“JUST A DASH OF SALT”:

SALT AND IDENTITY FORMATION IN

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY JAMAICA

by

ALYSSA J. SPERRY

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Student: Alyssa J. Sperry

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This thesis has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the Department of International Studies by:

Stephen Wooten	Chairperson
Candice Goucher	Member
Daphne Gallagher	Member
Galen Martin	Member

and

Kate Mondloch	Interim Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Alyssa J. Sperry

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Salt is a ubiquitous substance that has played a significant role in the development of human culture. It is a recognizable universal human need that over time has adapted symbolic and practical significance across cultures and regions. However, most scholarship around salt has focused on the practical use in the form of production and consumption, where salt’s symbolic significance has been overshadowed. Moreover, research has underestimated how essential salt was in the fueling of the Atlantic Slave trade (15^{th} – 19^{th} centuries), while being a contributor in creating, and later preserving, identities of enslaved Africans and the newly developed cultures that emerged from colonial oppression. This thesis explores the symbolic significance and value of salt, and how beliefs and practices were created around salt to aid in the development and preservation of two African-derived cultures in Jamaica that emerged from the Atlantic Slave trade era: Maroons and Rastafarians.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Alyssa J. Sperry

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene, OR
Washington State University, Vancouver, WA

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts, International Studies, 2020, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts, Anthropology and History, 2018, Washington State University
Diploma with Honors, Baking and Pastry, 2010, Art Institute of Portland

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Food Studies Specialization
African Studies Specialization

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Slape Fellowship Award, Department of International Studies, 2018

Thurber Award, Department of International Studies, 2019

Special Opportunity Travel and Research Grant, Graduate School & Global Studies Institute, 2019

Oregon International Research Grant, Global Studies Institute, 2019

Food Studies Graduate Research Grant, Food Studies and Department of Environmental Studies, 2019

Folger Shakespeare Library Scholarship, Folger Shakespeare Library, 2019

PUBLICATIONS:

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- One Love

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Background

Salt is a ubiquitous mineral that played an important role in human existence and the development of culture, contributing to the rise and fall of many societies (Kurlansky, 2002). The study of salt spans across several disciplines including Global Studies, Food Studies, Anthropology, History, Geology, Medicine, and Chemistry due to its versatility and impact on the environment, physiology of the human body, chemical composition, economic influence, society, and human culture. However, it only has been within the past few decades, that the study of salt has gone beyond the boundaries of chemical and geological research, and into the humanities and social sciences, which emphasize its cultural and societal impact. In fact, food studies as a whole has only recently in the past several decades begun to engage in understanding how human relationships to food operate in the context of society and culture (Fischler, 1988, p.275).

Analyzing salt's use among humans from social and cultural perspectives has led to an increased understanding of salt's economic and culinary roles. This emphasis has resulted in understanding the production and movement of salt and how it became a highly sought-after commodity and an essential factor in the expansion of "dominating" societies, especially during the expansion of the Atlantic Slave trade (Lovejoy, 1984; McDougall, 1992). Trade documents, price equivalences, land titles, maps, and production methods have helped to build a more comprehensive understanding of salt and its influence on society. However, far fewer sources have critically analyzed salt's

influence on culture, the beliefs and practices around salt that have been shared and learned across space and time from one generation to the next.

The difference between culture and society is that culture is comprised of learned and shared customs and traditions that govern behavior and beliefs, whereas society is the group of people who share a common culture and territory. I define these terms to provide clarification of the research's focus, which is directed to understanding the customs of culture that have been learned and shared over generations, thus governing the beliefs and practices tied to salt. It is important to understand these different terms because while this research does focus on the people who share a common culture and territory, that of Jamaica, it is not the primary direction of the research. The research aims to understand the role of salt and its application in developing the sub-cultures within the larger societal framework of Jamaica, paying close attention to how salt is used to create, reinforce, and preserve cultural identity over time through beliefs and practices for oneself and one's culture. Thus, the approach is arguing that salt, and in general food, is a tool used to develop and preserve culture, placing emphasis on the role of salt in cultural preservation as revealed by written documentation and oral traditions. Therefore, the study stresses both the importance of food's role in culture and the need to continue research on food and identity.

The importance given to exploring the role of salt in culture is the result of its historical significance and its influence on society in many regions of the globe. Salt is a recognizable universal human need that overtime has adapted symbolic and practical significance across cultures and regions (Trumbull, 1899; Kurlansky, 2002; Shain 2005; Sperry, 2021, forthcoming). It is these symbolic and practical significances that make salt

a unique case study to explore its influence on human culture and in Jamaica because of salt beliefs and practices use in expressing cultural differentiation. Salt became highly sought-after, especially during the colonial expansion of the Atlantic Slave trade. It was during this time, the need for salt in high volumes led to its ubiquitous production across landscapes, especially in the Caribbean (Kennedy, 2007). Jamaica was among those islands that produced salt (Sperry, 2021, forthcoming). This study has selected Jamaica as part of the Atlantic world's emphasis on salt because of its role in fueling the slave trade where indigenous and "imported" labor from Africa were used in European colonization. Jamaica's involvement in the slave trade resulted in the blending of people and cultures which led to the birth of new cultural identities. These new cultures drew from cultural origins to develop beliefs and practices that met the current need of their environment. Salt was among these beliefs used to help develop cultural ideas in the birth of these new cultures. However, the role of salt in Jamaica has been far from fully understood because of sugar, another important commodity that has taken center stage in the scholarship of Jamaica's history.

Jamaica is a desirable locale to conduct historical ethnographic research on salt and cultural identity formation due to its role in salt production, and its status as the birthplace of several cultures that emerged out of the effects of the Atlantic Slave trade. Especially, the dominant sub-cultures such as Jamaican Maroons and Rastafarians are African-derived, meaning cultural origins from African cultures expressed in other cultures and regions of the world due to the forced migration of enslaved Africans. Jamaican Maroons and Rastafarians have embraced and maintained their cultural connections to parts of Africa, if not the whole continent. Maroons and Rastafarians will

be used as case studies in this research as both cultures are African-derived, have emerged from the effects of colonial oppression, and provide evidence for the complex role salt plays in their cultures. Overall, Jamaica provides the opportunity to engage with a universal human need (salt as a dietary requirement) and see how it plays out in two culturally related cases inside of one regional and historical context. This focus will provide a window into the role of culture and history regarding salt in shaping its engagement with each sub-culture, exploring the difference and similarities salt has in the development of cultural identity, and more so its use as a cultural preservation method.

It is important to make a clarification about the use of specific terms such as "African-derived", "African", and "Africa" used throughout this thesis. These terms, when possible, will be specified by certain regions of Africa based on the identified origins of cultural beliefs and practices. However, tracing the origins of certain beliefs and practices expressed in the Maroon and Rastafari cultures is complex and limited. In general, many members of the Maroon and Rastafari community are not always able to identify specific regions their cultural beliefs and practices originated from within Africa due to the blending of cultures. Therefore, it is common to hear these sub-cultures generalize cultural elements as simply "African". Moreover, the ability to pinpoint exactly where these cultural beliefs and practices come from within Africa is extremely complex for scholars. African culture was brought over to the Caribbean by enslaved Africans. Although it is known that many enslaved Africans came from the West and Central regions of Africa, research does not always take into account the origins of where the person was born as it was common for enslaved Africans to come from places other than their points of departure from the continent. Scholarship focused on Africa has been

able to identify the origins of certain cultural elements now seen as syncretic and blended. For example, by tracing language and technology, it has been possible to pinpoint specific ethnic regions as origins of certain cultural traditions. However, there is limited scholarship, especially around salt, to help pinpoint the particular regions of Africa that cultural beliefs and practices expressed in Maroon and Rastafari culture come from. This limited connection between Africa and the Caribbean in tracing and pinpointing exact cultural traditions has resulted in the inability to always specify regions of Africa as the origin of cultural beliefs and practices used in the context of salt. Therefore, the broad "African" connection made by the cultures themselves is used to refer to these cultural continuities.

I explore the cultural use of salt focusing on Jamaican beliefs and practices, while most commodity research focuses on the production, trade routes, and economic influences, around salt. Despite engagement with salt as a research subject, there remains limited understanding of how and why beliefs and practices emerge out of salt based on the value attached to it, along with how cultural ideologies are passed down the generational line in attempts to preserve culture. Additionally, the scholarship that does exist, focusing on culture and salt, is either limited, outdated, or primarily Eurocentric in focus with little attention to broader Caribbean studies, let alone the growing field of black Atlantic cultural studies.

In this thesis, I will identify the cultural patterns around salt that are expressed in two African-derived cultures on the island of Jamaica: Maroons and Rastafarians. By conducting historical ethnographic research, I explore themes previously documented in the African, Caribbean, and European literature to see if these ideas around salt exist, and

if so, whether they are still present in contemporary Jamaica. I chose to conduct comparative case studies on Maroons and Rastafarians because of their intersectional similarities of cultural origins being birthed from an era of European oppression and their similarly strong attachment to their African heritage. Additionally, both sub-cultures have evidence of salt contributing to cultural beliefs and practices that are expressed symbolically and practically in the identity of their cultures. Moreover, it needs to be clarified that cultural beliefs and practices are not always in agreement, meaning the belief around salt and the practice employed can shift when juxtaposed. For example, when Maroons are unable to obtain salt for spiritual purposes, they use a white quartz crystal instead as it looks similar. The belief about salt is still present although the practices use an alternative material in place of salt. I explore these differences in Chapter 4 and 5, especially around the physical use of salt (practices) versus the belief attached to salt and how they can counteract each other based on context. I engaged in the search for the origins of their salt beliefs to see if similarities and differences between the two cultures arise, and if so why, based on their shared history of both European and African influence. I demonstrate that it is possible to historically trace the salt beliefs in each culture to see how salt aided in the development of cultural identity in the past, and how salt is used, if at all, in preserving the cultures in their representation in contemporary Jamaica. I do so, by looking at the beliefs and practices around salt historically and seeing if they have changed to meet the unique demands of the current environment, whether they remain the same, or whether they have disappeared altogether.

1.2 Research Questions

This research has focused on five main questions, followed by additional, related sub-questions. Each question provides an insightful and in-depth view in the following chapters of this thesis on how salt is used in cultural identity formation among Maroons and Rastafarians. These questions were designed to understand issues of value, cultural preservation, and the overall significance of symbolic versus practical applications of salt in Jamaican cultures.

Questions asked:

- Have Maroons/Rastafarians placed value on salt?
    - Historically and contemporarily.
- How do the ideas of salt get passed on to the next generation?
    - Orally, written, other?
- Do modern Maroons/Rastafarians perceive salt to influence their identity?
    - What are the reasons for why, or why not?
- Is salt an object of value that is used to preserve the identity of Maroons and Rastafarians?
    - If so, how?
- If similar and/or different patterns of salt beliefs and practices exist among Maroons/Rastafarians, why might they be that way?
    - What influential factors are reasons for ideas to be the same or different?

It is important to note that by the end of the study, several of the key questions had become supportive questions as limited information was provided. Factors included participants' willingness to reply or the ability to discuss certain questions was limited. I explore this further in-depth in the Chapter 6.

1.3 Research Approach and Methodology

This research investigates how salt contributes to the development and preservation of an individual's identity, along with a cultural group identity. Cuisines, dishes, and individual foodstuffs have lent themselves to embody aspects of human culture that aid as identifiers of who and where someone belongs, especially when it comes to national dishes and cuisines (Belasco, 2008; Laudan, 2015; Guptill et al., 2017). The human necessity of salt, along with its ubiquitous presence across the globe lends itself to be an extraordinary case study to understand how salt can be similarly viewed or in stark contrast by two culturally comparable communities. Therefore, this research employs a case study approach to investigate the individualized ways salt is used in the sub-cultures of Maroons and Rastafarians, within the larger regional cultural context of Jamaica.

This research took an interdisciplinary approach drawing from methods based in History and Anthropology, resulting in a format that can best be described as historical ethnography. The data collected heavily leans toward historical materials, but with an ethnographic accent. For the historical content of this research, I drew from secondary and primary resources. I utilized land titles and maps, colonial journals and diaries, geological surveys, treaties, and written works, which included novels, poems, and songs, dating as far back as the early 17th century. Primary sources were located and provided by

the Jamaica Archives and Records Department, the National Gallery of Jamaica, the National Library of Jamaica, and Library of Congress, along with other online access resources, and physical copies acquired by the Knight Library, University of Oregon; secondary written works primarily came from online journals and library resources. I engaged with these materials for the primary reason of documenting the existence of salt use and its significance in the larger cultural context of Jamaica, but also its influence in the cultural development and importance for enslaved Africans, Europeans, Maroons, and later Rastafarians. Furthermore, the materials provided the historical foundation to build upon and analyze against using data collected from my ethnography of current Maroons and Rastafarians. By doing so, it allowed me to find patterns of salt beliefs and practices from a historical context and compare them to contemporary use to see what cultural customs around salt have either remained, been altered, or removed from the culture(s) based on current environmental influences.

In addition to engaging primary and secondary resources to provide historical evidence and support, I conducted ethnographic research where I employed methods of participant observation, and semi-informal interviews based on the snowball sampling method. Snowballing is a method where participants of the study refer future participants to the researcher for potential interviewing. This can be problematic if future participants either do not commit or do not fit the requirements for the study. However, snowballing can be beneficial as it can provide a broader diversity to the sampling, in addition to providing a quick sampling of participants in a short amount of time.

Since the beginning of my initial research of Jamaica's salt industry, which began in my undergraduate education, I have been traveling to and from Jamaica gathering data

since 2016. During my previous trips, I developed relationships with meaningful contacts that have helped integrate me into the local culture, customs, and layout of the land. Several of those contacts identified as Rastafarians, who became valuable participants in this research providing me with an interview along with connecting me to other participants. For this master's research, data was collected during the summer months of 2019. The research project was Internal Review Board (IRB) exempt: protocol number 05202019.027. Anonymity is used for several of the participants to respect their request to remain unidentified as several participants wished to maintain their privacy.

The location of the participants resided in two areas on the island: the coastal region in the southwestern part of the island in Westmoreland, Belmont, Bluefields, and the Blue Mountains in the eastern part of the island. The Maroon participant was located in the Blue Mountains in one of the four Maroon communities, Charles Town. Rastafarian participant(s) were located in Bluefields and in the Blue Mountains. Due to complications that occurred during fieldwork, I was unable to collect a substantial number of interviews from Maroons but was able to get one particularly extensive and long interview from a well-respected and recognizable Maroon leader. Gaama Gloria "MaMa G" Simms, Paramount Queen of the Maroons and founder and director of Maroons Indigenous Women Circle is a key informant and a spokesperson for the Jamaican Maroon culture. Through her interviews and her role as Queen Nanny in the film "Queen Nanny" Gamma Gloria Simms is an important Maroon leader, who holds cultural information that was valuable for this thesis. Although I only had one interview from the Maroons, Gaama Gloria Simms provided a wealth of community-sanctioned knowledge that supported several of the historical foundational claims around salt

making the connection from the past to the present strong in the representation of salt. In contrast to my interactions with Maroons, I was able to acquire substantially more interviews from Rastafarians (seven in total). The participants from the Rastafari community included an artist, a leader from a Rasta Camp in the Blue Mountains, and several community members. Anonymity is used among the Rastafarians mainly for maintaining privacy. Demographics leaned heavily toward older identified men in the age range of 50 to 75 years of age. I was able to gather interviews from identified women, age range from 20-70, most from the age range of 20-30 years old. Interviews were both recorded and written with verbal permission. Questions were based on the five research questions above, but the interviews had flexibility based on what the participants wanted to cover in telling their story on what identity and salt meant to them. Since there was a discrepancy in the number of interviews I obtained, this limitation helped shaped the project to focus primarily on historical significance with contemporary beliefs and practices around salt as supportive data to demonstrate consistency of the beliefs and practices developed historically.

Overall, the research format was primarily based on historical data collection with ethnographic accents. The research methodology does have limitations which will be discussed in chapter 6. By having an interdisciplinary approach, the research provides a holistic study that encompasses the past with the present in a compare and contrast to understand the significant role salt plays in the development and preservation of cultures.

1.4 Outline of Thesis

The thesis is organized into seven chapters, including this chapter which presents the introduction and overview of the research, plus references and figures.

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive literature review on salt and its relevance to understanding salt's contribution to cultural and societal development and preservation by providing an extensive overview of salt's multipurpose function in the local-global continuum sphere. At the end of the chapter, a gap analysis is performed against discipline and geographically based studies on salt. I do so to demonstrate the need for commodity research to focus on cultural development and preservation, as well as to contribute to the expansion of Caribbean and African Diaspora studies.

Chapter 3 summarizes the history of salt in Jamaica, providing a contextual framework for considering the production, trade, and cultural influence of salt. It advances the different ideas and beliefs around salt in a compare and contrast of European and African ideologies. I engage with the history of salt in Jamaica to provide a foundation for demonstrating salt's significance and value at the beginning of Jamaica's history and how it will eventually contribute to the development and preservation of Maroons and Rastafarians.

Chapter 4 provides the historical and contemporary context of salt among the Maroon communities in Jamaica. It explores the historical significance and connection to African roots by understanding how salt was viewed by African ancestors to the current ideology of Maroons of use and symbolic understanding of salt. It further explores how salt is used as an identity marker to African culture, but also Maroon and Jamaican identity. Salt ebbs and flows to create a unity between cultures preserving the past in the

present. I engage in this work to demonstrate the significance and value placed on salt by the Maroon community, to emphasize salt's influence in the development of the Maroon identity, and the cultural preservation seen in contemporary Maroon communities.

Chapter 5 explores the complex relationship of salt among the beliefs and practices of Rastafarians in Jamaica. It provides a comprehensive historical outline for contexts relevant to the culture's relationship with salt and how emerging patterns and ideas are expressed by both self and group. It further explores the complexity of culture and identity and the agency an individual has to tailor ideas of a culture to cultivate a sense of identity to a unique belief system that blends with the overall cultural ideas of salt and salt's use among the Rastafarian community. I engage in this work to demonstrate the significance and value placed on salt by the Rastafari community, to emphasize salt's influence in the development of the Rastafarian identity and the cultural preservation seen in contemporary Rastafari communities.

Chapter 6 summarizes the findings from the research by addressing each research question used to investigate this study. It further expands on the limitation of the study and the steps that need to be taken to expand on this study. I include this chapter as a means to compare and contrast Maroons and Rastafarians to show patterns of similarities and differences, and why each culture developed their identity in salt and their reasons for it.

Chapter 7 includes the conclusion, contributions from the research, and the future research of this study. It provides the concluding ideas that are developed by this research and applies them to food culture and identity formation of Maroons and Rastafarians. I

include this chapter as a means to provide an encompassing overview of the research and the general themes shown throughout the study.

1.5 Positionality

My views on salt and identity formation, and my interest in the topic, have been influenced by my own experience with salt. My curiosity around salt history and the love I have for it has grown as a direct result of my background as a chef, nutritionist, and food researcher. These roles I have occupied have swayed my opinions towards viewing salt as a positive influence on human culture. However, I am aware this is not everyone's view of salt, and this research has shown me that during the destructive and painful past of the Atlantic Slave trade, salt had particular meanings and has left its unique memory among some people and in some cultures.

Furthermore, I identify as a white woman from the nation-state of the United States of America. My positionality in my research is therefore two-fold. I am aware of my admiration for salt and my beliefs of salt's useful benefits both physically and culturally, which can create bias as a result of favoritism toward salt. However, regardless of my beliefs, I am aware that I am a white woman researching in a largely black community in a culture other than my own; this poses its own challenges.

Historically, the white community has oppressed the black community, looting black cultural resources, their material culture, and enslaving their people. The Atlantic Slave trade (between the 15th and 19th centuries) historically demonstrates the oppression of black people directly to the beliefs of Europeans feeling superior over the African and Caribbean cultures. Even currently in 2020, two centuries later, the oppression continues

to express itself around the Black Lives Matter movement, which has begun to fight against police brutality and systemic racism in the United States of America and globally, as seen in Nigeria with the End SARS movement.

As I sit at my desk writing my thesis, and I contemplate my position in my research and the responsibility I have to ensure I do not impose my beliefs on the participants in this project. I want to be clear, that this might be my research, but it is not my story. I am merely a vessel that is here to help tell the story of the Maroon and Rastafari cultures in Jamaica. It is my hope that you will hear their voices, their experiences, their cultures, and ultimately their views on how salt has influenced their identity formation.

Over the past five years, especially the last two years of graduate research, I have been humbled in my own identity to understand the complexity of culture and how memories of the past contribute to the beliefs and practices surrounding salt. Maroons and Rastafarians generously have shown me the diversity of salt, and the roles it plays in their lives. The cultural beliefs placed on salt show that the commodity is neither positive nor negative in a binary descriptive way, but instead can be a valuable cultural tool that holds power in developing and preserving identity regardless of whether it is consumed or not. Its role is only to benefit the needs and wants of the culture, connecting people, beliefs, and commodities to achieve their desired identity.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a literature review of food studies research based on the limited or outdated scholarship that addresses three crucial topics involving the formation of cultural identity about self and one's community in connection with salt and Jamaica. I will be engaging with topics that address general food and identity formation scholarship, the importance and need for more African diaspora and Caribbean culture scholarship, and salt scholarship as it pertains to the development and preservation of identity or lack thereof. The intersection of these three topics provides a holistic understanding of the importance of expanding food research to be inclusive to non-Western regions of the world, while simultaneously addressing the need to expand commodity research to other foodstuff that have demonstrated across time and space to be relevant and important to the development of human culture. Furthermore, it explores the use of food as another method of preservation of memory and cultural heritage.

In this chapter, I engage with bodies of work that address the formation of identity through the use of food. I begin by engaging the larger themes explored in food studies and confirm the long-time neglect of research focusing on the individual to the collective in terms of cultural identity formation using food (Fischler, 1988). I argue the need to explore food's influence on identity in a smaller context, focusing on the individual or sub-cultures that exist within a larger cultural or social setting. In my research, I engage in two sub-cultures within the larger cultural frame of Jamaican identity: Maroons and

Rastafarians. By doing this, the project acknowledges the need for addressing idiosyncrasies of a culture and the diversity, yet inclusion that exists. Moreover, it combats the continuation of generalizing a culture based on common food beliefs and practices, by challenging the idea that not everyone views or uses food in the same way either within a culture or from a cross-cultural perspective.

Next, I examine the regional areas in which food studies research primarily focuses on when it explores food in relation to cultural identity formation. Generally, the majority of the scholarship once was found to either focus on Western world regions or explore non-Western cultures through a Eurocentric lens; rarely engaging with black culture. However, within the past 30 years there has been an increasingly substantial engagement addressing the importance and need for African diaspora and Caribbean food scholarship. I engage with this body of work of food scholarship and address the growing field according to those areas that have been predominately explored compared to those that have received minimal attention.

