

TWO GENERATIONS OF BOLIVIAN FEMALE VENDORS¹

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Indigenous market women in the Bolivian Andes have challenged ethnic-based notions of class in a highly stratified society by nurturing a reputation for successful entrepreneurship based on their marketing knowhow. Today, these market women embody Bolivia's indigeneity with their distinctive ethnic dress and also represent an astute entrepreneurship that has ruled these marketplaces for generations. The arrival of economic restructuring accelerated upward mobility for the youngest generation of female market vendors (*cholas*) who gained unprecedented access to formal education and are returning to the informal open-air markets armed with degrees in business and economics. Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, this essay shows how this generation is negotiating a space in Bolivia today by claiming indigeneity through entrepreneurial practices they code as "indigenous" and "non-indigenous." (Indigeneity, informal market, identity politics, economic anthropology, Bolivia)

The immense outdoor market in the city of Cochabamba, Bolivia, is home to a group of informal female vendors who typify *cholas*,² a term denoting females of mixed indigenous and European heritage. Today, Cochabamba's *chola* market women embody Bolivia's indigeneity with their distinctive ethnic dress. At the same time, *cholas* represent an astute entrepreneurship that has ruled these marketplaces for generations. The dual identity of the *cholas* as indigenous and entrepreneurs has helped them forge a unique niche as an ethnic merchant middle class and an extension of the region where they peddle their wares. Cochabamba for centuries has comprised an important trade hub between the Andean highlands and the Amazon basin as well as a cradle of indigeneity and an intersection that welcomes cultural blending. Indeed, the exchange of commodities takes place among this city's market stalls at the same time that a multiplicity of ethnic and class identities are negotiated at this cultural crossroads.

Cholas in Cochabamba have experienced a marked increase in their fortunes over the past two decades due to the advent of neoliberal policies encouraging a free market economy. As a result, the youngest generation of these market vendors achieved a long-sought upward mobility and acquired a university education in a society where the indigenous majority struggled against almost insurmountable obstacles to keep them from reaching this goal. No longer

donning the chola ethnic dress, these young women became indistinguishable from the city's white professional middle class. However, they insist on continuing to claim the chola class position in spite of the historical subordination of the indigenous component of this identity. This situation is partly explained by another direct effect of neoliberalism: the implementation of multicultural policies that opened spaces for the country's indigenous majority to participate in politics (Lucero 2006; Gustafson 2009; Paulson and Calla 2000). One of the effects of these policies is that belonging to the nation is determined by an ideology of indigenous nationalism deployed as a gate-keeping strategy by the current administration, which came to power aided by this political discourse. Consequently, the young cholas hope to achieve full citizenship in the new Bolivia through the indigenous component of their identity.

The young educated cholas are returning to the informal street vending of their mothers, armed with business and economics degrees, to take over their family's trade activities. This return involves a process through which the younger generation asserts that indigeneity can be represented not only through visible markers such as dress or language, but also by experiencing the market. In fact, these young women are claiming their indigenous identity through a business knowledge that they consider a legacy passed down the female line, through the coding of market practices as either indigenous or non-indigenous. Bolivian cholas present an interesting paradox: chola market women benefitted greatly from the economic structural reforms, yet they support anti-neoliberal political movements.

This essay argues that the entrepreneurship of the younger generation creates an alternative path to claim indigeneity and citizenship. This assertion is based on the notion that indigeneity in Latin America is no longer only an ethnic label but also an individually claimed political identification (Hale 2006; Pape 2009; Grey Postero 2007).

COCHABAMBA'S INFORMAL MARKETS

The city of Cochabamba, at an altitude of 7,400 feet above sea level, with a population, according to the 2008 census, of 608,276 inhabitants, is located in a flat valley surrounded by tall mountains. The valley is part of a series of depressions that slope down into the Amazon basin to the east and climb to the Andes highlands in the west. Given this privileged geographic location, the region and city are a commercial hub between the Bolivian highlands and the tropics (Instituto Nacional de Estadística [Bolivian National Statistics Institute] 2010). The chola market women, who are emblematic of this region, are considered an extension of Cochabamba because the city and the surrounding valley are portrayed in popular images as both a trade center and the cradle of a romanticized

indigenous identity. Cochabamba's cholos have maintained and fed this dual identity for over five centuries. Despite opposition from the ruling white elites, cholos carried out entrepreneurial activities that gave them power over this center, and refused to shed their distinctive ethnic dress in defiance of the disadvantaged position of indigenous peoples (Sanchez and Ramirez 2005).

