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La despensa nacional: Quinoa and the Spatial Contradictions of Peru's Gastronomic Revolution

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Abstract

This article explores the spatial politics of Peru's gastronomic revolution and corresponding efforts to territorialize Peruvian agricultural products by tracing the spatial dynamics of quinoa's trajectory from highland dietary staple to coveted national food. Efforts to codify Peru's national cuisine have involved mapping ingredients and dishes onto specific regions while dramatically reshaping agricultural production geographies and culinary topographies. Because of quinoa's success as a high-value export crop, the Peruvian altiplano is no longer perceived as a landscape useful exclusively for livestock pasture and mining. Instead, it is imagined as agriculturally productive: the country's quinoa heartland. At the same time, quinoa's trajectory illuminates spatial contradictions in the gastronomic boom's purported objectives and its tangible effects. The revalorization of quinoa led to a geographical expansion of its production outside the high Andes, undermining the spatially bound concepts of authenticity promoted by gastronomic leaders in Peru. Broadly, efforts to commercialize marginalized food products and their corresponding regions can at once reconfigure territorial discourses in important ways, reinforce long-standing geographical inequalities, and generate contestations of the geographic imaginaries of food and nation.

Keywords: Peru; gastronomy; territory; quinoa; food; nationalism; agriculture

Resumen

Este artículo explora la política espacial de la revolución gastronómica de Perú y los esfuerzos correspondientes para territorializar los productos agrícolas peruanos. Rastrea la dinámica espacial de la trayectoria de la quinua desde el alimento básico de las tierras altas hasta el codiciado alimento nacional. Los esfuerzos para codificar la cocina nacional de Perú han involucrado el mapeo de ingredientes y platos típicos, al tiempo que remodelaron dramáticamente las geografías de producción agrícola y las topografías culinarias. Debido al éxito de la quinua como cultivo de exportación de alto valor, el altiplano peruano ya no se percibe exclusivamente como un paisaje pastoral y minera. En cambio, se imagina como agrícolamente productivo: el centro de la producción de la quinua. Al mismo tiempo, la trayectoria de la quinua ilumina las contradicciones espaciales entre los supuestos objetivos del boom gastronómico y sus efectos tangibles. La revalorización de la quinua condujo a una expansión geográfica de la producción de quinua fuera de los altos Andes, socavando el concepto espacial de la autenticidad promovido por los líderes gastronómicos en Perú. En términos generales, el artículo sugiere que los esfuerzos para comercializar productos alimenticios marginados y sus regiones correspondientes pueden reconfigurar los discursos

territoriales de manera importante, reforzar las desigualdades geográficas y generar controversias sobre los imaginarios geográficos de la comida y la nación.

Palabras clave: Perú; gastronomía; territorio; quinua; alimento; nacionalismo; agricultura

In 2011, the Casa de la Gastronomía Peruana opened less than a block from Lima's Plaza Mayor, which boasts the national cathedral along and national and municipal government palaces. An offshoot of the Ministry of Culture's failed effort to claim UNESCO World Heritage Status for Peruvian food, the museum offers Limeños and foreign tourists the official state-sanctioned narrative about what Peruvian food is and how it came to be.¹

Visitors are guided through an assortment of visual displays, short films, dioramas, and maps presenting Peru's culinary grandeur. The first map a visitor encounters presents the nation of Peru divided into its twenty-five constituent political departments, color-coded into coastal, Andean, and Amazonian regions, the trifecta that has long defined the imagined geography of Peru (Figure 1). Here, though, that trifecta, which has historically classified the country's social and ecological composition, is retooled to reflect the country's culinary offerings. Each department's polygon contains photographs of the main agricultural commodities it produces: Arequipa, for instance, contains a photo of the famed *rocoto* peppers along with crayfish (*camarón de río*). The neighboring department of Ica, hub of pisco production, features a bunch of purple grapes. The map envisions Peru as a pantry, or *despensa*, of ingredients that collectively form the basis of the increasingly codified and world-renowned Peruvian food. Each of these "natural resources," as the map terms them, originates in a particular region of the country but is ultimately *Peruvian*.² Adjacent to the natural resources map lies the "gastrographic" map (Figure 2), which features a similar template, but instead of mapping agricultural products, it links traditional dishes (*platos típicos*). The dishes are not connected directly to departments like the commodities in the natural resources map but are located more haphazardly in relation to the color-coded coast, Andes, or Amazon. An image of *cuy chactado*, a roasted guinea-pig dish generally associated with the Cusco region, is found on the brown southern highlands, and a photo of *chapo*, a drink of banana and milk, is amid the area indicating Amazonia.

After viewing these maps, signs direct visitors to the only room dedicated to a single Peruvian product: quinoa. Quinoa's central place in the museum underscores the food's centrality to gastronomic revolution rhetoric and signals the potential of other undiscovered Peruvian foods.³ Quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa* Willd.) is a grain crop native to the Andes that has long been a staple for Peruvians based in or descending from the Andes. As the exhibit makes clear, it serves as a marker of in-group identity for rural populations in the Andean altiplano, much like chewing coca leaves or drinking chicha, while playing a central role in highland agriculture systems.⁴ The flip side of quinoa's status as a marker of highland identity is its stigmatization: Peru's cultural elites have long denigrated quinoa as "Indian food," and its production and consumption have been considered symbolic markers of rural poverty and indigeneity.⁵ In recent decades,

¹ See Matta (2016) for an in-depth exploration of the politics animating the Peruvian government's pursuit of World Heritage Status for Peruvian food.

² Following Wenzel (2019), I problematize the term *natural resources*, which constructs nature as always-already available for human use generally and profit making specifically.

³ See McDonnell (2019) and García (2020) for analyses of the ways tropes of loss and discovery and settler colonialism figure into the construction of contemporary Peruvian cuisine.

⁴ See Allen (2002) and Weismantel (2001), respectively, on the roles of chewing coca leaves and drinking chicha in identity construction in the Andes.

⁵ See Weismantel (2001) and Orlove (1998) for discussion of the complex symbolism around food and race in the Andes.



