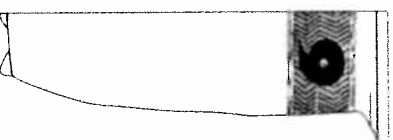


## EXPANDING THE FEAST

Food Preparation, Feasting, and the Social  
Negotiation of Gender and Power



Arthur A. Joyce

It was only a few years ago that Brian Hayden (2001: 23–24) lamented the lack of attention to feasting by archaeologists and cultural anthropologists. In less than a decade, however, research on feasting has exploded as a topic of great theoretical and methodological interest in archaeology (e.g., Bray 2003a; Dieter and Hayden 2001a; Junker 1999; LeCount 2001; Mills 2004; Pauker et al. 2002; Porter 2000; Spielmann 2002). Research on feasting has ranged from considerations of haute cuisines and culinary equipment (Bray 2003b, 2003c; Hasor et al. 2003; Joyce and Henderson 2007) to the role of feasting in the social construction of identity (DeBoer 2001; Pauker et al. 2002; Smith 2003), the mobilization of labor (Cook and Glowacki 2003; Dieter and Herbich 2001; Pollack 2003), and the construction of value and meaning (Spielmann 2002; Weissner 2001). Archaeologists have considered methodological problems in the archaeological identification of feasting practices (Adams 2004; Brown 2001; Clarke 2001; Turkon 2004; Wills and Crown 2004) and have developed typologies through which to classify feasting and relate it to broader aspects of social complexity (Hayden 1995, 2001; Periodic 2001) or to varied social, symbolic, and political fields (Dieter 1996, 2001). Archaeologists have debated the definition of feasting (Dieter

and Hayden 2001b: 3–4), the nature and role of feasting in particular times and places (Phillips and Sebastian 2004), and the theoretical perspectives through which feasting should be understood (Dietler and Hayden 2001b; Hayden 2001). Research has most often focused on the political dimensions of feasting, or what Michael Dietler (2001: 75) terms commensal politics. Studies of commensal politics usually focus on two contrasting and often conflicting aspects of feasting. Whereas feasting establishes and maintains a sense of social affiliation at a variety of scales, it also often contributes to the reproduction or transformation of social distinctions, especially hierarchies (e.g., Bray 2003a; Clark and Blake 1994; Dietler 1996; Hayden 1995; Junker 1999, 2001; Paukert et al. 2002; Phillips and Sebastian 2004; Rosenswig 2007).

This book exemplifies recent trends in feasting research, particularly the focus on commensal politics. The importance of feasting is nicely shown by the diversity of topics and regions in this volume, ranging from Mesopotamia to Mesoamerica, the Andes to Southeast Asia. As discussed by Elizabeth Klarich in her introductory chapter, the most important contribution of the volume is shifting the focus of feasting studies from food consumption to preparation. By focusing attention on the food-preparation side of feasting and the relations among food preparers, participants, and sponsors, the authors expand understandings of the social and political significance of feasting. Since practices related to food are usually highly gendered, this volume also adds to a growing body of literature (e.g., Bray 2003b; Gero 1992; Hastorf 1991) on how gender relations are represented, reproduced, and transformed through feasting (see chapters by Isbell and Grotzau, Junker and Nizolek, and LeCount). The volume also underscores that suprahousehold food preparation and consumption are not always a product of feasting but can be the way in which ordinary meals are carried out (see chapters by Klarich, and Goldstein and Shimada). In this chapter, I consider several issues and themes that emerge from the volume that engage feasting studies with broader theoretical issues, especially involving gender and power. I begin with a more basic consideration of how feasting should be analytically approached.

