Global Movements of Crops
Since the 'Age of Discovery' and Changing Culinary Cultures

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Introduction

Globalization as a phenomenon has captured the popular and scholarly imagination in the First World in the last decade. Much of this discussion of globalization has turned on trade and economic issues, and on the very visible worldwide diffusion of media and popular culture. Thanks to a series of highly visible protests against the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank, first in Seattle, and then successively in Washington DC, Genoa, and New York, globalization has become a contested term in popular discourse. Controversies about the safety of genetically modified crops have once again brought food and practices of food consumption to the forefront of discussions of globalization, where they might very well remain in the coming millennium.

In this talk, I will use the movement of crops, changing culinary practices, and shifting habits of food consumption to reflect on the phenomenon of globalization. First, I wish to raise some definitional issues about globalization. These concerns with definition will allow me to speculate on why questions of globalization in popular and scholarly discussions in the West have for the most part retained such a temporally shallow frame. I will then look at a few crops such as spices and sugarcane to argue that food and foodstuffs might well have played a critical, and perhaps underappreciated, role in the long history of globalization. While much has been made about the impact of the global circulation of news, films, music and fashions, not enough attention has been paid to how identities have been shaped by the movement of cuisines and foods. What does a deeper history of globalization as seen through crops, cuisines, and consumption tell us about the historical shaping of identities?

Mapping "Globalization"

Let me begin by offering some theoretical reflections on the meaning of "globalization." The frequency with which that word is used these days might lead one to believe that it is a phenomenon of the present. What has changed in the world in the last quarter of the twentieth century that has led not only academics, but policy-makers and journalists as well, to ponder the question of "globalization?" How do we know when we "see" globalization? Can we in fact see it — is it something that is available to sensory perception or is it something that is purely structural? Is "globalization" a new discursive realm, a new way of thinking, naming, and analyzing that has somehow become popular in the last few years? Finally, there is also the question of what we mean when we talk of globalization in the singular? Is globalization one phenomenon, or many different ones that have either converged to create the illusion of unitariness or, alternatively, are simply confused with one another?[i]

I will argue that globalization" is not a unique "thing" that can be charted in a unitary and definitive fashion for at least three reasons. First, the meaning of globalization diverges according to the phenomenon or sector being analyzed: thus an understanding of globalization derived from an examination of global financial flows differs substantially from another that looks at the exchange of biogenetic materials. Secondly, globalization appears very different in distinct geographical and spatial settings. Finally, globalization means very different things to diversely situated groups of people. My argument is that we need to move beyond the sweeping character of some of the pronouncements about globalization in the contemporary world by attending to the situational and conjunctural

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[i] Other sources that I have found useful in thinking about globalization include Appadurai (1996), Bynon and Dunkerley (2000), Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (1999), Inda and Rosaldo (2002), McMichael (2000), and Sassen (1996), Tsing (2000).

nature of "the global." Even as we engage from our various subject positions the ethico-political imperative to name, define, and debate "the global," we should be keenly aware of the futility of the task. An acknowledgment of the impossibility of mapping globalization in the face of the necessity of doing so makes it possible to more clearly engage the politics of what Anna Tsing has called "the culture and politics of scale making" (2000:).[ii]

It is important to emphasize that globalization is not a new phenomenon.[iii] In fact, there are many aspects of life in the twentieth century—characterized by systems of territorial states on the one hand, and parochial nationalisms, sliding into xenophobia, on the other—that might be interpreted as *reversing* processes of globalization. For example, if one looks at the mobility of populations, the absolute numbers of people who moved from one state boundary to another in the nineteenth century may very well have been comparable to immigration in the world today, and the proportion of the population that migrated certainly exceeded anything in the present despite the fact that we like to think that the population movements in the world today are historically unprecedented. Just think of the millions of people who migrated from Europe to the far corners of the world: the Americas especially but also South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, to different colonial areas in Africa and Asia, and those who traveled, temporarily or permanently, from one nation-state in Europe to another. As many as one hundred million people are

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[ii] This point emerged in an engagement with a paper presented by R. Radhakrishnan ().

