
Smoking and “Early Modern” Sociability: The Great Tobacco Debate in the Ottoman Middle East (Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries)

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IN APRIL 1699, an unusual disturbance broke out in the streets of Cairo. As part of the annual pilgrimage caravan, which escorted Muslim pilgrims through the Sinai Desert to the holy cities of Arabia, a solemn procession was conveying a new silk covering destined for the Ka'ba, or Sacred Shrine, in Mecca. Among the most notable participants were a group of North Africans, who created an uproar as they moved through the streets. Fired by religious zeal, they insisted on applying their own brand of Islamic morality to the crowd of onlookers. In choosing targets for chastisement, they were very specific, beating all the people whom they found smoking tobacco. As the tumult grew, they made their decisive mistake. Seizing a member of a local paramilitary group, they smashed his pipe, and during the ensuing quarrel, went so far as to hit him over the head. The crowd had apparently seen enough. Even as soldiers rushed to the scene, the “people of the marketplace” took matters into their own hands and began attacking the North Africans. The violence ended only with the arrival of a Janissary officer, who hauled the North Africans off to prison.¹

Looking back on this incident from a very different time and place, with our own concerns and passions about tobacco, it is hard not to be struck by the deep emotions that smoking, even then, was capable of eliciting. Walking around Middle Eastern towns today, one could never imagine that such struggles ever took place. Nearly everyone has now accepted smoking as a public freedom. Few people would dream of condemning it as a moral scourge, or of banishing it from the streets and markets. If smokers today hear medical warnings about the dangers of tobacco, they remain oblivious to the acrimony that it once unleashed. This tolerant consensus did not emerge all at once. After its first arrival in the Ottoman Middle East at the end of the sixteenth century, tobacco would ignite intense debates about its legality and morality. The altercation in the streets of Cairo highlights these divisions in opinion. Invoking religion and morality, the rowdy North Africans were determined to put an end to smoking, and felt justified in using extreme measures. On the other side, the “people of the marketplace” completely denied this presumptive right to intervene in the affairs of others or to act independently on behalf of religion. To make their point, both camps were willing to come to blows.

Why had tobacco become the subject of such bitter controversy? As contempo-

¹ ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (1754–1822), *ʿAjaʿib al-athar fi al-tarajim wa al-akhbar*, ed. ʿAbd al-Rahim ʿAbd al-Rahim, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1997), 1: 55.

aries could not have fully realized, the spread of smoking was a major cultural watershed that was both profoundly liberating and unsettling. It helped to accelerate cultural transformations that earlier generations could hardly have foreseen. In its strictly physical aspects, it brought about a revolution in the use of the body, which in the act of inhaling smoke now performed an operation that medieval populations across the planet would have found startling and perplexing. More troubling were its hedonistic overtones. In the long term, smoking would help to redefine patterns of social interaction, promoting more relaxed attitudes about pleasure and opening up new avenues for leisure and escapism. In coming to grips with these seductions, the Ottoman Middle East would acquire some of the most salient characteristics of an "early modern" culture.

It may seem surprising to link tobacco so directly with a discussion of early modern history. One might even object to the use of the terminology itself. Did the Middle East—or, for that matter, any other part of the world outside Western Europe—have an "early modern" period? Or is it simply a concept recklessly borrowed from the historiography of Europe, for which it was first devised? Skeptics foresee a repetition of the same mistakes that once doomed modernization theory, and worry that the search for "early modernity" will lead to a vain attempt to find—or artificially impose—European norms on non-European societies.² Arrayed against them are historians, often with one eye on a new narrative for world history, who are searching for common threads in the worldwide experience stretching roughly from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. As they see it, an "early modern" history can be built upon signs that, during this period, large parts of the world were undergoing an unprecedented level of economic integration.³ They would point mostly to parallel trends in political economy: the rise of large "gunpowder" empires; common recourse to experiments in imperial administration such as tax farming and venality of office; the increasing synchronization of price waves around Eurasia; and a burgeoning trade in precious metals and luxury commodities across long-distance commercial networks. These deep structural forces, slowly gathering momentum, would eventually lay the foundation for the modern era of "globalization."

One feature of all these theories is that they seek the defining characteristics of "early modernity" in the actions of political and commercial elites. Without dismissing the great weight that these groups carried, one might easily ask whether any discussion can afford to overlook transformations in popular culture. Were there any overarching cultural movements, beyond those specific to Western Europe (such as the growth of a print culture), that might have produced common "early modern" responses? One likely catalyst was the worldwide diffusion of new commodities that, winning almost instant favor, would later be integral to the creation of a modern consumer culture. This history of early modern consumption is still being recon-

² For one of the most trenchant critiques, see Jack Goldstone, "The Problem of the 'Early Modern' World," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41 (1998): 249–284.

³ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (1997): 735–762; John F. Richards, "Early Modern India and World History," *Journal of World History* 8 (1997): 197–209; Evelyn Rawski, "The Qing Formation and the Early Modern Period," in Lynn Struve, ed., *The Qing Formation in World Historical Time* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004); David Ludden, "Urbanism and Early Modernity in the Tirunelveli Region," *Bengal Past and Present* 114 (1995): 9–40. For a more Eurocentric perspective on this debate, see the collection of essays in *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998).

structed, and outside northwestern Europe and colonial North America, it remains particularly obscure.⁴ What seems certain, however, is that throughout much of Eurasia, growing numbers of consumers were indulging a taste for entirely new luxuries. Taking its place among these coveted consumer goods was tobacco, which, along with tea and coffee, caught on more quickly and did more to shape a recognizably “early modern” lifestyle than any other commodity.

THE ORIGINS OF TOBACCO, as is well known, are to be found in the New World. In the wake of the Spanish conquests around the Caribbean basin, where the practice of smoking was first noticed and imitated by European sailors, tobacco speedily made its way to Europe. At first it won fame as a newfound panacea, touted as a treatment for everything from head colds to visitations of the plague. From these early pharmacological applications, it soon passed into recreational use. It had branched out as a popular addiction in England, Holland, and Spain by the end of the sixteenth century, and in a matter of decades reached the rest of Europe. At the same time, smoking was becoming a truly worldwide recreation. The first leaves of tobacco had probably arrived in South Asia by the mid-1500s, and from this launching point the plant moved on to China and Japan by the early decades of the seventeenth century. Well before 1700, tobacco had become a major cash crop throughout much of Asia, which was now growing its own ample supplies.⁵

In the Middle East, as in Europe, tobacco first attracted interest among physicians, and was appearing in medical manuals by the last years of the sixteenth century.⁶ The most likely channel for this knowledge was non-Muslims who had contacts with Europeans or were capable of translating works from their languages.⁷ Facilitating the transfer of ideas and techniques was a common medical framework from one end of the Mediterranean to the other: the theory of humors inherited from antiquity. Within this familiar medical scheme, tobacco was hailed as a versatile treatment. Displaying the same unfounded optimism as their European counterparts, Ottoman physicians were soon applying packs and poultices of tobacco leaves for ailments such as bites and burns. In tribute to its emetic properties, they even

⁴ For a recent discussion of consumerism in the Ottoman Empire, see Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 2000); Donald Quataert, ed., *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550–1922* (Albany, N.Y., 2000). For one other recent attempt at finding “early modernity” in the Middle East, mainly in the architecture of eighteenth-century Istanbul, see Shirine Hamadeh, “Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the ‘Inevitable’ Question of Westernization,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 63 (2004): 32–51.

⁵ In South Asia, for example, tobacco had conquered a huge market for itself by the middle of the seventeenth century; Ashin Das Gupta, *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500–1800* (New York, 2001), 208; B. G. Gokhale, “Tobacco in 17th-Century India,” *Agricultural History* 48 (1974): 484–492; Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mogul India (1556–1707)* (New York, 2001), 50–51. On the spread of tobacco to East Asia, see Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York, 1979), 262–264; V. G. Kiernan, *Tobacco: A History* (London, 1991), 25; Berthold Laufer, *Tobacco and Its Use in Asia* (Chicago, 1924), 1–5, 10–11.

⁶ See, for example, the comment in İbrahim Peçevi (1574–1649?), *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1866), 1: 365.

⁷ Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, “Ottoman Science in the Classical Period and Early Contacts with European Science and Technology,” in İhsanoğlu, ed., *Transfer of Modern Science and Technology to the Muslim World* (Istanbul, 1992), 39–40.

recommended drafts of tobacco juice as an antidote for poisons or prescribed it as an abortifacient.⁸

The jump to recreational smoking took place very quickly. As one Palestinian scholar reported in the first decades of the seventeenth century, tobacco was already smoked openly in “gathering places of the people, like the markets and streets.”⁹ Most of these early aficionados were probably townspeople, who could have more readily afforded an expensive import from across the Atlantic.¹⁰ From these relatively affluent and privileged beginnings, the number of smokers rapidly multiplied. Alert to this buoyant demand, and instrumental in feeding it, were regional merchants, who soon began overtaking European suppliers and tapping sources closer to home. By 1700, the Ottoman market was producing most of its own tobacco, which was grown most widely in Macedonia, Anatolia, and northern Syria, supplemented by highly esteemed imports from Iran, where the plant had also established itself. Thanks to this early self-sufficiency, the price of tobacco would decline steadily throughout the eastern Mediterranean from the late seventeenth century onward. Urban markets bore witness to this pronounced expansion of the trade. In Cairo alone, the first guild of tobacconists had appeared by the middle decades of the seventeenth century; the French expedition (1798–1801) would later count two others, together with five involved in the manufacture of different kinds of pipes. This commercial success meant that tobacco was more accessible to Ottoman consumers than coffee, which had gotten an earlier start, and yet was probably drunk with much less frequency outside the towns. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, tobacco was already cheaper by weight, and by 1800 the difference had grown to roughly threefold.¹¹ Smoking, not coffee drinking, would quickly become the most affordable diversion of the Ottoman population.

All segments of Middle Eastern society contributed to this ever-widening demand. Surveying tobacco’s progress in his own lifetime, the Damascene jurist ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi confidently declared in 1682, “Tobacco has now become extremely famous in all the countries of Islam . . . People of all kinds have used it and devoted themselves to it . . . I have even seen young children of about five years

⁸ For examples of medical uses, see ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi (1641–1731), *al-Sulh bayn al-ikhwan fi hukm ibahat al-dukhan*, ed. Ahmad Muhammad Dahman (Damascus, 1924), 26–28.

