

Contemporary Legend

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Aims and Scope

Contemporary Legend, the annual journal of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research, aims to promote and encourage research, and to provide a forum for those working in this vibrant area of traditional narrative scholarship. Within this context the term "legend" is interpreted in its broadest sense as including Sagen, dities, popular rumors, sayings and beliefs, as well as narrative. Similarly, "contemporary" refers not only to so-called "modern urban legends" but also to legends in active circulation in a given community.

The journal presents original research findings and theoretical analyses on all aspects of contemporary legend. The articles range from case studies of individual legends, historical analogues and exploration of legends in society, to analyses of performances and transmission, form, bibliography covering books, essays and theses, and sections on contemporary legend in literature and in film.

An international editorial board of distinguished scholars with a wide range of interests reviews all contributions, thereby maintaining the high standard of published material.

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Editor's Note: Because of a series of delays in producing volumes 5-8 of *Contemporary Legend*, some articles may contain information and references dated after the volume year.

This issue of *Contemporary Legend* includes several essays that ISCLR has recognized as outstanding student work. Kimberly Lau's "On the Rhetorical Use of Legend" won the 1996 David Buchan Student Essay Prize for Contemporary Legend Research. Clare Sammells's "Folklore, Food, and National Identity" won the 1997 prize, and JoAnn Conrad's "Stranger Danger" and Lara Maynard's "Locked Doors" received honorable mentions in the 1997 competition.

Folklore, food, and national identity: urban legends of llama meat in La Paz, Bolivia

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Answering the question of why mestizo Bolivians will not eat llama meat enters into an ideological space where urban legend, ethnic identity, food, disease, and custom intersect. This article will examine different aspects of the taboo against llama meat among middle- and upper-class nonindigenous (mestizo) residents of La Paz. Llama meat will be considered not simply as a static food taboo among sections of Paceño society, but as a shifting focal point for discussing the penetration of indigenous identity into mestizo areas of the city, and as a material way for residents to draw boundaries between fluid categories of ethnicity and socioeconomic class.

The topic of eating llamas rarely enters into the conversations of mestizo Bolivians, even though that country has the largest population of llamas in the world, most of which are eventually consumed. Mestizo *Paceños* (residents of La Paz), ambiguously defined along intersecting lines of ethnicity, language, race, and class, simply do not accept the premise that llama meat is legitimate food. Many laugh at the mere suggestion of eating it. It appears at first that there is an "unconscious taboo" against it (Tambiah 1969:424), similar to how North Americans might not think to consider that they do not eat lizards, dogs, or spiders. However, the taboo against llama meat is not unconscious, although it may often be unarticulated. On the contrary, the taboo is based on the contradictory meanings that llama meat carries. Llama meat is accepted by almost all residents of La Paz, both indigenous and mestizo, as "Indian." Indigenous identity,

however, has ambiguous meaning among Paceños. The use of llama meat as reflective of ethnic identity is constantly being renegotiated and redeployed within this context.

The fluidity of categories of race and ethnicity and their intersection with socioeconomic class make the very representation of these groups difficult. Indigenusness in La Paz is correlated with poverty, as it is all over Latin America, and clearly the Paceño upper class as a whole can be in part defined by its more dominantly European ancestry. These categories can be defined neither in binary oppositions nor through direct equivalents, however, and I do not want to imply that being identified with any particular ethnic, racial, or socioeconomic category in La Paz can be inferred from concurrent identification with another. The very fluidity and complexity of these categories is what makes llama meat an interesting point of discussion for Paceños who are struggling to identify themselves along these different axes.

For the purposes of this essay, I will refer to the urban indigenous Aymara-speakers of La Paz as indigenous, although they are often referred to as *cholos* in the city, or even occasionally as *campesinos* (peasants), a word that in 1952 replaced the term *indio* (Indian) and is still used widely. With equal hesitancy I use the term *mestizo* for those who do not consider themselves indigenous. The mestizos interviewed for this paper span both the middle and upper classes, and some have at least partially indigenous backgrounds. I have given more specific information on my informants to help illuminate the complexity of unraveling the multiple meanings of llama meat in La Paz.

Mestizo Paceños generally react negatively to the idea of eating llama, seeing in it a symbol of the negative side of indigenous culture. But in Bolivia, where indigenous culture in stylized form has been elevated to the status of national folklore, taboos against those things associated with indigenous culture must be carefully justified in alternative ways. Although some Paceños simply say they are not accustomed to eating llama, many try to justify their taboo against it with popular urban legends centered on fear of disease and uncleanness. This continuum of stories, legends, and beliefs draws on science, ethnicity, and custom, weaving these elements together into a collage of overlapping explanations for the avoidance.

Ambiguous feelings towards llamas and their meat stem from the rejection of indigenous culture while its images are simultaneously and contradictorily used to define Bolivian national identity. Mestizo Paceños consider llamas dirty, diseased animals, herded and consumed only by "backward" indigenous people. At the same time, they use the live llama as a symbol of national pride and identity, comparable in position to the Andean condor or puma.

Indigenous people in La Paz have their own set of meanings for llama meat, which overlap, intersect, and contradict those of mestizos. Many indigenous people, both in rural and urban areas, eat llama meat because it is cheaper than other meats. At the same time, some may avoid eating llama in order to demonstrate a higher economic status, or may, conversely, openly consume llama in order to assert pride in their indigenous heritage.

Llama meat has clearly taken on meaning beyond the nutritional. Food, as an indispensable part of everyday life, can serve as the ground on which the everyday ideological work of identity-making takes place. Mary Weismantel notes in her work on ethnicity in foodways in rural Ecuador that "ordinary objects such as food are used as symbols of ideological conflict not so much in clearly defined political arenas as in everyday debates over mundane questions, such as what to eat or what to wear" (Weismantel 1988:7). In La Paz, where identity is constantly being renegotiated, material objects that have an implicit cognitive content, such as llama meat, are "good to think" about the interactions of ethnic groups treated as if they were in binary opposition to each other, even as they are recognized as interpenetrating and artificially bounded categories. Mestizo Bolivians might argue that llama meat is only eaten by indigenous peoples, yet they cannot deny that llama—as well as the indigenous people it is associated with—works its way into their lives and diets. Meanwhile, indigenous Paceños discuss llama meat in ways that demonstrate that they penetrate areas of the city that otherwise may exclude them.

Because of its association with indigenous people and culture, llama meat has an ambiguous position in La Paz. It is only sold in the poorer markets frequented by indigenous Paceños, and even there it can be difficult to find. Although it has been legal to sell llama in La

Paz since 1987 (MACA 1987), many mestizo Paceños still believe it is illegal, and those selling llama add to this belief by hiding their wares from mestizo clients and government officials, or by selling llama illicitly in the form of sausages.

