

run against the grain of the state's psycho-nationalist partitions, enclosures, and exclusions. Sometimes, this resistance brings out Iran's cosmopolitanism, diversity, and multiculturalism, in defiance of the stringent ethno-centric and linguistic norms dictated by psycho-nationalist discourses. A case in point is the "Indo-Iranian dialectic" (p. 69), which shows the extent to which Indian and Iranian identities have been mutually constitutive (a fact that was continuously repressed by various internal and external forces since the 19th century). At other times, this resistance was centered on the question of freedom, "which has been at the heart of the Iranian quest for democracy, human rights and pluralism for over a century now" (p. 125). From Jamal al-Din al-Afghani in the 19th century, to Mehdi Bazargan, Mahmoud Taleqani, Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar and Hasan Eshkevari in the 20th and 21st centuries—these and other Iranian thinkers visualized an "Islamic-democratic polity" (p. 137), "an authentic Iranian order that would be accountable to the people and independent of the dictates of external powers" (p. 130). Yet, to the author's mind, the ultimate "psycho-therapeutic' resistance" to the oppressive and restrictive forms of Iranian psycho-nationalism would be "sexing the nation." This entails the endeavor to excavate Iran's cultural treasures which contain a rich repertoire of anti-heteronormative patriarchal traditions. Hence, Adib-Moghaddam's vision for Iranian identity is trans-sexuality: "the nation in this interpretive tradition comes out as a powerful 'transvestite', rather than a weak subject" (p. 150).

I have two principal reservations with the book. First, although it is almost purely interpretive in nature, involving a claim to novel conceptualizations, the author would have made a clearer argument had he not been drawn to jargonizing. The social sciences provide a plethora of conceptualizations of nationalisms which the author could put to use, without the need to lean on terms such as "psycho-nationalism" and "psycho-therapeutic' resistance," which seem to me redundant. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, absent from the book are those post-1980s studies that have questioned modernist, Eurocentric understandings of nationalism and offered sophisticated analyses of colonial and postcolonial *non-Western* nationalisms. Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Peter van der Veer, and Talal Asad are just a few names that come to mind. Their analyses sometimes anticipate Adib-Moghaddam's interpretations of Iranian nationalism, and at other times these analyses complement them.

That said, *Psycho-Nationalism* is a long-overdue first-of-a-kind look at Iranian nationalism within the context of global thought. The work addresses and demonstrates the need for more critical analyses of modern non-Western nationalisms within the exciting field of global history.

NEGUIN YAVARI, *The Future of Iran's Past: Nizam al-Mulk Remembered* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). Pp. 275. \$50.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780190855109

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Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092), born Abu 'Ali Hasan ibn 'Ali al-Tusi, served as vizier in the court of the Seljuq Sultan Alp Arslan (r. 1063–72) first, and of his son Malik Shah

(r. 1072–92) later, becoming the most powerful and influential politician from Central Asia to Baghdad during the 11th century. Although he achieved a pivotal role in the administration of the Great Seljuq Empire (r. 1037–1194) and became one of the most celebrated personalities in Islamic historiography, a surprising limited amount of modern scholarship has been dedicated to the study of his life. Instead, modern scholarship has paid much more attention to Nizam al Mulk's work, the *Siyar al-Mulūk* (*Siyāsatnāmah*)—one of the masterpieces of the Islamic *Mirror for Princes* literary genre—while generally overlooking the abundant evidence about his life that is available in Islamic sources. In this context, Nequin Yavari's *The Future of Iran's Past* about the life of the vizier is an interesting proposal that comes to fill an existing gap in the field. However, the reader expecting to find a purely chronological succession of events about the life of Nizam al-Mulk will be disappointed, as this work offers a much more comprehensive view of the vizier in particular, and about the history and historiography of Medieval Iran in general.

