

Alcohol and Culture

by David G. Mandelbaum

THERE ARE A GREAT MANY substances that men have learned to ingest in order to get special bodily sensations.¹ Of them all, alcohol is culturally the most important by far. It was anciently the most widespread in use, the most widely valued as a ritual and societal artifact, the most deeply embedded in diverse cultures. Tribal peoples of all the major parts of the world (save Oceania and most of North America) knew alcoholic drink; it was of considerable interest in the principal civilizations, in most of them from their early beginnings onward. In some languages, as in English, the very term "drink" takes on the connotation of drinking alcoholic liquids.

Where alcohol is known, patterns for its use and for abstinence are prescribed, usually in fine detail. There have been very few, if any, societies whose people knew the use of alcohol and yet paid little attention to it. Alcohol may be tabooed; it is not ignored.

In many societies, drinking behavior is considered important for the whole social order, and so drinking is defined and limited in accordance with fundamental motifs of the culture. Hence it is useful to ask what the form and meanings of drink in a particular group tell us about their entire culture and society. In a complex modern society, made up of many subgroups, the drinking patterns of each subgroup or class may reflect its special characteristics as well as the cultural frame of the whole society.

The same kind of question can be asked about the drinking patterns of an individual. Given the cultural

definitions for drinking in his society, what does his characteristic drinking behavior tell us about his personality? Within most cultural prescriptions there is leeway for individual choice and manipulation. But before we can learn much about the configuration of his personality from a person's drinking activities, we must understand what choices about drinking are possible in his culture. These encompassing cultural factors are not often made clear in studies of drinking behavior and figure little in the literature on drinking pathology.

CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN THE USE OF ALCOHOL

Cultural practices in drinking range from avid immersion to total rejection. Anthropologists know this well, but those who study the social problems of use of alcohol do not always take this fact into account. Even a brief mention of the varied social functions of alcohol and the different cultural expressions of these functions points up the central importance of viewing the act of drinking as part of a larger cultural configuration. Alcohol is a cultural artifact; the form and meanings of drinking alcoholic beverages are culturally defined, as are the uses of any other major artifact. The form is usually quite explicitly stipulated, including the kind of drink that can be used, the amount and rate of intake, the time and place of drinking, the accompanying ritual, the sex and age of the drinker, the roles involved in drinking, and the role behavior proper to drinking. The meanings of drinking, its relation to other aspects of the culture and society, are usually more implicit. Thus drinking in a particular society may be either a sacred or a profane act, depending on the context, and the people may not be aware of the basic principles and meanings that are actually involved. These may become apparent only after studies have been made of the contexts of drinking and the behavior of drinkers.

At the extremes of the range of cultural practice the meanings are relatively clear. For example, among the Kofyar of northern Nigeria, "people make, drink, talk, and think about beer." In the religious sphere, "the Kofyar certainly believe that man's way to god is with beer in hand" (Netting 1963:1-5).

In contrast with those who consider alcohol to be essential and blessed are the people who regard it as

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destructive and dispensable. The Hopi and other Pueblo Indian tribes of the American Southwest felt that drinking threatened their way of life. They abhorred the use of alcohol so greatly that they successfully banned it from their settlements for many years (Parsons 1939:22-23; Benedict 1959).

The range of religious usage is great. Among the Aztecs, for example, worshipers at every major religious occasion had to get dead drunk, else the gods would be displeased (Thompson 1940:68). In sharp contrast are those Protestant denominations which hold that alcohol is so repugnant spiritually that it is not allowed even symbolically in the communion rite (Cherrington 1924:2:669-670). Yet another contrast is that provided in India, where a villager may pour an alcoholic libation in the worship of one type of deity (usually of the locality), while to do so at a temple of one of the deities of the classic pantheon would desecrate the place and disgrace the worshiper.

Cultural expectations regulate the emotional consequences of drink. Drinking in one society may regularly release demonstrations of affection, as is common among Japanese men; in another it may set off aggressive hostility, as frequently occurs among Papago Indians (Joseph 1949:76-77). Among Japanese, drinking is part of the fine ambience of pleasant physical sensation—when done at the proper time and place—and so is quite devoid of guilt or ambivalence. Conversely, there are other people among whom drinking is often accompanied by a flow of guilt feeling.

The act of drinking can serve as a symbolic punctuation mark differentiating one social context from another (cf. Honigmann 1963). The cocktail prepared by the suburban housewife for her commuting husband when he returns in the evening helps separate the city and its work from the home and its relaxation. In more formal ritual, but with similar distinguishing intent, an orthodox Jew recites the Havdola blessing over wine and drinks the wine at the end of the Sabbath to mark the division between the sacred day and the rest of the week. Drinking may be quite purely symbolic, as it is in the Havdola rite and in the sacrament of communion, or it may be substantive as well as symbolic, as in the heavy drinking at Aztec religious ceremonies.

Among other symbolic uses of drinking are its diacritical functions, as when one group or class within a larger society follows drinking patterns that serve as a badge marking them off from others. Such a badge may be deliberately adopted by the members of the group or may be ascribed to them by others, but when a sectarian group forbids drinking to its devotees, the prohibition is often deliberately taken as a counterbadge to separate the elect from the forlorn.

The physiological effects attributed to alcohol vary just as greatly among different peoples. Some are ready to feel high effect from a modicum of drink. Thus it has seemed to more than one Westerner that a Japanese man feels the convivial glow almost before the first sip of sake can reach the stomach. Among Aleut Indians, drinking leads more to surly drunkenness than to mellow conviviality, but among them also a drinker becomes intoxicated after he has taken relatively small amounts of a fairly mild beverage

(Berreman 1956:507). In other societies a man must absorb a large amount of alcohol before he shows that the drink has affected him. So is it also with hangovers and addiction; both are heavily influenced by cultural interpretations. A people who drink as heavily and as frequently as any group yet known, the Camba of eastern Bolivia, attribute no ill effects to their drinking other than the irritation caused to the mouth and throat by their liquor, an undiluted distillate of sugar cane that contains 89% ethyl alcohol.

Most Camba men participate in recurrent drinking bouts, which may last for a whole weekend. A drinker may pass out several times in the course of a bout and, upon reviving, drink himself quickly into a stupor again. Dwight Heath, the anthropologist who has studied Camba drinking, observes (1962:31): "Hangovers and hallucinations are unknown among these people, as is addiction to alcohol." In general, addiction to alcohol seems to be quite rare outside certain societies of Western civilization. Among most peoples whose men are expected to drink heavily and frequently, a man does not do any solitary drinking nor does he have withdrawal symptoms if he cannot get alcohol. He may not like to do without it, but he does not feel gripped by an iron compulsion to get a drink in order to be able to keep alive.²

The chemical and physiological properties of alcohol obviously provide a necessary base for drinking behavior; the same kinds of behavior are not socially derived from other widely used drugs, such as coffee, tea, or tobacco. But the behavioral consequences of drinking alcohol depend as much on a people's idea of what alcohol does to a person as they do on the physiological processes that take place (cf. Washburne 1961:267). When a man lifts a cup, it is not only the kind of drink that is in it, the amount he is likely to take, and the circumstances under which he will do the drinking that are specified in advance for him, but also whether the contents of the cup will cheer or stupefy, whether they will induce affection or aggression, guilt or unalloyed pleasure. These and many other cultural definitions attach to the drink even before it touches the lips.

SIMILARITIES ACROSS CULTURES

Cultural variations in drinking practices are well documented, but there has been little notice of similarities in the use of alcohol across cultures. One such regularity is that drinking is usually considered more suitable for men than for women. It is commonly a social rather than a solitary activity but is done much more in the society of age mates and peers than with elders or in the family circle.³ Drinking together generally symbolizes durable social solidarity—or at least amity—among those who "share a drink" (cf. Washburne 1961:270).

