

ウイスキーと文化

Stefan Buchenberger

「8 ボル (8 舂) のモルトを修道士ジョン・コルへ、王の名に依りて - 『命の水 (aqua vitae) 』 製造のため」 (1494 年 6 月 1 日)

この手紙に於いて、あの驚異の飲料、ウイスキーの歴史が、文書に初出したのである。但し、おそらくその製造は、中世、アラビアからヨーロッパに蒸留法が伝播したときに遡るであろう。しかしながら、少なくとも 500 年以上の長い歴史にもかかわらず、ウイスキーの神髄とも言うべきシングル・モルトは、ほんの 50 年前まで、スコットランドの外側では殆ど知られていなかった。それが半世紀のうちに、世界のアルコール飲料のアイコン的存在として、認知されるに至ったのであった。

これらの数世紀のあいだに、ウイスキーという飲料、その伝統、その遺産、そしてもとよりそれが内包する文化が、人類の文明と織り合せられてきた。たしかに、単なる一飲料が人類の文化の中で果たす役割は、一見したかぎりでは些細なものに見える。けれども、文化全体のうちの非常に重要な部分を、飲食物は常に担ってきたのである。全人類史が食料と飲料の歴史として描写されうる、といっても過言ではない。とはいえ、本論文の趣旨は、我々の文化に内在する様々なパラメーターを、またそれらとウイスキーがどう関わっているかを分析することだ。時間、歴史、文化的記憶といった諸々の要素が、ウイスキーの歴史の中でどのように重要な役割を果たしているのか、そしてウイスキーは、どのようにして人類の文化の一翼を担うにいたり、また担い続けているのであろうか。

ウイスキーは人間の歴史と文化にとって、不可欠な一要素となっている。その過去に結びつき、その現在には根付き、その未来にも続いているのである。

キーワード：

文化的記憶、時間、歴史、遺産、書記 (エクリチュール)、大衆文化

Whisky and Culture

Stefan Buchenberger

“The proper drinking of Scotch Whisky is more than indulgence: it is a toast to civilization, a tribute to the continuity of culture, a manifesto to man’s determination to use the resources of nature to refresh mind and body and enjoy to the full the senses with which he has been endowed.”¹

1. Introduction

One can describe the history of humankind by recounting decisive battles or other turning points. One can also recount the lives of important political figures or great thinkers and inventors. All these attempts leave us with a huge number of names and dates, things that have shaped our culture into what it is today.

However, there are other ways to describe the history of humankind. One can for example study the history of agriculture and how it affected the rise of human civilization, or one can focus on a seemingly trivial matter, the beverages people drink, to explain how we came to be what we are today.

Tom Standage’s thought provoking book *The History of the World in Six Glasses* (2005) is such an attempt. It analyzes the history of six types of beverages – beer, wine, spirits, coffee, tea and soft drinks – and shows how, sometimes over the course of thousands of years, they have become part of our traditions, our everyday life and therefore part of our culture.

Amongst the spirits analyzed by Standage is, of course, whisky, the focus of this study.

Whisky, (Gaelic for “water of life” is, as renowned writer Charles MacLean puts it: “... far more than liquor in a bottle: it embodies tradition and high craft, social history and topography, poetry and song.”² Or put differently: whisky is part of Western culture and the goal of this article is to analyze different parameters of our culture and how whisky interacts with them.

And, “How we spell ‘whiskey’ is emblematic of myriad historical, cultural, and, indeed philosophical themes.”³ True enough, but as the authors of this sentence are American and emphasize their own cultural heritage by using the American spelling of whiskey (with an “e”), the author of this article, as an European, would rather go into the opposite direction and use the spelling “whisky” for general purposes, and refer to “whiskey” only when it is necessary.

2. Whisky, time and history

Time is important to the manner in which whisky has become part of Western culture. For one thing, whisky is a beverage that has been produced and drunk for a very long time, which is connected to the distant past, and

thus connects us to that past. Beer, which in its distilled form is what whisky basically is, has been around even longer, with the first written proof of its existence found on Sumerian clay tablets that contain the “Hymn to Ninkasi”, which dates from around 1800 B.C.⁴ The first record of whisky itself is an English document dated June 1st 1494: “Eight bolls of malt to Friar John Cor, by order of the King, wherewith to make aqua vitae.”⁵ But the art of distillation is much older and probably came from Arabia, where it was used to make perfumes in the 8th century, after which it came to Europe where it was cultivated in medieval monasteries.⁶ Like many other spirits whisky was first distilled in farmhouses, or even in the open, and was in the beginning illegal, which led to many bitter feuds between distillers and the governments’ excise men, and also to smuggling, as taxes on whisky were very high even when it was legal. Today the image of tartan-clad smugglers carrying barrels of whisky while on the run from the tax officers is part of the romantic and rugged image of life in the Highlands of Scotland, an image that the makers of Scotch whisky are still promoting today. The age of illegal distillation came to an end in 1825 with George Smith’s obtaining of a license for his Glenlivet distillery. Others soon followed, slowly changing from small scale farmhouse distilleries, often illicit, into bigger enterprises.

