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Coffee and the Ottoman Social Sphere

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Coffee and the Ottoman Social Sphere

Marita Ervin

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Introduction

Sharing a cup of coffee has become nearly synonymous with the exchange of information. Coffee has the ability to act as a social unifier and a catalyst for intellectual interaction. Recent decades have experienced a dramatic increase in coffee culture which has resulted in a revival of the social café atmosphere. This revitalization has taken hold in numerous cultures that have transformed the beverage by adopting new processes of brewing and new tools for serving. Within this transformation coffee's connection with the exchange of social conventions has remained a constant. The integration of social ease and scholarly thought began within the confines of coffeehouses in the Ottoman Empire.

A significant amount of historical research has been devoted to European coffeehouses which were adopted from the Ottomans. Within this research Ottoman coffeehouses and their development of safe, social spaces have been largely ignored. The complex cultural exchange between the Ottomans and the Europeans was complicated by European ignorance rooted in the Ottoman acquisition of Constantinople. In 1453, Turkish tribes under the rule of Mehmet II overthrew Constantinople, the seat of the Byzantine Empire, and subsequently occupied the city. The Turks renamed the port city Istanbul[1] and designated it the new capital of the Ottoman Empire.

European countries regarded the Ottomans with suspicion which revealed an underlying anxiety. The Ottomans were a virtually unknown culture that had overthrown the revered Byzantines, the only surviving relic of the Roman Empire. The Byzantines represented a beacon of Western civilization in the East and served as a buffer between the

[1] The overthrow of Constantinople and the renaming of the city does not designate the beginning of the Ottoman Empire, rather the Empire was founded in the year 1299.

tribes of the East and the civilized states of the West. After overthrowing the Byzantines the Ottomans quickly began to establish themselves as a contending power in the Aegean. By the sixteenth century the Ottoman navy was victorious in a number of sea battles and occupied several North African ports, threatening European hegemony over the Mediterranean. It was not until the sixteenth century that the Europeans began to grow curious about their Ottoman neighbors, who had established themselves as a significant power intent on moving westward.

This curiosity generated an increase in European travel to the East. European countries, predominantly Britain and France, sent ambassadors to the court of the Sultan. In addition, individuals who had a personal interest in Ottoman culture traveled to Istanbul independent of a political purpose. Some of these travelers stayed for a brief time, others indefinitely, learning the language and in some cases attempting to adopt an Ottoman identity. Those who visited Istanbul wrote back to their mother countries in what is popularly referred to as travel literature. Their diaries were published serially in newspapers or compiled into books that were eagerly read by the public.[2] A trend of exoticism emerged in which Ottoman cultural aspects were commodified in Europe.

The most sought after Ottoman commodity was *kahve*, a thick, bitter drink made from boiling berries. Although European travelers were repulsed by the taste of coffee, they were fascinated by the space in which it was served. European travel literature extensively discussed the coffeehouse: the physical space in which Muslim men gathered to drink coffee and engage in conversation. Within the coffeehouse Europeans found civilized

[2] Travel literature is essential to ascertaining the activities within the coffeehouse as they were oral and nature and rarely recorded. Ottoman historians wrote only briefly on the coffeehouse, perhaps because it was so commonplace.

people who emphasized individuality, debate, and creativity; qualities that contradicted their expectations. Many Europeans anticipated a barbaric race, an assumption created to cope with the tangible Ottoman threat to European supremacy. The civilized nature of the coffeehouse fundamentally challenged European perceptions of the Ottoman Empire.

Although the Europeans believed coffee to be "the most universal drink"[3] to the Ottomans, the Turks were merely the first to commercialize the beverage. Istanbul was a center of cultural integration and coffee drew from multiple cultural traditions. Coffee beans were grown in the Arabian Peninsula outside of the Ottoman Empire, brewed within Istanbul, and sipped from exotic cups known as *china*. As a port city situated within the confluence of Mediterranean trade, Istanbul imported many goods available to the general public. However, none of these edibles had significant social ramifications, making coffee a unique commodity. The inherent properties of Turkish coffee – its bitterness, thickness, and temperature – led to the need for a specific space in which to consume the beverage, known as the coffeehouse. The layout of the coffeehouse's interior both grew out of and perpetuated the sedentary consumption of the drink. The need for a designated space to consume coffee created social cohesion and provided the opportunity to explore intellectual endeavors without the confines of social stratification, designating the coffeehouse as an Ottoman social sphere.

[3] John Chamberlayne, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, Tobacco: Collected from the Writings of the Best Physicians and Travelers* (Printed for Christopher Wilkinson at the Black Boy over against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleetstreet, 1682), 3.

The Mythology and Origins of Coffee

Before discussing the role of coffee in the development of the Ottoman social sphere, it is important to clarify that coffee was neither traditionally Ottoman nor native to the Empire.[4] However, the exact origin of the berry is difficult to discern due to the mythology surrounding its discovery. The Turk Abu al-Tayyib al-Ghazzi suggested a biblical origin, "in which Solomon appears as the first to make use of coffee."[5] After brewing the beans Solomon presented the drink to the angel Gabriel who used the brew to cure the sick.[6] This myth not only associated the origin of coffee with the divine, it also conceived of the idea that coffee itself possessed holy qualities.

In an alternate myth, a sheikh from the order of Shazili was said to have discovered coffee in Moka[7] in 1258 C.E. The sheikh had been without food or water for many days. After discovering the coffee plant he boiled the beans and drank the brew, which sustained him until he found food three days later. After observing the restorative qualities of the boiled beans the sheikh gave the drink to his severely ill friends[8]. In merely eight days the coffee cured their illnesses.[9] The legend of the sheikh focused on the unique properties of the bean whose revitalizing qualities transcended human understanding.

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[4] John Chamberlayne, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, Tobacco: Collected from the Writings of the Best Physicians and Travelers* (Printed for Christopher Wilkinson at the Black Boy over against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleetstreet, 1682), 3.

[5] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 12.

[6] Defne Cizakca, *Long Nights in Coffeehouses: The Effects of Place on Ottoman Storytellers* (University of Glasgow), 3.

[7] The city of Moka is located in present-day Yemen.

[8] Their illness is described as "scabbies", a highly contagious disease of the flesh.

[9] Defne Cizakca, *Long Nights in Coffeehouses: The Effects of Place on Ottoman Storytellers* (University of Glasgow), 3.

The most common coffee myth was devoid of divine influence or miraculous recoveries. Instead, the myth told "…of the shepherd who noticed the uncommon vigor of his sheep after they had just grazed on the plant."[10] In their natural form, without being brewed, the berries had a noticeable effect on animals as well as humans. Each of the myths surrounding coffee emphasized its unusual properties which added to its allure. In some cases these powers were associated with the divine and thus coffee's effects reached beyond human comprehension. The Turks did not seek to logically account for these enigmatic qualities; rather they accepted such supernatural origins which served to perpetuate coffee's mythical appeal.

