

Article

Qarasiña Culinary Tradition: Conserving Quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa*) as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in *Jach'a Puni* (Andean Community), Bolivia

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Abstract: Heritage encompasses features integral to the culture of a particular society, such as traditional foods that have historical significance and continue to be part of the community's identity. These culinary traditions must be preserved to sustain cultural identity and community well-being. This study aims to document the role of *qarasiña*, along with other ancestral foods, in establishing quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa*) as a cultural keystone species in the *Jach'a Puni* community. Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews with local experts and community observations, supplemented by a comprehensive literature review. Findings reveal that in *Jach'a Puni*, all food is considered sacred. Three main types of *qarasiña* are identified: *jupha qarasiña*, *ajara qarasiña*, and *kita qarasiña*. The primary ingredients are domesticated quinoa (*jupha*) flour (*Chenopodium quinoa* var. *quinoa*) and wild quinoa (*ajara*) flour (*Chenopodium quinoa* var. *melanospermum* and *C. hircinum*). *Qarasiña* is integral to community banquets and social events. Although quinoa is celebrated globally as the “golden grain”, there is a risk that *qarasiña* may disappear and quinoa could be replaced by wheat or maize, threatening its status as a cornerstone species in the Bolivian Altiplano.

Keywords: *jupha*; *ajara*; Andean food; *kaswira*; sustain life; ancient food; ancestral knowledge



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1. Introduction

Quinoa, the golden grain of the Andes, has taken the world by storm as a superfood. It is considered that its center of origin is around Lake Titicaca [1]. Yet, amidst this global recognition, the traditional knowledge and practices of the Aymara people, who among others, domesticated quinoa in the Tiwanaku zone millennia ago, are at risk of fading. It is time to shine a light on *Qarasiña*, a time-honored Aymara dish prepared with quinoa flour, which is part of the quinoa culture, and advocate for the inclusion of the quinoa-related traditions, the quinoa Culture, in UNESCO's World Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

The cultural heritage of any society includes both tangible and intangible aspects. According to UNESCO [2], Intangible Cultural Heritage encompasses “practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.” This heritage manifests in oral traditions, expressions, social practices, rituals, and festive events. Safeguarding these elements involves measures aimed at ensuring their viability, such as identification, documentation, research, and preservation, particularly through education and revitalization efforts.

Culinary cultural heritage is an essential tradition linked to each community, often transmitted through oral expression and firsthand practice [3]. Plants play a significant role in human societies, with certain species holding cultural importance. Ethnobotanical research aims to estimate the cultural salience of plants, assessing their value within specific cultural contexts. Among these important plants, some stand out as essential to the structure and function of socio-ecological systems, known as Cultural Keystone Species (CKS) [4]. Defined by Garibaldi and Turner [5], these species are of exceptional significance to a culture or people. They can be identified by their prevalence in language, cultural practices (e.g., ceremonies), traditions, diets, medicines, histories, and material culture. Cultural Keystone Species are key features of a community's identity and influence social systems and culture [6]. The concept of cultural keystone species builds on previous attempts to identify species of cultural importance—whether symbolic, utilitarian, or economic. One method for quantifying this phenomenon is an index of cultural significance based on various categories [7]. Platten and Henfrey [4] define cultural keystones by their systemic function, emphasizing their essential roles in maintaining complexity within social–ecological systems. Garibaldi and Turner [6] outline six elements for identifying a cultural keystone species: The magnitude and diversity of ways the species is used, the species' influence on language, the species' role in cultural practices (e.g., traditional practices, ceremonies), the persistence of the species' importance even as cultural identity changes over time, the irreplaceability of the species by another accessible species, and the species' role in activities outside its territory (e.g., trade).

According to the bio-cultural approach, plants and associated knowledge help define the cultural identity of each community. Identifying these species can provide insights into an ecosystem's resilience and support the survival of communities dependent on them. Garibaldi and Turner [6], Cristancho and Vining [8], and Garibaldi and Turner [5] use the term “cultural keystone species” as a metaphorical parallel to “ecological keystone species” rather than an extension of the original term described by Robert [9,10]. In both cases, what matters is not the volume or biomass but the complexity of relationships. The central position and high number of interactions in the network make a species a keystone. Taylor and Anderson [11] introduced the term “Cultural Keystone Food Groups” to characterize immigrant ethnic–cultural groups by studying markets and conducting individual interviews to explore their linkage to specific groups of foods, primarily plant-based.

Chenopods were domesticated in the Americas before European contact, notably in the Andean region of South America, Mexico, and Eastern North America [12,13]. Andean crops such as domesticated quinoa, *jupha* (*Chenopodium quinoa* Willd.) and wild quinoa or weedy quinoa *ajara* (*Chenopodium hircinum* Schrad., and *Chenopodium quinoa* var. *melanospermum* Hunz.) belong to the *Amaranthaceae* family according to the Angiosperm Phylogeny Group III (2009) [14], but formerly were part of *Chenopodiaceae*. These crops are highly nutritious [12,15,16], with over 2000 recognized ecotypes of quinoa adapted to the Andean region's diverse micro-climates [17].

Chenopodium quinoa Willd. (*Amaranthaceae*) is a Cultural Keystone species, particularly among Andean populations such as the Aymara of Bolivia, including the *Jach'a Puni* (Greater Puni) community. Its ritual preparation methods and culinary traditions are an integral part of its intangible cultural heritage according to UNESCO [2], meeting the six elements identified by Garibaldi and Turner [6].

Two significant processes threaten not only the local Aymara communities in the Bolivian Altiplano but also traditional rural communities worldwide: First, the success of quinoa, with rising prices in global markets and increased exports, has led to the expansion of agricultural land. This expansion has resulted in the destruction of natural habitats and overexploitation of resources [18,19]. Second, the survival of traditional ways of life, culture, and agricultural practices is at risk due to the growing migration of youths to large cities. This migration results in a loss of direct contact with traditions, the native language, and natural ecosystems. Traditional agricultural systems are rapidly shrinking, falling victim to modernization and unsustainable technological and economic changes [20]. Consequently,

traditional techniques for sustainable management in Andean agroecosystems are no longer being transmitted, leading to a loss of valuable expertise. Urgent action is needed to address this issue, including the valorization of traditional communities as key players in the conservation of genetic resources for agriculture and food. This is addressed by the Nagoya Protocol of the United Nations, but its results have been neither evident nor consistent [21,22]. Jacobsen [18] suggests that development should be redirected to ensure both a high-value food source like quinoa for the Bolivian population and a sustainable income resource for Andean farmers while meeting global market demands.