Lastly, this chapter will cover commodity research and the lack of diversity of foodstuffs, along with the value attached to an object, and how food, and in this case salt, is used as another medium to preserve identity. This is important to understand a culture, its history, and its modern relationship with a particular foodstuff. Currently, most studies aim their attention to big-ticket items that generate additional research to an already established body of work with a particular food product, such as sugar, as used in Sidney Mintz's (1985) *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. Furthermore, there is an effort to focus on the overall cuisine and dishes consumed, but not always individual foodstuffs and the value placed on a particular item as displayed in

B.W. Higman's (2012) "Jamaica Coat of Arms: Rice and Beans" article. In my research, I engage with salt and the value attached to it in order to expand on the importance of this commodity in the development of culture and its significance in preserving cultural identity and heritage.

2.2 Food and Identity: Making it Cultural

Food is one of the most important aspects of human culture; without food, humans would cease to exist. Food plays a vital role in every aspect of human life from production to consumption and everything in between. The study of food, in what is now called food studies, is not necessarily a new academic field (Albala, 2013, p.15), but has been found integrated into other academic disciplines like cultural anthropology, archaeology, and most recently has gained a considerable amount of attention in history, especially world history. Recently, world historians have begun to dominate food studies scholarship with works from B.W. Higman (2012) *How Food Made History,* Candice Goucher (2014*) Congotay! Congotay! A Global History of Caribbean Food,* and Rachel Laudan (2015) *Cuisine & Empire: Cooking in World History*. This scholarship provides a comprehensive world overview of food culture from the past, and how food was used to build empires, win wars, create alliances, and change environmental landscapes through human migration and food use. Each scholar explores food's relationship with humans as a driver of cultural and political development. The layout of these books provides a format for understanding how important historical events are in connection with food. An underlying tone in each of these books is how the past has influenced the present, and how food has migrated across time and space. I engaged with themes of food influence

and migration throughout chapters 4 and 5, exploring historical ideas around salt and how those ideas have either maintained, been altered, or removed in present-day cultures. I employ historical ethnography to encapsulate these ideas, thus being able to understand where salt lies on the scale of value among Maroons and Rastafarians.

Preceding the works of world historians, scholarship from anthropologists tend to have dominated the field of food studies. One of the most notable food studies scholarship in anthropology is Mary Douglas' (1972) "Deciphering a Meal". The article investigates how food is used as a code that provides a message used to enforce or express patterns of social relations (p.61). Being one of the pioneers of American anthropology, Douglas' work became a catalyst for future food studies work, related to food and culture aiding in the increased devotion to food studies. I engaged with Douglas' ideas about food being used as a code/message in chapters 4 and 5 to understand how salt was used as a message to preserve cultural identity among Maroons and Rastafari.

Continued works from Sidney W. Mintz (1996) *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past,* along with Carole M. Counihan (1999) *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power,* and Kristen J. Gremillion (2011) *Ancestral Appetites: Food in Prehistory* have all contributed to a further understanding of food and culture. These works explore beyond the societal aspect of food through understanding the beliefs and practices around food, by engaging in topics of gender, sexuality, religion, and power; thus, the meaning behind food and its influence and development of culture. These scholars' works provide a foundation for exploring how food influences culture by addressing concepts of value attachment to

foodstuff, which in turn influences cultural norms and ideas around identity. I engage with these ideas in my work by exploring the value of salt and its ability to create and influence a culture's identity. Furthermore, I expand on the idea of salt's ability to participate in the processes of identity formation by exploring how it is used to preserve cultural identity overtime of the existing culture; ideas of cultural preservation using foodstuff are absent in the current literature. Furthermore, I explore the modes of transportation on how the message of salt and its value is expressed within the realm of culture. I look at folklore stories, music, and how contemporary influences are used to alter opinions of salt from historical context. Overall, this scholarship has enabled my ability to engage with themes of cultural preservation, but through the material applications of food.

In more recent years, scholarly contributions from other disciplines have produced general overviews of the effects of food within society and its limited interaction with culture. Amy E. Guptill et al. (2017) in *Food and Society* provide an overview of food practices and modern food systems through the lens of society. Nevertheless, what remains lacking is the involvement of culture; the beliefs and practices that are attached to food, which includes taboos, spiritual and religious ideology, and food in a cultural representation such as belonging (e.g., nationality). The same is true in Warren Belasco's (2008) work, *The Key Concepts of Food*. A professor of American studies, Belasco dives into the social complex of food focusing primarily in America with touchstones to other global encounters. In contrast to Guptill et al., Belasco does address cultural views of food in the context of sexuality and gender, but what is

missing is the migration and transmission of food beliefs and practices; there is a strong emphasis on isolated case studies without the integration of cultural blending.

The representation of food in the context of beliefs and practices is limited in Guptill et al. and Belasco's work. The primary focus addresses society and its relationship with food, looking at the people, and omitting the cultural context behind it. Furthermore, when culture and identity formation is explored, the thematic ideas primarily revolve around the culture of power, with a limited interaction in other cultural areas like preservation of memory, cultural heritage, and embodiment. Therefore, I expand into less explored areas of culture and identity formation that looks at how food is used to convey awareness to oneself and one's culture in the larger framework of value, embodiment, cultural heritage, and preservation of memory using salt as the medium which is used create and maintain these beliefs and practices.

2.3 The Need for African Diaspora and Caribbean Scholarship

Among food scholarship, the primary focus has been toward the physical interactions with food which includes agriculture, production, hunting, foraging, trading, cooking, and consumption. With a forefront focus on the human relationship with food in the context of behavior, nutritional requirements, and metabolic regulation (Fischler, 1988, p.275). It has only been within the past 30 years that academics have begun devoting entire studies to topics of food-related issues which include, but are not limited to questions of food supply, patterns of eating, agriculture, and nutrition (Albala, 2013, p.15). However, with an increased popularization of food studies, there is still large neglect of the intersection between food and cultural identity formation, as well as the multi-dimensional

characteristics of food manifestation, where symbolism meets practicality. Needless to say, most scholarship that focuses on identity and food is limited or outdated, and even more so in representing regions of the non-Western world, such as Africa and the Caribbean. Scholarship that does encompass non-Western world regions for food and identity only addressed large scale identity formation such as nationality but omitted the representation of self and sub-cultural characteristics. In the case of Kelly F. Deetz (2008) *Stolen Bodies, Edible Memories: The influence and function of West African foodways in the early British Atlantic*, she explores West African food culture during the era of slavery but does not address the variation of cuisines or foodstuff attached to the different cultural identities. Deetz simply just lists the different cultures, such as Ibo and Yoruba, at the beginning but never engages with the individual sub-culture, but instead collectively talks about them as a whole.

It is important to take into consideration the imbalance of food research where the primary focus leans toward Eurocentric scholarship; where either food culture research is focused on Western culture or is viewed through a Eurocentric lens in the context of colonization. Thus, eliminating the viewpoints of African and Caribbean culture, along with other non-Western cultures and societies. Several works mentioned earlier in world history, anthropology, and other disciplines like sociology are examples of food scholarship that either omits or scarcely interacts with African, African diaspora, and Caribbean culture. For example, Mintz's (1996) *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past* explores the side of food and culture by understanding the social meaning connected to food and its symbolic contributions to human life. However, the work provides a limited range to the complexity of food and

culture, and diversity as the book primarily views beliefs of food and culture through a Eurocentric lens. It is safe to say, food scholarship that encompasses the non-Western views and ideas is scarce in scope. Therefore, food studies scholarship is lacking in diversity and inclusion to understanding the implications of how food influences non-Western cultures, by way of migration and influenced of colonialism integrating with each other to create new cultural ideas around food.

Scholars have gained awareness of this lack of engagement with non-Western cultures and it has become a growing field over the past 30 years. Candice Goucher's (2014) *Congotay! Congotay!* brings awareness to this need for diversity in food scholarship by bringing forth viewpoints of African and Caribbean cultures. Her work lays the groundwork for future scholarship that is desperately needed to understand the holistic world of food and culture in representing the regions of African and Caribbean scholarship. Emerging work such as Goucher is employing the use of conventional historical sources alongside ethnographic methods, including folklore and religious practices to encompass a holistic and interdisciplinary approach.

This attention to Atlantic food studies which focuses on regions of Africa and the Caribbean have directed their attention to fields of culinary history, agriculture, and technology. Popular literature in the form of cookbooks and culinary histories have made their way to the hands of scholars and the general public. Jessica Harris, an educator and culinary historian, has been a primary contributor to the expansion of knowledge about African diaspora food and foodways in her many cookbooks such as *Iron Pots & Wooden Spoons: Africa's Gifts to New World Cooking* (1989), and in her more recent work *High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America (*2011). Chef Michael Twitty the

author of *The Cooking Gene: A journey Through African American culinary History in the Old South* (2017) has intertwined his personal accounts with genealogical and historical research to expand on the blending of food cultures as the result of the Atlantic Slave trade. Frederick Douglass Opie, the author of *Hog and Hominy: Soul Food from Africa to America* (2008) explores and compares African descent foodways in America. Each of these scholars and authors have aided in the expansion of the growing field of African and African diaspora foodways by deconstructing and exploring the elements of food and how and where ideas around food and cuisine came from based on African traditions by encompassing a broad range of African culinary regions. Their contributions have helped to mitigate the gap in scholarship that once was overlooked and now is becoming increasingly popularized.

Although cookbooks and culinary histories based on African traditions are growing, there still is limited exploration on commodity history in connection with African traditions. Especially, focusing on particular food products, like salt, and its relationship between Africa and the Caribbean. Judith Carney, an educator and geographer, is one of the few scholars who has deeply engaged with commodity research that focuses on the African origins of foodstuffs, both crops and technological practices found in relation to their New World, a transfer which first was explored in her book *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (2001). The interest in food scholarship around transfers between Africa and the African diaspora demonstrates the larger greater potential to explore particular foodstuffs in their relationship to cultural practices and beliefs. Therefore, this thesis addresses this gap by exploring salt and its relationship with African traditions expressed in the Caribbean.

In addition to African works, among other Caribbean scholarship, anthropologist Richard R. Wilk who has been a long-time scholar for food and identity in Belize, has help expanded the Caribbean scene for food and identity in his published work. In his article "Real Belizean Food: Building Local Identity in the Transnational Caribbean" Wilk explores how food and cooking are used to understand the complexity of cultural exchange and the development of a sense of self within a nationality context while diets, recipes, and cuisines are always in a state of flux due to the bombardment of change (1999, p. 244). Although Wilk's work is a foundational piece that can be used as a model for understanding food in the development of identity, he does not take into account the idiosyncratic aspect of agency within each culture. Instead, he provides a generalization of cultural identity in a regional context by understanding how "foreign goods create a local identity on a global stage" (Wilk, 1999, p.253). Thus, his direction is still encompassing a larger outlook of food and identity development, while not addressing the melting pot of cultures within Belize's borders.

This model of food and identity formation is also represented in Igor Cusack's (2003) article "Pots, pans, and 'eating out the body': cuisine and the gendering of African nations". Cusack trails the ideas and beliefs around food from the roots of African cultures to the influences of European colonialism, and how it influences the ideas around gendering food within society, let alone culture. However, in agreement with Wilk, the lack of sub-cultural exploration or individual representation of food, and the altercation based on a personal relationship is exempt from the discussion. In similarity to Wilk, B.W. Higman's (2012) "Jamaica Coat of Arms: Rice and Beans" article provides an impressive historical overview of the common dish "rice and beans", or also referred to

as “rice and peas” in Jamaica. The article does an excellent job of providing the importance and historical significance of rice and beans among the larger context of Jamaican culture but fails to address the customization of the dish based on regional location and/or sub-culture. A participant of this study explained that although “rice and beans” are a dish commonly cooked in almost every household on the island, the variation of the dish can be vastly different as each person and family takes pride in their family’s recipe, thus providing evidence of the importance of individuality in relation to food. The generalization of a culture blanketed over sub-cultures becomes problematic as it excludes the variations and experiences that make up the smaller cultures within the larger societal framework. I engage with the idea of idiosyncrasies in chapters 4 and 5 by understanding how food impacts the individual, but also the sub-cultures within the larger Jamaican cultural context. I show the importance of removing food generalization in connection to culture as it can be problematic and disrespectful to practices.

The need to address the generalization of food culture in my research further stems from the master thesis “I-tal foodways: nourishing Rastafarian bodies” by Mandy G. Dickerson (2004) at Louisiana State University. Dickerson investigates the i-tal foodways of Rastafarians and how they relate to issues of wellness. Dickerson addresses the most fundamental aspect of Rastafarian culture, which is the value of autonomy, but later provides sweeping generalizations of the culture with certain food practices, most notably salt consumption. Although Dickerson’s research is accurate in the sense that Rastafarians are not supposed to consume salt, where it falls short is proclaiming that all Rastas engage in that practice when there exists much greater variability.

Although it is difficult to always provide the lens of diversity and removal of generalization, it can be done. Much of the food and identity scholarship out there provides an extensive overview of a known culture but does not always take into account the need to clarify and provide a disclaimer of the individuality of what is expressed within the culture. This is truly important when researching similar sub-cultures within the larger context of the dominant culture. By not addressing the sub-cultural or individual agency over food culture it becomes problematic because the scholarship does not provide a holistic and inclusive approach to food and identity and the complexity of culture. By not engaging with, or at least acknowledging variation within cultures, one risks over-generalizing that "all" view food and foodstuffs the same way. I engage in this need to combat generalization by providing evidence of Rastafarians consuming salt in chapter 5. It is apparent that culture is complex and its expressions are variable and should be treated as such to prevent inaccurate or misleading information.

As with the awareness of little engagement with African, African diaspora, and Caribbean scholarship, the same is true for the need for exploring the complexity of cultural subgroups. As a result, some scholars are becoming increasingly aware of this need and have begun to address the sub-cultures and idiosyncrasies of food and identity. Ann Allen (2016) in her "Foodways in Cultural Identity: A Case Study of the Yoruba of West Africa and Their Diasporas" article provides a thorough description of the Yoruba culture in Nigeria, and among other neighboring and distant communities where Yoruba people had migrated too; thus, ensuring the diversity within the culture is represented. Allen provides an overview of the culture yet reinforces the need to remove generalization. In Allen's article, she investigates how people of the Yoruba culture

maintained and protect the shared values and customs around food even if scattered abroad and away from their West African roots (p.21). I have engaged Allen's format in my research to ensure I am addressing Maroons and Rastafarians in a holistic approach instead of placing sweeping generalization about their relationship with salt. Since each of these African derived cultures is dispersed across the island and even the globe, I point out the importance of not assuming all Maroons, or all Rastafarians view salt in the same way. But instead, I use what my study explores as a foundation for further researching how each of these cultures (and the individuals that exist within these cultures) interact with salt.

2.4 Salt and Preservation: From Physical Preservation to Cultural Preservation

Salt has been recognizably known for its preservation qualities among other uses which include dietary consumption and flavor enhancement properties among the culinary world. Evidence of salt production dates as far back as 6000 BCE in China and 5000 BCE in Africa (Kurlansky, 2002, p.18,36), where salt became a desirable commodity for dietary use and economic trade (Higman, 2008, p.406; Kennedy, 2007, p.230; Kurlansky, 2002; Lovejoy, 1984, p.85). Beyond the practical uses of salt, salt has made its mark among the uses of symbolism in human culture. Needless to say, salt plays a multi-dimensional role in human life through the application of practical and symbolic means of expression. However, among salt scholarship, the focus has primarily leaned toward production and consumption leaving behind the symbolic uses of salt. In my research, I explore the need to understand the symbolic side of salt in the larger context of food and how it plays a role in the development of identity. Furthermore, I argue that salt is a

contributor to cultural preservation and is used to preserve memory, folklore, and other attributes that maintained cultural heritage.

Commodity research has long been done on many food staples and dominating foodstuffs like sugar, wheat, rice, coffee, and chocolate. However, because of the emphasis on a few select food products, scholarship neglects other important and deemed valuable foodstuff like salt. Additionally, regional research that focuses on Caribbean food culture is flooded with an abundance of sugar studies, as historians and anthropologists alike deemed sugar as a primary factor in the fueling of the Atlantic Slave trade leaving behind other fueling commodities like salt and codfish. For instance, the work of anthropologist Sidney Mintz (1985) in *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* was critical in establishing sugar's historical preeminence as a factor in building the Atlantic world. The wealth and prestigious culture that surrounds sugar made the commodity desirable among the elites in Europe and, only later, the working classes (Mintz, 1985, p.124). Sugar became widely used for numerous recipes, to sweeten tea and coffee, and to symbolize status among Europeans (Mintz, 1985, p.77). World historians also examined the role of sugar as a traded commodity. The sugar-producing locations became the primary focus for the Atlantic Slave trade and development of the New World's economy (Mintz, 1985). However, sugar was not the only white substance to contribute to the rise of colonialism. Salt also enabled colonial expansion and the development of the global economy. Therefore, I engage with commodity research to extend the importance of and need for further understanding of other foodstuffs and its duality of practical and symbolic application to human culture focusing on Jamaica.

In the borders of Jamaica, food research does exist, but is either dominated by sugar or is limited in its exploration of other commodities and their ties to identity formation. The historian B.W. Higman has produced much work on food in Jamaica. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, his study on "rice and beans" does touch on Jamaican identity but lacks the idiosyncrasies needed to be representative of the many cultures that exist on the island. Needless to say, Higman has paved the way for food studies in Jamaica by writing extensive works on Jamaican food, especially commodity research. In *Jamaican Food: History Biology Culture*, Higman (2008), provides an encyclopedia of food found and used in Jamaica. The book aims to provide an overview of why Jamaicans eat what they eat. Higman explores foods that were brought over from Africa and Europe during the Atlantic Slave trade, along with food found native to the island and how the food was integrated into Jamaican culture. However, what the expansive work lacks is the in-depth historical and cultural background of each of these foods. In the book, Higman talks about salt, but over 6 pages Higman skims the surface of salt's presence in Jamaica. His focus is primarily on the production and consumption of salt, and only referencing culture in a brief statement about Rastafarians i-tal diets eliminating salt (p.405). Higman is so far one of the only works, not including primary sources, that addresses salt in Jamaica from a humanities aspect. The majority of salt scholarship is either in the form of geological surveys or economic assessments (i.e., trade or profit). And although Higman's salt section focuses on the production and consumption side of salt, it still is missing the impact on human culture through symbolism and the development of identity. The reference to other specific sub-cultures including Maroons was not found when discussing salt in the national context of Jamaica, whereas salt

played an essential part in the making of the Maroon identity as noted in chapter 4 of this thesis.

Generally, salt scholarship has focused on production, trade, technology, and economic aspects of the commodity or the role salt play in the culinary industry. One of the most recognizable works about salt is Mark Kurlansky (2002) *Salt: A World History.* Kurlansky provides a sweeping overview of salt's history among human society and culture. His work primarily addresses production and consumption and establishes salt as an influencing power in the development of societies. However, his lack of attention to cultural identity formation and symbolism in salt, in addition to the exploration of non-Western cultures, illuminates the need to further understand salt's role in human culture.

Additionally, archaeological work conducted by Joost Morsink (2012) in Turks & Caicos and Heather McKillop (2019) in Belize expands Caribbean scholarship addressing the important role salt contribute to the development of societies; both scholarships explore the pre-colonial production of salt and the materiality and power it possessed by the influence salt had over social dynamics and food exchange; McKillop also explores the production and technology Mayans used to produce salt. Each scholar primarily focuses on the practical applications of salt along with its influence in society. Their in-depth focus on production emphasized place, at the expense of the wider cultural and historical picture. In the culinary world, Mark Bitterman (2010) *Salted: A manifesto on the world's most essential mineral, with recipes,* has popularized salt's story among the contemporary, common household. His work increases knowledge about salt's history, its geological complex, and awareness of artisanal salt being sold around the world, and at his store in Portland, Oregon. Needless to say, with salt's rise in popularity, the majority

of salt scholarship still largely directs its attention toward particular regions of the world, with relatively little attention given to the important role salt contributes to the wider Caribbean and its influence on identity formation.

Other well-known salt scholarship relevant to the African diaspora comes from Paul Lovejoy and E. Ann McDougall, where they have documented salt's role among the regions of the African continent and the important contributions it had on the people by analyzing salt's uses, including its role in physical preservation and currency (Lovejoy, 1984 and 1986; McDougall, 1992). Their contributions to the role salt played in society are geared to the production, trade, and salt's value in conjunction with the economy. I engaged with this body of work because of salt's value in society. Placing emphasis on salt as a valuable commodity begs the question of its value among cultural aspects of human life including symbolism. Furthermore, using African scholarship provides a touchstone to the African diaspora and Caribbean scholarship since my research analyzes two African-derived cultures. Having foundational literature helps uncover where beliefs and practices around salt originate in the Caribbean/African network.

Understanding salt in its practical applications, as in production and consumption, is more easily obtained in scholarship; where salt was produced, how it was used, trade routes, and its known value as a form currency has been well documented in salt scholarship. It is the symbolic use of salt that has been less represented in bodies of work, especially among Caribbean scholarship. The work of H. Clay Trumbull (1899) was one of the first collections of salt's symbolic uses. Focusing on religion and spiritual beliefs, among them, Christianity provides a composition of how salt was employed to create covenants, ward off dark spirits, and as a representation of life, among other abstract

uses. I engage with this body of work and thematic ideas throughout this thesis as a foundation for understanding the beliefs and practices of Maroon and Rastafarians in relation to salt. Christianity was a key structure of beliefs imposed by colonizers on the people who resided on the island of Jamaica. Subsequently, I engage with this work because of the unique dichotomy of salt being representative of life, yet also the opposite, as exists among Rastafarians. I explore how salt might have one idea attached to it, but in another context, it could also mean the opposite.

Furthermore, African and Caribbean scholarship that does mention or explore salt has a common theme of salt's role in connection with spirits and spirituality. The value that is placed on salt ultimately influences its role in spirituality. Value is placed on something or someone, that is regarded to hold importance, worth, or usefulness. The use of salt in spiritual culture demonstrates the level of value and the role it plays in human life. The more value salt has, the more influence it has on the development of beliefs and practices which in turn influences the development of one's identity through cultural practices. I engage with African and Caribbean scholarship to explore trends and ideas that might be similar or different in Jamaican cultures.

Among Africanist scholarship, most attention has been paid in connection to Christianity, Islam, or traditional practices in Africa. With the rise of Christianity after European's exploration of the African continent, ideas of salt tended to align with Christian belief systems. Stan Ilo, Joseph Ogbonnaya, and Alex Ojacor (2011) address the Christian Church's future in Africa by aligning it to salt. Salt in the biblical text continually refers to salt as being the "salt of the earth", which in this context is being used to represent life and purity. Therefore, the idea of the church being salt is then

transferred to be the fueling force behind preventing things on the African continent from going "bad" and "corrupt" (p.66). Furthermore, James H. Smith and Ngeti Mwadime (2014) refer to salt being used as a way to rid evil spirits by rubbing oneself down with salt, a practice found in Kenya (p.148). Identity formation is a connecting common factor in these cases as one would be identified as pure or cleansed by using salt for its purification.

