

Articulating Ḥaḍramī Diasporic Identity in *Layālī al-Qadr*: A Spiritual Re-Mapping of Java

Siti Amsariah^{1*}, Sayidatul Ummah², Ali Hasan al Bahar³,
Solikatus Sa'diyah⁴, Fathalla Mohamed Fathalla Zekaizak⁵,

^{1,2,3} Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, Jl. Tarumanegara, Pisangan, Kec. Ciputat, Kota Tangerang Selatan, Banten, Indonesia

⁴ Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, Indonesia

⁵ Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt

*Email: siti.amsariah@uinjkt.ac.id (Corresponding Author)

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Abstract

This article examines the articulation of Ḥaḍramī diasporic identity in *Layālī al-Qadr fī Akhdz 'an al-Ḥabīb Abū Bakr*, a travel narrative documenting Sayyidi Alwī al-Maliki's journey across Java during the early post-independence period. While previous studies have explored Ḥaḍramī identity through migration, religious authority, and social institutions, travel narratives as sites of diasporic identity articulation remain underexplored. Employing a qualitative textual approach, this study draws on William Safran's theory of diaspora and Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity to examine how communal belonging is articulated through ritual, symbolic, affective, and narrative practices represented in the text. The findings demonstrate that diasporic identity is reproduced through interconnected practices that sustain religious authority, communal recognition, collective memory, and affective attachment across dispersed communities. Rather than functioning as isolated cultural expressions, these practices collectively reproduce networks of belonging that connect individuals, communities, and religious institutions across multiple localities in Java. The study further argues that the cumulative effect of these identity-building processes extends beyond the maintenance of communal affiliation. By linking people, memories, authorities, and places within a shared framework of meaning, the narrative generates a spiritual geography through which dispersed communities imagine themselves as participants in a common religious landscape. Consequently, the re-mapping of spiritual space emerges from the continuous articulation of Ḥaḍramī diasporic identity in postcolonial Java.

Keywords: Cultural Identity; Ḥaḍramī Diaspora; Postcolonial Java; Rihlah; Spiritual Geography

مستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة تمثّل الهوية الحضرمية في الشتات كما ترد في "ليالي القدر في الأخذ عن الحبيب أبي بكر" وهو نصّ رحلي يؤثّق رحلة سيدي علوي المالكي عبر جزيرة جاوة خلال السنوات الأولى التي أعقبت استقلال إندونيسيا. وبينما تناولت الدراسات السابقة الهوية الحضرمية من خلال موضوعات الهجرة والسلطة الدينية والمؤسسات الاجتماعية، لا تزال السرديات الرحلة بوصفها فضاءات لتشكّل الهوية الشتات مجالاً لم يحظَ بما يكفي من الدراسة. واعتماداً على منهج نوعي قائم على تحليل النصوص، تستند هذه الدراسة إلى نظرية الشتات لدى ويليام سافران ومفهوم الهوية الثقافية عند ستيوارت هول، لفحص

كيفية التعبير عن الانتماء الجماعي من خلال الممارسات الطقسية والرمزية والعاطفية والسردية التي يمثلها النص. وتُظهر النتائج أن الهوية الشتات يُعاد إنتاجها عبر ممارسات مترابطة تُسهم في استدامة السلطة الدينية والاعتراف الجماعي والذاكرة الجمعية والارتباط الوجداني بين المجتمعات المتفرقة. ولا تعمل هذه الممارسات بوصفها تعبيرات ثقافية منفصلة، بل تُسهم مجتمعةً في إعادة إنتاج شبكات الانتماء التي تربط الأفراد والجماعات والمؤسسات الدينية عبر مواقع متعددة في جاوة. كما تجادل الدراسة بأن الأثر التراكمي لهذه العمليات المكوّنة للهوية يتجاوز مجرد الحفاظ على الانتماء الجماعي؛ إذ إن السردية، من خلال ربط الأشخاص والذكريات والسلطات والأماكن ضمن إطار دلالي مشترك، تُنشئ جغرافيا روحية تتخيل من خلالها المجتمعات المتفرقة نفسها بوصفها أطرافاً مشاركة في فضاء ديني واحد. وعليه، فإن إعادة رسم الفضاء الروحي تنبثق من الاستمرار في التعبير عن الهوية الحضرية الشتاتية في جاوة ما بعد الاستعمار.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية الثقافية؛ الشتات الحضري؛ جاوة ما بعد الاستعمار؛ الرحلة؛ الجغرافيا الروحية

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INTRODUCTION

The Ḥaḍramī community has been an integral component of Indonesia's cultural landscape for centuries. Their arrival in the archipelago, initiated through trade and Islamic missionary activities in the eighteenth century, contributed to the formation of a distinctive socio-cultural dynamic, particularly regarding the construction of their identity as a diasporic group.¹ Expansive trading networks and the transmission of Islamic teachings positioned the Ḥaḍramī community in a unique social status within local societies.² As descendants of Arabs closely linked to Islamic traditions, they

¹Huub De Jonge, *Mencari Identitas: Orang Arab Hadrami Di Indonesia (1900-1930)* (Gramedia Pustaka, 2019); Rabith Jihan Amaruli, Singgih Tri Sulistiyono, and Dewi Yulianti, 'Preserving Memory, Campaigning Nationalism: The Haul of Habib Hasan Bin Thaha and the Remaking of the Hadhrami-Arab Identity in Indonesia', *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8.1 (2022), doi:10.1080/23311886.2022.2125145.