The *qarasiña* or *kaswira* is a special food that is not widely known across the Altiplano and is rarely documented in the literature or scientific records. It is a distinctive food prepared and consumed among the people of the Camacho province. In these areas, it is considered a food offered and consumed primarily during extraordinary events or moments. This unique quinoa flour-based food is found amongst communities dwelling along the shores of Lake Titicaca, from Phuquqata to Escoma. Therefore, *qarasiña* is characteristic of a small part of the northern zone of the Bolivian Altiplano, near Lake Titicaca. The *qarasiña* represents an important culinary tradition and intangible cultural heritage of the *Jach'a Puni* community in the Bolivian Andean highlands.

In this paper, we will specifically address the role of *qarasiña*, a unique method of processing quinoa, in establishing *Chenopodium quinoa* as a Cultural Keystone Species. *Qarasiña* represents heritage cuisine and culinary traditions. The *qarasiña*, also known as *kaswira*, refers both to the technique of preparing and consuming nutritious food and to the resulting dish. The presence of *qarasiña*, like *ququ* (food tied up), at a meeting or event signifies the level of affection the host feels for the guest. Additionally, it indicates the skill and dedication of the woman who prepared the food. It is crucial to preserve not only the recipes but also the socio-historical context of their creation, as these are intertwined with the community's memories and values. To present the impact of the acculturation process on the consumption of *Chenopodium quinoa*, we aim to provide a concise overview of the various forms and presentations of quinoa available in online markets serving Latin communities in Spain, as well as in Latin stores in the city of Murcia (Spain). This will offer a comparative framework against the traditional uses observed in *Jach'a Puni*.

The objective of this work is to document the knowledge, processes, and other aspects related to the preparation, cooking, and consumption of *qarasiña* or *kaswira*. This culinary tradition and intangible cultural heritage contribute to the recognition of *C. quinoa* as a cultural keystone species, sustaining life in the *Jach'a Puni* community.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Area

In the province of Camacho, the municipality of Escoma was established by Law 4004 on 6 February 2009, during the presidency of Evo Morales. Escoma was designated as its capital, encompassing the cantons of Escoma, Challapata Peninsula, Collasuyo, and Villa Puni, which were previously part of the municipality of Puerto Acosta.

The *Jach'a Puni*, or *Gran Puni*, community, part of the agricultural union of Villa Puni in the Eliodoro Camacho province of Bolivia, is in the department of La Paz on the shores of Lake Titicaca (Figure 1).

This community has roots in the Uru culture [23], which later became Aymarized. The families in *Jach'a Puni* speak Aymara as their native language, with some also speaking Spanish. Their economy primarily relies on agriculture, supplemented by livestock, handicrafts, and fishing [24].

Historically, the *Jach'a Puni* community was part of the *ayllu Uxchi Uru*. After restructuring, it became known as *Puni* and is officially called the community of *Gran Puni* (*Jach'a Puni* in Aymara), organized as an Agrarian Union. Article 132 of the Agrarian Reform Law of 1953 recognizes the peasant union organization "as a means of defending the rights of its members and the conservation of social conquests" (Paz-Estensoro, 1953) [25].



Figure 1. Situation of the study area. Image: Google Earth Pro 7.3, 2020.

2.2. Data Collection

The methods used in this research were primarily ethnographic, including fieldwork, observation, interviews, and bibliographical review to compare our results with other sources of evidence. To collect first-hand information, we conducted in-depth interviews with eight local experts (Table 1), complemented by observation and integration within the community, also we took photographs of plants, quinoa processing, ceremonies, and social events. Ethnobotanical fieldwork for this study was conducted between 2009 and 2015. Prior informed consent was obtained verbally before each interview, adhering to the ISE Code of Ethics [26].

Table 1. Informants. Contributions: QS, quinoa species and cultivars; QI, qarasiña ingredients; TQ, types of qarasiña; QP, qarasiña preparation; MQ, meaning of qarasiña, QB, qarasiña-related beliefs, AY, Ayllu section; SQ, social events; SS, social status; CI, cultural identity; AC, acculturation.

Code	Nickname	Gender	Age	Contributions
Informants				
1	Isa-Hua	FEMALE	80	QS-QI-TQ-QB-SQ-SS
2	Jul-Cha	FEMALE	87	QS-QI-TQ-QB-AC
3	Luc-Coc	MALE	78	QS-QI-TQ-QP-QB-AY-SQ-SS-CI
4	Mar-Yan	FEMALE	58	QS-QI-TQ-QB-AY-AC
5	Mart-Ya	FEMALE	76	QS-QI-TQ-QP-QB-SQ-SS-CI
6	Olg-Coc	FEMALE	45	QS-QI-AC
7	Luc-Lar	MALE	47	TQ-QP-MQ
8	Mar-Cha	FEMALE	s/d	QI
Informant Observer				
9	Simón Cocarico *	MALE	57	QS-QI-TQ-QP-QB-AY-SQ-SS-CI-AC

Note. * Simón Cocarico is a native of the Aymara community of *Jach'a Puni*. He joined the doctoral program at the University of Murcia's Faculty of Biology, focusing on the ethnobotany of Aymara communities, and is currently preparing his doctoral thesis in Bolivia. This dual role positions him both as an informant, drawing on the traditional knowledge passed down by his community, and as a researcher, utilizing observation and semi-structured interviews as tools, all while working exclusively in the Aymara language.

Voucher specimens of the plants were deposited in the *Herbario Nacional de Bolivia* (LPB) at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz (Bolivia).

To determine the relevance of quinoa outside Bolivia, we conducted a search of online Latino and Bolivian shops in Spain (latincor.es (accessed on 23 September 2024), tutiendalatina.es (accessed on 23 September 2024), intertropico.com (accessed on 23 September 2024), lachaine.es (accessed on 23 September 2024), BoliviaMall.com (accessed on 23 September 2024)) and compared this with dietetic supplement and organic food shops (dieteticaonline.es (accessed on 23 September 2024), dietashop.es (accessed on 23 September 2024), herbolarionavarro.es (accessed on 23 September 2024)) also in Spain. Additionally, we recorded the quinoa products available in Latino shops in Murcia, Spain, in 2020, where there were approximately 30,000 immigrants, primarily of Aymara and Quechua origin, from Bolivia and Ecuador in 2019.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Magnitude and Diversity of Ways in Which Quinoa Grains and Leaves Are Used

3.1.1. Quinoa as a Food Ingredient in the Altiplano of Bolivia

Quinoa is often referred to as the “grain of gold” or “golden grain” due to its potential to address malnutrition. Both quinoa and *kañiwa* (cañahua) (*C. pallidicaule* Aellen) provide high-quality proteins with a balanced composition of essential amino acids like casein, the protein found in milk. Additionally, they offer oil rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids and tocopherols, as well as essential minerals (such as calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, and potassium), carbohydrates, and dietary [27,28].

