

Insatiable Appetite

Islamic History and Civilization

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Insatiable Appetite

*Food as Cultural Signifier in the Middle East
and Beyond*

Edited by

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Julia Hauser

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Introduction

Food has increasingly received attention in the humanities and social sciences in recent decades.¹ While the subject of food has long been considered banal beyond the aspect of economy, recent research has started to approach food from a whole spectrum of perspectives exploring the multiple facets of its significance. As Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik remark, “Food links body and soul, self and other, the personal and the political, the material and the symbolic.”² Food thus lends itself to being studied from a wide array of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives, opening up a broad range of topics. For example, foodways mirror a person’s social status. They can be subject to certain rules imposed by political or religious actors. Food choices also interact with bodily self-fashioning. Food, drink, and other substances can stimulate or alter sensual perception, and so can abstention from certain foods. In contrast, alimentary restriction is not—and has not been—necessarily a matter of choice. It is these six topics—social status, prohibitions and prescriptions, body and sexuality, intoxication, abstention, and scarcity—that are the focus of the present volume, which is an outcome of the interdisciplinary conference “Insatiable Appetite: Food as a Cultural Signifier,” held in Beirut, Lebanon, in May 2016 by the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA), the American University of Beirut (AUB), and the Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB). Focusing on the Mediterranean and on Arab Muslim countries in particular, the volume addresses the cultural meanings of food from a wider chronological scope from antiquity to present, and also adopts approaches from various disciplines, such as ancient Greek philology, Arabic literature, Islamic studies, anthropology, and history. Without claiming to be exhaustive, the volume aims to provide illustrative case studies and to explore examples little studied so far, thus stimulating further research into the manifold ways in which food has served as cultural signifier throughout history. Moreover, the framework of the main topics that structure the volume sets its contributions

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- 1 Important exceptions to this trend are the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, where research on food has been spearheaded by notable scholars like Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel de Certeau, Margaret Mead, Georg Simmel, and Pierre Bourdieu. For an introduction to research on food in both disciplines, see Robert Dirks and Gina Hunter, “The Anthropology of Food,” and William Alex McIntosh, “The Sociology of Food,” both in *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies*, ed. Ken Albala (London: Routledge, 2013).
 - 2 Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, introduction to *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3, Kindle.

into a dialogical relation to one another, highlighting a systematic approach to both historical and theoretical questions that are relevant to research on food.

1 Food and Social Status

Upper-class cuisine in the Near and Middle East is best documented, and hence from Abbasid to Ottoman times has been widely researched.³ Sources relevant in this context include cookery books and treatises on hospitality, the latter of which are sometimes characterized by satiric overtones. It is this aspect that Tarek Abu Hussein analyzes in his contribution. As shown by the many satiric characters in Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī's sixteenth-century treatise on hospitality, it was not just generosity that was a central virtue in the banqueting etiquette of the Damascene learned elite of the Mamluk era: generosity on the host's part needed to be complemented by modesty on that of the guests. Christian Saßmannshausen's chapter goes beyond the much-researched realm of upper-class cuisine by investigating the extent to which food and dining habits changed as a result of increasing contacts with the West during the nineteenth century. As he is able to show, food habits remained relatively constant while practices of consumption saw drastic changes that, among the middle and upper classes, were even reflected in the division of space in family homes.

3 See, e.g., Rachel Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Nawal Nasrallah, ed., *Annals of the Caliphs' Kitchens: Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq's Tenth-Century Baghdadi Cookbook* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Lilia Zaouali, *Medieval Cuisine of the Islamic World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Charles Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery: Essays and Translations by Maxime Rodinson, A.J. Arberry, and Charles Perry*, with a foreword by Claudia Roden (Totnes, England: Prospect Books, 2001); Geert Jan van Gelder, *Of Dishes and Discourse: Classical Arabic Literary Representations of Food* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000); David Waines, *In a Caliph's Kitchen: Mediaeval Arabic Cooking for the Modern Gourmet* (London: Riad el Rayyes Books, 1989); Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann, eds., *The Illuminated Table, the Prosperous House: Food and Shelter in Ottoman Material Culture* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2003). For studies drawing conclusions about middle- and lower-class patterns of consumption, see Paulina B. Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes: Aspects of Life in an Islamic Metropolis of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Alan Mikhail, "The Heart's Desire: Gender, Urban Space, and the Ottoman Coffee House," in *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee*, ed. Dana Sajdi (London: Tauris, 2007); Amy Singer, ed., *Starting with Food: Culinary Approaches to Ottoman History* (Princeton, NJ: Wiener, 2011); Amy Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

2 Prohibitions and Prescriptions from Classical Islam to the Present

In cultures influenced by Islam, the systematic classification of food as permissible or nonpermissible has a long and complex history. Already for classical Islam, scholars have pointed out the heterogeneity across space and time in halal regulations.⁴ In contemporary societies, halal regulations are even more open to interpretation, as they are being called into question by recent developments in modern technology and migration.⁵ The chapters in this part from Islamic studies, history, and anthropology are concerned both with the present-day situation and with historical discourses on ambivalent and forbidden foods and alimentary practices. Yasmin Amin looks at the conflictual negotiations in religious, medical, and other sources around garlic and onions, foods at once appreciated for their medical properties and rejected because of their odor. In the following chapter, Karen Moukheiber looks at how the office of the *muhtasib* changed in Abbasid times, arguing that it came to fulfill religious as well as secular functions. Shaheed Tayob's contribution looks at the interactions of economic concerns, innovations in food technology, and fatwa rulings in the establishment of halal certification in South Africa, showing that while parts of the industry work to achieve standardization, considerable differences in opinion and practice continue to exist. As all contributions in this part show, Islam—whether in its past or present—did not, and does not, provide a unified framework for handling food. Instead, prohibitions and prescriptions have varied over time, and norm and practice have by no means been congruent.

3 Food, Gender, and the Body in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

As long as food history is written in terms of intellectual history, it is a history often dominated by male actors, yet one that rarely discusses issues of gender. It was only in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a time that saw the emergence of a new middle-class ideal of gender, to which domestic-

4 Michael Cook, "Early Islamic Dietary Law," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986); David M. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Ersilia Francesca, "Dietary Law," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

5 See, e.g., Paula Schrode, *Sunnitisch-islamische Diskurse zu Halal-Ernährung. Konstituierung religiöser Praxis und sozialer Positionierung unter Muslimen in Deutschland* (Würzburg: Ergon-Verl, 2010).

ity was central, that women appeared as actors in, as well as expert authors of, writings on food in their emphatically stressed role as homemakers. It is here that Anny Gaul's contribution sets in, looking into discursive connections between food and happiness in Egyptian novels and culinary literature, and showing how notions of happiness were tied to concepts of gender and body. The relation between food and the body is further explored in Christian Junge's chapter on the role of food in Fāris al-Shidyāq's novel *Al-Sāq 'alā al-sāq*, where bodily reactions to food are shown to act as a "somatic critique" of the different societies and cultures encountered by the narrator. At the same time, Junge highlights the interdependence of food, love and sexuality, and language in Shidyāq's novel. As both contributions reveal, food and sexuality remained to be intimately connected in Arab literature during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as has been the case in the premodern period as well.

4 Intoxication: Wine and Hashish in Literary Sources and Beyond

The connections among consumption, love, and sexuality are taken further by Kirill Dmitriev, who explores the symbolic meaning of wine in early Arabic love poetry, ultimately discussing the relevance of literary sources in studying the significance of wine in Arab culture. The literary influence of another agent of intoxication, hashish, is examined by Danilo Marino in the following chapter. As Marino shows, literary representations of hashish consumption in early modern times were closely linked to fantasies on food reminiscent of the theme of the Land of Cockayne in medieval Western literature. Both chapters thus tie in with recent research that has questioned a perception of Islam as a monolithic culture hostile to intoxication, emphasizing the popularity of both hashish and wine, whose cultivation has been practiced and whose consumption has been celebrated in poetry.⁶ Eric Dursteler's chapter further questions the straightforward equation between religious norms and practice with regard to foods and beverages by looking into the consumption of wine and pork in Reconquista Spain.

6 Peter Heine, *Weinstudien. Untersuchungen zu Anbau, Produktion und Konsum des Weins im arabisch-islamischen Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1982); Peter Heine, *Kulinarische Studien. Untersuchungen zur Kochkunst im arabisch-islamischen Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1988); Philip F. Kennedy, *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

5 Abstention: Vegetarianism in the Mediterranean and Europe from Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century

This part inquires into the negotiations tied to the contrary of intoxication and excess, abstention. Throughout history, individuals have renounced certain foods considered as impeding spirituality or as objectionable for ethical reasons. The part focuses on a kind of abstention to be found in antiquity, Islamic contexts, and modern Europe: meat. By doing so, it closes several gaps in research. Scholarship on vegetarianism has posited a very certain genealogy:⁷ in this strongly linear narrative, ancient Greece, India, and then modern Europe and the United States are its key representatives.⁸ Traditions in Islam, however, have largely been ignored.⁹ The contributions in this part complicate this linear narrative. As Pedro Martins shows in his chapter, writings on vegetarianism in ancient Greece were very much informed by perceptions on foodways in other parts of the world. Kevin Blankinship's article responds to this lacuna in research by exploring the total rejection of animal products embraced for ethical reasons by one of the most important classical Arab poets: Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (d. 1058). Finally, Julia Hauser shows how and why perceptions of foodways in the Middle East played an important role in debates on vegetarianism in nineteenth-century Germany, where the region appeared as an epitome of frugality. As all these chapters show, vegetarianism was embraced for ethical and spiritual reasons since antiquity, and it was often informed by borrowings from and references to apparently like-minded practices in other parts of the world.

6 Managing Scarcity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

As historians have pointed out, scarcity emerged as a problem to be addressed from the late eighteenth century onward as a result of the Enlightenment notion of improvement. Throughout the nineteenth century, efforts were made

7 Jakob A. Klein, "Afterword: Comparing Vegetarianisms," *Journal of South Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (2008).

8 See, e.g., Colin Spencer, *The Heretic's Feast: A History of Vegetarianism* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1995); Tristram Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution: A Cultural History of Vegetarianism from 1600 to Modern Times* (London: W.W. Norton, 2007).

9 For an exception, see Richard C. Foltz, *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 81, 106–109.

to tackle the problem.¹⁰ Scarcity was also at the heart of reform in the Middle East.¹¹ Colonies and the peripheries of empires were often severely hit by famine until well into the twentieth century, particularly in the wake of global conflicts.¹² While there is a growing body of literature on humanitarian relief, it almost always focuses on donors rather than receivers. To address this gap in research, the contributions united in this part assume the opposite perspective, seeking to examine the perspective of those who confront scarcity. Tylor Brand shows how those suffering from famine in Lebanon during World War I transformed food into an object of fantasy and invented substitute foods. Lola Wilhelm looks at international food-aid programs in the Middle East from the interwar period until the 1960s not as “donor driven,” but as a result of negotiations between organizations and actors on the ground. In both chapters, those afflicted by scarcity appear not as passive victims but as historical actors actively trying to overcome crises, whether through negotiation with donors or sheer inventiveness.

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The volume, and the conference it results from, would not have been possible without the support of many individuals and institutions. In particular, the editors would like to thank the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the Berlin office of the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA), the provost of the American University of Beirut, the directors and staff of the Orient-Institut Beirut, the Food Heritage Foundation, Lebanon, and Brigitte Caland and Charles Perry for introducing us to the rich history and delightful flavors of Abbasid cuisine. We are also indebted to

10 James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

11 Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003). As Semih Çelik illustrates, the Ottoman Empire even tried to engage in humanitarian aid during the Irish famine. Çelik, “Between History of Humanitarianism and Humanitarianization of History. A Discussion on Ottoman Help for the Victims of the Great Irish Famine, 1845–1852,” *WerkstattGeschichte* 68 (2015).

12 For the Ottoman Empire, see Melanie S. Tanielian, “Feeding the City: The Beirut Municipality and the Politics of Food during World War One,” *Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014); Özge Ertem, “Considering Famine in the Late Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire: A Comparative Framework and Overview,” *COLLeGIUM* 22, no. 9 (2017): 151–172. For Morocco, refer to Bernard Rosenberger, *Société, pouvoir et alimentation: nourriture et précarité au Maroc précolonial* (Rabat: Alizés, 2001).

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PART 1

Food and Social Status



Social Dining, Banqueting, and the Cultivation of a Coherent Social Identity

The Case of Damascene 'Ulama' in the Late Mamluk and Early Ottoman Period

Tarek Abu Hussein

Any scholar specializing in the cultural history of the Arab East or Islam more generally will notice a paucity in the literature on Damascene material culture and daily life during the Mamluk and early Ottoman periods, and indeed, almost the entire history of Damascus as part of a larger Islamic dominion. There are comparatively few scholarly works on food, consumption, and everyday life in premodern Damascus, particularly in contrast to that other urban center of the Arab East, Cairo. This chapter represents a modest attempt to redress this through its emphasis on the heretofore-overlooked significance of food, social function, and entertainment in Damascene social life around the end of the Mamluk era and the beginning of Ottoman rule. It is an admittedly rudimentary effort to survey an important element of Damascene cultural history during this period.

The significance of food as creating social cohesion is notable; social dining was among the principal contributors to the formation and perpetuation of social and intellectual relations and to the creation of a distinctly learned elite in Damascus. This high learned elite, as we shall see, separated themselves from regular people and other elites in Damascene society, notably the military-administrative and economically privileged strata, partly through their customary dining practices and discourses on table manners. Such criteria, in turn, enabled them to clearly delineate who belonged in their group and who did not.

1 Sources

For any aspect of life in late Mamluk and early Ottoman Damascus, the work of the foremost local historian of the period, the *ḥanafī* scholar Shams al-Dīn Ibn Ṭulūn (d. 953/1546), is indispensable. The history of food and social dining culture in the city is no exception. Ibn Ṭulūn was perhaps the most prolific scholar of his age, having produced more than 750 works of varying length in a number of different fields, the overwhelming majority of which are either no longer extant or unpublished. Perhaps his most famous historical work is

his annalistic chronicle *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān* (The enjoyment with friends of the events of the time), which details events in Damascus during the period 1479–1520. Another important local history by Ibn Ṭulūn is his book *al-Qalā'id al-jawhariyya fī tārikh al-Ṣālihiyya* (The bejeweled necklaces concerning the history of Ṣālihiyya) on the Damascene quarter of Ṣālihiyya, where he himself lived. Both *Mufākahat al-khillān* and *al-Qalā'id al-jawhariyya* include several examples of the author's own social dining experiences with fellow 'ulama'. Ibn Ṭulūn also composed a treatise detailing the different types of banquets held at the time. In his *Faṣṣ al-khawātim fī-mā qīla fī'l-walā'im* (Gemstone rings regarding what has been related on banquets), Ibn Ṭulūn clearly underscores which occasions merited celebration (or, in one case, mourning) through social dining in the first, longer part of the treatise. For my purposes, I will say more about the second part of *Faṣṣ al-khawātim*, which comprises Ibn Ṭulūn's general observations on dining etiquette. One aspect needs to be mentioned pertaining to Ibn Ṭulūn's selection of a title for this book: although in the purely literal sense *Faṣṣ al-khawātim* denotes "gemstone rings," in this particular context it is also a reference to "gems of wisdom" or "pearls of wisdom." This indicates that the work is of a normative essence, which is significant because its author makes several remarks on the ideal nature of banquets and the proper conduct of individuals during such events.

Other works on similar subjects by Ibn Ṭulūn, according to the exhaustive list of books he presents in his autobiography, include a treatise on the virtues of figs, another extolling the merits of apples, a piece dedicated to sugar, as well as a history (*akhbār*) of dates.¹ He also claims to have composed a work on olives and olive oil; a book on the fava bean (*fūl*); another on watermelons; and a comparative evaluation of yogurt and honey, in which Ibn Ṭulūn had presumably argued that one possessed greater virtue than the other.² Ibn Ṭulūn even deemed it necessary to produce a work on a dish called *hindba* (endive),³ still very popular today in the Arab East, consisting of cooked dandelions with fried onions on top. He also contributed to the prohibitory discourses of the period in his compilation of declarations prohibiting the drinking of *boza*,⁴ a popular fermented drink (often with low alcohol content), and a piece titled *Taḥdhīr al-mughaffalīn min bay' al-'inab wa-l-'aṣīr li-l-khammārīn*

1 Shams al-Din Muḥammad Ibn Ṭulūn, *al-Fulk al-mashḥūn fī aḥwāl Muḥammad Ibn Ṭulūn*, ed. Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf (Damascus, 1996), 77 (on figs), also 96.

2 *Ibid.*, 101, 85, 141, 139.

3 *Ibid.*, 141.

4 *Ibid.*, 79.

(Warning the fools against the selling of grapes and juices to wine producers).⁵ Finally, this prolific historian composed a piece, presumably close in nature to *Faṣṣ al-khawātim*, titled *Ta'lim al-ahl li-ādāb al-akl* (Instruction in the manners of eating), apparently dedicated to social dining etiquette.⁶ Sadly, most of the aforementioned works are now lost, and none of Ibn Ṭulūn's many books relating to food and eating culture, apart from *Faṣṣ al-khawātim*, has been published. Nonetheless, the wealth of material dedicated to food and dining, both extant and unpreserved, confirms that it was a very important subject of premodern Damascene intellectual discourse, thus meriting greater scholarly attention.

Although Ibn Ṭulūn is surely the most important among Damascene authors of the first half of the sixteenth century, other contemporary or near-contemporary sources can elucidate some of the main themes treated in his works. Foremost among these are two brief pieces on topics related to *Faṣṣ al-khawātim* by a younger contemporary of Ibn Ṭulūn, Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 984/1577). The first, somewhat closer to Ibn Ṭulūn's subject matter, was entitled *Ādāb al-mu'ākala* (The manners of social dining), and the second, similarly conceived, was *Ādāb al-'ishra wa-dhikr al-ṣuḥba wa-l-ukhuwwa* (The manners of socializing and the mention of friendship and fraternity). Both are essentially manuals of social practice, instructing readers in proper and virtuous conduct—and in the case of the former, mostly improper and offensive behavior while dining socially. Al-Ghazzī describes a total of eighty-one such shameful aspects of eating in the company of others.⁷

Al-Ghazzī appears to follow a tradition of literary amusement beginning at least as early as the time of the great litterateur al-Jāhīz (d. 255/868–869), who mocked improper table manners, but also with later medieval scholars who developed the subject into a subgenre of sorts, such as the fifteenth-century scholar al-Abshīhī of Egypt.⁸ Interestingly, al-Ghazzī does not explicitly connect his own treatise to any similar work preceding it, which might suggest that he may not have been entirely familiar with writing on the subject. Although this might seem like an unusual claim, it is supported by the fact that premodern Muslim authors, including al-Ghazzī himself in other works, were generally scrupulous and forthright in disclosing connections to past scholars when writing within a specific subgenre of literature or any work directly connected to

5 Ibid., 90.

6 Ibid., 94.

7 Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-mu'ākala*, ed. 'Umar Mūsā Bāshā (Damascus, 1967), 6.

8 See Geert Jan van Gelder, "Arabic Banqueters: Literature, Lexicography and Reality," *Res Orientales* 4 (1992): 85–93.

the religious sciences. And so there is little reason to suppose that al-Ghazzī would have neglected to reference earlier works on the same subject had he known of their existence.

The significance of al-Ghazzī's perspective on social dining etiquette lies in his identity as a member of a renowned and long-established family of Damascene *'ulama'* and *muftīs* belonging to the Shafī'ī school. Among the occupants of the post of Shafī'ī mufti was his father, Raḍīyy al-Dīn al-Ghazzī and, eventually, also Badr al-Dīn himself. Renowned primarily for his expertise in Prophetic Tradition, al-Ghazzī established his own impressive network of intellectual affiliates and pupils, and though not quite as prolific as Ibn Ṭulūn, he produced more than one hundred works in different fields of literature and the religious sciences.

2 Dining Etiquette and the Articulation of a Form of Social Elitism

The art of hospitality was adjudged to have been a central tenet of Muslim social practice from the very beginning. The Prophet himself is purported to have declared “offering food and extending the greeting of peace to those you know and those you do not know” as among the principal elements of the new faith when answering a follower's question about “the best part of Islam.”⁹ The prominent medieval scholar al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) insisted that a person received greater divine reward by accepting a host's kind hospitality than when fasting.¹⁰ Indeed, one of al-Ghazzī's prescriptions for good social behavior in *Ādāb al-īshra* is yielding to the wishes of the host even while fasting. This is again derived from Prophetic Tradition, where Muḥammad purportedly recommends that Muslims break their fast if their host insists on offering them food and later make up for the day lost if they so wish. This is articulated in a *ḥadīth* attributed to one of Muḥammad's companions, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, who relates: “I made food for the Prophet, and he and his companions came. When the food was placed, one of them said, ‘I'm fasting.’ The Prophet, peace be upon him, said in reply, ‘Your brother invited you and burdened himself for you. Break your fast then fast another day in its place if you wish.’”¹¹ It was also somewhat humorously claimed by some observers, according to Ibn Ṭulūn in *Faṣṣ*

9 David Waines, *Food Culture and Health in Pre-Modern Islamic Societies* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 197.

10 Ibid., 198.

11 Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-īshra wa dhikr al-ṣuḥba wa-l-ukhuwwa*, ed. 'Umar Mūsā Bāshā (Damascus, 1968), 60.

al-Khawātim, that, although God had predetermined how long a person's life would last, the time spent dining and socializing with friends and colleagues around a table was not counted as part of one's lifetime. As such, a person was encouraged to remain at the table for as long as he could.¹² Although such an assertion may not have been entirely serious, it nonetheless aptly reveals the importance of social dining in premodern Islamic culture.

A crucial sociocultural form of separating the scholarly elite of Damascene Muslim society from both the general public and other elites was the articulation of detailed sets of principles stipulating proper conduct at social dining functions. This was accomplished by both Ibn Ṭulūn in *Faṣṣ al-khawātim* and, in more elaborate fashion, by Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī in his social manuals, particularly *Ādāb al-mu'ākala*. Al-Ghazzī's manual on social dining was conceived, by his own admission, as "a collection of shameful traits which, if recognized as such, would allow those who possess this knowledge to become experts on the manners of social dining."¹³

There are several categories of social eaters that apply to both hosts and guests in al-Ghazzī's *Ādāb al-mu'ākala*. The *ḥakkāk*, for instance, is he who scratches his hair and other parts of his body after washing his hands or before eating. Al-Ghazzī relates an anecdote on a *ḥakkāk* who dined with the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn and scratched his head, then his beard, on two separate occasions; both times, al-Ma'mūn asked this man to wash his hands again.¹⁴ Maintaining proper hygiene was among the principal tenets of good social dining practices. The well-mannered, according to Ibn Ṭulūn in *Faṣṣ al-khawātim*, washed their hands before and after sitting at the table. Before eating, it was especially recommended that the hands be allowed to air dry, rather than being dried with a towel, for risk of the towel being unclean.¹⁵

The *mudammī'* is any social diner who does not wait for his food to adequately cool off, tears up because of the heat in his mouth, and either spits the food out or drinks to help swallow it.¹⁶ Drinking water was preferable before or after a meal, and frowned upon otherwise—while eating it could lead, according to Ibn Ṭulūn, to belching.¹⁷ Al-Ghazzī's *naffākḥ* blows on his food until cool enough for his own judgment, and only then can he eat it, causing much embar-

12 Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭulūn, *Faṣṣ al-khawātim fī mā qīla fī l-walā'im*, ed. Nizār Abāza (Damascus, 1983), 64.

13 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-mu'ākala*, 6.

14 Ibid., 7.

15 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Faṣṣ al-khawātim*, 77.

16 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-mu'ākala*, 11.

17 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Faṣṣ al-khawātim*, 74.

rassment to himself.¹⁸ For his part, Ibn Ṭulūn explicitly affirms that eaters must remain patient until the food is less hot.¹⁹ The *muqattīʿ*, in contrast, mistakenly overestimates what he can consume in one bite and ends up chewing and, worse, dipping the same bite twice.²⁰ In fact, Ibn Ṭulūn recommended eating in small bites, savoring each bite, and not taking more food until it was swallowed.²¹ A *mīṭāsh*, when feeling thirsty in the middle of a bite, does not wait to swallow but moves the food to the lower part of his jaw while drinking, before chewing and, finally, swallowing his bite.²²

The *mughāthī* repeatedly dirties his chin and mouth while eating, whereas the *muqazziz* speaks of the most disgusting things at a dinner table, relating tales of people with diarrhea and other distasteful afflictions. The *muqazziz* is prone to spitting, blowing his nose, and scratching his eyes while eating socially.²³ Unlike the *mughāthī*, a *muwassikh* and *dārib* do not dirty themselves but accidentally spill food on the table and other people's clothes.²⁴ The *jamālī* (literally “camel-like”) bends his neck too far forward over the dish for fear of staining his clothes. Another eater derogatorily likened to an animal, the *baqqār*, licks his lips with his tongue, resembling a cow.²⁵ The *mukharrib* pays no heed to others' needs and eats as much food, especially meat, as he possibly can, with total disregard for what others may or may not have eaten.²⁶ The *jardabīl*, upon realizing that the bread supply is running out, grabs a large portion of what remains to ensure enjoying the rest of his meal with sufficient bread.²⁷ Similarly, the *mushghil* begins to consume bread at a faster rate when realizing the same. The *malquww* takes huge mouthfuls so that his face appears inflated with the amount of food in his mouth.²⁸ The *ṣāmit* is a silent eater who, instead of engaging in pleasant conversation with others around the table, concentrates solely on the food.²⁹

A remarkable category of eaters is the *ḥāmid*, who praises God on several occasions during a meal, which is construed as asking others to stop eating,

18 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-muʿākala*, 16.

19 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Faṣṣ al-khawātīm*, 81.

20 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-muʿākala*, 12.

21 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Faṣṣ al-Khawātīm*, 73.

22 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-Muʿākala*, 13.

23 *Ibid.*, 18.

24 *Ibid.*, 36.

25 *Ibid.*, 42.

26 *Ibid.*, 20.

27 *Ibid.*, 25.

28 *Ibid.*, 26.

29 *Ibid.*, 28.

since *ḥamdala* is generally declared only at the end of a meal, whereas *bas-mala* precedes it.³⁰ Indeed, as Ibn Ṭulūn demonstrates, praising God (*ḥamdala*) was customary after the end of a meal, and for this several different formulas existed, from the quick *al-ḥamdu li-llāh* (praise be unto God) declaration to more detailed and elaborate laudatory expressions.³¹ The summoning of divine blessing (*bas-mala*) at the beginning was also “recommendable for all eaters, young and old.”³² As such, *ḥamdala* or *bas-mala* in the middle of a meal would have sounded rather odd.

The *mūhim*, as his designation denotes, is under the illusion that he has grabbed food with only three fingers but has actually used five and, sometimes, the palm of his hand.³³ Indeed, a hugely important component of social dining etiquette was being aware of how many fingers to use while grabbing and consuming different kinds of food. According to Ibn Ṭulūn, if the dish in question had a certain degree of liquidity, then using all five fingers was recommended; if, in contrast, it was entirely solid, using three fingers (the thumb, index, and middle finger) was advisable.³⁴

The *mushayyiʿ* is a peculiar character who observes, seemingly out of pure curiosity, the way others eat.³⁵ Worse is the *mutaṭāwil*, who cannot stop looking at others’ food, giving the unmistakable impression that he hopes to consume their share as well.³⁶ A *mutaʿaddī* is a most uncouth character who grabs others’ food and consumes it.³⁷ The *muḥtāl* is a trickster who presents food, particularly meat, to the person seated next to him, then immediately accepts it back when the latter declines out of politeness; according to al-Ghazzī, this is a conscious act of deception.³⁸

Other categories apply exclusively to either hosts or guests. As far as the former are concerned, they were expected to demonstrate several qualities upon receiving guests. Among these, according to al-Ghazzī in his manual on socializing, is the host’s willingness to satisfy the desires of the guest and the ability to strike up polite and dignified conversation. The host must also appear generous and maintain a pleasant disposition at all times.³⁹ If he did not adhere to these

30 Ibid., 30.

31 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Faṣṣ al-khawātim*, 75–76.

32 Ibid., 76.

33 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-muʿākala*, 37.

34 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Faṣṣ al-khawātim*, 82.

35 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-muʿākala*, 35.

36 Ibid., 34.

37 Ibid., 41.

38 Ibid., 43.

39 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-ʿishra*, 74.

and other principles, the guest risked falling into one of the many categories al-Ghazzī described in his *Ādāb al-muʿākala*.

Such categories include the *muḥtamī*, a miserly host who, in explaining why the portions he offers are inadequate, claims to have made a decision to eat lightly.⁴⁰ The *muwaffir* suspends the serving of tastier and pricier dishes in hopes that his guests will get full after sampling the inexpensive foods on offer, thereby ridding himself of the obligation to serve the main courses.⁴¹ The *mutashakkī* continuously complains about the prices of foodstuffs, making his guests feel uncomfortable before or during a meal.⁴² The *ghaṣṣāṣ* neglects to place water at the table.⁴³ A *muḥaddith* inadvertently distracts his guests from eating by engaging in extended conversation that requires both parties to be attentive and responsive at all times. Al-Ghazzī is aware of the importance of conversing at such events, but he distinguishes the type of discussion that does not require everyone to be fully engaged all the time from the question-answer type of conversation that could prevent guests from enjoying their food.

The *muwḥish* is a host who treats his servants and cook terribly, resorting to physical force at times.⁴⁴ In his other brief work on the “manners of socializing,” al-Ghazzī cites the importance of treating servants well as among the major tenets of virtuosity more generally. He mentions a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet had declared: “[Servants] are your brothers, it is God who has placed them under your service, so allow them to partake in what you eat, render unto them what you wear, and do not force them to do that which they cannot bear.”⁴⁵

Guests acquired an even more extensive range of pejorative classifications. The *mutathāqil* accepts his host’s invitation but is so late in arriving that both his host and the other guests grow hungry in his absence. This, according to al-Ghazzī, was inexcusable even when the *mutathāqil* was fasting.⁴⁶ Indeed, Ibn Ṭulūn made it clear that if those invited, barring one or two late guests, had already arrived, it was entirely acceptable to commence eating without the tardy guests.⁴⁷ Perhaps even worse than the *mutathāqil* was the *ʿāʾib*, who instead of being quietly thankful for the food he was offered, proceeds to point

40 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-muʿākala*, 34.

41 Ibid., 38.

42 Ibid., 45.

43 Ibid., 42.

44 Ibid., 44.

45 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-ʿishra*, 45.

46 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-muʿākala*, 9–10.

47 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Faṣṣ al-khawātim*, 70.

out what he believes was wrong with his host's food, such as the meat being overcooked or the stew being too salty, sour, or sweet.⁴⁸

Ṭufaylīs were uninvited people who sat for a meal at another person's home; worse still, they did not make even the slightest effort to engage in conversation with others around the table and, even when spoken to, never answered with more than a single word so that the conversation ended prematurely, thus switching their focus back to the food.⁴⁹ Al-Ghazzī relates an anecdote on a *Ṭufaylī* who was refused entry into a banquet, only to return minutes later claiming to deliver a gift to the host that allegedly had been sent by a friend of the latter; his perseverance paid dividends, and the *Ṭufaylī* was indeed admitted the second time around.⁵⁰

The *mutalaffit* continues to glance toward the place from which the food is brought, expecting other varieties to be served.⁵¹ Along similar lines, the *mu'azzil*, even when full, vomits when served with more food to clear his stomach and enable himself to eat more.⁵² The *muwazzi'* is a guest who gets busy distributing food to the servants and even cats in the household instead of attending to his own meal. This, according to al-Ghazzī, is a blatant violation of the *sunna*, as it is a transgression against a right that is exclusive to the host.⁵³ Ibn Ṭulūn also affirms that the guest is not entitled to any more food beyond what he eats at the banquet itself; he may not take, sell, donate, or give any of the remaining food to servants or cats.⁵⁴

Other principles guided the quality, authenticity, and success of a banquet for such elite circles of the learned. Proper seating habits, for instance, were a fundamental component of social dining. Two seated positions were acceptable at such events, the first with both knees bent forward and the other in which one knee was used for support in a semi-reclining stance.⁵⁵ A fully reclined position was acceptable only when consuming fruit.⁵⁶ As far as guests were concerned, it was not customary to seat them facing the chambers belonging to the women of the household. They were also expected to leave only with the express permission of their host, and good manners necessitated that the

48 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-mu'ākala*, 19.

49 Ibid., 22–23.

50 Ibid., 24.

51 Ibid., 35.

52 Ibid., 44.

53 Ibid., 37.

54 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Faṣṣ al-khawātim*, 70.

55 Ibid., 70.

56 Ibid., 78.

latter show the former out the door.⁵⁷ Summoning blessings upon the host was also an essential mark of politeness on the part of guests.⁵⁸ Sadly, much less is said about food in our sources, but in *Faṣṣ al-khawātim* Ibn Ṭulūn gives a very general idea of the kinds of food that were served at banquets. Apparently, fruit was offered first,⁵⁹ and it was crucial to ensure that the fruit served was seasonal. Meat dishes came next as a main course, with *ḥalāwa* or other sweets being served as dessert. Throughout the meal, it was customary to keep fresh herbs and greens at the table, owing to a superstitious belief that they expelled demons.⁶⁰

Geert Jan van Gelder, who uses such manuals as the one al-Ghazzī composed on social dining in his work on Arab-Islamic banqueting culture, is correct to indicate the danger of using such texts uncritically as a source on real life, and yet he goes too far by almost dismissing them as mere entertainment or amusement, possessing little educational or intellectual value.⁶¹ There is no doubting the humor behind many of the characterizations of social diners offered in al-Ghazzī's manual. And yet the problem with this somewhat narrow type of thinking is that van Gelder fails to see *Ādāb al-mu'ākala* and *Ādāb al-ʿishra*, as related works, and thus he chooses not to study the latter in parallel with the former. However, not only did the late sixteenth-century Damascene copyist who preserved the two works include both in the same collection of manuscripts,⁶² which may well be a mere coincidence, but al-Ghazzī himself, by using the word *Ādāb*, or “manners,” seemed to connect the two. In fact, the same author used the word again, albeit in its singular form (*adab*), in one of his most significant works, a manual on Islamic education with detailed recommendations for both instructors and pupils, with a decidedly serious tone and task.⁶³ In writing on banqueting culture, van Gelder emphasizes the connection of these “festive meals” to a sense of “conviviality for the sake of the family, clan or tribe” in old Bedouin tradition that lived on in later urban culture.⁶⁴ But he neglects to note that the intellectual elite perpetuated their own self-image through such events and their own discourse surrounding them. At the outset of his introduction to *Ādāb al-ʿishra*, al-Ghazzī makes a clear

57 Ibid., 70.

58 Ibid., 77.

59 Compare Rosa Kuhne Brabant, “Al-Rāzī on When and How to Eat Fruit,” in David Waines (ed.), *Patterns of Everyday Life* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2002: 317–327).

60 Ibid., 71.

61 See van Gelder, “Arabic Banquetters,” 85–93.

62 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-mu'ākala*, 3.

63 See Badr al-Din al-Ghazzī, *al-Durr al-naḍīd fī adab al-mufīd wa-l-mustafīd* (Beirut, 2006).

64 Van Gelder, “Arabic Banquetters,” 86.

connection between the composition of his work and the elites, or *khawāṣṣ*. He ends the introduction with words ascribed to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib to the same effect:

Do not befriend a man of ignorance, do not dare,
For often has the ignoramus ruined he who can forbear.
A man is measured by those whose companionship he picks,
And for all things there are parallels and yardsticks⁶⁵

Although his introduction to *Ādāb al-mu‘ākala* is much shorter and less expressive, in the main text there are several references to the necessity for “wise men” to avoid the practices described therein.

3 Dining as a Social Adhesive for the Learned Elite

Ibn Ṭulūn’s chronicle of the history of Damascus during his lifetime also offers a few examples of events, both public and private, that further illustrate the attitude of the scholarly elite toward social dining practices. It could be deduced from the little information *Mufākahat al-khillān* relates that the religious elite were more particular when it came to social functions than were the secular, wealthy civilian elite of Damascus at the time. The nonscholarly but apparently affluent Qub‘iyya household, for instance, held a circumcision (*khitān*) ceremony for one of its children during the early Ottoman period (1520) that was, in Ibn Ṭulūn’s judgment, “massive.” Indeed, despite the high-class pomp and circumstance with the incorporation of several fully embroidered horses as decoration and their ostentatious use of percussion and pipe instruments and singers in the festivities, the Qub‘iyya family had invited a huge number of people.⁶⁶ This was perhaps somewhat incongruous to their social standing, as determined, of course, by the family’s wealth, but here it is rather obvious that great wealth was no necessary guarantee of either high social standing or the clear social distinction of the nonlearned, nonpolitical elite from other segments of society. This was true under both the Mamluks and Ottomans, for whom there was always a sharp distinction between the (at least theoretically) “military” and scholarly classes and the rest of the population. Ibn Ṭulūn’s tone

65 al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-‘ishra*, 13.

66 Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Cairo, 1962), 2:105.

when describing the entire affair of the Qub'iyya *khitān* is somewhat unfavorable, and almost reminiscent of the hostility of today's old-money elites toward the class often referred to as the *nouveaux riches*.

Even the local Ottoman authorities did not go to such great lengths as the nonlearned civilian elite on similar occasions. When the children of the Ottoman *beylerbeyi* (governor) of Damascus were being circumcised that same year (926/1520), only some *a'yān* (notables) attended the ceremony, and the governor was content with the slaying of eighty sheep for the benefit of the general public.⁶⁷ The distinction between highly learned elite culture, as represented by Ibn Ṭulūn, and that of both the civilian elite and court cultures, is patently obvious here; in his *Faṣṣ al-Khawātim*, Ibn Ṭulūn clearly does not regard the banquets he speaks of as massive public functions, and in his chronicle he appears to scoff at those members of the civilian elite who turned them into mass public events.

Occasions when both the military-administrative and religious elites convened for a social occasion involving food appear to be rare, and this is not entirely surprising, but there are a few examples. In 917/1511, the Mamluk *nā'ib* of Damascus invited a prominent local *'ālim* of whom he was particularly fond, a certain Nāṣir al-Dīn b. Sa'īd, to a meal. Nāṣir al-Dīn impressed the governor with his extensive knowledge of *ḥadīth* during the exchange between the two men (presumably, though not necessarily, mediated by an interpreter).⁶⁸

A rarer element of social dining was its use as an instrument to curry favor with the authorities; this form of socialization was less common, but nevertheless it can be found in Ibn Ṭulūn's historical works. Shortly after the Ottoman entry into Damascus, a *ḥanaḥī rūmī* by the name of Zayn al-Ābidīn Efendi was appointed to the *kādīlik* (the chief judicial post) of Damascus.⁶⁹ The previous *qādī*, a Shāfi'ī by the name of Waliyy al-Dīn Ibn al-Farfūr, probably wished to retain some of his privileges in the administration of his hometown and so invited his Ottoman successor to his home. Zayn al-Ābidīn Efendi, however, refused to eat or drink any of the food he was offered, most likely as an expression of his dislike and disapproval of Ibn al-Farfūr.⁷⁰ Indeed, Ibn Ṭulūn immediately goes on to indicate that the Ottoman *qādī* appointed other vice-judges under his authority for the Ḥanaḥī, Mālikī, and Shāfi'ī schools of jurispru-

67 Ibid., 2:110.

68 Ibid., 1:361.

69 *Rūmī* was the most common word used by Arabic-speaking individuals to refer to Turkish-speaking individuals in the Ottoman world at the time.

70 Ibid., 2:29.

dence.⁷¹ For his part, Ibn al-Farfūr seems to have been a mischievous character, as he spent the last year of his life in a prison in Damascus after again falling out with the authorities.⁷²

Another event that appears to have been worthy of celebration and feasting, though not in public, was the removal of an unloved local governor from his post. In Ibn Ṭulūn's chronicle, this occurred on more than a single occasion. In the middle of the *hijrī* year 899/1494, for instance, the notables of Ṣalīhiyya gathered to celebrate the expulsion of a much-maligned *nā'ib* of Damascus, as well as the execution of several of his associates. According to Ibn Ṭulūn's account, there were lavish offerings of food during the event, though he unfortunately does not specify what was eaten.⁷³

It is clear from the sporadic but not infrequent anecdotes of social dining that Ibn Ṭulūn relates in his chronicle that the scholarly clique of his hometown's civilian population rarely included nonlearned elites in its social circle. As such, it is safe to suggest that his treatise on banquets was dedicated to that very group to which he himself belonged, and to the same people with whom he socialized at the dinner table and other settings, as revealed in his chronicle.

Not all elite social events involving food, in any case, were banquets or feasts, and fewer still included more than a small number of people, but they were still a vital element of social cohesion for the Damascene learned elite. It is very important to recognize, though, that these meetings were largely restricted to the upper castes of Damascus's learned community. It is difficult to establish beyond a reasonable doubt whether belonging to such a group necessarily required both some degree of affluence and a position of high learning, but it is rather likely that, to some extent, both were major criteria. Naturally, one of Ibn Ṭulūn's most regular companions at such upper-class events was his own mentor, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Nu'aymī (d. 927/1521), and together they visited the home of another friend and colleague, Muḥammad b. Akram al-Shamsī, where they all sat in the latter's garden and enjoyed some figs.⁷⁴

Years later, Ibn Ṭulūn and Nu'aymī were part of a larger gathering of '*ulama'*' at another colleague's home, where their host, a certain Ibn al-Jundī, treated them to some apricots in his garden; those apricots were, apparently, brought to Damascus from the northern Syrian town of Hama. Soon thereafter, those present sat down for lunch; indeed, the event appears to have been a daylong

71 Ibid., 2:30.

72 Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira bi a'yān al-mi'a al-āshira*, 2nd ed., ed. Jibrā'īl Jabbūr (Beirut, 1979), 2:22.

73 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mufākaha*, 1:160.

74 Ibid., 1:368.

affair, as an even greater variety of food, according to Ibn Ṭulūn, was served to the guests late in the afternoon. Between meals, the men involved shared their knowledge of poetry, literature, and of course various religious texts. One especially interesting tale Ibn Ṭulūn relates is that of Jārullāh b. Fahd al-Makkī, who had recited a brief passage from an earlier work on the “virtues of Damascus” (*faḍā’il al-Shām*).⁷⁵ It was after Jārullāh’s recitation that another of Ibn al-Jundī’s guests, Muḥammad b. al-Khayyāṭ al-Madanī, burst into song and transposed Jārullāh’s reading of the *faḍā’il* to musical rhythm. Ibn Ṭulūn makes clear that everyone present was deeply moved, and most burst into tears;⁷⁶ this clearly reveals the sense of attachment that those local ‘*ulama*’ felt toward their hometown. More important, this episode indicates the essential role of food and food-related socialization in the cultivation of social and intellectual networks in Damascus, as well as the formation of a distinctly elite culture in the city. Judging by Ibn Ṭulūn’s evidence, socializing over meals was certainly a strong social adhesive in premodern Damascene Muslim urban culture.

As a corollary of the self-perception of this elite, an equally distinct local cultural identity also clearly existed among their members. Ibn Ṭulūn’s history of Ṣāliḥiyya, a Damascene quarter, was itself a manifestation of his deep sense of belonging to the place, of which he was a native, and in it he also demonstrates how food could be associated with such local pride. Among the pleasures (*mahāsīn*) of Ṣāliḥiyya, in Ibn Ṭulūn’s account, was its richness in fruits and various foods; plums, apples, sour cherries, pomegranates, various kinds of berries, and figs are all mentioned as specialties of the place. Vine leaves, which according to our Damascene historian are “only prepared in [Ṣāliḥiyya],” and sorbets or sherbet (*shurbat*) were claimed to have been exported to the “rest of the world.” Some specific foodstuffs were, in fact, associated with specific families of Ṣāliḥiyya, with the Muḥsin family garden specializing in berries, and another household specializing in figs.⁷⁷ According to Ibn Ṭulūn, Ṣāliḥiyya also boasted the tastiest meat pastries (*lahm ‘alā ‘ajīn*) in the world.⁷⁸ The author relates a statement attributed to a local ‘*ālim*’ of Ṣāliḥiyya, a certain Ibn Qundus who was Ibn Ṭulūn’s own instructor in the religious sciences, which aptly

75 Ibid., 2:8. The *faḍā’il al-Shām* was in itself a smaller subgenre of the *faḍā’il* literature extolling the virtues of various Islamic locales; in the case of Damascus, this literary-historical collection of works was probably pioneered by the great local historian-geographer of the twelfth century Ibn ‘Asākir. See R. Sellheim, “Faḍīla,” in *ET*² (Brill Online, 2012).

76 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mufākaha*, 2:8.

77 Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭulūn, *al-Qalā’id al-jawhariyya fī tārikh al-Ṣāliḥiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Duhmān (Damascus, 1956), 2:376.

78 *Lahmacun* in Modern Turkish, or *lahm bi ‘ajīn* in today’s spoken Arabic.

reveals how food could be construed and connected to a sense of local identity. Ibn Qundus had apparently declared, “If a native of Ṣāliḥiyya is offered some *lahm ‘alā ‘ajīn* elsewhere [meaning outside Ṣāliḥiyya], then the host has committed a grave injustice to himself.”⁷⁹ The implication in this statement is quite obviously that the non-Ṣāliḥiyya host commits injustice to himself by offering his Ṣāliḥi guest a *lahm ‘alā ‘ajīn* that the latter would consider, in all circumstances, substandard or at least not up to par with the variety he had become accustomed to in Ṣāliḥiyya itself. Ibn Ṭulūn’s writing of Ṣāliḥiyya’s history more generally derives from his clear love for and feelings of affiliation to the place, of course, and his remarks on the quarter are particularly indicative of such sentiments.

It is by now clear that social dining and the discourses surrounding it played a significant role in perpetuating the identity of a Damascene learned elite, and in turn gave that elite another tool for separating themselves from the rest of society. A sharp distinction could be drawn between those upper-level ‘*ulama*’ of Damascus and both the military-administrative elite and the nonlearned civilian elite. Articulating a vision of what was to be expected during social dining events, and how those attending should act, allowed the learning elite to delineate who belonged to the group and who did not.

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79 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Al-Qalā‘id*, 2:377.

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Eating Up

Food Consumption and Social Status in Late Ottoman Greater Syria

Christian Saßmannshausen

A group of distinguished Muslim and Christian notables in Tripoli arranged a schedule of mutual visits during the winter. Every night they would gather in the reception hall of one of the men. Sweets and fruit would be served while the guests enjoyed the company and conversation. One evening a gathering took place in the reception hall of the city's Islamic judge, Aḥmad Efendī. When the time came to serve the delicacies, he invited his guests to another room where the food was arranged. Seeing the arrangement, the city's mufti 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Efendī Karāmī asked the host why he had organized two separate tables, one with sweets prepared with butter, cream, or cheese and the other without. The judge responded, "The first table was prepared for all of the guests and the second," pointing in the direction of another visitor, "consists of foods that our Christian friend, Abū Ilyās [i.e., Ni'mat Ghurayyib], who is observing Lent, can consume."¹ With the words, "No *kneffeh* or *katayef* can separate me from Abū Ilyās!", the mufti sat down at the table where the Lent-friendly food was placed.² All the other assembled dignitaries followed his example and took a seat around the same table, "in honor of Abū Ilyās," in the words of the chronicler, "as well as out of love and respect to each other."³

This anecdote illustrates the extent to which food and the practices surrounding its consumption helped to draw or bridge lines of distinction in Ottoman society, whether between religious, ethnic, or social groups. What one ate (and what one did not eat), how much one ate, and in which manner helped generate these distinctions. At the same time these practices served to exclude upwardly mobile groups or to help them to display themselves as new social trendsetters, in comparison to established elites and their purportedly

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- 1 Ni'met Allāh b. Ilyās Ghurayyib (b. 1786), known as Abū Ilyās, "the father of Elias." The year of his death is not exactly known but must have been after the late 1830s (*Ghurayyib Family Chronicle* [unpublished material from the Ghurayyib family archive], 18–30). I am much obliged to Luṭf Allāh Khlāt for helping me during my research to access this private source material.
 - 2 On Lent fasting, see Julia Hauser's "A Frugal Crescent: Perceptions of Foodways in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt in Nineteenth-Century Vegetarian Discourse" in this volume.
 - 3 This episode is narrated in detail in the *Ghurayyib Family Chronicle*: 32. The work generally emphasizes Christian-Muslim solidarity.

old-fashioned practices. Moreover, as this episode shows, knowledge about the diet of other communities was widespread within Ottoman society, and the respect for or willingness to transgress particular boundaries depended—as in many other spheres of social activity—on a person's status.

Practices of food consumption changed rapidly in the nineteenth century and particularly in the last decades of the late Ottoman period. New dishes, utensils, and table manners spread across the empire and its provinces. To be sure, food and other related commodities had traveled between different world regions and across the Middle East long before the nineteenth-century wave of globalization, but the speed, extent, and range of developments were all new.⁴ These changes were both caused and accompanied by the arrival of a great variety of European consumer goods, which reached the markets of Greater Syria more quickly and across large distances thanks to steamships and railways. This made foreign luxury goods more accessible and mass-produced everyday products more affordable. Many commodities—like European-style kitchenware and household goods—were marketed in different price categories, making them available to large parts of society.

These transformations in food culture, however, cannot be understood by exclusively focusing on food itself. This article examines late Ottoman food culture by focusing not only on changes taking place on the plates but also surrounding them in terms of material culture, practices, and discourses, particularly those promoted by journals like *al-Muqataṭaf*. Dietary and culinary transitions were embedded in a larger domestic lifestyle culture suffused with contemporary discourses on modernity, refined manners, and the proper conduct of everyday life. This chapter examines how and to what extent discourses on food consumption in dialogue with larger shifts in late Ottoman domestic life affected practices of eating culture in Greater Syria, which parts of society were targeted by these discourses, and the extent to which these ideas reached groups beyond a very small circle of urban elites. Although many upwardly mobile social groups lacked the means to introduce such a lifestyle comprehensively, they found ways to participate in forms of eating culture associated with the modern. I follow recent scholarship on the history of food, which has supplemented earlier studies on modes of production and supply with a focus on the material culture, practices, and identities associated with food

4 Already in the Abbasid, Fatimid, and Mamluk periods new dishes and practices traveled across the Islamic world. See Paulina Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes: Aspects of Life in an Islamic Metropolis of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), esp. chap. 1; Nawal Nasrallah, *Annals of the Caliphs' Kitchens: Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq's Tenth-Century Baghdad Cookbook* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), esp. chaps. 6 and 8.

consumption. However, instead of focusing on courts or notables, I seek to offer a provincial and, in part, nonelite perspective on Ottoman food culture.⁵ Still, a systematic presentation of late Ottoman food culture remains a desideratum.

1 From Multifunctional to Differentiated Residential Spaces

The influx of European consumer goods in the last decades of the nineteenth century coincided with one of the most momentous and visible transitions in Middle Eastern domestic culture, namely from multifunctional to single-function residential spaces. Before this shift, multifunctional rooms had been the norm. Rich and poor alike had generally used single living spaces for different purposes: gathering, eating, sleeping, and sometimes even cooking. In the second half of the nineteenth century, both affluent urban elites and some middle-income families began to extend, modify, or rebuild their domestic spaces to create rooms that were functionally specific (e.g., dining rooms, living rooms, bedrooms).⁶

5 Elite food culture has often been the focal point. See Tülay Artan, “Aspects of the Ottoman Elite’s Food Consumption: Looking for ‘Staples,’ ‘Luxuries,’ and ‘Delicacies’ in a Changing Century,” in *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire: 1550–1922, an Introduction*, ed. D. Quartaert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 107–200; Madeline C. Zilfi, “Goods in the Mahalle: Distributional Encounters in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul,” in Quartaert, *Consumption Studies*, 289–312. A more comprehensive approach to food in the Ottoman Empire was undertaken by Suraya Faroqhi and Christoph Neumann. The study combined perspectives on food in relation to material culture, brought together court elite practices with other parts of society, and covered a wide period and a geographic range from Istanbul, to Anatolia, and the Arab provinces. Suraya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann, eds., *The Illuminated Table, the Prosperous House: Food and Shelter in Ottoman Material Culture* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2003). Finally, a wider public interest in “authentic” Ottoman cuisine has developed recently in Turkey and the Middle East; see, e.g., D. Karaosmanoglu, “Cooking the Past: The Revival of Ottoman Cuisine” (PhD diss., McGill University, 2006).

6 For a detailed discussion of the process and illustrative photographs see Ralph Bodenstern, *Villen in Beirut: Wohnkultur und sozialer Wandel 1860–1930* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2012), 65–79, 303–312; E. Akcan, *Architecture in Translation: Germany, Turkey, and the Modern House* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 133–144. Nancy Micklewright has highlighted that within this process both usages functioned to a certain degree and for some time simultaneously: see “Late Ottoman Photography: Family, Home, and New Identities,” in *Transitions in Domestic Consumption and Family Life in the Modern Middle East: Houses in Motion*, ed. Relli Shechter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 79–81. This process was beyond physical changes accompanied, as Fruma Zachs and Sharon Halevi have highlighted, by the redrawing of these spaces’ interior boundaries, which generated new social and gendered meanings (e.g., in the dining room, where women gained new roles in receiving guests and in representing their families’ status). See Sharon Halevi and Fruma Zachs, “The Little Kingdom over

In Greater Syria, the preferred architectural model among middle- and upper-class families became the central-hall house, in which a set of rooms clustered around a large, centrally placed reception hall.⁷ Still, the transition to this new model occurred slowly and at different times in different parts of the region; despite its popularity, more hybrid forms continued to exist in the mansions of middle-income groups who lacked the means to realize the ideal.⁸ Regardless, depending on the size of these mansions, hybrid practices in which functionally specific rooms continued to be used for various different purposes (e.g., sleeping during nighttime) probably continued for quite some time.⁹

This realignment in the usage of domestic space had a major impact on its physical appearance. While multifunctional rooms necessitated flexible and mobile furnishings that could be stowed away while a room served other purposes, new furniture was permanent, often bulky, and suited to a specific function: dining tables, chairs, cabinets, wardrobes, or bedsteads.¹⁰ At the same time, the number of required rooms increased as well.

Which God Made You Queen': The Gendered Reorganization of a 'Modern' Arab Home in Late Nineteenth-Century Beirut," *Hagar: Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities* 10, no. 2 (2013): 13, 16.

- 7 See Bodenstein, *Villen in Beirut*, 115. For the emergence of the central-hall house in the region, see also Michael F. Davie, ed., *La maison beyrouthine aux trois arcs, une architecture bourgeoise du Levant* (Beirut: ALBA & Tour, 2003); Aharon Ron Fuchs and Michael Meyer-Brodnitz, "The Emergence of the Central Hall House Type in the Context of Nineteenth Century Palestine," in *Dwellings Settlements and Tradition: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. J.-P. Bourdier and N. Al Sayyad (New York: University Press of America, 1989), 403–423; Semaan Kfoury, *Maisons libanaises: Recueil d'articles* ([Beirut]: Éditions Alba, 1999); and Anne Mollenhauer, "Die Genese einer Hausform: Mittelhallenhäuser in Beirut, Damaskus und Jerusalem (1840–1918)" (PhD diss., Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, 2005).
- 8 Many families, for instance in Tripoli's old town, often had a central reception hall installed in an existing house. Ralph Bodenstein has emphasized that in Beirut in the 1880s, many middle-income families still lacked the financial means to construct a central-hall house with several functionally specific rooms; still, the number who did had grown exponentially in comparison with just two decades earlier. The trend further accelerated in the two decades to follow. See Bodenstein, *Villen in Beirut*, 303–304.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Many of these items were European in design but produced locally and adapted to regional tastes. In Tripoli, for instance, very successful furniture production was established around 1910, with the manufacture of modern European-style furnishings. An Ottoman report estimated that almost half of all furnishings in Tripoli were produced by one company and that the manufacturer supplied the regional market in Syria. See Muḥammad Bahjat and Muḥammad Rafiq Tamīmī, *Wilāyat Bayrūt* (Beirut: Dār Laḥd Khāṭir, 1987 [1915–1916]), 2: 222–223.



No. 16.
Interior of
a Syrian
old house.

FIGURE 1 Sarrafian Brothers: "Interior of a Syrian old house, no. 16," early twentieth century
ALBUM SARRAFIAN S 40 S 6/16

A photograph taken by the Sarrafian Studio in Beirut, likely in the early twentieth century, portrays a multifunctional arrangement typical of urban as well as rural houses in Greater Syria (see fig. 1).¹¹ Rather than featuring permanently installed furniture, the room contained a couple of carpets and mats on which people sat during the day and probably slept at night. Several wall niches and wooden racks allowed for household utensils to be stowed when they were not needed. Other household goods were hung on hooks or ropes from the ceiling. What the picture does not exhibit, but what was also a widespread feature of multifunctional residential spaces, are wooden boxes or chests in which bedding, clothing, and other items were stored.¹² These spaces thus did

11 The Sarrafian Studio opened in 1895 in Beirut and was run by the Armenian Sarrafian brothers, Abraham (1873–1925), Boghos (1876–1934), and Samuel (1884–1941). These were among the most renowned postcard photographers of the Ottoman Empire. See Stephen Sheehi, *The Arab Imago: A Social History of Portrait Photography, 1860–1910* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), xxxvi. In contrast to other studios or foreign photographers often interested in biblical topoi, archeological sites or Orientalized studio imagery, the Sarrafian brothers portrayed many everyday scenes in cities and in the countryside of Greater Syria. For a general introduction to the studio with numerous reproductions, see Sami Toubia, *Sarrafian, Liban, 1900–1930* (Beirut: Aleph, 2008).

12 Almost every inheritance inventory in the court records of nineteenth-century Tripoli features a wooden chest or box (*ṣundūq khashab*), or more rarely of iron (*ṣundūq ḥadid*).



FIGURE 2 *Private family portrait of the Catzefflis family, Tripoli, around 1904–1905*
CATZEFLIS FAMILY ARCHIVE

not serve only for eating, receiving guests, sleeping and cooking but also, as the photograph in figure 1 shows, for the production of goods to be sold on the market.

In contrast, the private family photograph taken in the Catzefflis mansion in Tripoli around 1904–1905 shows a setting typical of functionally specific rooms (fig. 2).¹³ Equipped with permanent furniture (e.g., a desk, a sofa, chairs), this

These chests were owned by people from all income groups, whether women of the urban poor living in a communal courtyard structure (*hawsh*, e.g., SMST 61: 220; *ibid.* 66: 238); people from a middle-income background, like the wife of a baker or a gardener (*ibid.* 79: 93; *ibid.* 80: 301); more affluent artisans (*ibid.* 80: 303); or wealthy merchants (*ibid.* 82: 37). Often, people owned more than one such chest, used to store cash and other valuables (e.g., on a baker, see *ibid.* 60: 38).

13 This Greek Orthodox family of vice-consuls represented almost every Western state in Tripoli and acted as local trendsetters. After they had remodeled their existing house in the middle of the century, around 1900 they had a new mansion built in the garden of their old palace, featuring functionally specific rooms. The exact date of the photograph is unknown, but the picture portrays two children, of which the younger (Boris) was born in 1902. From his age and the absence of his younger sister, Charlotte (b. 1906), the photograph can be dated to the years around 1904 or 1905 (see the Catzefflis family tree in the

room was designated for a particular purpose, probably as an office or small salon.¹⁴ How domestic family life was orchestrated in this picture was also quite typical for that distinguished part of society and obviously was in dialogue with an ideal articulated in periodicals like *al-Muqataṭaf* (see below).

These physical transitions and the practices they brought with them revealed a major distinction in Ottoman society, as only a small privileged circle managed to participate in these practices comprehensively. In contrast, through the end of the Ottoman period, the vast majority of the population still lived in one or two rooms used multifunctionally and often shared a courtyard or kitchen with other families.¹⁵ These living conditions affected the extent of privacy a family enjoyed, but also the means of cooking and consuming food as well as of receiving visitors. They also prevented a large part of Ottoman society from participating in these new practices. As a result, a specified room layout became a very visible class distinction, functioning as a social marker of and precondition for a particular lifestyle promoted by journals like *al-Muqataṭaf* that helped shape a discourse on domestic living culture.

2 The Audience for New Discourses on Food: *al-Muqataṭaf* and Its Readership

Physical transitions in residential spaces were touted by newspapers and journals that advanced notions of how to use these new spaces appropriately.¹⁶

Catzefflis Family Archive, B6). I am grateful to George Catzefflis for his generosity in granting me access to the family's private archive and allowing me to use the material for publication.

14 Given the furnishings and size of the room, this could not have been the mansion's main reception hall. Although the sofa on which the family sits might have been used as a sleeping place at night, the size of the mansion and its number of rooms makes it likely that each family member had his or her own sleeping room.

15 An extreme case of this was the collective courtyard housing (*hawsh*) in which a considerable portion of the late Ottoman urban population lived. Here, families, widows, and bachelors resided in small single chambers grouped around a shared cylindrical courtyard. Bathroom and kitchen facilities were often shared. Small houses of slightly better-off people show quite similar features, and their residents lacked the means to implement a specified room program.

16 In the late Ottoman period, particularly after 1908, numerous newspapers and journals were founded all over the empire, often becoming an important arena for structuring discourses on lifestyle. Cities like Beirut, Cairo, Alexandria, and Damascus were centers for the Arab press, but provincial cities also experienced a wave of newspaper foundations. For an overview, see Dagmar Glaß, *Der Muqataṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit*, vol. 1 (Würzburg:

Among them, the Arabic monthly *al-Muqataṭaf* was one of the most influential and geographically widespread. In matters of food, domestic culture, and lifestyle, this Beirut- and later Cairo-based journal can be understood as a sort of Ottoman *Knigge*, a normative lifestyle manual that reached a transregional, if not global, audience.¹⁷ Designed at its inception in 1876 as a complementary textbook for students, the magazine rapidly developed into a scientific-literary journal covering a range of topics to attract new readers.¹⁸

These normative lifestyle models marketed to a wide and diverse readership make *al-Muqataṭaf* an especially interesting publication. The journal's circulation and the composition of its readership remain nebulous. Dagmar Glaß has estimated that, in the early stages of its first two decades, the periodical had a rather limited audience, composed mainly of students and staff of the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), as well as urban middle classes in Beirut and rural elites in Mount Lebanon.¹⁹ However, a closer look at the journal's letters to the editor reveals already in this early phase a much more diverse picture of *al-Muqataṭaf*'s readership. Letters sent in the late 1870s suggest a circulation mainly in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and small towns in today's Lebanon.²⁰ However, within a few years, *al-Muqataṭaf*'s readership became much broader. Beginning in the early 1880s, Christians and Muslims in large cities in Greater Syria, Egypt, and Iraq were reading the journal, alongside inhabitants of provincial small towns and rural areas in Greater Syria, Mount Lebanon, and Egypt.²¹ A smaller

Ergon, 2004), esp. chap. 2; Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), esp. chaps. 2–3.

17 *Al-Muqataṭaf* was founded in 1876 by Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf and Fāris Nimr, both alumni of the Syrian Protestant College (SPC). Both editors had a certain proximity to American missionaries.

18 Glaß, *Muqataṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit*, 1:202, 204. The journal correlated to SPC's curriculum and focused especially on the spheres of science and craft (*jarīda 'ilmīyya ṣinā'iyya*).

19 *Ibid.*, 1:219.

20 Although it is difficult to assess the geographical distribution of the journal, the different locations from which letters were received can give some sense. The published letters to the editor (in the periodical's section "Masā'il wa-ajwibatuhā," "Question and Answer") still show a quite diverse picture—from villages in Mount Lebanon, the Metn region, Sidon, Tyrus, Baalbek, and Zahle. See *al-Muqataṭaf* 4 (June 1879–April 1880): 39–40, 87, 112, 137–139, 165–167, 199, 222–223, 275–276, 306, 308, 334; *ibid.* 6 (June–August 1881): 59, 124–125, 189, 254, 446, 563, 698; *ibid.* 7 (June 1882–July 1883): 245; and *ibid.* 8 (August 1883–September 1884): 313–314.

21 The readership in Greater Syria lived not only in bigger cities like Damascus, Beirut, and Aleppo but also in towns like Antakya, Homs, Hama, Tripoli, and Latakia, as well as Acre, Jerusalem, Haifa, Nablus, Nazareth, and Yafa. Readers in Egypt lived not only in Cairo and Alexandria but also in small towns in the Delta, Damietta, Fayyum, and Port Said. See *al-Muqataṭaf* 4 (June 1879–April 1880): 86, 112, 137–139, 166, 222, 248, 275, 306–308, 334; *ibid.* 5

but still substantial body of letters was sent by subscribers in Istanbul, Anatolian towns, the Maghreb, Sudan, and even Yemen, Bahrain, and Iran.²² At the same time, the journal seemed to have also been popular among the Arab diaspora in Europe (particularly London and Edinburgh) and the Americas (e.g., São Paulo, Los Angeles, other parts of the United States).²³

By the end of the century, the journal had reached a circulation of a few thousand subscribers.²⁴ Its actual outreach must have been much higher; subscriptions were shared among family members and neighbors, and copies were made available or read aloud in reading rooms and cafés. Actual subscribers were usually middle- or upper-class Muslims and Christians with significant but rather varied educational backgrounds. Many were active in the civil service or part of the social elite.²⁵ In short, *al-Muqataṭaf* targeted a readership that was socially exclusive but geographically diffuse.

(June 1880–May 1881): 51, 79, 187, 331; *ibid.* 6 (June–August 1881): 58, 125, 189, 253–254, 305, 307–310, 444, 446, 504–505, 563, 566, 629–632, 698, 700; *ibid.* 7 (June 1882–July 1883): 246–247; *ibid.* 8 (August 1883–September 1884): 244–245. In 1885 the journal opened an office in Tehran (Glaß, *Muqataṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit*, 1:250). After 1883 the letters displayed not only the locations of the letter writers but also their names. The names show that, contrary to what is often assumed, a considerable number of Muslim readers subscribed to the journal. In Tripoli high-ranking ‘ulamā’, its later mufti Shaykh ‘Abd al-Majīd Moghrabī (1867–1934), and his relative, the Islamic reformer and intellectual ‘Abd al-Qādir (1867–1956) were among *al-Muqataṭaf*’s readers and contributed to its pages in the 1890s and early 1900s. See Muḥammad A. Durnayqa, *al-Ṭuruq al-ṣūfiyya wa-mashāyikhuhā fi Ṭarābulus* (Tripoli: Dār al-Inshā’ li-l-Ṣiḥāfa wa-l-Ṭibā’a wa-l-Nashr, 1984), 156–157, 278–279; I. Weismann and F. Zachs, *Ottoman Reform and Muslim Regeneration: Studies in Honour of Butrus Abu-Manneh* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 140.

22 See *al-Muqataṭaf* 4 (June 1879–April 1880): 128, 199, 276; *ibid.* 5 (June 1880–May 1881): 331; *ibid.* 6 (June–August 1881): 310, 504–505, 630, 632; and *ibid.* 7 (June 1882–July 1883): 245.

23 Presumably, middle-class migrants took their subscriptions to their new homelands in Europe and the Americas, or Arabic speakers living abroad might have become readers upon learning of the journal’s foundation. Letters to the editors were sent, for instance, from London, South America, Worcester (Massachusetts), Los Angeles, and Stockton (both California). See *al-Muqataṭaf* 4 (June 1879–April 1880): 166; *ibid.* 5 (June 1880–May 1881): 247, 277; *ibid.* 7 (June 1882–July 1883): 297; *ibid.* 14 (October 1889–September 1890): 51, 167.

24 It is difficult to evaluate the journal’s exact circulation. Rashid Khalidi has made a very conservative estimate, in the dozens, for Ottoman Palestine; Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 56. Marwa Elshakry speaks of “a circulation that rarely surpassed several thousand at most.” In the early 1890s circulation was about three thousand, making *al-Muqataṭaf* “one of the largest of any Arabic journal”; Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 22, 31.

25 Elshakry mentions a group in Baghdad that collectively held one subscription; the newly

3 A Lifestyle Manual for Modern Residential Spaces and Practices of Food Culture

It is difficult to evaluate the extent to which *al-Muqataṭaf*'s discourses on food and lifestyle affected its readers and translated into preferences in taste. However, the dialogic character of many sections—frequently featuring readers' comments and questions—indicates that it was read intensively and functioned as a guide and etiquette manual to influence and shape notions of a modern, refined lifestyle. The interplay between discourse and practice was rather complex, and *al-Muqataṭaf*'s normative prescriptions were not implemented in readers' homes in an immediate and straightforward manner. However, the journal was a reliable source of information about new styles and adequate practices, and it acted alongside modern educational institutions and local trendsetters as a model for a proper, modern lifestyle and domestic culture.²⁶

Various sections of the journal dealt with matters of lifestyle, but the column *bāb tadbīr al-manzil*, or “Good Housekeeping,” appearing regularly since 1881, was particularly central. Despite the fact that Dagmar Glaß characterizes it first and foremost as a women's section (“Frauenrubrik”), it often addressed both parents, for instance, in articles dealing with children's upbringing and home education.²⁷ Hence, it might rather be understood as an etiquette manual for family and domestic life, and reader surveys suggest that it was very popular. Like other sections of *al-Muqataṭaf*, this part of the journal had a dialogic char-

opened Egyptian University with a multiplied readership also had one (*Reading Darwin*, 31–32). She further argues that the readership was drawn from the civil service and political elites and excluded religious scholars or the “masses” (*ibid.*, 22). Nonetheless, as mentioned already, an examination of both contributors and letters writers suggest a slightly more diverse profile.

26 *Al-Muqataṭaf* was not the only channel for articulating notions of normativity; educational institutions, Sufi instructors, mosque preachers, and café circles also discussed these issues. Also in the reception halls (*manzūl*) of influential families in Tripoli that were remodeled particularly at the end of the Ottoman period into salons, modern lifestyle and eating practices, as well as food utensils, were displayed to a part of society of nonelite background.

27 When the section was introduced, the editors defined its scope as including the upbringing of children, food and beverages, maintenance and decoration of the home, cosmetics, and so on. See *al-Muqataṭaf* 6 (June–August 1881): 51. In the following year the editors specified that the section was to be for the benefit of the whole family. See *ibid.* 7 (June 1882–July 1883): 49. Several other sections appeared in the journal that dealt with food and domestic culture as well, including a Q&A section, one on disputation and correspondence, and another on book reviews.

acter, allowing for readers to interact with editors and critically contribute to the debates. This reciprocal aspect made these rubrics central in shaping the discourse on lifestyle and domestic culture reflecting the reception of the promoted ideas.²⁸

4 The Discourse on Food and Domestic Culture

Matters of food were constantly debated in the journal. In the span of three decades, between the mid-1870s and the mid-1900s, more than two hundred contributions took food and its consumption as a central theme.²⁹ These treated the matter from various angles: agricultural, philosophical, medical, and nutritional; demanding moderation and condemning wastefulness; and general practical advice regarding food preparation and housekeeping. Articles debated “the human desire for food” or “moderation in eating,” informed journal readers about “the digestion of food,” or warned them against “drinking cold water.”³⁰ Moreover, the journal treated issues related to raw food, meat, and vegetarian diets; gave advice on food suitable for children or the reception of guests; and suggested appropriate mealtimes and tips for protecting food against spoilage.³¹

Readers of *al-Muqataṭaf* were also made familiar with new terminology and recipes. Unfamiliar terms—usually deriving from European languages—were presented in a section called *muḡam al-mu‘arrabāt*, “a lexicon of terms translated into Arabic.”³² Oftentimes these glossaries listed technical and chemical terms, but they also offered entries on food, ingredients, and alcoholic beverages. Readers learned, for instance, about chocolate, vanilla, and cream of tartar, and about champagne and sherry, as well as the chemical substances

28 Glaß, *Muqataṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit*, 1:234–236.

29 Some such articles were translations from European or American journals, but most entries were written by Arab authors or the editors themselves.

30 See, e.g., “ṭalab al-insān li-l-ṭa‘ām,” *al-Muqataṭaf* 52 (January 1918): 15; “al-i’tidāl fi-l-ṭa‘ām,” *ibid.* 7 (June 1882–July 1883): 528; “al-ṭa‘ām wal-ḥaḍm,” *ibid.* 21 (1897): 756; “shurb al-mā’ al-bārid,” *ibid.* 6 (June–August 1881): 178, or *ibid.* 21 (1897): 756.

31 See, e.g., “al-laḥm fi-l-ṭa‘ām,” *al-Muqataṭaf* 19 (January–December 1895): 635; “al-ṭa‘ām al-nabāṭī,” *ibid.* 18 (October 1893–September 1894): 311, and *ibid.* 26 (January–June 1901): 383; “awqāt al-ṭa‘ām,” *ibid.* 21 (1896): 151; *ibid.* 44 (November 1910): 1106; “ṭa‘ām al-ṣiḡhār,” *ibid.* 19 (January–December 1895): 600. See also other articles related to the mentioned food matters, such as *al-Muqataṭaf* 7 (June 1882–July 1883): 243; *ibid.* 40 (January–June 1912): 83; and *ibid.* 52 (January–June 1918): 355.

32 English, French, and Latin terms were given in Latin letters with an Arabic transliteration, translation, or explanation.

gluten, glucose, caffeine, and theine.³³ The entry on chocolate (*shukūlāta*) explained it as “flat round discs made out of the powder of cocoa seeds, sugar, and some aromas and spices.”³⁴ Other articles suggested recipes, including many for marmalades (made of apples, orange or sour lemon juice, or watermelon rinds) or pear compote.³⁵ Furthermore, the journal recommended the preparation of beverages and refreshments like bergamot water (*mā’ al-Barghammūt*) or an energizing and invigorating soft drink (*sharāb mun’ish*) made from cooked and ground almonds, brandy, milk, and sugar, served with ice cubes.³⁶ Articles frequently promoted various alcoholic beverages. In addition to the introduction of champagne or sherry, countless recipes for fruit and flavored wines were presented.³⁷ Moreover, the journal educated readers about different tastes of wine, how the tastes were influenced by production, which wine to serve at dinner, wine culture in various European countries, the health benefits of wine, and how to turn wine into champagne.³⁸

More than any other foodstuff, bread was at the center of the journal’s and its readers’ interest. Some contributions introduced new kinds of bread—modern bread instead of traditional bread, white bread instead of brown bread—or

33 See *al-Muqtaṭaf* 8 (August 1883–September 1884): 401–402, 467–468; and *ibid.* 9 (October 1884–September 1885): 142, 144–145.

34 “Al-shukūlāta (Chocolate)—aqrāṣ maṣnū’a min daqīq jawz al-kākāw wa-l-sukkar wa ba’ḍ al-ṭuyūb wa-l-afāwiyya.” See *al-Muqtaṭaf* 8 (August 1883–September 1884): 468. Although chocolate had most likely been available in the Ottoman Empire since the late seventeenth century, it seems not to have been very widespread, such that still in the nineteenth century a broader audience had to be familiarized with the product. Y. Köse, “The Confusion of the Agha: A Short History of Chocolate in the Ottoman Empire (Seventeenth–Twentieth Centuries),” *Food & History* 12, no. 1 (2014): 153–173.

35 See *al-Muqtaṭaf* 6 (June–August 1881): 53, 109; and *ibid.* 7 (June 1882–July 1883): 244.

36 See *al-Muqtaṭaf* 6 (June–August 1881): 52, 111.

37 For instance, entries discussed the production of peach and apricot wine (*khamr al-durāq wa-l-mishmish*), flavored wine made from grapes and raisins with a maturing period of three years, and the “wine of Hippocrates” (*khamr buqrāt*), which was produced from nuts, coriander seed, sugar, grated lemon zest, and lemon juice. *Al-Muqtaṭaf* 6 (June–August 1881): 110. Honey, apple, and orange wine, as well as wine made of fodder beet (*al-khamr min shamandar*), were promoted. See *al-Muqtaṭaf* 13 (October 1888–July 1889): 265; *ibid.* 20 (1896): 42; and *ibid.* 26 (January–June 1901): 263.

38 “Al-khamr al-fransāwiyya,” *al-Muqtaṭaf* 13 (October 1888–July 1889): 255; “al-khamr fi Faransā,” *ibid.* 22 (January–December 1898): 849; “khamr İṭāliyā,” *ibid.* 35 (July–December 1909): 715; “ta’m al khumūr,” *ibid.* 14 (October 1889–September 1890): 716; “taḥwīl al-khamr ilā shambānyā,” *ibid.* 13 (October 1888–July 1889): 265, “fā’idat al-khamr,” *ibid.* 21 (1896): 63; “al-khamr ‘alā al-mā’ida,” *ibid.* 16 (October 1891–September 1892): 565; *ibid.* 20 (1895): 931; “Kayfa tuṣna’u al-khamr al-fransāwiyya?” *ibid.* 8 (August 1883–September 1884): 246.

gave recipes for special kinds of bread to make at home.³⁹ Often readers asked the editors for recipes to bake European-style bread (*al-khubz al-ifranjī*). One reader from Beirut who was interested in the European art of baking asked in 1878 how he could make European cake, and “How can one prepare European bread until it is light and its inside is like a sponge?”⁴⁰ Readers asked this question so frequently that, when the Arab nationalist and writer As‘ad Efendī Dāghir followed suit in 1901, the editors simply responded that they had already explained the matter and referred to a former issue of the journal.⁴¹

Apart from recipes for marmalade, aromatized wines, and bread, particular recipes for modern and European dishes occasionally appeared in the journal, such as a recipe for Spanish salad (*salaṭa isbāniyya*) made of green lettuce, herbs, and tarragon.⁴² In a long and comprehensive entry published in 1901, the journal acquaints its readers with the sandwich (*al-sandwīsh*), explaining:

The most suitable meal one could take along while traveling on the railroad or making a journey is filled bread (*al-khubz al-maḥshuww*) and it is known as a sandwich (*al-sandwīsh*) ... One puts a thin and tender piece of meat or a slice of it on the bread and the meat will be mixed with a little butter and spices like mustard, pepper, or something similar. This [the sandwich] is undoubtedly one of most delicious meals (*atyab aṭ‘ima*) and he who eats it needs neither knife nor fork.⁴³

39 See *al-Muqataṭaf* 13 (October 1888–July 1889): 54; *ibid.* 27 (July–December 1901): 743; and *ibid.* 28 (January 1902–June 1902): 76.

40 See *al-Muqataṭaf* 3 (June 1878–June 1879): 107.

41 See *al-Muqataṭaf* 26 (July–December 1901): 711. The same question was also asked by readers in other volumes: *al-Muqataṭaf* 3 (June 1878–June 1879): 107; and *ibid.* 18 (October 1893–September 1894): 711. In general, the periodical’s editors and editorial staff answered the questions asked by the readers; see Glaß, *Muqataṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit*, 1: 235. For a detailed discussion and analysis of *al-Muqataṭaf*’s section “Question and Answer” (“Masā’il wa-ajwibatuhā”), see *ibid.*, 64–69, 224–237, 260–282. As‘ad Dāghir was a writer and Arab nationalist, a member of the independence party and a newspaper founder. Eliezer Tauber, *The Formation of Modern Iraq and Syria* (Ilford: Cass, 1995), 50, 183; W. Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation: Arab Nationalists and Popular Politics in Mandate Palestine* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 78.

42 See *al-Muqataṭaf* 6 (June–August 1881): 109. The term *salad* (*salaṭa*) must have been quite unusual, and the editors gave it a full vocalization. Occasionally, the journal promoted other recipes for European dishes, such as gingerbread (*khubz al-zanjabil*), macaroni, and lemon cake (*al-Muqataṭaf* 7 (June 1882–July 1883): 507, 753 and *ibid.* 13 (October 1888–July 1889): 54).

43 The article emphasizes that the most suitable bread for a sandwich is rectangular German bread (*al-khubz al-nimsāwī al-murabba’*), brown bread, or large *pain romain* (*al-khubz al-*

The care with which the journal described the sandwich and how to make one suggests that it was rather unusual at the time. Also, though, the author linked the meal to practices of travel that were popular among middle and upper classes. Although its ingredients were not very exotic, the circumstances under which the sandwich might be consumed offered the promise of distinction and modern living while traveling—even more than a new food per se.

Although the journal made readers familiar with new food, recipes, or dishes, its notions of a refined and distinguished modern lifestyle, as the example of the sandwich suggests, did not necessitate the introduction of an entirely new European-style diet. Some European-style foodstuffs, such as new kinds of bread, jam, and beverages, served as a single exotic addition. But such elements acted as flashy accessories while the established dishes of a traditional Syro-Lebanese cuisine continued to be served. Instead, novelty and a sense of being modern were constructed with the help of new eating utensils and furniture, as well as a new environment and new practices of food consumption.

5 *Tahdhībism: Conversations on Food as Part of a Discourse on Refinement*

The conversation on food presented in a journal like *al-Muqataṭaf* was embedded in a broader discourse on domestic culture and lifestyle centered on a notion of refinement in manners, etiquette, and morals (*tahdhīb*).⁴⁴ Such refinement was one of the main tools for distinguishing social climbers, and it helped translate cultural capital into a particular lifestyle and habitus. It was not enough to possess a central-hall house equipped with furnishings of the latest fashion; one had to use these residential spaces properly. The latter particularly distinguished the ‘refined’ from those they viewed as vulgar nouveaux riches or unlettered swaggerers. At the same time, the combination of modern education with *tahdhīb* and refined manners marginalized upwardly mobile individuals who lacked a particular habitus. Shaping children’s habitus was at

rūmī al-kabīr). Moreover, the entry states that every kind of roasted meat (*al-laḥm al-maqlī* or “*rūstū*”) is suitable for making a sandwich. *al-Muqataṭaf* 27 (July–December 1901): 742–743.

44 The term *tahdhīb* was deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition and Sufi teachings—the religious scholar Aḥmad b. Ya’qūb Miskawayh (932–1030) wrote an influential Islamic work on philosophical ethics titled “The Refinement of Character” (“*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*”). *Al-Muqataṭaf*—as on other occasions—situated such concepts within a larger cultural (and often religiously charged) framework. Refinement was understood in secular terms but implicitly had moral and religious connotations.

the center of their upbringing at home, which focused equally on *tahdhīb* and on the transmission of knowledge, *ta'lim*. Such an understanding of parenting was expressed in a contemporary dictionary that defined *tahdhīb* as the “act of correcting, amending and beautifying within education.”⁴⁵ The writers of *al-Muqtaṭaf* also stressed on various occasions that this process should take place in the family long before formal education at school:

The refined education (*tahdhīb*) of a child begins before his education and instruction at school, beginning under the supervision of the mother, the attention and care of his father, the smile of his sister, and the effort of his brother.⁴⁶

Correct forms of food consumption were an integral part of such refinement and corresponded to new furnishings in new domestic spaces like the dining room. Shared meals were occasions during which refinement—or lack thereof—became highly visible. *Al-Muqtaṭaf* served as an instruction manual for these new spaces, giving advice and acting as a lifestyle compass to help readers adjust and correct their practices. In a period of great social and cultural change, readers likely yearned for guidance on how to live a modern life. On a discursive level, the periodical helped construct transregional notions of lifestyle that distinguished a particular social group—what one might call the emerging middle class—from others. In addition to general advice to readers, many articles focused on the upbringing and education of children in the home, where refinement was encouraged through the positive example of the parents.

Although the word *tahdhīb* referred to the Islamic tradition, the concept of refinement articulated in moral but less religious terms was based on a variety of sources and influences. Most articles related to aspects of *tahdhīb* were written by the editors of *al-Muqtaṭaf* or by authors inspired by missionary education and ideas of self-improvement, although some were translations from foreign journals (especially European and American). Many of these explicitly addressed the issues of etiquette and morals, but many others introduced them as implicit virtues. *Al-Muqtaṭaf* frequently dwelled on questions related to “the cultivation of morals,” the upbringing of girls, and the proper comportment of women in general.⁴⁷ Toufoul Abou-Hodeib has suggested that

45 James W. Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon Shewing in English the Significations of the Turkish Terms* (Constantinople [Istanbul]: Boyajian, 1890), 510.

46 See *al-Muqtaṭaf* 6 (June–August 1881): 51.

47 Among the numerous articles on refinement, *al-Muqtaṭaf* debates the matter in the

discourses on modernity placed the home and the family center stage.⁴⁸ However, refined lifestyle and manners were the main foci of the discourse, with the home and the family as central arenas where these could be materialized. This discourse was structured around five main themes: housekeeping and homemaking, health and hygiene, early childhood education, manners and morals, and women and gender roles.

All these fields were interconnected, and food and eating practices were central to all of them. Food featured prominently in matters relating to health, such as the risks of excessive consumption of salt and sugar, how to chew one's food, digestion, and sleep.⁴⁹ But more central for demonstrating a refined lifestyle were issues related to table manners, the decoration of dining rooms and banquet tables, receiving guests, and sitting properly at dining tables or on chairs (*ādāb al-julūs*).⁵⁰ Furnishings and utensils also played a central role. For instance, as the earlier-mentioned article on the sandwich hints, by 1900 middle- and upper-class households were familiar with forks and knives and most likely had adopted their use in daily life; in contrast, the vast majority of society still ate with spoons or their hands. All of these elements amounted to the many-layered, incorporated habitus that was the result of an obsessed focus on a culture of *tahdhīb*—one could almost call it *tahdhībism*—in which lifestyle visibly distinguished elites from those social groups with a lower economic, cultural, or social capital.

