *Kitab al-Qawanin as-Sjar'ijjah* (sic; Book of the Administration of Islamic Law). See Snouck Hurgronje, 'Sajjid Oethman's Gids'.
[12] *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, s.v. 'Priesterraden', by L. W. C. van den Berg. As an institutionalised priesthood does not exist in Islam, the term *Priesterraden* (Priestly Councils) as used by the Dutch in reference to *raad agama* was misleading.
[13] Snouck Hurgronje, 'Sajjid Oethman's Gids', p. 297.

in Singapore referred to earlier. Sayyid Oesman nevertheless held the racialised understanding in question and applied it to his interpretation of kafā'a in favour of sayyid privileges from as early as the 1880s, when he published his views on the matter.[14]

Noting that little support was found in legal texts against the marriage of a sharifah with a non-sayyid, Snouck Hurgronje added that Sayyid Oesman nonetheless saw 'a marriage of a woman from a sayyid line with a native of Indonesia as an example of unrivalled moral decay'.[15] This 'inconsistency', he suggested further, was forgivable because Sayyid Oesman did not feel, given his assumption of a 'noblesse oblige' of sorts, that he should preach to members of his lineage and give vent to their vexation over the immoral and dishonest practices of many of them in the region. Snouck Hurgronje maintained that when many Hadramis had lived in a land with entirely different social relations, and a sayyid from the Hadramaut allowed his daughter to marry an 'ordinary' Arab, Javanese, or Malay, he became an enemy of his foremost co-descendants. Indeed, Sayyid Oesman once issued a vehement denouncement of the Penghulu of Sumenep, who did not recognise any special inviolable birth rights of the daughters of sayyids.[16] Sayyid Oesman's interpretation of kafā'a in favour of sayyid genealogical exclusivity was instrumental to the preservation of sayyid authority. His handbook of Islamic law (sold also by the famous pergerakan press Setia Oesaha) institutionalised the elevated place of sayyids through its widespread use. His authority was nevertheless questioned. A year before his death, a marriage dispute in Surakarta provoked a challenge to his interpretation of Islamic law from a new voice on the public stage.

A man of Sudanese origin, Soerkati provided a counterpoint to Sayyid Oesman's authority. Soerkati was recruited in Mecca, where he had gained recognition as a scholar, to teach at a Djamiat Cheir school in Batavia. In 1913, while he was teaching at this school, Soerkati visited Surakarta, where he spoke at a gathering of Arabs at the home of their captain, Awad bin Soenkar. He suggested that the unwelcome cohabitation of a sharifah with a Chinese gentleman could be resolved by pooling funds

[14] Nico Kaptein, 'The Conflicts about the Income of an Arab Shrine: The Perkara Luar Batang in Batavia', in Huub de Jonge and Nico Kaptein, eds., *Transcending Borders: Arabs, Politics, Trade and Islam in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), p. 195.

[15] Snouck Hurgronje, 'Sajjid Oethman's Gids', p. 299.

[16] Ibid., p. 298. The bulk of a treatise by Sayyid Oesman was dedicated to the fatwa denouncing the interpretation of kafā'a as well as four other so-called legal and procedural mishandlings of the Penghulu of Sumenep. For a description of this work see C. Snouck Hurgronje, 'Vier Geschenken van Sajjid 'Oethman bin Abdoellah bin 'Aqil bin Jahja 'Alawi beschreven', *Notulen van de Algemeene en Directievergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, vol. 30 (1892), app. 14, pp. 105–6.

for her to leave her partner. As this met with no response, he proclaimed that an alternative solution would be for a Muslim to step forward and take her hand in marriage. Sayyids protested on the basis of kafā'a that no Muslim other than a sayyid could marry a sharifah, but Soerkati reaffirmed that the marriage of any Muslim with the said sharifah would be lawful as long as her father gave her away in accordance with Islamic prescriptions. News of this fatwa was cabled to Soerkati's sayyid employers in Batavia, who greeted him rather coolly upon his return, and soon afterwards, in 1914, he left Djamiat Cheir.[17] Soerkati's fatwa created a furore among sayyid circles that brought to light a strong concern among them for the preservation of their genealogical prestige; enough sayyid members of Djamiat Cheir were disconcerted that it led to the departure of the 'highly valued head teacher'.[18]

Soerkati's questioning of sayyid authority was not an isolated instance but part of a coherent modernist Islamic worldview that he brought with him. His position on kafā'a was grounded in Rida's particular 'insistence on the rights of reason in interpreting the Qur'an and *hadith* [the utterances and deeds of the Prophet]'.[19] This position recalls again the case of the marriage dispute in Singapore less than a decade earlier. Soerkati founded Al-Irsjad upon this modernist perspective with the financial backing of Manggoesj and other sympathisers after leaving Djamiat Cheir. The colony was changing and the tensions between sayyids and shaykhs began to be felt more forcefully.[20] The underlying tensions among Arabs did not amount to a concerted challenge to sayyid authority until the establishment of the reformist organisation Al-Irsjad. Organisations, the means by which sayyids came to the fore, became the basis upon which their paternalism was now challenged. Soerkati's fatwa became the rallying point for the scattered dissatisfaction with sayyid authority and for the founding of Al-Irsjad.

A Counterpoint to a Sayyid-Led Modern Identity

The growth of Islamic modernism was linked to the new aspirations of the trading culture in which not only sayyids but shaykhs emerged as enormously successful traders and benefactors of their respective causes.

[17] Schrieke, 'De Strijd onder de Arabieren', p. 190; Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement*, n. 87, pp. 62, 63.
[18] Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken [Rinkes] aan den Directeur van Justitie, 5 Feb. 1915, no. 22, Hazeu collection, H1083, no. 10.
[19] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 223.
[20] Schrieke, 'De Strijd onder de Arabieren', p. 191; Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 62.

From the outset, Al-Irsjad showed signs of intellectual and organisational independence that arose from its reliance on individuals and business groups who had established commercial enterprises and building companies similar to those examined in Chapter 2. The organisation was clearly guided by the belief that affecting change in the world meant dedication to *dunia perusahaan* (the world of commerce). Natalie Mobini-Kesheh has shown that Al-Irsjad demonstrated a notable concern for financial accounting and well-being. She notes that Al-Irsjad began 'as an informal grouping of like-minded individuals whose immediate aim was to raise funds to support Soerkati's school'.[21] She makes an important observation on the financial practices of the organisation, revealing how it sustained the establishment of schools from 1915 onwards. She also notes that Al-Irsjad 'was established as a fund-raising body, and effective management of the association's finances was a constant concern of the central executive [and pithily expressed] in the oft-repeated Arabic aphorism *al-māl rūḥ al-'amal*: money is the spirit of action'. Instructively, she adds that the 'almost obsessive concern with financial matters reflects al-Irshad's origins as an association of successful Hadrami traders'.[22]

Armed with financial resources, Al-Irsjad established institutions that realised its own Islamic worldview. This constituted not only an ideological struggle against claims to sayyid authority but a struggle to carve out a space in a sayyid-dominated environment. Newspapers, publications, and printing presses in the Arab community were dominated by sayyids. While financial resources were available, printers and newspapers were in short supply for the Irsjadis, hence they were at the mercy of sayyid-owned institutions.[23] The organisation thus prioritised the acquisition of printing presses and the publication of its own organs. Al-Irsjad published its own Arabic-language periodical in Surabaya in 1919 and found a voice for itself in the burgeoning Arabic and Malay press of the time.[24] The organisation's emphasis on equality was markedly demonstrated in its founding documents, to which we turn next.

Instituting Equality

The Djamyat Alislahwalersjat Al Arabia Di Batavia (sic; The Arab Reform and Guidance Association in Batavia) – commonly abbreviated

[21] Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, *The Hadrami Awakening: Community and Identity in the Netherlands East Indies, 1900–1942*, Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1999, p. 58.
[22] Ibid., pp. 59, 60.
[23] Schrieke, 'De Strijd onder der Arabieren'.
[24] See 'Al-Iṣlāḥ wa al-Irshād', *Al-Irshād*, vol. 1, no. 27 (23 Dec. 1920).

to Al-Irsjad – was legally incorporated in 1915. Its statutes consisted of ten articles. Housekeeping regulations were appended to the statutes in 1919 and both parts published in Arabic alongside a complete Malay and partial Dutch translation.[25] The variations in meaning between the Arabic and Malay renditions of Article 2 – the goals of the organisation – are significant enough to warrant detailed consideration. In Arabic, it states that Al-Irsjad was established to collect and maintain funds to defray the costs of a number of projects (the first of the three descriptive sections that follow is pertinent):

(A) The promotion of Arab customs in accordance with the religion of Islam and the teaching of writing and reading in Arabic to the Muslim community [*umma*], and the advancement of the Arabic language, Dutch and other necessary languages.[26]

The same section in Malay translation states the following:

(A) Carrying out of the customs and traditions of Arab people following the prescriptions of the Islamic religion and the advancement of Arabic, Dutch and other languages.[27]

The Arabic version more strongly advocated the promotion of those aspects of Arab tradition that fell within the bounds prescribed by Islam, and its meaning can be properly understood only within the context of Arabs in Java. Following the recent challenges to sayyid authority from Soerkati's fatwa and Manggoesj's act of defiance, it can be surmised that the article, in its remaking of 'Arab' and 'Islam', advocated the exclusion of customs that propagated the veneration of sayyids in Java. Furthermore, Article 5 stated the functions and selection of the *bestuur* (executive) and expressly excluded sayyids from it. In a report approving the organisation's legal incorporation, Rinkes noted that Article 5 acted as a counterweight to the practically exclusive control of sayyids over pre-existing organisations.[28]

The impetus for the establishment of the organisation was the fight against sayyid paternalism, but its members stood for a broader concern with equality. Forty-one members gathered in Batavia in February 1919 for a general meeting in which officials were elected and the statutes of the organisation were discussed and approved. Following this,

[25] *Qānūn Ǧami'ıyyat al-Iṣlāḥ wa al-Irshād al-'Arabiyya: Al-Asāsī wa al-Dākhilī* (*Statuten dari Perkoempoelan 'Djamyat Alislahwalersjat Al Arabia' di Batavia)*. Surabaya: Maṭba'at al-Islāmīyya (Islam-Drukkerij), AH 1337 (1919).

[26] Ibid., pp. 12–13.

[27] Ibid., p. 5.

[28] Adviseur voor Inlandsche en Arabische Zaken aan den Directeur van Justitie, 5 Feb. 1915, no. 22, Hazeu collection, H1083, no. 10.

housekeeping regulations in twenty-two sections were introduced. The third article in these regulations concerned the intake of students, and is as follows:

> Article 3: at no time is a member of the executive or a head of a school or a teacher permitted to treat one student differently from another, in whatsoever a manner, whether that child resides in the boarding house (in the care of the school) or outside, is rich or poor. It is incumbent upon them to treat equally all these students in all matters that take place within the school.[29]

This article was carefully worded to ensure that the school organisation did not replicate the social hierarchies of either the colonial order or its Arab communities. Given the entrenchment of these hierarchies, this article may well have been intended to encourage and guide administrators and teachers in the ways of equal treatment, and perhaps even to protect them in the event that such treatment gave offence to any party.