²Amanah Nurish, 'Religious and Cultural Embodiment in the Land of Osing: A Portrait of Hadrami Community in Banyuwangi, East Java', *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 18.2 (2024), pp. 1-24, doi:10.15642/islamica.2024.18.2.1-24; Ahmad Syukri, Mohammad Nabil Almunawar, and Mohammad Nabil Almunawar, 'Religious and Economic Contributions of Sayyid Hadhrami in Palembang During the 18th - 21st Centuries', *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage*, 13.2 (2024), pp. 377-413, doi:10.31291/hn.v13i2.751.

frequently held respected positions within the social hierarchy.³ However, this recognition also introduced complexities in identity formation, requiring ongoing negotiation between preserving cultural roots from Hadramaut and adapting to the plural socio-cultural realities of the Indonesian archipelago.⁴ This process of adaptation and integration generated distinctive expressions of identity, evident in language, clothing, cuisine, and socio-religious practices.⁵

Throughout their history, the Ḥaḍramī community has undergone diverse and dynamic phases of identity transformation.⁶ During the Dutch colonial era, the social segregation policy, dividing society into Europeans, Foreign Orientals (including Arabs and Chinese), and Natives, directly affected their socio-political standing. Classified as “Foreign Orientals,” the Ḥaḍramī occupied a higher privilege compared to natives, though still below Europeans. This situation created an identity dilemma, forcing the community to negotiate their position between colonial policies and their relations with indigenous society.⁷ Such tendencies are manifested in diverse cultural expressions, including literary works by Ḥaḍramī intellectuals and writers, one of which is the travel narrative *Layālī al Qadr fī Akhẓī ‘an al Ḥabīb Abu Bakr*.⁸

³Soleh Hasan Wahid, ‘Rebuilding Ḥabā’ib Authority in the Digital Age in Indonesia: Jamā’ah Relations, Social Action, and Transparency’, *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 12.1 (2025), doi:10.1080/23311983.2025.2508025; Gea Novita Rohmah, ‘The Role of Tarekat in Awakening the Spirit of Nationalism (Study of the Thought and Movement of Habib Luthfi Bin Yahya)’, *JOUSIP: Journal of Sufism and Psychotherapy*, 1.2 (2021), pp. 127–40, doi:10.28918/jousip.v1i2.4831.

⁴Fatimah Husein, Mark Woodward, and Nancy J. Smith-Hefner, *Ba ‘Alawi Women and the Development of Hadrami Studies in Indonesia Paradigms, Models, and Counterfactuals: Decolonializing the Study of Islam in Indonesia Gender and Islam in Indonesian Studies, A Retrospective* (n.d.); Syamsul Rijal, ‘Revitalizing Hadhrami Authority: New Networks, Figures and Institutions among Ḥabā’ib in Indonesia’, *Studia Islamika*, A27.2 (2020), pp. 239–72, doi:10.36712/sdi.v27i2.9382; Yahya Mohamed Ahmed Ghaleb, *Ishkālīyāt Al-Intimā’ al-Waṭanī ‘inda al-Muhājirīn al-Ḥaḍārimah Fī Indūnisiyā Fī al-Niṣf al-Awwal Min al-Qarn al-‘Ishrīn*, 22.3 (2015).

⁵Ismail Fajrie Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority? Menyemai Sunnah, Merangkai Jamaah* (Mizan Wacana, 2024); Rijal, ‘Revitalizing Hadhrami Authority: New Networks, Figures and Institutions among Ḥabā’ib in Indonesia’; Rabith Jihan Amaruli and others, ‘The Influence of Javanese Culture on Hadhrami Community in Coastal Society of Semarang’, *E3S Web of Conferences*, 317 (2021), doi:10.1051/e3sconf/202131701042.

⁶Natalie Mobini Kesheh, *Hadrami Awakening: Kebangkitan Hadhrami Di Indonesia* (Akbar Media Eka Sarana, 2007); Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk and Ahmed Ibrahim Hassan, ‘The Hadrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia: Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?’, in *The Hadrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia: Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?* ed. by Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk and Ahmed Ibrahim Hassan, 1st ed. (Brill, 2009).

⁷Ainur Rofiq Al Amin and Fikri Mahzumi, ‘The Identity Dilemma of Arab Descendants in Indonesia’, *Kemanusiaan*, 29.2 (2022), pp. 157–76, doi:10.21315/kajh2022.29.2.8; Huub De Jonge, ‘In the Name of Fatimah: Staging the Emancipation of The Arab Hadramis in the Netherlands East Indies’, in *The Arab Hadrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?* ed. by Aboushouk & A. H. Ibrahim A.I (Brill, 2009), pp. 245–63.

⁸Zeffry Alkatiri and Nabel A. Karim Hayaze, “Critical Literature Study on Habaib Identity in the Constellation of Islamic Studies in Indonesia from the Colonial Period to the Present”, *Cogent Arts*

Layālī al Qadr was completed on 28 Jumādil Akhir 1371 H / 1952, and its Indonesian translation was published in 2001. The text provides fresh insights into the Ḥaḍramī community in Indonesia, narrated through the journey of Ḥabīb Alwi bin Ali al-Ḥabsyī, a prominent scholar and mystic residing in Solo, to Gresik at the invitation of al-Qutb Ḥabīb Abu Bakr bin Muhammad Assegaf. Accompanied by close companions, including Ḥabīb Abdul Kadir bin Husein Assegaf, the author of this travelogue and a disciple of Ḥabīb Alwi, the narrative offers more than a mere account of travels. Abdul Kadir carefully details the locations, atmospheres, figures' names, and dialogue encountered along the way, enabling readers to vividly imagine the gatherings attended and to experience the joy and reverence arising from the interactions among these figures.