Figure 1. Map of Peru's Culinary "Natural Resources" in La Casa de la Gastronomía Peruana, Lima. Photo by the author.

however, quinoa has transformed into a globally recognized "superfood" coveted by wealthy, health-conscious eaters in the Global North. It is featured prominently in Lima's upscale restaurants, which now attract worldwide attention as part of Peru's so-called gastronomic revolution. Quinoa became an object of national pride and a symbol of national progress, and its export provided an economic boon. The museum's quinoa exhibit, cosponsored by the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Health, elaborates on quinoa's role in various pre-Hispanic Andean societies, its dietary attributes, and the diverse ways it can be prepared. The exhibit's discussion of quinoa's origins oscillates between its connection to the altiplano and its growing status as a national food: quinoa may originate in the altiplano, but at its core, it is "Peruvian." Notably, none of the described preparations is a typical Andean dish, but instead all are adaptations of European dishes, like quinoa risotto and quinoa salads. Quinoa may hail from the



Figure 2. Mapa Gastrográfico in La Casa de la Gastronomía Peruana, Lima. Photo by the author.

highlands, as the room’s maps and descriptions make clear, but it is in Lima where it is transformed into a gastronomic delicacy.⁶

As diverse foodstuffs are incorporated into the increasingly codified national cuisine in Peru, they are, in turn, territorialized at the national scale—that is, packaged for sale to Peruvians and non-Peruvians alike as “Peruvian.” The Casa de la Gastronomía’s maps, alongside quinoa’s prominence in the museum, offer a window onto the reappraisal and reimagination of national territory that is taking place in tandem with the “revalorization”

⁶ See García (2021) and McDonnell (2019) on the racial and class dynamics of this transformation.

of specific foods that together form the core objective of Peru's gastronomic revolution. The museum's maps showcase the cartographic gaze of the state as reconfigured for the age of neoliberal multiculturalism (see Hale 2002). Instead of minerals, timber, and traditional export crops like coffee and cacao, maps make visible "resources" that were long invisible to capital but are finding new (economic) value as specialty products and key components of an emerging Peruvian cuisine. Food culture represents the most conspicuous manifestation of a wholesale reimagining of the high Andes as a land of latent natural and cultural rich riches, awaiting the proper entrepreneurial spirit to unlock them (Hirsch 2022). I contend that the gastronomic revolution is a capitalist project and therefore a spatial one: the gastro-political complex creates value in part by reimagining and renarrating space. When food traditions are reconfigured as "natural" and "cultural" resources, the regions these products originate from and their location in the national imaginary are also reenvisioned and reappraised. Yet this vision presented in the Casa de la Gastronomía—one in which the ingredients are singularly Peruvian—does not go uncontested. As more ingredients produced and consumed by indigenous populations gain global reputations and increase in economic value accordingly, conflicts emerge over the scale at which these culinary resources should be claimed and their origin stories told.

The social construction of Peru's national geography is inextricably tied to capitalist expansion and national identity across historical conjunctures (Puento and Lerner 2022; Puento 2023). Cartographic pursuits have long been deeply entwined with economic ones: documenting flora, fauna, minerals, and human labor provided the foundations for expanding empire and capitalism in Peru and beyond (Schiebinger 2004). The postcolonial construction of Peru's tripartite geography developed alongside and within early social and environmental inventories of the region and in the context of major capitalist expansions (Zimmerer 2011; Puento and Lerner 2022). But mapping is not just about documenting space—it is a way of constructing space in the first place (Lefebvre 1974). These cartographic projects rippled far beyond business ventures, reshaping the very environments they sought to describe while influencing emergent imagined geographies, racial identities, and projects of elite control (Orlove 1993). In Peru, the schema of coast, Andes, and Amazon persists to this day as both shorthand for the country's terrain and spatialized racial hierarchy, wherein regions are read as having ecological and racial characteristics (Greene 2007). While the creation and implications of this tripartite division of people and territory have been analyzed at length for good reason, the ways capitalist expansion and the formation of Peru's regional identities mutually reinforce each other have been more subtle in the literature (Puento and Lerner 2022).

This article explores a new era in the broader relationship between space and capital in Peru generated by Peru's gastronomic revolution. Peru's "gastro-political complex" (García 2021) seeks to create economic value from existing culinary forms and transform ingredients (e.g., crops, spices, meats) produced by or connected to marginalized populations into culinary delicacies. The reimagining of national territory as a *despensa* of "undervalued" comestibles awaiting revalorization and territorialization at the national scale is central to this project. Poverty foods consumed by specific marginalized populations are increasingly reimagined as "Peruvian foods." The gastronomic boom is not the first: earlier economic booms have reshaped imaginaries of space and capital in Peru—the colonial-era mining booms, nineteenth-century guano booms, and the anchovy boom influenced conceptions of Peru and its geography (Burner 2018; Porcelli 2022). The gastronomic boom, though, is the latest major shift in geographical imaginaries in Peru that, like earlier examples, produces new ideas about and tensions surrounding national territory and space.

To explore the ways the gastronomic revolution is reshaping geographical imaginaries, I focus on one particular revalorized food, quinoa, and one particular region, the altiplano, which has historically dominated quinoa production in Peru. The quinoa boom and bust

offer an analytical entry point to interrogate the spatial contradictions of capital as they play out in the commodification of native foodstuffs and the larger reappraisal of regional geographies. Quinoa's boom-bust trajectory reveals how the effort to remake quinoa as a national product led to a reimagining of Puno's value to the nation while also igniting conflict over who has the rights to claim quinoa and the proper scale at which the grain should be produced. At the core of this tension lies a struggle over who ought to benefit from the commercialization of marginalized foods. Tracing the expansion and subsequent contraction of quinoa's production space in Peru reveals a key tension in efforts to commodify traditional foods as rural development—that of directing the benefits of commercialization to the small-scale farmers who have long produced the grain and the imperatives of capital to create economies of scale.

This article draws on eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Puno, Peru, with actors involved in the region's quinoa industry, along with intermittent visits to Lima to investigate the city's gastronomic scene. I conducted interviews with quinoa farmers, buyers, development technicians, agronomists, state officials, chefs, and other culinary entrepreneurs in Puno and Lima. I also carried out discursive analyses of culinary documents (e.g., menus, promotional materials) and extensive participant observation during different phases of quinoa production, purchasing, and meetings of Puno-based quinoa entities and organizations. This research took place between 2013 and 2018 and thus includes the peak of the boom period as well as the dramatic bust and its aftermath.

Gastro-capitalism in Peru

The construction and promotion of a national cuisine in Peru are part of a broader nationalist project that has made food central to the nation's economic development agenda (García 2013). The gastronomic revolution—an effort to transform local culinary traditions and native ingredients into lucrative business opportunities—is expanding capital accumulation into new realms. As capital necessarily exhausts natural and labor resources, it must seek new spaces of extraction and accumulation, that is, new frontiers (Moore 2011; Harvey 2001). Capitalist frontiers have come to be found at increasingly minute scales, as with the commodification of the genomic realm, while intellectual property rights are expanding to include collective cultural traditions (Sunder Rajan 2006; Coombe and Aylwin 2011; Hayden 2003). In the Andes in particular, the past decade has seen a dramatic expansion of commodifiable forms (Hirsch 2022).