Llama meat is so totally ignored that it has been rendered nearly invisible. Llama meat recipes are almost never found in the Bolivian cookbooks that represent the official discourse on national cuisine; in recipes that traditionally contained it, it is replaced with beef (Bozo de Salguero 1967; Cañipa de Sanabria 1988-9; de Gamarra 1948).¹ Some government and independent studies on how to prepare nutritious and economical meals for poor urban residents ignore llama, even though it is one of the cheapest sources of animal protein available in the city (INAN 1981; León *et al.*, 1992).²

Llama meat's status as unacceptable in Bolivia also ensures its invisibility in the domestic and international academic spheres that would be the most likely to take an interest in it. Only those interested specifically in marketing llama meat have written on the subject, and usually focus mainly on its nutritional value, the improvement of carcass weights, the fight against disease and parasites, animal health, and slaughter procedures, although there are a few interested in the prejudice that hinders its sale (Machicado Oliver 1993; Sammells and Markowitz 1995). Those researching Andean foodways also tend to ignore llama meat. If llama is mentioned at all, it is usually presented as primarily a pack animal, to be compared to Old World horses and oxen, and secondarily as providing wool (Crosby 1972:74; Johnsson 1986:44; Sokolov 1991).³

The neglect of llama meat as a legitimate food source is certainly neither a recent nor an isolated phenomenon. "Indian" foods have been devalued in the New World since the Conquest (Weismantel 1988:9). Throughout the history of the Americas, food has been an important part of the process of defining and dividing indigenous Americans from Spaniards and their *criollo* descendants. Sophie Coe's work on indigenous foodways revealed that "as the two societies, Indian and European, began ever so slowly to mix, the restrictions on such mixing increased, and many of them were based on matters having to do with food and drink" (Coe 1994:229). Cuisine became part of what ideologically separated the Spanish, who

consumed European foods as often as possible, from indigenous people, who ate only native foodstuffs (Coe 1994:229-230). Today in La Paz, the ideological binary opposition defined by food has continued with some foods, such as llama meat, even as the categories that it supposedly separates are no longer clearly defined. Thus, llama meat becomes a method of discourse, an index of ethnic relations within the city that can be deployed in various ways, depending on both speaker and audience.

Methodology

This research was conducted in La Paz over six months between 1993 and 1994. It is a synchronic analysis of the position of llama meat in La Paz at that time and should not be taken as a historical analysis, nor to represent a static view on my part of foodways in the city. Most of the data presented here are from interviews conducted in the neighborhoods of Sopacachi (near the downtown area) and Irpavi (in the Zona Sur) with mestizo middle- and upper-class Paceños. I conducted semi-structured interviews with thirty-two people, including married couples and individuals between thirty and fifty years of age, owners and managers of restaurants and *pensiones* (diners), and government food inspection officials. I transcribed the interviews literally and have included the original Spanish in the endnotes. In addition, I administered a written questionnaire to some of these informants in addition to nearly two hundred students at two Paceño universities.

I also conducted ethnographic work at an open-air wholesale meat market in one of the indigenous areas of La Paz. There, indigenous women sold the whole carcasses of pigs, sheep, and llama on the sidewalk. These women were invaluable for understanding the beliefs about llama meat among poorer indigenous Paceños. Not only were they themselves direct consumers of llama, in terms of both diet and making their living in part from it, but it was also possible to see the interactions between these women and government officials, such as meat inspectors, first-hand. The invisibility of llama becomes clear in this context, where meat is sometimes literally hidden in order to avoid attracting the gaze of those less sympathetic to its consumption.

Supporting a symbolic edifice: fear of disease

Explaining the taboo of mestizo Paceños against llama meat solely in terms of cultural prejudice would be to ignore the many interlocking reasons that mestizos avoid this meat. In the complex and fluid city of La Paz, where groups of people overlap and indigenous cultural symbols are used in different ways by all residents of the city, taboos against llama meat are not rigid, but rather part of a negotiation of ethnicity between individuals along the social continuum of race, ethnicity, and economic class. Thus, although the taboo against llama meat among mestizo Paceños is related to prejudice against "Indians" and their food, the urban legends surrounding llama meat are grounded in concrete and visible realities, enabling mestizo Paceños to avoid llama meat despite their acceptance that indigenous culture is integral to Bolivian identity. To study this—or any other—symbolic food system at the expense of the observable reality of food would be to ignore the important interactions between abstract belief and observable reality. Jack Goody warns that

there is a tendency to spirit away the more concrete aspects of human life, even food, sex, and sacrifice, by locating their interpretation *only* at the "deeper" level, which is largely a matter of privileging the "symbolic" at the expense of the more immediately communicable dimensions of social action [Goody 1982:25].

Llama meat's position in La Paz is not explained by city residents as being the result of a symbolic taboo against "Indian" food that serves to define and separate ethnic groups. Instead, mestizo Paceños justify their avoidance of llama with fears of disease and uncleanness, buttressed by medicine and science. This fact does not exclude ethnic prejudice as a partial explanation for the taboo, but rather complements it. In her work on Malay hot and cold food systems, Laderman notes:

Food avoidances have been explained either as fitting into a cognitive system which operates through symbolic logic, or as part of a society's largely unconscious codification of pragmatic strategy. . . . On the most abstract level, the strength of the system comes from its internal logic and coherence; on a middle level of abstraction, it provides metaphors for reasoning and understanding;

on the most concrete level—that of direct sensory experience—the system is reinforced by moorings in empirical reality that act as structural supports to the symbolic edifice [Laderman 1981:468].

Diseases, both real and imagined, have been the main "structural supports to the symbolic edifice" of the taboo against llama meat. In modern La Paz, the belief that poor and indigenous people are dirty and unsanitary complements the perception that the foods most closely associated with them, such as llama meat, carry disease. Real parasites provide concrete and visible grounds for avoiding llama.

Most mestizo Paceños are convinced that eating llama is dangerous to one's health. Some of these fears are ungrounded. For example, legends of llama meat carrying tuberculosis, leprosy, and syphilis have been circulating among Spaniards and criollos since the colonial era. In early colonial days, the Spanish spread the belief that eating llama caused syphilis (Machicado Oliver 1993:7; Flores Bedregal 1991). The association of this sexually transmitted disease with the Americas might have led to its association with indigenous foods such as llama meat (Crosby 1972:122-164; Quétel 1986:33-49). Fear of syphilis justified the Catholic Church's ban on camelid consumption, which was enforced because llama sacrifices were, and continue to be, associated with the indigenous Andean religions they sought to eradicate (Klein 1982; MacCormack 1991; Nash 1979:316).

The belief that one can contract syphilis from llama meat appears to be more prevalent in Peru than in Bolivia (Markowitz 1991; Risi 1994), although occasionally mestizo Paceños will make references to it. Syphilis is not as troubling to mestizo Paceños as *triquina*, a term which commonly refers to several different parasites found in meats.

Triquina, in its various forms, is easily visible and thus provides material proof to justify avoiding llama meat. Literally, *triquina* refers to trichinosis. But in La Paz, it usually refers to sarcocystiosis and cysticercosis. Both are easily detected upon slaughter of the animal (but not before); upon cutting the muscle tissue one finds white, rice-like granules in the meat. It is unclear why this misnomer occurred; it might be because cysticercosis and trichinosis can both affect the human neural system, and both are found in pork. Mestizo Paceños generally do not distinguish between *triquinas*, and few

know the scientific names for them. The indigenous llama meat vendors do distinguish between the two diseases, although they refer to both as *triquina*, as will be discussed below.

Cysticercosis, which is found in pork, attacks the human nervous system, causing convulsions and locomotion problems. Llama meat, in contrast, can contain sarcocystiosis. Sarcocystiosis is a parasite common to camelids older than four years, and infection rates can run to 100 percent in some populations. Cooking the meat well or salting and drying it into *charqui* (jerky) kills the parasite. If these precautions are not taken, its worst effects on humans appear to be stomach pains, and in extreme cases nausea and diarrhea, which disappear without treatment. Although humans can act as an intermediary host for sarcocystiosis, the parasite rarely infects human muscles (Estívariz Coca 1994; Fowler 1989:148; Leguia 1990; Siegmund 1979:465, 662, 713; Tichit 1991:45-46).

All Paceños are familiar with *triquina* in pork. Many Paceños avoid eating pork, or will cook it for themselves rather than order it in restaurants, for fear of *triquina*. Mestizo Paceños assume that the *triquina* in pork is the same as that in llama. Indigenous Paceños often distinguish between the two diseases, saying that the *triquina* in pork is more dangerous than the *triquina* in llama. Nevertheless, mestizos often assume they have a greater knowledge of the dangers of *triquina* in pork and llama meat than the indigenous people who see and eat llama regularly.

