

# Chocolate, Sex, and Disorderly Women in Late-Seventeenth- and Early-Eighteenth-Century Guatemala

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**Abstract.** Chocolate, in the form of a hot chocolate beverage, was widely available to men and women of all ethnic and social groups in late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century Santiago de Guatemala, the capital city of colonial Central America. At the same time, chocolate acted as a central vehicle of women's ritual power, used as the basis for magical potions to cast supernatural illness, in sexual witchcraft practices, and even, at times, as a flash point for women's disorderly behavior in public settings. The gendered associations of chocolate with ritual power and disorder in Guatemala are considered within the broader context of the changing cultural uses and meanings of New World food products during European expansion in the Americas.

Chocolate was an important ritual and food product in the ancient Maya culture and economy. During the European colonization of Guatemala, chocolate became an increasingly popular drink by the late seventeenth century, particularly in the city of Santiago de Guatemala (today Antigua), capital of colonial Central America. Chocolate, in the form of a hot chocolate beverage, was available to men and women of all ethnic and social groups in the capital, from poor Indians to wealthy Spaniards. At the same time, chocolate acted as a central vehicle of women's ritual power, used as the basis for magical potions to cast supernatural illness, in sexual witchcraft practices, and even, at times, as a flash point for women's disorderly behavior in public settings. While the cultural uses of alcohol and the association with public disorder in colonial life have long been acknowledged, chocolate and its association with gendered conflicts in daily life have been relatively neglected.<sup>1</sup> This essay aims to fill that gap.

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The changing cultural uses and meanings of New World products in the context of European colonial expansion in the Americas have long been important subjects of historical and anthropological investigation.<sup>2</sup> Recent work has highlighted how, as New World foods entered European societies at the imperial center, women's purchase and preparation of these new foods demonstrated their central cultural roles in colonial projects.<sup>3</sup> In colonial Latin America, as New World food products integrated into the lives and diets of European immigrants, Spaniards born in the Americas, blacks, and mixed-race peoples, new uses and meanings became associated with them.<sup>4</sup> This essay analyzes the cultural changes associated with chocolate, an indigenous food product, in a colonial setting, and explores its ambiguous status in late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century Santiago. On the one hand, chocolate was widely available in the city, and chocolate beverages could be consumed daily at meals or on special occasions such as local fiestas. On the other hand, in certain emotionally and/or sexually charged contexts of daily life such as revenge, spousal conflicts, and disobedience, inhabitants of Santiago associated chocolate with accusations that some women practiced sorcery.<sup>5</sup>

The analysis of chocolate, sex, and women's disorderly behavior is based primarily on Inquisition records, historical sources that provide a window into a range of conflicts found in daily life in this multicultural and racialized colonial setting.<sup>6</sup> The Inquisition, as an institution, has received considerable scholarly attention in recent years in both Europe and the Americas. Some scholars have characterized supernatural manifestations, witch hunts, and the role of the Inquisition as a conflict between the institutional church and popular religion, played out during the transition from a premodern to a modern era.<sup>7</sup> Others have analyzed the Inquisition as an institution exercising top-down social control and so characterized it as a colonial phenomenon in Spanish America.<sup>8</sup>

Sorcery and supernatural manifestations, however, can also be read as evidence of conflict within a culture, and that is the focus of my analysis. Here, Inquisition records, along with other historical documentation, show social relations of power that often had gender and ethnic dimensions. Accounts of supernatural interventions, such as those surrounding chocolate analyzed here, suggest how we may understand and analyze the politics of power within communities under colonial rule.<sup>9</sup>

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as chocolate consumption spread from the Maya to European, black, and mixed-race peoples in Guatemalan society, the cultural meanings associated with chocolate transformed.<sup>10</sup> Through women's use of doctored chocolate drinks designed to control men's sexual behavior or take revenge against male and female enemies, chocolate took on multiple meanings, at once as a popular beverage

of daily life and as an instrument of women's power in local conflicts.<sup>11</sup> In the process, the association between chocolate and female sorcerers was, at times, extended to frame colonial discourses regarding women's disorderly behavior in general, especially women's consumption of chocolate in public settings. The transformation of the meanings and representations of chocolate reveals how it came to be seen as a flexible and potentially dangerous food in the gender and racial politics of colonial life.

