HADHRAMAUT AND THE HADHRAMI DIASPORA: PROBLEMS IN THEORETICAL HISTORY

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If we understand history as a field constituted by a type of research and inquiry that concerns itself with human action in the past and is based on the interpretation of evidence, regardless of whether positivist or interpretive methods are used, then it can be said that historical works on Hadhramaut and its diaspora have been written. These works can be divided in broad terms into the two general categories of Arab and Western historiography. Nevertheless, in both cases, owing to certain theoretical problems that have beset these works, little progress has been made in the advancement of Hadhrami studies, particularly where the diaspora is concerned. Such theoretical problems include the lack of conceptualisation of Hadhrami emigration in terms of a “diaspora”, and atheoretical approaches to the study of the history of Hadhrami political economy and society. The purpose of this chapter is to outline these theoretical problems and to suggest fresh approaches to the study of the history of Hadhramaut and its diaspora that are more theoretically self-conscious.

A Critique of Existing Approaches

The study of Hadhrami history in terms of the nature, functions and impact of emigration with respect to both the home and host countries cannot be separated from the notion of Hadhrami emigration as a diaspora. But it is partly because Hadhrami emigration has not generally been seen as a diaspora that it has received relatively little attention as an object of study, especially as far as history and the social sciences are concerned. While there are a small number of works that recognise the diaspora dimensions of Hadhrami emigration,¹ there have been no conceptual attempts to locate the Hadhrami diaspora in the historical

text of Indian Ocean trade or in the theoretical context of various historical and comparative perspectives.

Part of the reason for the neglect of the conceptualisation of the Hadhrami diaspora is due to the fact that the term “diaspora” was associated with Jews exiled from the homeland and retained this narrow meaning for a long time. Secondly, the phenomenon of Hadhrami emigration, important as it may be from an academic and cultural point of view, is of little contemporary political and economic significance, in comparison to, say, the Jewish, Chinese or Palestinian diasporas. Finally, for a variety of reasons, the home country of the Hadhrami diaspora, Yemen, has never provided financial or institutional support for the promotion of Hadhrami studies. But there are other problems of a theoretical nature that beset both Hadhrami and Western historiography of Hadhramaut.

While Arab historiographical genres such as hagiographies (mānāqīb), genealogies (ansāb) travel literature (riḥlāt) and chronicles (tawārikh) often provide precise and documented reports and facts, Hadhrami historiography has been theoretically innocent. That is, it has generally been unconcerned with issues of historical causality, periodisation, motive forces in history, historical definition, the problem of continuity and change, and comparative analysis.

In contrast, Western historiography on Hadhramaut and its diaspora is generally informed by the myth of “passive peoples and continents, previously regarded as objects of a history acted out by major external protagonists” and devoid of its own internal dynamics. In spite of the laudable efforts of R. B. Serjeant in describing and cataloguing Hadhrami historical sources, there have been few theoretically informed works on Hadhramaut based on creative readings of these materials.

Theoretical History and its Provinces

Some initial remarks on the field of theoretical history and its boundaries are in order here. The term “theoretical history” was introduced by the Dutch historian Jan Romein. It is concerned with providing a logical nexus between the seemingly unrelated and isolated facts of history. Theoretical history is to be distinguished from other fields involved with

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2 Talib 1980, p. 36.
3 Serjeant 1950a and b; 1962b; 1981.
4 Romein 1948.
the study of the past, such as the philosophy of history, historical technique and methods, and historiography, in that it aims at "bridging the gap that divides the cautiously objective technique employed to ascertain the isolated facts of history, and the arbitrarily subjective method by which these facts are assembled into a picture of the past". Historiography refers to the reconstruction of the past based on data derived from historical technique and method, but restricts its concerns to subjects which have a temporal sequence and geographic unity, unlike theoretical history which is more concerned with conceptual unities. The selection and analysis of historical evidence in theoretical history are carried out in the light of theories developed in the social sciences. Its provinces are various and comprise problems relating to the objectivity of historical science and historical causality, the issues of continuity and change, the idea of integral history, the question of the pattern and rhythm of history, the periodisation of history, motive forces in history, and integrative history.5