The following woman's story about llama meat is common. She had unknowingly eaten llama, and although she liked it she continued to avoid it for fear of disease. She sets up an interesting dichotomy between the deliciousness and dangerousness of llama meat that mirrors the ambivalent feelings harbored by mestizo Bolivians toward indigenous culture and the foods representative of it:

You know, Clare, llama meat is what the indigenous people eat. . . . The middle class, the upper middle class don't eat llama meat. They don't eat it. . . . I've eaten llama meat, because my father was in the military, and we had to travel to many villages. Without knowing we ate llama meat, it's delicious, delicious. You know what the problem is with llama, is that it has trichinosis. Yes. Trichinosis: what pork has. Here, the middle class, we don't

eat llama meat. The indigenous people, the indigenous people eat it as charqui, generally. They take the meat from the llama, and put it to dry in the sun with a lot, a lot of salt. And this meat they eat, with *chuño*, with potatoes, right? But we don't eat it. I ate it without knowing. It's delicious. Clare, we're very careful, we the middle class, because it has trichinosis. . . . Trichinosis, it's the same as in pork. It has some, some little tiny bugs, and these go up to your head, and you can die. It's a very dangerous disease. Very dangerous. You can see when you're cutting the meat some little white grains. This is bad.⁴

The association between indigenous people, llama meat, other symbolically indigenous foods such as *chuños* (freeze-dried potatoes), and the rural countryside is prevalent. Although indigenous people make up a large percentage of urban areas throughout Bolivia, nearly all rural residents are indigenous, and many of those who live in cities still have familial and economic ties to the countryside. It is interesting to note that this woman does not mention the possibility that she might have eaten llama unknowingly in the city—her association of llama is purely with rural areas. However, other mestizo Paceños envision llama creeping into urban spaces, acknowledging that the rural-urban binary distinction between indigenous and mestizo is not so clear, as will be shown below. Nevertheless, llama meat tends to be seen by mestizos as a rural-indigenous phenomenon encroaching on urban-mestizo territory, rather than an integral part of that space, as some of the urban indigenous consider it.

Because llamas are associated exclusively with indigenous peasant herders, they are often assumed to be raised less carefully than are other animals. The assumption that llamas are not well cared for reinforces the belief that they carry disease. For example, one elderly mestizo woman commented:

The llamas, all of them have parasites. Because they're there in the altiplano, in the countryside, they have parasites. . . . They're in the country, without any care, without—nothing. They are raised any which way.

CS: And other animals aren't the same?

Informant: No, because they're cared for. Sheep, cows, all are specially raised.⁵

This woman had never heard of *triquina* and had no experience with llama meat. She nevertheless believes that llama meat is infected with something dangerous, and furthermore, she believes this danger to be unique to llamas. She assumes that since sheep and cows are fit for consumption, they must receive better treatment than "Indian" animals such as llamas.

The avoidance of llama and its subsequent devaluation in terms of price leads to differential treatment in the market in terms of slaughter, sanitation, and presentation, which feeds back into the justification for the taboo. Since llama meat is never sold outside of lower-class outdoor markets, while mutton, beef, and pork can be found in upper-class indoor markets and supermarkets, mestizos assume that this difference in standards of treatment is present throughout the animals' lives, and therefore the risk of parasitic infection from eating llama is greater. Thus, mestizo PACEÑOS believe llama meat is only eaten when one cannot afford or acquire beef or chicken, and even some indigenous PACEÑOS will make a point of saying they do not eat llama in order to demonstrate that they are in a higher socioeconomic class than their peers. But the double standard between the treatment of llama and other meats is caused by the taboo against llama meat, rather than stemming from it.

The (semi)legality of llama and the cycle of prejudice

The taboo against eating inferior "Indian" food such as llama meat has, in time, led to low sanitation and inspection standards that further justify the taboo. This mirrors the situation of alpaca meat in Arequipa, Peru, that Lisa Markowitz describes:

Since the meat is not culturally recognized as real food for real people, its retail is poorly regulated—the meat is not always inspected, vending stalls are dirty, and so forth—thus providing material substantiation for such disdain [Markowitz 1991:7].

It has been legal to sell llama meat in La Paz since 1987. The meat inspection sign above the poor street market where I worked clearly states that inspections will be made of all meats, including camelid (llama and alpaca) meat. Meat inspections are performed there every morning by the Urban Sanitation Department, which

checks for freshness and cysticercosis. In addition, the police department is responsible for collecting taxes from vendors, who pay a small fee for the right to sell their wares for the day.

The government is not unified in its policy toward llama, however. Part of this confusion is the result of llama's ambiguous position in PACEÑO society. While llama meat may be legal, the only legal slaughterhouses in La Paz will not slaughter camelids (Saneamientos Urbano Municipal n.d.). Government officials disagree about the legal status of llama meat. A representative from the police department whom I interviewed during the summer of 1994 contradicted members of the Urban Sanitation Department by saying that llama meat was illegal to sell in the city; he was surprised to learn that Urban Sanitation officials inspect llama meat daily. He asserted that police were charged with limiting the skyrocketing number of ambulant vendors, and that prohibiting the sale of llama meat was a logical part of this effort (see also Buechler 1978:350-357). Oddly enough, this man's predecessor, whom I interviewed the previous year, stated that llama meat was legal. It appeared that popular notions of legality, as enforced erratically by government officials, are at least as important as written law (MACA 1987; Machicado Oliver 1993; Saneamientos Urbano Municipal n.d.).

Mestizo PACEÑOS have little faith that meat inspections occur in poorer areas of town, and doubt that llama meat is included in the cursory inspections that they believe do take place there. Mestizos see chaos in the poorer markets, where people line the streets to sell goods, often without a stand or even a table. Llama meat vendors may be ambulant insofar as they have no permanent building in which to sell their wares, but like most vendors they typically have set places on sidewalks. Since the markets seem uncontrollable and their wares only for the poor, it appears to some that there is little attempt at control by the government. As Markowitz noted of alpaca meat in Arequipa, Peru, there is a circular relationship among prejudice, lack of inspections, and perceived poor meat quality. There is little public pressure to maintain the standards of preparation, transport, and vending expected for other meats. Mestizo PACEÑOS then point out that llama is inedible because it fails to meet reasonable quality standards.

Because llamas are not considered a source of real food, it is believed that they receive poor veterinary care and sanitation inspections, thus explaining why their meat is sold only in poor street markets. This belief feeds into the fear of disease, since parasites are a real problem. Given the situation they see in the city, mestizo Paceños feel more comfortable with an exclusive supermarket, rather than the police, screening their meat.

