

Ulrike Freitag, *Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadhramaut: Reforming the Homeland*, Brill: Leiden, Boston, 2003, xix + 589 pp. (*Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia*, Volume 87) ISBN 90–04–12850–6.

Hadhramaut is a region in the southern parts of the Arabian Peninsula with a long tradition of migration among its original inhabitants to the areas around the Indian Ocean, in particular the Malayo-Indonesian Archipelago, south-west India and the Deccan plateau, the shores of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, and the coastal areas of East Africa. Emigrants often integrated with the local communities. Yet the move did not prevent them from keeping linkages to their homeland, to such an extent that it is possible to justify the claim that until the Second World War, Hadramaut was more connected with South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Africa than it was with most parts of the Arabian Peninsula. This Hadrami diaspora was the theme of a seminal workshop held at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London in April 1995. The proceedings of this workshop were published by its conveners, Ulrike Freitag & William Clarence-Smith, under the title *Hadrami traders, scholars, and statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s–1960s* (Leiden: Brill, *Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia*, Volume 57). Since this workshop, a number of important monographs relevant to the Hadrami diaspora have appeared. In view of the readership of the present journal, I limit myself to two examples pertaining to Asia, namely Nathalie Mobini Kesheh's excellent PhD dissertation *The Hadrami Awakening: Community and identity in the Netherlands East Indies, 1914–1942* (Ithaca: SEAP Cornell University, 1999), and Friedhelm Hartwich's *Hadramaut und das indische Fürstentum von Hyderabad. Hadramitische Sultanatsgründungen und Migration im 19. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2000).

The admirable work under review here has been a product of the ongoing research of Prof. Freitag on the history of Hadramaut, and can be regarded in many ways as a synthesis of the preceding scholarly literature on the topic. In a chronological order, the book deals with the political, social, and economic history of Hadramaut from the beginning of the nineteenth century to 1967, when the British Protectorate over Hadramaut ended. The focus of the book is on Hadramaut, more particularly on its political organization (or, perhaps, the lack thereof) and the formation of its state structure. Of the nine chapters, eight focus on Hadramaut, while one, Chapter Five, focuses on the Hadrami diaspora in Southeast Asia from the 1880s–1930s as its central theme. Notwithstanding the strong focus on Hadramaut proper, the book is definitely an interesting read to more than just historians of this region, particularly in its documentation of the much wider historical processes, notably the activities initiated within the British colonial politics and the interactions with the members of the diaspora. These interactions could consist of the payment of remittances by the emigrants, the sending of children born in the diaspora back to Hadramaut to be educated (especially in Arabic and Islamic Studies) and, interestingly, the input of new ideas on such matters as religion, education, and politics by members of the diaspora into Hadramaut. The book illustrates this latter form of interaction by means of the life-histories of a number of Hadrami 'intellectuals'. An example is that of Muhammad ibn Hashim (1882–1960), who was born in al-Wasila in Wadi Hadramaut, and made a career in Batavia and Surabaya, and in the Netherlands East Indies in trade. He also worked as a journalist and educator from 1907, and returned to his homeland in 1927, where he rose

to prominence in educational and cultural life, introducing “modern” political and pedagogical ideas (pp. 270–274).

The book is extremely well documented, and as far as I can judge it includes virtually everything which has been written on the subject both in Western languages and in Arabic. In this sense it resembles a synthesis but it is more, as many new and previously unexplored materials are used. The strength of the book lies in its extensive use of Arabic sources, and the additions and refinements to the existing literature this produces, mainly concerning the history of Hadramaut, but also with regard to writings on and originating from the diaspora. Most interesting are the sophisticated historiographical elaborations which demonstrate a perfect mastery of the Arabic source material. Although the work is primarily written as a conventional history, the author does not shun linking up occasionally with theoretical discussions about imperialism, modernity, Eurocentrism, state formation, colonialisms, Western expansion and so forth.

The book is concluded by an index of 25 pages which not only includes names, of persons, places, periodicals, organizations and the like, but also analytical concepts, like cuisine, debt, food and so forth. As a result of this, the book has gained considerably in its accessibility, and in its use as a facilitated work of reference.

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