

BolivianExpress

Gratis Magazine





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9 THE AUTO
BODY EXPRIENCE

10 THE RIVER TREASURES
OF EL AMAZONAS

12 PARANORMAL
ACTIVITIES

14 THE RUINS OF
TIWANAKU

16 ATLANTIS
IN BOLIVIA

18 THE CATASTROPHE
OF LAGO POOPÓ

22 ROMANCE,
OLD AND NEW

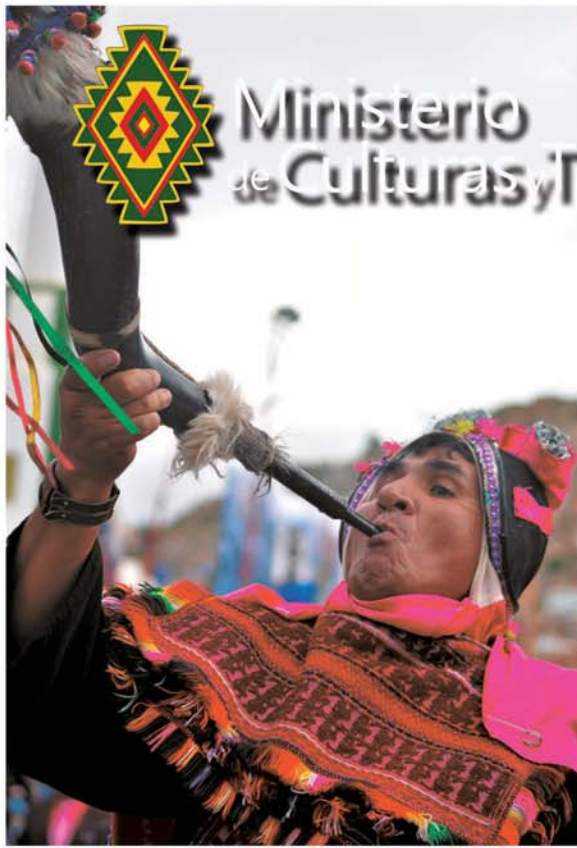
24 BOLIVIA'S ENDANGERED
LANGUAGES

27 BANDIDOS
YANQUIS



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*Promocionando
Nuestra Cultura
y turismo*



Located about 30 kilometers north of La Paz and nearly 5,500 meters up in the clouds, ghosts of a bygone era rest, old wooden relics of a past since past. Since the 1930's, this mountain, known as Chakaltaya, was home to the world's highest ski resort. This was the place where members of the Bolivian Andean Club and other visitors could cut through the powder at an altitude high above the flight paths of many airlines, gliding through the crisp, thin Andean air on top of glacial snows. But in 2009, this all came to an end.

Many scientists consider Bolivia a climate canary-in-a-coalmine, a country with a variety of ecosystems with considerable vulnerability to the effects of global carbon emissions and increasingly erratic El Niño weather patterns. One of the first and most glaring signs of this was the rapid melting of the glacier at Chakaltaya. Bolivians watched in disbelief as 80% of its cover vanished within 20 years. By the end of the first decade of the new century its melting rate had picked up pace, and in a relative instant, 18,000 years of snow and ice were gone.

The buildings that once housed the ski resort remain. On top of rocky, brown and black soil, the faded red and white lodge rests precariously along a ledge, its wind-worn siding fading and chipping, a shell of what was once there. Samuel Mendoza and his brother Adolfo, longtime members of the Bolivian Andean Club, still haunt the mountaintop, maintaining the property and serving as hosts to the trickle of tourists that come to this place every day to take in the views and to see for themselves the harsh truth about climate change in the Andes.

Recently, Bolivia has sadly entered the global spotlight yet again, this time marking the disappearance of the country's second-largest body of water, Lake Poopó. Another drastic result of climate change having adverse effects in Bolivia's ecosystems, it is more than unnerving to see another one of Bolivia's natural wonders disappear. Yet again, Bolivia is facing an ecological crisis that is emptying this place of its natural majesty.

In this issue of Bolivian Express, we think about the significance of appearances and disappearances in a changing world. As things come and go, the transitory nature of our experiences come into clear focus, and we set out to see what these processes mean. In writing about the Lost City of Atlantis and the stories of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, we study the ephemeral nature of legends, and how people, and in fact entire cities, can vanish, leaving those who remain to theorise about if and when those who are no longer present may reveal themselves again. In visiting the ruins of Tiwanaku or the waters of Amazonas, we share stories of Bolivia's cultural and natural treasures, leaving one to wonder what else is hidden beneath Bolivia's surface. We hunt ghosts and search for dying languages, and meditate on where tried-and-true, old-fashioned courtship techniques have gone.

In this moment in Bolivia, the latest disappearance of Lake Poopó is surely nothing but a loss, an ecological, economic and cultural catastrophe. But sometimes, disappearances can be seen as an opportunity for rebirth, an opening of spaces for something new to appear. While this may not be the case with the lake, or the glacier at Chakaltaya, not all disappearances are disasters. Life is full of surprises, one never knows when the next notable thing of great beauty may appear. ♦

N.B. Several Spanish and Aymara words are marked in **bold** throughout this issue. Their meanings can be found in our glossary

By William Wroblewski



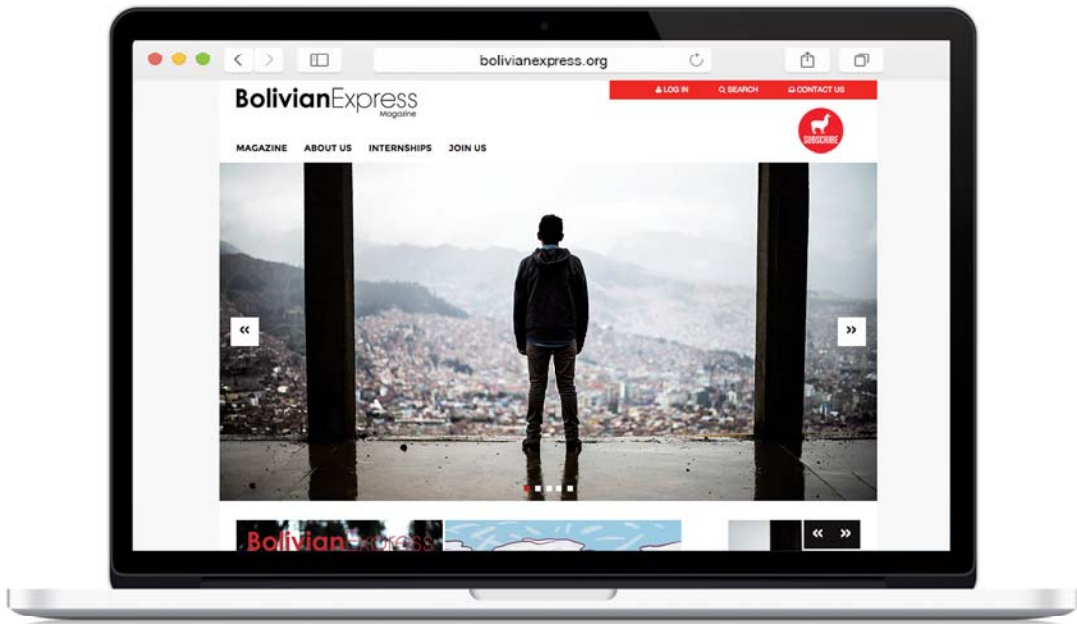
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THE AUTO BODY EXPERIENCE

TEXT : OLIVIA ROGALA

ILLUSTRATION: OSCAR ZALLES

Finally the time has come. Today is my day. My family and I have to leave La Paz early. The drive to Copacabana takes around three hours and we will probably have to wait in a long queue. But that is fine because we will be waiting outside the

We cannot be late, I have been waiting too long for this. My new family need me to do this. They trust me and I cannot let them down. They will take time to wait with me, they will dress me in beautiful fresh flowers. It certainly will be a **quantu**, the national flower of Bolivia, and gladiolus.

and pray to the Virgin. For me, for my family. For our safety. So I can always protect my family, never put them in danger. So I will be healthy for a long time.

