

Tropical Forests in Prehistory, History, and Modernity

PATRICK ROBERTS

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Although by now bored of me constantly talking about forests, it is Michael Petraglia that must take the credit, whether he would like to or not, for getting me involved in multidisciplinary research into tropical forests. Working with him in Sri Lanka, I was struck by the fact that the arrival of humans on the island was apparently associated with rapid, specialized adaptation to tropical evergreen rainforests, environments that many palaeoanthropologists and archaeologists had considered 'barriers' to human dispersal and long-term occupation. I have also been lucky enough to interact with a variety of enthusiastic scholars demonstrating significant hunter-gatherer manipulation, the development of agricultural practice, and even the rise of urban forms in these settings. The growing temporal and geographic diversity of this evidence, alongside its general neglect in palaeoanthropology, archaeology, conservation science, ecology, anthropology, and amongst the wider public, have led me to the writing of this book.

This book is the product of the work of the growing number of teams and multidisciplinary specialists working in tropical forest settings over the last two decades. Moreover, it stands as a testament to the generosity and openness of the people inhabiting the nascent sub-field of 'tropical archaeology'. A huge number of people have contributed to the final form of this manuscript, reading chapters, discussing ideas, and providing images. Special thanks go to Peter Mitchell for sending me down the perilous path of book writing in the first place (it must also be said that he did read and comment on the whole thing). I am also immensely grateful to Julia Lee-Thorp, Jay Stock, Matt Sponheimer, Nicholas Taylor, Michael Petraglia, Robin Dennell, Christopher Hunt, Jaboury Ghazoul, Carlos Sierra, Glenn Summerhayes, Alison Crowther, Robert Spengler, Anabel Ford, Roland Fletcher, Lisa Lucero, Nuria Sanz, Etienne Patin, Scott Fitzpatrick, Douglas Sheil, and Kathy Morrison for reading and providing comment on the various chapters.

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