The most common and perhaps most accurate explanation accepted by historians today is that coffee originated from the Sufi orders of Yemen where caffeine was essential to religious practice.[11] Sufis were an untraditional sect of Islam whose methods were seen as erratic and profane to both the Sunnis and Shiites. As opposed to practicing the structured prayer indicative of traditional Islamic sects, the Sufis consumed narcotics and danced fitfully to demonstrate their devotion to Allah. Such a practice required the consumption of a drug that could sustain them for many days. The Sufis lived on the fringes of Ottoman society and coffee's connection to their orders stirred speculation. Kâtib Celebi, the famous Ottoman historian, described coffee's first users as "Certain sheiks, who lived with their dervishes in the mountains of Yemen, used to crush and eat their berries, which they called *qalb wabūn*, […] a cold dry food, suited to the ascetic life and

[10] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 12.
[11] Ibid.

sedative of lust."[12] Celebi noted coffee's connection with social outcasts and the need to repress the desire to sin. Although Ottoman coffee struggled with its Sufi association, the Sufi concept of developing a bond over a cup of coffee remained an inherent quality of the beverage. Two men recognized the commercial potential of coffee's cohesive abilities and harnessed it into the development of the coffeehouse.

After the coffee plant was extracted from the Sufi lodges and brought to Istanbul by traders, two Syrians merchants named Hakam and Shams opened the first coffeehouse in the Ottoman capital in 1555.[13,14] Ottoman historian Ibrahimi Pechevi documented that the two men opened a shop in the district of Tahtalkale.[15] Ottoman sources described Tahtalkale as being a commercially impoverished district that was soon to be invigorated by the revenues of the coffeehouse.[16] However, the beverage was served in many locations before permanently settling within the coffeehouse. By exploring these locations it is apparent that the coffeehouse was successful due to its layout and integration into the streets of Istanbul.

Coffee in the Commercial Sphere

After coffee's arrival in Istanbul, the commercial sale of the beverage manifested into three distinct modes of operation. The first was the coffee stall, an experiment in

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[12] Kâtib Celebi *The Balance of Truth* trans. G L Lewis (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1609), 60.
[13] Ibid, 73.
[14] This date is recognized as both 1554 and 1555 due to the differing dates on the Islamic calendar.
[15] Bernard Lewis, *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 132-133.
[16] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 72.

takeout coffee.[17] Coffee stalls served meandering locals in markets throughout Istanbul. Customers walked up to the portable booth or coffee was delivered to various places within the market. Transporting the hot drink around a crowded bazaar required "hustling through the streets and alleys carrying cups and single-serving pots in a tray, usually suspended at three points along its circumference by chains or a sort of frame."[18] An engraving entitled *Vendeur de caffé par les rues* by Jean Baptiste van Moor from the seventeenth century featured a single coffee vendor (see Appendix Four). Baptiste's painting depicted a tray secured around the vendor's waist which held extra cups and a small burner with which to brew the coffee. The vendor would pour a pot of coffee into traditional *china* cups and deliver them to customers.[19] The difficulty of distributing the product to the customer resulted in the coffee stall's decline, yet the beverage remained in high demand. Coffee's success and integration into Ottoman culture required accessibility.

Coffee's next form of distribution occurred in the coffee shop. The coffee shop was essentially a large coffee stall lacking portable features. Patrons could order from a window and sit on "the high stoop that stuck out from the stall, or on a few benches inside the narrow confines of the shop."[20] Sitting on a stoop only served to isolate customers and limited seating only allowed few patrons to use the shop at one time. A layout that promoted the social aspects of coffee was necessary for its success.

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[17] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 80.
[18] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 80.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid, 81.

Coffee required a larger area in which to gather and a layout that encouraged conversation and community so customers would remain in the shop. With a spacious interior consisting of a single room, the coffeehouse fulfilled these demands. Because coffee was the constant component in the coffee stall, coffee shop, and coffeehouse, the layout of the coffeehouse can be attributed to its success over other venues. Whereas the coffee stall and coffee shop struggled to remain in Istanbul, the coffeehouse was immediately popular. Swedish traveler Mouradgea D'Ohsson described over six-hundred coffeehouses existing in Istanbul in the 1570s, only fifteen years after coffee first arrived in Istanbul.[21]

The coffeehouse consisted of a single large room which served as a place of preparation as well as consumption.[22] The only seating was a large cushioned bench around the perimeter which encouraged strangers to sit in close proximity and thus converse (see Appendix One). Patrons could partake in intimate conversations or focus on something in the middle of the room, such as a speaker or an artistic centerpiece. The French traveler Jean Thévenot described some coffeehouses as having an area outdoors which featured "benches of masonry, with mats on them, where [customers] can sit who wish to be out in the open air and watch the passers-by."[23] Outdoor spaces allowed for cohesion with the bustling streets. Patrons were not isolated from the urban atmosphere; rather they were fully integrated into the metropolitan landscape of Istanbul. The coffeehouse's presence on the city streets not only added versatility, it demonstrated that

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[21] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 81.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

the coffeehouse was a prominent destination worth showcasing. In addition to indoor and outdoor seating, the coffeehouse became more versatile by accommodating both a daytime and nighttime crowd. In order to serve individuals during the evening hours, large lamps were strung across the ceiling.[24] Patrons gathered in coffeehouses on summer nights when the weather was pleasant or "in Ramadan, when many would choose to break their fasts with a cup or two."[25] Thus, the coffeehouse remained popular regardless of the time of day.

Although coffeehouses shared similar layouts their locations within the Ottoman capital influenced the quality of their design. Within the wealthiest districts a new class of coffeehouse emerged: the grand coffeehouse. European traveler Dufour described grand coffeehouses as being located in the "most important places in town."[26] An engraving by Antoine Melling in 1831 titled *Interieur d'un café pablique sur la place de Tophane* depicted the intricate interior architecture of a grand coffeehouse (see Appendix Two). Assuming the engraving is to scale, the ceilings were at least twenty-five feet high.[27] In addition, the ceilings and walls were intricately coffered in copper, which was a discernible sign of wealth in the sixteenth century. Floor to ceiling windows covered the entire wall of the shop and overlooked the Sea of Marmara. In the engraving, patrons are situated around the room on a single upholstered bench facing a fountain. Coffee is brewed in the foreground in sight of the customers.[28] In his engraving Melling revealed the typical features of the coffeehouse such as the bench circling the perimeter with the addition of more sophisticated décor. The goal of the grand coffeehouse was "to create a park or

[24] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 82.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid, 81.
[27] Ibid plate 7
[28] Ibid.

garden-like atmosphere, to surround the patron with refreshing sights and sounds unlike those of either the city or the desert."[29] Thus, the grand coffeehouse created a new domain that served as an escape from daily life. Unlike middle class coffeehouses which allowed patrons to interact with individuals on the streets, the grand coffeehouse sought to eliminate any urban associations. Melling's engraving offers a glimpse into the upper-class grand coffeehouses and details the specific layouts found in coffeehouses regardless of their quality.

Whereas the grand coffeehouse flourished in wealthier districts, the beverage remained successful in working-class neighborhoods, even near the workplace. An engraving by William Bartlett titled *Coffee Kiosque on the Port* depicts different architectural qualities while featuring a similar layout (see Appendix Three). This waterside café lacked high ceilings and windows and was in fact without walls. Although this coffeehouse was not lavish, it continued to serve the same purpose as the grand coffeehouse. Lanterns hung from the ceilings to accommodate a nighttime crowd. Customers drank coffee on benches around the perimeter and conversed with one another while enjoying a view of the water. The Ayasofya mosque, an iconic feature of the Ottoman capital, is displayed in the background, suggesting that the coffeehouse was similarly a symbol of Turkish culture.[30] Although the seaside coffeehouse was an outdoor space with fewer amenities, it continued to serve coffee and foster a sense of community within the public space.