[iii] This is a point emphasized by Frank (1998), who forwards his own challenging thesis about how to interpret the rise of Europe outside a Eurocentric frame.

estimated to have moved in the nineteenth century, half of whom were European (Held et. al. 1999:311-314; Mintz 1985:71). Today, when people use the term "globalization," European immigration to other parts of the world is not the first thing that comes to their minds. This is especially ironic because globalization in its late twentieth century variant so often poses strictures on the movement of Third World populations, and because both those who see globalization positively as well as those who see it as a threat, are so often united in their opposition to immigration. Could it be that immigration from the "South" to the "North" becomes visible as a subject of heated national debate in Europe and the U.S. precisely because the discourse of globalization largely reflects the perspectives and anxieties of citizens of Northern nation-states?

Where globalization is undoubtedly "new" as a phenomenon that marks particularly the last quarter of the twentieth century is in the accelerating speed and volume of global transactions in finance, capital, and images. For example, when one looks at the global presence of mass media, both the saturation that it has achieved and the speed with which news and entertainment images travel the globe is historically unprecedented. Rather than attempt a balance sheet that might definitively help decide whether globalization is indeed "new" or not, I think it is more productive to focus on something rather obvious that is sometimes lost in the debate.

This brings me to my second point, which has to do with the unevenness and contradictoriness of globalization. Globalization is best seen not as a set of flows, but pathways for transactions or exchanges which depend on the reconfiguration of existing structural and social conditions (Held et. al. 1999:1-28; Tsing 2000:460 in Rosaldo volume). These pathways ensure that flows are highly unequal and asymmetrical. In its late twentieth century form, globalization in fact has sharply differentiated the ease, speed, and direction in which different things have flowed. On one end are finances, images, and communications, which now move around the globe at dizzying speeds; on the other end are flows of people and biogenetic resources, which move much more haltingly and unidirectionally. Somewhere in the middle are flows of goods, technologies, and ideas. From immigration laws to regimes of intellectual property rights, multiple barriers to mobility exist; these are almost always stratified by geopolitical location, class, gender, and race. The acceleration of financial transactions is often commented on as a distinctive feature of globalization, but the increasing barriers being placed on the movement of immigrants should also be seen as part of the same phenomenon. Thus, the particular element of this list that is employed to understand "globalization" leads to very different interpretations and conclusions. When this is combined with spatial unevenness and differentiation, and further complicated by looking at groups of people positioned differently in class, race, gender, and sexual hierarchies, it becomes evident that we need an altogether more intricate matrix by which to understand globalization than offered by asking whether it is a "real" phenomenon or a phantom effect of trendy theory.

The third point that I have to make about globalization may be the most important. And that is that globalization is the name for a process that is observed from somewhere, by someone.[iv] As Weber pointed out a long time ago, the very act of selecting a few facts

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[iv] Tsing (2000: pg. 469 in Rosaldo) writes, "This task requires that we study folk understandings of the global, and the practices with which they are intertwined, rather than representing globalization as a transcultural historical process." The point that Tsing is making here is that *any* attempt to represent globalization is someone's folk understanding of "the global," and that it is important for us to relate any theory of globalization to the sociological location from which that particular construction has arisen. Most discussions of globalization do not acknowledge that their own maps are not "views from nowhere" but arise from particular structural and cultural locations.

for consideration from the plenitude that the world offers us inevitably involves an interpretive dimension. Applying this insight to globalization generates the following provocation: The breathless excitement with which globalization has been greeted by some may be intimately related to the anxiety that it has provoked in others in that both sets of people seem to be operating with a common narrative about the nation- state. To caricature this narrative, it goes something like this: for the first three quarters of the twentieth century, economic and social life was carried out within a framework in which the territorial state was paramount, and where nationalism provided the ideology of community, which allowed for a regime of regulation characterized by a tripartite relation between capital, labor, and the state apparatus. This is the Fordist compact, which was realized perhaps most fully in social democratic regimes or welfare states. (Harvey 1992).

However, in the last twenty-five years, the territorial pact between capital and labor has been broken, so that a gap has opened up between the territorially expansive reorganization of capital on a global scale and the nationally limited character of state regulation and of labor organizing. "The economic" and "the social," which used to map onto the same territory, are now separated; and this separation has given rise to a crisis of representation and meaning on one side (which I think is expressed in the contentious character of nationalism today, ever-more strident and xenophobic) and a crisis of regulation on the other, as the regulatory mechanisms that were founded on territorial nation- states and the international system of states find themselves out of sync with dominant economic institutions. Notice the kind of story that is being caricatured here: first there was the sovereign, territorial, nation-state, and then there was globalization, with its attendant gains and painful effects. My challenge today will be to raise a question, which I cannot hope to provide an answer for at the moment: Can a different history of the present be narrated?

