COFFEE AND CULTURE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

by

MAGGIE DOBSON

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of History
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
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An Abstract of the Thesis of

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Title: Coffee and Culture in the Ottoman Empire

Approved: _____*Hannah Cutting-Jones, Ph.D.*_____
Primary Thesis Advisor

Have you ever wondered why we drink coffee? The historical answer to that question lies in the coffeehouses of the Ottoman Empire. Coffee, native to Ethiopia, spread throughout the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century and quickly became a mainstay of Ottoman culture. Recent scholarship on the topic has blown open traditional stereotypes and European metrics for understanding modernity in the Ottoman Empire. This project continues that trend by raising awareness and arguing for a shift away from Eurocentrism when studying the history of the Ottoman Empire.

This project explores the complexities of Ottoman coffee culture through research represented by a digital exhibit. The online exhibit, built on extensive historiographical research, challenges the traditional thesis format by being both educational and accessible to a wider audience. Viewers can learn about the history of Ottoman coffeehouses in a curated and self-guided digital environment. Public perception of the Ottoman Empire is often limited to misconceptions and stereotypical depictions of the Middle East, but public history projects like this one can help us connect with history and learn more about ourselves.

Click the link here to access the digital exhibit:

https://sites.google.com/view/ottomancoffeethesis/home

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to the approximately 1,404 cups of coffee that have fueled my undergraduate career. Many thanks to the helpful and supportive faculty in the History Department, Food Studies Program, and SCUA, who have helped me foster my curiosity and find community here at the University of Oregon. Thanks also to Gantt Gurley for his support as my CHC advisor, and to my amazing primary thesis advisor Hannah Cutting-Jones, for inspiring and encouraging me from my first day in the Honors College all the way to defending this thesis. Finally, thank you to all the amazing friends and family who helped me create this project and bought me coffee along the way.

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Figure 1. Home page (1): Header, navigation bar, and introduction.

Figure 2. Home page (2): Links to pages with short descriptions.

Want more information?

Click here for a list of further readings.

About this project

This digital exhibit is one portion of Maggie Dobson's undergraduate thesis project, presented along with a written portion to the University of Oregon Department of Food Studies and Robert D. Clark Honors College in May 2024 for partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Arts. This project is a culmination of Maggie's undergraduate work and combines historical research, an interdisciplinary food studies approach, and an interest in information science and accessibility. By building a digital exhibit, this thesis challenges the traditional written format and makes the research presented here more accessible to a wider audience.

Figure 3. Home page (3): Footer with link to more resources and "About this project" section.
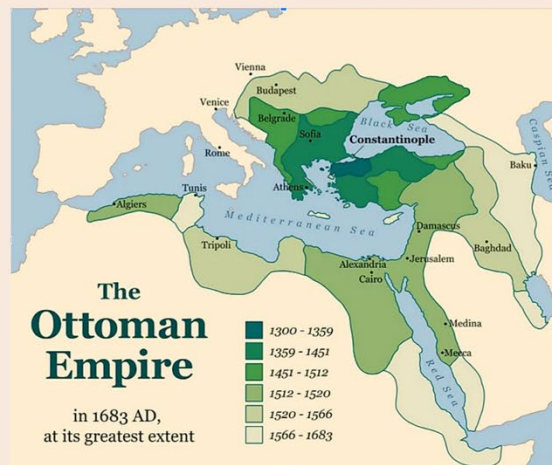

A Brief Introduction to Ottoman History

The Ottoman Empire peaked in the mid-16th century, when it stretched from its center in Anatolia to the far reaches of the Balkans, North Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula. Muslim Turkish sultans ruled over a vast diversity of Christians, Muslims, and Jews and a wide array of different cultures.

Being at the center of Europe, Africa, and Asia, the Ottomans were important players in the global spice trade. In addition to having access to goods from around the world, they produced an array of agricultural products, textiles, pottery, and other fine goods. Their economic system was based on obtaining a better standard of living by providing these necessary commodities to the population.

Society was split between **askeri**, those who worked for the sultan, and the **reaya**: urban merchants, artisans, and rural peasants. These positions were fluid but mixing of social classes was generally frowned upon.

This changed when one new commodity appeared in Istanbul that would eventually spread to every corner of the empire. Coffee, an unassuming plant from the Ethiopian highlands, quickly spread and became a mainstay of Ottoman life. Coffeehouses popped up in every urban neighborhood and rural village, and coffee became a core part of social rituals in and out of the home.

The Ottoman Empire in 1683 AD, at its greatest extent

Shuttershock

Figure 4. An Introduction to the Ottoman Empire page (1): "A Brief Introduction to Ottoman History" with map.

Artifacts from the Ottoman Empire

Studying objects from the past is a key part of studies in material culture and consumerism. Click through the slides below to learn about Ottoman culture through the things they used and art they created.

Textiles

The Ottomans created colorful and functional textiles to adorn their surroundings.

On the left is a cushion cover which would have been laid atop a low platform for seating.

On the right is a **sofra**, a tablecloth which would have been laid on the floor or a low table and had food served on top of it.

Figure 5. An Introduction to the Ottoman Empire page (2): "Artifacts from the Ottoman Empire" and slide 1, Textiles.

Ottoman Miniatures

Like their textiles, Ottoman art is colorful and complex. A popular form of art was the miniature, a small painting often found inside illuminated manuscripts.

On the left is a miniature depicting Sultan Murad III, who unsuccessfully attemped to ban coffeehouses, in his library. His study opens on to a courtyard where members of the court and harem can be seen.

On the right is a highly detailed scene of a coffeehouse with calligraphy. This image is explored further on the "Inside the Ottoman Coffeehouse" page.

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Figure 6. An Introduction to the Ottoman Empire page (3): slide 2, Ottoman Miniatures.

Porcelain Ceramics

The Ottomans had access to Chinese porcelain, and this inspiration can be scene in Ottoman ceramics such as the pitcher on the left.

Fine goods like pottery were both functional pieces and symbols of wealth and prosperity in the household.

On the right we see examples of Iznik wares, pottery from the town of Iznik in Anatolia. Potters combined Chinese styles with new colors, floral motifs, and Turkish themes.

The top image is a beautiful example of the rich turquoise and sage green pigments used. The bottom plate depicts an Ottoman woman playing a tambourine, surrounded by the signature red flowers found on many Iznik pieces.

Figure 7. An Introduction to the Ottoman Empire page (4): slide 3, Porcelain Ceramics.

Coffee Cups

Most ceramic goods and other objects used for eating and drinking were communal. Food was served in large calabashes which were eaten out of with spoons. In the early days, coffee was also drunk out of communal calabashes. As time went on, small coffee cups became more common.

Small ceramic cups such as the ones on the left were ornate and it was common to have one per person in the household, with extras for guests. These were some of the few individual objects used in Ottoman food culture.

The materials and ornateness of coffee cups were signs of wealth and status, but they were commonly owned and used by people of all classes across the empire.

Figure 8. An Introduction to the Ottoman Empire page (5): slide 4, Coffee Cups.

Coffee Pots and Zarfs

Coffee was usually prepared in metal pots over stoves, similar to how Turkish coffee is prepared today. It was served hot, strong, and without milk or sugar.

Ornate pots like the ones on the left would have been used by servants or slaves to serve coffee. The metal brazier would keep the coffee hot without burning the server.

The small objects in front of the pot and in the top left corner are known as zarfs. Used to protect the drinker's hand from heat, zarfs are small metal cup holders that would hold porcelain cups like the ones in the last slide. Zarfs were often luxury items, ornately decorated and sometimes adorned with precious metals or jewels.

Figure 9. An Introduction to the Ottoman Empire page (6): slide 2, Coffee Pots and Zarfs.

Up Next: Timeline of Coffee History

Sources for images:

Yastik Cushion Cover, ca. 1600. Mr and Mrs. Isaac D. Fletcher Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/446950

Floor spread (sofra) with Design of Tulips and Pomegranates, ca. 1600s. Saint Louis Art Museum. https://www.slam.org/collection/objects/547/

Sultan Murad III in his Library, 1582. Harvard Art Museums, The Edwin Binney 3rd Collection of Turkish Art. https://harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/215652?position=14&context=exhibition&id=2589

Coffee House Scene (Recto) and Persian Calligraphy (Verso), Folio from an Ottoman Album, ca. 1620. The Chester Beatty Library. https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/T_439_9/1/

Ewer with 'Tughra-Illuminator' Style Decoration, ca. 1525-40. Metropolitan Museum of Art. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451834

Plate Depicting a Woman Playing Tambourine, ca. 1600. Metropolitan Museum of Art. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451943

Dish with Saz Spray Decoration, ca. 1540-1550. Harvard Art Museums, The Stuart Cary Welch Collection. https://harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/190789?position=46&context=exhibition&id=2589

Coffee cups and Brazier, coffee pot, and coffee cup sleeve. Pera Museum, Suna and Inan Kirac Foundation Kutahya Tiles and Ceramics Collection. https://www.peramuseum.org/collection/kutahya-tiles-and-ceramics-collection/17

An impressive diamond and ruby-set gold Coffee Cup Holder (*zarf*) made for the Ottoman court probably Turkey, 19th Century. Bonhams. https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/11380/lot/22/

Figure 10. An Introduction to the Ottoman Empire page (7): Navigation button and image sources.

