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Colonialism And The Americas | Object Analysis

Chalice by Antón Dantés

Madison Goff

IDES 521 + IDES 651

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Introduction to object

Antón Dantés Silver-gilt Chalice

Circa 1565-1575

Mexico City

(Metmuseum.org,2020)

Gold-plated, cast, lathed, embossed,
chiseled and gloss-punched silver.

(Metmuseum.org,2020)

Height: 33 cm

Maximum Width: 21 cm

Weight: 2250 g

(Metmuseum.org,2020)



Place

The chalice was created in Mexico City, Mexico

(Metmuseum.org,2020)

(Previously known as Tenochtitlan, an old Aztec city that was conquered by the Spanish)



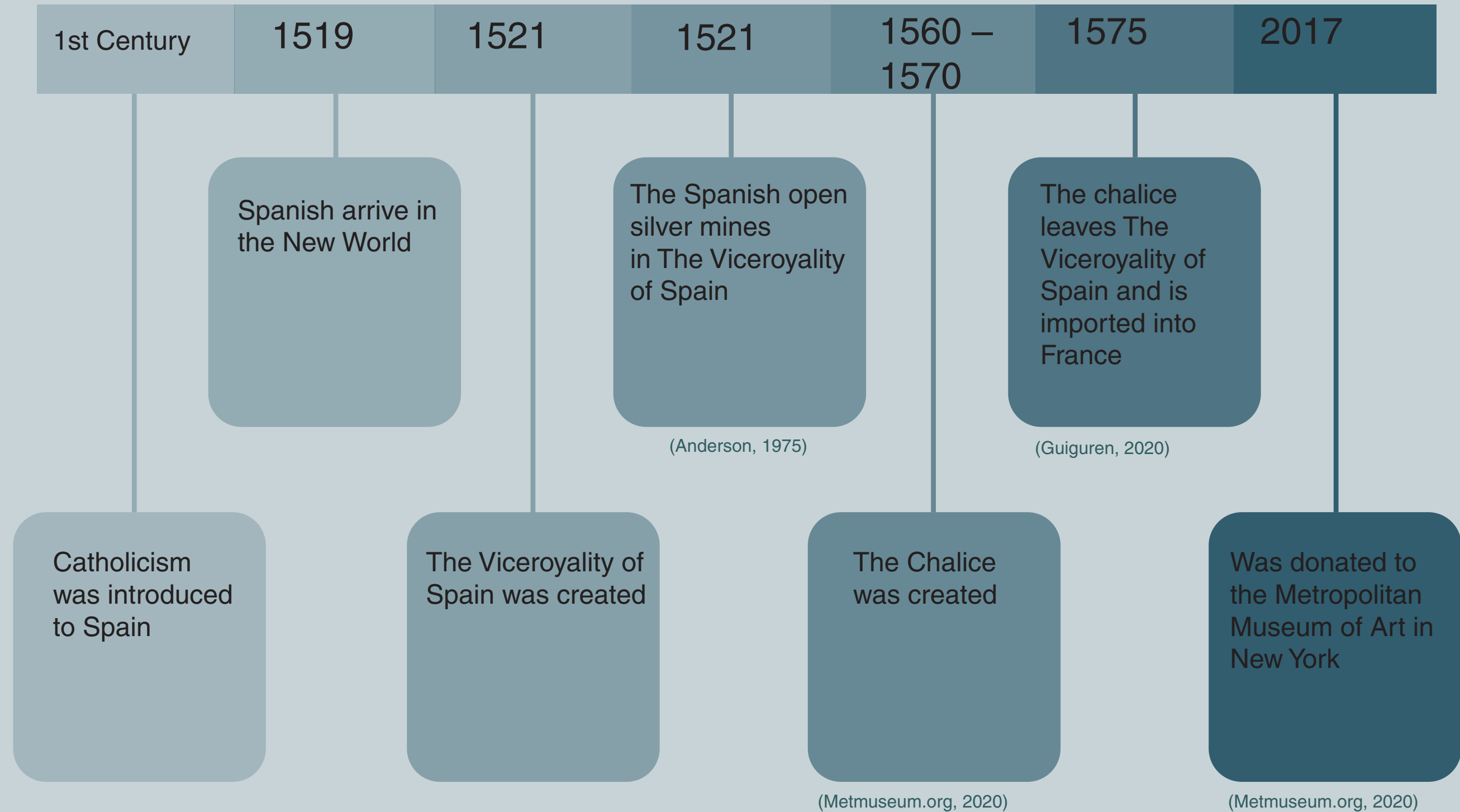
The silversmith Antón Dantés was originally from Seville, Spain.

(Guiguren, 2020)

The Viceroyalty of Spain

Time

The Object was estimated to be created between the years 1560 and 1570



People and Culture

The citizens who occupied 'Mexico City' in The Viceroyalty of Spain were Native Indians, and the Spanish conquistadors.

