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Trading Cacao : a View from Veracruz, 1629 - 1645

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Trading Cacao : a View from Veracruz, 1629 – 1645

- 1 Cacao was different from silver, silks, cochineal and all the other important items that were exported or imported by Mexico's seventeenth-century wholesale merchants in that it was consumed as food. Although the primary focus of this essay is the business of buying, transporting and selling cacao beans, it is worthwhile to first examine the remarkable demand for the beans in their most agreeably digestible form.

Chocolate

- 2 During the first decades of the seventeenth century, chocolate had become a consumer item of the first order in New Spain, a passion and social habit, and for many a physical addiction¹. A sense of the pervasiveness of chocolate can be drawn from references to it in the record of the events orchestrated by the viceroyalty's Holy Office of the Inquisition in the 1640s. Beginning in the late spring of 1642, people accused of Jewish heresy, targets of a program of persecution against crypto-Jews unprecedented in Mexico, were brought by the scores to the Tribunal jails. Prisoners filled the cells of both the old Inquisition building and a second building that had been rented beforehand and secretly remodeled to accommodate the anticipated surge of crypto-Jewish inmates.² In the testimonies that these people gave before the inquisitors, and in a variety of other, in-house, documents created by Holy Office personnel, chocolate appears with notable frequency. The following examples are far from exhaustive, and are meant to illustrate patterns.
- 3 Life in the prison was characterized by fear, pain, a variety of deprivations, anger, as well as other, less disruptive but still disturbing sentiments and emotions such as boredom and jealousy. In those sad circumstances, it is easy to imagine that the pleasure of chocolate, which the prisoners received several times during the course of the day, was great in the extreme. Inmates marked the passage of time, perhaps in addition to the ringing of church bells, by the morning and afternoon rounds made by slaves bringing them chocolate. Ana Suárez, who for a time shared a cell with her mother Rafaela Enríquez, told the inquisitors that the older woman carried on prohibited conversations with people in neighboring cells: "...in the morning after they had been given chocolate, La Rafa called out to Peña..."³ So strong was the prisoners' desire for the drink that at times it rivaled their other primary emotions. On September 3, 1643, in his eleventh hearing after more than a year in the jails, Simón Vázquez Sevilla repeated the same plea he had already made to the inquisitors on many other occasions: he asked for nothing more than to spend some time with his son and especially with his wife, Juana Enríquez. He had been allowed to meet with her only briefly the previous August, and he said that "seeing her so thin that he hardly recognized her" had left him unable to sleep for days afterwards. Six months passed before he was called again before the inquisitors, and in April, 1644, at his twelfth hearing, although he still asked to see his wife and son, what he asked for first was more "chocolate and sugar, because they are my only sustenance."⁴
- 4 For the slaves who worked among the prisoners, chocolate was a pivot of their daily routine. A few used the opportunity of the service rounds to carry messages and other items to the inmates, a profitable if risky activity. Chocolate was such a fundamental part of the interior life of the Inquisition that these slaves understood the physical spaces of the Tribunal building, and their mental images of themselves in that space, in chocolate terms, as their testimonies reveal. Francisco de la Cruz, "*casta* Angola," confessed to the inquisitors that the prisoners to whom he had been clandestinely delivering messages were in a cell located "above the little

room where the chocolate is prepared.”⁵ The slave Antonia de la Cruz took verbal messages from Francisca and Isabel Texoso, who wanted to advise their niece Violante Texoso what to say and what not to say when she was called to testify. After de la Cruz was caught, she described for the inquisitors how she had entered Violante’s cell and there, “sitting on a bag [*petaquilla*] of chocolate,” had given the young prisoner the advice that her aunts had wanted her to receive.⁶

5 Chocolate was also a central feature in the lives of people who worked for the Inquisition outside the Tribunal’s walls. The records of muleteers who were hired to bring suspected crypto-Jews to the Mexico City Tribunal from distant places are replete with references to chocolate. No doubt in a hurry to deliver their prisoners, to get paid, and to be free of the responsibility of guarding them, these men moved quickly across the highways and landscape of New Spain. That chocolate was regarded as essential for their mission—and thus a reimbursable expense—is made evident by the frequency with which it appears in the mule drivers’ statements of their expenditures. Rodrigo Serrano was arrested in Veracruz in early September, 1646. Serrano and the two men who were responsible for him traveled on four mules for about a week until they reached the Tribunal, where the prisoner entered the jails on September 9. According to the expense record submitted to the Inquisition accountant, at all the places where they spent the night they purchased chocolate, presumably for morning consumption. The following is an excerpt from the mule driver/guard’s notation:

Lencero	5 pesos “ <i>cena y camas y chocolate</i> ”
Venta de Bartolomé	3 pesos “ <i>gente y mulas</i> ”
Venta La Hoya	5 pesos “ <i>noche gente mulas chocolate</i> ”
Venta del Lobillo	6 pesos “ <i>comida cena y chocolate y mulas</i> ” ⁷

6 Coming a greater distance over more difficult terrain, in December, 1647, Jorge de Espinosa was brought to Mexico City by two men who arrested him for heresy in the small pueblo of Acayaca, Coatzacoalcos, in present-day southeastern Veracruz. The first part of the trip was made partly on foot, with a horse to carry supplies, but during most of the initial phase travel was by canoe, with native guides throughout. Once the party reached the southern camino real from Veracruz to the capital city (via Orizaba and Córdoba), they rented mules, and at the first opportunity (the *venta* at Tololinga) they bought food for the animals and tortillas and chocolate for themselves. They repeated these purchases at every overnight stop. Following a day’s rest at the *mesón* in Puebla they continued on to Mexico City, spending the night in the mountains at the *venta* of Río Frio, where they purchased dinner, hay for the mules, and “chocolate for the morning.”⁸

7 By no means is the history of chocolate that is to be found in the Inquisition archives limited to its consumption in the jails or on the road to prison. Although they bickered viciously among themselves and often worked at cross purposes, the inquisitors were unquestionably skillful at drawing from the imprisoned crypto-Jews both personal confessions and statements in which they denounced others for heretical practices. In the process of testifying, the inmates provided the inquisitors with information about a variety of different events in their lives, most often experiences that had occurred before their incarceration. The content of many of these testimonies is seasoned with both off-hand and explicit references to chocolate, which, as we can see, had served those who testified in diverse and complex ways.

8 Sometimes drinking chocolate took place during moments of notable social significance, and when the event was remembered long after the event, in prison, the particular details pertaining to chocolate would be recalled as well. In her testimony of October 24, 1642, Beatriz Enríquez recalled the afternoon four years earlier when the merchant Manuel Álvarez de Arellano had come to the house of her older sister, Rafaela Enríquez, to arrange a marriage between doña Rafaela’s daughter Ana Suárez and another merchant, Juan Méndez de Villaviciosa.

The betrothal itself had been made by Álvarez de Arellano and Beatriz's mother and the bride-to-be's grandmother, doña Blanca Enríquez, matriarch of the Enríquez family. As Beatriz described it for the inquisitors, after doña Blanca and the merchant spoke together in a separate room for what seemed like a long time, the wedding brokers then rejoined the other women of the family for a celebration that included, Beatriz recalled clearly, everyone drinking chocolate.⁹ Could this be the beginning of the now commonplace physiological-cultural link between love and chocolate?

9 Chocolate was commonly given as a gift on special occasions, and such generosity could remain in memory for some time. In her testimony of October 7, 1642, Isabel de Rivera, whose older sister María de Rivera had often worked in the service of another of the Enríquez sisters, Juana, wife of the wealthy merchant Simón Vázquez Sevilla, recalled that a year earlier, the night before the *día grande* (Yom Kippur) holy day, doña Juana had sent "thick chocolate and sweet things made in her house" to the modest home of the Rivera women.¹⁰ A memorable event for many of the imprisoned crypto-Jews was the death of the matriarch Blanca Enríquez on January 1, 1642. Knowing that she would die soon, her daughters and granddaughters and several of the Rivera women spent a day in prayer and reflection on doña Blanca's life. That evening, as Margarita de Rivera remembered for the inquisitors (on the anniversary of the event) two years later in 1644, the merchant Mathias Rodríguez de Olivera had provided the women who were holding vigil with a special meal of chocolate and pickled fish ("*pescado en escabeche*") brought from Veracruz.¹¹

10 And chocolate could be used to try to affirm social bonds in times of crisis. Aware that the Rivera women knew many of Mexico's crypto-Jews and could identify them, the Inquisition began its campaign by arresting Blanca de Rivera and her daughters on May 17 and 19, 1642. Catalina de Rivera was the only one of them who was then married, and her husband Diego Correa—who would remain free for several months—was immediately called upon by the Enríquez women who desperately hoped that he might be able to stop his wife and her sisters and mother from giving their names to the inquisitors. A retailer of modest means who sold goods from a stall (*cajón*) on the cathedral plaza, Correa later testified that doña Juana Enríquez had called him to her house, cried on his shoulder, and had given him six *libras* of chocolate, "telling me to send it to my wife, because it was good, and that she would know that it was, because she had drunk it during her visits to her [Juana Enríquez's] house." Juana Enríquez told Correa that he could probably get the chocolate—a tangible reminder of her link to the Enríquez household—to his wife in the Tribunal jails if he were to give "some sort of gift" to the warden. Another woman, doña Leonor Vázquez, a friend of Correa's imprisoned wife Catalina de Rivera, frightened that Rivera would give her name to the inquisitors, also gave Correa "a little chocolate and a loaf of sugar" and "in the midst of many tears and sobs" told him that if everything turned out right and no one else was arrested she would "very gladly" contribute to a dowry for his wife's younger sister, Isabel de Rivera, after the Blancas were released from jail.¹²

11 Paradoxically, the greatest interest the inquisitors had in hearing about chocolate were those cases when it was not drunk. Although there was some ongoing controversy over whether chocolate was in fact a food—and whether or not it could be consumed during times of religious fasting¹³—many crypto-Jews followed the prevailing (Christian) opinion and abstained from it in observance of holy days and other times of religious significance. For them this presented something of a problem, in that fasting in secret, on Saturdays and other days that were not part of the Christian fast-day calendar, could easily raise suspicions among their domestic slaves, whose job it was to prepare and to serve them chocolate. The fact that they regularly went to some trouble to hide their abstinence from their house slaves indicates how completely chocolate consumption was part of their daily routine: they drank chocolate with such regularity that they could not simply choose not to drink it on occasion without

being noticed. Margarita Moreira testified under torture that she and her husband Amaro Díaz Martaraña always drank chocolate in the morning, but on days when they were secretly fasting they spilled it without anyone noticing, thus avoiding the suspicions that would have arisen had they refused to drink it when their slaves offered it to them.¹⁴

12 The chocolate service that was used in the Veracruz household of Fernando Rodríguez, a crypto-Jewish merchant who traded in slaves and cacao, may well have been typical throughout the viceroyalty: small silver spoons, small silver saucers called *cestillos* (little baskets), and deep clay cups known by the Nahuatl term *tecomate*.¹⁵ He and his wife Blanca Enríquez used the service every day, but Rodríguez refused to drink chocolate the mornings of fast days, telling his slave domestics—rather disingenuously it seems, coming from a successful cacao merchant—that because the price of chocolate was going up he had to cut back on his consumption or face impoverishment.¹⁶ Following their arrests, the adult sons of Fernando Rodríguez and Blanca Enríquez at first claimed that they did not know about their parents' religious practices, but they did testify that when they were children they had seen them fast, remembering in particular that on certain days their mother and father had foregone chocolate (“I didn’t see them eat all day nor drink chocolate as they always did on other days”).¹⁷ One of these sons, Francisco López Correa, claimed that chocolate was the reason why he had begun to have doubts about the Christian orthodoxy of his brother, who in 1642 returned to the family home in Veracruz from Campeche where he had been living and working as a merchant. López Correa testified that one morning “a day before Holy Week” his brother did not have his chocolate “as was his custom,” but went off and spent the day by himself in his father’s warehouse on the beach.¹⁸

13 Fasting was also done on occasions when special, often ad hoc, circumstances seemed to require it, and in these instances there may have been more leeway as to whether chocolate could be drunk or not. Testifying a week after her arrest in July, 1642, Beatriz Enríquez, then 22 years old, confessed immediately that she had practiced Jewish rituals since her mother had taught them to her at age 12. She also said that fifteen days after their wedding in 1637 her husband had left Mexico City on a trading trip to the mining town of Zacatecas. She recalled that at her mother’s suggestion she had fasted then for her husband’s business success and his safe return. This fast had gone unnoticed in her home because, as she told the inquisitors, she had been unable to resist the temptation and “had drunk a little chocolate” while doing it. Nine months later her husband returned, and after a month’s stay he again departed for the mines, leaving on the *día grande* holy day. Beatriz explained how she took advantage of the situation to masquerade her abstinence during the more rigorously observed *día grande* fast: “from the window she pretended to be crying over the absence of her husband, and with this suffering she was able to hide from her *negras* the fact that she ate nothing and did not drink chocolate that day.”¹⁹

14 As a final example of the complexities created by the commonness of chocolate consumption and the exigencies of secret Judaic fasting, it seems that to offer chocolate at times when it was proscribed, and to receive a refusal in response, was to communicate using coded language. Isabel Duarte told the inquisitors that she knew that Diego Díaz shared her religious secret, not only because she had been told so by others, but also because—to test his faith—she had offered him chocolate “at different [proscribed] times” and when he refused her offer she asked him why. His reply, she told the inquisitors, was understood by them both: “he said it was stupid to ask him why.”²⁰