Peasant crops—those deeply embedded in local foodways and circulating primarily within household economies and local markets—represent one of the new accumulation frontiers. Sometimes called poverty foods, these products often provide essential sustenance for people living at the margins of a society where procuring a decent meal is a daily challenge (Garth 2019). With the pursuit of novelty and authenticity increasingly driving high-end cosmopolitan tastes (Johnston and Baumann 2014), local staples long shunned in Lima's elite spaces and unknown to consumers outside Peru have become sources of significant potential profit. The “revalorization” of “undervalued” foodstuffs like quinoa typifies a larger reimagining of culture itself in Peru specifically, and Latin America more generally, wherein culture is no longer simply a set of beliefs and practices but a set of forms, artifacts, and symbols with the potential for commercialization.

While twenty-first-century Peru is an especially lively site for examining the revalorization of marginalized foods as they relate to culinary nationalism and spatial imaginaries, related dynamics are transpiring in diverse contexts across the world. Increasingly, wealthy Northern consumers seek out food “with a story behind it” (Guthman 2020), a trend that makes marginalized foods potentially lucrative sites for

investment (Finnis 2012; Markowitz 2012). Entrepreneurs see particular local crops as potentially valuable export crops, a dynamic fomented by the rise of the folk category of the “superfood” (McDonell and Wilk 2020). Recent examples that have undergone this transformation besides quinoa include teff from Ethiopia and fonio from West Africa.

Neoliberal multiculturalism and the commodification of culture lie at the heart of Peru’s gastronomic revolution. Neoliberal multiculturalism—Charles Hale’s term describing the ways Latin American states increasingly differentiate “good” expressions of cultural difference from “radical” ones—is ultimately about opening up new areas to capital accumulation (“culture”) while protecting other frontiers from local resistance (e.g., natural resources) (Hale 2002). The Peruvian state punishes expressions of cultural difference or sovereignty efforts that threaten capital, evidenced by frequent clashes around water contamination and mining in indigenous territories (Cadena 2010; Bebbington 2009; F. Li 2015; McDonell 2014). At the same time, state and private investors are funding profitable expressions of difference (e.g., traditional dances, food, music) with the aim of attracting tourism and building a national brand (Cánepa 2013). Peasant crops increasingly represent a model of these lucrative expressions of culture.

Critical analyses of Peru’s gastronomic revolution have explored the phenomenon as a social project that seeks to reconstitute the nation through food. A number of scholars frame the gastronomic revolution as a form of performative nationalism, one that foregrounds a limited and elitist vision of the nation (Matta 2014, 2017; García 2021, 2023). Scholars emphasize contradictions in the discourse of inclusion espoused by the gastro-political complex and the new practices of exclusion the gastronomic boom has set in motion (Cox Hall 2020; García 2021). María Elena García (2021) argues that the much-repeated promise of promoters of the gastronomic revolution to unite a fragmented nation elides a dark side: marginalization and violence against indigenous and nonhuman bodies. In this vein, critical scholarship has suggested that the conspicuous and hegemonic discourse of inclusion obscures an elite project based on long-standing dynamics of the appropriation of indigenous traditions, culinary and otherwise (Irons 2022; Alcalde 2009; McDonell 2019). In fact, Grey and Newman (2018) suggest that gastronomic multiculturalism in this context is actually better understood as culinary colonialism.

I join a growing number of scholars who contend that the gastronomic revolution is by and large a capitalist project (López-Canales 2019; García 2021; Grey and Newman 2018; Seligmann 2022). This article extends this conversation by centering spatial dynamics. I contend that the gastronomic revolution is a capitalist project and therefore a spatial project: the gastro-political complex creates value in part by reimagining space and the way capital can be extracted from it.⁷ Despite a growing scholarly conversation around the gastronomic revolution’s failed promises and lively debates around its obscurantist politics, questions of space so far remain latent. Elsewhere, I have suggested that the gastronomic revolution reinforces power imbalances between capital and periphery, as the capital city of Lima is made into a gastronomic capital while the provinces are framed as places for speculation and discovery of raw materials.

Although some scholars gesture toward this asymmetry, existing studies have done little in the way of decentering Lima or specifying the spatial dynamics at work. Rather than looking at the phenomena writ large, focusing on a particular region outside Lima and a particular foodstuff helps us track more carefully the spatial dynamics and tensions at play. This article builds from existing scholarship on Peru’s gastronomic revolution to unpack how this process plays out in a marginal region of the country, one that is distant geographically, socially, and economically from Lima. By focusing on the intersecting capitalist and spatial dynamics that constitute a specific food in a specific region, we can better see how the construction of value in the gastronomic revolution

⁷ For a discussion of the spatial aspects of capitalism, see Massey (1984).

relies on reimagining and remaking regional and national geographies. I follow Eric Hirsch's (2020) claim that neoliberal national branding projects in Peru are not always accepted at face value and that some actors have complex relationships to these initiatives characterized by capitulation but also resistance and retooling (Hirsch 2020). Ethnographic specificity helps tease out dynamics of contestation less visible in studies that center Lima-based actors and conceptualize the gastronomic revolution as a single cohesive project.

Creating a national cuisine always involves complex relationships with regional cuisines. Appadurai (1988) notes that the creation of Indian cuisine privileged some regional culinary traditions over others but also generated more self-conscious ideas about regional traditions. In Western Europe, efforts to develop national culinary identities and build senses of regional specificity have a long history. The codification of French food took place in the nineteenth century, a process that involved circumscribing "Frenchness" while developing reputations for specific products (e.g., Champagne) and promoting tourism around local products (Guy 2003). These intersections of marginalized foods, culinary nationalism, and geographical imaginaries are exaggerated in Peru because of the centrality of spatial discourses to the larger culinary revalorization project.

Gastronomic revolution as a spatial project

When Diego Muñoz was appointed head chef of Astrid y Gastón in 2014, he launched an ambitious new tasting menu. At US\$240 per person, the twenty-six-course sequence was the most expensive meal in Peru: a highly coveted experience for culinary tourists that also served as a status marker for Peru's wealthiest residents. The menu was organized into five "acts," based on a trip (*viaje*) through the imagined geography of the nation: the coast, the desert, the Andes, the Amazon, and finally, the altiplano. Instead of featuring upscale versions of regional *platos típicos*, the menu utilized ingredients associated with these regions to evoke "the feeling" of the five regions (Jiménez 2014). Muñoz suggested that the menu was "about looking for the pure, the native—looking for oneself"; he sought to portray the basic essence of these different regions (Jiménez 2014). The altiplano section of the menu, for instance, features stylized dishes with quinoa (and quinoa leaves), *kañiwa*, along with other native altiplano crops. Astrid y Gastón's main competitor, Central, has a strikingly similar menu. Central's head chef, Virgilio Martínez, names dishes on the seventeen-course tasting menu for the geographic area or altitudinal range he intends the dish to embody. For instance, a dish of edible clay is called Dry Andes, Coastal Proximity is octopus in chili broth, and Altiplano and Lakes features lamb with wild mustard and quinoa.

