History 3029 Transnational History: A New Perspective on the Past
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Instructor: Dr Birgit Schneider
Student: WU Wai Man, Will

Book review

Gootenberg, Paul. *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Cocaine is generally known as nothing more than a harmful, addictive drug, like heroin, methamphetamine or opium. While the legal use of cocaine prior to the 1920s might be known, it is hidden behind myths and seen with the biases of the present. Paul Gootenberg's book, *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug,* tells the story of the legal cocaine industry in the Andes region. He shows us how different cocaine is before being considered a drug, and outlines the history of the Peruvian coca industry from the 1880s to the 1970s.

The author, Paul Gootenberg, is professor of history and sociology at Stony Brook University, and specialises in modern Peruvian economy, trade and drugs.[1] He has been long devoted to the research of Latin America. Trained as an interdisciplinary historian in Cambridge and Chicago, his PhD thesis was titled *Merchants, Foreigners and the State: The Origins of Trade Policies in Post-Independence Peru* (1985).[2] In his academic career, he continued to write, translate, and publish books and articles about the Peruvian economy and commodities. Out of his four books, three are dedicated to the commercial and economic policy of post-colonial Peru.[3] The remaining one is the one under review here, *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug*.

Content

The book is divided chronologically into three sections, with seven chapters in total. The two chapters from the first section cover the period before 1910. They describe the native roots, discovery and promotion of cocaine. The three chapters in the second part, covering the period from 1910 to the end of World War II, depict the challenges and eventual decline of the Peruvian cocaine industry. The two chapters in the last section, starting from the end of World War II to around the 1970s, cover the demise

[1] Stony Brook University, "Curriculum Vitae: Paul Gootenberg." Stony Brook University. http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/history/documents/Paul-Gootenberg-cv-2015.pdf (accessed Nov. 1, 2017).
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

of legal cocaine and the raise of illicit cocaine. The three sections are followed by an appendix, with data, footnotes, a historiographic essay of academic research on cocaine and a bibliography.

The story of cocaine starts with the coca plant. A distinction must first be made between coca leaves and cocaine. Coca is a native plant chewed by the Andes natives as a stimulant, similar to tea or coffee to modern people.[4] On the other hand, cocaine is an alkaloid first extracted from the coca plant by a German chemist, Emanuel Merck of Darmstadt.[5] It is a product of modernity and science, as scientists hoped to exploit its "hygienic power"[6] to reenergise farmers and workers, and for its ability to replace to tea or coffee.

This distinction is necessary to understand why cocaine is global, yet Peruvian. Coca is an Andean product, but cocaine is a product of modernity. They unite the hopes for Peruvian modernisation through cocaine production by combining the mystical, native, Andean, Peruvian coca plant with modern cocaine. Gootenberg describes it as a "happy marriage"[7] between the new cocaine and the old coca. Motivated by nationalist zeal, promoting cocaine becomes a nationalist project. Although it is a German chemist who first extracted cocaine, the initial method is not efficient, and commercialisation is only made possible by an improvement made by a Peruvian-French chemist, Alfredo Bignon. Using two locally available materials, kerosene and soda, Bignon opens the way for local production. Political economy also comes into play, as not only chemists are involved, but also traders, envoys and governments. Eventually, coca becomes the "the most dynamic export"[8] of Peru in the nineteenth century. A wide range of products in the world with cocaine emerge, among which beverages with cocaine like the American Coca-Cola and French Vin Mariani proved to be very popular.[9] Cocaine is also used medically, mainly in Germany and Japan.

After the 1910s, however, the Peruvian coca industry experiences setbacks. Despite Peruvian zeal, industrialisation with cocaine never materialises. Peru stays at the lower end of the production for raw materials and initial processing with little industry. Coca remains as a peasant crop with low technological input, resulting in problems like low productivity and soil depletion.[10] With competition from plantations in Dutch Java with higher technological input, Peruvian coca becomes increasing

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[4] Paul Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 16-17.
[5] Ibid., 22-24.
[6] Ibid., 52.
[7] Ibid., 100.
[8] Ibid., 55.
[9] Ibid., 57-58.
[10] Ibid., 94-102.

marginalised from the market.[11] The nationalist zeal begins to fade away, as the modernisation promise is never realised.

