



Article

## Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI): Arab-Hadrami Community Integration Movement in the Dutch East Indies, 1934-1942

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### Abstract

This article aims to explain how the involvement and success of the Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI) in integrating Arab-Hadrami society into a part of the Indonesian nation. PAI was originally a social organization founded in Semarang in 1934. But along the way, this organization turned into a political organization because of the demands of its time. This article uses historical research methods in four steps, i.e., heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. The main source in this article is the personal archive of A. R. Baswedan, organizational archives of Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI), and *Koempoelan Toelisan Gerakan al-Irsjad*. While the supporting sources come from contemporaneous newspapers, e.g., *Pewarta Arab*, *Insaf*, *Matahari*, *Al-Ma'arif*, *ad-Dahna*, *Hadhramaut* dan *Aliran Baroe*, as well as secondary sources derived from books, journals, and other scientific articles relevant to this topic. The results showed that: (1) Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI) was founded as a solution to reconcile the opposition among *sayidi* and *non-sayid* groups that divided the Arab-Hadrami community in the Dutch East Indies. Along the way, PAI then gained the support of the two conflicting groups; (2) PAI succeeded in integrating the Arab-Hadrami community into part of the Indonesian nation. Although at first the Indonesianized of this organization was doubtful, with its various programs, PAI managed to attract sympathy from nationalists and the Indonesian people that they were part of this nation.

## INTRODUCTION

Integration is an adjustment between different elements, especially in social life, so that later it will produce a comfortable life pattern for society. Integration also means an update to something until it becomes a complete unity (Hisyam, 2021). Integration itself is something that has an important role in society itself. In this article, the author wants to explain the Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI) as an organization that successfully integrated Arab-Hadrami (Hadrami associated with the Hadhramaut region in Yemen) society into the structure of Indonesian society during the colonial period.

Based on the prevailing social stratification, the Arab-Hadrami society in the Dutch East Indies can be divided into two major groups, i.e., *sayid* and *non-sayid*. These two factions then organized themselves into Ar Rabithah Alawiyah (*sayid*) which was founded in 1928 and Al Irshad (*non-sayid*) which was founded in 1914. Before the emergence of two organizations

with different goals, the Arab-Hadrami community had a common association called Jamiat Kheir which was founded in Batavia in 1901 (Berg, [2010](#)).

Jamiat Kheir was founded on 7 July 1905 in Batavia with an open to all Muslims regardless of their origins, even though most of its members were Arab-Hadrami. The organization is social in nature as reflected in its purpose, helping those affected by disasters and striving in the education and teaching of children (Hasyim & Haryono, [2019](#)). That social nature then gave the greatest share to education and teaching since 1909. Jamiat Kheir began to build his first madrasa with a modern system, such as the use of chaired classes and props to improve the quality of its graduates (Rahmadi & Hidayat, [2020](#)). Jamiat Kheir also brought in three teachers from the Middle East, among whom was Sheikh Ahmad Soerkati who came from Sudan in 1911. But a few years later Soerkati left Jamiat Kheir because of different views and founded the Al-Irshad organization (Collins, [2010](#)).

Jamiah al-Islah wal-Irshad (Association for Reform and Leadership) or better known as Al-Irshad was founded in 1915 by Ahmad Soerkati with the help of several Arab-Hadrami who came from non-*sayid* circles. This association became a stronghold of anti-*sayids* or *sheikhs*, which is still a common term to refer to all non-*sayids*. Al-Irshad embodied most of the lower-class emancipation within the Arab-Hadrami community. Like Jamiat Kheir, Al-Irshad is also social with the main goal in the field of education (Badjerei, [1996](#)).

The objectives of Al-Irshad are: (1) spreading Arabic customs in accordance with Islam, providing written language readings to the Arabs, increasing knowledge of Arabic and other necessary languages; (2) establishing infrastructure that supports activities within goal number one; (3) establish a library to collect books that are useful for the improvement of science and moral development (Anshari & Fahrudin, [2020](#)). Al-Irshad is an organization in which a *sayid* cannot be its administrator. This is contained in article 5 of its articles of association which reads “as for the *sayid* nation should not be appointed as a *lid bestuur* (administrator)” (Al-Irshad, [1934](#)). Nonetheless, a *sayid* named Abdullah Alatas was the biggest contributor to the organization. *Sayid* Abdullah Alatas donated 60,000 guilders to Al-Irshad (Muttaqin, [2022](#)).

