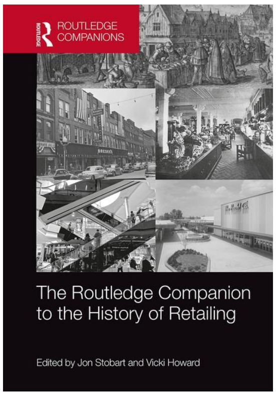

The Routledge Companion to the History of Retailing

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Caravanserai to Carrefour

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CARAVANSERAI TO CARREFOUR

The retail history of the Middle East, 600–present

Omar Foda

The burning of the Arcadia Mall and the looting of Carrefour in Cairo sit as peripheral events in the January 2011 movement in Egypt (Amar 2011; Press 2011; Chmaytelli 2015). The movement is remembered for the mass mobilisation of Egyptians in the country's squares, the iconic chants and signs and the steadfastness of the people in the face of tanks and tear gas. If any fire is associated with the movement it is the burning of the Napoleonic Institut d'Egypte (Press 2011). Nevertheless, the burning and looting of these venues in 2011 evokes the last time Cairo burned in 1952. In that year, as Nancy Reynolds details in *A City Consumed: Urban Commerce, the Cairo Fire, and the Politics of Decolonization in Egypt*, the fire-starters and looters targeted many European-style department stores and retail venues. The targeting was symbolic of the greater politicisation of retail during the decolonisation of Egypt. One could make the same proclamation about the targeting of Arcadia Mall and Carrefour. It signalled that retail and its venues were not collateral damage to the political happenings in Egypt, but were politicised as much as the squares, mosques and government buildings.

The politicisation of the retail sector in the Middle East, however, has not been limited to Egypt or the colonial/post-colonial period. From the very foundations of Islam until the present day, buying and selling, and the venues where these transactions took place, have been inseparable from the politics that surrounded them. This connection manifested itself in government regulation of retail spaces, countrywide boycott of products and active scenes of violence in retail venues. As I argue, there was never a time where retail was not a concern of those ruling and those hoping to rule. This connection was only amplified by the fact that mass consumption, and its attendant ideologies, erupted in a colonial context in the Middle East (Cohen 2004).

This political reality means that by analysing the typology of retail markets in the Middle East, we not only see who was selling what, and to whom, but grasp the historical interaction of state and society. Since retail markets generally abide by the rule of "sell what people want to buy", they offer a more honest look at the reality on the ground in the Middle East during the pre-modern, early modern, colonial and post-colonial eras.

Nevertheless, there are a few caveats with this study, which through a four-part analysis aims to map retail markets in the Middle East from 600 to the present. First, when I refer to the Middle East, I am referring to the area south of the Danube and north of Aden and between the Atlantic Ocean and the Indus river. Second, the topic of coverage is so large that

I can only discuss general trends and concepts. It goes without saying that exceptions exist for most everything discussed here. Third, the sources for this history are still being discovered. Much remains obscure, and perhaps will be forever so. This is especially the case with rural retailers, whose markets have generally remained outside the purview of study. Finally, the definition of retail I use is broad and applies to any venue that traded or sold goods to individual consumers.

Retail in the Islamic World, 600–1750

For the uninitiated, it may come as a surprise that the *Quran*, the foundational Islamic text, deals with such a mundane matter as trade, but this was standard practice for a religion that aimed to guide its followers in both worship and day-to-day activities. The *Quran* engages with the concept of trade on two levels. First, it frequently employs the vocabulary of the market in its teachings (O'Meara n.d.). For example, 'We shall set up scales of justice for the day of judgement' (Q 21:47) (O'Meara n.d.). Second, it lays out some of the basics of a religiously valid transaction.

The outlines of sale laid out in the *Quran* were supplemented by the *hadith*, the collection of sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. The *hadith* contains pertinent sayings on all variety of business-related matters, including: sales and trade; hiring; transference of a debt; business by proxy; loans; freezing of property; bankruptcy; and mortgaging (Bukhārī 1987).

From these two bases, an entire ruling structure emerged that blurred religious and secular authority, as did the legal system, Islamic Law (*shari'a*), that supported it (Constable 1994, p. 113). As a result, Muslim rulers from the seventh to the eighteenth centuries, in one way or other, were charged with the maintenance and protection of the *suq* (market, bazaar). The nature of their intervention could take varied forms. Leaders could step in to protect local food supplies, keep an eye on foreigners, prevent the export of certain goods or just to raise revenue (Constable 1994, p. 112). The involvement of the government in the market was best embodied in the position of the *muhtasib*, the market inspector, who was to make the relationship between retailer and buyer a fair and honest one.

The position of *muhtasib* was a feature of all Muslim empires from the eighth until the nineteenth century. Somewhere between a judge and chief of police, he would monitor prices and reprimand those who overcharged the rate set by the market. His methods of enforcement entailed beatings, parading offenders through the streets, confiscating faulty goods and even banishing repeat offenders from the markets. He was a government official, chosen for his outstanding moral probity and knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), although, unlike a *qadi* (judge), mastery was not required. He worked with the judges and police and would often have deputies to cover markets that were too large for one individual. However, his jurisdiction and interests were limited to the urban markets and even there, he did not have the power to determine prices. (Cahen *et al.* n.d.).

