



BRILL



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COFFEEHOUSES, URBAN SPACES, AND THE FORMATION OF A PUBLIC SPHERE IN SAFAVID ISFAHAN

On a summer evening in June 1619, foreign envoys residing in Isfahan gathered at the northern side of the city's new plaza, Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan (Plan of the World Square), to attend a reception with the Safavid ruler Shah 'Abbas I (r. 1587–1629). The shah arrived in the Maydan mounted on horseback. After strolling around the square, which had been illuminated by numerous lanterns (*chirāghān*), the envoys were led to a brilliant space in the market: with myriad hanging lamps, reflected in a central basin, it resembled a starry sky. Seated in the alcoves, the emissaries were then entertained by young boys dancing and performing acrobatic feats. After the meal, a bitter black liquid called “cahue” was served in porcelain cups, but most of the ambassadors refused to drink it, preferring wine.¹

The bitter, dark beverage was, of course, nothing but coffee, and the setting a recently erected coffeehouse in Isfahan, a bustling metropolis of seventeenth-century Eurasia and the royal seat of the Safavid dynasty (1501–1722). The dual sense of aversion and exoticness that coffee aroused in European visitors of the time is perhaps best articulated by the Englishman Thomas Herbert (d. 1682), who described coffee as a drink “black as soot, thick and strong scented,” that “please[s] neither the eye nor taste.”² Nevertheless, just two or three decades earlier few even in Isfahan were familiar with coffee. Indeed, before the sixteenth century, no one in the world had tasted the beverage, save for the inhabitants of the southern shores of the Red Sea—i.e., the Yemen and Ethiopia—whence coffee began to spread around the globe. It was first in the Yemen, sometime in the fourteenth or fifteenth century, that the ground, roasted seeds of the berries plucked from the coffee tree (*Coffea arabica*, a plant native to highlands of southern Ethio-

pia) were mixed with boiling water to make a beverage destined to spread far beyond southern Arabia. A taste for coffee was initially cultivated among members of certain Yemeni Sufi orders, who found the awakening effect of coffee useful for their nightly rituals (*dhikr*), and the substance was subsequently disseminated by merchants, who turned coffee into a lucrative commodity.³ With coffee came a novel social institution: the coffeehouse, a new phenomenon in the realms of the Ottomans in the eastern Mediterranean, and later, in Safavid territories in Iran. Over the course of the sixteenth century, as physicians discussed coffee's medicinal properties and jurists debated its legal status, coffeehouses grew in number and popularity, proliferating despite periodic bans issued by authorities anxious about the socio-political milieu engendered by the new institution. By the middle decades of the sixteenth century, major cities circling the eastern Mediterranean basin, from Cairo to Istanbul, were dotted with coffeehouses. By the early 1600s the habit of coffee drinking had spread eastward to Iraq and Iran. Prior to its popularity in Europe, the coffeehouse had been integrated into the social and urban fabric of southwest Asia.

And yet, despite coffee's novelty, early-seventeenth-century European visitors often regarded it as a long-established substance that had originated in ancient times: the Italian aristocrat and adventurer Pietro della Valle (d. 1652), one of those present at the above-mentioned royal reception held in 1619, believed that coffee had been known in Antiquity.⁴ In a similar vein, Herbert was certain that coffee pre-dated the Prophet Muhammad.⁵ An equally inaccurate and prejudiced notion underlies the Orientalist discourse of the nineteenth century, according to which Near Eastern coffeehouses

epitomized the quintessential indolence of Oriental men, who wasted their time chatting and smoking in these venues. In keeping with the Orientalist view, some recent studies have conceptualized coffee through a similar lens: as an exotic substance with essentially different social implications across the boundary that demarcates East from West. In this view, the “Oriental café”, unlike its “Western” counterpart, is an emblem of continuity over millennia, a distinct category that should be analyzed within a fundamentally different framework.⁶ At the core of this approach is an attempt to reconcile what is assumed to be the static and unchanging nature of Asian societies—a key trope of Orientalism and colonialism—with the rapid rise of a socially transformative substance such as coffee and the proliferation of a novel social institution: the coffeehouse.

In recent years, nevertheless, the study of coffeehouses, particularly in Ottoman territories, has witnessed new methodological approaches. As elsewhere, the emerging scholarly discussion has been influenced by Jürgen Habermas’s conceptualization of the public sphere and the role of the coffeehouse in the genesis of what he calls a bourgeois public sphere (*bürgerlichen Öffentlichkeit*) in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe.⁷ The extent to which the Habermasian model provides an adequate framework for analyzing the public sphere in early modern European societies, let alone other settings and time periods, has of course been contested.⁸ Yet, as several studies have shown, the notion of a public sphere—broadly understood as a terrain of social interactions distinct from both state institutions and the private realm—can indeed provide new insights into the workings and transformations of the pre-modern societies of Eurasia.⁹ More important, the concept of the public sphere allows us to account for material conditions and social dynamics particular to each society, and to adopt a comparative approach that goes beyond the prevalent critiques of Orientalism.¹⁰ At any rate, rather than considering a monolithic public sphere, a more nuanced approach is to conceptualize it as a site of overlapping publics and divergent social groups. If the coffeehouse constituted a public sphere, it was not an abstract domain of rational-critical debate, but rather a material site closely entangled with concrete aspects of everyday life and spatial configurations.

This indeed provides a more useful model for understanding coffeehouses as public sites in all historical contexts, including, as we shall see, Safavid Isfahan. And in analyzing Eurasian societies in the early modern period, one needs to consider public spheres as interconnected realities, informed in the context of an unprecedented circulation of commodities and humans throughout the globe.

The intertwining of a local context with broader global transformations was a quintessential characteristic of Safavid Isfahan, where the introduction of the coffeehouse was concomitant with the restructuring of the political order, flowering of long-distance trade, and integration of diverse social groups into a unified built environment.¹¹ Initiated as state-sponsored establishments, Isfahan’s coffeehouses were one of the main sites where the Safavid king represented himself to, and interacted with, the city’s cosmopolitan publics.¹² (‘Abbas even received ambassadors in an urban coffeehouse, as the opening anecdote of this essay illustrates.) Scholarship has shown how both the royal palaces and urban spaces of Isfahan were marked by a distinct notion of kingship based on “two opposing ideas of humility and absolutism,” and how this peculiar image of authority was mediated through rituals, feasting, and ceremonies.¹³ Yet this performative function did not remain a royal prerogative and was appropriated by the emergent publics of the Safavid capital. If the space of the coffeehouse acted as a stage set, it was not merely a venue for representations of kingship; it also hosted varied forms of cultural subversion and, at times, political dissent. The coffeehouse opened up a novel arena of public life operating, both physically and socially, between the spheres of royal authority and that of ordinary domestic existence.

This essay explores the ways in which the formation of a public sphere in Safavid realms, and particularly in the capital city of Isfahan, was closely associated with new architectural forms and conceptions of urban space. Through an analysis of the topography, urban configuration, and physical structure of the major coffeehouses of Isfahan, I show how these establishments contributed to the creation and expansion of a distinct public arena in the city, and how they altered the social meaning and perceptual character of the urban spaces along which they were erected. This will particularly be

illustrated through a reconstruction of the drinking houses that existed in the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan and the Chaharbagh, the two grand urban spaces of seventeenth-century Isfahan (fig. 1). This analysis not only leads to a fuller picture of the morphology of Safavid coffeehouses but also elucidates a less appreciated aspect of urban development in the age of Shah 'Abbas.

Recent historical studies have shed light on various aspects of coffee and other stimulants in early modern Iran, such as the role of commerce in their dissemination and the social functions of the coffeehouse.¹⁴ Building upon these studies, this essay probes the less-known architectural and urban features of Safavid coffeehouses. In doing so, it balances on-site investigations with an examination of visual evidence, such as earlier architectural drawings and nineteenth-century photographs. Together with evidence culled from a wide array of textual sources—court chronicles, biographical dictionaries, literary works, and travel narratives—the remaining physical traces of Isfahan's coffeehouses permit us to sketch out their architectural layout and their relation to urban spaces.

DISSEMINATION OF COFFEE AND THE COFFEEHOUSE

Coffee was introduced into Safavid territories in the last quarter of the sixteenth century through overland trade routes. By the middle decades of the seventeenth century, however, coffee was primarily shipped from the Yemeni port of Mocha to the shores of the Persian Gulf, a trade route along which European maritime companies as well as local sailors were active.¹⁵ Medicinal treatises reveal a great deal about the perceptions of coffee and the coffeehouse in the early years of its dissemination. As Aladin Goushegir notes, the earliest Persian-language text to discuss coffee appears to have been a treatise by the physician 'Imad al-Din Shirazi (d. after 1577). In a brief section at the end of his manual, 'Imad al-Din describes coffee's medicinal properties and refers to its method of preparation and popularity in Mecca, implying that pilgrimage was one of the channels through which coffee was introduced to Iran.¹⁶ The writings of the succeeding generation of physicians and pharmacologists reflect the rapid rise of coffee as a pop-

ular beverage. In an untitled epistle on coffee, tea, and other substances (composed ca. 1600), Salik al-Din Muhammad Hamavi Yazdi, a physician active in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, discussed the medicinal properties of coffee in greater detail, while offering a more extensive account of the origin and spread of the substance. Describing coffee as the fruit of a tree native to the Yemen, Hamavi relates the popular narrative about the discovery and brewing of coffee by the disciples of the Sufi shaykh Abu'l-Hasan Shadhili (d. 1258), concluding that now,

in Arab cities and particularly in Mecca [...] drinking coffee is common, and illuminated abodes and ornamented houses (*masākin-i nayyira va manāzil-i muzayyan*) have been constructed for this pastime. Those who seek pleasure gather there and all engage in carnal desires (*mushtahīyāt-i nafsāni*) by the decree of nature. Gradually the practice has spread to the lands of Iran (*mamālik-i 'Ajam*). In chief cities plenty of edifices have been built, where accoutrements of pleasure are prepared and assemblies of the wits and companions take place.¹⁷

The author further notes that “in Arab cities everyone and in most cities of Iran people of healthy temperament are accustomed to drinking coffee.”¹⁸ A remarkable aspect of this account is how the dissemination of coffee is associated with the development of public “houses” for its consumption: from the outset, coffee was known as a social beverage consumed in exquisite public structures.

Other sources suggest that inhabitants of Safavid territories first encountered coffee and coffeehouses in the Arabic-speaking regions of the Ottoman Empire, particularly the cities of Iraq. According to Hamavi, imbibers (*arbāb-i mashārib*) referred to coffee as the “wine of the Arabs” (*khamr al-'Arab*).¹⁹ In a prose piece, the famed Safavid painter and litterateur Sadiqi Beg Afshar (d. 1610) alludes to Yemeni coffee, and refers to “companions of the coffeehouse” and “youthful coffee-vendors” as among the primary joys of Baghdad in winter.²⁰ Indeed, the first dated mention of a coffeehouse in a Safavid chronicle refers to an incident that transpired in 1596 in Ottoman-controlled Baghdad.²¹ The existence of coffeehouses in Baghdad is confirmed by the account of the Portuguese traveller Pedro Teixeira, who reported seeing several coffeehouses in the city in 1604. Teixeira specifically highlighted a coffeehouse by the Tigris

- 1) Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan
- 2) Qaysariyya Market
- 3) Palace Complex (Dawlatkhana)
- 4) The Chaharbagh (Khiyaban-i Chaharbagh)
- 5) Allah Verdi Khan Bridge
- 6) Hizar-jarib Garden
- 7) Neighborhood of 'Abbasabad
- 8) New Julfa (Armenian Quarter)
- 9) Shrine of Harun-i Vilayat / Takhtgah
- 10) Old Maydan
- 11) Hasanabad (Khvaju) Bridge
- 12) Sa'adatabad Garden
- 13) Lunban Mosque



Fig. 1. Plan of Isfahan, ca. mid-seventeenth century, showing the main elements of the city and the sites studied in this article. (Plan: © Farshid Emami)

River, with multiple windows and upper-floor galleries, as “a very pleasant resort,” further adding that there were many more coffeehouses in the city and “throughout Turkey and Persia.”²²

These reports indicate that by the early seventeenth century, coffee was ubiquitous in Ottoman lands and quite popular in elite milieus of Safavid Iran. The introduction of the coffeehouse in Safavid domains thus coincided with the period of territorial expansion and material prosperity that ensued after the accession of Shah ‘Abbas. With the intensification of mercantile interactions came an influx of commodities and substances that particularly converged in Isfahan, which became the capital in the 1590s.²³

COFFEEHOUSES OF THE CHAHARBAGH

Chronicles of the reign of Shah ‘Abbas suggest that coffeehouses were part of the original building program of the Chaharbagh, the famed promenade of Isfahan (constructed ca. 1596–1602). In his *Rawzat al-ṣafavīyya* (completed ca. 1626), the chronicler Mirza Beg Junabadi reports that “taverns and coffeehouses” (*maykhānahā va qahvakhānahā*) were prepared for “wine-drinking companions and poor opium-consuming people.”²⁴ Likewise, in the narrative of the court astrologer and chronicler Jalal al-Din Munajjim Yazdi, the coffeehouse plays a central role: on December 26, 1602, upon the completion of the Chaharbagh, Shah ‘Abbas spent the evening in the coffeehouse, and there he composed a three-verse poem containing a chronogram indicating the year of the project’s inauguration.²⁵ As I will discuss below, several European reports also refer to venues for drinking coffee along the Chaharbagh in the seventeenth century.

The Chaharbagh (also known as *khīyābān-i chahār-bāgh*) was a ceremonial pathway and public promenade that constituted the fulcrum of the new Safavid developments in the southern outskirts of Isfahan.²⁶ Four kilometers long and forty-seven meters wide, it stretched from a gate of the medieval walled city (Dawlat Gate) to an enormous royal garden known as the ‘Abbasabad Garden or Bagh-i Hizar-jarib (Thousand Acres Garden) in the foothills on the south side of the Zayanda

River (fig. 1). The Allah Verdi Khan Bridge, completed circa 1607–12, connected the two portions of the promenade, which was bisected by the river.²⁷ In terms of physical layout, the Chaharbagh was conceived as an “elongated garden,” lined with four rows of plane trees (*chinār*), covered with pools and flowerbeds, and bordered with pairs of monumental gatehouse pavilions leading to gardens of various forms and functions (fig. 2).²⁸ While the Chaharbagh functioned as a thoroughfare, connecting the newly developed neighborhoods of New Julfa (inhabited by Armenian merchants) and ‘Abbasabad (settled by merchants from Tabriz) to the city’s commercial center, it was first and foremost a public promenade. The public character of the Chaharbagh was particularly apparent in its northern part, which stretched between the Dawlat Gate and the Allah Verdi Khan Bridge. Adjoining the palace complex (*dawlatkhāna*) and closer to the more populated areas of the city, the northern part of the Chaharbagh featured public institutions such as coffeehouses and Sufi convents, giving it a distinct social character. The southern portion of the Chaharbagh, between the bridge and the Hizar-jarib Garden, was lined with gardens erected by the military and bureaucratic elites.²⁹

Yet in its present state, Isfahan’s Chaharbagh Avenue retains little trace of its original landscape elements, gatehouse pavilions, and drinking houses. Indeed, the chief Safavid monument still standing on the Chaharbagh is the madrasa-cum-mosque complex erected by the last effective ruler of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Sultan Husayn (r. 1694–1722)—almost a century after the completion of the project under ‘Abbas I.³⁰ Interestingly, the most telling visual clue to the original layout of the Chaharbagh and its coffeehouses can be gleaned from a plan of the madrasa drawn up by the French architect Pascal Coste, who surveyed the building in 1840.³¹ Coste’s plan depicts not only the entire complex (with the linear market and caravanserai) but also a portion of the Chaharbagh with its now-lost plane trees, canals, pools, stairs, and waterfalls (fig. 3). The most remarkable aspect of the Coste plan for this study, however, is the area in the northwest of the complex, south of the market’s entrance portal, which he labeled as a café (no. 35 on the plan); a cursory glance at the plan and façade of this part of the building reveals that the covered space



Fig. 2. Old photograph of the Chaharbagh, taken ca. 1880s, showing the axial walkway bordered by plane trees, looking north from the middle of the northern section of the Chaharbagh. Tehran, Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization Documentation Center. (Photo: Ernst Höltzer)

designated as a coffeehouse was not originally laid out as part of the complex. Rather, it appears that it was an existing structure incorporated into the madrasa. Moreover, it is evident in Coste's plan that only this part of the building is aligned with the flowerbeds and stairs of the Chaharbagh, suggesting that it was laid out together with these landscape elements.³²

This hypothesis about the earlier provenance of the coffeehouse is further confirmed by the madrasa's endowment deed (*vaqf-nāma*), which mentions "the entire land and building (*arṣah va a'yān*) of the coffeehouse

located next to the auspicious madrasa" as one of the endowed properties and explicitly asserts that the establishment, which was "standing in the lands" of the complex, "had been purchased for [the use of] the madrasa" (*bi jahat-i madrasa-yi maḥkura ibtīyā' shuda būd*).³³ The passage reveals that the pre-existing coffeehouse was regarded as a piece of private property at the time of the construction of the madrasa, not a royal estate. Another piece of evidence that hints at the existence of a coffeehouse before the erection of the madrasa is a schematic plan of the Chaharbagh (fig. 4a) drawn

in the 1680s by the German physician and adventurer Engelbert Kaempfer (d. 1716). Despite its sketchiness, it shows that a series of self-contained structures (two of them bearing the label *kaf*)³⁴ stood in the same part of the Chaharbagh before the construction of the Shah Sultan Husayn Madrasa in the early eighteenth century.³⁵ Moreover, the existing building, as it stands today, does not seem to have a sound structural relationship with the rest of the complex.³⁶ Thus, while the coffeehouse's external decoration is consistent with the rest of the madrasa, textual, visual, and physical evidence suggests that the structure itself had its origin in an earlier period, or was at least refurbished on the basis of a pre-existing construction.

A close study of Kaempfer's plan shows that the extant coffeehouse was not a self-contained structure but was rather paired with another building on the western side of the Chaharbagh; in his plan both structures bear the same label.³⁷ The plan further indicates that to the south of this pair was another pair of structures (i.e., those labeled "*kaf*"), which in all likelihood would have flanked the other octagonal basin depicted further to the south on Coste's plan (fig. 4b), in the area of the Chaharbagh illustrated in an engraving by Coste (fig. 4c).³⁸ The existence of this second pair of coffeehouses is corroborated by the account of the Dutch painter and traveler Cornelis de Bruyn (d. 1726), who visited Isfahan in 1703–4, a few years before the construction of the madrasa; in his sequential description of the Chaharbagh, he refers to "two other buildings" farther to the south of the first area with coffeehouses, "where they retire to smoke."³⁹ Indeed, such a symmetrical configuration conforms to the overall layout of the promenade, where the bordering pavilions were all arranged in pairs flanking a sequence of large and small pools (figs. 1 and 5b). By the same token, it would be reasonable to assume that the southern pair of pavilions resembled the standing structure in terms of overall layout. These visual and textual records allow us to sketch out a hypothetical reconstruction of the Chaharbagh coffeehouses (fig. 5).⁴⁰ Located at the very center of the northern part of the promenade, they lay at the corners of Bagh-i Tut (Mulberry Garden) and Bagh-i Angur (Grape Garden), where roads leading east and west linked the Chaharbagh to the adjoining areas (fig. 5b).⁴¹

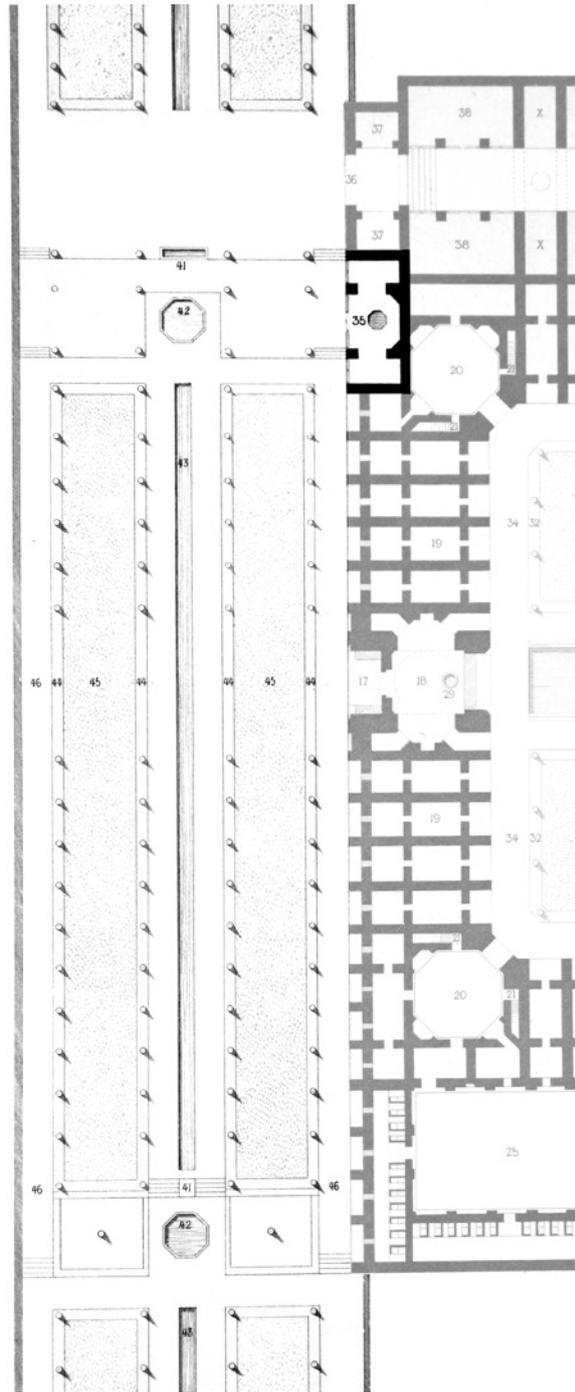


Fig. 3. Excerpt from a plan of the Shah Sultan Husayn Madrasa, showing the original layout of the Chaharbagh and the coffeehouse (no. 35), as surveyed by Pascal Coste in 1840. (After Pascal Coste, *Monuments modernes de la Perse* [Paris, 1867], pl. xix–xx)

