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Alcohol in the Maghreb and the Middle East since the Nineteenth Century Disputes, Policies and Practices

Edited by Elife Biçer-Deveci · Philippe Bourmaud

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Editors

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Introduction: Alcohol, Public Debate, and the Inescapability of Islamic References

Elife Biçer-Deveci and Philippe Bourmaud

THE ÜSKÜDAR AFFAIR (2006): A BATTLE IN THE TURKISH CULTURE WARS

In November 2006, the municipal council of Üsküdar¹ banned the drinking of alcohol on the banks of the Bosphorus. This decision was not unique: since the takeover of the government by today's ruling party Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi –AKP) in Turkey in 2002, similar bans had been adopted elsewhere. Nor were such bans new: AKP rule intensified similar measures already adopted throughout the 1990s (Gangloff 2015, 182–183). Municipalities introduced bans on alcohol in leisure spaces to address the demands of religious Muslim tourists. What singled out the alcohol ban in Üsküdar was the protest it

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ignited, which could be interpreted retrospectively as a harbinger of the Gezi protests in 2013. Journalist Deniz Som (1953–2010) took on the municipality on this occasion, and organized a protest which gathered about 400 people at the Kartal seashore, close to the Kızılkulesi touristic site. The day before, on 17 November 2006, he made his criticism public and called for protest in the Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet*:

In Istanbul, on the bank at Kartal, a sign with the following warning can be found: ‘Beware! Along the seashore, it is prohibited to drink alcoholic beverages, to pollute the environment. Contraveners will be fined according to the Environment Law, n° 2872. Tel: 0216 3060606. District governorate.’ I called the number, it was the Directorate of Environmental Affairs, and I asked according to which article of the Environment Law drinkers would be punished. They replied: ‘The 8th article, its first paragraph.’ Now, let us read together this first paragraph of the 8th article: ‘It is banned to do anything with all kinds of wastes against conditions and rules of the administration, such as to smash, to stoke, transport.’

Here, where is alcohol? I asked the director of the Chamber of Environment Engineers, Eylem Tuncaelli and she replied: ‘It needs a super intelligence to make a link between the 8th article of the Environment Law and the alcohol ban, and I believe that this “super intelligence” is reached through excessive alcohol drinking!’ Yes; the Islamic government enacts an alcohol ban in Kartal through the municipality. And what is worse: by bending the law! (...) This is the way Turkey is thrown into the claws of Sharia. This is the reason why I, the son of Üsküdar residents for seven generations, will be drinking, together with my wife, half a glass of wine in front of Kızılkulesi on the Salacak bank, this Sunday between 2pm and 3 pm, and I will call and ask the President of the Municipality of Üsküdar, Mehmet Çakır, to come and fine me!’ It seems that during this period, with the weather getting cooler, it is a ‘religious duty’ to go to the bank of Kartal and drink cognac. It is time to put some people in their place!²

For Deniz Som, an alcohol ban equalled sharia (Islamic law), and drinking in public space was a form of protest against sharia, and for liberalism and justice, which he considered that the Environment Law’s interpretation threatened.

There is much to be learned from this anecdote about how multi-layered the issue of alcohol can be in the Middle East and North Africa. First, Deniz Som’s reaction highlighted the extent to which debates on alcohol are commonly tied to Islamic da’wah (predication) and the promotion of Islamic norms. In the context of the Üsküdar ban, as in other

recent cases, debate swiftly moved to discussions about the validity of religious norms in contemporary societies and, hence, how implicit and commonly held was the assumption that normative statements about alcohol were tied, deep down, to Islam and its condemnation of *khamr* (fermented drink, wine) in the eyes of Muslims and secularists alike.

Second, the Üsküdar affair conversely illustrated the constant need, in Islamic societies, to justify alcohol regulation or prohibition with non-religious arguments. Even in countries that have taken a definite turn towards officially basing legislation on Sharia, either as a normative inspiration (e.g. in Egypt, where Islamic law officially became the inspiration of civil law in the 1970s) or as a whole body of jurisprudence (e.g. in Iran and Saudi Arabia alike), the matter is not handled solely as a religious issue. This-worldly motivations to curtail or simply forbid the production, circulation, and consumption of alcohol have coexisted in public discourse with religious references. It was deemed useful not to confine the debate. Proponents of stricter measures were careful not to confine the debate to Islamic norms and the enforcement of measures by the State, lest alcohol consumption should enter the repertoire of popular forms of political resistance. The risk of making drinking the easiest and most pleasurable form of political action could make religious prohibition completely counter-productive, from a religious perspective. Colonial history is here to testify that drinking can indeed be repurposed as resistance without losing its hedonistic attraction.³ In the Üsküdar affair, environment was the excuse, but public health and public order have also been mobilized to the same end.

Moreover, the Üsküdar affair is an example of the capacity of alcohol to polarize public opinion and public spaces, in Islamic countries more than elsewhere. Turkey under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has at times been compared with the United States and the “culture wars” that have divided American public opinion ever since the 1980s (Hunter 1991; Zubaida 2014). Since 2002, a strenuous government effort has been made to bring down consumption, not least through pushing up prices through taxes. Yet the central issue has been the visibility of alcohol.

ALCOHOL, SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY, AND THE REDEFINITION OF THE PUBLIC SPACE

Hiding alcohol from sight is not a specificity of Turkish politics since the late Ottoman period and the rift between Turkish political Islam and Turkish secularism. Restricting the social spaces where alcohol can be drunk and seen has been a general trend in Islamic countries since the 1970s. Transnational Islamicist politics have played a central part in transforming the realm of the acceptable and the terms of public discussion for decades now, and alcohol has been instrumental in producing these changes and in re-directing policies. Much like its Turkish counterpart, but with more openly religious undertones, the Egyptian government has, since the 1970s, focused on the visible places of retail (Kepel 1985, 247–248). Restaurants and bars serving alcohol have been submitted to heavier control from both Islamicist groups and the Egyptian state in areas where service had been open and normalized for most of the twentieth century, such as downtown Cairo (Haenni 2005, 106, 128; El-Dabh 2012). Iraq, Qatar, and some of the United Arab Emirates have followed the prohibitionist track opened by Saudi Arabia in 1952 (Philby 1968, 351) and followed by Iran after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979 (Khosrokhavar 2020, 63–76). Yet in most of these countries, alcohol is still made, sold, and drunk, either in the closed premises of embassies and under diplomatic protection (as in Kuwait (United States Department of State 2010)), in adjacent states (such as Bahrain vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia (Wallace 1987)) or in the secrecy of homes and private parties. Drinkers may occasionally require protection from the police (*Raseef22* 2018). The availability of alcohol has never been an issue, if only due to the porosity of external borders. Yet repressive policies have generally been directed against the visibility of alcohol, rather than against the thing itself. In any discussion of alcohol, academic or otherwise, in the Middle East and North Africa, the question of the definition of the public space is front-and-centre.

This is why this book is not about alcohol in the Middle East and North Africa in general. Little attention is given here to production and economics, or to drinkers' experience. These topics matter to us inasmuch as they are part of debates, and public debate first of all. Alcohol is a potent tool to investigate how various notions of the “public” (*‘amm* or *‘umûmi* in Arabic) are understood, justified, delineated, and contested in Islamic societies. There, the opprobrium on alcohol is pervasive, at the same time

ever religious and yet secularised, but it is just as commonly contested and subverted. It seems that due to the polarised configuration of public debate on the matter, alcohol-related policies, however hard its proponents try to secularise the stakes, cannot be severed from the suspicion of hiding their true purpose and being mainly religiously motivated.

FROM NORMALISATION TO HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT: A LITERATURE SURVEY

The history of alcohol in Islamic countries presents a specific genealogy, due to the importance given to the condemnation of *khamr* in the Sunna and the protracted debates it elicited from the early days of Islam onwards. For that very reason, historical works are tilted in favour of the early centuries of Islam. The modern and contemporary era, which is the time-frame of the studies presented in this book, remains sparsely studied in comparison. Existing works and the international historiography of alcohol for the period suggest that alcohol has been approached, over the last two centuries, from a host of different, if converging, norms and doctrines. In the *longue durée*, a chasm between an Islam-centred dominant perspective and a pluralistic one becomes apparent.

Works on the early and classical Islamic period have focused on the cultural history of alcohol through figures that have remained divisive, such as the poets ‘Umar *Khayyām* and Abū Nuwās (Péchoux 2008, 154–156; Kossaifi 2001, 171–194; Zakharia 2009, 131–160), or on the implications of the normative pronouncements against *khamr* in the Qur’an and in canonical *hadith*-s (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, book 81: *hadith*-s 763 to 772). Luminaries of nineteenth and early twentieth century orientalism such as Ignaz Goldziher and Arent Wensinck have focused on the normative dimension of fundamental religious texts to explore their influence on the society of Islam until the end of the Abbasid caliphate (Kueny 2001). Goldziher, starting with the Qur’anic description of *khamr* as an abomination, nonetheless found transgression in every rank and class of society. Yet chronicles and the development of *hadith* compilation allowed him to highlight a tendency towards mitigation and the adaptation of norms from strict interpretation of the Qur’anic text to social practices. He also shed light on the conflicts of interpretation between religious texts on the matter (Goldziher 1981, 59–63). Wensinck delineated ensuing debates about wine (*khamr*) in the generations following the death of

the Prophet Muhammad, down to the consolidation of the point of view of the Islamic legal schools (Wensinck 1927, 994–998). Both authors insisted on the distance between Islamic references and everyday life, which was not surprising in a period when Islam was far from being the majority norm. The norms of the emerging sharia only applied to non-Muslims, who had kept their own legal systems after the Islamic conquest, inasmuch as the new Islamic regime imposed rules of decency on everyone, regardless of religion. For an extended period, Islamic texts banning *ḵhamr* mattered more as the source of the law of the rulers for all than as the bedrock of belief for the Muslim minority (Wagda 1998, 133–136; see also Haider 2013, 48–89).

Time and distance have not eroded the sensitivity of the issue. Works dealing with the history of alcohol in early Islamic history and its implications to this day have constituted milestones in contemporary debates, at times stirring up significant controversy. Yemeni writer and public intellectual ‘Alī al-Muqṛī has provoked conflict in his repeated attempts to bring the presence of alcohol and the ambiguities of canonical Islamic texts on the issue into public debates. In his 2006 book *Al-ḵhamr wa’l-nabīd fī’l-Islām*, he related that a series of articles he published in 1997 on the issue had stirred violent opposition and the rejection of the subject as a legitimate enquiry. The author defended his project as dealing, not with the licitness of alcohol itself, but with the plurality of intellectual references, perspectives, and interpretations in the Islamic intellectual tradition (Al-Muqṛī 2006, 9–10). The reviewer for the London-based daily *Al-Quds al-‘Arabī* commented upon the controversy that its core issue was indeed not alcohol itself, but the acceptability of a plurality of religious interpretation on legal and moral matters: the real goal of the book was to attack modern forms of enforcement of Islamic consensus (*ijmā’*) by religious institutions, while the author remained ostensibly agnostic on the very issue of the (il)licitness of alcohol consumption (Al-Sayyid 2007). Likewise, in the context of renewed public debates on the question of alcohol in Egypt after the 2011 revolution, Mustapha Sheikh and Tajul Islam argue in favour of exploring the diversity of traditions. Commenting upon the uncertainty in Hanafī tradition regarding the condemnation of alcoholic drinks other than fermented grape and date juice (*ḵhamr* in a strict, traditional sense) and the way some Islamic legal scholars revisited it, these two authors warn against an essentialisation of Islam through “hegemonic discourses”, such as the notion that Islam prohibits alcohol (Sheikh and Islam 2018, 185–211). The thrust of these various texts is to move away

from answering the question of alcohol by an affirmation of moral values, as was the dominant perspective of Islamist thinkers in the decades following decolonisation. Instead, these various authors aim to discuss the conditions of public debate within an explicitly Islamic religious or cultural perspective as a sign of the autonomy of the Islamic intellectual sphere. Debate about Islamic tradition is part and parcel of the construction of the field surrounding debates on alcohol.

The sensitivity of the issue of alcohol, one might say, remained constant in the Islamic world with changing norms and attempts at regulation. The general historiography is shaped by a large gap in regard of the Islamic world of the modern and contemporary era. This book is an attempt to close this gap and to discuss the issue of alcohol from a perspective which takes religion into the centre of historical, social, and political analysis.

Recent research on alcohol in a global context presents, however, features that can hardly be reconciled with such a quest for the autonomy of debate as desired by Mustapha Sheikh and Tajul Islam. There is a strong tradition of investigating alcohol and its local perceptions either in the West, or as an expanse of a European and North American historiography. Research on alcohol in the social sciences and humanities has become institutionalised through research centres such as the Centre for Research on Addictions, Control, and Governance (CEAGG) in Helsinki. Debates are channelled through international networks of scholars including the Drinking Studies Network, who regularly organise international conferences. Research has found its outlets through international academic journals, beginning with the Chicago-based *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*. These institutions remain largely Western in their geography, but the scope of research has widened, as alcohol has become apprehended as a tool to approach social change and social practices in their public and intimate dimensions, and an object of postcolonial and global history.

Within the research field, the postcolonial turn in the academic world has widened the scholarship beyond Europe and the United States, towards other parts of the world, especially formerly colonised or semi-colonised countries: China, Latin America, Africa, and South Asia in particular. A growing body of literature has investigated regulatory or prohibitionist regimes and mobilisation against drinking. Mainly historical in nature, this literature has subsumed all anti-alcohol activities under the label of “global anti-vice activism” and highlighted the entanglements of modernisation, imperial politics, religious patterns of interpretation, and so forth (see e.g. Rod 2014; Shrad 2010; Health 2010; Tyrrell 2013; Courtwright 2019; Mills and Barton 2007; Pliley et al. 2016).

Much of this literature invites comparison and a study of trajectories between areas, not least because of the globalised career of a host of anti-alcohol militants. In his history of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Ian Tyrrell traces some of these trajectories and highlights the nexus of affiliations and issues that intersect in globalised modern anti-alcoholism, not least feminism, British imperialism, Christian missions, and social gospel (Tyrrell 1991). Walking in his footsteps, historians have produced richly textured histories of the multiple intersections between faith-based movements, secularised and religious doctrines, and reformism in its many declinations including eugenics (Tschurennev et al. 2014). These studies highlight a public space that has gone global through exports of alcoholic drinks all over the world, and the expansion in the colonial era of universalistic religions, be it Christianity in its protestant and catholic varieties or Islam.

With a focus on transnational anti-alcohol movements, this historiography leaves aside a number of issues that are just as important in understanding how public space can be shaped by alcohol. First, more research is needed on anti-alcoholism's various others: proponents of moderation in drinking, interest groups representing alcohol producers, critics of the heavily missionary aspect of anti-alcohol movements, especially in colonial settings, representatives of producer countries, to name but a few. Second, there have been significant oppositions regarding the methodologies needed to tackle alcohol or the practices of the various categories of actors commonly associated with temperance: between physicians and missionaries at the heyday of anti-alcoholism in the early twentieth century (Delfs 2014), or similarly between public health approaches and social science approaches to alcohol nowadays (Jayne et al. 2010). The absence of consensus on goals or on data has played a part in shaping debates about alcohol. Thirdly, while studies note the often conflicting, but at times converging, doctrines that surround the alcohol issue, there is still space for studies of the reverberations and interactions between the social doctrines of various religions. Nikolay Kamenov (2020) has insisted on the relations between science-minded Swiss Protestants, American prohibitionists usually associated with Protestant missions, and nationalists in independent Bulgaria. Likewise, taking into account the interaction of missionaries, nationalists, and secular reformers in the modern and contemporary Middle East and Maghreb suggests new directions of research. There is room, in particular, for the study of the interactions between not only Protestant anti-alcoholism but also social gospel and more recent

Evangelical movements that aim at propagating a revisited form of puritanism; not only Catholicism but also social Catholicism; and not only modern proponents of traditional norms in Islam regarding alcohol but also the modern versions of Islamic prohibition within public discourse, and particularly the nationalisms of the region. The authors of the present book hope to cover some of that ground.

This volume focuses on a region of the world which has been relatively neglected in the existing research on alcohol. The postcolonial turn has only recently inspired scholars of various disciplines to investigate drinking cultures in the Islamic world. Not only this academic interest but also the increased visibility of drinking in countries which, on account of their demography, can be described as Islamic have been a trigger. Economic transformation has not been accompanied everywhere by growing consumption, but the growth of the tourism sector has played a significant part in altering the essentialised image of Islamic countries as basically abstemious. Yet the issue of alcohol in the Islamic world is—in contrast with Western societies—still understudied, a telling statement about the reluctance of academics and public intellectuals to push the issue into the public debate. The present volume is an attempt to open a path for this kind of research and aims to provide a new research agenda based on the theoretical considerations and empirical research from the chapters in this book.

Alcohol is a cultural artefact and, as such, the manner of its consumption renders visible belongings to a particular class, culture, gender, age, etc., at the symbolic level (Mandelbaum 1965, 281–293). All body-related aspects of human social behaviour are mirrored in practices of drinking as well as in the debates against drinking. The chapters in the volume are based on historical as well as social anthropological research methods, therefore addressing the perspective of historical anthropology.⁴ The research on alcohol from this discipline helps to understand social practices and symbolic forms which human beings use to organise and regulate their daily life and their coexistence. With the consideration of Islamic culture, a further dimension comes into play. Islam, as Rudi Mathee has argued (Mathee 2014, 100–125), is not only a set of beliefs but is also a set of political actions and daily life behaviours. The norms defined by the Islamic religion for daily life are also linked to political ideologies because they are at the same time controlling codes for the individual within the society. Going back to Som's protest in Istanbul, it is the normative set of a conservative Muslim elite which introduced an alcohol ban in an area in

which the Turkish state has invested to make it attractive for tourists by offering traditional alcoholic beverages. In this particular case, this ruling elite refers to the protection of environment as seemingly legitimate order towards larger public. Here, alcohol can be used as an analytical lens to understand conflictual processes of social and political transformation within a society, from the secular order to a more re-assertive religious order and vice versa. Whether this analytical approach is feasible with other topics with normative ambiguities such as sexuality, drugs, gambling, etc., is an open question for future research.

Som's protest highlights the historical rootedness of drinking in his local context by referring to the fact that his family has lived there for many generations. Drinking alcohol is part of local traditions in the Muslim world. François Georgeon has shown, however, that a noticeable process of normalisation took place over the nineteenth century with regards to drinking in public spaces in Istanbul (2021). In recent decades, a small number of monographs and journal articles have been published which reconstruct drinking practices in the Muslim world from a historical perspective. Writing an economic and cultural history of beer in Egypt through the Stella brand, Omar Foda was able to show that there, too, a process of normalisation of public references to alcohol had taken place. Cafés served beer on their terraces, newspapers routinely advertised beer, and to some extent this acceptability was articulated to the perception of the brand as a national one (Foda 2019). This scholarship has focused on the cultural and social functions of drinking. The Islamic doctrine on alcohol has never been totally implemented in the Islamic world until the twentieth century.⁵

Yet by the same token, the pendulum was perceived in later decades to have swung back towards ostensible abstinence and anti-alcohol discourses based in Islam. Indeed, while Christian anti-alcoholism had made headways in some Islamic societies early in the twentieth century, alongside what in places like Turkey increasingly organised into an indigenous anti-alcohol movement, by the 1970s anti-alcoholism was essentially indigenous and, with a few exceptions such as within the Coptic Church in Egypt, first and foremost Islamic. These movements of the pendulum mirror the tides of political history, and especially the history of colonisation. As Nessim Znaïen has shown regarding Tunisia, there is a clear link, if not a straightforward one, between colonial rule and the capacity of various actors, not least Christian missionaries, to exert an influence upon alcohol policy (Znaïen 2021). The growing reprobation of drinking in the 1970s

can conversely be analysed as a result of the disappearance of over-powerful actors, the various colonial powers; but how? Was it a reaction to decolonisation and a way for Islamist nationalists to seize the political opportunities it seemed to offer? Should we trace anti-alcoholism in Islamic countries back to a frustration with the imbalances of international trade which brought alcohol products into these countries? What role was played by resentment against the state, or against geopolitics? Have there been other reasons, outside political ones, to the intensified religious campaigns against alcohol since this period? In any case, the variations of the acceptability of alcohol through space and time reflect changing stakes in public debates, rather than a recurring moral panic.

Alongside scholars of Islamic studies and historians, geographers have also paid particular attentions to the way of how the issue of alcohol has constructed the public space, within and without the Islamic world (Gorman et al. 2013, 417–428; Grunewald 2013, 443–450). Mary Lawhon, working on South Africa, offers a perspective that contrasts with entrenched conceptions of the division of space entailed by alcohol consumption. Rather than segregated “dry” and “wet” spaces, she suggests that alcohol is not fixed but essentially circulates (2013, 681–701). It belongs to the type of products that define urban metabolisms, and reflect the fluidities and frictions that characterise the circulation of commodities in urban settings. Behind the fixed division of public spaces in the Middle East and Maghreb according to the acceptability of alcohol, lies a circulation of both alcohol and drinkers. It is less visible to the public gaze, and yet, as Mina Ibrahim’s chapter illustrates, still faces frictions such as the reproving behaviour of taxi drivers. Rather than being submitted to a binary regime of opening and closure determined by politics at any given time, the movements of products and consumers are faced with interferences.

THREE MISCONCEPTIONS: DEPENDENCY, RELIGION, AND THE VULNERABILITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Disputes about alcohol are not about the issues they ostensibly bring to the fore. Alcohol is a powerful catalyst of social and political division. It can render manifest solidarities and polarities organised along lines that seem irreducible to oppositions of religion or consumption as such.

The question this book wants to tackle is: why does alcohol, in particular, have this catalytic effect? Our assumption is that alcohol, being in the modern era at the same time an import and a product of local industry against pervading reproof, epitomises the tensions inherent in the conforming of Islamic societies to global trends which redefine political communities, social hierarchies, and gender roles. The nineteenth century marks a turn here: alcohol, now chemically identified, became “a thing”, and no longer simply a variety of products unified by their common intoxicating properties, which tended to shift the debates.

Based on this understanding that disputes on alcohol are not what they seem, three common misconceptions need to be challenged. The first is the idea that the societies of the Middle East and Maghreb are threatened by alcohol consumption from a public health perspective, due to its increased circulation as a globalised commodity. The second misconception is that the contentiousness of alcohol is a function of the overall influence of Islam over society, as though Islam was a monolithic influence which exerts power regardless of context and especially of socio-economic transformation. And lastly, there is the misconception that drinking, in Islamic societies, is a uniform test against a scale of individual worth, opening a systematic path of doom.

Medical discourses on dependency and the threat of alcohol for public health (see e.g. Al-Mani 2009, 212–233) hide stances on national independence, political and economic, in an imperialist or neo-imperialist context. Dependency itself is a construction produced by political and scientific institutions abroad, later to be endorsed by statespersons, experts, and militants alike. In the case of alcohol, dependency was framed as a national issue in a particular historical context: its distribution in the nineteenth century underwent a large increase and a process of globalisation. Since then, it has been closely linked with pressure to open national markets and health-motivated debates on the efficiency of taxation to control or curtail its circulation. The Ottoman Empire, where free trade was forced on the authorities after 1838 and alcohol imports as well as public and private debts followed (Birdal 2010, 121–124), is a case in point. By 1881, taxes on alcohol had been directed towards paying back the Ottoman public debt, and public expressions of concern about the dangers of alcoholism went along with the primary concern of maximising the income and efficiency of taxes on alcohol (Gardner Wilkinson 1843, 95). Fighting individual alcohol dependency could be argued to be one way to get rid of national commercial dependency, but so was drinking national drinks.

Policy has been torn between public health concerns, national economic worries, and the lure of taxation on alcohol ever since.

The focus on religion, the religious origin of norms in Islamic countries, and religious mobilisation tends to conceal disputes on alcohol as a social struggle, revealing all forms of domination, in the Middle East just as much as everywhere else.

The manner of drinking alcohol, preference for certain alcoholic beverages, or the refusal to drink reflect class and gender roles, and thus power relations across society. Research focused on religion, be it in the days of Goldziher or with the work of Mustapha Sheikh and Tajul Islam nowadays, has not considered the changing power relations that lead to groups in society mobilizing religious arguments on the issue. They have not therefore contributed to the understanding of why alcohol—despite a religious ban—has remained a largely accepted beverage in the Muslim world. By contrast, authors focusing on the process of the normalisation of alcohol have been sensitive to the metamorphoses of anti-alcoholic norms, away from the sole authority of religious *dictum* (Georgeon 2002, 7–30). Yet even then, the terms of the debate hardly deviate: the question remains whether drinking is acceptable, be it from a religious, public health, or public order perspective.

Yet not all forms of drinking are on the same plane in the public space. Not only is drinking in public the object of more stringent norms than in the privacy of home; but drinking is seen differently according to social status, gender, or sexual orientation. As Mariangela Gasparotto underlines in her chapter, who you choose to drink with is significant, and drinkers may tend to make that choice as a way to enforce social hierarchies amongst themselves, and so preserve their own social acceptability.

Lastly, disputes on inebriation are more about assessing values rather than about judging private leisure. Describing inebriation as losing oneself or loosening one's grip on oneself does not capture the whole perspective of drinkers and may be the exact opposite of their intent. Nor does it explain why drinking should often be understood as necessarily drinking to excess. A better description is often that of inebriation as assessing one's value (or one's manhood). This is especially true in a Muslim context since transgression does play a fundamental role in assessing manhood (Elias 2016, 241–254).

These three entangled arguments are oriented towards a conception of alcohol as a highly political materiality. If inebriation is used worldwide for

its affordance, its capacity to disclose the hidden, so we claim here that alcohol unveils the political content of religious norms. As such, disputes on alcohol are essential to grasp the relations of power that structure the societies of the Middle East and North Africa.

AN OUTLINE OF THIS BOOK

Changing norms, changing politics, and shifting public debates have interacted intensively with evolving perceptions of alcohol since the nineteenth century, in a constant mutual interaction between science and politics. In Part 1, two chapters address this interplay. **Elife Biçer-Deveci** shows in her chapter that the emerging anti-alcohol movement in Istanbul was inspired by the global anti-alcohol movement and by Western countries, and that short prohibition era in Turkey in 1920s was based on the model of US prohibition. The public denial of alcohol drinking in Turkey was thus embedded in the context of the First World War and was linked to minority regimes. **Philippe Bourmaud** analyses enquiries by the British and French colonial administrations into the issue of alcohol in the Levant in the 1930s. He shows that the process of data collection and interpretation was embedded within local tensions and influenced by the knowledge circulated by the international anti-vice movement. The comparison between French and British enquiries reveals that colonial administrators of both powers pursued different strategies but targeted the same goal which was the control of alcohol consumption and trade in the Levant.

Deniz Som's protest illustrates the contested administrative rules regarding daily life norms and citizenries. In Part 2, three chapters reflect on administrative rules in different contexts. These rules, although based on certain normative systems, are also a result of negotiations between stakes. **Sylvie Gangloff** analyses alcohol politics in Turkey since the take-over of the government by the Justice and Development Party. With a particular focus on anti-alcohol campaigns, Gangloff shows that drinking in Turkey is politicised, but at the same time stigmatised. There is a significant discrepancy between spaces where drinking is not practised, mostly central and Eastern Anatolian cities, and spaces where attitudes to drinking are permissive such as in Izmir and Istanbul. **Nessim Znaïen** presents examples of Moroccan administrative rules on alcohol policies under French colonial rule (1912–1956). The anti-alcohol policy in Morocco was for the first time introduced under the French protectorate in 1912. Znaïen explains the discrepancy between the imperial prohibitionist policy

and the emerging alcohol-based economy in Morocco with the lack of long-term consideration within the colonial administration. Prohibitive measures were taken mostly as immediate responses to certain local circumstances and not primarily for the eradication of alcoholic beverages. The context of Morocco is also the frame of research in the chapter of **Philippe Chaudat**. Chaudat has conducted interviews with people who, despite Islamic doctrine on alcohol, consume and sell alcoholic drinks. He analyses how they deal with religion in their daily lives. Chaudat's focus is on the perspective of alcohol consumers on religion and the space in their narratives given to religious practice. From this perspective, Chaudat traces out the diversity and flexibility of religious practices of alcohol consumers during the month of Ramadan. Religion thus is contextual, its norms and values are defined within the boundaries of daily life, social relations, and time. Chaudat names alcohol in this context a "crossroads object", an object at the intersection of different levels of social life and in interaction with various spheres in society.

The Islamic doctrine bans Muslims from drinking alcohol. So, in a political context, where Islamic rules are implemented, such as in Iran and Gulf monarchies, drinking in public is punished, and the containment of drinking away from the gaze of others is exactly what Som protests against. Here, in a unique way, alcohol becomes a tool of political articulation. **Mariangella Gasparotto**, **Mina Ibrahim**, and **Marie Bonte** have opened with their research an interpretive perspective to explore this particular function of drinking. Drinking is a tool to transgress certain norms and rules, but it also mirrors political and ethnic tensions within a political entity. It is a prism through which multiple identities and relations are reflected, as is the individual ability to live and conform to, or alternately transgress and undermine, common or communal norms. The spaces where drinking is practised are "contested" as they allow for the transgression of norms. Yet at the end of the day, the cost and risk entailed by producing moonshine, such as the siddique drink in Saudi Arabia, are too low for prohibition to be effective (JHHHCenturian 2006). As a result, a division of space on different scales acts as a mitigator between norms of public morality and the limits of anti-alcoholic policy: people drink in certain streets, in certain countries of the Islamic world known for their lax policy on alcohol, and international tourism also works as a way to outsource and erase the public dilemma within public opinion at home.

Mariangella Gasparotto presents her observations on drinking practices in Ramallah from her ethnographic fieldwork. Gasparotto contextualises these practices within the socio-political circumstances caused by the Israeli colonisation of the Palestinian territories, the historical background, and the heterogeneity of the population. By doing so, the author reveals the multiplicity of factors shaping daily life norms around alcohol. Individuals adjust themselves to the changing rules and norms caused, for instance, by a prohibition or change in economic situation. Prohibitive norms on alcohol, as her analysis shows, are always transgressive.

Mina Ibrahim offers a contrast to drinking practices in Egypt within the broader context of communal morality and historical and political developments since 1970, but by focusing on the invisibility of alcohol from public discourses. Ibrahim elaborates, based on his findings from his ethnographic study, his argument that alcohol mirrors and mediates the “Islamic revival”, but also the “revival” of the Coptic Orthodox Church. In his study, the “negated object” of alcohol plays a crucial role in the political transition in the 1970s as well as in shaping the relationship between religious groups in Egypt.

Marie Bonte takes the dual concepts of visibility and invisibility of drinking in contested spaces in Lebanon into the centre of her analysis and traces the spatial, social, and symbolic dimensions of alcohol. Individual actors use a set of strategies to adapt and perform according to changing situations and spatial contexts. Though this discrepancy, drinking becomes a practice within a grey zone.

The various contributions show that alcohol can be used as an analytical tool to understand the formation of public space in a disseminated manner. National debates, international doctrines and geopolitics, and everyday engagements and negotiations with the pursuit of pleasure and the chameleonic nature of social norms reverberate, usually with a degree of generalisation and simplification as the alcohol issue is approached from a more macroscopic perspective. The ambivalence of public morality, a notion that lumps together religious influences (whether acknowledged or not), hygienic responsibility and a commitment to public order, organises space, time, and interactions at many levels. With its intricate connection with the history of Islam, alcohol shows mechanisms that help us understand how Islamic normativity works across the board, including on non-Muslims or people with an Islamic background who are estranged from religion. It also highlights the process through which an Islamic modernity has been produced. While alcohol relates and connects, and

while globalisation creates new commonalities around goods, an unescapable sense arises that Muslims drink, or abstain, in a manner that pertains to Islam, as do non-Muslims living in a by and large Islamic setting: to wit, differently from the way people without a background in the Islamic world do.

NOTES

1. Üsküdar is one of the municipalities (*ilçeler*, numbering 32 at the time of the protest, and 39 since 2008) that form the Municipality of Greater Istanbul (İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, or İBB).
2. The quotation is translated by the authors of the chapter. Deniz Som, *İçki Yasası*, 17 Kasım 2006.
3. On the idea that drinking was used as a form of resistance, and its interpretive limits, in colonial Africa, see Ambler and Crush (1992).
4. For historical anthropology, see: Tanner (2004). The approach is mainly based on historiography of early modern era: Burke (2005).
5. See e.g. Ortaylı (2009, 184–185); Shefer-Mossensohn (2010, 91–92); Foda (2019); İnalçık (2011).

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PART I

Science and Politics



Turkey's Prohibition in 1920: Modernising an Islamic Law

Elife Biçer-Deveci

INTRODUCTION

On 5 March 1920, the organisation Hilâl-i Ahdar (the Green Crescent) was founded in Istanbul by religious authorities and physicians to fight against alcoholism in Turkish society. Among its founding members was the psychiatrist Professor Mazhar Osman (1884–1951), who became the president of the organisation and published on the anti-alcohol struggles in Turkey (Osman 1933). In his book, he describes conditions in Istanbul during the Armistice era (1918–1923), which—according to him—determined the foundation of Hilâl-i Ahdar.

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The World War was over. Those who were drinking during the war, became a rich group, and they were baseborn. Many people [during this time], eating only corn bread and hungering for sugar, had forgotten the taste of alcohol. But then the Armistice era began, the enemy armies were running around in the streets of Istanbul like grasshoppers; American naval officers with blind-drunk Russian girls on their arms were on parade in cars on the main roads of Beyoğlu, in the bars; Englishmen, blinded by whisky, were attacking people at random. Above all, French colonial soldiers did not let go of anything. (Osman 1933, 781)¹

In the view of Osman, this moral degeneration was introduced by Western enemies. He also referred to refugees from Russia and compared Istanbul to an orgy:

Byzantium was living an orgy which had never been seen before. In restaurants and bars, many beautiful Russian princesses and countesses were serving and maddened these drunken regiments. Alcohol was not enough for this love; white powder, cocaine ... were raging. (ibid., 781)

Osman's retrospective description reflects the general perception of the moral and social degeneration in Istanbul during the Armistice era, when Istanbul was occupied by European powers. Life in the city became very difficult due to increased poverty, criminality, epidemics, and fires, but also the forced prostitution of women and girls and the unliveable conditions of migrants (Özer 2002, 153). Istanbul was also facing tension between ethnic and religious groups that had been based in the city for centuries. Turkish newspapers reported on provocation by Christian citizens allied to the enemies and contributed to the tensions (e.g. Kadri 1920, 1922). Several international humanitarian organisations were settled in Istanbul, to combat the crisis. Many associations emerged on the initiative partly of the Ottoman authorities and partly of civil actors (Temel 1998). Hilâl-i Ahdar was one of these initiatives and was founded in 1920 to fight alcoholism. The founding members saw the 'alcohol problem' as the main cause of the social and moral crisis in Istanbul. The campaigns against alcohol, and even the prohibitionist policy of the Turkish state, declared three years later in Ankara, failed, but Hilâl-i Ahdar survived as a parastatal organisation focusing on anti-alcohol campaigns and addiction prevention activities. Renamed Yeşilay Cemiyeti in 1934, it remains until today an important institution with connections to the World Health Organisation.

In this chapter, I analyse the understanding of the founding members about the issue of alcohol and the introduction of the alcohol ban in Turkey, which occurred in the same year as the foundation of Hilâl-i Ahdar. By

studying the arguments for the alcohol ban, I explain the role of Islamic moral hegemony in drinking behaviour, as well as the influence of Western prohibitionist and eugenicist ideas during the Armistice period in Turkey. The study of this issue is relevant to understand the process of secularisation and denominationally defined nationalism during the transformative era of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the Republic of Turkey.

Study of the Islamic context requires a dimension to the analysis of documents that is non-existent in the research literature on the Western world: the overarching authority of religion. Unlike other religions, Islam determines the public and daily life of a Muslim. In Islam, religion and state are not separate, they are one; everything that a Muslim does or does not do is inherently political and bound to the public realm and is part and parcel of the whole governance (Matthee 2016). The Islamic dimension makes the Muslim world in the historiography on alcohol peculiar as it shows the interplay of religious authorities in the definition of daily life norms.

To demonstrate the relevance of Islam in this prohibitionist regime in Turkey, I analyse the processes leading to the ban on alcohol in 1920, the reasons for its failure, and the actors who played an important role in the introduction of the alcohol ban law. I will situate the influence of Western temperance movements in the emergence of Turkish prohibitionist policy. I argue that the idea of the prohibition of alcohol in Turkey in the 1920s was based on Western influence and was used by religious circles to fight against their political marginalisation in the course of secularisation process under the lead of Mustafa Kemal, the first president of the Republic of Turkey. Studying alcohol in the context of the early republican era of Turkey allows us to unpack the complexity of 'modernity' by considering Islamic views. The transnational circulation of ideas and concepts of alcoholism, reform attempts, and Islamic values of abstinence played an interdependent role within this complexity. The understanding of modernity as a part of religious conservative project will contribute to a more differentiated view on today's alcohol regulation policies in Turkey under the lead of the religious conservative Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP; Justice and Development Party).

Prohibition in Turkey in the 1920s has been the subject of few studies. The legal scholar Onur Karahanoğulları (2008) documented the debates in the Turkish parliament on the introduction of the alcohol ban law, the amendment of the law in 1924, and the revocation of the same law in 1926. This documentation delivers an important source for the present analysis. Another study on the same subject has been published by Emine Ö. Evered and Kyle Evered (2016). Using the same source as Karahanoğulları, they

interpret the prohibitionist policy as a progressive health policy on the part of the Kemalist government. My analysis in this chapter will show that the Kemalist government actually perceived the prohibition as an attempt by religious ‘backward’ circles against reform policies and the revocation of the total ban in 1926 was thus a part of breaking with the Ottoman past.

Both studies disregard the broader context of temperance movements, international developments, and historical continuities of the previous era in their analysis of the prohibition law. In the historiography of Turkey, no attempt has been made to characterise the temperance movement and to emphasise the parallels with the history of temperance movements in the Western world. My analysis thus contributes a very new terminology to this historiography and sheds light on ambivalences and contradictions in the modern historiography. The first section presents the era before the prohibitionist policy of the 1920s and traces the emergence of the temperance movement in Turkey. In the second section, I focus on Hilâl-i Ahdar which had absorbed earlier temperance attempts and analyse, based on publications and memoirs, its understanding of alcoholism and the idea of the alcohol ban. In the third section, I present my analysis of parliamentary debates about the alcohol ban and show the extent to which actors from the temperance movement played a role and why the prohibitionist policy was not successful. The conclusion provides an interpretation of the results within the context of the processes of secularisation in Turkey and globalisation.

ALCOHOL PROHIBITION AND THE EARLY TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The alcohol ban policy of the Ottoman State was primarily based on Islamic doctrine, which ascribes a ban on drinking to the Qur’an. There is no agreement among Islamic lawyers about the degree of alcohol in a beverage needed to make it haram (forbidden) or about the degree of punishment for drinking alcohol. In the Ottoman Empire, the interpretation that all beverages leading to drunkenness are haram was generally prevalent (Akgündüz 1990, 231; Öztürk 2017, 12). Based on this doctrine, the Ottoman state repeatedly introduced alcohol bans and strong punishments, but revoked such bans, because of the personal preferences of the Sultan regarding alcohol or to generate income for the state treasury via taxes. Ortaylı and Mossensohn explain the Ottoman sultans’

frequent returns to prohibitionism in light of anxieties about being questioned on their authority rather than a result of religion principles or as a strategy to implement Islamic rule in society (Ortaylı 2019, 184–185; Shefer-Mossensohn 2009, 91–92).

Concrete rules on alcohol control were defined for the first time in the Ottoman history by the *Dahiliye Nezâreti* (Ministry of the Interior) in 1919 (Sülker 1985, 154). The Ministry ordered the ban on drinking in Muslim quarters, places reported by the police as sensitive, and near police stations and mosques, and ordered that places where alcoholic beverages were served must have only one entrance, must be closed by sunset, and must be walled (ibid.). This order was based on the decree of the *Darü'l Hikmet-i Islamiyye* (Academy of Islam). This institution was formed in 1918 by the State. Its function was to 'enlighten' the Muslim population about religious norms, to find solutions to problems threatening the Islamic world, and to inform the state about violations of the religious moral values of Turkish society (Albayrak 1973, 7–9). Members of Academy saw the increased drinking in the public as one of these violations. Two of them, Shaykh al-Islam Ibrahim Efendi Haydarizade (1863–1933) (Oral 2016, 148–150) and Said Nursi (1876–1960) (Mardin 1989), both religious authorities of the highest rank, initiated the formation of the anti-alcohol association Hilâl-i Ahdar in 1920. The Academy of Islam was dissolved with the formation of the Republic and the proclamation of Ankara as the new capital.

The first non-state anti-alcohol initiative in the Ottoman Empire was recorded at the beginning of the twentieth century. The oldest recorded document contains statutes of the Karadeniz Ereğlisi Osmanlı İçki Düşmanları Cemiyeti (Karadeniz-Ereğli Association of Ottoman Enemies of Alcohol), which was founded in 1909 in Ereğli, a city near the Black Sea. The association was founded during a conference held by Tunalı Hilmi Bey (1871–1928), the governor of Bolu and member of the Committee of Union and Progress during this time (Ateş 2009). Tunalı Hilmi was living in Geneva during his exile in Switzerland and besides his activities within the Geneva section of the Committee of Union and Progress, he also founded an association of Turkish students and wrote a book on education in Europe. Some parts of the book were reprinted in the women's journal Kadınlar Dünyası (Biçer-Deveci 2017).

The idea of the foundation of Ereğli Association can be traced back to the experiences of Tunalı Hilmi Bey during his stay in Geneva even though there are no references to this by the author in his publications. Geneva

was at the turn of the twentieth century a hub for many international anti-alcohol organisations (Spöring 2014), although historical sources do not mention any encounter of Tunalı Hilmi Bey with the antialcohol movement in Europe. But the structure and aims formulated in the statutes of the association show a similarity to the associations in Europe which tried to address “drinkers” directly and help them to overcome addiction through information and regular meetings. *Karadeniz Ereğli* Association published its statutes, goals, and philosophy of action in the magazine *Sırat-ı Müstakîm*. According to this record, it was an accredited association, and at the time of the foundation on 8 August 1909, it had sixty-nine members. Two of these were Christian, and five had never drunk alcohol. The committee consisted of seven persons, and the rule of the committee election was that five of them must have drunk alcohol (even to the extent of having been extremely intoxicated many times), and that two members, if possible, must never have drunk at all (Karakılıç 2012, 6–7). The idea behind this was that the damages caused by drinking could be exemplified to the public (ibid.).

According to the statutes, the association was concerned about the situation of drinkers and aimed to improve their condition by enlightening them. To help drinkers, it invited them to have regrets about drinking (*tövbe etmek*), to demand a fee, and/or to convince them, and if the drinker did not stop, the association would see it as a duty to support him until he had given up drinking. Because no record other than the statutes survive, it is not possible to trace how far the association was successful in implementing its goals. Its idea to mobilise ‘drinkers’ against alcohol was unique in comparison to the two other associations recorded in the archives and discussed below.

One of these associations is the Osmanlı Men-i Müskirat Cemiyeti (Ottoman Association for the Ban on Alcohol). Again, only its statutes are recorded. It was formed in 1910 (1326), and its goal is formulated in the statutes as follows: ‘The goal [...] is to work for the ban of all alcoholic beverages, which is scientifically harmful and religiously forbidden for our pure and immaculate nation, to find solutions against its threat of harm.’² In the statutes, it referred to similar associations formed in Western countries and their activities. The main goal of the organisation was to ban alcohol across the whole country. Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti (The Association of The Red Crescent, later named Kızılay) was another such organisation, although only one article gives us an idea of its leadership’s views on alcohol. In the piece, drinking is presented as a danger to the whole society.³

For both of these organisations, there are no records about how far their activities and campaigns ran, but they are clear indicators of the presence of a temperance movement in the late Ottoman Empire that was concerned with the issue of alcohol and referred to Western temperance movements.

HİLÂL-I AHDAR AND THE IDEA OF ALCOHOL BAN

The most successful organisation within the temperance movement was Hilâl-i Ahdar (Green Crescent).⁴ In contrast to the organisations already discussed, Hilâl-i Ahdar had a broad record and kept its own archives of publications and print materials. It was formed on 5 March 1920. It held conferences, published articles and brochures, and very soon had its own publication to enlighten Turkish society about the dangers of drinking. From 1925 to 1933, it published the journal Hilâl-i Ahdar: Sıhhi ve İctimai İçki Düşmanı (*Green Crescent: The Enemy of Alcohol in Health and in Society*) and thereafter İçki Düşmanı Gazete (*The Enemy of Alcohol*). These publications were mainly about alcohol and spread the view that alcohol particularly destroys human genomes and thus ruins the biological survival of the ‘race’, affecting the health of future generations and impeding policies to increase the population. The contents of these publications were shaped by discourses on individual and national or moral and physical degeneration, criminality, and eugenics, among others.

