From Rituals of Rapture to Dependence: The Political Economy of Khoikhoi Narcotic Consumption, c.1487–1870

DAVID GORDON

Princeton University, Published online: 14 Jan 2009.

To cite this article: DAVID GORDON (1996) From Rituals of Rapture to Dependence: The Political Economy of Khoikhoi Narcotic Consumption, c.1487-1870, South African Historical Journal, 35:1, 62-88, DOI: 10.1080/02582479608671247

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02582479608671247

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the “Content”) contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis.
‘The Hottentots would doubtless be the drunkenest people on earth, had they the liquor enough to be so’, commented the German astronomer Peter Kolbe in his ethnographic memoirs of his stay at the Cape of Good Hope from 1705 to 1712. ‘Supply ’em with any strong liquor and with tobacco, and they will drink till they cannot stand, smoak till they cannot see and roar till they cannot hear.’ Peter Kolbe’s observations were by no means unique. Almost every traveller or resident who left records of the Cape after the Dutch East India Company (VOC) established a settlement to replenish ship supplies on the way to or from the East Indies in 1652, observed that the ‘Hottentots’ — or Khoikhoi — were prone to drinking and indulging in psychoactive substances: they loved brandy, wine and the powerful rice and coconut liquor called ‘arrack’; precious cattle and sheep were traded with the Dutch for rapidly consumed tobacco and cannabis; and some of the more observant Europeans even noticed that the Khoikhoi used their own narcotic plants. Yet there has been no systematic attempt to try to determine exactly what psychoactive substances the Khoikhoi were using, the method of use, the variety of delivery systems, and the way the introduction of exotic narcotics like tobacco and alcohol transformed patterns of drug use and affected Khoikhoi society and culture. What was the relationship between Dutch and indigenous trading patterns and psychoactive substances? Initial barter between the Dutch and Khoikhoi was transformed by the late

* I would like to thank Robert Shell and Carmel Schrire for providing invaluable advice and comments. Thanks also to members of my graduate class at Princeton for commenting on an earlier draft. A few words need clarification at the outset. ‘Khoikhoi’ refers to the pastoralists and hunter-gatherers found in the area that is now known as the Western Cape, and thus may include groups that some scholars have previously labeled as ‘San’. I use ‘narcotics’ in a general sense, referring to all intoxicants, including alcohol and tobacco.

seventeenth century into coercive tribute which degenerated into a form of
enserfment of the Khoikhoi to labour-hungry settler farmers. Wages were paid
not in money, but rewards given in tobacco, alcohol and cannabis. By the time
the British took control of the colony in 1795, these drugs were the standard
items in economic dealings between settler farmers, slaves and Khoikhoi serfs.

To be sure, historians have referred to, or mentioned, the trade and use of
narcotics at the early Dutch Cape. In his classic history of the decline of the
Khoikhoi, Richard Elphick views narcotics as of secondary importance in
precolonial trade. According to Elphick, metals were more significant trading
items, both between the indigenes and with the Dutch than drugs like tobacco
and ‘dagga’. These narcotics were easily produced, rapidly consumed, and did
not signify wealth. Moreover, according to Elphick, tobacco and alcohol were
not significant reasons for Khoikhoi decline since the Khoikhoi had long used
drugs like ‘dagga’ and trade with the Dutch was in any event more coerced than
voluntary. In part, Elphick and other historians of the Khoikhoi-Dutch
encounter have underplayed the importance of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis as
causes of Khoikhoi decline to emphasize instead the coercive aspect of
conquest. These studies have been a valuable corrective to a conservative
settler historiography, epitomized by P.J. van der Merwe, who viewed Khoikhoi
decline as the result of their intemperance and lack of economic rationality: ‘the
Hottentots were stupid and ready to barter far more cattle than they could really
afford.’ It is far from the intention of this essay to resurrect such notions or
even to posit drugs as the cause of Khoikhoi decline. Nevertheless, Elphick too
easily dismisses the importance of narcotic commodities in the precolonial and
colonial trading networks. That the Khoikhoi were familiar with certain narcotics

2. R. Elphick, *Kraal and Castle: Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa* (New Haven,
1979), republished as *Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa* (Johannesburg,
72, he indicates that he might be referring to ‘wild dagga’ or *Leonotis leonurus* (see fn. 8
about this debate) and not *Cannabis sativa*. The impression is that Elphick usually means
cannabis.

3. Besides Elphick, the classic essay in this tradition is S. Marks, ‘Khoisan Resistance to the
Dutch in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’, *Journal of African History*, 13, 1 (1972),
55-80. For a good account of violence between the Dutch and Khoisan, see N. Penn, ‘The
Frontier in the Western Cape, 1700-1740’, in J. Parkington and M. Hall, eds, *Papers in the
Prehistory of the Western Cape, South Africa* (London, 1987), 462-503; N. Penn, ‘Pastoralists
and Pastoralism in the Northern Cape Frontier Zone during the Eighteenth Century’, in M.


5. For the traditional view of alcohol causing social disintegration, see B. Hutchinson, ‘Alcohol
as a Contribution Factor in Social Disorganization: The South African Bantu in the Nineteenth
Survey* (Ann Arbor, 1979), 331.
before the first encounter with Bartolomeu Dias in 1488 does not mean that narcotics purveyed by the Dutch held little appeal for the Khoikhoi. Indeed, precolonial traditions of narcotic use formed the basis upon which dependence on Dutch narcotics was built. Moreover, the transfer in the supply of narcotics from indigenous inland producers to coastal traders marked a profound political transformation. Patronage networks changed as new suppliers distributed new, powerful European narcotics.

Historians such as Pamela Scully, Mary Rayner and Wallace Mills have recognized the importance that alcohol, and more particularly wine and brandy, played on the eighteenth and nineteenth-century wine and wheat estates at the Cape. For Scully, wine rations, or what was known as the tot or dop system, helped to create a dependent work-force, but also allowed workers to construct an autonomous social sphere, free of the farmer's control. Alcohol resulted in an ambiguous relationship between the farmer and the drunken worker since 'farmers could only laugh at their workers from the outside'. While Scully captures some of the subtleties of alcohol use on settler farms, her account lacks an understanding of the historical depth of this political economy of addiction. When workers demanded and farmers distributed narcotics, they were tapping into well-established traditions of narcotic distribution that dated back to the supply of narcotics by Khoikhoi lords.

A study of Khoikhoi narcotic consumption prior to the arrival of the Dutch is a difficult task, and must place much confidence in the few primary sources available, including travellers' accounts, scanty archaeological evidence, Dutch colonial records which include little information about local customs and some linguistic evidence. The few Europeans who did record Khoikhoi activities in detail were often overwhelmed by novelties in this exotic world and attempted to pigeon-hole what they saw into a limited European classificatory system and narrow moral universe. In any event, the science of taxonomy of plants and drugs was still crude when the Dutch first established a settlement at the Cape almost eighty years before the Swedish botanist Carl von Linne (Linnaeus the elder) developed his classic system. Many travellers simply recorded Khoikhoi


7. This was in three major works. Linnaeus, Hortus Cliffortianus (Amsterdam, 1737); Flora Zeylonica Sistens Plantus Indicus Zelonicae Insulae (Stockholm, 1747); Philosiphica Botanica (Stockholm, 1757).
words for plants, which were based on classificatory principles other than the structure of the leaf, on which Western plant experts increasingly came to base their taxonomies.