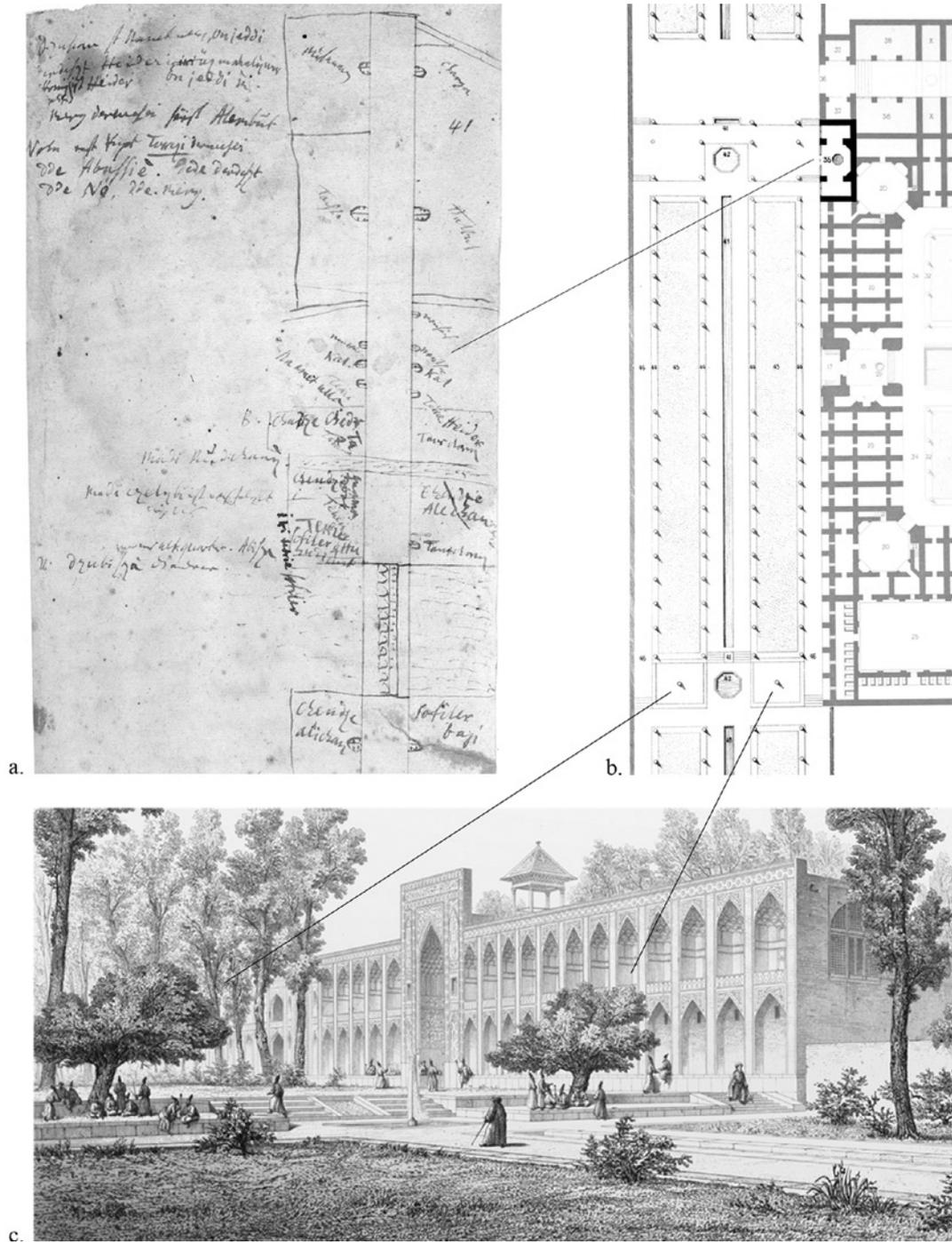


Fig. 4. a) Engelbert Kaempfer, schematic plan of the northern part of the Chaharbagh. London, British Library, Ms. Sloane 5232, fol. 42a. (Photo: provided by the British Library); b) Plan of the Chaharbagh Madrasa (see fig. 3); c) Engraving after a drawing by Pascal Coste, showing the Chaharbagh with the Shah Sultan Husayn Madrasa in the background. Before the construction of the madrasa, there were drinking pavilions on either side of the Chaharbagh, in front of the two platforms depicted in Coste's drawing. (After Pascal Coste, *Monuments modernes de la Perse* [Paris, 1867], pl. xviii)

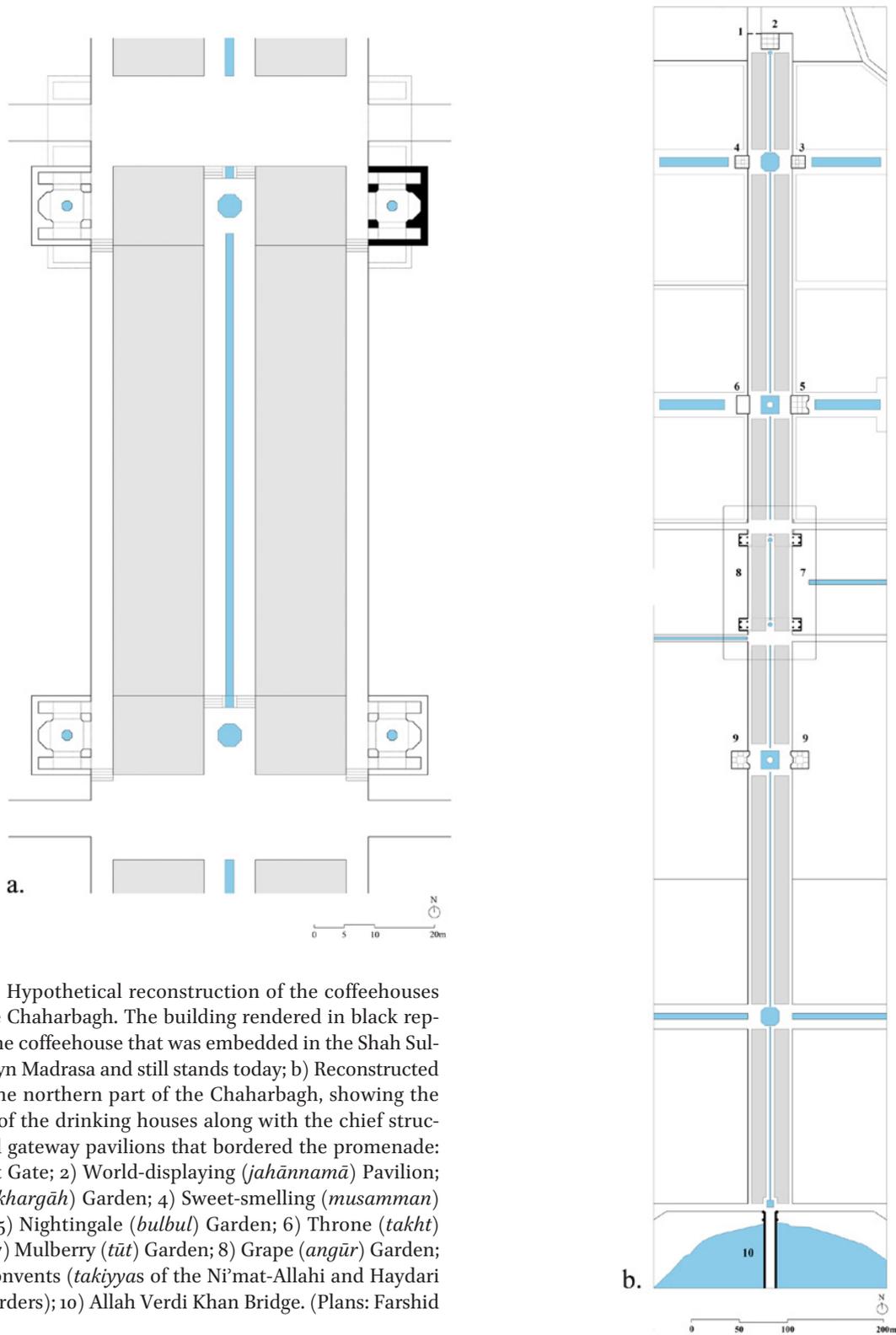


Fig. 5. a) Hypothetical reconstruction of the coffeehouses along the Chaharbagh. The building rendered in black represents the coffeehouse that was embedded in the Shah Sultan Husayn Madrasa and still stands today; b) Reconstructed plan of the northern part of the Chaharbagh, showing the location of the drinking houses along with the chief structures and gateway pavilions that bordered the promenade: 1) Dawlat Gate; 2) World-displaying (*jahānnamā*) Pavilion; 3) Tent (*khargāh*) Garden; 4) Sweet-smelling (*musamman*) Garden; 5) Nightingale (*bulbul*) Garden; 6) Throne (*takht*) Garden; 7) Mulberry (*tūt*) Garden; 8) Grape (*angūr*) Garden; 9) Sufi convents (*takiyyas* of the Ni'mat-Allahi and Haydari dervish orders); 10) Allah Verdi Khan Bridge. (Plans: Farshid Emami)

Literary sources, however, suggest that initially these structures functioned not just as coffeehouses but also as wine taverns. Our first source is a biographical compendium of poets completed in the 1620s by Taqi al-Din Muhammad Awhadi Balyani (d. ca. 1629). In his entry on Baba Shams-i Tishi of Shiraz, Awhadi relates that in 1603 (1012) Shah ‘Abbas had a wine tavern (*maykhāna*) set up for Baba Shams in the Chaharbagh of Isfahan, noting that now he is still “inebriated from the cup of leisure” in that royal wine-house (*maykhāna-yi shāhanshāhī*), and that “whoever drinks wine in that tavern is exempt [from punishment].” This exemption was in effect, he further adds, “even if there was a prohibition on wine.”⁴² Interestingly enough, Awhadi, who was a contemporary witness, does not refer to any coffeehouses. In fact, unlike later literary sources, throughout his voluminous compendium the terms coffee and coffeehouse barely figure at all. (Since he moved to India in 1606, it is likely that he was not very familiar with coffee or had simply missed the popularization of urban coffeehouses in Iran.⁴³) The second source is a later biographical dictionary of poets, completed in the 1670s by Muhammad Tahir Nasrabadi (d. ca. 1688). Nasrabadi describes Shams as an ordinary person (*avāsīṭ al-nās*) specializing in “the knowledge of music,” but relates that it was a *coffeehouse* that was built for Shams-i Tishi, and that a wine-house (*sharābkhāna*) was set up beside (*pahlū-yi*) it.⁴⁴ Regarding the special dispensation granted for wine drinking, Nasrabadi gives a more detailed account: Shah ‘Abbas decreed that anyone who drank at this tavern would have his hand stamped and that the magistrate’s fellows would know not to harass anyone so marked.⁴⁵ According to Awhadi, the reason for this order was Shah ‘Abbas’s interest in a young boy named Ganji who worked for Shams-i Tishi.⁴⁶

These two literary reports corroborate the conclusions reached on the basis of architectural drawings and sketches, suggesting that when Junabadi mentioned the establishment of “coffeehouses and taverns” on the Chaharbagh in his chronicle, it was not a figurative but a literal statement. Nasrabadi’s reference to a tavern erected beside a coffeehouse is indeed consistent with the proposed reconstruction, whereby two pairs of pavilions stood near one another. Based on these accounts, we can surmise that the conception and erection of a tavern coincided with the introduction and populariza-

tion of coffee, and hence both establishments were included in the program. Moreover, the existence of a tavern may not have been unrelated to the presence of a vineyard in this area of the Chaharbagh. According to the account of the French jewel merchant and traveler Jean Chardin, as well as Kaempfer’s map, the garden located on the western side of the thoroughfare in the area of the drinking houses was known as Bagh-i Angur (Grape Garden).⁴⁷

The juxtaposition of a coffeehouse and a wine tavern on the Chaharbagh of Isfahan is emblematic of the close historical affinity between the two social institutions. As elsewhere in the early modern world, in terms of social milieu, the coffeehouse was first and foremost akin to the tavern (or similar establishments serving alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages).⁴⁸ When the coffeehouse first appeared in Mecca, in the early sixteenth century, it was often compared to the tavern, and, as Hattox notes, the origin of the coffeehouse as a social institution should probably be sought in the wine tavern, rather than Sufi circles.⁴⁹ The perceived similarity between the two beverages is also reflected in the etymology of the word itself: before the emergence of “modern coffee,” the Arabic term *qahwa* referred to a type of thick wine with an acrid taste.⁵⁰ In the early years of its introduction to Safavid Iran, too, the coffeehouse was reminiscent of the tavern, as a couplet by Sadiqi Beg suggests:

I did not sit in the coffeehouse for the sake of coffee;
It is with the thought of wine that I drink coffee every moment.

*Bi qahvakhāna na az bahr-i qahva jā kardam
Bi yād-i bāda kasham jā-m-i qahva rā har dam.*⁵¹

Yet compared to the urban centers of neighboring empires, in Safavid realms wine appears to have been consumed with greater liberty in public spaces.⁵² As Matthee has shown, despite the Islamic prohibition on intoxicating drinks, except for periodic bans, public consumption of wine was generally allowed by the Safavids.⁵³ In the 1620s, ‘Abbas even ordered Qazi b. Kashif al-Din, another physician active in Isfahan in the first half of the seventeenth century, to compose an epistle on the benefits and rules of drinking wine.⁵⁴ Rather than substituting for wine, coffee was seen as complementing it.⁵⁵ Indeed, the proximity of a coffeehouse to a wine tavern provided a convenient amenity for the revelers

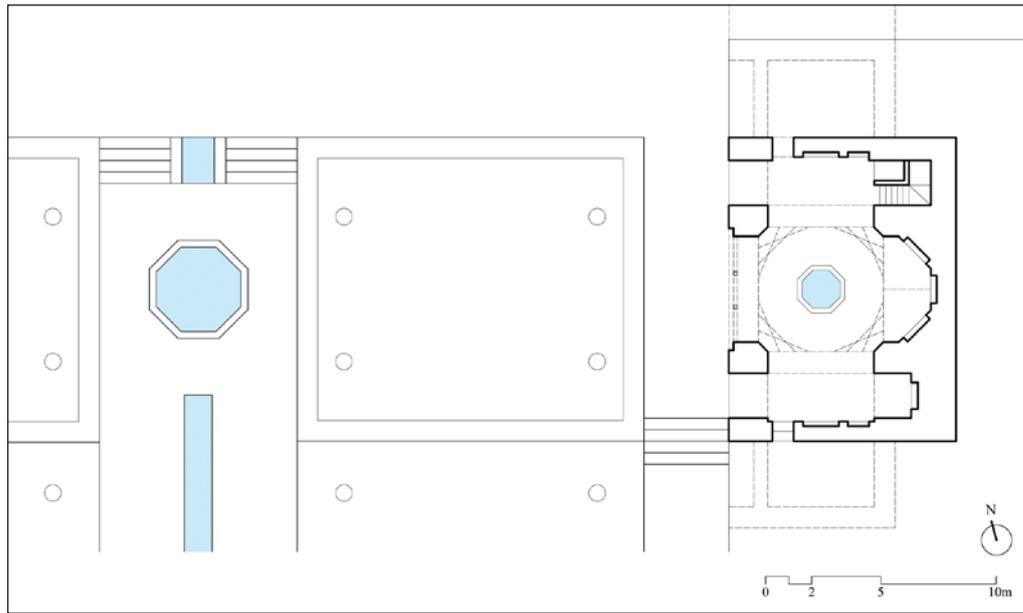


Fig. 6. Plan showing the Chaharbagh coffeehouse along with the adjoining platform and landscape elements. Drawn on the basis of old photographs and surveys of the madrasa. (Plan: Farshid Emami)

of Isfahan: in his description of the benefits of coffee, Qazi b. Kashif al-Din had noted the ameliorating effect of the substance on a hangover (*daf-i khumārī*).⁵⁶ And of course frequenters of the Chaharbagh tavern remained exempt from the sporadic prohibitions on wine drinking, although, as Awhadi pithily wrote, in Safavid Isfahan “no one cares” (*kas rā bi kas kār nīst*).



Fig. 7. Interior view of the extant structure along the Chaharbagh (which once served as a coffeehouse), showing the central hall and the upper-floor gallery. (Photo: Farshid Emami, 2013)

Whether initially conceived as coffeehouse or tavern, the extant structure along the Chaharbagh still offers a glimpse of its original form and sensory experience.⁵⁷ Measuring approximately thirteen by ten meters on perimeter, it consists of a double-height domed space, square in plan and about twelve meters high, surrounded by recesses on three sides (fig. 6). While the two lateral recesses are rectangular, opposite the entrance is a semi-octagonal alcove (*shahnishin*) carved with niches in the walls. Judging from Coste’s plan, an octagonal basin once stood at the center of the coffeehouse. The dome is supported by four piers with chamfered sides, from which spring pendentives covered with a pattern of intersecting arches that, together with the load-bearing connecting arches, form a base on which the dome rests (fig. 7). A staircase in the northeast corner provides access to a U-shaped gallery overlooking the central hall and offering screened views of the Chaharbagh landscape outside. In its present state, the structure is connected to a small room on the south side, which probably functioned as the service area of the coffeehouse, where coffee was brewed for clients.⁵⁸

Composed of a full-height arch flanked by two vertical bays, the coffeehouse’s elevation reflects the tripar-

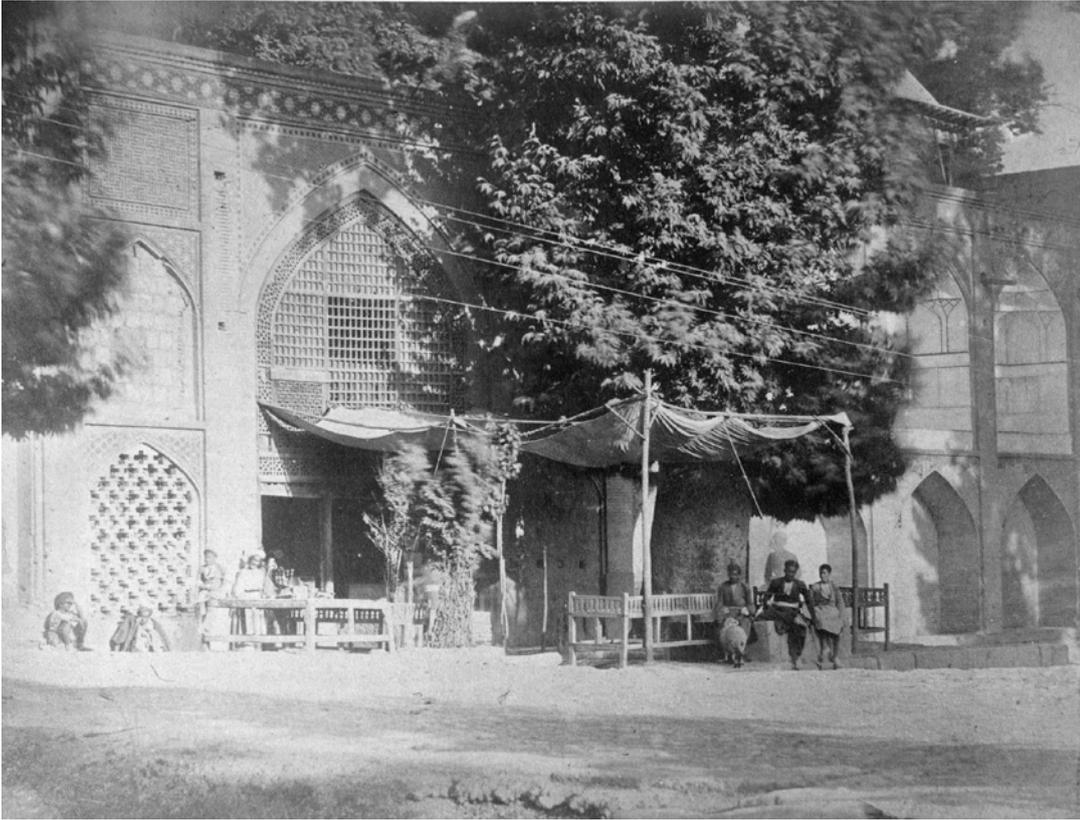


Fig. 8. Old photograph showing the Chaharbagh coffeehouse in the late nineteenth century. Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution. (Photo: Antoin Sevruguin, ca. 1880)

tite layout of the interior (fig. 8). The central arch has an elaborate wooden latticed screen through which air and light penetrated into the covered hall. Supported by two wooden columns, the screen featured glass panes and sashes (*urusī* or sliding panels). The lateral bays contain two arched windows of the same size, screened with perforated brickwork and surmounted by square tile panels bearing identical Koranic inscriptions in square *kufic* script. Added during the construction of the madrasa, the epigraphic panels, as I will discuss later, were an explicit proclamation of the coffeehouse's integration into a religious institution in the early eighteenth century.

In terms of architectural typology, the plan of the coffeehouse represents a variation of the cross-in-square model, the most common scheme for residential buildings and garden pavilions since pre-Islamic times.⁵⁹ What distinguishes the layout of the Chaharbagh drink-

ing pavilion from its contemporary or earlier prototypes is the omission of one of the four sides of the cross-shaped central space, a modification that provides a more direct link between the covered internal hall and the outside landscape. Indeed, the main novelty of the structure does not lie in its plan (variations of the cruciform layout were indeed common) or its façade per se, but rather in its urban configuration—that is, the manner in which the pavilion's open plan sits along an elongated promenade/thoroughfare to serve as a public institution. Rather than self-contained pavilions, the Chaharbagh's coffeehouses were street buildings with a single elevation. Here the perforated wooden façade does not screen a private reception hall from an enclosed courtyard but rather provides a transparent interface for a public building, from whose alcoves one could peer into the urban space. Like the mid-seventeenth-century Ipshir Pasha Coffeehouse in Ottoman

Aleppo, the Chaharbagh coffeehouses present a new conception of urban elevation: a perforated curtain filtering light, air, and views of the outside landscape

The urban significance of the drinking houses is also reflected in the way they were laid out in relation to the open-air space of the Chaharbagh. As old photographs and Coste's drawings show (fig. 3), a square platform stood in front of each drinking house.⁶⁰ Between each pair of platforms, along the canal that ran down the middle of the Chaharbagh, lay a small octagonal pool, preceded by a water chute and flanked by two flights of stairs—all created through a sculptural terracing of the land's sloping. As one strolled down the stone-paved axial pathway of the Chaharbagh, these pools and their flanking platforms marked the presence of coffeehouses/taverns: together, they formed a visual axis perpendicular to the axial walkway, directing one's gaze toward the bordering structures. The area was given a further distinct character by a dramatic shift in planting: on the platforms were willow trees, which broke the rhythm of the regularly-spaced plane trees and, with their slender hanging branches, created a contrast of shade, texture, and color. On a hot summer day, seated in the shade of the weeping willows, patrons of the drinking houses would sip coffee, drink wine, or smoke tobacco while relishing the richest sensory experience that the Chaharbagh landscape had to offer. The dappled light of the sun filtering through the leaves, they enjoyed air cooled by fountains and scented by flowers, along with the gurgling sound of water flowing on the carved surfaces of the water chutes—all mingled with the scents of coffee and tobacco, which were as exotic in seventeenth-century Isfahan as they were anywhere else in the early modern world.

