

in fermentation science at the University of California, Davis, is mentioned on pages 4, 9, and 10. Cathy Corison's quotation: "Back in 1978, when I did my first harvest, I never thought that women would be recognized as winemakers" appears on page 1 and 36. The short profiles in Appendix I of those already presented in more depth earlier add nothing.

Since *Women Winemakers* is a snapshot of a work in progress, many of the particulars in it will change over time. Nevertheless, there are insights of lasting value, especially to those contemplating a career in the wine industry with aspirations of reaching the top of the profession. The four pathways are a clever categorization of the sources of motivation for those considering entering the business. Success attributes of and lessons learned by those who have reached the top offer essential wisdom. For the rest of us not in pursuit of a career in winemaking, the book and website give us visibility into another enterprise where women are finally making progress, albeit at a pace too slow for many.

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DEREK SANDHAUS: *Drunk in China: Baijiu and the World's Oldest Drinking Culture*. Potomac Books, an Imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE, 2019, 295 pp. ISBN: 9781640120976 (hardcover), \$29.95.

As the title states, China has one of the oldest, if not the oldest, drinking cultures in the world. Residues of alcohol have been found on Chinese pottery dating back 9,000 years. Given the size of the Chinese population, its distilled white liquor, baijiu, is also the most consumed spirit in the world. Yet knowledge and appreciation of baijiu remain limited outside of east Asia.<sup>1</sup> On their first sip, most novices react

<sup>1</sup> The word jiu refers to alcoholic drinks and baijiu (literally, white liquor) specifies it as distilled white spirit compared to, for example, putaojiu (grape wine) or pijiu (beer).

negatively. It takes time and experience to appreciate an unknown fermented and distilled drink. Derek Sandhaus' purpose in writing this readable book, therefore, is to introduce China's history of alcohol-making to a broad audience, to distill the findings of scholars who have worked on the history, economy, and culture of drinking in China, and to encourage a greater appreciation of a rich tradition. He is an enthusiast and, as one of the teams promoting the *Ming River* brand of baijiu in the United States, he has a direct interest in making the drink more popular.

The pun in the title is intended since the book includes extensive discussion both of the history of baijiu, its contemporary production, and social and economic roles and also of the challenges faced by visitors during many hospitable encounters at the Chinese meal table. As the traditional saying quoted in the book notes: "A sober guest is the host's shame" (p. 94). While some readers not experienced in Chinese banquets or less interested in Derek Sandhaus' sacrifices of liver health in researching the range of regional flavors and production might find the anecdotes on those aspects slightly long, this reader enjoyed the insights they produced and was reminded of many past encounters across the Chinese dining table.

Derek Sandhaus first went to China as a student in 2006 and had some typically negative experiences of baijiu. It was not until after 2011 when he went as a "trailing spouse," accompanying his wife to a diplomatic appointment in Chengdu in Sichuan province, the home of some of China's most favored baijiu varieties, that he began to explore the drink. By 2016, he had become a strong advocate for it and was launched on a mission to spread its fame and to promote the sale of the spirit outside China. His book records his journey and his efforts to find out more about its history and to learn about its production. He traveled widely in China to get to know the regional varieties, he consulted historians and other specialists and their studies, and he observed the contemporary economic and social context. The result is an enjoyable and insightful study that provides an excellent starting point to explore China's drinking culture.

Overall, the book addresses four core themes: the history of alcohol in China, focusing primarily on the distilled baijiu; the production process and the main ingredients and varieties; the social and political context; and the way the industry has evolved in contemporary China. Its bibliography and footnoting provide a guide to further study for those who are inspired to learn more.

In discussing the history of Chinese alcohol, Sandhaus makes extensive use of scholars in the field, such as Kupfer (2019). He argues for a domestic origin of alcoholic drinks, subscribes to the "beer-before-bread" theory of the emergence of agriculture, and notes the importance of alcohol for the development of cultural and religious life. The early Chinese alcohols were grain based and eventually gave rise to a yeast starter consisting of a clump of mashed grain, a *qu*. This innovation became a distinctive feature of fermenting in China and gave many baijiu's distinctive flavors. Combined with local waters, the result was the emergence of a multitude of regional styles and characters. In tracing this history, Sandhaus refers to many of the Chinese myths and legends about the origins of alcohol and to the rich literary

tradition in praise of drinking. It was not until the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368) that the art of distillation arrived in China from its Middle Eastern origins, although Sandhaus speculates on the possibility of an earlier transmission along the Silk Road and quotes Chinese scholars who argue for a local origin. Once it arrived, however, it acquired strong local characteristics, with a preference for sorghum as the grain base and the use of a solid-state fermentation and distillation process whereby steam passes through the fermented grain to extract the alcohol. By the early Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), baijiu had become widespread across China.