Chocolate as commodity

15 Chocolate had been and continued to be an important part of the individual lives of the Inquisition prisoners: they desired it, their bodies demanded it, and they remembered drinking it. Before their arrests it had been part of their social lives: as a gift, a bribe, or simply as one

element among many that gave additional significance to social interactions from marriage brokering to coded speech acts. While a few of these chocolate uses and the behaviors associated with it were specific to crypto-Jews, certainly its consumption was common in Mexico beginning in the early seventeenth century. Widespread demand made chocolate a valuable commodity. In 1624 and again in 1628, just as that demand was getting underway, the Mexico City council tried to prevent the import of Maracaibo and Guayaquil cacao, arguing that the beans from these places were inferior in quality to the product of groves in Mexico and Guatemala.²¹ However, like every other attempt, municipal or royal, to tax or otherwise specifically control the cacao trade, these measures were not put into practice, and cacao reached the Mexican market in ever-increasing quantities. As rare and costly as it may have been in earlier years, by the 1640s its price had declined, and chocolate seems to have been widely affordable—at least in moderate quantities. References in the Inquisition sources suggest that by that decade, for all of the personal needs that it met and the ritual meanings that characterized its consumption, in the marketplace chocolate had become distinctly ordinary. It was so common in fact that the idea of chocolate seems to have become a kind of synonym for small sums of money—never more than a few coins—sums so small as to be considered almost trivial or insignificant. Consider two examples. The slave Sebastian Domingo, a Congolese, was already in the Tribunal jail for bigamy when the heresy arrests filled the cells. Freed to work as a prison trustee to supplement the short-handed Inquisition staff, Sebastian found himself caught up in the desperate efforts of crypto-Jews still on the outside who were trying to communicate with those who had been arrested. Offered fifty pesos and more if he succeeded in delivering messages to her husband while cleaning his cell, in order to encourage him to do it Beatriz Enríquez gave Sebastian a gift of two pesos, the slave confessed later, “saying that it was for me to buy chocolate.”²² The point is not that two pesos was an insignificant sum, especially for a slave; in craftsman’s wages it represented more than two days’ work.²³ What is notable, rather, is that doña Beatriz *represented* the two pesos as insignificant, a trifling sum that was not worth anything more than the purchase of a little chocolate. A quite different context suggests the same minor, almost trivial, monetary value with which chocolate had become associated. A listing of Tribunal personnel and their salaries made sometime in early 1646 mentions small sums paid to several Jesuits. For the Jesuits’ service to the Holy Office, the report reads, “writing and occupying themselves with other internal business[,]...they have been given some alms for [the purchase of] their chocolate.”²⁴ These texts tell us two things about the market for chocolate: not only could almost everyone afford to drink it, but also—and perhaps more importantly—it was natural to assume that everyone from slaves to Jesuits would spend their pocket money on chocolate.

16 Just what the cost of chocolate was to the consumer is difficult to determine. Unfortunately, the Inquisition record has nothing to say about the early seventeenth-century street price of chocolate, but an idea of the organization of its fabrication, and something more about the booming Mexico City market for it, can be gotten from the accounts of the cacao and sugar tienda of Luis de Burgos. In early 1644 Burgos, who was then 63 or 64 years old, made arrangements to buy an existing store, called a *cacaquetería*, which specialized in cacao, chocolate, and sugar. The sale price was 3,313 pesos. Under new ownership, the store opened in May, 1644, and to manage it Burgos hired a man named Juan de Acosta. On August 12, 1645, Luis de Burgos was arrested as a secret Jew,²⁵ the store and its contents were sequestered by the Holy Office, and an inventory was conducted on September 2. In as much as it was a profitable enterprise, rather than sell the tienda and its stock at auction, the Tribunal took over operation of the store, leaving the manager Acosta—whose religion was not suspect—in place as administrator. Burgos refused to confess, and perhaps because of his age, or perhaps because he was not known to other crypto-Jews and was therefore not useful as an informant, after eight months in the Inquisition jails he was fined for having come under

suspicion of heresy and released in the first auto-de-fé of April 1646. However, the Tribunal still had possession of Burgos' property when he died in July of that year, and only then did the Inquisition stop running the store and sell off the cacao, sugar and other goods that it contained.

The report of still-outstanding accounts that the manager Acosta prepared for the Inquisition accountant presents an interesting picture of the structure of chocolate production and sales.²⁶

17 Chocolate manufacture for retail sale was evidently a cottage industry, and cacao tiendas such as Burgos' were at the hub of a putting-out system. An explicit statement of the way this worked is in the testimony of another crypto-Jewish cacao and chocolate retailer named Luis Núñez Pérez, who arrived in Mexico City in March, 1642, and had acquired a store during the short interval before his arrest in June of that year. Describing his association with the women who had denounced him, he told the inquisitors that his first contact with them had been about chocolate: "soon after he had set up his store he gave them an advance [*un recado*; i.e., of cacao] to make for him thirty *libras* of chocolate in cakes [*tablillas*] so that he could sell them in the tienda."²⁷ The record of Burgos' store reveals that a single retailer might work with several dozen people who "took advances" of cacao from him to make chocolate.

18 In the case of Burgos' store, the Inquisition officials who took a record of its inventory found on hand bags of beans from distant cacao-producing regions: Maracaibo, Guayaquil, and Soconusco. The manager Acosta, in his summary ledger of debts that were still owed the store in 1646, listed twenty-nine entries for cacao that had gone out of the store on account to people with the expectation that they would return the beans made into cakes of chocolate.

The entries in Acosta's report record the name of the person, the location of that person's residence, and the value of the cacao taken. Here are several examples. As of March 20, 1645, padre fray Domingo Franco of the order of San Agustín owed 4 pesos/7 reales, the remainder of 32 pesos/7 reales "for advances that he took" [*de recados que llevó*] from the store. Doña Beatriz Carbonal, niece of capitán Carbonal who lived in the *portales* of Santo Domingo, owed 4 pesos/4 reales "for orders that she took." Juan del Castillo, who lived in the renovated houses of the cathedral and made his living as a debt collection agent, owed, as of March 10, 1645, 67 pesos/1 real "for sugar and cacao that he took on different occasions." Francisco de Saravia, who had been a dependent [*criado*] of the duke of Escalona (viceroy from June 1640 until he was deposed in June 1642) but whose residence was then unknown, owed 4 pesos "from advances" that he had taken from the store.²⁸

19 At the time the Inquisition ended its operation of Burgos' store, the total amount owed the merchant's estate for cacao that had not yet come back to the tienda as chocolate was 538 pesos/5 reales.²⁹ This was not a large sum, but the debt does represent some two-thirds of the total value of the store's capital goods (given that the contents of the store were sold at auction in July 1646 for 800 pesos). Without a retail price for chocolate or any idea of how much chocolate could be made from a given quantity of cacao, it is impossible to assess the value that was added by fabricating chocolate, but two features of the cacao store business are clear: First, those who "took advances" of cacao from the store to make chocolate were charged about one peso the *libra* for it, a price that was about one-third more than what cacao was sold to storemen like Núñez Pérez and Burgos by warehouse merchants in the city (the agents of importers).³⁰ This difference would seem to fairly represent a chocolate retailer's profit, although it is entirely possible that additional profits were made on the final, over-the-counter, sales of the chocolate once it was returned to the store. Second, dozens of cottage-scale chocolate makers found it profitable to buy cacao (in the form of beans advanced to them on credit) at about a peso per *libra*, which they then sold back to the store after transforming it into chocolate. That Juan de Acosta managed many accounts of this sort in Luis de Burgos' tienda, and that putting out cacao to be made into chocolate represented a major portion of the store's business, are further signs of a dynamic market, of the strong popular demand for chocolate.

Trading cacao

- 20 These anecdotes about chocolate in seventeenth-century New Spain mark the history of the first psychoactive, non-alcoholic, food to be sold in a mass market. By the 1620s many people throughout the viceroyalty prepared it at home or bought it from specialty shops and drank it in quantities, typically several times a day and at night as well, enjoying it for its flavor and warmth,³¹ but also for its stimulant and mood-altering properties. Men and women alike³² consumed it, and, given its chemical nature, developed a physical need for it. Used in a variety of domestic and interpersonal ritual settings, it had acquired significant social value that did not diminish even as it became somewhat cheaper and therefore more common. On other ritual occasions, especially widely observed holy days, fasting people denied themselves the pleasures that they ordinarily received from it.
- 21 Given this extensive and multidimensional demand for chocolate, we should be cautious about regarding as just some sort of hyperbole the statement by the Mexico City municipal authorities that, of all the trades in the kingdom, cacao was the largest.³³ In 1638 the viceroy Cadereita reported that the total value of the cacao marketed in Mexico City was between half a million and nearly a million pesos annually—an appealing potential source of both municipal and royal revenue. But all efforts by cabildo and viceroy to tax or otherwise regulate the commerce in cacao (a cacao *alhóndiga* was proposed in 1636) were adamantly resisted by both traders and consumers, so much so that Cadereita was obliged to forbid sermons opposing the suggested cacao tax.³⁴
- 22 It would not be a surprise to find that the merchants who supplied cacao to the Mexican chocolate market were engaged in a profitable enterprise. How profitable was it, for individual trader? For commerce generally—not just the cacao trade—this is not an easy question to answer. The best study of Mexico’s merchants in the seventeenth century, although remarkably thorough and comprehensive, struggles with the problem of determining commercial profit.³⁵ The problem lies in large part with the nature of the documentation, which is seldom adequate for the purpose of calculating profit. The business of trade did not then require bookkeeping that would have gathered in a single ledger a record that included both the purchase and retail sale prices of a given commodity, the costs of transporting the commodity from point of purchase to point of retail sale, and other significant costs that were paid at the expense of profit: commission fees and taxes, for example. However, when the Holy Office of the Inquisition arrested a merchant, acquiring both his property and responsibility for his debts, a record was occasionally created that contained most if not all the of the data needed to attempt a calculation of the profit that merchant earned in the course of his trade. This record came into existence as the inquisitors kept track of both their efforts to collect for the Tribunal coffers the outstanding debts that were owed the merchant at the moment of his arrest, and of the efforts of the merchant’s creditors to collect from the Tribunal what the merchant had owed them.
- 23 In an exceptional instance, the case of cacao merchant Antonio Méndez Chillón examined here, the information collected by this inquisitorial process included testimonies and claims for payment presented to the Tribunal by the whole range of individuals involved in this merchant’s business: a purchase agent, ship captains, muleteers, and a warehouse/wholesale agent in Mexico City. With this information in hand, a calculation of profit from the cacao trade is possible, and that calculation, in turn, provides the basis for a variety of other observations based on the conjuncture of cacao, the Inquisition, and Mexican society and economy in the early seventeenth century.

Transportation costs and taxes

- 24 Somewhere in the Laguna de Maracaibo on August 30, 1645, Francisco Álvarez, *maestre* of the frigate *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, which was then about to set sail for

Veracruz, signed a lading bill and receipt (*conocimiento*) for 677 ½ *millares* of cacao that he received from Antonio de Orozco, vecino of the Maracaibo coastal town of San Antonio de Gibraltar and purchasing agent (*encomendero*) for Antonio Méndez Chillón, veteran Portuguese merchant then resident in Veracruz. Méndez Chillón had come to Mexico from Angola in 1629 with a large number of slaves, which he had sold for a substantial profit.³⁶

Although he continued to finance the acquisition of African slaves occasionally, within a few years of his arrival in Veracruz he had become one of the principal importers of Venezuelan cacao to New Spain.

25 Cargo master Álvarez's instructions were to turn over the cacao that he had gotten from Orozco to Méndez Chillón immediately upon his arrival at the "Puerto de Sant Juan de Ulúa," but the transfer was never completed. Sailing quickly westward across the Caribbean in the hurricane-likely month of September, the *fragata* arrived in Veracruz sometime before Tuesday, September 9, 1645. We know that the ship made port on or before that day because on that date, at 12:00 noon, Antonio Méndez Chillón was arrested for Jewish heresy at his home by the Inquisition commissioner in Veracruz, and among his confiscated papers was the *conocimiento* that had been signed by Álvarez and Orozco in Maracaibo eleven days earlier. As soon as his transport could be arranged, Méndez Chillón was taken in irons to Mexico City, where he was entered into the Inquisition jail on September 22. A week later the Veracruz commissioner wrote to the Inquisition notary in Mexico City informing the inquisitors that the Maracaibo cacao that had arrived on the *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* was not in his possession and had not been confiscated with the rest of Méndez Chillón's property because *maestre* Álvarez had not physically transferred the cacao to the Portuguese merchant before his arrest. The problem of possession then became one of ownership. In a hearing before the inquisitors, Méndez Chillón claimed that the beans were not his, and that they belonged in fact to his Maracaibo partner Antonio de Orozco, who had sent them to him in Veracruz on consignment for sale in Mexico City. This testimony notwithstanding, the Tribunal continued to argue that the cacao belonged to Méndez Chillón, and that consequently—as was true of all the goods and assets of anyone arrested for heresy—the beans or their value had become the legal property of the Holy Office. On October 23 the inquisitors instructed the Veracruz commissioner to collect them or their value from Álvarez. But the *maestre* refused to relinquish the cacao, and as it turned out, as late as 1664 the Tribunal was still trying to collect the 677 ½ *millares* of Maracaibo beans and several other debts and property that it claimed had once belonged to Antonio Méndez Chillón.³⁷

26 The confiscated papers of Méndez Chillón—the Maracaibo *conocimiento*, a business letter to him from Maracaibo written by Orozco, and several other accounts—can be used to examine in fine detail the Venezuela-to-Mexico cacao trade. We can start with the unit of measure, the *millar*. The *Real Diccionario de la Lengua Española* defines *millar* very specifically as "a quantity of cacao, that in some places is three *libras* and a half and in others more." The Orozco-Álvarez *conocimiento* states clearly that the 677 ½ *millares* were four *libras* each: "de a quatro libras millar enjuto y buena condicionado." The *conocimiento* also provides us with shipping costs: cargo master Álvarez confirmed that he expected to receive payment for shipping the beans from Maracaibo to Veracruz, the *fletes*, at the rate of one and a quarter real for each *millar*.