And the best part is, I will finally receive a name! I think it may be Santiago, but I could be wrong. I just heard my family mentioning it a few times while talking about me. I really like it. After Saint James. It will just add to my blessing and happiness.

Afterwards, my family will open a beer and pour it all over me. For my luck. For our luck.



DES/APPEARANCES

MY FAMILY WILL OPEN A BEER AND POUR IT ALL OVER ME. FOR MY LUCK. FOR OUR LUCK.

beautiful Basílica de la Virgen de la Candelaria de Copacabana. Or maybe even by Lake Titicaca. The sun will reflect from the water like a sign from God. And it is all for me.

I might even have ribbons tied all around me. There will be a picture of the Virgin of Copacabana that will always look after me, in every moment of my existence. When it will finally be my time, the priest will come

They probably will be red and white in colour, but maybe my family will surprise me by adding some more!

This is a really big day for me. Even if the ceremony won't last more than 15 minutes, whether we go straight back home or celebrate with a dinner. It will be the most important day for me, the day I'm born again, the day I emerge in my new life, as Santiago.

I will do everything to shield my family when they drive me. I will be the best car my family ever had. ◦



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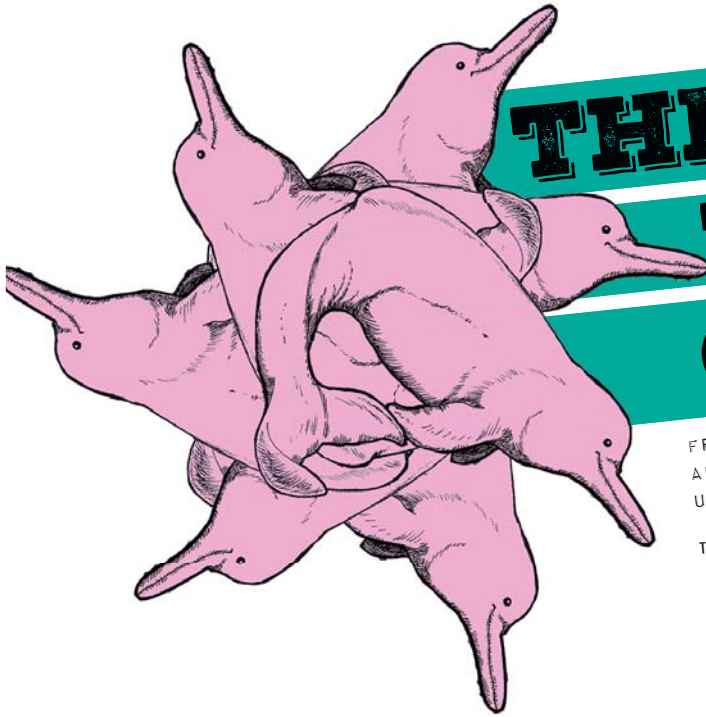
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THE RIVER TREASURE OF EL AM

FROLICKING IN JUNGLE RIVERS, BUFEOS
ARE JUST ONE PART OF BOLIVIA'S
UNIQUE AND DELICATE BIODIVERSITY

TEXT AND ILLUSTRATIONS: NIKOLAUS COX

Bolivia teems with the unique. From its wealth of pre-Colombian ruins to its haunting geography, from boundless lakes to vast salt plains, the country offers a wealth of the astounding. And upon the Yacuma River, at the headwaters of the Amazon in the country's northwest, dwells one of Bolivia's best examples of its **tesoro único**. Beneath the swirling brown waters that flow rap-

idly through the **pampas** which form a linchpin for the region's ecosystem and give life to countless organisms, live the **delfines rosados** – pink river dolphins. But their lives hang in a delicate equilibrium in which all things in Bolivia play a tense balancing act.

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idly through the **pampas** which form a linchpin for the region's ecosystem and give life to countless organisms, live the **delfines rosados** – pink river dolphins. But their lives hang in a delicate equilibrium in which all things in Bolivia play a tense balancing act.

The local name for the pink river dolphin is **bufeo**. When I asked my guide Ovidio from which indigenous language the name derived, he only laughed. There is no one language that propagated the name, Ovidio said, for the name itself is phonetic – it is the sound of a dolphin clearing thick river water from its blow-

hole. And indeed the sound of a spouting dolphin is akin to a wet cough or sneeze – very much a *bufeo*. These fresh-water dolphins look markedly different from their saltwater-dwelling cousins. Their eyes are small, for the river's detritus prevents anything from seeing more than an inch ahead. Their fins are paddle-shaped, allowing for greater manoeuvrability in the tight

waterways that are their homes. Their snouts are long and thin with a row of sharp fish-eating teeth. And these strange, chubby pink creatures are the apex predators of their waterways.

I went into the Amazonas in search of the *bufeo*. I had heard they were hard to find. Books listed them as endangered and anecdotes spoke of teams who had fruitlessly scoured the rivers for the elusive animal. My adventure was quite different. As we boarded our canoes at the port of Santa Rosa de Yacuma, at the frontier of Parque *Pampas del Yacuma* where the departments of Beni and La

Paz meet, two of the off-pink cetaceans rolled into the bay. It appeared the conditions were perfect for dolphins. The rainfall was worryingly slight for the Amazonas' human inhabitants, whose crops this season had suffered terribly. But what little rain had fallen was perfect for raising the river without flooding the plains. The dolphins were not confined to isolated pools as they are in dry weather, and the waters were not so high that the dolphins could spread out across inundated fields. Instead, pods frolicked along the length of the rivers, hunted piranhas in turbulent rapids and followed our motorised canoe.

Farmers in Bolivia feel the effects of the world's changing climate more than in other countries. Here, life for all animals, humans or otherwise, revolves around a delicate environmental balance. In the agricultural regions of the desolate **altiplano** and steaming jungles, everything depends upon rain. Few in the Amazonas disbelieve global warming, and they blame the changing state of El Niño upon this environmental disaster. But as crops wilt, the dolphins frolic in full view of the tourists, and a different economy booms.

My doom-saying vision of searching

RES AZONAS

the rivers for the 'critically' endangered animal had been undone. Ovidio explained the greatest worry locals have was not that the animal might go extinct, but that blooming populations upset the rivers' delicate equilibrium, upon which all life in the *pampas* depends. Everything exists in a balance – all creatures, both predator and prey, exist in harmony in the *pampas* ecosystem, as do the **granjeros** of the surrounding grassland. And as the dolphins flourish – the hunting of them being illegal and locals understanding that the long-term gains of keeping the animals alive for tourism outweighs the short-term benefits of selling their skin and oil – the fear grows that other animals may begin to disappear.

Maybe the dolphin was not so much the endangered but the endangerer. However upon a later visit I found that *pampas* life does not hinge upon the dolphins, but all upon the river, and the river relies upon the climate. My second visit was deeper into the rainy season, the river was higher and the *bufeos* nowhere to be seen. The rains had at last come, to the relief of the jungle farmers, and the lower fields lay flooded.