The historical context in which *Layālī al Qadr* was composed is particularly significant. Completed in 1952, the narrative emerged during the early consolidation of the Indonesian nation-state, a period characterized by efforts to define territorial sovereignty, national citizenship, and a shared postcolonial identity.⁹ For communities such as the Ḥaḍramī diaspora, whose social and religious networks extended beyond local and national boundaries, this context raised new questions regarding belonging and communal continuity.¹⁰ Within this framework, the *riḥlah* serves not only as a record of a spiritual journey across Java but also as a means of linking religious scholars, ritual gatherings, and networks of authority across multiple localities. The text thus articulates a form of belonging that transcends administrative boundaries and territorial divisions, offering a spiritual remapping of Java based on religious affiliations and shared cultural memories rather than solely on the political geography of the newly independent nation-state.

Previous studies on the Ḥaḍramī community in Indonesia have provided important insights into migration, religious authority, identity politics, and cultural adaptation. Ismail Fajrie Alatas,¹¹ for example, examines the reproduction of religious authority within the Ba 'Alawi community through transregional networks linking Hadramaut and Southeast Asia. Likewise, Alkatiri and Hayaze investigate the representation of

and Humanities, 9.1 (2022), doi:10.1080/23311983.2022.2096286; Sayidatul Ummah and Christina Suprihatin, *Hadhrami Cultural Identity in Bafagih's Fatimah*, 453. Inusharts 2019 (2020), pp. 183–86, doi:10.2991/assehr.k.200729.036.

⁹Arsyad Sobby Kesuma, Abdul Halim, and Nur Syam, "The Religious Politics of Habaib in Surabaya and Bangil East Java: A Socio-Religio-Political Approach" *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 10.2 (2022), pp. 285–318, doi:10.21043/qijis.v10i2.12090; Egi Tanadi Taufik, 'Hadhrami Networks and Colonial Legacies in Marriage Discourse of The Indies', *Religio: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 14.2 Special Issue (2024), pp. 226–64, doi:10.26443/jiows.v4i2.83.

¹⁰Al Amin and Mahzumi, "The Identity Dilemma of Arab Descendants in Indonesia"; Iain Walker, "The Hadrami Diaspora: A "Diaspora for Others" in the Indian Ocean", *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies*, 4.2 Special Issue (2021), pp. 188–211, doi:10.26443/jiows.v4i2.83; Nur Rosyid, *The Hadrami Diaspora and the Network Expansion of Majelis Shalawat in Contemporary Indonesia* (n.d.).

¹¹Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority? Menyemai Sunnah, Merangkai Jamaah*.

Ḥabā'ib identity in Indonesian historiography and literary discourse,¹² while Amsariah, Al-Bahar, and Ummah analyze the negotiation of Arab ethnic identity through female representation in literary texts.¹³ Collectively, these studies demonstrate that identity formation among the Ḥaḍramī diaspora is closely connected to religious authority, social transformation, and cultural representation.

Despite these significant contributions, the role of travel narratives (*Riḥlah*) as a literary medium for articulating diasporic identity in post-independence Indonesia remains relatively underexplored. Existing scholarship has predominantly focused on religious institutions, social organizations, manuscripts, genealogical texts, and contemporary identity politics. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to how travel writing constructs symbolic geographies of belonging and rearticulates networks of religious authority within the context of post-independence nation-building. The *riḥlah* genre¹⁴ offers a particularly valuable perspective because it records not only physical mobility but also the ways diasporic communities imagine space, belonging, and communal continuity during moments of political transformation.

This gap becomes particularly important in the context of *Layālī al Qadr fī Akhzi 'an al Ḥabīb Abu Bakr*, a travel narrative completed in 1952 during the early years of Indonesian independence. Rather than functioning merely as a record of a spiritual journey, the text documents encounter among scholars, ritual exchanges, and religious gatherings that connect various Ḥaḍramī communities across Java. Through these narrative representations, the text symbolically rearticulates networks of religious authority and communal belonging within the newly established Indonesian nation-state. Consequently, the travelogue can be read as a literary space in which diasporic identity is continuously articulated, negotiated, and reproduced.

This study uses William Safran's theory of diaspora¹⁵ and Stuart Hall's concept of the articulation of cultural identity as its analytical framework. Safran's theory facilitates an examination of how collective memory, attachment to homeland, and communal continuity are represented in the narrative. Hall's perspective, meanwhile, enables an analysis of identity not as a fixed essence but as an ongoing process of articulation

¹²Alkatiri and Karim Hayaze, "Critical Literature Study on Habaib Identity in the Constellation of Islamic Studies in Indonesia from the Colonial Period to the Present"

¹³Siti Amsariah, Ali Hasan Al-Bahar, and Sayidatul Ummah, 'The Arab Ethnic Identity Politics in Indonesia: A Female Representation in Fatat Qarut and Fatimah', *Buletin Al-Turas*, 30.2 (2024), pp. 261–74, doi:10.15408/bat.v30i2.36014.

¹⁴Imam Wicaksono and others, 'Sufi Journey in Richlatu Ibn Fathumati by Najib Machfouz (Carl Thompson's Travel Literature Analysis)', *Izdiḥar: Journal of Arabic Language Teaching, Linguistics, and Literature*, 6.2 (2023), pp. 183–197 doi:10.22219/jiz.v6i2.18569.

