

CULTURAL ITINERARY: THE ROUTE OF THE CACAO: TRADE OF THE CACAO IN VENEZUELA, TRANSFORMATION OF A TERRITORY

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THE CACAO IN SOUTH AMERICA :

The first reference to the fruit of the cacao in the "Province of Venezuela" was in 1579. Rodrigo de Arguelles and Gaspar de Párraga mention "the possibility of transporter these fruits to Spain." In 1602 there is a reference to 100.000 plants of cacao located in the jungles near to the lake of Maracaibo. This zone was habited by the Indians Cuicas; which were using the cocoa for ceremonial uses. Tha named the drink "Chorote" after the toasted almond of the cacao. The azteca named it "Xocolat" "The drink of the gods", the and also it was the botanical name was assigned "Theobroma".

When we speak about cocoa, immediately we think about Chocolate, but the cacao is not the chocolate, the cacao is one of the principal ingredients of the chocolate but not the only one

It is a tree which fruit is born directly of the trunk; inside they find the beefy, white and bitter seeds. They ferment these, dry off to the Sun and later they are grounded to turn in cacao; also from this process there the lard of cocoa is extracted, used for cosmetic products and other uses. The chocolate, like it we know it is a recipe developed in 1875 by the Swisses Daniel Meter y Henry Nestle.

THE TRADE:

From the XVIIth century the trade of the cacao turned into one of the principal instruments of economic development into the region. The cost of production was 15 "pesos" approximately and was selling in 50 "pesos" "by "fanega"¹. The cocoa managed to be so well quoted that occupied on the international market the third place after the gold and the silver.

To facilitate the comprehension of the historical stages of the trade of the cocoa we have divided the process in 4 stages:

¹ 165 pound=1.5 fanegas

1 The Guaira / Veracruz - 1621-1700:

This traffic represented 82,18 % of the trade of Venezuela. References are had from 1604 of the construction of ships in the Province and of the first exportation of the fruit to Cartagena. In this stage we can observe the presence of a monopoly in the exportation of the cacao on the part of the Venezuelan Fleet.

Starting from 1621 that registers increase in the exports, reaching 2000 fanegas per year, which supposes an existence of at least 350.000 trees.

In 1627 there remains registered in the customs books an intense maritime traffic and interchange of commodity between Veracruz and La Guaira. It was to record in occasions as far as to 18 ships property of this fleet.²

These fleet was going out of Caracas loaded with cocoa and was returning from Veracruz with silverwork, crockery of Populates and exotic commodity provenientes of the "Nao of Manila" that it was landing in Acapulco.

2. It fights for the control 1701-30:

Trade between Venezuela: Veracruz (Mexico): 75 %, Spain: 8,9 %; Canaries 5,6 %, French Company: 5,3 % English Company: 2,2 %, Windward Isles: 2 %.

The interchange is kept high with Veracruz but Spain and the Minor Antilles take part of the trade.

3 The Guaira / Spain-1728-85:

Monopoly of the of "Guipuzcoana Company". In the year of 1713 turns out to be registered an alone shipment from Caracas to Spain producing many complaints to them before a widespread shortage of supplies. Pedro Jose de Olavaria was in Caracas between 1720-21; in this occasion he elaborated a report over of the trade with Spain and Mexico. This report was one of the principal foundations for the creation of the of "Guipuzcoana Company" in 1728.

This company had the exclusivity of the trade between Spain and the Province of Venezuela, and it generated a violent change in the trade of cocoa. The Company lowered the prices almost at the level of production and limited the

² Polar Foundation. Dictionary of History of Venezuela. Colonial Venezuelan Merchant fleet.

trade with Veracruz. This control was translated in large losses for the Venezuelan cultivators that culminated with the revolt of the Canary Juan Francisco de León, in 1749-51. From this date the Company improved the conditions of buy of cocoa, even sold actions to the local merchants.

In this stage there is consolidated the maritime intercontinental way by the fleet of New Spain: This Fleet was coming up to Dominica or Martinique and from this place it was in two places at the same time in two: The Fleet of New Spain that was going to Veracruz and The Fleet of Firm Earth that The Guaira was directing for itself Cumana, Margarita, Rio Hacha and Santa Marta.³

4. Free Trade: 1786-1790:

The contract was cancelled by the Guipuzcoana Company in 1790 and the free trade was decreed. Fall of prices from 1790 an important fall began in the trade of the cocoa beginning to decrease the prices and internal the production. The coffee entered as competitor on the world market. Other producers start having protagonist as Guayaquil, Maracaibo and Cumaná. The internal conflicts of the country as the War of Independence, the Federal War did decaer furthermore the production and the trade of an important way. At the beginning of the XXth century decreased the untenable prices of way and the majority of the plantations are left.