There are two Khoikhoi words which enlighten our account: ‘dagga’ (or ‘dacha’, ‘dakka’) and ‘canna’ (or ‘kanna’). ‘Dagga’, in South Africa, has become known as cannabis, and this is what it represented in trading transactions by the eighteenth century at the Cape. However, many early travellers described ‘dagga’ as a root grown in the desert and chewed after careful preparation, challenging our assumptions of what ‘dagga’ meant to the Khoikhoi before the VOC arrived at the Cape. Canna became known as different species of the genera Salsola, used by the frontier settlers in the production of soap due to its high alkaline content. To the Khoikhoi, however, canna, like dagga, was probably something entirely different. Indeed, relationships between words and things were bound to become confused when European and Khoikhoi linguistic universes collided. Since most travellers’ accounts referred to one another in what the novelist J.M. Coetzee has called the ‘great echo chamber of the

8. See, for example, W. Ten Rhyné, An Account of the Cape of Good Hope, in I. Schapera and Farrington, eds, The Early Cape Hottentots Described in the Writings of Olaf Dapper, Willem Ten Rhyné and Johannes Guliemus de Grevenbroek (Westport, 1970), 153; O. Dapper, Kaffraria, or Land of the Hottentots, in Schapera and Farrington, Early Cape Hottentots, 41, 53; J.G. de Grevenbroek, An Account of the Hottentots in Schapera and Farrington, Early Cape Hottentots, 245. Brian du Toit, together with editors of travel accounts of the Cape, have thought dagga actually referred to Leonotis leonurus which is known as wild dagga. J.M. Watt and and M.G. Breyer-Brandwijk point out that Leonotis leonurus has no narcotic qualities. C.P. Thunberg observed it being smoked as a substitute for tobacco and cannabis — along with rhinoceros or elephant dung — in the late eighteenth century, but this seems to have been a desperate measure which was only developed after the introduction of cannabis and tobacco. Leonotis leonurus has roughly the same shaped leaf as cannabis and could resemble cannabis when dried, which is probably why it developed its name ‘wild dagga’. There is no record of Leonotis leonurus being chewed for narcotic purposes, although it did have a reputation as a general remedy for a number of ills from syphilis to cancer. Pappe, the renowned nineteenth-century Cape botanist, first popularized the notion that Leonotis leonurus was smoked and most scholars have accepted his authority. To my knowledge, the hypothesis that these early accounts of ‘dagga’ at the Cape referred to Leonotis leonurus cannot be substantiated with any other evidence. B. du Toit, Cannabis in Africa: A Survey of its Distribution in Africa and a Study of Cannabis Use and Users in Multi-Ethnic South Africa (Rotterdam, 1980), 20; C.P. Thunberg, Travels at the Cape, 1772-1775 (edited by V.S. Forbes and translated by J. and I. Rudner) (Cape Town, 1986), 315; J.M. Watt and M.G. Breyer-Brandwijk, The Medicinal and Poisonous Plants of Southern Africa (Edinburgh, 1932), 156; L. Pappe, Florae Capensis Medicæ; or, An Enumeration of South African Plants Used as Remedies by the Colonists of the Cape of Good Hope (Cape Town, 1857), 33.

9. For a good summary of the accounts by travelers of the use of Salsola on the frontier, see S. Daniel Neumark, Economic Influences on the South African Frontier, 1652-1836 (Stanford, 1957), 83.
Discourse of the Cape', misnomers stemming from misunderstandings were repeated until new literary realities were constructed.\textsuperscript{10}

Although we do not have a thorough record of the Khoikhoi languages spoken at the time of Dutch colonization, we may try to infer the meaning of 'dagga' and 'canna' from neighbouring San languages and the Korana Khoikhoi language. According to Dorothy Bleek, 'dahwa' means 'to be drunk' while 'taxa' means 'to make drunk' for certain San dialects.\textsuperscript{11} A German missionary scholar who wrote a dictionary of the Korana language identifies 'daho' as 'mad'.\textsuperscript{12} Click variations of 'kanna' or 'ganna' mean something green, a leaf or cannabis, while '!Kan' means a root in certain San dialects.\textsuperscript{13} 'Kxanna' in Nama means 'to smoke'.\textsuperscript{14} The general impression is that 'dagga' could have had an adjectival form (to be drunk) or its noun root referred to some plant substance that makes one drunk. 'Canna' could have been used as an adjective (to be green or unripe) or as noun meant a wide variety of narcotic and non-narcotic plants.

Given these fluid meanings of 'canna' and 'dagga', new sense can be made of the information travellers and colonial officials provide. Take, for example, the first record of 'daccha' found in Jan van Riebeeck's journal in 1658 after the escape of several of the Company's slaves. Eva, van Riebeeck's favourite maid, company interpreter and the first baptized Khoikhoi, told the commander of the Dutch fort at the Cape that the slaves had probably escaped to the 'Hamncum-quas [Inqua] living far from here and cultivating a dry herb which the Hottentots chew, which make them drunk and which they highly esteem'.\textsuperscript{15} And in a letter to his superiors Van Riebeeck identified this 'dachha' as being 'more precious than gold' for the Khoikhoi.\textsuperscript{16} Van Riebeeck continued to make several references to these eastern Khoikhoi groups, their wealth and the power of their king due to the cultivation of dagga.\textsuperscript{17} Unfortunately there are few details about

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} D.F. Bleek, \textit{A Bushman Dictionary} (New Haven, 1956), 20, 195.
\item \textsuperscript{12} F. Wuras, \textit{Vokabular der Korana-sprache} (Berlin, 1920), 34.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Bleek, \textit{Bushman Dictionary}, 80, 88, 275, 300, 407, 557.
\item \textsuperscript{14} C. Meinhof, \textit{Der Koranadialekt des Hottentottischen} (Berlin, 1930), 97.
\item \textsuperscript{16} 'al costelicker als gout onder d'Europiunien g'estimeert is' in letter to Batavia, quoted in \textit{VRJ}, 2:286.
\item \textsuperscript{17} \textit{VRJ}, 21 Sep. 1660, 3:259, 3:350. Also in Dapper, \textit{Kaffraria}, 40-1. The number of references to these eastern dagga cultivators indicates that knowledge about them was fairly widespread at the early Cape.
\end{itemize}
the eastern Khoikhoi or dagga cultivation. During a trading expedition in September 1668, the Dutch Sergeant Jeronimus Cruse visited the Attaqua — neighbours to the south-west and generally considered as allies or clients of the more powerful Inqua — and reported that 'it was still one month too early [to buy dagga] as it was not yet ripe'. The first recorded encounter between the Dutch and the Inqua was the trading expedition led by the VOC officer Isaq Schrijver in 1689 who reported that Hijkon, King of the Inqua Khoikhoi and the rumoured great cultivator of dagga, 'had little or no knowledge of smoking tobacco'. Hijkon claimed to barter 'dakka' from other groups along the coast.

The association of 'dagga' with cannabis has led historians to argue that the Eastern Inqua and Attaqua Khoikhoi, who lived in an arid environment, could not have produced any plant narcotic and must have simply monopolized the supply of cannabis traded with the Xhosa to the east. However, other sources such as C.P. Thunberg, the Swedish student of Linneaus, who collected botanical and zoological information during two journeys to the Eastern Cape between 1772 and 1774 inform us that precious narcotic plants were found near present-day Oudsthoorn in the Little Karoo, in the territory known as 'Canna-land' and formerly occupied by the Attaqua Khoikhoi:

Kon, was a name given by the Hottentots to a shrub that grew here (Mesembryanthemum emaridum) and was famous all over the country. The Hottentots came far and near to fetch this shrub with the root, stalk and leaves which they stamp together, and afterwards twist them up like pig-tail tobacco; after which they let the mass ferment, and keep it by them for chewing, especially when they are thirsty. If it be chewed immediately after the fermentation, it intoxicates. The word kon is said to indicate a quid; the colonists call it Canna root. It is found in the driest fields only, and is gathered chiefly by the Hottentots, who live near this spot. These afterwards hawk it about, frequently to a great distance, and exchange it for cattle and other commodities. No Hottentot or Caffre in the whole country has either money or any thing of a similar nature to trade with; but all their commerce consists in bartering either with cattle or other commodities.

18. Elphick, Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa, 63.
22. Thunberg, Travels at the Cape, 248; the identification of canna as Mesembryanthemum is made by Thunberg.
This is an extremely revealing passage. The ‘dacha’ referred to in the seventeenth century by Eva and her master Jan van Riebeeck was probably a narcotic canna, and thus named ‘dacha’. This canna was a vital part of the precolonial exchange economy, already in its dying stages by the time Thunberg made his observations.

