

## STUDIES ON THE SOUTH ARABIAN

### DIASPORA:

#### SOME CRITICAL REMARKS

##### I. INTRODUCTION

It is only of late that some attention is paid to the importance of studies on the South Arabian Diaspora in the Horn of Africa, the African side of the Red Sea, the East African littoral, the Indian subcontinent, the Indian Ocean island groups and South-east Asia, in throwing new light on (i) the process of Islamization, (ii) the origins of local dynasties, (iii) the problem of trade-routes, and (iv) navigational and maritime techniques and a host of other related problems.

This interest shown by scholars, learned institutions and international organizations (e.g. Unesco) was usually within the general framework of Indian Ocean studies. Conferences were held in Beirut (1961), Cochin (1971), La Réunion (1972), Mauritius (1974), Sri Lanka (1978), Perth, Western Australia (August 1979) and now New Delhi. It is no longer, as was the case in the past, essentially motivated by politico-administrative considerations of colonial powers in the region.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Van den Berg, L.W.C., *Le Hadhramout et les Colonies Arabes dans*

However, save for a few remarkable contributions, most studies on this dispersion of Southern Arabs are more often than not marred by over-hasty conclusions drawn from as yet fragmentary sources, factual errors and a general ignorance of South Arabian culture and civilization. Research in this field has been further hampered by the fact that scholars still remain isolated either as individuals or within separate disciplines and narrowly confined geographical areas.

Moreover, there is a prevailing tendency amongst a number of scholars to continue the myth of "passive peoples and continents, previously regarded as objects of a history acted out by major external protagonists." The impact of South Arabian migrations on countries bordering on the Indian Ocean is still considered in many recent studies as a one-way phenomenon and not one based on reciprocal relationship. Faced with this state of affairs it is hardly surprising to note that not a single comprehensive monograph on this subject has ever been published.<sup>2</sup>

Various methodological approaches have been employed in studying this Diaspora, involving disciplines as varied as numismatics, epigraphy, architecture, cultural anthropology, archaeology, history, navigational science, linguistics and even "prosopography."<sup>3</sup>

An exhaustive critical study of the existing sources on South Arabian migrations to various parts of the Indian Ocean and a detailed description of South Arabian colonies in these areas does not fall within the scope of this brief exposition. A rapid

*l'Archipel Indien*. Imprimerie du Gouvernement, Batavia, 1886. (English translations by Major C.W.H. Wealy, Govt. Central Press, Bombay, 1887).

Harold Ingrams, *A Report on the Social, Economic and Political Conditions of the Hadramout*. Colonial Report No. 123. London, 1936. (Only Chapters XXIII, XXIV and XXVI deal with Hadrami Diaspora).

Snouck Hurgronje, "Arabieren Ingezetenen Van Nederlandsch-Indie" in *Ambtelijke Adviezen van C.S. Hurgronje 1889-1936*, vol. II, 1959, pp. 1522-1615.

<sup>2</sup> The only tentative albeit superficial and inadequate study, and based on non-Arabic sources, is by Gustav Fuhrmann, *Die Ausbreitung des Hadrami (Hadarim) im Raume des Indischen Ozeans und ihre Rückwirkung Hadramaut*. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis), Heidelberg, 1943.

<sup>3</sup> See B.G. Martin "Notes on some members of the learned classes of Zanzibar and East Africa in the nineteenth century," *African Historical Studies*, IV, 3, 1971. (This approach was first employed by Sir Ronald Syme in classical studies with such publications as *Roman Revolution*, Oxford, 1939, *Colonial Elites*, 1958 and *Emperors and Biography*, 1971.

critical survey of primary and secondary sources in Arabic and European languages on some salient aspects of South Arabian migratory movements in time and space will be attempted. Particular reference will be made to the preponderant role played by Ḥadramīs.

## II. SOUTH ARABIAN MIGRATORY TRENDS

There are essentially three discernible phases of South Arabian migrations before the middle of the 19th century—Pre-Islamic and early Islamic times, and the late Medieval period onwards (15-19th centuries).

### (i) *The Pre-Islamic Phase*

Scholars in the field of Ethiopian studies like Conti Rossini,<sup>4</sup> Ullendorf,<sup>5</sup> E. Glaser,<sup>6</sup> A.G. Londine<sup>7</sup> and Arbel Armand<sup>8</sup> have tried to establish by their researches that the Horn of Africa, owing to its close proximity to the southwestern corner of Arabia, has always attracted migrants and has been the theatre of successive invasions. Constant and close ethnic, cultural, economic and political links were forged and maintained between the South Arabian kingdoms and the shores of Africa, across the Gulf of Aden, since the early part of the first millennium B.C.