The direct spatial and visual connection between the covered space and an open-air sitting area, which suited the public function of taverns/coffeehouses, was remarked upon by multiple European visitors. Kaempfer noted that those in charge of the drinking houses spread carpets and mats on the bordering platforms, where people could sit, watch shows, and listen to poets and storytellers, all while drinking and smoking; only when the weather was hot would they move to the cooler adjoining rooms.⁶¹ It also appears that the coffeehouses were later outfitted with outdoor furniture. While in Is-

fahan in the early 1700s, de Bruyn observed that this area of the Chaharbagh was covered with "benches, wooden chairs, and tables," and "in the evening you always see a great number of Persians, smoking and drinking coffee." De Bruyn also noted the distinct character of the Chaharbagh in the vicinity of the coffeehouses: "the ground here has a slope, where there are trees which afford the finest shade in the world."⁶²

The public character of the Chaharbagh drinking houses, however, does not mean that they were used by all social classes in a similar fashion. Lying to the west of the Chaharbagh was the elite neighborhood of 'Abbasabad and across the river was the Armenian quarter of New Julfa (fig. 1).⁶³ With these well-to-do residential areas in its vicinity, it is no surprise that the Chaharbagh coffeehouses were used by the upper strata of Safavid society as a public stage for the demonstration of social status.⁶⁴ This performative function was explicitly commented upon by the English traveler John Fryer, who when he visited Isfahan in 1677 found the Chaharbagh similar to London's Hyde Park: "a place to see and to be seen."⁶⁵ He further noted that at nightfall all "the Pride" of Isfahan was met in the Chaharbagh: "the Grandees were airing themselves, prancing about with their numerous trains, striving to outvie each other in Pomp and Generosity."⁶⁶ Fryer's observation illustrates how the physical setting of the Chaharbagh made certain socially-coded behaviors possible: "Near these Ponds, or *Tanks*, are Coffee-Houses, which furnish them when they dismount, with Coho, Tea, or Sherbets; while they sit in State, and smook Tobacco with their Attendance about them."⁶⁷ Riding on horseback on the lateral pathways of the Chaharbagh—the central alley was exclusively for pedestrians—an elite Isfahani would dismount for a cup of coffee while a servant attended his horse.⁶⁸ One such member of the merchant class matching Fryer's description is illustrated in a painting attributed to Mu'īn Musavvir (active ca. 1630s–90s), which portrays a middle-aged merchant named Mirza Muhammad-Taqi Tabrizi, mounted on horseback and accompanied by a groom (fig. 9).⁶⁹ As Massumeh Farhad has noted, the figure's epithet suggests that he was a scion of the Tabrizi émigré families who resided in the neighborhood of 'Abbasabad. The painting is a visual representation of the manner in which an upper-class Isfahani was



Fig. 9. Mu'in Musavvir (attributed), "Portrait of Muhammad Taqi Tabrizi." London, The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art. (Photo: Nour Foundation, courtesy of the Khalili Family Trust)

seen in public spaces such as the Chaharbagh on a day-to-day basis. It was not merely the ability to afford a drink, but also the very design of the Chaharbagh and its drinking houses, with their interconnected indoor and outdoor spaces, that enabled the elites of Isfahan to enact their social status in the public domain.

Another unique function imparting a novel social character to the Chaharbagh coffeehouses was its exclusive use by women once a week. In 1609, Shah 'Abbas decreed that on Wednesdays the Chaharbagh and Allah Verdi Khan Bridge would become an entirely feminine domain, so that the women of the court would not, as he had allegedly feared, be deprived of "the delight of strolling and conversing (*siyr u suhbat*) on the Chaharbagh." According to Munajjim Yazdi, on such days men were prohibited from entering the area and only female

vendors (*zanān-i ahl-i ħirfa*) were allowed in.⁷⁰ Since the main "vending spots" of the Chaharbagh were its drinking houses, it is reasonable to assume that on such days coffee and wine were also served by women. Yet the female participants of these weekly outings were not limited to royal ladies and their servants. Della Vale reports that one Wednesday his wife was invited to join the noble women of Isfahan for an outing with the court ladies.⁷¹ The presence of the local nobility, members of other religions (Della Valle's Nestorian Christian wife and her peers), and female vendors suggests that on such days the domain of women was relatively extensive. As public spaces used by both genders, albeit segregated by day of the week, the coffeehouses of the Chaharbagh were not exclusively masculine spaces; they also provided a rare venue for women to socialize in a public setting.⁷²

These manifestations of class and gender reflect the myriad ways in which the presence of the coffeehouses affected the meaning and uses of the Chaharbagh as a public space. Consider the elongated space stretching between the Dawlat Gate and the Zayanda River (fig. 5): the novelty of the coffeehouses did not lie in their layout or decoration per se, but rather in the way they sat at the heart of a public promenade, and in the way their covered rooms and open-air platforms created a public venue for utterly new social pastimes such as drinking coffee and smoking tobacco. In its incipient form, a *khīyābān* was not merely a planted road or an elongated garden for age-old leisurely activities: it was a promenade lined with street cafés, if you will, a public space accommodating and shaping the social practices and habits of a new age.

THE COFFEEHOUSES AT THE MAYDAN-I NAQSH-I JAHAN

In the urban landscape of seventeenth-century Isfahan, the Chaharbagh coffeehouses stood out for their association with the institution of the wine tavern and for their integration into a monumental promenade. Yet, the city's most famous coffeehouses were those erected on the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan (also known as the Maydan-i Shah, or Royal Square). In his detailed description

of the Safavid capital, Chardin refers to those establishments as “the most beautiful and the most spacious coffeehouses in the whole city.”⁷³ The significance of the Maydan’s coffeehouses is also reflected in the references made to them in literary sources. In a versified travel narrative, for instance, the poet Bihishti of Herat describes the coffeehouses along with the palace complex and royal market, a reflection of their perceived significance in Safavid Isfahan.⁷⁴

Chronicles suggest that, as in the Chaharbagh, the coffeehouses of the Maydan were integral to its main building program. Munajjim Yazdi’s account is indicative of the commercial nature of the development program, which comprised coffeehouses, the Qaysariyya (royal market), stores, caravanserais, and bathhouses.⁷⁵ Likewise, in Junabadi’s flowery description, one can get a sense of the close association of the coffeehouses with the Maydan and its elements: “through the *maydān* flowed a large canal resembling the stream of paradise, and pleasant coffeehouses were built along it of marble, brick, and stucco. In those coffeehouses, the tulip-faced and rosy-cheeked ones served coffee, symbolizing the darkness surrounding the fountain of life.”⁷⁶

European reports render a vivid picture of the Maydan coffeehouses. According to Chardin, the rooms were very high and large, open from top to bottom, with scaffoldings inside made like the benches of tailors (*établissements des tailleurs*), allowing one to sit or lean easily.⁷⁷ Similarly, according to the French traveler and merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, the coffeehouses of the Maydan consisted of rooms opening onto the square, where people go to smoke tobacco or drink coffee. These rooms, he wrote, had amphitheater-style seating, and, in the center, a simple basin with running water, used for filling water pipes.⁷⁸ Fryer, too, compares the coffeehouses to theaters: “they are modeled after the nature of our theatres, that every one may sit around, and suck choice Tobacco.” An oft-quoted passage in Chardin’s travelogue, which gives a generic description of Safavid coffeehouses, was most probably based on his observations of the Maydan establishments: “Several of them, especially those in the big cities, have a water basin in the middle. Around the rooms are platforms, which are three feet high and approximately three to four feet wide, more or less according to the



Fig. 10. Elevated view of the northeast side of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan, showing the restored arcades where the coffeehouses were once located. (Photo: Farshid Emami)

size of the location, and are made out of masonry or scaffolding, on which one sits in the Oriental manner.”⁷⁹ Sources suggest that the coffeehouses were located on the northern side of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan, in the arcades stretching on either side of the entrance portal of the Qaysariyya. Modified over the past century and taken over by shops, the present condition of the Maydan’s north side gives little clue to its original form and function (fig. 10).

To reconstruct the original layout of the coffeehouses it is essential to situate them in the broader framework of the Maydan’s development. As Eugenio Galdieri proposed in 1970 on the basis of an archaeological investigation, the arcades surrounding the Maydan were constructed in two stages: in the first phase, the plaza was circled by a one-story arcade leading to a row of shops on the outer perimeter; the row of shops facing the plaza as well as upper-level loggias (sing. *bālākhāna*) were added during a second stage of construction.⁸⁰ In a detailed study of four Safavid chronicles, Robert McChesney proposed a textual basis for Galdieri’s hypothesis, arguing that in the first phase, finished before 1595, the Maydan was primarily intended for festivities and sports, and that it was in the second phase, completed by 1602–3, that the plaza took on a commercial character.⁸¹

The nature and historical circumstances of this two-stage development, however, are not entirely clear, par-

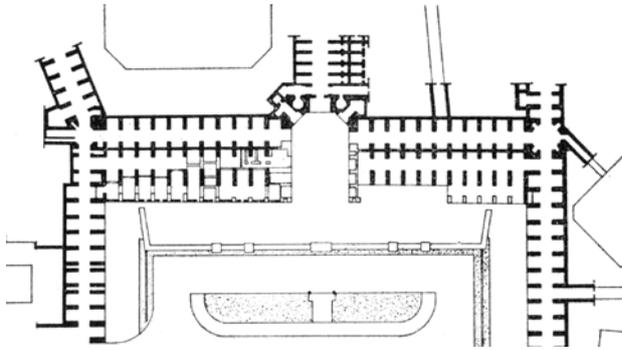


Fig. 11. Schematic plan by Galdieri of the northern side of the Maydan, showing original Safavid constructions and later additions. (After Eugenio Galdieri and Roberto Orazi, *Progetto di sistemazione del Maydān-i Šāh* [Rome, 1969])

ticularly with respect to the northern side of the Maydan, where the coffeehouses were once located.⁸² As Markus Ritter notes, in the northern side “the building mass surrounding the plaza is twice as deep as the other sides”; here an additional one-story gallery stands in front of the main gallery, which is lined with two rows of shops and encircles the plaza (fig. 11).⁸³ Judging from physical additions and restorations, Galdieri erroneously suggested that this extra arcade dated from a later time. Galdieri’s plan (fig. 11) thus reflects the state of the northern side of the Maydan in the 1960s, when the arcades containing the coffeehouses had long been modified and integrated into the market.⁸⁴ Yet, as Ritter remarks, a sketch plan of the Maydan drawn by Della Valle reveals that the additional gallery already existed in the early 1600s, during the reign of Shah ‘Abbas.⁸⁵ Among modern scholars, Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth were probably the first to identify the three-bay-wide gallery on the north side as the original site of the coffeehouses described in European reports. They particularly highlighted the distinctive vaulting of this area, which is characterized by an alternation between tunnel vaults and domes.⁸⁶ Every four bays surrounding a central hall, they noted, formed a quadripartite layout, which constituted one of the original coffeehouses.⁸⁷

Yet the key to the original layout of the coffeehouses lies in a plan of the Maydan drawn up in 1932 by the

French architect Eugène-Elie Beaudouin.⁸⁸ In contrast to Galdieri’s plan, this plan depicts the coffeehouses as six interconnected octagonal spaces stretching on the eastern side of the Qaysariyya portal (fig. 12). The above-mentioned sketch plan by Della Valle confirms that the coffeehouses were located in exactly this part. Moreover, this layout is consistent with the peculiar vaulting scheme of this area, as noted by Gaube and Wirth. (In the eastern four bays the original vaults of the coffeehouses are still preserved.) It is thus reasonable to assume that Beaudouin’s plan was based on the existing condition of the area in the early 1930s, i.e., prior to the modern renovation of the Maydan.⁸⁹ More important, the plan matches another sketch by Della Valle (fig. 13), which depicts the coffeehouse where Shah ‘Abbas held an audience with foreign ambassadors in 1619.⁹⁰ Della Valle’s drawing shows two of the six octagonal halls that constituted the coffeehouses on the north side of the Maydan.

These visual records, together with the physical remains and textual descriptions, allow for a rough reconstruction of the Safavid coffeehouses of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan (fig. 14). Occupying the entire western wing of the plaza’s northern side—what is today known as the Bazar-i Sarrafha (Money-Changers’ Market)—“the coffeehouse complex” consisted of six domed halls with chamfered corners (each approximately seven meters across and six meters high). The domed chambers were lit through an aperture in the ceiling and, judging from Della Valle’s sketch, featured octagonal basins at the center. Alternating with these domed halls were lower barrel-vaulted spaces (measuring five by four-and-a-half meters), which both separated and connected the domed halls (fig. 15). (Shah ‘Abbas sat in one of these alcoves to receive ambassadors). Della Valle’s sketch (fig. 13) suggests that these interconnecting alcoves were lined on both sides with platforms, traces of which still remain in situ. This reconstruction conforms to the description of Della Valle, who noted that with no barriers between them, the coffeehouses appeared as one complex.

The overall scheme of the coffeehouses can be described as a series of cruciform spaces with overlapping alcoves on the sides. By using two different types of vaulting and by chamfering the corners of the main

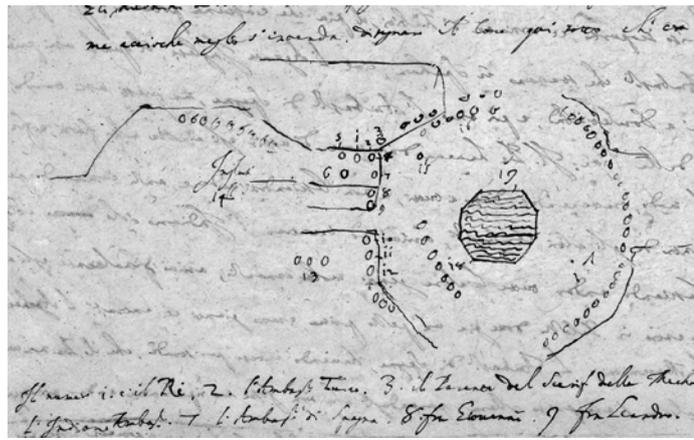
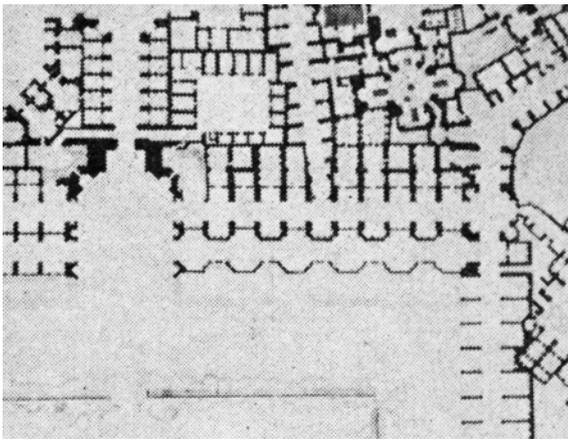


Fig. 12. Excerpt from the plan of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan drawn up by Eugène-Elie Beaudouin in 1932, showing the original layout of the coffeehouses on the northeast side of the plaza. (After Eugène-Elie Beaudouin, "Ispahan sous les grands chahs, XVIIe siècle," *Urbanisme, revue mensuelle de l'urbanisme français* 2, no. 10 [January 1933], 25)

Fig. 13. A sketch from the diary of Pietro della Valle, showing the layout of the coffeehouse where Shah 'Abbas held a reception for foreign envoys in 1619. Vatican, Vatican Library (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana), Ott. lat. 3382, fol. 126v. (Photo: courtesy of the Vatican Library)

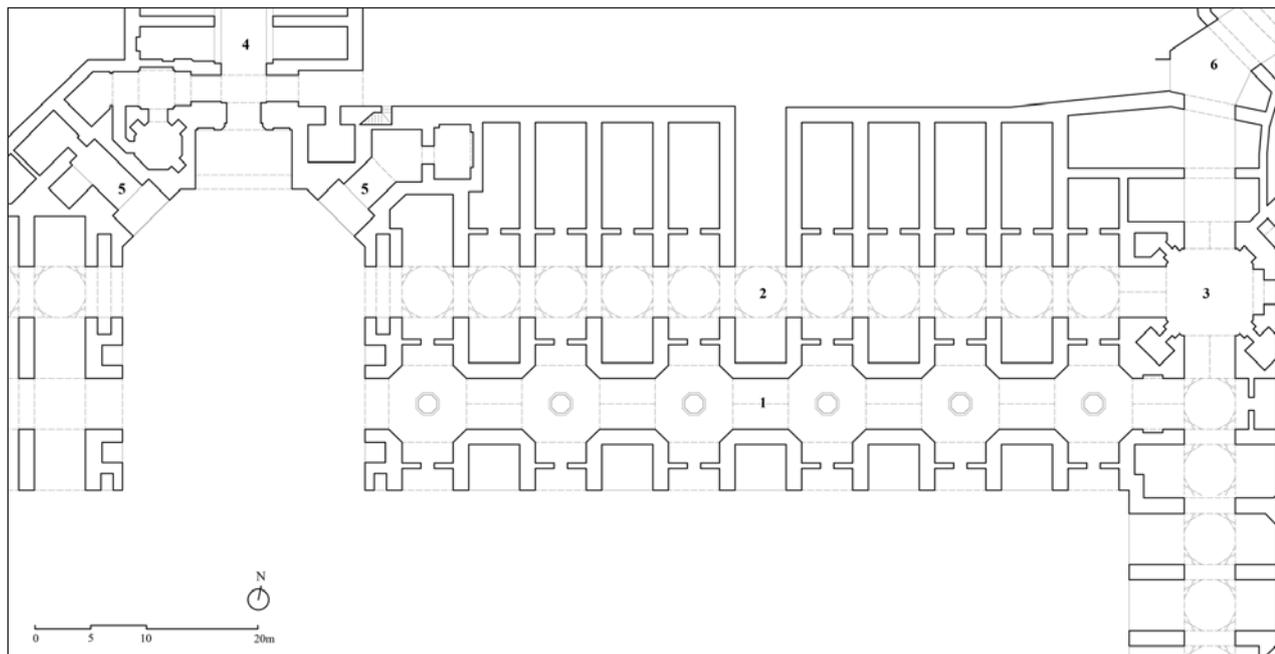


Fig. 14. Plan showing the northeast side of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan along with the reconstructed layout of the coffeehouses: 1) row of coffeehouses consisting of six octagonal rooms alternating with alcoves; 2) Bazar-i Qannadha (Confectioners' Market); 3) Chaharsuq-i Shah; 4) Qaysariyya Market; 5) sherbet houses; 6) covered market leading to the Old Maydan. (Plan: Farshid Emami)

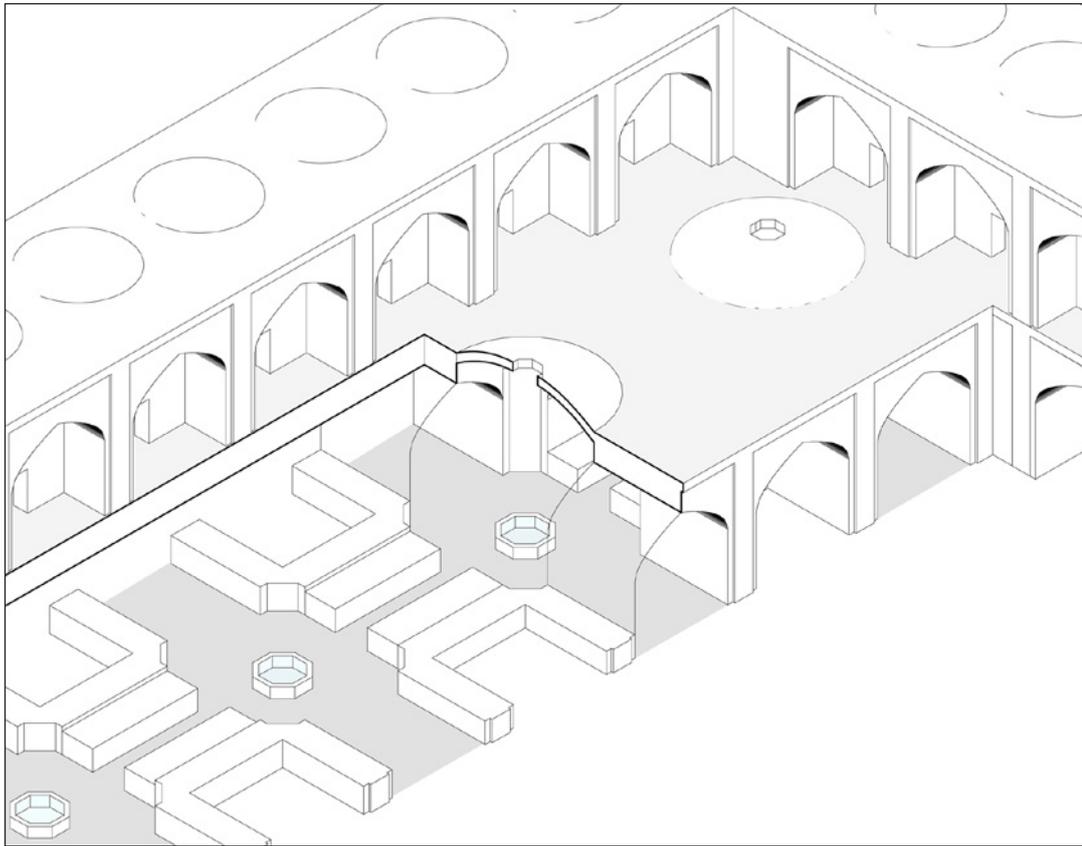


Fig. 15. Axonometric view showing the overall structure of the coffeehouses as they originally stood on the northeastern side of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan. (Drawing: Farshid Emami)

halls, the unknown architect of the complex masterfully created a new spatial configuration, suitable for the function of the drinking houses, without discarding the modular framework that underlines the overall design of the shops surrounding the Maydan. In addition to the eastern and western entrances, the coffeehouses were directly accessible from the open-air space of the plaza, and probably from the Bazar-i Qannadha (Confectioners' Market) to the north. Alternating with the entrance bays on both sides were alcoves facing the Maydan in the south and the gallery in the north. Earlier plans indicate that small niches were carved into the walls, which would have provided ample space for storing china cups and other utensils.

