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Global Opium Politics in Mozambique and South Africa, c 1880–1930

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ABSTRACT
The reach of European empires and of Indian Ocean trade networks drew southern Africa into the global politics of opium around the turn of the twentieth century, in the critical decades of its shift from economies of supply to regimes of control. This article outlines key processes and events concerning opium production, circulation and regulation within the colonies of Mozambique and South Africa. It aims both to situate southern Africa within the well-known accounts of the Asian opium trade and its suppression and, more directly, to demonstrate how opium figured in local colonial politics, conflict and social change. I highlight how official and subaltern actors shaped and responded to these developments and, in different ways, worked to benefit from them.

KEYWORDS
Opium; cannabis; drug control; South Africa; Mozambique; Indian Ocean

On 16 July 1877, at Mazaro on the Zambezi River in central Mozambique, Senhor Ignasio Jose de Paiva Raposo, a Portuguese businessman, called upon Captain James Frederick Elton, the Quelimane British Consul, and invited him to inspect the early fruits of a new agricultural experiment. Elton was in the area leading a small party of European explorers including Herbert Rhodes, brother of Cecil John.

Accompanying Paiva Raposo 'about five miles' to the banks of the Cuacua tributary, Elton found himself admiring two large fields of opium poppies, the plants bedded in 'flat, sloping, rich alluvial soil, irrigated by two Indian wells, worked with skin buckets and a rope down an inclined place'.[1] Elton was a child of the British Empire, the son of a Bengal army officer and, in his own right, a military veteran decorated for service in Delhi and Lucknow, and at Peking in the second Opium War. He knew something about the British imperial

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[1] J.F. Elton, *Travels and Researches among the Lakes and Mountains of Eastern and Central Africa*, ed. H.B. Cotterill (London: J. Murray, 1879), 246–247.

opium economy. He also knew 'Hindustani', and conversed in this language with the Zambezi project overseers, 'men from Malwah and Lucknow'. In his diary he noted:

> Each place consists of two hectares. One is near a lake, the other near the Quaqua; and Senhor Reposo [*sic*] expects 220 lbs of opium from each hectare. Irrigation and cultivation are purely Indian. After the crop [is harvested] he goes to Lisbon [to see] about raising the capital of the Company. He is sanguine (and I think rightly so) of success. He has studied the subject for six years in India.[2]

Elton's other comments concerned labour conditions, reflecting his mandate to monitor slave trading in the region. The plantation received a favourable report:

> Noone is allowed to strike a labourer. Men and women receive a ticket, and three yards of cloth for each seven days' work, with which they are contented, and for which they flock eagerly to work, never having been paid before.[3]

It was not the apparent absence of slavery, however, but the presence of opium that Elton was keen to report. In a despatch sent that very evening he described Paiva Raposo's operation and the terms by which, in 1874, the Portuguese government had granted 50,000 acres of crown land. The two poppy fields were part of an ambitious enterprise, engineered through Indian expertise, utilising quality botanical stock, and employing local, as well as imported, labour. Over the next months, British and colonial newspapers tracked the fortunes of the Mozambique Opium Cultivation and Trading Company, with its 'capital of about £180,000', along with the 'exclusive right to export opium free of custom duties for a period of 12 years'.[4]

The appearance of Zambezi opium figured in the mounting tensions of British and Portuguese territorial 'scrambles' in the region, reflecting the rising stakes of imperial occupation and claim-making in Africa during the years leading to the Berlin Conference.[5] The Zambezi valley was a particular site of rivalry: Portugal aimed to secure an inland corridor linking their coastal colonies of Angola and Mozambique; Britain sought to counter that claim with mission settlements in the Shire highlands and a Glasgow-based company on Lake Malawi. Paiva's proud display of healthy young poppies, centrally located on the *prazo Maganja aquem Shire*, dealt British imperialists a double blow. It demonstrated effective occupation of a contested region and announced the arrival of ‘a new competitor for the enormous profits of the opium trade with China’.[6]

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[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] 'Opium Growing on the East Coast', *Natal Witness*, 9 October 1877; 'Central African Exploration: Captain Elton's Expedition', *Cape Times*, 12 March 1878; 'Opium Production on the East Coast', *Natal Witness*, 28 May 1878; 'The Poppy in Africa', *Natal Witness*, 31 August 1878. See also 'Opium Culture', *British Medical Journal*, 29 October 1877.

[5] H. Livermore, 'Consul Crawfurd and the Anglo-Portuguese Crisis of 1890', *Portuguese Studies*, 8 (1992), 170–188; E. Axelson, *Portugal and the Scramble for Africa, 1875–1891* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1967), 137–156; R.J. Hammond, *Portugal and Africa, 1815–1910* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1966), 77–132.

Through this development, southern Africa was inducted into the global politics of Asian opium at a moment when moral opposition to the trade was beginning to be felt. Commentary in the *Natal Witness,* for example, suggested that ‘Englishmen ha[d] no right to complain’ about Portugal’s resolve to protect free trade.

> If there is nothing wrong with the opium trade then surely the Portuguese are as free as ourselves to embark on it. If there is something wrong in it, we who have carried it on for a century through scenes of illegality and bloodshed are not in a position to taunt Portugal with the immorality. We opened China to opium, procuring its legal admission by a treaty the benefits of which we cannot confine to ourselves.[7]

My aim in this article is to situate southern Africa within the otherwise well-known global politics of opium at the turn of the twentieth century, in the critical decades of its shift from economies of supply to regimes of control. Within the historiography, African frontiers of the Asian opium trade have not been investigated and so it has been difficult to account for how experiences in Africa shaped international processes of opium circulation, consumption and suppression. The cases explored here reveal the promise of such a focus, both for extending and reshaping the contours of drug histories and for enriching existing accounts of colonial and anti-colonial politics in Africa.

Southern African opium histories in this period (circa 1880–1930) were largely a corollary of imperial networks, formed through the successes and failures of their expansionist struggles and policies. Here, I outline these developments and their localised effects in three main sections. The first section chronicles the short-lived episode of opium production in Mozambique, a venture which the British Indian government perceived to be significant as a threat to their Asian trade monopoly and which, at its site of cultivation, sat within the centripetal conflicts unfolding in the Zambezi Valley between European imperialists as well as local creole and indigenous actors. In the second and third sections, I focus on South Africa, particularly after its formation as a self-ruling dominion state from two British colonies and two conquered Boer republics. Section two outlines patterns of opium consumption and circulation in the Union, which, although comparatively insignificant after 1910, nonetheless linked the region into transoceanic drug supply chains, in consequential ways. In section three, I demonstrate the political significance that such links held for South Africa, both for negotiating with international drug control initiatives and for making its own regulatory regime. I show how architects of the new Union state seized the opportunity presented by international imperatives to advance their own agendas. These included classifying and controlling another substance, cannabis, as a 'habit-forming drug' and promoting more stringent immigration controls along the Mozambique-South Africa frontier.

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[6] ‘Opium Production on the East Coast’, *Natal Witness*, 28 May 1878.

[7] *Ibid.*

My account here is largely empirical. However, it sits within a critical historiography concerned with how the flows of drug commodities and their changing moral status, from about 1900, become constitutive of modern state-building through the language and machineries of control.[8] Commercial development and circulation of psychoactive crops in the early modern period, most especially tea, tobacco, coffee and chocolate – but also opium and coca – underpinned European global political economies and the spread and adaptation of intoxicant cultural practices, initially as luxury goods.[9] When governments began to restrict the production, trade and consumption of certain substances – through claims of sovereignty over borders, civic spaces, and citizen/subject-vitalities – they were aided by the growing authority of medical science, which promoted public health, eugenics and/or labour fitness.[10] Drives by governments to suppress the movement of opium across borders confirmed state institutions and actors as arbiters of control, while also increasing the stakes of national gatekeeping. As Paul Gootenberg observes, in suppressive conditions, drugs make ideal contraband for their weight–value ratio and dependency-producing chemistry: borders are never closed to drugs but must be seen rather as productive of informal and illicit trade regimes.[11]

In the account that follows my focus is on the responses and actions of local opium producers, consumers and law-makers in south-eastern colonial Africa. While episodic and relatively minimal in scope, this African opium story nonetheless can be placed within the broader history of the opium trade and its suppression.

Zambezi opium: African production for an Asian market

Production of African opium for export and consumption in Asia engaged a complicated set of local and imperial politics. As a government-sponsored enterprise,

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[8] For a useful review of some of this scholarship, see P. Gootenberg 'Talking about the Flow: Drugs, Borders and the Discourse of Drug Control', *Cultural Critique*, 71 (2009), 13–46; also P. Gootenberg and I. Campos, 'Towards a New Drug History of Latin America: A Research Frontier at the Center of Debates', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 95, 1 (2015), 1–35.

[9] B. Breen, 'Drugs and Early Modernity', *History Compass*, 15, 4 (2017), DOI:10.1111/hic3.12376; D. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); J. Goodman, 'Excitantia: How Enlightenment Europe Took to Soft Drugs', in P. Lovejoy, A. Sherratt and J. Goodman eds, *Consuming Habits: Global and Historical Perspectives on how Cultures Define Drugs* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 1995).

[10] I. Campos, *Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origin of Mexico's War on Drugs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); P. Gootenberg, 'Between Coca and Cocaine: A Century or More of US–Peruvian Drug Paradoxes, 1860–1980', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 83, 1 (2003), 119–150; T. Hickman, 'Drugs and Race in American Culture: Orientalism in the Turn-of-the-Century Discourse of Narcotic Addiction', *American Studies*, 41, 1 (2000), 71–91.

[11] Gootenberg, 'Talking about the Flow', 20–24.