Yet, the demise of legal cocaine does not come before the Second World War. The author attributes this to the American anti-narcotics movement. The U.S. has been the champion of narcotics control. Cocaine is actually of minor interest to it; its major enemies are heroin, marijuana and opium.[12] Nevertheless, cocaine is banned in the U.S. in 1922, with an exception for Coca-Cola to make their drinks.[13] More importantly, the U.S. attempts to export its drug prohibition model to other countries through the League of Nations. The League, however, fails to promote the prohibitionist model as there is no political will among other countries.[14] After World War II, however, the U.S. becomes a hegemonic power. Its drug control model becomes the default, adopted by the United Nations. With the vanquished Germans and Japanese, and the Dutch yielding to American demands, there is no more legal cocaine producers or consumers.[15] Peru suddenly finds itself in isolation, facing strong US pressure to ban drugs. In 1949, the military junta bans cocaine and adopts U.S.-style prohibition, effectively ending all forms of legal cocaine.

But how does cocaine turn into the "crack" on the streets and in discos in the 1960s? The author tries to explain this in the last chapter of the last section. I think this is where the author is least successful. Gootenberg considers the subsequent surge of demand for cocaine as a result of the American prohibitionist policy. He calls those demands in the United States a "political construct" by "cold warrior Richard M. Nixon" and his War on Drugs policy.[16] However, Gootenberg does not explicate the link between prohibitionist policy and surge for demand. Arnold Bauer, one of the reviewers, thinks Gootenberg takes a naturalist approach. When the government suppresses one drug, people will automatically switch to another. When heroin is suppressed, people will switch to cocaine. And when cocaine is suppressed, people will switch to marijuana. [17] This explanation, however, is unsatisfying. While Gootenberg points to factors that lead to these changes, he does not give the whole chain of reasons for the switch of taste. Yet, we can be sure that the transition indeed happens, and the demands for

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[11] Ibid., 125-26.
[12] Ibid., 208-11.
[13] Ibid., 194-96.
[14] Ibid., 207.
[15] Ibid., 230-34.
[16] Ibid., 307.
[17] Arnold J. Bauer, "Tracking Cocaine," review of *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug,* by Paul Gootenberg, *A Contracorriente: A Journal on Social History and Literature in Latin America* 7, no. 2 (Winter 2010), 373-74, https://projects.ncsu.edu/project/acontracorriente/winter_10/reviews/Bauer_rev.pdf.

cocaine paradoxically increased after the prohibition. This may be considered the static background for the drug trafficking in the 1970s.

The author is more successful, however, in describing the key actors in the drug trafficking of this period. As demand for cocaine for recreational use revives, illicit cocaine all over Latin America fills this gap. The key players in this production chain are the illicit coca producers in Peru and Bolivia, with Chileans and Cubans as middlemen since the 1950s.[18] In the 1970s, the notoriously violent Columbian drug gangs take over the Cuban ones, taking advantage of the weak Columbian state.[19] Indeed, this is a pan-American effort. This is also the time when cocaine becomes the street drug that we know today. To me, the third section is a long epilogue of the Peruvian cocaine industry after the prohibition. The author is only interested in the subsequent development of the underground cocaine industry after 1949. The surge of demand serves only as a reason for the emergence of these underground networks.

Review

The narrative of the book is firmly grounded in research. Many reviewers praise the author for his excellent scholarship and the wide use of archival sources. Rosemary Thorp calls the research "first-rate scholarship."[20] Elaine Carey calls his work "extensive and comprehensive" compared to previous academic works.[21] Gootenberg relies on a wide range of primary and secondary sources. His primary sources are mainly from archives, official records and interviews. He visits national and regional archives in Peru, including archives in the Peruvian capital of Lima and former cocaine production centre of Huánuco. For narcotics control movements, he uses sources from U.S. and UN archives and official reports from the U.S. and Interpol. He also conducted interviews with the persons related to cocaine production in Lima, Huánuco and New York, like the former cocaine tycoon, the Durand family. These primary sources are used as evidence for his arguments. They show the author's solid research and understanding of his topic.