Under the Ottomans and the Persians, he took on additional functions like the enforcement of fixed prices (Turk. *narh*, Per. *tas'ir ajnas* list of fixed prices), which came either from a direct government order or through agreement with artisans (Floor 1987). While the *muhtasib* and the *narh* regulated prices, it was the institution of the guild that was the strongest regulator of artisans and retailers in the period from 1500 to 1750 (Faroqhi 2009, p. 31). Guilds appeared sometime during the fourteenth century in Persia and in the late fifteenth or sixteenth century in the Ottoman Empire and were involved in the production, marketing and taxing of crafts in urban areas (Rafeq 2008, p. 109). Guilds were generally organised hierarchically, with the headman (Tr. *kethüda/kahya*, Ar. sheikh, Per. *kadkoda*) at the top. Below the headman was the master (*al-ustadh* in Persian, shortened into *usta*, or *al-mu'allim* in Arabic), the journeyman (*al-sani'*) and the apprentice (*al-ajir* or *al-mubtadi'*) (Rafeq 2008, p. 108).

In Ottoman domains in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, guilds, in response to the greater cost of opening shops and less demand for their products, tried to limit the number of shops opened through the *gedik* system. A *gedik*, which meant "gap" or "slot", was a heritable 'workshop along with its contents, such as tools, instruments, raw materials and perhaps finished goods and the right to do business in this shop' (Faroqhi 2009, p. 119). It typically passed from father to son, or the top journeyman if the master craftsman had no son. It was a court-granted right and could not be bought or sold (Faroqhi 2009, p. 119). A similar institution appeared, called the *haqq-e bonica,* in Persia in the Qajar period for similar reasons, but was not as widespread as the *gedik* (Floor 1987).

Types of spaces

The *muhtasib*, the guilds, and the *gedik* were primarily urban institutions, but retail markets in the period from 600 to 1750 in the Islamic world went beyond the cities. Retail markets were generally organised in a solar central-place system (Clancy-Smith, 1994, p. 28; Barbara K. Larson 1985, p. 498). To understand what that means in the Middle Eastern context, it useful to map a typology from the rural exterior to the urban centre.

The terms *suq*, *çarşı* and bazaar roughly correspond to the English word "market". They, like the English term, could cover a vast array of places where commercial business happened, and, in some instances, even covered a single shop. Although there was a significant amount of overlap, the terms corresponded to the ruling language. Thus in Arabic speaking domains, *suq* predominated, in Ottoman domains, *çarşı*, and in Persianate domains, bazaar.

The simplest type of market, and the one located in the smallest rural population centres was the periodic market. Staged on private property, in exchange for a fee, it would meet on a designated day of the week and would be organised by product. Friday markets staged near the village mosque were quite popular because of their ability to draw people together, but these types of markets were not exclusive to that day nor to that locale. In fact, nearby markets would often co-ordinate their schedules so that a particular area could have a market every day of the week (Mohieddin 1998, pp. 302–303). They mainly provided the rural peasantry an opportunity to exchange locally produced agricultural products and household essentials (Larson 1985, p. 501). Besides peasants selling to other peasants, there were also probably Bedouins, professional village traders and local merchants.

As we move to a more densely populated area like a village or a town, the market maintained similar features (periodic, on private property, organised by product and dominated by the peasant), but everything was on a larger scale. In addition, the market featured products produced by local artisans (and guilds, after they appeared) and imported goods. These markets were also where agricultural goods would start moving up the chain towards urban centres. Merchants would move goods from these markets towards the provincial town, which sat at the centre of these small markets in a solar pattern (Larson 1985, p. 501).

As we move from the town, but before we reach the city, it was the *khan* that dominated. This was a one to two-story enclosed structure with fixed walls, a monumental gate, and an open courtyard with a water source. It was variably called a *khan, funduq, samsara, wakala, hawsh* and the most familiar caravanserai, and was an essential feature of commerce in the Islamic world between 600 and 1750 (Bianquis *et al.* n.d.). The *khans* dotted the trade routes of the Islamic world in the intermediary spaces between centres of populations. They served as the junction point between rural and foreign production and urban consumption (Elisséeff n.d.). In this capacity, their most critical role was as a safe haven and way station for caravans and other overland traders. Their solid walls, limited entrances, and access to water meant that they could be closed off from the surrounding world, keeping the goods, horses and merchants safe in isolated areas.

Although they were vital to the flow of goods through the paths of trade in the Islamic world, *khans* were also a feature of its urban spaces. In the city, the *khan* was, as opposed to a way point, the endpoint or a depot (Elisséeff n.d.). There, a large amount of merchandise could be sold either semi-wholesale or retail and distributed to the markets throughout the city. Depending on the city, it could be situated at the gates or inside of them, but there was always a connection to the world outside. The features that made it an ideal safe haven on trade routes made it an excellent segregation point for the rulers of the city. They were a place where rulers could tax or tariff goods, isolate undesirables or house foreign merchants and their goods (Elisséeff n.d.). They were also a place where *muhtasib* could verify the quality of the goods to be sold. The use of the market as an administrative site in the city paralleled the rural markets, which were also places to collect taxes and perform other administrative duties (Mohieddin 1998, p. 308). Beyond the *khan*, the urban retail scene in the Islamic world from 600 to 1750 was characterised by two common institutions: permanent booths and covered markets.

