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Hadhrami Arab-Descended Communities in Indonesia: Socio-Religious Contributions and Identity Negotiation

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Abstract

This study synthesizes scholarship on Hadhrami Arab-descended communities in Indonesia by examining the relationship between socio-religious contributions and identity challenges or negotiations. It employs a structured integrative literature synthesis. The thematic corpus comprises 24 sources: 10 core works, 14 supporting sources, and 1 methodological reference. Sources were identified through purposive and iterative searching strengthened by reference snowballing. Cooper's (1988) taxonomy informed the synthesis's organizational logic rather than serving as a literal classification scheme for individual works. Evidence was then thematically coded by distinguishing source-reported findings, synthesis-generated patterns, and authorial interpretation. The results identify four major arenas of contribution: religious authority and da'wa, education and knowledge transmission, solidarity and social services, and cross-group integration practices. Evidence that philanthropy directly reduces stigma is less robust than evidence concerning religious authority and education. Identity challenges emerge through categorization and stereotyping, non-binary negotiations of Arabness and Indonesianness, uneven social recognition, and internal differentiation. The study implies that socio-religious institutions should be examined relationally because the same arenas may expand public participation while reproducing, negotiating, or transforming identity boundaries. Its originality lies in a relational framework that treats contribution and identity negotiation as mutually constitutive processes rather than separate thematic inventories.

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Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mensintesis literatur tentang masyarakat keturunan Arab Hadrami di Indonesia dengan menelaah hubungan antara kontribusi sosial-keagamaan dan tantangan atau negosiasi identitas. Penelitian ini menggunakan sintesis literatur integratif terstruktur. Korpus tematik terdiri atas 24 sumber, yaitu 10 karya inti dan 14 sumber pendukung, ditambah 1 sumber metodologis. Penelusuran dilakukan

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secara bertujuan dan iteratif serta diperkuat dengan penelusuran rujukan. Taksonomi Cooper (1988) digunakan untuk menginformasikan logika pengorganisasian sintesis, bukan sebagai skema klasifikasi literal untuk setiap karya. Bukti kemudian dikodekan secara tematik dengan membedakan temuan yang dilaporkan oleh sumber, pola hasil sintesis, serta interpretasi penulis. Hasil menunjukkan empat arena kontribusi utama, yaitu otoritas keagamaan dan dakwah, pendidikan dan transmisi pengetahuan, solidaritas dan layanan sosial, serta praktik integrasi lintas kelompok. Bukti mengenai filantropi sebagai mekanisme pengurangan stigma lebih terbatas dibandingkan bukti mengenai otoritas dan pendidikan. Tantangan identitas muncul melalui kategorisasi dan stereotip, negosiasi ke-Arab-an dan ke-Indonesia-an yang tidak bersifat biner, pengakuan sosial yang tidak selalu setara, serta diferensiasi internal. Implikasi utama penelitian ini adalah perlunya membaca institusi sosial-keagamaan secara relasional, karena arena yang sama dapat memperluas partisipasi publik sekaligus mereproduksi, menegosiasikan, atau mengubah batas-batas identitas. Orisinalitas kajian terletak pada kerangka relasional yang menghubungkan kontribusi dan negosiasi identitas sebagai proses yang saling membentuk, bukan sebagai dua daftar temuan yang terpisah.

Keywords: Arab Hadrami; Indonesia; kontribusi sosial-keagamaan; negosiasi identitas.

Introduction

Hadhrami Arab-descended communities occupy an important place in Indonesia's socio-religious history. Hadhrami mobility across the Indian Ocean moved not only merchants and families, but also religious scholars, texts, learning networks, religious practices, and forms of social organization that subsequently interacted with local communities. Historical scholarship and studies of scholarly networks show that connections among Ḥaḍramawt, Islamic centers across the Indian Ocean, and the Indonesian archipelago helped shape the circulation of knowledge and religious authority in Southeast Asia (Azra, 2004; Freitag & Clarence-Smith, 1997; Ho, 2006; Ricci, 2011). In Indonesia, these influences developed through da'wa, education, organizations, social practices, and forms of authority across both colonial and postcolonial periods (Alatas, 2011, 2021; Laffan, 2003; Mobini-Kesheh, 2018).

This article uses the term Hadhrami Arab-descended communities to refer to groups with historical, genealogical, or cultural identification with Ḥaḍramawt that have become rooted in Indonesia. The term does not imply that all Hadhrami descendants form a homogeneous community. The literature instead

demonstrates variation in organizational orientations, religious authority, family practices, education, youth expression, and the public presentation of identity (de Jonge, 2022; Rijal, 2017, 2018, 2020; Subchi, 2020). Accordingly, diaspora is used in a limited sense to explain histories of mobility and transregional connections, not to presume that Hadhrami descendants in Indonesia necessarily experience themselves as external to Indonesian society.

Similar conceptual clarity is required when discussing minority status. Hadhrami descendants constitute an ethnic minority or a diaspora-rooted group, yet most are Muslim within Indonesia's Muslim-majority society. This article therefore does not use ethno-religious minority as a single, undifferentiated category. Minority positioning is understood relationally, referring to situations in which ethnic labeling, migration history, genealogy, or particular stereotypes shape social recognition and relations. At the same time, some Hadhrami actors may exercise substantial authority within Muslim religious fields. Distinguishing ethnic minority status, diasporic identity, minority positioning in social and political relations, and religious authority within a Muslim-majority society prevents demographic status from being conflated with socio-religious influence.

