
CHAPTER FIFTEEN

McDOMINATION:¹ THE AMERICANIZATION OF GLOBAL POPULAR CULTURE (1950s TO THE PRESENT)

THE PROBLEM

In his utopian novel *Looking Backward* (1888), author and journalist Edward Bellamy (1850–1898) predicted that by the year 2000, the world would be linked together in a “single planetary consumer market.” As Bellamy saw it, such a global economy would eradicate poverty and want worldwide by making everyone a participant—both as a producer and as a consumer—in government-planned and government-directed industrialization and distribution of goods. To Julian West, the novel’s hero, who had fallen asleep in 1887 and had not reawakened until September 10, 2000, it was a world that had eliminated not only poverty but also national conflicts and class warfare.

1. We first encountered this term in an unpublished lecture by University of Tennessee historian Vejas Liulevicius: “Europe’s Fear of McDomination.”

Although Bellamy’s socialist vision never materialized, his dreams of a global economy and a worldwide consumer market seemed prophetic to people actually living in the year 2000. Brand names and products such as Nike footwear, Nokia cellular telephones, and Pokémon trading cards and films are perhaps better known to men, women, and children worldwide than the names of the most important global political leaders. As Zygmunt Bauman commented in his book *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (1998), global commerce and consumption creates “a strange circle whose center is everywhere.”²

While many nations and cultures contribute products, services, and advertising images to the global marketplace, none has been more successful in doing this than the United States.

2. Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 77–78.

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The near-tidal wave of U.S. exports has raised serious questions about the power of multinational corporations and the efforts of other nations to withstand the American economic onslaught and to protect their own manufacturers—something that Bellamy clearly did not anticipate. The central issue in this chapter, however, is less economic than *cultural*: the possible effects of economic globalization on those cultures that consume American products. For as Benjamin R. Barber has explained in his thoughtful book *Jihad vs. McWorld*, “selling American products means selling America: its popular culture, its putative prosperity, its ubiquitous imagery . . . and thus its very soul.”³

No American corporation has been as successful in its efforts to capture the global marketplace as McDonald's, the fast-food giant that by 1999 boasted more than 25,500 restaurants in over 120 nations and served an average of 30 million customers *each day*. So pervasive are the company's trademarked golden arches that one eight-year-old youngster from South Korea saw a McDonald's restaurant while visiting Boston, Massachusetts, and exclaimed, “Look! They have our kind of food here.”⁴ The world's largest McDonald's (with 700 seats, 29 cash registers, and 605 employees) opened

in 1990 in Moscow, while in 1992 the first McDonald's opened in Beijing, with 40,000 customers being served on its very first day. Somewhere in the world, three new McDonald's restaurants open for business every day.⁵

This global spread of American products and popular culture, however, has not been without opposition. Often many people in the West and non-West alike, labeling this phenomenon cultural imperialism, accuse the United States of undermining and even destroying other cultures that allow American products and popular culture to gain footholds on their native soils by eroding their traditions, cultures, languages, and even identities. This resistance thus far has been most prominent in France, where farmer Jose Bové touched off a wave of assaults on McDonald's restaurants in 1999 and in doing so became a national and even international hero.⁶ Although opposition to American cultural intrusion in general and McDonald's restaurants in particular has been less dramatic elsewhere, there is little doubt that deep opposition to American cultural ubiquity⁷ is widespread.

By examining and analyzing the material in the Evidence section of this chapter, answer the following questions:

3. Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Times Books, 1995), p. 60.

4. James L. Watson, “China's Big Mac Attack,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 79 (May/June 2000), p. 131. In Source 8, Thomas L. Friedman claims the child was Japanese and that she saw the McDonald's in Los Angeles.

5. For the Moscow opening, see *New York Times*, Feb. 1, 1990. For the Beijing opening, see James L. Watson, ed., *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 39.

6. *The Times* (London), Aug. 21, 1999.

7. ubiquity: presence everywhere.

1. How does McDonald's give us insight into the globalization of popular culture?
2. What are the *benefits* of the globalization of popular (largely American) culture? What are the *liabilities*?
3. Do you agree or disagree with those who accuse the United States in general and American commercial enterprises in particular of a different form of imperialism (*cultural imperialism*)?

BACKGROUND

The economic dominance of the United States could easily have been predicted as early as the mid-nineteenth century—or even earlier. It boasted a burgeoning population that, as a result of natural increase and immigration, doubled every twenty-five years (providing ample numbers of laborers and consumers), a huge market within the nation and its territories, abundant raw materials, easy access to rich energy sources (water power, wood, coal), and modern technology (often “borrowed” from other nations). By the eve of the American Civil War in 1860 the United States ranked third among all nations in manufacturing output. And the Civil War (1861–1865) itself further accelerated industrialization by encouraging the growth of factories to produce war materiel, concentrating investment capital in the hands of a few large bankers and heads of investment firms, and maintaining in Washington a government friendly to business. Finally, after the Civil War, the United States dramatically reduced its military expenditures, thereby allowing it to pour even more resources into

economic growth and development (by 1880 the nation ranked only eighth in the number of military and naval personnel).⁸

During the early twentieth century, these trends continued. By 1900 the United States led the world in manufacturing output, with 23.6 percent of the world's total. And by 1929 that gap had widened even more significantly: The nation's share of world manufacturing stood at an incredible 43.3 percent. Indeed, it seemed as if the United States would become the world's manufacturer.

The worldwide economic depression in the 1930s severely reduced the United States' share of world manufacturing (to 28.7 percent by 1938). But by 1953 the United States' share had rebounded to 44.7 percent, due in large part to wartime devastation in Europe and Asia. After that, however, the rise of manufacturing in developing nations (which increased to 9.9 percent of the world's share by 1973), the resurgence of industrialization in Germany and Japan (with new

8. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 203.

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factories), the surprisingly rapid obsolescence of U.S. establishments, and foreign competition from nations with significantly lower labor costs combined to decrease the nation's share of world manufacturing. The United States' trade deficits with other industrial nations grew to disturbing proportions.