Over time, the production of baijiu adopted a range of production processes and characteristics. While sorghum remained a key grain, barley, maize, wheat, and rice were also used. The fermentation processes diversified, with different types of *qu*, and the distillation techniques varied. Sandhaus describes many of the key issues involved and the impact on flavor and character. He notes the broad classification into four main types: strong flavor (aroma) *nongxiangxing*, light flavor (*qingxiangxing*), sauce flavor (*jiangxiangxing*), and rice flavor (*mixiangxing*). Each has the qualities of taste, aroma, length, and so forth that are enjoyed by connoisseurs, although the Chinese vocabulary for appreciation is less complicated than that of the wine drinker. He also notes that there are also many sub-categories of classification.<sup>2</sup> Each style has its major producers, and many of them are very strong liquors, commonly in the region of 50% or more alcohol. The strongest this reviewer has encountered was *Lao Baigar* from Shandong at 63%! The other aspect appreciated by Sandhaus is that the grain base of baijiu complements the nature of Chinese cooking. Drinking and toasting are always accompanied by food.

Turning to the contemporary social and political context, Sandhaus underlines the importance of drinking as a feature of doing business in China, particularly since the reform period began in 1978. Eating and drinking together have become a prominent aspect of building relationships and trust across the economy and politics. Sandhaus explores this issue through many anecdotes and shows how excessive consumption became an aspect of corruption and influence-building. The Chinese phrase *yan jiu* (cigarettes and alcohol) puns with the word *yanjiu* (research), and the latter, has been commonly used as a satirical comment on the potential for officials to “research” an issue through fine living with cigarettes and alcohol. He also discusses how excessive alcohol consumption has generated some widespread problems of poor health and obesity among officials and is a target of efforts to curb corruption.

A further issue to emerge from the book is the way the baijiu industry has developed in modern China. Under the planned economy model, there were efforts to standardize production and quality and to focus on some key brands and styles. Guizhou Maotai, Sichuan Wuliangye, Beijing’s Erguotou, and Xi’an’s Fengjiu

<sup>2</sup>Those who would like to get further insight into production processes and classifications would find Zheng and Han (2016) very helpful. They list three major and nine minor categories and the exemplary distilleries for each type.

were all examples of this trend after the 1950s. Local products tended to be ignored and neglected. Since the reforms began, however, there has been a revival of varieties and products and much greater competition between regions and brands. Some of the most famous brands now sell for very high prices, especially aged bottles.

Sandhaus draws out many aspects of these issues, but it would be worth exploring further how the development trajectory of the baijiu industry illustrates the evolution of both the planned and the reform economies. The planned economy emphasized administrative controls of production, standardization, pricing, and distribution. The economic reforms decentralized production and encouraged competition. Local officials promoted the development of local economies, especially in the making of consumer goods and regional products. Producers diversified their products to compete in the market. Brands sought to strengthen their identity and prestige. The growing wealth of society also encouraged more consumption and helped establish a hierarchy of consumption by social status. In much the same way as the market for malt whiskies has evolved in other parts of the world, the baijiu market has grown in complexity and range. A similar story can be told for other Chinese products such as green teas and special foods and medicines (e.g., Etherington and Forster, 1993). This is an aspect that Sandhaus broaches but would be worth a deeper study beyond this book.

In sum, this book provides a broad and well-researched introduction to the history and contemporary fate of baijiu drinking in China. Mr. Sandhaus has a mission to encourage a greater appreciation of the drink and its merits, both as a devotee and as a marketer. He even supplies some cocktail recipes to provide a gentle introduction to the spirit for the uninitiated, although those of us with some experience of it might still prefer the pure flavor.

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