### Chocolate in Ancient Maya Culture

Cacao, both in seed form and as the basis of ritual chocolate beverages, played a central role in precontact Mesoamerica, an area that stretched from Mexico to Costa Rica. The cultivation of cacao trees (*Theobroma cacao*) most likely originated in Mesoamerica three thousand years ago in the humid lowlands of the Mexican Gulf Coast.<sup>12</sup> Mayas drank chocolate as early as 600 BCE. Recent research conducted by scholars at the University of Texas at Austin and by the Hershey Foods Corporation found residue from chocolate in teapot-like ceramic vessels found at the Maya site of Colha in Belize.<sup>13</sup> By 250 BCE, intensive cacao farming with large-scale irrigation canals existed in what is today the Petén department of Guatemala.<sup>14</sup>

In the Classic period (ca. 200–900 CE), the Maya made extensive use of chocolate and chocolate beverages in the area that later became encompassed by Spanish colonial Guatemala. Epigrapher David Stuart first identified the Maya glyph for cacao from chocolate containers found in a tomb at Río Azul in northeastern Petén.<sup>15</sup> Chemical analysis later conducted on residues collected from the Río Azul funerary pots showed traces of theobromine and caffeine, confirming that the vessels had once contained cacao.<sup>16</sup> Chocolate consumption had a strong association with elite culture, and many elite burial tombs contained these types of chocolate vessels.<sup>17</sup>

Chocolate was a sacred food in ancient Maya culture and had many meanings and uses. The Maya, especially members of the elite, consumed chocolate on important ritual occasions such as betrothal and marriage ceremonies, festivals, and warfare, and they also used it in sacrifices to deities.<sup>18</sup> During menopause and childbirth, women drank chocolate to fortify themselves, as did men and women suffering from magical sickness.<sup>19</sup>

Evidence suggests that women were responsible for chocolate preparation in Classic and post-Classic Maya culture.<sup>20</sup> Women first dried and roasted the cacao beans, mixed in some water and spices, then ground everything together on a metate, a concave grinding stone, which women also used to grind corn. The chocolate mixture was then shaped into brick-like cakes for storage. To make a chocolate beverage, the preparer mixed a

piece of the cacao paste with water in tall pottery cylinders.<sup>21</sup> Michael Coe identified what is perhaps the earliest depiction of chocolate drink preparation on a Maya funerary vase found in the Petén and dated circa 750 CE. The vase depicts a palace scene and a ritual beheading. In the far right corner of the scene, a woman pours chocolate from one vessel to another to cause it to become foamy, the final step in chocolate beverage preparation.<sup>22</sup>

### Chocolate and the European Encounter

At the time of the Spanish conquest, chocolate continued to have important ritual uses in native societies. Cacao beans had economic value as well and functioned as a tribute good and as a unit of exchange. Major cacao producing areas existed in coastal Tabasco and the Pacific coastal plain of colonial Guatemala and Chiapas.<sup>23</sup>

Europeans writing about their experiences during the Spanish conquest and its aftermath often included descriptions of cacao trees and commented on native practices of chocolate drink preparation and consumption. Diego García de Palacio, a sixteenth-century explorer, described chocolate in a letter to King Philip II of Spain: "The cacao tree is very delicate, and suffers alike from too much heat and too much cold, and therefore requires a great deal of care. . . . the beverage which they prepare from the cacao was formerly so highly esteemed by the Indians, that no one was permitted to drink it, unless he were a great personage, a *cacique*, or a famous warrior."<sup>24</sup> Indigenous chocolate consumption took many forms, including hot and cold drinks, porridges, and powders, mixed with spices and flavorings including vanilla, maize, and chili peppers.<sup>25</sup> Another European observer, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, commented that when he saw Indians drinking chocolate mixed with achiote (annatto), the drink turned their mouths, lips, and whiskers red, as if they were drinking blood.<sup>26</sup> Initially, Spaniards for the most part spurned chocolate beverages.<sup>27</sup>

When chocolate came to be ascribed with aphrodisiac qualities is difficult to determine definitively from the sources available, but it is important to consider in analyzing chocolate's association with sexual witchcraft later in the colonial period. Descriptions of chocolate as an aphrodisiac appear to be European constructions and can be found in Spanish-language sources.<sup>28</sup> The association between chocolate and sexual desire occurs frequently in early-modern Spanish literary texts and visual art.<sup>29</sup> The earliest descriptions of chocolate as an aphrodisiac date from the Spanish conquest of Mexico.<sup>30</sup> Bernal Díaz del Castillo, writing about his experiences as a foot soldier in the defeat of the Aztecs at Tenochtitlán in the 1520s, described a banquet he attended held by the emperor Moctezuma. He

noted that Moctezuma was served gold cups filled with chocolate “that they say was for success with women.”<sup>31</sup> Native women continued to be responsible for chocolate beverage preparation after Spanish conquest. Díaz noted that at Moctezuma’s banquet women prepared chocolate by first grinding the cacao on a stone and then mixing it into a frothy drink.

