

CoffeeLovers

ISSUE 60

magazine



Building Yemen's Future with Coffee

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Building Yemen's Future Through Coffee

Joseph Robertson



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FEATURE INTRO
**Sharing Yemen
Bringing It All Together**

Joseph Robertson



BOOK PREVIEW
**Where Humans and
Coffee Began PART 6**

Steven P. Unger



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**Episodes Featuring
Yemeni Coffee**

Joseph Robertson & Jesse Nelson

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

From the Editor

Joseph Robertson

**Coffee and War, Cancer,
Cinnamon Cake, More...**

This Month in Coffee

Coffee Tastes



Fruit

The taste of fruit in coffee is common, as coffee itself is a fruit. The natural sugars of the coffee fruit are transmitted into the bean, both while growing and during processing. If you desire more and stronger fruit flavors in your brewed coffee, seek out naturally processed coffees.



Crema

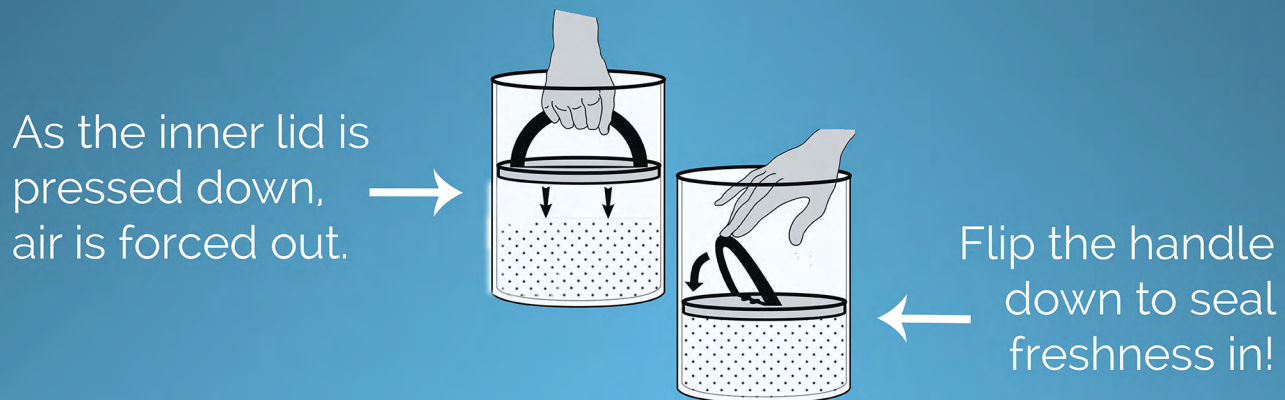
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THE MOCCAMASTER

by Technivorm

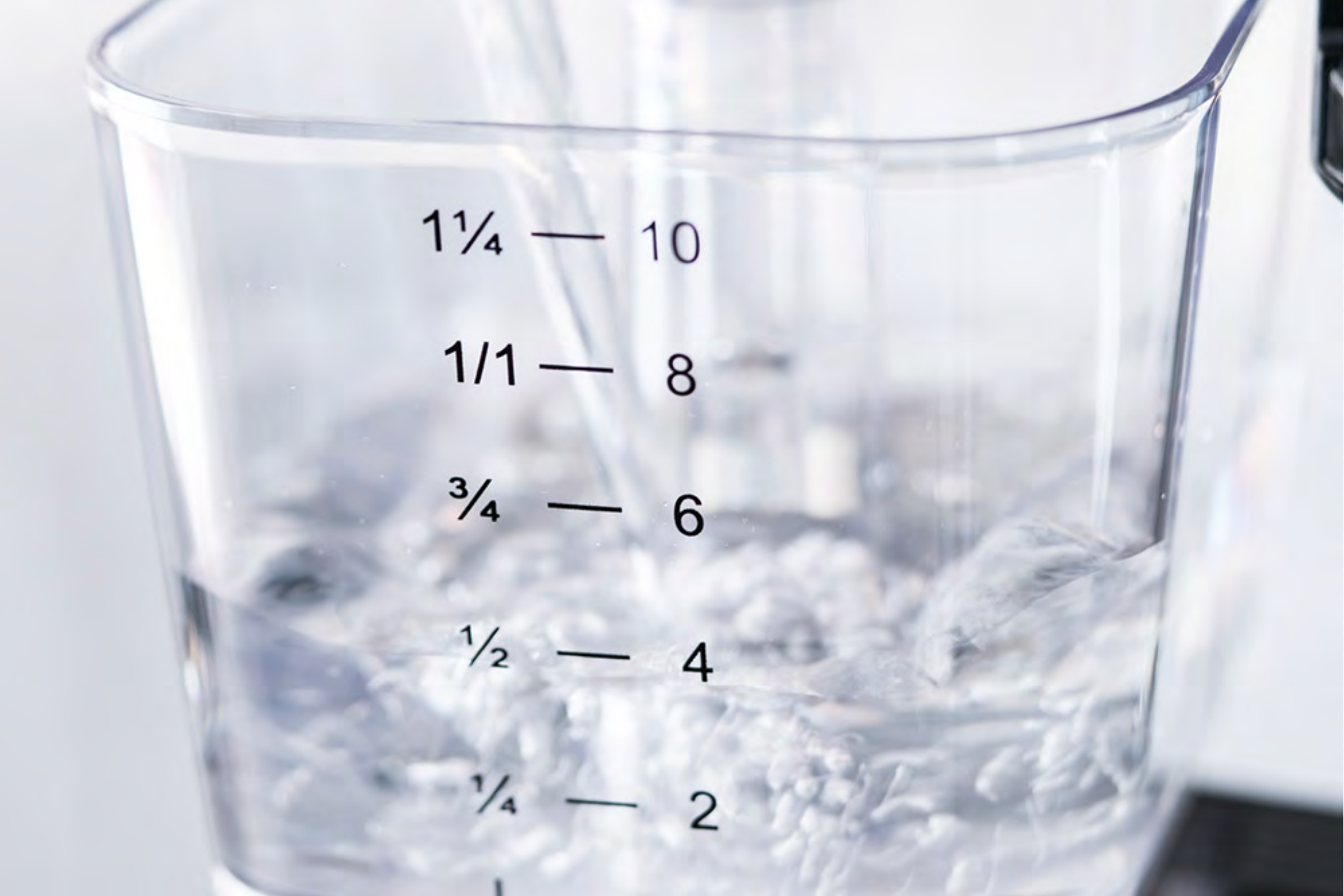
THERE IS A COMMON MISCONCEPTION; Auto-drip coffee brewers suck. This is what I thought, and was also my experience when I started getting into brewing and exploring high quality fresh roasted coffee.

It's understandable. When I started off, I was using hand brewing methods. I would meticulously coax out the delicate aromas and tastes of freshly roasted specialty coffee. In contrast, a cheap plastic drip brewer often couldn't even make the coffee taste enjoyable.

My opinion on auto brewers was flipped completely on its head when I discovered the European quality of Moccamaster. I remember the first time having a coffee on one of the brewers, I was skeptical. I brewed a coffee with which I was familiar. I knew all the aromas, the tastes, and the delight that this freshly brewed coffee could bring me. The first sip from the Moccamaster...