In the Bolivian Altiplano, the seeds of *jupha* (domesticated quinoa) and *ajara* (wild quinoa) are processed by removing the saponins, a toxic metabolite. Afterward, the seeds are roasted and ground into *aqallapu*, or quinoa flour, which is used to prepare various types of food, as outlined in Table 2. A detailed repertoire of quinoa processing methods among Bolivian Quechua communities is documented by López et al. [17].

Table 2. Forms of food preparation with *jupha* and *ajara*, in the Altiplano of Bolivia. Data: from the informants and observer (Table 1) and [29–32].

Aymara Name	Description
<i>aku</i> or <i>jak'u</i>	Quinoa seeds, roasted and ground or simply precooked quinoa flour
<i>aqallpu</i>	Quinoa flour
<i>chicha</i>	Slightly fermented quinoa drink
<i>ch'iwa kaswira</i> , <i>jank'acha</i> or <i>jank'achi</i>	Leaf fritters: <i>ch'iwa</i> are tender quinoa leaves consumed as food
<i>juchhacha</i>	Roasted quinoa grains
<i>jupha kaltu</i>	Ice-dried quinoa pancake (c. 1600 AD) or a quinoa gruel broth (presently)
<i>k'ispiña</i>	Quinoa soup
<i>k'usa</i>	Small dumpling made of <i>jupha</i> or <i>ajara</i> flour, kneaded, molded, and steamed) with its different variants
<i>la'wa</i>	Semi-ground, chewed, and fermented quinoa flour
<i>lluji't'a</i>	Quinoa flour beverage or soup
<i>muk'una</i>	Bleached leaves to chew with coca (<i>kuka</i>)
<i>phiri</i>	Steamed quinoa flour buns with filling
<i>phisara</i>	Precooked quinoa flour, moistened in warm water, with salt
<i>p'isqi</i>	Boiled quinoa in loose grains, after roasting, the appearance is like rice roasted and cooked in water
<i>qarasiña</i> or <i>kaswira</i>	Quinoa seeds cooked in water in the form of dough, with or without llama fat
<i>thurucha</i> or <i>phulacha</i>	Fritters with processed quinoa flour
<i>ullpu</i>	Semi-ground seed, kneaded with little water, molded and steamed
	Precooked flour mixed in water, a soft drink

3.1.2. Plant Species and Ethnovarieties Used to Prepare Qarasiña

Both species, *jupha* or domesticated quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa*) and *ajara* or wild quinoa (*C. quinoa* var. *melanospermum* and *C. hircinum*), belong to the *Amaranthaceae* family

(=*Chenopodiaceae*). These native species have been domesticated by Andean communities for their exceptional quality and high nutritional value [12]. The *jupha* or *juyra* or quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa*) is cultivated in the community and is the primary species used to produce *qarasiña*. In *Jach'a Puni*, several ethno-varieties of quinoa are grown, including *janq'u*, *wila*, *q'illu*, *rusaru*, *khilla*, and *k'anthi* (Figure 2). Each year, families in the community plan their quinoa cultivation based on various criteria, such as the number of family members, seed availability, community responsibilities, and the need for exchange or sale of the product [33]. A few Aymara prepare *ajara qarasiña* using wild quinoa or *ajara jupha qarasiña*. Recently, in some areas such as Humanata, *qarasiña* made from barley flour (*Hordeum vulgare*) has also been observed.



Figure 2. Ethnovarieties of *jupha*, *juyra*, or *quinua* (*Chenopodium quinoa* var. *quinoa*) grown in Villa Puni. Image: Simón Cocarico, 2009.

3.2. The Qarasiña's Influence on Aymara Language and Beliefs

3.2.1. The Worldview of the Families in *Jach'a Puni* and the Ayllu: A Framework for Understanding the Social Role of *Qarasiña*

For the *jaqi* (person) of *Jach'a Puni*, plants, animals, humans, and all other living organisms, along with the lake, the hills, the wind, and the rain, are part of the intricate fabric known as *Pacha*. In *Pacha*, everything, including humans, is interconnected and forms a single living entity. To ensure the continuity of life, every element must participate in its cultivation and nurturing. One must learn not only how to nurture but also how to be nurtured in return. Without careful and loving cultivation, production may be poor, leading to a scarcity of food. For the Andean people, the agroecosystem is seen as a living being, much like an animal, and it requires attentive care. They farm the land, raise their cattle, and offer thanks to the guardian spirits. Every step in the cultivation process, from soil preparation and planting to harvesting, is treated with respect and affection. This deep responsibility transforms farming into a celebration of life [34]. Some researchers define *jatha* or *ayllu* as a group of families connected by kinship, who speak a common language and manage one or more territories. These groups are fundamentally structured around cohesive social, economic, political, and religious relationships [35,36]. According to Kallisaya (:36) [37], the *ayllu* is: "... a life project called *Qama*. The *ayllu* system not only pertains to the economy, as it does not fragment human reality, but encompasses

all dimensions of human beings and nature, which is *Pacha* or *Pachaqama*. It is a holistic way of feeling and thinking that is incompatible with economies that produce inequality and injustice". In Aymara communities, the *ayllu* encompasses all aspects of human life, including interpersonal relationships within the family and connections with plants, animals, hills, stars, air, and everything that sustains life.

The management or administration of the *ayllu*, now known as the community, is temporarily entrusted to an authority composed of the Secretary General and other union members. This authority is responsible for enforcing collective agreements made in a *tantachawi* (meeting). These agreements aim to benefit all integrated families, as each member contributes according to their abilities and situational contexts. The *sayaña* (plot of land) is managed by the family, but it is not considered private property.