During the age of Industrialization, of which whisky offers a microcosmic view, whisky production on a bigger scale was made possible, and railways also came to rural Scotland, which opened the market for whisky. Industrialization also brought more effective distilling methods with the so called Coffee still, developed by Aeneas Coffey, allowing continuous distillation, which directly led to blended whiskies that make up 90% of the Scottish whisky sold worldwide today.

The Irish whiskey industry, however, failed to see the enormous potential of this invention and insisted on the traditional, time and money consuming way of making whisky, with its typical triple distillation. While Scotch became the worldwide alcoholic beverage it is today, Irish whisky got almost wiped out because of its insistence on tradition. Only in recent years has there been a comeback of Irish whiskies, some even made traditionally as “pot still whiskey.”

Scotch whisky came to be blended whisky, with malt whisky being just an ingredient for it. Malt whisky was considered to be “too strong” for the average customer, but in 1963, Glenfiddich started marketing the first single malt, with its iconic three-cornered bottle following in 1964. And although it took awhile for malt whisky to reach the heights it has today, Glenfiddich has continued to be handsomely rewarded for its bold entrepreneurship, as its product is still the best selling malt whisky in the world.

In the USA, Industrialization transformed the pioneer’s distilleries into industrial scale factories. Prohibition, which lasted from 1920-1933, not only led to the rise of organized crime but also created another romantic image of whiskey and the criminal activities surrounding it, immortalized in movies like *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984) and *The Untouchables* (1987).

Royal visits also helped promote whisky. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert visited Scotland in 1848 and the queen liked the whisky from the Lochnagar distillery so much that she bestowed a royal warrant upon it. The queen is also supposed to have laced her claret with this particular whisky.⁷ The paintings of Edwin Henry Landseer also helped forming the romantic image of Scotland at the time.

When the phylloxera catastrophe wiped out most European grapes in 1880 whisky also became a substitute for brandy, which, mixed with soda, had remained the drink of the upper classes up to this point⁸.

The first whisky boom ended in 1898 after the whisky brokering firm Pattison went bankrupt, but the industry greatly profited from Prohibition in the USA. In the 1980s many distilleries had to close because of the so called “whisky loch” caused by overproduction, and in many cases distilleries once closed were never to be

opened again. Some of the whiskies made by failed distilleries have reached iconic status and are highly sought after by collectors. Today's whisky industry is enjoying another boom phase with many new, and sometimes gigantic, distilleries trying to satisfy the world's thirst for whisky.

However, in recent years two farmhouse distilleries have also been opened, Kilchoman on the Isle of Islay and Daftmill in the Lowlands.⁹ On a very small scale, Scottish whisky has returned to its origins, and, of course, the marketing potential of the "good old days", of claiming to have brought back traditional ways of whisky making, has not been missed, although even these "throwback distilleries" use modern technology to their advantage.

Analogue to the relationship between whisky and the age of industrialization, the world of whisky can today also be seen as a microcosm of the world's financial crisis in 2008, when toxic assets were pumped into the financial system leading to a collapse of the markets. The whisky industry itself is struggling with sulphured casks that have led to bad, "infected" whiskies for a number of years now. Like with the financial market, it will take a number of years before the effect of those "toxic" casks will be gone.¹⁰

Apart from its historical dimensions time is also a very important factor when it comes to the aging of whisky, as the flavor of the new-made spirit will change greatly over time, for better or for worse according to individual taste. Legally whisky in Scotland has to be put into oak barrels for a minimum of 3 years to be called Scotch whisky, and in the USA a minimum of 2 years to legally become bourbon whiskey. Especially, vintage whiskies often carry a feeling of nostalgia, of shared memories of things long since gone, but made present again.

Finally, time is also a marketing ploy, with many whiskies proudly boasting their heritage, the fact that the foundation of their distillery occurred centuries ago, or their emphasis on traditional whisky-making methods. An interesting example of such old-style whisky making is Old Protero, an 18th century-style single malt rye whiskey, that invokes the American whisky pioneers. Templeton Rye whiskey claims to be made with a Prohibition-era recipe, an approach that, once again, links whiskey with the supposedly romantic era of smugglers and gangsters.