Along the lines of identity formation, Richard Shain (2005) explores ideas of identity formation in terms of the Apa identity in Nigeria as the primary salt makers. Just like Shain's exploration of identity among the Apa in Nigeria, Ann Allen mentioned earlier in this chapter, explores identity with Nigerians using salt in their naming ceremony. According to Allen, among the Yoruba culture foods have ceremonial associations, where it is believed that food given to a child during the naming ceremony will affect the child's characteristics and how it behaves later in life (Allen, 2016, p.30). Salt, along with sugar is placed on a child's tongue to bring pleasantness in life (Allen, 2016, p. 30). Although not an Africanist scholar but a Caribbean scholar, similar ideas are found in *Black Salt* by Édouard Glissant, where Glissant engages in abstract ideas about salt in connection to African culture with his poems (1983, p.10). Thus, salt's symbolic ideas remain constant across cultures within the African Diaspora by seeing similar ideas and beliefs of salt dance around the ideas of life, purity, and preservation. My engagement with this body of work is two-fold. I explore the current scholarship to see if similar beliefs and practices exist in the Caribbean culture, as many of the beliefs are derived from African ideologies as a result of forced migration of enslaved Africans. Additionally, I engage to understand how the beliefs and practices are transferred from

one generation to the next. Glissant uses poetry to convey feelings and ideas, while Allen states the use of oral learning from mothers and grandmothers (p.25) as well as the use of storytelling, proverbs, and poems (p. 28). By exploring these themes, it allows me to see patterns of cultural preservation and methods used among the African diaspora and Caribbean culture, including how salt is used to preserve identity.

Among the Caribbean scholarship of salt that focuses on symbolism, it is limited or outdated. Reference to salt in the context of Jamaica is even scanter. Few ideas of salt symbolism are explored in Jamaica. Among Maroons and Rastafarians, the only reference to salt symbolism is in connection to death or preventing human flight (Barrett, 1997; Bilby 2005; Chevannes, 2015). Kenneth M. Bilby, an American anthropologist, is known for his extensive work on Jamaican Maroon culture. Producing several books and articles, Bilby is primarily interested in music (ethnomusicology) among the Maroon communities. In Bilby's (2008) book, *True-Born Maroons*, I engage with several songs used to express ideas of salt and human flight. Bilby's work is fundamental to Maroon research. However, the limitations of his work include the majority of his research being conducted in the 1970s. It is not then representative of current Maroon culture and the ideas that are still expressed today. Furthermore, any aspect of salt stated throughout Bilby's work is limited and not well represented as a fundamental part of their identity formation.

Additional works of Caribbean scholarship discussing salt, includes the early work of African-American anthropologist and writer Zora Neale Hurston in *Tell my Horse (1938),* which describes the use of salt in a spiritual context in Jamaica with preventing the return of a duppy (a spirit) (p.58-59), similar to that of other salt

references in Jamaica. However, among the later scholars, there is a limited exploration to see if those beliefs exist today. The in-depth understanding of where these beliefs are derived from is limited and merely serves as a reference point to the elimination of salt in the diet. In fact, most literature that mentions salt in the context of Maroons or Rastafari only provide a few sentences by simply stating the reason salt is not consumed is because of these beliefs. There is limited (or no) exploration of how it aids in the development of identity, let alone the impact it has on contemporary culture. Therefore, there remains a need to dive deeper into understanding the effects of salt on identity formation, while exploring the beliefs and practices of salt and where they originate from, and how have they been adapted to reinforced Maroon and Rastafarian identities.

Thematic ideas in the larger context of the Caribbean and the Atlantic Slave trade help reveal reasons for certain beliefs and practices with salt used in the Maroon and Rastafari cultures. *Sucking Salt: Caribbean Women Writers, Migration, and Survival* (2006) by Meredith M. Gadsby, is one of the few works out there that address the Caribbean as a whole in exploring salt's use in symbolism. In her book, Gadsby traces the use of salt and its meaning, but also its application in poetry, novels, and the messages behind salt which were applied to identity formation. Gadsby also explores the alternative meaning behind the word salt, for example, to "suck salt" is a common phrased used meant to survive on the bare minimum (p.2). This phrase encompasses hardship seen in the Caribbean, thus reinforcing salts painful past among enslaved Africans. Themes of hardship are also expressed in Earl Lovelace's 1996 novel *Salt* in the beginning when he relates tales of bondage and salt's prevention of Africans flying

back home (p.3). Ideas of salt inflicting hardship are derived from the forced migration of enslaved Africans.

The Middle Passage changes the paradigm of beliefs and practices around salt. Salt, an object one valued for its riches seen in Africa, now has turned into an object valued for its bondage to the physical world that creates pain among enslaved Africans. Fred D'Aguiar (1997) in *Feeding the Ghost* begins his novel by addressing themes of pain, hardship, and misery. Referencing the salt in the sea as a source of torture for those forced to migrate across the Middle Passage in bondage, D'Aguiar states "salt washes wounds on those bodies instilled by the locks, chains, masks, collars, binds, fetters, handcuffs and whips of the land, washes until those wounds belong to the sea" (p.3) This idea attaches to the identity of pain and suffering, being bounded to a body of earth that does not release someone, thus taking away their freedom. D'Aguiar continues by saying "soon all those bodies melt down to bones, then the sea begins to treat the bones like rock, there to be shaped over time or ground to dust. Sea does not stop at death. Salt wants to consume every morsel of those bodies until the sea becomes them, becomes their memory" (p.4). The beginning of his novel includes reference to the countless enslaved Africans that lost their life at sea, either by death on the boat and thrown overboard, or be tossed into the sea to be consumed alive by what lies in and below the ocean. The sea becomes home, binding the souls of the enslaved for an eternity of suffering, reminding those who docked land in the New World of their ancestor's eternal bondage to torture brought forth by European colonizers.

The embodiment and memories attached to the Middle Passage are fueling factors in how enslaved Africans viewed their life in the Caribbean. Even if beliefs tied to salt

were rooted in the idea of life, the value of salt shifted once the journey to the New World began. I engaged with these themes of hardship, bondage, and death in chapters 4 and 5 with Maroons and Rastafarians, where I show how salt is viewed in the makeup of their identity with a compilation of African and Caribbean heritage. Salt becomes the enslaved African's memory; it follows how that transfer led into the development of new cultures, along with how beliefs were altered, and practices were used, all stemming from the value placed on salt and what it is intended to be used for. Salt no longer is used as food preservation, but it preserves the memories that translate into the beliefs and practices used in Maroons and Rastafarians as a way to preserve their identity in African and Caribbean heritage.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored food studies and the areas in which the field falls short, most notably in scholarship that explores African, African diaspora, and Caribbean cultures. But it also has noted the lack of diversity of commodity research in relation to symbolism. Food plays a major role in human life. Therefore, it is important to explore all aspects of food, not just the practical use of food but the abstract beliefs that developed symbolism attached to foodstuffs.

This thesis aims to produce an original contribution to the African diaspora and Caribbean studies, in addition to the area of food studies. The need to explore how food aids in the development and preservation of identity is becoming increasingly important. By following this intersection, the study provides a holistic approach to understanding food's role in human life beyond the realms of practicality. For far too long, food in the

context of humanities and social science has been neglected. There has been an emphasis on and recognized need to preserve cultural heritage among the humanities and social sciences. However, most studies focus on traditional forms of oral history, literature, and material objects. Food is being shown as a mode for cultural heritage with the rise of food sovereignty, where seed banks, agricultural practices, and revitalizing almost extinct foodstuffs all aid in the representation of culture. If practices around food are being used as forms of preservation of cultural heritage and identity, then food itself should be placed in that category. Therefore, in my research, I argue that salt used in food preservation is also a form of cultural preservation. How salt is used in stories, songs, and physical practices are all ways in which salt assists in identity formation and the preservation of culture.

CHAPTER III

THE HISTORY OF SALT IN JAMAICA

3.1 The Other Dominating "White" Substance in Jamaica

In the Caribbean, amongst the different islands, there is an island with a story to tell. Jamaica, known for its "fun in the sun" atmosphere and being one of the top tourist destinations for "island time" and relaxation, is also known for many other attributes deemed worthy to discuss. Historically, Jamaica is well-known for its involvement in the Atlantic Slave trade and its global role in sugar production (Goucher, 2014; Mintz, 1985). History books are inundated with discussions of the production of sugar as a primary reason for the exploitation of Jamaica; and although this economic role is accurate, sugar was not the only substance fueling the Atlantic Slave trade. Salt was a substance deemed valuable, it was sought-out by many, and it once dominated Jamaica's landscape before the rise of sugar.

The Atlantic Slave trade (15^{th} -19^{th} centuries) aided in the creation of Jamaica's present-day cultures. As the greed of European conquest grew, lands across the globe were subjected to brutality, kidnapping, and forced labor that served the development of labor-intensive plantation agriculture. During this era, Jamaica became one of the main islands in the Caribbean to be subjected to such actions. Over the course of the Atlantic Slave trade, over one million enslaved Africans, coming from West and Central parts of Africa, stepped foot on Jamaica's sandy shores (Slave Voyages Database, 2019), deeming Jamaica the island with the greatest importation of enslaved labor along with Brazil and other Caribbean islands.

Europeans required vast amounts of labor for the development of conquered lands and commodity production. As there were many commodities Europeans sought-out and produced, there were only a few that dominated the markets and history books. Among the Caribbean, and in particular Jamaica, sugar is seen as the main commodity produced during colonial expansion, as it was deemed valuable and highly desired by Europeans, who associated it with status (Mintz, 1985, p.6). Sugar was a commodity that was produced in many colonized lands across the globe, including parts of Africa and South America. However, just as sugar dominated the foodscape of colonized lands, salt did as well. These two commodities cohesively impacted the lives of enslaved Africans and Europeans alike. Subsequently, refined white sugar was often compared to salt for their striking resemblance to each other; it was this display of "whiteness" from both substances that aligned each with a representation of fineness and purity (Mintz, 1985, p.22; Sperry, 2021, forthcoming).

The importance of and need for salt and sugar had been documented among the Caribbean islands; most islands exploited by European powers have evidence of both commodities being produced at the same time, or one before the other. Initial research by Cynthia Kennedy (2007) in the Bahamas provided evidence for salt and sugar production co-existing during the slave trade. Kennedy established a connection between slave ownership, sugar plantation, and salt production in the Caribbean. It had previously been thought that where sugar was found or produced, salt would have preceded sugar or continue right alongside it. Europeans sought out suitable land for the production of sugar and salt as both were simultaneously needed and desired. It is this crucial connection between sugar and salt that reveals both to be critical. Without salt production and its

impactful contributions, sugar could not have enabled the fueling of the Atlantic Slave trade and the colonization of Jamaica.

Jamaica's salt industry had been a thriving industry in the early years but later was overshadowed by sugar. As a result, historical and geological documentation provide limited evidence of its existence and importance. However, it is during the beginning of Jamaica's entanglement with colonialism when salt had its most influential impact on the development of identities and cultures within Jamaica. Therefore, it is important to explore the value of salt in the early development of Jamaica, to understand the beliefs and practices around salt expressed in modern Jamaica. The remainder of this chapter will explore salt's beginnings in Jamaica, thus providing a foundation for understanding why salt eventually became a contributor to the development and preservation of Maroon and Rastafarian identity.

3.2 Spanish Conquest: The Beginning of Jamaica's Colonial Era

The Spaniards invaded Jamaica in the 15th century in hopes of finding valuable commodities, such as gold (Gottlieb, 2000, p.3). Finding none, they directed their attention to salt production (Gottlieb, 2000; Higman, 2008, p.409). Salt was a commodity that was essential for the Atlantic Slave trade to even exist. Salt was produced to be sold and used for personal gains among the European empires, and the Spaniards were no exception. Being the first colonizers on the island of Jamaica, the Spaniards realized the island's potential for the production of salt, at the same time finding no other "valuable" commodity. It seemed only natural to turn the island towards profiting from salt because of its suitable environment for salt making. Already familiar with the production of salt in

other parts of the New World, the Spaniards began to produce salt along the southern part of the island of Jamaica, where salt deposits were found in lagoons located near the coastline (Higman, 2008, p.409; Sperry, 2021, forthcoming).

The decision to produce salt was also determined by the exploration of Jamaica's landscape. The topography of Jamaica is diverse, ranging from the Blue Mountains to the coastal environment with tropical climates, equally varying in temperature. Further, the coastal regions of the island in combination with the high heat of the tropics combine to create excellent places for solar production of salt; the desired method used by Europeans. This method of salt production is sustainable, as it uses the heat from the sun to evaporate seawater, leaving behind halite crystals commonly known as salt, which can be easily harvested.

Although there is evidence of salt production during the Spanish era (between 1494 and 1655), many questions are still unanswered about the Spanish period in Jamaica. The British, upon their arrival in Jamaica, destroyed almost all the records created during that time of the Spanish rule. Archaeology has also been silent on possible early salt production sites. Therefore, further investigation about salt during the Spanish era is still needed for the future direction of this research.

3.3 British and Their Desire for Salt Islands

As European powers sailed the oceans in search of lands to conquer, and people to dominate, it was not unusual for Europeans to rival each other for land. Islands in the Caribbean were subjected to frequent turnover from one European group to the next, as it was common to search and steal desirable lands to gain power over one another

(Kennedy, 2007). Salt islands (islands known to produce salt), were prized lands for Europeans. The economic profit alone was substantial enough for any European to seek out salt islands. It was a lucrative investment for their economy in the development of the global economy, and the quest to dominate other societies. Salted cod was one of the main trade items produced in the New England region of the Atlantic. Salted foodstuff, especially salted codfish were the foundation of the maritime provisions and enslaved food on tropical plantations (Gardner, 1873, p.181; Kennedy, 2007, p.218; Goucher, 2014, p.12). To produce salted fish, the key ingredient, salt, ideally had to be in production and harvested in the nearby regions, to ensure a constant supply for the manufacturing of salted fish. Many islands provided suitable environments for salt production and being geographically close to the Americas, they might have become primary sources for salt.

The British were no exception to stealing lands for their gain in the dominance of money and people. In 1655, the British invaded Jamaica, later to officially defeat the Spaniards and gain control. At this point, the switch in power created an opportunity for enslaved Africans under the Spanish rule to run away into the Blue Mountains ensuring their safety and freedom from being forced into slavery by the British; these runaway slaves became some of the earliest Maroons of Jamaica. They joined indigenous people hiding in remote regions of the island. As the British gained control over the island, they initially continued to produce salt (Sperry, 2021, forthcoming). The salt market was booming, and the British saw an opportunity. Unfortunately for the Jamaican producers, salt production was competitive. Places such as Tortuga and Venezuela, both with large salt deposits, began to outproduce smaller suppliers, causing the price of salt in Jamaica

to decrease (Long, 1774, p.44; Zans, 1951, p.30). Seeing the drop in profits, the British eventually switched capital investment to cultivating sugar instead (Higman, 2008, p.408).

Although sugar did eventually become the primary commodity produced in Jamaica, salt still had a substantial influence on culture and the development of the island's land and economy. One of the earliest representations of Jamaica's known salt production occurred in the form of the historical illustration created by the English artist William Berryman between 1808 and 1816 (Figure 1), documenting Jamaica's existing salt industry. Berryman's sketch and watercolor show workers in evaporation ponds at saltworks on the island (Berryman, 1808-1816). Berryman's drawing dates to the closing decades of the Atlantic Slave trade era, when the salt industry in Jamaica would have been well established. Based on a large number of workplace studies, Berryman was particularly interested in the activities of Africans and their descendants; therefore, the drawing likely reflects the major role of Africans in the salt production industry. In his drawing, a building appears in the background surrounded by several salt ponds. These salt ponds were constructed to contain saltwater from the sea to be evaporated from the heat of the sun. Descriptions from other islands suggest that enslaved Africans would rake the salt, aiding in the rotation of halite crystals to help evaporate remaining moisture at the bottom of the bed (Prince, 2004, p.17). Berryman's drawing also depicts several female figures working in the salt beds, suggesting that women contributed to salt production. This analysis of women and salt working is particularly interesting because, across time and cultures, women were often the primary producers of salt. In the countries of Ghana and Nigeria, many women were known to be salt producers (Maier,

1986, p.16). Although Berryman's sketch is the only evidence thus far of women producing salt in Jamaica, it seems that this could have been the norm since on other islands in the Caribbean women similarly produced salt.

(Figure 1) William Berryman, Workers in evaporation ponds at saltworks, Jamaica, 1808-1816, (Courtesy of the Library of Congress, 2017)

Berryman's drawing provides a visual understanding of how salt was produced in Jamaica during the colonial era. However, it is a romanticized image and reflects the narrative of a European. In contrast to Berryman's viewpoint, the narrative of an enslaved woman known as Mary Prince directly explains what the environment and conditions were like for an enslaved African salt worker. Prince was a salt worker in Bermuda, another Caribbean salt island, and her narrative explains how an enslaved African might suffer during the long hours raking salt in the sun. Prince (2004) states:

> "I was given a half barrel and a shovel, and had to stand up to my knees in the water, from four o'clock in the morning till nine...and worked through the heat of the day; the sun flaming upon our heads like fire, and raising salt blisters in those parts which were not completely covered. Our feet and legs, from standing in the salt water for so many hours, soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone afflicting the sufferers with great torment" (p.15-17).

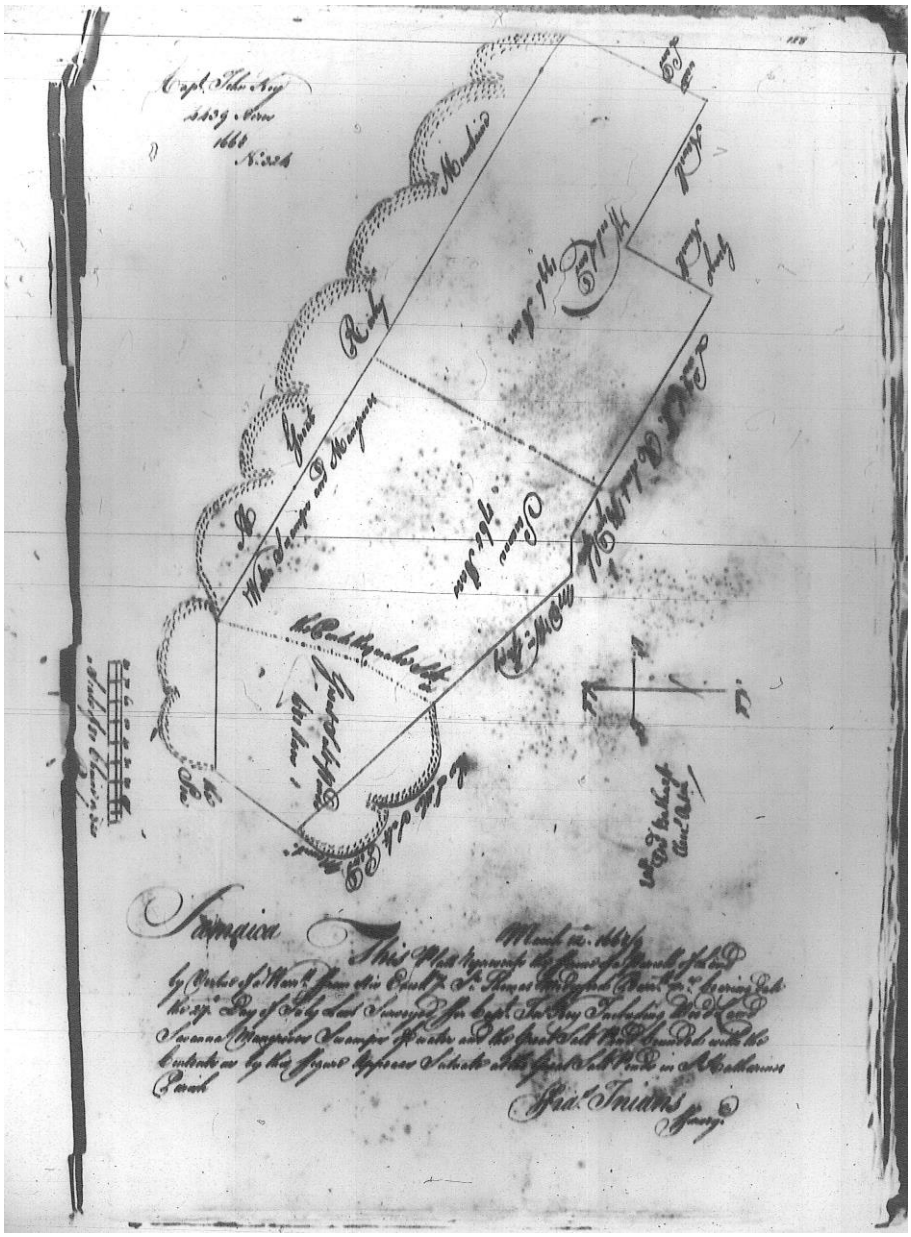
Once the salt workers were finished for the day, the slaves would be locked away at night to prevent them from escaping (Prince, 2004, p.17). Prince's narrative details the horrific conditions an enslaved African salt worker would have experienced, ultimately conjoining the salt and sugar industries that inflicted pain and agony upon their workers. In this way, the production of salt was directly implicated in the sweat and tears of the Atlantic world. Other islands, like Jamaica, may have become known for sugar production, with salt production a necessary evil to continue fueling the slave trade.

Berryman's and Prince's visual and graphic descriptions of salt production only represent one part of the salt industry. Salt production contributed to land ownership and Jamaica's economy. Twentieth-century geological surveys and earlier historical documentation confirm where salt ponds were located in Jamaica (Hughes, 1973, p.80; Lefond, 1969, p.144; Zans, 1951, p.29-30). According to Lefond (1969), geological surveys pinpointed two locations, the parishes of St. Catherine and St. Thomas, on the southern part of Jamaica to be primary locations for salt production. At these locations,

there are two salt ponds: “The Great Salt Pond” and “The Salt Pond” (Hughes, 1973, p.80). Subsequently, a mineralogical survey conducted in 1943 compared the saline levels of those from the ponds to that of nearby seawater (Hughes, 1973, p.80). The survey concluded the salinity of the ponds were more concentrated than that of seawater with The Great Salt Pond registering at 22,157 parts per billion of sodium and The Salt Pond registering at 19,787 parts per billion respectively compared to seawater registering at 11,081 parts per billion (Hughes, 1973, p.80). The levels of sodium in a body of water can determine the quantity and quality of salt produced; as shown, the salt ponds have higher concentrations of sodium levels, therefore, having the potential for producing more salt.