⁹ Mar’i bin Yusuf al-Karmi (d. 1623/1624), *Tahqiq al-burhan fi sha’n al-dukhan aladhi yashrabuhu al-nas al-an*, ed. Mashhur bin Hasan Al Salman (Beirut, 1974), 109. On the spread of tobacco to Arabia around the same time, see Muhammad al-Muhibbi (1651–1699), *Khulasat al-athr fi a’yān al-qarn al-hadi ‘ashar*, 4 vols. (Beirut, n.d.), 2: 80.

¹⁰ Seventeenth-century authors suggest that West Africa may have acted as a second source for the diffusion of tobacco (at least along the southern shores of the Mediterranean). See, for example, Ibrahim al-Laqani (d. 1631/1632), *Nasihāt al-ikhwan bi-ijtināb al-dukhan*, ed. Ahmad Mahmud Al Mahmud (Manamah, 1990), 59; al-Nabulsi, *al-Sulh*, 19. Lending credibility to these claims is the archaeological evidence. Pipes from seventeenth-century Palestine, for example, have shown a distinct resemblance to West African styles; Uzi Baram, “Entangled Objects from the Palestinian Past: Archaeological Perspectives for the Ottoman Period, 1500–1900,” in Uzi Baram and Lynda Carroll, eds., *A Historical Archaeology of the Ottoman Empire: Breaking New Ground* (New York, 2000), 149–150.

¹¹ To take a key benchmark: the price of tobacco would remain low even as, in Egypt and Syria, wheat roughly doubled in price over the same period; André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1974), 1: 76–77, 79, 216; 2: 514. For a comparison with the price of coffee, *ibid.*, 1: 70. For similar trends in Syria, see James Grehan, *Everyday Life and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century Damascus* (Seattle, Wash., forthcoming), chap. 4. On the limited role of coffee drinking in the countryside, see Michel Tuchscherer, “Les Cafés dans l’Égypte ottomane (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles),” in Hélène Desmet-Grégoire and François Georgeon, eds., *Cafés d’Orient revisités* (Paris, 1997), 93.

applying themselves to it.”¹² Among these early enthusiasts were many women. In the early seventeenth century, one Egyptian scholar, al-Barzali, was already lamenting that it caused women to lose their “buxomness.” By the eighteenth century, as tobacco continued to gain popularity, some had grown bold enough to flaunt their pipes in public. In Damascus in 1750, one startled townsman noticed a number of women “greater than the men, sitting along the bank of the [Barada River]. They were eating and drinking, and drinking coffee and [smoking] tobacco just as the men were doing.”¹³ By this time, smoking had become commonplace in large parts of the countryside as well.¹⁴ The prosperity of the Ottoman regional trade, sustained by its own cheap and readily available supplies, may very well have ensured that Ottoman consumers had better access to tobacco than their European counterparts, who had to contend with colonial monopolies and high import taxes.¹⁵

As an added enticement, beyond the falling price of tobacco alone, smoking required only the most rudimentary equipment, which made it simpler than coffee drinking. The most practical device was the ordinary pipe, which was made out of wood or clay and was available to consumers of nearly any means. As the market grew, so too did the range of models, which by the eighteenth century had undergone a noticeable proliferation in shape, style, and color.¹⁶ All held the attraction of convenience and portability. Some were short enough to be tucked into a sleeve when not needed or—as we shall see—when discretion was the order of the day. Even the longer pipes, fancied by grandees and others who wished to cut a good figure, consisted of several shorter segments, which could be easily carried and assembled.¹⁷ In Ottoman Egypt, their slender stems became the perfect hiding place for secret messages carried between Janissaries.¹⁸ The main alternative was the water pipe, or hookah. First popularized in India and Iran during the early seventeenth century, it had quickly migrated westward to the Ottoman Middle East.¹⁹ The market offered a wide selection of styles: everything from elegant crystal bottles to sturdy clay vessels and polished coconut shells. The one drawback of the water pipe was that it required

¹² Al-Nabulsi, *al-Sulh*, 36.

¹³ Al-Laḡani, *Nasihah*, 72; Ahmad al-Budayri (d. 1763?), *Hawadith dimashq al-yawmiyya*, ed. Ahmad ʿIzzat ʿAbd al-Karim (Cairo, 1959), 140. See also *ibid.*, 130; William Wittman, *Travels in Turkey, Asia Minor, Syria, and across the Desert into Egypt* (London, 1803), 245, 390.

¹⁴ Joseph Tournefort (d. 1708), *A Voyage into the Levant*, 3 vols. (London, 1741), 3: 56, 173; Egmond van der Nijenburg (d. 1747), *Travels through Part of Europe, Asia Minor, the Islands of the Archipelago, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Mt. Sinai &c.*, 2 vols. (London, 1759), 2: 48, 204; Richard Pococke (d. 1765), *A Description of the East and Some Other Countries* (London, 1743), 1: 72–73, 128; Vivant Denon (d. 1825), *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*, trans. Arthur Aikin, 2 vols. (London, 1803), 1: 155, 320; C. F. Volney, *Travels in Syria and Egypt in the Years 1783, 1784, and 1785*, 2 vols. (London, 1794), 2: 409; John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels in Arabia* (London, 1829), 426; Napoleon I and Gilles Néret, *Description de l'Égypte*, 9 vols. (Alexandria, 1943), 6: 548–549.

¹⁵ These barriers ensured that even at the end of the eighteenth century, many parts of the countryside in Western Europe could not count on regular supplies of tobacco; Jacob M. Price, “Tobacco Use and Tobacco Taxation: A Battle of Interests in Early Modern Europe,” in Jordan Goodman, Paul E. Lovejoy, and Andrew Sherratt, eds., *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology* (New York, 1995), 166–169.

¹⁶ Baram, “Entangled Objects,” 149–150.

¹⁷ See the description in Edward Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1908), 138.

¹⁸ See, for example, al-Jabarti, *ʿAjaʿib*, 1: 417, 483.

¹⁹ Al-Nabulsi, *al-Sulh*, 19; see also Jordan Goodman, *Tobacco in History: The Cultures of Dependence* (New York, 1993), 86–87.

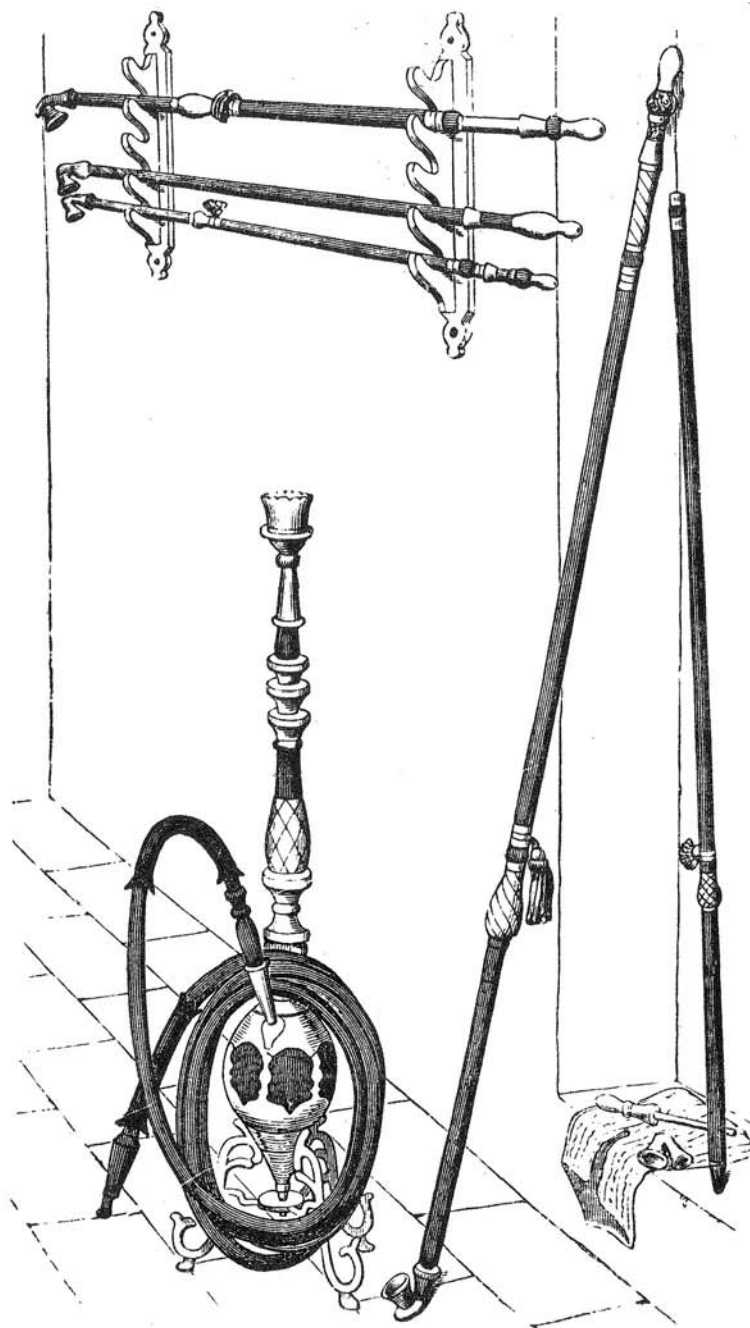


FIGURE 1: Examples of pipes and hookahs used by Ottoman consumers. From Edward Lane (d. 1876), *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836; 5th ed., New York, 1973), 135.

stationary leisure. Relatively bulky and time-consuming in its preparations, it was nonetheless perfect for the most relaxed venues, such as the coffeehouse or bathhouse, where patrons and their employees were always on hand to bring more tobacco and replenish burning coals. Only in Iran, where affluent smokers eschewed

the pipe altogether, did the hookah attain some degree of mobility, carried in saddlebags by attentive servants.²⁰ Other means of taking tobacco were unknown or failed to catch on. Snuff established itself in China early on, and by the eighteenth century had swept through Catholic Europe, where in countries such as France, it briefly managed to overtake smoking.²¹ In the Middle East, it generated little interest.²² Cigarettes, the avatars of modern tobacco culture, would not make their first appearance until the second half of the nineteenth century.²³

THE VICTORY OF TOBACCO was by no means foreordained. Throughout Eurasia, one can follow its progress from a wave of prohibitions—nearly all of them equally futile and short-lived—wherever smokers began to take up the habit.²⁴ In one place after another, it aroused the furor of religious and moral commentators and spurred governments to take action and try to root out the new pastime. To secure its place in early modern consumer culture, tobacco would have to overcome formidable barriers in opinion and policy.

