

also located in Üsküdar. Gülüş Emetullah is buried at the mosque's northern edge, in an open tomb surrounded by rosebushes.

While attending to these ceremonial duties, Uzun Süleyman Agha wasted little time in bringing his influence to bear on the selection of grand viziers, perhaps setting an example for el-Hajj Beshir Agha. In fact, his tenure began with the deposition of his adversary Damad Hasan Pasha, a close ally of the deposed harem treasurer, and the appointment of Kalaylıkoz Hajji Ahmed Pasha, with whom Uzun Süleyman was more compatible. The new grand vizier even arrived in Istanbul on Uzun Süleyman's boat.²³ In the course of his nine-year tenure as Chief Eunuch, Uzun Süleyman took the seal of authority from three more grand viziers. Small wonder that the venomously anti-harem eunuch author Derviş Abdullah Efendi laments, "For nine years the black aghas ran things."²⁴

Ironically, Uzun Süleyman's last deposition of a grand vizier, in 1712, brought to the office the formidable Silahdar Damad Ali Pasha, who held the post from April 1713 until his death at the battle of Peterwardein in what is now northern Serbia in August 1716. Damad Ali took a dim view of Uzun Süleyman's machinations and attempted to block the importation of African eunuchs into Ottoman territory entirely. He also replaced the African eunuch Şeyhü'l-Harem in Medina with a former grand vizier and upheld his predecessor Çorlulu Ali Pasha's decision, noted in Chapter 6, to make the white eunuchs of the Third Court subordinate to the *silahdar*, or sword-bearer.²⁵

So hostile was Damad Ali Pasha toward Uzun Süleyman and his circle, in fact, that he engineered the eunuch's deposition in June 1713. Like his predecessor, Uzun Süleyman was exiled along with the harem treasurer, el-Hajj Beshir Agha, who attained the post in 1706 (and may briefly have held it in the mid-1690s).²⁶ Lacking the 1,000 purses demanded of them by the sultan's gate-keepers, the two eunuchs were imprisoned in the sultan's private garden until their property could be sold. They were then sent to Cyprus.²⁷ The curse of the Aegean islands held true for Uzun Süleyman just as it had for Nezir Agha: he was executed in Famagusta in May 1715.²⁸ El-Hajj Beshir, however, was allowed to continue to Cairo. This dispensation was a sign that the grand vizier did not regard him as Uzun Süleyman's "partner," whatever else he may have had against him.

²³ Silahdar, *Nusretname*, II: 215; Mehmed Raşid, *Tarih-i Raşid* (Istanbul, 1282/1865), IV: 242; Ahmed Resmî, *Hamiletü'l-kübera*, 62.

²⁴ Silahdar, *Nusretname*, II: 229, 262, 288; Derviş Abdullah, *Risale-i teberdariye*, fol. 65b.

²⁵ Derviş Abdullah, *Risale-i teberdariye*, fol. 66b. ²⁶ *Silahdar Tarihi*, II: 745.

²⁷ Silahdar, *Nusretname*, II: 295, 306; Derviş Abdullah, *Risale-i teberdariye*, fol. 66b; d'Ohsson, *Tableau général*, VII: 58-60; Mehmed Raşid, *Tarih-i Raşid*, III: 224, Topkapı Palace Archive, E 153/3 (1125-26/1713-14).

²⁸ Silahdar, *Nusretname*, II: 332.

El-Hajj Beshir Agha

El-Hajj Beshir's sojourn in Cairo was not his first. Archival evidence also indicates that he paid brief visits as *musahib*, then as harem treasurer, between 1703 and 1708.²⁹ Before he entered the imperial harem, furthermore, he apparently cultivated a bond to one of Cairo's notable households, as Chapter 8 will demonstrate.

This time, in any case, his stay in the city was quite brief, perhaps only a few months. During it, he lived in the harem eunuch quarter that had taken shape near Cairo's citadel, in a house located next-door to a residence belonging to the late Uzun Süleyman Agha, with whom he had been exiled to Cyprus. Under the circumstances, it can hardly be a coincidence that this house had most recently been occupied by one Kibrîşî, or "the Cypriot."³⁰ In fact, Beshir may have been plotting out this latest Cairene phase of his career before Uzun Süleyman's death.

Şeyhü'l-Harem in Medina. Sometime in 1715, Beshir Agha was dispatched from Cairo to Medina to take up the post of Şeyhü'l-Harem, the head of the corps of eunuchs who guarded the Prophet Muhammad's mosque and tomb there. As we saw in Chapter 6, this office had been held by a harem eunuch since at least the early seventeenth century, although Yusuf Agha, in 1691, was the first deposed Chief Harem Eunuch to occupy it. El-Hajj Beshir, for his part, became the only harem eunuch ever to hold the office *before* promotion to Chief Harem Eunuch. The appointment was part of a continuing improvement in his fortunes, beginning with his relocation from Cyprus to Egypt.

Beshir's experience as Chief Tomb Eunuch was probably much like that of Yusuf Agha twenty years earlier, albeit far briefer. Although he stayed in Medina for only a year at most, he felt a sufficient connection to the city to endow both a madrasa and a *dar al-hadith*, or school for the study of the sayings of the Prophet, there over twenty years later. We will examine these in Chapter 9.

Return to Istanbul. In November 1716, el-Hajj Beshir took advantage of his relative proximity to Mecca to make the pilgrimage. This was not his first *hajj*; he had earned the title el-Hajj, or Hacı in Turkish, when he accompanied the *daye kadın*, the wet-nurse to an Ottoman prince, on pilgrimage from Istanbul in 1706.³¹ While in Mecca, he received word that he had been

²⁹ BOA, MD 114, no. 425 (end Zilkade 1114/16 April 1703); MD 115, no. 1012 (mid-Zilkade 1118/17 February 1707); MD 115, no. 2155 (mid-Zilkade 1119/6 February 1708).

³⁰ Hamza Abd al-Aziz Badr and Daniel Crecelius, "The *Awqaf* of al-Hajj Bashir Agha in Cairo," *Annales Islamologiques* 27 (1993): 296.

³¹ Topkapı Archive E 2429/6 (29 Muharrem 1118/12 May 1706); Ayvansarayî, *Garden of the Mosques*, 55.

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