¹⁵William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 1.1 (1991), pp. 83–90.

shaped by historical and cultural circumstances.¹⁶ The combination of these approaches allows for a deeper understanding of how literary narratives function as sites for the construction and maintenance of diasporic identity. Accordingly, this study examines the articulation of Ḥaḍramī diasporic identity in *Layālī al Qadr fī Akhẓī ‘an al Ḥabīb Abu Bakr* through representations of religious authority, cultural transmission, and ritual practices. By focusing on a postcolonial Arabic travel narrative, this research contributes to Arabic literary studies by demonstrating that the riḥlah genre functions not only as a travel account but also as a textual medium through which cultural belonging, collective memory, and diasporic identity are continuously produced and sustained.

METHOD

The primary source of this study is the Arabic travel narrative *Layālī al Qadr fī Akhẓī ‘an al Ḥabīb Abu Bakr*, written by Abdul Kadir bin Husein Assegaf and completed on 28 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 1371 H/1952. The text survives in several manuscript copies preserved by members of the Ba‘Alawī scholarly circles in Indonesia and has circulated within these circles as an important reference for religious and communal history. Over time, the manuscript's transmission relied on both familial inheritance and institutional custodianship, ensuring its preservation through generations despite historical changes. In 2001, an Indonesian translation of the narrative was published, further increasing its accessibility, and cementing its reception among contemporary scholars and community members. The enduring presence of these manuscripts, along with the later translation and ongoing community references, attests to the text's local significance and recognized authority as a record of the Ḥaḍramī diaspora's legacy. Composed during the formative period of Indonesian independence, *Layālī al Qadr* occupies a unique position as one of the few contemporary Arabic riḥlah texts that document the spiritual, social, and intellectual journeys of Ḥaḍramī scholars in Java. As a primary literary text, the travel narrative serves as the principal object of analysis. The study centers on narrative passages depicting mobility, religious encounters, ritual practices, scholarly networks, and representations of cultural belonging among the Ḥaḍramī community in Java.

Data were collected through intensive textual reading¹⁷ (*close reading*) of the Arabic text. To ensure methodological rigor, narrative segments were selected using defined inclusion criteria: segments were included if they directly addressed themes of diaspora, collective memory, religious authority, ritual transmission, or identity construction within the experiences of the Ḥaḍramī community. For instance, a passage describing a ritual gathering involving the distribution of blessed water was included as it clearly exemplified affective practices tied to communal identity, while descriptive travel scenery without direct reference to communal ties or cultural

¹⁶Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by J. Rutherford (Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 222–37.

¹⁷M. Taylor, S.J.; Bogdan, R.; DeVault, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Guidebook and Resource*, 4th ed. (Wiley, 2015).

practices was excluded. Recurring symbols, distinctive cultural practices, or key interactions that illustrated the relationship between Hadramaut and Java were also noted as operational inclusion markers.

During coding, each selected segment was assigned to one or more thematic categories (such as religious authority, ritual transmission, or collective memory) that were established prior to analysis. Throughout this process, coding decisions were documented; for example, if a passage depicted the granting of *ijāzah*, it was coded for both religious authority and transmission of tradition. When passages overlapped in theme, such as rituals that also served as public displays of identity, they were assigned multiple codes. Coding categories were refined iteratively as new patterns and interpretive nuances emerged within the corpus. Thematic coding was conducted manually, grouping similar content together and allowing for the identification of both anticipated and emergent themes.¹⁸ These textual segments were ultimately selected and analyzed because they depict diasporic experience and processes of identity formation among the Ḥaḍramī community in Java. This study uses qualitative content analysis to examine the articulation of diasporic identity in the narrative. The analysis was conducted through three stages: data reduction, thematic coding, and interpretation. Relevant textual excerpts were first selected and classified according to recurring themes. The coded data were subsequently interpreted within their literary and socio-historical contexts to identify patterns of identity construction and cultural continuity. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

The analytical framework of this study combines William Safran's concept of diaspora and Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity. Safran's theory facilitates the examination of how the narrative preserves collective memory and symbolic attachment to Hadramaut, while Hall's perspective enables an analysis of identity as an ongoing process of negotiation and becoming. These theoretical approaches complement each other by enabling an analysis that recognizes both the enduring significance of ancestral roots and the fluid, dynamic processes by which identity is continually articulated in new contexts. While Safran emphasizes stability, continuity, and ties to origin, Hall foregrounds the shifting, constructed, and negotiated aspects of identity formation. By integrating their insights, this study accounts for the interplay between inherited communal memories and the rearticulation of identity in response to changing historical and cultural circumstances. The combination of these frameworks enables a thorough understanding of how diasporic identity is represented and articulated in literary narrative.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The articulation of cultural identity in *Layālī al Qadr fī Akhdz 'an al Ḥabīb Abu Bakr* emerges through a series of encounters, rituals, and symbolic practices that structure the narrative. Written by a third generation Ḥaḍramī descendant in Indonesia, the

¹⁸E. J. Merriam, S.B; Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (John Wiley & Sons, 2015).

travelogue reveals how connections to Hadramaut were maintained not only through collective memory and religious authority but also through everyday cultural practices and spiritual experiences. Rather than presenting identity as a fixed inheritance, the narrative portrays it as an ongoing process of negotiation between ancestral traditions and the socio-religious realities of Java. The following discussion examines how this process is articulated through religious rituals, communal networks, symbolic representations, and cultural practices that collectively shaped the experience of the Ḥaḍramī diaspora in post-independence Indonesia.