This moral and legal struggle would become unusually intense in the Ottoman Middle East. From the time of its first entry, tobacco would have to rebuff strenuous challenges from political and religious authorities, who in the most critical tests of its appeal would join forces in sporadic anti-smoking campaigns. The depth of their indignation, matched only by the ultimate futility of their policies, needs to be explained. What was so offensive about tobacco that would turn it into such a contentious issue? In fact, many of the anxieties and uncertainties that infused discussions about tobacco had their origins in an earlier controversy over coffee. If tobacco could later march to fame (or infamy for unrelenting conservatives), it owed a great debt to coffee, which had prepared the way and whetted the appetites of Middle Eastern consumers for new tastes and recreations.

Coffee started as a regional phenomenon. Indigenous to Ethiopia and Yemen, it did not emerge as a popular beverage until the late fifteenth century. Originally touted by Sufi shaykhs as an aid to wakeful meditation in their all-night vigils, the new drink had already burst onto the scene in Mecca by the beginning of the sixteenth

²⁰ Rudi Matthee argues that one key difference between Ottoman and Iranian tobacco culture was that in Iran, the choice of smoking implement was more directly correlated with class. Wealthy Iranians showed an unshakable devotion to the hookah, whereas the pipe was definitely plebeian; Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500–1900* (Princeton, N.J., 2005), 132–133.

²¹ On snuff in China, see Goodman, *Tobacco in History*, 88–89; on snuff-taking in Europe, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants*, trans. David Jacobson (New York, 1992), 131–146.

²² Contemporary reports mention desperate smokers in Istanbul who resorted to snuff during the height of Murad IV's anti-smoking campaign in the 1630s. Apart from this brief episode, it seems not to have attained much popularity. Katib Çelebi (1609–1657), *The Balance of Truth*, trans. Geoffrey Lewis (New York, 1957), 58.

²³ Muhammad Raghīb al-Tabbakh (1877–1951), *l'lam al-nubala' bi-tarikh halab al-shahba'*, 7 vols. (Aleppo, 1988), 3: 355; Muhammad Sa'id al-Qasimi (d. 1900), *Qamus al-sana'at al-shamiyya*, ed. Zafir al-Qasimi (Damascus, 1988), 330. On the origins of the cigarette industry in the Middle East, see Donald Quataert, *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881–1908: Reactions to European Economic Penetration* (New York, 1983), 17–18; Relli Schechter, "Selling Luxury: The Rise of the Egyptian Cigarette and the Transformation of the Egyptian Tobacco Market, 1850–1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 (2003): 51–75.

²⁴ Braudel, *Structures*, 262.

century, and within a few short years had made the jump to Egyptian markets, which would rapidly transmit coffee throughout the eastern Mediterranean. In its wake came coffeehouses, which began to sprout up in towns throughout the Middle East. As novel as the drink itself, they became renowned for the loose, worldly atmosphere that they harbored. Coffeehouses had already opened in Mecca before the Ottoman conquest (1516–1517), and by 1555, two Syrians had set up the first establishment in Istanbul itself.²⁵ Moralists were aghast. Drawn mostly from the ranks of the ulama (members of the Muslim religious establishment), they inveighed against coffee as an intoxicant fully comparable to wine.²⁶ Their disquiet extended to official circles as well. In the initial reaction to the new beverage, the local Mamluk authorities had tried to stamp out coffee drinking in Mecca in 1511, but the campaign made no progress.²⁷ The tide of popular and legal opinion was already turning rapidly. Defenders of coffee, who boasted their own scholarly credentials, dismissed the legal objections of the opposition as groundless, praised coffee for its medical benefits, and authorized drinking within the bounds of propriety—if, for example, it did not accompany immoral activities or in any way impede religious obligations.²⁸ Consumers did not wait for the outcome of the debate. By the end of the sixteenth century, coffee drinking had entrenched itself as one of the consolations of everyday life. The coffee trade, centered in Yemen and directed mostly from Egypt, boomed, and by the early seventeenth century had largely taken up the slack from the decline in the international spice trade in the eastern Mediterranean.²⁹

The furor over the new drink had hardly subsided when tobacco first ventured into the Middle East. To understand the moral and legal reaction to this newcomer, we need to keep in mind the earlier travails of coffee, which set up much of the framework that subsequent debates would follow. One of the great difficulties concerning tobacco, carried over from the earlier wrangling about coffee, was that jurists could not count on any explicit guidance from scriptural sources, which could not possibly have had anything to say about substances that would not appear until later times.³⁰ This silence bred ambiguity, which soon manifested itself as full-blown scholarly dissension. Lacking clear scriptural authority, which could have definitively settled the debate one way or another, foes of tobacco tried to justify their objections on several different grounds. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (and even in later times), the arguments were fairly consistent.³¹ Authors tended to

²⁵ Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 1: 363–364; Ralph Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle, Wash., 1985), 77–78.

²⁶ For biographies of prominent opponents, see Muhammad ibn al-Hanbali (1502/1503–1563), *Durr al-habab fi tarikh a'yan halab*, ed. Mahmud Ahmad al-Fakhuri and Yahya Zakariya 'Abbara, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1972), 1: 701; 2: 124, 225; Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi (1570–1651), *al-Kawakib al-sa'ira bi-a'yan al-mi'a al-ashira*, ed. Jibra'il Sulayman Jabbur, 3 vols. (Beirut, 1979), 2: 111–112, 152–153; 3: 222–223.

²⁷ 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaziri (1505/1506–1569), *Umdat al-safwa fi hall al-qahwa*, ed. 'Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Habashi (Abu Dhabi, 1996), 132–134, 65–66; Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, 43.

²⁸ On the views of opponents, see al-Jaziri, *Umdat*, 69–73; for a rebuttal of these positions, see *ibid.*, 74, 108, 130. For biographies of leading supporters, or those who had quietly incorporated coffee into their daily lives, see ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr*, 1: 1007–1008; al-Ghazzi, *al-Kawakib*, 1: 185, 321; al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat*, 1: 261, 301–302, 389–390; 2: 196–197. See also Michael Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Modern Egypt: Studies in the Writings of 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani* (London, 1982), 190–191.

²⁹ Raymond, *Artisans*, chap. 5.

³⁰ See the discussion in Faruk Beşer, "İslam Fıkhı," in Nail Erhan, ed., *Sigara ve İnsan Sağlığı* (Istanbul, 1993), 50.

³¹ For a historical overview of the arguments against tobacco, collected into a single volume, see

differ only on what they stressed as tobacco's most odious qualities. Some concentrated on a few select points; others tried to lay out a more elaborate case and dutifully recited the whole panoply of criticisms from the legal literature.

One common strategy was to argue by analogy, casting tobacco as an intoxicant and equating it with wine, which the Qur'an had unequivocally banned. As a legal tool, this method was fully enshrined in the long tradition of Islamic law. If no explicit rulings were to be found in the Qur'an and traditions of the prophet Muhammad (*hadith*), it might be possible to infer the correct course of action by reasoning from analogy. A number of sixteenth-century scholars had tried precisely this line of attack against coffee. They tried to show that it produced the same visible signs of intoxication as wine, from excessive laughter and animation to unseemly slips of the tongue. To clinch their case, a few critics cited the early custom, before drinking at coffeehouses became the norm, of passing a coffee cup around a group of drinkers, in imitation of wine-drinking rituals. Rebuttals were immediately forthcoming as defenders of coffee—and later, of tobacco—declared that nothing in either substance produced anything resembling intoxication. In the full flush of conviviality, some individuals might become louder and less restrained in their behavior. But what might at first seem like evidence of intoxication proceeded, in reality, from an entirely innocent excitation of mind and spirit. The true causes of these symptoms, they maintained, were warm fellowship and lively conversation, to which coffee and tobacco were nothing more than accompaniments.³² Anti-tobacco authors did not give up, responding that novice smokers experienced a suspicious dizziness and, like wine drinkers, took time to grow accustomed to it. Even if they later showed no baleful aftereffects, they would have secretly fallen under the influence of a proscribed intoxicant.³³ As these quibbles about physical and medical properties were potentially endless, or at any rate exceedingly difficult to resolve, the debate was soon extended to other fronts.

In the search for supplementary arguments, one favorite theme, which looks quite fitting and prescient from a modern perspective, was to decry smoking because it was bad for the health. Critics chose several targets. Some classified tobacco as a source of "fatigue" that perceptibly undermined physical vigor. Others focused on the foul odor that it left on the breath.³⁴ Building on these feelings of revulsion, one argument simply placed tobacco in the category of "disgusting substances" (pl. *khaba'ith*) that

Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-Kittani (d. 1927), *I'lan al-hujja wa iqamat al-burhan 'ala man 'ma 'amma wa fasha min isti'mal 'ushbat al-dukhan* (Damascus, 1990). Al-Kittani was a Moroccan scholar who carried the legal battle against smoking into the early twentieth century. One of the virtues of his work, which is really a compendium of some three hundred years of Islamic denunciations of tobacco, is that it draws on all four Sunni legal schools (*madhhab*). Many arguments are preserved in full through long quotations, making it an ideal source for charting the evolution of the debate from its origins to the end of the Ottoman period. Most interesting is the pan-Islamic consistency of the anti-tobacco legal attacks, which transcended sectarian divisions. For Shi'ite denunciations of smoking, which followed roughly the same lines as Sunni critiques, see the discussion of Iranian debates in Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, 135–137.

³² Al-Nabulsi, *al-Sulh*, 76–77.

³³ Muhammad ibn Mustafa al-Khadimi (1701/1702–1762/1763), *Bariqa mahmudiyya fi sharh tariqa muhammadiyya wa shar'i'a nabawiyya fi sira ahmadiyya*, 4 vols. (Istanbul, 1900), 4: 111. See also the writings of Muhammad 'Ali ibn 'Alan al-Siddiqi; for his biography, see al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat*, 4: 187.

