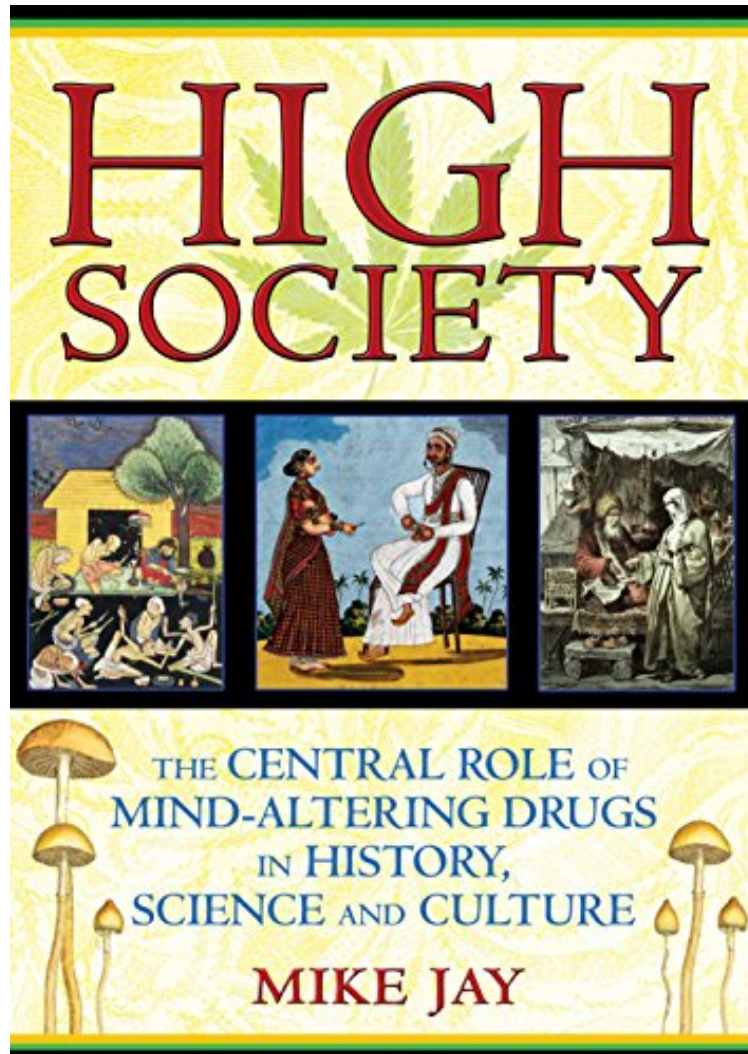


[Read now] High Society: The Central Role of Mind-Altering Drugs in History, Science, and Culture

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Mike Jay

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Mike Jay : High Society: The Central Role of Mind-Altering Drugs in History, Science, and Culture before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised High Society: The Central Role of Mind-Altering Drugs in History, Science, and Culture:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Well-written, comprehensive and thoroughBy Melody BaconThis is an excellent book on a topic about which little is written. The author presents a comprehensive overview of the history of psychoactive substances across time and culture. A must read for anyone interested in substance use and abuse.12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. A Core Human Activity Examined HistoricallyBy Dr. Debra Jan

Neither a dry academic treatise nor a strident advocacy, Jay's book is a very well-illustrated cultural and historical survey of the use of natural, purified, and synthesized psychoactive substances by every society around the globe, from deep rain forests to mountain peaks, from modern cities to desert oases. The book follows the exhibit under the same title presented at the famous Wellcome Collection in History of Medicine in London, England. Besides the spiritual and religious use (entheogens), the consumption of such agents have been social lubricants and glues, creative stimulants for artists, poets, and writers, relaxants, pharmacologically useful sleep-inducers and painkillers, and scientific tools in studying brain and mind. The pleasure and curiosity of consciousness-altering plants are not just human activities, for birds and mammals are known to seek them. Those groups and societies that attempted to eliminate all mind-altering substances were stagnant, staid, anxious, and short-lived. Islam may have forbidden alcohol consumption but coffee, tea, and tobacco in turn took its place. Even sugar and chocolate have been sought for its psychotropic effects. The story of this psychobiological need is fascinatingly told, and the historical color images enhance the discussion. I found particularly interesting the first specific book on psychoactive plants: Carl Linnaeus, the pioneer taxonomist, wrote *Inebriantia* in 1762. Betel-Areca nut preparations, kava, coca, khat, tobacco, ayuhuasca, peyote, psilocybin mushroom, opium, cannabis, tea, coffee, alcohol, nitrous oxide, LSD, MMDA (ecstasy), and other agents have been used (and sometimes abused), both prescribed, and proscribed. Government-supported industry and underground industry developing and trading these agents have a long history. The Opium Wars are an example of the importance trade could be in furthering government policies. If Jay offers any lessons, it is through historical exemplars. I, however, have no problem in seeing the folly of legal bans on what is a natural and culturally important activity. Education, self-limiting moderation, and regulated outlets are probably more effective means for dealing with the more hazardous substances, especially when coupled with encouragement of less hazardous alternatives. Too many people have died, too many people have been corrupted, and too many people have been persecuted and jailed in the various War on Drugs. This book should be read by every policy maker, and it is also an excellent book for anyone who uses mind-affecting substances, which means everyone.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This is an excellent book, filled with color photographs on glossy paper ...By asiguereThis is an excellent book, filled with color photographs on glossy paper that were a great complement for the text. Mike Jay writes in an accessible way and the book is a great resource material for anyone looking for a history of drugs.

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 worlds 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 Rajasthan; 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.

Mike Jays 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 Mod*)The fascinating history of mind-altering substances is given an articulate and intelligent treatment in Mike Jays 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 illustratedliterallyare the roles drugs play as medicines, religious sacraments, status symbols, and trade goods. This is no dry, academic account, but a colorful, crosscultural 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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