From Solo to Gresik: Ḥaḍramī Scholarly Networks and Islamic Authority in Java

The journey of Ḥabīb Alwi bin Ali al-Ḥabsyī from Solo to Gresik constituted not only a physical movement but also a significant spiritual and social pilgrimage. Each stage of the journey reconnected enduring bonds among the Ḥaḍramī communities in Java. Stops in Madiun, Jombang, Surabaya, Malang, and Probolinggo served as important occasions that reinforced social and cultural networks among scholars and their followers. Through meaningful interactions, the journey illustrates the vibrancy and resilience of the Ḥaḍramī community and their efforts to preserve collective identity within Java's plural society. The route from Solo to Gresik thus symbolizes the strength of Ḥaḍramī scholarly networks and Islamic authority in Java.

Safran notes that diasporic groups often maintain a strong sense of collective identity tied to their culture, traditions, and ancestral history. This collective identity functions not only as a reminder of their origins but also as a foundation for building supportive communities in new environments. Such a collective identity is clearly illustrated in the following passage:

فلما قام سيدي وأعتم، قال له الحبيب جعفر كان الحبيب عيدروس بن عمر. ويقرأ آية الكرسي
إذا اعتم فقال له اجرني فيها فاجازه وقبله في جبهته. (ليالي القدر، ٨١)

"When Sayyidi Alwi stood up to put on the imāmah, Ḥabīb Jakfar said, 'Ḥabīb Idrus bin Umar al-Ḥabsyī, whenever he wore the imāmah, would recite Ayat al-Kursī.' Sayyidi Alwi replied, 'Grant me permission (ijāzah) to practice this.' Ḥabīb Jakfar then gave the ijāzah and kissed his forehead."

The exchange surrounding *ijāzah* in this episode reveals more than a simple act of religious authorization. Within the context of the Ḥaḍramī diaspora, the request for permission to recite a specific devotional practice functions as a mechanism through which religious legitimacy is reproduced across geographical distance and historical time. Rather than operating merely as an educational credential, *ijāzah* establishes continuity between contemporary religious actors in Java and a longer genealogy of scholarly authority associated with the Ba 'Alawī tradition.

From Safran's perspective, diasporic communities sustain themselves not solely through memories of a homeland but also through institutions and symbolic practices

that preserve continuity despite dispersal.¹⁹ The significance of *ijāzah*, therefore, is not in the transmission of a particular prayer formula alone, but in its capacity to reaffirm a shared lineage of authority. By invoking Ḥabīb Idrus bin Umar al-Ḥabsyī as a precedent, the ritual situates the present encounter within a chain of remembered figures whose authority rises above the immediate setting of the interaction. What is reproduced here is not only religious knowledge but also a communal sense of historical succession.

At the same time, the episode invites a more critical reading. The granting of *ijāzah* does not preserve communal identity alone; it also regulates access to religious legitimacy. The act of seeking permission implicitly acknowledges the existence of hierarchical distinctions within the scholarly community.²⁰ Authority is not assumed to reside equally among all members but is recognized through specific genealogies and chains of transmission. Consequently, *ijāzah* functions simultaneously as a mechanism of inclusion and differentiation: it incorporates individuals into a recognized tradition,²¹ while also reaffirming the structures through which authority is distributed.

This ambivalence is especially significant when viewed through Hall's conception of identity as articulation rather than inheritance. The authority embodied in *ijāzah* is not simply inherited from the past; it must be repeatedly enacted, recognized, and certified through social interaction. Sayyidi Alwi's request for authorization illustrates that belonging to the Ḥaḍramī religious tradition is not a static condition guaranteed by ancestry alone. Instead, communal identity is continually produced through practices that connect individuals to networks of recognition and legitimacy.

Seen in this light, *ijāzah* functions as a diasporic technology of continuity. It enables dispersed communities to maintain symbolic connections to a shared religious heritage while simultaneously adapting that heritage to new social environments. The ritual thus demonstrates that the persistence of Ḥaḍramī identity in post-independence Java depended not only upon collective memory of Hadramaut but also upon institutionalized forms of authority capable of reproducing that memory across eras and locations.

While *ijāzah* illustrates how religious authority is transmitted and legitimized through chains of scholarly succession, the articulation of diasporic identity in *Layālī al-Qadr* is not confined to textual authorization alone. The continuity of the Ḥaḍramī community

¹⁹Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return'.

²⁰Nyong Eka Teguh Iman Santosa and Mohammad Reyaz, 'Fertile Seedbed for Planting Habaib's Religious Political Authority', *Religió Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 13.2 (2023), pp. 253-77, doi:10.15642/religio.v13i2.2550.

²¹Lutfan Muntaqo, 'Ijazah Sanad Tradition in Pesantren, an Effort to Maintain the Authenticity of Islamic Teachings (Study in Pesantren Maslakul Huda, Kajen, Pati, Central Java)', *Jurnal Ilmiah Studi Islam*, 18.1 (2018), p. 31.

also depends upon symbolic practices that render belonging publicly visible and socially recognizable. If *ijāzah* operates through the passing on of knowledge and legitimacy, other rituals function through the embodiment and display of communal affiliation. This shift from authorization to recognition is evident in the practice of *ilbās*, where identity is articulated not through scholarly transmission but through ceremonial symbolism.

وخرج من حضر المجلس و بقي سيد علوي ومن سعه. فطلب من سيد أبي بكر الإلباس. فلبسه
و بقي مدة واضع الكوفية و يقرأ ثم طلب الحبيب بكر من سيدى علوي أن يلبسه (ليالي القدر،
(٥٩

"[...] The attendees then left Ḥabīb Abu Bakr's house. Only Sayyidi Alwi and his companions remained. Sayyidi Alwi requested ilbās from Ḥabīb Abu Bakr, who placed the cap upon his head when reciting a prayer. Ḥabīb Abu Bakr then asked Sayyidi Alwi to bestow ilbās upon him"

Unlike *ijāzah*, which reproduces authority through authorized transmission, *ilbās* articulates diasporic identity through symbolic recognition. The significance of the ritual does not lie in the object exchanged but in the social relationship enacted through the exchange. By placing the cap on Sayyidi Alwi's head, Ḥabīb Abu Bakr transforms communal affiliation into a visible, publicly recognizable act.