27 A lading document, the Orozco-Álvarez *conocimiento* described the freight, its quantity and condition, the name of the person who was to take delivery in Veracruz, and it was also explicit about shipping charges, but it did not mention the purchase price of the cacao in Maracaibo or the overall cash value of the cargo. We know about Venezuelan prices thanks to a separate letter that Orozco wrote to Méndez Chillón in which he explained that he had paid eight and a quarter reales for each *millar* of cacao that he bought in Maracaibo. In this letter Orozco wrote that for during most of the year 1645 Maracaibo cacao had been selling for eight reales

the *millar*, but because the frigate had been late leaving Veracruz on the outbound voyage, and because other buyers had bought off most of the available supply, the demand for what remained had caused the price of Maracaibo cacao to go up to nine reales. But, Orozco wrote that because he could pay in Mexican silver he had been able to negotiate a somewhat more favorable price, and that he had made his purchase for eight and a quarter reales the *millar*.³⁸

28 These documents tell us what we need to know about the purchase price and the cost of shipping cacao from Maracaibo to Veracruz. Other papers found in Méndez Chillón's house by the Veracruz Inquisition commissioner make it possible to follow the cacao (actually a different shipment made earlier the same year) on the second leg of its commercial path, that is, from Veracruz to sale in Mexico City. These papers are accounts written by Antonio Méndez Chillón's associate in Mexico City, Sebastian de Castro, who regularly received shipments of beans that the Portuguese importer sent to him from the port, sold them for cash in Mexico City, and then remitted silver coin to the merchant in Veracruz.

29 On January 13, 1645, Castro wrote from Mexico City to Méndez Chillón in Veracruz telling him that on January 2 he had received from mule driver Antonio de Trujillo "90 *tercios* of Maracaibo cacao, and although the *conocimiento* says ninety *tercios*, two of them the teamster put together in one [leaving 89 *tercios*], and the whole weighed seven hundred and sixty-five *arrobos* plus two *libras* net." The *conocimiento* that the teamster Trujillo presented Castro was a document that had been written and signed in Veracruz by Méndez Chillón, at the start of the trip to Mexico City. It was both a bill of lading and a contract, in that it specified that it was Castro's responsibility to pay Trujillo upon delivery of the beans, for the cacao and their transportation, at the shipping rate, or *fletes*, as specified in the *conocimiento*. The cacao had been weighed in Veracruz (765 *arrobos* plus 2 *libras*; an *arroba* weighed 25 *libras*), and the *fletes* had been agreed to at the rate of 11 pesos for each unit of ten *arrobos*, called a *carga* (this ten-*arroba carga*, only nominal in nature and used solely for calculating the transportation charges, was different from the *carga* used for determining the alcabala tax, as we will see below). The total overland *fletes* charge, payable to the muleteer Trujillo upon delivery of the goods in Mexico City, had been established in Veracruz at 841 pesos, 4 reales.

30 In his letter Castro detailed for Méndez Chillón other details pertaining to the shipment that he had received. He described payment of the alcabala tax, which Trujillo had paid as he and his animals passed the tax post near Mexico City. Castro wrote that the alcabala tax had been charged at the standard rate of "a *carga* and half for each *tercio* at fifty pesos the *carga* and at six percent." To clarify, a *tercio* was the physical load carried by a mule, or, rather, half the load: each mule carried two *tercios*, one on each flank. Trujillo's forty-five mules carried a total of 89 *tercios*, and for tax purposes it was presumed—it becomes obvious that the mules were not unloaded at the alcabala post and their cargos were not weighed—that each *tercio* contained one and a half *cargas*. Here the term "*carga*" is used again, but it was not the nominal ten-*arroba* unit that was used in Veracruz as shipper and teamster calculated the muletrain *flete*. At the alcabala the meaning of "*carga*" shifted to the retail context, where it was understood to be a measure equal to 92 *libras* (a much smaller quantity than the shipping "*carga*" of ten *arrobos*, or 250 *libras*). It is evident that the alcabala tax was tied conceptually to the retail sale that would follow once the cargo reached the Mexico City market, and that in the case of cacao the tax was intended to collect six percent of the retail value of the beans. Obviously an approximate retail market value for cacao beans was built into the alcabala assessment rate: 50 pesos the *carga*. This was, in fact, close to the current market price of Maracaibo cacao in Mexico City, which in 1645 was 56 to 58 pesos the (retail) *carga*. According to Castro's letter to Méndez Chillón, Trujillo had paid the alcabala collector 400 pesos/4 reales, and the teamster had been reimbursed for this amount.³⁹

31 Although Castro's letter only reported the amount alcabala tax that had been paid, to confirm what took place at the alcabala post it is useful to break down the aggregate tax according to the

stated rate (“a *carga* and half for each *tercio* at fifty pesos the *carga* and at six percent”). Since Trujillo’s train of mules carried 89 visible (the teamster had repacked 2 of the original 90 into 1) *tercios*, each presumed to contain a *carga* and a half of cacao, the alcabala collector must have made the following calculation: $89 \text{ tercios} \times 1.5 \text{ cargas} = 133.5 \text{ cargas}$. Multiplying by fifty pesos the *carga*, the taxable value of all this mule train’s cacao was determined to be 6,675 pesos ($133.5 \text{ cargas} \times 50 \text{ pesos} = 6,675 \text{ pesos}$). Six percent of 6,675 pesos is 400 pesos/4 reales, precisely the amount that Trujillo paid.

32 From his warehouse in Mexico City, where he had unpacked shipment and weighed it, Castro reported to Méndez Chillón that the cacao that had been delivered weighed a total of 754 *arrobas/3 libras*—only some 11 *arrobas*, less than 2 percent of the original cargo and worth about 100 pesos at retail—had been lost on the road (the Veracruz weight had been 765 *arrobas/2 libras*). Castro then put the cacao up for retail sale, dividing it into retail *cargas* of 92 *libras* each. The total amount of cacao he then had available for sale, 204 *cargas/85 libras*, was about 30 percent more than the 133.5 *cargas* on which the alcabala tax had been assessed. It would seem that the cacao had been undertaxed by about a third. In money terms the difference between what was actually paid in alcabala tax, 400 pesos/4 reales, and what should have been paid, about 615 pesos, represented a benefit of something more than 200 pesos, about twice the value of what had been lost, or perhaps appropriated, by the teamster, in transit. Whether the muleteer Trujillo had purposefully overloaded his mules—putting more than a *carga* and a half in each *tercio*—to defraud the tax collector, or whether the fault was with the collector for not examining the loads more carefully, cannot be determined, but in any event it may have been common practice for mules to pass through the alcabala with *tercios* that were loaded with thirty or forty percent more than the standard taxable measure of a *carga* and a half per *tercio*.⁴⁰

33 Castro also wrote that he had then sold the cacao in Mexico City at prices that varied from 56 to 58 pesos the *carga*, with three-fourths of the sales made at the higher price.⁴¹ This generated income of 11,826 pesos, and from that sum Castro had taken his fee of 2½ percent, 295 pesos/4 reales, which represented his sales commission and handling costs (“*encomienda, corretaxe, y bodegaxe*”). The cacao had been sold during the short time between January 2, when it was delivered to Castro, and January 13, the date when Castro signed and dated his report to Méndez Chillón. On that day he also entrusted a substantial sum in silver coins, 8,000 pesos, “on the account of the said cacao,” to a second muleteer, Francisco Benítez. Benítez was charged with delivering the cash (and the report describing the alcabala payments and the sales transactions—which is why it was found by the Inquisition commissioner among Méndez Chillón’s papers later that year) to the merchant in Veracruz.

Calculating profit

34 Taken all together, the information contained in these documents make it possible to estimate with some precision the profit that Méndez Chillón might well have earned buying cacao in Maracaibo and selling it in Mexico City. Given the variety of units of measure used in different contexts, *millares* in Maracaibo, the muleteer’s *tercio*, one sort of *carga* in Veracruz (the nominal muleteer’s *flete* of 10 *arrobas*) and another kind of *carga* at the alcabala post and in Mexico City (the retail *carga* comprised of 92 *libras*), it is necessary to convert them all to their common element—the *libra*, and to express all transactions in terms of *libras* and reales (8 reales to the peso). In this way, the price paid for cacao in Maracaibo by Méndez Chillón’s encomendero Antonio de Orozco, 8.25 reales /*millar*, converts to 2.06 reales/*libra*. The *fletes* from Maracaibo to Veracruz, 1.25 real/*millar*, is equal to .31 real/*libra*. Similarly, the cost of shipping cacao from Veracruz to Mexico City, 11 pesos per *carga* (of 10 *arrobas*), can be expressed as .35 real/*libra*. The alcabala tax, “fifty pesos the *carga* [of 92 *libras*] at six percent,” translates to .26 real/*libra*. The sale of 204 *cargas/85 libras* of cacao generated

11,826 pesos, or 5.02 reales/libra, and Castro's 2.5 percent fee, 295 pesos/4 reales in cash, represented a reduction from the total sale of .13 real for each *libra* sold. These figures are presented in Table 1 .

Table 1

Cacao: Maracaibo to Mexico City,
Prices, Costs and Estimated Profits (1645)

Maracaibo price:
8.25 reales / millar
[1 millar = 4 libras]
[8.25 reales / 4 libras] = 2.06 reales/libra
Maracaibo to Veracruz fletes (ship):
1.25 real / millar
[1.25 real / 4 libras] = .31 real / libra
New Spain almojarifazgo (5%):
[2.06 reales / libra (Maracaibo price) X 5%= .10 real / libra
Veracruz to Mexico City fletes (mule):
11 pesos / "carga" of 10 arrobas
[1 arroba = 25 libras]
[11 pesos X 8 reales = 88 reales]
[88 reales / 250 libras] = .35 real / libra
Veracruz to Mexico City alcabala:
50 pesos / carga at 6 %
[1 "retail" carga = 92 libras]
[50 pesos X 8 reales = 400 reales]
[400 reales / 92 libras = 4.35 reales / libra]
[4.35 reales X 6 %] = .26 real / libra
Mexico City sales:
204 cargas, 85 libras sold for 11,820 pesos
[1 "retail" carga = 92 libras]
[204 cargas, 85 libras = 18,853 libras]
[11,820 pesos X 8 reales = 94,560 reales]
[94,560 reales / 18,853 libras] = 5.02 reales / libra
Sebastian de Castro's charges:
2.5 % of Mexico City sales: 295 pesos, 4 reales
[295 pesos, 4 reales = 2,364 reales]
94,560 reales X 2.5 % = 2,364 reales]
[2,364 reales / 18,853 libras] = .13 real / libra
Summary and Profit estimate:
Mexico City sales 5.02 reales / libra
Subtract costs from sales at 5.02 reales/libra:
Castro's 2.5 % .13 real / libra (4.0%)
Alcabala .26 real / libra (8.0%)
Veracruz-Mexico mule fletes .35 real / libra (10.9%)
Maracaibo-Veracruz ship fletes .31 real / libra (9.7%)
New Spain almojarifazgo .10 real / libra (3.1%)
Maracaibo purchase price 2.06 reales / libra (64.2%)
Total costs 3.21 reales / libra (100%)
Profit (sales less costs) 1.81 reales / libra
Profit (1.81 rls/libra) as percentage of Maracaibo purchase price (2.06 rls/libra): 93 %

35 According to these data, cacao purchased in Maracaibo for 2.06 reales/*libra* eventually sold for 5.02 reales/*libra* in Mexico City. After costs are subtracted, the remaining value, 1.81 reales/*libra*, can be taken as an approximate estimate of the net gain that the cacao trade generated for Méndez Chillón in 1645. Give that this figure is just slightly less than the purchase price of Maracaibo cacao (2.06 reales *libra*), we might reasonably conclude that the profit was about 90 percent of the Maracaibo purchase price. However, the Inquisition documentation does not include some costs that, if they are entered into the calculation, necessarily reduce the profit estimate. One cost that does not appear in the record, but which was certainly charged on Méndez Chillón's cacao, is the five-percent *almojarifazgo* entry tax, and it has already been included in the calculations in Table I (it would have been assessed at five percent of the Maracaibo price). There are other costs and charges that would have been incurred during course of the complete trade cycle, but which do not appear in the documentation. The risk and labor of conveying thousands of pesos in silver bars or coin first from Mexico City to Veracruz, and then across the Caribbean to the Tierra Firma cacao plantations certainly involved a cost. The Maracaibo encomendero Antonio de Orozco no doubt charged for his services as cacao buyer. To estimate these costs we can double the known seaborne and mule train *fletes* to cover transportation expenses in both directions, and we can allow Orozco an income equal to that of the 2 ½ percent collected in Mexico City by Sebastian de Castro. Doing this would increase costs by .80 reales/*libra*, which would mean that the net income from the entire process, a complete cycle, would have been about 1.01 reales/*libra*, or earnings of about 50 percent (based on the Maracaibo price of 2.06 reales/*libra*). Almost certainly the return on investment was no less than this.

