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The Making of Local Cosmopolitans

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## Names beyond Nations. The Making of Local Cosmopolitans

par Engseng HO

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# NAMES BEYOND NATIONS

Engseng Ho

## THE MAKING OF LOCAL COSMOPOLITANS\*

THE COLLECTION OF TERRITORIES ruled over by the House of Habsburg never found a settled description... for almost three hundred years they had no common name... In 1804 Francis II, the last Holy Roman Emperor, saw his Imperial title threatened by the ambition of Napoleon and invented for himself the title of "Emperor of Austria." This, too, was a dynastic name; the Empire was the Empire of the House of Austria, not the Empire of the Austrians. In 1867 the nation of Hungary established its claim to partnership with the Emperor; and the Empire became "Austria-Hungary." The non-Hungarian lands remained without a name until the end... In other countries dynasties are episodes in the history of the people; in the Habsburg Empire peoples are a complication in the history of the dynasty... the history of central Europe revolves round them, not they round it (Taylor 1976: 9-10).

### **Dynasty, Diaspora, Destiny**

Nations are made, not born. In their making, the spilling of blood often plays a greater role than its transmission. Yet birth remains a compelling metaphor, giving persons rights to nations, and giving whole nations fathers (and less often,

mothers). The interchange of identities, between persons and their nations, is an effect of the pervasiveness of birth as metaphor, which serves to connect things of different orders. But birth is more than a metaphor; it is a mechanism. As the link between ontogeny and phylogeny, birth is the mechanism which makes nations appear natural, as families writ large. Thus it bestows upon the nation its very name, *nasci*, "to be born," and its task, to grow. Nationalism is easily considered a sub-field of kinship studies.

Whether birth be nature or culture, it gains social significance from a subsequent act, that of naming. While there are as many sets of names as kinship systems, names in fact identify persons and groups with things beyond the sphere of biological and cultural reproduction (i.e., kinship), to include territory, for example. The House of Habsburg took its name from the castle of Habsburg (or Hawk's Castle, *Habichtsburg*) in present-day Switzerland, identified itself with Austria very early on, with the 13th-century Rudolph II of Austria, expanded when Rudolph III of Austria became King of Bohemia, Albert V of Austria became King of Hungary, and so on to predicate itself upon Germany, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and even the whole world, in its motto A.E.I.O.U.: *Austria est imperare orbi universo* (Austria is destined to rule the world). By following the movement, circulation, change and conservation of names,

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in effect end up tracing the Habsburgs as a dynasty, a diaspora, and a destiny. We end up with a whole history of central Europe, as the quote from A.J.P. Taylor above suggests, if not of the world, with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and the onset of World War I.

Viewed in this way, the nationalist identification of land, language and people appears as a particular moment, or stop, in the broader movement of names through space and time, movement which in its nature tends to mix things up. Today, Germans live in Germany and speak German. In France are found the French people, who speak French. England – English people – English language. Nationalist equations of land, language and people may be seen as artifacts of naming, of a particular naming practice: one name given to things of three completely different orders ties them together. It is in metaphors of birth and growth that the nation is able to weave its magic. The branching lines of a genealogical tree provide an image which unites birthing and naming. Its elements are names, its lines the motion of parturition connecting the names. The arboreal imagery unites not only names and births, but descends into the very soil to root and ground them both in territory as well. Thus genealogies are often thought of in terms of origins, and origins are often thought of as genealogies.

When viewed solely from the point of view of names, the nationalist identification of land, language and people is about stopping names' motion. In comparison, the Habsburg dynasty can be viewed as a circulation of names, as we have seen: not so much a circulation of the Habsburg name through different territories, as a circulation of the names of different territo-

ries through the Habsburg dynasty, as Taylor emphasized in the quote above. This circulation, however, is still a relatively restricted one. The Habsburgs were a dynasty, and a grand one, because all these names of places circulating through it revolved around a very few lines of descent. The most dramatic territorial expansions of the dynasty occurred through a few marriages with well-endowed heiresses, and the lands were subsequently kept together by highly endogamous unions. This is the opposite of nationalist naming practices, in which very many lines of descent circulate through only one name, that of the nation.

In providing a comparison with other contributions to this issue of *Études rurales* devoted to territoriality and national community, I would like to discuss naming practices very different from those of the Habsburgs and the European nationalisms which rivaled and supplanted them. I would like to discuss naming practices in which a few names circulate through many lines of descent and many territories. These are the names present in the genealogies of the *sayyid-s* of Hadramawt, Yemen, descendants of the Prophet Muhammad whose settlements around the Indian Ocean constitute an extensive diaspora. Their genealogies represent mobile and expansive naming practices, compared to the restrictive ones of the Habsburgs, and the rigid, immobilizing ones of European nationalism. Like the Central European relation between a dynastic empire and nation-states, they occur in the context of an asymmetrical relation between a transregional social entity and local ones. But the parties to the asymmetry here are different. They are a prophetic lineage with a universalizing religious mission, and creole port-states hosting transre-

gional trade. Names can be thought of as a medium in which exchanges between these parties are given value, or nominalized, and boundaries between them redrawn.