One can begin by asking, "From which position is the story of globalization as opening up a new beginning or hastening the decline of a just social order narrated from?" It becomes clear that such a narrative of globalization makes little sense if one sees it from the perspective of a poor person in Bangladesh, Trinidad or Lesotho. Only in a few nation-states in the First and Second Worlds was the sovereign, territorial state and the provisioning of social welfare a convincing fiction to the majority of their populations. For most other parts of the world, and particularly for subaltern peoples, the twentieth century has not been so much an interruption, as a continuation, of processes of globalization that date at least to the age of European exploration, and in the case of most of Asia, to a much earlier period.

If one looks at the Indian Ocean, for example, in an area that includes coastal East Africa, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Indian subcontinent, what is now Southeast Asia, coastal China and Japan, one finds a long history of connection. These connections probably reached their zenith from the 12th century onwards, and especially during the century between the latter half of the 13th century and first half of the 14th (i.e. from 1250-1350). During this time, long-distance trade over land but especially over sea had resulted in a truly spectacular set of economic relations and cultural encounters. Economies around the world connected by these routes boomed, as did new forms of cultural expression (Abu-Lughod 1989).

If one wished to explain the nature of politics, societies and cultures in these places, one needed to look not just at a culture area or empire, not at their encounters with peoples over the next hill but around the Indian Ocean. For example, goods such as silks and porcelain flowed out of China and rapidly affected tastes around the Indian Ocean (hence we talk even now of dining on "fine China"); Arabian horses were exported to India, and changed transportation and military strategy in the subcontinent (Chaudhuri 1985:108); coffee went from the Yemeni port of Mocha via Egypt to Amsterdam and

London in the late 17th century, and then was grown in Java to meet European demand, becoming a part of their and our lives to such an extent that many people would be unable to function without it (Hattox 1985:23; Wickizer 1951:66-67; Chaudhuri 1985:31); and incense from the Middle East became central to the ritual life of South Asia and China (Chaudhuri 1985:18).[v] The point I wish to make here is that globalization before the fifteenth century was not a "shallow" phenomenon. It did not merely influence the lives of those who lived in coastal areas, along the great ocean trade routes, and those who lived on the vast, intercontinental land routes like the Silk Route, but affected the intimate lives of people far from these places. Religion and ritual, typically regarded as intimate and community centered, were profoundly shaped by these global movements, as were ideas and images, and material artifacts in which people dressed and ate; in short, if one thinks of the extensiveness, reach, and sociological importance of these earlier moments of globalization, they may have been even more far-reaching than anything we might observe today.

Such a claim, of course, immediately raises important question of metrics and methods: how is one to measure the "degree" of globalization? Nowhere is this question more problematic than in the realm of ideas and everyday practices. Held. et. al. argue that if one weighs the extensiveness, intensity, velocity, and impact of global interconnections, then the period before European empires was characterized by *thin globalization* (1999:21-27). From the perspective of a devout Indonesian muslim, Held et. als. assertion that the "impact" of global flows before European empires was "low" might appear rather

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[v] The origins of coffee are often traced to Ethiopia (Hattox 1985:13). However, Yemen was the major supplier of coffee to the Middle East and Europe until the early 18th century.

puzzling, if not blatantly Eurocentric.[vi] Especially after September 11, when religious identities are presented as more essential than ever, it might be helpful to remember that the great diffusion of world religions took place well before the period of European empires, that is, in the era that Held et. al. term as a period of "thin globalization." This of course, brings to our attention the problem of periodization. No discussion of globalization can escape the problem of how to periodize different eras of globalization and no attempt at periodization can escape the question of whose perspective is being employed to think about breaks and continuities. Maps of globalization, in other words, always presume particular subject positions and identities, even if (or perhaps especially if) such identities are not acknowledged.