Meanwhile, Ar-Rabitah Al-Alawiyah is an organization that serves as an umbrella for all *sayids*. Ar-Rabitah was founded in reaction to a dispute between the *sayid* and non-*sayid* factions. Ar-Rabitah was founded on December 27, 1928, with the aim of (1) advancing the Arabs materially and spiritually; (2) strengthening brotherhood between fellow *Alawiyin* (*sayid*) in particular and *Hadhramiyin* (descendants of Hadhramaut) generally; (3) educating orphaned children, helping widows, the weak, the unemployed and the disabled; (4) re-register the descendants of *Alawiyin* and maintain the price of their wealth; and (5) disseminate Islamic religious education, Arabic and so on (Fauzi et al., [2013](#)).

In 1912, three Arab teachers were recruited by Jamiat Kheir to become teachers at their own schools. One of the teachers recruited was Ahmad Soerkati who came from Sudan. He was a teacher who studied in Mecca for a long time and became an important religious leader. A few years later, Soerkati caused discord in the Arab-Hadrami community (Batubara et al., [2020](#)). From the beginning, Soerkati did not like traditional religious views and rigid social relations within the Arab-Hadrami community. He especially disagreed with the haughty behavior of the *sayids* in Java. Soerkati was indeed influenced by modernist thought from Egypt, namely Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha who aligned the practice of Islam according to the guidance of the times. Soerkati's view immediately caused heated discussions within the Arab-Hadrami community in the Dutch East Indies (Jonge, [2019](#)).

The direct cause of the split within the Arab-Hadrami community was the statement about marriage and kissing hands. During his visit to the head of the Arab-Hadrami community in Solo, Ahmad Soerkati stated that marriages between *sharifah* (women of the *sayid* group) can be married by any Muslim man and even according to *kafa'ah*. On another occasion, Soerkati attacked the self-glorification and delusions of chastity of the *sayids* and advocated the abolition of kissing hands. Both events that followed had a tremendous impact among the Arab-Hadrami community (Jonge, [2007](#)).

The disagreement between the two factions then spilled over into other issues, such as the issue of *sayid* titles and the non-*sayid* group's rejection of the tradition of kissing hands (*taqbil*). As a result, the Dutch East Indies government was dragged into this dispute (Pijper, [1977](#)). In fact, this dispute also spilled over into political issues, especially those related to Hadhramaut, so it troubled the British Colonial government, which at that time was the ruler of the region (Jonge, [1993](#)).

This chaos was further aggravated by the establishment of several *muwallad* organizations in response to the increasing integration of the Arab-Hadrami community with Indonesia at that time. The first organization to be formed was *the Mura'atul al-Ikhwan* (Respect for Brotherhood). The organization was founded in Surabaya around 1913 and aims to develop cooperation among Arab-Hadrami people born in the Dutch East Indies (Kesheh, [2007](#)).

Another organization is *Jam'iyah al-Tahdibiyyah* (Educational Organization) which was founded in Surabaya in 1924. This organization aims to raise the social status of the Arab-Hadrami community in the Dutch East Indies and put aside all-party feelings. One of his supporters Sayid Hoesin Bafagieh recalled the foundation of his organization as quoted by the newspaper *Aliran Baroe*, namely: “some Arab youths from *Al-Irshad* and *ar-Rabitah* founded an association called *Bibliotheek Attandibijah* in Surabaya” (“Di Dalam dan Di Luar Pergerakan,” [1939](#)). This organization is open to all Muslims living in Surabaya but practically this organization is dominated by *muwallads*. The organization's greatest achievement was establishing a library and publishing a magazine published twice a month called *Zaman Baroe* (Fachruruzi, [2019](#)).

Then also established a similar organization in 1926 in Batavia called *Shubban al-'Arab* (Arab Youth). As a youth organization, *Shubban al-'Arab* is also dominated by *muwallads*. The organization aims to generate solidarity and unity among the Arab-Hadrami youth in the region and strives as far as possible to raise their educational and cultural standards (“Al-Ijtima’ as-Sanawi Li-Jam’iyah Shubban al-’Arab,” [1927](#)). Other goals were to establish a library, bring in teachers and hold courses for its members.

