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# Normalisation and Ambivalence: Tobacco in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This article questions the normalisation of tobacco use in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. The investigation shows that our present cultural ambivalence towards the intoxicant goes back to tobacco's early introduction. The integration of tobacco use as an essential element in social rituals was situated on a line from general acceptance to social deviance. Tobacco use was successfully integrated in existing settings of alcohol use. However, because of the origins of tobacco use among specific social groups such as seamen, associations with deviance and marginality remained an inseparable element of the Dutch landscape of tobacco use.

#### **KEYWORDS**

Tobacco; Dutch Republic; intoxication; premodern medicine; maritime culture

#### Introduction

Tobacco has had a most intriguing trajectory. Cultivation, trade, and use of the drug spread around the globe from the Columbian exchange onward. Smoking tobacco became a common habit in Europe in the early seventeenth century. Tobacco use was however never completely uncontested. In the late twentieth century the pendulum seems to have swung decisively against the drug, as the last decades have witnessed concerted public and medical campaigns against tobacco smoking and many governments have banned it from all kinds of public and private spaces. In the country that is the topic of this article, the Netherlands, the Law on Tobacco and Smoking Goods of 2020 prohibits smoking on the work floor, in catering establishments, and in public buildings. Separate smoking rooms are still allowed but the National Prevention Agreement of 2018, signed by the government and seventy societal partners, aims to close these rooms by 2022 and make the Netherlands a tobacco-free nation in 2040.<sup>2</sup> Remarkably at the same time more than twenty per cent of the population above the age of eighteen still smokes.<sup>3</sup> We can daily witness the spectacle of desk workers and students congregating in the streets to take a puff and to socialise, giving new meanings to centuries-old rituals.

A closer study of the normalisation of tobacco in the seventeenth century as presented in this article (focusing on the Dutch Republic and in particular the city of Amsterdam) shows that our cultural ambivalence towards tobacco goes back to the drug's early introduction. 'Normalisation' is a concept developed by drug sociologists over the past 25 years to understand the growing acceptance of (illicit) drug use in our contemporary society. According to the normalisation thesis, recreational use of illegal drugs has become an acceptable consumer choice rather than part of a deviant lifestyle in our society. The concept of normalisation fundamentally centres on the presence and expansion of a level of acceptance of drug use (and not only of drug use itself) in different public and private spaces.<sup>4</sup> At first sight one might wonder whether this concept can be useful in studying developments around tobacco occurring four centuries ago. Tobacco, after all, has never been an illicit drug in the sense of our contemporary drug laws, i.e. its production, distribution and use apart from medical purposes were not prohibited. (Although as we will see below tobacco like almost every other drug, licit or illicit, has been regulated in the seventeenth century: for instance in prohibitions on smoking in particular settings, or in taxation of use in particular settings.) However while the normalisation concept has been explicitly developed for the study of illicit drugs, the fact that they are illicit is not necessarily their crucial feature. The essential element in the process of normalisation is not the movement from illegal to acceptable (and possibly to legalisation) but rather the movement from controversial to acceptable. Using the normalisation concept understood in this way assists us in questioning the trajectories of drugs that were initially controversial whatever their legal status might be. Many drugs studied by drug sociologists using the normalisation concept (such as party drugs) were or are not illegal upon their introduction. For example the New Psychotropic Substances (NPSs) are a major source of concern for governments today exactly because they are not (yet) illegal.<sup>5</sup> In the case of the Netherlands cannabis is another example which shows the complexity of the issue: use and retail of the drug have been officially decriminalised and tolerated since 1976, even where production has remained illegal. Normalisation however set in later.<sup>6</sup> While the legal control framework of cannabis in the Netherlands is quite different from that of other drugs, recent work has studied its distribution and use in Amsterdam coffee shops making use of the normalisation concept.

One would expect that increased normalisation would lead to a reduced cultural ambivalence about a drug. However, the historical evidence suggests that this is not necessarily the case. In this article I will explore this theme by looking at the history of the introduction of tobacco in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, with a focus on the city of Amsterdam. In this exploration I combine a critical reading of the existing historiography with a closer look at the textual and visual documentation.<sup>8</sup> During this introduction on the one hand tobacco became normalised and its use acceptable or even respectable. Use was integrated in public spaces next to existing practices of alcohol consumption. On the other hand cultural ambivalence remained, connected to the original introduction of tobacco use by lower social groups and focused on immoderate behaviour and public nuisance in certain settings of use. Decisive in framing the cultural ambivalence around tobacco were the social contexts and environments ('settings') of use, and the personal characteristics including social-economic status ('sets') of the users.<sup>9</sup>



