

## 2.6 “Feeding bodies, nurturing identities”.

### *The significance of food for the well-being of Peruvian migrants in Chile*

Lorena Núñez C.

PhD candidate attached to Leiden University Medical Center (LUMC), with a scholarship of Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.

#### *Introduction: Food and Migration*

Products such as sugar, spices, chocolate, tea and tobacco brought once to Europe from exotic places are concrete evidence of the historical role food played in the development of European empires and reveal the double character of food as indicative of “roots and routes”. This continues to be the case at present for more recent and global migrations<sup>(1)</sup>.

Food patterns are linked to cultural roots as long as they operate as markers of a localized material culture. (At the same time are routes)-confusing, as pointed out by Döring; «testifying on the contact zones and “routes” which their produces and consumers have gone through» (DÖRING T. - HEIDE M. - MUHLEISEN S. 2003: 7). In fact the displacement and transformation of food patterns resulting in people’s migration rarely erase previous food traditions. By looking at the vestiges of old culinary traditions within the existing ones, it may be possible to trace back the paths of people’s migrations.

Looking at Peruvian migrant’s selection and manufacturing of food from the perspective of their previous and current whereabouts reveals the extremely rich culinary history of Peruvian food. It dates back to the Incas and pre-Incas times and was later influenced by the Spanish colonizers. Throughout its historical development as a nation, Peru has incorporated food practices; tastes, recipes, cooking techniques of the different migrations and *mestizajes*<sup>(2)</sup>. This is indeed a history that continues “to be cooked” along new *transnational* journeys, as Peruvian migrants spread throughout the world. This paper deals with a small portion of that history, one that is taking place among the Peruvian northern coastal immigrants in Santiago de Chile<sup>(3)</sup>.

The traditional cuisine brought to Chile by Peruvians is one of the most successful contributions of this migration to Chile, an exception to the generally hostile climate towards Peruvian migration in the country. Peruvian restaurants have multiplied and are very popular as a result of Chilean enjoyment of the flavour of Peruvian food. Peruvian ingredients are currently being imported to Chile and sold in almost every market (e.g. Yuca, Rocoto, purple maize, cancha [dried, fried maize], Inca-Cola, among many others products). Chilean families that have hired Peruvian domestic workers have also benefited from the cooking skills and cuisine from Peru. Even more significant is the place food has (holds) among the migrants community itself. As shown in this paper food comprises a central material and symbolic resource utilized by the migrant community to cope and resist the adverse climate of the Chilean society and maintain their well being.

Food is seen in this study as a field of resistance rather than of transformation by looking at the use of traditional food by the migrants to overcome the mental and physical disruption of the oppressive social environment of the hosting society. This paper examines how, through activities such as cooking, gathering around food, eating and sharing food, conversing and recalling memories of food, migrants' contested identities are revitalized and ill health cared for. The findings of this article were gathered through a participatory observation carried out among a community of Peruvian migrants living in downtown Santiago, during the spring of the year 2002.

Although I did not focus on food initially, after beginning my observation of this community, the importance of how the community members' lives were structured around food became apparent. It appeared as though general concerns about their well-being, as well about health and illness in particular were often expressed in the language of food, through talking and recalling memories of meals, cooking and eating traditional food. Food seemed to be the "centrepiece" around which the migrants' collective lives were articulated and as such, proved to be a path into the subject of migration and health, which I was principally investigating.

This paper is organized into three sections. The first section presents a conceptual approach to understanding the relation of food practices, identity and health. It also gives background of this migration to Chile and a picture of the living conditions Peruvian migrants are exposed to in Chile. The second section refers to the micro context within which these ethnographic observations were carried out; the shared housing unit, placing emphasis on the different elements that made this place a "home away from home". The third section delves into the meanings and practices that

make food a source to keep and restore the bodily balance and to foster migrants national identity. The conclusions are then presented.

