Physical, sensory, and mental impairments can influence an individual’s status in society as much as the more familiar categories of gender, sexual orientation, age, class, religion, race, and ethnicity. This was especially true of the early modern Arab Ottoman world, where being judged able or disabled impacted every aspect of a person’s life, including performance of religious rituals, marriage, job opportunities, and the ability to buy and sell property. Sara Scalenghe’s book is the first on the history of both physical and mental disabilities not only in the Middle East and North Africa, but also in the premodern non-Western world. Unlike previous scholarly works that examine disability as discussed in religious texts, this study focuses on representations and classifications of disability and impairment across a wide range of primary sources, including chronicles, biographies, the law, medicine, belles lettres, and dream manuals. As such, this is a sociocultural history that seeks to explain how blindness, deafness and muteness, impairments of the mind, and intersex were understood and experienced in a specific Arab-Islamic context within the geographical area that includes present-day Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine/Israel under Ottoman rule in the early modern period.

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Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization

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Disability in the Ottoman Arab World, 1500–1800

SARA SCALENGHE
Loyola University Maryland
To my father and my brother, Franco and Davide, and
to the memory of my mother and my sister, Laura and Cecilia.
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Note on Transliteration, Personal Names, Dates, and Translations

I have transliterated Arabic and Turkish words in accordance with the system devised by *The International Journal of Middle East Studies*. As a general rule, words that recur frequently, like *khunthā*, have diacritical marks and are italicized only the first time they appear.

As I explain in Chapter 2, Arabic personal names can be very long because they often comprise onomastic chains that report the name of the father and, if known, of the paternal grandfather and great-grandfather, in addition to several other nouns and adjectives that indicate place of origin and/or residence, occupation, honorific titles, and other distinguishing characteristics. For the sake of prose, as a general rule I provide only the first and last name of an individual in the main body of the text. Thus, for example, Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Naqshabandi al-Hanafi al-Asamm al-‘Arbili is shortened to Muhammad al-‘Arbili. In the case of authors, a longer version of their names is listed in the footnotes and bibliography. I have, however, made several exceptions to this rule, including when a person was only known by his or her first name and father’s name, for example, ‘Itban b. Malik (“b.” is an abbreviation for “ibn,” “son of”), or for those who were commonly addressed by an honorific title rather than by their first name, for example, Najm al-Din (“the star of the faith”) al-Ghazi.

I used conversion tables to convert all dates from the Islamic calendar (called “Hijri,” which means “of the emigration,” because it begins in 622 CE when the Prophet Muhammad emigrated from Mecca.
to Medina) to the Gregorian or Common Era calendar (CE). Because
the Islamic calendar is lunar and the Gregorian is solar, we can convert
dates with precision only if we know the day, month, and year that
an event took place. Thus, for instance, Muharram 1, 1208, Hijri cor-
responds to August 8, 1793, but Ramadan 1, 1208, is April 2, 1794.
When the full Hijri date was not available to me and all I had was “the
year 1208 Hijri,” I converted it as 1793/4 CE.
All English translations from Arabic, Turkish, French, and Italian
are my own unless otherwise specified.