Integrative history pertains to parallels and interconnections in world history. As discussed by Fletcher, this is the search for interrelated historical phenomena. This refers to "historical phenomena in which there is contact linking two or more societies, as, for example, the spread of an idea, institution, or religion, or the carrying on of a significant amount of trade between societies". Among the historical interconnections described by Fletcher are the growth of regional cities and towns, and the rise of the urban commercial classes. The study of the growth of regional cities and towns across different societies and civilisations may lead to the discovery of historical parallels. Once parallels are discovered it can then be determined if they are causally interrelated.6 The attention to historical parallels and interconnections can in turn provide explanations for events in particular regions or societies that were wrongly thought to be unique and confined to a certain area.

The coming of Islam to East Africa, South India and the Malay-Indonesian world is such an event. Various theories linked the coming of Islam only superficially with world economic history, mainly in terms of world trade in spices and gold. However, Islamisation in this region, especially the growth of Muslim coastal cities, had its historical parallels with the rest of the Muslim world. These parallels were causally interre-

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5 Romein 1948, pp. 54, 58-61; Fletcher 1985.
6 Fletcher 1985, pp. 37-8, 47-51.
lated and were bound up with the role of the Hadhramis in the Indian Ocean trade, a theme that we shall return to later.

The second issue in theoretical history is that of continuity and change in history. It is the problem of continuity and change that confronts us when discussing the manner in which a certain period “turns over” into another. The various theories of the Islamisation of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, for example, do not evince any consciousness with regard to this problem. The discussion of continuity and change, however, is vital to the study of historical change as the adoption of the new religion resulting from the establishment of the Hadhrami diaspora brings with it both factors of continuity and change. Change and continuity are not absolutes, but relative and opposites. Continuity cannot exist without change and the reverse holds true as well. This being the case, what we regard as a new period depends on what our criteria for a period are and, therefore, the type of change indicated by these criteria.

This brings us to the third issue, the problem of periodisation and the motive forces in history. As mentioned above, the type of change focused on is indicated by the criteria used in determining the onset of a new period. This in turn is related to the recognition of the motive forces in history. Those who believe in great personalities as the agents of history will divide history accordingly. Different dates in the periodisation of history will be selected if the motive forces are considered to be the forces of production or the level of technology. If these were to be the criteria adopted in the periodisation of history, then the focus on change and continuity would be directed to the mode of production.

The final issue pertains to the notion of integral history as discussed by Romein. His concern was to broaden the traditionally limited scope of historical scholarship to include “psychology, philosophy, sociology, the arts, political science, economics, religion, the ways in which life, societies, and human beings are viewed, the knowledge of all the sciences and literatures, and not least, the connections and interrelationships among groups, families, and generations”. The field of history is nourished by these various other fields. While it seems obvious to us now that historical scholarship cannot be treated in isolation, this was not the case even sixty years ago when, for example, sociological dis-
course was considered by historians to be absurd or foolish talk.\footnote{Romein 1953, pp. 74, 77.} I trust that historians and other scholars of the Hadhrami diaspora do not have such contempt for sociology or other fields in the social sciences. Nevertheless, their works on, say, the spread of Islam neglect various material aspects of Islamic expansion that are the subject matter of the social sciences, such as commercial law, the nature of the state, modes of production, and so on.

The four issues in theoretical history outlined above will constitute the guiding threads of the following discussion. This is intended only as a summary statement on the nature and consequences of Hadhrami emigration as I see it, and is meant to offer some avenues for research.