### Defining the Feast

As discussed by Klarich, this volume critiques the common assumption that suprahousehold food preparation and consumption are necessarily indicative of feasting, which reflects broader disagreements about how feasting should be defined (see Stein and Yaeger 2004). Archaeologists have disagreed over whether feasting must always involve ritual aspects (Dietler and Hayden 2001b: 3–4) and the degree to which feasts are communal and engage people beyond the household or family (cf. Dietler and Hayden 2001b: 3–4; Kirch 2001: 169; Spielmann

2002: 197; Wills and Crown 2004: 154). The most general definitions of feasting require only that feasts differ from normal meals (Hayden 2001: 28), although in particular cases even this distinction may not be self-evident (Stein and Yaeger 2004). Normal everyday meals can have ritual elements, such as when Christians say grace or when the people of Zuni Pueblo invoke the ancestors prior to eating (Cushing 1920: 574–575). Special meals can also be small-scale affairs involving only members of a single household, such as lavish family dinners at Christmas (Hayden 2001: 28–29). Conversely, as discussed here by David Goldstein and Izumi Shimada for Huaca Sialupe in the North Coast of Peru, ordinary meals can also bring together multiple households and families.

Many definitions of feasting are so broad as to be analytically useless, making it difficult to differentiate some feasts from ordinary meals and to delineate material indicators of feasting in the archaeological record. Definitional problems such as these have led to the development of a number of typologies of feasting that narrow the analytical focus (Dietler 1996, 2001; Hayden 2001; Perotie 2001). Scholars have also chosen to examine the variable ways in which food-preparation and consumption practices reproduce and transform social relations involving status, community, gender, and other aspects of social identity. For example, Michael Dietler (2001) delineates three modes of commensal politics that explore the ways in which certain interrelated food-preparation and consumption practices operate symbolically to act as sites or instruments of political process. Joan Gero (2003: 287) suggests that we should examine feasts not as isolated “events” but as “a *context-renewing practice*” (emphasis in original) that brings people together to celebrate a communality while at the same time asserting social distinctions. The feast will therefore be experienced differently depending on one’s social position.

By emphasizing suprahousehold-level meals, Klarich sharpens the analytical focus of the volume by moving it away from small-scale feasts and toward food-preparation and consumption practices that engage collectivities above the scale of households as well as the social and political implications of these meals. Most of the authors in the volume explore the broader social and political significance of suprahousehold meals, whether ordinary or marked as special meals or feasts. A major theme discussed in most of the chapters is the exploration of feasts as settings where social and political relationships involving aspects of identity, such as community, gender, and status, are reproduced, negotiated, and sometimes transformed.

### Socializing the Feast

Several of the chapters examine the ways in which feasting simultaneously reproduced hierarchical and other social distinctions while reaffirming and at

times renegotiating affiliations to collectivities on a variety of scales. For example, Laura Junker and Lisa Niziolek synthesize an impressive array of ethno-historical and archaeological evidence to explore the relationship among ritual feasting, status competition, and broader aspects of political economy, including warfare, slave-raiding, long-distance trade, and alliance networks in the pre-Hispanic Tanager region of the Philippines. They show that in the highly volatile political setting of Tanager, the establishment and maintenance of large clientage and alliance networks through feasting were crucial for mobilizing the labor and resources needed for ever more elaborate feasts through which status could be enhanced.

In northern Mesopotamia, Jason Ur and Carlo Colaninri argue that communal food preparation and consumption were centered on patrimonial households that ranged in scale from non-elite households to temple/palatial settings. They provide a strong critique of traditional top-down models that argue that agricultural production and intensification in Mesopotamia were controlled by powerful centralized states (e.g., Weiss et al. 1993). Ur and Colaninri show instead that agricultural systems were organized at the local level by commoner households. They argue that agricultural intensification was driven in part by communal meals that both may have been ordinary and involved special feasts. Through commensal hospitality, households at all status levels competed for prestige and affirmed relations with their communities, thus driving intensification from the bottom up. Interestingly, refuse produced by both ordinary meals and feasts was returned to the commons in the form of manure used to fertilize fields.