Peru's gastronomic revolution is an explicitly spatial project. Stories of space and territory are central to the way the gastro-political leaders make value in Peru, as the menus of both restaurants underscore. The menus reinforce the same spatialized vision depicted in the La Casa de la Gastronomía Peruana's natural resources map. Products hail from specific regions, and they derive their authenticity in part from their symbolic connection to particular places. Quinoa embodies the altiplano, and "authentic" quinoa is thus inextricably linked to this area. The territorialized origin stories are central to revalorization narratives of quinoa and other ingredients making their way into Lima's elite culinary scene.

The dominant spatial narrative of Peruvian cuisine emphasizes incorporating ingredients from the entirety of Peru, a vision that is often celebrated as inclusive and multicultural. Yet this hegemonic framing obscures the centralist dynamics of Peru's national cuisine. "The truth is that there are too many restaurants in Lima," Ernesto

explained to me as we chatted over a cup of espresso one afternoon in his restaurant that overlooked Puno's Plaza de Armas.⁸ For the past decade, Ernesto had run what was widely known as the city of Puno's best restaurant: the one tourist guides and hotel concierges recommended their guests try, where well-to-do Puneños made reservations on special occasions. Menu prices were high for Puno but affordable compared to restaurants in Lima or Cusco and downright cheap for most foreign tourists. His comment on the overabundance of restaurants in Peru's capital city fits within Ernesto's larger story about his own professional goals and the way he sees Puno within the country's larger gastronomic revolution. For Ernesto, building a reputation for his restaurant was about building a reputation for Puno as a culinary destination in its own right. This was an effort to seek validation and challenge the idea that one could eat well only in Lima, Arequipa, and Cusco: "Lima is obviously the starting point [for gastronomy in Peru] as it's said to be the gastronomic capital of America. But people now expect a lot from the provinces and well. They have a lot to try in Arequipa, a lot to try in Cusco, so it's to be expected that it will be the same for Puno." As head chef, owner, and manager, Ernesto had worked tirelessly over the previous decade to create a menu and restaurant experience that met the growing culinary expectations of domestic and foreign tourists who visited Puno while also remaining relevant and "respectful" in the eyes of Puneños.

Ernesto's vision of his work at once fits in the mainstream gastro-political complex's efforts to codify and commodify Peruvian food while also challenging this project's centralist tendencies. Ernesto wanted to push back against the prevailing ideas that Lima was the site of innovation and Peru's provinces were mere extractive zones that simply provided the culinary raw materials for the gastronomic boom.⁹ Instead, he hoped to show that places like Puno could be sites of innovation in their own right: "The gastronomic boom has encouraged us to do more creative things with our menu—to try to reach the level of restaurants in Lima. I know that Central, which is one of the best restaurants in the world right now, has a research center where they collect products from across Peru to feature. And that made us think, well, if they're coming to discover products that we always had, *why aren't we doing that too?*"

Ernesto suggests that it should be the responsibility of local chefs to exalt and reinterpret local ingredients and dishes rather than the exclusive purview of Lima's celebrity chefs. His contention that it should be local chefs reimagining local ingredients fits in an increasingly dominant development model in Peru that positions local actors in the Andean highlands as potential entrepreneurs who, with proper training, can transform latent natural and cultural riches not wealth. Eric Hirsch (2022, 7) suggests that this emergent development model in the Andes centers what he calls extractive care, "the nurturing of marginalized bodies, livelihoods, ecosystems, terrains, and worlds in a way that ultimately primes them for extractive capitalism by transforming them into resources." Ernesto positioned himself, a native to Puno, as a proper subject for reimagining Puno's marginalized ingredients as high-end dishes. He in turn saw Limeño chefs as inappropriate actors for this work, a conviction that showcases the kinds of spatial and territorial frictions Peru's gastronomic boom has generated. Although the gastro-political complex was dominated by elite Limeños and Lima-based institutions that arguably reproduced existing status hierarchies, actors like Ernesto challenged this dynamic.

As Ernesto's position indicates, Puno was not considered a gastronomic destination in its own right, and instead, the region was framed as a set of resources of Lima's chefs to experiment with. Puno was a source of natural (culinary) resources, of which

⁸ I use pseudonyms when referring to people who are not widely known public figures and who did not explicitly give me permission to use their real name.

⁹ This dynamic is well documented by works by López-Canales (2019), García (2021), and McDonell (2019).

quinoa was the most prominent. The gastronomic revolution's reimagining of the altiplano as the quinoa heartland at once generated a new and hopeful vision of agriculture in the region while reinforcing long-standing ideas about race, culture, and geography in Peru.

Reimagining the altiplano's potential

Puno is the counterhistory of Peru. The most Indian department. The other face of our Limeñized country. It's the grand challenge of the Republic of Peru. A frontier. No other department in its history has had the possibilities to break this longstanding pattern of the sierra's abandonment and deterioration. And it never could. We haven't only abandoned the highlands, we've created an image of a backyard, a burden, an obstacle to Peru's development. Puno is like a watchtower towards the heart of South America.

—José Luis Renique, "Puno es la otra cara de la historia limeñizada de nuestro país," *La República*, 2004

The altiplano has long occupied a special position within Peru's colonial and postcolonial national imaginary. The Puno department encapsulates almost the entirety of the portion of the Andean altiplano that lies within Peru's borders.¹⁰ The historian José Luis Renique underscores how within Peru's spatialized racial imaginary, the region is caricatured as a bastion of poverty inhabited by stubborn people who resist "progress." Puno symbolizes the "Indian problem" that has defined national conversations about race, modernity and national identity since Peru's inception (Mariátegui 1929). The region's symbolic position is notably distinct from Cusco, the highland department renowned as the capital of the Inca Empire and home to the country's most important tourist attraction, Machu Picchu. Cusco is framed as rich in the lucrative kind of cultural difference—the kind that attracts millions of tourists to Peru each year (Méndez 1996). Meanwhile, Puno has long been portrayed as the site of a different kind of cultural difference, one that is more problematic for the nation than profitable.

