


diplomatic relations with European kingdoms and city-states, and reconstructs the life of a local holy man, Abu al-Gaith al-Quachach, whose following briefly concerned Ottoman officials (relations between local authorities and the saint were marked by conflict and familial relations as they both married into the same elite families). The final chapters (especially 17 through 19) pay closer attention to the process of integrating local society, the frequency of familial alliances (often through marriage), and the role of endowments in family patrimony.

Blili's primary sources include Arab historians of the era (Muhammad Ibn Abi Dinar, Wazir al-Sarraj); the hagiography of a saint by one of his disciples, Ottoman scholar Sinan Chaouach (in French translation); the writings of the Spanish priest Diego Haedo (also in French translation); and French diplomatic correspondence and consular archives from the published collections of Pierre Grandchamp and Eugene Plantet. In the conclusion Blili mentions research in the records of religious endowments (*awqāf* or *ahbās* documents), although these archives are not cited in the footnotes or listed in the bibliography. Considering Blili's sophisticated and engaging work in this domain in previous publications (which I have relied upon and referenced in my own scholarship) this is unfortunate.

In light of the time elapsed between the original publication and the English translation, it is unfortunate that AUC Press did not provide a translator's introduction to explain the significance of Blili's work to an English-reading audience, situating her main ideas about chronology, state-building, Ottoman-local relations, household politics, Mediterranean geographies, or otherwise, in conversation with scholarly debates on these topics. Blili has excavated many details about the political contestations of the late Hafsīd and early Ottoman eras, bringing to life the men holding positions of authority in Tunis. Along the way, she indicates the recurrence of marriage alliances between political contenders and local families, painstaking work that also is presented in eight genealogical charts featuring some of the most prominent men of the ruling class. The fast-paced narration and short chapters make the text accessible and full of insights for scholars interested in the political elite of Tunis in the 16th and 17th centuries.

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Empire of Salons: Conquest and Community in Early Modern Ottoman Lands. Helen Pfeifer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022). Pp. 320. \$39.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9780691195230

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Despite its centuries of existence, the Ottoman *meclis* (salon) is almost absent in the scholarship, which makes it challenging for the modern eye to imagine this intriguing space. In her carefully researched new book on 16th-century gentlemanly salons, Helen Pfeifer aims to fill this gap in the literature. By exploring cultural and intellectual encounters between Rumis and Arabs following the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk lands in 1516–17, Pfeifer aptly demonstrates how informal gatherings played a crucial role during the process of imperial integration. Using Arabic and Ottoman Turkish sources in tandem, *Empire of Salons* offers a historiographical corrective to the assumptions that have prioritized the centrality of formal administrative tools in the making of Ottoman imperial domination.

Pfeifer's narrative revolves around a key protagonist, Badr al-Din al-Ghazzi (1499–1577), a notable scholar of Damascus. Concentrating on the important episodes in al-Ghazzi's life over the course of this transformative era, we follow his expanding network, which was comprised of distinct individuals from various walks of life who shared his aspirations. Although al-Ghazzi was not representative of all the provincial notables of his time, his experience was indeed very Damascene. His remarkable erudition and intellect brought him new opportunities, and at the same time, unsurprisingly, many challenges both from home and afar, which were on full display during his traumatic transition.

Structured in chronological order, Pfeifer's analysis traces how, as a soft apparatus of Ottomanization, salons orchestrated cultural exchange between Arabs and Rumis well before the 18th century. By focusing on the 16th century—when, it is said, a more centralized power was its height—the key argument of the book complements and challenges earlier debates on the negotiable entanglements between the Ottoman state and provinces. In so doing, the book gives more depth to “the seemingly straightforward hierarchy placing conqueror over the conquered” (21). Salons demonstrate how imperial integration was not merely a top-down project. Pfeifer shows that, even before the conquest, elites of the Ottoman and Mamluk polities were maintaining significant cultural interaction, which eventually gave birth to the rise of a comparable salon culture. Sharing a common scholarly culture, both sides used poetry to facilitate communication, often accompanied by music and wine. Following the conquest, Arab notables gradually gained material and stable benefits from the new government in return for the information they could provide and the ironing out of unfavorable policies. When Ottoman salons emulated the sultan's court to a certain extent, they also became important spaces for establishing elite male status and undergirding steep social hierarchies. The salon culture was modeled on the inherited concept of *adāb* (etiquette), since office, lineage, and scholarly prominence were the main criteria.