At the same time that the United States' share of world manufacturing was decreasing, however, other American exports were burgeoning. United States occupation troops and American films, television, and recorded music introduced people throughout the world to American popular culture. Young people especially became avid consumers of Hollywood-produced films,⁹ American popular music and clothing, and American products came to represent the "good life" or what was up-to-date or "cool." Michael Jordan became as well known in the People's Republic of China as he was in the United States; American baseball became a world sport; and Elvis Presley was famous nearly everywhere. Even American words or phrases found their way into other languages: chewing gum, cheeseburgers, prime time, talk shows, software. When American citizens finally were allowed to visit the People's Republic of China, they often were inundated by

young people seeking to practice their English and their use of "cool" American speech. And as young people throughout the world gradually became more affluent, their appetites for American popular culture increased all the more.

McDonald's was not the first United States company to take advantage of the Americanization of global popular culture. The ubiquity of the soft drink Coca-Cola led one British sociologist to grumble about "Coca-colonization."¹⁰ But in many ways it was McDonald's that most successfully fused American popular culture with a product and a particular style of delivering that product. Indeed, by 1982 McDonald's was the largest owner of retail real estate in the world.¹¹

Although brothers Maurice and Richard McDonald opened the first McDonald's window-service-only hamburger stand in San Bernardino, California, pioneered the golden arches as a trademark, and began selling McDonald's franchises (six in California by 1955), it was salesman-promoter Ray Kroc (1902-1984) who can be credited with making McDonald's a giant fast-food operation and worldwide cultural icon. Kroc, who at various times had worked as a piano player in a band, an announcer at a Chicago radio station, and a salesman of Florida real estate, was selling milk

9. In 1991, *Terminator 2* and *Dances with Wolves* were the two most popular films in the world. Of the twenty-two nations surveyed by *Variety International Film Guide*, only two nations (Finland and Holland) had domestic films that topped all others. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, pp. 299-301.

10. On "Coca-colonization," see Barry Smart, ed., *Resisting McDonaldization* (London: Sage, 1999), p. 1.

11. John F. Love, *McDonald's: Behind the Arches* (New York: Bantam Books, rev. ed. 1995), p. 4.

shake makers when he first met the McDonald brothers in 1954. The McDonalds ordered eight of them, and Kroc immediately set out for San Bernadino to visit a place that needed to make forty milk shakes at one time (each machine had five spindles). Kroc was stunned when, upon arrival, he found a modest walk-up hamburger stand that sold "the best hamburger you ever ate" for fifteen cents and a bag of french fried potatoes for a dime. People were lined up at all the windows.

Kroc ultimately won permission from the McDonald brothers to be the franchise agent to sell and set up new McDonald's stands (the first franchise fee was \$950). By 1958, Kroc had opened 80 new stores (the first store was in Des Plaines, Illinois, outside of Chicago); by 1959 he had opened 100, by 1960 there were over 200. Kroc later claimed that the keys to McDonald's success were good food at a low price (the french fries were the most profitable item), courteous and well-groomed employees (who were schooled to say "thank you" and "have a nice day"), and clean, well-lighted stores and spotless restrooms (Kroc once claimed that "I couldn't hire a guy from Harvard because the son of a bitch wouldn't get down and wash the toilets").¹² The McDonald brothers were bought out for \$2.7 million and McDonald's Systems, Inc., was on its

way. By 1965 there were 710 McDonald's stores with over 20,000 employees serving the traditional fare plus double burgers (1963), Filet-O-Fish (1964), Big Macs (1968), Quarter Pounders (1971), and Egg McMuffins (1971). By 1971, about 1 percent of all beef wholesaled in the United States was purchased by McDonald's (300,000 cattle per year), and the company was the nation's top purchaser of processed potatoes and fish, exceeding the U.S. Army in the volume of food served. It was the nation's leading employer of young people (1 in 15 of all people who work began their working careers at a McDonald's).¹³

Kroc's claim that McDonald's success could be attributed to good food at low prices, courteous employees, and clean stores and restrooms was only partly correct. The growth of McDonald's paralleled and was affected by important shifts in America's demography, economy, and culture. Chief among these changes was the postwar mass exodus of comparatively affluent young married couples to the new suburbs, where they created and participated in a suburban culture that centered much of its attention on its children (the "baby boomers"). In order to support the new, credit-based lifestyles of these young families, women increasingly began to enter the workforce. For these dual-income young couples with children, McDonald's was almost made to order. Families could pick up quick meals at the stores'

12. See Max Boas and Steve Chain, *Big Mac: The Unauthorized Story of McDonald's* (New York: Dutton, 1976), p. 24. See also Ray Kroc with Robert Anderson, *Grinding It Out: The Making of McDonald's* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1977), p. 131.

13. The first female crew workers were not hired until 1969.

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drive-through windows, thus relieving working wives of having to prepare meals after full workdays. Also, these busy parents could offer their children meals at McDonald's as "rewards." And they could depend on McDonald's for predictable food and clean restrooms as they took to the road in their automobiles as a new generation of tourists. Indeed, McDonald's was only the most successful of the many new franchises that were founded in the midst of these important demographic, economic, and cultural changes in American life.

Although by 1971 the company was selling approximately one billion burgers every four months (to say nothing of over 300 million pounds of french fries and well over 800 billion slices of pickles), the real profit for the company was in real estate. McDonald's would locate promising restaurant¹⁴ sites, lease them from the landowners, and then sublease them to the person who bought the McDonald's franchise (the franchisee).¹⁵ When McDonald's was able to purchase the land outright and then lease it to the franchisee, the profits were even greater.

It was almost inevitable that Kroc would take the McDonald's concept abroad. But questions abounded. Would the food be accepted in other lands? What accommodations would McDonald's have to make to other

cultures? Would the behavior of American customers (standing in lines, cleaning up their own tables, etc.) be adopted by others? Would the demeanor of McDonald's employees be understood or appreciated? Would people see McDonald's as another example of American intrusion into their diets, their businesses, and their customs?