The *Cancha* ("flat court") is how Cochabamba's residents refer to the immense outdoor market where the cholos work. The term alludes to the open space where, in small towns throughout rural Bolivia, local trade fairs continue to be held weekly when indigenous peasants come from the outlying areas bringing their produce to sell (Calderón and Rivera 1983). Following the trend in many other Latin American cities due to increasing industrialization, several waves of rural indigenous immigrants have flooded Cochabamba to the point where its population exploded from 80,000 to the present 600,000 in a little less than two decades (Blanes 2007:26). The great-grandmothers of the cholo market women arrived in the area as part of an earlier wave of migration over two centuries ago. Cholos today own established businesses in the market and can take advantage of the inundation of a new labor force into the marketplace.

As an open-air market, the *Cancha* in Cochabamba is a constantly shifting territory that occupies sidewalks, roadways, gutters, and public squares through more than 100 blocks of urban sprawl. The physical face of this market and its vending stalls is an ever-fragmenting kaleidoscope where the scenery and actors are seldom repeated. Large sections can bloom or wilt overnight. On "trade fair" days, stalls and shoppers seem to appear out of thin air. Sometimes, specific stalls can become fixed, as when the municipality builds an ornate booth at a busy street corner and then sells or leases the vending booth to the market woman who squatted to sell her wares on that bit of sidewalk. A vast majority of the stalls in the *Cancha* are a simple framework of metal bars with a plastic tarp for a roof, put up by their owners in the morning and taken down every evening. This partially accounts for the febrile movement to follow customers and jostle for better selling spots. Some stalls that stay in the same space can sell a different product every day of the week. Added to these ongoing transformations that challenge the notion that businesses require a stable or fixed base of operations, this market experiences sudden growth spurts to accommodate the dramatic influx of rural immigrants who make it their first stop upon arrival, in their hope to find a means to make a living (Antequera 2007:196).

The cholo women trade everything from vegetables and drygoods, to clothing and handicrafts, to flat-screen televisions and electronics. Cholos deal in every imaginable luxury and necessity. There is great heterogeneity within the market, where cholo women who are veritable trade moguls work next to humble peddlers whose sales barely enable them to survive. All of these vending women

are part of the market, as they all are placed under the city government's simplified tax regime (Rivero Adriázola 2007).

The concept of "informality" in the marketplace, in its early adoption by international development programs in the 1970s, was considered a set of survival activities of destitute people on the margins of society. Its present definition as embraced by economic anthropologists is that of an important sector of the economy characterized by its extra-legality (Tranberg-Hansen and Vaa 2004:10). However, the degree of legitimacy or illegitimacy varies widely from country to country. The trading activities of Cochabamba's cholos are within the purview of the law, yet they pay few or no taxes, given the small scale of their vending operations. Informality is hard to reconcile with some of the trader women who represent the more successful end of the chola spectrum. For instance, some of them own and run business empires in which they manufacture some of the goods they sell, transport truckloads of goods across state lines and international borders, and own prime real estate of warehouses, office buildings, and numerous market stalls. These women are hardly destitute marginal traders.

Cholas are central to the regional economy, and the scale of operations of some market women rival and at points overlap the formal economic sector. Though cholos have been successfully trading in Bolivia for centuries, it is only with the recent advent of neoliberal economic policies that many of them are able to compete with their formal counterparts. The cholos are exceptionally useful for examining the relation between the informal and formal markets. Their stories support the view of economic anthropologists who no longer oppose these two sectors as a dichotomy but rather compare their interactions in varied contexts (Obukhova and Guyer 2002:199). The ethnographic vignettes in this essay illustrate how cholos have forged surprisingly close ties to the corporate formal sector, further blurring the boundary between the formal and informal.

NEOLIBERALISM, IDENTITY POLITICS, AND COCHABAMBA'S CHOLAS

The turbulent last two decades in Bolivia witnessed the implementation of a series of International Monetary Fund-imposed economic reforms by governments espousing neoliberal policies. Starting in the early 1990s, chola businesses profited greatly from these reforms to promote a free-market economy. Specifically, cholos were able to access small business loans when newly formed credit unions offered microfinancing for businesses outside the formal sector. Cholos had always moved and borrowed capital on a smaller scale from reciprocal kin networks. The new source of financing enabled many cholos to expand their businesses or initiate new business projects, thus creating an unprecedented growth in their fortunes (Rivero Adriázola 2007). In fact, cholos quickly became

the acknowledged darlings of development agencies and programs and were held up by these institutions as examples of progress with native Andean entrepreneurs being incorporated into the global economy.

