



# Coffee: The Epic of a Commodity

*Heinrich Eduard Jacob , Lynn Alley (Introduction)*

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**Coffee: The Epic of a Commodity** Heinrich Eduard Jacob , Lynn Alley (Introduction)

"A cup of coffee is a miracle, " writes Jacob, "a wonderful assemblage of relationships." Coffee: The Epic of a Commodity tells the story of the world's most beloved stimulant. The book follows coffee's trail around the world, from London to Brazil, telling in intriguing detail and curious anecdote the singular history of the legendary bean, from its beginnings a millennium ago, up to the mid-20th century.

## Coffee: The Epic of a Commodity Details

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Author : Heinrich Eduard Jacob , Lynn Alley (Introduction)

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# **From Reader Review Coffee: The Epic of a Commodity for online ebook**

**Artur Katsev says**

**Coffee: The epic of commodity**

Absolutely fascinating story! Real pleasure reading this book to realize coffee "adventures" from slow introduction to the world to taking over it .

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**Jim Backstrom says**

**Interesting read**

A book from another time. The author reveals at the end he traveled to Brazil via Zeppelin from his native Germany in 1932 to research this history of coffee. I wish he was around today to bring it up to date

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**Leonard Gladden says**

**An epic story told in grandiose style.**

I love coffee. I love stories told by master storytellers. This book is both! His vocabulary is prodigious and his enthusiasm undeniable. Grab a cup and learn how it came to you from the distant past....

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**Mary says**

**A journey following coffee**

This is a book written in the early 1930's and as such some might find difficult to read but I found great use of the kindle features.

The author begins the journey for coffee's mythical origin and follows through both Asia and Europe. He takes his time telling his story and some may find it too detailed, though I enjoyed the literary journey.

The history of coffee is as much the history of the world that drank it and throughout the book I found myself thinking "oh that's why the South drink chicory" or "so that's why it's called Venetian".

I bought the printed version for friend's in Alaska who have plenty of time in the winter to enjoy the same travel.

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**Biljana says**

This is very much a book about a commodity. Though interesting and very well-researched, I found it a

boring read at times and that the author just droned on about things that had nothing to do with coffee. I expected something else from the book, but that is my own fault; I didn't take its title literally.

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### **Nina says**

I don't like coffee, but I do like history. This poetically written homage to the bean was first published in German in 1935, so it contains such gems as, "It is part of the nature of coffee that it can never become the favorite beverage of women...Its effects on the brain are antagonistic to the longing for harmony and peace which is characteristic of the best of women." The history begins with coffee's start as the "wine of Islam"; attempts to abate widespread drunkenness in Europe by switching people to coffee; periods in which it was thought to cure everything; periods in which it was banned as poison; times when it became rare and pricey; when it became common and cheap; and when trading in coffee influenced national economies and history.

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### **Diego Vasquez says**

#### **A book about coffee, what more can be said**

A fascinating and insightful historical look into my favorite beverage: coffee. Not dull or boring like some cup of tea but a real wake me up into the beginnings and the significance of this aromatic drink which has helped shape culture and economies.

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### **Wealththeow says**

Heinrich Eduard Jacob was a pacifist German Jew whose work was blacklisted by the Nazis since 1933. Nevertheless, in 1935 he managed to publish Myth and the Triumphal March of Coffee, as the saga of the commodity--this is a translation of that work.

Alas, I lost interest in this quickly. It's not a history like *Salt or Milk*, with its straightforward tracings of the trading and sociopolitical impacts of a particular food. Instead, it seems to be a collection of stories and anecdotes about coffee, from a series of legends about how coffee was discovered in Yemen to Jacob's own stories of being in Brazil in 1931, when the state bought coffee only to destroy it, to increase the price of its own coffee shares. Many of the chapters are tangents into tobacco, Jewish thoughts on wine, Japanese poems about tea, or legends about Bacchus. A serious student, who already knows the history of the regions Jacob talks about, would probably have a great deal of fun with this book. But its poetry and poetic license is not for me--I want straight, footnoted facts.