### *I. Food, Identity and Health*

Food patterns as conveying cultural meanings have been extensively studied by anthropologists. Claude Lévi-Strauss set the grounds of a structural analysis of food, continued later by Mary Douglas. Both authors focused on a wide realm of phenomenon by examining the rules and principles guiding what is considered food, good food, bad food, how food should be cooked and eaten (e.g. its temperature, the combination of ingredients, consistency etc.), prescriptions regarding when, what and how food should be eaten, by whom, as well as of its prohibitions or food taboos<sup>(4)</sup>.

Food patterns are not only indicative of structural oppositions, they result from the interaction of any given community with its milieu. Consequently, food binds identities to localities. This last notion has been put into question to the extent that these same localities and homes are displaced as people move around the globe.

However, food not only anchors identities to localities. Whether it is "here" or "there" food continues drawing the community boundaries. It is indeed by food choices and food sharing that people establish the limits of "us" and "them". Thus, the study of food and eating patterns may be indicative of how groups and identities are defined; since in the most different contexts, food lies at the center of rituals of belonging through which these various identities are marked and celebrated.

This study focuses on relationship between food, identity and health by looking at the case of Peruvian migrants in Chile. The point of departure is the displacement of food practices resulting from migration and evolves around its material and symbolic dimensions, in close relation with the societal context where these practices find their meanings and uses.

Food as material culture and its connection with health, is studied by examining migrants' conceptions and principles according to which they judge food to be good, edible and healthy. For migrants "a good food" is one which works in compliance with those preconceived principles. Consequently, food materializes in migrants' bodies, re-establishing the equilibrium altered by illness. Far from being arbitrary rules, these principles are remnants of an ancient conception of health kept alive by this community throughout their lineage.

Food serves as a cultural memory and as such it is linked to identity. Accordingly, attention is paid here to times when gathering around food or engaging in food related conversations, migrants bring in their own memories and share with other members of the community their different regional culinary traditions. At this moment, a sense of collective identity is produced just as the idea of a “national culinary tradition” is envisioned.

Sidney Mintz, has questioned the very existence of a “national cuisine”; a discussion of relevance for the case studied here. According to this author, ‘cuisines’ should be thought of primarily in regional, not in national terms. By drawing a parallel between cuisine and language the author argues that «local cuisines predates the political construction of a state just as do local dialects the standardization of a national language», and claims that «national cuisine, like a national language, is in some sense a political artifact on its way to becoming a tourist artifact» (MINTZ S. 2003: 26). However, Mintz concede the existence of national cuisine as “a textual reality” conditioning it to an immaterial reality; «as long as national cuisine is understood as having a textual reality as opposed to a concrete reality – something people talk about, imagine but do not literally eat » (*op. cit.*).

Likewise, in the case studied here, food operates as text (as spoken, imagined, described, evoked, and remembered). As a reality in such level, food produces a subjective effect on migrants’ identity. It is argued here that similarly performing as language through which Peruvian migrants communicate a familiar sensorial experience, food channels a positive relation with their native land and a sense of belonging to a national identity.

In the next section, the background of this migration will be introduced to better grasp the context where the above discussion is grounded.

### *Migration to Chile in the Nineties*

The economic prosperity and the newly inaugurated democracy attracted a wave of migrants from several Latin American countries to Chile.

The first wave of regional migrants arrived in Chile in the beginning of the 1990’s. The majority were professionals from Ecuador, Peru and Cuba and entered existing economic niches, including the Health Sector<sup>(5)</sup>. Yet, during the second half of the 1990’s Chile witnessed the arrival of a new type of migrants.

Less educated than the former group, the second wave of migrants was mostly women and blue-collar workers that filled the available jobs in the

lowest economic strata of the labour market. Willing to work for lower salaries and longer hours than their Chilean counterparts, this group found jobs in the construction sector and in the domestic service. The number of Peruvian among the whole group increased noticeably. Currently, Peruvians are the second largest group of migrants in Chile. It is calculated that they number 39.084 whereas the Argentineans, the largest foreign group, number 50.448, while the total population of foreigners in Chile adds up to 195.320 people (Census 2002).