In the Andes, feasting was a key practice in constructing Inka state and imperial identities (Bray 2003b; Costin and Earle 1989; Goldstein 2003; Hastorf and Johannessen 1993; Murra 1980). As George Gumerman argues, however, among the earlier Moche, feasting was a relatively small-scale and local phenomenon. Moche work-party and life-cycle feasts developed solidarity and social alliances, while also expressing and reinforcing the local hierarchy. He argues that Moche feasting patterns indicate greater independence for households and communities and therefore were one way in which the Moche reproduced a political system that was more decentralized in comparison with the later Inka. Gumerman also argues that there was no evidence for large-scale work feasts among the Moche, suggesting that models based on state-sponsored Inka feasting may not apply to earlier Andean politics. Likewise, among the Wari of the provincial capital of Cerro Baul in the Upper Moquegua Valley, as discussed by Donna Nash, feasts, although variable in size and context, were relatively small-scale affairs, affirming both group membership and hierarchy. Nash cannot rule out the possibility of large-scale work feasts since the presence of a large maize beer, or *chicha*, production facility

in Unit 1 on Cerro Baul *could* be interpreted as evidence for the staging of community-wide feasts.

Feasting in the Middle Horizon center of Conchopata in the Ayacucho Valley of Peru, as discussed by William Isbell and Amy Grobaleu, also occurred at a variety of scales and for multiple occasions that brought together different collectivities. Although Isbell and Grobaleu argue for the presence of large-scale state-sponsored feasts at Conchopata (also see Cook and Glowacki 2003), their chapter focuses on evidence for a relatively small-scale series of feasts involving household termination rituals, funerary rites, and commemorations associated with a powerful woman, perhaps a *chicha* brewer, which also raises issues concerning gender politics.

Although most of the chapters dealing with the ancient Andes show how communal meals contributed to social hierarchy, the chapter by Goldstein and Shinada demonstrates how suprahousehold food production at Huaca Sialupe can be tied to productive alliances, in this case specialized ceramic production and metalworking. Their study demonstrates how a variety of productive activities, including ceramic and metal production, spinning and weaving, agriculture, and cooking, tied together a suprahousehold productive collectivity of craftspeople and their support networks. In addition to the networking of productive practices, associated technologies were linked. The maize cobs left from the suprahousehold production of maize beer were recycled as fuel for use in the ceramic kilns.

### Distinguishing the Feast

Another way to clarify the analytical focus of feasting studies is to explore the aspects of food preparation and/or consumption that make certain meals special or particularly salient (Stein and Yeager 2004). All of the authors here stress the ways in which feasts are distinguished from ordinary meals. Feasts are meals involving some combination of elements including exotic foods often prepared and served in special vessels; feasts may be held in special locations and involve symbolically charged practices that differentiate and privilege feasting from other meals. In virtually every case of feasting discussed in this volume, alcoholic beverages were important to feasting cuisines (also see Dietler 1990; Jennings et al. 2005; Joyce and Henderson 2007: 651; Moore 1989; Morris 1979). Consumption of alcoholic beverages adds to the ritual drama of feasts, transforming the consciousness of participants and contributing to the extraordinary experience. Other special foods consumed at feasts discussed here include tortillas among the Late Classic Maya at Xunantunich; rice, betel nut, and perhaps water buffalo and pig in the Philippines; and camelids in the Andes. Foods were prepared in special places such as the kitchens at