6 Nonelites and Modern Practices of Food Consumption

Despite these clear lines of distinction generated through *tahdhīb*, modern practices of eating culture were not limited to this small circle of refined and

following contributions: "tahdhīb al-akhlāq," *al-Muqtaṭaf* 18 (October 1893–September 1894): 37; "tahdhīb al-awlād," *al-Muqtaṭaf* 6 (June–August 1881): 51; "tahdhīb al-banāt," *ibid.* 29 (November 1904): 1009; "tahdhīb al-nisā'," *ibid.* 35 (October 1905): 827–829.

48 Toufouh Abou-Hodeib, "Taste and Class in Late Ottoman Beirut," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011): 475–492; *id.*, "The Material Life of the Ottoman Middle Class," *History Compass* 10, no. 8 (2012): 584–595.

49 See *al-Muqtaṭaf* 6 (June–August 1881): 626; *ibid.* 34 (1909): 188–189; *ibid.* 40 (March 1915): 513.

50 Articles on table manners (*ādāb al-mā'ida*), furniture, and decoration of the dining room were numerous. See, e.g., *al-Muqtaṭaf* 2 (1877) 5: 115–116; *ibid.* 6 (June–August 1881): 242, 368–369, 435, 562; *ibid.* 7 (June 1882–July 1883): 243, 404; *ibid.* 9 (October 1884–September 1885): 370, 554, 743; *ibid.* 13 (October 1888–July 1889): 329; *ibid.* 18 (October 1893–September 1894): 121; *ibid.* 23 (January 1899–November 1899): 779; and *ibid.* 28 (January 1902–June 1902): 255.

affluent elites. It is difficult to evaluate how much this discourse affected social groups beyond affluent middle- and upper-class families in provincial cities like Tripoli (or even in urban centers).⁵¹ Most members of these groups were not subscribers of *al-Muqataṭaf*, although they might have come in contact with the journal in public readings held in cafés. Moreover, they could well have seen or at least heard about the new practices evolving around specified residential spaces in the mansions of affluent trendsetters in their neighborhood or city. As such, these influences diffused into the expectations and practices of that group as well, helping to shape notions of modern and desirable eating practices.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, various mass-produced consumer goods from abroad reached the markets of Greater Syria, making commodities like European kitchenware and textile goods available to and affordable for large parts of Ottoman society. This trend is reflected in numerous inheritance inventories of a variety of people from different social groups.⁵² These inventories, preserved in court records across the Ottoman Empire, reveal that European-style kitchenware and things related to the preparation, display, and especially the serving of food reached the region at a remarkably early date and with remarkable social spread. Beginning in the late 1840s, artisans in Tripoli with moderate incomes possessed European-style kitchenware. For example, a baker and a butcher who died around 1850 owned European-style plates (*ṣuḥūn ifranjīyya*) and glasses (*kāsāt ifranjīyya*), and in the case of the butcher, also a set of European-style coffee cups (*fanājīn ifranjīyya*).⁵³ All

51 The discussion of certain nonelite consumer trends and practices in this essay is a first approach, given that it lacks material with immediate reference to the discourse and has to be targeted in the future in a comparative perspective for the late Ottoman period.

52 These documents contained long lists of items a deceased person possessed with the value for each item realized in a public auction. The inventories were quite accurate and very detailed, sometimes listing even small amounts of food (like “a little zucchini,” *shuwayya kūṣā*) (see *Sijillāt al-maḥkama al-sharʿīyya bi-Ṭarābulus al-Shām* [SMST] 79: 93), “some lentils, a little onion and garlic” (*shuwayya ʿadas, shuwayya baṣāl wa thūm*) (SMST 80: 283), and a broken mirror (SMST 75: 375). For an overview and a discussion of the source in regard to consumption, see J.H. Matthews, “Toward an Isolario of the Ottoman Inheritance Inventory, with Special Reference to Manisa (ca. 1600–1700),” in Quataert, *Consumption Studies*, 45–82.

53 The baker Ḥājj Muḥammad al-Kardūsh al-khabbāz (d. 1849) owned thirteen European-style plates (*ṣuḥūn ifranjīyya*), all together worth 8.5 piasters, and four glasses (*kāsāt ifranjīyya*) valued at 2.25 piasters (SMST 60: 38). The butcher Sayyid ʿAbd al-Qādir Shaykh al-Shaḥḥānīn al-qasṣāb, who died in December 1850 and was higher in the guild hierarchy, possessed six copper and European-style plates worth 13 piasters, five glasses at 9 piasters, and seven coffee cups worth 5.5 piasters together (ibid. 60: 324). The phrase “European-

of these items were available at a very moderate price, and much cheaper than similar food-related items in the bequest that were produced locally.⁵⁴ These purchases might have been motivated by their affordability, but doubtlessly their design and shape would have been clearly identifiable as European, since the scribes who registered the bequests added the signifier *ifranjī* to them. These items, which were all related to hosting guests, likely articulated a sense of being modern that made them attractive to artisans. Additionally, these *ifranjī* food utensils most likely helped display the affluence and disposable income of their owners, since they were often owned alongside locally produced items serving the same function. Among artisans it was rather common to have just one set of food items, while owning two or more series of food items with the same function but differing in material, style, or value was rather common among richer parts of society.

It thus seems that European-style kitchenware was available to broad parts of society long before other kinds of commodities were. European-style clothing, for example, is hardly found in bequests from the middle of the nineteenth century. Western-style furniture, too, arrived much later and took several decades to be established in large parts of Tripoli's society. These begin to appear in probate records in the 1870s, but even then almost exclusively in the inventories of elites.

In the 1870s more affluent residents of Tripoli from middle- and upper-class families of soap merchants or *'ulama'* owned chairs. So did rural elites in the hinterland, such as the head of Tripoli's police.⁵⁵ Artisans lacked this modern

style items" refers here to things labeled by the court scribes registering the bequests as *ifranjī*—this hints that the items were perceived as exotic or European. These things must have had a European-style shape and could have been mass-produced in Europe or the region.

54 Each item was auctioned for the price of maximum two piasters, which was comparably inexpensive and most likely reflects objects that were mass produced and/or regionally manufactured (e.g., the glasses of the baker Ḥājj Muḥammad valued each half a piaster and the plates each seven-tenths of a piaster. In comparison, locally produced plates in a non-European style were more expensive and valued depending on the material, up to 2.6, 5, or even 7.8 piasters (*SMST* 60: 38). A similar occurrence is observed with the European-style items in the bequest of the butcher Sayyid 'Abd al-Qādir: plates, glasses, and coffee cups valued 2, 1.8, and 0.2 piasters each (*ibid.* 60: 324)). Prices resulted from public sales for the used items and do not necessarily reflect market value.

55 In the case of people like police chief 'Uthmān Aghā al-Arnā'ūt (d. 1870), for instance, who were not necessarily among the wealthiest and most educated people owning chairs (*kursī*, pl. *karāsī*), it is not clear whether the three chairs he possessed were used only to seat prominent visitors or whether they were already integrated into eating practices at a table. More affluent merchants or people from an *'ulamā'* background owning five or

furniture and could not participate in these new forms of eating; many probably still lived in multifunctional rooms or in hybrid forms too small to install chairs and a dinner table. It is for this reason that European-style eating utensils may have been so popular among socially mobile artisans, playing an even greater role in articulating a certain social position in a context where a fully refined domestic lifestyle was beyond reach.

This tendency is supported in the property structure of men and women from well-off artisanal backgrounds. Still, at the end of the nineteenth century, most of the bequests left by male artisans include few items of furniture; those present have a mobile character appropriate for multifunctional rooms. Kitchenware and things related to the consumption and display of food, in contrast, comprised at least one-third and sometimes up to more than half of the number of items and value of a successful artisan's bequest. Generally, since the 1870s, the extent of kitchenware and food-related items increased among moderately well-off artisans as compared to lower-income members of this professional group. The former often owned two or more sets of the same item, of varying value or material—a characteristic of privilege in elite households. For example, the miller Sayyid ʿUthmān, who died in 1877, left a small fortune of almost eight thousand piasters, of which the number of food-related items reached 79 percent, their value amounting to 70 percent of everything he owned.⁵⁶

Although owning kitchenware was not necessarily gendered and can be found in bequests of both sexes, the aforementioned trends were even more pronounced among women from artisan families. The inventories of these women—even from a moderate or lower-income background—show that kitchenware and food items played a central role among personal possessions from the 1870s onward. Items used to prepare and serve food were often at least a third of the total property in number and value, but in many cases up to 60 percent or 70 percent of the total.⁵⁷

more chairs might have used them daily or at special occasions at the dining table (*SMST* 74: 152; *ibid.* 76: 162, 204; *ibid.* 79: 180; *ibid.* 82: 95, 168).

56 The miller Sayyid ʿUthmān died in December 1877 and left a bequest worth 7833.5 piasters (*ibid.* 79: 351). Similar trends can be seen in the bequests of other well-to-do artisans like the baker Sayyid Muṣṭafā Shākīr (d. 1871) (*ibid.* 74: 338) and the carpenter Shaykh Aḥmad (d. 1878) (*ibid.* 80: 303).

57 For instance, 78 percent of all items in the bequest of a barber's wife who died in 1873 were food related, amounting to 69 percent of the bequest's value (*ibid.* 75: 127). Similar trends are seen among women from artisan families who died in the 1870s: the daughter of a carpenter (*najjār*) (number: 63 percent; value: 39 percent) (*ibid.* 79: 286), and the daughter of a cotton ginner (number: 80 percent; value: 48 percent) (*ibid.* 79: 319).

This trend in the property structure of male and female members of artisan families highlights the importance of items related to serving of food and receiving guests to expressing one's social position. They gave these moderate social climbers the means to participate in new practices of food consumption and to distinguish themselves from other, less affluent people within their professional group. While clothing functioned as the most important means for many less affluent artisans to articulate a certain modernity or economic well-being (or to hide one's actual economic situation), for more well-off artisans food items became more central.⁵⁸ Although for all of these artisans it was impossible to introduce various single-purpose rooms, it was at least possible for the slightly more affluent parts of this social group to participate in a new eating culture. The investment in food-related items, such as the possession of European-style kitchenware and the ownership of more than one set of food utensils, are strong indications that the wealthiest artisans attempted to partake in this culture, or at least replicate it in accordance with their own understandings and financial means. Food culture provided a sphere in which upwardly mobile groups from nonelite backgrounds could participate in new, modern conceptions of lifestyle.

7 Conclusion

The shift from multifunctional rooms to single-function residential spaces with permanently installed furniture and equipped with new Western-style crockery had a great effect on late Ottoman eating and bodily practices. This transition, accompanied by a discourse on domestic life and modern lifestyle promoted in journals like *al-Muqtaṭaf*, made eating one of the main lines of distinction within Ottoman society. The religiously diverse readership of *al-Muqtaṭaf*, which spanned Greater Syria, Egypt, Iran, and Anatolia to the Americas and Europe, became part of an imagined community of lifestyle and taste. In a period of social and cultural change, readers sought guidance on how to live a modern life in new—or old—residential spaces. On a discursive level, the periodical constructed shared notions of lifestyle that helped distinguish particular social groups from others. Food and practices of its consumption were part of this discourse, acting to distinguish elites from newly emerging middle classes. Practices centered on the concept of refinement (*tahdhīb*) as

58 Often, especially among lower-middle-income groups, dress items dominated a bequest in number and value. For instance, Ḥājj Ismā'īl (d. 1853), a miller, and his son, Muḥammad (d. 1893), spent a large part of their money on clothing (ibid. 63: 19; ibid. 82: 41).

well as new utensils and furnishings were more decisive in achieving personal distinction than the introduction of a new, European-style diet at the expense of the regional cuisine. As a matter of fact, traditional Syro-Lebanese cuisine remained largely the same, merely complemented by extravagant “eating accessories” like European-style breads, beverages, and marmalades. Still, such a refined lifestyle in single-function rooms and new central-hall houses was reserved for only a small circle of people; the vast majority of the population continued to live in multifunctional rooms and lacked the financial means to introduce these new lifestyle practices. Nonetheless, upwardly mobile artisans participated in this culture in accordance with their own means and perceptions. More well-off men and to an even larger extent women from that professional background possessed European-style food items like plates, glasses, and coffee cups, which reached a Syrian provincial town like Tripoli much earlier than other everyday European products did. So modernity and a refined lifestyle were to a much lesser extent expressed by new and exotic food on plates but by everything that surrounded them: furniture, utensils, and especially practices within the framework of a *tahdhibism* that promised to obtain gains of distinction and articulated a sense of being modern.

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PART 2

*Prohibitions and Prescriptions
from Classical Islam to the Present*



Peeling Onions, Layer by Layer

A Journey with Two Bulbs through the Islamicate World and Its Literature

Yasmin Amin

The onion and, to some extent, its cousin garlic play an important role in the cultural heritage of the Muslim world. They are part of almost all national dishes today. Recipes have been handed down through generations, and their forerunners are found in many medieval sourcebooks about food and recipes, with onions and garlic featuring prominently. The story of the humble onion and modest garlic—ever present but unsung heroes—goes far beyond food; they both have a fair claim as the most eaten foodstuff in the world. According to the United Nations, 175 countries around the world produce onion crops.¹ According to Edwards, garlic is a food plant with an enigmatic history. Garlic is not just garlic—it comes in many different varieties, “each with its own different subtleties of flavors, storage properties, geographic locals, and growing needs.”²

The study of food and religion tends to revolve around either taboos or festival dishes. Rarely do we read about the development of a “religious cuisine” or about individual ingredients. Mary Douglas, a leading scholar of sociology’s structural-cultural approach, has defined food as creating a code made up of symbols for social relationships, and through that code, we might decipher the social structure of society.³ So what can garlic and onions tell us about the Islamicate society? This chapter looks at the various discussions, usages, and conventions around onions and garlic in numerous Arabic classical texts, literary works, anecdotal collections, medical and pharmacological books and treatises, and *ḥadīth* collections—all of which form part of the cultural heritage of the Arab and Islamic world.

1 Marek Pruszewic, “Three Cheers for the Onion,” BBC, January 4, 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-30549150>.

2 Joan Edwards, “The Complete Book of Garlic: A Guide for Gardeners, Growers, and Serious Cooks by Ted Jordan Meredith,” *Gastronomica* 9, no. 3 (2009): 91.

3 Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” in *Implicit Meanings* (London: Routledge, 1999), 249.

1 History

Garlic and onions are known historically as the oldest crops. Ancient cultures referred to them five thousand years ago, and there is clear historical evidence for their use by the Egyptians, Babylonians, Romans, and Chinese.⁴ The ancient Egyptians believed that onions and garlic aided in endurance, and so they fed them to soldiers and to the laborers building the pyramids, to increase their stamina and protect them from disease.⁵ The workers building the pyramids even went on strike once, as preserved in an ancient Egyptian papyrus dated from around 1600 BC, because their daily food rations did not include enough garlic.⁶ A stela honoring the official Mentuwoser clearly shows the food being offered. His feast consists of loaves of bread, ribs, a hindquarter of beef, squash, onions in a basket, a lotus blossom, and leeks.⁷

Onions and garlic were also used medicinally in ancient Egypt for problems of the digestive system, sore throat, and toothache, and also in the mummification process. Onion bulbs were found in mummy cavities, and Eric Block suggests they were used to stimulate the dead to breathe again. Garlic was also used in the embalming process.⁸ Excellently preserved garlic was found in Tutankhamun's tomb, and dried remains of garlic and garlic bulbs made of clay were found in other eighteenth-dynasty tombs.⁹

In some places in ancient Egypt, garlic and onion were treated as gods during oath taking. Pliny mentions that the inhabitants of Pelusium, an important city in Egypt's eastern Nile Delta, about 30 kilometers southeast of the modern Port Said, were devoted to the worship of onion and garlic, while Juvenal satirized them for their veneration of the "garden-born" deities.¹⁰

Outside of Egypt, both the ancient Persians and the ancient Greeks believed that onions provided courage and good fortune. Their soldiers were known to

4 Bashar Saad, *Greco-Arab & Islamic Herbal Medicine—Traditional System, Ethics, Safety, Efficacy & Regulatory Issues* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2011).

5 Ernest Small, *Culinary Herbs* (Ottawa: National Research Council Canada Research Press, 1993), 127.

6 Ibid.

7 Edith W. Watts and Barry Girsh, *Art of Ancient Egypt: A Resource for Educators* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 113.

8 Eric Block, *Garlic and Other Alliums: The Lore and the Science* (Cambridge: Royal Society of Chemistry, 2010), 22.

9 Ibid.

10 Frederick Thomas Elworthy, *The Evil Eye: The Classic Account of an Ancient Superstition* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 150.

have lived on a diet of onion soup with dried bread broken into it, beating the French to their croutons by a couple of thousand years.¹¹

2 Sacred Texts: Bible and Qur'an

The fourth book of Moses, Numbers, includes this verse: "We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic." This passage refers to the Israelites in the desert, remembering their diet in Egypt and missing its diversity.¹² Both onions and garlic are also mentioned in the Qur'an. Q 2:61 reads: "And when you said: O Musa! we cannot bear with one food, therefore pray to thy Lord on our behalf to bring forth for us out of what the earth grows, of its herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions." This passage, like that of the Bible, refers to the Israelites, but here they not only remembered; they pleaded with Moses to call upon his God to change their monotonous diet. The *tafsīr* literature mentions that the word *fūm*, in addition to "garlic," could refer to corn, wheat, grain, or bread in general, and some *mufasssīrūn* (exegetes) such as al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1143), in his *al-Kashshāf*, explains this "boredom" by saying that, before their days in the desert, the Israelites were farmers engaged in agriculture, so they missed the variety of crops available to them. He adds that whoever eats the same diet daily eventually gets bored. Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273), in his *al-Jāmi' li-ahkām al-Qur'an*, heavily borrows from the biblical passage to add that they were remembering their days in Egypt. Regardless of whether *fūm* refers to garlic, he mentions the onion. According to al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), the Israelites were bored with eating nothing but quail and drinking "honey sent down from the skies called *mann*." The plants mentioned were common items in the Arabian diet, and each one of them is found frequently in the extant Arabic culinary manuals of the medieval period.¹³

11 Albert Jack, *What Caesar Did for My Salad: Not to Mention the Earl's Sandwich, Pavlova's Meringue and Other Curious Stories behind Our Favourite Food* (London: Particular, 2010), 125.

12 Block, *Garlic and Other Alliums*, 34.

13 David Waines, "Food and Drink," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Brill Online).

3 Religious Texts: *Ḥadīth* and *Fiqh*

Concerning onions and garlic, *ḥadīth* literature preserves several narrations attributed to the Prophet.¹⁴ It is narrated that he directed people to refrain from the two plants, saying, “Whoever eats of these two plants should not come near our mosque.”¹⁵ He also said, “If you must eat of these, then kill their odor by cooking.” The narrator adds that onions and garlic are implied.¹⁶ In some versions—for example, in Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s *musnad*—the word *al-khabīthatayn* (to mean “evil” or “vicious”) was added to describe the “trees.”¹⁷

Another *ḥadīth* narrates that the Prophet said, “Whoever has eaten garlic or onion should keep away from us,” and in a different version, “should keep away from our mosque.” But according to other traditions, the Prophet Muḥammad merely expressed his personal dislike of these plants and forbade those who had recently eaten them to come to the mosque, to avoid annoying other worshippers with the consequences of their consumption, such as flatulence and bad breath, and he himself never ate them raw.

Al-Ḥākim al-Nisābūrī mentions in his *al-Mustadrak* that, on being asked, the Prophet explained that he did not eat onions and garlic because angels suffer from the odor and he would be embarrassed to receive them with the smell.¹⁸ In yet other narrations, we are told that the narrator saw the Prophet direct a Muslim to exit the mosque to al-Baqīʿ, the graveyard of al-Madina.¹⁹ In other versions he is even said to have taken the culprit by the hand, leading him out to al-Baqīʿ.²⁰ Yet ʿĀisha narrated that Abū Ziyād Khayār b. Salama asked her about onions, and she told him that the last food the Prophet ate contained

14 Moiz Amjad, “Eating Garlic, Onion and Leek in Cooked Form,” *Renaissance* 19, no. 12 (2009): 39–42.

15 All translations from Arabic are my own.

16 Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Riyadh: Maktab al-Tarbiya al-ʿArabī li-Duwal al-Khalīj, 1988), #1808, #1809, Abū Dāwūd, *Ṣaḥīḥ sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Riyadh: Maktab al-Tarbiya al-ʿArabī li-Duwal al-Khalīj, 1989), #3827, #3828; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1993–1994), #4844; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad* (Cairo: Dār al-Iʿtishām, 1997), #16292; and al-Nasāʿī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1998), #6681.

17 Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad* (Cairo: Dār al-Iʿtishām, 1997), #16292.

18 Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥākim al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak ʿalā al-ṣaḥīḥayn fī-l-ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, n.d.), 4135.

19 Ibn Khuzayma, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzayma* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1390/1970), #1666; and al-Nasāʿī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1998), #6682.

20 Ibn Mājah, *Sunan al-ḥāfiẓ Abī ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd al-Qazwīnī Ibn Mājah* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1952–1953), #3363.

onions.²¹ This might be the reason the Prophet on his deathbed is said not to have given up use of the *siwāk*. The *siwāk*, also called *miswāk*, is a twig or small branch from the *arāk* tree (*Salvadora persica*) and is used to clean teeth.²² The Prophet had ordered Muslims: “Purify your mouths for they are the channels through which utterances of praise to God travel.”²³ Furthermore, another *ḥadīth* ascribed to the Prophet says: “If you happen to enter a land or new territory, then eat from its onions as it protects you from its diseases. Onions also strengthen your stamina, increase the sperm and reduce fever.”²⁴

No wonder, then, with all these conflicting narrations, that *fiqh* had to address the issue. Al-Shāfi‘ī, in his famous *Kitāb al-Umm*, concludes that onion and garlic are not to be distributed as charity, as they cannot be eaten raw.²⁵ This relates to a *ḥadīth* in Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s *musnad* that Murthid b. ‘Abdal-lāh would always come to the mosque carrying things that he would distribute as charity. One day he came to the mosque carrying onions. Yazīd b. Abū Ḥabīb told him: “Oh most generous, charitable father, why are you carrying this, which will make your garments smell filthy?” He replied, “By God that was the only thing in my house, so I brought it to distribute it as charity.” The Prophet responded, “The charity of a believer will be his shadow on Judgment Day.”²⁶

Another instance in which onions feature in *fiqh* is with regard to *ribā al-faḍl*, also known as surplus *ribā*, in reference to an excess taken in exchange for specific commodities that are homogeneous at the time of sale—such items included all sorts of grains, dry dates, raisins, meats, and milk and milk products, as well as salt, spices, vinegar, onions, garlic, and oil.²⁷ According to Abdulkader S. Thomas, there are two reasons for the impermissibility of surplus *ribā*. The first is that it must be nutritious and storable (i.e., a person usually receives nutrition from it to strengthen his constitution). The second is that if a person limited himself to eating only that type of food, he would survive

21 Sarfaraz Khan Marwat, Muḥammad Aslam Khan, and Fazal-ur-Rehman, “Ethnomedicinal Study of Vegetables Mentioned in the Holy Qur’an and Ahadith,” *Ethnobotanical Leaflets* 12, no. 1 (2008): 1259.

22 Walter Hepworth Lewis and Memory P.F. Elvin-Lewis, *Medical Botany: Plants Affecting Human Health* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2003), 386.

23 Vardit Rispler-Chaim, “The Siwāk: A Medieval Islamic Contribution to Dental Care,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd ser., 2, no. 1 (1992): 13.

24 Muḥammad al-Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār al-jāmi‘a li-durar akhbār al-a‘imma al-aṭḥhār* (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Wafā’, 1983), 66:252.

25 Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī, *Kitāb al-Umm* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1980), 38.

26 Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 5:411.

27 Abdulkader S. Thomas, *Interest in Islamic Economics: Understanding Riba* (London: Routledge, 2006), 37.

without needing anything else and without being weakened.²⁸ The final legal verdict is that onions are not *ḥarām* (prohibited), because the Prophet could not declare something as such when God had made it *ḥalāl* (permissible), yet he could qualify the prohibition and make it *makrūh* (discouraged) when its consumption was in raw form.²⁹

In addition, onions and garlic, which caused disgust because of their odor, were used for comparison purposes. Marʿī b. Yūsuf al-Karmī (d. 1033/1624), a mufti and teacher who authored many legal works, devoted one such work to the highly disputed question of the legality of smoking tobacco, which had arrived from the New World and had become extremely popular by the early eleventh/seventeenth century. His *Tahqīq al-burhān fī shaʿn al-dukhān alladhī yashrabuhu al-nās al-ān* (Investigating the matter of tobacco that people nowadays consume) finds that smoking tobacco falls in the “discouraged” category; that is, it is an act that is not outright forbidden, but refraining from it will be rewarded. Marʿī opines that tobacco, and people’s excessive devotion to it, is unhealthy and that it fouls the breath like garlic and onion do.³⁰

4 Sufi Literature

Anecdotes about the eating habits of Sufis, pious men, and teachers are characterized by a common moral denominator. For example, the literature describes Ibn Ḥanbal’s food consumption as modest yet sufficient. He did not starve himself, yet he abstained from indulging in delicacies. His attitude toward food indicates that his way of coming to terms with worldly needs and temptations was by keeping them to the necessary minimum.³¹

Some Sufis expressed their faith by refusing to make a living, expecting Allah to nourish them, and therefore they detached themselves from the productive circles of society.³² Illustrating this, and mentioning onions, is an anecdote by the Persian Sufi writer Farīd al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 618/1221): One day, the servant girl of the famous Sufi woman Rābiʿa l-ʿAdawīyya (d. 180/796), after many days of not cooking at all, was making an onion stew. She discovered that she needed

28 Ibid.

29 Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. Salāma b. ʿAbdallāh al-Azdī, *Sharḥ maʿānī al-āthār* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1996), 4:239.

30 Joseph E. Lowry, Roger Allen, and Devin J. Stewart, *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography: Teil 2 1350–1850* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 289.

31 Nimrod Hurvitz, “Biographies and Mild Asceticism: A Study of Islamic Moral Imagination,” *Studia Islamica* 85 (1997): 49.

32 Ibid., 50.

some more onions and said, "I will ask for some from next door." Rābi'a replied: "Forty years now I have had a covenant with Almighty God not to ask for anything from anyone but He. Never mind the onions." A bird suddenly swooped down from the sky with a peeled onion in its beak and dropped it into the pan. "I am not sure this is not a trick," Rābi'a said, refusing to eat the stew and instead eating nothing but bread.³³

Another anecdote mentioning Rābi'a and onions depicts Rābi'a and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), who is frustrated that when Rābi'a walks in the mountains, she is surrounded by flocks of deer, mountain goats, ibex, and wild asses, yet when he approaches them they flee. Rābi'a asks him what he has eaten. When he tells her that he had eaten "onion and tallow," she tells him: "You eat their fat. Why then should they not flee from you?"³⁴ Apparently it is not the onion that is problematic, but the fat in which it was fried. The Sufi master Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) cautions: "Be careful of your diet. It is better if your food be nourishing but devoid of animal fat."³⁵

5 Folklore and Legends: Jinn

The Prophet is also credited with saying, "Decorate your tables with greens, herbs and onions and frequently say the *basmala*,"³⁶ as that repels devils.³⁷ Hanelt states that they provide a feast for the eyes and the palate; hence, garnishes with onions or garlic are not inconceivable.³⁸ In *al-Risāla al-Bagh-dādīyya*, the author described a table laden with delicious foods of different types, beautifully and enticingly displayed in a sequence according to their nature. This gives us a clear idea of the appeal, as well as the generosity, of dining tables on great occasions, when all resources were mustered to exhibit largesse. There was a great variety of food and drink, and attentive hospitality toward guests, who would be appreciative of their hosts' kindness. Al-Tawhīdī

33 Valerie J. Hoffman, "Eating and Fasting for God in Sufi Tradition," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63, no. 3 (1995): 472.

34 Farīd al-Dīn al-'Aṭṭār, *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes from the Tadhkirat al-Auliya'* ("Memorial of the Saints"), trans. A.J. Arberry (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 45. Ibid.

36 The *basmala* is a name given to the words *bi-smi-Allāhi al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* or *bismillāh* in short, which translates to "in the name of God" and precedes any Qur'anic recitation.

37 Muḥamed Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1403), 59:127.

38 Peter Hanelt, "Allium of the Mediterranean Provides a Feast for the Eyes and the Palate," *Diversity* 2, nos. 1–2 (1995): 125–126.

started by describing the table on which the food was laid out, as a bride in all her finery, with bright contrasting colors and black next to white, with rosy-pink roasts and the rest white as pure Coptic linen.³⁹

As mentioned, in ancient Egypt garlic was a staple food and was perceived as a gift from the gods; however, in postbiblical mythology it was believed that it had grown where Satan's left foot stepped on earth after he was evicted from the Garden of Eden, whereas onions grew in the print of his right foot.⁴⁰ The same myth is quoted by Ellen Spector Platt, but without mentioning its origin in the Islamic literature.⁴¹ Eric Block states that the myth has Islamic origins but does not provide the original source of the myth.⁴² In Egypt and Morocco, people traditionally were advised to keep garlic and onion under an infant's cot or mattress to appease the jinn.⁴³

In *Qāmūs al-'ādāt wa-l-taqālīd*, Aḥmad Amīn writes that Egyptians believed that if a jinni took a liking to a human and wanted to give him something, he would gift onion peel, which turned to gold after sunrise.⁴⁴ Egyptians hang onions on the doors the night before the national holiday Shamm al-Nasīm, marking the beginning of spring, sometimes called Egyptian Easter, and put some under the bed and in the rooms, believing that evil spirits will leave and not return when they smelled the onions.⁴⁵ Jinn, as well as shaman's helpers and folk medicine practitioners, favor certain materials, such as chili pepper pods, garlic cloves, and onions. Along with sachets containing salt and other ingredients, these are used as measures to ward off the evil eye.⁴⁶

According to Victoria Arakelova, onions are the most esteemed plants with evident cultic significance. The earliest evidence of onion worship among the Yezidis can be found in a passage by Evlia Çelebi (d. 1095/1684),⁴⁷ the Ottoman

39 Ibrahim Chabbouh, *The Cuisine of the Muslims* (London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2004), 25.

40 Max Cryer, *Superstitions: And Why We Have Them* (Wollombi, Australia: Exisle Publishing, 2016), 58.

41 Ellen Spector Platt, *Garlic & Other Alliums* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2003), 29.

42 Block, *Garlic and Other Alliums*, 57.

43 Rosalind Franklin, *Baby Lore: Superstitions and Old Wives Tales from the World over Related to Pregnancy, Birth and Baby care* (Plymouth: Diggory Press, 2005), 152.

44 Aḥmad Amīn, *Qāmūs al-'ādāt wa-l-taqālīd wa-l-ta'ābīr al-miṣrīyya* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣrīyya, 1953), 98.

45 *Ibid.*, 99.

46 Tibor Horvath, ed., *Encyclopedia of Human Ideas on Ultimate Reality and Meaning* (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1978), 7–8:183.

47 The Yezidis, an ancient enigmatic Kurdish mountain people, are considered one of the oldest ethnicities in the Middle East and often derided as “devil worshippers.” Distinct

historiographer, in which he writes that the Yezidis of Sinjar “carry onion and *jajezil* (a type of pungent cheese). They believe that if anybody smashes or squashes an onion, his head will be smashed, and he will be killed.”⁴⁸ While this is no longer mentioned among Yezidis today, there is literary evidence to suggest that this belief once existed.⁴⁹ The Yezidis also apparently believed in the ritual of washing a deceased person with onion juice and planting an onion plant on the grave to protect the dead person’s soul against dark forces. This funeral rite is supposed to provide “the proper transition” of a soul from the profane world into the sacred one, protecting it from maligned forces.⁵⁰

Together with garlic and parsley, the onion is a well-known protection against evil spirits.⁵¹ Arakelova argues that onions are important ingredients in both white and black magic, used to bedevil. According to her, in some regions of Iran, to cause harm or do a bad turn to a neighbor, the onion is pierced with a needle and then pointed toward a particular house and left in that position for one night.⁵²

Not only were jinns and demons said to be kept away by onions and garlic, but in the earthly realm, rats were also fought off using onions. Squill, called *ishqūl*, *sqūlla*, and *ʿunṣul*, is a type of big white bulb that thrives in cold and mountainous regions like Andalusia, Syria, and Khorasan. The Arabs called it *baṣal al-fār* and used its juice to make rat poison. The squill bulb itself was not edible, but a type of liquid seasoning was extracted from it.⁵³

6 Aphrodisiacs, Pharmacology, and Medicine

From jinn it is a small step to potions of the gods. Aphrodisiacs are said to often possess a bit of the devil. Shahab Ahmad, dissatisfied with the domi-

from the majority Sunni Kurds, Yezidis’ religion evolved through a fusion of Sufism with earlier religious beliefs indigenous to the region, including Zoroastrian, Jewish, Gnostic, and Christian motifs. See, e.g., Birgül Açıkyıldız, *The Yezidis: The History of a Community, Culture and Religion* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

48 Victoria Arakelova, “The Onion and the Mandrake: Plants in Yezidi Folk Beliefs,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 7 (2014): 150.

49 Ibid., 155.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., 151.

52 Ibid.

53 Aḥmad Yūsuf al-Ḥassan, *Science and Technology in Islam: The Exact and Natural Sciences* (Paris: Unesco, 2001), 461.

nant conceptualizations of Islam as object and category, which he believes impairs the ability to recognize central and crucial aspects of the historical reality, suggests that “Islam should be conceptualized for a more meaningful understanding, both of Islam in the human experience, and thus of the human experience at large.”⁵⁴ Furthermore Ahmad argues for shifting the focus to include the territories from the Balkans to the Bengal complex.⁵⁵ He adds that, “despite a millennium of non-Arab majority Muslim demography and discourse, it is not that Islam derives a central focus and determinative profile from Asia, rather it is ‘Islamicate’ that does.”⁵⁶ The sheer diversity of Islam comes from the inclusion of a range of differences between societies, persons, ideas, and practices that identify themselves with Islam.⁵⁷ This proposed distinction between the Islamic (religious) and the Islamicate (cultural) allows for the inclusion of myths and legends from the Indian subcontinent.

And from the Indian subcontinent comes an Indian legend about the origins of garlic involving a jar hidden beneath the ocean that contains the nectar of immortality. Gods and demons stirred the sea until the jar rose to the surface. The heavenly beings succeeded in taking it and then quickly distributed the elixir among themselves. However, a demon disguised himself as a god and received a share of the potion. Another god recognized the imposter and beheaded him before he could swallow it and become immortal. Garlic plants are supposed to have sprung up where drops of his blood mixed with nectar fell to the earth. For this reason, garlic was considered a powerful substance, to be used with caution, for it contained demon’s blood along with the elixir of immortality.⁵⁸ It was believed in India that onions and garlic increase libido and sexual stamina.⁵⁹ Hindus prohibit offering garlic in worship, and members of the Brahmin caste do not eat garlic, because it arouses desire.⁶⁰ In addition to the prohibition against offering garlic in Hindu worship, celibates are supposed to avoid it because it arouses lust. Numerous manuscripts about food mention

54 Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 5–6.

55 *Ibid.*, 32.

56 *Ibid.*, 173.

57 *Ibid.*, 6.

58 Miriam Hospodar, “Aphrodisiac Foods: Bringing Heaven to Earth,” *Gastronomica* 4, no. 4 (2004): 86.

59 Karen Jean Matsko Hood, *Onion Delights Cookbook: A Collection of Onion Recipes* (Spokane Valley, WA: Whispering Pine Press International, 2014), 9.

60 Edward H. Schafer, “T’ang,” in *Food in Chinese Culture*, ed. Kwang-Chih Chang (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 132.

garlic as unfit to eat. (Elsewhere, Chinese Buddhism, Taoism, and indigenous ancestor worship prohibited the “five strong-odored foods,” which included onions and garlic.)⁶¹

It is highly conceivable that Ayurveda, the ancient Indian traditional natural healing system, came to be known in Abbasid times, which could explain that several Indian legends about onions and garlic found their way into the Islamic literature and ended up being attributed to an Islamic origin.⁶² Records show that the famous Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/786–809) invited the Indian physician Manak to Baghdad. Manak was credited with translating several Sanskrit works into Arabic, and he treated the caliph.⁶³ Sharma and Shastri demonstrate that during the reigns of both Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Manṣūr (d. 158/775, r. 136–158/754–775), many Indian scholars were invited to Baghdad and were offered prominent positions. This resulted in the translation of many of the Vedic sciences, Dhanavantari’s works, and other Sanskrit treatises to Arabic. Therefore, they conclude that the best of Indian knowledge reached the Middle East long before the advent of Islam in India.⁶⁴ Other Indian physicians, such as Ibn Dhaa, Bahal, and Bajigar, were invited to Baghdad by Abbasid caliphs and ended up accepting Islam as a religion.⁶⁵ Avari shows that the control of Sind gave the Abbasid caliphate a vital route to India and enabled them to transfer Indian ideas and expertise to Baghdad. Avari argues that Hārūn al-Rashīd strongly encouraged the learning of the Ayurvedic corpus and arranged its translation into Arabic. The translation activity further expanded in the reign of al-Ma’mūn (r. 198–218/813–833) who, according to Avari, established in Baghdad the official translation institute of the Bayt al-Ḥikma, where the important Indian treatises, for example on poisons, were translated.⁶⁶ However, this view is a modern view; according to Gutas and van Bladel, there is little information on the real function of Bayt al-Ḥikma, and it seems that it was more geared toward “collecting and preserving books of pre-

61 Ibid.

62 *Hing*, the Indian name for asafoetida, became popular with Indian vegetarians. When it was cooked in oil, it took on a garlicky flavor, which made it a good substitute for the onions and garlic avoided by devout Hindus. E.M. Collingham, *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 28.

63 Prudence F. Bruns, “Exploring the Development of Nāḍivijñāna in Early Indian Medical Texts” (MA thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2002), 9.

64 Raj K. Sharma and Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Revealing India’s Past: Recent Trends in Art and Archaeology* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2005), 414.

65 Bruns, “Exploring the Development of Nāḍivijñāna,” 9.

66 Burjor Avari, *Islamic Civilization in South Asia: A History of Muslim Power and Presence in the Indian Subcontinent* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 32.

Islamic Iranian and early Arabic lore than with transmitting Greek science.”⁶⁷ Wujastyk explores the evidence for the intellectual and cultural connections between northwest India, Bactria (or Tokharistan), and Baghdad, especially through the study of the history of medicine.⁶⁸ He reports that the Islamic conquest of Balkh resulted in the relocation of the originally Buddhist Khālid b. Pramukha from Balkh to Baghdad. Ibn Khālid, he argues, can be connected to the Sanskrit and Ayurvedic education that his father received in Kashmir. This influenced the medical treatises that were translated from Sanskrit into Arabic in second/eighth-century Baghdad and may have informed the building of one of the first hospitals in Baghdad.⁶⁹

From India, we return to Arabia, where Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), the sixth Shia Imam and also a major figure in the Ḥanafī and Mālikī schools of Sunni jurisprudence, is said to have encouraged eating onions because they increased semen.⁷⁰ In another narration he is said to have attributed the increase of desire and potency for sexual intercourse to onions.⁷¹ Also related to sexual health, Arab Muslim physicians, such as Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (Rhazes) (d. 313/925 or 323/935), Thābit b. Qurra (d. 288/901), Ibn al-Jazzār (d. 395/1004–1005), Ibn Rushd (d. 520/1126), and Ibn al-Nafīs (d. 687/1288), identified sexual and erectile dysfunctions and were the first to prescribe medication, therapy, and drugs for the treatment and improvement of male sexuality. Among the medicines and foods used were onion and garlic.⁷²

In *The Sultan’s Sex Potions*, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) offers a recipe for garlic broth.⁷³ It is made from fresh Syrian garlic, beef fat, and spices, and is credited with “heating the loins.” Another recipe to strengthen potency and coitus is made from onions, olive oil, salt, and spices.⁷⁴ Recipes were not only for potions to be consumed but also for enemas, said to increase sexual stamina.

67 Dimitri Gutas and van Bladel, Kevin, “Bayt al-Ḥikma,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (Brill Online).

68 Dominik Wujastyk, “From Balkh to Baghdad—Indian Science and the Birth of the Islamic Golden Age in the Eighth Century,” *Indian Journal of History of Science* 51, no. 4 (2016): 679–690.

69 *Ibid.*, 679.

70 ‘Alī al-Namāzī al-Shāhrūdī, *Mustadrak safīnat al-biḥār* (Qum: Mu‘assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1983), 346.

71 *Ibid.*

72 Saad, *Greco-Arab & Islamic Herbal Medicine*, 319.

73 Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *The Sultan’s Sex Potions: Arab Aphrodisiacs in the Middle Ages*, trans. Daniel L. Newman (London: Saqi, 2014), 98.

74 *Ibid.*, 102.

The enemas were made from the seeds of onion, leek, and carrot, as well as cinnamon, pepper, chickpea, and lamb testicle.⁷⁵

Garlic is a much more problematic substance when it comes to aphrodisiacs. It was deemed unfit to offer to the gods in ancient Egypt, and to this day Hindus and Chinese Buddhists do not use it in religious rituals, because of its possible sexual enhancement. Ancient Egyptians and Greeks believed garlic promoted brute strength, appropriate for pyramid builders and galley slaves, and along those lines it was also said to strengthen failing libidos. The Kama Sutra contains this formula: “Mix garlic root with white pepper and liquorice. When drunk with sugared milk, it enhances virility.”⁷⁶ It is conceivable that al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) knew of the Kama Sutra, because in his book on *‘ilm al-bāh* (sexology),⁷⁷ after many illustrations of his arguments using *ḥadīth*, he quotes “Persian scholars and Indian wise men, experts in sexuality.”⁷⁸ The Indian philosopher Mallinaga Vatsyayana’s erotic manual the Kama Sutra is, after all, considered the standard book on erotology. In the development of *‘ilm al-bāh*, Arab Muslim erotologists not only assimilated ancient Greek theories but also expanded and developed them, excelling in their use of language and description of lovemaking.⁷⁹ For example, in al-Suyūṭī’s *Nawādir al-ayk fī ma’rifat al-nayk* (translated by Daniela Rodica Firanesco as *The Ticket’s Blooms of Gracefulness: On the Art of the Fleshy Embrace*), a more explicit manual, al-Suyūṭī quotes different kinds of authoritative texts, including works by Hippocrates and Galen, as well as Indian wisdom.⁸⁰ Hämen-Antilla states that “al-Suyūṭī freely quotes—in his serious works as well as in his other works on *nikāh* (intercourse, marriage)—from various erotic manuals, showing that the works of explicitly erotic content were considered by him and his readers to be authoritative mainstream works suitable to be quoted side by side with lex-

75 Ibid., 110.

76 Hospodar, “Aphrodisiac Foods,” 84.

77 The definition of *‘ilm al-bāh* is the scientific study of treatments related to sexual potency from food aphrodisiacs, medical stimulants to enhance sexual potency and pleasure, or the art of coitus and the spiritual joys of physical ecstasy.

78 Daniela Rodica Firanesco, “Al-Suyūṭī and Erotic Literature,” in *Al-Suyūṭī, a Polymath of the Mamlūk Period: Proceedings of the Themed Day of the First Conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies (Ca’ Foscari University, Venice, June 23, 2014)*, ed. Antonella Ghersetti (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 256.

79 Habeeb Akande and Abdassamad Clarke, *A Taste of Honey: Sexuality and Erotology in Islam* (London: Rabaah Publishers, 2015), 14.

80 Jaako Hämen-Antilla, “Al-Suyūṭī and Erotic Literature,” in *Al-Suyūṭī, a Polymath of the Mamlūk Period: Proceedings of the Themed Day of the First Conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies (Ca’ Foscari University, Venice, June 23, 2014)*, ed. Antonella Ghersetti (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 231.

icographical authorities.”⁸¹ Yet Maimonides (d. 601/1205) thought that garlic, onion, leek, radish, cabbage, and eggplant were generally bad for all people, and very bad for whoever wished to conserve his health.⁸² Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, however, said that onions have benefits; they fight fatigue, increase strength, quicken heart rate, and reduce fever. In another narration he said onions improve food’s flavor, reduce phlegm, and increase desire and potency.⁸³

Arabic medical writing, in general and on dietetics in particular (the systematic control of food and drink to conserve health or combat disease), started in the second/eighth century.⁸⁴ Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (d. 260/873) and his son and nephew were among the pioneers of that genre. Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq translated Galen’s dietetic tract *Kitāb al-aghdhīya* (On the properties of foodstuffs).⁸⁵ Dietetics covered many aspects related to the individual’s physical well-being: how to follow due measure in daily nourishment and avoid extremes; which foods by their nature were contrary to or compatible with the individual’s own constitution; how to avoid the ill effects of foodstuffs by appropriate correction and adjustment in their preparation; which vegetables were ingestible; which dishes were suitable for counteracting a variety of ailments, or suitable for dealing with particular conditions, such as an excess of bile or phlegm;⁸⁶ and which dishes could stimulate a desired effect, such as diuresis.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, assisting nature was in the first instance within the competence of the household, where it was possible to draw on a range of home remedies available for fevers and other minor upsets. This attitude is reflected in the popular Arabic saying by which the medieval Arabs summarized their understanding of medicine, namely, that “the stomach is the abode of disease, and abstaining from injurious foods is the principal part of medicine.”⁸⁸

Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (Rhazes) (d. 312/925) wrote several works on dietetics, including *Kitāb Manāfi‘ al-aghdhīya wa daf‘ maḍārrihā* (Book on the benefits

81 Ibid.

82 Ariel Bar-Sel, Hebbel E. Hoff, Elias Faris, and Moses Maimonides, “Moses Maimonides’ Two Treatises on the Regimen of Health: Fī Tadbīr al-Ṣiḥḥah and Maqālah fī Bayān Ba‘ḍ al-A‘rād wa-al-Jawāb ‘anhā,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 54, no. 4 (1964): 19.

83 al-Shāhrūdī, *Mustadrak Safīnat al-biḥār*, 346.

84 David Waines, “Dietetics in Medieval Islamic Culture,” *Medical History* 43 (1999): 228, 230.

85 Ibid., 231.

86 Nawal Nasrallah, *Treasure Trove of Benefits and Variety at the Table: A Fourteenth-Century Egyptian Cookbook* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 329.

87 Ibid., 543.

88 Waines, “Dietetics,” 240.

of foodstuffs and avoidance of their harmful effects).⁸⁹ Garlic and onion had been used both as food and for medical applications for thousands of years.⁹⁰ Arab physicians prescribed garlic to induce sweating (diaphoresis), to help in expelling waste through the skin and to reduce fever.⁹¹ Onion juice was used to treat loss of appetite, cough, and skin infections.⁹² Cloves of garlic were inserted into ears to combat ear pain.⁹³

Onion juice, along with pounded radish seeds, was dripped into ears that were infected after water had entered them.⁹⁴ Intestinal parasites were destroyed by prescribing the consumption of water, mint with onion, and bread.⁹⁵ Garlic boiled in linseed oil and applied to a suppository was said to relieve anal itching and kill parasites in the bowels.⁹⁶ Physicians used these plants for their antibacterial values to fight infections long before bacteria were even discovered; onions and garlic were used to disinfect surgical utensils, and sometimes surgical needles and scalpels were stuck into onions and garlic to keep them sanitary.⁹⁷

Although they were still unaware of the existence of microbes and bacteria, judging from the professional literature, the veterinary doctors of the Mamluk period attributed great importance to the cleanliness of both surgical instruments and the wound or organ being operated on. A tenth/sixteenth-century doctor, al-Anṭākī (d. 1008/1599), highlighted the need for the veterinarian to use clean instruments, insisting specifically on care of the instruments and syringes used to draw blood. He wrote that the veterinarian must keep them scrupulously clean and oiled to prevent infection or contamination (‘*adwā*).⁹⁸

The scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) described some of the health benefits of onions in his work *The Prophetic Medicine*, such as for diges-

89 Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī, *Kitāb Manāfi’ al-aghdhīya wa daf’ maḍārrihā* (Cairo: Bulaq, 1885).

90 Saad, *Greco-Arab & Islamic Herbal Medicine*, 58.

91 *Ibid.*, 133.

92 *Ibid.*, 319.

93 Maxime Rodinson, “Recherches sur les documents arabes relatifs à la cuisine,” *Revue des études islamiques* (1949): 123.

94 László Károly, *A Turkic Medical Treatise from Islamic Central Asia: A Critical Edition of a Seventeenth-Century Chagatay Work by Subhan Quli Khan* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2014), 148.

95 *Ibid.*, 163.

96 *Ibid.*

97 Martin Levey, ed. and trans., *The Medical Formulary of Aqrā-bādḥīn of Al-Kindī* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 136.

98 Housni Alkhateeb Shehada, *Mamluks and Animals: Veterinary Medicine in Medieval Islam* (Boston: Brill, 2013), 462.

tion, in quenching thirst, as a diuretic, treating scorpion stings (as it expels toxins), treating phlegm (when taken with vinegar, honey, and salt), softening cough, treating toothache, and expelling worms.⁹⁹ He also wrote that onions were beneficial for expelling toxins from the body, cleansing the stomach, and improving complexion.¹⁰⁰ He specifically mentioned the benefits of onion seed for the treatment of leukoderma (a skin condition characterized by lack of pigment and pale patches of skin) and alopecia (hair loss) when applied as an ointment. Furthermore, mixing onion seed with honey worked to treat leukoma (a disease of the cornea).¹⁰¹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya also mentioned onion juice for ear and hearing problems, and cooked onion for jaundice and cough.¹⁰²

In the Mamluk treatises, wine, vinegar, garlic and onion juice, various sorts of salt, and lime were all used to cleanse surgical instruments before surgeries. A needle used for sewing wounds had to be passed through fire or could also be stuck in garlic for the same purpose.¹⁰³ As an antiseptic, garlic was widely used to control the suppuration of wounds. The raw juice was expressed, then diluted with water and applied to the wounds.¹⁰⁴ In Pakistan, particularly in the Samahani Valley, garlic juice has been used as a contraceptive and to lower blood pressure.¹⁰⁵

Aḥmad Amīn wrote in his *Qāmūs al-ʿādāt wa-l-taqālīd* that Egyptians believed that onions were very beneficial. They would use onion juice as eye drops to fight infection. For *ramad* (conjunctivitis) they added *shīḥ* (wormwood) to the drops. When reviving a person who had fainted, they would put some onion juice in his nose. In times of epidemics Egyptians would smell both bulbs frequently and increase their consumption of garlic and onion.¹⁰⁶

99 Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-ṭibb al-nabawī fī ḍaw' al-ma'ārif al-tibbiyya wa-l-'ilmīyya al-ḥadītha* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2003), 226–227.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Shehada, *Mamluks and Animals*, 462.

104 Rājīwa Sharamā, *Improve Your Health with Garlic & Onion* (Mumbai: U.P. Book Factory, 2005), 28.

105 Saad, *Greco-Arab & Islamic Herbal Medicine*, 264.

106 Amīn, *Qāmūs al-ʿādāt wa-l-taqālīd wa-l-ta'ābīr al-miṣriyya*, 98.

7 Literature about Banquets, Table Manners, and Cookbooks

The use of etiquette and appropriate social manners are well-known features of courtly circles. Studies of courts have demonstrated that to enter and succeed in them, it was essential to master the intricacies of proper behavior.¹⁰⁷

Yet everyone had banquets—not only kings and sultans—even if they varied in terms of number of guests and types of food served. In his *Faṣṣ al-khawātim fi-mā qīla fi-l walā'im*, Shams al-Dīn b. Ṭūlūn (d. 953/1546) identifies 13 different types of *walā'im* (feasts) according to their occasion and time of day or night, and gives advice on what to serve, when to leave as a guest, and on general table manners. He advises hosts not to serve raw onion, garlic, or leek.¹⁰⁸ Another book in the same genre is Abū al Barakāt al-Ghaznī's (d. 560/1165) *Kitāb al-Mu'ākala*, which focuses on table manners and provides more than 80 tips and descriptions of what not to do at the table.¹⁰⁹

The ultimate purpose of good manners and politeness is to avoid hurting or inconveniencing other people, and a traditional rule that demonstrates this was the unwritten imperative for guests to start eating as soon as bread was on the table, as the host should be spared embarrassment in case he had nothing else to offer. Onion and garlic were discouraged on Fridays, when in the company of others at the mosque, and in very refined circles one avoided them altogether. Also, there was no lingering after finishing—one left after everybody had eaten enough.¹¹⁰

Not only were onions and garlic banned from mosques; other books also urged barbers to refrain from eating them. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abdallāh al-Shayzarī (d. ca. 590/1193) writes in his *Nihāyat al-rutba fi ṭalab al-ḥisba* (The utmost authority in the pursuit of Ḥisba) that a barber should not eat onions, garlic, leeks, and other such foods, lest his customers be hurt by the smell when shaving.¹¹¹

Ibn al-'Imād al-Aqfahsī (d. 808/1406), an Egyptian authority on Islamic "table" etiquette, argues that one was allowed to leave the mosque if hungry and one wanted to eat. He further explains that leaving the mosque in such a case was not obligatory and that a person can but does not have to, as "one can

107 Hurvitz, "Biographies and Mild Asceticism," 42.

108 Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ṭūlūn, *Faṣṣ al-khawātim fi-mā qīla fi-l walā'im* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1983), 79.

109 Abū-l-Barakāt al-Ghaznī, *Kitāb al-Mu'ākala* (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1986).

110 H.E. Chehabi, "The Westernization of Iranian Culinary Culture," *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2003): 47.

111 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Naṣr b. 'Abdallāh al-Shayzarī, *Nihāyat al-rutba fi ṭalab al-ḥisba* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003), 258.

eat in the mosque as long as one does not mess up and does not eat garlic or onions or any other things that have a hateful smell; if, however, these things were cooked, they were no longer considered hateful.”¹¹²

Banquets revolve around food, and the earliest extant culinary manual, the late fourth/tenth-century *Kitāb al-Ṭabīkh*, by Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq (d. 360?/960?), contains evidence of a high culinary culture dating back to earlier times.¹¹³ However, this title was also used by many other authors for their books. Nawal Nasrallah lists the authors as well as original recipe authors and poets describing the recipes, as Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Baghdādī (d. 636/1239), Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī 224/839, Abū Ishāq al-Ṣūlī (d. 243/857), and Yūḥanna Ibn Māsawayh (d. 243/857), who in addition to *Kitāb al-Ṭabīkh* also wrote a book titled *Dafʿ maḍār al-aghḍhiya* (Prevention of the negative impacts of food-stuff).¹¹⁴

In *Kanz al-fawāʾid fī tanwīʿ al-mawāʾid* (*Treasure Trove of Benefits and Variety at the Table: A Fourteenth-Century Egyptian Cookbook*), which describes how to cook, the characteristics of a cook, how to create a varied diet, and types of utensils and food, cooks are advised to marinate fish and any type of meat in onion, garlic, lemon, and coriander, then cook them all together so that the *zafāra* (pungency), if any, would vanish.¹¹⁵ It also includes a chapter on aphrodisiacs and food that serves as medicine.¹¹⁶

Recipes for daily dishes occur in all culinary manuals that specify having a dietetic purpose. Among them was the subject of sexuality; according to the translated Greek medical books, coitus was one of the so-called non-naturals that affected the body’s health and so fell within the individual’s general regimen for well-being.¹¹⁷ For example, an omelet-style preparation of egg, onion, oil, mastic, cinnamon, and a pinch of salt was said to stimulate sexual appetite.¹¹⁸

Pleasant smells, in both domestic surroundings and on one’s body and clothing (not to mention in cooked dishes as well), were judged as part of proper

112 Aḥmad Ibn al-ʿImād al-Aqfaḥsī, *Sharḥ Manẓūmāt ādāb al-akl wa-l-shurb wa-l-diyāfa* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub, 1987), 80.

113 Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq, *Kitāb al-Ṭabīkh*, ed. Kaj Ohrnberg and Sahban Mroueh (Helsinki: Studia Orientalia/Finnish Oriental Society, 1987).

114 Nawal Nasrallah, *Annals of the Caliphs’ Kitchens: Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq’s Tenth-Century Baghdādī Cookbook* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 14–17.

115 Nasrallah, *Treasure Trove*, 202.

116 *Ibid.*, 529–575.

117 David Waines, “Luxury Foods in Medieval Islamic Societies,” *World Archaeology* 34, no. 3 (2003): 237.

118 Nasrallah, *Treasure Trove*, 171.

household management and personal hygiene. Other recipes for soap making and toothpaste indicate the importance of the culinary manuals in any study of medieval urban domestic arrangements.¹¹⁹

Medieval Arabic texts sometimes differentiate between various categories of spices, herbs, aromatics, and condiments.¹²⁰ Garlic is the “perfect” spice, and its appearance in a multitude of Mediterranean recipes testifies to its universality.¹²¹ Along with onions it is found in peasant food as frequently as in the food of the elite.

With regard to cookbooks and onions, the French pride themselves on having invented onion soup, made from caramelized onions in a beef stock and traditionally served with croutons and grated Gruyère cheese. French onion soup has many imitators, but arguably the original dish is itself an imitation, as the French were by no means the first to eat it. Cheap and tasty, as well as easy to grow, onions form the basis of many types of soup in the world and have since ancient times. The Persians, for example, are said to have produced their own onion soup thought to date back to the time of King Arsaces during his military campaigns of 250 BC against the king of Syria.¹²²

Onions are the main ingredient in the Persian dish called *ash-e-nazri* (pledge soup, or charity soup). This is traditionally served by a family seeking divine support for one of its members, such as a sick child or a son leaving on a long journey. The soup accompanies prayers for the child’s recovery or the traveler’s safe return. Other ingredients in the soup vary, but all are donated by relatives, friends, and neighbors, so that the rich are not seen as showing off and the poor are not left feeling inferior. Everyone contributes to the making of the soup, thus ensuring that there is enough for all and plenty left over for distributing to the hungry and homeless. If and when their prayers are answered—the child recovers or the traveler returns home safely—then the soup is made again every year on the same day as a ritual of giving thanks to God.¹²³

Onions and garlic found their way into travel literature as well. The famous Arab geographer al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094) provides interesting accounts of fifth/

119 Waines, “Luxury Foods,” 237.

120 Geert Jan van Gelder, “Spices,” in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Josef W. Meri and Jere L. Bacharach Meri (New York: Routledge, 2006), 767.

121 Clifford A. Wright, *A Mediterranean Feast: The Story of the Birth of the Celebrated Cuisines of the Mediterranean, from the Merchants of Venice to the Barbary Corsairs* (New York: Morrow, 1999), 511.

122 Jack, *What Caesar Did for My Salad*, 123.

123 *Ibid.*, 124–125.

eleventh-century Tunis, the most illustrious city of Ifriqiya. He writes, “Onions are called *kallawrī* (Calabrian onions) and are as big as oranges with a perfect taste.”¹²⁴

Clifford Wright, in his *Mediterranean Feast*, asks what the plant of civilization is, then answers: “I’m inclined to say garlic, because it is the plant whose aroma permeates all Mediterranean gastronomy.”¹²⁵ According to him, the trinity of garlic, onion, and parsley form the base ingredients of Mediterranean food.¹²⁶

8 *Ẓurafāʾ* and *Adab* (Literature): Proverbs, Anecdotes, and Poetry

Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) defined the *ẓurafāʾ* in his *Akhbār al-ẓirāf wa-l-mutamājinīn* as those possessing civility (*adab*), manliness (*muruwwa*), refinement, eloquence, politeness, seriousness, chivalry, loyalty, piety, and discretion, and those who had bright faces, lean bodies, cleanliness of body and garments, smelled nice, were disgusted by dirt and bad deeds, had a sense of humor, were generous and forgiving, and had all sorts of other good traits.¹²⁷ They were the epitome of good manners and polite behavior, hence warranted a literary genre dedicated to them.

Abū al-Ṭayyib Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ishāq b. Yaḥyā b. al-Washshāʾ (d. 325/937)—al-Washshāʾ or Ibn al-Washshāʾ for short—wrote a book containing the code of behavior, manners, and customs of the *ẓurafāʾ* (refined or elegant). This group was refined in their manners, clothing, and eating and drinking habits. According to Szombathy, *ẓarf* includes concepts such as fineness, smartness, inventiveness, originality, and, when applied to humans, it denotes linguistic skills, eloquence, and originality, as well as a soft-spoken, friendly, and witty style, and a sense of elegance and fashionable dress.¹²⁸

In his book *Kitāb al-Ẓarf wa-l-ẓurafāʾ*, also known as *Kitāb al-Muwashshā*, al-Washshāʾ devotes an entire chapter on the food of the *ẓurafāʾ*, stating that onion, leek, cabbage, radish, and garlic are absolutely not to be consumed.

124 Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, *Description de l’Afrique Septentrionale*, trans. William McGuckin Baron de Slane (Algiers: Algiers Adolphe Jourdan, 1913), 88.

125 Wright, *Mediterranean Feast*, 691.

126 Ibid.

127 Abū al-Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Akhbār al-ẓirāf wa-l-mutamājinīn* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1997), 26.

128 Zoltan Szombathy, “On Wit and Elegance: The Arabic Concept of *Ẓarf*,” in *Authority, Privacy and Public Order in Islam*, ed. A. Michalak-Pikulska and B. Pikulski (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2006), 102.

Even if some of these fell into a dish by accident, the *zurafā'* should not and would not even taste the dish.¹²⁹

The *zurafā'* were eloquent and able to entertain and quote poetry and proverbs. Even if they refrained from eating onion and garlic, they could have quoted the proverbs that mentioned them. Proverbs (*amthāl*) are a well-known genre in classical Arabic literature and one of the earliest and most common prose compositions, even though some are based on Arabic poetry. The thousands of Arabic proverbs demonstrate their important role in writing and in daily discourse. Moreover, as many proverbs depict a situation or give advice or warning, it is customary among Arabic speakers or writers to use them to illustrate their speech or written work and draw conclusions about a comparable situation.¹³⁰

Onions and garlic feature prominently in Arabic proverbs, such as the Lebanese saying “Bread and onion without care is better than meat with troubles.” Two similar proverbs from Egypt and Syria, respectively, say: “He who inserts himself between the onion and its peel only suffers from its smell (sting)” and “He who inserts himself between onions and garlic will only end up stinking.”¹³¹ These mean that meddling causes problems. A similar proverb from Egypt is “Like onions, he is present in every dish.”¹³²

“One day honey, one day onions” refers to the changing times and fortunes.¹³³ The proverb “You cannot get honey from an onion” means that bad things can never result in any good.¹³⁴ Because onions are cheap and nutritious, they were immortalized in proverbs such as “Onions are a poor man’s meat.” Although meat is traditionally a mark of opulence in poor regions, its absence must not necessarily be considered a sign of impoverishment.

Another proverb that reflects how cheap onions are goes “He fasts and fasts and breaks his fast on an onion.” Aḥmad Pasha Taymūr (d. 1930), the Egyptian writer and historian, explains: he fasted and then broke his fast on something cheap that does not even satiate hunger. He adds that this proverb is also used for those who refrain from something for a long time but then, instead of a reward, receive the worst possible outcome. This proverb is used when a per-

129 Abū l-Ṭayyib Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ishāq b. Yaḥyā b. al-Washshā', *Kitāb al-Zarf wa-l-zurafā'* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Taḡaddum, 1906), 134–136.

130 A. Shvitiel and Mahmoud Omidsalar, “Taḡālīd,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P.J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs (Brill Online).

131 Amīn, *Qāmūs al-'ādāt wa-l-taḡālīd wa-l-ta'ābīr al-Miṣriyya*, 306.

132 Jamāl Ṭāhir and Dāliyyā Jamāl Ṭāhir, *Mawsū'at al-amthāl al-sha'biyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr, 2005), 88.

133 Ibid., 89.

134 Ibid.

son endures a difficult state for a long period of time, wishing and waiting to obtain what is best.¹³⁵ Modesty and acceptance of circumstances are reflected in the proverb “The moon is our lantern, onions are our apples.” For the *subūʿ* celebration, a week after birth, Iraqis say, “Cut an onion and smell it and the daughter will resemble her mother.”¹³⁶ The onion, being a common ingredient in most dishes, this proverb comments on the physical or character resemblance of mother and daughter.

In the Levant those who deny their roots and heritage are admonished with “Your mother is the onion and your father the garlic, so where is the good smell supposed to come from, you wretch?”¹³⁷ And in Egypt: “An onion offered with love is worth a sheep.”¹³⁸ Proverbs can have their origin in anecdotes. “His onion is always burnt” refers to someone who is always in a hurry. This is based on the anecdote about a peasant who was hungry and pestered his wife (and in another version his mother) about a warm meal that was not ready. She gave him a piece of bread and an onion and told him to eat them until the food was ready. He wanted to make the meal special, so he put the onion in the clay oven and was impatient, and he kept taking it out and discovering it was not cooked yet. He increased the firewood, and the onion ended up raw on the inside and burnt on the outside because of his haste.¹³⁹

Michael J.L. Young quotes another anecdote from Abū l-ʿArab al-Qayrawānī (d. 333/945), a Mālikī scholar, who writes that when he was with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ziyād al-Maʿāfirī, judge of Ifriqiya, he found him to be in a melancholy mood. A fair-skinned youth came in, bringing him a bag of onions, and whispering something to him. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān’s face lit up, and he said to one of those near him: “Tell them [his household staff] to send some of these onions with the beans cooked yesterday.” Accordingly, they sent him what he had asked for. He then asked al-Qayrawānī to join him, who replied, “No!” Al-Maʿāfirī asked, “Why?” Al-Qayrawānī replied that he was suspicious. Al-Maʿāfirī then said: “Well done, Abū ʿUthmān; if you see a gift go into the judge’s house by the door, then you know that integrity has flown out of his attic window! But this was not a gift, for this youth is a *mawlā* of mine, who has brought me these onions from my estate.” Al-Qayrawānī replied to this: “But I saw that you were

135 Aḥmad Taymūr, *al-Amthāl al-ʿammīyya* (Cairo: Dār al Shurūq, 2010), no. 1722.

136 *Amthāl ʿIrāqīyya shaʿbiyya (Iraqi Popular Proverbs)*, n.d., <http://vb.chatiraqnaa.net/t13168.html>.

137 Jumāna Amīn Ṭāhā, *al-Jumān fī al-amthāl: dirāsa tārikhiyya muqārana* (Damascus: self-published, 1991), no. 270.

138 Ṭāhir and Jamāl Ṭāhir, *Mawsūʿat al-amthāl al-shaʿbiyya*, 88.

139 Iḥsān al-Farḥān, *Khayruhā fī ghayrihā: dirāsa fī-l amthāl al-shaʿbiyya al-ʿarabiyya* (Beirut: Dār al Bahīth, 1987), 159–161.

melancholy, and then when this youth came to you your face lit up.” Al-Ma‘āfirī said: “When I got up today I recalled how long it was since I had suffered any misfortune, and was afraid that I had become small in God’s eyes. Then when this youth came and told me that the most able and best of my slaves on my estate had died, my anxiety left me and I became cheerful.”¹⁴⁰ Cheap onions can nevertheless tarnish a judge’s reputation if they are thought to have been a gift or a bribe.

Another anecdote uses the cheap onions in contrast to valuable gold, to show how different standards can ruin lives. The anecdote tells of a man who wanted to marry the daughter of a pious elder. The father agreed and blessed the marriage. As a dowry for his daughter, he was given a sack of onions. Many years later, after they had a baby, the girl asked her husband to visit her parents. They had to cross a river on their way, and the man carried the child over and left his wife behind while crossing the river. She slipped and fell into the water. When she cried out for help, he responded: “Save yourself. You’re only worth a sack of onions.” However, by the grace of God, she was saved by a passerby who took her to her parents, where she told her story. Her father, very upset, told his son-in-law to take his child and return only with a sack of gold in exchange for his wife. The days passed and the child’s need for his mother grew. The husband tried to marry another wife but was unsuccessful, as his first wife and her family were very much liked and had a good reputation. He could not cope alone with his son, so he embarked on collecting a sack of gold to be able to get his wife back. He worked day and night for years and finally managed to fill a small sack with gold. When he presented the gold to her family in exchange for his wife, the father agreed to return his daughter to him. On the way back, when she wanted to put her foot in the water to cross the river, her husband quickly jumped in to carry her on his back, saying: “You’re expensive, and your dowry broke my back. I paid for you in gold!” When her father heard that, he laughed and said: “When we treated him according to our standards, he was treacherous, but when we used his, he became loyal!”¹⁴¹

Elsewhere in the world onions also feature in various sayings and events. Muslims in medieval India celebrated weddings lavishly. The bride’s sister and her relatives are said to have played pranks on the groom. They struck him with flower wands; pelted him with sweetmeats, mangos, guavas, garlic, and onions.

140 Michael J.L. Young, “Abū l-‘Arab al-Qayrawānī and His Biographical Dictionary of the Scholars of Qayrawān and Tunis,” *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 6, no. 1 (1993): 68–69.

141 Tawfīq ‘Azīz ‘Abdallāh, *al-Hikāya al-sha‘biyya* (Amman: Dār Zahrān li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘, 2010), 83.

They might even have gone as far as rubbing the groom's cheeks and ears with them as well, all part of the fun and merriment.¹⁴² The dowry is said to have included silk, garlic, onion, and gold.¹⁴³ In contrast, when reciting the Qur'an or the names of Allah, they were prohibited from consuming garlic and onion, as this was considered an abomination.¹⁴⁴

Onions and garlic also found their way into poetry. In his *Faṣṣ al-khawātim fī-mā qīla fī-l-walā'im*, Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 953/1546) mentions 13 different occasions for holding a *walīma* (banquet), for example, a marriage contract or the birth of a child. He follows it by four other occasions, such as celebrating brotherhood, family, or kin, and the consummation of a marriage. He insists that when one is invited to a banquet, one must go, yet one should not to ask for more food, or sit at the table if alcohol was served. In a long section he mentions various poems written about food and banquets, including onions and garlic.¹⁴⁵

The style of poetry that is descriptive of fruit came to prominence between 130/747 and 200/815, especially during the time of Abū Nuwās, who died between mid-198/813 and early 200/815.¹⁴⁶ Arie Schippers quotes one example of such poetry (in translation): "An apple came to a young girl to tell her the words of her lovers. The fragrance of [the apple] was not its own, but its scent was that of the one who had given it to her as a present."¹⁴⁷ It seems that food poems have not gone out of fashion, and even if onions are not as fragrant as apples, Şerife Hanim, A.L. Macfie, and F. Macfie quote this poem featuring onions:

At first, we make soup, of an excellent kind,
 From a well-flavored stock, garnished with garlic;
 With onions, tomatoes, lemon, and okra—
 A nice appetizer, served hot, not too thick.
 ...
 Puff pastry for borek, rolled into thin squares,
 Before the meat browns, add chopped onions and spice.

142 Ja'far Sharif, *Qanoon-e-Islam: Or the customs of the Moosulmans of India comprising a full and exact account of their various rites and ceremonies from the moment of birth till the hour of death*, trans. Gerhard Andreas Herklots (London: Parbury, Allen, and Co., 1832), 141.

143 Ibid., 129.

144 Ibid., 306.

145 Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Faṣṣ al-khawātim fī-mā qīla fī-l-walā'im* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1987).

146 Arie Schippers, "Hebrew Andalusian and Arabic Poetry: Descriptions of Fruit in the Tradition of the 'Elegants' or 'zurafā'," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33, no. 2 (1988): 220.

147 Ibid., 222.

Fold each square firmly, and crimp at the edges—
With parsley and pepper they taste very nice.¹⁴⁸

9 Architecture

Onions and garlic bulbs were also represented in Islamic architecture. The origin of the onion domes so famous in Russian churches is said to have been influenced by Islamic architecture, especially in Samarqand.¹⁴⁹ Under the Timurids a bulbous dome was developed that became characteristic of Iranian architecture.¹⁵⁰ Bulbous domes feature a profile greater than a hemisphere, with the lower part being greater than the base. They are usually built of masonry or brick and are found in Islamic architecture especially in the Middle East and India, most famously at the Taj Mahal.¹⁵¹ They are used on many tombs built after the ninth/fifteenth century in many parts of the world. The great shrines in Mashhad, Qum, and Mahan are covered and adorned by glazed domes.¹⁵² Another example is the dome on Humayun's mausoleum, which weighs about twenty thousand tons.¹⁵³ The Mamluk period witnessed a new trend of building bulbous domes covered with geometric and arabesque motifs, which became common after the eighth/fourteenth century.¹⁵⁴ Samarra, for example, is the best example of this, with facades decorated with vertical niches and bulbous domes.¹⁵⁵

148 Şerife Hanim, A.L. Macfie, and F. Macfie, "A Turkish 'Yemek Destani' (Food Poem)," *Asian Folklore Studies* 51, no. 1 (1992): 1–2.

149 Sydney Schultze, *Culture and Customs of Russia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 142.

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153 Praduman K. Sharma, *Indo-Islamic Architecture: Delhi and Agra* (New Delhi: Winsome Books India, 2005), 57.

154 Lucien Golvin Hill and Derek Hill, *Islamic Architecture in North Africa: A Photographic Survey* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1976), 36.

155 *Ibid.*, 139.

10 Conclusion

As we have seen, through the ages, loved or hated, sanctioned or condemned, recommended or rejected, onions and garlic found their way not only into pots and onto tables but also into proverbs, anecdotes, and literature, as well as into the architecture of the Islamicate world. The diverse functions, uses, and often contradictory connotations associated with onions and garlic since ancient times tickle one's gastronomic imagination. All the subtleties of the theory of aesthetic variants are necessary to unveil the complexities of these bulbs, which have remarkable benefits, yet also stirred severe criticism and even disgust, even if their positive qualities seem to have outnumbered their negative ones. Perhaps along with brain food and comfort food they could be called discomfort food, because, as demonstrated, in many circles they are thought to be socially inadmissible.

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Beyond *Ḥalāl*

The Dos and Don'ts of Syrian Medieval Cookery in a Twelfth-Century Market Inspector Manual

Karen Moukheiber

1 *Ḥisba* and the Problem of Origins

Market inspector manuals known as *ḥisba* manuals constitute a rich and valuable source on the economic and social history of Islam and the Middle East. Their professed aim is the implementation of Islamic law in the marketplace. They provide valuable information regarding commerce, professions, and trades such as the cooking and selling of a variety of foodstuffs in the medieval Islamic city. They also present a detailed description of the nature and duties of the state official called the *muḥtasib*.¹ The latter was appointed to the office of *ḥisba*, from which he derived his title. The office of *ḥisba* and the *muḥtasib* were based on the Qur'anic injunction of *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahī 'an al-munkar*, often translated as commanding right and forbidding wrong. The Qur'anic injunction was generally understood as the religious duty of every Muslim to command right and forbid wrong.

The origin of the public or state office of *ḥisba* is often presented as obscure.² The basing of the office of *ḥisba* on the Qur'anic injunction of commanding right and forbidding wrong seems to have been preceded by a linguistic association between the term *ḥisba* and the Qur'anic injunction. The term *ḥisba*, however, is not a Qur'anic one. Historians seem to agree that by the early Abbasid period the term *ḥisba* was generally used in reference to the duty of commanding right and forbidding wrong.³ The choice of the term seems to have been derived from the etymological root of the verb *iḥtasaba*,⁴ meaning doing something for God's sake without seeking any material or personal benefit. In qualifying the purpose of the *muḥtasib*'s actions, al-Shayzarī, the author

1 Walter Behrnauer, "Mémoire sur les institutions de police chez les Arabes, les Persans et les Turcs," *Journal Asiatique* 15 (1860): 460–503; Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes, "Sur quelques ouvrages de *Ḥisba*," *Journal Asiatique* 230 (1938): 449–457; Maya Shatzmiller, "Labour in the Medieval Islamic World," in *Islamic History and Civilization Studies and Texts*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 4: 71–74.

2 Claude Cahen and M. Talbi, "*Ḥisba*," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 304.

3 Ibid.

4 Émile Tyan, *Histoire de l'Organization Judiciaire en Pays d'Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 618.

of earliest extant manual of *ḥisba* from the Islamic east, states that “the *muḥtasib* must seek through his words and deeds to obtain the approval of God Most High and His gratification. His intentions should be honest, unblemished in his innermost thoughts by dissimulation and hypocrisy.”⁵ Historians also agree that it was during the Abbasid period, under the caliphate of al-Maʿmūn (r. 198–218/813–833) that the public office of *ḥisba* was instituted. It led to the transformation of *ʿāmil al-sūq* or *ṣāhib al-sūq*, the old market inspector of the Medinan and Umayyad periods, into the official *muḥtasib* of Abbasid times.⁶

Some of the secondary literature points to the many similarities between the duties of the *muḥtasib* and those of various pre-Islamic Greco-Roman urban officials, such as the *agoranomos*, the *astynomos*, the *aedile*, and the *logiste*.⁷ They generally present the *muḥtasib* as emanating from a superficial Islamization of one or many of these pre-Islamic officials.⁸ Patricia Crone points, on the basis of linguistic similarity, to the possibility of the Jewish *hashban* or market inspector as an antecedent to the *muḥtasib*.⁹ She states that “the *muḥtasib* tells us more about the relationship between the Arab conquerors and Judaism than it does about that between Greek, Roman, and Islamic law.”¹⁰ Others take the opposite view and stress the purely Islamic character of *ḥisba*. This tendency is especially found among modern and classical Arab historians who tend to reject any foreign influence especially in matters related to law.¹¹ The importance of the issue of antecedents is not only relevant to the origins of the office of *ḥisba*; it also leads to the question of sources used by manuals of *ḥisba* in describing the various duties of the *muḥtasib*, especially the ones that had an inherent urban and secular character. Many historians point to pre-Islamic treatises, such as the Byzantine *Book of the Prefect*, as possible sources that could have been used for some of the issues addressed by manuals of *ḥisba*.¹²

5 Abdul Raḥmān bin Nāṣir al-Shayzarī, *Nihāyat al-rutba fī ṭalab al-ḥisba*, ed. al-Bāz al-ʿArīnī (Cairo: n.p., 1948), 7.

6 Ronald Paul Buckley, “The *Muḥtasib*,” *Arabica* 39 (1992): 63.

7 These terms refer respectively to the Greek market inspector, an official responsible for the maintenance of streets and public buildings outside the agora; the Latin equivalent of Greek *agoranomos*; and the Byzantine official in charge of the municipal treasury and the execution of public works.

8 Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 54.

9 Patricia Crone, *Roman, Provincial, and Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 107. Crone seems to base the relationship in meaning on the assumption that *muḥtasib* means “something like calculator” (107).

10 *Ibid.*, 108.

11 Tyan, *Histoire de l'Organisation*, 17–18.

12 Jean Sauvaget, “Comptes Rendus sur al-Shayzarī *Nihāyat al-Rutba fī Ṭalab al-Ḥisba*,” *Journal Asiatique* 236 (1948): 310.

A more synthetic approach was undertaken by Benjamin Foster, who emphasized common points between the *muhtasib* and pre-Islamic officials but also pointed to the Islamic characteristics inherent to the office of *hisba*. He concludes his article by saying, “*Hisba* and *agoranomia* are two words applied to administrative offices concerned with a set of functions, which, if they were symbolized on a Venn diagram, would in many cases be the same.”¹³ R.P. Buckley takes the point even further: “It does not seem necessary to search for any outside influence; there is no good reason why the *‘amil al-sūq* and the later *muhtasib* should not have arisen spontaneously as a response to internal requirements and needing no foreign precursor for their appearance.”¹⁴ He adds, however, that in contrast to the later *muhtasib*, *‘amil al-sūq* had no religious duties. He thus suggests “that the very fact of renaming the official as *muhtasib* was intended to indicate a change in function and in spirit—an Islamizing of the post.”¹⁵

The arguments may be summed up in the following way: It is quite clear that the *muhtasib* and previous city officials held many similar responsibilities. The disagreement is about whether the *muhtasib* resulted from a conscious adoption of foreign parameters to which Islamic elements were added or whether he was primarily the result of developments from within the Muslim polity. The other point of contention, even among those who would tend to support the second hypothesis, is the degree to which the early market inspector, or *ṣāhib al-sūq*, of Medina up to Umayyad times had a religious function. The view seems to be that the religious character of the state office of *hisba* resulted from adding religious duties to the previously secular responsibilities of the old market inspector. This addition is described as resulting from an Islamization of the position under the Abbasids. Whatever the position adopted, there hasn’t been a clear attempt to understand how the Qur’anic injunction came to be associated with the office of *hisba* and the *muhtasib* granting them their Islamic character.

13 Benjamin Foster, “*Agoranomos and Muhtasib*,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 13 (1970): 144.

14 Buckley, “*Muhtasib*,” 63.

15 Ibid.

2 Commanding Right, Forbidding Wrong, and the Office of *Ḥisba*

The term *ḥisba* refers to two different things that share the important common ground of commanding right and prohibiting wrong.¹⁶ On the one hand, it refers to what is believed to be the divinely imposed duty of every Muslim to perform the Qur'anic injunction.¹⁷ Any individual enacting the duty is called a *muḥtasib*. As such it becomes the prerogative of the individual or the group and has the potential of holding public authority in check. On the other hand, it stands for a specific public office of the state held by a state officer who is also called the *muḥtasib*. As such, the duty of *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahī 'an al-munkar* is appropriated and performed by the representative of the ruler or the state. While claiming to serve, protect, and preserve the public interest or the common good, it carries with it the potential of inhibiting the individual's right to that duty. Thus, the Qur'anic injunction engaged the state and society in a struggle over the prerogative to perform the duty of commanding right and forbidding wrong. Conversely, the Qur'anic injunction engaged "civil society," led primarily by the religious scholars, and the state in a struggle over religious authority in terms of who was qualified to determine those rights and wrongs. Ira Lapidus takes this point further arguing that it inadvertently paved the way for the secularization of the Islamic state.¹⁸ Accordingly, the transformation of the market inspector into the *muḥtasib* of Abbasid times illustrates one aspect of the conflict over religious authority in matters of right and wrong between the ruler and society.¹⁹

From its early beginnings, the Qur'anic injunction of commanding right and forbidding wrong was tied to practices in the lives of rulers as well as in the lives of ordinary individuals and political groups.²⁰ It has an early history in Islamic

16 Tyan, *Histoire de l'Organization*, 618. Tyan points to a third meaning of the term that consists in a special judicial procedure, *'ala wajh al-ḥisba*, enabling any individual to bring to court a case where no personal interest is a stake but where the interest of a third person or a community is at risk.

17 Not all scholars shared that opinion. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and 'Abdallah ibn Shubruma (d. 144/761) presented the Qur'anic injunction as a *nāfila*, or supererogatory duty. Claude Gilliot, "La commanderie du bien et l'interdiction du mal," *Communio* 16 (1991): 135.

18 Ira Lapidus, "The Separation of State and Religion in the Development of Early Islamic Society," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 6 (1975): 363.

19 Buckley, "Muḥtasib," 62–63.

20 Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 470. Among the Sunnī caliphs, al-Manṣūr (r. 136–158/754–775) is described as engaging in the activity as part of his daily routine. Also, al-Muhtadī (r. 524–558/1130–1163) built a dome under which he would render justice,

historiography, Qur'anic exegesis, and *ḥadīth* collections. It eventually became the subject of a vast scholastic literature ranging from biographical dictionaries to extensive treatises on religion, morality, government, and individual rights.²¹ The office of *ḥisba* and the *muḥtasib* were also the subject of a vast literature. The former was addressed in general treatises discussing the nature and functions of the office. In a more direct and graphic manner, the actual duties of the *muḥtasib* were dealt with in what are called *ḥisba* manuals. It is through the study of this wide range of historical writings that historians have tried to progressively trace the evolution of the practice and theory of the Qur'anic injunction.

In a very successful attempt to render the Qur'anic injunction more palpable and relevant to modern minds, Michael Cook states that, whereas in the West “we have a clear conception to prevent others from doing things to their fellow humans which are outrageously wrong ... we lack a name for the duty, still less a general formulation of the situations to which it applies and the circumstances that dispense us from it. Islam, by contrast, provides both a name and a doctrine for a broad moral duty of this kind *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahī 'an al-munkar*.”²² The issue stated in modern terms would mostly come down to what we would do when as individuals, a society, or a government we come to witness a wrong. When do we intervene? How do we intervene? Furthermore, and here in a more Platonic vein, what do we consider the “good life” that our political and social orders are meant to sustain? It is when examined in the historical context of the formative period of the Muslim polity that of a society “in the making” consciously engaged in the “ordering” of its own polity that the theory and practice of the Qur'anic injunction take on their full significance.