The speed and scale of the recent Peruvian migration to Chile shapes its distinctive features and suggest differences between the several groups that have simultaneously arrived in Chile. Yet, public opinion tends to exaggerate the expected size of this migration. In particular, the media projects many distorted images of migrants thus channelling among the Chileans feelings of "being invaded" and exacerbating their xenophobic attitudes.

Among the different foreign groups Peruvian migrants are the most discriminated against. As workers, they are segregated in the labour market. In spite of their work capacity and training they have very limited access to job opportunities. Peruvians suffer from verbal and physical violence particularly on behalf of working class Chileans who blame them for problems such as unemployment and low salaries. Peruvians are treated badly in shops and insulted when using public transportation or services. Likewise, their children are often the target of scorn when attending Chilean schools.

Yet the roots of this phenomenon should be historically situated. As a result of the Pacific war of the XIX century among Chile and the Peruvian-Bolivian coalition, part of their (whose?) territories were annexed to Chile<sup>(6)</sup>. Such events fuel the current feeling of "superiority" by Chileans over their neighbours. This attitude has grown stronger with the knowledge that Peruvians fled their country for the better economic prospects in Chile,. However, at the core of the discrimination against Peruvians is a racial ideology widespread among Chilean population. For example, Chileans think of themselves as being of a whiter colour than Peruvians, and therefore superior. In consequence, Peruvians are seen as inferior, backward presumably more "Indian" than the average "mestizo" Chilean population.

After this general reference to the context of this migration, information will be given next to the micro-context in which Peruvians live as migrants in Chile, and to the various factors threatening their well being.

*Migrants in Chile: far from Heaven*

Economic migrants in Chile often feel forced to limit their personal expenditures severely in order to save remittance money from their very modest salaries<sup>(7)</sup>. They do so by devoting all their time and energy to work which has detrimental consequences for health. Migrants save money by living in crowded, unhealthy and insecure places. They are often exposed to street violence and fall prey to discrimination and insults. Burdened by economic problems and the emotional distress of having left their families behind, migrants experience loneliness and nostalgia.

Increased consumption of alcohol and unprotected sex are a common practice among migrants and are closely associated with their living circumstances, all of which adds extra risks to their mental and physical health. Illegal migrants avoid searching for medical care at public clinics out of fear of being reported to the immigration police. Even though it is not available in reality, their lack of papers puts a limit to their access to public care, restricting it to few primary care clinics. However, even if they have access to health care, migrants tend to postpone medical check-ups and medical treatment. Financial, practical and cultural barriers are particularly prevalent in mental and reproductive health issues, often preventing them from seeking professional medical care. In sum, to make their economic endeavours worthwhile, migrants often sacrifice their personal well-being by living in harmful conditions and by exposing themselves to various health risks.

Yet, an inside look into the life of Peruvian migrant's community in Santiago reveals the role of food as a cultural resource they make use of to face the adversity of their life in Chile. As it will be shown, the preparing and consumption of their traditional food helps migrants "to make a home away from home". Before delving into the uses and meanings embedded in food consumption; references to the community where these observations were carried out will be made next.

*II. Talking, cooking and eating at home with the migrants**The migrants' shared housing unit*

The migrants' shared housing unit was located on the second floor of building in Bandera street, downtown Santiago, only five blocks away from the *Plaza de Armas*, the main meeting place of the Peruvian migrant community in Santiago.

The building began to host migrants since 1998. However, in March of 2003, the authorities forced the building's owner to shut down the place due to the poor and unsafe conditions in which the building was kept. Although most of its permanent residents moved out to neighbouring houses they continued to live in similar conditions. Thus, the environment observed in the migrant housing unit, which is described hereafter, can be considered as representative of the conditions which migrants are often exposed to in Chile.