In the section to follow, we will look at how a universalizing narrative of prophetic mission is articulated in a language of names. We will then look at kinship and marriage relations to understand how diasporic, creole communities/networks are created at the point of articulation between transregional and local social entities. Here, names are again at play, now not as narratives of origin but of alliance, usurpation, gift-giving. The analysis will proceed by examining genealogical representations. These genealogies are about both universal religious values and particular kinship relations. In providing cultural forms of representation which capture both realms, genealogies are not linear instruments which simply point back to origins, obscure or glorious. They are complex languages of cosmopolitanism in which the foreign and the local negotiate co-existence in vital ways. They underwrite the existence of what I call local cosmopolitans, and thus have consequences observable in gross historical outcomes. Their counterparts in the Habsburg empire, in contrast, were court cosmopolitans out of their element when in the provinces, "... and even the twentieth century Michael Károlyi, the last great Hungarian aristocrat, spoke French and German better than Hungarian." (Taylor 1976: 22-23) When nationalist movements arose in modern Europe, the Habsburgs became repudiated as foreigners. After WWI, the head of the House of Habsburg could not even return to Austria, until Archduke Otto was finally granted a visa in 1966. In contrast, when nationalist

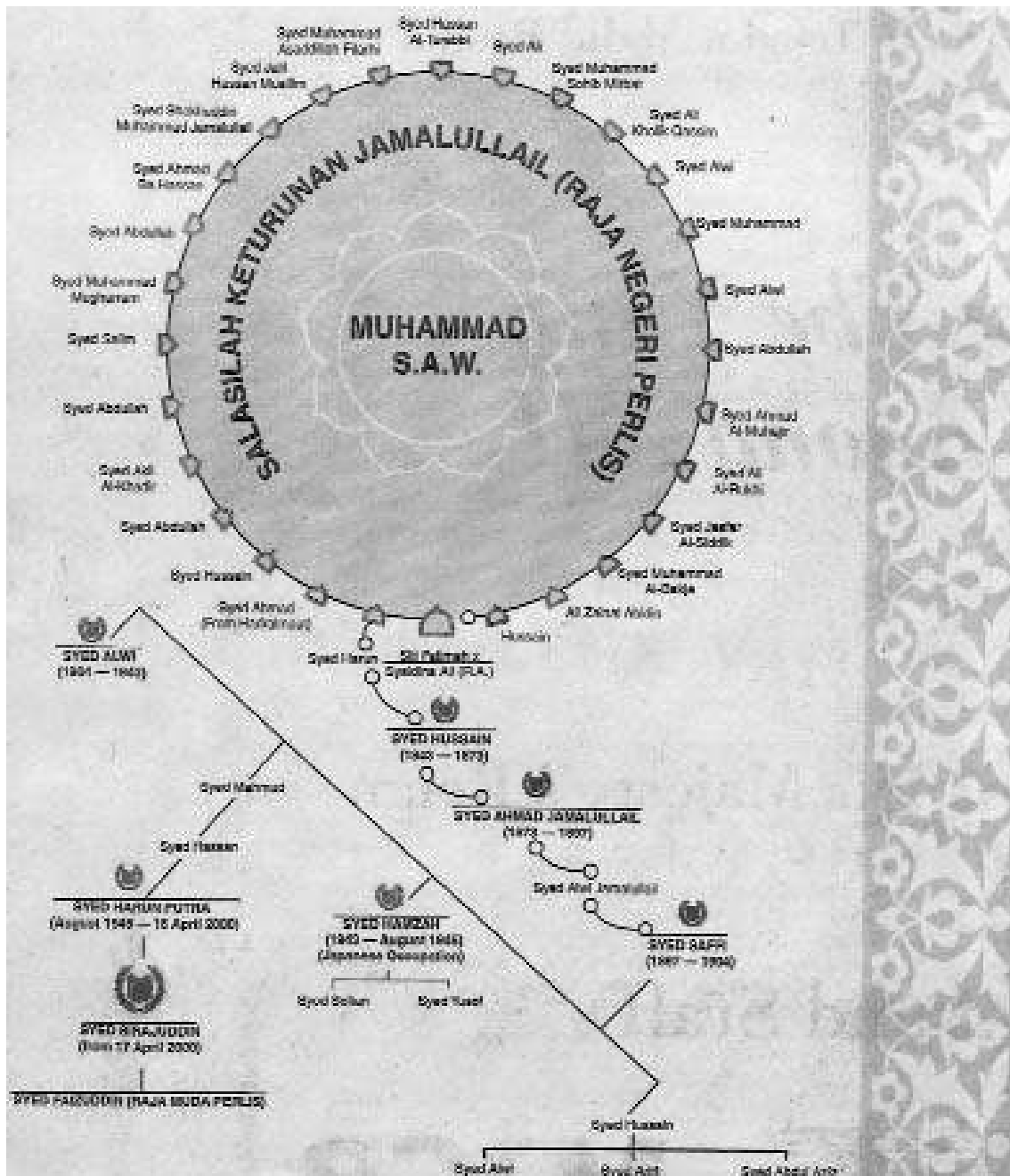
movements arose in Southeast Asia, Ḥaḍramī were among their leaders. They remain in such positions today, as the King of Malaysia, for example, descendant of the Arab Prophet Muhammad and symbolic-constitutional guarantor of the territorial sovereignty of the Malays. By having names which circulate beyond nations, local cosmopolitans are able to remain comfortably within many of them.

