

Cacao and colonialism: examining
the intersection between science
and commerce in the life
and work of Sir Hans Sloane

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Sir Hans Sloane, who would become the founder of the British Museum, sourced his early knowledge of natural history from Jamaica, acquired during his visit there in 1687–9. Sloane documented the various species of tropical flora (particularly cacao harvested by Jamaican slaves and used by natives) with empirical acuity for his private London herbarium and for his two-volume *Natural History of Jamaica* (1707). Sloane published botanical sketches of cacao that influenced taxonomist Carl Linnaeus. This study examines the intersection of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scientific and commercial interests through two material artefacts: an engraving of cacao from Sloane's second Jamaica volume (1725), and three glazed earthenware cups that Sloane used for drinking chocolate.



Figure 1. Sir Hans Sloane's *A voyage to the islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica*, Vol. 2, 1725, table 160

At age 27, Hans Sloane (1660–1753), a gentleman physician, botanist, and apothecary from Ulster, Ireland was enlisted as the personal physician to the Duke of Albemarle during his visit to Jamaica 1687–9. Jamaica, an English possession by 1655, was embroiled in the transatlantic slave trade. Lured by the handsome wages of medical practicing for the Duke and for the families of planters, Sloane had access to the knowledge of the plantation slaves and natives, which enabled the amateur naturalist to utilize their cultural capital to broaden his knowledge of the uses of the island's plants, through means of firsthand documentation and collection. Sloane's scientific interests were indicative of a larger commercial phenomenon that would later span the duration of four centuries, when commodities – raw materials, foodstuffs, manufactured goods, peoples – were trafficked across the Atlantic. At its apogee, the exchange of '[k]nowledge and profit went hand in hand', and the promises of scientific and commercial wealth ensnared '[Sloane] personally into worlds of speculation, colonization, and profiteering... [in] the West Indies.'¹

One plant in particular – cacao – seized the imagination of its custodian. Sloane's knowledge of the plant's

monetary, culinary and medicinal uses is bound in two volumes, titled *Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers, and Jamaica, with the Natural History ... of the Last of Those Islands*, or simply, *Natural History of Jamaica*, published in 1707 and 1725.² Sloane's volumes are emblematic of an intersection between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century science and philosophy. Cacao, and its lucrative progeny – chocolate – were a part of Sloane's larger project, which aimed at an accumulation of scientific knowledge – a project enabled by this period's transatlantic trade and colonialism. Jamaica's colonial infrastructure facilitated Sloane's 'bioprospecting' and yielded his later scientific and commercial successes.³ With a view to trace Sloane's influence on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century science and consumerism, this essay will define Sloane's work within the context of Baconian empiricism and millenarianism, venture to describe the innovative features of *Natural History*, then it will turn its attention toward patterns in consumption and consumerism and its ties to New World colonialism.

Sloane gleaned his methods of collection and meticulous documentation from writings on natural history by Francis Bacon (1561–1626), a philosopher of

whom Sloane was a disciple. Bacon viewed modern science as the means to reclaim Eden, a belief that was broadly defined as millenarianism. Bacon believed knowledge must be sought at various corners of the globe to restore the world to its ideal – or Edenic – state. In *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), Bacon expounded upon the intimacy between knowledge (science, philosophy) and matters of the State, including policy and commerce. He called upon the '[t]he King [to] take order for the collecting and perfecting of a Natural and Experimental History' of the world, precipitated through increased 'proficiency in navigation'.⁴ According to Bacon, such navigational 'proficiency' promised an 'augmentation of all sciences'⁵ which would, therefore, unite the 'material globe, the lands and seas' with the 'intellectual globe'.⁶ Bacon's exegetical eye lent itself to the inscription on the frontispiece of his *Instauratio Magna* (1621) – words that were copied by his acolyte Sloane onto the title pages of his own folio volumes. The inscription is sourced from the Book of Daniel (12:4): 'Many shall go to and fro and knowledge shall be increased.'⁷ In a

