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Coffee as a Global Beverage before 1700

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Abstract

Coffee first appeared in world history in the middle of the fifteenth century, making its debut in the Middle East and diffusing to Europe during the seventeenth century. However, before colonial coffee appeared on the world market in the eighteenth century, coffee was produced in a very restricted area—Ethiopia and Yemen—and therefore, the amount of coffee on the world market was initially limited. In this article, I will discuss why coffee came to be drunk globally despite its limited production by examining the production, trade, and consumption of coffee prior to the eighteenth century.

My conclusion is that the reason coffee became a “global beverage” before 1700 was because of the prior existence of a global trading network created by Indian Ocean traders. The network had long carried spices from east to west, and its existence facilitated the coffee trade and consequent culture prior to the eighteenth century, when the production of coffee expanded to other areas. The fact that coffee had already become a global beverage before 1700 led to the proliferation of a coffee drinking culture after colonial coffee appeared on the world market in the eighteenth century.

Introduction

Coffee first appeared in world history in the middle of the fifteenth century, making its debut in the Middle East and diffusing to Europe during the seventeenth century. However, before colonial coffee appeared on the world market in the eighteenth century, coffee was produced in a very restricted area—Ethiopia and Yemen—and therefore the amount of coffee on the world market was initially limited.

There are many studies dealing with coffee. They include the encyclopedic researches by W. H. Ukers and C. van Arendonk [Ukers 2007; van Arendonk 1954–2004]. There are also historical and cultural explorations, such as É. Geoffroy, who examines the origin of the coffee drinking habit [Geoffroy 2001], and M. Tuchscherer and A. K. Rafeq, who discuss the diffusion of coffee in the Middle East [Tuchscherer 2001, 2003; Rafeq 2001]. A. Raymond and N. Hanna study the merchants who engaged in the coffee trade [Raymond 2001; Hanna 1998, 2001], and R. S. Hattox analyzes the discussions of Islamic scholars (*‘ulamā’*) over the validity of coffee drinking [Hattox 1985]. From an archeological viewpoint, M. Kawatoko analyzes the style of coffee-drinking based on his excavations in the Sinai Peninsula [Kawatoko 2001]. As to coffee’s role in the world economy, C. G. Brouwer, H. Becker, and N. Um examine the trade that took place at Mocha, the most famous port city for the coffee trade in the western coastal area of Yemen [Brouwer 1988, 1997, 2001; Becker 1979; Um 2009]. W. G. Clarence-Smith and S. Topik approach this issue from the viewpoint of globalization [Clarence-Smith and Topik 2003].

However, none of these studies has answered the question why coffee came to be drunk globally within such a short period despite the fact that its production area was limited and therefore its

export quantity small. Regarding the diffusion of coffee into Europe, S. W. Mintz claims that colonial food items such as sugar and coffee diffused as quickly as they did because they were “popular” luxuries [Mintz 1993], and B. Blondé asserts that tea and coffee diffused in Europe because their novelty as “hot drinks” essentially transformed European culture [Blondé 2009]. These discussions, however, address the diffusion of coffee after the introduction of colonial coffee in the eighteenth century, when the quantity available and lower prices were sufficient to explain its burgeoning prevalence.