In his description of the Maydan's drinking houses (*Schenke, Tavernen*), Olearius referred to three distinct types of establishments—the wine tavern (*shīrakhāna*),

the Chinese teahouse (*chāy-i khatā'ī-khāna*), and the coffeehouse (*qahvakhāna*)—and gave a fairly different picture of the prevalent milieu in each of them: the wine tavern was mostly frequented by “low people” (*unzüchtige Leute*), who would watch the lewd dancing of young servers; in the teahouse, meanwhile, they drank a “foreign warm drink,” and played chess and backgammon; and the coffeehouse was where tobacco smokers and coffee drinkers could be found. In all three, Olearius observed, poets and storytellers could be seen seated on tall chairs in the middle of the room, reciting with a stick in their hands.⁹¹ No other source refers to these types, but since Olearius, who visited Isfahan in the 1630s, is one of our earliest sources, it is likely that at least initially such a functional categorization did exist in the Maydan's establishments.⁹² If so, as with the Chaharbagh drinking houses, here we can see a similar juxta-

position of the wine tavern and the coffeehouse. Also remarkable is the reference to a teahouse: sources suggest that tea was another “soft drug” popularized in the very same period, and although less common than coffee, it was consumed in elite circles.⁹³ Writing in the early 1600s, Hamavi reports that the royal gardeners of Shah ‘Abbas had even experimented with cultivating tea seeds, a deed indicative of the existence of a penchant for domesticating exotic substances.⁹⁴ Thus, even if the drinking houses on the northern side of the Maydan were formally identical and spatially interconnected, they were probably further distinguished by the type of drinks served in them.

There is no evidence in Safavid literary sources for the three types of establishments described by Olearius. The sources nevertheless suggest that the coffeehouses of Isfahan, including those on the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan, were known as distinct locales. In Nasrabadi’s oft-quoted compendium of poets, one finds references to several coffeehouses (*qahva* or *qahvakhāna*) with little indication of their exact locations. The Arab Coffeehouse (*qahvakhāna-yi ‘Arab*) was probably one of the first established in Isfahan; Nasrabadi relates two anecdotes about Shah ‘Abbas’s ad hoc conversations with poets in this establishment.⁹⁵ The coffeehouse’s name suggests that it was probably run by a person from Arab lands, which hints at the role individuals from abroad likely played in introducing coffee and its drinking customs. Some coffeehouses were known for their attractive coffee-servers (sing. *qahvachi*): one poet was infatuated with a server named Tufan (Deluge), and the son of Haji Yusuf Qahvachi had at least two admirers among Isfahani poets.⁹⁶ The central Asian litterateur Muhammad Badi‘ Maliha of Samarqand, who visited Isfahan in 1679–81, refers to a coffeehouse in the Maydan-i Shah called Agha Qiyasa, which was “the seventh coffeehouse” on the Qaysariyya side.⁹⁷ While the drinking establishments of the Maydan were similar in form and spatially unified, the fact that they were known after their proprietors or servers indicates that each coffeehouse had a distinct character, probably attracting a regular clientele.

It has been suggested that the architecture of the coffeehouse had its origins in public baths (sing. *hammām*), particularly the cloakroom (*sarbīna* or *maslakh*), which commonly consisted of octagonal spaces surrounded by

platforms.⁹⁸ This formal affinity is of course not without social implications. As in other Islamic contexts, the public bath was a social space in the urban centers of medieval Iran, where people gathered not just for bathing but also to meet and talk. What differentiated the architecture of the Maydan coffeehouses from that of the public baths was their dynamic relationship with the surrounding urban spaces. In contrast to bathhouses, which were introverted buildings constructed lower than ground level, the coffeehouses of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan were open and permeable structures, interconnected with the open-air space of the Maydan and the nearby markets. Accessible from multiple directions, they integrated the rhythm and flow of movement in and around the city’s main plaza into their very spatial structure.

The original articulation of the main elevation of the coffeehouses and the bays facing the Maydan, however, are not entirely clear. According to the Russian traveller Kotov, who was in Isfahan in 1624, on two sides of the coffeehouses there were “wooden lattices from where the Kizuilbashi [*sic*] watch the sport but pay no money.”⁹⁹ The two renditions of the northern side of the Maydan, produced some time between 1670 and 1674, are the only available contemporary depictions. The engraving published in Chardin’s travelogue (fig. 16) depicts the coffeehouses as single-story structures with openings set at two-bay intervals.¹⁰⁰ Above the bay along the entrance of each coffeehouse stands a small lantern marking the main spaces. A comparison with the existing appearance of the portal and late nineteenth-century photographs suggests that, despite its obvious errors in perspective, the engraving provides a fairly accurate depiction of the overall shape of the structure and its major components. Moreover, it gives a sense of the way in which the water canal and trees encircling the Maydan were laid out in relation to the configuration of the coffeehouses.¹⁰¹

Regardless of their original appearance, there can be no doubt that the coffeehouses offered the most spectacular view of the Maydan. Clustered in the south side of the plaza, the triad of monumental structures—the Shah Mosque, the Ali Qapu, and the Shaykh Lutfallah Mosque—was best viewed from the north, where the coffeehouses were located (fig. 17). This placement was not lost on contemporary observers. In a prose piece

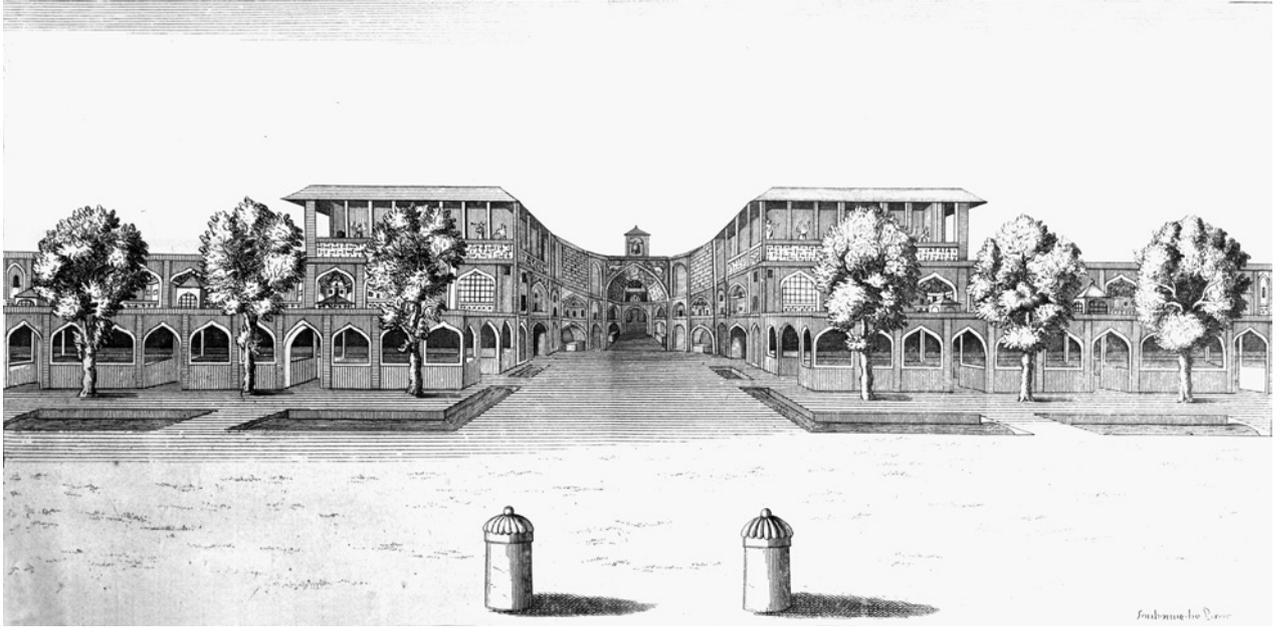


Fig. 16. Engraving showing the northern side of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan, with the entrance portal of the Qaysariyya Market at the center and the arcades containing the coffeehouses on the right-hand side. (After Jean Chardin, *Voyages du chevalier Chardin, en Perse*, 4 vols. [Amsterdam, 1635], 2: N. xxxvii)



Fig. 17. View looking south on the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan, showing the 'Ali Qapu (right), Shah Mosque (center), and Shaykh Lutfallah Mosque (left). (Photo: Farshid Emami)

(*inshā'*) composed in the middle decades of the seventeenth century, for instance, the poet I'jaz Hirati mentioned that the coffeehouses faced "the mihrab of the Shah Mosque."¹⁰² Similarly, in a poem on Isfahan completed in 1674, Mir Nijat described the Shah Mosque and the Maydan before referring to the coffeehouses themselves, which "appeared in front [of the Maydan], like the arches of the brows of the cruel beloved."¹⁰³

The most impressive feature of the Maydan coffeehouses, however, was not their physical shape but rather their nighttime appearance. The sources refer in particular to elaborate lighting structures hung from the ceilings inside the establishments. According to Kotov, "above the height of a man is stretched plaited iron wire like a net or a chessboard, and in every hole is placed a glass bowl and in these is poured rose water with oil and they light these glasses with oil."¹⁰⁴ The observation of the Russian merchant is repeated by Fryer: "at night here are abundance of lamps lighted, and let down in glasses from the concave part of the roof, by wires or ropes, hanging in a circle."¹⁰⁵ Since its first use by the Yemeni Sufi orders, coffee drinking had always been associated with nighttime activities and prolonged waking hours.¹⁰⁶ In that sense, the coffeehouses had a tremendous impact on the appearance and uses of the Maydan as a public space: illuminating the plaza, they extended the social life of the city's main public square beyond the working hours of daytime. Nocturnal activity was particularly intense during the month of Ramadan, when Kotov observed that "in the *kafs* and on the *maidan* they play and dance and have all sorts of games the whole night, with candles and tapers and lamps."¹⁰⁷ It is hard to conceive of any substance other than coffee that would be conducive to such a prolonged nighttime euphoria. At night, with other shops closed, the arcades of the northern side of the Maydan would have appeared as a row of bright arches, lit by a myriad of lamps burning in the coffeehouses.¹⁰⁸

To nighttime or daytime revelers of Isfahan, coffee and tobacco were just two of the pleasures available in the northern area of the Maydan. Indeed, it was probably no coincidence that directly behind the coffeehouses was the market of confectionaries (*bāzār-i qannādhā*), offering sweets (such as *nabāt* or *halvā*) that could be consumed with coffee (Safavid physicians deemed it

unhealthy to drink coffee on an empty stomach).¹⁰⁹ Moreover, according to Kaempfer, "sherbet houses" flanked the Qaysariyya portal (fig. 14).¹¹⁰ It was the concentration of these functions that turned the north side of the Maydan into the primary hub of social life in Safavid Isfahan. Here, the monumentality of the royal palace and mosques gave way to the messy reality of everyday life, day and night. Exotic substances such as coffee, tea, and tobacco imbued all mercantile and social activities with the distinctive tastes of the early modern world.

From the intense commercial and artisanal activity going on in the northern side of the Maydan one can conclude that perhaps more than the literati, the coffeehouses attracted craftsmen and merchants. (Several of the poets who frequented these establishments were in fact engaged in crafts as well.) If men of letters were the main clients of the coffeehouses by day, the establishments probably hosted a more diverse roster of patrons at night. The immediate urban context of these establishments also points to an ethnically diverse and cosmopolitan clientele. Visiting Isfahan's markets in its heyday, Olearius noted that "there is not any nation in all Asia, nor indeed of almost of Europe, who sends not its merchants to Isfahan," and mentioned traders from Khurasan, Bukhara, and China, as well as Turkish, Jewish, Armenian, Georgian, English, Dutch, French, Italian, and Spanish ones.¹¹¹ A Persian-language scroll on Isfahan's caravanserais (composed in the second half of the seventeenth century) conveys a similar sense of the staggering ethnic and confessional diversity of the merchants who traded in the nearby commercial spaces: Jews of Shiraz, Armenians of Aleppo, Hindu Indians, Sunni Arabs, and Ottomans (*Rūmīyān*), as well as Samarqandi merchants. To this list of Asian tradesmen, one could also add the agents of the Dutch and English East India Companies who were stationed in their respective compounds in the northeast of the Qaysariyya Market, just a short walk north of the coffeehouses.¹¹² Armenians in particular were very much integrated into the commercial fabric of Isfahan. At the time of Della Valle's visit, there were ten shops in the Qaysariyya run by the Armenians of Julfa, as well as a shop belonging to a Venetian.¹¹³ To be sure, all these merchants would have been able to spare a few coins to puff some to-

bacco or savor a few sips of coffee, engaging in pastimes that had become pervasive around the globe.¹¹⁴

A broader knowledge of the configuration of the coffeehouses and their relationship with the open space of the plaza allows for a new interpretation of the entire Maydan. The addition of a second ring of shops looking onto the plaza fundamentally transformed the relationship between the surrounding built mass and the open-air space of the plaza. “The initial project,” wrote Galdieri, “did not foresee a row of privileged shops open towards the square.”¹¹⁵ With this addition, rather than a unified monolithic space, the Maydan was now experienced as a continuous promenade, delineated by shops on one side and the water canal and a row of trees on the other. It was a space whose defining boundaries were formed, almost literally, by the flow of consumer goods and substances. The coffeehouses constituted an integral component of this emergent form of the public space. Indeed, they may have been the very motive for reshaping the space of the Maydan by adding a row of shops with a “street front.”

THE COFFEEHOUSES OF ISFAHAN

In addition to the Maydan and the Chaharbagh, Takhtgah (literally the “throne-place”) was another locale of Safavid Isfahan famed for its coffeehouses. Adjoining the shrine of Harun-i Vilayat (the city’s most popular site of pilgrimage), Takhtgah was located on the south side of the Maydan-i Harun-i Vilayat or Old Maydan (*maydān-i kuhna*), the pre-Safavid square of Isfahan (see fig. 1). One of the earliest references to Takhtgah can be found in a biographical dictionary dating from the early years of the reign of ‘Abbas, in which the author refers to “Takhtgah-i Harun-i Vilayat located at the end of the *maydān*,” and relates an anecdote about two poets “who were exploring the *maydān* atop Takhtgah.”¹¹⁶ In his biographical compendium, Maliha refers to a poet whom he met in “the coffeehouse of Takhtgah-i Sifahan”; with his back to the steel screen of Harun-i Vilayat’s tomb, he would sit on a porch (*suffa*) that lay opposite the ‘Ali Mosque (*masjid-i ‘Alī*). Maliha further remarks that in Isfahan there is no place finer than Takhtgah, where “one hundred coffeehouses are located side-by-

side.”¹¹⁷ Maliha’s description is echoed by Chardin, who referred to Takhtgah as one of “the famous places of the city,” with numerous *cabarets* of coffee and *kūknār* (a beverage made from the opium poppy). In Takhtgah, Chardin noted, one could always find large crowds of people gathering to drink, converse, or visit the shrine.¹¹⁸

Maliha’s reference to two still-extant spots—the porch overlooking the tomb chamber of Harun-i Vilayat and the portal of the ‘Ali Mosque—leaves little doubt that the elongated space delineated by the main façade of the mosque and the east façade of the shrine complex was known as Takhtgah in Safavid times and that it featured drinking houses in the seventeenth century, if not earlier.¹¹⁹ Indeed, the symmetrical configuration of the blind arched panels on the façades of the two structures suggests that they were laid out to form an articulated space, with the shrine porch and the mosque portal standing at the center (fig. 18). Old photographs, and a view drawn by the French painter Eugène Flandin in 1840, indicate that the arched panels featured doorways leading to now-altered covered spaces (fig. 19). Hovering above the complex was the still-extant 50-meter-high minaret of the ‘Ali Mosque, the tallest structure of old Isfahan. Despite massive transformations, one can still imagine Takhtgah, with its tile mosaic ornaments and lined with drinking houses.

Since the two structures defining the area were built during the reign of Shah Isma‘il (r. 1501–24), it is likely that the construction of Takhtgah dates from the same period and that wine or other drinks were served there before the introduction of coffee and tobacco.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, compared to the coffeehouses of “new Isfahan,” it appears that the establishments at Takhtgah were of a relatively different character. The sources refer to a widespread use of opium in this locale. In fact, as Chardin relates, the houses bordering the Old Maydan were known primarily as opium dens (*kūknārkhāna*) rather than coffeehouses.¹²¹ Located adjacent to the shrine of Isfahan’s “patron saint,” venerated by all the city’s sects and minorities (including the Jews and Christians), these establishments were probably frequented by a broader spectrum of the populace, especially the residents of the old city. Moreover, if the Old Maydan of Isfahan was indeed the model for the new plaza that Shah ‘Abbas constructed, then it is likely that Takhtgah

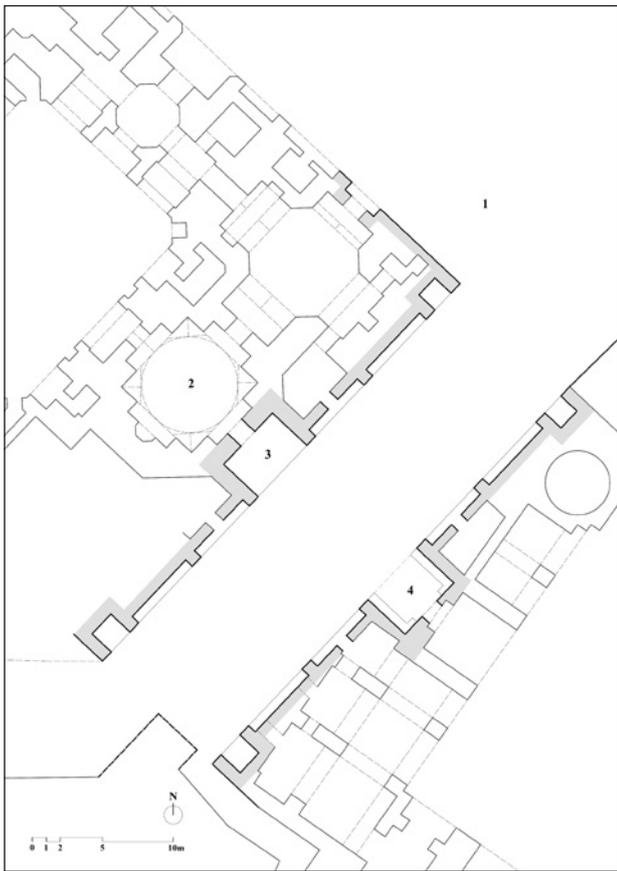


Fig. 18. Restored plan of Takhtgah: 1) Maydan-i Harun-i Vilayat (Old Maydan); 2) tomb chamber of Harun Vilayat; 3) porch (*şuffa*) overlooking the tomb chamber; 4) entrance portal of the 'Ali Mosque. (Plan: Farshid Emami)

was the inspiration for building a row of coffeehouses on the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan.

Except for Takhtgah, which lay at the heart of the old city, other coffeehouses of seventeenth-century Isfahan were located in new Safavid developments. Maliha refers to one near the gate of Chaharbagh-i Sa'adatabad, a tree-lined avenue (*khīyābān*) on the eastern border of the now-vanished Sa'adatabad Garden, laid out under Shah 'Abbas II (r. 1642–66) (see fig. 1). This coffeehouse might have been one of the two structures that flanked the southern gate of the avenue, as depicted in the plan drawn by Beaudouin in 1932.¹²² Similar coffeehouses were located in other suburban areas. In his compendium, Maliha refers at least three times to a coffeehouse



Fig. 19. Eugène Flandin, drawing showing an impressionistic view of Takhtgah, ca. 1840. (After Eugène Flandin, *Voyage en Perse de MM. Eugène Flandin et Pascal Coste, Perse moderne* [Paris, ca. 1850], pl. LXIII)

outside the Jubarah Gate, which was located north of the walled city.¹²³

Coffee was also available on the Hasanabad (now Khavaju) Bridge, which was completed in 1659 (fig. 20). Visiting Isfahan in the early eighteenth century, de Bruyn saw many Isfahanis who, in “an infinite number of both sexes,” flocked to the bridge in the evening, smoking and drinking coffee.¹²⁴ De Bruyn’s observation illustrates how social interactions on the bridge were enlivened by coffee and tobacco. Coffee was either prepared in one of the closed rooms on the lower level of the bridge, or perhaps sold by wandering vendors. Equally significant is de Bruyn’s reference to the presence of both sexes, which belies the notion of strict segregation by



Fig. 20. Hasanabad (Khvaju) Bridge. (Photo: Farshid Emami)

gender in later Safavid times, suggesting that as late as the early eighteenth century, and despite the measures taken under later Safavid monarchs, social pastimes such as drinking coffee, smoking tobacco, and strolling in public spaces were enjoyed by both male and female urbanites.¹²⁵

From the early seventeenth century onward, the coffeehouse also became an integral component of commercial and charitable complexes. Chardin alludes to a coffeehouse in the district of Hasanabad, which the secretary of the provinces (*munshī al-mamālik*) Mirza Razi had built, along with a bazaar, caravanserai, mosque, and bathhouse.¹²⁶ Similarly, in a complex developed by the vizier Saru Taqi, there appears to have been a coffeehouse alongside the market. Its form, which closely resembles those on the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan, hints

at its original function.¹²⁷ According to an endowment deed dating from the early 1700s, there was a coffeehouse, along with a bakery and candle-making shop (*shammā'ī*), “behind the Chihil Sutun.” These were likely located along the public pathway running on the northern and western borders of the Chihil Sutun Garden and connecting the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan to the Chaharbagh.¹²⁸ The coffee trade also left its mark on urban topography. Judging from the aforementioned British Library scroll, coffee was one of the major commodities imported to Isfahan’s markets. A 1924 map of Isfahan indicates that there was an entrance known as the Coffee Gate (*darvāza-yi qahva*) on the eastern border of the city. Moreover, a market branching off from the main bazaar was known as the coffee bazaar (*bāzār-i qahva*), which led to a coffee market (*tīmcha-yi qahva*),



Fig. 21. Views of the structure in the rear area of the Lunban Mosque in Isfahan, probably the coffeehouse built by the poet Nasrabadi in the 1670s. (Photos: Farshid Emami)

where this commodity was probably traded and stored.¹²⁹ Perhaps coffee beans were also roasted and ground here, to be distributed in Isfahan's coffeehouses. According to Kaempfer, one could see "all over Persia and in the bazaars and in the roads day laborers" engaged in the roasting and grinding of coffee beans.¹³⁰

Another famed coffeehouse of Isfahan, located in the vicinity of the Lunban Mosque, was built by the poet Nasrabadi, who in his autobiography tells us that it was after the passing of his dear friends that he decided to abandon the coffeehouse he used to frequent and seek seclusion in the Lunban Mosque.¹³¹ Located to the west of 'Abbasabad, the Lunban area was closer to the poet's ancestral home in the southwestern outskirts of Isfahan (fig. 1). Maliha, who met Nasrabadi in 1679, reports that the latter walked from his home to the coffeehouse everyday.¹³²

Nasrabadi's coffeehouse is probably the modest structure that is still standing in the rear area of the mosque (fig. 21). Although the building is undated, it is aligned with the seventeenth-century additions to the complex and its brick decoration is consistent with that

of the mosque, suggesting that the coffeehouse was built as part of the same building campaign. Inscribed in a tile panel on a portal of the mosque is a poem by Nasrabadi himself, indicating that the renovation of the mosque was completed in 1669; it was around the same year that the poet, according to his autobiography, decided to build a coffeehouse and seclude himself in the Lunban area.¹³³ A study of old plans and photographs shows that the coffeehouse originally faced a verdant rectangular courtyard on the southeastern side of the mosque. The building's tripartite layout is reminiscent of the coffeehouses on the Chaharbagh. Despite its dilapidated state, one can imagine the view of old plane trees framed in the arched iwan of the coffeehouse.