These urban markets, would be under the watch of the *muhtasib* and had their own guilds. However, this would change as the Ottoman Empire and Persia were fully integrated into the European world market in the eighteenth century. This integration would mark the rise of the merchants as the true masters of the market. This is not to say that they did not have significant power, especially with regards to prices and goods sold, prior to this point (Hanna 1998). But these merchants existed within the confines of the governmental systems of the Islamic world, confines they would break, with the help of European powers, after 1750.

Retail Colonialism, 1750–1950

The solar organisation of the retail markets in the Middle East changed after 1750, when they were integrated into the European world economy (Kasaba 1988, pp. 11–35). The most significant development of this integration was that control of the markets moved from the hands of the government into the hands of the merchants. This transition, a defining feature of the period from 1750 to 1950 and one that was happening organically in America at roughly the same time, was the result of the free trade imperialism of the European powers, summarised by the phrase, 'trade with informal control if possible; trade with rule when necessary' (Gallagher and Robinson 1953, p. 13; Leach 1994; Howard 2015, pp. 1–51). Across the Middle East, European merchants, and the governments that backed them, sought cheaper sources of raw materials, new locales for investment and new markets for their goods. The keystone to these actions was securing favourable trade agreements between the governments. The clearest and most widespread example were the capitulations (*imtiyazat*) (Wansbrough *et al.* n.d.). These were trade agreements the Ottoman and Persian governments, in their early years, made with foreign merchants to ensure safe passage and trade. As their geopolitical position weakened in relation to Europe, these concessions (reduced taxes and tariffs, special legal status, etc.) grew to be more favourable for Europeans. They were then formalised in treaties, the Treaty of Balta Liman (1838, Ottoman) and the Treaty of Turkomānčāy (1828, Qajars). Part of this process was the expansion of the populations covered by this protection from just European merchants and ambassadors to protégés – residents who had acquired, sometime through purchase, the rights (*berat*) granted to Europeans (van den Boogert n.d.). Once these trade deals were signed, foreign merchants, those with foreign status, and even well-connected local merchants, became the real drivers of the markets in the Middle East.

The primacy of merchants significantly altered the reality of retail markets in the Middle East. Most importantly, it changed the rural-urban market structure. Where previously it consisted of small rural markets circled around entrepôts, which then circled major cities, it became dendritic. This meant that rural markets became bulking centres for raw material exports, which were then sent to one of the few major cities of the territory regardless of distance (Tunis, Algiers, Cairo, Oran, Istanbul, etc.). As for the small periodic markets, they became more interconnected with each other, but decoupled from these larger markets. They ultimately came only to serve the subsistence needs of the peasantry (Larson 1985, p. 516). This change in market connectivity was intertwined in the physical restructuring of the territories, a process funded by reforming Middle Eastern rulers and European powers, but directed by merchants. The transformation took the form of building infrastructure to better connect internal bulking centres to the major cities and the external markets and of reshaping, rebuilding or reorienting the major cities.

Infrastructure building, in this period, mainly concerned constructing roads, railroads, bridges and ports. For reforming rulers, especially the Ottomans, this infrastructure work was meant to "reformulate mechanisms of governance" (Çelik 2008, p. 69). They hoped to have better control of their provinces through a more mobile military, and better transport of goods inside and outside of the empire. Imperial powers, on the other hand, saw this infrastructure building as a method of enrichment, conquest, and colonisation (Çelik 2008, p. 69). As for the urban restructuring of this period, the European powers and reforming rulers were guided by Hausmanian ideals of cleanliness and sanitation and the hope of better movement through the city, especially for new technologies like the tram. They viewed the market areas as prime targets of "modernization". They hoped to replace the "traditional" *suq*, as they called it, with its narrow passageways and labyrinthine design, with wide boulevards and squares dotted with arcades (Çelik 2008, p. 72).

The difference in aims, plus technologic superiority, meant that European powers were more effective in their infrastructure projects. They were also playing with a stacked deck, as much of the reformers' infrastructure building was either financed by foreign powers, or carried out by companies that had little allegiance to the state. In fact, this "modernisation" work of Middle Eastern reformers often set the territory on the path of colonisation or total loss of fiscal autonomy, as it was underwritten by European powers and their merchants (Pamuk 1987). We see this pattern in the colonisation of Tunisia (France, 1881), Egypt (Britain, 1882) and Morocco (1884, Spain; and 1904, France).

When these territories came under European control, the odds were stacked even further in the favour of merchants. Thus we see the outflanking of the urban guilds, who they deemed an impediment to their work (Faroqhi 2009, p. 119). We also see a change in agricultural business, leading to the privatisation of land, the growth of large absentee landholders and merchants making profits as middlemen and landholders themselves (Shields 2008, pp. 48–54). Interestingly, the prominence of merchants also worked against the concept of the dual city, i.e. a city with a "modern" European centre cordoned off from a "backwards" native periphery, that framed much colonial architecture. The most severe example of the desire for a dual colonial structure is French colonialism in North Africa. In fact, this dual city was a distinctive feature of the French colonial experience in the Middle East (Reynolds 2012, pp. 18–19).