These South Arabians, in order to protect and expand their seafaring and trading activities, exercised control over maritime bases along the Benadir coast as far south as Zanzibar, Dar-es-Salaam and Cape Delgado.<sup>9</sup> There have been speculative attempts

<sup>4</sup> Conti Rossini, "Expéditions et Possessions des Habaṣat en Arabie," *Journal Asiatique*, 1921.

<sup>5</sup> Ullendorf, "South Arabia and Aksum" in *The Ethiopians*, Oxford University Press, London, 1960, pp. 47-57.

<sup>6</sup> Glaser, E., *Die Abessiner in Arabien und Afrika*, Munich, 1895.

<sup>7</sup> Arbel Armand, "Sur les rapports entre l'Éthiopie et le Himyar au VI siècle." *IV Congresso Internazionale di Studi Etiopici*, Rome, 1972.

<sup>8</sup> Londine, A.G., "L'Éthiopie et ses rapports avec l'Arabie pré islamique jusqu'à l'emigration de ca. 615" *IV Congresso Internazionale di Studi Etiopici*, Rome, 1972.

<sup>9</sup> For the location of some of these maritime bases, see the important dissertation by Walter Raunig, *Die kulturellen Verhältnisse Nordost- und*

on the part of some scholars to show the existence of cultural and commercial links between these South Arabian kingdoms with regions as far removed as Southeast Asia. These have been critically examined by G. Tibbetts.<sup>10</sup>

Our knowledge of this very early phase of South Arabian maritime expansion is largely derived from Graeco-Roman sources, supplemented with archaeological, epigraphical and linguistic evidence. This is largely owing to the fact that we do not possess any South Arabian records relating to their seafaring and maritime activities.

At best these sources can only provide us with a fragmentary picture of what actually happened. Their value as documents has been questioned.

The problem of dating one of these sources—*The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*—has plagued many a scholar for more than a century now. Maxime Rodinson has critically reviewed some of these studies.<sup>11</sup>

Latin sources by Pliny and Strabo must be utilized with caution in the light of recent critical evaluations. The view held by Pliny that Roman navigators were able to cut across the Arabian Sea to Malabar in search of pepper has been questioned. Ascher<sup>12</sup> has convincingly demonstrated with the help of literary, technological and cartographical evidence that this was impracticable.

#### (ii) *South Arabian Migrations During the Era of Early Islamic Conquests*

The vanguard of the Islamic armies in the conquests of the

*Ostafrikas im ersten nachchristlichen Jahrhundert, entworfen an Hand des Periplus des erythraischen Meeres*, Vienna, 1964.

<sup>10</sup> Tibbetts, G.R., "Pre-Islamic Arabia and South East Asia," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 29, Singapore, 1958, pp. 182-208.

<sup>11</sup> See his review in *Annuaire, École Pratique des Hautes Études, IV<sup>e</sup> Section, Sciences Historiques et Philologiques*, Paris La Sorbonne, 1974-75, pp. 210-211.

<sup>12</sup> Ascher, "Graeco-Roman Nautical Technology and Modern Sailing Information. A confrontation between Pliny's account of the voyage to India and that of the *Periplus Maris Erythraeae* in the light of modern knowledge." *The Journal of Tropical Geography*, vol. 31. December 1970, pp. 10-26.

Middle East, North Africa, and Southern Europe during the first and second centuries of the Hegira were largely made up of South Arabians (Yemeni and Ḥaḍramī tribes). Military colonies were established at strategic sites—"al-Fustāt" in Egypt, "Waddan" in Southern Tripolitania, "Kūfa" in Irak.