³⁴ Al-Khadimi, *Bariqa*, 4: 111; al-Karmi, *Tahqiq*, 114–122; al-Kittani, *I'lan*, 57–59.

Islamic tradition deemed unfit for use.³⁵ The most adamant moralists could not imagine how anyone could possibly enjoy the act of smoking. They cited reports of mischief in which individuals had deceived smokers by substituting all kinds of foreign ingredients, such as "dried clover and horse manure," for their usual supplies of tobacco. The victims of such pranks, they claimed, could never tell the difference.³⁶ This dulling of the senses, alleged as one of the primary harms of smoking, became part of a more general attack. If smokers could not really taste their noisome delicacy, they could not really notice the deficiencies in hygiene from which they progressively suffered. Enemies of tobacco (in Europe as well as the Middle East) dwelled on the offensive sights and smells that it was held to produce.³⁷ Smokers dirtied their beards, mustaches, clothes, even the insides of their homes, as they left behind a trail of ashes and spent coals.³⁸

Emotions ran highest in discussions of tobacco's immorality. These writings, which lead into the recesses of the social imagination, treated tobacco as deeply menacing to spirit and character, far beyond any harm posed to physical health. Fearful critics saw smoking as an inducement to idleness and profligacy.³⁹ And the very novelty of tobacco, like coffee before it, was unsettling to a religious and legal tradition that looked with suspicion upon nearly any "innovation" (*bid'a*). Some jurists made it a central part of their case against smoking, which, as a clear departure from earlier behavior, seemed to erode the foundations of the Islamic moral order.⁴⁰ Nearly every aspect of the habit was troubling. In the most extravagant visions, the fire and smoke that accompanied the act of lighting a pipe conjured up hellfire and eternal damnation.⁴¹ Critics warned that smokers would appear on the Day of Judgment with blackened faces and hookahs hung around their necks; until that time, they would burn in their graves, like the tobacco in their pipes. Offering proof of these future torments, some "reliable authorities" testified about nocturnal visions in which they opened the graves of former smokers and found them to be full of smoke; looking inside, they discovered corpses with altered faces and pipes still lodged in their mouths.⁴² Thus smoking was not an innocent pastime. It had moral ramifications for the afterlife that smokers could understand simply by reading the clues from their pipes: fire, smoke, blackened bowls, disfiguring vapors and residues.

In exposing the evils of smoking, the most persistent critics traced their unease to the connection with Christian Europe, mainly through its merchants, who had first brought tobacco to eastern Mediterranean ports. If coffee had been bad enough as an "innovation," it had at least originated within the Muslim world. Tobacco, as most people knew, came from outside. Ottoman authors were familiar enough with the trade to single out "English" merchants, who had access to colonial tobacco from

³⁵ Al-Karmi, *Tahqiq*, 136–140.

³⁶ See, for example, the stories in al-Laḡani, *Nasihah*, 86–88.

³⁷ Sarah Dickson, *Panacea or Precious Bane: Tobacco in 16th-Century Literature* (New York, 1954), 154.

³⁸ Peḡevi, *Tarih-i Peḡevi*, 1: 365. See also al-Laḡani, *Nasihah*, 80.

³⁹ Al-Karmi, *Tahqiq*, 111–113; al-Laḡani, *Nasihah*, 92. For a rebuttal, see al-Nabulsi, *al-Sulh*, 72–73.

⁴⁰ See, for example, al-Khadimi, *Bariqa*, 4: 111–112.

⁴¹ Al-Karmi, *Tahqiq*, 122–126. For a scornful refutation, see al-Nabulsi, *al-Sulh*, 79. See also the entry for smoke in al-Nabulsi's dictionary of dreams; 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, *Ta'tir al-anam fi tafsir al-ahlam*, ed. Taha 'Abd al-Ra'uf Sa'd, 2 vols. (Damascus, n.d.), 1: 211.

⁴² Al-Nabulsi, *al-Sulh*, 8; al-Khadimi, *Bariqa*, 4: 112.

the Atlantic trade.⁴³ As smoking spread, the role of European merchants as the early suppliers fed underlying anxieties about Christian contamination of the lands of Islam. Some denunciations bordered on hysteria. Perhaps no author was more lurid in evoking the dangers than the Egyptian scholar Ibrahim al-Laḡani (d. 1631/1632), who viewed tobacco as a kind of Christian plot against Islam. As the new import passed from Christian hands to Muslim consumers, al-Laḡani saw only endless opportunities for mischief, and darkly warned of bales of tobacco being soaked in wine or pig lard, which would have secretly violated Muslim taboos against alcohol and pork and left believers in a state of ritual impurity. His message was dire: in taking up the habit of smoking—which in his view had first been perfected and propagated among Christians—people were unwittingly succumbing to the “Christian *sunna*.” His use of the term was quite deliberate. Lifted straight out of the Islamic religious tradition, it represented the model of piety and behavior first demonstrated by the prophet Muhammad himself. So the implication was clear: in emulating Christian conduct, smokers were essentially committing apostasy.⁴⁴ In battling tobacco, few authors were willing to go to the extreme of maligning non-Muslim communities. But the circulation of wild rumors, which probably functioned as the “urban legends” of their day, reveals subtle cultural tensions that smoking would provoke throughout the Ottoman Middle East.

THE OTTOMAN AUTHORITIES, like governments elsewhere around seventeenth-century Eurasia, did not take long to join the early opposition.⁴⁵ The first push for prohibition dates from the reign of Ahmed I (r. 1603–1617), a young and unusually pious sultan who seems to have given his personal backing to the cause. Sometime around 1611, he outlawed the sale of tobacco throughout the empire. The decree seems to have produced some effect. From the distant province of Egypt, we hear that the incoming governor (a future grand vizier who may have been eager to please the sultan) enacted a series of local reforms: issuing new money, repairing the pilgrimage route, and founding a new Sufi lodge. Most conspicuous was his burning of large quantities of tobacco, which was now declared contraband. His successor upheld the edict, which remained in force for a short time and then was allowed to lapse after his term.⁴⁶ In other words, the initial campaign was brief, and in at least some provinces energetic, but it made no lasting impression beyond the first proclamations. The war on tobacco, though not entirely forgotten, would not be revived for more than two decades.

⁴³ See, for example, Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 1: 365.

⁴⁴ See the discussion in several places in al-Laḡani, *Nasihāt*, 61, 65, 74, 82, 93. Another author who made disparaging comments about non-Muslims in connection with tobacco was Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi, who thought that smoking created a “slovenliness” that he associated with these minorities; cited in al-Kittani, *Iʿlan*, 134.

⁴⁵ The Ottomans were not alone among Muslim states in their attempt to stamp out smoking. At roughly the same time, both Safavid Iran (c. 1610) and Mughal India (1617) would announce their own anti-tobacco laws. See, respectively, Rudi Matthee, “Exotic Substances: The Introduction and Global Spread of Tobacco, Coffee, Cocoa, Tea, and Distilled Liquor, 16th to 18th Centuries,” in Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, eds., *Drugs and Narcotics in History* (Cambridge, 1995), 35; and Gokhale, “Tobacco in 17th-Century India,” 487.

⁴⁶ Mustafa Naima (1655–1716), *Tarih-i Naima*, 6 vols. (Istanbul, n.d.), 2: 58–61; al-Laḡani, *Nasihāt*, 85.

The second attempt at suppression was more vigorous. The main impetus came from the so-called Kadızadeli movement, which was centered in Istanbul. It took its inspiration from Mehmed Efendi Kadızade, a fiery preacher whose call for a strict reinterpretation of Islamic teachings had won a large following among the population of the capital, and even among some officials in the palace itself.⁴⁷ Among his demands, which were aimed mainly at popular and Sufi religious practices, was the immediate proscription of both coffee and tobacco, which were condemned as intoxicants. The charismatic preacher soon caught the ear of the sultan himself, Murad IV (r. 1623–1640), who endorsed the reformist agenda. The coffeehouses of Istanbul were shut down in 1633, and smoking became a capital offense. The sultan became personally involved. In secret tours of the city, he began to oversee the application of his new laws with uncompromising severity. Smokers unfortunate enough to be caught red-handed were executed on the spot.⁴⁸ On campaign, too (mostly in central Iraq, which was briefly occupied by Safavid Iran, 1623–1638), he presided over further executions during the long marches between the front and the capital.⁴⁹

Contemporaries offered several justifications for Murad IV's crackdown. The most practical arose from the threat of fires, which permanently menaced the capital and its mainly wooden buildings.⁵⁰ Other authors hint at political motivations for the closures, which had more to do with coffeehouses as a breeding ground for gossip and sedition than with any direct objections to tobacco itself.⁵¹ Perhaps more revealing than either of these explanations were pervasive anxieties about shifts in consumption and sociability, which seemed to undermine long-standing social hierarchies. By the late sixteenth century, the Ottoman state, now in the throes of a deep structural transformation, had become concerned about possible blurrings of rank and distinction, and issued a burst of sartorial regulations that sought to restrain a growing exuberance in popular fashion.⁵² Holding even greater potential for social leveling was the coffeehouse. During the very same decades, it was bringing together a diverse cross-section of Istanbul society: "former officials searching for appointments, judges, teachers, and a bunch of the unemployed and idle," all of whom were now rubbing shoulders in close and unaccustomed quarters. As with early English coffeehouses, this promiscuous mingling over cups and pipes—or even the perception that it might be happening regularly—seemed to invite social instability and

⁴⁷ On the rise of the Kadızadeli movement, and its wide influence within Istanbul society, see Madeline Zilfi, "The Kadızadeli: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45 (1986): 251–269.

⁴⁸ Naima, *Tarih-i Naima*, 3: 170–171.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Kamil al-Ghazzi (1853?–1933), *Nahr al-dhahab fi tarikh halab*, 3 vols. (Aleppo, 1988), 3: 220–221; Katib Çelebi, *Fezleke-yi Katib Çelebi*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1870), 2: 197.

⁵⁰ The Ottomans were not alone in viewing public smoking as a menace. Governments in Germany and Russia also sought bans as a means of preventing fires. Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*, 125–129; Count Corti, *A History of Smoking*, trans. Paul England (New York, 1932), 140.