For the most part, these fears were unfounded. Opening first, perhaps timidly, in Canada in 1967, McDonald's spread rapidly in the early 1970s in Japan, Australia, Germany, France, Sweden, England, Hong Kong, and New Zealand. By the mid-1990s, almost half of the McDonald's corporation's gross sales came from restaurants outside the United States.¹⁶ To be sure, some alterations had to be made. For example, when the McDonald's on Leningradskoe shosse in Moscow opened a drive-through window in 1996, tray liners had to be printed instructing people how to use the store's drive-through service. In Japan, to "accommodate the Japanese tongue," Ronald McDonald became Donald McDonald. In Israel no cheese was served on Big Macs; in India Big Macs were made of mutton; no pork was served in Muslim countries; McSpaghetti was a favorite in the Philippines; frankfurters and beer were on the McDonald's menus in Germany; in Norway customers could order a grilled salmon sandwich; in the Netherlands vegetarian burgers were available. And yet in most cases the

14. The first McDonald's with indoor seating (hence, a more traditional restaurant) opened in July 1966 in Huntsville, Alabama.

15. In real estate parlance, such a deal is called a "sandwich position."

16. Watson, *Golden Arches East*, p. 3.

basic menu of burgers, fries, and soft drinks remained the same.¹⁷

At the same time, McDonald's customers in other cultures adapted to the "McDonald's concept." In Moscow, a woman employee had to stand outside the restaurant with a bullhorn, explaining, "The employees inside will smile at you. This does not mean that they are laughing at you. We smile because we are happy to serve you." In Japan, McDonald's had to overcome traditional table manners, which hold that one does not actually touch food with the hands while eating. Yet at the same time, comfortable seating made the McDonald's in Beijing a favorite courtship site for young people (one area of the mammoth restaurant was nicknamed the "lovers' corner"). In Hong Kong, McDonald's became the catalyst for changes in restaurant and public restroom standards of sanitation.¹⁸

And yet the Americanization of global popular culture has not been without opposition. Concerned about the purity of its native tongue, the French Ministry of National Culture convinced the legislature to outlaw cer-

tain modern English/American words and phrases (chewing gum, for example, reverted to *gomme a macher*). In 1994 Mexicans ransacked a McDonald's in Mexico City and scrawled "Yankee Go Home" on the windows.¹⁹ Cultures as disparate as those in Great Britain, Italy, Turkey, and Korea have witnessed opposition to American popular culture that focused on McDonald's. It is as if they fear that the liabilities of global cultural homogenization might outweigh the benefits.

As you examine and analyze the evidence, remember the questions posed in the Problem section:

1. How does McDonald's give us insight into the globalization of popular culture?
2. What are the *benefits* of living in a global (largely American) culture? What are the *liabilities*?
3. Do you agree or disagree with those who accuse the United States in general and American commercial enterprises in particular of a different form of imperialism (*cultural imperialism*)?

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 34, 51, 89. In Cantonese, the restaurant is named *mak dong lou*.

19. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, p. 171; *New York Times*, November 9, 1994.

THE METHOD

Near-fascination with American popular culture by peoples outside the United States is not a terribly new phenomenon. Although Americans from colonial times to the twentieth century have exhibited a kind of cultural inferiority complex when it came to "high" culture (painting, sculpture, architecture, symphonic and classical music, etc.), at the same time non-Americans have often embraced aspects of American popular (or "low") culture such as jazz, rock 'n' roll, "pop" art, and so forth. This accelerated dramatically after World War II because of exposure to American servicemen and -women abroad, films, televisions, and recorded music; by the late 1990s, British sociologist Barry Smart was hardly exaggerating when he remarked that "most of the globally ubiquitous commodities have their roots in America; they are the products of the first mass consumer society."²⁰

By now you have been asked to familiarize yourself with and analyze many different types of historical evidence. Moreover, you have come to appreciate the fact that *everything* created by men, women, and children in the past can be used as evidence, if only we can learn how to properly examine it. This chapter, therefore, contains a mixture of types of evidence

for you to employ in answering the chapter's central questions. As you examine and analyze the evidence, keep those central questions in mind.

As you read each piece of evidence, you will find it helpful to determine which of the central questions that piece of evidence would help to answer. In this way you can divide the evidence into more manageable groups. Remember that certain pieces of evidence may help to answer more than one question.

Source 1 is a tray liner that McDonald's uses to cover the plastic trays before food is placed on them, proof of the above statement that everything can be used as historical evidence. What clues are contained in the tray liner from Norway (Source 1)? What does this tray liner tell you?

Sources 2 through 6 are newspaper accounts involving McDonald's outlets in various countries, four from the *London Times* and one from the *Washington Post*. Which question(s) can each newspaper report help to answer?

Source 7 is an editorial cartoon by John Deering that originally appeared in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* and was reprinted in the May 26, 2000, issue of *USA Today*. Deering clearly was dealing with the spread of McDonald's in the People's Republic of China. And yet, what does Deering juxtapose against the golden arches? What question does this cartoon help you to answer?

Source 8 is an editorial piece from the *New York Times* by foreign affairs writer Thomas L. Friedman, author of the important book on globalization *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. In Friedman's opinion, what are the benefits

20. Smart, *Resisting McDonaldization*, p. 1. For one example of the exporting of American popular culture see John Haag, "Gone with the Wind in Nazi Germany," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 73 (Summer 1989), pp. 278-304.

of cultural globalization? What are the liabilities?

The final source, Source 9, is an excerpt from an essay written by Harvard professor of Chinese studies and anthropology Thomas L. Watson that appeared in the May/June 2000 issue of the influential journal *Foreign Affairs* (influential because many

U.S. government officials subscribe to and carefully read the quarterly journal). Which question does Watson's essay intend to answer? What are his conclusions?

Now put all the evidence from each group together. Having done so, how would you answer the chapter's central questions?

THE EVIDENCE

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Source 1 from McDonald's restaurant, Oslo, Norway. Used by permission from McDonald's Corporation.

1. McDonald's Tray Liner, Norway



[McDonald's needs more coworkers. We pay well, and you yourself can choose how much you want to work. Work hours are variable, so you have time for other things. For an application, go to the cash register.]

McDonald's trenger flere medarbeidere. Vi betaler godt og du kan selv velge hvor mye du vil jobbe. Arbeidstiden er i tillegg variert, så du får tid til andre ting. For søknadsskjema henvend deg i kassen.