A similar self-consciousness about ensuring equality in a racialised setting informs the final section of the regulations, which governs the conduct and motives of members. The second article of this section is:

> Article 2: it is mandatory for the executive of the organisation and its members to respect the views of their colleagues, in addition to ensuring good behaviour in their deliberations, and implementing fair regulations and equality among themselves, without heed to the person's wealth or poor circumstances, rank or race, age or profession.[30]

The organisation's housekeeping regulations strongly indicate its members' desire for the institutionalisation of the equal treatment of their fellow members and students.

It was in schools, then, that Al-Irsjad's notions of equality were tested. Whereas modern Arab schools had hitherto reproduced the unquestioned presumption of sayyid authority, Al-Irsjad schools instituted equality and thereby encouraged a new representation of Arabs. According to Joseph Kostiner, the fundamental premise of Al-Irsjad's drive for education was to be rid of what was felt to be superstition and spiritual stagnation from the centuries of sayyid domination of education.[31] It was believed that only in this way could the class differences, conflict, and economic backwardness of Hadrami society be overcome.

[29] *Qānūn Ǧami'ıyyat al-Iṣlāḥ*, pp. 13–14.
[30] Ibid. p. 24.
[31] 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 R. Israeli and A. H. Johns, eds., *Islam in Asia*, 2 vols., *vol. 2: Southeast and East Asia* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1984), p. 215.

Al-Irsjad Schools

Generous contributions from numerous wealthy Arabs, including both men such as Manggoesj and sympathetic sayyids, allowed for the establishment of the first Al-Irsjad school in Batavia.[32] Founded in March 1915, the Madrasah Al-Irsjad Al-Islamiah (The Al-Irsjad Islamic School) offered a seven-year programme. Level A began by teaching children of around seven years old classical Arabic, civics, counting with words, and playing with games and pictures; Level B differed only in that the memorisation of parts of the Qur'an was introduced.[33] The basics introduced in the first two years were expanded after the first level, and mathematics, ethics, and the five obligations in Islam were also introduced. From the second level onwards, theological subjects were taught, as well as writing in the Roman alphabet; and in the fifth and final level, Malay and Dutch were taught besides the various subjects already noted. The programme was designed around a firm grasp of Arabic and a gradual transition from memorisation to a strong emphasis on reading and comprehending the Qur'an, history, and other subjects. The school provided a hostel in which students were obligated to study Arabic or Dutch in the night-time – in addition to their regularly scheduled lessons – and pray five times a day alongside their teachers. Its procedures, codes of conduct, holidays, and so on reflected a strong emphasis on discipline and, as Mobini-Kesheh has noted, the management of financial affairs.

In 1917, the Al-Irsjad School in Batavia reported an enrolment of 150 students, of whom eighty were native and seventy Arab. It offered day and boarding school facilities and claimed in the latter instance to provide 'good care and teaching through the night and day by teachers knowledgeable in Islamic religion and other secular disciplines'.[34] With the enthusiastic support of its benefactors, Al-Irsjad soon overshadowed Djamiat Cheir in its establishment of educational facilities throughout the archipelago.[35] With the Batavia school as their model, numerous others were started by the growing numbers of Al-Irsjad branches in the region. Notably, in 1920 Al-Irsjad opened a school in Surabaya, the largest and probably wealthiest Arab community in Java. Adopting the thinking of the Egyptian modernist Muhammad Abduh, Al-Irsjad schools taught a varied curriculum which in the course of time stressed instruction in *tauḥīd*

[32] Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement*, n. 97, p. 64.
[33] *Pertimbangan*, vol. 2, no. 30 (7 Feb. 1917). See also vol. 2, no. 31 (8 Feb. 1917) for more details on the procedures of the school.
[34] *Pertimbangan*, vol. 2, no. 33 (10 Feb. 1917).
[35] Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement*, pp. 64–6.

(oneness of God), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and history.[36] More native students were admitted into these schools as cooperation increased between Al-Irsjad and such organisations as the similarly inclined Moehammadijah. Al-Irsjad thus constituted its own vision of a modern Arab and Islamic identity in which Arabic literacy was formative.

The modernist Islamic education provided by Al-Irsjad was path-breaking in the Malay world. It offered further access to a transregional Islamic political culture and egalitarianism against the hierarchical claims of sayyids. It thereby broke down barriers and introduced a significant inclusionary politics. However, its efforts also resulted in the appearance of new barriers.

Inclusionary Politics and an Exclusionary Outcome

As we have seen in this book, the underlying relationship of Arabs with native Muslims was formative in the making of modern Arab identity. If sayyid-led identity rested on paternalism over native Muslims, its shaykh-led counterpoint promised egalitarianism. In the question of marriage, the former was exclusionary while the latter was inclusionary. Although Al-Irsjad realised an egalitarian and inclusionary politics to a significant degree, in practice its efforts also led to an exclusionary outcome.

The rise of Al-Irsjad led to an articulation and critique of the entrenched social hierarchy of Arabs in colonial Java that had local and transregional ramifications. It generated dialogues between residents of colonial urban centres in the Malay world and Cairo, and had an impact not only in Java but in the Hadramaut.[37] At the same time, Al-Irsjad engaged, in an Islamic idiom, with the broadly defined local struggles for justice and equality that characterised the years of the pergerakan when anti-colonial struggles were set in motion.[38] It extended the horizon of Arabs and other Muslim colonial subjects by shaking the tacit and unquestioned dominance of sayyids. The critique of sayyid authority was

[36] *Qānūn Jamiʿiyyat al-Iṣlāḥ*.
[37] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 271–309.
[38] Bertram Schrieke, the Dutch adviser to the Kantoor voor Inlandsche en Arabische Zaken (the Bureau of Native and Arab Affairs), located these struggles within the overall 'strivings toward emancipation in a sociological and religious sense' in this period that he collectively termed 'Aziatisch Reveil' (Asian Revival). See his 'De Strijd onder de Arabieren', p. 189; also *Pergolakan Agama di Sumatra Barat: Sebuah Sumbangan Bibliografi* (Jakarta: Bhratara, 1973), pp. 44–5, 53–5. (Translated by Soegardo Poerbakawatja from the original Dutch publication 'Bijdrage tot de bibliografie van de huidige godsdienstige beweging ter Sumatra's Westkust', dedicated to Dr G. A. J. Hazeu on his departure from the Netherlands Indies in *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. 59 (1919–21), pp. 249–325).

also an attack on rank and privilege in colonial society and resonated with the people, language, and goals of the pergerakan era. Soerkati's assertion of equality between Muslims thus not only was a critique of sayyid authority but contributed to an emerging anti-colonial politics. His publications and their radical interpretations found growing followers within and beyond Arab communities. A new and ideologically driven Islamic modernism began to take root. Al-Irsjad's democratic interpretation of Islamic ideology was in harmony with the politics of the pergerakan. It thus comes as no surprise that Agus Salim, the influential pergerakan leader, was the Sarekat Islam liaison with Al-Irsjad and other Muslim organisations.[39]

At the same time, Al-Irsjad's efforts became more exclusionary in relation to native Muslims. The struggle for equality and the goals inscribed in its founding documents were obscured as conflicts between Irsjadis and sayyids sharpened the debate around genealogical superiority and deepened the boundaries between contesting notions of Arab identity. The ideological defence of sayyids was sharpened by the challenge posed by Irsjadis. Once-tacit notions of paternalism now needed to be defended outright. Each side became staunch defenders of opposing notions of Arab identities that rested on leadership over native Muslims. The conflict between the two groups inevitably adopted the exclusionary vocabulary of colonial racialisation.

In addition, the superior training in Arabic language, literature, and Islamic subjects at Al-Irsjad meant that it was the logical course for its graduates to continue their education in Cairo or at other centres of scholarship in the Arabic-speaking world. Mobini-Kesheh notes an important contradiction built into the high-quality Arabic-language education of its schools: that 'al-Irshad education fed ultimately into an overseas education system, rather than one in the Netherlands Indies, suggests a further means by which al-Irshad schools inculcated a sense of separateness from the indigenous population'.[40]

Al-Irsjad promised to replace paternalism over natives with an egalitarian politics, and succeeded in doing so to a significant degree. In the process, it became exclusionary, if not paternalistic, in its relationship with native Muslims despite having a genuine stake in the zeitgeist of the pergerakan years. The contested character of Al-Irsjad-led identity, besides its sayyid-led earlier iteration, suggests that contestation was integral to modern Arab identity.

[39] Hadji Agoes Salim, *Djedjak Langkah Hadji A. Salim: Pilihan Karangan Utjapan dan Pendapat Beliau dari Dulu sampai Sekarang* (Jakarta: Tintamas, 1954).
[40] Mobini-Kesheh, *The Hadrami Awakening*, pp. 82–3.

Fault Lines in the Identity

Chapter 7 has demonstrated that modern Arab identity was not a neatly bounded entity but a dominant representation that was constituted in contestation from the outset. The chapter brings to a close the examination of this identity in the final part of this book. Chapters 5 and 6 described the rise and consolidation of the identity, from the overtures of a few to the Ottoman Empire to the establishment of pioneering organisations. Central to this consolidation was the pursuit of an education that would free young Arabs from the tangible and intangible walls of the colonial social order. Initially, a handful of elite families sent their children to study in modernist schools in Istanbul. As the momentum for progress grew, sayyids formed organisations that would offer a similar education in the Malay world. Arab identity came to be consolidated through the successful establishment of organisations such as Djamiat Cheir and the modernist Islamic schools it established.

The tensions of genealogy and class inherent to this identity were named in the two previous chapters but their outcome was left unexplored. Chapter 5 traced the earliest manifestations of the identity to sayyids who fashioned themselves as paternalistic leaders of native Muslims by initiating the turn to Istanbul. Chapter 6 saw the consolidation of this leadership through the development of pioneering Arab organisations. In each of these previous chapters, however, the remaking of sayyid paternalism in modern times rested on both intimacy and tension between sayyids and native Muslims. Genealogical and class inequality created fault lines in the architecture of the identity. At the same time, transregional connections not only extended the educational horizon of young Muslims but fed the growth of an exclusionary politics. Friction between sayyids and shaykhs in the Malay world was exacerbated by the rise of Arab nationalism and the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

Chapter 7 has taken up the task of teasing out the fault lines of genealogy and class, focusing primarily on a profound challenge to sayyid authority unleashed by a marriage dispute. Soerkati, a teacher hired by sayyids to teach in their own Djamiat Cheir school, established Al-Irsjad and thereby consolidated the dissatisfaction with sayyid authority that had hitherto been scattered in character. Organisations, the means by which sayyids came to the fore, thus became the basis upon which their paternalism was now challenged. Organisations became the driving force and public representation of the conflicting groups, and the task of consolidating their respective positions fell upon the schools they established. Al-Irsjad, for instance, sought to unmake sayyid genealogical ascendancy by institutionalising the principle of equality between

Muslims and confronting palpable manifestations of sayyid authority in public life such as the kissing of the hand and feet.

The process of becoming Arab in a racialised context accentuated the bounded character of the identity, but it was not totalising. More exclusionary notions of Arabness were constructed on the body of a largely creole society. The creole or hybrid character of the society was thus constrained but not lost. The very authors of modern Arab identity were creoles who emerged from a culturally hybrid context despite colonial categorisation and control. However, the claims made by Arab organisations in the name of identity represented a certain boundedness that came to speak for all. As a consequence, there was a concurrence of racialisation and hybridity though the two would seem to be irreconcilable. Arab identity could thus be bound by an exclusionary discourse and yet be constituted by cultural hybridity.

