

# “Drinking in a Culture”



**JIRAWAT MOOLASART, MD, PhD.**

**Department of Psychiatry,**

**Sunpasitthiprasong Hospital, Ubon Ratchathani**

**“When a man lifts a cup, it is not only the kind of drink that is in it, .... These and many other **cultural definitions attach to the drink** even before it reaches his lips. ... The form and meanings of drinking alcoholic beverage are **culturally defined**. ... The meaning of drinking, its **relation to other aspects of the culture and society**, are usually more implicit.”**

(Mandelbaum, 1965)

**“... every drink is loaded with symbolic meaning, every drink conveys a message. Alcohol is a symbolic vehicle for identifying, describing, constructing and manipulating cultural systems, values, interpersonal relationships, behavioral norms and expectations.”**

**(SIRC, 1998)**

# Symbolic Meaning

- **Social and cultural class positions;** categories, boundaries, status indicator, identity
  - **Group relationship;** group formation, group cohesion, solidarity, the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion
  - **Interpersonal relations;** a medium of exchange, business talk
  - **Gender;** for **male - masculinity;** but for **female - liberation, sexual availability or seduction**
  - **Age;** for teenage or youth - **a rite of passage** into adult world, independency, rebellion, or rejection of adult authority
  - **Status;** class, luxury, success, a shift in status, modern society
  - **Ethnicity;** individual and group identifications (region, locality, national, and religion), a symbol of regional autonomy, freedom and autonomy from colonial status

# Symbolic Meaning

- **Sociability and Hospitality;** social integration, social bonding; welcome party, guest
- **Sharing;** drinking rituals and etiquettes – the same cup or glass, the Gods and the dead, toasting
- **Reciprocity;** exchanged, reciprocal giving → creates and maintain vital social bonds (round-buying, shout, offering)
- **Relaxation, Recreation or a shift in occasion;** from work to leisure time, from the real world into a play world, into a time of fun or festival

# Symbolic Meaning

## ➤ Transitional rituals

- Life-cycle transitions
- Lifestyle transitions or Life-changing events
- Habitual transitions

## ➤ Festive rituals

- To drink is to be festive, to be festive is to drink
- Celebration: a celebration most certainly requires alcohol, but every drink does not require a celebration

# Symbolic Meaning

- **Health**; a tonic, an appetite stimulation, sleep inducing, dealing with heart problem and stress, antidote for sexual frustration
- **Transcendence** in ritual or religious experience

# Symbolic Meaning

## ➤ Social problem;

- **A signal of social degeneration;** a transgression, a testing of social limit or norm
- **A political rebellion**
- **A threat to social order and law;** violence, crime, gang
- **A threat to family;** motherhood, the proper care of children, poverty or financial problem, family violence
- **A threat to well-being and safety of women**
- **A threat to work;** accidental risk, production, income and profit, national development





174 & FOR. BY N. CERRIER, *Retired according to Act of Congress in the year 1848 by N. Cerrier, in the Clerk's office of the District Court of the Southern District of New York.* 152 NASSAU ST. COR. OF SPRUCE.

**THE TREE OF INTemperance.**

Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. — Proverbs II 7. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an Adder. — Proverbs XXIII 32. For the glutton, and the Drunkard shall come to Poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. — Proverbs XXIII 21.

# Drinking Norms

- **“Norm” is a culture rule or understanding affecting behavior which is enforced by sanctions, a relatively permanent rule shared by a class of individuals**
- **Differentiated according to social situation and according to individual status, role, and identity**
- **Drinking norms can be an instrument of social control, but can be enforced heavy drinking**
- **Directed at behavior during or after drinking, irrespective of the amount**

# **Social Control and Alcohol**

- **The process of construction and enforcement of a society's normative framework in term of belief and value: learned through socialization**
- **Social control on drinking can define as a part of overall cultural position of drinking**
- **There is a relationship between cultural mode of social control and cultural definition of alcohol-related problems and the mean of handling**

# Social Control and Alcohol

- **Informal regulation of drinking**
- **Control consumption, degree of inebriation, behavior when intoxication**
- **Self-control : External control**
  - **Age, Gender**
  - **Drinking contexts**
  - **Level of consumption**
  - **Drinking behaviors or Drinking acts**

# **Social Control and Alcohol**

- **Proscription of solitary drinking, solitary drunkenness**
- **Restriction on female and underage drinking**
- **Drinking context; public space, type of beverage,**
- **“The more a man consumes alcohol and remains sober, the more respect he gains.”**

# Drinking Culture

- **Wet VS. Dry culture**
  - Beverage type
  - Drinking practice
  - Alcohol-related problem
  - System of social controls
- **Abstinent; religion, legally forbidden**
- **Intermittent use; festive drinking, weekend, sacred occasions or ritual activities**
- **Customary regular use; everyday life, regular pattern**

# Drinking Culture

- **Abstinent culture;** negative attitude, prohibition
- **Ambivalent culture;** conflict attitude
- **Permissive culture;** positive attitude toward consumption, but negative toward drunkenness and pathological drinking
- **Over-permissive culture;** permissive toward drinking, intoxicated behaviors, drinking pathologies

# Socio-Cultural Perspective

- **Use-values**
  - **Beliefs / Attitudes**
  - **Symbolic meaning**
  - **Norm / Social control**
- **Drinking context**
    - **The drinker and Participants**
    - **Drinking occasion**
    - **Drinking place**
    - **Drinking time**
    - **Types of beverage**
    - **Drinking act**



## Public health perspective

### Pathological drinking

- Alcohol abuse
- Alcohol dependence

**Bodily harm**

### Alcohol-related problems

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Social problems; violence, family disruption, drink-driving, drinking costs

**Alcohol policies  
Intervention and treatment**

## Socio-cultural perspective

- Drinking culture
- Drunkenness / Intoxication
- Normal drinking VS. Pathological drinking

**Moral harm**

**Drinking norm  
Social control**

# Why drinking culture need to be studied?

- Drinking is affected by the role of alcohol in daily life, normative value of drinking practices, relationship to other belief and behavior, their social construction, religion, economic and politic activities
- Culture is a variable that must be taken into account in devising programs of prevention or treatment
- Relationship between drinking patterns and alcohol-related problems, social control and social world of drinkers, can provide a useful guide to effective local alcohol policies
- Alcohol policies need to be based sociocultural data and responsive to changes and trends in the society