

4 Field Colloquium: Fighting and Foodways: A Bioarchaeological Study of Violence and Diet during Imperial Decline and Drought in the Peruvian Andes

Speaker: Tiffany Tung

Host Department: Anthropology

Date: 11/30/2015

Time: 3:00 pm

Location: 411 West Hall

Description:

In this lecture I explore the biocultural effects of the process of imperial collapse and the effects of a severe drought in the ancient Peruvian Andes. Specifically, I examine a skeletal population that dates to the time of Wari imperial decline (Terminal Wari, ca. AD1050), and I document the frequency and kinds of violence enacted against children and adults. I also employ carbon and nitrogen isotope analyses to examine whether diets changed and whether they became more differentiated between distinct subgroups. These aspects of health are also examined among approximately 200 commingled individuals that date to the subsequent drought era, ca AD 1250 – 1350. Preliminary data show that the rate of violence significantly increases through time, both in terms of lethal and sublethal trauma. Moreover, nearly all of the 200 post-Wari individuals had been de-fleshed, de-muscle, and dismembered, a highly unusual treatment of the dead relative to mortuary practices in the preceding eras. The high levels of trauma and the desecration of bodies in the post-Wari drought era suggest that it was a time of intense conflict. Dietary practices also changed; there was a significant decline in maize consumption in the post-Wari era, but only among females, and diets became more heterogeneous, together suggesting greater gender and social inequalities in access to dietary resources. More broadly, these data are used to speak to anthropological issues regarding the health impact of two distinct processes: state collapse and climate change.

Bio:

Tiffany Tung is an Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Anthropology at Vanderbilt University. She received her BA in anthropology from UC Santa Barbara and her Ph.D. from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is an anthropological bioarchaeologist who studies mummies and skeletons from archaeology sites. In particular, she investigates how ancient imperial policies and practices structure health status, exposure to violence, and lived experience of ruling and subject peoples. Her research on the 'bioarchaeology of imperialism' has focused on the Wari Empire of the Peruvian Andes. Her current, NSF-funded research now examines the decline of the Wari Empire, including possible explanations for that decline, as well as the health effects of that collapse. Her research has been published in the American Journal of Physical Anthropology, Current Anthropology, the Journal of Anthropological Archaeology, Cambridge Archaeology Journal, and Latin American Antiquity, among other journals. She is also the author of the book *Violence, Ritual, and The Wari Empire: A Social Bioarchaeology of Imperialism in the Ancient Andes* (2012).