\textit{Islam and the Trade Diaspora: The Need for Integrative History}

For more than fifty years various theories have been presented attempting to delineate the causes and modes of conversion to Islam as well as the consequences of the coming of Islam to the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. Many authors stressed the fact that Islam was brought to the region by traders from Arabia, Persia, India and China. Although it was clearly through trade that Islam was initially introduced into the archipelago, it is extremely doubtful that the large-scale conversions to Islam can be explained simply in terms of these early trading contacts. Theories that suggest other modes of conversion to Islam need to be considered. These theories explain large-scale conversion in terms of economic and political motives, rivalry between the Muslims and Portuguese, inter-marriage, and Sufi proselytisation.\footnote{Alatas 1962; Al-Attas 1969; Fatimbi 1963; Alatas 1985.} 

What is at issue here is the identification of additional factors which explain why proselytisation was intensified in the period after the thirteenth century, granted that the various means of dissemination of Islam discussed by the various theories of Islamisation were operative. For example, according to Johns the conquest of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 A.D. unleashed a wave of Sufi missionary activity in the Malay-Indonesian world.\footnote{Johns 1961b, p. 14.} But this begs the question of what brought the Sufis to this region. Sufis are not in the habit of fitting out ships and sailing to far-off places in large numbers for the purpose of spreading Islam. Gen-
erally, they would follow trade routes. Therefore, the large-scale missionary activities of the Sufis would have to be explained in terms of the greater scale of Muslim trade to the Malay-Indonesian world. The same can be said of the other means of dissemination discussed in theories of Islamisation. To my mind these various means were operative, but the greater intensity and large-scale dissemination by these means must ultimately be explained in terms of the intensification of Muslim trade from the West in the region.

This can be conceptualised in terms of the notion of the “trade diaspora”, a cross-cultural phenomenon which is an “interrelated net of commercial communities forming a trade network...”.¹⁴ Merchants who settled in alien towns learned the languages, customs and commercial practices of their hosts and then served as cross-cultural brokers to facilitate cross-cultural trade between the host society and those of the foreign merchants. Over time, these merchants set up a whole network of trade settlements in foreign cities. Such a settlement was that of the various Muslim communities throughout the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago after the thirteenth century such as Aceh, Pasai, Jambi, and Malacca. These were port-cities on the route of the Muslim trade diaspora that originated in the various western Muslim states and India, as well as in the Malay-Indonesian world itself.

According to Curtin, trade diasporas “tend to work themselves out of business”. Cross-cultural trade at first required mediation which in turn reduced cross-cultural differences and therefore the need for cross-cultural brokers.¹⁵ There are several ways in which this need is reduced or eliminated, one of which is the development of a universal commercial culture across the trade network in question. This is precisely what happened in the case of the Muslim trade diaspora, of which Hadhramis were prominent members until the nineteenth century.

Here, it is necessary to emphasise the diaspora dimensions of Hadhrami history and consciousness. It is within the conceptual framework of the trade diaspora that many issues, including the questions of the causes and consequences of Hadhrami emigration, become better understood and more meaningful. For example, the various causes of Hadhrami emigration (the push factors) were of a such a nature as to turn emigration into diaspora proportions. These were the perennial problems of famine, wars, limited arable land, unpredictable rainfall and flash floods,

¹⁴ Curtin 1984, p. 2.
¹⁵ Curtin 1984, p. 3.
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as well as the lure of lucrative international trade and the Hadhramis’
proverbial love of travel. Many of these reasons have been stated by
various authors, but convincing arguments in some cases have yet to be
made. For example, while geographical factors were always present,
why is it that large-scale Hadhrami emigration to the Malay-Indonesian
archipelago took place only in the eighteenth century and after? While
an answer will not be attempted here, it undoubtedly has to do with the
changing nature of the Indian Ocean trade diaspora over a period of cen-
turies.

The impact of Hadhrami emigration on Hadhramaut, on which there
is more information, is also due to the diaspora nature of emigration.
Centuries of emigration brought Hadhramaut into an international trade
network which arguably impoverished it and left it in a state of depen-
dence, the nature and scope of which is open to debate.