⁵¹ See, for example, Naima, *Tarih-i Naima*, 3: 168–169; 6: 230–231; Katib Çelebi, *Fezleke*, 2: 154–155.

⁵² Donald Quataert, "Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720–1829," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997): 406. On the anxieties produced by the restructuring of the Ottoman state, see, for example, Rifa'at 'Ali Abou-el-Haj, *The Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany, N.Y., 1991); Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)* (Princeton, N.J., 1986); Douglas Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the 16th and 17th Centuries," *Journal of Asian History* 22 (1988): 52–77.

moral corruption.⁵³ It was now possible to find pleasure-seekers and ordinary townsmen crowding alongside “polite members of literate society,” with whom they played games, recited poetry, and discussed literature.⁵⁴ Indeed, one could hear this refrain about social and moral confusion whenever new patterns of consumption seemed to expand to wider social groups. The sight of women openly enjoying tobacco deeply unsettled Mikha’ il Burayk, a Greek Orthodox priest from Damascus, who in 1759 found them smoking “in homes, bathhouses, and gardens, even along the river while people were passing by.” As he put it, they were blatantly “crossing boundaries,” which made their temerity all the more corrosive to public mores (incidentally demonstrating that these anxieties were by no means confined to an “Islamic” sensibility).⁵⁵ Further shaking his notions of decency were the persistently masculine and negative connotations of tobacco. Even in the eighteenth century, it was still associated with rough or unsavory social types: soldiers, bachelors, idlers, and anyone who seemed unattached, uprooted, and threatening to the social order.⁵⁶

These scruples about smoking seem to have mattered most in polite company, where a few smokers continued to feel self-conscious. To avoid giving any offense to companions, they might excuse themselves from social gatherings before lighting their pipes.⁵⁷ But even in these exclusive social circles, which prided themselves on refined manners, many others, including eminent judges, felt no inhibition and smoked wherever they wanted. ‘ Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, who penned one of the most important treatises on tobacco (1682), originally found it prudent to distance himself from the habit. He might enjoy the smell of tobacco, and he sometimes prescribed it for himself as a medical treatment, but he carefully added that he was not a smoker himself. It was a show of piety that would last only another decade. During a long journey to Egypt and the Hijaz, he would succumb and become an enthusiastic smoker for the rest of his life.⁵⁸ This complicity of members of the social and religious elite, who appreciated tobacco no less than other subjects of the sultan, made official pressure harder to organize and sustain.

By the eighteenth century, few officials would bother themselves about tobacco. In the capital itself, all the most brutal measures, summarily enforced, had done little to blunt its popularity. Within the sultan’s own army, smoking had flourished even during the height of his anti-tobacco persecutions. The chronicler Katib Çelebi (d. 1657), who accompanied the army as a scribe during the Iraq expeditions, relates that as smokers were being apprehended and executed, many of their comrades, called

⁵³ On the anxieties provoked by the appearance of coffeehouses in seventeenth-century England, see Brian Cowen, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven, Conn., 2005), chaps. 4, 8.

⁵⁴ Peçeви, *Tarih-i Peçeви*, 1: 364. The arrival of the coffeehouse seems to have partly disrupted what one historian has called an “etiquette of controlled visibility.” Members of the Ottoman elite, both male and female, preferred to minimize social interaction in public space. For a discussion of this “etiquette” in the sixteenth-century Middle East, see Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley, Calif., 2003), 156.

⁵⁵ Mikha’ il Burayk (d. 1782?), *Tarikh al-sham*, ed. Ahmad Ghassan Sabbanu (Damascus, 1982), 74.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Muhammad Khalil al-Muradi (1759–1791/1792), *Silk al-durar fi a’yan al-qarn al-thani ‘ashar*, 4 vols. (Beirut, 1988), 4: 130.

⁵⁷ See, for example, al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat*, 4: 179.

⁵⁸ Al-Nabulsi, *al-Sulh*, 37; al-Nabulsi, *al-Haqiqa wa al-majaz fi al-rihla ila bilad al-sham wa misr wa al-hijaz*, ed. Ahmad ‘ Abd al-Majid al-Haridi (Cairo, 1986), 58. See also Barbara von Schlegell, “Sufism in the Ottoman Arab World: Shaykh ‘ Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1997), 90.

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FIGURE 2: An upper-class lady of Aleppo, relaxing with her pipe as she awaits a cup of coffee (c. mid-18th century). From Alexander and Richard Russell, *The Natural History of Aleppo* (London, 1794).

to attend the proceedings, quietly puffed from pipes that they had stashed in their sleeves. Others took to smoking in the latrines, out of sight of their officers.⁵⁹ The central state soon gave up, and by 1650 had formally legalized the use of tobacco again. Sporadic campaigns against smoking would continue in the provinces, but they failed to act as a meaningful deterrent.⁶⁰ Some advisors tried to make the most of the setback. As early as 1654, Katib Çelebi was openly advocating the equivalent of a sin tax on tobacco. Official policy would not come around to this way of thinking until 1691.⁶¹ Strapped for cash and pressed by defeats on the Austrian frontier, the

⁵⁹ Katib Çelebi, *The Balance*, 52.

⁶⁰ See the remarks by Naima, who believed that the ban had merely made smoking seem more alluring; Naima, *Tarih-i Naima*, 3: 169. In another sign of the widespread resistance or indifference to anti-tobacco campaigns, the closure of the coffeehouses in Istanbul ordered by Murad IV seems not to have taken place in the Arab provinces. Ayşe Saraçgil, “L’Introduction du café à Istanbul (XVIe–XVIIe siècles),” in Hélène Desmet-Grégoire and François Georgeon, eds., *Cafés d’Orient revisités* (Paris, 1997), 36–37. On the legalization of tobacco under Baha’i Efendi, the *şeyhülislam* (chief jurisconsult) of Istanbul who issued the relevant fatwa, see Katib Çelebi, *The Balance*, 52.

⁶¹ Mehmed Raşid Paşa (d. 1735), *Tarih-i Raşid*, 6 vols. (Istanbul, n.d.), 2: 377–378.



FIGURE 3: A party of ladies entertaining themselves in the gardens of Kağthane, in Istanbul, c. 1793. Detail. From Metin And, *Turkish Miniature Painting* (Istanbul, 1982), 96.

Ottoman Empire, like many other European states of the time, surrendered to fiscal exigency and the lure of extra revenue.⁶² The treasury had trumped the pulpit.

Only in the Arab provinces do we later hear an echo of the anti-smoking campaigns of the Kadızadeli movement. In 1743, the *sharif* of Mecca tried to outlaw public smoking, which was no longer permitted in the markets or coffeehouses. If “riffraff” were found indulging in their addiction openly, he and other prominent residents would admonish them to keep it out of sight. Acting as part of the same campaign, the governor of Egypt took up the cause the same year in Cairo. His men patrolled the markets, and in moments of particularly acute rage forced smokers to eat their own tobacco bowls. In neither place, however, does the persecution seem to have lasted long or stirred up much popular approbation. In Mecca itself, “the

⁶² Corti, *A History of Smoking*, 94–96, 151, 156–157, 160, 177.

distress [caused by the decree] was general among the *ashraf* [recognized descendants of the prophet Muhammad], ulama, and commoners." In muted protest, the ulama refused to issue fatwas that would either legalize or condemn tobacco; through ambiguity, they withheld their endorsement of a measure that most people regarded as obnoxious and overzealous. In Cairo, mass indifference soon gained the upper hand, and the anti-smoking edict was quietly dropped by later governors.⁶³ The final attempt at prohibition came a few years later in Damascus, where the powerful governor As'ad Pasha al-⁶⁴ Azm was quicker to learn these lessons. Having announced his own decree against tobacco in 1749, he had it hastily withdrawn, probably because of its immediate unpopularity.⁶⁴ No provincial governor would ever again try to carry out such an ambitious plan. The last outbreak of anti-tobacco fervor was left to the Wahhabi movement, which under the first Saudi dynasty had extended its sway throughout central Arabia by the late eighteenth century. Wherever the Wahhabi raiders went, they insisted on applying their own puritanical version of Islamic law. After capturing Mecca in 1806, the new regime quickly outlawed smoking. Squads of enforcers gathered pipes and hookahs and burned them in great bonfires.⁶⁵ The arrival of Egyptian troops in 1812, sent to retake the Hijaz, reversed the decree and helped tobacco to surmount its last official hurdle.

What touched off the delayed campaigns in the Arab provinces, which seem so obviously out of fashion by the eighteenth century? For the edicts of 1743, the most likely inspiration was not local but imperial, and came in response to renewed warfare with Persia, which had fallen under the rule of Nadir Shah (r. 1743–1747), a tribal warlord. As hostilities mounted, eventually escalating into a full-blown border conflict, the Ottomans began an anti-Shi'ite propaganda campaign, which in Mecca featured sermons preached against the "shah of the Persians."⁶⁶ The anti-tobacco measures had come at the height of these preparations, and should be interpreted as part of a broader claim of religious orthodoxy, aimed deliberately at leading centers of Islamic tradition and an international audience of Muslim pilgrims. Presenting itself as the defender of the true faith, as well as the world's preeminent Muslim dynasty, the Ottoman state was eager to remove the least doubt about its own religious credentials, which would need occasional burnishing as the old assumption of Ottoman military superiority permanently vanished during the eighteenth century. These ideological strains later reached their culmination with the rise of the Wahhabi movement, whose message of social and religious reform, audible from the Arabian interior by at least the 1760s, was slowly gaining notice in neighboring regions.⁶⁷ In this atmosphere of intensifying religious rhetoric, Istanbul was willing to

⁶³ Ahmad ibn Zayni Dahlan (1816/1817–1886), *Khulasat al-kalam fi bayan umara' al-balad al-haram* (Cairo, 1977), 193–194; al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, 1: 260.

⁶⁴ Al-Budayri, *Hawadith*, 130. One can gauge the scale of the problem from the reaction of al-Budayri, an ordinary barber who identified with conservative opinion: "The smoking [of tobacco] has become one of the greatest afflictions in Damascus."