Drinking is more often considered appropriate for those who grapple with the external environment than for those whose task it is to carry on and maintain a society's internal activities. This distinction was anciently symbolized in India by the difference be-

² There is, however, a full description of the behavior of an addict in one of the ancient Aztec codices. It is given in a discussion of the astrological sign "under Which the Drunkards were Born" (Dibble and Anderson 1957:11-17).

tween the god Indra, the scourge of enemies, the thunderer, the roisterer, the heavy drinker, and Varuna, the sober guardian of order and morality (Basham 1954:233-238). In ancient Greece, the worship of Dionysius could transport the worshiper into an extraordinary, even frenzied, state; that of Apollo encouraged only social morality. The Greeks successfully combined the two by assigning certain functions and occasions to the one deity and a different jurisdiction and festivals to the other. Drinking was a prominent feature of the Dionysian rites but not at Apollonian ceremonies (Dodds 1956:69; Guthrie 1950: 146-149).

In general, warriors and shamans are more likely to use alcohol with cultural approval than are judges and priests. A priest is generally the conservator of tradition, the guide and exemplar for his fellows in precise replication of ritual in ways that please the gods. Drinking rarely goes with the priestly performance of ritual, except in symbolic usage, as in the Mass. But a shaman has personal relations with the supernatural, must directly encounter potent forces beyond ordinary society. Drinking is not often considered as interfering with this function.

When the fate of many hinges on the action of a single person, that person is usually not permitted to drink before performing the critical activity. The high priests of the Old Testament, beginning with Aaron, were particularly forbidden to drink "wine nor strong drink" when discharging their priestly duties in the Sanctuary (Leviticus 10:9). American pilots today are forbidden to drink for a number of hours before flying as well as during the flight. (French pilots have wine with their in-flight meals, but, as we have noted, that kind of alcohol is defined as food by the French.)

Yet another ban that appears in various cultures is imposed when it is considered dangerous to heighten the emotions of large numbers of people who gather at the same occasion. To give but one eloquent example, there is an inscription dating from about the year 5 B.C. near the stadium at Delphi which forbids the carrying of wine into the stadium on pain of a 5-drachma fine. The classical scholar who comments on this also notes that similar signs are to be seen now at the football stadia of Harvard and Southern Methodist Universities (McKinlay 1951).

Drinking patterns give one set of answers to fundamental questions that must be answered in every culture. Drinking is inescapably relevant to attitudes toward bodily sensations. It is made relevant by most peoples to relations between man and woman, to the proper interchange between man and man, and to the nexus between man and god.

CHANGE AND STABILITY IN DRINKING PRACTICES AMONG CIVILIZATIONS

As a whole culture changes, so do the drinking mores of the people change. We can best see evidences of change and also of long-term stability in drinking

³ In France and even more so in Italy, wine is assimilated into the definition of food and the delight that good food brings. Hence wine is drunk by all around the family dinner table. But other kinds of drink, cognac for example, are classified in a different way and drunk in non-family contexts (cf. Lolli 1958; Stoetzel 1958).

practices over the long careers of the ancient civilizations.

In India, for example, changes in alcohol use reflected major changes in social structure. Drinking was done by all men in an early, egalitarian period. Then, as the motif of hierarchy pervaded and stratified Indian society, drinking was accommodated to this social theme. Liquor was prohibited for certain castes and permitted for others, just as other social functions were specialized according to caste. Within very recent years there has been a shift to a more egalitarian though alcoholically less permissive social code. Under the law of several state governments of the Republic of India, drinking is prohibited to all in the state.

The earliest Indian literary sources, the Vedic hymns, make frequent mention of intoxicating liquors. One ritual drink was Soma, used only in sacrifices, and described as having inebriating effects, although it may not have been alcoholic, since it was pressed from the juice of a plant, mixed with milk, and drunk on the same day. Sura was certainly alcoholic. It could be prepared from molasses, or rice, or possibly honey, and certain kinds were made only for use in sacrificial ritual. But there was a good deal of drinking outside the ritual occasions, and such drinking is condemned in the Vedic literature as leading to quarrels and misleading men from the path of virtue (Prakash 1961:22-26; Renou 1954:169).

Later there came a change in the social meaning of strong drink in India. It was eliminated from the rituals for the high gods; it became polluting to those who sought to follow the edicts of scripture. The rise of Buddhism may have had some influence on this shift of Hindu religious practice, since early Buddhism discounted mere ritual, including the ritual use of alcohol.

But alcoholic drinks were not prohibited for all society. The code of Manu says only that the Brahmans should totally abstain. Those of other strata of society need not take any disgrace in drinking but also could not attain, for that and other reasons, a high state of religious purity (Jhā 1926: 70-71, 419). Since the time of Manu, drinking has been socially and religiously compartmentalized in India. It is totally excluded from the worship of the high, universalistic gods and from the way of life of the religiously purest people. Many Brahman groups are strictly abstinent, and even among those Brahman communities in which the men may drink liquor occasionally, they must abstain from drink when they prepare to approach the high deities.

The men of the *Kshatriya*, warrior tradition, customarily drink heartily. Since this class provided most of the rulers and executives of the state, there was no more thought of total prohibition under indigenous Indian princes than there was under the later regime of the British. Yet the *Kshatriyas* also acknowledge that the high gods dislike alcohol, and they abstain when they seek to be in a state of ritual purity.⁴

There is another set of deities, local godlings who preside over local illness and misfortunes, whose ritual is carried on mainly by those of the lower castes, though all in village society, high and low alike, may

seek their intervention for personal aid. In the ritual for these deities, liquor is often applied, externally as libation, internally as invigorant. Thus there has long been a rigid separation of alcoholic use in Indian civilization. It was tabooed for those gods and men who were immersed in cosmic concerns. The influence of drink in that sphere was considered disruptive for the whole universe of religion and society. But in the more parochial domain, for local blessings, for village solidarity, for personal benefits, strong drink was liberally used.

Gandhi was strongly in the ascetic tradition, and, when the political party that he led took over the government of the country, the ascetic mode was respected. Many of the political leaders held the belief that an independent India had to be a pure India, and one way to advance national purity was by legal prohibition. This seemed to be quite in the sacred tradition, but in fact it was in one respect a radical departure from it. The Sanskrit tradition did not rule out alcohol for all in society but only for the most spiritually elevated. Yet the recent statutes prohibit alcoholic drink absolutely, for all who are within the territorial bounds of the state.

A modern example of the ancient specialization in drinking is given in Carstairs' study of a town of Rajasthan in western India. Alcoholic drink is still readily available there, but the Brahmans of the place do very little drinking. A good many of them openly drink an infusion of hashish (*cannabis indica*) which gives them a feeling of detachment quite compatible with the religious meditation enjoined in their scriptures. But the Rajputs of the town, as inheritors of martial tradition, spurn hashish and drink an alcoholic brew called daru. One Rajput explained that hashish "makes you quite useless, unable to do anything. Daru isn't like that; you may be drunk but you can still carry on" (Carstairs 1957:119). Those of military heritage choose alcohol because it helps maintain their traditional posture; those of the priestly heritage prefer hashish because it helps them to pursue their eternal verities. The legal arm of the state may, in time, influence such internal controls; it does not alter them quickly and directly. In India, as elsewhere, drinking practices are tied into fundamental themes of a people's life. While these practices change as the conditions of that life change, legislative acts are only one part, and not always a critical part, of the total change.

