ASIA INSIDE OUT

CHANGING TIMES

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Harvard University Press

Cambridge, Massachusetts

London, England

2015

Printed in the United States of America

First printing

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.
Asia inside out : changing times / edited by
Eric Tagliacozzo, Helen F. Siu, and Peter C. Perdue.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-674-59850-8 (alk. paper)
1. Asia—History. 2. Asia—Civilization. I. Tagliacozzo, Eric. II. Siu, Helen F. III. Perdue, Peter C., 1949–
DS33.2.A85 2015
950'.3—dc23 2014016511

ISBN 978-0-674-59850-8

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Yemen after the First Ottoman Era

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Spanning the meeting-point of the Red and Arabian Seas, Yemen has connected the larger maritime network of the Indian Ocean to that of the Mediterranean Sea since antiquity. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this maritime position took on new dimensions as Yemen emerged as the central site for cultivation and trade of the coffee bean, which had become a lucrative commercial item with the increasing popularity of coffee as a social habit from Europe to Asia. In 1636, under attack by rebel imams, the Ottomans withdrew from their last foothold in Yemen, at the port of Mocha. Yemen's coffee trade flourished for nearly a century after this date. But after 1726, when the first major Dutch shipment of coffee arrived in Europe directly from Southeast Asia, Yemen's coffee business went into decline. Although Yemen's preeminent commercial role was short lived, this segment of time represents an important moment in the globalized history of the early modern southern Arabian Peninsula.

When the Ottomans controlled Yemen, beginning in 1538, the region was knit with its Mediterranean neighbors to the north, at the far limit of territories under the aegis of Istanbul. After the Ottomans fled, the region moved into a more fluid position, politically detached from the demands of Mediterranean powers, but still economically intertwined with them, as well as related spheres to the south and the east. As such, the consequences of the Ottoman departure from Yemen in 1636 set the ground for its later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century commercial history. The Ottomans are key to this investigation because they established Yemen's coffee market and then struggled to control it after their forced departure, even attempting to ban Europeans from the market, although these efforts eventually failed. These two years bracket a period of transformation of coffee from an exclusive African-Arabian product to a global commodity produced in many centers.

Rather than tracing its economic history, this paper posits coffee as a mobile object of exchange, subject to shifting spheres of demand, but also production. In this manner, I echo the contours of Robert Hellyer's paper in this volume that explores the cultivation of American tastes for Japanese green tea in the late nineteenth century, but with China as the commercial model. Using these two stimulating beverages as examples, we both explore production and consumption patterns within an interregional network of exchange in and out of Asia. In particular, this paper tracks the dimensions of desire for coffee from a wide regional perspective and hones in on the ways in which Yemen's coffee market served as a site for cross-cultural contestation and competition. These issues were increasingly pressing at a moment when it was not just the coffee bean that was in transit, but also the plant that was being cultivated across world regions from the Arabian Peninsula to the islands of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.

With coffee as a conceptual lens, one can locate Yemen's shifting place within the multiple, overlapping, and mutable networks with which it corresponded. Although this paper is not explicitly art historical, in that it does not deal with objects or architecture as the focus of study, it is implicitly linked to the interests and goals of art historians by centering the concepts of space and visibility. While using sources that are mainly textual, this paper locates historical processes and temporal change within a tangible material and spatial matrix. Moreover, the geographic scope oscillates between wider regional processes and events and a honed localized view of the specific space of the Yemeni coffee market in Bayt al-Faqih. By doing so, this microhistory becomes nested and fixed within a much larger spatial network and the scale of political change comes down to the ground.

The First Ottoman Era, 1538–1636

Yemen's commercial coffee history begins when the Ottomans first harnessed the bean as a commodity and developed it as a major item of Red Sea and Mediterranean trade. Additionally, as described by historian Giancarlo Casale, the sixteenth-century Ottoman occupation of Yemen and its subsequent seventeenth-century loss constituted the respective beginning and end of active Ottoman policies of Indian Ocean exploration and engagement. Here, I draw on Casale's research on the Ottoman Red Sea and Indian Ocean (2009), while also extending the perspective offered by his work. I do this by considering how the Ottoman departure from Yemen reverberated far outside Istanbul in the postoccupation site of the southern Arabian Peninsula in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The Ottomans set their sights on Yemen in 1525, when the corsair Selman Reis offered the opinion that Yemen would yield great profits as a territory. By that time, the last sultan of Yemen's Tahirid dynasty (1454–1517) had been killed and the lowland areas were being controlled by the *levend*, "a fractious band of Levantine and Circassian mercenaries left behind from the last Mamluk expedition there." By contrast, the northern highlands were under expanded Zaydi rule.[1] Selman Reis encouraged Ottoman interest in the region by identifying Yemen as "a land with no lord, an empty province" (Casale 2009, 43). Hadim Suleyman Pasha, the governor of Egypt, then formally established Ottoman power in Yemen in 1538, on his return journey from an unsuccessful attack against the Portuguese at Diu on the Indian coast. This moment ushered in a period of Ottoman rule that lasted almost one hundred years. With Yemen, as well as the port of Suakin in modern Sudan, Massawa in Eritrea, and Jidda in Saudi Arabia, under Ottoman control, the Red Sea functioned as "an Ottoman lake" through the beginning of the seventeenth century.

While in 1525 Selman Reis had adequately enumerated Yemen's possible profits as an Ottoman territory, he had sorely misjudged Yemen's tractability as a province. Indeed, the divisive nature of local politics made Yemen an easy target to invade, but a difficult terrain to rule. Local resistance would prove insurmountable, eventually causing the Ottomans to flee after less than one hundred years. Among many obstacles to Ottoman control, two Zaydi imams posed the biggest threats. The first, al-Mutahhar b. Sharaf al-Din (d. 1572), who was a de facto imam of Thila, took many cities under Ottoman control beginning in 1566, only to be thwarted a few years later by Koca Sinan Pasha, who arrived from Egypt with large numbers of troops.[2] Another more significant Zaydi revolt against Ottoman rule emerged in 1598, when Imam al-Mansur billah Qasim b. Muhammad (r. 1598–1620) and his son pushed the Ottomans from the inland regions of Yemen and eventually isolated them on the coast. The Ottomans finally left Yemen in 1636 via the port of Mocha, their last foothold on the southern Arabian Peninsula.

