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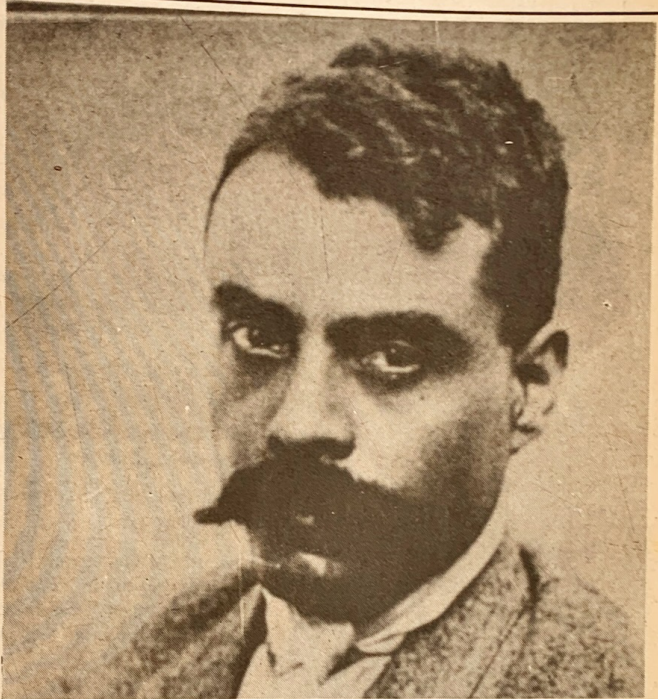
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The aphrodisiacs

Before falling to earth, "The Aztec Indians were brightly colored and birds who told a few secrets to Cortez de Balsabore for the Indians, secrets such as herbs speak, have sex, and cure. Little plants, aided by the human word, pull sickness from the body, reveal mysteries, straighten out destinies, and provoke love or forgetfulness." (Eduardo Galeano in Memory of Fire).

The study of aphrodisiacs or substances that stimulate genetic functions (such as erection or ejaculation) is extremely restricted. Actually, any use of aphrodisiacs is usually attributed to physical or nervous disorders and the thought that alleviating suffering by their use is said not to be valid. In the past, however, remedies included Spanish fly, essence of mint or garlic, and others that were effective.

In a study of the use of aphrodisiacs in the Valle de Tlacolula, we found that aphrodisiacs were reported to be non-existent among those interviewed. Varyingly, the response to our questions was that a friend, relative or neighbor told them about something that stimulates sexual desire, that they never needed aphrodisiacs except



A Mexican macho

perhaps as a guarantee for extramarital success. They are not used for conjugal relations. We were told that good health assures good sex...

"You're not going to believe this, but when I was potent and ate well, I had my wife six times a night. But that was if I had "vacas," a raw milk early in the day. Another at night made it good for me."

Some think that drinking tejate, an ancient drink made of corn daily, gives energy and even the elderly don't fail. One or two glasses of tejate mid-day is for energy and aphrodisiacal qualities; another choice is a raw onion with food or eaten alone with lemon juice. A 90 year-old told me that years ago she cooked for some Spaniards who ate a lot of onions. They told her that even if the man is dead, it revives and there is an erection.

Some say warm poultry broth

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Many refer to being in good condition because of morning "espirituales," two raw eggs beaten in a cup of chocolate. "My wife gives me my inspiration everyday and I never fail." Also another preparation is "pollas," two raw eggs in sherry or consecrated wine. If I can be with my wife during the day (instead of at night) I quickly prepare two raw eggs in a

“ You're not going to believe this, but when I was potent and ate well, I had my wife six times a night. But that was if I had "vacas." ”

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The aphrodisiacs...

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...make them feel potent. Others believe in young goat's testicles, called "criadillas" because "you see, the goat is very hot. Whenever people can, they do eat it because it's nothing really special to prepare."

One curious stimulant is Spanish fly dust obtained from a green fly that is dried, pulverized and taken in small quantities. But any excess causes near-fatal sickness. Spanish fly is a coleopteran from Europe. Dust from a black species that lives in excrement, especially cow dung, is similar to the coleopteran and is used in the same way. Another source is the badger, caught by mountain hunters in search of deer. One hunter recalled that his boss had O.D.ed and although he was dead, his penis was still erect.