In that same period, the caliphate was undergoing some very important changes. During the early years of the Muslim polity, the Prophet and the first caliphs who followed him embodied and symbolized both the political and religious unity of the Muslim community. They acted as both the dispensers of justice and the keepers of the political order. With the tremendous extension of the geographical limits of the Muslim polity, a delegation of powers became unavoidable and necessary. Gradually, it was no longer possible for the

command right, and forbid wrong, such as banning liquor and singing girls. The *‘ulamā’* counted for a good number of these individuals. On political groups, see Patricia Crone, *God's Caliph* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 85. The Kharijites were one of the earliest groups to use the Qur'anic injunction as a rallying cry of protest against the ruling order.

21 Discussions and writings related to this duty are very much alive today in moderate and radical Islamic circles.

22 Cook, *Commanding Right*, xi.

caliph to assume the full judiciary and political leadership of his territory. It was also in this period that the religious authority of the emerging communities of scholars was gradually gaining in prominence with regard to the urban masses, especially in the urban centers where they lived. People increasingly turned to them for guidance and instruction in their daily duties, beliefs, and transactions as Muslims.²³

In a conscious effort to make their community more Islamic in character, the emerging community of religious scholars began rethinking and reshaping everyday activities in an effort to give them an Islamic mold.²⁴ Their writings constitute the beginning of Islamic jurisprudence. Among those very scholars there were many who in their various discussions and writings came to examine and practice the Qur'anic injunction of forbidding wrong and propound their views on what it was about. Their various interpretations of *ḥisba* were one of the distinguishing marks in the development of the different schools of Islamic law. They were also very conscious of their emerging role as the repository of religious knowledge and authority and of the faltering position of the caliphate in that regard. If the *'ulamā'*'s writings on commanding right and forbidding wrong did not always have the weight of positive law they did provide, nevertheless, for a moral framework or for the "manners" regulating intercommunal behavior as well as for interaction between the community and the ruling order.²⁵ They, thus, turned the Qur'anic injunction of commanding right and forbidding wrong into one of the "ordering" and forging principles of early Muslim society.²⁶ It aimed primarily at preserving as well as sustaining a certain understanding of what constitutes an Islamic way of life.

The gradual elaboration of the duty is best illustrated in the evolution of the understanding of the duty in Qur'anic exegesis. This evolution reflects not only a change in content over time but also the influence of time over content.

23 Ira Lapidus, "The Evolution of Muslim Urban Society," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15 (1973): 31.

24 Joseph Schacht, "Fiqh," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 888.

25 In an attempt to define the nature of Islamic law, Andrew Rippin states that beyond the purely legal contents, it includes "matters of behavior, what might be termed 'manners' as well as issues related to worship and ritual." Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, vol. 1, *The Formative Period* (London: Routledge, 1990), 74.

26 It is important to point out, however, that the Qur'anic injunction was not always targeted at the internal ordering of the Muslim polity. It was also used to regulate ties to the outside world in the moderate form of proselytizing or in the more subversive form it seems to have associated with *jihad*, or holy war. Michael Cook refers to the following saying attributed to 'Alī bin Abī Tālib (d. 40/661), the finest form of holy war is commanding right, in *Commanding Right*, 38.

In referring to the view put forth by the early Qurʾān commentator Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150/767), Cook states that in very early Qurʾānic exegesis, the Qurʾānic injunction was mainly understood as “enjoining belief in the unity of God and his Prophet,”²⁷ in other words an adoption of Islam and a rejection of polytheism. There is no serious attempt among early exegetes to go beyond the generality of the Qurʾānic verses. However, al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) later states that the Qurʾānic injunction refers to “*all* that God and His Prophet have commanded, and ... to *all* that they have forbidden.”²⁸ In the same vein, al-Shayzarī states:

I swear it upon my life that the basic rule or reference in *ḥisba* related matters is the purified *sharīʿa*. For all that the *sharīʿa* has forbidden is prohibited, and it is the *muḥtasib*’s duty to eliminate and to prohibit its doing; and all that the *sharīʿa* has permitted is allowed as is.²⁹

In addressing al-Ṭabarī’s more elaborate approach, Cook states that “as al-Ṭabarī clearly perceived, if the scope of the duty is restricted to enjoining belief in God and His Prophet, then it had nothing to do with reproving other Muslims from drinking, wenching, and making music.”³⁰ This elaboration, however, may also be seen in the light of Roy Mottahedeh’s description of Islam as a religion of orthopraxy as opposed to one of orthodoxy where “the five pillars are more things that one does as opposed to things that one believes in.”³¹ Thus, the evolution of the interpretation of Qurʾānic verses through time not only would reflect the narrow motives of specific schools or sects but also would illustrate the general evolution of a society. It reflects the shift from an attempt to differentiate and distance itself from what it is not to a more demanding and detailed understanding of what it strives to become. The elaboration of the duty of *ḥisba* not only reflects but also reflects upon the will to construct a distinctive Islamic cultural identity and more generally and Islamic communal way of life. Conversely, manuals of *ḥisba* and the *muḥtasib* aimed, in part, at shaping urban life, and more specifically urban markets, to grant them a distinctive Islamic mold. This distinctiveness was religious as well as profane in character.

27 Ibid., 22.

28 Ibid., 24.

29 Al-Shayzarī, *Nihāyat*, 118.

30 Ibid.

31 Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Muslim Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 21.

3 Al-Shayzarī's Manual of *Ḥisba*: Regulating the Food Trades

Following the fragmentation of the Abbasid period, the public office of *ḥisba* seemed to have been somewhat gradually abandoned and no longer held in very high esteem. Ashtor presents the Ayyubid's revival of the office of *ḥisba* along with al-Shayzarī's manual of *ḥisba* as part of the general movement of Sunnī revival. The *muḥtasib* helped the ruling dynasty to supervise the markets where it was believed that many of the traders and craftsmen held Shī'ī sympathies. Moreover, many of the market traders, being Christians, necessitated a closer supervision of the marketplace for fear of their collaboration with the Franks. Indeed, whenever Saladin conquered a city he would hasten to nominate a *muḥtasib* to supervise the markets. Not much is known of al-Shayzarī except that he practiced medicine—more significant, he held the offices of *qāḍī* and *muḥtasib* in addition to serving as a secretary of Saladin.³²

The distinctive character of al-Shayzarī's manual resides mainly in its formal organization into forty chapters and in the degree of elaboration of each chapter. It is also the oldest extant manual of *ḥisba* from the Islamic East and more specifically from Syria. Out of the forty chapters, fourteen are dedicated to the selling and production of food. The contents of manuals of *ḥisba* in general and of al-Shayzarī's in particular, may be divided into three main categories with many overlapping areas. They fall under the three heads into which al-Mawardī divides the duties of the office of *ḥisba*: "It may concern what is due to God, or what is due to mankind, or it may partake at both."³³ They are addressed with varying degrees of emphasis in different manuals of *ḥisba*. The first heading is primarily religious and moral in character and deals with what is due to God. It focuses on the implementation of the Friday prayer, the supervision of mosques, and proper social behavior, such as the segregation of men and women. The second heading engages in more legal and administrative issues and deals with what concerns God and mankind. It is in this category that one finds a description of different types of commercial transactions as described by the *sharī'a*, as well as food-related regulations based on Islamic law such as the legal way of slaughtering animals. The third and last heading deals with worldly affairs or what is due to mankind. It is concerned with the description of the various professions or trades found in the marketplace.

It is in this last category, of matters beyond the strictly legal or moral order, that manuals of *ḥisba* derive their original character and that al-Shayzarī's man-

32 Gaudefroy-Demombynes, "Sur quelques ouvrages," 453.

33 Amedroz, "*Ḥisba* Jurisdiction," 80.

ual becomes a rich source of historical information on the dos and don'ts of medieval Syrian Islamic cookery. A close reading of the manual demonstrates that the regulations of the food trades were shaped, on the one hand, by a genuine interest in ensuring the welfare of the people in terms of zoning, architectural regulations, the availability of basic food staples, hygiene, and health, and on the other hand, by a will to provide gustatory, olfactory, and visual pleasures.

The food trades of the marketplace described in al-Shayzarī's manual may be grouped into three main categories. The first one pertains to the trades associated with selling cereals and baking bread, such as the grain and flour merchants (*al-ḥubūbiyyīn wa-l-daqqāqīn*), and the bakers (*al-khabbāzīn*). The second category includes the trades involved with the selling or cooking of meat, fish, or poultry, such as the slaughterers and the butchers (*al-jazzārīn wa-l-qaṣṣābīn*), the sheep roasters (*al-shawwāyīn*), the sellers of sheep heads (*al-rawwāsīn*), the fish fryers (*qallā'ī al-samak*), the makers of *harīsa* (*al-harrāssīn*), and the makers of sausages (*al-naqāniqīyyīn*). The third category concerns the baking of sweets. It includes the makers of confectionary (*al-ḥalwāniyyīn*) as well as the makers of *zalābiyya*. The oven owners (*al-farrānīn*) belonged to the first and second category, since people could bring them their own flour to bake their bread or their fish to have it grilled. As for the grocers (*al-sammānīn*), they form a group of their own, since they sold a variety of goods that belonged to none of the already-mentioned categories. They sold mainly dried fruits such as dates and raisins; spices such as turmeric, caraway, and cumin; oils such as sesame oil; various types of cheeses; molasses (*dibs*); and dyes such as *henna*.

4 Urbanism and Food Production

Before addressing the dos and don'ts of the selling and cooking of various foods, it is important to gain an overall impression of how decisions regarding the location and architectural features of the shops belonging to the food trades were shaped by a genuine concern for the people's welfare.

As it is still the case in traditional markets (*sūqs*) today, the people of each trade were allocated a specific section or *sūq* of their own. Al-Shayzarī explains that this was more convenient to the customer and more lucrative to the tradesmen.³⁴ The allocation of these various *sūqs* was determined, in part, by the specifics of each trade. Since baking and frying required the use of wood, the

34 Al-Shayzarī, *Nihāyat*, 11.

muḥtasib was asked to move the shops of the cooks away from those of the makers of perfume and of the drapers, for lack of compatibility.³⁵ As for the oven owners, the *muḥtasib* had to ensure that they were located not only in the market but also on the roads on the outskirts of the town because of their public utility and the great need that people have for them.³⁶ Similarly, the grocery shops or “convenient stores” were found not only within the *sūqs* but also in the neighborhoods and on the roads situated on the outskirts of the market.³⁷ Finally, the sausage makers needed to be placed in the vicinity of the *muḥtasib*’s booth. The frauds of their trade being so numerous, they required constant supervision.³⁸

The streets of medieval markets were not paved, and consequently sidewalks forming roofed passageways were found on both sides of the main thoroughfares for people to walk on, especially in wintertime. Shop owners were not allowed to set their benches onto the sidewalks, so as not to obstruct the passage of passersby.³⁹ The same applied for any potential source of harm to pedestrians. The butchers were thus forbidden from displaying their meat outside their shops. They were required to keep it inside to prevent people’s clothing from sticking to it and getting spoiled.⁴⁰ A similar interest in people’s comfort informs the architectural design of some of the shops, namely those of the bakers. To let the ovens’ smoke out and prevent people from being harmed by it, the ceilings of the bakers’ shops had to be elevated, with large vents located at the higher end of the front wall. The bakers were finally required to keep their doors open.⁴¹

The concern for appropriate location and architecture was parallel to a clear awareness of the need to ensure the availability of basic food staples such as bread. The *muḥtasib* required the flour merchants to deliver daily a specific portion of flour to the bakers, who were in turn assigned a set quantity of bread to be also baked daily. These measures were intended to make the needed amount of bread available to city dwellers. They further sought to protect the country from any disruption of the peace provoked by the scarcity of bread.⁴²

35 Ibid., 12.

36 Ibid., 24.

37 Ibid., 60.

38 Ibid., 8.

39 Ibid., 11.

40 Ibid., 28.

41 Ibid., 22.

42 Ibid., 23.

5 Ensuring Hygiene and Health

Public welfare was not limited to issues of zoning, architecture, and food availability; it also addressed matters related to hygiene and health. The enforcement of sanitary measures ensuring proper hygiene in the daily production of food was part of the *muhtasib*'s daily routine. Flies, vermin, and dust, as well as human hair, breath, and mucus, were the main enemies that needed to be prevented, eradicated, or contained at all times. A fly whisk, salt, and very hot water were the basic equipment needed for proper hygiene. The cooks were required to use boiling water for cleaning their utensils such as pots and pans. In the absence of a refrigeration system, the propensity for meat to rot and produce vermin was a constant concern running through all the cooking trades for which meat was a fundamental ingredient: "The *muhtasib* ordered the makers of the *harīsa* to wash the pots they used for cooking fat, clean them and salt them to prevent worms from breeding and their smell and taste from turning rancid."⁴³ Grocers were asked to wash their hands and spoons, to keep their clothes clean, and to wipe their weights and measuring cups. They had to keep their merchandise in recipients such as clay or glass jars which could be closed to prevent contact with dust, flies, or vermin or in special baskets covered with a piece of fabric.⁴⁴

Attention to detail in matters of hygiene is best illustrated in the directives given to the bread makers. Al-Shayzari writes: "The kneader of dough shall wear a mask, for he might sneeze or talk and some of his saliva or nasal mucus might drip into the dough. He shall tie a white headband around his forehead to prevent sweat from dripping into the dough. He shall shave his arms to make sure that no hairs fall into the dough. He shall have a person with a fly whisk in his hand to keep the flies away at all times."⁴⁵

The concerns for hygiene and for health were intricately linked. However, good health requires more than just proper hygiene. Al-Shayzari's medical knowledge informs some of the regulations designed to protect the people's health. For example, cooks are asked not to place food in vessels made out of lead when still hot because physicians have warned that it is poisonous to do so.⁴⁶ They are also prohibited from cooking different types of meat together, because a person convalescing from sickness might suffer a relapse from eating a mixture of different types of meat.⁴⁷

43 Ibid., 37.

44 Ibid., 60.

45 Ibid., 22.

46 Ibid., 30–31.

47 Ibid., 34.

6 The Senses: Seeking Pleasure and Checking Frauds

The market was a place teeming with all kinds of smells and colors that might offend, appeal to, or soothe the senses. The regulations concerning cooking instructions reveal acutely developed olfactory, visual, and gustatory sensitivities that in turn inform us about a range of cultural affinities in matters related to smell, sight, and taste. These inclinations become important factors in setting rules for the attractive display of food. Finally, appeal to the senses is used for checking frauds as well as conformity to rules related to hygiene and health. Al-Shayzarī explicitly notes that none of the ways of adulterating food can be prevented from affecting its appearance and taste.⁴⁸

Gustatory inclinations related to both salty and sweet dishes guide the *muḥ-tasib*'s directives to the bakers, the cooks, and the pastry chefs. The excessive use of fat in cooking was evidently not appreciated. The *muḥtasib* was required to keep an eye on the cooks, to make sure they did not use too much fat and not enough meat.⁴⁹ In a similar vein, al-Shayzarī explains that people have a great dislike for semolina because it absorbs much more oil than fine flour does.⁵⁰ As for fish, it is best appreciated when fried in sesame oil.⁵¹ When it comes to pastries, sweet and savory was not a mixture that was appreciated at the time. Al-Shayzarī writes: "No salt shall be added to the *zalābiyya* dough because it is eaten with honey. One would feel nauseous if it were salted."⁵²

The need to preserve the purity of taste of specific kinds of food is often depicted. This meant that fraud consisted mainly in mixing different kinds of food. The purpose of the fraud was either to accentuate a certain flavor or to add weight to the merchandise to increase its price. The regulations related to the use of meat were thus mainly concerned with the separation of goat from sheep meat, suggesting a popular gustatory inclination not to mix two types of meat. The various kinds of meat that one finds are goat, sheep, and camel. Eyesight was an important tool in regulating meat display and preventing butchers from mixing different types of meat. In the butchers' shops, the *muḥtasib* required that the goat meat be stained with saffron to differentiate it from the rest. Goat tails were to be left hanging on the meat until the last piece sold. Goat fat is known for its whiteness and clear color, and sheep fat for

48 Ibid., 41.

49 Ibid., 24.

50 Ibid., 25.

51 Ibid., 33.

52 Ibid., 26.

its strong yellowness.⁵³ In instructing the sellers of sheep heads, the *muhtasib* requires that they “place the goat’s trotters in their mouths to differentiate them from the sheep so as not to confuse the inexperienced customer. The distinguishing mark of the sheep’s head is that the eye has a hole under it but there is nothing below the goat’s eyes. Also, the goat’s snout is small at its base unlike that of the sheep.”⁵⁴

Finally, people could bring their dough to the oven owners to have it baked or fetch their fish to have it baked. When people’s dough started piling up, the cook was required to mark each portion with a sign to differentiate it from the rest and prevent everybody’s bread from getting mixed up. The oven owners were also required to have two different ovens, one for baking the bread and the other for baking the fish.⁵⁵

A concern for the art of displaying food indicates a refined appreciation of visual pleasure. Whiteness and shine were considered attractive features. The flour merchants are enjoined to spray the wheat with a small quantity of water as it is being crushed. This, explains al-Shayzarī, gives the flour an appearance of whiteness and excellence.⁵⁶ Conversely, the grocers were forbidden from coating raisins with oil to clarify their color and improve their appearance by making them look shiny.⁵⁷ Sight, in conjunction with water, is also used to uncover adulterated food. When the *muhtasib* has doubts as to whether an animal was slain or found dead, he is to throw it in the water. If he sees the carcass sink, the animal has been slaughtered; if it doesn’t, the animal was found dead. The same operation is used to test the quality of eggs. Fresh eggs drop to the bottom of a glass of water, whereas rotten ones rise to the surface.⁵⁸

A refined sense of smell guides not only cooking instructions but also adherence to proper rules of hygiene. Al-Shayzarī explains that the preparation of sausages involved taste as much as smell: “The fat in which the sausages are fried should have a pleasant taste, a pleasant aroma, and be neither old nor rancid.”⁵⁹ Similarly, the fat used for the *harīsa* must be fresh and have a pleasant scent. Mastic and cinnamon should thus be mixed with it as it is being prepared.⁶⁰ The offensive smell of goat meat is pointed out as one of its dis-

53 Ibid., 28.

54 Ibid., 32.

55 Ibid., 24.

56 Ibid., 21.

57 Ibid., 58.

58 Ibid., 29.

59 Ibid., 39.

60 Ibid., 36.

tinguishing marks.⁶¹ “One can tell stale sheep heads by breaking off the small bones found within the area of the spine and smelling them. If the smell is foul, the head is old.”⁶² Finally, the fish fryers must be ordered every day to wash the large baskets and trays in which they carry the fish, for if they neglect to do so, they will diffuse a stench and get dirtier. They should also make sure that water is poured out of the vessels to avoid the forming of bad odors.⁶³ On a side note, unpleasant food smells are taken into account in directives given to the barber. He is instructed not to eat onion or garlic while at work to prevent his breath from provoking the discomfort of his prospective clients.⁶⁴

7 Conclusion

Like all manuals of *ḥisba*, Shayzarī’s manual primarily addressed the implementation of Islamic law in the urban markets of medieval Syria. Clearly, however, the religious nature of the office was not simply the result of a superficial Islamization that consisted in adding religious duties, such as supervision of the Friday prayer, to the previously secular duties of the old market inspector, or *ṣāhib al-sūq*. The transformation of the old Medinan and Umayyad market inspector into the *muḥtasib* of Abbasid times reflects a variation in degree as well as a difference in kind. It may be seen as stemming from an ongoing process to construct a communal and distinctive Islamic culture through, in part, common regulations of urban life in general and of the marketplace in particular. The Abbasid *muḥtasib* was a culmination of that process.

Manuals of *ḥisba* generally, and al-Shayzarī’s in particular, “Islamized” the marketplace not only through the implementation of Islamic law but also by granting legal and moral legitimacy to cultural matters such as food production that were neither legal nor moral in character. *Nihāyat al-rutba fī ṭalab al-ḥisba* allowed al-Shayzarī to give advice on the best flour to use when baking *zalābiyya*, or the tastiest seeds and spices to sprinkle on freshly baked bread to enhance its flavor and appearance. Clearly, neither of these issues was a point of contention in Islamic law; the very fact, however, of being mentioned in contingency with matters taken up by the *sharī’a* provided them with a certain degree of cultural legitimacy that they would lack otherwise. The chapters devoted by al-Shayzarī to the food trades reflect a refined sense of civility and concern

61 Ibid., 34.

62 Ibid., 32.

63 Ibid., 33.

64 Ibid., 88.

for public welfare in matters related to architecture, health, and hygiene. More specifically, the manual reveals many culinary affinities as well as a refined appreciation of the pleasures associated with taste, smell, and sight. *Nihāyat al-rutba fī ṭalab al-ḥisba* surely offers a rich historical testimony to the role of food as a cultural signifier.

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Molecular Halal

Producing, Debating, and Evading Halal Certification in South Africa

Shaheed Tayob

1 The Global Halal Industry and the Development of Molecular Halal

Over the past two decades the global visibility of halal certification has exploded. Estimates place the value of the market for halal goods and services at more than half a trillion dollars and growing.¹ Food producers and finance houses have become aware of the potential of this niche Muslim market. The reach and extent of the halal certification industry now means that US consumers have the option of purchasing halal-certified lamb chops produced in Australia, and Muslim pilgrims in Mecca regularly consume halal-certified Brazilian chicken at the famous Al Baik fast-food outlet. The growth of the halal food industry has followed closely on the heels of rapidly expanding global supply chains, as well as advances in food production technology.

However, halal certification has not merely entailed an expansion of halal on a global scale. Rather, the certification industry has developed a new discursive and material terrain through which the risks of “food technology” and “cross-contamination” have entered into the practice of halal. This has produced a reconfiguration of the manner in which halal is practiced and has afforded Muslims new opportunities for public consumption.² Importantly, the new conditions of halal practice, global supply chains, molecular concerns, and market forces have introduced new questions for halal certification organizations.

The certification industry aims to standardize halal in order to facilitate global trade. However, organizations comprise *‘ulama’* committees each tasked with the responsibility of producing fiqh-based solutions to the challenges presented by food technology and cross-contamination. Given regional and sectarian differences, the opinions (*fatwās*) of certification organizations on common issues are neither static nor homogeneous. This chapter looks at the

1 “Halal Market to Top \$3.7 Trillion by 2019,” *Gulf News*, <http://www.halalrc.org/images/Research%20Material/Presentations/overview%20of%20global%20halal%20market.pdf>.

2 Shaheed Tayob, “‘O you who believe, eat of the ṭayyibāt (pure and wholesome food) which we have provided you’: The Role of Risk and Expertise in Producing Certified Halal Consumption in South Africa,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 46, no. 1 (2016): 67–91.

differences, debates, and conflicts among halal certification organizations in South Africa to gain an understanding of the complexity, debate, and conflict underlying the industry's aim of standardization.

The developments in halal certification in South Africa are not unique to the region. Rather we may appreciate South Africa as an important laboratory for the development of halal certification. The shift from Apartheid spatial planning to a more inclusive consumer economy and the concomitant explosion of certification have offered a particularly dramatic arena for appreciating the changes in discourse and practice that have accompanied the commercialization and public consumption of halal. The recent interest by Arab countries to participate in the global halal industry points to the relevance of halal certification in the Middle East. Indeed, as the opportunities for global trade and travel continue to increase, halal practice will become increasingly relevant for understanding Muslim lived experience across the globe.

2 The Anthropology of Halal: Consumer Identities, Audit Cultures, and the Development of a Risk Discourse

The emerging phenomenon of halal certification has attracted increasing scholarly interest. Research on the contemporary consumption of halal in minority contexts has argued for halal consumption as an expression of national, ethnic, minority, and consumer identity.³ Most recently, Johan Fischer considered the interplay of Malay state organizations, scientific laboratories, Islamic organizations, and neoliberal "audit culture" in the regulation of a certified form of standardized, "global halal."⁴ In each of these analyses the practice of halal in a particular place and time is taken as paradigmatic. Fischer's analysis of halal certification in Malaysia does recognize the novelty of contem-

3 Karijn Bonne and Wim Verbeke, "Religious Values Informing Halal Meat Production and the Control and Delivery of Halal Credence Quality," *Agriculture and Human Values* 25 (2008): 35–47; Johan Fischer, *The Halal Frontier: Muslim Consumers in a Globalized Market* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Loong Wong, "Market Cultures, the Middle Classes and Islam: Consuming the Market?" *Consumption Markets & Culture* 10, no. 4 (2007): 451–480; Marts Boyd Gillette, "Children's Food and Islamic Dietary Restrictions in Xi'an," in *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader*, ed. J.L. Watson and M.L. Caldwell (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 106–121; Gabriele Marranci, "Defensive or Offensive Dining? Halal Dining Practices among Malay Muslim Singaporeans and Their Effects on Integration," *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 23 (2012): 84–100.

4 Johan Fischer, *Islam, Standards, and Technoscience: In Global Halal Zones* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

porary practice, yet appears to merely point to the stated aims of the industry. These studies do not provide insight into the contested nature of halal as a practice of Islam as a discursive tradition.⁵

The halal certification industry does indeed aim to standardize halal practice in order to facilitate global trade. The developing risk discourse that has introduced food technology and cross-contamination as considerations for the practice of halal seeks to establish molecular knowledge, expert intervention, and documentary evidence as central to halal practice.⁶ However, the development of halal certification continues to be a contested terrain. Different organizations across the globe rule on the specificities of halal practice according to region, sectarian affiliation, and local market demand. In many instances a particular organization's underlying approach to the legal technicalities of halal practice determines the possibility for trade. Not all halal certification organizations accept the expertise and documentary assertion of another. In practice, therefore, the direct comparison to the Strathern's "audit cultures" critique also requires caution.⁷ As we will see, halal certification does not entail "abstract indifference to the substance of performance."⁸ Unlike the global hegemony of ISO standards (International Organization for Standardization) there is no absolute agreement on halal quality.

Understanding the development of halal certification thus requires scrutiny of the procedures, mechanisms, and rulings that underlie the practice of halal. Different organizations with different theological orientations compete in the market for halal certification services. This essay focuses on the debate and dialogue between halal certification organizations in South Africa with regard to food technology and cross-contamination. Both areas of debate have been central to the expansion of the market for halal certification, yet both have little precedent. This makes these areas ripe for innovation and difference. Approaching the development of halal certification as a discursive tradition, I argue that the South African case study is paradigmatic of the emergence of halal certification globally.

5 Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Washington, DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986).

6 Tayob, "O you who believe."

7 Marilyn Strathern, "Introduction: New Accountabilities," in *Audit Cultures: Anthropological Studies in Accountability, Ethics and the Academy*, ed. Marilyn Strathern (London: Routledge, 2000), 1–18.

8 Michael Power, "Making Things Auditable," *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 21, no. 2 (1996): 302.

3 Halal Certification in South Africa: Sectarian Difference and Market Competition

The South African halal certification industry was founded in 1958, when the Western Cape Muslim Butchers Association (WMBA) approached the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) for theological backing to ensure that all meat supplied by the butchers was halal. The MJC had formed more than a decade earlier in efforts to overcome the divisive effect of individually influential imams who characterized the Sufi-inspired nature of religious authority in the Cape.⁹ It operated uncontested for more than twenty years until a conflict erupted with the butchers' association over the supply of halal meat to non-Muslim retailers. This case indicated a conflict of interest between the butchers and the *'ulama'* over the proper point of sale for halal meat, and coincided with the first certification contract for a nonmeat product in South Africa. Thus, the introduction of food technology in the practice of halal signaled a new set of risks and opportunities in the market for halal certification services.

The WMBA approached the Islamic Council of South Africa (ICSA) for theological backing. In that same year ICSA had acquired religious authority as a credible organization after the defection from the MJC of a prominent local imam and halal inspector, Shaykh Abu Bakr Najjar (d. 1992). ICSA began conducting certifying operations in 1984. Both ICSA and the MJC preside over a predominantly Malay-descent, Shafi'i community in the Cape. Occupationally the community comprises artisans, office clerks, and small traders. Both ICSA and the MJC conduct halal certification across the country.

After 1994, the end of apartheid offered an increase in freedom of movement for the previously disadvantaged South African Muslim community. The young state's policy of religious freedom encouraged the confident expression of Muslim identity in public.¹⁰ Neoliberal economic policies improved the economic position of the predominantly middle-class Muslim community and

9 Shamil Jeppie, "Leadership and Loyalties: The Imam of the Nineteenth-Century Colonial Cape Town, South Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26, no. 2 (1996): 140; Abdelkader Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa: The Muslim Youth Movement* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1995), 52.

10 Goolam Vahed and Shamil Jeppie, "Multiple Communities: Muslims in Post-Apartheid South Africa," in *The State of the Nation: South Africa, 2003–2004*, ed. John Daniel, Roger Southall, and Jessica Lutchman (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005), 252–286; Goolam Vahed, "Islam in the Public Sphere in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Prospects and Challenges," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 27 (2007): 116–149.

deregulated the meat industry, which complicated control over the source of slaughtered meat. These developments presented new risks and opportunities for the halal certification industry.

In 1995 the South African National Halal Authority (SANHA) was formed through a coalition of Barelvi and Deobandi *'ulama'* and butcher associations from the northern, Indian-dominated trader communities. SANHA has its head office in Durban. A split in the organization resulted in the formation of the Barelvi *'ulama'*-aligned National Independent Halal Trust (NIHT) in 2001, with its head office close to Johannesburg. The history of Deobandi-Barelvi tension clearly spilled over into competition over halal certification.¹¹ SANHA and the NIHT find most of their support from within the predominantly Indian-origin Muslim community in the north of the country. These historically trader communities make up a significant portion of the contemporary South African Muslim middle class and are on average more prosperous than that numerically superior slave-origin Cape Malay community.

SANHA has since usurped MJC as the largest halal certification organization in South Africa. The organization's success has depended on its media campaign that emphasizes the risks of food technology and cross-contamination to the contemporary practice of halal.¹² At present, the four authorities—MJC, ICOSA, SANHA, and NIHT—continue to compete for market share in the South African halal certification industry. Despite each organization's focus on the provision of halal certification services, there are significant similarities and differences between their approaches to the practice of halal. Each organization has an interest in reaping revenue from halal certification. However, rather than indifference to the substance of what constitutes halal, there is constant negotiation between organizations as they balance competitive interests with sectarian and ethical concerns.

11 "Uprooting, Rerooting: Culture, Religion and Community among Indentured Muslim Migrants in Colonial Natal, 1860–1911," *South African Historical Journal* 45 (2001): 191–222; "Contesting 'Orthodoxy': The Tablighi-Sunni Conflict among South African Muslims in the 1970s and 1980s," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 23, no. 2 (2003): 313–334.

12 Tayob, "O you who believe."

4 Ruling Halal: Debate, Conflict, and Market Demand

Despite the sectarian and regional differences noted earlier, all of the authorities interviewed applied what they termed a multi-*madhhab* approach to their rulings. They argued that their openness to following different schools of jurisprudence (*madhhab*, pl. *madhāhib*) suited the broad spectrum of believers they served. However, despite these claims, it was clear that each organization had a particular sectarian allegiance and history that was reflected in the affiliation of the ‘*ulama*’ members on the *fatwā* council. I conducted interviews with various individuals at each of the certification organizations, all of whom were trained ‘*ulama*’. Where possible I have included *fatwās* (legal opinions) of their positions. However, not all of the organizations were forthcoming in disclosing the details of their legal opinions. This reluctance was an indication of the contentious terrain of Islamic jurisprudence that necessarily clashed with the industry objective of standardization.

This chapter presents two case studies as examples of the halal industry approach to the issues of food technology and cross-contamination, including the debate over the use of gelatin from non-halal animals, as well as the practice of avoiding cross-contamination between halal and non-halal food items. For the former, I was able to obtain a detailed MJC *fatwā*. However, for cross-contamination, no *fatwā* existed. Cross-contamination was a certification industry standard that had been adopted from contemporary food safety protocols. It appealed to a visceral register of purity and pollution (*najis*) rather than the technicalities of a legal discourse. For each case, I assess the different organizational positions. The MJC and SANHA receive primary attention because of their dominant position in the halal certification industry in South Africa.

5 The Use of Gelatin from a Non-halal Source

Central to the development of a molecular basis for halal has been an increase in awareness regarding the use of food technology in nonmeat products. According to this view, enzymes, colorants, and flavorings from non-halal sources have the potential to render otherwise seemingly harmless food products impermissible. A major focus of halal and food technology has concerned the widespread use of gelatin in a variety of ordinary consumer items. A household version of gelatin is produced by boiling animal bones for a number of hours. The resulting broth, once cooled, sets into a jellylike substance. Over the past two centuries, industrial methods of gelatin production rendered it useful beyond

the preparation of elaborate meat dishes. The first patent for gelatin was submitted in 1754 in England for the manufacture of adhesives for woodwork. Since then, gelatin has been used in the manufacture of medicinal capsules, margarine, ice cream and yogurt, and, of course, jelly. Gelatin crystals are used as a stabilizer for both food and nonfood products.

In South Africa the issue of the halal status of gelatin first arose in the 1980s, when it came to the attention of Muslim communities that it was an ingredient in the manufacture of household margarine. Until then, gelatin products such as jelly were readily available in supermarkets and widely consumed in Muslim households without awareness of the halal status of the gelatin contained therein. When the question of margarine arose, the MJC was the only halal certification organization in South Africa, and most of the animal bones used in the manufacture of gelatin had been sourced from non-halal-slaughtered animals. Given the recent development of gelatin crystals as a separate product for use in the manufacture of nonmeat foods, there was no direct Islamic legal precedent upon which to draw. The MJC was tasked with investigating the use of gelatin from non-halal sources. In 1983 a *fatwā* was issued by an assigned committee of *'ulama'* (see Appendix). The ex-president of the MJC, Imam Yasin Harris, explained during an interview that two important factors in the decision included the widespread use of gelatin in processed foods and the absence of a viable alternative produced from halal-slaughtered animals.

The 1983 *fatwā* explained that gelatin is produced from the hides and bones of animals. Through a process including "heat, pressure and water," the animal products are produced into gelatin in its crystalized form. The uses of gelatin in a variety of food products and medicines were noted as "almost indispensable" in the "modern world." The production plant had been inspected, and it was confirmed that the production process was as expected. The production of gelatin did not use "dog, donkey or pig skins as a norm." Following the inspection of the plant and an understanding of the production process, a legal opinion was formed through consideration of *al-Istihāla*, which referred to a "change of essence" or metamorphosis that would render the product halal. A Hanafi principle, metamorphosis is premised on the condition that the transition from one state to another is irreversible and that there is a total change in form. Through *al-Istihāla* anything that changes form irreversibly is pure and permissible, no matter the halal status of the original product. According to the *fatwā*, gelatin crystals are clearly distinguishable from the skin and bones from which they are sourced. Additionally, the process of turning hides and bones into gelatin is irreversible. Accordingly, the production of gelatin constitutes a change of essence or a metamorphosis. Though not explicitly stated in the conclusion, the appeal to the indispens-

ability and widespread use of gelatin was an interpretation of the concept of common affliction, whereby items unavoidable for Muslims to come into contact with can be ruled permissible. The MJC is a Shafi'i organization that had, through the application of a Hanafi principle of *al-Istihāla* as well as consideration of common affliction, ruled upon the halal status of gelatin manufactured from non-halal sources. This included gelatin produced in South Africa and in Europe.

On the basis of this ruling, the MJC obtained the contract to certify Davis Gelatine, the supplier of 95 percent of South Africa's gelatin market. Importantly, the wording of the *fatwā* emphasized that pigs, dogs, and donkeys were not a "norm" in the production process. It did not rule out the possible inclusion of these animal products in gelatin production. In fact, given the large consumer demand for porcine products in Europe, it would be expected that the Belgian plants mentioned did in fact use pig skins and bones in the manufacturing process. However, through discussions with various MJC representatives, the permissibility of gelatin sourced from pigs was categorically rejected. Clearly, the application of *al-Istihāla* was a contentious issue. Although it was not explicitly stated, the possibility of porcine-derived gelatin was tolerated through the application of the concept of common affliction. The MJC ruling on gelatin further highlights the peculiar position of certification organizations that earn certification revenue even in cases where a decision on the halal status of a particular product has been reached.

Both minor actors in the South African halal certification industry, ICSA and the NIHT, agreed with the MJC on the permissibility of gelatin from non-halal sources. The Cape Town-based ICSA had not conducted its own investigation and accepted the MJC ruling. The Johannesburg-based Barelwi-aligned NIHT had undertaken its own investigation. Together with "professionals in the field," they ascertained that a complete transformation (*al-Istihāla*) did occur during the gelatin production process. The chief executive officer of NIHT explained that "where collagen is not soluble gelatin is soluble. Where hide is collagen, it's not translucent. Gelatin is!"¹³ In both the MJC *fatwā* and the NIHT response, the evidence for metamorphosis was established through an emphasis on the physical transformation of skin and bone into a crystalline substance. The NIHT response had, however, proceeded to a molecular consideration by recognizing that gelatin, as collagen, was already present in animal skin and bone. However, through the test of solubility and color, the NIHT ruled that metamorphosis had taken place and that gelatin from non-halal

13 Mowlana Hookay, interview, National Independent Halal Trust, *Lenasia*, 2010.

sources was in fact halal. Like the MJC, both the NIHT and ICOSA held contracts to certify products manufactured using Davis gelatin. They, too, foregrounded common affliction and metamorphosis in the pursuit of certification agreements.

SANHA is a Deobandi-aligned organization that has built its reputation on an uncompromising attitude. This was communicated across the country through an advertising campaign that was in large part directed against the oversights of the MJC, which at that point was the largest halal certification organization in the country. Although the SANHA approach is often criticized, it has also amassed a large following and usurped the MJC as the predominant certification organization in South Africa. The Hanafi-dominated *fatwā* council of SANHA had at first agreed with the MJC application of metamorphosis but later reneged. In an interview with the theological director of SANHA, Mowlana Navlakhi, the applicability of the MJC *fatwā* was challenged: “No, our view is that there isn’t this metamorphic change that occurs. So we also *then* adopted the view that if it is from a halal slaughtered animal it will be deemed acceptable. If not it would be *ḥarām*.”¹⁴

SANHA was unwilling to disclose the details of its *fatwā* on gelatin, which may have been related to the change in position and controversy that the turnaround had generated among Muslim consumers. Mowlana Navlakhi explained that the molecular composition of gelatin was a form of collagen. This same collagen was present in skins and hides before they were processed into gelatin. Because of this *molecular continuity*, the manufacture of gelatin was actually a process of *extraction* rather than metamorphosis. SANHA had thus ruled that there had been no “change of essence” on a molecular level. As a Hanafi organization, it did not deny the potential applicability of the legal principle of *al-Istihāla*. Rather, through an appeal to molecular continuity, it was deemed not applicable to the halal status of gelatin. SANHA introduced a molecular basis upon which a “change of essence” could be ascertained. In its ruling, the notion of essence had shifted from observable form to molecular structure.

Importantly, there are no gelatin manufacturers in South Africa that use solely halal-slaughtered animals. Rather, SANHA certified gelatin-manufacturing plants in Pakistan and encouraged South African food producers to use this imported gelatin. Its appeal to extraction and a molecular basis for halal coincided with developments in global food supply chains. The conditions of global trade that necessitated halal certification also provided SANHA with the solu-

14 Mowlana Navlakhi, interview, South African National Halal Trust, 2010.

tion to halal gelatin consumption. The availability and affordability of Pakistan-produced gelatin thus sidelined common affliction through the availability of a viable alternative.

Between the three dominant positions on the halal status of gelatin was the development of a molecular basis for halal. The early MJC ruling foregrounded common affliction and physical transformation with regard to the halal status of gelatin from non-halal-slaughtered animals. Two decades later, the NIHT considered the molecular composition of collagen, yet remained committed to surface-level changes in determining the applicability of metamorphosis. The SANHA position, in contrast, firmly established a notion of molecular halal through an appeal to continuity and extraction. Furthermore, given the recent developments in South Africa and around the globe, common affliction was easily sidelined through international trade. The controversy that SANHA generated through publishing its position on gelatin had market implications in that it produced a newfound awareness of the use of gelatin in a variety of common household products. Its criticism of the MJC position was an important route through which SANHA asserted itself as the primary halal certification organization in South Africa.

The debate over the permissibility of gelatin has brought to the fore an interplay of factors through which halal certification is established and contested. However, the SANHA position, though seemingly straightforward, is far from hegemonic. South African stores continue to stock halal-certified food products that contain gelatin from non-halal sources as well as those that use only halal-slaughtered animal products. Underlying the establishment of halal standards is significant debate and contestation. Unlike the contemporary hegemony of ISO standards in global manufacturing environments, the practice of halal belies any absolute center of authority. As a discursive tradition, the establishment of a molecular basis for halal is an evolving and contested terrain.

6 Cross-contamination

Cross-contamination has been central to the establishment of the halal certification industry around the world. Given developments in global trade and the desire to provide Muslims with opportunities for public consumption, the halal certification industry adopted and transformed cross-contamination from its roots in international food safety regulation standards. According to the website of the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, “cross-contamination is the transfer of harmful bacteria to food from other foods, cutting boards, uten-

sils, etc., if they are not handled properly.”¹⁵ The major risk, the site explains, emanates from the secretions of raw meats to enter into contact with already-cooked food. Preventing cross-contamination reduces the risk of foodborne illness. In the halal certification industry, cross-contamination shifts in meaning from health to purity. It refers to the possibility for halal and non-halal items to come into physical contact with each other at any point during the production, transport, preparation, and retail of food. Cross-contamination does not refer to particular products. Rather, it is an overriding principle of the halal certification industry aim to ensure the integrity of the recently established halal supply chain.

Established in the practice of halal, cross-contamination has emerged as a crucial rationale for maintaining separate production, supply, and retail facilities. In South Africa it has been the basis for SANHA certification demands that Muslim butchers also obtain certification. SANHA has argued that although all slaughter in South Africa is performed at large abattoirs, third parties provide delivery services. Although abattoirs specialize in particular animal products and are often entirely halal, delivery companies may use the same transport vehicles for the delivery of both halal and non-halal meat. There is no way to be certain, they argued, that the trucks and meat hooks used are entirely free of blood, meat, and fat residue from non-halal deliveries.

In South Africa the demand for Muslim butchers to obtain halal certification is a highly contested issue. It conflicts with a halal rule of thumb that renders all supply by a fellow Muslim halal. However, under changing conditions of trade and food production, cross-contamination appeals to a visceral register of purity and pollution and is therefore not entirely unprecedented nor rejected. Muslims often express aversion to physical contact or even proximity to alcohol and pork, as well as other impure items (*najāsāt*). Islamic legal texts on purity contain detailed prescriptions on the necessary purification after contact with *najāsāt*.¹⁶ Under Islamic dietary law all items considered *najis* are by definition not halal. However, there are many haram items, such as non-halal-slaughtered meat, that are not necessarily considered impure. With cross-contamination the prohibition and visceral aversion to physical contact with items considered impure is extended to non-halal meat. According to cross-contamination, non-halal meat holds the potential to contaminate halal-slaughtered meat. Similar

15 USDA, *Be Smart, Keep Foods Apart, Don't Cross-Contaminate*, 2013, https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/ffis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/be-smart-keep-foods-apart/CT_Index.

16 Janine M. Safran, “Rules of Purity and Confessional Boundaries: Maliki Debates about the Pollution of the Christian,” *History of Religions* 42, no. 3 (2003): 197–212.

to food technology concerns, cross-contamination entails a shift in the basis on which halal is established. It introduced invisible, molecular-level concerns into the determination of halal. Though lacking a solid legal foundation, cross-contamination is clearly an extension of the discursive tradition of halal and haram into new contexts.

In South Africa none of the halal certification authorities have produced a *fatwā* on cross-contamination. Each accepts it as a first principle of the halal certification industry and emphasizes its importance. Rather than legal technicalities, cross-contamination is illuminated through a series of procedures designed to mitigate the possibility of contact between halal and non-halal items. According to the MJC website, the following procedures should be followed to avoid cross-contamination:

- No Haram products are stored or transported together with Halal products. This rule applies equally to the applicant as well as to its suppliers.
- Other criteria, e.g., no possibility of cross-contamination, etc., depending on the nature of the business.¹⁷

The procedures clearly allow for discretion in determining which aspects of the food production, transport, and retail industry are risks to halal. This outline is unanimously accepted by all halal certification organizations in South Africa.

7 Orion Cold Storage: The Limits of Cross-contamination

In November 2011, a controversy emerged through an investigative journalism report broadcast on South African national television in which Orion Cold Storage, a large corporate importer of meat, was accused of fraudulently placing halal logos on non-halal products, including pork. The announcement of the possibility that Muslims had been exposed to pork consumption caused a major uproar among the Muslim community. The company had been an MJC client. However, the MJC denied responsibility for the fraudulent logos, as it had not certified the cold storage premises where both halal and non-halal items were stored and traded. The MJC came under criticism for apparent laxity in allowing a location of the Orion cold storage halal supply chain to remain unsupervised. It had seemingly contravened the guidelines that had been established to mitigate the risk of cross-contamination.

¹⁷ MJC, *Auditing Procedures*, 2011, http://www.mjc.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12&Itemid=33.

To ascertain a response from the MJC, I held a telephone interview with the then president of the MJC Halal Trust. He explained that the certification agreement with Orion Cold Storage had been in effect since 2002. The company was a registered importer of meat that traded in both halal and non-halal products. In the event that an import of halal meat was intended for supply to a South African retailer, the MJC was called in to verify the source of that meat and its halal status. If necessary, MJC sent a delegation overseas to verify that the slaughter methods were halal, that halal certification was in place, and that no unsuitable products were present on the foreign premises. After approving the source of the imported meat, the MJC was then able to certify certain consignments as halal. Certification was never given to cold storage facilities, since the company imported a variety of different meat products from different sources. I was told that Muslims did not have the capacity to establish large importing operations and were thus unable to compete with the pricing of the non-Muslim importers. Given that Orion supplied up to six tons of halal meat each month to the South African market, the MJC considered it indispensable for local demand. The MJC had thus taken the decision to offer Orion Cold Storage consignment-based certification.

Importantly, the MJC argued that since all meat was transported, stored, and delivered in cold storage at -22°C , there was in fact no risk for the mixing of fat and blood between halal and non-halal products. Additionally, all products were imported, stored, and sold in sealed packaging. It was thus assessed that there was no risk of cross-contamination in the cold storage environment and a certification agreement was reached. Similar to the *fatwā* on gelatin, the MJC decision appealed to the absence of an alternative given the inability of Muslim importers to facilitate such large transactions as well as the indispensability of meat imports for local halal demand. However, by circumventing cross-contamination in the freezer environment, it had essentially eliminated it as a concern for the import of meat.

Both SANHA and the NIHT were critical of the MJC position. They refused to certify meat importers despite awareness that transport and storage was maintained at subzero temperatures. The SANHA representative whom I interviewed specifically mentioned power outages as a scenario in which the MJC's reasoning would falter. This, he explained, was particularly pertinent given the frequent power shortages that South Africa was facing. Given this uncertainty, SANHA ruled that it was impossible to eliminate the risk of cross-contamination in a cold storage environment.

The SANHA response was clearly in dialogue with the MJC decision to offer consignment-based certification in the cold storage environment. Cross-contamination had entered into the discursive tradition of halal certification. How-

ever, in public debates and discussions, SANHA did not challenge the MJC on its position regarding cross-contamination. Rather, it reiterated the need for on-site inspection and rigorous application of halal certification standards. In response, the MJC was at a loss to explain how the transgression had taken place. The MJC quite rightly pointed out that fraud was always a possibility in any certification agreement and that the halal labels printed were not a duplication of their own certificates. The MJC was not called on or offered a chance to explain its position regarding cross-contamination in a freezer environment.

On the surface, therefore, it seemed that cross-contamination was a hegemonic standard of the halal certification industry regardless of context. However, from the MJC rationale for the certification contract as well as the SANHA response, it was clear that differences of opinion regarding the applicability of cross-contamination were prevalent. It was clear from the arguments presented from each side that the publication of the intricate details of difference and debate had the potential to undermine cross-contamination as the underlying principle of the halal certification industry. In public debates the contestants thus avoided engaging each other on the issue of cross-contamination. The MJC has since taken steps to improve its bureaucratic structure and public relations management. Clearly, despite the halal certification industry goal to standardize halal in order to facilitate trade, significant differences in practice persist.

8 Conclusion

Studies on halal certification have made comparisons to neoliberal audit culture. According to this analysis, certification aims to standardize halal in an increasingly global world. I take these arguments as representative of the stated aims of the halal certification industry. Organizations such as the World Halal Council seek to regulate a new form of molecular halal. They employ teams of *'ulama'*, food technologists, and biochemists in a bid to establish certainty over the substance of halal. However, contrary to the aims of the halal certification industry, the practice of halal as an aspect of a discursive tradition of Islamic law often defies agreement across regional and sectarian boundaries. Further, the contemporary development of the halal certification industry introduces a new element of competitive concern in the form of certification revenue. This chapter has focused on two key aspects of the halal certification industry in order to illuminate the significance of debate and difference that underlie the establishment of certification standards. I argue that rather

than a mere shift toward standardization is the prevalence of dialogue and contestation that has long characterized the discursive tradition of Islam in practice.

Food technology and cross-contamination are contemporary developments of halal practice that have been an important source of demand for halal certification services. These risks have also been at the forefront of the certification industry effort to further entrench the necessity of its own expert intervention. The recursive relationship between the certification industry, contemporary developments in food production and trade, and consumer demand is central to understanding the contemporary terrain of halal. However, as a discursive tradition the practice of halal is not confined to contemporary concerns. A history of textual production and a legacy of argumentation and its limits mean that even seemingly straightforward questions of permissibility may give rise to divergent positions. The use of non-halal-slaughtered animals in the production of gelatin and the potential for cross-contamination between halal and non-halal products indicate this potential for difference between authoritative positions. This essay has argued for the necessity of close attention to the interplay of market concerns, developments in food technology, and the intellectual labor involved in the establishment of halal certification. Despite industry efforts to work toward standardization, significant differences in opinion and practice persist. Understanding these differences is crucial for a nuanced analysis of the practice of Islam in the contemporary world.

Importantly, the practice of Islam as a discursive tradition is not confined to divergent positions of authority. Similar to differences between religious authorities are the ways in which individual Muslims navigate halal in their everyday lives. Lacking formal training, ordinary Muslims are nevertheless schooled through practice in the requirements of halal. Future research in the field should pay attention to the way in which individuals from different backgrounds and places engage in an innovative and creative process through which to forge an understanding and practice of halal under changing conditions.

Appendix: MJC *Fatwā* on the Permissibility of Gelatin

MUSLIM JUDICIAL COUNCIL:

CLARIFICATION OF CERTIFIED GELATINE AS A HALAAL INGREDIENT IN FOODS

Introduction

The MJC being an organization entrusted by the Muslim community with ensuring that food consumed is halaal has therefore thoroughly investigated the matter and can confidently say that whatever products is certified by the Muslim Judicial Council is halaal and in particular gelatine used in foods consumed by Muslims.

However, we wish to reassure the community that the use of gelatine if certified by the MJC is halaal.

The issue of the use of gelatine in food products has been dealt with in detail by the Muslim Judicial Council.

Part 1

GELATINE

What is Gelatine?

A colourless or slightly yellow, transparent, brittle protein formed by boiling the specially prepared skin, bones and connective tissue of animals.

Gelatine is manufactured from bovine hides (bones and skins of cattle and / or animals).

How is gelatine produced?

The process to manufacture gelatine as mentioned henceforth, are virtually applicable to all circumstances wherein gelatine is produced or, at least, the process we approve of:

Preparation of bovine skins:

Raw skins are soaked in lime water in order to remove all impurities, meat, blood, hair, etc. After having been soaked in lime baths for a considerable length of time, the skins then transform into a sort of neutral substance.

Preparation of bovine bones:

Bones are first cleaned and all meat and fatty substances are removed. The bones are then crushed into smaller pieces. These bone pieces are then soaked into hydrochloric acid to remove the potassium chloride. The bones are now softer and ready to be transformed into gelatine.

Gelatine:

In both cases, under the influence of heat, water, and pressure the product is changed into a liquid gelatine substance. Following various processes, this liquid is transformed into a solid spaghetti-like substance, which is finally dried and crushed into gelatine granules of various sizes. These processes are irreversible. In other words, the end product (the gelatine) cannot be reverted back into skins or bones.

Uses of Gelatine:

Gelatine is used in: foodstuffs, medicines, a supplementary source of protein, as a carrier material, as a bonding agent stabilizer and emulsifier; as an aid for frothing up flavour enhancement, common salt replacement, clearing of drinks, as a collagen source in dietetics, in soft and hard medicament medication capsules, also in photographic films, theatrical lighting, etc.

In this modern world of today gelatine has become an almost indispensable product with a wide range of uses, as indicated above.

Davis Gelatine now known as Gelita S.A. has a gelatine plant in Krugersdorp, Gauteng, and supplies 95% of South Africa's gelatine needs. The MJC Fatwa Committee and 13 thirteen Muftis and 'ulama from the Jami'atul 'Ulama of Transvaal have inspected the Davis Gelatine plant in Krugersdorp. It was found that its production of gelatine is in line with the above-mentioned production processes. They also **do not use dog, donkey, or pig skins as a norm**. They however, import skin as well. It is correct to say that the skins and bones, which are used to produce gelatine, are **from Halaal slaughtered sources as well as from other sources**.

The Islamic perspective on the aforementioned:

In the Shari'ah there is a process called "al Istihaalah," which means "change of essence." It is an irreversible process, whereby the original status of a product has been transformed completely into another status. The Shari'ah is clear on

this, that the transformed status of the product is “Taahir”—pure and clean—irrespective of whether the original status of the product was unclean and impure.

On the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas (r.a.), he reported that the Prophet (Pbuh) said: “If the skin (of an animal) has gone through the process of tanning, then it is pure and clean.” (Bukhari & Muslim).

Likewise, when raw material, like raw skins or bovine bones from Halaal or non-Halaal sources are transformed into a totally new product of gelatine, through a process as mentioned above, the end-product (gelatine) is then pure, clean, and Halaal. The Fatwa Committee of the MJC, on the basis of the aforementioned and other empirical research methods, has found that the gelatine of Davis Gelatine and that of the two Belgium plants, Gent and Angolene, are Halaal and fit for Muslim consumption.

Signed by: Maulana Yusuf Karaan

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PART 3

*Food, Gender, and the Body
in the Late Nineteenth and Early
Twentieth Centuries*



Food, Happiness, and the Egyptian Kitchen (1900–1952)

Anny Gaul

Among the most familiar figures in scholarship about gender in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Egypt are the male *efendī* (pl. *efendiyya*) and his female counterpart, the “new woman.” Lucie Ryzova refers to the *efendiyya* as Egypt’s “first self-consciously modern generation.”¹ She describes its members as part of an emergent middle class united less by a definitive level of material wealth than by a set of shared practices and experiences: rural-urban migration, a “modern” education, and an emergent print culture.² The *efendī*’s female counterpart, the Egyptian “new woman,” was also a middle-class figure; she was the product of both comparisons to Western women and an Egyptian discourse about gender norms around the turn of the twentieth century that was exemplified by Qāsim Amīn’s books *Tahrīr al-Mar’a* (The liberation of women, 1899) and *al-Mar’a al-Jadīda* (The new woman, 1900). Hoda Elsadda, acknowledging that the figure was often an ambiguous one, describes the new woman in general terms: “She was educated, made good use of her time, did not languish in laziness, and was not prey to superstition and irrational ideas. She was also an excellent wife and mother who perfected her household duties, creating an idyllic environment for her husband and children.”³

There is a rich academic literature on the ideologies of domesticity, modernity, and nationalism that informed these gendered figures and their rise to prominence in modern Egypt. Less common are accounts of the everyday lives and quotidian spaces through which these ideologies circulated. In a review essay discussing a series of recent studies addressing questions of gender and sexuality in modern Egypt, Marilyn Booth notes that such works “focus more

1 Lucie Ryzova, *The Age of the Efendiyya, Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4.

2 Ibid. See also Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870–1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Michael Eppel, “Note about the Term Effendiyya in the History of the Middle East,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41 (2009): 535–539.

3 Hoda Elsadda, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel: Egypt, 1892–2008* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012), 4.

on narratives from the political center than on the human subjects who performed or eluded them.”⁴

This chapter asks how we can better understand the specifics of how gendered ideologies were translated or evaded in everyday life: what kinds of affective attachments did they form, and what kinds of bodies and spaces interacted with them? Taking as an example modern domesticity in Egypt during the first half of the twentieth century, I read the prescriptive literature that outlined its principles alongside literary sources that represented its outcomes to produce a new reading of this discourse. To do so, I trace the role of food and the kitchen in the production of happiness within the family home. I argue that the sources reveal two different and often contradictory readings of the relationship between food and happiness, each connected to a distinct set of moral values, modes of feeling, and material spaces. By juxtaposing literary representations to the clear dictates of prescriptive literature, I suggest a new way of reading in and around discourses like modern domesticity while offering an interpretation of how that discourse took root in Egypt—an interpretation focused on the plurality, rather than the coherence, of its narratives.

1 Happiness: History of a Sensibility

In his article “What Is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and New,” Daniel Wickberg advocates for an approach to cultural history that focuses not on “objects of representation” so much as on “the terms of representation, the generalized values and modes of perception and feeling in which various objects could be conceived and represented.”⁵ Drawing on Lucien Febvre’s term, he refers to this latter mode of reading as a history of sensibilities. Thinking about history and culture in this way accounts not only for discourse and ideology but also for the linkages between “ontological commitments and pre-cognitive dispositions, moral values and categories of sense perception, ideas and emotions.”⁶ Applying this approach to domestic happiness in early twentieth-century Egypt enables us to look more closely at the human subjects that “performed or eluded” top-down narratives about gender and national-

4 Marilyn Booth, “Wayward Subjects and Negotiated Disciplines: Body Politics and the Boundaries of Egyptian Nationhood,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45 (2013): 355.

5 Daniel Wickberg, “What Is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and New,” *American Historical Review* 112 (2007): 662.

6 *Ibid.*, 669.

ism, to borrow once again from Booth.⁷ Thinking of domestic happiness as a sensibility in this manner allows us to ask not only “how people used culture for social and political ends,” as Wickberg puts it, but also about “the terms in which they experienced the world.”⁸

This chapter attempts to demonstrate such a reading by tracing the relationship between food and happiness in a way that takes into account not only prescriptive discourses on domestic life as they were conveyed in cookbooks, household management manuals, and the women’s press but also the sensory, moral, and material terms that underpinned, framed, or enabled those discourses. To do so, I turn to novels and memoirs contemporaneous to the prescriptive literature. This brings out perspectives on domestic happiness that include quotidian, intimate details and affective attachments, drawing out tensions and conflicts that may arise when domestic ideologies play out in practice. In turning to novels as sources, I follow the work of Lauren Berlant, who argues that “the aesthetic or formal rendition of affective experience,” such as that found in novels, “provides evidence of historical processes.”⁹ When traced as patterns, she argues, such evidence offers a “poetics, a theory-in-practice of how a world works.”¹⁰ By tracking these patterns through not only food but also food’s role in producing particular modes of happiness, my aim is to avoid taking happiness in Egypt for granted as either historically static or culturally coherent.

My reading of these sources in concert produces two different accounts of the relationship between food and happiness in early twentieth-century Egypt, each of which corresponds to distinct sets of moral values, modes of feeling, and materialities. These different accounts of happiness do not neatly map onto a chronological axis of “before and after”; they would have overlapped in time and space, sometimes coexisting within single life spans, bodies, families, and communities. This interpretation resists the tendency to read for historical ruptures and continuities, focusing more on capturing distinct modes of daily experience. As a reading of everyday life, my analysis echoes Erika Friedl’s work on gender in a rural Iranian village. She argues that “actual gender performances are so highly contextualized, variable, and overlapping, even in this small, relatively homogeneous community, that normative rules can be isolated only with so many exceptions that the ‘norm’ is rendered heuristically

7 Booth, “Wayward Subjects,” 355.

8 Wickberg, “What Is the History of Sensibilities?,” 676.

9 Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 16.

10 Ibid.

dubious.”¹¹ Friedl identifies varying spheres based on economic activities for which certain norms hold, determined by context, as a way to mediate between norms and practice. I suggest two different spheres, or “kitchens,” whose conceptual and material qualities require and produce different versions of domestic happiness.

2 Food and Happiness 1: The Kitchen That Fills the Belly with Life

In the first iteration of the relationship between food and happiness, happiness is linked to fertility, generosity, and plenty. The provenance, wholesomeness, and quantity of food, as well as its ability to make one feel full and physically “fill out,” are more important than the specifics of its preparation. In particular, the foods of the Egyptian countryside represent a key source of nourishment, health, and happiness. This version of happiness is associated less with productive labor than with reproductive labor and fertility, whether of the land or of women’s bodies.

2.1 *Country Kitchen, City Kitchen*

A 1908 article published in the women’s magazine *al-Jins al-laṭīf* (The gentle sex) argues that the woman who lives in the country is both happier and healthier than the city woman, and that her emotional and physical well-being are linked in large part to her diet.¹²

To those who argue that the rural woman (*al-qarawiyya*) eats only bread made from corn, and the city woman (*al-madaniyya*) eats baklava: the response is that the rural woman who eats items of simple taste lives longer and in better health; the city woman, on the other hand, constantly faces deadly illnesses. When pregnant, she looks weakened, and if she gives birth she appears sickly in a matter of days. On top of this she only rarely lives a long life.¹³

Country foods, in their simplicity, are cast as essential to both happiness and physical health, including during the crucial reproductive stage of women’s

11 Erika Friedl, “The Dynamics of Women’s Spheres of Action in Rural Iran,” in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 196.

12 “Al-Mar’a al-Miṣriyya bi-l-ams wa-l-yawm,” *al-Jins al-laṭīf* 3 (1908): 65–69. No author was credited with the article, a common practice in women’s magazines during this period.

13 *Ibid.*, 68.

lives. Female reproductive roles are echoed in the country woman's habit of raising small birds to feed her family, further evidence of her superior virtue.¹⁴

The author goes on to link culinary tastes with particular forms of knowledge. Condemning women's education as a feature of city life that leads women to become prideful and forget their duties to their family, the article praises a very different form of knowledge inherent to the rural woman, explaining that the rural woman is not concerned with taking pleasure in eating because she innately knows the harm that foods can cause. In addition to this privileged knowledge, the rural woman knows that the key to happiness and marital harmony lies in feeding her husband the same foods that graced the tables of the ancient Egyptians; the article thus links the beneficial qualities of country food, and their ability to produce a happy and wholesome life, to both a kind of landscape and to a specific local history.¹⁵

At first glance this article, with its clear condemnation of city life, might seem incongruous in a publication published in a city and with a readership of women who were likely overwhelmingly urban as well.¹⁶ *Al-Jins al-latīf* was one of the longer-running magazines of the women's press in Egypt, which emerged in the last decade of the nineteenth century and had grown to include nearly thirty periodicals by the 1919 revolution.¹⁷ According to Malaka Sa'd, its publisher, the magazine's goals included raising the level of the Egyptian woman to that of her Western counterpart and educating women about their duties to their families and to their nation.¹⁸ While largely the realm of an intellectual and social elite group of women, female readership of the periodical press in Egypt was constantly expanding during the early decades of the twentieth century, and was linked not only to women's literary production but also to their increased participation in civil society and educational institutions.¹⁹

The women's press did not discuss only matters of concern to women but also issues debated widely in the mainstream press; the discussion above might

14 Ibid., 65.

15 Ibid., 68.

16 Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 81–83. Baron points out that although the number of literate women in Egypt was small, the reach of women's periodicals would also have extended to listeners, given the common practice of reading aloud. For a nuanced account of forms of literacy in Egypt during this period, see Hoda A. Yousef, *Composing Egypt: Reading, Writing, and the Emergence of a Modern Nation, 1870–1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).

17 Baron, *Women's Awakening in Egypt*, 1, 78. The magazine ran for eighteen years, from 1908 to 1925.

18 "Aghrād inshā' al-majalla," *al-Jins al-latīf* 1 (1908): 5.

19 Baron, *Women's Awakening in Egypt*, 2.

therefore be read in the context of broader debates about Egyptian nationalism, authenticity, and modernity that formed the basis of the social and literary concerns of urban Egyptian society at the time it was published. Samah Selim describes how the peasant, or *fallāh*, came to occupy a central position in the urban Egyptian intellectual milieu, providing “the raw material for the new nationalist literary imagination while also figuring as an archetypal narrative other for the cosmopolitan, urban subject.”²⁰ She describes the lost language and culture of the Egyptian peasantry as a site of alienation and trauma for the cosmopolitan urban intellectuals of the era. Lucie Ryzova describes the country as a problematic space for the *efendī* class even more generally, representing a place of origin and a source of authentic roots, as well as a place to leave behind.²¹ As the article on country versus city women demonstrates, there is no reason we should presume this tension was limited to the concerns of the men of the *efendī* class; it clearly extended to their wives as well.

Yahyā Ḥaqqī’s novella *Qindīl Umm Hāshim* (The saint’s lamp), published in 1944 and set several decades earlier, offers insight into this contradiction, illustrating one example of how an urban *efendī* figure might address this conflicted stance toward rural life.²² The novel’s protagonist, Ismā’īl, leaves his family home in Cairo to study modern ophthalmology in Europe. Upon his return to Egypt, he struggles to reconcile his new modern scientific expertise with his community’s religious and healing practices, which he views as backward and superstitious. He finds his cousin Fāṭima, his intended fiancée, ignorant and unrefined; what is more, she is rapidly losing her eyesight, and Ismā’īl finds himself inexplicably unable to cure her. The central conflict of the novella is Ismā’īl’s struggle to reconcile his religious faith with his scientific knowledge, culminating in an epiphany that Ryzova describes as his realization that “only someone who is authentic can be truly modern.”²³ At last Ismā’īl is able to cure Fāṭima’s worsening blindness. But he does not only open her eyes in the literal sense; the *nahḍa* tropes of enlightenment and awakening also apply to their domestic situation, and he takes her as a bride after teaching her to eat, drink, and speak properly as well as to see.

The question of Ismā’īl’s relationship to the countryside, however, is left unaddressed until the novella’s final pages. Notably, he opens a clinic to serve not his peers, the refined citizens of Cairo, but rather the peasants who live in

20 Samah Selim, *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary in Egypt, 1880–1985* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2004), 5.

21 Ryzova, *Age of the Efendiyya*.

22 Yahyā Ḥaqqī, *Qindīl Umm Hāshim* (Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1994).

23 Ryzova, *Age of the Efendiyya*, 3.

the surrounding villages, on the margins of urban society, whom he charges very little for his services.²⁴ In gratitude, his patients present Ismāʿīl and his family with gifts of eggs, honey, ducks, and chickens. It is this particular confluence of circumstances that completes his state of domestic bliss: Fāṭima bears him eleven children, and Ismāʿīl lives out his days growing large (*ḍakhm al-juththa*), with a voracious appetite (*akūlan nahiman*), and as a well-loved member of the community who enjoys much laughter, joking, and happiness (*al-ḍaḥīk wa-l-muzāḥ wa-l-maraḥ*).²⁵

The novella's resolution takes into account the problems raised in the article in *al-Jins al-laṭīf* and offers a narrative resolution to them. The proper “kitchen” in this case is not a physical domestic space so much as a confluence of material factors (plentiful rural foodstuffs, proximity to the countryside and its people), moral values (generosity and benevolence), and modes of feeling (in this case, feeling full and growing round either from eating one's fill or through repeated pregnancies, with plenty and fertility as evidence of adequate nourishment). All of these factors add up to produce a specific version of the sensibility of domestic happiness.

2.2 *Bodies in, and, as Kitchens*

This iteration of happiness, and particularly its connections to health and notions of healthy eating, resonates with a 1922 article published in the magazine *Fatāt Miṣr al-fatāt*.²⁶ While magazines of the women's press from this era frequently take a prescriptive tone (particularly in their columns concerning *tadbīr al-manzil*, or household management, and related subjects), this magazine was specifically published in partnership with the Egyptian Ministry of Education and available at half price to students, according to its cover. The 1922 article, addressed to women who wish to fatten up (*li-man turīdu an tasmana*) decries fat women's preoccupation with becoming thinner, and vice versa.²⁷ The article goes on to emphasize the importance of “healthy fat” (*al-samn al-ṣiḥḥī*).²⁸ A body with this kind of fat is not excessively large, the author explains, but pleasantly filled out (*imtilā' al-jism*), and is stronger, healthier, and less prone to disease.²⁹ A diet based on “good nutrition” is prescribed for achieving this healthy balance; “good nutrition” in this context means any

24 Ḥaqqī, *Qindil Umm Hāshim*, 121.

25 *Ibid.*, 122.

26 “Li-man turīdu an tasmana,” *Fatāt Miṣr al-fatāt* 2 (1922): 127–129.

27 *Ibid.*, 127.

28 *Ibid.*, 129.

29 *Ibid.*, 127–129.

food containing nutritional material that increases one's body weight.³⁰ The article names eggs, milk, and nuts as examples; it also recommends that a woman should not think or occupy her mind too much, echoing the cautionary tone warning against city women's education in the 1908 article cited earlier.³¹

An exploration of how this prescriptive medical advice fits into masculine desire, women's roles, and domestic life can be found in Naguib Mahfouz's *Bayn al-qaṣrayn* (Palace walk), the first volume of the Cairo Trilogy.³² The home at the center of the novel was likely based on Mahfouz's own childhood home and elements of the story drawn from his own life experiences.³³ Set against the backdrop of World War I and the lead-up to the 1919 revolution, the novel describes the daily lives of the members of the 'Abd al-Jawād family. Al-Sayyed Aḥmad, the patriarch, has significant relationships with two women: Amīna, his wife, and Zubayda, a singer and entertainer. While the novel does not touch on the space of the countryside, it evokes other aspects of the conceptual "kitchen" outlined already: full and filled-out bodies, fertility, and the kitchen as a space defined somatically, and by embodied practice, rather than a stable, concrete physical place defined by its contents and nonhuman material attributes.

In the space of the family home, domestic time is regulated not by clocks or other timekeeping devices, but by the bodies and embodied practices of its women. Aḥmad's wife, Amīna, rises each day because of an inner desire, not a mechanized alarm.³⁴ The remaining family members are awoken in turn by the sound of bread being kneaded each morning in the oven room (*ḥujrat al-furn*). Tellingly, the room is not labeled as a kitchen per se, but is rather described adverbially, as a room with an oven that is used "as a kitchen" (*maṭbakhān*).³⁵ Referring to the kitchen in this way centers the practices of the women who work in it (both the members of their family and their longtime female servant), rather than its particular material qualities, in defining its status in the home. Sabry Hafez, describing the importance of the room, points out that it "is not only the internal clock of the house, the source of its nourishment," but also functions as "the testing and initiation ground for its women. It harbours

30 Ibid., 138.

31 Ibid. 139.

32 Najīb Maḥfūz, *Bayn al-qaṣrayn* (Cairo: Dar al-Shorouk, 2006).

33 Rasheed El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning*, Arabic Thought and Culture (London: Routledge, 1993), 67.

34 Maḥfūz, *Bayn al-qaṣrayn*, 5.

35 Ibid., 19.

special recipes for fattening birds and animals for domestic consumption and women for prospective suitors.”³⁶

Along with her four children, Amīna’s prowess in the kitchen is a key source of status and satisfaction for her; the only praise she receives from her husband is in response to a well-prepared meal.³⁷ And yet her relationship to food is not restricted to the intimate and the domestic: it is also situated in the historically specific context of a wartime economy, which affects food and commodity prices. Amīna feels most like an equal life partner (*sharik al-ḥayāt*) to her domineering husband late at night, when he comes home from carousing and discusses “important” matters with her, like the rising prices of *samna*, wheat, and cheese.³⁸ The phrase *sharik al-ḥayāt* is significant here, echoing the kind of reformist rhetoric invoked to describe the ideal modern Egyptian wife since at least the turn of the twentieth century in the writings of Qāsim Amīn and the authors of the women’s press. Amīna does not fit this new ideal in many ways, but it is clear that her world is not untouched by the broader cultural and economic changes that were shaping it, despite Aḥmad’s attempts to preserve his home amidst the tides of change. Amīna may not be the village woman described in *al-Jins al-latīf*, but she possesses many of her qualities: she raises poultry, arises early to complete her household duties, and perhaps most important, she has no need of modern learning to know where her marital and maternal duties lie.

While happiness in marriage for Amīna comes from her offspring and her culinary skills, Aḥmad’s connection to food and happiness might best be read through his relationship with his mistress, the entertainer Zubayda. Her desirability and attractiveness are registered through descriptions of her body fat with words that overlap semantically with food: *lahm* (meat), *shaḥm* (flesh), and *dahn* (fat or grease). She typifies the attractive version of fatness and fullness of body promoted in the *Fatāt Miṣr* article. The first, flirtatious interaction between Aḥmad and Zubayda is also framed by food, taking place in the space of Aḥmad’s store, which Zubayda visits with the stated intent of purchasing basic food commodities: coffee, rice, and sugar. When Aḥmed draws parallels between the kinds of benefits a man can provide and the commodities he sells (implying that Zubayda might be shopping for his company as much as for his goods), Zubayda retorts, asking whether he is talking about a man or

36 Sabry Hafez, “Food as a Semiotic Code in Arabic Literature,” in *A Taste of Thyme: Culinary Cultures of the Middle East*, ed. Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper (London: Tauris Parke, 2000), 265.

37 Maḥfūz, *Bayn al-qaṣrayn*, 20.

38 *Ibid.*, 16.

a kitchen. Aḥmad replies by saying, “If you look closely, you’ll see the resemblance between a man and a kitchen: they both fill the belly with life.”³⁹

In *Bayn al-qaṣrayn* we can discern versions of happiness and satisfaction associated with plentiful food and with food that produces particular body types, specifically an attractive version of fatness that echoes the prescriptive literature of women’s magazines. The kitchen is not described in terms of concrete spaces and material equipment so much as women’s practices and their bodies. Inside the home, the kitchen provides the family with nourishment and pleasure and is the source of attempts to fatten up a family’s daughters. In the context of the store, the kitchen’s associations with sexuality and fertility are made explicit through Aḥmad’s insinuation that both men and kitchens “fill the belly with life” in different but related ways.

3 Food and Happiness 2: Kitchen of Experts

The second account of the relationship between food and happiness is grounded in a very different sort of kitchen. Egyptian cookbooks and other prescriptive texts from the first half of the twentieth century describe the kitchen in detail as a concrete domestic space with specialized equipment and particular material qualities. At the heart of this kitchen is the new woman, the modern housewife who is an expert manager of her home. Her realm is governed by the values of efficiency and productivity; notions of stability are paramount and tied to feelings of dutifulness and patriotism. Prescriptive texts in particular link the skills exercised by the housewife in the space of the kitchen directly to the happiness of her family and the nation. In this formulation, the body is abstracted into an object of culinary and nutritional expertise, valued for its productive capacity.

This version of domesticity and the role of the housewife it prescribes was neither an Egyptian nor a Western construct, but a transnational one. Ann Laura Stoler points out that numerous aspects central to European categories of class and gender, of which modern domesticity formed a crucial part, “were selectively refashioned to create and maintain the social distinctions of empire.”⁴⁰ Similarly, Karen Tranberg Hansen argues that the very notion that domestic activities had a “civilizing function ... was a product of the colonial

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 40.

encounter.”⁴¹ While European understandings of domesticity were shaped by empire, they also traveled full circuits as domestic science was exported back throughout the world. The graduates of one of the most prominent domestic science training colleges in England, for example, were dispatched to teach domestic science in England and throughout the British Empire, including Palestine, South Africa, New Zealand—and Egypt.⁴² Some of these women held government posts, while others worked for missionary organizations. In Egypt as well as Lebanon, European and American missionary women promoted home economics lessons for girls alongside locally driven initiatives that highlighted the importance of preparing girls for domestic roles.⁴³

The new woman and her role in the Egyptian family have been well documented from a range of perspectives in the academic literature. Lisa Pollard, for example, has argued that starting in the late nineteenth century and culminating in the 1919 revolution, a particular kind of modernized, bourgeois household and the monogamous couple that inhabited it became central to articulations of Egyptian identity.⁴⁴ Household and nation were linked as national character came to be defined “in terms of domestic behavior.”⁴⁵ Mona Russell situates the emergence of the new woman in Egypt within the rise of a new middle class concerned with acquiring and maintaining a new form of ideal family home, run by a “mother-educator” figure who combined traditional values with modern efficiency.⁴⁶

In this section I locate the kitchen, and its role in producing a particular understanding of happiness, within the dominant discourses about the new woman and modern domesticity in Egypt. In doing so I follow the work of scholars who have used material culture as a way to ground these discourses in lived lives of their subjects. Nancy Reynolds, for example, examines the role of gendered consumption patterns in Egypt during the first half of the twen-

41 Karen Tranberg Hansen, ed., *African Encounters with Domesticity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 3.

42 University of Gloucestershire Archives (UGA), UA 421–424, Bulletin of the College, December 1930; Gloucestershire County Archives (GCA), K1372, Minutes and annual reports, 1929.

43 Ellen Fleischmann, “Lost in Translation: Home Economics and the Sidon Girls’ School of Lebanon, c. 1924–1932,” *Social Sciences and Missions* 23 (2010): 32–62. See also Beth Baron, *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014); and Julia Hauser, *German Religious Women in Late Ottoman Beirut: Competing Missions* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

44 Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing and Liberating Egypt, 1805–1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

45 *Ibid.*, 5.

46 Mona L. Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman: Consumerism, Education, and National Identity, 1863–1922* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3.

tieth century.⁴⁷ She argues that “the material structures of space and clothing offers a corrective to the more diffuse imaginaries of community formed by print capitalism and theorized by Benedict Anderson.”⁴⁸ Focusing on the interplay of the material culture of the home and the discursive formations of “print capitalism” brings to light both the ways that universalizing discourses played out in specific contexts and the limited and uneven saturation of its precepts. This section explores the material space of the kitchen as it fit into modernizing discourses about gender and domesticity in Egypt to produce an entirely different version of domestic happiness. In addition to the women’s press, a household management manual, and cookbooks, I draw on a novel and a memoir to illustrate how ideas related to modern domesticity might have intersected with individual life trajectories and existing social formations.

Malaka Sa’d, the publisher of *al-Jins al-laṭīf*, was also the author of a popular household management manual, *Rabbat al-dār* (Mistress of the house), published in 1915.⁴⁹ Its description of the role of the modern Egyptian woman offers a succinct account of this second formulation of food and happiness—and its moral, material, and affective components. The overarching principles of home management in the manual stem from home economics (*al-iqtiṣād al-manzili*), which Sa’d defines as “the science of our material life, which enables us to attain the most benefit through the least possible expenditure. It is the science upon which the good health and happiness (*al-hanā’ wa-l-sā’ada*) of the family and of society depend.”⁵⁰ In this formulation, health and happiness are underpinned by economy and efficiency, not by generosity and plenty.

Women, according to Sa’d, are responsible for domestic happiness and must make their homes a “heaven on earth”—in part so that their husbands will want to spend time at home rather than in undesirable spaces like bars and cafés.⁵¹ The kind of domestic space best equipped to keep husbands happy

47 Nancy Reynolds, *A City Consumed: Urban Commerce, the Cairo Fire, and The Politics of Decolonization in Egypt* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012). For examples of historical studies of Lebanon highlighting how changes in domestic spatial configurations and material household culture informed processes of middle-class formation, see Toufoul Abou-Hodeib, “Taste and Class in Late Ottoman Beirut,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011): 475–492; Toufoul Abou-Hodeib, “The Material Life of the Ottoman Middle Class,” *History Compass* 10 (2012): 584–595; Akram Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

48 Reynolds, *City Consumed*, 8.

49 Malaka Sa’d, *Rabbat al-dār* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Tawfīq, 1915).

50 *Ibid.*, 13.

51 *Ibid.*, 7–9.

has special material and spatial attributes, starting with the division of space according to function: in the ideal home, various rooms are designated for specific functions (e.g., bedrooms for sleeping, the kitchen for cooking, a dining room for eating).⁵² This is described as progress: an advancement in comparison to what Sa'd refers to as an older way of doing things, when people slept, ate, and worked in a single room.⁵³ The kitchen is singled out for extra attention; an entire chapter is devoted to its material properties, including extended descriptions of the proper cooking equipment and other physical requirements such as air circulation.⁵⁴ Finally, Sa'd links the strength or decline of a nation to the status of its women; a housewife's duties require a particular level of learning and expertise, and they are inscribed in a patriotic context.⁵⁵ In sum, this configuration of happiness is produced very differently than the previous one: it requires a particular concrete space; it is based on the values of economy, efficiency, and expertise; and it explicitly links the family's status to that of the nation.

3.1 *Kitchen of Economy*

Home economics, as Sa'd puts it, is a science to be learned; its principles do not stem from a woman's innate knowledge but consist of forms of expertise to be mastered. Along similar lines, one early Egyptian cookbook, published in the 1930s, states: "Many people think cooking is easy, and that any woman can do it, as long as she has some experience in a traditional kitchen ... but in fact, the opposite is true. Cooking and arranging the table are fine arts that require great effort and care; they are the foundation of a family's happiness."⁵⁶

Despite this rhetoric, the importance of economizing at home was likely not simply a matter of principle; in 1921, one woman's magazine published a sample household budget in which food accounts for 35 percent of total monthly expenditures, even in what is presumably a relatively well-off home (the budget includes line items for a domestic servant and the purchase of books).⁵⁷ Given the managerial role newly attributed to women, who were supposed to create and oversee budgets such as these, high food prices would suggest the importance of economic management of food resources for financial and practical reasons as well as ideological ones.

52 Ibid., 18–43.

53 Ibid., 18.

54 Ibid., 43–57.

55 Ibid., 5–7.

56 Basīma Zakī Ibrāhīm, *al-Ghidhā' wa-l-maṭbakh wa-l-mā'ida* (Cairo: Wadī' Abū Fādl, 1934).

57 "Mizāniyat al-manzil," *Fatāt Miṣr al-fatāt* 1 (1921): 336–337.

An illustration of the nature and stakes of these skills can be found in the memoirs of Hudā Shaʿrāwī, a leading women’s activist from an elite background.⁵⁸ Shaʿrāwī explains that she was traveling in Europe when World War I broke out, making it difficult for her to return home amid the ensuing chaos. While temporarily stuck waiting in Italy for passage back to Egypt, she recounts, she overheard several women contemplating which of their domestic skills would be most marketable, should they be forced to remain in Italy and work for a living. “As I listened to them,” Shaʿrāwī remembers, “I asked myself, what could I do if I were in that position? I realized I did not excel at cooking, nor was I good at sewing. I recognized that this was a lesson for me; afterwards, I put great effort into learning how to cook and sew.”⁵⁹ Her case highlights the extent to which the social and political fabric of Egypt was changing drastically even for a woman with an aristocratic background like Shaʿrāwī’s. Amid political instability, a war that led to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and new demands for national sovereignty, the skills of women were not merely a matter of ideology; they were practical needs in a shifting world.

3.2 *The Stable Kitchen*

In 1939, Fāṭima Fahmī, an employee of the Egyptian Ministry of Education, published a three-volume text titled *al-Taʿlīm al-manzilī* (Domestic education), designed as a textbook for girls’ education.⁶⁰ In her introduction, she notes that she had attended an international domestic science education conference in Rome in 1927, an indicator of the extent to which Egyptian domesticity was connected to broader trends in domestic science worldwide.⁶¹ In the volume concerning cooking, Fahmī explains that “good nutrition is the basis of health, and it is only possible through masterful cooking,” before she goes on to describe the particulars of the space where such cooking must happen.⁶² Among the kitchen’s most important qualities is its permanence; a sink and a stove, in particular, as stable items (*al-ashyāʾ al-thābita*), should be permanent fixtures of the room, and are described as a part of the kitchen’s very structure (*juzʾ min bināʾ al-maṭbakh*).⁶³ An even more famous Egyptian cookbook author, Naẓīra Niqūlā (more commonly known in Egypt as Abla Naẓīra)

58 Shaʿrāwī, *Mudhakkirāt Hudā Shaʿrāwī* (Beirut: Dar al-Tanwīr, 2012).

59 Ibid., 98.

60 Fāṭima Fahmī, *al-Taʿlīm al-manzilī: al-Ṭahī*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Wizārat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUmūmiyya, 1939), vol. 1.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid., 1:3.