First of all, there is the question of remittances. Remittances were
used for daily subsistence which, as a result, must have created some
degree of dependence on this source of income. Remittances also pro-
vided financing for the Kathiri and Qu’ayti sultanates of Hadhramaut.
They provided yet another source of revenue, the traditional ones being
international trade, agriculture and crafts.

An issue related to migration is that of demography. Although emi-
gration had a potential modernising effect due to Hadhrami development
of skills in shipping, commerce and moneylending, the returns to the
productivity of the Hadhrami economy were minimal, as these people
tended to maintain a diaspora rather than return home. In fact, in some
areas the number of emigrants exceeded the number who stayed
behind.

There is the further issue of the role of Hadhrami remittances
in inter-tribal conflicts in Hadhramaut. Traditionally, the ṣāda had been
mediators in such conflicts. In the twentieth century, however, funds
from abroad, especially from Southeast Asia, led to an increase in arms
supply. Also worthy of consideration is the impact of Hadhrami
emigration on the introduction and spread of commercial laws and
techniques in the diaspora. There has been no work done to examine if
this influence originates from Hadhrami Shāfi’ī legal texts.

16 Martin 1974; Talib 1980; Redkin 1995.
17 Lekon chapter.
18 Algadri 1995; Lekon chapter.
The fact that discussions on Hadhrami emigration by and large do not state matters within the conceptual framework of diaspora is partly due to the restricted meaning sometimes applied to the term. For a long time, it referred to the “exile of Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion throughout many lands, signifying as well the oppression and moral degradation implied by that dispersion.” This narrow definition concerned dispersed communities which underwent persecution and genocide, and were committed to returning to their homeland. In this sense, the Hadhramis do not constitute a diaspora community. Consider, however, a broader definition concerned dispersed communities which underwent persecution and genocide, and were committed to returning to their homeland. In this sense, the Hadhramis do not constitute a diaspora community. Consider, however, a broader definition of diaspora, comprising dispersal from an original centre, collective memory or myth of the original homeland, a feeling of marginality and alienation in the host country, and continual relating to the homeland, physically or emotionally.

It is in this latter sense that we can speak of a Hadhrami diaspora, alongside those of the Palestinians, Chinese, Cubans, Iranians, Maghrebis, Greeks and others. All diasporas have their own peculiar characteristics and defining features. The Jewish and Palestinian diasporas, for example, are highly politicised and intertwined with international geopolitics. The Hadhrami diaspora, on the other hand, was for centuries a trade diaspora, consisting of a “complex network of coastal and island commercial centres, of trade routes and entrepots linking these places with the sea.” Nevertheless, this point had been missed by scholars of trade diasporas. As Dale notes, “it is remarkable, therefore, that it has been all but ignored in modern studies of migration, such as Philip Curtin’s stimulating work, ‘Cross-Cultural Trade in World History’.”

**Motive Forces in Hadhrami History and Hadhrami Identity in the Diaspora: A Khaldunian Perspective**

An important concern in theoretical history is that of the driving forces of history. Describing the Asiatic mode of production, Marx spoke of the stagnation of Asiatic societies, such as India, which had “no history at all, at least no known history. What we call its history is but the history of the successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive...
basis of that unresisting and unchanging society".\textsuperscript{25} Since Marx regarded the forces of production as the driving force of history, classless Asiatic societies were seen to be devoid of history altogether. Andreski, in contrast, says that the theory of the Asiatic mode of production (or Oriental Despotism) is contradicted by the fact that "Oriental" societies were characterised by change on a by no means small scale, as indicated by Ibn Khaldun's theory of dynastic succession.\textsuperscript{26}