Timeline of Coffee History

© MapsOfWorld

1300s-1400s

Coffee was discovered in the Ethiopian highlands, where eating the berries or roasting and brewing them whole became popular. Coffee arabica is native to Ethiopia, which is one of the top producers of coffee today.

Mid-1400s

Coffee spread to Yemen, where the drink was first used by Sufi mystics as an aid to worship. Sufism is a mystical branch of Islam that seeks to draw closer to the divine. Followers used coffee to focus, stay awake for long hours of prayer and meditation, and to reach ecstatic and euphoric states in order to be closer to Allah.
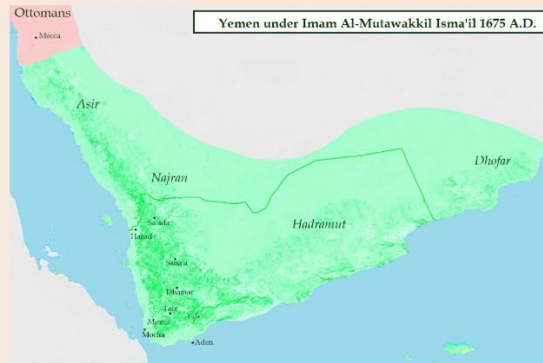
Wikimedia Commons/Tiwahi CC by SA 4.0

Figure 11. Timeline of Coffee History page (1).

© Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.

1497-99

Vasco de Gama, the Portuguese explorer, made his first voyage around Africa to India at the end of 15th century. His voyage marked 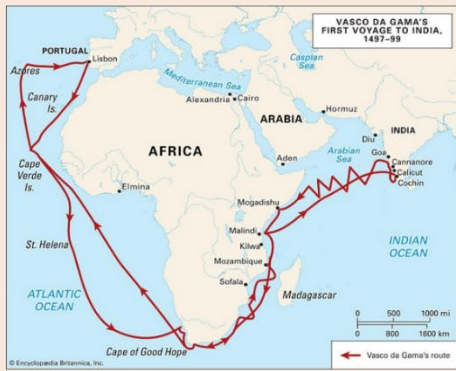the first successful route to India that did not have to go through the Ottoman Empire, meaning that Portuguese traders could make vast inroads into the spice trade without heavy taxing and restrictions.

For the Ottomans, that meant less profits from their spice trading ports such as Cairo, which capitalized on the demand for spices in Europe. However, coffee was taking off as an important commodity within the Ottoman Empire, which helped replace some of the lost profits.

Early 1500s

Through networks of Sufi convents and traders, coffee spread up the Hejaz (the west coast of the Arabian peninsula) and into Egypt. In important urban centers like Mecca, Medina, and Cairo, coffee become hugely popular among men, who would meet to drink it in public spaces, mosques, and coffeehouses.
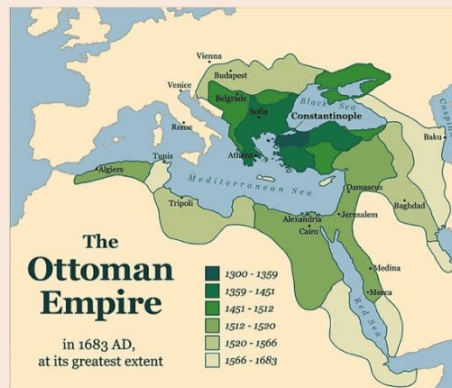
Shutterstock

Figure 12. Timeline of Coffee History page (2).
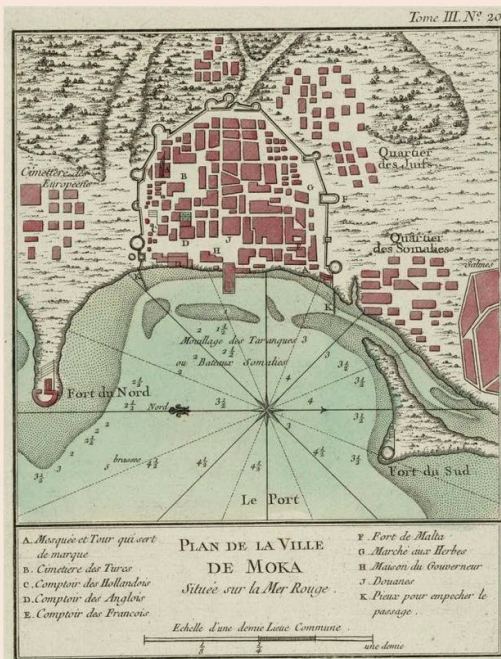
Jacques-Nicolas Bellin: *Plan de la Ville de Moka*, from: *Le petit atlas maritime...*, Vol. III, pl. 20, Paris 1764

1538

In 1538, Yemen was conquered and became part of the Ottoman Empire, and was ruled by Ottoman governors for the following decades. Yemen was a key conquest for the Ottomans because of its geographical location at the heart of the spice trade, and because most of the coffee in the world was produced in Yemen at the time.

Mocha, a port city on the southern tip of the Arabian peninsula and the namesake of the coffee-chocolate beverage, controlled the majority of coffee trade in this period. As coffee drinking gained popularity in the Ottoman Empire, Mocha's status as an important port only increased.

1555

By the mid-1500s, coffee had spread up through Anatolia to Syria and Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. There, coffeehouses began to pop up in every neighborhood as a space for men to gather and relax.

Coffeehouse (from 'Voyage Pittoresque de Constantinople') - Antoine Ignace Melling

Figure 13. Timeline of Coffee History page (3).

© Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.

Late 1500s

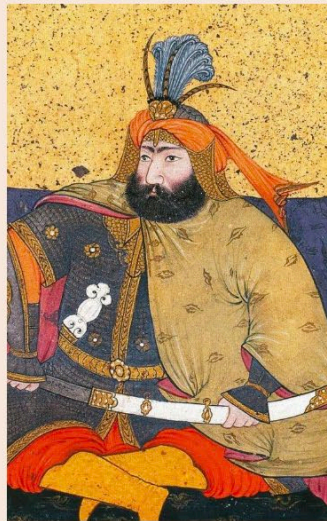By the late 1500s, coffee drinking had reached the farthest reaches of the Ottoman Empire. The empire was very diverse and contained Muslims, Christians, Jews, and a variety of other ethnic and religious groups. Coffee, even in the Ottoman holdings in the Balkans, took hold. Christians adopted coffee culture wholesale and founded their own coffee shops that served coffee in the Ottoman way, without milk or sugar.

1600

Coffee first reached Europe through Italy, another important center of trade in the Mediterranean. Coffee was initially viewed as an exotic Ottoman beverage, often represented by caricatures like the Turk in this painting of a Viennese coffeehouse. Like in the Ottoman Empire, coffee drinking took off in Europe and exports of Yemeni coffee, shipped from Yemen, increased.

"To the blue bottles", old Viennese coffee house scene (c.1900), by an Unknown artist

1633

As coffeehouses spread in the Ottoman Empire, so did concern over what was going on inside them. In 1633, the reigning Sultan Murad IV banned coffeehouses amidst fears that they were breeding grounds for sedition and subversive politics. Despite brutal attempts to enforce this ban, it was not successful in closing down coffeehouses. This ban was one of multiple in the 16th and 17th centuries in both the Ottoman Empire and Europe in which government officials and religious figures condemned and attempted to suppress coffee culture.

Coffeehouses were meeting places for men which were outside of the religious confines of the mosque. They also had little government oversight and encouraged an atmosphere of community, discussion, and learning. There is evidence that men frequently gossiped about community members, discussed politics, listened to lectures or satirical stories about sultans and their governments, and generally expressed subversive viewpoints.

Murad by Abdulcelil Levni

Figure 14. Timeline of Coffee History page (4).

1711

As popularity of coffee rose in Europe, so did demand for a European source. The Dutch East India Company seized the opportunity to fill that niche by starting coffee plantations on Java, an island in the Dutch East Indies.

The new source of coffee added to its popularity in Europe, and was another blow to the Ottoman Empire's profits in Mediterranean trade.
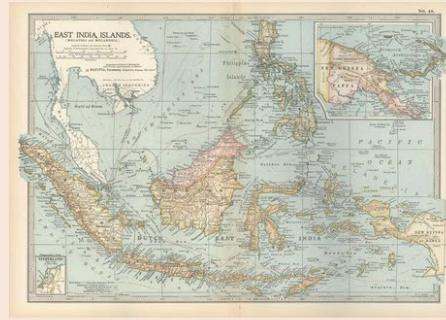
Historical map by The Century Company
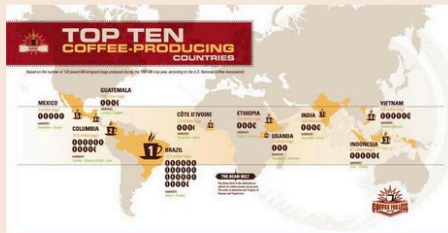
Coffee For Less

1727

Coffee was introduced to Brazil in 1727 and to many other colonies in the Americas throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Demand for coffee worldwide grew and Yemeni coffee production was outpaced by European colonies.