Most people interviewed said they never used or believed in the existence of aphrodisiacs and believe that when the time comes, age, malnutrition or sickness put an end to potency. As one old man

put it, you might as well forget it.

None of those interviewed know of any method of contraception other than the rhythm method or coitus interruptus. Until 20 years ago, they had between 10 and 20 children. Now 95% of the young married couples, will consult a doctor for birth control advice after 1 or 2 children, even if their own parents had more than 10.

Some women say they limit pregnancy with fasting and only 3 lemons daily, or a lemon water douche right after coitus. Women using such vaginal prevention often suffer from inflammation and illness. An unwanted pregnancy provokes some women to take infusions of bark or cinnamon tea to provoke an abortion. Carrying heavy objects or pounding their stomachs is also sometimes successful, unfortunately some women can hemorrhage and die.

As we pointed out at the beginning, the subject is delicate and people do not like to talk about it.

This discretion is natural and little ancient testimony exists in this Zapotec pueblo, but the investigation will continue. ♦

Viajes Xochitlan



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Camino Real, the Presidente reborn

As a service to our readers we want to let them know that the former Stouffer Presidente Hotel has been bought by the Camino Real Hotel Co. The new management has improved the quality of the hotel services and has restored the beauty of the building and grounds too!

The Guelaguetza, a famous Oaxacan ethnic dance festival is performed every Friday night, the performance includes a dinner of the well known Oaxacan cuisine. You can also enjoy the beautiful craft market in the old chapel of the Camino Real. The Camino Real Hotel is located at the corner of 5 de mayo St. and Abasolo St. ♦



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"Los corridos"

Stories of passion, political events, heroic feats, tales of outlaws, historic and revolutionary ballads of love and nature are the marrow of the Mexican corrido or popular octosyllabic lyric poem. Firmly entrenched in our folklore, it is the most genuine of Mexican epics put to music. It reached its height of popularity during the Revolution but reputedly dates back to the colonial era.

A few authors and compilers like Vicente T. Mendoza and Higinio Vasquez Santana have linked this music genre with the Spanish narrative type poems in as much as corridos relate exploits of wars and battles and their lyrics follow the pattern of the Castilian verses, songs and old picturesque ballads: Celedonio Serrano Martínez, on the other hand, thinks they go back to indigenous roots. Thomas Stanford, musicologist and compiler of ethnic and popular music maintains their similarity to Spanish narrative poems stems from the vernacular Christmas carols in Vogue in Mexico in the 18th century. The author leans toward the theory that the corrido descends from a specific type of tune and tribal song called jácara. It was supposedly dubbed with the name corrido for its style of accompaniment: distinctive strumming on the guitar and one other instrument. It is the equivalent of the french corrente. Whatever the origin, it is a cultural expression of the people for the people and its tradition has transcended our frontiers.

Nowadays only in the state of Guerrero and Oaxaca is the corrido thriving. Here song writers and troubadours make a point of cultivating it in their compositions.

In an era without mass communications media, the corrido traditionally performed the noble function of supplying the populace with the latest news by word of mouth. From the corridistas listeners learned of the feats of famous people, the intricacies of some tragedy, or enjoyed odes to a woman's beauty.

So, for the masses one century ago, the majority of whom were illiterate, the corrido represented a source of information as well as entertainment. "In those days," writes Vicente

T. Mendoza, "there wasn't one event that escaped being described, hashed, commented on and set to music in verse form. The plazas were full of keen listeners. This was truly their popular press. Not daily or at regular intervals even. Just every once in a while, depending on the course and development of life in Mexico."

Corridos are also referred to as: snowballs, lyric poems, stories, narrations, examples, tragedies, songs, memories, verses and ballads, not so much for their musical form as the themes they deal with.

So an account of crimes, disasters and sensationalistic facts is called a "story", while the term "example" was adopted by the editors when they used the corridos to moralize:

Fly away, fly away little dove go tell everyone not to heed the example of the disobedient son. ♦

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