⁶⁵ Uthman ibn Bishr al-Najdi, *'Unwan al-majd fi tarikh Najd*, 2 vols. (Port Said, 2001), 1: 191; ibn Zayni Dahlan, *Khulasat*, 292; M. A. Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (New York, 2000), 168.

⁶⁶ Ibn Zayni Dahlan, *Khulasat*, 193–194.

⁶⁷ Dina Rizk Khoury, "Who Is a True Muslim? Exclusion and Inclusion among Polemicists of Reform in Nineteenth-Century Baghdad," in Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman, eds., *Early Modern Ottoman History: A Reinterpretation* (Cambridge, forthcoming), cited by David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (New York, 2005), 30 n. 95.

authorize its local agents to take action against tobacco, which now offered itself as a convenient target for symbolic reassertions of order and legitimacy. Only in the anti-tobacco law briefly proclaimed in Damascus (1749) did an Ottoman governor, As'ad Pasha al-'Azm, take the initiative for entirely local reasons. Coming at a time of high prices, in the tense days after a full-scale bread riot, the decree appears as a symbolic measure designed to shore up his public image in the face of rumors that accused him of manipulating the urban grain market. In dealing with their own local pressures and crises, provincial officials might thereby resort to the same moral posturing that had once served the central state itself.

That these last attempts at prohibition were at all conceivable testifies to the tenacity of tobacco's opponents, who, even after shrinking to a small minority of shrill conservatives, never abandoned their convictions. In nearly every part of the Ottoman Middle East, stern moralists carried on with the cause and railed against the immorality of smoking. Only within the restive Wahhabi borderlands did they win state backing and successfully impose their doctrines on others. Inside the Ottoman Empire, their opinions remained marginal, and at best, helped to ensure that smoking would still be seen as somewhat disreputable and impolite. Acting in a private capacity, they exhorted smokers to mend their ways. Some, accepting smoking as a legitimate form of consumption, simply tried to place it within religious and customary regulations. Hence an Egyptian official, passing through the village of al-Bahnasa in Egypt in 1725, felt no compunction about punishing a peasant who had been smoking openly in daylight during the Ramadan fast.⁶⁸ Others of a more zealous cast—usually strict ulama—took personal action to uphold what they insisted was the rightful interpretation of the law. One Egyptian scholar, 'Ali al-'Adawi, was so disturbed by smokers that he absolutely forbade anyone from using tobacco in his presence. The entire city knew about his intense revulsion for smoking. It was said that while he walked through the marketplaces in Cairo, shopkeepers and peddlers would secretly alert one another and put out their pipes as he moved down the street. No one was immune from his rebukes. He was known to break the pipes of military officers, even powerful beys who unwittingly tried to smoke in the same room, and then subject them to long harangues about the evils of tobacco.⁶⁹

Through sheer force of personality, ulama such as al-'Adawi were able to prevent colleagues, or even total strangers, from violating their own stringent interpretation of Islamic law. If other scholars were not going to apply the full letter of the law, these firebrands would not shrink from what they saw as their duty to stamp out immoral and irreligious customs. In taking this activist stance, they self-consciously drew on a long tradition within Islamic law that required believers to "enjoin the right and forbid the wrong." The definitions of these terms, together with the prescriptions for attaining these ideals, were matters of prolonged debate, and never reached anything close to unanimity or resolution. But many people understood the spirit that guided such confrontational meddling, even if they were likely to ignore it. An activist such as al-'Adawi might be tolerated or humored simply because of his in-

⁶⁸ Ahmad Ibn 'Abd al-Ghani (d. 1737), *Awdah al-isharat fi-man tawalla misr al-qahira min al-wuzara' wa al-bashat*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahim 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abd al-Rahim (Cairo, 1978), 447.

⁶⁹ Al-Jabarti, *Aja'ib*, 1: 648. For other cases of scholars taking matters into their own hands, see al-Muradi, *Silk*, 2: 31.

dividual piety and charisma. Out of respect for this personal religious authority, smokers might momentarily yield. But having averted an unpleasant scolding, they would at once return to their pipes.

BY THE LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, in a cultural movement that was noticeable in other areas of the Mediterranean basin such as Italy,⁷⁰ legal opinion was swinging around more emphatically to a tolerant view of tobacco. Even in the early days, the anti-tobacco camp had faced considerable criticism from ulama who were more inclined to permit smoking and saw attempts at prohibition as morally misguided and legally unfounded. The Palestinian scholar Marʿi al-Karmi (d. 1623/1624) had arrived at this conclusion reluctantly. He personally regarded tobacco as deeply repugnant, but after searching legal sources, found insufficient grounds for outlawing it. He consoled himself with the thought that it was at least better than opium and hashish.⁷¹ Other jurists had absolutely no apprehensions about it and, taking advantage of their own rulings, embraced the new pastime. One of tobacco's early champions, the Cairene jurist al-Ajhuri, became an avid smoker himself. A visitor in 1632 found him studying late into the night, reading his books and smoking from a water pipe that was continually restocked by a companion.⁷² For still other ulama, who fell between these two extremes, the entire controversy hardly seemed worth the effort. They wondered aloud why the debate had ever started, and why some ulama so insistently returned to it and raised it to such prominence when other problems, such as bribery and corruption, seemed to be more pressing and damaging to the social order.⁷³ The court historian Naima (d. 1716), looking back from several decades, was completely scornful of the Kadızadeli leadership, dismissing them as reckless rabble-rousers and opportunists consumed with worldly fame and ambition.⁷⁴ One cannot simply assume that the ultra-pious were able to pose as the guardians of morality without facing popular skepticism and resentment, which, though muted and indirect, did not automatically bow down to the spiritual authority claimed by conservative ulama.

Perhaps the most forceful critic of intolerant conservatism was ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi (1641–1731), one of the most accomplished religious scholars and Sufi adepts in all of Ottoman Syria. In a treatise written in 1682, he declared smoking to be fully legal, and sought to parry what he regarded as the excessive zeal (*taʿassub*) of moral purists. His arguments sum up the basic propositions of more flexible and

⁷⁰ Corti, *A History of Smoking*, 134.

⁷¹ Al-Karmi, *Tahqiq*, 142, 152–157. For a similar ruling by a later scholar, see Muhammad Ibn ʿAbdin (1783/1784–1836), *Radd al-muhtar ʿala durr al-mukhtar*, 6 vols. (Beirut, 1994), 2: 295–296.

⁷² Al-Karmi, *Tahqiq*, 58. Another jurist who liked to smoke was Ahmad Baba al-Sudani, who made his home in Timbuktu. While passing through Cairo on the pilgrimage, he met Ibrahim al-Laḡani, the arch-nemesis of tobacco, and began corresponding with him. After al-Sudani composed a fatwa legalizing smoking and forwarded it to Cairo, their friendship soured; al-Nabulsi, *al-Haqiqa*, 429. On the avid smoking of Bahaʿi Efendi, the *ṣeyhülislam* who eventually reauthorized the use of tobacco (c. 1650), see Katib Çelebi, *The Balance*, 56–57.

⁷³ See, for example, ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, *Nihayat al-murad fi sharh hadiyat Ibn al-ʿImad*, ed. ʿAbd al-Razzaq al-Halabi (Limmasol, 1994), 581–582.

⁷⁴ Naima, *Tarih-i Naima*, 6: 228.

accommodating ulama as their ideas had evolved by the late seventeenth century.⁷⁵ His treatise would stand as a landmark in legal thinking on tobacco, and would continue to be cited by later generations of scholars.

Al-Nabulsi was, first of all, unwilling to leave the issue of tobacco's legality to the discretion of the state. Some ulama had taken precisely this position, openly certifying that any law decreed by the sultan should be obeyed as long as it did not stand in conflict with religious law, which was sacred and beyond the scope of any temporal authority. From this premise, the campaigns against tobacco had received religious backing as a sultanic initiative that, regardless of any scholarly debates which might be taking place, ought not to be questioned.⁷⁶ Al-Nabulsi flatly rejected this idea. Sultanic law derived its validity, he countered, insofar as it took its guidance from religious law. He had little faith in the judgment or character of rulers. The anti-tobacco sweeps carried out periodically in the markets of Damascus in the last decades of the seventeenth century struck him as little more than an exercise in hypocrisy. He mocked the governors and their soldiers who "were drunk as wine wafted from their mouths" and yet, in the name of piety, fined and punished shopkeepers whom they found smoking in their stalls.⁷⁷ If tobacco was a matter of dispute, it could only be the ulama, not the political authorities, who would decide on its legality.

He showed the same impatience with medical objections to tobacco. Embracing the early medical literature, which had hailed the new leaf as a welcome supplement to the repertoire of treatments, he dismissed arguments about the harm that resulted from smoking. Doctors knew what was best for patients, and if they were willing to prescribe tobacco, then scholars unskilled in the medical arts should simply take their word unless they could claim the same expertise. At no point did he concede a link between smoking and bad health. Were there not many smokers who lived to an old age? Were there not many others who had never taken up the habit and nonetheless suffered from worse health? He further asked why anti-tobacco activists should regard smoke as inherently damaging to the body. Were people harmed equally by the fires that burned in the marketplace or in the bathhouse? In making these determinations, he claimed, people should only allow experience to act as their guide, and the evidence so far offered insufficient support. People should recognize, moreover, that everyone had a different bodily constitution. Some people would doubtlessly tolerate smoking better than others. And like other substances, tobacco would tend to produce harmful reactions if used in excess.⁷⁸ As for the charge that it was an intoxicant, or that it somehow "weakened" the body, he explained the dizziness that often afflicted the uninitiated as an ambiguous symptom that could arise from entirely different causes, such as whirling around or looking down from high places, which left no lasting mark on the health. For those who would bypass these objections and simply place tobacco among "disgusting substances" that ought not to be handled, he calmly noted that onion and garlic belonged in this category, mostly for the lingering odor that they left on the breath, but that they had always remained per-

⁷⁵ By the late seventeenth century, mainstream scholarship in Iran had also turned toward a more tolerant view of tobacco; Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, 140–141.

⁷⁶ See, for example, the opinion of the Damascene scholar Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi; Ibn 'Abdin, *Radd*, 2: 296.

