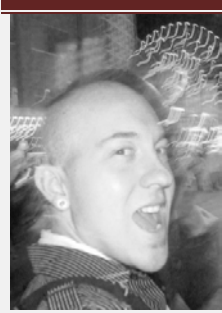


Chocolate Communion

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Abstract

Initially discounted as an unusual Mesoamerican commodity, chocolate came to confound and conquer Europe on a level incomparable by any other transatlantic resource or product. Chocolate was equated with the exotic. It titillated the senses, and mystified the cerebral. The influence of chocolate aroused the arts, embodied the rebellious and personified the avant-garde. It became synonymous with regal status. Through its consumption chocolate healed the body, opened the mind, and stimulated the soul. By examining the diffusion of chocolate throughout Europe, the prestige connected with its ingestion; the connotations associated to its consumption, and its quintessence of the slow disenchantment of dogmatic authority alongside secular archetypes, the reader can discover how chocolate transcended the conventional Eurocentric Columbian narrative going beyond a mere matter of exchange, exploitation, contamination, and conquest.



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Prior to Columbus's momentous voyage in 1492, no European had ever imagined, much less tasted, chocolate. Primarily rejected as a peculiar Indian drink, this product, second only to tobacco, came to conquer Europe on a scale unparalleled by any other American resource or product. Before coffee or tea became prevalent in Europe, chocolate was the beverage that invigorated the exhausted and elevated the despondent. However, no one could quite overlook the pagan past of chocolate, despite the ostensible Europeanization: theologians looked to Aztec standards to decide if chocolate drinking debased the ecclesiastical fast. Theologians and secular circles struggled to reconcile ideologies of European supremacy with American influence as it fashioned key modern developments ranging from Church authority to secularization. By analyzing the dissemination of chocolate throughout Europe, the status associated with its consumption; the meanings linked to its ingestion, and its embodiment of the gradual disillusionment of theological authority against secular paradigms, chocolate influenced minute and monumental facets of Spanish European life.

The spread of chocolate operated under several modalities. The church's mobility, through its clergy, was deeply enmeshed in the spread of trade, habits, information, and new fads. Luis Monreal y Tejada contributed the appearance of chocolate in Spain to a Cistercian friar who accompanied the conquistadors to Mexico. Cacao was sent back to his monastery in Aragon with manufacturing instructions to create chocolate. Others have attributed Franciscan monks who were among Cortes' entourage.¹ By the 1620s chocolate had made its appearance in the royal courts when it emerged as an affluent, regal, and aristocratic practice. Eventually, chocolate began to penetrate Spain's elite and plebian cultures. *Letrados*, or businessmen were among the first in Spain to use their funds to employ trans-Atlantic connections to import a steady flow this costly delicacy.² Chocolate emerged as an exclusive luxury, but was soon within reach of the civic market as a chance extravagance. Chocolate spread over the mainland via public sites of sociability. Quinones de Benavente (D. 1651) covers this in one of his works of fiction as one character expresses his

¹ Luis Monreal y Tejada, "La historia del chocolate" in *El libro de chocolate* (Nestle, 1979), 24, 26. However, he does not provide sources for either of these accounts.

² For example, in 1646 Madrid cacao paste was 8 reales per pound. One ounce was typical, though by no means large, serving, and so would cost 16 maravedis. For those buying it as an already made beverage by the *jicara* its cost was mandated at 28 maravedis. In 1655 the Sala mandated that chocolate cost 7 or 8 reales a pound. Matilde Sanamaria Arnaiz, "La alimentacion de los espanoles bajo el reinado de los Austrias" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universidad de Complutense, Facultad de Farmacia, 1986), 723, 725-26.

disgust “passing along hostels and inns” left to the danger of an “*indiano* abusing you, [by] making you drink chocolate.”³ 1633 records cite licenses for the production and dispersal of chocolate. This marked the beginning of the manufacturing and public sale of chocolate. It is probable that prior to this chocolate was fabricated in private residences.⁴ Public sales were made by the cup or half cup. By 1646 permits for chocolate covered beverages, tablets, and boxes. The *Sala* indicated in 1655 that a half-cup of chocolate would run 10 *maravedis*, or approximately one-third of the allotted daily expenditures by the poorest of society.⁵ By the 1640s chocolate spread to the arts and was displayed in still-life paintings. Vanitas paints a scene of dramatized worldly pleasure while he superficially highlights their transitory nature to ethereal escape.⁶