The concept of socio-religious contribution is also used in a bounded sense. It refers to institutions, networks, knowledge, and practices that are rooted in or mediated by religious values and authority while performing social functions within the community and in wider society. Operationally, the concept covers four arenas: the formation and maintenance of religious authority and da'wa networks; Islamic education and knowledge transmission; solidarity, assistance, and social services; and relational practices that expand connections with other groups. Symbolic legitimacy is not treated as part of the definition. It is considered a possible outcome that should be claimed only when supported by adequate evidence.

Previous scholarship has generated a rich body of knowledge, but it has developed through clusters that often remain analytically separate. Some works locate Hadhramis within Indian Ocean mobility networks and the circulation of knowledge (Freitag, 2003; Freitag & Clarence-Smith, 1997; Ho, 2006). Others examine organizations, community revival, and identity formation in the colonial

period (de Jonge, 2022; Mobini-Kesheh, 2018), while studies of modern identity emphasize creolization, the construction of Arab categories, and negotiations between local histories and transregional connections (Mandal, 2017). Contemporary Indonesian scholarship further shows that national orientation can coexist with Arab markers, alongside changing forms of ḥabā'ib authority and new expressions of identity in the public sphere (Alatas, 2011; Jacobsen, 2009; Rijal, 2020).

The gap in the literature is not limited to thematic dispersion. A more consequential problem is the tendency to separate discussions of contribution from discussions of identity. When education, da'wa, or organizations are read only as contributions, their role in identity reproduction may be overlooked. Conversely, when stigma, social boundaries, or Arabness are treated only as identity issues, the relationship between social recognition and institutional practice becomes less visible. Few syntheses explicitly ask how the same socio-religious arena may simultaneously serve public needs, produce authority, reproduce traditions, and negotiate group boundaries. This analytical gap provides the point of departure for the present article.

The relationship between contribution and identity is not assumed to be linear. Socio-religious contributions do not automatically produce acceptance, and identity maintenance does not automatically obstruct integration. Religious authority may expand services and knowledge networks while sustaining particular forms of internal legitimacy. Education may widen access to learning while also transmitting traditions across generations. Internal boundaries may function as mechanisms for preserving identity in one context and as sources of representational contestation in another. This relational perspective avoids the normative assumption that integration is always a success or that identity maintenance is necessarily an obstacle.

Against this background, the study addresses three questions. First, which forms of socio-religious contribution appear most consistently in the literature on Hadhrami Arab-descended communities in Indonesia? Second, which forms of identity challenge and negotiation recur most often, and how do they vary across periods and social contexts? Third, how are socio-religious contributions and

identity negotiations related within the same arenas? The study aims to produce a more transparent evidence map and to develop a relational synthesis that explains the connections between these two dimensions. Its novelty lies in turning two previously parallel thematic clusters into an analytical framework that reveals reciprocal relationships among socio-religious practices, social recognition, and the formation of identity boundaries.

Focusing on these relationships also helps place the history of Indonesian Hadhramis at an appropriate analytical scale. Transregional connections remain important because some forms of authority, scholarly mobility, pilgrimage, and genealogy derive meaning from networks extending beyond Indonesia (Alatas, 2016). Yet these connections are always translated through local conditions. Organizations, schools, religious assemblies, family relations, language, and national politics shape how knowledge and identity are enacted in Indonesia. The article therefore does not use diaspora as a single explanatory frame. Diaspora is treated as one historical dimension interacting with localization, citizenship formation, and generational change. This approach makes it possible to analyze Hadhrami contributions without isolating the community from Indonesian society while still recognizing the transregional sources that shape some socio-religious practices.

Method

This study uses a structured integrative literature synthesis. The design is appropriate because the objective is not to calculate effects, evaluate interventions, or claim exhaustive coverage of all publications, but to integrate historical, sociological, anthropological, and religious-studies scholarship that varies in form and scale. Because the corpus includes monographs, edited volumes, journal articles, and review publications used only for field framing or evaluative purposes, an integrative approach is more suitable than labeling the study a systematic review. Explicit procedures were nevertheless applied so that readers can assess how sources were selected, differentiated, and used to construct themes.

The search was purposive and iterative, using academic search engines, the Crossref metadata catalog, and publisher and journal websites. Initial searching used combinations of English and Indonesian terms, including "Hadhrami Indonesia," "Hadrami Arabs Indonesia," "Arab descendants Indonesia identity," "Hadhrami religious authority Indonesia," "Hadhrami education Indonesia," "Hadhrami diaspora Southeast Asia," "Arab Hadrami Indonesia," "diaspora Hadrami identitas," "otoritas ḥabā'ib Indonesia," and "pendidikan Arab Hadrami." Backward and forward reference searching using keywords was used to identify sources that repeatedly served as foundations for the scholarly discussion. Publication year was not used as a restrictive inclusion criterion because foundational works were necessary to understand community formation during the colonial period and its subsequent development. Source selection was therefore based primarily on substantive relevance to the research questions and analytical themes.

Inclusion criteria covered academic works in Indonesian or English that met at least one of three conditions: they directly examined Hadhrami communities or Arab descendants in Indonesia or the Netherlands East Indies; they examined Southeast Asian, Malay World, or Indian Ocean contexts directly connected to historical processes, knowledge networks, or Hadhrami identity formation in Indonesia; or they provided conceptual discussion necessary to explain authority, education, integration, and identity within the corpus. Popular sources, writings without traceable scholarly foundations, duplicates, and works that mentioned Hadhramis only in passing were excluded. Book reviews and review essays were not treated as empirical evidence. Burhanudin (1999) is used to map field-level scholarly framing, while Slama (2023) is used only for evaluative context concerning the work reviewed.