Conclusion

The nature of Arabness underwent a significant transformation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the great shift from sea to land. Where once Lord Sayyids roamed freely, much valued for their knowledge, skills, and Prophetic genealogy by the courts of the maritime Malay world, peddlers and middlemen now filled narrow niches in the colonial economy. Controls were placed on the residence and mobility of the latter. A new sayyid elite emerged over time who resisted colonial constraints by seeking Islamic modernity in Istanbul. They renewed their genealogical relevance by fashioning themselves as leaders of native Muslims, before consolidating their position through modern organisations. The sayyid-led modern identity that took shape was contested from the outset, most forcefully by shaykhs who advanced an egalitarianism inspired by modernist Islamic thinking.

There is a disjuncture between the desired politics and the outcome in the successive iterations of Arabness. Colonial categorisation and control attempted to cast Arabs after a fantasised racial image but managed to bring about some rather than extensive boundedness. Arab quarters retained a significant degree of ethnic diversity and cultural hybridity. Although their organisations had notable local and transregional resonance, neither sayyids nor shaykhs decidedly shaped society along their respective ideological orientations. With each iteration of Arab identity, an exclusionary outcome was incremental rather than radical in character.

The disjuncture between politics and outcome suggests that it may be helpful to distinguish between racialising discourses, usually state-driven, and hybrid social realities. As we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4, racialising discourses emerge from projects to categorise and control that aim to produce racial categories as self-evident entities. Considerable human effort is required. Dutch scholar-bureaucrats provided reams of philological and ethnographic research that bolstered the forcible emplacement of Arabs by colonial administrators. The representation of Arabs

as outsiders who possessed a powerful and negative influence on natives provided the textual justification for Dutch paternalism over the latter. Whereas racialising projects endeavour to shape a society along idealised exclusionary lines, hybrid social realities are historically constituted.

This book has considered the emergence of a modern Arab identity as the incremental rise of an exclusionary category in an ethnically diverse and hybrid context. This process becomes particularly evident in the choice of temporal and spatial terms for Chapters 6 and 7, namely the early twentieth century and the Malay world. Let us first address the temporal element. When a modern Arab identity took shape in the 1900s, the fluidity and porosity of the Malay world had been much constrained in comparison to its maritime past. This period was nevertheless marked by an efflorescent post-maritime ethnic diversity and hybridity. The work of Pramoedya and Maier, cited in the Introduction, highlight a heteroglossia in Malay-language literature that reflects its culturally diverse and hybrid authors and audiences. Creoles of Arab, Chinese, and European descent interacted in Malay in the everyday life of burgeoning commercial hubs and thereby invested in the language a cosmopolitan character. This Malay-world cosmopolitanism was evident not only in the language, but in the cultural habits, architecture, and artifacts of everyday life, such as textiles.

In spatial terms, the context of modern Arab identity was local, transnational, and transregional in scale. Arabs interacted within a diaspora and a transregional Islamic network that spread across the boundaries of European colonial empires. As we have observed, the movement and exchange of ideas between particular nodes were notable. The interaction between community and commercial leaders located in Singapore and Batavia, for instance, was strong across the boundary between the British and Dutch colonial states. Furthermore, the treatment of Arabs in colonial Singapore became the basis for comparison and criticism of their counterparts in colonial Batavia through letters published in Arabic periodicals emanating from Cairo. The assertion of the turn to Istanbul by appearing with a fez on the streets of Batavia brought into play people and developments in Singapore, Istanbul, and Cairo. The organisations that developed and institutions established in Java thereafter were linked to developments, people, and ideas of a correspondingly expanding scale. At the same time, the Ottomans cleverly mapped their efforts at mobilising political and financial support on to the Hadrami diaspora and appointed consuls from its members in the Malay world. The crystallisation of modern Arab identity involved social actors and places on a widening geographical scale.

In contrast to this book, racialising discourses appear to eclipse hybrid social realities in understandings of identity. Studies of identity in the Malay world have been shaped by the temporal and spatial terms of the modern nation-state and typically take the form of a history of an ethnic group within a nation-state. These studies develop a narrative that begins with the rise of an ethnic organisation under colonial rule and concludes with the incorporation of members of the ethnic group as citizens of a nation-state. This narrative reaches no further back than the first couple of decades of the twentieth century. Rather than consolidating a novel identity, the ethnic organisation is seen to have modernised an ethnic group that was already in existence. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are given little or no attention, as any manifestation of the ethnic group in this period is understood to be simply an earlier stage of the modern identity. The ethnic group is thus represented as a bounded and stable category in the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries and then again from the colonial state to the nation-state. Given the absence of critical reflection on colonial categorisation and control, the racialised language of colonialism thus comes to be normalised and perpetuated. The dominance of a racialising discourse over hybrid social realities can be seen in the normalisation of exclusionary politics that takes place with the emergence of nation-states.

The Normalisation of Exclusionary Politics

An exclusionary politics was accommodated in nationalisms across the Malay world by the 1930s and 1940s in different ways. Indonesian nationalism is cited as one of the most successful in accommodating this politics. The agreement by various ethno-national parties to make Malay the national language is regarded as a critical building block. Malaysia's independence came to be regarded a success because of the formation of a ruling coalition based on ethnic political parties. In each national instance, ethnic identities were acknowledged to be the necessary stable and bounded units of a nation-state. In the same breath, however, exclusionary ethnic politics has contributed towards political crises, separatism, irridentism, and racialised alienation.

Ethnic groups in the Malay world suffered alienation, if not repression, on the basis of 'race', after colonialism. A significant source of this suffering is not the primordial hatred, or the breakdown in 'race relations', so often blamed. It lies rather in a politics based on racialised interpretations of national history. Nationalisms that began with egalitarianism in the face of colonial overlordship instituted unequal terms of citizenship

upon gaining independence and state control in the Malay world. The 'indigenous' were typically privileged and the 'foreign' given secondary status. The creole histories that were a formative part of the Malay world were rendered marginal by forcing parochialising national narratives on the past. In this connection, nationalists and nation-builders have played a role in the reproduction of race and racism in post-independence contexts, in keeping with the observations of Glassman cited in the Introduction. The state-led and popular repression of cultural hybridity thus set in motion has persisted in the twenty-first century.

Race has been actively preserved or refined in independent Malaysia and Singapore. Nirmala Purushotham offers an instructive observation in the case of Singapore, where she notes that race has been 'given new ground, new meaning, and new power' following independence.[1] The city-state's leaders believe that it is not race that is a problem, but rather its abuse under colonial rule. By claiming to provide a democratic field for its different races, the state distances itself from 'its misuse' under the British.[2] The ruling elites are not necessarily Machiavellian in applying race politics; rather, Purushotham describes them as enmeshed in a colonial discourse recast after their own vision: 'They are almost always caught by, imprisoned in, a discourse inherited in a colonial history that continues to be re-produced by powerful contemporary reconstructions: re-formulated, re-vised, and definitely continuing a crucially neo-Orientalist social reality.'[3]

In comparison with Malaysia and Singapore, race would appear to be muted if not non-existent in Indonesia, but it has shown its head nevertheless when it comes to people of Chinese descent. Chineseness was racialised to different degrees from the late 1950s until the late 1990s, though violence had been directed at people identified as Chinese in the period of the Indonesian revolution between 1945 and 1950. The three decades of Suharto's New Order, from 1966 to 1998, saw the most systematic and oppressive form of racism of the three countries under consideration because it permeated the bureaucracy. Through the accentuation of the 'foreignness' of the rather heterogeneous Chinese, the regime perpetuated colonial categorisation. The New Order, however, went further than its Dutch predecessor by banning all public displays of Chineseness, from Chinese-language newspapers and schools to religious rituals and cultural festivities. Arabs did not become overt

[1] Nirmala Srirekam Purushotham, *Negotiating Language, Constructing Race: Disciplining Difference in Singapore*, Contributions to the Sociology of Language 79 (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998), p. 12.
[2] Ibid., p. 17.
[3] Ibid., p. 226.

targets but suffered the same legal alienation, as the category of 'Foreign Oriental' was carried over in a new language from the colonial to the independent state.

Nationalism led to dramatic and exemplary forms of self-government but not without costs, as the preceding cases of racialisation indicate. Movements in the twentieth century unleashed important calls for equality in the name of the nation, but they at once contained the drive to exclude and ethnicise. Rather than debunk or reject scholarship on nationalism, we draw attention to the cost of the exclusionary politics intimately associated with the phenomenon, and frequently expressed in racial or ethnic terms. Classic works such as George Kahin's *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (1952) and William Roff's *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (1967) provide valuable reflections on the emergence of nationalist politics. Twentieth-century nationalisms led to phenomenal struggles to democratise political life, develop independent economic initiatives, produce powerful artwork, and ameliorate the educational and living conditions of great numbers of the people. The alienation and repression resulting from the racialisation tied to nationalism, nevertheless, deserve critical attention. Nation-states reproduced colonial terms of difference to govern their own societies, and thereby remade an inequality that was the catalyst for their own rise. Racialised forms of nationalism obscured or deflected a quest for equality that informed the anti-colonial movement.

At the same time, racialisation has obscured the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic variety and complexity of contemporary societies. Cultures and identities are understood to be unitary or discrete entities in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Racialised perspectives, in conjunction with nation-centred scholarship on the Malay world, have erased or obscured in effective ways the presence of creoles in the region. Creole communities have historically been scattered throughout the modern Malay world, in coastal cities such as Surabaya, Jakarta, Singapore, Melaka, Penang, and Phuket. These communities of Arabs, Chinese, Eurasians, and others have been of considerable importance not only to trade and politics, but also to language and literature. However, they have been relegated to an irretrievable past and deserve no serious mention in discussions of cultural diversity today. Creole histories are thereby rendered insubstantial or seen as a quaint phenomenon of no great import to contemporary society. Yet creole and culturally mixed ancestry has been salient in public life. Many writers, artists, educationists, diplomats, businessmen, politicians, and heads of government are creole. The post of prime minister in Malaysia, for instance, is understood to be filled by someone who is ethnic Malay. It is widely known, nevertheless, that all the six individuals who have assumed the role to date have been of hybrid

ancestry – including Arab – though this aspect of their background is usually suppressed or ignored.