PROVINCIAL AND SUBURBAN COFFEEHOUSES

Not long after they became established in Isfahan, coffeehouses began to proliferate in provincial cities. Testifying to their spread, Chardin pronounced coffeehouses "the most beautiful places in the cities" of Safavid Iran.

In Tabriz, he saw several public houses for drinking coffee and smoking tobacco (cabarets á Cahvé et Tabac).¹³⁴ The author of a local history of Yazd completed in the third quarter of the seventeenth century mentions several coffeehouses in the city, and refers to tarrying in the coffeehouse as “the habit of the time” (*‘ādat-i ahl-i zamāna*).¹³⁵ Maliha, who travelled city by city from Samarqand to Isfahan around 1680, also visited several provincial coffeehouses. Indeed, so central were coffeehouses to his itinerary that McChesney suggests Maliha actually traveled “by way of the coffeehouses of those cities.”¹³⁶ As in Isfahan, it was in the coffeehouses that he would encounter the literati.¹³⁷

Little is known about the layout of the coffeehouses in provincial cities, but the sources suggest that, as in Isfahan, they were also situated in major urban spaces. In Kashan, the Agha Qiyasa Coffeehouse was located on the Maydan-i Sangin, the main public square of the city, originally developed in the mid-fifteenth century.¹³⁸ In Yazd, there were coffeehouses in the Maydan-i Khvaja and the Maydan-i Vaqt-i Sa‘at; even the cistern (*chāhkhāna*) of the famous Friday Mosque of the city had been turned into a coffeehouse.¹³⁹ A review of the plan of Yazd reveals the degree to which the addition of coffeehouses had transformed the meaning and function of the city’s main public spaces, such as the Friday Mosque’s courtyard and the *maydāns*. In Mashhad, there was one coffeehouse near the shrine of Imam Riza; according to Maliha, it was located “opposite the steel screen (*shabakah*) of the imam’s tomb.”¹⁴⁰ This coffeehouse was probably built on the urban spaces of Mashhad developed around the shrine under ‘Abbas I. As in the capital, these large-scale projects were not merely representations of imperial order but also conduits through which new social habits were disseminated across Safavid domains.¹⁴¹

By the mid-seventeenth century, the coffeehouse had become an integral component of caravanserais, too. According to Maliha, coffee was served in a caravanserai outside a gate of the city of Sabzavar in Khurasan.¹⁴² Traveling from the Gulf shore to Isfahan, Fryer stayed in a caravanserai near the city of Ashkdez, where he took up residence “in a convenient room, formerly designed for a Coffee-House, having a Tank of Water in the middle, with broad Seats around, either to Lie or Sit on.”¹⁴³

A similar sense can be gleaned from Kaempfer’s travel journal, which refers to at least four coffeehouses along the route from Isfahan to Bandar Abbas on the shore of the Persian Gulf.¹⁴⁴

A Safavid coffeehouse is preserved in the Mahyar Caravanserai, located some fifty kilometers south of Isfahan (fig. 22). According to Fryer, coffee was served here in the Safavid period.¹⁴⁵ With a double string of shops and a five-sided recess at the entrance, the design of the Mahyar Caravanserai is unusual, though it closely resembles the northern side of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan (fig. 23). Here, merchants and travelers heading north towards Isfahan were presented with an overture of the tastes and sights of the capital. Situated at the end of a row of shops, the caravanserai’s café is accessible both from the covered lane in the rear and directly from outside. The coffeehouse has a tripartite layout, with a central hall flanked by two alcoves. Also noteworthy is the pairing of the coffeehouse with a bakery; together they would have provided an apt mix of light meals and drinks to refresh weary travelers.¹⁴⁶ As the example of the Mahyar Caravanserai shows, the coffeehouse perhaps played an integral role in shaping a new conception of caravanserais, too; no longer a castle-like impregnable structure, the roadside inn had also become more integrated into the surrounding landscape.

THE MILLIEU OF ISFAHAN’S COFFEEHOUSES: VISUAL AND LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS

While the proliferation of coffeehouses in provincial cities and commercial complexes testifies to the rapid dissemination of coffee in Safavid Iran, nowhere was the institution as intertwined with Safavid society and culture as in the cosmopolitan capital. The coffeehouses of Isfahan provided venues for rendezvous and hosted literary gatherings—which at times involved heated debates.¹⁴⁷ Several poets and artists spent their entire days in coffeehouses, and some practiced their crafts there too: Mulla Ghururi, who earned a living through drawing marginal rulings in manuscripts (*jadval-kashī*), for instance, “resided in the coffeehouse” (*dar qahvakhāna sākin būd*).¹⁴⁸ Coffeehouses were not only the main sites of literary circles in Safavid realms but also acted as hubs

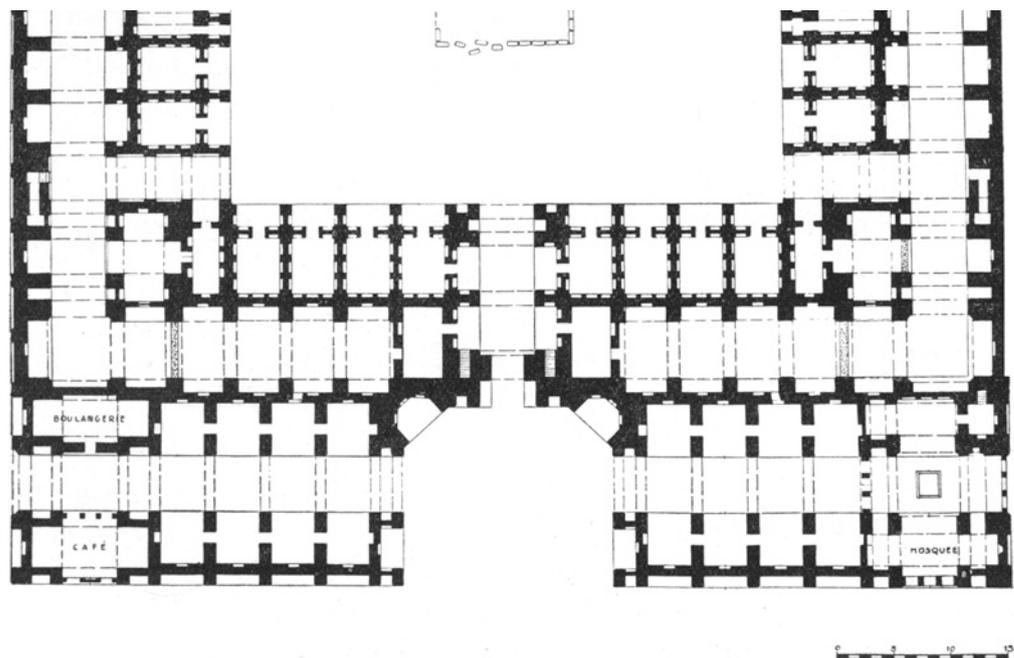


Fig. 22. Plan of the Mahyar Caravanserai, with the coffeehouse in the southwest corner. (After Maxime Siroux, *Caravansérails d'Iran et petites constructions routières* [Cairo, 1949], 59)



Fig. 23. View of the main façade of the Mahyar Caravanserai in 1937. Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution. (Photo: Myron Bement Smith)

in a broader network of cultural exchange in the Persianate world. To meet with the city's preeminent men of letters, a learned Samarqandi visitor such as Maliha did not require an invitation to a courtly assembly or a literary salon (*majlis*) at a private mansion—he need only step into a coffeehouse.¹⁴⁹ In a similar vein, it was in Isfahan's coffeehouses that artworks began to be sold on an open market to a broader range of clients: to purchase a single-page painting of Sadiqi Beg, an Indian merchant would only have to look for the artist himself in the coffeehouse.¹⁵⁰ The coffeehouse was thus central to the formation of interconnected regional and trans-regional publics and audiences, whose patronage and engagement had a lasting impact on the formats and contents of both literary and artistic creations. The integration of coffeehouses into orderly urban spaces, in Isfahan and elsewhere, would no doubt have accentuated their public function.

The habit of drinking coffee altered the rhythms of everyday life in and around the urban spaces of Isfahan. In his aforementioned treatise, Qazi b. Kashif al-Din recommended a few cups in the morning, and two to three cups after a meal.¹⁵¹ The popularization of coffee drinking likely increased the consumption of certain other substances, too. To achieve humoral balance according to the prevalent Galenic precepts, coffee was often consumed with a wide range of spices, including cloves (*qarranful*), nutmeg (*jauz*), and ginger (*zanjabil*).¹⁵² Eating habits and the order of meals were also affected by coffee: by the end of the seventeenth century a new type of meal that was taken in the morning had become known as *taht al-qahva* (literally, “before coffee”).¹⁵³ Many merchants and artisans working in the markets of Isfahan probably started their days in coffeehouses, with coffee and something sweet, in a manner that was becoming more and more cosmopolitan.

In coffeehouses patrons were entertained by storytellers (sing. *qişşakhvān*). Performed around the clock in covered illuminated structures, storytelling was now unaffected by cycles of day and night or the vicissitudes of the climate, as it had been in medieval times.¹⁵⁴ In addition to Firdawsi's *Shāhnāma* (Book of Kings), which had its own professional narrators (sing. *Shāhnāma-khvān*), there were popular romances such as the *Hamzanāma* (Story of Hamza) and the *Abū-Muslimnāma*

(Story of Abu-Muslim), as well as a growing number of newly forged narratives, which cast the deeds of the early Safavid kings as quasi-mythical heroic adventures. Yet storytelling was not merely a static oral recitation but was also accompanied by music and theatrical enactments. Nasrabadi tells us about a certain Sabuhi, who was not only good at reciting the story of Hamza and the *Shāhnāma* but was also unparalleled in adorning the scene (*majlis-ārāʿī*) and a master in music.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, Mulla Mu'min, who recited the *Shāhnāma* in coffeehouses, was known for his peculiar demeanor and appearance: “he would wear a gown with printed designs (*qabā-yi bāsma*), which he embroidered in various colors, while placing the scroll [that he used for reciting] in his headgear.”¹⁵⁶ In all likelihood, storytellers who used illustrated figural screens (sing. *şūratkhvān*) were also active in coffeehouses.¹⁵⁷ The centrally planned architecture of the coffeehouses, with their surrounding raised platforms, provided an apt setting for such performances. The coffeehouses of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan, in particular, would have allowed multiple storytellers to perform simultaneously.

Gradually, coffee and the coffeehouse permeated the capital's literary parlance, and verses with coffee-related imagery began to appear. The new poetic imagery was largely derived from wine culture. The cultural trope of praising the young male *sāqī* (cup-bearer) was carried on into the coffeehouse, as indicated by the multiplicity of references to the fetching servers of Isfahan's coffeehouses. Shams, who ran the drinking house on the Chaharbagh, hired good-looking youths as servers, and also composed new songs for each of them.¹⁵⁸ Nasrabadi relates several anecdotes about poets infatuated with the youthful servers of Isfahan's coffeehouses. In the homoerotic milieu of the coffeehouse, the *sāqī*—the conventional beloved of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish poetry—had found a new counterpart in the *qahvachī* (coffee server).¹⁵⁹

From the early seventeenth century onwards, a similar dynamism between wine and coffee imagery emerges in Safavid visual culture. One of the earliest examples—and indeed one of the first visual representations of coffee in Iran—is a 1630 work by the famed painter Riza 'Abbasi (d. ca. 1635). Typical of Riza's later style, it depicts a youth kneeling on a golden landscaped



Fig. 24. Riza 'Abbasi, "Kneeling youth offering coffee." Tehran, Gulistan Palace Library, Ms. 1668 (Muraqqa'-i Gulistan or Gulshan), fol. 37. (Photo: courtesy of the Gulistan Palace Library)

background, offering a tray with three Chinese-style blue-and-white cups filled with coffee (fig. 24).¹⁶⁰ While the overall posture and facial features of the subject follow conventional renditions of youthful cup-bearers, certain unprecedented features set this painting apart: unlike wine, coffee is served on a tray (*sīnī*), and the traditional long-necked crystal flask (*ṣurāhī*), often depicted half-filled with red wine, is here replaced with a drab metal coffee pot (*qahva-jūsh* or *qarā-āftāba*).¹⁶¹ Yet perhaps the most distinctive feature of the painting lies in the rendition of the figure's hand gesture: in contrast to shallow wine cups (*pīyāla* or *qadah*), which are customarily held from below with the forefinger and thumb poised in a delicate fashion, here the porcelain coffee cup (*finjān*) is gripped from above, with all the fingers placed around the rim, a gesture clearly suggesting that the beverage was hot, as do the undulating lines of steam rising from the cups. (Indeed, sources confirm that coffee was consumed very hot.) As Sheila Canby notes, the stance of the figure, the direction of his gaze, and even the swirls of steam rising from the cups, are all suggestive of a space extending beyond the picture plane. Exuding an instantaneous aura, the painting captures the moment the server has knelt, poured coffee, and placed the pot back down, before offering a cup to a client seated on the ground, as the direction of his gaze suggests. For the person being served, the aroma of coffee mingled with the scent of the narcissus tucked in the back of the server's sash, a sensory experience further augmented by the sight of the server's shining garment. (Note also the yellow wad underneath the server's knees, which was probably laid on the ground to preserve his delicate garment.) Rather than the wine flask and shallow cup, here the coffee pot and porcelain cups point to the role of the represented figure.

Although the extent to which such portraits were drawn from life is contested, in this particular painting a sort of naturalism is definitely at work. Even if the stylized rendition of the youth's face—as manifest in his bowed brows and fair complexion, as well as the tresses on his temples (*zulf*)—points to established tropes of beauty, the hand gestures, coffee cups, tray, and metal pot capture the new realities of everyday life for the elites of Isfahan, reflecting a yearning for desire and beauty in an evolving mundane context. The painting

represents an attempt at incorporating new objects—and the bodily gestures associated with them—in a repertoire of familiar forms. Whether based on a live model or an impression, it is more likely that an urban coffeehouse of Safavid Isfahan, rather than a courtly or private assembly, was the source of inspiration for Riza's painting.¹⁶² Moreover, the idealized facial features of the servant do not necessarily mean that contemporary beholders regarded the picture as a generic depiction; like one of the much admired coffee-servers praised in poetry of the time, the image may have been seen as a likeness of an individual server.¹⁶³

In addition to these cultural tropes, the painting reflects another novel aspect of Safavid coffee culture: the utensils used for drinking coffee. Beginning in the seventeenth century, a relatively new shape of vessel—porcelain coffee cups—began to be imported and manufactured in far greater quantities, which is indicative of the rapid development of coffee drinking as a social habit.¹⁶⁴ For instance, the records of the Dutch East India Company indicate that in 1634 100,000 coffee cups were shipped to Bandar Abbas (Gomboron), the chief entrepôt of Safavid Iran on the Persian Gulf.¹⁶⁵ The elements forming the moment rendered in Riza's painting thus point to a broader web of maritime trade that emerged in the early modern period. Perhaps it was not just coffee that reached the Safavid capital from afar through a ship sailing from Mocha to Bandar Abbas; the porcelain coffee cups depicted in the painting may also have arrived in Isfahan from China by way of a Dutch vessel.

Riza's painting is thus emblematic of the unprecedented ways in which seventeenth-century Safavid visual culture engaged with aspects of urban life. In both words and images, what was largely a metaphoric topos in medieval Persianate culture was now expressed with a more pronounced degree of realism.¹⁶⁶ The emerging practice had multiple roots, to be sure, but one could argue that it was the very space of the coffeehouse that fostered an audience for such single-figure paintings, while encouraging a higher degree of social realism by contributing to the rapid expansion of material life. The youth in Riza's painting might have been seen as a depiction of a real server in one of Isfahan's coffeehouses—perhaps on one of the Chaharbagh outdoor

platforms—whose new spatial conception paralleled the transformations occurring in Safavid visual and literary culture.

THE COFFEEHOUSE AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE: EXPANSION, APPROPRIATION, AND DEMISE

European reports hint at a subversive political atmosphere in Isfahan's coffeehouses. In these establishments, wrote Chardin, "people engage in conversation, for it is there that news is communicated and where those interested in politics criticize the government in all freedom and without being fearful."¹⁶⁷ A similar narrative is found in Fryer's description: "Hither repair all those that are covetous of News, as well as Barterers of Goods; where not only Fame and common Rumour is promulged, but Poetry too, for some of that Tribe are always present to rehearse [*sic*] their Poems, and disperse their Fables to the Company."¹⁶⁸ Even more telling is a passage in Tavernier's travelogue, which is indicative of the great opportunity for free political discussion spawned by the coffeehouse, as well as the attempts of the state to control the public sphere:

All the *Persians* that have any spare time, fail not every day to resort to those places between seven and eight in the Morning, where the Owner of the Room presently brings them every one their Pipe and their Dish of Coffee. But the Great *Shah 'Abbas*, who was a man of a great understanding, finding those places were only so many Meeting-houses, where men assembled to talk and prattle of State-affairs, a thing which no way pleased him; to break the neck of those petty cabals, he ordered that a *Moullah* should be sure to be betimes at every place before the rest of the People came thither, and that he should entertain those Tobacco-whiffers, and Coffee-quaffers, sometimes with a point of the Law, sometimes with History, sometimes with Poetry. This custom is still observed: so that after this entertainment has lasted two or three hours, the *Moullah* rising up, crys to everyone in the Coffee-Room, *Come my Masters, in good time, let's all now retire every man to his business.* Straight every one retires upon the *Moullah's* words, who is liberally entertained all the while by the society.¹⁶⁹

Tavernier's evocative description of those "talk[ing] and prattl[ing] of State-affairs" as well as "petty cabals"

signals a vibrant subversive milieu, achieved through conversation. Equally remarkable were the measures taken by Shah 'Abbas, indicating that such activities were seen as a serious threat to the authority of the monarch. Shah 'Abbas's frequent visits to coffeehouses were also noted by Kotov, who wrote that "the shah himself rides out to disport himself almost everyday and goes to the *kafs*."¹⁷⁰

Obviously, the unplanned presence of the patriarch in the coffeehouse was not simply for the purpose of entertainment: it was also an instrument of control and surveillance. The imbrication of the realms of the ruling authority and the public sphere appears to have been a distinctive feature of the institution in early seventeenth-century Safavid society. During the reign of 'Abbas I, coffeehouses were instrumental in representing the shah as a highly visible ruler; they constituted one of the main, and perhaps the most significant, spaces of the city in which the monarch appeared, and interacted with, the public. As stages for representation of power, then, the coffeehouses of Isfahan played an important role in the promulgation of an image of the omnipresent Safavid king, who relied on visibility to legitimate his power.¹⁷¹ In Habermasian terminology, the coffeehouse not only was an institution of the public sphere, but also acted as a stage for "representative publicness."¹⁷²

In reality, however, this was not a consistent practice. Over the last two decades of his reign, Shah 'Abbas spent limited time in Isfahan. Nor was the omniscience of the Safavid ruler perpetuated by 'Abbas's successors, who became more aloof and removed from the urban landscape, confining court ceremonies to the spaces of the palace.¹⁷³ While royal patronage was initially significant in the formation of coffeehouses, the publics of late Safavid times altered and appropriated these spaces. As the royal presence waned, the new publics and social associations formed in Isfahan's coffeehouses, urban spaces, and public institutions were further invigorated.

Throughout the middle decades of the seventeenth century, efforts to control coffeehouses and the social atmosphere they encouraged were waged under the banner of religion rather than politics. The first recorded campaign against the "immoral deeds" common in cof-

feehouses was instigated in 1645 by Khalifa Sultan, the devout vizier of Shah ‘Abbas II.¹⁷⁴ Distancing itself from the folk Sufi ethos, a clerical Shari‘a-based version of Shi‘ism had come to dominate the Safavid state. Wandering dervishes and storytellers, who were instruments of propaganda in the formative period of the Safavid polity, were now seen as threats to the centralized bureaucratic state in the urbanized metropolitan context of Isfahan. By the mid-seventeenth century, the coffeehouse had turned into the most contested space of the capital, and was at the center of a heated dispute among clerics, the literati, and dervishes.

It has been suggested that following these actions against coffeehouses a fundamental transformation occurred in the prevalent social milieu of the institution, which began to accommodate less sensitive activities, such as games and light conversations. For Nasrabadi, settling in the coffeehouse was synonymous with distancing himself from forbidden practices and entering an erudite circle of poets. A similar sense is conveyed in the aforementioned poem by Mir Nijat, which describes the coffeehouses of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan as a gathering place of the spiritual and learned, likening its platforms to “the kingdom of Greece.”¹⁷⁵ The addition of coffeehouses to the Lunban Mosque in Isfahan and to the Friday Mosque in Yazd is also suggestive of an expansion in the social purview of the establishment, which is likewise confirmed by Kaempfer’s observation that coffeehouses were included in madrasas.¹⁷⁶ This integration of the coffeehouse into madrasas and mosques can be read as the co-opting of a predominantly secular institution by the expanding religious public sphere of the late Safavid era. Obviously, the coffeehouse could coexist with normative religious institutions in a manner that would have been inconceivable for other establishments. If in the early years of its introduction, the coffeehouse had something of the antinomian ethos of the medieval wine tavern, it was now more aligned with the pursuit of piety and erudition. Nevertheless, this was by no means a pervasive transformation: even in this later period the coffeehouse was much vilified for the “improper behaviors” that it fostered. A late Safavid source, for instance, compared coffeehouses to “schools of Satan” (*madāris-i shayṭān*).¹⁷⁷



Fig. 25. Detail of the façade of the Chaharbagh Madrasa, showing one of the two epigraphic tile panels on the elevation of the coffeehouse. (Photo: Farshid Emami)

Such castigations were coupled with royal action after the accession of Shah Sultan Husayn, who, upon assuming the throne in 1694, embarked on an extensive campaign against violations of the Shari‘a: wine, wherever it was found in Isfahan, was poured out on the ground in the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan, and the vessels used to drink it were smashed; gambling was banned and brothels were dismantled.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, the enormous royal madrasa built by Sultan Husayn must have been deliberately placed on the site of the drinking houses in the very heart of the Chaharbagh. When the coffeehouse reopened after the construction of the madrasa, it projected a very different message: physically incorporated into a religious establishment and decorated with verses from the Koran, the coffeehouse was now a beacon of piety rather than a bastion of hedonism, or so it seemed (fig. 25).