### **Universalization: Patrilineal Genealogies**

Sharing Taylor's analysis of how nineteenth-

century nationalisms pulled at the Habsburg empire, B. Anderson's [1983] influential interpretation of nationalism traces its growth from a community in the minds and writings of intellectuals to a movement fed by the circulation of mass print, which captured masses and states. Textual worlds nurture imagined communities. Before newsprint and nationalism, the religions of the book captured worlds beyond nations. How did a particular lineage of Arabs – the *sayyid-s*, or descendants of the Prophet Muhammad – of a particular town – Tarīm in Ḥaḍramawt – come to see themselves as active creators of a universal world, and to have some others acknowledge them as such? In the Qur'an (49:13), God said: "We have made you peoples and tribes, that you may know one another." God did not make a universal race, but rather particular peoples and tribes. How did the Ḥaḍramī *sayyid-s* make of their migrations a whole religious mission? Much of it was done in books. A whole canon of texts was written in the diaspora, a tradition which became both cause and effect, making migration mission. One of these texts is the *Tārīkh al-Nūr al-Sāfir*,

Genealogy of the King of Malaysia.



which can be translated as the *Travelling Light Unveiled*. It was written by the Ḥaḍramī *sayyid* ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Shaykh al-‘Aydārūs in Surat in 1603. Its scope was the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, and it chronicled the events of the 10th Islamic century. This space and time became the broad stage on which Ḥaḍramī migration and mission was presented as telos. In order to see how al-‘Aydārūs’s text wedded geographical movement to religious value, let us turn to its immediate context, Gujarat.

Gujarat has long been the major textile producing centre of the Indian Ocean. Its natural market stretches from Cairo to Java (Chaudhuri 1990). The large volume of textile export from Gujarat also made it into a more general centre of trade and shipping in the Indian Ocean. Sitting in Cambay in Gujarat in the 16th century, the Portuguese accountant Tome Pires saw it as having two arms, the right stretching out to Aden, the left to Melaka (1944: 43). Gujarat was a regional fulcrum.

The development of a Muslim sultanate in Gujarat from about 1400 onwards drew in two sorts of foreign Muslims: first, Ethiopian slaves, or *Ḥabashī mamlūk-s*, who became army commanders and state officials; and second, religious adepts, who became court counsellors, sufi shayks, judges and teachers. The slaves were booty from war against Christians in Ethiopia, and were bought in Yemen by Turks and brought to Gujarat. Torn from their families, they underwent social deaths (Patterson 1982), and were transformed into new persons by education in two key skills: horsemanship and Islamic sciences. In the latter, many were tutored by Ḥaḍramī *sayyid-s*, whom they would have already come across in the Red Sea. Thus

as the *Ḥabashī mamlūk-s* rose in the ranks of state service, they patronized their Ḥaḍramī teachers lavishly.

Rayḥān Badr al-Dīn Jahānkīr Khānī was one such *mamlūk*, who was proficient in writing and account-keeping. He had become a minister, and shared his success with his teacher, the Ḥaḍramī *sayyid* Shaykh “Principal of Aḥmad Ābād” b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Aydārūs. Rayḥān’s scribe observed that:

He loved the pious, and devoted himself to serving the *walī* of the holies, sun of suns, Shaykh b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Aydārūs. He was encompassed by al-‘Aydārūs’s favour, and through al-‘Aydārūs the creed was perfected in him; he became famous for his piety. Thus he gave al-‘Aydārūs his due in many poems, and expended whatever he possessed in his service... both this slave and all he owned was for his master. Rayḥān loved the Ḥaḍramīs, especially the *sayyid-s*. He was fond of those closest to the *sayyid-s*, and in this way his charity extended to those of the Arab race (Ulughkhānī 1910-1928: 612).

Over the course of two centuries, Ḥaḍramīs such as Shaykh al-‘Aydārūs received patronage from such *mamlūk-s* and sultans, and by the 17th century had become key figures in their own right, no longer tied to particular patrons. Some of their tombs had become pilgrimage destinations. In the pre-eminent port-city of Surat, they would lead the whole city in prayer in times of crisis. Such a crisis broke out in 1735. The navy blockaded the port just when the ships of the Surat merchants were loaded with goods for the annual convoy to the Hejaz, and a thousand pilgrims were gathered to jour-

ney to Mecca. While the interests of almost the whole city became shared in the crisis, only the Ḥaḍramī *sayyid-s* were able to provide a face and a voice for the general public opinion and interest, for the city was rent by competing commercial and ethnic jealousies (Das Gupta 1979: 267).

Throughout the Indian Ocean, Ḥaḍramī *sayyid-s* had established themselves in towns such as Surat. A typical biography would show a Ḥaḍramī leaving Tarīm in Ḥaḍramawt for Aden, proceeding to the Hejaz to learn *ḥadīth* (reports of the Prophet's words and deeds) and gather *'ijāzas* (certificates), then venturing to Gujarat to try his luck while spreading the religion. By the 17th century, a Ḥaḍramī *sayyid* could journey throughout this whole region, from the house of one kinsman to another, and study with teachers who were uncles, cousins and brothers. Through visits and letters, they kept up an active communication across the region. Put in this way, it becomes easy to see how an Ethiopian slave starting out from Zayla' or Kamarān in the Red Sea might attribute his later success in Gujarat to the patronage of Ḥaḍramīs, who were public figures everywhere he went.