#### **Amsterdam**

My research has focused in particular on the city of Amsterdam. Amsterdam became in the seventeenth century an important global centre for trade, consumption, and production of tobacco. By the 1610s tobacco cultivation had spread to the plantations of Virginia, supplying European markets: the import of Virginia tobacco to Amsterdam multiplied from 500 kilograms in 1616 to 20,000 in 1620 and 700,000 in 1629. 10 Much of this import was destined for trading to the rest of Europe, but it also supplied domestic demand in Amsterdam making normalisation of tobacco use possible. By the midseventeenth century Amsterdam had become the most important market for spun tobacco from the Spanish and Portuguese colonies and leaf tobacco from British colonies and from Europe. 11 The city's tobacco factories produced affordable products combining the more expensive American with a cheaper product: indigenous Dutch tobacco. 12 Centred around the city of Amersfoort in the heart of the Republic Dutch tobacco cultivation took off around 1610 with close connections to Amsterdam merchants and expanded considerably over the course of the century. 13 However, while the main focus in this article is on Amsterdam, an investigation of the diffusion of tobacco use in other seventeenth-century Dutch cities might be equally rewarding. For instance, key hubs in the Dutch Republic for imports of colonial tobacco since the early 1620s included Rotterdam, Middelburg, and Flushing, while Gouda became a centre of the manufacture of tobacco-pipes. 14

# Normalisation of tobacco in the Dutch Republic

The normalisation of tobacco smoking in the Dutch Republic seems to have taken approximately half a century. Dutch historian A. Th. van Deursen demonstrated this by giving two examples. 15 The first is a quotation from a chronicle of the history of the Netherlands over the year 1598. Emanuel van Meeteren (1536-1612) mentioned in this chronicle that in the previous twenty to twenty-five years tobacco use had become known in Europe. He claimed that there were people sitting around in taverns smoking all day, just as drunkards drank wine and beer all day. To Van Meeteren tobacco use in 1598 was still a novelty and he was not too positive about the new drug. According to him, physicians still did not understand tobacco's effects. Van Meeteren himself thought that the smoke of burned vapours could not be good for the brain.<sup>16</sup>

In the second example that Van Deursen gives, the negativity towards tobacco persists: however, tobacco use is no longer seen as a novelty. In 1640, four decades after Van Meeteren's comments, a preacher from the maritime province of Zeeland (in the southwest of the country) complained that 'there were thousands of people, who called themselves Christians, who were so fond of this dirty smoke, just as children are of sugar'. 17 Of course this might have been a literary exaggeration but the practice of smoking seems to have become quite common by 1640. In a play by the Amsterdam writer Gerbrand Adriaensz Bredero published in 1616 a farmer coming to town is admonished by his wife for lying around smoking tobacco, poisoning the air and making her vomit. If he wants to 'lay and drink tobacco' (in Dutch: taback leggen en drincken), he has to go into one of the 'tobacco-houses' (Taback-huysen) the wife says. 18 For the Amsterdam play-watching public of 1616 it was convincing that tobacco was used by a non-fashionable yokel, a farmer from outside the city walls. Moreover, there were by then public spaces in the city where people could go to indulge their habit. In 1627 the ambassador of the Palatinate reported on a new 'fashion [in the Dutch Republic], that could be called a boozing of smoke, and surpasses all old and new forms of inebriety. People fiercely drink and slurp the smoke of tobacco with an unbelievable desire and inexhaustible diligence'. 19 Before the 1580s tobacco was described in herbaria but framed as a strange and exotic drug coming from the Americas. In the process of understanding the new substance within existing ideas and concepts a Netherlandish herbarium of 1554 compared the effects of tobacco with those of henbane, a witches' herb that brought its users to the devil's Sabbath.<sup>20</sup> By the 1630s the habit of smoking this exotic drug had spread through all classes of society. Retail trade and consumption of the drug had become embedded in public and private spaces of relaxation, social intercourse, and consumption. Tobacco had moved from being a colonial product, associated with strange exotic cultures overseas that were both attractive and dangerous, to a home-grown product exported to other countries in Europe.

#### The historiographical problem

Dutch sociologist Jaap van der Stel has pointed out how remarkable it is that in contrast to other substances tobacco, after only a short period of friction on its introduction, was relatively easily and without opposition from church or state integrated into the culture of the Dutch Republic. Van der Stel looks for an explanation of this seemingly frictionless introduction to views on the pharmacological properties of the drug itself. According to him, the effects of tobacco on behaviour and consciousness were considered so small, that criticism of its use faded quite fast.<sup>21</sup> However, this explanation seems too facile. Drug sociologists have emphasised that the effects of a drug on its user is the result of a complex combination of the pharmacological properties with the sociocultural setting of use and the psychological and biological make-up of the user.<sup>22</sup> Drug historians can apply this model to investigate changes in drug habits over longer periods of time, but also to investigate reactions to, and (non)-acceptance of drug habits. As I will argue, it was not so much tobacco itself but its users and the settings of its use that were central in the drug's cultural evaluation.