Despite these developments, it appears that until the early eighteenth century, coffeehouses continued to function as vigorously as they had in the earlier period. It was rather the fall of the Safavids in 1722 that ushered

in a rapid decline in coffee culture. Traveling in the late eighteenth century, the Frenchman Guillaume-Antoine Olivier was struck by the unattractive appearance of coffeehouses, a condition at odds with what he had read in the narratives of Chardin and Tavernier. Unlike in Turkey, coffeehouses were not popular in Iran, and indeed coffee was rarely served in them.¹⁷⁹ By the end of the nineteenth century, Safavid coffeehouses had utterly receded from the minds of Isfahan's inhabitants. Nothing is more telling in this regard than the statement of Mirza Husayn Khan, a local official who compiled a geographical study of Isfahan in 1893. Referring to the newly established coffeehouses of the city, he noted that earlier "the coffeehouse in the middle of the old Chaharbagh" was the only one functioning in Isfahan. "A few coffeehouses have been built in recent years," he further adds, but people avoid them, "yet soon they will get used to it."¹⁸⁰ The coffeehouse had returned to the city again, serving tea this time, and seen, yet again, as a novel phenomenon with a potential for political subversion.¹⁸¹

Coffee was not produced in Safavid lands. While it was initially disseminated by way of overland connections to Ottoman territories, by the mid-seventeenth century it was mainly traded through sea routes dominated by European companies. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the coffee imported to Safavid territories came not just from Yemen but also from the Dutch colonies in Java.¹⁸² The prosperity of Isfahan in the seventeenth century stemmed from a global equilibrium between overland and maritime trade networks. Coffee and tobacco were exotic commodities consumed by a privileged group of urbanites who enjoyed a culture of consumption made possible by a prosperous urban economy that relied on long-distance commerce as a major source of wealth. In the nineteenth century—when the elite quarters of Isfahan were all in ruins, when the drinking house of the Chaharbagh was the only one functioning in the city and the coffeehouses on the Maydan had been taken over by the market—it was hard to imagine the once vibrant coffeehouses that had existed in the Safavid era. When commodities ceased to flow, so too did the beat of life in Isfahan's foremost public institution.

CONCLUSION

By bringing the architectural layout and urban configuration of Safavid coffeehouses into sharper focus, this study examined the role of the coffeehouse in fashioning new forms and conceptions of the built environment in Safavid Iran. Seen in this light, the grand *maydāns* and *khīyābāns* of early modern Iran were not merely expressions of power or venues of royal leisure but also public spaces containing and shaping a wide range of novel social practices. The coffeehouses on the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan altered the perceptual character and social meaning of the city's main urban plaza. As venues for poetic circles, meetings of merchants, and political discussions—hosting daytime and nocturnal assemblies animated by new stimulants—coffeehouses were indeed central to the transformation of the Maydan into a constituent part of the public domain. In a similar vein, the drinking houses of the Chaharbagh played a key role in transforming the *khīyābān* from a suburban tree-lined road into a public space. The overall shape of the major coffeehouses of Isfahan was in turn informed by their urban positioning. Consider the coffeehouses of the Maydan, the Chaharbagh, or even Takhtgah: they were all constructed in rows or pairs along urban spaces.

The concentration of coffeehouses in the newly developed areas of Safavid Isfahan reflects the dichotomous social structure of the city in the seventeenth century. In contrast to the cities of the eastern Mediterranean, which featured a multitude of coffeehouses operating at different urban scales, the coffeehouses of Isfahan were mostly located in the quarters inhabited by the elite. In Isfahan, coffee clearly had a polarizing effect. Indeed, the sources give little indication that coffee was consumed beyond the urban coffeehouses of the new Safavid developments, a far cry from Istanbul in the same period, which reportedly contained more than six hundred coffeehouses.¹⁸³ The urban topography of Isfahan's coffeehouses therefore supports Matthee's conclusion that, in Safavid times, coffee was primarily a luxury commodity "enjoyed by the upper and middle strata of late Safavid urban society."¹⁸⁴ This dichotomy was manifested in the dual urban form of Isfahan, in the contrast between the opium dens lining the Old Maydan and the coffeehouses of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i

Jahan. Compared with its medieval counterparts, the coffeehouse was definitely a more inclusive social institution. Yet rather than obliterating class differences, the presence of a broader spectrum of society in the space of the coffeehouse gave rise to new performative expressions of social distinctions. The coffeehouses gave shape to the elites of Isfahan and, by framing their bodies and cosmopolitan social habits in public spaces, spawned new patterns of social behavior and urban leisure.

In terms of architectural layout, coffeehouses drew on a variety of older prototypes—garden pavilions, bathhouses, and probably wine taverns. Yet despite this typological diversity, it appears that a centrally planned space with surrounding raised platforms was the most common scheme. Resembling theaters to European visitors, this layout was not only more suitable for watching performances and listening to storytellers but also provided an intimate space for socializing. The social practices that were scattered in the spaces of the medieval city had now found a permanent space, which heightened their intensity and influence.

Indeed, this performative aspect, shaped by architecture, was central to the politically and culturally subversive roles that the coffeehouse came to play. It was in these spaces of performance that the state and different societal groups confronted each other: the mullah installed by Shah 'Abbas in Isfahan's coffeehouses was an instrument of state propaganda, intended to maintain a degree of social order and curb the social leverage of wandering dervishes. It was not merely an action against unaccepted religious practices instigated by the fledgling Shi'i orthodoxy of later Safavid times but also a measure against social mobilization and anti-state agitation. The theatrical physical character of the coffeehouse was thus central to its dual function as the locus of both political propaganda and social dissent. The coffeehouse was not simply a setting for the enactment of state power but also a venue for performing against its authority.

The earliest Safavid coffeehouses were state-sponsored public institutions, erected as integral components of the extensive building programs of the age of Shah 'Abbas I. In that sense, their construction shares an affinity with an established practice in medieval Muslim cultures, whereby princes would build hospices, soup kitchens, or similar charitable institutions, not

merely as a gesture of piety but also to create spaces that would mediate between the ruling elite and subjects. When the chronicler Junabadi wrote that taverns and coffeehouses were prepared for "wine-drinking companions and poor opium-consuming people," he cast the creation of coffeehouses in a similar fashion: as a benevolent royal action for needy subjects. But as this study has attempted to show, there was much more to Safavid coffeehouses than serving the indigent. Indeed, rather than solidifying the social fabric, the coffeehouse was a source of tension. The distinctive nature of the coffeehouse as an urban institution affected the medieval social dynamic in various ways. The spatial structure of Safavid Isfahan encapsulated this altered social configuration.

All in all, Safavid coffeehouses should be explained as a transformative social phenomenon that emerged in the context of heightened interactions in the early modern world. As a novel public institution, the coffeehouse not only shaped and contained new forms of sociability but also affected established social practices and the urban spaces in which they were taking place. Embedded in a cosmopolitan metropolis, the coffeehouses of Safavid Isfahan contributed to the expansion of the public domain and engendered new conceptions of urbanity, civic space, and public architecture. Seen in this light, the impact of coffee—and the physical setting and social practices associated with it—on seventeenth-century Safavid urban society is fairly comparable to other contexts in the early modern world: the coffeehouse was a social institution flourishing in a realm of commodity exchange—the primary locus of an emerging public sphere.

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NOTES

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rial inputs and suggestions. Finally, I am grateful to my friends Hessam Khorasani Zadeh and Mira Schwerda, who assisted me with translations from Italian and German, respectively.

1. Accounts of the royal reception can be found in the travel narratives of the Spanish ambassador Don García de Silva y Figueroa (d. 1624) and the Roman aristocrat and traveler Pietro della Valle (d. 1652). For Della Valle's narrative in original Italian, see Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle, il Pellegrino*, ed. G. Gancia, 2 vols. (Brighton, Eng., 1843), 2:22–28. For an account of the reception based on Della Valle's diaries, see Mahvash Alemi, "I 'teatri' di Shah 'Abbas nella Persia del XVII secolo dai disegni inediti del diario di Pietro della Valle," in *Il mondo islamico: Immagini e ricerche* (Milan, 1988), 19–25. For Silva y Figueroa's narrative in the original Spanish, see García de Silva y Figueroa, *Comentarios de la embaxada al rey Xa Abbas de Persia (1614–1624)*, ed. Rui Manuel Loureiro, Ana Cristina Costa Gomes, and Vasco Resende, 4 vols. (Lisbon, 2011), 2:535–36. Also see García de Silva y Figueroa, *L'ambassade en Perse* (Paris, 1667), 307. A study of the royal audience based on these sources was first provided in Naşr Allāh Falsafi, *Zindagānī-yi Shāh 'Abbās-i avval*, 5 vols. in 3 tomes (Tehran, 1364 [1985]), 2:703–8.
2. Thomas Herbert, *Travels in Persia, 1627–1629*, ed. William Foster (New York, 1929), 45, 261. Herbert accompanied the English ambassador Sir Dodmore Cotton.
3. For the most comprehensive available study of the early history and social aspects of coffee and coffeehouses, see Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle, 1988). See p. 74 for the use of coffee in Sufi rituals. Also see C. Van Arendonk and K. N. Chaudhuri, *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition* (henceforth *EI2*) (Leiden, 1954–2002), s.v. "Kahwa"; Michel Tuchscherer, ed., *Le commerce du café avant l'ère des plantations coloniales: Espaces, réseaux, sociétés (XVe–XIXe siècle)* (Cairo, 2001); Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper, ed., *Culinary Cultures of the Middle East* (London, 1994). For a comparative study of the spread and reception of coffee and other stimulants in the early modern period, see Rudi Matthee, "Exotic Substances: The Introduction and Global Spread of Tobacco, Coffee, Cocoa, Tea, and Distilled Liquor, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," in *Drugs and Narcotics in History*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge, 1995), 24–51.
4. Della Valle, *Viaggi*, 1:75.
5. Relating an anecdote that coffee was invented and brewed by Gabriel "to restore Mahomet's decayed moisture," Herbert concluded that coffee is certainly "more ancient than Mahomet." See Herbert, *Travels in Persia*, 261.
6. For an example of such views, see Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years* (New York, 1995), which begins with a cliché-ridden description of a typical "Middle Eastern café."
7. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass., 1989). For a study of Ottoman coffeehouses using the Habermasian model, see Selma Akyazıcı Özkoçak, "Coffeehouses: Rethinking the Public and Private in Early Modern Istanbul," *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 6 (September 2007): 965–86. For an alternative interpretation, see Alan Mikhail, "The Heart's Desire: Gender, Urban Space, and the Ottoman Coffee House," in *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Dana Sajdi (London, 2007), 133–70. Focusing on neighborhood coffeehouses, Mikhail questions the notion of a strict dichotomy between public and private in Habermas's framework. Drawing on Foucault's concept of *heterotopias*, he posits Ottoman coffeehouses as spaces of multiple functions.
8. Habermas's model has been criticized for its teleological premises, its elite-centered and exclusive notions, and its idealization of rationalist discourse as the primary function of a public sphere. For more recent reflections and criticisms, see Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts, eds., *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Oxford, 2004); Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).
9. See, for instance, Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, and Nehemia Levtzion, eds., *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* (Albany, 2002). Following the lead of Marshall Hodgson, the authors of this volume argue that institutions such as the waqf and madrasa, as well as Sufi orders, constituted a religious public sphere in pre-modern Islamic societies. Also see Babak Rahimi, *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran: Studies on Safavid Muharram Rituals, 1590–1641 CE* (Leiden, 2012), which analyzes the formation of a public sphere in Safavid Iran, with a focus on the Muharram ritual.
10. This point is expounded in Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Concluding Remarks: Public Sphere, Civil Society, and Political Dynamics in Islamic Societies," in Hoexter, Eisenstadt, and Levtzion, *Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, 139–161.
11. On the socio-political reforms and transformations of the Safavid household under 'Abbas I, see Sussan Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran* (London, 2004).
12. For a comparative analysis of Safavid Isfahan as a reflection of the informal rule of 'Abbas I, see Gülrü Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 303–42.
13. Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces: Statecraft, Shi'ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh, 2008), 7.
14. For the most comprehensive study of coffee and other substances in Safavid Iran, see Rudi Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500–1900* (Princeton, N.J., 2005) (henceforth cited as Matthee, *Pursuit*). Also see Aladin Goushegir, "Le café et les cafés en Iran, des Safavides à l'époque actuelle," in *Cafés d'Orient revisités*, ed. Hélène Desmet-Grégoire and François Georjeon (Paris, 1997), 141–76. The present study is indebted to the thorough examination of primary sources and inter-

- pretations offered by Matthee and Goushegir. In addition to engaging with neglected visual and physical evidence, I have revisited primary textual sources, many of which are now available in print. A greater knowledge of the architecture and urban topography of Isfahan's coffeehouses allows us to make better sense of otherwise generic or vague textual descriptions. For other studies of coffee and coffeehouses in Iran, see 'Alī Āl-e Dāwūd, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (London, 1982–), s.v.v. "Coffee" and "Coffeehouses"; Willem Floor, *The Economy of Safavid Persia* (Wiesbaden, 2000), 140–43; Naṣr Allāh Falsafi, "Tārīkh-i qahva va qahvakhāna," in *Chand maqāla-yi tārikhī va adabī* (Tehran, 1342 [1963]), 271–83. Safavid coffeehouses are also discussed in Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), 439–73. For a general study of Iranian coffeehouses, see Ali Bulookbashi, *Qahvakhānahā-yi Irān* (Tehran, 1375 [1996]).
15. See Matthee, *Pursuit*, 145–59.
 16. 'Imād al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Mas'ūd Shīrāzī, *Risāla-yi afyūniyya*, ed. Rasūl Chūpānī, Umīd Šādiqpur, and Vajīha Panāhī (Tehran, 1388 [2009]), 165–69. At the end of his treatise, 'Imad al-Din Shirazi (b. ca. 1515) relates that he used coffee as a cure for his addiction to opium, which suggests that coffee was available to him at the time. Yet since the treatise is undated and the date of the author's death is not known, we do not have a precise date for this early reference to coffee. 'Imad al-Din Shirazi was the chief physician at the court of Shah Tahmasb (r. 1525–76), during the latter part of his reign. As one of his last works, the treatise on opium probably dates from the 1560s or 1570s. For a biography, see Cyril Elgood, *Safavid Medical Practice, or, The Practice of Medicine, Surgery and Gynaecology in Persia between 1500 A.D. and 1750 A.D.* (London, 1970), 21–25. In an earlier version (Aladin Goushegir, "Le café en Iran des Safavide et des Qājār [sic] à l'époque actuelle," in *Contributions au thème du et des cafés dans les sociétés du Proche-Orient*, ed. Hélène Desmet-Grégoire [Aix-en-Provence, 1991], 53–100, at 55) of his 1997 article, Goushegir proposed the date 1537 for this early reference to coffee, and Āl-e Dāwūd (in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Coffee") later repeated Goushegir's suggestion; this date, however, is merely conjectural and untenable.
 17. Sālik al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥamavī Yazdī, [*Risāla fi qahva va chāy va fādzahr va bikh-i chīnī*]: Leipzig Universitätsbibliothek, B. or. 205-06: fols. 68b–77b, at 69a–b. Available online at http://www.islamic-manuscripts.net/receive/IslamHSBook_islamhs_00014268 (last accessed February 2016).
 18. *Ibid.*, fol. 70a.
 19. *Ibid.*
 20. Sādiqī Bēg Afshār, "Ḥazzīyyāt," ed. Īraj Afshār, *Āyna-yi Mīrās* 1, no. 4 (Winter 1382 [2004]): 145–84, at 163, 174–175.
 21. Fazlī Bēg Khūzānī Iṣfahānī, *A Chronicle of the Reign of Shah 'Abbas*, ed. Kioumars Ghereghlou, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2015), 1:226–27. The event is reported in the account of the year 1596 (1005). As noted in Matthee, *Pursuit*, 148, this is the earliest reference to a coffeehouse in a Safavid chronicle.
 22. Pedro Teixeira, *The Travels of Pedro Teixeira*, trans. William F. Sinclair (London, 1902), 61–63.
 23. It has been suggested that the coffeehouse was first established in Qazvin, the Safavid capital under Shah Tahmasb, yet we have no evidence to support this claim. Matthee's thorough examination of the primary sources has shown that there is no mention of coffee in local or European sources before the 1590s. See Matthee, *Pursuit*, 146–47.
 24. Mīrzā Bēg Junābādī, *Rawzat al-ṣafavīyya*, ed. Ghulām-Rizā Ṭabāṭabā'ī Majd (Tehran, 1378 [1999]), 761. For the English translation, see Robert D. McChesney, "Four Sources on Shah 'Abbas's Buildings of Isfahan," *Muqarnas* 5 (1988): 103–34, at 114.
 25. Mullā Jalāl al-Dīn Munajjim Yazdī, *Tārīkh-i 'Abbāsī, yā, Rūznāma-yi Mullā Jalāl*, ed. Sayf Allāh Vaḥīdnīyā (Tehran, 1366 [1987]), 237.
 26. The term *khīyābān* originally designated pathways in gardens. It was probably in the fifteenth century, in Timurid Khurasan and Central Asia, that *khīyābān* came to designate monumental tree-lined promenades outside gardens as well. For a study of the etymology of the term and the earliest references to *khīyābāns*, see Jalal Matini, "Khīyābān," *Irān-nāma* 1, no. 1 (1361 [1982]): 57–99; and Muḥammad Dābīrsīyāqī, "Khīyābān," *Khurāsān-pazhūhī* 3, no. 1 (1379 [1990]): 199–208. On the *khīyābāns* of Herat, see Terry Allen, *Timurid Herat* (Wiesbaden, 1983).
 27. Khūzānī Iṣfahānī, *Chronicle of the Reign of Shah 'Abbas*, 466. Khuzani Isfahani reports the construction of the bridge in his account of the year 1607 (1016), adding that the bridge was finished in five years. Judging from Munajjim Yazdī's report, the coffeehouse and Sufi hostels of the north Chaharbagh were completed in 1602.
 28. For the conception of the Chaharbagh as an elongated garden, see Mahvash Alemi, "The Royal Gardens of the Safavid Period: Types and Models," in *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, ed. Attilio Petruccioli (New York, 1997): 72–96, at 76; Mahvash Alemi, "Chahar Bagh," *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* 1 (1986): 38–45.
 29. For other studies of the Chaharbagh and the Safavid gardens of Isfahan, see Mahvash Alemi, "Princely Safavid Gardens: Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy," in *Middle East Garden Traditions: Unity and Diversity; Questions, Methods and Resources in a Multicultural Perspective*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington, D.C., 2007), 113–37; Mahvash Alemi, "Safavid Royal Gardens and Their Urban Relationships," in *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, vol. 18, *Islamic Period: From the End of the Sasanian Empire to the Present*, ed. Abbas Daneshvari (Costa Mesa, Calif., 2005), 1–24; Mahvash Alemi, "Urban Spaces as the Scene for the Ceremonies and Pastimes of the Safavid Court," *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* 1–2 (1991): 98–107; Stephen Blake, *Half the World:*