Given this context, of the traffic of men and goods between Gujarat and the Hejaz, let us now return to 'Abd al-Qādir b. Shaykh al-'Aydarūs's *Tārīkh al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, which comes out of this milieu. It is a centenary biographical chronicle organized by year, covering the 10th Islamic century. (This roughly coincides with the 16th century C.E.) This genre of 100-year histories had been pioneered by the Egyptian *ḥadīth* compiler Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) for the 8th Islamic century, followed by the Hejazi al-Sakhāwī for the 9th.

Al-'Aydarūs's chronicle may thus be seen as completing a set which covers the 8th to 10th centuries in time, and the route Egypt, the Hejaz and western India in space. This is probably no coincidence, as Ibn Ḥajar belonged to a Kārimī family, Egyptian merchants who traded with India, especially pepper from the Malabar coast. The Kārimī long-distance trade was taken over by the *Mamlūk* sultan Baybars in the 15th century, who secured the route down to the Hejaz. The *Mamlūk-s* were in turn overrun by the Turks, who colonized Egypt and the Hejaz, continued down to Yemen, and fitfully projected naval power out to Gujarat by the early 16th century. It was they who had brought the Ḥabashī slaves to Gujarat. Thus when 'Abd al-Qādir al-'Aydarūs composed his *Travelling Light Unveiled*, he was following the right arm of Cambay out to Aden and Cairo, across a space which had now become more integrated in terms of both trade and politics. Indeed, when the Gujarati sultans felt insecure, they would send their families, horses and treasures to the Hejaz for safekeeping. Conversely, Gujarat became known as the entry point of *ḥadīth* scholarship into the subcontinent, coming on the return sea journey from Jedda.

This whole transregional space appears vividly in al-'Aydarūs's chronicle. In it are death notices of jurists, historians, saints, pious persons and kings; floods, fire, rain, earthquakes, eclipses, comets; novelties such as coffee, *qāt* and Portuguese. The book feels like a newspaper, where events separated geographically jostle each other on the page, sharing the space of a common time. A dominant image emerges of particular localities held together by a skein of common reference books in religion,



language, law; of scholars whose itineraries and genealogies span this space. Kings appear as local, parochial potentates who help or hinder the scholars. In their mobility and their common curriculum, the scholars encompass the sultans. Tyrannies are islands surrounded by a wider sea of Sunnī Shāfi‘ī scholars which ebbs and swells locally but always dominates the horizon globally, possessed of multiple sources and resources.

In al-‘Aydarūs’s text, Ḥadramīs are one stream in a universal concourse of Muslim scholars, sufis and sultans. This it shares with the other centenary texts. However, embedded within the annalistic, year-by-year narrative of events in places is an alternative chronology. This is Muhammadan prophetic genealogy: the sequence of names of prophets and their descendants.

For an empirical history replete with names, dates and places, the *Travelling Light Unveiled* has a surprising preface. This preface is full of mystical, symbolic, figural terms. Here is an extract, to convey the flavour of it:

Know that when God wanted to bring his creation into existence, he brought out the Muhammadan Reality. From his eternal lights. He then peeled from it all the worlds. God told Muhammad about his prophethood, and charged him with spreading his message. He was the Prophet of Prophets, and intermediary for all the pure ones, whilst his father Adam was still between spirit and body. There gushed forth from him gems of spirits... Even though his bodily existence was subsequent (i.e. he came after creation and the other prophets), he was distinguished by his elevation and precedence... As the true

*ḥadīth* report by Muslim has it, the Prophet said: “God Almighty wrote the dimensions of human beings fifty thousand years before making the skies and earth, while his throne was still on the water.” (Al-‘Aydarūs 1985: 6)

What we have here is an example of the prevailing intellectual culture of the Islamic Indian Ocean-Red Sea of the period. In it are conjoined mystical and legal discourses centred around the Prophet Muhammad. *Ḥadīth* is key to this conjunction. It is a source not only for legal prescriptions, but for imaginative renderings of the personhood of the Prophet as well. Symbolic elements which appear in this quotation – water, the throne, light – had been the subject of debate by *ḥadīth* scholars: which of these were the first created things? At the same time, they were also formulated by mystics such as Ibn al-‘Arabī as divine elements which had a continuous, shaping effect on the mundane world. They were the *a‘yān thābita*, or permanent prototypes, which provided form for the mundane world through a succession of intermediaries.

Al-‘Aydarūs’s preface contains such symbolic, Ibn al-‘Arabī-inspired content rendered in poetic forms. It acts like a *mawlid*, or literally “celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad,” which is read on ritual occasions such as *ḥadras*. *Ḥadra* literally means “presenting” of the Prophet. Such rituals are led by Ḥadramīs throughout the Indian Ocean today. This *mawlid*, then, acts like a cosmogony which begins the history described in the rest of the book.

In this cosmogony, light is a key symbolic element, and is transmitted to Muhammad

through the prophets before him. Al-‘Aydārūs writes of the light:

It appeared that when God created Adam, he put the Light in his backbone. And it shone from his forehead. When he died, his son Seth was the executor of his wishes, as was his son after him: that this light would not be placed in any but the purest of women. This order was carried out until the light arrived to ‘Abd Allāh, father of Muhammad, in a pure state, from the fornication of the Jāhiliyya, as the Prophet has said in numerous *ḥadīth* (al-‘Aydārūs *op. cit.*: 9).

