

Indigenous Identity and the Coca Leaf: Attitudes Towards the Coca Leaf in the mid-sixteenth century to the late seventeenth century in Colonial Peru

Abstract

Throughout the mid-sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century, the use of coca was intricately connected to the Indigenous identity in Peru. The Inca elite had used coca in various religious and cultural practices prior to the conquest, and this connection to the Inca past remained an important aspect of the coca leaf throughout the early colonial period. The coca leaf had multiple uses in colonial Peru: The plant was an important part of the religious and cultural practices of the Indigenous population; it was used by Native miners in order to combat hunger, thirst, and exhaustion; and it formed a part of hybridized ritualistic practices. The coca leaf had a social and economic impact on colonial Peru; the extent of this impact was largely determined by colonial officials and their attitudes towards the plant. The colonists' perspectives regarding the plant was formed in connection to the Indigenous identity and captured through colonial writings. My paper explores the ways in which the colonists' attitudes towards the coca leaf were largely formed in relation to their views of racial superiority. I also investigate the religious, economic, and hybridized cultural structures that formed in connection with the Indigenous identity and the coca leaf.

Cultural practices, economic progress, and colonial attitudes were factors that intertwined with the coca plant to produce debates regarding its use in Colonial Peru. In a 2009 newspaper article, the president of Bolivia at the time, Evo Morales Ayma, argued the benefits of coca chewing and expressed his regret regarding the stigma of the plant. Morales asserted the connection between the Indigenous identity and the coca plant: “Why is Bolivia so concerned with the coca leaf? Because it is an important symbol of the history and identity of the Indigenous cultures of the Andes.”<sup>1</sup> Morales continued to explain that there are millions of people in “Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, and northern Argentina and Chile” who chew coca leaves.<sup>2</sup> Morales articulated the meaning of coca leaves in terms of Indigenous culture in the Andes; this association between the coca leaf and indigeneity can be seen through the colonial use and discourse of the plant. Although this article entitled, “Let Me Chew My Coca Leaves” primarily addressed the criminalization of coca since it became associated with cocaine, the extent to which the article reflects remnants of colonial debates and attitudes towards coca use is significant.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the history of Latin America, the coca leaf has been a target for legislation. The Spanish conquest prompted new discussions pertaining to the use of coca leaves in religious, economic, and social terms. Colonial attitudes towards the use of coca were a significant source of contention following the Spanish conquest. Coca leaves represented a part of the Indigenous identity in the Andes throughout the colonial period in a similar way to the contemporary cultural meaning outlined by Morales.<sup>4</sup> This paper will demonstrate the extent to which the debates regarding the use of coca were deeply rooted in colonial perceptions of superiority in

<sup>1</sup> Evo Morales Ayma, “Let Me Chew My Coca Leaves,” *New York Times*, March 14, 2009, A21.

<sup>2</sup> Morales, “Let Me Chew My Coca Leaves,” A21.

<sup>3</sup> Morales, “Let Me Chew My Coca Leaves,” A21.

<sup>4</sup> Morales, “Let Me Chew My Coca Leaves,” A21.

relation to Indigenous culture throughout Peru in the mid-sixteenth century to the late seventeenth century. The paper will further explore the extent to which the use of coca evolved to become a factor in religious discourse, economic opportunities, and hybridized cultural practices following the Spanish conquest in relation to its connection with the Native Andean identity.<sup>5</sup>

Following the Spanish conquest, colonial debates regarding the coca plant revealed that the view of coca mirrored the colonizers' perspectives of the Indigenous people and their culture. The Inca political authority had prohibited the indiscriminate use of coca, and the end of their authority led to the coca plant being used extensively among the Indigenous population.<sup>6</sup> Garcilaso de la Vega, a colonial chronicler of Inca history, described the use of coca in his writing. He explained that coca use within the Inca Empire was restricted to the socially elite: "The use of coca was nothing like so widespread then as it is today, but was the exclusive privilege of the king who, occasionally, offered a few leaves, as a mark of favor, to this or that prince or curaca in his immediate circle."<sup>7</sup> Coca had previously been used by the Inca elite in a selective manner, and as Vega explained, the use of coca leaves spread after the Spanish conquest.<sup>8</sup> Origins of coca within the traditions of the Inca elite grounded the association between indigeneity and coca.