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And my views completely changed. All the flavor, all the aroma, all the complexity and freshness that I wanted out of the coffee was there.

It turns out, most auto-brew drip brewers are cheap for a reason. They don't heat the water to the level that it needs. They don't cover, agitate, and brew the grounds in the brew basket well enough. They are inadequate cheap machines for carelessly dripping not-quite-hot-enough water over coffee grounds.

The Technivorm Moccamaster is different. Right off the bat you know it's going to brew a great cup of

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coffee because it is an SCA Certified Home Brewer. This means it has passed a rigorous standard of testing which demonstrates that the brewer consistently brews a cup of coffee which meets the SCA Golden Cup standards. The water is at the right temperature from start to finish, the coffee is extracting properly in the brew basket, the brew is in the optimal balance range, it remains at the appropriate temperature, and above all, it brews all the tastes and aromas out of the coffee that you are looking for - it tastes great.

The brewer also looks great. It is a uniquely designed, and handmade in the Netherlands, You might notice a hint of old style nostalgia, that comes from the 50 years Moccamaster has been around and their tireless efforts to always ensure quality all the way down to what's in the cup. If you get the glass carafe model, you have a choice of colors (including copper coated) as well as the knowledge your coffee will never burn on the hot plate. The thermal carafe model will keep your coffee hot for hours without any application of heat and is quite durable. The glass carafe model will elevate your counter top and be the talk of your next coffee break with friends. Your choice between the two will



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depend on your personal preference. The differences have no effect on the taste result of your coffee, merely the look and use of the machine.

The Technivorm Moccamaster is one of my top recommendations for home auto-drip machines. It's great if you need simple push-button brewing in the morning, or if you like to brew large quantities for guests or at parties. Not only do you get to have the power of automated brewing without sacrificing the quality of your fresh roasted specialty coffee, but you will also rest easy knowing that every one of these brewers is backed by an industry leading 5-year warranty.

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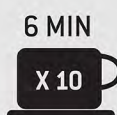
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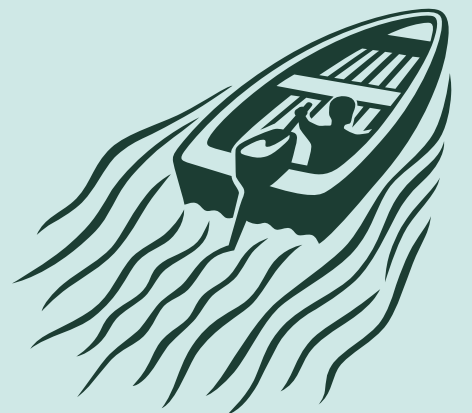


MOCHA

Sharing Yemen



Bringing It
All Together



PORT OF
MOKHA



4 years ago, I was searching intently for how I could share the stories of people doing amazing things in coffee . . .

...and to show you the people who are really behind it all, when I came across an interview with a guy on an amazing and challenging task in Yemen.

Before I discovered Mokhtar's story, I didn't really know anything about Yemen - little about its people and history, and really nothing much about coffee and Yemen. This is common. It's also unfortunate because Yemen is responsible for coffee as we know it today.

But there is great hope. Coffee can play a significant role in giving Yemen economic tools for creating not only a stable but an internationally prosperous society.

One of the things I've learned through working in coffee and sharing stories is the personal and economic impact that coffee can have. In cases like Yemen, working through the right people and producing specialty grade coffee gives the farmers in that country the ability to connect with international markets.

This is something that coffee farmers just can't do normally and illustrates the complexity and power dynamics inherent in the coffee production industry. In most cases, the economics of coffee is controlled by the importers and the roasters. Typically they buy the green coffee as low as they possibly can, to generate as much profit for themselves as possible.

Since farmers are entirely reliant on these people for the continuation of their business, they often are kept from growing beyond the point of just barely making it. This isn't something that's intended to be malicious, it's just what happens when actions are made only to serve profit.



Al-Durrar

The timeless land of Al-Durrar, a region located at 2350 meters above sea level. Here the thousand year old villages kiss the sky. Misty clouds bring rain during the monsoon season, allowing for the survival of coffee in one of the most difficult places for it to grow. Farmers here meticulously hand pick only ripe red cherries and their mastery of coffee cultivation shows in the array of intense fruit notes you will find in every cup.

We regularly cycle different farm lots to represent this region, with each lot named for the farmer who tends it.



There are many great people and companies in coffee who recognize these dynamics, take the time to figure out what farmers need to thrive, and then make their purchasing decisions based on that understanding. This is why Direct Trade is such a hot term in coffee these days (though there's no regulation on what that means, so tread lightly).

These people and companies who choose to work directly with farmers often invest in the improvement of the farmers production practices so as to increase the base quality of coffee coming from that farm - it's in this investment where the importers and roasters find their profit (and not in squeezing the farmer as much as they can).



This is something I figured out very early on in my own exploration of coffee, and you can see that throughout the first year of the magazine. While not a primary focus at the time, I was sharing the work of one roaster - Tim Wendelboe - who was revolutionary in being completely transparent about where his money was going. He also expressly shared his focus on improving the quality of coffee production on the farm by investing upfront and educating his farmers.

So early in the magazine, I was already not just interested in sharing the farmers' side of coffee but recognized that the best-tasting coffee comes from people who are treated well.

Then, I ran into Mokhtar's story.

Originally published in November 2014, Mokhtar was interviewed by Dustin Craun of **Ummah Wide**. I read about this young man who had a vision for not just improving the quality of coffee farming, but that the entire process could bring lasting economic and ultimately political change for the better in a country being torn apart inside and out. I was taken in by the profound passion and obsession that he had with the task before him.

This is what coffee is really all about. It has such a connective historical power that it can bring peoples from all over the world together. It drives an incredible inexplicable passion in people who work with it at all levels. Yemen is no exception. As I learned through all this, it being the origin of coffee commerce, Yemeni people have an incredibly deep sense of pride in their coffee, but one which had all but become completely lost to generations of strife and a world that had left them behind.



Al-Wadi

Nicknamed "The land of the tribes", Al-Wadi is one of the most difficult regions to source coffee. Their coffees are grown in hidden valleys that look like something out of a postcard. Much of their coffee is grown under shade, giving it delicate fruit notes and juicier body. The people of Al-Wadi have a lifestyle that has been uninterrupted for centuries and their art of coffee cultivation has been perfected for generations. It's an experience unlike anything you've ever tasted.

We regularly cycle different farm lots to represent this region, with each lot named for the farmer who tends it.



So it was with great pride that I simply shared Mokhtar's story in the issue titled Saving Yemeni Coffee.