Nevertheless, the urban retail markets themselves contravened this duality and were characterised by the bleeding of the two together. Albert Camus noted, dismissively, that the shops of Oran combined 'all the bad taste of Europe and the Orient' (Horne 2006, pp. 47–48). With respect to the goods in the market, "foreign" goods would not be limited to the "foreign" sectors of town and would make their way in to the "traditional" markets of the city (Çelik 1986, p. 160). Thus you would find socks, shoes, buttons and tarbushes in the markets of the "medieval" city. Likewise, upscale and "European" shoppers, who were supposed to be segregated in their sections, would frequent the *suq* based on better prices and the presence of certain "authentic" and "traditional" goods.

However, it was not a one-way process. The foreign retail markets could also not keep out the elements of the native markets. Native-style markets would appear adjacent to European-style markets and serve a complementary role (Srougo 2011). In addition, flea markets and informal markets, supplied by smuggling or counterfeits, offered the latest styles, lower prices and the ability to create a modern look on a budget (Reynolds 2012, pp. 41–46). Even the assumed enclave of the Western residents and their imitators, the department store, was not exempt. With its location in the heart of the city, its doors were open to more than foreigners and the elite, but all residents. Residents who, if they had the money, could shop at these department stores for special occasions like weddings and the 'ids (Reynolds 2012, p. 71–72).

This mixing was also seen in the ownership of retail venues. While there were a few venues that were easily identifiable as either foreign or native, that is, exclusively owned and run by colonists or long-tenured Muslims, many more reflected a mixed transnational reality. It was particularly the migrants and non-Muslim populations that played with this boundary. The stereotype of this group was the retail merchant who used his foreign status (what at first was a *berat*, and came to be called protégé status) to amass a large fortune, and who participated in the colonisation of the country (Schreier 2012). Nevertheless, some of these merchants, especially the non-Muslim populations, felt strong attachment to their territories and were fully enmeshed in them (Miller 2011).

This period, termed the first globalisation, also brought a large working and lower-class foreign-born population to the Middle East (Kozma *et al.* 2015). This group joined the working and lower-class population of non-Muslims, who were more concerned with making a living than grand projects of colonisation. The retail venues they established or worked in reflected a hybrid identity. These were ventures that may have sold Western-style goods and may have been located in Western cordons of the city, but were ventures that had no real connection to foreign powers and carried markers (names, staff and products) that separated them from these powers. For example, the Circurel Department store in Cairo was founded by Sephardic Jews from Izmir, who, by 1947, considered themselves Egyptian citizens (Reynolds 2012, p. 58).

But beyond the passive resistance of cultural mixing and boundary crossing, retail markets also became venues of active resistance. There were hints of this change prior to World War I. Examples include the 1891 nationwide tobacco protest in Iran in the face of the government's concessions to the British and the 1908 boycott of Austrian goods in the Ottoman Empire to protest the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Keddie 2006, pp. 61–63; Reynolds 2012, p. 84). This trend grew as colonialism engulfed the region after the end of World War I. The end of the war brought the divvying up the Ottoman Empire and marked the appearance of the Wilsonian rhetoric of the self-determination of nations. This trend spurred on burgeoning nationalist movements across the Middle East and the world. A distinguishing feature of these anti-colonial movements was boycotts (Breen 2004, p. 20; Reynolds 2012, p. 82). They were, in fact, one of the only ways that colonial subjects could fight the power of colonial states. Boycotts could take the form of abstaining from foreign goods or buying local (Shoham 2013). These anti-consumerist actions popularised the idea that all products had a nationality and that this nationality should play a role in their purchase (Reynolds 2012, p. 83). Retail and retail choices were not value neutral, but could be part of a larger struggle to guarantee the future or identity of a country (Shoham 2013).

As a result, there appeared a new entrant into the retail typology of the colonial Middle East: the national retailer. This retailer and his success, in opposition to the foreign retailer, would help build the country and strike at foreign powers. These retailers also reflected a new assertion of national identity, as their consumers were not broad categories, but citizens of a country (Peter 2004). This push for nationalist retailers not only led to the establishment of new "national" venues, but led others to rebrand with a "national" name or some just to stock and promote national products as a way to capitalise on this new feeling. The result of these movements in the period from the 1920s until the 1950s was that wealthy locals (especially Muslims) entered into partnerships with foreign entrepreneurs or protégés to claim some of the profits of the retail market while attaching a national name to their product (Vitalis 1995). Likewise, many protégés shifted the identity of their establishments or the products that they sold towards the national. This especially comes through in their advertisements, which grew tremendously in this period (Shechter 2005). Thus we see advertisements for Egyptian socks, Syrian textiles and Jewish bananas (Reynolds 2011; Shoham 2013).

However, these actions did not represent a radical disjuncture with the preceding period. Yes, there was more space for local industry, "national" brands, and local entrepreneurs, but its effects were mainly limited to the upper classes. Thus it was men like Ahmed Farghaly Pasha, a scion of an Egyptian cotton family, or Fu'ad Saba, a Palestinian businessman who benefited tremendously (Seikaly 2016, pp. 28–29). There were also gains for the urban middle classes as native workers were given positions over the foreign (Shechter 2006, pp. 104–110). How much change this actually produced in the workforce is up for debate as the very definitions of "native" and "foreign" were being defined and redefined in this period (Foda 2014). Regardless, large swaths of the populations, especially the majority of the rural population were excluded from this uplift.