The question does not turn on creoles by ancestry so much as a capacity to contemplate and imagine creole histories. One of the outcomes of the rise of race has been the decline, if not the elimination, of the capacity to imagine cultural mixing or interconnectedness. This is at least in part an outcome of the totalising power attributed to racialising discourses normalised under the nation-state, and the subsequent inability to recognise the persistence and significance of hybridity in society. Cultural hybridity tends rather to be framed by discourses of multiracialism or multiculturalism and coloured by trends in globalisation and consumption. However, this is an uncertain area in which we ought to tread with care. Firstly, by speaking of the rise of race, I mean the growth of exclusionary categories in the Malay world that nevertheless may not be comparable to notions of race in Japan, South Africa, the United States, and Germany. In each instance, exclusionary categories have been deployed with different kinds of social outcomes or violence. In this connection, Michael Banton cautions against the reproduction of a culturally European notion of 'race' through the spread of the term in the English language, as is done by international activist organisations.[4] With similar caution, Kahn reminds us that race as we know it today ought not be equated with its antecedents in the colonial era.[5]

Secondly, by drawing on the culturally heterogeneous terrains of Malay-world history in this book, I do not intend to produce an idealised anti-racial past. I am not alone in reflections on the cultural hybridity and fluidity of the region, as is clear from the Introduction. Indeed, the aim is neither to glorify the creole and hybrid against racialised identities, nor to dismiss the latter altogether. As Sanjay Krishnan has rightly cautioned, 'the critique of colonial and postcolonial reifications of race cannot be replaced by a celebration of precolonial creolity'.[6] Kahn's careful exploration of the cosmopolitan possibilities of the Malay world is nevertheless instructive, especially when he asks in relation to Malaysia's 'racial dilemma' whether an answer lies 'in a universalising anti-racist practice, or whether it might be better to work towards the recovery of a heretofore suppressed narrative of cosmopolitan Malay-ness'.[7]

[4] Michael Banton, *The International Politics of Race* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).
[5] Kahn, *Other Malays*, p. 19.
[6] Sanjay Krishnan, *Reading the Global: Troubling Perspectives on Britain's Empire in Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 105.
[7] Kahn, *Other Malays*, p. xxiii.

A Vocabulary of Interconnectedness

Creole histories serve as repositories of transregional and hybrid pasts and offer a vocabulary with which to speak of a past of interconnectedness that colonialism and nation-states have erased or rendered marginal. Whereas modern identity rests on acts of estrangement such as the making of the indigenous and the foreigner, creole histories articulate the connections to the people and land, and to multiple locations (even homelands), that rest on an appreciation of porous boundaries and cultural difference. Creole histories have left a lasting imprint on the Malay world. The cultural dynamics of the Malay world, of which creolisation was a significant feature, may not simply have been overwhelmed by the racialising imperative of the colonial and post-independence eras. Jacqueline Knörr has renewed interest in contemporary creole identity by exploring its role in fostering transethnic interaction within the culturally diverse social landscape of Indonesia.[8]

Creole histories are also ways of remembering insider–outsider interaction. The relationship between Arabs and native Muslims has been an abiding theme of this book. The story of the former cannot be told without the latter. This is attributable to the shared faith and the genealogical prestige of sayyids to some degree. However, the inseparable histories represent more broadly the nature of insider–outsider interaction in the Malay world. The case of the Arabs is one that can be related to others such as those of Chinese and Indians. Placing these groups in long-term perspective as we have done in this book would reveal more complex interactions than does the racialised foreigner–indigenous dichotomy.

Distinguishing racialising discourses from hybrid social realities helps in seeing not only the reach but also the limits of racialisation. The knowledge that race is not as totalising as it is thought to be makes for interpretations of the past, and the activation of other logics, that can have a considerable impact on hegemonic notions of the national past in circulation today. Furthermore, it compels us to ask if creole elements persist within the well-established boundaries of the nation-states in the Malay world and, if so, what their role might be, and how their erasure or recovery from national narratives could have significant consequences.

[8] Jacqueline Knörr, *Creole Identity in Postcolonial Indonesia* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014).

Epilogue

> Not only Europe! This modern age delivered breasts to suckle me, from the Indigenous people themselves, from the Japanese, Chinese, Americans, Indians, Arabs, from all the nations on the surface of this earth. They are the mother wolves who nurtured me to become the builder of Rome! Are you truly going to build Rome? Yes, I answered to myself. How? I don't know. I humbly admitted: I am the infant of all nations from all ages, past and present. The place and time of birth, the parents, were merely a coincidence, not at all something sacred.
>
> Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1981)[1]

Pramoedya envisages the Indonesian nation as the outcome of global miscegenation by casting his proto-nationalist hero Minke as an amalgamation of all the nations of the world. The Indonesian author dismisses enshrined conventions of nationalist narratives such as genealogical descent from an indigenous people and the specific details of a nation's birth. This is not a rejection of nationalism. It is, however, an insistence that the egalitarianism underpinning nationalism be applied to everyone in Indonesia without differentiating between categories of 'indigenous' and 'foreign'. The Indonesia-to-be, as represented by Minke, is a creole nation because it is a novel entity that arises from an amalgamation of people whose origins lie within and beyond the Malay world. It is the outcome of the amalgamation of the indigenous and the foreign. Published in 1981, Pramoedya's perspective on national belonging was exceptional not only in Indonesia but in the rest of the region. The Arabs acknowledged in the epigraph as part of the global miscegenation were, for the most part, erased from national narratives. They were viewed as alien or diminished in status in relation to 'native' citizens. Arabness,

[1] Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Anak Semua Bangsa* (Child of All Nations) (Melaka: Wira Karya, 1982), p. 165. This is the edition that was published in Malaysia. The novel first appeared in Indonesia in 1981. I have translated *Pribumi* and *bangsa* in the original to 'Indigenous people' and 'nations', respectively. This is the second book in the tetralogy narrating the rise of anti-colonialism and nationalism in the Netherlands Indies.

and in broadly comparable terms Chineseness and Indianness as well, were distanced, at least in Indonesia and Malaysia. Conditions changed, however, as Arabness was brought to the foreground in the Malay world.

Arab identity has been rediscovered in the national public spheres of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore from the early 1990s to the present. Arabs, mostly of Hadrami descent, are well known in the two countries as businessmen, professionals, political leaders, intellectuals, and Islamic scholars, though they are found in various other occupations throughout society. They are an intimate part of local culture, given the shared faith of Islam, and yet remain a measure apart because of historical and cultural differences. They thus constitute a significant but elusive community in the histories of the countries in question. The difficulties of seeing them as a community – an exercise that I acknowledge to be problematic – are further compounded by the partial erasure of their biographies from the respective national histories. It is against this elusive and even suppressed narrative that I consider the recent accentuation of Arabness – through writing in print and on the internet, conferences, and public occasions – to be a rediscovery. The rediscovery has not meant a return to a particular moment in the history of Arabs in the Malay world. Rather, it has led to a renewed interest in this past and contemporary Arab identity, now that it is possible to publicly acknowledge Arabness and historical connections to the Hadramaut.

The unification of North and South Yemen in 1990 was the initial spark of the rediscovery. The Republic of Yemen emerged and quickly proceeded to expand ties with Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore in the areas of trade and education. From 1967 to 1990, the Hadramaut had been part of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (commonly referred to as South Yemen), which cultivated ties with communist states rather than capitalist Indonesia and its neighbours. Unification brought about a reversal in this relationship and, as Ho observes, going back to the Hadramaut became possible again.[2] Tarim, a historical capital of Islamic scholarship, began to blossom once more, and students from the Malay world were returning to study there. As Martin Slama has noted, among the first in Indonesia to resume contact were members of sayyid families.[3]

The extent of trade and other ties between the Republic of Yemen and Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore respectively has differed in each instance. Let me mention one area, namely education. In positioning

[2] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, p. 67.
[3] Martin Slama, 'Indonesian Hadhramis and the Hadhramaut: An Old Diaspora and its New Connections', *Antropologi Indonesia*, vol. 29, no. 2 (2005), p. 109.

itself as a regional centre of education, Malaysia has actively sought to increase the number of students from Yemen in its institutions of higher education. To this end, several Malaysian delegations have held educational expositions in Yemen, and over three thousand students have been drawn from the country as of 2008.[4] Thus, it is no surprise when Slama recounts the story of a Hadrami who as a student in Malaysia was able to reacquaint himself with his relative in neighbouring Indonesia, whom he proceeded to invite to a wedding in the Hadramaut.[5] He had not had any connection with the Indonesian relative until then.

Arabness has been accentuated in more than one way. On the one hand, we have the processes of rediscovery raised in the preceding discussion. On the other, Arabs have been viewed as a link in what some see as a global chain of political extremism. What is significant about present-day attention to Arabness in comparison to the period from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century? How have these assertions developed in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, and what may we learn about the particular politics of identity in each instance? And what, if anything, is shared between the three cases that may hark back to the fluid identities of the precolonial Malay world? We might begin formulating some answers to these questions by exploring what happened to creole Arab biographies with the advent of nationalism.

Silences in Biographies and National Histories

Taking religion as not only a spiritual but also a civil and political space, Ho describes Hadramis as important historical figures in the building of public institutions and the formation of modern states; they played a vital role as diplomats, in particular.[6] Today, they remain active in the public affairs of the Malay world. Ali Alatas was Indonesia's minister of foreign affairs from 1988 to 1999 and is perhaps the best known of them. Alwi Abdurrahman Shihab took over the post, and held it for two years. Confirming the trend, Syed Hamid Albar was appointed the minister of foreign affairs of Malaysia in the same year as Alwi Shihab's

[4] Adnan Abdullah, 'Malaysian Education Road Show Concluded', *Yemen Observer*, 23 August 2003, www.yobserver.com/culture-and-society/1006273.html; Adnan Hizam, 'Educational Exhibition Opens in Sana'a', *Yemen Observer*, 1 May 2006, www.yobserver.com/business-and-economy/10010018.html. The statistic on Yemeni students in Malaysia is available on the website of the country's Ministry of Higher Education, http://educationmalaysia.gov.my/.

[5] Slama, 'Indonesian Hadhramis', p. 110.

[6] Engseng Ho, 'Empire through Diasporic Eyes: The View from the Other Boat', *Comparative Study of Society and History*, vol. 46, no. 2 (2004), p. 216.

appointment.[7] For a period of two years, 1999–2001, Hadramis occupied this key post in both countries. Syed Hamid remained in the same post until 2008, when he was made minister of home affairs for one year. Alwi Shihab, on the other hand, was returned to the Indonesian cabinet as the minister of people's welfare in 2004–5. A list of those who have held cabinet or other notable posts in both countries would be too long. Let me mention only two more, namely Muhammad Quraish Shihab and Said Agil Husin Al Munawar, who held the post of minister of religion in Indonesia in 1998 and 2001–4, respectively.

Typically these prominent figures did not discuss the Hadrami part of their biographies, at least not in public. Rarely would others, say journalists and political commentators, reveal the same. Consequently, the Hadrami background of many in notable government positions is not widely known as a rule. The biographical silence stems from the politics of the respective nationalist projects of Malaysia and Indonesia. In the former, the independent nation has been built on the active constitution and preservation of what are officially regarded as the three 'major' ethnic groups – Malays, Chinese, and Indians. Before independence in 1957, debates emerged in the Malay-language press of the 1930s about authentic versus inauthentic Malays, and derogatory terms were coined for those said to be the latter – which included creole Arabs.[8] The assertion of Malay authenticity in the face of ethnic Others has remained part of political life in Malaysia. Hadrami descent, though prized by many, has therefore had to be negotiated with care on the national stage.

Following the declaration of Indonesian independence in 1945, the nation was built on the constitution of numerous regional identities subsumed under a strong national and republican identity. Regarded as foreign, as in the Dutch colonial era, and without a specific sub-region of the nation-state to call their own, Chinese and Arabs have found themselves in an uncertain position on the national stage. As we shall see in the following section, only in recent years has their position become more sound. Before independence, in 1934, creole Arabs – following the precedent set by their Chinese counterparts two years earlier – mobilised themselves in support of Indonesian nationalism by founding the Arab Party of Indonesia (Partai Arab Indonesia). They thereby secured a place for themselves, however tenuous, in the multicultural nationalism that Joshua Barker argues has significantly characterised Indonesian history.[9]

[7] 'Syed' is a variation of the spelling of the honorific 'Sayyid' and is typically found in the former British colonies.