Another economic structural reform that directly benefited cholos at this time was the decline in government subsidies and price controls (Wanderley 2003). Able to dictate their own prices for imports in dry goods and nonperishables, cholos saw sudden jumps in their income. They quickly reinvested their profits to the point where they cornered specific markets. They became the undisputed queens of what is known as the “family breadbasket,” a group of basic household goods such as wheat flour, rice, oil, and corn. These businesswomen then invested their profits in other ventures, such as real estate and market-stall properties, clothing manufacturing and sales, and cheap trade goods from Argentina, Brazil, China, and the U.S.

Despite their tremendous economic success resulting from neoliberalism, the twenty-first century found these market women playing a crucial role in the social movements and anti-neoliberal protests that aided the electoral campaigns and eventual rise to power of President Evo Morales in 2005 (Laurie and Pozo 2006). Support of a diametrically opposite ideology is explained in part by the fact that cholos pursued economic and class advancement under changing circumstances. But the main reason for their alignment with a political movement that was discursively set against the policies that had benefitted them was that Morales’s party—the Movement to Socialism (Movimiento al Socialismo, or MAS)—promised to empower Bolivia’s ethnic majorities, which had suffered subordination and exploitation by the white elite for centuries.

Cholos witnessed the effects of top-down policies that created hardship for the lives of the indigenous majority (Medinacelli 1989). The closing of the state mining corporation caused the relocation of thousands of indigenous miners’ families, many of which made their way to Cochabamba. The elimination of state health, transportation, and public housing services dealt a near-fatal blow to thousands of urban poor families in the city, many of which had direct dealings with the cholos as customers, extended kin, or neighbors. These detrimental effects of neoliberalism sent city neighborhood residents into the streets in protest marches that decried these policies and forced the national government to restore some services. The rallies forced the government to meet people’s demands, and sowed the seeds for the rise of social justice movements and anti-neoliberal political parties such as those of Evo Morales (Assies 2003). Cholos supported these political campaigns as they historically count themselves as part of the oppressed indigenous multitude and have a trajectory for political activism (Gotkowitz 2000). Cholos were staunch supporters of Morales and the MAS, funding parts of his campaign and staffing protest marches against the foreign-imposed economic policies.

Grassroots social movements that promoted a politics based on an indigenous identity spread through the Andean nations in the early 2000s. At that time, Evo Morales's party was one of several "indigenous" political parties in Bolivia that arose to contest the traditional elite parties that were accused of allowing the Bolivian people to suffer from the widening gap between the rich and the poor caused by neoliberalism (Grey Postero 2007). Ironically, these new parties rose to power due to neoliberal regulations that created political spaces for indigenous movements through multicultural policies.

Such new political venues and access to power in Ecuador and Bolivia resulted in indigeneity becoming a political rather than an ethnic category because this identity conferred specific citizenship rights and privileges (Van de Cott 2008:4). This contributed to the growth of a younger generation of educated cholos who benefitted from neoliberalism and now use entrepreneurial know-how and trade practices to politically align with an anti-neoliberal ideology promoting indigenous nationalism. In this way, they are re-imagining the market of their mothers and grandmothers, and redefining trading practices in terms of ethnic identity.

PRACTICING AND RE-IMAGINING THE MARKET

The general description of cholos is that of an alternative middle class that successfully blends business acumen and urban savvy with their distinctive dress, language, and indigenous customs. Because Cochabamba is an important trade hub, the cholos of the region's informal market (despite their subordinate status as female and indigenous) have long been active in regional trade networks (Harris 1995; Lagos 1994; Nash 1993). In this context, it is not surprising that cholos are keen on participating in global trade due to the combination of commercial success and indigenous rights that they have acquired. Cholos have been strongly drawn to the flow of goods in the global market that accompanied Bolivia's economic reforms in the last two decades. The appeal to these vendors was so strong that they were among the first sectors to insert their business activities onto global trade circuits.

Some cholos I interviewed complained that although they succeeded in establishing trade connections with transnational networks of cheap goods coming from China and Taiwan via Peruvian and Chilean ports, they had trouble establishing their rights to import these goods into the country. That is, the import business continued to be the exclusive domain of the elite in the formal sector, and reinforced through state trade regulations. In a pattern the cholos had seen often in the past, upper-class entrepreneurs maintained their power over the lower social classes and the global market, effectively excluding cholos, whose ethnicity stood against them.