These South Arabian tribal groups were in no small measure responsible for the consolidation of Islamic rule in the aforementioned areas by playing leading roles in the socio-economic and political administrative fields. Their gradual sedentarization accelerated the arabization process and resulted in the rise of urban centres throughout the Muslim Empire.<sup>13</sup>

Tadeusz Lewicki,<sup>14</sup> Hishem Djaït,<sup>15</sup> J.C. Vadet<sup>16</sup> and Ḥaḍramī historians—Salāh al-Bakrī<sup>17</sup> and Šālīḥ al-Ḥāmīdī<sup>18</sup>—drawing essentially on classical Islamic sources, external to the Yemen, provide us with interesting observations on South Arabian trends. These may be summed up as follows:

- (a) Yemeni and Ḥaḍramī migrations were not exclusively oriented toward the Indian Ocean.
- (b) This dispersion of Southern Arabs was essentially overland and armed.
- (c) It resulted in the impoverishment and depopulation of the Ḥaḍramawt.
- (d) From a peripheral role during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, Southern Arabia now played a fundamental role in laying the base of an Arabo-Islamic civilization. One must

<sup>13</sup> One such centre was Palermo in Sicily: "Tra i cittadini di Palermo e testimoni in atti pubblici, ci occorrono Arabi delle tribù del Yemen: al *Azd*, Kindah, Lahm, Ma'afir e di Medina, e dell'Hadramawt..." in Michele Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, volume 3. Catania, 1937, p. 215 *infra*.

<sup>14</sup> Tadeusz Lewicki, "Les Ibadites dans l'Arabie du Sud au Moyen Age," *Folio Orientalia*, Cracow, 1959, pp. 3-18.

<sup>15</sup> Hishem Djaït, "Les Yamanites à Kūfa au 1<sup>er</sup> Siècle de l'Hegire," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. XIX, Part II, May 1976, pp. 148-181.

<sup>16</sup> Vadet, J.C., "L'Acculturation des Sud-Arabiques du Fustāt au lendemain de la conquête arabe," *Bulletin d'École Orientale*, Damascus, XXII, 1969, pp. 7-14.

<sup>17</sup> Salāh al-Bakrī, "Hijrah al-Ḥadārim ilā al-Khārij" in *Tārīkh Ḥadramawt al-Siyāsī*, Cairo, vol. II, 1936, pp. 218-237.

<sup>18</sup> Šālīḥ al-Ḥāmīdī, "Hijrah ahl Ḥadramawt fi ahd al-futūh" in *Tārīkh Ḥadramawt*, Beirut, 1968, pp. 166-176.

be on guard against a tendency to present a Yemenite oriented view of history.

(iii) *The Late Medieval Period Onwards*

Ḥādrāmī sources<sup>19</sup> mentioned the migrations of Ḥādrāmīs in numbers to trade, as missionaries and mercenaries, as from 8-9th centuries H/14-15th A.D. Many went to the help of the coastal and highland Muslim principalities of Duwārō, Balī, Sharkha, Hadya, Adal, Arababni, Darah in their protracted struggles against the Christian Kingdom.

These migrants entered through the port of Zayla and onwards to Harrar, which became “an important centre of dispersal of many of the founders of other Muslim settlements further inland.”

B.G. Martin,<sup>20</sup> drawing on published Arabic sources and contemporary works, has tried to show that owing to their defeat in the wars against the Christian Ethiopians and the Gallas, accompanied by unfavourable climatic and political conditions in the Ḥādrāmawt and the presence of hostile Portuguese fleets off the South Arabian and African coasts, these South Arabian migrants elected not to go home at all. Instead they migrated further to various points along the East African littoral.<sup>21</sup>

However Ḥādrāmī chronicles in my possession (*Tārīkh Bā Sanjalab*) do not support this view. Throughout this period and even earlier the Ḥādrāmawt maintained close and extensive commercial socio-cultural links with India, especially Gujarat and the ports along the Malabar coast.<sup>22</sup> Mahrī mercenaries were equally

<sup>19</sup> “Mahājir al-‘Alawiyin”—*Majallat al-Rābiṭab al-‘Alawiya*, 5, 3 Batavia, 1349H, pp. 181-189.

See *Tārīkh Bā Sanjalab* (unpublished), pp. 46-67, *Majallat al-Rābiṭab* 3, 3 1349H, p. 104.

On Ḥādrāmī emigrations—“Hagāig Nafisah an al-Sādāt al-‘Alawiyūn bi-Jazāir al-Qumr wa Madagascār” in *Al-‘Arab*, Singapore 22 Feb. 1934, no. 109, pp. 7-8. Al-Sādāt al-‘Alawiyūn bi-Jazāir al-Qumr, *Rābiṭab* 1347/1928-9, 1, pp. 328-335.

