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## High Society: The Central Role of Mind-Altering Drugs in History, Science, and Culture

*By Mike Jay*



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### High Society: The Central Role of Mind-Altering Drugs in History, Science, and Culture By Mike Jay

An illustrated cultural history of drug use from its roots in animal intoxication to its future in designer neurochemicals

- Featuring artwork from the upcoming High Society exhibition at the Wellcome Collection in London, one of the world's greatest medical history collections
- Explores the roles drugs play in different cultures as medicines, religious sacraments, status symbols, and coveted trade goods
- Reveals how drugs drove the global trade and cultural exchange that made the modern world
- Examines the causes of drug prohibitions a century ago and the current "war on drugs"

Every society is a high society. Every day people drink coffee on European terraces and kava in Pacific villages; chew betel nut in Indonesian markets and coca leaf on Andean mountainsides; swallow ecstasy tablets in the clubs of Amsterdam and opium pills in the deserts of Rajastan; smoke hashish in Himalayan temples and tobacco and marijuana in every nation on earth.

Exploring the spectrum of drug use throughout history--from its roots in animal intoxication to its future in designer neurochemicals--*High Society* paints vivid portraits of the roles drugs play in different cultures as medicines, religious sacraments, status symbols, and coveted trade goods. From the botanicals of the classical world through the mind-bending self-experiments of 18th- and 19th-century scientists to the synthetic molecules that have transformed our understanding of the brain, Mike Jay reveals how drugs such as tobacco, tea, and opium drove the global trade and cultural exchange that created the modern world and examines the forces that led to the prohibition of opium and cocaine a century ago and the "war on drugs" that rages today.



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“Mike Jay’s book offers an excellently researched account of the changing interface of drug use, social values, international trade and commerce, and cultural conditioning. It makes for a fascinating read for those interested in our long and varied relationship with psychoactive materials and our quest for novelty.” (*Tom Soloway Pinkson, Ph.D., author of The Shamanic Wisdom of the Huichol: Medicine Teachings for Modern Times*)

“The fascinating history of mind-altering substances is given an articulate and intelligent treatment in Mike Jay’s intriguing narrative. This is anything but a dry recounting. The intertwined influences of culture, politics, and finance on the history and perception of drug use are chronicled in this well-written and engrossing study.” (*J. D. Arthur, author of Salvia Divinorum: Doorway to Thought-Free Awareness*)

“I encourage you to read *High Society* to get a different perspective; one of research and historical facts before making a decision of what side you are taking. This is a good read and a good knowledge base for further contemplation and personal research.” (*Irene Watson, Reader Views, November 2010*)

“. . . an excellent introduction to the history of drugs: concise, readable, profound in its implications, and beautifully presented.” (*Jonathan Taylor, Erowid, October 2011*)

“The impressive collection of pictures alone makes this book outstanding. Well illustrated—literally—are the roles drugs play as medicines, religious sacraments, status symbols, and trade goods. This is no dry, academic account, but a colorful, cross-cultural history of people, as well as birds and animals, seeking pain relief, enjoyment, creativity, or enlightenment through plants. It covers centuries of both use and abuse.” (*American Herb Association, September 2012*)

#### From the Back Cover

#### ENTHEOGENS / POPULAR CULTURE

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MIKE JAY is a leading specialist in the study of drugs across history and cultures. The author of *Artificial Paradises*, *Emperors of Dreams*, and *The Atmosphere of Heaven*, his critical writing on drugs has appeared in many publications, including *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, and *The International Journal of Drug Policy*. He sits on the editorial board of the addiction journal *Drugs and Alcohol Today* and on the board of the Transform Drug Policy Foundation. He lives in England.

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