

the relationship between mountain gods and storm gods, who would represent, according to Taracha's reconstruction, two different layers of belief, with the storm gods gradually assuming the prerogatives and the position previously held by sacred mountains in the local pantheons of north-central Anatolia.

This change would reflect the new political situation in the early second millennium BC, when previously independent city-states, with their local pantheons, coalesced into larger political formations. The idea deserves to be further developed, but remains hypothetical at best, considering our almost complete lack of knowledge concerning local religious beliefs in Anatolia during the first centuries of the second millennium BC and the oldest phases of the Hittite kingdom. The formation of local pantheons and their structural changes over time do not follow general rules of development, and are influenced by a variety of factors that are seldom reflected by the limited sources at our disposal. That said, however, the synthesis of the traditional beliefs of north-central Anatolia provided by the author exemplifies his deep knowledge of Hittite religion, and represents an up-to-date and fascinating overview of the current state of research into the oldest phases of Anatolian local cults.

The book is supplemented with a glossary, indices of divine and geographical names, and a list of text citations.

This work represents a valuable contribution to our understanding of Hittite local cults, which will certainly stimulate further discussion on the subject. The author is to be warmly congratulated.

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The Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Harem: From African Slave to Power-Broker. By JANE HATHAWAY.
New York: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018. Pp. xvi + 323. \$105, £75.

Jane Hathaway's *The Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Harem* is as full a picture of African eunuchs in Mediterranean history as readers are likely to find, or construct for themselves. The picture or, more precisely, the set of depictions that Hathaway offers, combines the history of imperial institutions and of slave procurement with prosopography and individual biography. The geographical setting extends from the Horn of Africa to both shores of the Mediterranean, though the epicenter of demand in the early modern era was the imperial Ottoman court at Istanbul and its satellites.

The story that Hathaway tells begins with two chapters tracing the long and only partly known emergence of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa as the reservoir of eunuch manpower in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean. The preference for East Africans—Ethiopians, Habeshi, Galla, Oromo, et al.—was already established in Byzantine and early Islamic times, but the regularization of the eunuch slave trade, the elaboration of eunuch roles, and the sheer numbers involved cement the association with Ottoman dynastic culture between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Most of the boys who were removed—seized—from East Africa were castrated on the margins of the Ottoman empire, principally Upper Egypt and the Sudan, and transported to one or another Mediterranean court. Those who survived the barbarous cutting might end up in Egypt, the Moroccan sultanate, or one of the semi-independent principalities and fiefdoms of North Africa and the Arabian peninsula. The bulk of the trade, though, led one way or another to the Ottoman capital of Istanbul. Were they the “lucky” ones? Such designations hardly fit the slave condition, much less that of eunuchs. Eunuchs' very survival brought lifelong physical maladies and humiliations. However, part of those burdens might be lightened by appointment to the opulence and access afforded by the imperial Ottoman court. It is these relatively few individuals—some seventy-six from the mid-sixteenth century through the turn of the twentieth—who are the real subject of Hathaway's study. Each served varying terms as Chief Harem Eunuch, protector of the inviolability of the royal women's and family quarters. For most of that period they were also guardians of the rich pious endowments (sing. *waqf*) attached to the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina. They were thus key players in the politics of the time, as imperial confidants and intermediaries, and dispensers of wealth and position in their own right.

Hathaway has painstakingly reconstructed a history that is necessarily more background than foreground. She has uncovered as much of the individual lives and personalities as can be gleaned from scant subjective sources, but most of her portrayal is of the institution: the establishment of the office of Chief Harem Eunuch around 1530 with the transfer of the sultan's womenfolk from the Old Palace to Topkapı, a move that raised the political profile of their African keepers; the African eunuchs' eventual dominance over the white eunuchs employed elsewhere in the palace; and thereafter their front-seat involvement in palace politics. By the end of the sixteenth century hundreds of black eunuchs were superintending the thousand-plus denizens of the harem at the direction of the Chief Harem Eunuch, who capped his power with control of the emoluments and properties of the Holy Cities. Ottoman conquests in Egypt and points further south ensured the empire of a steady supply of East Africans to meet the heightened, and enduring, demand for castrated servants. Until 1909 and the effective end of the eunuch institution, East Africa continued to provide slaves—eunuchs and otherwise—for imperial service.

The next several chapters review the careers of the principal harem eunuchs through the seventeenth century, with a focus on the careers of the three longest-serving of the time, Habeshi Mehmed Agha, el-Hajj Mustafa Agha, and Yusuf Agha. Together they served forty-nine years between 1574 and 1687. The importance of the office and its occupants corresponded to the general domestication of the sultans in the period and, in the seventeenth century particularly, to the empowerment of queen mothers and their allies when child sultans acceded to the throne. What especially stands out in these chapters is Hathaway's parsing of the intimate engagement of the Chief Harem Eunuchs in the turbulent politics of the era, including the murder of a queen mother, the defense of her successor's princely sons, and the often lethal turnover of grand viziers.