<sup>20</sup> Martin, B.G., “Arab Migrations to East Africa in Medieval Times,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, VII, 3, 1975, pp. 367-390. See *ibid.*, footnotes (1), p. 367 and (38), p. 377.

<sup>21</sup> *Rābiṭab*, 1, 4, 1350H, p. 180.

<sup>22</sup> Ḥādrāmī colonies were equally to be found in Bijapur, Quilon, Cambaya, Bilgam, Surat, Ahmadabad, Delhi, Baroj, Cananor, Maniksore, Hyderabad-Deccan, Daglore, Rankabad, Diu, Rander etc.

fighting the Portuguese at Zaila', Socotra, the towns along the Benadir coast, the Comoro islands and even Mombasa. When Badr Bū Ṭwairiḳ, the Kathīrī Sultan, invaded their territory in Southern Arabia, they rallied to the cause of the Lusitanian forces. The picture of migratory movements during this period is one of great complexity and not as neat as Martin would have us believe. We can only go by fragmentary and, at times, confusing accounts. A number of Ḥadramī publications have been critically evaluated as to their usefulness as documents—(e.g. *Tārīkh al-Daulat al-Kathīriyah*, Cairo, 1948 by Muḥammad b. Hāshim).

A tremendous amount of work is needed before some of these historical sources could be catalogued and edited. Some of the pioneering efforts in this direction have been achieved by the eminent Arabist and student of South Arabian culture and civilizations, R.B. Serjeant.<sup>23</sup>

Paul Wheatley has shown, in his monograph on Sung maritime trade, the important role played by Ḥadramīs in the lucrative ivory trade and other essential commodities with Imperial China, through Southeast Asia.<sup>24</sup>

It was only towards the end of the 18th and early 19th centuries that increasing numbers of Ḥadramīs came to settle in the Malay Archipelago, Southern Thailand, Champa and the Southern Philippines.<sup>25</sup>

Ḥadramī migrations during the colonial period will not be discussed here. It is imperative that we now turn our attention to an examination of the causes accounting for this dispersion of Southern Arabs.

<sup>23</sup> Serjeant, R.B., "Materials for South Arabian History, Notes on New Manuscripts from Ḥadramawt," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 13, 1949/50, pp. 281-307, 581-601.

<sup>24</sup> "The second source of supply of Chinese ivory was the African coast in the neighbourhood of Zanzibar and Berbera. The collecting centre for this commodity seems not to have been on the African continent at all, but at Mirbat in the Ḥadramawt. The Arabs thus exercised a monopoly over the collection and transport of ivory in the western parts of the Indian Ocean. From Mirbat it was shipped eastwards in Arab bottoms to Sri Vijaya and Jih-lu-t'ing, the main ivory *entrepôts* in South East Asia." *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 32, Singapore, 195-, p. 111-112.

<sup>25</sup> For a bibliography see Yusof A. Talib, "Les Hadramis et le Monde Malais." *Archipel*, 7, Paris, 1974, pp. 41-68.

### III. FACTORS ACCOUNTING FOR ARABIAN MIGRATIONS

Scholars have attributed a number of factors causing migrations from Southern Arabia: unfavourable climatic conditions, famine, pestilence, a never-ending series of internecine warfare and foreign invasions, a desire for trade and a love of travel. These factors have more often than not been poorly documented. This is all the more surprising considering the wealth of unpublished and published sources in Arabic and European languages.

The incidence of draught, rains, floods, pestilences, and wars throughout Southern Arabia (especially during the Medieval period and after) have been faithfully recorded by local chroniclers (Bā Faḳīh al-Shihri, Bā Sanjalāh, Bin Hamīd, Shanbal).<sup>26</sup>

At times these factors have not been utilized with much discernment as causes for migration. Floods have been cited as an example. Yet as R.B. Serjeant has remarked "it is surprising to discover that after so many destructive floods there is no evidence quoted of cultivated areas being abandoned and the same localities appear to continue in cultivation."<sup>27</sup>

### IV. THE MARITIME ASPECTS OF SOUTH ARABIAN MIGRATIONS

Ever since the pioneering efforts of G. Ferrand<sup>28</sup> and the contributions of a distinguished group of scholars—G.F. Hourani,<sup>29</sup> T.A. Shumovskiy,<sup>30</sup> G.R. Tibbetts,<sup>31</sup> I. Khoury,<sup>32</sup> H. Grosset-

<sup>26</sup> "Some irrigation systems in Ḥaḍramawt," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 27, 1964, pp. 33-76.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>28</sup> *Instructions Nautiques et Routiers Arabes et Portugais des XV et XVI Siècles*. [Réproduits, Traduits et Annotés par G. Ferrand] 3 vols., Paris, 1921-23. *Introduction à l'Astronomie Nautique Arabe*, Paris, 1928.