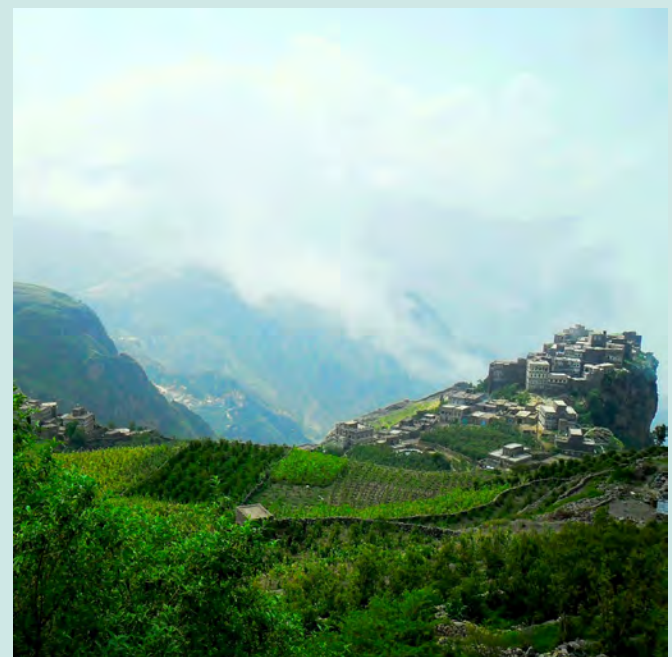
We had a several back and forths during those months - and while I never knew exactly what he was going through until the story of his life was published, I knew he was mostly alone, pushing (perhaps beyond sense many would say) for something few others believed in.

But this connection, the sharing of this story, and its effects on those of you reading as well as myself were profound. It was a turning point for the direction of the magazine and my own focus and interests in coffee, as I continued from there to seek out this deeper understanding of coffee and to share with you stories you'd never otherwise likely find.

It was then early 2015, having published the issue, I looked forward to meeting Mokhtar finally at SCA's Global Coffee Expo in Seattle. The drama which unfolded during this time period is the crux of the book *The Monk of Mokha*, written by David Eggars - if you haven't read this book yet, I highly recommend you find the time.

After all the months of back and forth, sharing Mokhtar's story, I remember the first time meeting him at SCA. Meeting him, and trying their coffees are the only things I remember from that show - and I'll never forget.

They held a cupping of Yemen coffees, featuring a few of the samples Mokhtar was able to barely get out of Yemen, as well as some samples from one of the other producers. In terms of the taste and deep understanding of coffee history, I had never had such an enlightening and eye-opening coffee taste experience. It was like the first time I discovered coffee could taste sweet, and like fruit, and not at all bitter - but on a much higher plane of understanding.



Al-Jabal

Al-Jabal, located at 2200 meters above sea level, is a beauty to behold. The final stretches of the journey to this region have no roads and can only be traversed by foot or donkey. Their vast coffee terraces stretch for miles and from certain vantage points can appear endless. The high elevation of the coffee makes for slow maturation of the coffee, creating unique and complex fruit notes. The people here, like much of Yemen, are distinguished by their easy demeanor, generosity and refined hospitality.

We regularly cycle different farm lots to represent this region, with each lot named for the farmer who tends it.

The natural complexity and uniqueness of Yemen coffees are almost unmatched throughout the world. It is no surprise that the entire world commerce of coffee, and many of its legends, were born out of Yemen.

I am completely obsessed not just with Yemen coffee, but it's history, and it's people.

We are now 3 years and 6 months from the first time I published about Yemen, and originally shared Mokhtar's story. His company now - Port of Mokha - continues to work with farmers in Yemen, building communities, eliminating the growing of the drug Qat, and hopefully one day bringing enough economic boon to the country to help it heal.

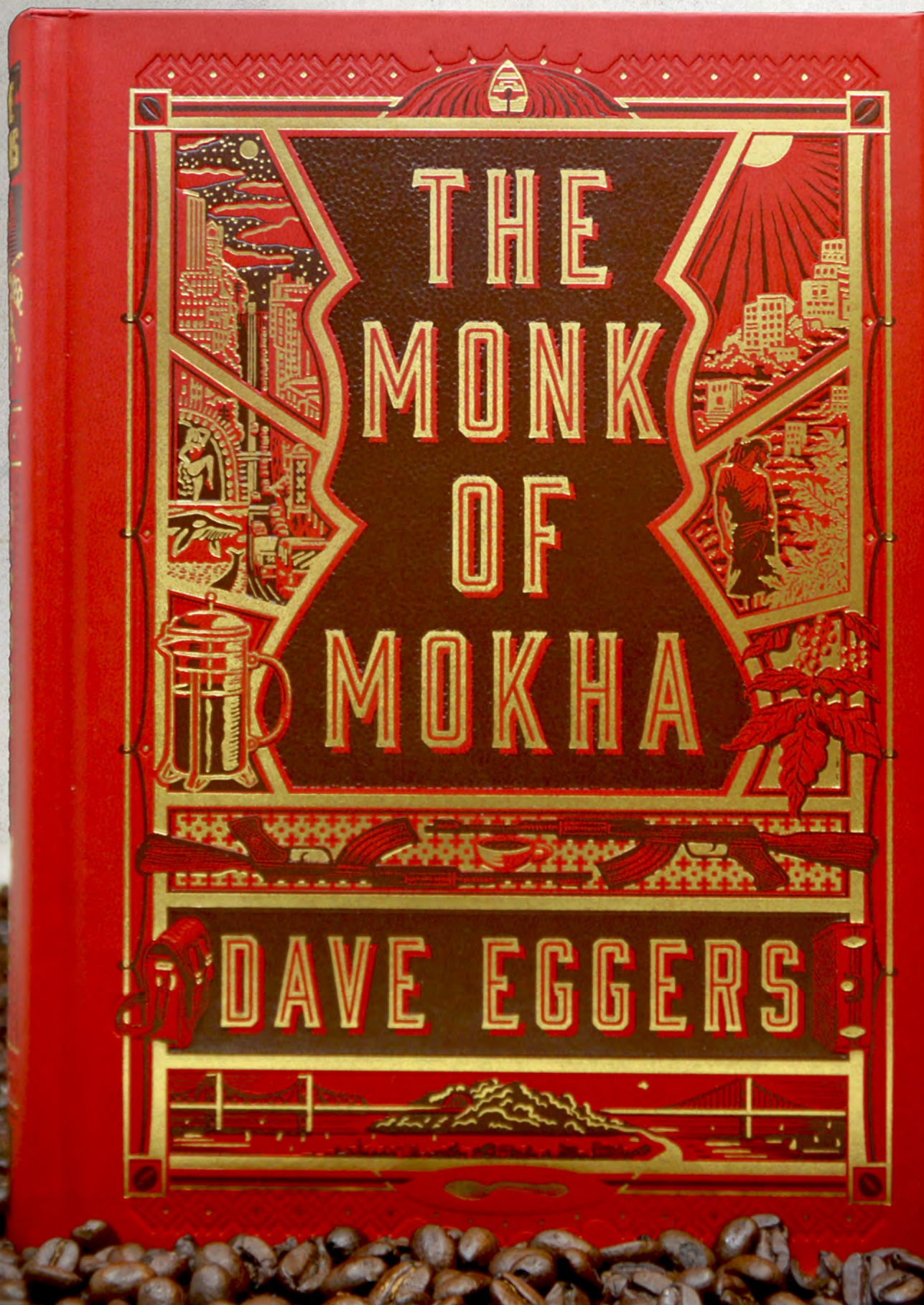
This past April, exactly 3 years from the first time Mokhtar and I met in person, I sat down with him so he could share his work thus far, his hopes and dreams, and gave us a look into the future of Yemen that he is helping to build...