36 There is reason to suppose that for Antonio Méndez Chillón the profits were usually higher: his place in the cacao market was evidently strong enough that he could afford to wait to buy Maracaibo beans at a price that suited him. In the letter written from Maracaibo, Antonio de Orozco informed Méndez Chillón that he had bought 677 ½ *millares* of cacao for 8 reales the *millar*, and that Orozco was sending it to Veracruz for him to sell. Although the Inquisition did not read it that way, the letter seems to indicate that the beans did not actually belong to Méndez Chillón. More to the point here, the letter also reveals that from Veracruz the Portuguese merchant had instructed his agent not to buy cacao if the selling price was higher than 6 reales. Orozco wrote:

...in this ship of capitán Antonio González Xamaica I remit the proceeds of the money that I brought from that city [Veracruz]... [but] I do not remit to Your mercy your [share of the?] proceeds [i.e., of the cacao purchased with Mexican silver] because you told me not to go more than 6 reales for each *millar*, and that is the only reason [why Orozco had not purchased cacao for Méndez Chillón], since I always prefer Your mercy to everyone else and we are as one single person because although Your mercy is far away you are always first in my mind and will always be as long as you may live.⁴²

The business of trading cacao

37 There is no way of knowing what portion of Méndez Chillón's business was done on his own account or in some sort of partnership with others. Nor is it possible to know long it typically took to complete the trade cycle (send cash or trade goods to Venezuela/purchase beans/send beans to Mexico/sell beans for cash profit), but there are reasons to suppose—the speedy Caribbean crossing, the quick conversion of beans to cash in Mexico City—that the cycle could have been regularly completed at least once a year. The frigate *San Antonio*, owned by Domingo Fernández de Acosta, alias “Tangafaranga,”⁴³ with whom Méndez Chillón regularly did business, left the Caracas port of La Guaira bound for Veracruz with cacao on November 3, 1644 and again, with the same destination and cargo, a year later, November 11, 1645.⁴⁴ Of course it is also entirely possible that Méndez Chillón was involved in more than one cacao-trading venture at a time.

38 What is more, in addition to the trades in which he invested his own capital, Méndez Chillón also marketed substantial quantities of cacao that were sent to him from both Caracas and Maracaibo, from planters and buyers who trusted him with the sale of their beans in Mexico. For example, in a letter dated November 3, 1645, Francisco Mijares de Solórzano, a Caracas planter, wrote to Méndez Chillón in Veracruz (not knowing that the Holy Office had arrested the merchant a month earlier) that he was sending him on the *San Antonio* a consignment of 72 ½ fanegas of cacao,

...so that from the proceeds of its sale and from all else that on my account ends in your hands you will do as I have requested on other occasions, which is to remit [the profit] to me in this city, sending it in whatever ships that may be available, addressed to me or to whom I may designate, and in its sale and disposition *you will do as is your custom. As I am always very satisfied*, if on this earth I am worth anything I beg you to ask of my service anything that you might want and I will do it, as I owe you as much, and may God protect you.⁴⁵

39 Evidently he had the full confidence of planters and others who did cacao business with him. How much did Méndez Chillón profit from consignments such as Solórzano's? Unfortunately no contracts have been found that would allow us to know this with certainty, but it seems reasonable to suppose that his earnings were those of an encomendero, no more than five percent of the sale price. But in an inquiry of a similar transaction, the Inquisition determined that Méndez Chillón's share was that of a full partner, and that he had been entitled to half the final profit.⁴⁶ As we have estimated, Maracaibo cacao, which sold in Mexico City for somewhat more than twice its purchase price in Venezuela, generated a profit after transportation, taxes and other costs of almost certainly more than fifty percent. If costs were similar for cacao sent from Caracas, then the profits made from Caracas beans may have been the same as well, in as much as the evidence we have indicates that Caracas cacao also sold in Mexico City for more than twice its Venezuelan price (65 pesos/fanega in Mexico City compared to a high of 30 pesos at the wharf on the Caracas coast).⁴⁷ The *caraqueño* Solórzano's 72 ½ fanegas would have sold at current (1645) Mexico City prices for almost 5,000 pesos, which would have represented income to Méndez Chillón of at least several hundred pesos as encomendero or as much as several thousand pesos if he and the Caracas planter were full partners.

40 However they divided the earnings, his transactions with Méndez Chillón left Solórzano entirely satisfied. And Méndez Chillón did a lot of this sort of business. According to a petition made to the Inquisition to collect unpaid alcabala taxes from his confiscated property, during 1644 and 1645 the Portuguese merchant had received at least eight shipments of cacao that arrived from Caracas and Maracaibo. Based on their sale price in Mexico City, the Tribunal attorney set the total value of these eight shipments at 10,473 pesos.⁴⁸ If our profit estimate of at least 50 percent is accurate, these consignments generated net profit of no less than 5,000 pesos. Again, we cannot know whether these transactions were Méndez Chillón's direct investments, partnerships, or if his role in them was the more limited one of encomendero. Nor can we know how many transactions of this kind Méndez Chillón made in a given period of time—we have a record of these eight only because the alcabala tax had not been paid on them. But it does not seem exaggerated to suppose that the cacao trade that passed through his hands—including both his own purchases and the consignments he received—may have been worth 6 or 8,000 pesos to him in annual profits.⁴⁹

41 In early 1648, a Holy Office accountant drew up an inventory of the cash value of the confiscated property of individuals who had been tried in the two autos-de-fé of 1646 and 1647. Of the 59 people who had been sentenced by the Inquisition in those two autos, only 21 had cash—or property that had been converted to cash at auction—totaling 100 pesos or more. Méndez Chillón was one of the wealthiest of these people, having forfeited to the Inquisition (as of May 1648) 25,087 pesos in cash and auctioned goods, including cacao.⁵⁰

Tribunal records describe this property in precise detail.⁵¹ After the merchant was arrested in September, 1645, the Veracruz commissioner and the town officials who accompanied him to Méndez Chillón's house found 8,486 Mexican silver pesos in a locked trunk, 349 gold doubloons of different currencies worth more than 1,500 pesos, including 3 of Portuguese origin whose value the officials were unable to determine, and 14 Portuguese silver coins that were similarly difficult to appraise. Other trunks contained quantities of silver, jewelry and tableware, as well as gold and pearls. The inventory included some household items, such as furniture and paintings—including one of Méndez Chillón kneeling before the Virgin Mary—that had domestic and personal value, but for the most part everything that the commissioner confiscated was commercial in nature. The lower storey of the house that he rented was a warehouse, and the things that were found there reflect the merchant's business. Besides quantities of cacao, there were boxes of white sugar from Havana, bags of cochineal from Oaxaca, 225 wax candles from Puebla, and many bundles of empty cotton sacks that had been woven in the Yucatan. Used for transporting cacao, these sacks had been brought with beeswax and honey from Campeche, and they were marked with the merchant's name ("*yntitulados Chilon*" the inventory recorded).⁵² Other Tribunal documents, the petition for unpaid alcabala taxes for instance, list other trade goods that at one time had belonged to Méndez Chillón: 40 boxes of indigo (*añil*) dye that had come to Veracruz by mule train from Guatemala, and other items that were highly desired in Venezuela and were therefore useful in the exchange for cacao: boxes of chinaware (*loza*) of both Asian and Puebla origin, indigenous woolen blankets (*frezadas*), and Chinese silks. Although every indication suggests that he was a capable trader, not everything he sent to Venezuela turned out to be saleable; Hector Suárez, an agent in Maracaibo, wrote from San Antonio de Gibraltar in August, 1645, that he had been unable to find a buyer for the expensive Japanese cloth that Méndez Chillón had consigned to him there.⁵³

42 All of these things, and everything else that the merchant owned, including the eight slaves that had served him in his home and business, were liquidated at auction by Tribunal authorities.⁵⁴ Added to the silver and gold coins that were confiscated immediately after his arrest, these items, converted to cash, amounted to the more than 25,000 pesos that an Inquisition official reported in 1648 had been entered into the Holy Office treasury under the name of Antonio Méndez Chillón. However, in the testimony that he gave in October 1645, two weeks after he entered the Inquisition jails, the merchant had described his holdings and had agreed that his net worth was approximately 70,000 pesos.⁵⁵ Only about a third of his wealth had been in cash on hand and expropriated inventory that had been sold at auction. Where was the rest of it?

43 As a good merchant, Antonio Méndez Chillón kept his money at work. At the time of his arrest, the Inquisition accountant Diego Ortiz de Vargas had been in Veracruz for some time working with the ledgers and the public records of other merchants resident in the port who had already been incarcerated for Jewish heresy. With the addition of Méndez Chillón to his list, Ortiz's work increased significantly, and in November, 1645, the inquisitors granted him a sixty-day extension so that he could find out more about the merchant's contracts. On December 13, Ortiz finished his report and sent it to the Tribunal in Mexico. He had found no less than 43 people who owed Méndez Chillón money or other items of value, including the brother of the Caracas planter Solórzano mentioned above (200 pesos); the royal treasurer Andrés de Aramburu (1,000 pesos); the *castellano* of the fortress San Juan de Ulúa, Antonio de la Plaza (2,000 pesos); and even the Veracruz commissioner of the Holy Office, *licenciado* Francisco de Viruega y Amarilla (68 pesos/4 reales). The total amount of all these debts was 39,739 pesos, which—if they could be collected of course—would become the property of the Inquisition.⁵⁶

44 Added to the 25,087 pesos in cash and liquidated goods already in the possession of the Tribunal, the 39,739 pesos in debt owed to Méndez Chillón brought the merchant's identified

and presumed collectible assets to 64,826 pesos. This sum was not much less than the 70,000 pesos estimate that he had made of the value of his estate in a hearing that took place shortly after his arrest. Not included in the accountant's report—but of considerable interest to the Tribunal—was another debt for the substantial sum of 10,000 pesos. This was a loan that Méndez Chillón had been obliged to make in the summer of 1640 to don Diego López Pacheco Cabrera y Bobadilla, marquis de Villena and duke of Escalona, grandee of Spain, when the nobleman arrived to take up his post as viceroy of New Spain. Together with his entourage of seventy retainers and servants, Escalona disembarked on June 24, 1640, and on July 7 papers were signed in Veracruz authorizing the viceroy to receive 10,000 pesos in cash from Méndez Chillón's agent in Mexico City, Sebastian de Castro. The loan had been made without interest and was to have been paid in full at the end of one year, but no repayment was made at the stipulated time.⁵⁷ Like many other people of means in New Spain who had loaned substantial sums of money to the incoming viceroy—it was reported in June, 1641, that in just a year's time he had gotten some 300,000 pesos in such loans⁵⁸—Méndez Chillón's chances of collecting worsened considerably when, in June, 1642, Escalona was deposed by the royal visitor-general Juan de Palafox and forcibly returned to Spain.

45 The Mexico Holy Office knew all about Méndez Chillón's loan to Escalona long before he told the Veracruz commissioner about it the day he was arrested in September, 1645.⁵⁹ In June, 1644, more than a year before they made the decision to arrest the merchant for heresy, the inquisitors called before them the former viceroy's treasurer, don Diego Gamarra, who was still in the city, and asked him to explain the 1640 loan. They also wanted him to identify for them those people to whom the viceroy had given money, because, from their point of view, the 10,000 pesos had never ceased to belong to Méndez Chillón, which meant that once the merchant had been arrested all of his property—including whatever part of that property the viceroy had given out in cash to third parties—could be legally claimed by the Tribunal. Gamarra, who seems to have had no sympathy for the inquisitors' interests, testified that he “had distributed it on the order of his *excelencia* in payment of debts that he [Escalona] had brought with him from Spain,” but claimed that he had no record of who had received funds from the Méndez Chillón loan.

