Gendered Perspectives on Sheep, Livelihoods, and Sense of Place in Sank’ayani Alto, Bolivia

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Outline

- SANREM CRSP and Gender CCRA
- Gender framework and literature
- Site description
- Participatory research
- Pasturing sheep and making chuño
SANREM’s goal in the current phase is to increase smallholder food security through the development of participatory conservation agriculture production systems (CAPS) adapted to the biophysical and societal conditions in disadvantaged regions of the world.

**CAPS:**
- Minimize soil disturbance from tillage
- Maintain a year-round soil cover
- Utilize crop rotation

Activities are carried out by seven U.S. universities and 34 host-country organizations in 13 countries.
Our goal was to document soil knowledge and gendered space in relation to CAPS.

We went to a rural farming community in the Andes to document gendered soil knowledge and gendered space and place.
Using a gender dimensions framework, the Gender CCRA identifies gender-related factors that may contribute to the success or failure of CAPS.

We ask: “Why is gender important?” and “How will CAPS affect men and women differently?” We added the landscape/space dimension to existing gender framework. (Rubin et al. 2009)
This research is informed by literature that connects social and environmental issues from a gender perspective.
Sense of place

Places are “...spaces which people have made meaningful.” (Cresswell 2005)
Everyday life and food preparation

de Certeau stresses the importance of everyday life as a research focus.

(de Certeau 1998)

Kitchenspace: a key site of cultural and social reproduction.

(Christie 2004; 2008)
Sank’ayani Alto, Bolivia

70-80 Households
Population ~300
Smallholder Farmers
Average plot size < 1 Acre
Elevation 14,000-15,500 feet
Languages: Quechua and Spanish
Primary livelihood activities during June-August

Planting

Pasturing

Chuño: home consumption and selling/trading
Participatory, qualitative research methods

Focus group discussions

Mapping soils on satellite image

Gendered resource mapping (Rocheleau et al. 1995)

Participant observation included planting potatoes and pasturing sheep.
Local or indigenous cultures and people hold significant knowledge of soils and environments, attained by experience and testing through many generations of living close to the land.” (WinklerPrins and Sandor 2002)
Using geospatial techniques to ‘map’ gendered knowledge
We found that men and women’s soil knowledge and space reflected a gendered sense of place.

Chajwa jallp’a: A Quechua term used to described a sandy soil, with stones or soil in slope. Farmers perceived this as a "worst" soil because it produces little, has too many small rocks, or gets too hard after rain. Some grow potatoes, oats, or barley. Many reported that they use this space to tie their animals or pasture.
Chuño and sheep, in addition to soil knowledge, showed gendered sense of place. We found this reflected in everyday life and the maps.
Chuño is a freeze-dried potato that is unique to Andean culture and world history.

- Developed by the Aymara to remove toxins from potatoes and store for long periods
- 4,000 year old process
- Shaped Andean civilizations
- One of the world’s first preserved foods
- Long used for consumption and trade

“Taking advantage of the freezing nights and brilliant days that the long dry season brings to these regions, they effectively freeze-dry their potatoes, turning them into hard and chalk-white chuño that is free of toxins and stores very well.” (Reader 2009)
Chuño was made in irrigation canals or other troughs and flat surfaces.

“Nosotras las mujeres hacemos el chuño. Si es mucha cantidad recién el hombre nos ayuda. Mis hijos también ayudan en pisar y a pelar el chuño después de su escuela.” (Interview with woman farmer, June, 2011)
“The women were peeling frozen potatoes all day, but after a half an hour my fingers were completely frozen. When they made black chuño they stomped them barefoot all day long too.” (Keri Agriesti, SANREM CRSP Gender GRA)

“Solo en los meses de Junio, Julio, Agosto. El mes de Julio tiene más helada y ahí procesamos más, nosotros llevamos donde mi tía a sus parcelas porque son planas aquí donde vivimos no es pampa y no congela.” (Interview with woman farmer, June, 2011)
Besides making chuño, women’s sense of place is constructed in part by tying sheep in plots or shepherding them across mountains.

“En las parcelas de descanso amarro mis animales cuando no tengo tiempo porque hay que hacer chuño, segar o cortar la cebada, y cuando tengo tiempo llevo al cerro a pastear a los animales. No los dejo en el cerro porque hay zorros, es peligroso, se lo come a las ovejas, también vienen a la casa a comer gallinas en agosto. Es muy peligroso, solo media día pasteamos en cerro.” (Interview with woman farmer, June, 2011)
For one woman, her sense of place and meaning tied to sheep and chuño characterizes her livelihood.

“El chuño hace mucho tiempo se elabora aquí desde nuestros abuelos. Hacemos chuño porque no se hecha a perder como la papa. Además cuando nos falta dinero vendemos el chuño y cuesta más que la papa. Nosotros comemos más chuño, no comemos mucho macarrón, fideo, arroz.” (Doña Ana, July 2011)
Conclusions

• “Yo amarro a los animales en el cerro, regreso a mi casa a lavar la ropa, preparo la comida, después regreso a recoger a los animales (ovejas).” (Translated from Quechua; interview with woman farmer, June 2011)

• Making chuño extends kitchenspace onto the landscape and inform women’s sense of place.

• Grazing sheep on plots after harvest or in fallow fields
Questions?

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