

CSSH NOTES

Engseng Ho. *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006.

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For centuries descendants of people from the region of Hadramawt on the southern Arabian Peninsula have navigated the Indian Ocean and inhabited its far-flung littorals. Engseng Ho's *The Graves of Tarim* offers an anthropological history of these Hadramis, in particular the 'Alawī Sayyids, one line of the Prophet Muhammad's descendants through his daughter Fāṭima and cousin 'Alī. Beginning in the graveyards of Tarim, a town in Hadramawt where some of the earliest 'Alawī ancestors are buried, Ho describes genealogical rituals developed at the turn of the fifteenth century used to "presence" those buried there, bringing the living into contact with the dead. These practices, which Ho identifies with a complex of Sufi practices (*tarīqa*) called "the 'Alawī Way," took on new resonances as a Hadrami diaspora, "a society of the absent," spread across the Indian Ocean. Its members, like the buried 'Alawī ancestors at Tarim, required constant "revivification." For some this was achieved through genealogies associated with the 'Alawī Way, transformed and reworked on journeys, which sometimes spanned generations, away from, returning to, and circumventing Tarim.

Ho's account suggests many factors affecting the possibilities of mobility for Hadramis over the past six hundred years. Where, when, and if Hadramis could move has been tied to such variables as gender, the vicissitudes of colonial borders, and the articulation of one's place in a genealogy. Ho argues the articulation of genealogy has been of particular importance for members of the 'Alawī Way. It is through it that these Sayyids have tied together "person, place, text, and name" in a "tissue of names across the ocean." Ho's knowledge of these genealogies and the rituals associated with them is an indispensable part of his recounting of Hadrami mobility. The genealogies are filled with recurrent names and are inscribed in different literary forms by different recorders. Although they threaten to overwhelm one not already acquainted with the intricacies of their interconnections, Ho skillfully navigates his readers through some of their branches, and manages to convey both their complexity and how they might make sense for one embedded within them.

Ho's otherwise deft description of these genealogies, however, suggests a few questions left unresolved. He works with several written versions from different time periods, characterizing them as "hybrid texts." Yet precisely what he means by this remains unarticulated, and he leaves the genres involved underdefined and unhistoricized. He admits that before the late nineteenth century most of the sources about and by Hadramis were part of the 'Alawī Way, self-consciously giving 'Alawī Sayyids privileged narrative positions. Perhaps reflecting these sources, Ho's narrative paints most contestation over idealized representations of Hadrami Sayyids as arising during this latter period and from non-Sayyid Hadramis or marginalized Sayyids born outside of Hadramawt. But might there be ways to read the texts that he identifies as an 'Alawī cannon that problematizes the sense of a relatively unified Hadrami Sayyid diaspora in earlier centuries? This possibility Ho leaves underdeveloped.

Despite these unresolved questions, Ho's account of genealogy and mobility remains compelling. He draws attention to a genealogy of indigenous and non-European mappings of what we now identify as the Indian Ocean and its littorals. He illustrates how certain of the 'Alawī Sayyids, through their articulations of genealogy, moved and theorized about a social space of Hadrami migration in this region. In so doing, he suggests that it is through such mappings that one might look for histories and social mechanisms of certain types and instances of mobility that have long interested scholars of this region and time period.

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Deborah Valenze, *The Social Life of Money in the English Past*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

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Scholars of money often take for granted its instrumentality. Deborah Valenze argues that this is a mistake, for it overlooks the historical contingency and variability in money's uses, meanings, and discourses. In this book, Valenze examines money in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, demonstrating how and when money took its "modern" social and moral form. By doing so, she opens up theoretical questions about the relationship of money to mobility and constraint, the potential of money to create hierarchy and limit freedom even while it affords new relationships and movements, and the role of money as a moral and social measure of self in everyday life. The abstracting power and the unstable meanings of money, Valenze contends, shaped early modern British culture in sometimes contradictory ways.

This book concerns money's "social life" during England's financial revolution. Rather than narrowly studying the state or financial institutions, Valenze