46 For his part, in November, 1644, Méndez Chillón sent an agent named Francisco de Acosta to Madrid to try to collect from the former viceroy. By the end of 1644 the Tribunal's determined search for crypto-Jews had been underway for a year and a half and well over a hundred people had been arrested. Méndez Chillón would remain free for another nine months, but the inquisitors were closely tracking the merchant's activities, and they took notice of Acosta's sailing. They believed that Méndez Chillón, knowing that a case against him was being developed, had planned for Acosta to take with him to Spain as much of the merchant's moveable wealth as he could, claiming it as his own, in order to get it out of the reach of the Holy Office. Anticipating future efforts that they might have to make to recover whatever property Méndez Chillón may have tried to conceal by sending it under his agent's name, the inquisitors sent orders to have Acosta's customs declarations reviewed carefully. The fact that the Inquisition had no legal claim to Méndez Chillón's estate until his arrest, which would not occur for months to come, did not prevent the Tribunal's ministers from keeping close watch on his property, which they clearly had intentions of acquiring long before they took him into custody. In any event, despite efforts all around—both Méndez Chillón's and the Inquisition's—to collect it, the 10,000 pesos would go unpaid for thirty years. Finally, in 1675, the Mexico Holy Office received half the original amount.⁶⁰

47 Obviously this was not a good investment. With Escalona's removal from office in the summer of 1642 Méndez Chillón recognized both that it was going to be difficult for him to get his money back and that he would not receive any benefit whatsoever from having made it available to the viceroy two years earlier. We can wonder why he had been willing to risk such

a substantial portion—roughly half—of his liquid capital in this way. He had agreed to the loan quickly, within two weeks of Escalona’s arrival in Veracruz, and by doing so he would have passed into a small cohort of merchant lenders to the government that Louisa Hoberman has called “professional financiers” and “bankers to the viceroys.” According to Hoberman, during the first decades of the seventeenth century, it was not uncommon for a few merchants and wealthy citizens, never more than six or seven individuals, to make loans of 10,000 pesos or more to royal officials, the viceroys in particular, who used the funds to meet short-term operating expenses as well as for personal investments. The lenders did not charge interest, receiving instead other considerations in return for their money: appointments to office, tax benefits, and in general access to the highest levels of authority and power that might be utilized in moments of trouble or special need. Hoberman found that such loans were repaid quickly, often within weeks and usually within a year,⁶¹ and it was probably in this tradition—to improve his business prospects and as a guarantee against unforeseen circumstances—that Méndez Chillón, even though it meant giving up temporarily about half of his working capital, agreed to a one-year contract with Escalona. In 1640 the merchant could not know that the viceroy would shortly prove to be, as Palafox described him in a 1642 letter to the king, “a good subject but a bad payer.”⁶²

48 In the series of depositions regarding his property that he was obliged to give in the days following his incarceration in the Tribunal prison, Méndez Chillón declared that only two of his many current accounts would not be reconciled without litigation. The Escalona loan was one, and it was by far the most important. The second was worth much less, an estimated 2,000 pesos that remained from a larger amount that Méndez Chillón had given on different occasions to don Antonio de la Plaza Eguiluz, the commander (*castellano*) of the fort of San Juan de Ulúa. As harbormaster, the *castellano* was the chief royal police official and one of the most powerful men in Veracruz; entry to the port, permission to dock, and both access to and protection for ships and cargoes all depended on him. The Inquisition’s records indicate that Veracruz merchants were willing to pay to secure his favor, and those who did business with him could expect to be repaid at his convenience.⁶³ Méndez Chillón testified that he had attempted to get his money from de la Plaza, but his efforts were complicated by the fact that there was no written record of their transactions, in as much as they had been made on the basis of verbal agreements between the two men.⁶⁴ Whatever chance the cacao merchant stood of repayment disappeared when the Inquisition began to arrest suspected crypto-Jews; in October, 1645, Méndez Chillón testified that the *castellano* had not replied to him for over a year and a half, and he claimed that he knew that he would probably never see his money when his last request for it was answered by the delivery of a decrepit horse—a veritable Mexican Rocinante—which the Tribunal’s Veracruz commissioner would later be happy to sell at auction for 7 pesos, “being so old and thin no one wanted to have it.”⁶⁵

49 Except for these two accounts, all the rest of the debt owned by Méndez Chillón, itemized meticulously by the accountant Ortiz, was considered collectible. He was owed by Caracas and Maracaibo cacao planters and agents especially, but people from many other places—Mexico City, Puebla, Guatemala, Campeche, Havana and Seville—were in his debt for cash or goods ranging in value from a few dozen to several thousand pesos. At the time of his arrest he had considerable liquidity, about 10,000 pesos in coin, and about 15,000 pesos in on-hand inventory, including several slaves, but more than half of his wealth was in the form of what might be simply called investments: about 35,000 pesos in collectible debt.

50 At the same time Méndez Chillón was also himself debtor to different people. Legally entitled to claim for itself what was owed to the merchant, the Holy Office was also obligated to pay off his outstanding debts. However, other than issuing a general announcement calling those who had claims against his estate to come forward, the Tribunal was under no obligation to find Méndez Chillón’s creditors. Therefore, while the accountant Ortiz could put together a

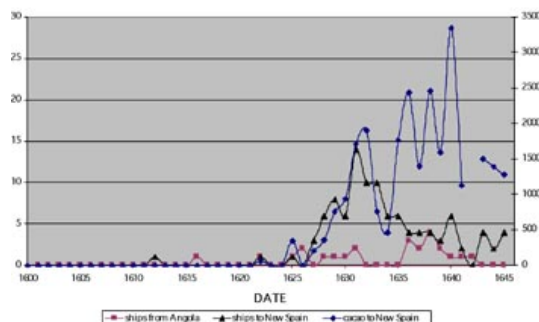
comprehensive list of “accounts receivable” in a matter of weeks, no effort was made by the Inquisition to create the “accounts payable” side of the Méndez Chillón ledger. The merchant himself testified to some debts, such as 1,050 pesos that he owed as part of a larger amount he had invested in an ill-fated trading venture to Florida.⁶⁶ But there is no summary statement of what he owed, and it is impossible to estimate the total amount of his indebtedness from his testimonies and the handful of claims on his estate that were filed with the Inquisition.⁶⁷

Trading cacao: a career summarized

51 Even without a complete picture of his finances, the Inquisition materials provide the basis for a rather clear view of the general nature of Méndez Chillón’s business, which we can now summarize. Beginning in about 1625, a close connection had been forged between the transatlantic African slave trade and the trans-Caribbean trade in cacao. There are no data for Maracaibo, but this pattern is clearly visible in the treasury data from Caracas. [see Graph I] Venezuelan cacao planters, eager to acquire slaves to increase their cacao holdings in order to take advantage of the expanding chocolate market in Mexico, came to depend on merchants like Méndez Chillón, who had both experience and success in the whole spectrum of the trade, from slavery in Angola to cacao bean retail in Mexico City. It may have been the case that the first exports of cacao from the Venezuelan coast took the form of direct exchanges of slaves for beans, as Portuguese slavers outbound from Africa bartered their fragile human cargos for cacao, which was in steadily increasing demand in Mexico.⁶⁸ By the time Méndez Chillón set up shop in Veracruz (1629), the system had gotten more complex, the slave trade from Angola had declined, and the center of cacao commerce had shifted to Veracruz. Working from there, very likely using profits from slave sales as his initial capital base, the Portuguese merchant invested in cacao, and dedicated himself successfully to the trade. As we have seen, since he had cash to offer for payment, he could instruct his Maracaibo agent not to buy cacao unless the price was to his liking. With solid connections at the retail end of the trade, the planters who consigned him their beans for sale trusted him to sell it in Mexico City at the best price he could get, a trust that he evidently deserved, because he clearly turned a satisfactory profit on a regular basis.

Graph I

Caracas Shipping: Slave Ships from Angola and Cacao Exports to New Spain, 1601-1645



Source: Eduardo Arcila Farías, *Hacienda y comercio de Venezuela en el siglo XVII: 1601-1650*. Series: Proyecto Hacienda Pública Colonial Venezolana, vol. 5. Caracas, Banco Central de Venezuela: 1986, pp. 92, 232-233.

52 With Venezuelan cacao entering Veracruz in unprecedented quantities, in the 1630s and early 1640s traffic on the camino real to Mexico City increased as well. The movement of one long string of mules after another, teams of forty animals and more making their way from port to market, had a discernible impact along the highway. The rental contract for the *mesón* at Xalapa, a roadside town located in a cool and salubrious site in the mountains about two days travel from the coast, after remaining steady at 80 pesos per year earlier in the century, began to increase in 1634, reaching 150 pesos in 1640, 145 in 1642, and 160 in 1643.⁶⁹ It is unlikely that

this rise in the Xalapa innkeeper's rents was due to the fleet-based transatlantic shipping, since by that time the flotas had begun to reach New Spain with declining frequency. Following an unbroken string that ran from 1608 to 1627 (this latter fleet captured on its homebound voyage by the Dutchman Piet Heyn in Cuba in 1628), no fleet made port at Veracruz in the years 1632, 1637, 1639 or 1641.⁷⁰ During these years, the decade of the 1630s above all, the smart money in the wholesale trades, as teamsters traveling the royal road no doubt knew very well, was in cacao beans.

53 It suited Antonio Méndez Chillón to run his cacao operation from Veracruz, presumably because from there he could arrange for both seaborne shipping and overland transportation, as well as personally oversee the transfers of commodities and cash that necessarily took place in the port. In the autobiographical statement he provided the Inquisition, he stated that he had not left the port since his arrival there in 1629, always relying on agents and associates to buy, transport, and sell his goods for him. At the same time, he was himself the center of his enterprise: he had purchased wholesale quantities of imported wine and he had exported indigo to Spain, but he was not the Veracruz factor for other, larger-scale merchants from Seville, Lisbon, or Mexico City. He had not built a career on cacao starting from scratch, but rather he had parlayed his experience in Angola and in the Atlantic slave trade into a substantial capital sum, which he then used to establish a solid business as one of Mexico's foremost importers of Venezuelan cacao beans.

54 That he was successful is evident enough, but the nature and characteristics of the entrepreneurship that created his success is less easy to discern. Almost nothing is known about his life in Angola. We can only presume that, if he had spent much time there before coming to Mexico in 1629, he had acquired the sophisticated merchandising skills that were a distinct feature of Portuguese traders who worked the West African coast and hinterlands in the early seventeenth century.⁷¹ We do find Angolan trade items on the list of his personal belongings that were confiscated by the Veracruz commissioner: "blue Angolan mantas" and "an [East] Indies hunting blanket" [*una colcha de la india de montería*], and "an Angolan war hatchet" [*una hachuela de mano de pelear de Angola*]⁷²—was this last item a memento?⁷² Did Méndez Chillón have first-hand experience of the almost constant internal wars—tied to the serious depopulation caused by extraordinarily aggressive slave trading—that convulsed Angola in the 1620s? Did he leave Africa for good in 1629 because of this crisis, which had brought slaving to a halt and had ruined the trade of many merchants in Luanda?⁷³ We can only be certain that the timing of his departure for Mexico was excellent, and that, despite the difficulties that were then being experienced by those in his profession, he had left Angola with a shipload of slaves at a time when they had become increasingly hard to come by. We know from Caracas notary records that by at least as early as 1634 Méndez Chillón was being given legal power by Caracas residents and ship captains to do cacao business on their behalf in Veracruz.⁷⁴

55 This business did not depend on a crypto-Jewish network. A few Caracas residents would become objects of the Inquisition's search for secret Jews, denounced from New Spain by people of their faith who knew them.⁷⁵ But no one in Caracas—and, more significantly, none of the many people who were arrested in Mexico for judaizing—had any first-hand knowledge of Antonio Méndez Chillón's religion, and very few of them knew him personally. Nor would he, following his arrest, provide the inquisitors with the names of anyone else who was known to him to be a crypto-Jew. In fact, of all the people throughout the Caribbean and Mexico with whom Méndez Chillón did business, only the frigate owner and captain Antonio González Xamaica would be arrested—and then later released—as a suspected heretic.⁷⁶ That Méndez Chillón lived largely outside what were primarily kin-based networks of people who would be accused of belonging to what the Inquisition called "the great complicity" of Jewish believers makes him noticeably different from all the other Veracruz merchants arrested for heresy. The

lack of such ties is almost certainly the reason he was able to stay out the Tribunal jails for years after most of the others of his faith had been imprisoned. Perhaps the fact that he had few social or family commitments that would have otherwise diverted some of his resources is also a reason why he was so successful at his trade.

56 Even in the fluid, often tumultuous setting of Veracruz, several features of Antonio Méndez Chillón's domestic life probably stood out, bearing what might have been marks of the rough, slave trade-based, society of coastal Portuguese Africa. Other Veracruz-resident, Portuguese, crypto-Jewish merchants who became victims of the Inquisition were men who owned their homes (Fernando Rodríguez's was built of stone, a rarity in seventeenth-century Veracruz), had married and were raising families, and valued the religion-based kin and personal connections that they had with one another and in Mexico City.⁷⁷ Connections, of course, that would prove to be their undoing with the Inquisition. By contrast, Méndez Chillón, despite his noticeable wealth and active enterprise, rented his wooden residence, was unmarried and the father of only illegitimate children, one by an African woman, his former slave who had come with him from Angola, and he had no more ties to Mexico City than the business he did there with his associate, Sebastian de Castro—who was not a crypto-Jew.

57 Only after the Inquisition began its intensive project against New Spain's secret Jews in the spring of 1642 did Méndez Chillón buy Veracruz real estate and take other financial measures to protect his children in the event of his arrest and the seizure of his property. In the wake of the revolt of Portugal in December 1640, and following a series of royal orders directed at Portuguese in the Spanish Indies that culminated in the one of February 1642 that obliged them to move 20 leagues inland from the coast,⁷⁸ on June 1, 1642, Antonio Méndez Chillón paid the *Concepcionista* nuns of Regina Coeli to admit his daughter María de Zauze, then seven years old, to the care of the *niñado* of the oldest convent of that order in Mexico City.

Probably his choice was based on the nunnery's *antigüedad* and prestige, and most likely it was just a coincidence that the one of the viceroyalty's foremost cacao merchants selected for his daughter the Regina Coeli, whose nuns' fondness for chocolate had already earned them the nickname *monjas chocolateras*.⁷⁹ To guarantee the continuous payment of all costs for her maintenance and education, Méndez Chillón purchased a house in Veracruz on the "*plazuela de la Compañía*" for 2,000 pesos and transferred ownership to young María.⁸⁰

58 Just days before the girl entered the convent, on May 18 and 19, 1642, the Holy Office started to arrest suspected crypto-Jews in Mexico City, and she had been in the Regina Coeli hardly a month when the first large wave of incarcerations took place, including in the dragnet residents of Veracruz. Méndez Chillón was still free the following summer, and he would remain free for two more years, but on June 6, 1643 the merchant signed two contracts that were intended to provide security for his children. For María de Zauze, he sent 6,000 pesos to his agent Sebastian de Castro, half of which was to go for her dowry when she was old enough to formally enter the order, and the other half to be spent at that time for anticipated additional expenses ("*gastos de su entrada, abitos, propinas, y profeción en la forma como se acostumbra*"). In the long interval before she would reach that age—she could not be a candidate until she was eighteen—Castro's instructions were to loan the money at interest to use the income to provide for her food and other basic needs.

