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Challenging Boundaries, Redefining Limits: The Experience of Bolivian Handknitters in the Global Market

by

Janet Marie Page

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1999

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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ABSTRACT

Challenging Boundaries, Redefining Limits: The Experience of Bolivian Handknitters in the Global Market

by

Janet Marie Page

Advisor: Professor June Nash

This dissertation examines the evolution of a knitting industry in Bolivia where several thousand women produce sweaters for export. Handknitters tend to be women from rural areas severely affected by poverty, social inequality, drought and economic crisis. Productive relations within the industry are dominated by middlemen who control extensive putting-out systems premised upon keeping wages low. Some knitters have attempted to challenge their subordinate position in export knitting by organizing themselves into sweater production and commercialization cooperatives. In some cases, this grassroots mobilization cultivated a broader field of action for handknitters that became the basis for more politically and culturally oriented activities. However, grassroots mobilization and cooperation have not been sufficient to transform relationships within the industry or to significantly improve knitters' condition. In this study, I examine the history and structure of the knitwear industry and identify the factors inhibiting the successful operation of grassroots knitting cooperatives. I demonstrate how the global market for handknits plays a key role in restricting the development of cooperatives organized at the grassroots level. Yet perhaps equally significant have been cultural factors at work in the dynamics of cooperative knitwear production. I argue that the manner in which knitting employment was incorporated into the local social and economic context, the way that new social actors from international agencies and managerial members of the Bolivian bourgeoisie influenced knitters' success, and the very nature of

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grassroots organizing itself, led to the downfall of grassroots knitting cooperatives through a redefinition of cultural boundaries. In the process of becoming incorporated into global markets, the unity of vision and the common purpose which had provided a fulcrum for grassroots mobilization among knitters were undermined, negating fundamental premises of cooperative organization.

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Acknowledgments

There are many people who contributed to making this dissertation possible and to whom I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude. First and most importantly, I would like to thank the women from the cooperative knitting association, '*Tipay Warmi*' (pseudonym) for allowing me to conduct my research among them. The inspiration I derived from their history and struggle is what led me to become interested in the issues explored here, and without their cooperation, my local-level analysis of knitting and women's cooperative organizing would have been absolutely impossible. I know that my presence was undoubtedly irritating and disconcerting, but they accepted me into their organization and homes with kindness and friendship for which I am extremely grateful. I am especially indebted to the Toranza (pseudonym) family for taking me into their home. Their friendship and support saw me through many personal and professional challenges in the field.

In addition to knitters from the cooperative, many other people in Arani contributed to my research and opened their doors to me. Neighbors, people I met at the *chicheria*, people I met at the market, women from other knitting organizations, people in the town government and a variety of others endured my questions and interviews and invited me into their homes. I consider many of the friendships I developed in Arani to be ones that will last beyond the deposit of this dissertation. In particular I would like to recognize the following people: Eco, *Don* Andres, Julia, *Dona* Marta and Jose, Margarita, *Dona* Maria and her parents, *Don* Carlos, *Dona* Julia, *Dona* Maria and her mother, Hilda and Miriam, Christina, Herminia, Gregoria, Feliza, *Dona* Modesta, *Dona* Justina and *Dona* Paulina, Flora and her mother and sisters. Without their help and friendship, I would not have survived life in the field.

In addition to people in Arani itself, many other people in Bolivia contributed to my research. Most obviously, a wide variety of people shared their views and experiences with me as informants. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the help of Zaracias Coca and Arthur Tracht in unscrambling the ADAM puzzle. On a more personal level, my friendship with Vanessa Keegan and Klaus Lotz was an key part of my field experience, and Vanessa's knowledge of the knitwear industry, which she shared with me unconditionally, was an essential ingredient in allowing me to develop an understanding of the bigger picture. I am eternally grateful to them for all that they did for me in while I was in Bolivia.

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My friends Alfred and Tomoko Petrov were also always available when I needed a break from the field and a bit of Tomoko's cuisine. Alfred's anecdotal analyses of Bolivian society and politics always proved to be valuable in some way or another. Alisa Coffin was extremely generous in allowing me to stay with her whenever I was in La Paz, and the time we spent together was always a nice break from Cochabamba. The many conversations I had with Rosario and Blanca Leon gave me a clearer understanding of Bolivia and the Cochabamba context, and helped me to feel more connected with urban life in Cochabamba. *Don* Federico Sanchez de Lozada and Luis Morato Pena helped me immensely with my *Quechua* language skills.

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Preface

In order to guard the identity of informants who contributed to my research, and to protect them from any negative repercussions which might arise from their participation in this study, I have used pseudonyms for certain individuals and institutions, including "*Tipay Warmi,*" the central case examined here. At the same time, I have not used pseudonyms for NGO's or the individuals they employ because I believe that these sorts of institutions, through their very nature, operate in the public domain, and as such are responsible for their actions and for the implications of their activities and policies. This means that in my opinion, they are vulnerable to scrutiny of the sort presented in this study. Any negative portrayal should be understood as part of my broader analysis of the handknit industry, of the politics of development funding and of the dynamics of women's grassroots organizing, and not as a personal indictment of particular institutions or individuals per se, except where explicitly specified.

This research was conducted with funding provided by a Fellowship from the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Program and by a Dissertation Improvement Grant from the National Science Foundation.

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Chapter 1
Challenging the Boundaries, Redefining the Limits

Statement of Thesis

This dissertation examines the evolution of a knitting industry in Bolivia where several thousand women produce sweaters for export. Handknitters tend to be women from rural areas severely affected by poverty, social inequality, drought and economic crisis. Productive relations within the industry are dominated by middlemen who control extensive putting-out systems premised upon keeping wages low. Some knitters have attempted to challenge their subordinate position in export knitting by organizing themselves into sweater production and commercialization cooperatives. In some cases, this grassroots mobilization cultivated a broader field of action for handknitters that became the basis for more politically and culturally oriented activities.

However, grassroots mobilization and cooperation have not been sufficient to transform relationships within the industry or to significantly improve knitters' condition. In this study, I examine the history and structure of the knitwear industry and identify the factors inhibiting the successful operation of grassroots knitting cooperatives. I demonstrate how the global market for handknits plays a key role in restricting the development of cooperatives organized at the grassroots level. Yet perhaps equally significant have been cultural factors at work in the dynamics of cooperative knitwear production. I argue that the manner in which knitting employment was incorporated into the local social and economic context, the way that new social actors from international agencies and managerial members of the Bolivian bourgeoisie influenced knitters' success, and the very nature of grassroots organizing itself, led to the downfall of grassroots knitting cooperatives through a redefinition of cultural boundaries. In the process of becoming incorporated into global markets, the unity of vision and the common purpose which had provided a fulcrum for grassroots

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mobilization among knitters were undermined, negating fundamental premises of cooperative organization.

In particular, I show that the evolution of the export knitting industry encouraged the development of two contradictory and unexpected tendencies among knitters. On the one hand, work in the industry promoted the elaboration of the *cholita* artisan knitter as a counter-hegemonic female identity that meshed with local cultural ideas concerning rural women's roles.[1] Because of the particular way that knitting developed as a form of women's work in the region, income from knitting and the concomitant valuation of knitters' labor helped to reinforce existing attitudes toward *cholitahood* as a parallel and alternative status within the dominant westernized social landscape, and contributed to knitters' recognition of their own ability to create social change through grassroots knitting cooperatives. At the same time, export production, grassroots organizing, and participation in "development projects" generated skills and self-identities that lay beyond the traditional scope of the *cholita*. Women in leadership roles in grassroots organizations accumulate experiences and acquire attitudes vastly different from those of the majority of knitters. Many leaders have developed lifestyles at odds with cultural dictates concerning *cholita* behavior. These tendencies have been exacerbated by ideological conflicts which have emerged as cooperative producers have fought for self-management and for entrance into global markets while remaining necessarily dependent on the knowledge and resources of institutions and individuals with their own agendas. The antagonism between cultural ideals and the realities of successful grassroots mobilization created a division between knitters and their leaders concerning the goals of cooperativization, and with respect to the very meaning of being a woman in local culture. The resulting cultural dislocation had a disruptive effect on the lives of individual women and on the organizational dynamics of grassroots knitting groups. The coherence of identity which once provided a framework for

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[1]The term "*cholita*" refers to women who use a particular form of dress. See Chapter 3 for an in-depth discussion of the concept of the "*cholita*."

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cooperation was undermined, threatening the basis for grassroots mobilization and the future of cooperative knitwear production.

This dissertation demonstrates how women can attempt to create social change, but how such efforts are always confronted by the emergence of new boundaries--in relation to both the structural position of knitters in the global market, and in terms of the dynamics of their own grassroots organizing--they push the limits but they can never erase them. The data I collected indicate that difficulties experienced by grassroots craft cooperatives are not a result of perceived shortcomings of the poor themselves as is often suggested in political debates. Nor are these problems principally the product of the exaggerated influence of hegemonic social, economic and political structures as much of the development literature would imply. Instead, the case studied suggests that the ultimate success or failure of any group is influenced by a variety of factors as external forces intersect with local social, economic and cultural conditions within the context of specific internal group dynamics. My research clearly demonstrates the extent to which the contradictions and antagonisms involved in women's cooperative endeavors can only be understood with a more nuanced approach that takes both the structural and the personal into account. This allows for us to recognize the myriad ways that women are active participants in structuring their own lives, even in the face of seemingly omnipotent political, economic and cultural forces that create boundaries for action.

The picture that emerges from this study of handknitters belies sentimental views of cooperatives as bastions of egalitarian relations or of grassroots organizing as a panacea for poverty and inequality. What I found in the field was considerably more complex. Grassroots knitting cooperatives represent a courageous challenge to structural relations in the global market by seemingly powerless indigenous women. However, even as knitters have been successful in restructuring certain boundaries constraining their lives, a new set of limitations has been created, requiring different strategies in order to effectively transform the social and economic controls by dominant players in the global ecumene.

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Relevant Theoretical Themes

In order to understand the processes at work in the evolution of the handknit industry in Bolivia, I draw upon insights from the extensive literature on peasant production. The ongoing debate over the nature of articulation between peasants and the global economy is particularly relevant to my analysis on a number of different levels. Most obviously, handknit exports involve rural Bolivian women in an artisanal production system linked directly with the global market. As in other parts of the world where crafts have become a vehicle for socio-economic development, the intensification of artisan production and the concomitant revitalization of local ethnic identities appear to challenge theoretical formulations which predict the eventual demise of local economies and cultural heterogeneity. The issue of peasant "resistance" which derives from this debate is extremely salient for understanding the dynamics of women's work in handknit production and conflicts which arise in the process of grassroots mobilization, key factors in my treatment of the politics of development funding.

Ethnography and Theory in the Andes

The theoretical issues explored here in relation to the knitting industry in Bolivia have a long tradition in Andean ethnography. The nature of peasant society and the dynamics of the relationship between peasants and nonpeasants have been central concerns in the anthropological literature. Yet representation of Andean lifeways, communities and history has not been static. Waxing and waning theoretical paradigms have provided changing views of social arrangements. Shifts in theoretical orientation affect our interpretation of how individuals are inserted into historical moments and spaces. The political ramifications of these interpretations give questions of theory a cogency beyond mere academic curiosity. At the same time, conceptualizing these processes is now more challenging as connections between local and global spheres become more intricate. Globalization of the economy,

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the influence of people mobilizing for change at the grassroots level, and the expansion of development project funding, for example, all complicate our theoretical models. Moreover, our own analytical abilities increasingly appear diluted by recognition of epistemological ambiguity as a permanent condition of contemporary life. Yet the need for analysis of these processes continues to take on even greater immediacy in light of deepening global economic crisis and the deterioration of livelihoods among rural producers.