[8] Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, p. 220.

[9] Joshua Barker, 'Beyond Bandung: Developmental Nationalism and (Multi)cultural Nationalism in Indonesia', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 3 (2008), pp. 521–40.

Arabness was nevertheless suppressed for the most part in the public life of independent Indonesia – as were the honorifics reserved for sayyids – in favour of a singular national identity.

Indonesian perspectives on Arabs in the Dutch colonial period have largely been shaped by the post-independence imperative to bury the 'Arab problem'.[10] This is nicely illustrated in the words of the country's former vice-president, Adam Malik:

> For me, the problem has long been buried, since citizens of Arab descent fought shoulder to shoulder in the independence movement through to the establishment of the PAI [Arab Party of Indonesia], the problem of people of Arab descent has been settled. They have assimilated and united with all the people of Indonesia.[11]

According to this view, the roots of the 'problem', the divided loyalty of Arabs as a group, lie in the colonial period, when Arabs were physically and legally separated from the native population. It is thus necessary to suppress the memory of their colonial past in order to incorporate them into the new nation of Indonesia. An unacceptable manner of discussing Arabs is then 'buried' or 'forgotten' as part of the loss of memory that accompanies the making of a nation.[12]

Hadrami descent has tended to be silenced in post-independence Malaysia and Indonesia because of the ambivalent position of Arabness in both countries. In order to appreciate the texture of the silences in biographies and national histories, we turn now to the cases of Syed Hamid, whose father migrated from Indonesia to Malaysia, and the Indonesian lawyer, activist, and author Hamid Algadri.

Syed Hamid Albar

Syed Hamid Albar (born 1944) held important ministerial posts from 1999 to 2009. Biographical accounts within Malaysia tend not to mention his Arab ancestry, though 'Albar' has been a prominent Hadrami family name in the Malay world. To know some of the specific reasons for this significant erasure, we have to look into the biography of Syed Hamid's father, Syed Jaafar Albar (1914–77). The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the party-political vehicle of ethnic Malays in the multi-ethnic ruling coalition, faced turbulent times in the

[10] I am indebted to Daniel Dhakidae, from whom I borrowed this formulation, and to Benedict Anderson for his notes and comments on Dhakidae's paper, 'Solomon's Ring or Muhammad's Religion', unpublished paper, Cornell University, Ithaca, 1985.

[11] Adam Malik's statement is from the preface written by him to the following book: Hamid Algadri, *C. Snouck Hurgronje: Politik Belanda terhadap Islam dan Keturunan Arab* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1984), p. 13. Dhakidae, 'Solomon's Ring', p. 1.

[12] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 204–6.

1960s. Syed Jaafar, as the party's secretary-general, strongly opposed what he believed to be compromises made by UMNO to the party representing ethnic Chinese interests.

Whereas Syed Jaafar stood the ethnic ground on behalf of Malays in the political arena, Syed Nasir Ismail (1921–82) was his counterpart on the cultural front. At one stage, the latter's publicly expressed dismay over the persistence of the Chinese language in the independent nation threatened efforts by the different ethnic parties to work together. The threesome of Syed Jaafar, Syed Nasir, and Mahathir Mohamad, who later became prime minister, were the most chauvinistic faction of UMNO, and came to be viewed as ethnic Malay 'ultras' as a result.[13]

Both Syed Jaafar and Syed Nasir were of Arab descent; however, neither of them appear to have discussed their ancestral origins in public. No one else seems to have raised the matter. They are remembered as archetypical Malays who were among the handful of outspoken defenders of the ethnic group in a formative period in the country's history. After 1970, UMNO veered towards the exclusionary political culture advocated by both men.

By the time Syed Hamid was active in UMNO, he bore the legacy of not only his father's exclusionary politics but also a party whose Malay identity and mission had been well established, often through angry demonstrations of militancy directed at ethnic Others. The creole ancestry of its members, including the roots in Kerala, India, of Mahathir Mohamad himself, was erased. Significant as it was, this ethnicised politics was not cast in stone, as we shall see a little further along when we address the Arab rediscovery. Before we proceed, let us turn from biographical silences in Malaysia to those in Indonesia, this time through a cursory examination of the life of Hamid Algadri.

Hamid Algadri

Before the present period of rediscovery, Hamid Algadri (1912–98) campaigned for Arabs in Indonesia to be granted equal status as citizens. As we have seen, in contrast to the centrality of ethnic Malay identity in Malaysia, Arabness was suppressed in Indonesia in the name of nationalism. The admission of cultural hybridity on the national stage in Indonesia was a politically charged matter when it involved the Chinese or Arabs. For the purposes of illustration, consider the consequences of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's assertion in 1960 that Chineseness was an

[13] Cheah Boon Kheng, *Malaysia: The Making of a Nation* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), pp. 103–5, 107, 113 (n. 5).

integral part of the Indonesian nation.[14] The world-renowned author was detained without trial for nearly a year and all the copies of the book containing the offensive admission were seized and destroyed.

Besides the prevailing nationalism, Arabs and Chinese were subjected to a legal status as citizens that was secondary to the indigenous, owing to laws with origins in the Dutch colonial era. Chineseness was suppressed far more harshly than Arabness through the legal and administrative discrimination put in place in the time of the first president, Sukarno, and greatly intensified under the authoritarian rule of his successor Suharto, from 1967 to 1998. Arabness, nevertheless, remained in the shadows of this overriding assimilationist and nationalist orientation.

A lawyer trained in a Dutch colonial institution in Jakarta, Hamid Algadri felt greatly distressed that Arabs, who, to his mind, were intimately tied to Indonesians, continued to be discriminated against. He believed that the source of the discrimination lay in the misdeeds of the colonial rulers. In 1984, he published a book about the role of Arabs in the formation of modern Indonesia and what he described as the anti-Arab and anti-Islamic intrigues of the Dutch, principally the scholar-bureaucrat Snouck Hurgronje.[15] This work is rare and unusual, as there have been few, if any, books published in Indonesian on Arabs in the Malay world.

A member of the Arab Party of Indonesia, Algadri played a role in the negotiations with the Dutch for his country's independence. Like A. R. Baswedan, the founder of the party, he was critical of those Arabs, usually of the older generation, who did not support the effort to establish a modern organisation to represent the community in the ranks of the growing nationalist movement of the 1930s.[16]

A prominent Indonesian journalist referred to Hamid Algadri as the 'headman of Arabs' as a means of indicating the stature and influence the latter gained as an unofficial representative of his community.[17] It was also a reference to the Arab officer system of the colonial era. He was one of the rare few who asserted his Arab heritage on the national stage in the 1980s. Thus, his efforts preceded the process of rediscovery

[14] Sumit K. Mandal, 'Strangers Who Are Not Foreign: Pramoedya's Disturbing Language on the Chinese in Indonesia', in Pramoedya Ananta Toer, eds., *The Chinese in Indonesia*, translated by Max Lane (Singapore: Select Books, 2008), pp. 35–54.

[15] Algadri, *C. Snouck Hurgronje*.

[16] Huub de Jonge, 'Discord and Solidarity among the Arabs in the Netherlands East Indies, 1900–1942', *Indonesia*, vol. 55 (1993), pp. 86–7, 90; 'Abdul Rahman Baswedan and the Emancipation of the Hadramis in Indonesia', *Asian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 32, no. 3 (2004), pp. 383–9.

[17] Rosihan Anwar, 'In Memoriam: Hamid Algadri Perintis Kemerdekaan', *Kompas*, 26 January 1998, in *Apakabar* Database of the Ohio University Libraries, www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1998/01/26/0051.html.

presently underway. However, he lived long enough to see it begin, as the third edition of his book appeared in 1996 with a foreword written by the then prime minister of Yemen.[18] The suppression of Arabness nevertheless prevails on the whole today. When Ali Alatas (1932–2008) passed away, it came as no surprise that the many obituaries published in Indonesia and abroad did not mention the former foreign minister's Arab ancestry.[19] He was connected, nevertheless, through family ties and friendships, with a network that was Arab, indeed with Hamid Algadri himself. Having examined briefly a few instances of biographical silence in Indonesia and Malaysia, let us now turn to the rediscovery of Arabs.

Rediscovery in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore

Conditions began to change in the early 1990s with the growing rediscovery of Hadrami identity in the Malay world. Developments in Singapore provide a point of departure. A debate was initiated in the island republic in 1992 when several people expressed their opinions in the local press on whether creole Hadramis in Singapore ought to be considered Malay.[20] It comes as no surprise that the debate was followed with interest in Malaysia well into the following year, as the two countries have interconnected colonial histories and a similar social composition.[21] Notably, the question of ethnic identity and authenticity has shaped national debate in Singapore much as it has Malaysia, and has marked both these countries apart from Indonesia. The specific question of Arabness, however, was raised in conjunction with the initial efforts to resume links with Yemen. In 1996, several years after the initiation of the debate, a newspaper in Malaysia published the following report about Hadramis in Singapore, perhaps somewhat overly enthusiastic in its forecast:

[18] Hamid Algadri, *Islam dan keturunan Arab dalam pemberontakan melawan Belanda* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), pp. 9–12. The prime minister was Haider Abubakar al-Attas.

[19] 'Selamat Jalan Alex', *Kompas*, 11 December 2008, http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2008/12/11/10213736/selamat.jalan.alex; S. Fitzpatrick, 'Bridging the Gap', *The Australian*, 12 December 2008. www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24787059-28737,00.html. I am grateful to Clive Kessler for alerting me to the latter.

[20] Syed Farid Alatas, 'Hadhramaut and the Hadhrami Diaspora: Problems in Theoretical History', in U. Freitag and W. G. Clarence-Smith, eds., *Hadrami Traders, Scholars and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s–1960s* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 28–9. The Arab Association of Singapore (Al Wehdah Al Arabiah) explored the question of the community's identity at a conference in 1995 and in the biannual magazine it published from 1996 to 1999: *Al-Mahjar* (a migrant's place of settlement, in Arabic).

[21] J. A. Karim, 'Singapore Arabs: Some Are Malays', *New Straits Times*, 21 October 1993; A. H. Badjenid, 'Nothing Wrong to Be What We Really Are', *New Straits Times*, 29 October 1993; and O. Bagarib, 'Group Has Never Faced Identity Crisis', *New Straits Times*, 11 November 1993.

Arabs – descendants of migrants fleeing drought and famine in Yemen more than 150 years ago – are rediscovering their roots. With the recent establishment of an honorary Yemeni consulate, more than 10,000 Arabs of Yemeni origin living in the island state are expected to make the journey back to the land of their ancestors.[22]

The rediscovery of cultural and historical links was in progress, in tandem with the growing attention paid by the governments in the region to expanding economic ties with Yemen. It was encouraged, at least in part, by the pioneering academic work on Hadramis in the Indian Ocean region published by scholars working out of Europe and Australia.[23] These works were especially important in supplying unprecedented research and scholarly perspectives on the diasporic community. The driving force of the rediscovery, nevertheless, lay within the communities themselves, and the changing conditions of their respective national contexts.