After this point, the Ottomans continued to hold key Red Sea sites, such as Suakin, Massawa, and Jidda, but withdrew from the active Indian Ocean forays that Casale described for the sixteenth century. Even so, the Ottomans recognized that Yemen was key to their territorial and economic ambitions. As historian Jane Hathaway has described, Sultan Mehmed IV considered attacking Yemen again in the 1670s, due to fears of Qasimi expansion into the Hijaz (2005, 125). Additionally, as will be detailed below, the Ottomans continued to communicate with the Qasimis after their expulsion, with the interest of intervening in local commercial policies. Eventually, the Ottomans returned to Yemen's Red Sea coast in 1848 and reoccupied parts of the region until 1918.

The Rise of the Qasimis

After the 1636 Ottoman departure, a local family of Zaydi imams descended from al-Mansur al-Qasim established themselves as Yemen's rulers in place of the Ottomans. Although they hardly receive notice in most historical studies of the Middle East or the Indian Ocean, the Qasimis of Yemen won a remarkable and mismatched faceoff between a small Shi'i state and the large expansionist force of the Sunni Ottomans. For this reason, the Qasimis looked to the unprecedented military victories that allowed for the foundation of their imamate as a source of pride long after the Ottomans had left (Hathaway 2005, 114).

As Heidi Walcher has shown in this volume for Safavid Iran and Tomislav Klaric (2008) has demonstrated for early modern Yemen, major political shifts entail a reconfiguration of geographic boundaries that may not be represented readily through common methods of cartographic depiction. For many of these geographic shifts represent subtle changes in the relationship between regions or the blurring of perceived spatial limits, which cannot be rendered simply through lines drawn on a map. Before the Qasimi period, the Zaydi imamate had always been localized, with imams ruling from landlocked northern centers with the compliance and support of the surrounding tribes.[3] In direct contrast to this regional model, the Sunni states of Yemen, such as the Ayyubids, Rasulids, and the early modern Tahirids controlled the southern territories and engaged in communication with outside states via maritime trade and diplomacy. After Imam al-Mu'ayyad Muhammad (r. 1620–1644) expelled the Ottomans, the Qasimis turned their backs on the longstanding model of regional authority and engaged in territorial expansion beyond the traditional Zaydi areas, thereby tying together regions that had been previously separated politically and linking the Zaydi north to the Sunni south.

Eventually, the third Qasimi imam, al-Mutawakkil Isma'il (r. 1644–1676) brought all of lower Yemen and the eastern stretch of Hadramawt under his rule, with what Hathaway called "a new geopolitical assertiveness" (2005, 116). He engaged in military campaigns and oversaw extended tracts of land outside of the traditional localized Zaydi bases in northern Yemen. Under these expanded conditions, the Zaydi imamate was pressed to adopt administrative mechanisms that were based on the model of previous Ottoman institutions, such as new strategies of taxation and a standing army, which no Zaydi imam in Yemen had held before (Haykel 2003, 50–56). Additionally, as Haykel has eloquently shown, the territorial expansion of the Qasimis allowed for greater connections between Zaydi scholars in the highlands and Sunni Traditionist ones in the lowlands, leading to their widening impact on the former's scholarship and legal opinions. With these major shifts, the Zaydi imamate itself transformed.

For these reasons, the year 1636 marked a moment of structural transformation for Yemen, and also for Yemeni Zaydism. In many ways, the geographical divisions that had defined Yemen's terrain for centuries were inverted after the departure of the Ottomans. Rather than a stark political and religious break between the north and the south, the two areas were tied together and ruled by a Zaydi imam. This new expanded role of the Zaydi imam opened up Yemeni Zaydism to new influences, facilitating a move away from its core doctrinal tenets. Additionally, the Zaydis then came into close contact with outside states through control of the lowland ports.

Coffee Stories

Originally, coffee grew wild in Ethiopia, but the roots of its consumption as a beverage date to the early fifteenth century in Yemen, likely in Sufi circles.

Although local authorities treated it with suspicion and passed legislation against it in places like Mecca, Cairo, and Istanbul, coffee caught on quickly as a social habit in the Arab and Ottoman worlds (Hattox 1985). Initially, small quantities of wild Ethiopian beans were garnered for export until Özdemir Pasha, the enterprising officer who spearheaded campaigns along both sides of the Red Sea, fostered coffee farming in Yemen in order to handle the increased demand for this cash crop, as Tuchscherer has proposed (2003, 54).[4] From the late sixteenth century forward, Yemen emerged as the major cultivator and exporter of the bean to a world that was increasingly thirsty for it.

The Ottomans were responsible for spurring the development of Yemen's coffee cultivation and export industry in the sixteenth century, but the local coffee trade escalated after they departed, in order to cater to a widening global demand. In the late seventeenth century, Yemen became a veritable world center for the sale of this precious commodity. The fortunes of merchants residing in cities like Cairo and Amsterdam hinged upon the Yemeni coffee market, at least for a brief time. For that reason the Qasimi dynasty has been referred to as the "Coffee Imamate" (Haykel 2003, 16). But this position was unstable, particularly after coffee cultivation spread to locations outside of the immediate region.