Various attempts to reconcile the dispute between the two main factions of Arab-Hadrami society have been made by many parties. The first attempt was made by Sayid Ismail Alatas, a member of the *Volksraad* (People’s Council) in 1918 proposed to form a committee to resolve this dispute. However, this attempt failed due to Jamiat Kheir's rejection of Ahmad Soerkati as a representative of *Al-Irshad* on the grounds that he was a foreigner (Suratmin & Kwartanada, [2014](#)).

The organization of the *muwallads* faces almost the same challenges. Nonetheless, these small organizations of the *muwallads* persisted and laid the foundations for the next plan to unite the *muwallads*. The main initiative came from Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Alamudi, a young and energetic *muwallad* from Ambon, who initiated the formation of a committee in Surabaya in 1929 with the aim of establishing the Arab-Hadrami Association in the Dutch East Indies (“Lajnah Al-Wahdah al-’Arabiyah,” [1929](#)).

The effort towards peace pioneered by Alamudi and gained great attention was the establishment of the *Indo-Arabische Verbond* (IAV) devoted to the Arab-Hadrami *peranakan*. IAV is expected to play an active role in politics. However, Alamudi's efforts failed miserably when it was discovered that Alamudi wanted to make the IAV his political vehicle to win a seat in the *Volksraad* which had been his ambition (Suratmin & Kwartanada, [2014](#)).

Another important figure who sought to forge unity among the Arab-Hadrami community was Abdul Rahman Baswedan. He is a *muwallad* from Surabaya. He received his first education from Ahmad Soerkati at the Al-Irshad school in Batavia. He also studied with Muhammad bin Hashim at the Hadhramaut school in Surabaya, where there are still habits such as kissing hands are still maintained (Baswedan, [1974](#)).

Baswedan was an active supporter of the IAV organization and was part of the committee that reconstituted its constitution in mid-1932. Baswedan explains the principles of Persatoean Arab Indonesia in his two articles published by the newspaper *Matahari*. In his article, Baswedan tried to explain sociologically the Arab-Hadrami society in the Dutch East Indies (Baswedan, [1934](#)). He asserted that Arab-Hadrami society as well as the Chinese were divided into two groups called *totok* (newcomers born in Hadhramaut) and *peranakan* (born in the Dutch East Indies).

Baswedan's article elicited a warm response. As in the earlier founders of at-Tadhibiyyah and IAV, he was accused of spearheading divisions among Arab-Hadrami. Most Arab-Hadrami reject the separation of *totok* and *peranakan* within their society and accuse Baswedan of trying to create this division. Baswedan's articles then influenced the issue of Arab-Hadrami identity which became the core of the rise of Arab-Hadrami society in the Dutch East Indies. He stated that the *peranakan* had more similarities with the Indonesians and Chinese than the *totok* people (“Tjatatan Dari Masa Kelahiran PAI,” [1940](#)).

The culmination was on October 4, 1934, in Semarang, thirty-nine *sayids* and *sheikhs* – Baswedan included in it – young and progressive born in the Dutch East Indies stated that they no longer viewed Hadhramaut as their homeland, but Indonesia. These progressive youths vowed that as sons of Indonesia, they would fight for the territory and society of Indonesia. The next day, they established the union called Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI). The union explicitly opposes divisions within the Arab-Hadrami community and seeks to increase cooperation and solidarity among the Arab-Hadrami people in Indonesia (Jonge, [2019](#)).

To see the gaps and novelty values of this article, the author presents some previous research in the last ten years that has a theme that is relevant to this article. Samudra Eka Cipta in his research explained Abdul Rahman Baswedan to be a figure who could unite differences among Arab-Hadrami and then declare allegiance to Indonesian nationalism (Cipta, [2020](#)). Amaruli, et al, reviewed how the Arab Youth Oath became the forerunner of the founding of the Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI) which became a forum for nationalist organizations among Arab-Hadrami people in Indonesia (Amaruli et al., [2018](#)). Alfiah Noor Ramadhani found that the Youth Oath in 1928 was influential among Arab-Hadrami people in Indonesia, giving rise to the Arab Youth Oath and Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI) (Ramadhani, [2017](#)). Olenka & Suparwoto explained that A. R. Baswedan became a central figure in uniting Arabs and became an inspiration for other Arab *peranakan* together with nationalists to fight for Indonesian independence (Olenka & Suparwoto, [2014](#)). Purnawan Basundoro in his writing explained that A. R. Baswedan became a figure who encouraged the Arab community to merge into the Indonesian nation starting from Ampel (Surabaya) until finally his ideas spread throughout Indonesia (Basundoro, [2012](#)).