Focusing on cultural and social-economic factors, German historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch has tried to explain the normalisation of tobacco by its usefulness for the rise of bourgeois society and early modern capitalism. Schivelbusch suggests that smoking tobacco fitted neatly into the sitting existence that characterised the life of the bourgeois, whether a merchant or an academic. The sedative effect of tobacco gave an alternative for the physical activity that had characterised pre-bourgeois life. Tobacco combined with the stimulating effect of another new intoxicant, coffee, to give the early modern bourgeois his daily chemical diet of 'uppers' and 'downers'. 23 Tobacco stimulated rest, concentration, and contemplation. Schivelbusch refers in this context to a picture of peaceful smoking farmers in a village inn painted by Adriaen van Ostade.<sup>24</sup> (We will return to these peaceful farmers below.) In a similar perspective as in the work of Schivelbusch, British historian Jordan Goodman has analysed how tobacco

was 'Europeanized' and incorporated in the diet and lifestyle of different social classes, as part of the 'soft drug revolution' in which according to Goodman tobacco, coffee, tea, and chocolate conquered Enlightenment Europe.<sup>25</sup>

The actual pleasure of smoking seems to be off-centre in these explanations. 26 However, pleasure stands central in discussions around tobacco use in the Dutch Republic as reconstructed by Van Deursen and later by Simon Schama. In their view, in a society dominated by Protestant Calvinism, enjoyment itself was suspect and by many considered as sinful. For seventeenth-century Calvinist theologians, smoking was part of the 'natural life', the sinful life that was the opposite of the religious or divine life.<sup>27</sup> To Schama the reactions to tobacco use were an example of the dichotomy between moralism and new luxury that characterised the seventeenth-century Republic. 28 The example given above by Van Deursen shows that tobacco use was still contested as filthy and un-Christian as late as 1640. There is an insurmountable gap between Schivelbusch' idea of tobacco as the peaceful bourgeois drug and its almost diabolical status in religious criticism.

Moreover, while the trend of appropriating tobacco within a bourgeois sphere is certainly discernible in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, we must not neglect the other social and cultural settings in which tobacco performed an important role and that contributed to its normalisation and to the cultural ambivalence around the drug.

#### A maritime habit

Of vital importance in contributing to both the normalisation of and the ambivalence around tobacco was that its use was not disseminated by the bourgeoisie or higher social classes downwards, but was introduced from 'below'. The first European tobacco users were seamen, the vast majority of them (celebrated exceptions such as Walter Raleigh notwithstanding) definitively from the lower classes. From Columbus onwards sailors and mariners were of key importance in the global dissemination of tobacco. They were the first to come into contact with the use of the drug by Native Americans in the New World and to take up the habit, introducing it to Europe and from there to Africa and Asia. Tobacco started as an intoxicant for the 'low-lives'. Upon its introduction to Europe in the sixteenth century the intoxicant was perceived, to quote historian Mary Norton, as 'a thing of slaves and tavern drinkers, and people of low consideration'. 29 Norton shows how ships, port inns and port taverns were crucial in the dissemination of tobacco from the Americas into Europe. 30 In a herbarium published in Antwerp in 1576 it is said that most seamen returning from the Americas smoked tobacco to satisfy their hunger and thirst, to renew their strength and to lighten their mood.<sup>31</sup> At first they imitated the habit of the Native Americans to roll the dried and crushed tobacco leaves in a palm leaf, setting the leaf on fire and smoking it. But the real expansion of tobacco use in the later decades of the sixteenth century was possibly because of a technological innovation: that of the clay pipe. For example, English clay pipes have been regularly found in archaeological excavations of Dutch port towns. In the early seventeenth century English refugees brought pipe-manufacturing techniques to Amsterdam and other cities.<sup>32</sup> The practice of smoking a pipe contributed to the normalisation of tobacco in the Dutch Republic.

Pipes found in excavations in Amsterdam show how much smoking was a maritime habit, but also that it disseminated to other groups. Dutch pipe collector and historian D. H. Duco published finds of pipes from various neighbourhoods in Amsterdam. Pipes from different areas are clearly discernible from each other, suggesting that the social groups living or commuting in these areas followed their own fashions. Especially along the Amsterdam canals where the wealthier burghers lived Duco found in general pipes of good quality, burnished and with heel marks of the producers, perfectly finished. Pipes found in the eastern docklands and other maritime districts frequented by seamen were quite different. They were mostly either unmarked and not burnished, or roughly decorated in relief with a side-mark rose with dot-shaped leaves (emblem of the producer) that made burnishing impossible. By the 1660s the use of a long-stemmed, finely polished and heelmarked pipe was regarded as respectable by many burghers, whilst the short-stemmed, unpolished pipe remained the emblem of the lower classes and the socially deviant. By the short-stemmed, unpolished pipe remained the emblem of the lower classes and the socially deviant.