Paiva Raposo's concession of agricultural land fit within Portugal's strategy for acquiring a broad swathe of central African territory to connect its coastal colonies of Angola and Mozambique. Claim to this corridor, in European imperialist terms, required effective colonial occupation. The Zambezi Valley, including the northern Shire tributary, was a crucial gateway, contested not only by the British Empire but also by colonial creole families – holders of crown land (*prazos*) – whose loyalties had, over centuries, defaulted to local power interests.[12] In the 1870s, Portugal looked to 're-conquer' the area through commercial activity and the Mozambique Opium Cultivation and Trade joint stock company was 'the most important development' thus far.[13]

Three hundred years of Portuguese settlement in this region was characterised by cultural diffusion with indigenous and other immigrant groups, and by the integration and innovation of new institutions and identities, through alliances shaped by a robust regional trade in human captives, guns and ivory.[14] The *prazo* system of land tenure incorporated local people as free but economically obligated and socially differentiated residents, and constituted a powerful base for resisting imperialist incursions.[15]

Across the Indian Ocean, news of opium cultivation in Mozambique alarmed officials in the British Indian revenue department who, in this period, were becoming concerned about government expenditures and the sustainability of opium as its financial bedrock.[16] 'Malwa opium', in particular, signalled a familiar threat. Named for the product farmed independently in the western Indian princely states of Malwa and Rajasthan, it had long competed with British-controlled Gangean cultivation.[17] Cheaper, and with both allegedly higher yields and higher morphine content than Benares or Patna opium, the Malwa product was particularly valued in China.[18] From 1831, British administrators alleviated financial losses by imposing duties on Malwa opium exported through Bombay. With no such recourse possible for Zambezi-grown opium, British Indian officials eagerly sought intelligence of this new competitor.

In 1879, during treaty negotiations in Lisbon, British delegate Arthur Crawford gathered sufficient information about the African venture to suggest there was 'good reason to fear'.[19] Opium was being grown 'on the Malwa system': persons from Rajputana had been transported to Mozambique, and from Mozambique to Rajputana, in training exchanges. The enterprise was currently hampered by a deficit of skilled labour and by the 'hostile attitude of the natives'. Yet Crawford believed these challenges would be quickly resolved, after which African production would 'seriously cut into the opium revenue of British India'.[20]

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[12] M.D.D. Newitt, 'The Portuguese on the Zambezi: A Historical Interpretation of the Prazo System', *Journal of African History*, 10, 1 (1969), 67–85.

[13] M.D.D Newitt, *Portuguese Settlement on the Zambezi: Exploration, Land Tenure and Colonial Rule in East Africa* (New York: Longman, 1973), 351–352.

[14] A.F. Isaacman and B.S. Isaacman, *Slavery and Beyond: The Making of Men and Chikunda Ethnic Identities in the Unstable World of South-Central Africa 1750–1920* (Portsmouth: Heinmann, 2004).

[15] Newitt, 'The Portuguese on the Zambezi', 80–83.

[16] J.F. Richards, 'The Indian Empire and Peasant Production of Opium in the Nineteenth Century', *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 1 (1981), 59–82.

[17] A. Farooqui, 'The Global Career of Indian Opium and local Destinies', *Almanack*, 14 (2016), 52–73; C. Markovits, 'The Political Economy of Opium Smuggling in Early Nineteenth Century India: Leakage or Resistance?', *Modern Asian Studies*, 43, 1 (2009), 89–111.

[18] A. Farooqui, 'Colonialism and Competing Addictions: Morphine Content as a Historical Factor', *Social Scientist*, 32, 5/6 (2004), 21–31; 24–25.

Over the following months, British agents in Mozambique and in Zanzibar collaborated to generate a more detailed picture.[21] Since Elton's initial report, the area under cultivation had expanded: by early 1880 opium was planted on 74 acres and, later that year, on 100 acres, with further ground being prepared. The 'draw well' irrigation system had been replaced by steam-powered centrifugal pumps, capable of moving 1500 gallons of water per minute. The exceptionally favourable soil and climate had resulted in 'unusually rapid' plant development,[22] enabling two growing seasons per year.[23] Opium connoisseurs – namely 'Hindus and others in Quilimaine' – had pronounced the Zambezi product 'to be more powerful and rapid in its action than the opium of India, and […] of exceedingly good flavour'.[24]

Yet against signs of assured success were causes for doubt. The 1879 crop had produced, in a generous estimate, only 500lbs of the drug, a far cry from Raposo's hopeful predictions. Moreover, as evidenced by seizures made in Bombay, almost half of this amount was syphoned away from Company export and into Indian Ocean smuggling networks, organised by the plantation's Indian labourers and Bania merchants based in Quelimane.[25]

Paiva Raposo faced other challenges. Late planting and careless irrigation caused losses of a considerable number of plants. Yields per hectare were just a quarter of those in Malwa, with Zambezi poppies producing only a third of the number of pods.[26] Most critical was a chronic shortage of skilled labour. Two fathoms of cloth per week, it was explained, could cheaply buy African workers for ground clearing and 'other rough operations in the fields'. Yet the 150 to 200 men and women so employed were declared to be 'unfitted for the skilled manipulation of the plant' and for preparing opium for export.[27] Of 42 experienced Indian workers imported from Bombay, seven had died and others were taken ill. The 'Parsi engineer' in charge of operations had departed.[28] Paiva Raposo was now contemplating the employment of Chinese opium growers from Macao.

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[19] British Library, India Office Records and Private Papers (hereafter IOR) L/E/6/23, File 248, A. Crawford, Commr. S.D. Bombay and British Delegate, Portuguese Treaty, to the Secretary to Governor of Bombay, Revenue Department, 18 December 1879.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, H.E. O'Neill, British Consul Mozambique to J. Kirk, Consul General, Zanzibar, 15 February 1880; Kirk, British Agent and Consul, Zanzibar, to Foreign Department, Government of India, 23 August 1880; Kirk to Foreign Department, 20 September 1880.

[22] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, O'Neil to Kirk, 15 February 1880.

[23] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, Private Note: British Agent Nunes (Mozambique) to Kirk, copied in Kirk to Foreign Department, 21 September 1880.

[24] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, H.E. O'Neill to Kirk, 15 February 1880.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, Kirk, Zanzibar, to Foreign Department, India, 19 October 1880.

The shortages and 'unfitness' of 'native labour' in fact pointed to a more ominous reality than reports suggested. The company – with formal rights to tax residents on land leased – was regarded with suspicion, and attempts to lure African villagers into employment resisted.[29] Early years of opium production had relied upon forced labour, procured also through intimidation and violence. As described by Alfredo Augusto Caldas Xavier, the Company's later manager, troops from the Mopea military authority toured the *prazos* demanding recruits, flogging or imposing fines on villagers who refused conscription.[30] Endemic brutality undoubtedly accounted, in good part, for the labour shortages reported by British agents. In 1882, Caldas Xavier reformed recruitment tactics by introducing an incentive scheme: villagers could commute their tax through two weeks of plantation work, or sending proxies.[31] This arrangement increased the numbers of local people employed: the new manager boasted a force of 2000 men, women and children. By ruling *prazo* families and their retainers, the scheme was felt as a severe blow to local political authority.

Meanwhile, the Company's concessionaire expressed only confidence that 'with God's help' the future of the company would soon be solidly established.[32] In 1880, Paiva Raposo sent samples of opium extract and poppy pods to the Quelimane British officer, with a note urging him not to be deceived by reports underestimating company outputs: only 19 days after the last British visitor had departed, his young plants had shot up tall and mature, and were harvested with yields exceeding those in India by 50 per cent.

British Indian administrators were anxious to have the Zambezi product analysed but Raposo's samples, due to faulty packaging, proved impossible to test.[33] Raposo's Bombay opium agents, the long-established David Sassoon and

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[27] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, O'Neill to Kirk, 15 February 1880.

[28] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, Kirk, Zanzibar, to Foreign Department, India, 19 October 1880.

[29] See L. Vail and L. White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique: A Study of Quelimane District* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 76–78. Travelling through the region in the mid-1880s, explorer Henry Edward O'Neill recounted that land concessions by Portugal provided for annual tribute of 3 s. 4 d. from every resident 'black or white' to the lessee, a system open to abuse: See H.C. Palmer and M.D.D. Newitt, *Northern Mozambique in the Nineteenth Century: The Travels and Explorations of H.E. O'Neill* (Leiden: Brill: 2016): 279–280.

[30] A.A. Caldas Xavier, *Estudos Coloniais*, Edicao official (Nova Goa, 1889), 331, in Newitt, *Portuguese Settlement*, 352. Caldas Xavier's representations of labour relations before and after his reforms must be read against his desire to highlight their successes. See also Vail and White, *Capitalism and Colonialism*, 78.

[31] Vail and White, *Capitalism and Colonialism*, 77.

[32] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, Senhor Ignacio de Paiva Raposa [*sic*] to British Consul, Quilimane, 9 August 1880.

[33] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, J.E. O'Conor, Department of Finance and Commerce to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 3 May 1880.

Company, confirmed that tests undertaken by their firms in China indicated Zambezi opium to be

> in a liquid or syruppy [*sic*] condition, somewhat resembling the 'chick', as it is locally called, of Malwa opium. We tested it and found that it strained well, and its consistency (or 'touch') was rather less than that of Malwa. We attribute this inferiority to the fact that the preparers were ignorant of the system of solidifying the juice adopted in Malwa, but doubtless this will be remedied in future.[34]

Sassoon representatives believed that, once processed correctly and its reputation established, Zambezi opium would be competitive. It would likely sell at the same level as Malwa opium grown in Western India, but without the burden of high duties, which had recently led to a 30 per cent decrease in that product's export.