Chola women, afforded by the recent expansion of the higher education system and their newfound prosperity, sent their children to university and finally gained the upward mobility that had long eluded them. The women felt that going to school and becoming proficient in the language of the formal market would allow their children to be mediators between the more abstract free market and their own trading practices in the informal sector. Additionally, in conversations and interviews with chola college graduates, many viewed their purpose in gaining a college degree as acquiring the tools, skills, and credentials that would enable them to compete with formal businesses on a more level playing field, and win a hold on the frontier of transnational trade for their family business.

There is now a generation of college graduates in Cochabamba whose mothers deal in the informal markets for a living. This is so widespread with younger cholas that it has become their distinguishing characteristic. The more humble market women sent their children to college at the local state university, while the wealthy cholas had their children attend elite private universities. The young cholas, having earned degrees in business and economics, return to the markets of their mothers, in spite of being considered part of the city's professional class, and instead of seeking employment in the formal sector.

These cholas, as they continue to call themselves, continue to claim their mothers' dual identity as indigenous entrepreneurs. Having shed their ethnic garb, these young cholas argue that indigeneity can be represented not only through visible markers such as dress or language, but also through ways of experiencing, practicing, and imagining the market. To support their case, they emphasize the trade that they learned from their mothers, that based on reciprocity and networking, instead of the formal business training they acquired through education. This knowledge, passed down the female line from mother to daughter, is presented as a strong component of their indigenous identity, and the young women use it as the credentials that enable them to continue claiming a chola identity in the marketplace.

Until recently, with the valuation of indigeneity through multiculturalism, the "intuitive" knowledge of cholas was considered inferior to formal education (Goldstein 2004; Rivera Cusicanqui 1996). However, as shown in the ethnographic anecdotes in this essay, the younger generation of cholas is giving equal weight to both types of market knowledge—be it learned from books or from their mothers. The differences between indigenous and non-indigenous business practices are being redefined and marked by cholas of both generations through language and performance. The notion of two bodies of market knowledge is reflected in the informal marketplace by the chola unique brand of trade practices indexed by the younger generation with the use of Quechua, the indigenous language, as opposed to Spanish. Both old and young cholas interviewed believe that their indigenous entrepreneurship is an "instinctive" knowledge that they

were born with, unlike the market knowledge learned from books. They were quick to describe the first type of practices in terms of affect, feelings, and moods, such as a happy transaction or a type of sale that made them uneasy or ill. The opposite was anything learned from books, which was described as rational, cold, and lacking affect.

The following ethnographic stories describe a market practice that cholas consider as indigenous and another that they claimed to be transplanted from the rational market practices they had learned in their university courses. These examples illustrate how the markers of language and emotions are deployed to justify the categories of indigenous and non-indigenous with different types of market knowledge.

INDIGENOUS TRANSACTIONS IN MARKET SALES

A young chola, here called Arminda, and I sat and chatted within an outdoor market stall in the heat of the day. The stall, typical for the outdoor market, barely measured six feet by four feet. Much of sales involve idle waiting interspersed with times of frantic activity. As we sat there, a girl came running, yelling “Godmother, godmother! A customer wants these in a six and a half!” She was waving a pair of brown men’s shoes as she ran in our direction. Arminda sat up abruptly and dashed out the back to another stall she owned across the street which had every available square inch of space filled with gleaming leather shoes. As she approached the stall where a slender girl sat knitting—another one of her employees—she yelled “Six and a half, brown, square toe!” The girl dropped her knitting needles, bent at the waist, and quickly materialized a box of shoes that she handed to the first girl, who promptly took them and ran off again. This all took place in less than five minutes.

When we had gone back to our seats, I asked Arminda what had just taken place. She grinned and cryptically replied, “*desdoblaje*.” This term translates loosely from the Spanish as “non-doubling.” Arminda explained that when her family had purchased their original stall on this sector of the market about two decades ago, it had been conveniently located on a main thoroughfare with heavy traffic. As time went by and the market continued its inexorable expansion, the pavement was swallowed by a growing number of stalls that eventually transformed a wide avenue into a pedestrian alley, causing the municipality to shift traffic to three blocks away. Arminda’s neighbors then decided to sell their stalls in what had become a little visited side street, and purchase stalls and vending spaces on the new main street front. Arminda reviewed her options and refused to emulate this move as selling and purchasing new stalls would cost a great deal of money. She opted instead to carry out *desdoblaje*, or sending out her merchandise to be sold at other points in the market with hired itinerant peddlers,

effectively doubling her number of stalls. Not everyone in Arminda's family agreed with her decision. In fact, the general sentiment at the time was that since she graduated from college with a degree in economics, her book knowledge was interfering with the common-sense market instincts that cholos exercised. The outcome of her decision became critical. If successful, it would validate her right to claim to be a market chola and head the family business.

