

Large print exhibition text



**Life in a cup:
coffee culture in
the Islamic world**

Life in a cup: coffee culture in the Islamic world

Coffee permeates the daily routine of millions of people across the globe. For many, life without it is unimaginable.

Although the **Coffea arabica** plant is native to East Africa's highlands, the beverage has its roots in Yemen. In the late 1300s or early 1400s, members of the Shadhiliyya Sufi religious order began to use coffee to ward off sleep and enhance mystical experience. Coffee rapidly moved into the secular sphere and spread along trade and pilgrimage routes across the Arabian Peninsula to Egypt and the Levant, reaching Istanbul in the early 1500s. By the early 1600s, coffee was known from Morocco to India.

Coffeeshouses emerged as places where people of different backgrounds could socialise on an equal footing.

Life in a cup: coffee culture in the Islamic world

The fondness for the drink quickly spread to and across Europe. Striving to control the highly profitable coffee trade, European powers established plantations in areas under their control, turning the coffee bean into a global commodity.

From Al-Mokha to Istanbul

From Al-Mokha to Istanbul

What was I, what was I?

A gentleman from Yemen,

Destiny confounded me

And landed me in a piece of china

Turkish riddle

A shaykh of the Shadhiliyya Sufi order in Al-Mokha, Yemen is credited with first introducing a coffee bean brew sometime in the late 1300s or early 1400s after a sojourn in Ethiopia. Members of the order adopted the beverage as it enhanced their state of mind during **dhikr**, remembrance rituals involving the meditative recitation of God's names and other sacred phrases. The appeal of coffee spread rapidly among ordinary members of the population, and through trade and pilgrimage reached the Ottoman capital Istanbul in the early 1500s.

From Al-Mokha to Istanbul

Although coffee encountered the disapproval of religious and political authorities with frequent attempts to ban it, the passion for it prevailed and coffee became an essential part of daily life, consumed in public coffeehouses and at home.

From qahwa to coffee

The terms coffee, **kahve**, **café**, **koffie**, **Kaffee**, **caffè**, **kopi** are among many used around the world to denote coffee. They evolved from the Arabic word **qahwa** which originally referred to a class of brewed beverages in the Arabian Peninsula. With time, the word **qahwa** became associated with the beverage specifically made from coffee beans.

1. Origins of coffee

Ethiopia and Yemen both play important roles in the history of coffee. While coffee had been consumed as berries or flour in Ethiopia, the brewed beverage itself originated in Yemen.

From Al-Mokha to Istanbul

Soon after the spread in its popularity there, the beverage was adopted in Ethiopia, the two sides of the Red Sea maintaining close trading contacts.

Black **jebena**, 2000-2020, Ethiopia. Private collection

Jamana with spout, 1950s–80s, Al-Mahra, Yemen, 2012,6030.124. Donated by Leila Ingrams

Jamana with double handle, 1920-70, Holan, Yemen, As 1971,07.5. Donated by Dr. Mark Littlewood

2. Kütahya coffee cups and saucer

In the 1600s, as coffee consumption spread, the demand for coffee related equipment increased. Porcelain cup imports from China surged and local workshops throughout the Ottoman Empire began producing cups of different shapes and sizes in attempts to meet the need. Coffee cup production became a monopoly of Kütahya workshops in the mid-1700s. Output was regulated between the 24 registered workshops, with wages strictly defined according to number and quality of cups produced.

From Al-Mokha to Istanbul

By the early 1800s, Kütahya cup production declined as its wares were unable to compete with newly fashionable European porcelain imports.

Cup and saucer, 1700s, Kütahya, Turkey, 1942,0414.6.a-b.
Bequest of Rev. Gustav Adolphus Schneider

Other cups, 1700s, Kütahya, Turkey, 1949,1115.22-24.
Donated by Essie Winifred Newberry

3. Kütahya covered bowl

Kütahya workshops produced wares with shapes and designs originating in imports from the Far East. Lidded bowls such as this one, influenced by Chinese covered rice or soup bowls, were used to serve delicacies such as jams, sweets and dried fruit alongside coffee which was usually served unsweetened. By the late 1800s, covered bowls became used frequently as containers for sugar.

1700s

Kütahya, Turkey

1878,1230.556

Bequest of John Henderson

Ottoman Coffee Trade

In 1516–17, the Ottomans under Selim I, defeated the Mamluks and established their control on the Eastern Mediterranean seaboard, the Red Sea and soon after, the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina, gaining control of vast trade and pilgrimage routes. Yemeni coffee was traded from Bayt al-Faqih along land and sea routes into Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Turkey. Coffee trading posts were established in cities such as Al-Mokha, Jeddah, Suez, Cairo, Aleppo and Basra where it was sold to European traders as well as local merchants, the taxes and customs levied bringing substantial revenue to the Ottoman Treasury.