This transmission of the light down to Muhammad may be called genealogical prophecy, in which Muhammad’s predecessors – Adam and the other prophets – pre-figure him.<sup>1</sup> Past Muhammad, the light is transmitted through his living, historical descendants, the *sayyid-s*. This channel may be called prophetic genealogy. It is at this point that the title of al-‘Aydārūs’s book becomes clear: the *Tārīkh al-Nūr al-Sāfir* concerns a light which becomes unveiled, or manifest, as it travels through history. Prophetic genealogy, which the Ḥaḍramī *sayyid-s* are a part of, becomes a vehicle for the transmission of that light. It is this genealogy which connects the cosmogony and the annalistic history in al-‘Aydārūs’s book. How does it do so?

Briefly, within the flow of years and events of the 10th century is embedded a genealogy of generations of the Ḥaḍramī *sayyid-s*. Key figures in this genealogy are given special attention, and they are connected to each other over and above the chatter of events. These connections take the form of similar thaumaturgical

feats of holy men, symbolic associations, nominal similarities, and genealogical descent. The names Shaykh and ‘Abd Allāh for example, are repeated in successive generations, resulting in someone having the name Shaykh b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Shaykh b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Shaykh b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Aydārūs. In the biography of his father, whose name is Shaykh, the author draws comparison with the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad had been given his name, which means “The Praised One,” before his praiseworthy qualities appeared. Similarly, Shaykh was given this name before it was known that he would become one. Indeed, he fulfilled his name in three senses: 1) he lived till an advanced age (*shaykhūkha*); 2) he was a shaykh in the sense of “leader” of the esoteric sufis of his age; and 3) he was a shaykh in the sense of “teacher” of students in the exoteric sciences. Al-‘Aydārūs concludes that God had inspired the naming of Shaykh “... in order that he realize his inheritance from his predecessors – just as God had inspired the folk of the chosen Prophet Muhammad in naming him ‘The Praised One’ before his praiseworthy qualities appeared.”

In his very name, al-‘Aydārūs’s father participates in a genealogy which is not only spiritual, but grounded in places as well. Consider again the name: Shaykh “Principal of Dawlat Ābād” son of ‘Abd Allāh son of Shaykh “Principal of Aḥmad Ābād” son of ‘Abd Allāh son of Shaykh son of ‘Abd Allāh the Grand ‘Ay-

1. A full and fascinating treatment of the interplay of genealogical and symbolic elements in the creation of the personhood of the Prophet Muhammad himself, employing *ḥadīth* and biographical (*sira*) sources, has been written by É. Conte (2001).

darūs, “Sultān of the Notables.”

Al-‘Aydārūs’s father is Shaykh “Principal of Aḥmad Ābād.” He was the spiritual teacher of the *mamlūk* official Rayḥān Badr al-Dīn Jahānkīr Khānī noted above, and is buried under a cupola in Aḥmad Ābād, capital of Gujarat. His grave became an object of pilgrimages. The term I have translated as “principal,” *ṣāhib*, also carries the meanings of “owner,” “friend,” “companion” (as in a journey). Among the Ḥaḍramī genealogists, it is usually applied to a celebrated, pious person whose tomb in the place is the object of pilgrimage cults so evocative of the polysemy of the term. The chain of names al-‘Aydārūs’s father participates in is thus also an itinerary of pilgrimage sites scattered around Gujarat and the homeland Hadramawt. An individual is in this way connected to many persons and places, opening up a whole geography for others to travel, visit, and participate in.

Al-‘Aydārūs’s book, then, formulates a model in which particular and universal elements are brought together in the diaspora of the Ḥaḍramī *sayyid-s*, first in Muslim Gujarat at the end of the 16th century C.E. As a history, the book is placed in the world of real space and time: the Indian Ocean and Red Sea in the 10th Islamic century. It is a world created out of the markings of difference: years, names, countries. At the same time, there are figural, nominal and genealogical similarities which arc across these separations, providing a higher level of connections throughout. They ultimately connect to divine creation and revelation itself. The combination of metaphorical and metonymic elements in the genealogy of the Ḥaḍramī *sayyid-s* functions as a synecdochic “bridge,” or *barzakh*, between cos-

mogony and history. In this sense, their travels abroad, in diaspora, are both a parallel and a continuation of the original revelation of Muhammad, which brings the universalism of divine truth to the particularities – the different peoples, times, places – of the mundane world. In composing this book, al-‘Aydārūs creates a poetic synthesis which gives specific meaning to the diasporic lives and journeys of his family members and other Ḥaḍramī *sayyid-s* across the Indian Ocean world. It gives them a way of being known among the many peoples and tribes of that world. Al-‘Aydārūs’s book is a cultural creation which gives them a way of knowing one another, long after the fact of creation, when the peoples have begun to mix.

Al-‘Aydārūs himself is a creole, born abroad in Gujarat of a Ḥaḍramī father and an Indian mother. His systematization of the genealogies creates points of articulation between transregional and local social entities, here existing within the textual world of his book. Written in Gujarat in 1603, this book is an early instance of the local cosmopolitanism whose evolution across the Indian Ocean may be traced in the circulation of Ḥaḍramī names. In the realms of this circulation, birth ties persons not to nations but to other names beyond them. In subsequent centuries other locales were brought within this realm of genealogies and names, as other Ḥaḍramī creoles ventured further east to the Malay archipelago. Not unlike the Habsburgs, they came to rule new lands and states through marriages with noble women there. The sort of cosmopolitanism they exemplified, however, was not that of a sedentary, centralized court which attracted provincial aristocrats and sent out armies and bureaucra-

cies. Rather, it was a mobile cosmopolitanism which travelled, amalgamated itself with other states, families, peoples, lands and languages, and came to be embodied in cosmopolitans who made available locally the values and virtues of a universal religion.