In this article, I will consider various aspects of coffee’s history before the eighteenth century, such as production, trade, and consumption, in order to answer the question why coffee came to be drunk globally before 1700. Although its production area was limited to Ethiopia and Yemen, merchant ships went there from Egypt, Oman, Iran, India, and Europe. The style of consumption of coffee varied from place to place, but the global proliferation of the coffee drinking habit occurred over a short period of around two hundred years. For my analysis, I use historical Arabic sources such as *‘Umdat al-Ṣafwa fī Ḥill al-Qahwa*, an article about coffee written by ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazīrī (fl. 965/1558) [al-Jazīrī 1973], *Bahjat al-Zaman fī Ḥawādith al-Yaman* (published under the title *Yawmīyat Ṣan‘ā’ fī al-Qarn al-Ḥādī ‘Ashar*), a chronicle of Yemen written by Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn (1035/1625–1100/1688) [Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn 1996], and *Sīrat al-Ḥabasha*, a travelogue written by a Yemenite ambassador to Ethiopia, al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-Ḥaymī (fl. 1067/1656) [Donzel 1986]. I also use a journal written by Pieter van den Broecke (1585–1640), a Dutch merchant in the service of the Dutch East India Company (Dutch Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, hereafter VOC) [Beckingham 1951; van den Broecke 1989]. Some travelogues written by Europeans such as Carsten Niebuhr (1733–1815), a German geographer who visited Yemen during 1762–1763 as a member of the Royal Danish Arabia Expedition, and John Lewis Burckhardt (1784–1817), who was born in Lausanne and visited Jidda in 1814, were also informative for my research; although they were written after 1700, they provide significant information relating to coffee cultivation and its trade that enables us to surmise certain conditions that must have been in place before 1700 [Niebuhr 1994; Burckhardt 2006]. The local powerholder, the Zaydi imam, expelled the Ottoman military force from Yemen in 1636, ousting it from the city of Mocha, and ruled the whole land of Yemen until the nineteenth century. In addition, the VOC was established in 1602, and began trading in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Peninsula. I will examine the diffusion and evolution of coffee during this transitory stage of world history.

1. Diffusion of Coffee in the World

Coffea arabica, which is one of the original coffee trees and the most popular globally, is of Ethiopian origin, and the custom of coffee drinking was brought to Yemen at some unknown date. According to Hattox, the historical sources that exist concerning when the Yemenite people started to drink coffee suggest that the custom began in the first half of the fifteenth century. The Islamic mystics (*ṣūfī*), especially of the Shādhilīya Order, are said to have been the first coffee drinkers; they consumed it during their nightly religious exercises for its stimulant properties [Hattox 1985: 22–26]. Coffee is generally described as *qahwa* in the historical sources. The moral acceptability of drinking coffee was seriously disputed among Islamic scholars because they thought coffee had the same intoxicating effect as alcohol.¹

The custom of coffee drinking, however, soon spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula and, in the last decade of the fifteenth century, reached Mecca, and also Rayy in Iran. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazīrī, author of *‘Umdat al-Ṣafwa fī Ḥill al-Qahwa*, cites the words of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Makkī:

¹ For example, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazīrī (fl. 965/1558) discusses the legality of drinking coffee in his article *‘Umdat al-Ṣafwa fī Ḥill al-Qahwa*.

[The custom of drinking] *qishr* prevailed to Rayy, Mecca, and other places until the (h. 8)20s, but *qahwa* did not prevail until the last years of the ninth century (h.). [al-Jazīrī 1973: vol.1, 146-147].

Qishr is generally a drink made from the husk (hull, *qishr*) of coffee beans, and *qahwa* is made from their kernel (*bunn*, *ḥabb al-bunn*) [Hattox 1985: 20].² At any rate, we can say that some kind of coffee-based drink prevailed to Mecca, Rayy, and other cities by the fifteenth century. Then, in the first decade of the sixteenth century, it made its way to Cairo. Al-Jazīrī cites the words of Shihāb al-Dīn (b. ‘Abd al-Ghaffār):

In the first decade of this century (the tenth century h.), the people from Yemen and people from *al-ḥaramayn al-sharīfayn* (the two sacred cities, Mecca and Medina), who were living in the Yemenite dormitory of the Mosque (of al-Azhar), were drinking it. [al-Jazīrī 1973: 147]³

The habit of drinking coffee soon prevailed in Cairo, and it reached Damascus and Aleppo around 1540. It then spread to Istanbul, and in 1554–1555, the first two coffee houses began operating there; their number had risen to 500 by the end of the sixteenth century. The Ottoman sultan sometimes issued decrees closing the coffee houses because they were considered places where ruffians gathered and had a bad effect on public morality. During the latter part of the reign of Suleiman I (r. 1520–1566), an effort was made to restrict coffee consumption to the affluent, by imposing a tax [Tuchscherer 2003].