letter to his uncle, Lord Burghley, dated 1592, Bacon famously posits knowledge as man's 'philanthropia', to which he, as a natural philosopher, contributes 'industrious observations, grounded conclusions, and profitable inventions and discoveries' to the benefit of mankind.⁸ Bacon called for reform of the sciences, built upon a 'solid foundation of well-weighed experience of every kind'.⁹ Bacon's *interpretatio naturae*, or 'interpretation of nature', propounds methodologies (though not comprehensive) for inductive investigations and exploration of the natural world. Such methodologies became the foundation of modern empiricism, and heavily influenced Sloane's scientific undertaking.

Additionally, the work of John Ray (1628–1705), an intimate friend of Sloane's, was at the forefront of seventeenth-century proto-taxonomical studies of exotic and native English plants.¹⁰ Ray built upon principles of Baconian empiricism. In a letter to Sloane dated 1684, Ray outlined his own intentions to publish a three-volume systemized record of the natural world, the most comprehensive at that time:

⁴ Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd., 1893 reprint), digital reprint.

⁵ Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, digital reprint.

⁶ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum, or the True Suggestions for the Interpretation of Nature* (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1902), digital reprint.

⁷ *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*, Authorised King James Version (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Book of Daniel 12.4.

⁸ James Spedding, editor, *The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon*, Vol. 18 (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), p. 109.

⁹ Francis Bacon, *The Great Instauration* (excerpts), Basil Montague, ed. and trans., *The Works*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Parry & MacMillan, 1854), digital copy.

¹⁰ Linnaeus is credited with the first real taxonomic studies of the natural world

¹ James Delbourgo, *Collecting the World: Hans Sloane and the Origins of the British Museum* (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), p. 31.

² Both volumes of this text are referred to as the *Natural History of Jamaica*, and will appear by that title from this point.

³ Delbourgo, p. 35.

... I endeavour an enumeration of all the species already described and published... [t]o facilitate the learning of plants, if need be, without a guide or demonstrator, by so methodizing of them, and giving such certain and obvious characteristic notes of the genera... and the description, to find out infallibly any pl[ant] that shall be offered to him, especially being assisted by [the] figure of it. And, lastly, because no man of our nation hath lately attempted such a work.¹¹

Jamaica would soon become Sloane's proverbial Eden, and its 'reclamation' depended upon the execution of the quasi-millenarian agenda begun by Ray: the 'methodized' documentation of flora, acute visual renderings of specimens, and thorough written descriptions. Expressed in a letter prior to Sloane's journey to Jamaica, Ray 'heartily wish[ed]' that Sloane would 'search out and examine thoroughly the natural varieties of that island [Jamaica]'. Ray encouraged Sloane to continue such systemized studies of the natural world, for the collective benefit of science and man (Bacon's 'philanthropia'): 'Much light might be given to the history of the [exotic] plants, by one so well prepared for such an undertaking... Nay... that history, we might justly expect, would not only be illustrated but much improved and advanced.'¹²

¹¹ John Ray and Edwin Lankester, editor, *The correspondence of John Ray: consisting of selections from the philosophical letters published by Dr. Derham, and original letters of John Ray in the collection of the British Museum* (London: Printed for the Ray Society, 1848), p. 139.

¹² Ray and Lankester, editor, p. 192.

¹³ Delbourgo, p. 96.

The ideas purported by Bacon and Ray influenced Sloane to 'increase' the knowledge he acquired through his exchanges with the Jamaican slaves and natives. Subsequently, during his two-year sojourn in Jamaica, Sloane amassed a collection of 1,589 specimens that were later bound in his two-volume compendia, produced through arduous processes of collection, preservation, description, illustration, and research upon his return.¹³ However, Sloane's visual and textual renderings of cacao, in particular, embodied the principles of Baconian empiricism, which had resounding effects on the work of botanists and taxonomists during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Cacao was not native to Jamaica; it had been transplanted from the American mainland by the Spanish (Fig. 1). Prized for its versatility and exploited for its profitability in the Americas and Jamaica, cacao featured prominently in Sloane's second folio volume (1725). When Sloane began collecting and documenting specimens in Jamaica, precise forms of scientific representation of various studies were in their early stages. A codified system of classification did not emerge until Linnaeus published his twelve-page *Systema Naturae* (1735), using binomial (rather than polynomial) nomenclature. Sloane's *Natural History*