The membership consisted of the religious leaders mentioned above, Shaykh al-Islam Ibrahim Efendi Haydarizade and Said Nursi, and physicians and intellectuals. Mazhar Osman (1884–1951) was professor of psychiatry and founded the first psychiatric clinic in Turkey (Naderi 2004). His motivation in founding Hilâl-i Ahdar drew more on the influence of eugenicist ideas (Karlıkaya and Gökçe 2001, 151). In his conferences, Osman defined alcoholics as ‘highly degenerate’ (*yüksek dejenereler*) (Uzman 1940, 213–214). His teacher, Raşid Tahsin (1870–1936), another founder of modern psychiatry in Turkey (Artvinli 2014, 130) and member of Hilâl-i Ahdar, was a follower of the eugenicist ideas of Emil Kraepelin (1856–1926) (Engstrom 2007). He participated in the Fourth International Psychiatry Congress in Berlin in 1910. Other founding members of the association were also convinced of eugenicist ideas. Besim Ömer (1862–1940), for instance, tried to argue that alcohol negatively affected motherhood, childbirth, and population increases (Özaydin 2006, 163), while Sadi Irmak (1904–1990) was influenced by Cesare

Lombroso (1835–1909) and tried to show a correlation between criminality and alcoholism using statistics (Büttemeyer 1993; Lombroso 1911, 90–93). Fahrettin Kerim Gökay (1900–1987), another psychiatrist influenced by Kraepelin, defined alcoholism as a ‘moral sickness’ (*ahlak hastaları*) (Gökay 1944, 6).⁵ Gökay was president of Yeşilay from 1945 to 1950 and provides the only evidence for a connection with a women’s organisation in Istanbul, as he was member of the Turkish Women’s Union and, together with Safiye Ali (1891–1952) (Arda 2009, 11), founded an Istanbul chapter of the World Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in 1930 (Biçer-Deveci 2017, 189).

There was a close relationship between eugenics and the medical community in the 1920s and the 1930s in Turkey. Particularly in the 1930s, the physicians mentioned above played a pioneering role in introducing modern medicine into Turkey by opening the first modern clinics for psychiatry and gynaecology. In their efforts to define themselves as pioneers and the new elite of Turkish society, they adopted eugenicist ideas. Eugenics served as a common ideology for them to form a professional community. How far they used problematic methods in their treatments is a still unanswered question, but in their use of eugenicist methods, they were limited in contrast to their European counterparts because of the lack of both financial resources and state support (Salgirli 2011).

A look into the memories of Mazhar Osman reveals that August Forel (1848–1931), a Swiss psychiatrist and leader of temperance movement in Europe (Spöring 2014), played an inspiring role in the idea of forming an anti-alcohol organisation in the Ottoman Empire:

It was one year after the [Era of the] Constitution. The director of the Régie,⁶ Baha Bey, and some friends wanted to propagate war against alcohol in our country in the European tradition. The real master of this propaganda was the Swiss [August] Forel. Being the most famous scholar in the world, for many years professor of psychiatry in Zurich, this old man was always an enemy of alcohol, gave lectures against alcohol everywhere, walked around within society at large. (...) Father Forel was not only active in Switzerland, but he also motivated the world against alcohol. Even in Bulgaria, he managed to form clubs. During the Constitution, his letters were sent to his former students, Drs Boğosyan and Baha, and to us, announcing that he would take over [the forming of a club] in Istanbul; Forel came to Istanbul, to Galata Sultanisi, at the club of the Greek Academy, and he held very beautiful lectures on anti-alcoholism. I learned from many of his works, and even fell in love with his style of statement; I admired his

simple way of explaining the minutiae of medicine to literate society. (Osman 1933)

According to Osman, the idea of forming an anti-alcohol movement was based on the European model. Osman mentions letters from August Forel (1831–1931) (Haeberle 1986) to doctors in Istanbul that were meant to spread the idea of eugenics and the anti-alcohol struggle.⁷ In the quotation above, Osman mentions religious clerics and their aim to form an organisation. The demand of many intellectuals, so Osman, was for a secular and science-oriented organisation rather than a religious one:

At that time, anti-alcoholism was completely established in America, the war against alcohol was the trend of the century, the manifestation of civilisation. Many intellectuals in the country wished for the formation of Hilâl-i Ahdar and wanted an experienced enemy of alcohol that gets ahead who wouldn't be afraid to move forward for the progress of this initiative; They were encouraging me in this work. In 1919 [...], all of intellectuals, known for their war against alcoholism, were invited to the Press Association of the Porte, and the Shaykhulislam of that time opened the meeting. The *hadjis* and *hodjas* supported the association, but we didn't want to form a society of fanaticism, but a scientific society, not to frighten [people] with the after-life, but by showing the ills, not because it was a sin, but to make of alcohol a rational enemy. (Osman 1933)

Osman constructs a differentiation between religious scholars and physicians within the membership of Hilâl-i Ahdar through the verbal distancing of 'we' and 'they'. This distancing from the religious segment falls within the framework of repression of religion in the public sphere by the Turkish state. He published his memoirs in 1933, a year before the declaration of the one-party regime of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey. The emphasis on the differences between clerics and intellectuals can be explained by the pressure on many civil organisations to merge with the *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP; Republican People's Party).

Another interesting member of Hilâl-i Ahdar was Milaslı İsmail Hakkı Bey (1870–1938) (Çatalbaş 2014, 99–129). He was a doctor and published broadly on public health issues but also on Islamic principles from a medical perspective. In 1915, he published a book on the issue of alcohol in the Ottoman Empire (Milaslı 1915). In other books, he dealt with such

topics as the benefits of namaz for physical well-being, but also with provocative issues such as the idea that eating pork would not be forbidden if the meat was purified from blood with modern technology (Milaslı 1898, 1933). In 1919, he published two articles in *Sebîlürreşâd* (Path of Righteousness), a journal of Islamic intellectuals founded in 1912, on the idea of total alcohol ban (1919a, b).

In the first, he discussed the prohibition of alcohol in the USA as a necessity of civilisation and in the second he argued for the banning of alcohol (ibid). He saw prohibition in the USA as the model which the Muslim society in Turkey should follow. His articles illustrate the connection between the Islamic principle banning alcohol and scientific views on the negative effects of drinking, in order to justify a total alcohol ban based on the model of US prohibition. In his speech at the foundation of Hilâl-i Ahdar, which was also published in *Sebîlürreşâd* on 30 March 1920, he refers to the Islamic principle, a wisdom now proved by the science according to him:

Finally, a decision is made which is according to our rational religion, and this is the result of the work of thousands of scholars who since many centuries went through several phases to discover the truth. Therefore, it [the formation of Hilâl-i Ahdar] means that one of the great wonders of our beautiful religion is confirmed by the public after 1300 years.

It is truthful that alcohol is the biggest enemy of the humanity. Here, I will not talk about since when alcohol exists. But I want to emphasise that alcoholic beverages during the time of the formation of Islam were not toxic to the same degree as today's beverages. Nevertheless, the Islamic religion has forbidden drinking even in little amounts. The science and recent discoveries confirmed this Islamic wisdom. (Milaslı 1920)

In his speech, he pre-empted one of the arguments for an alcohol ban which the parliamentarian and the initiator of the alcohol ban law in the Turkish National Assembly, Ali Şükrü (1884–1923) (Mısıroğlu 1978), raised. This reason was based on the concept of the Greek enemy. Milaslı refers to his experiences in rural regions:

Another reason for the spread of alcohol is that some physicians claim that it [drinking alcohol] improves the appetite, the digestion and the fitness and so motivates Muslims to drink. I know many families in Anatolia. Even though fathers and mothers are physically and mentally healthy, their children are criminals or weak, have tuberculosis, are sick or handicapped. I

believe the situation and the standing of these families are known. I searched for the reasons of this situation and found that a group of Greek doctors claimed that alcohol is very healing, and suggested to these poor people to drink in the beginning two glasses. In that way, they slowly took them to drinking cognac and raki. The neural system has been affected and as a result they were degenerates. In short, it is the lack of respect towards religion among those who lead to the penetration of alcohol under Muslims and also the intention of some doctors, particularly Greek doctors, who spread the idea of healing through alcohol. (Milaslı 1920)

The construction of the image of Greece as the enemy who poisons the Turkish society through selling alcohol, while enriching itself, was an image widely used by anti-alcohol activists. This image was also used in the arguments for the alcohol ban law in the first Turkish National Assembly in April 1920.

THE ALCOHOL BAN LAW OF 1920

Five days after its opening in Ankara, the Turkish National Assembly was already discussing the issue of alcohol, on 27 April 1920. Ali Şükrü, the member for Trabzon, brought the issue of alcohol into debates in parliament and caused fiery discussions among the delegates. Those in the first Assembly were united around the priority of defending the sovereignty of the Turkish state, democratisation, and a host of reform programmes, but the issue of alcohol signalled a deepening rift, which would manifest itself in 1923 with the formation of two parliamentary groups. Delegates opposing the law drew attention to countries where prohibitionism did not stop drinking and where the authorities favoured taxing the alcohol trade and education about the damage caused by drinking (Sülker 1985, 151–152; Karahanoğulları 2008, 153). The main arguments put forward by supporters of the law lay in the huge profits that Armenians and Greeks were claimed to make from alcohol consumption and in the moral degeneration of Muslim society. On 14 September 1920, the alcohol ban law (*Men-i Müskirat Kanunu*) was ratified after six months of discussions. On 22 March 1924, the law was amended because of implementation problems, and in 1926 it was totally revoked (Karahanoğulları 2008, 117–118). The issue of a ban on alcohol was among the first topics on which the two blocs in the Assembly clashed (Mısıroğlu 1978, 78).

The arguments used by Ali Şükrü in support of an alcohol ban reflected his Islamic values and principles. He mentioned several times that alcohol was prohibited in Islam. The model of the USA was also given as a supporting example, but generally the support for his initiative came from religious members of the Turkish Assembly. Another motivation in his arguments was how widespread addiction to alcohol was among the Turkish population, particularly those Turks who were participating in the national defence movement.⁸ In the arguments of Ali Şükrü, documented by Karahanoğulları (2008), eugenic framings and scientific explanations are not prevalent and were not primary concerns. He devoted more attention to denouncing the Christian population and its profiting from the alcohol trade.

In the country, 120 million kilograms of alcoholic beverages are consumed, 120 million kilograms that put money into the pockets of Greeks and Armenians ... Recently, Fevzi Paşa, his royal highness, told me—in due course of the topic—when I went to Erzurum for an inspection, notables in Erzurum said that consumption of alcohol at home has doubled compared to before the war. Even though in that province (*sc.* Erzurum), many populations were lost [due to war]! I investigated and saw that three Greeks produce and sell it. Please. By no means. I believe that you have seen what the sons of Ibranos borrowed for Armenia. The money raised for Greece is our money, too. So that the finance ministry can earn one million, at least ten million liras go into the pockets of Christians treating us openly as an enemy, and this at the cost of many humans being disgraced.⁹

Counter-arguments dealt with facts and circumstances, and claimed that prohibitionism would lead to an increase in illegal production, trade, and consumption of alcohol. The sovereignty of the Turkish state was still not established at this point, so police powers were not sufficient to implement the law. In addition to this lack of resources, there was a huge number of people within the police who drank, which would reduce their sense of responsibility. They also suggested that prohibitionist policies in some countries were not successful in the fight against alcohol, so in Turkey it might also not produce the expected results.¹⁰

Tevfik Rüştü (1883–1972), delegate for Menteşe and later foreign minister, suggested the exemption of the Christian population from the ban because alcohol was a part of their religious culture. Ali Şükrü opposed this suggestion vehemently and defended his idea of a prohibition

encompassing the entire population. He referred to Western countries, which are Christian and in which alcohol is a part of religion and tradition, and noted that they banned alcohol for the improvement of humanity:

Sirs, now also the issue of Christianity?! Before that, governments of America, Russia and recently Australia, implemented it [alcohol ban]. Although, these governments, despite being Christians, implemented this law [of alcohol ban] to protect only the health of society and of humanity, why should we exclude Christian citizens from the law that we want to introduce to protect our own nation?¹¹

Şükrü suggested the exemption of the Christian population from the ban only during their religious ceremonies. He based this view on the Islamic tolerance towards non-Muslim populations and also an understanding of a government with a secular constitution for all citizens. The discussions in the parliament about the alcohol ban showed that the arguments for a ban were religious rather than secular. In this understanding, they were similar to members of the *Hilâl-i Ahdar*, as presented in the last chapter. However, the West remained an important reference point for Ali Şükrü to legitimise the alcohol ban and to convince members of the parliament who were Western-oriented.

After long and fiery discussions about the alcohol ban legislation, Ali Şükrü presented the amendment with six paragraphs containing suggestions from those who were against the alcohol ban. The parliament voted on 14 September 1920 with seventy-one votes for and seventy-one against. The issue was decided by the vote of Mehmet Vehbi Çelik (1862–1949), who presided over the session, and was a delegate from Konya and a religious scholar.¹² The law was ratified on 28 February 1921.¹³ It banned the production, distribution, import, and export of alcoholic beverages. Contravening the law was to be punished according to Islamic sharia,¹⁴ with fines and/or imprisonment.

There was, however, an exemption to the law for medical purposes, which were to be controlled by the Health Commission. The implementation of the legislation was the responsibility of the Departments of Justice and Health of the Ministry of the Interior. After its ratification, the government brought forward suggestions for changes to the law, such as the production of spirits for medical purpose from seized beverages. To overcome these problems in implementation, the Assembly started to suggest an amnesty for people scheduled to be punished (Karahanoğulları 2008). Another suggestion was to postpone the implementation of the law in

Istanbul due to its occupation by Entente powers. Over the course of parliamentary debates, it was noted that many members of the parliament, including Mustafa Kemal, president of the government, were not following the law. Indeed, Mustafa Kemal deliberately drank alcohol in public after the victory in the last battle in the Greco-Turkish War in 1922 in Izmir, so as to show that he did not support the ban (Atay 1998). Fatih Rıfki (1894–1971) (Bosworth 1980, 98), a journalist and parliamentarian, mentions in his memoirs that the alcohol ban was ignored by state authorities and by the police force itself:

Because the ban was a dictate of fanatics, it provoked everyone, and during that time, it was the chief of the police who made the best beverages. There was an edge in restaurants: drinkers were put there, those who were outside [of the edge] pretended not to see anything. Many people produced raki in their own gardens. (quoted in Atay 1998, 560)

Rıza Nur (1879–1942) (Mango 2004, 14), parliamentarian and physician, also mentions that many authorities ignored the law:

The National Assembly banned alcohol ... But despite the prosecution by the government, [the consumption of alcohol] was not prevented categorically. Distilleries were impounded, but some officials with influence took some of these stills kept by the government and installed them in their houses. One of these officials was the chief of police, another is today's governor of Bursa, Fatih. They produced perfect raki and did good business. Two of them [raki] are the favourites of Mustafa Kemal. If they weren't, they wouldn't be able to run taverns. They also produced raki for Mustafa Kemal. (Nur 1967, 73)

The alcohol ban law was amended four years after its introduction, on 9 April 1924, to bring in new restrictions regarding seizures. The amended law led to a fourfold increase in the taxation on alcoholic beverages, a twelfold increase of customs duties on imported beverages, and the same amount of taxation on alcoholic beverages produced in the country. The opening of taverns and drinking in public places was forbidden. Only restaurants could hold a permit to serve light alcoholic beverages such as beer or wine. The production of alcohol was under licence. The law also prescribed the establishment of a state monopoly on alcohol production

and trade.¹⁵ Ali Şükrü, who was against all of these changes, had been murdered in 1923 (Akbal 2008, 427–439), and in the same year, new elections resulted in the weakening of the oppositional fraction in the parliament which was supporting the initiative of Şükrü. The government under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal thus had a majority in the Assembly. In 1924, the law was amended according to the suggestions presented above, and in 1926 it was revoked altogether and replaced by the ‘İspirto ve Meşrubatı Küüliye İnhisarı Hakkında Kanun’ (Law on the Monopoly on Alcohol and Alcoholic Beverages), which allowed alcohol production and trade and established the state monopoly (Karahanoğulları 2008, 134–135).

That the government did not support the law and the authorities ignored the ban contrasts with the prohibitionist projects in Western countries. One of the reasons was surely that members of the government were used to drinking alcohol as a symbol for Western attitudes, and the circumstances of war made the implementation of the law very difficult (Akbal 2014; Mısıroğlu 1978, 104–105). Another reason is that the initiative for the alcohol ban came from a religious and conservative partisan, Ali Şükrü, and was supported by the religious circles. Ignoring and then revoking the law on 22 March 1926 was a reaction to successful politics among Islamic and conservative circles. Turkey’s modernisation project sought to eliminate religious elements in the public sphere and in governmental structures, so every initiative supported by Islamic circles, without reference to how far it was for or against Western values, was perceived as oppositional to the government.

In *Sebîlürresâd*, the amendment alcohol law in 1924 was criticised by Ömer Rıza (1893–1952) (Uzun 1994), an Islamic scholar. The “heroic” first parliament, he claimed, had made a decision for the salvation of the Turkish nation, but the second parliament had taken a step to “destroy this great monument from the roots” (Rıza 1924). He called the reasons alleged to be hindering the law’s implementation baseless claims, and emphasised the struggle for an alcohol ban, which should be the duty of the second parliament.

CONCLUSION

The early twentieth-century temperance movement in Turkey emerged in a context of democratisation and the construction of civil society in the Second Constitutional Era. The lack of records makes it difficult to specify

the range of its influence and activities in society. The Hilâl-i Ahdar association, later known as Yeşilay, provides the best example of how the temperance movement was supported by religious circles and scientists and used the views of prominent European eugenicists. Its arguments were based not only on religious values, scientific explanations, but also on the image of the Greek enemy, which also served in the National Assembly to justify the prohibition.

Turkey's prohibition law in 1920 was based on the US model, but it diverged from it insofar as Western and reform-oriented political groups around Mustafa Kemal were against the alcohol ban. As shown through the parliamentary debates, delegates opposing the law highlighted the failure of similar policies in Western countries and insisted on the difficulties of implementation in the face of the occupation of Istanbul. Mustafa Kemal and his political circle also drank alcohol as a symbol of Westernisation and saw in the alcohol ban law an Islamic act rather than a part of the program of modernisation, as had been argued by Ali Şükrü.

Alcohol was one of the first topics which parliamentarians discussed and clashed upon, following the opening of the First National Assembly. This shows the significance of the issue, particularly in the transitional era from the Ottoman system to a secular government. Alcohol functioned as a dividing line along which the political orientation of actors was articulated. That supporters of Mustafa Kemal still preferred to drink even during the era of prohibition makes this function even more evident.

In the 1920s, the issue of alcohol marked a break with the Ottoman past. In the first year of the democratically elected parliament after the war of independence, the issue of alcohol functioned as a field in which supporters of the Ottoman past and Islamic rule could maintain their power in the face of the rise of the Western-oriented and secular political group around Mustafa Kemal. This prohibitionist era, although created by a supporter of the Ottoman system, was different from earlier alcohol policies of the Ottoman state. Ottoman sultans' preference for prohibitionism or a liberal market for the alcohol trade were due to circumstances in Istanbul, such as the growing number of taverns or potential income through taxation. Prohibitionist policies were mainly directed towards the Muslim population, whereas the alcohol ban of 1920 included the Christian population as well. The prohibitionist law as designed by Ali Şükrü was an act against the Christian middle class which was dominating the alcohol trade market in Turkey. Besides the national cleansing policies in Turkey (Akçam 2012), prohibitionism was a further instrument to alienate the Christian

population. The introduction of the state monopoly can be interpreted as a forced shift of the alcohol trade from the hands of Christian population to the state which was representing the Muslim Turkish society.

In the alcohol policies of the Turkish state, Hilâl-i Ahdar played a marginal role; even religious voices disappeared over the course of the 1920s. The anti-alcohol struggle remained the realm of secular scientists, who were also in a close relationship with the state under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. In the context of the process as a whole, however, the association delivered a field of action for scientists to attempt to influence society at large with their views on purity, eugenics, and morality.

NOTES

1. All quotations are translated from Ottoman-Turkish to English by the author of the chapter.
2. Osmanlı Men-i Müskirat Cemiyeti Nizamnamesi (1326/1910), Matabaa-i Hayriye ve Şûrekası, İstanbul: 1.
3. Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Mecmuası, 1341: 257.
4. The name has been used since 1934, after the association became accredited by the state as a charity.
5. Gökay, *Ablaklı astaları*, 6
6. The Régie Company, the Ottoman Tobacco Monopoly (*la Société de la régie cointéressée des tabacs de l'empire Ottoman*), was a company formed by the Ottoman Public Debt Administration and European banks in 1883 to pay the debts of the Ottoman State to European banks and thus overcome the State's persistent financial crisis. The Company had a monopoly on tobacco and salt. In 1925, the Régie was nationalised by the Turkish Republican State and in 1929 replaced by the institution, TEKEL; see Birdal, *Political Economy of Ottoman Public Debt*, and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 232–233.
7. On the anti-alcohol activities and eugenic ideas of Auguste Forel, see Spöring, 'Du musst Apostel der Wahrheit werden'.
8. TBMM, ZC, 13.9.1336: 121.
9. TBMM, ZC, 13.9.1336: 117.
10. TBMM, ZC, 13.9.1336: 113–118.
11. TBMM, ZC, 13.9.1336: 106.
12. TBMM Albümü 1920–2010. 1. Cilt 1920–1950, TBMM Yayınları Ankara 2010, p. 44.
13. TBMM, ZC, 14.9.1336: 137.

14. In the article of Men-i Müskirat Kanunu, the punishment according to sharia is not described. The parliament discussed a punishment of eighty lashes, but there was no consensus about who was to be excluded from this punishment. Finally, the parliament decided that courts must rule based on individual cases (TBMM, ZC, 14.9.1336: 128).
15. TBMM, ZC, 8.4.1340: 419–429.

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Unknowable Social Problems or Competing Regimes of Truth? Surveying Alcohol in Mandatory Palestine and Syria-Lebanon (1918–1948)

Philippe Bourmaud

INTRODUCTION

On 24 August 1934, a 56-page-long report by J.W.P. Harkness, the Deputy Director of Medical Services at the Department of Health of the Government of Palestine, was published in the *Palestine Gazette*, documenting “the Liquor Traffic in Palestine” (Harkness 1934, 460). The report was a survey of alcohol production and consumption in the British mandate, addressing concerns raised by militant anti-alcohol circles in Britain (Bourmaud 2015, 75–87). The Harkness report was not an isolated event. In previous years, the French mandatory powers in Syria and Lebanon had been summoned twice by the French Ministry of Foreign

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Affairs to report on issues related to alcohol.¹ These enquiries raise questions as to the construction of alcohol as a public problem in countries commonly understood as culturally Islamic.

The French and British enquiries had common features: they came as answers to questionnaires, commissioned by the colonial authorities with a clear defensive purpose, and touching upon social problems—a notion which French and British authorities were sceptical applied to alcohol in the region. There was a difference, though: the French enquiries remained internal, while the British had the Harkness report published. Producing public expertise to back public awareness is central to the response to social problems (Neveu 2015): why did the British authorities give the publicity of the enquiry much more apparent importance?

Greater influence from anti-alcohol movements in Britain is only part of the answer,² as they pressured both mandatory administrations through national and international channels. The defensive nature of the enquiries hints at a problem of veridiction:³ knowing the extent of alcohol consumption is always fraught with methodological difficulties, not least in a significantly Islamic context due to the moral reprobation of drinking, but holding the truth on the matter is also about relevant documentation and power. In a colonial context such as that of the mandates, truth was considered less as an ontological adequacy between statement and reality, and more as a power relation on which hung the credit and sustainability of colonial rule. In late colonial conditions, colonial powers had a hard time defending their ability to have the last word on truth, as other rival or hostile voices could be heard stating other versions, especially in international forums. Enquiry had long been used to affirm an official truth and close the debate about colonial matters, but as colonial powers were increasingly contested, it seemed their claims to the truth became less stable. Conversely, the need to provide proof and convince Western public opinions that colonial authorities were not covering things up grew. Based on a historical and comparative analysis of French diplomatic archives, Ottoman statistics, mandate-era press, and the archives of the American University of Beirut (AUB), this chapter argues that the British and French administrations sought to maintain a colonial regime of truth, in the face of local tensions and of an emerging international regime of truth, which was advanced mainly by voluntary, humanitarian organizations and relied on changing criteria of proof. The French and British authorities followed different strategies towards the same goal, asserting their truth on a shifting ground. This becomes apparent through the functions the enquiries

serve, and through their methodologies of data collection when compared with the changing paradigms of research on alcohol from non-state institutions (anti-alcohol movements, humanitarian and missionary organisations, etc.).

In this chapter, I shall first examine how historians have made sense of the construction of social problems in the late Ottoman and colonial Levant and make out what was particular about alcohol among them. I then examine the motivations of official enquiries that dealt with alcohol in the French and British mandates in the Levant, as the crisis of the 1930s was deepening. Lastly, I trace how those reports were made and organised with a view to establishing a definitive, official truth about alcohol, and to what extent they were nonetheless challenged by international voluntary organisations with a capacity of their own to produce surveys.

BETWEEN SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The immediate aftermath of the First World War was a period of deep anxieties in the Levant, among colonialist circles and in the burgeoning international community. These anxieties concerned social problems to a large extent, including alcohol.

Social problems in the mandates have been studied historically from a variety of perspectives. These perspectives are also relevant regarding alcohol, but they generally neglect the specificities of debates on alcohol, which articulated tensions between social and economic stakes, and between colonial and international institutions.

Among the histories of social problems in the Levant, Elizabeth Thompson's analysis of gender anxieties in the French mandate in Syria and Lebanon tackles memory and rights issues as triggers. She argues first that the societies of Syria and Lebanon (an argument valid also for Palestine) retained the traumatic memory of World War I, the 1915–1916 famine in Greater Syria and the end of Ottoman rule: these events were experienced as a demotion from masculine roles in patriarchy. Second, she highlights the social uncertainties created by the discordance between the colonial status of the inhabitants of Syria and Lebanon and the formal rights conferred by manhood-based citizenship and self-government institutions established in mandatory states. The reassertion of gender hierarchies, while often weaponised against the colonial power,⁴ sought to counteract these uncertainties (Thompson 2000).

Melanie Tanielian and Simon Jackson also insist on the backdrop of World War I on post-war social issues, underlining class differences. Both authors articulate relief, social disaggregation in the aftermath of World War I, and the 1915–1916 famine. Simon Jackson links new networks of clientele through humanitarian aid with the rise of people connected with the peace negotiations in Paris (Jackson 2015, 62–75). Tanielian observes how exclusion from aid, depending on access, gender, and denomination, deepened class divides, and at the end of the day fostered social anxiety (Tanielian 2018, 4603–4942).

Yet adapting these perspectives to alcohol is misleading. After World War I, public alcohol consumption seemed also to be considered as a remainder of ‘wartime anomie’ (Audouin-Rouzeau 1998, 233–243), but it was usually accounted for in a larger chronology of modernisation and related social change.⁵ Class was downplayed in official enquiries, structured by other social categories: religion, ethnicity, gender, age. Indeed, social drinking was organised by implicit gendered norms, but anxieties concerned more generally emerging commensalities that blurred social boundaries (Bourmaud 2015, 83–84).

Other researchers have underlined the internationalisation of social problems. This is also valid, with an institutional twist, of alcohol. The circulations of prostitutes in the Mediterranean, studied by Liat Kozma (2017), and the informal trade in cannabis and its prohibition as researched by Cyrus Schayegh (2011, 273–306) come closest to mirroring the multifacetedness of alcohol by articulating circulations, colonialism, and a constructivist approach to international relations. International scandals on these issues focused the attention of international movements and the League of Nations. Concern shaped these agendas into objects of colonial policy and of nationalist anxieties. The same was true of alcohol, but with apparently less public mobilisation in the mandates: newspapers and activists were generally content with quoting *hadith*-s against *khamr*.⁶ Visible anti-alcohol mobilisation regarding the mandates mostly came from abroad. At the League, mandatory powers were taken to task on these issues through two channels: the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) in charge of examining their administration at the League, and the committee on social issues, which proved a much less friendly setting for mandatory powers (Bourmaud 2016, 75–87).

Yet alcohol was understood as intrinsically an economic, not just social, problem. It pitted diverging social and economic interests. For this reason, it was a taboo at the League (Borowy 2009, 164, 391). Temperance

movements used the few circles where discussion on the matter was possible—the PMC and the Commission on the traffic in women and children—as stepping-stones to open a debate on alcohol within the League, taking advantage of pre-existing concern and international conventions.⁷

As a result, discussions on alcohol at the League had a narrow scope but dovetailed with contemporary research approaches: drinking was mostly to be addressed in connection with other social problems. Sociologists, meanwhile, were questioning the ‘social problems’ approach, which highlighted the concatenation of issues but reified them at the expense of complex social dynamics. Medically, defining addiction was a major theoretical problem; linking drinking and pathologies was the next-best thing to track down alcoholism. The association of alcohol and other issues (prostitution, accidents, etc.) stands out in Harkness’s report.

International attention to social problems was one reason for the growing body of expertise in the mandates. International preoccupation with the future of colonialism was another, indeed the formal justification of the mandates system (Pedersen 2015). The sustainability of colonial empires appeared increasingly conditioned by the capacity of colonial rulers to know colonial populations and the nationalist antagonists of colonial rule, and to negotiate the continuation of their rule accordingly.⁸ Alongside ‘colonial sciences’, this required a capacity of analysis of the ‘tensions of empire’ (Cooper and Stoler 1997). Enquiries were nothing new in both the French and the British empires in the face of problems, including on the issue of alcohol (Committee of Inquiry into the Liquor Trade in Southern Nigeria 1909), and provided colonial authorities with tools alternately to decide or obfuscate colonial problems (Sibeud et al. 2013, 6–22). In the contested territory of Palestine in particular, successive white papers provided the template for reflexivity and policy adjustments, although often in a muddled and improvised manner (Beckerman-Boys 2016, 213–233). Due to the annual examination by the PMC, the mandates produced a large amount of public documentation, known to be often a smokescreen hiding deep problems. However, this body of data offered a basis for external criticism, and colonial authorities could hardly dismiss it.

But it also depended on a capacity to contain economic turmoil that was liable to create social tensions and at the end of the line nurture political protests, which became increasingly difficult with the 1929 global crisis. The Levant mandates, advertised as showcases for colonialism, were at a disadvantage, since the open-door regime that had been imposed as part

of the mandate pitted them against more protected competitors. As a result, mandatory powers had to protect every legal, value-creating productive sector of the local economy, including wineries and spirit-producing companies. This, in turn, required a knowledge of economic assets and perspectives.

Simon Jackson, in his study of the Paul Huvelin mission to Syria and the ensuing redirection of French claims at the peace negotiations towards economic assets, discusses the mutability and instrumentality of colonial knowledge. He shows that the French ‘Colonial party’,⁹ a tightly knit set intent on influencing colonial policy, sought to shape French claims at the peace conference in 1919–1920 by setting goals inspired by hopes for economic exploitation of the country. To that end, reports such as Huvelin and like-minded people were ‘producing an “objective” account of Syria’s postwar economic value’—including vineyards and wine (Jackson 2013, 83–103). After the formal establishment of the mandates in the Levant in 1923, encouraging economic development remained an obligation and a strategic issue for the mandatory powers. Yet mandatory administrations were in a double bind, between solicitations to curb alcohol consumption, also from the League (Bourmaud 2015, 79), and the interests of alcohol producers.

Controlling the conclusions of the debate was therefore a sensitive political matter for the mandatory authorities. Giving the definitive truth about alcohol was an underlying concern in the official enquiries. Truth was understood as a position of power in order to close the debate, a tall order given that there were other sources of information on alcohol at hand.

THE DEFENSIVE FUNCTION OF OFFICIAL ENQUIRIES

The French and British enquiries had an explicit common goal: rather than document a public problem in order to devise a policy response, they aimed at providing mandatory administrations with a defence against the attacks of similar actors.

This involved pre-empting criticisms against mandatory administrations, in particular from movements promoting temperance and public morality. In November 1929, the French representative of feminist organisations at the League, Adrienne Avril de Sainte Croix (1855–1939), wrote to the French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand (1862–1932), to submit a series of questions on alcoholism, psychoactive substances, and

prostitution, on behalf of the International Council of Women. Avril de Sainte Croix had been summoned to open an enquiry on the issues by the British Women's Union for the Promotion of Public Morals. The Union claimed that 'since Syria has been under French mandate, alcoholism makes considerable damage in the country, as does the use of narcotics'.¹⁰ Yet Avril de Sainte Croix made it clear to Briand that her motivations for writing were sympathetic and aimed at avoiding bad publicity for the French mandatory regime. Her request was then passed on by the High Commission, which headed the French colonial system in Beirut, to its delegates in the various territories and states of the French Levant.¹¹

Following this, the agenda of the traffic in women and children in the East took precedence. Questionnaires were sent to the French mandatory authorities over the years 1931–1932 (Committee of the Traffic in Women and Children 1931), including the preparatory questionnaire for the mission of enquiry on the traffic in the East, which toured the Middle East and Asia in 1932–1933. In the latter, question n° 10 singled out alcohol among the factors in the international circulation of prostitutes, alongside the existence of red-light districts, of brothels, the profits arising from the activity, narcotics, obscene publications, and immoral shows (ibid., 1932b). Alcohol no longer appeared as an issue in itself. This hints at a different agenda, as feminist organisations were pushing for a ban on regulated prostitution. There were, however, porosities between international social movements such as feminism, temperance movements, and organisations for the abolition of regulated prostitution. A hint that the pressure may come from close quarters to the British organisation that pressed Avril de Sainte Croix to intervene lies in the French answer to the questionnaire: presenting efforts on the issue, the report mentions that the Comité Bourj, a Beirut-based voluntary organisation, had recruited an experienced female worker from Britain to campaign and raise awareness (ibid., 1932b).

The Harkness report was not an answer to queries from international associations, but was requested by the British government of Palestine to defend it from the accusations coming mostly from Palestine-based missionaries, but taken up in Britain by parliamentarians, that it was not doing enough to stem the growth and social consequences of alcoholism. Just as for the British Women's Union for the Promotion of Public Morals, a major argument was that consumption was supposed to be exploding among Muslims (Bourmaud 2015, 80–81). The Zionist daily *The Palestine Post* claimed that the goal of the report was 'not merely or mainly with the

idea of rebutting the attacks on the British Administration, but [...] making available exact information' (Palestine Post 1934, 4). Yet from inside the British administration, it was clear that the refutation of criticisms took precedence. Likewise, the Jerusalem-based Arab weekly *Mir'at al-Sharq* traced the cause of the report back to 'the campaign started by some members of prohibitionist associations in England, first of all Miss Agnes Slack, leader of the women for the prohibition of the liquor traffic [Nation British Women's Total Abstinence Union]'.¹² Providing data for the larger public, which was what mandatory powers already did with the annual report on their administration they sent to the PMC, could easily backfire: it was what critics of British alcohol policy had used to make their case in the first place.

Were official enquiries meant to overcome critics? It is likely, but not manifest. Institutionally, the PMC was an obvious addressee: while mostly silent on alcohol in the French mandate, it pressed the British administration to provide more information leading towards more stringent legislation on alcohol sales, restaurants, and bars. During the 27th session, one of the specialists of the alcohol issue within the commission, the Portuguese delegate Count de Penha Garcia, drew from Harkness's report a conclusion diverging from the one advanced by the mandatory power, namely, 'that consumption has sharply increased among Muslims' (Permanent Mandates Commission 1935, 70).

Efforts by the French and British mandatory authorities to placate the commission were not separate from attempts directed to anti-alcohol movements; both authorities were aware of contacts between the two.

Could the enquiries have also targeted local opinions? *Prima facie*, there seemed to be limited public interest in the issue within the mandates anyway. While there were reminders in the Arabic press of the opprobrium cast on drinking in Islam, and active proponents of social reform, there does not seem to have been an intense anti-alcohol movement in either Palestine or Syria-Lebanon in the Interwar period. An indicator is the weakness of temperance associations. In 1925, American missionaries and professors of the American University of Beirut participating in the relief efforts of the Near East Relief (NER) after World War I conducted a survey of the social and educational conditions of Syria and Lebanon. They concluded that '[there were] almost no temperance organisations or societies—one for women in Damascus being the only one reported. The "Servants of the Near East" seeks to unite young men in "opposing drinking, gambling, and sexual immorality"' (Sibley et al. 1925). In

comparison, the NER, committed to supporting the prohibition of alcohol beyond the United States, witnessed the dynamism of temperance organisations between late-Ottoman and Republican Turkey. In 1922, Istanbul under Entente occupation was home to two temperance societies, with a total of 12 members, under the auspices of the (Protestant) Young Men's Christian Association (Johnson 1922, 158). Five years later, the NER stated that the Green Crescent Society, founded in 1920, 'is the National Temperance Society', with 1700 members and 22 chapters. By then, all lines of social and moral reform in which the NER and Western missionary organisations had worked had been taken over by 'Turkish Agencies': 'educational, medical, social, sports and community activities, publication, relief, orphanages, anti-alcohol, world peace humane treatment of animals' (Near East Relief 1927, 11 and 16). The weakness of anti-alcoholic movements was as true of Palestine as it was of Syria. In September 1934, the temperance society of Jerusalem, which had been active since before World War I under the guidance of European Protestant missionaries, tried to revive its activities by publishing an announcement in *Mir'at al-Sharq* inviting new members to use its facilities. The text did not mention the Harkness Report. Yet, coming within days of the latter's publication, it was obviously piggybacking on the debate started by the report in the press.¹³ The report boosted local anti-alcohol movements, more than it reacted to them.

Moreover, there was little apparent inclination on the part of Islamic or nationalistic organisations to openly criticise mandatory powers on the issue. One sole petition to the PMC by an Islamic organisation dealt to some extent with alcohol, and even then, its goal was the defence of free expression for an imam, not prohibition.¹⁴

Yet lack of action against alcohol was no proof of indifference to it in the Mandatory public; quite the opposite, it was too sensitive to be touched upon. Mandatory authorities were wary of dealing with public feelings on alcohol, not because they were not an issue, but because doing so might be courting trouble. Prior to the Harkness Report, *The Palestine Bulletin*, forerunner of *The Palestine Post*, denounced the accusations made by British anti-alcohol movements as an attempt to pit the Muslim population against the British, and implicitly against the Jewish population as well, because of the assumed negative effects on public morality throughout the country on account of increased drinking.¹⁵

To sum up, the enquiries were first and foremost defensive responses to explicit critics of mandatory policies in both mandates. The strength of

those groups lay in the plurality of their agendas—feminists, protestant missionaries and humanitarians, temperance movements, paternalist colonialists, in particular—and their capacity to mobilise collectively through their alliance, and to cultivate contacts in Geneva and the governments of mandatory powers, Britain in particular. In this milieu, there was an interest for Middle Eastern affairs since World War I and the organisation of emergency aid for the Christian victims of mass murders and deportation in the Ottoman Empire.

Yet official enquiries, the Harkness report in particular, ended up serving other purposes: downplaying inter-communal oppositions regarding alcohol, and despite an initial claim to set aside the ‘industrial and commercial dimension of the trade’,¹⁶ surveying an economic sector in a context of crisis and growing economic protectionism. In the year following the report, a brewery was established in Palestine and the mandatory authorities clearly pushed for it to take over the domestic market, effectively killing off through tariffs the competition from the Lebanese brewery Gellad, which had dominated the market until then (Permanent Mandates Commission 1937; Great Britain Department of Overseas Trade 1936, 22). The content of the Harkness report, its fiscal documentation in particular, compiled data to shape tariff policy.

CONSTRUCTING PROOF

Miscellaneous Objects of Enquiries

The defensive function of the enquiries created agenda dependency, as the officials who produced them followed questionnaires whose themes reflected their critics’ agenda. In 1929–1930, the French mandatory authorities focused on overall consumption and the number of public houses, state by state in the segmented territory of the mandate.¹⁷ The 1932 questionnaire for the preparation of the League mission of enquiry produced little more than a compilation of legislative texts on prostitution and the sale of alcohol (Committee of the Traffic in Women and Children 1932a). The Harkness report documented legislation, production, circulation, imports, taxes, arrests for drunkenness, road accidents, and the role of alcohol in the traffic in women and children (*Mir’āt al-Sharq* 1934, 7). This left out social perceptions of drinking as well as medical data, which French officials were intent on downplaying in any case.¹⁸

Strategies of Proof

Among the miscellaneous data, a string of strategies was used to give the enquiries probative force. The mandatory administrations claimed exhaustive data as a reflection of the efficacy of legal disposition—in this case, a licensing system whose scope and fees were adapted over the years to maximise control of producers and disincentivise informal production (Harkness 1934, 821). Surveying the volume of spirit production, Harkness concludes that ‘[since] the administration of the country was undertaken by the Mandatory Power, legislation providing for the effective control of the manufacture has been placed under efficient supervision and illicit manufacture rendered more difficult’ (ibid., 823).

Exhaustiveness was of the essence to rebut the administration’s critics, who focused on the variations of consumption. Since consumption could not be revealed directly through official data, and short of interviews and direct observations, all Harkness could do was to construct consumption by adding national production and imports.

This came with a number of methodological caveats: for the aggregate to be reliable, it was ‘necessary to assume that stocks carried over from year to year [remained] relatively constant; it was “assumed that all imports were consumed locally and not re-exported to neighbouring territories”; in order to evaluate the quantity of absolute alcohol consumed, “it has been assumed that [...] imported spirits contain an average of 45% by volume of absolute alcohol which is considered to err if anything on the liberal side”’ (ibid., 823–825). An even more significant assumption was that the circulation of alcohol was all over the counter, which was debatable given the secrecy of much drinking in the country. Furthermore, aggregated state data did not provide Harkness with the level of data precision that he needed, in particular a breakdown of consumption by religion.

To get around these difficulties, mandatory approximations would convert the aggregated figures at their disposal into proportional indicators. For lack of medical data, Harkness used the quantity of absolute alcohol consumed ‘[as] the injurious effects of intoxicating liquors are proportionate to their content of absolute alcohol and the quantity consumed’ (ibid., 825). In 1929–1930, French officials did not try to arrive at an aggregate representing the volume consumed, but given that its goal was to show their efforts in curtailing drinking, they gave the numbers of licenses to public houses and their downward variation as the next best thing.¹⁹

To make their point on the limited dangers of alcohol in the territory under their administration, colonial authorities could also tap into informal intelligence networks. Indeed, inasmuch as the alcohol issue was constructed in association with fighting prostitution, the French mandatory authorities made use of the information gathered by the *Sûreté Générale*, its intelligence service throughout the mandate.²⁰

The accumulation of macroscopic and informal means of documentation may have briefly convinced critics, but it presented clear limitations. It downplayed earlier Ottoman systems of statistical information. According to Harkness, '[statistics] of the number of wine presses or distilleries operating during the period of the Ottoman Administration are not available. A system of license to manufacture did not exist' (Harkness 1934, 821). Official Ottoman statistics, however, provided data relevant on the production of grapes and the number of firms producing spirits and beer (Güran 2017). Published data existed, due to the transfer of the volume of taxes on alcohol to the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (OPDA). Vital Cuinet, a French delegate at the OPDA, published in 1896 a statistical yearbook of the Syrian provinces: according to his data, the province of Beirut, which included the districts of Nablus and 'Akkā in central and northern Palestine, produced 6,237 kilograms of wine and spirits, amounting to 4,304 francs in value (Cuinet 1896, 25). The alleged absence of data derived from the transformation of territorial units, since the mandatory territories did not overlap with Ottoman administrative districts. Yet Ottoman-era statistics existed even in a perimeter very similar to that of mandatory Palestine: the Zionist agronomist Arthur Ruppin compiled a number of charts on Palestinian agricultural economy at the end of World War I, giving an evaluation of the surface cultivated to produce wine and the value they created (Ruppin 1918, 29–32). Even accounting for the reluctance of the Ottoman authorities to circulate statistics in their possession and the doubts the British authorities may have nurtured towards non-government statistics, the absence of Ottoman data has to be taken with a grain of salt. It constructed a reality where the mandatory power did not have to face comparisons with an earlier political organisation.

Inadequate Sources of Data

The statistical construction of consumption and of the damage caused by drinking in the Harkness report hint at another limitation of the data: it

had to be repurposed to fit to the goal of the enquiry, generating biased indicators. There was a general lack of official data on social issues in the mandates, due to the organisation of their administrations (Sibley et al. 1925, 73).

Moreover, the problem was ongoing. Another surveyor for the NER suggested in 1927 that there was a need for '[the] publication by a qualified agency of a work setting forth the essential elements in social data, and the practical benefits to be had therefrom'.²¹ The Department of Social Sciences at the AUB, established the same year, set out to train personnel, but the ongoing reliance of mandatory authorities on voluntary agencies for social data meant that this effort took time to percolate within the mandatory states (Schayegh 2015, 649–684). In Syria and Lebanon, no dedicated service existed for social affairs before the arrival of Free France at the helm of the mandate in July 1941 (Yehya 2015, 306). Prior to this, the lack of social data had hampered the Vichy government in its efforts to extend its anti-alcohol policy to the French mandate. The advisor for financial matters of the High Commission argued against a boost on taxes on alcohol to curb consumption as inefficient from a technical fiscal point of view, adding: 'In the matter, the issue is not about fiscal dispositions but about legislating for social defence, and does not concern my service then'.²² The High Commission was loath to act upon the taxation of alcohol, which had been entrusted to the governments of the various states forming the mandate,²³ to deflect criticism on alcohol policy from both Syrian and Lebanese politicians: Syrian nationalists, inspired by Islamic sensitivities, pressed for prohibition measures, while Lebanese politicians defended alcohol production as part of the economy.²⁴ In Palestine, from the first years of the mandate, a single Welfare Inspector, Margaret Nixon, dealt with social affairs within the mandatory government.²⁵ Social issues were otherwise delegated to the respective communal institutions of the Arab and Jewish communities (Simoni 1999, 91–109). Nixon had ties with British feminist and anti-alcohol organisations, but kept close ranks with the government at the time of the Harkness report.²⁶ Understaffed social services meant a dearth of data on alcohol there too. Social concerns were addressed through economic and fiscal documentation, and the enquiries thus betrayed the reluctance of the mandatory administrations to clamp down on alcohol-related economic activities and thus forego a source of income for the Treasury.