Women were at the forefront of chocolate experimentation. As the industry began to burgeon throughout the 17th century it became more dominated by women.⁷ This was primary because of cultural ties in Aztec American gendered preparation and its associative uses with women, such as its presence in love potions and popular female medicinal cures, much to the disgust of Juan de Cardenas whose writings contributed to moral theology and Mexican Inquisitors. By 1685, city officials moaned that:

“There was hardly to be found a street where there was not one, or two, or three stands where chocolate was manufactured and sold, as well as women walking from house to house to sell it.”⁸

³ Quinones de Benavente, “Extremes famoso: dos gaiferos” quoted in Jose Romera Castillo, “Los entremeses y el desucrimiento” in ed. *Las Indias (America) en la literature del siglo de oro*, Ignacio Arellano (Kassel: Gobierno de Navarra, 1992), 124.

⁴ Santamaria Arnaiz, “La alimentacion,” 712-713. For licenses for 1646, see AHN, Alcaldes, Libro de gobierno 1231.

⁵ Santamaria Arnaiz, “La alimentacion,” 23. She writes that prior to the mid-century there were many new requests from makers of chocolate looking for permission to sell *en bebida*, not only because “ser mayor la ganancia, sino porque, al parecer, el public lo pedia asi” despite the fact that Sala disapproved of the practice and frequently denied these requests.

⁶ On the 1633 still life portraying 3 jicaras (in the Coleccion Contini Buonacorsi), S. C., “Cuatro jicaras y un molinillo,” *Correo erudite*, 1 no. 3 (1941 {?}): 102. See Juan de Zubaran’s Still Life with Chocolate Service (1640), Antonio de Pereda’s Still Life with Sweets, Vessels and an Ebony Chest (c. 1652) and his Kitchen Scene (Allegory of Lost Virtue) (c. 1650-05) in William B. Jordan and Peter Cherry, *Spanish Still-Life from Velazquez to Goya* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1995), 107, 88, 99. Zubaran became Seville’s leading religious painter and sought to rise from his position in the artist class. Pereda was patronized during the reign of Philip IV (pp. 78-79)

⁷ On the 1630s, see Santamaria Arnaiz, “La alimentacion”; AHN, Sala de Alcaldes, Lib. De Gobierno 1685, lib 1270.

⁸ AHN, Con., lib. 1173, fol. 98v. See Monreal y Tejada, “La historia,” 34.

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By the eighteenth century chocolate consumption was universal. Madrid city taxes, in 1727, show conservative numbers hiding potential profits from tax collectors with a catalog of retail and wholesale chocolate numbering nearly 780,000 pounds of chocolate and cacao, and 304 families engaged in chocolate business.

The increase of chocolate intake can be linked to the consumer's perception of elevated status through its consumption, which was important to the elite classes. Visiting guests in privileged households were often presented with gifts of chocolate. Chocolate suggested a discursive expansion in the early seventeenth century culture becoming synonymous with regality. Policies passed by the monarchy imposed monopolization and taxes upon chocolate commodities, reinforcing the luxury of its symbolic status. Powerful men, like Don Pedro de Aragon, constructed chocolate rooms called *estrado* next to the drawing room, and juxtapose to where guest were received.⁹ Contemporary literary references make clear that the *estrado* was incomplete without chocolate.¹⁰

Chocolate precedent was set by royal standards and followers flocked to mimic it. Chocolate was not only fit for royal ingestion, but also linked to sovereign rites. By 1654, we have archives of nobles, like the Duke of Albuquerque, who crafted a public display of grandiosity as a formal gift of chocolate to the King, Queen, and Infanta as well as the favorite Luis de Haro. By the rule of Charles III, drinking chocolate was part of imperial iconography: he drank several cups of the dark concoction with breakfast, and the kingly *chocolatera* was rumored to hold 56 pounds of chocolate.¹¹

As new taste and practices traveled from the professional classes to the aristocracy a similar pattern moved from the elite to more humble consumers. Chocolate's claim to hold medicinal qualities helped to establish its validity and presence as a necessary resource among Europeans. Its exotic and mystical origins ensured its continued allure in the public mind. Chocolate soon became the conduit for individual

⁹ "Memoria de las pinturas y alaxas elexidas en last res casas del Almirnate para en parte de pago del credito que contar sus bienes tener los testamentarios y herederos de Son Jacome Maria Pedesina, Que este en el cielo," no date, AHN, Com., leg. 7022, fols. 133r-136v. This was an inventory of painting in the house and spatial position of the inventory proceeded sequentially in the house. It is not clear if these rooms were for the consumption or preparation of chocolate.