PORT OF
MOKHA

“AS GRIPPING AND CINEMATICALY
DRAMATIC AS ANY FICTIONAL
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Mokhtar Alkhanshali
Port of Mokha

Building Yemen's Future Through Coffee

AN INTERVIEW WITH Mokhtar Alkhanshali

By Joseph Robertson

Joseph: Where is [the company] Port of Mokha? Where are you all at right now? Port of Mokha is importing coffee pretty regularly at this point, you have a good solid set of farmers...

Mokhtar: You know, when I first left [Yemen], I had our first sale, which was a small lot that we sold to Blue Bottle. They loved the coffees.

The issue with us - there were a couple things. One, I had set up a supply chain - a value chain. I use the word value more than supply because I think everyone [in the chain] brings value to the product. And I had a wonderful, incredible, and resilient team in Yemen. So I set that up, and that was really the heart of our success - the people around Port of Mokha, the farmers that believe in what we do, our brand on that side of the world, with producers.

So our issue was one: shipping coffee out of the country. Which eventually worked out. The City of Aden was eventually liberated. It's a major port for export.

The other issue, which ended up being more difficult, was 'can we scale quality?' Not being a one-hit wonder. Can we do this again, and again? Can it be repeatable? So we were going to 5x our production the following year.



For us it's very important to produce high high end coffee, to have that brand. When roasters or anyone sees our brand, consumers, they know it's Port of Mokha coffee, it's going to be delicious coffee. I was very keen on not trying to dilute or have different tiers. [I didn't want to] use my name to sell cheaper coffees.

That [second] shipment, we were tasting the pre-shipment samples before they were to be shipped out, and two of the samples didn't score [that high] - they were 87 point coffees, which is still pretty high, but we were targetting 90+ coffees. So I said, ok, I'll sell those coffees locally.

Those two lots (which were not quite high enough scoring) ended up being 70% of the volume of that shipment. That's when I realized, wow, if this thing is going to work, we need to make sure we can scale the quality. I decided to take a loss, and keep the brand.

Joseph: Around when did that happen?

Mokhtar: Our first shipment with Blue Bottle was in (early) 2016, this was last year after that...late 2016 actually. I went back to the drawing board. We looked at every part of the value chain. Where did this dip in quality happen? We didn't realize we were losing moisture at a rapid pace during one part of the process. It was going below 9%. So the following harvest, we doubled up our QC, and we were able to 20x our production.



So for us now, we work in 3 different regions. We get samples from all across Yemen, from hundreds of farmers trying to be part of our project. Which is our social and quality intervention model.

On the quality side we give them raised drying beds, moisture analyzers, and we give them protocols - because you have to have a great product at the end of the day. And on the social side, making sure they have micro loans, so they weren't being taken advantage of by loan sharks, gender equality, and paying the highest price in the world for coffee. We were able to sustain our farmers through that.

When I first started this project, I spent those 2 years early on in Yemen and as I began to work more and more growing the company, I had to do a lot of the marketing, so I now spend 75-80% of the time outside of Yemen. I'm only in Yemen during harvest time, at key parts of the year. I realized that, in order for me to be successful, people love to hear stories, and want to hear directly from the source - someone can say the exact same words as me, but for some reason when I say it, it resonates better with people. It helps sell the coffee, it helps people understand the coffee more [when I'm the one sharing the story].

So for me it's been this balance. My heart is in Yemen, but also trying to make this work for my farmers. So I always have to travel. Now we have the book launch, and that's just exacerbated it, because I've been just living out of my suitcase the last 12 weeks now - I've been to 3 different continents in 10 days.



Luckily we have coffee, and coffee helps us stay awake, but that's kind of where we are right now.

Joseph: When you started off - and this is told in the book of course - you weren't really that much into coffee. [You found a connection and built upon a deep passion.] Do you feel that you are able to still fulfill that part of you, in the position that you are in now? Do you feel like you are able to still do what you "need" to do, in your current position?

Mokhtar: Yea when I first started, the only coffee I knew tasted like burned popcorn - really crappy coffee, you had to put cream and sugar just to make it drinkable. I think my story a lot of people resonated with it because they were like that at some point, then they had their first cup of coffee, usually it was a natural [processed], like a Yirgacheffe or a Yemen.

Yea, I have these moments where I feel like I want to be more present with farmers. But then I go to these coffee shops and see people, and like this SCA conference, I have people all around the world telling me about how they are inspired by my story, they love my coffee. Producers coming to me from Myanmar and Ethiopia, asking me questions about quality control and how to processes it better.

So that makes me really happy. And my farmers sending me messages, like their kid is in school, or they are having weddings.



I always ask this of our team members - what do you need to do to make this successful? What does that mean for you? It's different from me. For me if that means I have to, every year, reach 100 million plus people through online, events, radio, and programs like Coffee Lovers Magazine, I have to do that. I'm always trying to balance between that, and realizing 'whats the goal' and how I can achieve that through my own position.

The reality is if I just went to Yemen, just lived there again...it's a beautiful life, I loved it. It's simple, healthy, there's this wonderful balance between nature and life - not this crazy rat race. That's kind of selfish. Because I know I wouldn't be able to help the farmers sell a single bean. You figure out what makes sense for your company. And you're right, you have to find those things that fulfill you or you feel it's not worth it.

Joseph: Your coffee has gotten a fair amount of press for the price of it. How did you come to the amount that you pay for the green coffee? How much do you pay, and how does the whole picture pan out?

Mokhtar: For pricing, it's interesting. I remember, I think it was two days before the first Blue Bottle launch [of our coffee], in 2016. James Freeman [CEO of Blue Bottle] told me the price point of the coffee. He said 'it's going to be \$16 a cup, we're going to serve it with this cookie, etc.' I said 'whoa whoa whoa...wait...why is it \$16 a cup?' Why are you charging so much for it? We talked. He said, well, Mokhtar, you're charging us this much for the green beans, and we have this formula...that's what it's going to cost.



When I start this project, I just realized - what do farmers need to get paid to live a dignified life? One thing the book [The Monk of Mokha] talks about, is this concept of Direct Trade. Sometimes we have these different certifications, be it fair trade, or whatever. As consumers its supposed to make us feel better about what we do and help, but the artificial cost increase doesn't really affect the actual cost of production.

With Direct Trade, you start with the farmer - 'what do you need?' That's going to change, from country to country. What coffee's going to cost in Yemen, a country that's gripped by war and chaos, and there's the scarcity of the coffee...it's the most expensive coffee to produce per pound in the world. The cost for water, diesel, electricity, travel - it's so much more than in other countries.

Joseph: Is it primarily an infrastructure and social situation there that's causing the price?

Mokhtar: Well first of all, it's the only country that produces coffee which is not affected by the commodity market, because it's such a low production. So it's a limited, scarce resource. There's huge international demand; Saudi Arabia buys most of Yemen's coffee. They have a love for Yemen's coffee, it's like a brand. But there's no infrastructure for helping farmers. There's no electricity. So we have to pay thousands of dollars a month in diesel costs to mill the coffee. Every time you want to ship coffee samples out, it has to go through a laborious process. Everything is just exacerbated, to produce it. So that's one thing.