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[29] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 81.
[30] Ibid.

Regardless of where coffee was served – in the grand coffeehouse, a seaside café, or in a middle-class neighborhood – the drink quickly became an important component of Ottoman culture. Augier Ghislain de Busbecq[31], who was living in Istanbul the year the first coffeehouse was opened, reported that coffee was so popular it caught the attention of the Sultan. Sultan Süleyman was so impressed by the beverage that he appointed a *kahvecibasi*, or chief coffee-cook, to his permanent staff.[32] After Süleyman created the position, it became traditional for a Sultan to appoint a personal coffee-cook.[33] When assuming leadership, Sultans constructed physical structures that would serve as reminders of their power after their lifetime. Often expressed in the form of a mosque or *madrasa*[34], the most famous of these displays of power was the Blue Mosque commissioned by Sultan Ahmed in the 17th century.[35] After the introduction of coffee to Istanbul, building a grand coffeehouse became one of the first constructions commissioned by the Sultan in newly conquered territories to demonstrate the civility of their rule.[36] Sultans built coffeehouses in Istanbul and throughout the Ottoman Empire as an expression of a fundamentally Turkish symbol.

The Properties of Coffee

Istanbul imported other consumables such as tobacco, opium, tea, and chocolate, yet none of these goods met with the same success as coffee. Whereas coffee necessitated a designated space for its consumption, other commodities could be consumed portably or

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[31] Busbecq (1522-1592) was the ambassador of Ferdinand I to the court of Sultan Süleyman.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Religious schools often affiliated with mosques.
[35] Jennifer Webster, "The Ottomans and Europe" (lecture, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, June 27, 2013).
[36] Markman Ellis, *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 13.

within the domestic sphere. Ottoman historian Ralph Hattox attributes coffee's popularity to the fact that "Coffee demands that you take your time."[37] Understanding Hattox's meaning requires descriptive accounts of how the drink was served within the coffeehouse. Englishman George Sandys explained that the Turks enjoyed their coffee "as hot as they can suffer it: black as soote, and tasting not much unlike it."[38] Although Sandys stated his dislike for the beverage, his report is worth mentioning as it reveals that coffee was brewed to be both bitter and hot. Other European accounts were consistent with Sandys' report that coffee was served scalding hot. John Thévenot illustrated coffee as being "bitter and black, and has a kind of burnt taste: they all drink it sipping, for fear of scalding themselves; so that being in a coffeehouse one hears a pretty pleasant kind of sippling music."[39] Thévenot concluded that Turks drank their coffee slowly in order to avoid being burned. Coffee's scalding temperature resulted in a slow consumption within the coffeehouse.

Coffee's near-boiling temperature and bitter taste were not conducive to hurried consumption. Analyzing the brewing process reveals the manner in which coffee was served. Turkish coffee was ground into a fine powder that was added to water without being filtered. This created a thick, bitter sediment which was added to the bottom of the cup prior to serving[40]. Without the addition of milk, sugar, or spices, the bitter taste of coffee was too overwhelming to be consumed in a hurry. Not only did coffee's properties promote leisure consumption, they made it nearly impossible to transport the beverage.

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[37] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 88.

[38] Markman Ellis, *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 8.

[39] Jean de Thévenot, *Voyages and Travels Volume 3,* (Oxford University Press), 33.

[40] Each coffee cup measured around three ounces and contained about two table spoons of ground coffee. This resulted in a coffee to water ratio of approximately one to three.

Additionally, Coffee was served in three ounce ceramic cups. Filled to the brim with hot coffee, the furthest the cups could be carried was from the burner in the coffeehouse to a customer's seat. Coffee's temperature, bitter taste, and thick brew encouraged a slow consumption which required a separate space dedicate to the enjoyment of coffee. Other imported goods did not require such a specified mode of consumption.

Coffee was unique in that its near-boiling temperature and thick sediment confined drinkers to the coffeehouse. Other imported commodities were easily consumable within less tailored spaces. Individuals could use tobacco and opium[41] within a variety of shops as well as their own homes.[42] Chocolate and tea were also popular commodities. However, chocolate could be consumed in a matter of minutes and tea was not brewed hot enough to demand the consumer remain seated. In addition, tea was prepared by simply dropping a tea bag into hot water – an operation that could be completed in the domestic sphere without instruction. Coffee, on the other hand, was brewed in a specific pot called an *ibrīq* or c*ezve*. Properly preparing coffee hinged on the ability to keep the temperature high enough to produce a foam without boiling the brew. Once the water came to a boil the coffee was ruined and the process had to be repeated. In order to avoid boiling, coffee required constant attention and stirring with the entire process lasting about twenty minutes. Whereas tea and chocolate could easily be made or consumed within the home, coffee's unique preparation and specific supplies required the assistance of a coffee-cook found within the coffeehouse.

[41] Some coffeehouses allowed the use of tobacco, however tobacco use only accounted for a minor portion of coffeehouse customers. Tobacco and opium to some extent became more popular within the coffeehouses in the eighteenth century. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries both commodities were more likely to be found within the tavern.
[42] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).

The Appeal of Coffee

Although the Turks enjoyed their coffee within the coffeehouse, Europeans were less impressed with the taste. Their attempts to justify consuming the beverage reveal multiple applications for coffee independent of its taste. Living in Istanbul in 1601, George Manwaring explained, "they drinke [coffee] extreme hot; it is nothing toothsome, nor hath any good smell, but it is very wholesome."[43] An Englishman accustomed to sipping the subtle flavors of tea, Manwaring emphasized that coffee neither tasted nor smelled pleasant. Instead, he evaluated the drink's medicinal properties, describing it as wholesome. The attraction to coffee was due in part to its remedial endowments recognized by both the Turks and the Europeans.

John Chamberlayne cited a medical manual by a fellow Englishman Dr. Willis, who wrote on the therapeutic applications of Ottoman coffee. Chamberlayne summarized Dr. Willis's report, describing coffee as able to cure "headaches, dizziness, lethargies, and catarrhs[44]."[45] Chamberlayne contributed to Dr. Willis's analysis of coffee, reporting, "It is very famous in old obstructions, so that all the Egyptian and Arabian women, are observ'd to promote their monthly courses with Coffee, and to supple constantly of it all the time they are flowing."[46] Chamberlayne made the argument that coffee could be used as a form of birth control, suggesting that the drink was not restricted to men. Thévenot added that he found coffee drinking useful when he was required to stay up all night to complete a

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[43] Markman Ellis, *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 6.
[44] Congestion.
[45] John Chamberlayne, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, Tobacco: Collected from the Writings of the Best Physicians and Travelers* (Printed for Christopher Wilkinson at the Black Boy over against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleetstreet, 1682), 5.
[46] Ibid, 6.

task.[47] Coffee's medicinal properties were so extraordinary that Chamberlayne described Dr. Willis as sending "his Patients to the Coffee-House rather than to the apothecaries Shop."[48] Unable to comprehend coffee's notoriety, European travelers Sandys, Manwaring, Chamberlayne, and Thévenot believed coffee's benefit lay in medicinal purposes.