Nature is wild and unpredictable. The dolphins can live in a surplus, or be dispersed, depending upon the weather. And whilst they are not aware of it, everything in the *pampas* depends upon the weather. The rains had come and the tourists had a far grimmer vision of dolphin life. The farmers were the ones who now frolicked amidst their watered crops, and they gave thanks to **Pachamama**. But if the climate continues to change, with the rains increasingly unpredictable, it can be surmised that soon both *bufeos* and *granjeros* will suffer together. ♦

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PARANORMAL ACTIVITIES

THE MISSING GHOSTS OF ESTADIO HERNANDO SILES

TEXT: HUGH OLLARD
PHOTO: KIT FRETZ

‘Ghosts?’ asks our taxi driver. ‘Go to Puente de Las Americas.’ Unfortunately, we have just gone over it. It’s nearing 11 pm on a Monday night, and we’re crossing La Paz from Plaza Isabel la Catolica to the working-class neighborhood of Miraflores. We are looking for the city’s apparent supernatural centres and our next stop is the Estadio Hernando Siles. It is a building viewed by many as deeply haunted, after the viral video of an apparition and the testimony of an unnamed architect.

Huddled on the steps of Pollos Copacabana opposite La Paz’s principal football stadium, we wait an hour for Leao Armas and Topacio Falcon, the ghost hunting power couple of Santa Cruz. Finally, a taxi draws up and out they come.

The first thing one notices about Leao

Armas is a thirst for credibility. Bundling out the cab with his wife, Topacio Falcon, he hauls two pieces of luggage. Topacio carries a dainty smaller one,

We emerge out onto the pitch and Topacio immediately hears footsteps.

containing \$8,000 worth of top of the range, ghost-busting equipment. They present themselves replete with caps and shirts emblazoned with the logo from a certain Bill Murray film.

Quickly, Leao launches into a quasi-soliloquy and says he studied exorcism, lived around the Vatican for two years and did a job in New York, where they picked up their high range gear. He informs us it is a family business and that his youngest child has ‘the sense’. Then he offers a plan for the

night and gives us a clear paranormal timetable, a lay of the land. Ghosts appear from midnight until 3 am, whilst demons appear from that point till sunrise. Mirrors are portals, we learn. Suicides make ghosts.

And, perhaps, they are not wrong. On our first night’s adventure, the stadium lies still, green blinds covering dark windows. No guard is in sight. Knocking on the iron bars of Gate 2 with his ring, Leao calls out. ‘Señor! Hola! Señor?’ A muffled thud replies. He tries again. ‘Señor! Hola! Senooooor?’ Again a muffled thud. Turning to us with eyes wide, he thrusts out his arm. ‘Look!’ Enthralled, we all do. Even in the half-darkness, goose bumps are clearly visible on his arm. ‘It’s not scientific,’ he says. ‘But its shows something is going on.’

At every iron-barred gate, Leao and

Topacio stop and peer before Leao repeats his call. As we approach Gate 9, Topacio stops. She points out movements beyond the bars. Interest piqued, we all similarly stop and look. There is definitely something there, but what? We nervously reach the bars. Leao repeats his call,

Even in the half-darkness, goose bumps are clearly visible on his arm

'Hola! Señor! Señor?' Now, suddenly unsure of ourselves, we peer into the darkness. Some of us realise it is nothing more than our shadows moving, but Topacio is convinced. Gripping the bars, she shines a torch into the dark abyss. Only when we move off is she prepared to let go.

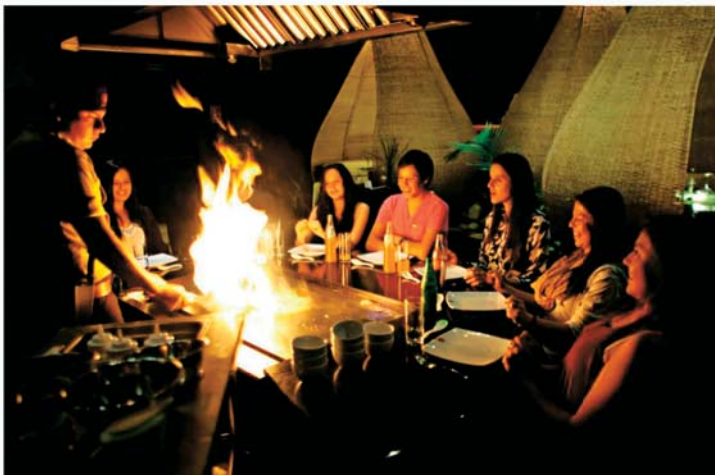
Unable to get in on our first night, we spend the interior of the next week trying. A few baffled officials and a plastic trophy-cum-thank-you-present later, we stand outside Gate 4 the following Friday. The mood is different; the couple says they have mentally prepared themselves for a big night. Leao, having called on the protection of both **Pachamama** and God, furiously chews coca leaves as we watch the silhouette of a caretaker limp into view. Topacio has previously filmed an introduction to the ghost hunt, in which Leao invites the camera to accompany us on our exploration.

Once inside, the guard leads us to one of the changing rooms before departing with a tired shrug. We descend to the tunnel and into semi-darkness. 'It's colder here,' says Topacio, referring either to paranormal presences or atmospheric conditions 4,000m above sea level at midnight. We emerge out onto the pitch and Topacio immediately hears footsteps. She scans the empty stands with a torch, illuminating the Coca-Cola signs, but nothing more.

Having set up the motion sensor and duly triggering it themselves, we embark on a lap of the stadium. We are promised a guide and meet a bleary-eyed Hector at Gate 9. He leads us back out onto the pitch and points out another stand but discredits Leao's haunting theories. We walk through the concourses of the east stand and Leao's EMF meter (a device that measures electro-magnetic fields and, according to ghost hunters, paranormal activity) starts to go wild. He runs ahead, searching nooks and crannies for any sign of an apparition.

As we walk back down to pitch level, Leao senses we are not alone. The EMF meter is going crazy, registering maximum readings on the arbitrary scale. Leao summons us into a circle and requests that the demons reveal themselves. The pair take photos, saying the camera might pick something up, but the supernatural seems to think it has done enough. The readings die. The rain begins. We trickle out of the stadium and leave the ghosts behind.