4. The Sultan's coffee maker (kahveci başı)

This watercolour painting depicts a **kahveci başı**, an Ottoman court position that entailed responsibility for the palace coffee makers and for all coffee-making equipment, and whose principal task was to make coffee for the Sultan. The **kahveci başı** is depicted with an embroidered towel over the shoulder, carrying a tray covered with a cloth under which coffee cups and pots can be glimpsed.

About 1790

Istanbul, Turkey

1974,0617,0.12.1.22

5. Kütahya coffee pot

Small coffee pots such as this delicate example would have held a couple of cups of coffee.

Embellished with floral designs reminiscent of embroidery motifs, it is unlikely to have been used for brewing coffee but rather to serve coffee brewed in a metal pot.

1700s

Kütahya, Turkey

1878,1230.554

Bequest of John Henderson

6. Brass coffee pot

Travellers to Ottoman lands often acquired coffee making equipment for use on their travels. This piece once belonged to Edward William Lane (1801–76) who was the first to translate the **One Thousand and One Nights** into English (1840), or his sister Sophia (1804–91). Edward and Sophia lived in Egypt for prolonged periods of time adopting the lifestyle and dress of the locals and gained acceptance in Cairo's social circles.

1800s

Cairo, Egypt

Af,+1791

Donated by Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks

7. Study of two men conversing

This drawing by Sir David Wilkie (1785–1841) depicts two men sitting on a divan engaged in a conversation. The man on the right, sitting cross legged, is holding a coffee cup while the man on the left is smoking a long pipe.

From Al-Mokha to Istanbul

Wilkie embarked on a visit to the Ottoman Empire between autumn 1840 and spring 1841 visiting Istanbul, Izmir, Jerusalem and Alexandria, sketching extensively.

1840–1

Sir David Wilkie

1932,0623.5

Donated by W A Marsden

The coffee plant

There are 124 types of shrubs of the genus **Coffea** currently growing around the world. The two most commonly cultivated types are **Coffea arabica** and **Coffea robusta** also known as **Coffea canephora**. Coffee plants form evergreen shrubs with dark green glossy leaves, usually 10–15cm long. The fragrant white flowers appear in clusters along the branches. These are followed by oval berries that start green then turn yellow and then dark red as they ripen.

8. Botanical painting of coffee

Two paintings in this botanical album compiled in Calcutta in the 19th century depict coffee plants:

Coffea arabica and **Coffea bengalensis Roxb.**

Coffea arabica is referred to as 'coffee from Bussorah' (Basra in present day Iraq) a major port trading with India. **Coffea bengalensis Roxb.**, a wild form growing in the Indian subcontinent, was first recorded by William Roxburgh, the Superintendent of the Calcutta Botanical Garden (1793–1813).

1800s

Kolkata, India

Coffea Bengalensis Roxb., 1999,0203,0.10

Coffea Arabica, 1999,0203,0.11

Bequest of Major J P S Pearson

Coffee in early European travel accounts

Coffee in early European travel accounts

Coffee attracted the interest of Europeans travelling through Ottoman lands as political envoys, merchants and scholars. Their descriptions reached European eyes and ears through the narratives they published upon their return to Europe. The first to mention coffee was Leonhart Rauwolf, a German botanist and physician, who travelled in the Near East between 1573 and 1575. His book *Description of a journey in Eastern Lands (Aigentliche Beschreibung der Reiß inn die Morgenländerin)* was published in 1582.

Time wasting or social interaction?

Travellers frequently lamented that so much time was wasted by locals enjoying this hot black drink, time that could have been put to better use. They underestimated however, the importance attached locally to coffee drinking as a time spent enhancing social interactions, sharing information, conducting business and resolving conflicts.

Coffee in early European travel accounts

Many of the postcards travellers sent home featured coffee in some way.

1. Coffeehouse in Blida, Algeria.

Published by PS, 1900s, postmarked 1904, EPH-ME.2194

Coffeehouse in Constantine, Algeria.

1900s–20s, EPH-ME.6542

Coffeehouse in Cairo, Egypt.

Published by The Cairo Postcard Trust, 1920s-1930s, EPH-ME.5371

Café de la Casbah in Tunis, Tunisia.

1918, EPH-ME.5505

Coffeehouse in a tented soldiers' encampment, Morocco.

1910–20, postmarked 1920, EPH-ME.5674

2. Coffeehouse in Istanbul with men playing backgammon.

About 1910, EPH-ME.3042

Coffee in early European travel accounts

Open air coffeehouse in Beirut, Lebanon, on a feast day.