The Little Karoo and south-eastern Great Karoo are not likely areas of settlement for prosperous pastoralists due to the dry conditions and sparse vegetation (‘Karoo’ means ‘dry place’ in Korana). The Karoo is also unsuitable for the cultivation of the cannabis plant which prefers the wetter climate to the south or the east. Why should the most powerful Khoikhoi kingdom reside in such an area? Major Robert Gordon, who was in charge of the Cape Garrison, provides us with a clue from his description of Cannaland in October 1777: ‘There is almost no grass except in times of rain, but there are shrubs and herbs, many mesembryanthemums of different colours, euphorbias and aloes here and there. The Canna is a mesembryanthemum with small white flowers.’ Indeed, many other travellers during the eighteenth century noticed that canna grew in this area was used by the Khoikhoi as a kind of narcotic. The *Mesembryanthemum* species preferred for narcotic production, the *Mesembryanthemum expansum* and the *Mesembryanthemum tortuosum*, were found exclusively between present-day Willowmore and Oudtshoorn, which approximates the combined area of Attaqua and Inqua settlement. The Little Karoo semi-desert thus provided a unique ecological niche for the growth of a most precious narcotic resource. Such areas, where quality canna grew, allowed for the rise of powerful canna suppliers, in a similar fashion to the suppliers of kola nuts in the tropical forest environments of West Africa.

23. This should not be confused with the canna (*Salsola*) that the frontier farmers were using to make soap in the same period. The *Mesembryanthemum* will be known to those familiar with Cape flora as a *vygie*.

24. Other evidence to support this includes the fact that canna would be ripe in spring or early summer — exactly when Cruse, who visited the Attaqua, identified the season — since from preliminary experiments conducted on species of the *Mesembryanthemum* genera it seems that the presence of oxalates greatly varied from May (highest) to August (reduced by five times). A too-high presence of oxalic acid would make this canna unpleasant and even poisonous. See D.G. Steyn, *The Toxicology of Plants* (South Africa, 1934), 208.


27. Steyn, *Toxicology of Plants*, 211-212. See the map by E.E. Mossop of Schrijver’s expedition in Schrijver’s *Journal*.
How was canna used? Experiments conducted by toxicologists show that *Mesembryanthemum* plants have two active ingredients with different psychoactive effects. The oxalate present in the root acts as a fermenting agent and results in an especially powerful alcoholic beverage when combined with a sugar solution such as honey mixed with water. This is the drink known as *khadi* — also known to be made from the root of the *Mesembryanthemum mahoni* plant — which David Livingstone in 1843 began to find among the Tswana, apparently originating from the Khoikhoi: ‘another kind of beer is now being introduced into this country, made from honey beer and a native root, which is not only intoxicating, but produces a kind of frenzy most horrible to behold.’ So the one use of canna was the production of alcohol. When the alcohol-drenched root was chewed immediately after fermentation, it was a powerful intoxicant.

The root could also be dried and chewed at a later occasion. The other active ingredient found in most *Mesembryanthemum* plants is a rare psychoactive alkaloid called *mesembrine*, which is also a mild sedative. In addition to *mesembrine*, the oxalic acid gave the root a sour taste, which had a pleasant, moisturizing effect in the mouth. Thus, the dried root could be chewed for long periods without any immediately visible narcotic effects. During another trip to the Little Karoo, Thunberg observed: ‘A *Mesembryanthemum*, with a white flower, was chewed by the Hottentots, for the purpose of quenching their thirst, after it had been suffered to putrefy and properly prepared.’ Different types of canna and different methods of preparation led to variety of narcotic effects.

Canna was only one type of numerous roots and herbs that the Europeans observed either being eaten or worn by the Khoikhoi. They cooked potato-like roots in the ashes of a fire (for example, *Trichocalon piliferium* and *Cyphia cardimus*), prepared several species of asparagus, sorrel and spinach, and ate raw the sweet honey-flavored root called *krukimenkranki* (*Gethyllis cillaris*). Indeed, the Khoikhoi had a varied plant cuisine that was integrated with the unique ecology of the Cape *fynbos* region. Preparation of these plants and roots often

entailed complex processes to improve the taste. 'Buchu' was the collective name for a variety of different dried, sweet-smelling plants used for various rituals. Wounds were treated with buchu, marriages were agreed to with the potential bride sprinkling the plant over her partner's head. Later, after the marriage, the bride's family gave a sack of buchu to the newly-wed couple. Buchu was also used as a type of perfume and, after giving birth, women rubbed it on their new-born babies. Indeed, it was so important that all Khoikhoi carried little leather pouches filled with the herb.

Once Dutch trading commenced, European commodities began to replace those gathered on indigenous soil. This was most evident with the European alcohol that replaced alcohol produced from canna and honey. However, this process was gradual and throughout the eighteenth century and even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, travellers and authorities reported the production of honey-canna liquor. In the early eighteenth century, Kolbe wrote that canna was viewed as 'the greatest cheerer of he spirits and noblest Restorative in the world'. Wikar reported the production of beer using roots of different qualities which resulted in varying degrees of stomach ache. The root that he observed being powdered and added to honey and water in this instance was called the 'haap' (presumably *Kedrostis puctuluta*):

'haap' or hair root, which dried and crushed, in the first instance helps the warm sweet water to ferment, so that they get yeast from it, which afterwards increases the more it is used ... From two bowls of pure honey and 4 or 5 pints of water six or eight

they are still the most complete accounts available. The Company and later Dutch settlers were for the most part interested in cultivating European grains, fruits and vegetables, but did show some interest in local plants: see VRJ, 1:46, 1:76.

33. For example, Ten Rhyne observed the Hottentots preparing what he called an 'African Arum' which had 'such a pungent taste that it not only burns the tongue but sharply cuts it. It deserves to be classed among the poisons.' Ten Rhyne, *Account of the Cape of Good Hope*, 131.

34. Most buchu is from the *Diasosmeae* tribe and in particular the *Rutacae* family: see Watt and Breyer-Brandwijk, *Medicinal Plants of Southern Africa*, 88-91. The *Barosma* genera are renowned for their antiseptic qualities. The earliest record we have of buchu use as perfume is from the Frenchman Etienne de Flacourt in 1648 in R. Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck: Callers at South Africa from 1488 to 1652* (Cape Town, 1967), 175. Also buchu used as perfume and transported around in a pouch in Thunberg, *Travels at the Cape*, 77, 93, 174; Dapper, *Kaffratio*, 41; Ten Rhyne, *Account of the Cape of Good Hope*, 115. For healing and perfume with buchu, see De Grevenbroek, *Account of the Hottentots*, 245, 263. Wikar observed red buchu being used to consummate a wedding. This was made from the powdered *Kameeldoring* (Acacia erioloba) tree, see Wikar, *Journal*, 63. For buchu sprinkled over a new-born baby, see Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description*, 3:280. Buchu in the form of *Barosma betulina/crenulata* is still drunk as a health tea in the Western Cape.