The first coffee house in England opened in Oxford in 1650. London soon followed suit. In France, coffee houses appeared in Marseille around 1671, and in Paris after that. The coffee-drinking culture soon made its way to other European cities such as Amsterdam, Vienna, Nuremberg, Hamburg, and Leipzig [Ukers 2007: 20–100]. Coffee thus diffused throughout Europe in only half a century, from the middle of the seventeenth century, even though the production of coffee was restricted to Ethiopia and Yemen.



Figure 1. Diffusion of Coffee in the World

² More specifically, the drink made from the husk (hull, *qishr*) of coffee beans is called *qishr*, or *qahwa al-qishrīya*, and the drink which is made from the kernel (*bunn*, *ḥabb al-bunn*) is called *qahwa*, or *qahwa al-bunnīya*. However, the drink made from both the kernel and the husk (they are roasted together) is also sometimes called *qahwa*. In Yemen, *qishr* has been more popular than *qahwa*. See Section 4.2. below.

³ He adds that Islamic mystics (*faqīr*) drank coffee when they were performing Islamic devotional exercises (*dhikr*).

2. Production

The coffee plant can only be cultivated under mild weather conditions where there is no possibility of frost, and where the rainfall is approximately 1,800 mm annually [Ukers 2007: 134]. The mountainous areas centering on Manākhā, located in the western part of Yemen and 1,100–2,200 meters above sea level, are the most suitable for coffee cultivation.

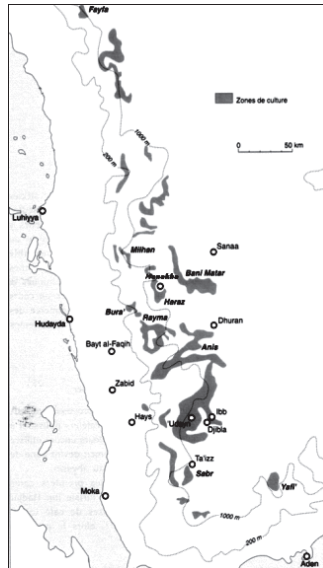


Figure 2. Areas of Coffee Cultivation in Yemen (Source: Becker 1979)

It is not known when coffee cultivation started in Yemen. Since, however, coffee had come to be drunk in many places in the Middle East by the mid sixteenth century, coffee cultivation must have started before then. Few historical sources describe how coffee plants were cultivated or give accurate records about how much coffee was produced in Yemen during the time under discussion. Arabic historical sources such as chronicles are not prolific with such details because their focus was describing the ruling dynasties. There are, however, some travelogues that give us information about coffee cultivation at the time. For example, Carsten Niebuhr's aforementioned travelogue gives us a vivid description of the cultivation of the coffee plant in the mountainous area of Yemen:

The tree which affords the coffee is well known in Europe; so that I need not here describe it particularly. The coffee-trees were all in flower at Bulgosa, and exhaled an exquisitely agreeable perfume. They are planted upon terraces, in the form of an amphitheatre. Most of them are only watered by the rains that fall; but some, indeed, from large reservoirs upon the heights; in which spring water is collected, in order to be sprinkled upon the terraces; where the trees grow so thick together, that the rays of the sun can hardly enter among their branches. We were told that those trees, thus artificially watered, yielded ripe fruit twice in the year: but the fruit becomes not fully ripe the second time: And the coffee of the second crop is always inferior in quality to that of the first. [Niebuhr 1994: 291].



Figure 3. A Coffee Plantation in Yemen (Photo taken by the author in 2010)

Though Niebuhr's visit to Yemen was in the eighteenth century, his account tells us that there was a kind of irrigation system in place. He also reports that the local people there were more accustomed to European people than anywhere else in Yemen, but were a little suspicious of the members of his expedition because they did not seem to be European merchants wanting to trade in the area [Niebuhr 1994: 294–295]. This testifies to the presence of European merchants in the interior of Yemen to purchase coffee. However, usually the coffee beans cultivated there were bought by middlemen, such as Arab or Indian merchants, then taken to Bayt al-Faqīh, a market trading in the coffee produced in the highlands, from which it was exported by both land and sea.

