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RICHARD W. UNGER, *A History of Brewing in Holland, 900–1900: Economy, Technology and the State*. Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 2001. Pp. xxii, 428; 40 black-and-white illustrations, black-and-white figures, tables, and 1 map. \$154.

Writing the history of brewing in Holland from 900 to 1900 is a risky enterprise, but Richard Unger has brought it off. Urban beer production in the Low Countries started in Dordrecht in the eleventh century as a local domestic production. From the thirteenth century on, it became an industry and an international export product. In 1285 the count of Holland tried to concentrate beer trade in the new planned town of Brouwershaven ("port of brewers"), but without lasting results. Between 1450 and 1650 the beer trade contributed largely to the expansion of other industries and trades in Holland. Its slowing down in the sixteenth century was originally the result of competition from foreign beers and protectionist measures abroad. A second threat came from distilled spirits. The real hard decline, between 1650 and 1860, occurred as part of a general collapse of Dutch industry. For beer this process started earlier, because of declining demand, deteriorating quality, alternative tropical drinks, like coffee and tea. The industry took off again after 1870 with the real industrialization of brewing.

Unger considers brewing extensively as social history, first within rituals in a variety of public festivals and private celebrations. New products largely influenced trendy consumption. Hop beer from northern Germany became a status product, so competitive on the Dutch market around 1300 that the count authorized Dutch brewers to imitate the German product. Consumption was also linked to dietary problems of safe drinking and excessive use of salt in food; only after 1860 was there no longer a dietary necessity. Brewing is part of social history in a second way. Brewers guilds were set up primarily to protect workers within the sector and to regulate labor and production quality. In the fifteenth century, guilds disappeared in Dordrecht and other places, and when reintroduced in 1583 they slipped off to improper use by favoring members of a closed elite, selected on the basis of property rather than on skill. Women were an important part of the working force. Many were involved in small, independent production units of husbands and wives. Widows could easily run the breweries of their late husbands. Strangely, women disappeared more or less from the industry in the early seventeenth century.

Technology is examined in chapter 4 and in two appendices on materials and measures. Unger explains the variety of products, mainly three types from high quality to medium and thin beer, as well as specific types like the "kuit" in Gouda and the "dubbelsbier" in Haarlem. The technological infrastructure was never static, but changed as brewers experimented with new tastes. At first hops had to be imported, but as early as 1325 hops were being grown as ordinary field crops on the Dutch countryside.

Brewing is business history. Small and medium-large firms struggled to survive economic constraints and political pressures, coped with the permanent necessity of new investments, and used strategies of limitation of supply in order to drive up prices. In the sixteenth century the main reaction to government regulations was the increase of the scale of firms and the concentration of capital in bigger enterprises.

Last, but not least, brewing is political history, an interplay of technical change and government action. Rulers and local city boards in the Low Countries were interested in raising indirect taxes on the production and consumption of beer as a crucial component of their income and of their political and economic strategies. Urban aldermen also promulgated protectionist regulations to encourage export and to reduce the importing of beer from other cities in Holland, but more specifically from England and Germany. Although an amazing number of doctoral and M.A. dissertations have been produced at universities in the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United States, from 1932 on, on brewing in several cities of Holland and the old Netherlands, only a few of them have been published and

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then usually in local journals and virtually all in the Dutch language. Historians should therefore be grateful to the Canadian historian Richard W. Unger for this comprehensive study, considering the long term, all the Dutch cities, and all aspects of the brewing process, economy, technology, finance, labor, and politics.

Numerous tables and figures illustrate the text. Most of them are excellent. A few remarks, however: Comparison of beer prices on table IV-2 (p. 123) is virtually impossible, because they are not converted to a single currency; a better presentation can be found on page 81, on the beer output. The entry on page 127, on the import of three hundred thousand liters in Biervliet in 1427, is not very significant, as the population figure is not mentioned. This figure, at least an estimation of it, is available (my article in *Revue du Nord* 65 [1983], 264); the level of 234 families suggests that the beer cannot have been intended for purely local consumption. On page 226 Unger mentions that in 1742 the income of the richest brewer of Amsterdam was ten times that of the poorest, and that seventeen brewers belonged to the top 6 percent of the income earners in town; page 223, however, lists only seventeen breweries in the city in 1749. Where are the poor then? The topic of protectionism in cities, and the effort to reduce or destroy competition, is interesting (p. 182) but not isolated to the brewery sector alone. It should be considered within the broader context of the interplay of town and countryside, as has been studied by David Nicholas (*Town and Countryside: Social, Economic, and Political Tensions in Fourteenth-Century Flanders* [Brugge, 1971], pp. 53–172). Unger does not mention on page 63 that the regulation of 1408, to restrict the export of beer to the quantity of imported rye and wheat, was annulled by the count of Holland in January 1409 on the request of the formal group of the cities of Holland (W. Prevenier and J. G. Smit, *Bronnen voor de geschiedenis der dagvaarten van de Staten en steden van Holland voor 1544, 1/2: 1276–1433* [The Hague, 1987], p. 435. This edition has not been used, though it gives numerous data on beer trade; see 1/1:276, lemma “Bier”). On page 140 Unger argues that “brewers and even towns petitioned for relief” from excise taxes; I easily understand the viewpoint of the brewers here, but less that of the towns, as they were the beneficiary of the introduction of these urban taxes; some critical comment is advisable.

The high quality of this marvelous work is the outcome of an exceptional combination of talents. Unger reads Dutch, essential here, as all the sources and secondary literature are written in that language. He has long-standing experience in archival research and has marshaled a huge number of unpublished documents from the urban archives of Dordrecht, Delft, Haarlem, Hoorn, Veere, Amersfoort, Enkhuizen, Leiden, Amsterdam, Gouda, and Leuven and from the state archives in The Hague, Brussels, and Zeeland. Unger undertook meritorious search for iconographical sources, many of them have been reproduced in this volume.

Unger is at ease with economic concepts and statistical methods, and, most importantly, he confronts a large variety of fundamental and new questions in the sources, well fitting in current historiographical interests. This work has a perfect balance of analysis and synthesis.

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