In Mesopotamia wine was known at Jemdet Nasr, dating from some time before 3000 B.C. As Sumerian civilization became established around the temple, beer became an integral part of temple ritual and economy. It was the popular drink, indeed a staple of diet, throughout two millennia of the Sumerian-Akkadian tradition. Some 40% of all cereals grown, one estimate has it, went into brewing at one period (Forbes 1954: 279). Not only was beer offered as part of the temple service, it was also drunk copiously in beer shops, and there the drinking was not necessarily seen as being morally benign.

⁴ Scotch whiskey is put in a special category. It is so costly that its main use is as a prestige symbol for the wealthiest, and so it is not nearly "as defiling as is country-made liquor" (Srinivas 1955:21).

The code of Hammurabi (who came to power about 1720 B.C.) laid down strict regulations for tavern-keepers and tavern servants, who were mainly women. Taverns and inns are marks of civilization; they provide anonymous travelers and customers with food, drink, and shelter, not because of kinship or personal obligations, as is usually the case in tribal societies, but because the customer can pay. Taverns help maintain a complex society, and Hammurabi was concerned that they be operated properly. His code specified the price, the quality, even the credit terms for beer.

But, because taverns are places where anonymous people can gather, they could be dangerous to the regime. One danger was from conspirators and outlaws. A tavern-keeper who tolerated such characters on her premises could be put to death. Even more stringent were the liquor laws for women who were dedicated to the gods. Such a woman could not keep a beer shop or frequent one. If she was convicted of doing so, she was burned to death, the direst form of capital punishment. It was imposed only for this beer crime and for mother-son incest (Lutz 1922:127-130). Prostitutes also gathered at the beerhouses; since alcoholic euphoria could be had there for money, so also sexual pleasure. Though alcoholic drink in Sumer was used in worship and served as a means of consolidating society, in certain contexts its use was potentially antisocial and immoral, so the state tried to eliminate the disruptive side effects of alcohol.

In Egyptian civilization wine and beer were also staples of diet and ritual. One inscription states that a good mother provides her schoolboy son with three loaves of bread and two jars of beer every day (Lucas 1948:19, 24; Lutz 1922:107). Heavy drinking, to the point of insensibility or illness, is frequently depicted in sketches and descriptions of banquet scenes. Egyptian taverns, like those in Mesopotamia, were supposed to be avoided by the social elite.

The ancient Egyptian writings include a number of warnings against drunkenness, among them a touching letter, perhaps from the equivalent of a student's copybook, written by a teacher to his student. The teacher writes that he hears that his former student is forsaking his studies and is wandering from tavern to tavern. He smells of beer so much that men are frightened away from him, he is like a broken oar, which cannot steer a steady course; he is like a temple without a god, like a home without bread. The teacher ends by hoping that the student will understand that wine is an abomination and that he will abjure drink (Lutz 1922:105). In ancient Egypt as in Sumer, alcohol was an essential element for human welfare when used in one context, a dangerously disruptive force in another. But there seems to have been little attempt by Egyptian state officials to regulate drinking in the manner of the Hammurabi code.

Both the moral and the immoral uses of alcohol are set forth in the Old Testament. Wine is specified for use as libation in the temple service (e.g., Numbers 15:5-10, 28:7-8) but drunkenness is depicted as leading to shame and abomination, as in the accounts of Noah and Lot. Several passages in the Book of Proverbs warn against wine's dangers, and others mention its

benefactions; one passage refers to both (31:4-7). According to one biblical scholar, the antagonistic view of alcohol is from an earlier, simpler stage of Hebrew history and the more tolerant view from a later period (Jastrow 1913).

In the New Testament wine is mentioned as a festive drink (John 2:3-10), as a medicament (Luke 10:34; I Timothy 5:23), and as supreme symbol (Matthew 26:27-29; Mark 14:23-25; Luke 22:17-18). But wine must be drunk in moderation. There are several disapproving references to excessive drinking (I Timothy 3:8; Titus 2:3; Ephesians 5:18).⁶ There is considerable continuity in attitudes toward drinking in Old and New Testaments, though the symbolic use of wine becomes greatly elevated in Christianity.

Continuities in style of drinking suggest clues to cultural stabilities. There is another kind of continuity that is of interest; it is the similarity in drinking practice over a large culture area, among many separate societies.

CULTURE AREAS IN DRINKING PATTERNS

The functions of beer-drinking that we have noted among the Kofyar of Nigeria in West Africa are important also among the Tiriki of Kenya in East Africa (Sangree 1962). Beer is a constant medium of social interchange for men, beer-drinking is a pre-occupying activity that few men reject. Drinking beer together induces physical and social mellowness in men. Very little aggressive behavior is ever shown as a result of drinking, and that little is promptly squelched. Pathological addiction rarely, if ever, occurs. The supernaturals are as fond and as interested in beer as are mortals, hence worshippers regularly offer beer for the spirits.

This is quite different from the style of drinking in many Central and South American societies; that drinking pattern allows or requires men to drink steadily into a state of stupefaction. Drinking is social, often done when there is a religious celebration, but not so much poured out for the supernaturals as poured into the celebrants, and always done at fiestas. Though drinking is frequent and heavy, no problem of addiction arises. This pattern has been remarkably consistent through time and place. It was maintained by the peoples of the ancient indigenous civilizations, the Maya, Aztec, and Inca. It is followed in contemporary societies, both Indian and Mestizo, from Mexico to Chile, in highlands and lowlands. (See Cooper 1948; Morley 1956:236; Thompson 1940:68. On modern communities see Simmons 1962; Stein 1961; Mangin 1957; Bunzel 1940; Metzger 1963; Viguera and Palerm 1954.)

⁶ The 1961 translation of the New Testament, the New English Bible (NEB), gives wordings different from those in the King James Version (KJV) in two references to wine. The changes may reflect differing views of alcohol held by the different translators. I Timothy 5:23

KJV: Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.

NEB: Stop drinking nothing but water; take a little wine for your digestions, for your frequent infirmities.

Titus 2:3

KJV: The aged women likewise, that they be ... not given too much wine. ...

NEB: The older women, similarly, should be ... not slaves to strong drink. ...

This style of drinking is widespread but is not followed everywhere in Central and South America, as is indicated in the study by Sayres (1956) on three Colombian villages and by Viguera and Palerm on Tajin, a Totonac Mexican village. While the modern distribution of this pattern has yet to be traced in detail, the data suggest certain avenues of analysis.

CULTURE AND PERSONALITY ANALYSIS OF A DRINKING PATTERN

To take the extreme case of the Camba of eastern Bolivia, why does a normal Camba man regularly drink himself into a stupor, and on reviving promptly want to drink himself right back into alcoholic oblivion? There are some 80,000 Camba in all, living in a remote but fertile geographic enclave. They are mostly Mestizo peasants, who have little contact either with the neighboring Indian tribes or with the centers of Bolivian national life. Camba men are among the heaviest drinkers on record for normal members of a functioning society.

Drunkenness for them is not an unfortunate by-product; it is the explicitly sought goal of drinking (Heath 1962:30-31). Alcohol is supposed to have some medicinal value as an internal parasiticide, but no other beneficent properties are attributed to it. The Camba could easily make wines or beers of lower alcoholic content, as do their Indian neighbors, or use other means to prolong a convivial state while drinking. But what they choose is a highly potent drink with very quick effect, and that effect is gross inebriation.

What explanation can we find for this behavior? It seems to require some further exploration. Camba men gulp down quantities of a drink that they dislike in order to attain a state in which they feel nothing. Certain conditions help maintain the pattern, though they do not explain it. Alcohol is cheap and easy to get; it is the main product and export of the region. The region is naturally bountiful, so the simple economy can be maintained even though the drinking absorbs much time and energy.

