

EUNUCH HOUSEHOLDS IN ISTANBUL, MEDINA, AND CAIRO DURING THE OTTOMAN ERA

T _____ INTRODUCTION

his brief contribution proposes to explore the role of the Chief Eunuch of the imperial harem of the Ottoman Empire (in Ottoman Turkish, Darüssaade Ağası or Kızlar Ağası; in Arabic, Āghā Dār al-Saʿāda) as a builder and member of households. In this context, the term “households” refers to the conglomerations of kinship and clientage ties that served as major loci of political and economic activity throughout the Ottoman Empire between the late sixteenth century and the period of westernizing reforms that commenced toward the middle of the nineteenth century¹. We can identify three principal locales where acting, former, and future Chief Harem Eunuchs undertook to amass households, namely, Istanbul, Medina, and Cairo. Not coincidentally, these sites correspond to three distinct phases of a Chief Eunuch’s career. Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, naturally, housed the imperial harem — the private quarters of the Ottoman sultan’s mother, concubines, and unmarried sisters and daughters, along with a veritable army of female functionaries — over which the acting Chief Eunuch presided. Medina, Islam’s second-holiest city

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¹ On the concept, see Jane HATHAWAY, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdağlıs*, Cambridge, 1997, p. 17-27; Metin KUNT, *The Sultan’s Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650*, New York, 1983, especially chapter 5 and Conclusion; Rifaat A. ABOU-EL-HAJ, “The Ottoman Vezir and Paşa Households, 1683-1703: A Preliminary Report”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, XCIV (1974), p. 438-47.

after Mecca, was the site of the Prophet Muhammad's tomb, which former Chief Harem Eunuchs, beginning in the late seventeenth century, frequently supervised. Cairo, finally, was the most common place of exile for deposed Chief Harem Eunuchs from the early seventeenth century onwards. An examination of the Chief Eunuch's connections to households in these locations reveals that membership in a household or, alternatively, building a household of his own was an essential strategy of an enterprising Chief Eunuch at every stage of his career.

THE PALACE

The Chief Harem Eunuch, head of a large corps of predominantly East African eunuchs serving in the harem of Topkapı Palace², became a critical figure in Ottoman political culture toward the end of the sixteenth century. This surge in his influence coincides with the onset of what used to be called the Ottoman Empire's "decline", and with a period of political assertion by sultans' mothers and favorite concubines that was until recently labeled the "sultanate of women". Over the past thirty years or so, historians have recast this era as one of profound military, fiscal, and demographic crisis to which the empire gradually managed to adjust³. This period was, however, also marked by a crisis in dynastic reproduction: specifically, a lack of princes old enough and mentally competent to rule, and consequent fears for the Ottoman dynasty's survival. These fears led to the abandonment of the tradition of sending princes out to govern provinces in order to learn statecraft, and likewise of the tradition whereby a new sultan executed his brothers in an attempt to avoid competition for the throne⁴. Princes were now raised in the harem, where the

² On eunuch numbers and the dichotomy between African eunuchs and eunuchs from eastern Europe and the Caucasus, see Jane HATHAWAY, *Beshir Agha, Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Imperial Harem*, Oxford, 2006, p. 12-16.

³ Suraiya FAROQHI, "Crisis and Change, 1590-1699", Part II of *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, Halil Inalcık, ed., with Donald Quataert, Cambridge, 1994, p. 413-636; Linda T. DARLING, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560-1660*, Leiden, 1996, especially chapter 1; Douglas A. HOWARD, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", *Journal of Asian History*, XXII (1988), p. 52-77; Cemal KAFADAR, "The Question of Ottoman Decline", *Harvard Middle East and Islamic Review*, IV, nos. 1-2 (1997-98), p. 30-75.

⁴ Leslie PEIRCE, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford and New York, 1993, p. 45-50, 52-56, 97-103; Gabriel PITERBERG, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, Berkeley, 2003, p. 10-16.

Chief Harem Eunuch oversaw their education⁵. This meant that the Chief Harem Eunuch, along with the sultan's mother, became the principal influence on a sultan's upbringing and outlook.

