

mauvais travers de nous distraire de l'écoute des joueurs et de nous empêcher de comprendre de l'intérieur ce que les poètes sardes ont à (nous) dire. Cyril Isnart

Manger, Leif: *The Hadrami Diaspora. Community-Building on the Indian Ocean Rim.* New York: Berghahn Books, 2010. 201 pp. ISBN 978-1-84545-742-6. Price: £ 35.00

Yemen has frequently been in the news over the past decade, and for all the wrong reasons; this study of a diaspora originating from the Hadramawt region of southern Yemen should help to correct any misconceptions that all things that issue forth from Yemen are bad. That said, however, and as the author of this title makes clear, Hadramis are not quite Yemenis; and the biggest baddie of them all, Osama bin Laden, was of Hadrami origin. Nevertheless, this book is a welcome contribution to the literature on a diaspora that is substantial, influential, and not particularly well known. Hadramis have been present around the Indian Ocean rim for centuries, and this presence has led to the construction of a number of diasporic communities with varying but generally well-structured senses of cohesion. Leif Manger has the advantage of having carried out fieldwork in several of these locations and is able to provide an informed comparative perspective on the Hadrami diaspora, both generally and in particular.

After an introductory chapter, which briefly presents Hadramis and lays some theoretical groundwork, Manger discusses the Hadrami communities in four very different locations: Singapore, Hyderabad, Sudan, and the Horn of Africa. In each of these sites, Hadramis have faced different constraints and opportunities: in Singapore (and by extension nearby Southeast Asia) as fellow Muslims but ethnically different; in Hyderabad as Muslims in a largely Hindu environment; in Sudan as fellow Muslims and fellow Arabs; and in the Horn as Muslim Arabs in an East African Christian-Muslim frontier area with its attendant conflicts. Each of these contexts has prompted different strategies on the part of Hadramis, and if integration was simplest in Sudan, it is a tribute to their skills, both social and economic, that they have been equally successful in contemporary Singapore.

However, the various communities are not homogeneous. Chapter 6 describes how social stratification in the homeland has been carried into diaspora where the distinction between Sada, descendants of the Prophet, and the rest remains salient. Religious leaders were generally drawn from the Sada families, and their economic activities involved trade and commerce; the lower status non-Sada were more likely to be manual labourers. The two groups maintain their identities through marriage practices: Sada prefer to marry their own, often importing a spouse from the homeland, while non-Sada were more likely to marry among the host population, and were thus more likely to assimilate. Strategies of assimilation have waxed and waned with time: as Manger explains, there have clearly been moments when discretion was more appropriate, such as in the postcolonial periods of assertions of national identity; in contemporary Singapore, in con-

trast, assertions of Arab identity allow Hadramis to claim a role in interactions with the Arab and Islamic world.

The suggestion – discussed at some length – that Osama bin Laden, who was resident in Sudan in the 1990s, was part of a response to threats to the Hadrami diaspora, is not entirely convincing. Hadramis are by and large not well disposed towards Wahabi proselytism, either at home or in the diaspora, and Osama's entourage, as far as can be judged, was generally not of Hadrami origin. It is indicative that Al Qaida is not particularly active in Hadramawt, its centre of activities being located further west and particularly in Abyan. More widely, this is part of a suggestion that Hadramis are particularly active in anti-Western Islamic movements; but the evidence for this is slim. Hadramis provide religious leadership throughout the Indian Ocean region, and have done for centuries, largely because the dominant *madhhab* is Shafi'i (as it is in Hadramawt), and are, therefore, likely to be more prominent in religious spheres; expressions of Muslim identity and intercultural conflicts do not seem to be the particular preserve of Hadramis.

Perhaps a more fundamental problem with this book is its scope, which appears overambitious. All four ethnographic chapters devote a great deal of space to the general historical context in which the Hadrami diaspora receives little more than a passing mention; so, too, does the chapter on stratification and the Sada in the homeland. The author clearly has an extensive background knowledge, but lengthy histories of Ethiopia or the Ottomans detract from what should (judging by the title) be the focus of the book. As a result, the detailed ethnography is lacking. Thus, when the author states that "the biographies of these people look somewhat alike" (142) we really only have his word for it. Similarly, while there was a revealing discussion of the role of *waqf* and relations between moral and economic spheres of thought (141), a brief reference to Hadrami roles in financial services (78) was not explored; and while the links between Sudan and Hadramawt initiated by the British in the sphere of education were revealing, discussion of the Yemeni school in Addis Ababa could have been expanded (101). To be fair to the author, he acknowledges this problem of scope in the last chapter, which was itself a more theoretical discussion of globalisation, and Muslim responses, rather than a discussion of the Hadramis themselves.

There were a couple of minor factual errors (the protectorates were never part of the Aden colony); and in more than one passage the distinctions between Arab, Yemeni and Hadrami were not entirely clear, e.g., a reference to the luxury good trade being in the hands of "Arabs" (71): were they Hadramis? These distinctions (and the lack of them) are often important. Generally, however, the text is well written and readable and this book will be a useful text for migration studies scholars, dealing as it does with a multicentred diaspora – or perhaps "diasporas," since the author suggests that Hadramis constitute a collection of diasporic communities with little in common but a point of departure. The text's wide focus will be of particular value to readers who are not familiar with the societies in question.

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