Thus, despite the uncertainty of the Mozambique enterprise, Indian revenue officers remained convinced of its threat. A spate of failed crop seasons in north-eastern India made the matter serious. In March 1881, they related their concerns to London, also recounting unsuccessful efforts to expand opium production in two key districts in Uttar Pradesh.[35] In mid-June, the Secretary of State for India, the Marquess of Hartington, laid out reasons he believed the Indian state should not rely on opium revenue, including a growing public antipathy to the trade.[36] Early drafts of this missive indicate that African opium, like Persian opium, weighed heavily in Hartington's thinking.[37] About Mozambique he wrote, 'it is only reasonable to expect that the cultivation would be extended […] and the competition become more keen'.[38]

Yet poppy culture in southern Africa was not to be extended. By 1889, the project had failed for reasons that draw our attention back to the complicated politics unfolding in the lower Zambezi Valley. In 1881, the Portuguese government and a local grouping, the Massingire, formed a shaky alliance out of a mutual interest to secure territory against their respective rivals. The Massingire had been created through integration of the Maganja clan with the Vos dos Anjos *prazo* dynasty (of Goan ancestry), reputed for its mid-nineteenth-century slaving and gun-running warlord Paul Mariano II. In the 1870s, the Massingire's position was unsettled by, among other factors, a crisis of leadership succession, and the 1881 agreement with Portugal now became a point of internal contention. At the same time, Portugal's declaration of a Massingire protectorate incited British animosity, contributing 'more than any other single factor' to heightened imperial tensions.[39]

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[34] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, David Sassoon and Co., Bombay, to Acting Secretary, Revenue Department, Bombay, 24 May 1880.

[35] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, Minute Paper, India Revenue Department, Opium Cultivation in Mozambique and Failure to Reintroduce Poppy Cultivation in Certain Purgunnahs of Allabhabad and Mirzapore Districts, 7 March 1881.

[36] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, Point 9 in Secretary of State (Marquess of Hartington), to the Governor General of India in Council, 16 June 1881.

[37] Secretary of State Hartington's June 1881 dispatch was referenced in 1884 by the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade in the pamphlet it circulated to the British Parliament. Although that letter, in its final draft, did not contain information about the Zambezi case, earlier drafts mention it specifically and demonstrate that it indeed informed the concerns about revenue cited by anti-opium activists. See LSE Library, Select Pamphlets. Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade, 'Our National Responsibility for the Opium Trade: a Sketch Prepared for the Use of Members of Parliament' (London: Dyer Brothers, 1884), 8–9.

[38] British Library, IOR/L/E/6/23, File 248, Minute Paper, India Revenue Department, Resubmitted in accordance with Instructions from the Undersecretary, to the Governor General of India in Council (U.D. one of several early drafts of letter sent 16 June 1881 by Hartington, see fn 37).

In July 1884, when Portugal sought to collect taxes from the Massingire, they were met with mistrust and rebellion. The Massingire embarked on a campaign of destruction directed at Portuguese, but also Dutch, trade stations, military outposts and settlements. Paiva Raposo's opium plantations and 'factory' came under attack in early August.[40] It was repelled by a corps of '16 white men and over 80 blacks, all fully armed' that arrived from Quelimane, but not before crops were destroyed and houses, stores and outbuildings burned to the ground. An account of 'The War on the Zambezi' (as dramatised by a correspondent for the *Scotsman*) appeared in the Eastern Cape's Lovedale newsletter, the *Christian Express*, describing a stand-off by company manager Caldas Xavier, a Scottish engineer, and 'about 20' Indians from Bombay. Their rescue, led by Frederick Moir of the British African Lakes Company, prompted a battle in which 100 'Machingire' were reported killed.[41]

Caldas Xavier represented attacks on the opium company as the work not of dissatisfied Massingiri but of *prazo* land-holders who seized the opportunity of the rebellion to defend their established authority, mobilising 'about half of the Maganja' villagers to join in the assault.[42] Portuguese officials also accused British traders and missionaries of complicity.[43] Vail and White have countered these interpretations, pointing to the role of *prazo* landowners in quelling, not fuelling, the rebellion, and to the agency and ready participation of opium labourers and resident taxpayers addressing grievances of their own.[44]

Following these events, Ignacio Jose de Paiva Raposo managed to renew his land concession on the Maganja *prazo* for another thirty-two years. His death in 1887, however, represented a further blow to company fortunes, and his son-in-law inherited a floundering enterprise.[45] In 1889, he instead turned his commercial ambitions to sugar cultivation.[46]

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[39] M.D.D. Newitt, 'The Massingiri Rising of 1884', *Journal of African History*, 11, 1 (1970), 87–105, 95.

[40] Vail and White, *Capitalism and Colonialism*, 78-82.

[41] 'The War on the Zambezi', Christian Express, 15 January 1885, 15.

[42] Newitt, *Portuguese Settlement*, 353.

[43] Newitt, 'The Massingiri Rising', 99–104.

[44] Vail and White, *Capitalism and Colonialism*, 79–82.

[45] H.E. O'Neill observed that the 1884 destruction merely accelerated the collapse of an enterprise that '[h]ad never paid a dividend': Palmer and Newitt, *Northern Mozambique*, 280. Yet, in 1888, Raposo's heir in this enterprise, John Peter Hornung, seemed to revive the operation with a 'dazzling' poppy crop of 120 hectares in Mopea but mass floods put another end to it: see Vail and White, *Capitalism and Colonialism*, 99–101.

[46] The sugar enterprise was successful into the twentieth century, and notorious in its exploitative relations of labour. Paiva was remembered in a ribald song of protest, as documented by L. Vail and L. White,

Opium production in southern Africa was, for Portugal, a brief and ill-fated experiment, the casualty of clashing interests, imperial and local. For British Indian officials, the failure of Zambezi opium represented a reprieve from expectations of competition and financial loss. When opium politics next arose in southern Africa, it was to do not with production for export but with import for local consumption.

Smoking opium in the Union: South Africa in the global supply chain

In South Africa, opium and its alkaloids, especially morphine, featured in the drug regimens of European settlers, largely in the form of patent medicines.[47] 'Drug drinking' was a sign of habitual inebriety, though ready citation of De Quincey by local literati suggested that – while an acknowledged 'evil' – opium's intrigue was not uniformly denied.[48]

In the Natal Colony, opium made a brief appearance in the 1887 'Wragg Commission' report, which documented the conditions of indentured Indian sugar labourers, recruited into the region by British agents from 1860.[49] Medical doctors charged with overseeing worker health observed that opium was sometimes smoked with 'dakkha' (Cannabis sativa) or tobacco. Dr Jones of Stanger observed too that 'the practice of opium-eating prevails to some extent […] and it will be almost impossible to prevent it'.[50] Reports by doctors compared cannabis to opium, to ensure that sufficient gravity was given to the former substance: 'opium […] and Indian hemp are almost identical as regards their effect'; '[…] the smoking of dakkha ranks with that of opium'.[51] Indian migrants, including shopkeepers, were routinely accused of selling cannabis to African youth. In Natal, colonial fears about cannabis – reputed to cause insanity, violence and death – in fact appeared greater than concerns about opium: an opium eater might be deemed merely unfit to work and, thus, returned to India.[52]

'Plantation Protest: The History of a Mozambiquan Song', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5, 1 (1978), 1–25.

[47] See T. Waetjen, 'The Politics of Narcotic Medicines in Early Twentieth Century South Africa', *Social History of Medicine*, 32, 3 (2019), 586–608 2019.

[48] Eugéne Marais's biographer, Leon Rousseau, considered that the poet (who wrote of morphine such lines as 'Ek hoor jou stem as fluistering in 'n droom') was under the 'morbid influence' of De Quincey and Edgar Allan Poe. At least one historian has argued that Olive Shreiner's writing career was curtailed by several years of excessive use of opiated medicines, including chlorodyne, prescribed by lovers or friends who were also her physicians: L. Rousseau, *The Dark Stream: The Story of Eugéne N Marais* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1982), 122; Y. Draznin, 'Did Victorian Medicine Crush Olive Schreiner's Creativity? *The Historian*, 47, 2 (1985), 196–207; Newspaper journalists liked to cite De Quincey when reporting on local opium dens or opium law-making: see as examples, 'Yen Yen', *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 November 1908; 'The Doctors' Day', *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 June 1909.

[49] Over 152,000 migrants from India were indentured in South Africa between 1860 and 1911.

[50] Y.S. Meer et al., eds, *Documents of Indentured Labour: Natal 1851–1917* (Durban: Institute of Black Research, 1980), 514.

[51] *Ibid*., 256, 511–518.

[52] As in the case of M. Hoosan, 'an opium eater'. National Archives of South Africa (hereafter NASA), Pietermaritzburg Archival Repository (hereafter NAB), Indian Immigration files (II), 1/151, Estcourt magistrate correspondence.

It was in the Transvaal Colony that a high-profile political economy developed around opium consumption. In 1904, after the South African War, the British imperial government transported around 63,000 indentured Chinese migrants for work in the Witwatersrand mines, a politically contentious strategy for reviving gold production.[53] The arrival of these workers and their confinement in mine compounds stimulated an entrepreneurial rush of opium into the region, with pharmacists, shopkeepers, hawkers and smugglers seeking to profit from a captive market.[54] As recounted in detail elsewhere, in 1905 lawmakers passed a prohibitionist Act, seeking to restrict the massive consignments of opium being imported by pharmacists: yet loopholes allowed for continued sales to 'confirmed opium smokers' for 'medicinal purposes'. As opium-related debility and death rose in the gold mines, the state revised its policy from prohibition to formal opium provision, passing the Opium Trade Regulation Act of 1906 and hoping, thereby, also to limit the amount that could be legally sold to a given individual. Under the new law, up to 2lbs of opium were awarded monthly by medical prescription and, during the next two years, pharmacists and physicians supplied at least eight tons of opium to unfree foreign workers.[55] Through a Customs Act, also passed in 1906, the colonial state farmed revenues generated through legitimate imports. At the same time, it endeavoured to suppress the enormous quantities of opium smuggled into ports and across inland borders. Seizures by police and customs officers indicate the scale of illicitly trafficked opium, with as much as 800lbs confiscated making headlines every few months.