Heath offers a tentative interpretation based on the nature of Camba social relations. These are fragmented, tenuous, and atomistic. Marriage bonds are brittle, families notably unstable, and kinship ties meager. People shift residence a good deal, there is little cooperative enterprise, and enduring friendships are rare. Heath notes that all people in the world value association with others and the Camba choose to get such association in drinking parties rather than in other ways (pp. 32-33).

This seems true enough, but there arises the questions why they choose to have such brief conviviality associations outside the aura of alcohol. Perhaps a single answer can be postulated for both questions, based on what seems to be a deep-seated personality based on what seems to be a deep-seated personality characteristic. The Camba individual seems to be self-isolated, quite like individuals of another South American group about whom we have more personality data (Simmons 1959, 1962).

The men of Lunahuaná, a Peruvian town in the

Andean foothills, also drink frequently, often into drunken oblivion. While their drinking practices differ in detail from those of the Camba, the grand pattern is quite the same. Simmons notes that the adult male Lunahuaneño may be characterized, in part, as timid, evasive, shy, indirect, at a loss for words, uncertain of his behavior when in the company of others, inordinately concerned with "correct" behavior, always preoccupied with what others may think of him, and always timorous lest there be unfavorable criticism. He sees other people as potentially dangerous and is characteristically suspicious and distrustful even of people he knows well.

These attitudes are instilled at an early age. Children are taught to keep to themselves, close to home, and are punished if they go into neighbors' houses. They are kept away from any visitors to the home for fear that they will not behave properly (Simmons 1962:41, 44). Each person's social relations are "marked by a profound sense of distrust of others and a lack of confidence in his own ability to control the outcome of a given episode of interaction."

If we assume that the Camba have similar fear and distrust of others, similar doubts about their own abilities to cope with social relations and hence a constant attitude of defensive self-isolation, we can begin to see an answer to the questions raised above. It is that a Camba man wants to have two different kinds of relations with his fellows. He wants to insulate himself from them, and yet at the same time he wants some safe interaction with them. He achieves both through drink. From the normal isolation of the week, he comes to the drinking bout of the weekend. For two or three hours then, in the first stage of the drinking cycle, warmed by the liquor, he has pleasant interchange, is voluble and sociable. But since his fear is great and intrusive, he does not want protracted sociability. He needs the protection of isolation. This he gets through the narcotizing effect of alcohol. He regularly proceeds from normal self-isolation, through a brief episode of non-isolation, promptly into alcoholic isolation.

Two features of Camba social life give evidence in support of this formulation. Both are circumstances under which Camba men do not drink. One is at the annual reunion of the Veterans of the Chaco War, one of the bloodiest conflicts of the twentieth century. There is no drinking then, "the presence of a prevailing atmosphere of genuine camaraderie stemming from a past of significant shared experience, and a common characteristic pride may be sufficient basis to unite the veterans, during their reunion, in a way which allows warm and easy fellowship without dependence on alcohol to overcome initial reserve" (Heath 1962:33-34). The trust born of having endured great hardship and danger together dispels the normal distrust. Hence the participants feel no defensive need to drink, and when they do not have to, they do not drink.

The second instance is that of the relatively few Camba who belong to fundamentalist Protestant sects. Abstinence is part of the denominational doctrine, but there is another reason that helps explain why these few are able to deviate from the normal pattern of drunkenness. Heath observes that these Protestant con-

verts have a stable primary group, which other Camba do not have. Three or four nights a week they meet for religious purposes, call each other "brother," and interact under favorable conditions in which each one is encouraged to take active part (1962:33). The members of one of these Protestant churches form a tightly knit group, consolidated by both their internal interchange and their common opposition to the Catholic majority. So bolstered, a Protestant Camba does not need to preserve social isolation among other Protestants, he does not have the same need for alcoholic isolation, and he is able to uphold the non-drinking doctrine of his denomination.

Normal Camba drunkenness thus seems to arise from a fear of one's fellows and a desire not to interact much with them even when in their presence. This is quite different from the attitudes of Jews or Italians, whose childhood training teaches them to need social interchange and to fear social isolation. Among these people, convivial drinking is condoned, but isolated and isolating drinking is strongly disapproved.

Some interesting implications are suggested by this analysis. One is relevant to studies of the use of alcohol, and adds to the thesis ably presented by some students of the subject, namely, that drinking behavior is best understood as an outcome of fundamental social relations and that the nature of these relations must be known before the meaning of drinking, to the group and to the individual, can be recognized and any alcoholic debilitation efficiently treated (cf. Bacon 1944, 1945; Bales 1946, 1962; Pittman and Snyder 1962 *passim*).

The other opens up new queries in the study of South American cultures. The Camba, as mestizos, have kept only a very few, minor elements of the tribal Indian culture that their ancestors carried on. Yet in their drinking bouts, and presumably in their attitudes toward their fellows, they share fundamental ideas with the surrounding tribesmen. It is as though all the surface, manifest, superficial traits of Indian culture had been abandoned but certain of the basic, structural concepts retained. If this is so of the Camba, what then of all the other Latin-American peoples who follow drinking patterns that are similar in certain main respects? Could the widespread importance of "machismo," the imperative necessity felt by men of these societies to defend and validate their manly qualities, be a general manifestation of fear and suspicion of others which seems to be at the bottom of Camba drinking practices?

STUDIES OF THE USES OF ALCOHOL

Both change and stability in drinking patterns have occurred within the frame of those ways in which alcohol tends to be used everywhere. If we should find a people in which women must drink more than men, in which drinking must be done alone or in the company of one's mentors and dependents, or in which the upholders of scripture (whether theological or political) are expected to drink more heavily than do others, we should know that we have encountered a society basically different from others so far known.

Drinking practices can be studied as expressions of pervasive behavioral themes. A pioneering effort in

this direction is Donald Horton's study (1943) on the functions of alcohol in primitive societies. It was based on a survey of reports of drinking in 56 tribes. Horton concluded that the amount of alcohol used was related to anxieties created by food scarcity, acculturation, or war. That is, peoples who were habitually subject to these stresses drank heavily to reduce the anxieties that were so generated. Horton also noted that heavy drinking can create anxiety, and he said that the amount of drinking allowed in a culture is the outcome of the interplay between the anxiety-reducing and the anxiety-creating functions of alcohol.

This formulation has been found wanting as a valid explanation both in general and in particular cases. Two intensive studies of drinking, by Lemert among Northwest Coast Indians (1954) and by Mangin among Andean Indians (1957), found that drinking among these people was a means of social integration, a way of providing needed primary social relations, rather than a response to anxieties of the kind Horton mentions. And, from the case examples noted above, it is clear that the use of alcohol in a society cannot be explained simply as either a solvent or a source of anxiety. The Camba evidently have none of the major anxieties postulated by Horton. In the Indian village studied by Carstairs (1957), the Rajputs who drink have not been under any greater anxiety than the Brahmans who do not. The description of the beer-centered Kofyar culture gives no hint that Horton's three sources of anxiety have much to do either with heightening their continual thirst for beer or with quenching it. It well may be that where alcohol is culturally defined as a means of relieving anxiety, those groups and individuals who feel themselves under greater stress will drink more, but we must note that drinking is not necessarily so defined nor is tension relief necessarily sought through drink.

A more recent study by Peter B. Field, entitled "A New Cross-cultural Study of Drunkenness," gives a critique of Horton's methods and offers a different explanation. "The general conclusion indicated by the findings to this point is: drunkenness in primitive societies is determined less by the level of fear in a society than by the absence of corporate kin groups with stability, permanence, formal structure, and well-defined functions" (1962:58). The presence of such group organization provides controls over heavy drinking that are not available to peoples who have looser, less well defined kinship organization (p. 72).

