

the more contemporary biographies are in the style of the obituaries of the histories of Ibn al-Sāʿī's own days.

There is one manuscript of this text available—at the Veliyyudin Library in Istanbul—and one previous edition, by Muṣṭafā Jawād. Shawkat Toorawa used both for his edition of the text, along the way correcting some of Jawād's readings. The translation of the text is yet another wonderful collaborative project of the Library of Arabic Literature (LAL). It was done with utmost precision by a team of LAL editors, each of whom is an outstanding Arabist and specialist in Abbasid literature. Clear from this volume's pages is that there was great appreciation of the original text and the entire process of editing and translating was a labor of love; the reader—specialist or non-specialist—reaps these fruits by getting to know another great text of Arabic classical literature.

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*The Black Eunuchs of the Ottoman Empire: Networks of Power in the Court of the Sultan.* By GEORGE H. JUNNE. London: I. B. TAURIS, 2016. Pp. x + 336. £64.

George Junne is a professor of Africana Studies at the University of Northern Colorado and has undertaken this book on the African eunuchs of the Ottoman imperial harem as a labor of love. In the book's acknowledgments, he cites my short biography of the Chief Eunuch el-Hajj Beshir Agha (term 1717–1746) as an inspiration for his research. This is, obviously, extremely flattering and even touching. I therefore sincerely wish I could say that this book is better than it is. Unfortunately, the author's lack of formal training in Ottoman and Islamic history combined with a lack of thorough-going peer review on the part of the press to yield a work that is hampered by inaccuracies and poor execution. This is particularly disappointing because the author has perused a truly exhaustive corpus of secondary literature. Moreover, a lucid synthesis of the material on African harem eunuchs found in widely scattered secondary sources would have been quite useful.

The book consists of nine chapters, preceded by a brief introduction. The introduction and chapter one seem to assume that African eunuchs fall into the modern analytical category of Black. Since most harem eunuchs were from the Horn of Africa and were therefore not only identified but also self-identified as *ḥabashī* ("Abyssinian"), this assumption is, to say the least, highly problematic. Paradoxically, Junne himself discusses the *ḥabashī* label and other regional identitarian categories later in the book.

Chapter two abruptly turns to the tradition of eunuchs in the Byzantine empire, inaccurately positing that the Ottomans simply adopted the principal Byzantine ruling institutions, up to and including the employment of harem eunuchs. The well-documented

influence of earlier Islamic empires on the Ottomans' palace culture and bureaucratic institutions is hinted at in chapter three, which otherwise addresses sources of African eunuchs (with, however, too great an emphasis on West Africa, where few Ottoman eunuchs originated) and castration practices. Chapter four attempts to give an overview of different forms of slavery in the Ottoman empire, including Ottoman responses to British abolition efforts, while chapter five focuses on the functions fulfilled and influence exercised by African harem eunuchs specifically.

After this more or less introductory material, chapter six catalogues the Chief Eunuchs of the Ottoman harem, from (Ḥabeshī) Mehmed Agha (term 1574–1590) to Fahreddin Agha (term April to May 1909). They are listed in rather bare-bones fashion, and many anecdotes of dubious authenticity are incorporated into the narrative. A succeeding chapter deals with the harem eunuchs' religious influence, focusing mainly on mosques and larger religious complexes founded by Chief Eunuchs. The two final chapters cover physical descriptions of harem eunuchs and various accounts of their personal lives.

There is no discernible overarching argument to this book. Even the individual chapters lack an organizational principle. Instead, various assertions and quotations from a disparate array of English-language and translated primary sources and secondary sources—everything from memoirs to atlases—are strung together. Conclusions are difficult to identify. The author's lack of familiarity with Ottoman and Islamic history leads to some bewildering statements, such as the assertion that the Ottomans did not employ either eunuchs or harems before the conquest of Constantinople from the Byzantines (p. 112), that only mosques commissioned by the imperial family were domed (p. 154), and that "the Ottomans . . . were the official ruling and military class and could be Turks, Arabs, Jews, Slavs, or others" (p. 46).

The book contains no illustrations or maps. On the other hand, the back matter includes a useful table of all Chief Harem Eunuchs, organized by sultan's reign, with their dates of service and, to the extent this is known, the dates of their deaths. The book's copious bibliography will be of great use to readers hoping to research this subject for themselves.

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*Written Culture in Daghestan.* Edited by MOSHE GAMMER. Series *Humaniora*, vol. 369. Helsinki: FINNISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, 2015. Pp. 226, figs. €35.

This volume provides an overview of religious literature in Daghestan, today one of Russia's "Muslim" republics in the North Caucasus. The papers stem from a 2008 conference in Jerusalem, convened by the emi-