Fundamental to Ibn Khaldun's theory is the concept of 'asabiyya or group feeling. Only a society with strong 'asabiyya could establish domination over societies with a weaker group feeling. Because of superior 'asabiyya, the Beduins could defeat sedentary people in urban areas and establish their own dynasties. But when a tribal group established a dynasty and legitimised its authority, it became set in the urban ways of life and dispensed with 'asabiyya. The ascendant ruler no longer ruled with the help of his own people, but depended on other tribal groups who had become his clients. As 'asabiyya decreased, the power of the ruling dynasty declined, until it was finally conquered by another tribal group with superior 'asabiyya. And so the cycle repeated itself.\textsuperscript{27}

Ibn Khaldun is not stating the domination of the city by the tribes. Rather, the way of life of the tribesmen makes them dependent on the cities for basic necessities. Moreover, the tribes are dependent on the 'ulama' who interpret religion for them, and who call "upon them to fulfil the commands of God and rid them of blameworthy qualities and cause them to adopt praiseworthy ones, and who have them concentrate all their strength in order to make the truth prevail." They then become fully united as a social organisation and obtain superiority and royal authority.\textsuperscript{28}

When considered within the proper historical context, Ibn Khaldun's theory of dynastic succession actually constitutes a critique of the theory of the Asiatic mode of production. Nomadic pastoralism was an ever-present factor weakening the Asiatic state, the driving forces of history here being the tribal factor and 'asabiyya. Trying to understand Hadhrami history in terms of Ibn Khaldun's theory can help explain the path that state formation took.

Hadhrami history provides an empirical field for the integration of

\textsuperscript{25} Marx and Engels 1959, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{26} Andreski 1969, pp. 172-3.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibn Khaldun 1981, pp. 139, 154-5.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibn Khaldun 1981, pp. 151, 153.
Marxist or other materialist frameworks into Ibn Khaldün’s theory of state formation. While the economic systems of Hadhramaut may be described in terms of Marxist or Weberian concepts, such as pastoral nomadism or prebendal feudalism, their political dynamics can be analysed in terms of Ibn Khaldün’s theory of state formation. Ibn Khal- dün’s work is a study of the pattern and rhythm of history, while a Marxist or Weberian framework emphasises economic structures as driving forces of history. While work has been done on the social order and class structure of Hadhramaut, theories of Hadhrami political economy have not been forthcoming.

The Khaldunian concept of ḥasabiyya may also be of use in the further understanding of the role of the ḥawτa (religious sanctuary) in the mediation of conflicts between various tribes and the preservation of peace. The effectiveness of the ḥawτa is partly a result of the genealogy of the sāda who control them. There have been no attempts to understand the social psychology surrounding the workings of the ḥawτa, or indeed the social order of Hadhrami communities based on the sāda-mashāyikh-masākin social hierarchy, in terms of the concept of ḥasabiyya and the related phenomenon of the “cult of saints”.

Ḥasabiyya as a concept is also useful in dealing with the complex issue of Hadhrami identity around the Indian Ocean, where Hadhramis have settled over a period of centuries but still retain a Hadhrami consciousness. As Boxberger notes, there was “a conflict between two different facets of Hadhrami identity: their strong identification as Muslims and their identity as a dispersed emigrant community linked to the homeland”. Identity issues in the diaspora were not confined to religion but also involved intra-Hadhrami conflict, as in the case of the ‘Alawi-Irshādi disputes, and Hadhrami-host country ethnic relations.

Consider the case of the Singapore Hadhrami community. Some public debate has taken place concerning the position of the Singapore Arab community in Singapore Malay society. The debate started with a letter to the Singapore daily, the Straits Times, criticising a Singapore Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) Malay programme, “Potret Keluarga” (“Family Portrait”), for depicting “local Arabs as part of the Malay com-

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31 Knysh 1993b.
32 Boxberger chapter.
munity". Soon afterwards, a spokesman for SBC gave assurances to the effect that there was no intention on the part of SBC to depict Arabs as part of the Malay community. There were also reactions to references to “Malays of Arab descent”. In both Singapore and Malaysia, stories were carried in dailies suggesting that there was an identity crisis among the Arabs of Singapore, but that it was a minority which wished to hold on to their Arab identity. It was also said that the process of integrating Arabs into Singapore Malay society that had been well under way for decades would not be jeopardised by the attitude of a tiny minority which wished to set itself apart from the larger Malay society.