Much of early Andean ethnography was focused on identifying "Incan" or precolumbian elements and customs among contemporary Andean peoples.[2] For some, this was a sort of "salvage" ethnography looking for continuity with the past as an explanation for "Indian" cultural practices. Others, more influenced by *Indigenista* politics and perspectives, saw rural communities, rather romantically, as manifestations of a precolumbian primitive communism which contained seeds for a model of future society. These formulations shared common tenets with other folk-urban dichotomies (*i.e.*, Redfield 1940) in vogue at the time. Indian communities and ethnic groups were treated as homogenous, cohesive units with fixed, unambiguous boundaries. Individuals, analytically indistinguishable from each other, were seen as passive bearers of "tradition" existing outside of, or at the margins of modern society. These assumptions found an easy fit with accepted views of the time about Indian "backwardness," and complemented existing ideas about "progress" and urbanization.

The rise of more technocratic, modernization perspectives in the 50's and 60's supplanted the *indigenista* idealization of *lo indio* with a belief in "scientific intervention for directed social change."[3] Academic community studies were combined with "interventions" or projects which attempted to replace poverty and backwardness with "progress." These approaches treated Andean culture as something which needed to be studied and documented in order to be able to bring Indians and peasants into the twentieth

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[2]See Castro Pozo (1924), Clews Parsons (1945), Tschopik (1947).

[3]Dobyns (1988/1965), Babb (1980), Himes (1981), Nunez del Prado (1973)

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century through "directed social change." However, "traditional" culture and the intransigence of poverty thwarted attempts at intervention, and the functionalist assumptions and evolutionary schema underlying these studies came under fire. Although modernization-based ideas continued to have influence in political arenas and to serve as the underlying basis for much policy implementation, as a theoretical paradigm modernization succumbed to numerous and varied critiques.[4] Especially influential were dependency theorists and Marxist analysts who posited the need for recognizing the interconnectedness of contemporary relationships, against modernizationist views of Indian "backwardness."[5] Dependency theory located the mechanisms for the creation of poverty and "underdevelopment" in the historical relationship between the "first" and "third" worlds rather than as arising out of the failure of people to "develop." This approach contradicted accepted evolutionist visions of socio-economic progress and development, yet seemed to resonate with studies which had begun to link the experience of Andean peasants and urban slum dwellers to the external, structural forces of expanding capitalism.

This conceptualization of "linkage" offered an important alternative to previous ahistorical, functionalist approaches, and helped to promote a re-valorization of indigenous cultural practices which had in the past been belittled as impediment to "progress."[6] Still, although dependency theory enjoyed great support both academically and politically during the 1970's, the identification of numerous fundamental flaws with dependency as a theoretical model reduced its efficacy to explain contemporary relationships. The most salient criticisms focused on dependency theory's over-attribution of power to the logic and structure of the "world capitalist system," the model's use of internally undifferentiated

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[4]For examples of modernization theorists consult Aujac (1984), Jorgenson (1961), Inkeles and Smith (1984) and Rostow (1971).

[5]For Dependency theory see Baran (1957), Cardoso and Faletto (1979), Frank (1973), Wallerstein (1974).

[6]ie, Brush (1977), Bastien (1978), Buechler and Buechler (1971), Deere and Leon de Leal (1978), Lobo (1982), Long (1977), Nunez del Prado Bejar (1975), Warren and Bourque (1981)

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geopolitical units as the basis of analysis, its focus on market exchange rather than on the relations of production, and the failure of the model to allow for "agency" by people other than the captains of capital as the navigators of history.[7]

Initial alternatives to the dependency approach were often couched in terms of more classical Marxist class analysis and led to studies which examined the impact of external forces on the structure of local relationships.[8] This approach contributed to the elaboration of one of the most important focuses in Andean scholarship over the past 20 years--that of studies which attempt to understand exactly how Andean peasant communities fit into regional, national and global economic processes. Although at times vitriolic, this debate on the 'peasant question' in the Andes has contributed some of the most important and insightful analyses in the literature on peasant societies.[9] Theoretical constructions of peasant economy and culture which were popular in the 70's and 80's reflected the influence of structural Marxism and often revolved around arguments concerning "modes of production." However, in the Andes as in other parts of the world, attempts to understand society as the articulation of structural nodes often fell far short of meaningful interpretation.[10]

What has become clear is that reliance on unitary theoretical models to explain the nature of these interactions has proven unsatisfactory. Recent studies give more play to factors such as gender, ethnicity and culture as significant pieces of the puzzle, and attempt to rethink the concept of class in a less functionalistic way

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[7]For critiques of dependency theory see Brenner (1977), Laclau (1971), Nash (1981), Schneider (1977), Stern (1988), Wolf (1982).

[8]see examples of external impact on Andean communities in Guillet (1980), Mallon (1986), Nash (1979), Radcliffe (1991), Rasnake (1988)

[9]For relevant peasant studies literature, see Dandler (1987), Deere (1991), Greaves (1975), Guillet (1980), Lehmann (1982), Long and Roberts (1884), Mallon (1983), Meier (1984), Miller (1965), Orlove (1980), Painter (1986), Redclift and Goodman (1987), Sage (1991), Smith (1989),

[10]One notable exception was Nash's (1979/1993) We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us which was a critique of "classical" marxist theory in it's emphasis on the household and the community rather than the workplace as the locus most motivating class action.

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than had often been done in the past.[11] The slipperiness of categories such as "Indian," "*chola*," *Mestizo*, and *campesino* continue to defy and confound analytical treatment. Alternative perspectives in Andean ethnography have demonstrated the need for problematizing the seemingly unproblematic "traditions" of Andean peoples, and underline the need to rethink and redefine basic units of analysis, such as "the community," "the household," "kin," "the nation," or "Indian." Emphasizing these aspects of Andean society as potential points of conflict or at least, as in need of analysis, has produced new insights on the nature of life in the Andes.[12]

At the same time, global processes such as the evaporation of once seemingly clear trends toward concentration of capital, and the de-skilling, and de-composition of the labor process contradict the expectations of existing evolutionist paradigms on the Left and the Right. The new global division of labor no longer fits into neat categories. Increasingly, de-industrialization, "peasantization" and informalization are recognized as outcomes of global economic transformation.[13] Michael Kearney (1996) has proposed that the category "peasant" itself is no longer useful for describing or understanding the complex "reticula" (p. 126) of relations and identities that are now constituted by global processes. Hall (1997) highlights the extent to which one of the outcomes of globalization is the construction of distinct local identities among people at the "margins" who are struggling to reclaim their ability to represent themselves.

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[11]see Archetti and Stolen (1987), Brass (1986), Bunker (1987), Gladhardt and Gladhardt (1981), Lagos (1992), Leons (1977), Smith (1979), Van den Berghe (1979)

[12]For literature on gender see: Allen (1988), Harris (1980), Warren and Bourque (1981), Weismantel (1988). For treatments of belief and representations of reality see: Custred (1980), Platt (1986), Rasnake (1988), Urton (1990). For literature on ethnicity, consult: Albo (1990), Allen (1988), Belote and Belote (1984), de la Cadena (1991), Godoy (1985), Harrison (1989), Lagos (1992), Rasnake (1988), Rivera Cusicanqui (1991). Also see I Spent My Life in the Mines (Nash 1992), The World of Sofia Velasquez (Buechler and Buechler 1996) and Andean Lives (Valderama, et. al. 1996) for biographical accounts which confound previous constructions.

[13]See Buechler and Buechler (1992), Escobar de Pabon (1989), Healy (1988), Long and Roberts (1984)

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Ethnographic studies in the Andes have been greatly affected by these changes. In a recent dissertation about rural Bolivia, Paulson (1992: 7) explains that to her "'Andean' does not refer to pristine precolumbian ways, but on the contrary, to the specific shape and dynamic of incorporation and integration." In fact, a recurring theme in contemporary Andean studies is the admission that reality is much more fragmented and complex than previously supposed. Billie Jean Isbell's (1978) use of the kaleidoscope metaphor to describe the mobility of her subjects in the Peruvian town of Kuschi appears more and more apt on a general level as the years go by.

These issues are especially relevant to the circumstances described in the case study presented here. Global processes affecting the Cochabamba region and transformations in the market for handknits have significantly affected the way that knitters live their lives and how they are incorporated into the global economy. Participation in rigorous production schedules for export geared to conform with ephemeral consumer tastes and fashion trends presents new challenges to existing social norms concerning the manner in which women's work complements the demands of home and family. These changes impact the nature of women's economic participation in the household and in the community, and affect the way that women view themselves. Knitters' need to define themselves in a certain way and their sense of self-identity are both reflections of the nature of dynamics at work as 'the local' and 'the global' vie for position in the context of current trends, and in the priorities and lifestyles of individuals.

Artisan Production and Women's Work

In Bolivia as in other parts of the world, artisan production has become an important source of income for many people, and crafts have featured prominently in schemes to promote socio-economic development. As global linkages have reduced the "distance" between previously isolated areas, governments, development experts and indigenous communities have seen crafts as a panacea for a variety of social, economic and political ills.

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Still, a growing body of literature reveals contradictions in the development of craft industries, obviating the need for more comprehensive analysis. Deficiencies in our knowledge are especially apparent in light of the plethora of development projects initiated during the 1980's aimed at bringing women into the market economy through the production of crafts (USAID Document 1987a). Two decades of research since Boserup's (1970) seminal work on the role of women in economic development have produced an extensive body of literature on the sexual division of labor and women's status (surveyed in Morgan 1990). My research draws on analyses which emerged from that work in examining aspects of the knitwear industry in Bolivia. Pioneering works by a number of authors have offered important insights into the nature of women's work in the Andes (e.g., Bourque and Warren 1981; Buechler 1986; Nash 1986). Despite advances in our understanding, however, we still need more information to adequately address the problems facing women in Latin America, which are exacerbated by economic and social crisis.

In particular, studies of artisans illustrate that the intensification of craft production can affect relationships within a community (Nash 1993). In some cases, existing patterns of production may be maintained. Often, however, successful production for the market can undermine the social structures which are the foundation of that production (Stephen 1991). In other cases, the production process itself may be revolutionized, necessitating the creation of entirely new relationships (Berik 1989). The impact of these transformations on the continuity and cohesiveness of ethnic communities, and on women's lives, can be profound. Income from a craft industry can give some individuals or households the ability to accumulate capital, creating unprecedented differentials of wealth which disintegrate local social ties (Waterbury 1989, Bourque and Warren 1981). In her work with petty commodity producers in La Paz, Buechler (1986) demonstrates the centrality of internal relations of production for understanding how women are positioned to deal with change. In my work with handknitters, I found that the manner in which women's income from

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knitting was incorporated into the local economy presented a challenge to existing social, economic and cultural boundaries.

In the Cochabamba valley, a number of communities and projects have focused on sweater-knitting as a way to generate income and at the same time, utilize "traditional" skills and maintain what are perceived to be "traditional" women's roles. Using rhetoric of "participation," women were organized into production "cooperatives," which Larrazabal (1988: 35) describes as "quasi-cooperatives," amounting to little more than glorified putting-out systems. In Waterbury's (1989) analysis of San Antonino dress makers in Mexico we see how such loss of control over the production process can negatively affect women's autonomy. Women who sew and embroider "Mexican wedding dresses" have been reorganized into a putting-out system which has had little effect on the existing gender ideology of separate spheres for men and women. With the segmentation of dressmaking into discrete tasks, women have lost the control they once had over the production process, a significant feature of women's domain. Monopolization of credit and materials by merchants, and the separation of sewing and embroidery, threaten the modicum of control that women exercise over their own labor and time. In West Africa, Etienne (1980) details a similar process in her description of how the relationship between Baule women and cloth has been reversed through commoditization. Cloth, an object that women once controlled, has been transformed into an object that now controls them. In Bolivia, knitters' control over income gave individual women power and prestige at the local level, but the nature of relationships within the industry maintained knitters as a group in a dependent position.

