

CHAINED

TO

KHAT





Al Hajjarah Village in the fog, Jabal Haraz, Yemen. One of the places where farmers grow khat, a leafy plant which acts as a stimulant when chewed and which has recently been banned as a class C drug in the UK. 2500 tons were imported to the UK every year. Somali, Yemeni, Kenyan and Ethiopian communities chew regularly.



Sharara village, north Yemen. There are many varieties of khat. The best seems to grow in the north of Yemen, near the Saudi border. There it is called "chami". Its effects are very strong and can be felt very quickly.



Water pond In Thula, Yemen. Some farmers stopped growing coffee and plant khat instead since it can be easily harvested all year round and it's twice as profitable as coffee. It also requires less water than coffee. 500,000 farmers cultivate khat in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian peninsula.



A Yemeni woman taking water from a village cistern. Khat fields consume about 30% of Yemen's water. Yemen is in real danger of becoming the world's first country to run out of water according to hydrologists.



Protection on a khat field near Ibb, Yemen. As it brings a lot of money, khat is cultivated everywhere it can be, but the best places are in the same high altitude areas where that coffee is grown.



Women selling khat In the giant khat market in Awaday, Ethiopia. It is an international hub from which loaded trucks leave for Somalia, Djibouti and the Arabian Peninsula every night. Planes head towards Amsterdam and London. An estimated 25,000 kilograms per day are sold at the Awaday market.



One bag like this costs hundreds of euros. UK classified khat as an illegal drug. For the thousands of little farmers and traders in Awaday, the ban has already had a severe impact. Khat was Ethiopia's fourth largest export, bringing in more than 200 million euros 2013.



571 is a franchise in Hargeisa, Somaliland. It is the most sophisticated supplier and the market leader, selling 80 tons a day. They even own a plane to carry the khat to Ethiopia or to the refugees camps! The legend says it is run by a woman who may earn millions dollars a year in this business. 571 is the year in which the prophet Muhammed was born.



Khat seller in Somaliland. The prices range from \$0.5 to \$20 for a bunch. It varies depending on quality and freshness. Many people spend more money on khat than on food. More than 20 millions chewers in the Horn of Africa make fortunes for the dealers.



Be careful if you come across a boat, car, or plane that transports khat. The couriers travel at super fast speeds to deliver the khat on time. It must be chewed within 24 hours of being picked for maximum potency.



In Hodeida, Yemen, on the Red Sea. The khat market takes place at night as the deliveries arrive later here. The area is very hot so people will chew late into the night and will wake up late in the morning too!



Chewing khat is mainly regarded as a social activity. Anywhere you'll go, someone who chews khat will offer you a branch like this yemeni tailor in Hodeida. "You have alcohol, we have Khat," many Yemenis say.



The first hour, you need to keep the leaves in your check. The chewers feel an increase in alertness, energy and euphoria.



The effects of khat are easy to spot: the eyes bulge, the heart races, people look very alert, speak a lot, and most obvious of all, the mouth is full of green things that they spit out when they speak!



These effects are replaced 3 hours later by mild dysphoria, anxiety, reactive depression, insomnia and anorexia according to researches by World Health Organization. But you'll never hear a chewer complain.



A common complaint of khat chewers is constipation, The correlation between this effect and khat was noticed when in the 1960s, a ban was imposed on khat in Aden, Yemen. The sales of laxatives decreased by 90% but returned to the original level soon after the ban was lifted!



In Djibouti, like in Ethiopia, women both sell and chew khat. Many say it's an aphrodisiac, but it seems to be khat euphoric effects that make people look more attractive.



In the mountainous regions of Yemen, it's not uncommon to see children of 6 or 7 chewing khat that was given to them by their fathers. The children follow their parents' lead and end up addicted at an early age to khat.



Sanaa, Yemen - The stimulant properties of khat are commonly believed to improve efficiency, so it's common to see laborers chewing while working. Same goes for the drivers. After the euphoria fades, the drivers can fall in sleep and cause accidents.



A khat party in Yemen. Everybody brings some leaves and shares them like a khat potluck. Men and women chew in separate rooms. It is a good opportunity for the local sheikhs to solve tribal problems in a relaxed atmosphere. It will last for hours and hours, halting all economic activity.

Bixin

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Gelin, iyo Dawwayn

In Somaliland, you can see lot of advertising billboards for dentists as most of the people chew khat and have serious dental problems as a result. A high rate of gingivitis, gingival recessions, and tooth mortality has been observed among male khat chewers.



This somali man is suffering from a mouth disease. Khat is grown with a lot of pesticides, and people who are not educated do not wash it before chewing it. There are serious concerns about the long-term risk of mouth cancers in the whole Horn of Africa.



In Harar, Ethiopia, this old beggar has lost his teeth because of khat-induced damage. But he still chews by mashing it in a pot before keeping it in his mouth!
Many people are addicted for life to khat.



This man lives in Harar, Ethiopia, a place where lot of khat is cultivated and subsequently sent mainly to Djibouti and Somalia. The khat is very strong and some people develop serious mental illness after chewing too much. There is no asylum in Harar so these people are kept in chains in their home.



A long time ago, the khat was kept in banana leaves like in this picture. Freshness of the leaves is of critical importance. Nowadays, the khat is sold in plastic bags. Some still use the banana leaves but double it with a plastic bag.



Outside of Sanaa, the yemeni capital, millions of plastic bags that contained khat can be seen littered about. The government tried to launch campaigns to avoid this ecological catastrophe to no avail.



Burao city, Somaliland. You can guess you 're near a town when you cross there desert when you start to spot plastic bags all over the ground...

**Sigaarku waa
Mamnuuc
No Smoking**

ممنوع التدخين



SAGA JET

**Hubku waa
Mamnuuc
NO WEAPON**

ممنوع أي سلاح



SAGA JET

**Qaalku waa
Mamnuuc
NO KAT**

ممنوع القات



SAGA JET

Berbera airport, Somaliland, it is forbidden to bring khat inside the plane, like kalshnikov!

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