It is not only surviving material artefacts such as pipes that give us indications of both the importance of tobacco for specific social groups and the normalisation of its use. We can correlate these findings with documentary evidence (extending well into the eighteenth century) that shows that pipe smoking among sailors was not only ubiquitous, but also had its own cultural forms. At a burial of a sailor in the seaport of Hoorn in 1723 all seamen present had pipes in their mouths.<sup>35</sup> Tobacco could be a cause of friction on ships. During the Dutch occupation of Northeast Brazil (1630–1654) an officer took a roll of tobacco with him on the return journey from Recife to the Republic. Because he did not wish to share the tobacco with the crew, he threw it overboard. This angered the seamen to such extent that they would have thrown the officer overboard as well, but for the intervention of the captain.<sup>36</sup>

Documentary evidence shows that the sailors of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) took considerable amounts of tobacco with them to Asia. When Georg Naporra signed in 1752 in Amsterdam as seaman with the VOC, at the start of his first voyage he packed no less than thirty Amsterdam pounds (or 26 kilograms) of *kardoezentabak* (tobacco packed in paper), as well as twelve dozen clay pipes from Gouda (the main centre of the pipe industry) in his sea chest.<sup>37</sup>

Surviving tobacco boxes are another important source showing maritime tobacco use. In excavated shipwrecks of the VOC archaeologists have regularly found these boxes: for example one small egg-shaped box belonging to a sailor that was found in the wreck of the yacht Hollandia, built in Amsterdam for the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC and shipwrecked in 1642 in the Moluccas.<sup>38</sup> The shapes of tobacco boxes changed over time. They were also customised to the needs of the seamen. Pieter Holm was a Swedish sailor who from 1737 until his death in 1776 ran a school in navigation in the heart of the Amsterdam harbour district. He devised a box of which the lid showed a perpetual calendar. The owner could use the table to calculate the days of the week. The calendar is also a lunar calendar, with which one can calculate the age of the moon and hence the tides. On the bottom of the box is a 'sea measurer'. With the assistance of the table one can calculate the speed of the ship from the number of counts, using the method of 'outboard guessing': i.e. counting how long it takes for patches of foam on the water to travel a distance marked on the ship. Holm had his tobacco box put into production: twenty have survived. The owner would always have his data at hand together with his intoxicant.39

Tobacco boxes and pipes of seamen show clear contrasts with the tobacco boxes and pipes of wealthy bourgeois. The development of these utensils as luxury goods is beyond the scope of this article but of interest is that Schama mentions how the wealthy made their pipes and tobacco-boxes from precious materials such as ivory or expensive wood, engraved with emblems, and clearly unsuited for adventuring on the high seas. 40 The exotic nature of the drug, associated with Mesoamerican and later North (Native) American practices, had an alluring appeal to many of the higher classes.<sup>41</sup> Norton suggests that 'Europeans (...) learned from others – in a chain of transmission beginning with native Americans - that tobacco [and chocolate] were singular substances to consecrate social bonds'. 42 Schama felt that the Dutch assimilated the exoticness, or rather that tobacco's exoticness was not an obstacle for its integration in everyday life. 43 However there remained an ambivalence about tobacco due to its introduction and use by lower social groups.

#### **Rowdiness**

Seamen were not the only group on the margins of bourgeois society that took up smoking. Thomas Raymond, an English mercenary fighting in 1633 in the army of Stadtholder Frederick Henry of Orange, wrote how his fellow-soldiers started each morning off with yelling for brandy, wine, and tobacco. Raymond took his first dosage of the drug when marching and wrote: '... it made me sick and ill all day'. 44

American historian and journalist Benjamin B. Roberts has argued that the appropriation of tobacco use in the higher and middle classes took place in the context of a youth revolt. In this revolt, compared by Roberts to the 1960s youth revolt, new drugs and practices were taken up by students and other youngsters in conscious imitation of the behaviour of the lower classes and to shock their parents. <sup>45</sup> An important inspiration for Robert's thesis was the work of art historian Ivan Gaskell, who has traced associations of tobacco with excess and sexuality in Golden Age Dutch paintings. 46 The inns, taverns and coffee houses where men gathered to smoke were not always the quiet places where people smoked in peace. In the paintings of Van Ostade for example we can notice some rowdy behaviour (such as a customer groping a serving wench) and gambling (which often could end in violence) going on.<sup>47</sup>

## Regulations

The low-life associations of tobacco show up in early forms of regulation in Dutch port towns. In 1580 the city of Enkhuizen forbade inn and tavern keepers to sell tobacco, as well as beer and wine, on religious holidays to customers. The regulation specifically mentioned soldiers among these customers and provided for a fine and a penalty of a month's withdrawal of licence. 48 Twenty-five years later, in 1605, another regulation issued by the city government prohibited the sale of tobacco, beer, and wine on Sunday before three o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>49</sup>