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Source 2 from The Times (London), June 24, 1998.

2. McDonald's in China, 1998

MCDONALD'S OUSTS STALIN AS CHINA SHOWS CHANGING FACE TO US LEADER

As Richard Nixon's limousine sped across Tiananmen Square on his groundbreaking visit to China in February 1972, he could hardly have missed a 30ft high portrait of Stalin.

If President Clinton glances in the same direction when his motorcade crosses the square on its way to the same state guest house on Friday, he will see the McDonald's arches. Stalin is long gone. . . .

Culturally in China, things seem very different. When Nixon was here, the roly-poly female attendants at the state guest house seemed sexless in pigtailed and khaki Mao suits. The female attendants that Mr Clinton will see, chosen for their beauty, are tall, slim and beguiling with fashionable hairstyles and *cheongsams* cut to the thigh.

Nixon was taken to see *Red Detachment of Women*, a revolutionary ballet about people's militias struggling with Chinese nationalist reactionaries. Mao's sour-faced wife, the late Jiang Qing, hosted Nixon at a rather grubby theatre for the performance, and he smiled as she told him that the face on a target that the people's heroes were firing at was that of Chiang Kai-shek, the Taiwanese leader and America's friend.

Nowadays, the movie *Titanic* has been seen by millions of Chinese and it is impossible to escape its theme tune anywhere in China—even in the Foreign Ministry's briefing room. In Nixon's time, *The East is Red* and *Chairman Mao is the Bright Red Sun in our Hearts* were still top of the pops.

International youth culture—in effect American culture—has taken over China. Michael Jordan is a youth icon. Tight T-shirts, jeans, baseball caps and trainers are de rigueur for the young. Discos, bars and nightclubs abound, and young ladies of the night are now almost as common as Red Guards once were.

Political slogans like "Serve The People" and "Down with American Imperialism and all its running dogs" have given way to poster boards and jingles for consumer goods.

"You let us rule you and we will let you get rich," is the pact the Communist Party has made with the people, though this is fraying at the edges as the economy falters in this authoritarian, but not now totalitarian, state.

Source 3 from *The Times (London)*, August 1, 1998.

3. Queen Elizabeth Visits McDonald's, 1998

THE PEOPLE LONGED FOR A LESS REMOTE MONARCH: YESTERDAY THEY MET HER

Those determined to portray the monarch as a people's Queen could hardly have designed a more populist day out for her yesterday: she spent the morning in Ellesmere Port, shopping for kitchenware and a pair of trainers, sustaining herself with a visit to a drive-in McDonald's.

Being the Queen, she bought neither canvas shoes nor plastic washing-up bowl, and no Big Mac passed the royal lips. But as an exercise in carefully stage-managed window-shopping, it opened the eyes of both Sovereign and subjects.

Her visit to the Cheshire Oaks Designer Outlet Village fitted the new pattern that has emerged to counter criticisms of remoteness that surfaced after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. Typically on an awayday, the Queen now meets far more ordinary people in everyday situations and far fewer flunkies.

As the royal limousine drew up outside the burger bar, there seemed a momentary danger that the Queen might have to go inside to learn the mysteries of Quarter-Pounders and Chicken McNuggets, but she was spared, and her visit was restricted to meeting the staff on the pavement outside. She looked a mite glum.

Pausing briefly to talk to members of a shopping motability group, and to be told that it would cost her £3 to hire a battery wheelchair, the Queen decided to walk, first to Whittard's Coffee and Kitchenware store to browse among the utensils. "She was fascinated by the plastic bowls; she couldn't make out what they were made of," the manageress Katie Bellis said later. The shop presented her with a green glass bowl and some barbecue tools, which may yet find employment at Balmoral.

The royal shopping entourage moved on to the Reebok store, where she engaged the manager Darryl Peacock in conversation on the latest in sports shoes. "I asked if she would like to buy a pair, but she just smiled. She did take an interest in one sweater which she said Prince Philip might like," Mr. Peacock reported.

Source 4 from *Washington Post*, October 11, 1998.

4. A McDonald's Promotion in Hong Kong, 1998

SNOOPY FAD TAKES HONG KONG BY STORM:
THOUSANDS LINE UP OUTSIDE MCDONALD'S

HONG KONG—They began lining up at dawn, outside every branch in the city. Soon the lines grew to hundreds of people, stretching around city blocks. On a few occasions, police were called to keep order.

What was the cause of this city-wide pandemonium? A run on a failing bank? A mad rush for visas, perhaps?

No, it was Snoopy. Not Snoopy Dogg, the rapper, but Snoopy, the world's most famous beagle, Charlie Brown's pooch from the Peanuts cartoon strip.

Every day for four weeks McDonald's offered three-inch Snoopy figurines for a mere 6 Hong Kong dollars—equivalent to about 75 cents—with the purchase of a McDonald's meal. Each day brought a Snoopy dressed in a different national costume—a Chinese Snoopy, a Mexican Snoopy, a Mongolian Snoopy, an American Snoopy in an Uncle Sam hat, as well as one in a cowboy hat with a pair of six-shooters around his waist.

What McDonald's probably never anticipated was that in collector-crazed Hong Kong, the Snoopies became the hottest item in town. For the duration of the offer, which ended last week, thousands of people lined up outside McDonald's outlets each day, beginning as early as 6 a.m. Some people sent their maids or their elderly grandparents. Some came equipped with cell phones, to take Snoopy orders from friends and co-workers.

One businesswoman reportedly sent employees to McDonald's outlets in Malaysia and Singapore to grab excess Snoopies. And a Snoopy black market opened in Wan Chai and Mongkok, selling bootleg versions of the most popular Snoopies for 50 times the going rate.

A 72-year-old retiree said he got up every morning at 4 a.m. to do his exercises, then headed straight to the neighborhood McDonald's in Sheung Wan. "I used to go have dim sum every day," he said. "Now I have no dim sum—I just go to McDonald's." His goal was to collect all 28 Snoopies for his grandson, 8, who would face ostracism at school and serious social humiliation should a single Snoopy be missing from his set.