Alliances with Imperial Women

Beginning in the late sixteenth century, not coincidentally, we see a pattern of alliances between the Chief Harem Eunuch and the sultan's mother (Valide Sultan in Ottoman Turkish). Although numerous examples exist, I shall focus on only one, involving the late seventeenth-century Chief Harem Eunuch Yusuf Ağa (term 1671-87), who would later attempt to build a household in Egypt. Throughout his career in the imperial palace, Yusuf appears to have been an ally of Turhan Sultan, the mother of Sultan Mehmed IV (r. 1648-87), who engineered the murder of her powerful mother-in-law, the fearsome Kösem Sultan, and agreed to the appointment of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha as grand vizier in 1656, thus ushering in the era of Köprülü reforms⁶. Yusuf Ağa himself appears to have been an exponent of these reforms⁷. At the same time, Yusuf grew close to Mehmed IV's favorite concubine, Rabia Gülnuş Emetullah, the mother of Mustafa II (r. 1695-1703) and Ahmed III (r. 1703-30). In 1679, Gülnuş Emetullah founded a large pious endowment (Ottoman and modern Turkish, *vakıf*; Arabic, *waqf*), later known as the Valide Vakfı, to fund a hospital and soup kitchen in Mecca; it drew its revenues from four carefully-selected villages in Egypt, as well as from Cairo's Nile port of Bulaq. The endowment deed (*vakfiye*, *waqfiyya*), which has been published by Tülay Duran, specifically names Yusuf as superintendent, or *nâzir*, of the *vakıf*⁸. This is unusual since ordinarily, more generic language, on the order of "whoever is Chief Harem Eunuch will be *nâzir*", would have been used. It is perhaps no coincidence, under the

⁵ Ottaviano BON, in *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al senato*, vol. XIII: *Constantinopoli (1590-1793)*, Luigi Firpo, ed., Turin, 1965, 1984, p. 92-93/440-41; see also N.M. PENZER, *The Harem: An Account of the Institution as It Existed in the Palace of the Turkish Sultans, with a History of the Grand Seraglio from Its Foundations to Modern Times*, Philadelphia, 1936; 2nd ed. London, 1965; reprint New York, 1993, p. 128.

⁶ On this point, see, for example, Marc David BAER, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe*, Oxford and New York, 2008, p. 223, 236.

⁷ On this point, see HATHAWAY, *Beshir Agha*, *op. cit.*, p. 32-33, 56.

⁸ Tülay DURAN, ed., *Tarihimize Vakıf Kuran Kadınlar: Hanım Sultan Vakfiyyeleri*, Istanbul, 1990, p. 96-158, especially p. 134-35; HATHAWAY, *Politics of Households*, *op. cit.*, p. 150-52. See also the collection of documents related to this *vakıf* in the Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi (Istanbul), under E 33.

circumstances, that Yusuf later became the first former Chief Harem Eunuch to serve as head of the eunuchs who guarded the Prophet Muhammad's tomb in Medina.

Eunuch Households Within The Palace

While in office and in residence in Topkapı Palace, we might argue, the Chief Harem Eunuch wielded influence through his membership in the sultan's household. His alliances with the sultan's mother or favorite concubine occurred within that framework. At this stage in his career, he did not head his own household. Or did he? We can certainly find examples of eunuch patronage networks within the palace, so that we observe certain harem eunuchs rising through the harem hierarchy and even becoming Chief Harem Eunuch thanks to the patronage of senior eunuchs.

The powerful Hacı Mustafa Ağa, for example, who became Chief Eunuch in 1604, was succeeded in 1620 by his own protégé, Süleyman Ağa, so that even though Hacı Mustafa had been forced into exile by the opponents of Sultan Osman II (r. 1618-22), his pro-Osman stance was maintained by his successor. After Süleyman Ağa was murdered in the 1622 rebellion of palace soldiery that resulted in Osman II's own execution, Hacı Mustafa was recalled from Egypt to take up the post of Chief Harem Eunuch again; this time, he held it until his death several months later⁹.

Even the most powerful Chief Harem Eunuch in Ottoman history, Hacı Beşir Ağa (term 1717-46), was the client of a former Chief Eunuch, Yapraksız Ali Ağa (term 1694-1700), and seems to have begun his ascent of the palace eunuch hierarchy during Yapraksız Ali's term in office¹⁰. Although it is not clear how these patron-client ties formed between and among various members of the palace eunuch hierarchy, several factors may have come into play: common membership in the entourage of a particular sultan, prince, or Valide Sultan; perhaps even common origins in a particular region of Ethiopia or membership in a particular Ethiopian tribe¹¹.