Today, coffee's birthplace of Ethiopia remains a major coffee producer. Brazil is the world's largest exporter of coffee, which is drunk in a variety of ways and cultures around the world.

Up Next: Inside the Ottoman Coffeehoue

Figure 15. Timeline of Coffee History page (5).

Inside the Ottoman Coffeehouse

This slideshow explores a detailed miniature of an Ottoman coffeehouse. The painting dates to around 1620 in Istanbul, nearly 70 years after the first coffeehouse opened in the capital. Click through the slides to learn about how men drank coffee and what went on in coffeehouses.

This painting is a great example of the kind of spaces that coffeehouses created. Communal cafes, often found in neighborhoods, were spots for socializing and relaxing.

As men entered the coffeehouse, they would remove their shoes and enter into the **orta** or **meydan,** the main area which resembled a living room. The coffeehouse was designed with leisure, relaxation, and community in mind. Modeling it after spaces in the home made men more comfortable and fostered a relaxed atmosphere.

● ● ● ● ●

Figure 16. Inside the Ottoman Coffeehouse page (1) slide 1.

Coffeehouses invited social mixing between classes, but also preserved social rankings. The highest ranking men in the community sat on the **bassedir,** the highest raised **divan** in a corner of the cafe. Elders, religious leaders, and other important men reserved this place of honor and sometimes used it as a speaking platform.

Figure 17. Inside the Ottoman Coffeehouse page (2) slide 2.

A servant prepares coffee on an **ocak**, a small furnace for brewing coffee. Coffee was prepared and served black, without milk and sugar. It was generally served in small porcelain cups.

Servants were generally young and beautiful young men. They served coffee, entertained guests, and sometimes participated in sex work with patrons.

Figure 18. Inside the Ottoman Coffeehouse page (3) slide 3.

Ottoman coffeehouses were very similar to our modern day cafes. In this corner, we see men playing games like backgammon and mancala. Servants might also serve sweets to the men as they conversed, read, listened, and played games. Coffeehouses often served as centers of learning and lending libraries, and many men in the painting appear to be holding prayer books.

Figure 19. Inside the Ottoman Coffeehouse page (4) slide 4.

One of the most important functions of the coffeehouse was as a center for gossip, socialization, and learning. In the center of this painting we see a **meddah,** a storyteller, reciting to the men. He has musical accompaniment (left middle) and perhaps an actor (in blue with the grey face). Storytellers, musicians, and puppeteers frequently entertained men and often touched on satirical and subversive political topics.

Figure 20. Inside the Ottoman Coffeehouse page (5) slide 5.

Women, Coffee, and Religion:

Coffee Drinking Outside the Cafe

Coffee and Islam

Coffee drinking originally spread within the network of Sufi convents on the Arabian Peninsula. Its origins lie in Islamic traditions and it became part of religious life for many Muslims in the Ottoman Empire. Coffee was used as an aid to worship for staying awake during long prayers, and to help with fasting during Ramadan.

However, coffee did have its controversies in the beginning. Some religious scholars believed that its stimulating effects should be considered haram, or forbidden, and that men gathering in coffeehouses instead of the mosque was not good for the religious wellbeing of the community. Despite fatwas, Islamic legal rulings that attempted to ban coffee drinking, the drink remained popular throughout the Ottoman Empire. It remains an important part of Middle Eastern and North African culture for many people today.

ⓘ Sultan Murad IV enthroned, Ottoman mid-17th century, Topkapi Palace Museum Library, H. 2148, 11b

Figure 21. Women, Coffee, and Religion page (1) Coffee and Islam.

Women and Coffee Drinking

Coffee was often served in the privacy of the harem, the section of the home reserved for women and children. Coffee was an important social beverage that was part of the ritual of entertaining a woman's guests, served along with sweets or rosewater.

While there were harems in many wealthy households, the most famous is that of the sultan in his palace. Coffee was served to the mothers, wives, and concubines of the sultan in the imperial harem, as pictured below.

Musavvir Hüseyin, Painting, 1680, *Costumes turcs de la cour et de la ville de Constantinople*, pl. 4

Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department, Lewis Collection, T9

The garden, seen here in a miniature, was another important part of Ottoman life. It was a space for entertaining and leisure where coffee may have been served.

Figure 22. Women, Coffee, and Religion page (2) Women and Coffee Drinking.

Bathhouses

Bathhouses were important gendered meeting spaces in the Ottoman Empire, both for hygienic and religious populars. Cleansing before prayers is an important ritual in Islam, and bathhouses were also public meeting spaces for women.

Women were not generally permitted in coffeehouses as patrons or servers, and therefore had less public spaces in which to meet and talk. Bathhouses served that purpose, and coffee was often served in their changing rooms or parlors.

Amir Pashaei, Photograph of Sultan Amir Ahmad Bathhouse, Kashan, Iran, 2020 CC 4.0

Figure 23. Women, Coffee, and Religion page (3) Bathhouses.

Dinner Parties and Entertaining

Many men and women held extravagant dinner parties to show off abundance and entertain their friends. In the privacy of their homes, they would hold parties with musical entertainment and sometimes dancers and storytellers.

At these parties, all the food would be served at once in a show of abundance. Food was served out of communal calabashes, but coffee, often served before or after the meal, used individual cups.

This miniature, which shows a feast held by the grand vizier for the Janissaries, the elite of the Ottoman army. Note the extravagant textiles, abundance of food, and long sofra (tablecloth on which food is served).

Nusret-name, Banquet given by the Commander-in-Chief Lala Mustafa Pasha to the Jannissaries in Izmit, 1570

Figure 24. Women, Coffee, and Religion page (4) Dinner Parties and Entertaining.

Further Reading

Want to learn more?

If you'd like to know more about this project and see a complete bibliography, you can read the full written thesis here.

There are many wonderful resources on Ottoman history, culture, and coffeehouses. I've listed some of the sources that were most important for this thesis, and which are a good place to begin further research.

Books on Ottoman history and culture:

Faroqhi, Suraiya. *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*. London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000.

Faroqhi, Suraiya. *Approaching Ottoman History: An Introduction to the Sources*. Cambridge l New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uoregon/detail.action?docID=202027&pq-origsite=primo.

Faroqhi, Suraiya. *A Cultural History of the Ottomans: The Imperial Elite and Its Artefacts*. I.B.Tauris, 2016. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350985025.

İnalcık, Halil, and Donald Quataert, eds. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

For more information on the religious and political aspects of coffee culture:

Hattox, Ralph S. *Coffee and Coffeehouses : The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East*. Seattle, UNITED STATES: University of Washington Press, 1986. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uoregon/detail.action?docID=3444597.

For consumption and food studies approaches to coffee and Ottoman history:

Akçetin, Elif, and Suraiya Faroqhi, eds. *Living the Good Life: Consumption in the Qing and Ottoman Empires of the Eighteenth Century*. Rulers & Elites : Comparative Studies in Governance, Volume 13. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2018.

Quataert, Donald, ed. *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922: An Introduction*. SUNY Series in the Social and Economic History of the Middle East. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000.

Singer, Amy, ed. *Starting with Food: Culinary Approaches to Ottoman History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2011.

For more information on archaeology and material studies:

Artan, Tülay. "The Illuminated Table, the Prosperous House: Food and Shelter in Ottoman Material Culture; Ottoman Costumes. From Textile to Identity." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52, no. 3 (2009): 583–91.

Baram, Uzi. "Clay Tobacco Pipes and Coffee Cup Sherds in the Archaeology of the Middle East: Artifacts of Social Tensions from the Ottoman Past." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 3, no. 3 (1999): 137–51. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021905918886.https://doi.org/10.1163/156852009X458269.

The Historical Archaeology of the Ottoman Empire : Breaking New Ground. First edition 2002. Contributions to Global Historical Archaeology. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2000.

For more information on women and gender in the Ottoman Empire:

Peirce, Leslie P. *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*. Studies in Middle Eastern History. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Sajdi, Dana, ed. *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century*. London ; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007. (Especially Alan Mikhail's essay "The Heart's Desire: Gender, Urban Space and the Ottoman Coffee House."

Primary sources:

The Digital Ottoman Studies website is a resource for locating and accessing digital archives and resources for studying Ottoman history. https://www.digitalottomanstudies.com/

Coffee House Scene (Recto) and Persian Calligraphy (Verso), Folio from an Ottoman Album. https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/T_439_9/1/

Evliya Çelebi, Hâfız Mehmet Zıllî, Sooyong Kim, and Robert Dankoff. *An Ottoman Traveller: Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi*. London: Eland, 2010.