MEANING OF THE ITINERARY

The production and trade of cocoa meant in Venezuela an important economic activity that lasted more than 2 centuries. It is undoubted that this stage influenced economic, cultural and spatial transformations to local, regional and global level.

Venezuela, up to this moment it had been a modest Province which economic potential had been underestimated and in the middle of the XVIIth century appears as one of the major generators of wealth in the continent.

The consequences that were produced in the territory Venezuelan as proved from this trade we can specify them in 3 points: a) Transformation of the local landscape b) Creation of new urban accessions c) the cultural legacy

a) Transformation of the local landscape:

From the ends of the XVIIth century the plantations spread along the coast of the states: Aragua, Miranda and Sucre. To local level the sowing of the cocoa generated

³ International Committee of Cultural Itineraries. Card of Identification Real Intercontinental Way.

important landscape changes his sowing needs of the total elimination of the existing vegetation and the introduction of new plants species. The construction of new ways and ports from the place of the crop up to the port of exportation.

b) Creation of new urban accessions:

We can observe the foundation of populated centers born from this economic system as the case of the State Aragua: Choroní (1622), Ocumare de la Costa (1721), Cuyagua (1660), Cata (1672) y las Obras Pías de Chuao (1568).⁴

c) The cultural legacy:

After the centuries there is valued for Venezuela the anthropologic, ethnographic, architectural, environmental and immaterial legacy of the trade of the cocoa.

It is possible to observe even today in the important collection of Mexican silverwork in the churches of Venezuela; as well as also the influence of Veracruz in the popular traditions of dances like the Venezuelan national dance.

Also the manifestations of the Africans - Venezuelan folklore the fact that the drum and the religion were recovering a fundamental role. They coincide the epochs of crop in December and in June with the Parties traditions call of San Juan and Christmas.

The Spanish heredity, she remains demonstrated in the inventories with more of 60 such places: Plantations house, customs: the headquarters of the Of Guipuzcoa

Company: The Guaira and of the "Puerto Cabello", fortifications: Maracaibo, The Guaira and, natural places, indigenous cemeteries, places of petroglifos, archaeological places and other places of interest like Chuao's cultural landscape.

The COCOA IN THE XXIST CENTURY

The merger of cultures in space and time they it have granted to Venezuela an important legacy in the XXist century. In the country we can observe the renaissance of the of the cacao culture with the creation of regional Institutes that foment the culture of the cocoa. Also it is possible to notice the rescue of the international prestige of the Venezuelan cacao and the increase of domestic enterprises dedicated to the study and development of elaborated products of the cacao.

To end we have the development of the industries of the

⁴ Called " Obras Pias " to those Plantations house benefits donated for the welfare of hospitals, misses' endowments or religious institutes.

tourism in the urban centers of the coast of the state Aragua in the one that can be enjoyed the heredity of the traditions of the cacao.

Abstract

In The Pre-Hispanic America, The Aztec named it "Xocolatl" "The drink of Gods". In South America, the first registered reference of the cocoa's fruit was at the General Office of the harbor Master in Venezuela on 1579. Rodrigo de Arguelles and Gaspar de Parraga mentioned "The possibility to transport this fruits to Spain". There is a reference in the year 1602, of 10.000 plants of cocoa to be located close to the Maracaibo Lake. This area was populated by the "Cuicas" Indians who used the cocoa for ceremonies. They named the drink "Chorote" after the toasted and grinding seed.

The Cocoa became one of the most market products in Europe and America. Since 1607, there is a reference regarding the exportation of this fruit. In 1631, there are registers showed about 2.000 "fanegas" of cocoa exported mostly to México and Spain. Between the XVII and XVIII century, the cocoas market was introduced to the most important maritime-commercial routes of the region. A very important maritime traffic was established among the consumer and producer Countries of the fruit.

The Cocoa production in Venezuela generated a transformation of the landscape and the creation of new population centers, the construction of a new substructure and services like irrigation systems, roads, system of supports and ports. The commercial exchange left deep Cultural treads in the countries who participated on this process. On the other hand, the use of the African slaves to take care of the plantations generated a mix of cultures between the African and local traditions which remain nowadays.

The Cultural Itinerary that was generated by the cocoas market among these 3 countries is showed these days in the transcendence of the humanity heritage into our culture.

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