In addition to control over income, control over the production process and over finished products, are key issues in the literature on women's status (*i.e.*, Etienne and Leacock 1980). Nash's (1993) study of potters in Amatenango illustrates how increasing commercialization and rising profits give men an incentive to become involved in the pottery business, and at the same time to usurp control of the supply of materials and the sale or marketing of

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pots. This has also given men *de facto* control over income previously controlled by women. The opportunity to migrate for wage labor affords men greater knowledge and experience with outsiders, while cultural dictates limiting women's behavior and movement result in low literacy rates and a higher level of monolingualism among women. Cultural restrictions thus make women dependent and give men an advantage when they enter into the pottery industry. Similarly, in their study of two Peruvian towns, Warren and Bourque (1981) found that men have been the disproportionate beneficiaries of increasing involvement with the cash economy. The penetration of market relations into the indigenous community of Mayobamba undermined activities in which women previously exercised control and strengthened the position of men, *vis a vis* that of women. As they show, this process had advanced even further in the Mestizo community.

In Bolivia, these issues are particularly salient because of the attempt of some knitters to subvert the power of middlemen in order to create an independent structure for home-based production, and to challenge the dependent position of women through educational programs which give women empowering knowledge and skills. Organizing at the grassroots level has given women access to external sources of capital through project funding and the ability to increase control over their own productive activities. while simultaneously incorporating themselves directly into foreign markets. To a certain extent, this effectively overturns the position that rural Bolivian women have held in the global marketplace. Given the disadvantages faced by women in developing countries, knitters' successes as entrepreneurs are striking. However, the implications of these activities on gendered aspects of production remain unclear, both at the level of the international division of labor, and within local arenas. This study explores the ways that internal relations of production in the knitwear industry reproduce or challenge women's subordination.

In comparing Zapotec merchant and weaver households, Stephen (1993) finds that participation in production for the market can also influence women's status. Weaver women, who participate

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directly in production, have more egalitarian relationships in their households and enjoy more autonomy in the production process than do merchant women, who play a subordinate role to their husbands. Still, Stephen demonstrates how changes in the political structure of the local community have negatively affected the ability of women to participate in politics and public life. While merchant women seem to have education and skills which allow them to take part in the secularized political structure, weaver women continue to operate effectively through kin-based networks and *compadrazgo* to influence decisions and events informally. Yet, this avenue of power for women is threatened as these more traditional institutions are increasingly eroded by commercial relations. Economic stratification from the commercialization of weaving has undermined the civil-religious "*cargo*" system of *mayordomia* upon which political authority in Oaxaca has previously been based. Women have always been excluded from the formal power structure, but participation in the *cargo* system as members of a husband/wife pair allowed women a certain degree of inclusion in decision-making and augmented the status of women in the community in general. The re-ordering of ritual space has validated the "authenticity" of Zapotec crafts but has also further excluded women from political participation.

Similar contradictions have occurred with women's wage labor in the Turkish carpet-weaving industry (Berik 1989). The existing system of gender inequality has simultaneously been undermined and strengthened. Nuclearization of households made possible by women's wage labor offers women greater independence, but the association of factory work with religious symbols which subordinate women maintains the inequalities of the system within this transformation. An essential mechanism in this process is the preservation of family-based relations of production which recreate age hierarchies in the work place. Merchant capital preserves domestic relations of production because of the nature of the specific production process required for carpet-weaving, and because an important factor in determining profitability is the ideological devaluation of women's labor. Likewise, in Guatemala,

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according to Ehlers (1993), while weaving may provide women with independent income and allow them to contribute significantly to the family productive system, their labor continues to be treated as secondary. Domestic responsibilities are seen as a woman's primary activity, regardless of the economic importance of her weaving. Men appropriate the value of women's labor which is ideologically construed as "helping out." (Cook 1990)

Merchants are often able to capitalize on this extractive relationship by using the idiom of kinship to legitimize and reinforce exploitative relations of production. Underlying commercial relations, however, threaten the logic of household production based on the ideology of symmetrical contribution by men and women. The husband/wife unit becomes problematic as the relationship of women to men changes from one of interdependence to one of dependence. The tensions created by these changes threaten the very domestic relations on which production is based. For example, Harris (1978) discusses the importance of the concept of "complementary unity" in Andean cosmology. Women and men are said to form a unitary whole, with each member of the pair contributing complementary and necessary aspects of the relationship. This ideology gives meaning to marriage as a series of daily exchanges between husband and wife, cementing individuals into a social contract. Despite a cultural emphasis on complementary unity, however, Harris demonstrates the inability of the concept to fully encompass the reality of relations between men and women by ignoring the significance of the relationship between men and women as social groups. The economic importance of the married couple and their complementary relationship as individuals within the household conceals the real inequality that characterizes social interaction between men and women, exemplified by the incidence of domestic violence against women and the absence of women from political and certain ritual spheres. At the household level there may be a form of equality between the sexes, but gender relations at the level of the community belie the reality of the complementary conjugal unit. The ideology of complementarity at the household level thus masks broader social inequality.

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New streams of wealth produced by intensified artisan production for the world market can subvert the contract founded on the ideology of bilateral exchange between husband and wife. Power relations are significantly affected by control over resources. Etienne (1980) suggests that new forms of production which give women power lead to crisis in the household when men perceive a challenge to their position of authority. In fact, commercial relations can threaten the very institution of marriage as, for example, among the Baule, where cloth is losing its function to consolidate relationships between men and women (Etienne 1980). Nash (1993) describes the gender antagonism which erupted in Amatenango del Valle, Mexico when men felt that women's participation in a local cooperative challenged the traditional patriarchal power structure. Women there are allowed to earn "supplementary" money as long as it does not threaten men's controlling position in the redistribution of the household fund. In Bolivia, women's access to income from knitting has resulted in a certain amount of independence, especially for younger women. However, the principal dynamic would seem to be that women's income stabilizes the domestic unit by providing a household with cash for everyday expenses in a context where male outmigration and minifundization weaken cohesion between individuals within the household and threaten the very existence of the family unit.

My study explores how the men and women in Arani have responded to changes accompanying the development of the knitting industry. If participation in the knitting industry is reshaping relationships in Cochabamba, this could represent yet broader challenges to existing power structures. My analysis relates the development of knitting as a source of employment for women to key factors regarding how gender and class relations affect knitters' status, both within the household and within the community.

Cooperatives and "Development"

Since the 1950's, craft producers around the world have attempted to organize grassroots production and marketing cooperatives as a way to circumvent the weak position of artisans

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in the global economy. In much of the literature on development, the cooperative model and grassroots organizing have been touted as keys to economic and social advancement of the poor because they offer the promise of empowering skills. Governments and agencies that fund development projects have seen cooperative efforts as attractive tools for socio-economic development and have lent a significant amount of financial and organizational support to craft coops. Yet despite the general promise placed upon the cooperative framework, all too often craft coops fail or linger on the edge of financial solvency. Those that do survive frequently develop hierarchical relationships mirroring power structures in the broader society.

These disappointments have fueled ideological debate regarding the nature of socio-economic forces. At issue are the causes of poverty and the possibilities for people to affect change by challenging social and economic boundaries placing limits on their lives and actions through collective action. One currently popular argument in the academic literature emphasizes power relations in the implementation of project funding as central for understanding the difficulties encountered by poor people in their attempts to produce social change.[14] Analysts adopting this perspective believe that the root of the problem lies in a pervasive language and ideology of "development" that informs and shapes processes of socio-economic change. According to this perspective, deeply ingrained ideological biases function to maintain the *status quo* or even to promote the interests of those in power, impeding the poor from succeeding when they attempt to organize.

Although the proponents of this critique have identified a number of salient points in their analysis of the discourse of development, this approach has proven too narrow to explain the intransigence of poverty and the difficulties faced by the poor when they organize for change. Moreover, there is a disturbing tendency for these same analysts to romanticize about the nature and efficacy of mobilization and "resistance" among the poor in a

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[14]Including, Apfell-Marglin (1990), Escobar (1991, 1995), Esteva (1987), Sachs (1992), Sheth (1987), Shiva (1989)

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manner inconsistent with the realities of grassroots organizing. In the case of grassroots craft producers, the ethnographic record suggests a wide range of factors responsible for hindering greater success with the cooperative model which are not made evident by the current critique framework.[15]

Other approaches have proven more useful for illuminating processes at work in situations involving cooperatives and development aid. In 1976, Nash, Dandler and Hopkins published an edited collection of groundbreaking articles attempting to develop a deeper anthropological understanding of the processes involved in cooperative endeavors in different socio-economic contexts. In some cases, the extent to which existing social structures provides a potentially appropriate blueprint for collective action was often ignored or underestimated by development planners (Raulin and Roth, Gosselin). In other cases, attempts at cooperativization were thwarted when collective structures were manipulated by individuals vying for political advantage (Vincent).

The collection by Nash, *et al.* demonstrated the importance of comparing "ideal type models" of collective action with real cases. The studies presented showed that there was no "natural" tendency to cooperate, but rather that what was necessary was to build appropriate and functional structures for cooperation. In fact, they found that Gide's paradox that the more successful a coop economically, the more likely it was to fail socially was supported by the existing data (p. 17). However, they suggest that the cooperative form works best when there is a maximum flow of information between all the individual members of the coop and that failure to meet this requirement results in a concentration of decision-making power in the hands of a small elite (p. 12). In addition, they found that cooperative endeavors tend to generate two contradictory political fields of action (p. 16). On the one hand were efforts which sought stabilization and reform within the given structure, while on the other were more radical mobilizations for change directed toward a fundamental transformation of society.

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[15]See for example, Nash (1993) and Villarreal (1994).

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They found that the nature of a particular collective action was influenced by the political field in which it's participants were enmeshed. As will be demonstrated in the chapters that follow, all of these points remain salient for understanding the dynamics of cooperatives in the current context.

Other authors have also suggested alternative perspectives to the negative vision promoted by the current development critics. Wignaraja (1993) agrees that the dominant development paradigm has failed, but suggests that what we need is a new conceptual framework which can provide a positive synthesis of ideas with concrete social action (p. 3). She points out that back in the 70's, she and a number of others elaborated the basic premise that

> "development is simultaneously a 'top-down' and a 'bottom-up' process... successful development is viewed as a process of human development, a process of social transformation in which the people are both the subject and the object. In such a process the people participate at all levels of decision-making in matters affecting the totality of their lives and through this process of empowerment a more democratic process is initiated." (p. 27)

In a more recent piece, Nash (1997) has also suggested a positive relationship between NGO's and grassroots groups. Her analysis of the situation in Chiapas, Mexico suggests that these organizations can play an important role in creating political, cultural and economic spaces which make it possible for grassroots groups to operate.

Kevin Healy (1999) has offered some important insights concerning the particular case of grassroots cooperatives in Bolivia, further challenging the analysis proposed by the current development critics. His book, Llamas, Weavings and Organic Chocolates: Multi-cultural Grassroots Development in the Andes and Amazon of Bolivia, examines a number of success stories from groups in Bolivia. He demonstrates how

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> "grassroots movements in Bolivia mounted a successful challenge to the western model of development and shaped a socio-political context favorable to expressions of indigenous culture within rural development planning." (from Chapter 1)[16]

He suggests that the project stories provide a view of how cultural recuperation and revitalization can be fostered and strengthened through appropriate NGO strategies, and show how small-scale projects are "important crucibles in which indigenous cultural resources become rediscovered, reworked and imbued with value." (from the Conclusion). He elaborates 17 specific elements of success which include:

--popular participation
--training
--paraprofessionals
--group empowerment
--the positive influence of outsiders
--the participation of foreigners

In the long run, rather than eschewing "development" in its entirety, Healy's examples illustrate how it is possible for people to appropriate aspects of "globalization" to promote their own ends.