Justifying the llama's existence: wool and transport

Since mestizo Paceños believe that llamas are not primarily food animals, they turn to other explanations for why llamas are herded in their country. Outdated visions of llama trains and homemade llama wool cloth overshadow their importance as a food source. Obviously, llamas are used in part for pack and wool, and my purpose here is not to deny this part of their function in Bolivian society and economy. However, this part of their use is exaggerated by mestizo Paceños, both to justify their presence in nonnutritional terms and to hearken back to a romantic past. The assumed importance of llama for transporting materials supports the belief that its meat is inferior to that of animals raised solely for meat. Some argue that if llamas were raised specifically for meat, they might be a more acceptable meat source:

The kind of care that the llama gets, for example, since it's used for transport, is quite different from a cow that is raised for meat. It's very different. Like I told you, I think that if there were marketing for llama meat, and if they taught the peasants how to raise the llama for meat, it would be different. . . . [Now] The people . . . say, surely this llama died, and they want to earn some money, so they sell the meat of animals that died.⁶

The fact that llamas are used for transport is often believed to make their meat tough, malodorous, or strangely colored. In reality, a large part of the reason llama meat is often tough is because herders wait until the animals are older (seven to ten years) to slaughter them because the market does not support a higher price for higher quality meat. Although llamas are still used to transport goods in a few isolated places, this practice has become much more limited since trucks became readily available.⁷

Most mestizos agree that indigenous people do eat llama occasionally, either on special occasions or after they die naturally, even if they believe llamas are not raised specifically for that purpose. Take for example, this man's comments:

Currently, they eat llama less than mutton, because, at least as far as I know in the villages, for every fifty sheep there are only two or three, four llamas. They only eat them when they die. But they don't kill them. They also consume them when they have rituals They sell them, but only a little, I would say. At least as far as I know. I don't think that they raise llamas in the alti-plano for more than, than, what's it called, the wool, right? The wool of the llama, I think.⁸

There are far fewer llamas in Bolivia than sheep, cows, or pigs, and thus much less llama meat (Caceres Vega *et al.* 1991; FIDA 1990; MACA 1992; Machicago Oliver 1993).⁹ The reason for this is not so much because the natives use the llama primarily for wool or transport, but more because it is more profitable to raise other meat-producing animals.

Because the llama is assumed to be so useful for wool and transporting goods, a few mestizo Paceños believe that indigenous people would not *want* to use them for food. One upper-class man, who spent two weeks in a village near the city of La Paz, believes that llama herders must be emotionally attached to their llamas, considering them almost as pets (similar to the North American view):

I think that the peasant wouldn't want to eat llama either. Because for them, the llama is more an instrument of work, same as the donkey. It serves them for transporting their bundles and the rest, on the llama, right? So I think that they, principally, wouldn't see it for anything else, wouldn't take well to commercializing llama meat. Because for them it's a work animal. . . . I don't think that they eat llama, because of what I told you. It's as if I ate my dog. My dog only gives me its affection and friendship. But if my dog also served me for everything, served me for riding, go to my work, or gave me other help, it would never enter my head to eat it. If it died, I would bury it. It's like that. It's as if it were part of the family. And for the peasant, the llama, the llama and the donkey, it's the same. They're work animals, that help them, so, I think that when they die, they bury them, and finally, it never enters their

heads to eat them. . . . I've never seen it . . . but I imagine, from what I know of the peasants . . . I don't think they could eat them.¹⁰

While many mestizo Bolivians compare llama and dog meat, and claim that both are served secretly in street food, the "pet" reference almost never figures into the equation. There are multitudes of stray dogs in La Paz, mangy mutts who wander the streets in packs, stealing scraps and fighting amongst themselves. Estimates of their numbers run in the tens of thousands. These animals often carry rabies and are a public health hazard (*El Diario* 1994:12). The association between llamas and stray dogs (rather than the family dog) strengthens the association between llama meat and disease.

Llamaburgers and dogwurst: urban legends in La Paz

In Irpavi, an upper-class neighborhood in the southern part of La Paz, a restaurant was rumored to have been caught using llama and dog meat in their *chicharrón*, a fried pork dish for which the establishment was famous. Municipal meat inspectors, upon examining the premises, found the severed heads of dogs in the garbage, and closed the establishment. I heard several versions of this urban legend during my time in La Paz but could find no official reference to the incident, not even from Urban Sanitation Department officials. Similar stories circulate in Cochabamba, where a local newspaper reported that city officials were inspecting *chicharrón* establishments for the illegal use of llama and dog meat, prompted by the unexplained disappearance of stray dogs in the city ("Investigan . . ." 1989).

Meat switching is a common fear of mestizos that is reflected in urban legends about llama meat. They believe that llama and dog meat are both substituted illegally for other meats, and often will not buy ground meats or non-brand-name sausages for fear of what they might contain. They also suspect that street vendors and other lower-class eating establishments serve llama meat to unwitting customers in order to cut costs and increase profits. Stories of meat switching are akin to North American urban legends of rats being substituted for chicken in major fast-food chains, and ethnic restaurants serving cat (Brunvand 1981:81-90).

Although Paceños agree that llama meat is served secretly in various places in the city, dividing the areas of La Paz where llama

meat can be found from where it cannot be found is a difficult task. The territory of covert llama meat spans a large area where the rising indigenous lower middle class meets the established mestizo lower middle class, and some claim it spreads even further into the eating establishments of the wealthy. Llama meat is deployed to show how indigenous culture is excluded from certain areas, or conversely, how it penetrates those spaces. An amorphous line, depending on combined factors of race, class, and ethnicity, divides llama eaters from llama avoiders, and shifts depending on the perspective of the person drawing it. Both sides agree that llama meat is sold openly in poor indigenous markets such as the one where I worked and that it is never sold in upper-class supermarkets—but this distinction left a large section of the city inadequately defined, as indeed it *is* inadequately defined according to simplistic markers of ethnicity, race, and class. Ambiguous markers such as food offer a way to pry open these complex relationships without losing their multifaceted richness.

Although mestizo Paceños usually see llama meat as confined to the poorer areas of La Paz (although as seen above, sometimes they believe it is an entirely rural phenomenon), it is believed to creep down into middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, where the unsuspecting are in danger of being duped into eating it. Of the nearly two hundred university students I questioned, even though all but one said they had never knowingly eaten llama, more than a quarter said they were not sure if they had or not. This remarkable level of uncertainty is the result of the belief that llama can be found in questionable foods: street food, food served in *comedores populares* and cheap *pensiones*, charqui, non-brand-name sausages, and hamburgers sold in downtown street stands. The sanitation standards of these questionable foods are lower, and therefore their real and perceived contamination higher, from llama as well as from dog meat, fecal matter, and disease.

The media add to the discourse on llama. A local newspaper ran an article in 1991 saying that Paceños unknowingly ate twenty-four tons of llama meat daily. In addition, they claimed that 98 percent of this illicit meat was contaminated with dangerous diseases such as sarcocystiosis, which they erroneously stated could be fatal to humans. Newspapers warn Paceños to beware of hamburgers,

sausages, and ground meats (*La Razón* 1991; *Última Hora* 1990; "Investigan. . ." 1989).¹¹

Most of my mestizo informants who claimed to have tried llama meat said that they ate it unintentionally, usually under the guise of beef. They entered into the territory of the indigenous and were tricked into eating something associated with them. Like the woman who said that she had eaten llama while traveling with her father on military duty, many said that they unwittingly ate it while traveling in the rural *campo*. While some of these personal experience stories may be true, there is rarely any proof they are eating llama other than a friend's opinion or their own gut instinct. These accounts enter into the fabric woven from urban legends, the evidence of visible parasites, and common belief to maintain the belief that llama is dangerous and that serving it is deceitful.

One man's story of his experience while traveling as a student from La Paz to his hometown of Sucre to visit his parents is a good example of this genre:

When I used to go to Sucre, I went by bus, right? . . . So, during the night journey, we would stop in a little village, and in the village they would serve us country food. We would stop at midnight, or one in the morning, it was really cold as we left the bus, we'd drink a little coffee, and we were served something. And one time, we had stopped in a village, and asked, without knowing, for steak, right? And they brought us some beef that seemed pretty good, right? And I began to eat. I was really hungry, and I didn't notice. . . . And finally [my friend] said to me, "Well, how did you like the llama meat?" "Uh? What?" "Right! We just ate llama meat!" he told me. Llama meat! A bit red, yeah, the meat, llama meat is really red. But I had eaten it. I'd eaten it. . . . And more than one time we stopped in a village when they served us dinner, or something to eat, or whatever there was, and on that occasion they served us llama. And surely it wasn't just one time, who knows, maybe two or three times. So yes, I've eaten llama.¹²

He finds this story almost amusing. But others are angrier when they discover that they have been secretly sold llama. While rural villages may not have the option of serving anything besides llama meat, indigenous meat vendors in the city are assumed just to be

making a larger profit. The following middle-class woman bought what she thought was beef in Mercado Bolívar, a market in one of the poorer areas of town, Tembladerani. The tell-tale sign here that this is llama meat is not its color, but its bad odor; it is a common belief among mestizos that llama meat smells bad.