The Hadhrami diaspora provides an interesting case of a transnational community which assimilated into their host societies, but retained their cultural identity. Hadhramis in the diaspora had for centuries married into East African, South Indian and Malay-Indonesian communities without losing the sense of Hadhrami identity, because such identity was neither national nor ethnic, but was based on kinship. The locus of Hadhrami identity was not so much language but *nasab* (lineage), which formed the basis of a uniquely Hadhrami type of *'asabiyya*.

**On the Periodisation of Islamisation and Hadhrami Emigration**

The Islamisation of various regions in the Indian Ocean cannot be divorced from the presence of the Hadhrami trade diaspora. Taking the Malay world of Southeast Asia as an example, Hadhramis played a prominent role in proselytisation from the fifteenth century A.D. onwards, which intensified in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries A.D. While continuity and change have not been the subject of discussion in Hadhrami historiography as theoretical issues, there have been some empirical attempts to periodise the history of Hadhrami emigration.

Most authors dealing with the history of the Islamisation of Southeast Asia note that the religion was brought to the region by traders from Arabia, Persia, India, and even China. There is ample evidence that Muslim traders from these areas had travelled to various ports of the

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38 Abdul Samad Ismail 1992.
Malay archipelago since at least the eighth century A.D. The cosmopolitanism of the region was aptly described by Ibn al-Faqih who refers to parrots that talked in Arabic, Farsi and Chinese.39

What needs explanation are the additional factors that articulated with trade to produce the large-scale conversion of the Malay world after the thirteenth century A.D. As van Leur observed, there had been “Moslem trade involved in the traffic of the Indonesian ports for centuries without there having been question of missions and conversions to Islam to any appreciable degree. Toward the end of the thirteenth century a change began to take place, however, a change which developed rapidly in the fourteenth century and became the dominating phenomenon in Indonesia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.”40 The interaction between the macro-processes of the trade diaspora and the various causes of Islamisation constituted a “turnover” to a new period in Malay-Indonesian history, that is, an Islamic period, the defining criteria of which are both cultural and material.

What was the role of the Hadhramis in this turnover to a new period? Most authors do not mention Hadhramis in relation to the Islamisation of Southeast Asia prior to the eighteenth century. The assumption of many has been that significant Hadrami emigration to Singapore, the Dutch East Indies and to British Malaya commenced in the eighteenth century,41 whereas the period of Islamisation began much earlier. Therefore, the role of the Hadhramis in Islamisation was seen to be one of continuing a process begun by others in earlier periods. An alternative Hadhrami periodisation designates emigration to India and Southeast Asia as a single era, implying that the period of Islamisation by Hadhramis from the eighteenth century was really part of a process of Islamisation that began earlier in South India.

‘Alawi ‘ulamā’ divide the historical development of the ‘Alawīyyūn into four stages.42 During the first stage, which lasted from the third century to the seventh century A.H. (9th-13th century A.D.), ‘Alawi leaders such as Ahmad al-Muhājir and his grandson ‘Alawi b. ‘Ubaydillāh were mujāhid-s (persons expressing legal opinion) and carried the title of Imām. They were not followers of any particular madhhab (legal school)

41 Van den Berg 1866a, pp. 105-20; Morley 1949, pp. 155-6; van der Kroef 1953, pp. 304-5; Roff 1964, p. 81.
or tariqa (Sufi order). While it is true that a great deal of their ijtihdad (legal opinion) was in line with Imam al-Shafii, this may have been partly due to the circumstances in Hadhramaut.