63 Ibid.

describes the kitchen in similar terms in her tome *Uṣūl al-ṭahī*, co-written with Bahiya ʿUthmān in 1941.⁶⁴ Niqūlā and her co-author were also influenced by the international domestic science discourse of their time, having studied the subject in England.⁶⁵ Their description of the ideal kitchen also indicates that it should be a space apart within the home, its floor made of specific materials such as marble, tile, or cement that render it easy to clean and smooth.⁶⁶

These are exacting requirements that would not have been possible for many Egyptian families when these cookbooks were published in the 1930s and 1940s; but they were being integrated into new forms of the family dwelling that emerged around the same time—namely, the villa. According to Mohamed Elshahed, from the 1920s onward, “the most potent architectural manifestation of Egyptian bourgeois modernity was the private dwelling, or villa.”⁶⁷ The villa grew in popularity in the following decades; its distinguishing feature was not derived from any particular architectural style so much as the fact that it was a single family dwelling, reflecting the lifestyle ideal of the nuclear family.⁶⁸ Thus, the nuclear family home became a new norm in Egyptian middle-class society discursively as well as in the built environment. These new homes were designed with a new type of kitchen, designed not for old-fashioned wood- or coal-burning stoves but for new kitchen technologies and appliances.⁶⁹

The stability and permanence associated with this kind of dwelling and the kitchen that goes along with it translate into the desirability of a potential groom in Laṭīfa al-Zayyāt’s novel *al-Bāb al-maftūḥ* (The open door).⁷⁰ The novel is a coming-of-age story centered on Laylā, a middle-class woman attending government schools in the late 1940s, where she would have read the kinds of domestic science textbooks described here. She and her group of female friends are subjected to strict bourgeois norms about propriety and social behavior—exemplified by Laylā’s friend and cousin Jamīla, whose family needs her to marry well not only for social standing but also because they can no longer

64 Naẓīra Niqūlā and Bahiya ʿUthmān, *Uṣūl al-ṭahī al-naẓarī wa-l-ʿamalī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1941).

65 UGA UA 421–424, Bulletin of the College, December 1930; GCA K1372, Minutes and annual reports, 1929. School records note that two Egyptians, including Niqūlā, graduated in 1929 and were in the employ of the Egyptian government as of 1930.

66 Niqūlā and ʿUthmān, *Uṣūl al-ṭahī*, 1.

67 Mohamed Elshahed, “Revolutionary Modernism? Architecture and the Politics of Transition in Egypt 1936–1967” (PhD diss., New York University, 2015), 319.

68 *Ibid.*, 325.

69 *Ibid.*, 327.

70 Laṭīfa al-Zayyāt, *The Open Door*, trans. Marilyn Booth (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000).

live off her deceased father's pension. Her potential groom "was an old man, and he was vulgar, and he had a potbelly"; here, a round belly is associated with vulgarity and unattractiveness, in contrast to the large, happy, and well-loved Ismā'īl in *Qindīl Umm Hāshim*.⁷¹

Jamīla's intended does have other attractive qualities, however: he owns a villa and a car, and he has the means to furnish the entire marital home—including the kitchen, with "a Frigidaire and a gas stove."⁷² In the configuration of happiness inscribed in this representation of domestic science ideals, desirability in marriage can be translated in terms of the stable nature of a man's income, and of the kitchen he can provide, complete with the latest appliances and kitchen technology. The kitchen here is a concrete space, but it is also conceptually linked to the key values of stability and efficiency.

3.3 *Kitchen and Nation*

Finally, this account of the relationship between food and happiness is tied explicitly to the Egyptian nation. In the first iteration of happiness, described earlier in this chapter, this connection was articulated in terms of the Egyptian countryside and its physical land; here, however, connections are made to the more abstract and intellectual national renaissance, or *nahḍa*. Malaka Sa'd makes explicit reference to duties not only to home but also to homeland (*al-waṭan*).⁷³ And the foreword to Niqūlā and 'Uthmān's cookbook, written by a Ministry of Education official, observes that "every day, there is new evidence of Egyptian women's contributions to the intellectual renaissance (*nahḍa fikriyya*) of our time."⁷⁴ In other words, the housewife is responsible for the happiness of both her family and the nation.

In *al-Bāb al-maftūḥ*, however, al-Zayyāt gives us a very different account of this dynamic. Laylā's cousin Jamīla is miserable in her marriage, despite her villa and all its luxuries. Laylā soon learns that Jamīla is having an affair and has even attempted suicide in her despair.⁷⁵ Taking her friend's failed marriage as a warning sign, Laylā breaks her own respectable engagement to join the resistance against the British, effectively reversing the formula: rather than the housewife saving the nation, the nationalist cause saves Laylā from an unhappy domestic fate. It is only when she defies all the men in her life to fight that she finds love and happiness.

71 Ibid., 90.

72 Ibid., 91.

73 Sa'd, *Rabbat al-dār*, 7.

74 Niqūlā and 'Uthmān, *Uṣūl al-ṭahī*.

75 al-Zayyāt, *Open Door*, 301.

While the novel is a literary representation, and an allegorical one, it also aptly illustrates the critiques of historians who have argued that while modernizing discourses went hand in hand with seemingly liberatory reforms, such as the expansion of women's access to education, they also subjected women to new forms of control. Tying housewives' roles in producing food to particular kinds of spaces, run by women who were called on to exhibit particular forms of expertise for the sake of their families and the nation, was a process that also created adverse emotional and social consequences. In the context of a new conception of the family, linked to specific values and kinds of domestic labor and spaces, novels and memoirs can depict in detail the cracks in domesticity's ideological veneer.

4 Conclusion

These two often contrasting versions of the sensibility of happiness, grounded in different configurations of material space, moral values, and modes of feeling, remind us that affective categories like happiness should not be taken for granted as culturally coherent or historically static. Even within a somewhat narrow range of middle-class Egyptian experiences, no coherent narrative accounts for how the relationship between kitchens and happiness evolved over the first half of the twentieth century. What makes the Egyptian case unique is not only the terms by which domesticity was translated into Arabic and adapted into local contexts but also the alternate formulation of happiness described here, which in some ways refused or eluded aspects of the more familiar, dominant discourses surrounding gender and domesticity at the time. The female figures involved with the first iteration of domestic happiness contrast considerably with the image of the "modern" new woman. But how are we to understand these contrasting discourses in relation to each other?

It is crucial that the configuration of food and happiness linked to plenty, to fertility, and the body should not be cast as a remnant of a static status quo simply waiting to be displaced or disrupted by the new domesticity-inspired versions of happiness. To the contrary, the first configuration was firmly embedded in a set of historical processes linked to industrialization and modernization with roots in the previous century; these processes affected the gendered distribution of labor and the position of women in state and society more generally, leading to more sharply defined gendered roles in the home. The British occupation of Egypt from 1882, added to the economic hardships of World War I, would have given added significance to the ideal of plenty in the provi-

sion of food.⁷⁶ A significant body of literature illustrates the way that state-led projects initiated over the course of the nineteenth century subjected women to new forms of control as existing sources of support and power for women waned.⁷⁷ That is to say, an understanding of the sensibility of happiness as connected with plentiful, wholesome foods need not be read as unchanging or static “before” but rather as an alternate version of the configurations of modern domesticity more common in the state-centered sources and narratives so often at the heart of the writing of history. Note, for example, that one woman, Malaka Sa’d, was involved in producing aspects of both versions of happiness. The point is not to read her as a contradiction to be resolved, but to embrace the potential of multiple trajectories and sensibilities to exist in the same space.

In this vein, literary sources prove particularly useful in documenting and historicizing happiness as a sensibility in a way that includes dominant, prescriptive discourses but is not limited to them. Salwa Bakr has called Naguib Mahfouz “the historian of what traditional academic histories exclude”; hence, his rich account of a configuration of domestic happiness that was not prior or outside of, but adjacent to the kind of happiness associated with the new woman.⁷⁸ The aim of this essay, then, has been not only to argue for an account

76 Hanan Kholoussy, *For Better, for Worse: The Marriage Crisis That Made Modern Egypt* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 23–24. Kholoussy points to a long series of economic challenges that made it difficult in particular for middle-class men to afford marriage, including “foreign economic domination, the 1907 and 1921 economic crises, the early 1930s Great Depression, the early 1930s unemployment crisis, and periods of high inflationary prices but paltry government salaries.”

77 Fay narrates how elite women began to promote a nuclear family model in the face of new state institutions that siphoned power away from older social structures in which they had wielded power. In contrast, discussing mostly lower-class women, Tucker suggests that over the nineteenth century, state policies undermined the productive capabilities of individual families; industrialization and the resulting rise of waged labor in Egypt led to an increase in the gendered distribution of labor within many Egyptian families. Kozma, Abugideiri, and Fahmy have discussed the particular ways the state began to regulate women’s bodies during this period. Mary Ann Fay, “From Warrior-Grandeess to Domesticated Bourgeoisie: The Transformation of the Elite Egyptian Household into a Western-Style Nuclear Family,” in *Family History in the Middle East*, ed. Beshara Doumani, 77–97 (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003); Judith E. Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Liat Kozma, *Policing Egyptian Women: Sex, Law, and Medicine in Khedival Egypt* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011); Hibba Abugideiri, “The Scientisation of Culture: Colonial Medicine’s Construction of Egyptian Womanhood, 1893–1929,” *Gender & History* 16 (2004): 83–98; Khaled Fahmy, “Women, Medicine, and Power in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

78 Quoted in Shaden Tageldin, “Mahfouz’s Posts,” in *Approaches to Teaching the Works of*

of the history of a sensibility, happiness, in modern Egypt that is pluralistic and nuanced; it also aims to chart a new approach to reading the sources both new and familiar, to produce an account of Egyptian culture and history that can account for the complex and layered trajectories of Egyptians' everyday lives.

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Food, Body, Society

al-Shidyāq's Somatic Experience of Nineteenth-Century Communities

Christian Junge

Pleasures may be divided into six classes, to wit, food, drink, clothes, sex, scent and sound. Of these, the noblest and most consequential is food.

MUḤAMMAD IBN AL-ḤASAN AL-BAGHDĀDĪ (d. 1239)¹



The consumption of food is often experienced by the body as pleasure, but it may also provoke its opposite sensation: pain.² During the “transformation of the world” in the long nineteenth century, attitudes toward the consumption of food and its corporeal experience shifted in various regions and communities.³ This essay deals with al-Shidyāq’s (d. 1887) autofictional travelogue *al-Sāq ‘alā al-sāq* (*Leg over Leg*), published 1855 in Paris, that practices a “culinary mobility” in an accelerated period of time:⁴ its protagonist al-Fāriyāq moves between various Arab and European regions and communities and is “bodily exposed” to their way of life, and especially their food. Eating with Arab Catholic Monks in Mount Lebanon, with Western Protestant Missionaries in Malta, with Englishmen in Malta, with Victorians in England, and with his wife in Egypt, al-Fāriyāq comes in close physical contact with different life concepts and worldviews; the consumption of food is here a very intimate world contact.

1 Translated by A.J. Arberry, “A Baghdad Cookery-Book,” *Islamic Culture* 13 (1939): 32, quoted after G.J. van Gelder, *Of Dishes and Discourse: Classical Arabic Literary Representations of Food* (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 2000), 1.

2 For classical concepts of pleasure, see H. Shuraydi, *The Raven and the Falcon: Youth versus Old Age in Medieval Arabic Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 91–94.

3 So the title of J. Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2010), esp. 84–116. The long nineteenth century also includes transformation processes in Christian communities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On shifting attitudes, see *ibid.*, 300–314, 335–354.

4 *Ibid.*, 335–340. While Osterhammel mainly uses this term for the mobility of culinary systems, I use it here for the mobility between culinary systems.

In this work, the “taste of the long nineteenth century,” however, is more often disturbing than convenient. Instead of pleasure, the protagonist’s body more often feels pain because of various food etiquettes, cookery, or ingredients. The act of consumption and digestion often become for al-Fāriyāq a painful incorporation of the world into the corporeal self; by consuming and digesting food, the body somatically scrutinizes society and reveals its shortcomings. Relying on theories of the soma, that is, the subjective sensation of the lived body, I focus on the somatic experience of food. Eating in pleasure or pain, I argue, is a somatic negotiation between body and society.

1 Food for Body and Soma

Although it seems quite obvious that every human has a body, it is less obvious that every human *is* a body; this is the difference between the body as a material object formed by society and used by oneself and the body as lived subject experienced by oneself and shaping one’s own perception of the world.⁵ In *Thinking through the Body*, Richard Shusterman describes the widespread neglect of the lived body:

I both *am* body and *have* a body. In much of my experience, my body is simply the transparent source of perception or action, not an object of awareness. It is that *from which* and *through which* I perceive or manipulate the objects of the world on which I am focused, but I do not grasp it as an explicit, external object of consciousness, even if it is sometimes obscurely felt as a background condition of perception.⁶

Along with many previous thinkers, like Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Hermann Schmitz,⁷ Shusterman seeks to foreground the body’s background, to reveal “the crucial somatic dimension of the mind,”⁸ that is, how we think *through* the body. To do away with the classical mind-body dichotomy and to provide a more inclusive term than *body*, Shusterman uses the term *soma* “to designate the living, sensing, dynamic, perceptive, purposive body.”⁹

5 See R. Gugutzer, *Soziologie des Körpers* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2004), 146–155.

6 R. Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 28.

7 For Merleau-Ponty, see R. Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 49–76. For Schmitz, see H. Schmitz, *Der Leib* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 1–27.

8 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 47.

9 *Ibid.*

For his pragmatist perspective, the somatic background provides an often unnoticed and unreflective experience that nevertheless helps us better understand not only ourselves but also our surrounding world, and also facilitates appropriate reaction. Paying attention, for instance, to one's breathing rhythm or muscle tone may provide knowledge about the poor quality of the air or the high mental stress of a situation and thus may result in further reflections and actions, like opening a window to get fresh air or avoiding such stressful situations. This is also true for the somatic experience of pleasure and pain: "In fact, pain itself—a somatic consciousness that informs us of injury and prompts a search for remedy—provides clear evidence of the value of attention to one's somatic states and sensations."¹⁰ My chapter relies on Shusterman's conceptualization of somatic experience, ranging from unconscious sensations to conscious feeling, and combines it with Hermann Schmitz's "alphabet of somaticism" (*Alphabet der Leiblichkeit*), including the concurrence of tightening (*Engung*) and widening (*Weitung*) as basic categories of somatic experience.¹¹ Though often neglected in contemporary discussions on the soma,¹² Schmitz's categories offer, in my opinion, useful tools for analyzing somatic states and dynamics.

When it comes to food, the body and its mechanical techniques and societal disciplines have been widely discussed, as by such different thinkers as Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault. This may include eating manners, dietetic prescriptions, and biopolitical conceptions. From this perspective and with relevance to the Arab long nineteenth century, Bernard Heyberger has described the devout cultural model of modern Catholicism as emerging in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the importance of bodily control and ascetic prescriptions as embodied by the anorectic mystic Hindiyya 'Ujaymī (d. 1798).¹³ Moving the focus from the body as disciplined object to the soma as sensing subject, the somatic experience of consuming and digesting food is a way to experience the world. In the nineteenth century, it becomes, in the words of Tarek El-Ariss, a trial of Arab modernity. He analyzes al-Shidyāq's factual trav-

10 Ibid., 40.

11 H. Schmitz, *Leib und Gefühl: Materialien zu einer philosophischen Therapeutik* (Bielefeld: Edition Sirius, 2008), 44–45, my translation. See also Schmitz, *Der Leib*, 15–27.

12 See Gugutzer, *Soziologie des Körpers*, 146. Shusterman, for instance, does not deal with Schmitz, while the recent German reception seems to rediscover his "new phenomenology" (*Neue Phänomenologie*).

13 "Like other women aspiring to sanctity, Hindiyya chose, when still quite young, to use food to test her self-control and her entourage." B. Heyberger, *Hindiyya, Mystic and Criminal (1720–1798): A Political and Religious Crisis in Lebanon*, trans. R. Champion (Cambridge: James Clark, 2013), 22.

elogue *Kashf al-mukhabbā 'an funūn Ūrubbā* (Revealing the hidden in the arts of Europe), published 1867 in Tunis, where al-Shidyāq's relates his bodily experience with British food and civilization. Working in a small village, he is exposed to the low quality and dreadful taste of local food, so much so that once he even faints from its consumption. Reading the physical reaction toward food as an evaluation of its community, the somatic aversion to British food unveils fundamental shortcomings of British civilization:¹⁴ "Staging the body as the site of physical trials and signification, al-Shidyāq experiences modernity by trying it on like a piece of clothing, mocking it, and tasting and taking it in like a food item."¹⁵

While body and soma play an important role in the factual travelogue *Kashf*, as El-Ariss has shown, they play an even greater role in the autofictional travelogue *al-Sāq*, where self-reflection, self-duplication and self-mockery are intermingled. This essay traces in *al-Sāq* the numerous shades of somatic experience of food in different communities, analyzing what I want to call "somatic negotiation": the somatic experience triggers somatic processes of reaction, examination, evaluation, and interaction that may reveal and consider merits and demerits of a community. Although food plays a major role for the somatic experience, that experience is not restricted to food but can relate to other material goods (e.g., clothes) or immaterial products (e.g., language, music) of a community. In this regard, I trace the somatic experience of women and words along with food.

2 al-Shidyāq's *al-Sāq* and the Somatic Experience of Nineteenth-Century Communities

(Aḥmad) Fāris al-Shidyāq is an important and controversial figure of the Arab nineteenth century, a period often referred to as the *Nahḍa* (awakening). Working as teacher, translator, editor, lexicographer, journalist, and *homme de lettres* during his lifetime, he played an influential role in renewal and reform in many fields, although his positions were sometimes received as eccentric or downright provocative. Born around 1805/06 into a Maronite family in Mount Lebanon, he converted to Protestantism in the 1820s and to Islam in the late 1850s. In the early 1850s, he both translated the Bible and penned a biblical critique nearly at the same time, all while publishing in Paris in 1855 his lit-

14 T. El-Ariss, *Trials of Arab Modernity: Literary Affects and the New Political* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 67–83.

15 *Ibid.*, 67.

erary masterwork *al-Sāq*. In Istanbul, he founded the Arabic newspaper *al-Jawā'ib* (Tidings from afar) in 1861 and later the homonymous printing press that turned him into one of the most influential public intellectuals of his time, both admired and feared for his pointed and often polemical pen. Having a life in motion, he moved from Mount Lebanon to Egypt, Malta, Britain, France, Tunis, and Istanbul, often forth and back. Living most of his life outside the Arab world, his exilic, cosmopolitan experience provided him with an even more uncompromising and critical perspective on Arab and European societies and the Arabic language.¹⁶

A characteristic of the Arab Nahḍa was its heightened interest in Europe, as expressed in many travel accounts. In regard to contemporary travel writers from the Levant, As'ad Ya'qūb Khayyāt (d. unknown) published in London and in English *A Voice from Lebanon* (1847), including an account of England and France; and Salīm al-Bustrus (d. 1883) published in Beirut in 1856 *al-Nuzha al-shahiyya fi al-riḥla al-Salīmiyya* (The pleasant trip: On Salīm's journey), reflecting on France, England, Belgium, and Prussia.¹⁷ These accounts combine literary autobiography with didactic ethnography, resulting occasionally in cultural and societal criticism. In this manner, but with a more critical emphasis, al-Shidyāq published 1867 in Tunis his two factual travelogues, *al-Wāsiṭa ilā ma'rifat Mālṭa* (Mediation concerning Knowledge on Malta) on Malta and the already-mentioned *Kashf* on England and France. The autofictional *al-Sāq*, published in 1855 in Paris, follows the contemporary *riḥla* genre (travel account), but subverts it at the same time in the direction of an experimental and radical texture of literature, lexicography, and criticism.¹⁸

Its ambiguous title, *al-Sāq 'alā al-sāq fi mā huwa al-Fāriyāq aw ayyām wa-shuhūr wa-a'wām fi 'ajm al-'arab wa-a'jām*, can be translated as *Leg over Leg; or, The Turtle in the Tree—Concerning the Fāriyāq: What Manner of Creature Might He Be*; otherwise subtitled *Days, Months, and Years Spent in Critical Examination of the Arabs and Their Non-Arab Peers*.¹⁹ Gathering four books in one

16 For his life and works, see W. Hamarneh, "Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq," in *Essays in Literary Arabic Biography*, ed. R. Allen (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 3:317–328; for his exilic life, see El-Ariss, *Trials of Arab Modernity*, 83–87.

17 Khayyāt's travelogue remains surprisingly unstudied; for Bustrus's, see R. Wielandt, *Das Bild der Europäer in der modernen arabischen Erzähl- und Theaterliteratur* (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 1980), 98–104.

18 Ibid., 77–98; see also K. Rastegar, *Literary Modernity between the Middle East and Europe: Textual Transactions in Nineteenth-Century Arabic, English, and Persian Literatures* (London, Routledge, 2007), 101–125.

19 A.F. al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg*, trans. and ed. Humphrey Davies (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 1:3. All translations of this source are taken from Davies unless otherwise mentioned.

volume of more than seven hundred pages, the author has two main concerns, namely to present the arcane words of Classical Arabic and discuss the merits and demerits of women.²⁰ It basically narrates the story of al-Fāriyāq, who from the beginning to the mid-nineteenth century moves from Mount Lebanon to Malta, Egypt, England, and France. The protagonist, whose name is a compound of Fāris al-Shidyāq (hence al-Fāriyāq), is the author's younger autofictional alter ego and an ardent lover of words and women. He marries al-Fāriyāqiyya, a soon eloquent and self-reliant protofeminist, who figures as the protagonist's female alter ego. The narrator, in addition, frequently intrudes into the narrative and comments lengthily on the European and Arab nineteenth century and figures as the author's mature alter ego. This threefold narrative *dédoublement*, or self-duplication of the narrative figures, contributes to the text's polyphony as well as its critical irony and playful lexicography, among the latter long lists of arcane or synonymous words.²¹

Here I focus, in a modified translation of the subtitle, on the "critical examination of Arabs and non-Arabs" as relating to the somatic food experience of al-Fāriyāq. Moving through various regions and societies around the Mediterranean Sea and northwestern Europe, the protagonist often eschews classical dichotomies like Arab versus non-Arab, but rather deals with smaller, intersectional communities within nineteenth-century cultures and societies, like the Arab Catholic clergy in Mount Lebanon, Western Protestant missionaries and expatriate Englishmen in Malta. In addition, the protagonist pays particular attention to a somehow different form of community, namely the matrimonial partnership with his wife, providing an account of both travel and marriage. With its remarkable sensitivity to differences, *al-Sāq* seeks not only to provide information and meditation on these communities but also to instigate readers to try to *experience* them through their own senses and bodies: "You would do better to leave your prosperous city to see with your own *eyes* what you cannot see in your own country and *hear* with your own ears what you cannot hear there, to *experience* [*takhtabir*] how other people live and their customs and ways."²²

20 Ibid., 8, 14.

21 For a literary study, see, e.g., B. Hallaq, "al-Sāq 'alā al-Sāq de Ahmad Fāris al-Šidyāq: Un roman à la Rabelais," in *Histoire de la littérature arabe moderne*, ed. B. Hallaq and H. Toelle (Arles: Sindbad-Actes Sud, 2007), 1:232–260.

22 Al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg*, 4:13, my italics.

3 The Embodied Misfortune of al-Fāriyāq and His Somaesthetics

The protagonist is a notoriously “unlucky fellow.” As the narrator elaborates, al-Fāriyāq suffers not from separable but from inseparable bad luck. This means that he is not occasionally, but rather constantly, haunted by bad luck, “during his waking and sleeping, his eating and drinking ... and in everything that comes his way.”²³ This kind of bad luck is not located in the immaterial mind but is embodied in the corporeal self, as the narrator continues; it is “like the blood that courses through the body’s every joint and member—the breast-bones and polyps, the vertebrae tips and osmotic membrane ..., the two veins that supply blood to the brain and the limbs, the spine and its extremities.”²⁴ When he dreams, for instance, of drinking first a cold and then a hot drink, his teeth start hurting and his throat gets husky.²⁵ The embodied misfortunate, however, is not limited to dreams but relates to all kinds of life activities in a given community.

This is a dolorous handicap on the one hand, but a rare gift on the other: it is an idiosyncratic aesthesia or sensibility for societal shortcomings. Often, before he cognitively discerns or even intellectually understands a problem, he somatically senses it. Condemned to be a misfortunate body (and not only to have one), the protagonist develops a heightened capacity to “think through the body,” to use Shusterman’s expression. Al-Fāriyāq is particularly attentive to his own body and its states and sensations, its pain but also its pleasure, and how this embodied misfortune constitutes his life. In the first two books, as a still young and naïve *picaro*, his body is often directly exposed to the communities, whereas in the last two books as a married and well-traveled interlocutor, his thinking through the body is mediated by knowledge or language. Importantly, the protagonist does not limit his awareness to negative sensations, but also opens to positive sensations. Reading *al-Sāq* from this perspective, it provides a sparkling example of what Shusterman calls “somaesthetics,” a compound of *soma* and *aesthetics*, concerning “the body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (aesthesia) and creative self-fashioning.”²⁶ It combines the mind

23 Ibid., 1:257.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 1:259.

26 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 27. Schmitz also develops therapeutic and artistic perspectives out of his new phenomenology but does not combine them into an artful aesthetics of body and pleasures like Shusterman’s somaesthetics. See Schmitz, *Leib und Gefühl*, 49–53; Schmitz, *Der Leib*, 97–112; Shusterman, *Body Consciousness*, 15–48.

with the body and seeks to ameliorate the somatic living experience. In the context of the nineteenth century, it relates the claims of civilization to the lived body and makes the somatic experience its touchstone.

4 Toothache and Itch: Eating with Arab Monks (Mount Lebanon)

In the first book, the young and roving al-Fāriyāq enters one day a monastery in Mount Lebanon that hosts him for a night. The monks offer him “lentils cooked in oil and three ‘cymbals’ of that bread,”²⁷ so dry and hard that he has to whack them like a cymbal one against the other until they break into small pieces. When he starts eating the bread, one sharp sliver of bread nearly breaks out a tooth, and when he eats the lentils, their heat makes his belly hurt so much and is so itchy that he starts scratching until “his skin was in shreds.”²⁸ In a satirizing description of this eating scene,²⁹ tiny details are scathingly exaggerated, like the hardness of the monks’ bread mocking the hardship of the monks’ way of life. Eating with Arab monks in Mount Lebanon means for the protagonist in this anecdote to suffer pain in his mouth and belly. This aching connection between food and body is linguistically embodied in the *figura etymologica* (*jinās al-ishtiqāq*) of the chapter’s title: *Fī akla wa-ukāl* (A dish and an itch):³⁰ from the Monk’s dish one derives a belly’s itch.

The Catholic asceticism of the Arab monks is first to be experienced by the consuming and digesting body, that is, the teeth and the belly, and its somatic feeling, the toothache and the itchiness. “This upset him greatly,” the narrator tells us.³¹ By evaluating the pain as an unjust and unnecessary somatic sensation—and not assessing it as a just and necessary mortification of the flesh, as the monks do³²—the protagonist turns the mere somatic sensation into a more complex somatic critique: he has a heightened scrutiny to often unnoticed, unreflective, and disdained somatic states and sensations, to use Shusterman’s words, to produce knowledge about the monks’ way of life and to come to a judgment on their value. In this sense, the somatic consciousness offers an epistemic and ethical dimension. The acute intensity of pain often

27 Al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg*, 1:179.

28 Ibid.

29 For the widespread satirical and parodist descriptions of food in classical Arabic literature, see van Gelder, *On Dishes and Discourse*, 74–108; for ascetic food etiquette, see 22–38.

30 Al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg*, 1:174–175.

31 Ibid., 1:179.

32 See *ibid.*

supports working through this sensation. According to Schmitz, pain has an exceptional position between sensations, because one cannot escape it, but “has to deal with pain; one has to defeat it or be defeated by it.”³³

The protagonist reacts to the somatic hardship with the habitus of a poet: he seeks relief from pain by writing a vengeful poem on the monastery that restores his health by rebuking fate. When he has to look up a certain word for his poem, he asks the monks for a dictionary, a *qāmūs*. The monks, out of ignorance concerning a *qāmūs*, only misunderstand words like *jāsūs* (buffalo) and *kābūs* (nightmare) and wonder what the heck *qāmūš* (with the letter *šād* instead of *sīn*) could mean, a *hapax legomenon* for “grasshopper” occurring only once in Arabic literature in a poem by Ibn Muqbil (d. seventh century).³⁴ This funny linguistic misapprehension reveals the monks double ascetic abstention both to food and language. As a consequence, the protagonist is deprived of his poetic “pain management” and has to wait until the following morning to confront one of the monks with his experience of ascetic food and language.

Interrogating him first on his way of life, the protagonist then indulges in a lengthy speech against Catholic asceticism. There is no harm in eating good food like meat and even drinking wine, he argues. God wants man to enjoy his life, to laugh and have a strong bodily constitution—otherwise, he would not have created this kind of food. And for the public weal, monks should not be unproductive but should write useful books for their contemporaries. Abstention from food and language, as he had suffered it with on his own body, is not a way to worship God, al-Fāriyāq adds.

At the end, the protagonist finally finds relief. The monk confesses to being depressed about the ascetic life: “I see my body wasting away day by day and my spirit becoming dejected.”³⁵ Through the discussion with al-Fāriyāq, he himself develops a somatic consciousness and eventually decides to leave the monastery.

The protagonist concludes satirically: “I swear, if I were to free a monk or a novice, or at least a nun or a novice nun, every time I ate lentils, I’d want to eat nothing else as long as I should live and [even] if the lentils consumed my body. May God reward the monastery well!”³⁶ Importantly, the evaluation of pain suddenly changes. While the protagonist rejects suffering from painful ascetic

33 Schmitz, *Leib und Gefühl*, 170, my translation, respectively 163–174; Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 149–161.

34 This allusion is an implicit linguistic boasting of the narrator. Ibn Muqbil, *Dīwān Ibn Muqbil*, ed. ʿI. Ḥasan (Beirut: Dār al-Sharīf al-ʿArabī, 1995), 183 (line 38).

35 Al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg*, 1:183.

36 *Ibid.*, 1:189.

food as self-mortification, he accepts it as a way of overcoming the Catholic asceticism; pain is still unpleasant, but now necessary and meaningful. Fashioning himself as critic of nineteenth-century communities, pain becomes the token of his somatic critique.³⁷

5 Disgust with Pork: Eating with Western Protestant Missionaries (Malta)

In the second book, al-Fāriyāq flees from Mount Lebanon to Malta after he has converted from Catholicism to Protestantism. On the island between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, he stays with a Western Protestant missionary and experiences the Protestants' way of life: his host eats nothing but pork—pork head, pork feet, pork liver, pork spleen.³⁸ Following the tradition of Levantine Christians to “imitate the Muslims in all things other than those pertaining to religion,”³⁹ the protagonist does not eat pork but feels utmost disgusted by it. Though embracing the Protestant confession, he cannot accept eating what he still considers an “abomination.”⁴⁰ As consequence, he is forced into an unintended diet of bread and cheese, so that his “intestines grew lean and shriveled up.”⁴¹ The protagonist's body reacts viscerally and painfully to the host's dish, and eventually al-Fāriyāq eats as little as possible, “until emaciation reduced him to a pitiful *state*, his molars become rusty so little he *ate*, and two of them fell out.”⁴²

Staying at the Protestant's house, he not only experiences his unpleasant food but also his ill-fitting clothes and the prohibition on peeping through the window at the women in the neighbor's house. As a consequence, al-Fāriyāq becomes “mournful and sad.”⁴³ When he finds even his window nailed shut

37 For the painful somatic critique and interaction, see also the mocking *zuhdiyya* (ascetic poem) of Catholic asceticism and the mocking *madiḥ* (panegyric poem) of Druze food etiquette, in *ibid.*, 3:276–278, and 1:109–115.

38 Reading *al-Sāq* as an autofictional account of al-Shidyāq's life, the Western Protestant missionary is the American missionary Daniel Temple. See G. Roper, “Arabic Printing in Malta 1825–1845: Its History and Its Place in the Development of Print Culture in the Arab Middle East” (PhD diss., Durham University, 1988), 210, <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/1550/>. For the portrayal of pork in classical Arabic literature, see van Gelder, *On Dishes and Discourse*, 83–84.

39 Al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg*, 2:73.

40 *Ibid.*, 2:75.

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Ibid.*, italics in the translation to indicate the prose rhyme.

43 *Ibid.*, 2:81.

to prevent his glances, he metonymically experiences the tight puritan over-scrupulousness of Protestantism and falls ill until the doctor advises him to leave the island for Egypt.

In this anecdote, the body's emaciation and its painful somatic sensation do not lead to a conscious but to an unconscious somatic negotiation. Rather than working consciously through pain with poetry and revealing the culinary and somatic shortcomings in a speech, he is afflicted by a growing latent pain that leads to a manifest illness that foregrounds, in the words of Shusterman, "the background condition of perception," that is, his somatic sensation. Before he fully discerns the problem, he painfully senses it. In *al-Sāq* illness often delivers such an unconscious somatic critique when the protagonist is not capable or willing to scrutinize and criticize a situation thoroughly.⁴⁴ Leaving Malta for Egypt and staying there again with Protestants, they forbid him to play the *ṭun-būr*, the protagonist's beloved music instrument, so that he consciously breaks with the Protestant community.⁴⁵

In the discussed eating scene, the somatic discomfort of food marks the beginning of a larger somatic discomfort with the Protestant way of life, including food, clothes, music, and women. While the protagonist rejects the otherworldly Catholic asceticism, to use Max Weber's distinction, he also rejects the inner-worldly Protestant asceticism that establishes a puritanical code of conduct as well as its indifference to and assumed supremacy over Arab culture.⁴⁶ In this sense, the protagonist rejects the culinary and cultural self-righteousness of Protestant missionaries who are coming to the Arab world.

6 The Consumption of Saliva: Not Eating with Englishmen (Malta)

In the third book, the newlywed al-Fāriyāq returns with his wife, al-Fāriyāqiyya, to Malta. While walking down the street, they bump into an expatriate English lawyer who invites the couple to lunch the next day. While very hospitable at first glance, the Englishman turns out to making rude fun of them. When the couple comes to his home for the banquet, the host leaves them waiting for hours and hours. In the meantime, the couple witnesses how the mother and

44 See, for instance, the unconscious somatic critique of academic studies in Cairo resulting in "various forms of sickness," as the title says; *ibid.*, 2:383–389.

45 See *ibid.*, 2:103, 161.

46 M. Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, ed. D. Kaesler (Munich: Beck, 2004), 139–181; S. Khalaf, *Protestant Missionaries in the Levant: Ungodly Puritans, 1820–60* (London: Routledge, 2012), 63–68, 212–213.

daughter of the host receive a young Englishman who even starts kissing the daughter while the mother is present. These manners cause immediate bodily reactions: “al-Fāriyāq’s face turned yellow, his wife’s turned red, and the mother beamed.”⁴⁷ This funny description of three different color changes refers to different bodily reactions and situational evaluations, namely the paleness of embarrassment, the blushing of anger, and the beaming of joy. Driven by anger, al-Fāriyāqiyya indulges with al-Fāriyāq in subsequent contemplations on kissing, saliva and its erotic and nonalimentary consumption.

Coming from a well-educated family in Cairo and having previously lived a secluded life in her family’s house, al-Fāriyāqiyya is shocked. In a naïve and yet witty way she interrogates her husband about English kissing culture and thereby instigates a matrimonial dialogue on equal footing about different kissing cultures. She first wonders why in European culture public kissing is appreciated, since it bereaves kissing of its sensuality, whereas in Arab culture kissing is completely private precisely because of its erotic sensuality: “Kissing among us is always accompanied by panting, sighing, sucking, smelling, and closing of the eyes.”⁴⁸ Her husband, an ardent lover of Arabic lexicography, adds: “I find in the [dictionary] Qāmūs ... that *mukāfah*, *mulāghafah*, *muthāghamah*, *lathm*, *faghm*, *ka’m* and *taqbil* all means a man kissing a woman on the mouth, or doing so while simultaneously devouring it.”⁴⁹ The discussion of kissing cultures involves the parts of the body that are considered erogenous zones and the movement and techniques that provide sensual pleasure. In regard to Arabic culture, the mouth is described here as an erogenous contact zone and kissing as a way of sucking (*maṣṣ*) or devouring (*iltiqām*), thus foregrounding the eroticism of bodily techniques also used for eating.

Saliva (*rīq*), in addition, is described in poetry as either sweet or thirst quenching,⁵⁰ whereas Arabic *ars erotica* is not limited to the consumption of saliva. “Can the lover find pleasure in drinking salivary secretions from any part other than the mouth?” al-Fāriyāqiyya asks. And al-Fāriyāq answers: “Quite possibly, where some of the Arabs are concerned, but the Franks [i.e., the Europeans] object to doing so even from the mouth. Indeed, the only name they know for such things is ‘spittle.’”⁵¹

In this anecdote, there is no real eating scene *with* the English family: the host is notable by his absence, the other members of the family eat uncharita-

47 Al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg*, 3:161.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.; I translate *iltaqama* as “devouring” instead of “chewing.”

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

bly “a piece of bread and a chunk of cheese” where they stand,⁵² and the couple wait till the night falls leaving without having eaten anything. In absence of a real eating scene, however, there is an “ersatz eating scene,” fathoming the joyful consumption not of food but of saliva and other bodily fluids. In Arabic love poetry, saliva is, together with the front teeth, a topos of the mouth; its consumption is imagined as fresh, pure, sweet, thirst quenching or thirst arousing, and often compared to the consumption of wine.⁵³ In regard to Arabic *ars erotica*, this joyful erotic consumption includes, according to the protagonist, even vaginal secretions and maybe sperm, whereas European eroticism would despise even saliva as spittle. Humorously, the chapter is titled “A Banquet and Various Kinds of Hot Sauce.”⁵⁴ The banquet, however, refers not to the English cuisine but to the Arabic language and its many erotic words for kissing and saliva. The title’s hot sauces, in consequence, may refer to saliva and other bodily secretions to be enjoyed for erotic consumption.

The dialogue examines the lustful consumption of saliva and the erotic sensation of the mouth.⁵⁵ But rather than referring to a personal lived experience of the couple, it refers to cultural memory as embodied in Arabic literature and language. Drawing from poetical topoi and lexical synonyms, it evokes a somatic cultural memory.⁵⁶ Cultural memory, a collective and selective act of identity making over a long period of time, conveys here a culturally constructed somatic consciousness of the mouth as an erogenous zone and kissing as an erotic body technique. In this regard, somatic experience is prior to neither societal norms nor cultural memory, but these are rather embodied in the somatic experience. In this sense, the somatic examination of the European culture of spittle is an ersatz somatic examination of the culture of English cuisine.⁵⁷

52 Ibid., 3163.

53 T. Bauer, *Liebe und Liebe und Liebesdichtung in der arabischen Welt des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts. Eine literatur- und mentalitätsgeschichtliche Studie des arabischen Ġazal* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), 309–324.

54 Al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg*, 3159.

55 For the erotic dimension of the gaze in *al-Sāq*, see N. Al-Bagdadi, “Eros und Etikette—Reflexionen zum Bann eines zentralen Themas im arabischen 19. Jahrhundert,” in *Ver-schleierter Orient—Enschleierter Okzident? (Un-)Sichtbarkeit in Politik, Recht, Kunst und Kultur seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. B. Dennerlein, E. Frietsch, and T. Steffen (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2012), 123–134.

56 For somatic memory (*Leibgedächtnis*), see T. Fuchs, *Leib, Raum, Person: Entwurf einer phänomenologischen Anthropologie* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2000), 316–332.

57 For sexual alimentary metaphors in classical Arabic literature, see van Gelder, *On Dishes and Discourse*, 109–118.

7 **Restraint and Excess: Eating with Victorians (England)**

In the fourth book, the couple moves from Malta to England at the beginning of the Victorian era. In a matrimonial dialogue, al-Fāriyāq describes to al-Fāriyāqiyya the typical eating manners that exhibit a Victorian control over the body. One must not eat or drink joyfully, the protagonist emphasizes, but “their way of eating consists of snacking, picking, pecking, nibbling, tasting, testing, and chewing over and over again, while their way of drinking consists of sipping little by little, bit by bit, drop by drop, slowly, slowly, listlessly and unenthusiastically.”⁵⁸ When invited to a banquet, the guest should not expect Arab hospitality, where the guest is supposed to eat as much as possible,⁵⁹ but rather should expect to eat as restrained as possible. The host controls “every movement of the guest’s jaw and hand so as to know whether he’s a wolfer or a pouncer and pecker.”⁶⁰ The guest must not take the food or drinks by himself but has to wait for the host to invite him to do so, while he has to also praise him constantly for his generosity.

This detailed description of a typical Victorian eating scene contains precise knowledge of Victorian body techniques. Putting the bodily restraints of food consumption at center stage, the protagonist refers to the larger bodily control of Victorianism, demanding, for instance, that one not to laugh too loudly, not speak too much, lower the voice, and express everything in a humble way.⁶¹

At the same time, the protagonist conveys with his enumerations an aesthetic knowledge through the body. He does not only speak to al-Fāriyāqiyya about the enormous restraint but also makes her (and the reader) feel it by a long enumeration of words. When he vivisects the Victorian way of laughing, speaking, and eating, he indulges in an excess of Arabic words: fifteen synonyms for “tepid titters”; eleven synonyms for “snacking” and twelve for “sipping”; seventy synonyms for “reticence,” “wariness,” and “caution”; six synonyms for saying, “Certainly!” and “understanding”; and nine ways of admiring English civilization.⁶² On the one hand, these compilations mock the Victorian restraint; on the other hand, they produce it somatically—that is, they make the wife (and the reader) reenact it through one’s own body. The linguistic excess produces the Victorian restraint by producing an atmosphere of rigidity and omnipresence. This lexicographic performance affects al-Fāriyāqiyya to

58 Al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg*, 4:161.

59 *Ibid.*, 4:165.

60 *Ibid.*

61 *Ibid.*, 4:160–168.

62 *Ibid.*, 4:159–165, 425.

such a degree that she exclaims: “That’s too much to cope with. I’m never going to put anything in my mouth in their homes, even if they’re having manna and quails.”⁶³

While eating with the Victorian community is no pleasure, describing it in Arabic is a pleasure. Here and elsewhere in *al-Sāq*, long lexicographic enumerations express a relish derived from the classical Arabic language.⁶⁴ Since the many premodern words for snacking and sipping maintain a precise corporeal knowledge of eating techniques, the protagonist can accurately vivisection nineteenth-century Victorian modernity and what he considers its shortcomings in regard to body and pleasure.⁶⁵

8 The Widening of Pleasure: Eating with His Wife (Egypt)

But al-Fāriyāq does not only eat in pain but also in pleasure. In the third book, the newlyweds al-Fāriyāq and al-Fāriyāqiyya spend their honeymoon on a ship journey from Cairo to Malta via Alexandria. While the sea voyages in *al-Sāq* are often described as liminal somatic states of unsteadiness,⁶⁶ the Nile voyage with his wife is fundamentally different. The water of the Nile is calm; the ship glides smoothly and does not toss around, unsettling the passenger. The countryside of the Delta is green and fertile, a feast for the eyes; and the water of the Nile is sweet and healthy. Every now and then, the barque stops “to take on supplies of chickens, fresh fruit, milk, eggs, and other things.”⁶⁷ Traveling the Nile Delta, the narrator states, is “one of the greatest pleasures for which the breast is opened,”⁶⁸ as the text literally says.

As for al-Fāriyāq, he enjoys the delicious food from the Egyptian countryside by day and at night the sex with his wife. These “two sweetest things” (*al-aḏhabayn*), namely food and sex, make him forget about the hardships and diseases experienced in Cairo, including the Protestants’ dilettantish Arabic.⁶⁹ For these pleasures his breast is opened (*yanshariḥu la-hā ṣadru-hū*), an idiomatic

63 Ibid., 169.

64 For the enumerations, see M. Peled, “The Enumerative Style in *al-Sāq* ‘alā al-sāq,’” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 22, no. 1 (1991): 127–145.

65 El-Ariss, *Trials of Arab Modernity*, 53–87.

66 See, for instance, the relation between heavy sea, seasickness, and religious doubts in a chapter titled “Emotion and Motion,” in al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg*, 1:283, 291–295.

67 Ibid., 3:131.

68 Ibid.; note the literal translation.

69 Ibid. For the representation of the two sweetest things in classical Arabic literature, see van Gelder, *On Dishes and Discourse*, 109–118.

Arabic expression for “being delighted and rejoiced.” The somatic turn, however, draws attention to the somatic dimension of such linguistic idioms. “The ‘soma oblivion’ in modernity,” Thomas Fuchs writes, “made us believe that all references and allusions to the soma, of which language holds so many, are only metaphors.”⁷⁰ The somatic rereading of experience, as Fuchs demands, has therefore to reread linguistic expression and try to take them literally.

The somatic widening of the breast engenders a somatic relaxation linguistically embodied in *inshirāḥ* (relaxedness). For Herrmann Schmitz, tightening and widening are two central categories of the soma that constitute every somatic experience. While not every somatic widening may be assessed as relief, the transition from tightness to wideness often provides pleasure, as in the case of orgasm.⁷¹ While living in Cairo with his parents-in-law under tight social conditions,⁷² he now experiences on the ship the intimate matrimonial community as somatic wideness. Eating and sleeping with his wife in the calm and spacious Nile Delta is full of pleasures, so that he arrives in Alexandria well “fed and watered” and sexually satisfied.⁷³

While the protagonist later also experiences in length the quarrels and troubles of marriage, the marriage in *al-Sāq* is an intimate community between man and woman in which the body with its somatic states and dynamics plays a pivotal role. Matrimony is here a somatic community highly attentive to Shusterman’s somaesthetics—that is, to discern and improve the somatic knowledge and feeling. Later, for instance, al-Fāriyāqiyya considers (and practices) female coquetry in matrimony as a technique of *daghdagha* (tickling) to restimulate the male affection toward her.⁷⁴ During the honeymoon, however, al-Fāriyāq experiences the merits of matrimonial community in food and coitus, the two sweetest things in the world.

9 Food, Women, and Words: *al-Fāriyāq*’s Somatic Negotiations

Bringing together different eating scenes from *al-Sāq*, I have sought to describe different somatic experiences of food (ranging from pleasure to pain) and their different literary expressions (ranging from narration to enumeration). These

70 Fuchs, *Leib, Raum, Person*, 27, my translation.

71 Schmitz, *Der Leib*, 15–27, 61–63.

72 See especially the social constraints of the wedding night and the bloody sheet as a proof for virginity, in al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg*, 3:79–81.

73 *Ibid.*, 3:133.

74 *Ibid.*, 3:320.

eating scenes instigate complex somatic negotiations between body and society. Because of the protagonist's embodied misfortune, he has the capacity for a heightened somatic awareness. Living in different communities and sharing their way of life, the protagonist explores these communities through his own body (e.g., by food or music). As consequence, the body reacts to the consumption of food (e.g., by the loss of teeth and emaciation) and delivers a somatic sensation (e.g., a painful heat or a pleasant wideness). The body and its somatic feeling, however, is not prediscursive but is constituted, for instance, by a somatic cultural memory (e.g., the Arabic language and literature). The food experience, along with other experiences, may instigate an unconscious (e.g., by illness) or conscious (e.g., by poetry or speech) somatic examination and evaluation of the community's broader context (e.g., the painful Catholic asceticism or the European culture of spittle). Eventually, this may lead to interactions (e.g., convincing the monk to leave the monastery or indulging with his wife in the two sweetest things). The somatic experience, thus, triggers somatic processes of reaction, examination, evaluation and interaction that may reveal and consider merits and demerits of a community. In regard to food, the protagonist experiences more often tightness, spasm, and pain than wideness, relaxation, and pleasure. He is more often *ḍayyiq al-ṣadr* (of tight breast, or annoyed) than *raḥb al-ṣadr* (of wide breast, or lighthearted). These somatic negotiations of nineteenth-century communities include in *al-Sāq* contemplations of various pleasures as pivotal constituents of human nature; bodily knowledge and somatic sensation thereby become a touchstone for human civilization.⁷⁵

In this framework, the somatic experience of food is often linked to women and words, the two main concerns of the book according the author. As the Arabic expression of the two sweetest things combine food and sex, al-Fāriyāq appreciates the companionship of women. But while food is necessary to survive, women, according to the narrator, put the male nature in order.⁷⁶ For the protagonist's somatic well-being, it is indispensable to have contact with women: to look at them, to talk to them, to eat with them, and, with regard to his wife, to kiss her and to sleep with her.

Less obvious, however, may be the link between food and words. As an ardent lover of classical Arabic, the protagonist detects somatically the linguistic shortcomings in the Arabic-speaking communities, like the monks' ignorance in regard to dictionaries.⁷⁷ At the same time, the protagonist finds fre-

75 See *ibid.*, 2:190–290.

76 *Ibid.*, 2:190.

77 Similarly, he haptically perceives the feeble Arabic of the Bible translation and smells the dreadful language of praise poetry. See *ibid.*, 1:270 and 2:172.

quent pleasure in the classical Arabic language. While deprived of a food banquet in Malta, the protagonist enjoys a word banquet, praising the richness of erotic words in Arabic. And describing Victorian table manners in Arabic, the protagonist celebrates excessively the exactness of words for bodily restraint. In *al-Sāq*, the protagonist has a somatic relationship toward the classical Arabic language that often leads to its excessive celebration.

As Geert Jan van Gelder has shown, the literary text of classical *adab* is sometimes conceived of as a banquet.⁷⁸ This is also true for the words in *al-Sāq*. In the book's opening proem, a kind of *captatio benevolentiae*, the "lyrical I" praises for the reader the many enumerations of words. The reader can wear it like a piece of clothes, slumber in its burbling, being delighted by its musical sound, or consume it like food or medicine: "I have licensed you [dear reader] to swallow it as a whole or to lick it./ Or, if afraid of vomiting, to take it diluted."⁷⁹ Reading here is an act of consuming and digesting words, taking them in the mouth, articulating them with the tongue, making them part of the living somatic experience of the body.

10 The Mouth as Oral Contact Zone of Cultures

While the somatic experience may in general refer to all parts of the human body, the mouth is of particular importance. As Hartmut Böhme and Beate Slominski argue in a recent study on the oral, the mouth is the second birthplace of the human, from where subjectivity emerges.⁸⁰ Translating this insight to my reading, the mouth is the part of the body where different forms of incorporation and consumption take place: eating and drinking, of course, but also kissing, singing, and speaking. In this regard, the mouth constitutes an oral contact zone where different cultures, societies, and communities are tasted and negotiated; how it feels to eat, drink, kiss, and speak with them; how it feels to take a certain part of the world in the mouth and to negotiate it with the tongue, the teeth, and the palate.

78 Van Gelder, *On Dishes and Discourse*, 39–79.

79 Al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg*, 1:29.

80 H. Böhme and B. Slominski, "Einführung in die Mundhöhle," in *Das Orale: Die Mundhöhle in Kulturgeschichte und Zahnmedizin*, ed. H. Böhme and B. Slominski (Paderborn: Fink, 2013), 12. See also Schmitz, *Der Leib*, 55–57; and Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 108–109.

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PART 4

*Intoxication: Wine and Hashish in
Literary Sources and Beyond*



The Symbolism of Wine in Early Arabic Love Poetry

Observations on the Poetry of Abū Ṣakhr al-Hudhalī

Kirill Dmitriev

All given is being transfigured in what is created.

MIKHAIL BAKHTIN



In the history of Arab culture, Arabic poetry has always represented a very important medium of creative communication. Since its origins in the pre-Islamic times, Arabic poetry has been perceived and fostered as ‘*dīwān al-‘arab*’ or “the register of the Arabs”—the main repository and tool for negotiating the social, cultural, and linguistic identity of the Arabs. Research into food in Arab culture, especially in its early and classical periods, inevitably presupposes a comprehensive evaluation of Arabic poetic texts. This chapter aims to provide a brief yet illustrative example, underlining the importance of Arabic poetic sources for the study of food in Arab culture by analyzing the various usage and meanings of wine motifs in the poetry of Abū Ṣakhr al-Hudhalī (d. ca. 80/700).

The focus on wine rather than food motifs in general is implied by the history of Arabic poetic tradition,¹ which features a rich repertoire of popular Bacchic imagery and motifs, as well as a distinctive poetic genre of the *khamriyyāt* (from Arabic *khamr* ‘wine’²), that is, wine poem or wine song.³ The poetic works of

1 On food in classical Arabic literature, see Geert Jan van Gelder, *God’s Banquet: Food in Classical Arabic Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the European Research Council, which very generously funded my research project “Language—Philology—Culture: Arab Cultural Semantics in Transition” (ERC, Starting Grant, ARSEM 312458). This article is one of the outcomes of my research conducted within the ERC project.

2 Arabic *khamr* (خمير) is a loanword from Aramaic/Syriac. See Siegmund Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (Leiden: Brill, 1886), 160–161; Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur’an* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938: 125–126). See also Arent Jan Wensinck and Joseph Sadan, “Khamr,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. Peri Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 4:994–998.

3 Jamel-Eddine Bencheikh, “Khamriyya,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. Peri Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 4:998–1008; F. Harb, “Wine Poetry (*Khamriyyāt*),” in *‘Abbasid Belles-lettres: The Cambridge History*

Abū Ṣakhr al-Hudhalī offer themselves as a particularly interesting case study in the context of early Arabic poetry. Their transitional character, simultaneously reflecting norms and values rooted in pre-Islamic Arab society and the adoption of new notions of social consciousness introduced with the rise of Islam in the first/seventh century, attests to both continuity and innovation in the development of Arab culture during the early Islamic period. In the following, wine motifs in the polythematic poems by Abū Ṣakhr (*qaṣīdas*) are analyzed in comparison with their function and meaning in his love poems (*ghazals*). Thereupon, the question of the relevance of early Arabic poetry for wine in its historical context and its importance for understanding the significance of wine for Arab culture are discussed from the perspective of literary theory.

1 Dīwān Banū Hudhayl

Abū Ṣakhr belonged to the Arab tribe of the Banū Hudhayl.⁴ In the sixth and seventh centuries, the tribe lived in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, in the Ḥijāz to the north and east of Mecca and on the highlands stretching to al-Ṭāʾif. As part of the Khindif branch of the Muḍar tribal confederation, it was closely related to Kināna and also Quraysh, the tribe of the Prophet Muḥammad. The collection (*dīwān*) of the Banū Hudhayl's early poetry has been preserved in the recension of al-Sukkarī (212–275 or 290/827–888 or 903). Its particular value arises from the fact that it represents the only surviving *dīwān* of an Arab tribe from the pre-Islamic and early Islamic period. Documenting the poetic tradition of the Ḥijāz during the period immediately preceding and following the emergence of Islam (550–580/700), the *dīwān* of the Hudhayl provides authentic texts reflecting important social, cultural, and political transformations during this crucial period in Arab history. The last section of

of *Arabic Literature*, ed. Julia Ashtiany, T.M. Johnstone, J.D. Latham, and R.B. Serjeant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 219–234; Philip F. Kennedy, “Arab Poets,” in *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, ed. Jancis Robinson and Julia Harding, 4th ed. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015), 30; Philip F. Kennedy, *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Ifran Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, pt. 2 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2009), 2:139–158. On *khamrīyyāt* in Arabic, Persian, and other poetic traditions in the Near and Middle East, see Kirill Dmitriev and Christine van Ruymbeke, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Wine Poetry in Near and Middle Eastern Literatures* (Baden-Baden: Ergon Verlag, forthcoming), and <https://khamriyya.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/>.

4 Kirill Dmitriev, “Hudhayl, Banū,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, THREE, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (Leiden: Brill, 2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_30538.

the *dīwān* in the complete edition by ‘Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr,⁵ containing poems by sixty-nine Hudhalīs,⁶ includes twenty poetic texts by Abū Ṣakhr al-Hudhalī.⁷

2 Abū Ṣakhr al-Hudhalī

Abū Ṣakhr lived in the second half of the seventh century, a period of dramatic religious, political, social, and cultural change for Arabs and the Middle East in general. The poetry of Abū Ṣakhr reflects these changes through its transitional character. It combines old, highly conventional motifs and themes of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry with new ones that correspond to the changing social norms and psychological self-consciousness of the individual developing during the period of the first Arab Muslim dynasty, the Umayyads (41–132/661–750). The turbulent years of the early Umayyad era left their mark on the life of Abū Ṣakhr. He was personally involved in political power conflicts, was imprisoned for about a year by the “anti-caliph” ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, and took part in the Umayyad conquest of Mecca in 72/692.⁸

Abū Ṣakhr composed panegyric poems for leading political figures, including the fifth Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (25–86/646–705) and his brother ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān (d. 86/705), the Umayyad governor of Egypt. Remarkably, in these texts Abū Ṣakhr does not articulate himself as a spokesman of his tribe, but rather as a representative of a political group and its interests. This marks a clear shift toward the conventions of Abbasid praise poetry. Another literary innovation is represented in the inclusion of the elegiac elements in the *madīḥ*, the praise section of the *qaṣīdas* composed by Abū

5 ‘Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr, eds., *Sharḥ ash‘ār al-Hudhalīyyīn*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-‘Urūba, 1965).

6 Renate Jacobi, “Hudhayl (Hudhaylī poets),” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 2nd ed., ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London: Routledge, 2010), 292–293. See also Bernhard Lewin, *A Vocabulary of the Hudhailian Poems* (Göteborg: Kungl. vetenskaps- och vitterhets-samhället, 1978).

7 ‘Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr, eds., *Sharḥ ash‘ār al-Hudhalīyyīn* (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-‘Urūba, 1965), 2:913–976. For the study on Abū Ṣakhr, including a complete German translation of his poetry, see Kirill Dmitriev, *Das Poetische Werk des Abū Ṣakhr al-Hudhalī: Eine literaturanthropologische Studie* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008); Arabic translation of the book by Mousah S. Rababah, *Shi‘r Abī Ṣakhr al-Hudhalī: dirāsa anthrubūlūjīyya adabīyya* (Amman: Dār Jarīr, 2016).

8 Abū al-Faraj Al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Beirut: Dār al-thaqāfa, 1961), 23:268–270; Khalil Ibn Aybak Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt* (*Das biographische Lexikon des Ḥalīl Ibn Aybak aṣ-Ṣafadī*), ed. Dorothea Krawulsky (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1982), 17:614–615.

Şakhr for patrons still alive (IX:18–19 and 25–27, VIII:29–32)—a poetic practice that became common during the Abbasid period (132–656/750–1258) but is highly unusual for early Arabic poetry.⁹

Most novel, however, is Abū Şakhr's love poetry. His contribution to the emergence of *ghazal* as an independent genre of Arabic love poetry is substantial. In the Arabic tradition, Abū Şakhr has been celebrated as one of the most famous *ghazal* poets of his time.¹⁰ It is particularly noteworthy that some of Abū Şakhr's lyrical verses have been attributed to the legendary Majnūn (first/seventh century), and vice versa—some of the latter's verses have been transmitted under the name of Abū Şakhr.¹¹ Ibn Faḍlallāh al-ʿUmarī (700–749/1301–1349) also praises the lyrical dimension of Abū Şakhr's oeuvre by putting him on a par with such outstanding representatives of the Arabic *ghazal* tradition as Majnūn and Dhū ar-Rumma (d. ca. 117/735).¹²

Later, within the Abbasid tradition, *ghazal* (love poetry) and *khamriyyāt* (wine poetry) can hardly be separated from each other. They often merge entirely together, and in the poetry of Abū Nuwās (c. 140–198/755–813), for instance, it is sometimes impossible to determine whether a particular text should be classified as *ghazal* or *khamriyyāt*.

To better understand the development of Arabic wine poetry and the relationship between the genres of *ghazal* and *khamriyyāt*, it is necessary to analyze the Bacchic theme in early Arabic *ghazal*. In this respect, the poetry of Abū Şakhr, with its transitional character combining old and new elements, offers interesting examples for a case study on this subject.

3 Literary Context

The theme of wine features nine times in nine different poems by Abū Şakhr.¹³ Considering that the last three of twenty poems by Abū Şakhr transmitted in the *dīwān* of Hudhayl are short fragments of only three or four lines, one can say

9 Ewald Wagner, *Abū Nuwās: eine Studie zur arabischen Literatur der frühen Abbasidenzeit* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1965), 365.

10 Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq Ibn Yaḥyā al-Washshāʿ Abū al-Ṭayyib, *Al-Muwashshāʿ aw al-zarf wal-zurafāʿ* (Beirut: Dār Şadir, 1965), 84.

11 Abū al-Faraj Al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1961), 23:280.

12 Ibn Faḍlallāh al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abşār fi mamālik al-amşār* (Ayasofya, 3437), fols. 71b–72b.

13 For an analysis of some of these texts along with wine poetry by other Hudhalīs, such as Sāʿida b. Juʿayya (sixth–seventh century) and his transmitter (*rāwī*) Abū Dhuʿayb (d. ca. 28/649), see Ali Hussein, “The Rhetoric of Hudhalī Wine Poetry,” *Oriens* 43 (2015): 1–53.

that practically every second poem by Abū Ṣakhr at least mentions a topic or a motif related to wine and wine drinking. This frequency is remarkable, despite the fact that the relevant passages are short, reaching a maximum of four lines, as in poem xv. In the case of poems vii, xi and xvii, wine is mentioned in just a single line, and in poems iii and xvi wine drinking is only implicitly suggested in a single hemistich. This, however, does not mean that wine motifs are not important or are used by Abū Ṣakhr at random. In early Arabic poetry, briefness in dealing with a specific motif does not necessarily indicate that it is less meaningful than topics elaborated on in much-longer passages. In general, early Arabic poetry is more provocative than informative, aiming more to evoke an emotional reaction in the audience by alluding to well-known experiences rather than to narrate novel stories. Briefly pointing to a specific subject instead of describing it extensively can be meaningful only when the subject in question, including the poetical conventions related to it, is well known to the audience. Thus, concise, yet frequent, mentioning of wine in the poetry of Abū Ṣakhr can be interpreted as confirming both the popularity of Bacchic themes in early Umayyad times and the fact that his audience was well acquainted with wine motifs, as well as the forms and content of their poetic expression.

In several cases, Abū Ṣakhr's addressees included Umayyad political figures of the highest calibre. Indeed, poem x is a panegyric for 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, and the *qaṣīdas* vii and ix were composed for his brother, 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Marwān. The mentioning of wine in the official panegyric poetry clearly indicates that the Bacchic theme was regarded among the early Umayyad elites as socially acceptable and aesthetically appealing.¹⁴

Wine mostly appears in the Hudhalī poetry in the context of the description of a beloved woman, especially her saliva.¹⁵ The larger structural framework in which the topic of wine occurs in the poetry of Abū Ṣakhr provides an informative basis for interpreting its symbolism.

14 Bacchic motifs developed in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry remained constituent of the Arabic poetic repertoire in the early Islamic period and are occasionally attested in texts bearing an explicit Islamic context. Thus, Ḥassān ibn Thābit (d. before 40/661), one of the most prominent bards of the Prophet Muḥammad, includes in his ode celebrating the Muslim conquest of Mecca in 8/629 an elaborate passage on wine introduced through the conventional *saliva*-wine simile. For an English translation and analysis of the poem, see James Edward Montgomery, *The Vagaries of the Qaṣīdah: The Tradition and Practice of Early Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 1997), 224–232; see also Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, 142.

15 Hussein, "Rhetoric of Hudhalī Wine Poetry," 4.

4 Structural Framework: *Nasīb* and *Ghazal*

Five instances are attested in the polythematic *qaṣīdas* (III, VII, IX, X and XVI), and another four in *ghazal* poems (II, XI, XV and XVII).

In the *qaṣīdas* of Abū Ṣakhr, wine motifs occur only in the *nasīb*, the opening part of a polythematic poem conventionally dedicated to an elegiac reflection on the past, including the memories of previous love episodes in the life of the poet. As Renate Jacobi has observed, the *nasīb* in early Arabic poetry is always looking backward; its literary time is limited to the past, and therefore the theme of love is described only in the past tense, never in the present or future.¹⁶ It changes significantly in the Umayyad *ghazal*, where love is no longer just a memory but is described as an emotional state in the present and is cherished for the future when poets like Abū Ṣakhr proclaim their devotion to love until death and beyond.

5 Wine in the *Nasīb*

The *qaṣīdas* of Abū Ṣakhr provide examples of both old and new perceptions of love. Accordingly, the function of the wine motifs also varies between two categories: wine representing merely an object of enjoyment in the past, and wine as a source of intoxication and addiction illustrating the permanent love sickness of the poet which continues to affect him emotionally and physically.

In the *nasīb* of *qaṣīda* III, wine is recalled as a source of enjoyment along with other pleasures that vanish forever once youth is lost:

III: 1,3–4

بَكَرَ الصَّبِيَّ عَنَّا بَكُورَ مُرَائِلٍ عَجَلَ الشَّبَابُ بِهِ فَلَيْسَ بِقَافِلٍ ١

...

أَخْوَا صَفَاءٍ فَارِقًا بِشَاشَةِ وَبِشُورَةٍ مِنْ عَيْشِنَا وَفَوَاضِلٍ ٣

وَلَدَانِدٍ مَعْسُولَةٍ فِي رِيْقَةٍ وَصَبِيٍّ لَنَا كَدِجَانِ يَوْمِ هَاطِلٍ ٤

- 1 The passion of the youth left us for ever.
The youth took it swiftly away and it does not come back.

...

16 Renate Jacobi, "Time and Reality in *Nasīb* and *Ghazal*," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 16 (1985): 1–17.

- 3 Two sincere brothers took the gaiety with them,
the beauty of our life and its pleasures,
4 and the enjoyment (of wine) mixed with honey in the saliva,
and the passion of the youth, which is for us like an abundant rain of a
rainy day.

The same idea is implied in the context of the conventional motif of an abandoned campsite (*aṭlāl*) in the *nasīb* of *qaṣīda* XVI, where a deserted place offers nothing:

XVI: 3

سَوَا عَرَفِ سَمَارِهَا كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ كَعَرَفِ قِيُونَ الْفَارِسِيِّ لَدَى الشَّرْبِ ٣

- 3 Except the whispering of [the jinn] playing there every night
like the sounds of Persian songstresses at a carousal.

The *nasīb* in *qaṣīda* X provides a more elaborated passage on wine, explicitly introduced through the wine/saliva simile as part of the description of the poet's beloved:

X: 11–13

كَأَنَّ عَلَى أَنْبَاهِهَا مِنْ رُضَابِهَا ١١
سَيِّئًا نَفَى الصَّفْرَاءَ عَنْهَا إِيَامَهَا
بِمَادِيَةٍ جَادَتْ لَهَا زَرْجُونَةٌ ١٢
مُعْتَقَةً صَهْبَاءً صَافٍ مَدَامَهَا
أَتَى مِنْذُ مَاتَتْ فِي رَوَاقِيدِ دَنْهَا ١٣
ثَلَاثُونَ حَوْلًا لَا يُفْصَلُ خَتَامَهَا

- 11 As if on her teeth from her saliva
was honey from which the fumigation has driven off the bees,
12 with pure honey to which was amply added the gold-coloured,
precious, pure white wine.
13 Since it died deep inside its wine-jar
30 years passed, its seal being unbroken.

This, nonetheless, does not change the symbolic meaning of the motif. Wine is still just another aspect of pleasure associated with the past. Since it cannot be retrieved, recalling it can only evoke sadness, and the subject is thus better discarded. The *nasīb* ends in full accordance with the conventions of old Arabic poetry, with Abū Ṣakhr saying in line 16:

X: 16

١٦ فَأَقْصِرْ فَلَا مَا قَدْ مَضَى لَكَ رَاجِعٌ وَلَا لَذَّةَ الدُّنْيَا يَدُومُ دَوَامَهَا

- 16 Stop talking! For what is gone will not come back to you,
and the pleasure of earthly life does not last for ever.

In most of his poetry, Abū Ṣakhr breaks the old poetic conventions in regarding love merely through the prism of memory. His feelings of love and longing are no longer subject to the inevitable loss of youth and its pleasures but acquire a permanent value and meaning as manifestations of his emotional constitution in the present as well as in the future. The poet remains faithful to his love and expresses his feelings without the constraints of the collectively oriented social norms. Nothing exemplifies this better than the celebration of chronic love sickness in Abū Ṣakhr's poetry. It is one of the major features of his *ghazals*—poems entirely devoted to the theme of love and often resembling *'udhrite* lyrics with their unconditional, self-effacing ideal of love.¹⁷ Yet quite remarkably, the new forms of expressing individual emotional experiences are not limited to *ghazal* only. They also occur at times in the *nasīb* of conventional polythematic *qaṣīdas*.

The development of *ghazal* as a new poetic genre is very closely linked to the transformation of the *nasīb*. On the one hand, many early *ghazal* poems, and this is especially the case in the poetry of Abū Ṣakhr, are structured just like *nasīb*s without being followed by other parts of the *qaṣīda*. On the other hand, the *nasīb* remaining as it is the opening part of the *qaṣīda*, becomes extended to a degree that reaches far beyond the conventions of old Arabic poetry and is focused more on the emotional aspects and psychological reflections than on external circumstances. This can be observed in the examples of *qaṣīdas* VII and IX by Abū Ṣakhr, also featuring the motif of wine.

In both poems the *nasīb* is rather long: twenty-six out of fifty-two lines in VII, and seventeen out of twenty-nine lines in IX. Such an extension of the *nasīb* over the half of a poem corresponds to the increased importance of expressing the imperishable value of love in the consciousness of an individual:

17 On *'udhri* poetry, see Renate Jacobi, "The 'Udhra: Love and Death in the Umayyad Period," in *Martyrdom in Literature. Visions of Death and Meaningful Suffering in Europe and the Middle East from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Friederike Pannewick (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004), 137–148.

IX: 8–13, 16–17

<p>وَقَدْ دَنَّتِ الشُّعْرَى وَلَمْ يَصْدَعْ الْفَجْرُ إِذَا اسْتَوَسَّتْ وَأَسْتَقَلَّ الْهَدْفُ الْهَدْرُ بِشَاهِقَةٍ جَلَسَ يَزُلُّ بِهَا الْغُفْرُ بِعَقَبِ سَرَى جَادَتْ بِهِ مُزْنٌ قُرُ فَصَفِي ذَوْبًا شَبَّ لَشْوَتَهُ الْخُمْرُ وَفِيهِنَّ مَا عِشْنِ الْمَلَاذَةَ وَالْخَيْرُ</p>	<p>كَأَنَّ عَلَى أُنْيَابِهَا مِنْ رُضَائِبِهَا ٨ وَبَلَّ النَّدى مِنْ آخِرِ اللَّيْلِ جِيْبِهَا ٩ مُجَاجَةً نَحْلٍ مِنْ قَرَّاسٍ سَبِيْئَةٍ ١٠ بِاسْفِنْطٍ كَرِّمٍ نَاطِفٍ زَرْجُونَةٍ ١١ جُمَعْنَ مَعًا فِي صَحْفَةٍ بَارِقِيَّةٍ ١٢ فَتَلَّكَ الْهُوى مَا عِشْتَ وَالشُّوقُ وَالْمُنَى ١٣</p> <p style="text-align: center;">...</p> <p>فَلَمْ يَنْسَهُ جُمْلًا وَشَيْبِيَهَ بِهَا ١٦ فِرَاقِ أَخِي لَنْ يَبْرَحَ الدَّهْرُ ذِكْرَهُ ١٧</p>
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- 8 As if on her teeth from her saliva,
when Sirius had already risen and the twilight had not yet divided [the sky],
- 9 and when the dew at the end of the night touched the opening of her dress on the neck,
when she went to sleep and a heavy and loud [rain] was slowly moving,
- 10 was the honey of the bees, which is delivered from Qarās,
on a high mountain, from which the young of a mountain goat slides down,
11 mixed with *isfinṭ* [*a Persian name for wine*], *vinum coctum* and gold-coloured [wine];
after [the rain] had travelled at the end of the night,
grey clouds poured it out abundantly.
- 12 They were mixed in *bāriqitic* bowl,
then the honey was purified and the wine gave its pleasant scent.
- 13 And she is [my] love as long as I live, [my] longing and desire,
and in them, as long as they live—flattery and deceit.
- ...
- 16 It did not let him forget Jumla and his love for her
the vicissitudes of days, which are bitter and adverse,
- 17 [even] the loss of [his] brother. The memory of him will never cease
to torture me as long as I live, or until my life comes to an end.

Here, the Bacchic motif mentioned in lines 11 and 12 as part of the description of the beloved's appearance, and her pleasant kisses can still be seen as limited

to the representation of wine as no more than an attribute of a pleasant erotic experience in the past. Nonetheless, in the final passage of the *nasīb*—lines 16 and 17—a new perception of love as an unbroken emotional dedication to a beloved person becomes apparent. It is noteworthy that the beloved is mentioned by her name, *Jumla*, which underlines the idea that poet's loyalty is directed toward a specific person and not an abstract amorousness or an affection for women in general.

The subject of wine can also acquire a more explicit connotation, symbolically emphasizing the new understanding of love. At the end of the long *nasīb* in *qaṣīda* VII, Abū Ṣakhr describes the intimate closeness with his beloved in a dream (the *khayal* motif):

VII: 23

عَذْبًا نَقَاخًا غَرِيضًا غَيْرَ أَعْدَادٍ فَبِتُّ أَفْرِشَهَا كَفِيِّ وَتُعَيِّنِي ٢٣

- 23 I spent the night making my hand her bed while she granted me constantly
sweet, pure, fresh water [*i.e.*, kisses].

One would expect the line to be continued with words to the effect that to the water honey and wine were added, as we have seen in the *nasīb* of poem x, for instance. In fact, wine is implied here and the motif of wine drinking follows two lines later—not as an attribute of delight, but as an analogy illustrating the permanent longing for unattainable love:

VII: 25–26

وَدَارُهَا بَيْنَ مَبْعُوقٍ وَأَجْيَادٍ إِنَّ الْمُنَى بَعْدَمَا اسْتَيْقَمْتُ وَأَنْصَرَفْتُ ٢٥
لَمْ يَقْضِ مِنْهَا طَلَاهُ بَعْدَ انْفَادٍ كَمَا تَمَنَّى حَمِيًّا الْكَأْسِ شَارِبُهَا ٢٦

- 25 Truly, the desires after I woke up and she went away—
for her encampment was between Mab‘ūq and Ajyād—
26 were like when a carouser desires the heat of a cup:
at the end his longing for it is not satisfied.

6 Wine in *Ghazal*

The symbolic meaning of the Bacchic motifs in the *ghazal* poetry of Abū Ṣakhr emphasizes his new attitude toward love. In xv, wine appears at a first glance as still merely an attribute of enjoyment, depicting the pleasures of intimacy with a beloved in the past:

XV: 16–21

ذُو الْعِلْمِ جَاهِلُهَا لَيْسَتْ مِنَ الْقَزَمِ صَهْبَاءٌ مُصَعَّقَةٌ مِنْ رَائِيٍّ رَذِمِ جَرْدَاءٌ مَهِيْبَةٌ فِي حَالَتِي شَمِيمِ فِي إِثْرِ سَارِيَةِ أَعْقَابِ مُحْتَدِمِ إِذَا يُكُونُ تَوَالِي النُّجْمِ كَالنُّظْمِ فَكَيْفَ أَهْوَى خَلِيلًا غَيْرَ ذِي قِيمِ	طُفْلٌ أَنَامَلَهَا سَمَحٌ شَمَائِلُهَا كَأَنَّ مَعْتَقَةً فِي الدَّنِّ مَغْلَقَةً شَيَّبَتْ بِمَوْهَبَةٍ مِنْ رَأْسِ مَرْقَبَةٍ مِنْ رَأْسِ عَالِيَةٍ مِنْ صَوْبِ غَادِيَةٍ خَالَطَ طَعْمَ ثَنَائِيهَا وَرَيْقَتَهَا تِلْكَ الْهَوَى وَمَنْنَى نَفْسِي وَرَغْبَتَهَا	١٦ ١٧ ١٨ ١٩ ٢٠ ٢١
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- 16 Soft are her fingertips, friendly is her temper,
[even] the connoisseur does not know her, she is not cruel.
- 17 As if good, preserved in a wine-jar,
reddish yellow-coloured¹⁸, strong [wine], [extracted] from rich, fluid
[wine]
- 18 was mixed with [water] from a mountain on top of a summit,
on a dangerous, slippery cliff of great height
- 19 on top of a high hill, from the rainfall of a cloud, which brings rain in the
morning
after a night cloud, which [comes] at the end of a hot day.

18 On *aṣhab* (fem. *ṣahbā'*) in relation to the color of wine meaning "goldish," see Vladimir Polosin, *Slovar' poetov plemeni 'abs (VI-VIII vv.)* [Dictionary of the poets of the tribe 'Abs (sixth–eighth centuries)] (Moscow: Vostočnaya literatura, 1995, 279). On its meaning "reddish yellow," see Georg Jacob, "Das Weinhaus nebst Zubehör nach den Fazelen des Ḥāfiẓ. Ein Beitrag zu einer Darstellung des altpersischen Lebens," in *Orientalische Studien*, ed. Carl Bezold (Gieszen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1906, 2:1066); on "reddish" or "a dark colour with a dash of red," see Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, 2:143–144, 155. *Ṣahbā'* signifies "wine" or "wine expressed from white grapes" (see Edward Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* [London: Willams and Norgate, 1872], bk. 1, pt. 4, 1737)—that is, "white wine," which in "southern countries is mostly yellow or brown yellow," on which see Wolfdietrich Fischer, *Farb- und Formbezeichnungen in der Sprache der altarabischen Dichtung. Untersuchungen zur Wortbedeutung und zur Wortbildung* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1965), 359–360.

- 20 It was blended with the flavor of her teeth and her saliva
when the stars appeared like a pearl necklace, one after another.
21 She is [my] love and the desires of my soul and its longing.
Yet how could I love someone without virtues!

Yet the poem ends with an exaggerated oath, whereby Abū Ṣakhr swears that he has experienced stronger pain from his love than a mother who has lost her children:

XV: 22–25

وَالنُّورِ وَالْبَيْتِ وَالْأَرْكَانِ وَالْحَرَمِ	حَلَقْتُ بِاللَّهِ وَالتَّوْرَةِ مُجْتَهِدًا	٢٢
عُوجِ ضَوَامِرٍ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقَلَمِ	وَرَبِّ رَكْبٍ عَلَى خُوصٍ مَخْيَسَةٍ	٢٣
هَلْ بَعْدَ ذَا لِدَوِي الْإِيمَانِ مِنْ قَسَمٍ	وَالطُّورِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى وَزَائِرِهِ	٢٤
شَمَطَاءُ تُشَكِّلُ بَعْدَ الشَّيْبِ وَالْهَرَمِ	لَقَدْ وَجَدْتُ بِلَيْلِي ضَعْفَ مَا وَجَدْتُ	٢٥

- 22 I swear eagerly by God, the Torah,
by the Light, by the Temple, the Corners and the Sanctuary [of the
Ka'ba],
23 by the Lord of the riders on hollow-eyed, bridled,
crooked and meagre [she-camels], and by the Gospel and the Qalam,
24 by Mount Sinai, the Mosque al-Aqṣā and its visitors!—
Is there another oath by those who swear?—
25 that I have suffered twice [as intense pain] because of [my love of] Laylā
as a grey-haired [woman] who lost [her children] after grey hair [had
befallen her] and she [had reached] an old age.¹⁹

Love is presented not just as a very intense feeling here but as a lovesickness that is impossible to cure or overcome. No other choice is left but to endure it. Moreover, a religiously connoted oath, along with the allusion to the virtue of preserving the memory of lost relatives, children or a brother, in IX:17 quoted earlier, indicates an ethical dimension of the emotional dedication to love. For-

19 For a more detailed discussion on this passage in relation to a similar comparison of poet's lovesickness with the pain of a mother who lost her only son by Sā'ida ibn Ju'ayya (VII:4–28 and X:14–30) and Abū Dhu'ayb (XXIII:5–20), see Dmitriev, *Das Poetische Werk des Abū Ṣakhr al-Hudālī*, 56–60.

getting the beloved and abandoning the feeling of love would thus be morally reprehensible and probably also religiously denunciative.²⁰ This projects a corresponding connotation back on the preceding wine motif that illustrates the poet's love, desires, and longing.

In other *ghazal* poems by Abū Ṣakhr, the new symbolic meaning of Bacchic motifs is expressed more clearly. In poem II, wine is not just a metaphor for sweet kisses:

II: 16

كَأَنَّ ذُؤَبَ مَجَاجِ النَّحْلِ رِيْقَتُهَا وَمَا تَضَمَّنُ أَجْوَافُ الرَّوَاقِيْدِ ١٦

16 It is as if her saliva was honey [mixed]
with what wine jars contain,

but the object of an infinite longing, which cannot be satiated:

كَالْكَأْسِ مَا رَكَدَتْ لَمْ يَصْحُ شَارِبُهَا وَقَالَ إِنْ نَفِدَتْ يَا كَاسِنَا زِيْدِي ١٧

17 Like a cup: as long as it is running out, the carouser will not become
sober,
and he says when it is empty: O cup, refill yourself!

Thus, the function of the wine motif here is to provide a poetic image, not just of pleasure, but of addiction and longing for permanent intoxication, which metaphorically expresses the idea of love as something one desires neither to give up, nor forget. Such love consumes the poet physically, emotionally and mentally—just as wine deprives its drinker of his senses—as Abū Ṣakhr admits in the following verse:

XI: 17

وَأَنْسَى الَّذِي قَدْ جِئْتُ كَيْمَا أَقُولُهُ كَمَا تَنْسَى لُبَّ شَارِبِهَا الْخَمْرُ ١٧

17 And I forget what I came to say
just like wine deprives its drinker of his senses.

20 The religious aspect of love is articulated more clearly in *'udhri ghazal*.

A similar example of the dizzying effect of wine carrying the lover away is implied in line 20 of poem XVII, where it is associated with the power of the beloved to capture the poet's heart:

XVII: 20

٢٠ إِذْ تَسْتَبِي قَلْبِي بِذِي عَذْبٍ ضَافٍ يُمِجُّ الْمِسْكَ كَالْكُرْمِ

20 For she captures my heart with lush ringlets,
which like wine bring forth the fragrance of musk.²¹

7 Symbolism

Both major aspects of wine motifs in Abū Ṣakhr's poetry—illustrating a positive emotional experience in the past and expressing a present emotional state of intoxication by lovesickness—have a symbolic meaning, which Dmitry Bykov has defined as one of the main literary functions of food in fiction.²² The metaphors of wine structures and corrugates the poetic subject. Two other functions of food in fiction distinguished by Bykov appear also to be relevant in the given context.

First is the psychological function: references to wine and wine drinking delineate key characteristics of poetic personages. The poet is a sophisticated lover who can afford the precious experience of wine and love, and knows to appreciate its value in all its subtle nuances; and the beloved—a no less refined person often empowered with an unconditional emotional control over the poet.

The notion of the refinement, as manifested in elaborate poetic depictions of the various appearances, tastes and qualities of wine, as well as its ability

21 Along with the pleasant smell, the motif of musk implies the dark color of the hair as a symbol of young age. On musk associated with wine in Arabic and Persian poetry, see Anya H. King, *Scent from the Garden of Paradise: Musk and the Medieval Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 143, 319–323, 358. The description of dark hair as musky is also a characteristic motif of Persian poetry; see Mehr Ali Newid, *Aromata in der iranischen Kultur unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der persischen Dichtung* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2010), 76; King, *Scent from the Garden of Paradise*, 157, 302; Bahram Grami, “Perfumery Plant Materials as Reflected in Early Persian Poetry,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 23 (2013): 43–44.

22 Dmitry Bykov, “Simvolika Edy v Mirovoy Literature” [The symbolism of food in world literature], public lecture presented on November 13, 2014, https://www.pryamaya.ru/dmitriy_bykov_nochnaya_lectsiya_simvolika_edy_v_mirovoy_literature.

to capture the poet's mind, soul, and body, corresponds to the third function, defined in Bykov's terms as the grounding one: the poetics of food is set against abstractedness and speculative blur. In this sense, the close-up view of wine and explicit references to the somatically tangible impact of wine drinking in early and classical Arabic poetry contribute substantially to the poeticity of versified speech, which, in Salah Said Agha's words, results directly from the concrete universal of the poetry, that is, the fundamental power of poetry to express universal truths through concrete imagery.²³

8 Cultural Significance between Historical Reality and Literary Fiction

The imagery of love in early and classical Arabic poetry is closely linked to various symbolic meanings and functions of literary representations of wine defined by the poet's intentions at the time and the existing cultural context. In the descriptions of the beloved, especially in the popular motif of the beloved's saliva, "ingredients" like fresh water, honey, and musk are likewise often used to illustrate the eroticizing sweetness and joy of love, as attested also in the above-quoted lines by Abū Ṣakhr (II:16, III:4, VII:23, IX:10–12, X:11–12, XV:18–19, XVII:20).²⁴ The description of wine, though, occupies a predominant place in poetic elaborations on the emotional effects of love and reflects the intoxicating powers of wine, as well as its unique character, perceived as noble and pure. The latter notion of wine as an exquisite drink can be seen as related to the historical background of wine trade and consumption in late antique Arabia. The mostly arid environment of Arabia imposed limits on local viticulture, rendering wine a particularly expensive commodity imported into the Arabian Peninsula from the adjacent regions, mainly from Byzantine Oriens (Bilād al-Shām) but also from Persian Mesopotamia and Ḥimyarite Yaman.²⁵ The high

23 Saleh Said Agha, "Of Verse, Poetry, Great Poetry, and History," in *Poetry and History: The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History*, ed. Ramzi Baalbaki, Saleh Said Agha, and Tarif Khalidi (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011), 1–35.

24 On musk describing the scent of the beloved's mouth, teeth, and saliva in Arabic poetry and the scent of the beloved's hair in Persian poetry, see King, *Scent from the Garden of Paradise*, 299–302.