Hottentots could be made merry. The pot is placed by the fire or put in the sun to warm up or start fermenting. In the dry season, when the beer has stood in the sun for about four hours, it bubbles and rapidly ferments. Then they drink it before it goes flat. On such occasions they hum and sing lustily, without quarreling or disagreement, which I have strictly forbidden, otherwise at these beer parties they reproach one another with all kinds of things and pelt one another with arrows.36

According to the French astronomer Abbe de la Caille, the Khoikhoi made honey liquor by fermenting a root during the months of November and December. For most of the summer, the Khoikhoi drank this liquor and slept under the Cape sun.37 Honey liquor or *khadi* production was even reported among mine workers in 1913-14 where a ‘mysterious root said to have been derived from the San ... was pulped and mixed with golden syrup (sweet molasses), pearl barley and water’.38

Why did the precolonial Khoikhoi consume narcotic substances? Was intoxication for the Khoikhoi close to a European form of ‘leisure’? Or did it have other, more culturally significant, roles? Without more detailed sources this is nearly impossible to establish. The nearby Xhosa drank beer made from fermented grain for reasons ranging from political to social and medicinal.39 But our inadequate knowledge of precolonial beer drinking in African societies cannot simply be projected onto the Khoikhoi. Our best guess is that narcotics were originally used in Khoikhoi society in part at least to induce the trance-like states that David Lewis-Williams describes as being the inspiration of San rock art.40 If this is true, narcotics were intertwined with cosmology providing a much sought-after alternative view of the world. It would explain why narcotics were never used by the Khoikhoi in moderation; instead, they chewed, drank or

smoked until reaching a delirious trance. Although alcohol produced from local plants would not stimulate hallucinogenic trances — as alcohol is not an hallucinogen — other psychoactive properties like mesembrine could have played such a role. Alcohol, by contrast, would have provided shamans with the power to reach a form of ‘boiling energy’ which was necessary to extract evil sickness, or more simply to make rain. In general though narcotic types of canna could have had a variety of medical and cultural uses, in the way that alcohol or opium was used in Europe.

Whatever the sociocultural role of canna, its value does indicate its great importance: ‘There is a root, gather’d in the Hottentot countries, called Kanna; which is in such esteem among the Hottentots for its great virtues that they adore it. What greatly inflames the value of this root, is its scarcity; for ’tis rarely found.’ Kolbe continued to claim that the Khoikhoi would trade anything they owned or provide any service for a piece of the canna root. Indeed, good quality canna was hard to come by as certain suppliers, by their access to the fields where the best canna grew, effectively monopolized the supply. By contrast, as Richard Elphick has previously noted, the trade in cannabis in the precolonial Khoikhoi economy was of secondary importance. It certainly cannot explain the hegemony of groups like the Inqua. However, Elphick underestimates the importance of other narcotic commodities in the precolonial trading network. It was the control over fields of canna that made the Inqua king Hijkon ‘chief lord of all kings and potentates’, for he was one of the patrons whose power flowed from the precious canna that grew in the desert.


44. Elphick argues that the dagga trade was of lesser significance to the metal trade since ‘[d]agga can be grown in most areas, and with almost no effort; thus it was not a commodity that one would expect to be traded in large quantities over long distances’. This may be correct for cannabis but less likely for canna. For both, however, there must have been a degree of ecological specialization. Moreover, this argument completely ignores the demand side of the precolonial market. Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa*, 67.

To be sure, there is also evidence that the Khoikhoi traded cannabis with Nguni-speaking people to the east, probably first supplied by Arab or Portuguese traders and then grown independently along the fertile coastal belt. Shipwrecked survivors of the *Stavenisse*, who lived with the Xhosa in the 1680s, claimed that ‘every year at a known time and place ... 50 to a 100 Hottentots, with wives and children would come to trade coral and copper rings for dagha, which is similar to the leaves of hep and is used like opium’. In 1668, the Dutch East India Company, well aware of the trading value of cannabis at the Cape, instructed officers of the *Voorman* ship going to the Terra de Natal to bring back a good quantity of dagga ‘as the Hottentots here seem to make great work about it’. However, cannabis remained of minor importance compared to the new, imported sources of delirium that descended on the Khoikhoi.

During the seventeenth century Europe experienced an explosion in the consumption of the new miracle drug, tobacco. Reputed to restore humoral balance, especially for those of a too-phlegmatic disposition, imports of this drug into England increased by over one and a half thousand times between the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. England’s trade and consumption of tobacco was only matched by Holland. By the seventeenth century Holland had cornered control of the European market and Amsterdam was the most important European trading and re-export centre for Chesapeake tobacco. From about 1640 to the 1660s, Dutch merchants were even able to import directly from Virginia, thus threatening British trading interests. Although direct access to Virginia became increasingly difficult for Dutch merchants, Amsterdam remained the premier European tobacco mart into which raw tobacco from Brazil, Spanish-America and Virginia was shipped. The tobacco was blended and spun in at least twenty different workshops and then re-exported.

Faced with the continued problem of saturating the European tobacco market, tobacco featured prominently among the commodities that filled the holds of the Dutch ships passing the Cape of Good Hope on the way to the East Indies. When, at the beginning of April 1652, Jan van Riebeeck and his crew of settlers arrived to establish a refreshment station for these ships, they were

48. In 1603, 25,000 pounds of tobacco was imported; in 1700, the figure was 38 million pounds: J. Goodman, *Tobacco in History: The Cultures of Dependence* (New York, 1993), 59.
desperate to find regular sources of fresh meat for the consumption of the local employees and that of the passing Company fleet. A few days after arrival, some local Khoikhoi promised in broken Dutch and crude sign language that they would sell cattle to the Dutch for tobacco and copper. Yet by the middle of June, Van Riebeeck’s eager entrepreneurs had been ‘unable to obtain from these natives more than one cow and a calf’. At first, the local Khoikhoi were not interested in Dutch copper or tobacco — although bread was a little more appealing. In spite of ‘luring’ with wine, arrack and promises of vast amounts of copper and tobacco, the Dutch failed to secure a steady supply of meat during the first year of occupation. To little avail, they ‘generously filled their [the Khoikhoi] bellies and little sacks with bread and made them drunk and did whatever else would serve to attract them’. By the end of 1652, Van Riebeeck was so desperate that he proposed raiding the ‘Saldanhars’ who apparently had herds of cattle in excess of 10 000, which they refused to barter. Indeed, hungry Company employees at the Cape begged the unsympathetic Council to allow them to steal cattle from the wealthy Khoikhoi.

There were some hopeful signs for the colonists: by the end of 1652 some Khoikhoi brought a few livestock to trade. They had little interest in Dutch copper, and Van Riebeeck commented that ‘without tobacco, and for copper alone, we should hardly get a single head of cattle’. In fact, the saturation of the copper market was an enduring problem for the Dutch during the entire period of Khoikhoi-Dutch trade. On the other hand, the demand for tobacco began to rise among the Khoikhoi. Perhaps the strong tobacco, smoked in large Dutch pipes and antelope-horns, provided Khoikhoi shamans with new visions of how to cope with the strange white traders and their powerful weapons. But once such visions had subsided, the physiological effect took hold. It was ultimately through this addiction that the Dutch could make consumers of the Cape Khoikhoi; slowly, tobacco soldered Khoikhoi existence around this peripheral trading station to a new mercantile political economy.

The Company never allowed the traders to resort to theft; instead, it tried to extend its mercantile control over the inland Khoikhoi by sending emissaries laden with alcohol and tobacco (but always supported by Dutch arms). After one frightened Khoikhoi clan pleaded with the Dutch not to steal their cattle, the

51. _VRJ_, 10 Apr. 1652, 1:30; _VRJ_, 10 June 1652, 1:44.
52. _VRJ_, 22 Dec. 1653, 1:198.
55. Tobacco, especially when inhaled in large volumes through wide pipes, may have had a powerful hallucinogenic effect. The classic work on tobacco, hallucination and shamanism is J. Wilbert, *Tobacco and Shamanism in South America* (New Haven and London, 1987), 149-202.
Dutch ‘persuaded’ them to swap wine for milk and honey and to ratify what they imagined to be a trading alliance:

We ... assured them that we had come to make a closer alliance with them. This was ratified by offering two or three drinks of wine all around to the men, women and children ... they, on the other hand, presented us with milk and honey, so that after spending about an hour we parted mutually well contented.56

While drinking liquor was familiar enough to the Khoikhoi, the Dutch had to instruct the Khoikhoi on new methods of narcotic consumption. During the first expedition to the northern Cape in 1661, Pieter van Meerhoff taught the Namaquas how to smoke:

I gave each of them a clean pipe of tobacco; they were anxious enough to smoke, but most of them could not; the king, instead of drawing in his breath, he blew from him; I took his pipe 4 or 5 times and showed him that he must draw in his breath; he began to learn; and they all learned so well while we were with them, women as well as men, that they became very fond of tobacco.57

