INTRODUCTION

The state of Johor Darul Takzim is deemed to be one of the most unique states in Malaysia. The uniqueness of the state is reflected in its historical roots where the state was ruled across two different eras of the Sultanate. In the first era, the state was controlled under the Sultanate of Johor-Riau (1511-1685) which is also known as Johor Lama [1-3] where the administrative centre was located at Tanjung Batu. The second era shows the birth of the Modern Johor Sultanate known as Johor Baru from 1686 until today. This Johor Sultanate which started back in 1511 was one of the successor states of Malacca Empire [4].

Moreover, the state of Johor possessed a decided advantage in its interaction and assimilation with a variety of traditions and customs ever since it opened its door to external trades as a result of the policy being implemented and practiced in Singapore as of 1891. Such interaction and assimilation may be seen by the presence of foreign traders from China, India and Arab lands who arrived to the coast of Singapore and Johor by sea. For example, Arab communities who originated from Hadramaut not only played a significant role in developing the economy, in addition to political and social aspects of the state but also played a rather large role in Johor’s religious matters and issues.

They are claimed to be one of the earliest communities who migrated to Johor and their presence in the state may be traced back to the early days of Johor Sultanate with the emergence of an Arab by the name Sayid Idrus. He originated from Hadramaut and came to Aceh seeking to tie the knot with the Sultan of Aceh. The marriage was gifted with a son who was named Sayid Zainal Abidin. The state’s prominent Ulama, Tun Habib Abdul Majid was furthermore a descendant of Sayid Idrus and was appointed as the Prime Minister of the Sultanate of Johor Lama from 1688-1697 [5]. Other official data regarding the population of Arab communities, especially with regards to the Hadrami Arabs cannot be accurately determined as Johor was under the control of the first era of Sultanate with exception to a few historical chronicles as mentioned above. The reason for this is mainly because during such a time Johor was still passing through a demanding stage requiring it to defend its freedom from threats stemming from the Portuguese and Aceh. This effectively resulted in the formation of Johor Bharu under the administration of Sultan Abu Bakar.

The strategic location of the state was found in that it was situated between the main route of trading activities adjacent to Singapore, in addition to the fact that the late invasion by the British supported the acceptance and spread of Islam in the state especially due to the Hadrami Arab community. The process effectively formed the history of Johor as we know it today, allowing it be renowned as one of the states that had successfully continued the legacy of Malaccan Empire in terms of acceptance and spreading of Islam. The chronicles and process of migration of Hadrami Arabs to Johor and religious activities practiced by them will be discussed in this paper.