In total the shared housing unit had 20 rooms and the whole floor was inhabited by approximately 50 people — a number which increased on the weekends with temporary residents, friends and acquaintances who dropped by for a visit. By improvising beds or squeezing into the existing ones, residents hosted all those migrants who needed temporary shelter. This group came from the cities of Chimbote, Trujillo, Barranca and Lima, as did the majority of Peruvian migrants who have settled in Santiago.

The strategy of sharing a house and even sharing a room is common among migrants<sup>(8)</sup>, splitting the price of otherwise, unaffordable rents. In fact this type of housing arrangements is profitable to property owners, who often charge migrants high rents for poor housing in devalued buildings. This particular example of migrant housing is not an exception. In a space the size of a gymnasium, flimsy dividers made of triplex were used to create twenty small rooms. Two toilets, two showers that only provided cold water and two make-shift kitchen areas made up the shared facilities. However for migrants, the building's strategic location in the city centre compensated to some extent for its poor state.

In general, the housing area was kept in very bad and insecure conditions. Pipes were constantly leaking water, and electricity shortages were frequent due to the overloaded electrical system threatening the migrants' lives and damaging their appliances. This migrant housing area resembled a sort of small-scale shantytown, a kind of precarious neighbourhood hidden behind an anonymous door of a run down building in downtown Santiago. Although the building was in extremely poor condition, insecure and expensive<sup>(9)</sup>, it served as their temporary home. This was the ethnographic site chosen for my fieldwork, and this community the one with whom I shared the living space<sup>(10)</sup>.

The next section describes the events and relations that made up a substantial part of the collective life of this community.

*Ahome away from home*

The shared housing unit can be considered a home for this migrants' community. A physical and social space where cultural codes are shared, holding its members in a social and emotional web; a constructed *transnational* place. Its inhabitants had the experience of "being here and there" simultaneously and continually. It was there where migrants' cultural identity was produced and celebrated and migrants' well-being maintained through meaningful interactions and culturally distinctive practices.

In this place migrants lived, met, talked, rested, slept, ate, and exchanged information on jobs, bargains, and strategies for dealing with the foreign system. It functioned as a place where illegal migrants could hide from the police and feel secure. It was a place to listen to their favourite traditional music played loudly disrupting the sleep of more than one, and whenever possible to eat traditional food and reminisce about home.

It was a place to love and fight, to celebrate and mourn, to share worries and concerns, to complain about the hardship of their lives, to share joys and pains, to get and give advice, to tell stories from home and to gossip, to sell and buy, to borrow and lend goods and money to share resources and treatments, to face illness and to restore health.

It was there where migrants spent their most meaningful time away from Peru, because only another migrant could fully understand the sadness and loneliness of being away from home, especially during culturally important holidays such as Christmas and Mothers' day, as well as being absent on birthdays, deaths and/or sicknesses of beloved ones. It was there where the sadness and nostalgia of being away from home was futilely drawn in alcohol by men less often by women who would gather there to drink for an entire weekend, disrupting the precarious balance of the relations with their partners and neighbours.

At the core, migrants' housing temporarily suspended the oppressive relations that migrants were subjected to in the broader Chilean society, but certainly did not erase other conflictive and sometimes violence ridden relations among their members. In fact the housing unit was not free from robberies, nor from loud and violent quarrels among neighbours and couples. More than once the police had to be called upon to stop a violent incident.

In this place married women and men lived together (ambiguous at this point if they are married together or married to other people but living together), setting up temporary relationships to help each other cope with



the distance and unbearable loneliness of being away from their spouse and families. In living arrangements that may well coexist with an intended faithfulness and priority given to each one's *compromiso*<sup>(11)</sup> in Peru. In this new context the task of cooking tended to be initially assigned to women in line with the gender order of the traditional Peruvian patriarchal family. Furthermore, often relationships among migrants started up and consolidated through a woman cooking for a man. However, such arrangements soon changed as a result of women carrying out paid work, causing tensions regarding the traditional sexual division of labour and forcing men to also take part in the cooking.