At first glance, the ceremony appears to reinforce hierarchy. However, the reciprocity of the exchange complicates this interpretation. After receiving *ilbās*, Sayyidi Alwi is invited to perform the same ritual for Ḥabīb Abu Bakr. Rather than serving solely as a transfer of status, the ritual becomes a mutual affirmation of belonging. This reciprocity aligns with Hall's concept of identity as articulation, in which communal identity is not simply inherited but is continuously produced through acts of recognition. In Safran's terms, such symbolic practices contribute to diasporic cohesion by enabling dispersed community members to recognize and affirm their affiliation with a shared religious tradition. The episode thus demonstrates that the continuity of the Ḥaḍramī diaspora relied not only on genealogical memory and scholarly transmission but also on visible forms of communal recognition.

The significance of *ilbās* goes beyond individual recognition, as the ritual derives much of its meaning from the communal context in which it is performed.²² The narrative, therefore, moves from symbolic exchanges between religious figures to larger collective gatherings during which communal relationships are reinforced and renewed using shared participation.

²²Aly Atho'ilah Najamudin and Irwan Abdullah, "HABIB, ISLAM, DAN OTORITAS KEAGAMAAN: PENERIMAAN MASYARAKAT MUSLIM BANYUWANGI", *FARABI*, 19.1 (2022), pp. 16–48.

ثم دخل وقت المغرب فأذن المؤذن وصلينا المغرب والعشاء جمع تقديم و بعد الصلاة جلس الحبيب ابو بكر ومن حضر المجلس الحشيم وكان من عادته متع الله مجيائه لا يجلس للروحه بعد المغرب بل الروحه عنك عشية الى الصلاة المغرب ولما كان فرحا ومتزورا يقدوم سيدي علوي جلس بعد الصلاة المغرب واتوا الناس افواجا من قرسي و سربايه (ليالي القدر: ٢١-٢٢)

"After the Maghrib and 'Ishā' prayers, Ḥabīb Abu Bakr remained seated with his guests. Normally, he never held rouhah gatherings after Maghrib, as these were usually held in the late afternoon. Yet out of joy at Sayyidi Alwi's visit, he made an exception. People arrived in large numbers from Gresik and Surabaya"

The significance of the *rouhah* gathering lies not primarily in the religious activities it includes, but in its capacity to bring dispersed members of the community into a common social space. The narrative emphasizes that people arrived in large numbers from different localities, including Gresik and Surabaya, to participate in the gathering. This detail suggests that *rouhah* functioned as more than a devotional event; it served as a mechanism through which collective bonds were periodically renewed and experienced collectively.

From Safran's perspective, diasporic continuity depends not only upon memories of a homeland but also upon practices that sustain cohesion across geographical dispersion. In this context, *rouhah* functions as a social institution that temporarily overcomes spatial distance by bringing community members together in a shared ritual setting. The gathering transforms a dispersed population into a visible and interactive community.

This collective dimension matches Hall's concept of identity as an ongoing process of articulation. Identity is not simply possessed by members of the diaspora; it is continuously produced through participation in shared cultural practices. The significance of *rouhah*, therefore, lies in the opportunity it creates for people to experience themselves as part of a larger collective. Through repeated encounters, shared rituals, and face-to-face interaction, communal belonging is enacted rather than merely remembered.

More importantly, the gathering introduces a spatial dimension that is less evident in the preceding rituals. Unlike *ijāzah* and *ilbās*, which primarily involve interpersonal exchange, *rouhah* establishes a temporary communal space where networks of affiliation become socially tangible. The event demonstrates that diasporic identity is maintained not only through authority and recognition but also through recurring occasions of collective presence. In this context, *rouhah* represents a significant step in transforming dispersed communities into an interconnected religious landscape.

While *rouhah* creates a communal setting in which dispersed members of the diaspora can gather and reaffirm collective belonging, the narrative also highlights the affective

experiences that emerge within such gatherings. Community is sustained not only through physical presence and social interaction but also through shared meanings and emotional attachments. This affective dimension becomes particularly visible in the practice of *barakah*, where communal affiliation is experienced through participation in a shared ritual.

في آخر الروحة، يأتونا بقلاس ماء فيشرب منه الحبيب ابو بكر. والباقي من شربه يضعونه فوق الماء الذي يشربونه الناس. فيديرونه على الجميع تبركا بنور هذا الحبيب متع الله به في خير وعافية (ليالي القدر: ٤٤)

"At the end of the rouhah, a glass of water was brought to Ḥabīb Abu Bakr. After he drank from it, the remainder was poured into a larger container and distributed to the attendees so they might partake of his blessings. May Allah prolong his life in goodness and health"

The distribution of "blessed water" at the conclusion of the *rouhah* gathering reveals a dimension of diasporic identity that extends beyond authority, recognition, or communal assembly. What is at stake in this episode is not simply the preservation of tradition but the cultivation of a shared emotional attachment to the community and its religious figures. The act of drinking water associated with Ḥabīb Abu Bakr transforms belonging from an abstract affiliation into a lived and embodied experience.