The ethnographic data from this case study of the Bolivian handknit industry contribute to our understanding of these issues. Cooperativization of the industry began with initiatives begun by institutions from outside which failed to take local ideas and culture into consideration. A number of large-scale "development" projects and small-scale interventions exemplified all of the negative aspects of the development process identified by the critics. However, as I demonstrate, closer examination of the case of handknitters gives strength to the more nuanced arguments offered by Nash, Wignaraja, Healy and others.

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[16]Citation here is for the final draft copy of the manuscript and pagination for publication was not yet available.

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"Resistance"

The increasing importance of artisan production in the global economy has other important implications. In some circumstances, the ability of people to produce crafts (and even the crafts themselves) may reflect the maintenance of "traditional" relations of production. In other instances, the growth of craft production has revitalized local ethnic identities. These trends challenge conventional wisdom concerning the inevitable deterioration of "traditional" culture which is at the heart of the debate over the "peasant question" in anthropology. Moreover, the intensification of artisan production has cultivated ideas concerning "resistance" to the dynamics of the capitalist system. A number of insightful interpretations have identified the ways that crafts can represent the expression of a distinct cultural tradition or the reassertion of ethnic identity as a "counter-hegemonic" dynamic.[17] At the same time, however, the ethnographic record regarding artisan production is complex and often contradictory. Rather than supporting a monolithic approach to defining and understanding these issues, the data would appear to require a nuanced and cautious treatment.

The "peasant debate" revolves around understanding the economic transformations which occur as rural producers become involved more directly in the capitalist market economy through wage labor and commodity production. The details of this debate have been well-documented and need not be repeated here beyond the following brief summary.[18] The central issue has been whether peasant economy and culture are destined to disappear and be replaced by "modern," capitalist relations. This focus complements the perceived tension between "tradition" and "change" which underlies much of the scholarship on Andean societies. Intense speculation regarding the peasant issue was fueled by studies which examined the details of how peasants are inserted into broader economic processes, especially those which applied a dependency

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[17]See Nash (1993) for an edited collection

[18]For excellent reviews of the peasant debate see: Cook and Binford (1986), Deere (1991), Kearney (1996), Orlove (1980), Plattner (1989), Roseberry (1989), Wolf (1982) .

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framework, and later through the elaboration of arguments concerning the relationship between different "modes of production."

The debate is often portrayed as between two opposing theoretical camps. On the one hand are *descampesinistas* who, following Lenin, tend to perceive a trend toward increasing differentiation of peasant communities into classes with differential access to the means of production and the replacement of "precapitalist" forms of production with that of the capitalist system. On the other hand are the *campesinistas* who, in the tradition of Chayanov, find evidence of the maintenance of traditional, noncapitalist forms and relations of production, even as peasants are incorporated into the capitalist economy. The existence of non-market relations is seen as a "persistence" of "traditional" culture and is offered as proof of peasant resistance to the logic of capital. Of course, few treatments actually fit comfortably into these categories, and even fewer authors have been willing to embrace either of these labels. Nevertheless, the dichotomy provided a strawman which has provoked detailed commentary, yielding valuable insights. At this point, however, it is my view that continuing to ask whether or not peasants are capitalist is a misplaced inquiry given that the ethnographic data suggest a much more complicated set of relationships.

Numerous studies demonstrate that neither Leninist nor Chayanovian models are adequate for understanding what has been found in the field. To note just a few examples, Favre (1977) found that in Peru, migration for wage labor actually allowed the maintenance of traditional life back in the village, and Guillet (1980) concludes that traditional relations provided channels for the accumulation of capital. Brass (1986) demonstrates that "traditional" kinship relations are not the basis for the community solidarity of the folk, but rather can become mechanisms for domination, and Bradby (1982) discovered that "market" relations were actually liberating for poorer peasant communities tied to their more wealthy neighbors through exactly this sort of coercive relationship couched in terms of "tradition." Isbell (1978) shows

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that "genealogical amnesia" allows people to manipulate their understanding of the past and create the conditions for a heightened and more exclusive "tradition." Perhaps even more suggestive, Sanchez (1982) proposes that what appears to be "persistence" of peasant relations is actually the result of forces within the capitalist sector which make it necessary for people to rely upon noncapitalist forms. In a similar vein, Collins (1988) points to an impending crisis as peasant families are simultaneously forced to depend more and more upon nonmarket relations for basic subsistence and the reproduction of the household, at the same time that the ability of families to maintain these relations is being undermined by current economic trends.

What is clear is that just as "capitalism" in the "core" has been found to be much less homogenous and cohesive than previously believed, relations in the "periphery" are equally complex. The existence of small-scale productive activities within a larger capitalist economy is unlikely to result from a unitary cause or to represent a monolithic system of meaning. In some cases, "tradition" may reflect continuity with the past. In other situations, local tradition and custom become "appropriated" by broader, structural forces and no longer maintain crucial aspects of past function and meaning. And in still other cases, "tradition" is actually created. One of the strengths of social systems, both "traditional" and "capitalist," is the potential for people to adapt to change and accommodate contradictions. "Tradition" may then represent all of these things. In the case study presented here, what is clear is that production of handmade products for the export market and participation in grassroots production cooperatives create a different economic field than that addressed by the debate as it has been framed in the past. The current situation would suggest that the debate is not about whether "peasants" survive as small-scale cultivators or operate within the bounds of a kin-ordered community, but rather, whether the logic at work in situations involving individuals from a rural culture is distinct from that which is found in industrial settings.

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Gavin Smith (1989) makes an important contribution to our understanding of this complexity in Andean peasant economies in his study of Huasicancho, Peru. He demonstrates the significance of noncommodified relationships in the evolution of "confederations of households" through which certain Huasicanchino families form alliances involving participation in contemporary commodity and wage labor markets. The dynamic which has been created through this diversified peasant economy has facilitated rather than stifled the formation of local class and status hierarchies, while simultaneously validating "traditional" culture. Smith concludes that although these relations give an appearance of continuity with relations of production from the past, contemporary economic patterns among peasant households reflect historical processes which have substantially transformed the nature and meaning of previously existing relationships. Smith's portrait of Huasicancho calls to mind a short story by the Argentinean philosopher, Luis Borges. In the story, a man authors a book which is, word for word, identical to Cervantes' *El Quixote*. The premise of the story is that the new work is not a mere copy of the original, but rather an entirely different book as a result of having been "written" in a different historical context. In Borges' elaborate philosophical exploration of the interconnectedness of human existence through a repeating and circular reality, we can see a reflection of relationships in Huasicancho. No matter how tempting it is to see "peasant" relations as evidence of some prior social order, Borges' image and the ethnographic data compel us to recognize the transformations which are inherent in any form of "persistence."

Smith's characterization of peasant economy also points to one of the other central issues in the literature--that of human agency. Smith demonstrates that the configuration of the confederated households he encountered is the product of people actively engaging with structural and historical forces. Huasicanchinos create alliances and selectively involve themselves in activities which they perceive will promote their own interests, both within and outside the market economy. The persistence of these sorts of "traditional" social forms, often through

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diversification of the peasant economy to include market and nontraditional activities, has been taken by many researchers as evidence of peasants "resisting capitalism." In ethnographic studies from throughout the Andes, recognition of the extent to which people play an active role in constructing their own lives and histories has shown us that "resistance" *is often an important* component of social processes. Yet it would seem to me that "capitalism" is not a "thing" to resist, but rather a series of relationships and ideologies, many of which are contradictory. I have come to believe that arguments about peasant "resistance" require closer examination to determine subtle differences in exactly what is being "resisted." The result will have important implications for understanding people as "agents" within a "hegemonic" structure.

A particularly influential work in the "resistance" debate has been Michael Taussig's (1980) analysis of devil and death symbolism in the Andes. His depiction of local systems of symbolic meaning as "commodity fetishism" which represents the alienation of peasants from the capitalist system, seems to have found fertile ground in the ideological climate of the early 1980's. Evidence that Andean peasants have an inherent cultural opposition to wage labor and commodity production spoke to people on the Left in a voice they wanted to hear. However, June Nash's (1979/1993) detailed study of the Bolivian tin mines from which Taussig derives much of his Bolivian data, provides a different, more nuanced interpretation. Nash found that miners were not "alienated" from capitalism, but rather exploited. The importance of devil symbolism in the form of the "*Tio*" was not a critique of wage labor, but rather a syncretic image which unlike the Christian devil-as-Satan figure, *is both* generative and destructive. Moreover, rituals enacted in the mines as part of the effort to placate *Tio* and improve mineral yields, promote bonds of solidarity among workers or between workers and management which effectively combat forces of alienation.

Other researchers have also found multiple levels of meaning at work in Andean social metaphor concerning economic relationships. These studies effectively undermine the

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meaningfulness of interpretations which portray peasant antipathy to the market. In her detailed ethnographic investigation of northern Bolivia, Olivia Harris (1989) did not uncover a distinction between use and exchange value in Layme symbolism relating to money. Instead, like much of miners' beliefs about the *Tio*, the Layme see money as something which "gives birth" to economic prosperity. Contrary to expectations of the "fetish" perspective, the Layme believe that it is a good thing to be involved in relations of credit, both as a creditor and as a debtor. In fact, *wanu*, the *Quechua* word for "manure", is used to refer to lending because such interactions produce both social and economic "capital" over time. In addition Harris found that among the Layme, old coins and money are highly valued for use in ritual activities because they are seen to represent the "source" of current wealth. Still, money is issued by the state and as such, is simultaneously imbued with negative meanings related to the power structure of the larger social order. Yet it is not money *per se* which is seen as exploitative, but forms of coercion which arise from relations of production, and which may be enacted through certain transactions involving money. Sallnow (1989) writes about a similar finding concerning the meaning of the symbolism of gold in southern Peru. Like money, gold is seen to derive it's value from the state and must be subjected to local ritual in order to "control" it. Negative images of gold are not a consequence of peasant antipathy to money or commoditization, but rather indicate the "imperfect articulation between the dictates of capital and the norms of Andean culture."

In the same way, Gose's (1986) interpretation of social metaphors of death represented by Andean mythology and animal sacrifice do not support interpretations of peasant commodity fetishism. According to Gose, Andean peoples see sacrifice as a form of tribute which counters the "destructive" individuation produced through any form of exchange by feeding the *apus* ("ancestors") and restoring them with what they lack. Sacrifice contains a sense of compensation with food as in the "*mink'a*."[19] To

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[19] *Mink'a* is a form of cooperative labor found in the Andes.

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see these things as commodity fetishism "sanitizes death" and "enshrines individuality at the expense of transcendence." Crain (1992) brings these themes together in her exploration of devil and death symbolism in Ecuador. She reveals the transformations which have occurred in local symbolic representation of the devil figure in popular belief and myth. Over time, the image of the devil has evolved from priest, to hacienda owner, to mercantilist, and most recently in the context of technological modernization, to technician. Rather than interpreting people's narratives about devil and death symbolism as commodity fetishism, Crain suggests that the underlying allegory is one about exploitation, individualization and technological modernization. The mechanization of agriculture in the Ecuadoran highlands has undermined rural labor and threatened rights to pasture land. Dramatic changes occurring through modernization of the economy have forced men to migrate for work, negatively impacting the position of women in the household economy. The principle fear being expressed in the devil/death metaphor is one of "dependence" on the market and not fear of the market itself. Like Nash's interpretation in Bolivia, Crain finds that the underlying critique is about class domination rather than ideological opposition to market exchange.