⁷⁷ Al-Nabulsi, *al-Sulh*, 39. For his views on obedience to political authority, see *ibid.*, 54–70.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 21, 24, 33–34; al-Nabulsi, *Nihayat*, 580.

fectly legal. The insertion of tobacco would imply nothing about its ultimate legality. Indeed, he questioned whether it could really be considered disgusting. Tobacco smoke, he maintained, had a rather pleasant fragrance, which to many people was more delicious than incense.⁷⁹

Moving on to the more strictly legal arguments, al-Nabulsi found no reason to condemn smoking. Despite the insistence of staunch moralists, he asserted that tobacco was no more an intoxicant than coffee, which had undergone similar legal travails and emerged unscathed. Addressing charges that it was an impious “innovation,” he responded that not all innovations were bad. Muslim jurists had learned to distinguish between innovations in “religion,” which were impermissible, and those that pertained to “custom,” which posed no problem as long as they conformed with Islamic laws and values. The ordinary things of everyday life—food, drink, and clothing—stood outside the realm of these dangers.⁸⁰ In general, such moral concerns about tobacco were entirely unfounded. Some ulama had tried to outlaw tobacco for encouraging “profligacy”; but on this count, too, they fell short. In promoting wakefulness, stimulating the body and mind, and “drying out moist humors,” it was a boon to well-being that compensated for any extra expense. Most ridiculous were the warnings about smoke as a foretaste of hellfire. If tobacco were thereby outlawed, he reasoned, then the authorities would need to take measures against the smoke issuing from chimneys and kitchens or from sticks of incense.⁸¹ All attempts to taint tobacco with undertones of infidelity had no basis and ought to be rejected. Aware of earlier suspicions against tobacco on account of its original connection with Europeans, he declared that “we eat and drink as they do,” and that non-Muslim customs should be discarded only if they were “blameworthy.” He credited the Europeans with great knowledge in such “ancient sciences” as medicine, engineering, and astronomy. If Muslims wanted to use this expertise, which had no bearing on the Islamic religious sciences, they faced no restrictions.⁸² Few “Franks” actually came to Damascus in his day, but he had heard something of their exploits in fields such as medicine, which in debates about tobacco could prove quite valuable. In matters outside religion, he was willing to listen to whatever he could learn; and in this receptivity, however tentative and ill-informed, we can perhaps catch a glimpse, even in an inland town such as Damascus, of an “early modern” Mediterranean culture, where ethnic and religious boundaries were more porous, blurry, and unstable than we are used to assuming.⁸³

Beyond his efforts to build a solid defense for smoking, al-Nabulsi had much broader complaints about anti-tobacco authors. He saw their arguments as growing

⁷⁹ Al-Nabulsi, *al-Sulh*, 50–53, 77–78.

⁸⁰ Al-Nabulsi, *Nihayat*, 576–577; see also ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, *al-Hadiqa al-nadiyya: Sharh al-tariqa al-muhammadiyah*, 2 vols. (Lailbur, 1977), 1: 128. Not every jurist made the same distinction, but the principle of evaluating innovations, and not necessarily rejecting them out of hand, was fairly well established. One scholar fit them into the same five categories—mandatory (*wajib*), recommended (*mandub*), permitted (*mubah*), disapproved (*makruh*), and forbidden (*muharram*)—used for judging all other questions. Only the most uncompromising scholars, such as the leaders of the Kadizadeli movement, would have dismissed them altogether. See, for example, the discussion in al-Karmi, *Tahqiq*, 146.

⁸¹ Al-Nabulsi, *al-Sulh*, 72–74, 79.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 16–17.

⁸³ See, for example, Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton, N.J., 2000).

out of an unhealthy self-righteousness that clouded their judgment. In essence, they were simply imposing their prejudices on others by improperly citing a legal tradition that called on all believers “to command the right and forbid the wrong.” Al-Nabulsi did not dispute the validity of this doctrine, but asked whether anyone alive was fit to apply it. Drawing on a long line of Muslim thinking, he declared that the generation of the prophet Muhammad was the purest in piety and understanding, and that each succeeding generation was inferior to the previous one. Who in his age, he demanded, now possessed the qualifications to judge others and tell them, with absolute confidence, how to act rightly and avoid error? He denied that it was possible. As an alternative, he exhorted all believers to turn inward and concentrate on reforming their own hearts.⁸⁴ Most poisonous to religion, he believed, was the determination to find fault. Good faith required good faith in others. People might indeed have bad intentions, he said, but one could not easily discern them from the outside. If individuals were not engaged in activities that directly contravened religious law, they should enjoy a presumption of innocence. Unwarranted suspicions can only lead to “fanaticism.”⁸⁵

One of the most arresting implications of these arguments is a greater openness toward pleasure. In his treatise on tobacco—and elsewhere, too, in writings on singing and dancing—al-Nabulsi very explicitly spoke for a newfound self-indulgence. His goal was to reassure believers that in the midst of fun-loving pursuits, they could still be good Muslims as long as they committed no acts that explicitly trampled on Islamic norms and duties. No one, he frankly stated, should feel shame about taking pleasure from this world.⁸⁶ In working out this position, he was very consciously trying to expand the limits of debate about fun and recreation. And in crafting more lenient interpretations of the law, he seems to have been aware of a more easygoing outlook among his unlettered contemporaries. He was prepared to go along. If not taken to excess or harnessed to deviant desires, positive attitudes about pleasure posed no threat to morality and religion.

The boldness and originality of al-Nabulsi’s position are more obvious when set against the views of earlier generations of writers, who had felt a great deal of ambivalence about what they called “fun and games” (*lahw wa luʿb*). These were troublesome words that generated their own stubborn taboos and carried deep connotations of wayward indolence and temptation. Moral commentators were determined to contain this danger. They conceived of life as serving an essentially serious purpose. People ought to be preparing themselves for the afterlife and, in pursuit of this reward, dedicating themselves to upright living and worshipful contemplation. Ulama applauded stories of prodigal sons, trapped in the “valley of fun and idleness” (as one biography put it), who later repented and reformed themselves.⁸⁷ The main-

⁸⁴ ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, *Idah al-dallalat fi simaʿ al-alat* (Damascus, 1884), 17–18; al-Nabulsi, *Nihayat*, 581; al-Nabulsi, *al-Hadiqa*, 1: 128. As Michael Cook notes, al-Nabulsi’s position was slightly eccentric in placing such firm restraints on commanding the right. No other scholars seem to have taken up his ideas and extended them; Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 325–327.

⁸⁵ Al-Nabulsi, *al-Sulh*, 6, 17.

⁸⁶ For the most explicit statement of this position, al-Nabulsi, *Idah*, 12–14, 24–25.

⁸⁷ Al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat*, 3: 4, 244. For other derisive references to a life of pleasure-seeking, see ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr*, 1: 590; Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi, *Lutf al-samar wa qatf al-thamr*, ed. Mahmud al-Shaykh, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1981), 1: 75–76, 124–125; al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat*, 2: 240. See also ʿAli al-Nuri

stream moral writing that celebrated these spiritual reclamations had little use for love of this world, which in the harsh light of eternity held nothing of lasting value.

The ulama were not entirely unforgiving. In small doses, the pursuit of pleasure might be permissible. But they were prepared to sanction it only if it were harnessed to fundamentally religious goals and enjoyed in sober moderation.⁸⁸ For the sake of mental and physical rest and recuperation, they conceded the need for periodic breaks from routine. The recommended options were entertainments of an edifying character: picnics in gardens, literary gatherings, and of course religious devotions.⁸⁹ Beyond these limits lay the zone of deviance and unbridled self-indulgence. Mindful of these distractions, which constantly called people from more pressing affairs, moral authorities appealed first to a sense of duty and responsibility, and discouraged habitual play as unbecoming for adults and spiritually perilous for sincere believers.⁹⁰ Few pastimes were truly innocent. They deplored games such as chess and backgammon, and frowned upon musical performances (especially outside religious settings).⁹¹ Ordinary acts of consumption, as a potentially sensual experience, held their own dangers. Beverages, in particular, were inherently suspect. The Hanafi legal tradition, which had become the preeminent legal school within the Ottoman Empire, had long looked upon them with misgiving. People had to be careful about using them with the right intentions. Any drinks consumed solely for wanton diversion and amusement were strictly forbidden.⁹² In fact, jurists seem to have assumed, working mostly from their experience with wine and other alcoholic potions, that the enjoyment of drinks would naturally produce illicit pleasure or encourage questionable conduct.

Tobacco fit precisely into this category: as Middle Easterners still say today, individuals "drank" their smoke, which was treated as a virtual beverage. To some observers, tobacco therefore harbored all the potential dangers of any other pleasurable drink. As if to confirm these fears, the act of smoking—which, from a physical standpoint, was new and unconventional—soon expanded to plainly illicit substances such as hashish and opium.⁹³ Condemned as intoxicants, and allowed only for specific medical purposes, these drugs had first appeared in the Middle East around the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁹⁴ Addicts had originally satisfied their cravings by

al-Safaqisi (d. 1706), *Risala fi hukm al-sama' wa fi wujub kitabat al-mushaf bi'l-rasm al-'uthmani* (Beirut, 1986), 17.

⁸⁸ Al-Khadimi, *Bariqa*, 3: 18.

⁸⁹ Al-Jaziri, *'Umdat*, 94.

⁹⁰ Ibn Hajar al-Haythami (d. 1566), *Kaff al-ra'a' an muharramat al-lawh wa al-sama'*, ed. 'Adil 'Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-'Abbas (Cairo, 1989), 94–122; Shihab al-Din al-Qalyubi (d. 1659) and 'Umayra al-Burullusi (d. 1550/1551), *Hashiyatan: al-Qalyubi wa 'Umayra*, 4 vols. (Bombay, 1970), 4: 319–320; Murtada al-Zabidi (d. 1791), *Ithaf al-sada al-muttaqin bi-sharh asrar ihya' 'ulum al-din*, 10 vols. (Cairo, 1893), 7: 431. On disapproval of "fun and games" in medieval Islamic literature, see Franz Rosenthal, *Gambling in Islam* (Leiden, 1975), 9–26.

⁹¹ For disapproving references to chess playing, see al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat*, 2: 276; 3: 101–102.

⁹² Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, 55.