59 The second contract recognized the transfer to Castro of 4,000 pesos to be used for the benefit of his son, Juan Chillón "*mulatillo*," born in Veracruz to Lucretia, "*morena libre difunta*," who had been his slave in Angola and had come with him to New Spain in 1629, where she had been given her freedom. According to the agreement, the boy, then twelve years old and already living in Castro's house, was to receive the 4,000 pesos when he reached "a competent age." In the meantime the money was to be loaned at five percent interest and the income was to be used for his daily needs.⁸¹

60 Fearing arrest and confiscation of his property, and probably hoping to prevent the Inquisition from claiming the 10,000 pesos he had intended for his children, Méndez Chillón wrote statements into the contracts with Sebastian de Castro which suggested that in both cases the money he was giving Castro had been made earned through the efforts of others and that most of it was not his at all. He claimed that the 6,000 pesos earmarked for his daughter was the product of 2,000 pesos that he had sent to Angola with one Antonio Alfonso Nieto, who, according to Méndez Chillón, by working hard (“*con ánimo*”) had tripled the sum in three years. According to the second contract, the 4,000 pesos for his son were based initially on the proceeds of 1,500 pesos that had been left to the boy in inheritance by his mother, Lucretia, the former Angolan slave.⁸² Méndez Chillón stated that he had given that amount to a trader named Marco Díaz, who had then invested it in Caracas, presumably in cacao. After “a few years” trading, Díaz had managed to multiply the 1,500 peso investment into 4,000 pesos, and it was this amount that Méndez Chillón sent to his associate Sebastian de Castro for his son’s care and benefit. What seems to have been the underlying logic of the statements was the idea that the only portion of the 10,000 pesos that could be considered Méndez Chillón’s property was the 2,000 pesos he had given to Nieto to take to Angola, and that all the rest was legally someone else’s—the inheritance left by the slave Lucretia and the profits earned by the two traders.⁸³ The Holy Office was not impressed by the argument. On November 22, 1645 an Inquisition attorney petitioned the inquisitors to order Sebastian de Castro to pay the Tribunal the 10,000 pesos, which he did, and on February 7, 1646, a receipt for that amount was issued to him.⁸⁴ Méndez Chillón’s efforts to provide for his children’s futures had failed.

61 Without doubt the testimonies and affidavits that people made before the Inquisition were not always true, and the truth is particularly difficult to discern in texts that were created under the extraordinary circumstances of inquisitorial proceedings or in anticipation of one’s arrest by the Holy Office. But presumably people testified with the intention—or at least the hope—of persuading those who heard what they said. Applying then the test of plausibility, rather than truth, allows us to suppose that Méndez Chillón believed that the inquisitors would find it credible that 2,000 pesos invested in Angola could be increased—“*con ánimo*”—to 6,000 pesos in three years’ time, and that 1,500 pesos employed in trading Caracas cacao could be increased to 4,000 pesos in the course of a few years. These figures represent annual profits of somewhere between 40 and 50 percent on the initial investment. These rates are commensurate with the estimates of profit calculated above for actual Maracaibo-Mexico City trading ventures based on known prices and costs. If a fifty-percent return on the investment was indeed the profit-earning capability that the merchant Méndez Chillón claimed for himself (or at least for the hard-working traders who worked for him), it probably rang true with the Inquisition (even though the inquisitors rejected the claim out of hand), and it was probably true in fact.

62 In the end we cannot know if Antonio Méndez Chillón’s success was the result of skill and hard work, or if it came about more because he had the good fortune to have moved to Veracruz and located himself in the cacao business at just the right time. He had always acted prudently, taking measures necessary to protect himself, including the extraordinary loan which he made in 1640 to the incoming viceroy the duke of Escalona, other loans or gifts made to royal officials in Veracruz, and even a modest sum loaned to the Holy Office commissioner in the port. He possessed a royal certificate of Castilian naturalization, which he had acquired for five hundred ducats and costs in 1642 after the fall of Escalona.⁸⁵ And, as the Inquisition jails were filling, he had procured a license signed by the then viceroy, the duke of Salvatierra (viceroys from November 1642 to April 1649), granting him permission—which mattered for nothing as it turned out—to “remain in Veracruz for as long as he should want to.”⁸⁶

63 With regard to his religion, he was so discreet, or possibly so lax, in his practice that virtually none of the people who shared that faith knew anything about him. When his name was

mentioned in the strained and often superheated context of the rumors that circulated in the Inquisition prison, what was said was vague, confused and wrong. To cite one example, the informant Gaspar Alfar reported to the inquisitors that he had overheard his cellmate Simón Vázquez Sevilla talking through a hole in the wall with Vázquez Sevilla's brother-in-law Tomás Núñez de Peralta. According to Alfar, Vázquez Sevilla had told Núñez de Peralta that the bishop Palafox,

not able to sequester the property of the Portuguese as foreigners, had had them arrested by the Holy Office...and that in particular the *visitador* [Palafox] had asked a certain fellow [*“un fulano”*] Chillón to loan him ten thousand pesos, and when Chillón refused he [Palafox] swore that he [Méndez Chillón] would be sorry, and that when he [Palafox] became viceroy he arrested Chillón and one of his companions.⁸⁷

64 Those few people who testified to the inquisitors about him said only that they had heard rumors that he was a Jew. One of them was Luis Núñez Pérez, who had been in Mexico City only a few months before he was arrested in June, 1642—time enough to set up a chocolate retail shop—and during that time he had heard—so he testified—that Antonio Méndez Chillón was a crypto-Jew from one or another of *las Blancas*, the exceptionally well-informed women whose testimonies would be of central importance to the Inquisition.⁸⁸ But, in fact, Núñez Pérez's information had to have had a different source, because, although they gave many names of people both living and dead, in the end holding nothing back from the inquisitors, none of the loquacious Blancas ever mentioned Antonio Méndez Chillón in their testimonies.

65 His precautions and the fact that he had not become linked to other crypto-Jews kept Méndez Chillón out of prison until September, 1645, while many others, denounced and denouncing one another, were jailed years earlier and would be kept in jail for many more months than he was. When his time came he confessed quickly, his circumcision scars seen as proof of his heresy. He cooperated with the confiscation of his property and the identification of his debtors, and he was not pressured—by torture or long imprisonment—to be forthcoming with names of other secret Jews—probably because it was evident that he had almost no information to give.⁸⁹ Few of the more than a hundred individuals arrested for Jewish heresy spent less time in prison than he did. The sixteen months (from September 9, 1645 to the auto-de-fé of January 23, 1647) of his incarceration was less than half the average jail-time of those who were released in the first two autos (1646: 38 cases, 40.5 months; 1647: 21 cases, 37.5 months) and only one-third the average time spent in jail by all who were arrested as crypto-Jews (117 cases, 48.0 months).⁹⁰ As a special favor, he was allowed to remove his *sambenito* the day after the auto-de-fé. He asked for his certificate of Castilian citizenship, and it was returned to him. On June 10, 1647, along with 27 others, Méndez Chillón was sent from Veracruz to exile in Spain, sailing on ships of the fleet of General Lorenzo Rodríguez de Córdoba, which would reach Cadiz on August 19, 1647.⁹¹ The Mexico Tribunal would continue to be interested in his property for some time; its archives record the efforts that will be made for decades to come to collect his debts—cacao trading profits for the most part—for the benefit of treasury of the Holy Office. The last Inquisition reference to Antonio Méndez Chillón himself—his successful career as a slave dealer turned cacao trader ended—is to be found in the manifest of convicted crypto-Jews who were destined for deportation in 1647. There his physical description, intended as a verbal mug shot, headed the list: “Short in body, graying, with large eyes and a good beard and mustache. Ladino, fifty-three years of age.”⁹²

Notas

1 “Chocolate contains more than three hundred identified chemical substances, including theobromine and methylxanthine—two mildly addictive caffeine-like substances—and phenylethylamine, a stimulant chemically similar to the bodies' own dopamine and adrenaline.

Phenylethylamine acts on the brain's 'mood centers' and presumably induces the emotion of falling in love, a matter of partly understood brain chemistry." Allen M. Young, *The Chocolate Tree; A Natural History of Cacao* (Washington D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 13.

2 On July 23, 1642, writing to the Supreme Council in Madrid ten days after the first wave of arrests had brought 40 people to the cells, the inquisitors explained: "before arresting any of these people and considering that this Inquisition did not have enough cells to put them in ... we agreed to ask the viceroy [Juan de Palafox] for the two new houses he had lived in before he moved over to the [viceregal] palace in as much as they are near to this Inquisition, of solid construction and ideal to serve as a jail." Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid), Sección Inquisición (hereafter AHN, Inq.), Libro 1054 fs. 27-29, letter of July 23, 1642. Returning to this theme in a letter written in to the Suprema in 1643, the inquisitors said that they had remodeled the "*casas de Picaso*" as the second building was known, in "such secrecy that no one ever knew that it was happening" Archivo General de la Nación (Mexico), Sección Inquisición, leg. 416, part 2 (hereafter shortened: AGN, Inq. 416_2a), fs. 450-456. In July 1642, as the first people to be jailed were taken to the *casas de Picaso*, many crypto-Jews who were still free, seeing that the building had been converted to a jail, suffered the frightening realization that the Inquisition had made preparations to arrest a large number of people. AHN, Inq. Libro 1054, fs. 427v.-428, testimony of Diego Correa, December 6, 1642.

3 AGN, Inq. 410_1, f. 58v.

4 AGN, Inq. 398_1, fs. 161-165v., testimonies of April 17, June 1, August 19, and September 3, 1643, and April 27, 1644.

5 AGN, Inq. 396_3, f. 52.

6 AGN, Inq. 396_3, fs. 505v.-506., testimony of Antonia de la Cruz, October 10, 1643. There is no reason to suppose that the bag of chocolate was a small one. Although *petaquilla* would appear to be the diminutive of the Spanish *petaca* meaning a bag or container woven from palm fronds or other fiber, *petaca* derives from the Nahuatl *petlacalli*, and the similarity between the Nahuatl term and *petaquilla* suggests that the latter term was current in Spanish usage in the early seventeenth century and that the shortened form *petaca* had not yet evolved.

7 AGN, Inq. 427_1, f. 15. The total cost of the trip was 69 pesos/3 reales. Rodrigo Serrano entered the Tribunal jails on September 10, 1646; he does not appear in any of the four autos-de-fé. There is a very useful log of the dates people were entered into the prison of the Mexico City Tribunal of the Holy Office: AGN, Inq. 387_11, unfoliated, "*Memoria del día q'entraron*". The Lencero site will become the famous Veracruz hacienda of Antonio López de Santa Anna on the eastern outskirts of Xalapa.

8 AGN, Inq. 427_9, fs. 197-216. The total cost of the trip was 61 pesos. Jorge de Espinosa, who went by the alias Jorge Serrano, entered the Inquisition jail on December 29, 1647, AGN, Inq. 387_11. He does not appear in any of the four autos-de-fé

9 Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Hispanic Document Collection, document 35, Juan Méndez Villaviciosa, f. 88; testimony of Blanca Enríquez, October 24, 1642. Of interest to the inquisitors was Beatriz Enríquez's confirmation that that the merchants Álvarez de Arellano and Méndez de Villaviciosa were crypto-Jews. Méndez de Villaviciosa had been arrested during the first wave, on July 13, 1642, and Álvarez de Arellano would be arrested on April 19, 1643, AGN, Inq. 387_11.

10 AGN, Inq. 411_1^a_1, f. 34. Blanca Mendez de Rivera and her daughters were popularly known collectively as "las Blancas."

11 AGN, Inq. 453_2, f. 360. Testimony of Margarita de Rivera, January 3, 1644. Mathias Rodriguez de Olivera entered the jails on April 19, 1643, AGN, Inq. 387_11.

12 AHN, Inq. Libro 1054, fs. 425-429; testimony of Diego Correa, December 6, 1642. Correa was jailed three months after his wife on August 12, 1642, AGN, Inq. 387_11.

13 Antonio de León Pinelo, *Question moral si el chocolate quebranta el ayuno eclesiastico* [Madrid, 1636] (Mexico: Centro de Estudios de Historia de Mexico (CONDUMEX), 1994).

14 AGN, Inq. 372_26, no folio numbers, testimony of Margarita Moreira, February 1644.

15 AGN, Sección Inquisición Real Fisco, leg. 18, exp. 3 (hereafter shortened as follows: AGN, Inq. RI. Fisco, 18_3), fs. 87-87v. Testimony of Fernando Rodríguez, July 27, 1644.

16 Genero Garcia and Carlos Pereyra, *Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México*. (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 2nd ed., 1974), 185.