By the end of the colonial period, we are left with a retail market that reflected the economic reality of the colonial Middle East. In many urban areas there was a well-developed hybrid retail sector where consumers could produce a distinctively "native" style that was a mélange of the best of the boutiques and the *suq*. These consumers were likewise drawn from a developing middle class and well-established upper class. Nevertheless, there remained a large number of urban and rural poor.

Both middle and upper-class individuals recognised the economic inequity that colonialism had brought to the Middle East, and they both had solutions. The men of capital believed that the nation would be saved by the growth of an economy that they would lead, a free market economy guided by capital accumulation and consumer moderation (Seikaly 2016, p. 46). The middle class, who would come to control the governments of decolonisation, would see it another way. Governments would develop the economy, and the nation itself, by excising colonialists, predatory merchants and businessmen, and smashing the control of large landholders.

The retail of developmentalism, 1950–1990

The boycotts of the late colonial era transformed consumption, and thus retail, into a battlefield. It is no surprise then that in the decolonising Middle East, retail, among other things, would be a target of efforts to slough off the colonial yoke. One of the first and most violent examples is detailed by Nancy Reynolds in *A City Consumed*. As she describes it, some of the most prominent targets for the looting and fire-starting of the 1952 Cairo fire were retail shops (Reynolds 2011, pp. 186–187).

This ire represented the full enunciation of the ideologies that underlay the previous era's boycotts, that retailers, especially those carrying "foreign" names and "foreign" products were embodiments of the exploitation of the colonial powers. This feeling was especially powerful in the urban middle class, who would carry through much of the fight against colonisation in the Middle East and would take control of the seats of the power in many post-colonial governments (Eppel 2004, p. 152).

The policies of post-colonial governments charted a course of developmentalism. As Joel Beinin describes it, this was a World Bank and IMF-supported 'economic strategy based on import-substitution industrialization: replacing imported consumer goods with domestically manufactured products targeted to local markets and protecting uncompetitive "infant industries" with high tariff barriers' (Beinin 2016, p. 41). This strategy could also include 'government redistribution of large landholdings to increase the purchasing power of poor' and middling farmers, and state-led economic development through investment in key economic sectors, public utilities and industry (Beinin 2016, p. 41).

Developmentalism's most prominent example was Arab Socialism and its figurehead Gamal Abdel Nasser. Socialism, especially of the Arab kind, was very appealing to a region that looked to chart a third course in an increasingly bi-polar world. This appeal was only increased by Nasser's strong stance in the Suez crisis (Vandewalle 2006, p. 80). It is then not surprising that we saw some variety of this ideology in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq and Syria (Issawi 1982, p. 180). However, developmentalism was not only limited to those countries that committed to Arab socialism. Many of its policies were features of the economic initiatives of Israel, Turkey, Iran, Jordan and the Gulf countries in the 1950s, 60s and 70s (Issawi 1982, p. 180). Iran deserves special notice, because its developmentalism, under Khomeini, was covered with an Islamic reformism and anti-western, anti-consumerist ideology (Webb *et al.* 2005)

In the eyes of post-colonial governments, retailers, especially those with the foreign taint, did little but extract precious resources from the native population in exchange for non-essential and "foreign" goods. It is then no surprise that these retailers were swept up in the government nationalisations that were a feature of this era (Addi 2006). Nevertheless, these post-colonial governments recognised that their plans of import substitution would only work with concomitant growth in the consumption of the goods that they were producing. From this realisation emerged a new retail entity in the Middle East, the government retailer.

In its most ideal form, this would be a retailer, which was part of a large government organisation or collective, that sold the consumer goods of another government industry. For example, in Egypt, the nationalised department store Sidnawi could sell *Ideal* brand washers, refrigerators, etc., whose producer was part of a larger economic organisation for consumer goods, which was under the control of the Egyptian government (Abaza 2006a, pp. 92–93). If there was not a large store to sell these goods, then the government would create one, like the Souk el-Fellah (Peasant's Market) in Algeria (Troin 1990, p. 90). This type of retailer was the full realisation of the "national" retailer from the colonial era.

There was also another government-controlled retailer, the state co-operative. They would draw their products from government-planned agriculture and industry. These, often in combination with rationing, were meant to make sure that the population, one that was primarily agrarian and poor, received the "essentials". What these essentials were varied, but would typically include foodstuffs and things like petrol, soap, sugar, etc. (Amuzegar 1993, p. 79; Abaza 2006a, pp. 153–154). Another aspect of this social net, which affected not only government co-operatives but small retailers more generally, was subsidies. These subsidies which set the prices of certain commodities were meant to ensure that all people received their "daily bread" (Amuzegar 1993, p. 79). Nevertheless, the small retailers who existed before developmentalism, persisted afterwards as they carried the badge of "authenticity" and were not big enough to draw the eye of the government. This meant that the small urban shops, peddlers, and rural periodic markets that existed before remained relatively unchanged. Nevertheless, government products replaced the foreign products that may have been present, and any staples sold were subsidised.