Many American museums and repositories have collections of Ottoman manuscripts and artifacts, including:

The Met's Islamic Art collection: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search?department=14&showOnly=highlights

The Harvard Art Museums' Edwin Binney 3rd Collection of Turkish Art: https://harvardartmuseums.org/exhibitions/1860/the-edwin-binney-3rd-collection-of-turkish-art-at-the-harvard-university-art-museums

The Pera Museum's Suna and Inan Kirac Foundation Kutahya Tiles and Ceramics Collection: https://www.peramuseum.org/collection/kutahya-tiles-and-ceramics-collection/17

Figure 25. Further Reading page.

Introduction

The Ottoman Empire reached its zenith in the mid-17th century, when it controlled vast portions of the Near East and stretched into Arabia, North Africa, and the Balkans. Turkish sultans conquered and reigned over a diverse array of peoples. The empire was a Sunni Muslim caliphate, meaning its rulers claimed direct descendance from the prophet Muhammad, but the empire contained many religious minorities such as Orthodox Christians and Jews.

The Ottoman Empire's central placement between Europe, Africa, and Asia, and its borders around the Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, and Persian Gulf made it a powerful player in global trade. At its height it controlled and heavily taxed the Silk Road through Istanbul, held many ports on the route to and from the Indies, and saw huge profits in the spice trade in the Mediterranean. The Ottomans had access to goods from the Far East, Europe, and the Indies, and produced an array of agricultural products, textiles, pottery, and other fine goods.

Despite their central trade position, the Ottomans did far more importing and internal trade than external. The economic system was based on obtaining a better standard of living by providing necessary commodities to the population. This was achieved by importing fine goods for the upper classes and necessities for the lower classes, as well as internally producing agricultural products on small family-run farms.

The height of the Ottoman Empire was accompanied by urbanization, and many rural peasants moved into cities like Istanbul, Cairo, and Mecca to make a living. For urbanites, life consisted of the home or private sphere, the market, and the mosque. There was a lack of public, uncontrolled spaces where people could gather for longer periods of time to socialize. The market was a place of business, the home was private, and the mosque and other religious spaces were tightly controlled and had very specific rules and practices. There were some taverns, often

run by Jews or Christians, that served Muslim clientele. In Islam, alcohol is considered haram or forbidden. Because of that, taverns were not seen as socially acceptable or a place for civil society.

Ottoman society was split between the *askeri*, people who worked for the sultan and wielded his authority, and the *reaya,* urban merchants, artisans, and rural peasants. This structure was fluid, as positions in the *askeri* were not inherited, so people could rise or fall in stature. While more fluid than the rigid stratification of feudal Europe, it was still frowned upon to mix with people of a lower or higher social standing than oneself.

This changed when one new commodity appeared in Istanbul that would eventually spread to every corner of the empire. Coffee, an unassuming plant from the Ethiopian highlands, quickly spread through religious orders before becoming a mainstay of Ottoman life. Coffeehouses popped up in every urban neighborhood and rural village, and coffee became a core part of social rituals in and out of the home.

This thesis explores the culture of coffee-drinking in the Ottoman Empire in the 16-18th centuries through a historiography and digital exhibit. The project proposes new directions for future scholarship and presents an online learning experience which reflects the complexities of Ottoman coffee culture in an accessible and informative way.

The first section looks at the last four decades of scholarly research on the topic of coffee, society, and cultural histories in the Ottoman Empire. This historiography describes the scope of primary sources, traditional and more recent historical approaches, and differing viewpoints and frameworks. It then suggests potential new directions for future research.

The second section builds on the first by recognizing the need for new interpretations of Ottoman coffee culture and combining them with the principles of accessible exhibit design. By

combining extensive historical research with an online format, this thesis represents the need for accessible public history and digital humanities projects for learning. It challenges the traditional thesis format by being approachable, understandable, and inviting further learning on the part of the audience. Viewers can learn about the history of Ottoman coffeehouses in a curated and self-guided digital environment. Public perception of the Ottoman Empire is often limited to misconceptions and stereotypical depictions of the Middle East, but public history projects like this one can help us connect with history and learn more about ourselves.

Historiography: Exploring Scholarly Trends in the Study of Ottoman Coffee Culture

In recent decades, historians have explored a variety of aspects of the Ottoman coffeehouse. From Ralph Hattox's 1986 book *Coffee and Coffeehouses*[1] to Ozlem Caykent and Derya Gurses Tarbuck's 2017 article "Coffeehouse Sociability: Themes, Problems, and Directions,"[2] this historiography explores recent developments and trends within the field. A variety of works have touched on religion, subversive politics, economics and consumption, food studies, publicness, and modernity in the Ottoman coffeehouse. The tendency to apply European metrics and dichotomies to these topics has been a continual, though not uncontested, theme in historical works. Increasingly in recent years, scholars from multiple fields have attempted to address these issues by reexamining aspects of Ottoman coffee culture. This historiography is not representative of contemporary Turkish literature on the topic, other than where it has been translated and made accessible to English audiences. However, many of the works discussed below reference Turkish works extensively and represent a diversity of scholars from different fields. After examining these works and comparing a variety of different frameworks used by scholars, I have proposed new directions for further research.

A Note on Primary Sources

It has been 25 years since the publication of Suraiya Faroqhi's "Approaching Ottoman History: An Introduction to the Sources,"[3] a highly informative and celebratory exploration of available primary sources for studying the Ottoman Empire. She proposes that the advancement

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[1] Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses : The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East*.
[2] Ozlem Caykent and Derya Tarbuck, "Coffeehouse Sociability: Themes, Problems, and Directions."
[3] Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History*.

of cataloging of the Ottoman Archives has made it "possible to question, thoroughly revise, and at times totally abandon, the conventional images of Ottoman history which populated the secondary literature as little as thirty years ago."[4] This and other arguments she makes have clearly been taken up by researchers, who have opened up new areas of research and have been much more willing to cross over from their specialties into new domains. Research from the last 40 years, represented in this historiography, relies on a wide array of primary sources that has allowed scholars to explore Ottoman coffee culture.

Archival collections are a mainstay of historical research. The largest repository of records related to the Ottoman Empire is the Ottoman State Archives in Istanbul. As Suraiya Faroqhi points out in her guide to Ottoman primary sources, "The Ottoman central archives…for most Ottoman historians will constitute *the* major resources."[5] While her guide was published in 1999, this appears to remain largely true, which represents somewhat of an issue for this researcher, who can neither read Ottoman Turkish nor travel to Istanbul. These records are also not completely processed and cataloged, and their digital archives are only available within the archive itself.[6] There have been efforts to expand the digital archives for Ottoman history, such as the Digital Ottoman Studies site,[7] a platform for gathering digital humanities resources for Ottoman and Turkish studies. However, English speakers will find a limited breadth of information in digitized manuscripts.

In addition, a majority of these archives are devoted to administrative, political, religious, and economic files related to the functioning of the Ottoman government. Official

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[4] Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History*. 1.
[5] Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History*. 50.
[6] State Archives. "Frequently Asked Questions."
https://www.devletarsivleri.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Sayfa.aspx?icerik=3&h=934515957719AB25DF388559A8E86A76 7FD99E56CFFDE08AE38B07C4F6D43854
[7] Digital Ottoman Studies. https://www.digitalottomanstudies.com/

correspondence, administrative files, and economic surveys are beneficial for establishing several factors of Ottoman coffee culture. The way the government reacted to coffeehouses, whether or not they were taxed, and the revenue they generated in communities can be extrapolated from a variety of these sources. Religious documents from juries and scholars of the time period also paint a picture of how coffee interacted with Islam. However, administrative and religious documents are not as fruitful for cultural studies.

Biographies, chronicles, and traveler's accounts from both Middle Easterners and Europeans of the time provide a more cultural viewpoint for scholars. Evliya Celebi, a widely traveled Ottoman scholar who chronicled his adventures in his *Book of Travels,*[8] is a prime example of this kind of source. These primary sources are often biased or partial and require close reading and contextualization to be fully useful. This is especially important for accounts written by European travelers, which are heavily skewed by their own conceptions of society. Bias in European accounts is usually addressed by historians who factor it into the relevance and weight of the source.

Archeology is another useful and often overlapping field for historians, especially for studying patterns of consumption. However, as addressed by Uzi Baram and Lynda Carroll in their 2000 book "The Historical Archaeology of the Ottoman Empire: Breaking New Ground,"[9] archeologists in the Near East have largely focused on artifacts from the further past. Sites such as Çatalhöyük, the 9000-year-old remains of a Neolithic city in present day Turkey, have been hugely important for advancements in the field, but discoveries of more recent history have been overlooked. Their book, which includes chapters on a variety of topics by several archeologists, is dedicated entirely to forging a new branch of archeology for Ottoman studies. Their

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[8] Evliya Çelebi, Kim, and Dankoff, *An Ottoman Traveller*.
[9] *The Historical Archaeology of the Ottoman Empire : Breaking New Ground*.

discoveries and analyses of culturally important objects has added another dimension to archeology in the Middle East. In addition, they touch on many of the themes laid out in this historiography and provide another level of primary source analysis.