Information on alcohol could also be censored from within the mandatory administration. This was apparent in the report on the autonomous

territory of the Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1929–1930. Two versions of the report were sent on the same day, on 13 January 1930. The first one minimised drinking, circumscribing its use to the partly European populations of the cities, especially the port of Alexandretta. Among the locales of the Sanjak, Kırıkhan is mentioned as a rapidly growing town of 6000 inhabitants, with 13 cafés holding a license to serve alcohol, which the French authorities want to reduce to four.²⁷ In the second version, the report includes a more explicit conclusion, dashed in the editing process: the writer notes that there had been an increase in alcohol use indeed in Kırıkhan, whose population had grown due to the resettlement of Armenian refugees there, among whom drinking was socially acceptable. The report added that ‘it is obvious that the French brought to the country certain types of alcohol which remained unknown in the interior of the country: aperitifs and digestives of all kinds’. While it plays down the role of these imports on indigenous consumption, the admission proved too candid to be circulated in international circles.²⁸ Not only was available data circumscribed in a way that minimised colonial responsibility, but the truth presented by mandatory authorities was tailored accordingly.

Official enquiries were equally dismissive of the data presented by their critics, treating it as badly interpreted if the sources were mandatory reports, and unsound and unrepresentative if the data was qualitative. As a result, the enquiries ignored an entire body of surveys conducted since the beginning of the mandate: economic surveys, such as the ones Sa’id Himadeh, from AUB, was conducting in the 1930s in the various Middle Eastern mandates, presenting the plight of mandatory viticulture (Himadeh 1936, 85–87; 1938, 151–153); and social surveys conducted in the 1920s by the NER in order to plan its operations after the phase of emergency aid.

Among them, the authors of the *Social Survey of Syria* were not above the accusation of biases and impressionism. They were confronted with the lack of social statistical data with which to answer the questionnaire established by the NER, and reflected the concern for drinking in the United States in the 1920s, and at the Rockefeller Foundation in particular (Moor 2015; Kay 1997, 283–293). Yet the biases reflected were not only their own. In the ‘Social conditions’ section of the questionnaire, section 3-F mentioned ‘Intemperance—extent of social; drinking; wine shops, how regulated, character of, influence on community morality, etc’ (Sibley et al. 1925, 7). For lack of quantitative data, the surveyors reported the assessments of interviewees, who converged in acknowledging the

normalisation of drinking in public places. However, the interviewees appeared concerned above all to paint a counter-intuitive picture of religious drinking patterns, asserting that drinking was more common among Muslims than other denominations (*ibid.*, 88). Qualitative assessments betrayed denominational biases, but their practical effect was to nurture the impression that the mandate had accelerated changes in drinking patterns.

Yet perceptions and methodologies were changing among American humanitarians, academics, and missionaries. Attempts were made within the NER and later at the Department of Social Sciences at AUB to circumvent the limitations of official data by producing quantification-intensive micro-studies. The NER's social surveys mention in 1927 a project of experimentation on an Egyptian village under the auspices of the American University in Cairo (Near East Relief 1927). The following year, the professor of sociology within the department, Stuart Dodd (1900–1975), presented the Rockefeller Foundation with a similar 'Model Village Project' to be conducted in Syria (Dodd 1934, 89). Dodd's project was a much more elaborate epistemological endeavour and relied heavily on the production of social statistics. Seven 'Alawi villages and a newly-founded village established to resettle Armenian refugees, all located in the "Government of Latakia", were picked as examples of the most impoverished and "backward" communities in the mandate. The object of the experiment was to measure the amount of "progress" produced by one factor of social change—the establishment of a Near East Foundation-led clinic in the Armenian village' (*ibid.*, 91). With that goal in sight, Dodd sent a team of students and volunteers into the villages with questionnaires ('Questionnaire A'), in order to record and quantify social practices through a scoring system. The results of the questionnaire are assumed to reflect 'a *unified culture complex*', which implies moral repudiation of drinking among other things (*ibid.*, 82–83. *Emphasis in original*). Two years after the initial survey in 1931, a re-survey was conducted in the same villages, with a more practical, downsized questionnaire ('Questionnaire B'), conceived by Dodd, through correlation rates between the scores, to be about as reflexive of the coherence of 'Syrian conditions and village culture' he postulated in village behaviours as the 1931 one (*ibid.*, 33). The methodology was geared towards anticipating the complexity of norms which macroscopic official enquiries were unable to reach.

The experiment is of interest to us on two main accounts. First, the questionnaires and scores are telling as to the importance given to alcohol in the American missionary-academic-humanitarian milieu Dodd was part of. Three questions out of 270 in Questionnaire A refer either to alcohol as a medicine or to drinking patterns (*ibid.*, 242–243). The coefficient given to these questions in the scoring system reflect the amount of scepticism regarding the reliability of answers on a morally and religiously charged issue.²⁹ Yet in Questionnaire B, questions on alcohol have disappeared; alcohol was only mentioned as a possible remedy used by the villagers (Dodd 1934, 45). Second, regardless of its very limited results, the experiment reflects ongoing epistemological changes in the sociological approach to social problems. At the time of the *Social Survey of Syria*, alcohol was approached in association with other social or medical issues, so as to circumvent sensitivity and reliability issues in the answers, as well as methodological problems in the observation of addictions. The work of the committees on social issues at the League and the official enquiries in the mandates still reflected that approach. Yet it had been exhausted in the 1920s in the NER/NEF work, which supported Dodd's experiment. Dodd, inspired by the Middletown enquiry of which he was apprised (Schayegh 2015, 680), was veering towards an opinion-based, community-oriented approach in which alcohol was a factor deemed of diminishing importance, not the object of study. Indeed, respondents answered the surveyors that the questionnaire missed the point by failing to ask any question on the one central issue from their point of view. From their perspective, debt was the principle problem of the village. It structured social relations and crippled village society in so many ways. True or false, Dodd's survey, with his heavy methodological apparatus to verify data, was deemed irrelevant by those it described. Nevertheless, it was a sign of methodological changes that were taking place, with profound political consequences. The surveys of the village explored sampling and micro-projects as ways to circumvent the limitations of official data, and counteracted the international agendas which influenced the official enquiries, as well as the latter's claimed monopoly on truth.

CONCLUSION

The treatment of alcohol in official colonial enquiries sheds light on the constraints that conditioned policies regarding social problems in increasingly contested colonial settings. Asserting governmental truth was

instrumental vis-à-vis anti-alcohol actors who based their arguments on government data. But the data-collection apparatus of the colonial power was too limited in scope, and inadequate in object, to bury alcohol as a social issue. Criticisms would come up now and again in the years following the Harkness report.

Moreover, the blind spots in official enquiries underlined the growing obsolescence of the format of mandatory government, which downplayed or completely ignored social issues. Mandate officials ignored the surveys that had been conducted by voluntary organisations in previous years, yet social issues remained a staple of anticolonial criticism all through the 1930s. Simply put, alcohol did not seem the most effective theme of popular mobilisation.

But then again, in milieu that used to be composed of proactive anti-alcohol campaigners, perspectives were changing. Anti-alcoholists, Protestant missionaries, academics, and humanitarians formed a 'social reform nebula' of their own in the mandates (Topalov 1999). In that nebula, promoting temperance was consensual, but observations on the increased social acceptability of drinking led in the 1930s to a reassessment: after the failure of US prohibition, temperance, while still desirable, no longer seemed a major public concern. Yet by instilling social sciences in the approach of social problems in general by voluntary agencies, institutions such as the NER and the AUB found a way to occupy the field of social work which mandatory powers had conveniently abandoned, and to mobilise methods and information which escaped the macroscopic tools of observation of the state: vaccination campaigns, the protection of children, and popular education gradually replaced the priorities of international reform movements: prostitution, alcohol, and narcotics.

If the importance of alcohol was fading away, why were mandatory governments trying to keep a monopoly on information about it? Metropolitan campaigns are only part of the answer; so are the tensions between economic interests and social concerns. Among the reactions to the Harkness report, another reason stands out: alcohol was liable to create intercommunal tensions, and so the less done about it, the better (*Mir'āt al-Sharq* 1934, 7).

NOTES

1. French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter: MAE), Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes (hereafter: Nantes), Archives of the mandate of Syria-Lebanon (hereafter: Syrie-Liban), 1st transfer (hereafter: IV), Bureau diplomatique, 1391: Avril de Sainte Croix to Briand, Paris, 6 November 1929); Commission d'Enquête sur la traite des femmes et des enfants en Orient, document C.T.F.E./Orient/19, *Questionnaire* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1932). On the enquiry, see Kozma, *Global Women*, 36–41.
2. The historiography of temperance movements in Britain is vast. See among others: Harrison, *Drink & the Victorians*; Lewis Shiman, *Crusade against Drink*; Jennings, *A History of Drink*; Hands, *Drinking in Victorian and Edwardian Britain*.
3. On the construction of veridiction, see Foucault, *Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres*, 80.
4. An instance of such weaponisation, in a contemporary Egyptian context, is the scandal caused by reported attempts by Protestant missionaries to convert orphans: Baron, *The Orphan Scandal*.
5. Georgeon, “Ottomans and Drinkers”; also see Evered and Evered, “From *rakı* to *ayran*”; as well as Elife Biçer-Deveci’s chapter in this volume.
6. This is true of the Lebanese *Lisān al-ḥāl*, founded by Christians, albeit in a latitudinarian perspective, as well as of the Jaffa-based *Al-Difā’*, founded by Muslim journalists formerly associated with the explicitly titled *Al-Jāmi’ah al-Islāmiyyah*. See: “Ḥāḍaratu’l-‘Arab fī dār al-Salām—3 Al-ḥamr wa’l-ḡayr wa’l-nudamā” [His Excellency [the Prophet] of the Arabs in the House of Peace—3 Wine, the other, and remorse], *Lisān al-ḥāl*, 28 September 1932, p. 1; ‘Kalimāt fī muḍār al-ḥamr’ [Words about the harm caused by wine], *Al-Difā’*, 28 June 1934, p. 2.
7. Bourmaud, ‘Expanding obligations’, 79–80; on alcohol and prostitution in mandatory Syria and Lebanon, see Graham, *Sex Work in French Mandate*.
8. Dimier, *Le Gouvernement des colonies*; Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 267–282. Regarding expertise in the French Levant, see: Dakhli, ‘L’expertise en terrain colonial’.
9. On the informal French ‘Colonial Party’ and the various groups whose interests it channelled, see Julien, *France coloniale ou parti colonial*.
10. MAE, Nantes, Syrie-Liban, IV, Bureau diplomatique, 1391: Avril de Sainte Croix to Briand, Paris, 6 November 1929.
11. MAE, Nantes, Syrie-Liban, IV, Bureau diplomatique, 1391: Delegate of the French High Commissioner in the State of Syria, to Ponsot, Damascus, 3 February 1930.
12. ‘Al-Muskirāt fī Filastīn’ [Intoxicating drinks in Palestine], *Mir’āt al-Sharq*, 5 September 1934, 7. On Agnes Elizabeth Slack, see Barrow, ‘Slack, Agnes Elizabeth (1857–1946)’.

13. 'Al-Muskirāt fi Filastīn', 7.
14. Permanent Mandates Commission, *Procès-verbaux de la 25e session* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1934, 138–139).
15. 'Palestine and Drink', *The Palestine Bulletin*, 4 December 1932, 8.
16. Harkness, *Report*, 820.
17. On the division of Syria-Lebanon in multiple statelets and territories, see Jean-David Mirzahi, 'La France et sa politique de mandat en Syrie et au Liban (1920–1939)', in Nadine Méouchy (ed), *France, Syrie et Liban 1918–1946. Les ambiguïtés et les dynamiques de la relation mandataire* (Beirut: IFPO, 2002, 35–71).
18. MAE, Nantes, Syrie-Liban, IV, Bureau diplomatique, 1391: Robert to the Delegate of the French High Commission in the State of Syria, Damascus, 30 December 1930.
19. MAE, Nantes, Syrie-Liban, IV, Bureau diplomatique, 1391: Delegate of the High Commissioner to the Lebanese Republic, to Ponsot, Beirut, 30 December 1929.
20. MAE, Nantes, Syrie-Liban, IV, Bureau diplomatique, 1391: Chief of the Sûreté Générale for the state of Syria, to the Delegate of the French High Commission in the State of Syria, Damascus, 3 February 1930.
21. 'Subcommittee on Social Conditions', in Near East Relief, *Near East Survey. Minutes Overseas Advisory Committee Constantinople Conference*, 10.
22. MAE, Nantes, Syrie-Liban, IV, Cabinet politique, 875: 'Note pour Monsieur le Conseil Législatif', Beirut, 15 October 1940.
23. MAE, Nantes, Syrie-Liban, IV, Cabinet politique, 875: 'Note pour Monsieur le Conseil Législatif', Beirut, 10 October 1940.
24. MAE, Nantes, Syrie-Liban, IV, Cabinet politique, 875: 'Note pour Monsieur le Conseil Législatif', Beirut, 15 October 1940.
25. Women's Library, London School of Economics (London) (hereafter: Women's Library), Archives of the National Vigilance Association, 4IBS/6/030: McInnes to Baker, 24 November 1923.
26. Women's Library, Archives of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, 3 AMS/D/24: Nixon to Neilans, Jerusalem, 23 February 1934.
27. MAE, Nantes, Syrie-Liban, IV, Bureau diplomatique, 1391: vice-delegate of the High Commissioner in Alexandretta to Ponsot and the delegate of the High Commissioner in Damascus, Alexandretta, 13 January 1930.
28. MAE, Nantes, Syrie-Liban, IV, Bureau diplomatique, 1391: vice-delegate of the High Commissioner in Alexandretta to Ponsot and the delegate of the High Commissioner in Damascus, Alexandretta, 13 January 1930 (version 2).
29. Rockefeller Archives Center (Tarrytown, NY), Rockefeller Foundation archives, RF Records 1.1. FA 386, box 11: American University of Beirut, *Sociology Yearbook, 1930–1931*, 'Instructions for family hygiene schedule'.

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Ordinary Drinking? Place and Politics of Alcohol in Lebanon

Marie Bonte

INTRODUCTION

Alcohol and Advertising: Absolut Civil Love

In September 2018, an inter-communitarian wedding was organised in Lebanon by Absolut, the Swedish vodka brand. The video released after the event displays the couple's union, celebrated on a boat off the coast, and offers footage of the party, which was held within international waters, where one could see guests drinking the world-renowned vodka, commonly available in Beirut's nightlife venues (www.civillove.com). The comments accompanying the clip explain how civil marriage could eradicate the legacies of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), seeing clashes between religious communities replaced by unions. This event and its promotion were part of the “Absolut Civil Love” advertising campaign by the Interesting Times agency. That same year in Beirut, several billboards associated the iconic shape of the bottle with the caption “We Declare

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Civil Love”. Using the vocabulary of love and tolerance, the brand was joining existing demands from civil society.

This unusual marketing may be viewed as intrusive, considering the political and social issues relating to civil marriage in Lebanon.¹ One might therefore wonder about the goals of such a campaign: expanding market share, converting abstinent people? Or enhancing the reputation of a product by highlighting its pacifying and hedonistic virtues? These strategies of communication illustrate the spatial and moral implications of alcohol. As a commodity, alcohol is produced, conveyed, sold and, above all, consumed. On a global scale, alcohol circulates. Nevertheless, its trajectories vary according to cultural, political and social contexts that influence in return the availability and visibility of alcohol, as well as the norms and practices ascribed to it. This is particularly the case in Lebanon, known to be more permissive than its neighbours with respect to drinking.

In the multi-faith country of Lebanon, alcohol is legal. This partly explains its accessibility in terms of price, sales outlets and consumption. However, alcohol is no ordinary commodity. It is rejected by a large part of the population, in accordance with religious and moral standards. Consequently, it is not visible or available uniformly. This difference must not be understood only through the lens of religion, economic, social, moral and gender-related factors, must also be taken into account. The study of alcohol in Lebanon thus implies a consideration of its spatial dimensions, from the places where alcohol is authorised, banned or sold in a hidden way.

This chapter asks where alcohol can be found and consumed in Lebanon, and places under scrutiny the social and political features related to the act of drinking. By doing this, I consider alcohol as something not already “in place” (Lawhon 2013: 686) and ordinary, but rather question what defines the important but unsettled place of alcohol in Lebanon. I use the word *place* as an analytical category, imbued with multiple meanings. First, I understand place as the *spatial dimensions* through which economic and political mechanisms shape the geography of alcohol in Lebanon. Place is also embedded in strong *social significations* (Cresswell 1996), which question the importance of drinking in everyday practices along with its subversive potential. Finally, the symbolic characteristics of alcohol are central: representations of alcohol, particularly through advertising, must be considered.

Through the dual concepts of visibility and invisibility, I analyse the spatial, social and symbolic dimensions of alcohol in Lebanon. Stating that

alcohol has different regimes of visibility means that alcohol, drinking and drunkenness are not something to be constantly seen. The processes of concealment and exposure encompass production, sale and consumption. When displayed to the general view, alcohol is used for economic purposes, ostentatious practices or encroachment tactics of a political nature. Conversely, the various methods of invisibility are used to carry out illegal activities, transgressive practices or marginal forms of sociability (Tadié 2015). Rather than a binary relationship, this relationship between visibility and invisibility should actually be understood as a set of strategies that actors adopt and perform according to changing situations and spatial contexts. This discrepancy enables them to blur the visible and invisible dichotomy into a grey zone. Consequently, this chapter explores how thresholds between the visible and invisible are managed and sometimes disrupted.

The analysis is based on a qualitative fieldwork conducted between 2014 and 2018. The study first relies on site observations in nightlife districts of Beirut, namely, Mar Mikhael, Badaro and Hamra (see map), and in large clubs located at the edge of the city on the embankments. The discussion is also built on a body of semi-structured interviews involving different actors: drinkers,² night industry workers such as barmen and pub managers, and professionals from the alcohol sector (brewers, retailers). To understand the representations of alcohol conveyed, the analysis draws from a corpus of iconographic data that includes various alcohol advertisements. These images have been collected from advertising agencies, websites and social networks, or have been photographed in their direct urban environment.

I first consider the trends and flows of alcohol in Lebanon, by providing background elements about production, trade and consumption. Then I address the regulation of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness through the role of different actors: state, private companies and political parties. Finally, I focus on the resulting drinking patterns that I observed: according to spatial, social and temporal contexts, they vary between careful observance of norms and transgressive behaviour.

Alcohol in Lebanon: Trends and Flows

Renewals in Local Production

In 2015, a bar manager stated during an interview that “Beirut is getting on the international map when it comes to alcohol”. This sentence first shows that the Lebanese capital is a city that does drink, and, more broadly, that the country is part of globalised trade networks. This does not mean that all the drinks come from outside. As an indicator, foreign beers represent 21% of the country’s annual consumption.³ Imported wines are also a minority: mostly French and Italian, they are served in the more upscale venues and those designed as wine bars. While alcohol imports average 26,000 tons per year,⁴ there is also a long tradition of production detailed in this section. Mainly composed of arak, wine and beer, this production is going through a certain renewal, which is characterised by the multiplication of Lebanese breweries, and the marketing of home-produced spirits.

Arak, a grape-based drink with a liquorice-like flavour of anise, is considered part of the national heritage (Gefou-Madianou 1992, Challita 2010). Its production is subject to a legislative framework: a 1937 law defined arak as an alcohol made by fermenting grapes and distilled with aniseed seeds (Kazan 2015). In 1999, a decree promulgated under the influence of the big producers recognised the industrial production of arak, but made a distinction between “arak” and “grape arak” (Challita 2010). Part of the arak consumed in Lebanon is a domestic and family product, which is however served in restaurants and preferred by regular customers. With so much home production not included in the official records, it is hard to tell how much arak is made. Lebanon’s Blom Bank estimated in 2016 that around 2 billion bottles a year are produced in the country, with nearly a quarter of it exported.⁵

In the same way, the production of wine is currently expanding. At the end of the civil war, there were no more than seven domains still in operation,⁶ but this had risen to about 50 by 2018.⁷ The crops cover more than 3,000 hectares, mainly in Bekaa and Mount Lebanon. The introduction of noble grape varieties reflects a search for quality, and a desire to increase export sales (which now account for a quarter of production). This expansion is supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, notably because it is a way to replace hashish crops. It is also stimulated by a rise in wine tourism.⁸

According to Blom Bank,⁹ beer consumption reaches 29 million litres a year, for a population of six million citizens overall.¹⁰ The market is

dominated by Almaza, which has brewed and bottled in the country since 1933. The brand produces about 24 million litres each year, and accounts for three-quarters of the beer market. It continues to behave as a national beer, even though its capital is majority owned by Heineken. Nevertheless, this widespread pilsner is challenged by a crop of micro-breweries now making headway in the market.

The recent increase in microbreweries in Lebanon started in 2006 with the 961 beer. The partners, who named the beer after the country's telephone code, first experimented with brewing at home, with the assistance of foreign collaborators.¹¹ The idea was to have a local, eco-friendly and patriotic beer. In 2016, 961 accounted for 5% of Lebanon's beer market. Brewed in a factory outside Beirut, 961 is sold directly to bars, restaurants and supermarkets. The 961 bar opened in 2007 in Mar Mikhael has been closed for several years and the company now focuses predominantly on exports, which make up 85% of its sales. In parallel with this rise, other local beers such as BrewInc or Colonel have also appeared. Located in Badaro district of Beirut, BrewInc was launched in 2017 and has a brewing capacity of 3,000 litres per month. In Batroun, northern Lebanon, the Colonel brewery is of larger size (a brewing capacity of 1,000 litres per day).¹² This development in the brewery infrastructure can be seen as an example of the global development of the craft beer industry, which has mainly been studied in the United States and Europe (Schnell and Reese 2014; Reid and Gatrell 2017), and of a globalised circulation of production methods: the owner of the Colonel brewery, for instance, was trained in England. This trend is driven by a special interest in local initiatives and products (Wesson and Neiva de Figueiredo 2001), as well as in customer sensitivity to higher quality products which also have a strong connection with the region (Reid and Gatrell 2017). While the use of carefully selected raw materials is highlighted by the craft brewers, they also mention the need for personal achievement. Thus Omar Bekdache, who launched BrewInc after participating in the 961 project, discusses during an interview his need to go back to a craft activity based on experimentation and autonomy:

the most important reason was that I could go back to the beginnings of what I did, and enjoy my work. I had moved away from beer manufacturing, I was more of a manager. What I want is to make the beer I want to make, to interact with people, more than to be in an office (Interview O. B., April 2018)

These needs valued by brewers are similar to what Thomas Thurnell-Read analysed in England, observing “a sense of reward and satisfaction found in the production of what is perceived to be a product distinguished by the skills, passion and care deployed in its production” (Thurnell-Read 2014: 46). Because of their small size, these breweries also provide spaces of sociability and interaction: bars, gardens, and a free access beach in the case of Colonel. This renewal in alcohol production patterns in Lebanon begins to concern spirits. In 2019, three gin brands were founded: this spirit is rather easier to distil and does not need to be matured. The promotion of the terroir and local aromas (lemon, mint) is even easier than for beer, which needs ingredients—including hops—which are not available domestically and must be imported.

An “Alcogenic” Country?

While the alcohol market in Lebanon is characterised by a diversifying local production, it is also stimulated by strong demand, because alcohol is for many people part of everyday social life. As an indication—and due to the scarcity of detailed statistics—the director of the “beverage” department of Fattal, a distribution company in Lebanon, has estimated that some 60% of the population drinks.¹³ This assessment should be balanced by data from the WHO’s global status report on alcohol, which counts a higher abstinence rate, but quite a high alcohol *per capita* consumption: 25 litres of pure alcohol, among Lebanese drinkers, in 2016. The published alcohol research in Lebanon, which comes mainly from the Department of Epidemiology of the American University of Beirut, has recently focused on youth alcohol behaviour (Ghandour et al. 2015; Yassin et al. 2018; Nakkash et al. 2018; Chalak et al. 2020). Surveys of university and high school students show that the experience of drinking alcohol begins early: 85% of the 15–19-year-olds interviewed had their first drink before the age of 14 (Yassin et al. 2018). The same study also found a 40% increase between 2005 and 2011 in the number of interviewees who had drunk alcohol in the previous 30 days. Despite the influence of some politico-confessional parties, these results are weakly related to religiosity: 40% of Muslims who declare themselves to be believers are regular drinkers, and this figure rises to 89% for non-believers (Ghandour et al. 2009). Furthermore, many of the participants did not see alcohol as something bad or socially unacceptable.

Alcohol drinking as a commonplace practice can be explained by the development of an “alcogenic” environment (Nakkash et al. 2018). An

“alcogenic” environment is characterised by the visibility of alcohol and its outstanding availability and use, assumed to trigger a desire to drink. Thus the causative relation between availability and consumption should be tempered; in this case the survey carried out by the epidemiology research team in several districts stresses that the density of alcohol outlets ranged from 18.30 to 80.95 per squared km. These outlets can be divided into two categories, depending on whether alcohol is to be consumed on site or in an alternative location. The second group (“off-premise”) refers to supermarkets or grocery or liquor stores. The first category (“on-premise”) covers restaurants and, more importantly, bars and clubs, which are numerous in the Lebanese capital. A 2015 survey estimates that there are between 220 and 230 bars, pubs and clubs in Beirut—excluding restaurants and alcohol-free coffee shops (Jayne et al. 2011; Chrzan 2013; Bonte 2016). Thus, drinking is a temporally influenced activity, and marks the beginning of the night as a social moment. More precisely, the happy hour, generally between 5 pm and 9 pm, has been identified by customers as the main transition between day and night. This association is also reflected in the discourses of young Lebanese people who patronise bars and nightclubs: 63% of the people interviewed spontaneously link nightlife to alcohol (e.g. bars, pubs, drinking and intoxication). Alcohol is considered a key factor in Lebanese nightlife, and the main ingredient of a successful evening, as shown in these interview extracts:

[>Marie]: *“Are there things absolutely necessary for a good party?”*

[>M.H.]: *Yes, alcohol. First in line. Of course, it relaxes you. In this city I think everyone has his own substance. (...) in fact for me it’s fundamental but I think it’s everywhere like that”* (Interview M. H., 28/04/2014).

“I don’t drink during the day, I drink at night, in pubs. And I love drinking” (Interview Ch. C., 03/07/2013).

These quotes are typical of the dominant discourse among the revellers I met during my fieldwork: alcohol consumption is central to night-time entertainment. Because of its disinhibiting virtues and its ability to shape social interaction (alcohol is ordered, drunk, offered), alcohol creates social connections (Jayne et al. 2011; Chrzan 2013). However, these features are not confined to nightlife venues. In recent years, the practice of “do it yourself nightlife” (Chatterton and Hollands 2003) has increased in the nightlife neighbourhoods of Beirut. The idea is to drink alcohol in the lively streets, but outside of establishments. People purchase cheap alcohol

in grocery stores that are open until late at night to take advantage of partygoers, and do not really check the age of their customers. Once served, people mingle with the crowd or sit on stairs, steps or building porches. Police and residents' tolerance towards these activities depends on the area. In Mar Mikhael or Hamra for instance, people can create their own drinking spaces without interferences from the authorities or inhabitants (Bonte 2017; Yassin et al. 2018). In Badaro, where nightlife is more controlled due to the influence of the Badaro Traders Association, this kind of outdoor gathering is more complicated. Thus, bars, clubs, restaurants, groceries and supermarkets and lastly improvised spots, together form the Lebanese drinkscape¹⁴—to which we must add domestic spaces and private parties. Despite its nocturnal dominance, it should not be confused with nightscape, which refers to nightlife activities (Chatterton and Hollands 2003) as indicated on the map. On the urban scale, the density of alcohol venues admits variation, as well as those in drinking practices, but they both contribute to enhance the “alcogenic” side of Beirut (Fig. 1).

The Visibility of Alcohol: Advertising and Branding

This “alcogenic” environment is not only due to the high availability of drinks and the large range of habits, but also thanks to the presence of brands, directly in nightclubs and through advertising campaigns. The involvement of alcohol brands in nightlife can be a physical and material one, in places where drinkers are most likely to be found. This can be illustrated by the installation of stands in large party venues. Through this kind of sponsorship, alcohol can be sold at low prices or distributed freely by agents, who are dressed in the brand's logo and also distribute promotional items (lighters, keychains, etc). Brands can organise their own events by setting up in a nightlife district. Some even offer short training courses for Beirut's bartenders. This enables them to better employ the products and use them on a daily basis. To this end, production and/or distribution groups negotiate with bar or club owners to have their particular vodka used in cocktails and basic blends (like “vodka/soft drink”), offering discounts or other inducements.

Brands or alcohol suppliers also take advantage of weak regulations on advertising. Advertisers are not required to have any advice on moderate drinking, and references to celebration and pleasure are not banned as in other countries like in France, where the representation of drinkers is prohibited. In addition, the display of advertising billboards is rarely

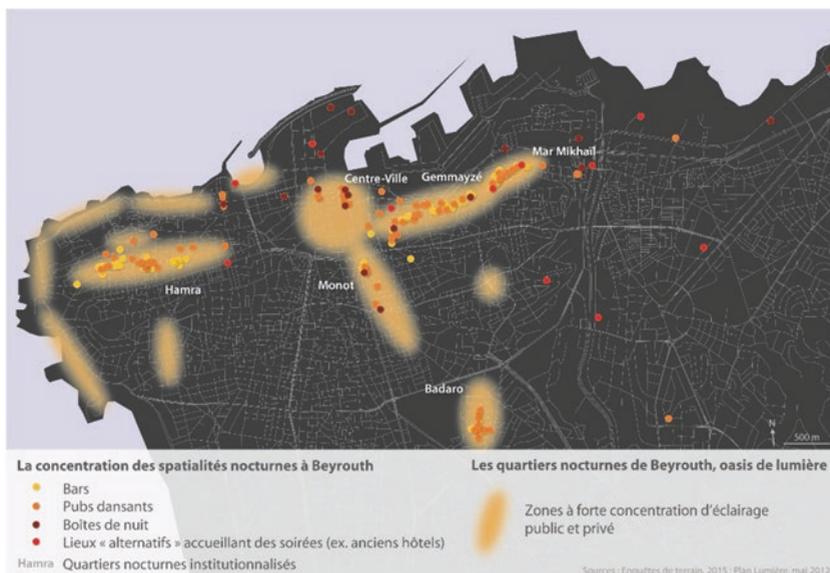


Fig. 1 The geography of bars and clubs in Beirut. (Bonte 2017)

controlled: official boards compete with informal companies whose practices lead, particularly on the edge of highways, to an overwhelmed visual landscape and, consequently, to a high visibility of alcohol. However, it should not be understood that this type of advertising is omnipresent: in some municipalities, alcohol adverts may be banned, as in Tripoli in 2014. More generally, advertisers prefer not to invest in areas where the acceptance of alcohol is complicated. This does not prevent unusual coexistence, however. The photograph below shows the flag of Hezbollah, a political party that preaches abstinence, alongside an advertisement for the latest product of Almaza: a 25 cl bottle with a cap that unscrews, allowing it to be drunk anywhere and at any time (Fig. 2).

The promotion of alcohol and drinking is based on two kinds of strategies, which are not exclusive. The first is relatively widespread and relates alcohol to attractive situations or positive values. Advertising then emphasises fun, friendship, social status and shows how to enjoy the product, suggesting that the drink is appropriate for—or provokes—joyful gatherings, with same-age friends.



Fig. 2 Alcohol advertising in Lebanon's highway. (©M. Bonte 2018)

Alcohol as a model for social relationships is a common theme in advertising (Chrzan 2013), but in Lebanon this also takes a national perspective: adverts refer to cultural, historical or political elements which are more or less subject of consensus—like Absolut's Civil Love campaign. Sylvie Gangloff's work on alcohol in Turkey (Gangloff 2015) shows how drinking can be seen as a national act, as Turkish identity is built on modernity and mixing. Similarly, representations of alcohol in

Lebanon—partly shaped by advertising—contribute to a positive and “modern” image of the country. They are a way to express differentiation from neighbouring countries, or to transcend the idea of a war-torn country. For example, the video clip produced by the creative agency Blitz for the White nightclub stresses drinking practices with various sentences: “No one gets shot, we take shots”; “We drink usually straight from the bottle”; “We do not fear hangover”.¹⁵ Alcohol is a key element in the establishment of a festive ethos, often combined with a Lebanese one (Haugbolle 2013; Bonte 2017). In a divided society, the elements of unity are few and therefore often emphasised, thus the year of independence or celebration of the Lebanese army are items that often appear.

The evocation of Lebanese resilience to conflicts and instability is at the core of Leo Burnett’s communication strategy. The various advertising campaigns carried out for the Johnnie Walker brand—which belongs to the global alcohol giant Diageo—illustrate this trend. The poster reproduced below was designed in 2006 and was displayed on the northern highway, a couple of months after the 33-day war. On this board, war is represented by its concrete consequences: a bridge is damaged. The famous silhouette of the man walking is reproduced, accompanied by the usual message, “keep walking”. However, this is not an ordinary advertisement. It shows the need for the people to move forward in spite of the losses and destruction caused by the conflict. And it is precisely the consumption of alcohol—and thus, the celebration and parties—that best ensure this continuity. Finally, drinking whisky becomes more or less a patriotic act, because it is raised to a stance: not being disturbed by foreign aggression. In a way, the self-branding processes usually at work in alcohol adverts are shifting. This whisky is no longer a question of being friendly or having taste, but rather of agreeing with a specific meaning that is attributed to a population and a territory. In this poster, Johnnie Walker made alcohol a tool for national branding, which emphasises resilience. During an interview, a member of the Leo Burnett agency explained how these whisky campaigns are addressed not only to drinkers, but to all Lebanese people: “*We had a succession of campaigns that made the brand, and brought the Lebanese and the brand closer: they believe in their resilience and their capacity to progress in this country (...) So we told a story (...)*” (interview L. B., April 2018) (Fig. 3).

The nationalisation of the values associated with alcohol and drinking is reflected both in the act of drinking and the selection of the product. Thus, the increasing demand for national and “ethical” alcohol, locally

Fig. 3 Advertising for Johnnie Walker in Lebanon. (©H&C Leo Burnett 2006)



produced, can be seen as a way of overcoming economic and cultural domination caused by the oligopoly of international companies. The alco-genic environment which seems to describe Lebanon is mainly due to its availability and visibility. The renewals in local production, combined with the national branding of alcohol, show that this commodity has high acceptability. This does not mean that alcohol is not regulated at all, but rather that it is regulated by competing actors: its analysis shows the persistence and emergence of different forms of authority in Lebanon.

Shaping the Flow: Competing Regulations of Alcohol

Political Influence and the Place of Alcohol

In order to open a drinking venue, the Lebanese law only requires an individual to respect the rules of location: it must supposedly be more than

100 metres from a hospital, a religious building or a school. Considering the density of bars and off-licenses in nightlife areas (Bonte 2017; Nakkash et al. 2018), the rule is obviously not followed. But this bypass of a limited constraint does not imply a ubiquity of alcohol. On the one hand, there are spaces where alcohol circulates freely, or from which it is banned, or where it is concealed. Its official availability or non-existence is related to the political orientation of the specific areas. On the other hand, the alcohol issue is also exploited in the interests of competing ideologies.

In Beirut, the geography of the nightlife—and drinkscape—is partly explained by land prices and fashion trends. It also demonstrates the persistence of “political areas” in Lebanon (Mermier 2008). It is a legacy of the civil war, during which the clashes led to a sectarian divide. This determines the leisure geography of the city, be it banishment, avoidance or use of alcohol. Avoidance here refers to any attempt made to prevent business-people (shops, nightclubs or restaurants serving alcohol) from settling in a specific area (neighbourhood, municipality). The southern suburb of Beirut, Dahiya, is a case in point (Deeb and Harb 2013). The municipalities of this Shia-majority area are under Hezbollah’s influence. As a result, they guide leisure activities, expected to comply with the party’s moral standards, based on religious, social and political ranges. One of its specific outcomes is abstinence. In the growing number of cafés in Dahiya, the music played is carefully monitored, and alcohol is not served. Nor is it possible to sell alcoholic drinks in grocery stores or supermarkets. More broadly, in the areas under Hezbollah’s influence, there are many dissuasive or intimidating practices (threats, vandalism), such as in Nabatiyeh, South Lebanon: “*I may be able to get a license for a bar, but the party in Nabatiyeh, Hezbollah, will ban it. Not in an official way, but there have been bad experiences, some of the stores had to close, their windows have been broken...*” (Interview N., April 2018).

In this extract, a young Shia woman recalls her experience as a coffee shop owner in Nabatiyeh. In her venue, alcohol was secretly served to customers that she considered to be “reliable”. This example firstly shows that official licensing by the Ministry of Tourism does not depend on the area in which one wishes to open. Secondly, the acknowledgement of the religious and social norm does not necessarily imply its observance. In order to operate discreetly, the alcohol offered in the café (called “café culturel”) was not mentioned on the menu. The supplies were obtained in the neighbouring municipalities, particularly in the village of Kfar

Roummana, a former hub of the Lebanese Communist Party where alcohol is officially available.

The official existence or absence of alcohol, linked to sectarian and political divisions, shows a patchwork of “wet” and “dry” territories at both national and urban levels. It also works on a micro-scale: in the mixed district of Hamra—where the density of alcohol outlets is high—restaurants that do not serve alcohol are close to groceries or pubs that openly do. This is largely due to the building owners who rent the ground floors for retail. In a poorly controlled housing market, they may themselves prohibit or allow the sale of alcohol or, in a more lenient way, require a very high rent.

While the cases of Nabatiyeh and Dahiya show that the leisure activities and availability of alcohol work as signs of morality or attachment to a political group, Hamra’s case suggests a greater range of uses. In a neighbourhood where nightlife flourished in the 1960s, alcohol practices are used to serve political ideologies. It is essentially the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) that has taken advantage of the rebirth of nightlife in the district since the mid-2000s. The territorial anchoring of the party is materialised by the presence of armed partisans, the marking of space by flags or the installation of signs on which short sentences recall their ideological trend. This is based on secularism and cross-borderness (Mermier 2010; Dot-Pouillard 2016). These ideas are claimed as aligned with the ethos of the pubs in the area—spaces of coexistence and openness. It enables the party to reassert its distinction from the major religious parties such as Amal and Hezbollah of which it is nevertheless a partner. Thus, the SSNP is seen as promoter of the diversity of the district, which is historically multi-faith and cosmopolitan, and the use of alcohol is a significant part of this. This example shows that the geography of alcohol is the result of instrumentalisation by political parties with competing ideologies and is thus partly explained by the political and religious power that, in Lebanon, has taken on a spatial dimension.

Private Companies as a Growing Actor

The issue of alcohol control also refers to relations between the Lebanese state and international companies operating in the country. The latter are more involved in improving the acceptance of alcohol rather than extending their sales, which are already very successful. They also act as a workaround for the government and, in so doing, increase their influence. These companies take advantage of weak state regulation or implementation: no restrictions on

alcohol advertising and random control of drink-driving or legal drinking age. In addition, approximately half of the nightlife venues do not have a proper license, and the sale of counterfeit alcohol is commonplace: “*It’s like a regular bottle of Jack Daniel’s, but made here, in which there’s more water or adulterated alcohol than anything else. (...) There are few clean places. (...)*” (Interview Z. B., April 2015).

While there are few legal restrictions on the trade and sale of alcohol, companies operating in Lebanon have various forms of self-regulation, leading them to seize the state’s responsibilities such as security, public health and the struggle against the informal trade. At the same time, they display an “ethical business” value allowing them to better control alcohol circulations and practices. Diageo’s initiatives are a good example, as they are involved in many aspects of alcohol distribution and consumption. This starts with financial support for NGOs such as Kunhadi or Skoun, which focus on road safety and the prevention of various addictions. Through the campaign “Drink Positive”, Diageo works on both representations and practices:

It is part of the CSR Initiative of Diageo to promote moderation in society: inciting people to make positive choices about alcohol, promote moderation. For us, Diageo is “to celebrate life everyday and everywhere”. So the purpose of alcohol is celebration. And it shouldn’t be abusive. So the purpose of the campaign is to remind people to make positive choices about alcohol. And all of this contribute to the positive role alcohol has in society and it helps Diageo to achieve its ambition to become the most respected and trusted company in the world (...). In addition to that, there is something called “Save the night”, which is training the clubs and pubs in Lebanon in order to become responsible outlets: bartenders, bodyguards, how to interact responsibly with the people who are there. There are different criteria like serving water, and they are given an accreditation. (Interview D., April 2018)

The association of alcohol with sociability and celebration, and the denunciation of all excesses, help to release alcohol from its negative ascriptions (dependence, loss of control, isolation). It is also a way to strengthen and value good practices in drinking, promoted on billboards. This moralisation of alcohol, which can be seen in the posters shown below,¹⁶ is combined with training employees (bartenders, waiters, bouncers). By preventing misbehaviour, the company gets closer to the nightlife stakeholders (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 Drink positive campaign by Diageo, 2018. (Source: drinkiq.com)

Finally, Diageo's initiatives concern the company's activities. They began to collect and reuse glass bottles, in a country where waste recycling is mainly carried out by NGOs.¹⁷ If the aim is above all to avoid the stealing of bottles and their use to sell counterfeit alcohol, this contributes to an improvement in the company's reputation and, eventually, to the extent of its influence on the State authorities:

When the government looks at me and sees that I'm collecting the bottles and running responsible drinking campaigns, and cooperating with NGOs, training bartenders, we are seen as a trustable partner. So when I go to the police and tell them "guys, we have an issue in Lebanon", they listen to me. (Interview D., April 2018)

This replication of the duties of the state allows a genuine takeover in the economic and political system, which serves to tackle informal trade. This firstly involves lobbying to keep taxes low, and secondly pointing out the loss of income that counterfeiting represents. The control of informal trade is also achieved through reporting, which involves the Internal Security Forces, and training sessions with the police:

We have our people on the ground... We are intelligence people if you want. So if we spot anything wrong in the market, we give the police the leads, "This shop, they are selling fake, or they sell smuggled alcohol", and we give the details. Our

law firm go with them, they do the raid, they catch them. And so far we are getting very good results. On smuggling, parallel import, or counterfeiting. But it doesn't stop (...) we carried out training for police officers as well. They come here, we show them what is counterfeit, all of that. (Interview D., April 2018)

The position of Diageo—which has the largest share of the formal alcohol market—is therefore not instruction. The challenge is not so much to increase the number of consumers as to avoid reprobation and strengthen its status. Nevertheless, its ability to impact on security-related authorities (police, Internal Security Forces) is a key indicator of how power is exercised in Lebanon. It involves the regulation of trade and labelling practices as “good” or “bad”. The posters produced by Diageo are thus part of a normative and prescriptive framework that guides drinking patterns which in turn show different manifestations of transgressive practices.

Drinking Patterns between Performance and Transgression

Performing Gender in Nightlife Venues

While alcohol embodies national values that are conveyed and understood as unifying, the representations attached to drinking, especially in bars and clubs, contribute to reproducing gender stereotypes. This assessment is mainly true for women, and can be observed through events involving alcohol, and through drinking behaviours. The two posters reproduced below provide information on the organisation of a “ladies night”, in other words a happy hour for women (Fig. 5).

These images illustrate a business strategy. A happy hour for women only attracts customers, firstly women because of the special rate, then men, because this kind of event ensures the attendance of women, and therefore potential conquests: they are in some ways part of the venue's offer. This operation is profitable: the lost profits represented by promotions for women are limited, since they are generally less likely to drink a lot. It is largely offset by male patrons willing to offer and drink more.

By targeting a specific population, the advertising posters convey a number of stereotypes. The first image shows several pink items: sneakers, bag, lipstick and a cocktail glass. All these things are not only to be seen as extensions of female bodies but also as an indication of the self-presentation rules for women. It begins with make-up, then casual but feminine clothing—hence the pink Converse—and ends with the micro-bag which is



Fig. 5 Advertising for ladies nights at Bodo Bar. (Source: Facebook, February and April 2017)

more ornamental. Finally, the suggested drink is not to be missed. It is served in a stemmed glass, designed for cocktails or drinks considered “typically feminine” such as a Cosmopolitan (also pink) or Martini.

The construction of a masculine and feminine drinking is therefore based on the beverage selection. Those usually associated with women are wine, light or fruity cocktails, perhaps beer but in a specific variation (low in calories for example). For men, some preferences are also expected: strong alcohols and spirits, beer, wine. While advertising has long been involved in building gender identities through drinking (Chrzan 2013) these are perpetuated by the people who are directly in charge of preparing and serving drinks in nightclubs, especially bartenders:

Whenever a guy orders something with strawberry... all right, I do that, but... no! Have a good drink, a proper drink! You have to have a proper drink. Even women... but if a woman orders a Negroni... that's fucking sexy! (Interview Sg. S., 19/03/2015)

This indicates that there would be drinks unsuitable for a man, in this case a cocktail made with fruit. Ordering them is like being disregarded by the bartender, who, on the other hand, considers women who consume strong and masculine drinks to be particularly attractive. Thus, this small transgression is not particularly a release, but rather puts the woman in other

representations, here that of a liberated person, also sexually. The possibility of achieving any kind of freedom for women through alcohol consumption is thus ambiguous: attending bars and pubs is certainly like appropriating places constructed as masculine, but this involves the observance of certain gender stereotypes (respect for beauty standards, moderation). Thus, the indoor areas of bars and nightclubs, which are largely dedicated to alcohol consumption, are of course places of mingling, but this does not imply a uniformity of practices. This is related to the scenic dimension of nightlife: the visibility involved is no longer that of alcohol, but rather the performances associated with drinking. Behaviours are thus guided by the option of either complying with—and reinforcing—specific stereotypes or defying them. A variety of gender, but also social and moral, standards can therefore be encountered in these places.