As observed, a redistribution of the traditional gender order took place so that feeding each other among couples tended to be seen increasingly as a mutual obligation. In situations where food sharing was not based on family relations negotiations had to be carried out among men and women and the different resources and tasks involved (e.g shopping, cooking, washing up) were assigned independently of gender. Men eventually participated in cooking.

In sum, the transformation of the foreign world into their own Peruvian space took place in the shared housing unit being observed. Food was central among the different elements used by migrants to make of this inhospitable place a home<sup>(12)</sup>. Migrants gathered around food. They enjoyed the freedom to cook and eat in their own Peruvian way. By sharing food, migrants built and confirmed social relations. However, other social relations such as the traditional division of labour were transformed.

Food sharing made up a substantial part of the practices and rituals performed in the close community, corroborating their sense of belonging to a collective.

Food helped to create and enact the social world which supported migrants' well-being, resulting in the restoration of the ability of the community members to act outside in the foreign world. The ways in which food protected migrants' well being, will be explained in detail in the next section.

### *III. Food the material source to restore the body's balance.*

#### *Good food, bad food*

In general, Peruvian migrants often complained about having to eat frozen food, or food that was cooked a long time ago and stored for days.

They complained that food consumption in Chile is restricted to indoor venues as opposed to street eating venues such as the street vendors so common in Peru which provide freshly cooked food. They also complained that Chilean people eat very little and rush through eating junk or tasteless and insipid food. The migrants felt that the seafood available for consumption in the Chilean markets is not fresh; for example, fish is frozen and transported to the city days after being caught. Rather than debating on the veracity of such statements, I would like to reflect on what seems to underlie migrants' opinions; ultimately it was the clash of ideas and principles of what is good and healthy food.

Let us analyse one central element: temperature. As it is possible to observe in the account above, temperature seems to be an important criterion applied to food and health by migrants. Along with it underlies a coherent conception of health. It is actually a vestige of the Hippocratic Medicine brought by the Spaniards to Latin America where some of its principles, such as temperature are still prevalent among the population. For example, a good meal should be one which is warm and recently cooked, and it should never be eaten the day after it was cooked, not only due to the loss of its nutritional qualities but also because it might harm one's health. Reheating food may cause it to ferment, a process that continues in people's stomach resulting in illness<sup>(13)</sup>. In addition a wrong combination of food's temperature in a meal may alter its quality. For example, according to popular perceptions, eating something too cold after having eaten something hot will have a negative effect on either the stomach or the throat. The qualities of being hot and cold are extended to physical processes (such as pregnancy or menstruation) and also to emotional states. For example, in the case of a nervous breakdown the body is considered to be in a hot state. During this episode, the body of person affected accumulates heat, heat that should be expelled. The person needs to *desfogar* or "let off steam" by throwing things around, breaking things, screaming or crying. After having calmed down, drinking cold water with lemon juice is advisable.

This happened to Olga, a forty two year old live-in domestic workers who spends every weekend with her relatives in their shared room at the migrants' house. Olga usually called home from a nearby call centre at Plaza de Armas, as she did that Saturday, when I was there. Having received the bad news that her mother was seriously sick in Peru, she began to tremble. Her sister and niece who were there with her brought her back to the room where she had a nervous attack. Olga was allowed to cry, soon after she was given lemon juice in cold water to drink. The treatment and support hel-

ped her to feel better. The choice of food given to Olga, in this case a cold liquid does not come arbitrarily. It is ruled by the temperature principles, present in physical process and emotional states. The body under a nervous attack produces heat and needs an intake of cold infusions to regain its balance. More examples can be given for food and drinks selection and the operation of such principles<sup>(14)</sup>. The importance of this is stressed in order to highlight the underlying logic which may lead to revealing the relationship between health and illness. Certainly migrant's food choices are indicative of a knowledge transmitted through generations and applied every time migrants recognize in each other the signs of sickness. If eaten in the traditional way, food has a healing effect when ill. Let us now move to some other food-related aspects.

