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Kenneth F. Kiple. *A Moveable Feast: Ten Millennia of Food Globalization.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 384 pp. $27.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-79353-7.

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A Satisfying Serving of Food History

The subtitle *Ten Millennia of Food Globalization* accurately captures the scope of Kenneth F. Kiple's *A Movable Feast*, which begins with the earliest hints of agriculture and continues down to the twenty-first century. The concept underlying Alfred W. Crosby's 1972 classic, *The Columbian Exchange*, informs the work throughout, as Kiple acknowledges early on. Crosby argued that conquest and settlement was not just one-way, but rather an exchange between both conquerors and natives, and furthermore involved not only human beings, but also the flora, fauna, technology, and ideas associated with them–for good and for bad.

A Movable Feast focuses primarily on the flora and fauna that humans domesticated, in part or in whole, and then shared with humans in other regions of the globe; again, for good and for bad. Kiple begins with a brief introduction to the origins of agriculture, followed by more detailed descriptions of the important animals and plants that came under human control in the early millennia of the agricultural revolution, and then a discussion of the consequences of this major change in human behavior. This portion of the book, comprising the first six chapters, is organized mostly by geography, moving from the Fertile Crescent to eastern Asia, with a brief return to Africa and Europe. The Americas, where the processes of domestication occurred much later, are not included in this first portion.

Much of the material in the first six chapters–and indeed in the book as a whole–derives from the massive two-volume work, *The Cambridge World History of Food*, which Kiple co-edited with Kreimhild C. Ornelas and which was published in 2000. In chapter 2, "Building the Barnyard," and again in chapter 6, "Consequences of the Neolithic," Kiple states that animal domestication occurred when people who had already begun practicing sedentary agriculture captured animals for sacrifice to ensure good harvests, and began taming and eventually breeding them. This assertion seems speculative at best; there is an old tradition in the study of prehistory that ascribes any activity for which there is no evident cause or purpose to religion, but making such a statement does not prove the reality. While it may be true, there is no reason to assume so without archaeological evidence to substantiate the claim. Since agriculture began in the prehistoric era, of course no written confirmation can exist.

Nevertheless, the evidence Kiple provides makes clear that food globalization began almost as soon as the domestication of animals and plants did, and accelerated after ca. 3000 BCE. This was by no means a one-way traffic; just as would happen some millennia later with the Columbian Exchange, foods of all kinds moved east, west, north, and south, so that–within the limits of geographical and climatic necessity–many staple foodstuffs were raised throughout the "Old World."

Chapters 7 through 10 carry the story of food globalization into historic times, focusing primarily on Europe with a brief excursion into Asia in chapter 8, "Faith and Foodstuffs." It is with chapter 11 that Kiple turns to the American continents, doing as he did in the first few chapters and beginning by describing the flora and fauna that were domesticated by the inhabitants of those regions. These chapters include somewhat more political history as well, since the context is the Spanish European

incursions into these continents and written records exist of their activities, though such records did not necessarily give accurate information about what was or had been going on among the various native political units and cultural zones. Chapters 14 and 15 then deal, respectively, with the impact of American foodstuffs on Europe, Africa, and Asia, and the importation of Eurasian and African plants and animals into Oceania and the Americas. Sugar and beverages–cacao, coffee, tea, soft drinks, and alcohol–receive a chapter to themselves.

Kiple suggests that the large-scale immigration of Europeans into the Americas provoked an eventual blending of cultures and foodways that would ultimately increase food globalization. Eurasian and African foods in the Americas were combined with native staples to create new dishes that now, several hundred years later, seem completely natural. The fried plantains that appear regularly in Caribbean menus originally came from New Guinea and arrived in the islands via Africa. Foods from the Americas similarly became integrated into cooking traditions in Europe, Africa, and Asia. The spicy curries of India would be far less hot without the chili peppers first domesticated in South America.

Immigration and its influence is the theme of chapter 19. Kiple's decision to present first Chinese, then Italian and Hispanic influences on North American cuisine, before turning to French, African, Germanic, and English sources of cooking tradition, keeps this chapter fresh. In chapters 20 and 21, he argues that the increase of food supplies that followed from the Columbian Exchange benefited Great Britain and the rest of Europe, and North America, more than other parts of the world, and synergistically promoted the Industrial Revolution in these regions of the world. Labor was drawn to city industries; food needed to be brought from the countryside for these workers, meaning that both transportation and agriculture became more developed and industrialized in turn. Foodstuffs could increasingly be sent not just from hinterland to city, but–eventually–worldwide. This in turn created ever greater mixing and homogenization of cuisines.

The final six chapters of the book, from "Notions of Nutrients and Nutriments" (chapter 22) to "People and Plenty in the Twenty-First Century" (chapter 27), deal with the modern era, primarily with some of the positive and negative outcomes of food globalization. As with the previous few chapters, these focus more on North America and Europe than the rest of the world, although Kiple makes a good effort to extend his analysis worldwide, using for instance examples of vitamin and mineral deficiencies that appear in particular geographic locations due to local diets, often in turn due to local mineral deficiencies in the soil or the availability or lack of particular types of foodstuffs. The growing incidence of obesity in the United States and other Western societies is another problem that Kiple ties to food globalization and the "Perils of Plenty" (chapter 23).

Genetically modified (GM) foods are perhaps the most contentious issue in modern agriculture and food consumption, and Kiple deals with the subject in chapter 27 in an admirably calm fashion. He discusses the potential benefits and liabilities of GM foods and the reactions they have caused, which have varied a great deal between different groups and localities. In the same chapter he mentions the increasing levels of production of newly "domesticated" plants and animals, especially although not exclusively from the ocean. Aquaculture has grown tremendously in recent years.

Kiple declines to guess at the future of food globalization and its effects on the kitchens and restaurants of the world's countries, but he notes that "dietary change has always occurred, and probably always will," and that "such change has been driven (albeit very slowly at times) by a quest for variety and, again, probably always will" (p. 305). He ends by saying that the greatest challenge of globalism and technological control over the food supply is to share the potential benefits of this control throughout the world.

A Movable Feast is a valuable contribution to the study of the history of food. In just over three hundred pages of text, Kiple provides a narrative that stretches from the origins of plant and animal domestication to the very modern problem of GM foods. While there is some slant towards Europe and North America, other parts of the world receive considerable attention as well. There is, unfortunately, no bibliography, only endnotes, but the endnotes cite materials in full the first time they are used in each chapter, making it easy for a reader to identify the sources. While *The Cambridge World History of Food* is by far the single most-used source, it in itself is wide-ranging, and Kiple draws on other, more recently published scholarship as well.

Black and white illustrations in the first half of the book liven up the examination of early domestication of plants and animals; captions to identify the subject of each drawing would be helpful, however. Likewise, maps to locate the regions where domestication took place would aid readers whose geographical knowledge

is less than perfect. These are minor quibbles. Overall, *A Movable Feast* is a book to savor, and to dip back into again and again to nibble at the storehouse of information within.

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