was objectively novel because it was written in English rather than Latin, the *lingua franca* of contemporary science; therefore, Sloane's work possessed greater utility for a non-academic, English-speaking audience. However, it was not simply this end – the scientific benefit to mankind – that echoed Bacon's philosophy. Sloane also supplied visual accompaniments to his textual descriptions of Jamaican flora. His work reflected the Baconian scientific 'reforms', which altered pre-existing means of scientific investigation: the focus of documentation would shift from solely textual records and descriptions to include empirical visual studies of plant specimens, a scientific pursuit exemplified by the cacao engraving.

Botanists that practiced in the later eighteenth-century Linnaean tradition of taxonomy would gather a surfeit of plant specimens to closely study and record. From these examples, botanists would scrutinize a particular characteristic of the plant, poring over multiple specimens in order to derive a complete understanding of its properties. After analyzing a body of samples, they would produce a composite sketch of a specimen, trusting that a range of specimens would yield a more accurate representation of the entire species. However, Bacon and his proselyte Sloane saw that a greater degree of factuality lay in the study of

¹⁴ Delbourgo, p. 102.

¹⁵ Hans Sloane, *A voyage to the islands, Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica*, Vol. II (London: Printed for the author, 1725), p. vi.

a single specimen, whose 'unidealized' and 'unsystematic' variety revealed the nuances that existed in the natural world.¹⁴ Referencing pages 59 and 60 of the fifth volume of Sloane's personal Jamaica herbarium, the sketch of a cacao plant adjoins the preserved specimen, which was used to render the drawing with acuity. Sloane glued (then subsequently, taped) the specimen next to the sketch for reference.

This form of study required Sloane – as well as his sketch artist Reverend Garrett Moore, who accompanied him in Jamaica – to levy an empirical eye when capturing the minute characteristics of individual specimens. For example, true to the empirical principles of observation, Moore rendered some sketches *in situ*, drawing them extant in nature, without relying on slaves to harvest specimens for later study. This is true of Moore's drawings for the *Arborum fructiferarum* in Sloane's second volume, which pictures a variety of trees – including cacao – rendered on site in their 'natural Magnitude.'¹⁵ More than a decade elapsed after Sloane's return to London – in 1689 – before he commissioned Dutch draughtsman Everhardus Kickius to draw live and preserved cacao specimens, combining details from each. Although not produced in the Linnaean fashion, Kickius' drawings were, in fact, composite renderings.

Charged with visually cataloguing Jamaican specimens, Kickius sourced his illustrations from Moore's sketches and Sloane's verbose descriptions of native life.

During the seventeenth century, scientific investigation and information about the practical uses of plants, often sourced from the native population, were common in natural history. In his first Jamaican volume, published in 1707, Sloane recognized the 'considerable profit' that cacao fetched for European and American traders, without expanding further upon its utilitarian or commercial potentiality.¹⁶ However, Sloane dedicates considerable space in the second volume to pontificate about the origins of the plant, its palliative properties, and its various monetary and culinary uses for the Indians and Spaniards.