Consideration of this debate has helped me to think about the nature of handknitting as a form of employment for rural women and the extent to which knitting can be seen to represent "resistance." In my research, I did not find evidence that knitters were averse to capitalism or a market economy *per se*, but rather to being incorporated at the bottom of the social hierarchy. History has shown us that people in a variety of social systems are likely to resist situations where they are the subjects of inequality or repression. No one likes to be at the bottom of the social food chain. But of course, this is not the only consideration that people make. On the contrary, people's lives are filled with institutions, relations and symbols which are of great importance in conveying a sense of identity and providing meaning to everyday existence. The fact that people make choices about the strategies they pursue based upon a delicate balance of often competing or contradictory factors is

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clearly demonstrated in the ethnography presented in the following chapters. Describing what results as "resisting capitalism" does not seem to adequately capture what is really going on. Instead, the existence of "traditional" culture and mobilization at the grassroots are better understood as the concatenation of numerous processes. Maria Lagos (1993: 65) writes that,

> "in identifying alterity, we cannot automatically conclude that it is resistance...to do so would be to freeze hegemony and culture as finished or essentialist products rather than conceptualizing them as formative processes...instead we need to look at the political relevance of alterity or the lack of it in specific hegemonic moments and how it relates to wider transformations that restructure social relations."

In a recent influential work, Michael Kearney (1996: 149) suggests that,

> "Rather than perceiving "individuals" as maximizers of the desired, we can regard them as transformers of value and power whom themselves become transformed in the process. This theoretical move de-essentializes the maximizing individual who is contained in dualist thinking and instead queries the effects of production and consumption of value on the formation of identity."

This study from Bolivia demonstrates that handknitters actively participate in constructing the boundaries of their own engagement with local and global processes. Although in the end, there are constraints which retain a fixity in structuring the social field in which knitters operate, the ethnographic data presented clearly show the extent to which individuals can impact or even transform not only fields of action, but how those fields operate.

Research Focus

The focus of this research on the Bolivian handknit export industry is the Cochabamba valley region where more than 2000

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women depend on some form of knitting income. Out-lying rural towns in the *Valle Alto* ("Upper Valley") and *Valle Bajo* ("Lower Valley") surrounding the city of Cochabamba form the backbone of the handknit industry. In these towns, *Quechua*-speaking "*cholitas*", with their brightly colored "*pollera*" skirts and braided hair, serve as the labor force for knitwear exports.[20] In the following chapters, I examine the impact that knitting employment has had on knitters' lives. I analyze the development of handknitting as an industry, and the struggle of knitters to overcome exploitation through organizing at the grassroots level. In particular, I explore the way that knitting became intertwined with political, economic and historical patterns at work in the *Valle Alto* town of Arani, which is a hub for Cochabamba knitwear production. Arani knitters have been the central players in the movement to create viable grassroots alternatives within the export knitwear industry.

In Chapter 2, I introduce information intended to contextualize my analysis. The chapter is divided into four sections. I begin with an historical overview of Cochabamba and of the *Valle Alto* town of Arani where I conducted extensive field work, and I describe political and economic processes which have shaped the configuration of life in the region. The particular concatenation of these historical forces creates a backdrop for this study of handknitters. The unique history of the Cochabamba valley as a center for pre-Columbian and colonial agricultural production, and later as the birthplace of the agrarian reform movement in the 1950's continues to have ramifications for understanding the contemporary period. I describe in detail a number of salient regional issues: the problems confronting small holders, drought, household restructuring, liberalization of the Bolivian economy, migration, the economics of cocaine, and the recent initiation of the *Ley de Participación Popular* (Popular Participation Law). These processes have had a considerable impact on knitters lives and on the way that knitting employment became incorporated into the local economy. I also explain different types of work that men and

[20]The *pollera* is the distinctive form of dress worn by women identified as *cholitas* in the Andes. The terms "*cholita*" and "*pollera*" will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

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women commonly do in Arani. This information demonstrates the context in which handknitting has become a form of women's work, and situates knitting work in relation to other alternatives available to women.

Chapter 2 also discusses cultural concepts of the "*cholita*" and the "*pollera*." The term "*cholita*" is used to describe women whose socio-cultural heritage is a blending of indigenous and Hispanic traditions. These women wear a distinctive form of dress called the *pollera*. In Bolivia, the concept of the *cholita* and the use of the *pollera* are embued with enormous psychological and social baggage which both locate and encumber those who wear it. A number of authors have shown how both can be interpreted as part of a strategy by certain social groups to resist domination and incorporation by the national westernized culture.[21] The history and social significance of these terms are important here because the majority of the handknitters in this study are *de pollera* (they "wear the *pollera*"). In the following chapters, I argue that the identity of the *cholita* artisan knitter as a counter-hegemonic female identity meshed with local cultural ideals and provided a consensus for grassroots mobilization within the industry. However, dynamics of operating as a knitting cooperative at the international level began to conflict with the basic premises of what was entailed in *cholitahood*.

In Chapter 3, I present a brief overview of the history of knitting in the Andes, followed by a description of contemporary handknits and knitwear production. I explain how the export knitwear industry is organized, distinctive features of the production process, and the nature of the raw materials involved. I also discuss dynamics of the development of the industry, giving particular attention to the problems knitwear exporters face in designing exportable fashions and in obtaining markets for their products. In the second half of the chapter, I chronicle the history of export knitting in Bolivia. I divide the past 40 years of export production by decade: the fifties were the era of "the benevolent

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[21]See for example, Barragan (1992) and Gill (1994)

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entrepreneur"; the sixties saw the emergence of "quasi-cooperatives"; the seventies were characterized by "the advent of discontent and no apologies capitalism"; and the eighties were a time of "collective action and autodevelopment" among grassroots organizations that broke away from existing knitwear exporters. For each period I use case studies of one or two of the most prominent knitting institutions to illustrate these trends. The data I collected demonstrate dynamics at work in the development of the industry and reveal clues to understanding why export knitting evolved the way it did. Of special relevance to arguments presented in later chapters is my over-arching analysis of the impact that export knitting had on the identity of the women who work as handknitters.

Chapter 4 describes the consequences of these developments in Arani and introduces principal characters in the ethnography. Arani was the location for the operational headquarters of the most important export knitting institution in the 1960's, and it was in Arani that the grassroots cooperative, the *Asociación de Tejedoras 'Tipay Warmi'* ("Association of Knitters 'The Knitting Woman')[22] was organized by a group of women in response to working conditions in the industry. Here I explore the specific reasons that knitting found such a convenient fit with local economic and cultural conditions. Particularly relevant to my thesis concerning women's identity politics was the way that export knitting appeared serendipitously at a time when work in the regional *chicha* industry was in decline. This was especially significant for women from poorer households and for young, single women, and I suggest a number of social consequences created by this socio-economic nexus related to the elaboration of a local *cholita* identity. I also chronicle the evolution of local perspectives regarding handknitting work from enthusiasm to disillusionment, to protest and ultimately to confrontation.

In Chapter 5, I show how out of the ashes of this confrontation, an inauspicious group of women mobilized to

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[22]Pseudonym

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challenge the subordinate position of knitters in the industry through the creation of a knitter-controlled cooperative that eventually rose to international prominence as a grassroots organization. I use the term "autodevelopment" to describe the process through which some knitters have attempted to negotiate their position *vis a vis* dominant groups and individuals, and within structures of power. *Tipay Warmi*'s success as a women's production cooperative provided its members with connections outside of Arani and Bolivia, and gave them independent access to money from sweater sales and development institutions. These advantages positively affected the status and power of *Tipay Warmi* as a grassroots institution and of it's *cholita* knitters. Despite the organization's considerable achievements however, I suggest that grassroots organizing was not sufficient to overcome limitations to financial success generated by the structure of the global knitwear industry. I outline the steps required to produce and export sweaters from Bolivia and I explain how as a result of the difficulty that cooperative producers face in entering the upscale, private market, a network of nonprofit "Alternative Trade Organizations" (ATO's) have become the principal clients for Bolivian knitwear producers. I delineate problems with this market which have generated new forms of dependency for grassroots knitters.

Given the structure of the international market for handknits, the market is ultimately a principal limiting factor for grassroots producers such as *Tipay Warmi*. In Chapter 6, I examine the 'top-down' approach to linking Bolivian knitters to global markets implemented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The chapter begins with a short description of the failure of an umbrella craft marketing project from the 1960's, representing an early recognition of the defining role that the market plays in the success of craft producers. The remaining bulk of the chapter is devoted to explaining the failure of a six million dollar marketing and design project from the 1980's. My documentation of this debacle explores issues raised by development critics, especially concerning the role that development capital often plays in regimenting the participation of the poor in the

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market and consolidating the power of elites. Even when poor people do all of the "right" neo-liberal things, they rarely come out ahead.

Chapter 7 examines a project funded by a Swiss development agency that intended to provide *Tipay Warmi* with a building for it's growing operations. The first part of the chapter describes how the *Tipay Warmis* battled with local elite women and political bosses for control of the project and its funds, and ultimately came out on top. However, these struggles were only the beginning. In the second part of the chapter, I show how the physical structure itself was ultimately compromised by corruption and internal development agency politics. The third and final section demonstrates how flawed project design, together with an unrealistic view of themselves held by the *Tipay Warmis*, made the building non-functional, or as many locals referred to it as, a "white elephant."

In Chapter 8, I present ethnographic data regarding *Tipay Warmi's* participation in "Andean by Design" (a marketing project that the group was involved with while I was in the field). This period was marked by antagonism between knitters and the project, by production and marketing problems, and by internal dissent. In this context, the cooperative framework upon which the group's success had always been based appeared to be coming apart at the seams. I suggest that these problems were symptomatic of a lack of participation at the grassroots level, and a reflection of crisis in the identity of the group and of its members rather than the handiwork of an exploitative development industry, it's hegemonic ideology or despotic discourse. The intricacy of internal group dynamics that I encountered in the field is indicative of cultural politics and broader market forces affecting the fortunes of *Tipay Warmi* as a women's grassroots sweater cooperative, and as such, exposes the weakness of theoretical approaches focusing narrowly upon the influence of a small number of factors.

Concluding remarks and analysis are presented in Chapter 9.

Approach and Methodology

This research reflects interests I developed through undergraduate coursework in Anthropology and International

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Development, and later through volunteer work with women from slum neighborhoods in Chile and Peru. As a result of my work in South America, I was aware of the importance of conducting research which is practical as well as theoretical. A course on "Artisan Production in the Global Economy," co-taught by June Nash and Jane Schneider gave me insights into the experiences I had with women's grassroots organizations, and demonstrated to me that a treatment of a craft production would be a useful way to integrate my interests in gender, grassroots organizing and socio-economic development. The specific focus of my research came about after Maria Lagos lent me a copy of a BBC documentary dealing with the debt crisis in Bolivia.[23] The women of *Tipay Warmi* are the principal voices in this video, and I was struck by the depth of their knowledge of complicated aspects of international political economy. At the same time, Carmen Medieros made me aware of the existence of the large sweater industry in Cochabamba which has received almost no attention in the academic literature.