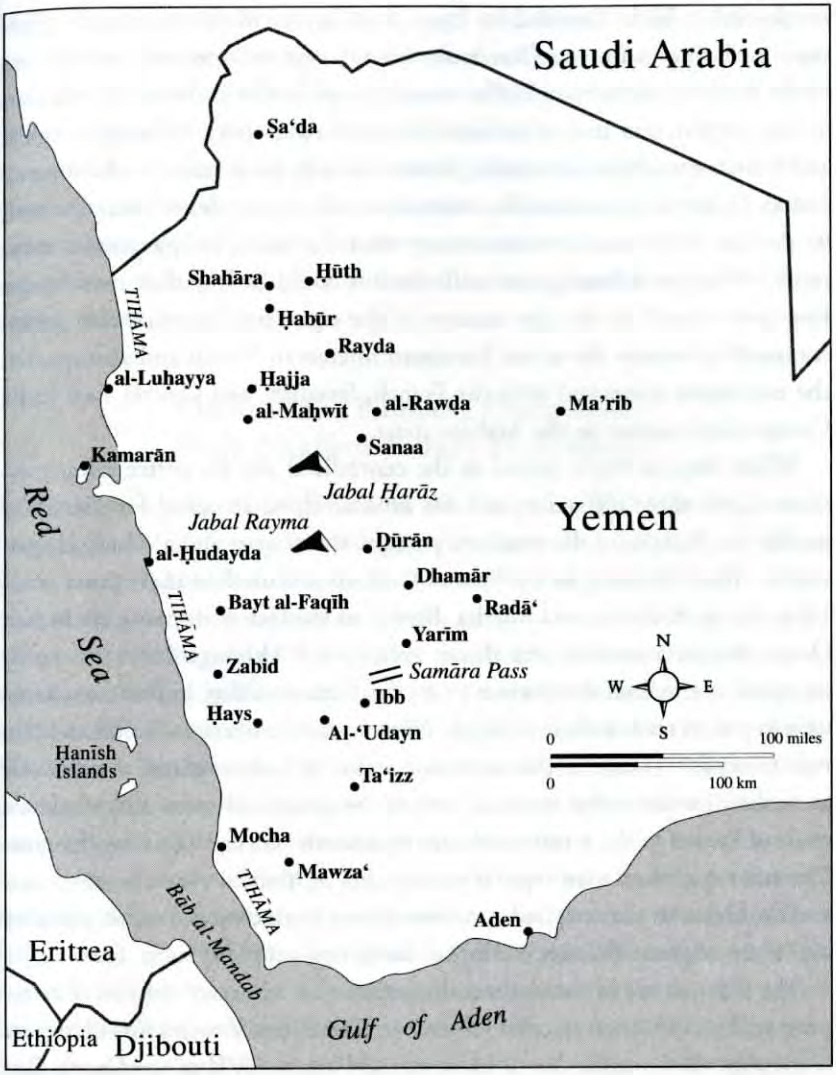
It is important to unravel the three strands of coffee's history—the history of the coffee bean as a commodity, the liquid history of the beverage and its consumption as a social habit, and the botanical history of the coffee plant. It is often the case that the stories of the bean and plant are folded into the lively narrative of the caffeinated drink's dispersal. While clearly related, these three trajectories may not be overlaid seamlessly. The Arabic etymology is instructive. The term that describes the drink *(qahwa)* is distinct from that which refers to the bean *(bunn),* suggesting that the object of consumption may have lived a very different social life during its commodity stage. Moreover, while the plant derived from Africa, both the cultivated bean and the hot, dark beverage entered the global realm from Yemen, but the production and consumption spheres became splintered soon after coffee was cultivated outside the immediate region. The coffee-studies pioneer Steven Topik describes the contemporary ramifications of this split: "For much of coffee's history, coffee-growing countries have been rural and illiterate while coffee-drinking countries and urban coffee-drinking intellectuals led the world into the Age of Enlightenment" (2009, 83). Thus, the history of coffee combines the story of an agricultural product, a commodity, and a beverage. To tell its story, we need to untangle its various spheres of circulation.

The Yemeni Coffee Market

While the Ottomans spearheaded coffee cultivation in Yemen in the sixteenth century, the Qasimi imams instituted major structural changes in the way that coffee was distributed and sold in the seventeenth century. Here a few words about Yemen's topography are necessary. Coffee grows at high altitudes where rainfall is adequate and temperatures optimal. In Yemen, ranges of mountains curve around the peninsula from the north to the south. These mountains were terraced to accommodate coffee bushes while effectively allowing runoff water to trickle down the agricultural slopes. Under the Ottomans, the coffee market appears to have been surprisingly unregulated. Coffee was sold at the ports of export or at the highland points of production and processing, with the intermediation of Indian Baniyan brokers (Brouwer 2006, 41–42). The coffee bales then exited Yemen via the Red Sea or by overland caravan.

The Qasimis instituted a structure that allowed for closer regulation and monitoring of the coffee market. One cannot say when it began, but sometime between 1640 and 1683 a centralized coffee emporium was established in the town of Bayt al-Faqih, which sits strategically in Yemen's lowland Tihama region that stretches along the border of the Red Sea.[5]

The town is situated ideally at the base of the coffee-growing mountains, but also located squarely between the three coastal ports that handled export shipping. It is closest to the port of al-Hudayda, but accessible to the northern port al-Luhayya and the southern port Mocha, each by a journey of a few days. It is likely that Imam al-Mutawakkil Isma'il, who instituted major commercial reforms in Yemen, established Bayt al-Faqih as the Qasimi coffee emporium, but local sources provide no details about it. It is clear, however, that this centralized coffee emporium was established so that coffee sales could be managed and controlled more closely by the imam's officials. As recounted by the French merchants who arrived in Yemen in the early eighteenth century, the coffee market in Bayt al-Faqih was a panoptic space with the city's governor seated on a dais in the center overseeing daily transactions (La Roque 1726, 98). Fees were levied at the point of purchase, Bayt al-Faqih, and then additional duties were added when the coffee bales were transported through the ports, allowing for the maximum profit on this precious commodity. For a period of more than forty years, bridging the late seventeenth century and the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the coffee market