Along with the spread of tobacco came Dutch pipes with long stems and large bowls. And after the Khoikhoi smoked the first few ‘arms’ of tobacco, as the Dutch had taught them, the pipes would lie empty. The Khoikhoi tried to fill their pipes with plants, with the chewed roots of their precious canna and even with rhinoceros droppings.58 But nothing was quite as satisfying as tobacco. There was no indigenous nicotine-bearing plant.59

To be sure, the Khoikhoi did not simply become addicted to European narcotics and then foolishly trade all their cattle. Nor were they naive natives

56. VRJ, 6 Apr. 1654, 1:227.
57. Moodie, The Record, 1: 232.
58. Thunberg, Travels at the Cape, 303, 313.
being force-fed alcohol and tobacco. Instead, the local Khoikhoi — the Peninsular Khoikhoi — accepted Dutch patronage and then attempted to use the goods acquired through the Dutch to extend their own patronage networks. To do this the Peninsular Khoikhoi attempted to blockade the Dutch from the surrounding Khoikhoi and exercise complete control over all Dutch-Khoikhoi trade. At first the Dutch co-operated with this scheme, but it soon became apparent that the Peninsular Khoikhoi were driving up the price of cattle. Often they were unwilling to part with their cattle and even traded Dutch goods to increase their own herds, instead of acting as Company agents.\textsuperscript{60} Such dynamics led to increasingly violent conflicts between the Dutch and the Khoikhoi.

By 1659 these trading conflicts, as well as the appropriation of land by Dutch farmers who were allowed to farm independently after 1658, led to outbreak of the first Khoikhoi-Dutch war.\textsuperscript{61} Dutch victory ended the monopoly by the coastal Khoikhoi over European commodities and direct trade to the hinterland opened up. Celebrations followed the conclusion of the war on 6 May 1660: the Dutch held a sermon to thank their god for the peace and, after the sermon, they placed a barrel of brandy-arrack mixture with a single small cup in the middle of the fort for the defeated Khoikhoi:

They drank themselves so full and drunk that the strangest antics in the world were to be seen, such as singing, dancing, leaping and many other strange gestures. First one, then another would collapse from drunkenness and some of those that were still relatively sober would then pick them up, carry them outside the fort and lay them down in the grass there to sleep it off. The chief did not behave in this way but kept himself reasonably sober, and was no more than half-seas-over. The same was true of three or four of his elders, though even some of these were unable to resist joining in the dances. The women sang and clapped their hands so loudly that the noise could be heard full 150 roods beyond the fort. So it seems after their own manner they were celebrating quite a triumph of peace and exaltation.\textsuperscript{62}

The intricacies of this drunken celebration are interesting. Far from being an uncontrolled drunken outpouring, or an imitation of Dutch insobriety, this account reflects what appears to be a well-rehearsed ritual. Even in this crude Eurocentric description, the outlines of a trance dance such as that witnessed and described by David Lewis-Williams among twentieth-century Kalahari San are evident:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{60} Elphick, \textit{Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa}, 100-3.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 110-12.
\item \textsuperscript{62} \textit{VRJ}, 6 May 1660, 3:36.
\end{itemize}
At one of these dances the women, usually sitting around a central fire, clap the rhythm of special songs. The men dance in a circle around the women. Bushmen believe that the sounds of their dancing rattles and thudding steps combine with the women's insistent songs to activate a supernatural potency that resides in the songs and the shamans themselves. When this potency 'boils' and rises up the shamans' spines, they enter a trance.63

Or this description of a healing dance witnessed by Orpen in the late nineteenth century:

It is a circular dance of men and women, following each other, and it is danced all night. Some fall down; some become as if mad and sick; blood runs from noses of others whose charms are weak, and they eat charm medicine, in which there is burnt snake powder. When a man is sick, this dance is danced round him, and the dancers put both hands under their arm-pits, and press their hands on him, and when he coughs the initiated put out their hands and receive what has injured him — secret things.64

Instead of intense dancing, local charms and canna, Dutch firewater helped the Khoikhoi reach 'boiling energy', the dignified state of a drunken stupor. The 'boiling energy' stupor was probably closer to the feeling of power and control that alcohol provides than a vision-inducing experience. It was this power that was so essential for reaching a successful 'num' which would allow for healing and rain-making.65 Admittedly, seventeenth-century Khoi rituals were not precisely equivalent to those of the more recently recorded San 'boiling energy' rituals. Nevertheless, alcohol was intertwined with a Khoikhoi culture closer to that of the San than to the European travellers, traders and settlers. Indeed, we can be sure that such dances were performed by the Khoikhoi, as witnessed by Francois Valentijn in the early eighteenth century:

When they wish to make merry together, the women clap their hands no little and sing therewith, while the men dance as if they trod peat ... Also they dance a round dance together, the men circling to the right and the women to the left, all to a fixed musical measure, which usually is beaten with a stick by an old man standing in the centre of the ring.66

63. Lewis-Williams and Dowson, Images of Power, 31-2.
65. A state of 'num' is the trance state that the San enter to effect a healing: see Katz, Boiling Energy, 280-94.
This is why, when the Khoikhoi drank liquor until they reached a state that the Dutch perceived as 'excess', they could 'brag of it the next day as a mighty Honour to 'em'.\(^{67}\) Drunkenness, for the Khoikhoi in the seventeenth century, was a pursuit of which one could be proud. Europeans, on the other hand, while often drinking until reaching a semi-conscious state, viewed such forms of consumption as immoderate vices.

The plentiful supply of European hallucinogens and narcotics as well as exposure to the European's culture of narcotic consumption had a profound effect on rituals that relied on altered states of consciousness. For one, easy access to trance stupors eroded their ritual basis. Moreover, European notions of 'insobriety' and 'indulgence' began to permeate Khoikhoi culture. Yet, in spite of the decline of healing rituals and the transformations in the meanings that surrounded narcotic use, the Khoikhoi continued in their idiosyncratic fashion of consumption, drinking until they reaching a sub-conscious state. Even when they smoked a cannabis-tobacco mixture, the Khoikhoi maximized the stupor by inhaling an entire pipe without exhaling until the pipe was finished, when they 'blow out all the smoke at once'.\(^{68}\)

It was, however, the casually used, but highly addictive and rapidly consumed, tobacco that became one of the most important trading commodities in the early mercantile period. Tobacco was far easier to transport than alcohol and did not cause the inflation of cattle prices as copper did. Moreover, Khoikhoi possession of tobacco did not endanger the Dutch occupation in any manner, like iron that could be used to make weapons. Thus, in spite of demand for iron, Commander Wagenaar informed his successor in 1666 that 'the first thing they ask for' is tobacco.\(^{69}\) And, in 1685, Simon van der Stel informed the Dutch East India Council that 'the cattle trade may almost be conducted for tobacco alone: we therefore request that no more [copper beads] may be sent'.\(^{70}\) Copper certainly does not feature in the strange trading ritual that Ten Rhyne described in 1686:

At first the traders display a big portion of tobacco, generally about two spans long, for the ox or sheep that is about to be exchanged always adding a bit ... otherwise the natives do not think themselves bound to keep the contract. The natives also often demand a tot

\(^{68}\) Valentijn, *Description of the Cape*, 69.
of brandy. Then the portion of tobacco must be gradually reduced to about one quarter.\(^{71}\)

While Dutch traders usually exchanged tobacco for livestock, they also distributed alcohol as a sign of goodwill, which helped seal fragile trading deals. The Dutch performed elaborate *vereering* rituals where they honoured their trading partners with crowns of copper and doses of alcohol.\(^{72}\) Providing a dose of alcohol during *vereering* was necessary to relax the anxious Khoikhoi when faced with armed mercenary traders who greedily eyed their vast herds.