Alcohol, Transgression and Invisibility

In Lebanon, a significant part of the population is abstinent or not supposed to drink, according to religious, moral or social standards. This statement varies according to place and people. Thus, the study of alcohol requires considering a set of individual or collective arrangements: abstinence, drinking occasionally, drinking away from home, drinking but not getting drunk, for example. The greater tolerance towards alcohol in Lebanon may reduce its subversive power, yet the presence of young partygoers in and around nightlife venues constitutes various forms of encroachment (Bayat 2013), conceived as ways of dealing with the various forms of authority. The transgression may lie in the fact of drinking, or drunkenness. It is therefore important for people to avoid social control. The aim is both to preserve one's reputation and to prevent exposure to the various forms of authority to which an individual is submitted. On this basis, we observe concealments which can be analysed on three different levels: the urban, district and venue scale.

At the urban level, the search for concealment spaces involves the mobility of dwellers out of their residential area. The people concerned are mainly those for whom attending a bar or nightclub is reprehensible according to their immediate entourage—family, neighbours, family friends—because these trips imply alcohol consumption, listening to inappropriate music, and proximity between men and women. For A., a 25-year-old female student living with her parents at the time of the interview, it is parental displeasure that must be overcome:

In my family, we don't drink alcohol, because it's against religion (...). We never even have a discussion about alcohol. But actually, I'm someone who really likes to go out, and I have no problem going out at night. But my parents don't like this kind of leisure very much. (Interview A., 26/03/2015)

In order to ensure night-time activities, A. combines various features. She first uses her student status—it was by becoming a student that she began to attend bars and clubs. She also uses the remote location of the university to explain the long trips and late returns, which she often schedules for after her parents go to bed, so as not to meet them. She favours the bars of Gemmayzeh and Mar Mikhael neighbourhoods, because she is not likely to meet any members of her family there. Urban mobility for the purpose of drinking is common, and sometimes necessary for city dwellers living in dry zones. This search for anonymous places has a protective role—Colette Pétonnet (1987) speaks of “protective dusting”—and an emancipatory one, because it enables individuals to progress through chosen social spheres. Thus, while some residents build a mental map of the recreational places where it is morally acceptable to go (Deeb and Harb 2013), others develop a map of anonymous places (Assaf 2013) where it is possible to bypass social norms. Their spatial practices are then discontinuous: they are associated with different networks that should not be intertwined.

On a smaller scale, some places in Beirut allow a concealment of practices, such as in the Yukunkun club, located in an alley in Gemmayzeh. The hidden and underground nature of the site constitutes a kind of security according to one of the partners: “*It's a place where people can dance, touch, kiss, without being afraid of anything, it's not easy in a country like this. We are safe, there is an entrance hall, stairs that goes down*” (Interview Z. B., 09/04/2015).

In Hamra, Metro al-Madina is another underground party venue that allows people to avoid exposure. It is a small dance bar, located underneath a theatre. Initially, the place was intended to receive visitors, but then became a social destination open late at night. One of its distinctive aspects is to welcome LGBTQ clients whose right to the city, and right to the city at night, is often denied. Here, however, the concealment is ambivalent: it protects but maintains invisibility around marginalised populations.

Drinking places such as bars and clubs provide a backstage: the word refers to places where the performance stops and where it is possible to



Fig. 6 Backstages at grand factory. (©M. Boulos 2015)

transgress the rules, especially obvious drunkenness. The toilets thus function as a space for retreat where it is possible to recover when you have drunk too much. The photograph below is taken from Myriam Boulos' *Nightshift* series,¹⁸ dedicated to the C U NXT SAT parties. It shows two young girls who have apparently been drinking too much. The first is sitting, leaning against the wall and drinking water. The second one is crouched down and seems to be trying to comfort her. The photograph reveals the restrooms, where it is possible to lock oneself away and do what cannot be displayed: vomit, make love, use drugs. It is therefore not necessarily an individual backstage, since it is common to see people coming out of it in pairs (Fig. 6).

CONCLUSION

As a part of ongoing research about alcohol practices in Lebanon—research that intends to focus on alcohol politics and public and private relationships, from alcohol's perspective—this chapter was an attempt to consider the in-between situation of the country. In a wider examination of alcohol issues in the Muslim world, Lebanon offers an interesting case.

The legal status of alcohol within a multi-faith society explains its accessibility, both in terms of price and places for sale or consumption. Although a significant part of the population does not drink or is not supposed to, Lebanon and its capital Beirut are portrayed as a festive place in the Middle East. Thus, advertising campaigns like “Absolut Civil Love” are possible and contribute to an alcogenic environment also made up of numerous bars, clubs, restaurants, groceries and liquor shops. Alcohol and drinking can be considered as ordinary, in the “normal” meaning of the word, and part of everyday life. Nevertheless, the presence and availability of alcohol should not be considered as self-evident. Its varying place is connected to the sectarian divisions in Lebanese society, and to a set of social and moral values whose transgression tend to multiply the regimes of visibility of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness. The study of alcohol as a socio-spatial subject therefore gives significant insights into the various forms of authority, and the political and economic exercise of power, in contemporary Lebanon. The place of alcohol, in its geographical, social and symbolic meaning, is never set: this discrepancy blurs the dichotomy of visible and invisible into a grey zone.

NOTES

1. In Lebanon, the only legal form of marriage is religious. However, civil marriages (between different communities or not) that have been held abroad are officially accepted.
2. Unlike the other categories where gendered labour division still prevails, the drinkers interviewed were both men and women.
3. « Le marché de la bière libanaise, une consommation encore timide », *L'orient-Le Jour*, 31/08/2013. URL: <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/830604/le-marche-de-la-biere-libanaise-une-consommation-encore-timide.html>
4. « Nouvelles taxes sur l'alcool au Liban: quel impact sur le commerce avec l'Union Européenne ? », *L'orient-Le Jour*, 07/08/2017. URL: <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1065991/nouvelles-taxes-sur-lalcool-quel-impact-sur-le-commerce-avec-lue-.html>
5. Fadi Tawil, « Making, drinking arak a source of national pride in Lebanon », *AP News*, 20/09/2018. URL: <https://apnews.com/article/e/13396e870aff4f3babf74b5b87ce5fca>
6. Nabila Rahhal, « Raise a glass to something new », *Executive Magazine*, 6/11/2017. URL: <https://www.executive-magazine.com/industry-agriculture/raise-a-glass-to-something-new>

7. NabilaRahhal, «Ofreds, whitesandrosé», *Executive Magazine*, 10/01/2018. <https://www.executive-magazine.com/industry-agriculture/of-reds-whites-and-rose>
8. « Farmers swap weed for grapes as winemaking blossoms », *The Daily Star Lebanon*, 19/10/2014. URL: <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2017/Oct-16/422808-farmers-swap-weed-for-grapes-as-winemaking-blossoms.ashx>
9. « Lebanese Beer Market Yet to Brew », Blominvest Bank—Research Department. URL: <https://www.blominvestbank.com/Library/Files/BLOM%20Invest/Spot2013/2013-08-Lebanese%20Beer%20Market%20Yet%20to%20Brew.pdf>
10. UN estimation.
11. Ibid.
12. Fieldwork data, April 2018.
13. Interview M.F., April 2015.
14. The drinkscape refers to those places where alcohol flows and is consumed, including outdoor public spaces (street, parks) (Wilkinson 2015).
15. «This is White Beirut », Blitz Advertising: Beirut Visuals, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZLMPW4cXCI>
16. In English, as for the advertising Campaign “Absolut civil love” mentioned in the introduction. This is commonplace in Beirut’s nightlife and in advertising, yet it reflects how alcohol practices, language and social distinction are intertwined in Lebanon.
17. Such as Recycle Beirut, Green Glass Recycling, Arc-en-ciel, Live Love Recycle.
18. Boulos, Myriam. 2015. Nightshift. Photographic series.

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PART II

Normative Systems and Negotiated
Interests



Alcohol and Religious Practices in Meknes (Morocco): Between Rejection and Compromise

Philippe Chaudat

INTRODUCTION

In the Arab-Muslim tradition, the Qur'an, *hadith*, and *fiqh* are permanent and immutable, due to their revealed and extra-temporal character (Bouhdiba 1975). They describe a set of behaviours and models to be followed, reproduced, and respected, and are set as a standard of truth. This Arab-Muslim tradition represents the ideal cultural model. Respecting it scrupulously ensures that one acts in accordance with the texts, in a way that is consistent with dogma and that one is within the framework delimited by God. For many people, to move away from it means to go astray.

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As alcohol is a prohibited or an inadvisable commodity in these texts, dealing with the issue of alcohol in North Africa or more broadly in Islamic countries could thus seem contradictory, curious, or even impossible (since, a priori, it does not exist). Indeed, one might think that Muslims do not consume this commodity, considered as haram.¹ Leading politicians and supporters of the Justice and Development Party (PJD),² recently in power in Morocco, are part of this Arab-Muslim tradition. They advocate strict compliance with the texts and reject any consumption of alcoholic beverages. But another part of Moroccan society has a less strict reading of religious writings, or distances itself from them, and sells or consumes alcoholic beverages. These distributors and consumers sell or consume³ and are at the same time able to reconcile this practice with their religion. The two can thus be opposed by some who consider them to be contradictory and incompatible, contrary to the Law, as well as combined by others who practice their religion while consuming alcohol. These people who consume and distribute these goods view sacred texts in a different way, and reconcile their drinking and religious habits within a “world”⁴ that is their own and which, as we will see, must remain invisible and hermetic.

In the context of this article, it is precisely these underground practices that interest us. We will endeavour here to adopt an approach that is the opposite of that used by the Arab-Muslim tradition, which interprets and criticizes the use of alcohol from the Qur’an: it will not therefore be a question here of reflecting on the positioning of the Muslim religion towards alcohol and we will not begin with the will of God and sacred texts to analyse these practices around alcoholic beverages, but will analyse what alcohol consumers do with religion in their daily lives, so as to be able to sell and/or consume alcoholic drinks. We will thus observe how, in Meknes,⁵ alcohol consumers reconcile (or not) religious practices and their consumption of the haram product. We will thus favour the point of view of the interested parties to understand what place is given to the religious field in this universe of wine and alcohol of which they are the actors.

DAILY RELIGION AND ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Drinking or not drinking alcoholic beverages when one is a Muslim, believer or religious person, refers to two different conceptions of Islam that reflect two different readings of the Book, one moderate and flexible, the other more rigid, sometimes referred to as “Islamist”:

Alcohol is a sin. I do it and I do it again morning and evening [laughs], without any problem. Now I have no problem. But I don't have this complex, this complex of having committed a sin. I don't have it. Being a Muslim is part of my culture, I don't deny it either. I'm not saying I'm not a Muslim, yes, I'm a Muslim, yes. They, the Islamists, will not believe me, because "you are Muslim and *you must not drink!*" [pronounced in an authoritative tone]. (Mr W.)

Thus, the most strict abstain from any alcohol consumption, considering that the Book forbids it, while others, believers and/or religious persons, consume it, considering that the Qur'an does not prohibit it but only advises them to move away from it and not to come to prayer with their spirits troubled by alcohol. They refer to the Sura *Al-Nisa'* (IV, Verse 43), in which the Prophet warns against alcohol: "O you who believe! Stay away from prayer while you are drunk—wait until you know what you are saying!" Still others point out that the Prophet says: "If you want to do something forbidden, do it, but hide to do it." They then reclaim the discourse of the Book by interpreting it in such a way as to make it compatible with their uses of alcohol, considering that they are within their rights and then consuming without any problem, without being seen⁶:

—Can you be a believer and consume alcohol?

—Well, it's a good question, but everyone interprets it, interprets it in their own way. Can we reconcile belief and drinking alcohol? ... that's a good question. So it's true, I'm a believer, I don't pray, so..., but I'm a believer, I believe in God. Of course, I read the Koran, so for us, it's not forbidden, but it tells us that it's in our interest not to drink alcohol and that's different. For me, I try to take it from that side, from that side that says it's not prohibited but that I better not abuse it. This is quite normal, I too am against abuse, because when you abuse, there are also the perverse effects of alcohol: when you drive, you no longer control the wheel, you can no longer walk properly. So, for me, in the Koran, we do not say that it is forbidden, but we say that it is in our interest not to drink alcohol, not to exceed the limits. So I'm trying to take that way. And we have those who ... extremist parties that say "no, it's forbidden". I can have a drink or two, that's no problem. So I am a believer but I must not abuse, I must not exceed a certain limit. So if I don't exceed the limit, I'm within the standards. So, according to my conviction and everyone has their conviction (I am not there to judge others), for me I have a rational explanation: in the Koran, we do not prohibit but nevertheless it says that we must not abuse. I don't abuse, so I find, for me, that there is a conciliation between belief

and drinking alcohol. Others, of course, they say “no, no, no, no, no, it’s forbidden!” But everyone thinks as he wants, there is freedom, everyone is free to think as he wants and to explain the Koran in his own way, as he sees fit. So we have different explanations. What the Koran even tells us is that “beware, do not pray if you are not conscious”. So it means that it is tolerated, but that we should respect the prayer, that we will not pray when we are in an abnormal state, when we have abused alcohol too much. (Mr Q.)

In this case, there is a relatively flexible religiosity among believers and religious persons alike, a religiosity that stems from an interpretation of the Qur’an. We thus find ourselves between two ways of understanding the Qur’an. One is a matter of rigour, “authenticity” and *model*: the person then follows his daily life according to religious doctrine and logically excludes all haram goods from his daily life. The other is individual *interpretation*: some verses are interpreted in such a way as to bring them into line with one’s own practices around alcohol. It is therefore all a question of interpretation and arrangement between a person’s daily practices and religious principles. The latter may be a basis for legitimizing actual or expressed behaviour (this is how it is practised, or is said to be practised, based on religious texts) or they may be interpreted in a sense considered compatible with a practice that is not compatible with others, in this case alcohol consumption, to make it more acceptable (to oneself and/or the social entity). Thus, some people reconcile alcohol and religion without any problem and interpret the latter socially in order to be able to lead their daily lives as they see fit, according to their own choices (in this case, the choice to drink alcohol daily). As Clifford Geertz (1968/1992: 131) says: “In Morocco, the divorce between the forms of religious life and the substance of daily life almost reaches spiritual schizophrenia.” Believers and/or religious persons not only manage to legitimize the coexistence between their religious practices and their consumption of alcoholic beverages, but they also associate them in a concrete way in their daily lives.

Alcohol consumers, whether believers or religious persons, do not ask themselves the question of the *halal* or the haram when they drink a glass of wine, beer, or other alcohol. Religion is like placed in parentheses, compartmentalized. The consumption of alcohol excludes the *concomitant* practice of religion: one cannot exercise one’s religion while consuming alcohol. The two can be reconciled, but not simultaneously; they are in different living spaces and “worlds”. The existence of these dissociated “worlds” allows these alcohol consumers not to exclude themselves from

the Muslim community, not to consider that they are acting against Islam, and to respect the canonical obligations listed above. Thus, for alcohol and wine drinkers, drinking would not have a transgressive character, as long as the two “worlds” are dissociated.

Some people are religious, but still consume alcohol. They may both share rituals with other Muslims (including those who do not drink alcohol) and not share the same value system with them (Ferrié 2004). Many people make their five daily prayers: they mark their obedience to God, but then drink alcohol in the evening after *isha’a* (evening prayer, last prayer of the day). They thus present themselves at prayer without their condition being altered by alcohol. These people prefer not to go to prayer if they have drunk alcohol, even in small quantities, in their own way respecting the instructions of the Qur’an. They then adapt to each of the living spaces (mosques and places of alcohol consumption), to each of these “worlds”, and play the appropriate role.

Consuming alcohol does not necessarily mean not practising your religion, and conversely, not practising your religion does not mean consuming alcohol. Some are indeed not religious and yet do not drink alcohol. There is therefore not necessarily a cause and effect relationship between alcohol consumption and religious practice.

These observations run counter to certain preconceived ideas that describe *the* Muslim as a prisoner of a network of prescriptions, from birth to death, obsessed with respect for the law and norms and the search for perfection. Our observations show that Muslims cannot be characterized *in* this way, but rather that several ways of living and practising their religion can be identified. While many people may seek to remain faithful to the religious obligations and prescriptions set forth by imams and political power, and constantly seek compliance with the Law, others, while considering themselves Muslims, may also not want to be a copy of the “perfect Muslim” and practice their religion in their own way, by consuming alcohol. Religious practices and beliefs can therefore be multiple and variable, they are not always the same. The observation of Ramadan practices by alcohol consumers is along the same lines.

REFRAIN FROM DRINKING ALCOHOL DURING RAMADAN

Ramadan and fasting (*al-siyam*) are of central importance and are a criterion of Islam. The survey conducted by El Ayadi et al. (2007: 119–120) rightly highlights this centrality of fasting:

With regard to the observance of fasting, *ṣiyām*, in the month of Ramadan, 59.9% of the population surveyed deny non-practicing Muslims any Islamism ... For the majority of all age categories, observance of the Ramadan fasting ritual is a main criterion of Islam. Thus, in terms of the criteria of Islam, the observance of fasting is endowed with a rate that is almost twice that of the observance of the rite of prayer ... Ramadan as a religious rite thus retains all the effectiveness of which Charles-André Julien spoke, even among Muslims who do not observe the rite of prayer in normal times. While social tolerance towards the practice of the rite of prayer is confirmed, the Ramadan fasting rite remains strongly controlled by the community. The non-observance of this rite exists in Moroccan society, but it is not visible on the public scene because, in addition to the condemnation of the community, there is the sanction of the law which prohibits the non-observance of the Ramadan fast in the public sphere.⁷

During Ramadan, but also during *Eid al-Kabir* (the feast of sacrifice, commemorating Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac), *Fatih Muharram* (Muslim New Year) and *Eid Mawlid Al-Nabi*,⁸ Moroccan law requires the closure of the wine and alcohol departments of supermarkets and grocery stores⁹ as well as bars and restaurants that sell alcohol. The latter could remain open and serve alcohol only to non-Muslim customers, or serve only non-alcoholic drinks, but in Meknes many establishments prefer to close, as there are fewer tourists than in Marrakech, for example, and the Muslim customers of these establishments are not interested in this type of drink.

Alcohol consumers, on the other hand, have varying attitudes towards Ramadan. Many people prefer to abstain from alcohol during this period. These clients (including prostitutes who are hostesses and who are numerous in bars) prefer to stop drinking alcoholic beverages, sometimes a week or even forty days before, during the month of the *shaban*. To explain their abstinence or that of others during Ramadan, they put forward several explanations. For some, it is the sacredness of this period and the more intense family life that encourage them not to consume alcohol. For others, those who stop drinking alcohol during Ramadan do so to counterbalance their transgressive practices during the rest of the year, to redeem themselves before God, and to draw closer to religion.

Even in the working class, even in poor neighbourhoods, you will not find people who drink alcohol during Ramadan, or very, very, very, very exceptionally. Because, in general, even these people, who are not very literate, not very educated, etc., consider Ramadan to be a sacred month. That is,

even if they have made mistakes, such as drinking alcohol, they think that by respecting the month of Ramadan, the board will be erased. (Mr U.)

- During Ramadan, the mosques are very full. Really, people, well, those who are in bars all the time, sometimes I have the impression that it is this population that is the most pious during Ramadan, who is at the mosque, etc., respect for the rules, it is as if it were a game of compensation, of balance. So they're a little in that game, of compromise. They are a little in this mosaic of situations, they adapt to them. And you can't say they're hypocrites, because no, they are like that. It is simply a mode of operation. A form of plural identity. And even when you deepen the discussion with them, well, they tell you "listen, I don't want to isolate myself in my own society", but yes, there also they give you another situation, they say: why am I going to create situations of isolation in my own society? It is also an argument that can be heard.
- A situation of isolation by what means?
- Isolating oneself is cutting oneself off from networks, family and religious ties, etc. So since they are in this situation of compromise, that's what builds their personality. At the same time, their personal identity is based on these contradictions, but it's what they are. It's not that they're playing.
- Is Ramadan a way to stay anchored in the community?
- Yes, that's right. That's why I said "create a bond". If they isolate themselves in bars, they are still seen and in addition they exclude themselves from community and family ties, in the mosque, etc., and that's where it can become schizophrenic, because they will experience extremely violent pathological situations. But the fact that they walk around, that they move from one space to another, they live it well. They do not experience this as a form of hypocrisy, it is the image we send back to them. I would rather say that it is the others who are hypocrites because they are a bit single minded. It is as if there is good and evil and there is no intermediary, as if there is no space for contact and connection. On the other hand, they are not only there, they are also in that living space. It has to circulate. They are also in the intermediate living space. They are mediators after all [laughs]. (Mr G.)

Still others do not drink alcohol during this period, not for religious or family reasons, but because they fear being spotted because of their breath, and fear to suffer the stigma of their social environment and/or repression by the authorities. It is true that social tolerance towards alcohol consumers is much less pronounced during this fasting period. It should also be stressed that societal pressure is important and pushes individuals to do Ramadan,¹⁰ “to pray with everyone” and to play their role as head of the family (especially by setting an example for their children). Social pressure against alcohol consumers is even greater during this period and can be quite effective. Drinking alcohol or wine can then become very complicated, hazardous, even risky:

- During Ramadan, do you drink alcohol?
- No. No. No, I can’t, for several reasons. Because we talked about social pressure in normal times, but during Ramadan, it’s unimaginable! That is, if someone drinks alcohol, they must not leave their home, at the risk of being lynched. If you ever smell alcohol, you meet people ... Even inside your home, you have to hide.
- In relation to your wife?
- In relation to your wife, in relation to visitors, in relation to neighbours, in relation to your family, in relation to your children. With respect to your wife, there could be a complicity. That’s not the problem, we can’t talk about a person or two. But, let’s say you will be constantly insecure, even inside your home. If someone comes, well, you have to hide, who’s coming? So this is really forbidden, we are really entering the forbidden. Now it’s something else, it’s really... (Mr U.)

Thus, during Ramadan, social pressure is such in Morocco that some people abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages during this period or consume them, hidden in their homes, while they drink publicly if they are in France.

This practice of Ramadan and this temporary abstinence from alcoholic beverages can also be explained by the ability of fasting to maintain a link between the non-practising individual and his religion. Fasting and alcohol deprivation are a real discipline that allow us to witness our belonging to Islam in a collective context. Respecting Ramadan would thus allow some alcohol consumers to maintain a foothold in the Muslim community

to which they belong, and, during this period, to move from one “world” to another, as this person points out:

Respecting Ramadan would be a way of respecting the community, a way of actually adhering to this community of belonging, because you have two communities in there: you have the community of belonging and the community of reference. The reference community will be the group of peers with whom you empty bottles, with whom you spend time, etc. And the community of belonging is your community of origin in fact and people, sometimes, they will live ... there are those who will experience it in a somewhat difficult way and others who will easily find the balance between the two. It depends on each individual. (Mr R-C.)

But other people resist this social pressure. They choose to lead their daily lives unchanged during this period and to continue marketing and/or consuming alcoholic beverages on their own terms.

CONTINUE TO DRINK ALCOHOL DURING RAMADAN

During the days before Ramadan, when the bars are still open, some consumers abstain from drinking alcohol, so that they can start fasting without having any trace of alcohol in their bodies. Others, on the contrary, continue to consume it, but then prefer to change bars. They do this in order not to *show the* consumers of the usual bar that they do not respect the preparation of this month of fasting well, and on the contrary to *show* them their religiosity, by their absence.

As Ramadan approaches, a week before Ramadan, in fact, people are beginning to reduce their consumption of wine or alcohol, in anticipation of the three days before Ramadan ... in addition, it gets around that we have to stop forty days before Ramadan, because wine and alcohol remain in the body. So you have to purify the body before you start Ramadan, so it's just sheer stupidity to make people stop drinking before. However, some people want to show that they have stopped drinking, but two weeks before that, they go to other bars to drink and other people from other bars come to our bar. I didn't pay attention, but a bartender told me that. Some people, that's it, don't want to show that they drink before Ramadan, so they go elsewhere to continue drinking and others, come here. Yes, I noticed it, it's incredible! (Mr A-A.)

During Ramadan there are alcohol consumers who refuse to stop drinking alcohol. But, for fear of social sanction, they must change their habits during this period, and consume differently, on the sly, only at home. They must take into consideration, while reconciling them, both their personal and external perspectives, depending on the “world” in which they find themselves. Above all, they must show that they respect fasting even if they do not respect it (especially when the food concerned is alcohol), the whole community being concerned: drinking alone at home is an individual matter, but drinking becomes a collective problem from the moment the practice becomes public (and is made public visually and/or through smell). What is decisive here is therefore less the act than the demonstration of the act,¹¹ the latter jeopardizing the balance between the “worlds” and their cohabitation. The important thing is not to show that we are deviating from the actual practices of Islam, out of respect for other Muslims and their “world”, which is explained by the fact that “no one will erase from the Muslim’s mentality the feeling of responsibility he has towards other Muslims” (Delcambre 2004: 89). And the respect for religious conformity by many alcohol consumers, due to very strong social pressure, does not usually call into question the sincerity of their faith, even though they have practices that could be considered contrary to dogma.

To be able to consume at home in peace during Ramadan, bottles and cans are stocked up from the supermarket or from a grocery store before fasting begins.

There are those who are stockpiling. There are many of them. I know friends who stock up before Ramadan, like twenty bottles, forty bottles. He needs at least one bottle at night. That’s why he buys thirty bottles, forty bottles, he stores before Ramadan. And so, once the last prayer is made, he drinks his wine during Ramadan, there is plenty of it. It means that there is the relationship to the rule and the transgression of the rule that can be multiple and situated at different levels, thus we make do. (Mr Z.)

A few days before Ramadan, it’s impressive, the wine shelves are literally looted! People have reserves at home. (Mrs D.)

These alcoholic drinks are kept in the home, hidden in a closet so that the cleaning woman, neighbours, or other visitors do not see them, and are

then consumed out of sight, often alone in the bedroom when living with the family.

Some people sometimes continue to supply themselves discreetly from their usual shop during this period, without letting the transaction show through to those who scrupulously respect the fast. The mutual trust between the merchant and his customer must then be total and based on a lasting relationship between the two men, only within the framework of an inter-knowledge network, and within a single “world”. Sometimes the grocer respects Ramadan himself by fasting and makes his daily prayers, but he nevertheless sells alcohol to his Muslim customers during this period. This situation, at first sight, may seem contradictory, but it is not. The transaction takes place in secret, and again, what is decisive is not to show that he does not respect the prohibition of sale during Ramadan. If the exchange is visible, it also becomes a public affair and involves others and society as a whole. It is at this very moment that it becomes a transgression and is condemnable. But the “worlds” are not always hermetic. The transaction may sometimes appear in public. This situation can then become conflictual but can also be ignored, the observer outside this “world” pretending not to have seen anything. Here again, the question of gaze and monstration is fundamental:

Once, I was buying alcohol in the middle of Ramadan in this grocery store. There’s a woman who came in. So it was at four o’clock, I was doing something, but really, from a social point of view, which is not ... the woman, she looked at everything, a 40-year-old woman, a 50-year-old woman, she acted as if she hadn’t seen anything. But I swear, she saw what happened. She turned her back, she didn’t look anymore, so as not to ... I thought it was very considerate of her, you know. She didn’t come out, she waited quietly for me to finish the thing so she ... you know. (Mr V.)

Others cannot buy their goods from their usual grocery store and then use the services of clandestine wine and alcohol sellers (*garabas*) to obtain them. It is likely that the prohibition of alcohol during these religious holidays will favour the informal sector and contribute to its development.

The prohibition of the sale of alcohol during Ramadan can promote not only the informal sector but also corruption. Indeed, this temporary prohibition can also be exploited by another actor: the police. The latter can accuse a trader of selling alcohol during this period to obtain “bak-sheesh”,¹² as evidenced by this trader:

After an Eid party, the police came to pick me up and told me that their boss had seen me taking boxes of bottles out of the store and handing them over to someone. That wasn't true, I wasn't even there. The police told me that they could not say that their chief was lying. So I had to pay baksheesh. (Mr I.)

Finally, it should be noted that alcoholic practices during Ramadan can sometimes be the subject of humour. A journalist wrote the following article on April 1, 2016:

Morocco: 6 years in prison for anyone who has consumed alcohol 40 days before Ramadan

The PJD, more determined than ever to introduce religious laws in the kingdom, today announced the implementation of a new law on the marketing of alcohol. **This law stipulates that all alcoholic or alcoholic beverages will be banned in Morocco 40 days before the month of Ramadan.** [Sentence in bold by the author.] Just after the announcement of its *Morocco Cannabis 2016* bill, which legalizes the use of cannabis in Morocco, parliament has just voted for a new law prohibiting “any operator of a licensed establishment from selling or offering free alcoholic or alcoholic beverages to Muslim Moroccans 40 days before the holy month of Ramadan”, according to article 28 of the same law.

And anyone who violates this rule risks being “**punished with imprisonment from 1 to 6 years and a fine of 3000 to 15,000 dirhams or only one of these two penalties**”. [Sentence in bold by the author.] The decision concerns all points of sale: breweries, supermarkets, bars, nightclubs..., but remains relatively flexible towards hotels, especially since Ramadan will take place in June, a period of high tourist traffic. It is clear that through this decision, the government is deciding to take drastic measures against alcohol consumption in Morocco.¹³

However, the journalist added the following warning to her article: “Notice to our readers: You may have guessed it, but it was indeed an April fool’s.”

These kinds of jokes are part of a larger set of funny stories or jokes about drinking that some people make. We can take the example of alcohol consumers who, when they hear the muezzin in the street, ironically divert the call to prayer and transform “Allahou akbar” into “Go to the bar!” playing on the phonetic similarities between Arabic and French sentences (“Allez au bar” in French), mixing religion and alcohol and thus

diverting the religious message from its original meaning, to the limit of blasphemy.

This description, which focuses on the consumption and circulation of alcoholic beverages in a Muslim country, thus makes it possible to analyse how the people concerned themselves connect the religious with their daily lives, and how they conceive of this connection within the framework of a daily Islam. It is through the practice of the five daily prayers and the fast of the month of Ramadan that we can see that the respect for canonical obligations does not contradict the practices relating to alcohol and that, as in any society, “we deal with...”, thus referring to the current plurality of religious practices in Islam. Alcohol is thus a “crossroads object” that makes visible the variability of religious practices.

ALCOHOL, A “CROSSROADS OBJECT” REVEALING THE VARIABILITY OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN ISLAM

Alcohol-related practices reveal differences in behaviour and attitude towards the Muslim religion. Indeed, on the Moroccan scale, differences in behaviour and attitude exist and the spiritual unity of society does not exclude the diversity of practices and interpretations towards Islam. There are gaps between the ideals of society and its actions. The discourse of Muslim alcohol consumers therefore shows us that we can believe in God and practice our religion in many ways and thus deal differently with the spiritual depending on the context in which we find ourselves. This cross-over study of alcohol use and religious practices shows that it is possible to follow the religious tradition without, however, strictly respecting the rules it imposes, and that departing from it is not necessarily experienced and expressed as a mistake and error. We observe that there is a gap between the representations of the actors and the actual practices of Islam. Moroccan society is not a closed world governed solely by a Muslim religion that ensures social reproduction and the maintenance of social order. This religion does not generate a single order. It has specific characteristics, but it is part of everyday life and dominates the lives of the actors in a variable way. It is mixed with other practices that also make it possible to characterize each social actor (such as drinking alcohol, for example). It is no longer a question of considering *the* Muslim as a social actor, but of considering the social actor as an individual with different characteristics, including that of being a Muslim (with all the degrees in religious practice

that this implies), but which may also concern other dimensions of daily life. The way individuals assemble these different characteristics varies. It is precisely these assemblages that are interesting and make it possible to understand how each person inserts (or not) the religious into their daily life in order to make it compatible with the other elements characterizing their existence, and more particularly with the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

The religious practices implemented by alcohol consumers in their daily lives, particularly during Ramadan, more generally highlight the diversity of ritual practices and their variability depending on time, activity, and daily social relationships of individuals, and relativize the notion of “practising Muslim”, which is too generalizing. This combination of practices also shows us that Islam is not necessarily at the root of all behaviour in Moroccan society, that individuals do not necessarily comply with this system of ideas and this model of practices and that they carry out “tinkering” allowing them to reconcile religion and daily life. Thus, not everything can be explained by religion, and Islam should not be apprehended in an isolated way but must take into account other dimensions of society. It is necessary to correlate it with the ways in which it is put into practice and adapted to everyday life.

The same applies to transgressive practices such as the consumption or distribution of alcohol, which cannot be addressed, analysed, and understood without putting them in dialogue with the religious way. The transgression and uses of alcohol in this case make it possible to show that not all behaviour can be explained by religion as totality closed on itself: change, resistance to change, and social dynamics can only be considered in this context, by going beyond the study of Islam limited to the study of faith, beliefs, or rituals, but through what people do with it, particularly by transgressing its directives. In this respect, alcohol is a “crossroads object”, located at the intersection of the different levels of social life, around which several dimensions of society interact, including religion. The analysis leads to the mobilization of all dimensions of social life, thus transforming this object into a true “total social object” (Mauss 1950/1983). We cannot study religious practices and transgressive practices around alcohol separately, it is essential to understand their interferences, interweaving and/or contradiction, separations, or even their repulsion in the physical sense of the term. To sum up, we have to work on borders. It is from this kind of “crossroads object” that we must seek to approach Islam on a daily basis, making it possible to uncover particular practices, interactions, and

representations, and to go beyond the “totalitarian approach—still dominant—which makes Islam a system of norms and values transcending time and space, and Muslims a passive and interchangeable individual” (Rachik 2018: 11). This approach thus makes it possible to propose a new approach and to give a new image of Muslim societies and the dynamics that drive them.

These observations concerning the respect of Ramadan and daily prayers by people who consume alcohol also refer to the question of the “relationship between belief and action”, thus joining this dichotomy between the forms of religious life and the substance of daily life described by Clifford Geertz (1968/1992: 131), particularly through this example:

When I think of the religious situation [...], in particular the relationship between belief and action, [a young Moroccan man, a Moroccan student, met on a plane to New York comes to my mind]: quite cultured, speaking French, but raised traditionally—evolved, as the acid vocabulary of French colonialism would say; he was going to study at an American university, it was his first trip to the country. Scared, it is conceivable, by this first flight (as well as by the thought of what awaited him on arrival), he spent the whole journey shaking the Koran in one hand and in the other a glass of whisky.

Alcohol consumers reconcile the two practices, reconcile their beliefs and actions, and in fact live their different practices in different “worlds”, in different spheres of expression and exchange. The rupture is not total, and the person can move from one “world” to another, from one sphere to another, in the same way as in economic anthropology we speak of spheres of exchange concerning goods in certain societies, where we can observe various categories of goods and services, but where the exchange of a product can only be done with another product which belongs to the same category. Here, social exchanges, interactions between alcohol drinkers and their individual expression are only possible within the same “world”, the same sphere corresponding to a commodity: alcohol. The “worlds” or spheres must be as tight as possible, the words and behaviours exchanged must also be of the same nature within each “world”. Individual behaviours are communicable, shareable, only if they belong to the same category. Because of the coexistence of these “worlds”, there is a concomitance of respect for the general principles of society (values, morals, conventions, rules of public behaviour, etc.) and transgressive practices. Laws

are broken while adhering to the global conception of the social order that must prevail in society, as produced by the majority of its members. It is thus accepted that a person makes his or her five daily prayers, respects Ramadan, and drinks alcohol, as long as the latter practice is not public, that is, as long as he or she does not appear in the sphere or “world” of abstinent individuals. These behaviours are therefore only seemingly contradictory. The person can therefore both violate a standard of conduct by consuming alcohol and share the religious principles of individuals who scrupulously respect it. It can thus violate rules whose legitimacy it recognizes. To each “world”, to each sphere, corresponds a normative order.

Society is therefore based not on values and norms that would be shared collectively but on a plurality of normative orders specific to different “worlds” that cohabit hermetically, that nevertheless share a certain number of unifying moral values and that would allow everyone to live in society while referring to his or her “world” of belonging. This explains why some people are Muslim, respect the five prayers and Ramadan, give alms, drink alcohol but do not show it to respect the morals shared in the whole society. These different normative systems are therefore effective in each of the different “worlds” through which Muslim alcohol consumers pass. The members of society are in no way disturbed by this situation and instead function by referring to one or the other of these “worlds”, depending on the moment, the living space in which they find themselves, and the social actors involved. Moroccan society thus finds its balance through the coexistence of these different “worlds” which also participate in its dynamics, “worlds” that can only be identified and dissociated by focusing on “crossroads objects” such as alcohol.

NOTES

1. Prohibited, illegal.
2. Party described as “Islamist”.
3. While the sale of alcohol to a Muslim and its consumption by a person of the same faith are prohibited by Moroccan law.
4. The notion of “world” (in regards to the analysis of Howard Becker in 1982, regarding art) refers to the logic of construction, not only individual but also collective, of a living space as well as an object by the cooperation of a set of actors who share certain conventions and who intervene collectively in a coordinated manner and who finally build particular “worlds” which are specific to their practices.

5. I chose to carry out my research in Meknes (a city in north-western Morocco, 60 km west of Fez) because this city is the heart of a vast vineyard developed during the French colonization (Znaïen 2018) and because there still are many bars (due to its status of garrison town during the Protectorate). Bars are all located in the modern town (*Hamria*) built by the French, several kilometres away from the old city (the Medina, the traditional Muslim city, and the Mellâh, the Jewish Quarter). After Independence (1956), most Europeans left the modern town and Moroccans settled there. Many bars remained open, mostly taken over by employees of the former French bosses. The duality between the colonial town and the traditional city then tended to disappear (in the latter, streets and squares were de-baptized and mosques were installed). But it still persists today with this presence of bars and liquor shops in the modern town (the only trace of the former occupants), which have become impure spaces to most of its inhabitants.

The local population had therefore to change its relation to these spaces, adopting exogenous practices while respecting endogenous ones. A new way of life thus emerged for some people and social relationships of an original nature emerged among the urban Moroccan population, due to the persistent presence of alcohol: one had to learn how to live with it, or with those who used it. New practices and conflicts thus emerged in this space, as well as a new way of living together, as the presence of alcohol changed the modalities in social relations between people who have a relationship with alcohol and those who do not.

Meknes, an imperial city, is today the sixth largest city in Morocco. Its population has grown considerably since decolonization: from 140,000 inhabitants in 1952 to 319,800 in 1982 (Noin 1996), and 517,376 inhabitants today (2014 census: Haut Commissariat au Plan, 2021). The city is governed by a conservative mayor, a member of the Justice and Development Party (PJD).

6. Not showing that one buys or consumes alcoholic beverages is essential in Moroccan society. Not respecting this principle is an even more serious act than the individual's relationship with alcohol itself, because it engages other Muslims by touching their principles and morals. For a more detailed analysis of this issue, see Chaudat (2018).
7. The 1963 Penal Code imposes a fine and imprisonment on Muslims who "ostensibly break the fast in a public place".
8. Religious holiday celebrating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, Rabi' al-awwal—third month in the Islamic calendar.
9. These grocery stores selling alcohol and everyday products in the same area can remain open as long as all haram bottles are removed from the

- displays. Those selling these goods in separate areas close the alcohol section and leave open the hallal section.
10. According to Hassan Rachik (in El Ayadi et al. 2007: 83–84), “it is easier to accept a person who does not pray than a person who breaks the fast: 59.9% of respondents do not consider someone who does not fast as Muslim against 27.9% who think otherwise. What attitude should be observed towards a person who is not fasting? 44.1% consider that this person should be punished until he or she returns to the right path, 40.8% consider that this is a private matter and that we are free not to fast, and 14.2% think that we should fast by conformity. In addition, 82.7% of the respondents disagreed that cafés and restaurants should remain open during the day during the month of Ramadan for Muslims who do not fast. With regard to their openness for non-Muslims, the rate of “non-tolerant” people is falling (41.7%).
 11. This mechanism is constantly found in Moroccan society, and in particular in the purchase, sale, and transport of alcoholic beverages (cf Chaudat 2018).
 12. Bride.
 13. Benfdil, Sarah, n.d. <http://www.welovebuzz.com/maroc-6-ans-de-prison-pour-toute-personne-ayant-consomme-de-lalcool-40-jours-avant-ramadan/>. Accessed November 28, 2017.

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Morocco 1912–1956: The Most Prohibitive of the French Colonies?

Nessim Znaïen

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I analyse Moroccan alcohol policies during the French colonial period (1912–1956), a time of changing patterns of alcohol consumption in the country and of new relations between rulers and ruled with the arrival of the French administration. The Protectorate established in 1912 in Morocco was not a genuinely new development and had been tested at the end of the nineteenth century by France in Tunisia or Madagascar and by England in Egypt. However, General Hubert Lyautey (1854–1934), who was appointed governor (*résident général*) of the protectorate in 1912, introduced an original policy towards native Moroccans in many areas of daily life. For this study, I will focus my analysis on the correspondence of the police and economic administrations, in order to understand the particularities of the emergence of prohibitive decrees in the Moroccan Protectorate. These two administrative divisions had

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different powers and interests, and confronting the internal record of both services can help us grasp how complex implementing alcohol policies was in the colonial Islamic world.

How can we account for the enforcement of a strict alcohol policy in Morocco? I will consider three defining moments in the history of the Moroccan Protectorate: the First World War, which nearly coincides with the beginning of the Protectorate regime (officially started with the treaty of Fez in 1912), saw the first attempts at an anti-alcohol policy. During the Interwar period and the 1930s, the results of prohibitionist policies became manifest while an alcohol-based economy started to emerge in Morocco. Lastly, the Second World War years, particularly the short-lived Vichy rule (1940–1942), was decisive due to renewed prohibitionist policies.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE CREATION OF AN ORIGINAL PATTERN OF IMPERIAL PROHIBITION

Fighting Alcoholism: A Reason for the French Intervention in Morocco

Fighting alcoholism was presented right from the start as a major reason for the presence of France in Morocco and as a justification for colonisation, which is out of character for French colonialism.¹ Morocco was actually a particularly coveted land, by European countries and European alcohol companies alike. Moreover, prohibition had become by the early 1910s a matter of heightened national and international interest, more so than for the preceding years. The *Acte Général de Bruxelles* (1890) dealing with the Limitation of the Circulation of Alcohol (as well as the prohibition of slavery and the gun trade in Africa), and the Hague Convention on Narcotic Drugs in 1912, created an unfavourable international legal context for drugs and alcohol (Courtwright 2001). In the colonial press, such as the *Annales coloniales*, the intervention of France in Morocco was initially presented as an efficient way to fight the informal alcohol trade (aka “the liquor traffic”), which was traced back to Spain for the most part.² Shortly after, the newspaper argued that French intervention was urgently needed, since the import of alcoholic beverages had doubled between 1909 and 1910, and the number of alcohol retailers in Casablanca was said to have increased from 6 to 161 between 1910 and 1913.³

A few weeks after becoming *Résident général*, Lyautay had the first prohibition laws passed. They probably aimed at lowering the level of alcohol consumption as much as at a public relations operation, and suggested measures that were consensual for the French and Moroccan elites. On 10 January 1913 the opening hours of public houses were limited, as was the possibility of hiring female employees in bars, and penalties for the sale of alcohol to minors were increased.⁴ While these measures were probably adopted to maintain a certain moral behaviour, preserving the health of soldiers was also at stake: troops were already scarce, so the measures tried to keep them away from a yet-to-be-regulated prostitution sector which would later be supervised through the creation of a red light district (Taraud 2009). Enforcing limitations on the consumption of alcohol in Morocco was made easier for the French authorities by the structure of the market: the companies which dominated it were not French in the first place. Liquors came from Germany and Spain, while wine was mainly exported from Spanish winegrowers until right before the First World War.⁵

French prohibition policy in Morocco before the First World War was given extensive coverage in the French anti-alcoholic press. In May 1914, in a piece called “L’absinthe chassée du Maroc” (Absinth Expelled from Morocco), *La Jeunesse* poured praise on the then General Lyautey, showing him as an example to metropolitan authorities:

What a general did for Morocco, will our 602 deputies have the courage to do it for France? Let us hope they make the liberating gesture that will free us from the most terrible poison contrived by human industry to destroy human life and intelligence. Let us all say it out loud: long live Lyautey! Down with absinth!⁶

The Moroccan policy of prohibiting absinth was not original in the French colonial world. While the ban on absinth in metropolitan France by the government waited until during the First World War, it had been imposed in some colonies in previous years by men such as Gabriel Angoulvant in Ivory Coast.⁷ A couple of years later, the First World War provided the French authorities with a pretext to promote new prohibitive laws in Morocco.

The First World War, the Rise of French Prohibition

French authorities in Morocco took numerous anti-alcoholic measures. In a *dahir* (royal decree) dated 25 August 1914, the General Directorate of Public Works was given the right to close certain bars.⁸ Three weeks later, on 20 September, another *dahir* forbade serving or providing alcohol to Moroccan Muslims.⁹ The 1914 measures can be accounted for with two different reasons. First of all, the French imperial context suggests that the measures were inspired by similar ones adopted in older African colonies. Similar wordings to those of the *dahir* allowing the authorities to close public houses can be found in Tunisian and especially Malagasy legislation.¹⁰ Likewise, prohibition of sales and service of alcohol to Muslims had been decreed a week earlier in Tunisia.¹¹ This suggests that the Moroccan authorities did not want to appear more lenient than their Tunisian counterparts. With the outbreak of war, measures were adopted in every territory of the French Empire and even metropolitan France, in order to better control behaviours and repress excesses in public spaces.¹² Another explanation is specific to the Moroccan Protectorate. Anti-alcohol measures can be understood more generally under the umbrella of the “politique musulmane de la France” devised to regulate the relations between France, the Muslim population of its colonies, and the Islamic world at large. Regulating alcohol contributed to this goal alongside measures forbidding Europeans to enter mosques or allowing them to organise pilgrimages for Muslims to Mecca. In Morocco, anti-alcoholism was one side of the “politique des égards” (policy of consideration) developed by Hubert Lyautey. This policy aimed at showing consideration towards the Moroccan population,¹³ so as to prevent any rebellion. The French colonial authorities dreaded an uprising that might be supported by Wilhem II’s Germany, since the Kaiser cut a rather popular figure in certain Moroccan circles at the beginning of the war (Rivet 2002, 195–200).