25 Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, 2:139. On viticulture in Arabia, see Peter Heine, *Weinstudien. Untersuchungen zu Anbau, Produktion und Konsum des Weins im arabisch-islamischen Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1982); Henry Frederick Lutz, *Viticulture and Brewing in the Ancient Orient* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1922); and Georg Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben nach den Quellen geschildert* (Berlin: Mayer und

cost of wine in Arabia allowed poets to use the wine consumption motif for the purpose of self-praise,²⁶ as implicitly represented in the following verse by ‘Antara ibn Shaddād al-‘Absī (second half of the sixth century) in his *Mu‘allaqa* (verse 37):

وَلَقَدْ شَرِبْتُ مِنَ الْمُدَامَةِ بَعْدَمَا رَكَدَ الْهَوَاجِرُ بِالمَشُوفِ المَعْلَمِ

It may also be mentioned how often I have drunk good wine,
after the noon’s sweltering calm, from a bright figured bowl.²⁷

This also sees explicit representation for example in the passage by ‘Adī ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādī (d. ca. 600) describing the praiseworthy qualities of a wine purchaser (verse 12):

XIII: 7–14²⁸

لَا قِصَارٌ كُسْرٌ وَلَا هُنَّ رُوقٌ	وثنایا كالأخوان عذابٌ	٧
حَانَ مِنْ غَائِرِ النُّجُومِ خُفُوقٌ	مُشْرِقَاتٌ تَخَالُفُنَّ إِذَا مَا	٨
فِ تَرِيكِ القَدَى كَمِيتٍ رَحِيقٌ	بَاكَرْتِهِنَّ قَرَقَفٌ كَدَمِ الجِوِ	٩
نَ فَأَذَى كَى مِنْ نَشْرِهَا التَّعْتِيقُ	صَانَهَا التَّاجِرُ اليَهُودِيَّ حَوْلِي	١٠
نَّ وَحَانَتْ مِنَ اليَهُودِيِّ سُوقٌ	ثُمَّ فَضَّ الخِتَامُ عَنْ حَاجِبِ الدِّ	١١
أَرْيَحِي غَمْدَرٌ غَرْنِيقٌ	فَاسْتَبَاهَا أَثْمٌ خَرَقٌ كَرِيمٌ	١٢
قَيْنَةٌ فِي يَمِينِهَا إِبرِيقٌ	ثُمَّ نَادُوا عَلَى الصُّبُوحِ جَاءَتْ	١٣
يَكِ صَفَى سُلَافِهَا الرَّأُوقُ	قَدَمَتُهُ عَلَى سُلَافٍ كَعَبِينِ الدِّ	١٤

Müller, 1897), 96–109. Various aspects of wine culture in Persia are subject of the contributions published in Bert G. Fagner, Ralph Kauz, and Florian Schwarz, eds., *Wine Culture in Iran and Beyond* (Vienna: Verlag der ÖAW, 2014).

26 One filled wineskin could cost as much as a three-year-old camel; see Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben*, 104; Lutz, *Viticulture and Brewing*, 151.

27 James E. Montgomery, *Dīwān ‘Antarah ibn Shaddād. A Literary-Historical Study* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 9, translated by Arthur John Arberry as *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1957), 181.

28 Muḥammad Jabbār Mu‘ayyid, *Dīwān ‘Adī ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādī* (Baghdad: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād, 1965), 76–79.

- 7 And [my beloved's] teeth, like a camomile, sweet,
neither short fragments nor tusks,
8 Shining, you imagine them like an early
setting of falling stars.
9 Wine sweetened them in the morning, [red] like heart's blood,
[so clean] that [any] speck [in it] becomes visible, dark red, matured
wine.
10 A Jewish merchant kept it for two years,
so that the maturing process has enriched its fragrance.
11 Then the seal was removed from the cork of the pitcher
and the Jewish wine market opened.
12 It was purchased by a tall, generous, noble,
magnanimous [man], his nourishment is soft bread.
13 Then they called to the morning feast, and
a singer came with a jar in her right hand.
14 I served it on top of the best [drinks], [it is golden yellow]
like the eye of a cock, a strainer has cleaned the best of it.

The expensiveness of wine stimulated the transregional wine trade in the Near and Middle East, for only high-cost commodities could be transported and traded profitably over long distances.²⁹ In this context, it is remarkable that in early Arabic the most common word for merchant—*tājir*—often has the specific meaning of ‘wine merchant’:³⁰

Imru' al-Qays (sixth century) XIV:8³¹

كَأَنَّ التَّجَارَ أَصْعَدُوا بِسَبِيئَةٍ مِنْ
الْخُصِّ حَتَّى أَنْزَلُوها عَلَى بَسْرِ

Like wine merchants, who go up from al-Khuṣṣ³² with imported wine,
until they discharge it at Yusur.

29 Compare the mention of wine in the New Testament book of Revelation (18:11–13) among other luxury goods such as gold, pearls, and frankincense, which “the merchants of the earth” will no longer be able to sell.

30 Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben*, 99.

31 Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, ed., *Imru' al-Qays. Dīwān* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1958), 111.

32 According to Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), al-Khuṣṣ is a name of a village near al-Qādisiyya, a city to the southwest of al-Ḥira. See Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch [Mu'jam al-buldān]*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1867), 2:449. The Arabic word *khuṣṣ* (pl. *khaṣāṣ*, *khuṣūṣ*) also has the meaning “wine of the best quality” and

Another aspect underlying the intercultural exchange manifested in the wine trade and reflected in the texts of early Arabic poetry is rooted in the fact that wine production and trade in late antique Arabia was largely in the hands of Christians and Jews. Georg Jacob suggested even that Christianity spread among the Arabs along the wine-trading routes.³³ Moreover, the usage of Persian vocabulary in early Arabic poetry on wine attests to cultural exchange between Arabia and Persia, which was already flourishing before the spread of the Arab Muslim caliphate in the Islamic period. Particularly important in this respect is the poetic heritage associated with the late antique Arab city of al-Ḥīra, the center of the Lakhmid principality. Situated in a fertile and healthy area near the Euphrates in southern Iraq,³⁴ it lay in close proximity to Sasanian Iran and its capital Seleucea/Ctesiphon, one of the largest urban agglomerations of the late antique world. Some of the earliest and most elaborate examples of Arabic wine poetry are attributed to the poets closely related to al-Ḥīra, in particular ‘Adī ibn Zayd and al-A’shā (d. ca. 7/629),³⁵ whose poetry reveals urban context and familiarity with both Arab and Persian cultures.³⁶ Furthermore, based on analysis of the Arabic poetry corpus from al-Ḥīra, Gustav von

“shop of a vintner.” See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 746; Albert Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire arabe-français* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Cie, 1860), 1:580.

- 33 Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben*, 99. Noteworthy in this respect is the testimony of *The Chronicle of Se’ert*, reporting that a merchant from Najrān, a South Arabian oasis town, was baptized in al-Ḥīra at the time of the Sasanian king Yazdgird I (399–421). Upon his return to Najrān, he converted his kinsmen and other city residents to Christianity. See Hubert Kaufhold, “Nağrān,” in *Kleines Lexikon des Christlichen Orients*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), 371–373.
- 34 Al-Ḥīra was located near today’s Najaf and the city of al-Kūfa, founded in 16/637. See Alois Musil, *The Middle Euphrates: A Topographical Itinerary* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1927). On the history of al-Ḥīra, see Philip Wood, “Al-Ḥīra and Its Histories,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 136 (2016): 785–799; Isabel Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra: Eine arabische Kulturmetropole im spätantiken Kontext* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Greg Fisher, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); ‘Arif Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Ghanī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥīra fi-l-Jāhiliyya wa-l-Islām* (Damascus: Dār Kinān, 1993).
- 35 For biographical information on ‘Adī ibn Zayd, see Theresia Hainthaler, “‘Adī ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādī, the Pre-Islamic Christian Poet of al-Ḥīra and His Poem Nr. 3 written in Jail,” *Parole de l’Orient* 30 (2005): 157–172. On wine poetry by ‘Adī ibn Zayd, see Kirill Dmitriev, “Poetičeskaya shkola al-Ḥīry i istoki arabskoy vinnoy poesii na primere qāfiyyi ‘Adī ibn Zayda al-‘Ibādī” [The poetry school of al-Ḥīra and the origins of the Arabic wine song: The qāfiyya of ‘Adī ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādī], in *Symbol 58: Syriaca and Arabica*, ed. Nikolay Seleznyov (Moscow, 2010), 319–339. See also Thomas Bauer, “al-A’shā,” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 2nd ed., ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London: Routledge, 2010), 107.
- 36 Hainthaler, “‘Adī ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādī, the Pre-Islamic Christian Poet,” 162–163.

Grünebaum, and more recently Dmitry Frolov, came to the conclusion that Persian influence reached beyond the formal borrowing of Persian vocabulary or Bacchic motifs and considerably contributed to the formation of the Arabic poetic technique, stimulating the increased usage of short poetic meters such as *ramal* and *khafif* suitable for singing and performance with the accompaniment of music.³⁷

The impetus originating from cultural exchange with Sasanian Iran did not remain limited, either geographically (to Eastern Arabia) or chronologically (to the pre-Islamic period). On the contrary, historical sources suggest that dynamic relations involving several aspects of intertribal ties and political, economic, and military life existed in pre-Islamic time between al-Ḥīra and the sedentary centers of West Arabia including Mecca and Medina.³⁸

One cultural aspect of this process was the importing of Persian singers into Arabia via al-Ḥīra, which promoted the spread of Persian singing culture, along with the spread of poetic innovations introduced in al-Ḥīra to other regions of Arabia, including Ḥijāz, where the tribe of the Banū Hudhayl resided. Thus, the fact that the Ḥijāz school of lyrical poetry, which emerged in Mecca and Medina in the Umayyad period, corresponds to the metrical pattern of the poets from al-Ḥīra can be seen as confirming a lasting impact of the cultural exchange between Arabia and Persia in pre- and early Islamic times.³⁹ Further indicators of this are found in early Arabic wine poetry and the development of the *khamriyyāt* genre in the Umayyad period, as attested to also in the poetry by Abū Ṣakhr.

The metrical structure of Abū Ṣakhr's poems remains conventional; he makes no use of short meters.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, his verses on wine reveal Persian elements. As Ali Hussein has pointed out, Abū Ṣakhr in IX:11 uses the Persian words *isfīnṭ* (probably a Persian word for wine) and *zarajūna* (gold colored [wine]).⁴¹ In addition, the poet mentions in XVI:3 "Persian songstresses at a carousal." Persian wine terminology and the motif of Persian singing girls by Abū Ṣakhr could be understood as reflecting the realities of wine-drinking cus-

37 Gustav von Grünebaum, "Abū Du'ād al-Iyādī. Collection of Fragments," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 51 (1948–1952): 102; Dmitry Frolov, *Classical Arabic Verse: History and Theory of 'Arūd* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 230–238.

38 Meir J. Kister, "Al-Ḥīra: Some Notes on Its Relation with Arabia," *Arabica* 11 (1968): 143–169; Meir J. Kister, "Mecca and Tamim," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 8 (1965): 113–163.

39 Frolov, *Classical Arabic Verse*, 239–240.

40 *Ṭawīl*, thirteen poems; *basīṭ*, three; *kāmil*, two; *wāfir*, two. Poems with wine motifs have following meters: *ṭawīl*, four poems; *basīṭ*, three; *kāmil*, two.

41 Hussein, "Rhetoric of Hudhālī Wine Poetry," 31.

toms to which he would have been exposed. At the same time, however, they clearly belonged to the existing poetic conventions of early Arabic poetry and could have been used by Abū Ṣakhr merely on the basis of such conventions, without referring to any real experience in his life. This raises an important question about the historical value of poetry as a highly fictional product of human creativity. If early Arabic poetry, despite reflecting historical realities, can, as a literary product, only be essentially fictional,⁴² why and to what extent should the representations of wine in it, real or imaginary, be regarded as culturally significant?

The symbolism of wine motifs in the poetry of Abū Ṣakhr represents a vital dimension of their poeticity, and as such it is polyphonic. A particular symbolic meaning of one and the same object of wine can vary from one poetic description of it to another, and Abū Ṣakhr fully exploits this freedom in providing different connotations depending on his subjective intentions and the specific ideas of love he is trying to express through Bacchic imagery. Poured into the mold of literary fiction, does wine therefore entirely evaporate into the limberness of poetic symbolism? And if so, can one still talk about wine as a signifier of Arab culture on the basis of poetic sources? Or is it only the symbolic meaning of wine descriptions that retains hermeneutic relevance, as has often been presupposed, especially in relation to interpreting mystical wine poetry in classical Arabic?⁴³

The cultural significance of symbols is fundamental. Culture as such, according to the famous definition by Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckholm, “consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols.”⁴⁴ It is evident that language, and with it also poetry, fulfills a crucial function in transmitting culturally constitutive symbols as well as in shaping their meaning. Language and poetry, as the domain in which language most creatively calls attention to itself, are not passive communicative tools but active driving forces of culture as a process of negotiating meaning.⁴⁵ And

42 Renate Jacobi, “Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre in der klassischen arabischen Dichtung,” in *Story-Telling in the Framework of Nonfictional Arabic Literature*, ed. Stefan Leder (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), 22.

43 See, e.g., the commentary on *al-Khamriyya*, the famous wine poem by Ibn al-Fāriḍ (576–632/1181–1235) in Thomas Emil Homerin, ed. and trans., *The Wine of Love and Life: Ibn al-Fāriḍ's al-Khamriyah and al-Qaysarī's Quest for Meaning* (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2005), 14–15.

44 Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckholm, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952).

45 Andreas Wimmer, *Kultur als Prozess. Zur Dynamik des Aushandelns von Bedeutungen* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005).

since meaning is “the determinable property of people and cultures,”⁴⁶ the cultural significance of the objectively real is directly proportional to the degree of the manifestation of what Mikhail Bakhtin highlighted as “the unfinalisability of meaning in human relationships.”⁴⁷ An object like wine can be regarded as culturally relevant if it has a meaning in a given cultural context, and it can be valued as culturally important depending on the intensity and diversity of dialogic interaction with and about this meaning. In this respect, poetic wine motifs in early Arabic poetry, whether carrying a literal or a symbolic meaning, are culturally at least as significant as any material aspects of viticulture and wine consumption in late antique Arabia.

Poetry as a creative form of interaction with the real by means of language is an essential medium for expressing and promoting the cultural significance of a particular phenomenon of that reality—in this case, wine in Arab culture during the Umayyad period. The popularity of the wine theme in early, and also in later, classical Arabic poetry affirms and intensifies the significance of wine in Arab culture. Finally, one might also note that poetry and wine drinking in the cultural tradition of Arabia are phenomena of collective performance and dialogic interaction. Both aim to provoke an effect on the human emotional state. Thus, poetry and wine appear to be intrinsically tied to each other in the history of the Arabic literary tradition as indispensable signifiers of Arab culture.

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46 Andy Lock and Tom Strong, *Social Constructionism: Sources and Stirrings in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 90.

47 *Ibid.*, 92.

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Hashish and Food

Arabic and European Medieval Dreams of Edible Paradises

Danilo Marino

According to the Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), among the first edicts issued by al-Malik ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Aybak (r. 648–655/1250–1257) after his accession to the throne as second Mamlūk sultan of Egypt in 648/1250 was the introduction of a tax on *al-munkarāt*—reprehensible acts such as the consumption of intoxicants, like wine (*khamr*), beer (*mizr*), and hashish (*hashīsh*), as well as prostitution.¹ This means that, by the mid-seventh/thirteenth century hashish use was widespread enough in society to justify the payment of a tax to the state treasury. Therefore, whenever a Mamlūk ruler issued bans or raised taxes on *al-munkarāt*, either for moral or for financial purposes, hashish seems to have always been coupled with wine and beer, as well as linked with other immoral conduct, such as prostitution and pederasty.²

What al-Maqrīzī calls *hashīsh* is a preparation of a mix of ground seeds, resinous extracts, or powdered leaves of *Cannabis sativa* or hemp. Indeed, the Arabic *qinnab*, apparently an Akkadian calque (*qunnabu*) from the Greek κάμβισ, which might have later been adopted into Aramaic, is a plant that was known in Mesopotamia and Egypt from ancient times.³ This herb was already in use in medicine and well known to the Arabic and Islamic botanists and physicians at least since the second/eighth century. The survey of the medieval books of plants shows that Arab botanists, influenced by the Greek pharmacopeia and especially Galen’s *De simplicium medicamentorum*, *De alimentorum*

1 Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā‘iz wa-l-i’tibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 1990), 2:90.

2 Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, “Plaisirs illicites et châtements dans les sources mameloukes,” *Annales Islamologiques* 39 (2005): 275–323; Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, *Délinquance et ordre social: L’État mamelouke syro-égyptien face au crime à la fin du IX^e–XV^e siècle* (Bordeaux: Ausonius Éditions, 2012); Paulina B. Lewicka, “Alcohol and Its Consumption in Medieval Cairo: The Story of a Habit,” *Studia Arabistyczne i Islamistyczne* 12 (2004): 55–97; 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, no. 1 (2005): 40–91.

3 In the ancient Assyrian clay cuneiform tablets on herbal drugs, it was known as “the drug which takes away the mind,” see Reginald Campbell Thompson, *A Dictionary of Assyrian Botany* (London: British Academy, 1949), 221.

facultatibus and Dioscorides's *Materia medica*, distinguished between a domestic (*bustanī*) and a wild (*barrī*) variety of *qinnab*, the latter also used for the manufacture of fiber and rope (in modern taxonomy this is *Cannabis sativa sativa*, one of the two species of hemp). In addition to *qinnab*, the Persian words *shāhdānaj* or *shāhdānaq* were also adopted to indicate either the domestic plant and its seed (*bizr*) or fruit (*thamara*) and leaf (*waraq*). Both species were used as a remedy for many diseases, including digestion, earache, and dandruff, and as a carminative and analgesic. However, its seed in particular if consumed in large amounts was believed to cause impotence, mental disorder, amnesia, and even insanity.⁴

As for the word *hashīsh*, it is an Arabic word meaning “dry grass,” or simply “herb,” and first appeared in reference to a hemp-based product in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century. Ibn al-Bayṭār (d. 646/1248) in his *Jāmiʿ* says that *hashīsh* is an Egyptian nickname for a third variety of hemp called “the Indian hemp” (*al-qinnab al-hindī*), the consumption of which was believed to trigger intoxicating and euphoric effects. There is thus no reason to doubt that the Arabic *hashīsh* in these sources overlaps with what modern botanists call *Cannabis sativa indica*, the second variety of *cannabis* that produces a large amount of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the principal constituent of the plant's psychoactive effects.

As far as nonmedical or botanical works are concerned, the word *hashīshiyya* and *jamāʿat al-hashīshiyya* first appeared in the “anti-Ismaʿīlī Literary campaign,” as Farhad Daftary has called it. In the *Īqāʿ ṣawāʿiq al-irghām*, written after the *al-Hidāya al-Āmiriyya fī ibtāl daʿwā al-Nizāriyya*—both epistles issued by the tenth Fatimid caliph al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh around 517/1123 to refute

4 Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Aḥmad al-dīn Ibn al-Bayṭār, *Al-jāmiʿ li-mufradāt al-adwiya wa-l-aghdiya* (Būlāq: Maktabat al-ʿĀmira, 1874), 4:39; Martin Levey, “HASHISH,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. H.A.R. Gibb, J.H. Kramers, E. Lévi-Provençal, J. Schacht et al., 3:266; Sami Khalef Hamarneh, “Pharmacy in Medieval Islam and the History of Drug Addiction,” *Medical History* 16 (1972): 226–237; Indalecio Lozano Cámara, “Terminología científica árabe del cáñamo (ss. VII–XVIII),” in *Ciencias de la naturaleza en al-Andalus—Textos y estudios*, ed. C. Álvarez de Morales (Granada: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Escuela de Estudios Árabes, 1996), 4:147–164; id., “El uso terapéutico del *Cannabis sativa* L. en la medicina árabe,” *Asclepio* 49, no. 2 (1997): 199–208; and id., “Acerca de una noticia sobre el qinnab en el ʿYamiʿ de Ibn al-Bayṭār,” in *Ciencias de la naturaleza en al-Andalus—Textos y estudios*, ed. E. García Sánchez (Granada: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Escuela de Estudios Árabes, 1990), 1:152. A detailed survey of the botanical and pharmacological description of *qinnab* and hashish can be found in my unpublished PhD dissertation: Danilo Marino, “Racontar le haschich dans l'époque mamelouke: Étude et édition critique partielle de la *Rāḥat al-arwāḥ fī l-ḥašīš wa-l-rāḥ* de Badr al-Dīn Abū l-Tuqā al-Badrī (847–894/1443–1489)” (PhD diss., Inalco, Paris, 2015), 33–51, <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01368946>.

Nizār's claim to the Ismā'īlī imamate—*hashīshīyya* and *jamā'at al-hashīshīyya* are clearly used in reference to the Syrian Nizāris but without explanation. Similarly, the term appears in some early Seljuqid chronicles, but again without any detail. Thus, already at the beginning of the sixth/twelfth century *hashīshīyya* was a well-known term; otherwise, it would have needed clarification. According to Daftary, in all these sources *hashīshīyya* and *jamā'at al-hashīshīyya* are both used as synonyms for other expressions referring to the Ismā'īlī community, such as *bāṭiniyya* and *malāḥida*. However, it seems that by the eighth/fourteenth century, the term had been abandoned. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), for instance, writes that the Syrian Nizāris, once called *al-hashīshīyya al-ismā'īlīyya*, were named in his time *fidāwīyya*.⁵ Moreover, neither in al-Maqrīzī's section on hashish nor in al-Badrī's *Rāḥat al-arwāḥ fi-l-hashīsh wa-l-rāḥ* is there any specific reference to the Ismā'īlī sect. Finally, by the sixth/twelfth century the term *hashshāshīn*—albeit with a different spelling (e.g., *assassini*, *assissini*, *heyssessini*, *assassins*)—had already reached medieval Europe through descriptions of returning Crusaders and Latin historical accounts of the time.⁶

1 Hashish as Food: A Comestible Legal Intoxicant versus an Illegal Drink

The *Kitāb Rāḥat al-arwāḥ fi-l-hashīsh wa-l-rāḥ* (*The Delight of the Soul in Hashish and Wine*) of Taqī al-Dīn Abū l-Tuqā al-Badrī (d. 894/1488) is the most comprehensive text dealing with hashish in premodern *adab* literature. Not only does al-Badrī mention several medical and legal sources that had been discussing hashish use for almost two centuries; he also devotes an entire paragraph to how the drug was prepared. Well before the eleventh/seventeenth century, when the habit of smoking dry cannabis leaves emerged alongside tobacco smoking,⁷ hashish was primarily eaten, in the form of small pills and confec-

5 Farhad Daftary, *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Isma'ilis* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), 89–90.

6 Silvestre De Sacy, "Mémoire sur la dynastie des Assassins, et sur l'étymologie de leur Nom," *Mémoire Royal de France, classe d'histoire et littérature ancienne* 4 (1818): 1–84; Kevin M. McCarthy, "The Origin of Assassin," *American Speech* 48, nos. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 1978): 77–83; Juliette Wood, "The Old Man of the Mountain in Medieval Folklore," *Folklore* 99, no. 1 (1988): 78–87; Daftary, *Assassin Legends*, 91–135.

7 Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988); James Greham, "Smoking and the 'Early Modern' Sociability: The Great Tobacco Debate in the Ottoman Middle East (Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries)," *American Historical Review* (December 2006): 1352–1377; Yahya

tionery. Al-Badrī reports some recipes for its preparation: in Egypt, for instance, seven parts of the leaves of the domestic variety were boiled together with one part of the wild plant, which served as a fermenting agent (*khamīra*). Then, the mixture was left to decompose for six weeks, after which small balls (*ṭabāt*) were formed from the dough. Alternatively, the leaves were soaked in salty water for seven days. Then a dough was made and left to dry in the sun before pills were formed. The people of the “Northern lands” had the most expensive but also most powerful preparation: first, they roasted the green leaves, then, after powdering them, they added a thick, sweet molasses (*dibs*) from dates or grapes. Last they shaped the dough into small spheres.

Al-Badrī strongly condemns the practice of adding ritually unclean ingredients to the process, such as cow’s dung and urine, or mixing in menstrual blood to the decomposing leaves of *qinnab*.⁸ The use of urine is said to have been inspired by Iblīs, who taught the Indian sheikh Pīr Rantān how to cultivate cannabis and prepare hashish. He is also allegedly the first person to have discovered the mind-altering effects of the herb.⁹ Indeed, both al-Maqrīzī and al-Badrī reject as fabrication and calumny the commonly held belief that hashish was first used either by the sheikh Quṭb al-Dīn Ḥaydar (d. ca. 618/1221–1222) from Zāwa in Khurāsān or by Jamāl al-Dīn Qalandar (d. 630/1232–1233) from Sāva. Nevertheless, they also admit that the habit of eating electuaries (*maʿjūn*) made of hashish was a corruption of the rituals of some Eastern mystics, whose itinerancy might have spread the consumption of the drug all over the Middle East and as far as Egypt.¹⁰

As early as the seventh/thirteenth century, all sources point to the Sufi’s use of hashish. The first literary texts on the herb, for instance, elaborate on the drug’s role as adjuvant to trance (*wajd*) and the complete extinction of indi-

Michot, *L’opium et le café (édition et traduction d’un texte arabe anonyme, précédées d’une première exploration de l’opiophilie ottomane et accompagnées d’une anthologie)* (Paris: Albouraq, 2008); and id., *Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Aqḥiṣārī (d. 1041/1631 or 1043/1634): Against Smoking, an Ottoman Manifesto* (Markfield, UK: Interface Publications and Kube Publishing, 2010).

8 Taqī al-Dīn Abū l-Tuqā Al-Badrī, *Rāḥat al-arwāḥ fī l-ḥaṣhīsh wa-l-raḥ*, Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhiriyya of Damascus, ms. *adab ‘arabī* 7855, *maǧmū’* 210 (ms. D), 58a–b; ms. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, ms. *arabe* 3544 (ms. P), 8a–b. Al-Badrī reports the last recipes from the *Zawājir al-Raḥmān fī taḥrīm ḥaṣhīshat al-Shayṭān*, a book apparently lost written by the Shāfi‘ī shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Najjār (ninth/fifteenth century). See Franz Rosenthal, *The Herb: Hashish versus Medieval Islamic Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 13 and 16–17.

9 *Rāḥa*, ms. D, 58b; ms. P, 8b.

10 Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 2:127; *Rāḥa*, ms. D, 57a; ms. P, 4a.

vidual consciousness in the contemplation of God (*fanā'*).¹¹ The Ḥanbalī traditionist and preacher Ibn al-Jawzī (510–597/1126–1200), in his catalog of heresies, the *Talbīs Iblīs*, also remarks that some Sufis “replaced the [temporary] loss of consciousness (*izālat al-'aql*) entailed by wine with something else they called *al-hashīsh* or the electuary (*al-ma'jūn*).”¹²

By then, the eating of hashish for nonmystical purposes must have been widespread in society as a recreational habit; if that were not the case, political authorities would not have introduced a tax on hashish consumption. A number of factors may have played a role in the popularization of the drug: hashish confections were comparatively inexpensive because of the low overhead for their production, and this eventually allowed for a larger segment of the population to enjoy intoxication; the pills were also easily transportable, stored, and hidden, as they could stay in a pocket or in the palm of a hand and be quickly consumed anywhere. Finally hashish eating was less suspicious than alcohol because it could not be smelled on one's breath, although red eyes were considered a visible sign of hashish intoxication.

However, it is perhaps the lack of an explicit religious condemnation that made this drug so popular and also prompted several jurists to investigate its use to create a legal framework for regulating its recreational use. As there is no direct reference to hashish in the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, or early legal books, according to the seventh/thirteenth-century Shāfi'ī scholar al-'Ukbarī (d. ca. 690/1291), there was no reason to consider hashish forbidden. This is why he wrote *al-Sawāniḥ al-adabiyya fī l-madā'ih al-qinnabiyya*, the only known treatise in praise of the

11 Two long *qaṣīda*-s by al-Nūr al-Is'irdī (d. 656/1258), for example, allude to the use of hemp during “the nights of pious devotion (*layālī al-ta'abbud*).” See Rosenthal, *Herb*, 163–164. Al-Is'irdī's contemporary Ibn al-Ḥaddād (d. after 673/1274) compiled three *maqāma*-s where he describes a group of people including adepts of the Qalandariyya sect debating about the virtues and damages of cannabis consumption, Ibrahim Geries, “Débat sur le Haschich dans les maqāmas d' Ibn al-Ḥaddād,” in *Il dialogo nella cultura araba: Strutture, funzioni, significati*, ed. Mirella Cassarino and Antonella Ghersetti (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino 2015), 107–121.

12 Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr, 2001), 329. Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jawabārī (d. after 619/1222) also wrote a whole chapter of his *Unveiling of the Secrets (Kashf al-asrār)* to “those who pretend to be Sufi.” According to al-Jawabārī, purported Sufis like the followers of the Ḥaydariyya sect, an antinomian group who used to shave their beards and wear iron rings and chains, considered hashish legal and, after consuming it, satisfied the strong sexual arousal produced by the herb with teenage boys. See al-Jawabārī, *Kitāb al-Mukhtār fī kashf al-asrār*, ed. Manuela Höglmeier (Berlin: Klaus-Schwarz Verlag, 2006), 115. See also Ahmet Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Middle Period, 1200–1550*, 2nd ed. (London: Oneworld Publications, 2006), 54.

herb. This work, apparently lost, was extensively quoted by later Shāfi'ī scholars such as Qutb al-Dīn al-Qaṣṭallānī (d. 686/1287) and al-Zarkashī (794/1392), as well as by al-Maqrīzī and al-Badrī.

Al-Qaṣṭallānī in particular wrote an epistle in refutation of the *Sawānīh* in which he strongly criticized al-'Ukbarī for using literature as an argument in favor of the permissibility of hashish consumption.¹³ According to al-Qaṣṭallānī, there are two kinds of edibles—food (*ghidhā'*) and drugs (*dawā'*)—and hashish belongs to the latter category. That means that it should be used only as needed because it is among those drugs that are dangerous to both body and mind. In addition, for al-Qaṣṭallānī hashish is basically something repulsive (*khabiṭh*) and, as far as its effects are concerned, is essentially an intoxicant (*muskir*) because, like wine, it muddles people's rational faculties.¹⁴

Among the fiercest detractors of hashish was Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). Discussing the ritual impurity (*najāsa*) of cannabis, the Ḥanbalī jurist relates three opinions: (1) hashish is not ritually unclean (*najs*); (2) only liquid hashish preparations (*mā'i'*) are impure, whereas the solid state (*jāmid*) of the herb is clean (*tāhir*); and finally, (3) corresponding to Ibn Taymiyya's own position, hashish is impure like the fermented drink made of raw grape juice (*khamr*) and, as such, should be listed among the repulsive substances (*khabiṭh*). If wine is an impure liquid as urine is, then hashish is an unclean solid comparable to feces (*'adhira*).¹⁵ Hence the *ḥadd* legal sanction would apply equally to the hashish eater and the wine drinker.

However, Ibn Taymiyya was much more concerned with the physical and intellectual pleasures of the drug, or what he calls "the unlawful pleasure" (*al-ḥazz al-muḥarram*).¹⁶ In fact, because the consumption of hashish implies a deliberate intention to satisfy a hedonistic desire such as the contemplation of beautiful faces, sexual pleasure, or even dancing and singing, hashish should be considered illegal because it distracts from *dhikr Allāh*. In fact, hashish is for Ibn Taymiyya particularly dangerous because it "opens the door of imagination" (*[al-ḥashīsha] fataḥat bāb al-khayāl*), creating illusions that in his view were none other than "corrupted images" (*khayālāt fāsida*).¹⁷ A similar idea was

13 Al-Qaṣṭallānī's epistle is the *Kitāb Tatmīm al-takrīm li-mā fi-l-ḥashīsha min al-taḥrīm*, in Indalecio Lozano Cámara, "Estudios y documentos sobre la historia del cáñamo y del hachís en el Islam medieval" (PhD diss., Universidad de Granada, 1993), 2:50; and id., "Qutb al-Dīn al-Qaṣṭallānī y sus dos epístolas sobre el hachís," *al-Qanṭara* 18, no. 1 (1997): 117–118.

14 Lozano Cámara, "Estudios y documentos," 2:47–50.

15 Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā* (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, 1985), 34:34, 204, 206, and 112.

16 Ibid., 34:223.

17 Ibid., 34:222–223.

also developed later by al-Badrī, for whom hashish gives to the person who consumes it short-lived, deceptive, illusory pleasure (*al-ladhdha al-wahmiyya*).¹⁸

Other scholars contested this general prohibition that was based on an analogy between wine and hashish. According to the Mālikī jurist al-Qarāfi (d. 684/1285), even if hashish—like *banj*, henbane (*saykarān*),¹⁹ and opium (*afyūn*)—is a corruptive substance (*mufsid*) and, like *khamr*, muddles the reasoning and the senses (*al-ḥawās*) of its user, this does not automatically imply that it falls under the legal category of fermented liquids. In fact, only *al-muskirāt* in his view results in intoxication (*nashwa*), delight (*surūr*), and courage (*shajā'a*), and gives confidence and strength to the spirit (*quwwat nafs*), along with animosity and hostility. Consequently, the hashish eater will receive a less severe punishment, the *ta'zīr*, than the *ḥadd* legal sanction normally applied to the wine drinker. In addition, al-Qarāfi does not find any evidence showing that *mufsid* substances like hashish should be considered ritually impure (*najis*) like the *muskir* ones, and so praying under the effects of the herb does not invalidate the ritual prayer (*ṣalāh*).²⁰

A similar position was adopted by the Shāfi'ī scholar Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī (794/1392), who, in his *Zahr al-'arīsh fī taḥrīm al-ḥashīsh* suggested that the consumption of an intoxicating plant (*al-nabāt al-muskir*) is not comparable to the drinking of any unlawful intoxicating liquid because only the latter has the power to increase the feeling of joy and pleasure (*shidda muṭriba*). So, even if hashish fails to be included into the *muskir* legal category, it nevertheless falls under the *mukhaddir* and *mufattir* category, which provoke weakness and laxity in the body, and, according to Prophetic tradition, all that intoxicates and causes weakness should be banned (*nahā al-Nabī 'an kull muskir wa-mufattir*).²¹

18 *Rāḥa*, ms. D, 65b; ms. P, 30a.

19 In the medieval sources, there was some confusion regarding *banj* and henbane. See Max Meyerhof, BANDJ, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:1014.

20 Shihāb al-Dīn Abī l-'Abbās Aḥmad Idrīs Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣanhājī Al-Qarāfi, *Kitāb Anwār al-burūq fī anwā' al-furūq*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Sarraj and 'Alī Jum'a Muḥammad (Cairo: Dār al-Salām li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī' wa-l-Tarjama, 2001), 1:361–365.

21 Lozano Cámara, “Estudios y documentos,” 2:60–61; and id., *Tres tratados árabes sobre el Cannabis indica: Textos para la historia del hachís en las sociedades islámicas s. XI–XVI* (Madrid: Agencia española de cooperación internacional, Instituto de cooperación con el Mundo Árabe, 1990), 92–95 and 132–137. This is also the opinion of the Shāfi'ī Egyptian jurist Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1567), Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, *Kitāb al-Zawājir 'an iqtirāf al-kabā'ir* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Azhariyya, 1907), 172–173; and id., *al-Fatāwā al-kubrā al-fiqhiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1983), 226.

Thus, apart from Ibn Taymiyya's general prohibition, for most scholars the legal status of hashish was more ambiguous. As far as the effects of hashish are concerned, and regardless of the fact that it was consumed in solid form rather than drunk, hashish was not assimilated to *khamr*. If wine is considered a source of strength, virility, courage, and self-confidence, but also of animosity because of its hot temperament, then the cold and dry nature of hashish entails relaxation, passivity, dullness, apathy, and drowsiness. Yet if the consumption of hashish can lead to sleepiness, the herb could be a means of evading reality and seeking refuge in the realm of imagination and dreams.

2 Hashish and Food

In his *Rāḥat al-arwāḥ fī l-ḥashīsh wa-l-raqḥ* al-Badrī is the first who collects poems and anecdotes on hashish, to such an extent that we can consider the *Rāḥa* the largest collection of hashish literature of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk periods (564/1169–922/1516). As the title suggests, the *Rāḥa* is divided in two parts: the first is about wine and the second about hashish;²² both sections are symmetrically arranged in seven chapters.²³ The hashish part opens with a discussion on the origins of the herb and who discovered its inebriating effects, the second chapter lists the different names and nicknames of the drug, the third presents the botanical and medical discussions, the fourth collects a number of anecdotes and entertaining stories about hashish eaters, the fifth examines the link between hashish consumption and food, the sixth focuses on hashish and homoeroticism, and the seventh collects a number of poetic compositions inspired by hashish.

Chapter 5 opens with the following observation:

قيل يستعمل عليها من الأطعمة أخفها ومن الحلاوات أشرفها ويجلس في أتزه مكان
ويستجلب على الإخوان حتى يتحدث بشيء كان وبشيء لا كان ثم [يسرد]²⁴ ويهدس في
ذكر الحلاوات والطعام ويظن ذلك جميعه يقظة وهو في المنام.²⁵

22 This is the order according to the Damascus manuscript (ms. D) of the *Rāḥa*; the Paris manuscript (ms. P) inverts the two sections.

23 Only ms. D gives a clear chapter division. The first section is about wine (22a).

24 *Rāḥa*, ms. P, 24b.

25 *Rāḥa*, ms. D, 62a; ms. P, 24b.

It is said that with [the herb] one would [also] consume the lightest foods and the finest sweets, then he would sit in the most isolated and pleasant place and would bring together friends to talk about real and imaginary things. After that, he would tell [stories] one after another about sweets and food and he thinks that everything happens when he is awake while he is instead dreaming.

This introduction highlights two important elements: on the one hand, hashish stimulates appetite or even a strong craving for food, especially sweets, and, on the other hand, the hashish experience can lead to another state of consciousness, that of dreamlike and startling visions about food.

3 In Search of Food

A composition unlikely attributed by the Paris manuscript of the *Rāḥa* to Abū Nuwās (d. ca. 198/813) synthesizes perfectly the basic needs of a hashish eater:

[من البسيط]
 لو²⁶ قال لي خالقي تمنى²⁷ * قلت له سائلاً بصدق
 أريد في صبح كل يوم * فتوح صدق يجيء برزق²⁸
 كف حشيش ورطل لحم * ومن خبز ووصل علق²⁹

If my Creator asked me to make a wish
 I would tell Him honestly:
 I want every day in the morning
 as a generous donation that comes as sustenance
 a hand full of hashish, a *raṭl* of meat
 and two *raṭls* of bread as well as sex with a willing boy.

26 *Rāḥa*, ms. P, 42a: إن.

27 *Rāḥa*, ms. P, 42a: تمننا.

28 *Rāḥa*, ms. P, 42a: خير يجيء برفق.

29 For the Damascus manuscript, the author is a certain Ibn Shafā'a, ms. D, 71b. This composition has also been cited by Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Abbāsī (d. 963/1556), *Ma'āhid al-tanṣīṣ fī shawāhid al-talkhīṣ*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1980), 2:141; and Rosenthal, *Herb*, 83.

In fact, as soon as the “hashish eater” started to be adopted as a fictional motif in Arabic jocular (*hazlī*) literature, it became standardized in images evoking gluttony and avidity. Thus, a hashish eater was presented as a beggar (*min al-ḥarfasha*) who, having spent all his fortune on drugs, sweets, and expensive delicacies, would sell even his own clothes to buy hashish.³⁰

In another anecdote, Muḥammad Ibn al-Kharrāṭ (d. 840/1436), a judge and prominent person of the royal chancery in Egypt, while traveling to Damascus for an important official matter, met a certain Muhannā, a respectable and decently dressed person who was sitting in the shade near a waterway. When the effect of hashish became visible and Muhannā’s eyes red, Ibn al-Kharrāṭ improvised these verses, in which sorrow personified tries to overcome the joy and happy disposition triggered by hashish:

[من الطويل]

مررت بحشاشٍ واحمرّ طرفه * يطارد جيش الهم بالأخضر الفرد
بأسهمه إن يرمه الهم يتقي * مسابقة خضراء محكمة السرد

I walked by a hashish eater who, when his eyes turned red,
assaulted the army of sorrow with a single green.
Sorrow fears to throw his arrows against him,
it would mean a struggle against a plant/an army clad in armour³¹ and
the legal prosecution of the endless narration of stories.

This Muhannā was known as being a sophisticated libertine (*kharrī khallī*), and Ibn al-Kharrāṭ asked him to join and entertain his company during their journey. When Muhannā took another dose of drug and started to behave like a fool (*tamakhlaʿa*), Ibn al-Kharrāṭ composed another epigram:

[من الطويل]

لنا صاحب في كفه نصف طابة * حكمت شجر الرمان لاح إخضارها³²
صبرنا عليه ساعة بعد بلعها * فبان لنا في عينه جلنارها

30 *Rāḥa*, ms. P, 22b; Rosenthal, *Herb*, 159.

31 See *khadrāʿ* in Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 4:245.

32 *Rāḥa*, ms. D, 71b: إخضارها; ms. P, 22a: اخضرارها.

We have a friend who has in his hand half a pill [of hashish],
he is like a pomegranate tree when its green bunches shine while swing-
ing.

We waited one hour after he ate it
and in front of us a pomegranate blossom appeared in his eye.³³

Finally, when they passed in front of an apricot seller, poking fun at Muhannā they asked how many *ratl* of apricots he would eat. He replied that he would take all the apricots the seller had, which was one hundred *ratl* (a fourth of a quintal). After he finished, he even broke the pits and ate what he found inside, and someone recited a *mawāliyyā* about it:

داوم مسرتك ديم³⁴ والحشيش كول
لظها³⁵ واشرب من البنكا ملا الكجكول
وان لح لاحيك في سفك لكفك قول
اي سيدي كم تفجعني وانا مسطول

Always rejoice yourself and eat hashish,
cut it and then drink a full cup of *bank* (*banj*).
If anyone annoys you for eating your *kiff*, tell him:
Sir, what a torture you are inflicting to me while I am stoned.³⁶

These stories featuring hashish eaters can easily be considered further elaborations of the classical stereotype of the glutton, as portrayed, for instance, in the well-known *tufaylī* or party-crasher motif. A few other anecdotes contained in al-Badrī's *Rāḥa* better clarify this assumption. One of these stories features the eighth/fourteenth-century writer Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār, who was invited to al-'Umarī's house to prepare a sweet called *'azīzā*, topped with almond oil. As soon as the dessert was served, the guests each took a piece of this delicious sweet, and while tracing lines on it to drive all the oil toward themselves, they used Qur'ānic quotes:

33 Rosenthal, *Herb*, 77. Poets use this metaphor to indicate the redness of the eyes of the hashish eater. However, several anecdotes mention the pomegranate fruit in connection with hashish eating, probably because the former was considered good for hangovers and to treat nausea, see Ibn al-Bayṭār, *al-Jāmi'*, 2:143. I owe this reference to the anonymous reviewer of this article.

34 *Rāḥa*, ms. P, 22a: دايمًا.

35 *Rāḥa*, ms. D, 71b: لعلها.

36 Rosenthal, *Herb*, 61.

فقال ابن فضل الله [العمري]: يا معمار ﴿أَخْرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ أَهْلَهَا﴾؟ فقال: كلا ولكن ﴿فَدَسُّقْنَاهُ إِلَى بَلَدٍ مَيِّتٍ فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ [بِهِ الْأَرْضَ]﴾.

al-ʿUmarī said: O Miʿmār “Thou hast made a hole in it so as to drown its passengers (Q 18:71)?,” and al-Miʿmār replied: certainly not, but “we drive them to a dead land and give life thereby to the earth (Q 35:9).”³⁷

A longer version of this story featuring Bunān the parasite was already reported in the fifth/eleventh century in al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī’s *Kitāb al-Taṭfil*. In this version, Bunān was asked to prepare a *ʿaṣīda*, a well-known confection made of flour, water, and honey and served with clarified butter. Al-Baghdādī’s version is significantly longer than al-Badrī’s, with no fewer than nine different Qurʾānic quotations deliberately decontextualized and recontextualized.³⁸ But what is important here is that al-Badrī adapted the story by replacing the conventional classical Bunān with two eighth/fourteenth-century figures: Ibrāhīm al-Miʿmār and Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/1348). Although hashish is not explicitly mentioned, Ibrāhīm al-Miʿmār, whose *azyāh* poems on the herb (from *zīh*, a nickname for hashish) have been even compared to Abū Nuwās’s songs on wine (*khamriyyāt*), is also the standard protagonist of other stories included in the *Rāḥa*, where he acts as the prototypical hashish eater. Thus, the insatiable appetite commonly attributed to the *ṭufaylī* character is transferred and sup-
planted in this Mamlūk source by the unrestrained, though artificial, hunger and blatant witticism of the hashish eater.³⁹

37 Ms. D 65b; ms. P, 28a.

38 “One of them took a mouthful, dipping it in the butter, saying: ‘They shall be pitched into it, they and the perverse (Q 26:94).’ He then drew the butter toward himself. Another said: ‘When they are cast, they shall hear its bubbling and sighing (Q 25:13,12).’ He drew the butter toward himself, so that it ran away. Then I said, ‘How many a ruined well, a tall palace! (Q 22:45),’ and I pierced butter toward myself. Another said: ‘Thou hast made a hole in it so as to drown its passengers? Thou hast indeed done a grievous thing (Q 18:71).’ The fight goes until Bunān, taking what is left of the *ʿaṣīda* and the butter, says: ‘Earth, swallow thy waters; and, heaven, abate! And the waters subsided, the affair was accomplished, and the [Ark] settled on El-Joudi’ (Q 11:44).” Geert Jan van Gelder, *Of Dishes and Discourses: Classical Arabic Literary Representations of Food* (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 2000), 89.

39 See, e.g., Danilo Marino, “Raconter l’ivresse à l’époque mamelouke: Les mangeurs de haschich comme motif littéraire,” *Annales Islamologiques* 49 (2015): 75–76.

4 Dreaming of Food under the Effects of Hashish

The second element emphasized in the introduction to the fifth chapter of the *Rāḥa* is that food descriptions under the effects of hashish give the impression of reality; however, they are basically images, illusions, or dreams. In fact, hashish has the power to lead one to misread reality, blurring the boundaries between consciousness and dreaming. This tension is particularly evident in the first anecdote of this fifth chapter: A rich hashish eater named Ibn Siyāj al-Qayrawānī one day, after consuming a large dose of hashish, fell asleep. He suddenly heard a voice telling him to give to his fellow hashish eaters (*ikhwān al-ḥashāshiyya*) some of his wealth, because he would soon die. When he woke up, he immediately spent all his money ordering the most expensive ingredients and cooking the most delicious sweets. Then he went to a well-known place in Cairo frequented by hashish eaters and gave them all sorts of these sweets. After that, he returned to his place, ate another dose of hashish, and fell asleep. Suddenly, the same voice addressed him again, directing his attention to a splendid palace (*qaṣr*) where all the architectural elements were made of sweets and pastries. The whole structure was made of curdled milk (*ʿaqīd*), the columns were of almond paste and sugar (*fānīd*), the roof was of *mushabbak*, and the windows of *mumashshak*. Walls, too, were made of pastries: a brick of *qāhiriyya* and others of *qaṭāʿif*, the white plaster surface of the wall was smeared with *manfūsh*, and the tapestry made of embroidered honey strings (*min ʿasal al-ʿaqāʿid manqūsh*). From the tiny colorful skylights (*qamariyyāt*) made of sugar candies (*ʿalāliq*), delicious ropes of nuts (*qalb*) hung over a fountain (*shādarwān*) of rock sugar (*qaṭr al-nabāt*), while its basin of sugar syrup (*jullāb*) had a bottom of *ṣābūniyya*, corners of marzipan (*maʾmūniyya*), water of refined sugar, and fish made of peeled bananas. Inside the castle, a bedlike platform made of sugar was set over fragrant sugarcane feet and a small river of honey flowed underneath, running outside between banana trees and small tent annexes made of *kunāfa* that moved with every breath of wind. When Ibn Siyāj al-Qayrawānī asked about the owner of the palace, the mysterious voice told him that it was his reward (*jazāʾ*) for having fed the hashish eaters. He was so pleased to hear this that he composed the following poem:

[من الطويل]

أيا من يجمع المال شئت عمره * أتفعل ذا والموت ما زال طائفنا
فاطعم به أهل الحشيش قطائفًا * ونم تر مثلي في المنام لطائفنا

Maybe who has collected money has wasted his life,
 have you? Death is turning around.
 Feed instead with *qaṭā'if* the hashish eaters,
 then go to sleep and, like me, you will dream of sweet delicacies.

But as soon as he woke up, the image of this fabulous palace disappeared, and he discovered instead his box of money completely empty. He immediately went insane because he was a very stingy person.⁴⁰

This story is a rewriting of an anecdote already found in the *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa-muḍḥik al-'abūs* of Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī (d. 868/1464).⁴¹ Al-Badrī expands the older version by portraying Ibn Siyāj as a hashish addict, a detail we can only surmise in the *Nuzha* from the fact that the character's brothers are called hashish eaters (*'ikhwānuhu* and *ikhwānaka al-ḥashāyshiyya*). From the other, he also merges in this anecdote parts of another silly story of the *Nuzha*, where the pharmacist Ibn 'Irāsh after criticizing his neighbor for sleeping a lot, was told this story: one night he dreamed of being invited to attend a rich banquet (*walīma*) set in a palace (*dār*) entirely made of various delicacies (*laṭā'if*). When he entered the fabulous building, which had already whetted his appetite, and was about to bite into a chicken thigh from the banquet tables, he suddenly woke up and the vision of the banquet with all its luxury foods had disappeared. Since then, he never ceased sleeping, trying to pick up his dream right where he left off.⁴² The description of this building closely overlaps al-Badrī's sketch of edible architecture. However, here again Ibn Sūdūn does not mention hashish consumption.

Manuela Marín and Geert Jan van Gelder have observed that Ibn Sūdūn's literary fascination with food, especially sweets, might be connected to the general assumption that hashish stimulates appetites,⁴³ as is evident in other sto-

40 Ms. D 62a–b; ms. P, 24b. For a translation of all these sweetmeats and pastries, see Manuela Marín, “Literatura y gastronomía: Dos textos árabes de época mameluca,” in *La alimentación en las culturas islámicas*, ed. Manuela Marín and David Waines (Madrid: Agencia española de cooperación internacional, 1994), 137–158; van Gelder, *Of Dishes and Discourses*, 92.

41 'Alī Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa-muḍḥik al-'abūs*, ed. Arnoud Vrolijk (Leiden: Research School CNWS, School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies, 1998), 69–70; and Danilo Marino, “L'humour dans l'Égypte mamelouke: Le *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa-muḍḥik al-'abūs* d'Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī,” in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Europe and Beyond—Études arabes et islamiques en Europe et au-delà* (Proceedings of the 26th Congress of Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, 2012, Basel), ed. M. Reinowski, M. Winet, and Sevinç Yaşargil (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 143–155.

42 Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 65–66.

43 Marín, “Literatura y gastronomía,” 146–148; van Gelder, *Of Dishes and Discourses*, 92.

ries of the *Nuzha*.⁴⁴ However, poverty and deprivation alongside the demand of a more equal division of the resources and eventually the culinary pleasures resulting from it may be also behind these humorous tales. Medieval Islamic oneirocriticism, indeed, considered dreaming about food—especially fruits, dates, and sugared and honeyed sweets like *zalābiya*, *qaṭāʾif*, and other confections (e.g., *fālūdhaj*, *ʿaṣīda*, *khabīṣa*)—symbols of joy, luck, money, and pleasure.⁴⁵ As dream interpretation was a very popular science we can safely assume that Ibn Sūdūn and al-Badrī were totally aware of the specific symbolism of food in their stories.

5 The Western Land of Cockayne

All these anecdotes are reminders of the gingerbread house of Hansel and Gretel, a well-known fairy tale recorded by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and published in *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* in 1812. However, the most striking similarities with the Arabic motif are found in a number of poems and popular stories from late medieval Europe. It is the well-known fictional motif of the Land of Cockayne, a paradise on earth, where work was forbidden, food and drink appeared spontaneously, and one had to only open his mouth for delicious food to jump inside—even the rain was made of pancakes and pies. The weather was stable and always spring, there were communal possessions, no arguing or animosity, sex, a fountain of youth, beautiful clothes, and edible architectures.

Written texts on the Land of Cockayne are found in several versions from different medieval literary traditions, including English, French, German, Dutch, Italian, and Spanish, spanning from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. However, Herman Pleij has reasonably pointed out how the oral tradition played an important role in the development and spread across Europe of specific motifs related to this legendary land. In fact, already in a well-known Latin song included in the *Carmina Burana*, dating from around the 1164, the word *Cucaniensis* is used without any specific explanation, which means that

44 See Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 67–68 where he relates the story of an insomniac who received a pill of something “green” (*khadrā*) and could finally get some sleep, but while dreaming, he felt hungry and left his place to find something to eat until he arrived in a fabulous land entirely made of sweets.

45 ʿAbd al-Ghanī Al-Nābulī, *Taʿīr al-anām fī taʿbīr al-manām* (Cairo: al-Maṭbʿa al-Azhariyya al-Miṣriyya, 1883), 1108–117, esp. 1115–117, where the author discusses sugar, fruit, honey, and sweets; van Gelder, *Of Dishes and Discourses*, 118–121.

a kind of oral “*Cockayne* material” was apparently familiar at least to European monastic communities of the High Middle Ages.

According to Pleij, the basic patterns shared by most versions of the Land of Cockayne are the motifs of eternal idleness, the superabundance of food, and edible architectures.⁴⁶ In the Middle Dutch version, which is similar to the Old French, for instance, the houses of Luilekkerland—the Dutch Cockayne—have roofs of delicious pancakes; the walls are made of pancakes and bacon, the beams of suckling pigs, the doors and windows of sugar cakes, and the doorposts and window frames of very spicy gingerbread nailed together with cloves. Around every house stands a strong fence woven of fried liverwurst, mettwurst, and other kinds of sausages. The fountains spout wine and all kinds of sweet drinks, and meat pies grow on trees. Some rivers are made of milk, and white bread constantly falls into their currents; others are of water with boiled, roasted, or grilled fish swimming in them. Roasted chicken, geese, and pigeons fly over the country, and already-roasted pigs walk around with a knife stuck into their back. The Middle English version of the Land of Cockayne adds rivers of oil, milk, honey, and wine, along with sweet odors, singing birds, sensual delights, and a landscape of precious stones. As Pleij stated, all these medieval dream worlds can be seen as both imaginary and literary substitutes for a heavenly paradise. In other words, amid everyday worries related to food shortage, famine, plague, and war, the Land of Cockayne was a spectacular form of relief and a compensatory fantasy to earthly deprivations and scarcity.⁴⁷

Piero Camporesi, however, has convincingly written that in premodern Europe, hunger, malnourishment, precarious and inadequate diet, consumption of stale or infected food, accidental or deliberate use of flours adulterated with potentially toxic grains or plants (e.g., poppy, hemp), along with all kinds of fermented drinks, distillations, and drugs could have given rise to hallucinatory experiences, visions, and fantasies. Hence, “hunger sufferers, in their quasi-delirious state, readily transformed them into nirvanas of nourishment, although afterward it appeared that such experiences were only fit to be passed on by word of mouth.”⁴⁸

46 Herman Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne: Medieval Fantasies of the Perfect Life*, trans. Diana Webb (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 55.

47 *Ibid.*, 423.

48 *Ibid.*, 125; and Piero Camporesi, *Bread of Dreams: Food Fantasy in Early Modern Europe*, trans. David Gentilcore (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 14–15, 120–145.

6 Eastern and Western Edible Architectures

Although it may be true that drug-induced dreams, meant to allay one's fear of starvation, have played an important part in the elaboration of both the Arabic and the Western fictional images of edible paradises, it should be stressed that drug consumption is not the only element at stake here. For example, it has been pointed out how Western descriptions of an earthly paradise of the senses could be the result of popular elaboration and combination of different existing sources: Greek and Latin accounts of the Islands of the Blessed and the Aurea Aetas (Golden Age),⁴⁹ biblical descriptions (e.g., Song of Songs, the book of Revelation), medieval exegesis of the Holy Books and apocalyptic literature, such as Joachim of Fiore's (1145–1202) influential vision of the End of Time, sermons, and hymns, as well as the Qur'ānic descriptions of the afterlife available in Latin translations and popular accounts of the Islamic paradise derived from the *Mi'rāj* tradition translated into Latin, French, and Spanish—the *Liber Scalae* cycle.⁵⁰ All these sources have certainly provided both medieval Christian European and Muslim populations with stunning images and literary motifs.

In fact, a comparison of the Arabic dreams of an edible land, as portrayed in the *Nuzha* and the *Rāḥa*, for instance, and the Western Land of Cockayne with both Islamic and Christian images of paradise reveals some interesting similarities. One is certainly the idea of the availability and self-replenishing supply of ready-to-eat food. Some Christian descriptions, probably incorporating Greek and Roman motifs, insist that paradise is a garden of pleasures and delights where everyone's desire is satisfied.⁵¹ Similarly, according to a Shī'a source, when the blessed of paradise imagine a delicacy, even if they cannot name it, they are promptly served; or “when the believers desire a river to flow, they draw a line [on the ground], and from there springs water, flowing incessantly.”⁵² As Christian Lange pointed out, the Qur'ānic idea that the blessed will enjoy food and drinks set for them in heavenly banquets echoes descriptions of the delights of the afterlife of the fourth-century Syrian Christian Ephrem (d. 373), to such an extent that the Qur'ān appears to be a continuation of Jewish and late antique Christian traditions of a paradise of sensual pleasures.⁵³

49 Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne*, 282–284.

50 This has been already pointed out by Dorothee Metlizki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 210–219.

51 Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne*, 167–181.

52 Christian Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 153.

53 *Ibid.*, 18 and 65–66. For a survey of food in the Qur'ān, see David Waines, “Food and Drinks,”

Yet there is one key element, peculiar to both the Arabic and Western anecdotes, that is not found in the traditional Christian and Islamic account of paradise: the motif of edible landscapes and architectures. Although descriptions of heavenly buildings, pavilions, and sumptuous palaces abound in both traditions, they are all made of or encrusted with precious metals and stones, as well as pearls, musk, and incense.⁵⁴ Hence, by replacing all these precious and rare gems with food and sweets, one might assume that an author's intent was humorous. And this is, indeed, the very objective of these writings:

The key to understanding the representation of all this food is the concept of exaggeration and caricature, the forms of humor most effective in combating hunger. They typically belong to the arsenal of artistic forms that intentionally distort reality with specific objectives in mind. Where food or the lack of it is involved, magnification in every conceivable form is the most effective method of presentation.⁵⁵

However, there is more than just alleviating poverty through literary compensations. In contrast to the many days of food shortage caused by drought, famine, and plague that periodically hit Europe and the Middle East, descriptions of rich banquets and images of abundance during public and private feasts might have served as models for both the Western and Arabic motif of edible architectures.

Herman Pleij has already pointed out that from 1200 onward, European medieval cookbooks offered descriptions of how to build edible structures. During the banquets enjoyed by the aristocratic elite, castles, palaces, towers, landscapes, ships, animals, plants, and human figures were all made of food-stuffs; also, specific events, like battles, were re-created using artful edible models made of all manner of delicacies, like the Siege of Jerusalem during the First Crusade displayed in a banquet offered by the French king Charles V in 1378.⁵⁶ Similarly, there is evidence of castles (*qaṣr*, pl. *quṣūr*) and figurines (*tamāthīl*) made of sugar (*sukkar*, *ḥalāwa*, or *ḥalwā*) displayed during sumptuous banquets offered by the Fatimid rulers (fourth/tenth–sixth/twelfth centuries) in Cairo to their courtly entourage, amirs, functionaries, and dignitaries. In the

in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006), 2:216–223.

54 Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne*, 168, 192–195, and *passim*; Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 14 and 133.

55 Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne*, 156.

56 *Ibid.*, 136–146.

royal kitchens, known as *dār al-ḥiṭr*, huge amounts of sugar, honey, nuts, dates, flour, oil, butter, and spices were available for preparing all sorts of delicious dishes, which were then moved to the banquet table.⁵⁷ On some occasions, especially during important religious celebrations, the number, size, and, of course, cost of these sugar castles and figurines must have been particularly impressive. According to al-Maqrīzī, for the *ʿīd al-ḥiṭr* marking the end of the holy month of Ramaḍān of the year 415/1024, there were one hundred sugar figurines and seven sugar castles; for the *ʿīd al-aḍḥā*, the sacrificial festival of the month of Dhū l-Ḥijja of the same year, 154 sugar figurines and seven castles were prepared.⁵⁸ As Paula Sanders has pointed out, it is possible that a portion of food arranged on the Fatimid banquets was distributed to the population of Cairo and Fustāṭ.⁵⁹ Indeed, giving sugar and sweets to the masses during Ramaḍān as a symbol of power and generosity started to be common in the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk periods.⁶⁰ As for the tradition of selling figurines (*tamāthīl*) of sugar—probably initiated by the Fatimids—this continued during the Mamlūk period and is still found today during the so-called *mawlid al-nabī*, the birthday of the Prophet. Al-Maqrīzī gives an interesting description of the Market of Sweets Merchants (*Sūq al-Ḥalāwīyyīn*), where one could find sugar candies shaped like cucumbers or bananas along with hanging sugar candies (*ʿalālīq*) shaped like horses, lions, and cats.⁶¹

Tusugitaka Sato suggested that, although sugar and sweets were mostly consumed in royal circles and by the elite (*khāṣṣa*), because of the governmental monopoly imposed on their production and trade, “the availability of inexpensive sweets gradually expanded from the *khāṣṣa* to the *ʿamma* of Egypt in about the eleventh century. As sugar production increased, changes in diet first appeared in the *khāṣṣa*, and later extended to the *ʿamma*.”⁶² Hence, the edible architectures described in the *Nuzha* and the *Rāḥa* can be also considered humorous attempts to subvert the social order.⁶³

57 Al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 1:435–437.

58 Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāz al-ḥunafā bi-akḥbār al-aʿimma al-fāṭimīyyīn wa-l-khulafā*, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl (Cairo: al-Majlis al-Aʿlā li-Shuʿūn al-Islāmiyya, 1967), 2:160 and 166, respectively, and Tusugitaka Sato, *Sugar in the Social Life of Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 58–59.

59 Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 78–79.

60 Sato, *Sugar*, 124–133.

61 Al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2:99–100; Sato, *Sugar*, 124–133.

62 Sato, *Sugar*, 169. For a discussion of luxury food in medieval Islamic society, see David Waines, “‘Luxury Foods’ in Medieval Islamic Society,” *World Archeology* 34, no. 3 (February 2003): 571–580.

63 Marín, “Literatura y gastronomía,” 150–151.

7 Conclusion

To conclude, following the spread of the consumption of hashish as recreational substance in the post-ʿAbbāsīd period (1250–1517), Muslim jurists had to deal with the herb's ambiguous status. Because hashish products were not consumed in liquid form or considered dangerous substances, such as poisons, or listed among the unlawful, impure, or forbidden aliments, their association with fermented fruit juices (*khumūr*) such as wine was precarious. Also, as far as the effects on the body and the mind of eating hashish confectionaries were concerned, the *muskir* (intoxicant) legal category seemed to be unsuitable too. Some scholars suggested that a hashish eater could indeed feel an altered state of the mind as the wine drinker does, however he is more likely to experience dullness, passivity, and sleepiness, and thus hashish is more similar to the *mukhaddir* (narcotic) and the *mufattir*. Other scholars, such as the Ḥanbalī jurist Ibn Taymiyya, supported a strict prohibition on hashish. Because the herb stimulates the creation of false images and hallucinations (*khayālāt*), it was considered a way to escape from reality by dismissing the realm of rationality and indulging in dreamlike worlds.

Literature, as usual, did not fail to reproduce by its own terms and expressions the habit of eating hashish, which by the seventh/thirteenth century had rapidly spread and was used at all levels of the Arab and Islamic societies. The hashish eater soon became a literary motif, included among the large set of existing jocular figures, such as the fool, the old pederast, the glutton, and the beggar, as seen in the ninth/fifteenth-century original collections of poems and narratives written by Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī (d. 868/1464) and Abū l-Tuqā al-Badrī (d. 894/1489). Since one of the major cravings of the hashish eater is food, and sweets in particular, it is not surprising to find a very long digression on food in the *Rāḥat al-arwāḥ fī l-ḥashīsh wa-l-rāḥ*, the most comprehensive *adab* work dealing with hashish.

Hashish has been a thematic catalyst of already-existing and successful literary motifs; the herb is mentioned to magnify a character's gluttony and strong appetite, as in the story of the party crasher (*tufaylī*). But also the consumption of hashish was a valuable literary substitute for other liminal states of consciousness, such as stupidity, foolishness, insanity, and drunkenness, which were previously narrativized and crystallized in Arabic jocular literature.

The other issue addressed is that hashish can also produce dreamlike experiences and hallucinations, as in the story of Ibn Siyāj al-Qayrawānī's dream of edible architecture, from the fifth chapter of the *Rāḥa*, and its previous version in Ibn Sūdūn' *Nuzha*. A comparison with Western texts on the Land of Cockayne, some of the oldest of which go back to the thirteenth century, reveals

some striking similarities, especially with respect to the literary motif of a self-replenishing land made of food and edible architectures. Although such visions and dreams of edible paradises in medieval Europe may have been induced by the intentional or accidental consumption of psychoactive substances, a literary model of both Arabic and Western writings was perhaps found in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic tradition of the delights of the paradise and the Garden of Eden. Hence, elaborations and caricatures of these sources, which were already part of the collective memory of the masses, are definitely at stake here. Hashish, then, was a valuable pretext and a literary trick to indulge in such a fantasy of edible paradise.

Such dreamlands could have represented for the masses at least a literary reward to everyday conditions marked by abstinence, deprivation, and food shortage. Some luxury goods, like sugar, were beyond the reach of the masses or able to be enjoyed only during religious celebrations, in the form of inexpensive delicacies or royal gifts. In addition, images of abundance and lavish banquets with edible architecture on display to amuse both Arab and European medieval elites must have gripped the masses, which is certainly echoed in these writings. So, it could be said that dreaming of food and sweets, even in a drug-induced hallucination, offered an immediate and extended realization of what one could have seen only during some celebrations, but this was also a way to subvert the social order in which abundance and food, especially luxury goods, embodied notions of social status and exclusion.

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The “Abominable Pig” and the “Mother of All Vices”

Pork, Wine, and the Culinary Clash of Civilizations in the Early Modern Mediterranean

Eric Dursteler

In France some years ago, members of a far-right nationalist movement began serving food to Paris’s homeless and downtrodden. The simple meal included bread, cheese, a glass of wine, and a hot bowl of what was called “identity soup.” This was a hearty, traditional French soup whose key ingredient was pork—smoked bacon, sausage, and pigs’ ears, feet, and tails. The group’s motto was “help our own before others,” and the “others” they targeted were poor Muslim immigrants whose religious traditions, of course, forbid the consumption of pork.

This was not an isolated incident. Recently, in what was described as “the meatball war,” a town in Denmark (a country with two and a half pigs for every resident) voted to require public day-care centers and kindergartens to serve pork on their lunch menus as a means to “preserve national identity.” In the same vein, several towns in France have attempted to remove nonpork options from school menus as part of an effort to “preserve French identity.” Former President Nicolas Sarkozy described pork-free lunches as a threat to “our tradition, our way of life.”¹ There is no question of the power of the pig in terms of Muslim self-definition, too: Bernard Lewis has written that “abstention from pork” is “universally regarded by Muslims as constituting ... the immediate and practical distinction” between themselves and others.² In line with this view, a recent study found that “by far the most common disavowal ritual” among former British Muslims, and the definitive symbol of their leaving Islam, “was the consumption of pig meat,” or losing one’s “pork virginity,” as one individual described it.³

As these examples suggest, in contemporary Europe food is regularly mobilized in a wide range of political and religious contexts, and pork often occupies

1 Dan Bilefsky, “Denmark’s New Front in Debate over Immigrants: Children’s Lunches,” *New York Times*, January 20, 2016; “French Secularism and School Lunch,” *New York Times*, March 23, 2015.

2 Bernard Lewis and Buntzie Ellis Churchill, *Islam: The Religion and the People* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2009), 186.

3 Simon Cottee, *The Apostates: When Muslims Leave Islam* (London: C. Hurst, 2015), 74–76.

a privileged position in these cultural conflicts. One could argue that analogues exist in the banning of the sale or even consumption of pork in majority-Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, or bans of beef consumption in Hindu polities. In each instance food becomes a potent instrument in conflicts over much larger issues related to agriculture, globalization, and immigration. At their core, all of these food fights center, in one way or another, on the relationship of food to identity.

The linkage of food to identity, of course, has a long pedigree. One of the earliest writers on European food, the Parisian politician, judge, and bon vivant Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, in his influential 1825 book *Physiologie du goût: Méditations de gastronomie transcendante*, famously wrote one of the now most oft-repeated phrases in food studies, his fourth *aphorisme*: "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are."⁴ Brillat-Savarin was not issuing a manifesto about healthy eating or trying to market a new diet—indeed, given his intense appreciation of food, he would likely have been quite surprised to see the ways in which contemporary culture has appropriated his maxim. What he was suggesting was the tight cultural link between the "Siamese twins" of food and identity.⁵ "By our food," he wrote, "we declare and affirm who we are and who we want to be."⁶

Building on Brillat-Savarin's observation, modern scholars have written extensively on the relationship of food to identity. Because of the biological imperative that we eat and drink regularly, and the central role that the acquisition, production, and consumption of food plays in our existence, food functions as a potent social, religious, gender, political, and cultural marker. The sum total of one's food-related attitudes and activities, or foodways, form a sort of culinary identity that serves both to define and to differentiate: those who eat similar foods are deemed trustworthy and safe, whereas those whose foods differ are viewed with suspicion or even revulsion.

One area that is profoundly marked by food is religion: food is "firmly embedded in every faith's definition of religiosity."⁷ Food functions as symbol, as the

4 Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût: Méditations de gastronomie transcendante* (Paris: Charpentier, 1839), 11.

5 Peter Scholliers, "Meals, Food Narratives, and Sentiments of Belonging in Past and Present," in *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe since the Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Scholliers (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 11.

6 Jonathon Brumberg-Kraus, "'Bread from Heaven, Bread from the Earth': Recent Trends in Jewish Food History Writing," in *Writing Food History: A Global Perspective*, ed. Kyri Claflin and W. Peter Scholliers (New York: Berg, 2012), 132.

7 Ken Albala, "Historical Background to Food and Christianity," in *Food and Faith in Christian*

subject of petition, as a form of communion.⁸ Many religions articulate dietary codes that classify food dichotomies of clean-unclean, edible-abominable, sacred-profane. Food serves as a “sacred cement” that defines and differentiates communities of faith through rules on what to eat and how to eat it, as well as rituals of sacrifice, feasting, and fasting.⁹

This chapter examines the multifarious ways in which food informed religious and communal identity in the early modern Mediterranean, with particular attention to the illustrative experience of the Moriscos of early modern Spain. The case has been amply documented and can suggest insights into a broader Mediterranean context. The Moriscos represent a revealing example of the complex ways in which food functioned and was manipulated in the manufacture of religious and communal identities in the light of the dramatic social, political, and economic change that Spain experienced in this period. In particular, I focus on wine and pork, which have historically occupied a privileged position in articulating regional cultural and religious boundaries. An examination of patterns of consumption of these commodities challenges the prevailing notion of a culinary clash of civilizations at the Mediterranean table and suggests the need for caution in drawing overly stark culinary boundaries between religious communities in a connected Mediterranean that was characterized by a richly dynamic and nuanced food culture.

The question of the Moriscos, or “little Moors,” has been described as one of “the nodal issues” of the history of the early modern Mediterranean: Braudel described it as “a splinter ... in the heart of Spain.”¹⁰ For more than half a millennium, Muslim, Jew, and Christian lived side by side in many parts of the Iberian Peninsula in a complex state of “social and confessional pluralism”¹¹ which scholars have labeled *convivencia*.¹² This fragile but long-lived state of

Culture, ed. Ken Albala and Trudy Eden (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 8; Trudy Eden, introduction to *Food and Faith in Christian Culture*, 7.

8 E.N. Anderson, *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 154.

9 Anna Meigs, “Food as Cultural Construction,” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (New York: Routledge, 1997), 103; Anderson, *Everyone Eats*, 155–156.

10 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 2:794.

11 Bruce Taylor, “The Enemy Within and Without: An Anatomy of Fear on the Spanish Mediterranean Littoral,” in *Fear in Early Modern Society*, ed. William G. Naphy and Penny Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 78, 80–81, 96.

12 There is an extensive and intensive debate about *convivencia*: for a brief sampling see, Darío Fernández-Morera, *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, and Jews under Islamic Rule in Medieval Spain* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2016); Jonathan Ray,

affairs began to unravel in the later Middle Ages as the position of Spain's Muslim and Jewish minorities eroded significantly, most notably with the Jewish massacre of 1391, the first *limpieza de sangre* decrees in 1449, and the establishment of the Inquisition in 1478. The process culminated with the fall of the final Muslim outpost in the peninsula, the Nasrid kingdom of Granada, on January 1, 1492, which ushered in a new era in relations in the peninsula's religious culture.

The Treaty of Granada guaranteed specific cultural and religious rights for Muslims and Jews. Almost immediately, however, their new sovereigns, Isabella and Ferdinand, began to disregard it. In March 1492, all Jews were given four months to convert or depart. The much larger Mudejar Muslim minority was spared for a time, but efforts to peaceably convert them became more aggressive after 1495 under Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros and led to a revolt in late 1499. The uprising was quickly snuffed out, but it provided a pretext to implement the crown's "cherished" objective of a kingdom united in its worship of "the one true faith." Over the following twenty-five years all of Spain's Muslims were faced with the choice of either conversion or exile under onerous terms.¹³ Some fled, but most had no real choice but to convert, which they did en masse in huge public ceremonies.

The character of the Moriscos' conversion, and hence their religious identity, was clearly problematic. Though Christians generally denounced coerced conversion, it was theologically held to be legitimate and irreversible.¹⁴ Spain's

"Beyond Tolerance and Persecution: Reassessing Our Approach to Medieval 'Convivencia,'" *Jewish Social Studies* 11 (Winter, 2005): 1–18; Maribel Fierro, ed., *De muerte violenta. Política, religión y violencia en al-Andalus* (Madrid: CSIC, 2004); J.N. Hillgarth, "Spanish Historiography and Iberian Reality," *History and Theory* 24 (1985): 32–35; Anna Akasoy, "Convivencia and its discontents: Interfaith life in Al-Andalus," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010): 489–499; Alex Novikoff, "Between Tolerance and Intolerance in Medieval Spain: An Historiographic Enigma," *Medieval Encounters* 11 (2005): 7–36; Mark T. Abate, "Ever Since Castro: Thomas F. Glick, Medieval Spain, and *Convivencia*," in *Convivencia and Medieval Spain: Essays in Honor of Thomas F. Glick*, ed. Mark T. Abate (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 40–48; Bruna Soravia, "Al-Andalus au miroir du multiculturalisme. Le mythe de la convivencia dans quelques essais nord-américains récents," in *Al-Andalus/España. Historiografías en contraste. Siglos XVII–XXI*, edited by Manuela Marín (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2009), 351–366; Maya Soifer Irish, "Beyond Convivencia: Critical Reflections on the Historiography of Interfaith Relations in Christian Spain," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 1 (2009): 19–35.

13 L.P. Harvey, *Muslims in Spain, 1500 to 1614* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 14.
 14 Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1750* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 37; Nicolau Eymerich and Francisco Peña, *Le manuel des inquisiteurs*, translation and introduction by Louis Sala-Molins (Paris: Mouton, 1973), 77.

sovereigns certainly considered the Moriscos as “legally converted to Christianity,”¹⁵ although they also understood the practical limitations of these conversions implemented through a “pedagogy of fear.”¹⁶ It was believed, at least initially, that over time the Moriscos could be transformed into “true Christians,” unlike the experience with the more intransigent Jews.¹⁷ As time passed, however, doubts about this hoped-for conversion began to arise. The “religiously suspect Moriscos” were increasingly viewed as “false Christians” and crypto-Muslims, who dissimulated their true religious identity and secretly and deceptively continued to practice Islam.¹⁸ Morisco “exteriority” was considered a challenge to the ongoing attempt to forge a common, homogeneous Spanish identity, and as a threat to both “the security of the state and the authority of the Church.”¹⁹ This fed into a broader “hermeneutic of suspicion” that existed toward converts in the early modern Mediterranean,²⁰ as well as a pervasive “climate of fear” in Spain in which the Moriscos were seen as a fifth column who might ally with the Habsburg’s Ottoman archrival in bringing down the kingdom.²¹

The growing tension between the crown and its newly converted subjects produced a standoff in which royal and religious institutions tried to bring about the assimilation of the Moriscos into Christian culture and were met in turn by varying degrees of resistance. This political and cultural struggle played out in a variety of ways: there were a number of popular uprisings, as well as

15 Harvey, *Muslims in Spain*, 2.

16 Bartolomé Bennassar, “L’Inquisition ou la pédagogie de la peur,” in *L’Inquisition espagnole: xv^e–xix^e siècle*, ed. Bartolomé Bennassar (Paris: Hachette, 1979), 105–141; id., “Patterns of the Inquisitorial Mind as the Basis for a Pedagogy of Fear,” in *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind*, ed. Angel Alcalá (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 1987), 177–184; Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, 37; Lance Gabriel Lazar, “Negotiating Conversions: Catechumens and the Family in Early Modern Italy,” in *Piety and Family in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Marc R. Forster and Benjamin J. Kaplan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 156.

17 F.E. Peters, *The Monotheists: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Conflict and Competition*, vol. 1, *The Peoples of God* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 182.

18 James B. Tueller, “The Assimilating Morisco: Four Families in Valladolid,” *Mediterranean Studies* 7 (1998): 168; Mary Elizabeth Perry, “Behind the Veil: Moriscos and the Politics of Resistance and Survival,” in *Spanish Women in the Golden Age: Images and Realities*, ed. Magdalena S. Sanchez and Alain Saint-Saens (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 39–40.

19 Deborah Root, “Speaking Christian: Orthodoxy and Difference in Sixteenth-Century Spain,” *Representations* 23 (Summer 1988): 122.

20 Lazar, “Negotiating Conversions,” 177.

21 Taylor, “Enemy Within,” 78; Andrew C. Hess, “The Moriscos: An Ottoman Fifth Column in Sixteenth-Century Spain,” *American Historical Review* 75 (1968): 1–25.

many smaller acts of resistance.²² At the core of the conflict was a constellation of questions regarding religious identity: What was the essence of the religious self? Did it manifest itself through internal belief or external practice? How could it be measured and assessed? And most important, could it be altered through conversion, and if so, what was the evidence that such a change had taken place?

These questions were central to the Morisco problem, particularly as doubts about their conversion began to crystallize. In 1526 a junta in Granada concluded that to achieve true conversion and complete assimilation, all Morisco particularism must be prohibited. It proposed a series of measures that linked religious identity to cultural praxis. Muslim-inflected, "deviant customs" were seen as "a source of contamination" for Moriscos and evidence of an insincere and incomplete conversion.²³ They also caused "discord and prejudice" with Old Christians, which prevented the creation of the desired unified community. The notion was that suppressing Morisco "cultural distinctiveness" would efface ties to their Islamic past and facilitate their assimilation into Christian Spanish society.²⁴ Thus, policies designed to inhibit "Moorish" customs related to dress, song and dance, washing and hygiene, and the use of Arabic were implemented.²⁵

One of the chief points of friction in this escalating confrontation was food.²⁶ Foodways came to be perceived by political and ecclesiastical authorities as an essential component of Morisco separatism, and to the degree that they resisted assimilation, which is a matter of some debate, food played an important role in Morisco attempts to preserve their cultural and religious identity. For Spanish authorities food was of particular significance in the broader conflict because, unlike belief in religious dogma, food was viewed as an external, measurable mark of the interior individual. In the high stakes "game of exchanging identities," food functioned as "a primary indicator of

22 Henry Kamen, "The Habsburg Lands: Iberia," in *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*, ed. Thomas A. Brady Jr., Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy (Leiden: Brill, 1994–1995), 1:481.

23 Root, "Speaking Christian," 122, 126.

24 Grace Magnier, *Pedro de Valencia and the Catholic Apologists* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 387; Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision*, 4th ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 221.

25 Bernard Vincent, *El río morisco* (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2006), 158; Root, "Speaking Christian," 122, 126.

26 Louis Cardaillac, *Moriscos y cristianos: Un enfrentamiento polémico, 1492–1640* (Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004), 32.

intent."²⁷ In addition, it was widely believed that the consumption of Christian foodstuffs and the abandonment of Muslim foodways would lead to an actual transformation of Moriscos' physical constitution. In short, Christian food made Christians.²⁸

In the wake of the junta of 1526, a whole range of Islamic-inflected culinary practices came under the scrutiny of the Spanish Inquisition, which played a leading role in confronting the Morisco issue. Examples from inquisitional records abound: in Toledo in 1538 a Morisco was arrested for a variety of heretical activities, including "playing music at night, dancing the *zambra* and eating couscous,"²⁹ which, though included in contemporary cookbooks and consumed by non-Morisco Christians,³⁰ had come to be considered un-Christian food because of its status as a staple in North African cuisine.³¹ In another instance, a woman and her daughter were prosecuted because they had celebrated "the Easter de *moros*, with fried eggs and crullers (*buñuelos*)." ³² Indeed, Muslims were so closely associated with these fritters that "simply working as a *buñolero* could raise suspicions of improper belief."³³ Refusing to eat "animals that had died a natural death,"³⁴ not sitting in a chair or eating at a table,³⁵ avoiding food and drink during Ramadan, and even rejecting an invi-

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- 27 Anna Foa, "The Marrano's Kitchen: External Stimuli, Internal Response, and the Formation of the Marrano Persona," in *The Mediterranean and the Jews*, vol. 2, *Society, Culture and Economy in Early Modern Times*, ed. Elliott S. Horowitz and Moises Orfali Levi (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), 20.
- 28 Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 166.
- 29 Henry Kamen, *Spain, 1469–1714: A Society of Conflict*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1991), 176; Cardaillac, *Moriscos y cristianos*, 27.
- 30 Jodi Campbell, *At the First Table: Food and Social Identity in Early Modern Spain* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 73; Olivia Remie Constable, *To Live Like a Moor: Christian Perceptions of Muslim Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 109.
- 31 Charles Perry, "Couscous," in *The Oxford Companion to Food*, ed. Alan Davidson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 220; Bernard Rosenberger, "Dietética y cocina en el mundo musulmán occidental según el *Kitab Al-Tabij*, recetario de época almohade," in *Cultura alimentaria Andalucía-América*, ed. Antonio Garrido Aranda (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1996), 33.
- 32 Benjamin Ehlers, *Between Christians and Moriscos: Juan de Ribera and Religious Reform in Valencia, 1568–1614* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 96.
- 33 Olivia Remie Constable, "Food and Meaning: Christian Understanding of Muslim Food and Food Ways in Spain, 1250–1550," *Viator* 44, no. 3 (2013): 206–207.
- 34 Henry Charles Lea, *The Moriscos of Spain: Their Conversion and Expulsion* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1901), 130; Taylor, "Enemy Within," 90.
- 35 Matthew Carr, *Blood and Faith: The Purging of Muslim Spain* (New York: New Press, 2009), 108.

tation to a meal with a Christian—all might potentially result in a denunciation.³⁶ Authorities tried to snare recalcitrant and dissimulating Moriscos by sending sheriffs into homes unannounced at mealtimes looking for families eating foods “prepared in the Muslim manner, seated on the ground in traditional fashion.”³⁷ Indeed, to facilitate the identification of nonconforming foodways, New Christians in Granada were ordered to “keep the doors to their houses open” on Fridays and holidays,³⁸ although even with the doors closed, the smells of food cooking in the narrow alleyways of cities provided ample incriminating, though indeterminate, evidence.³⁹

Among the many culinary markers of religious identity in early modern Spain, however, the most compelling are suggested by one of the edicts of faith promulgated by the Inquisition, which were intended to instruct Old Christians in how to identify dissimulating New Christian neighbors. They were specifically instructed to watch for individuals who “have not eaten bacon or drunk wine in accordance with Moorish custom.”⁴⁰ While a whole range of what were coded as Muslim culinary practices came under scrutiny, the two foods that were held to mark sincere conversion to Christianity and the abandonment of Islam were pork and wine, two commodities that for centuries had formed “the base of the triangle of differentiation between Jews, Muslims and Christians.”⁴¹

Pork, or what Martin Harris has called “the abominable pig,”⁴² occupied a privileged position as a “marker of cultural distinction.”⁴³ While the Mediterranean has been characterized as both a “porkophile” and a “porkophobe” region,⁴⁴ there is no question where modern Spain falls on this spectrum. The

36 Toby Green, *Inquisition: The Reign of Fear* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009), 226; Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 108.