Sloane carefully studied the economic exclusivity of cacao. Sloane remarks that in 'certain Provinces which are call'd Guatimala and Soconusco, there is a growing great Store of Cacao... It is the best Merchandise that is in all the Indies.'¹⁷ Given its relative scarcity, 'for it will not grow in any cold Country', the 'Christians carried

[cacao] from [Soconusco] to Nova Hispania and Nicaragua' to cultivate it... [and] Honduras...¹⁸ Furthermore, Sloane remarks that '[w]hen the Spaniards went first to Mexico these Nuts went for current Money.' Indians prized cacao, using it as currency prior to the arrival of the Spanish: '...the Nuts pass for Money, in Costa Rica, between Portabel and Nicaragua, on the Coast of Caraccas and in the South Seas at Guiaquil, Colima, and Jamaica.'¹⁹ Sloane's record continues, '...[t]he Indians planted them in a hot and moist Ground, and purchas'd with them whatever they wanted of their Neighbours.'²⁰ Such records suggest the early commodification of cacao by the Spanish. In the markets of the West Indies, cacao could be used to barter for coveted goods, as it 'goeth currently for Money... or Fair, and may buy any Flesh, Fish, Bread or Cheese, or other Things.'²¹ The monetization of cacao also formed the foundation of the Indian economy, and Sloane further suggests that possession of the nuts had some influence over the social dynamics within – and between – the populations of Indians, Spanish, and English (after 1655). He follows this statement by writing, 'The Indians when taken Prisoners by us Strangers shew'd their Esteem

for these Nuts more than any other Commodity.'²² Relative to almonds, another expensive commodity, cacao was exorbitantly priced: 'The Indians of this Country pay the King their Tribute in Cacao, giving him four hundred Carga's, and every Carga is twenty four thousand Almonds... The chiefest Merchandise in Suchetepec and Guazacapan is Cacao.'²³

After his expatriation on cacao's intrinsic value to both the Jamaican natives and the colonists, Sloane turned his attention to the culinary and medicinal uses of the plant. Early preparations of the plant by the Indians were labor-intensive; the most common product was a beverage, followed by early forms of solid chocolate to be consumed. The cacao had to undergo torrefaction of the nut, 'having so much Oyl that it may be squeez'd out of them', which allowed it to be 'pour[ed]... out of one Vessel into another, from on high, to bring the more oily Parts and Froth uppermost, to be drank.' In all cases, 'moderate heat' is needed to cause the separation of the solid and the liquid; what is left – the 'compound' – may be eaten for 'nourish[ment]'. Both the Indians and Spanish²⁴ – and later, with the culinary knowledge Sloane

carted back to London, the English – enjoyed chocolate beverages.

Sections of Sloane's second volume echo, almost verbatim, the firsthand accounts of Girolamo Benzoni, an Italian merchant and *conquistador*, from his *Historia del Mondo Nuovo* (1565). Whether Sloane lifted these words from the pages of Benzoni's work or the comparison of chocolate to a 'drink [only] suited' for pigs' was ubiquitous throughout the New World remains unclear. However, Sloane would have encountered Benzoni's writings in this research about the plant. Both men describe chocolate as an 'ungrateful Drink' they lacked an immediate taste for: 'To make Drink the Indians dry [nuts] on an earthen File, grind them with Stones to Powder, and mix it with Water and Pepper, which makes a Difla fitter for Swine than Men.' Sloane continues, '... [I]t was a Year before I could drink of it, for which the Indians would laugh at me; it does not inebriate; and is in great Esteem among the Indians.'²⁵ Sloane and Benzoni's acceptance of chocolate was reluctant, but they noted how the Spanish quickly grew fond of the chocolate drink. According to Sloane, it became palatable to the Spanish with the addition of 'Chille,

16 Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. lv.

17 Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. 16.

18 Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. 16.

19 Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. 16.

20 Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. 16.

21 Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. 16.

22 Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. 16.

23 Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. 16.

24 The French also had chocolate recipes dating from the seventeenth century.

25 Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. 16; Benzoni's own account reads, 'It [chocolate] seemed more a drink for pigs, than a drink for humanity... The taste is somewhat bitter, it satisfies and refreshes the body, but does not inebriate, and it is the best and most expensive merchandise, according to the Indians of that country' from the facsimile 1575 edition of *La storia del Mondo Nuovo*: Girolamo Benzoni, *La storia del Mondo Nuovo* (Graz: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1962), pp. 103-4.

or sweet Pepper and Achiote', and soon, the Spanish partook in 'drinking Chocolate five or six Times a Day.'²⁶