Published by Sarrafian Bros, 1900–14, EPH-ME.5127

Coffeeshop in Cairo, Egypt.

Published by Lehnert and Landrock, 1905-1914,
EPH-ME.8479

Group of men sitting in front of a coffeehouse in Istanbul, Turkey.

About 1910, EPH-ME.3047

The photographer's eye

With the advent of photography in the 1830s and of postcards in the 1870s, visual representations of coffee drinking and coffeehouses, some staged with Orientalist overtones, became popular as souvenirs to be sent back home by tourists visiting the region or soldiers serving there.

3. Women of Bethlehem, Palestine

1900s–20s, EPH-ME.1871

Coffee in early European travel accounts

4. Women from the Ouled Nail, Algeria.

Published by Maure Photographe, Biskra, 1920s,
EPH-ME.2274

Woman in traditional clothing, Algeria.

Algeria, about 1910–30, EPH-ME.5479

Women seated on cushion-covered divans, Algeria.

About 1900–10, posted in 1911, EPH-ME.8454

Woman on a balustrade drinking coffee.

France, 1920s, EPH-ME.5672

Man seated on a cushion.

Published by ES, 1910s, EPH-ME.2200

National identity

Since the 1960s, notions of statehood and pride in cultural heritage became more defined. Postcards began depicting subjects imbued with special relevance for national identity, including coffee.

Coffee in early European travel accounts

5. Women cleaning coffee beans in Aden.

Aden, Yemen about 1952, EPH-ME.1038

6. Bedouin preparing coffee, Jordan.

1970s, EPH-ME.1905

Coffeepot Monument, Bahrain.

Published by Hilal Bookshop, 1980s–90s, EPH-ME.1002

Preparing coffee: roasting and grinding

Preparing coffee: roasting and grinding

**Love is like the coffee of the bedouin,
bitter yet beautiful**

Arabic saying

Every aspect in the preparation of coffee is important, from roasting and grinding to brewing and serving. The sounds, sights and smells of coffee preparation and eventually the taste all contribute to the enjoyment of the coffee experience.

Coffee can be prepared in numerous ways, but most involve the roasting of coffee beans. Unroasted 'green' coffee beans are not particularly flavourful. Roasting enables the chemical release of flavours and aromas, temperature and length of roasting time affecting the final flavour. Sugars within the bean caramelize giving it the characteristic brown colour.

Preparing coffee: roasting and grinding

The skill and knowledge of the person roasting the coffee beans enables a variety of nuances in flavours to be achieved. Once roasted, the coffee beans are cooled then ground in readiness for brewing.

1. Earthenware roasters

These two roasters from Yemen illustrate some shapes and sizes that roasters could take. The small scalloped-edge roaster was made for use within a domestic setting. The large capacity cylindrical roaster with straight edges could have been used in domestic or public settings when large amounts of coffee were needed at a particular time.

Cylindrical coffee roaster, 1900–80, Ash-Shawariq, Yemen.
As1980,17.13

Scalloped edge roaster, 1900s, Hadhramawt, Yemen.
As2002,06.42. Donated by Carl Phillips

2. Coffee roaster on wheels and spoon

Among bedouin tribes, coffee beans, in Arabic **bunn** or **bann**, were roasted in large open roasters with long handles. A long flat spoon was used to move the beans around preventing them from burning and ensuring a relatively even roast. This example has wheels which enable the pan to be moved in and out of a ground fire with ease.

1930s–70s

Aleppo, Syria

As1975,07.17.a-b

3. Folding coffee roaster

Small roasters with folding handles were used by travelling merchants and by shepherds moving their flocks in search of better pastures. Constantly on the move, they carried all the equipment they needed with them. Folding roasters could be easily packed for transport and enabled the coffee to be freshly roasted as and when needed.

1890s–1930s

Turkey

2013,6008.2

Preparing coffee: roasting and grinding

4. Pouches with decorated tassels

The larger of these two pouches made of goat skin with tassels embellished with blue beads, buttons and shells was used to store unroasted coffee beans while the smaller pouch was used to store cardamom or sugar lumps. The blue beads also carried apotropaic value and were meant to protect the precious commodity within the bags.

1930s–70s

Jordan

As1975,03.11.a-b

5. Coffee cooler

Once the coffee beans were roasted, they were left to cool. This process allowed the oil in the beans to cool down, preventing bitterness from developing when brewing. This glazed pottery coffee cooler was made in Kütahya which, following a slight period of decline in the early 1800s, saw a revival in domestic crockery production from the mid-1800s.