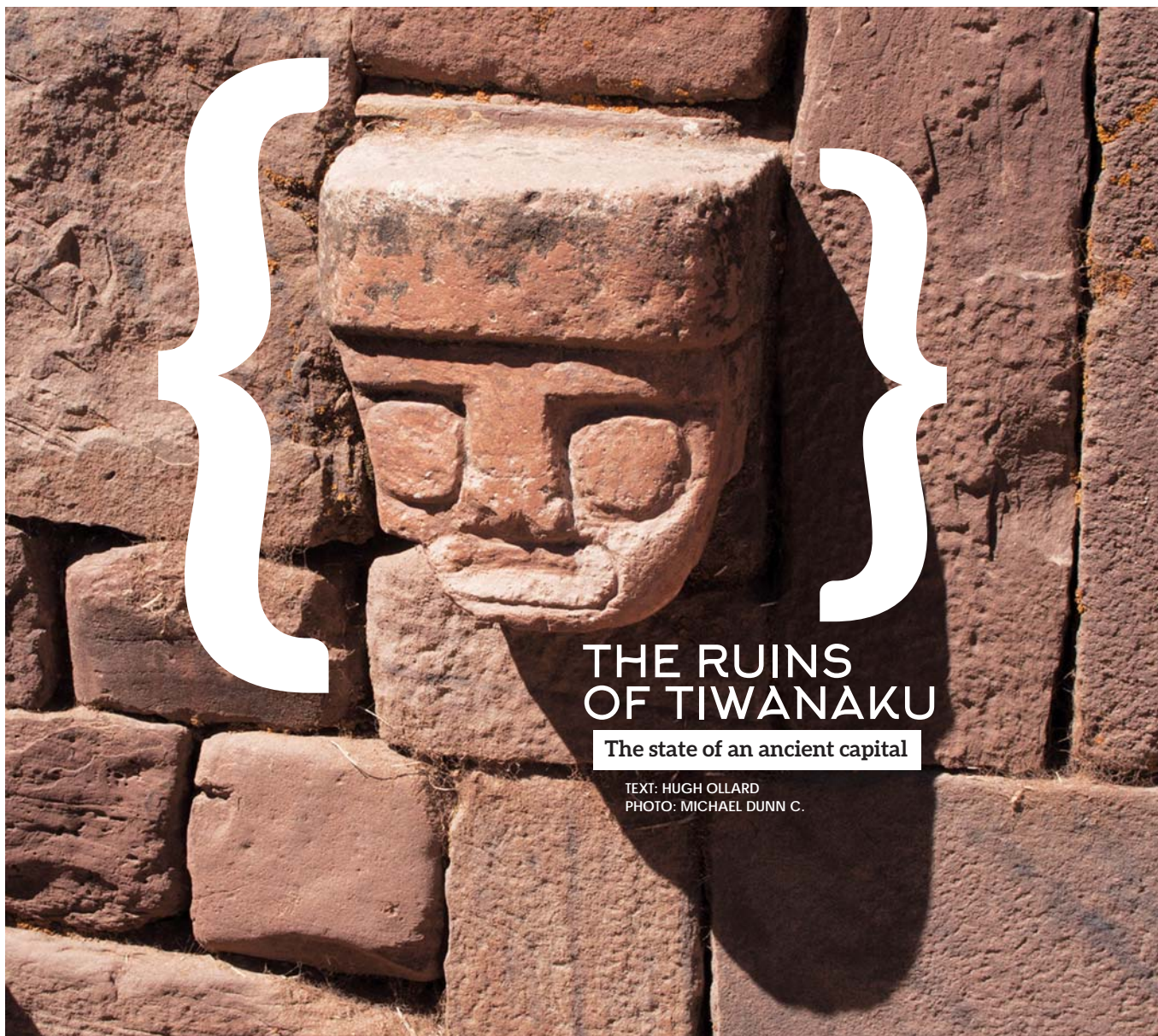
La Paz is an old city. It is rife with superstition and beliefs in the supernatural. We came to Estadio Hernando Siles hoping to create our own but left with little more than memories of a bleeping EMF detector and a moonlit walk through a deserted stadium.♦



JARDIN DE ASIA

Calacoto calle 13 Esq. Av. Julio Patiño
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DIS/APPEARANCES



THE RUINS OF TIWANAKU

The state of an ancient capital

TEXT: HUGH OLLARD
PHOTO: MICHAEL DUNN C.

Tiwanku is the birthplace of a dominant civilisation. It contains examples of agricultural technology and stonework that modern experts still struggle to understand. However, it currently consists of a huddle of souvenir huts and unexplained ruins.

Arriving at the site, down a dusty road seemingly leading nowhere, there is a distinct sense of going through the motions. A tiny ticket office, two museums and a sign to the ruins greet you. A guide timidly asks if you want a tour.

The walk to the bus terminal completes the impression of Tiwanaku as a sleepy town still yet to be wakened by the shake of tourists. A couple of restaurants, some men sitting outside and run down houses constitute the town centre. As Jedu Sagárnaga, professor

of archaeology at Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (UMSA), says, neither the authorities nor the local people care as long as the site brings in some level of tourism.

Only precious ruins remain from the advanced Tiwanaku civilisation, which influenced the surrounding 600,000 km of land from 400-900 AD. The site faces issues associated to the altitude, such as premature weathering and erosion of the stone. This has led to the diaspora of some of the site's major attractions. Some were moved to museums for their protection while those of the Kalasasaya Temple have almost disappeared in the inclement conditions.

Tiwanaku has also fallen prey to stone robbers. A nearby railway bridge contains stones identified as belonging to the site. The famous Akapana Pyramid

lacks its original stonework thanks to its use as a quarry for buildings in cities. Furthermore, efforts to reconstruct the site have also weakened its standing. The walls that stand around the Kalasasaya were built in the 1960s and bear little resemblance to their archaeological recreations.

It is stagnating in its present form. The Bolivian government has denied funds for any additional research into the 90% of the site still underground. The museums are 40 years old with no update in sight. Tiwanaku operates more as a cultural football than a national treasure. It has become a political stage for President Evo Morales and turns into a party centre for **Aymara** New Year in June, despite it having no connection to Aymaran culture. According to Prof. Sagárnaga, what 'was the capital of a very important state is now used as a dancefloor'.

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ATLANTIS IN BOLIVIA

SEARCHING FOR THE LOST CITY AT PAMPA AULLAGAS

TEXT : FLORENCE WILDBLOOD
PHOTO: EDUARDO MONTAÑO

When people imagine the lost city of Atlantis, they don't tend to picture an arid, shrubby landscape miles away from the ocean. They think instead of a sunken metropolis, barnacled yet still telling of former glory, or they envisage the paragon of cities first described in Plato's *Timaeus*. The semi-desert of Pampa Aullagas, around three hours from Oruro, is far from either of these depictions, but many take it to be the site of this legendary city.

Pampa Aullagas' main feature is a cactus-covered hill, a single undula-

tion in the flat, sandy surroundings. Its closest body of water, **Lago Poopó**, dried up very recently, and is now little more than a vast expanse of dusty, cracked ground. If you look closely, however, there are several enigmatic features that mark this place as a unique destination. Pottery shards, telling of some kind of former civilisation, litter the barren ground; the rocks are black, red and white, as Plato suggested; and the former canals that snake around the hill are caked in aquatic fossils and marine sand. These canals correspond in number and form to those in Plato's story.

The Atlantis tale was originally understood to be no more than a myth. It wasn't until the 19th century that people started to take it seriously. In 1881, writer and politician Ignatius Donnelly famously argued that ancient cultures weren't advanced enough to develop concepts like language and religion independently and that they must therefore have come from another unknown civilisation – Atlantis. Since then, the lines between myth and truth regarding Atlantis have become increasingly blurred. Nowadays, many explorers devote their lives to tracking down this potentially fictional city beneath the waves, guided by Plato's description. Speculators have placed Atlantis in places as diverse as Greece, Cuba, Great Britain and, interestingly, here in Bolivia.

The British cartographer Jim Allen, for example, concludes that the city of Atlantis simply couldn't be anywhere else. Following Plato's directions, he has come to believe that the impressive island 'opposite the Pillars



of Hercules' is synonymous with South America. According to Allen, there can be no sunken continent missing in the Atlantic, since we can perfectly piece Pangea back together. He argues that the expansive artificial lakes in Moxos and the enigmatic Nazca Lines in Peru are only some of the remnants of Atlantean civilization. For him, the so-called kingdom of Atlantis, described by Plato as a level, rectangular plain surrounded by mountains, is none other than the Bolivian **altiplano**.

Apart from these geographical links, there are uncanny connections between the story of Atlantis and Bolivian mythology. In Greek legend, Poseidon carved out the island city of Atlantis from the hill on which his wife Cleito lived. In Bolivian myth, **Tunupa**, also the God of the sea, created Pampa Aullagas in a similar context. Some argue that Plato used Bolivian legend to write the Timaeus and applied Greek names merely to appeal to his readers. The name Atlantis, after all, has a Latin American origin.

