others since the 1960s. Therefore, she reads ethnographic and linguistic evidence for practices attested only in Tonga- and Ila-speaking communities as indicating great antiquity, despite the very real possibility that such distributions result from recent borrowing. For example, the antiquity Saidi proposes for the presence within Botatwe of musungu medicine, sororal groups, or widow/er-cleansing should be sustained by linguistic and/or ethnographic traces in western as well as eastern Botatwe-speaking communities (p. 104). Finally, Saidi deserved a far better editor; errors like ‘Proto-Eastern Sudanic’ rather than ‘Proto-Eastern Savanna’ (p. 78) and the break between Figures 2.1 and 2.2 are quite confusing and serve only to distract from Saidi’s important questions.

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Aside from alcohol, khat must now be the most researched psychoactive substance in Africa. This drawing power is due partly to the comparative ease with which it can be studied in Ethiopia, Kenya, and other countries where it is legal, but mainly to the continuing fascination of a stimulant disdained by policy makers as a ‘drug’, yet embraced by hundreds of thousands of farmers from Yemen to Madagascar in the wake of increasing demand. Nowhere is the khat controversy more pronounced than in Ethiopia, and this volume edited by Ezekiel Gebissa is an excellent introduction to the topic, touching on issues relevant for all producer countries. Gebissa has already contributed much to khat research, and he provides two of the chapters in this volume (which derives from a workshop held in Addis Ababa in 2004), as well as the introduction and conclusion. The other contributions to this collection are strong too, giving a well-rounded picture of the production, trade and use of Ethiopian khat, and broadening the geographical focus from Gebissa’s own area of expertise in Harerge. The first section is entitled ‘Culture of consumption’ – though perhaps this should be pluralized given khat’s integration into several different ‘cultures’ – and well conveys how this stimulant is put to various uses. Hussein Ahmed describes khat’s use in the wadaja ceremony as performed in Wallo, northern Ethiopia. This ceremony involves elders and religious leaders offering prayers in response to adversity faced by an individual or the community: khat consumption is an integral part of the blessing-giving process. Ahmed contrasts such use with contemporary recreational consumption in Wallo, where khat is now a ubiquitous commodity. Daniel Mains examines consumption by unemployed and employed youth in Jimma, closely analysing the link between mirqana (the khat ‘high’) and ‘dreaming’, as unemployed youth imagine a better future while chewing, a future unlikely to be realized in the current economic climate. Mains’ description of youthful khat consumption is very familiar to me from my work in Kenya, where young chewers also tap into an urban youth culture very different from earlier cultures of khat consumption. Gebissa’s chapter provides a concise historical overview of the ‘chew culture’, the medical consequences of consumption, and opposition to consumption. His puncturing of arguments for khat prohibition is
measured, although his remark that *khat* is only as injurious as coffee or tea is perhaps injudicious, and rather contradicted by his lament that modern cultures of consumption allow ‘misuse’. Also, his notion that *khat* was consumed in a controlled fashion ‘traditionally’ romanticizes past chewing cultures, while he appears a little puritanical in equating ‘misuse’ with recreational consumption.

The second section should be required reading for agricultural policy makers in Ethiopia and beyond. The chapters offer insights into the factors driving the stunning recent increase in production, and demonstrate that overall *khat* has had a beneficial effect on food security (making the subtitle rather ironic) and job creation. Gebissa opens the section with an overview of production and marketing that supplements his earlier work (which studied *khat* in Harer until the end of the Derg), updating the history of Ethiopian *khat* production. Degol Hailu provides an economist’s view of the expansion in production in northern and southern Ethiopia. Subsistence crops and coffee cannot compete with what Hailu terms the ‘dollar leaf’ against a backdrop of failing agricultural policy. Habtemariam Kassa continues this theme with a thorough examination of the factors behind the switch to *khat* in Harer. He emphasizes the agency and innovations of the farmers who have turned to *khat* in a context of increasing land fragmentation. Similarly, Tesfaye Lemma Tefera and Daniel Start suggest that *khat* has been the one crop to allow farmers to improve living standards in difficult circumstances. The chapter contrasts *khat* with other crops grown in eastern Ethiopia, showing that farmers with access to irrigation can do very well out of *khat*, especially in the dry season when prices increase. While the tone of these chapters is positive overall, they all urge caution: *khat* is not a panacea for Ethiopian agriculture, and they warn that the *khat* boom might not last long into the future.

With this in mind, both Gebissa and Christopher Clapham conclude with calls for the *khat* debate to move beyond sterile arguments about prohibition. *Khat* is far too deeply ingrained in Ethiopian society and culture, and far too important for the nation’s economy (it is a major source of foreign exchange), for prohibition to prove feasible. Instead, effort is better spent working with farmers on the issue of agricultural sustainability, and with consumers on harm reduction measures. Such a conclusion is sobering in the context of the global *khat* debate, a debate still reeling under the influence of the ‘war on drugs’.

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This book claims to be the most nuanced historical study of a major media outlet in Eastern Africa. Loughran narrates the story of the *Nation* against the background of the politics of ‘transition’ in Kenya following the country’s independence and its subsequent transformation over the intervening years. The book is both an historical text and a critical intervention into state–media relations in the country. Throughout, Loughran points to the symbiotic relationship between the state and the media: the extent to which media development is embedded in a