As the war drew on, anti-alcohol measures in Morocco became particularly strict, especially when compared with other colonies in Indochina and West Africa. The economic services of the *Résidence générale* advised French migrants to avoid alcoholic beverages, including wine and beer, which shows to what extent social control had tightened.¹⁴ More tellingly, a *dahir* dated 18 February 1917 forbade the import of any liquor to Morocco, with the exception of orders placed by the State administration.¹⁵ This measure was an extension of earlier ones adopted in the territory of Beni Guil,¹⁶ on the Algerian border, where massive informal

exchanges with Algeria, a major alcohol producer, took place (Meloni and Swinnen 2014, 2018, 461–466). Rather than placating Moroccan elites, including writers in *L'écho du Maroc* who doubted the benefits of the measure, the main aim was to slow down imports from Algeria, to whose production a share in metropolitan markets was now denied on account of the war, and which was likely to direct its production towards other colonial markets. One of the main interest groups in Western Algeria, the most important alcohol production region in the country, was the Union of Oran Liquor Sellers (*syndicat des distillateurs liquoristes d'Oran*). It sent a protest against the measures to the French authorities in Morocco. The *Résidence générale* in Rabat answered, with some exaggeration, that the measures only replicated similar measures adopted in metropolitan France, Tunisia, and Algeria.¹⁷

The prohibition of liquors may have been the most spectacular aspect of Moroccan anti-alcoholic policy, but the trend was general: a decrease in imports of all alcoholic beverages could be observed throughout the First World War, more likely because of transportation difficulties and inflated manufacturing costs caused by inflation rather than due to the prohibitionist policy followed by the authorities. In volume, beer imports dropped to one-eighth of their 1913 level during the conflict.¹⁸

THE INTERWAR: THE CLIMAX OF FRENCH PROHIBITION IN MOROCCO

The Continuity of Prohibitionist Policies

The Interwar period saw few additional prohibitionist measures in Morocco. The Penal Code of 1926 confirmed the measures that had been adopted during the war against the sale of alcohol to Moroccan Muslims.¹⁹ Yet the reiterations of the prohibition of absinth and of every anis-based alcoholic beverage in the *dahirs* of 26 April 1915 and 20 February 1923²⁰ was likely a sign of the difficulties that the authorities faced in their efforts to enforce the 1914 *dahirs*.

Two new measures, adopted in 1924 and 1937, concerned the service of alcoholic beverages. Their goal was to impose stricter conditions on the issuing of licences to establishments which served alcohol. The 1924 measure followed similar decisions made in 1901 in Algeria and Tunisia. It defined quotas of establishments serving alcoholic beverages, according to

a maximum ratio of 1 establishment per 300 inhabitants. The 1937 measure gave power to the local administrative authority to forbid, at its discretion, any sale of alcohol in Muslim-majority neighbourhoods.²¹ The latter measures have to be read against the background of anticolonial movements and growing social problems: in 1924, the Rif war pitted Berber tribes from northern Morocco and the French army against one another; in 1937, major protests broke out in several locations, especially Meknes and Port-Lyautey (Kenitra) (Rivet 2012, 323). Prohibitionist policies in the Moroccan Protectorate may not have been a priority for the authorities, but they can be read, on occasion, as an answer to political challenges and local pressures.

In Contradiction to the Development of a Local Economy of Alcohol

The Moroccan protectorate represented an obvious target for the major French alcohol producers after the First World War, especially for strong spirits (whisky, anisette, kirsch, rum), but even for cider and beer. Concerning the latter beverage, “La cigogne” from Casablanca, “L’Atlantique” from Bordeaux, and “L’Algérienne” from Algiers made particularly notable investments in the *casablançais* market. This was probably a market that had only opened up recently for these companies, especially with reduced alcohol exports from Germany since the War. This is why enquiries were made after the war by companies, and by the *Résidence générale*, to assess the potential of the Moroccan consumer market.²² The head of the Economic Office of Marrakech was puzzled by this request, as opposed to his counterpart in Casablanca, who confirmed the existence of an expanding market, as well as to his counterpart in Oujda, who wrote that “liquors and aperitives sell very well in Oujda where bars and restaurants are very popular because of the great lack of distractions”.²³ Similarly, a cider company, the Paul Saintinier company of Rouen, tried to take over the Moroccan market in the early 1920s.²⁴ With great optimism, the head of the Commerce and Industry Office wrote on 21 July 1921 that “the natives could even become a big consumer of this beverage”.²⁵ However, the experiment soon petered out for technical reasons. Bottles had to be particularly robust in order not to lose the froth. This created additional costs, and even when sold at cost price, cider could not compete with beverages made in Morocco. The company gave up on the Moroccan market.²⁶

During the Interwar era, a wine-based economy took off and enabled a growing number of workers to make a living. As early as 1928 a Moroccan delegation joined the Office international du vin (International Wine Office), an intergovernmental organisation with scientific and technical expertise, as a symbol of the new presence of the wine industry in the country. The Moroccan delegation probably acted under the orders of France on the important questions of international market regulation, most of all regarding wine, a sector of which France was a world leader (Garrier 1989, 223–227). In the statistical registers of the country, the surface increase is spectacular, from 960 hectares of vineyards in 1923 to over 5000 in 1928.²⁷ Casablanca combined not only the country's main port of export and a greater number of Europeans but also the largest area devoted to vineyards. More than 2000 hectares of land had been planted in vines around Casablanca by 1928, making around 40% of the total vineyards in surface.²⁸

Moroccan wine production, however, was far below its Algerian and even Tunisian equivalents (Znaien 2020, 44–61). Wine was essentially produced for local consumption. No less than the Director-General of Agriculture admitted in 1929 that there was no real “official control of the total production of wine” and Morocco possessed neither “major wine establishments”, nor “large cooperatives”.²⁹ Moreover, through most of the 1920s, and despite yields that compared with those of Algeria, the wine produced in Morocco failed to meet local demand. Moroccan authorities had to import alcoholic beverages from metropolitan France and Algeria, but also from Spain.³⁰ The alcohol sector was also influenced by the trade war waged by French imperial and Spanish companies over the Moroccan wine market during the 1920s. The Director-General of Finance thus suggested to the Director of Agriculture, Trade and Colonisation in January 1923 a ban on sales in Morocco for any wine containing over 10% alcohol. Prima facie, the measure was in line with the colonial policy that aimed at “preserving” Moroccan Muslims from the strongest alcoholic beverages. But the letters of French financial administrators of the Protectorate help us understand that the projected measure (which eventually failed) aimed first and foremost at limiting imports of Spanish wines, most of which contained between 10% and 15%. Moral reasons were a smokescreen for protectionism and giving an edge to metropolitan wines.³¹

The Protectorate authorities never considered wine as a credible resource for Morocco's foreign trade. While 90% of the wine production

of Algeria and about 60% of Tunisia's were exported throughout the period, there was almost no trace of wine exports from Morocco before the mid-1930s. The local wine production was used primarily for local consumption. The context was also less favourable for Moroccan viticulture than it had been for Tunisian and Algerian wines in the late 1880s with the Phylloxera crisis, which destroyed a third of metropolitan vines at the end of the nineteenth century (Garrier 1989). Moroccan wines were little known, and the metropolitan market was already saturated. Furthermore, with the economic crisis of the 1930s, many metropolitan wine growers struggled to find outlets for their production. The Director-General of Agriculture and Colonisation wrote on this subject to the president of the association of Moroccan wine growers that importing Moroccan wines to France "would undoubtedly provoke, both in metropolitan France and in Algeria, coalitions of interest, under which Moroccan producers would certainly have to suffer".³² Whether these fears were true or not, they showed at least the perplexity that the French authorities in Morocco felt vis-à-vis plans to have wine contribute to the Moroccan trade balance. The economic services of the French administration made enquiries to research potential markets for Moroccan wines in other countries. French diplomats made contacts in Egypt,³³ or in Poland.³⁴ French sales representatives in Poland also expressed their pessimism and argued that by necessity, the economic crisis and high-level competition limited economic opportunities in the country. The *Résidence générale* later enquired into the possibilities of exporting Moroccan wine to the United States or to other European countries such as Belgium, Czechoslovakia, or Switzerland. Time and again, exporting wine proved a success, as in the case of the *Domaine de Beni Assar*, whose wine growers exported 2000 hectolitres of wines to Switzerland in 1934.³⁵ But in most cases, Moroccan wines were the victims of competition, and remained in the country to become part of an increasing local consumption.

The Interwar period saw, as in Tunisia (Znaien 2017, 281), the beginning of a significant local production of beer. The brewing society of Morocco established a brewery in Casablanca in the early 1920s. It quickly reached a production of 18,000 hectolitres per year, which was as much as the total beer imports before the War.³⁶ The goal was to take control of a market that had partly been abandoned by Germany, which had led the beer market in Morocco before the War, with French companies controlling the rest.³⁷ Moroccan breweries remained dependent on imports of

raw materials to produce beer for a long time. Most of the supply of a city like Oujda was provided by Oran's breweries throughout the first half of the 1920s.³⁸ The emergence of local beer production in Morocco soon fell under the supervision of the *Résidence générale*. In 1922, it adopted regulatory, not prohibitionist, measures applying to beer production. By a decision of 21 January 1922, a tax on beer consumption was adopted, on top of the tariff. A group of French beer importers in Casablanca immediately protested, arguing that this tax was superior to its equivalent in France and gave an advantage to wine, but to no avail.³⁹ Two months later, another decision made it mandatory for brewers to put a "brewery" sign on their establishment, so as to make police surveillance easier.⁴⁰ The policy of the *Résidence générale* towards beer was less about coercion than about taxing production and confining it to specific locations. The *Résidence générale* maintained a fairly liberal stance: beer was not to be considered among the most dangerous alcoholic beverages. At the end of the day, French colonial authorities needed money for the budget first of all, and taxation was a more efficient means to that end.

A Limited Repression Exerted with a Soft Touch

The scope of this repression was in fact limited: the Moroccan police prioritised certain cities and spared others. Enforcement was looser in Casablanca or in Saleh. It was stricter in Marrakech and especially in Fes, under the intensified pressure of local elites. In the latter city, rumours in the Medina in 1937 complained that the local authorities were not acting seriously enough to repress drunkenness in Muslim circles.⁴¹ The rumour reached the *Résidence générale*, which attempted to give proofs of improved security in the Medina without incurring extra political risks. A few days later, the Chief of city services had two dozen people arrested, most of them Algerians who had been convicted several times in the past for selling alcohol to Moroccan Muslims. The *Résidence générale* asked the prosecution to make an example of them, and ultimately seven individuals, six Algerians and one Tunisian, were deported from Morocco. Four of these individuals were in their forties and came from the region of Constantine. The men were often married with children and all of them had received convictions repeatedly in the past. A common area of origin and relatively homogenous profiles made it plausible that it was a network

whose members knew each other beforehand and had set up a lucrative business. The Protectorate authorities may also have thought that exiling foreigners would be less risky, as they could benefit from limited solidarities in the city. Blaming Algerians was practical in this case, and the only aspect that had been given consideration was the public relations of the city of Fes, whose authorities and elites tried to defend the image of the city as a preserved space in Morocco. Yet even then, the French authorities seemed reactive rather than proactive, taking initiatives against alcohol only when they felt under pressure.

Selling or giving alcoholic beverages to Muslims had been forbidden across Morocco since 1914, but the law seemed to play out quite differently from one city to the next, and to elicit little effort on the part of the *Résidence générale*. Special rules existed in every city, highlighting the originality of the Moroccan government, when compared to other, more centralised, colonies. In cities like Fes, alcohol was completely prohibited from certain areas from the 1930s onwards. Alcohol was plainly forbidden to everyone, regardless of their origins, in the areas of Fes Medina and Fes Jedid, with the exception of the streets reserved for Europeans. The cities of Port Lyautey in 1928 and of Meknes in 1932 forbade Moroccan Muslims to sell alcoholic beverages and banned alcohol retail within the Medinas. In Saleh, prohibition was limited to the sale of alcohol to Moroccan Muslims.⁴²

Casablanca was an exception, being the most liberal of the Moroccan cities. Despite protests from the *Chambre syndicale de l'alimentation* in Casablanca, in 1931, 1933, and again in 1938,⁴³ Moroccan Muslims were free to sell alcohol. The syndicate argued that an “increase of alcoholism” was likely due to the fact that “no useful sanction can be applied against grocers, who even sell alcoholic beverages to Muslim natives by the glass at the back of the shop”.⁴⁴ With this argument, the syndicate wanted to reach the colonial authorities mostly preoccupied with the management of social control. But the protest, first conceived as a defence of the interests of French companies in Morocco, allows us to understand what was at stake in the control of alcohol sale. Under the surface of a policy of respect for Islam, the true goal was to maintain the monopoly of a tiny French minority over the licences for public houses, or to deter Moroccan Muslims from owning a shop and reaping profit.

THE IMPOSSIBLE PROHIBITION? (1940–1956)

The Second World War, a New Moment of Prohibition to Muslims

As in metropolitan France⁴⁵ and other colonies such as Tunisia (Znaïen 2017, 439–444), the Second World War saw the imposition of prohibition in Morocco. The colonial state took control of and regulated alcohol consumption, production, and trade. In Casablanca, during the summer of 1940, selling high-proof alcohols was restricted to certain hours of the day; advertising and importing high-proof alcohols to the areas built by the French for settlers were forbidden.⁴⁶ Similar measures had been implemented in Tunisia a few days before.⁴⁷ By then, Morocco had come under the control of the Vichy regime, which was fighting against alcoholism, liquor consumption, and—these issues were all connected in the eyes of the Vichy authorities—for the “moral regeneration” of the French nation. Alcohol producers, the Union of Bar Owners, and the Board of Trade of Casablanca joined in protesting against the regulation policy and tried to circumvent the law. The Office of Agriculture tried the same tactics and enforced the law only for the high-proof alcohols, so as “not to impede Moroccan production”.⁴⁸ In like manner the unions of wine producers protested a few weeks after the decrees at the Board of Trade and Industry of Casablanca. They argued about the risk of unemployment for the 48 employees of the four main companies, as they had been selling aniseed aperitifs in Casablanca.⁴⁹

A little less than two years later, a measure dated 28 March 1942 forbade any Muslim to operate an establishment where alcoholic beverages were served.⁵⁰ The situation in metropolitan France and in the Empire was given as a justification for the measure. It was implemented to comply with French law and with measures adopted in Algeria on 25 October 1941. The measures also concerned rationing tickets, which had been imposed for the sale of a limited number of food products. Rationing tickets including wine were particularly severe towards Muslims. Though the tickets were given according to nationality, not religion, the administration kept a dichotomic policy and ended up opposing Muslims and non-Muslims. A circular dated 15 September 1942 specified that “Algerian natives” with a European consumption card (such as those which had been given out by the French administration in order to regulate food stocks) could not use it to claim a ration of wine. Similarly, in Marrakesh, in March 1943, a Moroccan Muslim who had become French by marriage

tried to claim a wine card, on account of her new nationality. The municipality of Marrakesh refused, on account of the religion she was born in, eliciting protest from her husband.⁵¹

1945 and Beyond: A Lighter Touch

After the Second World War, the numerous prohibitionist measures imposed on French African colonies and in metropolitan France during the war received heavy criticism, especially from the pressure groups created by alcohol producers. In November 1949, the Secretary General of the Moroccan Protectorate organised consultations with the civil controllers of different Moroccan regions. The aim was to determine if keeping the prohibition on imports and the production of aperitif beverages, as imposed during the war, was a necessity. Civil controllers were rather unfavourable to a liberalisation of the market, though they admitted that the ban was only nominal and was in fact impossible to enforce. Some of them took as a model Algeria's very liberal regime on alcohol, a regime already modelled on metropolitan France, and argued for open borders for wines as was the case in Algeria. The civil controller of Rabat recognised that Algerians in the city were surprised "that the freedom enjoyed by the inhabitants of the neighbouring colony is not extended to Morocco".⁵² The civil controller of Marrakesh maintained that "the neighbouring population of Algeria had apparently not drawn a sense of welfare from imported tastes and habits of this nature".⁵³ Two points stand out here. First, the comparison with Algeria, even as a foil, always seemed natural for Moroccan economic and political elites, and more so than Tunisia. Second, harmonisation of policies between the three countries of the Maghreb could be used as an argument for stricter prohibition but was never a priority for the Moroccan administration.

However, despite conflicted economic interests, the French authorities in Morocco maintained until the end of the Protectorate a position of "protection" towards Muslim Moroccans, that is, protection against themselves and against the various temptations understood to contradict nature and their religion. In July 1952, the delegate of the *Résidence générale* wrote to the director of the security services to express the public shock felt when, at a carnival in Rabat, some bar tenants "most of the time Spanish, proposed games of chance to the native clientele, whose difficulties to calculate her chance of winning we are well aware of".⁵⁴ The official focused specifically on the games "whose reward are made up of spirit

wines”⁵⁵ and “a lasso game whose stake consisted of bottles of wine”.⁵⁶ Here are classical elements of colonial ideology, allowing it to impose hierarchies between different groups. In that context, a hierarchising criterion rested upon drinking behaviours. But behind the aim to create colonial hierarchies, a more concrete stake was to create alliances with Muslim elites. The official, in order to get the police officer to act, claimed to rely on “the healthy Muslim opinion” and “the repeated protests from indigent members of the Rabat Municipal Commission”.⁵⁷

An Enduring Contradiction Between Prohibition and the Reality of Alcohol Consumption

During the last ten years of the Protectorate, the number of hectares planted in vines fell slightly but remained on a level with the 1930s. In the statistical yearbooks, the figure stood between 20,000 and 25,000 hectares. The decline in yields during the war, however, did not permit the Protectorate to achieve self-sufficiency in wine, and Morocco had to import about half of its consumption from Algeria in the years following the war.⁵⁸ The presence of alcohol in the public space remained a discriminating feature between Moroccan cities, with Casablanca probably an exception. There, during the last fifteen years of the Protectorate, a large workforce lived off the liquor trade. During the Second World War, for instance, the four major liquor companies (Phénix, Gras, Taourel, and Pernod) employed in total around fifty workers. Seventy per cent of them were natives.⁵⁹

However, from a global point of view, the number of public houses and the availability of alcohol seemed to be much lower than in Algeria and Tunisia throughout the Protectorate. If we count the addresses of public houses against the total populations of the countries, data that could be found in the *Bottin de l'Union coloniale française*, there were slightly more than three bars per 10,000 inhabitants in Algeria, almost two in Tunisia, and only 1.25 in Morocco.⁶⁰ The gap is greater if we study the number of drinking places in the ten largest cities of the three respective countries. We then come up with nine drinking places per 10,000 inhabitants in Algeria, six in Tunisia, and around 3.5 in Morocco. The data must be considered with caution, as we cannot ascertain the degree of knowledge of the country the authorities had. But it can at least be taken as an indicator of the limited social space taken by public houses in Morocco, something which probably had to do with a reduced European presence.

According to the *Bulletin de l'Union coloniale*, French settlers represented in fact around 5% of the overall population of Morocco under the Protectorate, about twice as much in Algeria in the same period, and around 7–8% in Tunisia.

The study of the overall consumption of wine per capita in the three colonies seems to produce results coherent with the number of bars. Comparing population, wine production, and trade in the statistical year-books of the three North African territories, we find that about fifty litres of wine per inhabitant were consumed in Algeria during the last twenty years of the period. The rate barely reached the much lower figure of fourteen litres per inhabitant and per year in Tunisia. It was even lower in Morocco, somewhere under twelve litres. The main indicators show that Morocco was the Northern African colony which was least concerned with alcohol consumption, at least as far as could be known by the administration (liquors, wines, beers). The consumption of local alcoholic beverages, such as palm wine, almost never appeared in the colonial archives.

CONCLUSION

The Moroccan Protectorate was one of the last territories to be added to the French colonial empire. Alcohol policy there was an exception due to its role as a justification of colonisation, although its results compared with those obtained by the authorities in Tunisia, the other French Protectorate in North Africa. The fight against alcoholism was among the main reasons given in the colonial press and the French authorities to justify French presence in the territory. Decisions were made quickly, as early as 1912, such as the prohibition of absinth, which made of the Moroccan Protectorate a precursor of metropolitan France. Hubert Lyautey then introduced a prohibitionist policy based on a discourse of respect for the local elites and, more generally, for Muslim populations. The emblematic measure of the period was adopted on 20 September 1914 and prohibited giving or selling alcohol to Moroccan Muslims. For forty years, from a legal point of view, one of the most prohibitionist policies in the French Empire had been adopted in a territory where the proportion of French and Europeans in the overall population was low, as was the economic importance of alcohol in the Moroccan Protectorate. Legal chronology and repressive practices on the ground suggest nevertheless that those measures were mostly immediate responses to specific local or metropolitan solicitations, without an idea of a long-term policy.

NOTES

1. On the reason and the stakes of French colonialism in Morocco, see Rivet, 1988. *Lyautey et l'institution du Protectorat français au Maroc*.
2. (À propos des vins de l'Algérie et du Maroc), *Les annales coloniales*, 25 February 1913, 3.
3. (*Maroc*), *Les annales coloniales*, 3 May 1913, 3.
4. The *Résident Général* publicly recognised the problem by mentioning the danger for the soldiers in the field. He lamented the capitulation regime which limited the enforcement of the measures adopted in France to French individuals. The *Résident Général* asked “the sherifian authorities to publish a decree strictly forbidding the ingress into bars to consume alcoholic beverages to Muslims.” (“[Injonction aux] autorités chérifiennes de prendre un arrêté qui interdit d’une manière absolue aux musulmans de pénétrer dans des débits pour y consommer des boissons alcooliques”). (Arrêté of 10 January 1913). (À propos des vins de l'Algérie et du Maroc), *Les annales coloniales*, 25 February 1913, 3.
5. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C249, Questionnaire relatif à la situation actuelle de la Viticulture, 1915.
6. “Ce qu’un général a fait pour le Maroc, nos 602 députés auront-ils le courage de l’accomplir pour la France? Espérons d’eux ce geste libérateur qui nous délivrera du plus affreux poison qu’ait inventé l’industrie des hommes pour détruire la vie et l’intelligence humaine. Et crions tous d’un seul cœur: vive Lyautey! sus à l’absinthe!”
7. Archives Nationales de Côte d’Ivoire, 1FF105, *Dossier relatif à l’interdiction de vendre et de donner de l’absinthe aux indigènes*.
8. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, IMA100 241.
9. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat marocain, E1068, *Dahir du 20 septembre 1914*.
10. Archives Nationales de Côte d’Ivoire, 1FF99, *Circulaire au sujet de l’application de l’arrêté du 22 août 1914 portant réglementation sur les débits de boissons dans la colonie*, Antananarivo, 7 september 1914.
11. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat tunisien, Supplément au premier versement, 20, alcoolisme, *Décret du 12 Septembre 1914*.
12. On this point, see Fillaut, 1999. ‘Pouvoirs publics et antialcoolisme en France sous la Troisième République’, 127–192. And Fillaut, 2014. *Le pinard des poilus*.
13. On this policy, see e.g.: Rivet, *Histoire du Maroc*, 306–310.
14. Protectorat de la republique francaise au Maroc, *Notice sur le Protectorat français du Maroc*, Paris, Galerie d’Orléans, 1916, 61.

15. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C285, *Application de l'ordre résidentiel du 18 février 1917, portant interdiction d'importation des alcools au Maroc.*
16. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C285, *Enquête sur la production et consommation des boissons alcooliques, bureau international contre l'alcoolisme, 1923.*
17. Ibid.
18. From 17,600 hectolitres to 2720 between 1913 and 1918. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C228, *Statistiques d'importation de bière, 1912–1919.*
19. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, Direction des affaires indigènes, 331B, *Procès-verbal de la chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Casablanca*, session of 16 March 1938.
20. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C228.
21. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, 2MA1140, *Arrêté du 5 mai 1937*, portant sur réglementation des débits de boissons.
22. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C228.
23. Translated from French: “les liqueurs et apéritifs divers trouvent un excellent débouché à Oujda où les cafés et brasseries sont très fréquentés en raison de l'absence quasi-totale de distractions”.
24. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C228.
25. “[L'indigène] pourrait même peut-être devenir un gros consommateur de cette boisson”. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C228, *Lettre du Chef du service du commerce et de l'industrie, à monsieur le directeur de l'office du protectorat de la République française au Maroc*, 15 July 1921.
26. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C228, *Consommation de cidre au Maroc.*
27. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C228, *Statistique de production.*
28. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C245, *Lettre du chef du cabinet diplomatique au résident général*, 27 avril 1928.
29. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C245, *Lettre du directeur général de l'agriculture du commerce et de la colonisation au monsieur le directeur de l'office du protectorat*, 11 avril 1929.
30. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C249, *Lettre du service du commerce et de l'industrie, commerce des vins*, 12 may 1927.
31. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C249, *Lettre de l'inspecteur des finances, directeur général des finances à monsieur le directeur général de l'agriculture, du commerce et de la colonisation*, 26 January 1923.
32. “[Cette mesure] ne manquera pas de provoquer tant dans la métropole qu'en Algérie, des coalitions d'intérêt dont certainement les producteurs marocains auraient à souffrir”. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C290, *Lettre du président de l'association des vigneron du Maroc au directeur général de l'agriculture et de la colonisation*, 26 February 1934.

33. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C290, *Lettre de la délégation de la république française en Egypte*, 6 février 1934, *exportation de vins marocains en Egypte*.
34. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C290, *Note de l'attaché commercial de France en Pologne*, 7 January 1933.
35. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C290, *Note sur l'envoi de vins marocains en Suisse*, 1933.
36. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C285, *Enquête sur la production et consommation des boissons alcooliques, bureau international contre l'alcoolisme*, 1923.
37. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C228, *Ministère du commerce et de l'industrie*, 1921.
38. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C228, *Lettre de l'inspecteur de l'agriculture, l'agent de liaison commercial auprès du contrôleur civil de la région d'Oujda au chef du service du commerce et de l'industrie*, 8 novembre 1926.
39. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C228, *Arrêté viziriel du 21 janvier 1922, portant sur une taxe intérieure sur les bières*.
40. Archives Nationales du Maroc, C228, *Arrêté viziriel du 18 mars 1922, déterminant les obligations imposées aux braseurs et fixant les déclarations auxquelles ils sont tenus*.
41. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, IMA200 677, *Lettre du directeur de la sûreté publique au résident général*, 27 October 1937.
42. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, IMA200677, *Lettre du directeur affaires politiques, au résident général*, 7 May 1938.
43. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, IMA200677, *Note pour le ministre plénipotentiaire, délégué à la résidence générale*, 19 March 1938.
44. “[Aucune] sanction utile ne peut être appliquée aux épiciers qui vendent même au verre et dans l'arrière-boutique des boissons alcooliques aux indigènes musulmans”.
45. Nourrisson, 2013. *Crus et cuites. Histoire du buveur*.
46. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, Direction des affaires indigènes, 331B, *Arrêté du 10 septembre 1940*.
47. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Tunisie, Supplément au premier versement, 20, *alcoolisme*.
48. Translated from French: “ne pas gêner la production marocaine”. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, 2MA1140, *Lettre de l'inspecteur des finances, à monsieur le secrétaire général du protectorat*, 5 November 1940.
49. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, IMA200677, *Lettre du syndicat des vins au président de la chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Casablanca*, 4 October 1940.

50. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, 1MA200677, *PV de la commission direction des affaires politiques*.
51. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, 1MA200677, *Lettre du chef de la région de Marrakech au directeur des affaires politiques*, 7 June 1943.
52. “[Que] la liberté dont bénéficient les habitants de la colonie voisine ne soit pas étendue au Maroc”. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, carton 1MA200677, *Lettre du contrôleur civil de rabat, au directeur de l’intérieur*, 4 November 1949.
53. “[La] population voisine d’Algérie n’a pas apparemment tiré un supplément de bien-être de l’importation de goûts et d’habitudes de cette nature”. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, 1MA200677, *Lettre du chef de la région de Marrakech au secrétaire général du Protectorat*, 12 November 1949.
54. “[Parmi ces hommes] généralement espagnols [on] propose une pratique des jeux de hasard à la clientèle indigène, dont on sait qu’elle sait mal calculer ses chances de gagner”, Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, 2MA1140, *Lettre du ministre plénipotentiaire, délégué à la résidence générale, à monsieur le directeur des services de sécurité*, 26 July 1952.
55. “[Dont] les prix sont constitués par des vins spiritueux”.
56. “[Un] certain jeu de lasso où l’enjeu consiste en bouteilles de vin”.
57. “[L’]opinion] saine musulmane” and “les protestations répétées de la part des membres indigènes de la commission municipale de Rabat”. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, 2MA1140, *Lettre du ministre plénipotentiaire, délégué à la résidence générale, à monsieur le directeur des services de sécurité*, 26 July 1952.
58. Archives Nationales du Maroc, D271, *Lettre du directeur de l’agriculture, du commerce et des forêts à monsieur le secrétaire général du protectorat*, 11 October 1947.
59. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Protectorat Maroc, 1MA200677, *Lettre du syndicat des vins au président de la chambre de commerce et d’industrie de Casablanca*, 4 October 1940.
60. *Bottin de l’Union française*, Paris, 1956.

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Drinking in Turkey: From Social Coexistence to Ideological Confrontation

Sylvie Gangloff

Turkey's society is one of sharply contrasting levels and patterns of consumption. On one side, in most social and spatial milieux, alcohol is not part of socializing or festive interactions and people do not drink at all. Drinking is subjected to popular contempt, and a drinker, even an occasional one, is often regarded with a disdainful look. This perception is reinforced by official campaigns and by a spatial delimitation of public drinking places (bars or restaurants). On the opposite side, alcohol is fully integrated into the codes and practices of sociability of certain social classes or politico-cultural groups (such as the Kemalist and upper classes, intellectuals...). For these groups, drinking plays a part in the construction of socially meaningful identifications; it is an expression of a social status as well as a political identity. Since it has been in power, the ruling Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - Justice and Development Party (AKP) has introduced anti-alcohol policies that impose legal restrictions (on sales and licences, or

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on public displays of alcoholic drinks in public spaces and in the media) and financial burdens (taxes hikes) combined with health arguments and a renewed narrative that alcohol is the devil's work, and that its consumption runs counter to Islamic and Turkish tradition. The AKP has progressively restricted the physical and notional spaces where alcohol is consumed, resulting in an even greater politicisation of the very act of drinking. This chapter details these political shifts and shows how ideological polarisation, expressed through alcohol consumption, reflects wider political debates and confrontations on modernity, tradition, secularism, or oppressive policy of the AKP government.

Patterns and norms of drinking in any given country are never uniform (Savic et al. 2016: 278). There are distinct subcultures and social worlds or sub-societal cultural groupings with self-conscious identifications where alcohol can play different roles. In Turkey, studies show sharply contrasting patterns of consumption according to social class or education level (Aydin 2011; Alkan and Güney 2020). With the noticeable exception of upper classes, intellectuals, “leftist”, and Kemalist communities, for most of the population, especially in rural and provincial areas in Central and Eastern Anatolia, drinking does not play a part in traditional forms of socializing, nor is it part of codes of hospitality. In such contexts, it does not fulfil any customary functions of sharing or exchange. For these social classes, there are no traditions, rituals, or cultural norms based on, or including, alcohol. Drinking with your colleagues or friends after work in a bar or a pub, offering alcohol if you host people for dinner, or collectively drinking (or getting drunk) for local celebrations are not customary practices. Alcohol is part of social interactions in some social clusters, among groups of friends or families, or among gatherings of young people. But interactions involving alcohol are uncommon compared to Western culture. In practice, day-to-day hospitality and conviviality is expressed through tea. The place where people commonly socialise is the *çay salonu* for men and at home for women, who are in the habit of exchanging visits. Whereas in most cultures there is a proscription of solitary drinking but a prescription of social drinking, in Turkey both are commonly banned by official and popular morality (again, the upper and intellectual classes are an exception here). Surveys (Buzrul 2016; TÜİK 2016; WHO 2018) also show a very high proportion of abstainers among the population of Turkey, a typical feature of “dry” countries (Room and Mäkelä 2000).

Turkey is mainly a proscriptive society—to be differentiated from “prescriptive” or “permissive” societies or “drinking culture” (Room and

Mäkelä 2000; Savic et al. 2016). But within this proscriptive society, there are “permissive areas”, both spatially and socially permissive. Drinking is a well-established norm of sociability within Kemalist, leftist, and educated communities, as well as for most senior managers (to the exception of the—relatively new—entrepreneurs supporting the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP). These Kemalist and intellectual classes do drink and follow rules on where to drink, when, where, with whom, and what (again, similar features can be observed in all cultures, see Heath 2000; SIRC 2000; Savic et al. 2016). Alcohol may be used to create social bonds (mainly among teenagers and students), but in general it is rather used to assert social status. Finally, while patterns of consumption diverge considerably within the country’s population, discourse, perceptions, and systems of social control regarding drinking diverge as much.

Some might see this as a reflection of the dualism within Turkish society, between a conservative and religious majority and a secular upper or intellectual class. Until the AKP came to power, a proscriptive majority and permissive minorities lived side by side with either an understanding or a tacit agreement that drinkers have to hide (even if everyone “knew”) or, at least, confine their drinking to specific areas, streets, or spots. In big cities, there were—and still are—areas or streets where alcohol is served (including in open spaces/terraces) right next to completely dry areas or streets (no licenses issued). The two main beer brands in Turkey (Efes and Tuborg) used to sponsor concerts, festivals, and popular basketball teams without arousing much controversy.¹ The Islamist AKP party that has governed the country since 2002 has made harsh moves against alcohol through tax hikes, area restrictions, hygienist discourse, and demonisation campaigns that ended in renewed marginalisation for drinkers, notably in Anatolian cities. Some of these cities were officially declared “dry”, with no liquor stores or bars serving alcohol. In general, drinking in public has grown harder, places officially serving alcohol have become rarer, and even the most permissive area, the district of Beyoğlu in Istanbul, has been subjected to a political dispute over alcohol consumption on street terraces.

THE INVISIBILITY OF ALCOHOL IN PUBLIC AREAS: WHERE DRINKERS ARE OUTCASTS

As is usually the case for the societies with ambivalent attitudes towards alcohol, there are few spaces to drink in public in Turkey. These drinking spaces tend as well to be concentrated in some areas, clearly physically and symbolically delimited. This section outlines the types of space in which alcohol can be found, and the social mechanisms by which its consumption is shaped and controlled.

A Scarcity of Places Where Alcohol Can Legally be Bought or Drunk

One can usually find alcohol in almost any locale in Turkey. Yet in some areas in Central and eastern Anatolia, it can be a challenge. Most of large- and middle-sized towns (cities of between 200,000 and 1 million inhabitants, such as Kayseri, Konya, Eskişehir, Erzurum, Aksaray, or Şanlıurfa/Urfa) only have a few places legally serving alcohol, generally 2 or 3 of them, 10 at most. Likewise, places selling alcohol such as grocery shops or Tekel bayı² are rare. Drinking areas (“areas of permissiveness”) might be found in Izmir, in some areas of Istanbul or Ankara, and in the tourist resorts on the seaside in and near Bodrum, Antalya, and Fethiye, along the Mediterranean shore, on the Black Sea coast notably in Artvin and Trabzon and to a lesser degree in Giresun, Sinop, Zonguldak, and in Eastern Thrace (Gangloff 2015: 166–168). Altogether, the country displays a sharply contrasting geography of alcohol consumption.

In areas where there are few places to drink in public (bars, restaurants...), as it is the case in most of the country, drinkers create their own “areas of permissiveness”: this is generally a place outside the city (a clearing in the forest, next to a lake, in a car, underneath a bridge), the backroom of a friend’s shop, or a clandestine bar. Such isolated and remoted spots can be found all over Central and Eastern Anatolia. The transgressive feature of these meetings reinforces the solidarity within the group (Gangloff 2015: 88–89, 156–171).

Concentration and Ostracism in Public Spaces

Drinking is subjected to *concentration*: one can drink in some dedicated, well-delimited places, in specific areas of Istanbul (Beyoğlu/Cihangir,

Kadiköy) but not in others. Sometimes, local authorities simply decide that a particular street is to become alcohol free (with no licenses allocated), whereas the adjacent one is packed with bars (for instance in the very “wet” area of Beyoğlu in Istanbul). In Anatolia, a common pattern in the geography of drinking places is their situation along specific roadsides or at crossroads. Some locales have been famous for decades for selling alcohol: Bolu on the road from Istanbul to Ankara; Pozantı between Ankara and Adana; Yusufli on the road from Erzurum to Artvin; and so forth. This geography motivates drinkers to drive dozens of kilometres to buy alcohol.

Drinking is subjected to a *marking* and a *differentiation* in public spaces: some types of restaurants or bars would never *ever* serve alcohol. As a rule, alcohol can be found only in a *meyhane* (a traditional tavern specialised in *mezze*/Turkish appetisers), an *ocak başı* (specialised in grilled lamb), or in hotel restaurants (in a back room or on the first floor). All other common types of restaurant never serve alcohol: neither a *lokanta* (cheap restaurants specializing in soups and stews, the most widespread type), nor a *pide salonu* (Turkish pizza place), or a *kebab salonu* (specialised in kebab and grilled meat) would serve alcohol. As for bars, as mentioned above, the regular social venue for most Turks is the *çay salonu* (literally the tearoom, in fact bars for men only, where they can sit and play cards or backgammon, etc.). Likewise, the gathering place for families on weekends is the *aile çay bahçesi* (“Family tea garden”, an alcohol-free area of outside seating often surrounded by trees, in a park or on a square). No alcohol is served in either type of establishment. This “containment” is the result of public policies, such as the rules guiding the delivery of licenses. But it originates also from a traditional way of setting apart places serving alcohol, as the result of a perception of drinking as a licentious act. The sidelining of places serving alcohol in turn reinforces this same perception.

There is *no visibility of alcohol in public spaces*. In non-permissive areas, when a restaurant serving alcohol can be found, even if this restaurant legally serves alcohol, it is often a bar on the first floor of the hotel or at a hotel outside the city—that is, hidden from the street and the public space and distant from them. Alcohol is also hidden from the eyes of women and children. Sidewalk bars serving alcohol are consequently very rare as well, with the significant exception of specific areas in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, and tourist locations or ports such as Trabzon (areas of permissiveness, see above). When drinkers create their own areas of tolerance or

“permissiveness”, these spots can be legal or illegal but in all cases they remain discreet and hidden.

In areas where alcohol is not served *legally* (either because the district or the street is alcohol free, or because the owner does not have a license), drinkers resort to other concealment strategies, such as drinking dark beer in a cola glass in a restaurant owned by an acquaintance. “Alcohol areas” are therefore clearly delimited, confined, and restricted, which is to say that drinkers are subjected to a kind of *ostracism*. The scarcity of places serving or selling alcohol and the concentration of such places clearly define drinking as an exception and not as a social habit. There is also a lexical distinction: two different words describe non-alcoholic and alcoholic drinks respectively: *içecek* and *içki*.

CAMPAIGNS AND STIGMATISATIONS

Drinking is subjected to *popular contempt*, and a drinker, even an occasional one, is often met with a look of disdain. Alcohol consumption is associated with:

- Depravity, disgracefulness; those who drink are not perceived as reliable or decent. They are not considered suitable company.
- This perception is based on a confusion between drinking (even occasionally), being drunk, and being an alcoholic. This popular notion understands drunkenness (rather than alcoholism) as a pathological feature. Alcohol is regarded as a narcotic with all of the patterns of addiction.
- Idleness: drinkers, conflated with alcoholics, are assumed to spend their time drinking, and consequently not working while spending all of their money on alcohol.
- A health hazard. This opinion is however more commonly advocated in the press and in official campaigns, less so in popular discourses.
- A danger to family and society. The protection of family is the primary and ultimate argument in official campaigns, on a popular level, and within both secular and religious circles. Drinking means jeopardizing your family, your marriage, and your home. “The biggest enemy of the family (and society) is alcohol” stated a slogan of the Turkish Green Crescent (Yeşilay).³ This perception is in some ways the result of the sanctification of the family in Turkey. Again, with the exception of intellectual and urban upper classes, alcohol does

not penetrate private spaces and homes. One cannot mix the profane and the sacred, or the pure and the impure.

To sum up, “Alcohol consumption [not specifically heavy or addictive consumption] is unhealthy, it paralyzes social life and causes crime by prompting drinkers to behave badly, and is the main reason for fatal road accidents”.⁴

Here again, with the notable exception of intellectuals and urban upper classes, drinking is rarely perceived as a practice that can be positive, or associated with pleasure, interaction, social networking, cultural belonging, or celebrations. Popular stories or jokes (such as *fikra-s*, or funny short stories) may stage scenes involving alcohol, but most of the time, the involved character is a drunk, and possibly an Alevi (a Shi’a minority who follow different ritual and social practices). These injunctive norms surrounding alcohol also weigh heavily on young people and even students, who show noticeable misperceptions regarding their peers’ alcohol use (on this, see McAlaney et al. 2015; Gündüz et al. 2019).

This *stigmatisation* is reinforced by *tight social control*. Social intercourse in villages, small towns, and the districts surrounding big cities work as hubs of deep and numerous exchanges of information on professional and private life. The neighbourhood acts as a guardian of so-called “good morality” and probity: everybody knows everyone and people “watch” over each other (i.e., help each other and spy on each other at the same time!). Women might be the main vector of rumours through which reputations can be made and unmade very quickly.⁵ In this context, someone who gets caught with a glass of beer in his hand is considered a drunk and an alcoholic, and may be rejected as a potential suitable husband as a result. Anthropological observations in villages or areas (*mahalle*) of Istanbul illustrate these enquiries about suitability in the neighbourhood. Questions related to alcohol consumption are systematically included in the background check of an anticipated groom, as shown in Jenny White’s anthropological studies in the Istanbul district of Ümraniye (2002: 71). Still more meaningful is the fact that Central or Eastern Anatolian families may be completely abstinent at home all through the year, within villages, small towns, or big cities where the *mahalle* displays powerful social ties, but may still drink alcohol when they go on vacation to Bodrum or Antalya during the summer.

This popular contempt is fuelled by *official campaigns* which represent alcohol consumption as a social plague, and the drinker as an immoral and depraved person. Yet again the confusion between drinking, being drunk, and being an alcoholic is strong. Sermons by muftis, campaigns led by the Ministry of Health, the Green Crescent (Yeşilay), or similar organisations focus on the argument of the vicious circle: if you drink once, you will drink more and more and become an alcoholic. You will then spend all your money and all of the family's assets on alcohol. In the last stage, you will be alone, depressed, lose your job, become violent, and destroy your family.⁶ As there are no distinctions between use, abuse, and addiction, unlike in Western Europe or America, there are no official campaigns on moderate or responsible consumption (such as “One drink is fine, three, here comes trouble” in France or “Drink or drive, you have to choose”, “or “responsible drinking” in the USA). Campaigns on alcohol consumption look exactly like campaigns against drug consumption.

This “attitude of strict condemnation is part of a cultural complex” that can be found in other Middle Eastern cultures, where drinking, smoking, and taking drugs are not really perceived as falling under different categories (Tapper 1994: 216 ss). In the Turkish language, the same verb, *içmek*, is used to refer to drinking and smoking.

To sum up, alcohol is not part of the customs, traditions, sociability, hospitality rules, or festive rituals (and might even be banished from such rituals), where drinking can be performed outside of a social framework. In some areas, the public places where one can buy or drink alcohol are very rare, and people have to hide to drink. As a consequence, drinkers are often marginalised and it is hard for a consumer, be it a regular or an occasional one, to drink without committing a *transgressive act*. The tighter the social control, the higher the probability that the act of drinking is disruptive.

Moreover, in social and geographical spaces where one has to go outside the city to be able to drink, drinkers tend to meet specifically *in order to* drink. Drinking tends therefore to be excessive: it is the purpose of such meetings, and on top of that there are no social boundaries, no tradition or culture that are conducive to an education in drinking. The highest rates of alcohol use at levels dangerous to health can be found in Central Anatolia, with 13 percent of the cases, despite the fact that Central Anatolia represents only 6.8 percent of the overall alcohol use in the country (according to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Health in 2014 among 18,477 people over fifteen years of age, in 81 provinces).⁷ The

existing anthropological and psychological literature shows firstly that in countries with a high temperance tradition, the dominant pattern of drinking is infrequent and very heavy (Room and Mäkelä 2000: 478) and secondly that the behavioural consequences of drinking are in keeping with what people in a given culture *expect* to happen, and individuals internalise such expectations (SIRC 2000: 11). In Turkey, patterns of drinking reinforce the *expected* confusion between drinking, being drunk, and being a drunk. Many surveys on student consumption have also recorded risky behaviours (Ilhan et al. 2008). Such patterns are common to all dry countries, whether Islamic or not. But countries with Muslim-majority populations are in general “dry”, with the notable exception of former Soviet Republics. Not only drinking patterns and drink-related problems, but the whole system of social control on drinking are defined as part of the overall cultural positioning of drinking (Room and Mäkelä 2000: 477).

If the religious ban on alcohol clearly weighs on current popular condemnations of drinking, one cannot really distinguish this Islamic component from a more general moral stance and the alarmist condemnation of what is perceived as a social calamity. Official campaigns are preachy but not religious. They are mostly based on the “socially disruptive” argument rather than the “purity” (i.e., religious) one, with the possible exception of perceptions of wine in some parts of the population with a rural or lower-class background. Nevertheless, even if religious arguments are not deployed, they carry weight in this condemnation (“Alcohol is the mother of all evils”, the main slogan of the AKP on the issue, is actually a *hadith*). The narrative of social intolerance towards alcohol (which is a historical construction) cannot be distinguished from Islamic prohibition.

The Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyamet) also maintains a hygienist approach (if not a paternalist one) on this matter. It regularly lists on its website the harmful effects of drinking for your health and social life, and denounces the inevitable destruction process: you drink one drink, then two, then you become an addict, you destroy your life and your family. The discourse is almost exclusively based on moral, not religious, principles. Doctrinal controversies on the interpretations of suras and *hadith*-s on alcohol are rarely discussed.⁸ This is clearly reflected in popular arguments and perceptions, as expressed and felt by people of all walks of life. In the interviews that I conducted, and in the surveys that have been conducted on the issue, interviewees advance arguments of health or morality, such as: “It is bad for your health”, “it has bad impact on the

family”, “it can make you violent”, as well as religious ones, to justify their abstinence (Gangloff 2015).

The case of the Alevis reflects this mix of religious legitimacy, environmental pressure, and social control. The Alevis are a religious minority (ethnically Turkish or Kurdish) living almost exclusively in Turkey (and in the diaspora in Europe). They follow a syncretic branch of Shi’a Islam which does not prohibit alcohol, providing drinkers comply with certain rules, mainly staying in control of their words and actions. Alevis account for around 20 percent of the population in Turkey. They do not, however, represent a homogenous social or cultural community. Surveys on their drinking patterns based on significant samples remain to be done, but it seems that they comply with the dominant rules, norms, and discourses of their surroundings. That is to say that, when Alevis live in temperant (or intolerant) areas, they do not drink, and express the same sanitary or morality arguments as their Sunni neighbours: such is the case in Southeast and Central Anatolian Alevi settlements such as Malatya, Urfa, and Maraş. Alevis living in permissive areas drink. In this case, they might even drink quite regularly, in bars, in *Türkü evleri* (bars with traditional Alevi music) or at home, and on many social occasions, if not on religious occasions. This frequent use of alcohol pertains to classes beyond the intellectual or upper classes, in contrast with their Sunni fellows (see below: “Who drinks?”). Such is the case of the Alevis in the port of Mersin or near Antalya on the Mediterranean coasts (*Bektashi* communities) or on the Aegean coast (Bodrum).

“ALCOHOL IS THE MOTHER OF ALL EVILS”: THE AKP CRUSADE AGAINST ALCOHOL

Since it came to power, the Islamic-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP) has constantly reduced official areas of consumption. In 2005, the government transferred to local authorities (mayors) the authority to issue alcohol licenses (for bars, restaurants, and grocery stores). In the previous year, most of the cities in Turkey had fallen under the control of the AKP Party after the local elections (March 2004). The government openly encouraged AKP mayors to designate areas where alcohol cannot be consumed (alcohol-free zones). Newly elected mayors quickly proceeded to ban the sale and consumption of alcohol from city centres, residential areas, or from whole cities. Such was the case in Denizli, Bursa, Kuşadası,

Balıks ehir, Kırıkale, Bitlis,  sk dar (Istanbul), and Antalya as early as December 2005. Similar measures were later adopted in places such as Bursa and Ankara. In most of these cities, bars and shops selling alcohol were relocated to specific areas or streets. An acrimonious debate ensued between the AKP on one hand, and Kemalist and secular Turks on the other, on the creation of alcohol-free zones, thereby pushing drinkers into some limited areas of immorality. Journalists and intellectuals quickly denounced the creation of red-light districts (*kırmızı sokak*), a reference to “immoral areas” in Northern Europe.

Banners displaying the assertion that “Alcohol is the mother of all evils” (*“İçki b t n k t l klerin anası”*) appeared and spread along roads, at the entrances to parks, and around cities. In line with the narrative of alcohol as a social plague and the devil’s work, officials argued that they had to protect the weakest, meaning women and children, to prevent them from being confronted with these degrading and “harmful habits”. As a result, new restrictions on outdoor drinking were applied: bans on alcohol consumption in picnic areas, on the streets, and in parks, sometimes in stairwells and subways, in the Aegean province of Afyonkarahisar (2012), Antalya (2017),⁹ the Dilek Peninsula National Park in the Aegean province of Aydın (2018), etc. Local authorities banned outdoor seating including in areas known for their street life and active night life (areas of permissiveness) such as the Beyođlu district in Istanbul. The case of Beyođlu’s Asmalı Mescit neighbourhood in 2011 motivated intense reactions from customers (the “table crisis” or *Masa krizi*, which entailed a temporary shutdown of outside seating). Alcohol consumption was banned from university campuses, sport clubs, and the premises of local teachers’ associations. Even gas stations were prohibited from selling alcohol: situated outside villages and cities, gas stations had been among the places where people commonly bought alcohol.

In 2008, the Supreme Board of Radio and Television (RT K) added a clause in the regulation of television broadcasts, stating that “broadcasts should not encourage the consumption of alcohol, drug, or tobacco products”. Therefore, movie scenes featuring someone happily enjoying a glass of wine might be censored. In 2009–2010, new regulations prohibited advertisements from associating alcohol with food as historical or cultural icons. Popular images depicting *rakı* and appetisers (*mezze*) in front of the breath-taking scenery of the Bosphorus were, therefore, no longer allowed.

In February 2011, Internet sales of alcohol were prohibited, which particularly affected small wineries.

Finally, in 2013, the Turkish Parliament (*Türkiye'nin Büyük Millet Meclisi*) adopted an alcohol bill submitted by the ruling AKP, tightening restrictions on the sale and advertising of alcoholic beverages. The main features of the law were the following:

- Retailers were no longer allowed to sell alcoholic beverages between 10 pm and 6 am.
- All forms of advertising for alcoholic beverages in magazines, newspapers, and posters was banned. This included promotions, sponsored activities, festivals, sport events, and free giveaways.
- In TV series, films, and music videos, images that glorified the consumption of alcohol were prohibited. It included a requirement to blur depictions of alcoholic beverages on television and in films.

The main weapon in the government's campaign to lower alcohol consumption has been to push up prices. Since the end of 2002 (the first AKP government), the special consumption tax, or ÖTV, on alcoholic beverages has skyrocketed, making alcohol in Turkey a real *luxury* product. From the end of 2002 to October 2017, the price of rakı jumped by 665 percent, and beer prices by 580 percent, according to data from the Turkish Statistics Institute (TUIK). The price of a glass of beer (still the cheapest alcohol) in a bar runs from TL 10 to TL 25 (2019), whereas the minimum wage applied in the country is TL 2000. This means that the price of beer is the equivalent of 6–15 euros, beyond the reach of standard minimum wages in Western Europe. The price of a bottle of rakı in a store is TL 93 (2019), the equivalent of 50 euros. This is particularly crucial in Central and eastern Anatolia where the average salary is the lowest.

WHO DRINKS, WHERE, WHAT, AND WITH WHOM?

Drinking patterns and levels of consumption are always influenced—if not shaped—by socio-economic class, ideological or cultural affiliations, or identities. In the case of Turkey, drinking is a particularly strong and relevant expression of identity. Certain social classes or “ideological communities” have completely absorbed alcohol as part and parcel of their codes of social interaction. Drinkers are to be found mainly among urban upper or

upper-middle classes, intellectuals, and secular Kemalists (Aydın 2011; Alkan and Güney 2020).

- Kemalist, intellectuals, and urban leftists drink rakı or wine,¹⁰ in *meyhane* (traditional restaurants), bars, or at home. They live mainly in Istanbul.
- Liberal professions (surgeons, lawyers, etc.) and senior officials and administrators drink wine in stylish restaurants or in their circle or professional societies. They represent here the upper class.¹¹ Provincial liberal professions drink rakı and occasionally wine at home or in their private clubs.
- Businessmen and leaders of major companies drink wine in chic restaurants or in professional circles (typically alumni societies). Anatolian Islamist businessmen (known as the “Anatolian Tigers”) who appeared in the 2000s and developed halal businesses such as hotels without any alcohol are an exception here.
- Young people, especially high school and university students, drink beer, in bars or outside in parks or along the Bosphorus.
- The affluent “gilded youth”, in Istanbul, Ankara, or Izmir, drinks cocktails in extremely expensive nightclubs, restaurants, or other venues. This represents an extremely marginal part of the population.

Even within a dual society, there are prevailing customs within some classes of society, self-imposed norms and regulations concerning drinking, social situations and appropriate behaviours, and symbolic significations (Room and Mäkelä 2000; SIRC 2000; Heath 2000).

Normative discourses on drinking such as the nutritional or medicinal virtues of alcohol are marginal, especially when compared with permissive cultural features. They are confined to the classes of the population that drink. However, this drinking population used to be active in newspapers and thus editorials and articles on “how a glass of wine per day is good for your health” were regularly published. The intoxicating function of alcohol only prevails among young people. This is a general trend in almost all societies in the world, but Turkish teenagers get considerably less drunk than their Western counterparts (ESPAD 2004; Ilhan et al. 2008; Gündüz et al. 2019). The festive values of drinking, such as having fun and being with friends, and expectations such as being exhilarated or disinhibited, are clearly stated in surveys, but only among young people and students (Gangloff 2015: 95–108). The fortifying value attributed to alcohol

(“alcohol gives you strength”) is not so frequently put forward. Refreshing or comforting virtues (to have a drink to warm up during the winter, or to cool down during the summer) almost never appear.

In Turkey, drinking is a significant feature of the reproduction of community identity. It is, quite openly, part of the *sociability codes* of the Kemalist and upper classes. Some of these “communities” may even have developed sets of particular social rules or rituals. Kemalists/intellecuals’ debates, for example, focus on how to drink raki: Ice has to be added afterwards, raki must be mixed with a certain amount of water, it has to be drunk with certain types of appetisers, and so on. The dismantling of the state monopoly in 2003 allowed for the production of new brands of raki, and debates were profuse among editorialists on the qualities of each of them (Zat 1994, 2008; Eksen 2000; Raki ansiklopedisi 2011; Raki, cep kitabı 2014 and numerous articles in newspapers, see Gangloff 2015: 198–208).

Urban upper classes value wine as an expression of modernity and sophistication. They are called the *şarapseverler* (literally, the “wine lovers”). They organise gourmet seminars where they learn how to taste wine, and publish their own journals (with titles such as *Gusto*, *Dionisos*) and books on the best wine and the best cépages (Yalçın 2003; Gürsoy 2003, 2013). In so doing, they reinforce their status and specificity as the “nation’s elite” through their beverage preference. Even more than an expression of social status, their “refined taste” for wine is part of a networking strategy, with its own associations and private clubs. This network has become, however, less active and visible since the 2013 law, as their journals and websites had to close down (Gangloff 2015: 208–217).

The political signification of drinking: The choice of beverage is clearly here a statement of affiliation, a declaration of membership in a particular group, a sub-culture with its values, attitudes, and beliefs. “Certain drinks might as well have become symbols of national identity” (SIRC 2000). In Turkey, the elite maintains a discourse praising raki as a national drink, or wine as an expression of elegant and modern manners. If drinking alcohol always carries a heavy social and cultural signification, in the case of Turkey, it also carries a political meaning. Indeed, as the marginalisation of alcohol is the result of a mix of Muslim proscription and tradition (therefore, for some, a kind of obscurantism), drinking alcohol works as a way of taking a political stand: I drink, I am modern, secular, Westernised. This correlation has been very much present in the debates following the prohibition measures adopted by the AKP. It was to some extent the subtext of the

debate, even when it was not expressively stated. However, the relationship between drinking and being modern per se is almost never discussed. The “national drink”, rakı, symbolises the fact that drinking alcohol is a Turkish tradition, eluding the fact that “arak” has been traditionally produced in the Arabic Middle East as well. Wine carries with it the idea that Turks can be modern and refined. As underlined by Richard Tapper in his article on drinks in the Middle East, “in extreme political and ideological confrontations, certain liquids can become heavily loaded with metaphors” (Tapper 1994: 215). President Erdoğan has tried to dispute this symbolic and political image by claiming that “ayran is the national drink”.

Kemalists and intellectuals meanwhile tend to present the genuine Turkey as a society and culture where people drink; indeed, in the areas where they live and the communities they interact with, alcohol is plainly a part of socializing practices. This implicitly tends to promote the idea of a modern, westernised country, despite the fact that drinking has no intrinsic role in modernity and there is no evidential basis for the claim. Likewise, Kemalists and intellectuals produce a discourse on the cosmopolitan nature of Istanbul which answers the same need: affirming the tolerant nature and modernity of Turkish society.

Individuals or groups of drinkers can also be found in “dry” areas of Turkey but in this case, they rarely drink in the open, and alcohol does not occupy an integrated place in their social life, family rituals, or sharing rituals in the local “bar”, where alcohol is not legally served anyway. These groups might have strong internal ties precisely because they are united by the very fact that they commit together an illicit act. They are more likely to develop deviant patterns of drinking because they drink in secret, and are not submitted to common social regulatory rules; they meet *in order to* drink. Studies show that countries with low average consumption and negative or inconsistent beliefs and expectations about drinking often register relatively high rates of alcohol-related social and psychiatric problems. Conversely, countries with much higher levels of consumption and positive beliefs and expectations about alcohol score low on most indices of problem drinking (SIRC 2000).

A split in Turkish society is clearly visible through alcohol consumption and sociability codes around alcohol. Members of the upper classes drink according to codes, values, and even “etiquettes”. Up until recently, drinkers and non-drinkers used to live side by side, with limited interferences and conflicts as they occupied different social and geographical spaces. Occasionally, individuals or families would refuse to attend a wedding or

other family event because alcohol was served. The act of drinking, once interiorised as the sign of an implicit political stance, is now openly expressed. In the current political debate revolving around the Islamisation of the Turkish way of life and the dictatorial nature of the positions and actions of the government, alcohol has become a subject of political mobilisation and militancy.

THE LINES OF ARGUMENTS AND THE UNDERLYING DEBATE

Between the first step taken to drastically reduce the physical and moral spaces of consumption in the fall of 2005 and the 2013 law, the measures pushed by the AKP triggered a harsh controversy among Kemalists, intellectuals, liberal professionals, upper classes, and young people, who accused the government of enforcing a religious-moral prohibition and of restricting individual freedom.

Not all the arguments put forward by AKP, at least in the first years of its rule, were based on religion (something which holds true of anti-alcoholic measures adopted prior to the “AKP era”). By arguing that drinking inevitably leads to an excessive consumption, the official line of argument held by AKP mobilises a series of arguments:

- The protection of children and the family, and moral values: Starting in 2005, the official line of argument was that the new regulations were intended to “protect children and women”. This implied that drinking alcohol was a shameful or immoral habit or a dangerous one, and a habit that has to be concealed from innocent eyes. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (then Prime Minister) backed his argumentation with Article 58 of the Constitution, which states that “The State shall take necessary measures to protect youth from addiction to alcohol and drugs, crime, gambling, and similar vices, and ignorance”. All the rules on drinking alcohol in public areas (terraces, parks...), on advertising (2013 law), and on images in films and series (RTÜK restriction) were asserted in the name of protecting children and family and moral values.
- Public health. The argument that alcohol is as dangerous as drugs and that drinking creates a major disruption in the lives of drinkers and therefore in their social commitment, makes of drinking—conflated with alcoholism (see above)—a public health concern. A host

- of governors have banned alcohol from urban bars in order to “protect both public health and the family”.
- Security: if alcohol cannot be consumed in a moderate way, drunk people are bound to create problems in the public space. Crime prevention, avoiding alcohol-related traffic accidents and the preservation of public order were reasons given for the ban on open sale after 10 pm in 2013. Bars have been closed or relocated away from city centres because of “disturbances” and “in order to prevent violent acts from spreading”.
 - All in all, AKP officials downplay the importance of the restrictions: They reject the accusation that there is a “ban” on alcohol. They argue that people can still drink, but at home.
 - Finally, and with the specific goal of countering accusations that the AKP is imposing an Islamic way of life, party officials claim that these rules are widely applied elsewhere in Europe. Newspapers aligned with the AKP government have run, over the years, headlines such as: “[such] rules are applied all over the world”; “[in] Scandinavian countries, alcohol sales are forbidden after 6 pm, and in France after 9 pm”; “[in] Belgium, alcohol sales are controlled as well”; “[those] who claim we intervene in people’s lifestyles should look at the regulations in the United States, in the West”.

Secular Turks interpret these rules and restrictions as a *creeping implementation of an Islamic agenda*. They denounce contemporary changes in official rules on the headscarf, adultery, and halal food. Much more than alcohol consumption per se, most see the whole package of these rules as an infringement on their lifestyle, a religious *and ideological* imposition, an “attempt to re-design the society according to their beliefs and lifestyle” and “government effort to design a monotype society” (Musa Çam, MP for the main opposition party CHP—Republican People’s Party, 2013).

The same strains of opinion denounce the curtailing of secular freedoms, the implementation of what are depicted as *liberticidal rules* and policy, the oppressive mentality that seeks to control the people. They object on the grounds of personal freedom and the respect for lifestyle choices, arguing that Turkey is a liberal democracy and citizens should be free to choose for themselves. They argue as well that these measures go against European practices, against the freedom of cultural expression, and against free market principles.

Finally, alongside the denunciation of increasing displays of religious conservatism, they mourn the loss of Turkey's modern gains, and the undermining of modernity and Westernisation. The reference to Mustafa Kemal, who founded modern Turkey, abolished sharia, adopted Latin script, and was openly a drinker himself, is recurrent. However, there has been no real debate on what precisely is modernity. Nor has there been a public conversation regarding the way in which drinking alcohol can be interpreted as a sign of modernity, beyond the fact that it is part of traditions of regular social intercourse in Western Europe, let alone another debate, which the latter should trigger, on the relationship between modernity and Westernisation.

Legal action has been taken by businessmen, associations (notably bar associations in 2005), and non-AKP senior officials in efforts to challenge the new regulations. Local courts were summoned against the decisions of local governors to ban alcohol from specific areas, in places such as Ankara, Istanbul/Üsküdar, İsparta, and Afyonkarahisar. The State Council, Turkey's higher administrative court, was called upon in 2011 to intervene against the regulation establishing 24 as the minimum legal age for buying and consuming alcohol. Plaintiffs referred to the European free market principles, the constitutionality issues raised by the restrictions of alcohol sales in some areas on principle of equality and the right to work, as well as the restrictions of individual freedoms and fundamental rights and possibly also violations of popular will. The controversies spilled over, raising larger issues of jurisdiction and revealing conflicts of authority, particularly between some of Istanbul's local municipalities (*İl*) and the Municipality of Greater Istanbul. Also contested in the process was the extension of the powers of local governors.

Some would also argue that some of these regulations—such as the compulsory warnings about alcohol's harmful effects on the packaging, the extra penalties on drunk driving, the ban on advertisements for alcohol on TV, the ban on alcohol sales in stores near highways—sound rather reasonable. Yet the debate seems to be constantly overshadowed by political and social antagonisms, as those who promote the measures are in general pro-AKP writers or politicians.

THE EFFECTS OF THE AKP CRUSADE ON ALCOHOL: MOVING AWAY FROM THE SOCIAL STATUS QUO

The main and almost immediate consequence of the new regulations has been a decrease in the number, not of drinkers, but of places of retail. According to Tütün ve Alkol Piyasası Düzenleme Kurumu (TAPDK),¹² the number of licenses for shops selling alcohol dropped from 82,271 in 2002 to 78,212 by March 2008. Similarly, the number of valid licenses for bars, restaurants, and pubs fell from 13,115 in 2002 to 8963 in March 2008—all this in a country whose economy and population were growing. As for consumption itself, it seems to have decreased slowly.

Data can be selected or manipulated, so as to underline a desired process. In the particular case of alcohol consumption in Turkey, data based on declarations (especially face-to-face surveys) can be corrupted by the desire to comply with prevailing morality, the fear of being looked down on or judged as depraved. Data can also be bent due to the frequent controls that have forced bars or restaurants to declare their sales; or by including or excluding foreign tourists, who make up of a significant proportion of wine and beer consumption. An increase in the tax rates furthermore generates illegal production, which is harder to assess.

According to data provided by the official TAPDK, consumption did not radically decrease when the AKP started implementing restrictive rules and increased taxes, at least for the first 10 to 15 years.¹³ But the rise of tourism should be taken into account in this data. Consumption notably decreased in 2015 and 2016 when tourism declined, following terrorist attacks. The restrictive 2013 law and the cumulative increases in taxes definitely impacted consumption, which started to decrease (TAPDK 2017; Buzrul 2016 based on TAPDK, WHO data, and surveys by the Turkey National institute). The official WHO data (adjusted to include tourist consumption) also reveal an interesting increase in the proportion of abstainers: from 81.1 percent of the population in 2003 to 79.6 percent in 2010 and 89.1 in 2016 (WHO 2004, 2014, 2018). Surveys conducted by the Turkey Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) from 2010 to 2019 are not so conclusive (Turkey Health Survey based on interviews, showing a proportion of 70 to 80 percent of abstainers).¹⁴ The possibility of shift from one substance to another should also be investigated, as reports show an increase in drug consumption, and notably in deaths from overdose since 2013.¹⁵

The *patterns of consumption have changed*. Beer consumption is slightly on the rise while the traditional Turkish spirit, rakı, is not as popular as it used to be, despite the liberalisation of the alcohol market in 2003, which has allowed private companies to produce rakı. As in many countries of Europe and around the world, youngsters tend to drink beer more than their elders, regardless of the nature of traditional drinks, be it wine, beer, or spirits. Increased taxes have also driven people to buy cheaper kinds of alcohol. This rise was noticeable in the first 10 years of AKP power (2002–2012). Consumption has remained stable since then: per capita beer consumption rose from 11.8 litres in 2003 to 13 litres in 2012, and has remained at around 12 litres ever since (The Brewers of Europe 2018 [2014, 2012, 2010]).

The wine consumption curve is rather irregular. At first, intensified controls combined with the ban on sales of alcohol on Internet (2011) to force wine producers to go through official channels to sell their products. This translated into an artificial increase in the sales in official data. Later on, the drop of tourism in the country (2016) after terrorist attacks resulted in a temporary lapse in consumption.

Last but not least, rakı is clearly a victim of the taxes and of the tastes of young people. Consumption dropped from 42 million bottles in 2004 to 32 million in 2016 (last official TAPDK data available). This decrease is only partially made up for by an increase in the consumption of other spirits such as vodka, gin, or whisky (TAPDK 2017; Buzrul 2016).

Smuggling and counterfeiting alcohol: Before the considerable and repeated tax hikes, fraud consisted firstly of small-scale clandestine importations carried out by travelling immigrants buying bottles of whisky or rakı at duty-free (a more organised traffic has long been reported on the south-east and eastern borders, especially through informal trade with Iran since the 1980s) and secondly, on a much wider scale, the non-declared production and sale of wine by small producers (Gangloff 2015: 250–256). After 2003, illegal sales of wine grew. Some even estimated that a third of production went undeclared at the beginning of the 2000s, most of this being sold online, through clubs or associations, and via tourist operators. Later on, an increase in controls and the ban on Internet sales forced winemakers to declare their production (resulting in an apparent increase in official production).

Home brewing of beer or wine has gone up as well. Amateurs gather through Facebook groups or other social networks, where they can find guidance or even DIY kits, and use Internet tutorials on how to make rakı

or beer at home. This remains so far an urban hobby, but one that has been given some attention by media in Turkey and abroad.

More indicative, striking, and lethal is the illegal production run by criminal networks that has surfaced with the tax hikes. As early as February 2005, two clandestine distilleries were dismantled in Istanbul and Sakarya; millions of bootleg bottles have been seized across the country since 2005. People have repeatedly died from alcohol poisoning: 19 people in March 2005, 4 tourists in June 2011 in Antalya, 18 in Istanbul in October 2015, 12 in Adana in July 2019, and a total of over 80 people during the fall of 2020 in various places in Turkey. In December 2020, the CHP published a report (“*sabte içki raporu*”) blaming the high taxes (“The country where the taxes are the highest”) for the spectacular rise of death toll due to the consumption of bootleg alcohol in the previous months, and denouncing once again an environment where “prohibitions and ideological discourses on alcohol consumption are widespread”.

The main outcome of the AKP alcohol policy is certainly a *stronger stigmatisation* of drinkers. In all ambivalent culture, that is, cultures where “the attitude toward beverage alcohol usage is one of conflict between co-existing value structures”, there is a conflict in beliefs, attitudes, and practices (Pittman quoted in Room and Mäkelä 2000: 476–477). What used to be a *typology* (various classes of populations with various customs living side by side) became a *conflict* of values between social and political or religious (secular) classes.

A *political and ideological confrontation* is expressed through alcohol. Alcohol illustrates a split in Turkish society, while also reinforcing this split. It shows a noticeable shift in the social status quo in Turkish public life, where the once praised peaceful coexistence between secular/modern and traditional Turks was disrupted by the growing economic and political power of the former (traditional) lower classes and their acclaim for an Islamic/ist government. The reintroduction of Islamic (and nationalist) values in public discourse, daily life, and political and administrative structures affects much more than the traditional provincial middle classes. Together with the more pregnant visibility of religion on campuses, 70 percent of students declare religion as being an important or very important influence on their drinking patterns, or in this case their abstinence (McAlaney et al. 2015).

The AKP crusade against alcohol consumption has made drinking much more of a matter of “identity” than ever, as well as a political issue, prompting Erdoğan to assert that “No one should make alcohol a matter

of identity” (televised address to his party members, 28 May 2013). At the same time, Kemalists/secularists claim that modernity is so rooted in the country that even laws and taxes cannot challenge this modernity, nor alcohol consumption, arguing that “Alcohol consumption in Turkey [is] not diminishing despite obstacles”.

From a political issue, alcohol has turned into a *politicised issue*. Drinking is seen as a test of the AKP’s commitment to democratic values and freedoms. Drinking publicly and obviously has become an act of protest. Youngsters have demonstrated time and again by gathering on squares with bottles or cups of alcoholic beverages (campaign “Let’s Drink to the AKP” in January 2011 or during the Taksim protest in 2013). Miscellaneous events illustrate a clear rise of tensions between drinkers and non-drinkers, and more generally between factions of Turkish society: Turkish Radiohead fans were attacked at a concert for consuming alcohol in June 2016. An art exhibition opening in Istanbul in September 2016 was attacked by angry locals complaining about alcohol consumption. Art galleries in Istanbul have been subjected to attacks (notably those located in Tophane, a conservative neighbourhood). A group of armed men reportedly opened fire and chanted anti-alcohol slogans at an annual raki festival in the southern province of Adana (December 2015).

Of course, the controversy over alcohol is not just about alcohol. “We are against Western culture and this lifestyle!” said some young AKP activists protesting alcohol sales in a festival—while wearing clothes featuring well-known Western brands (a contradiction underlined in multiple forms, such as the creation of “neo-Ottoman” restaurants). “This is not a battle about alcohol, but about freedom” claimed others. This “environment where prohibitions and ideological discourses on alcohol consumption are widespread” (CHP, *Sahte İçki Raporu*, December 2020) polarises conflicting identities, as illustrated by the recurrence of the subject “Alcohol” in the speeches and campaigns of the AKP. This is an odd recurrence, considering the relative low level of consumption in the country, but one which reflects the symbolic and political meaning of drinking.

NOTES

1. These included the Efes Blues Festival (taking place every year all over the country), the Tuborg Alive festival, and the Tuborg Pilsener Youth Concerts. As for sports, the Efes Pilsen basketball team (renamed Anadolu Efes in 2011) has won the Turkish championship several times.

2. Stores run by TEKEL, the former state monopoly on tobacco and alcohol that was dismantled in 2003 to conform with EU rules.
3. “Ailenin (ve toplumun) en büyük düşmanı ALKOL’dur”, a poster by Yeşilay. See, e.g., <https://twitter.com/1920yesilay/status/1068070377388167168?lang=bg> (Yeşilay official twitter account @1920yesilay, last accessed 9th March 2021).
4. “The mother of all evil (II)”, editorial by Burak Bekdil (hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/burak-bekdil/the-mother-of-all-evil-ii-31157).
5. Researchers have noted the role of women as guardians of morality and social propriety or models of self-control in many non-Muslim cultures as well, see *Social and Cultural aspects...*, op. cit., p. 19.
6. See, e.g., the posters of Yeşilay published in recent years and reproduced through various official and non-official channels, such as newspapers: yesilay.org.tr/yesilaydergisi/Mart_2014/files/assets/basic-html/page15.html; ihsander.com.tr/alkol-bagimligi/; www.ansiklomedya.com/yesilay-haftasi-ile-ilgili-atasozleri-aciklamalari-ve-guzel-sozler/; www.harbiforum.net/konu/yesilay-afisleri.130136/; etc.
7. See also the maps of alcohol consumption “Türkiye’nin alkol haritası” on www.ensonhaber.com/turkiyenin-alkol-haritasi-2014-08-20.html.
8. www.diyanet.gov.tr. See also the books by Alparslan Özyazıcı (1997, 2012), issued by the publishing house of the Diyanet. The author lists all the possible consequences of drinking on health (cardiac effects, effects on the digestion, etc.), denounces the assimilation of alcohol to a remedy, highlights traffic accidents caused by drunk people, and relates stories of divorces caused by alcohol consumption. He also regularly published articles in the journal of the Diyanet.
9. Antalya, which was the centre of a harsh debate between the local Police department and the Metropolitan Municipality of Antalya, has been the target of a political and electoral battle between the main opposition party, the Kemalist secular CHP, and the AKP.
10. In the past, intellectuals were more likely to drink wine (Öncü et al. 2001). At some point (in the 50s/60s), there was a movement towards rediscovery of Anatolian roots (mixed with Western features) and the intellectuals started to drink more rakı.
11. Note that the AKP has progressively replaced some or most of these senior officials (in Ministries, universities...) and liberal profession (judges, lawyers notably) by AKP supporters.
12. The state-run Tobacco Products and Alcoholic Beverages Regulatory Board. The TAPDK was transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture in December 2017; TADB (Tütün ve Alkol Dairesi Başkanlığı—Chairmanship of the Department of Tobacco and Alcohol www.tarimorman.gov.tr/TADB). The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was previously already

- in charge of inspections on the content of the bottled alcohol including domestic and imported drinks.
13. The observation is arrived at by putting together production and importations, minus exportations. See also data of the National Statistics institute (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu Başkanlığı, see as well TÜİK—www.tuik.gov.tr).
 14. See TÜİK, Sağlık İstatistikleri Yıllığı, 2016, table 4.4. p. 52.
 15. See the reports of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), section “Turkey”.

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PART III

Contested Spaces



Drinking in Times of Change: The Haunting Presence of Alcohol in Egypt

Mina Ibrahim

A PRESENT ABSENCE

The Islamisation of the Egyptian state and society since the 1970s has disciplined the presence of alcohol and drinking practices. Although Egyptians have for decades debated the morality of the production and consumption of alcohol in their society, stakeholders of the so-called *al-Şahwa al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Revival) have broadly succeeded in controlling public spaces and everyday interactions. In this regard, the

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publicisation of alcohol has disappeared to a notable extent from street signage and the commercial advertisements displayed on television and by newspapers. Novelist Alaa Al-Aswany mentions in his novel *The Yacoubian Building*, which depicts the lives of the inhabitants of Downtown Cairo during the 1990s, that “[t]here was not one bar Downtown that advertised its presence...the very word ‘Bar’ on the signs was changed to ‘Restaurant’ or ‘Coffee shop’” (Al-Aswany 2006, 33). And during his archival work in Cairo on the history of Egypt’s most famous beer, Stella, historian Omar D. Foda was asked by an employee at Egypt’s national library (*Dar al-Kutub*) if “Stella beer still exist[s] in Egypt” (Foda 2019, 187). Writing a whole book about this kind of beer in particular, Foda wondered about the positioning of alcohol in contemporary Egyptian society in light of its absence from the national imaginary of many Egyptians. Some Egyptians still make their money and careers (including academic ones), and spend their leisure time, within the framework of the economic, social, and cultural aspects of alcohol in their society. However, it seems that these modes of living exist in the shadow of an Egyptian society that predominantly prohibits drinking practices and spaces.

Existing literature has pointed to various theological and social arguments why and how the Islamic “revival” movement has enforced a status of invisibility on alcohol among Egyptians (Esposito 1995, 135; Mahmood 2012, 90; Bayat 2007, 33; Schielke 2015, 30). Beyond these reasons and claims, I seek in this chapter to follow Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno’s interest in focusing on the “haunting” yet significant roles played by negated objects and spaces (Benjamin 1928, 177–178; Adorno 1973, 159–160; Gordillo 2014, 230, 253). By situating bottles of beer and whisky in different contexts of transformation, I consecutively ask in the five interconnected sections below what the invisibility of alcohol from public discourses means for understandings of communal morality, public order, and national progress that Egyptians negotiate during religious, political, geographic, and demographic periods of transition. Based on an ethnographic fieldwork conducted between January 2017 and October 2019, I seek to grapple not only with how the presence of alcohol troubles the current impact of the Islamic “revival” of the 1970s but also how drinking practices have been present in the shadow of two other interrelated waves of change that have affected Egyptians’ everyday interactions and debates during the last five decades.

Accordingly, I will follow up in the second section the question of how alcohol mirrored and mediated shared and shattered livelihoods between Muslims and Christians in Egypt amid not only the Islamic “revival” but also the other parallel “revival” of the institution of the Coptic Orthodox

Church. Afterwards, I will show in the third and fourth sections how the 2011 uprisings in Egypt have negated debating drinking practices. I will specifically look at what we can learn from the haunting presence of alcohol about sectarian and gendered considerations of periods of political transition. The fifth section will highlight the role played by alcohol amid the current radical geographical and demographic changes sponsored by the regime of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. In the final and concluding part, I argue that drinking and singing for bottles of beer can allow Egyptians of different social and economic classes to meet and to make sense of their inequalities, despite the new urban plans that violently isolate the poor from the rich.

TEETOTAL SECTARIANISM

“He is a powerful man” (*Dah ragel gā med*). On one of the famous streets in Cairo’s neighbourhood of Shubra, there lies a liquor store that does not close throughout the year. It does not shut in Ramadan or on the other Islamic holidays, as it is the case with the vast majority of similar stores and bars, together with the hotels that serve alcohol only to non-Egyptians during these times. This closure is known as “dry nights” or “*al-layā ly al-nashafā*” in Arabic. Egyptians from different social and economic backgrounds use both terms during the Islamic holidays, when they cannot buy the alcohol they want.

I will return to this point soon, as I want to focus on the “powerful man” and his daily interactions. His liquor store in Shubra not only sells alcohol but also juices, snacks, and fruits. The fridge where the alcohol is stored is placed next to other products that usually accompany a bottle of beer such as nuts and potato crisps (i.e. appetisers or *mezzah* in Arabic). The fridge full of beer is actually offered to him by the Coca-Cola beverage company and he is supposed to store the company’s products in it. The “powerful man” added stickers to the transparent façade of the fridge to hide what is inside. He also places bottles and cans of cola to camouflage the *Sakkara*, *Stella*, and *Heineken* beers. Moreover, he sometimes surrounds the fake Coca-Cola fridge with a blanket that prevents those who pass by the shop from seeing the purchases of his clients.

Liquor store owners always pack their clients’ purchases in black plastic bags. Together with the security measures taken by “the powerful man,” the bags are symbols of the ambiguous positioning of alcohol in the Egyptian society. Liquor stores are present in different neighbourhoods

and districts within and outside Cairo. The owners of these shops get licenses from the relevant municipalities and governmental agencies. The production companies distribute stocks to them based on such licenses throughout the year, including the Islamic holidays. And it goes without saying that the inhabitants of the neighbouring shops and buildings know what these shops sell. Hence, packing the bottles in black plastic bags indicates a shade of invisibility that the buyers and the sellers of alcohol attempt to present even while knowing that the “external” observers probably recognise what such bags contain. This shade of invisibility refers to what I call a respectful transgression of dominant public morality.

Particularly in Ramadan, when the vast majority of the liquor stores are forced to close under Egyptian law and when drinking is prohibited in most bars, the fact that the “powerful man” still sells beer does not mean that he does not care about the exceptional atmosphere of religiosity that controls people’s diets, morality, and interactions in Ramadan. On the contrary, he avoids any trouble with his neighbours via what James Scott called a “hidden transcript” that hides and conceals social differences (Scott 1990). For the sake of preserving shared livelihoods of *ḡīrā* and *‘ishra* (neighbourliness and companionship), the Muslim neighbours of the “powerful” prefer to *ti’adīhā* (let it go) even with the violation of their norms and beliefs.

“Letting” the “powerful man” sell alcohol during Ramadan can be also related to how his Muslim neighbours belittle his Coptic Christian identity. “The powerful man” has a huge tattoo of the Virgin Mary on his right arm. This “powerful” labelling might be somehow connected to his visible bodily identity as a Christian selling alcohol in a predominantly Islamised Egyptian society and, more critically, during a sacred time like Ramadan. However, it is an ability that is facilitated by his Muslim neighbours who would more likely accept a Coptic Christian selling alcohol than they would do with respect to a Muslim fellow.

In light of the relationship between Muslims and Christians during the aforementioned Islamic “revival” movement of the 1970s, many Muslims in Egypt believe that drinking practices are *‘ādī* (normal) among Copts (Rutherford 2013, 251). Part of this normality has to do with a general imagined wrongness of the Coptic Orthodox tradition in particular and of Christianity in general. It is true that many of the privately owned liquor stores are administered by Copts. This is different from the major chain store Drinkies, for instance, which employ both Muslims and Copts. Still, for many Muslims, the presence of pictures of Mary, Jesus, and other

Saints in nearly all privately owned liquor stores is enough to prove that Copts are visibly more involved in the circulation of alcohol than Muslims.

Against this backdrop, I argue that the Muslim neighbours' acceptance of the respectful transgression of the "powerful man" is not only connected to aspects of companionship and neighbourliness that often feature the neighbourhood of Shubra in Egyptian popular culture and media, but also has to do with his belonging to a religious group that is stereotyped for its support for the sale of alcohol (du Roy & Ibrahim ([forthcoming](#))). Both nuances work in a simultaneous manner in tolerating a negated object like alcohol even during the "dry nights". The presence of alcohol, as I will indicate in the rest of this section, plays an important role in cultivating and highlighting both differences and similarities between Muslims and Christians in Egypt, and in debating which group is morally superior.

Alcohol is instrumentalised during sectarian and moral debates when it is present in the hands not only of Christians but also of Muslims. During the last night of Ramadan, long queues in front of liquor shops sometimes block streets and augment the already incessant traffic jams in Cairo, Alexandria, and other large Egyptian cities. While buying new clothes for the festival of Eid al-Fitr that succeeds the Islamic holy month, and while preparing *ka'ak al-Eid* (Eid cookies), many Muslims also rush to buy bottles and cans of beer, wine, and whisky. Similar to how Muslim neighbours perceive the "powerful man," many Christians with whom I talked imagine Muslims as "hypocrites" who stop drinking during Ramadan not because they believe in what they do, but because the liquor shops are closed by law, or because they are afraid to be "punished" by the government (i.e. the police) or by God.

If the materialised presence of alcohol influences visible moral debates and competitions between Muslims and Christians, its absence is also important in illustrating their shared assumptions of how a good person, whether Muslim or Christian, should behave. This important role of alcohol has to do with the Islamic awakening movement of the 1970s that has enforced an invisibility of alcohol from public spaces. Similarly, the institution of the Coptic Orthodox Church has clarified its positioning towards alcohol during the same period. Clerical and lay Coptic Christians led a "revival" movement that has marginalised alcohol from any debates connected to the truthfulness of the Coptic Orthodox tradition (Hasan [2003](#), 190; Elsaesser [2014](#), 58).

In a previous article, I highlighted how debates about alcohol among Copts have disappeared, specifically following the 1952 coup in Egypt, since the regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser (1954–1970) supported the institution of the Coptic Orthodox Church as the official representative of members of the largest Christian minority in the Middle East (Ibrahim 2019, 370–371). In fact, the current competition for moral superiority between Muslims and Christians has been preceded by a similar one between Christian European missionaries and local Egyptian religious institutions and forces, Islamic and Christian alike. Some decades before the Islamic and the Coptic “revivals”, historian Samir Boulos wrote that “the missionaries tried to provide biblical evidence that drug and alcohol consumption is sinful, and that alcohol is in general prohibited for Christians” (Boulos 2016, 107). In light of and to reach the same moral standards that were intertwined with the physical and psychological harmful effects of alcohol, my fieldwork observed how drinking practices have become totally absent and/or obviously belittled in the contemporary official educational syllabuses of the Coptic Church’s Sunday Schools. To protect their congregants from its harmful effects, moreover, the Coptic Orthodox Church has recently replaced the word *khamr* (wine) in its liturgical text with the word *‘asīr al-karmah* (grape juice) to describe the liquid used for the communion.

When I asked a priest about the change of the term, he told me that the “blood of Jesus” offered to the people to heal their “spiritual diseases” contains not more than two or three percent alcohol, which is already present in many of the medicines people take for flu and other “normal diseases”. He also stressed that changing the name aims to prevent the sacred text of the liturgy being an *‘atharah* (stumbling block) that might push people to commit sins. In this regard, the priest meant that Copts who read the text might “wrongly think” (*yeftekrō bil-ghalat*) that drinking wine is accepted by the Church, since it is offered by the hands of its clerical hierarchy. More importantly in other contexts, the priest also meant that Muslims might “feel” that Christians get drunk during their prayers, as they sometimes “fabricate rumours” about what Copts do inside the gated and securitised Christian neighbourhood parishes”.¹ In both cases, the presence of drinking during the Islamic and Christian religious “revivals” in Egypt can disturb and belittle the dominant moral standards followed by each of the two religious groups. Popular phrases like “this is not what Islam is about” or “these are not real Christians” control the discussions when a Muslim or a Christian is seen buying or selling alcohol.

To be sure, some Muslims still drink even during the dry nights, as I learned from the “powerful man” and from my Muslim friends. Similar to and together with Copts, many Muslims find their ways to circumvent the prohibition of alcohol by religious and legal forces. People accumulate their stocks before the Islamic holidays. They accept that they will have to pay higher prices for alcohol during these times, and buy from what is known as an underground black market. Both Muslims and Christians drink at places that cannot be reached by or that are hidden from the security forces who also back this exceptional atmosphere of religiosity. They ask their friends coming from Europe or the States to buy bottles of whisky from duty-free shops at the airports.

Nevertheless, such shared transgressions between Muslims and Copts exist within an invisible contour that do not place religious identities in the forefront. People conceal their religious belongings and the relevant “moral imaginaries” and superiorities (Shenoda 2010, 8) when they buy and sell alcohol. They prefer to highlight not only their *ḡīrā* and *‘ishra* but also their friendship, collegueship, and leisurely spirits.

The presence of someone like the Coptic “powerful man” in Shubra together with his Muslim and Coptic clients thus reflects the haunting presence of alcohol in Egypt. In other words, bottles of beer, wine, and whisky that are usually made invisible in black plastic bags for the sake of invisible and respectful transgressions organise similarities and differences between both groups because (and also despite) the exclusion of drinking practices from the current hegemonic interpretations of religious traditions. When a Muslim or a Christian drinks in times of religious “revival”, they interrupt mainstream moral debates in Egypt. We learn about alternative modes of interaction that exist in the shadow of the visible Muslim-Christian moral competitions that dominate public spaces. In a similar vein, I will focus in the coming two sections on how alcohol affects the recent political transformations of the so-called Arab Spring together with how revolutionary forces remember those who sacrificed their lives for a better Egypt. I will particularly show that the presence of alcohol during the 2011 uprisings in Egypt haunts not only the dominant public discourse of national unity and harmony between Muslims and Christians but also the gendered aspects of the parallel “revival” movements.

A SOBER REVOLUTION

In October 2019, my colleague Mohammed Ezz and I earned a grant from the Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS) to shoot an ethnographic film about Shubra. The film particularly focused on how the inhabitants of Shubra remember the 18 days that preceded the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak following the 2011 January uprisings. One of the participants in the film noted that when the police forces completely disappeared from the streets on 28 January, many shops were looted, including a liquor store located in one of Shubra's main streets.² He added that it is "normal" that this happens to a place that *keda keda* (essentially or naturally) sells *ḥagāʾt ḥarām* (prohibited objects/things). Although other shops and stores of different kinds were looted in many streets in and outside Cairo around the same time, he did not blame those who broke into the liquor store because their "illegal" act was conducted against a place that is *bilfiʿl* (already/actually) negated in the Egyptian society.

Fear and uncertainty troubled the souls of many Egyptians following the disappearance of police forces on 28 January, when the latter failed to contain the anger of the protestors with their live bullets, tanks, and tear-gas grenades. The opinion of this friend in the short ethnographic film is shared by many Egyptians who witnessed the uprisings some ten years ago. Both those who drink and those who are teetotal did not, or were not able to, criticise the violence committed against the owners and employees of liquor stores. As a friend of mine who works for a liquor store in Alexandria told me, "we would be afraid to publicise a violation committed against us in general". This is because "the police and the judiciary will not take us seriously and will always prioritise other crimes", he said. They also mentioned the example of the slaughtering of a Coptic liquor store owner in January 2017 in Alexandria, and how *innās* (the people/the public) focused more on the morality of his job than on the crime (AbdelHamid 2017).

During my fieldwork in general, I noticed how the inhabitants of Shubra who were against the demonstrations and ousting of Mubarak did not mention the looting of the liquor store to reflect the "chaos" and the public "disorder" (*ḥarag w marag*) of the "protestors," as they did, for example, with neighbouring supermarkets, electronics stores, and jewelry shops. Similarly, my interviews with the supporters of the uprisings showed a complete absence of the destruction of the liquor stores from

the stories told about the “thugs” who were mobilised by Mubarak’s regime to cause such “chaos,” and about the Egyptian regime’s intention to cause public disorder following the defeat of the police forces. Within this context, I show in what follows that the absence or the negation of the stolen alcohol from the different perspectives taken on the January 2011 uprisings speaks to broader understandings and shaping of the exclusionary moral standards of political dissent and change in Egypt.