The Great Salt Pond and the Salt Pond became focal points for salt production with the British. However, it was The Great Salt Pond that gained considerable attention for its abundance in salt production compared to its sister pond. A map and land title for The Great Salt Pond as early as 1668 (located in the Jamaica Archives and Records Unit in Spanish Town, Jamaica) indicate that Captain John Noy, also known as Captain Joseph Noyes, owned a salt-making facility at The Great Salt Pond (Figure 2). In further investigation of this salt pond, journals of the planter Edward Long (1774), Robert Montgomery Martin’s *History of the West Indies* (1834), and Williams James Gardner’s *A History of Jamaica* (1873) reference The Great Salt pond in connection to salt production. Information on salt yield, ownership, and how the pond came to be were all discussed in these journals. According to William James Gardner (1873), who was serving as a missionary in Kingston in the 19th century, “[s]alt was requisite [and] is now imported [at the end of the nineteenth century]: the settlers first prepared it

themselves…the island was, as it still is, capable of yielding an abundant supply for the necessities of its inhabitants" (p. 80). Gardner's statement is representative of salt's importance to Jamaica, British, and the need to tap into the salt industry for profit.



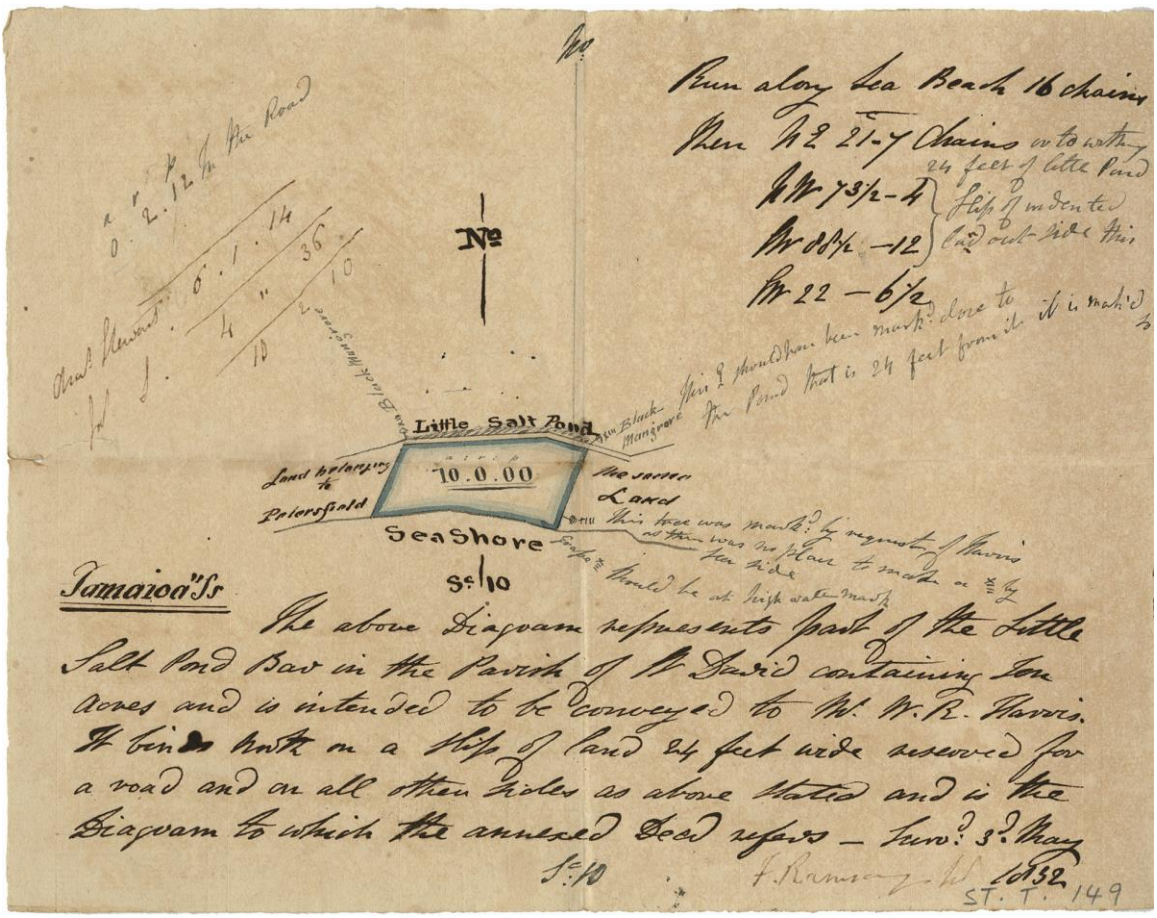
(Figure 2) Diagram of Captain Noy's "Salt Pond," 1668,
(Courtesy of the Jamaican Archives and Records Department, 2020).

In each journal, pieces of information about the salt ponds in Jamaica have provided me the ability to create a picture from the British perception that encapsulates the salt industry at that time. According to Gardner (1873), The Great Salt Pond was contrived by Sir Thomas Modyford, an early governor of the island as a means to increase salt yield between the two ponds as he was interested in salt as a potential source of revenue (p.82). According to the planter Edward Long (1774), Captain Noyes also conducted salt production at The Great Salt Pond, southwest of Port Henderson Hills (p.43-44). The Great Salt Pond in conjunction with the other salt pans likely yielded large quantities of salt (Long, 1774, p.43-44; Zans, 1951, p.30). Both Gardner and Martin's journals claimed that in 1670, Captain Noy was able to produce 10,000 bushels of salt (Gardner, 1873, p.80-82; Martin, 1834, p.25). To give some perspective on the quantity of salt yielded at that time, this would be between 50,000 and 70,000 pounds of salt annually from the salt pond; a bushel ranged between fine salt which weighed around 50 pounds, and coarse salt which weighed around 70 pounds (Sperry, forthcoming).

The focus of salt production as the primary commodity produced on the island only lasted for a short season until a shift in the focus of the island economy turned to sugar production. An exact date of when the salt production came to a halt is unclear as salt continued to be produced in conjunction with sugar; salt no longer was the primary revenue for the island. In fact, according to Gardner's journal (1873), Captain Noy stated that he could continue to produce salt and increase his production if access to the market could be gained. However, at this time, other competing salt islands began to expand their production. This caused a decrease in salt pricing making it cheaper to import from the other nearby salt-producing islands, rather than produce salt locally (Gardner, 1873,

p.80; Higman, 2008, p.409). This was in part due to the increase and expansion of the island's sugar plantations outproducing salt production, thus directing capital movement to sugar production instead of salt (Higman, 2008, p.409). After 1650, the Caribbean was producing little sugar for export. However, as more plantations were developed supported by an increase in enslaved Africans being imported, sugar production began to rise. By the end of the 17th century, sugar exports out of the Caribbean were outproducing other commodities like tobacco (Mintz, 1985, p.35-36).

As descriptions of salt production primarily focused on The Great Salt Pond, some directed its attention to the Salt Pond in Yallahs St. Thomas. In the Special Collections at the National Library of Jamaica in Kingston, I was able to locate a land-ownership map documenting 19th century ownership to the Salt Pond by W.R. Harris in 1832 (Figure 3). The hand-drawn map refers to the pond as the "Little Salt Pond", a likely reference to the size in comparison of The Great Salt Pond. A hand-written description on the map states: "the above diagram represents part of the little Salt Pond … in the Parish of St. David [currently St. Thomas] containing ten acres and is intended for W.R. Harris…north on a slope of land six feet wide reserved for a road … and is the diagram to which the annexed Deed refers..." (Harris, 1832). As mentioned, most of the focus was on The Great Salt Pond, therefore, limited information about the smaller Salt Pond is available for research. Needless to say, more analysis of the Salt Pond is needed to be conducted to understand the full potential and influence it had on the environment, economy, fueling of the Atlantic Slave trade, and the people, including enslaved Africans, Europeans, labors, and consumers.



(Figure 3) W.R. Harris Salt Pond, St. Thomas, 1832,
(Courtesy of The National Library of Jamaica, 2020)

Both salt ponds were large contributors to fueling the economy of Jamaica. However, they did more than just bring financial stability, they aided in the vicious cycle of increased importation of enslaved Africans as a means to keep production going. Moreover, the salt produced was used as an ingredient to preserve food, but at times used as a form of currency given to enslaved Africans as an allowance either for their consumption or use for trading. Salt was allotted to slaves with the other food provisions required by law be given by their masters (Higman, 2008, p.405-406; Williams, 1834, p. 5). Salt was highly valued, as noted in the slave narrative of James Williams, an

apprenticed laborer in Jamaica after the emancipation in 1834 when he described how working conditions got worse after the emancipation. Williams states that apprentices were “worse off for provision than beforetime; magistrate take[s] away their day, and give to the property; massa [master] give we no salt allowance, and no allowance at Christmas [sic]” (Williams, 1834, p.5). Salt continued to be valued, even after the enslaved labor industry switched from forced labor to apprenticeship.

Over the years, The Great Salt Pond and the Little Salt pond’s production of salt eventually ceased as capital moved to support the growth of the sugar industry in Jamaica. As the rise of nearby competing islands had stronger ties to regional and international markets because of their extensive and deeper roots in the Caribbean salt industry. Jamaica began to focus on other industries like tourism and other more lucrative endeavors as a means to generate revenue for their economy (Sperry, 2021, forthcoming).

3.4 Post-colonialism and Jamaica’s Modern-Day Salt Production

Over time Jamaica became known for its “fun in the sun” tourism industry eventually leaving its salt industry in the past to slowly disappear along with the most unpleasant recollections of the island’s known history. However, salt production has not completely disappeared. In 1950, a geological survey conducted by Verners A. Zans provided a comprehensive profile of Jamaica’s mineral resources along with their 20th century economic potential. Evidence from the survey confirmed the salt industry did not cease but instead continued on a small scale (Zans, 1955, p.30). Zans documented salt operations at Wreck Bay and on Pigeon Island, in addition to a company called Jamaica Salt Works, Ltd in Springfield, near Falmouth, Trelawny, on the north side of the island;

unfortunately, little is known about Salt Works Ltd. as evidence of its existence is scant (Zans, 1955, p.30).

Almost two decades later in 1969, salt production on a larger scale took root when the establishment of the Industrial Chemical Company Ltd. (ICC) was initiated by Alexander Barclay Ewart; several salt-producing factories were established in Spanish Town, St. Catherine Parish (Higman, 2008; *Jamaica Observer*, 2015). The ICC, according to the island's licensing records, was the only registered salt company with the Jamaican government. The ICC manufactured a variety of salts from chemical-based brines and seawater sources which created both industrial use salts and household "table" salts for consumer consumption.

Salt production in Jamaica began to pique the interest of the government as a vital form of investment to create revenue for the island. In 2015, the ICC received a US $2 million investment loan from the Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ); the bank's investment was noted as a "vote of confidence" in salt's contribution to Jamaica's economic growth (*Jamaica Observer*, 2015). With the ICC's new investment loan, the company was able to increase production by expanding its facilities with state-of-the-art equipment. Their most popular and most recognizable product "Freeflo", a table salt containing both fluoride and iodine, was able to expand into more markets as the increase in production allowed it. The ICC currently controls 80 percent over the local markets on the island and hope to take their success and break into the global markets and become a known global salt producing company (*Jamaica Observer*, 2015).

Although the ICC dominates the local market in Jamaica, it is not the sole producer of salt on the island. Several small-scale salt works occur in the form of

harvesting salt from naturally occurring salt deposits on the island (Sperry, 2021, forthcoming). Documentation of local men harvesting salt in the Portland Cottage area, on the southernmost tip of the island showed locals were harvesting salt for personal consumption or sold locally (Sperry, 2021, forthcoming). In this particular case, the type of salt harvest was known as “coal” salt, while some also refer to it as “coarse” salt due to the minerals being large in size in comparison to table salts that are of a fine grain (Figure 4). The reference to salt being called “coal” is because the salt is harvested with techniques that are said to resemble coal mining, where the salt harvester chips small bits away from a large, naturally formed block of dried salt (Sperry, 2021, forthcoming). The salt is harvested during the weeks around March and April as the temperatures are ideal for drying out the salt but still tolerable to harvest in comparison to the high heat during the summer months.

(Figure 4) Salt from Portland Cottage, Jamaica 2017 (Photography by Alyssa Sperry)

Local salt harvesting seems to be a specialized task that is tied with a person's identity in reference to their occupation. Identifying labels like doctor, teacher, and chef are all terms used to describe a person's occupation. People then associate their identity with the occupation they hold, where they will state "I am a …" filling in the blank with the type of occupation one holds. For example, the man who harvested the salt in the Portland Cottage area was referred to by fellow comrades as the "salt man". His nickname "salt man" is in reference to his identity as someone who produces salt. He did not advertise his salt, but instead, people knew where to buy local salt because of word-of-mouth in addition to his salt identity. In the area where the salt man lived, an informant explained that there used to be a local salt factory in the nearby area, but later it was shut down. Unfortunately, he was unaware of the reason(s) why the factory ceased production. However, the informant stated that salt production was, *and remains*, an important industry in Jamaica (Sperry, 2021, forthcoming). Some might even say salt was and is part of Jamaica's identity.

From the late 15th century to current times, salt has contributed to the development of Jamaica's economy and land. This foundational history of Jamaican salt has substantial value to understand how and why salt aided in the development of cultural identities. As expressed in the graphic detail of Mary Prince, salt work was not a pleasant activity to perform, and with it came pain and suffering. Prince's slave narrative provides a window into how salt might be viewed among Maroons and later Rastafarians. With the stark contrast between Europeans and enslaved Africans, it is clear that salt had a different impact on each of their cultures and on their identity formation.

The bridging of the historical to the contemporary that is explored more in depth in this thesis emphasizes the importance of understanding both the historical and contemporary contexts of salt in Jamaica. Historically, the focus on salt was directed toward production and economic value as demonstrated with production yields and ownership titles that trace its exploitation. There has been limited engagement with the consumption and use of salt's connections with its cultural value. In more contemporary times there was a transition from economic value towards understanding the application of salt through its use and consumption in relation to ideas of health and new cultural beliefs systems. This thesis has bridged together the historical and the contemporary in order to explore through interdisciplinary and holistic approaches the full implications of salt in Jamaica.

CHAPTER IV

THE VALUE OF SALT: PRESERVING THE MAROON IDENTITY

"Salt is very important both physically and spiritually."

-Gaama Gloria Simms

4.1 The Birth of the Maroons: Historical Overview

Just like salt itself on the island, Jamaican Maroons have a complex history with divergent assessments. Their remembered past ebbs and flows between being heroic freedom fighters to oppressors of future runaway slaves. The existence of Maroons came out of the Atlantic Slave trade; communities or groups of enslaved indigenous and African people who ran away and escaped from the brutality of slavery and bondage became the foundation of the Maroon communities (Agorsah, 1994, p.2). These runaway slaves established a sustainable community that harbored the traditions and culture of their ancestors while adapting, and even thriving in their new environment, all the while continuing to fight for their freedom against colonial powers.

As the colonial powers began to overtake lands across the New World, the resistance of enslaved indigenous and African people was commonly seen. Runaway slaves in the Caribbean, Latin America, and North America who created resistance communities were deemed Maroons; the term "Maroon" initially referred to runaway cattle but later became the designated term for runaway slaves. Although there are Maroon communities that exist across the Caribbean and Latin America today, the majority have blended in with the surrounding communities (Agorsah, 1994, p.2). This

differs from the Jamaican Maroons who are one of the few Maroon communities still at large and are famously known because of their long battle with the British and the treaties that protected their sovereignty (Agorsah, 1994, p.2). As a result, the Jamaican Maroons are a valuable community from which to understand historical memory and how it is used in the form of preservation of self and community in the context of cultural identity.

Since the birth of the Jamaican Maroons, the culture and community have continued to live on and they maintained their cultural identity and that of their ancestors in modern times. Although some changes have come about with modernization and government influences, the Maroon communities do their best to preserve the essence of what it means to be a Maroon along with their cultural heritage and ancestral ties to their African roots. Since the Maroon community emerged from West and Central African people, many of their ideas and beliefs along with their core cultural identity are woven with a variety of different African, and later syncretic Jamaican belief systems. However, because the Maroons were developed from blending multiple African cultures, it can be difficult to identify specific ethnic origins. Some African traditions expressed in Maroon culture do not have a single place of origin within Africa as some traditions can be seen in multiple African regions and there is limited historical exploration of where ideas originated and how and when they were transferred between Africa and the Caribbean. It needs to be recognized that even though these are referred to by Maroons as simply "African traditions," they are not cultural expressions found across all regions of Africa. There is much diversity across the continent and that diversity was also transferred across the Atlantic.

The origins of the Jamaican Maroons took place in the 17th century during the time the British overthrew the Spanish in 1655. While the colonial powers fought each other for control of Jamaica, many enslaved Africans who were freed from the Spanish bolted to the Blue Mountains to escape from future enslavement by the British (Brooks, 2010, p.29; The Jamaican Maroon Treaties of 1739). Although the battle between the British and the Spanish has been a recognizable indicator that marked the beginning of the Jamaican Maroons, there is documentation of a first Maroon sighting dated during the Spanish era (Agorsah, 1994, p.2; Kopytoff, 1978, p.288-289)**.** However, the legacy and origins of Maroons are still based on the transition of colonial power into British hands and the long-standing fight for freedom.

The number of original Maroons from the Spanish era that fled to the beautiful, yet the torturous landscape of the mountains was estimated to be around 100, if not fewer (Kopytoff, 1978, p.289). It was only after the battle between the Spanish and British that later resulted in an increased number count of 558 Maroons (Brooks, 2010, p.30). As the Maroons began to develop their communities, they divided into two distinct groups based on their location, Windward and Leeward. The Windward Maroons were located on the East side of the island, while the Leeward Maroons were located in the West. The Windward Maroons occupied Moore Town and Charles Town in Portland, Nanny Town in St. Thomas, and Scotts Hall in St. Mary. The Leeward Maroons were located in areas such as Trelawny Town in St. James and Accompong in St. Elizabeth. Over the next 84 years, the Maroons continued to fight against the British for their freedom from slavery and their rights to maintain their cultural identity by way of isolation from the rest of the island's population.

While the British continued to exploit Jamaica's landscape through the use of enslaved labor, the Maroons continued to cultivate and maintain cultural ties to their African roots. Maroons were able to survive and even thrive in the Blue Mountains as the environment mimicked landscapes of their African home in regions of West and Central Africa, unlike the British who struggled with conquering the rugged and dangerous interior of the island. The Maroons were able to use the Blue Mountains to their advantage to hide and attack the British while secluding themselves, which cultivated their unique Maroon identity.

The majority of Maroons can be traced back to West and Central Africa as this is where the majority of enslaved Africans were captured during the Atlantic Slave trade (Agorsah 1994, p.13). It is from these cultures that the ideas and beliefs were derived and directed towards the development of the Maroon culture. According to archaeologist and anthropologist E. Kofi Agorsah (1994), it is difficult to identify specific African elements expressed and retained among the Maroons (p.4). This is because the capturing of enslaved Africans might have been traced back to specific West and Central African ports, but the place of birth for many Africans could have been elsewhere in the interior regions. Ideas about food, religion, and spirituality associated with the Maroon identity have roots in African cultures but later became uniquely Maroon with the development of new ideas based on the blending of cultures and environmental factors. For many Maroons, the ability to directly pinpoint exactly where these African traditions originated from is complex and limited as records are scarce in tracing back where enslaved Africans came from in terms of their birthplace and ethnic identity. Needless to say,

Maroons felt a necessity to maintain their African identity and autonomy by way of resistance against the colonial powers before, during, and after the era of colonialism.

In an attempt to preserve their autonomy in 1720, the Maroons fought the British in the first Maroon War. Over the next decade, Maroons and the British fought against each other. In 1734, Moore Town, also known as Nanny Town in reference to Queen Nanny the only woman leader of the Maroons, was taken over by the British. Regardless of this brief violation of sovereignty, the Maroons never stopped fighting for their freedom. Finally, in 1739 the British acknowledged the strength of the Maroons and accepted their defeat. The British deemed the Maroons an independent community, by having both parties sign the first Peace Treaty acknowledging the Maroons' freedom from enslavement, granting them land and rights; Captain Cudjoe of the Leeward Maroons of Trelawny Town signed the treaty to create peace between them and the British. However, this treaty only represented the Maroons in the West, not the East. It was a year later, in 1740, when the second Peace Treaty was signed to include the Windward Maroons (The Jamaican Maroon Treaties of 1739).

The Peace Treaty was seen as a covenant between the Maroons and the British. The Maroon community viewed the Peace Treaty as a "blood treaty" which could not be broken (Kopytoff, 1979. p.49). Maroons saw the treaty as their freedom from slavery but also their ability to maintain their African heritage without interference from the British. Queen Nanny, the only woman warrior of the Maroons, not only was a force to be reckoned with, but also a symbol of Maroon identity. Queen Nanny's spirit and drive to maintain her African roots and freedom from enslavement encapsulated the essence of what a Maroon was. The Maroons maintained their culture by incorporating food

traditions, religious and spiritual belief systems, and other cultural expressions perceived as rooted in West and Central African cultures. Queen Nanny also represented the spirit of fierceness as she was a spiritual leader among other high-status rankings (Fuller, 2017 p.278). She was known to be a woman who wore the teeth of her enemies and a belt of knives; it was said at any given time Queen Nanny would have between 10 to 12 sharp knives on her belt (Goucher, 2021, forthcoming). She was a leader and an iconic representation of the Maroon identity.

Although the Maroon community in Jamaica has encompassed this ambiance of romanticized imagery as freedom fighters, the truth be told is that their freedom came at a cost. When the Maroons and the British signed the Peace Treaty, the Maroons had to agree to prevent future runaway slaves from escaping the bondage of slavery. Maroons were paid to capture and return enslaved Africans to their owners (Maroon Treaty, 1739, article 9; Bilby, 2008, p.36). This created a rift between non-Maroons and Maroons, which eventually led to a "them" versus "us" mentality mindset among the Africans on the island. Maroons justified these actions through oral stories such as that of the "Two Sister Pikni" that differentiates a "true" Maroon from that of "other" Africans; folklore involving the consumption of salt as a primary factor in separation and preservation of African heritage. Needless to say, betrayal was expressed not only toward non-Maroons but within the Maroon community as well. For instance, when such accounts took place it was based on a Maroon finding it difficult or even impossible to adapt to the Maroon society (Bilby, 2008, p.224). These separations of ideas, beliefs, and identities between Maroons, Europeans, and non-Maroons reinforced identity barriers that solidify the differences between all groups on the island. No longer were Maroons and other Africans

seen as one but they were distinctly separated by the Peace Treaty and an established identity of what it meant to be a Maroon versus the known "other".