The final thematic corpus comprises 24 sources. Ten works were designated as the core corpus because of their direct relevance or field-framing importance to the history, identity, networks, or positioning of Hadhramis, which were required to build the synthesis framework. Core status therefore indicates analytical centrality, not uniform evidentiary weight. The core works are Laffan (2003), Mobini-Kesheh (2018), de Jonge (2022), Jacobsen (2009), Burhanudin

(1999), Mandal (2017), Azra (2004), Ricci (2011), Freitag and Clarence-Smith (1997), and Abushouk and Ibrahim (2009). Fourteen additional works serve as supporting sources to deepen more specific themes, test contemporary variation, or provide transregional context. Cooper (1988) is used as a methodological reference and is not counted among the 24 thematic sources.

The distinction between core and supporting works does not imply that core sources are always of higher quality. Rather, it identifies their analytical function in the synthesis. Core works establish the thematic architecture and provide broad historical or conceptual context. Supporting sources test, refine, or delimit generalizations derived from those themes. To prevent evidence from different settings from being treated as equivalent, each source was also classified by geographic coverage: Indonesia/Netherlands East Indies; Southeast Asia; the Malay World; the Indian Ocean; or Ḥaḍramawt. Findings from regional and transregional sources are used as context or comparison and are not automatically presented as empirical findings about Indonesia.

Cooper's (1988) taxonomy informed the organizational logic of the literature synthesis through six dimensions: focus, goal, perspective, coverage, organization, and audience. Because Cooper's original taxonomy was developed to characterize literature reviews rather than individual historical, ethnographic, and conceptual works, the present study uses these dimensions as a guiding framework rather than as a literal classification scheme for each source. The ten core works were therefore profiled descriptively according to their substantive focus and purpose, analytical perspective, geographical and temporal scope, organizational structure, and intended audience. Cooper's taxonomy functions as an organizational framework for the synthesis rather than as an instrument for assessing the methodological quality of individual studies.

After mapping, each source was extracted into an analytical worksheet containing source identity, publication type, location, period, contribution themes, identity themes, and evidentiary status. First-stage coding remained open to terms emerging from the sources. Related codes were then grouped into recurring categories. A final theme was retained when it was supported by more than one substantive source or by one strong Indonesia-specific source whose

consistency could be checked against other relevant scholarship. At the interpretive stage, the analysis distinguished three levels of statements: findings directly reported by the sources, patterns emerging from cross-source comparison, and conceptual interpretations advanced in this article. This distinction was particularly important for controlling claims concerning philanthropy, symbolic legitimacy, integration, and generational change.

A minimal appraisal was conducted in a manner appropriate to an integrative synthesis. Sources were assessed for direct relevance to the research questions, depth of evidence, clarity of geographic and temporal context, publication type, and consistency with other sources. Monographs and studies based on clear archival, ethnographic, interview, or historical evidence carried greater interpretive weight than reviews or short overviews. A formal risk-of-bias tool was not used because the corpus does not consist of homogeneous research designs. Themes were validated through cross-source comparison, examination of discordant evidence, and consideration of alternative interpretations, including the possibility that internal boundaries may function as mechanisms of identity preservation rather than only as identity challenges. This appraisal also prevented geographically broad but Indonesia-distant sources from dominating the synthesis. When a proposition was supported only by regional evidence, it was identified as contextual or analytically possible rather than as a general characteristic of Hadhrami communities in Indonesia.

The original search process was not designed in accordance with the PRISMA protocol and therefore did not produce a defensible initial record count that can now be reconstructed. This article does not fill that gap with a retrospective number. Transparency is instead provided by reporting how the corpus was built, the search terms, inclusion and exclusion criteria, the functions of each source tier, and the size of the final corpus. Consequently, the findings should be read as a structured thematic mapping and synthesis, not as a claim that every publication on Hadhramis in Indonesia was captured.

To strengthen analytical traceability, sources were coded not only thematically but also by historical period. Colonial scholarship is used primarily to explain the formation of social categories, organizations, identity debates, and

relations with nationalism. Postcolonial and contemporary scholarship is used to examine continuity and change in forms of authority, education, identity, media, and social relations. This temporal distinction prevents colonial findings from being projected directly onto present conditions. When similar patterns appear across different periods, the article identifies thematic continuity only after considering changes in context. The analysis therefore does not assume that terms, institutions, or identity boundaries carried the same meanings from the early twentieth century to the present.

Results

Mapping the Corpus and Positioning the Evidence

The mapping shows that Hadhrami scholarship relevant to Indonesia operates across several scales. Works on the Netherlands East Indies and Indonesia provide the most direct evidence concerning community formation, organizations, identity, education, and authority. Scholarship on Southeast Asia, the Malay World, and the Indian Ocean clarifies mobility networks and comparative frameworks but is not used to generalize Indonesian experience. This distinction matters because the same theme, such as authority or integration, may take different forms across locations and periods.

Table 1 provides an analytical profile of the ten core works using a descriptive framework informed by Cooper's taxonomy. Rather than applying Cooper's categories literally to individual works, the table compares each source's substantive focus and purpose, analytical perspective and scope, organization, and intended audience. The profile shows the predominance of historical and interpretive approaches, followed by contemporary case studies and comparative volumes. As a result, the synthesis is especially strong in explaining long-term change and identity formation, but it does not provide an equally strong basis for estimating the frequency of particular practices among contemporary Hadhrami populations. The findings below are therefore presented with attention to how closely each body of evidence relates to the Indonesian context.