Sugar and Spice and Nothing Nice: Monopoly, Colonization and the Making of a Distinctive "European" Culinary Culture

We are accustomed not to thinking of sugar as spice, but, rather, to thinking of 'sugar and spice' (Mintz 1985:80)

Perhaps nothing better illustrates the process and consequence of globalization than the story of spices. In their study of cooking techniques in southern Europe in the

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[vi] One could similarly argue that the diffusion of major "world" religions, technologies and ideas (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism; processes of making paper, silk, and gunpowder; knowledge of medicine, astronomy, and agriculture) before Europe's 'Age of Discovery' has had a more profound impact on human civilizations than anything that came after. My point is not to make the case for one side versus another but to caution that there is no one scale by which "impacts" can be measured.

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Redon, Sabban and Serventi conclude that "the main difference between a medieval master cook and a modern- day chef lay in the wealth of spices in his cupboard" (1998:19). Lest there be any misunderstanding, they are not making this comparison in favor of the modern chef! Spices played an important role in medieval culinary arts, particularly as practiced among aristocratic and urban households, but by no means limited to the elite and spice merchants played an prominent role in the social order.

What were the commonly used spices and why were they so routinely found in the kitchens of the wealthy in medieval Europe? Pepper was by far the most important both in terms of quantities imported, as well as in its everyday utility (Pearson 1996:xx), reaching humbler tables and more rural surroundings than its "finer" counterparts (Redon, Sabban and Serventi 1998:8). Cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, and mace were the other important spices. In addition to these, there was long pepper, ginger, grains of paradise, and cumin; and saffron too played an important role as a flavoring and coloring agent.[vii] The extent to which spices were employed can be gauged from the fact that a random sample of twenty six dishes chosen from *The Medieval Kitchen* yielded eighteen that used at least one spice from Asia, of which eleven employed black pepper.[viii]

[vii] Saffron and rose water had clearly been introduced to European palates by the Arabs, who were also the chief intermediaries in the spice trade.

[viii] The recipes reviewed were for split pea, or dried fava bean soup, chickpea soup, lasagne, white ravioli, extemporaneous soup, white poree, white porrata, green poree, watercress poree, black poree, asparagus with saffron, sauteed mushrooms, Le Menagier's civet of hare, sweet and sour cive of venison, chicken with fennel, chicken with lemon, brouet of capon, roast kid with sauce of gold, stuffed suckling pig, bourbelier of wild boar,

The surprising popularity of spices, particularly pepper, in the diet of medieval Europe has often been attributed to a simple reason. Most cattle and other major livestock were slaughtered in the late autumn, as it was not possible to feed the animals through the long winter. The meat then had to be preserved by smoking or salting for consumption in the next few months. It is widely held that pepper and other spices were used to disguise the semi-putrid smell of the rotting meat, especially as meat consumption increased in a prospering Europe (Pearson 1996:xvi; Mintz 1985:81).[ix] However, others dispute such functional explanations since they cannot account for the subtlety and precision with which spices were often used; or for the fact that fewer spices came to be used before improvements in the methods of preservation; and it certainly does not account for why a smaller quantity of spices were not used when meat and fish was fresh (Dalby 2000:156; Mennell 1985:53; Redon, Sabban and Serventi 1998:29).[x] Whatever the merits of this

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chicken with orange sauce, sweet and sour fish, roast shad, grilled fish, dover sole with bitter orange juice, and cuttlefish in black sauce.

[ix] This may be the origin of such recipes as "pepper steak" or beef tongue or roast studded with cloves.

[x] Mennell (1985: 53-54) seeks to explain why fewer spices came to be used in medieval recipes by pointing out that using a smaller number and quantity of spices may have been one way in which finer cooks distinguished their art from inferior ones. But there is no reason why the this effort at distinction should have necessarily led towards fewer spices rather than their more precise combinations or more selective use, as in Thai or Indian cuisines.

argument, one thing is clear: spices serve a large range of functions in the medieval European kitchen, and are used in a wide range of foods such as meat, fish, jam, soups, and drinks (Pearson 1998:xvi).