After the first Khoikhoi-Dutch War, the Cochoqua Khoikhoi became the Dutch’s preferred traders. But, again, a Cochoqua blockade of Dutch trade with the wealthy Chainouqua Khoikhoi led to conflict between the Cochoqua and the Dutch. War broke out in 1673. By 1677 the Dutch had defeated the Cochoqua and confiscated most of their cattle and sheep. The Dutch’s new allies were the Chainouqua led by ‘Klaas’.\(^{73}\) Gradually, the Dutch trading frontier moved eastwards, approaching the previously powerful canna-producing kingdom of Hijkon. In 1687 Hijkon, aware of the powerful Dutch traders, sent a messenger to the Cape trading centre, requesting the initiation of direct trade. Following another visit from Hijkon’s ambassadors in 1688, Governor Simon van der Stel authorized an expedition to make contact with the Inqua. After a 46-day trek from the Cape, Ensign Isaq Schrijver encountered Hijkon who had come to greet him with 150 followers. Schrijver offered a *vereering* to the famous, frightened rug trader:

\textit{In the beginning they were very afraid and shy of us, even the Captain himself shook and shivered when he saw us, but this quickly passed when he perceived the crown of copper which was set upon his head. He was most pleased of this and was in high feather. In the drinking of arrack he bore himself frugally, but had little or no knowledge of smoking tobacco.}\(^{74}\)

Although ‘frugal’ at first, Hijkon took a liking for European liquor and bartered over 500 cattle and a flock of sheep ‘mostly for strong drink’.\(^{75}\) Unsurprisingly,

\(^{71}\) Ten Rhyne, \textit{Account of the Cape}, 137. Peter Kolbe boasted that for only one pound of tobacco a fine ox could be bought and half a pound for a sheep: Kolbe, \textit{Present State of the Cape}, 263. J. Starrenburg generally traded an ox for one pound of tobacco, a bunch of copper beads and some brandy: Diary of Landrost J. Starrenburg in Valentijn, \textit{Description of the Cape}, 2:39, 2:51, 2:53.

\(^{72}\) Besides the above example, see the encounter with Hijkon below. See also Valentijn, \textit{Description of the Cape}, 51, 53.

\(^{73}\) Elphick, \textit{Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa}, 121-34.

\(^{74}\) Schrijver’s Journey, 233.

\(^{75}\) Schrijver’s Journey, 234, 236.
after contact with such a profitable trading partner, the Dutch became disenchanted with their old Chainouqua trading ally, Klaas. With Klaas's rival, 'Koopman' (Dutch for 'Merchant') and Isaq Schrijver's encouragement, Van der Stel ended Company support of Klaas, then attacked him and confiscated his livestock in 1693. As the Dutch exhausted the livestock of their trading partners, they conquered them and penetrated further into the hinterland.

By the late seventeenth century the Company found it increasingly difficult to maintain a monopoly over trade with the Khoikhoi as, in spite of the Company's prohibition, independent settlers had begun to trade with the Khoikhoi. Moreover, settlers who had access to land began producing commodities such as wheat and wine, which could be exported, distributed to slaves and workers, or used for interior trade. To contain these tensions, the Company enforced measures to maintain its monopoly over trade with select Khoikhoi traders. For example, besides the general prohibition on trade, by 1680 the Company had strictly banned farmers from cultivating tobacco since through these farmers 'the Hottentots also contrive secretly to procure their supply'. Indeed, well into the eighteenth century, *plakkaten* prohibited the sale of tobacco and ensured the VOC's monopoly. Settlers found ways of circumventing these restrictions; for one, instead of tobacco, farmers grew cannabis 'chiefly on account of the Hottentots, who smoke the seeds and leaves as they do Tobacco'. It grew without much care at the Cape and along the eastern coastal regions, and the process of cultivation and preparation for smoking was relatively simple, never involving blending or spinning like tobacco. Furthermore, since cannabis was not an important mercantile trading item, the Company

77. For the first offence the tobacco plants were rooted out, on the second offence the settler was fined 25 Rix-dollars, and on a third offence he would be publicly flogged. See Moodie, *The Record*, 8 Apr. 1680, 1:375. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, tobacco farming was attempted but never achieved great success: *VRJ*, 6 May 1656, 32-3; H.C.V. Leibbrandt, *Precis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope, Requesten, 1715-1806* (Cape Town, 1906), 2:519d, 3:977b, 3:978b.
79. The illustration in Kolbe's work confirms that the dagga he referred to was cannabis: Kolbe, *Present State of the Cape*, 2:264, 1:162. During the seventeenth century there were few references to dagga being smoked, but by the beginning of the eighteenth century its use was widespread. There is a possibility that cannabis plants predated the Dutch, but it may have been first planted by the Dutch as an experiment for rope-making. It is unclear whether the sailors, slaves from the East Indies or the Khoikhoi first smoked this hemp. We know that The Council of Policy ordered the cultivation of hemp in 1659: Moodie, *The Record*, 7 May 1659, 1:160. Peter Kolbe lists hemp as exotic to the Cape: Kolbe, *Present State of the Cape*, 2:264.
KHOIKHOI NARCOTIC CONSUMPTION

was hardly concerned with its cultivation. It could become a far more convenient contraband trading narcotic for non-Company Dutch farmers and traders than monopolized tobacco. The Khoikhoi combined this local dagga with imported tobacco to make an indigenous mixture called *buspasch* which was smoked in large Dutch pipes or the horns of antelope.\(^{80}\)

By the seventeenth century cannabis, or Indian Hemp as it was known, was a regular item on ships returning from the East Indies to Europe. Traders were scouting for new products that might either be miracle cures for a disease-ridden Europe, or be transformed into popular commodities like tobacco or coffee.\(^{81}\)

Although the use of cannabis can be traced back to the ancient world, cannabis re-emerged in the pharmacopoeias of Europe with Berlu’s *Treasury of Drugs* of 1690, where it was reported as coming from the East Indies, and as being of an ‘infatuating and pernicious use’.\(^{82}\) To be sure, cannabis in the next century gained far greater medicinal legitimacy as a cure for coughs, colds, ‘heats of urine’ and for ‘restraining venereal appetites’.\(^{83}\) However, cannabis never became as popular as tobacco or coffee in Europe. Unrestricted by the Company, early Dutch farmers at the Cape could grow cannabis to exchange with the Khoikhoi for their livestock, and, increasingly, for their labour.

Shortly after Willem Adriaan van der Stel’s reluctant legalization of settler-Khoikhoi trade in 1700, a trading expedition comprised of poor farmers and their Khoikhoi servants set out east, intent on acquiring Khoikhoi cattle and sheep.\(^{84}\) The goods that they carried consisted of iron, which the Company refused to sell for fear that it could be made into weapons, and cannabis, among other goods. But these farmers were not really intent on trade, nor did they care much for *vereering*. Rather, this was an expedition of killing and looting the Eastern Khoikhoi. The Inqua suffered most. Many were killed and the settler

---

80. Kolbe, *Present State of the Cape*, 210. Mixing tobacco with opium, both of which were imported by the Dutch East India Company, was common in China by the eighteenth century: see Braudel, *Structures of Everyday Life*, 264.
81. These two functions were not mutually exclusive. Both coffee and tobacco were marketed as medicinal products until the nineteenth century.
83. For example, see W. Lewis, *Experimental History of Materia Medica* (London, 1784), 187.
84. Willem Adriaan van der Stel used this expedition as justification for suspending trade between the settlers and the Khoikhoi, but some would argue that his humanitarianism was simply hypocritical and he simply wanted to protect his own interests. See Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the founding of White South Africa*, 227-229; H.C.V. Leibbrandt, *Precis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope: The Defense of Willem Adriaan van der Stel* (Cape Town, 1897), 143, 147, 148; L. Fouché, ed., *Het Dagboek Van Adam Tas* (1705-1706) (London, 1914). See also G. Schutte, ‘Company and Colonists at the Cape’, in Elphick and Giliomee, *Shaping*, 303-7.
traders stole 2,000 cattle and 2,500 sheep from them.\textsuperscript{85} This act of frontier violence heralded the beginnings of nearly two centuries of conflict between independent European farmers and indigenous pastoralists along the northern and eastern frontiers. It also marked a turning point in the Cape economy. Now settler estates and roaming trekboers, rather than Company trade, began to determine the economic priorities at the Cape.