¹⁰ Santamaria Arnaiz, "La alimentacion," 714-717.

¹¹ Maria del Carmen Simon Palmer, *La vida domestic en el palacio* (Madrid: Ayuntamiento de Madrid, Instituto de Estudios Madrilenos, 1988), 21. On the size of the *chocolatera* according to a later account, Monreal y Tejada, "La historia," 38.

expression. Declarations of pleasure followed the therapeutic claims of chocolate. Chocolate was seen as a channel for sexual desire as depicted in an eighteenth-century decorative mural from Valencia. The piece entitled “the Chocolate Party” illustrates several scenes of wooing and toying, with men on bended knee extending tantalizing cups of chocolate.¹²

Through the intake of chocolate its subjects pampered sensual desire, promoted elegance to suggest regal status and established social bonds. By 1630 chocolate was applied to a category of *regalo*. A 1610 dictionary defined regalo as royal treatment, *regalarse* as possessing the delicacies of kings, and *regalso* as one treated with novelties and pleasure, especially in food.¹³ Offering regalo imparted status on both the bestowed and the recipient. It created a link of sensual pleasure and a display of a social bond of aristocratic, if not royal, sensibility. Later the sensual aspect of regalo would contribute to religious scrutiny backed by treaty writers who worried that chocolate was a stimulant for libidinous lust, which prompted venerates activity. Chocolate was central to social rituals as it became a beverage of sociability and an indulgence of the appetites.¹⁴ As the popularity in the seventeenth century grew, many used chocolate to indulge pleasure rather than restore humeral balance. Through its consumption the partaker pursued sensory pleasure, established social status, validated ideologies of a darker seedier side of a communal fad, and nurtured states of intensified cognizance.

Antonio de Pereda depicts this in a kitchen scene painting (*Allegory of Lost Virtue*) (c.1650). We find the chaotic ruins of an opulent feast, and an abstruse interface between a young man and woman. The woman, evidently a maid, kneels by the banquet table moving toward a young soldier, he leans over the untidy table with sensual excess. Featured notably in the foreground, near the woman’s knee is a toppled *chocolatera* and *molinillo*.

¹² Jordan and Cherry, *Spanish Still-Life*, 90; *La xocolatada*, title mural, 1710, Museu de Ceràmica, Barcelona. Reproduced in *Museu de Ceràmica: Guia* (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.), 49 & cover.

¹³ It was suggested that it derived from the Greek word for Milk, since the “antigou” held all things made from milk as delicate and delicious,” Sebastian de Covarrubias Orozco and benito Remigio Noydens, *Primera parte del tesoro de la lengua castellana o espanola* (Madrid: Melchor Sanchez, 1674), 157. First edition appeared in 1611. Other related words were “gasajo” and “deleite” which was also tied to pleasure offerings (pp. 27, 204).

¹⁴ *Sentencia jocose sobre...elvino, y chocolate*. (Oficina de Pedro Ferreira, [17th century]).

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The indulgence of chocolate was also absorption of the symbols and meanings associated from the conquered American beliefs. Attempts were made to make this commodity more orthodox to reconcile its pagan and barbarous roots with Christian civilization. Europeans learned of chocolate's symbolic, ritualistic, and physiological potency from their original Aztec origins. When the Spanish adopted the use of chocolate, they also detached its overt religious context while maintaining a fetishized connection to its consumption. Doctors influenced by Christian ideologies attempted to strip chocolate of its spiritual significance and meaning.¹⁵ Jordan Goodman proposes “just as native cultures... accepted European commodities but employed them actively by providing them with meaning derived from their own belief system... the success with which one commodity crosses from one culture to another depends on whether this new object can be given meaning within the host culture.”¹⁶

Remarkable correspondences surfaced between the private and social uses of chocolate in pre-Columbian American and Western European civilizations. It was more than a drink or delicious delicacy; it was ingested in ritualized settings removed from food repasts. Chocolate revelries may begin at midnight just as dawn broke, some revelers would eat psychedelic mushrooms, while others consumed chocolate.¹⁷ Spanish conquistadors, like Bernal Diaz del Castillo, titillated his bibliophiles with narratives of the feasts of the Aztec king Montezuma. He sensationalized chocolate while establishing links to an honored status as well as virility, and heightened libido, as shown by its presence in the cases of “erotic magic” prosecuted by the Mexican Inquisitions.¹⁸ Hernandez also recounted that cacao had aphrodisiac properties according to the Nihaus.¹⁹ Bishop Landa, over the Mayan mission in the first half of the 16th century, gave ethnographically-rich reports claiming that cacao was burdened with sexual symbolism and used in coming-of-age rites in local custom.²⁰

¹⁵ Sophie D. Coe and Michael D. Coe, *The True history of Chocolate* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 126.