the Xunantunich palace and the elite residence of Unit 145 at Cerro Mejía in the Moquegua region, with its numerous hearths and cooking and storage vessels. Suprahousehold food preparation required greater numbers and/or larger cooking vessels and features such as hearths. Special foods sometimes required unusual cooking vessels like the *comales* used to roast tortillas at Xunantunich, as discussed by Lisa LeCount, or the large decorated brewing jars among the Wari. Elaborate serving vessels also made feasts salient, as with the fine porcelain wares that high-status people in the Tlaxcala region of the Philippines acquired through extensive trade contacts. Although status competition through feasting drove the intensification of trade for elaborate feasting wares, Junker and Niziolek show how increased consumption of less expensive Southeast Asian porcelains and local decorated wares was driven by the fact that these vessels mimicked the food display assemblages of elites but were accessible to lower-status people who also participated in competitive feasting. Feasting wares are represented by elaborate polychrome ceramics of the Classic period Maya (LeCount, Chapter 6) as well as among the Postclassic Aztecs (Brumfiel 2004) and Mixtecs (Forde 2006; Hernández Sánchez 2005) in Mesoamerica.

Feasts are marked as special occasions by ritualized practices that often extend well beyond the meal and that make performance and theatricality important elements of such events (Mills 2007). Feasts discussed in this volume were components of life-crisis ceremonies such as the funerary rituals and building-closure ceremonies in the Andes and in the Philippines, or involved celebrations of economically important communal activities such as the Andean work feasts. Theatricality can be seen in the choreography of the preparation, presentation, and consumption of food and drink, such as that recorded ethnographically in the Philippines by Junker and Niziolek (also see DeBoer 2001). Routines like the smashing of vessels following the funerary feasts described by Isbell and Grolleau are other vivid examples of ritualized performance that distinguished feasts from ordinary meals. Presentations of food and other gifts, ritual drinking, dance, life-crisis ceremonies, celebrations of harvests or military victories, and engagements with ancestors and spirits make feasts highly charged symbolic and political events. The smell and taste of exotic foods as well as the drinking of alcohol and the intake of other consciousness-altering substances like betel nuts, as discussed by Junker and Niziolek, would have heightened the senses and the emotional impact of the feasting experience. Feasts are often staged in special locations such as the palaces and ceremonial plazas discussed for the Xunantunich Maya by LeCount and in the Andean cases presented by Nash and by Isbell and Grolleau, as well as the reception rooms that Ur and Colantoni discuss for northern Mesopotamia.

The drama of ritualized performances at feasts makes them especially powerful for the communication of ideas about a person's place in society and in the

cosmos. Gero (2003: 285) argues that what make feasts special or "splendid" meals are not just the cuisine, location, or culinary equipment but also the company. Feasts may bring together people who do not normally eat together and who are often divided by status and other dimensions of social distinctions. The people who participated in feasts at the ruler's palace in Xunantunich (also see Hendon 2003) and the provincial palace at Cerro Baul (also see Goldstein 2003) celebrated their shared cultural ties and membership in a broader collectivity that probably encompassed asymmetrical relationships involving status, gender, and, in the Andean case, perhaps ethnicity. But by defining affiliations and social boundaries, feasts "both unite and divide *at the same time*" (Dietler 2001: 77; emphasis in original) such that social distinctions were affirmed through the performance of feasts as well. The different roles, practices, and proxemics of feast preparers, sponsors, and participants demonstrated differences in access to material and symbolic capital, including labor, exotic foods, trade goods, and powerful ancestors or spirits that communicated and materialized social distinctions. For example, in the Philippines, feasts sponsored by high-ranking families referenced extensive trade alliances in the use of fine porcelains, success in raiding through slave labor used in staging the feast, and special access to the spirit world as shown by the sacrifice of large numbers of pigs and water buffalo as well as the performance of shamanistic rituals. The Philippine and Andean cases show that ancestors, deities, and spirits could be important actors in the feast and were sometimes fed and ritually celebrated, commemorated, or appeased (also see Hastorf 2003; Hendon 2003; Kirch 2001; Lau 2002; Nelson 2003; Weissner 2001). Feasts therefore involved the affirmation and negotiation of social relations not only with the living but also with ancestors and the divine.