⁹ Ahmed RESMÎ EFENDİ, *Hamûletü'l-Küberâ*, Ahmet Nezihi Turan, ed., Istanbul, 2000, p. 48-49. On Mustafa Ağa's and Süleyman Ağa's support of Osman II and opposition to Mustafa I, see PITERBERG, *op. cit.*, p. 11, 15-16, 22-24, 83, 93-98, 107-09.

¹⁰ HATHAWAY, *Beshir Agha, op. cit.*, p. 29-31. *Yapraksız*, literally "leafless," in this context may, like the corresponding expression in Greek, refer to a lack of eyelashes. I am grateful to Professor Harriet Blitzer of Buffalo State College for this observation.

¹¹ For the regions and populations of Ethiopia most frequently targeted by the slave trade, see Alice MOORE-HARELL, "Economic and Political Aspects of the Slave Trade in

Evidence even exists of Chief Harem Eunuchs forming what amounted to “mamluk households” in the imperial capital — that is, purchasing mamluks, or elite military slaves, as a sort of private army or protective force. The most infamous example of this trend is Hacı Beşir Ağa’s successor, Moralı Beşir (term 1746-52), who purchased large numbers of mamluks from Georgia and other locales in the Caucasus. These mamluks’ rampages through Istanbul, as well as their rapacity in collecting bribes from those seeking the Chief Eunuch’s favor, are thought to have triggered Moralı Beşir’s deposition and eventual execution in 1752¹². Since mamluks from the Caucasus (and especially Georgia) were popular throughout the Ottoman Empire during the latter half of the eighteenth century¹³, it is no surprise to find one of the empire’s most senior officials purchasing them.

MEDINA

As noted above, Yusuf Ağa became the first former Chief Harem Eunuch to serve as Şeyhü'l-Haremü'n-Nebevî, or chief of the eunuchs who guarded the Prophet’s tomb in Medina. His appointment, which occurred in 1691, about four years after he had been exiled to Egypt, set a precedent: it now became common for exiled Chief Harem Eunuchs to be posted to Medina. As Shaun Marmon has pointed out, the corps of eunuchs who guarded the Prophet’s mosque and tomb had ostensibly been created by the great Crusader fighter Nureddin ibn Zengi in the late twelfth century; they were reinforced toward the end of the following century by the Mamluk sultans in an effort to protect the Sunni ulema appointed to Medina from the city’s population, which at the time was still largely Zaydi and Ismaili Shi’ite¹⁴. By the Ottoman period, the tomb eunuchs enforced decorous behavior at the tomb while preventing the occasional Shi’ite from throwing rubbish into the graves of Abu Bakr and

Ethiopia and the Sudan in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century”, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, XXXII, nos. 2-3 (1999), p. 407-21, at p. 410.

¹² Ahmed RESMÎ EFENDİ, *op. cit.*, p. 69-73; Jean-Claude FLACHAT, *Observations sur le commerce et sur les arts d’une partie de l’Europe, de l’Asie, de l’Afrique et même des Indes Orientales*, 2 vols., Lyon, 1766, vol. II, p. 132, 138-41.

¹³ On this point, see HATHAWAY, *Politics of Households*, *op. cit.*, p. 101-06, 169.

¹⁴ Shaun MARMON, *Eunuchs and Sacred Boundaries in Islamic Society*, Oxford and New York, 1995, chapters 2-3.

ʿUmar, which are located within the tomb precinct¹⁵: while Sunnis recognize these two men as the Prophet Muhammad’s successors as leaders of the Muslim community, Shiʿites believe that they usurped the succession, which should rightly have gone to the Prophet’s cousin and son-in-law ʿAli ibn Abi Talib. The Şeyhü’l-Harem appointed the other tomb eunuchs, who by the late eighteenth century numbered roughly forty¹⁶. This meant that the subordinate tomb eunuchs were, in effect, his clients. A eunuch neighborhood grew up next to the gate of the tomb complex, and the Şeyhü’l-Harem lived in a grand residence at the neighborhood entrance. In effect, he became one of Medina’s notables¹⁷.