¹⁶ Goodman, Tobacco, 41.

¹⁷ Coe, *First Cuisines*, 78-79, 80.

¹⁸ Quoted in Coe, *First Cuisines*, 75. For the role of chocolate in elite Mexican feast see Diego Duran, *The history of the Indies of New Spain* (the Aztecs) translated and edited by Fernando horcasitas and Doris Heyden (New York: Orion Press, 1964), 110.

¹⁹ Coe, *First Cuisines*, 90.

²⁰ Ramon Cruces Carvajal, *Lo que Mexico aporto al mundo* (Mexico D.F.: Panorama Editorial, 1986), 51; J. Eric S. Thompson, “Notes on the Use of Cacao in Middle America,” *Notes on Middle American Archaeology and Ethnology*, no 128 (November 1956): 104-105.

As chocolate consumption rose in secular circles theological and juridical authorities were faced with additional strain in an already conflicted Renaissance discourse. Theologians questioned whether or not drinking chocolate jeopardized the effectiveness of the ecclesiastical fast (one could imbibe beverages but not eat foods during this kind of fast). The primary function of the fast was to discipline the body in such a way as to keep the baser appetites and indulgences in check. Yet the representation of chocolate embodied these very indulgences. Chocolate, rather than contributing to the Counter Reformation debate, undermined it from within. Chocolate was the means to exploit and voice the existing tensions between Christian and secular ideas.

Chocolate was so entrenched in society that the Church debate was not about if it should be used but how. Chocolate provoked discussion about the types of authority needed to resolve the dispute. These cultural establishments sought to outline the crucial nature of chocolate and concluded that it could best be outlined in social, rather than physical terms. In many ways chocolate mirrored the evolution of the gradual disenchantment of mystical fervor from religious realms to more secular ones, which undermined Christian authority.²¹ Concerns were made about American precedent to resolve theological difficulties.²² Efforts to introduce chocolate into standing theological disputes led to cultural relativism, and authorities looked to Aztec standards, the very thing that weakened the theological framework, as the foundation for forming opinions about proper Christian use.

The components of the fast had gray areas with undefined ingestible substances, adding further theological debate. Fasting took precedence, followed almost as an afterthought by other virtuous acts.²³ Fasting was considered to be an inherently good work, patterned after Jesus and his apostles, as it acclimatized the body preparing it to be a receptacle for additional spiritual uses. Fasting was a method to build up a resistance against other degenerate manners averting the prospect of gluttony and

²¹ Leon Pinelo. *Question moral*. fols. 13 r, 55r-v

²² Leon Pinelo. *Question moral*. fols. 1r-v.

²³ Granada, *Guia*, 142; see also 147. Granada's works were best-sellers in the 16th century, see Sara T. Nalle, "Literacy and Culture in Early Modern Europe," *Past and Present*, no. 125 (1989): 80.

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taming the animal appetites.²⁴ Pandering to *regalos* was the dualistic opposite and encouraged sensual appetites to govern the rational mind.²⁵

The year 1577 marked the beginning of the debate when a reply was created at the request of a Parcurador in Chiapas, the prominent theologian Azplicueta Navarro wrote the papal (Gregory XIII) opinion that chocolate would not defy the ecclesiastical fast.²⁶ Later in 1592, doctor Juan de Cardenas, debated the fast in his work *Problemas y secretos de las Indias*. Juan wrote that chocolate would indeed break the fast because it debased the condition that nothing of sustenance be consumed and the divine necessity that it exacted bodily deprivation.²⁷ Discourse raged on both sides of the debate, and any condemnation was often followed by a rebuttal.²⁸ Chocolate's other features quickly surfaced as part of the debate. Juan Eusebio Niremburg, famed Jesuit theologian, contended that chocolate was a "stimulate[s] for venereal uses," questioning if it is "fitting for the fast since it is taken mainly in order to mitigate lascivious desires."²⁹ Later the verdict that chocolate drinking did not obey to the principles of the fast would again change. In 1644 Cardinal Francisco Maria Brancaccio advertised in the *Rome De chocolatis potu* diatribe, claiming that chocolate drinking did not endanger the fast.³⁰

Disputes existed over sources (papal depositions versus American chroniclers), precedents (old world versus new world views),³¹ and expertise (ecclesiastical versus secular).³² These disputes evolved into a

²⁴ Granada, *Guia*, 82; see also 138, In the chapter outlining mortal sins, number six on the list is breaching any Church injunctions, of which fasting is provided as one of the examples. Following the sentence of godly precepts, Granada returned to the topic of the fast and specified the conditions it is applied.