Social hierarchy was reproduced through the location of feasts and the spatial arrangement of participants. At Cerro Mejía Unit 145, a high-status residence in the Moquegua region discussed by Nash, the architectural layout of Room D defines the interaction and relative status of three groups of feasting participants: people on the patio, people one step above on a low platform, and presumably the feast sponsors presiding over the occasion from an elevated room. Even greater spatial distinctions were created architecturally at Xunantunich, where rulers presided over public feasts from a royal throne at Structure A-15 and perhaps from the *audientia* at the ruler's residence. The royal sponsors, visiting rulers, non-ruling nobles, and commoners who attended the feasts at Xunantunich's royal palace undoubtedly experienced the occasion differently and, depending on their position both physically and symbolically, may have felt awe, reverence, fear, jealousy, benevolence, and so forth (also see Hendon 2003). The seating arrangements discussed by Junker and Niziolek for ethnohistoric feasts in the Philippines also show how status was affirmed through spatial relationships.

### Preparing the Feast

As discussed by Klarich in her introductory chapter, much of the research on feasting has focused on food-consumption and -disposal practices and the collectivities brought together to *consume* food. Considerably less attention has been placed on the study and theorization of suprahousehold levels of food *preparation* such that we may be missing some of the complexities of feasting. Klarich argues that we must develop a baseline to evaluate what constitutes daily, household-level preparation so that we can recognize the salient aspects of food preparation for feasting. As she shows, there has been relatively little research that uses data on routine food preparation in households to identify the salient aspects of food preparation for feasting (however, see Clarke 2001; Kirch 2001). In all fairness, this lack of attention is in part the result of the frequent difficulty of differentiating food-preparation facilities and materials, like hearths and cooking vessels, used in feasting from those used for routine meals.

The focus on the food-preparation side of suprahousehold meals is an important contribution of this volume as represented especially by the chapters by Junker and Niziolek, Nash, Gummerman, LeCount, Goldstein and Shimada, and Isbell and Groleau. Despite the complexities of identifying food-preparation facilities for feasting, among the chapters, both Gummerman and Nash very effectively show how the "big pots and big hearths" of Andean feasts differ in scale and context relative to normal household food preparation (see Blitz 1993 for a Mississippian example). Similarly, using Cathy Costin's (1991) criteria for productive specialization, LeCount makes a strong case that the food specialists and kitchen facilities associated with the royal residence at Xunantunich were used not only for ordinary meals in the palace but also for staging private parties and perhaps public feasts. Her detailed account of the spatial patterning of ceramics suggests the location of varied practices, such as the making of beverages, along with areas where more general food-preparation and service activities were carried out. Her study moves us toward a consideration of the identities of the food-preparation staff and how food preparation and service for feasts may have been staged.

Unpacking food-preparation, consumption, and disposal practices will in turn help us to better understand the complexities of social production, negotiation, and power embodied in feasting. For example, whereas feasts may be sponsored by particular individuals or corporate groups, very different sets of social relationships are often involved in the preparation versus the consumption side of meals, whether ordinary or special. In ancient Mesoamerica, for example, food preparation was strongly identified with and practiced by women (Brumfiel 1991; Hendon 2003; Joyce 2000). Presumably, it was women who prepared the food for the feasts at Xunantunich, but, as effectively suggested

by LeCount, were the food preparers family members of the nobles sponsoring the feasts or were they commoners employed as attached specialists or paying service to the nobility or the community? The social relationships of the feast preparers to hosts and guests have profound implications for the gender and status politics of feasting. Furthermore, those attending the feast and consuming the products of these women's labor were presumably members of the broader community, both male and female. How do these complex relationships involving gender and status, food preparation and consumption, contribute to the social dynamics of feasting?