### *Food as a symbolic source nurturing migrants' cultural identity*

#### *Talking about food*

Even though the actual act of eating is central, talking about food seemed at times to be even more important to the migrants than what they actually ate or cooked. Furthermore, as observed, the ability to cook traditional Peruvian dishes was often limited by the availability and affordability of obtaining the necessary ingredients in Chile. However for migrants, eating "real Peruvian food" in Chile seems to be impossible; whenever they used similar Chilean ingredients as opposed to the authentic Peruvian ingredients, the migrants often commented that: "*Peruvian dishes cooked with Chilean ingredients never taste the same*".

As it was said, the importance of it became more evident to me while sharing the living space with the migrants. It was the length and frequency with which people engaged in food-related conversations and the vivid character of their descriptions which lead me to suspect that there was something else which was being talked about when conversing about food; something which transcended food but which is at the same time intimately linked to the migrants' bodies, self and identity.

It was interesting to note that while talking about Peruvian food, there was no internal clash; neither regional antagonism nor class or gender hierarchies; women and men participated equally in the discussion, as well as people from the sierra and from the coast. Each participant was free to add comments to the collective picture using their own culinary experience and subjective preference as well as memories of the meals, recipes or

fruits they used to eat and dishes they used to cook back home. Each element would be celebrated and included without opposition. It was as if each one was allowed to bring into this evocative scenario their regional specialities and these memories were taken with pleasure into each one's repertoire. In addition, accounts of the variety, size, colour, taste and nutritional value of the food produced in Peru were often presented as proof of the richness of their homeland: of the goodness of the Peruvian nature and abundance of its diverse landscape.

It seems that what migrants actually evoked through this collective remembrance is a primordial element of their cultural identity assembled in the palatable texture of their traditional food. As a result of this exercise it would nurture a positive relationship to their common native soil, as described in the next account; "*Vivir al lado del mar es mas sabroso...*" ("living near by the seaside is more delicious") were the lyrics sung by one of the migrants in between courses during a meal shared at the migrants housing, in remembrance of the delicious fish they used to eat in their coastal hometown in Peru. Migrants also commented that in Peru even with just a little money, a fresh, big fish can be purchased, "*the fish are so delicious fresh... as if they just jumped out of the sea*".

In contrast, comments in regard to Chilean food lead inevitably to the undisputable conclusion of the superiority of the Peruvian food. The dynamics of the food related conversations reveals how feelings regarding their national identity are channelled. Conversations around food were frequently held while talking about Peru. Memories of Peruvian cuisine were connected with a feeling of nostalgia and longing for being back in Peru. Conversations about food always occurred while sharing a meal with the migrants.

This also happened while shopping for food products, when two or more people engaged in such activities. Whereas with me, a Chilean citizen, these conversations took on another fashion, they tended to be more descriptive of the size, colour, and taste of vegetables and fruit, and quality of the meat used in Peru since it was implicitly assumed that I was not familiar with it. In summary, among migrants themselves, these conversations were dominated by memories but with me or other non Peruvian people present they were descriptive emphasizing its characteristics.

In my opinion, such comparisons helped the migrants to reposition themselves in their unbalanced relation with their host country. The interpretation I propose here is that remembering, recalling and appraising Peruvian food and Peru's natural resources allows migrants to strengthen their common cultural identity and reconcile themselves with a country which

has been steadily "expelling their people"<sup>(15)</sup>. By placing an emphasis on what the Peruvian natural environment gives them, Peruvian migrants acknowledge belonging to a country that despite its many problems (unemployment, corruption, political instability, and violence) remains faithful to its people and can provide for its population. As Demetrio, who used to be a fisherman in Chimbote often said: "*en Perú nadie se muere de hambre*" ("in Peru nobody dies of hunger"). In contrast, the harshness of Chilean society is expressed through the small size of the Chilean natural products and in its colourlessness and tastelessness food. Chile is seen a country which gives them jobs but does not feed them.