Departing from the literature review above, no research has been found that discusses the role of Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI) who became the pioneer of the Arab-Hadrami community integration movement in the Dutch East Indies. Therefore, this article is here to complement previous research as well as add to the latest treasures related to publications about Arab-Hadrami people in Indonesia in general and Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI) specifically.

## METHOD

This research uses historical research methods with four stages (Kuntowijoyo, [2021](#)). Heuristics are carried out by collecting primary sources in the form of personal archives of A. R. Baswedan, archives of organizations Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI), *Koempoelan Toelisan dengan Gerakan al-Irsjad*, contemporaneous newspapers, e.g., *Pewarta Arab*, *Insaf*, *Matahari*, *Al-Ma'arif*, *ad-Dahna*, *Hadhramaut* dan *Aliran Baroe*, as well as secondary sources derived from books, journals, and other scientific articles relevant to this topic. Verification is carried out by sorting only those sources that are stated to have used the scientific method. Interpretation is carried out by conducting analysis and synthesis with a social approach. The results of these stages are written in the form of historiography in the form of this article.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Birth of Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI)

Responses from various parties regarding the Baswedan article published in the newspaper *Matahari* do not of them show opposition. Among the people who gave their support were Salim Maskati (first editor of the newspaper *Zaman Baroe*) and Sayid Nuh Al-Kaf, editor of Semarang weekly magazine *Pewarta Arab*. Al-Kaf wrote an unnamed article in his magazine on September 5, 1934, that helped Baswedan in the context of the unity of the *peranakan* (Kesheh, [2007](#)).

After finishing preparing everything to hold the congress, Baswedan immediately formed a committee led by himself to prepare a conference of *muwallads* in Semarang. On the first day of the congress, the congress participants succeeded in sparking what is known as the Indonesia-Arab Day of Consciousness. On that day the participants agreed with a pledge or oath, which Baswedan later said was the Oath of Indonesian Youth of Arab Descent. The oath contains, among others, i.e., (1) the homeland of the Arab *Peranakan* is Indonesia; (2) hence they must renounce a solitary life (isolation); and (3) fulfilling obligations to the homeland of the Indonesian nation (Baswedan, [1974](#)).

The conference was then attended by about 40 people consisting of active supporters of the two feuding organizations (Al-Irshad and Ar-Rabitah). In his speech, Baswedan stated that those present were the mobilizers of the Arabs-Hadrami who were at war with each other (Baswedan, [1974](#)). Despite the differences between them, on the next day (October 5, 1934) the participants agreed to Baswedan's proposal to establish a new organization called Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI). The organization was founded to fight for the emancipation of the Arab-Hadrami people and integrate it with the wider community. PAI membership is restricted to Arab-Hadrami people born in the Dutch East Indies, although Arab-Hadrami people born anywhere are included as extraordinary members (Haikal, [2019](#)).

Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI) following the footsteps of the Indische Partij, the Indo-European group party and Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (PTI). The founders of PAI recognize that their homeland is not Hadhramaut, their ancestral land, but rather Indonesia and that Indonesian culture is their culture insofar as it does not conflict with Islam. PAI has the same ideals as Indonesian nationalists, i.e., to fulfill their obligations to Indonesian society. The Arab-Hadrami felt obliged to improve their social, economic, and political position to

awaken brotherhood and equality along with mutual respect and dispel everything that could undermine that sense (Jonge, [2019](#)).

On the last day of the conference, the organizational structure of the PAI was formed and the central board was elected (Suratmin, [1989](#)). The first PAI Executive Board leadership reflected the different backgrounds of the conference participants. The PAI leadership consists of five people, i.e., A. R. Baswedan (chairman), Nuh al-Kaf (first secretary), Salim Maskati (second secretary), Segaf Assegaff (treasurer), and Abdoerrahim Argoebi (commissioner). Baswedan, Maskati, and Argoebi were active members of Al-Irshad, while Al-Kaf and Assegaff belonged to *sayid* groups and supporters of ar-Rabitah al-Alawiyah. Al-Kaf and Assegaff served as a kind of *sayid* advocacy committee formed in 1931 (“Lajnah Ad-Difa’ al-Far’iyyah Bi-Surabaya,” [1933](#)). Thus, PAI was founded by people who had been hostile to each other in conflicts that arose from debating the title of *sayid*. This difficult attempt to reconcile the *Irshadi* and *sayid* groups was made up to the level of a branch of the organization.