The Future of Iran's Past is a rather unconventional biography. Instead of choosing a traditional structure, for example, dedicating a chapter to each period of Nizam al-Mulk's life, Yavari opts to offer a collection of five different essays. Although each of the chapters could be read on its own, they are in fact connected to one another. Readers interested only in finding information about the life of the vizier, can go directly to Chapter 3 and omit the rest. However, this is not advisable; the rest of the book offers useful insights into the sociohistorical context in the life of Nizam al-Mulk based on research deeply rooted in historical sources. The preface offers clarification, explaining the argumentative base for binding these five different chapters together in a single manuscript. The author suggests that the life and work of Nizam al-Mulk transcended the period he lived, and his own persona. Therefore, an account of his life, Yavari argues, would not be complete without a more comprehensive analysis of the relevance of Nizam al-Mulk during his lifetime, an analysis of the historical contexts in which he lived, and the legacy he left.

In the first chapter, the author deals with biography as a literary genre by way of comparison. The essay compares biographical work from medieval Europe with a contemporary biography written in the Islamic World. The former is the *Vita Karoli*, written by Einhard (d. 840) considered to be the first secular biography of the Frankish emperor Charlemagne (d. 814). The latter was written by 'Abd al-Hakam (d. 882) in Egypt and focussed on the life of the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar II (r. 717–20). The chapter is interesting as a way to introduce the topic of biographical writing in the medieval period. The author briefly explains in her preface that this chapter aims to “draw out, in the first instance, certain intellectual constructs that shape the lives of great people in both classical historiography and the early Islamic historical tradition” (p. xx). However, when reading the chapter, there is little reference to Nizam al-Mulk himself or other aspects covered in the rest of the book. Albeit the author engages with challenging questions regarding kingship, secular and religious authority, and the depiction of rulers in comparative perspective, one cannot avoid feeling that this chapter is somehow forced into the book. The remaining chapters are, in my view, better interconnected despite remaining individual essays in their own right.

The second chapter is a good, though general, overview of the history of 11th-century Iran; a useful introduction to the sociopolitical context of the period. The chapter's main concern is a discussion of the “origin” of the Great Seljuqs according to the different narratives found in Islamic sources and investigates carefully the role of “the Turks” in this

period of Islamic history. The section mainly investigates how the Turkic Seljuq dynasty became the hegemonic military power in Eastern Iran and the implications that this event had in the historical development of the region. The chapter introduces the reader to the political context, in which Nizam al-Mulk lived, which becomes relevant to understand different aspects of the vizier's biography described in the following chapter.

The third chapter is the actual account of Nizam al-Mulk's life, in which the author expands, based on a wide range of contemporary and later sources, on the vizier's early life, his education, role in the administration of the Seljuq court, patronage activities, conflictive relationship with the Sultans—especially with his *nemesis* al-Kunduri (d. 1064)—and finally his death. In Chapter 4, Yavari offers a short reflection on the relationship between Nizam al-Mulk and *alterity*. The section looks at how different medieval sources have portrayed the interaction between Nizam al-Mulk and the Turks, the Caliphs, the “heretics” (mainly Shi'a and Isma'ili) and the Sufis. Although this section is especially relevant, it might leave the reader disappointed, as it feels rather short considering the relevance of the subject and the abundance of source materials dealing with these topics that exist in Islamic historiography.

The final chapter looks at the legacy of the figure of Nizam al-Mulk after his death and pays attention to different moments of Islamic history up to the present. The author suggests that a political image was crafted by Nizam al-Mulk himself together with those that elevated his writings and persona in later periods. Specially, the author highlights that in terms of his political thought, the ideas of Nizam al-Mulk can be seen as having taken Islam as a political ideology “transcending confessional, ethnic and regional divides” (p. 133). Based on this idea, Yavari suggests that in the history of Iran, Nizam al-Mulk has become a “veritable figure of Memory,” (p. 148) someone whose Iranian background and resolute defence of Islam has served as a national symbol into the modern day.