The most interesting chapters of the book—at least for this reader—focus on the “art of conversation” (Chapter 4) and the “transmission of knowledge” (Chapter 5). The promise of refined conversation required a wide-ranging set of qualifications in humanistic genres: poetry, rhetoric, grammar, history, and competence in the religious and scholarly corpus. The expectation of linguistic competence, however, posed a challenge to Turkish-speaking Rumi scholars who were often at a disadvantage when conversing in Arabic. On the transmission of knowledge, Pfeifer directs our attention to salons rather than madrasas. In-person gatherings that were held outside of the formal madrasa offered a more flexible means for reading practices and the circulation of ideas.

Pfeifer concludes with a discussion of how salons led by Rumis gradually transformed into spaces that restricted Arab notables' access to imperial resources over the course of the 16th century. She relates this shift to “the routinization of Ottoman governance,” during which Ottoman officials became relatively less dependent on informal channels. Similarly, because of the growing “maturation” of their own intellectual tradition and the consolidation of the Ottoman educational system, Ottoman scholars showed less interest in Arab scholars' erudition. All in all, Pfeifer says, Arab scholars became “victims of their own success” (231).

Although Pfeifer's arguments are generally persuasive, I would like to point to some aspects that raise questions. Pfeifer adopts a strict dichotomy between informal and formal tools of the state, and the former is represented by salons. However, when reading her clearly written narrative arc, I cannot help but wonder whether salons were indeed part of larger and more heterogenous, maybe even pan-imperial, infrastructures that blurred such rigid binaries.


Likewise, recent historiography, especially in the growing field of the history of knowledge, has questioned unilateral forms of knowledge exchange. Certainly, in some cases such interactions are asymmetrical, yet I would be curious to know what Arab scholars obtained from their Rumi counterparts beyond access to patronage systems and new career opportunities. Pfeifer stresses that the adaptation by Ottoman learned elites of the Arabic scholarly tradition is reflective of their “openness” to new ideas, and sees this episode as

unique to Ottoman culture. Although this statement is somewhat reminiscent of “Ottoman exceptionalism,” it also is not fully clear how this syncretic intellectual contact lost its relevance when Ottoman scholarly culture arguably became more self-sufficient and confident by the end of the 16th century. We know of, for example, Arabic texts rendered into the Turkish language in the following century, so how and when was there a rupture, or was there any? It might be a broad question for this monograph, yet such questions are definitely stimulated by Pfeifer’s engaging prose.

Featuring new research accompanied by an effective set of maps, charts, an appendix of key figures, and a glossary, *Empire of Salons* will become an essential point of reference in early modern Ottoman studies. It also is a timely and important study for those interested in premodern Islamic cultural history.

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As Night Falls: Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Cities after Dark. Avner Wishnitzer (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021). Pp. 376. £29.99 hardback. ISBN: 9781108832144

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Avner Wishnitzer’s excellent book brings illumination to a subject very little studied for the Middle Eastern world, and that is the night. Covering the long 18th century stretching from 1703 to the 1820s and focusing almost exclusively on Istanbul, with some discussion of Jerusalem, the book examines the impact of darkness on individuals, the fear and insecurity it induced and the dangers it conjured up, both real and imagined. It considers the role of the night in spiritual illumination, and what the night meant for the state, presenting it with both an obscurity it could not control and a murky world of illegal trade from which it benefited, as well as a canvas for the projection of power and piety, a backdrop whose illumination brought with it legitimization of sultanic power. The night also presented a world of illicit entertainment, where nighttime offered concealment and a cover for activities not acceptable in the light of day.

For many people in the Ottoman empire in the 18th century, night represented the time to withdraw, to be locked away in their homes and definitely not out and about on the streets. It was, to use Wishnitzer’s phrase, a “disquieting” time. The night robbed people of their ability to see, and the deep darkness into which Istanbul, like other early modern cities, was plunged with the setting of the sun undermined people’s sense of control, leaving them to rely largely or solely on their sense of hearing to understand and interpret what was going on around them. It is this “aural texture of the night” (17) that Wishnitzer sets out to reconstruct in the first section of his book.

Just as for its subjects, for the state too the night represented the realm of the unknown and uncontrollable, “the temporal frontier of its power” (47). Wishnitzer notes that although scholarship has been very aware of the geography of public order, its treatment of the temporal dimensions has been “cruder,” and, he argues, scholarship largely remains “night-blind” (47). It is this failure to engage with the challenges that the night specifically posed to the imposition of order that Wishnitzer also sets out to tackle. Blinded by the darkness, the guilds and neighborhood surveillance, the mainstays of the everyday network of urban order, were hampered in their ability to function, leaving the way open to illegal trafficking and illicit activity. The darkness of the night also provided an excellent arena for opposition