1900–60

Kütahya, Turkey

Private collection

Preparing coffee: roasting and grinding

6. Wooden coffee coolers

Coffee coolers were often made of carved wood such as these examples from Jordan, Turkey, Egypt and Sudan. The spouts enabled the beans to be transferred easily to mortars and mills minimising the risk of spillage. The round cooler bears the name of its owner Idriz (sic) on the spout.

Large cooler, 1920-1970, Jordan, As 1974,29.15

Coolers with decorated sides:

1920–50, Egypt or Sudan, Af1954,+23.2916

1920–60, Sudan, Af1982,09.44. Both donated by the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine

Round cooler, 1920–40, Turkey. Private collection

7. Storage containers

Coffee storage containers were varied. The gourd flask was manufactured in Indonesia by the Torajan community on Sulawesi and was intended for taking coffee when going to work in rice paddy fields. The storage basket from Uganda was used to store coffee beans.

Preparing coffee: roasting and grinding

The lidded wooden box from Anatolia in Turkey was used to hold coffee in one compartment and sugar in the other. The Dutch introduced coffee to Indonesia in the 1700s establishing plantations on several islands including Java, Sumatra, Bali and Sulawesi. Commercial coffee cultivation in Uganda was kickstarted with the establishment of the East Africa Company in the late 1800s.

Gourd flask, 1920–50, Sulawesi, Indonesia, As1974,24.7

Basketry container, 1900–50, Uganda, Af1952,07.177

Wooden box, 1900–60, Anatolia, Turkey. Private collection

8. Coffee mortar with lid and pestle

Once the roasted coffee beans had cooled down, they were placed in mortars and pounded with a pestle until a fine grainy texture was obtained. Elaborately carved wooden mortars were known in Arabic as **mihbaj**. The pounding was not repetitive but could be altered creating rhythmic variations frequently accompanied by songs praising the host and the guests and thanking the coffee for bringing them together.

Preparing coffee: roasting and grinding

1930s–70s

Jordan

As1974,29.14.a-c

9. Inlaid coffee mortar

Coffee mortars were not only practical items but were seen as prestigious expressions of the generosity and hospitality of their owners. They were elaborately decorated with carvings, and often embellished with camel bone, mother-of-pearl, metallic thread or brass studs. This example carries around the rim an inscription in disjointed letters, calling for blessings and giving a date of 1292AH (1875–6).

1870s

Probably Egypt

Af1962,06.1

10. Wooden coffee mill

In the Indian subcontinent, coffee has been consumed since the 1600s when it is said to have been introduced by pilgrims returning from Mecca. Coffee was popular at the Mughal court but overall it never received as ready an acceptance as tea.

Preparing coffee: roasting and grinding

The British established coffee plantations in India and took over Dutch plantations in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Coffee equipment was produced locally to supply the needs of European residents.

1780–1830

Sri Lanka

1975,0303.1

Donated by Anthony Bertolucci

11. Coffee mill

Sometime in the late 1600s, small portable mills, using the same principle as flour mills, evolved to grind coffee. They enabled a fine even grade of coffee to be ground and quickly gained ready acceptance. Soon locally produced and imported mills replaced mortars and pestles in cities and towns, but not among bedouin tribes where mortars continue to be used to this day.

1940s–60s

Palestine

As1968,10.74.a-c

Brewing and serving

A cup of coffee commits one to forty years of friendship

Turkish saying

Variations in the way coffee is prepared abound, including degree of roast, brewing methods, parts of the coffee berry used and the addition of sugar, milk and spices such as cardamom, cinnamon, saffron, ginger or rose water.

There is a strict etiquette when it comes to coffee's offering and acceptance. It is always prepared fresh and is never reheated. It is served in half-filled small cups, refilled repeatedly and with the right hand, presented first to the most important guest or to the person on one's right.

The preparation of coffee, the unwritten rules that govern its presentation and consumption, the conversation that follows it, all help to create or strengthen social bonds between people.

Brewing and serving

The whole coffee experience is given its due time and never rushed.

1. Omani coffee pot (dalla)

Coffee is often brewed with spices, particularly cardamom, but in Oman, rose water is often added just before serving. Coffee is accompanied by fresh or dried dates to sweeten its taste. Like in other parts of the Gulf, it is offered by the host repeatedly until a shake of the cup suggests that the guest is satisfied.

1970s–80s

Musandam, Oman

2010,6003.19

Donated by Carl Phillips

2. Coffee pots (jamana and jebena)

Pottery or metal spoutless coffee pots are common on both sides of the Red Sea. The porous unglazed pottery was sealed by burning coffee grounds or sugar inside the pot before it could be used for liquids. When serving, long stalks of grass were inserted in the mouth of the pot to prevent the grounds from going into the cup.