- The Aztecs were the Indigenous peoples of Mexico before the Spanish took over.
 - After the Spanish conquered the Aztecs, the population of the Native Indians plummeted from 20 million to around 2 million. (Green, 2012)
- The Spanish were also missionaries and saw the New World as “a spiritual conquest”, which introduced **Catholicism**.
 - Many practice a version of Catholicism that include “pre-Hispanic” traditions. (Green, 2012)
- The Spanish were in search for gold and jewels, but instead found silver.
 - Silver mines were constructed and the Natives were forced to be **servants**. The mines were the main occupation for the nation. (Anderson, 1975)



Aztec Sun Symbol illustration

<https://www.amazon.com/Aztec-Symbol-Stickers-Decals-Ancient/dp/B01DCVOAE-U?th=1>



Aztec Sun Stone

https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/SS7730459_7730459_8650162;prevRouteTS=1638730161940

Tools and Materials

Material

Silver-gilt, gold-plated, gloss-punched silver

(Metmuseum.org,2020)

Process

The chalice was created by pouring the molten silver into a cast that the artist made out of wax. The artist then utilized the technique called 'repousse' where he hammered from the inside of the chalice which creates a low relief design. Then a small layer of gold was then applied on top of the silver-gilt chalice.

(Olmos, 2003)

Tools

Hammer, an anvil and a chisel.

(Olmos, 2003)



Design process and characteristics

Cup

Slightly flared at the top and has a distinctly smooth texture, comparative to the highly ornamented and raised elements.

Shaft

Has multiple convexed areas on the shaft in between the cup and the base

There are busts of religious figures on each face of the hexagonal form at the middle of the shaft.

Base

The bottom of the cup portrays four winged cherubs' heads and detailed scenes of religious figures from the Bible.

(Guiguren,2020)



Design process and characteristics

This chalice takes a different approach than others. Instead of portraying the usual apostles, the artist casted portraits of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John the Baptist, and St. Barbara



- Each face of the volumetric hexagonal form is connected by festoons.
- The Saints are captured between arches, clearly separating each figure.
- The long forms encircling the chalice resemble a form like minarets which could have been influenced by the previous Islamic presence of the Moors in Spain
- Small shells are found at the midpoint of the festoons. The shell represents baptism in Christianity.

(Guiguren,2020)

Design process and characteristics



[https://jaimeeguiguren.com/
usr/library/documents/main/
cat-plateria-2017-14-19.pdf](https://jaimeeguiguren.com/usr/library/documents/main/cat-plateria-2017-14-19.pdf)



<https://jaimeeguiguren.com/usr/library/documents/main/cat-plateria-2017-14-19.pdf>

**Chalice by Antón Dantés
Mexico, 1560-1570 C.E.**



<https://jaimeeguiguren.com/usr/library/documents/main/cat-plateria-silver-gilt-chalice.pdf>

**Vermeil chalice and its paten,
maker's mark OPIRIZ, La Antigua
Guatemala, circa 1560 C.E.**



<https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2008/european-silver-gold-boxes-and-objects-of-vertu-pf8013/lot.171.html>

**A Guatemalan Silver-gilt Chalice,
La Antigua Guatemala
Circa 1550-1560 C.E.**

The similar elements that these chalices share was from a stylistic trend that spread to Seville, to Mexico (Viceroyalty of New Spain), to the Kingdom of Guatemala.

Use or role within an interior

The function of the chalice was to hold the consecrated wine during communion.

Before Communion

- The object is placed on a table, located in front of the congregation before communion starts.

During Communion

- The chalice is held by the priest during the service.

After Communion

- The objects are placed in a secured tabernacle, located behind the altar. After communion, the objects are moved to the sacristy where altar servers' clothes are kept, sacramental wines, and other religious artifacts are kept. It is kept locked up when not being utilized for communion.

(Anderson, 1975)



Spanish Ciborium
Spanish 16th Century

https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/SS7731421_7731421_11670832;prevRouteTS=1638734711804