While Sloane does not specify whether the Spanish partook 'five or six Times a Day' out of mere enjoyment of drink, he goes on to tout the plant's analgesic and health-promoting properties for its consumers, 'provided it be moderately us'd'.²⁷ Sloane's catalogue of medicinal uses for cacao reflects his interest in the study of physic, and foreshadows the development – and later promotion of – 'medicinal chocolate' in the eighteenth century: 'Three or four Nuts first rolled stop the Bloody Fluxes', cacao aided the body in 'dissipat[ing] malignant Humours' and 'keep[ing] the Body cool and in good order'. It possessed palliative use for people who were 'hectical and consumptive' and 'extenuated', and its 'anodine' qualities were 'good in all Inflammations'.²⁸ The above diagnoses recorded in the Jamaica volume for which cacao was prescribed as a purgative or laxative remain still largely ambiguous.

Additionally, Sloane reports that taken as an aphrodisiac, the 'compound [solid] Sort promotes Venery'.²⁹ When researching and writing his *Natural History*, Sloane would have referred

to the work of his contemporary, Dr. Henry Stubbes (1632–1676), who was one leading authority on chocolate in the seventeenth century and prepared the concoction for Charles II. Sloane and Stubbes were appointed to similar positions during their respective stints in Jamaica. Stubbes was appointed His Majesty's Physician in Jamaica in 1661, and by the next year, authored *The Indian nectar, or, A discourse concerning chocolate* (1662). Two decades later, he returned to the subject of chocolate in *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, and Tobacco* (1682). In a near propagandistic fashion, Stubbes' essay uses the Bible to peddle chocolate as a miracle drug. Stubbes, and later Sloane, both suggest that chocolate was a crucial implement to a grand millennialist design. During the seventeenth century, chocolate appealed to the sexually indulgent consumer, and Stubbes goes so far as to say that chocolate could be used as an accessory to people the planet, as God had intended: '...Adam is commanded in Paradise to increase and multiply, therefore I hope this little Excursion is pardonable, being so adequate to this Treatise of *Chocolate*...' ³⁰ Sloane circulated amongst men, like Stubbes, who all saw science as the mechanism to execute God's will. Whether these early musings were evidence of his

²⁶ Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. 16.

²⁷ Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. 17.

²⁸ Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. 17.

²⁹ Sloane, *Natural History of Jamaica*, Vol. II, p. 17.

³⁰ Henry Stubbes, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, and Tobacco* (London: Christopher Wilkinson, 1682), p. 18.



Figure 2. Three chocolate cups from Hans Sloane's collection Bernardo Sterbini, dealer c. 1700.

Three chocolate cups. [Tin-glazed earthenware]. At: London: British Museum, Britain, Europe and Prehistory. SLMisc. 1693.

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millennarianist affinities or commercial speculation, once he returned to London in 1689, Sloane's holistic approach to the study of cacao facilitated a new economic opportunity: the popularity of chocolate throughout Europe was aided by the trade in another cash crop, sugar, in which Sloane also had a hand.

Sloane's involvement in transatlantic commerce – a network that traded knowledge of cacao and lucrative commodities such as sugar – engendered a taste for chocolate in England. The sphere of colonialism in which Sloane was enmeshed, which can be broadly defined as the triangular trade that united Europe, Africa, and the Americas, promulgated consumerism as well as scientific understanding. In the decade that preceded Sloane's arrival in Jamaica, naval shipping lists recorded an exponential spike in the export of cacao. From 1675–8, a total of three metric tons of cacao left Jamaica and Barbados, bound for other countries. However, between 1678–9, that total more than quadrupled from the previous years to 14 metric tons.³¹ To put this in perspective, cacao was rivaled only by sugar, a commodity whose exports topped 3,650 metric tons.³² The cultivation of cacao proved difficult; it was susceptible to disease

and vulnerable to the tempestuous weather of the Caribbean. A blight befell the crop in Jamaica during 1670–1, a fact which Sloane documented in *Natural History*. The loss of the crop could partly account for the low quantities of exports from 1671–7, and its relative scarcity could account for its exorbitant cost. However, while cacao exports from Jamaica plummeted to negligible levels in the last decade of the seventeenth century, sugar exports from the island increased seven hundred percent.³³ Although scholars still debate how and why chocolate gained popularity in England in the last decades of the seventeenth century, the addition of sugar into chocolate – made possible by ever-increasing imports of sugar into England – could have made the otherwise 'distasteful' drink palatable for English taste.