In February 1909, international delegates of prominent nations and empires met in Shanghai to discuss possibilities for restricting the Asian opium trade. In a show of compliance, and anticipating the imminent merger of four South African colonies into a self-ruling Union, Transvaal law-makers again transformed their approach to the opium question. In June 1909, with numbers of Chinese workers rapidly diminishing through scheduled repatriation, legislators phased out the opium provision policy, correlating its termination with the departure of the last worker cohorts. In 1911, Natal's system of Indian indenture also ended, and the Union government passed a national Immigration Restrictions Act that classed all Asians as 'undesirables' and confined Indians born in South African to their 'province of domicile'. Population management was considered a *de facto* drug control solution. When, in September of that year, Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the British Colonies, wanted to know how much opium South Africa would require annually, the Union government returned a figure of 750lbs. This, he was informed, was likely an overestimate, because '[o]wing to the cessation of Chinese labour on the mines in the Transvaal and the restriction of Indian immigration in Natal, the quantity in future is likely to decrease rather than increase'.[56] In November, Harcourt offered South Africa special representation at the international opium convention, to take place in The Hague early the following year. Prime Minister Louis Botha declined, declaring it 'unnecessary'.[57]

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[53] P. Richardson, *Chinese Mine Labour in the Transvaal* (London: MacMillan, 1982).

[54] T. Waetjen, 'Poppies and Gold: Opium and Law Making on the Witwatersrand, 1904–10', *Journal of African History*, 57, 3 (2016), 391–416.

[55] T. Waetjen, 'The Rise and Fall of the Opium Trade on the Transvaal, 1904–1910', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43, 4 (2017), 733–751.

The stakes and shape of South Africa's illicit opium economy indeed changed dramatically. In Johannesburg in the years just before Union, a pound of opium could be purchased for 20–40 shillings and seizures of contraband were measured in hundreds of pounds in weight;[58] two decades later, a pound of opium sold for £16–£23 and customs officials and police officers described the confiscation of 2½ lbs as a 'massive quantity'.[59] After Union, numbers of people smoking opium remained diminutive and vastly more opium was consumed in medicinal preparations than in pipes. Nonetheless, as will become clear in the next section, connections between illicit local opium circuits and a wider, transoceanic supply chain became significant politically with the growth of international efforts to control 'dangerous drugs', particularly into the 1920s. It is important, therefore, to sketch a picture of opium consumption and its circulations within South Africa.

Until 1922, opium smoking remained legal. In 1908, in keeping with imperial directives emerging from Britain's ten-year agreement with China, the Cape Colony law department had drafted a bill to outlaw the practice of opium smoking, along with opium pipes, lamps and other equipment.[60] Yet civil dangers presented by opium smoking were declared unequal to the costs of its suppression, and the bill was never introduced in parliament.[61] In some urban centres, a handful of opium dens continued to cater to small, eclectic communities of consumers under pressures of police raids designed to suppress unlawful trade. Opium was used and sold by some Chinese settlers, a group subjected to repressive exclusion laws from 1904. Yet opium use and dealing were not exclusively Chinese. In certain moments, the multiracial camaraderie typically found in opium parlours arose as a governmental worry. Yet, especially after 1910, opium commanded much less official attention than did trafficking of alcohol or cannabis for indigenous colonial subjects.

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[56] NASA, National Archives Repository (hereafter SAB), GG 1911 62/59, Gladstone to Harcourt, encl. Prime Minister's Office, Minute no. 1052, 1 September 1911.

[57] NASA, SAB GG 102 3/728 Secretary of State for the Colonies Lewis Harcourt to Gladstone, 2 November 2011; SAB GG 103 3/741, Louis Botha, Prime Minister, to Gladstone, 15 Nov 2011.

[58] See e.g. NASA, Transvaal Province Repository (hereafter TAB), LD 1413 AG 813/47, Edwin Mundy to Secretary of the Law Department, 15 July 1907; Cape Town Archives Repository (hereafter KAB), MOH 322 Copy, 'Opium on the Mines of the Witwatersrand', Report/Letter from G. Baldwin to Baines, 1 May 1907; TAB, LD 1413 AG/813/07, Commissioner of Police to Law Department, 13 May 1907; TAB, DCU 101 630/07, H.R. Eaton, Director of Customs, to Collector of Customs, 11 July 1907; TAB, DCU 89 1849/06, Director of Customs Minute, 'Gluckman and Kowarsky's illegal importation of 838 lbs of Opium'.

[59] See e.g. NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, CI Officer to Police Commissioner, Witwatersrand division, 31 January 1927; CI Officer, Sub-Inspector A. Cilliers, Transvaal Division to Deputy Commissioner, Transvaal Division, Report: Illicit Smuggling into the Transvaal Province, 26 March 1926. In Lourenço Marques, opium transacted at '£19 per kilo Portuguese Sterling', and sold on in Johannesburg at '£28 Portuguese Sterling'; Acting Deputy Commissioner E.S. Fall to Commissioner of SAP, 31 December 1928; Police Commissioner Geddes to Minister for Justice, 23 July 1929.

[60] NASA, KAB, T Part 1 986, Draft Copy: Bill to Prohibit the Smoking of Opium.

[61] NASA, KAB, T Part 1 986, Department of Public Health, A.J. Gregory to Advocate Morgan Evans, Attorney General's Office, 20 July 1908.

In Cape Town in 1910, at least six ‘opium dens’ were known to police, establishments where up to ‘eight opium pills might be obtained by a smoker […] for a shilling’.[62] All were accommodated within private homes, a room with space for about six reclining patrons. In one, at a house on Church Street, a Mr Kong Lee also ran a laundry and resided with his wife, ‘a St Helena woman’, and their two children. Homet Arming and his spouse ran an opium salon out of their home on Caledon Street, particularly popular with ‘well dressed Malay tailors’ employed at Garlick’s clothing factory. Another, on Orange Street, was ‘notorious’ for drawing a mix of ‘European’, ‘Coloured’, ‘Malay’ and ‘Chinese’ men and women. The ‘ill reputed’ Salogedien Adams operated in District Six. Tracing some of the economic and affective links between individuals appearing in official records, we glimpse aspects of the intimate urban ‘networks’ through which opium and opium knowledge moved.

Managers of opium parlours sometimes hired resident smugglers to source opium at the dockside, where Chinese sailors working the Bucknall steamship line, for example, traded opium for seafood when, ‘once or twice monthly’, they were in port.[63] Cloth and garments also figured in drug transactions. In 1909, the aforementioned Salogedien Adams and another opium dealer, William Birch, were arrested for theft of stock from a tailor’s shop on Adderley Street. The haul, designated for Chinese fences, comprised

> thirty-six suit lengths of cloth, seven overcoats, three pieces of cloth, one hundred and twenty silk handkerchiefs, twenty suits of pyjamas, twenty yards of flannel, twenty reels of twist, forty eight shirts, ten pairs of boots, twenty four pyjama hats, six woollen belts, one hundred and thirty eight undervests, a bag, a cushion and eighteen tie pins.[64]

Insufficient evidence allowed Adams and Birch to evade conviction, but trial proceedings evidenced links between small time city drug dealing and transoceanic garment smuggling.[65]

Hustlers like William Birch had other ways to procure and sell opium, such as diverting it from legitimately imported pharmaceutical consignments. Birch, a dapper, literate and married 'coloured man' in his late twenties was a jack-of-all-trades: Pierrot Troupe player, dealer in drugs and stolen goods, police informant.[66] For six months he partnered with a 'Dr Watson', an American immigrant and veterinarian whose credentials allowed him to purchase good amounts of opium from pharmaceutical manufacturers, which Birch sold on.[67]

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[62] NASA, KAB, JUS 130 24894/10, Report on opium dens in Cape Town by Detective E Evans, CID, 13 October 1910. A ‘pill’ referred to a small bit of opium heated in an opium pipe.

[63] *Ibid.*

[64] NASA, KAB, CSC 1/1/1/68 13, Rex v Burch and Adams, Cape Supreme Court, 26 March 1909.

[65] In this period, the Cape Town production of finished articles of clothing and footwear was ‘the city’s most important industrial activity’, employing 1500 workers: V. Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001), 18.

Hamat Rajap, a tailor with Garlick's clothing factory, also sourced opium through medical professionals, often in a form that required 'cooking' into a smokeable substance. Possessing this skill enabled him both to support his own habit and, apparently, to develop a small sideline. In an affidavit taken by the Cape colonial Medical Officer of Health, with ten doctors on trial for opium provision,[68] Rajap explained his recipe for preparing opium:

> I take a pound of Opium as bought at the Chemists and I put with it half a pound of Opium ashes out of Opium pipes. I boil the whole in about a bucket and a half of water in a big pot. It boils for about half an hour, I then strain it through a piece of linen two or three times and I throw away the refuse. The liquid I boil for several hours until it becomes thick and all the water is out of it. I then put it in a basin and rap it up [*sic*] for a quarter of an hour with a flat stick until it becomes quite thick and it is then ready for smoking.[69]

Rajap acquired this artisanal expertise from Chinese associates with whom he appears to have been in business.[70]

Opium smoking, too, involved specialised skill, as Rajap explained: '[Y]ou take a small piece on a pin or bit of wire, heat it in the lamp until it is melted and bubbles, it is then put in the hole in the pipe, the pipe is held over the lamp and is smoked.' William Birch introduced this intricate practice to his lover, Daisy Harris, identified by police as one of two 'European women' who 'frequented' the opium den on Orange Street.[71] Rajap shared his method of smoking with workplace colleagues from Garlick's factory. As with other opium parlours, the men who gathered in his home were both friends and customers, including a few who helped him to source opium from colluding medical doctors.[72] Garlick's appears to have been a key point for transmitting opium practices, tailoring being an occupation in which Muslim men were prominent. Cape police and politicians noted the rise of opium consumption among young Muslim males, whom they considered 'ordinarily […] a law-abiding and sober class'.[73]

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[66] NASA, KAB, MOOC 6/9/668 1471, Death notice, William Birch, 12 June 1911; 'Passion Tragedy in a City Bar: Suicide follows Murder', *Cape Times*, 12 June 1911; 'Motive for Murder: the Plea of Birch', *Cape Times*, 19 June 1911; 'Cape Town's Seamy Side: Barmaid Shot, a Pierrot's Love Affair', *Eastern Province Herald*, 12 June 1911.