The end of Suharto's rule in 1998 led to unprecedented political and legal reforms with far-reaching consequences in Indonesia. In 2002, the People's Consultative Assembly rejected an attempt to include in the country's constitution an official distinction between indigenous and non-indigenous citizens (*pribumi* and *non-pribumi*). Although the impact of this defence of equal citizenship was felt most by the country's ethnic Chinese, the national stage was now open to a range of explorations and assertions of ethnicity as well as cultural hybridity.

The Asian financial crisis of 1997–8 precipitated the end of authoritarian rule in Indonesia, and provoked an unprecedented challenge to authoritarian rule in Malaysia. In the same year that Suharto stepped down, a political movement emerged against Mahathir Mohamad, then Malaysia's prime minister. In its nascent stages, this movement borrowed from the language of democratisation popularised in Indonesia. Notably, the movement showed signs of resisting, though not abandoning, Malaysia's ethnicised politics.

When in 1999 an ethnicised claim was made in Malaysia against an opposition leader, a counter-argument was published in one of a number of new publications that had surfaced in the unprecedented era of popular

[22] 'Search for Cultural Roots Prods Singapore Arabs to Visit Yemen', *New Straits Times*, 27 March 1996.

[23] There were academic exercises and publications in the countries under study, but these did not make a strong impact, unfortunately. Of the works published outside the region that did have an impact, I include only books that appeared in the initial five years from 1997 to 2002: U. Freitag and W. G. Clarence-Smith, eds., *Hadrami Traders, Scholars and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s–1960s* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Mobini-Kesheh, *The Hadrami Awakening*; Huub de Jonge and Nico Kaptein, eds., *Transcending Borders: Arabs, Politics, Trade and Islam in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002).

political activity.[24] The writer claimed that there was no reason to call the political leader's credentials into question because of her ethnic background – ostensibly Chinese. This was so because all the prime ministers of Malaysia until then had been ethnically mixed, Arab ancestry included. Although this incident is not commensurate to the reforms undertaken in Indonesia, it is an indication of the growing openness to the admission of mixed ethnic heritage on Malaysia's national stage. On this score, it is noteworthy that the effort to discredit the politician in question failed.

In April 2002, the installation of Malaysia's ruler in the rotating kingship practised in the country was followed by an unprecedented acknowledgement of Arab ancestry on the national stage.[25] On this occasion, it was the turn of the ruler of the province of Perlis to ascend the national throne, and his Hadrami background was brought to the fore rather subtly. So far as it is known to me, the mass media in Malaysia studiously omitted any reference to this background, but for one exception. A national daily published the genealogy of the Perlis royal family in which the would-be king's descent from the Prophet Muhammad is clearly indicated.[26] Figure 12 shows the genealogy, with one Syed Ahmad described as the first ancestor to arrive from the Hadhramaut. Besides its publication in the daily, the genealogy was displayed in a special public exhibition held at the national museum in conjunction with the inauguration.[27]

The revelation of the king's Hadrami background was politically significant because it was a public acknowledgement of the ethnically mixed nature of a ruling class that represents itself as authentically Malay. Other instances of such admissions followed. Of these, it is worth noting that Abdullah Badawi's Chinese ancestry was reported by a leading national daily in 2003 soon after he became prime minister, a post that is understood to be open only to ethnic Malays.[28]

By the end of the 2000s, the rediscovery of Arabness had advanced sufficiently for three historic conferences on Hadramis to be held in the Malay world.[29] In 2003, the Indonesian national archives and the Yemeni

[24] Sumit K. Mandal, 'Transethnic Solidarities, Racialisation, and Social Equality', in E. Terence Gomez, ed., *The State of Malaysia: Ethnicity, Equity and Reform* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), pp. 70–1.

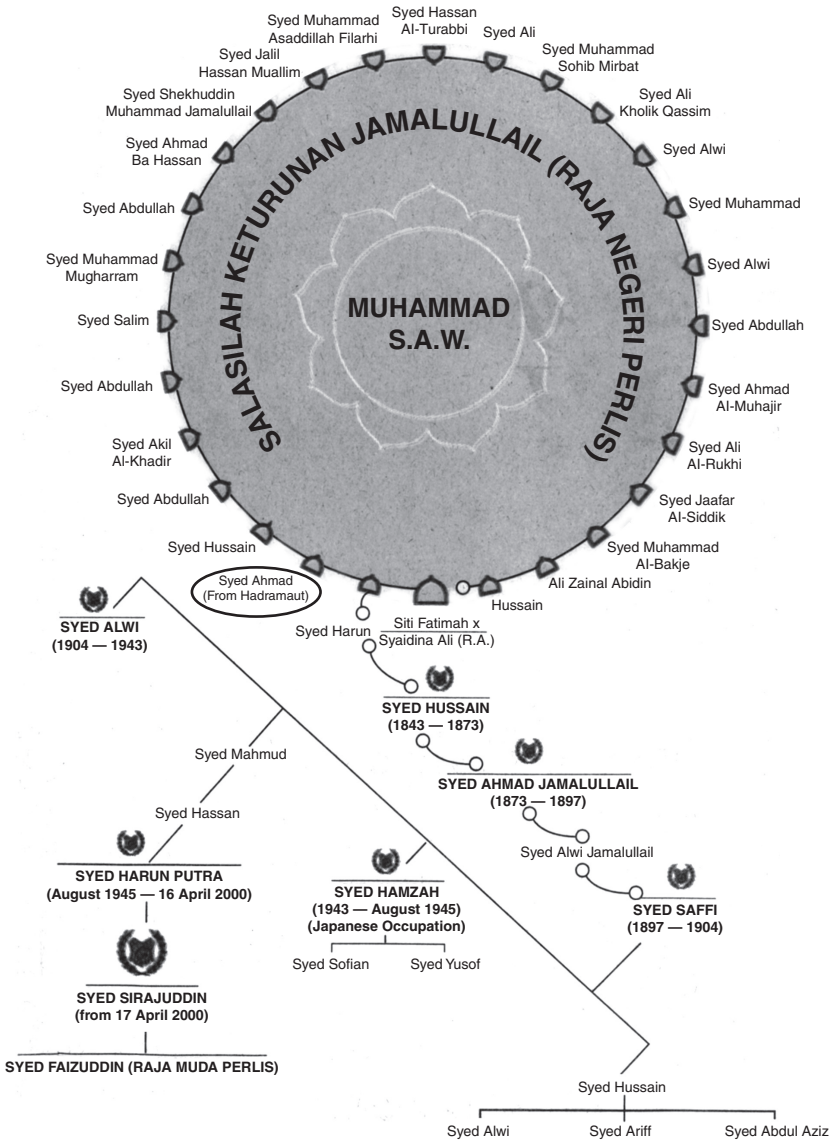
[25] The constitutional monarch of Malaysia is selected by rotation every five years from a pool of nine provinces in the country that are ruled by sultans.

[26] The genealogy appeared in a special supplement of the *New Straits Times*, 25 April 2002, p. 13.

[27] 'Peluang rakyat ketahui salasilah diraja', *Berita Harian*, 29 April 2002, p. 14.

[28] Choong Kwee Kim, 'PM Meets Relatives from China', *The Star*, 22 December 2003, http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2003/12/22/nation/6967642&sec=nation.

[29] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, pp. 307–8. See also the author's brief discussion of the conferences in light of what he views as the decline of the world of the Hadrami diaspora following the formation of independent nation-states.



LINE OF DESCENT ... Perlis royal family are direct descendents of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.)

Figure 12. Genealogy of the Raja of Perlis, Syed Sirajuddin, showing his relationship to the Prophet Muhammad; Syed Ahmad (name circled) is the ancestor who migrated from the Hadramaut to the Malay world

embassy jointly organised a conference in Jakarta titled 'Arab Cultural Legacy in Indonesia: The Cultural Mix of Indonesia-Hadramaut (Yemen)'. It was officiated by the then minister of religion, Said Agil Husin Al Munawar. Whereas the appearance of a minister of Arab descent was not particularly eventful in Indonesia, this was not the case in Malaysia, where a second conference was held. In 2005, Syed Hamid Albar opened the conference titled 'Yemeni-Hadramis in Southeast Asia: Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?', which was jointly organised by the International Islamic University of Malaysia and the Yemeni embassy. The conference assembled what must have been one of the largest gatherings until then of scholars of Hadramis from both the global North and South.[30] Notably, many people of Hadrami descent were present, a substantial number of whom from the Malay world, and quite a few from the Hadramaut. Among them were scholars (including Islamic scholars), students, community leaders, professionals, and a special contingent of visual artists. Singapore came next, when a conference and exhibition was held at the National Library in March 2010, though fairly extensive information about the history of Arabs was already available online months in advance. A bibliography of studies on Arabs was also prepared in conjunction. The conference included a small number of academics working in the area with the aim of publishing a book. Significantly, it was opened by a representative of the Quaiti Sultanate of the Hadramaut. The exhibition was up for more than half a year and probably constituted the first effort at the national level to showcase Hadrami history in the region for an extended period. With these events, conferences on Hadramis had been held in all three neighbouring capitals.

Syed Hamid delivered the opening speech dressed in what has come to be regarded in Malaysia as official Malay attire, complete with the black, rimless head-covering found throughout the Malay world: the *songkok* (or *peci* in Indonesia). When he milled about the crowded lobby outside the plenary hall, he stood out sharply against the white robes and turbans of some of the participants from the Hadramaut, and the suits of the officials, including the Yemeni ambassador. Figure 13 shows the contrast in dress between Syed Hamid and Habib Ali al-Jifri, a reputable Islamic scholar of Hadrami origins.

[30] My description of the conference is based on my own observations. I was invited to act as a discussant and moderator by the historian Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk of the International Islamic University of Malaysia. He and Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim, a colleague at the university, edited a volume of selected essays from the conference, namely *The Hadhrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia: Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

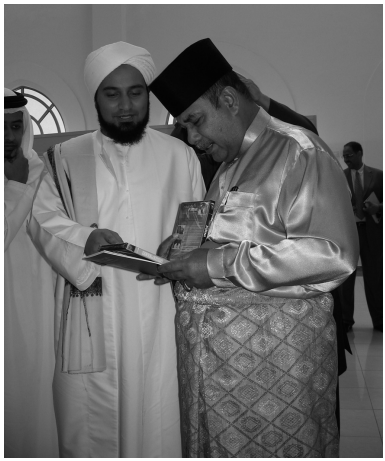


Figure 13. Syed Hamid Albar, on the right, with Habib Ali al-Jifri, a renowned Islamic scholar of Hadrami origins, at the conference on Hadramis in Southeast Asia held in Malaysia in 2005

In his speech, Syed Hamid observed that, as a person of 'Hadrami descent', he was interested in the phenomenon of Hadrami migration and assimilation. He proceeded to offer an understanding of 'diaspora' and 'assimilation' that appear to reflect his efforts to reconcile his membership in UMNO, and its essentialist understanding of Malay ethnicity, with the transcultural Hadrami world he acknowledged to be his own. He spoke, for instance, about communities that maintained their identity 'in spite of being integrated in their host societies'. To his mind the term 'diaspora', as it is understood today, serves as a means to elucidate a community's place within the culturally diverse Malay world, and not as a measure of separateness. Hadramis in Malaysia and Indonesia, he thought, were a unique case of 'community integration', as they embraced diversity even as they maintained some of their roots.