Brewing and serving

Black **jamana**, made in Eritrea, acquired in Saudi Arabia, As1965,07.21. Donated by Dr. Mark Littlewood

Jamana, 1960s-80, Ash-Shawariq, Yemen, As1980,17.15

Tin **jebena**, 1960–80, Darfur, Sudan, Af1980,21.127

3. Dalla, ibriq and other coffee pots

The term **dalla** refers to a coffee pot with a beak-like spout and is used specifically in the Arabian Peninsula and in some parts of the Levant. The term **ibriq** on the other hand, used across the Islamic world, refers to any vessel with a spout, with a qualifier specifying the use: **ibriq qahwa** for example, for coffee. The various examples represented here show the range of shapes coffee pots could take. Makers of everyday objects tend to remain anonymous. The coffee pot with top handle from Zanzibar has an inscription in Arabic identifying the maker as ‘the one who puts his trust in God, Muhsin ibn Abd-al-Nabi Nahhas’ and gives the date of manufacture as 1155AH (1742–3).

Brewing and serving

Large **dalla**, 1940s–50s, Abu Dhabi, 2015,6048.8.
Donated by Caroline Gordon

Octagonal **ibriq qahwa**, 1970s–2000s, Syria, 2013,6019.1

Dalla, 1930s–60s, Palestine, As1971,02.2.
Donated by Sheikh Abdullah Khayr

Kanaka, 1900s–50s, Egypt, Af1971,28.5

Ibrik, 1940s–60s, Bulgaria, Eu1971,01.244.
Donated by the Bulgarian Committee for Cultural Relations

Ibriq, 1880–1930, Zanzibar Island, Tanzania, 2014,2011.157.
Donated by Leila Ingrams

Ibriq with top handle, 1742–3, Zanzibar Island, Tanzania,
2014,2011.156. Donated by Leila Ingrams

4. Spoons

Spoons were used to measure the coffee grounds required and to stir in spices and sugar when brewing. Long handled spoons were used to move the coffee beans around while roasting. As copper oxide is relatively poisonous, copper and brass coffee pots and spoons such as these examples from Morocco would have usually been tinned to prevent oxidation when in contact with liquids.

Brewing and serving

1930s–70s, Tarfaya, Morocco, Af1974,10.22.a & c.

1940s–70s, Atlas Mountains, Morocco, Af1973,26.4

5. Lustre coffee cups

Lustre pottery was a luxurious commodity much in demand across the Islamic world. These cups from Iran, decorated with geometric, astral, botanical and animal motifs would have graced the serving trays of wealthy urban merchants and notables alongside imported Chinese and Japanese porcelain wares.

1600–1720, Iran

G.371, G.373-4, G.376, G.417, G.419, G.421-3, G.428-30, G.433. Bequeathed by Miss Edith Godman

1878,1230.601-7. Bequeathed by John Henderson

1970,0207.38, 1970,0207.40-1, 1970,0207.45. Bequeathed by Miss Lilly Nora Ziegler

6. A taste of luxury: porcelain and silver

Chinese porcelain had long been appreciated throughout the Islamic world. The spread of coffee consumption led to an increase in imports of small delicate cups. Pilgrims returning from **hajj** frequently brought back coffee cups acquired during their journey.

Brewing and serving

Chinese goods were rivalled by Japanese imports and in the 1800s by European wares, particularly of German and French manufacture. As saucers were not frequently used, two porcelain cups were placed inside one another, protecting the fingers from burning. This led to the rise in the 1700s of small cup-shaped metal envelopes, **zarf**, used to enclose and hold the fine porcelain cups.

Small Chinese cups, 1850–1930, Chinese manufacture, acquired in Palestine, As1971,02.18.a and f.
Donated by Sheikh Abdullah Khayr

Brass **zarf**, 1800–60, Egypt, Af.373.
Donated by Henry Christy

Painted **zarf**, 1800–60, Egypt, Af.3494.
Donated by Henry Christy

Chinese cup, 1800–60, Chinese manufacture, acquired in Egypt, Af.3495. Donated by Henry Christy

Purple cup, 1800–1900, Meissen, Germany, manufactured specifically for the Ottoman market. Private collection

Diagonal stripes cup, 1800–1900, Japan. Private collection

Silver **zarfs**, 1800–1900, Turkey or Egypt. Private collection

7. Haysi coffee cups and cup holder

By the mid-1500s, as coffee consumption spread, the town of Hays in Yemen, a pottery centre since at least the 1100s, began producing large quantities of small glazed coffee cups. Their popularity was such that they were known as **haysi** even when produced in other pottery centres. Production of these traditional glazed cups and of models with handles continues to this day. The tall covered basket made of woven palm leaves was designed to store and carry coffee cups.