In the 18th century, such local cosmopolitans began to have prominence further east, in the Malay archipelago, and participated in the restructuring of polities there. The European imperial entry, especially Dutch maritime attempts to divert flows of trade and production in the region, was met with Muslim responses in the creation of new Muslim states, or sultanates, in new places.

### **Creolization: Matrilateral Families and States**

In the 18th century, Dutch efforts to re-route the regional East-West maritime spice trade through Java were met with attempts at creating new ports elsewhere, such as the South Borneo coast, giving the Dutch a wide berth. Bugis from South Sulawesi, who were dominant in the regional carrying trade, took the lead in creating these new ports, and brought Ḥaḍramī associates into these projects. In the early stages, piracy was part of the state-building process of these small ports, a means of primitive accumulation. Once a port-making project reached a certain size, however, piracy became counter-productive. A new image of maturity was now needed, an announcement that this was a comfortable place for trade. To that end, there were few better ways than installing a resident Muslim jurist to fashion a new sphere of civilian concourse. Ḥaḍramī *sayyid-s* were sought for such roles. They were educated in the religious sciences, corresponded

with India and Arabia where they came from, and were acquainted with transregional Bugis and Ḥaḍramī shipowners. They came with reputations already established from a pre-history in Gujarat, which maintained close trading links with the Malay archipelago.

As we have seen, creole Ḥaḍramī *sayyid-s* in Gujarat, such as al-‘Aydarūs, had begun to systematize their genealogies and biographies in books. When they arrived at Aceh in Sumatra, Malacca in Malaya or Banten in Java, those texts effectively became paper credentials with wide currency. Aceh and Banten, the greatest indigenous Southeast Asian port-states in this period, had the largest mosques and libraries, and their sultans were ritually ratified by Mecca. The linear trade route connecting Southeast Asia, Western India, Yemen and Mecca was experienced as a hierarchical network of Muslim centres and peripheries, teachers and students. It was this network which authorized the entry of a stream of Ḥaḍramī *sayyid* scholars and sufis into Malay and Bugis port-sultanates, as known cosmopolitans arriving to grace parochial backwaters with their presence.

As an example, the arrival of one such Ḥaḍramī *sayyid* at the nascent Bugis port of Mempawa on the South Borneo coast in 1747, *sayyid* Ḥusayn al-Qadri, is recorded in one of the major Ḥaḍramī genealogies as follows:

The sultan of Mempawa assembled his princes, ministers and sons, and announced to them his happiness at the coming of the *sayyid*, and said that it was hard to find one of the house of the Prophet in that country, and that his coming was a stroke of good fortune. A mosque and a house were built... His

house became a shelter for foreigners and was sought by guests. As well, the place became a city of learning and trade (al-Mashhūr ed. 1984: 510).

Sayyid Ḥusayn's name and fame extended Mempawa's reach in trade and learning. Ḥaḍramī *sayyid-s* such as Sayyid Ḥusayn were potential catalysts in connecting provincial Malay port-towns with the larger networks of the Indian Ocean. That potential was commonly imagined in the form of a genealogy with religious luminescence. The aura came from its connection with distant, unseen powers whose effects were nevertheless tangible: "His house became a shelter for foreigners... the place became a city of learning and trade." Indigenous sultans sought to avail themselves of those powers by domesticating the genealogy. One way of doing so was to marry their daughters to the *sayyid-s*. The male offspring of such unions would be both grandsons of the sultans, and *sayyid-s* in their own right. Coexisting at such close quarters, *sayyid* and sultanic lines merged, and *sayyid-s* became sultans.

The association between Sayyid Ḥusayn and Bugis Mempawa continued into the next generation. Sayyid Ḥusayn's son married the daughter of the sultan of Mempawa, and went on to found the settlement of Pontianak. When his efforts to trade were obstructed by a local chief, he sought help from his wife's cousin Raja Haji, the most powerful Bugis warrior in the Malay regions, and with his aid vanquished his opponents.

This military assistance can be seen as part of a multi-generational series of exchanges between Buginese and *sayyid-s* which tied their families and fates together. The cycle of presta-

tions had begun with Sayyid Ḥusayn, who made of himself a gift to the infant Bugis settlement of Mempawa. Mempawa's sultan had reciprocated by giving his daughter's hand to Sayyid Ḥusayn's son in marriage. The cycle of exchanges was to intensify. The Bugis warrior and the son of Sayyid Ḥusayn traded visits, feasts, dances, jokes, palaces and prayers, culminating in the son's investiture as Sultan of Pontianak by the warrior. The bond which developed between them was created in a process which may be called a system of "total prestation" following Mauss:

Food, women, children, possessions, charms, land, labour, services, religious offices, rank – everything is stuff to be given away and repaid. In perpetual interchange of what we may call spiritual matter, comprising men and things, these elements pass and repass between clans and individuals, ranks, sexes and generations (1967: 12).