 CAIRO

Even more than Medina, Egypt was a key arena of Chief Harem Eunuch household-building activities as a result of the Chief Eunuch’s long-standing ties to this largest Ottoman province. Most African harem eunuchs were first enslaved in Cairo, where they arrived after being transported from Ethiopia through Sudan with one of the two annual slave caravans, or by boat through the Red Sea, and castrated in villages in Upper Egypt¹⁸. Many of them spent time in the households of Ottoman governors or members of Egypt’s military-administrative elite before being presented as gifts to the imperial palace¹⁹.

Connections to Egypt Through the Evkâfü’l-Haremeyn

While in office, the Chief Harem Eunuch was in close contact with Egypt through his position as superintendent, or *nâzir*, of the Evkâfü’l-Haremeyn, a collection of enormous imperial pious foundations estab-

¹⁵ Sir Richard Francis BURTON, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah*, memorial ed., 2 vols., London, 1893; republished New York, 1964, vol. I, p. 321.

¹⁶ Carsten NIEBUHR, *Travels through Arabia and Other Countries in the East*, Robert Heron, trans., 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1792; reprint Beirut, n.d., vol. II, p. 41; see also MARMON, *op. cit.*, p. 97 and p. 148 n. 280. This is the same number reported by Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Sakhawi in *Al-Tuhfa al-latifa fi ta’rikh al-Madina al-sharifa* at the end of the fifteenth century; see MARMON, *op. cit.*, p. 39. In contrast, Richard Francis Burton reports 120 in the 1850s; see BURTON, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 372.

¹⁷ HATHAWAY, *Beshir Agha, op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18-20, 23.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23, 25-26.

lished by key sultans and imperial women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, building on Mamluk sultanate precedent, to benefit the poor of Mecca and Medina, as well as pilgrims to the Holy Cities²⁰. Although land and properties throughout the Ottoman Empire were endowed to the Evkâf, a disproportionate number were concentrated in Egypt — in particular, villages in Upper Egypt that grew grain for the Holy Cities, which was delivered with the annual *hajj* caravan from Cairo. The members of Egypt's military-administrative elite competed for the tax farms of these villages and therefore cultivated ties with the acting Chief Harem Eunuch in the hope that he would award them these revenues. Beginning with Hacı Beşir Ağa in the early eighteenth century, if not earlier, the acting Chief Harem Eunuch kept a permanent representative, known as the vekîl-i Darüssaade (literally, “agent of the Abode of Felicity”, referring to the harem), in Cairo to ensure that revenues from the Evkâf villages were delivered to Istanbul in a timely fashion. This *vekîl* was usually a client of the Chief Eunuch from among Egypt's grandees²¹.

Exile To Cairo

Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, furthermore, it became routine for a Chief Harem Eunuch who had been dismissed from office to be exiled to Cairo; there, he would live out his life in what amounted to comfortable retirement²². He would usually have planned for this retirement in advance, acquiring a house and a number of clients and slaves, including mamluks, before arriving in Cairo. By the late seventeenth century, in fact, a sort of eunuch neighborhood had grown up along the shores of Birkat al-Fil, west of Cairo's citadel, which between the early years of that century and the middle of the following century, as André Raymond has pointed out, was the hub of elite residence in

²⁰ See Stanford J. SHAW, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt, 1517-1798*, Princeton, 1962, p. 269-70; İ.H. UZUNÇARŞILI, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı*, Ankara, 1945, 1984, 1988, p. 177-83; *idem*, *Mekke-i Mükerrere Emirleri*, Ankara, 1972, p. 15; HATHAWAY, *Politics of Households*, *op. cit.*, p. 140; *eadem*, “The Role of the Kızlar Ağası in Seventeenth-Eighteenth Century Ottoman Egypt”, *Studia Islamica*, LXXV (1992), p. 141-58, at p. 141-42.

²¹ See HATHAWAY, *Beshir Agha*, *op. cit.*, p. 82-84; *eadem*, *Politics of Households*, *op. cit.*, p. 91, 143-44; *eadem*, “The Role of the Kızlar Ağası”, *art. cit.*, p. 145-47.

²² HATHAWAY, *Beshir Agha*, *op. cit.*, p. 16; *eadem*, *Politics of Households*, *op. cit.*, p. 140-41; *eadem*, “The Role of the Kızlar Ağası”, *art. cit.*, p. 142.