37 Mary Elizabeth Perry, *The Handless Maiden: Moriscos and the Politics of Religion in Early Modern Spain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 72; Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 108.

38 Antonio Gallego y Burín and Alfonso Gámir Sandoval, *Los moriscos del reino de Granada: Según el Sínode de Gaudix de 1554* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1968), 207.

39 Claudia Roden, *The Food of Spain* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 230.

40 Helen Rawlings, *The Spanish Inquisition* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 77.

41 Christian Bromberger, “Towards an Anthropology of the Mediterranean,” *History and Anthropology* 17 (2006): 99.

42 Marvin Harris, *Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985).

43 Barry R. Mark, “Kabbalistic *Tocinofobia*: Américo Castro, *Limpieza de Sangre* and the Inner Meaning of Jewish Dietary Laws,” in *Fear and Its Representations in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Anne Scott and Cynthia Kosso (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 170.

44 Jaume Fàbrega, “La cultura del cerdo en el Mediterráneo, entre el rechazo y la acepta-

pig is the most important animal in the Spanish diet, the “king of the Spanish kitchen” Spain today has the highest level of meat consumption in Europe, with pork making up 50 percent of the total, and it is the continent’s second-largest pork producer. There are more than twenty million pigs in Spain, and every one of their body parts, including snouts, ears, tails, brains, and trotters, is used in the Spanish diet.⁴⁵

The contemporary Spanish affinity for pork has deep roots in a range of historical, ecological, economic, and social factors: it was perhaps the most popular meat in Roman Hispania, where it appeared on the backs of certain coins, and the Celts fed their pigs on acorns and chestnuts, and made cured pork products that are the precursors of Spain’s culture of *jamón*.⁴⁶ In postclassical Spain, pork was the most common, and often the only, meat consumed: it was the cheapest meat on the market, and it was essential to survival because pigs reproduce quickly and in large litters; they are easy to raise; their meat can be preserved by smoking, pickling, or being made into “sausages, salamis, or pate”; and pig fat preserved as lard was essential to—indeed was one of the defining ingredients of Christian cooking. Pork was considered the most nourishing meat “because of its similarity to human flesh,” which made it easier to digest and convert into human tissue.⁴⁷ Pork’s totemic popularity in the early modern era, which has been described as “almost a cult,” is evidenced in Agustín de Rojas Villandrando’s paeon, “In Praise of the Pig.”⁴⁸

Given its importance in the Christian Spanish diet, then, it is not surprising that the pig took on such significance in issues related to Islam during the

ción,” in *La alimentación mediterránea: Historia, cultura, nutrición*, ed. F. Xavier Medina and R. Alonso (Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 1996), 217.

45 Roden, *Food of Spain*, 62; Eamonn Rodgers, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Spanish Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 6.

46 Antonio Gázquez Ortiz, *Porcus, Puerco, Cerdo: el cerdo en la gastronomía española* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2000), 24; Earle, *Body of the Conquistador*, 56; F. Xavier Medina, *Food Culture in Spain* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2005), 3, 8.

47 Ken Albala, *Food in Early Modern Europe* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003), 62; John Varriano, *Tastes and Temptations: Food and Art in Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 149; Allen J. Grieco, “Food and Social Classes in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy,” in *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Jean Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 303; Gázquez Ortiz, *Porcus, Puerco, Cerdo*, 25–29; Kamen, *Spanish Inquisition*, 221; Piero Camporesi, *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 50.

48 Francisco José Flórez Tascón, Francisco José Flórez-Tascón Sixto, and Carmelo García Romero, *¿Somos lo que comemos o comemos como somos? Alimentación y Antropología* (Madrid: Editorial Universitaria Ramón Aeries, 2011), 285.

early modern period. In comparison to the Old Testament, which "is a treasure trove of forbidden flesh." Pork is the only meat that is explicitly forbidden in the Koran (6:145), which categorizes it as "disgusting!" This prohibition is repeated twice in the holy text, as well as in numerous *ḥadīths*, which also forbid Muslims from buying or even raising pigs.⁴⁹ Commentators historically attributed the taboo to the pig's "unattractive habits": it is an omnivore, it eats its own excrement, and it is especially zealous in prolonging copulation, which led to the belief that pork consumption led to moral laxity. According to legend, in response to an appeal from Noah for help cleaning up the filth in the ark, Allah produced a pair of pigs for him from elephant dung. Tradition held that Jesus had "changed a group of hostile Jews into swine," which gave rise to the popular view that pigs were metamorphosed wicked humans. It was also commonly believed that a prayer was automatically voided when a pig passed by.⁵⁰ Abstention from pork became one of the key markers of Muslim identity, both from within and without the *ummah*, and in turn, for Muslims "the pig played an absolute symbolic role" in representing Christendom and its polluted nature.⁵¹

For Spanish Moriscos faced with escalating persecution, the pig came to occupy a central place in articulating both their own religious identity and their resistance to conversion and assimilation. For example, the influential 1462 Aljamiado Sunni Breviary, under the listing "Principal Commandments and Prohibitions," states: "Do not eat pork, nor any carrion flesh, nor blood, or any suspect thing."⁵² A sixteenth-century Morisco document lists the consumption of pork as one of the seventeen mortal sins, along with rejecting Allah, murdering a fellow Muslim, and disobeying parents.⁵³ Moriscos had their own explanations for the pork taboo; the most common one held that a pig one day brushed up against Muḥammad and soiled his new cloak, and was thus cursed.

49 Nicholas Starkovsky, *The Koran Handbook: An Annotated Translation* (New York: Algora, 2005), 402; Harris, *Good to Eat*, 67, 84–85.

50 F. Viré, "K_hinzīr," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 5:8.

51 A.J. Wensinck, "K_hitān," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 5:20; Massimo Montanari, "Food Models and Cultural Identity," in *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Jean Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 191; Irven M. Resnick, *Marks of Distinctions: Christian Perceptions of Jews in the High Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 157.

52 Carolyn Nadeau, "Moscatel Morisco: The Role of Wine in the Formation of Morisco Identity," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 90, no. 2 (2013): 155–156.

53 Anwar G. Chejne, *Islam and the West: The Moriscos, a Cultural and Social History* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1983), 66.

Whatever the reason, many Moriscos continued to see the rejection of pork as “a condition for their salvation and a symbol of their union to the community of Islam.”⁵⁴

Thus Moriscos referred to Christians as “worshippers of the Cross and eaters of pork,” and calling someone a pig was one of their “sharpest insults.”⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, their reactions to pork could be visceral: one woman, when told that a meal she had just eaten “with good appetite” contained pork, immediately “stuck her fingers in her mouth and vomited.”⁵⁶ When Christians in the Inquisition’s prisons attempted to goad them by frying bacon, their Morisco co-inmates plugged their noses and fled to avoid even the smell of pork.⁵⁷ A ballad, written by a leader of a 1568 rebellion, decries being compelled to listen to the preacher “harsh-voiced as a screaming owl” while “he the wine and pork invoceth.” When Philip II visited the town of Muel in 1585, the inhabitants refused to eat pork or drink wine, and following the king’s departure, they destroyed “all the glassware and pottery that had been used for the obnoxious food and drink.”⁵⁸ Moriscos who ate pork also faced communal pressure to sustain the culinary divide: when Lorenzo de Soleña caught neighbors eating pork, he rebuked them and tried “to strengthen them in the faith” by reminding them of the importance of the pork taboo to the Muslim community.⁵⁹

Pork was also used to demarcate boundaries and to assay religious conversion and conviction by Spanish ecclesiastical and political authorities. In the days before the Moriscos’ expulsion in 1609, a commission identified nine qualities that were evidence of a sincere conversion to Christianity: these included the obvious—attendance at mass, participation in religious processions, membership in confraternities—but also “regularly” eating pork and “habitually” drinking wine.⁶⁰ The Inquisition was “obsessed with the pig”:⁶¹ pork was considered a key indicator of crypto-Muslims. Indeed, a popular inquisitorial guide prescribed giving “forbidden” foods to converts to gauge their religious commitment: “Those who refuse will be considered as suspected of heresy.”⁶² In

54 Cardaillac, *Moriscos y cristianos*, 32.

55 Chejne, *Islam and the West*, 25, 193; Viré, “*Khinzīr*,” 5:8.

56 Carr, *Blood and Faith*, 109.

57 Cardaillac, *Moriscos y cristianos*, 22.

58 Lea, *Moriscos of Spain*, 207, 435.

59 Cardaillac, *Moriscos y cristianos*, 74.

60 James B. Tueller, “Good and Faithful Christians: Moriscos and Catholicism in Early Modern Spain” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1997), 298.

61 Foa, “Marrano’s Kitchen,” 21.

62 Louis Sala-Molins, *Le dictionnaire des inquisiteurs: Valence, 1494* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1981), 291–293.

Valencia, refusing pork and wine served as proof of Islamicizing, and although officials usually sought additional corroborating evidence,⁶³ a man in Zaragoza was sentenced to two hundred lashes solely for refusing both.⁶⁴ A shared meal might innocently, or intentionally, unveil a crypto-Muslim, as when a man in Arcos was denounced to the Inquisition for refusing to eat eggs prepared in pork lard by a neighbor. Indeed, even a simple statement like "pig is a vermin" could produce an inquiry.⁶⁵

Inquisitorial officials regularly entered Morisco homes unannounced to ensure that "they were cooking with pork fat and pork products." This may have contributed to the popularity of pork in Spain and to the practice of adding small bits to vegetables, fish, and other dishes, which allowed both New and Old Christians to parry doubts about their Christian bona fides.⁶⁶ A character in a Lope de Vega play went so far as to hang a side of bacon in his home "so that the King will know that I am neither a Moor nor a Jew."⁶⁷

Alongside pork, wine, called "the mother of all vices" by the great Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi,⁶⁸ was the other principal commodity evoked in discussions regarding Morisco assimilation. In contrast to pork, however, wine occupied a more complicated position in discourses regarding religious identity. Among non-Muslims in the Mediterranean, water was rarely drunk—indeed, it was widely perceived as potentially dangerous to health. Wine was one of the core Mediterranean triad of staples, along with olive oil and grain, and represented the "backbone of the Iberian diet."⁶⁹ It was considered an essential source of nourishment, and was often taken at all meals; early modern consumption levels ranged from one to four liters daily. Wine was held to have therapeutic powers and was considered a nearly "universal remedy."⁷⁰ Spain was a major producer of quality, expensive wines for export,⁷¹ as well as a large

63 Ehlers, *Between Christians and Moriscos*, 96.

64 Lea, *Moriscos of Spain*, 130; Taylor, "Enemy Within," 90.

65 Cardaillac, *Moriscos y cristianos*, 26–27.

66 John Barlow, *Everything but the Squeal: Eating the Whole Hog in Northern Spain* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008), 40; Roden, *Food of Spain*, 21.

67 Earle, *Body of the Conquistador*, 61; Gázquez Ortiz, *Porcus, Puerco, Cerdo*, 44; Campbell, *At the First Table*, 78.

68 Evliya Efendi, *Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa in the Seventeenth Century by Evliya Efendi*, trans. Joseph von Hammer (London: William H. Allen, 1846), vol. 1, pt. 2: 52.

69 Earle, *Body of the Conquistador*, 1.

70 Albala, *Food in Early Modern Europe*, 79, 80; Massimo Montanari, *The Culture of Food* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), 121–122.

71 Henriette De Bruyn Kops, *A Spirited Exchange: The Wine and Brandy Trade between France and the Dutch Republic in Its Atlantic Framework, 1600–1650* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 197, 214, 218.

consumer; wine represented “the soul of the worker, the hoer and the reaper.”⁷² Wine also occupied a central place in the liturgy, which linked it much more profoundly to Christianity than pork. Yet, despite this intimate and symbolic association with Christian theology and practice, in Spain attitudes toward wine among both Moriscos and Old Christians were decidedly more ambiguous than those toward pork.

Whereas pork is referred to only twice, the Koran mentions wine six times, decrying it as “the devil’s work” (5:90).⁷³ Muslim scholars strongly condemned wine: for the Shafi’i legalist Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri, anyone who denied “the unlawfulness of wine” was “an unbeliever” and a “renegade” who could be legally “executed for his unbelief.”⁷⁴ Another tradition held that wine remained in the body for forty days, and if drinkers expired during that time, they were destined for hell,⁷⁵ while increased alcohol consumption was considered “a sign of the Last Days.”⁷⁶ Part of the danger was the effect it could have on the quality of prayer; thus, drinking alcohol came to be considered one of the “greatest sins” in Islam.⁷⁷ Finally, the association of blood with wine in many of Jesus’ miracles, and in particular in the eucharistic metamorphosis, was repulsive to many Muslims, who considered blood utterly impure, “the impious food of evil genies,” and “unthinkable” to ingest, as it broke two fundamental Islamic taboos.⁷⁸

The Qur’an can be ambiguous in its treatment of wine, however. Sura 2, verse 219, states that “there is great sin” in wine, but also some “use for mankind.”⁷⁹ There is considerable difference of opinion among scholars in the

72 James Casey, *Early Modern Spain: A Social History* (London: Routledge, 1999), 36.

73 Jane McAuliffe, “The Wines of Earth and Paradise,” in *Logos Islamikos: Studia Islamica in Honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens*, ed. Roger M. Savory and Dionisius A. Agius (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 159; Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 92; Starkovsky, *Koran Handbook*, 394.

74 Ahmad ibn Naqib Al-Misri, *Reliance of the Traveller*, ed. and trans. Nuh Ha Mim Keller (Evanston, IL: Sunna Books, 1994), 109, 809.

75 Chejne, *Islam and the West*, 65.

76 Richard Tapper, “Blood, Wine and Water: Social and Symbolic Aspects of Drinks and Drinking in the Islamic Middle East,” in *A Taste of Thyme: Culinary Cultures of the Middle East*, ed. Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 219.

77 Tapper, “Blood, Wine and Water,” 219; Erich Kolig, *Conservative Islam: A Cultural Anthropology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 98–111.

78 Bromberger, “Towards an Anthropology of the Mediterranean,” 99; Lucetta Scaraffia, *Rinnegati: Per una storia dell’identità occidentale* (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1993), 84–85; Lea, *Moriscos of Spain*, 435.

79 McAuliffe, “Wines of Earth and Paradise,” 159.

three primary legal schools of thought.⁸⁰ Some scholars held wine was "not in itself sinful," nor its prohibition "unconditional or absolute"—indeed, rivers of wine are one of the rewards awaiting the faithful in paradise. Alcohol is condemned by some commentators only when consumed in excess and in "unsuitable or inappropriate" contexts that produce negative social and spiritual consequences, such as drunkenness, which can lead individuals to hurt those around them and can cloud their minds so that "awareness of [the] Lord slips away."⁸¹ Treatises also prescribed moderate wine consumption for its medicinal properties.⁸²

For the Moriscos in early modern Spain, despite the fact that wine was both forbidden to them (the 1462 Sunni Breviary decreed, "Do not drink wine or any other intoxicating thing"),⁸³ and a central element of Christian foodways and rituals, their "repugnance" for wine was clearly not as profound or as deeply rooted as it was for pork.⁸⁴ In preconquest al-Andalus, wine was widely available and the focus of a genre of "wine song" poetry,⁸⁵ Muslims owned numerous vineyards and were known to consume the product of their labors,⁸⁶ and wine was consumed in mixed social settings.⁸⁷

This carried over to early modern Spain where so many New Christians eagerly embraced wine bibbing that it quickly came to be seen as a pressing "social problem," and Christian authorities began attempting to control Morisco alcohol consumption.⁸⁸ Already in 1500 decrees were promulgated against selling them wine or opening taverns in their communities. When a group of Moriscos at a Christian celebration created a "disturbance" in which

80 Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 46–57.

81 *Ibid.*, 160, 165–166; Kathryn Kueny, *The Rhetoric of Sobriety: Wine in Early Islam* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001), 1–3; Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 84–85.

82 Richard Tapper and Sami Zubaida, introduction to *A Taste of Thyme: Culinary Cultures of the Middle East* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 15.

83 Nadeau, "Moscatel morisco," 155–156.

84 Mercedes García-Arenal, *Inquisición y moriscos: Los procesos del Tribunal de Cuenca* (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 1978), 69.

85 Mark D. Meyerson, *Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom: Society, Economy, and Politics in Morvedre, 1248–1391* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 38n93.

86 Nadeau, "Moscatel morisco," 156–158; Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 74–75; Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain: The Commercial Realignment of the Iberian Peninsula, 900–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 184–185; Gallego y Burín and Gámir Sandoval, *Los moriscos del reino de Granada*, 69–71.

87 Campbell, *At the First Table*, 75.

88 Cardaillac, *Moriscos y cristianos*, 32.

several were “killed in knife fights,” a series of royal decrees reiterated the ban on selling wine to Moriscos, who “lose their minds and get drunk ... [creating] much disorder.”⁸⁹ In 1515 the problem of Morisco public intoxication was so pronounced that Queen Juana wrote officials throughout Granada that “some of the newly converted ... because of the great amounts of wine which they drink, become so intoxicated that they fall down in public in the street, so that the Old Christians mock them. When they are drunk, they cause disorder.” In 1521 the city council of Baza banned wine sales because Moriscos and other troublemakers, presumably Christians, gathered together to drink, and thus “neglect their own affairs and spend the whole day in the taverns, and when they do go home, they beat their wives.”⁹⁰ The drunken Morisco became a recurring figure in literature as well.⁹¹

The ambiguity of attitudes toward wine, its centrality in the Spanish and Mediterranean diets, the strong social component of its consumption, as well as its pleasurable but addicting affects made wine use among Moriscos both more common and less meaningful in conflicts over identity and conversion.⁹² Indeed, it has been argued that recently converted Moriscos embraced wine drinking as a way both “to assert their new identity” and to allay questions about differences between themselves and Old Christians. They also acquired vineyards as investments “to demonstrate the sincerity of their recent conversion.” In Bolaños, Almagro, for example, half of all vines were owned by Moriscos. For Old Christians, Morisco attempts to assimilate through sharing in wine consumption were resisted through laws prohibiting them from drinking publicly. This can be seen as an attempt by Old Christians to preserve difference and to retain their social, political, and economic privilege and status.⁹³

The example of Morisco wine consumption suggests the need to approach more critically the interrelationship of food, conversion, and religious identity in Spain and more broadly in the early modern Mediterranean. Rather than a clear-cut and simple confrontation between a monolithic community of Moriscos, “whose cohesion was forged and constantly strengthened by the

89 Gallego y Burín and Gámir Sandoval, *Los moriscos del reino de Granada*, 69–71; David Coleman, *Creating Christian Granada: Society and Religious Culture in an Old-World Frontier City, 1492–1600* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 57. See also Ehlers, *Between Christians and Moriscos*, 138.

90 Harvey, *Muslims in Spain*, 49–50.

91 Barbara Fuchs, *Passing for Spain: Cervantes and the Fictions of Identity* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 11.

92 Cardaillac, *Moriscos y cristianos*, 33.

93 Nadeau, “Moscatel morisco,” 158–160.

ongoing hostility and persecution" of a similarly monolithic and adversarial Christian community, the reality, as is so often the case, was much more nuanced. The relationship between Old and New Christians, in other words, reveals "more complicated patterns" of interaction than just persecution and resistance.⁹⁴ As one scholar put it, "Early modern Spain was a more varied and tolerant society than one might think. Not everyone supported the Inquisition or the decrees of expulsion ... Coexistence, assimilation, toleration and acceptance of difference, of the other, were possible even in the most hostile environment that early seventeenth-century Spain often was. Not all Moriscos were crypto-Muslims, nor were all Old Christians intolerant fanatics. Many had found a way to live together in relative harmony and peace."⁹⁵

While political and religious authorities attempted to define Christian orthodoxy and heterodoxy in increasingly specific and restrictive terms, the practice of suspect activities was not always a political or religious act of resistance. As Anna Foa has suggested, we need to ascertain whether "the symbolic value" of Morisco actions was a "product of internal mechanisms or primarily of Christian influence."⁹⁶ Indeed, determining when Moriscos consciously acted with religious or political intentionality is highly problematic since they were prosecuted for common, quotidian acts that were performed recurrently, even rotely, and quite likely with no consideration of their symbolic value or religious valence.⁹⁷ This was the point made by the Morisco leader Francisco Núñez Muley in his famous 1567 *Memorandum*, in which he argued that Morisco customs were simply cultural practices with "no religious significance."⁹⁸ He noted that the *zambra* dance had initially been opposed by Muslim *alfaquis*, not by Christian authorities, and that Morisco bathhouses were frequented by Christians both old and new. He also pointed to the great cultural complexity of the Mediterranean, in which Christians in Jerusalem and Malta spoke Arabic and wore Arab dress, as did the Moriscos, yet their Christian faith went unchallenged.⁹⁹

At the core of Muley's defense was the contention that the Moriscos were loyal subjects of the crown and good Christians, despite their preservation of

94 Coleman, *Creating Christian Granada*, 9.

95 Trevor J. Dadson, "The Assimilation of Spain's Moriscos: Fiction or Reality?" *Journal of Levantine Studies* 1 (2011): 24.

96 Foa, "Marrano's Kitchen," 21.

97 Chejne, *Islam and the West*, 67.

98 Francisco Núñez Muley, *A Memorandum for the President of the Royal Audiencia and Chancery Court of the City and Kingdom of Granada*, trans. Vincent Barletta (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

99 Coleman, *Creating Christian Granada*, 47–48.

certain cultural practices. There is a growing body of evidence that supports his contention. Contrary to the traditional image of Moriscos as committed crypto-Muslims tenaciously holding onto their banned faith, by the second or third generation after the conquest, “a significant portion” of the community was increasingly, and seemingly sincerely, embracing their new Christian faith.¹⁰⁰ This was not just the case from the Moriscos’ perspective; many Old Christians reported the same.¹⁰¹ Far from an intractable “civilizational hatred,” as Braudel termed it, that prevented Morisco assimilation, Francisco Márquez Villanueva, in his influential *El problema morisco*, has argued that Moriscos and Old Christians could have lived together “without conflict” had political and religious authorities not intervened to create a situation in which traditional cultural practices within a shared communal context were reclassified as heterodox and dangerous.¹⁰²

There is, in fact, a tendency to overstate the religious differences that characterized early modern Iberia, to divide the peninsula too starkly down religious, civilizational lines. Moments of confrontation tend to obscure the more pacific day-to-day reality and to mask the permeable, fuzzy boundaries of this inter-confessional space where religious identity and practice were quite malleable. As one scholar has described it, “In the Mediterranean the confrontation of cultures was more constant than in northern Europe, but the certainty of faith was no stronger.”¹⁰³

This was certainly true of early modern Spain, which was characterized by a diverse blend of “community traditions, superstitious folklore, and imprecise dogmatic beliefs.” The view that religion was culturally contingent and that “everyone can find salvation in his own faith” was widespread. Christian peasants asserted that “God feeds the Muslims and heretics just the same as he feeds the Christians,” and “the good Jew and the good Muslim can, if they act correctly, go to heaven just like the good Christian.” Moriscos held similar views: one man claimed that the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian laws were all “good, even holy ... and that in all three those who keep its laws will be saved.”¹⁰⁴ As

100 Ibid., 33–34.

101 Tueller, “Good and Faithful Christians,” 166.

102 Mercedes García-Arenal, “El problema morisco: Propuestas de discusión,” *Al-Qantara* 13 (1992): 493–494.

103 Henry Kamen, “Strategies of Survival: Minority Cultures in the Western Mediterranean,” in *Early Modern History and the Social Science: Testing the Limits of Braudel’s Mediterranean*, ed. John A. Marino (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2002), 214.

104 Ibid., 214–216; James B. Tueller, *Good and Faithful Christians: Moriscos and Catholicism in Early Modern Spain* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2002), 129.

Barbara Fuchs has noted, "Despite the rampant stereotypes that attempted to pigeonhole Spain's Others ... religious identity in Counter-Reformation Spain was never really crystal clear."¹⁰⁵ There was great variability and imprecision in belief, and praxis more than theology marked communal and individual religious identities. This imprecision was of concern to religious and political authorities who were increasingly intent on defining and enforcing orthodoxy by staking out stark boundaries of language, costume, social conventions, and, of course, foodways.

We have seen how wine, far from being a marker of difference, was in many ways part of a shared culinary culture that transcended exaggerated boundaries of difference, and indeed marked a common point of contact between Moriscos, Old Christians, and Jews. The cultural frontiers of medieval Spain had always been "highly permeable to transcultural exchange," and this is evident in its shared foodways.¹⁰⁶ Broadly speaking, Spanish cuisine was rooted in Mediterranean commodities and Roman cuisine, which provided its substratum. To this layer were added numerous Arab foods, spices, and preparations that profoundly affected the peninsula's food culture.¹⁰⁷ This continued apace with the introduction of foods from the Americas, most of which were being adopted and transforming peninsular cuisines already in the sixteenth century.¹⁰⁸ Medieval sources provide ample evidence of vibrant foodways with commodities, dishes, and preparations that "were not confined to one ethnic or religious group." The differences that certainly did exist were more a product of socioeconomic variation than of religious or cultural differences.¹⁰⁹ Medieval Spanish Muslims, Jews, and Christians, from the royal household to the peasant hovel, ate and clearly enjoyed "very much the same foods" as their neighbors.¹¹⁰ One example among many is the iconic Christian *tarta de Santiago de Compostela*, which is derived from the Passover cake

105 Fuchs, *Passing for Spain*, 2.

106 Coleman, *Creating Christian Granada*, 66.

107 Rafael Chabran, "Medieval Spain," in *Regional Cuisines of Medieval Europe: A Book of Essays*, ed. Melitta Weiss Adamson (New York: Routledge, 2002).

108 On this, see Jeffrey M. Pilcher, "Five Hundred Years of Fusion Histories of Food in the Iberian World," in *Writing Food History: A Global Perspective*, ed. Kyri Claflin and W. Peter Scholliers (New York: Berg, 2012).

109 David Waines, "The Culinary Culture of Al-Andalus," in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. Salma K. Jayyusi (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 2:735.

110 Clifford A. Wright, *A Mediterranean Feast: The Story of the Birth of the Celebrated Cuisines of the Mediterranean, from the Merchants of Venice to the Barbary Corsairs* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1999), 293; Constable, "Food and Meaning," 200, 209.

that Jews introduced to the region when they fled the Berber Almohads in the twelfth century.¹¹¹ Another was the ubiquitous *olla* stews, which were inspired by Arabic and Jewish precedents, and often “Christianized” with the addition of pork.¹¹²

Though seemingly the culinary boundary par excellence, the culture of pork in Spain was more nuanced than the reductionist formulas of the Inquisition allow for. While pork certainly was an important part of Christian culinary practice, at the same time this should not be exaggerated. In part this is because meat consumption experienced a precipitous decline in early modern Spain:¹¹³ poor peasants ate on average only fifty grams of meat a day, divided primarily between pork and beef, and supplemented by growing quantities of cod.¹¹⁴ In addition, fast days during which no meat was consumed numbered more than a third of all days on the calendar.¹¹⁵ The primary way in which pork did enter the Christian diet was as lard, which was commonly used in medieval Spanish cooking, but that began to be replaced by olive oil during the sixteenth century.¹¹⁶ Thus, pork, though it served as a powerful symbol, was “not actually eaten by the whole of Catholic Spain”; rather, it was what people aspired to eat.¹¹⁷

Pork did not always represent an unbreachable fault line either: Christians in medieval al-Andalus often “refrained from eating pork” voluntarily and out of respect for Muslim sensibilities, as did Copts in Egypt, and Melkites in Syria.¹¹⁸ For their part, at times some of the Muslim rulers of medieval Spain tolerated pig husbandry, pork was sold by butchers in the market, and there were

111 Roden, *Food of Spain*, 70.

112 Chabran, “Medieval Spain,” 137; Campbell, *At the First Table*, 73.

113 Montanari, *Culture of Food*, 73–74.

114 Casey, *Early Modern Spain*, 36; James Maxwell Anderson, *Daily Life during the Spanish Inquisition* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002), 187.

115 Regina Grafe, *Distant Tyranny: Markets, Power, and Backwardness in Spain, 1650–1800* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 68–70.

116 Varriano, *Tastes and Temptations*, 149–151.

117 Earle, *Body of the Conquistador*, 61.

118 Francisco Márquez Villanueva, “On the Concept of Mudejarism,” in *The Conversos and Moriscos in Late Medieval Spain and Beyond*, vol. 1, *Departures and Change*, ed. Kevin Ingram (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 39. On the Copts, see Paulina Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes: Aspects of Life in an Islamic Metropolis of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 177–178. On the Melkites, see Bernard Heyberger, “Morale et confession chez les melkites d’Alep d’après une liste de péchés (fin xvii^e siècle),” in *L’orient chrétien dans l’empire musulman: Hommage au professeur Gérard Troupeau*, ed. Geneviève Gobillot and Marie-Thérèse Urvoy (Paris: Éditions de Paris 2005), 287.

even theoretical texts that defended its consumption.¹¹⁹ Though rare, it was not unknown for Muslims to eat pork, including in medieval Italy, and among some Berbers in Morocco.¹²⁰

As for the Moriscos, as the Inquisition's extensive evidence indicates, pork consumption became widespread over the course of the sixteenth century, both by their own admission and corroborated by the testimony of their Old Christian neighbors. Several examples, among many, will suffice: a 1571 list of individuals in an *auto de fé* in Granada described Sebastian de Alcaráz as a "Morisco" and a "pig-keeper" who was found in possession of several "Moorish prayers and other things from the Qur'an of Muhammed."¹²¹ And finally, at the time of the expulsion, a Morisco wrote in a memorial, verified by numerous Old Christian witnesses, that he and his family had "always eaten bacon and drunk wine," and even raised and slaughtered pigs.¹²²

Morisco resistance to pork was often likely simply a function of taste rather than religion or politics. Individuals interrogated by the Inquisition made this point repeatedly; as one contemporary source put it, "We have not eaten pork because we are not accustomed to it."¹²³ Moriscos in the small Castilian town of Damiel were reported not to eat pork because it "did not agree with them."¹²⁴ One Morisca from Granada explained to the Inquisition that "Christians do not know how to cook a stew without using salt pork (*tocino*), [but] in her land they made these dishes with olive oil."¹²⁵ And another Morisco in testimony before the Inquisition attributed his avoidance of wine and pork to his upbringing: "He had never eaten bacon ... nor drunken wine ... because he was raised that way and not because he was practicing any ceremony or following any religious rule."¹²⁶ Attempts to alter eating habits flew in the face of the thinking of the day, which envisioned taste "as a kind of sympathy between a person's nature and a particular food." Food preference was mostly a consequence of

119 Fàbrega, "La cultura del cerdo en el Mediterráneo," 221–222, 226; Eugenio M.O. Dognée, *La higiene de Albucahis* (Córdoba: Imprenta y Papelería Moderna, 1925), 48, c. 87.

120 Julie Anne Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy: The Colony at Lucera* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003), 71; Harris, *Good to Eat*, 85.

121 Lu Ann Homza, ed. and trans., *The Spanish Inquisition, 1478–1614: An Anthology of Sources* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006), 240.

122 Trevor Dadson, *Los moriscos de Villarrubia de los Ojos (siglos xv–xviii): Historia de una minoría asimilada, expulsada y reintegrada* (Madrid: Iberoamericana Editorial, 2007), 401.

123 Root, "Speaking Christian," 129.

124 Lea, *Moriscos of Spain*, 104.

125 Constable, "Food and Meaning," 211.

126 Anna Benito, "Inquisition and the Creation of the Other," in *Marginal Voices: Studies in Converso Literature of Medieval and Golden Age Spain*, ed. Amy I. Aronson-Friedman and Gregory B. Kaplan (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 63.

ones humoral makeup and temperament; thus, one's "taste could no more be changed than ... [one's] temperament."¹²⁷

All this suggests the need to complicate our understanding of early modern foodways. We began with Brillat-Savarin's famous quote, which has become an article of faith in food studies: "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are." As the example of the Moriscos illustrates, food certainly does function as a marker of identity and as a means to divide and distinguish. The example of the Moriscos also suggests the need for caution, however, in embracing too easily—or better, too exclusively—the ways in which food functioned as a boundary. "Caricature is a serious danger" in the field of food history: What people eat is "a potent ingredient of national and social stereotyping," and this can lead to distortions that mask more complex realities in terms of both foodways and identity.¹²⁸ This is evident in the Inquisition's emphasis on pork and wine, which was less about identifying unique Morisco foodways and more about disciplining and controlling what was a restive and potentially subversive community, and preventing their assimilation with Old Christians. We should not, in short, look too carefully to the Inquisition to provide an accurate culinary map of Spanish foodways in the early modern period. And finally, an exaggerated emphasis on the nexus of food and identity can obscure and oversimplify the rich and multivalent ways that foodways often transcend seeming insuperable political and religious boundaries. This is apparent in early modern Spain, where overemphasis on rhetorical constructions of antagonism can obscure connections evidenced in the richly nuanced functioning of its culinary culture.

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127 Jean-Louis Flandarin, "Distinction through Taste," in *A History of Private Life: Passions of the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 294.

128 Stephen Mennell, "Divergences and Convergences in the Development of Culinary Cultures," in *European Food History: A Research Review*, ed. Hans J. Teuteberg (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), 280–281.

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PART 5

*Abstention: Vegetarianism in the
Mediterranean and Europe from Antiquity
to the Nineteenth Century*



An Ontological Dispute in the Writings of Porphyry of Tyre

The Discussion of Meat Eating as a Battlefield for Competing Worldviews in Antiquity

Pedro Ribeiro Martins

If only it were possible to abstain without problems even from crops as food, if there were not this corruptible part of our nature! If only, as Homer says, we had no need of food or drink, so that we might really be immortals! The poet rightly shows that food is a provision not only for life but also for death.

PORPHYRY OF TYRE, *De abstinence* 4.20.13¹



Food is often considered a source of life and energy, since living beings depend on it to live. In ancient thought, humans' need for food is what distinguishes them from the gods, who do not crave it or have need of it. In this chapter's epigraph, the philosopher Porphyry of Tyre expresses his desire to live without food, and so his longing for immortality. This ascetic idea of rejecting food in order for the soul to ascend to the divine was common among ancient philosophers, especially the Platonists. Another, more specific asceticism was also found in antiquity: vegetarianism. There were many reasons for living a vegetarian way of life in antiquity, such as the pursuit of an ascetic life, the conviction that the souls of animals and humans are related to each other, the belief in migration of the soul after death, the escape from evil demons dwelling in the flesh, the opinion that plant sacrifice to the gods was more appropriate

1 If not stated otherwise, all translations of *De abstinence* (DA), are from *Porphyry: On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, translated and organized by Gillian Clark (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000). DA 4.20.13: "εἰ γάρ, καθάπερ φησὶν Ὅμηρος, μηδὲ σίτου ἐδεήθημεν μηδὲ ποτοῦ, ἴν' ὄντως ἦμεν ἀθάνατοι· καλῶς τοῦτο τοῦ ποιητοῦ παραστήσαντος, ὡς οὐ μόνον τοῦ ζῆν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ ἀποθνήσκειν ἢ τροφή ὑπήρχεν ἐφόδιον. εἰ οὖν μηδὲ ταύτης ἐδεήθημεν, τὸσω ἂν ἦμεν μακαριώτεροι, ὅσω καὶ ἀθανατώτεροι."

than animal sacrifice, and the idea that animals should be treated justly.² This chapter discusses the ethical questions of eating meat and how doing so reveals competing classifications of beings in antiquity—gods, humans, animals, and plants.

The discussion of meat eating and vegetarianism in antiquity reflected a dispute between different ontological classifications of beings—that is, the way that the hierarchy of gods, humans, animals, and plants was understood. Classifying what should and should not be eaten is one parameter for evaluating this dispute; thus, in antiquity food and conscious abstaining from it should be analyzed as expressions of specific views on the ontological classification of living beings.

In general, there are two major worldviews concerning the ontological classification of beings. The first divides them into hermetic categories of gods, humans, animals, and plants, whereas the second understands these categories as interchangeable. Porphyry of Tyre belonged to the second group. He defended an ethics of nonviolence and of extending just treatment to other beings by using spatial metaphors. Furthermore, Porphyry extended translocally the project of vegetarianism to other ancient civilizations in order to embody his ethics of nonviolence.³

1 Porphyry as a Source for the Vegetarianism in Antiquity

Porphyry of Tyre was a Neoplatonic philosopher, in his time second only to Plotin, his master, who lived in the third century CE.⁴ He was born in the

2 For a more detailed discussion on the many reasons for vegetarianism in antiquity, see Pedro R. Martins, *Der Vegetarismus in der Antike im Streitgespräch: Porphyrios' Auseinandersetzung mit der Schrift Gegen die Vegetarier* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018); Johannes Haussleiter, *Der Vegetarismus in der Antike* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1935); Daniel A. Dombrowski, *The Philosophy of Vegetarianism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); *Porphyry: On Abstinence* (Clark); and Stephen Newmyer, *Animals, Rights and Reason in Plutarch and Modern Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

3 Translocality is understood here in the terms of Ulrike Freitag and Amin von Oppen, who discussed it as a “more open and less linear view on the manifold ways in which the global world is constituted.” See Freitag and von Oppen, *Translocality: The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 5–6. Expressing a concept beyond spatial mobility and cultural transfer, the term *translocality* “refers explicitly and critically to the local adaptation, re-structuring and limitation of translocal experiences in particular settings.”

4 For an actual discussion of the biography of Porphyry of Tyre, see Andrew Smith, *Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus: Philosophy and Religion in Neoplatonism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 717, 773.

Phoenician merchant city of Tyre, present-day Sur in southern Lebanon. Porphyry's interests were diverse, as he wrote more than 60 books on Homeric literary criticism, Aristotelian logic, biblical interpretation, and analysis of Chaldean oracles in metaphysics.⁵ Porphyry pursued part of his formal education in Athens and was mostly active in Rome.

For a long time the *communis opinio* (especially Bidez) held that Porphyry had converted to a fully Hellenized culture: he wrote only in Greek, he did not refer much to his hometown, and he was the quintessential Neoplatonic scholar of his time.⁶ Those of this opinion also classified his first works as Oriental and mystic, in opposition to his later works, which were closer to Greek thought. This position was challenged by Johnson, who understands Porphyry's philosophy as a translational project.⁷ Instead of understanding Hellenism as a major cultural force that decimated regional cultures, it is perhaps more appropriate to understand the phenomenon through a dynamic of microexchange and adaptations between both Hellenic and regional cultures. These exchanges required a deep effort of understanding among cultures—or, in Johnson's terms, a translation of cultures. In this view, Porphyry was a major translator. He worked on two axes, a vertical one in which he absorbed the manifold cultural and theological manifestations of truth and god in different cultures as rendered in a Platonic framework, and a horizontal one in which he translated cultural manifestations into understandable concepts for other cultures.⁸ Nevertheless, despite the exchange that occurs in such a process, for Johnson such cultural translation is ultimately also a form of conquest.⁹

Porphyry's most important contribution to the debate on vegetarianism is the book *De abstinentia ab esu animalium*, or *On Abstinence from Living Beings with a Soul*, which is the most extensive defense of vegetarianism found in antiquity.¹⁰ The treaty is organized as a letter to his friend in Rome, Firmus Cas-

5 Among others, see *Quaestionum Homericarum ad Iliadem* and *ad Odysseam*, *Isagoge*, *Contra Christianos*, *De philosophia ex oraculis* and *Sententiae*.

6 Joseph Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre, le philosophe néo-platonicien: avec les fragments des traités Peri agalmatōn et De regressu animae* (Gand: van Goethem, 1913).

7 Aaron P. Johnson, *Religion and Identity in Porphyry of Tyre: The Limits of Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4–12.

8 The efforts of Porphyry are described by Johnson (*Religion and Identity*, 8) as follows: “a persistent and wide-ranging series of cultural and philosophical translation acts.”

9 Ibid. 8: “The interpretatio Graeca was a translation of non-Greek elements into a Greek frame of reference that perpetuated Hellenocentrism. It was a universalism that masked a particular hierarchical arrangement of cultural power.”

10 The original title is Περὶ ἀποχῆς ἐμψύχων. He also wrote other books in which vegetarianism plays a role, such as *Vita Pythagorae* and *Vita Plotini*.

tricius, a former vegetarian who had resumed eating meat. The work is divided into four books. The first contains writings from opponents of vegetarianism such as the Stoics, the Peripatetics, the Epicureans, Clodius of Naples, and Heraclides Ponticus.¹¹ The second book focuses on the relationship between sacrifice and meat eating: even if humans have to sacrifice to the gods, they are not obligated to eat the sacrificed meat (*DA* 2.1.1). The third book turns to the ethical discussion of meat eating, especially to the problem of justice toward other animate beings.¹² The fourth and last book covers abstinence from meat by analyzing the customs and laws of ancient nations. According to Johnson, *nation* here refers to *ethnos*, which can also be understood as a culture or group of people. Porphyry announces his interest in analyzing vegetarianism “nation by nation,” or κατὰ ἔθνη, in *DA* 4.1. He discusses not only the ancient Greeks (*DA* 4.2) and Spartans (*DA* 4.3–5) but also the Egyptians (*DA* 4.6–10), the Jews (*DA* 4.11–15), the Syrians (*DA* 4.15), the Persians (*DA* 4.16), the Indians (*DA* 4.17–18), and the Cretans (*DA* 4.19).

From each nation, Porphyry picks worthwhile examples to support his cause. Before looking into how and why he does this, I analyze in more detail the above-mentioned competing ontologies.

2 Gods, Animals, Humans, and Plants: Two Worldviews in Conflict

There was an open debate among philosophers and mythographers concerning the ontological classification of gods, humans, animals, and plants. In general, two concurrent ontological positions defined the debate. The hegemonic position was supported not only by archaic writers such as Hesiod but also by prominent philosophers like Aristotle as well as the Stoics and Epicureans.

11 The arguments of the Stoics and Peripatetics are contained in *DA* 1.4–6, of the Epicureans in *DA* 1.7–13 and those of Clodius of Naples and Heraclides Ponticus from a book called *Against the Vegetarians* (Πρὸς τοὺς ἀπεχομένους τῶν σαρκῶν) in *DA* 1.13–26. For an extensive treatment of this fragment, see Martins, *Der Vegetarismus*.

12 In this book Porphyry relies on Plutarch and other sources to engage in a dialectical discussion with the Stoics. The point is to prove that animals have some kind of reasoning and, therefore, they must be treated morally. Edwards has shown that Porphyry does not subscribe to the thesis that animals have reason, yet he defends for other reasons the idea that animals should be treated with justice. See G.F. Edwards, “Irrational Animals in Porphyry’s Logical Works: A Problem for the Consensus Interpretation of On Abstinence,” *Phronesis* 59, no. 1 (2014): 22–43; and G.F. Edwards, “The Purpose of Porphyry’s Rational Animals: A Dialectical Attack on the Stoics in *On Abstinence from Animal Food*,” in *Aristotle Re-Interpreted: New Findings on Seven Hundred Years of the Ancient Commentators*, ed. Richard Sorabji (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016): 263–290.

In this view, there is a hermetic division between gods, humans, animals, and plants, and a clear hierarchy between these beings. Hesiod says that humans once have lived with the gods and have access to justice, whereas other beings did not.¹³ Aristotle claims that plants exist for animals and animals for humans, and that there is a natural and just war between men and animals (*Politica* 1.8 1256b). The Stoics maintain that only beings with reason (*logos*) can be treated justly,¹⁴ and for the Epicureans there is no advantage in treating irrational beings with justice if it is not possible to profit from a contract with them (*DA* 1.7–13). In general, this position suggests that there is no way to defend ethical actions toward animals and plants because they belong to ontological categories below humans.

An alternative ontology, however—one that understood the ontological borders between beings as more fluid—was developed by Pythagoreans.¹⁵ This view found many supporters in the Platonic Academy, including Theophrastus and Xenocrates.¹⁶ It was later reactivated by Plutarch,¹⁷ and finally by Porphyry. This position holds that all souls share some degree of relatedness, familiarity, or kinship because of the similarity of body and soul. Although there is still a hierarchy among souls—gods occupy the upper position and plants the bottom one—there is a possibility of equivalence, or exchange, between them. This is reflected, for example, in the Pythagorean theory of *metempsychose*,

13 Especially on the basis of *Erga* 277–279 (Zeus allowed the animals to eat each other but bestowed justice upon men for them to live together) and *Theogonia* 535–563 (division between the worlds of men and of gods), Most advocates the following opinion: “Human beings, to be understood as human, must be seen in contrast with the other two categories of living beings in Hesiod’s world, with gods and animals—indeed, each of the three stories with which Hesiod begins his poem illuminates man’s place in that world in contrast with these other categories.” See Hesiodus, *Hesiod*, trans. and ed. Glenn W. Most (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

14 *DA* 1.4–6 and many other sources. For a more detailed discussion, see Sorabji, *Animal Minds* Ithaca, NY: Edwards, “Purpose of Porphyry’s Rational Animals,” 263–290.

15 It is always a challenge to talk about the deeds and thoughts of Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, but the doctrine of *metempsychosis* and vegetarianism are two distinctive markers of the Pythagoreans that can be reconstructed from varied sources. For a more detailed discussion, see Haussleiter, *Der Vegetarismus*, 97–150. U. Dierauer, *Tier und Mensch im Denken der Antike: Studien zur Tierpsychologie, Anthropologie und Ethik* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1977); Marcel Detienne, “La cuisine de Pythagore,” *Archives des sciences sociales des religions* 29, no. 1 (1970), 141–172; Alberto Bernabé, “Pitagóricos en la comedia griega,” in *Ágalma: Ofrenda desde la filología clásica a Manuel García Teijeiro* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2014), 477–483.

16 For a more detailed discussion about animals and humans in the Platonic Academy, see Haussleiter, *Der Vegetarismus*, 163–233.

17 Newmyer, in *Animals, Rights and Reason*, offers the best discussion of the writings of Plutarch on meat eating and vegetarianism.

which postulated that souls could be reincarnated in the body of different beings, and also in the postulate of a community (*koinonia*) between men and animals, as Sextus Empiricus (*Adversus Mathematicos* 9.127.8) and Cicero (*Res publica* 3.11.18–19) reported from Pythagorean traditions. Another expression of this ontology is found in the so-called *Oikeiotes* theory of Theophrastus. In a fragment reproduced by Porphyry (*DA* 3.26), Aristotle's pupil defends the idea that not only all people of all nations and tribes, but also all animals, share a relatedness of feelings (*Oikeiotes*) because of the similarity in their body and soul.¹⁸ This relationship called for humans to treat animals morally, and Porphyry based his ethics on this alternative ontology. The next section discusses how exactly he expressed the relationships between beings.

3 Extending Just Treatment to Other Beings: Metaphors and Ethics

Examining Porphyry's use of metaphor, especially spatial metaphors, allows for deeper comprehension of the philosopher's ethical prescriptions. Since Lakoff and Johnson's 1980 book *Metaphors We Live By*, it has been widely accepted that metaphors are not only aesthetical components of discourse but also constitutive parts of our conceptual system—and therefore of written and spoken argument.¹⁹ They maintain that “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.”²⁰ The application of this approach allows us to delve into the structure of Porphyry's ethical argument, as he is using metaphors not only to embellish his text but to express his thesis on relationships between living beings.

In a previous work I proposed that Porphyry defended a nonabsolutist ethic, expressed by means of spatial metaphors on the relationship between humans and others living beings.²¹ Instead of describing exactly how humans should

18 There has been a long and fruitful discussion on the concepts of *Oikeiotes* and the Stoic *Oikeiosis*. For more information, see Charles Oscar Brink, “Οἰκείωσις and Οἰκειότης: Theophrastus and Zeno on Nature in Moral Theory,” *Phronesis* 1, no. 2 (1956), 123–145; and Anthony A. Long, *Stoic Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

19 “Primarily, on the basis of linguistic evidence, we have found that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature.” See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 4.

20 Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 5. Their most famous example is that argument is war. Obviously, an argument is not the same as war, but metaphoric expressions from the realm of war are frequently used to understand and structure an argument, for example: I defended a thesis; I attacked your argument; I undermined your position.

21 Martins, *Der Vegetarismus*.

deal with animals, he describes the “evil” aspects of killing and eating animals, and even plants, but he leaves it to the reader to decide whether they will or will not do it. The basis of his ethical prescription is the already-discussed alternative ontology, which assumes kinship among all living beings, as we see in this passage: “So, since they are kin, if it appeared that they have also, as Pythagoras said, been allocated the same soul, someone who did not refrain from injustice towards relatives would justly be judged impious.”²² But he admits that the human being is not autonomous and needs food: “We cannot keep the divine untouched and harmless in relation to everything, for we are not without needs in relation to everything.”²³

So to become closer to God, the ultimate Neoplatonic goal, individuals should extend just treatment not only to human beings but also to other beings: “Thus someone who does not restrict harmlessness to human beings, but extends it also to the other animals, is more like the god; and if extension to plants is possible, he preserves the image even more.”²⁴

The parameter for determining when and how to extend justice to other beings is the *Nous*—the intellect—which only humans possess. According to the *Nous* and to one’s experiences in life, one should be able to make the right choice about treating other living beings justly:

But as concerning the choice of a way of life it is the one who has experience with both ways of life a more precise *judge* (*krites*) than the one who has experience with only one; in respect to the choices and negligences of duties is the one who chooses from an upper position a more confident *judge* (*krites*), including of lesser matters, than the one who judges from below of what lies before him. So the man who lives in accordance with intellect is a more precise *judge* (*oristes*) in respect to what has to be chosen and what not than the one who lives according to unreason.²⁵

Porphyry chooses the word *oristes* (ὀριστής) to convey the meaning of one who makes a moral judgment. The *oristes* was originally a boundary (*oros*)

22 DA 3.26.1: “ὥστε συγγενῶν ὄντων, εἰ φαίνοιτο κατὰ Πυθαγόραν καὶ ψυχὴν τὴν αὐτὴν εἰληχότα, δικαίως ἂν τις ἀσεβῆς κρίνοιτο τῶν οἰκειῶν [τῆς ἀδικίας] μὴ ἀπεχόμενος.”

23 DA 3.27.4: “ὅτι τὸ θεῖον ἀκήρατον καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν ἀβλαβὲς σφίζειν οὐ δυνάμεθα.”

24 DA 3.27.2: “οὕτως ὁ μὴ μόνον στήσας τὸ ἀβλαβὲς ἐν ἀνθρώποις, παρατείνας δὲ καὶ εἰς τὰ ἄλλα ζῶα μᾶλλον ὁμοίως θεῶν, καὶ εἰ ἄχρι φυτῶν δυνατὸν, ἔτι μᾶλλον σφίζει τὴν εἰκόνα.”

25 My translation of DA 3.27.7: “ὥσπερ δὲ ἐν βίῳ ἀίρέσειν ἀκριβέστερος κριτῆς ὁ πείραν ἀμφοῖν εἰληφῶς τοῦ θατέρου πειραθέντος μόνου, οὕτως ἐν ἀίρέσει καὶ φυγαῖς καθηκόντων ἀσφαλέστερος κριτῆς ὁ ἐκ τοῦ ἐπαναβεβηκότος κρίνων καὶ τὸ ἦττον τοῦ κάτωθεν κρίνοντος τὰ προκείμενα. ὥστε ὁ κατὰ νοῦν ζῶν τοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἀλογίαν ἀκριβέστερος ὀριστῆς ὧν τε αἰρετέον καὶ ὧν μὴ.”

settler, marking the limits between nations or cities. Later it also came to be used for “judge.” Appealing to the original meaning and evoking complex spatial imagery,²⁶ Porphyry indicates that moral decisions are flexible like boundaries. Each time one makes a moral decision (e.g., to kill an animal for food), one also must consider whether, in that specific case, the action is the most just one that could be taken. Porphyry, then, leaves to individuals their ultimate choice, knowing that it is impossible for humans to be perfectly just. Thus, in every case, individuals must define their own moral boundary in order to carry out the most just possible action. Although the image of the boundary settler entails some flexibility in the particularity of human action, the philosopher is clearly interested in delimiting the general scope of the just action: nonviolence toward other living beings. This image of the human being as a boundary settler is decisive in understanding not only the application of the nonviolence principle but also how Porphyry deals with vegetarianism in foreign countries, as discussed in the following sections.

4 Setting New Boundaries for Vegetarianism: Translocality and Ethics

Porphyry’s main goal in *De abstinentia* is to provide convincing arguments to abstain from meat eating. This section analyzes how he drew on other cultures to enhance his argument. In the fourth book of *De abstinentia*, Porphyry composes a mosaic of ethnographic accounts of vegetarianism in the major ancient cultures. His goal is to show that in each culture at least one group of people abstained from some kind of food. Johnson analyzed Porphyry’s view on different cultures with respect to vegetarianism from the perspective of racial theory.²⁷ Because Johnson is mainly interested in Porphyry’s underlining concepts of race, tribe, and nation, he does not pay attention to the matter itself: meat eating and abstaining from meat. It is worth noting that the descriptions in the following pages are the opinions expressed by Porphyry and should not

26 In passage *DA* 3.26–27 Porphyry uses a great deal of spatial metaphors to express his ethical point of view. Here are some examples of words he uses metaphorically to operate moral concepts: 3.26.2 *apokopto* (to cut off) having familiarity (*oikeion*) as an object, 3.26.5 *parekteino* (to extend), 3.26.7 *perigrapho* (to circumscribe), 3.26.9 *diateinein* (to extend), 2.27.2 *parateino* (to extend) having Just (*to dikaion*) as an object and 3.27.9 *exoristheises* (to ban someone or something of a territory) referring to justice (*dikaosyne*). For a complete analysis of all spatial metaphors used by Porphyry in this passage, see Martins, *Der Vegetarismus*.

27 See Johnson, *Religion and Identity*, 192–221.

be used acritically to assess the culture of the nations to which he referred. The goal is to analyze Porphyry's interests in comparing several nations in light of his main ethical project.

Porphyry starts his narrative with the Greeks, *hoi Hellenes*. He uses Dicaearchus to offer a rationalized version of the Golden Age myth (DA 4.2). In it, the first humans, the race of gold, were very close to God and did not kill (*phoneuein*) animals for food, instead they ate what nature gave them (DA 4.2.1–4). Afterwards, with the decrease of morality in the silver and bronze races, humans' desires grew, and with that the need for more and new things (DA 4.2.6). At this point people started to have private property and to use animals for food (DA 4.2.7–8). War appeared in this period, and Porphyry correlates the murder of animals with the origins of war, luxury, and injustice (DA 4.2.9).

This idealized account of a morally degenerative evolution of society is based on a hegemonic perspective of time passing, as illustrated by the narrative of the five ages from Hesiod's *Erga* 106–201. Porphyry's analysis rates the killing of animals as a reason for the degradation of humanity as a whole.

Porphyry then goes on to the Spartans, focusing on the society created through the laws of Lycurgus the lawgiver (DA 4.3–4). Even though the Spartans did not abstain from meat, the *Politeia* organized by Lycurgus minimized the consumption of meat (DA 4.3.1). Using Plutarch as source, Porphyry stresses the communitarian and frugal aspects of Spartan society, such as their famous collective meals, the *syssitia* (DA 4.4.1). This daily social event was strictly controlled and demanded full participation of each citizen. During the meal citizens were expected to talk with each other about daily life and the city or just to have fun. The meal consisted of bread, wine, cheese, and figs (DA 4.4.6). Through this communal meal, says Porphyry, all the citizens were at the same level, which helped eliminate distinctions between rich and poor (DA 4.4.2).

This description of a non-vegetarian diet does not completely fit the purpose of the book, which is to defend a vegetarian way of life. Instead, it serves Porphyry's argument on the importance of having control over one's own wishes in order to achieve a just life. Most importantly it connects political aspects, such as state organization and wealth distribution, with the discussion about food and abstinence.

After a transition, in which he points out that even among the barbarian nations a group of enlightened ones always abstained (DA 4.5), he moves on to a discussion of the Egyptian priests (DA 4.6). His source, Chaeremon, was himself a priest and explains the intricate, not always logical, types of abstinence found among the Egyptian priests. Most of them are connected to purification rites for special holy days. Some of the prohibitions included wine, because of its stimulating properties and because it prevents work, as well as bread in times

of purity, oil, products from outside of Egypt, quadruped ungulates, carnivorous birds, eggs, and other animals. There are many other long compilations of observations (DA 4.6–8). Porphyry concludes by saying that the Egyptians realized that the divine is present not only in humans but also in animals, which have the same soul as humans. This is also why the Egyptians' gods have animal shapes (DA 4.9–10).

Porphyry's interest consists in comparing the figure of the Egyptian priest with that of a philosopher who follows the path of the divine through abstinence. His interpretation and translation for Hellenic minds of the way Egyptians dealt with animals and gods reflects the ontology classification of gods, humans, and animals as interchangeable entities.

On the Jews, Porphyry quotes Flavius Josephus, especially on the sect of the Essenes (DA 4.11–13). This group, “the most venerable and honourable,” abstained from every animal and understood pleasure as a vice and temperance as a virtue. They despised wealth, giving all property away when they joined the sect and collectively administered wealth. They didn't value marriage but adopted children and taught them their traditions. Their meals were ritualized and sacred—also collective—but silent and introspective, in contrast to those of the Spartans. They believed in the immortality of the soul and the corruption of the body (DA 4.13.8). As for the rest of the Jews, Porphyry recounts that they abstained from pork, fish without scales, and animals with solid hooves, among others. He also emphasizes their differentiation between killing and eating animals (DA 4.14).

The most important aspect of the Jewish tradition for Porphyry's argument is the concept of the immortality of the soul and the corruption of the body. This dualism, a cornerstone of Platonism, is also expressed through dietary rules, especially abstaining from meat.

Next, he introduces the habits of the Syrians, by whom he probably meant the Phoenicians, including himself, but he does not mention his own identity. He states through his sources (Neanthes and Asclepiades) that all Syrians previously abstained from eating meat, although they did sacrifice to some maligned entities and did not eat the sacrificed meat (DA 4.15.1). Then, one day, under the rule of Pygmalion, a high priest burned his finger on the sacrificed animal and put his finger into his mouth, tasting the flavor of the fat. When he decided to eat it, he was condemned to death by Pygmalion. The next high priest did the same thing and received the same punishment. At some point the whole population started eating meat and Pygmalion could not do anything about it (DA 1.15.3–5). The only thing people still abstained from was fish (DA 1.15.5).

The next nation Porphyry covers is the Persians. Porphyry quotes Eubolos as his source for the existence of three groups of *Magoi*, or “the wise” (DA 4.16.1).

The first neither killed nor ate animals, the second used animals for work but did not kill domesticated animals, and the third abstained from many kinds of animals (DA 4.16.2). Apart from this, they had a strong belief in *metempsychosis*, which relates to the Pythagorean philosophy (DA 4.16.2). Furthermore, they understood their relationship with animals as being in community (*koinonia*) with them (DA 4.16.3).

Heading to the Far East, Porphyry uses Bardasanes to speak about the Indians, especially two Gymnosophist groups: the Brahmins and the Samaneans. The first, born into the caste, abstained from every animal, ate vegetable crops or rice as meals, and lived in isolation from social contact. The second group was chosen among the general people; they lived outside the city; ate rice, bread, fruit, and vegetables; and had no wife or possessions (DA 4.17). They understood life as a necessary service to nature and looked forward to being freed from their bodies, since they believed in the immortality of the soul (DA 4.18).

The aspect Porphyry emphasizes in this section is the personal human struggle to free one's soul from the chains of the body. This struggle corresponds, for Porphyry, to the effort that should shape the life of a philosopher.

The last nation to be discussed is the Cretans. Porphyry affirms that the prophets of Zeus in Crete were vegetarians and quotes a beautiful remaining fragment of Euripides' now-lost *Cretans* to prove his point:

In clothing all white, I shun
the birth of mortals; I do not touch
corpse-biers; I have set my guard against
the eating of animal food.²⁸

The purification of the body as an ascetic ritual is the main theme of this description, which functions as a way to connect religious performance with philosophical reflection on ethics. The next section presents how Porphyry used these narratives to exemplify his ethical project.

28 DA 4.19.2: "πάλλευκα δ' ἔχων εἴματα φεύγω
γένεσιν τε βροτῶν καὶ νεκροθήκης
οὐ χριμπτόμενος τὴν τ' ἐμψύχων
βρώσιν ἐδεστών πεφύλαγμαί."

5 Space, Extension, and Nonviolence: Porphyry's Translocal Project of Vegetarianism

Porphyry's project to translocally extend the vegetarian discourse beyond Greece and Rome had many goals. The first and clearest was to develop a network to support his own way of life. The second was to collect the best examples of attitudes from other cultures to substantiate his own claim. Third, he performs many acts of cultural translation for the cultures he is writing about and the public to whom he is writing. Finally, he applies his ethics of setting boundaries by analyzing different ways of abstaining from and extending justice to other living beings, not judging any nation for not abstaining in the way he does. Once again, the moral flexibility of each individual action that Porphyry defended can be understood only within the framework of a nonviolent life.

The structure that Porphyry follows to introduce and discuss his sources reveals his argument. Every ancient nation, Greek or non-Greek, receives approximately the same importance in his account. Furthermore, they are not presented through a critical lens, as in his other writings,²⁹ but are idealized, since his goal is to emphasize the positive aspects of vegetarianism. As would be expected of one of the most erudite scholars in antiquity, Porphyry uses many ethnographic sources, including Dicaearchus, Plutarch, Chaeremon, Flavius Josephus, Neanthes, Asklepiades, Eubolos, Bardasanes, and Euripides. He begins each section quoting his sources, showing his interest in using them as authorities, yet he also reveals that he did not do any fieldwork. If some praise Herodotus as the first ethnographer, then Porphyry would be the first armchair anthropologist.³⁰ Most importantly, he uses his sources to tie together his readership with foreign ideas. By the end of book 4 he managed to create a strong social network,³¹ connecting cultures from most of the known world to Roman and Greek ways of thinking through vegetarianism. A network of manifestations of vegetarianism—rather than a strict hierarchical dogma better fits Porphyry's ethics, since he is not interested in developing a strict moral codex that rules all people in a hierarchical manner.

29 For an analysis of nations and races in the corpus of Porphyry, see Johnson, *Religion and Identity*, 258–286.

30 An armchair anthropologist uses third-party description and ethnography to develop his own interpretation of cultures. Important examples are James Frazer, Edward Tylor, and Marcel Mauss.

31 For a discussion on the literature on social networks in general, see Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); and Christian Stegbauer, ed., *Netzwerkanalyse und Netzwerktheorie. Ein neues Paradigma in den Sozialwissenschaften* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2010).

In terms of content, it is clear that Porphyry emphasizes the most positive aspects of each culture in regard to abstention. Each custom is first presented from a more or less neutral perspective. Only then, with all the information laid out, does Porphyry give his own interpretation—and by doing so, he carries out the cultural translation necessary for his readership to understand and appropriate foreign customs into their own way of life.³² In this way, he can work with known concepts and also deal with exotic societies. The decisive concepts he translates are the following: a morally degenerative passage of time from the ancient Greeks, the Spartans' combination of asceticism and social life, the Egyptians' metaphysical connection between gods and animals, the Jewish belief in the immortality of the soul and the corruption of the body, the Syrians' differentiation of sacrifice and eating, the Persian *Magoi's* doctrine of *metempsychose*, the Brahmans' and Samaneans' struggle to free the body from the soul, and finally the Cretans' purity, ritualism, and abstinence. This effort represents a transversal movement that verticalizes the nonviolent aspect of every culture and also makes horizontal each experience with abstinence and vegetarianism in terms that a Greek would understand, thus decentralizing the racial superiority of the center of the Roman Empire and appreciating every effort to achieve the soul's ascendance.³³ One has to remember that every people considered by Porphyry, with the exception of the Indians, was at least partially under the control of the Roman Empire at the time he was writing. Thus, Porphyry is not only collecting ethnographic data to address educated groups at the center of the empire but most probably also producing a moral philosophy for the elite of Rome's periphery, such as his hometown of Tyre.

The metaphor of the human as a boundary settler that Porphyry developed in his third book is also exemplified in the fourth book. Thus, we can understand Porphyry's ethnological interest as a way of showing the many paths one can follow to achieve the ultimate goal: the ascension of the soul to the god. In this way he provides practical examples of possible expressions of the abstinence from animals as a just act. His understanding of justice as something that can be extended to other beings through nonviolence constitutes an operative ethical approach to the relationship between different nations and between species. In summary, Porphyry translocally extends the project of vegetarianism not only by rendering the experiences of each culture into one Platonic frame but also by adding up regional efforts toward abstention into a map of possible attitudes towards alimentation. In doing so, he stresses the importance

32 See Johnson, *Religion and Identity*, 259–299.

33 See *ibid.*, 298–299.

of abstaining from meat in order to establish an ontological classification that assumes the importance of nonhumans as living beings.

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Missionary and Heretic

Debating Veganism in the Medieval Islamic World

Kevin Blankinship

To be a vegan in the medieval Islamic world was an embattled position.¹ Most inhabitants of that world assented to the idea that animals are granted by God for human use, and that *ḥalāl* stipulations for butchery and preparation were the strictest required standard.² It is thus no surprise to find keen interest among medieval observers in the hard line taken by Syrian poet, belletrist, ascetic, and alleged heretic Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī (d. AD1058) against using *all* animal products. The best-known and best-preserved example of such interest is an exchange of five letters in literary Arabic between al-Maʿarrī and the Persian poet, intellectual, and Fāṭimid missionary at Cairo, al-Muʿayyad fi-l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. AD1078). Al-Muʿayyad writes al-Maʿarrī ostensibly to learn about his veganism, but his true intention of debunking the Syrian poet’s dietary

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- 1 Paulina B. Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 260. I acknowledge at the outset my anachronistic use of the term *vegan*, a modern approximation of the position al-Maʿarrī seems to take against consuming all animal products, not just meat. Regarding the Arabic terms, al-Maʿarrī infuses his stance with ethical import by calling it *ṣawm al-dahr*, “lifelong fasting,” which he claims to break only for the two ʿĪd celebrations. Meanwhile, al-Muʿayyad uses the phrase *tahrīmihi ʿalā nafsihi al-luḥūm wa-l-albān*, “forbidding from himself animal flesh and dairy products,” perhaps meant to signal al-Maʿarrī’s seeming attempt to play God by deciding what is illicit and what is not. While the word *vegan* is a poor substitute for these Arabic expressions, it does capture some sense of the self-imposed abstention from animal products and the ethical imperative for doing so.
 - 2 That being said, there were voices in medieval Islam calling for a moderate intake of meat and other animal products. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī famously discusses the need for such temperance in the section “Kitāb kasr al-shahwatayn” (“On breaking the two desires,” referring to hunger and sexual lust) of his magnum opus, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (Revival of the religious sciences). His position derives from the principle, خير الأمور أوسطها (*khayr al-umūr awṣaṭuhā*, “things are best in their moderated state”). Thus for thinkers like al-Ghazālī, the issue of al-Maʿarrī’s total abstention from animal products is one of degree rather than kind. See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2005), 964–994. Timothy Winter has translated this part of the *Iḥyāʾ* into English; see his *Al-Ghazālī: On Disciplining the Soul* (Kitāb riyāḍat al-nafs) & *On Breaking the Two Desires* (Kitāb kasr al-shahwatayn), *Books xxii and xxiii of the Revival of the Religious Sciences* (Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn) (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1995).

practice is evident throughout the correspondence. In turn, an aging al-Ma'arrī repels al-Mu'ayyad's attack against the regimen that he has followed for nearly half a century.³

From al-Mu'ayyad's side, the impetus for writing is a twenty-three-line *qaṣīda luzūmiyya* (poem in double end-rhyme) by al-Ma'arrī. The first line gives a call—al-Mu'ayyad's word is *da'wa*, “invitation” or, perhaps in this case, “preaching”—to practice veganism, implying that those who do not are intellectually and spiritually ignorant. Al-Mu'ayyad claims to have encountered this poem at the Fāṭimid court in Cairo and decided to answer its summons to seek out al-Ma'arrī for further wisdom, although as noted, his real purpose was more polemical. Even so, he must have appreciated al-Ma'arrī's choice to express a moral invitation in verse—al-Mu'ayyad himself used poetry as a potent weapon in the Fāṭimid Shī'ite missionary arsenal. More broadly, each author occupies at once the rhetorical position of “missionary,” in exhorting others to proper thought and action, and that of “heretic,” in being the target of such exhortation and even public refutation.

The presence of such shared elements between these men signals the first argument I wish to make. Despite being at odds in their intellectual and socio-political pre-commitments, both al-Ma'arrī and al-Mu'ayyad frame poetry throughout their correspondence as a specific mode of discourse, namely *da'wa*. They each use rhyme, meter, and literary devices as a powerful medium to convey an overall cosmic worldview that also serves as normative ethical behavior. For al-Mu'ayyad, a professional Fāṭimid missionary in the service of the court, *da'wa* was an institutionalized duty enacted through poetic discourse, hence his inclination to see al-Ma'arrī's verse as hortatory. From al-Ma'arrī's side, his poem on veganism arguably constitutes *da'wa* because it

3 There are three editions of the letters. The first appeared in 1894 by Shāhīn Effendī 'Aṭīyya, along with a brief commentary: *Rasā'il Abī l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī* (Beirut: Al-Khūrī, 1894). The second is by David Margoliouth at Oxford, who, in addition to the text—prepared from a single manuscript at the Bodleian Library—provides his partial English translation. See Margoliouth, “Abu'l-'Alā al-Ma'arrī's Correspondence on Vegetarianism,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (April 1902): 289–332. The best edition, which conveys much more content of the letters than Margoliouth's, was made by Iḥsān 'Abbās from five complete or partial manuscripts. See Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, *Rasā'il Abī l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, al-juz' al-awwal*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1982). The content itself has not been preserved independently but is instead reproduced in a medieval biographical encyclopedia, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī's *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, as well as one of the later sessions of *Al-Majālis al-mu'ayyadīyya*. This fact raises a number of conceptual questions about authorship, transmission, and reception. For this chapter, I have chosen to rely on the 'Abbās edition.

seeks to impart a general awareness, akin to knowledge, that all things suffer and die, including humans themselves.⁴

As a second point, poetry as *da'wa* or preaching suggests an audience, someone to whom the call is made. This public function of poetry and indeed of the entire correspondence between al-Ma'arrī and al-Mu'ayyad can be seen in a passage from the multi-volume *Al-Majālis al-mu'ayyadiyya* (The sessions of al-Mu'ayyad), a work written to preserve the wisdom of esoteric teachings for the community of Fāṭimid adherents. The passage in question relates a gathering in which those present fiercely debate al-Ma'arrī's vegan practice, which some believe justifies his murder, as it presents clear evidence of heresy. At this point, al-Mu'ayyad interjects that killing al-Ma'arrī would only heap more glory on him. A better course, he argues, would be to publicly expose al-Ma'arrī's groundless arguments, thereby diverting converts from veganism to the Fāṭimid missionary's more moderate approach.

With this polemic in mind, I submit that veganism becomes a signifier pointing beyond itself and signaling confessional legitimacy.⁵ Attitudes toward food consumption, in many ways a private matter, thus come to serve a public function in the performance of cultural identity. In turn, foodways as a cultural signifier play a role in the battle between al-Ma'arrī and al-Mu'ayyad for hearts and minds, against the backdrop of a fractured Islamic polity in which various claimants to sovereignty tried to expand their spheres of influence. In recent years, scholars have turned more attention to the performative side of pre-modern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern foodways.⁶ My chapter contributes

4 To date, Margoliouth's and 'Abbās's introductions to their edited texts are the fullest secondary treatment of the correspondence itself. Also noteworthy is Elias Saad Ghali's study of al-Ma'arrī's veganism as part of his overall skeptical outlook. See Saad Ghali, "Le végétalisme et le doute chez Abul-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (363–449/973–1058)," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 32–33 (1980–1981): 99–112. In addition, Daniel de Smet has written about al-Mu'ayyad's engagement with another heterodox thinker, Ibn al-Rāwandī, whose writings survive only through their polemical secondary treatment in the *Majālis al-mu'ayyadiyya*. See Daniel de Smet, "Al-Mu'ayyad fi d-Dīn ash-Shirāzī et la polémique ismaélienne contre les 'Brahmanes' d'Ibn al-Rāwandī," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, ed. U. Vermeulen and Daniel de Smet (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 85–98. Each of these studies makes a vital contribution to scholarship on al-Ma'arrī, although they tend to focus more on the polemical content of al-Ma'arrī's veganism than on its function as a discursive and cultural signifier.

5 I purposely focus less on the actual content of these arguments, since this aspect of the letters has been given attention in previous studies, than on how they signal discursive identity in a given rhetorical and cultural context.

6 See, e.g., Geert Jan van Gelder, *God's Banquet: Food in Classical Arabic Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Lilia Zaouali, *Medieval Cuisine of the Islamic World: A Concise History with 174 Recipes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Hannele Klemet-

to this growing body of work by focusing on food's relevance to intraconfessional legitimacy—rather than interconfessional, especially Christianity versus Islam—and to the social role of such polemic.

In this way, both poetry as *da'wa* and disputation as legitimizing discourse take part in the same process of sociopolitical contestation. At another level, juxtaposing al-Mu'ayyad's persona in the *Majālis* to that of his correspondence with al-Ma'arri speaks to the co-presence of multiple audiences, overlapping yet often separate, each imposing its own exigencies that can alter the rhetorical presentation of a speaker's identity and message. That al-Ma'arri's verse reached al-Mu'ayyad in Cairo in the poet's lifetime shows both the existence of these multiple audiences and their possible contiguity. The fact that those audiences contended and still contend over the significance of veganism underscores how readers play an active role in making meaning, and how the polysemy of cultural signifiers renders them germane beyond their time, yet also perpetually disputed.

1 The Battle for Hearts and Minds

Although political power in the Islamic world had been gradually decentralizing for centuries, at least as far back as Umayyad removal of the capital city from the Arabian desert and its replacement at Damascus, never before had rival caliphs thrown their hats in the ring. Never in the history of Islam as a way of organizing society had multiple, competing nodes of power sprung up and vied for dominance from Córdoba to Khorasan, each asserting sole authority to rule the Muslim *umma*. Yet within just a few years of eminent jurist and historian Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's (d. AD 923) grand apocalyptic vision of the disintegration that characterized his time,⁷ the Islamic world was split among fully three separate dynasties, each claiming caliphal investiture.

tilā, *The Medieval Kitchen: A Social History With Recipes* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012); Jodi Campbell, *At the First Table: Food and Social Identity in Early Modern Spain* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017); M.R. Ghanoonparvar, *Dining at the Safavid Court: 16th Century Royal Persian Recipes* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2017).

7 Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 11 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif), 9:361–366, 481–489. In no uncertain terms, al-Ṭabarī portrays events like the Zanj rebellion (AD 869–883) and the “Anarchy at Samarra” beginning with the fratricide of al-Mutawakkil and ending in the forced execution of al-Musta'in (AD 861–866) as disastrous events that threatened the very existence of Islamdom. For secondary analysis of this period, see, e.g., Michael Bonner, “The Waning of Empire, 861–945,” in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1, *The Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, ed. Charles F. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 305–359.

The first were the ‘Abbāsids, a Sunnī dynasty headquartered at Baghdad and fighting to keep its grip on an ever-expanding empire. The second were the Fāṭimids, an Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ite denomination based in Cairo, with large swaths of North Africa, Syria, Iraq, and the Ḥijāz under their control. They challenged the authority of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate through lineage claims tracing back to the eponym Fāṭimah, daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad. Finally, the Córdoba Umayyads traced their ancestry to the last surviving Damascene Umayyad, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I, called *ṣaqr quraysh* (the falcon of Quraysh, i.e., the tribe of the Prophet). Like the Fāṭimids, this moniker signals an appeal to the lineage of Muḥammad in resistance to ‘Abbāsīd authority.

Suspended between each of these centers of gravity were various rump states, like the Būyids and Ghaznavids east of Baghdad,⁸ the North African Ḥammādids in modern-day Algeria and the Zīrids at Qayrawān, and the Andalusian *ṭawā’if* city-states. Such marginal polities represented a contested sphere of influence for the three caliphates, who vied for control through political stratagem, military might, and diplomacy. Al-Ma‘arrī himself lived under such a disputed area: that of the Ḥamdānids, and later the Mirdāsids, of Aleppo, a Shī‘ite Berber dynasty caught between their confessional counterparts in Egypt, namely the Fāṭimids, and the Christian Byzantines to the northwest.⁹

Al-Ma‘arrī discusses the constant threat of Byzantine encroachment on northern Syria in a winding meditation placed in the mouths of animals, *Risālat al-ṣāhil wa-l-shāḥij* (‘The epistle of the horse and the mule’).¹⁰ Just a century after Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī’s death, Syria generally and Antioch in particular had become a crossroads between the Byzantines, the Armenian Christians

8 These two dynasties were part of a broader “Iranian intermezzo,” a term coined by Vladimir Minorsky to describe the presence of various eastern Islamic polities between the decline of the ‘Abbāsids and the eleventh-century emergence of the Seljuqs. See Vladimir Minorsky, “The Iranian Intermezzo,” in *Studies in Caucasian History 1: New Light on the Shaddadids of Ganja 11* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 110–116.

9 For basic information about these dynasties, see, e.g., Ramzi Jibrān Bikhāzi, “The Ḥamdānīd Dynasty of Mesopotamia and North Syria, 254–404/868–1014” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1981); Stefan Heidemann, *Die Renaissance der Städte in Nordsyrien und Nordmesopotamien: Städtische Entwicklung und wirtschaftliche Bedingungen in ar-Raqqā und Harran von der Zeit der beduinischen Vorherrschaft bis zu den Seldschuken*, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts 40 (Leiden: Brill, 2002). For analysis of how Ḥamdānīd and Mirdāsīd rulers are portrayed in al-Ma‘arrī’s writings, see Pieter Smoor, *Kings and Bedouins in the Palace of Aleppo, As Reflected in Ma‘arrī’s Works* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1985).

10 Abu-l-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī, *Risālat al-ṣāhil wa-l-shāḥij*, ed. ‘Ā’isha ‘Abd al-Raḥmān “Bint al-Shāṭi” (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1984).

of Cilicia, the Muslim Zengids of Syria, the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, and several Jewish communities.¹¹ Recent scholarship has underscored Antioch's political and military importance, to challenge the traditional view of Jerusalem's dominance during the crusades.¹²

But the power of ideas was just as important as political and military influence to the project of bringing marginal states like the Syrian Ḥamdānids into caliphal orbit. Indeed, northern Syria constituted a lively corridor of inter-religious polemic, philosophical disputation, and literary and cultural exchange. The Fāṭimids in particular represented an ideological threat to many with competing claims on Islamic orthodoxy. Throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries, the Fāṭimid caliph-imams undertook a "well organized and highly secret institution for religious education and proselytization" known officially as the *da'wa* (preaching).¹³ This involved dispatching missionaries to other lands to preach in person, as well as disseminating written texts and corresponding with key rulers, intellectuals, and patrons. In turn, to combat the influence of this *da'wa*, public figures spent much time refuting Fāṭimid pretensions to spiritual and political authority. Al-Ghazālī devoted a whole treatise, *Faḍā'ih al-bāṭiniyya wa-faḍā'il al-mustazhiriyya* (The disgraces of the esotericists and the virtues of the exotericists), to anti-Fāṭimid rhetoric in order to win hearts and minds away from their allegedly heretical version of Islam.¹⁴

In this struggle for converts, the issue of veganism was significant as a marker of religious and cultural legitimacy. While much of the Islamic world was opposed to completely avoiding animal products, out of a desire for moderation in socio-religious practice, some were intrigued by Byzantine cosmopolitanism spreading from Constantinople. This helped make "vegetable-friendly culinary standards" more of a mainstream practice within Islamic lands.¹⁵ There is for one thing the simple fact that the Byzantines were Christians, and

11 For a recent study of this era, see Andrew D. Buck, *The Principality of Antioch and Its Frontiers in the Twelfth Century* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2017).

12 See, e.g., Thomas S. Asbridge, *The Creation of the Principality of Antioch, 1098–1130* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2000).

13 Tahera Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī and Fatimid Da'wa Poetry: A Case of Commitment in Classical Arabic Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 4.

14 For more on al-Ghazālī's opposition to the Fāṭimids, see, e.g., Farouk Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis: A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002). For a Fāṭimid response to al-Ghazālī, see 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd, *Dāmigh al-bāṭil wa-ḥaṭf al-munāḍil*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālib (Beirut: Mu'assasat 'Izz al-Dīn, 1982).

15 Lewicka, *Food and Foodways*, 258. Of course meat was an expensive luxury in medieval Islamic lands, meaning that the average diet was largely vegetarian to begin with.

therefore interested in vegetable dishes for fasting during Lent.¹⁶ For another, this period witnessed a widespread interest in the writings of Galen, with their emphasis on a moderate diet.¹⁷

That these ideas and practices were not perceived as indigenous to Islamic lands meant that for many, veganism and related practices could be associated in the popular imagination with foreign influence and even heresy.¹⁸ In al-Ma'arrī's case, scholars have traditionally looked for an Indic source to explain his attraction to veganism,¹⁹ which is present in the teachings of both Hinduism and Jainism and would also qualify as a marker of foreignness. Although this connection was once seen as dubious, recent research does suggest cross-influences between Ayurveda and Islamic medicine, for instance, the relocation of Indian physicians from Balkh to Baghdad in the wake of Muslim conquest of the former.²⁰

Another possible explanation is that al-Ma'arrī was affected by Byzantium, especially the two previously cited elements of cosmopolitanism and Galenic

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- 16 Several premodern sources comment on the phenomenon of *muzawwarāt* dishes, that is, vegetarian dishes cooked by Christians in the Arab-Islamic world and recommended by physicians for various illnesses. Al-Warrāq's tenth-century cookbook includes chapters on vegetarian Lent dishes for Christians as well as for the sick. See *Annals of the Caliphs' Kitchens: Ibn Sa'yīr al-Warrāq's Tenth-Century Baghdadi Cookbook*, trans. Nawal Nasrallah (Leiden: Brill, 2007), esp. chaps. 46 and 105. For secondary research on these dishes, see David Waines, "Dietetics in Medieval Islamic Culture," *Medical History* 43 (1999): 228–240; and David Waines and Manuela Marín, "Muzawwar: Counterfeit Fare for Fasts and Fevers," in *Patterns of Everyday Life (The Formation of the Classical Islamic World)*, ed. David Waines and Manuela Marín (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 303–315. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for bringing these studies to my attention.
- 17 For more on Galen as a canonical source of Byzantine medicine, see, e.g., Vivian Nutton, "From Galen to Alexander: Aspects of Medicine and Medical Practice in Late Antiquity," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984): 1–14.
- 18 In the Christian Byzantine milieu, medicine in general was associated with heterodox belief. See Nutton, "From Galen to Alexander," 6–7.
- 19 Margoliouth, for example, considers but ultimately rejects as implausible the idea that al-Ma'arrī developed an interest in veganism from Jain teachings at Baghdad. See Margoliouth, "Correspondence," 291. At a more general level, Norman Calder discusses the frequent association in Islamic heresiographical literature between heterodoxy and Indian *barāhimah*, with earlier (ninth-century) caricatures giving way to later (tenth through twelfth centuries), more accurate yet still polemical portrayals. See Norman Calder, "The Barāhima: Literary Construct and Historical Reality," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 57, no. 1 (1994): 40–51. For examples of polemic against the *barāhimah* in al-Mu'ayyad's writings, see de Smet, "Al-Mu'ayyad fi d-Din ash-Shirāzi."
- 20 Dominik Wujastyk, "From Balkh to Baghdad: Indian Science and the Birth of the Islamic Golden Age in the Eighth Century," *Indian Journal of History of Science* 51, no. 4 (2016): 679–690.

theory, close as al-Ma'arrī's hometown was to the frontiers of Christian Greek lands.²¹ In fact, direct traces of that impact can be detected in the life and works of al-Ma'arrī himself. Secondary sources relate that in his youth, al-Ma'arrī traveled to Byzantine Christian territory, either Antioch or Latakia,²² where he supposedly first encountered arguments in favor of veganism. Although accounts of these travels differ in their details and show marked polemical motivation both pro and contra,²³ they do agree on the fact that al-Ma'arrī ventured beyond Islamic Syria and that this affected his worldview. As for Galen, al-Ma'arrī names him directly in referring al-Mu'ayyad to *al-kutub al-mutaqaddima* (ancient writings) on medicine that recommends veganism as a healthy lifestyle.²⁴

Granted, the Byzantium hypothesis has its challenges. Ascetics of both Christian and Muslim traditions adopted extreme dietary restrictions, and therefore al-Ma'arrī might not have had to look far beyond his own cultural tradition. This fact militates against the idea that Byzantine cosmopolitanism had more of an impact in greater Syria than asceticism, although it is unlikely that mainstream populations were affected by the latter any more than by the former. Also, vegan ideas might have arisen in several places at once and led to an overall sociocultural zeitgeist whose contact points are difficult to identify. This lack of certainty calls for more studies of how both Indian and Greek thought shaped al-Ma'arrī's worldview and that of northern Syria as a whole.²⁵

21 Of course, he would have had direct access to Arabic translations of Galen, which were available starting in the ninth century AD, and given the fact that he spent some time in Baghdad, a center of translation activity from Greek to Arabic and where such sources were well circulated. My thanks to one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing this out.