To be sure, if a society has strongly integrated kin groups whose members closely control each other's behavior, and if heavy drinking is seen as something to be kept in check, their drinking will be so controlled. But not every people considers heavy drinking as something to be controlled by kinsmen. Drunkenness is the normal goal of drinking in a good many South American societies, some of which have tight unilinear kin organization and some of which do not. Conversely, drunkenness is minimal in many African societies, some of them with strong corporate kin groups and some with quite loose kin organization. In India, there are both Rajput and Brahman groups that have all the social features (save only bride price) postulated by Field (1962:72) as being positively correlated with sobriety, yet some of the Brahman groups

are teetotalers and the Rajputs are generally heavy drinkers.

Edwin Lemert has proposed yet another approach, that drunkenness need not be considered as a symptom of either personal deprivation or defective social organization. "There is an alternative way of viewing drunkenness, which is to say as an institutionalized pattern operating in a relatively autonomous way and only tenuously related to other aspects of the culture" (1956:313). There probably are some societies in which, as Lemert says, drunken behavior is fenced off from other areas of behavior and is considered to be outside the context of morality; perhaps this occurred among the English gentry when there were alcoholic remittance men and drunken squires whose condition was politely ignored. But in most societies drunkenness is not disregarded; it may be deliberately sought, as with the Camba, or deliberately discouraged, as with the Kofyar. In either case it is closely related to the general pattern of drinking, and drinking, as has been noted above, is not culturally ignored. Most certainly it was not ignored among the English upper classes, whatever may have been their social techniques for dealing with drunkards.

One difficulty with these and some other theoretical contributions to the studies of alcohol is that their focus is so greatly on drunkenness and alcoholism. Their scope then becomes too restricted for them to be able to explain well even the phenomena on which they concentrate. Inebriety is not really dissociated from the general pattern and standards of drinking, even where drunkards are overlooked. Hence drunkenness cannot be understood apart from drinking in general, and drinking cannot be understood apart from the characteristic features of social relations of which it is part and which are reflected and expressed in the acts of drinking. At the American cocktail party, for example, participants not infrequently take in much alcohol rapidly. It has been suggested that if more food were eaten with the drinks or if drinks of lower alcoholic content were served, the social benefits of such occasions would be enhanced because the deleterious effects of the high intake of alcohol would be minimized (Lolli 1961). But whether food is taken or liquor of low alcoholic content is offered is in a sense irrelevant. We know that persons can get drunk on beer as well as on distilled spirits if they intend and are expected to do so; they can mix food and alcohol and still get intoxicated. Even more importantly, many cocktail parties seem to be mainly occasions during which one can interact gaily and superficially with a number of others in a way that precludes being relatively serious and intimate with any. If this is indeed the real social purpose of the occasion, rapid alcohol intake helps rather than hinders it.

Alcoholism in the sense of abnormal, addictive, pathologically compulsive intake of alcohol is not the same as drunkenness, which can be quite normal culturally, and should not be confused with the standard drinking practices of any society. In a paper entitled "Alcoholics Do Not Drink," Selden Bacon (1958) shows how very different are the typical practices of

alcoholics in the United States from the usual American ways of drinking. Both drunkenness and alcoholism, and the manifold social, economic, and medical problems involved in them, will be understood better than they now are to the degree that they are seen in relation to each culture's normal ways of drinking

(cf. Ullman 1958). Once we have clear conception of these patterns, we can assess the themes of personality that lead an individual to make certain choices in drinking, and we also can appraise the motifs of culture that become expressed in the kind of drinking that a people customarily does.

Abstract

The extensive literature on drinking practices raises some interesting anthropological problems. This paper is not a review of that literature or of any major part of it, but it is rather intended to bring to notice certain problems which merit further attention.

The use of alcohol is generally a matter of considerable cultural interest. It may be tabooed; it is not ignored. Even a brief account of the range of drinking practices shows that cultural expectations define the ways in which drinking, both normal and abnormal, is done in a society. This is well known to anthropologists but often glossed over in the medical and behavioral studies of the subject.

Cultural variations in drinking have been more often noted by anthropologists than have the cross-cultural similarities. Where drinking is culturally approved, it is typically done more by men than by women. Drinking is more often a social affair than a solitary act, and the social group in which drinking is done is usually composed of age mates and social peers. Where alcohol is used at family meals, it tends to be defined as a food rather than as a stimulant.

Comments

By VERA S. ERLICH*

Zagreb, Yugoslavia. 3 viii 64

I would like to add some of my observations to Mandelbaum's revealing article. My material is from rural Yugoslavia, where I carried out surveys on family relations shortly before the 2nd World War (Erlich 1964). The problem of alcoholism was included in the study, and I received material from 305 villages. From this material, the conclusion can be drawn that cultural traditions determine drinking habits and attitudes toward alcohol only under certain circumstances, namely, if some equilibrium is maintained in the life of the community; if an area is exposed to excessive pressures, the cultural tradition may be overrun suddenly, and abrupt changes in attitudes toward alcohol may occur.

In 7 Yugoslav regions which differed in economic development, religious affiliation, and cultural traditions, alcoholism was very different. In most groups, historical factors entered recently were as important as the traditional cultural definition which had survived changes in conditions in the past. Only on the Adriatic littoral did people behave exactly in accordance with cultural traditions. In this area, Western in-

fluences had prevailed for centuries, a pecuniary economy had entered early, and the standard of living was relatively high (or had been high in the past). National and political struggles had remained in the background. The drinking of alcohol was culturally defined as the legitimate way of enjoying oneself, feasting, offering hospitality to visitors, and ingesting food calories. People in this area drank their excellent, sweet, aromatic wine in great quantities, but there was never much intoxication; drunkenness was unusual.

In other regions, where there was less equilibrium in the life of the community for historical, political, and economic reasons, it seems that the same amount of alcohol might cause heavy intoxication. Desperation seems to be one of the preconditions for excessive intoxication. There is evidence that in the Serbian region 100 years ago, in a period of expanding economy and high political and national hopes, people drank unbelievably great amounts of plum brandy without becoming drunk. In later periods, especially in the difficult era of the '30's, men could not consume nearly as much brandy without becoming seriously and dangerously intoxicated.

In areas under great stress, cultural traditions were overrun. Whole areas

became involved in the vicious circle of poverty, anxiety, drunkenness, increase of poverty and calamities, more drunkenness, and more insoluble problems. In some cases, this occurred in spite of cultural traditions opposed to drinking. For example, the tradition of the Moslem community of Bosnia was definitely opposed to alcohol consumption, in accordance with the prohibition of the Koran. This prohibition was relaxed somewhat a long time ago, when the Koran was interpreted to prohibit wine, but not brandy. More barriers were broken down during World War I, when Bosnian soldiers received brandy to give them courage before battle. Under the Yugoslav state, which was founded in 1918, the drinking of brandy increased, and during the '30's excessive drinking of wine as well as brandy became common. This change in attitude toward alcohol caused poverty, decay of mores and spirit, brutality, and desperation. The reason for this mass escape into alcoholism was concentric socio-economic pressure composed of several factors: 1) the world-wide economic depression; 2) the police regime (*diktatura*); 3) land reform, which dispossessed many landowning Moslems; 4) discrimination against the Moslem population by the state authorities; and 5) the feeling of being declassed which

resulted from memories of the Ottoman Empire, in which Moslems were privileged, and of the Austrian era, in which they were well-liked. The results of these objective and subjective difficulties were nearly catastrophic.

