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Starchy Foodways

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Starchy Foodways

Surveying Indigenous Peoples' culinary practices

prior to the advent of European invasions

in the Greater Caribbean

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Preface

They tried to bury us. They didn't know we were seeds.

—Mexican maxim/Dinos Christianopoulos

This proverb is a powerful statement regarding oppression and resilience, but it also resonates deeply with the forgotten and buried stories that archaeologists excavate and reconstruct. The human requirement and use of food is so intrinsic it forms the base and echoes throughout Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The facts presented in this dissertation help retell lost or forgotten stories, which were essential because there has been a curricular genocide—erasing the memory of Indigenous Caribbean Peoples from many of our classrooms. Because Spanish policies of enslavement, genocide, and in due course mass murder are so egregious, it is tempting to only fixate on Indigenous Peoples' deaths, but they can seem chronogeographically distant and abstract unless we learn something about their lives. Therefore, even if this dissertation only makes one reader realize something about the world's history it will contribute a reconstruction of a past that was forgotten, ignored, and destroyed. The power from these words may breathe life back into exhausted lungs.

My story begins from lasting memories that were forever imposed during my childhood from fresh breaths of the sweet air and experiences on my family's farm in Colorado, USA. It was here that I learned to love plants and understand that dietary plants can be medicinal as well. Twenty-five years away from that farm, I had a crisis. Visiting the University of Oregon for an interview to become a PhD student, I was asked a simple question: What topic do you want to study for your PhD? At the time, I was unprepared to answer this question other than a general statement about archaeological research in the Caribbean. On that trip to Oregon, I hiked the Eugene Mountains and had an epiphany while gazing up at the tall trees. And you were a vegetarian for 25 years, you grew up around plants, love nurturing plants, and watching them grow—become an archaeobotanist. It would take another year to actualize that dream when beginning my PhD at Leiden University. Prof. dr. Corinne Hofman introduced me to the renowned Dr. Jaime Pagán-Jiménez, or as he prefers simply Jaime. He taught me techniques used to address questions of human-plant interactions and how to research phytocultural dynamics. Before beginning this quest, I never imagined the beauty of looking through the microscope at ancient plant remains and the ensuing interpretations of culinary practices. The

foodways approach for archaeobotanical investigations is knowledge I am now able to share with the world and take an immense pleasure with this responsibility.

Acknowledgments

The niche I have constructed would not have been possible without the context it was manifested from and that is why I first want to thank my supervisor; Professor dr. Corinne Hofman who has successfully challenged the boundaries of her discipline. Her influence, guidance, and charisma have caused me to reach for the moon and land amongst the stars. I am also thankful for the encouragement, input, advice, motivation, and intellectual support of my co-promotor, Dr. Jaime Pagán-Jiménez. Without his guidance, this dissertation would not have materialized, but more importantly the hours of conversations, family dinners, and comradery helped me persist through the trials and tribulations of attaining a PhD.

I have been indebted to the faculty of archaeology and the Caribbean Research Group at Leiden University for their countless hours of shared intellectual experiences, riveting debates, and advice. To Dr. Pete Sinelli, ten years ago he agreed to take on a daring task—converting a previous business student, then Maya archaeologist, into a Caribbean archaeologist, thank you Dr. Sinelli for sharing time with me chewing the mud in the field and showing me the ropes for providing education to future archaeologists.

I thank the present-day people of the Greater Caribbean for the opportunities to carry out this research. Their historical legacies are passionately admired. More specifically, I have a big thank you to the Antiquities, Monuments, and Museum Corporation in The Bahamas, Eric Salamanca, from the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR) in Providenciales. I am forever grateful to the many participants of the excavations in Dominican Republic, The Bahamas, Turks & Caicos Islands, and Nicaragua. Also, I thank the Nicaragua government administration facilitated by the Instituto Nicaragüense de Cultura, under the technical supervision of the Dirección Nacional de Arqueología.

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Andy learning culinary practices

Finally, a huge thank you is due to my parents and sister, Gretchen, Joe, and Kellie all of them provided love, support, and guidance during times where I may have fallen but they were there to encourage me to get back up and keep going to challenge the limits of the unknown.

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