17 AGN, Inq. 419_2a, f. 405; testimony of Gerónimo Fernández Correa, May 20, 1644.

18 Ibid., fs. 346-347; testimony of Francisco López Correa, October 24, 1644.

19 AGN, Inq. 405_8, fs. 449-449v.; testimony of Blanca Enríquez, July 24, 1642.

20 AGN, Inq. 372_21, unfoliated; testimony of Isabel Duarte, August 1642.

21 Louisa Schell Hoberman, *Mexico's Merchant Elite, 1590-1660; Silver, State, and Society* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1991), 206-207.

22 AGN, Inq. 399_2a_1, f. 330v.; testimony of Sebastian Domingo, alias Mungia, September 5, 1642.

23 For example, tailors who were employed to construct the effigies burned in the auto-de-fé of 1649 and to sew the sambenitos that reconciled heretics were obliged to wear received daily wages of 7 reales; AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 15_3, f. 122v.

24 AGN, Inq. 500_3, unfoliated.

25 The date of Luis de Burgos' entry into the prison is in AGN, Inq. 387_11.

26 AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 39_no expediente number, fs. 139-175.

27 Núñez Pérez was referring the Blanca Méndez de Rivera and her daughters, the women known as "the Blancas." AGN, Inq. 394_2, f. 282v., testimony June 20, 1642.

28 AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 39_no expediente number, fs. 165-168.

29 It is possible that some of the debt in Acosta's account was simply for cacao that had been sold on credit without the expectation that it would be made into chocolate and returned to the store. However, almost all of Acosta's entries contain the word *recado* (also spelled *recaudo*), which I take to mean cacao given, or advanced, on credit—with the expectation that it be made into chocolate and returned to the store. That is clearly what the word meant in Núñez Pérez's statement that he had given a *recado* of cacao to the Blancas for that purpose.

30 For instance, in January, 1646, Sebastian de Castro, a Mexico City merchant who had extensive dealings with Veracruz cacao importers and who also appears in the ledger of Luis de Burgos' store, sold cacao to retail shopkeepers for 56 to 58 pesos the *carga* (of 92 *libras*), or about 5 reales per *libra*.

31 Made with hot or boiling water, as a beverage chocolate was unquestionably welcome on cold winter mornings, and all the more so in the notoriously damp cells of the Mexico City prison. In addition, seventeenth-century understanding of the physical properties of cacao and chocolate had it that the cold and dry "earthly" character of cacao were offset by its warm and moist qualities, which were brought out when the powder of the ground beans was mixed, "artificially and intimately," in water. The foam that came to the surface with very little stirring was taken as evidence of this "hotness". It was believed that when additional "hot" ingredients, such as cinnamon, pepper, and achiote were added, an excellent, balanced concoction—chocolate—was the result. For maximum results, it was thought that once fabricated chocolate needed to season for a month or more before consumption. A text based on observations made in Mexico is Antonio Colmenero de Ledesma, *Curioso tratado de la naturaleza y calidad del chocolate* [Madrid, 1631], in English, James Wadsworth, trans., *Chocolate: Or, An Indian Drinke* (London, 1651), 21: "So I conclude that the chocolate confection is not so cold as the cacao, nor so hot as the rest of the Ingredientes, but there results from the action and re-action of these ingredientes, a moderate temper which may be good, both for the cold and the hot stomach, being taken moderately, and it having been made a month at the least, as is already proved."

32 There has been a long-standing misconception that chocolate was a woman's drink, particularly popular among nuns. See for instance Solange Alberro, *Del gachupín al criollo; o de cómo los españoles de México dejaron de serlo* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 3d. ed., 2002), 79: "Cabe apreciar cierta revancha irónica en el hecho de que, antiguamente reservados a los hombres, el chocolate y el tabaco se convirtieron durante la colonia en aficiones esencialmente mujeriles—y eclesiásticas en cuanto toca al primero--, en el contexto de una

sociabilidad del todo colonial por el lujo ostentoso y el clima afectivo que la caracterizan.” The hard-driving muleteers who were fortified by it as they set out on the road in the morning, or the veteran merchant who could not get enough of it in his jail cell, would have had no sense of chocolate as feminine. Nor was the social setting for chocolate consumption in any way limited to situations of “lujo ostentoso” as Alberro suggests, although the idea that drinking it usually contributed to a “clima afectivo” does seem to come close to the mark.

33 Hoberman, *Mexico’s Merchant Elite*, 122-123. Hoberman discounts the municipal council’s assessment of the cacao trade as the largest in the kingdom, calling it “not strictly accurate,” and in terms of commercial value she relegates cacao to third place, behind sugar and the other two “specialty crops”: cochineal and indigo. However, focused as she is primarily on the export of these agricultural items from Mexico, Hoberman does not fully appreciate the internal market for the enormous quantities of cacao beans that were imported to New Spain beginning in the 1620s, arriving from Venezuela at Veracruz and from Guayaquil at Acapulco, and coming both overland and by sea from Soconusco and Guatemala.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207, 221.

35 *Ibid.*, see especially pp. 50-55. A thoughtful consideration of the problems of estimating profit is John C. Super, “Partnership and Profit in the Early Andean Trade: The Experiences of Quito Merchants, 1580-1610,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 11, no. 2 (November 1979): 265-281.

36 In a hearing to determine his property holdings [*audiencia de hacienda*] that took place on October 9, 1645, he testified that his profit from the sale of 120 *piezas* of slaves that were his share of the 1629 *armazón* had been 30,000 pesos after taxes and other costs. AGN, Inq. R1 Fisco, 43_4, f. 50. There is a brief description of the trading activities of Antonio Méndez Chillón in the valuable pioneering study of Stanley Mark Hordes, “The Crypto-Jewish Community of New Spain, 1620-1649; A Collective Biography,” Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1980, pp. 81-83, 103.

37 AHN, Inq. 4803_3_1, fs. 1-3. Data regarding Méndez Chillón’s arrest is in AGN, Inq. R1 Fisco, 43_3, f. 24. The date of Méndez Chillón’s entry into the prison is AGN, Inq. 387_11.

38 AHN, Inq. 4803_3_1, fs. 5v-8v.

39 *Ibid.*, fs. 10-17v.

40 To cite another instance of this, just weeks before his arrest by the Inquisition, in February 1644, Francisco Rodríguez, Portuguese, former factor of the slave asiento and long-time resident merchant in Veracruz, sent 33 *tercios* of Maracaibo cacao to Mexico City. The total weight of the shipment was 263 *arrobas/6 libras*. Since an *arroba* was comprised of 25 *libras*, this was equal to 6,581 *libras*, or, in terms of *cargas* of 92 *libras*: 71 *cargas/49 libras*. This was the actual weight of the all the cacao carried on this mule train; divided by 33 *tercios*, the average actual weight of each *tercio* was 2 *cargas/14 libras*, which was more than 40 percent greater than the standard alcabala assessment of a *carga* and a half per *tercio*. AGN, Inq. R1 Fisco, 18_8, fs. 32v. – 34v. It may be that the alcabala schedule was established originally to tax cacao imported from Caracas, since beans began to arrive in New Spain from that Venezuelan town before Maracaibo. The unit of measure for Caracas beans was the fanega, not the *millar* as in the case of Maracaibo beans, and the fanega was always comprised of a *carga* and a half. Perhaps the alcabala was initially set up to tax cacao by the fanega (of a *carga* and a half) at six percent, and the assessment by *tercio*, which we see practiced in these sources, was a later development. As long trains of mules loaded with cacao became commonplace on the road to Mexico City in the 1620s, unloading the animals to weigh their cargos became impractical, and a shift in assessment practice from the weighed fanega to the visually counted *tercio*—two per mule—took place. If this was indeed what occurred, the loss of revenue from cacao for the royal treasury seems to have been significant.

41 These prices were paid by chocolate shop owners and other individuals who bought cacao in quantities of a retail *carga* (92 *libras*) or more at a time. Whether these prices were high or low is not possible to say. Information on seventeenth-century cacao prices has been gathered, but the data is not reliable for trend analysis because: 1) the fact that the unit of measure, the *carga*, varied by use is not taken into account, namely they do not distinguish between

the *carga* that was used in assessing the almojarifazgo tax (consisting of 12 *arrobas*, or 300 *libras*), the *carga* that was used in the calculation of teamsters' *fletes* (10 *arrobas*, or 250 *libras*), and the retail *carga* of 92 *libras*; and 2) they do not distinguish between the price in Veracruz (used to calculate the almojarifazgo tax, this was the same as the embarkation price, that is, the Caracas or Maracaibo price) and the much higher retail price at which the cacao was sold in Mexico City. See Hoberman, Table 12, "Cacao Prices in New Spain, 1588-1654," *Mexico's Merchant Elite*, 122; and Murdo J. MacLeod, Figure 37, "Some Cacao Prices in Mexico City," *Spanish Central America: A Socioeconomic History, 1520-1720* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973), 250.

42 AHN, Inq. 4803_3_1, fs. 5v.-6.

43 Fernández de Acosta's nickname appears in both the Mexico sources and the Caracas royal shipping tax records; "Tangafaranga" was probably a composite of the verb *tangar*: to swindle or to cheat, and *faranga*, a non-word that might have been derived from *farag*: idleness, or *haraganaría*: slovenliness or neglect. The nickname might be loosely translated "Lazy swindler" or "Lazy cheat".

44 Eduardo Arcila Farías, *Hacienda y comercio de Venezuela en el siglo xvii: 1601-1650*. Series: Proyecto Hacienda Pública Colonial Venezolana, vol. 5. (Caracas: Banco Central de Venezuela, 1986), 294.

45 AGN, Inq. 45_3, f. 49. Emphasis added. Francisco Mijares de Solórzano, a Caracas native son, was married in the Caracas cathedral on September 9, 1643. *Matrimonios y velaciones de españoles y criollos blancos de Caracas desde 1615 hasta 1831* (Caracas: Publicaciones del Instituto Venezolano de Genealogía, Italgráfica, 1974), 108. His brother, Pedro Solórzano y Rojas, served as *maestre* for cacao shipments from Caracas (La Guaira) to New Spain as early as 1631. Arcila Farías, *Hacienda y comercio*, 272. If the statistics compiled by Arcila Farías are correct, Mijares de Solórzano's 72 ½ fanegas represent about 5 percent of the total amount of cacao exported from La Guaira in 1645 (1,281 fanegas), *ibid.*, p. 90.

46 Based on Méndez Chillón's testimony about his property (*audiencia de hacienda*) in October 1645, in January 1646 an Inquisition commissioner was sent to Maracaibo to interview a resident there, Francisco Juan de Acosta, who reportedly had agreed to send cacao to Méndez Chillón with the understanding that the two men would divide equally the profits from the sale of the beans. AGN, Inq. R1 Fisco, 15_15, f. 350. The report of this inquiry and other information about Méndez Chillón's business in Maracaibo are to be found in AGN, Inq. R1 Fisco, 40_8-10.

47 Robert J. Ferry, *The Colonial Elite of Early Caracas* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989), 61. The Mexico City price may have been a great deal more than twice the Caracas price. According to Arcila Farías, *Hacienda y comercio*, a study based on Caracas royal tax records, the Caracas cacao price was as low as 6 pesos the fanega in 1633 and 1634, and vacillated between 10 and 20 pesos during the middle 1630s and early 1640s, 87-90.

48 AGN, Inq. R1 Fisco, 45_1, fs. 3v.-10.

49 An additional case of Méndez Chillón receiving Caracas cacao on consignment is in Hordes, "The Crypto-Jewish Community," 83.

50 AHN, Libro 1054, fs. 493-495. Dated May 12, 1648, the total sum of the inventory was 148,562 pesos; the average amount was 7,074 pesos.

51 AGN, Inq. R1 Fisco, 43_3, fs. 32-45v. and 47_4, fs. 20-29.

52 AGN, Inq. R1 Fisco, 47_4, f. 23v. Five bundles of cloth sacks, "*costales de Campeche*", had been sent to Méndez Chillón from Mérida. Other Yucatecan items conspicuous among the merchant's confiscated inventory were wooden trunks or boxes and other furniture for sale, especially desks or cabinets made of different kinds of wood, some of which were painted decoratively. Presumably the reason why Méndez Chillón brought cloth sacks from the Yucatan is because they were not available at other locations along the cacao trade route. Perhaps the advantage in having his bags woven in the Yucatan was cheap labor. For evidence of the complicity of local officials in the exploitation of native labor in the Yucatan, including the practice of the illegal *servicio personal* encomienda and the forced production of cloth, see Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Escribanía de Camara, 314, Residencias de Yucatan,

1660. That ships outbound for Venezuela carried empty sacks marked with the merchant's name suggests that Méndez Chillón took what measures he could to protect his interests in a cacao-trade world of jumbled ship cargos, with disputes over ownership possible at the several stages at which loading and unloading took place.

53 AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 45_1, fs. 1-3v. The alcabala suit was filed July 11, 1646 by Bernardo Lope de Haro, in name of Martín de Artadia y Bertiz, Veracruz judge of the *Reales Alcabalas, Union de Armas, y Armada de Barlovento*. He filed to collect some 3,000 pesos in alcabala taxes owed by Méndez Chillón. This appeal continued until 1648. For the Mexican items in the testamentary inventory of a Caracas-coast Portuguese cacao planter and slave owner, see Ferry, *The Colonial Elite*, 55-56. An excellent illustrated study of Asian and *poblano* ceramic ware in colonial Venezuela is Carlos F. Duarte and María L. Fernández, *La cerámica durante la época colonial venezolana* (Caracas: Armitano Editor, 1980). The problem of selling Japanese goods is given in Hordes, "The Crypto-Jewish Community," p. 82.