During the 2011 uprisings in Egypt, one of the main accusations that state-affiliated media outlets made against the revolutionaries was their consumption of drugs and alcohol together with them having “full sexual relations” (i.e. sexual intercourse) (Ali 2011). Moreover, supporters of Mubarak regime media emphasised that there were non-Egyptian “spies” among the demonstrators in Tahrir Square in Downtown Cairo, who facilitated this supposed consumption of drugs and alcohol and the sexual relations. The trilogy that shaped these accusations was immediately met either by anger or mockery by the protestors who denied the presence of any illicit practices or objects.

Anthropologist Hanan Sabea once wrote that “in spite of (maybe because of) the intensity of the attacks and the banality of the ‘democratic transition’ the potential for disrupting the ‘normal’ and ‘familiar’ has never ceased” (Sabea 2013). I agree on one level that Tahrir Square has set new and radical political imaginaries among Egyptians. However, during the 18 days of protest these imaginaries had to concede to and share a moral basis with certain meanings of the “normal” and the “familiar” in order to efficiently get rid of Mubarak. The revolutionaries not only made sure to deny the presence of alcohol from the sites where they resisted Mubarak’s regime, but they also regarded drinking practices together with sex and drugs as errors that could threaten their urgent dream of change, especially after some of their friends sacrificed their lives for their aspirations for a better Egypt.

Victimhood and martyrdom narratives that accompanied the killings of the protestors during these 18 days, as well as the massacres at Maspero and Port Said in October 2011 and February 2012, respectively, embraced a sense of perfection that made sure not to disrupt dominant meanings of public order and morality. Together with the other violent events in November and December 2011 in which revolutionaries clashed with police and army forces, my research indicates that the language of these narratives had to meet moral standards that can fit into dominant definitions of a good Egyptian citizen.³ In this regard, alcohol and drinking

practices, among other negated interactions, had to be hidden from the life stories of the martyrs and of those who stayed alive seeking justice for their friends and co-revolutionaries (cf. Lachenal 2019). Indeed, the revolutionaries who participated in the 2011 uprisings in Egypt should not be regarded as one homogenous group. I do not mean that all those who joined the demonstrations used to drink before, during, or after protesting. However, the revolutionaries' intention to present themselves as a unified sober group was done for the sake of constituting their will that forced Mubarak to resign.

For the sake of the ousting Mubarak, the revolutionaries had to present Tahrir Square and other settings of dissent in Egypt as a 'utopia', where people of different social, political, and economic belongings would "look like each other", as a protestor who joined the 2011 demonstrations in Ismailia told me. Gathering for "bread, freedom, social justice, and human dignity", the utopia of the protestors required hiding some of the desires and interests but also anxieties of any disruptions of an imagined harmony between leftists, Islamists, and other ideological groups, as well as those who do not follow a specific dogma. Some negotiations regarding not only the positioning of alcohol but also the negated rights of the Coptic Christian minority, on one hand, together with the deteriorating situation of Egyptian women, on the other hand, had to be concealed and delayed. Covering and postponing these critical issues has had its drawbacks that affected and shaped the transitional period that succeeded the ousting of Mubarak. This is another significant presence of alcohol in Egypt that I seek to grapple with in this chapter. It is a presence that haunts not only dominant meanings of public order in Egypt but also the (post-)revolutionary attempts to resist the stability of this order.

Stability (*istiqrār*) can be defined in opposition to both chaos (*fawdā*) and change (*taghīr*), as anthropologist Dina Makram Ebeid has illustrated (Makram-Ebeid 2012, 26). The utopia of Tahrir Square was imagined in order to change Mubarak's regime. However, it failed to expose an inherited dystopia, part of which is connected to the chaos of unresolved sectarian sentiments among the protestors. The previous section referred to how the "revival" movements of the institutions of the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Islamists forced Christians and Muslims to have the absence of alcohol as a common basis to posit their competing moral superiorities. This common teetotalism has also contributed to the many times in recent Egyptian history when Muslims and Christians claim their same and shared practices amid the danger of sectarian violence caused by the

haunting, unidentified *'aṣābe' kbafyyah* (hidden fingers or hands) of “exterior enemies” (Hassan 2015, 129; Ardovini 2016, 582). Within this context, I argue that the dominant existence of the sober national unity discourse during the uprisings, which for decades has been employed by Mubarak’s regime to conceal the sectarian consequences of these movements as well, can somehow define the presence of a “familiar” and “normal” non-alcoholic harmony between the protestors by which they were able to claim moral values against anti-revolutionary accusations.

The absence of alcohol during the uprisings not only means that its presence could have disrupted the moral order of the protests, but it pushes us to think broadly about the fragile utopia of the national unity discourse of Tahrir Square. Similar to how the self-proclaimed sobriety of the protests negated any chaos that could have been caused by bottles of beer and whisky, it has failed to think about the sectarian volcano that lies behind the temporariness of the harmony between Muslims and Christians. It should not be a surprise for the revolutionaries to witness a continuation of the persecution of Christians under the political regimes that came to Egypt after Mubarak. Furthermore, this wave of sectarianism should go hand in hand with the marginalisation of those who are usually excluded from the national unity discourse. A sober revolution that is dominated by the visibility of national unity between only two religious sects, which “look like each other”, will remain incomplete with the exclusion of revolutionary, victimhood, and martyrdom narratives not only of those who drink beer, but also non-believers in God, or others who belong to the marginalised Shiite and Baha’i sects. This is in addition to the members of other Egyptian Christian denominations such as Protestants, Catholics, and Adventists.

A VIRGIN REVOLUTION

The sober, exclusionary “revival” movements of the Coptic Orthodox Church and Sunni Islamists are enhanced by the random and contingent entity of *kalām innās* that usually judges people’s margins of respectability. *Kalām innās* refer to the rumours people fabricate about each other. *Kalām innās* is the panic-inducing spectre of gossip that we Egyptians always have to take into consideration as we navigate our everyday lives (Wikan 1996, 121. See also, Wynn 2018, 35). When a Muslim or a Christian drinks, or commits any act against dominant discourses of public

morality, their fellows usually say, “*innās haī’ōlō ‘alīnā eh?*” (What will the people say about us?) or “*sibnā eh lil nās il-tānyā*” (What did we leave for the other people?).

Innās in both phrases refer to members of the “other” religion. Together with the haunting presence of alcohol that generates *kalām innās*, I want to illustrate in this section that moral debates between Muslims and Christians also objectify the female body as a very important indicator of the sectarian dynamics of their parallel “revival” movements. Although some scholars have written about the important roles played by women in cultivating ideas of the parallel revivals (Mahmood 2012; Beshara 2019), I agree in the particular case of this part of the chapter with scholarship that has pointed to the predominantly masculine orientations and leaderships of the movements and the subsequent articulation of how women’s bodies and souls should be controlled (Armanios 2012; Kartveit 2018).

The national unity discourse that concealed the sectarian effects of the “revival” movements during the 2011 uprisings is usually entangled with the gendered dynamics of *kalām innās*. In other words, the failure to admit the sectarianism of the Tahrir utopia was accompanied by a dismissive attitude towards the sexual assaults committed by those who supported the ideas of justice, bread, freedom, and dignity. Here, the problem is not about the denial of “illicit” sexual relations before the “outsiders” who either were confused about or were totally against the January uprisings. Rather, it is about the non-consensual sexual assaults carried out by some of the revolutionaries against each other (Elturkey 2020, 91). Indeed, both sides of the story are connected. They contribute to the efforts of constructing the image of a “virgin” revolution where sexual desires and offenses might interrupt the harmony of the revolutionary times. During my fieldwork, for example, an Egyptian girl who joined the anti-Mubarak demonstrations in Port Said told me that her friend was raped on 11 February, the day when Mubarak resigned. “She screamed and cried; this was supposed to be the best day of her life, but it turned into a nightmare”, she said. When she and her friend complained to their male and even female colleagues about what happened, they were told to *kballī il-doniā te’addī* (let it [the incident] pass/forget about it) or *mesh wa’tḥā* (this is not the [right] time [to discuss this topic now]).

Il-doniā can mean the current situation and *wa’tḥā* can be translated into the current time, and they both refer to the transitional period that succeeded the ousting of Mubarak. Following Mubarak’s regime, media

and popular campaigns encouraged Egyptians to “clean” the streets of their neighbourhoods and to paint the walls and the sidewalks next to their houses. “From now on, I will not break a traffic light... I will not throw garbage in the street... I will not harass girls.” These were some of the slogans, among many other similar ones, that social media bloggers shared on their Facebook and Twitter pages during these times of change. As mentioned before, there was a tendency towards a new and better Egypt that would treat its citizens equally regardless of their gender and religion. However, like the sectarian wave that extended the temporality of Mubarak’s era even after he was physically removed from his office, sexual violence haunted the utopia of the Tahrir protests.

The bodies of the female protestors occupied an important role in defending the January uprisings. The exposure of the body of a female protestor by military forces in December 2011 boosted the anger of revolutionary forces against the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) that ruled Egypt between February 2011 and June 2012 (Tadros 2016, 6). Revolutionary forces criticised members of SCAF for carrying out “virginity tests” on unmarried female protestors in light of the aforementioned trilogy of sex, drugs, and alcohol (Bassiouni 2017, 330). Nevertheless, it seems that the rejection of these offenses was more of a political means to defame the dishonouring of the female body by certain political actors than an actually seeking of the emancipation of the female body from its status as a typical unit of moral analysis in a patriarchal society. Until today, revolutionaries’ denial of the presence of any sexual activity within their circles during and after the uprisings goes hand in hand with the Egyptian expression of *nonshor ghasilna el-wesekh* (showing off our dirty laundry) before *kalām innās*. The justification is that it is always “*mesh wa’thā*.” “When will it be then?” as the girl from Port Said asked after narrating her friend’s story.

In short, the claimed absence of alcohol, drugs, illicit sexual relations, and sexual violence from the Tahrir utopia were short-term tactics to appear “good” before *kalām innās*. It is true that Tahrir Square and the other revolutionary settings in and outside Cairo were more vulnerable and visible to *kalām innās* during the uprisings, given their radical, unprecedented demands to remove the regime. Nevertheless, one has to take care that the construction of a defensive shield against what the “other” people might think about the revolutionaries leaves behind a mess that cannot be simply recovered by “cleaning” the streets, as the national unity discourse can never be an ultimate solution to resolving sectarian sentiments among Egyptians. The real utopia of the Tahrir uprisings will

not happen without being honest about and making more sense of the dystopian chaos caused by the haunting presence of sexual violence before and after Mubarak. More than ten years after Mubarak's ousting, Egyptian political activists and academic researchers should take seriously the stumbling-blocks that not only left incomplete their dream of change, but also the ones that haunt the current regime's bulldozers, as I will show in the coming section.

(DIS-)CONNECTED WITH ALCOHOL

In the elitist neighbourhood of Zamalek in Cairo, I was invited to a birthday at one of the boats moored by the banks of the Nile. Before dropping me off a few metres before the boat, the taxi driver said to me, but more to himself, "I swear to God, we are not living" (*mesh 'āyshīn*). "*Dī nās 'āyshah fī 'amākin tānīa*" (These people live in other places), he added. Whether or not he knew that I was heading to one of the "other places", the driver's comment haunted my class privilege of partying and drinking.

Thursday and Friday nights in Cairo are full of circulations of cash and desires among and by different classes (Van Nieuwkerk 1992, 35). One does not have to pay the amount of money I spent on that night in Zamalek to drink a couple of bottles of beer and a glass of whisky (around 30 dollars). People drink not only at the fancy nightclubs in Zamalek but also at working-class bars in Downtown Cairo as well as in their homes and in public streets while making sure to hide from the police forces. However, drinking in Zamalek and other luxurious bars, nightclubs, and hotels during these two nights in particular presents a weekly opportunity for people to claim their belonging to a high social class. It is also an opportunity for the valets (*soyyās*, sing. *sāyes*) to extract a good amount of money from people who are already paying a lot to have some fun. This is in addition to the cash expected by drivers of the privately owned black and white taxis and of other vehicles that belong to the ride-hailing companies of *Uber* and *Careem*. The latter wait in front of the nightclubs after midnight to drive clubbers who do not have their own cars, and those who prefer not to drive home after long drinking nights.

After finishing their parties, clients of the nightclubs in Zamalek meet not only the valets and the drivers but also beggars, homeless people, and street vendors who expect to get some change. The latter come from the neighbouring districts of Shubra, Imbaba, Kit Kat, Boulaq Abu El-Ela, Warraq, and others.⁴ They cross one of the three bridges that connect the island of Zamalek to Cairo and Giza governorates to question the

privilege of the clubbers, who do their best to escape and to disregard the presence of those who cannot enter the nightclubs.

The clubbers continue to hide from the less privileged Cairene classes while getting to their homes. “*Fī ‘ā lam tā nī taḥtīnā*” (There is another world below us), said a microbus driver who once drove me from Zamalek to the city of Sheikh Zayed via the 26th of July Corridor. In Cairo, which has been spreading towards all the neighbouring governorates over the last three decades (Mitchell 2012, 273), there are other concealed worlds “below” and on the margins not only of the 26th of July Corridor but also the rhizomatic Ring Road (*al-Tarīq al-Dā’erī*) that circles Cairo. This is together with the newly built Rod al-Farag Corridor that connects the east of Cairo to its north directly to the North Coast, Alexandria, and Marsa Matrouh. Last but not least, one cannot disregard the infinite number of bridges that can take the clubbers from Zamalek to their homes in Heliopolis or to New Cairo without the need to pass by or to meet the inhabitants of what they usually call “unsafe” and “remote” districts (*khatar wa maḥdōfah*).

The new roads have increasingly diminished the haunting of the privilege of the clubbers in Zamalek, especially with the recent “development” plans of the “hidden worlds” (Wahba 2020, 85). Three novels, *Utopia* by Ahmed Khaled Towfik (2008), *Sharq al-Dā’erī* (The East of the Ring Road) by Khaled Ahmed (2014), and *Khairallah al-Gabal* (The Mountain of Khairallah) by Alaa Farghaly (2016), note how the presence of alcohol in the “hidden” districts has contributed to their dominant depiction as immoral. If Mubarak’s regime demonised the uprisings of Tahrir Square through the trilogy of alcohol, drugs, and sex, as manifested in the previous two sections, the regime of Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has regarded the dwellers of slum areas as “dangerous” subjects who need to be disciplined and displaced (Mittermaier 2019, 176; Leila 2019; Farid 2019). While nightclubs in Zamalek gather people from different classes inside and outside them, drinking practices can also contribute to the separation of rich from poor, forcing the latter to live far away from the parties of the clubbers.

What roles can alcohol play amid the current violent urban changes in Egypt? In light of the haunting comment of the taxi driver, together with the demonisation of the “unsafe” (and alcoholic) districts, what does the presence of beer and whisky bottles tell us about class formations, and more importantly class fictions and struggles? How can alcohol interrupt the systemic “bulldozing” of the lives of the poor? (Gordillo 2014, 113). These questions could not be more timely and critical to investigate, given

the current cultivation of what I call the contactless life-worlds that gradually separate the poor from the rich.

Historian Francesca Biancani teaches us that the urban planning of the elite administrators before and during the British colonialism was haunted by the presence of unwanted groups, Egyptians, and foreign migrants alike. Biancani's research focused on impoverished sex workers, who, together with the homeless and beggars (Ener 2003, 11), "embodied...a disorder which came into being with the increased social stratification and inequalities in wealth distribution" (Biancani 2018, 37). Put differently, the inability to fully control the transgressive movements of the unprivileged classes in Egypt complicated colonial policies in preventing the poor from meeting and asking for money, food, and remunerated sex from the rich. In Biancani's words, therefore, the haunting presence of brothels, and I would add drinking practices, "at the center of [Cairo's] urban space" contributed to the "production of a normative understanding of citizenship, materially and discursively" (ibid., 38; see also Cormack 2021, 18).

The positioning of sex work during the first half of the twentieth century is somehow similar to that of alcohol in today's Egypt. While state-regulated sex work was made illegal in 1951, we still see Egypt's consumption of alcohol during certain times and at certain places. However, like alcohol and drugs, illicit sex is present among the poor and the rich, Muslims and Christians, and revolutionary and counterrevolutionary forces in Egypt. Therefore, I argue that the enhancing negation of this trilogy amid the parallel "revival" movements of the 1970s has produced bottles of beer and whisky as significant ethnographic objects of critique among different social and economic classes. While recent anthropological and sociological studies have overlooked the nuances of this topic, social and cultural historians of Egypt have offered special attention to alcohol's haunting presence.

Historians Lucie Ryzova, Jacob Wilson, and Omar D. Foda have written about how the consumption of alcohol was employed in colonial Egypt by the educated middle class of *effendis* to describe the corruption of the Egyptian *awlād al-dhawāt* (sons of the elite) and the immorality of the local *baltagiyya* (thugs) (Ryzova 2014, 73; Jacob 2011, 248). Moreover, "there were *effendi* teetotallers", who promoted an "indigenous tradition of temperance" against the British colonial power (Foda 2019, 190). By contrast, other *effendis* regarded the consumption of alcohol as a "modern" practice that could separate them from both the non-elite, religious, and/or sober Egyptians, on one hand, and that could bring them closer to a western lifestyle, on the other (ibid.).

It is true that other classes also employed alcohol to differentiate themselves from each other and from the *effendis*. Nonetheless, the unique importance of the *effendis* lies in how some of them led or inspired the parallel revival movements of the 1970s and their lasting hegemonic effects. Whether it is Pope Shenouda III, who led the “revival” of the Coptic Orthodox Church, or Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood that shaped the “Islamic Awakening”, sober *effendis* have largely succeeded in imposing their vision on Egyptian society since then. Hence, similarly to the way in which alcohol and anti-alcoholism have formulated political, social, religious, and moral claims and arguments throughout modern Egyptian history, I hope with the coming concluding vignette to read and write future stories that further investigate how alcohol haunts people’s (lack of) wealth, (im-)morality, “(un-)safe” livelihoods, and leisure time. Despite and because of the recent geographic and demographic changes, it is necessary to explore such barriers that can interrupt the “bulldozing” of means of struggle and friction between the rich and the poor.

CONCLUSIONS: A HAUNTING, TRAVELLING SONG

In October 2019, I had to put an end to my fieldwork to start writing my doctoral dissertation, before I was haunted by a song called *bint al-gīrān* (the neighbours’ daughter). The latter belongs to the mahragānāt (sing. *mahragān*) music genre, which literally means festivals. The genre is a type of electronic dance music started during the first decade of the of the twenty-first century by inhabitants of popular neighbourhoods in Cairo and Alexandria (Diefallah 2020). It used to be an underground genre before the commodification and commercialisation that has led to the wealth and the fame of some of its singers. The two singers of *bint al-gīrān*, Omar Kamal and Hassan Shakoush, became well-known celebrities in Egypt. They were invited to sing their booming song at Cairo International Stadium during a ceremony held on the Valentine’s Day in February 2020. Some of the lyrics read: “If you leave me, I’ll hate my life and my years... I’ll get lost and won’t find myself, I’ll drink alcohol and smoke hashish.”

A few days after the celebration, the Egyptian Musicians Syndicate banned the singers of mahragānāt in general to sing at any coming public celebrations. The head of the syndicate, Hany Shaker, claimed that the lyrics of *bint al-gīrān* in particular are “promiscuous and immoral” and “do not represent Egypt” (Egyptian Streets 2020). In their turn, the singers of the song apologised for the incident through the Instagram account

of Hassan Shakoush. They argued “that an error occurred by the organisers of the ceremony by operating the old version of the song, instead of the new version that we delivered on [a] flash [memory stick]” (EG 24 News 2020). When Shakoush was invited to a talk show, I noticed that he sang the “new version,” in which he replaced “I’ll drink alcohol and smoke hashish” with “everyone raises his hands” (MBC Masr 2020).

In any case, the “old version” of the song exists everywhere on people’s cell phones and computers, not only in Egypt but also around the whole world. The song was played at nearly every single wedding or birthday party I attended in Cairo and Alexandria after the coronavirus lockdown was partially lifted in Egypt in July 2020. Nightclubs in Zamalek, luxurious hotels, and working-class bars in Downtown Cairo, along with *toktoks*, minibuses, and fancy cars all play the “old version”. The travelling of the song’s “alcohol” and “hashish” between different neighbourhoods and classes in Egypt has nurtured not only Hany Shaker’s perception of the (im-)moral standards that (cannot) “represent Egypt”, but it has also influenced other ideas about the social and economic backgrounds of those who sing, listen to, and dance to the song. I have realised during my fieldwork, for example, how members of the educated middle class referred to the mahragānāt singers as “uneducated nouveau riche”. Moreover, others take advantage of the songs to reproduce stereotypes about the immorality and/or the *bī’ah* (lacking good taste) label of the inhabitants of the districts from which the genre emerged. However, “we succeeded to impose our genre on them”, as a mahragānāt singer stated to me while talking about those who dance to the genre in the nightclubs in Zamalek and in other elite neighbourhoods.

NOTES

1. The Coptic Orthodox parishes and other Christian sites of worship in general are surrounded by police and army forces. This is especially the case after a number of church bombings that Copts suffered from during the last decade. This securitisation has been preceded and accompanied by rumours about what Copts do inside their parishes. For example, some Muslims think that Copts have weapons “in preparation for armed action against” them (Tadros 2013, 93).
2. The film is called “18 Days in Shubra”.
3. See e.g. Lachenal, ‘Fake Martyrs and True Heroes’ for a comparative case in Tunisia.

4. I obviously do not mean that all the inhabitants of these districts are poor or beggars. I do not also mean that they cannot join the parties in Zamalek. I just want to point out to how impoverished Egyptians live not far away from the clubbers.

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Production and Consumption of Alcohol in Ramallah: Steadfastness, Religion, and Urban Rhythms

Mariangela Gasparotto

INTRODUCTION

While he was living on the outskirts of Hebron, Saleh, a kitchen assistant in his twenties, never bought alcohol in his hometown. He could not find it either in public spaces or in locations of sociability because of Islamic norms and laws existing in the city that forbid Muslims to produce or sell alcohol.¹ However, Saleh used to purchase drinks in “wet” cities of the West Bank, such as Bethlehem or Ramallah. Coming from a religious family, this young man used to consume alcoholic beverages with discretion to prevent social disapproval. Indeed, in Palestine, alcohol’s geography follows some specific norms and laws that depend mainly on the religion of the inhabitants. Thus, Palestinian cities like Jenin, Nablus, Hebron, Tulkarem, and Qalqilya are known to be “drier”² than Ramallah and Bethlehem, where the Christian population has been determining sites of sociability and alcohol’s production, sale, and consumption.

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Despite the Muslim background of Hebron, Saleh was far from being the only person discretely drinking alcohol, and once the owner of a liquor store in Bethlehem told me that his business would close if people from Hebron stopped coming. Generally, as in Saleh's case, religious norms, and reputation, as well as social class, influence attitudes to alcohol consumption. For him, the most important thing was not being seen by his parents, his wider family, or neighbours while he was drinking. Nevertheless, he was convinced that those close to him were aware of his practices, but they were not used to talking about them. Thus, his mother had never commented on seeing him coming back home inebriated. Alcohol was a taboo, and its consumption was permitted only if it stayed unseen and untold. He discovered that his brothers also used to drink after having seen them boozing. They never received comments about their habits, and occasionally met for a sip.

Generally, Saleh used to drink with those friends who had the same routine. Therefore, when his non-drinking, veiled wife made an appearance, he seemed to be embarrassed and his rate of consumption was lower than usual: he did not want to give up his vice, but he also wanted to be wise and respectful of their differences. In Hebron, the drinkers' group regularly met in private spaces such as houses, flats, and warehouses. These confidential places became for them a sort of "moral-free zones"³ where those assembled could bypass Hebronite social and religious norms. They partially replaced bars and coffee shops located in Ramallah, where alcohol, even if it is not openly accepted, is nevertheless tolerated, and sold under certain conditions to people who can afford it.

When I was living and researching in the ersatz Palestinian capital, Saleh was living in Ramallah to work. When he lost his job and returned to his hometown, he sometimes spent his nights in Ramallah in order to feel free to drink. I met other youths like him from "drier" Palestinian cities or villages who used to fill their leisure time in Ramallah in order to enjoy an "urban" (Pétonnet 1987) and "collective" anonymity (Mermier 2015).⁴ Concretely, these internal migrants took advantage of "polite inattentions", "relationships based on distance", and the "principle of reserve" (Joseph 1984, 133, 134, 136) existing and protecting them there. They used to drink in the limelight among people who acted like them and in specific places (like bars or clubs) where their practices were permitted and shared among costumers. Others like Saleh preferred (or were pushed) to choose private spaces or wastelands because of social and economic reasons. As in other contexts, these internal and temporary

migrants were “capable of evading the multiple claims that will forever be placed upon them by fellow village people; and enacting forms of sociality that are appropriate to particular places and social contexts” (Marsden 2009, 70).⁵

This chapter is part of my PhD research on youths living in Ramallah (Gasparotto 2019) and it is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2012 and 2019 in the city, in its suburbs, and in one refugee camp. I lead an intense practice of participant observation and of observative participation: I followed young people in their daily life, I worked in a coffee shop/restaurant in Ramallah, and I combined semi-direct interviews with ordinary interactions to describe and analyse multiple ways of living followed by Palestinians from 20 to 30 years old who were not originally from the city and who lived at the margins of its actual development. Although alcohol was not the main topic of my research, its consumption was frequent, and I realised that its status was ambiguous. Observing practices and listening to discourses related to it, I noticed similar hierarchies and power relations that penetrate the city and, more generally, the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

In order to understand drinking practices in the Palestinian context, I will firstly contextualise the brewing and wine production processes. I will underline that the reputation of alcohol in Palestine diverges from other Muslim countries as it refers, in different and contradictory ways, both to the Israeli colonisation of Palestinian territory and to religious norms. In the second part of this chapter, I will describe the consumption of alcohol in Ramallah. I argue that the recent history of the city and the heterogeneity of its inhabitants are reflected in different practices of consumption. I will then evoke two case studies to clarify the importance of situational analysis. By doing so, I will point out the multiplicity of factors that play a role in shaping norms on alcohol. I especially consider the influence of personal and behavioural adjustments, which are enacted to keep the transgression in the shadows. I will summarise the most important insights in the conclusion and explain how far this research contributes to understand drinking in Muslim worlds in a more differentiated way. Indeed, alcohol prohibition does not prevent its inhabitants from drinking, but this rule pushes them to find various ways to do it. For some, it becomes a symbolic (if not revolutionary) act to display social, economic, and religious boundaries. Even though alcohol is forbidden by the Qur’an, as has been suggested by Fernand Braudel with regard to Muslim spaces, most of the time, it is a sort of “inexhaustible clandestine” (Braudel 1979, 198):

its consumption is quite common, as long as it stays confidential and moderate.⁶ As in other Muslim contexts, in Palestinian “dry” cities, the transgression of norms surrounding alcohol is conceivable on city’s margins, and there exists a “morality of visibility rather than one of culpability” (Buisson-Fenet 1997). Rhythm analysis and situational perspective—as they have been theorised respectively by Henry Lefebvre (1992) and Clyde Mitchell (1987)—will help me to shed a new light on practices of drinking alcohol in such settings.

PRODUCTION OF ALCOHOL IN PALESTINE: BETWEEN *SUMÚD* (STEADFASTNESS) AND HARAM (FORBIDDEN)

In their historical descriptions of alcohol’s status in former French colonies, scholars point to the collision between nationalistic and religious discourses: local activists emphasised that spirits were brought by Western authorities and that they had a bad influence and perverted native customs.⁷ In the Palestinian context, the use and abuse of alcohol, and policies surrounding it, have been analysed during the Mandate period by Philippe Bourmaud (2013). In Mandatory Palestine (1920–1948), alcohol (and especially ‘araq⁸) was conceived as a local resource constituting a national symbol as well as an economic expedient (Bourmaud 2015). Although some newspaper articles describe Palestinian initiatives and productions, actual consumption of alcohol has not yet been deeply described, despite its ambiguous role, which is determined both by Israeli colonisation of the territory and by religious concerns.⁹

Indeed, wine and beer producers link their work to national resilience, inserting it into the collective and popular theme of steadfastness (*sumúd*) against the Israeli repression. Like other aspects of the daily life, producing alcohol can be considered as a way to resist and to invest in local merchandise.¹⁰ Issues concerning Palestinian economic self-sufficiency and the boycott of Israeli goods¹¹ play an important role. Between nationalism and commercial gains, people involved in wine production and brewing do not hesitate to list all the problems involved in the production of their goods. Each step of the process (from the main raw materials to labelling and distribution) are compromised by Israeli policies, and the ownership and use of land are strictly subordinated by the colonisation process. For instance, Cremisan’s vineyards, managed by Salesian monks and located in the district of Bethlehem, have suffered from settler violence on a number

of occasions, and are threatened by the construction of the separation wall, which is likely to divide the property.¹² In order to market and export Cremisan wines, Palestinians started to cooperate with Israelis: as a result, the “wine frequently features in international exhibitions as an Israeli wine” (Monterescu 2019, 9). Members of the Ashkar family, from the northern Galilee village of Iqrit, produce an eponymous wine. They were forced to leave their home during the *Nakba* (catastrophe) (Mobley 2019),¹³ but today, their wine is considered Israeli. Elsewhere, since settlers exploit Palestinian natural resources, there is a general lack of water, which is necessary for alcohol production.

In addition, the Oslo Accords¹⁴ have perpetuated the subordination of the Palestinian economy to the Israeli one. Relating his own experiences as a brewer, one of the Sayej brothers—from the Birzeit brewery Shepherds, founded in 2015—described the numerous obstacles that his company must face to import products via Israel.¹⁵ His “nightmare” consists of “checkpoint hold-ups, permits, government interference and bureaucracy”, which have delayed beer production and increased costs. In a newspaper interview, he listed how Israelis “don’t supply us with trash cans outside. There is no sewage system. They do not want to give us infrastructure. The situation in [the OPT] is terrible. It is occupied. All the logistics make it 400 per cent harder than anywhere else” (Bentley 2017). Exports are also subjected to high additional costs, which make Palestinian goods non-competitive (Elagraa, Jamal and Elkhafif 2014). Under free trade agreements, certain countries (like the United States) refuse to import goods from Palestine, while labelling regulations force the Khoury family, who brew Taybeh¹⁶ beer, to stamp their products with the label “West Bank” instead of “Palestine”, which goes against their wishes. Finally, some Palestinians consider imported products as better than local ones, and they lean towards choosing Israeli or international brands (Rouveyrolles 2016).

Consequently, Palestinian brewers or wine producers do not hesitate to define their actions as being part of Palestinian non-violent resistance (Iommi-Amunategui 2013). They become a “symbol”, a “message of hope, resilience and determination on behalf of the entire Palestinian people” (Alqamar 2018). Producing beer has become “a characteristic of sovereignty, a national symbol that people claim in the same way as the still-closed airport, the stuttering television, the brawny police and the four-coloured flag” (Boltanski 1998). Brewers highlight that their actions can showcase not only a “new Palestinian generation” which distances

itself from violence and war, but also that they provide a “positive image of Palestine” (Rouveyrolles 2016). One member of the Khoury family emphasised his desire to “expose to the whole world that Palestinians are normal people. That they have the right to have a normal daily life: drink a beer, go to school, have running water” (Alqamar 2018). As I will underline below, while such statements represent the recently emerged image of the golden and depoliticised youth, they refer to a different (and sometimes contested) way of being engaged (Maira 2013).

Situated between politics and business, ads for local beers underline the link between revolution, occupation, and consumption: hence, drinking Taybeh beer, one can “Taste the revolution” and “drink for freedom”, while buying local products in the name of the BDS campaign.¹⁷ In the same vein, according to another advertisement, a Shepherds “beer a day keeps the problems away, Palestine” (Bentley 2017).

This positive image diverges from the negative one promoted by Muslim authorities who act according to the Qur’anic prohibition of drinks “which tend to inebriate, however little” (Sadan in Georgeon 2002, 7).¹⁸ Indeed, as in other Muslim countries,¹⁹ alcohol consumption in Palestine is subject to some conditions, and its production and trade are in the hands of Christians. Muslims who want to open a business related to alcohol (shops, restaurants, bars, or coffee shops) must be associated with Christians. As a result, Muslims sometimes bypass this rule by creating fake collaborations with Christians. All alcohol production is done in Christian villages and cities, and bars and coffee shops serving alcoholic drinks are located in historically Christian districts. From time to time, profane discourses may be adapted to fit religious precepts: for example, the management of Taybeh decided to produce non-alcoholic beers to satisfy Muslim tastes. However, they were unable to sell them in Gaza, after a distribution centre was burnt down by Islamic activists (Sheridan 2006).

It is important to add that, for some, Muslim values are part of the national identity; transgressing them implies an infringement of the Palestinian cause. Thus, during a festival in Birzeit, Shepherds’ stand was obliged to close after a preacher judged their activities as “non-Palestinian” (Rouveyrolles 2016). Israeli colonisation has led to this specific idea about Palestinian identity: the person was assuming that Palestinians must behave righteously, distinguishing themselves from Israelis, who enjoy political, military, and economic superiority, while being “less moral” than Palestinians.²⁰

All these examples show that Palestine is partially different from other Muslim countries, and that there is a collection of different and contradictory discourses on alcohol, which makes the consumption of drinks both acceptable and unbearable, laudable and dishonourable. Despite this, alcohol use is subject to some restrictions that are supported by common Muslim discourses. This does not preclude personal adjustments and interpretations of Muslim norms: like other aspects of daily life (future projects, love relationships, or consumption), one can see some ambiguities and a great distance between Islamic doctrine and believers' practices (Schielke and Debevec 2012; Deeb 2006). For example, some interlocutors did not see any contradiction in stopping alcohol consumption only during the month of Ramadan, while others took their *iftâr* (the evening meal which ends the daily Ramadan fast) sipping a glass of 'araq.

THE ARCHIPELAGO OF SPACES IN RAMALLAH: DISTINCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL

Ramallah is partly different from other Palestinian cities and it is frequently considered the most liberal space in the West Bank.²¹ According to local discourses and descriptions, there inhabitants can break moral, political, and social norms; residents usually go there to get away from the conservatism related not only to consumption of alcohol but also to other aspects of their life (such as behaviour, premarital relationships, friendships, or meetings). In the following part of this chapter, I will partially nuance such descriptions, arguing that the recent history and demographic composition of the city have created conditions for a plurality of spaces and attitudes that enliven the city in a contradictory way. Conservative and poor areas (like the neighbourhoods of Beitunia, al-Sharafé, or al-Bireh), lacking good infrastructures, juxtapose with upscale ones mostly inhabited by international workers or returnees. Such districts (as Al-Tireh, Al-Masyoun, or Ein Munjed) are characterised by an upscale and westernised way of life, and are composed of high standard houses built in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords and after the Second Intifada (2000–2005).

Ramallah was a small Christian village without any particularly distinctive features at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Most of its urban changes have been caused by movements of people and ideas. Firstly, significant emigrations to the Americas occurred from the end of the 1800s onwards (Jawad 2009, 30); while Palestinian departures left a void in the

city, remittances from abroad helped inhabitants to build houses and businesses, and together with investments in services created an urban, bourgeois ethos based on distinction (Taraki and Giacaman 2006; Wadi 2007). Meantime, new economic, cultural, religious, and educational activities (imported mainly by missionaries) prompted people from the region to move to Ramallah, temporarily or permanently (Taraki and Giacaman 2006, 20–28; Barthe 2011, 25). According to the Palestinian sociologists Lisa Taraki and Rita Giacaman, these migratory movements of people increased “the ‘openness’ of Ramallah to the outside world” (Taraki and Giacaman 2006, 22).

The *Nakba* of 1948 made Ramallah a city of internal refugees. Scholars argued that the Palestinian dispersion increased class segmentation that had already existed before 1948 (Sayigh 1979). In Ramallah, the refugees’ places of origin and religious belongings determined where they settled in the city. Indeed, some of the 700,000 Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes, and most of the Muslim refugees from the hinterland, installed themselves in refugee camps located in the city’s surroundings.²² Over time, they replaced the original tents with permanent houses in the three refugee camps (Al-Amari, Qalandia, and Jalazone) that still exist at the outskirts of the city.²³ As time went by, such areas became “places of life” which are equipped with shops and urban services (such as driving schools, travel agencies, banks, or NGOs).²⁴ Known as the centres of the popular resistance, refugee camps are the main targets of Israeli military incursions. Meanwhile, numerous and stigmatised images spread among non-camp citizens, who do not hesitate to define refugees as backwards or retrogrades, while others call them “gipsy” (*nawwâr*). Muslim refugees are distinguished from Christian ones who came to Ramallah from coastal cities such as Jaffa, Lod, and Haifa. These settled in the old city (Ramallah tahta), fitting with the economic, political, and civic life in the core of Ramallah (Signoles 2001). Until today, they own most of the grocery stores selling alcohol in the town.

Following the occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967 and following its Judaisation, the status of the former Palestinian capital was not discussed during the Oslo Accords. Consequently, Ramallah stood in as the temporary capital of the Palestinian Authority (PA). By the end of the twentieth century its population growth continued and increased.²⁵ Within the town, demographic changes led to an important innovation in the alcohol domain. In 1996, Fatah party officials (who were formerly based in Tunis)²⁶ relocated to Ramallah, establishing their political, bureaucratic,

and economic centres there. Besides these returnees (‘*â*’idûn),²⁷ a certain number of expatriate businessmen (*mughhtaribîn*) moved to Ramallah for economic reasons, mostly from the Gulf States, the United States, and Europe.²⁸ The majority of them were employed in NGOs, in international agencies, or in local companies. At the same time, many international NGOs moved their headquarters from Jerusalem to Ramallah, and foreign journalists also settled in Ramallah. Embodying a cosmopolitan trajectory, new inhabitants partially transformed the social and economic fabric of the city and settled mostly in the al-Masyoun, al-Tireh, and Ein Munjed areas. Hence, some returnees opened bars, restaurants, coffee shops, and new sites of sociability. Their names, menus, and styles seem to correspond to international consumers and tastes. Among others, the Khoury family, formerly based in the United States, opened Taybeh, the first Palestinian brewery in the homonymous village inhabited mostly by Christians, who constitute 90 per cent of the population. Taybeh Winery, owned by Khoury brothers, was founded in 2013.

Meanwhile, following the economic, social, and political deterioration of living conditions in the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories since the Second Intifada, unskilled workers settled in Ramallah, which seems to be partially safe both from the crisis affecting the land and from Israeli military incursions. With this new demographic diversification, the city’s development headed in two main directions: on the one hand, new buildings, social spaces, and streets were built in order to satisfy both foreigners and rich, cosmopolitan Palestinians; on the other, as the construction of affordable housing inside the city was not planned, poorer and unskilled internal migrants settled outside the city centre, notably in the al-Bireh and Betounia municipalities. This led to some strong urban differences in lifestyles, reflected in the consumption of alcohol, which correspond to inhabitants’ origins, economic power, religion, or status.

PLACES OF ALCOHOL IN RAMALLAH

The heterogeneity characterizing the city’s inhabitants and neighbourhoods reverberates throughout the diversity of leisure practices and places, the variety of sites where alcohol is consumed, and the ambiguity of alcoholic beverages’ status. Drinking a beer is not a big deal in Ramallah, and one can choose between a substantial variety of contexts to do it. In the next section, I will review the different options available to people in

Ramallah, considering private (flats and houses) and semi-public spaces (bars, pubs, clubs, and coffee shops), where most people drink.

Even if many bars and coffee shops have opened over the last fifteen years, private houses remain the cheapest and safest place for my penniless interlocutors to consume alcoholic beverages. Those who left their parents' homes did not hesitate to drink with friends who had the same habits; in such meetings, they avoided alcoholic beverages whenever an abstainer was present. Even if alcohol consumption is normalised in Ramallah, during my fieldwork, I had the impression that people transgressed religious norms only with those who shared such practice. Thus, as I underlined above, Saleh used to limit his alcohol rate when his wife was with him. Similarly, in February 2019, if Hicham was there, his friends renounced drinks. Moreover, as soon as he arrived while people were having a drink, they not only stopped consuming alcohol, but also removed bottles from the room. This young man decided on his 25th birthday to return to Islam's way of life after having spent his youth far from religious precepts. Now, he prays five times a day, and has stopped drinking and started to have a pure life. Despite their divergent beliefs, and even though Hicham was aware of his friends' habits, they thought that he would be annoyed by such an "abomination invented by Satan" (Qur'an 5:92).

Alcohol is drunk within private spaces also for reasons of discretion. Some interlocutors considered the possibility of being seen by a family member or a neighbour while they were drinking; others implied that they did not feel comfortable in stylish, overly expensive bars or clubs based on distinction; others mentioned the bad reputation of such places. Indoor informal meetings or parties were frequently organised by my informants, but precautions were always taken for the purpose of discretion. Thresholds between public and private spaces are not always distinct, and that principles governing relationships in public spaces also influence conduct at homes. In Ramallah, the distinction between areas defines people's practices in private, public, and semi-public spaces. Hence, in certain areas (like Ramallah Tahta, al-Masyoun, or al-Tireh), inhabitants seem to be less careful than elsewhere regarding alcohol's transgressions. Nevertheless, people set up a combination of tricks to hide their consumption, protecting themselves from the neighbours' eyes, comments, or blame. Thus, one interlocutor used to close her living room curtains while she was drinking, and another used to lock his door to prevent the sudden entry of a neighbour. Sometimes, tenants hid their alcohol stock in hidden corners, and occasionally they did not throw out empty bottles in ordinary bins.

These kinds of ruses are spread over the city territory, in the name of being considerate towards the Muslim community living in Ramallah. Some interlocutors mentioned a sort of “brainwashing” reaching the entire population: despite the open-mindedness of al-Masyoun’s inhabitants, and in spite of the fact that drinkers did not risk anything by being exposed, one was acting as if she was living in a more conservative area.

Alcoholic geography in semi-public spaces is compatible with the demographic composition of different areas but also with the political situation. In Ramallah today, one can choose from a wide range of places, and those who can afford to drink in coffee shops, bars, and pubs select their favourite places according to a set of factors such as prices, regular customers, and style. Some inhabitants considered new social spaces as the sites of the Oslo generation (*jil Oslo*), composed of a golden youth far removed from political matters (Yahya 2021). Because of their styles, the high prices charged, their menus, or the cosy and elegant settings, these places exacerbated internal fractures, emphasizing social and economic divides. While some social spaces sell alcohol, only few of them display their bottles to prevent upsetting religious people who do not drink. They have at their disposal two different menus, with one limited to alcoholic beverages while the other has soft drinks and food. For a waiter, a simple glance suffices to know whether he should bring the first or the second one. It is a question of style, way of talking, and dressing.

Some coffee shops and bars have an outside patio, a courtyard, or an interior garden protected by wooden boards. These lead people to act as they wish, away from the prying eyes of passers-by. Garage Bar, opened in 2015 and located in the prestigious area of al-Masyoun, has tables on the sidewalk. There, people sip glasses of wine or beer, reassured by the more indulgent and open-minded neighbours who agree with or accept a way of life that includes alcohol consumption.

Despite the social characteristics of this area, during open attacks by the Israeli army, outdoor alcohol consumption becomes non-tolerated and threatened, and is occasionally punished (Gasparotto 2015). Therefore, in the course of past Israeli offensives against Gaza or the West Bank—or when a Palestinian dies as a martyr—bars and other places for socialising would close in the name of popular mourning and the national fight against Israel. Once again, colonisation influences people’s practices: the consumption of alcohol as a festive moment among individuals is considered immoral and must be avoided when the Palestinian community

suffers more deeply. The political crisis brought about by colonisation produces a community based on strict moral values.²⁹

Concretely, only some of these leisure spaces follow this unwritten practice of grief on behalf of the national cause, and most of them remain open, but with discretion. On such occasions, waiters ask costumers to stay prudent and avoid noise or consumption in the street. Meanwhile, behind lowered shutters, the rate of alcohol consumption is higher than usual, as if exceptional moments of violence unveil two contradictory urbanities: on the one hand, social identities become more relevant, and they are strongly linked to moral norms. On the other hand, wartime constitutes a subjectivation period and people transgress norms, acquiring a certain degree of autonomy.

TIMES OF ALCOHOL: RAMALLAH BY NIGHT AND BY DAY, RHYTHMS, NORMS, AND REPUTATION

In Ramallah, alcohol rarely reaches public spaces like streets. Nevertheless, some exceptions must be made, since Ramallah and its periphery host some festivals celebrating alcohol: for one or two days per year, people can openly consume alcohol within a delineated perimeter. Since 2016, the Shepherds Beer Festival has taken place in Birzeit and Bethlehem, and in 2005 the “Taybeh Oktoberfest” started, celebrating Taybeh beer in the eponymous village. For two days, concerts, touristic walks, and glasses of beer alternate with the promotion of local products (olive oil, soap, embroideries, food) and the arrival of people, coming from all Palestinian territories. During such occasions, beer rises to the rank of Palestinian heritage (*turâth*), and it is celebrated as a national product.