2.1. Back in time

The so called Shackleton whiskies, actually MacKinlay's Rare Old Highland Malt, offer a truly unique way of linking with the past. The bottles left by explorer Ernest Shackleton in his hut in the Antarctic in 1907 evoke his unsuccessful expeditions, and the age of adventurous explorers, while the whisky they contain is of the style that was drunk at the beginning of the 20th century.¹¹ The whisky has since been analyzed by master blender Richard Patterson, after it was flown from the Antarctic to Scotland by a private jet owned by Whyte & Mackay owner Dr. Vijay Mallya. The original whisky has been recreated, and 50000 replica bottles will be sold, with 5 % of every sale going to the Antarctic Heritage fund.

And finally, the raw materials used in the making of whisky even have prehistorical roots with the peat that is used for drying malt coming from peat bogs thousands of years old. With peat as a ready source of energy everywhere in the Scottish Highlands, almost every whisky used to be peated, until peat was supplanted by coal and later gas. Peated whiskies, especially those from the Isle of Islay, therefore carry the memory of whisky 'how it used to be', a memory infused with the "atavistic folk memory"¹² of peat fires, which is even older. In today's global market peated whiskies have enjoyed quite a renaissance, with many Highland distilleries making

peated versions of their, normally unpeated, whiskies.

The grains used in the making of any kind of whisky, like barley, corn, rye and wheat, been always been some of the prime food sources of humanity, while water, used for brewing, and wood, used for cask-making, have always been on this planet.

3. Usquebaugh and other names

As one can learn from any publication on whisky the word comes from the Gaelic “usquebaugh,” although sometimes spelt differently.¹³ So the word whisky itself takes us back in time and reminds us of early distilling in monasteries in Scotland or Ireland, as do various brands of whisky, with their Gaelic names that are often quite difficult to pronounce.

For example, the Speyside whisky Auchroisk, pronounced “Arth-rusk”. When it was first bottled as a single malt it was called The Singleton of Auchroisk, because there was the fear that such an unpronounceable name might prevent customers from buying it.¹⁴ That decision has since been revoked, and the whisky is sold as plain Auchroisk. Another good example is the famous Islay distillery Ardbeg, which releases whiskies like Airigh Nam Beist, Corryvreckan or Uigeadail. All these names are more than simply exotic sounding words: they rather function as a bridge between Gaelic history and traditions and the present. Keeping these old names alive, enables them to endure the ravages of time.¹⁵ Other distilleries use the names of historical figures of Scotland, like the Highland Park distillery with their Earl Magnus and Saint Magnus bottlings, which evoke the memory of the 12th century first earl of the Orkney Isles, who became a martyr and saint. Many bourbon whiskies carry the names of American (whiskey) pioneers like Elijah Craig or George T. Stagg, while Tennessee’s most famous whisky carries the name of its founder Jack Daniel.

4. Whisky and cultural memory

As shown above, one of its strong ties with culture is the memory that whisky evokes, so I would like to take a further look at cultural memory itself and how whisky is a part of it.

Egyptologists Jan and Aleida Assmann coined this term, defining it as: *die Tradition in uns, die über Generationen, in jahrhunderte-, ja teilweise jahrtausendelanger Wiederholung gehärteten Texte, Bilder und Riten, die unser Zeit- und Geschichtsbewußtsein, unser Selbst- und Weltbild prägen.*¹⁶

The tradition in us, texts, pictures and rites that have been hardened across generations by repetitions lasting centuries or sometimes millennia, which form our conception of time and history and the images we have of ourselves and the world. (translation my own).

Culture reaches back into time and keeps the past present.¹⁷ The reading of the plays of Shakespeare takes us back into the times of Julius Caesar, Macbeth or Henry the Fifth. And drinking a ‘wee dram’ of the afore mentioned Highland Park Saint Magnus reminds of the violent history of the Orkney Islands, its martyred patron saint, and of the 12th century in Northern Europe, with its romantic images of barbaric Vikings, in general. As we drink old vintage bottlings, for example Glenfarclas’ excellent range of ‘Family Casks’, we are reminded of the particular years of each distillation with both personal and historical flashbacks, but also again of whisky’s cultural heritage as a part of, especially, Scottish history, and while these may not be as deep as the memories of ancient Egypt, it is still part of Western cultural memory.

And apart from tradition, objects and even food can be carriers of memory,¹⁸ in our case, whisky.