Arminda's decision to implement *desdoblaje* was followed by several months of adjustment in which she barely made ends meet while struggling to set up an efficient system where employees took turns manning the family's fixed stall and cruising the market's main thoroughfares offering her merchandise. To her great relief and elation, time proved Arminda right in her business strategy. She was happy to report that her venture was so successful that she had recently used her profits to finish buying out her competitors' neighboring stalls, and had expanded from selling only shoes to selling other merchandise, as well. On the day of this story of how *desdoblaje* was put into practice, Arminda proudly pointed out how the brilliancy of the scheme lay in having the young girl peddling the merchandise on foot, with the mobility to aggressively search for customers, backed by the extensive stock in the permanent stall. In this way, whenever a customer asked for something she did not immediately have in a specific model and size, she would dash back to Arminda's stalls to get the product and make a sale. Arminda explained how she had chanced upon the idea of *desdoblaje*, describing the moment in which she realized how to solve her problem:

One day I was working at my stall worried about how much money I would lose now that customers had to walk all the way in from the main street to reach my merchandise. I was feeling cold sweat all over my body and my family said my complexion was not healthy; the worry was affecting my liver. . . . Then I was walking home one evening and I had a *t'inkaso* [Quechua for "gut feeling"] that I could work things out if I sent the merchandise out to the customers in a handcart with my cousin. . . . if the customers wanted something she didn't have, she could just run back to get it from me. I was so happy [because] this was a solution my mother and my godmother—who are also merchant cholos—would have liked. . . . But I was also happy because I knew it was right; it felt right. When we cholos feel something is right, it usually works out well.

Arminda concluded her story by declaring *desdoblaje* to be a clear example of an indigenous trade practice. How this mercantile transaction could in any way be considered "indigenous" is not clear, but Arminda's statements are consistent with similar stories compiled from other cholos. First is the mention that a trading problem touched the woman deeply and emotionally, as witnessed by her mention of a worry that affected her health, and her joy at solving issue. These play into the notion that indigenous knowledge is associated by these women with affect and is the opposite of the cold rationality of the corporate world.

Another point linking this trade practice to an indigenous identity is the fact that Arminda put great store in her gut feeling or inspiration that provided the answer to her dilemma. Indeed, the Quechua term *t'inkaso* that she employed is something *cholas* would use time and again when describing and coding similar indigenous market activities. The word denotes an intuition that provides a glimpse of the future, or an insight into what the future might hold for a specific action. Indeed, *t'inkasos* were usually described vividly by the *cholas*, as involving all five senses, in keeping with the belief that they are part of an Andean worldview and body of knowledge (Morató Lara 2003). Arminda and her colleagues agreed that *cholas* would instinctively know the success of a market practice by gut feelings. These *t'inkasos* also contribute to the notion of an intangible knowledge that comprises the young *cholas'* indigenous legacy. This is confirmed by Arminda's invocation in her story to other market women in her lineage that would have approved of her decision to carry out *desdoblaje*, in this way upholding the idea that this type of market knowledge is inherited and passed down the female line.

Finally, Arminda pointed out that the main reason why *desdoblaje* could be categorized as indigenous was because of those who carried it out, as exemplified by the fact that the girl running back and forth with the shoes for a client was her goddaughter. The other girl taking care of the shoe stall was her niece, and a cousin and another goddaughter, both high school students, would help her on their free time on weekends and afternoons. Arminda explained that the way *cholas* operate was through the employment of young women who were fictive kin or related by blood as young apprentices, extending the market lineage into the next generation. She said that this also provided a method by which profits could be made in the highly fluctuating and variable informal market, given that these young women seldom worked for wages but were instead paid with commissions from sales, so they could operate their own side business, or with the promise of future favors. When probed further into what favors Arminda would need to give in return, she said that she would pay for one of her goddaughter's school supplies for the following academic year and noted that her niece had recently asked her to contribute drinks for her parent's anniversary party the following month.