Having laid down their arms and given up political struggle, the ‘Alawiyyun became the carriers of a Sufi tariqa when Ustadh al-Adhham Muhammad al-Faqih, muqaddam of the thirteenth generation from Imam ‘Ali, obtained the ijazat al-khiraq from Shaykh Abu Madyan Shu’ayb b. al-Husayn. The second stage was that of the development and consolidation of al-Tariqa al-‘Alawiyya (the ‘Alawi Sufi order), which lasted from the seventh century to the eleventh century A.H. (13th-17th century A.D.). The tariqa was a simple one, which did not have khalwa (seclusion for purposes of spiritual exercises) and did not denounce worldly activities. It was the only order in which nasab (descent) and tariqa came together.

The third stage in the development of the ‘Alawiyyun lasted from the eleventh to the fourteenth century A.H. (late 17th to late 20th century A.D.). During this period, the ‘Alawi ‘ulama’ and awliya’ (saints) came to be known by the title of habib. This was the period of emigration to India and Southeast Asia. Al-Sha’i’s periodisation defines this third period in terms of ‘Alawi migration to Asia, thereby making a case for the role of the Tariqa ‘Alawiyya in the Islamisation of Southern India and Southeast Asia.

The view that Sufism was responsible for the conversion of Indonesia to Islam was propounded by Johns, but he seems not to have considered the Tariqa ‘Alawiyya. He pointed out that the Sufi “interpretation of Islam was certainly suited to the background of the Indonesians...” and that the “conversion of Indonesia to Islam was very largely the work of the tarikas - even though they are ungratefully spurned at the present day.” While it is true that Sufis were involved in the proselytisation of Islam in the archipelago, there is little mention of the Tariqa ‘Alawiyya in this respect, although the role of the Hadhrami Arabs in the Islamisation of the region is well known. Works that discuss Islamisation have generally neglected the contribution of this community in the conversion of Southeast Asia to Islam. The view that Islam spread in the archipelago largely as a result of marriages between royal and merchant families, or as a consequence of Sufi missionary activities, are mere speculation or, at best, incomplete. What is needed is support from empirical
studies on the histories and genealogies of the various Hadhrami Arab as well as Indian Muslim families, many of which were assimilated into indigenous societies in the archipelago. Hadhrami Arab and Indian Muslim traders had been engaging in trade and missionary activities in the region for centuries and constituted an integral part of the Muslim trade diaspora which stretched from Egypt to the Malay world.

In the last century, European scholars held that Islamisation was brought about as a result of direct contact with Arab traders. This thesis was first rejected by the Dutch scholar Pijnappel who ascribed the spread of Islam in the region to the work of Arabs from Gujarat and Malabar. After Pijnappel, it was Snouck Hurgronje, in 1883, who developed the view of Islamisation from India. But, as Drewes points out, he failed to identify the region of South India from which these proselytisers came. Nor did he specify the region in Arabia from which the Arabs, coming via India, had originated. In a lecture delivered at Leiden University in 1907, Snouck Hurgronje went further. He suggested that colonies of Arab traders had not been established in Java and Sumatra before the sixteenth century A.D., and that Islam and all things Arab that made their way to the Malay Archipelago passed through India. Decisive Arab influence only occurred after the sixteenth century A.D., and came out of Hadhramaut and Mecca. One can say that the large-scale Islamisation of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago was carried out by Indians, Indians of Arab origin, and Arabs who came to the region via India.

The question thus arises as to who were the Arabs who traded, intermarried, and established tariqa-s in the region, especially in regard to the so-called legend of the nine saints (wali songo) of Java. The Babad Tanah Jawi, a generic title referring to several Javanese manuscripts, attributes the conversion of Java to the work of the wali songo. These manuscripts contain some historical records but are, for the most part, legendary accounts of the Islamisation of Java, couched in fantastic terms with descriptions of the magical powers of the nine saints. This had led many scholars to regard the legends more as insights into how the Indonesians viewed the process of Islamisation rather than as historical records of conversion to Islam.

