



Sacred Consumption: Food and Ritual in Aztec Art and Culture

Elizabeth Morán

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Aztec painted manuscripts and sculptural works, as well as indigenous and Spanish sixteenth-century texts, were filled with images of foodstuffs and food processing and consumption. Both gods and humans were depicted feasting, and food and eating clearly played a pervasive, integral role in Aztec rituals. Basic foods were transformed into sacred elements within particular rituals, while food in turn gave meaning to the ritual performance.

This pioneering book offers the first integrated study of food and ritual in Aztec art. Elizabeth Morán asserts that while feasting and consumption are often seen as a secondary aspect of ritual performance, a close examination of images of food rites in Aztec ceremonies demonstrates that the presence—or, in some cases, the absence—of food in the rituals gave them significance. She traces the ritual use of food from the beginning of Aztec mythic history through contact with Europeans, demonstrating how food and ritual activity, the everyday and the sacred, blended in ceremonies that ranged from observances of births, marriages, and deaths to sacrificial offerings of human hearts and blood to feed the gods and maintain the cosmic order. Morán also briefly considers continuities in the use of pre-Hispanic foods in the daily life and ritual practices of contemporary Mexico. Bringing together two domains that have previously been studied in isolation, *Sacred Consumption* promises to be a foundational work in Mesoamerican studies.

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