

The essence of commodification: Caffeine dependencies in the early modern world.

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The Essence of Commodification: Caffeine Dependencies in the Early Modern World

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Abstract

Caffeine drinks were unknown in Europe prior to the 16th century expansion of European colonial powers. Coffee, tea and cacao were the three caffeine commodities which, by the late 17th century, dominated European caffeine consumption habits. World systems models of mercantile expansion have emphasized European consumption as a driving force behind the development of plantation economies. The process by which these drinks gained prominence, however, was initially centred on regional production and consumption in the colonies themselves. The history of other caffeine beverages such as guayusa and yerba maté in South America provides a wider view. Such products never gained a market in the metropole, but illustrate the variables involved in the transition of caffeine plant domesticates from pre-colonial regional products to cosmopolitan, global commodities.



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