The roasters that buy from us... George Howell, Geoff Watts, James Freeman... they don't buy it from us for those reasons. There was one reporter, he asked the same question he asked James Freeman, I think it was CBS Sunday Morning. "Are you buying this coffee to support and help these farmers?" He's [James Freeman] like "No, this is not pity coffee. This coffee is an absolute pleasure. An incredible experience. You can pay \$20 for a glass of wine, and that's not nearly as life changing as this coffee."

So for us as a company, we have to focus on the quality, making sure it's a great coffee - that's why it won the Coffee Review last year (receiving 97 points, the highest score given thus far and shared by only a handful of other coffees in 20 years), that's a blind assessment of the coffee. Just yesterday I found Coffee Review gave 94 points to Equator Coffee for ours.

It's an award winning coffee, it does really well. Coupled with the scarcity, limited availability of this product, and how difficult it is to produce it, AND the trifecta, it has this incredible story behind it.

If I actually extrapolated the price points based on the pricing for Panama coffees, and coffees from other countries, it (the Yemen Coffees) would be much more than it is now. But we make just enough to be sustainable as a company. Our farmers they get paid \$6.3/kg for dried cherries. Which is the highest in the world.

It's a price that kind of shocks consumers. The question goes "what does your coffee cost? Why is coffee considered a cheap product?"



I was talking to Geoff Watts, he mentioned this he said “You know like in cheese, there’s Velveeta, and Craft...but then there’s a nice aged Comté. In wine, you get 2 buck Chuck, and Carlo Rossi, but then there’s also this special wine from Nappa and Chile...”

Joseph: Going back to cheese actually, I have a particular fondness for Wisconsin Cheddar

Mokhtar: He actually mentioned Wisconsin Cheddar!

Joseph: Yea I love a good 12 or 15 year cheddar, and I’ll spend you know \$15 or \$20 just for a few ounces.

Mokhtar: And why is coffee any different? In fact, if you compare the cost to produce coffee to wine or cheese, or even to draft beers. It’s so much more laborious, and so much more expertise is lavished on every process of the coffee, it should be more.

So Port of Mokha price point...it’s unintentional, but also no - the way you think of coffee it’s programmed a certain way, and it’s not costing what it should.

Joseph: Yesterday, at the show (SCA), I went to a panel with some young folks - it was TWIN and Coffee for Kids - and they were talking about the future of coffee, and what’s going to happen. I guess the average age of coffee farmers around the world is like 65, and most farmers are sending their kids away to a better life, because most of them just can’t have a good life farming coffee, you can’t make enough to live farming coffee....



Mokhtar: This is a good point, in Yemen a lot of our best farmers are young kids. Basically, kids who had jobs in cities - but because of the war, those companies are gone. So they've gone back to their villages trying to figure out what to do with their lives. So they are the ones that I have been recruiting.

They are young, so they like social media, I can communicate with them through Whatsapp, they understand quality. I think the specialty coffee market is a very exciting place for young people, because its a way for them to export not just their beans but their culture. It's something you produce with your own hands. You feel like you are part of an ancient lineage of your family's heritage.

The only issue in the past has been that there's not much money in it. Specialty coffee is an amazing industry and I think a way for them to find a meaningful life and to make money through it. Look at me, I left the US to go back to Yemen. That wasn't an easy decision for my family to understand. Ultimately I didn't think I was going to make much money. And I don't make huge amounts of money. But I feel like if I make enough to cover my bills...and I *love* what I do, I have meaning in my life. That means more to me than going to law school, making a bunch of money. I get to go around the world, talk about coffee, meet farmers.

Joseph: When you start off, you were also interested in changing the dynamic of Qat, that is being grown. Are you seeing any significant changes in that respect?



Mokhtar: Yes. We have seen a lot of farmers switching off Qat to Coffee. And that has been totally organic. I had this vision of doing a massive campaign, and farmers are already doing it. This brings us to The Mokha Foundation.

There are certain things my company can't afford, that we want to have happen in Yemen. Certain organizations like Coffee Quality Institute and the World of Coffee Association Program, they basically have not been able to do anything on the ground in Yemen, because of the war.

One of the things I wanted to do was to establish a Coffee Institute in Yemen. There are three key things to work on. First, establish Yemen's first certified coffee lab. In this lab, we'll be able to have Q Graders, and latte art competitions, and roasting classes, and really building a national industry, internally. Yemenis are really incredible people, and very creative, and passionate. Once they get their hands on something they just take off. I'd love to see one day Yemen be a part of the Barista Guild and Roaster Guild, and to be able to compete in competitions around the world.

The second thing is a proper processing mill. Rice hullers are what people use in Yemen to hull their coffee. So using a mill, which can be subsidized, and then it can cover the cost of the whole coffee institute.

The third thing is very important because it affects not just Yemen, but the world of coffee. It's a national nursery - a seed bank. So, the ones (Farmers) who are ready to switch over from Qat? Here



we can plant half a million trees in the next 5 years, here are the right seedlings for you. Start protecting certain seedlings that are almost extinct. Maybe find candidate varieties that can withstand drought and diseases like Roya - leaf rust - and give countries like El Salvador and Guatemala a chance to save their coffee industry.

So that is something that I would love to do. And what the foundation is there... people who have read the book, who are interested in my story, or have bought my coffee, they've been saying 'we want to help more, how can we support more.' This is a way for them to do that. So we're working on initiatives that focus on dealing with the water issues, trying to build this institute we talked about.

It really comes to me from an inspiration from Rwanda. How coffee was used to rebuild the country post genocide. I think coffee is an incredible way to move people from humanitarian aid to their own economic empowerment. This is to me the balance between non profit, and private sector. I always feel like private sectors are more sustainable, because NGOs sometimes cause a level of dependency. This is a way you can set up the foundations, give the farmers the varieties, maybe those 2 years - it takes about 1.5 years for the seedlings to grow, and then once they are planted 2-3 years - maybe during those 2-3 year period if you sign up with us we can set up a way to subsidize your income, while you take the Qat trees out. Then Port of Mokha, or any other exporter in Yemen, can come in and begin working.



So this is actually a national macro impact project. I would hope to work with other exporters in Yemen, and importers who can use these facilities. I think it can have a huge impact in Yemen and hopefully in the world. We've been very fortunate to be the in country partner with The Coffee Quality Institute in Yemen. They've done so much work on coffee in Yemen. If you google "CQI Yemen Reports" there are reports dating back to 2005 on coffee in Yemen. The last one in 2013 had 16 recommendations - of it all these things I've mentioned. The institute wasn't really my idea, there's data and research that shows we need to do this, and do this nursery.

So the idea is we can have our boots on the ground, and we can hopefully get our funding through this (The Mokha Foundation), collaborating with people like CQI, like the World of Coffee Association Program, people who have institutions behind them, academics behind them, we can implement their reports and make them happen.

Joseph: How can people participate and help with The Mokha Foundation project?