These European settlers, then, had little regard for fair trade and no tolerance of any independent Khoikhoi. Sweeping over the previously semi-autonomous Khoikhoi polities, the trading frontier had left dependent chiefdoms led by Dutch-appointed captains in its wake. The disintegration and dispersion of Khoikhoi communities transformed them into what one historian has identified as ‘a cowed and broken people living in isolated kraals’, which, in turn, made the appropriation of land and water resources by settler farmers riding horses and firing guns an even easier endeavour.\textsuperscript{86} Dutch pastoralists who had at best a tenuous relationship with the Cape economy led the way, and settled furthest from the Cape.\textsuperscript{87} But once land was appropriated and settled, commercial wine and wheat estates prospered in the winter-rainfall areas near Cape Town.\textsuperscript{88}

European farmers encouraged the Khoikhoi, reduced to a serf-like status, to work for rations of liquor, tobacco and dagga in their houses and on their

85. This was the last account of the Inqua Khoikhoi. Jeff Peires contends that Hijkon was Hinsati whose kingdom fell to the Xhosa around 1700. Subsequently Hinsati’s followers were assimilated into the Xhosa as the Sukwini, Gqwashu and Nkarwane clans. This disregards the above-mentioned attack on the Inqua in 1702. Peires is probably conflating the Gonaqua Eastern Khoi with the Inqua. After Inqua defeat, Inqua refugees may have joined Gonaqua groups. See J.B. Peires, The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of their Independence (Berkeley, 1981), 23-4; see also Harinck, ‘Interaction between Khoi and Xhosa’, 153-9.


87. The question of the connection of the trekboers with the Cape economy has been long debated. P.J. van der Merwe claimed they lived an independent existence, while S. Daniel Neumark contended that they relied on the Cape economy. See P.J. van der Merwe, The Migrant Farmer in the History of the Cape Colony, 1652-1842, edited and translated by R.B. Beck (Athen, 1994, originally 1938); Neumark, Economic Influences. See also Penn, ‘Pastoralists and Pastoralism in the Northern Cape Frontier Zone’; L. Guelke, ‘Freehold Farmers and Frontier Settlers’, in Elphick and Giliomee, Shaping, 66-108.

farms. Indeed, early colonial labour relations was where a new political economy of addiction emerged out of the previous narcotic trade. To be sure, this system did not arise as a sinister attempt by settlers to increase productivity and guarantee a dependent, drug-addicted work-force. In all likelihood, the Khoikhoi demanded such goods. Already in the early 1700s, the Khoikhoi would not work except for rations of tobacco.

A Hottentot will not enter into the Service of an European, unless Tobacco be made part of his Wages. He must have a certain Allowance of Tobacco every Day, or 'tis in vain to treat with him. And if the Portion it is agreed he shall receive daily, is but withheld for one Day, he becomes restive and untractable; and upon the like usage the day after, throws up the Cudgels, demands his other Hire, and can hardly be persuaded to strike a Stroke more for such a Master.\footnote{Kolbe, \textit{Present State of the Cape}, 210.}

Settler farmers distributed narcotics to ensure service, just as in the past the ability of patrons to distribute narcotics and other goods had purchased the loyalty and goodwill of Khoikhoi clients. In some cases, instead of remaining clients of a Khoikhoi patron, many Khoikhoi, especially women, decided to attach themselves to the Company or colonial farmers who would have had easy access to supplies of liquor and tobacco.\footnote{Leibbrandt, \textit{Precis, Requesten}, 2:772a.}

Settler farmers increasingly preferred to distribute local liquor instead of imported tobacco. While the wine, brandy, gin and arrack frequently described in the seventeenth-century gift-exchanges and celebrations or trance dances were generally imported from Europe or Batavia, local viniculture was established soon after Dutch colonization. By February 1659, Van Riebeeck tasted the first locally produced Cape wine that led to the establishment of Van Riebeeck's vineyard on the Liesbeeck River.\footnote{\textit{VRJ}, 6 Feb. 1659, 3:10; C.L. Leipoldt, \textit{300 Years of Cape Wine} (Cape Town, 1952), 5-6.} At this point, the Company held the exclusive right to buy liquor from passing ships and did not encourage settlers to spend their time producing wine instead of cultivating grain which was much in demand. Nevertheless, by 1665 the stubborn settlers had started producing wine, and even the Company established vineyards at Bosheuwel and Rustenburg.\footnote{Leipoldt, \textit{300 Years}, 9-10.} Soon retail outlets opened up and Company officials began complaining that the free men 'lead idle lives about the canteens'.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 13.} To exert greater control over the sale of liquor, the Company distributed licenses to select individuals. And as local production increased, exports to Batavia began, although payment for the wine was at first not guaranteed. The production of
wheat and wine for export proved to be a precarious investment during the eighteenth century, with international markets fluctuating and often making Cape products too expensive.  

Both wine and wheat, nevertheless, began to form the mainstay of the Cape agrarian economy by the early eighteenth century and their increasing commercialization led to the creation of settler planter elites who demanded cheap labour for harvesting and wine-making. Two forms of coerced labour became common. First, the Dutch imported slaves in roughly equal proportions from Indonesia, India, Madagascar and East Africa. Secondly, by 1721, the inboekstelsel or ‘apprenticeship’ system, which allowed farmers to coerce Bastaard Hottentots to work for them, was at least in de facto existence. Beyond coercion, settlers encouraged indigenous labour to remain on their estates by distributing the rewards — mostly drugs — that the Khoikhoi demanded. This system of drug distribution was then extended to imported slaves. To reduce labour costs further, wheat and wine farmers employed each other’s workers, made possible by wine-making following soon after the wheat harvest. Slaves and serfs harvested the winter wheat and then were taken to the wine farms where they picked and crushed grapes. Finally, the year’s work would end in a two-day drunken celebration for all.

The liquor produced for non-European consumption could hardly pretend to be wine: it was more of a staunch brandy made from left-over husks and stems, once they had been crudely drained of grape juice. In fact, much of the wine was unsuitable for export, and even in 1808-1810 only 53% of the wine produced on Cape farms was taken to Cape Town for sale; farmers distributed most of the rest — between 600 to 750 gallons per farmer annually — to apprentices and slaves. Farmers reserved sour sulfurous wine, sweetened with sugar, which ‘was a real headbreaker and makes those drunk

96. This practice became formally established in 1775.
97. As early as 1658, Van Riebeeck gave ‘a small glass of brandy and two inches of tobacco’ to newly arrived slaves to ‘animate their lessons and make them really hear the Christian prayers’: *VRJ*, 17 Apr. 1658, 2:277, quoted in full in R. Shell, *Children of Bondage*, 79.
on it quite violent', for the Khoikhoi, since even slaves were too precious to be allowed to drink such liquor. But there was still enough decent quality wine produced locally in the late eighteenth century for settlers to drink it like water. And the top, export-quality wine made its way in barrels to Batavia. The ships returned with the same barrels filled with East Indian arrack.

Cannabis, by contrast, never developed into a major settler trading commodity. Settler farmers could not maintain a monopoly over its production due to the ease with which it grew and was prepared for smoking. Moreover, since no export market for cannabis developed, farmers were not eager to invest in large scale production. According to Le Vaillant, writing of his visit between 1780 and 1785, 'some of the colonists cultivate it, and when they have dried the leaves sell it very dear to the Hottentots or change it for oxen'. But the Khoikhoi and Nguni-speaking people to the east continued to cultivate cannabis. Many farmers still distributed dagga as a reward to their Khoikhoi workers or slaves along with their ration of tobacco and alcohol, but since it grew so easily and its production could not be monopolized, cannabis would never gain widespread legitimacy among the economic elites of the Cape.

