

# Book Reviews

## *Liquid Bread: Beer and Brewing in Cross-cultural Perspective*

Wulf Schiefenhövel and Helen Macbeth. (eds),  
New York: Berghahn (The Anthropology of  
Food and Nutrition Volume 7) 2011, ISBN:  
978-1-78238-033-7, 264pp., Hb £75.00,  
U.S.\$120.00, Pb £16.50, U.S.\$26.00.

Reviewed by Russell Edwards

As implied by its title, *Liquid Bread: Beer and Brewing in Cross-cultural Perspective*, this edited volume provides a broad overview of both the production and consumption of beer in numerous parts of the world. Papers from a similarly titled multidisciplinary conference held in Bavaria and part of the International Commission on the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition (ICAF) comprise the contents, which not only span large swaths of the globe but also contain numerous approaches to interpreting the meaning of beer across time and place. The first chapter, an introduction by the editors, provides an overview of the following collection and does an admirable job of pulling somewhat diffuse commentaries into dialogue with one another, a necessity due to the relative lack of cross-referencing between individual chapters.

The breadth of the volume is both a strength and weakness. Beginning with examinations of motivations for alcohol consumption and its effects in humans (Kaiser, Medicus and Brüne) and all other animals (McGrew), the subsequent chapters range from archaeological interpretations of brewing efforts (Zarnkow, Otto and Einwag) to current multinational corporations' efforts to make their beer marketable to as many consumers as possible (Cantarero and Stacconi). Between are other case studies that deal with various elements related primarily to either brewing, discussing, marketing or imbibing beer in a specific part of the world. The result is a seemingly scattershot approach to a holistic understanding of beer, as discussion of one topic might not occur in more than one cultural setting, thus resulting in more cross-cultural description than analysis. However, the individual

chapters can serve as starting points for exploring the role of beer in one of the regions discussed.

The diversity of fields represented by the contributors ensures accessibility to a wider cross-section of academics, but anthropologists may find interest in some of the commonalities across chapters that can be teased out of the collection. Taboos related to production, rituals associated with consumption, the role of gender, and the creation and promotion of heritage are all discussed in at least some capacity in one or more chapters, but the oscillating foci of the chapters makes it difficult to identify discernable patterns. It is this broad overview with short chapters that makes the wider public more likely to engage with the volume, an audience the editors also suggest would be receptive to the work in the introduction.

Examples of applied research are not present for those parties interested in such efforts. However, the many roles policy can play, from quality control to availability, is mentioned in passing in at least a handful of chapters, as are the shaping forces associated with imperialism and increasing globalisation. Also noticeably absent is the entire Western Hemisphere, save for one of the only chapters that explicitly examines the same topic, drinking in fraternities, across two nations (Germany and the United States) (Dammann).

Taken in its entirety, the volume can serve as a stand-alone text for nearly anyone searching for an introduction to beer and brewing. However, readers would be best served to consult other works dedicated to more detailed analyses corresponding to their particular topics of interest. They might not need search long, as the editors point to another volume in the series (de Garine and de Garine 2001) that addresses 'the extensive range of social perspectives on why societies maintain beer drinking cultures', something they admit is necessarily treated with brevity in this work (6).

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## References

De Garine, I. and V. de Garine (eds.) (2001), *Drinking: Anthropological Approaches* (New York: Berghahn).

### ***Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru***

Kimberly Theidon, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, ISBN: 978-0-8122-4450-2, 461pp. Hb \$75.00, £49.00.

Reviewed by Melina Taylor

*Intimate Enemies* culminates over twenty years of ethnographic fieldwork in the southern highlands of the Ayacucho state in Peru. In her extensive ethnography, Theidon recounts excerpts of the Shining Path's rise to power and the memories of those who survived the internal armed conflict that took place from 1980 to 1992. The title invokes a double entendre; intimate describes the close connections of internal conflict survivors and their aggressors, and gives the reader a look into the personal connections that the ethnographer has with her informants. This reminds us how powerful ethnography can be when studying sensitive issues such as murder, rape, despair, loss, reconciliation and hope.

Through detailed ethnographic interviews over twelve chapters, the reader explores how individuals organise the timeline of violent events, how women coped with rape and harassment, the intense gender discrimination women endured at the national government level down to the pueblo level as women were repeatedly overlooked and blamed for problems and events out of their control, and how individuals remember and remember to forget events in order to reconstruct (or pretend to reconstruct) a community again.

A striking and unexpected addition to the book is the extensive interview account of former Shining

Path members. While it is generally easier to find victims of conflict and talk to them about their experience, it is harder to find the aggressors and get them to open up about the atrocities they have committed. Theidon illuminates past behaviour while showing the complexity that former participants in the conflict struggle with internally.

While the content is compelling in its own right, novice readers of Peru and Shining Path may have trouble following the non-linear account of events, as the book is not a chronology of the conflict, but rather a recount of Theidon's experiences as they came to her. This is a more authentic interpretation, but may disorient readers who are new to ethnographic writings, especially undergraduates. New readers to the subject should consult an overview of Peru and Shining Path history before embarking on this text – it is not a cultural overview, but rather a specific analysis of resulting events. The intense subject matter may leave readers feeling emotionally drained and disheartened, as the book covers 400 pages of turmoil and strife, but as an informational text, it dramatically increases the field of internal conflict research and provides evidence to how effective or ineffective truth and reconciliation commissions are.

This book would be a great resource for anthropologists studying the effects of internal conflicts and approaches to reconciliation that governments and individuals undertake to try and regain a sense of understanding or normality in their lives. The text would also be beneficial as a teaching tool, as individual chapters can be read to introduce students to concepts such as: rape as a weapon in warfare (Chapter 5), reconstructing a community after intense violence and aggression (Chapter 8), and the act of memory – remembering and remembering to forget (Chapter 9). This book is an excellent read for academics, graduate students and professionals in the fields of human rights law or nonprofit/NGO organisation and outreach strategies, and those interested or studying Latin American anthropology or human rights anthropology.

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