

## BOOK REVIEW

**Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras.** By Adrienne Pine, University of California Press, CA, 2008, ISBN-13: 978-0520255449; Price: £13.95 (paperback). 272 pp.

This is a fascinating ethnographic study of the complex web of connections between alcohol, work, religion, politics, US influence, social change and life in Honduras. Adrienne Pine considers these factors in relation to people with alcohol problems as well as crack users, gang members, shanty-town dwellers and factory workers. Honduras, literally a banana republic, appears to be poverty stricken and violent. The book devotes one of its three main chapters to alcohol. The others focus on violence and 'maquiladoras' (the facilities in which products such as cheap clothes are manufactured for export to the USA). It is noted that some Hondurans informed the author that between one in six and 99% of Hondurans were 'alcoholic'. These reports were clearly hugely exaggerated, but did reflect something of popular perceptions. Pine notes that this problem inflation was at least partly due to AA and Al Anon members and the staffs of other agencies. Some of these exaggerated the problem in order to secure funding. As in other Central and South American countries, hard evidence about the scale of alcohol-related problems is in short supply. This situation is being remedied in some

countries that are participating in Gender, Alcohol and Culture: An International Study (GENACIS). It is clear that alcohol *per se* has a bad image in Honduras, not least because of the fact that it is associated (or in some cases supposed to be linked) with violence. The latter is linked with machismo and many other cultural, psychological and demographic factors. Pine notes that

Just as drunks expose the 'truth' about violence in Honduras, they embody and enact gender truths. Such truths are not static. Hondurans, like everyone else, must renegotiate.

What it means to be women and men in response to social changes. Alcohol-defined settings are highly charged arenas of gender performance where much of the renegotiation is carried out.

Good ethnographic contributions to the field of alcohol studies are valuable but much too rare. This is an excellent, insightful book that presents a compelling voyage into the heart of a country where alcohol is increasingly an integral part of both good and bad aspects of life and its complexities in a changing, ever more interconnected world.

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