What no one disputes is that the appetite for spices increased voraciously as Europe moved into its Age of Discovery. Cooking was only one of the many uses to which spices were put; they were important for their medicinal properties, as preservatives, and as an addition to wine. Since most wine was drunk within a year, and techniques for preserving it were not yet well developed, spices made the coarse wines of the poor palatable and the mulled wines served on noble tables tastier (Pearson 1996: xvii). A sweet, spiced red wine called *hypocras* was often served as the last course of a meal, along with cheese, candied fruits, and light cakes (Henisch 1976: 105; Redon, Sabban and Serventi 1998:15). 'Spices for the chamber' such as candied coriander and ginger were also served after dinner, often in a private room to select guests, to aid in digestion and to sweeten the breath (Henisch 1976:105; Redon, Sabban and Serventi 1998:11).[xi] Such a use no doubt followed from a belief in the medical efficacy of spices. The medicinal use of spices was well established in South Asia and the Islamic world, and it slowly entered European medical practice through Arab pharmacology (Mintz 1985:80; Pearson 1996:xv). In fact, some of the earliest Portuguese sources on Indian spices were written by

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[xi] This was not the only occasion at which spices were consumed. A historian writing of the eating habits of the rich has this to say, "Even when they are not at table they made free use of spiced comfits, partly for the sake of aiding digestion and partly to gratify the appetite" (Mead quoted in Mintz 1985:81).

healers and pharmacologists (of whom Garcia da Orta and Tome Pires are the best known).[xii]

An important place among the spices was held by sugar. This is difficult to understand for the modern observer as sugar's role has been drastically redefined over the last few centuries. In the Europe of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, sugar was as precious and difficult to obtain as other spices, and was used in much the same manner. Mintz makes this clear: "When it was first introduced into Europe around 1100 A.D., sugar was grouped with spices pepper, nutmeg, mace, ginger, cardamom, coriander, galingale...saffron, and the like. Most of these were rare and expensive tropical (and exotic) imports, used sparingly by those who could afford them at all" (Mintz 1985:79-80). Unlike other spices, sugar gradually "changed from being a specialized medicinal, condimental, ritual, or display commodity into an ever more common food" (Mintz 1985:37-38). Redon, Sabban and Serventi comment that what "is most surprising to us about medieval cooking is its lack of interest in distinguishing sweet dishes from salty....Sweet and salty were simply not culinary categories" (1998:27-28). Sugar was commonly added to dishes that contained other spices, dishes whose dominant flavor was not sweet. Like other spices, sugar played an important medicinal role as well. In fact, we

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[xii] See Garcia da Orta (1996) and Tomé Pires (1944).

have no reason to distinguish sugar from other spices (sugar and spice) but rather to think of sugar as one spice among others.[xiii]

All of these spices came to Europe through a flourishing trade that tied Southeast Asia and South Asia to the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf, from where they were transported overland to the southern Mediterranean, eventually finding their way into Europe mainly through Venetian merchants (although Genoa was also an important center). Sugarcane cultivation came to Andalusia and Sicily with the Arabs but sugar was also imported from North Africa; once again, Venice was the center for the European redistribution of sugar (Mintz 1985: 24). All spices, including sugar, thus shared some common characteristics.

Spices, and the spice trade, were to profoundly shape the nature of European "exploration" in the "Age of Discovery."[xiv] As is well known, in this story of trade, monopoly, and colonization, the Portuguese were to play a pivotal role.[xv] Without understanding the conflicts over spices (including sugar), one cannot understand global geopolitics in this age. Nor could one appreciate the rich history of global connections before the rise of sovereign states. Perhaps yet to be told is a detailed history of the role of colonization in the story of the rise of sovereign nation- states in Europe, which we know

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xiii "This usage of sugar as spice may have reached some sort of peak in the sixteenth century. Soon thereafter, prices, supplies, and customary uses began changing rapidly and radically" (Mintz 1985:86).

xiv I will use quotes for these terms for the first time only as it is not possible to use them without irony.

xv The story of the Portuguese empire is most famously told in Boxer (1969). See Pearson (1987) for a more detailed account of the Indian part of this story.

occurs much the same time as the Age of Discovery, and which could not have been unaffected by the resources and rivalries unleashed by the effort to monopolize the spice trade. This might, after Said and postcolonial theory, appear to risk stating the obvious, yet such a project remains, so to speak, largely unexplored. What makes such Eurocentrism even more surprising was that this was a time, after all, when Europe was clearly not in the center, but on the margins of a world system centered around Asia and the Middle East. The Peace Treaties of Westphalia in 1648, taken to inaugurate the model of the sovereign nation-state in Europe, occurred in the middle of what Boxer has called "The First World War." This was the fight between the Portuguese and the Dutch for control of the former's colonial possessions, a struggle that "was waged in four continents and on seven seas" (Boxer 1969:106) and that unfolded for a large part of the seventeenth century (1600-63). [xvi] The principle of sovereignty—"the entitlement to rule over a bounded territory" (Held 1999:37)—was formulated in an historical context in which rule over colonial territories and the division of such lands was already a subject of some concern to European states. Tilly notes that "the construction of external empires provided some of the means and some of the impetus for the fashioning of relatively powerful, centralized, and

