

these individuals, who turned into travelers to the Habsburg royal court, manipulated the discourses of poverty, wretchedness, and king's obligation, putting the force of discourse to practical use for personal and collective purposes. Chapter 6 illustrates the point by way of the case of Don Lorenzo Zamudio El Lucayn, a literate Indian who crossed the ocean to have his identity legitimized and ancestry demonstrated (163). His quest for recognition within the República de Indios exemplifies the broadening of the elite status at the expense of fabricated documents through which commoners would rework, or ignore, established markers of racial purity and social status. The process shows understanding of the power of the written word, the authority of notaries, and the instrumentality of witnesses (170), attire (177), and performance (176) in establishing truth about ancestry and negotiating a position of social prominence and exemption from tribute and labor dues. The appropriation and subversion of Spanish exclusionary categories enabled indigenous subjects seeking justice and reward over the Atlantic to also separate themselves from "traditional Indian corporations, turning instead into spokespersons of a more abstract *Nación Índica*" (190). The commemoration of King Philip V's abdication in favor of his son offers a case in point. Chapter 7 discusses the manner through which leaders from the República de Indios disassociated their activities from Cuzco and Inca symbolism and "reembedded" them within "a *limeño*-migrant milieu" (194).

This final example summarizes the remarkable strengths of de la Puente Luna's book: constant attention to the indigenous as that which is constructed in discourse and through discourse, and thus is indicative of subjection, limited by the law, yet transformative of it, in the charged contexts of local and imperial representation. Taking their cue from its articulation at the intersection of the law, travel, and justice, the reader can track the ways through which de la Puente Luna's critical methodology expands what it means to be indigenous and opens up space to further questions of identity, in a modality that dialogues with studies on indigenous mobility written by James Clifford, indigenous critique of colonialism by Jodi Byrd, and indigenous self-recognition by Glen Coulthard, among others.

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*The World in a Book: Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition.*

Elias Muhanna.

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018. xvi + 214 pp. \$39.95.

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Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī (1279–1333) studied with various teachers in Egypt, left for Damascus in his twenties, and returned to Cairo in 1304 with an important position in the government. He showed a comprehensive knowledge

of and an accurate ability to manage the interests of the highly educated society of the Mamluks. In 1310, he was dispatched to Tripoli (Lebanon), as superintendent of army finances, for two years; then, at the end of 1312, he was back in Egypt to oversee the financial revenues in the Nile Delta. This training in Damascus or Cairo, as well as his professional profile linked to the government, is not atypical for a compiler in the Mamluk realms. Actually, other of al-Nuwayrī's contemporaries followed similar trajectories. However, toward 1316, al-Nuwayrī decided to withdraw from his public duties and to devote his life to copying manuscripts and to writing the *Nihāyat al-arab fi funūn al-adab* (Ultimate ambition in the arts of erudition), a thirty-volume encyclopedia probably composed in the Nāṣiriyya madrasa (Cairo). The work brings together all kind of subjects, arranged into five principal divisions: cosmos, human being, animal world, plant world, and universal history.

Elias Muhanna, professor of comparative literature at Brown University, translated into English, in 2016, an abridged version of the *Ultimate Ambition*. Two years later, in *The World in a Book*, Muhanna offers a careful study of this important text, neglected until now. Muhanna's book is composed of six short chapters, dealing with the milieu, the contents, the production, and the reception of the book. It is a brief study full of new information and easy to read—succinct and clear at the same time. The book is completed by two appendixes, notes to the six chapters, a final bibliography (with a detailed account of the manuscript and printed Arabic primary sources), and an index of names and topics. Some illustrations provide an idea of the manuscript and printed transmission of this encyclopedia.

Muhanna's book opens the door to the cultural and intellectual interests of Mamluk society. From the first chapters, the author shows how the fourteenth century witnessed an explosion of compilations in Egypt and Syria—al-Nuwayrī's work and that of other compilers such as al-'Umarī (d. 1349) or al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418). However, as Muhanna argues briefly, one should not understand this as a symptom of the decline of Arab-Islamic civilization or as an instinctive act of cultural preservation, as argued in traditional historiography, but as a solution to manage the overflow of authoritative sources available mainly in the school cities of Cairo and Damascus. In spite of the obvious links between encyclopedism and state, the author underscores the importance of distinguishing between scholarly and administrative knowledge.

In the second part, the author masterfully narrates the practical circumstances of the composition, circulation, and reception of these kinds of books. Especially important for our knowledge about Arabic manuscript sources is chapter 5, "Working Methods." Although the number of studies on Arabic material culture has increased in recent years, and has analyzed more carefully the strategies of collation, editing, and source management involved in producing Arabic compilations, the production of the book in Islamic lands remains insufficiently studied. Muhanna shows that al-Nuwayrī provides us with answers to important questions about the working methods used to compile multivolume manuscripts, the needed training that allows someone to become a successful

copyist, and the distinction between one's own copies of authoritative texts and those of other copyists. Thanks to the study of the contents of the *Ultimate Ambition*, the careful reading of al-Nuwayrī's biographies, and the analysis of the autograph manuscripts of this multivolume encyclopedia preserved in European libraries, Muhanna sheds light on the production process of this kind of work during the fourteenth century.

The last chapter brings us from the fourteenth to the twentieth century, and from Egypt and the Levant to Europe. It is devoted to the reception of the *Ultimate Ambition* by contemporaries and later European Orientalists, mainly Dutch. Muhanna raises questions such as: which volumes were most read; who was interested in this book (only Muslim or also non-Muslim readers?); and was the work edited, printed, or translated? Muhanna's original and essential book provides the reader with an in-depth understanding of the cultural and intellectual history of Mamluk times.

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*Empress of the East: How a European Slave Girl Became Queen of the Ottoman Empire.* Leslie Peirce.

New York: Basic Books, 2017. viii + 360 pp. \$19.99.

Interest in the life story of Roxelana has existed since the early modern period in Europe, when travelogues and diplomatic reports discussed the rise to power of the concubine turned queen, whose political trajectory broke with Ottoman dynastic tradition. As the current popularity of this intriguing figure is due to the recent Turkish soap opera *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Magnificent century), which aired from 2011 to 2014, a well-researched book exploring the life of Roxelana is timely. While Peirce's biographical study is grounded in historical reality, and eloquently written, it also appeals to an audience extending far beyond scholars of the Ottoman Empire. Peirce is well known in the field of Ottoman history for her groundbreaking studies of Ottoman dynastic politics in *The Imperial Harem* (1993), and her use of court records to reconstruct early modern social history in *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (2003). She draws on the breadth and depth of her knowledge in writing her new work and translates the Ottoman historical context in which Roxelana's biography unfolds for a general audience of readers.

Peirce's exploration of the life story of Roxelana is divided into three sections, "Beginnings," "Challenges," and "Politics," each containing five chapters. The opening section describes the Ottoman political and dynastic practices that may be unfamiliar to a nonspecialist audience, such as the Ottoman palace's administrative structures and politics of reproduction, which hinged on institutions of slavery and the inculcation of young female slaves into Ottoman palace culture, which would have shaped Roxelana's early years. This section seems to have been written for an audience familiar