It is tempting for scholars when writing a biography of a prominent figure of the medieval Islamic world whose works have survived to overuse the person's own writing to reconstruct aspects of his life. This has the obvious danger of falling too much into the person's bias in the account of his own life. When dealing with a famous figure such as Nizam al-Mulk, whose *Siyar al-Muluk* became one of the most popular texts in the medieval and modern Islamic world, this risk multiplies. However, Yavari's book does not fall into this temptation. Instead, she makes good use of a wide range of both Persian and Arabic sources to confront different versions of the events, rendering a critical and revealing narrative on different aspects of Nizam al-Mulk's life.

The balance between a clear presentation of the narrative and the in-depth use of original sources makes *The Future of Iran's Past* a useful contribution to the field and appealing to a wide audience. It can certainly be a useful reference for students; the individual chapter essays allow the book to be included in different subjects across university curricula. In addition, each of these essays opens the door to a variety of new lines of enquiry into the nature of medieval biographical writing and into how looking at the life of a well know figure such as Nizam al-Mulk, can still offer new perspectives to the study of Islamic history both past and present. This work can equally benefit scholars in their study of medieval intellectual Islamic history. Yavari's use of endnotes and a bibliography offers a useful tool for the interested reader, who will find a complete list of primary and secondary sources that can be helpful for visualizing the comprehensive corpus of original sources in the production of the book. Overall, *The Future of Iran's Past* is highly

recommended for those willing to explore the life and legacy of arguably one of the most influential political characters of the medieval Islamic World.

PRISCILLA MARY IŞIN, *Bountiful Empire: A History of Ottoman Cuisine* (London: Reaktion Books, 2018). Pp. 272. \$50.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781780239040

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Food studies is booming in scholarly, pedagogical, and popular arenas. These days, college catalogs list numerous courses on everything from the “Political Economy of Food” and “Food History” to the “Archeology of Food” and “Food Science.” Academic publishers increasingly market their food monographs to students and to broader audiences of food devotees. The fascination with learning about eating and its varied manifestations is related, in no small part, to food’s ubiquity in social media (especially Instagram), television shows, blogs, and glossy cookbooks. Prominent media providers, like Netflix, are also combining stylish food stories with a sense of scholarly curiosity; recently for instance, Musa Dağdeviren, the founder and chef of Istanbul’s celebrated restaurant Çiya, was featured on “A Chef’s Life” where he detailed the ethnographic process of recovering, documenting, and preserving nearly extinct Anatolian dishes in the face of globalization and urbanization.

So how has the growing interest in food studies permeated scholarship about the Middle East? Overall, the output remains limited, certainly relative to counterparts in American, European, and Asian contexts. Extant works have tended to focus on food and religion (much on Judaism, some on Islam, almost nothing on Middle Eastern Christians, Druzes, or Yazidis), food in the Abbasid or Mamluk Empires, and—for the modern period—food and nationalism, and to some extent food and gender. The Ottoman Empire, with its rich archives and complex culinary cultures, is beginning to draw serious scholarly attention by social historians, legal experts, and culinary researchers. Of note, Nicolas Trépanier has looked at food customs in 14th-century Anatolia, on the cusp of Ottoman ascendancy; aspects of Ottoman food consumption have also received attention from Suraiya Faroqhi, Tülay Artan, and Özge Samancı; Amy Singer has explored the relationship between food and charity; and several studies have been produced about Ottoman coffee trade and coffeehouses.

Priscilla Mary Işin’s *Bountiful Empire* is a welcomed addition to this nascent field. The book offers a preliminary introduction to Ottoman food traditions in a plurality of settings. While the term “cuisine” could have been better qualified considering its common association with a particular region or geography and in light of the empire’s vastness and cultural diversity, Işin indirectly suggests that Ottoman cuisine was the food of Istanbul and specifically of the Ottoman palace. Throughout the book, the author frequently highlights how provincial foodstuffs, culinary traditions, ingredients, spices, kitchenware, etc., shaped eating habits in the empire’s capital.

Bountiful Empire starts with background information outlining the links between earlier food traditions and the dishes consumed by Ottoman sultans, elites, and—to a lesser extent—commoners. In Chapter 1, Işin catalogues the influence of Persian, Abbasid,