"I just get a lot of satisfaction when I get a new one of the 28 Snoopies," said housewife Kitty Poon, 38. She has spent more than 4,000 Hong Kong dollars, or more than \$500, buying the meals to get the Snoopies, including 20 of the Uncle Sam Snoopy alone. "It's just like buying property!" she exclaimed.

Of course, very few people actually ate the food, especially after four weeks of daily visits. Some simply bought the meals to get the Snoopies, and then threw the food away or gave it to strangers. The homeless and poor of Hong Kong began gathering near McDonald's to take the unwanted food.

What lay behind the craze? Some psychiatrists say that in this climate of economic recession, collecting something seen as a bargain alleviates the stress of hard times. And Hong Kong residents are known as collectors of virtually anything that might have value one day, as witnessed by lines outside post offices for a chance to buy the last postage stamp with Queen Elizabeth's image last year before Britain handed the territory back to China and the imperial emblem was replaced with a flower.

With the success of the "Snoopy World Tour," the irreverent local weekly newspaper HK Magazine questioned why McDonald's would continue making hamburgers. "Why not close up shop and open Snoopy stores instead?" it asked.

Source 5 from *The Times (London)*, July 23, 1999.

5. Bermuda Resists McDonald's, 1999

BERMUDA BURGHERS KEEP "BIG MAC" BAN

Bermuda, one of the last remaining outposts of the British Empire, has struck a blow against American cultural imperialism. A drive to allow McDonald's to open a restaurant on the island has been firmly rebuffed.

The Privy Council in Britain, the highest court in the land for the most populous remaining colony, upheld a special Act of the Bermuda Parliament which bars McDonald's—and similar fast-food franchises—from setting up there. The Act has been the source of a long-running legal battle.

Those who had vigorously opposed the famous golden arches were celebrating yesterday. "It was clear that we were carrying out the wishes of the majority of the people and tourists," said Trevor Moniz, a lawyer who had led the action. "McDonald's is against Bermuda's image."

Six hundred miles off the coast of North Carolina, Bermuda has retained a colonial way of life. People wear Bermuda shorts and blazers to work, break for tea at 4pm and drive no faster than a sedate 20mph. The population, which includes David Bowie, the rock star, and the American billionaire Ross Perot, is 60,000—but ten times that number of tourists, the vast majority Americans, arrive each year.

The tranquillity of paradise was disrupted when Sir John Swan, the former Prime Minister, thought that visitors and natives alike might like the occasional Big Mac. He and a government backbencher, Maxwell Burgess, were given permission in 1996 by the then finance minister to set up a franchise.

The move further divided the ruling United Bermuda Party (UBP), then facing dissent in its ranks over a 1995 referendum on independence from Britain. The referendum was initiated by Sir John, who resigned when it failed.

The franchise approval led to five UBP MPs; including Mr Moniz, speaking out against the party in what the local press dubbed the "burger wars." The five initiated the Prohibited Restaurants Act.

Sir John's company, Grape Bay Ltd, sued the Bermudian Government, winning their case in the Supreme Court, losing in the Court of Appeal and winding up in front of the Privy Council.

Meanwhile the divided UBP, which had dominated government since party politics emerged in the late 1960s, lost its first general election last year as the Labour party swept into power. Mr Moniz, who retained his seat in the upset, said the grant of the franchise in 1996 helped to undermine the party's credibility.

Bermuda, home to countless millionaires and a port of call for the world's swankiest yachts, is believed to be unique in specifically legislating to stop

Ronald McDonald setting foot on its soil. The ban is an unusual experience for the food outlet which now peddles its burgers in 24,500 restaurants worldwide.

Source 6 from *The Times (London)*, September 1, 1999.

6. The French Protest McDonald's, 1999

FRENCH FARMERS FIGHT US 'IMPERIALISM'

McDonald's fast-food restaurants bore the brunt of demonstrations across France yesterday by farmers protesting against what they see as an American-led threat to their livelihoods and the French way of life.

About 100 farmers gathered in central Paris to support protests by hundreds more at about 20 McDonald's restaurants from Lille in the north to Lyons and rural towns across the south of the country. Their immediate aim was to win the release of Jose Bové, a southern farm activist who has become something of a hero with his campaign against American trade sanctions on Rocquefort cheese and other traditional French fare.

M Bové was arrested last month after leading a squad of farmers that ransacked a McDonald's site at Millau, in the Aveyron département. The region has been hit by Washington's punitive duty on ewe's cheese, imposed as part of the retaliation for Europe's ban on hormone-fed American beef.

With 750 restaurants, McDonald's is a convenient target for the latest rebellion by France's ever-angry farmers. Coca-Cola is also a target in a protest aimed as much at global economic pressures as at American "imperialism."

"I am a hostage to global commercialisation," M Bové said at the Montpellier courthouse yesterday, as judges considered whether to release him on bail. Guy Kastler, a farmer, said: "We are here to defend the right of people to feed themselves with their own food in their own way and against the determination of the United States to impose their way of eating on the whole planet."

McDonald's says that it wants to drop charges against M Bové and claims that 90 per cent of its products are French-produced. Worried about local mayors' threats to impose "Coca-Cola taxes," the soft-drink firm said yesterday that it was "working closely with the national farming organisations in France to make sure they understand our contributions to the French economy."

However, the struggle shows signs of broadening into national resistance, backed by the Communist Party, the Greens and much of the public, against industrialised food production and the supposed ills of the globalised economy. "Jose Bové has fulfilled every ecologist's dream: dismantling a McDonald's," said Denis Baupin, spokesman for the Green Party, which is a partner in the Government of Lionel Jospin.

Farmers are protesting against low prices, industrial methods and genetically

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modified crops. Their fears about the increasing domination of big retail distributors were sharpened yesterday by the merger of Carrefour and Promodes, two French hypermarket chains. The Socialist-led Government sought yesterday to reassure farm unions that the resulting huge retailer—the world's second biggest—would not mean further pressure on small farmers.

