

**Annerose Menninger: Tabak, Kaffee, Tee und Schokolade in Wissenskulturen der Frühen Neuzeit, in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 3.**

Four commodities, related because of their ingredient substances and physiological properties, were discovered and developed overseas: the hot beverages of coffee, tea and chocolate in Arabia, China and Ancient Central America, and smoking, snuff and chewing tobacco in Ancient America. What is most astonishing here are the parallels to be found in the concepts of their consumption. Everywhere, the substances were considered to be both stimulants and remedies. When they were first introduced into Europe, a reception process began during the Early Modern Age which can be retraced in travel accounts, medical writings and the reports of lay people. The European travellers played a key role in intercultural knowledge transfer. In travel accounts circulating on the contemporary book market they provided first-time information to the European public as to the use and consumption purpose of the unknown items. As for their spreading into use and acceptance by European society, a major part was played by learned representatives of school medicine and their writings, since they propagated the foreign commodities as remedies effective against numerous illnesses and even epidemic diseases by plausibly integrating them into the medical culture of Europe and helping to overcome the barrier of the substances' bitter taste. The dominating factor was their importance as remedies, although they also were recommended for what motivates their consumption today: as stimulants and social items of enjoyment. The influence of the experts on drugs is reflected not only in numerous reports by lay people; it also was instrumental in firmly establishing cultural innovations: coffee-house culture, breakfast customs, and coffee and tea surrogates.

**Katharina Niemeyer: "Fée verte" – "hada verde" – düstere Muse. Absinth in der Bohème des Fin de siècle, in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 3.**

A sophisticated aperitif, a people's drug and Bohemian source of inspiration: There is no type of alcohol that fascinated 19th century contemporaries as much as absinthe. Even nowadays, the "green fairy" is still considered a mythical figure. The paper begins by tracing the history of absinthe and analyzing its literary representations in the context of the French *décadance*, in order to illuminate subsequently the ways in which the product was transculturalized in Spanish and Hispano-American literature. It thus becomes evident that, outside of France, it was much less important to imitate traditional habits of consumption than to adopt certain related aesthetic literary trends, which – particularly from an outsider's perspective – seemed to be inseparably linked to the excessive consumption of the spirit. As a consequence, literary figurations of absinthe in Spanish and Latin-American literature must be understood as representing contemporary readings of (European) Modernity which, depending on their context, fluctuated between provocation and affirmation.

**James Mills: Cannabis and the Cultures of Colonialism: Government, medicine, ritual and pleasures in the history of an Asian drug (c. 1800 – c. 1895), in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 3.**

The paper examines attitudes towards cannabis evident in the colonial archives of British India. It identifies and historicizes both European and Asian perspectives on preparations of the plant. On the one hand the paper argues that even in societies that had long experience of cannabis, cultural practices and understandings surrounding the drug were never homogenous or static. On the other hand, it shows that even where the methods of 'modern' government are focused on the issue of cannabis, they bring no more clarity than the local cultural constructions that have grown out of experience. The conclusion is that cannabis

eludes simple location in any cultural system, partly because the substance is complex and unpredictable in its effects on human physiology, and partly because its properties place it in an often ambiguous or unstable relationship with moral codes, government systems and social organisations.

**Xavier Paules: The successful demonisation of opium during the 1920s and 1930s in China and the end of opium culture, in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 3.**

In China the consumption of opium emerged in the early 18th century and came to an end with the abolition campaign orchestrated by the communist party in the early 1950ies. The period between 1920 and 1940 was characterized by the decline of the central organs of power in China leading once again to a rising of opium consumption, although in the final stage of the Chinese Empire the drug had disappeared almost completely thanks to an abatement action (1906-1912). In spite of political and economical conditions in the 1920ies and 1930ies which actually benefited opium consumption, it seems to have reached a level considerably below that of the turn of the century which had marked the height of opium consumption. The article shows that the reason for this lay in a critical change of the image which opium had in the population. With the use of a massive and also clever propaganda it was possible to entirely reverse the ambivalent, by trend even positively connoted perception of opium as it up to this time had predominated among the Chinese population. Opium was systematically associated with the misdeeds of imperialism; the publicly widespread advantages of opium consumption were purposefully defamed while smoking opium was stigmatized as a symbol for the lowest social classes.

**Hans Esselborn: "Das Bewusstsein als Blätter, die Worte als Gifte." Hubert Fichtes Darstellung der Trance in den afroamerikanischen Religionen in Brasilien, in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 3.**

Loss and transgression of consciousness through drugs has at all times been regarded as a religious merging with the divine or an artistic enthusiastic state of production. In the days of LSD and cannabis Hubert Fichte was drawn by an alternative view of the world and way of living to travel and study intensely Afro-American religions in Brazil and the Caribbean. As described in "Xango", "Petersilie" ("Parsley") and "Explosion" the hybrid mixture of cultures based on African natural religion serves as an example for the escape from restraining civilisation and moral standards. Fichte's studies in Latin America and his exchange with scholars and priests focus on voduns or orixas and their cult dominated by music, especially drums, by animal sacrifice and common celebrations. At the same time he explores particular plants needed for those ceremonies. After many a toilsome investigation, observation and taking part in ritual ceremonies Fichte realises that the aim of using drugs is the "breaking of consciousness" in order to smooth the way into trance as a means for leaving reality and entering a spiritual space. But, surprisingly, he supposes that the main decisive effect does not emanate from agents of the plants but from the magic use of their names. Thus the chemical manipulation of body and consciousness is supplemented by social and spiritual practice that goes along with the magical use of language. Fichte thereby approaches the European interpretation of drugs as artistic stimulants. In the twenties Gottfried Benn for instance propagated and depicted in his essays and poems the idea of artistic production emanating from psychic regression through sexuality, intoxication and drugs.

**Jakob Tanner: Kurze Geschichte und Kritik der Drogenprohibition im 20. Jahrhundert, in: zeitenblicke 8 (2009), Nr. 3.**

Meanings and motives of consumption of drugs mutually changed in the course of history. That applies as well to substances which today operate under the term of hard drugs. The prelude to their prohibition around the world was marked by the first international convention on opium in 1912. On the one hand, reasons for this agreement should be sought in the 19th century. Since the 1820ies the British invested in the opium trade with China which between 1839 and 1860 led to two Opium Wars enforcing the legalization of opium in China. On the other hand, drug users appeared in the about 1900 fast growing cities of the western world. Certain groups of these were stigmatized and regarded as a social problem: in the USA these were not just even the upper class morphinists, but opium smoking Chinese immigrants and urban youth groups which amongst others consumed heroin. Under the impression of the consequences of mass consumption of opium in China and the Fear of an expanding drug consumption in the own society, in the late 19th century in the USA, Britain, and other European countries an anti-opium movement formed up which worked towards a global ban on opiates, cocaine, and later also on Cannabis. In the course of the 20th century the prohibition regime was increasingly expanded, enhancing the development of highly profitable black markets. Over decades the abatement of drug distribution concentrated on repressive measurements and culminated in the war on drugs since the early 1970ies. Once again the problems were not just expounded on the cocaine consumers of the well-off circles, but on socially failed livings because of their drug addiction. Not least owing to the discernment, that the course of this prohibition policy was largely counterproductive, new approaches are noticeable since that time. These no longer villainise drug consumers as social mavericks, but focus on harm reduction. In doing so, the awareness gains momentum how omnipresent most different drugs are in our society and how arbitrarily the borderline between legal and illegal has been drawn in the past.