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[xvi] The fight between the Dutch and the Portuguese (Spain and Portugal were under a common crown from 1580 to 1640) began with an attack by Dutch warships on Príncipe and São Tomé in 1598-99 and ended with the capture of Portuguese settlements in Malabar in 1663 (Boxer 1969:109).

homogenized national states within the continent [of Europe]" (1990:167).[xvii] But even on those occasions when there is an acknowledgment of the imbrication of colonialism in the rise of sovereign states in Europe, it rarely forms an integral part of the analysis (Tilly 1990; Houbert 1998).[xviii]

The growth of European involvement in the spice trade altered ecologies, production systems, and economies in the spice growing areas as well. Not only were there changes in the methods and areas devoted to the cultivation of spices, seen most explicitly in the use of slavery and indentured labor in the production of sugarcane, but also there were changes in the social relations between producers and merchants as the Portuguese introduced new methods of trade into the Indian Ocean.

Perhaps no more novel an idea was the introduction of force as a legitimate instrument of trade. It is clear that the merchants who traded in the polyglot, cosmopolitan, multiethnic entrepots of the Indian ocean such as Al-Fustat (Cairo), Aden, Basra, Hormuz, Cambay, Calicut, and Malacca had some difficulty in comprehending Portuguese attempts

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xvii Tilly does not follow through the implications of this statement for his own study of the European state system. Furthermore, as Radhika Mongia (2002) has pointed out, it is misleading to trace the rise of nation-states in Europe to such an early period; in fact, European nation-states can only be said to exist after the end of colonialism. Before that, European states were empire-states, since the colonies were an integral part of the state but not of the nation.

xviii I have not dealt with the more difficult question of the role of colonialism in the ideology of the sovereign state.

to employ a Mediterranean style of armed trading (Chaudhuri 1985:14-15). For a long time, the Portuguese were considered no different than pirates, and were not seen as part of the community of traders and as genuine competitors in the spice trade. Perhaps the notion that anyone should have a monopoly over the spice trade was so bizarre and outlandish a concept that it did not even occur to the groups of trading communities that successfully transported a large number of luxury and bulk goods over long distances on sea and land.

In this talk, I do not intend to add to the rich primary literature that explores the Portuguese role in the spice trade in Asia. What I wish to do here is to draw certain links between processes of globalization whose affinities are often overlooked because of the scholarly divide between different bodies of water. On the one hand is an Atlantic-ocean based scholarship that focuses largely on Spanish and Portuguese (and later English and French) connections with the New World and the west coast of Africa; on the other hand is a Pacific-ocean (really Indian- ocean) based scholarship that focuses on Portuguese, Dutch (and later English and French) connections with South Asia, Southeast Asia, the east coast of Africa, and the Middle East.

In the Atlantic circuit, sugar emerges as a key product; in the Pacific circuit, black pepper is central although other spices are important as well.[xix] These two circuits were linked through the consumption of beverages such as tea and coffee, which married a product from one circuit (tea from China, later India; coffee from Arabia, later Java) with a product from the other circuit (sugar from the New World).[xx] But they were linked as

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[xix] The story of sugar has been brilliantly narrated by Mintz (1985).

[xx] On tea, see Forrest (1973), Pettigrew (2001), Scott (1964), and Ukers (1936).

well in the role played by the Portuguese in attempting to corner the European market for spices. Once sugar is incorporated into the story of spices, one begins to see a thread between Portuguese colonization in the New World and Portuguese actions in Asia. (It then makes it possible for me to link Brazil and India in the same story about globalization in the Age of Discovery).