Art and architecture also represent valuable primary sources. They are usually representations of the ideal through the eyes of the creator and reflect cultural and societal functions and norms. Ottoman miniatures, small paintings of scenes often found in illuminated manuscripts, show the beauty and colorful nature of Ottoman society. The architecture of coffeehouses reflects the adaptations to the environment, building materials, and social functions of structures. The study of objects like coffee cups, whether housed in museums or dug up at archeological sites, is especially valuable for understanding consumption, trade, and the social importance of things. Visual analysis of these objects is made easier by digitized museum collections that have high-quality scans of artifacts. While not the norm in the museum world, repositories like the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Pera Museum in Istanbul have begun providing patrons with online access to artifacts.

Despite efforts to provide more online primary source access, written primary sources can be hard to find without a trip to Istanbul and a Turkish dictionary. Luckily, there is a wealth of information in secondary sources, which have extensively covered the Ottoman coffeehouse in recent decades. Below is an outline of how scholars have used a diverse array of sources to explore many areas of Ottoman coffee culture.

Setting the Stage: Religion and Subversive Politics

Ralph Hattox's *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East*[10] represents the earliest holistic study of the Ottoman coffeehouse. It has been referenced extensively by almost every piece of scholarship on the topic published since the 1990s, for good reason. Hattox's book represents a feat of primary source analysis and his conclusions have set the basis for the timeline around coffee's spread. The book focuses on what Hattox labels "The Great Coffee Controversy," the debate around the legality and social permissibility of coffee. He argues that prior to his book, works on Ottoman coffeehouses ignored or misconstrued the great debate as "fruitless quibbling over a concern of very little importance, an example of a hidebound religious institution carried to its illogical extreme."[11] His extensive bibliography works with eight centuries of religious documents, travelers' accounts, chronicles, histories, correspondence, and historical analyses. Many of the contemporary secondary sources used by Hattox reference coffee's whole history, focusing specifically on Europe. Many of them are Western economic studies or look at coffee's relationship with the histories of tobacco, tea, and chocolate. Hattox weeds through these works to present a more Ottoman-focused analysis. He establishes what he views as an appropriate map and timeline for coffee's spread through the Ottoman Empire. He determines the key drivers and cultural factors of coffee culture: the religious and political controversy around coffee and coffeehouses, their social and economic impacts, and the changes in leisure and social life that accompanied their spread. Hattox argues that by focusing on that controversy and the rationales behind it, a more nuanced and less biased understanding of Ottoman society is achievable.

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[10] Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*.

[11] Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*. 5.

Reviews of Hattox's *Coffee and Coffeehouses* are mixed; critics are mostly positive on the shift away from dismissiveness and towards material culture analysis. Franz Rosenthal, a pioneer in Arabic and Islamic studies in the U.S., found the book to be "written with great care and full, reliable documentation."[12] The main complaints are the narrowness of the research and lack of use of the Ottoman archives. Jon Mandaville, formerly a professor of History and Middle East Studies at Portland State University, characterized the book as "a thesis turned too rapidly into a book, with a kernel of tight traditional scholarship loosely wrapped in fine methodologically contemporary questions and vague answers."[13] He believed that Hattox should have used the plethora of sources from the time that exist in the Ottoman archives. It is worth mentioning that those archives can be difficult to access and were much less extensively cataloged at the time.

Mandaville argues that Hattox is too vague in his discussion of why Ottoman culture shifted to accommodate a new type of public space. Eric Wolf echoes this, asking, "what, indeed, produced the shift 'in the relations among men' of which the author speaks?"[14] Similarly, Andrew Hess believes that "What this book lacks is the larger framework for the rise of the coffeehouses…not to stress these connections is to make the story appear historically and socially disembodied."[15] While reviews praise Hattox's synthesis of previously scattered information, they point to several instances in which the book could have been further fleshed out. I propose that Hattox's book was necessarily specific, because of the uniqueness of the

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[12] Franz Rosenthal, "Ralph S. Hattox. 'Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East' (Book Review)." 1011.

[13] Jon E. Mandaville, "Hattox: Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East (Book Review)." 302

[14] Eric Wolf, "Hattox: Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East (Book Review)." 805

[15] Andrew Hess, "Ralph S. Hattox, 'Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East' (Book Review)." 205.

coffeehouse as an institution. His book may not have answered all the questions it proposed, but it did help found a niche for other scholars to fill.

Overall, Hattox's book is a starting point for further research, and many of the complaints of critics have been answered since the book's publication. Hattox remained somewhat confined in the more traditional view of Ottoman society and the coffeehouse. His work, along with other earlier studies, are overwhelmingly focused on the idea of subversive politics and the reactions of the government and religious bodies to them. These works fixate on the Ottoman coffeehouse as the symbolic representation of coffee culture as a whole and in doing so exclude key aspects of the milieu. As we see in later sections, expanding the scholarship past the political activities of men in coffeehouses can reveal much more about the impact of coffee on Ottoman society.

Economics, Consumption, and Food Studies

The more nuanced approach to Ottoman history that Hattox proposed was occurring around and after the publication of his book in new surveys and articles like those by prominent historians such as Suraiya Faroqhi,[16] Donald Quataert, and Halil Inalcik.[17] Like much traditional history, they dealt directly with economic trends and the interactions between government bodies with trade. Over time works on coffee and histories focused on economics and consumers have shifted to reflect a more global approach to the Ottoman Empire, emphasizing its centrality in Old World trade and the diversity of its lands and peoples. Food studies approaches to Ottoman culture have continued those trends and are still developing.

The earliest contemporary work on coffee used for this thesis is a 1986 article by Suraiya Faroqhi. The short article, "Coffee and Spices: Official Ottoman Reactions to Egyptian Trade in

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[16] Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*.
[17] İnalcık and Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*.

the Later Sixteenth Century," is an economics-focused exploration of the importance of early coffee trade in the Mediterranean. [18] As the spice trade out of Venice declined, coffee had spread within the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. Faroqhi argues that for Cairo, the trade of coffee within the Ottoman Empire was "a means of maintaining their position in international commerce."[19] She writes that a map showing how and when coffee drinking spread and especially "when the custom became sufficiently wide-spread for the Ottoman administration to moderate and finally give up its previous resistance" would be beneficial. [20] She herself dates the rise of coffeehouses in Cairo to the 1560s and 70s based on correspondence and official documents from the period.

Faroqhi, writing from the Middle East Technical University of Ankara at the time, had the privilege of using nearby primary sources, but also relied heavily on past scholarship. Examining her bibliography shows that much of the research on the topic was published between 1940 and 1970 and focused on the European actors in the Mediterranean spice trade, or on economic aspects of the Ottoman Empire.[21] The limited scope of the short article, the focus on economics, and the framing of the article in relation to the decline of Venetian trade are in contrast to the scholarship of the following decades.

A study of Egyptian trade in Salonica, "When Coffee Brought About Wealth and Prestige" by Eyal Ginio argues that "relying mostly on European historical sources may reveal only a part of the Ottoman reality at the time" and attempts to examine Salonican commerce more broadly than previous scholarship.[22] The importance of diversity in all parts of the Ottoman

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[18] Faroqhi, "Coffee and Spices: Official Ottoman Reactions to Egyptian Trade in the Later Sixteenth Century."
[19] Faroqhi, "Coffee and Spices." 93.
[20] Faroqhi, "Coffee and Spices." 91.
[21] Faroqhi, "Coffee and Spices." 91-92.
[22] Ginio, "When Coffee Brought About Wealth and Prestige: The Impact of Egyptian Trade on Salonica."

Empire is echoed here, especially because of past preferences for European sources in studies of the Balkans.

Jane Hathaway also looked at the economics of coffee in her article "The Ottomans and the Yemeni Coffee Trade" by exploring how the popularity of coffee affected Yemen, where the majority of it was produced until its popularity in Europe led the Dutch to begin cultivation in the East Indies.[23] Her article dives far deeper into the political workings of the Ottoman Empire and how officials interacted with trade. She also explores how indigenous tribes in Yemen affected coffee trade, again emphasizing the importance of the diversity of the empire. Hathaway also makes connections with processes of globalization: the Yemeni coffee trade benefited the Ottomans enough to offset European intrusions into the spice trade.

Aleksander Fotic's 2011 article "The Introduction of Coffee and Tobacco to the Mid-West Balkans" also emphasizes exploring how different groups experienced coffee, in this case looking at Christians in the Balkans versus Ottoman Muslims.[24] He argues that "the methods of consuming coffee, the vessels and terminology, were taken over wholesale by the Christian population from the Ottoman cultural model," highlighting how non-Muslim populations like those in the Balkans were affected by Ottoman cultural trends.[25]

Both Ginio and Hathaway's articles were published in 2006, 20 years after Hattox's book and Faroqhi's article on Egyptian trade. With Fotic's 2011 article, they reflect developments within the field by highlighting the diversity of the Ottoman Empire and the areas it had influence over, especially where Hathaway explores indigenous Yemeni culture. These scholars expand on the vast nature of the Ottoman Empire, in which citizen's interactions with coffee

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[23] Hathaway, "The Ottomans and the Yemeni Coffee Trade."
[24] Fotić, "The Introduction of Coffee and Tobacco to the Mid-West Balkans."
[25] Fotić, "The Introduction of Coffee and Tobacco to the Mid-West Balkans." 95.

were not monolithic. This diversification of the field through a more traditional economic lens is indicative of larger trends in the field of history and specifically the study of Ottoman coffee culture.