The Bugis warrior Raja Haji and Sayyid Ḥusayn's son, now sultan, swore that the ties which bound them would persist in their descendants and never be broken. The total social fact of their union can be represented after the fact by the splicing of Bugis and *sayyid* genealogies. Where the splicing occurs can be identified precisely by comparing the two genealogical texts I have drawn upon in this section, the Bugis *Tuhfat al-Nafīs* (Raja Haji Ahmad and Raja Ali Haji 1997) and the Ḥaḍramī *Shams al-Zaḥīra* (al-Mashhūr 1911 and al-Mashhūr ed. 1984). The author of *Tuhfat al-Nafīs* understood the connection between gifts and genealogies, and explains it in his



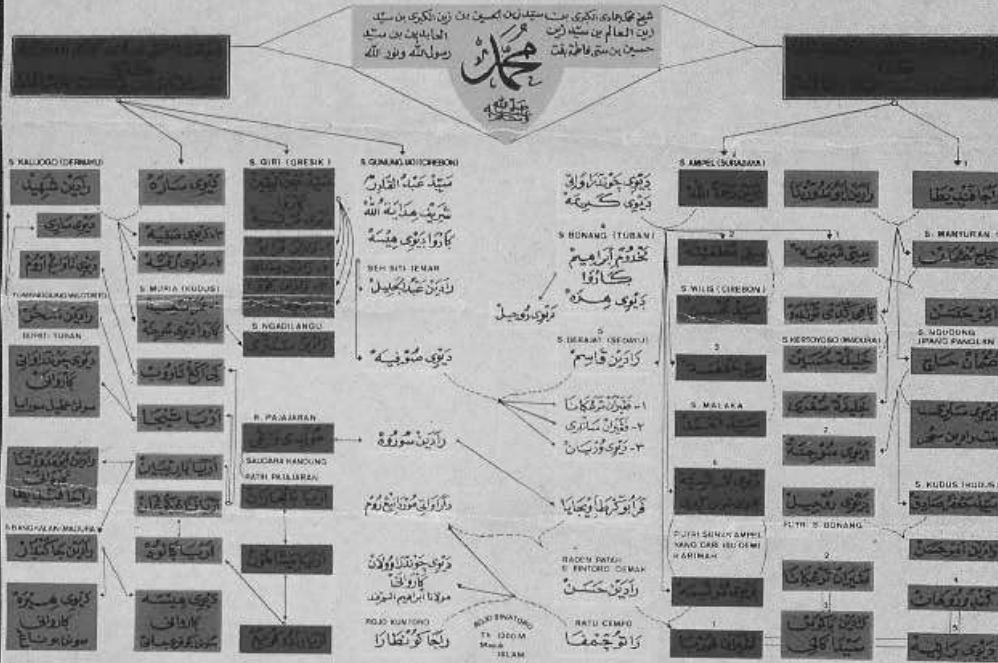
وَاللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ الطَّاهِرِينَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا قُلُوبَهُمْ فِي سُبُلِ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَوَجَّهَاتِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

### NASAB WALI SONGO (9)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ الْإِنَّمَا أَوْلِيَاءُ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَكَانُوا قُلُوبَهُمْ فِي سُبُلِ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَوَجَّهَاتِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

منسوبة إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وآله الطيبين الطاهرين منسوبة إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وآله الطيبين الطاهرين منسوبة إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وآله الطيبين الطاهرين

منسوبة إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وآله الطيبين الطاهرين منسوبة إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وآله الطيبين الطاهرين منسوبة إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وآله الطيبين الطاهرين



وَاللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ الطَّاهِرِينَ

منسوبة إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وآله الطيبين الطاهرين منسوبة إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وآله الطيبين الطاهرين



Sunan Maulana Malik Ibrahim



Sunan Ampel - R. Rachmat



Sunan Bonang - R. Mahdun



Sunan Kali Jogo - R. Syahied



Sunan Kudus - Syaikh Jakfar Shodiq



Sunan Muria - Raden Umar Syaif



Sunan Basung Jati - R. Syarif Hidayatullah



Sunan Giri - R. Ainul Yaqien



Sunan Drajad - R. Syarifuddin

Genealogies of the nine saints who established Islam in Java.

preface, "... in it I tell the genealogy, journeys, history and reports of the Malay and Bugis kings and their descendants. And I have named it *The Precious Gift*." (Raja Haji Ahmad and Raja Ali Haji *op. cit.*: 1) Itself a gift, his genealogy-chronicle modeled and regenerated the relations obtaining between two peoples: the kinship of total prestation, in which they made of their names and genealogies gifts to each other and to their descendants (Ho 2001).

### Local Cosmopolitans

In their marriages with local women, Ḥaḍramīs and their offspring became Swahilis, Gujaratis, Malabaris, Malays, Javanese, Filipinos. They became natives everywhere.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the men and their offspring continued to move throughout this oceanic space, for reasons of trade, study, family, pilgrimage and politics (Ho 1997). Throughout this space, a Ḥaḍramī could travel and be put up by relatives, who might be Arab uncles married to foreign, local aunties. Many had wives in each port. In contrast to Habsburg tendencies towards endogamy, Ḥaḍramī men were often polygamous. With frequent divorces and marriages, an individual man often had children from more than the four wives allowed him by religious law. Where husbands were absent (lengths of time in decades being common), wives of Ḥaḍramīs often lived with their own fathers and patrilineal kin. The uxori-local marriage traditions present across the Indian Ocean, in Swahili East Africa, the South Arabian coast, Southwest Malabar coast of India, and East Sumatra, enabled the creation of dispersed families, with half-siblings, offspring of the same father, living their whole lives in separate countries and lan-

guages, seldom meeting. In the arc of coasts around the Indian Ocean, then, a skein of networks arose in which people socialized with distant foreigners as kinsmen and as Muslims. The Ḥaḍramī diaspora brought together hitherto separated peoples in single families and in a single religion. In each place, members of such families were both locals and cosmopolitans.