Green cup, 1950s–60s, Al-Hudaydah, Yemen, As1965,07.5.
Donated by Dr. Mark Littlewood

Green and white cup, 1940–70, Sanaa, Yemen,
As1979,01.158

Cup with handle, 1950s–60s, Hays, Yemen, As1967,03.40.
Donated by Dr. Mark Littlewood

Cup carrier, 1980s, Yemen, 2010,6003.51. Donated by Carl Phillips

8. Masabb bowls

These glazed bowls with pointed spouts are known as **masabb** and were multifunctional.

Brewing and serving

Coming in different sizes, they served many purposes in the Yemeni kitchen from brewing coffee, particularly **qishr** made from coffee husks, to feeding small children, decanting liquids and measuring grain.

1920s–60s

Bayt al-Faqih, Yemen

As1966,03.1 and As1966,03.2.b

Donated by Dr. Mark Littlewood

9. Long handled coffee pots

Coffee pots with long handles, known as **cezve** in Turkish or **rakwa** or **bakraj** in Arabic are extremely popular for brewing what is known as Turkish coffee. The shape of the pot allows a thick foam to develop when brewing. A coffee with no foam is dismissed as of poor quality and the skills of its maker looked down upon.

1950s–60s, Lebanon, 2014,6024.3

Donated by Zeina Klink-Hoppe

1950s–60s, Turkey, As1968.10.80

2000–10, Turkey, designed by the Turkish design studio Santimetre. Private collection

Coffeehouses in Britain

The first coffeehouses in Europe were opened in 1632 in Livorno and in 1640 in Venice.

In England, the first coffeehouse is said to have been established at Oxford in 1651 while London saw its first coffeehouse in 1652 opened by a Levant trader, Daniel Edwards, and run by his Greek servant, Pasqua Rosee. With the surge in popularity of coffee and the increasing availability of imported coffee beans, it is estimated that by 1675 over 3,000 coffeehouses were functioning throughout England.

1. Coffeehouse tokens

In the mid-1600s at the time coffeehouses were proliferating, there was a shortage of small currency. Coffeehouses and other businesses dependent on the use of change minted their own tokens to use as currency and advertisement. The tokens were banned in 1674. In addition to the name of the issuer these tokens often bore a date and motifs such as turbaned men or coffee equipment.

Coffeehouses

From top to bottom:

Dublin, 1664. Issued by Lionell Newman, 1933,0413.525

London, 1671. Issued by Ward's Coffeehouse in Bread Street, Cheapside, T.2355

London, 1669. Issued by Nich Strainge, St Anne's Lane, Aldersgate Street, T.3430

London, 1660s. Issued by Thomas Eustis, Russell Street, Covent Garden, 2012,4001.306

Cambridge, 1660s. Issued by Thomas Marston, Trumpington Street, T.241

Unknown, 1660s, T.5860

Oxford, 1660s. Issued by Lawrence Short, New College Lane, T.4777

Unknown, 1660s. Issued by John Lansdell, 2009.4075.352

London, 1669. Issued by Charles Kiftell, Cheapside, T.2448

London, 1669. Issued by Mary Stringar, Little Trinity Lane, Bread Street, Cheapside, T.3872

2. Interior of a coffeehouse

Men met in coffeehouses to exchange commercial information, discuss politics and the arts while drinking coffee, smoking and perusing broadsheets. The coffeehouse as forum for political discussion alarmed the authorities and King Charles II banned them in 1675.

Coffeehouses

Information exchange enabled in coffeehouses led to developments in financial journalism, the modernisation of the Stock Exchange and the establishment of companies such as Lloyd's Insurance.

1690-1700 (inscribed falsely 1668), England
1931,0613.2

3. Trade cards and tokens

Coffee brought in by the Levant and East India Companies was traded in London and distributed across the British Isles by specialised merchants. Trade cards and tokens advertised merchants' wares and coffeehouse establishments, enabling them to broaden their customer base.

About 1800, London, trade card of Thomas Sedgwick,
D,2.2350

1794, Bath, trade token of M. Lambe and Son, SSB,185.95.1

1800s, Wolverhampton, trade token of Thomas and Frederick Lewis, 1870,0507.1546

1800s, County Cork, Ireland, trade token of Lyons and Co.,
1870,0507.18484

Coffeehouses

1800s, London, trade card of the Grafton Coffeehouse,
London, Banks, I.12

4. Coffeehouses in London

This album contains drawings of contemporary London life by George Scharf (1788-1860), including depictions of coffeehouses. The drawing at the bottom of the page shows the interior of a coffeehouse on Museum Street, close to the British Museum where Scharf worked, with men relaxing and reading newspapers. While women in the 1600s were originally barred from entering coffeehouses, the 1800s saw a relaxation of these unwritten rules.