Through the course of Maroon history, it is well-known that Maroons isolated themselves away from other existing communities on the island. This separation was fundamental in preserving their identity as "true" Maroons who resisted enslavement compared to those who "surrendered" their freedom and identity. Many folklore tales are used to reinforce this separation of identity even today, such as the mentioned story of the "Two Sister Pikni". However, in recent years the Maroon communities have begun to mingle and blend with outside communities; some even living outside the designated Maroon borders. Although Maroons had always interacted with communities outside their borders, primarily for acquiring provisions unable to obtain inland, there is still an embodiment of Maroon identity for someone who claims to be Maroon by blood descent. There is no way of telling who a Maroon versus a non-Maroon is, just from appearance, but it is through the bloodline of their ancestors that one can claim Maroon heritage.

Today the Maroon communities in Jamaica are vibrant and alive. People who identify as Maroons continue to embrace their heritage by still enforcing cultural beliefs and practices. Ceremonies, traditions, and spiritual connections to Obeah (spiritual powers) are still actively a part of the modern Maroon culture. However, unlike their ancestors who hid in isolation, parts of the Maroon community have embraced sharing their culture with other Jamaicans and tourists alike. Hosting the annual "International Charles Town Maroon Conference and Festival" every year with a different theme to embrace their heritage, promote sustainability, and innovative ways to continue the Maroon legacy is one way in which Maroons remember their traditions. Tourists can visit

the Maroon towns and become educated about what it means to be a Maroon and their history by strolling through the Charles Town Maroon museum. Live performance of traditional Maroon dances and songs accompany the stories told by Maroons within the community. But even with Maroons embracing the outside world beyond their borders, Maroons still are a highly isolated and secluded community ensuring their Maroon heritage continues to live on the way their ancestors intended it to be – living as "true" Maroons.

Understanding the history and origins of Maroons provides a foundation to understand why they might have certain beliefs and practices around food, let alone salt. Having been subjected to the brutality of Europeans during enslavement, they were later granted their freedom that allowed Maroons to carry on African traditions. As a result, some ideas about salt are derived from their African heritage but had been influenced by their interactions with Europeans resulting in a Maroon belief system. In the following sections of this chapter, I will explore Maroon engagement with salt and how beliefs and practices were rooted in African cultures but altered due to the experiences of the Atlantic Slave trade.

4.2 Salt: The Bridge Between Earth and the Spirit World

Maroons have a strong connection to their African heritage, which is viewed as being a core part of their identity. By maintaining their African roots, Maroons felt this innate connection to their homeland. Many factors contributed to their ability to preserve their identity and culture. Food and religion were two cultural components that aid in the Maroons' ability to continue to express their culture while helping to resist enslavement

from the colonial powers. Salt's presence in food and religion played a role in the preservation and development of the Maroon identity. Salt had two major categories of placement in the Maroon culture: its consumption and its external use. Each method in which salt was used helped preserve the African identity of a Maroon but also aided in the creation of beliefs, practices, and adaptations comprising what it meant to be a Maroon in Jamaica in comparison to non-Maroons.

Cultural beliefs and practices are tied to a value system that deems an object, place, person, and idea important in a cultural setting. When a person or community places value on something, including inanimate objects like salt, cultural ideas are developed around it, thus reinforcing a belief system. Over time the value of something can continue to remain intact, change meanings or value of importance, or no longer be excepted or wanted as part of the cultural identity. This cultural identity risk evolving due to the influences of nuances that are added. Salt has a value system among the Maroon community in the form of internal and external uses (i.e., consumption or uses outside the body). It is these binary expressions of salt that are seen as either in competition or working together. Of course, while culture is not clear cut and cannot be generalized for all, this concept applies generally to salt. In the context of Maroon identity, salt, in how it is expressed, viewed, and utilized, will vary within a setting of individuals, but also within the communities as a whole. Therefore, salt contributes to the core ideology and belief system of a Maroon, but essentially will and has been tailored to fit the needs and values of different Maroon communities and individuals; this is seen over time as influences of modernization have infiltrated the isolated barriers of the Maroon community.

Before Maroons existed in Jamaica, the beliefs around salt were a melting pot of West and Central Africa, European, and indigenous beliefs and practices. They touched different aspects of human culture, from those of consumption that involve the act of salt within the body to those around the physical use of salt outside the body. The realm of inside and outside the body are important factors in the development of the Maroon identity, as each form of salt use reinforces and aids in preserving the core identity of a Maroon. At any given time, both distinguished uses for salt can overlap or remain distinctly separated for different uses. How salt is used, when, and where are important layers to understanding how salt contributes to the Maroon identity and to those of non-Maroons; a core part of being a Maroon is the characteristics of being "pure" in comparisons of their fellow enslaved Africans. However, just as Maroons adapted to their new environment to meet their needs, salt, and the ideas attached to it were altered as well. For instance, many ideas around salt were derived from West and Central African ideas centered around how salt influenced the physical (earthly) and spiritual worlds. Maroons used their knowledge of salt among other cultural ideas from home as a touchstone to develop the Maroon's beliefs around salt. In this way, the trail back to different regions in Africa can provide a touchstone for examining how enslaved Africans who later became Maroons created, and later preserved their identity. Although it is stated that most enslaved Africans came from West and Central African ports, this is may not be the case for all origins. Ideas around salt vary across the African continent, but it is clear salt had a level of value in many African regions. Therefore, the following paragraphs explore the variety of salt's value as it was known for beliefs and practices to

be exchanged through the migration of people and have a level of similarity and expression in Maroon culture.

Salt's use as well as beliefs around salt varied across regions and time on the African continent. The themes around salt's meanings consisted of associations with wealth, life, purity, spirituality, and earthly belonging. Salt was essential for survival, especially in warmer climates, where the loss of electrolytes needed to be replaced. It was also used for the preservation of meats. These all were aspects related to food use and consumption. However, salt was more than food. Essential to the food making process, it also held a significance in currency, and symbolism of the spiritual and earthly worlds. In Egypt, people would incorporate salt as part of the sacrifice to honor the goddess Neith, also known as "the great mother of life" (Trumbull, 1899, p.72). Salt symbolically represented the creation of life among Egyptians which seemed fitting when sacrificing for "the great mother of life." Furthermore, this connection to Egypt is also relevant in the value of salt as many West and Central Africans produced salt along the Atlantic coast, later to be traded along the Trans-Saharan caravan routes for slaves, gold, and other desired commodities while merchants made their way to Egypt (Lovejoy, 1986). The value of salt extends across the African continent and can be seen in other location. In ancient Ethiopia, the need to transport salt from the lowlands to the plateau was essential that camels were entrusted to perform the work (Phillipson, 1983, p.355). Salt's value was ubiquitous across Africa, symbolizing currency, wealth, status, and religious beliefs.

Over time, salt ebb and flow between its multiple symbolic uses in Africa, but always maintained a connection to religion. In the later context of Christianity in regions

of modern Africa, Stan Ilo, Joseph Ogbonnaya, and Alex Ojacor (2011) address the Christian church's future in Africa by aligning it to salt. Salt in the biblical text continually refers to salt as being the "salt of the earth", which in this context is being used to represent life and purity. Therefore, the idea of the church being salt is then translated to be the fueling force behind preventing things on the African continent from going "bad" and "corrupt" (Ilo, Ogbonnaya, and Ojacor, 2011, p.66). Christianity was used by Europeans as a way to cleanse enslaved Africans of their traditional practices and heritage. Europeans would force enslaved Africans to comply with a European way of living by punishing anyone who tried to maintain their African culture. This aspect of European Christianity that was seen throughout the Caribbean later became essential to the creation of Rastafarian as a way to decolonize their belief system; the connection of Rastafarianism and Christianity is expanded on in chapter 5.

Additionally, Richard Shain (2005) explored ideas of identity formation in terms of the Apa identity in Nigeria as that region's primary salt makers. Subsequently, the Yoruba, a sub-culture group in Nigeria, incorporated salt into their naming ceremony for new-born babies, where salt was placed on the tongue to symbolize the heightened flavor of life (Warner-Lewis, 1993, p.115). Thus, salt's symbolic ideas remain constant across cultures within Africa by seeing similar beliefs and practices of salt dance around the ideas of life, purity, and preservation. Regardless of how salt was viewed and used, it was clear salt was significant and obtained value. Salt was utilized in many ways both in culinary and symbolism, and these ideas around salt crossed the Middle Passage in the memories and stories of enslaved Africans; later, being employed in cultural development and identity in Jamaica, let alone the Caribbean.

Although there are many aspects of salt within Africa's borders, only some of the beliefs and practices of salt with the African community were preserved consistently across centuries of cultural development. One common belief from a number of West and Central African folklores was the idea of salt being a powerful substance in connection to the spiritual world. A common belief seen among African descendants in the Caribbean, including Jamaica, is the belief around the consumption of salt and human flight. It was believed that if an enslaved African consumed salt it would prevent them from flying back to the motherland, their ancestral African home. This belief travels in many cultural directions and can be found in many cultural versions, such as the Rastafarian community, which I will discuss in the next chapter. Among the Maroons, the idea of salt preventing one from flying back to Africa is also part of the historical narrative that contributes to the Maroon identity.

The idea of salt preventing an African from flying back to Africa is rooted in folklore and mythology. In the literature about human flight in West African culture, some scholars like Lorna McDaniel (1990) claim the belief around human flight is unique as it is absent in West African culture (p.28). However, this is untrue because previous works explore the concept of flight that is found among the Yoruba who think that some women can become birds at night and fly (Prince, 1961, p.798). The ability to fly and the beliefs around it continued to exist in Maroon culture but have been altered to meet the needs of the current environment. Therefore, the connection and evolution of this idea of human flight from one culture to another is interesting because it can shed light on how beliefs and practices can be altered to meet the needs of the current environment, yet still preserve cultural identity. The idea of human flight and lack thereof is due to salt having

roots in the African thought of “malevolent forces” and spirits possessing the power of flight (McDaniel, 1990, p.28). The spiritual world in African and African diaspora culture is prominent and widespread in the belief that some people and spirits have the ability to fly. Subsequently, salt is seen as a factor in preventing flight of malevolent spirits (McDaniel, 1990, p.28; Hurston, 1938, p.62), along with other spiritual capabilities including protection. Belief systems around flight and salt become interlocked with each other and expressed in human flight capability and the creation of identity once enslaved Africans crossed the Atlantic.

The capabilities of salt are expansive within the spiritual world. Preventing flight of spirits is known across many African cultures in West and Central Africa. The reason for this is because the symbolism around salt primarily directs its attention to earthly connections, which are believed to limit one’s access to the spiritual world and all that comes with it – including flight. Ideas around salt are expressed in many religious and spiritual cultures. The most noticeable reference to salt is in Christianity; salt is symbolic of the earth and is mentioned in Matthew 5:15, “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.” This phrase comes from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. The meaning behind this phrase is all-encompassing to many ideas as over the years multiple interpretations have evolved. The most commonly expressed idea from Jesus’ speech tends to refer to the common people as worthy and regardless of status have value. However, other interpretations as seen earlier in this chapter in Ilo, Ogbonnaya, and Ojacor ‘s book *The Church as Salt and Light*, salt is used as symbolism for purity and good. Additionally, salt is a valuable mineral that comes from the earth,

making it a valuable earthy substance and grounding its symbolism to all things earthly. Referring back to Christian beliefs around salt, themes of worthiness, value, purity, and good are attached to salt. Within the Christian religion, "witchcraft" and spirits were constituted as demotic and not of the heavens. A connection can be made that based on salt's symbolism and the ability to obtain salt from the earth, salt bounds the spirits to the earth preventing them from flying (Warner-Lewis, 1993). This belief is confirmed through folklore and mythology from both African and European sides (McDaniel, 1990). It is then understandable to see Christianity used to influence African beliefs in the Caribbean during the colonial era when European imposition replaced outlawed African practices. Therefore, salt becomes a symbolism European Christianity, to help cleanse and bind the spirits and humans to the earthly world.

The theme of grounding and earthly possessions plays a role on the Maroon identity, especially in separating them from non-Maroons, including other Africans on the island. The tale of the "Two Sister Pikni" sheds light in the Maroons identity with salt and flight focusing on Queen Nanny, the legendary leader of the Windward Maroons during the 18th century and known as the "mother" of the Maroons (Bilby, 1984, p.11). It is said that Queen Nanny was born in Ghana. The identity of the Maroons aligns themselves with Queen Nanny and her resilience against the British in the effort to fight for freedom from enslavement and territorial sovereignty, and the ability to maintain and embrace their African culture. It was said that Queen Nanny originally came to Jamaica with a sister, Grandy Sekesu. This is the commonly known name for the sister of Queen Nanny (Bilby, 1984, p.13), a name that reflects her status and age. Nanny is similarly known as "Grandee" or "Granny" Nanny (Bilby 1984, 12; Agorsah 1994), with Grandy

meaning “grandmother” in Jamaican Creole. It is said that two identities, of the Maroon and the “other,” were directly associated with these two sisters. In the story, the differentiation was a result of two factors that determined their destiny. The first most commonly known was the desire to fight against the British. According to the story, Queen Nanny, a born warrior, had a fire within her to fight for her freedom against the curl ways of the Colonial powers. She wanted nothing more than free herself and other enslaved Africans from a life of bondage (Goucher, 2021, forthcoming). Her connection to her African identity and the spirits that aid in her ability to obtain human flight is also derived from African beliefs in women that fly like birds (Bilby 1984, p.13; Agorsah 1994, p.121). In the Akan society of Ghana, the bird is associated with leadership because it can go anywhere (Cole and Ross, 1977, p.152). However, unlike Queen Nanny, her sister Grandy said she would not fight as the sight of bloodshed was not a part of who she was (Bilby, 1984, p.13). These two sisters differ in their ability to fight, one embraced war and bloodshed, while the other could not bear to be a part of it.

However, the desire to fight, or avoid conflict, was not the only reason for the separation of the two sisters. Ironically, the consumption of salt aided in making these two distinct identities that shaped the Maroons and the “other” Africans on the island. During the trip across the Middle Passage, it was said that Europeans would attempt to destroy all connections to the spiritual forces the enslaved Africans possessed. The superior spiritual powers that Maroons were believed to possess are embedded in their ancestors. In the case of Queen Nanny, she is remembered in stories and legends for her ability to hide and keep close the objects and knowledge of African spirituality that was brought with them across the voyage of the Atlantic Ocean (Bilby, 2008, p.71).

Through the successful management of their African spirituality, Maroons were successful in establishing their identity. Maroons speak of swallowing their Obeah which allowed their ancestors including Queen Nanny, to keep their spiritual connection hidden for the entirety of the voyage (Bilby, 2008, p,71). Obeah is a term that encompasses a variety of spiritual beliefs and practices that range from sacred communication with unseen realms to medical knowledge. The word is derived from African origins and has been adapted as a word used in connection to the spirit world and supernatural forces (Bilby and Handler, 2004, p.154). Enslaved Africans that crossed the Middle Passage used Obeah to communicate "telepathically" to their homeland, attracting African spirits to help devise plans and use material culture as spiritual and physical weaponry to help in their fight for freedom (Bilby, 2008, p.71). Queen Nanny was adamant about protecting her spiritual connection to Africa and ensuring her Obeah would remain safe by taking additional precautions by rendering her speech by taking a special substance; she later gave herself the antidote when arriving on land (Bilby, 2008, p.72). This narrative plays an important role in the Maroon identity and its connection to the two sisters.

Unlike Queen Nanny who kept in touch with her roots in West African culture, it is said that her sister, Grandy Sekesu, was connected to the Bongo, another West Central African people (Bilby, 2008, p.118). While it is noted that both sisters and their descendants have the ability to connect to the spiritual world, it is said that the "Bongo" ancestors of those non-Maroons who were related by lineage, were less spiritually powerful as they did not take the necessary precautions to protect their spiritual connection to the homeland (Bilby, 2008, p.72). The main reason for the presence or lack of spiritual power was the consumption of salt.

The consumption of salt in connection to spirituality was a theme brought up multiple times from the participants of the research study from historical to contemporary aspects. This idea of salt consumption is a factor in Maroon identity historically and based on the data gathered in my ethnographic research, the topic of salt and spirituality still exists. The historical memory and symbolism of salt are still present in today's Maroon culture. Although it is less ingrained, it is still a testimony of self-representation and connection to the Maroon ancestors like Queen Nanny. The belief around salt and Maroon identity stem from the symbolic separation of the Two Sisters: Queen Nanny and Grandy Sekesu. Like their differences in warfare, stories of the two show another difference, the consumption of salt, or lack thereof.

Queen Nanny took precautions in all forms to maintain her spiritual connection to Africa, including maintaining the absence of salt in her diet (Bilby, 2008, p.73). However, her sister on the other hand went against the warning that salt would prevent her from connecting to the African ancestors. A story told among the Kumina religion, a West and Central African-derived religion having ties to the "Bongo nation" and beliefs around human flight and salt (Bilby, 2008, p.111), is told as a warning about the consumption of salt:

> "A two sister child, you know. Well, one was Grandy Nanny, that's the Maroon. And de other one is Mother Ibo, a African women [sic]. Two sister child. So, Maroon is fe Grandy Nanny, and we [Bongo people] are Mother Ibo grandchild. We was warned. We was warned not to eat salt. But, you know, some can't bear hungry. Anything him got, him eat [sic].

> But Maroon never eat, in de slavery time dem never eat, they feed on green bush" (Bilby, 2008, p.119).

This story, although it does not directly connect the non-Maroon's lack of spiritual power to Mother Ibo's salt consumption, it does suggest that because Mother Ibo is their grandmother, that they were warned, but did not obey. This story is a contributing factor in the separation of the identities of those who became Maroons and those who remained (non-Maroon) Africans but were now viewed as the "other".

Furthermore, the consumption of salt also demonstrated one's weakness and acceptance of slavery (Bilby, 2008, p.111). This implication further contributed to the distinctiveness of Maroon identities from those of the "others," who embraced eating salted food (i.e., saltfish, salted pork, and salted beef) given by white Europeans. By resisting eating salted food and directing their food consumption to wild plants and animals, the Maroons further detached themselves from the enslaved identity to that of a "true" Maroon. Supplying one's provisions demonstrated the agility and strength it took to ensure a connection to the spiritual powers connected to the homeland of Africa.

4.3 Ethnographic Observations of Contemporary Maroon Beliefs and Practices

The consumption of salt in the context of symbolism is not something that was only done in the past. During my ethnographic research, I spoke with Maroons in Charles Town shortly after their annual International Charles Town Maroon Conference and Festival. I had the pleasure of speaking with a participant that had a high status among the Maroon community. However, the information I gathered during my visit is limited and the data

collected cannot and should not be used to generalize the Jamaican Maroon community. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier in this chapter there were two communities of the Maroons: West and East. The data I collected in Charles Town only represents the Eastern Maroons, not those of the West. However, what information I was provided does suggest a snapshot of the contemporary Jamaican Maroon community and how salt among certain Maroons is represented symbolically.

I chose Charles Town to conduct my interviews because a colleague of mine had well-established connections with the Maroon community. The networking ties helped me to begin building trust between the Maroon community and myself. Charles Town is an isolated town away from any major shopping centers. There were many trees, dirt roads, one-way roads, and wooden buildings that made up the landscape. When I first arrived at the Maroon's museum, bold imagery was painted outside, along walls telling the story of their ancestors (Figure 5). Inside, children, teenagers, and adults all mingled around in an open area with a performance stage in the back. Children, both boys, and girls played with each other and delighted in an icy treat on what was a hot day. A colleague of mine who had a relationship with the main participant willing to talk to me introduced me to a slender, beautiful, and powerful looking woman who wore a vibrant yellow dress. As the participant made herself comfortable in her chair, my colleague and I sat down on a wooden platform with stairs.

(Figure 5) Charles Town Maroon Museum, 2019 (Photograph by Alyssa Sperry)

We began to talk, particularly about the relationship between salt and spirits. As the participant spoke, words of inherited wisdom and knowledge of the Maroons' ancestral past flowed from her lips, speaking of tales about Maroon culture, history, and how it is seen today.

Salt, being the main topic among others we discussed, was said to be a substance that is connected to the spiritual world. The participant got up and walked away suddenly, only to return with a wooden bowl full of coarse salt – salt crystals the size of small rocks (Figure 6). She also brought out white quartz that mimicked the look of the salt crystals she had in her bowl. As she swirled her fingers around the salt in the bowl, she proclaimed that salt was used in many ways to ward off the spirits. Just like the past, by avoiding salt so one could connect to the spirits, salt was used to keep unwanted spirits away. As the participant explained, salt was and still is used with the spiritual world. As a form of protection, salt is placed in the four corners of the house, or room to prevent any

spirit from crossing over. One can also place a blow of salt under their bed to rid of spirits causing nightmares. More than eighty years before, the anthropologist and ethnologist-folklorist Nora Zeal Hurston (1938) in her travels to Jamaica had explained the use of salt to prevent spirits from returning. The mixture of "some salt and 'compellance' powder was sprinkled in the coffin and it was finally closed … the train of salt and ground coffee was laid from the grave to the house door to prevent the return of the duppy [spirit] and people when on home" (Hurston, 1938, p.59). The use of the salt grounded the spirit from returning, just as it was said to ground Africans from flying home.

(Figure 6) Maroon Participant's bowl of salt next to white quartz, Charles Town, 2019
(Photograph by Heidi Savery)

The absence of salt in spiritual offerings is another practice performed in the Maroon community. According to the participant, food is offered to the ancestors and placed on altars or shrines. The food given is made without salt as it prevents the connection to the spiritual world, as well as shutting down the "third eye"; the third eye grants access to seeing into the spiritual world. The participant stated, "we [Maroons] don't put salt into food that we share with our ancestors, food we put in our altar or shrine also shut our third eye, making us lose our vision." This belief around salt with spiritual offerings is not widely recorded in the literature but was gathered during my interviews. The beliefs and practices around salt consumption extend beyond the personal consumption of salt. They apply human ideas of food consumption to the ancestors and spirits. Thus, human and spiritual use of salt becomes a way of connecting the consumption of salt to any blockage of the spiritual world, whether the efforts are for self-gain or honoring of ancestors.

In these practices, it is clear that salt holds a value when it comes to either tapping into the spiritual world, or when used as a form of protection against unwanted spirits. Therefore, it is not about whether salt is "bad" or "good" or about prescriptive rules governing whether one "should" or "should not" consume and/or use it, it is about the context of the situation and environment that is presented. This will ultimately dictate how salt is viewed and used, as well as what type of value is placed on it. The data gathered from modern Maroons confirmed beliefs and practices used to develop the Maroon identity back in the 17th century about salt and that is still present among the community today. The beliefs and practices continue to be passed on from generation to

generation in the form of oral traditions that will help to preserve the Maroon identity for generations to come. As the participant states “salt is very important both physically and spiritually.” Salt has and continues to be a factor in reinforcing ideas of Maroon identity by preserving the past in today’s world.