Effects of colonialism

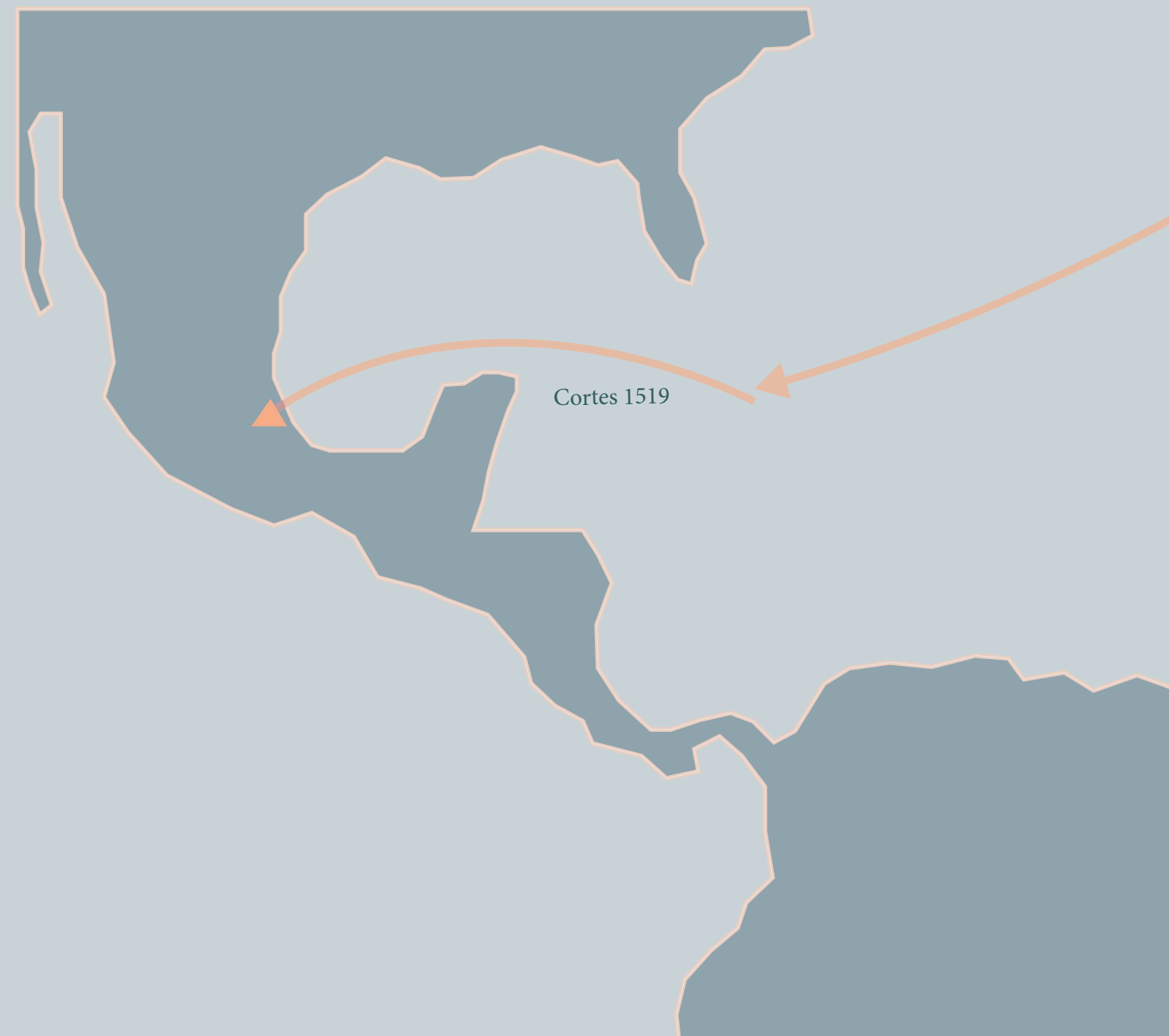
Spanish conquistadors' motivation were the three g's: God, glory, and gold

Before the Spanish

- The Aztecs oversaw a vast amount of land and people in Central America
- It was of little effort for Spanish conqueror Hernan Cortes to conquer and seize those lands due to a **divided nation** (Green, 2012)