22 See Ibn al-'Adīm, "Al-Inṣāf wa-l-taḥarrī fi daf' al-zulm wa-l-tajarrī 'an Abī l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī," in *Ta'rīf al-qudamā' bi-Abī l-'Alā'*, ed. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn et al. (Cairo: Dār al-Qawmiyya li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Naṣh, 1944), 555–556. Al-Ma'arrī's trip to Antioch is also recounted by seventeenth-century Syrian litterateur Yūsuf al-Badī'ī (d. AD1662). See Yūsuf al-Badī'ī, *Awj al-taḥarrī 'an ḥaythiyyat Abī l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Kilānī (Damascus: Maṭba'at al-Taraqqi, 1944), 55. For the trip to Latakia, see Jamāl al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf al-Qiftī, *Inbāh al-ruwāt 'alā anbā' al-nuḥāt*, ed. Muḥammad Abu-l-Faql Ibrāhīm, 4 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1950), 1:49.

23 For further discussion of this polemic, see Tahir K. al-Garradi, "The Image of al-Ma'arrī as an Infidel among Medieval and Modern Critics" (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1987), 16–20.

24 'Abbās, *Rasā'il*, 111.

25 This assumes a general influence by Greek texts on Islamic thought and medicine, a fact that has been well established by scholarship. See, e.g., Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998); Bashar Saad, Hassan Azaizeh, and Omar Said,

Still, the fact that a Byzantine influence existed seems likely, or at least possible. More importantly, such a prospect sheds light on al-Ma'arrī's intellectually fluid milieu and his own interactions with other public figures. These include al-Mu'ayyad fi-l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, who would have been concerned about the intellectual and cultural influence coming in to Islamic Syria from Constantinople and other lands to the west. He was also mindful of al-Ma'arrī's local prominence as a thinker and a writer, and this in a realm controlled by fellow Shī'ite Muslims. In addition, al-Mu'ayyad may have been aware of al-Ma'arrī's association with Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Maghribī (d. AD 1027), an author, statesman, and onetime scribe to the Fāṭimids, and who later rebelled against them.²⁶

These points are clearly reflected by al-Mu'ayyad's decision to confront al-Ma'arrī in writing. More than an intellectual inquiry or even a mere attempt to proselyte, al-Mu'ayyad's letters present us with what we might today call propaganda. The object thereof—al-Ma'arrī—constituted a plum prize if he could be convinced to publicly recant his veganism or, at the very least, be exposed as a heretic. Moreover, this public relations effort was not just a personal motivation for al-Mu'ayyad but also a chief *raison d'être* for the Fāṭimid dynasty in which he was a key player. As Tahera Qutbuddin explains, "The Fatimid Caliph-Imams had established a distinctive religio-political organization called the *da'wa*" from their court at Cairo,²⁷ thus enshrining missionary work as both a theological duty and a sociopolitical principle. Al-Mu'ayyad himself successfully carried the Fāṭimid message to other lands for many years, eventually being given responsibility over the entire program as *dā'ī al-du'āt* (chief missionary). That the Fāṭimids would place such a premium on missionary work makes sense in view of the contemporary political decentralization and the stakes of garnering converts.

Just as al-Mu'ayyad might have sensed al-Ma'arrī's predilection for Byzantine culture and ideas, so too might al-Ma'arrī have guessed at al-Mu'ayyad's missionary motivation. The fact that al-Ma'arrī engages his Fāṭimid interlocutor in debate, yet without giving in to his arguments, speaks to an awareness of the

"Tradition and Perspectives of Arab Herbal Medicine: A Review," *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* 2, no. 4 (2005): 475–479; Donald Campbell, *Arabian Medicine and Its Influence on the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2013).

26 For general information about al-Maghribī's life and works, see C.E. Bosworth, "Al-Maghribī, al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London: Routledge, 1998), 488. For the specific point of his rebellion against the Fāṭimids, see 'Abbās, *Rasā'il*, 87.

27 Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī*, 4. "In Qur'anic usage," writes Professor Qutbuddin, "[the term *da'wa*] denotes the call made to humankind by God, through His prophets, to believe in the true religion," and it was in this sense that the Fāṭimids used it as well.

delicate balance between Cairo and Constantinople that needed maintaining by the Mirdāsids, and also of al-Ma‘arrī’s own very public role. Such awareness of the power of ideas to influence the fractured political landscape is not the only parallel between the two men’s lives. Both were renowned as poets but did not get paid for their craft, and both relied on poetry to influence others through ideas. At another level, both al-Ma‘arrī and al-Mu‘ayyad were public figures who were rejected by intellectual communities they hoped to impress, al-Ma‘arrī at Baghdad and al-Mu‘ayyad at Shīrāz.²⁸ Both were proclaimed as heretics by prominent Muslim voices, whether Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī’s (d. AD1201) pronouncement that al-Ma‘arrī was one of three great heretics against Islam,²⁹ or al-Ghazālī’s indictment of Fāṭimid Shī‘ite Islam as a whole.

In this way, each poet ends up occupying the both rhetorical position of the missionary, and that of the heretic. They each try to exhort the other as well as those watching their debate, while at the same time becoming the object of such exhortation and, as with al-Ghazālī’s works, public refutation. Aside from permitting a richer, more nuanced contrast when determining what distinguishes al-Ma‘arrī from al-Mu‘ayyad, these parallels hint at a kind of shared respect between the two men. Their formal exchange of pleasantries, a rhetorical obligation in personal correspondence, seems also to carry with it a more voluntary, mutual acknowledgment between intellectual equals. It is the coincidence of this civility with a simultaneous expression of disagreement that makes al-Ma‘arrī’s and al-Mu‘ayyad’s correspondence truly an encounter, one in which two people confront each other by first acknowledging the other’s presence. That such individual encounters occurred publicly and in writing complicates the view of a fractured eleventh-century Islamic world, the very instability of which permitted interaction across spatial and intellectual borders.

28 This is recorded in several medieval biographical entries. For more information, see Al-Garradi, “Image,” 23–35. For details of al-Mu‘ayyad’s rejection, see Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu‘ayyad al-Shīrāzī*, 23–24. In brief, having been appointed *dā‘ī* of Fars—of which Shīrāz was the capital—al-Mu‘ayyad entered the service of the Būyid prince Abū Kālījār al-Marzubān (d. AD1048), whom he converted to Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlism. This and other missionary activities gained him Sunnī enemies within Abū Kālījār’s court and among the ‘Abbāsids, based on information gleaned from several of al-Mu‘ayyad’s poems written at the time. The pressure evidently became great enough that he was obliged to leave greater Persia in 1046AD.

29 Abū al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī, *Al-Muntaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa-l-umam*, 17 vols., ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā and Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1995), 16:23–24. The other two figures singled out for heresy (*zandaqa*) in this passage are Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. AD911) and Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. AD1023).

2 The Soundness and Sickness of Knowing

To briefly summarize the exchange between al-Ma'arrī and al-Mu'ayyad, the latter initiates communication with a direct yet civil inquiry into the former's *'illa* (grounds) for veganism, especially since Islam permits animals for human use. By way of explanation, al-Mu'ayyad cites the first line of a *qaṣīda* that reached him all the way in Cairo and is contained in al-Ma'arrī's best-known work, *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* (Self-imposed necessity), a collection of poems written in double end-rhyme and addressing themes of *zuhd* (renunciation), *wa'z* (memento mori), and rationalist critique of religious authority.³⁰ In response, al-Ma'arrī's first letter underscores the fact that animals feel pain as sufficient grounds for a vegan lifestyle, then makes the broader point that human reason is unable to comprehend God's mercy.

Al-Mu'ayyad's answer emphasizes God's charity toward all living creatures, then poses a rhetorical question: by superseding God's law through vegan practice—since presumably the use of animals decreed by God does not contravene God's mercy toward living beings—does al-Ma'arrī think he can outdo his creator in goodwill? Al-Ma'arrī's second and final letter does not answer this question, but rather reiterates the point about animal suffering. He also says that practical matters like financial lack and force of habit prevent him from giving up his lifestyle. Al-Mu'ayyad ends the correspondence just as he started it, ostensibly conveying gratitude for the intellectual exchange and with hope that al-Ma'arrī will come to a correct belief in time.

At the heart of this discussion sits the issue of human knowledge. Both men argue their position by first attempting to show that those who follow the other's path do so out of ignorance. From his side, al-Mu'ayyad begins his second letter with a wish for his opponent's incorrect belief to be cured:

30 Regarding my translation of these terms, they are convenient shorthand that cannot do justice to the original concepts. This is especially true of *zuhd*, which, as Leah Kinberg points out, encompasses an entire way of life and may therefore be called simply "ethics." See Kinberg, "What Is Meant By *Zuhd*?" *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985): 44. Michael Cooper-son makes a similar observation, arguing that *zuhd*, "renunciation," is the "natural consequence of [a general attitude of] scrupulosity." See Cooper-son, *Classical Arabic Biography: Heirs to the Prophets in the Age of al-Ma'mūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 113–115. For a study that gives a sense of the many themes treated in the *Luzūm*, see, e.g., Stefan Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry: A Structural Analysis of Selected Texts (3rd Century AH–9th Century AD/5th Century AH–11th Century AD)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 97–154.

حوشي الشيخ—أدام الله سلامته—من أن يكون ممن فطن في مرض دينه وعقله لعته،
وأجاب دعوة الداعي منه، بالبيت الشائع عنه، لنيل شفاء عته، يزيد به إلى عته علة، وقد ضمن
له الصحة، وضيقة إلى ضيقته من حيث أمل الفسحة، أن يكون كما قال المتنبي:
أظمتني الدنيا فلما جئتها مستسقياً مطرت علي مصائباً

May the shaykh—God preserve his safety—be excluded from those who [like me] notice the cause (*‘illa*) of their illness through their ailing mind and faith; and then, seeking relief from that sickness, respond to the inviter’s call (to health) couched in that well-known verse [of yours], only to have more sickness (*‘illa*) added in return; and who has been given health, only to have poverty’s straitness added to straitness, such that he hopes for release. Indeed may the sheikh be kept from being like al-Mutanabbī said: *The world stirred my thirst, but when I came to her to slake it, she rained troubles on me.*³¹

Here al-Mu’ayyad takes up the very metaphor with which al-Ma’arrī begins the poem on veganism: knowledge as health or soundness, and ignorance as sickness. He cleverly plays with the word *‘illa*, which can mean “cause” but also “illness,” then quotes a line from the highly influential praise poet al-Mutanabbī (d. AD 965).³² It is a trope common enough in Arabic texts not to be unusual,³³ but which has special resonance in a debate over food consumption.

31 ‘Abbās, *Rasā’il*, 118. This is my English translation.

32 Both al-Ma’arrī and al-Mu’ayyad were great admirers of this poet. In the case of the former, his two commentaries on al-Mutanabbī, *Mu’jiz Aḥmad* (Aḥmad’s miracle) and *Al-Lāmi’ al-‘azizī* (The lightning flash of ‘Aziz) stand as evidence of such admiration. See Abu-l-‘Alā’ al-Ma’arrī, *Sharḥ dōwān al-Mutanabbī (Mu’jiz Aḥmad)*, 4 vols., ed. ‘Abd al-Majīd Diyāb (Cairo: Dār al-Ma’ārif, 1986–1988); Abu-l-‘Alā’ al-Ma’arrī, *Al-Lāmi’ al-‘azizī*, vol. 1, ed. M. Sa’īd al-Mawlāwī (Riyāḍ: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal li-l-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya, 2008). On the side of al-Mu’ayyad, Iḥsān ‘Abbās notes his penchant for quoting al-Mutanabbī throughout his works, not just here. See ‘Abbās, *Rasā’il*, 118. Qutbuddin points out a poem in which al-Mu’ayyad speaks about al-Mutanabbī as *من لا ينكر فضلَهُ* الشعراءُ (*Man lā yankuru faḍlahū al-shu‘arā’*, “One whose merit no poet would deny”). See Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu’ayyad al-Shirāzī*, 179.

33 An example of this metaphor that will be familiar to students of Islamic law is the idea of soundness, *ṣiḥḥa*, when evaluating sayings of the Prophet, *aḥādīth*. It is a technical term that encompasses actual physical health as well as the metaphorical “health” or strength of a saying’s provenance. It is from this term’s root that the first rhyme word—*al-ṣaḥā’ihī*, “sound/healthy things”—in al-Ma’arrī’s veganism poem is derived.

Al-Mu'ayyad sets high stakes for that debate by connecting physical fitness, mental soundness, and spiritual integrity.

Al-Ma'arrī does not follow his correspondent in the health-sickness imagery, but he does premise his argument in favor of veganism on the limits of human knowledge. In the first of two letters, he counters the view that God's decree of animal use by humans is sufficiently merciful and therefore morally good, with several examples of tragic deaths, such as the slaughter of combatants at the Battle of Uḥud. He then wonders, *أفهدا خير أم شر* (Is this good or evil?).³⁴ The rhetorical question appears to cast doubt on God's goodness and mercy, or at least, the ability of human beings to understand that goodness and mercy. Al-Ma'arrī does not answer his own question, contenting himself with ambiguity: *هذه العُقد قد جهد في حلها المتكلمون من أهل الشرائع، فلم يجدوا لها انحلالاً، وأصبح* هذه العُقد قد جهد في حلها المتكلمون من أهل الشرائع، فلم يجدوا لها انحلالاً، وأصبح مقالمهم ضلالاً (These are knots that many of the best speculative theologians from various schools of thought did not know how to untie, since they could not find a solution for them, and therefore their pronouncements fell into error).³⁵

Characteristic of al-Ma'arrī, he then gets distracted from the topic and cites dozens of lines of poetry by people he considers heretics. "God keep me from the saying of the unbeliever!" is his opening supplication. The question arises as to the relevance of these verses to veganism, especially when al-Ma'arrī ostensibly wants to distance himself from their content. He makes a similarly subversive move in his long prose work *Risālat al-ghufrān* (The epistle of forgiveness). There, he purports to answer questions about heretics posed by his interlocutor, the aging grammarian Ibn al-Qāriḥ (d. AD1030), only to content himself with tangents on wordplay, etymology, and anecdotes.³⁶ As in the correspondence on veganism, it may be that al-Ma'arrī's concern is to not be caught in a heterodox opinion, hence the dissembling style.

But especially in his exchanges with al-Mu'ayyad, al-Ma'arrī seems to be making a point about humankind's incomplete knowledge. By suddenly inserting dozens of lines of heretical poetry, even after he has absolved himself of their content, al-Ma'arrī illustrates the confusion that can result when humans try to interpret God's nature too rigidly, since that divine nature can often seem inscrutable, even contradictory. As with the senseless tragedies that a nonethe-

34 'Abbās, *Rasā'il*, 109.

35 Here, "speculative theologians" (*al-mutakallimūn min ahl al-sharā'i'*) refers to Jews and Christians, as opposed to Muslim sectarians.

36 Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, *Risālat al-ghufrān*, ed. 'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān "Bint al-Shāṭi'" (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1963), 414–424.

less merciful God allows to happen, there is a blurred line between appearance and reality, echoed in the opacity of al-Ma'arrī's scandalous poetic citations. By drawing attention to the limits of mortal understanding, he arguably appeals to the same epistemological humility that underpins his vegan ethic. That humility stems from a basic awareness, a soundness of knowledge held always in mind that all living beings become sick, suffer, and die.

3 The Poetic Preaching (*Da'wa*) of Veganism

As noted, al-Ma'arrī and al-Mu'ayyad were both practicing poets who used their verse as a means to spread ideas. In the sense that either of them did so to convince others to think or act in a certain way, I prefer to think of this poetic discourse as *da'wa*, namely a mode of speaking that both "implies commitment on the part of the person who calls and asks for commitment from the one who responds."³⁷ Granted, the term *da'wa* has the more technical meaning in Fāṭimid history of missionary proselyting as a religio-political institution, which does not apply in al-Ma'arrī's case. Nor in his case does the term refer to advocating a closed set of confessional tenets the way it does with al-Mu'ayyad. Even so, I believe that *da'wa* as a rhetorical posture sums up what both al-Ma'arrī and al-Mu'ayyad are trying to do with poetry when they exhort their readers to belief and action.

In the correspondence at hand, al-Mu'ayyad himself takes this view of al-Ma'arrī's call to veganism and which supposedly prompted his first letter. After offering formal pleasantries and expressing admiration for his Syrian counterpart, al-Mu'ayyad explains that news of al-Ma'arrī's vegan practice had reached all the way to Cairo.³⁸ "I heard the poetic summons [*dā'iyat al-bayt*] which is attributed to you," al-Mu'ayyad writes before quoting the poem's first line:

غدوتَ مريضَ العقل والدين فالقيني لتسمع أنباءَ الأمورِ الصَّحائِحِ

You are ailing in mind and faith, so come see me! Hear of things as they truly are.³⁹

37 Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī*, 5.

38 'Abbās, *Rasā'il*, 100.

39 Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, *Sharḥ al-luzūmiyyāt*, 3 vols., ed. Ḥusayn Naṣṣār et al. (Cairo: Al-Hay'a

“And that [summons],” continues the Fāṭimid poet, “invites [*tadū*] one to seek illumination by the author’s lights.” In both sentences, al-Mu’ayyad describes the line of poetry using words—first a noun (*dā’iya*), and then a verb (*tadū*)—that share etymology and lexical meaning with the term *da’wa*. More than a phenomenological portrayal of just one verse, al-Mu’ayyad’s description of al-Ma’arrī’s poem as *da’wa* might be understood as responding to a specific kind of speech, one with a technical meaning for al-Mu’ayyad and with which he was intimately familiar. He perceives actual preaching plus invitation in al-Ma’arrī’s poem, whether or not it was intended that way, although I see no reason to think that this was not al-Ma’arrī’s aim.

The warrant for this assessment is al-Mu’ayyad’s own concept and practice of poetry as *da’wa*. On the one hand, from within the Fāṭimid community, his verse served a didactic function, imparting to adherents the lessons that would improve their religious learning. This is illustrated especially by verse in praise of the Fāṭimid Caliph-Imam,⁴⁰ such as the following line dedicated to the caliph al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh (d. AD 1094):

هو الذِّكْرُ الْحَكِيمُ الْحَيُّ قَامَتْ دَلَائِلُهُ مِنَ الذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ

He is the living Wise Remembrance whose
proofs are established from the Wise Remembrance

On the other hand, with respect to a broader audience that would have included al-Ma’arrī, al-Mu’ayyad’s verse was meant to help “indirectly and subtly convince every person in the Islamic world of the righteousness of the Fāṭimids’ claim to the Imamate.”⁴¹ To this end, al-Mu’ayyad composed numerous versified polemics, often aimed at specific sectarian and philosophical groups, plus more general indictments of those who rejected the Fāṭimid message. It thus served a similar function to that of the *Al-Majālis al-mu’ayyadīyya*, with doctrinal teaching and polemical disputation being a high priority.⁴²

al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1994), 1:362–364. For the entire text of the poem and my English translation, see the appendix.

40 Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu’ayyad al-Shirāzī*, 276. Al-Mu’ayyad’s poem translations are by Qutbuddin unless otherwise noted.

41 Ibid., 278.

42 Both Qutbuddin and Pieter Smoor agree on the point of how al-Mu’ayyad’s poetry functions, despite their divergent conclusions about its quality. See Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu’ayyad al-Shirāzī*, 276; Pieter Smoor, “Wine, Love, and Praise for the Fāṭimid Imāms, the Enlightened of God,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 142, no. 1 (1992): 100.

In one especially vivid image, al-Mu'ayyad describes his own verse as a kind of double-edged sword wielded to protect the righteous and assault the wicked:

مصائبٌ لِرَاغِبٍ مُسْتَرَشِدٍ مصائبٌ لِكُلِّ عَاتٍ مُعْتَدٍ

Snares for the desirous, the seeker of right guidance,
Calamities for every insolent aggressor

It is arguably such an approach to poetry that the Fātimid missionary brings to bear on his conception of, and response to, al-Ma'arrī's own verse. More than just an expression of the poet's inner state, al-Ma'arrī's call to veganism is treated by al-Mu'ayyad as a sermon on right ethical practice, along with an unequivocal invitation—even a demand—to follow that practice. As seen in the opening line of al-Ma'arrī's poem, there is even a sense of that call being an intellectual and spiritual litmus test similar to al-Mu'ayyad's, with those who refuse animal products occupying a separate, higher ethical sphere than those who do not.

Al-Ma'arrī's poetry has not previously been classified by scholars under the same general rubric of *da'wa* as al-Mu'ayyad's. While this Arabic word does not carry the same doctrinal and sociopolitical technicality in al-Ma'arrī's case, the idea of preaching with intent to convert does describe the poem under debate between al-Ma'arrī and al-Mu'ayyad. Before addressing that poem in more detail, I wish to make a brief point, which is that al-Ma'arrī does not dispute al-Mu'ayyad's assessment of the poem as *da'wa*, nor does he deny being a vegan. In fact, al-Ma'arrī claims that it was God who decreed that he abstain from animals: *إِنَّ اللَّهَ—عَزَّتْ عِزَّتُهُ—حَكَمَ عَلَيَّ بِالْإِزْهَادِ، فَطَفَقْتُ مِنَ الْعَدَمِ فِي جِهَادٍ* (Indeed God—great be His grandeur!—commanded me to refrain [from animal products], and so straightaway I undertook that personal poverty with great effort).⁴³

The fact that al-Ma'arrī does not equivocate on these points like he does in *Risālat al-ghufrān* and other works, but rather confesses a particular ethical belief and practice, stands in stark contrast to most instances in which his convictions are interrogated by a suspicious party. And while the Syrian poet's letters to al-Mu'ayyad are not completely devoid of such equivocation, as seen with the point of his citation of poetry from heretics, they clearly admit to vegan belief and practice. This fact, along with al-Ma'arrī's tacit acceptance

43 'Abbās, *Rasā'il*, 104.

that al-Mu'ayyad describes his poetry as *da'wa*, lends persuasive weight to the argument that, like his Fāṭimid interlocutor, *mutatis mutandis*, al-Ma'arrī too thought of his poem on veganism as a kind of moral exhortation to correct behavior.

Turning now to the particulars of that poem, it is preserved in its entirety in al-Ma'arrī's collection of double end-rhyme poetry *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* (Self-imposed necessity). Although al-Ma'arrī does not quote the whole poem in his correspondence with al-Mu'ayyad, he does spend several pages of his second letter explicating the four lines that immediately follow the first:

ولا تبغ قوتا من غريض الذبائح	فلا تأكلن ما أخرج الماء ظلما
لأطفالها دون الغواني الصرائح	وأبيض أماتٍ أرادت صريحه
بما وضعت فالظلم شرُّ القبائح	ولا تفجعن الطير وهي غوافل
كواسب من أزهارٍ نبت فوايح	ودع ضرب التحل الذي بكرت له

Don't ever eat what the water gives up under duress, or seek fare in the newly slain,
 Or mothers' fresh milk—purer than highborn maids—which they wished for their babes;
 Do not terrify carefree birds, who know not what is done, for cruelty is the basest of evils,
 And shun thick, white honey, struck fresh early in the morning from fragrant blooms—

Al-Ma'arrī takes each of these imperatives in turn, affirming the behavior they attribute to the animals mentioned.⁴⁴ He quotes popular sayings, poetry, and even *ḥadīths* from the Prophet and other central figures in Islamic history to demonstrate this. Here and indeed throughout much of the letter, the discussion stays close to the issue of animal suffering, which is the proximate cause of al-Ma'arrī's vegan ethics.

Yet a review of the rest of the poem—which, as mentioned, is not reproduced in the correspondence between al-Ma'arrī and al-Mu'ayyad—reveals broader themes that, in my view, help us understand both the ultimate cause of al-Ma'arrī's veganism and the nature of the *da'wa* mode in which it receives expression. At the poem's end, al-Ma'arrī links his opening calls for veganism

44 Ibid., 124–126.

to a pair of themes that dominate this and indeed much of al-Ma'arrī's verse, namely *zuhd* and *wa'z*. In lines 13–15, he meditates on the virtue of generosity:

ويعجبني دأبُ الذين ترهبوا سوى أكلهم كدَّ النفوس الشحائح
وأطيبُ منهم مطعما في حياته سَعَاةٌ حلالٍ بين غادٍ ورائح
فما حبَّسَ النفسَ المسيحُ تعبدا ولكن مشى في الأرض مشية سائح

I am pleased by the manner of those God-fearing monks, except for the way they eat the toil of miserly souls.

Superior to them are the Muslim ascetics, striving after what is *ḥalāl* day in and day out, who are better able to fathom his [Jesus Christ's] life:

The messiah hoarded not his soul just to worship God, but took up the journey with the step of a traveler.

Here, the traditional Arab virtue of liberality is deployed by al-Ma'arrī in back-handed criticism of monks or others who profess to piety but hoard their substance. This criticism of hypocritical inaction is embodied in the image of Jesus holding nothing back from others, not even his own soul. Misers hoard because they have placed their hearts on material possessions, affirms al-Ma'arrī, whereas the true ascetic does not care whether his stores are full. This theme of *zuhd* continues up to the end of the poem, where its companion theme, *wa'z*, appears in vivid imagery:

وما ينفعُ الإنسانُ أنَّ غمائمًا نَسَحُّ عليه تحت إحدى الضرائح
ولو كان في قُربٍ من الماءِ رغبةً لنافَسَ ناسٌ في قبورِ البطائح

A mortal gains not from rainclouds that gush on him, when he is beneath a tomb;

If people truly desired water, they would vie over flat graves of moistened earth.

Here, the postmortem struggle for water, a traditional symbol of anything beneficial, implies the futility of seeking profit in worldly pleasures. If humans would truly have something of value, insists the poet, they must look to the next life, denoted by the image of graves. With these lines, al-Ma'arrī clarifies his warrant for asceticism: death comes to us all, and therefore putting one's

hope in this world and hoarding its spoils is a futile enterprise. He thus also warns of hypocrisy and the need to fight it through rightness of action as a testament to true belief.

This is the core of al-Ma'arrī's vegan ethics. His call in this poem to avoid doing harm to animals taps into the deeper cycles of decease and rebirth that underlie all consumption of the dead to regenerate the living. By ending on the grim note of *memento mori*, he conveys an unequivocal message: let everyone recoil from bringing about the demise of any living thing, according to the same energy with which humans recoil from their own demise. Furthermore, this point reveals how al-Ma'arrī's discursive mode of *da'wa* functions not to educate readers in a coherent system of esoteric doctrine, as with al-Mu'ayyad's poetry. Rather, it aims to raise their awareness at a more general level, to make them conscious of their behavior and its effect on other living beings. It therefore takes part in a broader pacifist ethic and interest of al-Ma'arrī in animals as living beings in their own right.

Yet as noted, and despite clear admission of veganism, al-Ma'arrī subverts reader interpretation throughout the correspondence. After spending most of the first letter discussing high-minded ethical justifications for veganism, he writes that even if he were not morally inclined to avoid eating meat, he is too destitute to afford it on a regular basis. Earlier in the same letter, he also describes how veganism has become something of a habit, and therefore changing it now is an impracticality. Although at first glance these added explanations might seem to detract from the ethical defense of veganism, to my mind they confirm the point made earlier about the debatable nature of ethics. By forcing readers to engage in dialogue and meaning making, al-Ma'arrī involves them in the same interpretive process that led him to veganism in the first place.

4 The Legitimation of Moral Wisdom

The notion of a dialogue connects with the broader issue of audience, and also to how writers go about projecting legitimacy to that audience. Whether al-Ma'arrī and al-Mu'ayyad intended for their words to reach specific readers, they were no doubt conscious that they would be seen by people other than themselves. Indeed, the very notion of *da'wa* implies people to whom a call to belief or action goes,⁴⁵ which in al-Mu'ayyad's situation as a missionary is an assump-

45 In the context of Persian poetry, J.T.P. (Hans) de Bruijn asserts three core aspects of the

tion of institutionalized preaching. But al-Ma'arrī too was engaged as a public figure, which even a cursory glance at his collected letters makes clear. Especially given the contemporary setting of widespread political fracture and of fluid intellectual and patronage networks, it is reasonable to assume that both poets wrote about veganism with an awareness of the potential for their words to have an impact beyond their own realms. This includes whether readers saw them as legitimate sources of wisdom.

Moreover, there is textual evidence that al-Mu'ayyad and al-Ma'arrī knew that they were putting their arguments on display for others to read, in addition to trying to convince each other. As shown, al-Mu'ayyad cites the opening line of al-Ma'arrī's poem to explain why he decided to write, namely in response to the Syrian poet's *dā'iyat al-bayt* (poetic summons). Then, after two exchanges, in his final letter, the Fāṭimid missionary describes the setting in which he first heard that summons:

وحضرتُ مجلساً جليلاً أُجري فيه ذِكرُهُ، فقال الحاضرون فيه غثاً وسميناً، حففظته بالغيب
وقلت: إنَّ المعلومَ من صلابته في زهده يحميه من الظنَّةِ والرَّيبِ، وقام في نفسي أنَّ عنده من
حقائق دين الله سرّاً، قد أسبل عليه من التقيّةِ ستراً، وأمرّاً تميّزه عن قومٍ يكفّرُ بعضهم بعضاً،
ويلعنُ بعضهم بعضاً...

I attended a highbrow intellectual gathering in which talk of you was going round. Those present were saying all manner of things (lit. "both thin and fat") about you, and so I defended you in your absence. I said: "This man's well-known rigor in his ascetic lifestyle protects him from doubt and error!" And then it occurred to me that you must have had some secret knowledge of God's divine truths that had sheltered you from having to dissimulate your religion (lit. "lowered a curtain between you and *taqiyya*"), some crucial thing that distinguished and guarded you from people who call each other unbelievers and who curse each other.

It was against this backdrop, explains al-Mu'ayyad, that he first heard the opening lines of al-Ma'arrī's poem, especially the injunction to seek him out for true

"homiletic mode" of verse, the first of which is that "a homily is delivered to an audience," whether nominal or actual. See de Bruijn, "The Preaching Poet: Three Homiletic Poems by Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār," *Edebiyāt* 9, no. 1 (1998): 87.

guidance. This was all the confirmation he needed that, indeed, al-Ma'arrī possessed some special knowledge unavailable to others and which warranted his veganism.

However, as Iḥsān 'Abbās observes, this account of al-Mu'ayyad's defense of al-Ma'arrī to his detractors in Cairo is at odds with a second portrayal with the same basic premise, yet which reaches nearly the opposite conclusion. In one *majlis* of the *Majālis al-mu'ayyadiyya*,⁴⁶ the narration describes an intellectual gathering in which those present are arguing about al-Ma'arrī and his vegan practices, which some take to be clear evidence of heresy. They therefore call vociferously for his death. Amid this heated discussion, an unnamed interlocutor proposes an alternative:

بل الواجب أن يجرده من هيبته بالمنظرة والمحاجة ستره، ويكشف للناس عواره لينقص في عيونهم ويخط من درجته ما بين ظهرانيهم، فكث غير بعيد حتى توجه من وجهناه من داعين للقاء التركمانية، فانعقد بينه من المناظرة مكتوبة لا مشافهة ما نورده بقصه فينفع الله السامعين

"No, instead we must dispatch unto him someone who will pierce through his façade by means of debate (*al-munāzara*) and disputation (*al-muḥājja*), and who will expose his faults to people so that he falls short in their eyes and his status among them is debased!" And it was not long before the missionary whom we dispatched set off to meet with the Turkmen (of Syria), and there was had between him (and al-Ma'arrī) a written rather than a verbal exchange, which we reproduce verbatim. May God be of aid to those who hear!

Despite the anonymity, we are given to understand that the single speaker is al-Mu'ayyad himself. The *Majālis* would have been read out in the name of the Fāṭimid Caliph-Imam, who in this context is ostensibly referring to his *dār* (missionary), namely al-Mu'ayyad. Thus the latter does intervene on al-Ma'arrī's behalf, as he wrote to the Syrian poet, but with a markedly different impetus in mind: to garner intellectual converts to the Fāṭimid cause.

In turn, that motivational difference between the two accounts indicates the presence of at least two separate readerships for al-Mu'ayyad. One includes readers of the *Majālis*, being his Fāṭimid adherents in Cairo, while the other comprises al-Ma'arrī and any of his sympathizers, for whom the more generous account might have been intended. It also shows an awareness by al-Mu'ayyad

46 Cited in 'Abbās, *Rasā'il*, 86. For the full text and my English translation, see the appendix.

of those separate readerships and the stakes for projecting legitimacy to them. While both the letter to al-Ma'arrī and the episode from the *Majālis* claim to seek knowledge about veganism from the Syrian poet, the spur to doing so indicates how al-Mu'ayyad anticipates that his actions will be perceived by each audience. This demonstrates how a written message—here, arguments for and against veganism—and the identity of its author can act as a signifier of legitimacy, one that can shift given the needs of a particular rhetorical situation. After all, it is not as simple as saying that al-Mu'ayyad lied to al-Ma'arrī in claiming he defended the Syrian poet's reputation, since this is strictly speaking a true statement. Nor does defense of an absent al-Ma'arrī necessarily exclude the more self-serving motive of delegitimizing arguments for veganism.

Al-Ma'arrī, too, acknowledges the possibility of plural readerships, though not in direct reference to his encounter with al-Mu'ayyad. Indeed, he does not discuss that encounter independent of the correspondence itself, which may be due in part to al-Ma'arrī's advanced age at the time of their writing. Instead, we can infer such recognition of multiple audiences from a point made by the Syrian poet in explicating his own verse on veganism. Alluding to the first line, namely the call for those ailing in mind and faith to seek him out for truth, al-Ma'arrī states *فإنما خاطب به من غممة الجهل، لا من للرياسة علم وأهل* (Rather in this line, the poet addresses those who have been inundated by ignorance, not those who are a beacon of, and fit for, guidance).⁴⁷ Whether al-Ma'arrī makes this comment in earnest, we can still infer an awareness by al-Ma'arrī of multiple audiences, some to whom the call does not apply and others to whom it does.

Furthermore, al-Ma'arrī's self-gloss on the first line relies on an argument from a field other than literature, namely *fiqh* (jurisprudence), but which relates to it in terms of attention to the nature of language.⁴⁸ The argument has to do with general versus specific language, *al-'umūm wa l-khuṣūṣ*, which in the writings on *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of law) is used to determine the scope of the law's applicability.⁴⁹ General nouns like *al-muslim* or *al-mu'min*, for example,

47 Here, the beacon of guidance is a likely reference to al-Mu'ayyad himself. Margoliouth's edition gives the variant reading *علم وأصل* (*'alam wa-aṣl*), which he translates as "beacon and source." See Margoliouth, "Correspondence," 297. The word for guidance, *riyāsa*, often denotes popular following based on perceived religious authority.

48 It is not unreasonable to assume al-Ma'arrī's familiarity with legal principles, as many of the men in his extended family served as judges and legal scholars in Aleppo.

49 For more general information on this argument and its importance to classical Islamic jurisprudence, see B.G. Weiss, "Umūm wa-khuṣūṣ," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2012). For a fuller exposition, see Bernard Weiss, "General and Unqualified Expressions," in

are scrutinized for their potential specificity—let alone terms that are clearly delimited, like proper names and relative pronouns—to interpret the language of precedent. Although only a minority of premodern legal scholars denied the existence of truly all-inclusive language, most agreed that this was not a useful category in legal cases. They therefore made the distinction between statements that obtained generally and those that were delimited for certain people or circumstances.

By saying that his call to veganism applies to the ignorant rather than the wise, al-Ma'arrī is arguably drawing on *uṣūl al-fiqh* to delimit the scope of a term from the seemingly general to the actually specific. This is not the only place in which al-Ma'arrī makes this move. He also does it in a commentary on his poetry of *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* written to fend off charges of heresy: *Zajr al-nābiḥ* (Driving off the barking dog), which exists in a unique manuscript of *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* as a gloss written in the margins.⁵⁰ Throughout that commentary, al-Ma'arrī takes lines of poetry that seem to indict a whole category of people, such as *rijāl al-dīn* (religious authorities, lit. “men of religion”) or even *al-nās* (“people” in a general sense). He then makes the claim that those lines apply to only a select group, especially those who have little capacity for rational thought.

The immediate relevance of this argument has to do with the nature of language. Al-Ma'arrī's claim of specificity for what appears to be a universal call to veganism highlights the suppleness of both legal and literary discourse, especially the capacity of that discourse for multiple referents. Yet it also speaks to al-Ma'arrī's tacit mindfulness of the presence of various readers. Whether his gloss on the first line is sincere, he was at least conscious of multiple audiences, given the claim that some have a greater need for the call to veganism than others, and of the fact that people might understand the poem differently. Moreover, we know that al-Ma'arrī must have acknowledged multiple audiences because al-Mu'ayyad talks in their correspondence of how al-Ma'arrī's

The Search for God's Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010), 382–439; Joseph Lowry, trans., *Al-Shāfi'ī: The Epistle on Legal Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2013). For a treatment of *'umūm wa-khuṣūṣ* in the context of *ijtihād* (legal interpretation) versus *taqlīd* (cognate of precedent, or *stare decisis*), see Sherman A. Jackson, “*Taqlīd*, Legal Scaffolding and the Scope of Legal Injunctions in Post-Formative Theory: *Muṭlaq* and *Āmm* in the Jurisprudence of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfi,” *Islamic Law and Society* 3, no. 2 (1996): 165–192.

50 Abu-l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* (OR 5319), British Library, London. In 1965, an edition was published that reformats the text for readability. See Abu-l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, *Zajr al-nābiḥ: Muqatafaṭ*, ed. Amjad al-Ṭarābulṣī (Damascus: Al-Maktaba al-Hāshimiyya bi-Dimeshq, 1965).

poetry traveled all the way to Cairo. That both al-Ma'arrī and al-Mu'ayyad seem aware of their plural readerships helps us understand the rhetorical stakes for legitimizing their claims, as well as the signifying role played by veganism therein.

5 Conclusion: Food as a Perpetual Signifier

Al-Mu'ayyad's explanation of his motives was the last letter he addressed to al-Ma'arrī, who, aged eighty-five and ailing as he had claimed, died in his hometown of Ma'arrat al-Nu'mān soon after their correspondence (al-Mu'ayyad lived for another twenty years). Nothing survives of al-Ma'arrī's response, if it ever existed. Disappointing though this finale may seem, it nonetheless seems fitting given al-Ma'arrī's affinity for subversive style and noncommittal argument. It also lends some satisfying irony to the episode with al-Mu'ayyad, in view of al-Ma'arrī's oeuvre as a whole. He himself was in a similar position to al-Mu'ayyad's when writing *Risālat al-ghufrān*. That work comprises the answer to a letter from the aging grammarian Ibn al-Qāriḥ, whom al-Ma'arrī makes into the protagonist of the *Risāla*, imagining him to have died and gone to paradise in the meantime. And while no such eschatological portrayal appears in al-Mu'ayyad's final letter, still al-Ma'arrī's absence lingers at its end, a palpable stand-in for his presence.

Such a lack of closure reiterates the prospect of many potential audiences for the debate over veganism, audiences that are both immediate and distant, as well as their indirect participation in that debate. Even for his contemporaries, al-Ma'arrī's evasive style and insistence on the contingency of human knowledge puts an onus on the reader to participate in meaning making, thereby engaging them in a dialectical, indeed conversational mode of rhetoric. How much more so for those who encounter his words long after the fact? In other words, those who, in Erving Goffmann's language, "overhear" the message displaced from its original utterance, rather than have it aimed directly at them?⁵¹ The responsibility of audiences to cooperate interpretively with al-Ma'arrī and al-Mu'ayyad constitutes both the power and the puzzle of foodways as a signifier, the polysemy of which ensures that such cultural practices will remain perpetually disputed and, therefore, relevant.

51 Erving Goffmann, "Footing," *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 124–159.

Appendix: Source Texts

Al-Ma'arrī's *luzūmiyya ḥā'iyya* (meter: *ṭawīl*):⁵²

You are ailing in mind and faith, so come see
me! Hear of things as they truly are:

Don't ever eat what the water gives up under
duress, or seek fare in the newly slain,
Or mothers' fresh milk—purer than highborn
maids—which they wished for their babes;
Do not terrify carefree birds, who know not
what is done, for cruelty is the basest of evils,
And shun thick, white honey, struck fresh
early in the morning, collected from fragrant
blooms—

The hive didn't amass it just to give it away
Or gather it just to be charitable;
I've washed my hands of all these things, but
would that I'd heeded my condition before my
brow started to grey.

O you, people of my era! Know you the secrets
I've learned but don't lightly betray?
[In this,] you stumbled into error. Won't you
come to be guided by what my heart's purest
intentions have told you?

غدوتَ مريضَ العقل والدين فالفيني
لتسمع أنباءَ الأمورِ الصَّحائِجِ
فلا تأكلنَّ ما أُخْرِجَ الماءَ ظالماً
ولا تبغِ قوتا من غريضِ الذبائِحِ
ولا بيضَ أماتٍ أردتِ صريحه
لأطفالها دون الغواني الصرائِحِ
ولا تنجعنَّ الطير وهي غوافلُ
بما وضعت فالظلمُ شرُّ القبايحِ
وَدَعُ ضَرْبَ النَّحْلِ الذي بكرت له 5
كواسِبُ من أزهارِ نبتِ فوائِحِ

فما أحرزته كي يكون لغيرها
ولا جمعته للندی والمنائِحِ
مسحتُ يدي من كلِّ هذا فليتني
أبهتُ لشأني قبل شيب المسائِحِ

بني زمني هل تعلمون سرايرا
علمتُ ولكنني بها غيرُ بائِحِ
سريتُم على غيِّ فهلَّا اهتديتمُ
بما خبرتكم صافياتُ القرائِحِ

52 Abu-l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, *Sharḥ al-luzūmiyyāt*, 3 vols., ed. Ḥussayn Naṣṣār et al. (Cairo: Al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1994), 1:362–364.

The tempter to fault called to you.⁵³ Why did you answer with the best that such a tempter could hope for?

10 وصاح بكم داعي الضلال فما لكم
أجبتُم على ما خيَّلت كل صائح

When you learn the true nature of your faith [as it stands], you will come to know the most appalling of scandals!

متى ما كُشِفتم عن حقائق دينكم
تكشفتم عن مخزيات الفضائح

But if you are truly guided aright, then do not dye swords blood red, or make twigs into probes for wounds.

فإن ترشدوا لا تخضبوا السيف من دمٍ
ولا تلمزوا الأيصال سبَّ الجرائح

I am pleased by the manner of those God-fearing monks, except for the way they eat the toil of miserly souls,

ويعجبني دأب الذين ترهبوا
سوى أكلهم كدّ النفوس الشحائح

Superior to them are the Muslim ascetics, striving after what is ḥalāl day in and day out, who are better able to fathom his [Jesus Christ's] life:

وأطيبُ منهم مَطْعَمَا في حياته
سُعَاةُ حلالٍ بين غادٍ ورائح

The messiah hoarded not his soul just to worship God, but took up the journey with the step of a traveler.

15 فما حبَّسَ النفسَ المسيحُ تعبداً
ولكن مشى في الأرض مشية سائح

53 Namely, whoever told them that consuming animal products was acceptable. Unlike the criticism of hypocritical monks in line 13, it is unclear from both text and context whether this criticism is general or meant for a specific person or group, or whether the *dāʿī* (caller) to fault is mainly a notional one deployed for rhetorical force. If the latter, then it might be thought of as serving a parallel function to the *ʿādhil* (blamer) of profane love poetry. For more on this and related figures, see, e.g., Teresa Garulo, “Raḳīb,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

I'm covered in earth by one loathe to do so,
When death's hateful stench does not go away
from me;

يُغَيِّبُنِي فِي التُّرْبِ مَنْ هُوَ كَارُهُ
إِذَا لَمْ يُغَيِّبْنِي كَرِيهَةُ الرُّوَائِحِ

He is wary of being so close to bones, like
those of demolished camels cast about in a
game of *maysir*—

وَمَنْ يَتَوَقَّى أَنْ يُجَاوِرَ أَعْظَمًا
كَأَعْظَمِ تِلْكَ الْمَالِكَاتِ الطَّرَائِحِ

But the worst thing a good friend [like him]
can do is join the wail of funeral callers, the
chest-beating of hired mourners.⁵⁴

وَمَنْ شَرَّ أَخْلَاقِ الْأَنْبِيسِ وَفَعْلِهِمْ
خُورِ النَّوَاعِي وَالتَّدَامِ النَّوَائِحِ

Yet still I pardon the wrongs of both friend
and foe, so I can make my abode in God's
house, between the tomb's ledger stones,

وَأَصْفَحُ عَنْ ذَنْبِ الصَّدِيقِ وَغَيْرِهِ
لِسُكُنَائِي بَيْتَ الْحَقِّ بَيْنَ الصَّفَائِحِ

I do not like to accept praise from a man, even
if he were truthful! So how could I bear lying
praises and flatterings [of me]?⁵⁵

20 وَأَزْهَدُ فِي مَدْحِ الْفَتَى عِنْدَ صِدْقِهِ
فَكَيْفَ قَبُولِي كَاذِبَاتِ الْمَدَائِحِ

54 Throughout his poetry, al-Ma'arrī stoically insists that weeping for the dead is a futile activity, since it has no power to bring them back. One of the best-known examples is the first line of a *rithā'* (elegy) poem: نَوْحُ بَاكٍ وَلَا تَرْتُمُ شَادٍ / نَوْحُ بَاكٍ وَلَا تَرْتُمُ شَادٍ (*ghayru mujdin fi millati wa-tiqadi nawhu bākin wa-lā tarannamu shādi*, "In my confession and creed, neither the wail of one crying nor a singer's joyful quavering has any effect"). That is to say, nothing one does or says, whether out of grief or cheer, can stop death. See Abu-l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, *Saqṭ al-zand* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957), 7. Here, the juxtaposed opposites of mournful weeping and happy singing may also be a merism—the rhetorical combination of two contrasting words to refer to entirety, common in premodern Arabic poetry and prose.

55 Al-Ma'arrī takes a firm and explicit stance in his later writings against flattery in general and panegyric poetry in particular. This is a broadly philosophical position but one that is informed by biography. At the beginning of *Luzūm mā lā yalzam*, al-Ma'arrī attaches an introduction describing his own production of praise poetry in his youth, which he then decided: رَفَضْتُ الشَّعْرَ رَفَضَ السَّقْبُ غِرْسَهُ وَالرَّأْلَ تَرِيكَتَهُ (*rafaḍtu al-shi'r rafḍ al-saqb ghirsahū wa-al-ra'l tarikatahū*, "I rejected poetry like a camel calf rejects its afterbirth, or a newborn ostrich rejects its eggshells"). See Al-Ma'arrī, *Sharḥ*, 1:49.

Souls remain sturdy for riding [of mortal life]
like robust mounts, till gaunt, they fade to
haggard beasts;

وما زالتِ النُّفُسُ اللَّجُوجُ مَطِيئَةً
إلى أنْ عُدَّتْ إِحْدَى الرِّذَايَا الطَّلَاحُ

A mortal gains not from rainclouds that gush
On him, when he is beneath a tomb,
And if people truly desired water, they would
vie over flat graves of moistened earth.

وما يَنْفَعُ الْإِنْسَانَ أَنْ غَمَائِمًا
تَسُحُّ عَلَيْهِ تَحْتَ إِحْدَى الضَّرَائِحِ
ولو كان في قُرْبٍ مِنَ الْمَاءِ رَغْبَةً
لِنَافَسِ نَاسٍ فِي قُبُورِ الْبَطَائِحِ

Al-Mu'ayyad fi-l-Dīn on al-Ma'arrī:⁵⁶

قد انتهى إليكم خبر الضرير الذي نبع بمجرة النعمان، وما كان يُعزَى إليه من الكفر والطغيان، على كون الرجل متعسفًا، عن كثير من المآكل التي أحلَّ الله له متعففًا، وقد كان خبره يتوصل إلى كل صقع بما يحرك النفوس للفتك به، حمية بزعمهم للدين، وغيره على الإسلام والمسلمين. وكان جرى ذكره في مجلس الناظر الذي ينظر في ذلك الوقت، فخطب عليه الحاضرين وأغروا بدمه، وقالوا الغيرة على الدين تبيح قتله، فقال أحد الحاضرين: إن كلامكم على غير موضوع، وإن كان الرجل من العجز والضعف والإشراف على القبر بالغامية القصوى، وأنه متى بسطت له اليد على هذه السبيل اكتسب من الذكر الجميل الثناء بعد الموت ما لا حاجة بنا إليه بل الواجب أن يجرده من يهتك بالمناظرة والمحاجة ستره، ويكشف للناس عواره لينقص في عيونهم ويخط من درجته ما بين ظهرانيم، فكث غير بعيد حتى توجه من وجهناه من داعينا للقاء التركمانية، فانعقد بينه من المناظرة مكاتبة لا مشافهة ما نوره بنصه فينفع الله السامعين.

The story has reached you about the blind man who gained notoriety at Ma'arrat al-Nu'mān, and what was attributed to him of unbelief (*kufr*) and excess-driven impiety (*tughyān*), due to his extreme abstention (*muta-qashshifan*) from many foods which God has permitted in moderation (*muta'affifan*). Word of him reached every corner and moved people to destroy him, out of passion (*hamiyyatan*) from their allegiance to the

56 Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, *Rasā'il Abī al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, al-juz' al-awwal*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1982), 86.

faith, and out of their sense of honor (*ghūratan*) for Islam and all Muslims. One day, talk of him was going round the session of the overseer charged with supervising at that time,⁵⁷ and everyone gathered was emboldened after his blood, saying that honor for religion (*ghīra 'alā al-dīn*) permitted them to kill him. But then one of the attendees said: "Your words make no sense! If it's really true that the man is old and weak and staring down at the grave from its closest portico, when death's hand is finally reached out to him, he will have glory from peoples' admirable mention of him, a glory that we ourselves could never hope for. No, instead we must dispatch unto him someone who will pierce his façade through debate (*al-munāzara*) and disputation (*al-muhājja*), and who will expose his faults to people so that he falls short in their eyes and his status among them is debased!" And it was not long before the missionary whom we dispatched set off to meet with the Turkmen (of Syria), and there was had between him (and al-Ma'arrī) a written rather than a verbal exchange, which we reproduce verbatim. May God be of aid to those who hear!

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57 This might refer to a person appointed to persecute heterodoxy in the midst of such a session.

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A Frugal Crescent

Perceptions of Foodways in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt in Nineteenth-Century Vegetarian Discourse

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The history of organized vegetarianism, which emerged in Europe by the middle of the nineteenth century, has long been written about within an exclusively Western, if not national, framework.¹ Indeed, it is often inscribed into a specifically Western narrative of modernity, in which vegetarianism serves as a “technology of the self,” (Foucault)² fashioning bodies and selves in consonance with social Darwinist visions of modernity.³ Yet while arguments such as these were doubtlessly put forward by advocates of vegetarianism in Germany, Britain, and the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, a closer look

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- 1 Adam D. Shprintzen, *The Vegetarian Crusade: The Rise of an American Reform Movement, 1817–1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body: Beauty, Health, and Fitness in Britain, 1880–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007); Florentine Fritzen, *Gesünder leben. Die Lebensreformbewegung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006); Ceri Crossley, *Consumable Metaphors: Attitudes towards Animals and Vegetarianism in Nineteenth-Century France*, French Studies of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (Oxford: Lang, 2005); Karen Iacobbo and Michael Iacobbo, *Vegetarian America: A History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004); Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Colin Spencer, *Vegetarianism: A History* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002); Eva Barlösius, *Naturgemäße Lebensführung. Zur Geschichte der Lebensreform um die Jahrhundertwende* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1997); Wolfgang R. Krabbe, *Gesellschaftsveränderung durch Lebensreform. Strukturmerkmale einer sozial-reformerischen Bewegung im Deutschland der Industrialisierungsperiode* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974); Jakob A. Klein, “Afterword: Comparing Vegetarianisms,” *Journal of South Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (2008). Klein rightfully observes a divide in research on vegetarianism in Europe and North America, on the one hand, and Asia, on the other: Klein, “Afterword,” 199–212. The sole exceptions are the monographs by Tristram Stuart and Leela Gandhi, which discuss, though not exhaustively, the influence of India and Indian protagonists on vegetarian discourse in Europe: Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution: Radical Vegetarians and the Discovery of India* (London: Harper, 2006); and Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*, Politics, History, and Culture (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
 - 2 Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” in *Technologies of the Self. A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin, H. Gutman, and P.H. Hutton (Amherst, 1982).
 - 3 Shprintzen, *Crusade*; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Body*; Hau, *Cult*.

at contemporary treatises and periodicals arguing for a meatless diet shows that the history of Western organized vegetarianism was shaped by influences and appropriations from well beyond Europe.

Transnational networks and references to foodways in other parts of the world were central to vegetarian discourse. On the one hand, organized vegetarianism was coterminous with nineteenth-century processes of globalization, including mission and colonialism, on whose knowledge production it drew liberally. On the other hand, and based on the knowledge generated in these very contexts, vegetarianism was often justified by referring to supposedly homogeneous alimentary geographies. In addition to digressing on food and ethics in Buddhism and Hinduism, British and particularly German sources dwelled on the allegedly frugal foodways embraced by inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt.

In this paper, I discuss why the Ottoman Empire and Egypt played a role in vegetarian discourse in Germany and look at how these sources feed into a critical history of vegetarianism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Perceptions of foodways in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt in nineteenth-century vegetarian discourse testify to the importance both of transgressing and maintaining boundaries in vegetarian discourse—to the universalist gesture at its heart as much as to an implicit exclusionism on various levels that so far has been little acknowledged. The principal sources used include tracts on vegetarianism, travelogues and geographical literature, and articles from the *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* (Magazine for friends of natural living), the journal by the first German vegetarian association.⁴ The references to the Ottoman Empire and Egypt found in these sources are contextualized with contemporary research on the history of food and fasting in these regions, as well as with a few exemplary sources from the region, inter alia, a Greek Orthodox sermon on fasting from the late nineteenth century, an article on Western vegetarianism from the Egyptian cultural periodical *Al-Muqtaṭaf*,⁵ and an autobiography by a Greek Orthodox Christian that discusses the practice of fasting.

4 The *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* (later *Thalysia*) was issued by the Verein für Freunde natürlicher Lebensweise (Vegetarianer) (Association of Friends of Natural Living [Vegetarians]), founded in 1867 in Nordhausen by Eduard Baltzer, a Protestant theologian and head of a nondenominational parish.

5 On this journal, see Dagmar Glaß, *Der Muqtaṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit. Aufklärung, Rasonnement und Meinungsstreit in der frühen arabischen Zeitschriftenkommunikation* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004).

1 Organized Vegetarianism in Europe: Class, Religion, Global Visions

To understand why and how alimentary geographies, among them references to the Ottoman Empire, came to play an important role in European vegetarian discourse, it is instructive to recapitulate when, why, and in which social context organized vegetarianism in Europe emerged.

Abstention from meat had been debated in Europe well before the nineteenth century. As shown by Tristram Stuart, it had been discussed by Protestant religious dissenters and philosophers since early modern times, frequently with reference to precursors in ancient Greece and India, as a means of disciplining mind and body.⁶ In medicine, its merits had been extolled as well. Enlightenment physicians such as Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland, whose concept of macrobiotics owed much to his readings of ancient Greek medicine, had recommended a vegetarian diet. So had eighteenth-century French physicians who considered supposedly vegetarian “primitive people” to reflect humankind in its “natural” state. British physicians working in India toward the end of the eighteenth century had advocated rejecting meat for the sake of health and longevity. Meat, they all concluded, inflamed the passions, gave rise to harmful processes of putrefaction inside the body and weakened it, and thus for more than one reason increased the likelihood of dying early.⁷

But while vegetarianism had indeed been advocated earlier, it was only in the nineteenth century that it assumed the character of an organized movement. Based on interactions between protagonists in Britain and the United States, organized vegetarianism emerged around the mid-nineteenth century. The place where the first vegetarian association was founded, in 1847, was a hub of the Industrial Revolution in a growing empire, a city characterized by impressive warehouses but also abject poverty and squalor: Manchester.⁸

Other cities in Britain followed suit, and so did other countries, like Prussia. While vegetarianism in German-speaking regions had been propagated well before, with the political radical Gustav Struve celebrating it in his India-inspired epistolary novel *Mandarar Wanderungen* (Mandara's Journeys, 1843),

6 Stuart, *Bloodless Revolution*, 180–251.

7 Detlef Briesen, *Das gesunde Leben. Ernährung und Gesundheit seit dem 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2010), 28; Emma C. Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 23–28; E.M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800–1947* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 26–27.

8 Twigg, “Vegetarian Movement,” 83–88; Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, 30–50. In her analysis of the animal welfare movement in Britain, Mieke Roscher likewise underlines the urban character of the movement. Roscher, *Ein Königreich für Tiere. Die Geschichte der britischen Tierrechtsbewegung* (Marburg: Tectum, 2009), 34.

it was only twenty years after its emergence in Britain that vegetarianism assumed any organized character in Prussia, when Eduard Baltzer's *Verein für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* (Association of Friends of Natural Living) was founded in Nordhausen, Thuringia, in 1867.⁹ German-speaking Europe and Britain constituted the two most important bases of organized vegetarianism in Europe well into the twentieth century.

While organized vegetarianism remained a quantitatively small phenomenon, it addressed a number of urgent contemporary transformations, which will be discussed here briefly: an increasing distance from nature, the wearing away of the body in an age of industrialization, fears of change in social hierarchies, and an increasing closeness—in terms of transport, communication, and imperial connections—to other parts of the world.

From the nineteenth century onward, relations in Europe between human beings and animals underwent a number of transformations, a development that, due to industrialization and urbanization, first manifested in cities.¹⁰ Meat became more affordable and easier to consume as a result of transformations in agriculture and, subsequently, in transport and slaughter.¹¹ Large-scale abattoirs were established at urban peripheries.¹² Exotic animals became objects of entertainment for a mass audience in zoos and circuses.¹³ As a consequence of these transformations, certain kinds of animals became objects of affection.¹⁴ In many middle-class households, pets advanced to become members of the family.¹⁵ Newly founded associations dedicated themselves to ani-

9 Gustav von Struve, *Mandaras Wanderungen*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Struve, 1906).

10 On the developments outlined in this paragraph, see also Roscher, *Königreich*, 63–68.

11 Massimo Montanari, *The Culture of Food* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Hans Jürgen Teuteberg, “The Birth of the Modern Consumer Age: Food Innovations from 1800,” in *Food: The History of Taste*, ed. Paul H. Freedman (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 238–239.

12 Boris Loheide, “Beef around the World: *Die Globalisierung des Rindfleischhandels bis 1914*,” *Comparativ* 17, no. 3 (2007); Paula Young Lee, “The Slaughterhouse and the City,” *Food & History* 3, no. 2 (2005); Dorothee Brantz, “Animal Bodies, Human Health, and the Reform of Slaughterhouses in Nineteenth-Century Berlin,” *Food & History* 3 (2005); Lukasz Nieradzki, “Körperregime Schlachthof. Tierschlachtung und Tierbäder im Wien des 19. Jahrhunderts,” *Body Politics* 2, no. 4 (2014).

13 Eric Baratay and Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier, *Zoo: A History of Zoological Gardens in the West* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 147–197, 386–392.

14 Roscher, *Königreich*, 63–64.

15 Hilda Kean, “The Moment of Greyfriars Bobby: The Changing Cultural Position of Animals, 1800–1920,” in *A Cultural History of Animals*, vol. 5, *In the Age of Empire*, ed. Kathleen Kete (Oxford: Berg, 2007); Kathleen Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

mal welfare.¹⁶ Vegetarianism, at once a symptom of a growing distance between humans and animals and an attempt to bridge it, clearly addressed these concerns.¹⁷

Industrialization also produced a new kind of urban lower class whose members relied on their bodies as their chief source of capital. Working conditions and economic precariousness put heavy strains on them. Soon these conditions became the object of middle-class social reform. As social reformers maintained, it was not just the type and duration of work, but also housing conditions and inadequate nutrition, that contributed to their misery. Workers were believed to be prone to alcoholism, smoking, and licentiousness. Vegetarianism appeared to be the panacea for all these ills. If workers could be induced to abstain from meat, or so advocates of vegetarianism argued, then the “social question” could be solved.¹⁸

Although this argument was prominent among vegetarians in both German and British contexts, Eva Barlösius argues that German-speaking middle-class vegetarians from the late 1860s onward were also obsessed with fears of downward social and economic mobility. Vegetarianism, a diet whose potential inexpensiveness contemporaries did not tire of emphasizing, seemed to offer a solution to the purportedly tightening purses of parts of the middle class while likewise disciplining those middle-class minds and bodies.¹⁹

Encounters with other parts of the world, whether immediate or on a discursive level, played an important part in the emergence of vegetarianism, with the alleged treatment of animals in India frequently evoked as a model

16 Roscher, *Königreich*; Miriam Zerbel, *Tierschutz im Kaiserreich: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Vereinswesens* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1993).

17 According to Richard Bulliet, it was only in an urban environment where animals became increasingly invisible, a condition he refers to as “postdomesticity,” that human beings could harbour the illusion of no longer depending on them for their sustenance and so could consider rejecting meat. Bulliet, *Hunters, Herders, and Hamburgers: The Past and Future of Human-Animal Relationships* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 15–19, 27–34. Apart from the removal of animals from the domestic sphere, Bulliet sees “postdomestic” attitudes toward animals as influenced by the emergence of Darwin’s theory of evolution, which turned differences between humans and animals into “simply ... a matter of degree.” *Ibid.*, 197. In interpreting vegetarianism as a nineteenth- and twentieth-century phenomenon only, however, Bulliet ignores earlier reflections on meat abstention, most notably those in ancient Greece, as examined in Pedro Martins’s contribution to this volume.

18 Eduard Baltzer, *Die natürliche Lebensweise, der Weg zu Gesundheit und sozialem Heil* (Nordhausen: Förstemann, 1867), 65–66; T.S. Nichols, *How to Live on Six-Pence a Day: Vegetarian Meal Planning* (London: Nichols & Co., 1878), 45.

19 Barlösius, *Naturgemäße Lebensführung*, 164–171.

for Europeans to embrace.²⁰ Global influences were evident not just in ethics but also in a new curiosity about foodways in other parts of the world. Certainly, foods had travelled the globe for long.²¹ But in the nineteenth century, transformations in transport and communication, along with a new phase of imperial expansion, led to an increasing entanglement of Europe with other parts of the world.²² While travel and missionary reports had been popular literary genres since the eighteenth century, imperial expansion led to an increase in cultural exchange between colony and metropole.²³ One way regions outside Europe were mapped was through a charting of the “bodily practices” (Bayly) of their inhabitants, with foodways serving as a key to understanding the physical, moral, and political constitution of a given community.²⁴

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- 20 An early example of this is John Oswald, *The Cry of Nature; or, An Appeal to Mercy and to Justice on Behalf of the Persecuted Animals* (London: Johnson, 1791). On Oswald's biography, see David W. Erdman, *Commerce des Lumières: John Oswald and the British in Paris, 1790–1793* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986); T.F. Henderson and Ralph A. Manogue, “Oswald, John (c. 1760–1793),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). The positive view of India in writings on vegetarianism stood in marked contrast to the negative perception of Indian foodways in much of colonial discourse.
- 21 Raymond Grew, introduction to *Food in Global History*, ed. Raymond Grew (Newton Center: New Global History Press, 2004), 1–30. Sidney Mintz's study on sugar shows how foods from outside Europe became not just a staple part of European diets, but also introduced new cultural practices. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Sifton, 1985). Other studies have explored the impact of the colonial encounter on the bodies of the colonizers through food. See, e.g., Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492–1700*, *Critical Perspectives on Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*.
- 22 Christopher A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005).
- 23 Following Ann-Laura Stoler's and Frederick Cooper's suggestion to study links between metropole and colony, a growing number of studies has investigated these connections, with some focusing specifically on knowledge production. Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Pidgin-Knowledge: Wissen und Kolonialismus*, *Perspektiven der Wissensgeschichte* (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2013).
- 24 As Mrinalini Sinha argues, for instance, British colonizers perceived Indians as lacking in masculinity on account of the vegetarian diet, which they considered to prevail in the country. Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The “Manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali” in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). The centrality of food to perceptions of the Other in the colonial encounter in India has also been emphasized by Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*; Parama Roy, *Alimentary Tracts: Appetites, Aversions, and the Postcolonial* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

2 Alimentary Geographies in Vegetarian Discourse

Although much of this mapping occurred in texts, some of it took place literally on maps. In Heinrich Berghaus's *Physikalischer Atlas*, one map was dedicated to the world's foodways in relation to the world's population. In it, the globe was divided into several zones according to the supposedly prevailing foodways embraced by their inhabitants.²⁵ Berghaus's map clearly shows that there was an interest in linking geography and foodways in the nineteenth century, even though the map suggested that a solely plant-based diet was practiced by only a minority of the earth's inhabitants.

In similar ways, nineteenth-century tracts and periodicals advocating vegetarianism reflected a vivid interest in mapping the world according to foodways.²⁶ One example is the apology of vegetarianism published in 1846 by Wilhelm Zimmermann, a writer, lawyer, and later a radical democrat in the Frankfurt parliament. In its title, the book promised to point "the road to paradise," examining "the chief causes of the physical and moral decline of civilizations, as well as natural remedies to atone for it."²⁷

According to Zimmermann, the decline of civilizations was ultimately a result of a change from a plant to a meat-based diet. Introducing meat into people's diet had led to drastic consequences for humankind as such: "The herbivores were destined to preserve the original image of human nature; the carnivores were doomed to decline into animality."²⁸

To prove the merits of vegetarianism, Zimmermann sought to locate it across the globe. Strikingly, however, it was neither urban populations nor the German-speaking lower classes whose foodways were idealized. Idealization required geographic distance. It relied on a "denial of coevalness" (Fabian) as

25 "Nahrungsweise / Volksdichtigkeit," in *Physikalischer Atlas*, ed. Heinrich Berghaus (Frankfurt, 2004).

26 This interest would continue to remain vivid in the following decade. Eduard Baltzer, founder of the first German vegetarian association, even called on the editors of the newly founded *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* to draw on their scholarly knowledge and contacts and comment on the reports published in his association's periodical on the foodways embraced in other parts of the world. Baltzer, "Bericht über den ersten Vereinstag des deutschen Vereins für naturgemäße Lebensweise, Nordhausen, 19. Mai 1869," *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* 10 (1869): 155.

27 Wilhelm Zimmermann, *Der Weg zum Paradies. Eine Beleuchtung der Hauptursachen des physisch-moralischen Verfalls der Culturvölker, so wie naturgemäße Vorschläge, diesen Verfall zu sühnen* (Quedlinburg: Basse, 1846).

28 *Ibid.*, 19–20.

much as a denial of economic inequality.²⁹ Hence, it was the ancient Egyptians, the Incas, Hinduism, and the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt who served as models.³⁰

Why did Zimmermann and other contemporary authors resort to these alimentary geographies? First, and most obvious, they helped to establish a vegetarian diet, a fringe phenomenon in European middle-class society, as the most common dietary regime on the globe. Second, they countered the assault on middle-class habits that vegetarianism represented by resorting to a middle-class value par excellence: education. Finally, they justified an acute critique of European society.

Although Zimmermann's, and other authors', geographical references seemed almost deliberate, certain regions were recurred to particularly often. Next to India, these were the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. According to Zimmermann, among the models of vegetarian living were "the Arabs." Clearly referring to Muslim Arabs (and condemning the alleged immoderacy of their Christian neighbors), he emphasized that the prohibition of alcohol imposed on them by religion led them to embrace moderate habits with regard to food as well.³¹ Indeed, their important contributions to the cultural heritage of humankind were a direct result of this perceived "frugality."³²

In the vegetarian map of the world, the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, then, were perceived as regions where little meat was consumed. German advocates of vegetarianism familiar with contemporary life in these regions frequently confirmed this view.

In 1868, the first issue of the periodical published by the *Verein für Freunde natürlicher Lebensweise*, the first vegetarian association in Prussia, quoted from a paper presented at the local *Deutscher Verein* by Dr. Wilhelm Reill, a corresponding member of the association and a German physician who was resident in Cairo. Reill spoke to his audience about the foodways embraced by what he referred to as the "common man" of Egypt. After enumerating the various vegetables present on an average Egyptian table, he concluded:

Of animal substances, milk in all varieties, cheese ..., and butter, are used most frequently, eggs coming only second. Olives and olive oil are con-

29 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 25–35.

30 Zimmermann, *Der Weg zum Paradies*, 145–147, 153–158, 168, 170–172.

31 As Kirill Dmitriev's contribution to this volume shows, attitudes toward alcohol in Islam varied over time, and Qur'anic passages concerning it were subject to conflicting interpretations.

32 Zimmermann, *Der Weg zum Paradies*, 170–172.

sumed on a regular basis as well and often used as condiments. Meat is only eaten on holidays, fish slightly more often ... Even on this diet people can bear the hardest strains. Boys are employed on public construction sites from a very young age onwards. The fact that people do not live long is due to other harmful habits.³³

Somewhat prior to Reill's report, German clergymen travelling to Ottoman Syria had already been impressed by the alleged frugality of the region's inhabitants. Seaborne passages in particular offered them an opportunity to observe locals' supposedly modest alimentary practices. Accordingly, Theodor Fliedner, a German Protestant clergyman travelling in the 1850s to Greece, the Ottoman Empire, and Egypt, commented:

During our passage, we admired the moderate habits embraced by Turks, Armenians, and lower-class Greeks in dining. For the most part, they consumed nothing but some raw cucumbers and pumpkins, olives in brine, radish, and particularly ample amounts of leeks, onions, and bread. In these foods they relished, ... concluded their meal by smoking a pipe, and finally returned to their corners contentedly.³⁴

Reil's and Fliedner's observations were not rare examples. To the contrary, both the *Vegetarian Messenger* and the *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde natürlicher Lebensweise* regularly reported on the supposedly frugal foodways embraced by the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire, Greece, and Egypt.³⁵ A critical

33 Eduard Baltzer, "Erster Vereinsbericht," *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* 1 (1868): 9–10.

34 Theodor Fliedner, *Reisen in das heilige Land, nach Smyrna, Beirut, Constantinopel, Alexandrien und Cairo, etc. Theil 1* (Kaiserswerth: Verlag der Diakonissen-Anstalt, 1858), 52.

35 "Die Bektaschis," *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* 13 (1869): 205–206; E.W., "Damaskus," *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* 1 (1886): 14–15; and all by Eduard Baltzer: "Aus Professor Brenneckes Reise: Die Länder an der unteren Donau und Konstantinopel," *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* 22 (1870): 349–351; "Aus Arabien," *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* 64 (1874): 1016–1018; "Aegypten," *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* 11 (1869): 171–172; "Von der türkischen Grenze," *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* 29 (1871): 456–459; "Cypern," *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* 111 (1879): 1766–1768; The *Vereins-Blatt* even figured reports by a German-speaking vegetarian who, attracted by the meat-free diet embraced by Greek Orthodox monks, converted to Greek Orthodox Christianity and entered a monastic order. Slavibor Breüer, "Vom Athos," *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* 155 (1883): 2471–2473; Monach Sava, "Vom Athos," *Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* 165 (1884): 2635–2636.

look at passages like these reveals certain instructive aspects. None of these observations was made in a domestic setting. Also, they were limited to lower-class alimentary patterns. These aspects confirm what scholarship on Orientalism and gender has long argued: Europeans' fantasies about local ways of life largely resulted from the fact that their access to the domestic sphere was limited.³⁶ Moreover, none of the observers was interested in the reasons why the consumption of meat was purportedly lower than in Europe. What was emphasized instead was the supposed effect of meat abstention on physical endurance, gleaned from observations made in public and with a specific social and gendered focus—for interestingly enough, the observations were confined to male members of the lower classes whose foodways were taken to be representative of local society as a whole.

3 Meat and Meat Abstention in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt

In the light of recent research, assumptions that the Ottoman Empire and Egypt were regions where little meat was consumed appear questionable. Because of the sources available, much of this research focuses on upper-class cuisine, and indeed on pre-Ottoman times. The value of food in Abbasid times, from which date the earliest cookery books in Arabic, has particularly been researched amply. As these studies emphasize, courtly cuisine was far from rejecting meat. A dish without meat was not considered a proper meal. Meatless fare was served only to the sick.³⁷ The same appreciation of meat seems to have held true for Ottoman palace cuisine, although vegetables enjoyed a somewhat higher esteem in that case.³⁸

36 It was because of this inaccessibility of the private realm that the harem became a focus of desire for male travelers. For copious literature on the topic, see Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 13; Ruth Bernhard Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind: Passages of Western Art and Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 17.

37 David Waines and Manuela Marín, "Muzawwar: Counterfeit Fare for Fasts and Fevers," in *Patterns of Everyday Life*, ed. David Waines and Manuela Marín, *The Formation of the Classical Islamic World 10* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2002), 303–315; Charles Perry, "The Description of Familiar Foods (Kitāb waṣf al-aṭ'ima al-mu'tāda)," in *Medieval Arab Cookery: Essays and Translations by Maxime Rodinson, A.J. Arberry, and Charles Perry*, with a foreword by Claudia Roden (Totnes: Prospect Books, 2001), 443–450.

38 Hedda Reindl-Kiel, "The Chickens of Paradise: Official Meals in the Mid-Seventeenth Century Ottoman Palace," in *The Illuminated Table, The Prosperous House: Food and Shelter in Ottoman Material Culture*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann (Würzburg: Ergon, 2003), 38; Özge Samancı, "Culinary Consumption Patterns of the Ottoman Elite

What is clear is that meat was of central importance to hospitality, not just in courtly contexts but even among the Bedouin.³⁹ Writers concerned with the ethics of eating, like al-Ghāzalī, enjoined hosts to serve meat to guests.⁴⁰

Research is less dense when it comes to the foodways of the lower classes, on which sources are scarce. But Paulina Lewicka, in her recent study of food in medieval Cairo, cautions us against considering lower-class cuisine as the precise opposite of courtly fare, suggesting that, despite economic constraints, alimentary norms and ideals embraced by the upper layers of society might have trickled down.⁴¹ Even the less affluent could buy cheaper cuts of meat in the market, either raw or as part of ready-made dishes.⁴² Because lower-class people often lived in crowded conditions and did not necessarily have a kitchen or sufficient fuel at their disposal, this might have been an attractive option.⁴³

Lower-class diets, then, were not strictly vegetarian but nor were they as rich in meat as those of the upper classes. In nineteenth-century Egypt, meat was

during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Illuminated Table*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann (Würzburg: Ergon, 2003), 171–172; Paulina B. Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes: Aspects of Life in an Islamic Metropolis of the Eastern Mediterranean*, Islamic History and Civilization 88 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 256–257.

- 39 In eighteenth-century England, the central role of meat in Bedouin hospitality led George Sale, the editor of one of the first Qurʾan translations into English, to suppose that the Bedouin themselves consumed meat in large amounts, to which he attributed their allegedly fiery temperament. George Sale, “Preliminary Discourse,” in *The Koran: Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammed, translated into English immediately from the original Arabic; with explanatory notes, taken from the most approved commentators. To which is prefixed a preliminary discourse. By George Sale, gent* (London: C. Ackers, 1734), 22. John Oswald, a Jacobin activist and author of an ethical tract on vegetarianism, based his generally negative views of the Arabs on this passage (51, 102–103). Present-day researchers, however, emphasize that occasions for slaughter among the Bedouin were rare—not surprising, as camels were the principal helpers in transport. Peter Heine, *Kulinarische Studien. Untersuchungen zur Kochkunst im arabisch-islamischen Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 50.
- 40 *Über die guten Sitten beim Essen und Trinken. Das ist das 11. Buch von Al-Ghazzālī’s Hauptwerk. Übersetzung und Bearbeitung als ein Beitrag zur Geschichte unserer Tischsitten von Hans Kindermann* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 32.
- 41 Lewicka, *Food and Foodways*, 128. This argument is also put forward in an earlier study by Peter Heine: *Kulinarische Studien. Untersuchungen zur Kochkunst im arabisch-islamischen Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 4.
- 42 Nawal Nasrallah, introduction to *Annals of the Caliphs’ Kitchens: Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq’s Tenth-Century Baghdadi Cookbook*, ed. Nawal Nasrallah, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts 70 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 34–35.
- 43 See Christian Saßmannshausen’s contribution to this volume.

a rare item of consumption among the less privileged.⁴⁴ Because of its limited availability to the poor, meat was frequently chosen as an item for almsgiving, particularly during Ramadan.⁴⁵ In the Ottoman Empire, it was also occasionally served in establishments for the poor.⁴⁶ This, however, did not necessarily translate into dishes heavy in meat. Food dispensaries, as Christoph Neumann cautions, seem to have operated on a “hierarchical, generally two-tiered system, with standard fare and luxury fare.”⁴⁷ Without access to charity, meat might have been less available, particularly in Egypt, where the first half of the nineteenth century was characterized by a decrease in the animal population and overall scarcity.⁴⁸ A cuisine relying on plant foods was also common for rural regions of the Levant, such as al-Koura, a mountainous region in present-day Lebanon, where inhabitants primarily relied on plant food, including wild plants.⁴⁹

On the whole, therefore, it may be assumed the cuisine of the less wealthy was not necessarily a meat-free one, but that it featured far less meat than that of the affluent. However, deliberate abstention from meat for other reasons, most of all ethical ones, was not altogether unknown, although it is unclear how much of these traditions was still alive by the nineteenth century.

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- 44 Alan Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 28–30, 46.
- 45 Amy Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 74; Mai Yamani, “You Are What You Cook: Cuisine and Class in Mecca,” in *A Taste of Thyme: Culinary Cultures of the Middle East*, ed. Sami Zubaida (London: Tauris Parke, 2000), 182.
- 46 Amy Singer, “The ‘Michelin Guide’ to Public Kitchens in the Ottoman Empire,” in *Starting with Food: Culinary Approaches to Ottoman History*, ed. Amy Singer, Princeton Papers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (Princeton: Wiener, 2011), 49–68; Nina Ergin, Christoph K. Neumann, and Amy Singer, introduction to *Feeding People, Feeding Power: Imarets in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Nina Ergin, Christoph K. Neumann, and Amy Singer (Istanbul: Eren, 2007), 15.
- 47 Singer, “‘Michelin Guide’ to Public Kitchens”; Christoph K. Neumann, “Remarks on the Symbolism of Ottoman Imarets,” in *Feeding People, Feeding Power: Imarets in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Nina Ergin, Christoph K. Neumann, and Amy Singer (Istanbul: Eren, 2007), 285.
- 48 Alan Mikhail, “Unleashing the Beast: Animals, Energy, and the Economy of Labor in Ottoman Egypt,” *American Historical Review* 118, no. 2 (2013): 317–348; Mikhail, *Animal in Ottoman Egypt*, 28–29, 46.
- 49 Souad Slim and Hasan Abiad, *The Banquet of Old Times: Cuisine of Al-Kurah / Al-Ma’duba ayyām zamān. Al-maṭbakh al-kūrānī* (Balamand: University of Balamand, 2012), 29. Wild herbs were likewise resorted to during times of scarcity in the region in World War I (see Tylor Brand’s contribution to this volume). They also form a central part of present-day culinary identity in the Palestinian territories. Atsuko Ichijo and Ronald Ranta, *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: From Everyday to Global Politics* (London: Routledge, 2016), 55.

To name a notable example, Abū al-Alā' al-Ma'arrī (973–1057), an agnostic, philosopher, and poet, had rejected not just the consumption of meat but also of all animal products—a position on which his contemporaries frequently challenged him.⁵⁰

Meat abstention also played a role in early Sufism. Although evidence is somewhat ambiguous, and Sufi abstention cannot be equaled with the logics of modern-day vegetarianism since its value was spiritual first and foremost, and it did not categorically exclude meat, some tales about characters like Bishr al-Ḥāfi and Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya mention their hesitancy to consume animal fat or meat because of the harm done to fellow creatures and because the substances would interfere with spiritual growth.⁵¹ Meat abstention was also practiced by certain Sufi orders. By the nineteenth century and later, however, Sufi *tekkes* seem to have abandoned the restrictions.⁵²

Finally, Orthodox and Coptic Christians, a significant minority in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, were expected to abstain from meat for part of the year, although there are signs that the practice was on the wane in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵³ Fasting, a practice embraced not just in the six weeks preceding Easter but at regular intervals that effectively amounted to half or two-thirds of the year, was based on a reduction of the number of meals, the gradual rejection of animal products (first meat, fish, and butter, then dairy products as well), oil, and wine, and total fasts on some days.⁵⁴

50 See Kevin Blankinship's article in this volume.

51 Valerie Hoffman, "Eating and Fasting for God in Sufi Tradition," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63 (1995): 465–484; Michael Cooperson, "Bishr al-Ḥāfi," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three*, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), http://dx.doi.org/encyclopaedia.ofislam.han.sub.uni-goettingen.de/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_24019 (accessed 22 December 2016); Richard C. Foltz, *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 109; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, "Antinomian Sufis," in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 101.

52 Nicolas Trépanier, "Starting without Food: Fasting and the Early Mawlawi Order," in *Starting with Food: Culinary Approaches to Ottoman History*, ed. Amy Singer (Princeton: Wiener, 2011); Hoffman, "Eating and Fasting," 1–22.

53 Febe Armanios, *Coptic Christianity in Ottoman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 128, 134–135.

54 Costi Bendaly, *Jeune et oralité* (Beirut: An-Nour Coop, 2007). Athanasius N.J. Louvaris, "Fast and Abstinence in Byzantium," in *Feast, Fast or Famine: Food and Drink in Byzantium*, ed. Wendy Mayer and Silke Trzcionka, *Byzantina Australiensis* 15 (Brisbane: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2005), 189–198; Issa Khalil, "The Orthodox Fast and the Philosophy of Vegetarianism," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 35, no. 3 (1990): 237–259; Alexander Schmemmann, *Great Lent* (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974); Archimandrite Akaios, *Fasting in the Orthodox Church: Its Theological, Pastoral, and Social Impli-*

Although probably originally reflecting the limited availability of meat to parts of society, the main purpose of fasting was spiritual.⁵⁵ Lenten fasting in particular was to bring about *rabi' an-nafs*, a “spring of the carnal soul,”⁵⁶ as Gerasimos Masarrah, the Greek Orthodox bishop of Beirut, put it poetically in a sermon reproduced in the Greek Orthodox Beirut periodical *al-Hadiyya* in 1889⁵⁷ Certainly the practice had come under challenge by the late nineteenth century with the activities of Protestant missions in the region, many of which hoped to convert Orthodox Christians.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, fasting continued to be an aspect of quotidian life and religious practice.⁵⁹

cations (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2016). While these studies examine fasting on a normative level, there are as yet no historical studies of Orthodox fasting as a lived cultural practice.

- 55 Antonia-Leda Matalas, Eleni Tourlouki, and Chrystalleni Lazarou, “Fasting and Food Habits in the Eastern Orthodox Church,” in *Food & Faith in Christian Culture*, ed. Ken Albala (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 189–203.
- 56 *Nafs*, and hence the opposition between a carnal and a spiritual soul (*rūh*), is a motive employed in Sufi ascetic discourse as well. Trépanier, “Starting without Food,” 7; Gabriel Said Reynolds, “The Sufi Approach to Food: A Case Study of Adāb,” *Muslim World* 90, no. 1 (2000): 198; Mark J. Sedgwick, *Sufism: The Essentials* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000), 9–10.
- 57 Gerāsīmūs Masarrah, “Al-ṣawm al-arbaʿīnī,” *al-Hadiyya* 7, no. 174 (1889): 66.
- 58 On the strategy of Protestant missions regarding Orthodox Christians, see Heleen Murrevan den Berg, “The Middle East: Western Missions and the Eastern Churches, Islam and Judaism. Vol. 8: World Christianities, c. 1800–1914,” in *Cambridge History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 458–472; Habib Badr, “American Protestant Missionary Beginnings in Beirut and Istanbul: Policy, Politics, Practice and Response,” in *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Heleen Murrevan den Berg, Studies in Christian Mission 32 (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Rejecting the fast, therefore, became an important part of performing one’s new religious affiliation. Christine Lindner, “‘In this religion I will live, and in this religion I will die’: Performativity and the Protestant Identity in Late Ottoman Syria,” *Chronos* 22 (2010): 25–48. For one example of a convert’s rejection of fasting, see Abraham Rihbany, *A Far Journey* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin; Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1914), 189–190. Nonetheless, some converts continued to be ambivalent about what appeared to them the meat-centredness of Western foodways. See Christian Junge’s article in this volume.
- 59 In Egypt, Coptic Christians followed a similar fasting pattern. Armanios, 127–135. As Christian Sassmannshausen indicates in his contribution to this volume, Christian fasting practices were often respected by non-Christian social contacts.

4 Reading Foodways in the Middle East: From Collective Practice to Choice

The impact of social status, religious practice, and cultural transformations on the menu of the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt were largely lost to European advocates of vegetarianism. Yet their views were not merely due to their lack of access to certain parts of local society and their ensuing lack of knowledge concerning eating as a cultural and social practice. They also served a distinct didactic purpose with regard to the home audience.