Cairo²³. Many of the houses in this area were used by a succession of exiled eunuchs, who often endowed their houses to their personal *wakıfs*.

Eunuch Households In Cairo

Not surprisingly, given their enmeshment in Egypt, exiled Chief Eunuchs participated in the game of household-building in that province. The most striking and anomalous example of a eunuch-led household in Egypt has to be that of the aforementioned Yusuf Ağa, who was exiled to Cairo in 1687 and lived there for thirty years until his death in 1717 at the age of ninety-six²⁴. Because of the anomalous circumstances of his deposition, Yusuf Ağa was forced to behave as an “ordinary” Egyptian grandee rather than as a palace luminary. He was deposed in the course of the military coup that brought down Sultan Mehmed IV. While on his way to Üsküdar to take ship for Egypt, he was stopped by a band of “rebels” (*zorbalar*) and taken to the prison in the Yediküle fortress, at one end of the Byzantine land walls, while his property in the capital was inventoried and seized. Meanwhile, the governor of Egypt, Damad Hasan Pasha, Yusuf’s own former scribe and a son-in-law of Mehmed IV, sold his property there²⁵. When Yusuf finally arrived in Cairo, consequently, he had virtually nothing, except what some of his former mamluks in Egypt had been able to buy back from the governor. He was thus obliged to build a household “from the ground up”. He retained a house at Birkat al-Fil which had been owned by his patron, the former Chief Eunuch Taş Yatur Ali Ağa (term 1644-45), and was apparently able to purchase at least a few mamluks while relying on those he had acquired while still in office. The most prominent of these was Mustafa Bey Kızlar (so-called because he was the mamluk of the Kızlar Ağası, or “*agha of the girls*”, *i.e.*, Yusuf Ağa), who served at various times as *defterdâr*, or

²³ André RAYMOND, « Essai de géographie des quartiers de résidence aristocratique au Caire au XVIII^e siècle », *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, VI (1963), p. 58-103, especially p. 66-67, 72-73, 75-78; Jane HATHAWAY, “The Wealth and Influence of an Exiled Ottoman Eunuch in Egypt: The *Waqf* Inventory of Abbas Agha”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, XXXVII (1994), p. 293-317, at p. 304-05; *eadem*, “Exiled Harem Eunuchs as Proponents of the Hanafî *Madhhab* in Ottoman Cairo”, *Annales Islamologiques*, XXXVII (2003), p. 191-99, at p. 193.

²⁴ His death on 12 Rebiülevvel 1129/24 February 1717 is reported in Ahmed Çelebi ibn ʿAbd al-Ghani, *Awdah al-ishārāt fî man tawalla Misr al-Qāhira min al-wuzarāʾ waʾl-bāshāt*, A.A. ʿAbd al-Rahim, ed., Cairo, 1978, p. 290.

²⁵ Silâhdâr Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa, *Silâhdâr Târîhi*, 2 vols., Istanbul, 1928, vol. II, p. 288, 307-08.

chief financial officer of the province; governor of the grain-rich Upper Egyptian subprovince of Jirja; and *kaymakâm* (Arabic, *qā'im maqām*), or stand-in for a deposed governor; he also appears to have served as *vekîl-i Darüssaade* to Hacı Beşir Ağa while the latter was acting Chief Harem Eunuch²⁶. However, Yusuf was obliged to compete with Egypt's grandees for revenues and offices. The records of Gülnuş Emetullah's Valide Vakfı during the 1690s and early 1700s show that Yusuf alternated with prominent Egyptian beys of the Faqari faction, notably Zülfikar Bey and his son, İbrahim Bey ibn Zülfikar, as *mütevelli* (Arabic, *mutawalli*), the superintendent of the *vakıf* "on the spot" in Egypt²⁷.