### Gender, Sex, and Chocolate

Starting in the 1590s, Spaniards overcame their aversion to chocolate. Unlike native peoples, Spaniards often mixed in vanilla, cinnamon, and sugar.<sup>32</sup> By the seventeenth century, Guatemalans from all social and ethnic groups had access to chocolate in cities such as Santiago de Guatemala, and they drank it in a wide range of contexts in daily life. The transformation of chocolate drinks into a basic staple that could be consumed daily by not only Mayas but also Spaniards and *castas* (mixed-race peoples) probably occurred, in part, through native women working as servants in colonial kitchens.<sup>33</sup> Not everyone could afford Indian servants, however, which meant that less-wealthy Spanish, *casta*, and Afro-Guatemalan women most likely learned to prepare chocolate from their Indian neighbors and served it to their families.

Some men and women consumed chocolate beverages daily, especially at breakfast. The neighbor of an elderly priest described how he often brought the priest hot water so he could mix his morning chocolate drink.<sup>34</sup> Inhabitants of colonial Guatemala drank chocolate in many other day-to-day contexts. Mourners drank chocolate to fortify themselves during all-night wakes.<sup>35</sup> Women prepared chocolate for fiestas and other family and community events. One woman reportedly even served bewitched chocolate drinks to her slaves to prevent them from interfering in her sorcery practices and to keep them from running away.<sup>36</sup>

Chocolate had properties associated with healing as well. A free *mulata* servant described how a female Indian curer of magical sickness administered a healing chocolate beverage to heal the *mulata*’s Indian husband of *locura* (insanity).<sup>37</sup> Hospitals in the capital city of Santiago budgeted money for chocolate among their food expenditures for their patients.<sup>38</sup> The Royal Hospital in Santiago spent eleven and one-half reales on chocolate to fortify its Spanish, Indian, and *casta* patients. In addition, the hospital purchased chocolate for the priests who cared for the sick, forty-eight reales worth for Fray Juan de Dios Lara, the head of the hospital, and twenty-four reales for each of the eight caretaker priests. The budget also included money for chocolate for the hospital servants.<sup>39</sup>

Women continued to prepare chocolate for their families and neigh-

bors as part of their social roles in food procurement and preparation. Female market sellers also sold chocolate drinks in stalls in the capital's outdoor markets. Only in extreme cases did men prepare chocolate, as seen in Juan de Fuentes's complaint to Inquisition authorities that his wife bewitched him with sorcery. Juan, a thirty-three-year-old *mulato* construction worker in Santiago, denounced his mulata wife Cecilia to the Inquisition, accusing her of acting as a sorcerer-witch (*hechizera-bruja*). He charged that Cecilia used spells and curses "so that he could not be a man on all the occasions that he desired to have intercourse with his wife." Ultimately, Juan's evidence that Cecilia had used sorcery to bewitch him centered on what he perceived to be their inverted household gender roles, shown by his inability to control his "unnatural" behavior of preparing the morning chocolate while his wife slept in. The Inquisition gave the following summary of his testimony:

His wife treats him not as a husband but as a servant. He lights the fire in the kitchen, he boils the water, he mixes the chocolate and heats the food, . . . and he gets up very early every morning to do this while his wife stays in bed and sleeps until very late. And when his wife wakes, he brings her chocolate so she can drink it after she dresses. And even though it is very late [in the morning], he has the water ready, [and] he drinks chocolate with his wife. . . . in this way his wife has turned him into a coward, and all this cannot be a natural thing.<sup>40</sup>

Cecilia was eventually convicted by the Inquisition in Santiago for sorcery, and officials sent her overland under guard to the central Inquisition jail in Mexico City. Cecilia brought a number of items along with her to ease her stay in jail including clothing, bedding, and an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. She also brought with her four cakes of chocolate, and a gourd cup called a *jícara*, specifically used to drink chocolate.

By the late seventeenth century, as inhabitants from all social and ethnic groups in colonial Guatemala drank chocolate in large quantities in many contexts in daily life, the cultural meanings of chocolate had expanded from ancient Maya ritual and economic meanings and became refashioned and transformed to include associations with female social disorder. In accounts of women who acted "disorderly" in a variety of public contexts, colonial authorities and inhabitants of the capital often included descriptions of women's illicit sexual activity and practices of sexual witchcraft, where women took advantage of their roles in food preparation to assert power over the men in their lives.<sup>41</sup>

Because of its dark color and grainy texture, chocolate provided an ideal cover for items associated with sexual witchcraft. These included vari-

ous powders and herbs, as well as female body parts and fluids, which women then mixed into a chocolate beverage and fed to men to control their sexuality. Manuela Gutiérrez, a twenty-year-old, single mulata servant, consulted a mulata sorcerer named Gerónima de Varaona for sexual witchcraft. Gutiérrez described how she was having problems with her lover and wanted something to attract him. De Varaona gave her some powders and told Manuela to wash her *partes naturales* (genitals) with water, then beat the powders and the water into a hot chocolate drink and give it to the man she desired.<sup>42</sup> Nicolasa de Torres, a single, free mulata servant, wanted to sexually attract her employer. She consulted an Indian woman named Petrona Mungia, who told her to take her pubic hairs and a small worm found under a certain type of stone, and then mix everything together and put it in her employer's chocolate.<sup>43</sup>