Mokhtar: Well one way is they can buy our coffees, proceeds go back to it, even the book proceeds go back to it. But really if they go on the website www.mokhafoundation.org you can sign up there and start donating there.

We'll be having campaigns in the coming months, really cool campaigns for it. It's a way to give back to a country that is really

Al-Durrar Yemen



Port of Mokha

VIDEO

Al Durrar, Yemen Coffee by Port of Mokha

Coffee Lovers TV



responsible for why we have coffee today. Yemen and the Port of Mokha brought coffee to the world, and that changed the world - the amazing social movements that happened, coffeehouses throughout Europe.

Yemen is going through a very difficult time, it needs our help. The least we can do is try to support whatever we can. It doesn't take much, sometimes a few dollars can go a long way, especially in countries like Yemen that could be enough for a coffee seedling. Or hundreds of dollars, whatever you can afford it can really help.

So that's kind of my goal. After we are able to fundraise, once we see how much we have gathered, we can see which one of these programs we can fund, and to be honest with you think they are all really important.

Joseph: Lets talk about the book. [Tell us about] the impact of the book to you, personally, as well as your business and the farmers.

Mokhtar: You know it's interesting, because a lot of people didn't know much about my background. I grew up in pretty humble beginnings.

For me, it's the story of coffee and our industry. I've had barista come up to me and thanking me, saying 'thank you, my parents now understand what I do for a living.' Or people come up to me, random people; "I didn't know coffee came from cherries!" So it's been incredible to tell them that story.

Al-Jabal Yemen



Port of Mokha

VIDEO

Al Jabal, Yemen Coffee by Port of Mokha

Coffee Lovers TV



What Dave does - Dave Eggers - is that, these bigger stories he tells them through a human lens, makes them accessible. So for coffee, I think for a long time we've been stuck in our own world, in our own bubble, talking about genetics, and varietals, you know, filter, extraction... And the story, it's a very accessible story. It's easier for people to understand.

Personally, it is still awkward for me. It's my personal life out there. People know about my weird things. I would hope that, as an industry, it helps shed light on our world. I think it's the first mainstream book like that. The fact that people know what a Q Course is, what cuppings are. Because Dave comes in it as an outsider, as a skeptic almost. Actually he was in the beginning, then he converts.

It's a great thing [to convert someone over to the great world of coffee that we know.] I was used for that, if my life was used for that, what a great thing to be used for. That's really why I was willing to lose my personal life. If in exchange I could help impact the world of coffee...you don't get that opportunity [again] - it's once in a lifetime.

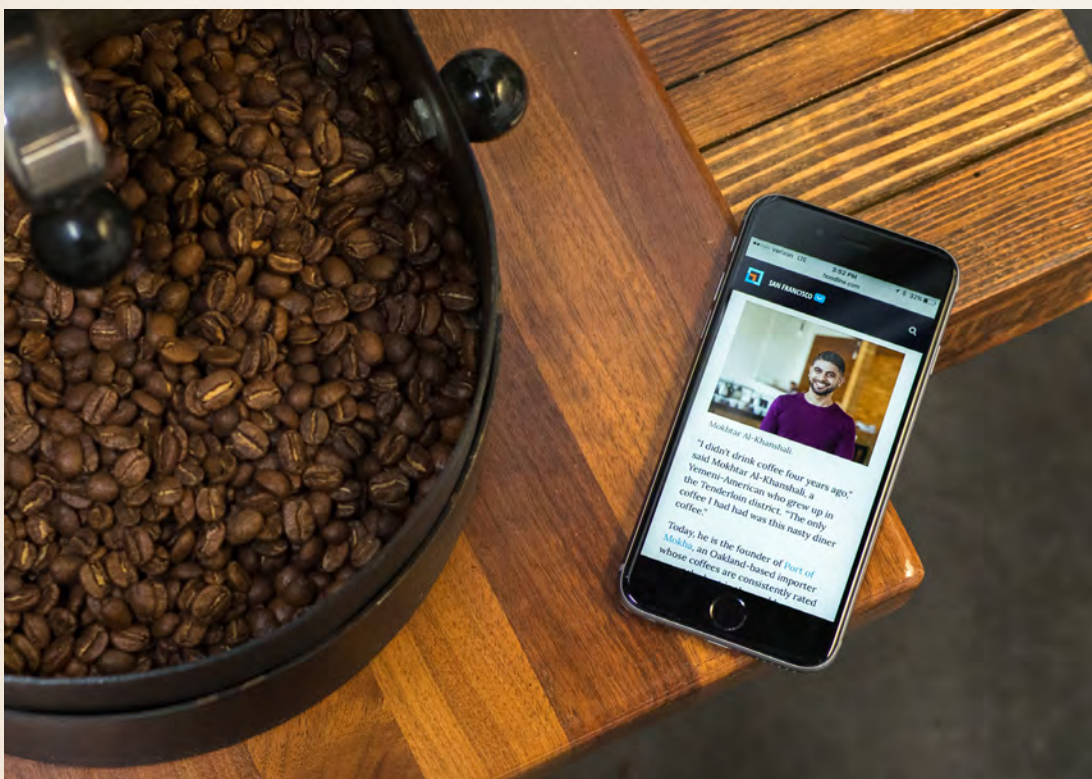
But I want to take a moment to thank *Coffee Lovers Magazine*, and you for... I mean you've chronicled my story from before there was a book, from before there was 'a story.' From my earliest projects in Yemen. I remember in 2014 you guys did a podcast, I was in Dubai, on my first trip to Europe to Paris. I heard it and I was still freaking out. I couldn't believe I was on this podcast, someone is talking



VIDEO

Saving Yemen Coffee and The Monk of Mokha

Coffee Lovers TV



about me. And then you put me on the cover of your magazine, that edition, the title was 'Saving Yemeni Coffee.'

I mean, in a way you kind of foreshadowed a lot of these things. I never knew what was going to come after that. Some of these things were really dramatic. I really thank you so much for telling my story, and all the other stories of other farmers and coffees. You seem to always been focused in on important things. For viewers out there, you don't know the amount of work that Coffee Lovers Magazine does in researching in coffee - they are always at every coffee event, every conference. Thank you very much for making that happen, please support them.



