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**Book Review: by Fekadu Fullas**

**Leaf of Allah: Khat & Agricultural Transformation in Harerge, Ethiopia 1875-1991.** By Ezekiel Gebissa. Addis Ababa University Press--Research & Publications Office, Addis Ababa. 2004. xiv + 210 pp. 5.3 x 8.5 in. ISBN 0-8214-1560-2.

Voluminous literature is available on the plant *Catha edulis*, also known by the common name khat. The botany, chemistry and pharmacological properties and use of khat have been extensively investigated. As far back as 1984, an International Symposium on Khat, hosted by Natural Products Research Network for Eastern and Central Africa (NAPRECA), was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Before that time and since then as well, research reports had/has been forthcoming in the literature on the many facets of khat, both within and outside of Ethiopia.

This volume by Dr. Ezekiel is an important addition to the body of knowledge on khat in the literature. It is a product of the author's Ph.D. dissertation work in the 1990's in the History Department of Michigan State University, USA. The author compiled the book based on extensive analyses of data he gathered from archival materials in London, and from his own travel to Harerge, as well. The book is divided into three major parts.

Part One is further divided into two chapters. In the first chapter, a broad introduction on the history, use, botany, chemistry, pharmacology and other aspects of khat is given. Chapter two discusses the geography and social structure of Harerge, where the author spent a month collecting data and information for the book. Part Two contains five chapters, which discuss, in turn, the structures of agriculture and trade as they relate to khat, production, consumption and marketing, export, domestic use and trade of khat. Each chapter spans several years, from 1875-1935 in chapter 3 to 1935-1964, each in chapters 4 and 5, and 1964-1974, each in chapters 6 and 7. Part Three is devoted to a discussion of the proliferative growth of khat production in Harerge. It also delves into the socio-economic implications of khat in the region. Contraband trade of khat through various routes of smuggling is adequately discussed. The contents of the book are interspersed with black and white photographs, mainly depicting khat-chewing rituals, khat terraces, harvesting, scenes of khat picking and local khat markets in Harerge.

The appendix consists of three sections: a listing of volume of khat export by year (1936-91); a glossary of Amharic words used in the book; and a list of names of informants that the

author contacted for parts of the book. The bibliography section comprises of an extensive list of references ranging from archival materials, newspapers, books, journal articles to unpublished material. The last part of the book constitutes the index. A very important feature of the book is inclusion of conclusions after most of the chapters. A busy reader can glean from these sections a summary of the ideas presented in the respective chapters.

Although the significance of khat in religious rituals among the Muslim communities of Harerge is obvious, the title of the book could have been a little modified. Part of the title, “Leaf of Allah,” may distract the reader away from the main thrust of the book. The author has given an explanation on the organization of the book at the end of the introduction section. This explanation could have been better placed earlier after the preface. In addition, readers could also have benefitted from designations Chapter 1, Chapter 2, ..... in place of only One, Two, and so on that were used in the text itself.

In sum, this book is well-researched, very useful and easy to follow. I highly recommend it for anyone who is interested to know the various aspects of *Catha edulis* (khat), especially in Harerge.