For his secondary sources, Gootenberg investigated three themes. Firstly, he looked for comparison in other indulgences like tea, coffee, and alcohol, but also other drugs like marijuana and heroin. Secondly, he investigated Andean history, not only Peru but also other states, and their relations with the U.S. Thirdly, he investigated other scholarly works about cocaine. The use of secondary sources

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[18] Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine*, 301-2.
[19] Ibid., 302.
[20] Rosemary Thorp, Review of *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug*, by Paul Gootenberg, *The American Historical Review* 115, no. 4 (October 2010): 1200. http://www.jstor.org.eproxy2.lib.hku.hk/stable/23303318.
[21] Elaine Carey, "Cocaine's Rise and Fall: A New Global History," Review of *Andean Cocaine*: *The Making of a Global Drug*, by Paul Gootenberg. *H-LatAm* (April 2011), https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=32733.

places the book in a dialogue with previous scholarship, responding to and answering questions that were not previously addressed.

The sources and arguments tend to focus on the economics of cocaine production, perhaps due to the author's economic background. For example, he meticulously describes the differences in the commercial use of Northern Trujillo leaves and Southern Huánuco leaves, as the Trujillo leaves are for syrup and Coca-Cola, the Huánuco leaves are for cocaine.[22] The entire third chapter is devoted to the commodity chain of cocaine, tracking the source of coca, the traders, the shippers and the distributers in different countries. For characters, he chooses to write about prominent figures like chemists, politicians, cocaine industrialist, traders, farmer-colonist communities etc. He also calls coca the "herb of capitalism"[23] and the trade of illicit cocaine "cocaine capitalism,"[24] applying economic terms in describing cocaine. With the sources and writing, the book seeks to explain the economics of the cocaine industry across different time periods.

However, I think the book lacks an explanation of the social role of cocaine. Comparatively little is known about the lower end of production, such as the farmers and natives and their living conditions, and about consumers and abusers. They are mainly depicted with a high degree of generalisation. For example, we know there are uses of legal cocaine for medical or other reasons, but the author does not go into why and how cocaine is consumed, and who exactly consumes it. Michael Gonzales, a reviewer, shares this viewpoint, noticing that readers still do not know the social conditions of the industry, like coca farming, labour recruitment and the social relations of production.[25] Therefore, it seems that the author's understanding of the social conditions is rather static. Social conditions are only treated as a general background before which trade and production occur. Their changes and their interaction with cocaine is not of much interest to the author. This prevents readers from gaining a comprehensive grasp of the status of early legal cocaine.

The book also has a political dimension. The author also seems to apply Dependency Theory, and affirms the dependency of Peru by showing its volatility due to external influences. As some readers may notice, Latin America is the birthplace of Dependency Theory. The theory states that the more developed nations at the core, such as the U.S., will always exploit the less developed countries of the periphery, such as Peru. There is no way to escape this dependency, unless the dependent countries develop their

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[22] Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine*, 62-63.
[23] Ibid., 52.
[24] Ibid., 292.
[25] Michael J. Gonzales, Review of *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug*, by Paul Gootenberg, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2010): 170-71.

domestic industries by eliminating foreign competition, using means such as tariffs and quotas. While Gootenberg does not indicate the use of Dependency Theory in his book, his narrative of legal cocaine clearly fits this theory. Although cocaine is promoted and produced by the Peruvians, modernisation never follows, as Peru remains at the lower end of the production chain. The technologies are controlled by developed countries, such as the German Merck pharmaceuticals and the Dutch plantations. This gives the impression that the Peruvian invention is being exploited by rich countries. In the later stages, Peru cannot resist the enormous pressure from the U.S. to ban and annihilate its cocaine industry, contrary to Peruvian interests and against its culture. The lesson of Dependency Theory is that states should block imports and external influence, and develop their own industry. This may explain Gootenberg's hostility towards the Nixonian War on Drugs and his sympathy to the drug industry. Although I believe in the author's integrity in authentically presenting his materials, his narrative may simply fit too well with the theory. It raises concerns over whether the author trimmed his materials to fit the theory. There is also the problem of representation of different actors. The author seems unduly sympathetic to cocaine producers. According to the theory, nations should protect their national producers against foreign intervention. Here, the theory tells to protect the legal cocaine producers against foreign prohibitionist movements, and the author indeed takes a similar position. While the modernisation efforts of the cocaine industry are explicated, cocaine's negative impacts, such as on health or labour, are not discussed. The anti-narcotics movement, on the other hand, is either depicted statically like the social conditions, or framed as undue American influence, but its viewpoints and arguments are not well presented. It might have been a good idea to evaluate the arguments and evidence of the early anti-narcotics movement through, for example, the early medical records of cocaine use. And if the anti-narcotics movement has a point, perhaps the author should have given it some credit. It does not make the author's arguments more convincing to shy away from such debates. Besides, if the author is really trying to apply the theory, he should recognise and discuss it.