This evolving change of attitude though surprising did not occur suddenly. Most of the founders of PAI participated in the disbanded *muwallad* organization and in the IAV organization which gave birth to the friendship between the *muwallads* of the two parties. Although conflicts over the title *sayid* have separated them, the turmoil over the issue is shrinking. It seems that on both sides there are some younger members who are not so keen on continuing this endless conflict and are more interested in matters that encourage cooperation between the two groups such as continuing the modernization of education (Kesheh, [2007](#)).

What Baswedan and the PAI administrators have done by highlighting to the disgruntled *muwallads* of both parties the differences between the *peranakan* and the *totok* is a way to overcome the *'Alawi-Irshadi* split. The principles of PAI were then compiled in a *communiqué* by its leaders. This *communiqué* contains that Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI) making Islam the basis of this organization, here is its content:

- 1) Establish and recognize that the homeland of the *peranakan* Arabs is Indonesia;
- 2) Hadhramaut is recognized as the homeland of the ancestors;
- 3) Arabic should be used as an Islamic language, so it should be taken into account as Indonesian;
- 4) In line with the statement on point (a), the Arabs must fulfill their obligations towards the Indonesian homeland and its people, as long as they can carry it out;
- 5) In view of the statement on point (d), in order for them to fulfill their obligations, the *peranakan* Arabs had to improve their position and ability in the social, economic, and political spheres within the jurisdiction of the country;
- 6) To achieve everything mentioned above, it is necessary to presumably have a good organization of unity (“Persatoean Arab Indonesia: Official Communiqué Dari Hoofdbestuur PAI,” [1934](#)).

This declaration was a remarkable decision as a form of self-awareness of the identity of the Arab-Hadrami *muwallad* people. This declaration is clearer than Baswedan's article published in the newspaper *Matahari*. This declaration not only explains from the point of view of the political perspective of the *muwallads* including Indonesians as well but also confirms the attitude that their culture is Indonesian culture.

Therefore, the founders of PAI rejected every opportunity taken by the Arab-Hadrami people to maintain their cultural identity. The mention of Hadhramaut's position as “the homeland of the ancestors” was a form of apparent rejection of the view that Hadhramaut as a beloved homeland, prevailed between the *Irshadi* and *'Alawi* people of the time and continued

to inspire reform activities from both parties in Hadhramaut. The founders of PAI are in line with this opinion, i.e., identity is emphasized in the homeland. They are different from their fathers because they recognize other places as their homeland. The Indonesian and Arab countries are their *watan* (homeland). When they know where their *watan* is, then they will know how to behave towards their *watan*, for their father has taught them (Kesheh, [2007](#)).

At the beginning of its establishment PAI was active only in the social, religious, and cultural fields. The organization is doing its best to improve education for Arab-Hadrami children and organizes courses on lectures on topics around worldliness and spirituality for adults. To reach young people and women, youth organizations were established, namely Laskar PAI and the PAI women's association. The attempt to manipulate women can be seen as a revolutionary step in the Arab-Hadrami community. PAI also publishes two periodical newspapers called *Insaf* and *Sadar*, which are owned by Hoesein Bafagih and based in Surabaya (Jonge, [2019](#)).

At the first congress held in January 1936, the organization had only six branches and the ones that were really very active were the Batavia and Surabaya branches. At the second congress of PAI held in Surabaya in March 1937, ten branches were established. This number rose to sixteen by the time of the third congress held in Semarang in April 1938 (“Mendjelang Congress PAI Ketiga,” [1938](#)). Its nine branches are in Java and the rest are in Arab-Hadrami villages spread across Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Ternate.

Since that year its development has been progressing rapidly. The organization had 27 branches in January 1939 and 38 branches in June 1940 (“Tjabang-Tjabang Organisasi Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI),” [1940](#)). Then in August 1941, PAI branches spread to 45 large cities and towns in Java and outside Java. The number of PAI members per branch also varies, but from the existing figures, it can be stated that PAI received widespread support from the *muwallads* in the Dutch East Indies (Kesheh, [2007](#)).

In its early development, PAI was indeed slow. Although the historical facts about the previous *muwallad* organization illustrate the opposite, the unity of this organization can be regarded as an achievement. There are no numbers that are a benchmark for how large the number of PAI members is. However, between 1937 and 1940, the number of PAI branches increased from 28 to 45 branches, in almost every important Arab-Hadrami community in Java and other islands.