Likewise, the local legend of the **Desaguadero** depicts a scenario similar to the one Plato suggests swallowed up the city of Atlantis. The sea has now receded after these theoretical events, leaving sparse and often nondescript ruins around South America, including those at Pampa Aullagas. Regardless of its mythological origin, the story of

Atlantis remains alive in the minds of many, as evidenced by the cavern like 'Atlantis Bolivia' shop El Prado in La Paz, which is adorned wall to wall with photographic evidence and Atlantis-inspired memorabilia.

The myth of Atlantis 'connects us with a more satisfying and imaginative version of our origin. It is part of the mythological capacity of man to rewrite their history.' - Marcelo Valero

In the midst of the intrigue, it's easy to forget the glaring inconsistency in Allen's theory, and all others that insist on Atlantis being a real place. It was most likely never meant to be so. It seems the stories surrounding Atlantis have proliferated due to our modern fascination with mystery. According to Marcelo Valero, a specialist in Andean culture and, the myth of Atlantis 'connects us with a more satisfying and imaginative version of our origin. It is part of the mythological capacity of man to rewrite their history.'

If we accept Allen's interpretation of the Atlantis story, we also have to question widely-held theories about the age and origin of Andean civilization. This may seem illogical, but perhaps we should learn to embrace our curiosity and remind ourselves that conventional truths aren't necessarily beyond contention. ♦

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THE CATASTROPHIC OF LAGO

WHEN BOLIVIA'S SECOND LAGO DRIES UP,
WHAT IS LEFT?
TEXT AND PHOTOS BY [unreadable]

THE TROPHE POOPÓ

LARGEST LAKE DRIES UP,
WHAT'S BEHIND?
BY KIT FRETZ





of bullet holes between its ribs. Enrique Richard, the biologist and environmental investigator who is showing me around Poopó, turns to me and says, 'La catástrofe se transforma en tragedia cuando mataron este animal' (The catastrophe became a tragedy when they killed this animal).

The reason for their deaths is clear: all three vicuñas have been skinned for their **lana**, an incredibly fine and warm wool that is highly prized the world over and is the cause of poaching across the Andes. A kilo of *lana* can sell for over US\$500, making the windfall from three vicuñas a substantial amount of money for anyone living in this remote part of the **altiplano**. It is an especially large amount of money for a fisherman who no longer has any fish to catch.

Lago Poopó, Bolivia's second largest lake after *Lago Titicaca*, has completely disappeared in the last two months. Surprisingly, a lake once over six times the size of the city of La Paz has vanished. There are many factors at play. The lake had an average depth of 1.4m, which made it absorb more heat than deeper bodies of water like Titicaca. At 3,686m, its altitude combined with rising global temperatures and the El

Niño phenomenon, leading to higher rates of evaporation. Despite these environmental factors, it is believed that the lake would not be dry were it not for the impact of industry.

When we find the second vicuña it is accompanied by another banana peel that all but confirms our suspicions: this is the work of a human. Its throat has been slit, making a perfect

Yet although we drive for miles, the water never gets any closer

nest for thousands of maggots.

The third body puts it beyond doubt. As well as an open throat, it has a pair

A dead vicuña lies on the cracked, parched ground formerly known as **Lago Poopó**. As we approach it, the sunshine reflects off of its mummified muscles, making them appear like a hunk of scrap metal. I'm reminded of the wreckage of the old planes that litter the El Alto airport we passed this morning. A banana peel, shrivelled and blackened from the sunlight, lays a few metres from the corpse. It's the only sign of human life for miles.

Since the 1980's, Bolivia and Perú have either licensed or ignored the diversion of water from Poopó's tributaries for the use of the agricultural and mining industries. Increasingly in the last decade, more than 300 mining companies

(including Huanuni, the largest state owned tin mine) have taken water from the **Desaguadero** river and the lake's other tributaries, often returning it to the source highly contaminated. Various metals and even arsenic have clogged the rivers with sediment and reduced the flow of incoming water. This high level of contamination began to claim the lives of some of Poopó's wild animal life even before the lake's disappearance.

Out in the distance, stretching across the horizon is a constant mirage. Initially I believe in my eyes, in the reflections of the islands that rise from the plain. Yet although we drive for miles, the water never gets any closer and it's then that I understand the illusion. Enrique swerves his Jeep towards anything that breaks the monotony of the barren lakebed. Alongside the slaughtered vicuñas are the corpses of multiple bird species dotting the Poopó landscape. There are flamingos, geese and ducks from the Andean region, as well as **keñolas**, one of the species most affected by this disaster. Among the corpses walk herds of cows, sheep and vicuñas, though I never get near the latter, since they have an understandable fear of humans.

Tending his flock of sheep as they graze on plants that are growing on the former lakebed is Felix Augustopampa. 'All of the lake is like this. There are no fish. This is all that's left,' he says bitterly, gesturing at the vast expanse of arid desert. The irony is that all of this could have been avoided.

So the question remains, what can be done to save *Lago Poopó*? One of the most expensive yet most effective options would be to dredge the lake's sediment of the contaminants

and residues. Given that the lake is currently empty, it would be cheaper and easier to do this now. Alone, however, this would not be enough. The contamination of the water must be curtailed and the diversion of Poopó's tributaries must be drastically reduced and regulated.

The catastrophe became a tragedy when they killed this animal

By taking these measures, the **Estado Plurinacional** could boost credibility and show the world that Bolivia is treating climate change as the serious threat we know it to be. As of yet, the government has only been accused of mismanagement. It received

recently as 1994 – and may return with the rains, the state needs to be more aggressive in confronting the reality of climate change.

On the other hand, Enrique forcefully stressed that the responsibility for this disaster and the potential recovery doesn't only lie with the state and the mining and agricultural industries, but with each and every Bolivian citizen. According to him, both the state and the majority of the Bolivian population have faced the effects of climate change with apathy and inaction. 'Bolivians will march for virtually anything,' he states, 'but when it comes to climate change, there's nobody on the streets.' Enrique sustains there is a need for greater environmental awareness in Bolivia, and



€14 million from the European Union and set aside a further 897 million Bolivianos to solve the problems of Poopó, but the lake still disappeared. President Evo Morales has sought to shift the blame away from the government, proposing the possibility that the lake could return. After returning from the UN climate change conference in Paris in December, he said, 'My father told me about crossing the lake on a bicycle once when it dried up.' While the lake has disappeared before – as

that general studies on climate change should be included in the Bolivian curriculum. 'You cannot conserve what you are not aware of,' he says.

One can only hope that the next generation of Bolivians will be as well-informed as Enrique's 9-year-old daughter who, surrounded by the barren desert that was once a lake, told me of her desire for 'paz y tranquilidad, y justicia para la naturaleza' (peace and tranquility, and justice for nature).•



“ I DON'T BELIEVE IN MAGIC “
THE YOUNG BOY SAID.
THE OLD MAN SMILED.
“ YOU WILL, WHEN YOU SEE HER ”

ATTICUS

possible. She, on the other hand, even at 21, had to be home by eight o'clock in the evening, escorted by a “gentleman” from her social circle.

“Bolivia back then was going through one of the worst economic crises Latin America has ever seen. Since Hernán Siles Suazo took power in the midst of a series of different governments and dictatorships, annual inflation had risen to 200%. It was an unsustainable situation for a young man like me who had to care for himself. I had to make one of the most drastic decisions of my life: I moved to London, England, where I could save every penny I earned, motivated by the fact that it was the only way I could have a future with her.