As we have seen in the example of Mempawa above, such local cosmopolitans progressed from being religious creators of public institutions to rulers of states in their own right. Muslim Mindanao in present-day Philippines from the 15th century, the Comoros Islands in East Africa and Aceh in Sumatra from the 17th century, Pontianak and Siak in Borneo and Sumatra from the 18th, Perlis in Malaya from the 20th century till the present – all have had Ḥaḍramī sultans. By virtue of a rotating election of sultans, the Sultan of Perlis, Tuanku Syed Sirajudin is today the King of Malaysia.

In addition, as people who maintained communications with relatives in foreign countries over centuries, such local cosmopolitans were very useful as diplomats in their countries of domicile. The separation of British Malaya from Dutch Indonesia in 1824, which drew the border down the Straits of Melaka and through the Riau islands (enduring as the sovereign states Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore today), was brokered by Ḥaḍramī diplomats who were married into ruling families on all

2. The depth and breadth of this indigenization is reflected in attempts at tracking it that give rise to encyclopedic works in Ḥaḍramī literature: massive genealogies (al-Mashhūr ed. *op. cit.*), a four-volume compendium of diasporic families (Bā Maṭraf 1970, 1984), a five-volume one of poets (al-Saqqāf 1984).



sides (Ho 2002). Today, they remain in the public light: the current foreign minister of Malaysia Syed Hamid Albar is of Ḥaḍramī descent, as are his two previous counterparts in Indonesia, Ali Alatas and Alwi Shihab, and the prime minister of independent Timor, Mari Alkatiri. Like the British in the Atlantic and the Pacific, the history of the Ḥaḍramī diaspora in the Indian Ocean is interwoven with the history of state formation.

As Dresch has argued for Zaydī North Yemen, what we think of as state formation involves unified, linear narratives:

Events may be related in several different modes, but only one of these, the learned version, presents the continuity from which processual forms such as state formation can be extracted. As always with human society, our material has been defined for us before we come to study it. To understand it fully would require working close to the grain of history and ethnography to determine how such definitions in fact were made in local terms (1990: 274-275).

In modern western political conceptions, such linear narratives are understood in terms of institutions. The Habsburgs were, in the last analysis, simply the largest landlords in Europe. They had no need for a single name to cover the empire because their army and bureaucracy could do so. When those institutions

were destroyed in WWI, the linear narrative stopped, and the Habsburg state disappeared. In the Ḥaḍramī diaspora, linear narratives were constructed out of names, and existed in books and charts. On paper, in ritual chants, at graves and pilgrimage sites, those names were connected to one other and circulated around the Indian Ocean. Whether given to saints, scholars or sultans in any particular instance, they exhibited an uncanny ability to reappear after periods of occultation, new figures claiming connections to distant past ones, as in al-‘Aydārūs’s figural prophetic genealogy above. When thought of in terms of names and their circulation, theological differences between the Ḥaḍramīs, Sunnī Shāfi‘īs who originate in southern Yemen, and their northern Zaydī counterparts disappear. Zaydī states, which seemed to appear and disappear like charismatic Ḥaḍramīs, were “... a realization of ideas stored elsewhere, in the writings and connections of learned men whose beliefs were less vulnerable than any state apparatus and whose own apparatus of learning could reproduce itself if need be from a few severed fragments.” (Dresch *op. cit.*: 265) In both the Zaydī and the Ḥaḍramī cases, what those fragments contained were names. They appeared to be local because they were fragments, but their capacity for reconstitution proved that they had always retained their larger connections beyond states and nations, their cosmopolitanism.

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**Abstract**

Engseng Ho, *Names beyond Nations. The Making of Local Cosmopolitans*

Names are useful in exploring the separations and connections that create kin groups, nations, empires, religions. Capable of being both tokens and types, names enable the interchange of identities between individuals and collectivities. Being media of exchange, names transform boundaries between parties, as do gifts. As such, their range of circulation – restrictive in the case of nationalism, and expansive in the case of prophetic genealogies – outlines the boundaries of moral communities. This paper examines expansive naming practices to show how genealogies host points of articulation between transregional and local communities, valorizing persons as both locals and cosmopolitans, and furnishing a language of transcultural mobility beyond nations.

**Résumé**

Engseng ho, *Des noms au-delà des nations. La construction de cosmopolites locaux*

La connaissance des noms est utile pour explorer les césures et les connexions qui sont à l'œuvre dans la constitution des groupes de parenté, des nations, des empires et des religions. Le fait que les noms représentent des signes arbitraires et soient inscrits dans des typologies permet l'échange d'identités entre individus et collectivités. À l'instar des dons, les noms modifient les écarts identitaires propres à deux acteurs et, en tant que moyens d'échange, leur mobilité – restrictive dans le cas du nationalisme, expansive dans le cas des généalogies prophétiques – trace les contours de communautés morales. Cet article examine les pratiques d'une nomination expansive et montre comment les généalogies contiennent des points d'articulation entre des communautés transrégionales et locales, en valorisant les individus à la fois membres d'une localité et cosmopolites, et en créant un langage de mobilité transculturelle au-delà des nations.