Yet cannabis and tobacco buspasch continued to be smoked by the Khoikhoi and slaves. Thunberg’s fellow botany student, Anders Sparrman, renders a vivid description of the Khoikhoi’s idiosyncratic fashion of smoking:

the Boshiesman [or Khoikhoi] contrives to squeeze the whole of his mouth in such a manner that none of the smoke can escape or be lost, but passes entire, in a column proportionate to the size of his throat, some part of it coming out again through his nostrils. To make amend for this, however, five or six gulps content him; a fit of coughing, hawking, and rattling in his throat ensues, which he probably considers as a very desirable consequence. He then hands this delicious horn to his next neighbour that he may, in a like manner, have a pleasure of fumigating his lungs; and in this way the horn circulates among them, women as well as men ...

102. Ibid., 2:186, 3:184.
103. F. le Vaillant, Voyage de Monsieur le Vaillant dans l’Interieur de l’Afrique (Paris, 1790), 84-5. Rev. C.I. Latrobe indicates that as late as 1815 settler farmers were still selling cannabis to the Khoikhoi: C.I. Latrobe, Journal of a Visit to South Africa in 1815 and 1816 (New York, 1818), 325.
104. Anders Sparrman, who visited the Cape from 1772 to 1774, claimed that ‘hemp is cultivated both by the Hottentots and the colonists for the purposes of replenishing the pipes of the former with it instead of tobacco’; Sparrman, Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, 2:265; Thunberg, Travels at the Cape, 89. See also Mentzel, Geographical and Topographical Description, 85; J. Barrow, An Account of the Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa in the Years 1797 and 1798 (London, 1806), 1:93-95.
swallowed the smoke of his horn with such avidity, that I saw him fall down in a swoon as a consequence of it.\textsuperscript{105}

Cannabis remained a valuable substance and part of an internal exchange economy, although produced mostly by independent Xhosa farmers. Khoikhoi men carried pouches filled with cannabis and exchanged it at weddings, in a similar fashion to buchu.\textsuperscript{106} Only in the mid-nineteenth century did the continued exchange and consumption of cannabis begin to be condemned by evangelical missionaries; and in the twentieth century, after being prohibited in 1928, it became the centre of a thriving ‘underground’ market.\textsuperscript{107}

With regard to the settler economy after the emancipation of the slaves in 1838, as wheat and wine farmers became dependent on ‘free’ labour, ‘free’ labourers became dependent on their daily ration of narcotics. The wine farmers, often faced with the problem of marketing their low-quality wine, supplied the necessary dosage. Five times a day non-drinking Muslim overseers administered a ‘dop’, and in this drunken dependence a new communion of labour faithfully toiled. One official, first quoted by Wallace Mills, captures the tragedy of this system of exploitation:

> It is surprising how these people manage to work steadily on in the broiling heat of the day, without rest, or shelter, and were it not for the wine, I question whether they would keep at it in such good spirits, vying with each other as to who can get through the most work in a single day, with the master standing by, loud in his praises of those who are outstripping their rivals, urging them on to the utmost exertion by flattery and encouragement, and when the day’s labour is at an end rewardig them with an extra ‘dop’ because they had so ‘mooi gewerk’.\textsuperscript{108}

This observation took place in 1870. Behind the ‘good spirits’ lies a system of labour exploitation that had been in the making for several centuries.

\textsuperscript{105}. Sparman, \textit{Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope}, 2:230. Many travelers noticed the use of ground-pipes. For a description, see Wikar, \textit{Journal}, 157. However, as Wikar indicates, this method of smoking does not seem to have been evident among the Cape Khoikhoi who mostly smoked with Dutch pipes.


\textsuperscript{107}. For evangelical condemnation, see Rev. C.I. Latrobe who claimed that cannabis ‘not only takes away the senses for a season, even more completely than drunkeness, but by degrees, undermines the constitution, weakens every faculty of the mind and body, and makes cripples of those who continue in the practice’: Latrobe, \textit{Journal of a Visit to South Africa}, 325. Cannabis production, consumption and sale was prohibited in the 1928 Medical and Pharmaceutical Act.

\textsuperscript{108}. Quoted in Mills, \textit{Cape Smoke}, 6.
Was intoxication and alcohol addiction a double-edged sword for the wheat and wine farmers? According to Pamela Scully, through liquor workers could create an independent culture and consolidate bonds which would ultimately lead to the development of class solidarity and resistance.\textsuperscript{109} On one level narcotics certainly did allow for a degree of continuity in Khoikhoi culture by allowing continued access to trance-like drunken stupors. But, ultimately, the ease with which a trance state could be entered eroded its social power. Perhaps narcotics helped to build new lines of solidarity between Khoikhoi and slave. Unfortunately, reliance on Dutch narcotics by both slaves and Khoikhoi tied them to the colonial economy and often resulted in recapture of escapees.\textsuperscript{110} To be sure, some Europeans considered Khoikhoi drunkenness a nuisance. Anders Sparrman, for instance, lost the brandy intended for the preservation of his zoological specimens to his Khoikhoi driver.\textsuperscript{111} In most cases such actions were minor inconveniences. Thomas Baines, the famous British painter of the colonial Cape, thought drinking despicable, but was entertained by his driver ‘Andries, who, like, a true Hottentot, or sailor, deemed it a sin of the first magnitude to leave port sober’.\textsuperscript{112}

An addiction to alcohol and tobacco became part of the ‘merry’, sardonic disposition of the Khoikhoi as they lost their previous socio-economic independence to settler farmers. Thereby, settler-produced liquor and imported tobacco increasingly became an unambiguous instrument of socio-economic servitude and degradation. The Cape political economy always had to be vigilantly defended by the settlers’ sjambok. But when the sjambok was not raised, it was the powerful, submerged ties of paternalism and dependence that ensured continued subservience. One dimension of these ties of dependency was narcotic addiction, for even as coerced labour became repugnant to the British colonial authorities, settler control over narcotics, which labourers gladly consumed and upon which they became increasingly dependent, continued to strengthen the chains of bondage.

Narcotic commodities were at the centre of political economies that ranged from the rule of the precolonial drug lord through the age of mercantile trader to the agrarian master. Much economic activity prior to the establishment of the VOC’s trading post in 1652 centred around the supply of psychoactive substances such as the renowned canna or dagga, which led to the rise of powerful inland lords. With the onset of trade with the VOC and its employees, who demanded vast quantities of fresh meat, new drugs began to play an

\textsuperscript{109} Scully, ‘Liquor and Labour in the Western Cape’, 59.
\textsuperscript{110} For example, see Hangklip runaways in Ross, Cape of Torments, 58.
\textsuperscript{111} Sparrm, Voya ro the Cape, 175-6.
important role in trading transactions. The Dutch used alcohol as a 'treat' to honour and calm the Khoikhoi so that they would consent to trade. Tobacco, along with copper, became the most important trading item that the VOC offered in exchange for livestock. By the late seventeenth century these drugs had introduced new psychoactive experiences which were grafted onto older traditions of narcotic consumption. Narcotics then eased the traumatic emasculation that the Khoikhoi suffered as they lost their previously independent pastoral existence and gradually joined imported slaves in settler households and on wine and wheat estates. On these estates, narcotic consumption was more a sign and tool of the economic and social degradation of rural workers than a form of resistance to their overlords.

By the seventeenth century the Khoikhoi had long used powerful narcotic substances which were comfortably integrated into their cultural and economic livelihood. That the Khoikhoi used such drugs in precolonial times made them especially vulnerable to new, harsher narcotics and hallucinogens distributed by Dutch merchants. In a similar fashion, when settler farmers needed to detain indigenous labour on their estates, they resorted to both the carrot and the stick, wielding the sjambok while attracting the Khoikhoi with their favourite drugs. The Khoikhoi, through the narcotics they used, quickly became attached to a world-wide economy that did not wait for spring and for the white flowers of the canna plants to bloom, heralding a summer song of restoration and rapture. Instead, in the peculiar wine, dagga and tobacco economy of the old Cape, the Khoikhoi indulged in deadly new colonial cocktails. New cultures of dependence infused the landscape.