3.2.2. Meaning of *Qarasiña*

In the Uru-Aymara culture, *qarasiña* is a special food made from quinoa and wild quinoa flour. Additionally, the term "*qart'asiñani*" refers to the tradition of inviting a friend to share a meal and drink. This practice is common during extraordinary events, such as weddings. During this process, one person invites a friend to share food, and in return, the friend offers another food item. This exchange extends to drinks, which can include liquor or beer. It is a form of social interaction that involves both sharing and friendly competition in the offering and consumption of food and drink.

This custom encourages the best productions to be shared, fostering a culture of generosity and commitment to quality. According to our informants and Pinto [38], the bride's family often prepares the *qarasiña* and helps with the wedding feast in Aymara culture.

3.2.3. Ingredients and Preparation of *Qarasiña*

The main ingredients for *qarasiña* are *jupha aqallapu* (quinoa flour), *ajara aqallapu* (wild quinoa flour), *q'athawi* (lime, calcium oxide), *jayu* (salt), *uma* (water), *asiti* (oil), and *lik'i* (lard).

Jupha aqallapu (quinoa flour) is made from quinoa seeds through a process of washing, drying, venting, roasting, and grinding. Washing removes the saponins found in the episperm, which cause a bitter taste [39]. The ease of removing saponins varies among genotypes [40]. *Ajara aqallapu* or wild quinoa flour, is similarly processed from wild quinoa seeds. Unlike *jupha*, the perisperm in *ajara* is more strongly attached, making it harder to process. *Ajara* plants are not cultivated but appear spontaneously in crops or resting plots. *Q'athawi* (lime) or calcium oxide, is acquired through purchase or barter at fairs in Escoma and Puerto Acosta. The lime is dissolved in water in a container (*chatu*) giving limewater (*q'athawi uma*), which is used to knead the *aqallapu*, neutralizing the bitterness of the quinoa seeds. *Jayu*, or common salt (sodium chloride), is used during the kneading process, like its use in other foods. *Asiti*, or oil, is used in two stages. First, it is applied to the hands to prevent the *qarasiña* dough from sticking while being thinned by crushing and stretching. Second, oil is used for cooking the *qarasiña* cakes. A portion is poured into a heated pan, and the cakes are fried one by one. The oil (sunflower oil, soybean oil, or canola oil) is sourced from the Escoma fairs or local stores. *Lik'i* or lard from home-raised pigs was formerly used to fry *qarasiña*. Pigs were raised locally, and the lard was conserved from pork rinds for future use, minimizing the need for purchase.

The preparation of *qarasiña* is organized into several stages, beginning with the kneading of quinoa flour. Quinoa flour (*jupha* and *ajara*) is kneaded with limewater (*q'athawi uma*) (Figure 3). To prevent the dough from breaking during stretching, a small amount of wheat flour is added, along with salt. Traditionally, limewater (*q'athawi uma*) was stored in a clay vessel called *chatu*. In recent years, metal (Figure 3) or plastic containers have been used instead.



Figure 3. Pouring of limewater (*q'athawi uma*) and kneading quinoa flour (*aqallapu*): (1). Pouring of limewater (*q'athawi uma*). (2). Kneading quinoa flour (*aqallapu*). Images: Simón Cocarico, 2009.

In the *qarasiña* processing, the crucial moment is when limewater is added to neutralize the flour's bitter taste. This step highlights the women's skill in achieving the perfect balance. They add limewater incrementally, tasting the dough each time (Figure 4). They use their sense of smell, instead of taste, to detect any deficiency or excess of lime (*q'athawi*) in the dough. If there is too little lime, they add more stirred limewater (*qunchu*, turbid water). If there is too much, they add "crystalline" limewater, where the lime has been previously decanted (*ch'uwat'ata uma*).



Figure 4. Testing of quinoa dough. Image: Simón Cocarico, 2009.

An example of processing this dough can be seen in Figure 5, where the informant couple demonstrates how both *qarasiña* and *k'ispiña* can be made from the same dough. The dough (*ñatu*) is shown in the bowl (Figure 5(1,2)). The husband (*chacha*) is shaping and flattening the *qarasiña* with his palms. The raw *qarasiña* are placed in a dark wooden bowl (Figure 5a). Meanwhile, the wife (*warmi*) is preparing *k'ispiña*, small dumplings, which are kneaded and molded, and later will be steamed or boiled, in contrast to *qarasiña*, which will be fried (Figure 6).



Figure 5. Kneading and processing of *qarasiña*: (1). Elaboration or manual molding of *qarasiña* (a) and *k'ispiña* (b). (2). Supplies for the preparation of *qarasiña*. Images: Simón Cocarico, 2009.



Figure 6. Frying *qarasiña*. Draining the oil from the already fried *qarasiña* and frying a raw *qarasiña* in an iron pan over a clay stove. Image: Simón Cocarico, 2009.

To shape and flatten *qarasiña*, a portion of dough is taken. For *t'axla qarasiña* (circular) (Figure 7), it is formed into a ball, and for *sayt'u qarasiña* (elongated) (Figure 7), it is elongated as if shaping a finger. A small container of oil is placed nearby for the shapers. This oil is applied or spread onto the palm of the hand. It acts as a lubricant, preventing the dough from sticking as it is flattened and shaped between the palms. Achieving a thin *qarasiña* is crucial, as it indicates skill in preparation. If the *qarasiña* is too thick, it suggests a lack of expertise. In such cases, the wife responsible for frying will refuse to cook thick *qarasiña*. Once enough *qarasiña* pieces have been flattened, they are fried in a pan with oil or fat. *Qarasiña* should be fried at elevated temperatures, which is achieved by setting the pan on the middle burner (*taypi qhiri*) in the case of the stove with three burners (Figure 6). The mother, once she places the raw *qarasiñas* in the pan, must be attentive during frying to avoid burning them. Timing is crucial, as *qarasiñas* can easily burn if left unattended. After frying, she uses a sturdy wire, often one used for hand knitting or from a bicycle radio, to skewer the fried *qarasiña* pieces one by one onto the wire. Once all are skewered, she lifts them slightly to allow any excess hot oil to drain off. With her other hand (right hand), she carefully places raw *qarasiña* into the pan, adjusting the amount according to the pan size (Figure 6).



Figure 7. Types of *qarasiña* made in Jach'a Puni with jupha (*Chenopodium quinoa* var. *quinoa*): 1. *T'axla qarasiña*, circular and flat, varying in size. 2. *Sayt'u qarasiña*, elongated. 3. *Sayt'u q'api qarasiña*, elongated and narrower with fingerprints. 4. *Pullira qarasiña* (circular with fringes or lobes, arrow indicates the fringes or lobes). Image: Simón Cocarico, 2009.