I prepared [the meat] at home. . . . It had a really strong odor, nothing like beef. Beef doesn't have an odor like this. . . . So, I said to myself, "What's going on here?" And it made me touchy, what to do, to serve it to my family, not to serve it to my family. I was there thinking, this is something weird. So, I saved all the cooked meat, I tried it, I tried it. It was delicious, didn't have anything. Like they say it was tender meat, very nice. Well seasoned. But I ate it, and I said I couldn't serve it to my family. I saved all the meat on a platter, and later I went back to the market, to complain to the woman [who sold it to me]. I told her directly "You have sold me llama meat." And she told me, "No!" I showed it to her, I was going to denounce her, because this couldn't be. Finally she told me yes, it was llama meat. "I'll return your money if you don't say anything." That was my experience with llama meat, so now I'm very careful, and sometimes we don't buy ground meats, but like I said earlier, it's possible that we've eaten [llama meat] in salteñas.¹³

Both of these stories accuse indigenous people of serving llama meat to unwitting mestizo Paceños. In each case, the victim envisions him- or herself venturing into the territory of the poor and indigenous (the rural village, the poorer market) and being duped into buying inferior goods. There are some who realize the goods offered are inferior, however, and thus avoid being taken advantage of. This mestizo man tells of confronting a street food vendor near where I worked with llama meat wholesalers:

There was a woman who sold chicharrón. So we approached her. "Ma'am, sell me some. Na na na na na, na na na na, na na na na, na na na na" [sings a short melody]. "What?" and she cursed us, because what we were saying with the song was, "Ma'am, sell me llama chicharrón." And she didn't accept this and cursed us. It's pork, she said. It was llama, of course, we knew. . . .

CS: And why did you sing this song?

Informant: Because the "llamerada" is one of the dances danced with llamas, with llama herders.¹⁴

Although he does not make a direct accusation, he tells the woman that he knows the food she is selling is inferior llama meat through an association with a traditional *folklórico* song. He proves that the indigenous Paceña cannot trick him, and shows his street-wise intelligence. Instead of being the victim, he makes her the victim of his accusations.

The indigenous Paceñas who sell street food are often accused of selling inferior foods. Everyone accepts that the quality of meat they sell, be it llama, beef, pork, or chicken, is lower, which is not unreasonable given how inexpensive street food is. However, sometimes their meat-switching is said to lead to serious health problems for the unwary. One man tells of this deceit leading to serious health problems:

Llama will cause some diarrhea. When you're not used to it, then llama will produce some diarrhea. Then the people just say they don't like it. Then that's why. Also, they used to, some years ago, mix llama with dog, because the bones are almost the same. . . . [ten or twelve years ago] they investigated, 'cause there were so many diarrheas and headaches and people throwing up, and they found out it was mixed with dogs. And also, dogs were quite few around here, and in El Alto, and they said, "Ah! There's something wrong here." And investigated, and they found there were some dogs mixed with llamas, and mixed with donkeys.

CS: And who was doing this?

Informant: Um, some, what do you call, cholitas. They used to sell chicharrón, fritanga, and all those things in big pails.¹⁵

Because of the health problems associated with llama meat, many people—even some meat inspection officials—erroneously believe that llama is illegal within the city.

Through meat switching, llama meat becomes a way for the lower class to pollute the upper class. Douglas's argument that dirt is "matter out of place" can be modified in this case to "dirt is meat out of place" (Douglas 1966:35; Herzfeld 1992:38). Llama may be acceptable for indigenous Paceños, but it is certainly not for mestizo Paceños. The fear and distrust of clandestine llama demonstrates the insecurity and general suspicion directed towards the poor indigenous people of La Paz, people who are also believed to be predisposed

toward domestic violence, uncleanness, and drunkenness. Thus food enters into the discourse on ethnicity and race.

A matter of custom

Although there is a symbolic system at work in the devaluation of llama meat, it would be unfair to claim that mestizo Paceños are aware of it and consciously uphold that system. There is also the matter of *costumbre*, custom. One experience with indigenous friends at the wholesale meat market where I worked taught me the power of custom in shaping food habits. I would often eat in the markets with them, and one day they brought me a bowl of soup with half a sheep head in it, *sans* skin and eyeball. I ate it, but, when I refused to eat this particular dish on a second occasion, my dislike for sheep head became something of a joke in the market. My friends would tell me it was delicious, and I should eat it. I, quoting some of my upper-class interviewees, would say I was not accustomed to it. Even though I know that sheep heads are nutritious and safe, and realize that my prejudice against it is the result of my middle-class American upbringing, the revulsion is real.

Many mestizo Paceños will begin addressing their reaction to llama meat by saying that they are "not accustomed to it" (*No estamos acostumbrados*). The following comment is typical:

It's also a question of custom, tradition, and culture. That is to say, the city man . . . the man from the city, he has thoughts, he thinks differently from the man from the country, the peasant. So . . . he doesn't eat llama meat. . . . So, it's a social problem, a problem of custom. We're more accustomed to eating beef, mutton, right? Pork, right?¹⁶

Another points out that indigenous people might have similar prejudices:

Who knows, for one who is used to eating llama meat, and then tries beef, the beef might seem just okay to them. It's a question of custom. It's a question of the custom of taste, isn't that right?¹⁷

This appears to be foodways relativism—"You eat your foods, I'll eat mine." But by saying that indigenous people might have similar but

opposite prejudices, the difference between them and mestizos is further demarcated.

Llama meat and marking the "indigenous"

Llama meat is considered an "Indian" food with all the negative connotations that designation implies. Mestizo Paceños typically view llama meat as diseased, tough, and bad-smelling. They notice that it is sold only in poorer markets, which lack refrigeration, cleanliness, and adequate inspections. Putting the horse before the cart, they assume it is sold in poorer areas because the meat is inferior, rather than realizing that it is seen as inferior because it is found there. Mestizos then conclude that llamas must receive inferior pasturing, medical treatment, and slaughter before the arrival of the meat in Paceño markets. And they say that they are not accustomed to eating it, whereas indigenous people are. Indigenous people, like llama meat, are generally perceived negatively: dirty, poorly raised, uneducated, violent, and failing to live up to the lofty standards of their noble ancestors. Llama meat has become representative of everything that mestizo Paceños are not and have no wish to be.

Llama meat as "Indian" food serves as an important marker to separate indigenous from mestizo. Indigenous culture is allowed—even, it might be argued, obligated—to have its own "traditional" foods, clothes, music, and dances that are separate from mestizo culture. This separation is negotiated on all sides as groups and individuals struggle to define themselves. Indigenous images are not necessarily pre-Columbian, as the case of urban indigenous women's clothing, which is descended from Spanish colonial dress, demonstrates. But the mere fact of separation means there are always elements considered "authentically indigenous" that mestizos can appropriate when they need to reassert their invented indigenous heritage (Guss 1994). Usurping indigenous identity for "national" identity implicitly claims that all Bolivians have a shared culture (Gill 1993:75; Hendricks 1991:56). This appropriation serves to gloss over the differences between indigenous and mestizo, and idealizes the indigenous past at the expense of its present.