At times, mothers and daughters cooperated in their use of chocolate in sexual witchcraft, passing this knowledge from one generation to the next. In 1705, a mulata slave accused her mistress, a wealthy mulata widow named Francisca de Agreda, and her daughter, Juana, of practicing sexual witchcraft. The slave claimed that Francisca and Juana concocted a bewitched chocolate drink to send to Francisca's lover, the parish priest of the primarily indigenous town of Santa María.<sup>44</sup> The slave asserted that the drink contained Francisca's pubic hairs, gray hairs from her head, her fingernails, and saliva, along with hairs from Juana. The bewitched drink contained body parts from both mother and daughter, the women perhaps inspired by the belief that this increased their power over Francisca's lover.

Not only poor, mixed-race, and Indian women consulted female sorcerers for sexual witchcraft using chocolate; elite Spanish women did as well. Women often asked their neighbors and friends for recommendations on whom to consult for sorcery, and they also used them as go-betweens to acquire the necessary ritual items. Gerónima de Varaona, herself a well-known sorcerer in late-seventeenth-century Santiago, acted as a go-between for doña Luisa de Gálvez.<sup>45</sup> Doña Luisa gave de Varaona half a loaf of bread and four bread rolls and asked her to take them to the house of an Indian woman named María de Zumagra and trade them for some ritual powders for sexual witchcraft. De Varaona went and returned with three packets of powders, one for doña Luisa to place in the clothes of the man she desired, and the other two to put in his chocolate and food. Doña Luisa then washed her armpits and genitals with water, and another woman mixed the powders and this water for her into a chocolate drink. Despite doña Luisa's elite status, she had a violent reputation as shown by her nickname, La Machete. De Varaona explained that everyone called doña Luisa "La Machete" "because she can cut out a tongue with a machete."<sup>46</sup>

Chocolate also proved a useful cover for ritual items designed to force the men to return home, or to stop them from using physical violence. Gertrudes de San José, a twenty-two-year-old *mulata libre* (free mulata), had a fight with her husband, a muleteer, and he left her.<sup>47</sup> To try to force her husband to return, she chewed cacao beans, mixed them with black powders, and buried them under the door to her husband's house. Not satisfied that the ritual would suffice, she also gathered worms from underneath stones called *rosquetas*, toasted them in a pan, and ground them with powders. Gertrudes then mixed everything into a chocolate drink to give to other men she desired "so that the men would not leave her and that they would love her."<sup>48</sup>

Other women used sexual witchcraft to "desenjar al hombre," literally "to free a man of his anger." María de los Angeles, a thirty-year-old Spanish seamstress, mixed black powders and water she had used to wash her genitals into a jicara (gourd cup) filled with hot chocolate so that her lover "would lose his anger."<sup>49</sup> A Spanish woman named doña Luisa de Gálvez, in search of relief from physical abuse by her male partner, pursued a similar strategy. She consulted an Indian woman named Anita for a spell "to free him of his anger."<sup>50</sup> Anita gave doña Luisa some green and cinnamon-colored powders. First, doña Luisa washed her genitals with the water. She then mixed the water with the powders into a hot chocolate drink, and fed it to the targeted man.<sup>51</sup> A single *mulata blanca* (light-skinned mulata) named Melchora de los Reyes, began a sexual relationship with her lover before marriage, probably after he had promised to marry her.<sup>52</sup> He later abandoned de los Reyes, threatening her reputation as *doncella* (virgin). De los Reyes bought some powders from a sorcerer and mixed them into the chocolate of her lover to make him "subject to her will," so that he would return and marry her.

Women also used bewitched chocolate drinks to take revenge against sexual competitors. Doña Catarina Delgado, a twenty-eight-year-old Spanish woman, accused a woman named Agustina of doing just that.<sup>53</sup> Doña Catarina's husband, Sargento Nicolás Callejos, also a Spaniard, had been conducting an illicit affair with Agustina, a mulata servant who lived next to the University of San Carlos, in the house of her employer.<sup>54</sup> According to doña Catarina, one day Agustina came to their home and fought "with much brazenness" in public with her husband Nicolás. A few days passed and Agustina and a female friend brought them over some chocolate as a peace offering.<sup>55</sup> Doña Catarina, her husband, and their female Indian servant all drank the chocolate. Doña Catarina soon fell ill, describing her sickness as "echando el curso negro o amarillo" (expelling the black or yellow flow), where she alternately vomited yellow, green, and blood-colored,



water-like substances through her mouth. The female Indian servant fell ill with the same sickness and died, while the husband apparently remained healthy.