Their emphasis on lands outside the core of the empire is especially important to note for the time period being studied here. Although explorations of the New World had begun in earnest by the 16th century, Ottoman history is not often considered in that aspect of globalization. The Ottoman Empire was at the center of Asian, African, and European trade. In terms of both objects and knowledge, the Ottoman Empire was exposed to a variety of cultures and existed on three continents at once. While coffee may have been produced in the close-at-hand lands of Yemen, it originated in Ethiopia and was drunk out of Chinese porcelain from Istanbul to the Ottoman-occupied regions of the Balkans. Representing that diversity of lands and peoples is an important factor in not representing the Ottoman Empire as a homogenous culture.

Consumption studies can also help show the diverse nature of Ottoman culture through a socioeconomic lens. The way that societies and individuals consume goods and services can reveal much about them. The rising trend of studying cultural history through consumption is evidenced by works such as Quataert's introduction to consumption in the Ottoman Empire,[26] the works of Eminegul Karababa,[27] and the 2018 book *Living the Good Life,* which compares consumption of Ottomans and the Qing Empire.[28] An array of other articles looking at consumption, especially in urban centers like Istanbul, have been published more recently. Archaeologist Uzi Baram, who published an article on coffee cups and tobacco pipes discovered

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[26] Quataert, *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922*.
[27] Karababa, "Investigating Early Modern Ottoman Consumer Culture in the Light of Bursa Probate Inventories1."
[28] Akçetin and Faroqhi, *Living the Good Life*.

in former Ottoman lands, provides an archeological perspective to this trend.[29] Each of these works is part of a newer approach to economic history that focuses in on people and goods rather than only trade and commerce.

For studying Ottoman coffee culture, understanding the objects around coffee consumers allows us to understand the consumers and their habits better. For example, the presence of tobacco pipes and coffee cups found together, as posited by Baram, suggests that the two were often consumed together.[30] Combining that archeological evidence with documents showing the importation of tobacco, poetry written about how men enjoyed both at the same time, religious and governmental bans which forbid coffee and tobacco collectively, and accounts from European travelers witnessing both imbibed together paints a picture of the consumption of the two substances together. Furthermore, from each source we can extrapolate the culture around the substances and understand how consumers connected with goods and with each other.

Food studies, which has grown significantly as a field in recent decades, occupies a considerable niche in cultural studies of the Ottoman Empire. Like consumption studies, it takes a fundamentally interdisciplinary approach to history through a particular niche: food. Using food studies frameworks allows cultural historians to understand people and cultures through food and can be an effective way of removing Eurocentrism from cultural studies. What, how, and when people eat says a lot about them. Although the empire was home to many cultures, there are some important mainstays in Ottoman food culture: banquets, entertaining, and coffee. Food and coffee went hand in hand, and therefore understanding one is crucial to understanding the other.

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[29] Baram, "Clay Tobacco Pipes and Coffee Cup Sherds in the Archaeology of the Middle East: Artifacts of Social Tensions from the Ottoman Past."
[30] Baram, "Clay Tobacco Pipes and Coffee Cup Sherds."

Books such as Nicolas Trepanier's *Foodways and Daily Life in Medieval Anatolia* and articles from the same period have connected food to identity.[31] Some of the best accounts of Ottoman foodways were written by European travelers, who understood Ottoman cuisine through their own experience of food in Europe. The identities of these travelers were fundamentally tied up in experiences of food in their homelands, which then spilled over into their accounts of Ottoman foods. Europeans also imposed that connection between identity and food onto their Ottoman contemporaries, although often in negative stereotypes.[32] Although the ways in which Ottomans and their European counterparts connected and identified with food has been studied, there is more room for a food studies approach to coffee and identity in the Ottoman Empire.

The Problem with Dichotomies: Space, Gender, and Publicness

The most recent and pertinent discourse on Ottoman coffee culture is the problem of dichotomies when discussing Ottoman life. The most traditional and pervasive of these is the European/Oriental divide, which views the Ottoman Empire and the rest of the Near and Far East as historically and culturally separate from Europe. Analyzing world history through a Eurocentric viewpoint makes the Ottoman Empire an 'other' and leads to multiple tropes in older literature: supposing a homogeneous culture in the Middle East, studying Middle Eastern history only where it intersects with European history, or imposing European metrics and ways of understanding on Middle Eastern culture. These factors have led to ignorance of the diversity of peoples and culture in the Near East, harmful stereotypes, and an understanding of Middle Eastern cultures that is fundamentally flawed by its basis in Western ideologies. Eurocentrism is

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[31] Trépanier, *Foodways and Daily Life in Medieval Anatolia*.
[32] Dursteler, "Bad Bread and the 'Outrageous Drunkenness of the Turks.'"

especially prominent in studies of modernity, with arguments often suggesting that modernity began in Europe and spread to the rest of the world through colonialism and globalization. For Ottoman coffee history, this is reflected in the adoption of Habermasian frameworks for studying the public and social natures of coffeehouses.

Jurgen Habermas is a German philosopher who published *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in 1962.[33] His argument around the formation of the public sphere in Britain is based in British coffeehouses and supposes a strict dichotomy between private and public society and apolitical cultural spheres and political social spaces. Habermas' work has been extremely influential, especially in studies of modernity, and it is no surprise that his theories have been applied to the Ottoman coffeehouse as well. Selma Ozkocak and Cengiz Kirli are two examples of applying a Habermasian framework to an investigation of coffeehouses in Istanbul.[34] They both establish the Ottoman coffeehouse as the key public space for men and discuss how social and political interactions were shaped in these spaces.[35]

In recent years, Habermas has been frequently critiqued, and that is no different for this particular topic. Alan Mikhail[36] and Ozlem Caykent with Derya Gurses Tarbuck[37] have written comprehensive critiques of applying Habermas' ideas of publicness to the Ottoman coffeehouse. Along with Uğur Kömeçoğlu, these authors propose a different philosophical framework, that of Michel Foucault's heterotopia, for a more nuanced understanding of coffeehouses.[38]

Foucault's proposal of heterotopic spaces in his 1984 article "Of Other Spaces" is a far cry from Habermas' strictly imposed line between the public and private. Instead, he proposed

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[33] Habermas, Burger, and Lawrence, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.
[34] Kirli, "The Struggle over Space : Coffeehouses of Ottoman Istanbul, 1780-1845."
[35] Selma Ozkocak, "Coffeehouses: Rethinking the Public and Private in Early Modern Istanbul."
[36] Mikhail, Alan in Sajdi, *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee*.
[37] Ozlem Caykent and Derya Tarbuck, "Coffeehouse Sociability: Themes, Problems, and Directions."
[38] Kömeçoğlu, "The Publicness and Sociabilities of the Ottoman Coffeehouse."

that globally there are places "in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted."[39]

Uğur Kömeçoğlu suggests that we apply Foucault's heterotopia to coffeehouses, based on the "heterogeneous and incongruous mix of practices (political, religious, seductive, literary, seditious, subversive, artful theatrical, carnivalesque, and so on)" that define them.[40] However, he still imagines the coffeehouse as completely in the public sphere. Caykent and Tarbuck take this one step further by arguing that the dichotomy of public and private presented by Habermas is limiting and that a nuanced understanding of coffeehouses is achievable with a more "innovative use of existing sources."[41] Their article is a call for a broader understanding of coffeehouse sociability than is presented by Ozkocak and Kömeçoğlu.

I propose that Caykent and Tarbuck's call had already been answered at the time of their writing, with a book cited in their own bibliography. In *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee,* Alan Mikhail's essay on "The Heart's Desire: Gender, Urban Space and the Ottoman Coffeehouse" rejects a Habermasian framework and adopts Foucault's idea of heterotopia.[42] Furthermore, Mikhail goes beyond the scope of the majority of the scholarship on the topic by exploring the dimensions of coffee drinking that occurred outside of the coffeehouse and more holistically examining coffee culture in all of its aspects.