Ports and emporia of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Yemen. (Barry Levely)

at Bayt al-Faqih served as the global emporium for the coffee bean, called by the Danish historian Kristof Glamann the "centre of a trade of a world-embracing character" (1958, 191).[6]

Agents shipping for Jidda and Cairo were the main clients of the coffee market in Bayt al-Faqih, with the majority of bales sent from Yemen's ports northward to Jidda, destined for Egypt and further Mediterranean distribution, including to Europe (Kawatoko 2001).[7] Beginning in the first decades of the seventeenth century, coffee was also exported from Yemen to the east, for the Iranian and Indian markets (Matthee 1994, 5–6). Although English and Dutch merchants arrived in Yemen initially for a stake in the western Indian Ocean trade and not for coffee alone, it became a desired item for both by the end of the seventeenth century, when the habit had garnered a committed Western following and coffeehouses could be found in most major European cities.[8] In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, this prized commodity became the major European interest in Yemen and also spurred the merchants associated with the French, Swedish, and Ostend East India Companies to arrive on the Arabian coast.

While Bayt al-Faqih served as the centralized site for coffee sales, merchants used three different ports for export. Those shipping for the Cairo market via Jidda used the northern ports of al-Luhayya and al-Hudayda primarily. Those shipping to the Persian Gulf market used all three ports of al-Luhayya, al-Hudayda, and Mocha. European merchants shipping via Indian Ocean channels used Mocha almost exclusively.[9] Although India was rarely intended as the final destination point for Yemeni coffee, Indian merchants were key to its trade at Bayt al-Faqih. Namely, the Baniyans—Hindu and Jain merchants from Gujarat, the northwest region of India—played a major role as brokers for the coffee trade, as well as the general overseas and wholesale trade of Yemen in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.[10] During the post-Ottoman era, they were regular inhabitants in Yemeni cities as merchants and brokers who also inspired controversy over both their economic visibility and their religious difference (Haykel 2003, 125–126; Um 2009, 162–184).

The first quarter of the eighteenth century also witnessed the rise of European coffee cultivation in colonial territories and then Yemen's loss of its near monopoly on the coffee bean. In 1707, the Heeren XVII of the Dutch East India Company, or VOC, ordered the Batavia administration to stimulate local coffee cultivation.[11] Sizeable quantities of adequate quality were finally harnessed in 1711. By 1726, Dutch imports of coffee in Amsterdam were dominated by Javanese beans, rather than Yemeni-grown ones (Knaap 1986, 36). In 1714, the French obtained coffee plants for cultivation on the island of Réunion (Île Bourbon) and then later on Martinique (Campbell 2003, 67–68). In the 1730s, the coffee grown in the French territories in the West Indies and Indian Ocean and shipped via Marseille began to arrive in the

Mediterranean ports of Egypt, the Levant, and Anatolia. This shift represented a major reversal in the global flow of coffee exports, with European middlemen funneling the trade and transit of coffee grown in colonial plantations destined for Muslim consumption (Tuchscherer 2003, 56). So this era marked a transitional period in coffee's global availability, as well as foregrounding the increasing role that European cultivation would play in global coffee markets. Yemen's coffee industry continues into the modern era, but its central role in the global coffee trade was irrevocably compromised by these developments.

Ottoman and European Competition in the Southern Arabian Marketplace

As described above, the expulsion of the Ottomans from Yemen in 1636 marked the end of their efforts to engage directly in the Indian Ocean sphere. It also marked the end of their control over the lucrative coffee market. Ottoman merchants, both Turkish and Arab, continued to profit from the precious bean, but they did so at the will of the Qasimi imam and his governors, who controlled the local market tightly, and also with the assistance of agents at Bayt al-Faqih who would ship coffee to Jidda for transfer to the north. While much has been written about European interest in the Yemeni coffee market at this time, less is known about Ottoman involvement. Hathaway has provided a general picture of a situation in which "the Ottomans were at the virtual mercy of the Qasimi imam who derived a healthy profit from the coffee trade." According to the Ottoman court historian Mustafa Naima (1655–1716), the Ottomans lamented contributing to the treasury of their ousters, the Qasimis, as they continued to rely upon them for this prized commodity (Hathaway 2006, 168).

But a second turning point occurred in the first decades of the eighteenth century, a time of crisis in the Yemeni coffee market, when prices were on the rise.[12] The Ottomans influenced the Qasimis to limit European purchases on the market, albeit ineffectively, culminating in a ban ordered in 1719. These price increases are often explained as a result of European direct purchases of coffee, which were expanded via Indian Ocean channels during this time. But it is difficult to determine how much of an effect the European trade actually had on the coffee market because earlier comparative figures, as well as ones for Cairo and Persian Gulf sales, are either undocumented or incomplete. Moreover, certain external factors, such as years of bad crops and complications in transit must also be taken into account when considering fluctuations in price. As economic historian Mehmet Genç has stated, "after 1702, the relationship between the demand and price of coffee becomes both complex and ambiguous" (2001, 163).

But for the purposes of this investigation, the actual effect of European sales on the Yemeni coffee market is less important than the *perception* that the European commercial presence was the principal cause for the rise in prices at Bayt al-Faqih. Once again, Hellyer's work on the Japanese tea market is instructive. In the nineteenth century, a vibrant cross-cultural sphere of production, advertising, and marketing that encompassed Japan, the United States, China, and India formed American opinions regarding the quality of tea and its health effects. These perceptions were key factors in the marketability of tea and ultimately drove the demand for it, whether or not they were based on solid data. In the case of Yemeni coffee beans, we know that individual merchants in Cairo could use the European presence in Yemen's coffee market to increase their profits strategically. According to Raymond, they engaged in a kind of "psychological warfare" by deliberately overestimating the amount of coffee that Europeans had purchased in Yemen and underestimating their own supplies in order to raise the value of their coffee bales once they arrived in the Egyptian marketplace (1980, 42). Thus it is not surprising that merchants at Bayt al-Faqih blamed the Europeans for the rise in coffee's price. Indeed, the arrival of a European boat in Mocha's harbors would cause the price of coffee at Bayt al-Faqih to skyrocket, at least momentarily.