The protest is being taken seriously by the Government as the European Union prepares to confront the United States in the next round of world trade talks, in the autumn. Opinion polls show huge public support for the farmers' goals. Noel Kapferer, a professor at a Paris business school, said that the campaign against McDonald's was the first sign of a European rebellion against American-imposed cultural uniformity. "Drinking Coca-Cola in the 1970s was to support the Vietnam War," he said. "Today consumers are rejecting the American way of life."

Source 7: By permission of John Deering and Creators Syndicate, Inc.

7. Editorial Cartoon About McDonald's in China, 2000



Source 8 from Thomas L. Friedman, "Big Mac II: How McDonald's Became 'Glocal,'" New York Times, December 11, 1996.

8. McDonald's Adapts to Local Culture, 1996

The folks at McDonald's like to tell the story about the young Japanese girl who arrived in Los Angeles, looked around and said to her mother: "Look, mom, they have McDonald's here too."

You could excuse her for being surprised that McDonald's was an American

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company. With 2,000 restaurants in Japan, McDonald's Japan, a.k.a. "Makadon-ald," is the biggest McDonald's franchise outside the U.S. The McDonald's folks even renamed Ronald McDonald in Japan "Donald McDonald" because there's no "R" sound in Japanese.

"You don't have 2,000 stores in Japan by being seen as an American company," said James Cantalupo, head of McDonald's International. "Look, McDonald's serves meat, bread and potatoes. They eat meat, bread and potatoes in most of the world. It's how you package it and the experience you offer that counts."

The way McDonald's has packaged itself is to be a "multi-local" company. That is, by insisting on a high degree of local ownership, and by tailoring its products just enough for local cultures, McDonald's has avoided the worst cultural backlashes that some other U.S. companies have encountered. Not only do localities now feel a stake in McDonald's success, but more important, countries do. Poland for instance has emerged as one of the largest regional suppliers of meat, potatoes and bread for McDonald's in Central Europe. That is real power. Because McDonald's is gradually moving from local sourcing of its raw materials to regional sourcing to global sourcing. One day soon, all McDonald's meat in Asia might come from Australia, all its potatoes from China. Already, every sesame seed on every McDonald's bun in the world comes from Mexico. That's as good as a country discovering oil.

This balance between local and global that McDonald's has found is worth reflecting upon. Because this phenomenon we call "globalization"—the integration of markets, trade, finance, information and corporate ownership around the globe—is actually a very American phenomenon: it wears Mickey Mouse ears, eats Big Mac's, drinks Coke, speaks on a Motorola phone and tracks its investments with Merrill Lynch using Windows 95. In other words, countries that plug into globalization are really plugging into a high degree of Americanization.

People will only take so much of that. Therefore, to the extent that U.S.-origin companies are able to become multi-local, able to integrate around the globe economically without people feeling that they are being culturally assaulted, they will be successful. To the extent they don't, they will trigger a real backlash that will slam not only them but all symbols of U.S. power. Iran now calls the U.S. "the capital of global arrogance."

People in other cultures cannot always distinguish between American power, American exports, American cultural assaults and globalization. That's why you already see terrorists lashing out at U.S. targets not for any instrumental reason, but simply to reject this steamroller of globalization/Americanization, which has become so inescapable. (The McDonald's people have a saying: Sooner or later McDonald's is in every story. Where did O. J. eat just before the murder of Nicole? McDonald's. What did Commerce Secretary Ron Brown serve U.S. troops just before he died? McDonald's. . . .)

"You try to shut the door and it comes in through the window," says the

historian Ronald Steel about globalization. "You try to shut the window and it comes in on the cable. You cut the cable, it comes in on the Internet. And it's not only in the room with you. You eat it. It gets inside you."

The only answer is multi-localism—democratizing globalization so that people everywhere feel some stake in how it impacts their lives. "McDonald's stands for a lot more than just hamburgers and American fast food," argued Mr. Cantalupo. "Cultural sensitivity is part of it too. There is no 'Euroburger.' . . . We have a different chicken sandwich in England than we do in Germany. We are trying not to think as a cookie cutter."

Source 9 from James L. Watson, "China's Big Mac Attack," Foreign Affairs, vol. 79 (May/June 2000), pp. 120-124, 134.

9. McDonald's in the People's Republic of China, 2000

Looming over Beijing's choking, bumper-to-bumper traffic, every tenth building seems to sport a giant neon sign advertising American wares: Xerox, Mobil, Kinko's, Northwest Airlines, IBM, Jeep, Gerber, even the Jolly Green Giant. American food chains and beverages are everywhere in central Beijing: Coca-Cola, Starbucks, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Häagen-Dazs, Dunkin' Donuts, Baskin-Robbins, Pepsi, TCBY, Pizza Hut, and of course McDonald's. As of June 1999, McDonald's had opened 235 restaurants in China. Hong Kong alone now boasts 158 McDonald's franchises, one for every 42,000 residents (compared to one for every 30,000 Americans).

Fast food can even trump hard politics. After NATO accidentally bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during the war in Kosovo, Beijing students tried to organize a boycott of American companies in protest. Coca-Cola and McDonald's were at the top of their hit list, but the message seemed not to have reached Beijing's busy consumers: the three McDonald's I visited last July were packed with Chinese tourists, local yuppies, and grandparents treating their "little emperors and empresses" to Happy Meals. The only departure from the familiar American setting was the menu board (which was in Chinese, with English in smaller print) and the jarring sound of Mandarin shouted over cellular phones. People were downing burgers, fries, and Cokes. It was, as Yogi Berra said, *déjà vu* all over again; I had seen this scene a hundred times before in a dozen countries. Is globalism—and its cultural variant, McDonaldization—the face of the future?

American academe is teeming with theorists who argue that transnational corporations like McDonald's provide the shock troops for a new form of imperialism that is far more successful, and therefore more insidious, than its militarist

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antecedents. Young people everywhere, the argument goes, are avid consumers of soap operas, music videos, cartoons, electronic games, martial-arts books, celebrity posters, trendy clothing, and faddish hairstyles. To cater to them, shopping malls, supermarkets, amusement parks, and fast-food restaurants are popping up everywhere. Younger consumers are forging transnational bonds of empathy and shared interests that will, it is claimed, transform political alignments in ways that most world leaders—old men who do not read *Wired*—cannot begin to comprehend, let alone control. Government efforts to stop the march of American (and Japanese) pop culture are futile; censorship and trade barriers succeed only in making forbidden films, music, and Web sites irresistible to local youth.