This perception endures among many Limeño elites into the present, something I encountered as a white North American through frequent warnings to "be careful" while in Puno. While I was at the Peruvian consulate in Chicago finalizing a research visa in 2016, the consulate employee casually asked where I would be spending time in Peru. Upon learning that I would spend a year in Puno, he began uncontrollably laughing and then turned quite stern, telling me to be careful and watch out for the "unpredictable" locals. Months later, during one of my visits to the capital city, a prominent figure in gastronomic journalism told me that I must try the *kankacho* (a lamb stew) of Ayaviri (a town within the Puno region known for this dish) and without pause went on to warn me to be cautious while doing so. He suggested that the "very strange, very distinct" ("muy raras, muy distintas") people of the region could not be trusted and then shared a convoluted story of a time he felt his life had been threatened while traveling in Puno. In January 2023, and just days after the massacre of seventeen protesters in Puno department by state police, de facto president Dina Boluarte declared, "Puno no es el Perú," a statement that drew ire from Puno politicians who interpreted it through a long history of antagonistic relations with Lima's political apparatus and a prevailing idea of Puno as not quite part of "Peru."¹¹

¹⁰ This is despite the fact that some low-altitude jungle regions lie within the contours of Puno, and geologically speaking, a small part of the Cusco and Arequipa departments are in the altiplano.

¹¹ See Renique (2004) on the long-standing antagonisms between Puno's politicians and social movements with Lima's political apparatus.

Since the colonial era, the altiplano has been economically defined as a mining region. A hub of mining investment and mineral extraction, mining continues to be a major economic activity in the region. Under Spanish colonial rule, the region was known for the lucrative Laykakota silver mine. Since then, a number of large mines owned by foreign capital, large informal mining operations like La Rinconada, and small informal ones have been developed. The actual minerals of interest have shifted over time, with long-dominant interests in silver and gold recently surpassed by interest in newly discovered lithium deposits. To this day, mining remains both a major source of local employment and a cause of social conflicts in the region (Zevallos Yana 2020; Paredes Bermejo and Maquera Maquera 2016; McDonell 2014). Despite vast mineral wealth, the Puno department has exceedingly high rates of poverty. In 2023, Puno had the highest poverty rate (43 percent) of all departments (Instituto Peruano de Economía 2023).

Beyond mining, the altiplano is considered a pastoral landscape. The region's agricultural systems have been seen as valuable primarily for livestock production rather than crops. The hacienda system in the altiplano was dominated by wool-production operations, which expanded drastically throughout Puno in the early twentieth century as the export of alpaca fiber became an increasingly lucrative venture for intermediaries and wool processors (Slater 1989; Orlove 1977; Jacobsen 1993). Extreme power asymmetries left by colonial legacies and reinforced by the hacienda system met considerable resistance from peasant movements, marked by frequent uprisings across the twentieth century (Renique 2004). Peru's agrarian reform, which began in 1969, sought to upend the landlord-tenant systems structuring much rural land tenure in the altiplano, and in Puno, led to the creation of massive cooperatives focused on sheep, and to a lesser extent alpaca and cattle. The degree to which the cooperative model restructured power relations for the better in the region is debated as the cooperatives were dismantled in the 1980s in large part because of pervasive internal corruption (Mayer 2009; Paredes Mamani and Escobar-Mamani 2018). After the agrarian revolution, the growing agricultural development apparatus in the region sought to continue expanding cattle herds for dairying along with sheep and alpaca.

Despite being defined as a region for livestock and mining, Puno has incredibly lively crop production. Puno is dominated by peasant farming, defined here as small-scale farms that supply goods for the family unit using primarily family labor, while selling surplus to markets. Typically, these are highly diversified and risk-averse household economies, with small plots of a number of crops in a carefully managed rotation, multiple varieties of livestock, supplemented by temporary informal employment for cash income.¹² The region's high altitude (3,500–5000 meters above sea level) generates a climate of extremes, with massive diurnal temperature fluctuations, frequent hailstorms, frosts, and a long dry season with exceedingly rare rainfall. Most nonnative crops fail here, and even hardy crops like barley do not reach full maturity in the altiplano climes. Altiplano societies have practiced agriculture for millennia, resulting in a highly specialized production system and carefully adapted crop varieties that work in these ecological conditions. Native grains like quinoa and the closely related *kañiwa* are high-protein foodstuffs that thrive in the high-altitude climate. A handful of tuber crops, including *ulluco* and *oca*, along with native potatoes (only special varieties of potatoes can survive in the altiplano) are also cultivated. Maintaining soil fertility often entails integrating a nitrogen-fixing crop like *tarwi* (a local lupine) into the production systems and strategically rotating fields to use as animal pasture. High-salinity soils and lack of oxygen further shape the region's agricultural production systems and require complex crop rotations.

¹² Common employment situations include sporadic motorcycle taxi driving, temporary gigs in the city, or having one family member work in a mine.

The kind of agricultural production possible in the altiplano is, in short, unproductive in a logic of capital. Diverse, small-scale agriculture is frequently framed as pathological and premodern, a view that has justified “improvement” regimes like the Green Revolution (Li 2007). Compared to livestock, which various agricultural development practitioners told me was like having “money in the bank,” Andean cropping systems do not easily translate into a capitalist form of wealth accumulation. Scholars have debated the degree to which highland peasants truly operate “outside” capitalist logics or whether this form of economic activity is actually a highly rational response to a particular position in relation to capitalism (Figuroa 1984; Cotlear 1989; Mayer and Glave 1999). Still others argue that peasant logics in the altiplano are not beyond or even adjacent to capitalism, but that capitalism developed in an idiosyncratic and “stunted” way in the altiplano as a result of the persistence of colonial power asymmetries (Jacobsen 1993). Although research has shown how smallholder farmers often symbolically and materially separate subsistence crops that are part of local meaning systems from market crops (Dove 2011), the transformation of peasant crops into market crops is an increasingly common dynamic, fueled here by Peru’s gastronomic revolution.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, development projects in the region have focused primarily on making farming profitable. Attempts to capitalize altiplano agriculture include introducing new technologies while training farmers in profit-oriented production strategies and entrepreneurial logics.¹³ Numerous projects have centered on livestock “improvement” and adding value to milk products, but starting in the 1980s, a concerted effort emerged to commercialize specific crops, especially quinoa. The Centro Internacional de Recursos Naturales y el Medio Ambiente (known as CIRNMA), a Puno-based nongovernmental organization working in agricultural development, was a pioneer in organizing farmers around commercial quinoa production in the 1990s. At the time, the center’s work was largely funded by external grants, and it was an uphill battle to convince farmers that it was worth their time to invest in commercial quinoa production when prices were so low. In 2014, the organization’s director described their defining challenge defining their work in the 1990s plainly: “The problem was demand. No one wanted to buy or eat quinoa at the time.” Native altiplano crops like quinoa were considered unremarkable and even disagreeable outside the region. Their consumption was largely stigmatized among Peru’s urban middle class and upper classes, a dynamic that would change drastically when quinoa captured the attention for wealthy eaters outside Peru in the 2010s.