Men were well aware that women used chocolate as vehicles for sexual witchcraft, and they sometimes took advantage of the association between hot chocolate drinks and sexual witchcraft in their pursuit of female lovers. Rosa de Arevillaga was a twenty-eight-year-old mulata slave of a nun and lived cloistered in the convent of Santa Catalina Martir in Santiago.<sup>56</sup> Despite her slave status, Inquisition authorities listed de Arevillaga as *doncella*, or virgin. She had received an education in the convent, as evidenced by the letter she wrote to Inquisition authorities denouncing her confessor for solicitation in the confessional. In the letter, Rosa described how she had gone to confess during the Easter holidays. As she waited, she served the priest, Padre Francisco de Castellanos, a cup of chocolate in front of the other priests “as it was the fashion and kindness that one does in the convent for the confessors.”<sup>57</sup> When she entered the confessional, Padre Francisco attempted to seduce her, calling her “his soul, and his life, and his Rose of Jericho.” As Rosa fended off his advances, Padre Francisco told her that he knew that she had put powders in the chocolate she served him so “to gain his love.”

Because of the close association between chocolate drinks and sorcery in colonial Guatemala, those who were served chocolate by women with whom they had ongoing conflicts treated the drinks with suspicion. In 1730, Manuel Antonio Calderón, a twenty-one-year-old, free mulato weaver, described his marriage to his seventeen-year-old wife Magdalena as contentious. According to the Inquisition’s summary of his testimony, “there has not been one day that they [Manuel and Magdalena] have not fought, because she mistreated him in word and deed.” Manuel suspected that his wife had cast a spell on him, putting demons in his body that caused him to suffer from an “affliction of reason.” He recounted how six months before, Magdalena, his mother-in-law, and his sister-in-law offered him a cup of chocolate. When Manuel took the cup, he noticed that it weighed more than usual and became suspicious, thinking that the women had perhaps added something nefarious to the drink. Manuel decided not to drink the chocolate and placed the cup in the corner of the room. He put next to the chocolate a sprig of rosemary, an herb associated with ritual cleansing and protection from evil in Spanish culture. When Manuel returned, his wife and her mother and sister “laugh[ed] at [him], taking [him] for an idiot.” The next morning when Manuel checked the cup, he “found the cup of chocolate filled with such a large quantity of white worms that the cup of chocolate appeared to move on its own, which horrified [him].”

Manuel pointed to the bewitched chocolate as the first in a series of incidents which led him to believe that his wife cast a supernatural illness on him that caused symptoms of “confusion” and “insanity.” He eventually underwent a series of exorcisms conducted by the local parish priest to cleanse his body of the sorcery.<sup>58</sup>

Inquisition records describe how chocolate could also be used as the basis for ritual beverages designed to cast supernatural illnesses and even murder rivals. María de Santa Inés, described by witnesses as a “one-eyed, dark-skinned mulata,” had a citywide reputation for violence and murder. María was known in the capital as “La Panecito” (The Pastry) because of rumors that she used bewitched chocolate pastries (*panecitos de chocolate*) to murder her enemies.<sup>59</sup> Pascual Pinto, a married mestizo who ran a shop in the front of his home, claimed that people called de Santa Inés “La Panecito” because she cast a spell on a woman from another neighborhood with a bewitched chocolate pastry. Pinto’s sister, a thirty-year-old woman married to a tailor, confirmed de Santa Inés’s violent reputation, claiming that people called her “La Panecito” because she put a spell in a chocolate pastry and gave it to a female enemy. She added that local authorities had punished de Santa Inés with banishment for having cooperated in the beating death of another woman.<sup>60</sup> Cecilia de Arriola, whose husband Juan accused her of sorcery in part because she forced him to make her morning chocolate, reportedly also took revenge on an enemy with a bewitched chocolate pastry. Teresa de Solorzano, a thirty-year-old, single mulata, told Inquisition authorities that Cecilia de Arriola inflicted a supernatural illness on her neighbor’s female Indian servant after a series of arguments between the two women. The Indian servant supposedly suffered nausea and breathlessness after eating the bewitched pastry and died soon after.<sup>61</sup>

The association between chocolate and disorderly women extended to elite women as well, especially their unruly behavior in public settings. Thomas Gage, an Englishman writing in the mid-seventeenth century about his travels through Central America, described a public confrontation between the bishop of Chiapas, located on the far northwestern edge of colonial Guatemala, and his elite female parishioners over the consumption of hot chocolate during mass. According to Gage, Bishop Bernardino de Salazar complained that the women insisted on drinking hot chocolate in church, disrupting the mass. The bishop became so angry that he posted signs on the cathedral declaring that he would excommunicate those women who continued to drink chocolate in church. The women unsuccessfully tried to change the bishop’s mind, and Gage wrote:

The women, seeing [the bishop] so hard to be entreated, began to stomacke him the more and to sleight him with scornfull and re-

proachfull words; others sleighted his excommunication, drinking in iniquity in the Church, as the fish doth water, which caused one day such an uproar in the Cathedrall, that many swords were drawne against the Priests and Prebends, who attempted to take away from the maids the cups of chocolatte, which they brought unto their mistresses.<sup>62</sup>

The conflict between the bishop and the women escalated, with both sides refusing to compromise, or, as Gage put it, “the women would not obey.” The women proceeded to boycott cathedral services to protest the bishop’s prohibition of chocolate during mass. When the bishop became ill during the boycott, rumors spread through the city that one of the women had poisoned his chocolate. The bishop’s head and face became greatly swollen, and any touch “caused his skin to break and cast out white matter, which had corrupted and overflowne all his body.” Physicians called to the bishop’s sickbed agreed that someone had poisoned him, and he died from his illness a week later. Gage claimed that from the incident emerged the warning, “Beware of the Chocolatte of Chiapa.”<sup>63</sup>

In Santiago, hundreds of miles southeast of Chiapas, authorities also associated chocolate with disorderly women. Elite women in Santiago also drank chocolate during cathedral services, much to the consternation of religious authorities. In 1650, one priest complained that many of the women brought with them servants and slaves who carried cushion pads, chairs, mass books, and jeweled boxes that contained fans for their mistresses to use during mass. According to the priest, the greatest abuse was that slaves and servants served the women steaming cups of chocolate “con gran lujo” (with great luxury), disrupting the church services. In response, Santiago’s city government enacted a law prohibiting chocolate consumption in church.<sup>64</sup> Santiago’s nuns acted even more scandalously, according to Pedro Rosuela, chaplain of Santiago’s cathedral. He denounced two nuns, Madre Abessa María de San Pedro and Madre María de San Francisco, to the Inquisition for drinking chocolate in the confessional.<sup>65</sup>

### **Chocolate and Representations of Disorderly Women in Colonial Guatemala**

In colonial Santiago de Guatemala, as chocolate became widely available to men and women of all ethnic groups and social statuses, the cultural meanings associated with chocolate began to transform. Colonial authorities, as well as ordinary men and women, however, increasingly associated chocolate with female social disorder, which cut across racial and status boundaries. Mixed-race, indigenous, and African women in par-

ticular were described as using chocolate as the basis for a wide variety of sorcery activities: sexual witchcraft, casting supernatural illness, and extracting revenge. Potions were infused with power from the ritual ingredients mixed into the chocolate, including herbs, powders, and body fluids and hairs. While elite women also availed themselves of chocolate-based potions, they also defended their rights to consume chocolate beverages in public settings, such as during church services, refusing to obey edicts against the practice. Women in late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century Santiago who prepared and consumed chocolate ran the risk of being accused of sorcery and other types of disorderly and illegal behavior. Despite discourses that linked chocolate with female social disorder, however, especially in sexual contexts, women often took advantage of those associations by serving, or threatening to serve, doctored chocolate beverages in the day-to-day conflicts and confrontations between men and women.

## Notes

The initial idea for this essay began in conversation with Marcy Norton, when she presented her paper “Tobacco, Chocolate, and the Indianization of Europeans” (Working Paper 98-36) at Harvard University’s International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World in August 1998. I thank her for this and for commenting on an earlier draft. Since then, the essay has undergone multiple revisions, and I thank Peter Hulme, Chris Lutz, Jean O’Brien, Matthew Restall, Susan Schroeder, Anne Cruz, and Susan Tax Freeman for their helpful comments along the way. Versions of this article were presented at the meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory (1999), the Sixteenth-Century Studies Conference (1999), Pennsylvania State University (2000), the University of Miami (2002), the Institute for Maya Studies (2004), and Canisius College (2004). Spelling and punctuation have been updated and standardized.

- 1 William Taylor has analyzed alcohol consumption among native peoples in colonial Mexico, arguing that alcohol consumption worked to reinforce the ties of community life, especially when used in local rituals and celebrations. At the same time, however, misuse of alcohol contributed to alcoholism and interpersonal and community violence. See his book *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in a Colonial Mexican Village* (Stanford, CA, 1979).
- 2 See Sidney W. Mintz’s classic *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, 1985).
- 3 Kim F. Hall, “Culinary Spaces, Colonial Spaces: The Gendering of Sugar in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, ed. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dymphna Callaghan (Cambridge, 1996), 169. See also Norton’s essay “Tobacco, Chocolate” for its argument that the gradual spread in use and popularity of tobacco and chocolate in Europe is evidence of indigenous culture’s influence on European culture and consumption.