3. Trade

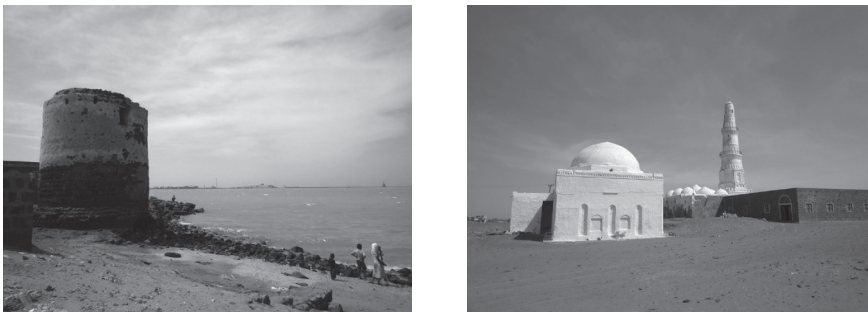
3.1. Trade Routes

After being cultivated and harvested in the mountains of Yemen, the coffee beans were taken to Bayt al-Faqīh. Niebuhr reports that it was in a favorable location for trade, because it was located half a day's journey from the coffee cultivation area, and a few days' journey to port cities such as al-Luhayya, al-Hudayda, and Mocha. He also said that merchants from Egypt, Syria, Iran, Ethiopia, India, Europe, and so on were attracted by the trade and came there [Niebuhr 1994: 272–273]. Coffee beans were purchased by such long-distance traders and exported from Yemen by two main routes.



Figure 4. Bayt al-Faqīh (Photo taken by the author in 2010)

One was the inland route leading to Mecca, Medina, Damascus, Aleppo, and Istanbul. This was the traditional trade route, used in ancient times for transporting frankincense and later for the spice trade. Caravans transported the cargo; risks along this route were few because it was less affected by adverse weather conditions. The other primary route was through seaports located in the western coastal area of the Arabian Peninsula. They included Jidda, al-Ḥudayda, al-Luḥayya, and the most important, Mocha (al-Mukhā). In that period, Mocha was not only a trading port but also a military port and port for pilgrimage. In 1647, the Yemenite ambassador, al-Ḥaymī, travelled to the African seaport Bayrūr from Ṣan‘ā’ by way of Mocha, and reported that there were many naval ships there, in fear of the Ottoman army, which was stationed at Sawākin and Maṣṣawa‘, seaports along the African east coast [Donzel 1986: 103]. In the chronicle of Yemen, there are also descriptions of the pilgrimage of Sultan Uzbek from Kashgar to Mecca; he landed at Mocha with 500 soldiers and servants in 1669 [Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn 1996: 183–184; Um 2009: 56]. From these descriptions, we know that Mocha played an important role in this era, not only commercially but also politically.



**Figure 5. The Port of Mocha and the Shrine of a Sufi Saint
(Photo taken by the author in 2010)**

In the middle of the seventeenth century, the Zaydi imam, Imam Mutawakkil (r. 1054/1644–1087/1676) ruled all the lands of Yemen. At the time, Yemen’s most important resources of revenue were land tax (*kharāj*), poll tax (*jizya*), and taxes collected at seaports. The details surrounding its tax system are not clear, due to a lack of financial sources, but the tax collected from trade must have been large. There are many extant descriptions about the trade carried out in Yemen’s seaports, as well as information on caravans from the seaports to inland cities such as Ṣan‘ā’, Ta‘izz, and others. The caravans were often plundered because they transported the tax monies collected at the seaports, in addition to the merchandise traded there. For example, the caravan that carried the tax monies collected at al-Shiḥr, another of Yemen’s major port cities, was plundered in 1080/1669–1670 [Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn 1996: 187].