- The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan, 1590–1722* (Costa Mesa, Calif., 1999), 91–97. Also see Zahra Ahari, “Khiyābān-i Chāhārbāgh-i Iṣfahān, mafhūmī naw az faẓā-yi shahrī,” *Gulistān-i Hunar* 5 (1385 [2006]): 48–59, which argues that the Chaharbagh of Isfahan presents a new conception of urban space. A useful catalogue of Safavid gardens and descriptions of the Chaharbagh can be found in Seyed Mohammad Ali Emrani, “The Role of Gardens and Tree-lined Streets in the Urban Development of Safavid Isfahan (1590–1722): A Comparative Approach (Paris and Versailles in the 17th Century)” (PhD diss., Technische Universität, Munich, 2012).
30. Known as the Madar-i Shah Madrasa or Sultani Madrasa, the extant complex of Sultan Husayn consisted of a madrasa-cum-mosque, a caravanserai, and a bazaar. For a history of the monument and its inscriptions, see Luṭf Allāh Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āsār-i tārikhī-yi Iṣfahān* (Isfahan, 1344 [1965]), 685–722. For an architectural survey and description of the complex, see Maxime Siroux, *Anciennes voies et monuments routiers de la région d’Ispahān* (Cairo, 1971), 284–89.
 31. The plan appeared in Pascal Coste, *Monuments modernes de la Perse, mesurés, dessinés et décrits par Pascal Coste* (Paris, 1867). It was based on a survey, made by Coste in Isfahan in May 1840, which is now preserved in Marseille, Bibliothèque de l’Alcazar (formerly Bibliothèque municipale), Ms. 1132, fol. 20. Pascal Coste (1787–1879) and the painter Eugène Flandin were sent by the Académie des Beaux-Arts on an artistic expedition that accompanied a diplomatic mission to the court of the Qajar ruler Muhammad Shah (r. 1834–48). For an account of the journey, see Eugène Flandin, *Voyage en Perse de MM. Eugène Flandin et Pascal Coste* (Paris, 1850).
 32. The authenticity of Coste’s rendition is confirmed by several nineteenth-century photographs depicting the ruins of the Chaharbagh. See, for instance, Ernst Höltzer, *Persien vor 113 Jahren* (Tehran, 1975), 100, 105; Ernst Höltzer, *Hizār jilvah-yi zindagī: Taṣvīrhā-yi Irnist Hūlstir az ‘ahd-i Nāširī* (Tehran, 1382 [2003]), 483, 485.
 33. ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Sipantā, *Tārikhcha-yi awqāf-i Iṣfahān* (Isfahan, 1346 [1967]), 151. The rhetorical emphasis on the purchase of the coffeehouse seen here is typical of endowment deeds, which generally show a marked concern for the lawfulness of the endowed properties.
 34. The term *kaf* appears to be short for “coffee” in Kaempfer’s manuscripts.
 35. Kaempfer travelled to Iran as secretary of the Swedish delegation to the court of Shah Sulayman (r. 1668–94). During his twenty-month-long stay in Isfahan, he surveyed the gardens and drew sketches of buildings. Part of his observations appeared in the Latin-language *Amoenitatum Exoticarum*, published in 1712. Kept at the British Library, London, Kaempfer’s materials pertaining to Safavid gardens have been studied by Mahvash Alemi in the publications cited above.
 36. Even in its present state, there is a gap between the structure and the adjoining façade of the madrasa. The awkward structural relationship between the coffeehouse and the rest of the madrasa is also alluded to by Siroux, who surveyed the building during a restoration effort in the 1960s. Not recognizing the earlier origin of the coffeehouse and some other elements of the madrasa, Siroux referred to this structural disjunction as a sign of concern over appearance in Iranian architecture. Siroux, *Anciennes voies*, 285.
 37. Kaempfer uses the same label for both structures, which is indicative of their similar function. The label is yet to be deciphered.
 38. As more accurate plans and old photographs show, a pre-existing structure seems to have been incorporated into the southwest corner of the madrasa as well. See, for instance, the aerial photograph of the madrasa published in Henri Stierlin, *Iran of the Master Builders: 2500 Years of Architecture*, trans. Robert Allen and Nicolas Ferguson (Geneva, 1971), 92.
 39. Cornelis de Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia and Part of East-Indies*, 2 vols. (London, 1737), 1:198.
 40. Coste’s survey is not accurate in terms of scale and details. The plans offered here are based on more recent surveys of the madrasa and my own fieldwork. The plan of the upper section of the Chaharbagh (fig. 5b) is part of my ongoing research on the other elements of the promenade.
 41. In his oft-quoted description of the Chaharbagh, Chardin did not mention the coffeehouses. He did, however, refer to the “jardin des Vignes” (vine garden) and “jardin des Mûriers” (mulberry garden) on the sides of “the fifth pool” of the Chaharbagh, which corresponds to the area where the coffeehouses were located. See Jean Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l’Orient*, ed. Louis M. Langlès, 10 vols. (Paris, 1810–11), 8:26.
 42. *dar Šifāhān makhšūš-i Bābā maykhāna-yi murattab farmūd dar ghāyat-i āb u havā dar Chahārbāgh*. Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad Awḥādī Daqqāqī Balyānī, *Tazkira-yi ‘arafāt al-‘āshiqīn va ‘arāsāt al-‘arifīn*, ed. Muḥsin Nāji Naṣrābādī, 7 vols. (Tehran, 1388 [2009]), 3:2047.
 43. A native of Isfahan, Awhadi (b. 1565) became attached to the court of Shah ‘Abbas in the early years of his reign. In 1606, he moved to India, where, in 1613, he began to compile a compendium of short biographies and selected verses of 3,492 poets, one of the largest anthologies of this sort ever composed in Persian.
 44. Muḥammad Ṭāhir Naṣrābādī, *Tazkira-yi Naṣrābādī: Tazkirat al-shu‘arā*, ed. Muḥsin Nāji Naṣrābādī, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1378 [1999]), 1:213–14. Nasrabadi was a prominent man of letters in Isfahan in the second half of the seventeenth century. He began to compile his compendium in 1672 (1083). The book contains short biographical notices of about a thousand poets, mostly of Isfahani origin.
 45. *ū rā muhrī bar kaf-i dast bizanad va bi ān ‘alāmat mulāzimān-i dārūgha ū rā āzār narisānand*. Ibid.
 46. See Awḥādī, *Tazkira-yi ‘arafāt al-‘āshiqīn*, 2047. Shams-i Tishi and the servers of his drinking house were also favor-

- ite entertainers at the court of Shah ‘Abbas. In 1611 (1020), during a nocturnal banquet held at the shah’s private palace (*khalvatkhāna*) in the Naqsh-i Jahan Garden, for instance, Baba Shams-i Tishi and “the boys of the coffeehouse” (*pisarān-i qahvakhāna*) were among the performers. See Khūzānī Iṣfahānī, *A Chronicle of the Reign of Shah ‘Abbas*, 1:586.
47. Chardin, *Voyages*, 8:26. Visiting Isfahan in 1637, Adam Olearius, the secretary of the embassy of the Duke of Holstein to the court of Shah Safi, described the Grape Garden as a vast vineyard yielding a variety of specimens. Adam Olearius, *Vermehrte neue Beschreibung der muscowitischen und persischen Reyse* (Schleswig, 1656; repr. Tübingen, 1971), 562; English trans.: Adam Olearius, *The Voyages & Travels of the Ambassadors Sent by Frederick Duke of Holstein* (London, 1662), 301. Indeed, these vineyards may have been the *raison d’être* of the Chaharbagh: according to Chardin, before Shah ‘Abbas had the Chaharbagh constructed, the area was occupied by four grape gardens. See Chardin, *Voyages*, 8:26. Chardin also refers to a wine tavern inside the palace complex, located behind the Chihil Sutun Palace, which, interestingly enough, was also located in the vicinity of a vineyard. From Kaempfer’s drawings, we know that this now-lost pavilion was situated on the border of the Bagh-i Khalvat (Private Garden) and Bagh-i Anguristan (Grape Garden). For a reproduction of Kaempfer’s drawing, see Alemi, “Safavid Royal Gardens and Their Urban Relationships.”
 48. Before the rise of coffeehouses, in addition to the winehouses, there were establishments known as *bangkhāna* (hashish-house), *majūnkhāna* (serving electuaries, often containing opium), and *būzakhāna* (houses serving *būza*, a slightly intoxicating drink made from millet). In Safavid sources, these are mentioned as the social activities that were banned when Shah Tahmasb issued an edict of repentance in the mid-sixteenth century. See Aḥmad ibn Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī al-Qumī, *Khulāṣat al-tavārīkh*, ed. Iḥsan Iṣhrāqī, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1980–84), 1:226, 233. For the transcription of the edict of Shah Tahmasb installed at the Mir ‘Imad Mosque in Kashan, see ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Navā’ī, ed., *Shāh Ṭahmāsb Ṣafavī, majmū‘a-yi asnād va mukātabāt-i tārikhī hamrāh bā yāddāshthā-yi tafṣīlī* (Tehran, 1350 [1971]), 513–14. Before the introduction of coffee, *boza*-houses were ubiquitous in Ottoman Bursa as well. See İklil O. Selçuk, “State Meets Society: A Study of Bozakhāne Affairs in Bursa,” in *Starting with Food: Culinary Approaches to Ottoman History*, ed. Amy Singer (Princeton, N.J., 2011), 23–48.
 49. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, 76–78.
 50. For a discussion of etymology, see *ibid.*, 18–19.
 51. Sādiqī Bēg, “Ḥazzīyyāt,” 174. The affinity between coffee and wine is also expressed in other poems comparing the effect of coffee to wine.
 52. This point was made by several European visitors. Herbert noted: “Great is the difference betwixt the Turks and Persians; for the Turks, being by law prohibited, abstain from wine, yet drink it covertly; but the Persians now (as of old) drink with freedom openly and with excess.” Herbert, *Travels in Persia*, 82–83. According to Della Valle, “in Persia, though it is a country of Muslims, all drink wine with alacrity, without scruples or shame.” Della Valle, *Viaggi*, 1:441; quoted and translated in Matthee, *Pursuit*, 66. Della Valle’s observation may be true only with regard to the elite, as Matthee suggests, but it should not change our understanding of the prevalent milieu of the “New Isfahan”: after all, it was a city made for, and inhabited by, the elite. It is also necessary to keep in mind that European observers’ proclivity for describing the Ottomans and Safavids in binary opposition to one another was, of course, informed by the geopolitics of the time, in which the Ottomans were seen as an imminent threat and the Safavids as a potential ally. These reports are, nevertheless, reflective of some concrete differences between the Ottomans and Safavids with respect to social practices such as wine drinking.
 53. On wine in Safavid times, see Matthee, *Pursuit*, 37–96. The Chaharbagh of Isfahan was not the only Safavid city where coffeehouses and wine taverns existed in the same space. In the newly constructed market of Bandar ‘Abbas, too, Herbert saw, in 1628, taverns (with plenty of Shiraz wines brought in long-necked glasses), along with coffeehouses and sherbet houses. Herbert, *Travels in Persia*, 45.
 54. For the edited version of the epistle, see Qāzī b. Kāshif al-Dīn Muḥammad Yazdī, *Jām-i jahānnamā-yi ‘Abbāsī: Dar-i manāfi‘-i shurb = The Abbasid “Planetarium Cup”*: *On the Benefits of Wine*, ed. Ali Hassouri (Uppsala, 2014). The treatise is also indicative of the pervasiveness of wine drinking in Safavid times among ordinary people outside royal circles.
 55. This was at least the case when coffee was first introduced under ‘Abbas, although, as in other contexts in the early modern period, the Safavid coffeehouse gradually began to function as a gathering place for more respectful people. It appears that throughout the seventeenth century, the coffeehouse also provided a venue for the consumption of wine and other narcotic-based drinks such as *kūknār*. Wine was served during the reception that Shah ‘Abbas held for foreign ambassadors in one of the coffeehouses of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan.
 56. Qāzī b. Kāshif al-Dīn Muḥammad Yazdī, “Risāla-yi chūb-i chīnī va qahva va chāy-i khaṭāyī,” in *Panj risāla-yi ṭibbī*, ed. Majīd Anūshīrvānī (Tehran, 1392 [2013]), 60–93, at 91.
 57. In the 1960s, the coffeehouse was converted into a branch of Bank Melli Iran. In its present state, the whitewashed interior walls bear no trace of any ornamentation. Meager traces of poetic graffiti, however, give a glimpse of the building’s original function.
 58. Kaempfer gives a detailed description of the preparation of coffee in a public coffeehouse: “These beans are roasted in a small flat vessel, and are regularly stirred, above a small charcoal fire, till they smell reasonably well and have become black-brown. Then they are poured into a circle (Orbiculum), and thus put, warm or cold, into a stone mor-

- tar [...]. They grind the coffee with great effort, in a large mortar that is built into a bricked fixed place [...]. When this roasted powder has become sufficiently grounded, due the pounding, they use it in the following manner: they take a spoon filled with this powder—that which is freshly roasted is the best—and put it in half pint (*Puentche*) of hot water that is already waiting on the fire in a copper tinned jar which is a handwidth long. Then the lid is put on it, some burning charcoal put on the jar, so that it boils quickly [...]. Then one puts two spoonfuls of cold water into the boiling coffee liquid, which makes the oil (oleum) milder, after which it is left on the fire [...]. Then it is ready and is served in small cups, and drunk as hot as one can tolerate.” Engelbert Kaempfer, *Die Reisetagebücher*, ed. Karl Meier-Lemgo (Wiesbaden, 1968), 115; trans. from Floor, *Economy of Safavid Persia*, 142.
59. For instance, the layout of the coffeehouse resembles the pavilion located on the eastern side of the Fin Garden at Kashan, which dates from the reign of Shah ‘Abbas. The structure also bears stylistic affinities to the surviving Safavid mansions of Isfahan, such as the House of Sukas in New Julfa. Built in the first half of the seventeenth century, the Sukas mansion has a comparable domed hall, which is not only of similar dimensions and proportions, but also features analogous chamfered piers and arch-nets, as well as a wooden screen. See John Carswell, *New Julfa: The Armenian Churches and Other Buildings* (Oxford, 1968), 65–67; Karapet Karapetian, *Isfahān, New Julfa: Le case degli armeni; Una raccolta di rilevamenti architettonici = Isfahan, New Julfa: The Houses of the Armenians; A Collection of Architectural Surveys* (Rome, 1974), 119–56.
 60. Although such raised platforms were common in garden design, those on the Chaharbagh may have indeed been conceived after a specific connotation of the *maṣṭaba*. The term in Arabic and Persian signifies a “place where people assemble” (Edward W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* [London, 1877, repr. 1984], s.v. “ṣ-ṭ-b”), as well as an “outdoor stone bench” or a “stone platform (for sitting)” (Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J Milton Cowan [Wiesbaden, 1979], s.v. “*maṣṭaba*”). In medieval Persian poetry, however, it primarily denoted a “platform outside a wine tavern,” and often implied a tavern in general. See Alī Akbar Dihkhudā, *Lughatnāma*, 15 vols. (Tehran, 1998), s.v. “*maṣṭaba*.” The term *maṣṭaba* is frequently used to signify a wine tavern in the works of medieval Shirazi poets, including three verses by the famous fourteenth-century poet Hafiz. One can surmise that since Shams was from Shiraz, the taverns of the Chaharbagh might have been modeled after those that existed in that city, famous not only for its wine but also for its taverns and gardens.
 61. Engelbert Kaempfer, *Am Hofe des persischen Grosskönigs, 1684–1685*, trans. Walther Hinz (Tübingen, 1977), 202.
 62. De Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia and Part of East-Indies*, 1:197–98.
 63. Also known as Tabrizabad, the ‘Abbasabad district was laid out in the early seventeenth century to accommodate a group of merchants from Tabriz who were forced by Shah ‘Abbas I to settle in Isfahan. The Tabrizi émigré families and their descendants made up the majority of the elite of the New Isfahan throughout the seventeenth century.
 64. Regarding these nobles, Della Valle wrote that they “chiefly hold aloof from the base people, and they so despise them that they think themselves contaminated merely by touching them. Thus in the streets, when a noble passes by, all the base people make way in order not to touch and so soil him.” Pietro della Valle, *The Pilgrim: The Travels of Pietro Della Valle* (London, 1990), 131–32.
 65. John Fryer, *A New Account of East-India and Persia in Eight Letters* (London, 1698), 345.
 66. *Ibid.*, 297.
 67. *Ibid.*, 287.
 68. Visiting the Chaharbagh in 1840, Coste observed that only the axial walkway was paved with durable stone and that the unpaved lateral paths were used by horse riders: Coste, *Monuments modernes de la Perse*, 29. The central pathway of the Chaharbagh was interrupted by pools, making it more suitable for slow leisurely strolling, while the straight lateral pathways could be used by those who wanted to go about their business, whether walking on foot or riding on horseback.
 69. For a study of the painting, see Massumeh Farhad, “The Art of Mu‘in Musavvir: A Mirror of His Times,” in *Persian Masters: Five Centuries of Painting*, ed. Sheila R. Canby (Bombay, 1990): 113–28. Also see Farhad’s entries in *Treasures of Islam*, ed. Toby Falk (exh. cat.) (London, 1985), 124–26, cat. nos. 96 and 97. The painting is paired with another illustration depicting Muhammad Taqi Tabrizi in a similar pose, but dressed in a different garment. The inscription on the latter painting indicates that it was made on the occasion of Muhammad Taqi’s pilgrimage to Mashhad.
 70. Munajjim Yazdī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Abbāsī*, 361. According to Munajjim Yazdī, the celebration (*jashn*) began on May 28, 1609 (23 Safar 1018). The prohibition against men being present during outings by royal women, referred to as *quruq* in Safavid sources, was a common practice throughout the seventeenth century. While such bans were generally temporary, the *quruq* was a weekly event in the Chaharbagh.
 71. Della Valle, *Viaggi*, 2:30.
 72. The presence of women in public was of course not limited to such state-sponsored occasions. Awhadi, for example, refers to women mingling with men in Isfahan. See Awhādī, *Tazkira-yi ‘arafāt al-‘āshiqīn*, 2:1013, 3:2044. Many of these women, though not all of them, were probably courtesans, whose role in Safavid Isfahan awaits a fuller investigation on the basis of Persian-language primary sources. It can also be deduced from textual sources that on a day-to-day basis ordinary women were also not absent from public promenades such as the Chaharbagh. An edict issued after the enthronement of Shah Sultan Husayn against improper behaviors (drinking alcohol and prostitution) prohibited women from appearing in public unaccompanied by male relatives and from attending public shows (pl. *ma‘ārik*). See

- Abū Ṭālib Mūsavi Findiriskī, *Tuḥfat al-‘ālam: Dar awṣāf va akhbār-i Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn*, ed. Rasūl Ja‘fariyān (Tehran, 2009), 82. Also see Rudi Matthee, “Prostitutes, Courtesans and Dancing Girls: Women Entertainers in Safavid Iran,” in *Iran and Beyond: Essays in Middle Eastern History in Honor of Nikki R. Keddie*, ed. Rudi Matthee and Beth Baron (Costa Mesa, Calif., 2000), 121–50, at 147. Ineffective in practice, such edicts are rather indicative of the wider presence of women in the public spaces of Safavid Isfahan throughout the seventeenth century.
73. Chardin, *Voyages*, 7:366.
74. ‘Abd Allāh Ṣānī Bihishtī Haravī, *Nūr al-mashriqayn: Safar-nāma-yi manẓūm az ‘ahd-i Ṣafavī*, ed. Najīb Māyil Haravī (Mashhad, 1998), 221–22.
75. Munajjim Yazdī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Abbāsī*, 236. For a translation, see McChesney, “Four Sources,” 109. Munajjim Yazdi attributes the design of the entire complex to a single architect (*muhandis*), whom he hyperbolically praises but without providing any name. Junabadi gives the date 1603–4 (1012) for the beginning of construction on the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan. Since Junabadi wrote his narrative a couple of years later, it is reasonable to consider Munajjim Yazdi’s report more accurate.
76. Junābādī, *Rawzat al-ṣafavīyya*, 760. For the translation of the full passage, see McChesney, “Four Sources,” 113.
77. Chardin, *Voyages*, 7:366.
78. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier, Baron of Aubonne, through Turkey, into Persia and the East-Indies, for the space of forty years*, trans. J. P. Tavernier (London, 1677), 154.
79. Chardin, *Voyages*, 4:67–68. Translation by Matthee, *Pursuit*, 162–63.
80. Eugenio Galdieri, “Two Building Phases of the Time of Šāh ‘Abbas I in the Maydān-i Šāh of Isfahan, Preliminary Note,” *East and West* 20, nos. 1–2 (1970): 60–69.
81. McChesney, “Four Sources,” 114.
82. The source of controversy is Blake’s argument, which disputes McChesney’s reading of the primary sources. Blake maintains that what McChesney has interpreted as a reference to an earlier stage of the construction of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan is actually concerned with the refurbishment of the Maydan-i Harun-i Vilayat, the pre-Safavid square of Isfahan. He further contends that, contrary to the common assumption, the relocation of the Safavid capital from Qazvin to Isfahan occurred in 1590 rather than 1598. Blake argues that the refurbishment of Isfahan’s old Maydan was the first building activity that Shah ‘Abbas undertook and that the building of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan was begun a decade later, in 1602. See Blake, *Half the World*, 15–28. For a critique of Blake’s work, see Sussan Babaie’s review of *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan, 1590–1722* in *Iranian Studies* 33, nos. 3–4 (2000): 478–82. I agree with Blake’s proposition that ‘Abbas’ first construction project in Isfahan was the refurbishment of the Maydan-i Harun-i Vilayat. His two other propositions however—that the capital was relocated in 1590 and that construction commenced on the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan in 1602—are not supported by the available evidence. The second phase may have followed the first in rapid succession, though this is not necessarily reflected in textual sources.
83. See Markus Ritter, “Das königliche Portal und die Nordseite des Maidāns von Schah ‘Abbās I. im safawidischen Iṣfahān,” in *Iran and iranisch geprägte Kulturen: Studien zum 65. Geburtstag von Bert G. Fragner*, ed. Markus Ritter, Ralph Kauz, and Birgitt Hofmann (Wiesbaden, 2008), 357–76, at 361. For Ritter’s other publications concerning the Qaysariyya portal and the north side of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan, see Markus Ritter, “Monumental Epigraphy in Iran: Paired Panels With Square Kufic Script and Sa’dī Verses in Safavid and Earlier Islamic Architecture,” *Eurasian Studies* 6, nos. 1–2 (2010): 19–37; Markus Ritter, “Zum Siegesmonument in islamischer Kunst: Schlachtenbild und Trophäen an einem Portal im safawidischen Isfahan, Iran 17. Jahrhundert,” in *Inszenierung des Sieges—Sieg der Inszenierung: Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven*, ed. Michaela Fahlenbock, Lukas Madersbacher, and Ingo Schneider (Innsbruck, 2011), 181–98.
84. See Eugenio Galdieri and Roberto Orazi, *Progetto di sistemazione del Maydān-i Šāh* (Rome, 1969).
85. Ritter, “Das königliche Portal,” 361. For Della Valle’s sketch, see Alemi, “I ‘teatri’ di Shah Abbas,” 21. The sketch is found in Pietro della Valle, *Diario*, vollend. 1626: Vatican Library, Ms. Cod. Ottob. Lat. 3382, 126b (Della Valle-Del Bufalo Archive). For a new rendition of Della Valle’s sketch, see Ritter, “Das königliche Portal,” 363. As Ritter also notes, the physical remains seem to suggest that the additional gallery was also constructed at a later stage, together with the row of shops on the other sides of the Maydan. Ritter’s study focuses on the elements, such as the clock and *naqqarakhāna* (music hall), and does not discuss the coffeehouses.
86. Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth, *Der Bazar von Isfahan* (Wiesbaden, 1978), 93.
87. *Ibid.*, 137, 138.
88. Eugène-Elie Beaudouin, “Ispahan sous les grands chahs, XVIIe siècle,” special issue of *Urbanisme, revue mensuelle de l’urbanisme français* 2, no. 10 (January 1933). Also see Eugène-Elie Beaudouin, “City Plans,” in *A Survey of Persian Art*, ed. Arthur A. Pope, 18 vols. (Oxford, 1938), 3:1391–1410.
89. All other plans of the Maydan totally dismiss the coffeehouses. See, for example, the plan of the Isfahan Bazaar in Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture* (Chicago, 1973). See also Klaus Herdeg, *Formal Structure in Islamic Architecture of Iran and Turkistan* (New York, 1990), in which the arcades containing the coffeehouses are eliminated from the reconstructions of the Maydan.
90. The plan was first studied in Alemi, “I ‘teatri’ di Shah Abbas,” 20.
91. Olearius, *Vermehrte neue Beschreibung*, 558. For an English translation, see Olearius, *Voyages & Travels*, 298. The term *shūra* here refers to *shūra-yi angūr* (grape juice), which was