It is well known that Ottoman officials attempted to limit European purchases of coffee in Cairo and other cities in the Mediterranean. In 1703 and then, in 1706, they instituted an outright ban on exporting coffee outside of the boundaries of the empire (Buti 2001, 221–222; Raymond 1980, 44; Tuchscherer 2003, 57). While this ban, in addition to other Ottoman attempts at limiting coffee's sale and consumption, was unevenly enforced and regularly circumvented, it nevertheless represents the fact that the Ottomans saw coffee as an important local commodity that should not be provided for the free consumption of Europeans (Genç 2001, 163–164). The present essay relies upon a combined reading of local Arabic sources, in conjunction with commercial and travel records of the Dutch, English, and French, to show how the Ottomans tried to inspire the Qasimis to implement a similar ban in Yemen. Their efforts were ultimately ineffective, but still represent the extension of Ottoman interest in the southern Arabian marketplace long after their seventeenth-century departure.[13]

My goal is to show how the interests of various merchants and states collided in Yemen, particularly at Bayt al-Faqih, the sole location where the Mediterranean coffee trade and its Indian Ocean counterpart overlapped. While both markets ultimately supplied Europe, they represent two distinct trajectories of the coffee bean, which each operated according to its own spatial, temporal, and economic logic. The different players in the coffee market placed multiple demands on the imam, as its overseer, at the moment when coffee itself was being transformed as a commodity that was no longer solely Yemeni, but in the process of becoming global.

Ottoman Envoys in Yemen

In his account of the first French missions to Yemen in 1708 to 1712, Jean de la Roque wrote about a French doctor, Monsieur Barbier, who was sent to the interior highland court to treat Imam al-Mahdi Muhammad (r. 1698–1718), who was suffering from an ear infection.[14] (La Roque 1726, 203) During his three-week-long stay at the court in al-Mawahib in 1712, he witnessed an Ottoman envoy that came from Istanbul via Egypt. The ambassador, who appeared with a large retinue and many gifts, complained that European coffee sales had diminished the supply going to Egypt and had caused the price of this precious commodity to increase. He also objected to the fact that Europeans received a preferential customs rate on their purchases in Yemen. According to the French observer, Imam al-Mahdi did not welcome this Ottoman intervention in his policies and seemed to desire the quick departure of the delegation. It is impossible, however, to ascertain what actually transpired between the imam and the Ottoman envoy, as this information came to the French through a secondhand source at the court. Regardless, there were no ramifications to the European coffee trade that year—the French shipped as many bales as they had in a previous season—so it does not appear that al-Mahdi acted upon any Ottoman demands.

The Ottoman concern over competition in Yemen's coffee market escalated over the following years, as indicated by multiple envoys dispatched to the Qasimis. Of these embassies, the best-documented one was sent in 1719 and described by a Yemeni chronicler, Muhsin b. al-Hasan, also known as Abu Talib.[15] According to Abu Talib, an Ottoman ambassador from Jidda arrived at the court of Imam al-Mutawakkil al-Qasim (r. 1718–1727) in Sanaa with a letter from the Sultan in hand. His goal was to convince the imam to prohibit the European trade of coffee in Yemen, which was "in the general interest of Muslims." The letter added that non-Muslims should not to be allowed to live in Mocha[16] and threatened in stark terms that travelers from Yemen would be forbidden from proceeding to Jidda by sea if this demand were not obeyed (al-Hasan 1990, 405). After consideration, al-Mutawakkil, unlike al-Mahdi before him, agreed to comply and sent the messenger away satisfied with many gifts.[17] Although the passage alludes to the ensuing dissatisfaction of the merchants affected, the issue then disappeared from the chronicle.

This embassy was also noted in the Ottoman sources from Cairo studied by Raymond, which mention a *kapıcı başı* that was sent to Yemen in 1719 to demand that Europeans be excluded from the coffee market there (Raymond 1973, 1: 150). This mission was apparently supported by the sharif of Mecca as well. According to these records, the imam of Yemen agreed to make a considerable quantity of 30,000 to 35,000 fardes of coffee available for the Jidda market the following year, although nothing was said about limiting the European stake in the trade. Although these two accounts differ in details, we can discern from them that the Yemeni imam made efforts to appease the Ottoman ambassador of 1719 and that officials in Cairo believed that the mission had been a success.

Yet perspectives from Yemen reveal that these decisions were hardly simple, straightforward, or conclusive. Rather, over the months following this envoy's visit, a series of discussions and negotiations took place between the imam of Yemen and local Dutch and English merchants about not only whether they could purchase coffee in Yemen, but also how and where they should do so. In this regard, the *dag registers*, or daily logbooks of the VOC, offer a helpful perspective. The Dutch merchants convey that on September 3, 1719, a messenger from the imam in Sanaa came to their house in Mocha, transmitting the Ottoman complaint that the European trade had raised coffee prices too high, thereby preventing them from purchasing it. Additionally, the Ottoman envoy voiced concerns about the Dutch and English houses, which were said to be large and equipped with artillery and expressed the fear that they could take the city by siege with little warning. The Dutch immediately wrote a letter to the imam stating that these claims were untrue. Even so, five days later, another letter came to the Dutch, this time from Bayt al-Faqih, with the news that Imam al-Mutawakkil had sent a letter to that city's governor telling him not to allow the "hat wearing nations" to purchase any coffee (September 8, 1719, VOC 9116, ff. 37–38).

The previous year, 1718, was described by Glamann as an uncommonly bad year for coffee, when there was "an abnormally great demand and also an abnormally small supply" due to a poor harvest (1958, 197). Additionally, in May 1719, a ship from Ostend had arrived to trade in Yemen for the first time, which alarmed the other European groups in the city, and was undoubtedly noted by other merchants at Bayt al-Faqih as well (VOC 9103, ff. 95–96). It appears that the Ottomans were reacting to the dire problems of the past year, when the diminished supply of beans was further exacerbated by the increased presence of European merchants at the coffee emporium.