<sup>29</sup> Hourani, G.F., *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, Princeton, 1951.

<sup>30</sup> Shumovskiy, T.A., *Tri neinvestnaya Lotsi Akhmada ibn Majida* [Three unknown pilot-guides of Ahmd ibn Majid] Moscow/Leningrad, 1957.

<sup>31</sup> Tibbetts, G.R., *Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean before the coming of the Portuguese*, London, 1971. [Detailed charts indicating the routes taken by Arab navigators between the Arabian Peninsula, South India and S.E. Asia].

<sup>32</sup> "La Ḥawiya—Abrégé versifié des Principes de Nautique de Ahmād bin Māgid." [Arab text with introduction and analysis in French]. *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales de Damas*, Tome XXIV, 1971, pp. 249-384.

Grange<sup>33</sup> and others, our knowledge of Arab navigation has been enriched.

However one finds only scattered allusions in these and other works<sup>34</sup> to the “structure and activities of South Arabian maritime communities on the seaboard of the Indian Ocean.” Detailed studies on these communities are indispensable as they throw light on the South Arabian’s ability to establish, over a spread of several centuries, a vast and “complex network of coastal and island commercial centres, of trade-routes and *entrepôts* linking these places with the sea,”<sup>35</sup> and thereby facilitating population movements and cultural interactions.

R.B. Serjeant, Sir Thomas Adams Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, has come to our rescue with an important paper—

<sup>33</sup> Grosset-Grange, H., “Les procédés arabes de navigation en océan Indien au moment des Grandes Découvertes.” *Huitième Coll. Hist. Mar.*, Beirut, 1966 pp. 227-46.

<sup>34</sup> Clouet A.G., “La Navigation yéménite au long cours vers l’Afrique orientale,” *Actes du IVe Congrès de l’Association Historique Internationale de l’Océan Indien et du XIVe Colloque de la Commission Internationale Maritime*, Saint-Denis-La Réunion, Sept. 1972.

Apart from the afore-mentioned works on Arab navigational techniques one equally finds a growing number of works on Arab sea crafts and trade in the Indian Ocean and adjacent areas:

Hans Kindermann’s excellent little piece of work on the classification of Arab sea craft—“*Schiff im Arabischen* (Zwickau, Saxony, 1934)—has now been supplemented by the writings of scholars familiar with the language and culture of the region [e.g. George Rentz—“Pearling in the Persian Gulf” in *Semitic and Oriental Studies—A volume presented to William Popper*, Ed. by Walter J. Fischel, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1957) pp. 897-402; R.B. Serjeant—*The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast*, (Oxford, 1963), Appendix II, pp. 132-137; Richard Le Baron Bowen—*Arab Dhows of Eastern Arabia* (Rehoboth, Mass., 1949); M.P. Naugarede—“Qualités nautiques des navires arabes” *Studia* 11 (Lisbon, Jan. 1963) pp. 95-122. For description of life on board these craft see the fascinating accounts given by A. Villiers—“Sailing with Sinbad’s Sons.” *National Geographic Magazine*, Nov., 1948, pp. 675-688; and *Sons of Sinbad* (New York, 1968); E.B. Martin and Chryssee Perry Martin, *Cargoes of the East: the Ports, Trade, and Culture of the Arabian Seas and the Western Indian Ocean* (London, 1978). On the cartography of Arabia in historical times, see G.R. Tibbetts, *Arabia in Early Maps*. (Arabia Past and Present, vol. 4) Cambridge, 1978].

<sup>35</sup> B.G. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 389. cf. Van den Berg, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-150. On the maritime links between South Arabia, India, the Gulf and East Africa, see *Tārikh Bā Sanjalab*. On the importance of Arab shipping in Indonesia up to the middle of the 19th century, see the preliminary survey by F.J.A. Broeze, “The Merchant Fleet of Java 1820-1850,” *Archipel* 18 (Paris, 1979), pp. 251-269. A global study of Arab shipping in all its aspects in the Indian Ocean has as yet to be attempted.