4.4 Consuming Salt

Salt consumption is a particularly simplistic yet complex action among Maroons. As discussed in the symbolism of salt, past studies would suggest that Maroons do not consume salt as it blocks their ability to connect to the spiritual world, thus grounding them to the earth. However, this is not the case, at least not in certain contexts. Salt consumption was an important conveyor of meaning and still is present among Maroons. The use of salt was an important factor in their food consumption, as it was a form of preservation of wild meats, particularly hog, while isolated and hidden from colonial powers.

Salt becomes this unique substance with guidelines that helped determine when it was acceptable to consume salt as a Maroon. It is neither fully avoided nor fully, unquestioningly embraced, but is used as a way to develop a cultural identity that separates a Maroon from others on the island. To make salt more complex, Maroons historically consumed salt when it clearly was emphasized that they did not to maintain their pure identity as Africans while resisting slavery; it was their lack of salt that allowed them to form the Maroon community, while still possessing the ability to fly back to Africa.

Salt is seen to have a dual purpose among Maroons. How it is used is based on the context of the situation. This complexity of salt demonstrates how identity formation is plastic and is, therefore, molded and developed into layers of cultural ties, by which an object with value is neither viewed as having a negative or positive influence, but simply exists and functions based on the context of the situation and the environment in which the person lives.

The avoidance of salt in the form of consumption is directed toward the spiritual world and the value placed on being able to connect with the ancestors and spirits. However, when discussing salt in terms of the physical, or in other words the "earthly" world, salt is readily consumed, and in some cases, seen as an essential part of the Maroon identity make-up. The renowned Jamaican dish "Jerked" Pork is rooted in the Jamaican Maroon culture (Kopytoff, p135). Maroons were known as excellent hunters. The environment and terrains of the Blue Mountains mimic that of their homelands in Africa. The Maroons quickly adapted and became successful hunters and gatherers, later cultivating plots of land for gardens, which aided in their ability to successfully defeat the British. With the success of their hunting, especially of wild hogs, the Maroons had to either sell or preserve the meat before it spoiled. The typical method for preservation of the meat (if not sold to nearby settlers and plantations) was to brine the meat in salt, or in some cases, wood ashes, which were a form of salt recovery (Kopytoff,1997, p135). Whether smoked or roasted, the prepared hog meat in this method was called "jerked" hog and was considered a Maroon delicacy.

The production of "jerked" hog relied on first simply soaking the hog meat in a brine, either of salt or of "wood ash" (Kopytoff, 1997, p.135). Finding or producing salt

can come in many forms. The most common forms of collecting or producing salt is either in the form of solar evaporation, rock salt mining, and vacuum evaporation. These methods can be used either for small- or large-scale production. In addition to the three main forms of salt production, other forms include but are not limited to salt extraction from plant ash and manure; these alternative methods are used in small scale production and in locations where rock salt and seawater are not available, particularly in the interior landscape of regions. Since the Maroon established communities in the interior landscape of the island, salt had to be produced using other materials or obtained from outside salt producers. Maroons were often in want of salt, but as their landscape of the interior mountain rage limited their access to seawater or the markets to buy salt, they had to either produce salt in an alternative way or trade when able to (Brooks, 2010, p.33). Needless to say, in 1739, when the first Maroon Peace Treaty was signed, Maroons were granted free access to the markets where salt was available for trade or purchase (Kopytoff, 1997, p.136). The preservation of the wild hog made the meat last longer. Salt, along with other ingredients used to make the "jerked" hog helped preserve the meat and make it quite flavorful. Traveling in 1816-18, the writer of gothic novels and proprietor of estates in Jamaica, Matthew Lewis describes his encounter with the famous Maroon cuisine during his trip to Jamaica:

> "We had at dinner a land tortoise and a barbecued pig, two of the best and richest dishes that I ever tasted; - the latter, in particular, which was dressed in the true maroon fashion, being placed on a barbecue (a frame of wicker work, through whose interstices the steam can ascend), filled with peppers and spices of the heist

> flavour, and wrapt [sic] in plantain leaves, and then buried in a hole filled with hot stones, by whose vapor it is then bake, no particle of the juice being thus suffered to evaporate" (Lewis, 1834, p.151).

This process of using salt, additional spices (particularly the local allspice), and how the meat was cooked created the iconic "jerk" food commonly still found throughout the island's food scene. Salt was an essential ingredient in the making of this dish (Kopytoff, 1997 p.135).

Although it is the dish itself that is connected to the formation of Maroon identity, by overlapping hog hunting, cooking methods, and eventually an iconic dish that represents Maroons, salt is an essential factor and without it, the dish would not be what it is. Modern Maroons state that their ancestors would trade wild hog meat for salt, exchanging one valuable commodity for another. This use of salt contradicts the Maroon avoidance of salt, but as mentioned before it is not whether salt is used or avoided and the need to choose sides that determine Maroon identity, but how salt is used in a given context. Salt infiltrates identity formation through either use or avoidance, which then helps determine what makes a "true" Maroon.

Salt on a physical world level was essential and needed for the preservation of meats and the health of the body. Nevertheless, when the context was one of engaging with unseen realms of ancestors or spirits, it was omitted from the diet as it was believed to prevent one's connection to the spiritual world. However, although salt was eliminated from the diet for a Maroon to connect to the spiritual world, salt use in other forms outside the body was still actively incorporated into the lives of Maroons; salt was never

fully eliminated from the culture. Among the physical uses of salt, the participant in the study claimed that salt is needed in the diet, but of course in moderation. The balance of salt is key in the identity of Maroons. According to the participant the physical use of salt, which encompasses the internal (consumption) and external uses of salt, is expressed in many forms and multiple practices.

The majority of salt use was through the form of consumption as food and other culinary forms. Today's Maroons, according to the participant, learned the ways of salt from the elders around them. Salted meats and salt mixed with herbs to preserve meats are common forms of culinary practice used historically and they have continued into modern times. Furthermore, salt used in the form of bathing is another use seen to have continued in modern times from its historical roots. The salt bath is for healing and cleansing properties. It is said that a salt bath takes place after a woman has given birth to help heal and cleanse the body.

As one can tell, salt is important in the physical realm of Maroon culture and identity formation. Salt not only preserved the meat for Maroon ancestors but was used to help create an iconic dish that preserves the identity of Maroons and their culture's history. Salt in this case is not only preserving the physical flesh but the memories and beliefs that go along with it as it is passed down through the generations.

4.5 Conclusion

Salt was a contributing influence on the development of the Maroon identity for self and community. The symbolic and culinary uses of salt all aided in the beliefs and practices used to reinforce what it means to be a Maroon amongst the many others who possess

links to their African heritage. The ideas of remaining pure from the infiltration of salt and its ability to block the spiritual world were seen as core meanings that informed what made a Maroon possess the ability to connect with Obeah and the powers and knowledge needed to fight against the colonial powers, and even gain freedom prior to emancipation.

Among the Maroon community salt is neither viewed as “bad” or “good” nor should be avoided in general, but its involvement in the Maroon culture is based on the needs and context of the situation at hand. Just as Nora Zeal Hurston observed in the 1930s, salt was being used to prevent the spirits from coming back. The participant’s use of salt to ward off nightmares and unwanted spirits was similarly employed as protection. Salt has acquired a form of value that is still being used to preserve the cultural identities of the Maroons both in the past and in the present. Each of these ideas around salt has remained constant over time among the Maroon community; the symbolism and culinary uses are still present and are told in oral traditions of stories and songs that are passed down the generational bloodline. Salt is not just a commodity for preserving food but is a tool used to preserve the identity and culture of the Maroon community.

CHAPTER V

I-TAL WAY OF LIFE:

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RASTAFARIANS AND SALT

"Salt is a Mystical Substance."
-Rastafarian participant

5.1 Rastafarianism: A Historical Overview

In the 1930s, the Rastafari movement swept across the landscape of Jamaica. First taking root in the Kingston area, the movement's message of decolonization replaced European imagery with African imagery, and reclaimed agency over oneself, one's culture, and one's land. This laid down the foundation for the Rastafari religion and socio-cultural movement to expand across the island and later the globe. The Rastafari religion removed European imagery representing God and replaced it with African images (for example, the lion becomes the symbol of the Messiah), thereby stating their African identity. The movement was born out of African spirituality deriving from Maroon culture, the West-Central African-derived religion called Kumina, and the preceding Revivalism movement from Jamaican Christianity. However, Rastafarianism later fashioned into its own form of religion taking on characteristics focusing more on the practicality of how one lives on earth, embodying the "one love" theme, a theme of unity and inclusion. In turn, Rastafari evolved into a large-scale cultural and religious movement originating in Jamaica, but which now has taken root in other regions of the world. The first part of this chapter will explain the history of the Rastafari movement and the bridge between the past and the present. This will provide the background information needed to understand and frame

the symbolic and practical views of salt, which will be discussed in the remaining parts of the chapter.

Rastafari culture is a movement of resistance. By rejecting European culture and embracing African heritage, anyone who identifies as a Rastafarian, or Rasta, for short, has encapsulated an ambiance of resistance. Furthermore, Rastafarianism represents the most recent movement of resistance culture in a long line of resistance movements in Jamaican history, starting with the Maroons (Chevannes, 1994, p.10). Moreover, Horace Campbell (1985) traced the Rastafari culture's history and connected its traditions and ideas back to the Maroon era, and the original slave rebellions. Rastafarians additionally drew from other resistance movements such as those of the nineteenth-century peasant revolts and the twentieth-century philosophical and political works of Marcus Garvey, and the preceding resistance movement Revivalism, also known as the Revival Zion (Chevannes, 1994, p.10; Edmonds, 2012, p.6).

The connection to Marcus Garvey is just one important link in the development of beliefs and practices around salt in the Rastafari culture because he had played a foundational part in the development of the Rastafari religion. Born on August 17, 1887, in St. Ann's Bay parish of St. Ann, Jamaica, Garvey left a legacy of black unity and was later given the status of a prophet in the Rastafari community, shortly before his passing in 1940 (Edmonds, 2012, p.7). What makes Marcus Garvey important to this research is his duality of being a Maroon, and his influence on the Rastafari community and other components of Jamaican society through the Garvey movement of the 1910s and 1920s, which was, in turn, the result of black nationalism and Pan-Africanism movements. Garvey's mission was to create a unified front among African descendants, with

emphasis on repatriation, black pride, and self-reliance (Edmonds, 2012, p.7). Garvey embraced themes of equality, unity, and self-reliance which he was able to convey through cultural, religious, and political messages to the crowds of Jamaica (Chevannes, 1994, p.95-97). Being a Maroon, Garvey pulled inspiration from his heritage, embracing slave revolts and African heritage, which later can be seen as having some level of influence on the Rastafari identity. Maroons were the original resistance movement against the Europeans. Many ideas about African beliefs and practices can be traced across the timeline of Jamaican history with each new resistance and Pan-African movement that took place between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, leading up to the Rastafari movement.

A pivotal moment in Rastafari prehistory that led to its beginnings is Garvey's prophecy about a black king, stating that following only a year later, in 1930, when Ras Tafari became the crowned Emperor Haile Selassie of Abyssinia/Ethiopia which brought Marcus Garvey's prophecy to life. Emperor Haile Selassie's rise gave him messianic status, the same status as Jesus Christ; this connection to King David's line deeded Ethiopia the promised land (Lewin, 2000, p.197). Between Garvey's prophecy and the crowning of a new emperor in Ethiopia, many Jamaicans attribute this as a significant event as it was the fulfillment of the prophecy. Therefore, a number of Revivalists and members of the Garvey movement joined together in a renewed resistance and a revived Pan-African movement called the Rastafari movement. The belief behind the Rastafari movement is that all Africans in the diaspora are destined to be free from "Babylon" or in this case Jamaica, by returning home to "Zion" (i.e., Africa) the land of their ancestors, or more specifically, Ethiopia (Chevannes, 1994, p.1). Ethiopia became the focal point in

the Rastafari culture because of the prophecy and with the rise of a black king during the period of European colonial empires. Emperor Haile Selassie is the black Messiah, who became the redeemer of all Blacks who were exiled from Zion as a result of White oppressors in the form of colonization (Barrett, 1997, p.1).

This point in Jamaica's history helped build a bridge connecting beliefs and practices that were generated during the Maroon movement in the eighteenth-century to those of the Rastafari. The ideas of resistance and generalized African beliefs seen across regions continue to be passed down the generational line in Jamaican history, being expressed in African-based religions like Kumina, and in other resistance movements like the Revivalists. Value systems and cultural characteristics expressing African heritage continued to influence Jamaicans, especially Rastas and Maroons. Ideas around salt remained consistent around symbolism, but were altered in other areas, especially in Rastafari culture adaptations to the current environment were deemed necessary to continue to match up with the current value system that influenced the Rasta identity. The cultural beliefs and practices of Maroons had some level of influence on the development of the identity of early Rastafarians. This continues to be the case. One Maroon participant of this study also identified as a Rasta woman. She embraces the Maroon beliefs and ideas around salt and how it influenced the Maroon identity, but also values her Rasta identity and can see the value of salt in that cultural ethos. Rastafari embraced and embedded ideas of the Jamaican past, including those from the Maroons. Marcus Garvey became the link between the two cultures as he was both a Maroon and positioned to aid in the development of the Rastafari religion and culture.

As the Rastafari movement continued to emerge, Jamaica itself became the corrupted place of Babylon. Babylon represented the ideologies of the West, especially that of the church and state (Lewin, 2000, p.202). The term "Babylon" was adopted in the Rastafari culture because of its use in the ancient biblical city of Babylon in Mesopotamia, where the Jews became victims of a series of deportations between 597 and 586 BCE (Edmonds, 2012, p.38). Furthermore, the term "Babylon" is used in reference to the Roman Empire in the *Book of Revelations* where Christians were facing persecutions from Roman authorities. Therefore, Rastas aligned themselves, and their ancestral past with the motives of colonialism and the exploitation of land and labor with that of the biblical scripture. The Babylon spirit encapsulated all that was associated with colonialism, which included social, political, and economic ideas and beliefs. Anything that was seen connected with the Babylon spirit needed to be rejected and removed from the Rastafari culture. This is where Rastas turned and embraced "Zion", the "city of peace" as their source for beliefs and practices. Zion is adopted from the biblical scripture, just as Babylon was. However, Zion represents Jerusalem, the city of God, which translated into ideas of harmony, community, and justice (Edmonds, 2012, p.41). In the case of Rastafarians, Zion translates to Africa or Ethiopia, the home of their ancestors, wherein resides the freedom to reconnect to their roots and embrace newly harvested cultural ideas and traditions.

However, in 1966 when Haile Selassie visited Jamaica for the first time, a shift in perspective on Jamaica's connection to Babylon took place. When Haile Selassie arrived, the shock of his appearance of lighter skin and small frame was not what some Rastafarians expected. They were hesitant about whether or not he could be the Messiah

of their race. Instead of rejecting the culture altogether, Rastas who were hesitant saw a new opportunity and developed ideas that Jamaica was Jah (God) make-yah (here), meaning God is here in Jamaica, making it a beautiful second home to Africa (Lewin, 2000, p.199). This idea of Jamaica as home also extends to having Zion within oneself. During one of my interviews, a Rasta man proclaimed that Zion/Africa was with a person at all times. We all come from Africa, and therefore Africa is within all of us. The religion was thought to be about what "we" brought with us when we left Africa; these possessions include ideas, beliefs, practices, culture, food, music, religion, spirituality, and much more. The Rasta man continued by saying that it is not always possible to travel to Africa, and therefore a Rasta has to make the place he or she resides as a form of Africa – stating "you make Africa where you are."

Eventually, the Rastafari culture developed what is called "Mansions of Rastafari," an umbrella term used to house conceptually the various groups within the Rastafari community. Although there is a variety among groups that are included, there tend to be five main groups which include, the Bobo Ashanti, the Niyabinghi (Nyah Binghi), the Twelve Tribes of Israel, the Orthodox, and the Rastas (a group that has no affiliation to any group). There is no central leadership that defines or enforces structural beliefs and practices. The idea of autonomy is one of the main characteristics of Rastafari culture, as is the rejection of formal structures of Babylon's institutions, such as politics, church, law enforcement, economy, and education, all of which are seen as factors in oppression (Edmonds, 2012, p.52). And it is this autonomy that plays a critical factor in the development of cultural ideas and preservations of identity among the Rasta community. Even though there are mansions or houses as some Rastas call them, many

Rastafarians pursue a doctrine of individualism that either embraces the general views of "Rastalogy" or rejects certain aspects that do not align with their views or contribute to their identity as a Rasta, thus creating an idiosyncratic approach to how one lives (Edmonds, 2012, p.53); this particular aspect of modern Rastafarianism plays a role in how salt is viewed.

By emphasizing individualism, beliefs and ideas will vary within groups and between individuals, where views on the diet, scripture, spiritual beliefs, looks (e.g., dreadlocks), and relationship with the "herb" or "ganja" are expressed according to personal preference, not strict rules. Many of the Rastas that were involved in this research did not identify with a house but instead claimed they were simply a Rasta, without further affiliation. However, a couple of the Rastas belonged to a Rasta Camp in the Blue Mountains under the Nyah Binghi house. Needless to say, this aspect of individualism in the Rastafari culture is extremely important when understanding the role salt plays among the community, as a generalization of the culture and its relationship with salt can be problematic especially with a culture that values an idiosyncratic approach to life and identity.

As Rastas began to decolonize their life, they began to replace the European imagery with that of African (Figure 7). Many beliefs and practices can be traced back to African cultural ideas, allowing Rastafarians to connect with their ancestral roots. Connecting with African cultural ideas has meant for Rastafarians encompassing the entire African continent. Since many Rastafarians are unsure of where their specific origins lie within Africa, the ability to just connect to Africa as a whole symbolizes

cultural significance in itself. Hence, the generalized term of “African culture” is used to represent any and all ideas of African origin and connectedness.

(Figure 7) African imagery representing Christ Jesus, Blue Mountains, 2019 (Photograph by Alyssa Sperry)

These Africa-rooted beliefs bleed into daily practices including diet. Ideas around food also go through a continual decolonizing process. Certain foods are omitted based on symbolic and practical beliefs, both connecting to past and present ideas. One important foodstuff that plays an important role among many Rastafarians is salt. Beliefs and practices are derived from historical memory and their African ancestors during the Atlantic Slave trade, but over time evolved into a stance on its exemption because of practical reasons focusing on health. However, the level at which salt plays a role in a Rasta’s life does have some level of influence on identity and the preservation of memory. As demonstrated, a Rasta doctrine of idiosyncratic mindsets plays a primary role in identity formation, and many Rastas believe salt does not play a role in their

identity, as it has to do more with what is inside, instead of visible and outward characteristics of a Rasta, such as dreadlocks or what one eats. This tends to be true based on the variation in ideas and beliefs expressed among the different groups and people of the Rastafari community. By collectively building from the ideas of Rastafari history, the remainder of this chapter will explore the symbolic and practical views and uses of salt as a method of identity creation, preservation, and as a form of decolonization based on the larger framework of the Rasta's relationship with food.

5.2 Salt's Symbolism in Rastafarian Culture

Food contributes to a large part of the Rastafarian identity. By eating a diet pure from modification and focusing on a vegan lifestyle, food is a way to promote life and wellbeing. However, to do that food beliefs and practices are placed on food to help guide Rastafarians to living a life destined to be in line with the "Rastalogy" of principles and practices. Having a blended belief system and drawing on past resistance movements and cultures such as that of Jamaican Maroons, Rastafari beliefs and practices around certain foods are critical to cultural expression. Salt is one foodstuff that has significant value in both cultures. In the sections below, I will explore the beliefs and practices around salt in the Rastafari culture to understand how the two African-derived cultures drawing from similar belief systems incorporate salt into their value systems, expressing their meanings in daily lives.

5.2.1 Human Flight and the Kumina Religion

The superficial role of salt among the Rastafari community leans toward the execution of practical ideas, those associated with consumption on a physical level. However, salt also has a symbolic role that some suggest the practicality of salt emerged from. Drawing from past rebellious moments, ways to regain self-proclaimed freedom from lasting oppression were at the forefront in developing beliefs and practices. This behavior moved an individual forward in regaining control of oneself and safeguarding one's community from the grasp of European beliefs and practices. Salt as seen in past cultures was transmitted across generations and across cultural boundaries, to be utilized and adopted by more recent arrivals on the island of Jamaica. In this context, the ideas of human flight and salt as seen expressed in Maroon culture are also prevalent in the emergence of the Rastafari movement in the 1930s.

At the beginning of the Rastafari movement, many "Rastalogy" principles and practices were created. Salt had its role within Rastalogy, defined as an ideology based on an interpretation of the Bible. Drawing from the past, salt was seen as an inhibitor of human flight. This idea can trace back to the origins of the Maroons, continuing to manifest in other cultures and religions across time and space on the island. For example, salt beliefs are found in Kumina, a religion and cultural community primarily located in St. Thomas that is said to be rooted in Central African culture (Schuler, 1980, p.70-71), but also references a much wider African homeland, including the Akan. The practices around ideas and beliefs are those of ancestors who stand in contrast to the Maroons, but who may have similar historical roots. Those considered the "other" Africans on the island practice the Kumina religion (Bilby, 2008, p.72). The origins of this religion are

arguably unclear, but evidence of Kumina practices are documented across the timeline ranging from the 1700s and throughout the 1800s (Edmonds, 2012, p.55). Although suppressed by authorities, the religion is still practiced today in St. Thomas.

Within the Kumina religion, human flight is prominent in the experience of believers. Just as with Maroons, the consumption of salt would prevent anyone from flying back home. Interestingly enough, there are songs from the Kumina religion that are discussed in the story of the Two Sister Pikni:

> "A two sister child, you know. Well, one was Grandy Nanny, that's the Maroon. And de other one is Mother Ibo, a African woman [sic]. Two sister child. So Maroon is fe Grandy Nanny, and we [Bongo people] are Mother Ibo grandchild.
>
> We was warned. We was warned not to eat salt. But, you know, some can't bear hungry [sic]. Anything him got, him eat. But Maroon never eat, in de slavery time dem never eat, they feed on green bush" (Bilby, 2008, p. 119).

In this song there is a clear distinction between which African group belongs to which sister; those who did not consume salt are Maroons, and those who did are Bongo, or non-Maroon. It was the mistake of Bongo ancestors to consume salt and their weakness toward hunger that prevented them from flying. Therefore, it was strongly noted in the Kumina religion that salt is not to be consumed when connecting with the spiritual world.

As the Rastafarian movement emerged in the 1930s, the desire to be repatriated back home to Africa was strong. The consumption of salt, or lack thereof, became part of

the religion as an effort to support the idea of returning home. It was known since the early days of the Atlantic Slave trade that the use of salt would ground an enslaved African, preventing them from returning home (Warner-Lewis, 1993). Although this idea of human flight and salt is emphasized in the Kumina religion, and Rastafarian movement, a clear connection between the two is still hazy. The origin of Rastafarians' symbolic connections between salt and human flight may be suggested in the Kumina religion; since this idea was also seen in the Maroon culture, the belief could have been inherited by both cultures.