Since 1990 I have conducted extensive research for this project, spending more than 20 months in the field. The data I collected allowed me to develop a framework for understanding various aspects of the Bolivian handknit industry and how it relates to the wider regional economy. My approach uses several levels of analysis, from the global market to individual life histories. The nature of the alpaca knitwear industry makes such a variety of perspectives necessary. Through knitwear production and export, indigenous peasant women in Bolivia are linked directly to high fashion retailers in the U.S., to development project funders and funds, and to each other as they organize at the grassroots. This study investigates relationships at each of these levels.

Research in Bolivia began with a 3 month reconnaissance trip in 1990. During that time, I made contacts with a number of organizations and businesses engaged in knitwear production and export, and with individuals and institutions working with women and women's organizations in Bolivia. As a preliminary step to

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[23]"Hell to Pay" (BBC) 1986

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conducting a more extended field study, I developed a relationship with *Tipay Warmi* and received permission from the group to continue my study. I also began the arduous process of acquiring *Quechua* language skills through intensive lessons in Cochabamba with the *Quechua* scholar, Federico Sanchez de Lozada.

The following year I returned to live for 3 months in Arani in the house of the Toranza sisters who are founding members and leaders of the cooperative. This gave me the opportunity to see the daily operations of *Tipay Warmi* and to gain an understanding of knitters' lives. I conducted a preliminary survey to gather basic information about knitters and their families, interviewed members of the cooperative, and participated in educational workshops. Learning to knit that year was also a key aspect of my research. Knitting along with other women in Arani allowed me to participate more fully in the rhythm of rural life, and gave me insights about the skill and labor required for knitwear production. At the same time, I was able to continue to develop contacts with other individuals and institutions engaged in knitwear production and sales outside of Arani, including field visits and interviews with spinners, knitters, managers, owners and marketers. I also began ethnohistorical documentation of the development of the handknit industry in Bolivia, with special attention to the role of grassroots organizations and development aid.

In 1992, I returned to Cochabamba to study *Quechua* in an intensive course with Luis Morato Peña being offered by Cornell University in Bolivia. In addition to language lessons, I conducted follow-up research from the previous year in Arani, and began an in-depth investigation of the Andean by Design project. I lived in the house of the project's Director, Judy Bristol, and I was able to engage key individuals in detailed interviews, to be granted access to project documents, and to observe the functioning and evolution of the project. Gabriela Toranza, the principal founder and long-time President of *Tipay Warmi* was the production coordinator for the project and she also came to live in that house. This further allowed me to discuss with her, both the project and the history of *Tipay Warmi*. With contacts I obtained through Andean by Design,

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upon my return to the U.S. I was able to interview many of the stores and boutiques where alpaca handknits are sold, and developed a close relationship with the project's U.S. sales representative in New York, Marlene Rigby. Through her I was able to stay abreast of the changes in the project as it evolved that year and had access to her personal files.

In 1993, I returned to the field for another 13 months, followed by a brief follow-up study in 1995. During my time in the field I again lived at the Toranza home in Arani. Through "participant observation," I was able to participate in the flow of daily life in Arani and to go through daily routines on the same terms as local people. This permitted me to document central aspects of women's lives in addition to knitting, including agricultural, marketing and household activities. Together with knitters and other people in Arani, I participated in the daily tasks of hauling water, cooking, doing laundry by hand, and shopping (and drinking) on market day, and in the excitement of the arrival of new babies, christenings, first-communions, marriages, birthdays and new car purchases; and the sorrow of illness and death. The relationships I cultivated in Arani were crucial in permitting me to conduct extended interviews with key figures in *Tipay Warmi*, in the town power structure (including the mayor and the priest), and in the knitwear industry (including rival knitting organizations). Using these relationships, and the *Quechua* language skills I acquired, I obtained extensive ethnographic information regarding household budgets, migration patterns, marital relationships, alcohol consumption, kinship relationships, institutional rivalries, land ownership, religion, schooling, and local politics. These data on local processes gave me insight into the experiences of individual knitters, the effects of knitting on households, the emergence of a cooperative production structure, and the role of a women's grassroots organization in community relations.

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A Hypothetical Afternoon in Arani[24]

It is a winter afternoon. The town seems empty and almost lifeless. An intense, biting wind besieges the dusty streets where adobe walls are interrupted by newer plastered buildings. Shuttered windows and latched, locked doors create an atmosphere of desertedness. Occasional passersby rush along with heads bent against the fierce drive of the chill wind and dust, appearing almost like apparitions that quickly disappear around the next corner A child sits huddled, almost hidden next to the public water spigot in the street, anxiously waiting for a trickle of liquid to fill a plastic jug. The silence and emptiness seem magnified by the monochrome color of the adobe bricks as they reflect the same fawn brown of the surrounding earth. Here even painted plaster quickly develops a muddy hue from strong winds that whip-up dust clouds that move about like angry ghosts. The relative lack of trees and other foliage contributes to the barren atmosphere. Even in the summer months when surrounding fields are briefly covered with green, the vibrant colors representing the thriving life of the community abruptly end at the edges of each small plot. Although the deserted appearance of the town is a reflection of an underlying reality in Arani, behind the closed doors peoples' lives unfold and are woven together in the practice of everyday life.

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[24]All of the characters in this vignette represent real people, and the events described are representative of events I witnessed in the field. For the purposes of this chapter I have combined these events into one afternoon. One reader of an earlier draft of this manuscript questioned my use of a "postmodern" literary device rather than a more "conventional" anthropological description of a specific ethnographic moment. I was surprised by her query, in part because I was not intentionally trying to be "post-modern" (although I suppose to an extent we can't avoid our condition) and because somehow in my mind, I was not doing anything "unconventional." In fact, my decision to use a composite arose primarily out of my desire to present an overview of issues that will be elaborated upon in later chapters. Since I was not able to identify one specific ethnographic moment that I believed reflected the complexity of factors I hoped to present--such as the discussion of Mothers' Day so beautifully presented by Warren and Bourque (1981: 10-40)--I believed that this vignette would serve a similar purpose. The fact that subsequent chapters use extensive detail of specific etnographic moments also influenced both my desire to do something "different" to interest the reader, and my sense that I was not losing anything in "creating" this hypothetical afternoon in Arani. Of course, I want to make explicit the fact that the following vignette is "constructed" out of observed "moments" and should be read as such.

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Along one of the dusty streets near the entrance to town, is the house of the Toranza family. The two story walls facing the street are covered with dusty pink paint and the faded letters of a political slogan--graffiti from a previous election season. In the adobe kitchen in the back courtyard of the house, *Don* Hernando[25] grumbles following his discovery that there is no *llaqwa*[26] to go with his soup for lunch. He rummages around the kitchen until he finds the small plastic jar with the dried and ground chili pepper that his daughter Ema brought him from Cochabamba. Imagine, pepper in a shaker-bottle! Everything is becoming *envasado*[27] these days! It will have to do. He has gotten used to serving his own bowl, or even cooking his own lunch (!) while his daughters are off with their knitting activities, but it always makes him grumpy when there is no *llaqwa*. Everyone knows (he's told them a million times) that his 70 year old palate can't tolerate food without *piquante*.[28] Tomorrow is the Thursday market in Arani. He will make sure that his eldest daughter, Dolores, buys *loqotu*[29] and tomato so that she can grind some fresh *llaqwa*. He thinks, all of his life he has had to make-do. The many years he spent as a laborer in Argentina, and hardships of agricultural life have made him *duro*.[30] He muses that the money he made migrating and his daughters' income from knitting may have paid for them to have a nice house and nice clothes, but it sure hasn't improved the food. While *Don* Hernando settles down to his lunch of soup with ground chili peppers, a baby's cries fill the air.

Inside the principal room of the house, *Doña* Gilla[31] sits on the floor along the wall. She was knitting until her baby began to cry. She has just finished changing his soiled clothing and his crying

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[25] *Don* = title of respect applied to adult men

[26] *Llaqwa* is a spicy sauce made of tomatoes, onions and chili peppers (*loqotu*), similar to the more well-known Mexican *salsa*, but with it's own distinct flavor.

[27] *envasado* = "bottled"

[28] *piquante* = "hot sauce"

[29] *loqotu*= "hot chili peppers"

[30] *duro* = "hard"

[31] *Doña*= title of respect applied to married women. In Arani, women who wear the *pollera* are more likely to be called *Doña* while women who wear western style dress are more likely to be called "*Señora*."

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stops as he settles in to suckle. She continues her knitting. Another woman leans against the wall watching a third iron a sweater on a large wooden table covered with a blanket. In the past, the Toranza home was the base of operations for the cooperative knitting association, *Tipay Warmi*, but now the group has it's own building along the main highway across the field behind the house. Because the new building has no electricity, knitters must still iron at the Toranzas' house. Gregoria, the woman ironing, is from a humble background and knitting with *Tipay Warmi* has provided her with both income and a certain prestige. She is pressing a damp cotton rag-cloth between the iron and the sweater. The moisture from the cloth helps to protect the alpaca yarn of the sweater, and at the same time, makes it easier to manipulate the length and width of the garment to meet the exact specifications required for export knitting. Yet having to wet and wring the cloth every few minutes makes the ironing take much longer.

Hilda is leaning up against the wall, waiting her turn to iron the three sweaters she carries in her bag. Two of them she knit herself and the other is the work of her sister who has remained at home cooking lunch for the family. Hilda is quite swank in her shimmering brocaded *pollera* skirt, brimmed straw hat and gold earrings. She and her sister are considered exceptional beauties by local standards, despite the fact that they are both a bit lean. Like other girls their age, the sisters spend most of their earnings from knitting on clothes and jewelry, giving them an appearance of luxury that seems somehow incongruent with Arani's dusty streets and rustic adobe dwellings.

Gregoria finishes ironing her sweater and wraps it up in her woven *awayllu* carrying cloth so that it won't get dusty. The wind has already picked-up this afternoon and dust is flying everywhere. Hilda begins to iron while Gregoria ties her *awayllu* onto her shoulders and heads out the door, and around the back, and across the field to the new building. It would be quicker for Gregoria to hop the 4-foot adobe wall out in back of the Toranzas' house like the Toranza sisters do, but Gregoria generally uses the door out of a concern for proper etiquette. She makes her way across the dry,

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cracked winter earth with gusts of wind whipping at her *pollera*. At the new building a few knitters are huddled around the edges of one of the front rooms. The women generally prefer to sit outside, but today the wind has gotten the best of them and they have retreated into the building.

Across the structure's open central passageway, there are 3 women in a room filled with piles of different colored yarn. Bits and pieces of wool are strewn about on the floor. Lydia and Dolores are in charge of sweater production for the cooperative. Dolores is the oldest of the Toranza sisters and Lydia is her second cousin. Gregoria enters the production room to turn in her newly-ironed sweater and receive more yarn for the next one. Lydia is occupied sorting and weighing skeins of yarn. Dolores is arguing with *Dona* Rosa about the measurements for a sweater. *Doña* Rosa is not happy with the fact that Dolores has found fault with the sweater she has knit and a small tiff ensues. Dolores prevails and *Doña* Rosa takes back the sweater for repairs. She acts put-out, but later admits that Dolores *tenía razon* because it was faulty.[32] *Doña* Rosa is an excellent knitter with many years of experience and knows when her work is not up to par. This is one of the things that makes Dolores angry and Dolores is well-known for her sharp temper. *Doña* Rosa, however, is no limp napkin herself and can hold her own in arguments with her long-time friend Dolores.

As Dolores begins to inspect Gregoria's sweater, a shiny new mini van "*trufi*"[33] pulls up in front of the building and the group's President, Ema Toranza, and the Vice President, Lupe get out with the wind whipping at their *polleras*. Lupe's hat is blown off and she has to run to catch it while making sure that the wind doesn't pick up her silky skirt. The knitters have come to the door to watch the moment's events and they all begin to giggle when her ruffly underskirts are displayed in a gust of wind. As the van drives away, curious faces peer out of the vehicle's windows, trying to catch a glimpse of what's going on in the new building. Some of the knitters

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[32] *tenía razon* = "was right"

[33] *Trufi* is the name of one of the first bus companies to use mini van's, but the word *trufi* has become the generic term for this type of vehicle.