1844

London

1862,0614.597

The coffeehouse, the home and beyond

The coffeehouse, the home and beyond

**Tobacco without coffee,
is like a sultan without his fur coat**

Egyptian / Syrian saying

Coffeehouses developed as places where men could socialise, discuss current affairs and listen to poetry and music. They facilitated interactions that challenged traditional boundaries and often attracted the disapproval of the authorities.

As early as 1511 in Mecca, and later in Cairo, Damascus and Istanbul, calls were made to ban them. An acceptance that coffee itself was not forbidden and the revenue coffeehouses generated, eventually removed opposition. By the late 1800s coffeehouses had become meeting places where families could enjoy story-telling and shadow puppet performances particularly during Ramadan.

The coffeehouse, the home and beyond

Coffee is also consumed by people at home. Its rituals permeate every aspect of daily life and social interaction. Integral to joyful and sad occasions, it has become the defining element of hospitality.

1. **Swinging serving tray**

Kahvecis (coffee waiters) had to serve their customers quickly and without spilling hot drinks. At some point in the early 1800s swinging trays were developed that could be carried with one hand. The centrifugal forces acting on the contents of the tray ensure that no liquid is spilled although the tray is swinging from side to side.

Tray, 1940s-1960s, Tripoli, Lebanon. 2014, 6024.4.
Donated by Zeina Klink-Hoppe

Cup, 1900–50, China, acquired in Palestine, As1971,02.18.c.
Donated by Sheikh Abdullah Khayr

The coffeehouse, the home and beyond

2. Bedouin reception in a tent

This watercolour and pencil drawing depicts the reception offered by assembled tribal dignitaries to a group of Ottoman officials and foreigners including Sir Austen Henry Layard, in dark coat and cap. Under the canopy of a large tent, coffee is served and civilities are exchanged while a large number of spectators curiously look in. Layard excavated several Assyrian sites in what is now Iraq between 1845 and 1851.

1850

Charles Frederick Cooper

2010,6001.8

Tobacco

Tobacco is believed to have been introduced into the Ottoman Empire by British merchants in the early 1600s. Its use and cultivation spread rapidly and in 1612, Sultan Ahmet I imposed the first short-lived prohibition on tobacco. Twenty years later, both coffee drinking and smoking were banned by Sultan Murat IV. Tobacco began to be shredded and inhaled as snuff instead of being smoked.

The coffeehouse, the home and beyond

During the reign of Murat's successor, the bans were lifted and trade in tobacco was regulated along the lines of trade in coffee.

Tophane

The neighbourhood of Tophane in Istanbul was one of the oldest industrial districts of the city. The Imperial Armoury, **Tophane-i Amire**, established by Sultan Mehmet II for the manufacturing of cannons and cannonballs, gave the district its name. In the 1760s, the guild of pipe makers was established there and by the end of the century more than 60 workshops were producing clay pipes and later, other types of ceramics including coffee equipment. Although pipes were produced in several other places, Tophane pipes were esteemed as the best.

3. Tophane cups

Tophane workshops developed their own style of ceramics, in line with the baroque aesthetic popular at the time.

The coffeehouse, the home and beyond

Coffee cups were small and delicate, with handles and matching saucers or without. Patterns were added with stamps and rollers. The same clay, fired in different ways, led to either red or black wares. Once fired, gold leaf or paint was applied to the designs. On black pieces, like the cup and saucer here, silver and niello could also be added.

Cup and saucer, 1870–90, Tophane, Turkey.
Private collection

Coffee cup, 1870–90, Tophane, Turkey. Private collection

4. Ottoman pipes

Ottoman pipes usually had three elements: pipe bowl, stem and mouthpiece. Pipe bowls could be pressed in moulds or shaped by hand. Those produced at Tophane or in Asyut (Egypt) were the most refined. Pipe stems could be made of a variety of woods, the preferred being jasmine, and could reach lengths of a metre or more. Mouthpieces in amber, coral and ivory were popular among the well to do.

Black pipe with rabbit, 1800–60, Tophane, Turkey or Asyut, Egypt, Af.3372.a&b. Donated by Henry Christy

The coffeehouse, the home and beyond

Red pipe bowl with gilding, 1840–80, B. Fucnez, Tophane, Turkey acquired in Egypt, Af,+5150

Black pipe bowl, 1860–80, Egypt, Af,CA.49

5. Incense burner and rosewater sprinkler

When entertaining guests or at home, coffee preparation and presentation were only part of the rituals of hospitality. At the start and end of a visit the guest was surrounded by the fragrant smoke emanating from an incense burner and offered rose water to perfume the face and hands. All aspects of the rituals were designed to appeal to the senses and to make the encounter even more enjoyable.