“I remember those days at Gordon’s Wine Bar on Villiers Street, the pub I managed to get work in, listening repeatedly to *A Forest* by The Cure and taking a cheeky 30 minutes every day to write letters about my days in that city. I’d send them by post and wait desperately for about three weeks for a reply. The mental effort to avoid thinking she had forgotten me and was with someone else was truly exhausting. Can you imagine how difficult it was? A relationship between two people was

One time the old man said:

“The truth is I don’t understand you young people and the way you handle relationships. Back in my day – in the 80s, I mean – it was hard enough just to meet a girl you wanted to go out with. There were no smartphones, no emails, never mind Facebook or other social networks. I had to wait anxiously for her home phone to ring off the hook and hope she was the one to answer. If anyone else answered, I would hang up immediately, which was tiresome as I’d have to try again later. I would take the number 2 bus from Sopocachi to reach Calle Indaburo near Jaén, a very traditional area of La Paz where my current wife used to live. She was from a conservative family. As you can imagine, she had to make stealthy escapes via the balcony of her house so we could see each other. Obviously, her parents did not agree with our relationship. I was an “experienced 25-year-old boy,” as they saw it. I had left the family nest at age 17 to start working and studying so I could be independent as early as



certainly very difficult to sustain..

“Near or far from that person, it didn’t matter. My life and the lives of most people of my generation were geared around being in a relationship. Conventional marriages were idealised.

“Nowadays you lot just live relationships through “long-distance Whatsapps” and all I see are casual relationships everywhere, based on any old thing, whilst fewer relationships are founded on true love.”

The young boy answered:

“Sir, I understand exactly what you’re saying. That kind of romanticism worthy of a novel by Gabriel García Márquez just doesn’t exist anymore. It has disappeared entirely. However, you should know that today I spent four hours at my university where I should have been paying attention to an economics class, and then a marketing one, but my head was exploding as I tried to write the right Whatsapp message to her. Just a little written message, that could be interpreted in thousands of ways and would maybe say what I didn’t want it to, leading to a fight with someone I love and a sleepless night. The other day as I was scrolling down Facebook on my smartphone, I read an almost anonymous post that in my opinion aptly described how we are the fearful generation. This generation was born just to hide behind the image we want to portray in our social network profiles. You, sir, think they help our relationships but let me tell you, it’s quite the opposite.

“I think the ease we have now in responding to a “romantic” message in a millisecond has become a mental effort – an even bigger and more exhausting one. What song should I share with her? Should I reply straight away or wait 10 minutes? No, if I reply now I lose. Has she read my status? She hasn’t been online for more than 2 hours. Is she with someone else? If she sees I’ve seen the message she’ll think I’m angry. It’s 3 in the morning and we can’t stop sending voice messages!

“You should understand, sir, so many social connotations come with this huge range of communicative devices that overwhelm our relationships. Don’t get me wrong, I mean, I’d honestly do anything for her. It is a genuine feeling. I just won’t say it through a tune by The Cure. Instead, I might send her the new crappy Justin Bieber song.”

The young boy laughed about that stupid comment.

The old man was thoughtful.◦



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BOLIVIA'S ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

THE PLIGHT OF THE KALLAWAYA SHINES A LIGHT ON DISAPPEARING MOTHER TONGUES.

TEXT AND PHOTOS: FLORENCE WILDBLOOD



Rubén Calancha wears a traditional multicolour robe, vibrant against the surrounding whitewashed walls. He smiles rarely and speaks hesitantly, exuding knowledge about his heritage in a quiet, understated manner. He doesn't deny that it's a privilege to be part of his unique community, but he is also wary of the threats it faces in a modernizing world. Rubén is a Kallawaya, and his is a heritage in decline. The Kallawaya are an itinerant group of Bolivian healers, and he is one of the last speakers of their language.

Once the last remaining speaker of a language dies, we lose a unique interpretation of the world. We also lose irreparably the bulk of knowledge encoded within the language. This knowledge has been sustained by the human mind, not the Internet, so can never be resurrected. It's a pretty uncomfortable degree of finality for a generation so used to having information at their fingertips.

But what if this this knowledge had been deliberately secret all along? The Kallawayas are a group of healers, based

mainly in Chacarani in the department of Potosí, who continue to communicate their age-old insight on medicinal plants via an impenetrable dialect even now, 400 years after the fall of the Inca Empire. They're renowned for this knowledge, and also for their rituals: **mesa blanca** ceremonies for 'travel, business, housing,' Rubén explains, and **mesa negra** ceremonies for 'bad events,' like deaths. Their mystical use of llama fetuses and coca leaves within these rituals is a very public affair, but when I ask Rubén about their language, he is resolute in his response: 'It's a secret.' The knowledge encoded within this private language expands far beyond what is shared, and is of incalculable value. Perhaps by communicating in this way, the Kallawayas avoid being exploited by people seeking lucrative benefits from their collective wisdom. Yet with fewer than 100 speakers spread around six communities, we have cause to worry about the future of this wisdom. In fact, it's fairly remarkable that the language, passed only between men, isn't already obsolete.

For many, the issue of endangered languages seems at times distant and often irrelevant. Most of us are native speakers of one of the world's main languages, and can't even come close to understanding how it feels to, almost single-handedly, sustain our means of communication. According to Daniel Kaufman, founder and executive director of the US-based Endangered Language Alliance, it generally isn't a good feeling.

'Speakers of endangered languages have a wide range of feelings about their languages not being spoken by children,' Kaufman says. 'In the vast majority of cases, it's a negative feeling.'

'It's sad,' confirms Rubén. His brow furrows as he speaks of the attitudes of young people in his community, bemoaning that 'they're no longer engaged with learning the language.' When I ask him why, he blames the magnetism of Bolivia's (predominantly Spanish-speaking) cities. 'The countryside has nothing to offer them,' he sighs, before emphasising the importance of projects to engage the youth with the language and healing techniques of the Kallawayas.

It appears to be a natural result of urbanisation and globalisation that spoken communication becomes more and more dominated by a few, monolithic languages. This may seem like a good

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thing on the surface: speaking only a minority language can be isolating, and being brought up with another instead is often the key to assimilation into society. However, lesser-spoken dialects can and must coexist with the likes of Mandarin, Spanish and English. Our culture is so often one of blind efficiency, and because of this, we have to be careful about what we leave behind. The value of diversity might be intangible, but it's also very difficult to deny.

'In this era, languages are dying because of social and political coercion, not because of "natural causes"; Kaufman says. If this is true, and the problem is predominantly caused by humans, it's a lot easier to fix than if it's a natural phenomenon. It also means we have a responsibility to fix it: many of us are unconsciously complicit in the sidelining of smaller languages.

The Bolivian government has become something of a model for other countries struggling with similar problems. Unlike places like China and Russia, where ethnic languages are seen as a threat to internal unity and suppressed, Bolivia under Evo Morales is well on its way to preserving several of its endangered languages.

For example, as a means to preserve the **Quechua** language, the state has enforced multilingual education in its schools. Indigenous languages (**Aymara** and **Quechua** the most well-known) are taught side by side with Spanish. On top of this, all public sector workers have to speak at least one indigenous language, aided by government-sponsored training programmes.

However, these programmes have had variable success, and there is still a large amount of work to be done. Rubén is indignant about the government's measures, declaring, 'They aren't doing anything.' For him, the reason behind the disappearance of so many languages is profoundly po-

Anna Luisa Daigneault, the Latin America projects coordinator at the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages, has a largely positive view of the government's efforts, but she too emphasises the need for more focus on the smallest of languages. 'I think incredible work has been done in Bolivia to protect

Quechua and *Aymara*. Bolivia is in the lead in South America when it comes to promoting and celebrating indigenous languages', she says. 'I think more work needs to be done to protect smaller local languages, such as Monkox Bésiro', an indigenous language spoken in Santa Cruz department.