Other travelers added to the justification of coffee, claiming the drink had a distinct place within Ottoman cuisine. William Biddulph believed the Turks valued coffee because "they find to agree very well with them against their crudities and feeding on hearbs and rawe meats."[49] Coffee historian Markman Ellis suggests that Biddulph meant that "Coffee drinking […] is a necessary antidote to the diet of the Turks."[50] Travelers were familiar with Turkish cuisine, as they consumed Turkish foods when they were invited to dine with the sultan and high officials within the court. There they ate the highest quality food, however, this was not enough to leave a positive impression. Sandys described the upper-class Ottoman diet consisting merely of fish.[51] Though the upper-class would have had easier access to meat and seafood, their diet certainly featured more diversity. Sandys believed the lower classes "commonly feede on herbs, fruits, rootes, onions, garlick, a beastly kind of vupressed cheese that lie in a lump; hodgepodges made of flower, milke,

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[47] Jean de Thévenot, *Voyages and Travels Volume 3,* (Oxford University Press), 33.

[48] John Chamberlayne, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, Tobacco: Collected from the Writings of the Best Physicians and Travelers* (Printed for Christopher Wilkinson at the Black Boy over against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleetstreet, 1682), 5.

[49] William Biddulph in Markman Ellis, *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 5.

[50] Markman Ellis, *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 5.

[51] George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun an: Dom: 1610.: Fovre bookes. : Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of Ægypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and islands adjoining* (London: Fovre Books, 1610), 65.

and honey."[52] Sandys' report is accurate in that the lower classes ate more fruits and vegetables than meats, and this lack of protein may have been the cause for underwhelming many travelers. Sandys continued to say, "… the little flesh which they eat is cut into gobit, and either sod or toasted in a furnace. But I thinke there is more in London spent in one day then is in this Citie in twenty."[53] Sandys contrasted the small amount of meat consumed in Istanbul to the abundance of diverse foods within his home country. Like Sandys, many Europeans, accustomed to their respective cuisines, were unimpressed with Ottoman foods. These travelers believed that coffee was a means of introducing a bolder taste into a banal diet.

Due to their dislike of coffee Europeans sought to explain coffee's popularity outside of its taste. According to some European writers, a diet that presented less meat and more produce required the addition of a bold tasting beverage. Chamberlayne insisted, "Coffee is said to be very good for those that have taken too much Drink, Meat, or Fruit."[54] A less popular but still valid opinion held by Sandys, Biddulph, and Lithgow was that the Ottomans drank coffee because Islam forbid them from drinking wine.[55] According to these travelers a lack of a pleasurable beverage in alcohol required a similarly social drink. Building off of explanations in European accounts, coffee's taste, medicinal qualities, and its place in the Ottoman diet contributed to coffee's popularity within the coffeehouse, which quickly became a place of cultural significance.

[52] George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun an: Dom: 1610.: Fovre bookes. : Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of Ægypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and islands adjoining* (London: Fovre Books, 1610), 65.
[53] Ibid.
[54] John Chamberlayne, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, Tobacco: Collected from the Writings of the Best Physicians and Travelers* (Printed for Christopher Wilkinson at the Black Boy over against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleetstreet, 1682), 6.
[55] Markman Ellis, *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 5.

Coffee in the Public Sphere

Coffee's temperature, bitterness, thickness, and difficult brewing process were not the only factors that contributed to its consumption outside of the home. Dufour, writing in the 1600s, noted that the Turks "seldom took their coffee at home, preferring instead to frequent the coffee shop."[56] Drinking coffee in the domestic sphere meant consuming the beverage alone or with family, thus eliminating interaction or a sense of community. In the Sufi lodges, drinking a hot cup of coffee "emphasized the theme of brotherhood."[57] Although coffee had virtually been stripped of its association with the Sufis the idea of kinship remained. Coffee had the inherent ability to forge bonds between strangers, a task that could not be completed within the home.

Ottoman historian Kâtib Celebi suggested that the Turks had a "natural vivacity [which] prompts them to seek amusements out of doors. They frequent coffee-houses and markets and are fond of assembling in public meetings as often as possible."[58] According to Celebi, a Turk living in Istanbul, drinking coffee in a public space could be attributed to the inherent social nature of the Turkish people. Celebi contrasted this Turkish characteristic with Arabs, revealing, "What I have formerly said concerning the amusements of the inhabitants of the East, reflects the Arabians only in part. They are often obliged to take up with sedentary and domestic amusements."[59] Whereas the Turks were a social people

[56] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 73.
[57] Gwendolyn Collaco, "The Ottoman Coffeehouse: All the Charms and Dangers of Commonality in the 16th-17th Century," *Lights: The MESSA Quarterly* (2011), 62.
[58] Kâtib Celebi *The Balance of Truth* trans. G L Lewis (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1609), 223-224.
[59] John Chamberlayne, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, Tobacco: Collected from the Writings of the Best Physicians and Travelers* (Printed for Christopher Wilkinson at the Black Boy over against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleetstreet, 1682), 223-224.

Celebi explained that the majority of Arabs resided within the private sphere. Though Celebi presented a generalization with little supporting evidence, it is worth noting that coffeehouses were less popular in both the Persian Safavid Empire and the Arab Mamluk Empire.[60] In addition, Coffeehouses established by the Ottomans in former Mamluk territories were significantly less successful. The popularity of coffee and the public space that grew around the beverage were unique to the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish people living within the Empire.

Ottoman coffeehouses facilitated the disintegration of social constrictions, allowing customers to interact in a more relaxed environment. Hattox remarks that within the coffeehouse "The act of hospitality could now be transferred to a public place where one's responsibilities, and perhaps prestige, as host were more limited. This would imply a subtle shift in the relationship of host and guest, and a break, if only symbolic, with old values."[61] Hattox suggests that it was not the nature of the Turkish people but rather the dissolution of a social hierarchy that attracted Muslims to the coffeehouse. Within the coffeehouse men did not fulfill the roles of guest and host therefore their relationship could flourish on more common ground. The lack of a hierarchical guest-host relationship led to the disintegration of class divides within the confines of the coffeehouse.

[60] After the Ottoman overthrow and capture of the Mamluk Empire coffeehouses were introduced in Cairo. Though they were an Ottoman establishment attended solely by Muslims they were significantly less popular than coffeehouses in Istanbul.
[61] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 99.

Distinguishing the Coffeehouse from the Tavern

Before discussing the activities that occurred within the coffeehouse it is essential to distinguish it from other institutions that that existed within the public sphere. Ralph Hattox refers to the Ottoman coffeehouse as "a tavern without wine."[62] However, very few connections can be drawn between the two. The only similarity between the tavern and the coffeehouse was that both existed commercially within the public sphere. The tavern was not unique to the Near East as similar establishments were present in other cultures. The European travelers who visited Istanbul recognized taverns immediately and began to draw parallels. After visiting a tavern, Sandys remarked, "have they their Coffa-houses, which something resemble them."[63] Sandys was too eager to group the two enterprises and was therefore unable to recognize their distinct qualities. Taverns sold alcohol that was *haram*, or forbidden, in Islam. Whereas taverns sold an illegal beverage, coffeehouses were a safe place for Muslim men to gather.