These first regulations were specifically connected to religious restrictions: clearly, one was not supposed to indulge in pleasure and the 'natural' as opposed to the 'spiritual' life on a holy day. However, this did not hinder the religious minded from taking up the habit. It was reported that the Protestant Remonstrants, who had split off from the

Calvinist Reformed Church (of which every public official had to be a communicant member), took up the habit of tobacco drinking (tabacksuijghen) around 1620. Some of them spent all their money on the habit, probably to comfort themselves after their movement had been banished by Stadtholder Maurice of Orange and his Reformed allies. <sup>50</sup> Reformed ministers took up the habit as well. The final budget of the synod of the Reformed church of 1630 included under expenses one hundred Dutch guilders for tobacco: worth now an estimated 5,000 Euros, and at the time three or four month's wages of an outside labourer, or two and a half month's wages of a master carpenter or a pastor. Since the church members had to pay for this, it was considered a scandalous figure, showing immoderate behaviour.<sup>51</sup>

Interestingly an early regulation of tobacco use is on ships. The earliest Dutch maritime tobacco regulation, on a fleet of privateers in the Caribbean, dates from 1627 and specified that the sailors could only smoke on the wooden railing before the main mast (the so-called boevenet), where in daytime a burning fuse was hung. On a first violation of this regulation the hapless smoker was put for eight days in irons and was formally reprimanded. When he again broke the regulations he was hung from the yardarm and then flogged. In addition he lost a month's wages. At night smoking was completely forbidden and the sentences were doubled. In comparison: getting drunk on alcohol was punishable with fourteen days imprisonment on bread and water.<sup>52</sup> This might of course be explained by the danger of fire aboard ships. On the other hand, the fact that these regulations existed shows that sailors would be willing to take the risks of fire to indulge in their habit, and so needed to be disciplined. Robert Muchembled has shown in his investigations of early modern disciplining of the lower classes the latter's resistance to this disciplining.<sup>53</sup> In this case, it was not so much tobacco use itself as its use by seamen in a distinct setting which needed to be disciplined.

#### **Criticism**

Immoderate behaviour and public nuisance were the focus of the criticism of humanists who at first took issue with smoking. The Amsterdam merchant Roemer Visscher, prominent in the city's cultural elite, disliked the new vogue for tobacco. In his popular book of emblems from 1614 he wrote that he accepted the medical value of the intoxicant. But it went too far according to him to say that the smoke was pleasant.<sup>54</sup> In his educational poem on tobacco published in 1630 the philologist Petrus Scriverius passionately attacked recreational tobacco use and described tobacco smokers as vreemde, vuyle stinkers (strange and dirty stinkers).<sup>55</sup>

To physicians steeped in the Hippocratic traditions the key problem of tobacco use was the failure to be moderate. This went further than the idea that tobacco was bad for your health - in fact, as we will see below, there grew a kind of consensus among doctors that tobacco use had all kinds of medical benefits. In his widely read medical text book Schat der Gesontheyt (Treasure of Health), published in 1636, Dordrecht physician Johan van Beverwijck recommended smoking only to people who were 'strong' and had 'wet and moist' temperaments - and then only in the morning and on an empty stomach. Children and the feeble-minded especially should not smoke. Van Beverwijck gave an example of a man who could not restrain himself from smoking as much as twenty pipes each day and who developed problems with breathing, finally suffocating in his own phlegms.<sup>56</sup>

It was not the intoxicant itself but the immoderate attitude to consumption that was the problem for the doctor. When used wisely and moderately tobacco use was seen as beneficial for one's health. In Tabacologia, a monograph on tobacco published in Leiden in 1626, the German physician Johann Neander called tobacco a plant of God, but warned that the devil was involved and that excessive use ruined mind and body. He rejected recreational use but listed a number of indications for medical use such as inflammations of the nose, infections, worms, sleepiness, scurvy, toothache and arthritis.<sup>57</sup> We have seen that Roemer Visscher disliked the new vogue for tobacco but he accepted the medical value of the intoxicant.<sup>58</sup> To studious people doctors such as Cornelis Bontekoe advised smoking.<sup>59</sup> In 1643 tobacco was incorporated in the Amsterdam pharmacopeia. It was administered in syrups, balms, bandages, powders, and extracts. It was applied internally against fluid retention, epilepsy, whooping cough, tetanus, and abdominal cramps, externally against skin rashes, and in enemas against constipation. Sniffing was supposed to help against headaches and the cold, smoking against constipation and the cough, besides making users cheerful and strengthened.60 Tobacco smoking was considered efficacious against the bad humours that accompanied the frequent plague epidemics that hit the Dutch Republic. Strasbourg-born medical doctor Paul Barbette, who had settled in Amsterdam around 1647, advocated preventive measures against catching the plague, such as purifying the air to make it clean and free of vapours. He mentioned tobacco as one of the 'things which do really purifie the Air', although he added, 'although such as take Tobacco, do very much commend the virtue of that Plant, I do not disapprove the use of it, though as much as I can, I avoid the Smoak.'61 While accepting the medical efficacy, the doctor disliked the public nuisance of tobacco smoke.