The mapping also reveals a temporal imbalance. Foundational works and historical monographs are prominent in explaining Hadhrami communities since the colonial period, while contemporary studies are more concentrated on ḥabā'ib authority, identity, media, youth, and family practices. Consequently, some apparently similar terms emerge from different forms of evidence. Religious authority, for example, can be traced through long-term scholarly networks, but its colonial organizational forms are not identical to contemporary da'wa networks. Likewise, early twentieth-century identity debates cannot be treated as direct equivalents of present-day dilemmas of media representation. The synthesis therefore emphasizes patterns rather than assuming perfect historical equivalence.

The Indonesia-specific corpus also shows that organizations mediate between structural change and identity formation. In the colonial period, organizations provided arenas for debating education, social status, political orientation, and relations with wider society (de Jonge, 2022; Mobini-Kesheh, 2018). In more recent periods, religious networks and media have provided different channels for building authority and reaching publics (Madihah et al., 2025; Rijal, 2020). The commonality lies not in organizational form but in relational function: organizations help regulate who speaks, which forms of knowledge are prioritized, and how identity is presented. This finding is important for the analysis that follows because socio-religious contributions almost always operate through particular organizations or networks rather than through ethnicity in the abstract.

By publication type, monographs and research articles provide the primary basis for substantive findings. Regional edited volumes help illuminate cross-site variation and transregional networks. Book reviews are used only as indicators of how a work is positioned within scholarly conversation. This evidence structure explains why a theme can be assessed as strong even when it is not supported by the largest number of sources: evidentiary weight depends on depth and proximity, not citation frequency alone. The same principle underlies the conclusion that social services and philanthropy still require more direct evidence from Indonesia.

Table 1. Analytical Profile of the Ten Core Works

Source	Substantive Focus and Purpose	Analytical Perspective and Scope	Organization and Intended Audience
Laffan (2003)	**Focus:** Islam, colonialism, and nationhood. **Purpose:** Explains the formation of Muslim public space and Islamic nationhood.	**Perspective:** Historical-critical. **Scope:** Colonial Indonesia.	**Organization:** Historical. **Audience:** Scholarly.
Mobini-Kesheh (2018)	**Focus:** Hadhrami community and identity. **Purpose:** Explains revival, organizations, and identity debates.	**Perspective:** Historical-analytical. **Scope:** Netherlands East Indies, 1900–1942.	**Organization:** Historical-thematic. **Audience:** Scholarly.
de Jonge (2022)	**Focus:** Hadhrami identity and social change. **Purpose:** Reconstructs changes in identity and social position.	**Perspective:** Historical-analytical. **Scope:** Netherlands East Indies and Indonesia, 1900–1950.	**Organization:** Historical-thematic. **Audience:** Scholarly.
Jacobsen (2009)	**Focus:** Contemporary Hadhramis. **Purpose:** Examines Indonesian orientation and the maintenance of Arab identity markers.	**Perspective:** Interpretive case study. **Scope:** Contemporary Indonesia.	**Organization:** Thematic. **Audience:** Scholarly.
Burhanudin (1999)	**Focus:** Scholarship on the Hadhrami diaspora in the archipelago. **Purpose:** Reviews and evaluates interpretations of the field.	**Perspective:** Review essay/evaluative. **Scope:** Indonesia and the archipelago.	**Organization:** Thematic review. **Audience:** Scholarly.

Source	Substantive Focus and Purpose	Analytical Perspective and Scope	Organization and Intended Audience
Mandal (2017)	**Focus:** Formation of modern Arab identity. **Purpose:** Explains creolization and identity construction.	**Perspective:** Postcolonial-interpretive. **Scope:** Malay World.	**Organization:** Historical-conceptual. **Audience:** Scholarly.
Azra (2004)	**Focus:** Scholarly networks and Islamic reformism. **Purpose:** Explains the circulation of scholars, ideas, and knowledge.	**Perspective:** Historical-analytical. **Scope:** Southeast Asia within wider Middle Eastern networks.	**Organization:** Historical. **Audience:** Scholarly.
Ricci (2011)	**Focus:** Texts, translation, and the Arabic cosmopolis. **Purpose:** Explains the transmission and localization of Islamic texts and culture.	**Perspective:** Intellectual and literary history. **Scope:** South and Southeast Asia.	**Organization:** Conceptual-historical. **Audience:** Scholarly.
Freitag & Clarence-Smith (1997)	**Focus:** Hadhrami diaspora in the Indian Ocean. **Purpose:** Compares the roles of traders, scholars, and political elites.	**Perspective:** Historical-comparative. **Scope:** Indian Ocean.	**Organization:** Thematic-comparative. **Audience:** Scholarly.
Abushouk & Ibrahim (2009)	**Focus:** Hadhrami identity, assimilation, and diaspora. **Purpose:** Compares Hadhrami diaspora trajectories in Southeast Asia.	**Perspective:** Comparative-analytical. **Scope:** Southeast Asia.	**Organization:** Thematic-comparative. **Audience:** Scholarly.