44 Pijnappel 1972, p. 157f.
45 Drewes 1968, p. 441.
46 Snouck Hurgronje 1924, Vol. 4, pp.105-6, 109f.
47 Babad Tanah Jawi 1975.
Arab as Mes in the Arab trade

The specifically Hadhrami origins of the wali songo appear to be unknown to some authors. For example, Raffles refers to some of the awliya’ (pl. of wali) as originating from Arabia, but he does not refer to their Hadhrami origins nor to the fact that their ancestors had settled in India. Arnold calls one of the awliya’, Malik Ibrahim, a descendant of a grandson of the Prophet, Zayn al-‘Abidin and a cousin of the Raja of Chermen. Imam ‘Ali Zayn al-‘Abidin was actually a fourth generation descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). According to Veth, Chermen is located in India, while Rouffaer places it in Sumatra. Majul refers to these awliya’ as being Indians or Arabs originating from Arab settlements in India. Indonesian works know these awliya’ to be historical personalities. Furthermore, Hadhrami sources contain the genealogies of these awliya’ who lived in Java during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is from these genealogies that it is known that many were Hadhrami Arabs who had come to the Malay Archipelago via India. The link to Ahmad al-Muhājir confirms the Hadhrami origins of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn, from whom many of the “legendary” awliya’ of Indonesia originate.

Although the wali songo belong to earlier centuries, discourse on their history and genealogy belongs to the twentieth century, as the silsila (descent line) of the awliya’ claimed to be of Hadhrami sayyid origin seem to appear in documented form only then. Nevertheless, van Bruijnenessen’s hypothesis that this is a fabricated reconstruction and historical revision is rather premature. The fact that genealogies had not been recorded on paper for a period of time does not mean that later tabulations are fabrications. Hadhrami genealogists have been rather meticulous in checking and verifying genealogies from existing documents, as well as orally transmitted traditions.

The question of Hadhrami origins is important not merely for the sake of historical accuracy, but because it laid the foundations for the tariqa which was firmly established by Hadhramis during the eighteenth century and after. There are a number of derivatives of the Ṭariqa ‘Alawiyya

49 Raffles 1965, pp. 113, 117.
50 Arnold 1913, p. 378.
115n.
52 Majul 1962, p. 363.
53 Salam nd; Lembaga Research Islam 1975.
54 Al-Saqāf al-‘Alawi 1384/1964; Chehab 1975.
such as the ‘Aydarüsiyya Ṭa’ifa founded by Abū Bakr b. ‘Abdallāh al-‘Aydarūs (d. 914 AH/1509AD) in Tarim which spread to East Africa, India and Indonesia. There is also the Ṭariqa ‘Attāsiyya which established itself in the Indian sub-continent and Burma. The failure to understand the role of the Ṭariqa ‘Alawīyya in earlier periods affects the perception of the influence of the ṭariqa in the eighteenth century and later, as is obvious from the paucity of research on Hadhrami Sufi orders.

Conclusion

The above discussions on the history of Hadhramaut and the Hadhrami diaspora in the context of the identification of various problems of theoretical history point, above all, to the need for an integral history approach. The history of the Hadhrami diaspora requires bringing together various disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, and history. While this need is quite evident, we have yet to see its actual fulfilment on a large scale. At the moment, it seems that the field consists mainly of anthropologists, archaeologists and historians. But, some of the problems referred to above require the attention of historical sociologists, political economists and economic geographers.

While many assertions in this chapter have not been adequately backed empirically, they certainly point to new areas of research and questions to be asked. Furthermore, the theoretical issues pertaining to integral history, integrative history, continuity and change, and periodisation are among the important problems in the study of Hadhrami history that have yet to emerge at the forefront of scholarship. Attention to such theoretical issues is vital if various problems in Hadhrami history are to be solved. Beyond this, however, such attention may lead to contributions to the field of theoretical history from Hadhrami studies.