Along with the Western/Eastern and public/private dichotomies, gender and the divide between the feminine and the masculine has also pervaded studies of Ottoman coffee culture. Often and especially for Middle Eastern societies, the public is associated with the male, such as the male-dominated coffeehouse, and the private is associated with the female, such as the

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[39] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces." 25.
[40] Kömeçoğlu, "The Publicness and Sociabilities of the Ottoman Coffeehouse." 16.
[41] Ozlem Caykent and Derya Tarbuck, "Coffeehouse Sociability: Themes, Problems, and Directions." 225.
[42] Mikhail, Alan in Sajdi, *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee*.

harem. This is a problematic and exclusionary viewpoint that oversimplifies representations and understandings of gender in the Ottoman Empire. As Mikhail writes, "by getting past these conflations of 'the public' with men and 'the private' with women, I think we come to a fuller understanding of Ottoman neighborhood life where what was meant by 'male' and 'female' was constantly changing and flowing between the home, the coffeehouse and the neighborhood."[43]

Mikhail elaborates a more fluid approach to gender and continues a long upward trend of representation of women and gender studies in history. Books on women in the Ottoman Empire such as those of Faroqhi[44] and Leslie Pierce[45] have helped widen our understanding of women's roles in Ottoman society. Formerly, the imperial harem was the main and often falsely stereotyped representation of women in the empire, but women and gender studies have begun exploring the social and cultural roles and women and sexuality. This is especially important for this research project because the Ottoman coffeehouse was an exclusively male institution in its early days. Because they are symbolic of coffee culture as a whole and are represented in more primary sources, cafes are often the exclusive focus of studies on Ottoman coffee. However, coffee was frequently prepared and drunk by women in homes and public baths and was an important part of women's social rituals. He argues that especially for lower classes, coffeehouses allowed women more space to entertain and socialize in the homes when men left for cafes. Poorer families could not afford larger homes with a separate selamlik and haremlik for men and women to host guests, so having men out of the house provided women with more socialization just as it did for men.

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[43] Mikhail, Alan in Sajdi, *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee*. 162.
[44] Faroqhi, *Women in the Ottoman Empire*.
[45] Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*.

Mikhail not only explores this under-discussed social function of coffee in women's lives; he also examines how the gender binary was represented and affected by coffeehouses. His works, along with articles such as Simon Leese's "Connoisseurs of the senses: tobacco smoking, poetic pleasures, and homoerotic masculinity in Ottoman Damascus," discuss homoeroticism in coffeehouses.[46] While the role of attractive young men as coffee servers and potentially sex workers is referenced in other works, Mikhail and Leese explore the gendered dimensions of leisure in coffeehouses and connect it to Ottoman conceptions of space, publicness, and modernity. Imposing a gender and sexuality lens on coffeehouses, especially considering their mainly male attendees, is a unique examination that is necessary for furthering understandings of Ottoman culture outside of European conceptions of masculinity.

As exemplified by Mikhail's essay, Foucault's heterotopias and a gender studies approach invite exactly the kind of discussion that is needed to advance discussions of Ottoman coffee culture in the right direction. By accepting that the coffeehouse is representative of both a myriad of aspects of Ottoman life and exploring those aspects outside the confines of the cafe, we gain two advantages. One is a more nuanced understanding of how Ottoman society at large was represented by and affected by the coffeehouse. The other is a perspective that allows exploration of the lesser-known parts of Ottoman coffee culture, and by extension Ottoman culture: coffee drinking in the selamlik, by women in the home, and in bathhouses. We can learn more about Ottoman culture by expanding our research beyond the symbolic, male-dominated coffeehouse.

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[46] Leese, "Connoisseurs of the Senses."

Moving Forward

While this historiography is in no way an exhaustive list of every work that addresses Ottoman coffee culture, it does show important changes in Ottoman historical research. By tracing the trends in scholarship over the last four decades, we can see a shift away from Eurocentrism and more traditional historical analyses. Rather than engaging in the more traditional economic, religious, and political conversations, historians are shifting towards a more cultural and more nuanced non-Western understanding of Ottoman coffee culture. Consumption, food, and women and gender studies, along with different philosophical frameworks have all been applied to reexamine the role of coffee in Ottoman culture.

The richness of sources is as important to research as how we read them, and in the case of Ottoman coffee culture, accessible primary sources could further expand the body of scholarship. In particular, expanding digitized resources, although not the easiest or cheapest task, could be beneficial. Digital humanities projects like the Digital Ottoman Studies site and the digital repositories of a number of universities and archival institutions are steps in the right direction, as they allow global researchers to work with fewer barriers to entry. Improving accessibility to primary sources through digitization is a hot topic in the archival field at the moment, but it is undeniable that for most historical research, it is immensely beneficial. For students in the field, access to scholarships and funding for travel is limited. E-books, online journal publications sites, and complex online library systems have already vastly expanded the information that is easily and often freely accessible to researchers. Primary sources are already being made accessible through platforms like Project Gutenberg and other digital repositories and will continue to expand and improve accessibility to important historical information. As

that expansion continues, more scholarship on Ottoman coffee culture from a variety of standpoints can be expected.

Those new areas of scholarship could benefit in several areas. First and foremost, it is difficult to find information on how exactly coffee was produced, shipped, and prepared in Yemen and the Ottoman empire. In the realm of food studies, the role of coffee as a mark of Ottoman identity could be examined as it affected different populations while it spread. Fotic's article is one example, but coffee was adopted in Anatolia, the Balkans, Arabia, North Africa, and eventually stretched into more of Europe and the Safavid Empire. How did it stop being identified as an Ottoman drink, and how did it affect the identities of the conquered peoples who drank it? The interdisciplinary nature of food studies research lends itself easily to such a complex topic that is grounded in one substance.

Coffee drinking in the home and in public bath houses by women is an underdeveloped area of study that could benefit from being the lone topic of an essay. It represents the quieter side of the conversation in the historiography that would complete the already robust scholarship on the male-dominated coffeehouse. While there are more limited primary sources, historians have already been able to write significant works on women in the Ottoman Empire which are being extended to include coffee culture.

Perhaps the most important direction for future research is the one it is already headed in: rejecting outdated dichotomies and embracing new ways of understanding. This has already occurred, as evidenced in this historiography, but must continue in order to fully understand Ottoman coffee culture. Foucault's conception of heterotopias is a more nuanced approach to understanding the complexities of the coffeehouse, and scholars like Caykent, Tarbuck, and Mikhail have questioned the overreliance on Habermasian theory and its strict public/private

dichotomy. However, Foucault's philosophies are still European in origin, and he certainly did not have Ottoman coffeehouses in mind when he wrote them. Can a complete understanding only come from an entirely Ottoman-informed point of view? Perhaps not, but contextualizing coffee culture as much as possible in the realities of Ottoman life and the actualities of Ottoman ways of thinking will result in the most well-rounded research.

The Digital Exhibit: Exploring Ottoman Coffee Culture in an Online Format

Americans drink millions of cups of coffee every day and the habit is deeply ingrained in our culture. But our coffee-drinking habits did not come out of nowhere, and as a researcher interested in food history, I wanted to share their origins. I felt that the traditional thesis format would not be accessible enough beyond the confines of the university, so I have turned my findings into a digital exhibit. This project synthesizes complex historical research into an accessible learning tool for a wider audience. Understanding of Ottoman history is limited in America but is significant in understanding world history and today's Middle Eastern cultures. By looking specifically at coffee culture, we can relate to Ottoman history and learn about ourselves in the process. Below, I explain how I used an accessibility-focused mindset, professional guidelines, and an interdisciplinary food studies approach to create this exhibit.

Designing the Exhibit

The Smithsonian Guide to Exhibit Development suggests a pyramid structure for outlining exhibition designs.[47] At the top is the big idea, then key messages, and finally critical questions. I employed this idea to guide my overall plan for the website. The Big Idea is to explore coffee culture in the Ottoman Empire. The key messages include:

- Coffee culture in the Ottoman Empire was part of everyday life for a variety of different people.

- Studying cultures of the past through artifacts and art can help us learn and relate to history.

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[47] Smithsonian Exhibits, "A Guide to Exhibit Development."

- By understanding the past, we can better understand ourselves.

The critical questions answered in the exhibit help to impart these key messages. They include:

- Where did coffee come from?

- How did coffee culture form and spread?

- Who drank coffee?

- How did people drink coffee in the Ottoman Empire?

- How is coffee connected to the history and culture of the Ottoman Empire?

- How was coffee culture in the Ottoman Empire similar to coffee culture today?

Rather than trying to directly answer these questions, the exhibit invites viewers to draw inferences of their own. Key takeaways can be different for each individual based on what interests them or draws their attention the most, but the big idea remains the same.

In order to execute this design, I created a self-guided website using the Google Suite's Sites program. Following exhibit development guidelines, I focused on concise paragraphs and captions tied to images and key concepts. I used a diversity of visual components including maps, artifacts, and paintings. I also made sure the site was easily navigable to allow self-paced exploration of the material.

Accessibility

Accessibility is a core tenet of this project. Accessible design in education and public history is incredibly important because it means as many people as possible can learn and benefit from the information presented. The traditional thesis format can be intellectually unavailable for many people because of the dense and jargony writing and the lack of clear background information. For example, the historiography portion of this thesis is written for those with a

background in history and academia. It has a lot of valuable information on the sources used and how the scholarship on this topic has evolved, but because it is not written for a public audience, it is not a good learning tool for understanding coffee culture in the Ottoman Empire.

In contrast, the digital exhibit offers an easily accessible learning tool. The intended audience is students and adults who have some experience learning about history and with museum-style exploration. Compared to an academic paper, the information presented is more intellectually accessible to that audience. It is more engaging, more readable, and more fun. In addition, it does not require travel to a physical exhibit or archive.