A problem with these government retailers, and one of the problems with import substitution, was that the success of a company was viewed through how much it produced, not how effectively it was able to meet the demands of a population (Shechter 2008, p. 576). Simultaneously, demand for products was growing globally as the US led the world into an era of mass consumption in the 1950s (Schayegh 2012).

It was the informal market that filled in for this demand. For example, in Egypt we have the appearance of a social institution called the *tujjar al-shunta* (bag merchants). These were primarily woman peddlers who sold smuggled fabrics, clothes, perfumes, crèmes, pullovers and underwear at affordable prices (Abaza 2006a, p. 123). However, it was not only in Egypt, as there were examples of strong informal markets in Algeria, Jordan, Turkey and several other countries (Doan 1992; Varcin 2000). Informal retail was part of the informal structures that appeared throughout the Middle East in response to another aspect of developmentalism in the region, the ruling party's domination of the state (Joffé 2002).

Informal markets and subsidies would continue, and be bolstered, as the region made a transition away from developmentalism. The first step away from this was the 1967 Arab defeat, which discredited Pan-Arab nationalism and Arab socialism. This defeat, however, was a massive boon for the Israeli economy, as they opened up new markets and cheap labour by occupying Gaza and the West Bank (Owen 1998, p. 181). They also saw a massive increase in defence spending and American aid, which both helped fuel the economy.

Nevertheless, Israel suffered, like European countries and America, in the 1973–5 recession and the subsequent period of stagflation (Beinin 2016, p. 60). This set of events would push the World Bank and the IMF, which were guided by America and Western Europe, away from developmentalism as a supportable strategy. They declared it a failure and moved towards the idea that reorienting towards foreign markets with a focus on exports would save the countries of the global south.

The countries in the Middle East and North Africa made some initial moves to the new world consensus, but they did not carry out any of the truly drastic measures of "structural readjustment" (massively reducing government budgets, privatising public institutions and removing trade exemptions and tariffs) as they were buttressed by the oil boom of the 1970s. The boom supported both the oil-rich countries (The Gulf Countries, Iraq, Algeria, etc.) and the oil-poor, who relied heavily on the remittances of workers in these oil-rich countries (Beinin 2016, pp. 58–60). The hallmarks of developmentalism would continue until, and sometimes after, the oil bust of the 1980s, which would force many of the countries of the region to turn to the world financial institutions (The World Bank and IMF) and accede to the "Washington Consensus" and its requisite Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program (ERSAP) (Beinin 2016, pp. 94–95).

It is at this point that the retail markets in the Middle East and North Africa started to move away from government retail towards neoliberal retail. This transition to neoliberalism meant a reintegration of retail markets into a global free-trade economy (Springer *et al.* 2016). It also entailed governments ceding control of the markets, over which they had just had gained control, back to merchants.

Neoliberal retail, 1990–present

The end of developmentalism and acceptance of the Washington Consensus was meant to "free" the markets of the Middle East and North Africa. It did, in the sense that it opened up the

Middle East to foreign direct investment, eased the process for the establishment of private businesses and lowered the trade barriers of the countries in the Middle East. But what did this mean for retail markets?

The changes are best encapsulated in three additions to the typology of the retail market. These were the retail chain, the hypermarket and the shopping centre, which were not present in the Middle East prior to the 1980s and 90s (Vignal 2007, p. 69). Retail chains were outposts of a typically foreign brand, i.e., McDonalds, Pizza Hut, Cinnabon. The hypermarket, on the other hand, was a large store that housed everything under one roof, a one-stop shop. Walmart was probably the most famous example of a hypermarket, but it was Carrefour, in conjunction with Majid al-Futaim (a Dubai-based holding company), that was probably the most famous in the region (Elsheshtawy 2006, p. 242).

The shopping centre was a structure that housed large stores, even department stores, selling a wide variety of goods and services. The shopping centre typically contained retail chains and hypermarkets. Each of these venues differentiated themselves from the "traditional" markets with their claims of cleanliness (tiled floors, glass windows), organisation (well-marked signage and directions), safety (video cameras and security) and ease of movement (wide thoroughfares, the presence of escalators and elevators) (al-Otaibi 1990; Markowitz and Uriely 2004, p. 28; Abaza 2006a, p. 274). In addition, these venues often would come as part of larger government projects of "beautification" (Singerman 2007).

Despite the fact that most of these venues were either western brands or Western-style venues, they typically functioned through license agreements and direct investment relationships between local and regional entrepreneurs and foreign investors (Vignal 2007, p. 69). In this respect, we see similarities with the pre-developmentalism era, especially when we consider that the group of local and regional entrepreneurs was comprised of the economic elite, governmental cronies and wealthy Gulf merchants. The other similarity is that these stores were aimed at urban and suburban middle and upper-class shoppers. These goals fit with the general economic trends of the post-developmental Middle East. Governments "freed" the markets, but at the expense of economic equality and the social support programs of the developmentalism era (Shechter 2009).