According to UNESCO, by the end of this century, around 50% of the world's existing languages will most likely survive only as recordings; one language dies approximately every four months. It's easy to accept their gradual disappearance as a natural process, a fact of life. But as Daniel Kaufman emphasises, 'As long as there is a single speaker, or even good documentation of a language, there is hope for reviving it.'

I ask Rubén how the Kallawayaya language has survived for so long without support, and he agrees that it is fairly re-

markable. 'It's been a long time, but it's still here', he murmurs, unable to provide a specific reason. Together we muse on the auspicious circumstances that have allowed for its continuation: perhaps purely because it is interesting, and useful, I suggest. He agrees. It's not just Kallawayaya – each one of Bolivia's colourful languages has an inexplicable draw, and this is something to be celebrated and preserved. ♦



Once the last remaining speaker of a language dies, we lose a unique interpretation of the world.

litical. The government care more about 'money and power'. He agrees that a sufficient amount is being done to preserve, for example, *Aymara* and *Quechua*, but it's clear that any overall improvement has yet to reach his community.

BANDIDOS YANQUIS

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE
KID IN THE LAST MOMENTS OF THEIR LIVES?

TEXT AND PHOTO : OLIVIA ROGALA

One of the biggest movie hits in 1969 was Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid starring Paul Newman and Robert Redford. Based on real events, the film tells a story of the outlaws' adventures in the North America with their gang, their flight to Bolivia and their last moments on the **altiplano**.

The film depicts their end in blockbuster fashion, with an epic shootout. But the last moments of Cassidy and the Kid are, for many, still a big mystery, with dozens of theories on how their lives ended. Did they die in the the village of San Vicente like the film suggests, or did they survive the famous shootout? Did Butch Cassidy really get plastic surgery in France and return to a normal life in Washington State? Did the pair escape to Russia and open a dry-cleaning business? Or were they dead even before they reached Bolivia?

LeRoy Parker, better known as Butch Cassidy, and Harry Longabough, the Sundance Kid, were famous **bandidos yanquis** in South America. They both belonged to the 'Wild Bunch gang' that

robbed trains, banks and mine workers' wages in North America in the late nineteenth century. However, after some disputes inside the gang, the duo went their own way. With the Pinkerton Detective Agency hot on their trail in the western United States, the *bandidos yanquis* left for South America to escape the heat and to settle down. Yet their past caught up with them, and after a few years of non-criminal life, Pinkerton detectives found them in Argentina. To get away, Cassidy and the Kid went back to doing what they knew best.

Bill Cassidy, who said he was the outlaw's son, claimed that his dad died when he was run over by a limousine.

They began robbing banks in Chile and Argentina, and in 1906 found themselves in Bolivia. Here they again tried to live normal lives, this time guarding, ironically, the payrolls of miners. According to letters he sent to friends, Cassidy was tired of his criminal lifestyle and constantly running away. He wanted to settle down for good, even choosing Santa Cruz as

'a place he sought for 20 years.'

Possibly to create a cushion for retirement, the pair decided to go back to robbery. They headed to the south of Bolivia where there were many wealthy mining companies. On November 4, 1908, they robbed a convoy in Huaca Huañusca, on the *altiplano* of Potosí department. Two days later, in nearby San Vicente, a four-man military patrol discovered them and shot up the room where they were staying. In the morning, the bodies of two North Americans were found. Rumor says that Cassidy shot his wounded partner, then turned his gun on himself.

It's said that their bodies were buried in the San Vicente cemetery, in an unmarked grave, but many people believe otherwise.

Even before Cassidy and the Kid fled North America, various sources reported that Cassidy had died in Utah at age 32. Newspapers reported that 'he certainly must have more lives than a whole family of cats,' and that 'several of him have been killed but he still flourishes.'

Some members of the Kid's family be-



lieved that he did die in San Vicente because they stopped receiving letters from him after the alleged shootout. Yet someone in Idaho claimed that his neighbour was the Kid's son, and that the Kid died many years later after the shootout in Washington State.

Cassidy's sister claimed that he died of pneumonia in Washington State in 1937. There's also the story of machine shop owner William T. Phillips, who claimed to be Butch Cassidy himself. In this story, Cassidy escaped the San Vicente shootout, leaving the Sundance Kid behind and travelling to Paris for plastic surgery; he then returned to Washington to marry his wife in 1908 (never mind that that's the year of the shootout, a troubling inconsistency for this particular version of events). Phillips did have extensive knowledge of Cassidy's childhood and youth, and he even looked a bit like the famous outlaw. But Cassidy's sister said Phillips was an imposter, even though her brother occasionally used the name Phillips as an alias. After other Cassidy family members cast doubt on Phillips's claim, some journalists investigated and proved that Phillips and Cassidy were not the same person and that they had met in prison in Wyoming (before Cassidy even joined the Wild Bunch gang), keeping in touch after their release.

There are also claims from Butch's 'children'. Bill Cassidy, who said he was the outlaw's son, claimed that his dad died when he was run over by a limousine after spending a few years in relative seclusion in Richfield, Wisconsin.

And in 1991, the North American television show *Unsolved Mysteries* got a call from a man claiming to be Cassidy's son, who reported that his dad passed away in 1978 (which would make him 112 years old). And a man claiming to be Butch's great-great-nephew said that there is only one story circulating in his family: Cassidy lived in California until his death in the 1930s.

Other rumours abound: Cassidy died under a fake name, crushed in a mining accident in Nevada sometime around 1944; the Kid escaped Bolivia while operating a Wild West show in the Andes starring Will Rogers and Billy the Kid, and he died in Montana in 1967.

Butch and the Kid died many times in Latin America too: in Honduras, Mexico, Chile and Argentina, shot dead or having committed suicide.

Meanwhile, Pinkerton Agency files either initiated or just added to the theories. After the San Vicente shootout, the agency listed them as 'dead, but unac-

counted for'. In a letter sent to United States about the death of the bandits, the Pinkerton general manager stated, 'Parker was dead and deader than hell. I am inclined to believe that the information given by the informant about Parker being dead is true but of course I cannot prove it.'

And scenarios kept coming in: Cassidy was shot by the police somewhere in New Mexico. The Kid was last seen in Venezuela in 1900. They were both shot dead in Uruguay in 1911. Moreover, it took three years for the Bolivian government to send an official report to the US government, stating the death of two unknown Americans.

In 1991, a team of anthropologists went to investigate the outlaws' DNA, to be uncovered from their graves. They had difficulties finding the graves and identifying the bodies of the actual bandits, and in the end the extracted DNA did not match the DNA of Cassidy's and the Kid's relatives.

To try and uncover the truth, I went to Tupiza to follow the bandits' last moments. The dry **altiplano** made me think I went back in time: horses are still a mode of transport, with their riders wearing cowboy hats. I talked to ranchers, and I was lucky enough to meet some people from San Vicente. Everyone knew who Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were. When asked what happened, they only ever gave one answer: they were shot dead in San Vicente.