⁹³ For a general discussion of this transition, see Goodman, *Tobacco in History*, 88. In China, too, the smoking of opium followed the spread of tobacco, and the two were soon mixed together; Laufer, *Tobacco and Its Use*, 23–24.

⁹⁴ For a summation of rulings on hashish and opium, see Ibn 'Abdin, *Radd*, 2: 295. Note also the legal interpretation cited by al-Jaziri, *'Umdat*, 77. For references to Ottoman scholars who wrote about hashish and cannabis (*banj*), see ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr*, 1: 92; al-Ghazzi, *al-Kawakib*, 2: 79; al-Tabbakh, *I'lam*, 6: 165–166.

eating small pellets, usually flavored with sweeteners such as sugar, honey, or tahiini.⁹⁵ Consumption was furtive and shameful, confined to disreputable back streets and private spaces. Tobacco brought these habits into the open, mostly in the form of *barsh*, the name for nearly any mixture of tobacco and narcotic drugs, which were now brazenly smoked in the middle of coffeehouses and markets.⁹⁶ The problem reached into nearly all sectors of society, from tradesmen to itinerant laborers. Most scandalous were members of the religious establishment who succumbed to these addictions.⁹⁷ If leading religious figures might partake of such unlawful pastimes, others surely had fewer scruples. Throughout the Middle East, tobacco emboldened a growing leisure culture that, now armed with pipe and hookah, inadvertently liberated illicit drugs such as hashish, which made their own unwelcome debut in public. This guilt by association would further fuel the anti-tobacco furor.

A more insidious danger was the social context of smoking, which did not escape the notice—or censure—of the guardians of morality. Ulama sought to contain social routines within the bounds of religion and propriety. Gatherings ought to be tame, sedate, and steadfastly moral in purpose. Smoking was a dubious pastime because it seemed to overcome all these taboos and prim expectations. It delivered a sensual gratification that seemed to defeat inhibition, much to the dismay of moralists. When asked why they smoked, fumed İbrahim Peçevi, smokers would brazenly respond, “It is an amusement; apart from this, it’s all about pleasure.” In addition to this blatant hedonism, which was galling enough, smokers were prone to odd antics. Most likely thinking of the young literati who frequented coffeehouses, Peçevi indignantly talked of smokers who recited poetry at “inappropriate times” and engaged in a boisterous camaraderie that defied all the rules of polite conduct and conversation.⁹⁸ Smokers accepted this connection between tobacco and unalloyed pleasure. Undoubtedly aware of these provocative undertones, one Aleppan poet found a resemblance between the sighs of a lover and the exhalation of smoke from the lungs.⁹⁹ Thus on all sides, there was general agreement. Tobacco seemed to undermine restrictive mores and offer a new outlet for sensuality that some eagerly embraced and others abhorred as a moral snare.

⁹⁵ For a discussion of the consumption of opium in the medieval Middle East, see Franz Rosenthal, *The Herb: Hashish versus Medieval Muslim Society* (Leiden, 1971), 57–71.

⁹⁶ The first references to *barsh* date from the 1530s, when narcotics were probably added to coffee. Al-Jaziri, *Umdat*, 132–134; al-Ghazzi, *al-Kawakib*, 3: 185. On complaints lodged against coffeehouses where patrons smoked opium and other drugs, see Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the 18th Century* (New York, 1989), 233. One European observer, resident in early nineteenth-century Cairo, noted the existence of special shops (*mahshasha*) where patrons smoked nothing but hashish; Edward Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1973), 334. Women, too, might consume opium or opiated mixtures. Evliya Çelebi (d. 1672?), the renowned Ottoman traveler, heard that husbands in the town of Afyon (which had already become a major region of poppy cultivation in Anatolia) sometimes had to hide their supplies from their wives; Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, 217. On the mixing of tobacco and drugs in seventeenth-century Iran, see Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, 131.

⁹⁷ See, respectively, al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat*, 4: 6; al-Ghazzi, *al-Kawakib*, 2: 9–10. For other ulama who smoked drugs, see al-Ghazzi, *Lutf*, 1: 377; 2: 541; al-Ghazzi, *al-Kawakib*, 1: 306. To the Syrian chronicler al-Ghazzi, it seemed as though “many Ottoman judges” had acquired this habit; al-Ghazzi, *al-Kawakib*, 3: 35–36.

⁹⁸ Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 1: 365–366. On the presence of rowdy litterateurs in late-sixteenth-century Istanbul, contemptuously termed “city boys” (*şehir oğlanları*) by learned commentators, see Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 223.

⁹⁹ Al-Tabbakh, *İlam*, 6: 257.

THE ACCEPTANCE OF SMOKING has to be understood as the extension of a new sociability that first emerged with the spread of coffee drinking. The most obvious landmark in this reworking of patterns of everyday life was the coffeehouse, which was an innovation of far-reaching repercussions. One cannot find comparable social institutions at any earlier date in Middle Eastern towns. Only the bathhouse comes close. Part of the legacy of antiquity, it survived throughout the medieval and Ottoman periods all over the Mediterranean basin. Yet unlike the bathhouse, which was semiprivate and enclosed, away from public view, the coffeehouse constantly offered itself as a spectacle, which, tempting and visible, beckoned to the surrounding markets and neighborhoods throughout the daylight hours and into the night. The allure was powerful. Many religious observers were alarmed precisely because it diverted so much traffic from older areas of public congregation. In sixteenth-century Istanbul, they lamented, the mosques now stood empty, as worshippers—including many members of the religious establishment—whiled away their hours in the inviting precincts of the coffeehouse.¹⁰⁰

Contemporaries tell of a lively, if not entirely wholesome, social scene in which people came to exchange news, to gossip, or simply to enjoy each other's company. The coffeehouse became a cultural harbor where people might watch musical performances and puppet plays, attend literary recitals, and play games such as chess and backgammon. Moralists looked on with horror. To Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi (d. 1651), an inveterate foe of both coffee and tobacco, the coffeehouse was nothing less than "a refuge of Satan." If others threw themselves into the carefree and relaxed atmosphere of the place, he could find only a sink full of the worst possible vices: frivolity, promiscuity, debauchery, and outright intoxication.¹⁰¹ And yet by al-Ghazzi's time, the coffeehouse had already become a permanent fixture in the neighborhoods and markets of his hometown of Damascus. In short order, it had emerged as the main bastion of a public culture of fun that had not previously existed. Until the silent cultural revolution of the Ottoman centuries, conviviality had been almost entirely private, or at least banished to the outskirts of town in the orchards, gardens, and cemeteries that discreetly offered their open space for picnics and other outings. Taverns had operated a shadowy business, which, owing to the Islamic proscription of wine and other alcoholic beverages, ensured them a marginal place in urban society. Disreputable and subject to sudden closure, they had no chance to nourish their own distinctive social life.¹⁰² Measured against these earlier outlets for social contact, the significance of the coffeehouse immediately stands out as a major cultural achievement. The creation of this open social space was undoubtedly a first step in the emergence of a very different kind of sociability.

The pivotal role of tobacco was to broaden and further entrench this public culture of fun. In its convenience and mobility, it was perfectly suited to the task. Unlike

¹⁰⁰ Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 1: 364.

¹⁰¹ Cited by al-Kattani, *I'lan*, 139. See also the portrait drawn by Mustafa Ali, a high-ranking Ottoman bureaucrat, for the coffeehouses of Cairo; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafa Ali's Description of Cairo of 1599*, trans. Andreas Tietze (Vienna, 1975), 37–38.

¹⁰² One researcher has argued that in some Middle Eastern towns, including Cairo, taverns may not have appeared until Ottoman times. Paulina B. Lewicka, "Restaurants, Inns, and Taverns That Never Were: Some Reflections on Public Consumption in Medieval Cairo," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48 (2005): 40–91.



FIGURE 4: A shopkeeper enjoying his hookah in one of the markets of Cairo. From Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 316.

coffee, which required a free block of time and a relatively elaborate apparatus for preparation, tobacco needed only to be stuffed into a bowl; as long as an ember or burning coal was available, smokers could enjoy it almost at once. Most critical to this success was the pipe, a highly transportable piece of equipment, which in ease of use and speed of consumption would not be surpassed until the nineteenth-century advent of the cigarette. To be more precise, smoking catered to the entire range of recreation. With a hookah, it could offer all the redolent leisure of coffee culture, which was essentially casual and sedentary. The pipe, on the other hand, conferred freedom and flexibility. One could smoke whenever, and wherever, one wanted: at home or in the markets and streets, in familiar company or on the move. More than

any other product of its time, tobacco opened the possibility of instant gratification—or what must have seemed like it to people of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Securing these options was no mean achievement. In some parts of central Europe, such as Prussia, public smoking remained illegal, and was treated as the equivalent of sedition until the early nineteenth century; it would later appear as one of the key demands of political reformers.¹⁰³ In the Middle East, tobacco's victory over state authority occurred much earlier. And once smokers had gained a foothold in public space, they were determined to hold as much ground as possible. But let us not overestimate the resistance that they faced. Throughout the Ottoman Middle East, large numbers of people seemed quite receptive to the new pastime, and showed themselves to be open to new sources of fun and excitement. In the end, political and religious authority had to bow to these powerful attitudes that seemed to well up from the depths of the culture and make a mockery of official anxieties. As tobacco continued on its seemingly inexorable progress, legal definitions underwent their own gradual alteration, often at the instigation of officials and scholars who had become smokers themselves. If not fully respectable itself, tobacco would still play a part in reshaping standards of morality. In subtle ways, the appearance of pipes and hookahs encouraged a more easygoing outlook, which was comfortable with its new satisfactions and, having once obtained them, proved very reluctant to give them up.

The adjustment in mentality may seem diffident and trivial; it justified itself not as a challenge to prevailing notions of morality, but as a matter of their proper interpretation. Nevertheless, it is precisely this unabashed quest for fun and diversion that, in fully mature form, would later go on to become one of the hallmarks of modern culture. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these playful impulses were already beginning to assert themselves with a growing boldness and ingenuity in streets, shops, and coffeehouses across the world. Although widely reviled in our own time, and scientifically linked to malignant illnesses, tobacco was a key factor in the breakdown of old moral strictures and helped to frame a distinctively early modern culture in which the pursuit of pleasure was thereafter more public, routine, and unfettered.

¹⁰³ Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*, 129.

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