The attitudes toward alcohol in another Bosnian group, the Christian (Orthodox and Catholic) community, show that a little less pressure makes a great difference. In this area, although the same unfavorable conditions as those among the Moslems prevailed, there was less excessive drinking, despite the fact that the cultural tradition here was rather favorable to drinking. Since the pressure was less severe, there being no prejudice against this group and no feeling of being declassed, the results were not as terrible as among the Moslems.

The experience with another group, the Albanian community in Macedonia, shows that many factors are necessary to overpower cultural tradition. The Albanians, also Moslems, lived under difficult conditions similar to those of the Bosnian Moslems, but their drinking habits were completely different. Among the Albanians, the Koran was strictly respected, and neither wine nor brandy was consumed. The explanation for this difference may be in that the Albanian community entered the Yugoslav state in 1918, directly from the collapsing Ottoman Empire. In the Empire, conservative tendencies prevailed, and the Albanians had preserved their tribal and patriarchal social structure unchanged. Bosnia, on the other hand, was severed from the Ottoman Empire 1 or 2 generations earlier, having been occupied by the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1878. In Austria, Western, modernizing tendencies were dominant, and the Islamic tradition gradually weakened; old values came to be seen as relative, not absolute. These 40 years of cultural change made all the difference. When the difficult '30's arrived, the Bosnian Moslems no longer had a value orientation which could resist the concentric pressure. The Albanians, however, still rooted in their ancient ways and their unbroken tradition, showed a formidable resistance to the pressure.

It seems that attitudes toward alcohol, although partly dependent on the cultural definition, are at the same time partly independent of it, following under some conditions autonomous toxic laws. Under severe stress, not even as strong a force for maintaining ancient habits and moral standards as Islam can prevent mass escape into alcoholism, with catastrophic results for health, property, and family relations.

By KHWAJA A. HASAN

Lucknow, India. 18 vii 64

Mandelbaum has done an excellent job in discussing the cultural implications of the use of alcohol. I fully endorse his view that changes in drinking pattern may offer clues to fundamental social changes. In a study of a multi-caste village of predominantly lower rank castes, I found that at least 4 types of alcohol were used by the village folk (Hasan 1961; 1964). These ranged from the use of wine, country-made liquor, to denatured spirit and toddy (obtained as a juice from fan palm). That people have an ambivalent attitude toward alcohol is evident from the high per cent of users (about 72%), but they at the same time do not give the use of alcohol a place of honour in society. For example, if a person wants to become a *Bhagat* (devotee), he must pledge before his *guru* (religious preceptor) that he will not consume liquor, meat, etc., nor will he have sexual intercourse (even with his own wife) after becoming a devotee. However, he is allowed to use natural drugs like *bhang*, *ganja*, and *charas*, all obtained from different parts of *Cannabis sativa* and *Cannabis indica*. It may be noted that members of any caste can become *Bhagats*. The conclusion is that in the traditional Hindu society abstinence from alcohol and meat are symbols of higher individual as well as social status, since these are virtues of Brahmins.

Mandelbaum correctly points out that legislative acts of prohibition are only one part, and not always a critical part, of the total change. This was evident in the increase noted in the use of illicit liquor or even denatured spirit among the lower castes of the village.

What has bothered me are Mandelbaum's generalizations on the physiological effects of alcohol and the role of cultural factors in these effects. One may agree that the behavioral consequences of the use of alcohol may depend upon a people's ideas of what alcohol does to a person. One may also agree that *only to a limited extent* are the physiological consequences also governed by cultural conditioning. But that after the intake of alcohol the basic chemical processes inside the body will also depend upon such factors is difficult to understand. Gamba men may be heavy drinkers, but that chronic and heavy drinkers in this society do not suffer from neuritis, delirium tremens or cirrhosis of the liver remains to be demonstrated by medical and public health surveys. That the culturally regulated beliefs of the village folk of some parts of

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the State of Uttar Pradesh in India will stop delayed poisoning, attributed to the use of methylated spirit, also remains to be proved.

By DWIGHT B. HEATH*

La Paz, Bolivia. 30 viii 64

This is an excellent introduction to the sociocultural aspects of alcohol. Beverage alcohol is a uniquely appropriate focus for interdisciplinary study, involving a fairly obvious interplay of chemical, physiological, psychological, and sociocultural aspects, and it is gratifying to see more anthropologists joining the collaborative efforts that have grown markedly during the past 20 years.

But Mandelbaum's paper is valuable for more reasons than that it draws this subject to the attention of a broad segment of the professional community who may never have been particularly concerned with it. Instead of offering a comprehensive review article, he provides some excellent new material. His discussion of "Cultural Variations in the Use of Alcohol" includes a few well-chosen examples to illustrate anthropological points that were too long ignored by physiologists and others, and his brief demonstration of "Similarities across Cultures" is an insightful initial effort at showing the other side of the coin. We may look forward to seeing other generalizations, based on statistical correlation of specific drinking beliefs and practices with aspects of child-rearing and social structure in a large and diverse sample of cultures throughout the world (Bacon, Barry, and Child, forthcoming).

The discussion of "Change and Stability in Drinking Practices among Civilizations" illustrates well the integration of alcohol with other aspects of culture. Only during the past year have there appeared some studies of change and stability in drinking practices among non-literate peoples: the Navaho, by Heath (1964), and three Polynesian societies, by Lemert (1964); similar material on the Eskimos of Frobisher Bay is being prepared by John and Irma Honigmann (personal communication).

"Culture Areas in Drinking Patterns" have attracted some attention, but extensive studies are limited by the lack of detailed and systematic local data. An interesting ethno-historical effort was made by Bruman (1943) on New Spain; G. Webe has not yet published his abundant material on the Amazonian area.

The convergence of the socio-psychological and structural approaches to the interpretation of cultural institutions is dramatically reflected in Mandelbaum's "Culture and Per-

sonality Analysis of a Drinking Pattern." It is virtually identical with my own, which he characterizes as "...based on the nature of Camba social relations," except where he ventures to speculate on assumed similarities between the Camba and the Lunahuanos described by Simmons. Although this is only an example, illustrative of an extreme form of social drinking, it seems appropriate to discuss alcohol among the Camba in more detail, since the author lent so much weight to this case.

Mandelbaum's tentative assumption that the Camba share the "fear and distrust of others" that characterizes the people of Lunahuana seems crucial to his subsequent interpretation, but is hardly justified by the evidence available. Similarities in culture are many and detailed, but I find Camba personality relatively much more open than the Lunahuanos; certainly there is no such restriction on the children.

What I take to be Mandelbaum's key conclusion—"Normal Camba drunkenness thus seems to arise from a fear of one's fellows and a desire not to interact much with them even when in their presence"—sounds eminently plausible, but contributes little to our understanding of another type of Camba drinking pattern, the sedate toasting which characterizes a wake, which is amply described in my article cited by Mandelbaum as well as in the somewhat more detailed original version (Heath 1958). Furthermore, if we look at the context in which drunkenness occurs, we find that the individual Camba does not thus escape from interaction nearly as effectively as he might. The drinking group persists while the individual subjectively (but not physically) "comes" and "goes." His fellows are there whenever he wakes up from a sleep or from "passing out," and he enthusiastically rejoins the party as though he had never withdrawn. If drinkers sought to escape from the burden of sociability, we might expect to find an institutionalized way for them to do so much more effectively.

Another kind of support for my emphasis on the importance of the drinking group as a reference group on rare and sporadic occasions for social interaction in an atomistic society is that of analogy: Camba drinking patterns are in many ways similar to those of sailors ashore after a voyage, cowboys or lumberjacks "on the town," the farmers of Chichicastenango at market (Bunzel 1940), the homeless men of "Skid Row" (Straus and McCarthy 1956), and so forth.

