

BOOK REVIEWS

Paradigms Lost: The Anthropology of Alcohol in Truk

WEEKEND WARRIORS: ALCOHOL IN A MICRONESIAN CULTURE. Mac Marshall. Mayfield Publishing Company, Palo Alto, California. 1979. 170 pp. \$9.95 (paperback).

SILENT VOICES SPEAK: WOMEN AND PROHIBITION IN TRUK. Mac Marshall and Leslie B. Marshall. Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, CA. 1990. 190 pp. \$11.95 (paperback).

The concept of “culture” is a potent tool for building intellectual structure from the complex flow of experience. “Culture” is the idea that the lived experience of a group of people has order: that social relations and behavior follow certain rules, and that these rules relate to basic values and principles of the group. Anthropologists employ the culture concept as a cognitive framework for making sense out of a mass of observations and information, for selecting some facts and discarding others in order to create a coherent picture of a particular people’s way of life, and the meaning those people give to their actions. Thus “culture” serves for social data what “paradigm,” as Thomas Kuhn has argued in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, serves for physical data.

Paradigms “shift,” in Kuhn’s terms—the earth-centered Ptolemaic view of the solar system is relinquished for the heliocentric Copernican view. Likewise, though less astronomic in implication, cultural perspectives shift, and thus alter the way we perceive our social world. Derek Freeman’s view of Samoan culture and character, for example, represents a radically different perspective than Margaret Mead’s view. The two perspectives select and highlight different data to present quite different pictures of Samoan culture.

Mac and Leslie Marshall’s new book, *Silent Voices Speak: Women and Prohibition in Truk*, also represents an important shift in cultural perspective. In this case, the previous perspective was presented in Mac Marshall’s 1979 book, *Weekend Warriors: Alcohol in a Micronesian Culture*.

Weekend Warriors was an influential book that disturbed many people. Trukese were disturbed by the portrayal of themselves as bellicose, truculent drunks. (There was even a resolution submitted to the Truk State Legislature, censuring the book’s author for maligning Trukese.) People involved in programs against alcohol abuse were surprised and disturbed by the

book’s thesis, that “drunkenness may be looked upon as a psychological blessing for young men in Truk from the standpoint of their overall mental health” (p. 120) and that “drunkenness has provided a major new outlet for hostile feelings on the part of young men who seem always to have been in the most stress-ridden position in the social system” (p. 121).

Marshall’s 1979 perspective on the culture of drinking in Truk rests on a particular portrayal of Trukese young male values: an emphasis upon bravery in the face of peril, and strength and defiance in the face of pain. In Marshall’s analysis, the expression and control of aggression in Truk is especially problematic. “The introduction of alcoholic beverages to Truk less than a century ago helped to resolve one of the most fundamental difficulties of Trukese culture: how to allow for legitimate expression of aggression” (p. 53).

Truk is one of the few cultures of the world that traditionally lacked any indigenous drug substance. Trukese inter-group warfare went unrestrained until the late 1800s, and was brought under external control around the same time that resident traders introduced alcohol to the Trukese. *Weekend Warriors* argues, in essence, that drunken displays of aggression by young Trukese men are a functional substitute for warfare.

In *Weekend Warriors*, Marshall describes drunkenness in dramaturgical terms: “to become drunk in Truk is to put on a culturally sanctioned mask of temporary insanity” (p. 53). Drunken craziness is a “shared fiction” (p. 113) because everyone apparently knows that the drunks, although culturally defined as “out of control” are “in most, if not all, instances, [able to] discriminate persons and contexts quite well and guide their craziness accordingly” (p. 80).

The depiction of Trukese young male drunks as theatrically belligerent is probably overdrawn, but Marshall uses this selective and rather one-sided representation to make an important anthropological point: the role and behavior of the drunk is determined in part by culture, and this role has functional utility. Acting drunk and crazy allows young Trukese men to demonstrate their bravery and strength, values that are esteemed in Trukese culture.