# **Tobacco in public spaces**

Tobacco use by sailors was clearly a long way apart from the smoking sedate bourgeois of Schivelbusch or the Enlightenment soft drug revolution of Goodman. Nevertheless the drug and its effects were adaptable to maritime as well as bourgeois settings. As we have seen from the many different varieties and qualities of pipes and tobacco boxes, smoking became ubiquitous in society at large and 'a Dutchman without a pipe a national impossibility. 62 However, because of public nuisance smoking outside was not always accepted. In 1635 the city government of Amsterdam took steps to stop the clustering of people living around the old shoe and clomps market, hanging around on the pavement and drinking tobacco – clearly because this caused public nuisance.<sup>63</sup>

Above we noticed that the farmer in Bredero's play from 1616 was admonished to drink tobacco in one of the 'tobacco-houses'. This suggests that there had evolved specialised public spaces in the city where people went to indulge their habit. Furthermore it suggests that, if only for hygienic reasons, smoking tobacco was contested in other spaces, for instance when one's wife was around. What were these 'tobaccohouses'? Were they taverns, drinking places where tobacco was 'drunk'? The terminology used at the time might give us a clue. Johan van Beverwijck wrote in his Treasure of Health: 'In our language we say that we drink tobacco, although we draw no fluidity but only smoke from it'. 64 There existed tobacco sellers, probably small shops where people could buy tobacco and possibly light up ('drink') the drug as well. Van Beverwijck has an engraving of one of them in the Treasure of Health. 65 According to historian Clé Lesger, in Amsterdam tobacco shops usually made themselves known by wooden tobacco rolls hanging from the awning or attached to the shop front.'66 However, it was vital for the normalisation process that tobacco drinking was incorporated into the existent social and cultural settings for consuming another intoxicant: namely, alcohol. Significantly, this drug was (literally) drunk as well. The regulations of Enkhuizen suggest that tobacco was consumed in inns and taverns, next to and together with beer and wine. Rituals of consumption and of experiencing the pharmacological effects of tobacco were integrated into existing infrastructures of public spaces where men gathered and drank. (Women were present there mostly to sell and serve: for instance, in the image of a tobacco seller from the work of Van Beverwijck in 1636 mentioned above, the only woman present is cutting and selling tobacco from behind the counter. <sup>67</sup>) As historian David Courtwright has written: 'The drug market is not a zero-sum game', in which one drug excludes the other.<sup>68</sup> Tobacco enhanced the effects of alcohol and dependent on the mindset and character profiles of its users and the setting of use this could stimulate restful contemplation or the rowdiness and violence so often encountered in the public spaces of the Dutch Republic.

According to the study of Amsterdam taverns by Maarten Hell smoking mostly took place in existing drinking establishments, because of the penetrating smoke and smell. In the inventories of seventeenth-century drinking establishments tobacco boxes, braziers and dishes are mentioned.<sup>69</sup> In 1623 excises (imposten) on tobacco (and later on tobacco pipes) were introduced by the States of Holland, possibly a sign in itself of the increased popularity of the drug, and in 1678 taxes on consumption had to be paid by the sellers of tobacco as well.<sup>70</sup> On the basis of the annual payments of admission fees by wine-, beer-, and tobacco sellers in Amsterdam between 1660 and 1700 Hell has calculated that there were around 1,350 licenced alcohol sellers (at whose premises people of course smoked) and 250-300 licenced tobacco sellers. However, in 1662 the States of Holland estimated that there were at least 5,000 sellers of alcohol and tobacco in Amsterdam, one-quarter of all sellers in Holland: the majority was unlicensed, making either too little money to pay any taxes, or evading payment in general.<sup>71</sup>

In seventeenth-century Amsterdam places to drink (tapperijen) included the professional inn (herberg), essential amongst other things for the functioning of maritime and other trade networks. There were about a hundred of them in the late seventeenth century, located especially in the town centre and in the harbour district and docklands. There were also taverns (taveernen), taprooms in people's living rooms, and wholesale dealers of beer (biersteeckers) where people could buy and consume alcohol. These drinking places (drinkhuizen) were essential places of sociability and relaxation, where one could drink, smoke, sing, talk, and gamble. They performed all kinds of social functions. Auctions took place in inns, with different inns specialising in different goods. Some drinkhuizen were cover-ups for illegal brothels and gambling houses. Foreigners had their own drinking places, and some drinking/lodging houses were specialised in catering for foreign sailors (Germans, Scandinavians) looking for work with the navy or trading companies. The Amsterdam underworld also had its own drinking places. From the 1660s and especially the 1690s onwards coffee houses came into existence catering to the wealthier bourgeois and the traders at the stock exchange: by around 1700 there were around thirty in Amsterdam. But research suggests that alcohol and tobacco were the most frequently consumed drugs even in these