In order to make sure the website was as accessible and engaging as possible, I consulted the Smithsonian Accessibility Program's Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design.[48] The exhibit adheres to multiple of their suggestions, which I adapted for an online format. A common misconception is that accessibility features are only for people with disabilities, but they often make learning easier for everyone. For example, all the text on the website is in an easy-to-read font and clearly labeled with headings. In addition, body text and headings have high contrast with the background so that they are easier to read.

The Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design suggest that visitors should be able to access a variety of sensory experiences in an exhibit.[49] Because of the online format of this exhibit and the nature of the content, that was not entirely achievable. While I was not able to provide tactile or auditory experiences, I supplemented in several different ways. The exhibit combines text with a variety of maps, artwork, and artifacts to add visual engagement and invite visual analysis. Each image serves a purpose by helping the reader locate the topic or

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[48] Smithsonian Accessibility Program, "Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design."
[49] Smithsonian Accessibility Program, "Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design." 16.

demonstrating a part of Ottoman culture. The artwork and artifacts are almost all products of Ottoman artists and therefore exemplify the experiences and realities of the time.

In addition, each image has a caption, description, or alternative text that explains its contents. This is especially important for those using screen narration who may not be able to see images. All the text is designed with clear headings and flow so that it is understandable when read aloud with screen narration.

The flow of the website is an important aspect of the self-guided experience. From the home page, visitors can navigate with buttons or through the navigation bar. At the bottom of each page, there is a button leading to the next section. This suggests a path for readers to follow through the content which can help with navigation. In addition, the interactive slideshow functions have instructions to "click through" and arrows that appear to help readers navigate the slides. While the pages and slideshows have an implied order, visitors can enjoy them in any order and still learn from the exhibit.

Components

After researching, conceptualizing a plan, and applying principles of accessible exhibition design, I created a digital exhibit with six distinct sections. Each of these pages serves a purpose within the site while coexisting with other sections to create a cohesive exhibit. The information on the slides is based on the extensive research into the Ottoman Empire and its coffee culture discussed in the historiography portion of this thesis.

Visitors to the site are immediately presented with the home page, which outlines the purpose and sections of the exhibit. First, viewers are immediately drawn to the "hook" question: "Have you ever wondered why we drink coffee?" Following that is a brief explanation of what

the site is, what viewers can expect to learn, and how the exhibit connects to viewers.[50]

Underneath the hook, each of the four main learning pages are laid out with a clear title, brief description, and accompanying image. Visitors can navigate to any of these pages by clicking on the titles, which are also navigation buttons.[51] Finally, there is a link to further readings for viewers who want more information, and a brief explanation of this entire thesis project.[52] The home page introduces the viewer to the topic, helps them navigate the site, and explains the purpose and intent of the exhibit.

Through the home page or the navigation bar, viewers can reach the four main sections, beginning with "An Introduction to the Ottoman Empire."[53] The purpose of this page is to situate readers who are unfamiliar with Ottoman history and culture. A map and brief introduction locate the Ottomans in time and space and explains their culture. The information presented is a short synthesis of general histories of the Ottoman Empire.[54] [55] After reading, viewers can scroll down to a slideshow of Ottoman artifacts with brief explanations. Combining this historical introduction with visual analysis of art and objects helps make this page feel less like a lecture or blog post. It maintains visual interest while delivering important information that helps contextualize the coffee culture discussed in the next section. This page also has links to each artifact, all of which are housed in museums with robust digitized collections.[56] Including the sources invites readers to continue researching and learning more about the content of the

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[50] Figure 1.
[51] Figure 2.
[52] Figure 3.
[53] Figures 4-10.
[54] Baram, "Clay Tobacco Pipes and Coffee Cup Sherds in the Archaeology of the Middle East: Artifacts of Social Tensions from the Ottoman Past."
[55] Faroqhi, *A Cultural History of the Ottomans*.
[56] Figure 10.

page. The analysis of artifacts draws on their museum listings and a number of material culture[57] and consumption studies.[58]

After the brief introduction to the context of this project, the next page is a timeline of coffee history.[59] The page lays out the most important dates in the history of coffee. By combining maps, dates, and brief explanations, the reader can learn a lot about how coffee spread, the culture that fostered and spread it, and the changes coffee made. This page also uses a variety of maps and art to keep readers engaged and to help contextualize events in the places they happened. The dates in the timeline are drawn from Ralph Hattox's seminal research into coffee's spread [60] and several other articles documenting its spread.[61] [62]

Having learned more about Ottoman culture and the origins and spread of coffee, readers can immerse themselves in the most iconic site of Ottoman coffee culture, the coffeehouse. This page uses one richly detailed miniature painting to explore the key aspects of the coffeehouse.[63] Each slide focuses on one portion of the painting in order to show spatial and social aspects of the cafe. Captions describe the subjects and discuss key vocabulary terms.

Investigating art is an important tool for historical research because it presents a vision through the eyes of the artist. Many depictions of Ottomans in European art are heavily biased or stereotyped, like the Turk in the Viennese coffeehouse painting on the timeline page. By looking at this idealized vision of a coffeehouse that an Ottoman painter created, we can explore the material, social, and spatial aspects of coffee culture. The analysis of this painting draws on

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[57] Faroqhi, *A Cultural History of the Ottomans*.
[58] Yilmaz Birsen, "Turkish Cultural Heritage: A Cup of Coffee."
[59] Figures 11-15.
[60] Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*. 26,28.
[61] Fotić, "The Introduction of Coffee and Tobacco to the Mid-West Balkans."
[62] Hathaway, "The Ottomans and the Yemeni Coffee Trade."
[63] Figures 16-20.

Ralph Hattox's and Alan Mikhail's in-depth descriptions of coffeehouses.[64] Mikhail's essay is especially helpful for the vocabulary associated with different spaces within the coffeehouse.[65]

The last section is an exploration of where coffee drinking occurred outside of the coffeehouse.[66] This was especially important to include because so much of the scholarship on this topic has focused exclusively on coffeehouses. Coffee has been linked to Islam since its arrival in Yemen and I wanted to highlight that religious importance. Hattox extensively explored the connection between Islam and coffee and was the main source for that section.[67]

In addition, coffeehouses were historically male-dominated spaces. Therefore, scholarship on the topic has naturally excluded women from the conversation, despite their frequent consumption of coffee. I highlight women's consumption of coffee while also describing important spaces and traditions within Ottoman culture, such as the dinner party. This page makes the research presented more well-rounded and more in line with trends in the scholarship. Mikhail's essay was once again fruitful for this section because of his focus on the gendered aspects of coffee drinking.[68] Cultural and food studies approaches to Ottoman history were also key sources for understanding the importance of bathhouses, hosting, and dinner parties.[69]

The website concludes with a "Further Reading" section which invites viewers to explore and learn more about the topic.[70] In addition to linking to this written thesis, which contains a complete bibliography, I listed some of the most helpful resources on a variety of topics. These

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[64] Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses.*
[65] Mikhail, Alan in Sajdi, *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee*. 162.
[66] Figures 21-24.
[67] Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses.*
[68] Mikhail, Alan in Sajdi, *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee*.
[69] Singer, *Starting with Food*.
[70] Figure 25.

represent some of the main fields and trends referenced in my historiography, and provide access to primary sources, which can be difficult to access for this topic. The objective of this exhibit is to foster learning and exploration on a little-known but relevant topic. Inviting further research and providing ways to do it aligns perfectly with that goal.

Conclusion

This project was born from a single question: "Why do we drink coffee?" Combined with a passion for food studies, accessibility, and public history, that simple query has led to a thorough and useful answer. The research conducted and presented in this thesis is interdisciplinary, invites more learning and scholarship on this topic, and makes important contributions to accessibility in history.

By approaching the historiographical research from an interdisciplinary perspective, I was able to gain a richer understanding of the topic. Confining historical research only to secondary sources written by other historians is unproductive and does not represent the richness of scholarship on this topic. Instead, I employed a food studies approach, which is fundamentally interdisciplinary. Incorporating information presented by archeologists, sociologists, philosophers, and a variety of other scholars helped expand the viewpoints and analytical frameworks I explored. In addition, I found this approach more suited to a digital humanities project like this exhibit, because it can be more widely used as an educational tool.

This thesis also supplies future researchers with valuable information. The historiography examines the field, points out issues in the scholarship, suggests current and future trends, and presents possible routes for further work. For those inspired by the exhibit to learn more, the "Further Reading" page lists useful works and primary sources. For students, teachers, and curious researchers, the complete bibliography is a treasure trove of scholarship on the Ottoman Empire and all the ways it can be studied.

Finally, I believe that this thesis is an important example of accessibility in history and the humanities. By making the information here intellectually accessible to a larger audience, this project promotes awareness, learning, and interest in the humanities. The online format

allows the most amount of people to access this information, and the accessibility features broaden that audience even further.

   This project effectively takes a part of our daily lives, coffee, and makes its history more accessible. The combination of scholarly research and effective design has generated a learning tool that connects us to the past. It showcases the significance of incorporating digital resources into our learning practices, and the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in history and food studies.

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