Recent changes in Camba drinking patterns provide what I consider even

stronger support. (Several brief re-studies have yielded the following data, which were not available to Mandelbaum.)

The typical weekend fiesta which I described earlier has virtually disappeared in the past 6 years, and rites of passage and religious fiestas are marked by far less drinking and drunkenness than was previously the case. During the same period, most Camba farmers have joined *sindicatos*, "peasant leagues," which were established in order to enlist mass support for the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement), the incumbent political party which came to power by revolution in 1952 and introduced a major restructuring of the previously feudal social order, through land reform, universal suffrage, and nationalization of major industries. *Sindicatos* serve as channels through which the party dispenses patronage, and as corporate entities through which small-scale farmers are encouraged to take advantage of new beneficial laws. Membership may comprise the former tenants of an hacienda, or unrelated individuals. Both types of groups were prompted by party organizers to band together and were rewarded for jointly petitioning that land be expropriated from landlords and re-allotted to them. Members of a *sindicato* are, thus, united in their claim to social and economic benefits of the revolution, as well as in their opposition to what politicians have taught them to consider the unjust concentration of land in the hands of a few. They gratefully support the incumbent party at frequent meetings and demonstrations, where they call each other *compañero* (comrade). In many respects, the *sindicato* now serves as a primary reference group for most Camba farmers, in much the same way that the Protestant congregation does for its members. The coordinate decline in drinking-bouts is striking, and sindical activity has replaced frequent heavy drinking in the lives of many individuals.

The social structure of any society undoubtedly reflects the cumulative decisions of innumerable individuals, and through the ages their decisions have been colored by idiosyncratic as well as socially shared personality characteristics. The interplay between cultural institutions and personality patterns is complex and reciprocal, as has been repeatedly demonstrated. But unsupported (and inaccurate) speculations about personality add little to our understanding of drinking patterns or any other aspects of culture.

I share most of Mandelbaum's reservations concerning "Studies of the Uses of Alcohol," and enthusiastically endorse his appeal for more detailed

and systematic studies of normal drinking practices in societies. Not only have many authors focused on spectacular orgiastic or other abnormal kinds of drinking, to the neglect of prosaic and familial uses of alcohol, but many have also failed to distinguish between attitudes toward drinking, drunkenness, the individual inebriate, and his drunken behavior, all of which may be very different.

There has been considerable development in anthropological studies, but the fragmentary literature is scattered throughout a number of journals that few anthropologists see regularly; my paper cited by Mandelbaum contains a bibliography of the principal studies to that date, and I regret that I cannot provide a fuller discussion of the recent literature because I am writing this while in the field.

As a tangential note which may be of interest also to anthropologists whose concerns will never focus on the subject of alcohol, we could all learn much from the system of bibliographical compilation, abstracting, and other kinds of information-processing in which the Rutgers University Center for Studies on Alcohol, New Brunswick, New Jersey, U.S.A., has long excelled.

By JOHN J. HONIGMANN*

Chapel Hill, North Carolina, U.S.A. 20 ix 64

By way of comment, I will call attention to a promising line of research not mentioned by Mandelbaum. Instead of studying drinking behavior globally ("drinking habits of the so-and-so"), in some communities it will be worth while to heed the way drinking varies with social position. This means not only using sex categories but also occupational and other structural divisions recognizable in the community. Relationships between drinking and social category can contribute new insights into the conditions that channel drinking or abstinence under relatively controlled conditions.

For example, among the town-dwelling Eskimo of Frobisher Bay, Baffin Island, Northwest Territories, Canada, Irma Honigmann and I discovered that consumers who secured their beer and liquor from the territorial liquor store could be categorized as either *high* or *low* purchasers. The two categories were then found to diverge in certain social characteristics. High purchasers are most often steadily employed, male, wage-earning heads of families in their 30's and early 40's. The community's elected leaders are well represented among high purchasers. High purchasers, in other words, are men who have closely assimilated town life and shed previous traits of Eskimo culture, like hunting and trapping. Men in this

category more rarely failed to renew their liquor permits, when new rules of buying from the liquor store were introduced, than did low purchasers. High spenders showed somewhat better ability to drink and yet stay out of trouble with police. The evidence: they have appeared in court less frequently than low spenders. As a category, low purchasers manifest greater social heterogeneity. Again heads of families predominate, but the category includes more young, unmarried men. Low purchasers have spottier employment records and enjoy steady employment less frequently, meaning they also earn less wages. Of those who received social assistance the low spenders were more than twice as numerous as the high spenders. Only one low purchaser ranks as a leader.

From such data we conclude that alcohol consumption as measured by purchases made at the liquor store (attendance at the tavern is another matter, which I will not go into here) correlates directly with economic and social status. Such purchases represents one mark of a full-fledged Eskimo townsman. We can predict that as employment opportunities and standards of living increase in Frobisher Bay so will liquor consumption (Ronald Cohen 1962:100).

By EDWIN M. LEMERT*

Davis, California, U.S.A. 4 ix 64

I am impelled both to praise and question Mandelbaum's well-phrased brief for the importance of culture in studying alcohol use. There can be little quarrel with his argument that the stock tool of anthropology—patterned behavior—is highly important in understanding how, why, when, and which people drink, and in large part what expressive behavior gets associated with intoxication. This the author quite ably demonstrates with a variety of historical and comparative materials, which he brings together with impressive virtuosity. His cultural perspective gains further merit from the interesting hypothesis of inebriety it has suggested or generated.

Some of Mandelbaum's comments, however, were surprising to me. His general theme, that the relation of drinking and inebriety to culture patterns and values has been ignored, overlooked, or indifferently exploited by social scientists doing alcohol studies, suggests that the author has sampled rather than conversed completely with the literature of the field. While this dialectical procedure may be an unavoidable prerequisite to establishing the priority or distinctiveness of a theoretical point of view, it has some unfortunate proprietary and patronizing overtones.

It is true, as Mandelbaum asserts, that quite a number of alcohol studies in so-called primitive societies have dealt with inebriety. This, however, has been a function of the data; in many of these societies the modal pattern of drinking is that of intoxication and drunkenness. Hence there is no question of relating inebriety to the "general pattern and standards of drinking" in such societies. The author's insistence that this must always be done reveals the insidious ease with which the concept of culture gets reified by its devotees; it also reflects an obvious moralistic tone in his discussion. It seems clear to me that he has written with some kind of normative drinking pattern in mind, most likely that of the Italians and Jews.

Although the concept of patterned behavior or of values taught as a pattern in an integrated culture is useful in explaining drinking and inebriety among some peoples, it diminishes in importance for others. The latter is particularly true in societies whose cultures have been attenuated and fragmented by social change and technological specialization—which probably represents most societies in the world today. It must be kept in mind that drinking and drunkenness may be expressions not only of culture patterns but of collective behavior, symbolic protest, individual demoralization, situational controls, and social interaction. Thus while skid-row drinking has the semblance of a pattern, it is much more plausible to regard it as the result of a kind of interaction structured by the situation.

My work on drinking by present-day Samoans leads me to conclude that group interaction and social control are far more significant than culture values in understanding or predicting the occurrence of their drinking. This is particularly important because drinking among these people has arisen and occurs in a context of illegality and continuous repressive controls.

The most questionable assertion made by Mandelbaum is that addictive drinking is primarily understandable in terms of culture. At best it can have only marginal significance. Certainly the idea that there is some kind of one-plus-one relationship between culture and personality in the development of addictive alcoholism is untenable. Apart from the methodological problem of keeping personality and culture separate in empirical analysis—a no mean one—there is no evidence of accepted worth to show a relationship between personality types or "themes" and alcoholism. This has not been due to any lack of efforts to discover or establish such relation-

ships.