It was not long after Vasco da Gama first reached Calicut in 1498 that the Portuguese managed to occupy the center of the European spice trade. Lisbon displaced Venice as the port that landed the largest volume of spices. These spices were then distributed to the rest of the continent through Antwerp, which became an important center of financing and redistribution. Lisbon and Antwerp soon bypassed Alexandria and Venice just seven years after Vasco da Gama's maiden voyage (Chaudhuri 1985:69). In fact, between 1505 and 1515, four times more spices entered Lisbon than Venice (Pearson 1996:xxvi-xxvii). When he heard about the return cargoes of Portuguese ships in 1501, a contemporary in Venice glumly remarked: "to-day, with this new voyage by the King of Portugal, all the spices which came by way of Cairo will be controlled in Portugal, because of the caravels which will go to India, to Calicut, and other places...And truly the Venetian merchants are in a bad way, believing that the voyages should make them very poor" (quoted in Chaudhuri 1985:64-65). Such an observation turned out to be on the mark: by 1515, Venice was humiliated into buying spices in Lisbon (Pearson 1996:xxvii).

The rapidity with which the center of the European spice trade shifted to Lisbon had its parallels in that Atlantic spice, sugar. Portugal and Spain encouraged a new industry in sugarcane in their islands in the Atlantic, first in Madeira and Sao Tome after 1450, and later in the Canary Islands (Mintz 1985:29-32). From the Spanish Canary Islands, Columbus took sugar cane with him to the New World in his second voyage in 1493. Sugar cane was first grown in Santo Domingo, and was already being shipped back to Europe as early as 1516. And in the wake of sugar cane came slavery: "Santo

Domingo's pristine sugar industry was worked by enslaved Africans, the first slaves having been imported there soon after the sugar cane" (Mintz 1985:32). The Portuguese took cane with them to Brazil which took over as the leading supplier of sugar to Europe in the sixteenth century. In the century leading up to 1625, Portugal was supplying nearly all of Europe with sugar from Brazil (Mintz 1985:38). Once again, Lisbon depended on Antwerp for processing and distribution. Between the thirteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries, Antwerp was the center for refining sugar in Europe and its subsequent sale (Mintz 1985:45).

There were other connections between the Atlantic and the Pacific circuits of European colonization during the Age of Discovery. Although I have so far emphasized what the Europeans took from Asia, the crops that they took to Asia from the New World were to have enormous consequences for agricultural patterns and eating habits.[xxi] For example, the diet of the poor in South Asia is composed heavily of chilies and potatoes (and in some parts of the subcontinent, tapioca), all crops that were first introduced to India from the New World. Much of what passes for Indian food today in restaurants from Delhi to Birmingham to Rio is composed of foods native to the New World: chilies, potatoes, tomatoes, maize, ground nuts, and cashews. Fruits such as pineapple, papaya, cheeku, guava, avocado, and passion fruit have also found their way into the culinary cultures and eating habits of South Asians who regard most of these products as a part of

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xxi A wonderful example of New World crops transplanted to the Indian sub- continent for colonial purposes is provided by cinchona, the anti-malarial drug found in "tonic" water (Desmond 1992: 220-230).

their inherited traditions.[xxii] The extent to which New World crops have found their way into "Indian" food is revealed by a random sample of fifty recipes from a contemporary Konkani cookbook, the *Rasachandrika*. The sample demonstrates that 74% of the recipes included at least one crop from the New World, and that 66% included red or green chilies [xxiii]

Similarly, pasta and red sauce might be associated with the great traditions of Italian cooking, yet Europeans first encountered the tomato only after Columbus. Although it is taken as a truism in the literature in economics that the hardest thing to change are people's preferences for the kinds of foods they like to eat (and hence that demand for certain types of food is relatively inelastic), the historical evidence demonstrates a truly remarkable plasticity in tastes and consumption patterns. Perhaps no other arena of social life demonstrates the hybridity of cultural encounters as thoroughly as the preparation, display, and consumption of food.

These new foods changed not only eating habits but also affected cropping patterns, land and water use, and forest cover as well. This is an area about which we know very little: What were the agricultural and ecological implications of this shift to

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[xxii] The definitive guide to the origins of Indian food is two volumes by Achaya (1998a, 1998b).

[xxiii] The Konkan is a narrow strip on the west coast of India that was perhaps most profoundly altered by the ocean trade. The sample of recipes surveyed includes such staples as sukke, talasani, ghashhi and ambat. I am grateful to Lalaie Ameeriar for sifting through this data.

New World crops? We know something about how the growing demand for spices altered the rhythms and patterns of pepper production as well as of other spices. Even at the height of European demand for spices, however, the major share of spice production was being shipped not to Europe but to meet the demand of the huge markets of China and India. But this story of the impact of New World crops and of changes in spice production is not very well researched compared to the major plantation crops, such as sugar, tea, coffee, and palm oil.

