read this book from end to end. That, however, is not the primary aim. Rather, it is to gain a wider audience for a text hitherto almost inaccessible for English-speaking audiences: a rarity, originally published in German and forgotten until 1982, when an (incomplete) Turkish translation was published. The translators have done an excellent job converting the text from the original German (it would be nice to see more culinary material in general translated from this language). İşin’s editorial material makes the book more accessible and includes a bibliography of sources in both Turkish and English.

Unger’s book also contains illustrations, which are reproduced here in rather grainy black and white; a color reproduction of one recently appeared on the cover of a journal showing how delightful the originals must be. They show Greek and Turkish confectioners’ shops and various street vendors selling drinks and confectionery. Unfortunately, it is not made clear exactly how many illustrations come from Unger’s book, and the reader is left to presume that only the first six plates are original. Other useful illustrations show artifacts associated with Turkish confectionery, including a startling-looking pot for making khadayif.

There is much that is good and interesting in this book, but it has been let down by the production details. For instance, an index would be very useful. And this is a colorful subject, colorfully observed, so why such a dull color—grey—for the cover?

—Laura Mason, author, Sugarplums and Sherbet

The Traditional Dietary Culture of Southeast Asia: Its Formation and Pedigree
Akira Matsuyama
Translated by Atsunobu Tomomatsu
London: Kegan Paul Limited, 2003
xxv + 459 pp. Illustrations. $212.50 (cloth)

This English translation of Akira Matsuyama’s compendium on the culinary products and practices of Southeast Asia is not for the casual reader with a passing interest in Asian cuisines. Rather, it is for the specialist, the anthropologist or historian, who wants to delve into the specifics of cultural change as it relates to the foodways of Southeast Asia.

The book is divided into chapters based chronologically upon the periods of Southeast Asian history: prehistoric, pre-European, European colonial, and the present day. Though encyclopedic in its approach to the dietary cultures of Southeast Asia, it is uneven in its geographical focus, which is primarily upon the Indonesian island of Java and, to a lesser degree, New Guinea, Burma, Cambodia, and the Malay Peninsula. The first quarter of the book, which deals with the geology of Southeast Asia and prehistoric dietary cultures, is for the anthropological and archaeological specialist. Other portions of the volume reflect the author’s academic background in biology and agriculture, as seen in his highly detailed, often technical discussions of processes such as the production of fermented dairy and soy products, sugar, and alcoholic beverages.

Matsuyama relies upon a vast array of original sources in a variety of languages, including inscriptions from the late first millennium at Borobudur, Pagan, and other temple complexes; the pictorial reliefs at such sites; early Javanese literary works; Chinese and Japanese historical sources; and the accounts of early Portuguese and Dutch traders and explorers. Drawing from these resources, he effectively delineates the different stages of the development of the cultures of Southeast Asia and the concomitant changes in diet: the aboriginal; the period of Hindu and Buddhist influence from India; the period of Chinese trade and the later stage of Chinese migration; the period of Islamic influence in the archipelago; the period of European colonialism; and the postcolonial period. For those interested in cultural change and its effects on cuisine, Southeast Asia is perhaps the most complex and fascinating global region, something that Matsuyama clearly reflects in his writing.

Matsuyama makes a further important contribution in his discussion of what constitutes tradition in dietary cultures. Those who consider dishes such as spicy Thai curries, Indonesian sate, or fresh papaya to be part of traditional cuisines in the region might be surprised to learn of the many foods native to the Americas that were introduced into Southeast Asia by Europeans, including all varieties of chilies belonging to the capsicum family, peanuts, papayas, pineapples, tomatoes, potatoes, and cassava. Even earlier, according to the author, Indian traders had introduced spices such as cumin, coriander, cardamom, and saffron. And several crops introduced by Europeans for commercial export eventually became staples of the Southeast Asian diet, principally coffee and tea.