### Engendering the Feast

As suggested by the Xunantunich case, a focus on the food-preparation side of feasting draws attention to gender relations. Feasting and food preparation, and consumption more generally, are important settings for the representation, reproduction, and transformation of gender roles and identities (Bray 2003d; Dietler and Hayden 2001b: 10–11; Gero 1992; Hastorf 1991). It is female labor that most often underwrites food preparation for feasts, as well as for ordinary meals, even if women may gain in wealth and status from the outcome of feasts and may at times sponsor feasts (Dietler and Hayden 2001b: 11). Ethnohistoric and ethnographic evidence certainly suggests that women were primarily responsible for food preparation in most of the cases discussed here, including the Maya (Hendon 2003), the Andes (Gero 1992; Silverblatt 1987), and the Philippines (Junker and Niziolek, Chapter 2). An important issue raised by the recognition of gendered divisions in the staging of feasts is the degree of gender complementarity (Dietler 2003: 279). To what extent was female labor recognized and valued or, alternatively, materially exploited and symbolically denigrated?

The example of the renowned female brewer who was celebrated in commemorative feasts at Conchopata indicates that Andean women could enhance their status through feasting-related productive activities (also see Gero 1992; March 1998). The Conchopata example shows how a consideration of food preparation confirms the economic importance of women as food producers, brewers, weavers, and porters in the ancient Andes (Bray 2003b; Costin 1996; Silverblatt 1987). Female gender roles were reproduced through feasting-related practices and may have been idealized in representations on pottery, including perhaps some of the large jars in which chicha was brewed. Research on the Inka (Hastorf 1991) and the Tiwanaku of the Moquegua region (Goldstein 2003: 164) indicates, however, that although women were the primary producers of chicha, males consumed significantly more maize than females, suggesting that in these instances men dispropor-

tionately engaged in and benefited from both the dietary and political advantages of feasting.

In Mesoamerica, researchers have argued for a high level of gender complementarity within households (Hendon 2003; Joyce 2000; McCafferty and McCafferty 1988). If the food preparers working in the kitchens at Xunantunich were commoners rather than noblewomen, then the exploitation of their labor was likely a product of status rather than gender asymmetries, or perhaps gender was marked differently according to status affiliation or economic specialization (see Kirch 2001). A similar intersection of gender and status could have been present in Unit 145 at Cerro Mejía, as discussed by Nash. If feasts sponsored by high-status households required the mobilization of female labor from beyond the household, as suggested by Nash, then the means through which this labor was acquired would provide key insights into the politics of gender in the Tiwanaku polity.

The exploitation of female labor in feasting was undoubtedly a feature of gender relations at Tanjay in the Philippines. The great expansion in feasting among both elite and non-elite households documented by Junker and Nizioletk for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had major implications for gender politics as well as for domestic and political economy. Ethnohistoric evidence indicates that women were responsible for most of the food preparation for feasting, and feasts required the mobilization of a large amount of labor, including women from outside sponsoring households. The high production cost and gender roles associated with feasting required an influx of female labor, which was acquired through polygamous marriages and increased slave-raiding. Ambitious men were able to convert the labor of women into enhanced status through Feasts of Merit. Polygamy and especially the capture of women as slaves indicate that success in competitive feasting produced increasing gender asymmetries (also see Junker 1999, 2008).

### Empowering the Feast

Differentiating the social positioning of feast sponsors, food preparers, and consumers, as well as those involved in broader aspects of ritual performance beyond the meal that might accompany a feast, draws our attention to issues of power. As many of the chapters demonstrate, feasting is empowering; it embodies both macro- and microrelations of power that construct community, gender, hierarchy, and other dimensions of identity. Several of the chapters considered the ways in which feasting and other ritualized practices are used to negotiate power relations, such as those among the Maya, the Moche, the Wari, Philippine chiefdoms, and the urban centers of northern Mesopotamia like Hamoukar. It would be useful to take the issue of social negotiation further