[67] NASA, KAB, MOH 322, Affidavit of William Burch [*sic*], as taken by A.J. Gregory, 26 September 1907.

[68] See T. Waetjen, 'Drug Dealing Doctors and Unstable Subjects: Opium, Medicine and Authority in the Cape Colony, 1907-1910', *South African Historical Journal*, 68, 3 (2016), 342–365.

[69] NASA, KAB, MOH 321, Affidavit of Hamat Rajap, as taken by Medical Officer of Health, Dr A.J. Gregory, 19 September 1907,

[70] *Ibid.* In his testimony to Gregory, Rajap claimed to cook opium for his personal use and for a few workplace friends. His description of his personally prepared opium being 'plenty times weighed' and favourably assessed by 'the Chinamen' suggests this to be a regular transaction.

[71] This affair ended tragically in a public murder-suicide that also shed a more complicated and interesting light on the ancestry of Harris. Police racially profiled patrons of the opium dens they visited in order to determine the dangers, especially, to white women, explicit objects of anti-opium campaigns in Anglophone societies more broadly, such as documented by M.T.Y. Lui, 'Saving Young Girls from Chinatown: White Slavery and Women's Suffrage, 1910–1920', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 18, 3, (2009), 393–417.

In Johannesburg, opium moved inland mainly from the ports of Natal and Delegoa Bay, transferred by rail – in suitcases and trunks or in cases of goods – and by road.[74] A spate of police raids in 1910 pushed opium dens in this city underground. Thus, in 1920, when police arrested 27 occupants of one such establishment, much of the news story was devoted to the ingenious architectural disguise, elaborate 'alarm system' and near-impenetrable barricades which required that police enter through a hole cut in the roof.[75] Police raids and, from 1922, restrictive laws effected price rises that made smuggling even small amounts of opium into Johannesburg quite lucrative.

Into the 1920s, opium trickled into Johannesburg, carried across the ocean by sailors and ship stewards working independently or through organised schemes.[76] Police believed most opium was transported 'via the British Indian Shipping line, whose ships ply between Bombay, along the East Coast to Durban, as well as Japanese and Dutch boats plying the same routes'.[77] For example, Ismael Mohammad Patel, a mess steward for the *S.N. Cos* on its India-South Africa route, carried 54lbs of opium into Lourenço Marques. From there, accomplices transported it through Swaziland to the Carolina railway station where, packed in luggage, it was sent to Braamfontein and collected by a local cabby.[78] A Mr Ken Kon, ship fireman for the *SS Nykerk*, sailed from Hamburg and on to Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Cape Town and Algoa Bay before being arrested with 3lbs of opium in East London.[79] An unnamed German sailor coming down the east African coast on the German *SS Toledo* was apprehended in Lourenço Marques with 10lbs of opium.

Opium smugglers in Durban and Lourenço Marques utilised their racial diversity as an occupational resource, with 'Indians, Greeks, Jews', 'Chinamen', as well as 'Coloured and Native' people collaborating to evade authorities.[80] Women were employed in certain drug-running tasks, less likely to be searched.[81] Railway employees were uniformly suspect by police:

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[72] Waetjen, 'Drug Dealing Doctors'.

[73] NASA, KAB JUS Part II 130 Cape Acting Under Secretary for Justice to Attorney General, 24 October 1910.

[74] See Waetjen, 'Opium Trade in the Transvaal'.

[75] 'Alleged Opium Den Raided: 27 Arrests/Forced Entry through Roof', *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 October 1920.

[76] NASA, SAB, GES 1654 10/27B, Criminal Investigations Department to Deputy Commissioner SAP, re: Habit Forming Drugs: prosecution SAP, 2 June 1926.

[77] NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, Report: Police Commissioner Geddes to Minister for Justice, 23 July 1929.

[78] NASA, SAB, GES 1654 10/27B, A.E. Trigger CID to Deputy Police Commissioner, Johannesburg, 19 February 1926.

[79] NASA, SAB, GES 1656/27F, Secretary of Public Health to Secretary of External Affairs, Pretoria, 9 February 1933.

[80] NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, Divisional Officer, Witwatersrand Division to Deputy Police Commissioner, Transvaal Division, 24 September 1928.

> Certain types employed in the dining cars as well as bed and corridor stewards are men who would lend themselves to smuggling in contravention of the Customs Law, especially the smuggling of such items as opium, cocaine, cigarettes, cigars and silks, small items of which a small parcel can represent a considerable value.[82]

Late in 1926, Union police believed opium supplies were drying up.[83] Witwatersrand detectives learned from their informants that the drug could 'not be obtained in any large amount. Opium to-day is at a premium and it is impossible to get opium under £16 per pound, which amount is willingly paid by opium smokers of this city'.[84] Hospitalisation of two well-known addicts was attributed to 'their being unable to obtain opium to fulfil their craving'.

In this year, the promise of high dividends in the opium smuggling business proved alluring to one Daniel Joseph du Preez, a rheumatic, down-and-out Transvaaler.[85] He decided to try his luck, sponsored by an associate, Tommy Beckley, a disabled legal clerk who had lost his job in the Law Courts for taking part in the labour strikes of 1922. Beckley and Du Preez met with Albert E. Adams, a Johannesburg prospector with mineral rights in Lichtenburg. Adams provided instructions and a contact: T.S. Lewis, a steward on the *SS Takliwa*, a Bombay liner with a route between India and East Africa. In August, Du Preez made his way through Delegoa Bay to Zanzibar where, taken ill, he resided in the Africa Hotel for a month before venturing on to India. In Bombay, an 'unknown Parsee' provided him a quantity of opium, apparently a good deal less than promised and – seemingly – diverted clandestinely from a larger operation.[86] Preparing to await further delivery, Du Preez suddenly received a note advising him to take what he had and leave that very day. 'Bad people' were unhappy with any delay: if Du Preez did not depart immediately he should give up the proposition altogether and 'if tomorrow anything troublesome occurs, then we are not responsible, I fear for you'.[87] Returning to Zanzibar, Du Preez managed to sell a small amount to some locals before police arrived at his hotel where they found 5lbs of opium packed in cigarette tins. Du Preez was arrested, fined 1500 rupees for the opium (and more for an unlicensed gun) and put in gaol. He was later released when relatives in South Africa sent money to cover bail and his fine.[88]

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[81] NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, Acting Deputy Commissioner E.S. Fall to Commissioner of SAP, 31 December 1928.

[82] NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, CI Officer, Sub-Inspector A. Celliers, Transvaal Division to Deputy Commissioner, Transvaal Division, Report: Illicit Smuggling into the Transvaal Province, 26 March 1926.

[83] NASA, SAB, GG 1495, CI Officer to Police Commissioner, Witwatersrand division, 31 January 1927.

[84] NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, CI Officer to Police Commissioner, Witwatersrand division, 31 January 1927.

[85] NASA, SAB, GG 1495, Confidential report, CID, Johannesburg Re: Opium Traffic: Joseph Daniel du Preez, 31 January 1927; Copy: Tommie Beckley to Daniel du Preez, Zanzibar, 24 August 1926; Copy, Report by the Superintendent, Zanzibar Police, 25 November 1926.

[86] NASA, SAB, GG 1495, Copy, unsigned note found on Du Preez, Bombay, 12 October 1926.

[87] NASA, SAB, GG 1495, Copy, undated, unsigned note found on Du Preez.

Du Preez's adventure provides a small window onto one transoceanic route, and the blend of opportunism and organisation through which this commodity moved into southern Africa. It demonstrates how established smuggling syndicates maintained dominance within lucrative trade routes, making use of and disposing amateurs to protect larger networks. In this case, evidence suggests either a double-crossing by a Bombay agent working within a large merchant house or, more likely, that Du Preez was meant to believe such scenario and – judged a poor prospect or already pegged for the role – was set up as police bait.

Whatever the facts, Du Preez's case was cited at the Fourteenth Meeting of the Eleventh Session of the Opium Advisory Committee at the League of Nations in 1927, as evidencing an illicit narcotics traffic coming through Lourenço Marques bound for the Transvaal.[89] The Portuguese representative was dismissive of this charge: the Mozambique Governor had assured it to be 'absolutely impossible', since controls were rigorously enforced.[90] If South Africa knew of a 'leakage', they should present the facts:[91] there had been no drug arrests at the frontier to confirm its accusations.[92] The Union government now deployed police spies to further investigations of habit-forming drugs at the border and in Lourenço Marques itself.[93]

In the two decades after Union, the practice of opium smoking was relatively circumscribed within the dominion. In urban spaces, opium brought together small numbers of people from diverse backgrounds for sociable consumption, knowledge-sharing, and as a means to bolster marginal or precarious livelihoods. The underworld status of this substance was produced not only through prohibitions around its unlicensed sale but through the official classification of Asian migrants as 'undesirables' in immigration law. Although not prioritised locally for legal suppression, circulations of this exogenous drug in South Africa would prove significant for shaping international control. The next section shows how imperial drives for opium restriction were drawn into the agendas of colonial statecraft, grafted to evolving claims of national sovereignty and local drug control regimes.

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[88] NASA, SAB, GG 1495, Copy, Report by the Superintendent, Zanzibar Police, 25 November 1926.

[89] NASA, SAB, GG 1495, Confidential: S. Amery to Hertzog, External Affairs, 11 July 1928.

[90] NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, Sir Malcom Delevingne to Augusto Vasconcellos, 27 November 1929.

[91] NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, Provisional Minutes – 17th Meeting of the 12th Session of the Opium Advisory Committee, League of Nations.

[92] NASA, SAB, GG 1495, L.S. Amery [Sec of State for Dominion Affairs] to Minister of External Affairs, Union of South Africa, 27 May 1927.

[93] NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, Detective Sergeant Coetzee to Pretoria: 'Illicit Immigration and Smuggling of Habit-Forming Drugs and other Contraband into the T'vaal', 24 September 1926; SAB GG 1495 Resume of Report on Illicit Traffic in Opium and Cocaine, 8 December 1928–4 March 1929.

