Anglo-Turkish Society online lecture, 9 September 2021, 6.00 pm

Speaker: Jane Hathaway

Platform: Zoom with link provided to those who register

Title: 'The Sultan's Eunuch: The Chief Harem Eunuch as Shaper of the Ottoman Empire'

The Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman harem (Darüssaade Ağası or Kızlar Ağası) was one of the most powerful figures in the Ottoman Empire from the formal inception of the office in the late 16th century until the westernizing Tanzimat reforms of the mid-19th century. His authority seems all the more extraordinary when we consider that most Ottoman harem eunuchs started out as enslaved boys from East Africa. His power stemmed not only from his proximity to the Ottoman sultan, his mother, and his chief concubines but also from his supervision of the imperial pious foundations for the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Since lands and properties throughout the empire were endowed to these foundations, they gave him connections to every Ottoman province. Through his own foundations, furthermore, he influenced Ottoman intellectual and religious life. This talk, which draws on the speaker's 2018 book on the office of Chief Eunuch, explores the evolution of the Chief Eunuch's authority over the course of this period while also situating the office of Chief Eunuch within the context of East African slavery.

Booking essential: https://jane-hathaway-lecture.eventbrite.co.uk

Contact: contact@angloturkishsociety.org.uk



Terceme-i Şâh-nâme, 1620 - Uppsala University Library, MS O. Celsig 1, fols. 1b-2a.



Jane Hathaway is Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of History at Ohio State University. She received her Ph.D. from Princeton University in 1992. She has published six books, most recently *The Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Harem: From African Slave to Power-Broker* (Cambridge, 2018; paperback 2020) and *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2020). She has also published four edited volumes and scores of articles on Ottoman eunuchs, Ottoman Egypt and Yemen, ethno-regional tensions in Ottoman provincial administration, Jews under Muslim rule, and the legendary early Islamic sword Zülfikar. Her current research focuses on the Ottoman-era documents of the Cairo Geniza.

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