

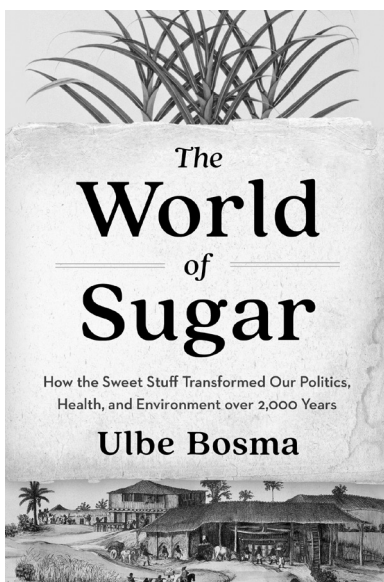
Ulbe Bosma, *The World of Sugar: How the Sweet Stuff Transformed Our Politics, Health, and Environment over 2000 Years*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2023: 464 pp., hardback, \$35 (USA), £30.95 (UK).

Ulbe Bosma's *The World of Sugar* is wide-ranging both in time and geography. It is an attempt, born out of a meeting of sugar scholars in Amsterdam over twenty years ago, to rebalance the more widely-known 'Atlantic-centric' history of sugar. The book is divided into fourteen chapters, and also includes both a chronological timeline as well as a useful 'Dramatis Personae' of important persons appearing therein.

Bosma examines the history and effects of sugar production from early beginnings in Asia to the modern era, from its early status as a luxury affordable to only the wealthy, through to the development and industrialisation of the manufacturing process in order to satisfy an ever increasing demand. The findings are neither pretty nor healthy and the devastation that the insatiable demand for sugar has wreaked on both communities and countries is shocking.

Currently Professor of International Comparative Social History at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Bosma's accomplishments as an academic researcher is evident in the meticulousness of his investigations. The notes and references themselves number over a thousand and run to almost a hundred pages.

With only a passing general understanding of the history of



sugar production, I found the sections on the very early history of sugar in India and China particularly fascinating. Equally intriguing to discover was the sugar crisis of 1884, that the origins and development of the British beet sugar industry were as a result of a Napoleonic blockade, as well as the sugar industry's response to the use and impact of modern High Fructose Corn Syrup and artificial sweeteners.

Each chapter has a broad subject matter and they are arranged in an approximately chronological order. However, in order to put more modern events in context, the narrative necessitates repeated revisits to the nineteenth century. This creates a sense of churning of content, which only serves to highlight the complexity of the modern sugar world. In the twentieth century, sugar inveigled its way into so many foodstuffs and areas of life that we currently live in a world where, somehow, the British sugar industry has received billions from the European Commission for development and the global sugar industry has now been an accredited stakeholder with the World Health Organisation for almost thirty years.

Bosma's *The World of Sugar* strives to lay bare the terrible impact sugar has had on the world and is a sobering but important contribution to revealing the insidious grip sugar and the sugar industry holds over us all.

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