This ideology of *mestizaje* is behind the revival of folklorico costumes, music, and dance. The folklorico style claims to be

descended from indigenous culture, but in reality it is a blend of Spanish and indigenous styles. From this syncretism comes the Andean pipe music presented to the outside world as "traditionally Bolivian" but performed mainly in tourist restaurants in Bolivia (Turino 1991). Bolivian folklorico-style costume and dance were presented to the world at the opening ceremonies of the World Cup soccer games in 1995 as national folklore. The festive *mini-polleras*, glittery bowler hats and high-heeled boots, derived from modern indigenous dress, have become a sign of national identity. This costume represents the indigenous roots that all Bolivians share (Yaksic 1994).

Mestizo Paceños do not reject all that is indigenous, but instead selectively deploy it to emphasize Bolivian national identity. The ambiguous feelings they have toward indigenous people make this deployment possible. On the one hand, indigenous peoples are idealized as a proud, uncorrupted society that resisted Spanish domination. On the other, they are seen as lazy, uneducated, violent drunkards (Gill 1994, 1993:81-82). Sometimes the distinction between these two groups is a distinction between rural and urban. Those Indians who stay in their own space in the rural countryside are "good" Indians. Those who come into the city, crowding the streets with vendors and filling the shantytowns that climb the sides of the valley onto the plateau above, are "bad" Indians. This presents indigenous people themselves as a negative incursion into urban space, much as llama meat itself is perceived.

This dichotomy in "Indianness" allows Bolivian mestizos to idealize their own indigenous heritage while criticizing modern indigenous people for failing to live up to this ideal. Although llama meat is currently associated with the negative stereotype of indigenous Bolivians—a dirty, diseased food that only the naïve, idiotic, or drunk could be duped into eating—opinion might swing the other way, transforming llama meat into a wholesome food, uncorrupted by modern influences and traditionally native.

Foodways in flux

Foodways, like folklore in general, are never static, but constantly subject to the eddies of the culture around them. The position of llama

meat in Paceño society is not a given. The very fact that llama meat was made legal as recently as 1987 indicates that a shift in attitudes toward it is taking place. Even though the official discourse surrounding llama meat is negative, this discourse is not accepted or maintained equally by all Paceños. The multifaceted meanings of llama meat result from the ambivalent representations and perceptions of indigenosity itself.

Some symbols of "indigenous" culture have been reclaimed by Bolivians and transformed into emblems of national pride. Similarly, a few "Indian" foods have been incorporated into national cuisine through appropriation by the upper classes as a result of a combination of renewed interest in "national" foodstuffs, health concerns, and influence from tourists. *Cuy* (guinea pig) is making a comeback in Ecuador as a nationally appreciated food despite its indigenous associations (Morales 1994) and has also become a favored tourist dish in Cuzco, Peru. In Mexico City, ant eggs and worms, both pre-Conquest protein sources, have appeared on the menus of expensive restaurants under the rubric of Mexican *haute cuisine* (da Silva Richmond 1994:105).

In Bolivia, the best example of an indigenous foodstuff being incorporated into the cuisine of the Paceño upper class is that of quinoa, a highland Andean grain (Caceres Vega *et al.* 1991; Horkheimer 1990). Until recently, quinoa was neglected by mestizo Bolivians as "Indian" food. After foreign health food interests started buying and marketing it in America and Europe, interest in it blossomed in Bolivia as well. Now, many specialty foods, such as granola, cereal, and marmalade, contain quinoa. It is not a staple foodstuff—it is rarely offered in restaurants or pensiones—but the price has gone up and the upper class eats it as a delicacy. Several people commented in interviews that if foreigners could be convinced to eat llama meat, the Bolivian upper class would follow in kind. Others suggested that an advertising campaign extolling the benefits of llama meat, similar to that conducted for quinoa, would help improve its status in Bolivian society. Bolivian interest in native foods is growing, and one upper-class man attributed the recent success of quinoa to this new appreciation of indigenous foods:

Everyday, they're eating more Bolivian food, typical food. For example, before, quinoa wasn't served much. Quinoa? No. Today,

one sees lots of products made with quinoa. There's pastries they make with quinoa, cookies . . . of quinoa, there's an infinite number of dishes they can make with quinoa. So quinoa is becoming more accepted inside the city. Before it wasn't common to eat it in the city. Today, because of its nutritional value, because of the advertisements they did, lots of quinoa is consumed in the city as well. I'd say they eat a lot of quinoa in the city. As much in the city as in the country. . . .

[It happened] in the last ten years. They've always eaten quinoa in the city, always. But, I'd say that in the last ten years, thanks to the advertising they did for it, many companies commercialized quinoa products, the same quinoa, there was advertising, so they consumed more all the time. There's a marketing campaign today for quinoa, isn't that right? Not just for quinoa, but rather for, for the foods, for the products that are native, native to the country, right? So, the people eat more of this food because it's healthy food.¹⁸

National food is often associated with being healthier, since it is seen as less processed. A rekindled interest in healthy and natural national food might send llama meat on a path to greater acceptance among mestizo Paceños (Capriles Villazón 1990; "Promocionan. . ." 1991; Minka 1988). Llama meat has advantages over other meats: it is higher in protein, and significantly lower in cholesterol (Antúnez de Mayolo R. 1981:65; Aguirre Frisancho 1980:27; Nava 1994; Paredes Arizapana 1978).¹⁹ This has been its major selling point for foreign firms experimenting with exporting llama meat to European countries as a red meat alternative (Gager 1993; Flores Bedregal 1991). Since the upper class of La Paz has concerns about high cholesterol levels in other meats, especially lamb and pork, llama might prove to interest them because of its low cholesterol content. Upper-class Paceños currently claim to eat less of these two meats than members of the lower classes do. Some in the restaurant industry agreed that llama could be used as a substitute for lamb or beef in some dishes and marketed on the basis of its lower cholesterol content. A butcher shop and a supermarket, both in well-off neighborhoods, have expressed interest in offering llama and alpaca meat to their middle- and upper-class clients (Geschwend 1994). Restaurants are usually reluctant to offer llama, however, as they believe that doing so would adversely affect their business.

The llama's position as a "national animal" has had a mixed effect on the status of its meat. Llamas are common motifs on jewelry, clothing, weavings, and other art work considered typical of Bolivia that both Bolivians and tourists buy. The llama is considered an important national symbol that should be protected. A small minority of the mestizo Paceños I interviewed were concerned that promoting llama meat might drive the animal to extinction (*Presencia* 1994). Although llama meat is considered dirty and diseased, the prospect of the llamas' extinction is seen as a great loss to Bolivian national culture. For example, one man thought that commercializing llama meat would lead to uncontrolled slaughter of the animals:

Sadly there's no control over, over the quantity of llamas. So, one could see an indiscriminate extermination of llamas, for a good price and the rest. . . . So, we would lose something that's very much ours, right? The llama, the alpaca, is like the condor of the Andes, those are the animals we identify with what is Bolivian culture, right? It's what is our altiplano in the end, very typically altiplano. So, because of this, it scares me that they could commercialize llama meat.²⁰

This man looks on llamas and alpacas as if they were endangered wild animals, like the condor and vicuña (a wild camelid), which could be hunted to extinction. Since llamas and alpacas are purely domesticated, this seems unlikely, as those that depend on these animals for their livelihood seem unlikely to kill their entire flock for a short-term profit.

The llama's "national animal" status does not necessarily mean that llamas will become the national pet and therefore remain taboo. Llamas and alpacas represent Bolivian culture, but they were also the most important pre-Columbian protein source in the Andes. Llama meat could be incorporated into the process of national identity-building as an indigenous food unique to Bolivia and connected to a glorious pre-Conquest past (Nava 1994).