Typically, fried *qarasiña* is crispy. However, elderly individuals who have difficulty chewing may request that the cook remove *qarasiña* from the frying pan while it is still soft. If *qarasiña* are deemed unsuitable for any reason, it is advisable not to share them to avoid criticism from other women. Excessive lime (*q'athawi jiljata*) can lead to undesirable outcomes, characterized by a yellowish color and a noticeable lime odor.

3.2.4. Types of Qarasiña

In *Jach'a Puni*, there are four known types of *qarasiña*, all made from the same dough (with *jupha*, *Chenopodium quinoa* var. *quinoa*) but distinguished by their shape. The most common variety is *t'axla qarasiña* (Figure 7), which is circular and flat, typically larger than those shown in the photo. *Sayt'u qarasiña* is elongated in shape (Figure 7). *Sayt'u q'api qarasiña* (Figure 7) is also elongated and features fingerprints from the process of crushing and removing the butter. This type was sometimes sold at fairs and stores, though it is no longer in use. The *pullira qarasiña* (Figure 7) is like the *t'axla qarasiña* but has lobed edges resembling a skirt (Figure 7 arrow). This form is produced exclusively by women born in the *Equipuni* communities and is uncommon in *Jach'a Puni*.

Four additional types of *qarasiña* are made using wild quinoa flour, *Chenopodium quinoa* var. *melanospermum* (*ajara*). Two of these, *t'axla ajara qarasiña* (Figure 8) and *sayt'u ajara qarasiña* (Figure 8), are distinguished by their circular or elongated shape. These varieties are darker than those made from *jupha* due to the black seeds of wild quinoa. They are typically excluded from special events and are consumed by only a few families. The other two types are made from a mixture (*kita*) of *Chenopodium quinoa* var. *quinoa* (*jupha*), *Ch. quinoa* var. *melanospermum* (*ajara*), and *Triticum aestivum* (wheat) flour. *Ajara kita qarasiña* (Figure 8) has an intermediate color, as it is prepared with a blend of *ajara*, *jupha*, and wheat flour, with the main distinction between them being their shape: circular or elongated.



Figure 8. *Qarasiña* types from other botanical origins. Above with *ajara*, *Chenopodium quinoa* var. *melanospermum*: 1. *T'axla ajara qarasiña*. 2. *Sayt'u ajara qarasiña*. Below with a mixture (*kita*) of *Chenopodium quinoa* var. *quinoa* *Chenopodium quinoa* var. *melanospermum* and *Triticum aestivum*: 3. *T'axla ajara kita qarasiña*. 4. *Sayt'u ajara kita qarasiña*. Images: Simón Cocarico, 2009.

3.2.5. The *Qarasiña* as an Indicator of Social Status and Abilities of the Wife

The *qarasiña* is a type of food that reflects a family's social status and the quality of a wife. An informant explained: "When I have to serve as the authority or organizer of special events such as marriages, parties, *rutuchas* (first hair cut ceremonies), visits to the godfather of marriage, communal meetings, *apxata* (altars of the deceased prepared for the feast of all saints), and other occasions, I must bring *qarasiña* in sufficient quantities, so that it reaches everyone (approximately five per person). If I do not provide that amount, people will consider me to be from a lazy family, and therefore, poor". When a wife raises a substantial amount of *qarasiña*, it indicates she is hardworking. To assess the quality of a future daughter-in-law, the prospective mother-in-law typically gives her a portion of wild quinoa (*ajara*) to process into *qarasiña ajara*. If she succeeds, it is said she is well-trained and will prepare decent food for her husband and family. Conversely, if she fails, it suggests she has not had a good mother from whom she has learned. In such cases, the mother-in-law will share her experience and knowledge in preparing *qarasiña* and other foods to ensure her son does not face difficulties at various events as a married person (*jaqi*) or in a couple (*chacha-warmi*).

3.2.6. Foam in the Pan Is a Bad Omen

Popular beliefs regarding culinary practices and daily life include the following saying: "*Qarasiñatixa phurmunti ukjaxa amuyasiñawa, kunasa pasakistaspawa*", (when the *qarasiña* foams, it is necessary to think about what might happen), this means that if foam is produced while cooking *qarasiña* in the pan, one should proceed with caution as it is considered a bad omen, indicating a potential problem or accident. To counteract this bad sign, it is advised to discard all the oil used for cooking. Another widely held belief advises against eating hot *qarasiña*. It is said that eating *qarasiña* while it is extremely hot can make a person less resilient to hunger throughout the day. The best way to enjoy *qarasiña* is when it is warm.

3.3. The *Qarasiña* Role in Cultural Practices and Ceremonies

3.3.1. Events Where *Qarasiña* Is Consumed

As a key indicator of a family's social status and cultural standing, *qarasiña* plays a central role in many significant occasions. Its presence is not merely a culinary tradition, but a symbol of respect, hospitality, and community belonging. *Qarasiña* is expected to be served at special events, where its preparation and presentation reflect the family's dedication, resources, and adherence to cultural values. The following paragraphs will explore the various occasions where *qarasiña* is essential, highlighting its importance in social and ceremonial contexts:

Asking for a Bride's Hand: During *irpaqas*—formally asking for the bride's hand or transferring her from her parent's house to her future husband's—*qarasiña* is essential.

Marriages (*Kasarawis* or *Jaqichawis*): For the three days of the marriage celebration, *qarasiña* is a staple at every meal, scattered among other dishes on the table (*quqawi*). The groom's family must provide 3 to 5 pieces of *qarasiña* per person, along with a piece of sheep meat, for guests to take home. Insufficient food would result in strong criticism. While enjoying urban food served on plates, guest women (Figure 9) also share scattered (*wart'ata*) food items, including *qarasiña*, alongside *mote* (hominy corn), fritters, potatoes, beans (*Lupinus mutabilis*), *ch'uñu* (freeze-dried potatoes), and other foods.

Visit to the Godfather of Marriage: The third and final day of the marriage celebration involves visiting the godfather. During this visit, the groom's family must present a large pile of *qarasiña* to the godfather as a token of gratitude for his sponsorship. The amount should be enough to share with all attendees and ensure a good portion for the godfather.



Figure 9. Banquet (*misa past'aña*) in the godfather's house during a marriage celebration. Image: Simón Cocarico, 2005.