From Safran's perspective, diasporic continuity depends upon more than institutional structures and collective memory. Communities endure because their members remain emotionally invested in shared traditions and symbols. The circulation of "blessed water" functions as one such symbolic practice. Its significance lies less in the material substance itself than in the communal meanings attached to it. By participating in the ritual, attendees reaffirm their connection to a wider religious tradition and to the collective identity that tradition sustains.

Hall's concept of articulation further illuminates this process. Identity is not reproduced solely through formal declarations of belonging but through practices that generate shared meanings and experiences. In this episode, *barakah* operates as a medium through which communal identity is felt rather than merely expressed. The ritual creates a sense of proximity between participants and a revered religious figure, allowing collective belonging to be experienced in an immediate and tangible way.²³

²³Syamsul Rijal, *Habaib Dan Kontestasi Islam Di Indonesia: Antara Menjaga Tradisi Dan Otoritas* (LP3ES, 2022); Egi Tanadi Taufik, 'Defending Traditional Islam in Indonesia: The Resurgence of Hadhrami Preachers, by Syamsul Rijal', *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 180.1 (2024), pp. 118–21, doi:10.1163/22134379-18001006.

What makes the episode particularly significant is its emphasis on participation. Unlike *ijāzah*, which depends upon authorized transmission, or *ilbās*, which relies upon symbolic recognition, *barakah* invites collective involvement. The ritual, therefore, demonstrates that diasporic cohesion is sustained not only through structures of authority or occasions of gathering but also through affective experiences that cultivate attachment, intimacy, and emotional investment in a shared religious community.

While *barakah* demonstrates how belonging is experienced through shared participation, the narrative also preserves forms of affiliation that operate beyond immediate ritual encounters. Some are sustained through stories, symbols, and remembered experiences. This narrative dimension becomes particularly visible in the episode of the *ridā*, where communal belonging is articulated through a dream rather than a public ritual.

ثم قص الشيخ هادي مكارم, رؤيا يراها مبشرة للحبيب حسين. وهي كأن الحبيب علي بن محمد الحبشي خرج من بيت. قابض بيد الحبيب حسين الى أن دخل بيتا آخر. ثم جاء شخص , فناول الحبيب علي ثلاثة اردية. اثنين خضر وواحد سخلت. فاستعمل الحبيب علي واحد من الاردية الخضر. والآخر اعطاه الحبيب حسين, والسخت اعطاه الرائي (ليالي القدر: ١٤)

“Shaykh Hadi Makarim told a dream in which he saw Ḥabīb Ali al-Ḥabsyī leading Ḥabīb Husein by the hand from one house to another. A man then came and presented Ḥabīb Ali with three cloaks (ridā): two green and one brown. Ḥabīb Ali wore one of the green cloaks, gave the other to Ḥabīb Husein, and handed the brown cloak to Shaykh Hadi Makarim”

Unlike the preceding episodes, the significance of the *ridā* narrative lies less in the symbolic object itself than in the author's decision to preserve the dream within the travel account. The episode interrupts the journey's chronological progression and introduces a symbolic narrative in which relationships of affiliation, recognition, and spiritual proximity are expressed through the distribution of cloaks. The dream, therefore, functions not merely as a private spiritual experience but as a narrative device that communicates communal values.

From Hall's perspective, identities are constructed through systems of representation that organize meaning rather than simply reflect reality. The importance of the *ridā* lies in the way it narrates relationships of belonging. Through the symbolic allocation of the cloaks, the dream maps distinctions of proximity and affiliation within a shared religious community, rendering them intelligible through narrative form.

The episode also reflects Safran's emphasis on the importance of collective memory in sustaining diasporic continuity. By preserving and circulating the dream, the narrative transforms an individual experience into a communal resource. The

significance of the *ridā*, therefore, lies not in its material form but in its capacity to transmit remembered meanings across generations. In this sense, the dream contributes to the reproduction of diasporic identity by providing a symbolic narrative through which belonging can be remembered, interpreted, and reaffirmed.

والحبيب أبو بكر مناظركم الآن يقوم و يقعد ولوسرتوا راسا اليه لكان احسن. وكان قصد سيدي علوي ان يكون المشي من عند الحبيب حسين. في الصباح اليوم الثاني. ويكون الحبيب حسين سعفه. فالتذر باشر في رجليه. وامر يسدي بالتوجه الى عند الحبيب ابي بكر لانه منتظر وصوله. وهذا كشف منه (ليالي القدر: ١٤).

"Sayyidi Alwi had planned to continue the journey the next day, accompanied by Ḥabīb Husein. However, Ḥabīb Husein fell ill with leg pain. He then instructed Sayyidi Alwi to immediately proceed to Ḥabīb Abu Bakr, who was awaiting his arrival. This circumstance, which Ḥabīb Husein had foreseen (kashf), revealed his spiritual insight"

What makes the episode of *kashf* particularly striking is that Ḥabīb Husein's authority becomes most visible now when he is physically unable to continue the journey. Although illness prevents him from accompanying Sayyidi Alwi, the narrative shows that his spiritual insight still guides events. This apparent paradox suggests that the significance of *kashf* lies not in the prediction itself but in the way the episode constructs authority beyond physical presence.²⁴

Rather than treating *kashf* as evidence of supernatural ability, the narrative frames it as a sign of spiritual distinction recognized by the community. The episode invites readers to view Ḥabīb Husein as a figure whose authority extends beyond ordinary forms of knowledge. In doing so, the text transforms a personal experience into a narrative resource that reinforces his religious legitimacy.