Socio-Religious Contributions

The first and strongest arena in the corpus is religious authority and da'wa networks. Studies of scholarly networks and intellectual mobility show that transregional connections provided channels for the circulation of teachers, texts, and learning practices (Azra, 2004; Ho, 2006; Ricci, 2011). In Indonesia, the formation of authority depended not only on individuals but also on organizations, scholarly networks, genealogy, and the capacity to manage social relations (Alatas, 2011, 2021; Mobini-Kesheh, 2018; Rijal, 2020). A finding that can be drawn directly from these sources is that Hadhramis contributed to the formation and maintenance of religious knowledge infrastructures. A stronger interpretation that such authority necessarily produced social acceptance cannot be inferred automatically from this evidence.

The second arena is Islamic education and the transmission of knowledge. Scholarship on scholarly networks provides context for the mobility of ideas, while research on Jamiat Kheir and Al-Irsyad shows that Arab organizations participated in the modernization of Islamic education in early-twentieth-century Jakarta (Azra, 2004; Hasyim & Haryono, 2019). Studies of colonial Hadhrami communities further show that education and organization were linked to internal debates over reform and identity (Mobini-Kesheh, 2018). The evidence therefore supports two functions that may coexist: education as a contribution to Islamic learning infrastructure and education as a means of transmitting community values and orientations.

The third arena concerns solidarity, assistance, and social services. This theme appears in diaspora scholarship through discussions of support networks, community institutions, and mechanisms of solidarity, but direct evidence that Hadhrami philanthropy reduces stigma or social distance in Indonesia is more limited than the evidence on authority and education (Abushouk & Ibrahim, 2009; Jacobsen, 2009). The synthesis therefore does not conclude that philanthropy by itself reduces stigma or converts economic resources into symbolic legitimacy. A more defensible statement is that assistance and social-service practices provide arenas of interaction that may bridge social relations, while their effects on public recognition require more specific empirical research.

The fourth arena is socio-religious integration and cross-group bridging practices. Jacobsen (2009) shows that a strong orientation toward Indonesia can coexist with particular Arab markers. Alatas (2011) likewise demonstrates that becoming Indonesian occurs through complex social positioning, while scholarship on identity in the Malay World emphasizes the historical and creole character of Arab category formation (Mandal, 2017). The synthesis therefore suggests that identity maintenance and integration need not be treated as mutually exclusive alternatives. They may occur simultaneously through participation in public institutions, adaptation of social repertoires, and the maintenance of selected cultural or religious markers.

Table 2. Evidence Trail and Source Context for Socio-Religious Contributions

Theme	Evidence Trail and Source Context	Evidence Profile	Evidence Assessment
Religious authority and da'wa	**Direct Indonesia/Netherlands East Indies evidence:** Alatas (2011, 2021); Mobini-Kesheh (2018); Rijal (2020). **Regional/transregional contextual evidence:** Azra (2004); Ho (2006); Ricci (2011); Freitag & Clarence-Smith (1997).	**Period:** Colonial to contemporary. **Evidence type:** Historical, ethnographic/anthropological, and network studies.	**Strong** for explaining the formation and reproduction of religious authority. Claims concerning broader public acceptance remain contextual and should not be treated as direct causal effects.
Education and knowledge transmission	**Direct Indonesia/Netherlands East Indies evidence:** Hasyim & Haryono (2019); Mobini-Kesheh (2018); Jacobsen (2009).	**Period:** Colonial to contemporary. **Evidence type:** Historical, institutional, and intellectual studies.	**Strong** for demonstrating the role of education and knowledge transmission. The evidence also supports their dual function in facilitating social integration while reproducing

Theme	Evidence Trail and Source Context	Evidence Profile	Evidence Assessment
	Regional/transregional contextual evidence: Azra (2004); Ricci (2011).		community identity.
Solidarity and social services	**Direct Indonesia evidence:** Jacobsen (2009), with indirect relevance to solidarity and social-service practices. **Regional/transregional contextual evidence:** Abushouk & Ibrahim (2009).	**Period:** Primarily contemporary and regional. **Evidence type:** Community studies and comparative scholarship.	**Limited.** The literature supports the presence of solidarity and social-service practices, but the available evidence is insufficient to conclude that philanthropy directly reduces stigma or social distance.
Integration and bridging practices	**Direct Indonesia evidence:** Jacobsen (2009); Alatas (2011); Al Amin & Mahzumi (2022). **Regional/transregional contextual evidence:** Mandal (2017); Abushouk & Ibrahim (2009).	**Period:** Colonial to contemporary. **Evidence type:** Ethnographic, historical, and identity studies.	**Moderate to strong** for showing that social integration can coexist with the maintenance and reproduction of Hadhrami identity.

Identity Challenges and Negotiations

The first identity theme is categorization, stereotyping, and social boundaries. During the colonial period, racial classification and administrative ordering shaped the position of Arabs within the Netherlands East Indies (de Jonge, 2022; Laffan, 2003; Mobini-Kesheh, 2018). In more recent contexts, Arab identity remains contested in meaning, including debates about Arabism and dilemmas in representing Arab descendants in Indonesia (Al Amin & Mahzumi, 2022; Syarif, 2019). This evidence supports the conclusion that Arab markers derive their meaning from social relations and historical processes rather than from fixed

ethnic attributes. However, neither the level nor the form of stereotyping can be assumed to be uniform across Indonesia.