Politics of controlling ‘dangerous drugs’ in South Africa

In 1912, when the Opium Convention was convened in The Hague, southern Africa was neither an opium-producing, nor any longer a major opium-consuming, region. Yet delegates identified it as strategic for the suppression of global drug traffic for two reasons. One was geography. South Africa’s position between two oceans, with established sea and overland trade routes and numerous working ports, made it a key site of control. The second reason was South Africa’s growing pharmaceutical industry, with several medicine manufacturing firms, such as Lennon, Petersen and Heynes Matthew.

The Union government utilised international pressures to conform with new opium protocols as leverage for furthering its own, local political aims. In this section, I outline two ways this happened. First, global opium politics offered the language and legal machinery for defining and controlling cannabis (dagga) as a ‘dangerous drug’. Second, as mentioned at the end of the last section, drug control was drawn into negotiations with Portuguese Mozambique over a variety of issues, most directly to curb ‘undesirable’ immigration over its shared frontier.

In 1910, repatriation of indentured Chinese workers convinced Union government officials that its ‘opium problem’ had been resolved, rendering ‘unnecessary’ any local representation at the 1912 Opium Convention. However, in this same period, a new and homegrown ‘problem’ was perceived in a locally cultivated plant: dagga. Dagga possessed a centuries-long history of consumption among indigenous inhabitants of southern Africa but did not figure in the intoxicant repertoires of British settlers. Official uncertainties about its uses, biochemical effects, cultural meanings and analogues, as well as its botanical identity and taxonomy complicated debates over policy, well into the twentieth century. ‘Wild dagga’ species of Leonotus, which grew abundantly and checked proposals of botanical eradication through noxious weed laws, were long confused with, or otherwise considered analogous to, Cannabis sativa.[94] Opium became an idiom through which to grapple with dagga’s variable nature and classification.

Thus, for example, in May 1901, William Griffith, the Potchefstroom goods traffic manager of the Imperial Military [South African] Railway, asked his Johannesburg supervisor how ‘dagga’ – ‘frequently consigned’ by both freight and passenger train – should be classified on the waybill.[95] Unnamed in the tariff lists but 'actually a kind of tobacco', he wondered what rate to charge. Over the next few years, railway bureaucrats around the territory debated dagga's nature and value as revenue.[96] The Natal Spruit station officer agreed with a Pretoria colleague, as well as the Mozambique director of the *Caminho de Ferro* railroad, that tobacco rates should apply because African people used it for smoking.[97] Yet, after 1905, when 'dagga' was included in the Cape Colony's pharmaceutical schedules, some officials cited grounds for heavier taxation: '[I]t is a Species of Drug', declared W.H. Barrett of the Johannesburg office, 'used by natives somewhat after the same manner as opium'.[98] The Kimberley traffic manager still disagreed: 'although a drug, it is not so in a different sense to that in which tobacco is'.[99] At the end of 1906, the Transvaal General Manager ruled that dagga would henceforth be taxed as a 'drug', because official attitudes to dagga were the same as with opium: 'Both of these are vegetable products and injurious drugs when used for other than legitimate purposes as medicines'.[100]

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[94] See U. Chattopadhyaya, ‘Dagga and Prohibition: Markets, Animals, and Imperial Contexts of Knowledge, 1893–1925’ this journal issue. Leonotus, like Indian Hemp, was included in the Cape Pharmacy poison schedules from early in the century. In the 1930s, there was concern that police were confusing the endemic species of Leonotus with those of Cannabis. See J.M. Watt and M. Breyer-Brandwijk, ‘The Forensic and Sociological Aspects of the Dagga Problem in South Africa’, *South African Medical Journal* (22 August 1936). Current and historical botanical debates are summarised in C.S. Duvall ‘Drug Laws, Bioprospecting and the Agricultural Heritage of Cannabis in Africa’, *Space and Polity*, 20 (2016), 10–25.

The Union had formed from four colonies with differing views and policies on dagga. In the Cape, dagga was grown commercially and, up until the turn of the century, its sale was advertised in newspapers, along with 'dop brandy' and other consumables commonly sold in bulk or as rations for farm workers. Around this time, however, it came under scrutiny by Cape Progressive Party politicians and medical elites who collaborated in 1905 to introduce its scheduling as a medicinal 'poison' within the existing 1899 Pharmacy Act.[101] Afrikander Bond Members of Parliament protested vehemently against a measure that threatened their Cape Midlands dagga-growing constituencies: these farmers were hurt badly by the 1905 law, as buyers from pharmaceutical firms – now legally granted exclusive rights to sell cannabis – were empowered to name their price.[102] Shortly after Union, wine and fruit farmers in the western districts of the Cape – along with the Justice Department, Medical Council and the police – pressed for more stringent dagga controls.[103] They accused Cape pharmacists of operating a roaring trade in 'non-medical' dagga, and claimed the substance caused worker debility, insanity, crime and sex across the colour line.[104]

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[95] NASA, SAB, SAS 1323 RG23, Griffiths, Potchefstroom Imperial Military Railways, to Johannesburg Railway Traffic Manager, 6 May 1901.

[96] NASA, SAB, SAS 1323 RG23, Traffic Manager, Kimberley, Cape Government Railways, to Chief Traffic Manager, Johannesburg, 28 September 1905; Acting General Manager, Cape Government Railways, 20 December 1905; 'Rate for Dagga'.

[97] NASA, SAB, SAS 1323 RG23, Chief Traffic Manager's Office, South African Railways, Pretoria, 8 November 1904; Traffic Manager, Natal Spruit to Chief Traffic Officer, Johannesburg, 17 September 1905; also to Cape Town Manager, 9 September 1905; General Traffic Manager, Johannesburg to Director, *Caminho de Ferro*, Lourenço Marques, 6 November 1906; Director, *Caminho de Ferro*, 30 January 1907.

[98] NASA, SAB, SAS 1323 RG23, Traffic Manager, Johannesburg to Natal Spruit, 19 September 1905.

[99] NASA, SAB, SAS 1323 RG23, Traffic Manager, Kimberley, Cape Government Railways, to Chief Traffic Manager, Johannesburg, 28 September 1905; Acting General Manager, Cape Government Railways, 20 December 1905.

[100] NASA, SAB, SAS 1323 RG23, 'Rate for Dagga'. Declares that dagga falls under the tariff classification on page 144 of the tariff book at the normal (i.e. not tobacco) rate. R740/23; etc.

[101] NASA, KAB, JUS 141 25726/11, Dr J. Waterston to the Cape Parliament, 4 September 1904 and 11 September 1904; Legislative Council Report, 'The Smoking of Dagga', *Cape Times*, 27 March 1906; Copy of Proclamation, government notice 1363, 18 December 1905.

[102] 'Parliament Legislative Council', *Cape Times,* 28 August 1907. Whereas before the law dagga had regularly sold for 4s 1d per lb, farmers had been compelled to sell in 1906 at 1½d per lb.

On the Witwatersrand, meanwhile, surveys in 1908 and 1911 sponsored by the Government Native Labour Bureau canvassed the opinions of mine inspectors and pass law officers about labourers' dagga use in mining compounds.[105] Outcomes revealed generally tolerant attitudes. Tolerance, however, did not extend to the civilian spaces of Transvaal towns. In Natal, meanwhile, vocal white settlers and African Christian leaders sought dagga restriction through law. But this was tempered by the colony's investment in the politics of indirect rule, which devolved regulation of dagga as a customary African practice under the authority of chiefs and family patriarchs.[106] Native Affairs Department officials opposed cannabis prohibition because they believed it would incite rebellion and undermine the authority of 'older [African] men, many of whom while irrevocably addicted to the drug are not of a stamp who should be made criminals by a stroke of the pen'.[107]

International pressures to control opium opened to the Union government the possibility of overriding internal dissent and suppressing dagga not merely as a medicinal poison or noxious weed, but as a 'habit-forming drug'. Yet it took several years for this opportunity to be grasped, and quite a few more before it was realised in law.

At the 1912 Hague Opium Convention, delegates drew up protocols for international control of opium and London began pressing South African government leaders to demonstrate compliance by passing a national anti-opium law. In March, Harcourt forwarded copies of the conference proceedings to Pretoria, explaining that, although South Africa had independent decision-making powers, London was 'very anxious' to secure consensus across the Empire. Union officials showed little urgency in their response. In August, Prime Minister Louis Botha explained that he could not guarantee swift action, as 'various provinces of the Union fall short of some very material requirements which are to be enforced under the convention'.[108] Urged to reconsider, the Union reiterated its reservations.[109]

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[103] NASA, KAB, JUS 141 25726/11, James Gribble, Paarl Farmer's Association to Minister of Justice, Pretoria, 3 August 1912 and 7 August 1912; Attorney General's Office 'Bill to Prohibit the Sale and Use of Dagga', 13 July 1907.

[104] For example, NASA, KAB, AG 1885 310/11, Report, Office of Deputy Police Commissioner, to Cape Provincial Secretary, 9 July 1914; Cape Provincial Secretary to the Secretary of the Cape Agricultural Association, Port Elizabeth, 22 November 1915; Attorney-General to Secretary for Justice, Cape Town, 24 March 1916; Sergeant M Kenny for the Deputy Commissioner, Cape Town, to the Attorney General, Cape Town. Report on Sale of Dagga. 3 August 1916; KAB, JUS 141 25726/11, Chief Commissioner SAP, Pretoria to Secretary for Justice, 6 September 1912.

[105] NASA, SAB, NTS 8194 3/345, Correspondences around the survey, various, from 1908 and 1911.

[106] NASA, SAB, NTS 8194 3/345, Hlabisa Magistrate to Zululand Native Commissioner, 2 July 1909; Government minute paper, 2 July 1909. Though a survey by Zululand magistrates of chiefly attitudes towards such a restrictive law indicated support for outlawing the use of dagga by youth and women.

[107] NASA, SAB, NTS 8194 3/345, Chief Native Commissioner, Natal, to Natal Provincial Secretary, 13 June 1923.