- a synonym for wine. For examples from medieval Persian poetry, see Dihkhudā, *Lughatnāma*, s.v. “shīra.” According to a late Safavid manual of administration, composed ca. 1725, the royal wine cellar was also known as the *shīrakhāna*. See V. Minorsky, ed. and trans., *Tadhkirat al-mulūk, A Manual of Safavid Administration, circa 1137/1725: Persian Text in Facsimile (B. M. Or. 9496)* (Cambridge, 1943), 99, 137–38.
92. The only exception is the dubious travel narrative of Jan Jansz. Struys, which also refers to teahouses. Not all of his travel narrative might be fictitious, as Willem Floor suggests, but his description of the Maydan drinking houses is clearly based on Olearius. See Willem Floor, “Fact or Fiction: The Most Perilous Journeys of Jan Jansz. Struys,” in *Études safavides*, ed. Jean Calmard (Paris, 1993), 64.
 93. For an overview of the introduction and consumption of tea in Safavid times, see Matthee, *Pursuit*, 238–41. According to Olearius, tea was imported by the Uzbeks from China. Safavid medicinal manuals often discuss tea together with coffee and tobacco, the very same categories that were available at the drinking houses on the Maydan, as described by Olearius.
 94. Ḥamavī Yazdī, [*Risāla*], fol. 73b.
 95. Naṣrābādī, *Tazkira*, 1:206, 343, 363. The coffeehouse is also referred to as the Coffeehouse of Baba Arab or Arab Qahvachi.
 96. *Ibid.*, 1:554, 473, 605.
 97. Muḥammad Badī’ ibn Muḥammad Sharif Maliḥā-yi Samarqandī, *Muzakkir al-aṣḥāb*, ed. Muḥammad Taqavī (Tehran, 1390 [2011]), 150. Also cited in Robert D. McChesney, “Barrier of Heterodoxy?: Rethinking the Ties between Iran and Central Asia in the 17th Century,” in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville, *Pembroke Papers 4* (London, 1996), 231–67, at 250. Maliha compiled this compendium after three years of traveling in Safavid Iran. Before the publication of the edited volume, McChesney studied the manuscript in two essays. The article cited above deals specifically with the author’s observations in Iran. Also see Robert D. McChesney, “The Anthology of Poets: *Muzakkir al-aṣḥāb* as a Source for the History of Seventeenth-Century Central Asia,” in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City, 1990), 57–84.
 98. See Bulookbashi, *Qahvakhānahā-yi Īrān*, 16–20. Also see Willem Floor and Wolfram Kleiss, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Bathhouses.” For an architectural survey of Safavid and Qajar public baths, see Kambiz Haji-Qassemī, ed., *Ganjnameh: Cyclopaedia of Iranian Islamic Architecture*, vol. 18, “Bathhouses” (*ḥammāmḥā*) (Tehran, 1383 [2005]). Note, in particular the design of the cloakrooms (*sarbinah*) with surrounding platforms in the Hammam-i Shah (Royal Bathhouse) and Hammam-i Shahzada (Prince’s Bathhouse).
 99. Fedot Afanasiyev Kotov, “Of a Journey to the Kingdom of Persia,” in *Russian Travelers to India and Persia, 1624–1798: Kotov, Yefremov, Danibegov*, trans. and ed. P. M. Kemp (Delhi, 1959), 1–42, at 19. In its present state, the second bay from the east has a peculiar design, which may have been a remnant of the original coffeehouses: from the corner of the adjoining octagonal hall a flight of stairs leads to a mezzanine, subdividing the vaulted bay overlooking the Maydan into two levels. This elevated platform would have provided a good view of events taking place on the Maydan, as noted by Kotov, while the lower level, which is connected to the interior space through two doors, might have been used for preparing coffee.
 100. Both engravings are apparently based on drawings made by the French engraver and painter Guillaume Joseph Grélot, who was hired by Chardin and later joined the Venetian aristocrat traveler Ambrosio Bembo. See Ambrosio Bembo, *The Travels and Journal of Ambrosio Bembo*, trans. (from Italian) Clara Bargellini, ed. Anthony Welch (Berkeley, 2007), 26–32. In the drawing of the north side of the Maydan that appeared in Bembo’s travelogue, there seems to be a panel above the entrance arch of each coffeehouse, which may have included some sort of signage.
 101. The drawing by Grélot included in Bembo’s travelogue is less precise than the one that appeared in Chardin’s book. One irritating difference is that in the latter there are four bays between entrance portals. One explanation was that the bays were subdivided by wooden lattices.
 102. *Dargāh-i qahvahā* [...] *rū bi miḥrāb-i falak-jināb-i masjid-i shāh āvarda*. I’jāz Hirātī, “Ta’rif-i Iṣfahān,” ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, *Farhang-i Īrān-zamīn* 18 (1350 [1971]): 173–94, at 186.
 103. *Namāyān qahvahā-yash az barābar/chu tāq-i abrū-yi yār-i sitamgar*. Mīr ‘Abd al-Ma’ālī Nijāt Iṣfahānī, “Vaṣf-i Iṣfahān,” ed. Aḥmad Gulchīn Ma’ānī, in *Majmū’a maqālāt-i kungiri-yi jahānī-yi buzurgdāsht-i Iṣfahān* (Tehran, 1385 [2006]), 367–76, at 371.
 104. Kotov, “Of a Journey to the Kingdom of Persia,” 19.
 105. Fryer, *New Account of East-India and Persia*, 345. Interestingly, a similar device, referred to as a wonder-exciting novelty and mind-boggling creation, is described in Natanzi’s chronicle: “twelve wheels were built, and on each were fixed nearly one thousand lamps in such a way that by lighting one lamp and turning the wheel all the lamps could be lit.” See McChesney, “Four Sources,” 107.
 106. For a study of coffeehouses and nighttime practices in the Ottoman world, see Cemal Kafadar, “How Dark is the History of the Night, How Black the Story of Coffee, How Bitter the Tale of Love: The Changing Measure of Leisure and Pleasure in Early Modern Istanbul,” in *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Arzu Öztürkmen and Evelyn Birge Vitz (Turnhout, 2014), 143–269.
 107. Kotov, “Of a Journey to the Kingdom of Persia,” 27.
 108. Indeed, the Maydan coffeehouses appear not to have featured any particularly impressive ornamentation. In their descriptions of the Maydan coffeehouses, European sources mostly focus on the lighting. The fact that the coffeehouses were considered attractive for their abun-

- dant lighting, their integration into the urban space of the Maydan, and the social atmosphere they fostered is rather symptomatic of the novelty of the social institution and the urban experience that it had engendered.
109. See, for instance, Qāzī b. Kāshif al-Dīn, "Risāla-yi chūb-i chīnī," 92. A similar phenomenon was observed in the Ottoman context. See Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, 67.
 110. Kaempfer, *Am Hofe*, 208.
 111. Olearius, *Vermehrte neue Beschreibung*, 559; Olearius, *Voyages & Travels*, 299.
 112. *Dar dānistan-i kārvānsārāhā-yi Isfāhān*: London, British Library, Ms. Sloane 4094. For a facsimile and German translation of the scroll, see Gaube and Wirth, *Der Bazar von Isfahan*, 261–85, where the authors attribute the text to the reign of Shah Sulayman.
 113. Della Valle, *Viaggi*, 2:9.
 114. Although there might not be any explicit reference to the mingling of different ethnic or confessional groups in coffeehouses of Safavid Isfahan, there is evidence that non-Muslims frequented them. Indeed, considering the staggering diversity of merchants active in Isfahan's markets, it is unlikely these groups did not socialize with one another in coffeehouses.
 115. Galdieri, "Two Building Phases," 66.
 116. Mīr Taqī al-Dīn Kāshānī, *Khulāṣat al-ash'ār va zubdat al-afkār: Bakhsh-i Isfahān*, ed. 'Abdul-'Alī Adīb Burūmand and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Naṣīrī Kuhanmū'ī (Tehran, 1386 [2007]), 304.
 117. *tā sad qahva dar yalī-yi yakdīgar uftādah*. Malihā, *Muzakkir al-aṣḥāb*, 344. McChesney suggests that "one hundred coffeehouses" is probably an allusion to the coffeehouses at the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan, which were built in a row. See McChesney, "Barrier of Heterodoxy?," 250. Although the figure appears to be a hyperbole, at least one other source makes mention of a hundred coffeehouses, which is indicative of their great, if not exact, number. As the reconstructed plan shows, the coffeehouses probably extended beyond the limits of Takhtgah, along the eastern side of the Old Maydan.
 118. Chardin, *Voyages*, 449–50.
 119. For an insightful discussion of the shrine of Harun-i Vilayat and Takhtgah, see Jalāl al-Dīn Humā'ī Shīrāzī Isfahānī, *Tārīkh-i Isfahān: Abnīyya va 'imārāt* (Tehran, 1390 [2011]), 167–68. The street is now called Haruniyya.
 120. Hunarfar, *Ganjīna*, 360–73. Because of the mystical connotations of opium, it is likely that the establishments of Takhtgah had some associations with the devotional practices of the Safavid Sufi order. Indeed, if it dates from the time of Isma'īl, the term "Takhtgah" may have had royal connotations. It is also possible that the area was provided with coffeehouses during the early years of the reign of 'Abbas, when the Old Maydan was renovated.
 121. Although *kūknār* was also served in coffeehouses, it appears that the *kūknārkhāna* was shunned by the upper classes. See Matthee, *Pursuit*, 107–9.
 122. Beaudouin, "Ispahan sous les grands chahs," 42, 46.
 123. Malihā, *Muzakkir al-aṣḥāb*, 254, 281, 443. It has been shown that the northern suburbs of Isfahan were also subject to development in the seventeenth century. See Emrani, "Role of Gardens," 134–35. It is possible that this coffeehouse was also located near a *khīyābān*, which had become the main element of virtually any urban development throughout Safavid territories.
 124. De Bruyn, *Travels in Muscovy, Persia and Part of East-Indie*, 200.
 125. De Bruyn's observation contradicts the idea that women were less present in public spaces in the late Safavid era, as is sometimes assumed. This assumption is particularly questioned by Matthee, who argues for a more complex and variegated picture of the role and visibility of women in later Safavid society. See Rudi Matthee, "From the Battlefield to the Harem: Did Women's Seclusion Increase from Early to Late Safavid Times?," in *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran: Empire and Society*, ed. Colin P. Mitchell (New York, 2011), 97–120.
 126. Chardin, *Voyages*, 7:295.
 127. For drawings and a description of the complex, see Haji-Qassemi, ed., *Ganjnameh* (Tehran, 1383 [2005]), vol. 9, "Bazaar Buildings" (Banāhā-yi bāzār), 104–113. See also Gaube and Wirth, *Der Bazar von Isfahan*, 343–45, where they speculate that the structure was originally a bathhouse.
 128. See Siyyid Ḥusayn Umīdīyānī, "Nigarishī bar yik vaqf-nāma-yi tārikhī az dawra-yi Ṣafāvī," *Ganjīna-yi asnād* 21–22 (1375 [1996]): 20–27, at 23.
 129. See Sultan Siyyid Riza Khan, *Naqsha-yi dār al-Salṭana-yi Isfahān* (Tehran, 1363 [1984]).
 130. Kaempfer, *Die Reisetagebücher*, 115; trans. in Floor, *Economy of Safavid Persia*, 142.
 131. Naṣrābādī, *Tazkira*, 672.
 132. Malihā, *Muzakkir al-aṣḥāb*, 271.
 133. For the transcription of Nasrabadi's poem and a brief description of the Lunban Mosque, see Hunarfar, *Ganjīna*, 626–30.
 134. Chardin, *Voyages*, 2:315–17.
 135. Muḥammad Mufīd b. Maḥmūd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *Jāmi'-i mufīdī*, ed. Īraj Afshār, 3 vols. (Tehran, 1340 [1961]), 3:443.
 136. McChesney, "Anthology of Poets," 61.
 137. Malihā, *Muzakkir al-aṣḥāb*, 276, 306. In the city of Simnan, for instance, a native poet, 'Ashiq-i Simnani, opened a coffeehouse that came to be known by his name. It appears that the poet adopted the coffeehouse culture and brought it back to his hometown after spending several years in Isfahan.
 138. Malihā, *Muzakkir al-aṣḥāb*, 104. This *maydān* and its adjoining establishments are also mentioned by Kaempfer, who notes that the plaza of Kashan was bordered by two broad *Kaljanhäuser* (houses for smoking waterpipes) that looked like theaters. See Kaempfer, *Die Reisetagebücher*, 78.
 139. Bāfqī, *Jāmi'-i mufīdī*, 228, 444, 644.

140. Maliḥā, *Muzakkir al-aṣḥāb*, 81, 266; McChesney, "Anthology of Poets," 83.
141. It is possible that Safavid coffeehouses served as the model for Mughal ones, too. According to at least one account, in Shahjahanabad, the new Mughal capital, "scattered here and there were coffeehouses where amirs gathered to listen to poetry, engage in light conversation, and watch the passing scene." Quoted in Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639–1739* (New York, 1991), 56.
142. Maliḥā, *Muzakkir al-aṣḥāb*, 326. McChesney, "Barrier of Heterodoxy?," 262n77.
143. Fryer, *New Account of East-India and Persia*, 258.
144. Kaempfer, *Die Reisetagebücher*, 41, 66, 92, 115. Noted in Floor, *Economy of Safavid Persia*, 141n94.
145. Matthee, *Pursuit*, 164.
146. The proximity of bakery and coffeehouse recalls the coffeehouses at the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan, which were also located near confectionaries. Interestingly, a bakery was also included in the Ipshir Pasha Complex in Aleppo, not far from the coffeehouse.
147. Naṣrābādī, *Tazkira*, 445.
148. Ibid., 410. A *jadval-kash* (ruling-maker) was one of the experts involved in the traditional bookmaking craft, along with the scribe, illuminator, illustrator, and binder.
149. On the medieval majlis, see Dominic P. Brookshaw, "Palaces, Pavilions and Pleasure-gardens: The Context and Setting of the Medieval Majlis," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 6, no. 2 (2003): 199–223. On the Timurid majlis, see Maria E. Subtelny, "Scenes from the Literary Life of Timurid Herat," in *Logos Islamikos: Studia Islamica in Honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens*, ed. Roger M. Savory and Dionisius A. Agius (Toronto, 1984), 137–55. Such assemblies continued to flourish in Safavid Isfahan, but they were no longer the primary setting of literary production and cultural exchange.
150. This is based on an often-quoted anecdote related in Naṣrābādī, *Tazkira*, 56. For an English translation of this passage, see Anthony Welch, *Artists for the Shah: Late Sixteenth-century Painting at the Imperial Court of Iran* (New Haven, 1976), 186–87.
151. Qāzī b. Kāshif al-Dīn, "Risāla-yi chūb-i chīnī," 92.
152. See Ḥamavī Yazdī, [*Risāla*], fol. 71b. Hamavi reports that Shah 'Abbas would always add ginger to his coffee, believing that the "hotness" of the ginger would balance the "coldness" of the coffee. Hamavi too shared this belief, but noted that adding less ginger would be more beneficial.
153. See Muḥammad Ḥusayn 'Aqīlī Khurāsānī Shīrāzī, *Makhzan al-advīyya* (Calcutta, 1844; repr. Tehran, 1371 [1992]), 250; Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāma*, s.v. "*taḥt al-qahva*." In Turkish, breakfast is referred to as *kahvaltı* (literally, "before coffee").
154. Medieval sources suggest that storytelling was largely practiced in mosques or along roads and streets. For some of the references in Arabic texts, see Rasūl Ja'fariyān, *Qiṣṣa-khvānān dar tarikh-i Islām va Īrān* (Qum, 1378 [1999]), 104. One might also compare the situation in Safavid territories with the prevalent conditions in Central Asia, where the coffeehouse was not known. In contrast to Nasrabadi, who refers to coffeehouses as the primary operating ground of storytellers, Maliha makes mention of Rigistan Square in Samarqand and Bukhara as the sites where storytellers performed. See Maliḥā, *Muzakkir al-aṣḥāb*, 72, 31.
155. Naṣrābādī, *Tazkira*, 506.
156. Ibid., 207.
157. See Awḥādī, *Tazkira-yi 'arafāt al-'āshiqīn*, 4:2646, where the author mentions a certain Mawlana 'Alī Suratkhvan, who told stories in "the Maydan of Isfahan" using figural images (*ṣūratkhvānī*). Such performers may have become active in coffeehouses as well, considering the fact that Awḥādī's observations date from the period slightly before the rise of coffeehouses. The practice, known by the term *parda-khvānī* (reciting a historical narrative illustrated on the screen), is well documented in the Qajar period, and the art form that emerged on the basis of this practice became known as *naqqāshī-yi qahvakhāna'ī* (coffeehouse painting).
158. Awḥādī, *Tazkira-yi 'arafāt al-'āshiqīn*, 3:2047.
159. Praising the *sāqī* or handsome young artisans of a city was a long-established literary trope and social practice, best exemplified in the Persianate genre of "City Beauties"—i.e., poems describing handsome young boys engaged in different crafts and professions in the city. Known as *shahr'āshūb* or *shahrangīz*, the genre was especially in vogue in the Mughal, Safavid, and Ottoman realms from the sixteenth century onwards. See J. T. P. de Bruijn, *EI2*, s.v. "Shahrangīz." For a survey of Persian-language *shahr'āshūb* poems, see Aḥmad Gulchīn Ma'ānī, *Shahr'āshūb dar shī'r-i Fārsī*, ed. Parvīz Gulchīn Ma'ānī (Tehran, 1380 [2001]). For a study of parallel homoerotic practices in Ottoman culture, see Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham, 2005).
160. The painting bears the date February 14, 1630 (1 Rajab 1039). The physiognomy, pose, and garment of the figure closely resemble a slightly earlier painting by Riza dated July 12, 1629 (20 Dhu'l Qa'da 1038), which also depicts a youth standing holding a tray of coffee cups. See Sheila R. Canby, *Rebellious Reformer: The Drawings and Paintings of Riza-yi Abbasi of Isfahan* (London, 1996), 158–59. The production of two similar images in a short span of time suggests that Riza or his clients were likely obsessed with the same figure for a while.
161. As noted by Goushegir, "Le café et les cafés en Iran," 150–51, the coffee pot depicted in Riza's painting is probably a representation of what Minorsky (*Tadhkirat al-mulūk*, 68 [English trans.], 51 [Persian text]) refers to as a *qarā-āftāba* (literally "black ewer"). It is mentioned as one of the items put in the care of the official responsible for the royal coffee department (*qahvakhāna*). The other items included: the coffee container (*qahva-dān*), coffee roaster (*qahva-biryān-kun*), cup (*pīyāla*), and tray (*sīnī*). The coffee pot also matches what Kaempfer refers to as the "copper tinned

- jar” used for mixing ground coffee with hot water. See n. 58 above.
162. Indeed, the fine quality of the outfit worn by the figure does not necessarily suggest that this scene derived from a courtly or private assembly. Sources mention that the young servers in coffeehouses wore garments embroidered with gold. See, for instance, Kotov, “Of a Journey to the Kingdom of Persia,” 20.
163. For a study of single-page paintings, see Massumeh Farhad, “Safavid Single-Page Painting, 1629–1666” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1987). In a similar but somehow more schematized painting signed by Muhammad Qasim, the name of an actual likeness is given. See Farhad, “Safavid Single-Page Painting,” 123.
164. Lisa Golombek et al., *Persian Pottery in the First Global Age: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden, 2014), 40–41. Also see Yolande Crowe, *Persia and China: Safavid Blue and White Ceramics in the Victoria & Albert Museum 1501–1738* (Switzerland: La Borie, and London, 2002), 263. Other new types of medium-sized vessels may have been used not just in private assemblies but also in public coffeehouses, for serving sweets and appetizers to clients.
165. Golombek et al., *Persian Pottery in the First Global Age*, 25.
166. See Sunil Sharma, “The City of Beauties in the Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 73–81. As Sharma notes, a higher degree of realism differentiates Safavid, as well as Mughal and Ottoman, *shahr’āshūb* poetry from earlier examples of the genre. On the development of the “Realist School” in Persian poetry, see also Paul Losensky, “Poetics and Eros in Early Modern Persia: *The Lovers’ Confession* and *The Glorious Epistle* by Muhtasham Kāshānī,” *Iranian Studies* 42, no. 5 (2009): 745–64.
167. Chardin, *Voyages*, 4:68.
168. Fryer, *New Account of East-India and Persia*, 345.
169. Tavernier, *Six Voyages*, 154.
170. Kotov, “Of a Journey to the Kingdom of Persia,” 21.
171. See Necipoğlu, “Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces,” 306–12. Among the urban spaces of Safavid Isfahan that were subject to the informal visits of Shah ‘Abbas, the coffeehouses were definitely the most public ones.
172. Habermas uses the concept of “representational publicness” to differentiate between the notion of public in European feudal society of the medieval era and the bourgeois public sphere. See Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 5–14.
173. See Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*.
174. Mīrzā Muḥammad Ṭāhir Vaḥīd Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i jahā-nārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, ed. Siyyid Sa’id Mīr Muḥammad Ṣādiq (Tehran, 1383 [2004]), 412–16.
175. *Pur az ahl-i dil u arbāb-i ‘irfān/Sarāsar ṣuffaha-yash mulk-i yūnān*. Mīr Nijāt Iṣfahānī, “Vaṣf-i Iṣfahān,” 371.
176. Kaempfer, *Am Hofe*, 149.
177. Ni’mat-Allāh Jazā’irī, Musakkin al-shujūn: Qum, Mar’ashī Library, Ms. 3442, fol. 70. Cited in Rasūl Ja’fariyān, *Sīyāsāt va farhang-i rūzgār-i ṣafāvī*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1388 [2009]), 2:1434.
178. Findiriskī, *Tuḥfat al-‘ālam*, 35–36.
179. Matthee, *Pursuit*, 242–43.
180. Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān b. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Khān Taḥvildār Iṣfahānī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Iṣfahān*, ed. Manūchīhr Sutūda (Tehran, 1342 [1963]), 120.
181. On the reappearance of the coffeehouse and the development of a public sphere under the Qajar dynasty in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Matthee, *Pursuit*, chapter 10.
182. Matthee, *Pursuit*, 159.
183. In his study of Ottoman coffeehouses, Mikhail suggests that “the café was a space that had more in common with the domestic world of the home than it did with the city, its street and its thoroughfares.” Mikhail, “Heart’s Desire,” 148–50. By contrast, the coffeehouses of Isfahan appear to have been enmeshed with the city’s urban life. The phenomenon of the neighborhood café, which was of immense social importance in Istanbul or Cairo, was negligible in Isfahan, where most of the coffeehouses functioned at the city level.
184. Matthee, *Pursuit*, 165.