Even today, the true reason for and place of their deaths is unknown. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid certainly did have more lives than a whole family of cats. As for us, we have plenty of theories to choose from. One thing is known for sure, the **bandidos yanquis** left behind a true legacy of mystery, a mystery tied tight to Bolivia. Regardless of all the theories, it is in Bolivia that the final days of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid belong. ♦



Here begins the story of a visionary



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GLOSSARY

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ALTIPLANO: A high-altitude plateau found partially in western Bolivia

AYMARA: An indigenous nation in the Andes and Altiplano regions of South America

BANDIDOS YANQUI: Yankee Bandits; nickname South Americans gave to Butch Cassidy and Sundance Kid

BUFEO: Local, colloquial name for Pink River Dolphins

DELFINES ROSADOS: Pink River Dolphins

DESAGUADERO: In the legend of Desaguadero, Tunupa preached to people who sent him into a lake to die; he was miraculously taken in his boat to a lagoon (now Lake Poopó) and disappeared never to be seen again.

ESTADO PLURINACIONAL: The plurinational state; Evo Morales changed Bolivia's official name to the Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia

GRANJEROS: Farmers

KEÑOLAS: An endangered species of waterbird that inhabits the altiplano of Bolivia and Perú; also known as the zampullín del Titicaca

LAGO: Lake

LANA: Wool; the vicuña's lana is one of the finest fibres in the world, and has been used since Pre-Inca times

MESA BLANCA: A Kallawayá ritual to bring luck and good fortune in travel, business, housing etc.

MESA NEGRA: A Kallawayá ritual, used to bring bad luck and misfortune; associated with bad events, e.g deaths

PACHAMAMA: The Earth Mother; a fertility goddess historically worshipped by the Inca and still treated with reverence and attributed divine properties by contemporary Quechua, **Aymara** and other indigenous peoples of the Andean region

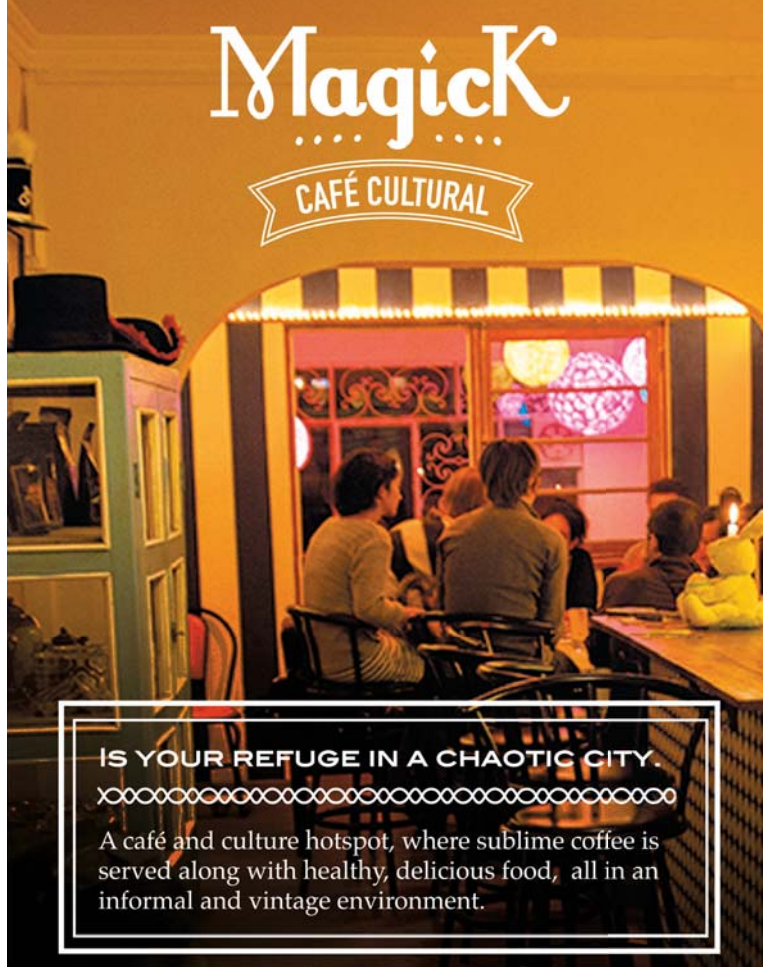
PAMPAS: Fertile grasslands, found throughout South America

QUANTU: The national flower of Bolivia

QUECHUA: Language spoken by the Quechua people, an American Indian group based in Peru and parts of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador

TESORO ÚNICO: Unique treasure

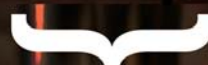
TUNUPA: Principal Andean god of the sea



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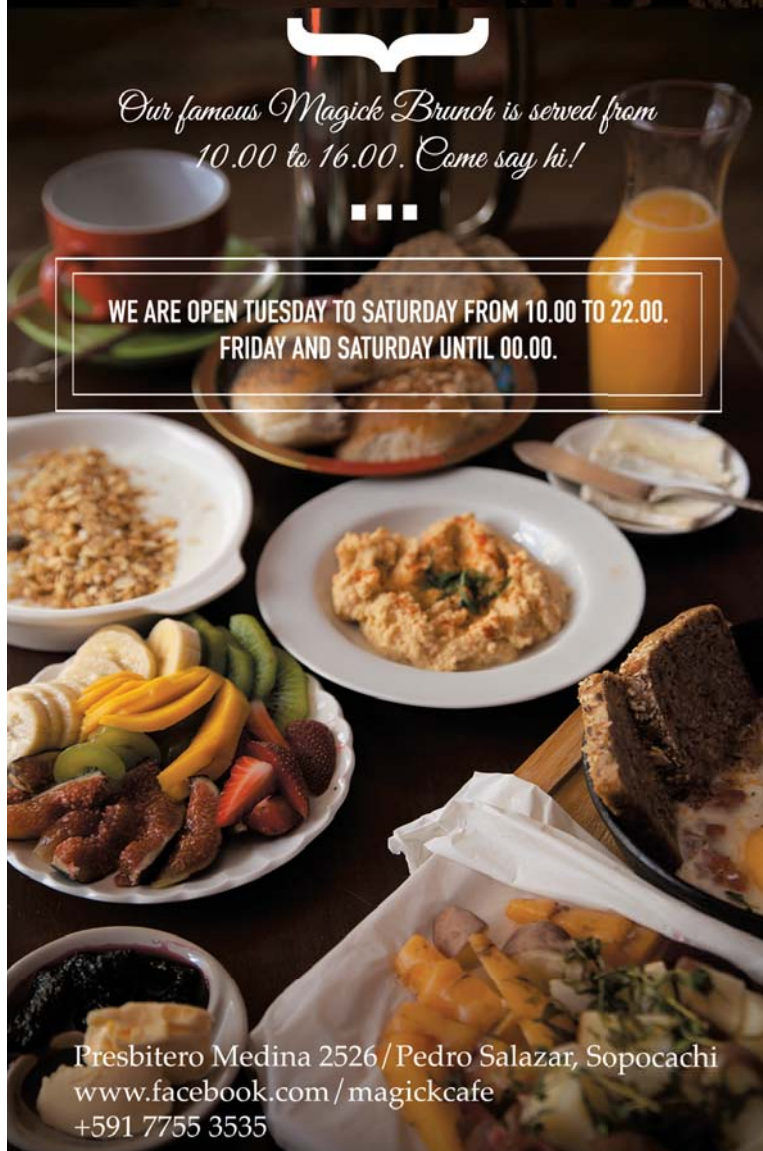
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Advertencias: No es recomendable para personas con alergias o intolerancia a alguno de sus principios activos: aspirina (ácido acetilsalicílico), salófeno, cafeína. Consulte a su médico si sufre de: desórdenes de coagulación, hemorragia gástrica, gastritis, alcoholismo, diabetes, hipertensión o reducción en la función renal, cardíaca o hepática. Mantener fuera del alcance de los niños.

