

The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989. Edited by William Gervase Clarence-Smith and Steven Topik. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. xviii, 486; 10 illustrations. \$80.00 cloth, \$64.00 digital.

Coffee, central to many African economies today, percolated from Ethiopia to Yemen and on to the rest of the world beginning in the fifteenth century. Ethiopians began domesticating coffee for local consumption, and then for Muslim trade networks that branched from Yemen to Cairo and beyond to the Ottoman Empire. Yemenis began producing their own coffee midway through the sixteenth century,

supplying a small international market for urban coffeehouses that encompassed centers around the Mediterranean and east to India. Dutch colonialists began planting coffee in Java a century and a half later, and by the early eighteenth century coffee trees were taking root in Dutch and French colonial possessions around the globe. Réunion became a center of production, followed by Madagascar. As the African mainland succumbed to colonial control, coffee was introduced to new areas as an export crop and became a major source of income and contestation. The fortunes of African producers have oscillated with changing patterns of global demand, price changes in relation to supplies from dominant competitors in Brazil and elsewhere, and the colonial and postcolonial political transformations to which coffee has often served a key role.

William Clarence-Smith and Steven Topik have compiled a collection of essays that delves into the economic history of coffee as a commodity. Bridging the oceans, *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989*, provides perspectives on African coffee production in the context of an international trade that Africans have never controlled. Of special interest to Africanists are essays by Michel Tuchscherer about the Red Sea trade, Gwyn Campbell on Réunion and Madagascar, Andreas Eckert on Cameroon and the Kilimanjaro area of colonial Tanganyika, and Kenneth Curtis on Bukoba in western Tanganyika, in addition to contextualizing essays by Topik, Clarence-Smith, and Mario Samper.

The essays by Eckert and Curtis demonstrate the centrality of control over labor and land in African coffee economies. Colonial authorities were at best ambivalent about the spread of coffee to indigenous farms, focusing more on extraction of labor for settler farms and public works. Nevertheless, in areas that were geographically well suited to coffee, the crop increasingly came to primacy among small farmers during the first decades of the twentieth century. Early adopters in Tanganyika received seedlings and advice from missionaries and the occasional settler in Kilimanjaro, beginning in the first decade of the century. Because farms planted with coffee take many years to bear fruit, the crop did not begin to prove its potential profitability to most farmers until the next decade. By the 1920s, when the French administration in Cameroon began encouraging coffee production in the territory they had taken over from Germany, Tanganyikan highland farmers were planting as much coffee as they could. Campbell shows that coffee had a longer history in Madagascar, where it began as a plantation crop produced with conscripted labor in the mid-nineteenth century, but truly came into its own when indigenous production accelerated in the 1930s. Coffee was firmly established by the 1930s as a smallholder crop, principally a male crop that often heightened gender imbalances within the household, from Cameroon to Madagascar. The diverse experiences of these territories all reinforce Curtis's important observation that, absent forced labor, coffee in Africa was most successful on small farms that benefited from family labor, knowledge of the

microenvironment, and the ability to weather price fluctuations due to the simultaneous need to grow more nutritious crops. However, the prosperity associated with the coffee boom years led to countervailing efforts by authorities, both indigenous and colonial, to control production. Especially on Kilimanjaro, where the expansion of coffee bumped against the limits of land at the appropriate altitude, coffee contributed to social stratification and the emergence of a market for land as a fungible asset. Coffee became a prime subject for contestation between colonialists and new indigenous organizations that often played a catalytic role in African independence movements.

The book's specific case studies work together to provide an important overview of the social and political history of one global commodity. An Africanist might wish for additional geographic perspectives, notably some analysis of settler Kenya and modern Ethiopia, and a more systematic discussion of coffee and gender in Africa would build on chapters examining the topic for Asia and Latin America. A historical examination of coffee would also, as Curtis hints, do well to look at the African economies that emerged from the colonial experience. The postcolonial aftermath, as well as the effects of the recent *fin de siècle* specialty coffee boom, are subjects ripe for inclusion in the research agenda with which Topik and Clarence-Smith conclude their volume.

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