Rezensionen

Abushouk, Ahmed Ibrahim, and **Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim** (eds.): The Hadhrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia. Identity Maintenance or Assimilation? Leiden: Brill, 2009. 297 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-17231-9. (Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia, 107) Price: € 114.00

Jacobsen, Frode F.: Hadrami Arabs in Present-Day Indonesia. An Indonesia-Oriented Group with an Arab Signature. London: Routledge, 2009. 132 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-48092-5. (Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series, 24) Price £ 80.00

The Arab diaspora communities of Southeast Asia have received considerable attention in recent years. The approaches vary from philological and historical to studies of their impact on politics or Southeast Asian Islam. Although numerically marginal, Arab communities had a tremendous impact, especially in insular Southeast Asia where they settled as traders, merchants, or religious teachers. The vast majority of those Arabs came from Hadhramaut in southern Yemen, and continue to maintain economic and kinship relations to their original homeland, although many were living in Southeast Asia for several generations. In the following, the term "Hadhramis" is used equivalent to "Arabs."

The two books under review here reflect these different approaches towards the Hadhrami communities in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. While the short book of Frode Jacobsen gives the impression of being the result of anthropological fieldwork, the volume edited by Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk and Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim is a compilation of philological, historical, economic, and sociological approaches and also supplies a lot of anthropological ideas.

Jacobsen's booklet, overpriced as usual by this publisher, is composed of an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion on 119 pages of text. After presenting the historical and ethnographic background of Hadhramaut (7–18) the author gives an overview of Hadhrami communities in Java, Bali, Lombok, and Sumbawa (19–32). The following chapter on ethnicity and Hadhrami vision of their homeland consists of long citations from the authors' fieldwork notes, but as it lacks deeper analysis, this chapter is of rather anecdotal character (33–60). Chapter 5 discusses the social stratification in Hadhramaut, the Netherlands East Indies, and Southeast Asia, almost exclusively from a historical point of view (61–74), but adds nothing new to the ongoing discussions. The final and most interesting chapter describes Hadhrami religious leaders and healers on Bali (75–114).

This book is a major disappointment. Jacobsen claims to have carried out four months of fieldwork between 1999 and 2001 (19), which means that he visited Indonesia four times with a four-week tourist visa. Furthermore, he states that the "fieldwork" regions encompass the islands of Bali, Lombok, and Sumbawa. With regard to researches on Hadhrami communities in Southeast Asia, so far these islands are indeed a neglected area. Thus, it would have been interesting to get some substantial informations on the Hadhramis and their role on these islands, both in the past and present. However, the time of four months seems to the reviewer far too short to receive deep insights into Arab communities on three rather densely populated islands. Jacobsen rightly states that Hadhrami communities on Bali concentrate in Denpasar, the capital of the province, and in Singaraja, an old harbour town at the north coast of Bali. But instead of keeping close contacts to the Arab community in Bali, during his fieldwork Jacobsen had lived in a privately rented house in the famous tourist spot of Nusa Dua in the south of Bali (115). Furthermore, Jacobsen seems not to speak neither Indonesian nor Arabic, and ignores the Indonesian discourse on Hadhramis by authors like H. Aqib Suminto, Azyumardi Azra, Hamid Algadri, or Alwi Shihab.

It is no surprise therefore that Jacobsen's contacts with the Hadhrami communities obviously were not intensive and deep. His descriptions and analysis are largely based on hearsay, vague informations, and estimations rather than on observation. Through the whole book the reader will find sentences such as: "I have heard about one family in Singaraja …" (22); "On Sumbawa … I got the impression that …" (30); "This is my general impression …" (121, fn. 13); "My recording is probably not complete" (121, fn. 16); "My current impression is …" (30); "Although I have not established systematic data like this for my other places of fieldwork, from many statements in individual interviews I hold it likely …" (28); "On Bali, I never once met a Hadrami who knew of any young Hadrami … who …" (30). While it is true that gossip can build a major basis for data in anthropological fieldwork, here it seems the whole study is based on hearsay and assumptions which had not been further verified. Thus, one has to ask which of the data in this book are actually based on personal observation. The only exception is

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