Most if not all *cholas* use this complex system of reciprocities for two reasons. One is to cut overhead costs considerably by not paying help a monthly wage, and doling out occasional cash contributions instead. The other and most important is that the informal market of *cholas* is an exclusive domain monopolized by them, their families, and kin. In this view, it is easy to characterize most if not all of the practices that take place within their market as "indigenous," as long as they are carried out and performed by *chola* and their closed circle of associates. The notion of a clear boundary between insiders and outsiders is

further explored in the following example on what is characterized by cholas as a non-indigenous market practice.

CORPORATE BUSINESSES IN THE STREETS

A different commercial practice that young cholas in the markets label and code as non-indigenous is the advertising and marketing practices of corporations in the informal market. The practices that the youngest generation of cholas had learned in their university studies have to do with dry goods and groceries and the recent incorporation of salesgirls who offer customers free samples of some of the wares on sale. On a tour of the market with a young chola named Elsa who had recently graduated with a degree in economics from the local state university, we were frequently accosted by girls offering us samples of herbal tea, laundry detergent, noodles, yogurt, crackers, and cheese. All of the girls wore smocks that covered their jeans and shirts with the logo of the brand they were promoting: bright blue and yellow uniforms bore the name “Unilever” for soaps, deodorant, detergent, and related products; orange and brown smocks noted “Nestlé” for the brand’s instant coffee, teas, and soups; and red and green were the colors for Kellogg’s breakfast cereals. Many of the girls sported baseball caps that matched the company colors. The girls were in their late teens and early twenties, spoke Spanish well, did not wear ethnic dress or accessories, and acted as if belonging to the white middle class. When we accepted some instant coffee from one of these girls, she told us where a larger jar could be bought for a considerable discount. At that particular vending stall, the young woman’s efficiency was impressive as she ran off the prices of a half dozen unrelated items we purchased, even though she was apparently only offering samples and did not work there. Surprisingly, when the shopping concluded, the young girl deftly stepped into the stall, bagged the purchases, and collected our payment, which she promptly gave to the chola woman who obviously owned the vending space.

This situation is curious as the owner of the stall sat silently near the back throughout the entire transaction. She was an older woman wearing a heavily embroidered pleated skirt and flounced blouse, distinctive chola ethnic garb, while watching everything intently. The image of silent cholas sitting in their stalls while eyeing the work of enthusiastic young women who sell for them and offer product samples contrasts sharply with cholas in other sectors of the market, where they interact garrulously with customers and with the younger kin who help them. I was told that their salary was not paid by the passersby but by the corporations whose brands they marketed. Thus, in the example above, the salesgirl who helped with our purchases was employed by Nestlé, the company that makes instant coffee.

This interesting sales arrangement was explained by Elsa, who had business dealings with several of the drygoods stalls. She said the girls were only supposed to offer samples to passersby, but were also running the vending stalls for the cholas. Elsa asked, "Do you know who has won the best sales award for breakfast cereals for the past six years in a row, who had the best sales record for laundry detergents the past two years, or the highest sales in noodles and instant soups?" She answered, "Not the local supermarket chain, but cholas in the sector of drygoods stalls." She then explained that the young girls hired to provide samples were part of an ongoing business agreement between a handful of large corporations and the cholas in this part of the market. The companies placed these part-time workers at the cholas' disposal on condition that the cholas sell only their products and not the competing brands, permit the brand marketing carried out by the girls with their samples and, in some cases, have the company's logo prominently displayed on their stalls.

Elsa concluded by stating that the arrangement between the cholas and corporation salesgirls was a good example of a non-indigenous practice that she and other young cholas associated with business knowledge acquired at university. Her reasons for calling this a "non-indigenous" practice are:

You can't consider this arrangement indigenous because it's not something that we cholas know and it's not something we have been doing since the time of our grandparents. This is something that the corporations made. We cholas accepted. "All right," we said. . . . Because it's in our benefit, right? It benefits us if the girls who give out samples come to our stalls to help with sales and we don't need to pay them. . . . But, you know also that we really don't need this. You already noticed that our kin, our goddaughters . . . can help with sales in the same way, without charge. But if outsiders offer us this help, we accept and in exchange we sell their products, which we would be selling anyway. "Marketing," they call it. This is something you learn in college. But in the Cancha, what works in books doesn't work without the cholas' backing, and this is why corporations such as Quimbol or Nescafe . . . it pays for us to sell for them.