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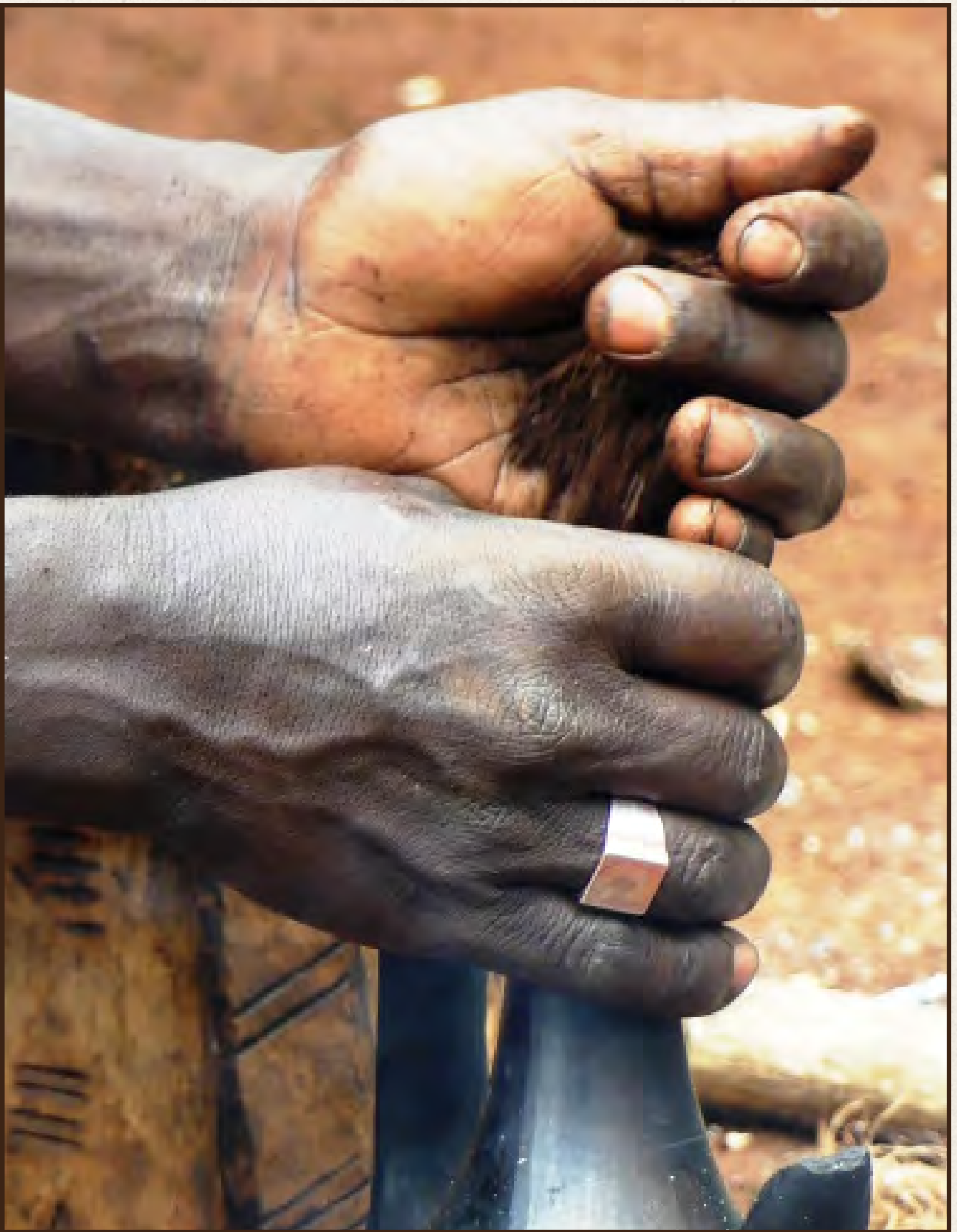
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Coffee Facts



Shade Grown Coffee

Much of the coffee grown in the world is done so by clearing vast areas of natural forest for farming. Shade grown coffee takes the opposite approach - planting and growing entire farms of coffees within forest under the cover of other natural plants. The benefits - aside from not destroying natural habitats - include natural regulation of direct sunlight, as well as naturally more fertile ground.



LUCY, I'M HOME!

IN THE LAND WHERE HUMANS AND
COFFEE BEGAN **BY STEVEN P. UNGER**

BOOK PREVIEW **PART 6**



Yetnebersh

AFTER OUR MORNING *Buna Kitel* we spent a few hours in a much larger Ari village called Yetnebersh. Only a few miles from Jinka, Yetnebersh contains over five thousand people in houses scattered over a wide area and is well known for its pottery production. Some fifty women make pottery in Yetnebersh, taking their weekly production to the large Jinka market and other nearby villages.

The coffee and the mix of popcorn and peanuts we were treated to in Yetnebersh was prepared outside by Geni. Most days she makes coffee, with a bit of salt, about eleven in the morning with a breakfast of roasted maize and beans. Geni had just finished preparations when a sudden torrential downpour forced everyone inside her older sister Baro's house. Soon Baro's home was filled with people and the fragrances of incense and freshly made coffee, popcorn, and peanuts. After about twenty minutes or so, the downpour stopped completely, just as suddenly as it had begun.

Both Geni and Baro are potters, skilled in making *jebenas* as well as *ashkas* (the flat plate used to heat the *jebena* and to roast coffee beans or popcorn) and the pot-shaped *gulichas* (the fireplace feet).

While Geni was making coffee, Baro shaped the first stage of a *jebena*. Geni and Baro belong to a special group, the *Mena*, which also includes blacksmiths and is feared and marginalized by most of the Ari, who are primarily farmers and herders. The skill of pottery making is transferred from mothers to their daughters when they are between six and fifteen. *Mena* may only marry other *Mena*, which may explain why attractive, vivacious Geni was still waiting for a husband.

The first, basic shaping of a *jebena* is done with black clay found in the nearest swampy area mixed with stones ground to a powder. The black *jebena* is dried for two days, and then red clay from the upper level of a riverbed is used to cover the dried black body. The handle is added by molding, and the spout is molded, pierced, and re-covered with red clay. The completed *jebena* is entirely smoothed with a plastic tool and finally by hand. The *jebena* is dried another day, then heated over an open fire of wood and grass.





The Mursi

A few late morning hours in a tiny Mursi village, countless unmarked dirt roads from our predawn start in Jinka, changed our lives forever. There really is a common humanity—babies, drinking a coffee drink, adornments, work, family, laughter—that transcends the vastest possible divides of technology and culture.



Lalo made it possible for us to simply hang around a dozen mothers, grandmothers, toddlers, and infants as they drank their morning coffee—coffee made from the bags of dried coffee cherry husks and skins that Lalo had brought from the *buna* washer we'd visited the day before—mixed with inch-long green chilies and red and green onions, the way the Mursi women always drank their coffee. No one performed for us, wore their lip plates, or painted their bodies for us.

We weren't invisible, of course. When a dog fight started in the middle of the irregular circle of Mursi women and charged right toward me, I was completely unnerved while the rest of the village had a big laugh. I imagine it was one of the big stories of the day when the men came home: "You should have seen that *faranji* when the dogs started fighting. He



jumped up from his seat like a chicken flying off her perch!" (Or something like that.) When Lalo brought us some hot coffee from a thermos, Ruthie said "Ahh" and licked her lips, much to the amusement of the old lady painting lip plates in front of her.

Most importantly, watching a beautiful young woman with intricate scarification patterns up and down her arms—raised bumps that decorate dark skin better than any tattoo—grinding the coffee cherry husks and skins and the little green chilies



by stone and pouring the mash into the big communal pot; the old woman setting freshly painted lip plates one after another on the ground; the older women talking and laughing and dipping their stitched leather cups and hollowed half-gourds into the pot, the babies being babies and their mothers and grandmothers being mothers and grandmothers, I began to understand.

It's taken time to put my thoughts together; I hope Ruthie's photographs can convey some of what my words can't.