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go back to what they were doing. Others hang around near the doorway to hear what Ema and Lupe have to report. They are both in a good mood. Ema has been teasing Lupe that the crazy man who is known to walk around the city naked is really Lupe's boyfriend. This makes everyone laugh. Eventually both Ema and Lupe go into the separate office room, and the knitters retreat back into the warmth of the building. Lupe pulls the ledger out of her desk and records the afternoon's expenses from their trip to the city. Ema opens her notebook and sits at a table in the office to work. For a brief moment, the two discuss something from Ema's notes in hushed tones, out of earshot of the others.

One of the faces peering curiously peering from the *trufi* was that of Carmen Valderama--or better said, one of the not-so-apparently curious faces. Carmen is *de vestido*[34] and does not use the characteristic outfit of the *cholita*[35] worn by the knitters of *Tipay Warmi*, indicating her greater educational and social standing. As the *trufi* pulled away from the *Tipay Warmi's* building toward the final drop-off at the *playa*,[36] Carmen could be seen to make only furtive, fleeting glances at the building. Everyone knows that no friendship is lost between Carmen and the *Tipay Warmis*. Carmen got out of the *trufi* a block from the plaza and walked to the colonial adobe house she shares with her mother, two sisters and their children. Carmen had gone to the city for a doctor's appointment and for a meeting with a government institution interested in *Tejedoras de Arani*,[37] the knitting group that Carmen and her sisters run out of their home. Carmen's political party connections have given her an inside track for the possibility of obtaining project funding for a knitting center building like the one the *Tipay Warmis* built. In fact, the *Tipay Warmis'* building is the source of the overt hostility between the two groups. When the *Tipay Warmis* obtained financing for the building project, Carmen and certain others tried to gain

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[34]*de vestido* = "wearing western-style clothing" (See Chapter 2)

[35]*cholita* = term used to refer to a woman who wears the distinctive *pollera* style of dress. See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion.

[36]*playa* = literally "open space," in Arani it used to refer to the large open space where the Thursday market is held.

[37]Pseudonym

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control of the project. This attempt failed, but the animosity generated in the struggle lives on.

On this day, Carmen arrives home to find a number of women knitting in the main room of her house. There seems to be some question over the pattern that the women are knitting and a number of knitters have come so that the correct stitching can be indicated to them. Carmen's sister is speaking somewhat harshly to one of the women, but Carmen is able to smooth the ruffled feathers after she arrives. Not long afterward, two young women come to the door. One does the talking while the other timidly hovers in the background. Both appear slightly nervous. They tell Carmen that they want to knit. She asks them whether they have experience, but her sister calls out in a loud voice that the two are already knitters for *Tipay Warmi*, so what are they doing coming around here? Rather defensively the girls say that they have left *Tipay Warmi* because they weren't being paid properly. They toss about gossip and innuendo about their experience with *Tipay Warmi*, and say that they have heard that Carmen is *muy buena*.[38] Carmen considers the idea. On the one hand, the knitters of *Tipay Warmi* are known to be highly skilled, but on the other, it is never a good idea to give the impression that she is "stealing" knitters, even from her enemies. She hasn't quite made up her mind what to do about these two, but begins to tell them more about what is entailed in knitting with *Tejedoras de Arani*. When she mentions that there are mandatory weekly or bi-weekly meetings, the girls are unpleasantly surprised and quickly make an excuse to get away without making a commitment. Their abrupt exit relieves Carmen of the need to decide what to do.

A few minutes later, a boy knocks at the door with a message for Carmen that she will have a phone call from a potential sweater client at the local ENTEL phone office in 15 minutes. She pays the message boy a *Boliviano*[39] and hunts for her shawl. Wrapping herself tightly against the biting wind, Carmen sets off for the

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[38] *muy buena* = "really nice, a good person"

[39] *Boliviano* = "Bolivian coin". During the fieldwork for this study the US dollar was worth approximately 3.5 *Bolivianos*.

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house of *Don* Carlos at the corner of the *playa* where the phone is located. Walking quickly to escape the cold, she crosses the plaza and heads down the main street. A few houses from the corner of the plaza she passes a large adobe colonial house with the door propped open. A sign above the door announces the building as the headquarters of "FOTRAMA," the oldest export knitting operation in Arani. FOTRAMA is operated by the Catholic church and at one time employed a great number of Arani's *cholitas*. Today, however, the organization is just one among many. Inside, a group of young girls, mostly *cholitas*, are sitting around a courtyard knitting. Although it is windy out, the high walls of the colonial house make the courtyard bearable. Knitters from FOTRAMA are working on scarves with a complicated pattern involving 20 different colors! Carmen makes note of the design and colors as she passes--always interested in what the competition is up to. In general, Carmen's knitters work on designs dictated by the customer, but Carmen likes to try her hand at manipulating the designs and colors to produce sweaters which are her "own" designs. Previous clients have accused her of stealing their designs, but what do they know?

Carmen arrives at *Don* Carlos' house and takes a chair to wait for her phone call to come through. This is the only phone in the whole town. The door to the phone booth opens and a portly woman emerges. It is *Doña* Maria. Her husband, *Don* Angel, is a construction worker in Argentina and every few weeks he calls her to say hello. Today's phone call was particularly important because she recently received a letter from him saying that he might be coming home. The phone call just confirmed this news, and Don Angel will be returning any day now. As *Doña* Maria leaves the ENTEL office she cheerfully yells out her thanks to the Arani ENTEL manager and bustles out the door with her 13 year old daughter Gimena. Before going home they need to run a couple of errands. Gimena is knitting her first sweater from a private business which only recently appeared in Arani. Unfortunately, the design is proving to be too complicated for Gimena and *Doña* Maria has been knitting most of it for her. *Doña* Maria is a former FOTRAMA knitter now knitting with *Tipay Warmi*. Despite her mother's help, however, Gimena is

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becoming discouraged and has decided to return the incomplete sweater and the yarn. *Doña* Maria is going with her to help with the argument that is sure to occur.

All afternoon the wind has continued to blow without letting-up. As the afternoon has worn on, the chill in the air has become even more apparent and *Doña* Maria is sure that tonight will be very cold. Waiting for the phone call from *Don* Angel took longer than expected and it is now beginning to get dark. *Doña* Maria and Gimena hurry across the soccer field to return Gimena's sweater. They enter a house just a few doors from the corner. Inside a couple of women are knitting. Miriam, a tall *cholita* with a stately figure, a shiny silk *pollera* and gold earrings is measuring a portion of another woman's sweater. Miriam was a knitter with *Tipay Warmi*, but has taken this position as the "putter-out" for a local entrepreneur. Salutations are exchanged all around as *Doña* Maria and Gimena come in.

When Miriam finishes with the measurements, it is Gimena's turn. She tells Miriam that she is returning the sweater incomplete. Miriam is a good-tempered girl and doesn't really argue, but tries to convince Gimena to keep trying. Miriam is responsible for making sure that all of the sweaters are complete for a particular date. Gimena remains steadfast in her decision. Up until this point, all *Doña* Maria has done is stand by Gimena as a sort of moral support. But the situation changes when Miriam weighs the wool Gimena is returning. The wool is significantly short what it should be. Gimena tries to argue and her mother comes into the argument to take Gimena's side. But in the course of things, *Doña* Maria becomes convinced that the wool really is lacking. A knitter must pay for the missing weight. *Doña* Maria's fury turns on Gimena for not having been more careful with the wool. In the end, Miriam and *Doña* Maria agree that Gimena will finish knitting the sweater with the wool that is there plus the wool which has undoubtedly "stayed behind" at their house. At this point, just a few days before the order is due, Miriam has no choice but to make a deal. As long as Gimena turns in the complete sweater, no deduction will be made.

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Doña Maria and Gimena leave. Gimena is sullen for having received a public scolding. *Doña* Maria is irate because she knows that SHE will be the one to finish Gimena's sweater. In a commanding tone, *Doña* Maria sends Gimena back toward their home alone with instructions to go and get supper ready. Her two younger brothers need to be made to come into the house out of the cold. *Doña* Maria decides to hurry on over to *Tipay Warmi* since she is half way there already. *Doña* Maria is one of only two *de vestido* knitters in *Tipay Warmi* and she rarely participates in any of the organizational meetings. Although these group activities are "mandatory" few of the knitters actually attend regularly. *Doña* Maria tells her friends that she would like to go the workshops if she were young and had the time, but how can she possibly waste time sitting in a meeting with the demands of raising her family, cooking, washing, cleaning, raising and butchering the chickens she sells at sunrise in the daily market, helping with her elderly parents' harvest, and buying and re-selling cattle in Punata every few weeks. Besides, she has trouble understanding many of the topics that they discuss and can not see how they have much relevance for her life.

Recently, however, *Doña* Maria has been meaning to stop by the *Tipay Warmi's* new building. She heard that a new order for sweaters arrived and that the production team is giving out wool for knitting. There has been a hiatus between orders and a lot of knitters have been without work. *Doña* Maria wants to get her yarn early to make sure that the whole order won't be given out already. It's getting dark and she isn't sure that anyone will still be at the *Imilla* building. Without electricity, no one can work there at night. Besides none of the women like to be out walking alone after dark because there are *malcreantes* and *karasiris* about.[40]

Doña Maria arrives just in time to convince Dolores to weigh out some wool for her. Dolores is worried about getting home so that she can fix dinner and help her father settle the cows in for the night. Dolores makes *Doña* Maria suffer a bit by arguing that it is

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[40] *malcreante* (Spanish) = "bad people"; *karasiri* (*Quechua*) = "malevolent being," part of Andean belief. See Chapter 2.

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already too late, but finally gives-in to *Doña* Maria's pleas. As Dolores is selecting the colors for *Doña* Maria's sweater, Lydia is quickly gathering together her belongings and wrapping her shawl around her shoulders. The new floral velvet *pollera* she is wearing is one she recently had made for her sister's wedding and it is a bit warmer than some of her others, but she will still be chilly. Lydia lives some distance away and is concerned about the impending darkness. Everyone else has already left. Lydia hurries down the highway and then across a number of fields. The dark and cold make her decide to stop off at her sister's house and get her nephews to accompany her the rest of the way home. Her sister, *Doña* Bette, lives with her husband and children in an adobe house about two blocks from the Toranza home, near the edge of town.

Lydia enters through the back to find her sister in the process of cooking the evening meal. A blackened pot containing a watery soup with thinly sliced potato, carrot, onion and largish chunks of slightly tough beef has just begun to boil. *Doña* Bette leaves Lydia to watch over the simmering soup and rushes to the front room of her house. There, a number of young girls are gathered together knitting. *Doña* Bette's cooking is always interrupted by the sporadic knocking of customers who come to purchase soda pop, noodles, cooking oil, laundry soap, or any of the assorted dry goods that are for sale in the little store she operates from the adjacent front rooms of her home. In addition to customers for the store, *Doña* Bette is also a seamstress and sews to order for local women on the pedal-operated sewing machine in the corner. Women bring over lengths of cloth they have purchased in the Thursday market in Arani, in Punata or in Cochabamba. *Doña* Bette keeps a notebook of measurements for regular customers and is said to do a good job sewing the lacy blouses and gathered *pollera* skirts worn by *cholitas*. A number of pieces of cloth and half-finished skirts and blouses hang from a hook on the wall. Others are heaped in a pile next to the sewing machine by the door. Lately *Doña* Bette hasn't had much time, and she has gotten somewhat behind in her sewing. In fact, this evening *Doña* Bette has barely been able to get dinner

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started because there have been more interruptions than usual with all the knitters showing up.