in feasting studies, especially when considering food preparation, in addition to consumption. Most of the chapters in the volume consider feasting as a practice that affirmed certain social relationships—communal and hierarchical. Yet what of the social contradictions and points of friction that might be activated in the organization, preparation, serving, consumption, and disposal of the feast? Did feasting practices at Hamoukar involve tension and negotiation surrounding increasing differences among households in political and economic power? At a broader social scale, did feasting involve negotiations around the likely contradictions between more traditional, local, and less hierarchical relations and those practices that embodied the rapidly emerging regional and strongly hierarchical authority of state institutions and rulers? Likewise, how did feasting involve the negotiation or contestation of gender relations in Tanjay or Conchopata? Was feasting involved in imperial relations between indigenous inhabitants and the Wari colonists at Cerro Baúl? How were gender politics and status worked through in the suprahousehold productive arrangements at Huaca Sialupe?

Issues of social tension and dynamism are explored in the Philippine Feasts of Merit discussed by Junker and Nizioletk. In the Tanjay region of the Philippines, feasts did not simply affirm established social hierarchies. Instead, they were transformative in that both elites and non-elites engaged in competitive feasting as they jockeyed for position, attempting to gain status and power. Junker and Nizioletk consider the different strategies used by households depending on status and access to trade networks in attempts to elevate their wealth and status through competitive feasting. Lower-ranking nobles, commoners, and interior tribal leaders emulated the feasting assemblages of high-ranking chiefs through the use of more accessible and less expensive imported porcelains and local decorated ceramics. Through such strategies, subordinate households were able to engage in competitive feasting—a social field to which they previously did not have access and which gave them opportunities to advance in the volatile political landscape of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

More generally, researchers might consider how relations of power were experienced at the feast. How did the feast produce ritualized agents who internalized particular power relations in their dispositions? How was power externalized in the bodily practices of cooking, serving, consuming, and viewing the festivities from one's place on the throne, in the crowd, or out back at the kitchens? How were hegemonic relations negotiated and/or appropriated by subordinates in feasting practices?

Beyond feasting, what was the relationship of practices of food preparation and consumption to broader aspects of power and knowledge? For example, John Monaghan (1990, 1994) argues that in Mesoamerica, power was often



expressed in alimentary terms or in orality. Gods "eat" people when they go into the earth at death. When people eat maize, one is consuming the god. Ethnohistoric literature records elites as saying that they "are" the items offered to them in sacrifice. According to Francisco Cervantes de Salazar (1985: 664), during the siege of Tenochtitlan, Cuauhtemoc, the last Aztec emperor, shouted to the Tlaxcalans, "*Vos prendieremos y comeremos haciendo de vosotros sacrificio*" ("We will capture and eat you, making sacrifices of you"). Given such metaphors of power and consumption, researchers should consider the broader symbolism of food production and preparation.

An archaeological example of the broader symbolic fields in which feasting can be embedded comes from Late Pueblo III and Pueblo IV villages of the American Southwest. James Potter and Scott Ortman (2004) argue that ritual meanings of communal feasts in the Southwest were derived from the gendered symbolism of domestic cuisines. The symbolism associated with cuisine and container imagery in turn referenced a broader discourse on gender that extended to domestic and intervillage relations as well as political authority.

The point is that making and eating food may express more pervasive and fundamental relations of power that extend far beyond the feast but that may be particularly salient as expressed in the feast. In the chapters in this volume, we see glimpses of these broader associations, such as the involvement of deities, ancestors, and spirits in feasting in the Andes, Mesoamerica, and the Philippines. Among the Moche, the feeding of the dead and presumably the living during funerary feasts was embedded within a much broader set of symbolic and material relations involving ancestors, deities, and the reproduction of status and other dimensions of identity. As Gummerman (p. 118) argues, "Moche culture was consumed by death." The converse of Gummerman's metaphor was probably true as well, since Moche nobles consumed the blood of sacrificial victims at ritual feasts, thereby embodying their broader powers over life and death (Haslorf 2003). Many of these power questions challenge our abilities to interpret the past, yet I think they are worth considering as we continue to explore the complexity of food preparation, consumption, and feasting.

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