The tourism industry indirectly encourages the incorporation of llama meat into Bolivian national cuisine. Americans and other foreigners travel to have new experiences, and experimenting with local cuisine is part of the exotic experience they seek. In Potosí a mine-tour guide invites foreigners on his tours to his home for a

"traditional miners' meal" of llama meat and corn soup. He makes an additional profit by providing this service and the tourists thoroughly enjoy trying this "traditional" dish. Foreigners' qualms about eating "pet" llamas are generally outweighed by their taste for the exotic and "authentic."

The nationalization of indigenous folklore has been encouraged by the growing tourist market in Bolivia. Foreigners come to see the colorful costumes and hear the pipe music that distinguishes the "exotic other" in their minds. Food, music, clothing, and dance that claim a historical underpinning are seen as more "authentic" and therefore more worth seeing (Herzfeld 1992:107-108). As the South American nation with the highest percentage of indigenous people, Bolivia has been able to claim that its folklore is more "authentic" by virtue of its racial and cultural connection to the pre-Columbian past. Bolivia actively advertises itself as "the Folklore Capital of South America." The connection between Bolivian folklore and the tourism market is so clear in the minds of Bolivians that I was sometimes asked if I intended a career as a tourist agent. They assumed I studied Bolivian folklore and customs in order to direct foreigners to the best festivals.

The process of building a national identity for Bolivia brings out the mixed feelings that different ethnicities in Bolivia have about ethnic markers such as llama meat. As cultural elements such as dress, music, dance, and food are traded between groups, their attached symbolic meanings change. Food is not immune to the force of this inevitable change and renegotiation. The Bolivian government is beginning to take an interest in promoting llama meat as a cheaper and more environmentally sound protein source for a population with a relatively high rate of malnutrition (MACA 1987; Edgardo Alferez 1986). A few newspapers have shown an interest in llama meat as a low-fat, high-protein meat (Cardozo 1992; Flores Bedregal 1991; Nava 1994; Sammells 1993; Scholte 1994). Because of its historic roots in pre-Columbian cuisine and its low cholesterol content, llama meat might be incorporated into "traditional" national Bolivian cuisine. But despite the potential for llama to be recategorized by mestizos as a healthy, national food, it currently remains representative of what mestizos consider to be the negative side of indigenous identity.

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Notes

¹ For more on national cuisine building, see Appadurai 1988. M.Y.C. de Gamarra 1948 includes one recipe for llama meat, for a dish called *charquekan*, made with llama *charqui*, which is associated with rural food. The inclusion of this recipe is unusual among Bolivian cookbooks and might have to do with the older date of the book.

² While often the word *meat* (*carne*) is left unspecified in parts of these documents, in Bolivia *carne* was synonymous with beef, unless unequivocally stated otherwise (i.e., *carne de llama*).

³ Crosby makes the erroneous statement that in pre-Columbian times "Most of the [Indians'] meat and leather came from wild game" (Crosby 1972:74). Not only is this a gross over-generalization—the agricultural and ecological situations in the Andes, Mesoamerica, and North America being widely different—but the fact is that in the Andes the llama was by far the major protein source, followed by hunted deer, with guinea pig and dog running far behind. Wild deer comprised less than 10 percent of Andean protein after the domestication of camelids (Paz B. de Valda and Cajias 1992; Wheeler 1984; Wing 1998).

It seems that because the llama is not currently an acceptable meat source and is not presented as part of traditional cuisine, researchers do not

think to include it in their studies. Researchers such as Sokolov, who appear to do a large part of their research in cookbooks and ethnic restaurants, would never see llama meat served and therefore do not pursue the issue of its use. More curious is the omission by Johnsson, who researched Bolivian foodways in poor urban La Paz and rural areas, and yet makes only the most passing of remarks on llama meat.

⁴ Sabes, Clara, la carne de llama la come la gente indígena. La gente indígena. La gente de clase media, media alta, no la come la carne de llama. No la comen. . . . La carne de llama yo he comido, porque mi padre es militar, y tiene que viajar a muchos pueblos. Sin saber hemos comido carne de llama, es deliciosa, deliciosa. Sabes cual es el problema con la carne de llama, que tiene triquinosis. ¿Ja? Triquinosis: lo que tiene la carne de cerdo. Acá la clase media, no comemos carne, carne de llama. La gente indígena. La gente indígena come en charqui, generalmente. Lleva carne de la llamita, y la pone a secar al sol con mucha, con mucha sal. Y esa carne la come, con chuño, con papa, ¿sí? Pero nosotros no comemos. Yo he comido sin saber. Es deliciosa. Clara, tenemos mucho cuidado nosotros la clase media porque tiene triquinosis. . . . Triquinosis, es igual que el cerdo. Tiene unos, unos, bichitos chiquitos, y eso te llega a la cabeza, y te puedes morir. Es una enfermedad bien fuerte. Bien fuerte. Y se nota cortando la carne, unos granitos blanquitos. Eso es malo.

⁵ Las llamas, todas tienen parásitos. Como están allí en el altiplano, tiene campo, tienen parásitos. . . . Están en el campo, sin ningún cuidado, sin—nada. A la de Dios se crían.

CS: ¿Y los otros animales no son lo mismo?

Informant: No, porque ellos están cuidados. La oveja, cordero, las vacas, todas están criadas especiales.

⁶ El tipo de cuidado que tiene una llama, por ejemplo, que está de carga es muy diferente que una vaca que está para alimentación. Es muy diferente. Yo le digo, que creo que si se promociona a la carne de llama, y si se enseña al campesino como criar a la llama como para alimento, sería muy diferente. . . . La gente sabe que la llama . . . dicen, seguramente la llama se murió, y otro quiere ganar dinero, vende la carne de los animales que se murieron.

⁷ As late as 1930 llamas were still being used to bring foodstuffs to markets in La Paz (Rowe and Borges 1930:22). While llamas may be used for transport in isolated areas, they are rarely seen (alive) in the city of La Paz or other large urban centers.

⁸ Llama, en realidad, se consume ahora menos que cordero, porque, por lo menos lo que yo conozco de las comunidades, por cincuenta ovejas

existen dos ó tres, cuatro llamas. Solamente consumen cuando se mueren, ¿no? Pero no las matan. También consumen cuando hacen rituales, ¿no? . . . Se vende, pero poco, yo diría. Por lo menos lo de que yo conozco, ¿no? No creo que la llama en el altiplano se cría por fines más, de, de, como se llama, de la lana, ¿no? De la lana de la llama, yo creo, ¿no?

⁹Bolivia has the following approximate livestock populations, in order of prevalence: sheep, 7,500,000; cattle, 5,800,000; pigs, 2,300,000; llama, 2,020,000; goats, 1,500,000; alpaca, 300,000. Meat production (in metric tons) follows similar trends: beef, 130,000; pork, 44,500; mutton, 13,000; goat meat, 1,100; llama 1,100; alpaca 200.

¹⁰Yo creo que al campesino no le gustaría tampoco comerse a la llama. Porque para ellos, la llama es más un instrumento de trabajo, igual que el burro, ¿no? Les sirve para transportar sus bultos y demás, en la llama, ¿no? Entonces yo creo que ellos, principalmente, no verían para nada, no verían muy de agrado en que se puede comercializar la carne de llama, ¿no? Porque ellos lo ven como animal de trabajo. . . . No creo, no creo que coman llama, por lo que te comenté. Es como si yo comería mi perro. ¿No? Que mi perro solamente me da su cariño, su amistad. No, si el perro además de todo, mi serviría para montarme, ir a mi trabajo, o tendría otro tipo de ayuda, pues, ni se me pasaría por la cabeza el comerlo. Si se muere, yo lo entiero. Es así, nomás. Es como si fuera de la familia. Y para el campesino, la llama, la llama y el burro, es lo mismo, ¿no? Son animales de trabajo, que les ayudan, entonces, yo creo que cuando se mueren, igual los entierran, y fin. Pero ni se les pasa por la cabeza el comerlo, ¿no? . . . Nunca he visto, . . . pero yo imagino, por lo que conozco del campesino . . . no creo que puedan comer.