“Maritime Customary Law off the Arabian coasts” read at the eighth International Colloquium of Maritime History held in Beirut (September, 1966).<sup>36</sup> Selectively drawing on the mass of material that he has gathered on the “seafaring communities of Arabia,” the author has provided us with valuable and fascinating information on the “highly complicated and sophisticated customary law that governs the life of both mariners and fishermen” as well as on other maritime aspects (e.g. art of navigation, the “convoy” method adapted locally, the ship’s company, discipline, the broker, cargo, jettison, salvage and fishery laws).

These notes, so far assembled by the author, are extremely valuable in understanding and controlling the data to be found in the old standard texts. Even though these notes are on present-day practices, there are only slight differences when compared with ancient ones.

There is still an important maritime aspect which has been neglected as a field of study: popular beliefs amongst South Arabian mariners both living and dead. There are scattered references to these in published and unpublished Arabic sources (e.g. *fatāwa*, hagiologies, South Arabian chronicles, etc.) as well as in European accounts based on field-work in the area.

Owing to the perilous nature of their profession: attacks by pirates, the Portuguese, the unkindly elements, the manifold dangers from the sea and diseases, these mariners, like their counterparts elsewhere, look for deliverance from all these perils to their local saints,<sup>37</sup> resorting to charms,<sup>38</sup> ex-votos,<sup>39</sup> and the like. The rich maritime lore of Southern Arabia awaits a monograph.

<sup>36</sup> S.E.V.P.E.N., Paris, 1970, pp. 195-207.

<sup>37</sup> “Hagiologies are full of miracles performed by the saints for their devotees who called upon them for help at sea.” [Serjeant, R.B., *The Portuguese*, 1963, p. 137]. One such hagiology in my possession [*Kitāb al-Zabr al-Bāsim fī Manāqib al-Imām al-Shāikh Abī Bakr b. Salīm*. MS.] contains references on the power of this celebrated Saint of ‘Ainat in the Hadramawt over the elements. This is somewhat reminiscent of a similar miracle performed by Jesus. [See the *Gospel of St. Mark*, Chapter 4, verses 35-41]. Equally, the *Malay Annals*, 9th edition, Singapore, 1960, pp. 181.

<sup>38</sup> See especially: ‘Abdullāh b. Asad al-Yamanī al-Yāfi‘ī, *Kitāb al-Dar al-Nadīm fī Khawās al-Quran al-‘Adīm*. [Lithography copy in my possession, undated] A.H.J. Prins, “Islamic Maritime Magic—A Ship’s Charm from Lamu,” *Festschrift Damman*, Stuttgart, 1969. “Maritime Art in an Islamic Context. Oculus and Theion in Lamu Ships,” *Mariners Mirror*, vol. 56, 1970, pp. 327-339.

<sup>39</sup> Serjeant (1970, p. 199) indicates an interesting practice relating to the

## V. THE IMPACT OF SOUTHERN ARABS ON THE COUNTRIES BORDERING ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

Despite the fact that the Ḥadramawt was and is an impoverished and underpopulated land, it was able, thanks to its migrants, to exercise preponderant political, religious and socio-economic influences in these countries before the era of European colonization.

Views differ as to the factors accounting for this privileged position. Martin,<sup>40</sup> Trimmingham<sup>41</sup> in the case of East Africa, Forbes<sup>42</sup> for the Central Indian Ocean Archipelagos, Raffles,<sup>43</sup> Van der Kroef<sup>44</sup> for the Dutch East Indies, attributed this to the Islamization of these territories.

The Ḥadramī Saiyyids were able—on account of their marriage alliances with local princely families, their wealth and their unquestioned authority on all matters pertaining to Islam, the control of Islamic Centres of Education, mystical orders, the cult of saints, the interpretation of the “Shariah”—to give Shāfiī Islam an indubitable Ḥadramī stamp.

However, Dutch scholars like Van den Berg,<sup>45</sup> Veth,<sup>46</sup> stressed

“fawlah” festivity—[deliverance from danger]—“When a vessel arrives at Rās Hafūn, from Africa, they told me, the crew prepare a coconut for the Jinn, and send out little model boats for the Jinn, to pacify them—after this there is *fawlah*, i.e. *Salamah*, safety. Sometimes in return for a safe arrival they sacrifice an animal. At Rās Asīr or Gardafui the sailors place some food in a little box and throw it into the sea to ransom themselves from the wrath of the Jinn who inhabit the mountains of Gardafui; they do likewise when they pass by Rās al-Kalb. Ashes are commonly used in Ḥadramawt when it is wished to exclude or drive away the Jinn.