As an analysis of the cultural function of drinking in Truk, *Weekend Warriors* is a logically coherent if ethnographically somewhat skewed account. But the analysis suffers from an inherent weakness of functionalist writing in anthropology, an inability to deal with change in the system. In the case of alcohol in

Truk, a major change occurred several months after Marshall completed the manuscript of *Weekend Warriors*. The Moen Municipal Council passed, by an overwhelming majority, a referendum prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages.

Writing in 1978, Marshall dismissed the significance of the prohibition referendum. He suggested that the motivation for the vote was mainly financial—competition between the Truk District Legislature and the Moen Municipal Council over import duties and sales taxes on beverage alcohol, and the fees for local drinking permits—and that the prohibition would be lifted in a few months when the financial differences were resolved (p. 49–50).

In retrospect, it is clear that Marshall missed the significance of the prohibition movement that was taking shape in Moen while he was doing fieldwork in 1976. He also underestimated in 1978 the cultural importance of the Moen anti-alcohol referendum, as an expression of emergent attitudes towards drinking and drunkenness. *Silent Voices Speak*, written with Leslie Marshall, is a second look at alcohol in Truk, from a quite different perspective than *Weekend Warriors*. The book is a detailed account of prohibition and its aftermath in Truk.

The authors describe the incipient class structure and new monied elite that was evident on Moen in 1985. They emphasize that "A recognition of nascent social classes in Truk is also essential to an understanding of women's involvement in the prohibition movement in the past decade in Truk . . . middle-class women provided the leadership and the energy to launch and sustain prohibition" (p. 22). They then recount the history of alcohol in Truk, much of which was related in *Weekend Warriors*.

In Chapters 4 and 5, the Marshalls discuss traditional women's roles, and the interplay of Christianity, anti-alcohol attitudes, and women's organized power in Truk. Education and employment have brought new options for Trukese women, but their political influence is still limited largely to church women's groups. Christianity preceded alcohol in Truk, and the staunch Protestant anti-alcohol attitude and the US women's temperance movement, filtered through the Protestant missionaries, shaped Trukese attitudes towards drinking and drunkenness. "The involvement of island women in church activities . . . pointed them in the path of effective community activism which could be reconciled with deference to the dominant sex" (p. 61). The participation of several Trukese women in November 1976 in the Honolulu Conference "Christians Concerned About Alcohol" was also important in stimulating political activism.

Chapter 6 recounts the effects of prohibition in

changing the context of drinking, and discusses the problems of enforcement of the liquor prohibition. The authors describe the growth of a lucrative black market for alcohol, the economic benefits of the black market for the political and business elites who controlled it, and the effects of the loss of revenues for the municipal and state budgets.

Chapters 7 and 8 situate the Truk prohibition experience in wider perspective. The Marshalls draw structural parallels between the situation in Truk in the 1970s and in the US in the 1870s—"Like their American counterpart in the 1870s, Trukese women's temperance movement was 'religiously and morally inspired social reform . . . [which] had its base in the Protestant churches'" (p. 107). The authors summarize alcohol control policies in Oceania, and conclude that alcohol use historically has followed a rather similar pattern in the Pacific.

The conclusions to this book raise important issues in the cross-cultural understanding of prohibition. The authors contend that, "contrary to conventional wisdom based on the American prohibition experience, people may vote for prohibition not with the intent of literally eliminating alcohol and drinking from their community, but rather to alter the pattern of alcohol use" (p. 137). They also emphasize that cultural differences in notions of self and social control may underlay differences in the way societies respond to prohibition laws. "Pacific islanders may be more amenable to or willing to support and abide by laws that constrain their individual behavior than, say, Americans would be (p. 140)." In effect, the prohibition law in Moen functioned as an external control that induced temperance. Trukese continued to drink after the Moen ordinance, but "the presence of the law helped them control where they drank and how they behaved after imbibing. Thus, the prohibition law *did* exercise an important external control over drinking even though it did not eliminate alcohol use" (p. 141). In the authors' evaluation, the prohibition had a net positive effect on the community.

