

The collection ends with a perspective by Jacquard and Ward on the genetic consequences of changing reproductive behaviour. These workers provide a reasoned and optimistic evaluation of the future implications of reduction in selective disadvantage of deleterious alleles, reduced variation in family size and the changing distribution of parental age in human populations.

Although this collection is derived from a workshop held in 1974, many of the papers included were prepared more recently. It constitutes coherent and useful reading, treating multiple viewpoints of demographic genetics from prehistory to the distant future while avoiding obscurities of specialisation and style. The book deserves a wide circulation among all interested in human biology.

It is unfortunate that in an otherwise excellent work attention to editorial detail could be better. The notion of an electrical engineer disassembling an unknown device to contemplate its structure (p. 129) fails to pass as intentional comic relief only because it appears too early in the article—but such infelicities are numerous. More seriously, references cited are in at least two instances not listed at the ends of articles.

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EVOLUTION OF CROP PLANTS. Edited by N. W. Simmonds. Longman, London Pp. 339. £14.

For those seeking information about particular species in cultivation and for others, teachers especially, whose concern is with the evolutionary and historical processes contributing to the origin of cultivated plants this will prove an excellent, indeed invaluable reference book. Over 80 major crops are dealt with and there is reference to as many crops of lesser importance. The authors present their facts under five headings. There is an *introduction* which tells us what the crop is grown for and where, a *cytotaxonomic background* which tells us about chromosomes, the breeding system and evolution, an *early history* which often traces migration from various centres of origin, a *recent history* of aims and developments by breeders and cultivators and, finally, *prospects*, followed by a list of references. The pattern imposed by the editor succeeds admirably and while one may quarrel with an author on taxonomic or other grounds the bare essential facts are there along with key references to detailed work. This is not to say that the information presented is bleak or scanty. On the contrary the book is packed with fascinating facts and theories. It was new to me that cloves were much in demand in Indonesia for mixing with tobacco to produce kretek cigarettes or that the clove tree was vulnerable to a disease with the despairing name of "sudden death". We learn that *Triticale*, the man-made wheat-rye species, is in some cases outyielding wheat and that it consistently has a higher nutritive value than wheat in terms of protein and essential amino acids. We learn that the grain and straw of *Sorghum* provides not only food for man and domestic animals but also beer, fuel and even fencing material. This book is a pleasure to read and I am sure it will become the standard work on the subject.

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