Participants of this study when asked about human flight and salt consumption in the context of Rastafarians stated they had not heard of this idea before. When the topic of repatriation and returning back to Africa was discussed, participants mentioned boats or planes as the modes of transportation to return home; the need for spiritual flight was no longer considered. These comments suggest that while the belief around salt and human flight once might have required the protective practice of removing salt in one's diet, over the years this action simply was no longer of value in that context. It became a folkloric myth of the Rastafari movement, serving merely as a form of preserving the memory of the distant past.

5.2.2 Genesis and the Story of Lot's Wife

The idea of human flight and salt might have diminished over time, but symbolism with salt still exist within the Rastafarian community. During my interviews with Rastafarians, several participants referred to biblical scripture for reasons they abstained from consuming salt. The story of Lot's wife in the book of Genesis was continually referred

to in our conversations. The fear around being turned into a pillar of salt has become of value among some Rastafari communities as a way to represent disobedience. According to participants of the study, the story of Lot's wife in the Bible was told to them at a young age. One participant claimed references to the story were incorporated into songs that warn of repercussions when people disobey.

In the story, Lot had sheltered two angels who later told Lot and his family to flee from Sodom as the angels were going to destroy it. As Lot, his two daughters, and his wife flee, one of the angels told them "[f]lee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!" (Genesis 19:17). However, as they fled to the nearby mountains, Lot's wife "looked back, and she became a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19:26). The disobedience of Lot's wife has become a key lesson among some of the Rastafari community.

The symbolism of salt in connection with Lot's story, and the preceding human flight belief, continually reinforces a message of the consequences of disobedience. It warns that the actions of consuming salt will have repercussions. Whether it be the story of flight or the story of Lot's wife, these references reinforce the practices of Rastafarians. In this way, restraint from salt consumption is preserving the behaviors and the identity of what it means to be a Rastafarian.

5.2.3 Why do you have to be so "Salty"?

The terms "salt" or "salty" are commonly references to unpleasant identity characteristics, including "mean", "bitter", "rude", "bitchy", "jealous", and "nasty". I observed this negative characteristic of salt not only among the larger Jamaican

community but also within the Rastafari community. During my trips to Jamaica, over time I was deemed the “salt woman” among the communities I lived and worked with, as a reference to my work with salt. One time I had a conversation during fieldwork with a young man who told me that the term “salt” was seen as an unpleasant characteristic like “bitchy”. Being concerned about my own representation of identity among the community, I had asked if my being referred to as the “salt woman” was a reference to my characteristics of being “rude” and/or “bitchy”. The young man laughed and said no, it is simply because you are the only one we know so invested in understanding salt on the island. Hence, the reference to being called the “salt woman” may fall out of the cultural norms. My encounters with salt, which could be used as another form of identity marker, in contrast to the other stories, showed flexibility in the ways in which salt was used. In general, the term “salt” or “salty” was used frequently to refer to someone typically unpleasant. However, in a few cases, such as mine, it did not mean that, confirming how the term “salt” is used is based on context. Salt’s meanings can ebb and flow between different identity markers, thus not always being preserved as the same thing, at the same time. This fluidity may be particularly important for the term’s use by Rastafarians.

Commonly in the context of Rastafarians, the terms “salt” or “salty” has been associated with unpleasant descriptions. Therefore, the term is generally avoided as a descriptive word unless in the context of someone who is consistently “bitter”, “rude”, or “nasty”. One of the participants informed me that while growing up he would hear people say “ya salt” or “ya salt mon”. These name callings referred to someone bad or experiencing (or conveying) bad luck. When a person says “ya salt” or “ya salt mon” it

was a way to say “don’t come around me because you have bad vibes.” Sometimes the story of Lot’s wife was used as a warning associated with being “salty”. It is a term most want to avoid being referred to as it sends the wrong message about their identity, in particular, how they want to be perceived as a person.

When I asked about the origin of these names and the belief that salt equates to “bad vibes,” a Rasta man in his fifties claimed it was “old people stuff,” and it is what they grew up with. I then asked if the Rasta man thought this could be tied to the Atlantic Slave trade with disobeying the warning message of consuming salt to a modern-day translation to someone who disobeys and is heading down a path doomed for no good. The Rasta man comment and said:

> “could be, but then I would have to say it would have to be that with the [sugar] cane too, but it’s not like that because they drinkin white rum like a mother fucker [sic]. I don’t think that’s it, some people just decide shit, like one faction says ‘ya were not going to fuck with the salt like that’, another faction [is] like ‘fuck ya, go ahead do what you all want to do, I’ll eat salt if I want to eat salt’. We got our freedom, I’m free and do whatever I want now, I’m going to do this, you do that [sic].”

What might be concluded from the views in this statement is that the negative beliefs associated with the term salt are not set in stone but are fluid. They are general beliefs around the use of the term salt in reference to a person’s character but may not be associated with historical ideas of salt.

5.2.4 Preserving Death Instead of Life

Another form of salt symbolism that contributes to the formation of Rastafarian identity is salt's ability to preserve the dead. Salt is a known method for preserving meats and other foodstuffs. During the Atlantic Slave trade, it was used primarily to preserve fish, especially codfish the cod industry was booming alongside the salt and sugar industries (Sperry, forthcoming). The salted fish or salted codfish was used as provisions for sailors and enslaved Africans alike. As mentioned in the previous chapter about Maroons, the enslaved Africans who wanted to remain connected to the spiritual world and resisted colonial corruption were said to have refused the consumption of any salt products. Salt was said to ground their bodies to the earthly world and to prevent them from flying back home, thus preserving the human body and bonding it to earth.

In addition to the thought of preserving the human body, the idea of salt as a preservative was placed onto the sea. Many enslaved Africans thought the sea was seen as a physical barrier preventing them from returning home to Africa, but it was more than just a body of water, it was the saltwater that was said to be the reason they could not go back (Gadsby, 2006, p.35). Bodies that went overboard, including anyone who tried to escape and swim back, were said to be trapped and preserved by the sea and its salt (D'Aguiar, 1997). The saltwater represented a form of "preservation" of death by physically drowning the bodies, but also symbolically persevering their soul in the ocean waters preventing it from living on land. It may also be a signal that the body has returned to the realm of the ancestors, often believed to be beyond the sea.

Between the two forms of salt's association with preservation (food and death), Rastafarians pulled from those beliefs and applied them to their culture as a way to

support the removal of salt from the Rastafari diet. The concepts of preservation and death went hand and hand and also continued to remind the Rastafari community of their ancestors' painful past of enslavement. By eliminating salt, their diet became a form of colonial resistance.

5.2.5 Symbolism Today

Salt symbolism has deep roots in the Rastafari community. Salt has been associated with a variety of meanings engaged in the preservation of identity: by its connection to historical symbolism of human flight, its presentation of someone's character as unpleasant, and in the preservation of flesh (and spirit). Although salt has been shown to preserve identity through its symbolic beliefs, its value and importance change over time, just as the value system changes based on environmental needs. For instance, the African-derived belief in human flight is no longer considered of high value among some Rastafarians. Memories of the folklore "myth" are faint or even nonexistent among other Rastas. This demonstrates that the value of salt in the form of symbolic use changes over time, possibly to match the needs of the current environment. The story still exists, available to aid in the preservation of some Rastafarian identities. However, the value is no longer associated with human flight but has been shifted onto other symbolic reasons why not to consume salt, such as in the case of Lot's story in the Bible or the meanings associated with the term "salty". Switching the value to match the current symbolism of salt demonstrates the evolution of a foodstuff and how it is used to reinforced cultural beliefs. Symbolism around salt still exists in contemporary Rastafari communities, but the focus is now placed on the character of a person to help guide them instead of the

ability to fly home. The need and use of salt have shifted to meet the needs of the current environment and how they see fit to use salt as a way to reinforce and preserve their cultural identity.

5.3 The Saltless Diet: The Switch from Symbolism to Practicality

One of the most visible characteristics of the Rastafari community is their dietary lifestyle. Rastafarians live a vegetarian/vegan lifestyle, although variations of this do exist as individual Rastas can claim agency over their own lives based on their individual understanding of the Creator and can, therefore, modify their diet based on how they see fit (Edmonds, 2012, p.47). The common phrase "I-tal is Vital" is used in conjunction with the Rastafarian's diet, and even if a Rasta modifies their diet, they may still connect it to the i-tal philosophy. I-tal is a variation of the word vital and the phrase refers to the idea that anything natural is life-giving (Edmonds, 2012, p. 47), especially "pure" or "saltless food." The Rastafarian's diet employs the "i-tal" principles by emphasizing the consumption of natural and organic foods that come from the earth; this means no use of unnatural fertilizers, sprays, chemicals, and poisons in the food chain. The majority of Rastas will grow their food to ensure it meets the quality and standard of the "i-tal" lifestyle. However, the phrase "I-tal is Vital" is more than just meaning natural and pure. It is a way of life around all aspects of food and the earth together. For instance, an i-tal way of life includes maintaining a healthy body, mind, and spirit, with an emphasis on "balancing" the body. One of the participants stated that "everything is bad if it is too much," reinforcing this idea of the need for balance. Consuming food is only one aspect of the i-tal way; the other is the connection and sovereignty over their land, especially

through growing food. By maintaining and sowing land, food practices, and relationships with food has become an important and valuable aspect of the Rastafari cultural expression.

Within the Rastafari community, there are variations on how strict a Rasta is in terms of the consumption of their food. For Rasta who considers themselves "strict", meaning someone who adheres to the principles and practices of the culture without modification, food consumption has to meet the culture's highest standards. Strict Rastas live a vegan lifestyle free from processed foods; this includes the elimination of canned and packaged goods, refined flours and sugars, and all forms of food additives, including salt (Edmonds, 2012, p.48). Other rules include foodstuffs must be organic and not from synthetic (GMO) seeds, no alcohol, and limited consumption of "white" foods. According to a participant in this study, the latter idea is to consume colors seen throughout the environment, those include mostly greens, yellows, and reds – the same colors associated with Rastafarianism. The reason he claimed those colors are mostly consumed besides being the colors seen throughout the environment, is that those are the colors used in most of the African flags, thus becoming more significant as they provide a connection to Africa. Furthermore, limiting "white" foods is primarily due to its lack of nutrients, but one participant mentioned that removing "white" foods was also viewed as a symbolic form of resistance and decolonization. This concept of white food was only referenced by one participant, (and therefore should not be applied to all Rastafarians and their beliefs). It emphasizes the flexibility of Rastafarians to use food to express their strong sense of autonomy and their ability to modify the material world how they see fit.

Freedom is an important factor in the Rastafarian community. As one Rasta man stated, he had "freedom to do what [he] wanted to do" meaning within the Rasta community autonomy is valued and contributes to how one portrays himself or herself as a Rasta. The Rasta man continued to describe his uncle who is a Rasta but could not have dreadlocks due to his job. The lack of dreadlocks did not define his identity as a Rasta, nor did it challenge it because it did not change the inside of who he identified as – a Rasta man. This idea of freedom has also been expressed with salt among several of the participants claiming that salt does not define identity because it is not what is consumed or how one looks that make them a Rasta, but how one acts and what they feel inside. An example from one of the elder Rasta men with whom I talked used money to demonstrate this idea. He claimed that identity is not based on an object per se but is determined by how it is valued and the personal attachment to it that allows it to influence identity. An example the Rasta man gave was how money is not the root of evil but the love of money and how someone puts value on it can translate into identity formation. What this represents is the money is the object, just like salt, and the level of value some people place on it will determine how it influences their identity. It defines a person based on how much they allow that object to influence their life, and how much value they placed on it; the more value the more it influences their identity.

Other reasons for the elimination of food items, such as meat and salt, stem from biblical scriptures or folklore stories. One participant told me a story about two Princes', who were brothers from Egypt. They were fighting, and one of the brothers killed the other, chopping him into fourteen pieces. When the brother began to gather the fourteen pieces, he could not find the penis. It was concluded that it must have fallen into the river

and was thought to have been eaten by a catfish. Therefore, the catfish was no longer allowed to be eaten.[1] The justification to remove foodstuffs from the diet found in stories is also seen in the example of the Bible story of Lot's wife in the book of Genesis as mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Rastafarians distinguish levels of strict behavior related to food prescriptions. In contrast to a "strict" Rasta, "other" Rastafarians, who do not identify as "strict," have been known to be less rigorous in their food choices and tend to fall into the pescatarian lifestyle, only allowing "small" fish to be a part of the diet. The reason for choosing the small fish, typically under one foot in length, is because larger fish are seen as predatory, which is seen as a trait that is representative of Babylon (Edmonds, 2012, p. 48).

Although these two diet styles (i.e., strict and pescatarian) tend to be the common ones seen among Rastas, there are some Rastas who do venture outside the typical diets more than others. For example, one of the participants with whom I was sharing accommodations, decided to head to Kingston for some groceries, and took me along. I was starving and we decided to stop at a Wendy's (an American fast-food chain) as it was close by and convenient, plus I'll admit I was craving something other than "salt fish and ackee." When I went inside, the participant joined me. I asked if I needed to eat in the restaurant or would it be acceptable to eat in the car, making sure I would not disrespect the culture. The participant laughed and said "we" will eat in the car, meaning he too wanted something from Wendy's which I happily bought for him. Watching him, he

[1] Sex, sexual attributes, and gendering in relation to food are emphasized in the Caribbean culture. Many men and women, but mostly men have been known to consume or eliminate foods that challenge their gender or increase their sex drive. Mannish water, a type of soup in Jamaica, tends to be only for men as it is seen to increase their libido and "manliness". The Rastafari culture has been referred to as a culture of sexual freedom, therefore making sense that food is related to genital and other sexual and gendered attributes.

ordered a fried fish sandwich with fries and a large soda pop that was half Sprite and half Pepsi. Even though this Rasta was, as he called himself, a "born" Rasta, meaning he was a Rasta from birth, he still consumed food that was considered unacceptable in the stricter Rastafarian culture, including salt.

As I sat watching the participant consume his salty fries, I questioned him about this choice. He looked at me and simply smiled and said "I love salty fries." The participant's statement clearly only is reflective of his relationship with food, including salt. Many Rastas would refuse to eat the processed fast food. Needless to say, this encounter with behavior that was contradicted forced me to look more closely at the roles salt could play in the Rastafari culture, as well as if and why not all Rasta were strict around the elimination of salt in the past.

According to the principles and practices of Rastafari culture the consumption of salt initially, at the beginnings of Rastafarianism, had emphasized the symbolic ideas of salt and the need to eliminate it from the diet. However, over the years, and most notably in current times, the elimination of salt has shifted to a more practical, health-conscious notion among many Rastas: eliminating salt because of health reasons instead of preventing human flight back to the African homeland.

Some Rastas still make a link between oppression and salt in the diet. For example, one participant of the study claimed that some African ancestors did not eat salt from the day they were born until the master [slave owner] fed them salt. The enslaved Africans then became addicted to salt and created the habit of adding salt to their diet. According to the participant, this was "bad" because it created an imbalance in the body. Needless to say, the reason for the switch from primarily symbolic to practical is because

the value of salt had shifted to meet the current environment of the Rastafarians. Modern planes and boats now allow Rastafarians to travel back to Africa, whereas during the slave era it was nearly impossible to return once an enslaved African left Africa, as one participant stated. The symbolism now has transformed into a folklore of their ancestors.

Many people convert to the "Rastalogy" lifestyle and are not always born into it, but rather may make a choice later in life. One of the participants, a woman in her early twenties, who recently had become a Rastafarian explained that people who convert to the Rastafari culture bring with them habits that are hard to break. Salt consumption is one of them. This was confirmed by another participant, who was male and, in his sixties, who claimed: "a little salt is good, and that [the] salt in body, [which is] natural salt in body is needed to [be] balance [sic]." Imbalance and balance were words used to describe the reason behind many of the practices and principles used throughout the Rastafari community. There is a need for the body to be balanced not only physically, but spiritually. This concept applies to the consumption of salt as one participant puts it, "the need for the body to be balanced – if you have good blood pressure you don't need salt, same goes for bad, but if you have low blood pressure you need a little salt." The balancing point is thought to vary for each person, especially since autonomy is a primary characteristic of Rastafarianism. Therefore, the limitation on consuming salt is not strict, nor is its avoidance only performed by "strict" Rastas. As demonstrated, salt still holds value within the community, but the value has shifted, with its elimination being for practical reasons instead of symbolic.

Rastafarians are by and large health conscious and only consume food seen to be "healthy" and promote life. Added salt, also known as "free salt" is considered to be an

unnecessary additive. Although salt comes from the earth, Rastafarians believe the foods they consume contain adequate amounts of salt on their own, according to several of the participants. Many of the participants said that adding "free salt" is harmful to the body because it is overloading the body with more salt than the body needs and it disrupts the "balance".

A common theme discussed throughout the Rastafari community was the concern about how salt leads to high blood pressure. Participants claimed African descended/Jamaicans/black people (terms used by several of the participants) are more suspectable to high blood pressure due to the exposure of high salt consumption during the Atlantic Slave trade. The prevalence of hypertension brought on by high-sodium diets is well documented. An article by Thomas W. Wilson (1986), *Africa, Afro-Americans, and Hypertension: An Hypothesis* explains how high blood pressure is found in nearly twice as many black Americans as white Americans, with the evidence pointing to sodium metabolism (p.489). The article states that research suggests that blacks do not consume anymore salt than whites (p.489). The hypothesis behind this idea has suggested that Africans and African descendants retain more salt due to biological adaptations in hot environments which would benefit from genes that retain more salt (p.489). Once enslaved Africans were forcefully removed, their diet and environment changed, but their capacity to metabolize sodium did not.

The consumption of salted fish and salted foods, in general, leads to health issues that are seen across black populations today, according to one participant. The same participant explained to me that the majority of black Jamaicans have hypertension. When I asked for the source of his information, he claimed that it was a known fact that

everyone is aware of because of how their ancestors consumed salt, and that is a main reason why salt is limited or even removed from the diet to help improve conditions of hypertension or prevent it from happening altogether. He discussed how enslaved Africans had to consume salt, particularly in the form of saltfish out of necessity to survive, but now that they are free and there are fresh fruits and vegetables available to consume. Rastafarians, and Jamaicans more generally, can reverse the health issues that were the result of the Atlantic Slave trade. Hypertension/ high blood pressure, and the discussion around it were consistently the main reason Rastafarians talked about when asked why salt should be removed from the Rastafari diet. One participant said that consuming salt while having high blood pressure will make a person sicker. Since most of the participants discussed hypertension right away, it can be safely concluded that the elimination of salt was mostly for this health-related reason.

Although hypertension was identified in my research as the need for a saltless diet, Rastafarians did discuss the ability to acquire salt elsewhere and that added salt was unnecessary. As one participant put it "salt is not a necessity but is all based on individuality." Among the community, the belief is generally that the consumption of natural and organic foods provides the necessary nutrients the body needs to be healthy. With the elimination of salt from the diet, the majority of Rasta's claim they get their salt allowance from the different varieties of food they consume. For example, a Rasta man said eating a fish from the sea can provide you enough "natural" salt for the body; some Rastas even cook using the saltwater. This idea is consistent across many Rastafari communities and individuals. However, two of the participants in the study brought up alternative ways that salt was incorporated into the diet as a means for maintaining health

if salt is needed. It was clear that the majority of Rastas knew the value of salt in association with a properly functioning body but counteracted this idea by claiming the body did not have any need for added "free salt." Therefore, it can be claimed that all Rastas in fact do consume salt, but not all Rastas consume salt by way of adding salt purposefully. Salt is believed to be obtained from the surrounding environment and the foods consumed by a Rasta. As stated by a participant:

> "salt is just the use of flavor, so those little food right there (points to his garden) all those flavors in your i-tal pot, you don't need salt in your i-tal pot at all, you know what I am saying, and if you do it be on the table, so sprinkle away if you wish to sprinkle away, ya know, yeah. That is basically what it is [sic]."

Newly baptized Rastas will still consume salt as they have not adjusted to the saltless diet, yet. A young Rasta woman in her twenties explained that many Rastas who have a hard time eliminating salt will consume "free salt" sparingly. Furthermore, the type of salt is believed to be important. Rastas who do consume salt tend only to consume sea salt. They will either purchase it from the grocery store or obtain it from local salt producers on the island; obtaining from local salt sources tends to be more desirable as consumers can guarantee the "natural" quality of salt (Sperry, 2021, forthcoming).[2] Salt

[2] Salt is primarily produced in Jamaica by the Industrial Chemical Company (ICC). The ICC controls 80% of the local market selling a variety of salts including their recognizable brand "Freeflo" which contains additives like iodine and fluoride. Whereas the local market harvest salt along the seashores, in caves, or established salt ponds (Sperry, forthcoming). Imported salt is available for purchase in the supermarkets. A popular Pacific Northwest company in the United States located in Oregon state called Bob's Red Mill is sold in Jamaican grocery stores. However, price-point for each of these salts will vary with imported salt

from the grocery stores tend to contain additives like iodine and fluoride; these are considered unnatural and unnecessary additives to the natural food source. Several of the Rastafarians informed me that a main reason they prefer the local salt or sea salt is because they know there is either little to no processing of the salt. Manufactured salt strips the salt of its minerals and then adds artificial additives which all are seen as harmful to the body and can create imbalance. Therefore, if a Rasta has to consume salt, the preference is locally produced or store-bought sea salt.

In addition to the consumption of some salt, Rastas have found alternative ways beyond the general consumption of foods that contain traces of salt. During one of my interviews with an elder Rasta man in his seventies he claimed that when a Rasta needs to balance their body due to low blood pressure, they will either consume a little salt or create a drink that contains enough "natural" salt, that the "free salt" is not needed. He claimed that salt is only needed when someone has low blood pressure, which signals the need to balance the system of the body. The drink he consumed consisted of molasses, lime juice, and water or milk. The participant claimed this drink will provide a person with the necessary salt and electrolytes needed. When he brought this up, I asked how molasses provided salt, as it is a sugar. He claimed there was a type of molasses that contains high levels of salt. I asked how he knew this information and he stated that he reads a lot, "reading makes a man." Since I was unaware that the molasses made from sugar cane contained any salt and even high levels of salt, I then followed up on his claim by asking sugar cane experts at Appleton Estates (a rum factory in the heart of Jamaica) where employees work with molasses in the process of making rum. And to my surprise,

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being the most expensive and the ICC's salt being the least. People tend to prefer the local salt if they can find a salt person, but since there are far and few local salt producers most opt for the store-bought kind.

they confirmed that there is a variety of sugar cane, some refer to as “salty sugar cane” that contains high levels of sodium used to create a certain type of rum. But I was also told that all sugar cane has some level of sodium, and some have higher levels than others. Therefore, the ability to acquire salt in alternative forms is plausible as well as accessible, as it can be obtained in many forms whether from just consuming foods with naturally occurring salt content or creating a mixture of ingredients that help provide more salt than just eating one’s regular diet.