Elsa codes the business arrangement between cholas and corporation salesgirls as "non-indigenous" because the marketing technique is mentioned in business textbooks and it is a practice that the corporations who train and employ the salesgirls have designed without any input from the market women. That Elsa used the English term "marketing" to refer to this practice highlights how it is indeed a foreign concept. The arrangement is not forming part of the cholas' market repertoire, and thus it is also not something that they would back. Elsa's attitude reflects a feeling of mistrust and resentment with the formal sector that is pervasive throughout the Cancha and stems from centuries in which the chola traders were excluded from the world of formal business (Rivera Cusicanqui 1996). Though this business arrangement brings the formal sector into close contact with the informal business world of the cholas, the attitude of the vendors in the informal market shows a boundary between insiders—cholas—and outsiders

that reflects a history of exclusion, a fact shown by the cholás' insistence on coding the practice as non-indigenous.

Perhaps the most important reason why this practice could not be considered indigenous is that the corporations bring outsiders to the informal market and to the world of the cholás and their web of reciprocal kin networks. That the sales-girls are not cholás, and actually belong to a white social class that until recently discriminated against the cholás, has not stopped the market vendors from taking advantage of this business practice. Yet another reason why it is allowed to flourish has to do with the cholás' younger generation's pride in the indigenous component of their identity, a state of affairs brought about by the promotion of recent political discourses that value indigeneity.

Elsa noted that chola vendors were beating the supermarkets when it came to sales, and added that the cholás did not really need the corporation's help, as they ran successful businesses independent of this arrangement. In fact, she seems to imply that the corporations' need of the cholás is greater than the cholás' need for the corporations.

A final reason why this market practice is not coded as indigenous is that it elicits only cold indifference from the cholás. Unlike with the practice of *desdoblaje*, no strong emotions are involved. Educated cholás always spoke of the knowledge learned from textbooks in their college business training as cold and rational. This pragmatism follows discourses on the free-market economy as impartial and devoid of emotions (Appelbaum 2005). As such, it is viewed negatively by the cholás who insist that passion, strength, and affection mark a successful business. The cholás' own trade empires were given as proof of this. That business prosperity in the informal sector is closely tied to an indigenous identity, which in turn is related to powerful emotions and affect, helps explain the connections forged by the younger generation of cholás between market practices and indigeneity.

CONCLUSIONS

Using Quechua words to describe how a commercial idea arose, when speaking about distinct feelings, when discussing cholás in the family business, and operating within a network of reciprocal kin relations are all ways in which Arminda, the young chola of the first story, indexed the framework within which *desdoblaje* took place as indigenous. In the second anecdote, the presence of outsiders to the informal market with samples and sales transactions in the stalls, as well as the obvious links to the formal market businesses and the allusions that these practices were learned at university, all made these practices non-indigenous.

The current Morales administration in Bolivia has embraced an alternative discourse of indigenous nationalism which promotes ethnic dress and indigenous language as part of gate-keeping strategies to control who belongs to the new Bolivia. Because of this political rhetoric, the youngest generation of chola traders, who have shed the distinctive ethnic dress, is now claiming a place in the new Bolivian nation by means of coding their market knowledge and practices as markers of an indigenous identity. Arminda, the young chola of the first vignette, states her group's claim to their ethnic identity:

Now, I belong to a chola family, which means I am also indigenous. Just because I no longer dress with a pleated skirt, with braids, this does not mean that I can't be indigenous. We cholas know trade like no one. . . . I also have a bachelor's degree, which is useful in the formal sector. But first I am chola because I know trade. No one teaches this trade knowledge to us and it's not something that can be learned. If your mother was a chola, if your godmother was a chola, then you are also a chola. This is clear, and you will also feel a need to trade, and want to trade.

Striking in Arminda's words is her desire to continue being a chola and her pride in this identity and her group's commercial expertise. In this sense, she seems to regard her formal education and training as a mere complement to the much more important knowledge of the markets and trade that she has as part of her chola legacy. This pride in an ethnic identity firmly grounded in the markets also feeds into the cholas' feeling that they deserve to be in the game of global and national commerce that used to be the sole province of the formal business sector, a sentiment echoed by Elsa's statements on the ascendancy of chola businesses over some of the corporations that produce and market daily consumer goods.