If even those people able to bear the hardest physical strain could live on a plant-based diet, then surely Europeans could follow their example. Vegetarianism was thus characterized as the ideal diet for all parts of the globe, as well as the ideal one for all classes, particularly the working classes, with whom advocates of vegetarianism were often particularly concerned. The consumption of meat, the self-declared friends of “natural living” believed, went hand in hand with an increase in thirst, which, from their perspective, the members of the working class were most likely to quench with alcohol. By embracing vegetarianism, they would be taught thrift as well as abstinence. They would also increase their physical strength, health, and the overall length of their lives.⁶⁰

Vegetarianism in the Middle East was thus sold to the European reader as part and parcel of an agenda of public health and social reform—an agenda one could freely choose and was well advised to adopt. Yet this perspective of vegetarianism as a choice would not necessarily have been subscribed to by the inhabitants of the region so extolled in European vegetarian periodicals. In contrast, Western observers overlooked, or romanticized, economic constraints, which forced many people in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, as well as in Europe, to keep alimentary expenses low.

In serving as a didactic example to a European middle-class audience able to choose from an increasingly wide range of foods in an age of agricultural and industrial transformations, West Asia and North Africa were not exceptional cases in German or English-speaking vegetarian periodicals. Instead,

60 Eduard Baltzer, *Vegetarianisches Kochbuch für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* (Rudolstadt in Thüringen: H. Hartung & Sohn, 1886), 11–12; Henry S. Salt, A plea for vegetarianism, and other essays (Manchester: Vegetarian Society, 1886), 26. Several *ḥadīths*, too, condemn the cruel treatment of animals and recommend treating them with compassion. Richard C. Foltz, “‘This she-camel of God is a sign to you ...’: Dimensions of Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Culture,” in *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*, ed. Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 152; Foltz, *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures*, 19–21, 24.

such journals amply reported on the foodways embraced in other parts of the globe with the intention of promoting vegetarianism as a healthy choice available to the Western individual, a “technology of the self” that would benefit self-declaredly threatened members of the middle-class as much as members of the working class—and would thereby regenerate not just individuals, classes, or societies but also European civilization as such.

5 Killing the Animal: A Bridge Unnoticed

At the same time, such laudatory passages strikingly contrasted with others condemning the supposedly cruel treatment of animals in other parts of the world, particularly the Middle East. Islam, homogenized into one cultural entity, often figured as an antipode when it came to the treatment of animals, with practices of halal slaughter serving as an emblem—although part of the logic of halal slaughter, as some present-day scholars emphasize, stems from a concern for decreasing animals’ pain in the process of death.⁶¹

Interestingly enough, however, the animal, read as both noun and adjective, was not necessarily an unequivocal object of affection in nineteenth-century European vegetarianism. First, affection was directed only at certain species, most notably pets and other useful animals, which in fact were invested with human characteristics. Second, and more interesting in this context, no affection was ever bestowed on what one might refer to as the ‘figurative animal,’ or the ‘animal within.’ Until well into the twentieth century, discourse on meat abstention in Europe and elsewhere grappled with the purportedly “animal” instincts of humans, including their appetite for food, alcohol, and sex. Consuming meat was thought to arouse these instincts beyond control. Vegetarianism was thus conceived of as an attempt to let the mind and the spirit rule the body, or to let culture rule nature, with the mind, or culture, being connoted as the ‘human,’ and the body, or nature, connoted as the ‘animal’ aspect of human

61 Oswald, *Cry*, 50–51. For Islamic theological arguments on halal slaughter, see Francesca Ersilia, “Dietary Law,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, Brill Online, 2016. Several *ḥadīths*, too, condemn the cruel treatment of animals and recommend treating them with compassion. Foltz, “This she-camel of God,” 152; Foltz, *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures*, 19–21, 24; http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/encyclopaediaofislam.han.sub.uni-goettingen.de/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/dietary-law-COM_26018. See also Mohammed Hocine Benkheira, Cathérine Mayeur-Jaouen, and Jacqueline Sublet, *L’Animal en islam* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2005), 116, 136–137.

nature: an internal civilizing mission for the sake of the “animal without,” yet at the cost of the “animal within.”⁶²

Ironically, this very aspect would have allowed European vegetarian discourse to link up with discourses on meat abstention in the Middle East beyond the aspects of economy and health that dominated the perception of foodways in the region in European sources. For in Christian Orthodox as well as Sufi discourse, it was precisely the killing of the “internal animal” that served as the main rationale for a rejection of meat.⁶³ Indeed, the battle against the figurative animal was the secret common denominator in debates on vegetarianism in Europe and the Middle East before the twentieth century (an observation likewise to be made with regards to debates on vegetarianism in India toward the end of the nineteenth century).⁶⁴

6 Conclusion: Universalism and Exclusion

To conclude, how does the role of the Middle East in vegetarian discourse in nineteenth-century Europe allow for a critical rewriting of the history of vegetarianism?

First, while previous studies of the development of organized vegetarianism have been written within a national frame, reports on the Middle East reveal the crucial role of knowledge about foodways in other parts of the world in vegetarian discourse.

Secondly, these sources testify to the tension between a self-proclaimed universalism and implicit dynamics of exclusion in vegetarian discourse. On the one hand, vegetarianism was represented as a diet already followed by the larger part of mankind. At the same time, authors came to conclusions on local foodways by merely observing members of the lower classes in nondomestic

62 Julia Twigg, “Food for Thought: Purity and Vegetarianism,” *Religion* 9, no. 1 (1979): 21–22.

63 For a comparison of the carnal soul to an animal in Sufi discourse and the repression of supposedly “animal” instincts in humans through dietary restriction, see Sa’diyya Shaykh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn ‘Arabī, Gender, and Sexuality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). I am indebted to Khaled al-Boushi for directing my attention to this context. The same argument was made in Greek Orthodox sources on fasting, such as in a poem by a clergyman kept in the archives of the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut, Université Saint-Joseph, Bibliothèque Orientale, Département des manuscrits, BO USJ 01495. I thank Souad Slim for presenting me with a copy and explanation of this source.

64 On this, see Julia Hauser, “Körper, Moral, Gesellschaft: Debatten über Vegetarismus zwischen Europa und Indien, 1850–1914,” in *Geschichte des Nicht-Essens: Verzicht, Vermeidung und Verweigerung in der Moderne*, ed. Norman Aselmeyer and Veronika Settele, Beihefte zur Historischen Zeitschrift (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2018).

environments, and by privileging Christians over Muslims, the latter of whom were often scapegoated because of their alleged treatment of animals, while practices of abstinence in religious traditions like Sufism were ignored, as was the religious dimension in general.

Third, vegetarianism did not embrace a wholly positive view of ‘the animal.’ While beings in need of man’s protection, animals remained associated with base instincts. Although these were believed also to be present in human beings, they needed to be suppressed by the very act of abstaining from meat. Vegetarianism thus benefited the animal without while aiming to suppress the animal within. In this respect, Western vegetarianism was similar to rationales for abstaining from meat in Sufism and Greek Orthodox fasting practices.

Both sides in the encounter, however, rarely acknowledged the aspects that connected them—at least as far as spirituality went. Just as the allegedly meat-free foodways of the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire were considered as grounded in thrift and modesty rather than in morality, so, judging from an article on the subject in the late nineteenth-century highbrow magazine *Al-Muqataṭaf*, Western vegetarianism was perceived primarily as a health-related phenomenon, and its moral and ethical aspects were ignored.⁶⁵ It was only during the 1930s that Western vegetarianism, because of its specific ideas about nutrition and sexuality, began to be discussed as a moral regulator in the Middle East.⁶⁶

On the whole, the history of vegetarianism was very much a product of cultural encounters. At the same time, however, it is important to stress the silences, the processes of appropriation, and the redrawing of boundaries between classes and religions, and between humans, animals without, and animals within, that characterized European vegetarian discourse vis-à-vis its perceptions of alimentary practices in other parts of the world.

65 “Madhhab al-nabāṭiīn,” *Al-Muqataṭaf* 25, no. 4 (1921): 403–404. The editors of the journal had received a Western academic education at the American University of Beirut, an establishment founded by American missionaries, whose hostility toward fasting may have influenced the men behind *Al-Muqataṭaf* in their selective view of European vegetarianism. On the founders of the journal, see Dagmar Glaß, *Der Muqataṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit. Aufklärung, Raisonement und Meinungsstreit in der frühen arabischen Zeitschriftenkommunikation*, Mitteilungen zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der islamischen Welt 17 (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004), 181–208.

66 I thank Kirsten Scheid (American University of Beirut) who came across references to German vegetarianism and related movements in her research on the history of nudism in twentieth-century Lebanon for an instructive conversation. See also her as-yet-unpublished talk: “The Nudism Movement: Learning to Look at/as Nudes,” presented at the conference *Modern Bodies. Dress, Nation, Empire, Sexuality and Gender in the Modern Middle East*, convened by Reina Lewis and Yasmine Nachabe Taan, Lebanese American University, Beirut, March 15, 2018.

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PART 6

*Managing Scarcity in the
Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*



Some Eat to Remember, Some to Forget

Starving, Eating, and Coping in the Syrian Famine of World War I

Tylor Brand

If one were to outline a worst-case scenario for Lebanon and coastal Syria around the turn of the twentieth century, it would look a lot like the period of World War I, from 1914 to 1918. From the end of 1914, the effects of mobilization, environmental disaster, and the wartime blockade resulted in a growing social crisis, defined by unemployment, high prices, and eventually famine. Individuals adapted to circumstances according to their means, but by the summer of 1915, famine set in and did not dissipate until the end of the war. Over time, the high cost of living and lack of jobs drove many from the mountain and the countryside into the cities, precipitating a large-scale social breakdown. Catalysts like disease, harsh winters, and compassion fatigue among the wealthier segments of society only deepened the physical and social devastation, transforming the famine into perhaps the worst disaster to have befallen the region since the seventeenth century. It is impossible to determine accurately how many died, as estimated figures in Lebanon alone range wildly from about 12 percent of the population to the (literally) incredible estimate of 50 percent.¹ Nevertheless, for those who lived through the war, the famine became the defining element of their lives, exerting such a profound influence on both sufferers and observers alike that the Syrian Protestant College Professor Bayard Dodge was moved to note that “the worst of famine is its effect upon the living, rather than its silence upon the dead.”²

1 Death tolls and population figures are always a particularly difficult matter since—as the two contemporary works on the region note—migration and accounting irregularities make statistics distressingly unreliable. John Nakhul’s MA thesis on the region of Batroun during the war offers the most nuanced analysis of the effects of the crisis using local statistics. See John Nakhul, “Bilad al-Batrun fi al-harb al-‘alamiyya al-ula: al-jarad, al-ghala’, al-maja’a, al-wafayat,” in *Lubnan fi al-harb al-‘alamiyya al-ula*, ed. Antoine Qassis (Beirut: Manshurat al-Jami’a al-Lubnaniyya, 2011), 2:795–867. For further discussion of figures, see Nicholas Ajay, “Mount Lebanon and Wilayat Beirut, 1914–1918” (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 1973), 1:432–433; Melanie Tanielian, “The War of Famine: Everyday Life in Wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon” (PhD diss., University of California Berkeley, 2013); Tylor Brand, “Lives Darkened by Calamity: Enduring the Famine of WWI in Lebanon and Western Syria” (PhD diss., American University of Beirut, 2014).

2 Bayard Dodge, “Relief Work in Syria during the Period of the War” (1919), Howard Bliss Collection: AUB President 1902–1920, Archive AA:2.3.2, box 18, file 3, p. 12, American University of Beirut/Library Archives, Beirut.

For good reason, famine is far easier to associate with deprivation and want than with food and eating. Nevertheless, the topic of food is in many ways central to the experience of famine. For the economic historians who have defined the field of famine analysis, concerns have primarily focused on whether or not food was available, affordable, and entering people's bodies.³ However, the issue of food in the midst of famine need not be restricted to the margins of society or the hyperbole of mass starvation. The dramatic rise in the cost of food and the inaccessibility of what previously were perceived as normal items slowly altered how individuals interpreted specific foods and even acts of consumption. In her 2015 article "When Mothers Ate Their Children," Najwa al-Qattan demonstrated the power of food as a figurative tool for those seeking to convey the moral and social effects of calamity.⁴ She notes that contemporary writers frequently attached a literary meaning to food that was only nominally linked to its alimentary value. For many of them, food became a symbol, a weapon, a fetish, or even a gesture of accusation. Through almost formulaic pathos, writers depicted the transformation of the normal—the general collapse of society and the degradation of humanity. In the tragic narratives of the famine, food held great power as a central shared reference point between author and readers. Eating, a most normal act in our daily lives, morphed into something horrid. In the worst of cases, bread gave way to grass and meat to human flesh, marking for readers the terrible transformations that the famine forced upon individuals and society.

This chapter offers a parallel study to Qattan's literary analysis in its search to understand the social and personal meaning that food, consumption, and deprivation acquired over the course of the famine for those who lived it. Throughout the crisis, food—and how it was prepared and consumed—was infused with a variety of additional values and meanings, not only for those who suffered and struggled to survive, but also for those who experienced the famine merely as observers. Whereas Qattan's subjects were often concerned with the transformation of food from normal to abnormal, this essay takes the opposite approach, seeking the normal amid the abnormal (or at least the

3 Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); Stephen Devereux, *Theories of Famine* (New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1993); Alexander de Waal, *Famine That Kills* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); John Walter and Roger Schofield, eds., *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Andrew Appleby, "Grain Prices and Subsistence Crises in England and France, 1590–1740," *Journal of Economic History* 39, no. 4 (1979): 865–887.

4 Najwa al-Qattan "When Mothers Ate Their Children: Wartime Memory and the Language of Food in Syria and Lebanon," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 46 (2014): 731–732.

“new” normal). This ultimately reveals the complexity of life in the famine period, as people lived and adapted within their own individual narratives, not all of which exactly corroborated the dominant historical memory of the period. Accessing this lived experience requires delving into those aspects of daily life that are most easily taken for granted in typical circumstances but that seem impossibly ordinary during crisis—and what could be more ordinary than eating? The question thus becomes not if people ate, but rather why they ate what they did, and what meaning such consumption patterns had for individuals and society. Certainly, food defined the nutritional and economic statuses of those who lived in the crisis, but it also touched on issues of life and death, self-identity, politics, morality, and the reality of being human in the dehumanizing depths of disaster.

1 Fulfilling a Need: Eating and Satiety in Crisis

Famine produces horrors almost unparalleled by any other type of calamity, but unlike many disasters, it tends also to be a protracted process rather than an event, ultimately creating a new context that impacts each individual in society differently. The most vulnerable always suffer the first and worst, but the economic circumstances that generate mass starvation require those from across society to adapt to high prices or limited access to food items they are accustomed to consuming.

For the most desperate, eating—anything—was a way both to ward off the pains of starvation and to alleviate the uncertainty and fear that is a psychological by-product of hunger. The long-term semistarvation that commonly afflicts the vulnerable in famine had a variety of physical and mental effects. The most pronounced physiological impact of the famine was the wasting of marasmus, which over time transformed the normal human body to one that was gaunt and skeletal. However, in addition to the more obvious physical effects, humans who suffer absolute short-term starvation or long-term semistarvation begin to exhibit peculiar mental characteristics as their metabolic biochemistry begins to shift from the usual dependence on glucose to a fat-burning state of ketosis. While this process extends their life, it also tends to produce psychological effects like irritation, aggression, distraction, apathy, and fixation—notably on food and the means of acquiring it. Driven by the pangs of hunger and the urgency to survive, those suffering most acutely in the famine consumed nearly anything that could be considered vaguely edible. For those in the deepest throes of starvation, food assumed a position of paramount importance in their daily activities and even their moment-to-moment decision

making.⁵ This obsessive stage effaces any aversions to otherwise inedible or ghastly fare and often leads the famished to compulsively wander, even away from relief, in a perpetual search for food, for fear that they will miss a tiny life-saving scrap.⁶

This ultimately led to the most notorious of consumption practices, such as eating garbage, carrion, grass, and even human flesh, items whose virtues often were more the fact that they filled the stomach than that any nutritional value might be derived from them.⁷ George Doolittle wrote in his wartime retrospective that one could “walk for hours and not find a bit of green vegetation suitable to eat, [because] it had all been plucked up to satisfy the hunger pangs of the villagers.”⁸ When starving individuals acquired food items, they similarly went to great lengths to not waste anything. The orange-toned rings that adorned the sandstone walls of the city became legendary examples of this behavior among locals, each one an instance of someone rubbing the bitter outer rind from oranges so as to not waste the mass of the pith and peel.⁹ Such practices, along with other desperate measures like diluting lemon juice or pulverizing and boiling bones, contributed little to the dietary needs of the poorest inhabitants of the region but were not without merit: refuse, pulp, peels, and even the bran filling of a child’s doll provided individuals with the illusion of satiety, or dulled the pangs of hunger that afflicted them, at least for a moment.¹⁰

This need to fulfill hunger often extended to social, and especially familial, relations as well. The struggle of parenting and even the empathy of individuals for others around them made them susceptible to the hunger pangs of

5 Josef Brozek, “Psychology of Human Starvation and Nutritional Rehabilitation,” *Scientific Monthly* 7, no. 4 (1950): 271–274; Leah M. Kalm and Richard D. Semba, “They Starved So That Others Be Better Fed: Remembering Ancel Keys and the Minnesota Experiment,” *Journal of Nutrition* 135, no. 6 (2005): 1349.

6 John Butterly and Jack Shepherd, *Hunger: The Politics and Biology of Starvation* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), 94–95.

7 Such depictions are ubiquitous. See Antoine Yammine, *Quatre ans de misère* (Cairo: Imprimerie Emin Hindie, 1922), 46; Jirjis Khuri al-Maqdisi, *A’tham harb fi al-tarikh* (Beirut: al-Matbu’at al-Ilmiyya, 1927), 68; Sulayman Dhahir, *Jabal Amil fi al-harb al-kawniyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Matbu’at al-Sharqiyya, 1986), 45–46; Edward Nickoley, “Historic Diary,” Edward Nickoley File AA:2.3.3, Diary from 1917, box 1, file 2, p. 17, American University of Beirut/Library Archives.

8 George Curtis Doolittle, *Pathos and Humor of the War Years in Syria: A Book of Personal Experiences* (1920): 103.

9 Jonathan Stacey, ed., *A History of the American Community School at Beirut* (Beirut: Alumni Association of the American Community School, 1998), 13.

10 Dodge, “Relief Work in Syria,” 7.

loved ones and even strangers. Dora Eddy noted in the report on the Sidon Girl's School in 1917 that "the crying of hungry children all over the country has been a sad strain on the nerves and tempers of the equally hungry mothers."¹¹ For parents, the frustrated tears of children too young to understand why there was no longer enough food added yet another layer to the emotional burden of the period. One account of the famine period featured the heartbreaking pleas of a three-year-old girl asking her mother for a little sandwich "just the size of my hand," normally a very reasonable demand, but one that was impossible to fulfill given the rigid limitations of the family budget and the uncertainty of the future.¹² Such responsibility was not solely placed on parents either. In one of his typically evocative anecdotes, Doolittle told the story of a girl who relieved her mother of the need to explain why she could not feed her sister by telling her younger sibling that there was a public demonstration and they were not allowed to eat before they attended it.¹³

Although stories of the poor rooting through garbage and sucking flesh from discarded bones are evocative and chilling, most of society subsisted in less desperate straits. For them, the problem was a matter of choice and of balancing the costs and benefits of the options available to them. In short, how could they provide a reasonable and somewhat normal diet for their family given the unreasonably high prices of normal foods? Wheat, the cornerstone of the regional diet,¹⁴ experienced dramatic spikes in price as a result of the surge in demand by the war, compounded by artificial demand in the marketplace because of rampant speculation on grain and failed price controls that pushed supplies into the black market. What bread did reach the average consumer was often compromised by inferior ingredients and inadequate quantity, as determined by price and availability. Even the parboiled kernels of cracked wheat known as *burghol* (bulghur) rose in conjunction with the price of flour, despite its association with poorer diets in normal circumstances, requiring many to shift to less palatable substitutes.¹⁵

11 Dora Eddy, "Report of the Sidon Seminary, Oct. 1916–1917 Oct.," Presbyterian Historical Society Archives, Philadelphia, PA, RG-115-17-18, Sidon Girls' School Reports 1906–1955.

12 Interview with Hayat Mahmoud, 2014.

13 Doolittle, *Pathos and Humor*, 33.

14 Afif Tannous estimated that nearly a kilogram of bread was daily consumed per person in Lebanon. John Gulick, *Social Structure and Culture Change in a Lebanese Village* (New York: Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, 1955), 40; Mary Karam Khayat, *Lebanon, Land of the Cedars* (Beirut: Khayat's, 1956).

15 According to Edward Nickoley, in "Historic Diary," the price of bulghur on May 23, 1917 was 60 piasters per *ratl* (roughly five kilograms), whereas flour was a "mere" 55 piasters. This varied somewhat over time, as Mary Dorman (Dale) noted that the special prices

The inability to procure typical foods inspired creative solutions across the region. In Sidon, local missionaries observed that *turmous*, the fibrous seed of the lupine plant, had been elevated from a casual snack to a staple of many diets on account of its density and cheapness.¹⁶ The account of Shaykh Muhsin al-Amine likewise listed a variety of replacements for the usual wheat-based fare, ranging from millet to pulses and even fenugreek seeds, which were boiled until they transformed into a bitter gelatinous sludge that, if not altogether palatable, was at least edible. Predictably, none of the replacement foods was enjoyable enough to replace wheat in the long term, but some were worse than others. The bread that Amine had fashioned from ground vetch was apparently so odious that his son refused to touch it—which may have been a fortuitous judgment. Although vetch has historically been used to stretch grain reserves in times of famine in Europe and the Middle East,¹⁷ it is toxic when consumed in large quantities, producing potentially hazardous effects not dissimilar from favism.

The distaste for such famine foods came in part from their often unpleasant and unfamiliar flavors and textures and in part from the colloquial understanding that they were nutritionally deficient, or even dangerous. In the more limited famines of the 1900s, Dr. Ira Harris of Tripoli's Kennedy Memorial Hospital observed that the cases of gastrointestinal distress and poisoning increased substantially with the onset of dearth and famine, as individuals sought to supplement their diet with inedible materials or poorly processed, harsher grains like corn (not sweet corn but rather kernels more aptly used as fodder for animals).¹⁸

It is somewhat curious at first glance that such behaviors were so prevalent, given the amount of traditional knowledge about the safety or hazard of eating such items. Even reports of the ostensibly bestial consumption of grasses should be taken with a grain of salt, since gathering herbs was a common practice, especially in the countryside as a part of the annual preservation, the

that members of the Syrian Protestant College campus paid for wheat and bulgur were, respectively, 15.2 and 12.3 piasters per *ratl*. The wheat prices were up from 11.3 piasters on September 20 the previous year, which actually would have come at a relatively inexpensive point of the year. Dale's prices are taken from Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilayah of Beirut," appendix 283.

16 Doolittle, *Pathos and Humor*, 84.

17 Maguelonne Touissant-Samat, *A History of Food*, trans. Anthea Bell (Chichester: Blackwell, 2009), 132.

18 Ira Harris, "Medical Work—Tripoli Station—Syrian Mission—1902," Presbyterian Historical Society Archives, Philadelphia, PA, RG-115-19-16, Tripoli—Medical reports 1895–1914,1; Nickoley, "Historic Diary," 4.

mune—because of this, the edible plants were well known and seasonally consumed even in normal years.¹⁹ In contrast, eating in violation of taboos, such as the consumption of garbage, grains from animal dung, and even human flesh, is a different matter. That the behaviors observed in the famine diverged so dramatically from the common knowledge and folk wisdom of the region would suggest that the motivation for eating such recognizably dangerous fare was something that transcended the rational thought processes of those driven to such extremes. Indeed, it is possible that for those in the most desperate state of starvation, the importance of food was more psychological and somatic than nutritional.

2 Coping and Food: Eating to Remember, Eating to Forget

The social upheaval and utter bleakness of the famine period prompted those who endured the period to adapt both practically and emotionally to ensure their mental well-being in a time of despair, depression, and horror. Long-term suffering and exposure to the suffering of others elicited changes in those who experienced the famine period, transforming attitudes and modifying how individuals socially interpreted themselves and those around them.²⁰ Ultimately, to survive the famine emotionally and physically meant to cope with the changes that had begun taking place across society and within oneself. For some, this meant normalizing the crisis to make it manageable. For others, it meant seeking normalcy through various tokens of the past or dissociating emotionally from the famine, often by blocking out its influence in their lives or by distracting themselves from its effects. In both cases, food was a key component of deliberate and unconscious coping strategies that individuals employed throughout the period.

As noted in the previous section, food could help people manage the crisis by filling a physical need, but it also filled a more symbolic emotional need as well. Although it is easy to overlook the fundamental centering role of food in our daily lives, consumption patterns are primary points of orientation in daily life. Such emotional anchors were of special significance in the depressing

19 On the *mune* or *muna*, see Aida Kanafani-Zahar, *Mune: La conservation alimentaire traditionnelle au Liban* (Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1994). On the identification and uses of edible herbs, see Cynthia Chaker Farhat, "Analysis of Indigenous Nutritional Knowledge, Cultural Importance and Nutritional Content of Wild Edible Plants" (MA thesis, American University of Beirut, 2006).

20 I explore this topic in my dissertation: Brand, "Lives Darkened by Calamity," 161–188.

atmosphere of the famine as individuals sought to project normalcy into their own daily existence or, in other cases, to shield their family members from the worst of the suffering around them.²¹ In this effort, food often helped alleviate the pains and stresses of daily life—physiologically in a very real sense, but also by providing flashes of nostalgia and comfort that helped satisfy the emotional hunger for satiety and safety.

If fulfilling one's emotional and somatic needs often placed value on there *being* food (or at least something edible), then coping through normalcy required the food to be, or at least to approximate, those food items that filled similar roles in the time before the war. The realities of the wartime period often complicated this goal, since many of the foods that were associated with the antebellum period had been relegated to luxury status by the blockade and general high prices. As they grew scarcer and more costly, such foods concurrently gained value as mnemonic sparks that helped illuminate the dark atmosphere of the famine for those who could afford them. The price and social value of such mundane luxury items seems to have been inflated by the nonrational value bestowed on them by a society starved for something normal—prices driven up by low supply and latent demand due to the associations that they inspired in their consumers. Although such foods would have been prohibitively costly to consume on a daily basis, the perceived benefit of the consumption of these items seems to have been high enough to outweigh the cost, if only as an occasional indulgence for those who could afford them.

Although the colloquial notion of comfort food is somewhat inexact in this case, the utility of food as an emotional emollient actually has some scientific basis. Beyond the sense of social identity that such foods recall, the taste, smell, and texture of food can evoke connections to associations buried deep in the past that can heighten joy or even mitigate stress. These associations can also be catalyzed by the nostalgic powers of scent, which researchers have linked to the stimulation of emotional, autobiographical memories.²² In a famine atmosphere wherein individuals increasingly sought relief from the strains of the crisis, such tokens of quotidian normalcy could help individuals cope with the emotional burden of the disaster by satisfying both a bodily and a nostalgic hunger.

21 Eddy, "Report of the Sidon Seminary," 1.

22 Charles Reid, Jeffrey Green, Tim Wildschut, and Constantine Sedikides, "Scent-Evoked Nostalgia," *Memory* 23, no. 2 (2015): 158. See also S. Chu and J.J. Downes, "Odor-Evoked Autobiographical Memories: Psychological Investigations of Proustian Phenomena," *Chemical Senses* 25 (2000): 111–116; Simon Chu and John J. Downes, "Proust Nose Best: Odors Are Better Cues of Autobiographical Memory," *Memory and Cognition* 30 (2002): 511–518.

The most obvious evidence of this coping practice came at times when special foods would have been most commonly consumed anyway—during holidays, birthdays, and other commemorative events. For most of society, celebrations continued in somewhat attenuated form throughout the war whenever possible, and food played perhaps a more visible role than usual given its increased social and monetary value. Typical foods lent a veneer of normalcy to such celebrations, or even during social visits when the use of such ostentatious (and universally hoarded) ingredients as sugar could be justified for those who had it. Understandably, the use of food as a mood heightener was more relevant for those in the upper classes or members of protected groups (like the Americans), for whom an occasional indulgence would not risk future deprivation. Contemporary observations seemed to corroborate this supposition—in a 1917 diary entry, Syrian Protestant College professor Edward Nickoley wrote, “This year the [Ramadan] celebration is pretty tame. Most of the people have been obliged to fast, not because they were religiously inclined, but because abstention was dictated by stern physical necessity. There was nothing for them to eat and the sad thing about it is that even now on the feast most of them have nothing.”²³ In contrast, because the patronage of Ottoman military governor Jamal Pasha had shielded the college campus from the worst of the famine, birthdays and holidays were still excuses to consume those foods that had largely disappeared from the shelves of stores and certainly from the tables of all but the wealthiest or best connected in the region. For instance, in his diary, young Archie Crawford described a bridal shower as a “grocery shower,” wherein the young couple was feted with food and other edible luxuries.²⁴ The New Year’s celebration during the terrible winter of 1916–1917 was likewise an opportunity for pies, candies, ginger, and cakes at the Dorman house—an orgy of pricey sweetness at a time of deep social malaise and poverty.²⁵

That the wealthy continued to indulge in such high-value items was often interpreted by writers during the period as an indication of the callous disregard that the wealthy classes held for the suffering of the poor, particularly since the fortunes of the elites and the poorest of the population were so visibly and egregiously divergent. In one of Halidé Edib’s first commentaries on her experience in Syria during the war, she noted that “the poorer population looked haggard and underfed. But women of the richer classes, gorgeously dressed and elaborately painted, drove about the town in luxurious carriages. The famine

23 Nickoley, “Historic Diary,” 57.

24 Ajay, “Mount Lebanon and the Wilayah of Beirut,” 1:422.

25 *Ibid.*, 422–423.

had not reached its climax, but one felt it coming, and the prosperity of the rich hurt one's eyes."²⁶ Others, even among the upper classes, viewed with some distaste the lavish dinners and parties that continued through the war as local politicians continued to trade influence with one another and the Ottoman wartime administration.²⁷

For even those among the middle and upper classes, the effort to reclaim normalcy occasionally required some creativity. At a time when the cost of sugar had surged from a prewar price of \$ 0.06 a pound to \$ 4.50 and the price of coffee from \$ 0.23 to \$ 6.00, a typical breakfast or simple social event could quickly turn into an extravagant affair.²⁸ Rather than squandering their precious cash reserves on social obligations, many contrived clever substitutions to approximate the flavor or effect of the absent ingredients so that at least the spirit of the meal or its ritual was preserved. Carob or grape molasses made a poor but workable substitute for sugar in drinks or baked goods, and bulghur served as a relatively pricey temporary stand-in for the imported luxury grain, rice.²⁹ Members of the Syrian Protestant College had considerably more leeway to experiment than most in the population because of their generally warm relationship with Jamal Pasha. His beneficence entitled them to purchase staple goods from the Ottoman state at significantly reduced prices and with predictable regularity.³⁰ The guaranteed availability of food and its cheapness emboldened those on campus to modify and repurpose precious food items to serve as stand-ins for rarer treats.

Given the inexact nature of the approximations, it would seem on the surface that the value of such substitutions as actual consumables would be nominal at best. However, even in normal times, the value of nonessential items like coffee transcends the nutritional or even gustatory payoff of its consumption. Conviviality, particularly in the context of the Near Eastern culture of hospitality, involves a significant amount of ritual and repertoire, in which nonalcoholic foods of gesture like coffee, fruit, and sweets play a significant role. The setting, layout, and even timing of the service of such consumables held social

26 Halidé Edib, *Memoirs of Halidé Edib* (New York: Century Co., 1926), 401.

27 Anbara Salam al-Khalidi, *Memoirs of an Early Arab Feminist: The Life and Activism of Anbara Salam Khalidi*, trans. Tarif Khalidi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 68.

28 Secretary of the American Mission Press Margaret McGilvary provides a price list that listed the prewar costs of various items and the peak prices recorded in 1917 and 1918. See Margaret McGilvary, *Dawn of a New Age in Syria* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1920), 301.

29 Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilayah of Beirut," 2:45.

30 Nickoley, "Historic Diary," 45.

significance.³¹ An interesting case of this during the famine is that of coffee, or at least its stand-in. By the time of the war, coffee had achieved some ubiquity in society after being traditionally the sole provenance of the shaykhly classes and an obligation imposed by the traditional social structure of the mountain, wherein the nonshaykhly classes were required to provide coffee as a gift to their social betters as an *'eidlyya* duty.³² By the end of the nineteenth century, prices had diminished to the extent that offering coffee to guests had become an obligatory gesture of hospitality across society in Beirut and Mount Lebanon.³³ Moreover, it seems to have occupied a significant place in the lives of the Americans of the region as well (many of whom had grown up in Syria with the same rituals). Coffee itself is not technically required to engage in the hospitality ritual, but it seems that the optics of the matter were important enough that individuals on the college campus had taken to roasting chickpeas then grinding and steeping them in hot water to produce a coffeelike liquid. Though this might seem ghastly to those living in the post-Starbucks age, the product was visually and conceptually similar enough to fill coffee's formal role during social visits.³⁴

As trivial as this may seem, perhaps the best indicator of the importance of such rituals is the utter wastefulness of the creation of and disposal of the fake coffee. To achieve a reasonably close flavor and texture (and likely to prevent the grinds from turning into hommos), the beans would have had to be roasted heavily before brewing, rendering the dregs of the process wholly inedible. The potential nutritional value of the food, which would have been priceless for so many who were starving on the streets mere meters away from the campus, was

31 Wolfgang Schivelbusch offers interesting insight into the function and practicality of ritual, repertoire, and the functional paraphernalia thereof, although his Eurocentric exploration of the issue of coffee in particular applies poorly in the case of Ottoman Beirut. Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants and Intoxicants*, trans. David Jacobsen (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 176–185.

32 Akram F. Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 20, 39; and Touful Abou Houdeib, “Authentic Modern: Domesticity and the Emergence of a Middle Class Culture in Late Ottoman Beirut” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2010), 179. Nada Sehnaoui has documented critical articles in the journal *al-Muqtataf* that indicate that both coffee and tobacco played significant roles in Beirut social ritual as early as 1881. Sehnaoui, *L'occidentalisation de la vie quotidienne à Beyrouth, 1860–1914* (Beirut: Éditions Dar al-Nahar, 2001), 122–123. Likewise, Daniel Bliss includes coffee as part of his “bill of fare” in 1873 in a letter to his wife, Abby. Bliss, *Letters from a New Campus* (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1994), 117.

33 Khayat, *Lebanon*, 84–85.

34 Ajay, “Mount Lebanon and Wilayat Beirut,” 1:300.

deliberately wasted in the service of a higher, symbolic function. From a nutritional standpoint, and in view of the apparent social injustice of luxury in a time of famine, the creation and consumption of chickpea coffee seems indefensible. However, such a value judgment decontextualizes the practice from the actual experience of the famine itself. For the consumers of the coffee, the psychosocial gains that came from the ritual outweighed the relatively nominal nutritional sacrifice of the precious food it required. In any case, *they* were not the ones starving.

Although we may be tempted to dismiss the apparent profligacy of the wealthier classes as crass or at least tone-deaf, as the previous example indicates, even those who lived through the famine as observers often dealt with complex and conflicting emotions over their own emotional health and their role in the crisis. In her memoirs, 'Anbara Salam (daughter of the eminent Salim 'Ali Salam) wrote that the guilt she felt over watching starving children fight over her discarded banana peels completely diminished her appetite.³⁵ Margaret McGilvary wrote in her postwar account that "life as foreigners from behind the curtain in Syria was never free from strain. They would be ashamed to refer to the lack of customary luxuries as a hardship, for in that respect they were no worse off than every one [*sic*] else throughout the world."³⁶ The efforts that the wealthy took to conceal or limit the famine in their daily lives were reflected in varying degrees across the population. Those motives that drove individuals to continue living their lives as if there were no famine were universal, even among those whose economic situation permitted only limited or infrequent lapses of luxury, or at least recourse to the soothing ritual of prewar life.

The fact that the poor and starving also sought normalcy in indulgence would seem astounding if one solely consulted traditional famine narratives, since many accounts reduced their decisions to the most basic, functional levels. This is more a reflection of the perspective of the writers, and often the moralizations that they applied to the famine, than anything else. Often, the poor were judged as harshly as the wealthy for their decisions, and any deviation from pure subsistence purchases had the potential to be regarded as foolish or irrational. Despite this, it is clear that those who acutely suffered in the famine were at times willing to risk their potential future food security for the emotional security provided by familiar foods. In a report on the relief efforts conducted by the American Mission in Mount Lebanon, the author

35 Khalidi, *Memoirs*, 68.

36 McGilvary, *Dawn of a New Age*, 167.

critically reported an incident wherein the vigilant (and ever judging) relief workers had discovered that one man had used an entire week's worth of his family's food stipend to purchase kibbe, the minced meat and bulghur dish, with onion, parsley, spices, and occasionally pumpkin and other ingredients, all baked in a round tray. To deplete his family's reserves to provide one dinner was a wasteful extravagance in the eyes of the humanitarian, since cheaper fare like lentils, chickpeas, and millet would have provided far more food for a lower price. According to the report, when confronted by the rather obvious risks of his choice, the man replied, unperturbed (except perhaps by the impudence of the charity worker), that his family wanted kibbe, and that God would provide.

One of the subtler lessons of this encounter was that the cost-benefit calculus of the famine was not necessarily as straightforward as outside observers might presume it to be—and not everyone was using the same equations. For the relief worker, food served one purpose: to maintain the lives of the man and his family as long as possible. Its value was tallied in terms of the piasters that he doled out and the calories that the money would buy, with the predictable outcome that everyone in the family would eat. That achieved, he considered the food to have been appropriate. The father's equation was likely quite similar, with the exception that he, his wife, and his children were not static quantities in a formula; they were living, breathing, feeling individuals whose lives had been defined by deprivation for nearly three years. Similarly, the food that the father purchased for his family had additional functions that were not part of the relief worker's accounting: it had flavor, it drew on happy past associations, and it met an emotional need in a time of distress. And it was even a rational choice. Because the family continued to draw on their stipend from the Americans, God (or at least his surrogates in the Presbyterian relief organization) *did* provide.

3 Food and Identity in the Famine

Even during the famine, the quality and quantity of food that one could access served as a social signifier and an important element of one's self-identity. If this seems strangely similar to the role that food plays in normal circumstances, it is because the question of why people ate what they did during famine is not altogether disconnected from the question of why people eat what they do in normal circumstances. And, as in normal circumstances, the type, quality, and quantity of food that an individual chooses to consume (or is able to consume) are central in orienting an individual or a group of people, in a way that

recalls Brillat-Savarin's immortal quote: "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are."³⁷ Despite the scarcity of usual foods, individuals were still highly aware of what could be considered appropriate for their (prewar) social status.

Because of this tendency, it should not be surprising that deviations from what individuals considered normal or appropriate consumption patterns can, and have, produced dramatic social effects—particularly in time of social stress. In his work *Man and Society in Calamity*, the eminent sociologist and famine survivor Pitrim Sorokin distinguished two basic forms of starvation—physiological and psychosocial. The notion of physiological starvation is broadly understood, but the definition of psychosocial starvation, which in a technical sense is not starvation at all, captures more of the complexity of life during a famine crisis. Sorokin identifies the concept as a feeling of dissatisfaction or discomfort due to a disruption in the amount of food one normally consumes, the schedule by which one consumes it, or one's inability to access food that he or she considers appropriate in type or quality.³⁸ As trivial as this might seem, consumption patterns are fundamental aspects of our daily lives, even affecting our circadian rhythms,³⁹ and in a broader sense they even define our long-term lifestyle choices. From our morning pot of coffee to the sense of gnawing that we feel in response to missing a meal, our sense of satiety is heavily influenced by what we consume and when.⁴⁰ Embedded in this concept are both psychological and social factors—the feeling of pain or discomfort at the lack of food, as well as the feeling that one has been reduced by famine to either a poor-quality food or an insufficient quantity of food in a way that was unbecoming his or her social standing or social self-identification.

In the Syrian famine, this sense of psychosocial starvation was evident in the importance that individuals attached to the types of food that they could or were forced to consume—most apparently in the grumblings over the less-refined famine foods that replaced normal ingredients. Adjustments to diets and the uncomfortable decline of the middle and even upper segments of society over the course of the famine elevated the importance of certain class-

37 Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 1–3.

38 Pitrim Sorokin, *Man and Society in Calamity* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1942), 15.

39 See Frederick Stephan, "The 'Other' Circadian System: Food as a Zeitgeber," *Journal of Biological Rhythms* 17, no. 4 (August 2002): 284–292.

40 It could be argued that more riots (and even revolutions) have been the product of outrage over acute and widespread psychosocial starvation than from its physiological counterpart. Psychosocial starvation, often in response to the quality, price, or amount of bread available to the public, has often been the initial trigger of critiques of a state's handling of the moral economy.

orienting foods, particularly as life in the crisis began to more sharply contrast with the pre-famine days. Eating, inextricable from status and power in the best of times, continued to be a signifier of social distinction and the maintenance of status in Lebanese and Beirut society in the worst of times.

For those who had fallen from the ranks of the privileged to the poor, the social implications of certain foods, and even how they were procured became deceptively important variables in their interpretation of the famine. In his postwar report on the soup kitchens of the Gharb region, the kitchen sponsor and ardent Presbyterian Bayard Dodge was scandalized by those individuals who refused to make the trek to his shelters to receive their portion because they considered it beneath them. For Dodge, this was the sin of pride intervening in their ability to keep themselves and their families alive, but to some extent the charitable aid to such individuals inverted local patronage practices, subjecting those who typically dispensed patronage to the same lot as those who were its usual recipients.⁴¹ Because of this, even the benefit of a free meal was not necessarily inducement enough to suffer the social stigma that acquiring it would confer. Ignoring the frustrations of Dodge and his ilk, it is telling that individuals were not willing to sacrifice their social or personal self-image for the undignified salvation of a common pot of gruel.⁴²

However, by far the most obvious and most important case study of this phenomenon is that of white wheat bread, which had been the cornerstone of the regional diet prior to the war and was regarded as the *sine qua non* of healthful consumption and lifestyle in Syria—a meal was not considered a meal without bread, and indeed, many could not afford much else in normal times.⁴³

41 Tawfiq Touma, *Paysans et institutions féodales chez les Druzes et les Maronites du Liban du XVII^e siècle à 1914* (Beirut: Lebanese University Press, 1986), 2:434.

42 Bayard Dodge, "Report of the Abeih and Suk al-Gharb Soup Kitchens 1914–1918" (1919), Howard Bliss Collection: AUB President 1902–1920, Archive AA:2.3.2, box 18, file 3, American University of Beirut/Library Archives, Beirut.

43 Marie Karam Khayat notes a saying in her book on Lebanese village life: *qamh wa zeit amareit al-beit*, or "wheat and oil are the pillars of the house." Khayat, *Lebanon*, 83. John Gulick recorded local sayings like "a meal is not a meal without bread" in his survey of the Lebanese village of Munsif. John Gulick, *Social Structure and Culture Change in a Lebanese Village* (New York: Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, 1955), 40. Similar interpretations could be found in the outrage over the black bread of the period predating the French Revolution and even the idea that the British had achieved their empire on a diet of white bread and beef. Linda Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture: A History of Food and People* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008), 189–190; Georges LeFebvre, *The French Revolution from Its Origins to 1793*, trans. Elizabeth Moss Evanson (New York: Routledge, 2005), 127–128; Rachael Lauden, *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 250–251.

The famine changed this dramatically, diminishing both the quality and the quantity of grain available for baking as well as the fuel required to heat the communal ovens in which much of the bread was baked. Some adapted to the situation creatively. Lisa Riyashi notes that the use of the paper-thin, mountain-style *khubz markouk* (*saj* bread) in Zahle and Chtaura in the Biqa' Valley only began after 1915 and the flood of refugees into the city.⁴⁴

Likewise, as grain grew dearer, the bread grew darker. Survivors of the famine frequently complained that the pristine, pure white bread of the prewar era disappeared as the situation deteriorated, leaving them to suffer the indignity of the notorious bran-laden “black” bread made from heavier flours adulterated with barley, pulses, and, in some accounts, sand, pieces of wood, or worse.⁴⁵ Certainly the use of “black” bread was not unprecedented in times of famine, for the most part its appearance in the market was a matter of practicality and price. Milling wheat for white flour involved the loss of roughly a quarter of the grain by weight through the extraction and bolting process—during famine, this would be an unacceptable sacrifice, as millers, bakers, and officials would have sought to extract every bit of nutrition (and value) possible from the costly grain. Margaret McGilvary, the American Mission press secretary, narrated the black bread situation as a scandal implicating Beirut’s social elites and the Ottoman authorities,⁴⁶ but from the perspective of those officials who exercised control over the quality of the bread, the inclusion of bran with the wheat was likely viewed as a responsible and cost-effective choice, since it made use of those portions of the wheat kernel that would normally be discarded during the milling process. Even the military and those receiving aid from the Ottoman state were subjected to the coarser flour.⁴⁷ In the Ottomans’ defense, flour at times remained unbolted during times of crisis in Europe, in order to retain as much volume as possible.⁴⁸ Nutritionally, the inclusion of the offal in the flour had its benefits and its demerits. The caloric content of the roughly milled grain is actually partially sequestered in the poorly digestible or inedible portions of the husk and bran—removing it allows the body to assimilate up to 90 percent of the calories. By including such large quantities of rough cellulose, the bread actually became less digestible, even as its gross

44 Lisa Wadia’ Riyashi, *Tarikh Zahle al-‘am, 4000 Q.M.–1986M: Wa nukhba min ‘alamiha al-wataniyin fi matla’ al-qarn al-‘ishrin* (Beirut: Dar Ishtar, 1986), 157.

45 McGilvary, *Dawn of a New Age*, 150–151; see also Nicholas Ajay’s interview with Dr. Ra’if Abi Lama’, in Ajay, “Mount Lebanon and the Wilayah of Beirut,” 2:25.

46 McGilvary, *Dawn of a New Age*, 151.

47 Ajay, “Mount Lebanon and the Wilayah of Beirut,” 2:120, 247.

48 Toussaint-Samat, *History of Food*, 142.

caloric, protein, and vitamin content increased.⁴⁹ Oddly, for those suffering the severe caloric deficiencies of the famine, this may have somewhat diminished the benefits derived from the bread, since the body expended more energy to achieve a lower net caloric yield. Of course, if the bread was adulterated with inedible or dangerous materials, something as simple as bran would have been a relatively minor concern.

Still, as abhorrent as the bread may have been, its taste and dubious safety were merely two aspects of what had made it unacceptable to the majority of the population. Marc Bloch once noted that “there is no clearer criterion of social class over the centuries” than the consumption of white flour,⁵⁰ and appropriately, it is apparent that Beirut consumers considered the adulterated bread to be not only a public health menace but also a dramatic affront to their cherished social identity in their cosmopolitan, modern city. White wheat bread, so normal yet priced out of the reach of the majority of the population, became a paradoxical marker of elite status and a focus of resentment among those who had been financially diminished by the famine. Even the terminology used to describe the bread might itself be considered a value judgment: rather than referring to the bread by the more descriptive adjective, *asmar* (dark), by which whole-bran bread is currently marketed, contemporary accounts overwhelmingly used the word *aswad* (black), the difference in meaning serving as an intensifier of the distinction in quality from the normal, white fare. Undoubtedly, the repellant taste and gritty texture of the black bread were factors sufficient enough to generate discontent, but perhaps more fascinating is the fact that those who were forced to suffer inadequate bread felt that they were entitled to the white, even as thousands lay famished across the country. Indeed, the outrage of those who felt that they had been deprived of “good” bread seems to have been exacerbated by the pride that some individuals felt at having been “white bread eaters” throughout the famine, a status that anecdotes from famine survivors suggest became almost a social class unto itself.⁵¹

If we consider the importance of food as a coping tool, the case of bread is especially peculiar. As of the most important nonnutritional functions of food in famine is its ability to generate a sense of normality and familiarity, one would expect that the foods that were consumed most frequently would carry the most value for those seeking solace in their meals. To some extent, this is demonstrably true, but not in the sense that it helped people to cope with the

49 Ibid., 140–141.

50 Ibid., 145.

51 Interview with Hayat Mahmoud, 2014.

crisis. Rather, because of its “blackness,” the adulterated version of bread that was sold during the famine transformed the most normal of everyday foods into a poignant reminder of the very quotidian changes that people tried so hard to ignore, or at least briefly to deny. With regard to bread, the value of food as a palliative or an emotional catalyst was linked less to what it actually was or what it tasted like, but rather to what it represented to the one consuming it.

4 Conclusion: Consumption and Crisis

Even in instances of great suffering, humans do not simply feed, they *eat*, and the basic fact that people must eat to survive does not entirely account for why people ate what they did during the famine in World War I Syria. With every act of consumption, there was a choice, and every choice involved a value judgment. Excepting those driven to tearing scraps of flesh from discarded bones or picking through animal dung for undigested grains of barley, individual diets in the famine period still involved a series of decisions that depended on more factors than mere household economics or physical survival. Those who lived (and even died) in the famine faced a continually evolving social and economic context that required them to consistently adapt to changes in circumstances and their own limitations in order to maintain some degree of control over their consumption patterns. Moreover, it is apparent from contemporary accounts of life in the period that the choices they made about the food they ate were not merely about filling their bellies or extending their lives—food defined who they were and whom they imagined themselves to be, even in the face of the famine’s dramatic restructuring of society and social realities.

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Local Histories of International Food Aid Policies from the Interwar Period to the 1960s

The World Food Programme in the Middle East

Lola Wilhelm

In May 1961, the president of France, arguing that world peace would prove elusive as long as two billion people carried on living in poverty, publicly expressed his support for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) new initiative, the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, a scheme to raise support from private organizations and communities to fund agricultural development projects.¹ "The surpluses accumulating where abundance reigns," he said, "offer men the means to vanquish hunger, their immemorial enemy. An immense effort is needed. May all on our land actively participate in the Freedom from Hunger Campaign."² The rhetoric of his message was reminiscent of a declaration of High Commissioner for Refugees Fridtjof Nansen, who in 1921 had deplored, "Argentina is burning its grain surplus; America is letting its corn rot in its silos; Canada has more than two billion tons of leftover grain—and yet, in Russia, millions are dying of hunger."³ How to curtail hunger levels thus appeared to cause as much anxiety amongst the officials and Member States of international organizations (IOs) in 1961 as it had done four decades earlier. This anxiety was also one of the motives behind the land and agrarian reforms which swept the Middle East in the 1960s. It is against this backdrop that from 1961, a newly created United Nations agency, the World Food Programme (WFP), started implementing programs in the region, often in support of Middle East governments' planned development projects. Based on hitherto neglected records of WFP programs, this chapter examines how global food and hunger politics translated into the local programs of specialized agencies, and how the organizations' vision of modernization and development may

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- 1 See Anna Bocking-Welch, "Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses: British Involvement in the United Nations Freedom from Hunger Campaign, 1960–70," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40, no. 5 (2012); Amy L.S. Staples, *The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization Have Changed the World 1945–1965* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2006).
 - 2 "La France participera à la Campagne Mondiale contre la Faim," *Le Monde*, May 31, 1961 (author's translation).
 - 3 Quoted in Ruth Jachertz and Alexander Nützenadel, "Coping with Hunger? Visions of a Global Food System, 1930–1960," *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 1 (March 2011): 102.

have been altered by these experiences. It argues that the privileged method of the WFP, food aid, was instrumental in the reinforcement of the region's image as a rapidly modernizing player on the global development stage of the 1960s.

The history of hunger has been the subject of an expanding literature in recent decades, which the first section of this chapter discusses. By the end of World War I, as James Vernon has demonstrated, the idea that hunger constituted a threat to economic prosperity and to political stability, not just on the national but also on the international scale, had become widespread amongst Western governments and public opinions. This constituted a significant turn from attitudes that had prevailed vis-à-vis hunger and famines well into the nineteenth century, and that were built on Malthusian interpretations of hunger as an efficient way of averting overpopulation and as a means of instilling the ethics of hard work among the poor.⁴ The management of hunger through government policies was thus not a new phenomenon. However, in the interwar period, the need to justify colonial occupation in the empires, to keep the workforce healthy and docile at home, and to weaken revolutionary sentiments abroad, brought hunger and famine prevention further into the focus of State authorities and of newly constituted humanitarian organizations.⁵ Research in medicine and physiology during the first decades of the twentieth century further paved the way for a renewed understanding of hunger as a "biomedical" as well as a socioeconomic condition.⁶ Hunger, it appeared, could be quantitatively and qualitatively measured, and addressed through government planning both in Western countries and in the colonial empires.

Despite this redefinition of hunger up to the interwar period, its management remained a highly political issue both nationally and internationally. International organizations, which a growing scholarship has analyzed as sites for the transnational circulation of knowledge amongst scientific communities and for the arbitration of their member states' diverging priorities, offer a particularly rich perspective on the international discussions over the nature and

4 On the changing perception of hunger in British society, see James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).

5 A growing historical literature on the politics of hunger management has highlighted some of these dynamics. See, e.g., Vincent Bonnacase, "Avoir faim en Afrique occidentale française: Investigations et représentations coloniales (1920–1960)," *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 21, no. 2 (2010): 159; Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), 12–13, 22; Vernon, *Hunger*.

6 Sunil Amrith and Patricia Clavin, "Feeding the World: Connecting Europe and Asia, 1930–1945," *Past & Present* 218, suppl. 8 (2013): 40; Cullather, *Hungry World*, 14–19.

definition of hunger, and on the historical dynamics behind the articulation of solutions to it.⁷ The role of the specialized agencies of the League of Nations and, subsequently, of the United Nations, in this debate, has recently come under closer historical scrutiny. Building on this expanding literature, the second section of the chapter reexamines the history of successive international schemes to address the issue of hunger internationally from the interwar to the post-World War II period.

Despite this renewed attention to food-focused international organization, we still know little about how headquarter-level policy debates were translated into organizational practices on the local scale.⁸ Recent studies have relied heavily on materials produced by their governing bodies and secretariats, as well as on records from some of their most prominent donors. Much remains to be understood of the heterogeneity, and sometimes inconsistency, of the thematic and geographical approaches that these organizations developed on national and regional scales, and how this in turn contributed to orienting international theories and practices of food and hunger management. Using the post-World War II Middle East as a case study, the third section examines more specifically how this international project materialized in the region. The region provides rare insights into the discrepancies between the theory and practice of postwar international food policy.

1 The Recent History of International Hunger Alleviation Schemes

Historians have connected the emergence of schemes to manage the issue of hunger and food scarcity to the rising popularity of social planning and engineering among the state administrators supervising those schemes, and to concomitant discoveries in medical and scientific research from the late nineteenth century onward. Discoveries in nutritional science, especially, con-

7 For a discussion on the significance of international organisations for transnational history, see, e.g., Sandrine Kott, "Les organisations internationales, terrains d'étude de la globalisation. Jalons pour une approche socio-historique," *Critique internationale* 52, no. 3 (2011): 9; Davide Rodogno et al., "Introduction," *Relations internationales* 151, no. 3 (2012): 3.

8 Exceptions, focusing on Asia or Latin America, include Amrith and Clavin, "Feeding the World"; Corinne Pernet, "Between Entanglements and Dependencies: Food, Nutrition, and National Development at the Central American Institute of Nutrition (INCAP)," in *International Organizations and Development, 1945–1990*, ed. Marc Frey, Sönke Kunkel, and Corinna Unger (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). The local dimensions of international food policies at the level of donor countries have also been examined. On Britain, see, e.g., Bocking-Welch, "Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses."

tributed to shaping the policies addressing food scarcity and hunger. In the first decades of the twentieth century, scientific research provided new explanations of the physiological role of the different components of the human diet—proteins, carbohydrates, lipids, vitamins, and minerals.⁹ The appeal of nutritional science coincided with the epoch's enthusiasm for science and statistics as objective sources of policy making, at a time when “the arithmetic of standards of living, revenues, education, and population gained significance in assessments of the relative status of states and empires.”¹⁰ The provision of school meals in the United Kingdom and United States, initially by charities and later by the state, has been seen as a consequence of this newfound faith in rational public administration.¹¹

The colonial spheres, meanwhile, provided a “living laboratory” for the botanists, agronomists, physicians, and social scientists concerned with agricultural production, public health, and nutrition.¹² In the 1920s, in compliance with new League of Nations requirements, France's Ministère des Colonies conducted a series of studies on living standards in the empire, with part of the findings expected to hail from nutritional surveys. Beyond illustrating the extent of the colonial authorities' ignorance regarding the living conditions of the populations under their rule, such surveys faced their main executors, local colonial administrators, with a dilemma: accurate figures could help improve their planning efforts, but also expose unflattering results and attract criticisms. However weak they knew the collected statistics to be, colonial authorities responded to them by implementing measures to reduce the risk of food shortages, imposing, for instance, the creation of grain reserves.¹³ Overall, the measures were

9 Kenneth J. Carpenter, “A Short History of Nutritional Science: Part 2 (1885–1912),” *Journal of Nutrition* 133, no. 4 (April 1, 2003): 975–984; id., “A Short History of Nutritional Science: Part 3 (1912–1944),” *Journal of Nutrition* 133, no. 10 (October 1, 2003): 3023–3032.

10 Nick Cullather, “The Foreign Policy of the Calorie,” *American Historical Review* 112, no. 2 (2007): 337–364: 337.

11 James Vernon, “The Ethics of Hunger and the Assembly of Society: The Techno-Politics of the School Meal in Modern Britain,” *American Historical Review* 110, no. 3 (2005): 693–725; Susan Levine, *School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 23–38.

12 See, e.g., Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Vernon, “Ethics of Hunger,” 106; Christophe Bonneuil, *Des savants pour l'empire: La structuration des recherches scientifiques coloniales au temps de “La mise en valeur des colonies françaises”: 1917–1945* (Paris, 1991); Joseph Morgan Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007).

13 On this topic, see Bonnacase, “Avoir faim en Afrique occidentale française”; Monica M. van

as unpopular as they were unrealistic. Such experiences in the French and British empires, however, contributed to the standardization of hunger management in the imperial world, and the knowledge derived from them fed directly into the work of the League of Nations on hunger and nutrition in the 1930s.

Historians have recently brought to the fore the hitherto neglected history of the concerted attempts to alleviate hunger on an international scale from the interwar period onward, delving into the records of dedicated humanitarian and international organizations involved in this field.¹⁴ Building on these findings, the following section examines the emergence of three successive generations of dedicated international agencies, the League of Nations' Mixed Committee on Nutrition, the FAO, and the World Food Programme.

2 The Involvement of International Organizations in International Food Schemes

As Patricia Clavin and Sunil Amrith have noted, the League of Nations' original mandate did not give the organization a specific role in social policy. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, proposals to internationalize the coordination of agricultural and nutritional policies had gained little traction amongst European and American powers. The League did nevertheless play a key role in this field in the wake of the Great Depression.¹⁵

In 1937, the League of Nations Health Organization published its *Report on the Relation of Nutrition to Health, Agriculture and Economic Policy*, which found that malnutrition was plaguing vast swaths of the world population, mainly because of the failure of the international economic system to ensure the adequate distribution worldwide of otherwise abundant (and even, in the case of

Beusekom, *Negotiating Development: African Farmers and Colonial Experts at the Office du Niger, 1920–1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002).

- 14 These works, too numerous to be cited here, make up a number of journal issues. E.g., Martin Bruegel and Alessandro Stanziani, eds., "Pour une histoire de la 'sécurité alimentaire,'" *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 51–53, no. 3 (2004): 7–16; Cornelia Knab and Amalia Ribí Forclaz, "Transnational Co-operation in Food, Agriculture, Environment and Health in Historical Perspective: Introduction," *Contemporary European History* 20, no. 3 (2011): 247–255; Silvia Salvatici, ed., "Food Security in the Contemporary World," *Contemporanea*, no. 3 (2015): 347–354; Sebastien Farré et al., "Face à la famine: Mobilisations, opérations et pratiques humanitaires: Introduction" *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 22, no. 6 (2015): 855–859.
- 15 Amrith and Clavin, "Feeding the World," 31–32.

surplus-producing countries, excessive) food supplies. The report reflected a major innovation in how the expert community framed the global issue of hunger: they no longer saw it solely as the result of insufficient food supplies but as a consequence of the failure of the “industrialized” nations to “adapt [their] economic policies and distributive systems to the increased production of wealth which progress in the scientific field had made available.”¹⁶

Support of consumption and the lowering of tariff barriers would, in their view, boost the economy of “backward” countries and put them on the path to becoming solvent markets for the industrialized world’s exports.¹⁷ The League’s work was innovative in more than one regard. First, it popularized the idea that hunger resulted from dysfunctions in agricultural, trade, and public health systems, and that any attempt to address it should lever these different areas of policy making. It was also key to the “internationalization of a biomedical view of hunger.”¹⁸ A further shift it helped consolidate was the idea that solving hunger was beyond the capacity of single national entities and required a coordinated, international response.

The League established a Mixed Committee on Nutrition, and tasked its members—experts in nutrition, agronomy, and economics—with analyzing the world food problem and outlining possible solutions to it. In 1936, the influential British nutritionist John Boyd Orr, who sat on the Committee, published his report *Food, Health and Income*, the findings of which showed that a third of the British population was malnourished. Both reports brought home the fact that hunger was still a very prevalent challenge on the global scale. The isolationist economic policies that prevailed during the Depression across much of the industrialized world, Committee experts argued, and their attempted reduction of surpluses through subsidies to producers, were misguided. The response they advocated for, on the contrary, embraced the Keynesian principle of supporting consumption rather than production, and rejected protectionism in favor of a regulated international trade system.¹⁹ Some of these recommendations were already partially experimented in some national contexts, for instance in the United States under Roosevelt’s New Deal. The League’s advocacy, however, mostly failed to curb isolationist tendencies in the Western and imperial world.

Reflecting on what she identifies as the foundational steps of the postwar agenda promoted by the international civil servants of the newly created FAO,

16 Quoted in Jachertz and Nützenadel, “Coping with Hunger?,” 104–105.

17 Staples, *Birth of Development*, 73; Amrith and Clavin, “Feeding the World,” 39.

18 Amrith and Clavin, “Feeding the World,” 40.

19 Jachertz and Nützenadel, “Coping with Hunger?,” 104–106, 107.

Staples has argued that World War II further built the case for an international agency in charge of regulating food, given the experience of the Combined Food Board, which oversaw the international supply and shipping of food across a number of Allied countries.²⁰ This, along with the League experiences of the 1930s and the 1941 Atlantic Charter, which enshrined “freedom from want” as a universal right, gave momentum to the idea that there ought to be a peacetime specialized agency dedicated to tackling the issue of food and agriculture worldwide.²¹ In 1943, the US government conveyed an international meeting at Hot Springs, Virginia, during which participants agreed to the creation of the FAO, the constitution of which was drafted and signed two years later by twenty member states at the first FAO conference in Québec in October 1945.

The impetus for the betterment of the nutritional status of populations on both domestic and imperial scales in the aftermath of the war, however, came not just from Western countries’ adherence to the FAO’s vision, but also from their concern that hunger would serve as a breeding ground for communism.²² The modernization mind-set that blossomed in the newly created Bretton Woods and UN institutions after 1945 was partly built on the premise that improved socioeconomic conditions would benefit the world’s economic growth and thereby contribute to geopolitical stability.

The ambition of the FAO’s founding officials to reform and regulate the international system of commodity trade and of agricultural production was met at the outset with suspicion from some member states, and were repeatedly frustrated by the national interests of its most influential member states.²³ FAO proposals between 1945 and 1950 included the creation of a regulatory World Food Board, of a loan facility for agricultural development in underdeveloped countries, of world food reserves that were to be used to buffer price fluctuations on the world market, and of emergency food stocks for famine relief.²⁴ The American administration’s attitude in this period became symptomatic of the relationship between major powers and the organization: now that demand for US farm products had risen again as a result of Europe’s reconstruc-

20 Staples, *Birth of Development*, 75; Jachertz and Nützenadel, “Coping with Hunger?,” 105.

21 Staples, *Birth of Development*, 75–76.

22 Cullather, “Foreign Policy of the Calorie,” 350.

23 Amy L.S. Staples, “To Win the Peace: The Food and Agriculture Organization, Sir John Boyd Orr, and the World Food Board Proposals,” *Peace & Change*, 28, no. 4 (October 2003): 495–523.

24 *Ibid.*, 89. See also Shaw’s chapters in *World Food Security*: “The World Food Board,” “International Commodity Clearing House,” and “A World Food Reserve.”

tion, the US, alongside other member states, had little interest in endorsing FAO proposals to establish such strong, internationally coordinated regulatory schemes.²⁵

The failed attempts of the FAO to reform global commodity trade rules was by no means an isolated case, Ruth Jachertz and Alexander Nützenadel have noted: attempts to do so by other international organizations failed to introduce meaningful or applicable measures, such as commercial quotas, over the same period.²⁶ From the early 1950s onward, therefore, the FAO appeared set to pursue a more modest agenda, focused on technical assistance for agricultural modernization. It also took over the mandate of its predecessor, the International Institute for Agriculture, which since its creation in 1905 had been responsible for collecting and reporting on international agricultural data to help inform government policies and the global commodity markets.²⁷

As the need for agricultural imports in recovering European economies started waning in the 1950s, the issue of the dwindling export market for agricultural surplus started looming again.²⁸ It is during this period that food aid became a major *modus operandi* of postwar international organizations. Organized food distributions had been a familiar sight in humanitarian relief operations since the nineteenth century, but the practice of allocating agricultural surpluses to large-scale relief efforts is commonly viewed as dating back to World War I.²⁹ Food aid and loans came to be regarded by donor countries as a useful economic instrument best kept protected from foreign interference.³⁰ The proposed creation of a multilateral food reserve for famine relief, though pressed for by the FAO secretariat in its early years, had been rejected by its most powerful member states, reluctant as they were to see a multilateral agreement interfere with their national interests.³¹ Yet by the 1950s, as plans to reform the world food system had all but failed and the food surplus issue

25 Staples, *Birth of Development*, 88.

26 Jachertz and Nützenadel, "Coping with Hunger?," 112; Shaw, *World Food Security*, 65.

27 For a history of the IIA and its role as a multilateral clearing house for data on agricultural resources, see Amalia Ribi Forclaz, "Agriculture, American Expertise, and the Quest for Global Data: Leon Estabrook and the First World Agricultural Census of 1930," *Journal of Global History* 11, no. 1 (2016): 44–65.

28 Shaw, *World Food Security*, 49.

29 Examples can be found in Sébastien Farré, *Colis de guerre: Secours alimentaire et organisations humanitaires (1914–1947)* (Rennes, 2014); Matthew Lloyd Adams, "Herbert Hoover and the Organization of the American Relief Effort in Poland (1919–1923)," *European Journal of American Studies* 4, no. 2 (2009); Shaw, *World Food Security*, 12–13.

30 Shaw, *World's Largest Humanitarian Agency* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 1–7.

31 See the chapter "A World Food Reserve," in Shaw, *World Food Security*, 37–57.

became pressing again in the recovering Western world, the practice of channeling agricultural surplus toward multilateral aid programs gained unprecedented momentum.

According to John Shaw, the United States was the main driving force behind the formalization of this practice. It built on the experience of the Marshall Plan between 1948 and 1951; of Public Law 480, voted in 1954; and of its successor, the “Food for Peace” program, launched 1959, all of which institutionalized large-scale surplus disposal abroad.³² By the early 1960s, large-scale food aid was widely used to support the rural modernization and industrial development schemes that were to become the symbol of what the United Nations termed the “Decade of Development,” as Nick Cullather’s study of US food aid to India has shown.³³ The FAO’s secretary general, Binai Sen, grew keen to harness this resource, and advocated for the creation of a multilateral food-aid scheme.

This resulted, in 1961, in the creation of the World Food Programme. Institutionally attached to the FAO, but endowed with a separate leadership and autonomous resources, the WFP was tasked with collecting, stocking, and distributing food donated by member states on a voluntary basis, and with channeling these to programs run by the WFP itself or other UN agencies, upon request from member governments. Emergency humanitarian food aid, which became the WFP’s main function in later decades and especially in the wake of the mid-1970s world food crisis, only very occasionally appears in its 1960s activities.³⁴ Instead, the WFP’s foundational role in development indicated that surplus disposal was now viewed as a welcome complement, and possibly a desirable alternative, to the FAO’s ambitious but politically frustrated modernization and regulation agenda.

The principle of surplus-disposal-based food aid, the original function of the WFP, was by the 1950s already a highly controversial one. Its promoters presented it as a rational way of matching the export needs of surplus-producing countries with the nutritional needs of developing countries. Its detractors, by contrast, claimed that it only benefited donors’ economic and geopolitical interests while damaging recipients’. Bilateral food aid was particularly to blame for this injustice, critics argued, but the multilateralism of organizations

32 Cullather, *Hungry World*, 142–143; Shaw, *World Food Security*, 87. The financial mechanisms, and macroeconomic and political implications of the disposal of food surpluses through bilateral aid schemes have been described by Shaw, *World Food Security*, 12–30, 85–89, and Shaw, *World’s Largest Humanitarian Agency*.

33 Cullather, *Hungry World*, 142–146.

34 On the world food crisis, see Ruth Jachertz, “The World Food Crisis of 1972–1975,” *Contemporanea*, no. 3 (2015): 445–468.

such as the WFP only partially mitigated it. This debate was slowly settled in the following decades, with the eventual phasing out of food aid in all but emergency programs in the 1990s. It remains a hotly disputed topic of development studies.³⁵

Meanwhile, the history of the local implementation of Development Decade multilateral food-aid programs in specific regional contexts has remained largely neglected, as has been the role of local government officials and field teams in their elaboration, and the purposes they sought to achieve, either officially or unofficially. It is to this neglected facet of the history of food aid that this chapter now turns.

3 The World Food Programme in the Middle East

This case study of WFP programs in the Middle East builds on the records of the French delegation to the WFP in the 1960s. While this material may not offer an exhaustive overview of the organization's programs, it nevertheless comprises numerous copies of the organization's project proposals, field reports, and official correspondence in an easily accessed collection. They reveal four characteristics of the institutional psyche and methods that underpinned the work of the WFP on the local and global scale.

3.1 *Geographic Determinism*

The first compelling trend that transpires from our examination is the relative importance of the Middle East for the WFP, in comparison with other, more neglected, areas, such as sub-Saharan Africa. In the absence of explicit explanations for this imbalance in the archives considered here, the WFP's comparatively large presence in the region can be explained by a number of circumstances. Due to a geopolitical context too thoroughly debated elsewhere to be described here, during the postwar period, the Middle East, as Charles Issawi noted in the early 1980s, received the most foreign assistance per capita of any region, owing in large part to politically motivated bilateral aid bestowed by the United States and Soviet Union.³⁶ The WFP, therefore, may simply have

35 For a description of these debates, see Shaw, *World's Largest Humanitarian Agency*, 5–6; see also Gilbert Rist, *Le développement: Histoire d'une croyance occidentale* (Paris, 1996), and Mitchel B. Wallerstein, *Food for War/Food for Peace: United States Food Aid in a Global Context* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980).

36 Charles Issawi, *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa*, Columbia Economic History of the Modern World (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 63.

mirrored the broader aid agenda of the postwar decades—in particular that of its main donor, the United States. This explanation, however, may conceal other possible reasons for the WFP's involvement in the region, one of which was the perceived presence of a compatible, preexisting framework for economic development. From the 1950s and until the sharp income increase experienced by many countries of the region in the wake of the 1970s oil crisis, land and agrarian reform, agricultural modernization, and industrialization were the primary objectives of development planning across the Middle East.³⁷ When the WFP started operations, the region appeared well equipped to process large-scale food aid into its development planning, by contrast with the Sub-Saharan region, for instance, which had only just emerged from colonial rule and was largely considered as the precinct of former colonial powers' bilateral development aid. Although more research is needed to further ascertain the reasons for the international distribution of early WFP activities, Cold War and post-colonial circumstances therefore appeared to have been determining factors for the concentration of WFP programs in the Middle East and its neglect of other regions. Although this bias appears to have stemmed from practical considerations, its persistence in the 1960s directly fueled an ingrained geographic determinism that pitted the Middle East as a rapidly modernizing region well suited to multilateral assistance. Despite the very different national contexts they covered, WFP programs were, consequently perhaps, remarkably uniform across the region.

3.2 *Rural and Industrial Projects*

The second observation to be drawn from WFP materials regards the unvarying nature of its programs and their modes of implementation across the Middle East. Occasional emergency operations aside, a majority of WFP-supported development projects were aimed at medium-term development projects, and, as was standard practice at the time, conducted through or in close association with national government ministries and their affiliated institutions.³⁸ A first noteworthy subset of projects in the WFP's portfolio, agricultural modernization projects were permeated by a vision of change and modernity of the

37 Ibid., 145. For an overview of Middle East economic development in the post-war decades, see Roger Owen and Şevket Pamuk, *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 93–103.

38 Telegram from WFP to French Foreign Ministry: "Avons reçu demande d' aide d'urgence de Syrie pour catastrophe inondations," August 28, 1963; "Projet d' aide d'urgence à la RAU, Projet No. 856, 31 juillet 1967," Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes (thereafter CADN), 15PO1/1–19.

rural world rooted in the principles of mechanization and intensification. In 1966, the government of Turkey requested a US\$2 million in-kind grant from WFP for a three-year project to feed six thousand workers and their families, for a total of thirty thousand intended beneficiaries.³⁹ Public forestry work had until then been an intermittent occupation for herdsmen or subsistence farmers, the project documentation noted. This kind of labor could not be mobilized for more than a few days per year to tend to forestry work. Further, subsistence farming was considered problematic, because, the Turkish government argued, it was a hindrance to the development of an industrial farming sector. In this case, food aid was therefore targeted at the reallocation of rural labor from subsistence farming and ad hoc supplementary daily labor and into waged rural labor, and at a reform of land occupation to prepare the country's transition to a modern agricultural economy. Plans for the construction of dams or irrigation works presented a similar concern for the reform and modernization of agrarian systems.⁴⁰

Several similar projects explicitly supported population control programs, such as those to encourage the "stabilization" of nomadic groups, notably in Algeria or across Syria and Jordan, both to rationalize land use and to adapt the social and demographic landscape to desired modernizing economy, or to make way for slum clearance and urban renovation projects.⁴¹ The possible political tensions between central governments and nomadic groups, and the implications of such induced social changes, did not appear to raise concerns amongst WFP staff.

Parallel to agricultural programs, in almost all countries of North Africa and the Middle East—for instance, in Algeria, Egypt, and Syria—food aid was also routinely used as in-kind wages for workers on major infrastructure and industrial development projects. Projects of this kind included road and railway works, electric network extensions, dam construction, and the building, rehabilitation or running of petrochemical and metal industry facilities.⁴² The WFP

39 French Minister for Foreign Affairs to Permanent Representative to FAO, September 5, 1966, and "Programme Alimentaire Mondial, Résumé d'une demande officielle" (Document reference WS/47289), CADN, 15POI/1-19.

40 "Tunisie: Construction de petits barrages pour permettre la production de cactus dans le Gouvernorat de Medenine, 1967," CADN, 15POI/1-19.

41 File "Syrie: Stabilisation et développement des troupeaux nomades; 1966-1967," "République Arabe Unie: Stabilisation nomades de la région du désert côtier occidental," May 11, 1964; File "Elimination des taudis à Ammane," CADN, 15POI/1-19.

42 "PAM, Turquie 140: Développement de l'industrie de l'azote, 1964"; "Turquie: Développement de l'industrie de la pâte à papier, 1964-1967," "Turquie: Développement des forges et aciéries de Karabuk, 1964," File "Syrie—271. Construction de ligne à haute tension, 1967";

also helped sponsor government measures to mitigate the consequences of large-scale modernization schemes: it donated, for instance, \$1.5 million worth of cattle feed for the 38,500 Nubian farmers displaced by the flooding of their land in the wake of the construction of the Aswan dam in Egypt.⁴³

The methods of the WFP appear to have been remarkably uniform across the region, even though its programs were formulated in consultation with national authorities. The uniformity of WFP methods could, perhaps, be explained by its staff's confidence in their universal appeal, arguably an enduring feature of the 1960s development agenda. Another reason for the ubiquity of WFP methods, however, could also be that they were aligned with the rural modernization and industrialization ambitions of 1960s Middle East governments, and therefore readily co-opted by them. Less explicitly, these projects were also imparted with a common moral objective. Their occasional dysfunction and failure exposed the limits of the WFP's approach.

3.3 *Moral Objectives, Program Failures*

The frequent discrepancies between global development agendas, the expectations of development staff in the field, and the realities of local development work, have been familiar themes in the historical literature on development.⁴⁴ The history of WFP presence in the Middle East is no exception to this trend, as the frustrations and failures of WFP programs demonstrate. Programs did not always go according to plan. Pragmatic readjustments were necessary. Local feedback left WFP officials occasionally frustrated, and their disillusionments shaped their interpretation of the normative international agenda of food assistance. Records thus provide insights into the changing mind-set of WFP employees vis-à-vis host countries, and the gap they increasingly perceived between their organization's idealized conception of modernity and the realities they encountered.

Starting in the mid-1960s, the FAO and WFP jointly supported the Iraqi Ministry of Agrarian Reform in implementing an agricultural development

File "Syrie—273. Développement et amélioration du réseau de chemin de fer"; "Syrie, 268: Construction de routes forestières et reboisement, 1967"; File "Jordanie: Remise en état du Chemin de Fer du Hedjaz," CADN, 15PO1/1-19.

43 Press release, "Le PAM va aider les Nubiens de la République Arabe Unie," I/R/Presse 64/216, n.d., CADN, 15PO1/1-19.

44 For views on this expansive topic in the context of the Cold War, see, e.g., Cullather, *Hungry World*; Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); David Webster, "Development Advisors in a Time of Cold War and Decolonization: The United Nations Technical Assistance Administration, 1950-59," *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 2 (July 2011): 249-272.

project in the Mussayib region. It consisted in building new orchards and rehabilitating a preexisting irrigation system.⁴⁵ In 1968, the Iraqi government requested a funding extension. Processing this request, WFP staff noted that no provision had been made in the initial project for the maintenance of the new irrigation works. The project extension request they submitted to donor member states thus explained: "When the initial project was started, it was hoped that once the canals had been rehabilitated with World Food Programme help, their maintenance would be taken up voluntarily by the local beneficiaries, without the need for the appointment of permanent assistance. The results are encouraging; however, it is estimated that it is necessary to extend the period of assistance until those concerned have understood the necessity of personal effort."⁴⁶

Beyond the material improvements the project was supposed to bring to its intended recipients' lives, one of its expected outcome was that it would foster self-help values within their community, a typical trope of development programs at the time.⁴⁷ Little attention appeared to have been given by WFP and government officials, at the preparation phase of the project, to the possibly differing interpretations of the assisted communities regarding their role in the project and its aftermath; or, for that matter, to their understanding of the project's objectives, namely their material and moral advancement. The resulting failure was attributed not to a mutual misunderstanding regarding these objectives, or to the intended recipients' possible pursuit of different objectives—a funding extension for instance, but instead to their perceived indolence. Such cryptic communication, or lack thereof, between WFP field teams and those supposed to benefit from their assistance were symptomatic of how schemes to foster modernization in rural communities apparently failed, at least from the organization's perspective. Historians looking at other periods and regions have viewed such phenomena as illustrative of the "disjuncture between theory and practice" in agricultural development, and of the constant negotiation that occurred between developers and developpees over the objectives, whether official or tacit, of development projects.⁴⁸

45 Executive director A.E. Boerma to French Minister for Foreign Affairs, January 1, 1968; "Résumé d'une demande officielle: Irak 032 (prolongation)," CADN, 15PO1/1-19.

46 "Résumé d'une demande officielle: Irak 032 (prolongation)" (author's translation), CADN, 15PO1/1-19.

47 See, e.g., Cullather, *Hungry World*, 78.

48 Monica van Beusekom, "Disjunctures in Theory and Practice: Making Sense of Change in Agricultural Development at the Office Du Niger, 1920-60," *Journal of African History* 41, no. 1 (2000): 79-99.

Perhaps owing to the growing awareness of the limitations of WFP interventions amongst staff, the question of the aftermath of food assistance programs is hardly mentioned in the records; when it is, it is usually in the context of funding extension requests. Addressing the issue of the possible handover of a school meal program in Algeria from WFP to government hands, a project note simply mentioned: "The Government, being determined to apply a planned development policy ... has for some time had at its disposal increased resources drawn from the exploitation of oil and gas. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the Government will be able to progressively assume the pursuit of programs of this type using its own resources."⁴⁹

3.4 *Food as a Cultural Signifier*

A final feature of WFP programs worthy of consideration is the complete absence of discussions regarding the nature and appropriateness of food products allocated to WFP projects. Cereals, dairy and meat products, and other staples such as sugar, were distributed irrespective of programs' diverse nature, whether they were intended as wages in industrial development and rural modernization programs or as provisions for school meals.

Nowhere was this trend more visible than in WFP projects in the field of social welfare. These programs differed from the aforementioned food-as-wage schemes in that, unlike the latter, they more explicitly addressed the improvement of the diets of those they targeted. In the field of education, the WFP provided food aid to supplement school meals for children as well as for professional colleges.⁵⁰ A program in Morocco made a provision for the donation of 153 tons of cheese and 126 tons of butter for a school meal program.⁵¹ Most frequently donated staples also included dehydrated milk, sugar, grains (especially wheat, maize, and barley), and more rarely canned meat. By 1960s nutritional standards, the bulk of these foods were deemed positive, nutritious additions to the vegetable-based diets of developing countries, believed to be protein and calorie deficient.

49 "Résumé d'une demande officielle: Algérie 409, Assistance aux écoles primaires," CADN, 15PO1/1-19 (author's translation).

50 File "Jordanie. Amélioration de la nutrition dans les centres d'éducation, 1966-1967"; File "Algérie": "Note pour monsieur l'ambassadeur": "Le PAM a accordé en septembre 1967 une aide équivalente à \$6 millions à l'Algérie dans le cadre d'un projet d'assistance alimentaire aux écoles primaires"; "Résumé d'une demande officielle: Algérie 409, Assistance aux écoles primaires"; File "Turquie," "Résumé d'une demande officielle: Assistance pour les internats, 390," CADN, 15PO1/1-19.

51 D.E. Sintobin, chief, Food Products Section, Programme Operations Division, to Michel Huriet, Permanent Representative to FAO, March 15, 1966, CADN, 15PO1/1-19.

This belief was also illustrated by WFP programs to improve food productivity. WFP-donated food aid was frequently used to fund agricultural modernization schemes aimed at transforming traditional farming regions by establishing industrial cereal, dairy- or poultry-production centers, which, it was hoped, would contribute to improving the population's nutritional status along more Western lines.⁵²

The apparent lack of reflection on the nature of the food donated was largely justified by the now well-documented belief in the superiority of the Western diet, which had permeated nutritional research since the beginning of the century.⁵³ Other factors, however, may have further reinforced that trend. Most significantly, the WFP had little choice over what food it could allocate to its programs. Although it occasionally appealed to donors for specific foodstuffs, the organization relied on stocks made up of voluntary contributions. The issue of the eventual withdrawal of these foods after the end of the projects were hardly considered.

4 Conclusions

The economic and social implications of food aid, and its legacy in receiving countries, have been the subject of a highly polarized discussion in development economics and the development literature.⁵⁴ WFP programs in the Middle East in the 1960s, and their comparison with other geographic areas, yield new insights into lesser-studied aspects of the history of food aid and, more broadly, of the international hunger management agenda. They expose, on a local scale, the dilemmas and shortcomings of a vision that had been conceived on a macroscopic scale over the course of several decades.

Multilateral development aid has not been thoroughly examined by the historiography on the modern Middle East. Such research may illuminate how international theories of hunger management crystallized in national contexts, and challenge the dominant interpretation of food aid as the mere product of monolithic donor-driven agendas. WFP projects may have helped cement

52 "Résumé d'une demande officielle: Irak 383, Développement de l'industrie avicole et de la production de maïs," CADN, 15PO1/1-19.

53 Vernon, *Hunger*; Cullather, *Hungry World*.

54 See, e.g., Wallerstein, *Food for War*; Christopher Barrett, "Food Aid: Is It Development Assistance, Trade Promotion, Both, or Neither?," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 80, no. 3 (1998): 566-571; John D. Shaw and Edward J. Clay, eds., *World Food Aid: Experiences of Recipients & Donors* (Rome: Heinemann, 1993).

a political and moral geography of the world that pitted some geographic areas as better suited to development than others in the 1960s. However, in practice, these programs also resulted from ad hoc alignments between donor interests, the experience of international organization staff, and the objectives of national officials and communities. Further research into Middle East food-aid programs may also contribute to a deeper historical understanding of the legacy of food aid, and its implications for the dietary habits, culinary culture, and socioeconomic fabric of the communities that were affected by them.

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