On May 11, 1695, during this decade of unparalleled growth in the sugar trade, Sloane married Elizabeth Langley Rose – a match which 'linked [Sloane] permanently to Jamaica and slavery.'³⁴ Elizabeth's former husband Fulke Rose owned 3,000 acres in Jamaica and had been one of Jamaica's chief slave owners. As dictated by the laws of coverture, Elizabeth relinquished her one-third share of net profits

³¹ David Eltis, "New Estimates of Exports from Barbados and Jamaica, 1665–1701," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 52.4 (1995), pp. 631–648 (p. 639).

³² Gaps exist in the records; sugar also used for molasses and rum may account for the high number of exports.

³³ Eltis, p. 643.

³⁴ Delbourgo, p. 149.

from the Rose plantations in Jamaica to Sloane after they married. Sloane benefited from the trade in sugar, a fact recorded in shipping ledgers from the early eighteenth century. By the time of Elizabeth's death in 1724, Sloane amassed a total fortune of £3 million pounds (in today's money) from the sugar plantations.³⁵ To some extent, Sloane's knowledge of cacao – its medicinal properties, preparations, and rituals – and his contribution to the trade of sugar, an ingredient necessary to make the drink palatable, helped to popularize the drink in London.

The increased demand for chocolate in Britain in the latter decades of the seventeenth century and first half of the eighteenth century gave rise to a culture of conspicuous consumption. Along with the importation of cacao beans and knowledge of early preparations of the beverage, Sloane inadvertently contributed to the transmutation of the Mesoamerican chocolate-taking rituals in England, which evolved and spread from the Americas to Jamaica with the help of the Spanish.

Chocolate's consumption initially possessed spiritual connotations for the Mesoamericans, namely the Aztec and Maya. Appropriately, Carl Linneaus assigned the plant its taxonomic name *Theobroma cacao* in 1753; the first part of

³⁵ Delbourgo, p. 149.

³⁶ Sophie Coe and Michael D. Coe, *True History of Chocolate* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2013), p. 18.

³⁷ Sloane, *Natural History*, Vol. II, p. 383.

the binomial, *Theobroma*, synthesizes two Greek roots, *theo* ("god") and *broma* ("drink").³⁶ Sloane's knowledge of chocolate and its accoutrement is a product of European colonialism in the Americas and the transatlantic trade networks which forged a link between the New and Old Worlds. Although Sloane arrived in Jamaica after the island transferred from the hands of the Spanish to the English in 1655, much of the Spaniards' early sixteenth-century knowledge about chocolate-taking accessories had persisted. In the second volume of *Natural History*, Sloane records this established knowledge of the chocolate vessel that had remained from the Hispanic era. Sloane writes, 'The Indians drink their Chocolate in Calabashes... the great Use of [calabash] is to make Cups and Vessels to drink out of, called Thecomates, especially for Chocolate.'³⁷

For the Mesoamericans prior to their domination by the Spanish during the first decades of the sixteenth century, the taking of chocolate was a ceremonious affair, in which 'chocolate was imbibed from drinking vessels made for that purpose': 'During the pre-Hispanic era, finely painted lacquered gourds and ceramics were manufactured exclusively for chocolate... Known in Nahuatl as *tecomatl* (for ceramic cups) and *xicalli* (for the calabash variety), these vessels

were among the tribute items levied by Moctezuma.³⁸ The possession of accoutrement designated for chocolate emphasizes the ceremonial importance of the plant for the natives, especially one as notable as the Aztec ruler. Following their conquest of Mesoamerica, the Spaniards held onto early preparations of the drink and appropriated the natives' chocolate-taking ritual, though they eventually stripped it of its spiritual significance.³⁹ Even so, the use of the chocolate vessel remained an intact part of what was still, to some degree, ritualistic consumption by the Spanish *conquistadores*; in time, a demand for chocolate vessels developed, fueled by the transatlantic trade between the Americas and Iberian Peninsula:

The Spanish also learned from Mesoamericans that chocolate must be sipped from a special vessel—the *tecomate*... or the *jícara*... Ship manifests indicate that in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Iberian-based chocolate consumers bought *tecomates* and *jicaras* along with chocolate and cacao imports. Likewise, early chocolate still lifes depict the lacquered gourds as part of the conventionalized chocolate service.⁴⁰

Rising demand for chocolate throughout

Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries fueled the demand for its accoutrements. Transatlantic trade facilitated the transmutation of Mesoamerican chocolate-taking ritual, and with rising '...demand for... chocolate... came yearnings for accessory implements, spurring European manufacturers to produce porcelain chocolate pots...'⁴¹ The calabash cup, *tecomates*, *jicaras* of middle America were readily replaced by sumptuous, decorative alternatives in Europe.

While chocolate was partaken from dishes during the seventeenth century, the chocolate cup quickly replaced the dish in England.⁴² However elusive their use for the enjoyment of chocolate drinks, Sloane himself owned a set of tin-glazed earthenware cups made for the beverage (Fig. 2 above). Although Sloane explored a rich history of Mesoamerican chocolate rituals and their evolution at the hands of the Spanish, little is known about his own chocolate cups, except for an extant description from his manuscripts: 'Eleven chocolate cups of various shapes & designs, some broken from Abbe Sterbini's collection'.⁴³ Sloane imported the cups from Bernardo, or

'Abbe', Sterbini, who dealt in antiquities in Rome during the 1730s. The cups are emblazoned with scenes from the Old Testament that seem to reflect Bacon's millenarist design. The rightmost cup depicts Moses striking water from a rock, after which he proclaims that 'that the people may drink.'⁴⁴ At his feet, unidentified figures lap up the water as it issues forth. His possession of such cups links him inextricably to Jamaica through ties of the transatlantic cacao trade which first cultivated knowledge of the exotic plant, its origins, and rituals, but later, a consumer society bent around the preparation of the beverage and the accoutrement to facilitate its consumption. Whether Sloane intended it or not, the cups can be read symbolically as the fulfillment of Baconian millenarianism: Sloane's empirical studies of cacao ushered in scientific – and culinary – change in Britain. Sloane, like Moses, allowed his public to 'drink' to prosperity, partaking in whatever beverage they saw fit. The gilded cups reaffirm the heightened social status of chocolate consumption in the era preceding industrialization, when mass production of chocolate made it more economically accessible to the general public. Sloane's possession of these cups suggests that he partook – however indirectly – in a culture of conspicuous consumption.

Sloane's scientific and commercial

successes illuminate a nuanced, dynamic intersection of knowledge and profit in the late decades of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century. Jamaica's colonization proved advantageous to Sloane and his contemporaries on multiple fronts: its exoticism fostered a curiosity in the science of the New World; its accessibility and profitability fueled commercial prospecting; and its rich colonial history shaped – and continued to reshape – European consumerism in the eighteenth century.

38 Marcy Norton, 'Tasting Empire: Chocolate and the European Internalization of Mesoamerican Aesthetics', *The American Historical Review*, 111.3 (2006), pp. 660–691 (p. 672); Coe and Coe, *True History of Chocolate*, p. 52.

39 Coe and Coe, *True History of Chocolate*, p. 126.

40 Norton, p. 683.

41 Norton, p. 666.

42 Coe and Coe, *True History of Chocolate*, p. 175.

43 Written description by Sterbini accompanies photograph of the cups on the British Museum website

44 *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*, Authorised King James Version (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Exodus 17.6.