5. Whisky and Writing

The first major book about whisky and its industry was written by Alfred Barnard in 1887, the groundbreaking *The Distilleries of the United Kingdom*, for which he visited more than 150 distilleries in 1885. Barnard's travels even inspired whisky writer Robin Laing to make a similar journey through Speyside in 2007, which led to his book *The Whisky River*, although many of the distilleries that Barnard visited have long since disappeared. Since Barnard's magnificent work books about whisky have become part of a global trend of writings about food and drink. For lovers of single malt whisky, Michael Jackson's *Malt Whisky Companion*, which appeared for the first time in 1989, became the most important publication. It has been updated a number of times, with the most recent 6th edition appearing in 2010, after the death of its original author. Through his and other books knowledge, of whisky and whisky making has spread along, with the ever increasing popularity of whisky, including knowledge that used to be only for specialists, like cask types, peat content or the history of distilleries. As the general whisky horizon widens, texts about whisky become ever more widely distributed, some of them as annual events like the *Malt Whisky Yearbook* or Jim Murray's *Whisky Bible*. Compared with Barnard's travel diary and his personal tasting notes a lot has changed, with the ways of describing the sensual pleasures of whisky becoming ever more sophisticated. Tasting today is basically split into four to five categories: colour, nose, body, palate and finish are used Michael Jackson's book, while Jim Murray uses nose, taste, finish and balance, and blogger Serge Valentin refers to colour, nose, mouth and finish. All these systems use a 100-point grading system, which has become somewhat of a standard, with 100 points being the perfect whisky (which nobody seems to have found so far). Other writers only describe their tasting impressions without giving any score, like Dave Broom or Dominic Roskrow, who also uses many comparisons with rock music. The real differences, however, lie in the style employed by these, and other, distinguished writers.

Alfred Barnard's main interest lay in describing the distilleries themselves, and also in the description of his travels. Only rarely does he mention the taste of the whisky, and then only in a few sparse words: "The Whisky is a fine Lowland Malt," is what he has to say about the whisky of the long gone Grange distillery.¹⁹

Michael Jackson, whose style of writing is almost as austere as some of the whiskies he describes, and who never uses offensive language for whiskies he rates lowly, describes one whisky as follows: "Macallan Gran Reserva 1981: Colour: Mahogany red, Nose: Freshly cut wood. Sawmill aromas. Body: Viscous, but lighter in body. Palate: similar [to the 1982 bottling] but slightly lighter, and less complex in flavours. Finish: Dry. Very slightly woody and astringent."²⁰ For all of this, he assigns the very high score of 94 points. A true gentleman describing the drink he loves in an inoffensive and objective way that won him fans across the globe.

Serge Valentin, one of the self proclaimed Malt Maniacs, who almost daily updates his Whiksyfun blog, tends to be more detailed and personal, but always reminds his readers that everything he writes is his own opinion:

"Rosebank 15 yo 1990/2006 (59.5%, Blackadder Raw Cask, Hogshead #1522, 294 bottles). Colour; straw. Nose: less talkative and a little less 'evident'. Grassier, with also nice notes of marzipan. Lemony for sure, but less so than the ones we just had. With water: gets very grassy and also a little soapy, even after quite a long time (no simple 'saponification' that quickly vanishes after reduction). Mouth (neat) : a bit harsh, overpowering, more acid than lemony I'd say. Spirity and very 'green'. With water: gets better this time, even good. Creamier, rounder, with a better 'lemony definition'. Finish: rather long but slightly caramelly this time, and also slightly bitterish. Not bad at all but there are better Rosebanks I think. SGP:451 – 78 points."²¹

At the other end of the spectrum there is Jim Murray, the self-anointed "world's foremost whiskey author-

ity,” who never minces words, especially if there is a whisky he does not like. His final verdict on a rare bottling of Dungalas from the Littlemill distillery reads: “For serious whisky devotees or people with a serious grudge against their tastebuds.”²² Murray continues to polarize but was one of the first to recognize the trend towards a globalized whisky world, with excellent whiskies from India, Australia and Europe. He also clamored for the return of rye whiskey in the USA, which has become a very trendy beverage once again after being almost forgotten after the Second World War. His highly personal style, full of colorful metaphors and whisky memories, is at times reminiscent of the writings of literary critic Harold Bloom, whose love for literature is matched by Murray’s love for whisky that is up to his personal standards.

6. Whisky and Marketing

A recent trend is ultra premium bottlings that command prices well in excess of a thousand euros or dollars. All these products heavily emphasize the history and tradition of the whisky linking it to the past of the distillery or the place where it is made. Highland Park offers a limited 50-year-old that comes in a special wooden box shrouded with a hand-crafted silver net that both evokes and symbolizes the elemental forces of the Orkney Islands.

Other evocative bottlings that link themselves to the past include the Ardbeg Double Barrel, two single-cask bottlings from 1974 that come in a hand-made leather case normally used for a double barreled hunting gun, or the Bowmore 40 year that comes in a hand-blown bottle that evokes the rugged coastline of the Isle of Islay.