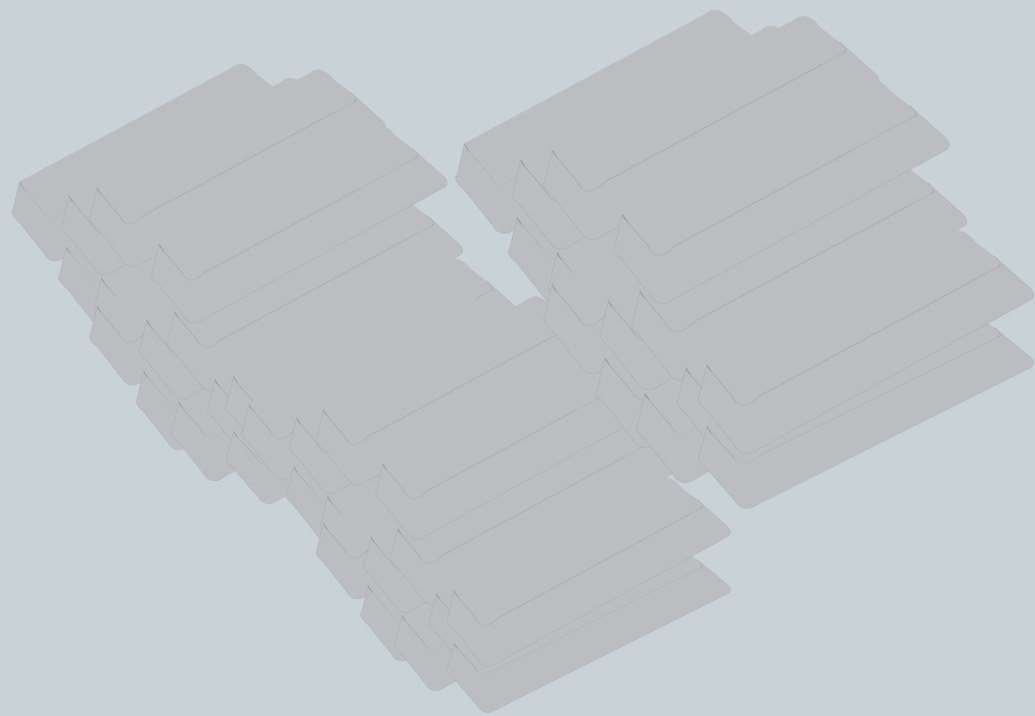
After the Spanish

- Created the Viceroyalty of Spain in 1521 (Green, 2012)
- Conquistadors discovered large amounts of silver in the new world
- The Spanish adopted the Inca mandatory public service system called **Mita** to mine the silver (Anderson, 1975)
- Native Indians pass away from battles with the Spanish, new diseases, and mercury poisoning from the silver mines (Anderson, 1975)
- The silver mines in the Americas from the 16th and 18th century produced over 150 thousand tons of silver (Anderson, 1975)
- Native Indian Silversmiths are forced by Spain to **forfeit their traditional** silver practices and are taught by Spanish silversmiths the rules and styles of the Spanish Church (Anderson, 1975)

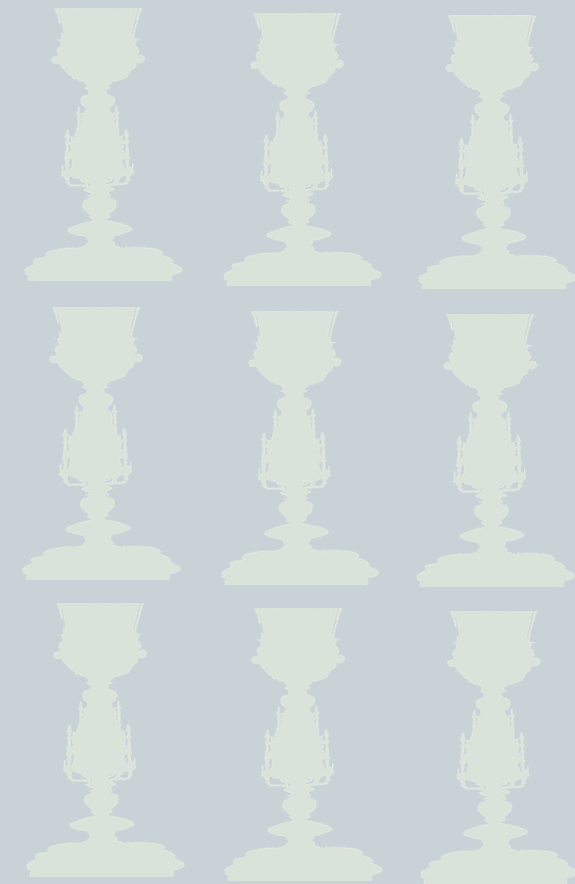


Effects of colonialism

Since there was such an availability of silver, the churches were able to create chalices and other items out of silver without being too expensive



Surplus of silver



More holy silver objects for the Catholic Church both in Mexico and Spain

Mexico is the world's leading producer of silver and has occupied top spot for several years.

Analysis, realizations, and reflections

ANALYSIS

The Native Indians were easily overthrown by the Spanish Conquistadors due to a weak government and divided nation. The Conquistadors made silver mines which produced a larger availability for metal. The Churches were commissioning more holy objects to be produced with silver. The Chalice by Antón Dantés was commissioned by a church to follow the same style that was popular in the artist's hometown Seville, Spain.

If the Spanish did not conquer the New World, there would not have been the discovery of large quantities of silver, conversion to Catholicism, and Chalice by Antón Dantés

REALIZATIONS

- The Native Mexican Indians had an interesting hierarchy/ mandatory service system that was copied by the Spanish conquerors and utilized for the silver mining,
- There were many deaths from this colonization by disease, conquests, and mercury poisons in the mine.
- A similar design style was occurring in Spain around the same time that it was occurring in Guatemala

REFLECTIONS

- Nearly one third of all the silver mined in the world came from the Guanajuato region.
- Many Natives died from these conquests.
- Cultures of the Natives were not all written languages so its hard to know exactly how they lived before they were conquered.
- The conquistadors forced conversion, destruction, and violence to subjugate the Native people.

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