The results of this reality were starkly portrayed in the suburbs. Here shopping centres, filled with chains and hypermarkets, sat near exclusive suburban gated developments. They were only accessible through cars and thus presented one of the most exclusive retail locations in the Middle East (Abaza 2006b, p. 205). These venues were in sharp contrast to the periodic markets that existed on the peripheries of the city (Singerman 2007).

Bearing a striking similarity to the periodic markets that had been a feature of rural retail since pre-modern times, these markets served the low-income populations living in the informal housing on the edges of the city. Their resemblance to the rural market was not coincidental, but represented a distinct feature of urbanisation in the post-1980 Middle East. The majority entering the city and remaining in its periphery were rural people looking for greater opportunities in the face of the suffering agricultural sectors of the economy.

However, it would be incorrect to conclude that the introduction of these retail institutions created a new dual society. In a manner similar to what we saw prior to the 1950s, the retail market on the ground was both a site of cultural hybridisation and active resistance (Marr 2012, pp. 358–359). First, these shopping centres and hypermarkets did not replace the retail markets that existed before (Abdelghani 2013, p. 246). Rather, consumers incorporated them into their other retail habits. Each historical locus of retail, the *suq*, the colonial market, the subsidised government retailer, carried associations and identities that a consumer performed when he or she entered (Vicdan 2015).

Second, as these new shopping centres became part of the urban and suburban fabric, periodic markets grew up around them (Abaza 2006a, p. 258). Their product offerings were complementary or competitive with those offered in the mall – cellphones, entertainment devices and other electronics alongside clothes and other dry goods – but much more affordable (Ilahiane and Sherry 2008). The organisation of these informal markets resembled the rural retail markets, and contravened the government's "modernization" projects for their cities (Abaza 2006a, p. 258). They were part of the growth in the informal sector that neoliberalism brought to the Middle East (Doan 1992).

The ruralisation of the urban retail market was matched by the urbanisation of the rural markets (Troin 1990, p. 88). The periodic market remained the primary way that the rural populace acquired its consumer goods. However, these periodic markets grew to carry not only agricultural livestock and produce, but cheap imported dry goods (clothes, toys, appliances, etc.), arriving from urban centres (Troin 1990, p. 88). These markets also remained important points of local political organisation and social regulation (Mohieddin 1998, p. 309). In addition to the presence of imported goods in these rural markets, another significant change was that there were more permanent shops in rural towns and the in-between spaces between cities. These shops typically sold imported goods, but of a higher quality than those in the periodic markets (Mohieddin 1998, p. 308)

But it was not only on the outsides of the markets and cities, where the local population asserted themselves in the face of new retail realities. Since many of these shopping centres and supermarkets were urban they witnessed what Jillian Schwedler and Rodney Collins term transversals (Schwedler 2010). These shopping centres, as well as the periodic markets that formed around them, had porous boundaries between "foreign" and "native", which Middle Eastern residents of all social levels traversed. Their placement in the city centre meant that to keep the "wrong" people out was difficult, if not impossible.

Beyond population demographics, there was also the growing presence of Islam within these new shopping venues. As the region abandoned developmentalism for the neoliberal market orientation, it also suffered an identity crisis. The middle-class modernity that had been the dominant discourse since the late nineteenth century and saw its apotheosis in Arab socialism, was no longer workable in a post-developmental Middle East (Shechter 2008, p. 578). The policies that undergirded the middle class were slashed or under attack and its ideologues were impoverished, imprisoned or exiled. Although the governments pushed Middle Eastern countries towards a market orientation, this move was not typically met with the same ideological support that developmentalism was. Most governments after 1970 were ideologically very flexible and more concerned with their continued rule of the country, and profits from it, than articulating strong positions.

Into this void entered another take on modernity that had been simmering since the 1920s, but had been pushed aside by Arab nationalism and socialism – Islamic reformism (Starrett 1998). This Islamic modernity pushed Islamisation as the solution to the troubling realities of the Middle East after the 1980s: income disparities, the disassembling of the social safety net and repressive governments (Göle 2000). This Islamic modernity was not generally anti-capitalist, socialist or isolationist (Shechter 2011). Rather it meant to show how Islam could solve the ills of the new global market economy while also allowing countries to enjoy its benefits. It did not argue with the ends of market orientation, merely the means.

This ideology was helped in many ways by the success of Saudi Arabia in the 1970s. The Saudi ruling regime, which was heavily imbricated with the Wahhabi sect of Islam, one of the earliest and most severe reformist movements, did much to present a workable model of an Islamic capitalist economy. This ability to provide a template was especially clear in their early treatment of retail venues. Shopping centres, hypermarkets and other retail venues were at the vanguard of Saudi Arabian commercial evolution and urbanisation. However, they only entered under the terms of the government, who controlled the purse strings. This meant that they would be internationally structured and follow the latest trends in retail architecture, but also bear local – traditional names, match the local daily pace – shops closed for an afternoon break as well as prayer breaks – and facilitate state regulation of *halal* and price (Shechter 2011, p. 379). Although they would soon come to be one of the few public spaces Saudi women could inhabit, they were also the homes to the semi-official morality police and other community gatekeepers that kept them as places of enforcement of strict religious observance (Shechter 2011, p. 379).

