

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.

MAAIKE VAN BERKEL  
RADBOUD UNIVERSITY NIJMEGEN

---

*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.

JANE HATHAWAY  
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

---

*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-

ment Moshe Gammer (1950–2013), whose monograph *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar* (1994) had pioneered the study of Daghestani and Chechen history in the West. After Gammer's untimely demise, the volume was furnished with a memorial essay from the pen of Rebecca Gould, which also serves as an introduction.

In a fine piece, Daghestan's leading archeologist Murtuz Gadzhiev discusses what we know about the pre-Islamic alphabet of Christian Albania, a political unit that covered parts of Daghestan and Azerbaijan before the advent of the Arabs. Gennadi Sosunov analyzes seventeenth- to nineteenth-century tombstones of Mountain Jews, from communities in Azerbaijan and southern Daghestan, with a focus on forms and inscriptions. The other contributions are dedicated to Islamic literature in Arabic and in Daghestani languages.

Daghestan has a central manuscript collection at the Institute of History, Archeology, and Ethnography in Makhachkala, and the last two decades brought to light a wealth of smaller libraries in Daghestan's mountain villages. The team around Amri R. Shikhsaidov, the doyen of Arabic historical studies in the country, has identified no fewer than 350 collections in mosques, schools, and in private possession, some boasting manuscript copies dating from the eleventh century. As Shikhsaidov demonstrates, most Daghestani libraries have a very classical profile, with volumes of Shāfi'ī law, theology, and grammar that had been imported from the Middle East before the sixteenth century; these were studied and copied in Daghestani madrasas up to the 1920s. And from early on Daghestani ulema also produced their own works in these classical disciplines, mostly in Arabic.

Other contributors discuss the circulation of particular manuscripts in Daghestan, and what information one can find in colophons and margins of Arabic manuscripts (e.g., *waqf* documents). Starting in the fifteenth century Daghestanis also began to use the Arabic alphabet for their native languages like Avar, Dargin, and Lak, as discussed in other chapters. One contribution offers six religious poems by Islamic scholars from the Archi community, in the original Avar and Archi languages of the nineteenth century and in English translation (yet without any philological or historical analysis). Turkic and Persian literatures in Daghestan are not discussed in this volume.

A profile of what was read at the turn of the twentieth century is presented by Natalia Tahirova, who reconstructed the library of Ḥasan al-Alqadārī (1834–1910), an outstanding poet, historian, and *faqih* from southern Daghestan. Part of his library contained Arabic translations of Robinson Crusoe and of Russian historical books; Tahirova qualifies al-Alqadārī as an "enlightener." Milena Osmanova analyzes the emergence of local lithographic printing in the first two decades of the twentieth century, which made Arabic and vernacular literatures much more accessible to the population. Amir Nauruzov provides the history of a major Arabic-language newspaper, *Jarīdat Dāghistān* (1913–1919); originally conceived of as the herald of the Russian

administration, the *Jarīda* soon became the mouthpiece of a small group of Daghestani cultural and religious reformers around 'Alī al-Ghumūqī (Kaiaev, d. 1943), who had studied with Rashīd Riḍā in Cairo. Nauruzov provides a systematic overview of the journal's "progressive" positions, including its critique of Sufism and its partisanship for *ijtihād* and educational reform.

The Soviet period is covered by Rukiia Sharafutdinova from St. Petersburg, who studied the Caucasus-related work of the famous Arabist Ignatii Krachkovskii (1883–1951). Krachkovskii initiated the publication and Russian translation of some important Daghestani Arabic manuscripts on the history of the jihad movement of Imam Shāmil (ruled 1834–1859). Based in Leningrad, Krachkovskii was in exchange with Arabists and historians in Daghestan, who began to systematically search for manuscripts. The above-mentioned Amri R. Shikhsaidov (b. 1928), himself belonging to Krachkovskii's last generation of students, continued along these lines, and since the late 1980s his team has produced excellent publications of Arabic historical texts in Russian translation.

Like the two preceding collections of articles that Gammer edited, *Daghestan and the World of Islam* (2006) and *Islam and Sufism in Daghestan* (2009), this volume is a goldmine of factual information and a welcome counterpoint to many studies that only take Russian accounts as their foundation for understanding Islam in Daghestan. As a whole, this collection makes a strong argument that Daghestan must be taken into consideration also by scholars who work on other areas, and that it has much to offer for Arabic studies in general. But Krachkovskii already made the same points in the 1930s; today, twenty-five years after the end of ideological restrictions, the Daghestani contributors themselves (except for the archaeologist!) rarely place their individual case studies into a broader context. In her essay, entitled "Why Daghestan Is Good to Think," Rebecca Gould therefore reminds us (or perhaps the contributors) that the Daghestanis' use of the Arabic alphabet for vernaculars has parallels in Islamic Africa, and that the debates on *ijtihād* and legal methodology since around 1700 must be placed into a broader context of an early Muslim modernity before colonialism. Similarly, the North Caucasian jihad movement of the nineteenth century invites comparisons with similar anti-colonial movements in Africa and Asia, and the reformists of the early twentieth century need to be seen in relation to Tatar Jadidism in Russia. Finally, Soviet Orientalology on the Caucasus must be viewed from the same critical position that we employ when scrutinizing Orientalisms in other parts of the world. That Daghestani literature was in lively exchange with the outside world is evident from most contributions.

MICHAEL KEMPER  
UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM