

## **Reviews / Comptes rendus**



**Cynthia SHAFER-ELLIOTT, *Food in Ancient Judah: domestic cooking in the time of the Hebrew Bible* (Equinox / Acumen: Sheffield, 2013) 256 pp; 10 figs; price £60/\$99.95; ISBN 978-1-908049-73-5.**

*Food in ancient Judah* fills a gap in the study of the Hebrew Bible and Syro-Palestinian archaeology – the modern, less judgemental term for what used to be called Biblical archaeology. Up to now, studies of biblical food have mostly concentrated on the kosher laws, sacrificial practice and elite feasting, although more recently there has also been an interest in the ancient Israelite diet.<sup>1</sup> This book seeks to look further at the everyday, in an attempt to see what household archaeology can contribute to the study of food preparation in the Bible. As such it is most welcome: even with the recent expansion in food studies over the last few decades, there are still generally too few studies of humdrum, as opposed to exotic and exciting food.

The first chapter states the author's specific intent: "to determine if there were differences in domestic food-preparation techniques in Judah in the Iron II B-C period between the urban settlements and the rural farmsteads" (p. 11). Shafer-Elliott gives us an overview of the literature on the ancient household and its food, including archaeology, anthropology and the Hebrew Bible (the term the author rightly prefers to the theologically-biased "Old Testament"). She also sets out the classification of food preparation proposed by Jack Goody, which she uses as a paradigm for her analyses of food preparation.

Having decided to compare urban and rural settlements, in her second chapter the author analyses terms in the Hebrew Bible for cities, towns, villages and farmsteads. This is not very closely connected with the subject of biblical food, and also her use of these Hebrew terms is problematic. They are quoted without transliteration into Latin characters, so a reader with no Hebrew would have difficulty in following the discussion. The problem is further compounded by a series of misprints. Thus *hatzer* in the text becomes *tatzer* in the footnotes (p. 34, notes 5, 9, 10, 15). And this is not the only problem with the Hebrew. Whereas on page 34, the Hebrew terms under discussion are written in conventional form with consonants and vocalisation, in other places some, but not all, of the Hebrew is written with consonants, vocalisation and cantillation marks. I have never seen this practice before, and it does not add anything to our understanding. It is a pity that these problems have not been picked up in editing this book, as they may prove very misleading to readers who are not familiar with biblical Hebrew.

The meat of the book, and the author's real contribution to combining archaeology and biblical studies, comes in chapter 3: her spatial analysis of Iron II Judahite settlements. Here Shafer-Elliott takes a number of archaeological

<sup>1</sup> N. MACDONALD, *What did the ancient Israelites eat? Diet in Biblical times* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, 2008).

reports from large walled urban settlements and reports of smaller rural settlements to analyse them for evidence of food preparation, comparing the data from these different kinds of settlements. Anyone who has ever tried to extract data even from so-called 'final' archaeological reports will sympathise with the author's difficulties in extracting usable material from the mass of often incomprehensible data provided, and commend her for her bravery. Her first thought, to compare Iron Age and Persian period techniques of food preparation, was reasonably abandoned for lack of excavated or published Persian sites in Judah. Her actual analysis encountered many problems, some of which she acknowledges and others which should be pointed out, not as a criticism of this pioneering work, but as signposts for those who may hope to follow her. The sites, Tel Lachish, Tel Halif, Khirbet er-Ras and Pisgat Ze'ev are indeed comparable, in that they are all Iron Age IIB-C sites with evidence of cooking activities. But not only do the finds themselves vary; the level of archaeological publication varies too, as indeed she acknowledges. Lachish has received a final report from a university professor of archaeology, whereas the data from Tel Halif is as yet only extant in the form of an internet site put up by the still on-going Lahav Research Project, an academic consortium. Both these digs were carefully planned with an eye to extracting the maximum scientific information using the best of modern technologies. The rural sites, on the other hand, were not excavated by university teams, but were only surveyed and excavated by teams from the Israel Antiquities Authority as part of rescue digs, which by their very nature are not widely planned beforehand and generally suffer from pressures of time and more limited resources.

Other problems in comparing these sites which the author does not mention, but can be deduced from her careful reporting of finds, are the different methodologies used in the digs, which must have biased the results. The report from Lachish mentions two occurrences of a single fish bone, while the report from Tel Halif mentions multiple fish bones. Given the dates of the excavations, it is likely that the more recent excavation at Halif used more modern techniques to obtain their results: wet sifting to find fish bones.<sup>2</sup> The lack of data about the fish in the report presumably means that identification is still in progress. It will be interesting to see their provenance in this inland site.

The author's conclusions that the large walled settlements had smaller rooms, but used larger cooking pots than the rural settlements leads her to a discussion of the possible reasons for this, and she includes the interesting observation that siege-conditions at Lachish could well have affected cooking. The diagrams

<sup>2</sup> Wet sifting for fishbones: R. REICH, E. SHUKRON, O. LERNAU, "The Iron Age II finds from the rock-cut pool near the spring in Jerusalem: a preliminary report" in L. L.GRABBE (ed.), *Israel in Transition: from late Bronze II to Iron Age IIA (c1250-850BCE)* vol. 1: *The archaeology* (New York/London, 2008), pp. 138-143.

reproduced from the excavation reports are, sadly, of rather poor quality: it is often difficult to make out the locus numbers she refers to in the text.

Following this chapter, Shafer-Elliott attempts to fill out her picture of Iron Age cooking in Judah by the use of anthropological, ethnological and literary data. She compares it with ethnological data from present-day Syria, and with the details of cooking found in the series of cuneiform tablets from Mesopotamia from around 1600BCE, published by Bottéro. She claims that although the latter were from an elite context, there would have been a trickle-down effect to simpler kitchens, and that cooking methods changed very slowly in antiquity. I find this less than convincing. Of course, one stew may be coincidentally like another, but the distances between ancient Mesopotamia and Iron Age Judah in both time and space are enormous. One suspects that if she had used different comparative material she might have been led to different conclusions. For example, in Palestinian talmudic sources from around a thousand years after the Iron Age, rather than around a thousand years before, there would at least have been comparability of place. Here she would have found, for example, that many rural inhabitants did not bake every day, but only once or twice a week, unlike her modern ethnological comparisons.<sup>3</sup>

In her final chapter, Shafer-Elliott gives us an analysis of four scenes of preparing food in the Hebrew Bible, from the point of view of food preparation, which has not always been the major interest of biblical commentators: Abraham and his family making food for their three visitors; Jacob making the “mess of pottage” (lentil stew) for which Esau sells his birthright; Gideon preparing food for the angel which is consumed by fire from heaven; and King David’s daughter Tamar making *levivot* for her apparently sick brother, who then rapes her. These are presented as scenes from everyday life, and the author proposes that they show that cooking at home “was not just ‘women’s work’” (p. 182). But I would contend that these are not really “everyday” meals in their biblical contexts, although they are clearly built on everyday patterns. Abraham’s angelic visitors were about to announce the birth of his son and the continuation of the people; Jacob’s pottage was to be sold for the birthright; Gideon was preparing a meal which was consumed by fire from heaven: all these were unusually significant meals and as such, their authors presumably felt they were too important to be left to mere women, as would surely have happened every day.

Cynthia Shafer-Elliott’s work thus opens the way to new fields of interest for biblical scholars. Her use of archaeological data goes beyond the “Bible-and-trowel” approach to Syro-Palestinian archaeology, and gives us a foretaste of the contribution household archaeology could make to the study of biblical food.

Susan Weingarten, *Tel Aviv University*

<sup>3</sup> Palestinian Talmud Orlah ii, 62b, with parallels in other Palestinian talmudic sources.

**Ken ALBALA and Trudy EDEN (eds), *Food and Faith in Christian Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011. 265 pp. ISBN: 9780231149976**

Such an ambitiously titled volume as this latest contribution from investigator of all-things-food Ken Albala and co-editor, historian of American foodways Trudy Eden, is bound to fall short of its potential subject matter. This is, in fact, a volume of essays covering a variety of contexts – “Christianities” might be more accurate – from the reformations of the Sixteenth-century forward, with one exception that ventures back to the fourteenth-century. From the food-shopping habits of Vallambrosian Florentines to missionary and Maori wheat-growing in New Zealand (Petrie) and Brethren in Christ love feasts in North America, the volume admirably makes up in diversity of place and polity for its chronological shortcomings.

Both its time limitations and spatial coverage are intentional, as Albala and Eden hope to make up for “the relative lack of synthetic studies” of Christian foodways after the Middle Ages. In a brief “prelude” on the study of food in early Christianity, Albala notes that it has enjoyed a flourishing of scholarship, although he draws mostly on the work of Gillian Feeley-Harnik that spawned it over thirty years ago. It would have been very helpful at least to list more recent works in that field, and I would like to have seen more evidence of awareness of it in the essays. Including a bibliography of significant secondary sources, separated from the numerous primary sources used by all the contributors, would also be helpful to readers; so would a brief biography of all the contributors. Some internet research lead to the discovery of a range of educational backgrounds, relations to subject matter, and previous publications that help to elucidate some of the insights that stood out in the articles.

The volume provides many good things, but we will have to wait for that hoped-for synthesis. Eden’s introduction delineates four significant themes for Christian foodways: commensality, sacrament, fasting and bodily health. These appear throughout the contributions, with some receiving more attention than others; but there is little attempt at thematic synthesis and few of the essays address the interrelationships of all four. Indeed the essays primarily describe micro-contexts. It is in the detailed analyses of purchase records (Musumeci), sumptuary legislation (Moyer), travel narrative (Martel), testimonial from Brethren feasters (Oberholtzer Lee), and thick description of the silent commensality of a Benedictine monastery meal (Irvine) that this volume shines. Especially noteworthy is Sydney Watts’ sophisticated reading of “medical and Lenten” mindsets about fasting in early modern France. These are primarily historical researches, with few references to theory or interdisciplinary approaches. Synthesis is problematic where it is attempted. While there

is enough to pique interest in his projected book on the multi-faceted subject of fasting and the Reformation, Albala's analysis of the topic is preliminary.

Fasting and other forms of restriction occupy much of this volume, as they have occupied the scholarship on food and religion in general. Evidence of comparative methodologies is virtually absent here, however. Some already well-covered territory (New Thought and Christian dieting movements) is gone over again, while a general correlation of Greek Orthodox fasting to health should encourage more work in this area. Commensality and sacramentality are overlapping and complex areas. While Eden's attempted clarifications in the introduction are helpful, definitions are muddled in avoidable ways in some of the essays. (Real presence is not synonymous with transubstantiation!) This leads to a caveat about synthesis of this immense topic: not yet. Both the difficulties and delights of this volume illustrate the current state of scholarship on food and Christianity. While in some areas (early Christianity) fermentation is already taking place, in most we are still hunting and gathering. And we need to use more of our tools more efficiently. Albala and Eden have tracked down some fine ingredients for that anticipated synthesis; this volume should encourage others to add to the bounty.

Corrie E. Norman, *The University of Wisconsin*

**Philip SLAVIN, *Bread and Ale for the Brethren: The Provisioning of Norwich Cathedral Priory, 1260-1536. Studies in Regional and Local History 11* (University of Hertfordshire Press, Hatfield, 2012) xvii+220 pages, 18 figs, hb £35, pb £18.99. ISBN 978-1-907396-63-2.**

Philip Slavin is well known among medieval economic historians for his recent publication on the great cattle plague of the early thirteenth century, which he argues was as important a factor in that century's catastrophic human mortality as contemporary crop failures or the better known human pestilence of 1347 onwards.<sup>4</sup> *Bread and Ale for the Brethren* is perhaps not as groundbreaking as that research, but is nevertheless a fascinating study of Norwich cathedral priory's provisioning arrangements, using the monastic accounts, following in the footsteps of Barbara Harvey at Westminster,<sup>5</sup> to show how the way priory officials ran its estates related to the daily life of the community. It also adds valuable knowledge to the burgeoning scholarship on Norwich, which must now be one of the most intensively studied places in medieval England.

There is much hard-core economic history here – Slavin's main thesis is about the priory's continuing reliance on its own estates for basic foodstuffs while society was commercialising rapidly around it – but also a good deal of more direct relevance to dietary history. For instance, this study nails, if nailing were still required, the idea that monks ate “the food of the poor”: the vast majority of the wheat and barley produced on the cathedral's estates was carted directly to the priory to make the titular bread and ale, while the “inferior” oats and rye were largely sold off at source. At the priory bakehouse, wheat was made into *panis monachorum*, also known as *panis albus*, probably equivalent to wastel, of about 50% extraction, as well as servants' bread of either smaller size or coarser meal. The brewery, too, produced *ceruisia bona*, or *monachorum*, and *ceruisia secunda*, presumably small beer. In both cases, servants and tenants might receive the higher grade on special occasions, but for the monks it was everyday fare. Nor, despite the author's statement that the Norwich monks observed the Benedictine Rule's dietary prescriptions better than their counterparts in other English houses, were they vegetarian: not just fish in bulk, but large numbers of cattle and sheep carcasses, were brought in for their consumption. This is a long way from the Rule's two little dishes, plus another of fresh fruit or vegetables in season (RB 39). In fact, Slavin states that the brethren ate no fruit or vegetables at all, despite the proximity of the cathedral's garden. He does not cite evidence for this, and may be relying on

<sup>4</sup> “The great bovine pestilence and its economic and environmental consequences in England and Wales, 1318-50”, *Economic History Review* 65 (2012), 1239-66.

<sup>5</sup> *Living and Dying in England, 1100-1540: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford, 1993).



the absence of garden produce from the accounts, but fruit and vegetables may simply have been too unimportant or cheap to feature there. Fruit, in particular, is unlikely to have been overlooked, as a valued source of sweetness before processed sugar was available.

Slavin points out that the purveyance listed in the accounts would provide each brother with about twice as many calories as a sedentary adult male is considered to need today. He cites palaeopathological studies, revealing ‘diseases of affluence’ in monastic cemeteries, to show that monks did actually eat more than they needed, but suggests that they also gave some of their allowances away to servants and paupers, helping to fulfil the Christian obligation of charity. That obligation was fulfilled on a much larger and more systematic scale, however, by the priory’s almoner, whose soup-kitchen provided peas pottage and rye bread (“much healthier”, as Slavin comments, than the monks’ *panis albus*) to up to 1350 people a day. We also hear something about the feeding of workers from the priory’s estates: harvest carters, for instance, got their dinner (*cena*) when they stopped overnight *en route* to Norwich, although no detail is given about what they ate – we know more about their horses’ diet, and here we may be seeing the priorities of those who drew up the accounts.

The book’s editorial standards are unfortunately not faultless, and the author’s meaning is occasionally unclear. There are a few errors in transcription and translation, and the occasional mistake that must stem from the author’s living a long way from the region he works on. The statement on p. 141, for instance, that intermittent availability of wind for milling might be “especially an issue in Norfolk, a flat county with a relatively mild climate” could only be made by someone unaware that East Anglia is notorious in England for its winds “straight from the Urals/North Pole”.

But this is still an immensely valuable work, revealing abundantly how economic strategies, social hierarchy and dietary customs were inextricably interwoven in one of the wealthiest institutions of medieval England.

Debby Banham, *University of Cambridge*

**Joan FITZPATRICK (ed.), *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare* (Farnham, Ashgate, 2010), 171 pages. ISBN 9780754664277; Price: \$99.**

A book titled "*Renaissance Food*" promises a wide and wonderful content, particularly when the introduction underscores the short title with descriptions such as "international and interdisciplinary," "historians, cultural commentators and literary critics", "wide in scope", and "the depiction of food by writers such as Shakespeare". The "Contents" elaborates further on that promise with sections on "Eating in Early Modern Europe", "Early Modern Cookbooks and Recipes", and "Food and Feeding in Early Modern Literature". While this volume contains eight interesting chapters by established scholars, the sum of their work is less than the promise. What the book appears to be and what it is are not the same.

Let's start with the claim that the essays are "international and interdisciplinary in their approach". Of the eight chapters, six pertain to England, one to France, and one presents seven recipes originally published in seven different languages. While this is, technically, international, one would hope that a wider variety of regions would be represented. Of the eight authors contributing to this volume, seven are literary scholars (six English, one French) and one is a historian--not what one would call even moderately interdisciplinary. This lack of interdisciplinarity is even more noticeable when one looks beyond the titles and into the chapters themselves. Shakespeare is prominent as a source as well as a focus, whether it is to analyse why Shakespeare wrote of "distressful bread", to understand the beauty of distilling, or to employ Shakespearean descriptions of banquets. A decade or so ago, a collection like this would have been in the vanguard for its determination to be "international" and, indeed the mix presented would have been seen as such. However, food studies have grown exponentially over the last ten years and scholars can be found who study foods in every major time period and in regions around the world. The same is true for related disciplines. The attendees at major food conferences around the world include social scientists, scientists, humanitarians, musicians and a wide array of people outside of academia.

This is not to say that the volume lacks variety. It does not, but the variety either tends to take it outside the bounds of food or the tenor of the volume as a whole. For example, one essay devoted to distilling, presents a provocative study of home distilling by women, suggesting that further study might show more women participated in the seventeenth-century rise of scientific activity than previously thought. It is a conclusion long overdue. Another essay presents an excellent study of the *Pharmacopoeia Londinensis* and its role in the standardisation of recipes. Neither, however, have much to do with food. Although both authors referenced food in their chapters, they are just that, references, and somewhat strained at that. On reading further,

both chapters seem to fit because they are analyses of Renaissance English literature, but when looked at from the purpose of the volume, they are out of place. Similarly, the one historical chapter, while most definitely on food, is a narrative of one historian's efforts to cook using original recipes. A highly accomplished piece representing an important aspect of food scholarship, it nevertheless sits uncomfortably in this volume because of its difference.

Finally, there is the organisation of the volume. The first section, "Eating in Early Modern Europe" is only tangentially so, containing a disconnected chapter on baking and bakers and another on Rabelaisian descriptions of foods taken from various menus. Both chapters rely heavily, if not exclusively, on literature. What, then is to distinguish this first section from the third, "Food and Feeding in Early Modern Literature"? Is there a difference between eating and feeding? Why should some chapters end up in this third section when those from the first section also rely on early modern literature for their substance? The reader is given no answer.

To sum up, this volume contains a number of very well crafted chapters predominantly analysing references to food and medicine in mostly English literary works published during the Renaissance. It is interdisciplinary in that it has one contribution on Rabelais and another on the present-day experience of cooking Renaissance recipes. Readers wanting such studies should look to this volume. However, readers wishing a broader range of approaches and topics must look to other sources.

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**Rebecca EARLE, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012), 265 pages, 21 illustrations. Price: £60.00 (\$99.00). ISBN 978-1-107-00342-2.**

In Rebecca Earle's own words, this book "explores the dynamic relationship between overseas colonisation and the bodily experience of eating in the early modern world, asking how the colonisers thought about their bodies and those of the native peoples they aspired to rule" (p. 215). The approach allows her to revisit the European-Amerindian encounter from a perspective that is as obvious as it has been almost completely neglected. From the very first lines, Earle alerts us to the seldom-noticed notion that Columbus was more concerned about the Spaniards dying in the Caribbean than about any prospect of Indian mortality. He blamed the misfortune not on the weather but on the food – or rather, the lack of the right food. His concern was not only to preserve the health of his European companions but also, and more intriguingly from a modern perspective, to prevent them from turning into Indians. That he also thought that Indians needed to eat the right kind of food in order to start looking more like Europeans highlights the surprising fluidity of these concepts. The picture that emerges poses a serious challenge to our persistent preconceptions about racialism, which simply do not obtain in the early modern period. Rather than the predictable enterprise based on an unquestioning assumption of European superiority, early modern colonialism emerges from this intriguing study as a much more anxious pursuit.

Earle bases her study on a good range of primary sources. They provide a wealth of information that seems mysteriously to have eluded researchers. Take, for instance, Pedrarias de Benavídez's *Secretos de chirugia*, where we read that Indians "don't have the same humours as us because they don't eat the same foods"; or Agustín de Vetancut's *Teatro mexicano* where it is argued that "by eating new foods, people from different climates who come here create new blood, and this produces new humours and the new humours give rise to new abilities and conditions". This evidence is ably used by Earle to remind us that in the early modern period each person was believed to possess a particular humoral balance, always in uneasy equilibrium and subject to the impact of external forces. Bread, wine and meat, eaten by Europeans, were hot; roots, herbs and fish, eaten by Indians, were cold. This was the main reason why Indian bodies were so full of "cold humours" which in turn shaped their docile and phlegmatic characters.

This might seem like familiar territory, but Earle's emphasis on food as the most important factor is a welcome corrective to the frequently voiced opinion that, in the words of Anthony Pagden, there was "relatively little at

stake in dietary customs” in European responses to the New World.<sup>6</sup> Earle shows convincingly that hybridity, which was a deep source of anxiety, was generated through food in a much more radical way than hitherto acknowledged. The conviction that the wrong foods could turn anyone into the wrong person – that “blue blood”, to give but one of a myriad of instances, could be undermined “not only by misalliances but also by too many turnips” (p. 203) – was surprisingly widespread.

Since the porous human body was particularly vulnerable to the powerful influence of unfamiliar foods, Earle implies that any suggestion that there might have been some degree of permanence in the human body or any notion of an embodied racial difference are more than likely to be anachronistic. It is a pity that she does not apply the same fluidity to other aspects of early modern colonialism. She detects a paradox, for example, in the way in which evangelisation often went hand in hand with diet, because “it encouraged the elision of the very difference that separated colonisers and colonised” (p. 158). This neat, two-tiered perspective leads her to assert that the “aims at the heart of the colonial endeavour were inherently contradictory” (p. 182) and that what she calls the “colonial ideology” was based on “unstable foundations” (p. 183). These assertions seem based on a rather dated perception of the early modern Hispanic world as dominated by a “militant Catholicism” that encouraged a “focused assault on the autonomy of Jewish and Muslim communities” and where “certain sins”, such as being Jewish, could “mark the body so powerfully that *nothing* could remove their trace, even many generations hence” (pp. 187, 205 Earle’s emphasis). There is a growing body of research that has called the bluff of these perceptions by highlighting the widespread practice of the principle of *obedezco pero no cumpro* (“I obey but I do not comply”). It has alerted us to the dangers of taking legislative initiatives that were rarely put into effect too much at face value. A little more attention to this would have allowed Earle to avoid a certain reiterative tone which seems to stem from these apparently unresolved tensions. But this is a minor quibble in what is otherwise a remarkably engaging, coherent and persuasive study.

Fernando Cervantes, *University of Bristol*

<sup>6</sup> *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven and London, 1993), p. 186.

**Matthieu LECOUTRE, *Ivresse et ivrognerie dans la France moderne* (Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes / Tours, Presses universitaires François-Rabelais de Tours, 2011), 395 pages, 20 black and white illus., 8 colour illus. Price : €21. ISBN 978-2-7535-1706-6.**

Matthieu Lecoutre's study of drunkenness in early modern France, originally a *thèse de doctorat* submitted to the Université de Bourgogne in 2010, has a very ambitious goal: to study drunkenness across all of the Ancien Régime, which he understands to be roughly 1500-1800, and to cover all of France. The title of the book reveals Lecoutre's deep interest in languages of drunkenness. In French *ivresse*, he tells us, refers to the state of intoxication or inebriation, that is, a physical or medical condition that is temporary. On the other hand *ivrognerie* connotes the kind of behavior more often associated with someone who regularly drinks to excess. Both words tend to be translated as drunkenness in most French-English dictionaries, though the distinction of meanings is the same in English. We tend to use the same word, however, for both meanings: being drunk (*ivresse*) is not quite the same as being a drunk (*ivrognerie*). The first may seem more a physiological condition, while the second is more obviously a cultural construction; but Lecoutre shows not too surprisingly that both are in fact cultural constructions. Thus, this book is much more about the languages and definitions of drunkenness than it is a study of the drinking habits of French men and women that led to drunkenness, though as Lecoutre notes, the two need to be studied together. Nevertheless, the book is the most systematic study that I know of on the effects of excessive drinking and the way those effects were perceived in early modern France.

Lecoutre shows clearly that the two words *ivresse* and *ivrognerie* were used almost interchangeably in the early modern period, and indeed multiple variants of them crop up in the sources. In fact, a total of 118 different variants of the two words appear in the archival sources he has investigated (23). It is not until the twentieth century that the distinction between being intoxicated and being a drunkard is more closely defined. Thus, Lecoutre employs a wide variety of both printed and archival sources in his research in his effort to show the varied ways in which drunkenness was understood by contemporaries over the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Although the research is vast – Lecoutre lists more than 350 printed primary sources in his bibliography, for example – the most telling of his sources fall into two major groups: criminal records in the archives of Brittany, Burgundy, Beaujolais, Lyonnais, and Forez in the central Loire valley that show the attempted prosecution of excessive drunkenness; as well as a wide range of religious, moralist, and medical literature that sought to condemn excessive drinking and all its many variants. While one could argue that the archival materials hardly cover all of

France – and the heavily populated capital of Paris is just one obvious omission – it is nevertheless an impressive body of evidence that Lecoutre brings to the table here. So, how does he organise such a vast body of evidence and what conclusions does he draw from it?

First and foremost, Lecoutre notes a rising tide of opposition to public drunkenness and public disorder emanating from it beginning in the sixteenth century. Although the Protestant and Catholic reformations surely played a significant part in this, the origins of these efforts actually predate any efforts by Luther, Calvin, or others to initiate a “reformation of manners” or to create a more godly kingdom of Christ on earth. Efforts by civil magistrates were just as significant, however, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and Lecoutre shows how in many cases church and state worked hand in hand to try to control or at least limit public disorderliness due to excess drink. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries these efforts were joined and eventually replaced by moralists and medical practitioners. What Lecoutre shows, however, is that all these efforts ultimately failed to diminish or even check the “culture of intoxication of the Old Regime (*la culture de l’enivrement de l’Ancien Régime*)” (316-317), and he argues that the French government, at least, eventually came to tolerate it by the late eighteenth century. In other words, Lecoutre suggests that the culture of drinking practices built around holidays, sociability, political and religious rituals, and rites of passage were just far too engrained to be overturned or even significantly checked by sustained attacks from church and state.

Second, Lecoutre’s use of archival evidence from criminal records is also suggestive. Perhaps the most surprising thing I encountered in the entire book is that in the Burgundian capital of Dijon, police authorities took action against cabarets and taverns for serving excess drink on only 14 occasions between 1547 and 1786 (280). The author notes that attempts to repress drunkenness directly were simply non-existent, and even indirect actions such as visiting places where drink was served were both rare and arbitrary. Lecoutre rightly rejects any attempt to interpret an increase or decrease in the policing of excessive drinking as evidence that excessive drinking itself was increasing or decreasing. If that were the case, then drunkenness hardly existed in Dijon at all over three centuries. Indeed, he shows convincingly that drunkenness was fairly constant in early modern France even as the attempts to repress it by judicial and ecclesiastical authorities increased in the sixteenth century and eventually petered out by the end of the eighteenth century. Lecoutre also uses contemporary images as sources for his findings: 20 black and white engravings and 8 oil paintings of the period, the latter reproduced in colour. While many, if not most, of these images merely illustrate some of his conclusions, the author uses them most effectively in a chapter titled “Artistic drunkenness (*L’ivresse artistique*)”.

In summary, *Ivresse et ivrognerie dans la France modern* is not a book about drinking practices in early modern France, but a book about the ways that contemporaries understood and perceived the state of intoxication and its resultant behaviors over three centuries. Lecoutre is especially good on the different ways contemporaries used different forms of language to express, define, and describe the wide variety of meanings drunkenness connoted in the early modern world. Ultimately, though, the book is a narrative of how the Catholic Reformation in the sixteenth century, the absolute monarchy in the seventeenth century, as well as the moralists and physicians in the eighteenth century were ultimately unable to mold and shape the drinking habits of a nation steeped in the culture of intoxication. Not that any more evidence is needed, but Matthieu Lecoutre puts the final nail in the coffin of the older view once championed by Peter Burke and others that early modern culture was a battle between Carnival and Lent – or to put it another way, popular culture vs. elite culture – and a fight that Lent ultimately won by the end of the eighteenth century. This book shows more clearly that all those assumptions are wrong. The war on drunkenness was not an inter-cultural battle but an intra-cultural battle, and if we want to retain Burke's metaphor, a battle that Carnival was always likely to win.

Mack P. Holt, *George Mason University*



**Philippe MEYZIE, *L'alimentation en Europe à l'époque moderne. Manger et boire, XVI<sup>e</sup> s.-XIX<sup>e</sup>* (Paris, Armand Colin, "Collection U: Histoire", 2010), 288 pages. ISBN 9782200244071.**

Given the expansion of food history as a discipline over the past twenty years or so, and the cardinal place that the early modern period has in the social and cultural history of food in Europe, it is remarkable that there are still so few historical surveys of this period. Ken Albala's informative and enthusiastic primer is the only one in English that readily comes to mind.<sup>7</sup> It offers a welcome introduction to the foods and ingredients of the period and their respective geographies, as well as introductory discussions of key themes. Albala ambitiously targeted students of both history and food studies, making the complexity of the past manageable. But this risked leaving more advanced students of history unsatisfied. There has been little which brought together both an account of the remarkable transformations that occurred between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century with a discussion of the potentially bewildering range of methodologies, approaches and themes, based on an equally diverse range of archival, printed and material sources, that historians have used in an attempt to understand them. This rich vein of published research had yet to be digested. Philippe Meyzie's study does this.

Meyzie's own expertise lies in the study of food consumption patterns and food and wine markets, with doctoral research on food culture and society in early modern south-west France.<sup>8</sup> He is thus well placed to identify and discuss some of the most topical areas and developments in the historiography of the subject in recent years. In a survey history of this sort the author has the challenge of pursuing both the history of the period and its historiography, of charting the changes and continuities, and how people of the time perceived them, as well as presenting the research which allows us to know these things. And, of course, that research is immensely varied, with its own strengths, weaknesses and limitations. Meyzie gets the balance about right. The book begins with a discussion of the origins of the discipline and the key works that contributed to its development, culminating in Meyzie's own notion of what elements and approaches should constitute "une histoire globale des cultures alimentaires européennes" (p. 25), which is what the book sets out to survey.

Meyzie is quite clear that there is a history to be recounted. He identifies three phases in the evolution of eating and drinking during the early modern period. The first lasts until the middle of the seventeenth century, during which a certain continuity with the preceding period prevailed, when dining

<sup>7</sup> Ken ALBALA, *Food in early modern Europe* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Philippe Meyzie's 2005 doctoral dissertation was entitled: *Culture alimentaire et société dans le Sud-Ouest aquitain du XVIII<sup>e</sup> au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle : goûts, manières de table et gastronomie. L'émergence d'une identité régionale.*

habits remained little changed from the Middle Ages and the products of the New World made little impact. Cereals continued to dominate and new tastes had yet to emerge. The second phase extends from the 1650s to the 1750s, during which the range of food products expanded thanks to developments in agriculture, and new plants and goods from overseas. Developments in French cookery lead to an increasing refinement in dining, with less opulence but more luxury. The final phase, from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, witnessed the acceleration and multiplication of exchanges that transformed consumption habits. Maize and potatoes took their place in various regions of Europe, exotic foods started to circulate widely in most countries, and the liberalisation of pleasurable eating initiated a new relationship with food.

Meyzie charts these developments in practices and representations thematically, investigating a wide range of topics: food self-sufficiency and provisioning strategies; the sites of consumption (taverns, coffee-houses, restaurants); the circulation and exchange of food items and cultures; beverages (from staples like water to luxuries like chocolate); the foodways of the rural and urban poor; the shift from abstinence to pleasure; the politics and power of food; ideas about health and food; national and regional cuisines. Along the way, Meyzie introduces the reader to the challenges historians face in reconstructing the early modern European past. The book abounds with references to the sources historians have used in recent years, from the archival to the archaeological.

There are important insights. Meyzie does not shy away from making simple things complicated, by taking preconceived notions and turning them on their head. For instance, the *vision misérabiliste* of generations of historians was to assume (lacking evidence to the contrary) that the peasants of early modern Europe were condemned to a wretched, changeless and unvaried diet. But in chapter 6 Meyzie uses more recent research to stress how the diet of the European peasantry may have operated within the constraints of a culture of hunger, but it was nevertheless open to variety and new flavours, and was never entirely cut off from the changing usages of the rest of society.<sup>9</sup> None are these the faceless peasants of demographic and economic histories. Throughout, Meyzie's book abounds with real people, doing real things and thinking real thoughts, warts and all. Travellers, for example. If it is well known that travellers' accounts tell us as much (if not more) about the land they come from as the land they are visiting, rather than see this as a weakness of the source it can be turned into a strength. The French traveller visiting Poland in the

<sup>9</sup> Then again, one might argue that Meyzie is painting an overly rosy picture here. His example of the potato as evidence of change is a double-edged one, since in some parts of Europe the introduction of the potato signalled an actual impoverishment of the diets of the poor.

seventeenth century, who complains of the overuse of strong spices there, is telling us as much about Polish cookery as the shift away from spices and towards 'natural' flavours occurring in his homeland (p. 250).

There are some limitations, too, in terms of organisation and coverage. In terms of organisation, the final chapter (ch. 11), dedicated to a reconstruction of national and regional cuisines, remains a bit of a mystery to me. Rather than take us through Europe's regions, and the discuss the changes therein, we have a discussion of Italian cookery (to illustrate the national) followed by south-west France (to illustrate the regional). But what points were being made, what contribution the chapter made to book, and why the chapter came at the end of the book, remained unclear.

There are some questions about coverage, too, though these tend to invite further discussion rather than detract from the book. Take Meyzie's discussion of the spread of French cookery to eastern Europe, in particular Poland, during the second half of the eighteenth century (ch. 4). This trend is taken as a given by Meyzie, which is rather strange given the importance he rightfully places on understanding the mechanisms by which exchange and innovation take place. One would like to know more about the why's of the success of French food fashions. Moreover, and perhaps inevitably, geographical coverage is uneven. This is due in part to the vagaries of the historiography itself, Meyzie's own expertise and research interests, and – in particular for the eighteenth century – the European fashion for French cuisine. As a result, much of the book's content is 'French'. That said, we are a long way from the days when a book written by a French historian, with 'Europe' in the title, tended to mean 'France', which in turn really meant 'Paris'. Meyzie has gone out of his way to include examples from all over Europe. And if one has the impression that the ratio of French to non-French material is something like two-to-one, at least 'French' here extends far into the provinces.

By way of example, let us consider his discussion of the ordinary, everyday dining habits of elite families (pp. 150-153). Meyzie has a penchant for illustrating his points with three different examples and this one is based on three published case studies: two involve French noble families, a lord of Languedoc and a noblewoman of Bordeaux, and one Spanish, a rural noble family of La Mancha. The discussion illustrates two further welcome features of Meyzie's book. The first is conceptual. Meyzie here illustrates the welcome shift away from a focus on elite banquets and feasts as the core of food history, to a study of the social habits at all levels of society, elites included, which has lead historians to ask questions about how the elites behaved and consumed when they were in private. The second point concerns the sources available. Here Meyzie illustrates the important shift towards the study of documents like kitchen accounts, household inventories and commonplace books as a way of tracing patterns in day-to-day behaviour.

Meyzie thus succeeds eminently well in his aim of offering us “a global history of European food cultures” during the early modern period, that combines a nuanced study of practices and values relating to food, attentive to the dynamics of change and exchange, in a context that is economic and political, social and cultural.

David Gentilcore, *University of Leicester*

**Rachel RICH, *Bourgeois consumption. Food, space and identity in London and Paris, 1850-1914* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2011), 239 pages, 8 figures, 2 tables. Price : £55. ISBN 978 0 7190 8112 5.**

While workers in the nineteenth century seemed to have been bashful about sharing private meals and revealing the ingredients of their billy-can to their colleagues for fear of being stigmatised, they participated in a public culture of drinking whose hallmark was reciprocity. The aristocracy and the independently wealthy indulged in conspicuous consumption to flaunt their wealth and maintain networks of influence. Now what about the social group in the middle, one rung above those who worked with their hands and one below those who did not work at all? These white collars are the people whose meals Rachel Rich sets out to investigate in London and Paris between 1850 and World War I, when population had increased from 2.7 to roughly 7.3 million inhabitants in the British capital, and from 1 to 2.9 million in the city of lights. Rich trains her analytical eye on four sites (or occasions) of eating, using the home, the restaurant, clubs and civic banquets to examine what meals can tell about the organisation of middle-class everyday life. Commensality is thus the subject of *Bourgeois Consumption*, and its author is particularly attentive to the role of gender and the interplay between, and overlap of, the public and private spheres.

International comparison is a commendable but difficult endeavour because it immediately raises the question of social taxonomy. Rich is aware of the complications, and she struggles upfront to make the case for the comparability of the English middle class and the French bourgeoisie. For this she relies, first, on an economic attribute that highlights a man's capacity to maintain wife and children at leisure (and sometimes to hire domestic help), and second, on a set of common meal routines that include punctilious attention to manners and mores intended to express respectability, signal comfort and display altogether rational comportment. This somewhat circular hypothesis is a convenient working tool as it aims to integrate quantifiable data (occupation, revenue, education) and values (especially those expressed through mealtime sociability) in order to identify the group under study. It is, however, also prone to lump together practices that otherwise sort out members of this rather more elusive and composite class. Various sub-categories thus capture the actors engaged in what the author considers bourgeois modes of consumption: the "respectable and educated middle classes" (p. 29), a "broadly middle-class audience" but also "lower-middle-class women" as readers of advice literature (p. 28), "a rather well-to-do upper-middle-class couple" (p. 72, pp. 124-125), a "solidly middle-class family" (p. 83), the *petits* and the respectable bourgeois (p. 95, p. 105), the vaguely bohemian literati as "one section of the bourgeoisie" (p. 113), "polite society" (p. 126) as well as "elite

upper-middle-class men" (p. 149), "aspiring middle classes" and "a majority of middle-class women" who operated within constrained budgets (p. 24), the "stable but not excessively wealthy middle classes" (p. 41), British families whose yearly budgets stretched from £800 to £10,000 (p. 85) – "a broad range of economic levels" as Rich disarmingly notes later (p. 144).<sup>10</sup> What they shared, it seems, is an ideal that distinguished them from the leisure class as well as from the working class, and the happenings on and around the table represented one means to create a sense of belonging, however tenuous or disparate the tangible ties may have been.

The emergence, in the nineteenth century, of the middle class – endowed as its members were with some disposable income to make consumer choices – was accompanied by a learning process on how to behave properly. Advice manuals taught about which foods and utensils to buy, what houses to live in and the way to arrange them, how to compose a list of invitations to dinner, and where to join a club. Rich has no information on the readership or the price of the prescriptive literature which she uses, in chapter 1, to reconstruct a set of guidelines by which to live: observe self-restraint, avoid gluttony, be on time, steer clear of political discussions – at least in France.<sup>11</sup> And so just as standards defined (good) taste, rules in effect reined in choice. They helped members of the middle class to find their bearings. But, as Rich sustains at several junctions, insecurity came with their social position, and such anxiety led to a significant degree of dependence on the gaze of others. Much of life on the middle rungs of the pecking order evolved in a culture of regard that made and unmade reputations.

Actual behaviour diverged from this normative framework. Letters, diaries and memoirs show degrees of informality where etiquette books suggest stifling directives of conduct, and they tell of families for whom dire straits made it difficult to keep up with the middle-class model. The majority of these personal records do not document the pain coming with the inculcation of norms (as does Kafka's *Letter to His Father*, 1919) or the questioning of gender roles. Rich emphasises the convivial aspects of commensality and understates its constraining imperatives and possible negative side effects. She does, however, spend some time with the counter model of the wife as homemaker, the divorced feminist, single mother and (Dreyfusard) journalist Marguerite Durand (1864-1936). She also presents the occasional glimpse

<sup>10</sup> Marguerite Perrot has established the "surprising diversity" in consumption practices among the French bourgeoisie, see *Le mode de vie des familles bourgeoises (1873-1953)*, Paris, A. Colin, 1961.

<sup>11</sup> Writers like Emile Zola and Marcel Proust, scholars like Gabriel Monod and Emile Durkheim, artists like Claude Monet and Emile Galle, and actress Sarah Bernhardt would have considered it infelicitous (a euphemism) to assert that the Dreyfus affair had divided the French "to a ridiculous extent" (p. 110).

at the frustration induced by the pressure of social expectations to be polite, receive guests or attend dinners.

The affirmation of middle-class identity benefitted from, and sustained, the growing numbers of restaurants in the nineteenth century. Chapter 4 examines these establishments as they offered the possibility to outsource meal sociability while maintaining a quasi private atmosphere on a public stage. The French hegemony in the restaurant business is standard historiographical fare, and Rich's evidence is interesting in another respect. Indeed, London had its share of restaurants replicating the Gallic prototype, yet they seemed to drain less of their clientele among the middle class than their Parisian counterparts. Then, too, unaccompanied women raised suspicions of being prostitutes, and their presence in restaurants tested the resilience of this ambiguous space in England. It was only by the turn of the century that women were accepted as routine – and paying – customers. The French had no compunction about welcoming female guests (paintings, somewhat neglected here, offer ample evidence for this). Conversely, English women founded clubs while the French, where formal social circles remained almost exclusively male, seemed not to have followed that route. In both countries, public banquets rarely sported women among the diners; they used other venues to voice their concerns.

*Bourgeois consumption* is valuable because it aims to combine the study of norms and practices. It is better on the former but delivers interesting insights on the latter. For one, middling women's role in, and responsibility for, private receptions increased dramatically in the course of the nineteenth century. Rich insists on the commonalities rather than the differences between the Parisian and the London middle class, though that may owe a great deal to, first, the exceedingly inclusive social taxonomy, and second, the paucity of evidence used to document social experience. The reliance on discursive sources has Rich neglect institutional set-ups to educate home keepers; there is hardly a glance at cooking schools and domestic science classes, some of which were part of public school programs in France after 1881. Then, too, the nuts and bolts of running a family's daily budget as well as its social schedule recede behind the way in which contemporary authorities envisioned the ideal household, about which the reader learns a great deal. The analysis of bourgeois modes of living and patterns of practices would have gained from a larger number of concrete descriptions, say of the resort to catered take-out food to offer private dinner or the socio-political meaning of banqueting or club membership as public engagement beyond mere private interests. The book would have benefitted from more careful copy-editing.

Martin Bruegel, *INRA-ALISS*

**Kilien STENGEL, *L'aide alimentaire : colis de vivres et repas philanthropiques. Histoire de la Gigouillette 1934-2009* (L'Harmattan, coll. "Historiques", 2012), 140 pages. ISBN : 978-2-296-296776-2 ; Prix : €14,50.**

Cet ouvrage retrace la vie d'une association philanthropique créée dans les années 1930 à Clamecy, petite commune de la Nièvre. La connaissance personnelle de l'auteur, Kilien Stengel, fils et petit-fils des Présidents de l'association, lui permet de s'appuyer non seulement sur son expérience et ses souvenirs personnels mais surtout sur des témoignages et documents de première main. Ainsi, bien plus qu'un récit, ce livre constitue un document précieux à l'historien, permettant de reconstituer en détail la vie et le fonctionnement d'une association locale, en insistant en particulier sur l'importance de certains épisodes ou de certaines personnes qui ne laisseraient pas nécessairement de traces dans les archives.

Fondée le 8 juin 1954, la Société philanthropique de la Gigouillette se situe dans le prolongement d'une petite confrérie du tastevin créée dans l'entre-deux-guerres, "la Commune libre de La Sainte Butte du Crot-Pinçon". À l'hiver 1954, sensibles à l'appel de l'abbé Pierre, les membres de "la sainte butte" décident d'en élargir les objectifs à des fins philanthropiques et de venir en aide aux vieillards nécessiteux de Clamecy et des environs. Dès 1955, alors que la carte nationale dite "Carte sociale des économiquement faibles" (instituée en 1949 pour les plus de 65 ans sous conditions de ressources) ouvre droit à un bon gratuit pour deux kilos de sucre, les membres de la nouvelle association suggèrent de compléter cette aide par la distribution de charbon et d'autres denrées alimentaires: pommes de terre, colis alimentaire pendant l'hiver et colis de Noël. À ces distributions s'ajoutent chaque année l'organisation de la fête des rois à l'hospice de la ville, un voyage gastronomique et le banquet annuel de l'association, à l'occasion duquel les membres de la Gigouillette partagent leur goût pour la gastronomie avec quelques heureux bénéficiaires.

Comme pour l'ensemble du monde caritatif, ces activités supposent un budget. Récolter des fonds est le nerf de l'activité de la Gigouillette. Outre les subventions de la municipalité, les dons d'hiver et quêtes aux mariages, l'association se doit d'organiser des événements qui attirent la générosité du public. Parmi ses principaux rendez-vous annuels la Gigouillette compte la traditionnelle collecte de chiffons et ferraille et la fête de la Butte, toutes deux héritées de "la Sainte Butte", auxquelles s'adjoignent la collecte d'argent organisée en mairie les jours d'élections, puis, plus tardivement (1977 -2007) la fête de l'andouillette et du vin blanc organisée le 14 juillet. Ces activités supposent de la main d'œuvre bénévole, des compétences (gestion de stocks, comptable etc.), mais aussi le soutien des édiles municipaux qui, lorsqu'ils préfèrent à la Gigouillette une autre association pour l'organisation de l'édition 2001 de



la fête de l'andouillette, mettent en péril les comptes et l'existence même de l'association.

L'un des mérites de l'ouvrage est en effet de montrer la précarité de ces associations locales qui ne tiennent que par le dévouement d'une poignée de membres. C'est ainsi que les premiers colis de l'association sont déposés et distribués au domicile du Président ou au salon de coiffure du co-fondateur de la société au risque d'en bloquer l'entrée. Plus tard, le président devient l'assujéti du local d'hébergement d'urgence municipal lorsque les secrétaires de mairie envoient directement les SDF à son domicile. Or les membres de l'association peinent à assurer leur renouvellement. Les jeunes sont partis à la ville ou préfèrent à la désuète Gigouillette les Restos du cœur, aux actions davantage médiatisées. Avec le temps, les membres de la Gigouillette doivent également s'adapter à d'autres changements qui témoignent de l'augmentation de la précarité en France à partir des années 1970. Le principal changement concerne l'élargissement des personnes aidées par la Gigouillette en faveur de personnes plus jeunes, de familles monoparentales et des demandeurs d'asile. Ils doivent également renouveler certaines activités, qu'il s'agisse de la collecte de fonds (l'organisation d'un vide grenier se substitue à la collecte de ferraille) ou de leur allocation. Ainsi pour faire face à une demande croissante (à budget constant), l'association met en place dans les années 1990 un questionnaire d'attribution inspiré de celui des Restos du cœur. Les membres de la Gigouillette doivent enfin composer avec un paysage associatif qui se complexifie et qui conduit, sur la scène locale, à collaborer successivement avec la Croix-Rouge, les CCAS et la Banque alimentaire pour l'organisation de la distribution d'aide alimentaire.

En retraçant la vie de la Gigouillette sur 50 ans l'auteur montre comment se répercutent sur le milieu caritatif, à l'échelle locale, les principaux changements intervenus dans la vie économique et sociale française depuis l'après-guerre. Qu'il s'agisse de l'effritement de l'interconnaissance entre membres et personnes aidées, qui, par le jeu des critères d'attribution deviennent des "bénéficiaires", ou du contenu des colis, dans lesquels le poisson frais et le pain d'épice laissent place à des biscuits et des plats préparés appertisés, le renouvellement des pratiques caritatives apparaît avec d'autant plus d'acuité lorsqu'on sait celles dont elles sont héritées. Agrémenté de photos et de documents tels les comptes de l'association pour certaines années ou le détail du contenu des colis alimentaires, l'ouvrage fournit, au delà de l'aventure humaine qui y est présentée, une approche originale et stimulante de la question de l'aide alimentaire.

Anne Lhuissier, *INRA-ALISS*

**YANG Jisheng**, *Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine, 1958-1962* (London, Allen Lane, 2012), 629 pages, 1 illustration. Price : £30. ISBN 978-1-846-14518-6.

**ZHOU Xun** (ed.), *The Great Famine in China, 1958-1962: A Documentary History*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 2012, 204 pages, 1 illustration, ISBN 978-0-300-17518-9.

The Great Chinese Famine (1958-1962) was one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes in world history. There now seems to be irrefutable evidence to prove that this disaster was almost entirely man-made. It was caused primarily by policies introduced by the Communist Party during the Great Leap Forward. Although a number of foreign scholars have written detailed studies of this famine, due to its continuing political sensitivity Chinese historians have been limited in the extent to which they have been able to conduct and publish research. In recent years, however, an increasing number of scholars based in Mainland China and Hong Kong have sought to defy official taboos, and have begun to unearth the hidden history of the Great Famine. One of the most prominent of these scholars is Yang Jisheng, a journalist from Hubei Province who conducted research into the famine for over a decade. He consulted a vast number of official documents only available to those granted admission to exclusive Communist Party archives, exploited informal channels to procure rare documents, and interviewed cadres who governed areas of rural China in 1958-1962. This monumental and courageous research project culminated in the publication of a weighty two-volume study, offering perhaps the most comprehensive overview of the famine yet produced. Unfortunately Yang's book remains banned in Mainland China. It has now been heavily edited and translated by Stacey Mosher and Guo Jian, and published as *Tombstone: The Untold Story of Mao's Great Famine*.

Yang intersperses chapters detailing regional case studies with those providing general analysis of the political causes of the famine. His specific local examples help to shift the focus of the discussion away from an elite-centered perspective that has often dominated the history of famine. He does not totally eschew discussion of high-level power politics. Significant attention is dedicated to cataloguing the court intrigues that raged amongst members of the higher echelons of the Communist Party. Yet the strength of Yang's study is in its ability to trace links between the Politburo and the People's Communes. He demonstrates how elite-level decisions were filtered through the particular prisms of local politics, and were intensified by processes of positive and negative feedback. This multilayered perspective constructs an analytical model that dissects the Maoist political system from core to periphery.

The image of the system that Yang presents is one beset by horrific repression and desperate survival strategies. Readers seeking further evidence to

indict the Maoist regime for its crimes against the Chinese population will not be disappointed. Yang describes widespread cannibalism, torture, cadre corruption and starvation, often in forensic detail. He begins by recalling the death of his own adopted father, whose starvation he personally witnessed (p. 3-12). Given that Yang was motivated to conduct research into the famine by this personal trauma, it is entirely understandable that he writes with a degree of anger and passion that somewhat precludes a fully nuanced approach. His picturesque prose betrays his background in journalism rather than academia. His description of Chinese political culture as “despotic” (p. 484), and his references to the “bellicose temperament” (p. 465) of ethnic minorities, will not appeal to professional historians, who have long questioned such descriptive categories. Yet Yang’s study has much to offer scholars, both in its analytical approach and in its insight into restricted documents.

Yang’s study has an unapologetically political agenda. Its primary target is the totalitarian rule of the Communist Party, which, he claims, lacks a “corrective mechanism” to arrest to development of corrosive decision-making patterns (p. 496). He provides a neat aphorism to describe Chinese political culture during the famine, noting how each official “wore two faces: before his superiors he was a slave, and before his subordinates, a tyrant” (p.486). Later he goes further, claiming that *everyone* bore at least some responsibility for the system that drove China to starvation (p. 496). He somewhat undermines this argument for collective responsibility, however, by insisting upon highlighting the personal culpability of Mao Zedong. He is not content to view Mao as the misguided and callous leader of a dysfunctional system, but rather insists upon uncovering his malign influence at every possible juncture. Thus, on the one hand, Yang argues that responsibility for the famine was dissipated throughout the political system, and yet, on the other, attributes near omnipotent power to Mao. The tension between these dual perspectives is never reconciled satisfactorily.

Given that *Tombstone* repudiates Communist rule so wholeheartedly, it is somewhat intriguing that Yang’s analysis retains so many of the Party’s own explanatory frameworks and rhetorical idiosyncrasies. For example, he refers to the collective psychological dynamics that perpetuated the famine as the “Communist Wind” and the “Exaggeration Wind” (pp. 248-269). Here not only does Yang’s terminology remain rooted firmly in official political discourse, but his explanatory framework also bears a strong resemblance to that given by the Communist Party, which sought to disavow its former radicalism in later years. Similarly, Yang describes an idealist/pragmatist split that arose within the Party, claiming that the latter faction defied the hard-line Maoists to precipitate the end of the famine (p. 518). Here his explanation shares an oblique parallel with official Communist Party historiography, promoted by the pragmatist faction in the post-Mao years. Some historians now dispute this

narrative, and suggest that it was widespread civil disobedience against grain procurement policies, rather than the internal rectification of policy errors, that finally ended the famine.<sup>12</sup>

Whilst Yang demonstrates an encyclopaedic knowledge of the Great Famine, his analysis suffers from a severe lack of historical context. In particular, he makes very little reference to the fact that famine had struck China repeatedly throughout its history, and had grown particularly acute since the mid-nineteenth century. Whilst it is certainly true that no previous crisis had begun to approach the magnitude of the 1958-1962 famine, several had been significantly more intense, causing greater per-capita losses within a limited geographical region. The Incredible Famine of 1876-1879 killed an estimated 9-13 million people, and the Northwestern Famine of 1928-1930 10 million.<sup>13</sup> In over 500 pages, Yang's discussion of previous famines is largely confined to a single paragraph, during which he presents a misleading picture of the historical consensus on the severity of these events (p. 13). This absence of context is particularly telling during Yang's discussion of the impact of the famine in Henan. He concludes that a minimum of three million people perished between 1958-1962 (pp. 80-82), yet fails to mention that a comparable number died during the 1941-1943 Henan Famine.<sup>14</sup> This oversight is indicative of a deeper problem with Yang's approach. He does not seem to be motivated by a desire to assess the impact of the 1958-1962 famine, but rather by an attempt to find evidence to support the most damning indictment of the Communist Party possible. In order to pursue this political objective, he seems content not only to sacrifice subtlety, but also to overlook the inconvenient deaths of millions of Chinese people who perished in the years before Mao came to power.

Yang's research was aided considerably by his status as a journalist. This provided him with the cover to access government documents, and to discuss the famine extensively with former cadres. The Hong Kong-based scholar Zhou Xun adopted a different approach, exploiting a relaxation in the rules governing archival access at the end of the last decade to conduct a groundbreaking research project into the Great Famine. Between 2006-2010 she travelled to nine provinces and gathered over one thousand documents. A selection of these is reproduced with introductory remarks in *The Great Famine in China, 1958-1962: A Documentary History*. For the first time,

<sup>12</sup> Ralph A. THAXTON, "How the Great Leap Forward Famine Ended in Rural China: Administrative Intervention versus Peasant Resistance", in *Eating Bitterness: New Perspectives on China's Great Leap Forward and Famine*, ed. Kimberly ENS MANNING and Felix WEMHEUER (Vancouver, 2011), pp. 251-271.

<sup>13</sup> Lillian M. Li, *Fighting Famine in North China: State, Market, and Environmental Decline, 1690s-1990s* (Stanford, 2007), p. 284.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

non-Chinese readers and those without access to Communist Party archives are able to examine 121 official documents. These are an important resource, as they not only provide evidence of widespread cannibalism, political repression, violence and starvation, but also demonstrate the extent to which the government was aware of such problems. Zhou collates her documentary collection by theme and chronology.

The documents work best when they are revealing the everyday experience of villagers attempting to survive. We learn how the famine led to the disintegration of communities and families, and forced individuals to pursue desperate survival strategies. Zhou also describes less well-known aspects of the famine, providing, for example, a fascinating chapter about religious movements that challenged the legitimacy of the Communist Party (pp. 91-113). One of the most illuminating documents describes how women were coerced into working topless during the Great Leap Forward (pp. 39-42). What is particularly arresting about this account is not so much the tyrannical nature of local cadres, for which abundant evidence is provided throughout Zhou's collection, but rather how those inflicting sexual humiliation seem to have believed, at least partially, that their actions were ideologically justified. Forcing women to remove their clothes, it was reasoned, emancipated them from the oppression of feudal tradition. Even the most skillful historian would struggle to describe the terrifying logic of the People's Communes in a more evocative manner. In such moments, Zhou reveals the power that primary evidence has in illuminating the darkest and most inexplicable moments of history.

Zhou collaborates closely with historian Frank Dikötter, who has provided several of the archival documents cited in his own study of the famine for this collection.<sup>15</sup> Zhou's analysis follows her collaborator closely, and she repeats several of his more controversial claims without reference to subsequent critiques.<sup>16</sup> At one point she reproduces a document used by Dikötter as proof of Mao's personal culpability for the famine (pp. 23-25). It is claimed that Mao ordered the continuation of grain procurement policies in full knowledge that they were causing starvation. The picture that emerges from the document itself, however, is far more ambiguous. Certainly Mao did assert that it was "better to let half the people starve so that the other half can eat their fill" (p. 25), yet it is far from clear whether he was speaking literally. In allowing this document to be published, Dikötter has demonstrated the extent to which he relies upon somewhat ambiguous evidence to bolster his polemical claims.

<sup>15</sup> Frank DIKÖTTER, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-62* (London, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> For example, Zhou repeats mortality statistics disputed in Cormac Ó GRÁDA, "Great Leap into Famine: A Review Essay", *Population and Development Review*, March 2011, 191-210.

On occasions Zhou's study might have been improved had she interrogated her sources more thoroughly. The reader is confronted with numerous official documents that decry severe systemic problems. Yet there is no reflection upon the fact that this evidence was itself produced by the very political system that it serves to indict. Admittedly, this methodological difficulty confronts any scholar attempting to produce a documentary history of a society in which the dissemination of information is so rigidly controlled. Yet whilst this problem may be inevitable, it should be acknowledged and incorporated into analysis. Whilst Zhou does enjoin readers to "maintain a critical distance" from the sources (p.xiii), there is no significant attempt to explore the partiality of evidence, or to explain how it may have been distorted by the cadres and investigation teams responsible for its production and preservation.

Taken in concert, these two studies not only highlight the horror of Maoist misrule, they also demonstrate the staggering extent of official knowledge about the famine. No longer is it possible to make a credible argument that one of the world's worst humanitarian catastrophes resulted from a failure to disseminate information from the grassroots to policy makers. Thus, whilst these studies may not always offer the most nuanced analysis, they are an excellent resource for historians and students. Perhaps most importantly, they contribute to an ever-expanding dossier of evidence that fundamentally undermines official Communist Party history. Whilst neither study manages to provide irrefutable evidence of Mao's personal culpability, they both serve as a powerful indictment of the system he helped to create. Historians should now desist from perpetuating the rather sterile debate about Mao's role, and instead focus upon the areas of the famine that remain less well understood. Yang and Zhou have provided detailed analyses of the official knowledge of the famine, dealing exclusively with Party documents. The voices of ordinary Chinese people remain frustratingly absent. If historians can now integrate the evidence offered by these official documents, with oral history testimony and information gathered from outside the apparatus of the state, then they will begin to reveal the true unknown story of the Great Famine.

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**América Solanger BUSTAMENTE ARÉVALO, *Ernährungserziehung (shokuiku) und die nationale Identität Japans* [Food Education (*shokuiku*) and National Identity in Japan], (München, Iudicium 2013), 159 pages, 6 illustrations. ISBN 978-3-86205-307-0 (published in German); price : € 18.**

The disaster of 11 March 2011, in particular the nuclear accident at the power plant Fukushima Daiichi, has resulted in intense scholarly interest in food-related issues in Japan, particularly food safety. Departing from these catastrophic events, Arévalo's book explores the pertinent issues of food self-sufficiency and nutrition in contemporary Japan. Despite bypassing the story of the renewed interest in food safety in the wake of the 2011 nuclear disaster, her contribution is nonetheless timely since she examines consumer education initiatives that seek to raise Japan's food self-sufficiency rate, and the "Basic Law of Food Education" (*shokuiku kihon-hō*), enacted in 2005 under the Koizumi administration as a framework for balanced nutrition. The book is divided into four parts. The goal of Arévalo's investigation is to show how food education (*shokuiku*) contributes to nationalism and the strengthening of the nation.

In chapter one, the author clarifies the study's objectives, research methods, and references. Whereas recent publications emphasise the nationalistic overtones of food education campaigns,<sup>17</sup> Arévalo puts forward the argument that *shokuiku* is not a top-down initiative, but that *shokuiku* campaigns empower individuals to participate in and create food education. Thus, from Arévalo's perspective, national identity is crafted by individuals through their participation in *shokuiku* activities. Participation, according to Arévalo, inspires community spirit that is not necessarily tied to a sense of national identity per se but nonetheless helps to foster national identity. The author draws on the influential work of Benedict Anderson by referencing the term "imagined communities"<sup>18</sup> to contend that the invention of print contributed to the creation of a nation whose members can relate to vernacular writings without knowing all of their fellow nationals in person, which creates a feeling of connectedness and national belonging. The author also refers to the concept of "banal nationalism" proposed by Michael Billig, who argues that nationalism is constantly reinforced and remembered through every day practices such as eating.<sup>19</sup> It would have been insightful to see how the author applies the

<sup>17</sup> For example Hiroko TAKEDA, "‘Delicious Food in a Beautiful Country’: Nationhood and Nationalism in Discourses on Food in Contemporary Japan", in *Studies on Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 8:1 (2008), pp. 5-29.

<sup>18</sup> Benedict ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London/New York: Verso, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Michael BILLIG, *Banal Nationalism* (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995).

findings of these authors to Japan; however, both works are merely cited as major representative works in the debate on nationalism. Food occupies a significant role in the formation of Japanese national identity as by the differentiation between Japanese food (*washoku*) and *other* foods, namely Western foodstuffs (*yōshoku*) and Chinese food (*chūka ryōri*). Arévalo describes how moves to strengthen the consumption of Japanese staple foods in the *shokuiku* campaign depict domestic foodstuffs as “healthier” than foreign alternatives.

In chapter 2, the author addresses three governmental initiatives that promote “healthy”, native foods and nutritional balance. She first takes up a nutritional guide that features entire dishes as opposed to ingredients organised into the form of an inverted pyramid (*shokuji baransu gaido*) (pp. 30-39). Her second example is the guidelines of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) initiated in the year 2000 for nutritional habits (*shokueikatsu shishin*). The third governmental campaign examined, Food Action Nippon, began in 2008 and aims to raise the food self-sufficiency rate of Japan to 45 percent by the year 2015 by promoting domestic production (p. 47). In May 2011, Food Action Nippon was augmented by the initiative “Support through Eating” to bolster the consumption of products from Fukushima (p. 53). However, despite all of these governmental efforts, citizens in Japan are not very familiar with the concept of *shokuiku*. As Arévalo reveals, according to a survey conducted by the market research institute NetMile in September 2010, only 44.5 percent of the respondents replied that they were somewhat familiar with the term *shokuiku* (p. 53). This finding is significant, since a lack of popular understanding of *shokuiku* raises questions about the effectiveness of these campaigns in fostering nationalism. Arévalo correctly identifies these three recent *shokuiku* efforts, but she fails to acknowledge the historical dimension of the term *shokuiku*, which made its first appearance in 1896 when the physician Ishizuka Sagen described dietary education for children with the term *shokuiku* to complement the existing words “cognitive education” (*chiiku*), “moral education” (*saiiku*), and “physical education” (*taiiku*).

In chapter 3, the shift of attention moves to major staple foods such as rice, soybeans, *daikon*, and fish. Arévalo also discusses how Japanese citizens participate in *shokuiku* activities in agriculture and at food festivals. In particular, *shokuiku* activities that focus on the experience of cultivating rice (*nōgyō taiken*) contribute to a feeling of national identity according to the author. Arévalo next examines fish, in particular sushi, which originated in the seventh century as a means to preserve fish, and has been elevated to a symbol of national identity, even to the point of installing a certification system for sushi outside Japan to ensure “authenticity”. The author also examines *o-sechi*, New Year’s Eve culinary specialties, as symbols of national identity; and she touches on whale meat in school lunches. Chapter 4 focuses on cooking and the conceptualisation of Japanese cuisine through educational activities.



Consumer education initiatives, for example, offer cooking classes to children and young mothers in order to pass on the “taste of home cooking” (*furusato no aji*) (p. 111).

The author draws on a fascinating range of *shokuiku* activities, which is a strong point of her book. Arévalo has conducted an impressive and thorough analysis of online resources available in Japanese, most of them released by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry (MAFF), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Unfortunately, it is not apparent whether the author also relied on additional sources or on original fieldwork; nor does she clearly situate the scholarly discipline of her publication, which would have been helpful to contextualise her contribution in the fields of sociology, cultural anthropology, or area studies. Furthermore, the author’s exclusive reliance on government publications limits her ability to assess the extent to which *shokuiku* campaigns have been received popularly. Finally, clearer recognition of the historical dimension of *shokuiku* would have underlined the fact that *shokuiku* is not a new phenomenon in Japan but appeared in various forms since the Meiji period (1868-1912), when a hybrid Japanese culinary identity consisting of Japanese, Western and Chinese elements crystallised.<sup>20</sup>

Equally problematic is the lack of discussion of the entwined concepts of national and local identity. The author refers to the concept of “banal nationalism” but only discusses this notion in passing. A more thorough discussion of what is meant by local identity would have been insightful in this book, in particular since the author ultimately disproves her argument that *shokuiku* campaigns contribute to the strengthening of local identity. Contrary to her initial argument that national identity is crafted through participation in *shokuiku* activities, Arévalo concludes that active participation only becomes evident with well-organised *shokuiku* activities centred on rice consumption and that reinforce national identity not local identity. Despite these flaws, this book is a valuable addition to the literature on Japanese food culture and food education and would be of interest to students of sociology and area studies.

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<sup>20</sup> Katarzyna J. CWIERTKA, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).

**Dorothy DUNCAN, *Canadians at Table: A Culinary History of Canada* (Toronto, Dundurn, 2011), 248 pages, illustrated. ISBN 9781459700383; price: C\$24.99.**

**Barbara SANTICH, *Bold Palates: Australia's Gastronomic Heritage*, Kent Town, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2012, 336 pages, illustrated, AU\$49.95, ISBN 9781743050941.**

On the surface, it would seem that Canada and Australia have very distinct culinary histories; different climates and landscapes have created unique local foods and have shaped immigrant experiences. However, in reading Dorothy Duncan's *Canadians at Table* and Barbara Santich's *Bold Palates*, one is struck more by the similarities than the differences in Canadian and Australian food culture and history. Both discuss the experiences of European settlers, their relationships with indigenous foods and peoples, and the adaptability of immigrants to their new environment. The practice of eating outdoors and outside of the home is a recurrent theme in both Duncan's and Santich's culinary histories. Duncan seeks to celebrate Canada's culinary heritage, particularly the food lessons learned from the First Nations people, whereas Santich attempts to assert "Australianness" as an independent and unique identity that is separate from its (primarily) British roots.

Duncan begins 35,000 years ago, with the first hunters to arrive in North America, and then quickly moves to discuss the traditions of Canada's First Nations and Viking explorers. The opening chapters are short and the real story seems to begin with the encounters between European explorers and First Nations people. In the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, records were sent back to England of an ocean filled with fish and Duncan notes that other European adventurers quickly made the journey to John Cabot's "New Founde Lande".

From this first exploration, through successive generations of explorers and settlers, the relationship between the new Europeans and the long-established First Nations is a running theme throughout the book. Duncan celebrates the traditions of the First Nations people and describes how the first Europeans depended on help from local natives to survive. She cites examples of the First Nations helping Europeans learn to tap maple trees to provide a natural sweetener, and how Jesuits in Quebec began eating blueberries after seeing the indigenous people pick them. Examining the cuisine of the earliest French settlers, Duncan argues that they brought their love of butter and cream and also adapted local ingredients into new dishes.

Duncan goes on to explore the history of trading in Canada by using a food theme to discuss the rivalry between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. The Hudson's Bay Company established their forts with the idea that the First Nations would journey to these specific

trading centres. The North West Company built multiple trading posts across the country closer to where the First Nations actually lived, which required supplying the white traders with adequate provisions for the return journeys between Montreal and the interior of the Continent. Significantly, men who worked with the North West Company ate, and depended on, pemmican, a Native food mixture of dried meats and berries, which was easily transportable, whereas men with the Hudson's Bay Company typically relied on heavier items such as bread and porridge. However, Duncan comments that the reliance on pemmican was unfortunately part of the North West Company's downfall as buffalo hunting declined in the nineteenth century, and as exportation of dried meats from the Red River Settlement (the area in Manitoba where most of the pemmican came from) was forbidden in 1814.

Confederation in 1867, further exploration of the western half of the country, and the building of the railway across Canada brought new immigrants and new food traditions to the country. Settlers in the prairies (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta) brought with them traditional recipes from Russia, Germany, Ukraine, Poland, and Iceland, and these mingled together to create a unique culture in a fertile land. Throughout the book, Duncan stresses adaptability and location as significant aspects of Canada's food heritage. Duncan argues that Canadians have always eaten on the road – from fur trading camps, to luxurious railway cars, to the cowboys' chuckwagon – and also in various places outside of the home – for example, schools, religious institutions and at community gatherings. Community fundraisers, local food festivals, and "Pie Socials" stand out as examples of Canadians celebrating their cuisine, dating back to the nineteenth century. Peach festivals in the summer, pumpkin and apple celebrations in the fall, and the Festival du Voyageur in Winnipeg, Manitoba in the winter continue to pay tribute to Canada's culinary heritage. However, Duncan often seems nostalgic for a previous era, and the twentieth century is glossed over, with one short chapter filled with brief anecdotes, such as the Canadian invention of Pablum, and a general move to microwave cooking. She notes that there has been both culinary change and continuity throughout the twentieth century, but compared to the rest of this well-researched history, the twentieth century feels like an afterthought.

Eating outside of the home is something Santich stresses in her study of Australia's culinary history. Santich argues that the barbecue and picnicking culture of Australia continues to be one of its finest features. Similar to the Canadian experience, early Australian settlers explored, camped, and cooked outside. However, unlike the first Canadian explorers who interacted more broadly with the First Nations, Australian settlers only used Aboriginal knowledge to determine what local produce was edible. Santich argues that "indigenous ingredients were culturally appropriated by the colonists, plucked from one culture and incorporated into another. In this way, using cuisine as

the mediating agent, the foreign could be made familiar.”<sup>21</sup> Where Duncan attempts to celebrate the culinary relationship between Europeans and First Nations in Canada, Santich discusses indigenous ingredients rather than a relationship with the Aboriginal people. She contends that it is necessary to include indigenous foods in Australia’s food culture to respect the land and the people who cultivated them long before Europeans arrived. But she then states that the inclusion of indigenous ingredients needs to be a celebration of Australianness for the twenty-first century, rather than only an acknowledgement of their place in Aboriginal culture.

More important to Australia’s food culture is the act of eating outside and the food made at barbecues and picnics. Santich comments that the barbecue is a domesticated form of earlier bush cooking; the idea of cooking in the outdoors over an open fire is the same, but the experience now happens in one’s own backyard. Furthermore, she points to the many international foods that can be found on Australia’s barbecues, arguing that the barbecue acts as a vehicle for embracing multiculturalism, and considers that a reason why it should represent Australia’s national identity. Picnics also are another variation of explorers eating outside in the bush, but a more refined nineteenth century version. Santich comments that picnics were part of an Australian sense of adventure and certain spots were noted as perfect for picnicking. She argues that Australian picnics were more inclusive and democratic with regard to class than their English counterparts, and their universal appeal and use for all public holidays is a unique part of Australia’s culinary heritage. Santich uses picnicking and barbecuing as ways to celebrate Australia’s diversity and inclusive atmosphere distinct and separate from that of England.

In addition to barbecues and picnics, Santich also uses a discussion of cakes to illustrate that while the basic baking methods were English, the variations of ingredients, such as passionfruit and cocconut were what make cakes Australian. Adapting old English recipes to Australian ingredients demonstrates the inventiveness of Australian cooks. Santich compares Australian and British cookbooks and notes the much larger proportion of cake and dessert recipes in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Australian cookbooks. Santich argues there is an Australian identity that is separate from its British heritage, and states that Australian cooking was multicultural even in the nineteenth century. However, she does not discuss any of Australia’s immigration history, or how the twentieth century’s “White Australia Policy” may have influenced Australia’s identity and cooking. Santich notes in the conclusion that there were French restaurants in the nineteenth century and there were many global foods imported into Australia. As she stated earlier with regard to the Aboriginal people, food can act as a “mediating agent,” but

<sup>21</sup> Barbara SANTICH, *Bold Palates: Australia’s Gastronomic Heritage*, (Kent Town, 2012), pp. 67-68.

while acceptance of foreign foods may have made Australia a more creative and inclusive atmosphere in terms of cuisine, it does not necessarily make it a more multicultural society in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, it seems the desire to assert a unique “Australianness” detracts from some of the real British influences that existed in the early development and settling of the country.

Both Santich and Duncan discuss inventiveness, landscape and location, and adaptability in the creation of Australian and Canadian cuisine. Both countries were settled by European immigrants, and in both places, an immediate encounter with indigenous foods and people shaped the history of the nation. Duncan concludes by noting that the twenty-first-century concern with diet and environment reflects back to Canada’s ancestors and is a re-appreciation of the First Nations and their roots. On the other hand, Santich looks more to the future, to a more multicultural and international Australia that incorporates indigenous ingredients with a specific Australian way of outdoor living, something she sees as unique from Australia’s British descendants. In describing their respective culinary histories, both Duncan and Santich use abundant primary sources, quoting liberally from newspapers, letters, journals, and cookbooks, many of which date back to the early periods of settlement by Europeans. These sources not only support their claims, but also help to add flavour to their stories, and illustrate that discussions of food and cooking have always been a part of these culinary heritages. The illustrations, historic menus and recipes help make both histories appealing to academic and popular audiences.

*Goldstein #*

**Jeffrey M. PILCHER, *Planet Taco. A Global History of Mexican Food* (New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2012), 292 pages, 44 images. ISBN 978-0-19-974006-2; price: US \$ 27.95.**

Este es un libro fascinante que muestra cómo construyeron y expandieron unas cocinas mexicanas. Aunque el énfasis del libro se hace sobre la manera en que ambos procesos se comenzaron a dar a partir de mediados del siglo XIX, en el primer capítulo hay un estudio sobre los tiempos prehispánicos, la conquista y el siglo XVIII mexicano. No obstante, este apartado es sucinto y tiene como fin mostrar algunos antecedentes de los elementos comunes a las cocinas mexicanas que perduraron en el tiempo y que han tenido importancia, a pesar de las diferencias regionales. Dos ejemplos de estos antecedentes son: la trascendencia del maíz en la dieta indígena, asociado claramente al proceso de nixtamalización,<sup>22</sup> así como la forma en que este grano y esta preparación, en el periodo hispánico, llegaron a ser comunes a la sociedad colonial. En este apartado, el autor también analiza cómo, a partir de la inserción de los modelos culinarios de los conquistadores y los productos europeos, se creó una cocina claramente distinguible –la criolla –, que acompañaría a la indígena hasta el presente. Asimismo, este capítulo devela que la expansión de las cocinas mexicanas y algunos de sus productos comenzaron desde el mismo periodo colonial. Sin embargo, debe reconocerse esta sección como un punto de partida, fundamentalmente construido desde lo bibliográfico, para asentar unas ideas básicas que demuestran la forma en que el proceso de expansión de la cocina mexicana se dio, con más fuerza, a partir del siglo XIX.

Para observar este proceso de globalización, el autor insiste en que no se puede pensar en una única cocina mexicana, sino que hay que considerar sus múltiples variantes. Así, por ejemplo, con base en la idea del escritor del siglo XIX, Manuel Payno, Pilcher explica que en este siglo existían en México, de manera general, tres cocinas: la indígena, la criolla y, paradójicamente, la francesa. La primera formaba parte de la herencia aborigen. La segunda era un constructo cultural, producto de años de elaboración, del encuentro de múltiples tradiciones y de la apropiación de un territorio. La tercera era fruto de un proyecto modernizador, de clara raigambre eurocéntrica, que buscó implantar, merced a la presencia de cocineros europeos, modelos culinarios “adecuados” para la óptica de parte de la elite mexicana. Estas cocinas coexistían y se enfrentaban, no solo en el campo culinario, sino, fundamentalmente, en el ideológico, pues en cada una de ellas se asociaba a unos valores sociales y culturales. Por ejemplo, quienes optaban por la cocina francesa, veían en ella un modelo de civilización y orden en la comida que se debía imponer al conjunto de la sociedad; quienes

<sup>22</sup> Proceso de pelar o cocinar el maíz con la ayuda de ceniza de cal o de madera, con lo cual se liberan algunas propiedades nutritivas del grano.

apuntaban al proyecto de la consolidación de identidades típicamente mexicanas, despreciaban la comida europea por foránea y la indígena por rústica, en tanto que veían en la cocina criolla el estandarte de un modelo de consumo y preparación adecuada. No obstante, el autor demuestra que en la práctica, las fronteras entre ellas eran porosas y algunos individuos, dependiendo de la situación, consumían las preparaciones de todas ellas, sin que esto representara un problema.

En sus análisis, Pilcher utiliza diferentes niveles de escala para comprender el proceso de construcción de las diversas variantes de la cocina mexicana. En ocasiones, se ubica en un ámbito local y, en otras, en uno regional, nacional o global. Esto le permite entender la construcción, en el XIX, de las ideas de lo que debía ser la cocina mexicana nacional, enriquecida por la presencia de platos regionales, cocineros internacionales e inmigrantes que llevaban sus gustos y saberes con ellos. Una muestra de esto sería la popularización del taco en México, después de haber conquistado el D.F. Sin embargo, este ejemplo no debe transmitir la idea errónea de que el autor asume una mirada centralista, pues, en otros ejemplos, estudia la forma en que, desde las regiones, se consolidaron cocinas que para globalizarse no tuvieron que pasar por la capital, sino que adquirieron dinámicas y vías de circulación propias que las llevaron a otros países y continentes, como con los *burritos*. En este caso, pero no solo en él, la región limítrofe entre México y EE.UU., a ambos lados de la frontera, desempeñó un papel en la difusión de algunas de las variantes de la cocina mexicana, como reconoce el autor a las cocinas *Tex-Mex*, *Cal-Mex* y *New Mex*. Incluso, se puede ver cómo muchas de estas cocinas se difunden por EE.UU. y el mundo antes de que lo hicieran las cocinas del centro de México. Además, dejan una impronta futura en el proceso de globalización, porque, en muchas ocasiones, serían el marco de referencia de lo que se entendería como la cocina mexicana. En ello, la industrialización y el empaquetado de algunos insumos, básicos para las recetas, tuvieron un papel fundamental.

Uno de los elementos que encuentro más interesantes en este estudio es el análisis de los agentes difusores de las variantes de la comida mexicana por el mundo, desde las "Chili Queens" (con sus puestos callejeros en San Antonio), empresarios de restauración y cocineros profesionales, surfistas, soldados norteamericanos asignados en bases militares instaladas en el exterior, hasta importadores de comida. En ocasiones, los muestra como grupo y, en otras, como individuos, con nombres específicos, dando cuenta de su vinculación al negocio alimenticio y la trayectoria que siguieron en este proceso. Además de ello, Pilcher explicita el entorno en que estos agentes de difusión desarrollaron sus actividades, las dificultades que enfrentaron y los estereotipos que se crearon sobre ellos y la comida, o los que los propios difusores crearon para promover el consumo e identificación de la comida mexicana.

*Planet Taco* es importante en los estudios de historia de la alimentación en varios niveles. Para los estudios relacionados con América Latina, inaugura una manera de entender la globalización de las cocinas nacionales; incluso, me atrevo a pensar que sienta unos patrones que permiten pensar, con base en problemas nuevos en cada ocasión, lo que ha significado la difusión de las cocinas del continente por el mundo. Si bien el caso de México, con sus especificidades geográficas y culinarias, tiene particularidades únicas, no por ello pierde valor como modelo de trabajo: por ejemplo, se puede replicar la idea pensar en variantes de una cocina, más que en la cocina auténticamente nacional; o bien, identificar patrones de agentes de difusión de la comida vinculados a la emigración de personas ligadas o no ligadas nacionalmente con esa cocina; trabajar sobre los estereotipos que se crean, positiva o negativamente, para entender sus significados; analizar el papel que desempeña la industria, entre otros. En este mismo sentido, resulta interesante para el campo de historia de la alimentación, en general, ya que encuentro que el aporte de este libro estriba en estudiar la globalización desde otra perspectiva. En términos generales, se ha estudiado poniendo el énfasis en productos o platos específicos (p.e. ajíes, azúcar, maíz, pastas, tomate), pero, con frecuencia, no en una cocina, lo que abre nuevas posibilidades con respecto a problemas, métodos y fuentes.

En cuanto al aspecto metodológico, *Planet Taco* tiene algunas características interesantes que es necesario resaltar. Como buena parte de los trabajos que abordan problemas de escala global, este texto cuenta con un apoyo bibliográfico muy amplio, que le permite al autor soportar buena parte de sus afirmaciones. Sin embargo, trasciende el ámbito de la síntesis historiográfica y se ubica en el investigativo, con un variado tipo de fuentes y una manera de trabajarlas que enriquece el trabajo. El autor ya había trabajado algunas de estas fuentes en sus libros anteriores sobre alimentación, sobre todo las vinculadas al siglo XIX en México. Sin embargo, en esta ocasión, ha ampliado el espectro, con ánimo de responder a la pregunta sobre la globalización de la comida. De esta manera, Pilcher aumenta la búsqueda en archivos y bibliotecas de México y de EE.UU., especialmente en los archivos personales que custodian algunas de estas instituciones. Esto resulta más claro como estrategia metodológica cuando cubre partes del siglo XIX y la primera mitad del XX. Además, consultó un buen número de periódicos de ambos países, así como de Europa y Asia. Es claro que, a medida que el estudio se aleja del continente americano e incursiona en la segunda mitad del siglo XX, la información de la prensa gana más peso, no tanto por la cantidad, como por la ausencia de documentación similar a la de archivos y bibliotecas de EE.UU. y México. Sin embargo, esto no crea un desequilibrio notorio, porque el autor logra suplir estas ausencias con otros tipos de fuentes, especialmente la oral, con trabajo de campo de observación y análisis de la publicidad. Incluso, hay momentos en los que toma fuentes recientemente producidas, como las dos presentaciones que hizo



México ante la UNESCO para que se reconociera la cocina mexicana como patrimonio inmaterial de la humanidad; Pilcher analiza las diferencias entre ambas solicitudes, los sentidos políticos y culturales que subyacieron a las candidaturas, así como de su rechazo y posterior aceptación. En resumen, no hay una homogeneidad entre los capítulos con respecto al soporte documental, lo que es comprensible en un texto de este tipo que abarca un periodo extenso y que, además, toca, en buena parte, la historia del tiempo presente. Además, el autor desarrolla estrategias metodológicas que le permiten responder al problema particular de cada capítulo, así como al general de la obra.

Pilcher, en la introducción, señala que, para comprender la comida mexicana, se requieren perspectivas globales y locales, así como étnicas y de historia empresarial (p. 13). Resulta claro, al leer el libro, que este acercamiento múltiple se cumplió. Hay otros, incluso, que se hacen de manera tácita. Por ejemplo, en ocasiones, se ven formas de trabajo propias de la Historia social, en tanto se preocupa por las maneras como se establecieron las relaciones que posibilitaron o dificultaron la circulación de algunas preparaciones o de una de las variantes de la cocina mexicana. Así, las redes sociales o familiares, migraciones, densidades demográficas, entre otras, desempeñan un papel importante en las explicaciones de algunos de los capítulos. En otras ocasiones, el autor se inclina por un acercamiento a la Historia cultural, como cuando analiza los estereotipos creados sobre las variantes de la cocina mexicana, o los valores y peligros que se proyectaban sobre los platos y preparaciones de esta cocina. De esta manera, se preocupa por los sentidos y significados que subyacían en las imágenes que se construían alrededor de la culinaria mexicana en el mundo. Incluso, al final del libro, asume una posición crítica sobre el papel subalterno otorgado a los cocineros indígenas o la forma en que ciertos organismos internacionales sancionan una jerarquización eurocéntrica de las cocinas del mundo o el desequilibrio existente entre las ganancias de los cultivadores tradicionales y de las empresas que producen semillas modificadas. Aunque sustentadas y pensadas en términos históricos, se puede ver, en estas posturas, un acercamiento a los estudios culturales y a la crítica cultural. Esta diversidad de aproximaciones resulta sumamente interesante, porque, al tiempo que demuestra diferentes maneras de trabajo, permite entender cómo resolver un problema de investigación desde diversos ángulos.

*Planet Taco* es un muy buen libro sobre historia de la alimentación, hecho de una manera imaginativa que enriquece nuestro panorama. Tal vez el único elemento que se le pueda reprochar es que asumió la globalización de la cocina mexicana desde una perspectiva de los países desarrollados, pues la mayoría de sus ejemplos se ubican en Europa y, muchos de ellos, en su zona norte. Si bien aparecen menciones de la India o de países del antiguo bloque soviético, no hay trabajo sobre África, Suramérica o el Asia menos industrializada. Tal vez, estudiar esto nos permitiría entender la influencia de México sobre sus vecinos

del sur, en términos políticos y alimenticios, o bien, entender cómo varían los estereotipos sobre la sociedad mexicana y su cocina, cuando el país receptor se encuentra en una escala de menor o igual desarrollo económico que México; es decir, cómo varían las interpretaciones al asumir una óptica sur-sur. Sin embargo, nada de esto demerita el trabajo de Pilcher; antes muestra qué caminos se pueden recorrer en el futuro gracias a esta obra.

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