- 4 Jeffrey Pilcher has produced an important work in this regard, analyzing the ethnic and cultural politics of food and the construction of Mexican nation-state. See his *Qué Vivan los Tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque, NM, 1998).
- 5 For a detailed discussion on the use of Inquisition records as historical sources, see Martha Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives: Gender, Religion, and the Politics of Power in Colonial Guatemala* (Austin, 2002), esp. chap. 1. While my interpretations of women's use of sorcery under Spanish colonial rule differ from the important works of Irene Silverblatt and Ruth Behar, much of my understanding of the connections between witchcraft and women's power is indebted to their scholarship. See Irene Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (Princeton, NJ, 1987); and Ruth Behar, "Sexual Witchcraft, Colonialism, and Women's Powers: Views from the Mexican Inquisition," in *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Asunción Lavrin (Lincoln, NE, 1991).
- 6 On the methodological approach of microhistory, see, e.g., the works of Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives* (Stanford, CA, 1987); and Guido Ruggiero, *Binding Passions: Tales of Magic, Marriage, and Power at the End of the Renaissance* (New York, 1993).
- 7 See Ruggiero, *Binding Passions*; and Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore, 1980).
- 8 See, e.g., Richard E. Greenleaf, *Zumárraga and the Mexican Inquisition, 1536-1543* (Washington, DC, 1961); and Greenleaf, *The Mexican Inquisition of the Sixteenth Century* (Albuquerque, NM, 1969).
- 9 This work, then, is a cultural translation of the everyday world of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Guatemala, part of which involves uncovering and analyzing the vocabulary that colonial inhabitants used to make sense of their world. For many, that world had both natural and supernatural aspects, as men and women across social and racial groups often used the vocabulary of sorcery and the supernatural to construct explanatory frameworks. See Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives*.
- 10 In this essay I primarily relied on the colonial racial-ethnic designations used to describe those who appear in Inquisition records, such as "Indian," "Spaniard," and "black." "Mestizo" or "mestiza" referred to a person of mixed Spanish and Indian descent. In Central America, "mulato" or "mulata" referred to a person of mixed African, Spanish, and/or Indian descent. Whenever possible, I offer specific information on race, ethnicity, place of origin, and language spoken.
- 11 For more on women's participation in sorcery, magical healing and midwifery, and clandestine religious practices within the context of multiethnic social relations in cities, see Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives*.
- 12 Sophie D. Coe and Michael D. Coe, *The True History of Chocolate* (London, 1996), 26. Allen Young argues for the Amazonian, not Mesoamerican, origins of cacao, but he acknowledges that no evidence exists in the Amazon for any precontact use or intensive cultivation of cacao, as it does in Mesoamerica. See his *The Chocolate Tree: A Natural History of Cacao* (Washington, DC, 1994), 14.
- 13 *Monterey County Herald*, 18 July 2002.
- 14 Young, *Chocolate Tree*, 17, 21.
- 15 Coe and Coe, *True History of Chocolate*, 48; and David Stuart, "The Río Azul

- Cacao Pot: Epigraphic Observations on the Function of a Mayan Ceramic Vessel,” *Antiquity* 62 (1988): 153–57.
- 16 Grant D. Hall, Stanley M. Tarka Jr., W. Jeffrey Hurst, David Stuart, and Richard E. W. Adams, “Cacao Residues in Ancient Maya Vessels from Río Azul, Guatemala,” *American Antiquity* 55 (1990): 137–43.
- 17 *Monterey County Herald*, 18 July 2002.
- 18 Coe and Coe, *True History of Chocolate*, 61–62.
- 19 Charles Wisdom, “The Supernatural World and Curing,” in *Heritage of Conquest: The Ethnology of Middle America*, ed. Sol Tax (Glencoe, IL, 1952), 119–41.
- 20 Norton (“Tobacco, Chocolate”), using literary sources, argues that indigenous women were responsible for chocolate drink preparation at the time of the Spanish conquest.
- 21 Young, *Chocolate Tree*, 18.
- 22 Cited in Coe and Coe, *True History of Chocolate*, as the earliest known image of chocolate preparation. Image from Michael D. Coe, *Lords of the Underworld: Masterpieces of Classic Maya Ceramics* (Princeton, NJ, 1978), 16–21.
- 23 Murdo J. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America: A Socioeconomic History, 1520–1720* (Berkeley, CA, 1973), 70.
- 24 Diego García de Palacio, *Letter to the King of Spain, Being a Description of the Ancient Provinces of Guazacapan, Izalco, Cuscatlán, and Chiquimula, in the Audiencia of Guatemala* (Culver City, CA, 1985 [1576]).
- 25 Young, *Chocolate Tree*, 18; MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 50.
- 26 Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (Madrid, 1959), 1:272.
- 27 Coe and Coe, *True History of Chocolate*, 112.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 29 See Norton, “Tobacco, Chocolate.”
- 30 Coe and Coe, *True History of Chocolate*, 95.
- 31 Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, ed. Carmelo Saenz de Santa María (Madrid, 1982), 185.
- 32 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 68, 242; Norton, “Tobacco, Chocolate,” 9.
- 33 Coe and Coe, *True History of Chocolate*, 112. Also see Hall, “Culinary Spaces.”
- 34 Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Ramo de Inquisición (hereafter AGN, Inq.), vol. 539, exp. 3, fols. 120–225 (Santiago de Guatemala, 1704).
- 35 AGN, Inq., vol. 540, exp. 22, fol. 270 (Santiago de Guatemala, 1698): “Así mismo dice que estando velando en el barrio de Santo Domingo, y estando sentando tomando chocolate en la cocina.”
- 36 AGN, Inq., vol. 729, exp. 12, fols. 406–24 (Santiago de Guatemala, 1705/1715).
- 37 AGN, Inq., vol. 706, exp. 11, fols. 81–89 (Santiago de Guatemala, 1698): “Ha perdido el juicio y que con chocolate que esta le ha dado le quita la locura y queda bueno.”
- 38 Archivo General de Centro América, Guatemala City (hereafter AGCA), A1–1826–12043 (1693).
- 39 I have converted all the monetary amounts here to reales for comparative purposes; 8 reales = 1 peso.
- 40 AGN, Inq., vol. 695, exp. 78, fols. 330–490 (Santiago de Guatemala, 1695).
- 41 For more on women’s use of sexual witchcraft in colonial society, see Behar, “Sexual Witchcraft”; and Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives*, 52–55.
- 42 AGN, Inq., vol. 644, exp. 2, fols. 196–347 (Santiago de Guatemala, 10 September 1695).