In 1913, London prompted Gladstone, the Governor General, with a reminder that South Africa had not yet signed the Hague convention, along with North and South Rhodesia, Swaziland, Basutoland or Bechuanaland. Most of these cases were unproblematic 'so long as the colonies possessing important ports, which could be used for transhipment' cooperated.[110] Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey declared that 'refusal or failure of certain of the dominions, colonies, dependencies and protectorates' threatened to derail British interests. South Africa was indispensable to imperial opium diplomacy, both because of its 'large and busy ports on the route to the Far East' and because of its capacity to develop modern 'chemical works for the manufacture of the drugs'.[111]

The Union now capitulated, and Secretary of Interior Jan Smuts promised to introduce a national opium bill to parliament.[112] However, three more years passed without legislative action.[113] By then, international attention was directed to the World War, with Smuts and Botha leading campaigns on two African fronts.

In 1916, the Cape provincial secretary pressed Pretoria for a national law to suppress dagga, either eradicating it as a noxious weed under agricultural law or else up-scheduling it as a poison to the same class as opium under a pharmacy Act.[114] By then, however, Union lawmakers had finally drafted the requested opium legislation.[115] This bill defined and incorporated dagga, like opium, as a 'habit-forming drug', to be suppressed through criminal law, with punishments of £100 fines and prison terms up to six months.[116]

The 'Opium and other Habit-forming Drug Regulation' bill brought both Leonotus and Cannabis under the same governance as 'heroine', 'morphine', 'raw opium', 'medicinal opium', 'prepared opium' and 'cocaine'. It further grafted dagga to opium through prohibitions related to their analogous modes of ingestion:

> No person shall use any pipe, receptacle, or material for smoking opium, Indian hemp or dagga, and […] be in possession of, or use any habit-forming drug or plant from which such drug can be derived, extracted, produced or manufactured; and no person shall keep or assist in the keeping of or frequent, any premises or place for

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[108] NASA, SAB, GG 113 3/1027, Louis Botha to Gladstone, 10 August 1912.

[109] NASA, SAB, GG 114 3/1072, Harcourt to Gladstone, 25 September 1912.

[110] NASA, SAB, GG 129 3/1483, Harcourt to Gladstone, 6 March 1913.

[111] NASA, SAB, GG 126 3/1428, Harcourt to Governor General, 25 October 1913.

[112] NASA, SAB, GG 127 3/1453, Smuts to GG, 19 December 1913.

[113] NASA, SAB, GG 130 3/1543, High Commissioner to General Governor, 23 March 1914; SAB, GG 131 3/1556 Smuts to General Governor, 6 April 1914; GG 137 3/1804 From Imperial Secretary to Governor General, 10 March 1915; SAB, GG 138 3/1820 Smuts to Imperial Secretary, 7 April 1915.

[114] NASA, KAB, AG 1885 310/11, Cape Provincial Secretary to Secretary for the Interior, Pretoria, 30 June 1916.

[115] NASA, SAB, GG 140 3/1938, Louis Botha to Governor General, 29 October 1915.

[116] NASA, SAB, GG 140 3/1938, Draft copy of 'Opium and other Habit-forming Drug Regulation Bill'; SAB, GG 141 3/19/1965, Louis Botha to Governor General, 16 January 1916.

> the smoking of opium, Indian hemp or dagga, or for the surreptitious consumption, injection or administration in any manner whatsoever of any habit-forming drug.[117]

This not only served to mark as deviant one particular form of opium consumption (inhaling it as smoke), but also made it conceivable to apply to dagga the suppressive measures peculiar to stamping out opium dens.

Although planned to come into effect January 1917, the bill was never presented to parliament. Its drafting, however, signalled that, by the middle of the decade, government bodies had seized on to the opportunities presented by global opium regulation for controlling other intoxicating substances as problematic 'drugs'.

In August 1918, the US Ambassador wrote to British Foreign Secretary, A.J. Balfour, advising that protracted combat during the war had generated 'many sufferers' who were now 'so accustomed to the use of opiates as to be in danger of enslavement'.[118] In South Africa, war demands for medicines had indeed expanded its pharmaceutical manufacturing sector. Petersen's Limited, for example, a Cape based firm founded in 1842, with factories also in Johannesburg and Bloemfontein, supplied the Union Defense Force in both its South West and East African campaigns.[119] Through this commerce, by 1917, the company was able to complete construction of a new five-storey factory in Cape Town, with over 200 employees. House-invented 'automatic Pill-making Machines, the Gelatine Coating Plant, the Tablet Mixing and Granulating Machinery' were guarded secrets, producing 'immense quantities of every conceivable kind of medicine', as well as industrial and culinary goods. Petersen's products were shipped as far as Nairobi, Blantyre, Swakopmund, and Chinde. Company sales representatives travelled around the Union, but were cultivating markets also in Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo, Angola and Mozambique.[120]

In January 1920, the Treaty of Versailles took effect, including a provision bringing the 1914 opium conventions into force. Smuts, now Prime Minister, confirmed that no Union legislation directed to the control of opium or other habit-forming drugs had yet been passed.[121] Lord Alfred Milner wrote to Governor General Buxton, reminding him that ratification of the peace treaty obligated compliance also with the opium convention.[122] Five years earlier, he recalled, Union Ministers had drafted an opium bill but this had 'never been introduced!'[123]

At the end of 1920, Smuts assured London that a national Medical, Dental and Pharmacy law, containing all necessary provisions to regulate drug imports, exports and transshipment, was imminent, overseen by the provincial Medical Councils and Pharmacy Boards.[124] Yet, a standoff with these bodies over his medicines stamp tax precluded this avenue of action.[125] Instead, regulations were appended to a Customs and Excise Duties Bill, passed through proclamation 81 of 1922.[126] Opium and cannabis would now be controlled as 'habit-forming drugs' and identical proclamations were issued for Swaziland, Basutoland and Bechuanaland.[127] Relevant provisions were transferred to a national Medical, Dental and Pharmacy Act passed finally in 1928.

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[117] NASA, SAB, GG 140 3/1938, Draft copy of 'Opium and other Habit-forming Drug Regulation Bill'.

[118] NASA, SAB, GG 151 3/2496, A.J. Balfour, London to the Governor General, 23 August 1918.

[119] *The House of Petersen* Souvenir Brochure, Petersens Limited, 1918. National Library of South Africa, Cape Town.

[120] *Ibid.*

[121] NASA, SAB, GG 159 3/2869, Smuts to Governor General Buxton, 29 January 1920.

[122] NASA, SAB, GG 161 3/3005, Milner to Governor General Buxton, 30 March 1920.

[123] NASA, SAB, GG 161 3/3005, Minute Paper, 26 April 1920.

Meanwhile, Smuts built upon the momentum of South Africa's compliance to international opium law. In 1923, he requested that the League of Nations place cannabis on the international dangerous drug list, to be regulated globally through the same machinery as opium and cocaine.[128] His stature within this organisation brought weight to the proposal, which was implemented in 1925 after input also from other nations.[129]

With national and international laws on the books, the issue of opium was now drawn into frontier politics between South Africa and Mozambique. Opium traffic into South Africa was of little consequence and it diminished further in the 1920s. Indeed, by 1928, the Witwatersrand police confidentially informed their Pretoria Commissioner that ongoing investigations failed to find tangible proof that drug traffic was occurring to any great extent:

> In regard to opium there is undoubtedly an amount of illicit traffic, the main consumers being Chinese residents of Johannesburg. The known Chinese opium den keepers have either been deported or are undergoing imprisonment, and there is not one known opium den in Johannesburg today […] Special inquiries have been made into the alleged cocaine traffic but Johannesburg appears to be singularly free of drug addicts. No organisation in respect of the illicit use and marketing of the drug is in existence.[130]

Yet South Africa remained keen to produce evidence of narcotics traffic coming in from Delagoa Bay.

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[124] NASA, SAB, GG 170 3/3354, Prime Minister's Office, Pretoria to Governor General, 23 December 1920. See also SAB, GG 155 3/2676 Dispatch from HM Minister at Peking, requesting South Africa to furnish copies of all laws, by-laws, orders in Council governing opium and cocaine. Buxton sent this to Union Ministers on 13 September 1919 and a reminder on 20 November 1919.

[125] M. Ryan, *A History of Organised Pharmacy in South Africa, 1885–1950* (Cape Town: The Society for the History of Pharmacy in South Africa, 1986), 65–73.

[126] NASA, SAB, GG 170 3/3354, Governor General to Imperial Secretary, Cape Town, 17 June 1922; GG 184 3/4021 Governor General to Colonial Office, London, 19 June 1922.

[127] NASA, SAB, GG 170 3/3354, Draft proclamation in respect of Swaziland; SAB GG 186 3/4149 Imperial Secretary and High Commissioner, correspondences and copies of proclamations for Bechuanaland and Basutoland, 5 October 1922.

[128] NASA, SAB, BTS 2/1/104 LN 15/1, J.C. Smuts to Secretary, League of Nations, 28 November 1923.

[129] J.H. Mills, 'Colonial Africa and the International Politics of Cannabis: Egypt, South Africa, and the Origins of Global Control', in Patricia Barton and James Mills, eds, *Drugs and Empires: Essays in Modern Imperialism and Intoxication 1500–1930* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 165–184; Chattopadhyaya, 'Dagga and Prohibition'.

[130] NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, Confidential, Deputy Commissioner, Witwatersrand Division to Police Commissioner, Pretoria, 6 November 1928.