The second theme concerns negotiations of Arabness, Indonesianness, and belonging. The literature indicates that these categories are not necessarily oppositional. Jacobsen (2009) describes communities oriented toward Indonesia while retaining an Arab signature, whereas Mobini-Kesheh (2018) and de Jonge (2022) show how organizations and political debates transformed the articulation of Hadhrami identity. Mandal (2017) provides a conceptual context in which modern Arab identity in the Malay World emerged through histories of creolization and colonial transformation. Identity negotiation in this synthesis therefore does not mean choosing between being Arab and being Indonesian. It refers to the management of markers, affiliations, and self-representation under changing social conditions.

The third theme is uneven social recognition. Indonesia-specific historical scholarship shows that Hadhrami social positioning was shaped by colonial classification, organizations, nationalism, and broader social relations (de Jonge, 2022; Mobini-Kesheh, 2018), while Laffan (2003) provides broader historical context for the formation of Muslim publics. Contemporary identity studies further show that attachment to Indonesia can coexist with distinctive Arab markers and dilemmas of social categorization (Al Amin & Mahzumi, 2022; Jacobsen, 2009). Comparison across these works generates a pattern in which recognition in one arena does not automatically eliminate labeling in another. Uneven recognition is therefore a synthesis-generated pattern, not a quantitative measure that applies uniformly to all Hadhrami communities.

The fourth theme is internal differentiation. The corpus reveals at least four dimensions. First, organizational and doctrinal differentiation appears in colonial community debates and contemporary dynamics of socio-religious hierarchy (de Jonge, 2022; Mobini-Kesheh, 2018; Rijal, 2017). Second, differentiation in authority and da'wa repertoires is evident in shifting ḥabā'ib networks and in youth expressions of popular piety (Rijal, 2018, 2020). Third, a regional and comparative study of the Malay World identifies differentiation in family boundaries through practices and debates concerning marital kafā'ah (Subchi,

2020); this evidence is used here contextually rather than as a uniform Indonesia-specific finding. Fourth, differentiation in public representation appears in the production of identity through media and organizational discourse (Madihah et al., 2025). These dimensions are not automatically identity challenges. They become such challenges when differences generate contestation over who may represent the community, how membership boundaries should be maintained, or how the community is interpreted by broader publics.

The mapping also shows that evidence on generational change is uneven. Research on youth and popular piety provides a basis for identifying changes in religious repertoires, but it is insufficient to conclude that younger generations generally experience stronger pressures to integrate than older generations (Rijal, 2018). This article therefore does not retain that generalization. Generational change is treated instead as one possible dimension of differentiation that requires dedicated intergenerational research.

Table 3. Evidence Trail and Source Context for Identity Challenges and Negotiations

Theme	Evidence Trail and Source Context	Evidence Profile	Evidence Assessment
Categorization, stereotyping, and social boundaries	**Direct Indonesia/Netherlands East Indies evidence:** Mobini-Kesheh (2018); de Jonge (2022); Syarif (2019); Al Amin & Mahzumi (2022). **Regional/transregional contextual evidence:** Mandal (2017).	**Period:** Colonial to contemporary. **Evidence type:** Historical, discourse, and identity studies.	**Strong** for showing that Arab categories and social boundaries are historically and socially constructed. Their forms and meanings vary across periods and social settings and should not be treated as uniform.
Arabness, Indonesianness, and belonging	**Direct Indonesia/Netherlands East Indies evidence:** Jacobsen (2009);	**Period:** Colonial to contemporary.	**Strong** for showing that Arabness and Indonesianness are not mutually

Theme	Evidence Trail and Source Context	Evidence Profile	Evidence Assessment
	Alatas (2011); Mobini-Kesheh (2018); de Jonge (2022). **Regional/transregional contextual evidence:** Mandal (2017).	**Evidence type:** Historical, ethnographic, and interpretive studies.	exclusive identities but can overlap and be articulated differently according to social and historical context.
Uneven social recognition	**Direct Indonesia/Netherlands East Indies evidence:** Mobini-Kesheh (2018); de Jonge (2022); Jacobsen (2009); Al Amin & Mahzumi (2022). **Historical/regional contextual evidence:** Laffan (2003); Abushouk & Ibrahim (2009).	**Period:** Colonial to contemporary. **Evidence type:** Historical, ethnographic, identity, and community studies.	**Moderate.** Uneven social recognition is a synthesis-generated pattern across the literature rather than a uniformly measured phenomenon. Its form varies according to period, setting, and social relations.
Internal differentiation	**Direct Indonesia/Netherlands East Indies evidence:** Rijal (2017, 2018, 2020); Madihah et al. (2025); Mobini-Kesheh (2018); de Jonge (2022). **Regional/comparative contextual evidence:** Subchi (2020).	**Period:** Colonial to contemporary. **Evidence type:** Organizational, doctrinal, family and marriage, youth, and media/discourse studies.	**Strong** for demonstrating internal variation in authority, organization, family practices, religious orientation, and representation. Such variation constitutes an identity challenge only when it affects community boundaries, representation, or legitimacy.

Discussion

The principal finding of this study is not simply the existence of four arenas of contribution and four clusters of identity issues. Its analytical value lies in the relationships between them. Socio-religious arenas that generate public benefits are also sites where identities are formed, maintained, contested, or interpreted by others. Socio-religious contribution and identity negotiation are therefore mutually constitutive processes. Their relationship is neither inherently positive nor inherently conflictual. Its form depends on institutions, periods, actors, and the ways publics interpret Hadhrami markers.