The boom: Quinoa as global commodity and *producto bandera*

The problem of a lack of demand for quinoa would change dramatically in the early 2000s as health-conscious foreign consumers grew interested in the grain.¹⁴ Demand for quinoa in the United States and Europe skyrocketed at that time, such that between 2005 and 2014, exports increased from less than one thousand tons to thirty-six thousand tons as prices surged by almost 700 percent. Quinoa was increasingly sought after far from the altiplano; it had joined a class of foods that cosmopolitan eaters increasingly were willing to pay a premium for: “superfoods.” While some foreign consumers knew that quinoa originated in the Andes, and quinoa product packaging occasionally drew on a connection to the Inca Empire, many of the new eaters were ignorant of quinoa’s origins, and instead ate the grain for its specific nutritional attributes or more general “health halo.”

¹³ See Brush and Guillet (1985) on potato improvement schemes in the 1980s.

¹⁴ The reasons for this shift are complex and include the work of Peruvian entrepreneurs and associations actively promoting quinoa.

As a direct result of this growing demand, quinoa production was expanding beyond South America. While efforts to introduce quinoa production outside the Andes had been underway at an experimental level for decades, this work took on new vigor with the demand surge and the United Nations' declaration of 2013 as the International Year of Quinoa. Among the International Year of Quinoa's explicit goals was the expansion of quinoa consumption and production across the globe (Food and Agriculture Organization 2013; McDonell 2015). While actors who had been working to commercialize quinoa for decades appreciated the recognition and investment brought by the United Nations, the declaration also contributed to a much more competitive global quinoa market where the Andean countries no longer completely monopolized commercial quinoa production (Alandia et al. 2020). By 2014, seventy-five countries were producing quinoa, many at a commercial level (Bazile, Jacobsen, and Verniau 2016). Quinoa was no longer exclusively an Andean crop.

Quinoa's surging popularity with foreign consumers alongside increasing competition from new quinoa-producing countries corresponded to a sudden efflorescence of projects seeking to claim quinoa as Peruvian, a dynamic evident in government programs and product marketing alike. Around 2013, we see a push to territorialize quinoa at the national level—that is, to link quinoa to Peru in the eyes of foreign and domestic buyers and consumers. In 2013, Peru's now defunct Mistura food festival, which boasted up to four hundred thousand visitors a year, introduced a special hall in the fair called Mundo Quinoa that exclusively featured quinoa-based products and dishes. That same year, Peru's Ministry of Exterior Relations claimed quinoa as a flagship product (*producto bandera*), joining pisco and ten other Peruvian commodities marketed as such (INDECOPI 2013). Soon PromPeru, a wing of the Ministry of Exterior Commerce and Tourism, was developing an official tourism route called the Ruta de la Quinoa to capitalize on the success of quinoa abroad for tourism purposes.¹⁵ That same ministry featured quinoa in its promotional campaigns at product expos across the globe, notably in the Superfoods Peru campaign, which imagined Peru as the “land of superfoods.” Meanwhile, Lima's most elite restaurants, which cater to foreign diners and Peruvian elites and explicitly brand their food as Peruvian, were featuring quinoa prominently on their menus as a hallmark ingredient of national cuisine.¹⁶

Quinoa, long distasteful to the country's elites, was suddenly a lucrative object of national pride: a genuine *Peruvian* food. While globalization scholarship from the 1990s tended to predict that place-based identities would slowly take on less and less import, research has found precisely the opposite dynamic. Globalization leads local, regional, and national identities to take on more import (Wilk 2006; Parasecoli 2022). Indeed, it is with quinoa's success in global markets and growing interest among foreign farmers that efforts develop to claim quinoa as distinctly Peruvian.

Although most commentary has underscored the rise in quinoa exports, internal demand was growing quickly as well. Official figures show that Peru's domestic demand grew from twenty-eight thousand tons in 2000 to seventy-eight thousand tons in 2014, more than doubling per capita consumption (MINAGRI, DGESEP, and DEA 2015). Many upper-class Peruvians who previously shunned the grain were eating it with abandon.¹⁷ Eating quinoa no longer signaled rural, indigenous identity in a straightforward way.

¹⁵ This tourism route never ultimately came into being after a change in presidential administrations led to its stalling.

¹⁶ As an example, a chain of upscale lunch eateries in San Isidro called Quinoa opened in 2015, while famed white-tablecloth restaurants like Astrid y Gastón, Central, Maido, La Mar, and more were putting quinoa front and center in their offerings.

¹⁷ At the same time, many of Peru's urban poor temporarily could not afford to eat quinoa when prices spiked (McDonell 2016). For more on the complexity of changing quinoa consumption patterns in Peru, see Gamboa et al. (2020), Higuchi et al. (2022), and Rosales et al. (2020).

Quinoa consumption expanded across social classes and regions, such that variation in how, where, and the form in which one ate quinoa became vital for signaling one's class and racial identity. Quinoa transformed into a celebrated national food that helped urban Peruvians feel connected to an imagined rural past and a more authentic "Deep Peru."¹⁸ Quinoa derived its authenticity for Peruvian elites precisely from its origins in the altiplano and its production by indigenous Andeans.

Quinoa's (re)construction as a "national food" also meant its conscious reinvention as an emblem of Peruvian identity writ large. To be Peruvian was to eat quinoa, as suggested by a T-shirt for sale in downtown Lima in 2015 that read *Más peruano que la quinua*. Critically, these sorts of national foods may symbolize national identity even when they are not an everyday dietary mainstay for the general population. Richard Wilk's (2012) study of nationalism and diets in Belize, for instance, found much discrepancy between the foods people said represented Belizean food and the foods they actually ate on a daily basis. While rice and beans were constantly cited as the most important Belizean dish, hamburgers made up a much larger part of the daily diet (but were never mentioned as Belizean food). Quinoa in Peru increasingly occupied a similar role to rice and beans in Belize. Its discursive power as a symbol of the multicultural nation had to be constantly maintained through overt celebration. Wilk (2012, 26) emphasizes that constant reminders about the importance of rice and beans maintained its status as a self-consciously national dish: "Every public event or banquet that has any pretense to being cultural, in the sense of relating to local rather than global cosmopolitan values, must include at least a token scoop of rice and beans on the plate. This dish is like a flag, which must constantly be kept visible as a reminder that some values are more important than others." Quinoa was increasingly a conspicuously Peruvian food.