The tavern served as a place to procure intoxicating beverages and socialize in a less civilized manner. Hattox explains that "…the tavern probably has a more heterogeneous clientele than the coffeehouse."[64] The tavern catered to the significant non-Muslim population of Istanbul, made up of Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. Whereas the tavern served those non-Muslims in Istanbul, coffeehouses were an exclusively Muslim

[62] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 79.
[63] George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun an: Dom: 1610.: Fovre bookes. : Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of Ægypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and islands adjoining* (London: Fovre Books, 1610), 66.
[64] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 96.

establishment.[65,66] Although the Ottomans had a more heterogeneous population than most European countries, religious divides were deeply rooted in the Quran. Historian Abraham Marcus explains that "Muslim, Christians, and Jews saw themselves as members of distinct communities organized around different beliefs. They were brought up to feel a moral superiority to the adherents of other creeds and a loyalty to their faith and coreligionists."[67] Although individuals of different faiths coexisted within the Ottoman capital their spiritual affiliations determined their social interactions. Marcus continues to explain that "Each person carried [their religious identity] as a social stamp, irrespective of personal piety and observance."[68] Marcus highlights that even those who were the least pious adhered to this social norm. Within Ottoman Istanbul religion segregated social groups which resulted in non-Muslims gathering in the taverns and Muslims residing within the coffeehouse.

Muslims and non-Muslims gathered in separate social spaces due to deep-rooted religious identities. The Ottomans subscribed to a superior Muslim identity which used a separate word to distinguish non-Muslims: *ahl al-dhimma*[69]. The social segregation of the *ahl al-dhimma* was due in part to their special treatment in the Ottoman Empire. Under the Ottomans all Muslim citizens were exempt from paying taxes, therefore the duty of funding the Empire fell on the non-Muslim community. In addition, the Ottomans functioned as a slave empire under the direction of the Quran which forbid the enslaving of Muslims. This

[65] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 96.
[66] Europeans were not regular customers at coffeehouses therefore they were allowed inside as a means of showcasing the Turkish tradition.
[67] Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 39.
[68] Ibid.
[69] أهل الذمة Arabic for "the people of protection".

meant that slaves and janissaries were exclusively taken from the *ahl al-dhimma* population, particularly Christian inhabitants. These religious divides pervaded class structure in Istanbul to the point that Muslims, regardless of their social standing, shared a common and perhaps superior place in society. Due to religious affiliation and the superior treatment the Muslims received under the Ottomans, the coffeehouse became a solely Muslim establishment in which the *ahl al-dhimma* were forbidden.

The *ahl al-dhimma* were expected to remain in the tavern, a seedy establishment with a reputation for violating the laws of the Quran. Hattox explains that within, "the tavern or gambling den… one went at the peril of one's soul, reputation, or perhaps life…"[70] The illicit activities that occurred within the tavern were not limited to wine and gambling, but included prostitution as well. A common misconception among European travelers was the presence of prostitutes within the coffeehouse. After visiting a coffeehouse George Sandys reported "…many of the coffa-men keeping beautiful boys, who serve as sales to procure them customers."[71] Sandys made the assumption that the apprentices serving the coffee were either prostituting themselves to customers or were engaged in a sexual relationship with their mentor. However, Sandys described a characteristic of the tavern and accidentally assigned this feature to the coffeehouse. Additionally, it is logistically impossible for coffeehouse to have practiced prostitution as it only consisted of one room that allowed for no privacy. Although Sandys wrote of prostitution occurring in the

[70] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 125.
[71] George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun an: Dom: 1610.: Fovre bookes. : Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of Ægypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and islands adjoining* (London: Fovre Books, 1610), 66.

coffeehouse, the coffeehouse presented more intellectually-oriented activities and the tavern offered more salacious affairs.

Whereas the tavern included the *haram* wine, forbidden gambling, and loose women, the coffeehouse was a more intellectual, Muslim-friendly space. Yusek described the atmosphere as, "an excellent place for a Muslim man to spend his time and socialize with others, because unlike taverns, coffeehouses create a public place, in which urban Muslim men can linger in; have excitement; play games without harming his social reputation."[72] In Ottoman Istanbul, taverns were the dirty places where non-Muslims resided. They contained many aspects forbidden in Islam and dwelling in such a place could endanger a customer's life. In contrast, the coffeehouse was a safe space where Muslims would not be tempted by forbidden pleasures. Muslim men could meet one another and share a permitted drink while enjoying intellectual entertainment and sharing their own creative explorations. The coffeehouse and tavern were both commercial endeavors but they catered to a different clientele divided by religious affiliation.

The Coffeehouse and Mosque

By providing entertainment that did not comply with the Quran the tavern was an exclusively non-Muslim location. While the mosque, like the coffeehouse, catered specifically to Muslims, the two spaces remained separate. The coffeehouse existed alongside the mosque as an independent entity that harnessed a new social function. Selma Ozocak noted a symbiotic relationship where the coffeehouse "functioned as an entertainment place for those who came to the nearby mosque and needed to be occupied

[72] A. Yusuf Yusek, *On Coffeehouses in the Lake Ottoman Empire* Bogazici University 3.

before and after prayer times."[73] The coffeehouse had a uniquely harmonious relationship with the mosque. Many Muslim men visited the mosque for prayer up to six times each day, sometimes as little as two hours apart. As opposed to traveling home, they were able to reside in the coffeehouse until the next prayer time. In addition, Ozocak reveals that "the coffeehouse was assigned to a pious endowment, *vakıf*, and thus it was also financially a part of it."[74] A *vakıf* was a public feature funded by a Muslim meant to serve as a testament to their faith. *Vakıfs* were required to promote a sense of community, and were usually found in the form of a mosque, *madrasa*, or fountain. As a *vakıf* the coffeehouse stood physically separate from the mosque and yet was ideologically tied to the Islamic tradition.

Although the coffeehouse and mosque existed symbiotically within the public sphere, their differing purposes created distinct institutions. Yusek remarks that the success of the coffeehouse can be attributed to "the prospect of a way of life that lay somewhere outside the basic need, such as mosque, home and place of business, in an area whose boundaries had not been drawn by society's code of morals."[75] Within many public institutions Muslims were confined by a severe social structure. The mosque required silence, a strict dress code, recitation, and a separation of the sexes. Before entering a mosque one was required to wash in ritual ablution, or *wudu*, a pious process meant to demonstrate respect to Allah. In the workplace men were required to carry out a specific duty, often one that had been expected of the family for generations. In the domestic sphere certain mannerisms were also expected, mostly revolving around family and the

[73] Gwendolyn Collaco, "The Ottoman Coffeehouse: All the Charms and Dangers of Commonality in the 16th-17th Century," *Lights: The MESSA Quarterly* (2011), 64.
[74] Ibid.
[75] A. Yusuf Yusek, *On Coffeehouses in the Lake Ottoman Empire,* Bogazici University 3.

proper roles of the sexes. The mosque, the workplace, and the domestic sphere were plagued by social obligations. Within the coffeehouse strict rules were less applicable and many classes were able to freely gather and exchange ideas.

Inside the Coffeehouse: The Coffeehouse as a Social Sphere

Prior to classifying the coffeehouse as a social sphere it is essential to define the social sphere and distinguish it from the public sphere. German sociologist Jürgen Habermas outlined the specific qualities. He claimed that within a social sphere individuals "behave neither like businessmen or professional people transacting private affairs, not like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy."[76] Within the social sphere individuals transcend their professional identity and loyalty to the state, allowing only the identity of the individual to remain. Habermas added, "Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion – that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions – about matters of general interest."[77] According to Habermas, within the social sphere individuals are able to express themselves creatively and exist without subscribing to a coherent ideology. The ability to assemble without restrictions excluded the mosque and the workplace, which existed exclusively within the public sphere. Both the mosque and workplace did not allow for unhindered social interaction. Instead, the coffeehouse was a "non-hierarchical sphere for cultural expression."[78] The

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[76] Jurgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: an Encyclopedia Article," *New German Critique* No. 3 (Autumn, 1974): 49.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Gwendolyn Collaco, "The Ottoman Coffeehouse: All the Charms and Dangers of Commonality in the 16th-17th Century," *Lights: The MESSA Quarterly* (2011), 61.

coffeehouse established an unprecedented space in which individuals were able to engage in conversation, share their own creative work, and partake in intellectual games which added a scholarly element to the coffeehouse.