While all these whiskies are made for the rich, the basic idea of connecting with the tradition, history and the terrain of the place where it was made goes beyond a pure marketing gimmick, as these whiskies are as outstanding as the packaging they come in. The only setback is the sad fact that only very few people will ever get to taste them.

The oldest bottling so far is a 70-year-old Mortlach by independent bottler Gordon & MacPhail, which was distilled in 1939. With this one you are really drinking history.

In recent years the story of an unidentified businessman who invited his friends to share a bottle of 62-year-old Dalmore has become a topic of discussion among whisky aficionados - it was only one of twelve bottles in existence - and those who think that a bottle of whisky that costs about \$70000 is just plain ridiculous.²³

Another recent trend that this time connects whisky to the world of wine making is bottlings that have been finished in barrels that used to hold premium wines like famous Bordeaux crus (for example Chateau D’Yquem), or Italian super Tuscan wines (for example Sassicaia). The Isle of Arran distillery especially is experimenting with wine finishes, not all of them living up to expectations. However, this is essentially a continuation of the traditional use of sherry casks for whisky, which have been in use since the 16th century, as England used to import sherry in casks, which were then discarded.

Labels play also an important part in the marketing of whisky, with many of them featuring Celtic designs that once again reach back in time to emphasize whisky’s ancient heritage. The Bruichladdich distillery on the Isle of Islay, on the other hand, emphasizes the terrain of its locale with a series of bottlings called Rocks, Peat and Waves.

Other evocative bottlings include the Masters of Photography series by the Macallan distillery, with limited releases of bottles adorned with pictures by renowned photographers.

7. Lost in time but not completely gone

However, for all the ways by which whisky reaches back into time and builds a bridge into the present, some whiskies have been lost forever. In the 1980s a number of distilleries in Scotland were closed due to overproduction of whisky. So it is only a matter of time before there will be no more whisky from now iconic distilleries like Brora, Port Ellen or Rosebank, to name but a few. Soon there will be only memories left, unless you are prepared to pay outrageous sums for collector's item bottles that may occasionally show up in the market. Most of the closed distilleries have been demolished, but for some, innovative means of preservation have been found. The Speyside distillery of Dallas Dhu has been converted into a museum by Historic Scotland, providing a fascinating look at a distillery frozen in time, or as Whisky writer Charles MacLean puts it, "preserved in aspic",²⁴ where history comes alive again. Another example is the aforementioned Rosebank distillery, which itself will never be reopened, but will have a kind of successor next door with the planned Falkirk distillery that hopes, in time, to get the rights for the name Rosebank from its owners.²⁵ The potential for an even stronger link to the past was lost when copper thieves stole Rosebank's remaining distillery equipment in 2009, selling it as scrap metal.²⁶ The construction of the new distillery, which tries to reach back into time to link with the old Rosebank distillery, itself ran into trouble with an even older link to the past when the local building council raised objections to new construction, worried that the new building might damage the remains of the Antoine Wall, which was built in 142. However, that conflict seems to have been resolved, and so fans of the old Rosebank eagerly await its recreation.

8. Whisky, Heritage and Globalization

While the heritage of whisky is very much alive in Scotland, with the Whisky Heritage Centre in Edinburgh as a focal point, and other strong traditions exist in Ireland and the USA, there is now a trend towards a worldwide making of whisky which has, of course, very strong ties to its heritage.

Whisky is in many countries part of the post-colonial heritage of their former occupiers. India is today the greatest whisky drinking nation in the world. Its best whisky so far, Amrut, invokes Indian mythology as it is named after a golden pot that contains the elixir of life²⁷, an interesting play on "water of life". And while this name emphasizes India, two recent bottlings, "Two Continents" (first matured in India then in Europe) and "Fusion" (using both Indian and Scottish barley), clearly create a bridge between the former colonial master and its one time subjects. The trend has even been recently reversed, with renowned Australian distiller Bill Lark becoming the advisor for the new Scottish Kingsbarns distillery in Fife, a project spearheaded by two other Australian distillers, Greg Ramsay and Doug Clement, from the Nant distillery in Tasmania. Whisky has, in a way, come full circle.

9. Whisky and Japan

A very special case of whisky and its tradition bridging different cultures while more or less staying true to the traditions of both is that of Scotland and Japan, the latter being one of today's biggest producers and consumers of whisky.

