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SONDONDO'S AGRICULTURE AS REFLECTED IN PHYTOLITHS. USE OF SOIL ANALYSIS TO UNDERSTAND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN PREHISPANIC TERRACES IN PERU

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In Peru, studies of pre-Hispanic agriculture have been adopted a number of different approaches. Some researchers have focused on botanical aspects, others on agrarian technologies, while others have concentrated on social and economic relationships. However, in almost all cases, typological and structural views have prevailed leading to conclusions strongly based on relative chronologies and broad generalizations, especially for the more complex stages of social development, mainly the horizons of the Wari and Inca Empires. Aligned with the theme of this conference, our team has begun to conduct phytolith analysis in relation to soil and land use to more fully interpret terrace construction, use, and their social implications.

The interdisciplinary methodologies and techniques that we are applying on the terraces allow the implementation of new approaches in Agrarian Archeology in Peru that examine the cultivation sites themselves without relying exclusively on ethnographic or ethnohistorical analogies. In our paper, we will present the results of the first multiple microfossil analysis of soils analyzed from agricultural terraces in the Sondondo Valley (Department of Ayacucho, Peru) at 3200 m.a.s.l.. For example, we have been able to identify the standardization of agricultural terraces in the southern Peruvian Andes during the expansion of the Inka Empire and directly related to the need to harvest corn. Our innovative methods not only shed light on the types of crops cultivated, but also demonstrates how shifts in cultigens can serve as measures of sociopolitical transformations.

Keywords

agrarian archaeology, terraces, andean studies, paleoethnobotany

Note/comment