coffee houses: according to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century moralists, the coffee houses were infested with smoke. This does not necessarily mean that everyone in drinkhuizen and coffee houses was smoking, but it does mean that even non-users would have found the smoke acceptable, or that they were at least used to the smell (as many of us in our youth in the twentieth century were, even when we did not smoke ourselves). The penetrating odours of tobacco smoking might have been a contributing factor in moving consumption to public settings such as inns and coffee houses.<sup>72</sup>

#### **Tobacco and deviance**

Cultural assumptions and associations that went with the tobacco habit depended therefore very much on the setting of use. This setting could radically change not only in time (from a sailor's habit around 1600 to that of a burgher in a coffee house in 1700) but also at the same time in space. In the city of Amsterdam a few hundred metres could be the difference between respectability and social deviance for exactly the same practice of consumption. On the one hand seventeenth-century painters such as Willem Buytewech and Pieter de Hoogh show us wealthy burghers with their smoking utensils enjoying the habit.<sup>73</sup> For instance, the smokers in Buytewech's tavern scene from around 1620 are elegant burghers and a far cry from riotous sailors.<sup>74</sup> Still, more decent and dignified town inns prohibited the habit of tobacco drinking on their premises as late as the 1670s in order to avoid nuisance.<sup>75</sup>

Negative images of public smoking also focused on female consumption. Stinking of tobacco was even presented as making women (but not men) sexually unattractive.<sup>76</sup> Tobacco use by women became associated with immoral behaviour.<sup>77</sup> Gaskell shows how in the paintings of Jan Steen smoking is connected to sex, brothels, and the degradation of women. The Amsterdam engraver Matthijs Pool depicted around 1700 a smiling woman looking at a tobacco box in her right hand and a tobacco pipe in her left. The caption beneath the engraving suggests that she smiles because she stole the (probably expensive) box from someone's coat. She is called a griet, an informal designation of a young girl or woman (she might be a prostitute). The Latin legend around the engraving translates to 'food without killing or shedding blood', suggesting that she might sell the stolen ware.<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps a key to the normalisation of tobacco is that the habit of smoking, at least in premodern Amsterdam, did not become completely respectable and domesticised. In an account of Amsterdam brothels dating from 1681, pipe smoking appears in two places: among boatmen and sailors who frequent a lower-class brothel in a maritime district; and among the bouncers in a higher-class brothel who are portrayed with tobacco pipes in their mouths. 80 A room stinking of tobacco smoke could signal a socially acceptable event, for example when merchants gathered in one of the coffee houses close to the Amsterdam exchange. Or it could signal something more marginalised.

# **Conclusion: legacies of normalisation**

After 1700 new methods of tobacco consumption gained popularity. Sniffing tobacco, preferably out of a luxurious little box, became part of the elegant life in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century cigars and later cigarettes became popular. In his popularising Catechism of Nature of 1778 pastor and natural scientist J. F. Martinet was quite positive about tobacco and tobacco use. Not only was the drug's production and trade

an important economic sector in the Dutch Republic, consumption - when done with moderation – was healthy and stimulating for the nervous system. 81 However, this did not mean that the ambivalence about tobacco use by certain people in certain settings had disappeared. The celebrated Italian adventurer Giacomo Casanova visited Amsterdam in the 1750s and entered a so-called 'music house' where he encountered a cornucopia of music, dancing, and women of easy virtue, in a room smelling of inferior tobacco. At first one is surprised at the libertine's negative reaction to this spectacle, until one finds that he entered a social setting of people he considered of lower status and whose smell offended him. For Casanova their tobacco habit was an indication of their social inferiority.<sup>82</sup> The method of administration could also have been of importance here: in the eighteenth century the elegant ritual of sniffing tobacco, rather than smoking it, became a marker of social and cultural finesse, while the lower classes kept to their pipes.<sup>83</sup>

So despite the normalisation of tobacco smoking it was by Casanova's time still perceived as a potential problem of failed moderation and public nuisance when performed by members of certain groups of lower social status. This connection between tobacco and lower social status exists until today. For example, according to the statistics of the Dutch Ministry of Public Health, in the age group of 25–44 years old the percentage of smokers is three times as high among men and women with a low level of education than among others. More than half of the low-educated men in this age group smokes.<sup>84</sup>

Normalisation of tobacco use was based on its integration in public spaces. However ambivalence continued to exist when this use was linked to lower social classes and marginalised social settings, and to immoderate behaviour and public nuisance. Paradoxically, the normalisation of tobacco use in these settings contributed to wider attitudes of ambivalence in society.