Quinoa became a chief symbol of the gastronomic riches that lie waiting discovery in the Andes. The grain not only offers a highly marketable story of the undervalued and "lost" Peruvian food but also is easily adaptable to European dishes. Gastón Acurio, the celebrity chef considered the leader and main public face of the gastronomic revolution, explains quinoa's versatility as key to its recent success with new consumers: "Famous chefs from around the world have shown us that this grain is not only able to adapt to diverse Peruvian dishes like ceviche, tamales, juanes, rocoto relleno, and tacu tacu, among others, but that it can be successfully work in the most exquisite dishes of other cultures too" (Acurio 2017). These dynamics together helped make quinoa a key symbol of the economic potential of Peru's "undervalued" culinary cupboard and the altiplano as a source of culinary abundance (McDonnell 2020).¹⁹

Yet as the Peruvian state, Limeño restaurateurs, and quinoa exporters sought to territorialize quinoa at the national level, the view of quinoa as Peruvian did not proceed uncontested. During the quinoa boom, few, if any, quinoa industry actors in the highlands took issue with quinoa's Peruvianization. The profits they enjoyed over those first years when the crop fetched record prices in response to international demand meant that they were generally willing to subscribe to the state's claim that quinoa belonged to all Peruvians. Yet when quinoa's price plummeted a few years later, competing claims emerged that sought to reterritorialize quinoa at a different scale.

Reclaiming quinoa as an altiplano crop

At the same time that quinoa production was expanding outside Andean countries, the production geography within Peru was shifting dramatically. With quinoa's growing price,

¹⁸ In invoking "Deep Peru," I reference Mayer's (1991) discussion of Mario Vargas Llosa's article on the Uchuraccay massacre.

¹⁹ Here, I reference Hirsch's (2022) analysis of conceptions of abundance in the Peruvian highlands.

a host of Peruvian agribusiness leaders and politicians began to see a future for quinoa as a major cash crop. In 2012, Nadine Heredia, Peru's first lady at the time, spearheaded a project incentivizing quinoa production among large-scale agricultural producers along the Peruvian coast. While these farms had been primarily producing rice at an industrial scale, quinoa's soaring price attracted their attention, and the government's offers of assistance further encouraged the adoption of a new, albeit risky, crop.

As global demand climbed, integrating quinoa into a "modern" capital-intensive production system appeared to ensure that Peru would become the global leader in quinoa exports. The altiplano's complex agriculture landscape prevented economies of scale necessary to rapidly increase national production figures. Through technical assistance, training, and seed subsidies, Heredia's Proquinua program helped develop commercial quinoa production outside the altiplano (AgroRural 2014). The initiative made clear that, for Peru's central government, quinoa's revalorization was not primarily an opportunity to provide incomes for farmers in the highlands. Instead, quinoa's popularity abroad offered economic opportunity for Peru's agribusiness sector and a chance to position Peru as the world's chief quinoa exporter.

At the same time that Peru's celebrity chefs were touting quinoa's connection to the altiplano and constructing its authenticity based on its regional identity, the grain's indelible link to the altiplano was being destabilized. In the short term, Proquinua and the larger effort to develop capital-intensive quinoa production outside the altiplano was a massive success. Peru's coastal production increased drastically between 2012 and 2014. While the highlands accounted for more than 99 percent of quinoa production before 2011 (and Puno consistently produced more than 80 percent), by 2014, producers along Peru's coast were growing 40 percent of the national total (MINAGRI, DGESEP, and DEA 2015). In just two years, Peru's coastal regions—primarily Arequipa, along with La Libertad, Lambayeque, Lima, Tacna, and Moquegua—became major quinoa-producing centers (see [Supplementary Material](#)). Not only had coastal farmers replaced other crops with quinoa, but productivity was far higher on the coast. Whereas 1,000 kilograms per hectare (kg/ha) constitutes an impressive yield in the highlands, and averages are closer to 800 kg/ha, coastal producers reported yields of 4,000–6,000 kg/ha, owing largely to access to technology and an accommodating climate that allowed two harvests per year. By late 2014, quinoa was no longer exclusively a highland crop, biophysically speaking.

The dramatic increase in coastal production resulted in a glut. National production had surged from 44,200 tons in 2012 to 114,700 tons in 2014. Even though global demand was still rising quickly, the rapid growth of quinoa production in Peru had outpaced consumer demand. Prices fell accordingly. Quinoa's farm gate price in Puno peaked in mid-2014 at US \$3.20 per kilo and by mid-2015 Puno's farmers were receiving less than a dollar per kilogram while Arequipa's farmers reported prices as low as US\$0.65 per kilo (MINAGRI, DGESEP, and DEA 2015). The expansion of quinoa production into Peru's coast was undermining the altiplano's industry.

While overproduction sent prices falling, contamination scandals began to erupt. Over the course of 2014 and 2015, the US Food and Drug Association rejected hundreds of tons of Peruvian quinoa found to contain pesticide and fungicide levels exceeding US Environmental Protection Agency limits (Ayma 2015). Highland farmers and most industry actors in Puno blamed the contaminated quinoa on coastal producers. While quinoa proved highly productive in the warm, oxygen-rich coastal environment, it was also found to be highly susceptible to the coast's plentiful insects, such that it was well known that coastal producers had to apply chemicals to salvage their yields. The persistent chemical residue on exported quinoa meant that Peruvian quinoa in particular lost value as foreign buyers' trust in the quality of the product ebbed. Peru's quinoa was selling for less than Bolivian quinoa, and many highland farmers feared that the coastal *fracaso* had ruined the stature of Peruvian quinoa for good. Peru's quinoa buyers and exporters

lamented the tarnished reputation of Peru's quinoa and the corresponding trust issue they were facing.

Altiplano farmers and other actors involved in the industry were upset about the tarnished reputation of Peruvian quinoa and more broadly the usurpation of quinoa by large-scale producers along the coast. This expansion of quinoa production into new realms led to an emerging discourse differentiating Puno's quinoa from coastal quinoa. Beginning in 2015, farmers, researchers, and buyers I spoke with began to claim quinoa produced in Puno cooked or tasted different than other quinoa, something they justified with varying explanations from soil type to the "natural" production methods. While they at times contrasted it to Bolivian quinoa, they mostly sought to differentiate it from quinoa produced in other regions of Peru. Either way, Puno's quinoa farmers and industry actors were increasingly talking about the region's quinoa as distinct from Peruvian quinoa as a larger category that included coastal production.