My search for the origins of humans' relationship with *Coffea arabica* had brought us here to this Mursi village: the culmination of our Ethiopian journey had brought us to the beginning, as far back as we could go in time and place and culture.

Ethiopia's incomparable gift is burned into my brain in the best way, with the ever-vivid memory of that Mursi village, a memory that I can conjure up at any time in my alternate reality of 21st Century California. As I drive down the freeway sipping Ethiopian Yirgacheffe and cursing the Humvee tailgating me, the Mursi women are enjoying their morning *Tee Lahkeenoy* as they have always done. And probably having a better time.











This article has been excerpted from **Black as Hell, Strong as Death, and Sweet as Love: A Personal Guide to the World's Best Coffee Experiences** Copyright © 2018 by Steven P. Unger and Ruthie Santistevan, currently in prepublication.

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PRO TIPS

Watch the Pros



VIDEO

**A Coffee Brewing Theory "4:6 method" Invented by
Tetsu Kasuya World Brewers Cup 2016 Champion**
HARIO Official Channel

THERE ARE LOTS OF COFFEE PROFESSIONALS in the world experimenting and sharing their processes for brewing and exploring coffee.

Very recently the World Brewers Cup Champion of 2016 - Tetsu Kayusa - shared his brewing theory for the V60. It is a very different approach to brewing the V60 than I shared in last month's issue.

My Pro Tip of the month is to explore different brewing methods by looking at what many other people are doing - Youtube is a great resource for video demonstrations. While there's a lot of science in coffee, there is also a lot of art. As you'll see with this brewing method, it's entirely different from my approach (featured in last issue), and it produces a very excellent cup of coffee. You might find you enjoy the result better, or not. Either way, you'll discover something interesting in your own rituals of coffee.



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E29 After SCAA - Exploring the Event and Yemeni Coffees





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E34 The Wine of the Bean - Yemen Coffee





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CLR-E34: The Wine of the Bean - Yemen Coffee

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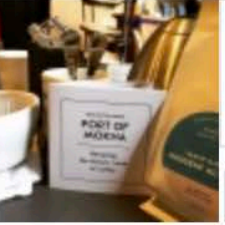
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E51 A Taste of Yemen





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E85 The Monk of Mokha





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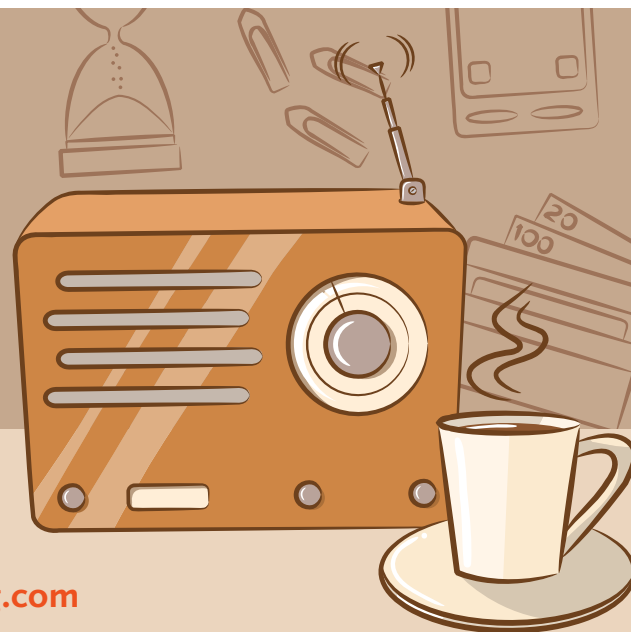
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HOSTS

Joseph Robertson - Coffee Lovers Magazine - www.coffeeloversmag.com

Jesse Nelson - Conduit Coffee - www.conduitcoffee.com



ON THE SUBJECT OF YEMENI COFFEE

For those of you who have been following the magazine for many years, you'll have seen me talk about and publish numerous articles and videos on the subject of Yemen.

This issue represents a culmination of a lot of work, which began with my prediction of Yemen coffee being an important and impactful subject - check out my Jan 2015 new years predictions if you are curious.

This issue is also a significant preview to things to come, as the work Mokhtar and Port of Mokha are doing represents a few key important things that need to happen in the world of coffee at large over the next 20-50 years.

While an advanced subject, I'll be talking in future issues about coffee genetics. Here you got to see Mokhtar mention the production of a national nursery in Yemen, and seed vaults to protect and preserve unique varieties of coffee through the ever-changing environment. This isn't a new thing, and there are people doing work like this in other countries.

There importance of studying genetic diversity in coffee (far more than just coffee). Our understanding of the cultivation of coffee, especially through climate change (it is a very climate sensitive plant), will inform research in many other areas of growing food and plants throughout the world.



**What's Your
Coffee Type?**

Take our Coffee Quiz

I also think, as a consumer, it's only going to aid in your enjoyment and understanding of coffee to know just what it means to be consuming certain varieties of coffee. One can already start making the argument that it is beneficial to look for roasters who are buying and roasting unusual varieties of coffee.

To go a little in depth on that briefly...one of the greatest challenges facing coffee farmers in the world right now is an ever-growing threat of disease, like leaf rust. These diseases often affect specific varieties of coffee. But because genetic diversity of coffee in most of the world is so small (outside of Yemen and Ethiopia, the rest of the world contains somewhere around just 1% of coffee varieties), most farmers end up growing the most popular coffee, and these farming areas end up with no diversity. This means if leaf rust strikes one farmer, it strikes them all and hits everything. Growing different varieties can help combat this (but ultimately, consumers need to buy them - this is all a story for another issue).

On another level, a category of topics I've only touched on a couple times in the past is the national coffee associations



and the industry support that they create. The reason I haven't spoken much of these programs is that they are tremendously industry focused. There is little bridge between the activities of the national coffee associations, the competitions they do for the industry, and for the average consumer - it's mostly all just a mystery.

To my mind that is unfortunate. These programs are fantastic for developing robust coffee programs throughout many countries and are largely responsible for the reason the coffee industry is so broad today. In Yemen, a national coffee association could completely tie together the industry, and build a platform through which the country can interact with the international world of coffee.

Lastly, I am particularly interested in sustainable models of economic redevelopment through coffee. This is something that is difficult to illustrate on a broad scale because it takes many years of development to actually see significant change. But on smaller scales, I've shared stories like these before. I'll also have some very interesting articles and videos to share on Uganda before too long - another country that is trying to redefine itself through coffee.

So there you have it - this issue is a massive culmination of work on Yemen. I'll surely share interesting bits about Yemen in the future as they come along, but for now, consider it an exclamation point, as well as a signpost for the future...



This Month in Coffee

July 2018

How This Coffee Entrepreneur Beat Incredible Odds to Give Back to War-Torn Rwanda

A great story of a man who's using coffee to help rebuild his homeland.

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Coffee Doesn't Cause Cancer, Says California Health Risk Agency

It was pretty absurd when this original story came about. Now it appears cooler heads are prevailing, and we'll get that cancer warning off coffee...

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A Cinnamon Coffee Cake That's Sure to Perk Up Your Morning

Food and coffee go hand in hand. I think it only makes sense to have a great coffeecake recipe in your repertoire.

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Caracas Coffee and Inflation

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