Although Japanese might have tasted whisky before via Dutch merchants in Nagasaki in the 17th century, the

first barrels officially arrived with Commodore Matthew Perry, who forced the opening of Japanese harbors to foreign ships in 1854. The first attempts at making whisky in Japan were probably horrendous, and not in keeping with Scottish distilling traditions, but the results were nevertheless called “Scotch,” one specimen being a brand named “Queen George,” and seemed to have been enough to get foreign sailors drunk.²⁸ In 1919 whisky pioneer Taketsuru Masataka went to Scotland where he studied chemistry at the University of Glasgow before going on to work at different distilleries, among them the Hazelburn distillery where he worked for five months as an apprentice. Coming back to Japan in 1920, he joined forces with businessman Torii Shinjiro and together they founded the Yamazaki distillery near Osaka in 1924, the foundation of what today is the Suntory beverage empire. In 1934 Taketsuru founded his own distillery in Yoichi, Hokkaido, which would become Suntory’s chief rival Nikka.²⁹ Whisky proving once again to be a microcosm of the world of business, Japanese distillers started out copying Scottish methods but have since pulled even with their erstwhile teachers, or have even supplanted them as many international awards for Japanese whiskies show. For example, in 2008 a 20-year-old single malt from Yoichi was crowned best whisky of the year at the World Whisky Awards in Glasgow, in what must have caused a similar cultural shock to that produced when Californian wines beat French ones at the Judgement of Paris wine competition in 1976. To this day Japanese whisky, both single malts and blends, are produced using Scottish methods, but there have also been whiskies matured in Japanese mizunara oak, which gives it a distinct local sandalwood flavor. These whiskies from Japanese oak, and likewise the so-called “card-series”, a series of single cask bottlings named after European playing cards, made by Japanese whisky maker Akuto Ichiro, are cultural hybrids, emphasizing both Japan’s whisky-making tradition and its European roots.

The connection between Japanese and Scotch whisky and its makers runs even deeper. Seven Scottish distillers, Arran, BenRiach, Bladnoch, GlenDronach, Glengyle, Kilchoman and Springbank, have produced 2000 bottles of a vatted malt called “The Spirit of Unity”. Through its sale the organizers hope to raise the sum of 50000 pounds sterling for disaster relief in Japan after the devastating earthquake of March 11th 2011. 120 bottles will be sold in New Zealand to benefit the victims of the earthquake in Christchurch on February 22, 2011.³⁰ Renowned whisky critic Serge Valentin dedicated a whole week of tasting entirely to Japanese malt whiskies, as another gesture of solidarity.³¹ Various whisky websites have also been in touch with Japanese distilleries, informing concerned customers and fans about the health of Japanese employees at these distilleries. Obviously whisky is much more than an alcoholic beverage, as through its tradition it connects two very different peoples in a time of need.

10. Whisky and Space

Festivals have also started to play an important role on the global whisky scene, including cultural events and festival bottlings. The most famous is probably the Feis Isle Islay Malt and Music festival, which started in 1986, with many cultural events celebrating the heritage of the island. Since 2000 the distilleries in Islay have held their own open-house days which include special festival bottlings.³² Another example of such an event is the world-spanning Whisky Life, which takes place in a number of major cities all over the world.³³

What used to be pilgrimages to sacred shrines and places has been replaced by the annual travel of Whisky enthusiasts to their favorite distilleries.³⁴ Journeys like that are also made into travel accounts, like food blogger Kate Hopkins’ *99 Drams of Whiskey* or the aforementioned books by Alfred Barnard and Robin Laing.

11. Whisky and Objects

Objects, which also preserve cultural memory, are another important cultural item, and as the topic of this essay comes in objects, or rather in different kinds of containers, we will now take a look at the relationship between whisky and way it is stored or transported. Before the middle of the 19th century whisky was basically sold in casks, from which the customer would draw a measure into a decanter or serving bottle, as glass bottles, which were used for wine and spirits from the middle of the 17th century, were still expensive and therefore rare. Earthen jugs were also used. In a household with servants one of their tasks was filling the bottles from the casks, and this 'bottler' later became the 'butler', an icon of British culture himself.³⁵

What the classic shape of the original glass bottle of Coca Cola is to soft drinks, the triangle-shaped green bottle of Glenfiddich is to the world of malt whisky. Other companies are trying to recreate old-style bottles, like Aberlour with its Victorian age style bottlings called A'bunadh. Older bottles are also a very much sought after collectors' item.

12. Whisky in Popular Culture

The most important figure in Scotland and its history of whisky is the poet Robert Burns (1759-1796), who immortalized the national drink in many of his poems.