### *Concluding remarks*

From the observations made within the shared housing unit it was possible to interpret that the migrants' collective life was structured around food. In this paper I explored whether activities such as conversing, cooking and eating can be seen as a means through which migrants communicate, confirm and ultimately take part in a shared national identity. This cluster of activities forms a material and symbolic source of resistance to the multiple forms of oppression Peruvian migrants experience in the Chilean society.

It was shown how by appraising their national food, migrants reconcile themselves with their home country which has, in some way, expelled them. In sum, it was shown how the cooking of traditional food is used by migrants to maintain their health and well-being. Furthermore, the practices underlying migrants' food choices display traces of a coherent conception of health and ways to treat illness. This stems from a more ancestral knowledge, nowadays labelled as a popular medical system. I asserted that far from being arbitrary, these principles are based in an intrinsic logic and comprise a cultural resource for this migrant community.

Food choices also reveal the extent to which, through this transnational migration, an extension of previous mobile livelihood practices in Peru can be seen (such as internal rural-urban migration). Ultimately, changes in food and eating patterns demonstrate whether migrants' acculturation into the more modern and westernised urban setting of Santiago is taking place. In addition, changes that result from migrant women engaging in the labour market trigger changes in the traditional sexual division of labour. As observed, migrant men are increasingly taking part in cooking. Such changes may also be reinforced by the less rigid gender order prevalent in the Chilean society.

As has been demonstrated, by examining practices and meanings around food it is possible to look at the connections between material culture, identity and health. Examining the conditions in which food is prepared provides an opportunity to look at the wider political and social context in which the subjects are positioned. As shown, where migrants' identity and well-being is threatened, having control of the conditions in which food is cooked turns out to be of a vital importance. This reveals a broader role of food preparation and consumption regarding self-determination. Such control allows migrants to use food as a means to achieve cultural cohesion and to maintain their psychological and physical welfare.

## Notes

<sup>(1)</sup> DÖRING T.- HEIDE M.- MUHLEISEN S. (eds) (2003).

<sup>(2)</sup> Such groups are included Chinese, European, African and Japanese immigrants.

<sup>(3)</sup> Certainly, the selection of ingredients, its combinations and the cooking techniques are all codes containing traces of the paths followed by people in their previous journeys as well as those of their past generations. The ingredients currently used by Peruvian migrants in cooking are reminiscent of the cooking traditions from the sierra (such as the use of maize, yucca and potatoes), as well as of the coastal areas evident in the abundant use of fish and seafood. It is also very common to use the animal viscera as well as parts of the animals discarded by Chileans such as fish heads, particularly due to its cheap price. This seems to be a tradition inherited from slavery; since slaves were forced to develop tasteful meals out of animal leftovers discarded by their masters.

<sup>(4)</sup> For a comprehensive review see COUNIHAN C.-VAN ESTERIK P. (1997)

<sup>(5)</sup> The recognition of their professional titles in Chile was possible due to existing bilateral agreements subscribed to by the governments during the past century. According to recent statistics from the Ministry of Health, more than 50% of the professional personnel working in the Public Primary Health Care Sector (medical doctors, nurses and midwives) are of foreign stock from other Latin American countries.