Since 1936, PAI has also begun to feel its presence in the political arena in the Dutch East Indies. This was evident in 1937, Persatoean Arab Indonesia changed its name to Partai Arab Indonesia in response to the strengthening of the political side of this organization (Suratmin & Kwartanada, [2014](#)). The organization supported the so-called Soetardjo Petition filed in the *Volksraad*, to convene a conference of Dutch and Indonesian representatives to chart a path to autonomy under the auspices of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 1939, the union became a member Majelis Islam A’la Indonesia (MIAI) and in the same year, PAI sided with the action Gaboengan Politik Indonesia (GAPI) to replace the *Volksraad* with a democratically elected parliament. PAI later became the closest non-indigenous foreign party compared to similar parties. The Indonesian party and the nationalist press then welcomed PAI into the political arena of the Dutch East Indies as an ally (Jonge, [2019](#)).

The Japanese occupation in March 1942 marked the end of political parties and political life. Japan's military government also banned all political parties – including PAI – and organizations with political implications. This ban became the end point of PAI's presence in Indonesian politics. But even if it must be disbanded, PAI's philosophy of struggle is still being fought by its leaders informally. This is because there are still many Arab-Hadrami who believe

in its Indonesianized. They also tried their best to show the world around them, that they thought of themselves as Indonesians in the hope that the Japanese would change their attitude towards them and eventually treat them in a native way like natives.

### PAI and Integration into Indonesia

Nationalism among Arab-Hadrami became a divisive topic in this community. Many Arab-Hadrami *totok* people are very uncomfortable with the choice of *peranakan* Arab-Hadrami who were mostly born and raised in the Dutch East Indies and then consider Indonesia as their homeland. These Arab-Hadrami *were* strongly opposed to the nationalism that was increasingly felt among the Arab-Hadrami and PAI became the main kingpin of the spread of this idea. Those who reject this nationalism argue that there is no congruence between Islam and national identity. These opponents deliberately created the issue to get a lot of supporters (Jonge, [2019](#)).

According to opponents of this idea, neither the Koran nor the hadith contains any indication of allegiance based on nationality, homeland, or land. But PAI members said the statement lacked a solid basis for argument. They called for a thorough review of these sources along with fact-based discussions and denounced critics whom they viewed as too sentimental and prejudiced. In addition, PAI members also accused opponents of not seeing the long-term social change that has taken place over the centuries. They seem to be alive in the days of “camels and *syakduf*, the age of the Sahara and dates” (“Di Sekeliling Kebangsaan Dan Islam: Bergerak Dengan Dasar Kebangsaan,” [1939](#)).

But the idea of nationalism brought about by PAI is not always smooth sailing. Even Indonesian nationalists do not fully believe in the Indonesianized of this organization. The wider acceptance of PAI was only obtained after this organization began to gain the trust of the Indonesian nation by actively participating in the nationalist movement. The first step was made at the second PAI congress in Surabaya in 1937 by presenting an Arab representative from the *Volksraad*, namely Sayyid Abdullah Salim Al-Attas who stated that PAI could only attract the interest of the Indonesian nation through political activities (“Pidato Toean A.S. Alatas, Penasihat PAI,” [1937](#)).

Since then, PAI has been actively involved in Indonesian politics. The organization expressed its support for Soetardjo's petition before the *Volksraad* in 1936 requesting a conference to discuss the implementation of autonomy in the Dutch East Indies within ten years. PAI branches in various cities are planning rallies in support of the petition, which was also signed by Al-Attas. For some Indonesians, this is strong evidence that this organization has a purpose that is in accordance with the ideals of Indonesian independence. This further strengthens PAI's success in integrating itself as part of the Indonesian nation.

PAI leaders are increasingly aware of its position as the Indonesian nation, not a Hadrami nation. In various ways, they sought to show that they had abolished their Hadrami identity to become an Indonesian citizen (“Politiek Program PAI,” [1937](#)). An Arab-Hadrami citizen cannot be an Indonesian citizen. Indonesian nationality can only belong to someone who ceases to be a Hadrami nation (Kesheh, [2007](#)).