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### **Baobab says**

I enjoyed this book. I was inspired to read this by reading Giorgio Riello's *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World*. This book is similar, but treats the commodity coffee more in a sociological, historical sense. There are many details about history (German and Austrian history in particular) from the 16th through the 19th centuries that made the book interesting, though not compelling reading for someone truly interested in

coffee, as opposed to history. The book was written in the early 1930s and reflects the prejudices and perspectives of its time. The last two chapters are an extended consideration of the Brazilian policy of the early thirties that burned bumper crops of coffee beans during a time of glut on the market in order to stimulate the price. This apparently outraged many at the time, especially since so many europeans were barely able to find food (let alone coffee) to feed themselves, and would have loved to drink coffee made from those beans. The concept of destroying a commodity in order to stimulate demand must have been new and controversial at the time. The preceding chapters may well have been tacked on to the final two in order to provide a book-length publishing vehicle for them.

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### **Timothy says**

From the raw fruit to the roasted beans, and how it became so beloved and universal - a great read with your favourite coffee brew...

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### **Jim Razinha says**

This wasn't what I was expecting, nor did I know that it was originally published in 1935, but it was still an engaging history. More history of history than history of coffee, but still an interesting read.

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### **Lindsay Nixon says**

This isn't a book on coffee! almost no discussion on coffee until book 4 (the last few chapters) and even then it isn't the main topic. At best this is a drab book on European history (even Columbus' voyage made it in!) but if you're looking for a direct/interesting history or evolution of coffee in popularity, culture, customs, or trade THIS ISNT IT! There was more discussion on beer than coffee!

I kept waiting for interesting facts but none came. Or they were lost in historical dribble that didn't apply to the thesis or supposed topic of this book.

For example, I was bemused to learn "americano" came from war, when American soldiers, confused by espresso, diluted it with water... nothing of that sort hit here. You're better off reading Wikipedia.

I'm sorely disappointed.

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### **Travis says**

Originally written in the 1930s, it presents a record of trade in and history of coffee as promised, from its roots in the Arab world to Europe, Brazil and the U.S. up until the 1900s. He discusses the early establishment of coffeehouses as places of socialization, places to conduct business, places to discuss politics. His writing does contain information but I found it often irritating. He redundantly characterizes the cultural influence of alcohol as "Bacchic" and that by some Christians and all of Islam, coffee was considered a tool to combat its influence ("Anti-Bacchic"). He makes liberal use of exclamations, offers a

heap of odd assertions such as that "the Spanish are a strange people" and that coffee is something that is not befitting to the disposition of women. Also, i learned some classic derogatory slang for certain racial groups. In his defense, toward the end of the book he discusses the Austrian School and the concept of marginal utility.

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### **Nathan Schrock says**

This is a difficult book to review because of it's unique style. As "The Epic of a Commodity", most of the book recounts the economic influence of Coffee throughout Europe in the 17th-19th centuries, and Brazil in the 20th. I hesitate to recommend it whole-heartedly to the average schmo, as a large part of it is economic history, with the thrilling narrative at a minimum. Still, Jacob details a fascinating history of coffee as a commodity, and I'm happier for having read it.

"The name "mocha" has a wonder-working influence. Arabia cannot produce nearly as much mocha as the public demands. Brazil has here come to the coffee-merchant's aid. During the rainy season, coffee is shipped on old-style windjammers to Arabia, by the longest route, round the Cape of Good Hope. It reaches port as wet as a soaked sponge. The damp and the long voyage have spoiled its aroma. Doctored and dried under the Arabian sun, and rechristened with the money-making name of mocha, it is now shipped on steamers to be sold in the great markets of the West."

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### **Eric Christopher says**

#### **A Brutal Read**

I bought this book thinking it was a thorough, yet fun history of coffee. It turns out this book is a painfully dry, historical narrative meant for 1930s historians. Painfully boring.

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