<sup>(6)</sup> The Chilean northern cities of Arica and Antofagasta were once Peruvian and Bolivian territories respectively. Controversies around this issue continues until today troubling the countries relations

<sup>(7)</sup> Remittance money needs to be successively changed from Chilean pesos (ChP) into US dollars (US\$) and from US dollars to Peruvian soles, paying taxes and commissions with each transaction. The size of migrants' remittances depends heavily on the exchange rate. While the value of the US dollar has been steadily increasing, salaries in Chile have remained stable (minimum wage in Chile is ChP 110.000 pesos = US\$146 dollars-a-month, the exchange rate at the time was of 755 ChP per 1 US\$). For migrants, the monetary value of the salary earned in Chile is decreasing. Good times are gone, as migrants often say. In the past migrants enjoyed better salaries in the Chilean labour market and a more favourable exchange rates between the Chilean peso and the US dollar (for example in 1997 when the exchange rate was 500 ChP per 1 US\$).

<sup>(8)</sup> Living in overcrowded accommodation of devaluated building seems to be common among migrants in different context, as described for the case of Senegalese migrants in Italy (RICCIO B. 2002).

<sup>(9)</sup> A monthly rent for a room not bigger than 18 square meters was approximately US 65 dollars, and approximately US 45 dollars for a smaller room of 12 mts<sup>2</sup>. Electricity and water were paid separately.

<sup>(10)</sup> I rented a room in the house and lived there several days a week over a period of four months (September to December of the year 2002). Doing participatory observation meant joining migrants' normal activities and routines e.g. shopping, cooking, eating meals there, going out dancing, as well as more meaningful ones such as calling home. Migrants were aware of my identity and goals and had agreed on my presence among them

<sup>(11)</sup> Term used to refer to the socially recognized and accepted marriage, irrespective of its legal status.

<sup>(12)</sup> Music was also a central element.

<sup>(13)</sup> As I observed, no matter how little money migrants had or how uncertain they were about their next day's meal they never kept food leftovers to be eaten the next day. Leftover were always thrown away.

<sup>(14)</sup> In several cases identified among the migrants community temperature principles rules what should be eaten, and done or not done to maintain health and prevent illness, and are carefully applied. As said, they are based on the Hippocratic category of the different humors and temperatures present in the human body. E.g. being in a warm environment and moving too rapidly to a cold one may harm people's health, causing facial paralysis. Postpartum is a "hot" and particularly sensitive state. It is specially during the 20 days after giving birth that women should restrain from drinking and touching cold water or from exposing themselves to cold temperature, or they run the risk to get the culturally bound syndrome called "sobrepardo", which results when the cold temperature reaches the womb.

<sup>(15)</sup> It is estimated that more than 2 and half million of people make up the so called "Peruvian Diaspora". Along the last two decades, Peruvian citizens have been steadily leaving Peru, migrating to various countries in Europe, USA and Japan. In Latin America Peruvian migrants have mostly migrated to countries such as Argentina, and Venezuela and only lately to Chile.

## Bibliography

ARAUJO Kathy - LEGUA María Claudia - OSSANDON Loreto (2002), *Migrantes andinas en Chile: el caso de la migración peruana*, Fundación Instituto de la Mujer, Santiago de Chile.

COUNIHAN Carole - VAN ESTERIK Penny (1997), *Food and Culture. A Reader*, Routledge, New York - London.

CSORDAS Thomas (1994), *Embodiment and Experience. The existential ground of culture and self*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

DORING Tobias - HEIDE Markus - MUHLEISEN Susanne (eds.) (2003), *Eating Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Food*, "American Studies" (A Monograph Series), vol. 106, 2003.

LIN PANG Ching (2003), *Beyond' Authenticity': Reinterpreting Chinese Immigrant Food in Belgium*, in DORING Tobias - HEIDE Markus - MUHLEISEN Susanne (eds.), *Eating Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Food*, "American Studies" (A Monograph Series), vol. 106, 2003.

RICCIO Bruno (2002), *Toubab and Vu Cumpra. Italian perceptions of Senegalese transmigrants and the Senegalese Afro-Muslim critique of Italian society*, pp. 175-196, in GRILLO Ralph - PRATT Jeff (eds.), *The Politics of Recognizing Difference. Multiculturalism Italian-style*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, Aldershot (UK).