The Indigenous religious practice was an important aspect of coca and its connection to the Andean identity. Vega described the religious use of coca among the Indigenous people of

<sup>5</sup> My first two paragraphs are the only parts of my paper that introduce contemporary perceptions of the coca leaf, but for more information about contemporary coca practices in relation to the Indigenous identity in Peru, see "The Hold Life Has" by Catherine J. Allen in *The Peru Reader*. Allen offers an interesting anthropological perspective regarding Indigenous practices and coca.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph A. Gagliano, "The Coca Debate in Colonial Peru," *The Americas* 20:1 (1963): 43.

<sup>7</sup> Garcilaso de la Vega, *The Incas: The Royal Commentaries of the Inca*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: The Orion Press, 1961), 87.

<sup>8</sup> Vega, *The Incas*, 87.

the amazon: “The Antis also worshiped a plant called *cuca* or, as the Spaniards say, *coca*.”<sup>9</sup> The worship of coca was significant because it associated the plant with pagan religious practices, according to the colonists’ perspective.<sup>10</sup> The physical properties of coca also would have been important in religious ceremonies of the elite Inca as the stimulant effect of coca was able to increase the intensity of these practices.<sup>11</sup> The religious practices involving coca became an important part of the coca debate as they fueled the arguments of missionaries demanding coca prohibition and established the impermeable connection between Indigenous practices and coca.<sup>12</sup>

In the decades following the conquest, missionaries argued against the use of coca among the Natives of Peru. Missionaries were concerned about the plant’s role in superstitious practices. Coca was used for various sacrifices, cures, and secret rites among the Indigenous population.<sup>13</sup> At the First Council of Lima in 1552, the use of coca in pagan sacrifices and divination was reported to the prelates who had gathered. The prelates were advised to discourage the use of coca in offerings to the earth, sun, and sea; they were to also discourage the use of maize, water, or other substances in regards to these offerings. Coca was viewed by many prohibitionists as a vice and instrument of Satan.<sup>14</sup> The colonial attitudes towards coca formed in relation to the prevalent use of the plant in the cultural context of the Indigenous peoples.

The negative view of coca because of its association with the Indigenous population was evident in colonial writings; this association can be seen in the writing of Pedro de Cieza de

<sup>9</sup> Vega, *The Incas*, 101.

<sup>10</sup> Gagliano, “The Coca Debate in Colonial Peru,” 43.

<sup>11</sup> Richard T Martin, “The Role of Coca in the History, Religion, and Medicine of South American Indians,” *Economic Botany* 24:4 (1970): 424.

<sup>12</sup> Gagliano, “The Coca Debate in Colonial Peru,” 43.

<sup>13</sup> Gagliano, “The Coca Debate in Colonial Peru,” 43.

<sup>14</sup> Gagliano, “The Coca Debate in Colonial Peru,” 44.

León. Born in 1520, Cieza was a chronicler of Inca history.<sup>15</sup> His writing revealed the association between the coca plant and indigeneity, which demonstrated the discriminatory beliefs that influenced the discourse surrounding the use of this plant. The following quotation illustrated Cieza's view of coca chewing in relation to the Indigenous population: "...they said that with it [coca chewing] they do not feel hunger, and it gives them great vigor and strength. I think it probably does something of the sort, though it seems to me a disgusting habit, and what might be expected of people like these Indians."<sup>16</sup> Although Cieza conceded that he thought there were most likely benefits to the practice of chewing coca, he dismissed the practice as revolting and a practice that would be expected from Indigenous people because of what he perceived to be the repulsive nature of their practice. Cieza's view of racial superiority influenced his opinion of coca chewing. Since the practice was common to the Natives, Cieza was able to form his opinion regarding the mastication of coca on the basis of what he believed were the inferior practices of the Indigenous population. The connection between race and coca remained throughout the discourse pertaining to the plant.<sup>17</sup>

The cultural use of coca was prevalent among the Indigenous people and led to the association between indigeneity and coca. Natives worshipped the Earth Mother, Pachamama. According to the comments of Spanish colonizers, both men and women were devoted to Pachamama. Among *chicha* and other items, it was common for Indigenous people to spread coca on the earth in honour of Pachamama and with the hope that she would provide for them. Coca was offered to the goddess in the planting season so that she would encourage the crops to

<sup>15</sup> Pedro de Cieza de León, *The Incas of Pedro de Cieza de León*, ed. Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, trans. Harriet de Onis (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), xxix.

<sup>16</sup> Cieza, *The Incas of Pedro de Cieza de León*, 259-260.