I am inclined to think that addictive alcoholism probably can arise in any society. Cultural values may have a bearing on its differential incidence in various societies, but just how they operate is not clear. As Linton said years ago, culture gets expressed through social organization, and to me the most important variable in social organization as it bears on drinking is social control.

By WILLIAM MADSEN*

Lafayette, Indiana, U.S.A. 29 ix 64

Mandelbaum has presented an excellent cross-cultural analysis of drinking patterns demonstrating a wide range of variation. He suggests important problems for anthropological research on culture and alcohol.

A primary problem is that of defining the cultural norm and deviation from the norm. We need to ask how much deviation from the norm is tolerated and how the distinction is made between normal and abnormal drinking. As Mandelbaum points out, drunkenness is the norm for festive occasions in many Latin-American cultures and should not be equated with alcoholism. Snyder (1958:183) identifies the distinguishing feature of alcoholism as "the inability of the drinker to control or regulate his drinking within the bounds of social propriety." Defining the bounds of social propriety in a given culture is precisely the task of the anthropologist.

Folk societies generally lack the extreme deviation from the norm that is often found in modern urban societies. In a heterogeneous society like ours, we need to define not only the drinking norm of the majority but also the different norms of our sub-cultural groups, abstemious religious sects, and certain rural regions. Conflict between these norms appears to be a contributing factor in the development of alcoholism (Snyder 1958:189-192).

Change in drinking norms is discussed by Mandelbaum as a reflection of internal changes in social structure. We also need to know how the process of acculturation alters drinking patterns. The disruptive effect of enforced acculturation is illustrated by the change in Aztec drinking practices after the Spanish Conquest. In pre-Conquest times, drinking was performed as an act of devotion at Aztec religious celebrations, where the high priest and rulers became intoxicated to please the gods. Secular drinking was largely limited to the sick and the aged, who enjoyed the privilege of getting drunk. Under Aztec law, intoxication was a capital offense and

only individuals over the age of 70 were exempt from the death penalty for this crime. Consistent popular drunkenness was unknown, according to Gibson (1964:150). The Aztecs recognized alcoholic addiction as an affliction of individuals who had the misfortune of being born with the fate of becoming drunkards. Spanish destruction of Aztec tribal rule and worship was followed by widespread vagabondage, secular drinking, and intoxication. This change in drinking patterns has been attributed to the demoralization caused by the collapse of native institutions (Bunzel 1959:73-74; Gibson 1964:149-150).

Mandelbaum's paper does not deal with alcoholism except to note its rarity outside of Western civilization.

Reply

By D. G. MANDELBAUM

4 of the comments deal, quite rightly, with the importance of understanding changes in the use of alcohol, an aspect of the subject which is not given sufficient attention in the paper. Madsen's notes on the effects of acculturation, Ehrlich's on the influence of social and economic stress, and Honigmann's on variation by social position are dimensions of the research problem which seem to me to be worthy of intensive study to carry forward the very useful work which has already been done by these authors.

Heath's remarks on recent changes in drinking among the Camba are especially interesting here because the article makes extensive reference to his fine account. The marked decline in Camba drinking within 6 years, coinciding with the advent of new social-political groupings, is an occurrence that may well become, when documented and analysed, one of the classic case examples in the anthropological literature on alcohol. This new evidence seems to fit at least part of the formulation in the paper which attempts to link heavy Camba drinking with both social and personality factors. As Heath points out, the formulation does not explain the kind of drinking done at a wake or the successive rejoinings of a drinking party by a drinker. The use of Simmons' personality observations in Lunahuaná is questioned by Heath as applied to the Camba situation. While it might be possible to argue here for the tentative explanation in the article, it would be gratuitous to do so. The point of presenting such a formulation is to stimulate a better explanation if one is indicated. Heath is best qualified to give us a further analysis of this instructive case.

Hasan's comments call attention to the fact that among many groups in

His concluding paragraph seems to imply that the task of the anthropologist is to study the normal drinking patterns prescribed by culture rather than the abnormal practices of individuals. Yet, the very fact that alcoholism is primarily a Western disease suggests the possibility that it may be fostered by common socio-cultural factors in certain Western societies. As Lemert (1962:555-556) observes:

It is possible that rapid social change in the last 150 years, which has been strongly felt in Western societies and is emergent throughout the world, has enhanced the values of alcoholic intoxication. Such things as culture conflict, stress, and anomie may have grown to such proportions that alcohol in many societies is increasingly valuable

India, the use of alcohol is ritually defiling while the use of common Indian narcotics is not. Hasan is correct in stating that a high intake of alcohol must lead to the usual physiological effects, whatever the culture or society. What has been shown by both experimental and comparative studies is that there can be quite wide differences in the behavioral effects of ingesting a given amount of alcohol depending on social and cultural interpretations of the context of drinking.

The most serious exception to the paper is taken by Lemert. At least 1 of his objections is, I think, mainly a matter of terminology. He notes that "drinking and drunkenness may be expressions not only of culture patterns but of collective behavior, symbolic protest, individual demoralization, situational controls, and social interaction." I include under the term "culture" those patterns of social control and of collective behavior which are regularly used even though they are not formally or explicitly taught.

On the matter of addictive alcoholism, I agree with Lemert that addiction can probably arise in any society and that we have no good evidence on any close relation between personality type and addiction. What seems to me to be true is that the general nature and incidence of alcoholism in a society cannot be adequately understood without reference to the patterns and meanings of non-addictive drinking. Madsen's comment refers to the distinguishing feature of alcoholism as the inability of the drinker to control or regulate his drinking within the bounds of social propriety. Hence we must know what the accepted bounds of propriety are in order to know the nature of the behavior which is outside them. Where inebriety (to be distinguished from addictive alcoholism) is normal, it still is useful to study the whole range of drinking. Relative sobriety may then be outside the social proprieties,

as a social reagent and as a sedative for personality conflicts.

It is also possible that alcoholism may be symptomatic of the growing sense of social isolation felt in modern industrial societies where close, enduring ties with the community are often lacking. It is significant that the exceptionally high rate of sobriety among Orthodox Jews is associated with cherished family ties, community solidarity, strong religious faith and a ritual drinking pattern learned early in childhood. The relation of drinking patterns to cultural configurations and processes is difficult to measure, but such broad considerations deserve as much attention as the narrower task of investigating cultural directives for the use of alcohol.

and that kind of behavior should be studied in order to grasp the significance of both normal and non-normal drinking behavior.

The emphasis of the paper on this point leads Lemert to comment that it reflects a reification of culture and an obvious moralistic tone, most likely based on some kind of normative drinking pattern. To deny that one who writes on drinking has some value-attitudes of his own on the subject would be either to deny a main point of the paper, that drinking patterns are of some moment in societies where drinking is done, or to say that an author is not influenced by the values of his social time and place. However, an anthropologist should not allow such values in respect to drinking to undermine the most objective analysis of the subject of which he is capable. If this paper lacks such objectivity, it certainly merits the criticism.

Finally, Lemert indicates that the paper is wrong in stating that social scientists doing alcohol studies have overlooked the relation between drinking and culture. I thought that special tribute was given to these social scientists in several passages, notably in the paragraph which cites several references to "... the thesis ably presented by some students of the subject, namely, that drinking behavior is best understood as an outcome of fundamental social relations..." I believe that very much of the writing on alcoholism and the social problems of drinking has been done by medical men and other specialists who have not looked as closely at the social and cultural factors as have the social scientists who have worked in this field. Even though we may question one or another of their hypotheses, it would be an injustice to slight the contribution of these social scientists to a subject that holds so much theoretical interest and practical importance.

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