54 AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 43_3, fs. 24-45v.

55 AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 43_4, f. 50v. Hearing of October 9, 1645.

56 AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 15_15, fs. 349-350. The accountant Ortiz de Vargas was sent to Veracruz at the request of the commissioner there, Viruega y Amarilla, who found himself overwhelmed by the task of finding and compiling the outstanding debts of the arrested crypto-Jews. Ortiz was paid seven pesos a day for his services, and the Tribunal was eager to have him finish his work. AGN, Inq. 500_3, unfoliated.

57 AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 43_18, fs. 238v.-240v.

58 Cayentana Alvarez de Toledo, *Politics and Reform in Spain and Viceregal Mexico; The Life and Thought of Juan de Palafox 1600-1659*. Oxford, 2004. pp. 128, 137. Álvaro de Lorenzana, one of the three or four richest merchants in New Spain and a man with much experience in government/viceregal finance, could not collect on the 50,000 pesos that he had loaned to Escalona, Hoberman, *Mexico's Merchant Elite*, pp. 179, 228.

59 Méndez Chillón repeated the information in both of the *audiencias de hacienda* that he gave the inquisitors in Mexico City in October, 1645. AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 43_18, fs. 245-250.

60 The history of the 10,000 pesos is in *ibid.*, fs. 235-265; the Inquisition finally succeeded in collecting 5,000 pesos from the estate of the former viceroy on May 24, 1675.

61 Hoberman, *Mexico's Merchant Elite*, pp. 176-177.

62 Palafox to the king, 25 July 1642, quoted in Alvarez de Toledo, *Politics and Reform*, p. 137.

63 AGN, 397_3, f. 317, Testament of Luis de Olivares Rezio, dated April 20, 1644. The castellano owed him 200 pesos that had been loaned more than two years earlier.

64 "*sin vale ni escritura*" AGN, Real Fisco, 43_4, f. 53.

65 AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 47_4, f. 24. The commissioner's report was dated June 15, 1648. The *castellano* de la Plaza, interviewed by the Veracruz commissioner in 1647, with his honor in question for having done business with a confessed crypto-Jew, claimed that he never intended to repay Méndez Chillón. AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 40_15, fs. 269-271.

66 AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 43_3, f. 26v., *audiencia de hacienda*, October 20, 1645.

67 There are hundreds of folio pages of documents pertaining to the cases involving the business and property of Antonio Méndez Chillón in the Inquisition Real Fisco section of the AGN. Volumes 40, 43, 44, 45, 47 and 49 contain *expedientes* that trace the Inquisition's efforts to collect on his debts, beginning with the records of the original transactions. Claims made by others against his estate are also in these pages.

68 Ferry, *The Colonial Elite*, 47-48.

69 Michael S. Cole, "Peripheral Communities, Colonial Lifeline: Indian Villages along New Spain's Primary Route from Veracruz to Mexico City during the Seventeenth Century," *Secolas Annals*, 33 (October 2001): 35-44. Abundant pasture and mule husbandry were climate-driven reasons why Xalapa became an important way station on the camino real. Several of Mexico's largest ingenios were nearby, and quantities of sugar were loaded there for market (Mexico City and exports at Veracruz). See Gilberto Bermúdez Gorrocheotegui, *Historia de Jalapa, Siglo XVII* (Xalapa: Universidad Veracruzana, 1995).

70 Jose Antonio Caballero Juárez, *El régimen jurídico de las armadas de la Carrera de Indias; Siglos XVI y XVII* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1997), 351-366.

71 The Dutch failure to succeed in Angola after driving the Portuguese out of Luanda in 1641 has been attributed to their failure to understand and to adopt the established intricacies of the trade. Operating in complex networks of coastal exchanges that linked Elmina, São Tomé, the Loanda coast and Angola, Portuguese traders knew well how to barter a variety of goods—palm-cloth, copper, redwood, ivory and even the hair from elephant tail—for slaves. See Phyllis M. Martin, *The External Trade of the Loango Coast, 1576 – 1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 63-67.

72 AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 43_3, fs. 41-42. For the *colcha de montería* as a desired trade good, see the letter from Ana, queen of the Ndongo, to Bento Cardoso, Angola, 3 March 1626, in Beatrix Heintze, “Das Ende des Unabhängigen Staates Ndongo (Angola); Neue Chronologie und Reinterpretation (1617-1630)” *Paideuma; Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde*, 27 (1981): 268-269. See also John K. Thornton, “The Art of War in Angola, 1575-1680” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30:3 (1988): 360-378.

73 See David Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and Their Neighbours under the Influence of the Portuguese, 1483-1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 91-100.

74 A power of attorney [*poder*] of Antonio de Fonseca, resident Caracas, to Antonio Méndez Chillón, resident Veracruz, and to Francisco González, owner and capitán of the frigate *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* in the Archivo del Registro Principal de Caracas, Escribanías of Joseph López Villanueva, fs. 199-200, 29 and 30 July 1634. This frigate left La Guaira for Veracruz with cacao on August 22, 1634, Arcila Farias, *Hacienda y comercio*, 279

75 One who was widely well-known in Mexico City was Juan de Araujo, slaver and cacao trader, who was killed in the Caracas cathedral in the earthquake of 1641. The remarkable circumstances of his death made a lasting impression, and a dozen people testified about it in their hearings before the inquisitors. One of them, María de Rivera, mistakenly believed that the event had taken place in “Malacayo,” a misspelling of Maracaibo that frequently appears in the verbatim testimonies. Does the spelling reflect the way the word was pronounced? See Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Hispanic Document Collection, document 75, Juan de Araujo.

76 Arrested November 4, 1645, presumably he was released because no file exists for him and he did not appear in any auto-de-fé. AGN, Inq. 387_11. That the inquisitors were uncertain about his guilt is suggested by the order they sent to the Veracruz commissioner not to sell his frigate “for now, until all that [his case] contains is resolved”. Letter to commissioner Francisco de Viruega y Amarilla, November 7, 1645, AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 15_1, fs. 3-3v.

77 Fernando Rodríguez had come to Veracruz in 1604. He married Beatriz Enríquez there, and they had eight children, seven were alive in the 1640s, and the four adults among them were arrested by the Inquisition. All the members of the family were in the 1647 auto-de-fé. See AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 18_3, fs. 85-86.

78 February 10, 1642. AGN, Reales Cédulas Originales, vol. 1, no. 288, f. 528.

79 Josefina Muriel, *Conventos de monjas en la Nueva España* (Mexico City: Ed. Jus, 1995; [1st ed., 1946]), 73-80.

80 AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 43_14, f. 169.

81 *Ibid.*, f. 169

82 Méndez Chillón claimed that this inheritance had come from the proceeds of slaves sold by Lucretia, who had brought them with her to Veracruz (“the proceeds of several *piezas* of slaves that she brought when she came from Angola where she had been my slave”). AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 43_14, fs. 179-180. At first surprising, this is not inconsistent with the practice of slave trading and slave owning in Angola, there is no reason to suppose that Lucretia, herself a former slave, had not brought slaves for sale to Mexico.

83 The contracts are in AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 43_14, fs. 172-184v.

84 *Ibid.*, 168v.

85 AGN, Inq. Real Fisco, 43_1, fs. 1-6. Letter of Méndez Chillón to Esteban Luís Diamante, vecino of Seville, 16 April 1644. The naturalization document had not yet reached Méndez

Chillón and he asked Diamante to investigate. He had requested the naturalization, he wrote, "...in spite of the rebellion in Portugal, so that I can live in this port of Veracruz where I have been a vecino for fourteen years, and from which the señor bishop Juan de Palafox when he was viceroy ordered the Portuguese to leave without regard to their appeals and without regard to the policies ordered by his Majesty in the year [sixteen] forty and all the other circumstances that I could list... In February 1642, claiming concern that the Portuguese revolt might spread to Mexico, the interim viceroy Palafox had ordered all Portuguese who were living in port towns to move twenty leagues to the interior of the viceroyalty. The following summer Salvatierra allowed them to return to their homes. The return of Fernando Rodríguez and his family to Veracruz is described in AGN, Inq. 419_2a, fs. 346-347, testimony of Francisco López Correa, October 24, 1644.

86 In March, 1647, after he had been reconciled in the auto-de-fé of the previous January, Méndez Chillón petitioned for these documents to be returned to him, and they were handed over to him in Veracruz on May 13, as he waited to leave for exile in Spain. AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 47_3, fs. 10-15.

87 AGN, Inq. 398_1, testimony of August 31, 1648. Simón Vázquez Sevilla, who knew that Alfaro was an Inquisition spy, denied that he had said anything of the sort. It is possible that Palafox, like the marquis of Villena before him, had demanded a large sum of money from Méndez Chillón, and it was definitely the case that the Holy Office had arrested as heretics scores of Portuguese—including Simón Vázquez Sevilla and Tomás Núñez de Peralta—during Palafox's brief tenure as viceroy (June to November 1642). However, Méndez Chillón was not arrested until much later (September, 1645), and at that time Palafox and the Inquisition had become deeply disaffected—a part of the widespread controversy that then surrounded the controversial prelate. Here the significance of Alfaro's testimony is that it tells us that among the other crypto-Jews Méndez Chillón was himself virtually unknown [*"un fulano Chilon"*] and his affairs were only the stuff of rumor.

88 Luis Núñez Pérez, testimony of 23 August, 1642, AGN, Inq. 414_1, f. 8v. No one knew more people, living and dead, who were or had been crypto-Jews than Blanca Méndez de Rivera. She provided the inquisitors with the names of 173 people, but she did not mention Antonio Méndez Chillón. AGN, Inq. 1530_3, no folio numbers.

89 Antonio Méndez Chillón's confession and the few testimonies he gave before the inquisitors are scattered in AGN, Inq. 421_8; 421_11; 706_48. One of the few people he did denounce was Duarte Rodríguez, a Veracruz merchant who was himself not well-known outside the port. When Duarte Rodríguez was told that Méndez Chillón's had testified against him (Rodríguez guessed who it was, since the Tribunal did not identify witnesses by name), all he could say about Méndez Chillón was that he had heard that two of his brothers were in Inquisition jails, but he did not know where. Gilcrease Museum, Hispanic Document Collection, document 40, Duarte Rodríguez, no folio numbers.

90 Those who appeared in the autos of 1648 and 1649 had endured much longer periods in jail, more than 80 months for many who "came out" [*"salieron"*] in the 1649 auto-de-fé. The duration of jail terms was calculated using prison entry log, AGN, Inq. 387_11 and the records of the several autos-de-fé. Lists of names of individuals who were in the first three autos (1646, 1647, 1648) can be found in several places. See Richard G. Santos, ed. and trans., *Autos-de-fé of the Portuguese Conspiracy Held by the Holy Office of the Inquisition of Mexico City, 1646-1648* (San Antonio: Texas: W. J. Munter, 1998), and Seymour B. Liebman, *The Jews in New Spain; Faith, Flame and the Inquisition* (Coral Gables: Univ. of Miami Press, 1970, 314-333. The official account of the 1649 auto-de-fé is Matías de Bocanegra, *Auto general de la Fe celebrado por el Tribunal del S. Oficio de la Inquisición de México* [1649]; a translated, edited edition is Seymour B. Liebman, *Jews and the Inquisition of Mexico : The Great Auto de Fé of 1649* (Lawrence, Kan.: Coronado Press, 1974).

91 This fleet was in Veracruz from September 12, 1646 to June 10, 1647. During this period the stone house that had belonged to the crypto-Jewish merchant Fernando Rodríguez was rented out, with the proceeds going to the Holy Office treasury, to capitán Luís Velázquez,

owner of a nao in the fleet, for 550 pesos. AGN, Inq. RI Fisco, 20_22, f. 321v. Rodríguez and his family were also exiled in 1647.
92 AHN, Inq., Libro 1065. f. 33.

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Abstract / Resumen

This essay examines several interrelated themes and uses a variety of research strategies to explore the general topic of chocolate and the cacao trade in early seventeenth-century Mexico. Based primarily on the records of the Mexico Tribunal of the Inquisition, the essay attempts to expand our understanding of the beginning of large-scale chocolate consumption in Mexico, of the inner workings of the business of buying, transporting, and selling cacao beans, and the business of chocolate sold at retail. A central section attempts to estimate the profit that was made in the cacao trade, offering a careful analysis of prices, taxes, and shipping costs. The essay ends with a biographical sketch of a Portuguese slave trader turned cacao merchant, Antonio Méndez Chillón, whose arrest in the port of Veracruz for Jewish heresy in 1645 ended his successful career.

Este ensayo examina una variedad de temas relacionados entre sí y utiliza diferentes estrategias de investigación para explorar el tópic general del chocolate y el comercio del cacao durante el principio del siglo XVII en México. Sobre todo por medio del uso de la documentación del Tribunal Mexicano de la Inquisición, el ensayo trata de expandir nuestro conocimiento del comienzo del consumo a gran escala del chocolate en México, de los mecanismos de los asuntos relacionados con la compra, transporte, y venta del cacao, y del negocio de la venta del chocolate al detal. Una sección central intenta estimar las ganancias logradas en el comercio del cacao al ofrecer un cuidadoso análisis de precios, impuestos, y costos de transporte. El ensayo finaliza con un bosquejo biográfico de un Portugués comerciante de esclavos convertido en mercader de cacao, Antonio Méndez Chillón, cuyo arresto en el puerto de Veracruz en 1645, por ser cripto-judío, puso fin a su exitosa carrera.

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