There is also a clear geographical focus in the book. The book is centred on Peru or, in the author's own words, "the Huánuco-Lima-Washington American Axis."[26] I think the author is successful in justifying this axis as being most important in the early history of cocaine throughout the book, and the book is mostly devoted to this Axis. The problem is, however, shown when compared with other countries with similar background, such as Bolivia. The author often draws comparisons between Peru and Bolivia. In the pre-WWII period, the League of Nations makes early attempts in controlling cocaine production under the pressure of the U.S. While Peru simply ignores it, Bolivia protests avidly on the

[26] Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine*, 6.

grounds of local culture.[27] Another example is the form of coca production. While Peruvian coca has become more organised and export-oriented, the Bolivian coca is grown locally and for local consumption across all classes.[28] It would have added to the depth of the argument if their differences had been explored. However, Bolivia is never at the core of the book, and the descriptions of Bolivian coca are spread across different sections of the book, used only when they offer a worthy comparison with Peru. It seems that the author has been too limiting in his scope. Rather than writing an account of early legal cocaine, he gives the history of Peruvian cocaine only. Comparison with other places may be necessary to gain a full picture of the early cocaine industry around the world.

Even though the book is a Peruvian account, the international elements of the story are indispensable. The drug was discovered by a German chemist, promoted and produced by Peruvians, emulated by the Dutch, but then suppressed by the Americans and smuggled by other Latin American countries. The smaller international involvements are not forgotten, with Croatian colonists in Pozuzo, Chinese agents, and Japanese traders. Although the narrative is centred on Peru, the author by no means denies the international forces which shape Peruvian and world cocaine.

Rather than "Peruvian history" or "world history," I prefer to call this "glocal" history, a term that is actually used by the author as well.[29] The word "glocal" combines both "global" and "local." It recognises the uniqueness of Peru, without neglecting the various international forces at play in Peruvian cocaine. Neither can be abandoned. This is more useful than only emphasising the global or local elements, though I am slightly in favour of the local elements over the global ones, because it is too easy to draw our attention from the periphery to the core, from the specificity to the commonality, and forget about the uniqueness of Peru.

Although I may have made some criticisms, they are relatively minor to the great scholarship of this book. Gootenberg says that this book is a "new drug history"[30] with which academic historians are trying to replace "medical amateurs and muckraking journalists"[31] and their biased narratives. I think he is enormously successful at this. We, the general readers, have been too clogged with negative and preconceived notions when it comes to drugs; drugs that are bad and destructive, but also recreational, exotic and exciting. The economic approach of this book completely avoids engaging with these presumptions. The author shows that cocaine can also be a commodity, and a subject of national

[27] Ibid., 136-37.
[28] Ibid., 111-17.
[29] Ibid., 7.
[30] Ibid., 3.
[31] Ibid.

imagination. His disengagement with the moralistic-prohibitionist debates seems to be reasonable, in order not to distract readers from his narrative. His narrative adds a new dimension to the narcotics debates, and proposes new ways to think of drugs and cocaine.

This book is not an easy read, despite its "juicy" topic. Readers might be disappointed if they want to explore the roots and proliferation of cocaine as a drug. The history of Andean cocaine has few commonalities with the illicit, recreational use of the cocaine we know today. Therefore, I would suggest this book more to learned readers with a good understanding of drug history, Latin American history or economics. The general public might be easily overwhelmed by the details of this book, and unable to satisfy their general interest in drugs.

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