Religious authority illustrates this relationship clearly. The literature supports the role of scholarly networks, genealogy, texts, organizations, and institutions in the production of authority (Alatas, 2021; Azra, 2004; Ho, 2006; Rijal, 2020). On one hand, authority enables the production and dissemination of knowledge, the organization of da'wa, and the formation of learning communities. On the other hand, sources examining internal dynamics show that authority is also connected to hierarchy and community boundaries (Mobini-Kesheh, 2018; Karim et al., 2025; Rijal, 2017). The defensible claim is therefore not that authority causes exclusivity, but that sources of legitimacy that strengthen public contributions can simultaneously become objects of internal negotiation. Their effects on external acceptance must be tested contextually.

Education produces a similar dual pattern. The establishment of Arab-Islamic educational institutions in the early twentieth century was associated with educational modernization and expanded learning, while also emerging from internal debates over reform, authority, and the future of the community (Hasyim & Haryono, 2019; Mobini-Kesheh, 2018). Education can thus be understood as an arena of both integration and identity reproduction. Reproduction here does not mean maintaining identity without change. Knowledge transmission necessarily occurs through selection, adaptation, language, curriculum, and relationships with local institutions. Education is therefore better understood as an arena in which identity is both sustained and negotiated.

The findings on philanthropy require greater caution. In an overly strong formulation, social assistance can easily be presented as a mechanism that reduces stigma or produces symbolic legitimacy. The corpus analyzed here is not sufficient to support such a direct causal relationship. Diaspora scholarship provides a basis for understanding the functions of solidarity networks and community support (Abushouk & Ibrahim, 2009), but Indonesia-specific studies that directly test changes in public perceptions resulting from Hadhrami philanthropy remain limited. Philanthropy is therefore better positioned as a potential arena of social encounter. Whether it builds trust, sustains internal networks, or produces both effects remains an open empirical question.

A relational approach also changes how integration is interpreted. Jacobsen (2009) shows that Indonesian national orientation can coexist with Arab markers. Mandal (2017) demonstrates that Arabness itself is the outcome of layered histories of identity formation. These findings reject a simple assimilation framework that measures integration by the erosion of origin-based identity. Integration can occur through institutional participation and social connectedness without eliminating cultural or religious markers. Conversely, the presence of Arab markers does not by itself demonstrate social distance. Analysis must examine when a marker acquires an exclusive meaning, when it functions as a source of authority, and when it operates primarily as cultural identification.

Internal differentiation should be read through the same logic. Organizations, doctrines, authority, marriage, youth, and media operate at different levels of analysis. Treating all of them as identity challenges would obscure the actual social processes involved. Organizational conflict may concern strategies of representation. Kafā'ah concerns the regulation of family boundaries. Youth popular piety concerns changes in religious repertoires. Media concerns how identity is produced for broader audiences. These dimensions become relevant as identity challenges only when they affect definitions of membership, the legitimacy of representation, or relations with people outside the community. Under other conditions, differentiation may simply represent ordinary social variation.

Drawing on the evidence patterns identified in Tables 2 and 3, Table 4 presents an author-generated relational synthesis of how socio-religious functions and identity processes intersect across the reviewed literature. It should therefore be read as an analytical synthesis derived from the corpus rather than as a set of findings directly reported by every source.

Table 4. Relational Analytical Framework for Socio-Religious Contributions and Identity Negotiation

Arena	Socio-Religious Function	Identity/ Boundary Process	Relational Synthesis and Evidentiary Status
Authority and da'wa	Knowledge production, da'wa networks, and the reproduction of religious authority	Genealogical hierarchy, community boundaries, and contestation over religious authority	**Synthesis:** Public religious contribution and internal boundary maintenance can coexist. **Evidence note:** Strong support exists for both functions, while the extent to which genealogical authority produces perceptions of exclusivity beyond the community requires further empirical testing.
Education	Educational institutions, modernization, and knowledge transmission	Transmission of values, language, religious orientation, and community identity	**Synthesis:** Social integration and identity reproduction are not mutually exclusive processes. **Evidence note:** Relatively strong support exists for both the integrative and reproductive functions of education.
Solidarity and social services	Network-based assistance, philanthropy, and social support	Reinforcement of internal solidarity and potential cross-group interaction	**Synthesis:** Social-service practices may create opportunities for bridging across social boundaries, but their effects on stigma or social acceptance should not be assumed. **Evidence note:** Direct evidence from the Indonesian context remains limited.

Arena	Socio-Religious Function	Identity/ Boundary Process	Relational Synthesis and Evidentiary Status
Public integration and bridging	Participation in public institutions, civic engagement, and cross-group relations	Situational articulation and maintenance of Arab identity markers	**Synthesis:** An Indonesian social orientation can coexist with the continued articulation of Hadhrami or Arab identity. **Evidence note:** Moderate to strong support is found in historical, ethnographic, and identity-oriented studies, although the form of coexistence varies across settings.
Family, youth, and media	Intergenerational reproduction and circulation of socio-religious practices, values, and representations	Negotiation of boundaries, authority, representation, and belonging	**Synthesis:** Internal differentiation should not be treated as an identity challenge in itself; it becomes analytically significant when it reshapes community boundaries, representation, or belonging. **Evidence note:** Evidentiary strength varies across subthemes and remains uneven.

The relational framework distinguishes relatively well-supported source-based patterns from interpretive propositions that still require empirical testing. Its fourth column makes this evidentiary status explicit, preventing theoretical inference from being converted into an empirical fact that appears to have been demonstrated by all sources.