<sup>17</sup> Cieza, *The Incas of Pedro de Cieza de León*, 259-260.

grow.<sup>18</sup> Pachamama's daughters were emblematic of Andean bounty in the highlands, and one of the daughters, cocamama, represented this bounty of coca.<sup>19</sup> In his writing, Father Pablo Joseph de Arriaga, mentioned the use of *cocamamas* for the purpose of increasing coca production. The symbol of cocamama represented the extent to which coca was intertwined with the Indigenous culture. Moreover, the association foreshadowed the debates regarding the extirpation of coca in this period of cultural and religious assimilation.<sup>20</sup>

The Jesuit Pablo Arriaga was an active coca prohibitionist in the early seventeenth century.<sup>21</sup> Arriaga was concerned with the use of coca in pagan ceremonies, and he asserted that there were secret plantations where coca was grown to serve only religious purposes.<sup>22</sup> Throughout his written account, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, Arriaga argued for the extirpation of coca based on its cultural and religious significance among the Indigenous population of Peru; this significance was considered heresy in the context of Catholicism. Arriaga explained that coca was commonly grown and purchased for ritualistic purposes. He continued to write about the fourteen small coca fields on the riverbank of Huamanmayu. These fields were cultivated by community tills. Arriaga explained that these fields belonged to the huacas.<sup>23</sup> He defined the Quechua word, “huaca,” as an “idol or place of worship; a sacred object; also taken in the sense of treasure.”<sup>24</sup> Arriaga stated the purpose of these fields and the way in which the colonizers thwarted this use of coca because of the religious aspect of the plant: “Indians are set to guard these fields, to gather the coca, and take it to the ministers of the huaca

<sup>18</sup> Irene Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 24.

<sup>19</sup> Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru*, 25.

<sup>20</sup> Father Pablo Joseph de Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, ed. & trans. L. Clark Keating (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), 30.

<sup>21</sup> Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, xiv.

<sup>22</sup> Gagliano, “The Coca Debate in Colonial Peru,” 61.

<sup>23</sup> Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, 43.

<sup>24</sup> Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, 179.

at the proper time, for it is a universal offering for huacas on all occasions. These fields we ordered to be burned.”<sup>25</sup> Arriaga did not promote an attitude of toleration, the coca fields were to be burned because they were used as offerings; this use of coca opposed the Jesuit mission of converting the Indigenous people to the Catholic religious practices.<sup>26</sup>

The connection between huacas and *cocamama* was clear throughout the fifteenth chapter of Arriaga’s monograph. This chapter was dedicated to the instruction of questioning sorcerers and Natives about huacas. Arriaga explained that various clans have specific huacas, and when there is conflict between the clans, there may be Natives willing to provide information about a rival clan. Arriaga wrote the following regarding the Indigenous clans and their huacas: “They also worship *huaris*, that is, the founders of the earth or the persons to whom it first belonged and who were its first populators. These have many huacas and they tell fables about them which furnish much light upon their idolatry.”<sup>27</sup> Huacas were such a vital aspect of idolatry that they merited much investigation; they represented the pagan practices that Arriaga wished to eliminate. *Huaris* were worshipped, and huacas were used in this practice. Coca became implicated in this religious practice through its use as an offering, and through the involvement of *cocamama*. Throughout Arriaga’s writing, coca was fundamentally intertwined with the huacas, and thus, the religious practice of the Indigenous people.<sup>28</sup>

Arriaga urged the Indigenous people to give up coca and other items associated with huacas. After the investigations, he explained that the Indigenous people must bring coca to a date set for “the display of the huacas.”<sup>29</sup> Arriaga listed the supplies that the Natives were to bring on this day, and coca was among the list of items. He asserted that these items should not

<sup>25</sup> Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, 43.

<sup>26</sup> Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, 43.

<sup>27</sup> Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, 118.

<sup>28</sup> Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, 118.

<sup>29</sup> Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, 129.



be taken unless they were used for the Native religious traditions. He believed that the Indigenous attitude should be one of gratitude towards those enforcing this sanction: “They should be impressed with the fact that these objects are taken away from them on account of their idolatry and not simply to take advantage of them, which last would be most improper. They will also be told to bring wood for the burning.”<sup>30</sup> Since coca was used as an offering to the huacas, it was to be burned. The destruction of coca and other objects associated with the Indigenous religion, along with Arriaga’s paternalistic tone, demonstrated the extent to which coca was tied to the Native identity.

