



Purer Genuss? Wasser als Getränk, Ware und Kulturgut

A BOOK REVIEW BY ANDREAS KLEINLEIN

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Water is getting more and more in the focus of the world. According to this there was a symposium of scientists of different subjects, organized by the “Internationaler Arbeitskreis für Kulturforschung des Essens” (International Study Group for Food Research) of the Dr. Rainer Wild-Stiftung in Heidelberg in 2006. This book developed from the presentations given at this congress, together with the ideas, that came in the discussions of the participants. In the book there are contributions which contain six pages and some contributions with more than 25 pages.

The authors are from many subjects, from the social sciences like folklorists, sociologists, historians, nutrition and food scientists and physicians. The variety of authors is topped off with a

literary scholar and a physicist. Most of them come from a university Hereafter there will be presented the principal themes and also some of the particularly interesting aspects of the book:

The first main idea, which is discussed in many articles, is that mineral water is drunk more than tap water. This is strange, because the German tap water has a very high hygienic quality and also the minerals, which are in the mineral water, are incorporated in enough quantity through the nutrition. There are different explanations for this finding: First there is the question of image: Tap water is for example firmly connected with the thought of poorness and also with the fear of pollution. Whereas the mineral water has an image of a sporty and healthy drink.

These images are created mostly through the advertisements of the mineral water industry. In addition to this, there is the phenomenon of artificial shortage of water through the price. Especially in gastronomy this leads to distinction. In general water is with the exception of exclusive bottled water a low-interest-product.

The second big theme in this book is the cultural view on the subject of water and drinking. There are contributions on the topic of water in the literature, water in the Jewish culture or the phenomenon of Lourdes water. Some articles are also about the history of water, drinking water and the drinking recommendations as well as the history of the distribution of water.

The third aspect of this book is the discussion, how much water should be drunk. In the book there are presented the recommendations, how much every person should be drink every day. Nonetheless the upshot of the most authors is: the people drink enough, if they drink when there are thirsty. This is fact is also valid for children. However there is the problem of old people, who can have less sensation for thirst.

Lastly there is also the problem of the disposal of used water. Here one aspect is the question after a sustainably water system. From the point of view of the author the wastewater system of the 19th century is now outdated. He

suggests a system that is based on the separation of the wastewater and vacuum technology. Another issue in the field of disposal is the discovery of active pharmaceutical substances. There may be dangers for the users of the water, but according to the author it is better to act now and not when it is too late. Also for this problem solutions are presented.

It also discusses water in language, the physical and chemical aspects of water, water in food production and more interesting facts about water and drinking. The book is focused on the situation in Germany. Further there are also links to other European cultures and also to the global issue of water.

Even if not every article interests everyone, the book is a good opportunity to see the topic area from different perspectives. Furthermore it provides a lot of background information and contributes to the discussion what and how much we are drinking and what and how much we should drink. The book is relevant as well as interesting for almost everyone, because it deals with the challenge of water, which concerns us all.

The interdisciplinary work on the field of water, like in this book should be continued and probably will gain in importance due to the fact that "Water is going to be the Achilles' heel of future viability of global development" like the editors formulate in their introduction

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