

MEATSCAPES IN THE IMPERIAL ANDES OF PERU

Dr. Silvana Rosenfeld¹

¹ *High Point University*

Meat has been a special food item in the Andean region of South America. During pre-hispanic times, the main sources of animal proteins and fat were camelids -domestic and wild-, guinea pigs, and wild game such as deer and viscachas. From ethnohistorical sources, we know the Inka rulers considered meat to be special, and that the commoners only ate it in particular occasions (Cobo 1997 [1653]). Ethnographic sources on contemporary herders in Peru point out how the average diet is mostly meatless but camelid meat consumption peaks during ceremonies and special events (Flannery, Marcus, and Reynold 1989). Archaeological data suggests a connection between the consumption of great quantities of meat and feasts. As a special food item, meat -its provision, preparation, and consumption practices, is a strategic point of entry to the study of sociopolitical and ritual relations. This talk will explore meatscapes, those sociocultural spaces that mediated the interactions between Andean people, meat, and material culture as a way to understand the creation, negotiation, and differentiation of human relationships in imperial and colonial contexts. In particular, I will focus on the Wari Empire (600-800 AD), the Inka Empire (1438-1532 AD), and the early colonial times in what is now Peru.

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