Within his edict against idolatry, Arriaga again condemned coca. He explained the importance of the identification of whether the person in question knew any person who worshipped huacas “...which they offer sacrifices of chicha, coca, burned tallow, and other things.”<sup>31</sup> The sacrificial aspect of coca was emphasized in the ninth item: “Whether you know of any person or persons who celebrate the festivals of the huacas, offering them sacrifices or offerings of llamas, guinea pigs, mulla, paria, llacsa, burned tallow, sancu, parpa, coca, and other things.”<sup>32</sup> Arriaga’s writing represented the connection between idolatry and the coca plant, Arriaga believed that the use of coca should be extirpated in conjunction with idolatry and pagan practices. According to missionaries like Arriaga, the Christianization of the Andes required the prohibition of coca.<sup>33</sup>

The coca plant was compared and contrasted to cocoa in Mexico, illustrating the strong association between parts of the natural world and Indigenous practices. The association between superstition and the coca plant was not completely unique, it was the Peruvian case of plants or

<sup>30</sup> Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, 129-130.

<sup>31</sup> Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, 166.

<sup>32</sup> Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, 166.

<sup>33</sup> Arriaga, *The Extirpation of Idolatry in Peru*, 166.

products in latin america that were connected to the Indigenous culture. Another sixteenth-century Jesuit, José de Acosta, explained that there was a greater element of superstition present in coca than cocoa: “It [cocoa] does not grow in Peru, but there is coca there, about which there is even greater superstition, and it seems quite incredible.”<sup>34</sup> Cocoa was associated with Mexico while coca was the plant associated with Peru.<sup>35</sup> Since both coca and cocoa were a part of Indigenous ritual and cultural traditions, it is evident that discriminatory colonial ideas played a role in a negative stigma of coca.

Although coca and cocoa were associated with superstition because of their Andean origins, the Spanish adapted these commodities to their purposes. Cocoa became a delicacy when sugar was used in place of hot peppers, and the use of coca was allowed because of its ability to sustain the silver miners during their days of labour.<sup>36</sup> Coca was used as a tool to increase the Spanish silver production, and because of this, an attitude of toleration prevailed throughout the coca debates.<sup>37</sup> The Spanish employment of coca to increase silver production, however, did not overshadow the connection between coca and the Indigenous culture in the Andes. In contrast to cocoa, coca was not used as an export in Europe or supplied to a mass market among non-Indigenous people. The general acceptance of coca and its traditional use was never achieved because of the religious and cultural implications of the plant. Coca was largely understood in the context of its association with superstition and the Andean identity.<sup>38</sup>

Acosta wrote about the colonial coca debates. He explained that the dangers present in cultivating coca became a point of debate among colonial scholars. Some of the dangers of

<sup>34</sup> José de Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, ed. Jane E. Mangan (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 210.

<sup>35</sup> Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, 209.

<sup>36</sup> Leo J. Garofalo, “The ethno-economy of food, drink, and stimulants: The making of race in colonial Lima and Cuzco” (PhD diss., The University of Wisconsin, 2001), 312-313.

<sup>37</sup> Garofalo, “The ethno-economy of food, drink, and stimulants,” 313.

<sup>38</sup> Garofalo, “The ethno-economy of food, drink, and stimulants,” 314.

cultivating coca were described in his writing: “Usually it [coca] is brought from the Andes, from valleys where the heat is unbearable, where it rains most of the year, and its cultivation causes the Indians no little labor and even no few lives because they go from the mountains and cold climates to cultivate and pick it and bring it.”<sup>39</sup> Unlike Arriaga, Acosta was concerned with the dangers of cultivating coca rather than the use of coca among the Indigenous people. He explained that the purchase and mastication of coca leaves would be acceptable if there was not peril involved with the distribution and production of the plant. Acosta further explained the debate among scholars regarding whether or not coca cultivation should continue: “Hence there were great disputes and opinions among educated and learned men as to whether they should eradicate all the plantings of coca, but in the end they have remained.”<sup>40</sup> Acosta described the nature of the coca debates. Although the dangers of coca cultivation were used as an argument for its extirpation, the coca debates ultimately ended with the attitude of toleration.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike Arriaga, Acosta admitted that there may be benefits to the use of coca plants. Rather than focusing on the religious aspect of the plant, Acosta wrote about the practice of chewing coca in order to gain strength needed to complete labour in the mines. Acosta wrote that he did not believe the Indigenous people only imagined that they gained strength from chewing coca: “The Indians say that it gives them strength, and it is a great treat for them. Many grave men think this is a superstition and pure imagination. To tell the truth, I do not think it pure imagination; rather, I believe that it produces strength and spirit in the Indians, for effects can be seen that cannot be attributed to imagination, such as doubling the workload with a handful of coca without ingesting anything else and other similar feats.”<sup>42</sup> Acosta’s recognition of benefits

<sup>39</sup> Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, 211.

<sup>40</sup> Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, 211.

