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Main content

Article Preview :

The Living Fields: Our Agricultural Heritage. R. HARLAN. Cambridge University Press, 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211. 1998. Paperback, 271 pp., \$19.95. ISBN 0-521-64992-7.

This book is a winner! Read it, especially those of you beginning a career or already engaged in plant improvement. Make it a required text in your introductory plant breeding courses. Add it to your personal collection. What you and your students will get is a summary of the late Professor Harlan's life work along with a considerable number of his opinions, reflections, and personal reminiscences. The book, originally published in hardcover (\$52.95. ISBN 0-521-40112-7) in 1995, describes what is known about the origins of agriculture and the domestication of the crop plants that sustain us. This topic was Harlan's passion and that passion makes his book as near a "page turner" as a scholarly text can get.

The Living Fields begins with a brief summary of the theories that have been advanced to explain why humans ceased being hunters and gatherers and became nearly exclusively agriculturists. Harlan presents each theory and summarizes strengths and weaknesses. Chapter 2 deals with the processes, places, and anatomical and genetic outcomes of domestication for seed crops, weedy races, vegetatively propagated plants, and, briefly (three pages), animals. This chapter also includes two seemingly unrelated, but interesting sections. The first is Harlan's personal reminiscences of Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov who was a friend and colleague of Harlan's father and who apparently had a significant impact on Harlan's development as a young man. The second...

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services is subject to these policies and terms. Hide this. Results from Google Books. Choice, "The Living Fields...is always interesting, flows well, and is fun to read. The bibliography is an excellent source for classic older literature." A. H. Bunting, Journal of Agricultural Science, 'The book is well illustrated and easy to read. It must have great appeal to the student of agriculture, the geographer and for farmers with a deep interest in the origins of his or her profession.' Agriculture and Equipment International, '... for all who wish to understand more fully the relations between humans and the plants, animals and environments on which they depend for life and survival, it will be a welcome and attractive introduction.'A. H. Bunting, Journal of Agricultural Science, ' an extensive survey of the world&ap