One of the clearest expressions of the “cultural imperialism” hypothesis appeared in a 1996 *New York Times* op-ed by Ronald Steel: “It was never the Soviet Union, but the United States itself that is the true revolutionary power. . . . We purvey a culture based on mass entertainment and mass gratification. . . . The cultural message we transmit through Hollywood and McDonald’s goes out across the world to capture, and also to undermine, other societies. . . . Unlike traditional conquerors, we are not content merely to subdue others: We insist that they be like us.” In his recent book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Thomas Friedman presents a more benign view of the global influence of McDonald’s. Friedman has long argued in his *New York Times* column that McDonald’s and other manifestations of global culture serve the interests of middle classes that are emerging in autocratic, undemocratic societies. Furthermore, he notes, countries that have a McDonald’s within their borders have never gone to war against each other. (The NATO war against Serbia would seem to shatter Friedman’s Big Mac Law, but he does not give up easily. In his July 2, 1999, column, he argued that the shutdown and rapid reopening of Belgrade’s six McDonald’s actually prove his point.)

If Steel and his ideological allies are correct, McDonald’s should be the poster child of cultural imperialism. McDonald’s today has more than 25,000 outlets in 119 countries. Most of the corporation’s revenues now come from operations outside the United States, and a new restaurant opens somewhere in the world every 17 hours.

McDonald’s makes heroic efforts to ensure that its food looks, feels, and tastes the same everywhere. A Big Mac in Beijing tastes virtually identical to a Big Mac in Boston. Menus vary only when the local market is deemed mature enough to expand beyond burgers and fries. Consumers can enjoy Spicy Wings (red-pepper-laced chicken) in Beijing, kosher Big Macs (minus the cheese) in Jerusalem, vegetable McNuggets in New Delhi, or a McHuevo (a burger with fried egg) in Montevideo. Nonetheless, wherever McDonald’s takes root, the core product—at least during the initial phase of operation—is not really the food but the experience of eating in a cheerful, air-conditioned, child-friendly restaurant that offers the revolutionary innovation of clean toilets.

Critics claim that the rapid spread of McDonald’s and its fast-food rivals

undermines indigenous cuisines and helps create a homogeneous, global culture. Beijing and Hong Kong thus make excellent test cases since they are the dual epicenters of China's haute cuisine (with apologies to Hunan, Sichuan, and Shanghai loyalists). If McDonald's can make inroads in these two markets, it must surely be an unstoppable force that levels cultures. But the truth of this parable of globalization is subtler than that.

How did McDonald's do it? How did a hamburger chain become so prominent in a cultural zone dominated by rice, noodles, fish, and pork? In China, adult consumers often report that they find the taste of fried beef patties strange and unappealing. Why, then, do they come back to McDonald's? And more to the point, why do they encourage their children to eat there?

The history of McDonald's in Hong Kong offers good clues about the mystery of the company's worldwide appeal. When Daniel Ng, an American-trained engineer, opened Hong Kong's first McDonald's in 1975, his local food-industry competitors dismissed the venture as a nonstarter: "Selling hamburgers to Cantonese? You must be joking!" Ng credits his boldness to the fact that he did not have an M.B.A. and had never taken a course in business theory.

During the early years of his franchise, Ng promoted McDonald's as an outpost of American culture, offering authentic hamburgers to "with-it" young people eager to forget that they lived in a tiny colony on the rim of Maoist China. Those who experienced what passed for hamburgers in British Hong Kong during the 1960s and 1970s will appreciate the innovation. Ng made the fateful decision not to compete with Chinese-style fast-food chains that had started a few years earlier (the largest of which, Café de Coral, was established in 1969). The signs outside his first restaurants were in English; the Chinese characters for McDonald's (Cantonese *Mak-dong-lou*, Mandarin *Mai-dang-lao*) did not appear until the business was safely established. Over a period of 20 years, McDonald's gradually became a mainstay of Hong Kong's middle-class culture. Today the restaurants are packed wall-to-wall with busy commuters, students, and retirees who treat them as homes away from home. A 1997 survey I conducted among Hong Kong university students revealed that few were even aware of the company's American origins. For Hong Kong youth, McDonald's is a familiar institution that offers comfort foods that they have eaten since early childhood.

Yunxiang Yan, a UCLA anthropologist, hints that a similar localization process may be underway in Beijing. McDonald's there is still a pricey venue that most Chinese treat as a tourist stop: you haven't really "done" Beijing unless you have visited the Forbidden City, walked around Tiananmen Square, and eaten at the "Golden Arches." Many visitors from the countryside take Big Mac boxes, Coke cups, and napkins home with them as proof that they did it right. Yan also discovered that working-class Beijing residents save up to take their kids to McDonald's and hover over them as they munch. (Later the adults eat in a cheaper, Chinese-style restaurant.) Parents told Yan that they wanted

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their children to "connect" with the world outside China. To them, McDonald's was an important stop on the way to Harvard Business School or the MIT labs. Yan has since discovered that local yuppies are beginning to eat Big Macs regularly. In 20 years, he predicts, young people in Beijing (like their counterparts in Hong Kong today) will not even care about the foreign origin of McDonald's, which will be serving ordinary food to people more interested in getting a quick meal than in having a cultural experience. The key to this process of localization is China's changing family system and the emergence of a "singleton" (only-child) subculture. . . .

WHOSE CULTURE IS IT, ANYWAY?

Is McDonald's leading a crusade to create a homogenous, global culture that suits the needs of an advanced capitalist world order? Not really. Today's economic and social realities demand an entirely new approach to global issues that takes consumers' perspectives into account. The explanatory device of "cultural imperialism" is little more than a warmed-over version of the neo-Marxist dependency theories that were popular in the 1960s and 1970s—approaches that do not begin to capture the complexity of today's emerging transnational systems.

The deeper one digs into the personal lives of consumers anywhere, the more complex matters become. People are not the automatons many theorists make them out to be. Hong Kong's discerning consumers have most assuredly not been stripped of their cultural heritage, nor have they become the uncomprehending dupes of transnational corporations.