<sup>40</sup> Martin, B.G., *op. cit.*, (1975).

<sup>41</sup> Trimmingham, *Islam in East Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1960 (See especially, pp. 34-35, 72-73, 180).

<sup>42</sup> Forbes, “Southern Arabia and the Islamization of the Central Indian Ocean Archipelago.” 29 pages, maps (paper presented for the *International Conference on Indian Ocean Studies*, Perth, W. Australia, August 1979).

<sup>43</sup> Raffles: Despatch from Malacca, dated 10-6-1811—quoted by J.A.E. Morley, “The Arabs and the Eastern Trade” in *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 22, 1949, pp. 143-176.

<sup>44</sup> Van der Kroef, “The Arabs in Indonesia,” *Middle Eastern Journal*, vol. III, 1953, pp. 300-323.

<sup>45</sup> Van den Berg, *op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> Veth, *Borneo's Wester-Afdeeling Geographisch, Statistiek, Historisch*, Amsterdam, 1854. [See vol. I, pp. 246-282 on details concerning the Al-Quadris and the establishment of their power in Mempawa, Matan and Pontianak].

that these explanations are only partially acceptable. They observed that many areas of the Dutch East Indies, where they were firmly entrenched, were either pagan or non-Islamized. Their success in securing high positions within these societies can be attributed to non-religious factors—their skills in the field of diplomacy and their solidarity as a group.

In stressing the preponderant role of Hadramīs as agents of civilization in these areas, some South Arabian and Western scholars tended to be influenced by the following considerations, especially in relation to East Africa.

(i) B.G. Martin,<sup>47</sup> R.B. Serjeant,<sup>48</sup> Trimmingham,<sup>49</sup> Lyndon Harris,<sup>50</sup> Jan Knappert,<sup>51</sup> G.S.P. Freeman Granville,<sup>52</sup> Chittick,<sup>53</sup> Kirkman<sup>54</sup> and a host of other scholars, echoed de Verre Alan's following remarks: "Everything worthwhile came from Asia to Africa and not *vice versa*: '*ex-Africa nihil unquam novum*'."<sup>55</sup> In other words, as succinctly indicated by V.V. Matviev<sup>56</sup> and African historians, the widespread view was that Swahili civilization, which established itself on the East African coast, was introduced by Middle Eastern races—Arabs and Persians—who built towns, spread Islam and Arab-Persian cultures superior to those of African culture. By and large, Africans who were on the receiving end had to remain as passive partners.

This view-point is not new,<sup>57</sup> has a number of variants, and still has wide currency to-day.

<sup>47</sup> Martin, *op. cit.*

<sup>48</sup> Serjeant, R.B., *The Portuguese of the South Arabian Coast*, Oxford, 1973, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> Trimmingham, *op. cit.*

<sup>50</sup> Lyndon Harris, *Swahili Poetry*, Oxford, 1962.

<sup>51</sup> Jan Knappert, *Traditional Swahili Poetry—An Investigation into the Concepts of East African Islam as Reflected in the Utenzi Literature*, Leiden, 1967.

<sup>52</sup> Freeman Granville, G.S.P., *Men and Monuments on the East African Coast*, London, 1964.

<sup>53</sup> Chittick, "Kilwa and the Arab Settlement of the East African Coast", *Journal of African History*, IV, 2, 1963.

<sup>54</sup> Kirkman, *Medieval History of the Coast of Tanganyika*, Oxford, 1962.

<sup>55</sup> Alan, "A Proposal for Indian Ocean Studies" (paper presented to the University of East Africa Social Sciences Council Conference—Makerere University College, Kampala, Uganda—1969).

<sup>56</sup> Matviev, V.V., "East Africa twelfth to the fifteenth century" in vol. IV, Chapter 18 of the *General History of Africa*, Unesco (Forthcoming).

<sup>57</sup> "L'Islam est un progrès pour le nègre qui l'adopte." E. Renan, *Histoire du Peuple d'Israel*, vol. I, p. 60.

(ii) In the light of recent researches on African and Malay societies, this cultural-diffusionist approach has become increasingly unacceptable.

Very few Southern Arabs, or for that matter Persians, were rapidly assimilated.