The activities enjoyed within the coffeehouse were not new to the Ottomans. In fact, the coffeehouse can be seen as new location in which Ottoman traditions were expressed. Prior to the coffeehouse the recitation of poetry and the playing of games transpired in the *selamlık* within the domestic sphere. The Turkish word *selamlık* translates to "greeting" and was an area of the household reserved for housing male guests. Historian Defne Cizakca explains, "Whether rich or poor most households in Istanbul had a special room for accepting guests. It was in this room that dinner and refreshments would be served, politics discussed, intellectual opinions formed."[79] The role of the *selamlık* continued to exist within Ottoman culture but it was transferred from the private household into the public coffeehouse.

Similar to the *selamlık*, conversation played a key role in coffeehouse activities. The coffeehouse presented a safe space in which the exchange of ideas could take place. With seating only available around the perimeter of the shop, Turks had the opportunity to sit next to a stranger and converse. Hattox reveals that these conversations could be "serious or trivial, high-minded or base."[80] Patrons were free to have "…heated discussions on art, the sciences, or literature."[81] Whereas the mosque's sole purpose was religious devotion

[79] Defne Cizakca, *Long Nights in Coffeehouses: The Effects of Place on Ottoman Storytellers* (University of Glasgow), 3.
[80] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 100.
[81] Ibid, 101.

and the function of the workplace was to complete tasks to earn money, the leisure of the coffeehouse provided the opportunity to discuss subjects of a philosophical nature. Yusek explicates that the coffeehouse served as "an oral communication network running through rumors and gossip in order to spread news and information in society."[82] While some patrons may have harnessed the opportunity to debate scientific principles, others may have been interested in exchanging social prattle. Within the safe environment of the coffeehouse patrons were able to gather and speak on a variety of subjects. Without newspapers, pertinent social information was gathered and exchanged within the walls of the coffeehouse. Outside the confines of social convention, the coffeehouse became an arena of communal interaction that promoted both scholarly debate and the spread of rumors.

With seating bordering the walls of the coffeehouse, the spacious center served as an unofficial stage for ordinary men to engage in creative self expression. Ottoman historian Ibrahimi Pechevi, who attended the coffeehouse, explained "Some [patrons] read books and fine writings […] some brought new poems and talked of literature."[83] There was no schedule and no famous performers; rather, sharing poetry grew organically out of the conversations transpiring within the coffeehouse. Patrons seeking advice on their artistic exploits stood in the center of the room to submit to an audience. Pechevi's claim is further evidenced by an Ottoman miniature which depicts a man reciting his poetry to an attentive audience within the coffeehouse (see Appendix One). The success of this oral

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[82] A. Yusuf Yusek, *On Coffeehouses in the Lake Ottoman Empire*, Bogazici University, 4.

[83] Ibrahimi Pechevi in Bernard Lewis, *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 132-133.

tradition was due in part to the interactive environment of the coffeehouse in which creative expression was encouraged and criticism was welcomed.

Coffeehouses in Istanbul served as safe spaces for entertainment such as the recitation of poetry. However, the use of the open floor was not limited to laymen sharing their original aesthetic works; it was also commonly used by storytellers. Storytellers came from an old Ottoman tradition which found a new form of expression within the coffeehouse. Prior to the coffeehouse storytellers came in two forms: court entertainers and minstrels.[84] By definition court entertainers were confined to the Sultan's court and were only accessible to the nobility. Minstrels were similarly restricted to the rural outskirts of the Ottoman Empire and were inaccessible to those who lived in urban areas. Due to their locations, the stories of the court entertainers and minstrels had divergent themes: while the stories of court entertainers were humorous, minstrels told romantic legends saturated with love and heroics. Defne Cizakca argues that with the rise of the coffeehouse a new storyteller emerged, which she calls the urban storyteller. Unlike court entertainers and minstrels, the urban storyteller was accessible to anyone living in an urban environment where there might be a coffeehouse. The urban storyteller presented new stories and

> narrated traditional Turkish legends from *Kokogl* to *Dede Korkut*, funny real life occasions as well as stories with Islamic themes and the legends of local heroes,

[84] Defne Cizakca, *Long Nights in Coffeehouses: The Effects of Place on Ottoman Storytellers* (University of Glasgow), 5.

> Iranian legends, stories from 1001 Nights, Shiite and Sunni stories of saints and the histories of Ottoman sultans (the *Shahnama*).[85]

Urban storytellers within the coffeehouse presented more diverse stories that focused on Ottoman cultural aspects that were traditionally Turkish as well as Islamic-centric tales. Whereas the aim of the court entertainer was to illicit cheap laughs and the minstrel wove exaggerated, idealistic tales, the urban storyteller served a more sophisticated purpose. In addition, Cizacka illuminates that

> The most striking difference between coffeehouse storytellers and their fellow entertainers was their sense of history [...] One of the primary aims of the urban storyteller was to bring forth the past, while the minstrel was content with fictionalizing the present. In this sense, coffeehouses and their storytellers formed a continuity.[86]

Although the court entertainer and the minstrel both served their respective purposes within their locations, the coffeehouse developed its own storyteller to suit the establishment's urban, cerebral atmosphere while simultaneously contributing to the intellectual reputation of the coffeehouse.

Classic Ottoman pastimes transitioned from the private sphere to the metaphorical and literal stage of the coffeehouse. In addition to listening to oral composition, patrons could play a variety of games within the coffeehouse. In the lower right corner of the

[85] Defne Cizakca, *Long Nights in Coffeehouses: The Effects of Place on Ottoman Storytellers* (University of Glasgow), 5.
[86] Ibid.

Turkish miniature, customers are engaged in a game of chess (See Appendix One).[87] Sandys claimed of the Turks, "Of cards and dice they are happily ignorant; but at chess they will play all the day long: a sport that agreeth well with the sedentary vacancie; wherein not withstanding they avoid the dishonest hazard of money."[88] Sandys was sure to qualify that gambling never factored into coffeehouse games, which were played fairly and honestly. Like alcohol, gambling was *haram* in Islam and was therefore confined to the forbidden taverns. In addition to chess, backgammon was another common coffeehouse game. Unlike cards and dice, both chess and backgammon entailed strategy. Chess was a lengthy game for tacticians that required outsmarting the opponent by projecting multiple moves ahead. In addition, each chess piece held a unique characteristic which affected its ability to move across the board. The player had to be familiar with these features in order to play the game. Backgammon featured checkers and numbered die. The values shown on the die could be added up to move a single checker or strategically divided to make separate moves on multiple checkers. Playing backgammon required a knowledge of addition and division as well as the ability construct a strategy to move the checkers across the board. Although chess and backgammon were testaments to the coffeehouse's intellectual features, the need to understand mathematics may have excluded some patrons. Without gambling, the games played within the coffeehouse were more scholarly than those played within the tavern, supporting the idea that the coffeehouse promoted intellectual endeavors.