In places like Hong Kong, it is increasingly difficult to see where the transnational ends and the local begins. Fast food is an excellent case in point: for the children who flock to weekend birthday parties, McDonald's is self-evidently local. Similarly, the Hong Kong elders who use McDonald's as a retreat from the loneliness of urban life could care less about the company's foreign origin. Hong Kong's consumers have made the "Golden Arches" their own.

One might also turn the lens around and take a close look at American society as it enters a new millennium. Chinese food is everywhere, giving McDonald's and KFC a run for their money in such unlikely settings as Moline and Memphis. Mandarin is fast becoming a dominant language in American research laboratories, and Chinese films draw ever more enthusiastic audiences. Last Halloween, every other kid in my Cambridge neighborhood appeared in (Japanese-inspired) Power Ranger costumes, striking poses that owe more to Bruce Lee than to Batman. Whose culture is it, anyway? If you have to ask, you have already missed the boat.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Earlier in this chapter, you were instructed to divide the nine pieces of evidence into three groups, one to correspond to each of the chapter's central questions. Remember that a piece of evidence may fit into more than one group, since it may help you to answer more than one of the central questions.

The first question was how McDonald's gives us insight into the process of cultural globalization. Which pieces of evidence help you answer that question? In what ways is the Norwegian tray liner (Source 1) helpful? What *other poster* does the poster in Source 1 bring to mind? Why did Queen Elizabeth II make a brief stop at a McDonald's restaurant (Source 3)? What did she order from the McDonald's menu? What is the central point of the *London Times* story about the queen?

On another note, how can you explain the enormous popularity of McDonald's in East Asia, and specifically in China (Sources 2, 4, and 9)? From the Background section of this chapter, you already know the demographic, economic, and cultural changes in the United States that contributed to McDonald's growth and success in that nation. Do the sources offer any indication that similar shifts are taking place in East Asia as well? It has been said by some people that in certain places Ronald (or Donald) McDonald is more recognizable than Santa Claus.

To whom does McDonald's market its products? How does McDonald's marketing strategy in Hong Kong and China (Sources 4 and 9) explain globalization? What do these sources *omit* (see Source 7)? What do all of these sources tell us about the recent history of the People's Republic of China?

As to the benefits and liabilities of the globalization of popular culture, again one might concentrate on China (Sources 2, 7, and 9). In China, has globalization had any benefits at all? What things have *not* changed? Many French farmers, led by Jose Bové, saw only the liabilities of the "McDonaldization" of French culture. What are those liabilities (Source 6)? According to McDonald's, what were the benefits to French farmers (Source 6, but, by inference, see also Source 1)? Why did the Bermuda government bar McDonald's (Source 5)? According to Thomas Friedman (Source 8), do the benefits of cultural globalization outweigh the liabilities, or vice versa? Where does Thomas Watson (Source 9) stand on that question?

The story on Bermuda (Source 5) reported that Bermuda had "struck a blow against American cultural imperialism." Where do your other sources (especially Sources 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9) stand on that issue? To what extent should people preserve their own culture and traditions by keeping out other cultural influences? Are cultures that permit the intrusion of other cultural influences ultimately doomed? What comparisons or accommodations are possible (see especially Source 9)?

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EPILOGUE

Although other nations besides the United States have become more aggressive in exporting aspects of their own popular culture (especially Japan, with Pokémon, Godzilla, etc., and Great Britain), in many ways the globalization of popular culture is really the globalization of American popular culture. So powerful and ubiquitous had that trend become that in 1998, international bankers used the price of a Big Mac in Moscow (15.50 rubles) as a way to establish the exchange rate for Russian currency.²¹

In Budapest, Hungary, the "proper fashion statement" for young people at Budapest discos is a pair of Levi's blue jeans and an "American" T-shirt.²² In Beijing in August 2000, Marvel Comics' Stan Lee (who had a hand in creating Spider-Man, the Incredible Hulk, and the X-Men) was the honored guest at a banquet of leading Japanese and Chinese cartoonists and animators ("... if anything can bring countries together, it's cartoons"—Lee).²³ In Germany, a private firm is marketing what it calls "The American Dream," assistance (for a fee) in getting a United States green card (see photo).

The US government is now distributing
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Never again problems with visa, job search, or a longer U.S. stay: The Green Card gives you the right to reside in the U.S. and to work there. Without restrictions and without reference to what your profession is!

21. *London Times*, September 1, 1998.

22. *Fortune*, December 31, 1990.

23. *New York Times*, August 31, 2000.

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THE AMERICAN DREAM

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(Courtesy of The American Dream)

Simultaneously, many nations have been able to incorporate aspects of the new global culture without having their own native cultures or traditions suffer. According to Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper, in Turkey "there is evidence that the presence of establishments like McDonald's may actually be contributing to a revival of old-fashioned foods [such as kebabs, fried aubergine, cheese borek, baklava, and simit] which have been in danger of disappearing."²⁴ As Thomas Watson pointed out in Source 9, "People are not the automatons many theorists make them out to be." Is cultural homogenization a blessing? A curse? Both? Neither? And in the United States, too, popular culture is changing, in part influenced by immigrants from Asia and Latin America who bring their languages, music, and traditions *with them*.

And just as many people increas-

ingly embrace parts of American popular culture through films, television, music, e-mail, the Internet, etc., so also Americans enthusiastically seek—and find—things from elsewhere to enrich their own culture. Indeed, some observers warn that what may come to pass will *not* be the Americanization of global culture, but rather a globalized culture of the "haves," often set against the diverse traditional cultures of the "have nots"—what Thomas Friedman characterized as the "Lexus and the olive tree."²⁵

As global economics, pan-national movements, international migration, world demography, and the globalization of popular culture increasingly affect all of our lives, we will need a world understanding and a global perspective of these historical trends and events. Toward that understanding, we hope this volume has made a contribution.

24. Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper, eds., *Culinary Cultures of the Middle East* (London: University of London Press, 1994), pp. 73, 75.

25. Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, updated and expanded ed. (New York: Anchor Books, 2000).