Incense burner, 1700s, Kütahya, Turkey, 1878,1230.553.
Bequeathed by John Henderson

Rose water sprinkler, 1700s, Kütahya, Turkey, 1949,0517.3

6. Named coffee cups

These two hand-painted coffee cups bear the names of two gentlemen: Mansur Basha (Pasha) and Mustafa Riyad.

The coffeehouse, the home and beyond

With matching decoration, these cups probably formed part of a larger set once used in an administrative office or a military barrack with each official or officer having their own designated cup.

1880–1920, probably Egypt.

Private collection

7. Coffee cups

Coffee cups like the three examples here, mass produced in China for export specifically to the Middle East, North and East Africa, continue to be extremely popular and can be found in most homes. It is usual for a household to have several sets of coffee cups of different designs, quality and origin readily available for serving visitors and guests.

1960s–70s, China, acquired in London, 2012,6014.47.a

1940s–50s, China, acquired in Sudan, Af1958,07.2.

Donated by Mrs E. Barter

1970s, China, acquired in the UAE, 2011,6009.25.

Donated by Wilhelmina van de Weg and Joan Elliot

8. Relating news of the fall of Acre

Coffeehouses were the places to get information about and to discuss the latest political, social and financial news. In this print, a courier in traditional dress is seated outside a coffeehouse relating the news of the fall of Acre to a group of attentive men. Even the barber shaving a client next door is absorbed by the news. In 1840 British and Austrian ships bombarded the port of Acre in an attempt to prevent the Governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, from marching on to Istanbul.

1843

Print by John Nash, after Sir David Wilkie

1851,0503.159

9. Local production and revival

Faced with the preference by emerging middle classes for quality imports, artisanal ceramic production in many parts of the Islamic world stagnated or declined in the mid-20th century. Craft associations and government initiatives to teach new techniques and modernise designs were set up in several countries.

The coffeehouse, the home and beyond

The last two decades have seen a resurgence of interest in sustainable craft production for both local consumption and for expats and tourists.

Wave coffee cup, 2000s, Sha'lan Ceramic Studios, Lebanon, Private collection

Coffee cup and saucer, 2015-2018, Armenia, Private collection

Coffee pot, 1967–73, Abuja Pottery Training Centre, Nigeria, Af1996,05.1.a-b. Donated by Sir David Attenborough

Life beyond a cup

Coffee shortages and high coffee prices during and after the First World War led to an increased adoption of tea in many parts of the Islamic world. The passion for coffee nonetheless continued unabated in the last century. The desire to experiment with different coffees and ways of brewing resulted in the spread of Italian and American ways of brewing and enabled multinational coffee chains to establish themselves successfully in the region.

The coffeehouse, the home and beyond

Similarly, local roasteries originating in Lebanon and in Turkey expanded their appeal and entered the international scene. But coffee's appeal goes beyond the cup. Its grounds are the tools of fortune tellers reading a person's luck, its brew, the pigment used by artists reaffirming its links to their national identity and its beans are replacement tokens in children's games. It permeates every aspect of life.

A global commodity

A global commodity

The popularity of coffee in Europe in the 1600s led to increased demand on Yemeni coffee. The Ottomans attempting to safeguard supplies for themselves, banned, unsuccessfully, the export of coffee to Europe. Shortages occurred and prices soared.

In the early 1700s, the Dutch succeeded in growing coffee in Indonesia as did the French in their Caribbean colonies. The Spanish, British and Portuguese soon followed suit. This ended Yemen's monopoly on coffee cultivation. Cheap colonial coffee, grown mostly by enslaved labour, began to supply European markets.

From the 1730s, coffee produced in colonial plantations was exported from Europe to Ottoman lands. Its affordability led to its spread even though it was regarded as inferior to Yemeni coffee. Coffee had become a truly global commodity.

A global commodity

Global coffee

Coffee is currently grown worldwide from Hawaii to Papua New Guinea, in areas where the soil, temperature and humidity are suitable, with Brazil being the largest producer followed by Vietnam, Colombia and Indonesia. Green unroasted coffee is exported in large sacks containing between 60kg and 100kg of beans. The coffee sacks displayed here come from Costa Rica, Colombia, Brazil, Ethiopia, Yemen, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, India and Indonesia.

Burlap coffee sacks, 2015-21

A global commodity

Coffee in the pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic saw coffeehouses and coffee shops closed worldwide as lockdowns and restrictions affected public spaces. Nonetheless coffee continued to be consumed in homes as people adapted to the new conditions, and e-commerce of coffee increased substantially. Initial studies estimate that home coffee consumption may have increased by up to 23 percent globally even though overall consumption dropped.

Dunn Coffee Christmas blend burlap sack, 2020.