3.2. Traders

The coffee trade attracted merchants from many places. They came to Yemen to buy coffee beans and other merchandise. Hanna examines the trading activity of an Egyptian merchant, Ismā‘īl Abū Taqīya (d. 1624), and says that the Egyptian economy experienced a resurgence from the latter half of the sixteenth century until the first half of the seventeenth, after a serious economic decline in the late Mamluk period. The commodities that supported its revival were agricultural products such as wheat, rice, coffee, and sugar, and textile products such as flax fabrics. Merchants like Abū Taqīya utilized the network constructed by the former *kārimī* merchants and carried many products, including coffee, to cities in the Ottoman Empire and Europe. Abū Taqīya was given the title *shāh*

bandar al-tujjār, which means “the leader of the merchants,” because of his commercial success [Hanna 1998].

Merchants who participated in the Indian Ocean trade often had trading bases in several large cities, among which were Cairo, Jidda, Mocha, Aden, and Muscat. They varied in ethnic background—Arab, Indian, Persian, and so on—but they did not belong to a certain country in any sense, and conducted commercial activities for their own profit. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn describes an event that occurred in 1089/1678:

In the sea, he (Sulṭān b. Sayf I; ruler of Ya‘rubids in Oman, r. 1059/1649–1091/1680) spread his power over the coastal area of Yemen and plundered the property of Muslims. This situation continued for a few years, and as a result, merchants who had their commercial bases in al-Hasa, ‘Ajam, Hind, and other cities suffered huge damage, and the coffee supply route was cut. Because of this situation, no merchants departed from their port cities to Yemen. [Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn 1996: 340]

He also describes how Sulṭān b. Sayf I cut the trading route between Basra, India, and Yemen. From this description, we can guess that there was a huge commercial network in the Indian Ocean, and through this network, the coffee trade was conducted by merchants who came from Arabic regions, Iran, India, and so on. As Niebuhr reports, European merchants tried to enter this network because of its significant profits. They even tried to buy the coffee beans directly from the producers without going through the middlemen and merchants who traditionally engaged in Indian Ocean trade, but their efforts were in vain. As Brouwer discusses in his study, the VOC tried to enter this commercial net-work in the middle of the seventeenth century, and actually made a certain amount of progress, but the results were not sufficient to sustain a long-term position within the existing network. The VOC could not win in a price war with the traditional merchants who had constructed the Indian Ocean commercial network [Brouwer 1988, 2001]. Thus, they decided to grow coffee themselves, leading to the successful cultivation of coffee in Sri Lanka after 1690, and in Java in 1699 [Ukers 2007: 39]. This was the beginning of colonial coffee, which eventually assumed a significant role in the world market.

4. The Adaptation of Coffee

4.1. Consumers

There was a difference in consumer between the Middle East and Europe. As mentioned in Section 1 above, the habit of drinking coffee was originally linked to the Islamic mystics. However, as many ordinary people participated in their nightly religious exercises, the habit was soon disseminated among the general population, but coffee was still basically consumed in religious contexts until the beginning of the sixteenth century. Al-Jazīrī reports an incident that occurred in Mecca in 1511, in which the people who gathered at the Sacred Mosque after Friday prayer drank coffee, sharing a large bowl of it, sitting in a circle, and this led to a controversy among Islamic scholars over the moral validity of drinking coffee [al-Jazīrī 1973: vol.1, 158–160; Hattox 1985: 30–38]. When the coffee drinking custom reached Cairo, it is said that the first people to adopt it were Yemenite students who were studying at al-Azhar. However, after that time, people began to drink coffee outside of religious contexts, and a coffee house (*maqḥā*) opened in Cairo. After that, the consumption of coffee became popular in Damascus, Aleppo, and Istanbul. In Istanbul, a coffee house opened in the mid sixteenth century, only about forty years after the controversy over the validity of drinking coffee in Mecca. By the end of the sixteenth century, about 500 coffee houses were operating in

Istanbul, serving as public meeting spaces. After that, coffee made its way to Europe, but it was initially a drink for upper and middle classes because of its high price and limited availability. There is an anecdote that when Pope Clement VIII (r. 1592–1605) drank coffee for the first time, he was amazed by its taste, and he “baptized” it to make it “a drink of Christians” although the opponents of coffee drinking claimed that it was “a drink of Satan”. [Ukers 2007: 22] From this anecdote, we can guess that as the popularity of coffee in the Middle East was growing, the first Europeans to become acquainted with it were the upper classes. When it became popular among the middle classes, coffee houses opened in many European cities. Mints claims, “At first, all three new beverages (coffee, tea, chocolate) were drunk only by the wealthy and powerful, slowly becoming desired by the poor, and later preferred by them to other nonalcoholic drinks” [Mintz 1985: 110]. It must have taken some time for coffee to prevail among ordinary people in Europe, however, compared to the relatively rapid dissemination that took place in the Middle East.⁴