Day Visit to the Godfather (*Qulti Muruña* or *Rutucha* Day): On the day of *rutucha* or *qulti muruña* (first haircut to the child)—a significant event marking a child's transition to a new life stage—the family visits the godfather's house for the haircut ceremony. *Qarasiña* must be present at the meal. The parents, after asking permission to share the food, place a large bundle (*q'ipi*) of *qarasiña* and other special dishes (e.g., fried guinea pig, corn) in front of the godfather's table. A similar portion is provided for the companions. The godfather distributes the *qarasiña*, ensuring there is enough for everyone, with a sizable portion left for himself. To avoid running out of *qarasiña* during distribution, a cautious compadre should have a reserve ready. It is often said that, based on the quality and quantity of the special meal, companions will offer money and gifts during the haircut. This routine is similar to other events involving a godfather.

Mourning and Banquet. In Aymara, "*quqawi*" refers to a communal meal or banquet where food is shared among participants, often during special events or gatherings. It is a traditional practice where each person or family contributes food to be shared with the community. For example, following the Mass of the Dead, a community meal or banquet (*Quqawi*) is held in celebration. In the context of community events or rituals, a *ququ* often refers to a food package prepared for sharing among participants, especially during ceremonies or festivities. The large *ququ* (Figure 10(1)), a light meal of cold cooked roots or grains, includes *pullira qarasiña*, fritters, fried trout, corn, and cooked banana (*Musa* sp.), typically contributed by the widow. The other *ququs* are from the companions, each containing *qarasiña* along with other foods like *ch'uqi munta* (peeled and cooked potato), parboiled cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), corn mote, *ch'uñu phuti* (soaked and steamed dehydrated potato), and *kaya phuti* (soaked and steamed dehydrated oca, *Oxalis tuberosa*). To complement, the bowls often contain pieces of fish and sliced cheese on top of other meals (Figure 10(1), Table 3). The arrangement and selection of foods suggest that the mourners have urban influences. In Aymara culture, the *ququ* is never placed directly on the ground; there must always be an *awayu* or another fabric to insulate it from the ground. Placing it directly on the ground is seen as disrespectful and could be sanctioned by the authorities. *Qarasiña* is also placed on the offering table for the souls during All Saints' Day (*Apxata*). (Figure 10(2)).



Figure 10. Banquets associated with death: (1). *Quqawi* (mourning banquet) after Mass of the dead, the *ququs* contain *qarasiña*, and other foods (for explanation of names see Table 3), sharing the *quqawi* with the mourners. Image: Simón Cocarico, 2019. (2). *Qarasiña* among the meals offered (bread, *p'asanqalla*, *t'ant'a wawa*), on All Saints Day. Image: Simón Cocarico, 2004.

Table 3. Food types, persons, and tools involved in a mourning Quqawi (banquet). Data: from the informants and observer (Table 1).

Vernacular Aymara Name	Description	Species/Products Used
Foods		
<i>Aycha kanka irxata</i>	Fried, roasted, or grilled meat arranged in <i>ququ</i> to eat with other meals	llama, alpaca, or sheep, eventually others
<i>Ch'uñu phuti</i>	Frozen, peeled, dried, soaked, and steamed potato	Potato (<i>Solanum tuberosum</i> L. subsp. <i>andigenum</i> (Juz. & Bukasov) Hawkes (<i>Solanum tuberosum</i> Andigenum Group)
<i>Irxata</i>	Food consisting of meat, pepper, or other that is a source of protein, spicy or salty, to be combined with the rich in energy food. It is usually carried in a bowl or <i>wayk'a churwa</i> . Oca tubers are put in water, frozen, dried, soaked, and steamed.	Meats, peppers, or others. Often <i>qarasiña</i>
<i>Kaya phuti</i>	Oca tubers are put in water, frozen, dried, soaked, and steamed.	Oca tubers (<i>Oxalis tuberosa</i> Molina)
<i>Muntarara</i>	Potato peeled and cooked in water, also known as <i>munta</i> , <i>ch'uqi munta qhatita</i>	Potato (<i>Solanum tuberosum</i> L. subsp. <i>andigenum</i> (Juz. & Bukasov) Hawkes (<i>Solanum tuberosum</i> Andigenum Group)
<i>Pullira qarasiña</i> <i>Pusri qhatita</i>	<i>Qarasiña</i> made in the shape of a skirt Banana peeled and cooked in water	<i>Chenopodium quinoa</i> Banana (<i>Musa</i> sp.)
<i>Ququ</i>	Rich in energy food and protein that in its central part carries <i>irxata</i> . The food is tied in <i>ququ tari</i> .	Diverse ingredients rich in energy and protein
<i>Sayt'u qarasiña</i> <i>T'axla qarasiña</i> <i>Tunqu mut'i</i>	<i>Qarasiña</i> in an elongated shape <i>Qarasiña</i> in a circular shape Corn cooked in water	<i>Chenopodium quinoa</i> <i>Chenopodium quinoa</i> <i>Zea mays</i> L.
<i>Turucha thixi irxata</i>	Fried trout meat arranged in <i>ququ</i> as a source of animal protein, to eat with other foods	The rainbow trout (<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i> (Walbaum, 1792)). This species was introduced to the Lake Titicaca in the 20th century and has become quite prevalent
<i>Yuka qhatita</i>	Cassava root (<i>Manihot esculenta</i>) peeled and cooked in water	Cassava root (<i>Manihot esculenta</i> Crantz)
Tools		
<i>Ququ inkuña or ququ tari</i>	Quadrangular fabric to tie food (<i>ququ</i>), carry and put in the <i>quqawi</i>	Aymara textiles, especially those used as tablecloths at community banquets, are primarily made from alpaca wool and, to a lesser extent, from llama wool.
<i>Q'ipxaru awayu</i>	<i>Awayu</i> or <i>Aguayo</i> (quilt to transport things (food) or the baby). In this case to carry <i>ququ</i> . It is usually put as a cloth, to put on it <i>ququ</i>	Alpaca wool and, to a lesser extent, from llama wool
Persons		
<i>Quqt'iri or jaqi</i>	Person who participates in <i>quqawi</i> . Therefore, he has taken his <i>ququ</i> to share	-

3.3.2. Other Community Ceremonials Where *Qarasiña* Is Consumed

Qarasiña is commonly featured at various community events, including Teacher's Day, celebrations for community authorities (Figure 11), June 24 and January 1 festivities, School Board celebrations, when local native soldiers return from the barracks, *Ch'alla* Day (which marks the attainment of a professional degree), and the house roofing day. *Qarasiña* is also a staple in the *quqawis* or *ququsiñas* (communal lunches) served during community workdays, assemblies, and other gatherings. In these cases, the authorities typically provide the food (*ququ*), which includes *qarasiña* along with other traditional dishes (Figure 12).