In addition to the healthy and alternative forms of salt, the topic of flavor and salt was brought up by several participants. I-tal food is considered full of flavor. The flavor is said to come from the whole food used, but also from spices, flavoring, and herbs, like thyme, scallions, chili pepper, black pepper, and mint, to name a few. These “natural” foods that enhance the dish and give it flavor. One Rasta man said, “[people] say, without salt the food has lost its flavor, but … those [people] … don’t know [sic] that there’s salt already in [the] food, it’s a mindset, yah [sic]”. The naturally occurring salt is enough to add flavor, the mind has to overcome the need (or habit) to add more salt to make a dish flavorful. Using herbs and spices is all that is needed for flavor, according to several Rastafarians.

The practicality of salt is well documented among the Rastafarians in the need to remove salt from their diet to maintain balance. The need for a balanced body, mind, and spirit are several main factors in the removal of salt, as salt is seen to create imbalance, especially in conjunction with blood pressure. A saltless diet is the goal of the Rastafari community, but because autonomy is valued and at times can be seen to have more value

than salt for those who choose to eat “free salt” in the diet. As one of the Rasta men stated:

> “It is not necessarily what you eat, [or] how you look like, but how you act [that makes you a Rasta] – it is spirituality that controls the action. Lots of guys say they are Rastas, but they use it as a thing to get the girl to go to America or Canada, they put on the wolf clothes, the looks are deceiving. A Rasta is all about actions [sic].”

This may mean that it is not always what is eaten or how one looks that make a Rasta, but it is the spirituality and the actions expressed that make a Rasta. There are many “fake” Rastas, as several Rastafarians pointed out in the interviews. These “fake” Rastas might enjoy the ganja [marijuana], the dreadlocks, and that one can easily dress and eat like a Rasta but being a Rasta and identifying as a Rasta is more about what lies inside someone, which motivates how to act.

5.4 Conclusion

The general ideas about salt across the Rastafari community include the practice of a saltless diet. Among the participants of the study, all stated that a Rastafarian is “not” supposed to eat salt as it is an unnecessary additive, creates an imbalance, and is not considered to be part of an i-tal diet. And although a “saltless” diet and the practice of removing salt is clearly known and practiced, it is clear that modern Rastafarians also know that while they need salt in the diet, they have relied on other ways of obtaining it.

As mentioned, the i-tal way is a pure and natural way of eating with no addition of salt. The belief is that all the salt needed for the body can be acquired by consuming other whole foods. Therefore, I can argue that despite prescriptive claims to the contrary, Rastafarians do eat salt, they just do not (or most do not) consume "free salt," salt that is added.

Furthermore, there is a value placed on salt. The removal of salt has value among the Rastafari community because it expresses their identity in connection to an i-tal way of life. However, the value of salt and the role it plays in the development of identity for a Rasta will vary as the value of autonomy can overpower the value of a saltless diet. As one Rasta man pointed out, the object itself does not determine or create identity, but the value and the personal attachment to it are what influences identity. The same Rasta man, when asked if salt defined his identity, said "no, salt does not define identity," a saltless diet does not make someone a Rasta, "things that he [does] is greater than what he eats [sic]." This perspective reflects circling back to the primary role of autonomy and the freedom of expression in the Rastafari community. The actions and what lie inside a Rasta make one a Rasta, while all other characteristics are just supportive characteristics of the culture. As another Rasta man puts it in a food metaphor: "there's no one true way to do rice and peas, or curry goat, or ackee and saltfish, or any flavor, it depends on the person, and the seasons hand everyone seasons differently [sic]. Same pattern, but totally different with each one." The value of autonomy can outweigh the value of salt, and therefore can determine its placement in how it contributes to the development of identity.

In terms of salt preserving the past identity, it is clear that the majority of Rastafarians have begun to distance themselves from the supernatural beliefs or are not even aware of salt's representation of human flight and connection to spirituality. As one Rasta man said, Rastafari is about practicality and how to live on earth. The value of salt became associated with practicality and the effects of health instead of focusing on symbolism as the primary reason for removal. Needless to say, salt still contributes to preserving identity as it is still a topic discussed among many Rastafarians. The level of involvement salt has in preserving identity varies between individual Rastas and groups of Rastas.

As mentioned, the agency and autonomy of a Rasta are extremely important and hold value in the formation of identity. This is why there is such a variation in beliefs and practices around salt. Some Rastas will say "salt is important in its right proportions," while others claim, "it will make you sick." These ideas are derived from previous knowledge or what is taught and/or learned by each Rasta. Many Rasta emphasized that they read frequently to continue to learn about life, including how salt impacts the body. And it is the practical reason for salt's influence on blood pressure that tends to have become the main reason why salt is eliminated from the contemporary i-tal diet. The ideas and memories from the past have been altered to be relevant to the current environment in which the practices and principles are performed by the Rastafari community. But once again, the variation of practice reveals that beliefs and practices around salt are different based on what house a Rasta associates with or what value they place on salt in their own relationship in connection to the Creator and all that goes with it. Therefore, within the Rastafari community, salt clearly has a level of value that can

increase or decrease depending on one's relationship with the substance. Salt continues to preserve the Rasta identity, but even as it does contribute to identity, its meanings are not fixed. Over time meaning and practice have been alerted to meet the requirements and knowledge of the current environment. Overall, a Rasta's relationship with salt does not define them culturally or spiritually, but simply supports their lifestyle in maintaining a balance of their mind, body, and spirit.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 Introduction of Summary of Findings

This chapter provides a summary of the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5, which explored identity formation among Maroons and Rastafarians based on their relationships with salt. The chapter returns to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. The summary will be organized according to each research question outlined. It needs to be noted that although I had gone into the field to explore these 5 research questions, some of the questions were not fully examined as other questions were. This was based on willingness or the ability to elaborate on certain questions from the participants. Finally, the chapter also will discuss the limitations of the research project and the prospects for future work.

6.2 Major Findings

6.2.1 Research Question 1

The first research question investigated the idea of value and its placement on an object. This question was found to have the most impact and significance with the study along with the most data collected. The value placed on an object then causes significance, which in turn influences the development of beliefs and practices that create a sense of cultural identity and community connection. In the study, the object of value is salt. Based on the examination of previous research through a review of the available literature, salt held value in African and European culture. However, the question

remained whether these ideas were transferred across the Middle Passage during the Atlantic Slave trade and/or appeared in the development of new cultures, categories which include both Maroons and Rastafarians on the Caribbean island of Jamaica.

Based on the established value placed on salt within African and European cultures, there is abundant evidence of Maroons and Rastafarians placing value on salt. Value can be identified in the past and continues to be present in modern times. Although value is placed on salt, the beliefs and practices around salt were changed to meet the needs of a current environment, both historically and in modern times. Such changes are to be expected of any dynamic, living culture. For instance, both African-derived cultures had a symbolic view of salt and its connection to human flight. However, the research showed that Maroons continued to have a spiritual relationship with salt, while Rastafarians shifted to practicality. This helps to understand the development of beliefs and practices employed in the Caribbean, let alone Jamaica based on the blending of two cultures and how beliefs are constructed to meet the needs of the culture's environment: the ability to fly home to Africa and escape bondage.

Maroons and Rastafarians claimed the consumption of salt would prevent them from flying back to Africa, their homeland. However, the timeline of their existence demonstrates a change in ideas. For Maroons, the human flight was significant because it was the only way enslaved Africans could attempt to return home from a life of enslavement. The Maroon's spiritual connection to the continent of Africa held high significance. The consumption of salt would ground them to earth preventing human flight. Therefore, the value of being able to fly had a higher value than the consumption of salt. It was this placement of value that dictated the importance placed on the beliefs

making the value of salt significant in human flight. It was important not to consume salt since salt would disrupt an established significance of returning home and could be an obstacle to the spiritual connections with enslaved African ancestors. Maroons used human flight and the discipline of not consuming salt to identify Maroon characteristics and their strong African heritage with Queen Nanny.

When compared to Maroons, Rastafarians adopted the belief of human flight when the Rastafari culture emerged in the 1930s. Using Maroons as a historical reference to build upon, the consumption of salt was tied to symbolic beliefs and practices as one of the original reasons to eliminate it from the diet. Later, additional symbolism emerged with salt's connection to preserving flesh in the larger framework of death, since salt was a known preservation method of meat. The enslaved ancestors who were force-fed salted food created a physical bond to enslavement and the earth; this prevented them from flying. The salt preserved their flesh to the earth instead of being free to connect to the spiritual realm. Furthermore, it was thought that if a body had fallen into the sea it would be trapped by the ocean's salt, preserving the spirit for a lifetime of bondage. Either belief led to the concept of salt preserving death.

Over the years salt came in line with a more practical viewpoint, in which the need for a saltless diet to maintain a healthy and balanced body outweighed the value of salt's symbolic meaning. By eating an i-tal diet, Rastafarians placed a value of saltless diet as being associated with vitality and health. In contrast to the Maroon beliefs, salt was mostly used symbolically whereas Rastafarians placed more value on the practical.

The creation of beliefs and practices around salt shows the significance salt contributes to the development of each culture and identity by the established value

placed on it. Maroons and Rastafarians have clearly shown that their cultures have placed a level of value on salt. To clarify, value does not always translate to valuable. The value placed on salt shows a level of significance it contributed to the culture's identity and the beliefs and practices that are developed as a result of that identity's characteristics.

This research question on the value of salt had the most significance in this research project and became the focal point of the research. The following research questions outlined in Chapter 1, became supporting questions for confirming the value placed on salt by Maroons and Rastafarians.

6.2.2 Research Question 2

The second research question investigated how beliefs and practices around salt are passed down across generational lines, if at all. This question was found to have minimal impact on the study as either participants did not prefer to talk about this topic as they had agency over what they were willing to discuss or has limited information about how beliefs and practices were passed down. Therefore, knowing how these ideas around salt are transferred on an individual basis or within a community could further provide evidence on the level of value placed on salt within the culture with future research. For instance, if the expressed beliefs and practices around salt are only characterized among a few people, and lack consistency across the culture this can insinuate that the value of salt has diminished over time. Furthermore, who and how these ideas are passed down can also provide evidence of who are the keepers of historical knowledge and their status within the community, as well as the importance placed on preserving historical knowledge.

Within the Maroon and Rastafari community how beliefs of salt are passed down were found to occur in similar ways. Both groups stated they learned about salt either from the elders and/or their parents. The Maroon community did place emphasis more on the elders of the community while Rastafarians highlighted their parents. This implies that older members of the community are the keepers of historical knowledge and it is their responsibility to pass these ideas along to the next generation. However, I must clarify that in the Rastafari community, several of the participants did not acquire any information about salt through an elder or parent but through their own research, or they merely heard it from other community members, irrespective of age or community status. This demonstrates that the primary keeper of salt knowledge is the elders/parents, but they are not officially delegated individuals as others can learn through asynchronous methods or from peers in their community.

How the information of salt is passed to an individual or group is primarily through oral transmission. Songs, stories, and informal conversations are modes of transfer used. These methods are used equally amongst the Maroons and Rastafarians as ways to spread historical knowledge to preserve the cultural identity of the community in connection to their African heritage. Needless to say, oral transmission is not the only method, but reading feeds into the preservation of the ideas. Many participants, particularly from the Rastafari community, stated they educated themselves through reading. What is particularly interesting about the Rastafari community in comparison to the Maroon, is that the Rastafari used what they learned in reading about salt and health as a way to adjust their ideas around salt to benefit their message of practicality when ideas of human flight no longer expressed validity in their current culture. Human flight

was associated with the past, whereas healthy balance and addressing blood pressure issues have become the primary reasons for the removal of salt. In contrast, Maroons still maintained their strong links to salt and spirituality, while salt and health lie in the background in terms of salt's value within the community.

Although the main methods of cultural transmission fall under those of oral traditions, salt itself is also a method of transferring the beliefs and aiding in preserving the culture. Since the commodity exists, it is physically used and through its use, it continues to preserve the beliefs and practices employed in each culture. Thus, salt and, in the larger framework, food, are used as forms of cultural preservation.

6.2.3 Research Question 3

The third research question investigated how Maroons and Rastafarians view salt as something that influences their relationship and identity with each culture. Although this question can be seen throughout the thesis in how a cultural identity is formed, a direct relationship between current Maroons and Rastafari identities is not well established due to limited engagement with this question from participants. However, when asked directly if salt influences, challenges, and/or creates a Maroon or Rastafarian identity the general response was no. Salt was thought of as a substance to avoid but had nothing to do in terms of playing a factor in someone's identity as a Maroon or Rastafarian. Across each culture what was thought to be the determining factor of one's identity was 1) being born a Maroon or Rasta (bloodline or innately knowing their connection to the culture from birth), and 2) their actions that align with the value of the culture.

However, exploring this topic more deeply it was clear that salt had some level of influence on the development of cultural identity. Individually, it might differ, but within the community as a whole, the ideas of salt influencing spiritual connections, health, and attachment to ancestral roots do play a role in how one connects to a Maroon and/or Rasta identity. This was especially true for the participants who claimed to be both a Maroon and Rastafarian. Moreover, the participant who claimed identity to both placed more emphasis on the Maroon ideas of salt than those of Rastafari, thus showing a hierarchy in status on how one views their identity on what they rank primary. Needless to say, this only emphasizes the variance within cultures and the levels of adhering to salt beliefs. Several participants knew the historical beliefs and practices around salt and confirmed their validity in the culture, but still chose to adapt to the current environment. Therefore, their behavior reflected situational adaptation: being relaxed on ideas of consumption due to the realization of folklore stories that were relevant in historical past.

6.2.4 Research Question 4

The fourth research question investigated salt's preservations qualities. Salt is used as a form of preservation of food, especially for meat. As a substance known for preserving foodstuffs, the question of whether salt could be used to preserve culture was intriguing, thus expanding salt's use for preservation into an abstract realm in conjunction with its physical capabilities for preserving food. The idea explored was salt's influence on culture as one that helped preserve the identities of Maroons and Rastafarians based on their developed ideas of salt and its role in their cultural practices. Maroons have a more well-developed case about salt's role in cultural preservation because of their extended

existence as a community more than 300 years old, whereas the Rastafari have only been in existence for fewer than 100 years.

Although salt's uses and influences over time have changed, many of the beliefs and practices among the Maroons are still in existence. Connecting to the spiritual world is still valued and it is known that salt prevents access to a spiritual connection with the ancestors. Therefore, salt functions as a non-direct connection to preserving identity, but nonetheless is still a contributor to maintaining the Maroon culture. Rastafarians have evolved their ideas around the symbolism of salt towards a more practical view of salt and health. Just like the Maroons believe, salt does not make a direct correlation to preserving a Rasta identity but was used in conjunction with other factors that translated into what it meant to be a Rasta over time.

Salt does preserve the historical past and the ideas of salt associated with identity formation, but it does not translate to being the only factor that preserved the identity; salt merely is used to assist in the preservation of one's identity but is not the sole factor. However, salt figures consistently in how beliefs and practices and transferred. This suggests that salt, and in the larger cultural framework, food, are used as tools for cultural preservation by physically being present, being used, and holding meanings, especially among the Maroon community.

6.2.5 Research Question 5

The final research question investigated the similarities and differences of each African-derived culture. This project has considered whether ideas are similar or different, a consideration that can be seen as interwoven in each of the other questions. Symbolic

ideas of salt exist in both cultures and were similarly connected to ideas of human flight, preservation, and death. Practical ideas of salt differed since salt was used in the Maroon culture as a cooking method, whereas Rastafarians eliminated it from their diet for health reasons. Each of these beliefs and practices either remained the same or changed because of the value system placed onto the views of salt along with the requirement to meet the needs of the current environment. Human flight from bondage is no longer needed but connecting to the spiritual world is still desirable. Therefore, the value of salt shifted. The same reasoning is applied to the practical use of salt in which the consumption emphasizes health, thus replacing a spiritual connection but meeting the needs of the current environment.

6.3 Limitations

There are several limitations of the study that need to be addressed. The first and foremost is the sampling size for participants of the study. The number of participants for each group was limited in scope. Therefore, any observations cannot be used to make sweeping statements about Maroons and Rastafarians and their relationship with salt. Additionally, the participants came from certain areas of the island, when in reality Maroons and Rastafarians live all over the island, and even reside in other parts of the world. The sampling is therefore skewed to limited areas and this could influence how an individual Maroon and/or Rastafarian views salt in the development of individual identity or cultural group identity. Lastly, because the sampling only looks at Jamaican-based Maroons and Rastafarians, not those who have left the island and relocate elsewhere, it

ignores a key feature of the modern world's mobility. The research also does not include "other" Maroons whose origin takes place elsewhere in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Another limitation is the sampling of gender and age among the participants of the study for both Maroons and Rastafarians. It was difficult to obtain interviews from women in the Rastafari community based on gender roles within the community, and the number of Rasta women willing to speak. Not having significant data that includes equal or similar numbers of women compared to the men creates a limitation in the gendered knowledge about salt and identity formation, obscuring whether there are different views of salt among women versus men. Age is another limitation. The majority of willing and available participants were in their 50s and older. With limited participants in the younger age category of 18 to mid-30s it is uncertain whether salt has continued to play a role in their identity or might have even changed based on modern influences. This is a limitation on the research for both the Maroon and Rastafari communities.

Overall, the limitations of the study include a small sampling, limited age, and gender variety, and data gathered from limited regional areas. Each of these factors limits the ability to understand salt and identity formation among a larger cultural sampling, and to determine whether ideas about salt are consistent across groups of Maroons and Rastafarians throughout Jamaica. This study is a sample study. It can be used to generate further questions in a larger research project that might seek to understand how salt and other foods contributed to the development of identity formation by cultural groups by placing value on an object in their changing environments.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 Conclusion

The research sets out to understand how value is placed on foodstuff, in this case salt, and how it contributes to the development of identity formation of oneself and one's culture. By placing value on an object, it creates a relationship of significance that contributes to the make-up of identity. Furthermore, the study showed how salt can be used to preserve historical memory used to aid in the development of modern culture. Therefore, preserving the past where salt is no longer just used as a food preservative but as a cultural preservation method.

As shown in both the Maroons and Rastafarians, salt contributes to the development of a group identity based on the value placed on salt from either the culture's African ancestors or the origins of the group. Later, idiosyncratic plays a role in how salt is used to shaped individual identity within the culture, thus helping to shed light on the complexity of salt's role in the development of identity formation for culture and self. Moreover, the complexity of salt brings forth caution when generalizing an entire culture based on the beliefs and practices used within the culture. This poses problematic ideas that can contradict the importance of autonomy within the culture, especially among the Rastafari community. Overall, this research reveals how salt played a role in cultural identity formation for a group and self. Later to show how salt continued to influence cultural identity even if the value shifted. Salt is shown to preserve ideas, identity, and culture, in addition to aiding in the development of cultural identity.

7.2 Contributions

The research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how food aids in the development of identity formation from an idiosyncratic and community perspective. The case study of salt demonstrates the need for value to be placed on an item for it to become an important factor in identity development. Furthermore, the study explains how salt can also be used to preserve the beliefs and practices once bestowed on it in the past, and how it can be translated for the needs of the present. The study has demonstrated that even if the beliefs around salt have shifted, the object still holds a value and remains rooted in the core cultural identity that is still expressed today. Ultimately, this study shows how significant cultural meaning can emerge from a universal human need. The study investigates how salt resonates or plays out in two culturally related cases within a single regional context. In doing so, salt provides a window into the role of culture and history by seeing how its meanings are shaped by people's engagement. The study considers the similarities and differences between Maroons and Rastafarians.

The contributions of this research demonstrate the importance of foodstuffs in the development of culture and identity. By understanding why differences and similarities exist, especially in two culturally similar groups, the study has shown the significance of salt in how each group places different values on salt based on their needs. Furthermore, it has shown the significance of salt as more than a preservation method for food, but as an influencer on socially constructed belief systems which aid in the development of an entire community. The importance of this research is to understand the value system of humans and the complexity of culture which can lead to better awareness of how food and foodstuffs can severely impact a cultural community if neglected. Additionally, it can

help to understand the influencing factors and value systems of an individual food product. This in turn can lead to better cultural awareness and sensitivity training in the realms of the academic and industry.[3]

In terms of academic contributions, this study makes an original contribution to the fields of Global Studies, Food Studies, and Caribbean and African diaspora Studies. As academic fields that are emerging, it is an increasingly important topic to have in light of the general scarcity of research on indigenous culture and food seen through a humanities lens. Furthermore, much of the previous research tends to be limited and outdated mostly conducted between the 1970s and early 2000s and to focus on other (non-food) aspects of the Maroon and Rastafari material culture. Additionally, more recent research either has inaccurate, untested, or over-generalizing assumptions about salt in these cultures. Therefore, a major contribution of this study has been to clarify the complexity of each community and individual with regards to their relationship with salt. Salt is an important substance and has contributed to the development and creation of many societies, cultures, and historical events, including the Atlantic Slave trade. The original contributions of this study have added new information regarding the implications of salt and its influence on human culture and history.

Furthermore, this study helped expand the relationship between Food Studies and Caribbean Studies through its mutual connection with salt. Studies on salt in terms of production, economic, and trade are well-recognized in Caribbean Studies. However, Jamaica has had little recognition, if at all when it comes to salt being a factor in

[3]Industry in this context means anything field outside academia, including the many components of the food industry such as agriculture, food corporations, and other food-related businesses that typically lie outside the academic spheres of study in the humanities and social sciences.

Jamaica's culture and development. This study expands Caribbean Studies by emphasizing Jamaica and the importance of salt in cultural identity formation. Moreover, this study on salt expands Food studies through commodity research focusing on foodstuff and the importance food contributes to culture identity. The focus around salt then emphasizes the relationship between Caribbean Studies and Food Studies and how commodity research can be a crucial role in expanding both fields.

7.3 Future Research

This research would benefit from a larger study that gathers data from a larger sample of participants to see if ideas of salt are similar or different across Jamaica. By focusing on a larger sample size and gathering data from different sub-cultures within these two African-derived cultures, it should be possible to better understand whether the historical memory of salt is consistent with conclusions from this exploratory research.

Furthermore, this model of research can be used to understand other cultural ideas of salt and to investigate whether patterns of salt and identity formation exist in other regions of the globe. This model could also be applied to understanding other foodstuffs and their contributions to identity formation to better describe the power of food and its relationship to the humanities, taking its research sources beyond the fields of nutrition, agriculture, and food science. Thus, this project's primary thrust has been in the direction of helping to provide a more holistic approach to how food helps create and preserve cultural identity.

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