<sup>41</sup> Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, 211.

<sup>42</sup> Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, 211.

associated with coca chewing was significant since there were influential figures who dismissed the coca plant as having nothing more than the placebo effect on the Indigenous population.<sup>43</sup> His work also influenced later scientific writing on coca, such as José Hipólito Unanue's "Dissertation on Coca."<sup>44</sup> Unanue published his "Dissertation on Coca" in 1794 wherein he asserted the virtues of coca.<sup>45</sup> Acosta's position demonstrated that there were colonizers who recognized the benefits of coca chewing, and thus, the stimulant effect of coca contributed to the argument against the prohibitionists.<sup>46</sup>

Acosta's writing about the benefits of coca involved economic factors in the mastication of coca leaves. Coca was a significant source of profit for *encomienda* owners;<sup>47</sup> these *encomiendas* were grants of Indigenous labour distributed from the Spanish Crown to the conquerors.<sup>48</sup> Cieza's writing, as previously analyzed in relation to the connection between discrimination and the discourse regarding coca, also explained the economic benefits of coca

<sup>43</sup> Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, 211.

<sup>44</sup> Margaret R. Ewalt, "Christianity, Coca, and Commerce in the Peruvian Mercury," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 36:1 (2007): 200.

<sup>45</sup> Ewalt, "Christianity, Coca, and Commerce in the Peruvian Mercury," 192.

<sup>46</sup> Acosta's influence on the scientific writings of Unanue further cemented the relationship between indigeneity and the coca leaf outside the scope of the colonial period. The disdain for the coca plant in relation to the religious and cultural practices of the Indigenous population was an inhibiting factor in the early commodification of coca, but this connection was emphasized during the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century as coca gained prominence within nationalistic scientific works promoting coca as a global commodity.

The exotization of the coca leaf also became a motivation for the connection between the leaf and the Incan past. After the year of 1800, new fields of alkaloidal science and botany were subject to expansion, and the coca leaf became an exotized and favoured topic of European travel writers who would visit the newly independent American republics. In contrast to the reception of coca during the colonial period, the coca leaf gained favourable opinions from many European travellers.

For information regarding the connection to the rise of coca following the colonial period, see "The Popularization of Peruvian Coca" by Joseph A. Gagliano, *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug* by Paul Gootenberg, and "America's First Cocaine Epidemic" by David F. Musto. *The Making of a Global Drug* investigates the history of cocaine throughout modern history while particularly addressing the coca leaf in relation to the rise of cocaine while the two articles explore the rise of coca in the earlier part of the modern period. See "A Forgotten Case of 'Scientific Excellence on the Periphery': The Nationalist Cocaine Science of Alfredo Bignon, 1884-1887" by Paul Gootenberg for information regarding the place of both coca and cocaine in the scientific nationalism of Peru.

<sup>47</sup> Cieza, *The Incas of Pedro de Cieza de León*, 260.

<sup>48</sup> Orin Starn, Carlos Iván Degregori, and Robin Kirk, eds., *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, 2nd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 94.

crops. Cieza wrote about the economic advantages of coca cultivation: “This coca was so valuable in Peru in the years 1548, 1549, and 1551 that there has never been in the whole world a plant or root or any growing thing that bears and yields every year as this does, aside from spices, which are a different thing, that is so highly valued... Anyone holding an encomienda of Indians considered his main crop the number of baskets of coca he gathered.”<sup>49</sup> Cieza explained the argument that many coca advocates would use: Coca was a very profitable resource. Cieza continued to write about one of the primary reasons that coca was so profitable: The Potosí silver mines. Coca was transported to the mines of Potosí and sold to the labourers there.<sup>50</sup> The use of coca was most prominent in the mine camps. Weakened sanctions and land availability both contributed to this prevalent use of coca.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, coca was sold at an inflated price in the Potosí market because of its proximity to the silver mines.<sup>52</sup> Coca’s economic advantages were significant and were often connected to colonial economic structures that used Indigenous labour, namely the encomiendas and the Potosí silver mines.

Coca production was a path towards wealth. Cieza further highlighted the promising economic prospects of the coca trade in the following quotation: “There are those in Spain who became rich from this coca, buying it up and reselling it and trading it in the *catus* or markets of the Indians.”<sup>53</sup> Cieza explained that Indigenous people frequently bought coca, and this demand for the product created an economic opportunity for the Spaniards. Throughout the debates regarding the use of coca, the economic advantages of the coca trade were considered.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Cieza, *The Incas of Pedro de Cieza de León*, 260.