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[87] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).

[88] George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun an: Dom: 1610.: Fovre bookes. : Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of Ægypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and islands adjoining* (London: Fovre Books, 1610), 64.

Within the coffeehouse patrons were immersed in a safe atmosphere that allowed them to engage in a means of creative self expression through poetry. When poetry was not being recited urban storytellers recounted traditional Ottoman tales and sophisticated stories that catered to an academic audience. Customers were able to play games such as chess and backgammon that involved strategy without the *haram* gabling component. This wide range of stimulating coffeehouse activities were not confined to a specific class. Ottoman historian Ibramhimi Pechevi reported that there was no typical coffeehouse customer outside of the fact that they were only Muslims and predominantly male. He explained:

> It reached such a point that all kinds of unemployed officers, judges and professors all seeking preferment, and corner-sitters with nothing to do proclaimed that there was no place like [the coffeehouse] for pleasure and relaxation, and filled it until there was no room to sit or stand. It became so famous that, besides the holders of high offices, even great men could not refrain from coming there.[89]

According to Pechevi men of many professions, including officers, judges, and professionals, all frequented the coffeehouse. He went on to explain that great men who were in the service of the Sultan were also among the coffeehouse crowd. However, the coffeehouse did not solely cater to bureaucratic officials. European traveler James Douglas wrote that "The Muderis, or Professors of Law, and other Sciences; and, in fine, Persons of all Ranks and others of the first Quality, were seen to go openly to the Coffee House; and as this serv'd to increase the Reputation, so it multiplied the number of them to too great an Excess."[90] In addition to high ranking officials in the court of the Sultan, academics were also known to attend the coffeehouse. The attendance of upper-class citizens is not

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[89] Ibrahimi Pechevi in Bernard Lewis, *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 133.
[90] Markman Ellis, *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 13.

surprising, as many popular institutions throughout history have been restricted to the top tier of society. The Ottoman coffeehouse differed in that all classes of Muslim men, regardless of their social standing, were welcomed.[91] Collaco suggests that the Sufi idea of "brotherly cohesion alters to social cohesion, meaning that class distinctions among Muslims had little bearing on their interactions at the coffeehouse."[92] Muslims were able to sit next to a stranger and either converse, enjoy poetry, or share in a game of chess. Their interactions did not require the knowledge of class association. In general, by sharing in a cup of coffee and partaking in the activities of the coffeehouse social stratification dissolved to promote the greater purpose of community.

Conclusion

The development of the Ottoman social sphere began with a cup of coffee. The drink was served thick, bitter, and near-boiling. Such a drink could not be carried far away from the location where it was brewed but required the customer to enjoy the beverage in close proximity in a seated position. After being introduced to Istanbul in 1555, coffee was immediately popularized. Turks experimented with ways of presenting the beverage in the form of the coffee stall and the coffee shop. However, neither of these establishments harnessed the full potential of the drink. The coffee stall involved transporting the beverage around highly populated areas, a task that proved too difficult for the stall to remain in business. The coffee shop eliminated transportation but its small size restricted

[91] It is important to note that in order to reside within the coffeehouse, customers needed to be able to afford the coffee. It logically follows that the grand coffeehouses, in an effort to support their more sophisticated interiors, charged more for the beverage and were thus inaccessible to those who could not afford it.
[92] Gwendolyn Collaco, "The Ottoman Coffeehouse: All the Charms and Dangers of Commonality in the 16th-17th Century," *Lights: The MESSA Quarterly* (2011), 62.

its customer capacity. The coffeehouse proved successful by constructing one large room with seating confined to the perimeter.

Coffeehouses appeared in neighborhood of various demographics, with six-hundred existing in Istanbul just fifteen years after coffee's introduction to the Ottoman capital. Grand coffeehouses were prominent in wealthier districts and boasted more amenities, whereas more humble houses were established along the waterfront near the workplace. Although these institutions differed in quality, their design remained constant as each coffeehouse featured perimeter seating and a single, large room. The layout of the coffeehouse both grew out of the need to consume the beverage in a sedentary manner and promoted the social and traditional Turkish activities within the coffeehouse. The coffeehouse became so symbolically Turkish that it attracted the attention of Sultan Süleyman, who created the permanent position of *kahvecibasi*, or coffee cook, in his royal court. Süleyman began the tradition of Sultans founding coffeehouses when they conquered new territories to symbolize the reverence of intellect in Turkish culture.

Coffee's allure was not limited to its taste. Ottoman and European doctors claimed the drink could be used as a remedy against many illnesses. In fact, the mythology of coffee focused on its unusual effects on the body which were often associated with the divine. Ottoman and European sources claimed that coffee was useful in increasing energy, sustaining the drinker without food or water, and even being used as a form of birth control. Other European sources argued that coffee was a means of diversifying the bland Ottoman diet. Coffee's appeal can be attributed to a combination of its taste, medicinal

properties, and the institution of the coffeehouse that flourished as a direct result of the beverage.

The coffeehouse arrived in Istanbul when three other establishments dominated the public sphere: the workplace, the tavern, and the mosque. The coffeehouse remained separate from these domains and served a new purpose. The workplace demanded specific tasks and workers were often born into their professions, leaving no freedom of choice and little means of social mobility. The tavern was exclusively attended by the *ahl al-dhimma* who were religiously, and therefore socially, distinct from the Ottoman Muslim community. The mosque, though a common place for Muslims to gather, was socially restrictive as well. The coffeehouse allowed patrons to transcend their identities linked to the workplace and the mosque, allowing creative self expression. Because the coffeehouse did not require a subscription to a specific social background, social standing was of little importance within its walls. As a result, the coffeehouse emerged as a social sphere in Ottoman Istanbul.

The activities within this social sphere supported its desegregation. Muslim men were free to interact on multiple levels with those of differing social classes. Within the coffeehouse traditional Turkish pastimes converged outside of the domestic sphere. The seating around the perimeter of the shop encouraged patrons to converse with friends or strangers on subjects both scholarly and communal. With seating confined to the perimeter, the floor of the coffeehouse remained open. This unsanctioned stage provided the opportunity for men to recite poetry which was then offered up for criticism. The open floor of the coffeehouse was also used for storytelling. Within the coffeehouse a new type of storyteller materialized: the urban storyteller that uniquely recounted traditional

Ottoman tales and focused on the past. In a more relaxed fashion, games such as chess and backgammon were also provided. These games were strategy based and enjoyed without the *haram* hazards of gambling or cheating.

Unlike other public establishments throughout history, the coffeehouse was open to all classes provided they were able to pay for the coffee. The establishment of the Ottoman social sphere dissolved social loyalties and allowed patrons to focus solely on coffee and the affairs within the coffeehouse. The coffeehouse's success as a social sphere was due to its acceptance of all classes of people, its coexistence with other public institutions, and the opportunity it provided for patrons to express themselves. Traditional Turkish activities manifested themselves it new forms within the establishment. Coffee and the coffeehouse became fundamentally Turkish symbols that conveyed the intellectual focus of the Ottoman Empire which was available to all Muslims regardless of their social position in society.