While championing the cause of whisky by speaking out against the ban on private distilling and high taxes on whisky, Burns also became one of the hated excise men, as a means of earning a steady income. And although he liked the Scottish national beverage, and had a reputation as a drunkard, Burns did not drink more than his average countryman, and sometimes even didn't drink at all due to health problems.³⁶

In popular culture whisky or whiskey has often been associated with male heroes and their supposed toughness. Especially in Westerns, the heroes are always slamming back bourbon whisky, often to comical effect, but never so much that the hero is not able to perform his duties, such as rescuing the woman or shooting the bad guy. John Wayne as Marshal Rooster Cogburn in *True Grit* (1969) is a good example of such a hard drinking character, who nevertheless saves the girl and kills all the villains.

In *The Big Sleep* (1946) Philip Marlowe, played by Humphrey Bogart, has one of the great whiskey scenes of all time when he seduces a bookstore clerk by saying: "You know, it just happens I have a bottle of pretty good rye in my pocket," while he is on a stakeout.³⁷ Bogart portrayed many hard drinking characters, but was also that way in real life.

Even a Japanese whisky, Suntory's 17-year-old Hibiki blend, played an important role in the American movie *Lost in Translation* (2003), which starred Bill Murray as Bob Harris an actor, who comes to Japan for an advertising campaign for that particular whisky. The release of the movie coincided with Suntory's Yamazaki 12-year-old single malt whisky winning of a gold medal at the International Spirits Challenge in London, making Japanese whiskies known to a wider public for the first time. Because of its superior age and price the 17-year-old Hibiki is even more prestigious, with a longer tradition, but as the title of the movie points out all of this is "lost in translation":

"Director: Mr. Bob-san. [In Japanese] You're relaxing in your study. There's a bottle of Suntory whisky on the table. You understand, right? Say it with intense feeling, slowly, looking at the camera, tenderly, as if to an old friend. Like Bogie in Casablanca: "Here's looking at you kid ... " Suntory Time.

Interpreter: He wants you to turn, look in camera. OK?

Bob: That's all he said?"³⁸

Obviously the interpreter does not think the American actor is capable of understanding the real importance of Hibiki, but interestingly enough even the Japanese director acknowledges the iconic status of Humphrey Bogart when it comes to whisky. Japanese whisky is being portrayed as both grounded in its own tradition and while being strongly connected to Western iconic images, something that could be said about a lot of Japanese modern culture, with its interplay between Japanese tradition and idolization of the West.

Perhaps the greatest fictional Scottish character, chief engineer James Montgomery Scott, aka Scottie, of the spaceship USS Enterprise, also is very fond of his national drink. In the original Star Trek episode *By Any Other Name* (1968), he even drinks a villainous alien under the table, thereby preventing the intruders from taking over the Enterprise. In the Star Trek: The Next Generation episode *Relics* (1992), he is not fooled by synthetic whisky but insists on the real thing as he tries to reconnect with his lost past onboard the original Enterprise.

Another famous fictional Scott, the Edinburgh policeman John Rebus, written by Ian Rankin, is also very fond of single malt whisky. In the tradition of American hard-boiled detectives like the aforementioned Philip Marlowe, Rebus often drinks too much but always solves the mystery. Jeffrey Deaver's quadriplegic forensic specialist Lincoln Rhyme is also very fond of whisky, as one of the few pleasures still left to him.

There are, of course, many real life celebrities enjoying whisky. Here I will just mention two: renowned German poet Durs Grünbein's wife owned a shop called Whisky and Cigars in Berlin, while Prince Charles likes Laphroig from the Isle of Islay, where he once almost crashed his private plane while attempting to land it.³⁹

Whisky is also mentioned in folk and rock music, as in Don McLean's song *American Pie* where he sings about "Them good old boys were drinkin' whiskey and rye," Irish band Thin Lizzy's song *Whiskey in the Jar*, or Alice Cooper's album and title track *Lace and Whiskey*.

As all this goes to show, Whisky (or Whiskey) is an integral part of human history and culture. Linked to its past, entrenched in its present and looking toward its future.

Slainte.

13. Bibliography

Books cited:

Allhoff, Fritz and Marcus P. Adams (Ed.) 2010. *Whiskey and Philosophy*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.

Assmann, Jan 2001. *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*. In: Kolloquien des Max Weber-Kollegs XV-XXIII, pp. 9-27. Erfurt: Universität Erfurt.

Assmann, Jan 2006. *Thomas Mann und Ägypten*. München: C. H. Beck.

Barnard, Alfred 1887/2008 Facsimile Edition. *The Whisky Distilleries of the United Kingdom*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.

Broom, Dave 2010. *The World Atlas of Whisky*. London: Mitchell Beazley.

Buxrud, Ulf 2008. *Japanese Whisky*. Malmö: DataAnalys Scandinavia.