<sup>50</sup> Cieza, *The Incas of Pedro de Cieza de León*, 260.

<sup>51</sup> John C. Super, *Food, Conquest, and Colonization in Sixteenth-Century Spanish America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 73.

<sup>52</sup> Jane E. Mangan, *Trading Roles: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Urban Economy in Colonial Potosí* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 31.

<sup>53</sup> Cieza, *The Incas of Pedro de Cieza de León*, 260.

<sup>54</sup> Cieza, *The Incas of Pedro de Cieza de León*, 260.

The economic opportunities of the Potosí mines perpetuated the association between coca and the Indigenous people. The Potosí mines were discovered in 1545, and thereafter became a significant source of silver.<sup>55</sup> In 1549, Indigenous people travelled to the Potosí mines in large numbers to find work as labourers.<sup>56</sup> The increased population of the mining town allowed it to become a primary marketplace in colonial Peru.<sup>57</sup> The economic profits were so great in the Potosí market that even the Bishop of Cuzco sold baskets of coca by the thousands at inflated prices.<sup>58</sup> Coca became widely available for purchase in Potosí. The market for coca caused an increase in coca production; this increase was significant since it demonstrated the practical uses of coca and the departure from the ritualistic purposes of coca.<sup>59</sup> Coca was widely used for both its physical properties and its significance in traditional Andean ceremonies. Coca remained associated with the Indigenous people in Potosí because the primary group who bought coca for both its practical and spiritual use was Native labourers.<sup>60</sup>

One notable advocate of the coca trade, Juan de Matienzo, used the economic advantages to curb restrictive legislation regarding coca. His ordinances about coca were integrated within the legislation of the crown and Francisco Toledo.<sup>61</sup> Matienzo argued that there would be economic losses if coca was abolished: "...si agora se les quitase la coca dirían que bolvia la mala mita y tiranía de los Ingas, y si se le quitasen no yrían a Potosi, ni trabajarían... Consérvaseles con ello la dentadura, que les es necesaria tanto por el bivar... finalmente querer que no aya

<sup>55</sup> Gwendolin B. Cobb, "Supply and Transportation for the Potosí Mines, 1545-1640," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 29:1 (1949): 25.

<sup>56</sup> Mangan, *Trading Roles*, 26.

<sup>57</sup> Mangan, *Trading Roles*, 27.

<sup>58</sup> Steve J. Stern, *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest: Huamanga to 1640* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 37.

<sup>59</sup> Mangan, *Trading Roles*, 30.

<sup>60</sup> Mangan, *Trading Roles*, 30-31.

<sup>61</sup> Gagliano, "The Coca Debate in Colonial Peru," 47.

coca, es querer que no aya Perú...”<sup>62</sup> My translation of the quotation is as follows: “If coca were abolished, it would be said that the tyranny of the Incas would return. And if it were abolished, they [the Indigenous people] would not go to Potosí, nor would they work... They preserve with it [coca] the teeth. This benefit is necessary for their life... finally if coca is wanting, and there will be no coca, there will be no Perú...” Matienzo explained that the tyrannical rule of the Incas would return if the use of coca was prohibited except in selective cases. Matienzo argued that the abolition of coca would have dire consequences for both the Indigenous populations and the Spanish colonizers. The Indigenous labourers would no longer work in the Potosí mines, and depopulation would become imminent. Without coca, Peru would essentially be destroyed.<sup>63</sup> The idea that coca use was highly regulated by the Inca elite was reported by Matienzo and other coca advocates, but the theory may not be completely factual.<sup>64</sup> The coca advocates were aware that the economic situation involving coca favoured the use of coca and could be used to prevent prohibition.

Although the economic reasons for the cultivation of coca were significant, Matienzo had other arguments that did not focus on the issue of mine labour or economic profits. Matienzo asserted that coca should not be abolished because it was a gift from God: “Por otra parte parece que la coca no se deve quitar, porque pues Dios la puso alli mas que en otra parte, debió ser necessaria para los Indios...”<sup>65</sup> My translation is as follows: “Moreover, it seems that coca should not be taken away because, well, God put more of it here [ in Perú] than in other parts, should it be necessary for the Indians...” Matienzo argued that coca was placed in Peru for the

<sup>62</sup> Juan de Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú; obra escrita en el siglo XVI* (Buenos Aires: Compañía Sud-Americana de Billetes de Banco, 1910), 90.

<sup>63</sup> Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú*, 90.

<sup>64</sup> Phillip T. Parkerson, "The Inca Coca Monopoly: Fact or Legal Fiction?" *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 127:2 (1983): 109.