Although the Dutch are solitary observers of these events at the port and their sources are invaluable to the historian, one should not accept their subjective framing of them in a wholesale way. The VOC merchants at Mocha were alarmed by this infringement on their trading rights and wrote to the imam in outspoken terms about the immediate need to restore the privileges outlined in their trade treaty. But, in fact, the imam's 1719 ban on European coffee sales would have had little effect on European trade, at least at the outset. September was the low season for European trade. All Indian Ocean ships bound for the east and the south had left the port in August. Only a few European merchants, such as the Dutch and some English merchants, remained at the port of Mocha during this low season. Similarly, no European merchants were present in Bayt al-Faqih, although, at that time, that city was filled with agents, provisioned with chests of silver from Jidda to purchase coffee destined for the north. They were busy buying up the old beans from the past year and waiting eagerly for the new harvest to arrive from the highlands in the coming weeks. Although the European merchants at Mocha would stay abreast of news from the coffee emporium, they were unable to buy significant quantities of coffee until their silver arrived for the new trade season, beginning with the arrival of their ships from both Asia and Europe in January.[18] Moreover, they would have wanted to avoid the increased prices that stemmed from the influx of Cairene capital during this time. Undoubtedly, the imam was aware of this particular schedule for trade, for he was deeply invested in it. His own ships had left for Surat a few weeks earlier, on August 23 (VOC 9116, f. 34).[19]

Moreover, as we continue reading the Dutch *dag register*, the imam's ambivalence about his own newly imposed ban becomes clear, for he began modifying it almost as soon as the Ottoman messenger had left his court.[20] On September 26, a letter arrived from the imam to the Dutch in Mocha as a response to theirs from a few weeks earlier. While he assured them that they were not guilty of any misconduct, he still prohibited all Europeans from buying coffee in Bayt al-Faqih, but did allow them the minor concession to purchase coffee beans in Mocha. This concession was hardly appealing to the Dutch because coffee in Mocha was only available in small quantities that were marked up in price and often of poor quality. Anyone who was interested in buying significant quantities would do so in Bayt al-Faqih.

For that reason, the Dutch continued to argue for their right to buy coffee in Yemen's central coffee emporium in a long letter to the imam, dated September 27, 1719. In it, they not only rejected the ban on coffee purchases at Bayt al-Faqih, but also responded to claims that were not commercial, but rather sumptuary in nature. It is clear that concerns about their economic presence were collapsed almost indistinguishably with those about the visible presence of non-Muslims in on the Arabian Peninsula, one of the key Ottoman concerns. For instance, the Dutch attempted to mollify the charges about the size and weaponry of their houses in Mocha and Mawza' (an inland town which was used as a vacation spot by European merchants at this time), the number of horses that they owned and how often they rode them, and the critical issue of their relations with local women. They threatened that the imam must reinstate the original terms of their trade treaty or they would leave the city and it would become deserted like Aden. At the same time, they wrote a letter containing all of the same points to the wazir and governor of Bayt al-Faqih, Salih b. 'Ali al-Huraybi. To al-Huraybi, however, they added that it was not them but the English who caused the problems, thereby blaming their European competition for these complications.

As the debate between the Dutch and the imam continued, the latter eventually yielded his position. On November 13, the imam conceded by allowing them to buy coffee in Bayt al-Faqih as long as they did not go in person, but purchased it via Baniyan brokers. The Dutch accepted this compromise, which represented almost a full restitution of their privileges. Yet they were still awaiting the arrival of their ships in the coming months. Nonetheless, the two concessions that the imam offered are telling. They reveal clearly that the imam's goal was not to exclude Europeans from Yemen's coffee market. To the contrary, he was content with limiting their visibility there. The observant agents at Bayt al-Faqih who were shipping for Jidda and Cairo conveyed not just beans to their northern counterparts, but also information. By limiting the European presence in Bayt al-Faqih, a site of direct interface between these various merchant groups, the imam could continue to profit from the European trade in Yemen, while maintaining the fragile illusion that he had kept his promise to the Ottoman sultan. In this way, the imam was trying to negotiate the Mediterranean interests of the Ottomans, while still managing the demands of the active Indian Ocean trade, in which Europeans played a considerable, although not singular, role. The imam wanted to uphold his trade agreements with the Europeans, while also keeping them out of the watchful eye of the Ottoman sultan's agents and informants.

In the following weeks, these concerns died down considerably. In December, Qasim al-Turbati, a local merchant who had gone up to Sanaa, informed the Dutch that the imam was no longer concerned about this issue, which was, by that point, articulated entirely in sumptuary terms. Al-Turbati stated that all talk of "artillery, horses, and whores" had disappeared from the imam's court (December 11, 1719, VOC 9116, f. 57). On January 13, 1720, two Dutch ships came into the harbor, and during the next month the Dutch sealed their first purchase of coffee at Bayt al-Faqih for the year through Baniyan brokers. When the English East India Company ships arrived in the spring, they, however, were dissatisfied with working through their brokers and attempted to regain permission to send their own representatives to buy coffee directly. On May 12, 1720, the governor granted this to Edward Say, the English factor, who then sent the writer Thomas Hartnett to the coffee emporium (May 16, 1720, IOR G/17/1, pt. 1, f. 8r). Hartnett shipped bales of coffee from that city to Mocha in June. So, within eight months, the short-lived ban on European purchases of coffee was completely lifted, just in time for the height of the European coffee trading season. When the Dutch closed their books for the year in July 1720, they had purchased 1,771,742 lbs. of coffee, a significant quantity indicating that the events described above did not have a major impact on their trade.