Given the ethnocentrism for which his father is remembered, Syed Hamid's performance at the conference was a radical rediscovery, and represented a wider process underway in the Malay world as a whole. Gathered for the first time, on a national and international stage at once, were Hadramis who had thus far acknowledged their ancestry in networks of family, business, and co-workers only. Their Arabness was not widely known. Gathered also were people who hardly, if ever, acknowledged their Hadrami descent, including at least a few of the eleven 'Malaysian/Hadrami artists' whose works were both exhibited and reproduced in a

catalogue available to participants. Altogether, the conference as a whole signified a layered and historic process of rediscovery.

Besides politicians and large-scale events such as the 2005 conference, a few individuals have prominently acknowledged Arab ancestry, and claimed a place for their mixed biographies on the national stage. Syed Imran Alsagoff (born 1949), a former journalist and press secretary to a minister in Malaysia, today writes a blog that has attracted considerable attention. He proudly declared himself to be of Arab descent during one of the periodic outbursts of highly charged ethnicised assertions of Malay authenticity, when 'non-indigenous' Malaysians were labelled '*pendatang*'. The Malay word simply means 'new arrival', but it has become a slur applied to ethnic Chinese and Indians. I translate Syed Imran's observations from the Malay into English as follows:

> For example, I myself am of *pendatang* descent … My grandparents on my father's side migrated from Mecca to Brunei, then came here, while those on my mother's side came from the Hadramaut, Yemen. We are *pendatang* and 'guests' like practically all the people of this country, especially in Penang.[31]

Just as it was argued in the case that I raised earlier of the politician slighted for her ethnicity, Syed Imran cites the cultural hybridity of the prime ministers of Malaysia to bolster his argument.

In Indonesia, the poet Zeffry Alkatiri (born 1960) has emerged as a champion, both in the public arena and in verse, of cultural hybridity and inclusionary politics in national life. He is unabashed about his mixed ancestry, namely Hadrami, Pakistani, and Betawi (creole Jakartans), and expresses this heritage in verse in the two anthologies he published in 2001 and 2004, respectively.[32] He explored his Arab ancestry in the first anthology in a poem called 'Habib', the expression used to refer to a sayyid in more intimate terms. This poem takes us through the life of a migrant in a series of memorable and touching images, from the moment he leaves behind the desert landscape at the age of twenty-one, how he becomes seasick on his voyage to the Malay world, his life as an Islamic teacher and itinerant trader, and finally his death. In the final image, set in his home in Jakarta, his prayer beads slip away as his hand goes limp 'and touches / the sandless ground'.[33] Zeffry Alkatiri delved further into

[31] Syed Imran Alsagoff, 'Antara pendatang dan penumpang', 8 September 2008, http://kudaranggi.blogspot.com/2008/09/antara-pendatang-dan-penumpang.html. The emphases are mine.

[32] Zeffry J. Alkatiri, *Dari Batavia sampai Jakarta, 1619–1999: Peristiwa sejarah dan kebudayaan Betawi-Jakarta dalam sajak* (Magelang: IndonesiaTera, 2001); *Catatan seorang pejalan dari Hadrami* (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2004).

[33] Alkatiri, *Dari Batavia*, p. 51. This is my own interpretation of the poem.

his Arab ancestry in his second anthology, as is obvious from the title, translated by me from the Indonesian: *Notes of a Hadrami Traveller*.

Ben Sohib (born 1967) is making a name for himself as an Indonesian novelist, with the publication in 2006 and 2008 respectively of two books about the life of a young Arab-Indonesian named Rosid.[34] In the first book, Rosid questions his father's insistence that the young man wear the peci, and thereby challenges a symbol of Islamic piety that in this instance is also a meaningful representation of his family's Arab origins. In the second book, the young man shocks his father once again by proposing marriage with a woman of a different faith. Much of the dialogue of both books is captured in the Betawi dialect of Indonesian – native to the family portrayed – punctuated by Arabic words. Through a series of heated debates between son and father that at times descend into hilarious quarrels, Ben Sohib brings to life the struggles of a young man in the face of what seem to him the outdated customs of his Arab forefathers. Having obtained a sense of the process of rediscovery underway, let us now consider the identification of Arabs in the Malay world with extremism.

Extremists in the Land of Moderates

Following the aeroplane attacks on landmarks in New York and Washington, DC, in 2001, influential journalists found Arabs in the Malay world and Latin America, and cast them as potential co-conspirators in a worldwide chain of political extremism.[35] The language used by the Dutch colonialists to describe Arabs in the Malay world in the nineteenth century was rediscovered over a hundred years later.

In *Orientalism*, Said argues that relationships of power shape knowledge production.[36] He shows that an extensive corpus of knowledge on Islam and Arabs was engendered in the service of European imperial expansion. His work rests on the notion that Arab and Islamic civilisation posed a menacing threat at Europe's very borders. Indeed, the Ottoman Empire posed the threat of military conquest until the end of the seventeenth century. What was the response of Europeans, however, when they encountered Arabs not on the doorstep of Europe, but in the Malay world?

As we have seen in Chapter 4, Arabs and Islam came under the increasing scrutiny of European scholars with British and Dutch imperial

[34] Ben Sohib, *The Da Peci Code* (Jakarta: Ufuk Press, 2006); *Rosid dan Delia* (Jakarta: Ufuk Press, 2008).
[35] Karam, 'Crossing the Americas', pp. 251–66.
[36] Said, *Orientalism*.

expansion in the region. Borrowing selectively from the Orientalist tradition, Arabs and 'their' religion were considered alien influences upon the inhabitants of the archipelago. Two examples will suffice for a brief overview, namely the writings of the British merchant scholars Marsden and Raffles. Both men established the foreignness of Arabs by attributing to them an Islamic rigour, to put it mildly, that was associated with their land of origins, and was seen as antithetical to the peoples of the Malay world. Others would refine and build on this perspective in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Over time, Europeans came to view Arabs as the conduit, of sorts, through which an unwelcome Islam flowed from the Middle East to the Malay world.

When the Dutch grew anxious about the pan-Islamist politics on the rise in the late nineteenth century, they naturally blamed Arabs in their colony for the new challenge to their rule. Concerned about the mounting rebellions that seemed to possess strong Islamic undertones, the Dutch believed that Arabs had stirred the broader Muslim population into militancy. The idea prevailed that associated an Islamic threat with the centre, and quiescence with the periphery, only to reinforce the view that the troublemaker was an 'outsider'. The figure of the Arab thus became a powerful and alluring metaphor for intrusive disruptions.

Representing Extremism

After the attacks on the United States in 2001, Arabs in the Malay world attracted renewed attention, as did various Muslims across the globe who were identified as possible threats to security. The bombings in Bali in 2002, however, escalated matters. The idea of Indonesia as a site of moderate Islam had been shaken, and there were reasons to doubt the explanatory value of the dichotomy between an Islamic centre and periphery. If nothing else, it would appear to have been harder to attribute disruptions to an 'outsider' over half a century after national independence. Nevertheless, assertions of the destructive influence of Arab-Indonesians on their Muslim compatriots have grown since 2002, often driven by influential news media based in the United States. Arabs have been increasingly represented as the face of political extremism in the region.

An example of this representation is found in a story in *The Washington Post* in 2003, of which I need only share the telling title: 'Indonesia's Radical Arabs Raise Suspicions of Moderate Countrymen'.[37] More florid

[37] A. Sipress, 'Indonesia's Radical Arabs Raise Suspicions of Moderate Countrymen', *The Washington Post*, 9 January 2003, www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&contentId=A30378-2003Jan8&notFound=true.

evidence is provided by Michael Vatikiotis, the writer and journalist; he distinguishes between an Arab-influenced and a homegrown Islam:

> 'Allahu Akbar!' The ululating tones of Arabic are heard across Muslim Asia in the daily call to prayer, underscoring the role of Arab culture in Islam. Yet these roots are also sources of dogma and behaviour that bolster conservative thinking and help to breed radicals.[38]

Vatikiotis voices concern about a more generalised negative influence on local practice. Others have followed suit.[39] Beginning with the demonisation of Arab persons, the spectre now looms large as a generalised Arab Islam. Fareed Zakaria, editor of *Newsweek International*, offers a final example of this spectre:

> [The] fundamentalism [exported by the Saudi Arabian regime] has infected not just other Arab societies but countries outside … often [carrying] with it a distinctly Arab political program … The Arab influence extends even into the realm of architecture. In its buildings the Islamic world has always mixed Arabic influences with local ones – Hindu, Javan, Russian. But local cultures are now being ignored in places such as Indonesia and Malaysia because they are seen as insufficiently Islamic (meaning Arab).[40]

Contemporary observers who attribute extremism to Arab Islam, and moderation to Islam in the Malay world, perpetuate a distinction with a long history.[41] It is easy but not particularly productive to list the countless observations. I have cited only a few examples to indicate how much the dichotomy between moderate and extreme rests on the language of good and evil. As Mahmood Mamdani has shown, such value-laden terms are characteristic of discussions about Islam that advance culturalist arguments devoid of historical grounding.[42] This kind of 'Culture Talk', as he calls it, strongly influenced the foreign policy of the United States after 2001.

The distinction between moderate and extreme Islam resonates most with those who have the power to define from beyond the region, be they European colonial powers of the past or the United States government

[38] M. Vatikiotis, 'Recovering Islam's Roots', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 December 2003, www.feer.com/articles/2003/0312_11/p057current.html.

[39] B. Stephens, 'The Arab Invasion: Indonesia's Radicalized Muslims Aren't Homegrown', *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 April 2007, www.opinionjournal.com/columnists/bstephens/?id=110009951; H. Beech, 'A Call to Prayer', *Time Magazine*, 22 February 2007, www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1592576,00.html.

[40] F. Zakaria, *Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003), p. 145.

[41] Paul Wolfowitz, the arch-conservative figure who served under the former president of the United States George W. Bush, exemplifies an uncompromising faith in the moderating power of Indonesian Islam. See A. Bubalo and G. Fealy, 'Why the West Should Come to the Islamist Party', *The Australian*, 29 March 2005.

[42] Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, pp. 15–16, 22–24.

in the twenty-first century. Indeed, the terms in question have a long history because of their association with the first modern state in the Malay world, namely the colonial state. The clarity and usefulness to power of these terms make it possible, if not necessary, for people to use them.[43] Unsurprisingly, the dichotomy between moderate and extreme Islam informs the politics of the United States' strategic allies among nation-states with substantial Muslim populations.[44] The political leadership of Indonesia and Malaysia respectively, for instance, represents each of those countries as models of moderate Islam.

Muslim societies have evolved from multiple centres. As with other cultural or ideological flows in the histories of these societies, then, neither extremist nor moderate politics can be fixed in time and place. The bombs that were set off in Bali are an indication that violence in the name of an alternative Islamic political order is perfectly capable of finding expression on Indonesian soil.[45] The false extremist–moderate dichotomy allows for violent statements of moral and political disapproval, such as representing and understanding the Bali bombings as irrational acts by angry extremists who, as the label suggests, push Islamic concepts to the hilt. In this regard, Islamic extremism is a fatal misnomer for the kinds of complex, diverse, and sometimes contradictory processes at work, such as Islamisation, Islamic renewal, and political radicalisation.