This process resonates with Hall's understanding of representation as a practice through which meaning is produced rather than merely reflected. The significance of *kashf* lies in the narrative work it performs. By recording and circulating the episode, the text contributes to the construction of a particular image of spiritual leadership, one grounded in insight, foresight, and proximity to the sacred.

At the same time, preserving such narratives supports Safran's identification of the continuity of diasporic communities through shared symbolic frameworks. Stories of spiritual authority provide a common repertoire of meanings through which communal values and forms of legitimacy are reproduced across generations. In this sense, *kashf* functions not simply as a spiritual phenomenon but as a narrative

²⁴Abu al-Qasim Al Qusyairi, *Risalah Qusyairiyah* (Dar al-Kutub al-Arabiyyah, 2002); Harun Nasution, *Tasawuf Dan Tarekat* (Rajawali Press, 1999).

mechanism that sustains the moral and religious authority upon which communal cohesion depends.

The diversity of practices examined above should not obscure the broader pattern that connects them. Although *ijāzah*, *ilbās*, *rouhah*, *barakah*, *ridā*, and *kashf* operate through different mechanisms, each contributes to articulating Ḥaḍramī diasporic identity. Through authority, recognition, gathering, memory, and spiritual legitimacy, these practices reproduce relationships that connect dispersed communities across multiple localities in Java.

Re-Mapping Spiritual Space in Postcolonial Java

The preceding analysis demonstrates that Ḥaḍramī diasporic identity in *Layālī al-Qadr* is articulated through multiple interconnected practices. *Ijāzah* ensures continuity through authorized transmission, *ilbās* through symbolic recognition, *rouhah* through collective gathering, *barakah* through shared affective experience, *ridā* through symbolic memory, and *kashf* through narratives of spiritual legitimacy. While these practices function differently, they collectively sustain a sense of belonging among communities dispersed across various localities. Viewed from this perspective, the significance of the travel narrative extends beyond the preservation of communal identity. The repeated encounters among scholars, disciples, families, and religious gatherings create networks of connection that link geographically separated communities into a shared religious world. What emerges from the narrative is not simply a collection of isolated locations, but a web of relationships organized through common traditions, forms of authority, and systems of meaning.

This process is particularly visible in the movement between Solo, Gresik, Surabaya, Jombang, Malang, and other localities represented throughout the journey. These places do not appear merely as geographical destinations. Rather, they function as interconnected nodes within a broader religious network sustained by recurring encounters, ritual exchanges, and shared memories.²⁵ Through these connections, the narrative symbolically transforms dispersed locations into a recognizable landscape of communal affiliation. Hall's notion of articulation is useful here because it draws attention to the ways identity is produced through relational practices rather than inherited as a fixed essence. The significance of the rituals examined above, therefore, lies not only in their individual meanings but also in their capacity to connect people, institutions, memories, and places. Identity is articulated through relationships, and these relationships gradually acquire spatial expression.

In this sense, the narrative suggests that the articulation of Ḥaḍramī identity simultaneously generates what may be described as a shared spiritual geography. The spiritual significance of Java does not derive solely from physical territory but from

²⁵Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "Pilgrimage and Network Formation in Two Contemporary Bā 'Alawī Ḥawl in Central Java", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 25.3 (2014), pp. 298–324.

the network of meanings, authorities, memories, and affiliations attached to places. The travelogue, therefore, does more than document mobility.²⁶ It reveals how diasporic identity creates connections that symbolically reorganize space, enabling dispersed communities to imagine themselves as participants in a common religious landscape. The remapping of spiritual space thus emerges not as an independent process but because of the continuous articulation of diasporic identity across postcolonial Java.

CONCLUSION

The intellectual traditions and knowledge heritage of the Ḥaḍramī such as *riḥlah* (travelogues), play a pivotal role in the dynamics of the Ḥaḍramī diaspora in Indonesia. The travel narrative *Layālī al Qadr fī Akhdz ‘an al Ḥabīb Abu Bakr* demonstrates that the preservation of Ḥaḍramī identity in post-independence Indonesia was achieved through a variety of interconnected cultural and religious practices. Rather than representing a fixed inheritance from the ancestral homeland, identity emerged as a dynamic process continually reproduced through ritual performance, religious authority, collective memory, family traditions, and everyday cultural practices. Through mechanisms such as *ijāzah*, *ilbās*, *rouhah*, *barakah*, *ridā*, and *kashf*, members of the Ḥaḍramī diaspora maintained communal belonging while simultaneously negotiating their place within the social and religious environment of Java. The findings further reveal that the travelogue functions as more than a record of mobility or spiritual devotion. The narrative constructs a network of relationships linking scholars, families, religious gatherings, and local communities across different regions of Java. Through these encounters, the text symbolically re-maps spiritual space by transforming geographically dispersed locations into an interconnected landscape of religious authority, cultural memory, and communal affiliation. In this sense, the *riḥlah* serves as a textual mechanism through which diasporic identity is articulated, reproduced, and sustained beyond the geographical boundaries of Hadramaut. This study contributes to the growing scholarship on Ḥaḍramī diaspora literature by demonstrating that travel narratives can function not only as records of movement but also as sites to produce identity and the construction of diasporic space. By bringing Hall’s concept of cultural identity into dialogue with Safran’s theory of diaspora, the study shows how collective memory, symbolic practices, and transregional networks worked together to sustain a sense of belonging among Ḥaḍramī communities in postcolonial Indonesia.

²⁶Karina Tucunan, Ken Taylor, and Karima Laachir, “Rituals, Memory and the City: How Intangible Heritage Shapes Islamic Sacred Districts in Java”, *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, 21 (2026), pp. 102–16.

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