- 43 AGN, Inq., vol. 706, exp. 11, fols. 81-89 (Santiago de Guatemala, 1698).
- 44 AGN, Inq., vol. 729, exp. 12, fols. 406-24 (Santiago de Guatemala, 4 March 1705 and 6 June 1715).
- 45 AGN, Inq., vol. 644, exp. 2, fols. 196-347 (Santiago de Guatemala, 9 March 1682).
- 46 "Que por eso le llamaban La Machete porque habría salida con un machete a quitar una lengua."
- 47 AGN, Inq., vol. 644, exp. 2, fols. 196-347 (Santiago de Guatemala, 9 April 1682).
- 48 "Para que los hombres no la dejasen y la quieren."
- 49 "Para que se desenoje." AGN, Inq., vol. 644, exp. 2, fols. 196-347 (Santiago de Guatemala, 10 April 1682).
- 50 Ibid. Anita's surname is not listed in the documents.
- 51 Because of her illegal activities, colonial officials placed the Indian woman Anita in the *Beaterio de Nuestra Señora de Rosario*, also called *Beatas Indias*. This *beaterio*, run by religious officials and designated exclusively for Indian women, effectively functioned as a jail. J. Joaquín Pardo, Pedro Zamora Castellanos, and Luis Lujan Muños, *Guía de Antigua Guatemala*, 2nd ed. (Santiago de Guatemala, 1968), 223-27.
- 52 AGN, Inq., vol. 644, exp. 2, fols. 196-347 (8 September 1695). It was not uncommon in colonial Latin America for couples who planned to marry to engage in premarital sex. For more on this, see Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, "The Intersection between Rape and Marriage in Late-Colonial and Early National Mexico," *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 6 (1997): 559-90.
- 53 AGN, Inq., vol. 695, exp. 78, fols. 330-490 (17 October 1695). No surname is listed for Agustina.
- 54 Agustina was a servant of don José Montalvo. It is interesting to note that Agustina seems to have had a fair amount of freedom to move about the city and conduct a personal life outside of the control of her employer, in whose house she lived.
- 55 The wording here is vague and uses the phrase "they brought over some chocolate." From the context, however, doña Catarina appears to refer to Agustina and her female friend.
- 56 AGN, Inq., vol. 540, exp. 33, fols. 585-94 (Santiago de Guatemala, 1701).
- 57 "Como estilo y agasajo que ordinario se have . . . en dicho convento con los confesores."
- 58 AGN, Inq., vol. 831, exp. 2, fols. 214-352 (Santiago de Guatemala, 1730).
- 59 The *Diccionario de las Autoridades* [1737], 107, defines *panecito* as "pan pequeño," literally small bread. I have chosen to translate it as "pastry."
- 60 AGN, Inq., vol. 727, exp. 26, fols. 576-92 (Santiago de Guatemala, 1704).
- 61 AGN, Inq., vol. 695, exp. 78, fols. 330-490 (Santiago de Guatemala, 1695).
- 62 Thomas Gage, *The English-American: His Travail by Sea and Land; or, a New Survey of the West-Indies* (London, 1648), 103.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Agustín Estrada de Monroy, *Datos para la historia de la iglesia en Guatemala* (Santiago de Guatemala, 1972), 1:299-300.
- 65 AGN, Inq., vol. 530, exp. 35, fols. 547-53 (Santiago de Guatemala, 1695).