#### **Notes**

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- 2. 'On the Nationaal Preventieakkoord see,' https://www.volksgezondheidenzorg.info/onder werp/dossier-preventie/preventieakkoord#!node-wat-het-nationaalpreventieakkoord, accessed 21 December 2020.
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- 6. Stephen Snelders, Drug Smuggler Nation: Narcotics and the Netherlands, 1920-1995 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 154-6.



- 7. Timothy Dickson and Scott Jacques, 'Drug Control Policy, Normalization, and Symbolic Boundaries in Amsterdam's Coffee Shops, The British Journal of Criminology, 61 (2021), pp. 22-40.
- 8. The relevant historiography is discussed below throughout the article. Important online resources are the websites of the Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren (dbnl. org); the Rijksmuseum (https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en); Maritiem Digitaal (database maritime museums: maritiemdigitaal.nl); the Amsterdam Pipe Museum (https://www. pipemuseum.nl/); and for Amsterdam the Stadsarchief Amsterdam (https://archief.amster
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- 10. Clé Lesger, Het winkellandschap van Amsterdam. Stedelijke structuur en winkelbedrijf in de vroegmoderne en moderne tijd, 1550-2000 (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013), p. 153.
- 11. H. K. Roessingh, Inlandse tabak. Expansie en contractie van een handelsgewas in de 17e en 18e eeuw in Nederland (Wageningen: Landbouwhogeschool, Afdeling Agrarische Geschiedenis, 1976), p. 95; see also Clé Lesger, 'Vertraagde groei. De economie tussen 1650 en 1730' in Willem Frijhoff and Maarten Prak (eds), Geschiedenis van Amsterdam. Zelfbewuste stadstaat 1650-1813 (Amsterdam: SUN, 2005), pp. 21-88, on p. 84.
- 12. Lesger, 'Vertraagde groei', p. 84.
- 13. Johannes Jacobus Herks, Geschiedenis van de Amersfoortse tabak (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967); Roessingh, Inlandse tabak.
- 14. D. A. Goedeweegen, De geschiedenis van de pijpmakerij te Gouda (Gouda: n.p., 1942); G. A. Brongers, Pippen en tabak (Bussum: C. A. J. Van Dishoeck, 1977); English translation, Nicotiana Tabacum: The History of Tobacco and Tobacco Smoking in the Netherlands (Amsterdam: H. J. W. Becht, 1964); D. H. Duco, 'The Clay Tobacco Pipe in Seventeenth Century Netherlands', in Peter Davey ed, The Archaeology of the Clay Tobacco Pipe, vol. 5, Europe 2 (British Archaeological Reports 106 (ii), Oxford 1981); Wim Klooster, 'The Tobacco Nation: English Tobacco Dealers and Pipe-Makers in Rotterdam, 1620-1650', in Laura Cruz and Joel Mokyr (eds), The Birth of Modern Europe: Culture and Economy, 1400-1800 (Leiden: Brill. 2010), pp. 17–34; Victor Enthoven and Wim Klooster, 'The Rise and Fall of the Virginia Connection in the Seventeenth Century', in Douglas Bradburn and John C. Coombs (eds), Early Modern Virginia: Reconsidering the Old Dominion (University of Virginia Press, 2011), 90-127; Christian J. Koot, 'Anglo-Dutch Trade in the Chesapeake and the British Caribbean, 1621-1733', in Gert Oostindie and Jessica V. Roitman (eds), Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1600-1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 72-99.
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- 23. Schivelbusch, Paradies, p. 122.
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- 30. Norton, Sacred Gifts, pp. 159-60.
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- 32. Brongers, Pijpen en tabak, pp. 26-7; I. Gaskell, 'Tobacco, Social Deviance and Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century', in H. Bock and T. W. Gaehtgens (eds), Holländische Genremalerei im 17. Jahrhundert (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1987), pp. 117-37, 122, 134.
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- 40. Schama, Overvloed en onbehagen, p. 203.
- 41. On the influence of exoticism in general, a useful introduction is Benjamin Schmidt, Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Early Modern World (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).
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- 43. Schama, Overvloed en onbehagen, p. 203.
- 44. Cit. in Gaskell, 'Tobacco', p. 122.
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- 47. See two pictures of village inns by Van Ostade: one online https://www.meisterdrucke.nl/ fijne-kunsten-afdruk/Adriaen-Jansz.-van-Ostade/384819/Dorpsherberg.html; the second one hangs in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, see https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collec



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- 48. 'Biddaghs Keur', in Brongers, Pijpen en tabak, p. 27; see also Duco, 'Clay Tobacco Pipe', p. 114.
- 49. 'Sondaghs Keure', in Brongers, Pijpen en tabak, p. 27.
- 50. Brongers, Pijpen en tabak, p. 37.
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