Between the governments of South Africa and Portuguese Mozambique drugs were, in fact, only of minor concern. In the late 1920s, negotiations between the two colonies were intensive around other issues. These included the growing bulk of Union exports running through the port at Delagoa Bay, which demanded heavy use of rail and port facilities; new resistance by Natal to Mozambique sugar imports; and the conditions of passage for migrant labourers coming from Mozambique (and from further north) to the Witwatersrand gold mines.[131] During the era of European 'scrambles' on the continent in the late nineteenth century, Portuguese relations with Britain had been competitive and hostile, prompting Portugal's alliance with the Boers of the Transvaal, who similarly feared British imperialist aggression. Yet, after Union, Portugal looked to London's influence for containing the new dominion's expansionist dreams of a 'Greater South Africa'.[132] Smuts was pushing hard to annex Swaziland, Southern Rhodesia and southern Mozambique, seeking subcontinental unification as an Anglo-Saxonist dispensation.[133]

The Union also pursued racist Immigration Restrictions laws, adopting 1911 provisions from those first passed in Natal in 1897. These laws classified and constricted people – largely of Asian origin, but also hailing from eastern and Mediterranean Europe – according to racial and national designations as 'undesirable' for entry and settlement in the territory.[134] It was in fact not so much the issue of drug flows, but rather of human mobility – the entry of 'undesirables' across the Mozambique-South Africa frontier – that the Union was most anxious to curtail. Andrew MacDonald chronicles how, into the twentieth century, with immigration control in place in Durban and Cape Town, thousands of migrants found informal passage through Lourenço Marques, even as the Union government escalated its efforts to keep them out.[135] South Africa drew upon the authority of the League of Nations' drug committees to exert pressure on its northeastern neighbour in order to plug a porous border.

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[131] P.G. Eidelberg, 'The Breakdown of the 1922 Lourenço Marques Port and Railways Negotiations', *South African Historical Journal*, 8, 1 (1976), 104–118; W.G. Martin 'Region Formation under Crisis Conditions: South vs Southern Africa in the Interwar Period', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 16, 1 (1990), 112–126.

[132] Eidelberg, 'The Breakdown'; Martin, 'Region Formation'. Also R. Hyam and P. Henshaw, *The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South Africa since the Boer War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 102–117. Both Martin and Eidelberg contend that the Union drive for territorial expansion in the 1920s was felt by the Portuguese as a threat, but manifested materially more in the movement of capital which did not require political annexation. Hyam and Henshaw document that Smuts's aspirations to annex southeastern Africa up to Kenya continued into the 1930s.

[133] See a map of Smuts's subcontinental plan in Hyam and Henshaw's, *The Lion and the Springbok*, 104.

[134] A. McKeown. *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 185–197; J.C. Martens, *Empire and Asian Migration: Sovereignty, Immigration Restriction and Protest in the British Settler Colonies, 1888–1907* (Crawley: University of Western Australia, 2018).

[135] A. MacDonald, 'Forging the Frontiers: Travellers and Documents on the South Africa–Mozambique Border, 1890s–1940s', *Kronos*, 40 (2014), 154–177; A. MacDonald, 'Colonial Trespassers in the Making of South Africa's International Border: 1900 to c 1950' (PhD thesis, St John's College, Cambridge University, 2012).

Public hype about cross-border drug traffic, with Lourenço Marques accused of lax enforcement, served the Union in this cause. In August 1929, South Africa was declared to be 'A Clearing House for Drugs' in a *Cape Argus* headline. This description belonged to Mr Darcy, a tourist, who had been informed about the drug trade during his journey by sea from the United States 'via the East'. Opium, morphine and cocaine, he explained, were transported on ships between Peru, Java and Batavia via South African ports 'without the strictest scrutiny' and 'possibly the drugs are handed over at Beira and Delagoa Bay and carried through Africa by rail'.[136]

South Africa brought fresh complaints about its northeastern border to the Opium Advisory Committee of the League of Nations, forwarding police reports, which identified 10 alleged members of what they called a drug-running operation, linked to the arrest of a German sailor carrying 10lbs of opium.[137] In November 1929, Sir Malcolm Delevingne, the British Opium Committee representative, wrote to his Portuguese counterpart, Dr Augusto de Vasconcellos, indicating that evidence of a cross-border 'leakage', requested back in 1926, had now been gathered. There was 'every reason to believe that opium and cocaine [were] being smuggled into the Union via Delegoa Bay by organized illicit traffickers'.[138]

The following year, at the 32nd meeting of the Thirteenth Session, Vasconcellos informed the Opium Committee that Lourenço Marques police had investigated South African allegations of organised drug running.[139] Searches, surveillance and a raid – all dedicated to obtaining 'proofs of the culpability of those persons [… and] justify the application of law sanctions' – had rendered no results whatsoever.[140]

Early in 1931, Johannesburg newspapers reported on a border raid by 54 armed officers of the Union police, resulting in what was called a 'haul' of drugs valued at £15,500.[141] The South African commander had orchestrated the 'dawn to dusk' operation, setting up a trap in Lourenço Marques itself. News articles depicted a colourful but improbable story in which, in addition to discoveries of opium and cocaine, police 'foiled' 'gunrunning attempts', as well as the smuggling, by train, of cash lottery winnings. Instead of being apprehended, with their respective contraband seized, all culprits – along with the drugs, guns and £17,500 of prize money – were, apparently, 'stopped and turned back'.[142] It was, therefore, at least unsurprising when the Portuguese Mozambique Governor General registered scepticism about the veracity of the story. He also registered displeasure that an undercover Union policeman had planned the alleged operation on Mozambican soil without informing local police or inviting them to join the raid. He was particularly unhappy about the 'prejudicial representation' of Lourenço Marques by that officer who, keen to highlight his personal heroism, spoke of entering 'quarters of the port where it was said no white stranger can go safely'.[143]

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[136] 'Said to be a "Clearing House" for Distribution', *Cape Argus*, 19 August 1929.

[137] Produced through surveillance in Lourenço Marques and at the Komatiespoort border station, some of these reports also contained information about cross-border migration, lotteries, and South African women working in brothels in Lourenço Marques: NASA, SAB, GG 1945, Commissioner of Police to Secretary of Justice, 11 October 1928. Forwarding four reports. See also NASA, SAB JUS 955 1/840/26/1, CI Officer, Sub-Inspector A. Cilliers, Transvaal Division to Deputy Commissioner, Transvaal Division, Report: Illicit Smuggling into the Transvaal Province, 26 March 1926; S Gibbs, Acting Agent of the Union of SA, LM, to Assistant Commissioner, Stegi, Swaziland, U.D.; Acting Deputy Commissioner E.S. Fall to Commissioner of SAP, 31 December 1928; D. Oates to Head Constable, Johannesburg, 17 January 1929.

[138] NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, Delevingne to Vasconcellos, 27 November 1929. Delevingne expressed concern also that Mozambique had not declared its import from France of 200kg of morphine, as amount recorded in the French government's annual report.

[139] NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, Passfield to External Affairs, 19 May 1930.

[140] NASA, SAB, JUS 955 1/840/26/1, Provisional Minutes of the 32nd Meeting of the 13th Session of the Opium Advisory Committee; Ministerio Dos Negocios Estradades: Secretaria Gebal dos Servicos Portugeses da Socierdad das Nacoes.

[141] '£15,500 Drug Haul at Border', *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 February 1931; 'Blow at Drug Traffic: Dramatic Police Raid', *The Star*, 23 February 1931.

In the 1920s, the Union government worked to direct international pressure for opium suppression to advance its own agenda. This was evident in its classification of the indigenously produced dagga as a 'habit forming drug', to be controlled through the same machinery as the exogenous opium trickling into the Union. It was also demonstrated in South Africa's application to the League of Nations' Opium Committee for more rigorous gatekeeping along its northeastern border. In complying with imperial directives around drug control, South African state-builders asserted sovereignty over territorial space and borders, and over the vitalities of colonial subjects, in ways that assisted its national and modern self-definition.

Conclusion

This article addresses a gap within histories of the Asian opium trade by exploring cases of African entanglements and experiences around the turn of the twentieth century. With a focus on Mozambique and, especially, South Africa, it demonstrates how the changing global politics of drug supply and suppression influenced local colonial social and political processes. In turn, it suggests ways these histories influenced events further afield, perhaps most directly through Smuts's quest for international cannabis control by the League of Nations.[144]

On the one hand, these cases can be confirmed as sideshows to the main theatres of opium politics. Senor Ignasio Jose de Paiva Raposo's 13-year poppy experiment in Mozambique roused consternation among British Indian administrators, who feared a potential challenge to its Gangean monopoly. But

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[142] *Ibid.*

[143] NASA, SAB JUS 955 1/840/26/1, Union Consulate-General, Lourenço Marques, to Secretary of External Affairs, CT, 27 February 1931.

[144] See T. Waetjen, 'Dagga: How South Africa Made a "Dangerous Drug", 1905–1928', forthcoming chapter in L. Richert and J.H. Mills, eds, *Cannabis: Global Histories* (forthcoming Cambridge: MIT Press, 2020).

Raposo's venture was lost through (among other factors) colonial and imperial scrambles, fought out in his very fields. In South Africa, apart from sanctioned medicinal ingestion and the important six-year period (1904–1910) when the presence of indentured Chinese gold miners attracted large-scale importation of the substance, opium consumption remained too circumscribed to ignite much official interest. During the two decades after Union, opium smoking practices and knowledge were transmitted and incubated within eclectic but diminutive urban user communities who procured the substance through small-scale or opportunistic channels. Intermittent alarm about the 'spread' of opium smoking among indigenous and settling populations did not produce convincing prohibitive legislation until the 1920s. Unsurprisingly, international regulators focused their concerns on South African capacities for transshipment and production, not consumption.

Yet, while the resilience of indigenous intoxicant and medicinal practices, along with the commodification of locally-grown cannabis in this same period, impeded development of a more robust opium market in southern Africa, global opium politics was certainly significant to regional developments. Colonial, creole and indigenous actors, as well as transoceanic subalterns, sought to benefit from it different ways, with far-reaching effects. In Mozambique, the Portuguese venture in opium was driven by commercial and political aims, some of them only indirectly related to the nature of the crop being cultivated. In post-Union South Africa, the emerging state drew upon the authority of international opium conventions in order to enhance its own regulatory authority over 'drugs' and to assert its territorial sovereignty.

Note on the contributor

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