The framework also helps explain an apparent paradox in the literature. High socio-religious visibility does not necessarily remove ethnic labeling because contribution and categorization operate through different mechanisms. An institution may be recognized for its educational or da'wa services while the same actors continue to be read through an Arab category in another context. Conversely, a distinctive identity does not necessarily reduce the capacity to build

cross-group relations. What matters is how resources, institutions, practices, and symbols are positioned within particular social relations. Social recognition should therefore be treated as a contextual outcome rather than an automatic consequence of contribution.

Distinguishing mechanisms prevents overly rapid explanation. If a school founded or managed by Hadhrami actors serves students from diverse backgrounds, that fact supports a claim about expanded educational access. It does not, by itself, demonstrate reduced ethnic stereotyping without evidence of perceptions and social interactions. Similarly, the popularity of a habib may demonstrate the reach of religious authority but cannot by itself explain changes in social boundaries outside the da'wa arena. A literature synthesis must preserve the distinction among the existence of a practice, its reported function, and its inferred social consequences. This framework therefore rejects the use of any single indicator, such as popularity, number of institutions, or philanthropic activity, as an automatic measure of either integration or acceptance.

Theoretically, the synthesis reinforces three principles. First, minority status is relational. A group may be an ethnic minority while exercising strong authority in the religious sphere. Second, identity is historical and situational. Arabness and Indonesianness are not closed containers, but categories that change through organizations, politics, family, education, and public practices. Third, socio-religious contribution is both an institutional practice and an arena of meaning production. These principles allow Hadhrami studies to move beyond two equally reductive tendencies: celebratory narratives that merely inventory contributions and identity narratives that focus only on marginalization.

The empirical implication is the need for research that tests mechanisms at the level of institutions and interactions. First, studies could compare how Hadhrami schools, religious assemblies, social institutions, and organizations manage public access while transmitting identity. Second, comparisons across cities are needed because their demographic structures, migration histories, and relations with local institutions vary. Third, intergenerational research should examine changes in authority, marriage, education, and media use without assuming in advance that younger people are either more integrated or more

distant from tradition. Fourth, philanthropy research should collect direct evidence on beneficiaries, organizational networks, and public perceptions so that the relationship between social services and recognition can be tested rather than presumed.

Geography constitutes another important research agenda. Much of the core literature examines specific community centers and historical episodes, while Hadhrami experiences across Indonesian cities may vary with community size, relations with local majorities, economic structure, and local Islamic institutions. Comparisons among Surabaya, Jakarta, coastal Javanese cities, eastern Indonesia, and other regions should not begin from the assumption that Hadhrami communities pursue the same strategies. The relational framework instead suggests comparative questions: when is religious authority translated into public connectedness, when does education strengthen internal boundaries, and under what conditions are identity markers understood as an ordinary part of local plurality? Such questions can test whether patterns identified in the synthesis travel across regions or remain strong only in particular contexts.

The synthesis also has methodological implications for diaspora studies. Diaspora frameworks often emphasize origin-destination relations, transnational networks, and identity maintenance. For communities rooted in a country across several generations, these concerns should be combined with analyses of citizenship, local institutions, and intergroup relations. Otherwise, research risks continuing to study Hadhrami descendants primarily from outside Indonesia. Yet removing the transregional dimension altogether would overlook networks of knowledge, pilgrimage, genealogy, and authority that remain relevant in some settings. A more productive analytical position treats transregionality and localization as processes that can operate simultaneously with varying intensity across social arenas.

For Indonesian socio-religious studies, this approach also shifts attention from asking whether Hadhrami communities are already integrated toward questions that can be tested more directly. Researchers can examine who accesses institutions, how authority acquires legitimacy, which languages are used to reach publics, which identity markers are maintained, and how actors

outside the community interpret these practices. Such questions make it possible to test the relationship between contribution and identity at the level of interaction rather than infer it from histories of origin. They also create space for comparison between Hadhrami experiences and those of other ethnic minorities operating within a majority-religion sphere. Such comparison can broaden the theoretical relevance of Hadhrami studies without erasing the community's historical specificity.

This study has limitations. The corpus was constructed through purposive, iterative, and snowballing procedures rather than a systematic review protocol with an initial universe of records that could be counted retrospectively. The corpus is also heterogeneous in source type, historical period, and geographic scale. Several regional works are used for contextual purposes and cannot substitute for Indonesia-specific evidence. In addition, philanthropy and generational change have more limited evidentiary foundations than religious authority, education, and identity formation. These limitations do not negate the usefulness of the synthesis, but they restrict its claims to pattern mapping, relational explanation, and the identification of research gaps.

Conclusion

This synthesis shows that the socio-religious contributions and identity negotiations of Hadhrami Arab-descended communities in Indonesia should not be treated as two separate sets of phenomena. Institutions and practices that sustain da'wa, education, solidarity, and social connectedness are also arenas in which authority is formed, traditions are transmitted, group boundaries are negotiated, and social recognition is produced. Contribution therefore does not automatically eliminate stereotypes, while identity maintenance does not automatically obstruct integration. Their relationship is contextual and depends on how actors, institutions, and publics assign meaning to socio-religious practices.

The article's principal contribution is a relational framework that distinguishes ethnic minority status from religious authority, operationalizes socio-religious contribution, and treats Arab and Indonesian identities as

historically constructed categories that can overlap. The framework directs future research toward testing the mechanisms connecting public service, identity reproduction, and social recognition across different institutions and regions. Through this approach, research on Hadhramis in Indonesia can move from inventories of roles and challenges toward more precise explanations of how contribution and identity mutually shape socio-religious life.

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