Some of the dynasties founded in the Comoro islands, along the East African coast, and in the Malay Archipelago were not, contrary to the widespread belief, founded by Arabo-Persian elements, but were essentially African or Malay. The Ḥaḍramīs were not able to establish power structures in this area but usurped them. They then tried to legitimize their positions through the creation of dubious legends, thus obscuring the origins of these local kingdoms.

What has perhaps not been adequately studied, or even considered as meriting attention, has been the impact of the countries bordering on the Indian Ocean upon Southern Arabia in every aspect of its material and spiritual existence.

## VI. CRITIQUE OF SOUTH ARABIAN (ḤAḌRAMĪ) MIGRATIONS

The existence of works in Arabic by Ḥaḍramī authors on the negative aspects of successive emigrations upon their homeland appears, to the best of my knowledge and with the possible exception of R.B. Serjeant, not to have attracted the notice of students of the South Arabian Diaspora.

Two anonymous tracts [*Al-Hāyat al-Sūḍah bi-Ḥadramawt*, Singapore 1953; and “Kḥawāṭir Sānīḥah Warāḥ Nāsīḥah” in *Majalat al-Rābitah al-Ālawiyyah*, 7, 2, Batavia 1348H, pp. 252-275] as well as an article by the Singapore journalist Kāramah Balāḍram—[“Al-Zirā’ ha bi-Ḥaḍramawt,” *al-Hudā*, 18 Dec., 1933, p. 9 & 11]—give us rare insights as to how educated South Arabians viewed the crippling effects of the exodus of their co-religionists to various countries bordering on the Indian Ocean, upon the socio-economic, cultural and political activities within Southern Arabia itself.

Firstly these authors deplored the too great dependence on remittances derived from properties in the form of estates and houses in Singapore, the former Dutch East Indies and Hydera-

bad-Deccan, owned by a growing group of 'rentiers.' Ironically, instead of bringing about prosperity to the impoverished land of Southern Arabia, this flow of unprecedented wealth<sup>58</sup> brought in its wake widespread indolence, social parasitism, neglect of essential agricultural activities and great waste in the form of large spending on luxurious items (e.g. building of palatial homes, frequent marriages etc.). The cutting off of remittances during the Second World War and after caused widespread famines and reduced many of its inhabitants to the level of paupers, and consequently caused further emigrations, especially to the oil-rich Arab states of the Peninsula.

Secondly, the departure of her most gifted sons to other lands resulted in the gradual but sure decline of the Hadramawt as a seat of civilization. The desire for lucre turned away her youth from scholarly pursuits. In a spiritual land *par excellence*, materialism has gained the upper hand.

They equally feared the penetration and occupation of their sacred territory by European colonial forces.<sup>59</sup>

These writings were essentially exhortative in nature, and urged their fellow countrymen to hark back to the land of their forefathers, which they portrayed as "green and pleasant lands." The economic views expressed in them were autarchist and its nationalism reminiscent of that preached by Maurice Barres.<sup>60</sup>

My aim here is not to stir a hornet's nest, but rather to make a humble plea before the world community of scholars, that more studies should be encouraged and sponsored on this Diaspora in relation to other Diasporas in the region, and that research in

<sup>58</sup> According to Harold Ingrams, *op. cit.*, p. 150, the 13 principal Arab families of Singapore possessed wealth totalling \$21,000,000 (Straits dollars) or £2,554,000. Of these a single family had a fortune of \$10,000,000 or £1,170,000. H. Ingrams, *op. cit.*, p. 142, indicates the sum of £630,000 as remittances received annually in the Hadramawt. However Van den Berg, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127, has indicated with justification that it was impossible to assess the exact amount as these remittances were usually not sent through commercial houses or European banks.

<sup>59</sup> For a full discussion of the colonial question, see Chapter I of Y.A. Talib, *Les études européennes sur la société hadramite. Essai de bibliographie critique*, Paris, 1972 (unpublished Ph. D. thesis).

<sup>60</sup> It reminds me of the definition of "la patrie" as "le sol et les ancêtres. C'est la terre de nos morts" [Pierre de Boisdeffre Maurice Barres. Editions Universitaires, Paris, 1962, p. 88].

this field should view *sources*, whatever their origin or nature should be, accepted and treated on the same strictly scientific basis without placing a prior blind confidence in some, and less confidence in others.

Yusof A. Talib.  
(*National University of Singapore.*)