Figure 11. *Ququs* in community events. Celebration to the new local authorities (those that have blanket). Three *ququs* with *qarasiña*, and other foods. Three *ququs* (food) in front of local authorities. Image: Simón Cocarico, 2015.



Figure 12. *Ququs* (foods) in a *quqawi*; the *sayt'u qarasiña* still is part of the *ququ*, together with corn, *tunta*, and *ch'uñu*. Image: Simón Cocarico, 2014.

3.3.3. The Enduring Significance of Quinoa

In *Jach'a Puni* (Great Puni), any food (*manq'a*), is considered the person's *qipa* (the "tissue" of the human body). The diet in *Jach'a Puni* is primarily based on cultivated species, many of which are locally domesticated, such as *ch'uqi* (potato, *Solanum* spp.), *apilla* (oca, *Oxalis tuberosa* Molina), *isañu* (*Tropaeolum tuberosum* Ruiz & Pav.), *ulluku* (papalisa, *Ullucus*

tuberosus Caldas), and *jupha* (*Chenopodium quinoa* Willd.). Others were introduced from the Mediterranean by the Spanish, including *siwara* (barley, *Hordeum vulgare* L.), *jawasa* (broad bean, *Vicia faba* L.), *alwirja* (pea, *Pisum sativum* L.), *siwilla* (onion, *Allium cepa* L.), and others [24]. However, they also sporadically consume imported grains, such as *tunqu* (corn, *Zea mays* L.), as well as fruits and other items purchased or exchanged at fairs. Some complementary foods are obtained from livestock.

As part of the Agrarian Union, during meetings or events where several people or families participate, an authorized individual initiates the banquet and invites everyone to partake in the meal. At the beginning of the *quqawis* or *ququsiña* (banquet), it is customary for the Secretary of Justice or the Secretary of Relations to announce the start of the banquet with the words: “*taqinikiya irt’añani akaxa yusana wintisuynapawa, aka manq’ampiwa jiwasa jakastana, akaxa jiwasa janchisana qipapawa. Pachamamarusa yuspärarakiñani, ukhama taqini sarxat’añani*” (Food is a vital part of our lives, and we express our gratitude to Pachamama -Mother Earth- for providing it. We invite everyone to partake in this meal together. Please, let us begin). In some cases, participants will hold two foods, one in each hand, and at the end of the invitation, they blow on them so that their *ajayu* (spirit or soul) also accompanies those who do not have access to food. In the worldview of the *jaqi* or community members, food is considered sacred because it is the product of the interaction between humans and *Pachamama*.

For the Aymara, food should never be neglected for any reason. “*Manq’axa katuqasiña-puniwa, janiwa juyraruxa jachayañati*” (food is essential for our well-being; without it, we would not thrive) (Table 1, informant 5), meaning food should not be denied and the seeds and fruits of crops should not be discarded, as this is believed to cause them to cry (Table 1, informants 3, 5, and 9). One day, a grandmother saw a tuber of “*papa*” lying on the ground. She picked it up, saying, “Whoever is ungrateful has thrown you away,” kissed it, and placed it in her tie or *q’ipi*. A similar tradition exists in Europe with bread, which is also lifted, kissed, and placed in a spot where it cannot be stepped on [41].

3.4. The Irreplaceability of Quinoa by Another Species Accessible to the Group

The use of the “*sartén*” (iron frying pan) and oil or pig fat in cooking may be attributed to Spanish influence, which replaced preexisting procedures and tools for processing quinoa dough. For instance, the grandparents of the Puni community recall that in earlier times, *qarasiña* was cooked not in an iron pan but in a *jiwk’i* (earthenware), without fat and certainly without oil. Since quinoa was rarely used outside native circles, it can be said that most current preparation methods remain original.

The occasional use of barley flour is also of Spanish origin, as *Hordeum vulgare* was introduced during Spanish rule. The presence of seed remains of *Chenopodium quinoa*, *C. quinoa* var. *melanospermum*, and *Hordeum vulgare* in colonial artisan’s household middens in the marginal neighborhood of San Blas parish (Riobamba, Ecuador) suggests that imported Old World domesticates were widely accessible and not restricted to elite households during the Spanish period (16th to 18th century AD) in the Andes [42]. Consequently, barley became part of the native agricultural heritage in the Andes.

Samartino [43] argues that the Spanish colonization of the Americas aimed to intentionally destroy native populations and their food systems. Despite three centuries of colonial rule and two centuries of independent American republics, these objectives were not fully achieved. Currently, the proportion of self-identified American natives is 66% (in 2001) and 41% (in 2012) in Bolivia, 15.3% to 45% in Peru, and 6.8% to 25–30% (circa 2010) in Ecuador [44–47]. Although many traditional foods are endangered, they have persisted to this day. The problem lies not in the past but in the present, as contempt for Indigenous culture continues to grow, leading many natives in urban environments to renounce their culture and identity. This has resulted in the erosion of traditions, knowledge, techniques, and agrobiodiversity of native peoples [45–47]. Bautista [48] highlights the negative impact of Spanish colonization on local traditions, including the devaluation of traditional food production systems and agriculture. However, our findings show that native communities,

particularly the Aymara, have overcome these impacts over centuries. They have preserved their traditions, such as quinoa-based *qarasiña*, while incorporating Old World domesticates introduced by the Spanish, like onions, broad beans, and barley [42]. It is argued that European settlers in Andean America categorized foods into two groups: (a) Old World domesticated species brought from Europe, processed similarly to how they were in Spain and other European countries; and (b) species domesticated by the natives of America (*Abya Yala*) (Urus, Aymara, Quechua, and other ancestral cultures), which Europeans deemed inappropriate. However, notable exceptions include potatoes, maize, chili peppers, and many others that quickly became important foods in Europe after their introduction. Vavilov, the agronomist and plant geneticist, believed that most of the American domesticates imported to the Old World originated in Central America and Southern Mexico. In contrast, many endemic species from the Andean regions and Brazil, including *Chenopodium quinoa*, were not widely used in the Old World [49].

