

A STORY OF PERSISTENCE: PALEOETHNOBOTANICAL STUDY OF THE COLONIAL SITE OF ACHIUTLA, OAXACA, MEXICO

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This paper explores the Mixtecs' reaction to the arrival of Spaniards at Achiutla, one of the biggest religious centres of ancient Oaxaca. The study employs paleoethnobotanical analysis of ancient plant remains to investigate foodways, an important component of everyday life. This paper provides information about how the inhabitants of Achiutla, located in the Mixteca Alta, negotiated the arrival of new food items and to what level they accepted, incorporated, and resisted them. I present here the results obtained following the paleoethnobotanical analysis of macrobotanical samples (carbonized seeds) obtained from soil samples, and microbotanical samples (phytoliths and starch grains) extracted from unwashed artifacts.

By combining samples coming from the Postclassic (900 – 1521 AD) and the Early Colonial Period (1521 – 1600 AD), this study establishes the Mixtec diet prior to the arrival of Europeans in the region, enabling comparisons between pre- and post-Colonial foodways. This study is influenced by the notion of foodscapes, as it explores how social and cultural processes impacted foodways at Achiutla during the Early Colonial Period. This research examines the plants consumed by the Mixtecs, but also provides ideas explaining their food choices, involving different factors. This study provides new, interesting data that contrast with the narrative present in historical texts.

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