²⁵ Granada, *Guia*, 101.

²⁶ Agustin Davila y Padilla, *Historia de la fundacion y discurso de la provincial de Santiago de Mexico*.

Facsimile of 1625 edition (third edition; Mexico: Editorial Academia Literaria, 1955), 626-27.

²⁷ According to Hurtado, the former told him that he was "certissimo" that "chocolate was not of the nature of food, but drink, and so did not break the fast," *Chocolate y Tabaco*, fols. 14r-v.

²⁸ Leon Pinelo, *Question moral*, dedication, no fol.

²⁹ Leon Pinelo, *Memorial de los libros*. The *Memorial* cites "*De guber ind*, lib. I c. 24 no 76." On Solorzano Pereira's references, C. Perez de Bustamente, "El chocolate y el ayuno," *Correo erudite*, 1, no. 2 (1941): 36.

³⁰ Luis Castillo Cedon, *El chocolate* (Mexico: Departamento editorial de la Direccion General de las bellas Artes, 1917), 22.

³¹ Leon Pinelo, *Question Moral*, fols. 85v-86r. Toribio Medina reprinted this royal *cedula*, "Estudios," 60 and dedication.

³² Leon Pinelo, *Question Moral*, fols. 9v-10r; Hurtado, *Chocolate y tobacco*, fol. 43 discussed the differences between food falling into the stomach, even involuntary like spit or blood, and the other being restricted placing anything in ones mouth in regards to the latter being the "natural fast" for communion, fols. 45v-46.

mockery of Chocolate and the Church during a period of time historians have coined as “early modern.” Chocolate became a method to illustrate the hypocrisy of the churches intolerance as illustrated in a 1684 satirical poem entitled: “A True Report of the Great Sermon that Mabomet Calipapau, of Russian Nationality, the Great Prior of Escanzaona, and the Archbishop of Lepanto, Doctor Degreed in the Texts and Paragraphs of the Koran preached in the Parroquial Mosque of Babylon.”³³ The main theme of the poem was an official discourse between a Muslim Caliphate and a Christian Archbishop over the qualities of chocolate versus coffee. This satire pointed to serious theological debates over chocolate, and the medical assertions made for the beverage. In addition, it also highlighted ridicule of the Inquisition and the Church’s internal discrepancies of Counter-Reformation prejudices.

Replacing supremacy of “sublime values: e.g. mystical religion with the idiosyncratic rationalism of “western culture,” was a creation of “rational ethics of ascetic Protestantism” on the “spirit of modern economic life.”³⁴ This was a transfer of rationalism following the decay of the influence of the magical view to rid the church of its paranormal predispositions.

It is apparent that chocolate held sway over European life, from the mundane to the grandiose. Ultimately, the appearance of chocolate was a narrative of status, meaning, and the embodiment of theological discourse. Chocolate was a unique foreign resources, which marked a defining aspiration of Atlantic history, and elaborates the various exchanges, links, and bonds between the Old and New Worlds as being communal in character. It established change amid economic, political, scientific, and a variety of social systems. For the first time in history, women had gained licenses to excel as entrepreneurs and masters in their own *chic niche*. As chocolate spread its influences brought with it a heightened sense of status, which was not restricted to one archetype, spanning across all classes. Chocolate became a symbolic link between the classes and individual expression. It saturated art, food, literature, and facilitated discourse for counter-reformation movements. Perhaps chocolate’s most unique feature was its ability to pose as a genre and an embodiment for theological debate against secular archetypes.

³³ “Relacion verdadera del gran sermon que predico en la mesquite parroquial...” 26 May 1684, original manuscript at Library of the Hispanic Society of America, New York.

³⁴ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (first edition, 1920; London; HarperCollins Academic, 1991), 26-27. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New york: Scribner, 1971), 277-8.

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