Urban natives often replace *qarasiña* with fritters (Figure 13) made from white wheat flour, kneaded with yeast, and then molded as if it were *sayt'u qarasiña*, and sometimes sweetened with sugar. These fritters are then fried in oil. This meal is particularly popular among children and young people and is similar, if not identical, to “*fritillas*,” a traditional sweet from the Albacete province of Spain [50,51].



Figure 13. *Ququs* (foods) in a *quqawi* with wheat fritters. Arrows indicate wheat dough fritters, which replaced *qarasiña*. Image: Simón Cocarico, 2014.

During *quqawis* or *ququsiña* (“*apthapi*”) Indigenous feasts [52], young people often prefer fritters, while the elderly still seek *qarasiña*. For instance, in a recent *quqawi*, of the 16 *ququs*, 6 contained fritters, and only 1 had *qarasiña*.

An example of generational change and the impact of urban acculturation, including the loss of the native language, is provided by an informant (number 2, Table 1): “My grandson arrived from La Paz, and with much love, I offered him *ajara qarasiña* to enjoy. Due to its dark color (from the seeds of *Chenopodium quinoa* var. *melanospermum*), he thought it was dirty. He tried to clean it and then scrape it with a knife, but parts of the *qarasiña* came off, so he left it uneaten. I tried to explain that this food always looks like that, but since he does not understand Aymara, my efforts to communicate through signs were in vain. I offered him fritters, which he did eat”. This account highlights the discrepancies between rural and urban diets. If a food is unfamiliar or not part of one’s diet, even if it is nutritious, there may be reluctance to eat it, or it may be mistaken for something else. This story also underscores a significant methodological problem: language barriers. Effective communication or interviewing elderly men and women requires knowledge of their native language.

3.5. The Quinoa’s Role in Activities Outside Its Own Territory

Camelid meat and quinoa products have been undervalued since the colonial period [43,53]. Until recently in Bolivia, *jupha* (domesticated quinoa) was considered food only for Indigenous people and the poor, and the traditional methods of processing and the dishes made from it were looked down upon. However, quinoa has recently gained international recognition as a “superfood” [54]. Andean ancestral knowledge has always regarded *jupha* as one of the best foods. Nutritional analyses [27] have confirmed this view. *Chenopodium quinoa* was even considered a “new crop” for the Controlled Ecological Life Support System (CELSS) by NASA [55] due to its high protein content (12–18%) and unique amino acid composition. Lysine, an essential amino acid often deficient in many grain crops, is found in quinoa in proportions meeting FAO standards for humans. It is now consumed by those who once despised it, both in America and abroad [54].

Murcia is home to a Bolivian expatriate community of around 10,000 people. In Murcia, Bolivians can find various ways to maintain their cultural and social traditions, such as events, associations, and stores offering products from Bolivia. Within this group, there are many of Aymara origin who have abandoned their own language and traditions. This gives us an idea of the process of acculturation, not only in Spain but potentially in Bolivia in the future as well. We conducted a survey on the presence of quinoa and quinoa products in Latino shops in Murcia, Spain. The results were disappointing. Quinoa was a marginal item, underrepresented compared to maize products and even oats, rice, broad beans, “*frijoles de Castilla*”, wheat, and other crops introduced to America by the Spanish and now imported from America by Latino immigrants. Quinoa seeds were rare, and quinoa flour was completely absent from these stores. In contrast, quinoa is available in a wide variety of forms in online ethnic stores, especially Bolivian ones (Figure 14). These include quinoa grain, quinoa flour, noodles, macaroni, soups, flakes, energy bars, cookies, pre-cooked dishes, desserts, fruit juices, and both alcoholic and soft drinks. In Europe, diet and organic food stores offer quinoa in these forms and more, such as chips, vitamin complexes, chocolates, hair conditioners, crackers, vegan meatballs, baby foods, anti-stress supplements, and more. For example, on the website dieteticaonline.es, we found 110 distinct products containing quinoa, and on herbolario.navarro.es, we found 284 products.



Figure 14. Quinoa products outside Bolivia.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, a species becomes a cultural keystone or cornerstone through the intricate relationships between its various parts and products and the ethnic group that utilizes it. For the Aymara people, quinoa exemplifies this status due to the symbolic and social value of foods like *qarasiña* in numerous family and community events.

In *Jach'a Puni* (Gran Puni), families of Uru–Aymara origin continue to uphold principles, values, and culinary practices that honor life in *Pacha* (Mother Earth). The ancestral knowledge surrounding the preparation and consumption of *qarasiña* represents an intangible cultural heritage that has often been overlooked and undervalued, partly due to historical research policies that have neglected the realities of these communities.

In *Jach'a Puni*, three distinct types of *qarasiña* are made, depending on the type of quinoa flour used, and there are four recognized shapes of this traditional food. The presence of *qarasiña* at remarkable events and community banquets signifies social status, family quality, and the wife's culinary skills in preparing dishes from *jupha* and *ajara*. Such events include marriages, *rutuchas* (first haircuts), *tumpa* (celebration of authorities), godparent visits, and mourning ceremonies, among others.

In recent decades, traditional foods made from *jupha* or quinoa, including *qarasiña*, have transitioned from being undervalued to being celebrated as “the grain of gold” and one of the “superfoods”, particularly outside Indigenous communities. Nevertheless, there is a risk that, without a strengthened awareness and appreciation of quinoa’s cultural significance, its consumption may decline in favor of wheat.

UNESCO has already recognized the invaluable heritage of the Andean region through the acknowledgment of the Khalawaya, itinerant healers renowned for their plant-based medicine. Similarly, various food cultures have earned their place on the World Heritage list, such as Japan’s *Washoku* cuisine, Mexico’s traditional cuisine “*Comida Tradicional Mexicana*”, and the Mediterranean Diet. *Qarasiña*, deeply rooted in Aymara tradition, deserves recognition alongside these esteemed cultural expressions.

Including *qarasiña* and the broader Quinoa Culture on the World Heritage list would not only celebrate a remarkable dish but also acknowledge the entire Aymara, and overall Andean, knowledge system surrounding quinoa—from cultivation practices passed down through generations to the rituals associated with its consumption. Such recognition would be a powerful means of safeguarding this heritage against the homogenizing forces of globalization. Promoting *qarasiña* will ensure that future generations continue to value the profound connection the Aymara people have with quinoa, a bond that transcends its current trendy status.

Let us acknowledge quinoa not merely as a superfood but as a cornerstone of Aymara culture. By bringing *qarasiña* to the global stage, we recognize the vital role of preserving the rich diversity of human food traditions.

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