As was the case for all imperial officials of rank, the access that conferred power and wealth ended in murder for a few and banishment for many. Egypt and the Holy Cities were the customary landing spots for harem eunuchs who had to put distance between themselves and Istanbul. Those whose careers ended in good odor retired on state pensions, often supplemented by income from lucrative investments in real estate and commodities. El-Hajj Beshir Agha (d. 1746), about whom Hathaway has written extensively elsewhere as well, was a standout in these regards. His wealth and status eclipsed the power of his seventeenth-century predecessors in both reach and depth. The proofs of his personal dominion in twenty-nine years as Chief Harem Eunuch lay not just in the unwavering trust of his sovereign, Maḥmūd I, nor even in his remarkable vizier-making clout. Rather, his considerable wealth and the uses to which he put it demand particular attention. A generous patron of Ottoman cultural life in Istanbul, Cairo, Medina, and even on the banks of the Danube, Beshir Agha founded dozens of educational and intellectual foundations, including Quran schools, a madrasa, libraries, a mosque complex, and a Sufi lodge. The accumulation of wealth by the eunuch class and their desire to integrate, and ingratiate, themselves in elite culture are attested by scores of similar charitable and pious benefactions in those and other imperial locales. It is difficult to gauge how much such choices and objects of favor are evidences of real selfhood and not just refractions of the dynasty's preferences. Obviously, most of the eunuchs' expenditures and utterances accorded with the desires of one or more members of the royal family. Hathaway's wide-ranging research nonetheless finds occasional "glimpses" of the eunuchs' own personalities. The number of eunuchs who were genuine bibliophiles, and "great readers" in their own right, is especially striking.

Harem eunuchs like Beshir Agha and a few others held unparalleled power, but their positions and persons were also troubled by the ambivalence of contemporaries, elite and commoner alike. Fear, awe, envy, contempt, and even outright revulsion were in the mix among observers of the Chief Harem Eunuch's role as imperial grandee. After all, the Chief Harem Eunuch and the Africans who served under him were castrated minions, masters of the dynasty's domestic realm but black servants in the European white-dominant and white-preferred world of the Ottoman East. Ascription-based antagonisms were clearly present in Ottoman society. Crude derogations of African blackness worked their way into a number of Ottoman chronicles and essays over the centuries. As Hathaway and others point out, however, ethno-racial stereotyping may have been commonplace and objectionable, but it lacked the crippling potency of the New World's racial slavery. Among other differences, African eunuchs

could themselves own slaves, including white slaves, and at the height of their power they were able to make and break the highest officers of state, regardless of their ethnic origin or color.

The actual demise of the office of Chief Harem Eunuch occurred in the twentieth century in the aftermath of the failed Hamidian counter-coup against the Young Turks in 1909. Hathaway's consideration of the post-eighteenth-century years of the office and of the eunuch institution as a whole puts final touches on a story that has often begun and ended with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She argues that the Chief Harem Eunuch and the network over which he presided were basically "reformed out of existence" thanks to the institutional transformations of the nineteenth century. The main causes of the decline in the Chief Harem Eunuch's roles in palace politics and *waqf* management were structural. The power and posts that were once concentrated in the harem quarters and the sultan's personal household came to be dispersed over a wider political field, with the grand viziers and bureaucratic specialists newly predominating.

Hathaway's previous publications—e.g., on el-Hajj Beshir Agha and Egypt's Mamluk politics—have dealt with many of the topics and contexts featured in this volume. Nevertheless, there is interesting new material here—for example, on the harem eunuchs' social universe, including the retired eunuchs' enclave on the banks of the Nile, and their visual and textual representation in Ottoman manuscripts. Despite Hathaway's sound scholarship and clear writing style, however, the lack of a strong central argument makes for an uneven narrative, not without interest, to be sure, but rather more encyclopedic than monographic, and thus more likely to be consulted than read cover to cover.

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Shari'a Scripts: A Historical Anthropology. By BRINKLEY MESSICK. New York: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018. Pp. ix + 519. \$70, £58.95.

The term "Sharia" has become trendy in the West. Until just over a decade ago, Western scholarship would speak of Islamic law, but today "Sharia," with its ominous references to practices of the Taliban and ISIS, is common parlance among politicians, policymakers, and the general public. What has prompted academics to take up this term as well? For one, the term serves commercial goals, such as selling books or obtaining research grants. But some scholars find that "Sharia" is more fitting than "Islamic law" because the latter is a term confined to typical positivist legal matters called *fiqh*, while Sharia encompasses the wider domain of divine commandments and all its judicial elaborations, of which its rules are only a part.

Brinkley Messick's *Shari'a Scripts*, a detailed study of the production, transmission, and transformation of scriptural judicial knowledge among Yemeni scholars, judges, and other legal figures, is situated in this larger framework of Sharia. The title is therefore an apt summary of the book's contents. This study will not directly appeal to lawyers interested in the mechanism of making and applying Islamic rules, as it digs deeper into the mechanisms at work within the enormous corpus of Sharia itself. But, despite my quibble below, this unique undertaking is important for the student of Sharia in the broader sense of the word, whether a lawyer, historian, social scientist, or linguist.

Messick situates himself squarely in the Western scholarly tradition of Sharia, which adopted as its main challenge the relation between theory and practice. The tradition of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholarship assumed, in the words of Joseph Schacht, "discordance between the sacred law and actual practice" and it focused its attention on the doctrinal legal literature. From the second half of the twentieth century, social historians began paying attention to court records, land titles, administrative registries, and other legal documents; and since the 1990s scholars such as Wael Hallaq and Baber Johansen have combined the two by studying the interaction between these different legal materials.

To begin with, the field was dominated by philologists. Then came anthropologists, who studied the contemporary practices of Sharia. With scholars like Messick, however, a cross-breed of academics