4.2. Style of Consumption

In the Middle East, people enjoyed coffee mainly as a drink, but the style of consumption varied from place to place. For example, coffee was made from roasted coffee beans in most places in the Middle East; this means people usually roasted only the kernel (*bunn*, *ḥabb al-bunn*) of the beans, or sometimes roasted the kernel together with the husk (*hull*, *qishr*).⁵ That kind of coffee was called *qahwa al-bunnīya*. In Yemen, however, people also made coffee only from roasted husks, making a kind of coffee beverage, *qahwa al-qishrīya*. Niebuhr often refers to this kind of coffee beverage in his report [Niebuhr 1994: 254, 266, 267]. After the custom of coffee drinking became more widespread, people began to brew a coffee drink from the roasted kernel only and this gradually became the global standard.⁶ In addition to drinking coffee, some people ate coffee fruit as a kind of food in some places. Kâtip Çelebi (1609–1657) reported that certain *shaykhs* who lived in the mountainous area of Yemen with their associated Islamic mystics ate crushed coffee fruit which they called *qalb wabūn* [Chelebi 1957: 60]. In Ethiopia, the Galla (Oromo) tribe utilized coffee; they ate the crushed coffee beans mixed with fat as a food ration. In the equatorial provinces of South Sudan and in Uganda, the natives ate the raw berries of coffee, or first cooked them in boiling water, dried them in the sun, and then ate them [Ukers 2007: 537]. The use of coffee thus varied from place to place.

People in the Middle East did not drink coffee with sugar until the nineteenth century, and this was one of the major differences between the Middle East and Europe. Europeans drank coffee with sugar after the eighteenth century. In 1798, at the time of the French campaign in Egypt, the Egyptians laughed at the French soldiers for drinking their coffee with sugar [Grehan 2007: 137]. In the 1870s, “coffee without sugar” appeared on menus in Damascus, which suggests that it eventually became popular to drink coffee with sugar in the Middle East as well [Rafeq 2001: 127–142].

⁴ There are a number of reasons why coffee prevailed in the Middle East more rapidly than in Europe. First, the Middle East is nearer to the place of production, so prices must have been more reasonable for ordinary people there than in Europe. Second, alcoholic beverages were prohibited by Islamic law, and so coffee acted as an intoxicating drink. As to the issue of gender, it is interesting that coffee was a beverage only for men both in the Middle East and Europe. Coffee houses in the Middle East were a male preserve, and in Europe, the coffee drinking was regarded as a habit unfavorable for women, as seen in *Schweigst stille, plaudert nicht* (known as *Coffee Cantata*) by J. S. Bach.

⁵ See note 2. The taste of *qahwa al-qishrīya* is completely different from *qahwa al-bunnīya*. It tastes, so to speak, like “tea with a coffee fragrance.”

⁶ People usually made coffee by boiling a powder of coffee beans with water, as with Turkish coffee today. Other ways of making coffee started in Europe. The idea of making coffee by infusion appeared in France in 1711 [Ukers 2007: 626].



Figure 6. A Coffee Beans Shop in Yemen (Photo taken by the author in 2010. Left : Roasted Husks [*qishr*], Right: Roasted Kernels [*bunn*])

5. Mocha Coffee after the Appearance of Colonial Coffee

After colonial coffee appeared on the world market in the 1700s, European merchants such as the VOC and French merchants brought huge amounts of colonial coffee produced in their possessions in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the American continent to Europe and the Middle East, especially to the Ottoman Empire. However, coffee produced in Yemen was still attractive and trading activities were lively and brisk then. John Lewis Burckhardt, who visited Jidda in 1814 reported:

The commerce of Djidda may be divided into two principal branches—the coffee trade, and the Indian trade; with both of which that of Egypt is connected. Ships laden with coffee arrive from Yemen all the year round, without being restricted to any particular season. During the voyage, they sail constantly near the coast, and are thus enabled to take advantage of the land breezes during the season when northerly winds prevail, and render the voyage difficult in mid-channel. They dispose of their cargoes for dollars,⁷ which are almost the only article that the merchants of Yemen take in return. The coffee trade is liable to great fluctuations, and may be considered a species of lottery, in which those only embark who have large capitals at their command, and who can bear occasionally great losses. The price of coffee at Djidda, being regulated by the advices from Cairo, varies almost with the arrival of every ship from Suez. The price at the latter place depending upon the demand for Mocha coffee in Turkey, is thus equally fluctuating. When I arrived at Djidda, coffee-beans were at thirty-five dollars a hundred-weight; three weeks after they fell to twenty-four dollars, in consequence of the peace between England and America, and the expectation that West-India coffee would be again imported in large quantities at Smyrna and Constantinople. From the hazardous nature of this trade, there are many merchants who will not engage in it, except as agents; others send the coffee on their own account to Cairo, where the chief part of the trade is in the hands of the Hedjaz merchants residing there. Within the last six years, the coffee trade between Arabia and the Mediterranean has suffered greatly by the importance of West-India coffee into the ports of Turkey. These were formerly supplied exclusively with Mocha coffee; the use of which has been almost entirely superseded in European Turkey, Asia Minor, and Syria, by that of the West Indies. The Pasha of Egypt, however, has hitherto strictly prohibited the importation of West-India coffee into his

⁷ There is a possibility that “dollars” here referred to the Maria Theresa thaler which circulated in the Red Sea trade until the twentieth century [Tuchscherer 2003: 53]. I will discuss this point on another occasion.

dominions. [Burckhardt 2006: 10]

We gather, from Burckhardt's description of the coffee trade, that even in the nineteenth century there was a need for Mocha coffee even after the appearance of colonial coffee produced in the European possessions, but the price changed according to the supply of West Indian coffee to Turkey. The Muhammad Ali dynasty prohibited imports of West Indian coffee in order to protect the Mocha coffee trade, as well as the profits that could be obtained from the Yemen coffee trade.

European merchants remained attracted by the quality and taste of coffee produced in Yemen. The Dutch and French merchants reduced their purchases of the coffee produced in Yemen, but the British East India Company remained the major European customer throughout the eighteenth century. After the British reduced their purchases around 1800, American ships appeared at the ports of Yemen to buy coffee [Tuchscherer 2003: 56].

Conclusion

S. Topik and W. G. Clarence-Smith mention in their work, *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1900*, that coffee is a “palpable and long-standing manifestation of globalization.” However, their work mainly focused on the period after 1700, when the production of colonial coffee started. Coffee had already become a “global beverage” in the sense that it was drunk globally, especially in the Middle East, Iran, India, and Europe before 1700. Of course, the desirable taste of coffee, its caffeinating and addictive properties, and its psychotropic possibilities may have contributed to its rapid dissemination prior to the appearance of the large colonial coffee market. The stipulation that alcoholic beverages were nominally prohibited in the Middle East must have accelerated the prevalence of coffee in that region. In Europe, the fact that coffee was at first a luxury item for the upper- and middle-classes may have stimulated a longing for it among ordinary people. However, as shown from the above-mentioned arguments, the most important reason for coffee's rapid propagation is that there was already a global trading network that facilitated the diffusion of the coffee drinking culture. When we talk about Indian Ocean trade, studies so far have focused on the goods that were important for European society, such as frankincense, spices, and coffee. But the Indian Ocean trade had existed from ancient times, facilitating the movement of many commodities, including daily necessities like foodstuffs, timber, and fabrics. It also spread knowledge, religions, and culture. This network linked different regions by trade, and supported the distribution of new items and culture, such as coffee, around the world. Since coffee had already become a global beverage before 1700, colonial coffee was circulated rapidly and easily after that time.

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