A combination of pride in their ethnic legacy and their coding of commercial practices yields a safe way for a subordinate group to resist formal power structures as well as to claim its place in the nation (Pétilä 2007:7). What has taken place in Cochabamba's market with the use of coded practices is proving to be an effective mechanism that cholas will continue to use to gain full citizenship. What differs from the way identity was constructed in the past and the present political moment in Bolivia is that indigeneity can be claimed without resorting to visible ethnic markers such as dress. Indigeneity in the Andes, determined by self-identification as native groups take part in indigenous political movements, is a constant process of self-identification and affirmation by participants in an era of "postmulticultural citizenship" in the twenty-first century that Latin America today is undergoing, in which indigenous peoples are assuming their place in modern nation-states, thanks to a series of multicultural policies brought about by neoliberalism (Grey Postero 2007:11).

The indigenous or non-indigenous market practices described in this essay's two vignettes could arguably be reversed. That is, *desdoblaje* could be claimed

as a non-indigenous practice, and the use of outside salesgirls by the cholas in the markets could be defined as an indigenous practice. This supports the notion that indigeneity requires being claimed individually, but also shows that the cholas' entrepreneurial practices can be deployed with great flexibility. Indigeneity and entrepreneurship, the dual identities that make the core of the chola persona, can be seen as heteroglossic terms that can express multiple meanings simultaneously (De la Cadena 2005:261). It is hard to know where each ends or begins, and this is why cholas can claim seemingly contradictory market practices and render equal value to both instinctive-indigenous and book-learned forms of commerce.

Both *desdoblaje*, marked as indigenous by the young cholas, and the business arrangement with local corporations, coded as non-indigenous, share many similarities as well as their heteroglossic nature. Both take place within the informal market and its stalls, both involve the sale of merchandise under the immediate supervision of chola vendors, and both require the help of fictive kin apprentices or salesgirls. Yet another similarity is that the cholas who owned the stalls in both instances did not pay either of their helpers' wages as part of their overhead expenses. In fact, both cases are also instances in which payment was made in kind. In the first case, the cholas paid occasional amounts of cash to cover the costs of specific family functions that benefitted the young apprentices, or they paid in merchandise or with other favors. In the second case, the cholas paid the corporations in the form of exclusive sales, and by permitting the companies to use the vending stalls as advertising spaces for their products.

In both cases, there are clear and powerful indicators that the new successful chola businesswomen are a product of neoliberalism and are important enough to now work together with the formal business sector. Large corporations have taken note of the economic power of specific groups of cholas, and are hitting the streets of the informal markets with advertising and marketing campaigns. That is, the informal and formal sectors rely on each other. But scholars have referred to this relation as one in which the informal sector depends on the formal for its sustenance, while the formal sector uses the informal sector to increase its profits (Bhowmik 2010:4). The difference in this case is that the informal market cholas seem to be the ones profiting from the corporations, whose employees work for the cholas in their stalls, and in this way blurs the boundaries between these two economies. This confirms the view that the cholas are powerful and that their trading networks with global circuits of goods is a logical next step. What has thus far kept them from achieving this next level are historical hierarchies of exclusion based on ethnicity that continue to blunt their economic activities.

Though neoliberalism and indigeneity are at first glance concepts that are mutually exclusive, the cholas have shown that the two can actually be connected along a continuum and used for the cholas' identity and rights to full citizenship

(cf. Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009; Hale 2006; Lucero 2006). The young generation of chola market vendors discussed here has shown how market practices can define indigenous and non-indigenous identities. For centuries cholitas have been a marginal group exercising an alternate or informal economy. Today, this sector of the market has become central to the Bolivian economy and the global trade of this region.

NOTES

1. The fieldwork for this essay was supported by a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Award and a Wenner-Gren Dissertation Fieldwork Award, and conducted from August 2007 to January 2009. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 109th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in November 2010. For helpful comments on earlier drafts, I thank Andrew Orta, Katie O'Brien, Deborah Kapchan, Walter Little, and the anonymous reviewers and editors of *Ethnology*. All errors, omissions, or inaccuracies are my own.
2. Throughout this paper, I chose to use the feminine chola instead of the masculine *cholo* to refer to this sector of Bolivian society, despite the fact that in Spanish the masculine form is also used to denote both male and female members of a group. I do this purposefully in order to avoid confusing readers who are unfamiliar with Spanish or the Andes, and because the people described here are all women. Additionally, I deliberately subvert the term from a feminist perspective to give the cholitas their due as, particularly in Cochabamba, it is the women who define this class and ethnic identity.

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