Exploring the relationship between indigenousness and tradition as they relate to dietary cultures, Matsuyama initially suggests that foods which have been consumed over more than one or two centuries can be considered traditional. Yet, in a prolonged discussion on the production of locally produced black sugar and commercially produced white sugar, he argues that the mode of production may also have some relevance. Even though white sugar has
long been produced in Indonesia and all of the sizeable commercial production has been consumed domestically since colonial rule ended, Matsuyama does not consider it indigenous or traditional because of the uniformity of its processing. So-called black sugar, on the other hand, produced in small batches with local and regional variations in flavor and consistency, would be considered an indigenous, so-called traditional food.

There are occasional errors and discrepancies, though it is unclear whether they are errors of the Japanese original or of translation. For instance, the Indian terms ghee (clarified butter) and dahi (yogurt) are respectively translated as “beef tallow” and “fermented milk product” (p.124). Elsewhere, Matsuyama notes that foods such as garlic, cucumber, eggplant, or banana cannot be considered as indigenous because they are not found in early textual references. However, he contradicts himself and asserts that many of the early texts refer only to foods served at banquets and elite feasts and that a food’s absence therein does not necessarily indicate that it was not present in the region at that time. In particular, Matsuyama states that bananas appear pictorially in early temple friezes, obviously underscoring their presence during that period.

The extended discussions of the microbial strains and chemical processes that occur in the production of tempeh, palm wine, and tofu may appear to most readers to be overly detailed or tangential. However, for the historian or anthropologist concerned with Southeast Asia, there are many valuable nuggets of information in this volume.

—James M. Hastings, Wake Forest University

Banana Wars: Power, Production and History in the Americas
Edited by Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg
viii + 364 pp. Maps, graphs, photos. $22.95 (paper)

The ubiquitous, user-friendly yellow banana we so routinely encounter conveys nothing of its brutal past, contentious present, and suspect future. Fortunately, for a superb set of insights into “the most important internationally traded fresh agricultural commodity” (p.37), we can turn to Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg’s Banana Wars: Power, Production and History in the Americas. Their collection, which emerged from a 1998 session at the meetings of the American Anthropological Association, draws together interdisciplinary scholarship from the banana-producing zones of Latin America and the Caribbean. The editors succeed in making a diverse set of papers cohere by framing them in the two trends that have characterized banana scholarship: the first, comparative and macroeconomic; and the second based upon regional history and social dynamics. Accordingly, the opening essays and thoughtful conclusion look broadly at the banana commodity through space and time, while the other chapters grapple with particular locales.

Laura T. Raynolds surveys the development and operation of the two major and distinct “banana regimes”: the dollar bananas of Central America and Ecuador, and the ACB (African, Caribbean, and Pacific) bananas raised in the eastern Caribbean. Sketching the differences in ownership and production patterns—the former dominated by vertically integrated transnationals, the latter comprised of smallholders—Raynolds clarifies the origins and implications of the current “banana wars,” the recent series of WTO suits brought by the United States against the European Union. The next paper, by John Soluri, also serves as a useful introduction to the commodity’s history, as he links transformations in production zones to the marketing and consumption of bananas in North America. Soluri notes that the popularity of bananas expanded along with holdings of United Fruit, later to become Chiquita. Not only were bananas relatively cheap, convenient, and healthful, but as Soluri illustrates with images from popular culture, they also offered both a taste of the exotic and a humorous symbol of ineptly governed tropical nations.

And what about the relationship between United Fruit and those feeble states? This question is approached from complementary angles by the next two contributors. Through an analysis of corporate records and investor assessments, Marcelo Bucheli shows the firm adapting to political and market currents. While the compliance of Central American elites and backing from the US government made direct production control feasible and profitable in the pre–World War II period, by midcentury an erosion of formal political support and growing labor activism worried investors. Bucheli asserts that, in response, United Fruit eventually divested many of its Central American properties and reinvented itself as a marketing company, Chiquita, which today controls about a quarter of the world banana market. The machinations of United Fruit are further illuminated by Philippe Bourgois, who, through ethnographic serendipity, acquired access to decades of the company’s correspondence. He offers a fascinating glimpse into the quotidian stuff of imperialism—offhand allusions to conversations between presidents and corporate lobbyists, briefs on “Bolshevik”