Reconnection and Partition

The contrary processes of reconnection and partition have unfolded concurrently for nearly a decade. As much as the histories of Arabs in the Malay world have been marked by enormous transregional mobility, so has the representation of Arabs as extremist rested on the partitioning

[43] The clarity obviously came in handy when the White House appealed to citizens of the United States from 2002 to 2003 to support a proposed war with Iraq. In addition, perhaps such clarity helps to hide the real paralysis felt by all of us when, for all the millions spent on sophisticated defensive weapons and mechanisms, these are unable to prevent violent attacks carefully orchestrated by committed groups.

[44] Farish A. Noor, the Malaysian political scientist and historian, resists the label 'moderate' Muslim and explores the present-day political implications of the term in essays with telling titles: 'Why I Ain't No "Moderate" Muslim', *Malaysiakini*, 3 August 2004, www.malaysiakini.com/columns/28866; 'Revisiting the Spin of Malaysia and Indonesia as "Moderate" Muslim States', *Malaysian Insider*, 3 November 2009, www3.themalaysianinsider.com/lite/articles.php?id=42169.

[45] Violence in the name of Islam, moreover, has taken place on other occasions in Indonesia's modern history. To cite but one example, the army as well as militias were responsible for the killing of between half a million and 1.5 million people said to be communists from 1965 to 1966, during which time General Suharto assumed effective control of the country. Militias acting in the name of Islam were among those that carried out violent acts.

of the world. As we have seen, such partitioning encourages ethnicised views of the Arab diaspora, with potentially pernicious consequences. The security apparatus of the United States trained its lenses on the Malay world in keeping with the belligerent policies of President George W. Bush's 'war on terror' from 2001 to 2008. Arabs in the region have been identified as potential threats to security as a consequence. Correspondingly, influential journalists and writers have published ethnicised reports drawing unwelcome attention to people of Arab ancestry. A culturalist argument made by the Dutch colonial state in the nineteenth century has thereby been rejuvenated under the aegis of a new global power.

At the same time, the process of diasporic reconnection is bringing together regions through the resumption of ties that had long been severed. As the barriers are overcome on the transoceanic scale, the rediscovery of Arabness is well underway in the national public spheres of Indonesia and Malaysia. Public acknowledgement of the longstanding presence of Arabs in the region is becoming more common.[46] It is not that Arabs were unknown prior to this. Rather, they were rendered invisible, and mostly chose to remain so, on the national stage. Unsurprisingly, even the terms 'Hadrami' and 'Hadramaut' were unknown or forgotten ethnographic details to the general public (as well as many scholars), until the rediscovery. The estrangement and uncertain position of Arabs in the colonial era is at least one significant reason for this elusive history. Nationalism and post-independence pressures on Arabs to integrate are the other reasons.

Notably, Arabs in the Malay world have not been the target of discrimination or attacks as a result of the ethnicised reporting in influential news media abroad. Such reporting has rarely been echoed in the Indonesian media. I know of only one instance of an ethnicised news story in the latter.[47] On the whole, the Indonesian media did not respond to the Arab-baiting. The Malaysian media, usually more closely monitored by the state, and wary of naming ethnicity, has been equally resistant to such

[46] Alwi Shihab, a veteran Arab-Indonesian journalist, regularly publishes short histories in the newspaper *Republika*, and posts them on his website Djakarta Tempo Doeloe (Jakarta in Old Times [my translation]), http://alwishahab.wordpress.com/; Indra Harsaputra, 'People of Yemeni Origin Play Full Role in Indonesia's Development', *The Jakarta Post*, 29 July 2005; Rina De Silva and Audrey Dermawan, 'Search for Roots Continues Relentlessly 500 Years On', *New Straits Times*, 9 October 2007.

[47] 'Kelompok Islam Keras Bukan Teroris', *Rakyat Merdeka*, 13 October 2002. The closing lines of the report include: 'One of the reasons that the four Islamic groups in question have adopted a hardline is because their leaders are indeed [Indonesian] citizens of Arab descent.' The original sentence in Indonesian is as follows: '*Salah satu alasan kenapa keempat kelompok Islam tersebut bersikap keras adalah karena pemimpinnya memang berasal dari warga negara keturunan Arab.*'

tactics. As in the case of Paolo Pinto's discussion of Brazil in the same period, it would appear that ethnicised views of Arabs did not proliferate in the Malay world.[48]

To what extent can we credit the absence of ethnicisation to the long-standing fluidity and inclusive character of cultural identity in the Malay world? While it appears that Arabs have not been marginalised as an ethnic group, repressive measures and even violence have been directed at others. Suharto's New Order, for instance, marshalled not only the instruments of power, but also history, against Chinese Indonesians. However, was anti-Chinese racism deeply embedded in Indonesian society? The relative ease and speed with which Chineseness has been 'restored' in Indonesian public life is one indication that the racism was not deeply embedded, and was largely driven by state policy. On the whole, there appears to be some reason to believe that multiculturalist nationalism could prevail in the country.[49]

The anti-Chinese politics of the Suharto years is a salient reminder, nevertheless, of the capacity of the state to ethnicise, for instance by blaming Arabs for the challenges posed by politically radical groups of Muslims. There is a prospect of such anti-Arab politics developing when influential intellectuals and social activists in both Indonesia and Malaysia frequently equate the growth in Islamic orthopraxy, and the corresponding changes in dress and grooming, with Arabisation. Indeed, Slama has demonstrated such ethnicisation in the promotion of *Islam Pribumi* (Indigenous Islam) by young intellectuals associated with the Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's biggest Islamic organisation.[50] Projects such as this have not escaped the attention of journalists such as Vatikiotis. He sees it as 'one way the moderates are trying to blunt the advance of conservatism and radicalism … by stressing the non-Arab roots of Asia's brand of Islam'.[51] Like the views of Vatikiotis, the worldview of the Nahdlatul Ulama intellectuals rests on the dichotomy between a moderate periphery and a radical centre. Hence, they ethnicise the rise in radical Islamic politics by identifying it as Arabisation. Additionally, Chaider Bamualim shows how prominent Islamic leaders

[48] Paolo Pinto, 'Arab Ethnicity and Diaspora Islam: A Comparative Approach to Processes of Identity Formation and Religious Codification in the Muslim Communities of Brazil, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2011), pp. 312–30.

[49] See Barker, 'Beyond Bandung'.

[50] Martin Slama, 'Islam Pribumi: Der Islam der Einheimischen, seine "Arabisierung" und arabische Diasporagemeinschaften in Indonesien', *ASEAS – Österreichische Zeitschrift für Südostasienwissenschaften/Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2008), pp. 7–8.

[51] Vatikiotis, 'Recovering'.

in Indonesia have frequently drawn attention, in a derogatory manner, to the Arab descent of key proponents of radical politics.[52]

Rather than romanticise the Malay world as an exemplary and culturally fluid haven, I view it as a valuable counterpoint to the categories of race and nation of nineteenth-century origins. The rediscovery of Arabs as it is being driven by Syed Imran Alsagoff in Malaysia, as well as Zeffry Alkatiri and Ben Sohib in Indonesia, brings to the fore creole ancestries and histories in a manner that creatively resists ethnicised readings and unfounded dichotomies about Arabs or Muslims. Their work helps us to see beyond present-day nation-states and imagine the kinds of movements and interconnections that have shaped the Malay world historically. The connection of Arabs to this region, and their mobility, has impressed upon it a maze of remarkable, significant, and perhaps enduring transcultural trajectories. With this past, the possibilities are many for the rediscovery presently underway. As acknowledged already, there is the prospect that ethnicised understandings of political radicalism will prevail, and Arabs will be subjected to an exclusionary politics. More than half a century has passed since the creation of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, in which time each has made its own attempts to demarcate and control cultural identities within its national boundaries. The nascent diasporic reconnection, on the other hand, has opened up the possibility of acknowledging the transregional histories that have made Malay-world identities. In this regard, the rediscovery of Arabs has added a valuable measure of doubt, if not inclusiveness, to understandings of identity in all three nation-states.

[52] Chaider S. Bamualim, 'Islamic Militancy and Resentment against Hadhramis in Post-Suharto Indonesia: A Case Study of Habib Rizieq Syihab and His Islamic Defenders Front', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2011), pp. 267–81.

Glossary

ashrāf	descendants of the Prophet Muhammad
bangsa	race and nation
bumiputra	indigenous
di atas angin	above the winds (literally); refers to India, Persia, and the Arab lands
Indo	people of native and Dutch descent
Inlander	Native
Jawi	modified Arabic alphabet used to write Malay
Jawi Peranakan	creole Indian Muslims
kafā'a	equality between marriage partners
kemajuan	progress
keramat	Muslim gravesite shrine
maarschalk	marshal
Malayu	Malay (as it appears in ancient texts)
Melayu	Malay
non-pribumi	non-indigenous (official citizenship category in Indonesia before 2002)
pangeran	prince
peci	black, rimless head covering worn by men (as it is known in Indonesia)
pendatang	new arrival (used in Malaysia as a slur on descendants of migrants)
peranakan	creole; locally born
pergerakan	movement
pesantren	traditional Islamic school
pribumi	indigenous (official citizenship category in Indonesia before 2002)
Quraysh	the tribe from which Prophet Muhammad is descended
sayyid	honorific denoting a male descendant of the Prophet Muhammad

sharī'a	Islamic law
sharīf	honorific denoting a male descendant of the Prophet Muhammad
sharīfa	honorific denoting a female descendant of the Prophet Muhammad
sharīfah	rendition of *sharīfa* in Malay
shaykh	title of a leader of a tribe
sidi	derived from 'sayyid'
songkok	black, rimless head covering worn by men (as it is known in Malaysia)
syed	variation on 'sayyid' (used in Malaysia and Singapore)
tengku (or engku)	prince
totok	foreign-born
tuan	Lord
Vreemde Oosterlingen	Foreign Oriental; used to refer to Arabs, Chinese, and Indians under Dutch colonial rule
waqf	religious endowment

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Much of the research for this book is drawn from the collections of the former Ministry of the Colonies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs located in the National Archives (NA) of the Netherlands in The Hague. All references to the categories of colonial reports, Mr. (Mailrapport) and Vb. (Verbaal), pertain to sources from the former collection. For instance, a 904-page report by Fokko Fokkens is titled 'Onderzoek naar den Economischen Toestand der Vreemde Oosterlingen op Java en Madoera en voorstellen tot verbetering' and identified as Mr. 887/1894, which is a missive filed in Vb. 17 Apr. 1896, no. 27. References to documents from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are organised by the title and date of the document, the subject, and the dossier in which it is located. All my references from this collection fall under the subject Pan-Islamitische Woelingen (Pan-Islamic Agitation).

A significant number of other documents used in this book are found in the collections of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV – Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies) and entrusted to the Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden (Leiden University Library). I consulted the collections of J. D. van Herwerden (1806–79) and the following officials of the Bureau of Native and Arab Affairs in Batavia: G. A. J. Hazeu, R. A. Kern, and E. Gobée. Citations from here are organised by their title and date followed by the name of the collection and number of the document.

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