In reaching this conclusion, the authors clearly have revised their cultural perspective on Trukese drinking presented in *Weekend Warriors*. The first account minimized the destructive potential of young drunks, and asserted that a cultural "script" guides and controls the drunken role, which effectively proscribes violence against women, children, and older people. Audience and actors collaborate in a "shared fiction," a ritualized display of aggression, and little damage is done. "When Trukese drunks go crazy, they only go so crazy, and they only go crazy in culturally approved ways" (p. 117).

In *Silent Voices*, the "cultural approval" of drunken

craziness has turned into repudiation, and there is no mention of the "cultural controls" on drunken behavior. The authors write that "there was strong support in 1977 for the liquor ban, even on the part of many drinkers, because of a widely shared sense that alcohol use was *out of control* . . . People believed that something drastic had to be done" (p. 146, emphases added). The authors enumerate the reasons that women viewed male drinking very negatively; the women "were desperate for a solution to the *death and disturbance* they attributed to alcohol" (p. 66, emphases added). Evidently the women were not alone in this view. "In effect the [Moen anti-alcohol] law was a statement that a majority of citizens of Moen Municipality had had enough, that public alcohol use had become abuse, and needed to be reined in" (p. 85).

It is remarkable that two accounts of Trukese drinking, written by the same authors within ten years of each other, can represent such different cultural perspectives. The difference lies partly in that *Weekend Warriors* examines alcohol issues largely from men's point of view, while *Silent Voices* examines the same issues more from women's point of view. The success of the second analysis as a counterpoint to the first is an instructive case for feminist anthropology. Yet both accounts "work"; both offer a consistent view, well-grounded in observation and data. A useful classroom exercise in cultural theory would be to assign the two books in unison. They demonstrate how cultural perspectives, as paradigms for understanding the world, create a "reality" through selective emphasis and arrangement of phenomena into coherent wholes.

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Pacific Reefs

CORAL REEFS OF THE WORLD. VOLUME 3: CENTRAL AND WESTERN PACIFIC. UNEP Regional Seas Directories and Bibliographies. Susan M. Wells and Martin D. Jenkins, editors. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, U.K./UNEP Nairobi, Kenya. 1988. 329 pp., 30 maps. \$45.00 plus \$8 shipping per volume (\$100.00 plus \$20 for the three volume set). Available through IUCN Publications Services Unit, 219C Huntington Road, Cambridge, CB3 0DL, UK.

This volume, the third in a three-volume series, is a compilation of data and information on the coral reefs of American Samoa, eastern Australia, Belau (Palau), China, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Mi-

cronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, Hong Kong, Japan, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, the Northern Marianas Islands, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn, the Solomon Islands, Taiwan, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Funafuti, and Western Samoa. The format of the book is easy to follow, with sections on location, area, land tenure, physical features, reefs structures, noteworthy flora and fauna, scientific importance, economic and social benefits, disturbance and deficiencies, legal protection, management and recommendations. Each section has an extensive references list, and is illustrated with informative maps.

The editors have compiled a tremendous amount of valuable information in this three-volume set. The information was gathered from both the literature and surveys/interviews of researchers and individuals with first-hand knowledge of the particular localities. The acknowledgments section is a veritable "Who's Who" of coral reef biology and natural history for the Pacific region. As a result, this volume contains accurate and detailed information, previously unavailable, on a vast number of coral reef communities.

I found this particular volume to be an important research tool for coral reef studies because of the broad range covered. The diversity of Western and Central Pacific reefs is clearly evident when reading through the various sections of the book. This compendium is a particularly good place for graduate students in biology, oceanography and geography to start looking for thesis ideas, and for contacting individuals with specific information.

There can be no doubt that coral reefs throughout the world are being threatened by development, over-exploitation, unwise fishing practices and pollution. The Central and Western Pacific region includes islands and nations which have traditionally depended greatly on coral reefs for resources. The editors have done a superb job of collecting and organizing a massive amount of information which can be used as a base upon which to develop local and regional conservation strategies and plans.

In conclusion, I find *Coral Reefs of the World, Volume 3* (as well as the entire series) to be an important and informative addition to the library of anyone interested in coral reefs. This recommendation extends beyond coral biologists to anthropologists, geographers, conservationists, SCUBA divers, economists, and the general public. The editors and contributors are to be commended on their fine product.

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