The successful acceptance of PAI by Indonesian nationalists is a struggle that is not completely over. PAI's biggest challenge is convincing the *muwallads* to recognize themselves as Indonesians. The struggle to attract the day of the Arab-Hadrami people who were born in the Dutch East Indies was carried out with high enthusiasm and enthusiasm (Al-Habsyi, [2022](#)).

Baswedan became a major figure in the campaign. He addressed rallies in all corners of Java, trying to make the *muwallads* aware that their homeland is Indonesia. Baswedan is



directly responsible for the formation of most PAI branches. His business cost him considerable personal money and even then, caused his health to also decline (Suratmin, [1989](#)).

In addition to holding rallies, PAI disseminates its thoughts through official and semi-official governing bodies. Monthly magazines *Insaf* and *Sadar*, both published in Batavia and later monthly magazines Surabaya *Aliran Baroe*, all of them clearly explain PAI and its vision that *muwallad* is Indonesian. The development of PAI was offset by the many oppositions of the Arab-Hadrami community itself.

Various criticisms about PAI emerged after the organization was founded, of particular interest was the surviving IAV newspaper, *Al-Jaum* which became the first forum for critics to accuse PAI of eliminating their culture and creating divisions among the Arab-Hadrami community. But the loudest and hottest condemnation of PAI occurred when the organization achieved its most rapid development from 1938 to 1941. The increasing opposition at the time was demonstrated by the resolution produced at the PAI congress in 1938, which asked the leadership to pay attention to the attacks from newspapers. (“Kongres Persatoean Arab Indonesia Ke-3 Di Semarang,” [1938](#)).

The main opposition to PAI comes from *Al-Irshad* which is the main magazine of *Al-Murshid*, filled with attacks on PAI. There are several reasons why *Al-Irshad* strongly opposed PAI. Some reasons are ideological, and others are non-ideological. Here are the two main reasons *Al-Irshad* came into conflict with PAI, i.e., (1) the organization has sorted the Arab-Hadrami community into two groups, *peranakan* and *totok*. It gave rise to a pointless conflict among the formerly united Arab-Hadrami people; (2) PAI is accused of recognizing Indonesia as its homeland, and its leaders reject its identity as Arab and seek to become Indonesian.

The rejection of the PAI was not only against the Hadrami nationality but also against the Arab nationality itself which greatly shocked the Arab-Hadrami community itself (Kesheh, [2007](#)). The opposition to PAI culminated in an onslaught at a time when the organization's ideas were being spread. In addition to holding meetings and publishing magazines, PAI spreads its ideas using songs and theatrical performances. Even more controversial is the way of introducing the organization through theatrical performances that are open to the entire society of the Dutch East Indies.

Theatrical performances characterized the PAI congress between 1937 and 1941. Even Baswedan wrote two dramas entitled *Mr. Faisal* dan *Menoedjoe Masjarakat Baroe* (Haikal, 2019). But the most controversial show was the drama entitled *Fatimah* written by Hoesein Bafagieh during the third PAI congress in Semarang held on April 16, 1939. Other similar performances were held in Batavia, Solo, and Pekalongan (“Sekeliling Tooneel Fatimah!” [1939](#)).

*Fatimah* is accused of exposing the problems of Arab-Hadrami society to make the public know and mock her. The show was judged to be a damaging and insulting story to the beliefs and customs of the Arab people. Indeed, the striking thing is that Bafagieh did not reject the stereotypes of the Indonesian nation to the Arab-Hadrami people, instead, he showed these stereotypes to the whole society.

This latest incident was an unexpected achievement of PAI, thus causing peace between the *Al-Irshad* and *Ar-Rabitah* groups. The British Consul General in Batavia, Fitzmaurice, stated that the joint opposition to the PAI caused *sayid* and *Irshadi* groups to unite, thus easing the long-standing conflict between the two groups. Both organizations supported the idea of *wataniyyah* so they were surprised by PAI's efforts to sever ties between *muwallad* and its beloved homeland, Hadhramaut.

## CONCLUSION

Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI) became the Arab-Hadrami organization that was most successful in providing awareness of the idea of nationalism among Arab-Hadrami during the Dutch East Indies period. This organization was able to integrate the Arab-Hadrami community into part of the Indonesian nation, even though at first this organization was challenged quite severely, especially by *sayids* who did not agree with the ideas brought by non-*sayids*. Baswedan became a key figure of PAI who could change and convince other *muwallads*, that their homeland is Indonesia, not Hadhramaut.

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