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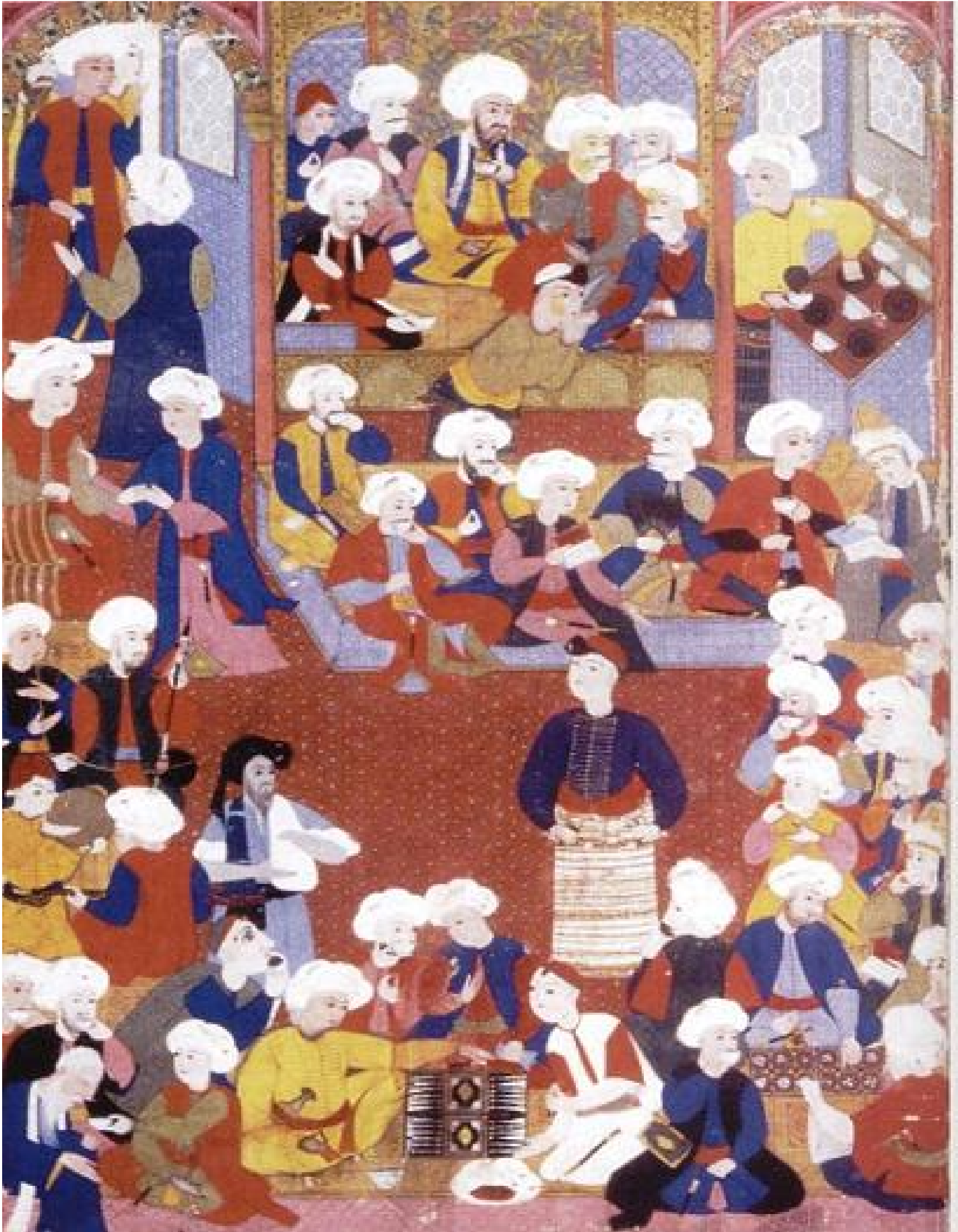
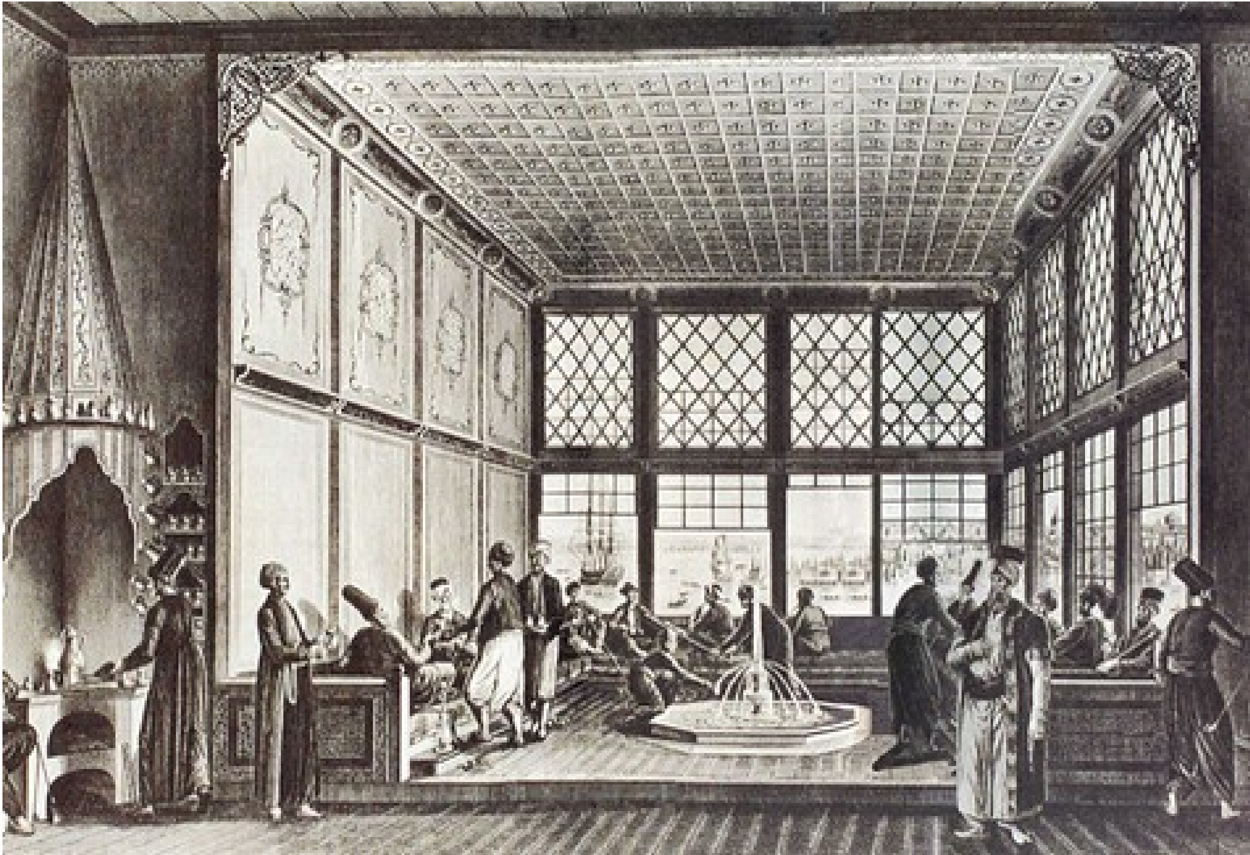
Appendix One: 16th Century Turkish Miniature



Appendix Two: Grand Coffeehouse



Appendix Three: Waterside Café

Appendix Four: Single Coffee Vendor