Buxton, Ian 2010. *101 Whiskies to Try Before You Die*. London: Hachette.

- Hopkins, Kate 2009. *99 Drams of Whiskey*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Jackson, Michael 2010. *Michael Jackson's Malt Whisky Companion*. 6th Edition. London: Dorling Kindersly.
- Laing, Robin 2007. *The Whisky River*. Edinburgh: Luath Press
- MacLean, Charles (Ed.) 2008. *Whisky*. London: Dorling Kindersly.
- MacLean, Charles 2009. *Whiskypedia*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.
- Murray, Jim 2006. *Whisky Bible 2006*. London: Carlton Books.
- Murray, Jim 2010. *Whisky Bible 2011*. Wellingborough, UK: Dram Good Books.
- Ronde, Ingvar (Ed.) 2010. *Malt Whisky Yearbook 2011*. Shrewsbury, UK: MagDig Media.
- Ronde, Ingvar (Ed.) 2009. *Malt Whisky Yearbook 2010*. Shrewsbury, UK: MagDig Media.
- Ronde, Ingvar (Ed.) 2008. *Malt Whisky Yearbook 2009*. Shrewsbury, UK: MagDig Media.
- Ronde, Ingvar (Ed.) 2007. *Malt Whisky Yearbook 2008*. Shrewsbury, UK: MagDig Media.
- Roskrow, Dominic 2010. *The World's Best Whiskies*. New York: Abrams.
- Standage, Tom 2005. *A History of the World in 6 Glasses*. New York: Walker.
- Udo, Misako 2006. *The Scottish Whisky Distilleries*. Edinburgh: Black & White.

Web sites cited:

- <http://www.whiskyfun.com/>
- <http://caskstrength.blogspot.com/>
- <http://www.whiskyintelligence.com/>
- <http://whiskymagazine.wordpress.com/>
- <http://www.whatsonxiamen.com/>
- <http://www.nonjatta.blogspot.com>

注

- 1 Whisky and Philosophy. p.XIII
- 2 Ibid, p.IX
- 3 Whisky and Philosophy, p.5
- 4 Malt Whisky Companion Vol.6, pp.15,16
- 5 The Classic Whisky Guide, p.39
- 6 The History of the World in Six Glasses, pp.93-97
- 7 Malt Whisky Companion Vol.6, p.372
- 8 Whisky and Philosophy, p.68,69
- 9 Malt Whisky Yearbook 2011, pp.154, 194. With the whisky scene constantly changing there are sure to be more farmhouse style distilleries in the foreseeable future.
- 10 Whisky Bible 2008, pp. 9-12
- 11 <http://caskstrength.blogspot.com/> Entry from 6th April 2011: The Return of the Prodigal Whisky. Entry from 18th November 2009: Do You Want Ice With That? Accessed 10th April 2011.
- 12 Miscellany of Whisky, p.106
- 13 For example the Malt Whisky Companion Vol.6, p.17
- 14 Murray Classic Whisky Guide, p.80
- 15 Das kulturelle Gedächtnis, p.11

- 16 Thomas Mann und Ägypten, p.70
- 17 Das kulturelle Gedächtnis, p.13
- 18 Ibid p.18
- 19 The Whisky Distilleries of the United Kingdom, p.317
- 20 Malt Whisky Companion, p.325
- 21 <http://www.whiskyfun.com/archivedecember07-1.html#141207>, accessed May 8th 2011
- 22 Whisky Bible 2006, p.141
- 23 99 Drams of Whiskey, pp.4-6
- 24 Whiskypedia, p.124
- 25 Malt Whisky Yearbook 2011, p.244
- 26 Ibid, p.198
- 27 World's Best Whiskies, p.273
- 28 Whisky and Philosophy, pp.302,303
- 29 For a detailed history of Japanese whisky see: Japanese Whisky
- 30 <http://nonjatta.blogspot.com/> posted 8 April 2011. Accessed 10th April 2011
- 31 <http://www.whiskyfun.com/> postings from March 13 to March 22, 2011. Accessed 10th April 2011.
- 32 See: <http://www.scotlandwhisky.com/whisky-festivals/Islay-malt-and-Music-festival/> Accessed February 20th 2011
- 33 <http://www.whiskymagjapan.com/live/2011/index.en.html> for the 2011 event in Tokyo, accessed on February 28th 2011
- 34 Das kulturelle Gedächtnis, p.18
- 35 Miscellany of Whisky, pp.158-168
- 36 Ibid, pp.238-244
- 37 The Classic Whisky Guide, p.316
- 38 www.whatsonxiamen.com/wine_msg.php?titleid=1509 Accessed 28th May 2011
- 39 The Classic Whisky Guide, p.174