In ordinary situations, special urban capacities are required, and inhabitants keep their consumption discreet: the city can be considered an archipelago of different spaces that people cross daily. As elsewhere, Ramallah’s inhabitants understand the diversity of its spaces and rhythms, and they circumvent norms, adapting their attitudes in conformity with the situation. Thus, it was in the name of his urban knowledge and capacities that, each time he bought bottles of alcohol, Hatem (like others) knew what he should do. He used to hide bottles of beer, wine, or spirits in two different black bags. He tied a knot in the first one to prevent the glasses from making a noise, while he used the second one for transportation. Sometimes, he put the taboo objects in his backpack. Even if he was living and buying

alcohol in Ramallah tahta (the old part of Ramallah, originally inhabited by Christians), he felt that he had to adapt to the majority of the population's habits by hiding his practices. He was not scared of being threatened, but nervous. According to him, it was a question of respect towards others. In his discourses, he used to talk about an implicit pact among inhabitants: alcohol was forbidden in public spaces, and people who wanted to consume it must maintain a judicious attitude.

During my fieldwork, I adapted my practices to these kinds of discourses and warnings, but I changed my mind after I started to walk with Iyad, my former flatmate and colleague. Between 2013 and 2014, we were both employed as waiters at a restaurant/coffee shop in the al-Masyoun area. At night, when we used to finish work at the Three Amigos restaurant at the same time, Iyad and I used to share our "warrior beer" at La Grotta, in Ramallah Tahta: prices were lower than elsewhere, and live music, subdued light, and the simplicity of the decor and costumers' attitudes contributed to a relaxed atmosphere.

Once, at the beginning of January 2014, we were too tired to finish our big Amstel bottle on site, and Iyad proposed to leave the place and consume our beverage on our way home. The doubts I expressed to my friend were quickly taken away: for him, there were no problems with what we were doing. Certainly, my foreign status determined his idea, even if he assured me that, at night, this part of the city was "safer", and that there was no reason to be afraid to drink in the street, adding that a lot of people usually did the same. What we were doing was "*âdî*": normal, ordinary.

Nevertheless, strolling with him, I noticed that this young painter had incorporated some norms which were linked to the demographic composition of the area. Walking ahead of me, Iyad would spontaneously hide the bottle under his winter overcoat; from time to time, he used to take it out to have a sip. I imitated all his farsightedness without remarking or questioning anything. I deduced that all his movements (that he described as unplanned) were due to inhabitants of the area: while the original inhabitants (*sukkân al-asliyyîn*) who were living in Ramallah tahta in the past were Christian, some streets of this neighbourhood are now inhabited by people who moved there several years ago, mostly from the Hebron area, which is considered to be very conservative. Passing through those streets, the young man in his thirties kept the beer out of sight; otherwise, he took it out.

Despite this, he was convinced that night-time reduced danger for transgressors. In his discourse, the rhythms of the city determine people's

practices. Iyad considered the night as “the time of all kinds of freedom” (Cauquelin 1977, 171) and he associated it with the consumption of alcohol, whereas this was out of the question at other moments. Therefore, night-time can be examined as a sort of carnival, since it represents “the splitting image of the city”, “more liberal and open-minded” (Agier 2000, 7). This moment produces a new way of being in the city, and this alternative urbanity depends on the situation.

Iyad set up a “partially conformist transgression” (Rachik 2018, 13) that was subordinated to relations (or potential relations) with others, and particularly to their gazes and hypothetical discourses or disapproval. His attitude shows the importance of the situation, but also his ephemeral and changing character: once wintertime was over and the overcoat was replaced by a t-shirt, we stopped drinking on the street. It is important to underline that Iyad’s attitude was not a question of denying or forgetting norms that were in force. Rather, it renewed them, taking some distance for a specific moment and under specific conditions.

Some few months thereafter, coming back home, I related to Iyad my afternoon with Zein. His reaction was vigorous. From his point of view, my carelessness would provoke not only a scandal and problems concerning my personal safety, but it could also compromise my research and put an end to my fieldwork.

It was the first time I met this young man, who was born in East Jerusalem, outside his workplace. At first glance, he seemed to be one of the only ones who did not care about his reputation and people’s condemnations of his attitude. In the city, he had a bad reputation because of his declared homosexuality. His manners, way of dressing, and some messages that he posted on his Facebook account made people aware of his non-conformist practices.

After a coffee, I found myself quite astonished at seeing him buying two cans of beer and putting them in two paper bags: in the middle of the afternoon, he was about to invite me to share a beer on the way to his workplace. We started our walk in Ramallah tahta, we took Rukab Street (the main street, officially named Al-Raisi Street), we passed by Al-Manara Square and we turned right towards Clock Square. His place of work was located close to the Qaddura camp (a refugee camp that was not recognised by UNWRA³⁰), and on the way from our meeting point to our destination, we passed through quite a crowded and conservative area.

People looked at us making comments, but Zein did not seem to note the remarks until the moment he looked at our bodies and our beers

reflected in a window: “Oops! We are holding a cup of beer in the street”—he told me, bringing his hand to his mouth.

During our walk, Zein appeared so dreamy that he did not realise that we were standing on the street with a beer in our hands. To the contrary, Ramallah’s passers-by were astonished, but I was not sure what was the main reason: his colourful clothing, his pink baseball cap, his bleached hair, his diamond earring, his attitude, his way of walking, and the beer effectively could constitute equal elements of reprobation. Walking with a foreigner could also be considered as a reason of blame.

These two examples of walking on Ramallah’s streets with a beer in hand are quite different: I walked with Iyad in Ramallah Tahta at night, which can be defined as a moment of permissiveness, or as a time characterised by an “ambivalent dimension” (Fouquet 2020, 21).³¹ On the contrary, Zein chose to roam the city centre, a controlled area that is usually avoided by some of my interlocutors because of the conservative views of people who frequent the zone. While Iyad was renewing rules at nighttime, Zein was breaking them in broad daylight.

The difference between the two points of view became even more explicit afterwards, once Iyad knew the details of my afternoon. He reminded me that, while the consumption of alcohol was a widespread reality which was well known by inhabitants, people must respect a certain number of rules of conduct. For him, religious and social norms were continuously recomposed and readapted to situations and subjects’ practices, but the “ways to be distant” must stay regulated. Most important, according to him, I was in danger because Zein had a bad reputation. Even without beer, my respectability would be questioned for the sole reason of being with him. He deduced that, because of my naivete, most conservative inhabitants of Ramallah would avoid meeting me again. Rich in information, such a reaction to my daytime walk represents the common view, and it shows the importance and numerous facets of the transgression of alcohol and of sexual norms. This conversation underlined the existence of a hierarchy of respectability and the weight of the way one speaks about others. It shows the interactionist aspect of alcohol transgression. More precisely, it shows that, as Howard S. Becker explained, “transgression is not a simple attribute, which is present in some types of behaviours and not in others; rather, it is the result of a process that implies the answer of other people in front of these attitudes” (Becker 1985, 37). Iyad saw himself as a “respectful person” because he keeps the secret. *Sirr*

(secret) is considered a “tactic” (De Certeau 1990), “the weak weapon”, while the problem of Zein was that he publicly engaged in his practices.

CONCLUSION

The three case studies on alcohol consumption presented in this chapter are interesting not only because they reveal norms, values, and rules but also because they show the internal hierarchy in the Palestinian society as well as the weight of Israeli colonisation. Through these different situations, it has become apparent that alcohol norms depend first on social class, and on time and place. People like Saleh and Iyad adapt their attitudes according to the urban space they find themselves in but also according to the rhythms of cities: the first one spends some of his free time in Ramallah, in order to take advantage of the anonymity of the city, or he consumes alcohol in private places with closer friends who have his same habits. He could not afford—and he did not feel comfortable in—coffee shops. Iyad drinks in public spaces during the night and in some specific areas inhabited by the Christian population. As I underlined through the study case of Zein, other factors play a role in the transgression of norms as well; consequently, the judgement of transgression changes according to the reputation of the young man who breaks the rules and depending on how he does it.

In certain situations, norms are bypassed even where and when they seem to be stricter. Israeli rhythms regulate people’s relationships and practices. It becomes both the reason to condemn and to appreciate the production and consumption of alcohol, and it determines (even if in a contradictory way) the best moment to transgress and ways of conduct. Borders between licit and illicit and between pure and non-pure are porous. Moreover, the consumption of alcohol, which is condemned, is regulated by a series of social hierarchies. It has to stay “*tabta t-tawla*”, under the table, hidden, and beverages must be consumed “*bi-l-‘atma*”, in the shade.

NOTES

1. All translations from French books and chapters and from Arabic interviews are done by the author of this chapter.
2. I use Sylvie Gangloff’s distinction between “dry” and “wet” countries: in wet areas, “the consumption of alcohol is socially approved; alcohol is

- incorporated in sociability's patterns and in traditional hospitality. There, the consumption of alcohol can also respond to a social demand. Among others, dry zones are characteristic of a quite weak average of consumption and of a high percentage of abstinence (Gangloff 2015, 12).
3. The concept of "moral-free zones" elaborated by Franck Mermier regarding Gulf societies is based on the economic concept of "free-trade zone", and it takes into consideration moral, political, and social spheres (Mermier 2019). It includes fluctuating places in Muslim societies where discourses and practices, which are usually conceived as Islamic, are "contested, tilted and represented" (Foucault 2004, 15): hotels in Manama for Saudis or book fairs are considered as moral-free zones *par excellence* (Mermier 2015).
 4. Mermier 2015.
 5. Marsden 2009, 70.
 6. For a historical report on alcohol usage in Morocco, see Houbbaida 2006, 97–102.
 7. For a historical report, see Bonte 2011, Znaïen 2015.
 8. Local distilled spirit.
 9. For an analysis of the Israeli wine production as part of the settlement colonialism and of the cultural appropriation, see Monterescu 2019, 324.
 10. For a historical perspective, see Picaudou 1997.
 11. Such actions are inserted into the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement, an international campaign that started in 2006 and was inspired by actions in South Africa. It aims to "oppose a Jewish State in any part of Palestine" (Barghouti, in Collins 2019).
 12. In July 2015, the Israeli Supreme Court approved the building of the separation wall that will divide the Cremisan Valley.
 13. The word *Nakba* refers to the Palestinian exodus of 1948. This Arabic word refers to Palestinians' mass migration in the aftermath of the 1948 War. The exact number of Palestinian refugees is still a matter of dispute. However, the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé (2006) maintains that around 720,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes because of the war and the establishment of the Israeli State.
 14. The Oslo Accords constitute agreements between the Israeli Government and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). They comprised the Declaration of Principles (1993), the Paris Protocol (1994), and Oslo II (1995) and they stipulated the creation of the Palestinian Authority with limited powers over some parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
 15. Since the Oslo Accords, control of borders and import–export activities are under the power of Israeli administration.
 16. Taybeh is the name of the Palestinian village where the beer is brewed. The Arabic world means "goodly".

17. The advertisement has an Arabic slogan besides the English one: “Taste the revolution” (in English); “Support Palestinian products” (in Arabic).
18. Sadan in Georgeon 2002, 7.
19. Historian Nessim Znaïen specifies that during the French protectorate over Tunisia, a bipolarity between the colonial part of the city and the indigenous one existed. While Europeans could drink, Tunisian Muslims could not. From 1930, geographic norms joined moral ones, since it was forbidden to open a liquor store “less than 100 m from a mosque, a cemetery, a school or a police station. It is also forbidden to open a liquor store in neighbourhoods inhabited mostly by Muslims” (Znaïen 2015, 108–109). In the same way, during the French protectorate in Morocco, Muslims were prevented from consuming in places serving alcohol (Bonte 2011, 148).
20. For a similar point of view, see Larzillière 2007.
21. In local discourses and literature, Ramallah is sometimes compared to Western capitals, as London, Rome, or New York (Yahya 2021).
22. Around 8500 refugees successively joined the 4500 citizens in Ramallah (Al-Juabeh and Bsharah 2001).
23. Thirty-two Palestinian refugee camps exist in the Gaza Strip and West Bank (UNRWA, *Where do the refugees live?*, <http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/wheredo.html>).
24. On this topic, see Bshara 2014; Johnson 2005.
25. According to the architect Natasha Aruri, the population grew by 81 per cent between 1997 and 2014 (Aruri 2015, 150).
26. Until today, Fatah leaders are commonly called “Tunisian” by ordinary people. This designation reflects the distance and the disappointment that inhabitants feel towards their clientelist and nepotistic practices (Picaudou 2006, 13). They represent 40 per cent of the elected representatives (Legrain 2006, 92).
27. Sociologist Sari Hanafi mentions the analysis of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) of 1997 and enumerates 267,355 people (10 per cent of the entire population) (Hanafi 2006, 27).
28. For an analysis of *mughtaribîn*, see Guignard 2016, 129–155; for an analysis of returnees, see Picaudou and Rivoal 2006.
29. Such practices are not new. For an analysis of this topic during the First Intifada, see Tamari 1990.
30. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.
31. Fouquet 2020, 21.

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PART IV

Ambivalences and Anxieties



Epilogue

Rudi Matthee

It's a law-and-order issue, you see. The rich drink in their own homes and frolic or puke on their own lawns, but the assumption is that if the poor get drunk in public spaces, they'll make a nuisance. Which is why those who can afford fine scotches can also afford to give everyone else lectures about our religious duties. It seems that those who suck the blood of poor people want to make sure it's not tainted with cheap alcohol (in Mohammed Hanif, "Pakistan has a drinking problem", New York Times, 2 Dec. 2016).

The Islamic faith has always had a fraught relationship with alcohol. The Qur'an lauds wine as a divine gift, a nutritious and healing substance (Sura XVI, The Bees: 67), but also condemns it for the effect of consuming it—clouding the mind of the believer. In deference to alcohol's allure, the sacred text defers the pleasure and the forgetfulness it instills to the after-life, paradise, where four rivers, of water, milk, honey, and (non-inebriating) wine, await the believer. Islam has forever oscillated between its

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aversion to alcohol and the plain fact that this aversion has never prevented many Muslims from drinking.

Drinking indeed is bound up with Islamic history and culture in intricate ways. The lure is clearly as strong as the rejection—the intensity of the two arguably entwined. Adherents to all of the world’s religions routinely contravene and violate the precepts and principles of their particular faith; yet no infraction seems as awkward, so little conducive to an open and honest investigation as that of Muslim drinking. Alcohol’s very presence through absence in Islam gives it a defining centrality in the faith.

That many Muslims drank, typically in secret or in the shadows, justifying their behavior with various excuses, was—and continues to be—little acknowledged. Scholarship about this dilemma consequently has been spotty and uneven. Muslim scholars continue to show little appetite to examine the relationship between alcohol and faith in any depth; serious studies about Muslim drinking by Muslims can be counted on the fingers of one hand.¹ Western scholarship, although not hindered by any taboo with regard to alcohol, has not done much better. Wine in poetry and Sufism, Islamic mysticism, has received ample attention, albeit mostly as a metaphor. Yet until recently, the Western scholarly verdict on actual drinking in Islamic history mostly boiled down to “forbidden, nonetheless prevalent; yet not interesting enough to merit further inquiry.”²

The last few years have seen rapid change in the relative lack of interest among (Western) scholars to dig any deeper. Indeed, the virtual silence has turned into a gathering clamor and the topic now appears to have arrived at a break-out moment. The first few months of 2021 alone saw the publication of two major monographs on alcohol in the Islamic world, one in French, on modern Turkey, the other, in English, on colonial Algeria. The present book and forthcoming special issues of the journals *Middle Eastern Studies* and *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée* are two more manifestations of rapidly growing scholarly interest in the theme.³

A proper understanding of the actual consumption of alcohol in Islamic societies presupposes an honest debate about the history of drinking in Islam and, naturally, would have to extend beyond the realm of poetry and mysticism. If this debate wants to go beyond identifying instances of drinking in spite of Islamic censure and exposing “hypocrisy,” it will also have to acknowledge Islam not just as a set of prescriptions and proscriptions but as a living faith in which theory and practice are dialectically entwined, in which theory informs practice but practice does not necessarily follow theory.

Once we do this we will find that “traditional” Islam, while it abounded in official bans on alcohol, was above all pragmatic, ready to come to terms with the real world, its messiness and its imperfections. This pragmatism expressed itself in multiple ways. Theoretically the apparent lack of clarity found in the Qur’an, which only unambiguously bans *khamr*, wine made from grapes, gave rise to endless and often-self-serving discussions about the possible permissibility of types of inebriating drinks not manufactured from grapes. The representatives of the Hanafi *madhhab*, school of thought, widespread in the Turkish world, concluded that *nabidh*, palm wine, is acceptable provided it is taken in moderation. Non-*khamr* types of alcohol such as vodka, araq/raki and, in modern times, champagne and even, in some cases, beer, thus were made semi-legitimate by virtue of the fact that they are not mentioned in early scripture, the Qur’an, and the prophetic *hadith*. Drinking in private was also protected by an Islamic, prophetically underwritten injunction about the impermissibility of prying into people’s private lives for hidden sin—so as not to bring shame on them. There also was—and continues to be—the “medical” excuse, the notion that (a moderate intake of) alcohol is permissible if it counts as medicine. This goes back to early Islamic literati such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980–1037) who, borrowing from the pre-Islamic Greek tradition, included alcohol in their list of healing agencies. Drinkers over time applied an endless array of other clever methods and arguments designed to make drinking compatible with being a Muslim—mostly by “suspending” their religious identity for the duration of the act. Muslims, in sum, have always used the ambiguity surrounding the issue in creative ways so as to “have their tittle and drink it too,” to imbibe while keeping up the appearance of being good Muslims.

The historical record is incontrovertible: While most Muslims never drank, many did, typically the ones from the high and the low end of the socio-economic spectrum, with the middling classes typically abstaining. Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs exemplify Islam’s remarkable ability to absorb elements from pre-existing and adjacent cultures by adopting the drinking habits of Christian-Byzantine and pre-Islamic Persian culture. The Turco-Mongol warriors on horseback who came to rule the eastern Islamic world as of the early second millennium introduced the ways and means of the steppes of Inner Asia whence they hailed, including the combination of hard fighting and hard drinking. Most Ottoman and Mughal sultans and Safavid shahs were real toppers, no less engaged in perpetual boozing, *shurb mudam*, than the rulers of premodern and early modern Europe, including Russia. That they did so without apparent guilt, indeed

with bravado, is amply reflected in the annals of Muslim history, which are filled with descriptions of rulers engaged in endless revelry with their boon companions, often to the point of delirium and early death.

Most of the reporting about the consumption of alcohol in early modern times comes from foreign observers, travelers, monks, and merchants; but indigenous sources abound as well. These often speak openly about drinking habits, as well as about sexual mores—shockingly so to those only familiar with contemporary Muslim puritanism and prudishness. They justify royal bibulousness as the natural pastime of big men, with reference to the separate moral universe the divinely ordained ruler inhabited. A Muslim ruler was seen as entitled to his fun and entertainment, as long as it did not come at the expense of good governance. All this is voiced most explicitly in the so-called mirror for princes literature of the Persianate world, practical and prescriptive advice manuals for rulers about proper manners, including table manners, which present royal drinking as integral to being worldly, civilised, in a way that does not contradict being God-fearing and pious.

A similar argument posited that the elite, the *khass*, were permitted to drink because they were able to hold their liquor, unlike the masses—in a type of reasoning reminiscent of that advanced by the eighteenth-century British elite, who, at the same time that they saw themselves entitled to boozing for being members of a discerning class, decried the alarming rate of drunkenness among the undisciplined lower classes for fostering imbecility and creating social unrest. The upshot of this fundamental distinction between toffs and yahoos was that both groups could have their alcohol and drink it too: the powerful from a sense of entitlement, the poor and the marginal from a sense of being irredeemable.

The ultimate life-affirming justification connected youth with alcohol. Young people, the reasoning was, have irrepressible urges and should be allowed to have fun—until the age of forty, that is, when it is time to contemplate the end of one's life, prepare for the hereafter, and return to the proper path by repenting, engaging in *tawba*, for one's youthful sins. Sin in Islam, after all, can be expiated through repentance.

Literature and especially poetry served as the entertaining accompaniment to elite carousing. Classical Arabic and Persian mystical poetry gives free rein to the pleasure and proscription paradox, transporting the reader to a world beyond restriction and inhibition, a world where the handsome cupbearer becomes the object of (sexual) desire. In Sufi poetry wine is both consolation for our fleeting lives and a metaphor for deep emotions.

The intoxication it produces symbolises the mystic's intoxicating love for God; the refraction of the ruby-red liquid swirling in the goblet represents divine radiance; the wine shop, *meykhaneh*, stands for the "realm of the angels"; and the free-spirited Sufi spills wine on the prayer mat to show his contempt for clerical bigotry and hypocrisy. For the discerning, wine unlocks the treasure box of eternal wisdom and truth. As the sixteenth-century Persian poet Fighani proclaimed: "What's not in the treasury of both worlds is in the tavern."⁴ All this culminates in the Arabic *khamriyya* and the Persianate *sāqi-nameh*, bacchic poetry composed by the likes of Abu Nuwas (d. 813/15), 'Umar Khayyam (1048–1131), 'Umar ibn al-Farid (1181–1235), and Hafez of Shiraz (1315/17–90). Irreverent and provocative, the wine poem acknowledges Islam facetiously as much as it refuses to bow to it, to accommodate it.⁵

To the extent that commoners hit the bottle, their drinking was part of a subculture of subterfuge and furtiveness, with men sneaking off to actual taverns, *meykhanehs*, located in back alleys in the non-Muslim quarter of town, dark and dingy haunts run by Jews, Armenians, Greeks, or Copts, where alcohol manufactured by these same minorities was served in a semi-private ambience. This type of boozing was typically left undisturbed as long as it did not upset the social and political order, and generally took place in a live and let live atmosphere punctuated by the occasional crack-down on vice and sin by the authorities, upon the ascent of a new ruler determined to establish his religious credentials, with the outbreak of the plague, or in other adverse circumstances demanding scapegoats. Such taverns remained disreputable, to be sure, associated with the seamy side of life. The tavern owner occupied "roughly the same place on the social scale as the prostitute, the overt homosexual, and the itinerant entertainer."⁶ In these conditions drinking remained hidden, "invisible," even though in some ways it took place in full view. To the extent that the coniving state derived taxes from the sale of alcohol, it had a stake in the business, even though it could never fully acknowledge reality by admitting this.

Alcohol, in sum, was ubiquitous, even though it was unevenly distributed. It was found most readily in capitals and port cities, as well as in locales with a heavy concentration of non-Muslims. Yet the evidence from the early modern period also points to remote places where provincial governors and local mayors were often inveterate toppers. Even in the Arabian Peninsula alcohol was to be had in early modern times, the holy cities of Mecca and Medina not excluded.⁷

This presentation of the spiritual and the profane as compatible, even mutually constitutive, should not come as a surprise. If religion pervades everything in life, as it ostensibly does in Islam, its scope must include the mundane and the obscene, the ribald and scatological aspects of life, with the argument that God has created everything for a purpose. To those who approached the world through *mujun*, libertinism, frivolousness and debauchery were natural, widely practiced and commonly accepted in elite circles, and not just by contrarians.⁸

Transformative change set in as of the turn of the nineteenth century, by way of a creeping European influence on the life style of, first, the elite and then, society's middling classes. This change was felt all over the Muslim world, in the Ottoman Empire, in North Africa as well as in Qajar Iran, Central Asia, and the Muslim parts of the Subcontinent, albeit in different ways and under different circumstances. In some cases, the intrusion was radical and abrupt, precipitated by military assault and occupation. Russia's gradual incorporation of large swaths of the Caucasus and Central Asia was a gradual process that unfolded over two centuries. Napoleon's invasion and short-lived occupation of Egypt at the turn of the nineteenth century is the most dramatic example of direct intrusion. The French invasion of Algeria in 1830 resembled Russia's assault on Inner Asia in ushering in an annexation resulting in direct and lasting outside control. This was followed by the British intervention in Egypt in 1882 and the French take-over of Tunisia in just one year. In 1912, Libya became an Italian colony and in the same year Morocco was brought into the French orbit as a protectorate. Elsewhere, such as in the Ottoman Empire and Iran, the intervention was more gradual and insidious, taking the form of indirect control and creeping influence of Western ways rather than "imposed" behavioral practices and patterns of consumption.

All this involved increased contact and interaction with the manifestations of the West. The influx of European manufactured goods included new drinks such as beer, brandy, and champagne, and was accompanied by the arrival of growing numbers of Europeans agents—diplomats, soldiers, entrepreneurs, and carpet baggers. Military intervention brought hard-drinking Western soldiers to Islamic capitals—Napoleon's troops to Cairo in 1798, the French to Algiers in 1830, the French and the British to Istanbul during the Crimean War of 1853–1856, the French to Lebanon in the 1860s, the British to Cairo in 1882 and 1914, and the Allied forces followed by White Russian refugees arriving in Istanbul following World

War One. Ottoman elites, beginning with the sultan, became familiar with Europe's drinking culture. So did the upper classes, who took to alcohol as a token of "modernity" and "sophistication." Traditional taverns gradually gave way to bars and modern restaurants featuring female waitressing and offering performances by singers and dancers; and nightclubs hosting *variété* shows sprang up. This process is discernable in North Africa, from Morocco to Egypt, as much as in the major cities of the late Ottoman Empire, Istanbul, Izmir, and Salonica, and in the countries that emerged from the Ottoman Empire in the 1920s, Turkey and Lebanon in particular. Iran, far more insulated from global currents, had to wait until well into the twentieth century and the Pahlavi period for a similar development.

Perspectives on alcohol naturally changed in the process as well. Whereas for many, alcohol was synonymous with modernity, a sophisticated European life style, as seen in the vogue for champagne and fancy liqueurs adopted by the ruling classes, the late nineteenth century also saw a change in the approach to alcohol under the influence of modernizing governments concerned about public order, hygiene, and health. The old medicinal excuse for drinking persisted, but alcohol increasingly came to be evaluated under the spell of a growing medicalisation, a concern about its negative impact on individual health as well as societal well-being, all of it inspired by American and European temperance movements.

This, in turn, spawned domestic nationalist and abolitionist reactions which identified the West as the source of debauchery and decadence in the form of drinking and prostitution, decrying those who spent their time in bars and cafes and brothels wasting their money and health, and called for the state to take its role as a regulator of the moral order seriously. With the unassailable argument that, if the non-Muslim West curbed alcohol, the Muslim world should surely follow suit, American and European temperance movements inspired similar initiatives in Egypt in the 1880s and Turkey in the early 1920s.

None of this prevented alcohol from becoming more public. In colonial North Africa, drinking was not fully free, with the French authorities applying a "politique des égards," designed to treat Muslim sensibilities with respect and circumspection, which included establishing quotas on the number of drinking establishments according to population numbers, and making sure these would not intrude upon Muslim areas. Yet alcohol was freely available in the French-built *villes nouvelles*. Post-World War I Cairo experienced its own roaring twenties.⁹ Raki, the favorite tippie of the emphatically secular Atatürk, became Turkey's national drink. Newly

created (urban) Pakistan retained its brightly lit bars and nightclubs, coasting on its gin-and-tonic fueled colonial past into the 1970s.¹⁰ Iran under Mohammad Reza Shah, at the height of his power home to some 50,000 American expatriate advisors, put few obstacles in the way of public drinking, much of it taking place in the bars of newly constructed international hotels. By the early 1960s, twenty factories in Iran produced alcoholic drinks, and the country was home to four beer breweries.¹¹

The intrusion of modern ways inevitably called forth a reaction—beyond the predictable grumbling of conservative forces, clerics above all. This came in the form of a newly politicised Islam propagated either by oppositional groups within “secular” states or by states themselves, now equipped with a far greater arsenal of disciplinary tools than any premodern ones. Islam became a slogan and a mission in either case. As had happened earlier in Europe and the United States, the modern state in the Islamic world became far more methodical and organised in its prescriptive as well as its proscriptive interaction with society—thereby often violating the principle of privacy embedded in Islam.

Gradually the tide turned, and not just in Iran, where the proclamation of an Islamic Republic in 1979 portended a radical break with the past, driving drinking underground. In Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, hard pressed for cash, had to make concessions to the Saudis, and began to impose restrictions on drinking halfway through his tenure as President. His Islamist successor, Zia ul-Haqq, even more dependent on petrodollars from the “limousine-driving Bedouins,” turned Pakistan into an Islamic republic.¹²

Decolonisation brought independence but also less diversity. In Egypt, Black Saturday, January 26, 1952, and its destruction of the bars and casinos along Cairo’s Pyramid Road portended a new sobriety. Under the subsequent rule of Nasser, Cairo and Alexandria lost much of their cosmopolitan character with the exodus of the resident Levantines, Greeks and Jews. The erstwhile cabarets and dance halls lost their glamor and turned into dimly lit, gloomy, and forlorn spaces in crumbling buildings.¹³ Growing pressure from Islamists under Nasser’s successor Anwar Sadat largely confined the consumption of alcohol to newly built hotels, the likes of Hilton, Marriott, and Sheraton, catering to international tourists and the local elite. Egyptian Islamists and Copts meanwhile found some (fragile) unity in a shared call for abstinence.

In Istanbul, the nightlife of Galata and Pera (now Beyoğlu) similarly went into terminal decline with the departure of the Greek population

following the riots of 1955. Raki and other alcoholic drinks, including locally brewed Efes beer, continued to be available in the country, though, and the new century catapulted Istanbul into renewed world-class status, with an attendant rebirth of modern bar and café culture along the Bosphorus. Yet before long a resurgent Islam came to challenge these manifestations of secularism. It found its champion in President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who soon after coming to power in 2003 initiated a crusade against alcohol, extolling the yogurt-like drink known as *ayran* as opposed to raki as the national drink, while reducing the consumption of alcohol by putting restrictions on its sale and by taxing it out of reach for the middle classes.

The new world we live in today demands full transparency and enables a great deal of it through instant communication, unprecedented state surveillance, and the blurring of private and public life through social media. Yet this has not necessarily created greater openness. The gap between is and ought, which in past times existed but was subsumed under a sound realism with an appreciation for multiplicity, ambiguity, and paradox in practice if not in theory, in modern times has grown to the point where discourse relegates both to strictly separate domains, making it as difficult as ever to bridge the gap by way of creative subterfuge.

The Muslim world has come out of two centuries of “modernisation” suffering from a combination of oblivion and willful amnesia with regard to the way it dealt with alcohol in past times. The balancing act between censure and connivance—the flexibility, the live-and-let-live toleration, the capacity for ambiguity, and the implicit acceptance of parallel normative systems—is half forgotten or ignored in our puritanical age. The sophistication that had marked premodern Muslim life got lost and became overwhelmed by straitlaced morality and full-fledged denial-cum hypocrisy vis-à-vis reality. Alcohol now is associated with mental and physical deficiency leading to depravity and social malaise—Western decadence. In the words of one Muslim critic, Islam in the face of the modern world has become a matter of “j’ai peur, donc je crois,” “I am afraid, therefore I believe.”¹⁴

Of course, alcohol itself has not gone away. Indeed, it is more conspicuously present than ever, bound up, as everywhere on the planet, with global mobility, foreign tourism, and a youth culture seeking fun, freedom, and social status through branding. Decades of neoliberal policies have resulted in expensive nightclubs and fancy bars in Cairo’s upscale Zamalek district, venues that cater to the thirsty able to afford their hefty

cover charges—exposing as never before the yawning gap between rich and poor in modern Egypt. The thriving private party culture of Tehran is as sophisticated and hedonistic as any in the West. Karachi alone counts about a hundred liquor stores, tucked away in the bazaar, officially just catering to the (tiny) non-Muslim population, but effectively selling booze, wrapped in paper, to anyone who enters with a fake national identity card or a computerised ID number belonging to a dead soul.¹⁵ Even the old distinction between male and female spaces has become murky, for small fast food restaurants and the bars of large modern hotels are no longer *terra non grata* to females (in company).¹⁶ Akin to Michel Foucault's interpretation of Victorian sex—ubiquitous precisely because it was suppressed—alcohol is everywhere in the Muslim world; the more it is hidden and the more it is banned, the more it is talked about, the more it is on people's minds—and lips. Furtiveness, as always, breeds excess.

Surveying the current scene, it is remarkable how, amidst all this modernity, the old concerns and anxieties with regard to alcohol are still very much alive, even if they operate in new contexts. Muslims still engage in motivated reasoning to justify their drinking. Muslim societies still struggle with the paradox, how far to go censoring a commodity that is at once illicit and irrepressible, how to keep the visible invisible, unable to resolve the conundrum since the rejection is anchored in the holy writ.

Without exception, the papers brought together in this book, all of which deal with the twenty and the twenty-first century, bear the imprint of this conundrum. They portray a modern Muslim world that is more open as well as more moralistic about the public consumption of alcohol than traditional Islam ever was. In all cases discussed here, alcohol is still about visibility as much as invisibility, about concealment and exposure; about presence within absence, the “haunting presence of negated object and spaces,” as Mina Ibrahim aptly puts it in her paper, referring to Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno.

In their introduction, Elife Bicer-Deveci and Philippe Bournaud identify a direct connection between the semi-legal status of alcohol in various Muslim-majority countries and attempts by governments under Islamist pressure to chip away at this status by making alcohol retreat from public life. The state typically does so less by using religious arguments than by appealing to concerns about public health involving the protection of young people against addiction to alcohol as well as other drugs.

In her own essay, Elife Bicer-Deveci offers a good example of such policies by analysing the origins and working of the various temperance

movements that sprang up in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire and that led to a short-lived ban on alcohol in the newly created country of Turkey. Although the movement was “modern” in the way it invoked health concerns borrowed from the international eugenicist movement, it was struck down in 1926 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s new regime for reflecting “obsolete” religious norms and beliefs.

Sylvie Gangloff pursues the story of Turkey into the modern age. Her survey of the anti-alcohol campaign waged by the AKP under President Erdoğan shows that even Kemalist Turkey never developed a real drinking culture, in which alcohol is tied to sociability, to the rituals of hospitality, the celebration of key events in life. It remained a society in which a proscriptive majority and a permissive minority lived side by side with the tacit agreement that drinkers had to hide, even if they hid in plain sight. In practice, this means that drinking became concentrated on the upper floors of restaurants and in specific streets or tourist areas, zones of “permissiveness,” or outside urban centers, near lakes, in forests, and in so-called *parryons*, dance halls or discotheques, which remind one of the Midwestern American supper clubs that sprang up during Prohibition. The call for temperance and restriction meanwhile continues to focus on the presumed “socially disruptive” effect of drinking.

Alcohol in the modern Muslim world is above all about truth, the hidden truth, the ambivalence of truth. Truth as a function of power, who owns it, who controls it, sits at the heart of Philippe Bourmaud’s contribution to this volume. He argues that in mandatory Syria and Lebanon (and Palestine) the alarming increase in alcohol consumption among Muslims became an issue raised by voluntary, humanitarian organizations, what today we call NGOs, rather than by weakly developed indigenous temperance movements. The mandatory authorities were forced to react to this pressure yet were reluctant to wade into the sensitive arena of Islam and alcohol for the intercommunal tensions that might be stirred up. While Syrian nationalists, inspired by Islamic sensibilities, clamored for curbing measures, the Lebanese cautioned about the fiscal repercussions of curtailing the sale and consumption of alcohol.

Even in today’s multifaith Lebanon, where alcohol is legal, it remains controversial. Marie Bonte begins her discussion with this observation and the corollary—that alcohol is generally available and accessible in the country in terms of price and venue. Yet, she adds, since alcohol is rejected by a large segment of the population—the Muslim segment—it still is no “ordinary commodity.” Even in Lebanon, which grows, processes, and

exports considerable amounts of wine and arak, where the craft beer industry keeps pace with global trends, and where Absolut Vodka can organise a vodka-fueled off-shore event advertising it as helping to heal from the civil war, drinking still takes place in the visibility/invisibility hall of mirrors. Bonte rightfully posits that rather than as a binary construct, the “relationship between visibility and invisibility should actually be understood as a set of strategies that actors adopt and perform according to changing situations and spatial contexts.” Johnnie Walker can thus serve as a symbol of resistance in a time of strife and hardship. Beirut may be “getting on the international map when it comes to alcohol,” but the story is a complicated one. Where alcohol is and can be consumed, Bonte submits, is determined by matters involving social status and gender. She identifies a patchwork of “wet” and “dry” areas, in Beirut as well as in the country at large. Quarters such as Centre Ville and Hamra account for most of the capital’s more than 200 bars and nightclubs, while in the Shi’i suburb of Dahiya, Hizbullah uses various control mechanisms to keep alcohol out (of sight).

Mariangella Gasparotto lays out a similar geographical division for Palestine, the West Bank, where cities such as Hebron, Nablus, Tulkarm, and Qalqiliya are “dry,” whereas others are “wet,” examples being the originally Christian towns of Bethlehem and Ramallah, the size of the latter offering a measure of privacy through anonymity. Yet even Ramallah is an archipelago, with some neighborhoods that are conservative and poor, while others are upscale and more open to the outside world—and thus more hospitable to booze. Drinking, the author argues, follows origins, economic power, religion, and status. In keeping with tradition in the Islamic world, much of it takes place in the private sphere, in the company of like-minded and trusted people. Similarly, drinking involves a great deal of subterfuge, tricks, and ruses designed to obfuscate and conceal, either out of respect for one’s parents, to evade censure from family and neighborhood, or out of consideration for the mostly Muslim population. Those who choose (or can afford) to drink in public have a choice of sites, coffee shops, bars, and pubs that offer their alcoholic offerings discretely, out of sight, on patios in the back, shielded from the prying eyes of passers-by, by way of separate menus. Appropriately, these establishments also close during Israeli incursions or whenever Palestinian martyrs are commemorated.

What makes Palestine unique, Gasparotto reminds her readers, is its location, sandwiched between Israel’s occupation and traditional religious

norms. Drinking alcohol in the West Bank becomes part of the resistance in a complicated way, ranging from defiance of religious norms to defiance of Israeli domination, in both cases presented as *sumud*, resilience, steadfastness. Beer carries its own potential for resistance. Brewing local beer against all odds—the odds of a disapproving religion, the odds of prohibitively high export taxes imposed by Israel, the odds of having your own people prefer foreign brands—becomes a symbol of sovereignty, of national pride, and thus is bound up with the national heritage. To drink Taybeh is to “taste” the revolution. This is branding, to be sure, yet it also points to something quirkily authentic.

Philippe Chaudat’s essay brings out the tension of lived practice in the face of prohibition as witnessed in modern Morocco. Alcohol and Islam are not automatically oppositional in the country, he contends: “Consuming alcohol does not necessarily mean not practicing your religion” and, conversely, “not practicing your religion does not mean consuming alcohol.” Believing in God and practicing religion takes many different forms. “People reconcile alcohol and religion without any problem and interpret the latter socially in order to be able to lead their daily lives as they see fit.” Only during Ramadan becomes drinking “unimaginable”—mostly, one gets the impression, because the social pressure not to indulge simply becomes unbearable. The obsessive drinker anyhow stockpiles ahead of the arrival of the holy month. Such compartmentalisation, seeking to separate the realm of drinking from the realm of religion through rationalisation, sounds distinctly modern but is in reality a very old way of dealing with the issue in the Muslim world.

Colonial Morocco, Nessim Znaïen explains, was an exception in that it was the French authorities who took the lead in combating alcoholism, presenting their stance as a major reason for their presence in Morocco, and thus as a justification for colonisation. The timing here is important, since the years just preceding World War I marked the height of the first international crusade against drugs, including alcohol. French policy in Morocco was also designed in part to keep the country’s competitors, Germany and Spain, at bay. The ultimate rationale behind the aforementioned “politique des égards,” developed by Hubert Lyautey, Morocco’s colonial administrator between 1912 and 1925, was a desire to weaken Muslim resistance to colonial rule. Enforcement, meanwhile, varied from city to city, with Casablanca and Salé less strictly monitored than more religiously sensitive cities such as Fes and Meknes. The campaign to

curb alcohol culminated during World War II, this time reflecting Vichy French concerns to regenerate the nation.

Mina Ibrahim, talking about Egypt's Tahrir Movement of 2011, reveals the little importance accorded to the looting of liquor stores during the Arab Spring. Alcohol, after all, still operates at the margins of society; it counts as a disreputable commodity, and ransacking a liquor store thus is not deemed a noteworthy offense. Conversely, the authorities used alcohol seeking to discredit the demonstrators by accusing them of drinking, using drugs, and having sex in public. The revolutionaries of Tahrir Square, in turn, defensively upheld the fiction that no booze or sex had been part of the scene. In both cases the truth is the ultimate victim.

Much of the anxiety about alcohol in the modern Muslim world is about attempts to put the genie back into the bottle, so to speak. Traditional Islam was mostly concerned making sure it never got out of the bottle. It did so by applying a great deal of realism to the power of alcohol, acknowledging its vitality as well as its inevitability, legitimizing it for the deserving few, while making sure that those of the unwashed who could not be kept away from it did not disturb the social order. In today's world, putting the genie back into the bottle seems futile, doomed to fail. Modern youth culture militates against it; international tourism is unthinkable without alcohol. In late 2020, directly following a stunning thaw in relations with Israel and the prospect of its tourist arriving in sizeable numbers, and in anticipation of the World Expo, the news broke that the United Arab Emirates would relax their restrictions on personal freedoms, including those involving the consumption of alcohol.¹⁷ Egypt now has its so-called drinkies, the retail chain of the Al Ahram Beverages Company, which, according to its website, operates more than eighty premium stores across the country, a place where you "can comfortably select your beers, wines and/or spirits," and where those who want to enjoy their drink but are too tired to leave the comfort their home can have it delivered straight to their doorstep.¹⁸ In Iran, home delivery is just as efficiently organised, even if it does not officially exist. The *peyk*, the courier on a motorcycle, delivers any type of booze—whisky, vodka, wine, beer, German beer, Dutch beer—to your house within half an hour of ordering it—electronic payment accepted, indeed expected. "Don't ask, don't tell," and "out of sight out of mind" remains the prevailing mode of dealing with alcohol in the Muslim world.

NOTES

1. See ‘Ali al-Muqri, *al-Khamr wa’l nabidh fi’l-Islam* (Beirut: Riad el-Rayyes Books, 2007), serially published as four (redacted) chapters in the cultural supplement of the Yemeni newspaper *al-Jumhuriyya* before it came out as a book, and to my knowledge the only serious book-length study of the topic in Arabic; and Rasha Mahmud ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Fayyalah, *Mazahir al-fasad al-ijtima’i fi Misr fi ‘asr salatin al-Mamalik, 648-923 H/1250-1517: al-muskirat namudhajan* (Alexandria: al-Maktab al-jami‘al-hadith, 2019), which mixes moralism with scholarship and only deals with the Mamluk period in Egypt.
2. A recent study of alcohol in Islam that, while informative, falls short of being a full historical examination, is Kathryn Kueny, *The Rhetoric of Sobriety: Wine in Early Islam* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001).
3. François Georgeon, *Au pays du raki. Le vin et l’alcool de l’Empire ottoman à la Turquie d’Erdöğän* (Paris: CNRS, 2021); and Owen White, *The Blood of the Colony. Wine and the Rise and Fall of French Algeria* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2021).
4. Paul E. Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī. Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 1998), p. 292.
5. Philip F. Kennedy, *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abu Nuwas and the Literary Tradition* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 18.
6. Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses. The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), p. 78.
7. For the availability of alcohol in the *haramayn*, in the nineteenth century, see Heinrich Freiherr von Maltzan, *Drei Jahre im Nordwesten von Afrika. Reisen in Algerien und Marokko*, 4 vols. (Leipzig: Verlag der Dürr’schen Buchhandlung, 1863), vol. 1, pp. 298–99; vol. 2, p. 236; John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels in Arabia comprehending an Account of those Territories in Hedjaz which the Mohammedans Regard as Sacred*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), vol. 1, pp. 361–62; Charles M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1888), vol. 1, p. 151. Conditions in Jeddah are also discussed in Ulrike Freitag, *A History of Jeddah. The Gate to Mecca in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). Remnants of traditional culture in which alcohol had a visible place could still be found in the mid-twentieth century in the ‘Asir region of Saudi Arabia and northern Yemen, where taverns and coffeehouses run by women were venues of “tavern prostitution.” See Carl Rathjens, “Tāghūt gegen scheri‘a,” *Jahrbuch des Linden-Museums*, new ser. 1 (1951), pp. 172–87 (184).

8. See Zoltan Szombathy, *Mujūn. Libertinism in Mediaeval Muslim Society and Literature* (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2013).
9. See Raphael Cormack, *Midnight in Cairo. The Divas of Egypt's Roaring Twenties* (New York: Norton & Company, 2021).
10. For an evocative narrative about urban youth culture in Pakistan's "free-wheeling" 1960s and 1970s, see Nadeem Farooq Paracha, *The Pakistan Antiberro. History of Pakistan Nationalism through the Lives of Iconoclasts* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2016).
11. *Iran Almanac* (1963), p. 24.
12. Nadeem Farooq Paracha, *End of the Past. An Immediate Eyewitness History of a Troubled Nation* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2016), p. 23.
13. For an atmospheric description of this scene, see Alaa Al Aswany, *The Yacoubian Building* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), pp. 33–34.
14. Malik Bezouh, *Ils ont trahi Allah. Blasphème, homosexualité, masturbation, athéisme ... ces tabous qui tuent la religion musulmane* (Paris: Éditions de l'Observatoire, 2020), pp. 117–25.
15. Elton Gomes, The real picture of alcohol markets in Karachi, Qrius, 25 May 2017, at <https://qrius.com/the-real-picture-ofalcoho-markets-in-Karachi/>
16. Emmanuel Buisson-Fenet, "Ivresse et rapport à l'occidentalisation au Maghreb. Bars et débits de boissons à Tunis," *Égypte/Monde Arabe* 3031 (1997), pp. 1–13 (3).
17. Isabel Debre, "UAE announces relaxing of Islamic laws for personal freedoms," *AP*, 7 Nov. 2020, at <https://apnews.com/article/dubai-united-arab-emirates-honor-killings-travel-islam-bce74c423897dc77c7beb72e4f51a23a>.
18. <https://www.drinkies.net/About>.

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