Conclusion

The events surrounding the unsuccessful 1719 ban on European purchases of coffee in Yemen are unique because they represent the only instance in which the imam agreed to Ottoman demands even initially and also because they are relatively well documented from different sources. In the following years, Ottoman envoys continued to arrive in Yemen with similar concerns. For instance, five years later, in March 1725, the Dutch heard that some Turkish merchants from Egypt had arrived in Sanaa again asking that Imam al-Mutawakkil allow them to have sole rights over coffee sales at Bayt al-Faqih, which he did not agree to (March 25, 1725, VOC 9119, ff. 150–151). This mission differed from the two that were described above because it seems to have been executed on the initiative of individual merchants rather than the Ottoman state and been targeted at all merchants, rather than just the Europeans, which would include those from the Persian Gulf as well. Apparently, dissatisfied with the imam's negative response, those merchants took matters into their own hands. A couple weeks later, on April 5, a Dutch letter reported that some "Turkish" merchants had tried to prevent them from buying coffee at Bayt al-Faqih. The local governor asked the Dutch to remain in their rented home, rather than appearing at the coffee market, in order to curb any possible conflicts (VOC 9119, f. 156). Later that year, in December, the Dutch heard that another Turkish envoy had arrived at the court in Sanaa, again trying to intervene with European coffee purchases. This envoy also went to Bayt al-Faqih to talk to the governor there (December 7, 1725, VOC 9120, f. 36). The sheer recurrence of these envoys signals that their missions were not being carried out effectively and hence required repetition.

However, the Ottomans stopped sending these envoys soon after this last account. By 1726, they had clearly realized that their efforts against European coffee sales were ineffective. At this time, they had also lifted similar injunctions in the Mediterranean (Genç 2001, 164). In March 1726, the news arrived in Mocha that seven Dutch ships full of coffee were sent from Asia to Europe, a quantity that far outweighed that which they had purchased in Yemen the previous year (March 27, 1726, VOC 9120, ff. 53–54). Although the initial consignment of coffee successfully cultivated in Java had been shipped fifteen years earlier, the 1725 shipment had been the first to yield a significant quantity and thus caused worried rumors to spread among Mocha's merchants and officials (Knaap 1986, 37). The Dutch remained at the port for many more years in order to boost the demand for Javanese beans on the European market by keeping the price of Yemeni coffee high.[21]

Rather than constituting a classic case of east-west confrontation around the Indian Ocean rim, the events described above demonstrate the liminal status of the three parties that each stood to lose or profit from various sets of shifting arrangements within the southern Arabian marketplace. The Ottomans were a major superpower that was surprisingly ineffective at controlling commercial affairs outside of, as well as within, their borders. The Qasimis were quite conciliatory toward European merchants, whose local presence they were eager to retain. Dutch and English merchants were not operating in a protocolonial framework in which their trade impact unfolded in a straight line toward colonial rule; rather, they held a relatively fragile position in Mocha and were often more concerned with the trade activity of their European counterparts than that of Muslim or Asian ones.

This essay began with the year 1636, when the first Ottoman occupation of Yemen ended, as an important turning point for the southern Arabian Peninsula. But it concludes with 1726, another key year for Yemen, the moment when knowledge about the success of offsite coffee cultivation arrived on the Arabian Peninsula. Accordingly, this year also marked the beginning of a steep and rapid decline in Yemen's global contributions of this highly sought-after commodity. As such, these two years serve as brackets that trace the transformation of coffee from its status as a plant cultivated in Africa and Arabia to its new incarnation as one that was actively farmed in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean realms. These years also highlight the elasticity of Yemen's place in the global networks that it participated in. Before 1636, it represented the southern limit of the Ottoman world dominated by the Mediterranean-oriented interests of Istanbul. But then, in the later seventeenth century and into the eighteenth, the Qasimi imam of Yemen was situated at the center of a global matrix, caught between the competing interests of the Mediterranean world, as represented by Ottoman economic demands, and Indian Ocean ones, as represented by the Mocha trade.

Notes

The author wishes to thank Eric Tagliacozzo and Helen Siu for the kind invitation to participate in Asia Inside Out. Thanks are also due to conference participants and audience members in Hong Kong and at Wellesley College, who commented intelligently on this essay at earlier stages and helped guide its revision. Mary Youssef generously took time to discuss the intricacies of the Arabic sources. Thanks also to Barry Levely for the map.

1. As one of three major subbranches of Shiʿi Islam, Zaydism, which emerged in the ninth century, has been represented by two communities historically, one in Yemen and the other in Tabaristan on the Caspian Sea. When the Caspian Zaydi

community declined in the twelfth century, the Yemenis became the dominant representatives of Zaydism into the modern era.

2. Al-Mutahhar was technically unable to assume the position because of a physical handicap. According to Blackburn, he was a "de facto imam" for the purposes of military engagement and political leadership (2000, 3).

3. The Zaydi concept of the imam is much broader than that of the other Shi'i groups, the Twelvers and the Isma'ilis, and succession does not follow lineal descent. For Zaydis, the imam must be a descendant of the Prophet through Fatima and 'Ali, possess scholarly erudition and be capable of defending the community, in addition to other criteria.

4. Although the Ottomans held the ports of Massawa and Hergigo in Abyssinia, they had only limited access to the interior regions.

5. In 1640, Wurffbain was still purchasing coffee in Mocha (Brouwer 2006, 42). The first dated mention of the coffee market in Bayt al-Faqih appears in a Dutch source from 1683 (VOC 1406). However, Bayt al-Faqih was also subject to the wider political upheavals. It was briefly controlled by a certain Amir Zayd, who took the city in the name of the wazir Zayd b. 'Ali Jahhaf, but then Imam al-Mahdi Muhammad reclaimed it in 1097/1685–1686 (Zabara 1985, 385).