<sup>65</sup> Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú*, 89.

Indigenous population's use. He explained that since the coca plant was native to Peru rather than other places, God had created it in this region because he believed it was necessary for the native people to combat environmental struggles.<sup>66</sup> Matienzo also asserted that coca diminished hunger and thirst: "...sienten poco la hambre y la sed..."<sup>67</sup> My translation of the quotation consists of the following: "...they feel little hunger or thirst..." Matienzo utilized the biological function of coca in his defense of the leaf. The plant's ability to suppress hunger and thirst was a significant argument used by coca advocates since it stressed the practical purpose of the plant rather than the ritualistic one.<sup>68</sup>

The use of the coca plant became more widespread as it transitioned from its use in Indigenous culture and towards a use in a hybridization of cultures in the New World, but the plant's association with indigeneity persisted. The seventeenth century presented a decline in coca use, and the middle of the seventeenth century marked the end of the coca debate. The Council of the Indies discussed the issue of coca chewing, and they decided it was to be tolerated since they believed that the Natives had become dependent on imagined effects of the plant. Although there were prohibitionists who vehemently supported the extirpation of coca, the primary reason for the decline of coca use was the decreased Indigenous population.<sup>69</sup> Disease was one important factor in the depopulation of Natives.<sup>70</sup> Indigenous workers were able to demand improved food rations and wages since depopulation created a labour shortage in the Americas. The labourer's coca dependency that had previously driven the market was no longer present. The availability of meat and bread increased as the production of staple food products

<sup>66</sup> Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú*, 89.

<sup>67</sup> Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú*, 89.

<sup>68</sup> Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú*, 89.

<sup>69</sup> Gagliano, "The Coca Debate in Colonial Peru," 62.

<sup>70</sup> Daniel W. Gade, "Inca and colonial settlement, coca cultivation and endemic disease in the tropical forest," *Journal of Historical Geography* 5:3 (1979): 278.



began to flourish. These economic changes, marked by the depopulation of the Indigenous people, caused the price of coca in public markets to drop considerably.<sup>71</sup> The prohibitionists were defeated and the mastication of coca would remain a part of the spiritual practices in the Andes.<sup>72</sup> The practical use of coca declined, and although coca remained interconnected with the Indigenous identity, its societal function shifted away from its practical use.

The hybridization of various religious and cultural practices was evident in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and this hybridization often exposed the connection between indigeneity and coca. The church's concern with huacas continued, but the beliefs regarding huacas began to merge with Christian concepts and create new religious traditions.<sup>73</sup> The Inquisition of Lima relentlessly investigated trials of witchcraft, but the significance of magical specialists was not diminished.<sup>74</sup> Although the strong Indigenous influences on witchcraft practices by African and European migrants were primarily in rural regions during this time period, a mirage of practices emerged to create spiritual beliefs featuring a strong connection to Indigenous traditions.<sup>75</sup> The mastication of coca became less prevalent with the depopulation of the Indigenous people, but the use of the plant in ritual practices remained a part of Indigenous culture and was also adopted by other cultural traditions. Following the coca debate, religious beliefs and practices often included the use of coca. Both Iberian and Catholic traditions were adapted to the Andes. Throughout the 1660s to the 1690s, a group of Afro-Peruvian ritual specialists emerged, and these specialists manufactured an identity based on the concepts of Native urban witchcraft. These concepts included the use of coca leaves, and often blended the traditions from different cultures. Inca rulers were imagined during these rituals; this was

<sup>71</sup> Gagliano, "The Coca Debate in Colonial Peru," 62.

<sup>72</sup> Gagliano, "The Coca Debate in Colonial Peru," 63.

<sup>73</sup> Garofalo, "Conjuring with Coca and the Inca," 55.

<sup>74</sup> Garofalo, "Conjuring with Coca and the Inca," 59.

<sup>75</sup> Garofalo, "Conjuring with Coca and the Inca," 64.

significant as it reinforced the relationship between the spiritual world, coca leaves, and Indigenous people. Although there were efforts to eradicate behaviour in opposition to the Catholic doctrine, the Catholic church ultimately failed in their mission to suppress the witchcraft and other superstitious practices.<sup>76</sup> The connection to the Inca past within the Afro-Peruvian rituals, and the Catholic church's failure to suppress these rituals, illustrates the ways in which the association between indigeneity and coca remained, even when coca was used by groups other than the Native population.