Arguably more typical of Chief Harem Eunuch household-building efforts in Egypt were those cases in which a client of the acting Chief Eunuch founded a household. Such appears to have been the case with the Jalfi household, an associate household to the powerful Kazdağlı household, which dominated Egypt's Azab regiment for much of the eighteenth century. The household's founder, Hasan Kethüda al-Jalfi, was a mamluk of one Mehmed Çavuş Qiyala, who in turn was a mamluk of the powerful Hacı Beşir Ağa well before Beşir Ağa became Chief Harem Eunuch²⁸. Decades later, Hacı Beşir's successor, the ill-fated Moralı Beşir Ağa, acquired five mamluks, all brothers from the same family, one of whom married the daughter of Rıdvan Kethüda al-Jalfi, another of whom joined the household of Rıdvan's senior partner, the powerful İbrahim Kethüda al-Kazdağlı²⁹. A third Beşir Ağa, known as Hazinedar Beşir, who served as Chief Harem Eunuch from 1752-55, appears to have been a client of Osman Kethüda al-Kazdağlı, the chief of a branch of the Kazdağlı household that rivaled İbrahim Kethüda's branch; his house was adjacent to Osman's mansion at Birkat al-Azbakiyya, which by the mid-eighteenth century had displaced Birkat al-Fil as the hub of elite residence³⁰.

²⁶ HATHAWAY, "The Role of the Kızlar Ağası", *art. cit.*, p. 147-48, 149, 157.

²⁷ *Eadem, Politics of Households, op. cit.*, p. 150-52 and nn. 42-43.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 53, 146-47; 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Hasan AL-JABARTI, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār fī'l-tarājim wa'l-akhbār*, Hasan Muhammad Jawhar, *et al.*, eds., 7 vols., Cairo, 1959-67, vol. II, p. 52.

²⁹ AL-JABARTI, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 158; HATHAWAY, *Politics of Households, op. cit.*, p. 111 n. 3.

³⁰ HATHAWAY, *Politics of Households, op. cit.*, p. 160-62; RAYMOND, *art. cit.*, p. 73-75, 78-79, 83, 97-103.

It might seem as if these three cities — Istanbul, Medina, and Cairo — represent three distinct phases of Chief Harem Eunuch household participation. While in office in Topkapı Palace, the Chief Eunuch operated mainly as a member of the sultan's household, even while cultivating ties of patronage with other harem eunuchs. In Medina, he acted as the *de facto* head of a large eunuch household centered on the Prophet Muhammad's tomb. Only in Cairo was he able to build a full-fledged, potentially self-sustaining elite household, complete with mamluks. Yet I would caution against such a neatly segmented interpretation. Instead, I see these sites of household-building as part of a broad continuum within the Chief Eunuch's career. Ties of *intisāb* with the imperial family and other palace personnel, with other eunuchs, and with mamluks and other military-administrative clients played a part at all stages of his career and are attested in the available primary sources. The overriding point is that household participation, whether as member or as head, was a continuous and evolving activity throughout the Chief Harem Eunuch's career.

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Jane HATHAWAY, *Eunuch Households in Istanbul, Medina, and Cairo during the Ottoman Era*

This article examines the involvement of the Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman imperial harem (Darüssaade Ağası or Āghā Dār al-Saʿāda) in households – conglomerations of patron-client ties that served administrative and economic functions – at different stages of his career. Household membership and household building were integral parts of the Chief Eunuch's career from his earliest training through his years in the palace to his deposition and exile. The paper identifies three major locales of household involvement: Istanbul, where the Chief Eunuch cultivated clients within the palace; Medina, where deposed Chief Eunuchs frequently served as heads of the eunuch guard at the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad; and Cairo, where Ottoman eunuchs often began their careers attached to the households of provincial governors or notables, and ended their careers in comfortable exile.

Jane HATHAWAY, « Maisons » d'eunuques à Istanbul, à Médine et au Caire à l'époque ottomane

Cet article a pour sujet les efforts des chefs des eunuques du harem ottoman (*Darüssaade Ağası* en turc, *Āghā Dār al-Saʿāda* en arabe) pour établir des « maisons » — c'est-à-dire des systèmes de liens à fonctions administratives et économiques entre un patron et ses clients — aux diverses étapes de leurs carrières. On peut identifier trois sites où se déployaient principalement leurs efforts : Istanbul, où le chef des eunuques entretenait des liens de clientèle au sein du Palais ; Médine, où les chefs des eunuques déposés avaient souvent la fonction de chef des eunuques qui gardaient la tombe du Prophète Mahomet ; le Caire, où les eunuques ottomans commençaient généralement leurs carrières dans les maisons des gouverneurs ou des grands de la province, et où ils achevaient ces mêmes carrières dans un exil confortable.