Even less explored is the link between agricultural shifts and the construction of people's ethnic and religious identities. In Goa, for example, there is a highly elaborated distinction between "Christian cooking" and "Hindu cooking" that relies on the selective use of ingredients, preparation techniques, and patterns of consumption. During the infamous Inquisition, which lasted in Goa from **date to date**, one of the ways in which the Portuguese authorities discovered whether someone had genuinely converted or was merely pretending to have done so was by checking if they still followed the Hindu custom of cooking rice with salt.

Conclusion

I began this talk with the observation that the last quarter of the twentieth century, rather than heralding a new age of globalization, might better be understood as a particular crisis of "high sovereignty" for the nation-state form in the First World. Viewed from what became the peripheral areas of a world system centered in northern Europe (this includes India as well as Portugal), what changed since 1250 was not the fact of globalization, but the forms that it took. From a system of open trading across land and sea that connected Southern Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, we moved to a situation characterized by monopolistic practices, mass deportation of slaves, and enforced subjugation of peoples through colonialism. This too was a form of globalization, albeit an unhappy form for the hitherto flourishing civilizations around the Indian Ocean and in the New World.

This talk demonstrates that by focusing on crops and cuisines, one can uncover some of the dynamics of the colonial phase of globalization. It is clear that colonization followed the spice trade, both in the East Indies and in the West Indies. A form of sovereignty emerged in which "mother countries" claimed different territories for themselves, and divided the globe amongst them. The Portuguese were soon displaced of their monopoly of the spice trade by the more efficient Dutch, who in turn were successfully challenged by the British.[xxiv] After a few years in which they wrested control over the spice trade from Venice, the Portuguese had in any case lost the initiative because of the revival of the spice trade through the Red Sea.[xxv] On the sugar front, too, after the middle of the seventeenth century, the British started producing sugar in their own colonies. Processes of displacement and internecine struggle among colonizing powers became the hallmarks of this phase of globalization. But globalization in the colonial phase went along with the consolidation of a model of Westphalian sovereignty for the European colonizers. This was a model of sovereignty more than a practice because its ideological form eventually became dominant with the end of official colonialism, but its practice was never more than a fiction for the majority of dependent and peripheral nation-states. We have yet to come to terms with the various ways that colonialism and imperial

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[xxiv] See Chapter V of Boxer's *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415-1825*, which focuses on the global struggle between the Portuguese and the Dutch.

[xxv] For details and controversies about the nature of the spice trade, see Steensgaard (1996) and Wake (1996).

expansion have shaped the formation of nation-states in Europe during the Age of Discovery and in the North more generally in subsequent eras.

A history of globalization that does not take the ideology of sovereign nation-states as its basic premise, or the self- understanding of Western industrial nation-states as its starting point, might better help us interpret the present. And few questions are as fraught today as that of identity. The paramountcy of national identity, never secure in most Third World nation-states, is being challenged as well in the dominant nation-states of the West. The problem of how to inculcate a national identity among people who shared nothing but a border had preoccupied modernization theorists in the aftermath of decolonization. Now, the need to create a national identity has been replaced by the fear that "ethnic" or "fundamentalist" identities are a problem for dominant states in the West.

Why is the question of identity rarely posed in terms of cuisine and crops in the scholarly literature while so much of the popular celebration of multiculturalism is in terms of a cosmopolitan consumerism? Is it because we scholars fear taking on a topic that is "shallow," or can too easily be co-opted into a new round of capitalist gluttony? Crops and cuisine offer us an intimate window into how people construct class hierarchies, ethnic identities, gender differences, religious borders, and distinctions between the sacred and profane.[xxvi] When it is clear that such distinctions are not created out of eternal, stable substances and practices, but rapidly incorporate new commodities and relations, such as New World crops in Asian cuisines, the connection between globalization and identity

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[xxvi] For instance, the literature on ethnic identity rarely mentions the role of cuisine in the construction of ethnicity. Clothing is sometimes analyzed in these terms (especially in Orientalist analyses of Otherness through practices such as veiling). The role of cuisine in national identity has been analyzed to some extent.

becomes especially interesting. Crops, cuisines, and consumption offer us a uniquely informative and important thread in the understanding of the history of globalization.

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