In 2015, a group of industry actors in Puno, including quinoa processors, producer community leaders, and development practitioners, began convening to figure out a strategy to legally differentiate their quinoa that would conceivably protect them from the reputational issues brought about by linkage to coastal producers implied with the designation of quinoa as a Peruvian product. Place-based labels like appellations of origin and collective brands have become an increasingly popular strategy to protect agricultural producers from competition and to protect agricultural production systems (Parasecoli 2017). In recent decades, this strategy, which developed in Europe for products like Champagne and Roquefort cheese, has been expanded into contexts across the Global South, offering a new strategy to protect local agricultural producers from competition from abroad and sometimes internally.²⁰

While conversations about differences between highland and coastal quinoa were rare during the boom times, the bust revealed that the commercial quinoa production in the altiplano could persist only if it confronted the increasing competition from coastal producers. Altiplano quinoa needed to be distinguished from the increasing supply of "commodity" quinoa entering global markets.²¹ Rather than collaborating with other Peruvian producers, actors in the highland industry increasingly perceived Peruvian producers outside the altiplano as competition.

A small group of relatively savvy quinoa buyers, processors, and individuals linked to various sorts of regional government entities began working to develop a collective brand that would market Puno's quinoa as authentic and natural. The idea was to allow only certified organic quinoa to be sold under the brand and to develop a highly regulated traceability system to make sure that only high-quality quinoa was being sold with the name. More broadly, the project was a confrontation to the nation's appropriation of quinoa as a national product. Quinoa was not a Peruvian product; it was an *altiplano* product.

The effort began when Puno's Mesa de la Quinoa received a small grant from a federal government program and a Swiss development agency already working in organic certification of quinoa in Puno. They hired a consultant from Lima specialized in creating collective brands in 2016. The consultant was tasked with generating a short list of marketable names for the collective brand and creating the *reglamentos* that delineated the rules of operation for the brand. Yet this process of developing a governance apparatus for a collectively managed commodity proved challenging. Members disagreed about the process by which new members should be integrated into the *marca*, the way they would

²⁰ A related case is that of mezcal and tequila, two distilled spirits produced in Mexico from the agave plant. See Bowen (2015).

²¹ Those involved in Puno's quinoa industry often referred to coastal quinoa as *quinoa commodity*.

ensure quality of the product, and the funding mechanisms, issues that ultimately became intertwined as the contamination scandals began erupting in the highlands in late 2016.

Puno's industry actors were not alone in pursuing this strategy. A handful of origin-based label projects for quinoa emerged across the Andes and beyond in the wake of the bust especially. Long a product tied to the Andes, quinoa was escaping physically and symbolically from the region as production expanded into new areas and growing demand appeared to be turning quinoa into another "placeless" commodity. Origin-based labels seemed to be the best way to keep quinoa Andean, or at least to keep substantial market share in the Andes. Bolivia, too, had been working to develop a geographic indication for Quinoa Real, and in interviews with Bolivia quinoa processors, it appears that they would be successful in legal terms, but the details of governance of the institutional arrangement were still being debated. In addition, a Cusqueño agronomist and French geographer who has also been one of key promoters of quinoa's global expansion have been attempting to spearhead a pan-Andean collective brand that would include Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Ecuador, and Chile (Chevarria Lazo and Bazile 2017). At the same time, producer groups who only recently took up quinoa production also saw collective brands as a strategy to add value to their product. A group of farmers in Peru's coastal region of Lambayeque, who only recently took up production, were launching a collective brand, Uiz Kik Peruvian Quinoa. A group of French farmers who also were new to quinoa production secured a collective brand for their quinoa, marketing it as "local" and leveraging the media coverage that portrayed the quinoa boom as harming Andean farmers. The bust brought a frenzy of efforts to territorialize quinoa at different scales, and within Puno, the primary goal was to distinguish Puno's quinoa from other Peruvian quinoa.

Puno's collective brand project has yet to be completed, more than seven years since it was initiated. There is not space to delineate the reasons for its failure here, but we can analyze the larger dynamic within the spatial contradictions of capital brought about by the gastronomic revolution. The effort to develop a collective brand was ultimately a project to reclaim quinoa as an altiplano product, to reterritorialize it. Gastronomic revolution logics imagine products produced in Peru as free for the taking, claimable as Peruvian. Yet the efforts to territorialize quinoa and reconnect it symbolically to the altiplano represent the contested nature of this discourse. Puno's industry actors were not opposed to quinoa's increasing prominence as a commodity, but they wanted benefits to accrue to Puno's farmers and industry actors.

Conclusion

The gastronomic revolution's revalorization discourse promised a new vision of agriculture in Puno and a reappraisal of the region's contribution to the nation. As new crops became coveted in Lima's booming culinary scene and some of them gained acclaim abroad, agricultural products and their corresponding production landscapes came to take on new value and meaning in the national imaginary. Puno was no longer a mining hub with ample pasture; it was the heartland of quinoa, a flagship Peruvian product. The gastronomic revolution would reconceptualize the symbolic location and value of Puno within the nation.²²

²² Another example is the Amazon, which was also seen as a nonagricultural zone, primarily valuable for timber and mineral extraction. With the gastronomic revolution, wild and foraged foods are finding new value in the elite gastronomic sphere, such that the Amazon itself is being reimagined as a storehouse of rare wild foods, valuable precisely for their inability to be cultivated. The chef Pedro Miguel Schiaffino is working on "revalorizing" Amazonian ingredients in his restaurants, and the chef Virgilio Martínez has sent research teams to the Amazon to locate new culinary resources for his restaurants.

As quinoa grew popular with foreign consumers and countries outside South America began to develop commercial quinoa production, efforts to claim quinoa as Peruvian intensified. Peru's government invested in developing capital-intensive quinoa production outside the Andean highlands while logics of economies of scale and competitive advantage further bolstered this trend. This very expansion undermined quinoa's profitability at the same time that it disconnected quinoa physically and geographically from the altiplano. This shifting production geography in Peru destabilized the connection between quinoa and the altiplano and undermined the gastro-political leaders' conceptualization of quinoa's place-based authenticity. The imagined geography of production displayed in high-end restaurant menus was being rearranged at the expense of smallholder farmers in the altiplano. Although the expansion of quinoa into large-scale farming operations along Peru's coast was likely out of the control of these chefs, the quinoa bust was ultimately an unintended consequence of the gastronomic revolution.

Actors in Puno's quinoa industry pushed back on the Peruvianization of quinoa and sought to reestablish the link between quinoa and the altiplano, differentiating their quinoa from Peruvian quinoa writ large. Even while the dominant discourse around food in Peru sees more and more ingredients as "Peruvian," the quinoa case demonstrates contestation around this narrative. These tensions are at their root about the question of who should benefit from Peru's culinary success.

Supplementary material. To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <https://doi.org/10.1017/lar.2023.67>.

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