¹¹Informants told me there were also occasional TV shows that warned about the dangers of llama meat.

¹²Y cuando iba a Sucre, iba en bus, ¿ja? En bus o en ferrocarril. Y cuando íbamos en bus, Clara, los caminos eran peores, de que son ahora. Ahora mejoran mucho los caminos. Anteriormente los caminos eran malos. Y el viaje duraba mucho. Yo me recuerdo que salíamos de La Paz a las siete de la noche en autobús, o entonces en omnibus, y par bamos en este, con dirección a Cochabamba, íbamos a Cochabamba, y Cochabamba a Sucre. Era prácticamente un día, un día y medio, muchas veces, ¿no? Entonces, en el viaje en la noche, paramos en un pueblito, y en un pueblito ellos nos sirven la comida del pueblo. Digamos, parabamos a los doce de la noche, o una de la mañana, salíamos del autobús con mucho frío, a tomar un poco de café, y servimos algo. Y alguna vez, hemos parado en un pueblito, y uno, sin

saber, pues pide un asado, ¿no? Asado, sabes que es un asado, ¿no? Un bife. Y nos traen, una vez nos traen un bife que parecía muy agradable, ¿no? Y empecé a comer. Estaba con mucha hambre, y no noté. . . . Y al final alguien me dijo, "Bueno, ¿que les pareció la carne de llama?" "¿Cómo? ¿Qué?" "¡Claro! ¡Lo que acaban de comer es carne de llama!" me dicen, ¿no? ¡Carne de llama! Un poco roja, sí, la carne, es bastante roja la carne de llama. Pero he comido. He comido. . . . Y más de una vez hemos parado en un pueblito donde uno se sirve una cena, o algún plato, o lo que sea, y aquella oportunidad, nos servimos llama. Y seguramente no sólo una vez, quien sabe, una dos o tres veces. Pero sí, he comido llama.

¹³Preparé en casa . . . había un olor bien fuerte, como nunca tenía la carne de res. En la res eso no puede ser, en el cerdo puede ser ese olor, cuando es un cerdo que me parece que no, que no, más que no bien limpiado, que no ha tenido nunca un cruce, una relación sexual, su carne tiene un olor horrible. El chanco, sí, el macho. Entonces, yo dije, "¿Qué pasó aquí?" Y me puse susceptible, que hago ahora, doy a mi gente, no doy a mi gente. Yo estuve all pensando, eso es algo raro. Entonces, guardé toda la carne cocida, yo probé, yo probé. Estaba rica, no tenía nada, como dicen estaba la carne suave, muy agradable, ¿no? Bien condimentada. Pero yo comí, entonces dije no puedo darselo, pues, a los míos. Guardé toda la carne en una fuente, "es otra cosa," y después me fui al mercado, y reclamé a la señora. Yo le dije directamente, "Usted me ha vendido carne de llama." Y me dice, "¡no!" Yo se lo muestro, yo le voy a denunciar, porque ese no puede ser. Entonces al final me dijo sí, era carne de llama. "Te devuelvo tu dinero, si no dices nada." Esa fue una experiencia para mí con carne de llama, entonces, tengo mucho cuidado, y a veces no compramos, y no hacemos mezclados, no nos dan mezclado la carne, pero como dijimos antes, es posible que en las salteñas hayamos comido. (Salteñas are a type of pastry, stuffed with meat, potatoes, and spices, sold out of vendor carts on street corners.)

¹⁴Ahí por el barrio de la Garita, había una señora que vendía chicharrón. Entonces se nos acercamos. "Señora, véndeme. Na na na na na, na na na na, na na na na, na na na na." "¿Qué cosa . . . ?!" y nos votaba, porque queremos decir con la canta, "Señora, véndeme chicharrón de llama." Y no ha aceptado y nos votaban. Es de chanco, dice. Era de llama, claro, sabíamos. . . .

CS: ¿Y por qué ese canción?

Informant: Porque la llamerada es una de las danzas que se bailan con las llamas, con pastores de llama.

¹⁵ Interview conducted in English.

¹⁶ Es también una cuestión de costumbre, tradición, y cultura. Por decir, el hombre ciudadano. . . . el hombre de la ciudad, tiene pensamiento, piensa diferente que el hombre del campo, el campesino. Entonces . . . no come carne de llama. . . . Entonces, es un problema social, ¿ja? Problema de costumbre. Nosotros est mos más acostumbrados a comer carne de vaca, carne de, carne de oveja, ¿ja? Carne de cerdo, ¿ja?

¹⁷ Quién sabe, para quien est acostumbrado a comer carne de llama, y come carne de vaca, la carne de vaca le puede parecer de gusto regular. Es una cuestión de costumbre. Es un cuestión de costumbre al gusto, ¿no es cierto?

¹⁸ Cada día, se est comiendo más la comida boliviana, la comida típica. Por ejemplo, antiguamente, la quinoa, no servía mucho. ¿Quinoa? No. Hoy, uno ve que hay tantos productos que son hechos de base a quinoa. Hay repostería que se hace de quinoa, o sea, galletas . . . de quinoa, hay una infinidad de platos que se pueden hacer con quinoa. Entonces, la quinoa est llegando cada vez más aceptada dentro de la ciudad. Antiguamente no era muy común comer en la ciudad. Hoy día, por su valor nutritivo, por la propaganda que se hace, se consume bastante quinoa en la ciudad también. Yo diría que se comen mucha quinoa en la ciudad. Tanto en la ciudad como en el campo. . . .

En los últimos diez años. Siempre se come quinoa en la ciudad, siempre. Pero, yo diría que en los últimos diez años, gracias a la propaganda que se hace, hay muchas empresas que comercializan productos de quinoa, la misma quinoa, hacen propaganda, entonces se consume cada vez más. Hay un marketing hoy día de la quinoa, ¿no es cierto? No sólo de la quinoa, sino de, de, de las comidas, o de los productos que son nativos, propios del país, ¿no? Entonces, la gente come más esa comida porque es comida sana.

¹⁹ Protein content of llama meat as compared to other Bolivian meats is as follows: llama 24.8 percent; beef, 21.7 percent; mutton, 20.9 percent; chicken, 20.6 percent; goat 19.4 percent; *cuy*, 19.0 percent. Llama's percentage of fat is 1.21 percent, compared to 5.05 percent for beef, 1.50 percent for chicken, and 37 percent for pork. Llama's low cholesterol depends on how old the animal is and how it is raised. One llama herder in the United States told me that when his llamas were fed corn just before slaughter rather than left to graze, the meat became very fatty. Unfortunately, because there is little interest in grain-fed llamas, I have no further data on this.

²⁰ Lastimosamente no hay un control sobre, sobre la cantidad de llamas que hay. Entonces, puede haber un exterminio indiscriminado de las llamas,

por un buen precio y demás. . . . Entonces, perderíamos algo muy nuestro para nosotros, ¿no? Como la llama, la alpaca, lo que es el cóndor de los Andes, que son animales identificamos con lo que es la cultura boliviana, ¿no? Es lo que es nuestra altiplano en fin, muy típico altiplano. Entonces, por ese lado, me da miedo que se pueda comercializarla, la carne de llama.

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