6. However, the port of Mocha, which played a relatively minimal role in the coffee trade, has largely overshadowed the inland center's reputation as a place for coffee sales. In fact, the name Mocha coffee is a bit of a misnomer, signifying the port from which coffee was shipped, but not the place where it was grown or purchased (Brouwer 2006, 56–57; Um 2009, 36–47).

7. Raymond has shown that few merchants from Cairo ventured south of Jidda or maintained direct contact with Yemeni counterparts in this era. Rather these northern merchants were served by agents that worked from Bayt al-Faqih. We know very little about this group of agents, but a Yemeni merchant named Sa'd al-Din al-'Udayni was likely one of them (Raymond 2002; Um 2009, 89–91).

8. When the Dutch and English initially began to purchase coffee in Yemen in the seventeenth century, it was intended for transshipment in the Arabian Sea, mainly for the Persian Gulf and western Indian markets. The European market opened up to coffee shipments in the 1660s (Matthee 1994).

9. The English also negotiated for the right to transport their coffee beans from Bayt al-Faqih to al-Hudayda, but only used that option when there was a shortage of camel drivers from Bayt al-Faqih or when their ships arrived in Yemen late in the season, as they did in 1721.

10. In his short but important study on the Baniyans in Yemen, R. B. Serjeant attempted to excavate the earliest textual citations to the community, which date to the fourteenth century, with Ibn al-Mujawir's mention of Hafat al-Baniyan (the Baniyan quarter) in Aden. One may find scattered references to the Baniyans, or even less discriminately, Indian merchants, in sources that predate the Qasimi era. But it is clear

that the Baniyan merchants emerged as a major unified block of merchants in the trading world of Yemen in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the textual references to their Arabian presence increase notably (Serjeant 1983a, 432–435).

11. According to Leupe, the Dutch transported coffee plants from South Asia to Indonesia beginning in 1696. By 1699, they had cultivated them successfully in Java. Other sources, including Yemeni lore, surmised that the Dutch smuggled coffee plants out of Yemen against the imam's orders (Leupe 1859, 56; Baghdiantz-McCabe 2008, 206).

12. For instance, Tuchscherer has shown that the number of Turkish merchants participating in Cairo's Red Sea trade between the years 1708 and 1730 witnessed a sharp decline (1991, 328) While this trade encompassed more than coffee, declining coffee revenues must have played a role in this drop. Dutch sources indicate that coffee prices rose considerably since the year 1717 and English sources record a steady increase for the period from 1710–1745 (Chaudhuri 1978, 360; Knaap 1986, 36).

13. Not all Ottoman diplomatic visits of the time were related to the coffee question. In 1114/1702–1703, Salim Pasha sent his brother Ahmad Agha to the imam's court in al-Mawahib. He stayed for a while and then passed through Sanaa (where he was entertained), 'Amran, and finally left from al-Luhayya (al-Hasan 1990, 305).

14. La Roque's book was immediately popularized and translated into English and German. Along with a narrative of the French missions, it provided a lengthy appendix about coffee. La Roque did not travel to Yemen, but used letters and interviews with the ship crewmembers and merchants that made the two journeys. For more on the medical treatment of the imam of Yemen by foreign doctors see Um, forthcoming.

15. Abu Talib stated that the ambassador arrived in 1133/1720–1721, whereas the VOC records say that he arrived in 1719 (1131 AH). When the English documents begin in 1720, they show that the crisis was almost resolved by that point. I use the earlier Dutch date, which is corroborated by English and Ottoman documents, rather than Abu Talib's dating. Abu Talib was writing retrospectively and other dates in his text are incorrect by a year or two, such as that of Aurangzeb's death, which was recorded in 1117/1705–1706, but actually happened in 1118/1707. Glamann described an embassy that arrived in Yemen in July 1719. However, Glamann interpreted the information based on the erroneous assumption that the Ottomans were still occupying Yemen at that time (probably drawing from van den Broecke's early seventeenth-century account). For that reason he described the Ottoman sultan's inability to exert control over the Yemeni market as an internal problem of authority. To the contrary, this was a case of a foreign state trying to intervene in local commercial affairs (Glamann 1958, 188, 192). Also, in passing, Serjeant mentioned an Ottoman embassy that had arrived at the imam's court to complain about the European trade, but gave no date (other than stating that this happened some time before the year 1737) or citation (Serjeant 1983b, 79).

16. This issue was one of contention between Ottoman jurists, who were Sunni adhering to the Hanafi school of legal interpretation, and Shi'i Zaydi ones. Hanafis believed that non-Muslims should not live anywhere on the Peninsula, while Zaydis deemed it permissible for non-Muslims to live in Yemen, but not in the vicinity of the holy cities. As Haykel has shown, this issue was hotly debated within Yemen at this time, between the two camps of strict Zaydis and Sunni-oriented scholars (2003, 115–126).

17. The Dutch clarified, saying that the messenger was sent away with lots of Spanish reals and many bales of coffee as a gift, although they heard different accounts of the quantities of each (Sept 16, 1719, VOC 9116, f. 39).

18. On September 21, information and samples of coffee arrived in the Dutch house in Mocha from Bayt al-Faqih, sent via Indian Baniyan brokers. Although this did not constitute a direct transaction, it indicates that Indian brokers were still working with European merchants to inform them of the state of the market in spite of these new restrictions (VOC 9116, f. 40).

19. The Qasimi imams owned two ships, which are documented as early as the imamate of al-Mahdi Muhammad (r. 1698–1718) through al-Mansur al-Husayn's period (r. 1727–1748). It is unlikely that they were built in Yemen, however. These ships are never mentioned in the local Arabic chronicles, but appear often in the commercial records of the Dutch and English, as do the names of the ships' *nakhudhas*, or sea captains (Um 2009, 91–95).

20. The Ottoman ambassador set sail from the port of al-Luhayya on September 25 (VOC 9116, f. 40).

21. Although VOC officials discussed the possibility of closing down the Mocha factory as early as 1724, it was not closed down officially until 1739 (VOC 9113; Glamann 1958, 208–209).

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