Saudi Arabia provided a ready model for those who looked to reconcile the new global world and their desire for an Islamic life. It was a model that many would witness firsthand as Saudi Arabia served as the locus of internal Middle Eastern migrants profiting from the oil boom and sending home remittances. This group, and their Saudi-influenced ideologies, would come to replace the old middle class as the emergent middle section in Middle Eastern societies and would further bolster this Islamic modernity (Shechter 2009, pp. 34–35). But it was not only returning migrant workers who aided this movement, but the wealth of Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf Countries. Their investment in other Middle Eastern countries, often times in the form of retail venues, was coupled with support of those local movements that would embrace their particular brand of Islamic reformism.

The result of this social movement is that Islam and retail became readily connected in the Middle East. Islamic retail took two forms in the markets in the Middle East. The first was the commodification of religious products. By that, I mean those products with 'direct association with acts of worship, as with prayer beads, or, more commonly, their bearing of sacred images or writing, often only the single word "Allah" or "Muhammad"' (Gregory Starrett 1995, p. 53). This group could include 'bumper stickers, keychains, posters, board games, jigsaw puzzles, colouring books, fans, clocks, framed Qur'anic verses, banners, greeting cards, decorative items in ceramic, brass, wood, cloth, and paper' (Gregory Starrett 1995, p. 53).

The second form is that of Islamized products, services and venues. In this mould, we see things like Islamic socks, Islamic ties, hijabi dolls, Islamic business associations, Islamic malls and Islamic banks (Abaza 2006a, pp. 198–204; Meneley 2007; Shirazi 2016, p. 23). Despite their names, all of these retail features are a messy mix of Islamic and neoliberal capitalist features and cannot be easily classified as products of either (Gökarıksel and Secor 2016). They are creations of the post-developmental Middle East and are thoroughly enmeshed in the retail venues discussed above. In these new shopping centres and hypermarkets, you can find stores selling Islamic goods, funded by Islamic banks and bearing Islamic names. You can even find shopping centres and hypermarkets that are "Islamic".

Finally, while governments may have abandoned developmentalism, the idea that consumption and the markets where it takes place are political battlegrounds did not disappear. The first and most famous example of this is the Bread Intifada in Egypt in 1977. When the Egyptian government tried to cut subsidies on sugar, tea, flour, rice and cooking oil, riots broke out in urban centres around the country. Clashes between security forces and demonstrators killed seventy-three, injured 800 and lead to arrest of 1,270 (Beinin 2016, pp. 96–97). It was not only Egypt, but Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan and Morocco that saw the manifestations of this return (Owen 1998, p. 191; Holden 2009, p. 215; Perkins 2013, p. 173). But it was not only riots over commodities that showed that the market was a battlefield. One particularly potent example was the bombing of the Dizengoff mall in Tel-Aviv on Purim in 1996. Malls, like cafes and discos, were potent targets for attack because they embodied the material privilege of the winners in the market (Carmeli and Applbaum 2004, p. 13).

The turn to neoliberalism was not solely an outside imposition, but an attempt to meet the demands of the population that no longer desired austerity, but demanded consumption. However, this came at the cost of the steps towards economic equality that developmentalist governments had taken. The clearest signal of this was the informal markets that grew in tandem with shopping centres and the Islamic ventures that featured in these places. The uniting factor between these two seemingly opposed retail features was that they both agreed that the system was broken and needed a different path. Soon mass movements, which concurred that the system was broken, would appear across the Middle East. Many of these movements would carry slogans and ideas that showed the continued political nature of retail in the Middle East. It is no surprise that one of the most well-known Egyptian slogans began with a demand for "Bread!"

Conclusion

The Arab Uprisings of 2011/2 were historic events, but did little to arrest the retail trends of the previous decades. In the years since, shopping centres and hypermarkets have been built, informal markets persist, and Islamic neoliberal institutions have grown. Nevertheless, they did mark a significant milestone in the social power of Internet technologies. Although they did not cause the movement, Internet technologies did have a well-observed impact (Kraidy 2016). The disbursement of these technologies has only grown since the uprisings, and this offers some interesting retail futures.

Most notably, online retail offers two powerful pathways. First, it empowers the informal retailers. As evidenced by a site like Etsy, one only needs an Internet connection and a camera to sell products directly to consumers. Online retail offers the ability to subvert the powered interests that necessitate the informal market (Ilahiane 2013). Second, the Internet provides connectivity to a global community. It not only offers larger world markets, but the ability to find like-minded individuals. In the case of retailers who prioritise the Islamic, the Internet offers the ability to tap into those within the Middle East and the world who are looking to assert their Islamic identity through their participation in the neoliberal world market (Abaza 2006a; Meneley 2007, pp. 198–204; Ilahiane 2013; Shirazi 2016, p. 23).

As I have shown, retail in the Middle East occurred on the ground in ways that defy or counter assumptions. There were "traditional" markets that showed significant dynamism, dual retail colonial scenes that in fact were a synthesis of foreign and native and Islamic retailers who were a mélange of Islamic and neoliberal ideas. Likewise, the arrival of one form of retail did not annihilate the previous model. Thus, while a fully developed online retail system in the Middle East may solve some problems, it will not be detached from the realities in place. But, regardless of the actual outcome, like the *suq*, the department store and shopping centre, this retail venue will be deeply imbricated in the politics of the day.

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