The integration of coca leaves with other religious traditions was significant to the evolution of connections between Indigenous culture and coca. While accepting Catholicism, migrants in Peru blurred the lines between the profane and sacred.<sup>77</sup> Andean tombs and burial sites were looted, and Indigenous Andean bones and figurines were taken from burial or ceremonial sites. The urban ritual specialists employed remains or offerings taken from these pre-Hispanic sites as objects that contained supernatural forces. The practice was comparable to the way Catholics treated relics. The ritualists called the objects "Inca" and made offerings to them. While offerings that were made to "Inca" resembled the practice of offering coca leaves to the huacas, the use of objects associated with the Inca was similar to the veneration of saints within the Catholic tradition. This hybridization of practices was an example of the mixture between the seemingly sacred Catholic traditions regarding saints and offerings to materials connected with the Inca past or idolatry perceived as profane.<sup>78</sup> The hybridization between ancient Inca history and Catholicism demonstrated the ways in which the connection between the Native identity and the coca leaf was not easily lost; in these situations where Indigenous people

<sup>76</sup> Leo J. Garofalo, "Conjuring with Coca and the Inca: The Andeanization of Lima's Afro-Peruvian Ritual Specialists, 1580-1690," *The Americas* 63:1 (2006): 54.

<sup>77</sup> Garofalo, "Conjuring with Coca and the Inca," 66.

<sup>78</sup> Garofalo, "Conjuring with Coca and the Inca," 77.

were not actively participating in spiritual rituals, the coca leaf persisted in its use as a remnant of the Inca identity and past.

The hybridization of religious traditions caused an assembly of people consisting of different social groups. Coca became a plant that unified people from different sectors of society who normally would not associate with one another. Practices involving coca became prevalent among women who led coca circles. Following the Afro-Peruvian women's involvement within coca circles, Spanish Creole women began to support the use of coca in divination. Spanish Creole women also became leading figures within the coca circles. Masticated coca was used by these groups to combat mundane problems with a supernatural means. Coca was used to summon men who would love the women, and it was also used to improve fortunes or to detect sickness.<sup>79</sup> The emergence of Spanish Creole women and Afro-Peruvian women in coca circles illustrated the role of traditional Native practices in other sectors of society. Although a hierarchy among the women formed on the basis of one's ability to read the coca leaves, coca consumption may have blurred social divides. In the Lima home of an Afro-Peruvian widow, who was poor and not a specialist, people gathered to chew coca. Among the people gathered was a proxy who masticated the coca leaves for a woman of a higher social status. There were two women, the proxy, and a man employed by the Holy Office of the Inquisition who all formed a circle and chewed the coca leaves. Although the societal social divides remained rigid, there were relaxed social distinctions inside this ritualistic practice, inside the circle, that allowed members of different societal sectors to congregate.<sup>80</sup> Coca circles illustrate the ways in which the practice of the mastication of coca leaves, an Indigenous practice that was perceived as a disgusting habit by colonial officials, spread to other parts of society.

<sup>79</sup> Garofalo, "Conjuring with Coca and the Inca," 73.

<sup>80</sup> Garofalo, "Conjuring with Coca and the Inca," 75.

Views of the Indigenous identity permeated the coca debate and impacted discourse regarding the legitimacy of Native Andean culture and religion. Although there were proponents of the debate who recognized the stimulant effect and practical uses of coca, the leaf never strayed from its association with superstition and the Native Andean identity. Moreover, since the primary group utilizing the practical function of the leaf consisted of Indigenous labourers, the use of coca continued to perpetuate a strong connection between Indigenous identity and coca chewing. The article, "Let Me Chew My Coca Leaves" illustrated the extent to which the connection between Native identity and the coca plant remains significant even in contemporary society. Morales articulated the connection between the Indigenous population and the plant: "The coca leaf continues to have ritual, religious, and cultural significance that transcends Indigenous cultures and encompasses the mestizo population."<sup>81</sup> The aspects of the coca plant that shaped the association between the Indigenous people and coca plant remained significant. While the coca leaf continues to be an emblem of Indigenous identity, it has gained a broader significance within Latin America as a result of the colonial discourse that surrounded the plant. The mid-sixteenth century to the late seventeenth century represented a period of discussion regarding the place of coca use in Peruvian society. Throughout disputes surrounding the extirpation of coca, economic motivations for the use of coca as a commodity, and the more widespread mastication of coca in hybridized rituals, the cultural identity of Indigenous people remained at the forefront of colonial attitudes towards coca leaves. The role of coca in early modern society was shaped by the economic appetite of the Spanish empire and the Spanish authorities' views of racial superiority.

<sup>81</sup> Morales, "Let Me Chew My Coca Leaves," A21.

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