Like her sister Lydia, *Doña* Bette was previously a member of *Tipay Warmi*. In fact, she served as President for the group during one period in the 1980's, but eventually tired of the meetings and workshops after she got married and started a family. Her husband, like most in Arani, was not particularly understanding about these activities. But *Doña* Bette considers herself lucky because unlike many of her friends, her husband isn't *malo*[41] and doesn't leave her with *ojo en tinto*[42] when he drinks. Today *Doña* Bette is one of three group leaders in Arani for *La Khochalita*, a different knitting "cooperative" based in Cochabamba. She travels into the city to pick up yarn and orders which she brings back to Arani. From her home, *Doña* Bette then puts out the production of these sweaters to 15 or 20 local girls who knit for her. A couple of her knitters can only come by clandestinely because they are members of other knitting organizations in town and must therefore take-out knitting from *Doña* Bette on the sly. The design of the sweaters in this particular batch has been relatively easy to knit, but there are always last minute corrections to be made just before she travels back to the city with the completed sweaters. The day after tomorrow *Doña* Bette will take the *bulto*[43] with the sweaters and excess yarn back to the headquarters of *La Khochalita* in the city where they will be checked over for quality control. Last time, 3 of the sweaters were sent back for repair. Hopefully this order will not need fixing.

As the knitters begin to disperse, *Doña* Bette admonishes them to make sure they turn their sweaters in on time. She reminds them that *Todos Santos*[44] is coming up and if they want to have money for new clothes, they have to complete their work. The reminder is well taken by the knitters who are looking forward to the holiday's festivities, but *Doña* Bette is also concerned about inevitable delays

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[41] *malo* = "bad"

[42] *ojo en tinto* = "a black eye"

[43] *bulto* = "pack"

[44] *Todos Santos*= In Arani, "All Saints' Day" is celebrated by families in commemoration of deceased relatives and *cholitas* often sponsor large parties featuring a band, a swing ride and dancing.

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that occur once a holiday is very near and wants the sweaters done enough in advance to beat the holiday rush. A couple of the girls head up the road toward home. It is dark now and they are more wary as they walk. Ahead they see the figure of a man. They nervously wonder what person or malevolent being it might be.

As they approach they are relieved to see that it is just old *Don* Hernando coming in from his fields where he has gone to give the cows one last drink of water and to throw an old blanket over the calf to protect it from the cold night. He mumbles a formal greeting and continues his shuffling walk on back toward home. He ate dinner before going out to the field, and Dolores and Ema have gone upstairs to watch TV until bedtime. Instead of heading straight home, however, *Don* Hernando has decided to make a detour to have a spot of *chicha*.[45] He has one and a half *Bolivianos* in his pocket--just enough for a pitcher. And what's more, *Doña* Gabby has just put out the white flag indicating that she has a fresh brew. *Don* Hernando goes in, has his drinks and chats with some friends. But he doesn't linger at the *chichería*[46] tonight. The air is chill and Dolores will surely reprimand him if she realizes he hasn't come home yet. *Don* Hernando thanks *Doña* Gabby and heads home. Now that the stars are out, the wind is starting to die down.

* * * * * * * * * * *

In this hypothetical afternoon we see concrete manifestations of how sweater knitting intertwines with cotidian reality in Bolivia. Implicit in this vignette are a number of issues related, for example, to the changing role of women's labor in a rural setting, to the importance of knitting as a source of employment, to the relationship of knitters to the market, to the influence of development funding, and to the shifting alliances that knitters pursue among different knitwear organizations. All of these things are interdependent. The result is an intricate social fabric, made-up by the often incongruent blending of local and global patterns. With

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[45] *chicha* = "locally-produced corn beer". See Chapters 2 and 4 for a more complete discussion.

[46] *chichería* = "establishment where *chicha* is served"

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this study, I attempt to show how women in Bolivia fashion knitting into their lives and how knitting incorporates them into the global economy.

Conclusion

The data I collected on knitting in Bolivia illustrates the variety of factors influencing the success or failure of a grassroots craft cooperative. This information helps to inform our understanding of the relationship between the poor and the global market as a product of negotiation. The focus of this study on grassroots knitting activities provides a context for examining the fields of action in which knitters operate and illustrates how knitters participate in structuring the boundaries of those fields. People pursue different strategies in relation to knitwear production as they attempt to expand their control over forces shaping their lives. Through actions and choices, individuals exert influence, ultimately impacting or even reformulating the contours of power. My analysis shows how women confront structural processes and cultural norms that limit spheres of action to within defined fields. Knitters contend with this social architecture at local, national and global levels in ways which allow them to actively redefine the myriad boundaries structuring their lives.

Yet it is rarely possible for individuals, especially women, to completely restructure the power relations in which their lives are enmeshed. In fact, real life consists of a complex mixture of what one researcher has called "yielding and wielding" power (Villarreal 1994). Inevitably, whatever the course of action, new limitations are reached and accepted, and new boundaries restricting fields of action are forged. This reconstitution of boundaries often occurs at points when contradictions in the dynamics of resisting, accommodating, embracing and colluding with limiting forces can no longer be reconciled or maintained. These contradictions then congeal into new domains, producing different sets of limiting factors.

I am concerned with understanding the limitations placed on individuals by their position within this structure, and identifying

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how it is possible for some people to find ways to challenge boundaries of the given social order. In their everyday struggles, people constantly challenge boundaries, and redefine limits. An act of confrontation such as organizing a grassroots coop can change or even denature the social landscape which gave rise to existing social boundaries. Along the way, individuals affect the rules of power, they change themselves, and they transform their ability and desire to accept or resist the new state of affairs. This process is not a melodrama involving either manipulation of the oppressed by all-powerful hegemonic forces beyond their control, or heroic action of the weak through solidarity and wisdom generated by an idealized tradition. Instead, what I have found is that the mechanism at work in the dynamics of the knitting industry involves a complex engagement between people and structural forces.

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Chapter 2

Cochabamba, the *Valle Alto* and Arani: History, Economy and Culture

Introduction

This chapter presents ethnographic information necessary for understanding my argument concerning the redefinition of cultural boundaries associated with the development export knitwear production in Bolivia and the emergence of grassroots knitting organizations. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section (A) describes the Cochabamba valley region where export knitting is concentrated, and identifies the town of Arani and it's microregional context as the setting for the principal case study of a grassroots knitting coop. Section (B) is a historical discussion of factors which have influenced the region's development. Contemporary social and economic patterns affecting the evolution of export knitting as an industry have colonial, Incan and even pre-Incan roots. Of particular relevance are the dynamics of local ethnic relations and land ownership patterns. Lack of ethnic homogeneity in Cochabamba provided a context for alternative forms of affiliation based upon political and economic factors. The development of a class of small, independent farmers helped to circumvent servile relations of production and heightened the importance of extended kinship networks for mobilizing resources. Reform laws enacted as a result of the 1952 Revolution expanded the base of this class and institutionalized relations of private property. However, the diminishing size of land holdings and deteriorating productivity have frayed the agricultural base of the local economy, eroding household income and security. The economic strategies pursued by handknitters today are best understood as a reflection of these historical processes.

Section (C) explains a number of significant recent regional trends. Further stagnation of the rural economy as an outgrowth of the historical forces described in Section (B) has become increasingly detrimental to small land holders. At the same time,

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the precariousness of rural life has been exacerbated by economic policies pursued by the Bolivian government and by persistent drought conditions. In response, families have further diversified the type and number of activities engaged in by household members (a process with colonial roots) to include things like handknitting, beer making, taxi driving and playing in a band. However, because the local economy provides limited avenues for making a living, long-distance migration and work in Bolivia's illicit cocaine industry have become major alternative sources of income. All of these trends have ramifications for the way knitters live their lives. Especially important for my argument concerning local identity politics is the way that women's sense of self has been influenced by these changes.

In section (D), I describe the cultural concepts of the "*cholita*" and the "*pollera*." In Bolivia, *cholita* refers to women who wear a style of dress called the *pollera*. A majority of the women from rural towns employed in handknitting belong to this group, and much of the money they earn through knitting wages is used to buy items of jewelry and clothing associated with being a *cholita*. In the chapters that follow, I show how knitting income helped to expand the accessibility of *cholita* fashion and to intensify the dynamics of an existing prestige hierarchy in which *cholitahood* exists as an alternative to the dictates of a national culture based upon western fashion and class standing. I argue that the elaboration of *cholita* identity among knitters affected local class and gender relationships in a manner beneficial to women who knit for export. Moreover, the self-identification of knitters as *cholitas* plays an important role in the way that women view their work in the knitting industry, and in the way that they have incorporated export work into their lives. The strength of this self-identity provided a fulcrum for knitters' grassroots mobilization. The historical and cultural discussion of *cholitas* and *polleras* presented here is intended to give the reader a context for understanding these processes.

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(A) SETTING THE STAGE

Cochabamba, the *Valle Alto* and Arani

The setting for this study is the Cochabamba valley region of the Bolivian Andes. Cochabamba is the departmental (state) name of the area, as well as the name of the department's principal city. Snuggled between the towering peaks of the Andean *cordilleras* ("mountain ranges") leading on the west to the *altiplano* ("high plateau") and on the east to the lowland areas of the Chapare and Santa Cruz, the Cochabamba valley lies protected from the extremes of hot and cold which affect other parts of the country. To people familiar with Bolivia, it might seem more probable that the capital city of La Paz should have developed an alpaca knitwear industry because of its frigid climate, its tourist markets and its connection with the herding economies of the *altiplano*. But it is Cochabamba which has been the real hub for export knitwear production in Bolivia.

In many ways, the valley is not what most people imagine when they think of the Andes. The postcard scene from the *altiplano* with snowcapped mountains and quaint "Indians" in colorful dress herding scattered groups of llamas is not the backdrop for export sweater knitting. Although *Cochabambinos* (people from Cochabamba) like to extol the region's virtues, there is really not much to attract sweater-buying tourists. Most of the city's colonial architecture has been replaced by a rather nondescript "Latin American urban vernacular" style and more recently by an ostentatious "narco chic." Cochabamba lacks the colonial grandeur, the archaeological ruins, the proximity to Peru, the mountain climbing, and the exotic charm which have made La Paz a tourist Mecca-- making the development of a knitwear export industry there is that much more intriguing.

In non-Andean terms, the valley's 9000 foot elevation would seem too high for successful agriculture, but Bolivia's relative closeness to the equator creates conditions in Cochabamba which are ideal for farming. As a result, the area has been a magnet for human settlement since precolumbian times and is one of the most densely populated areas of Bolivia. The intensity of farming

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activities and the density of the population in the valley create a mosaic of farmland plots speckled with adobe homes. Although the entire region is plagued by drought and soil erosion, the Cochabamba landscape does not convey the same harshness as the stark potato fields and sparse grazing pastures of higher elevations. In fact, during the summer months from November to March when crops are in bloom, much of the valley evolves into a lush patchwork of different hues of green.

Crisscrossing Cochabamba's flat plain are a few principal roads linking the city together with the valley's scattered towns. In contrast to the modern architecture which dominates in the city, some of these towns have colonial-style plazas and elaborate churches as testaments to their past importance as centers of *hacienda* ("landed estate from the colonial and Republican periods") or church power. Others are little more than wide places in the road around which a few more houses are clustered. During colonial and republican periods of Bolivia's history, agricultural production centered in these towns provided food for much of the rest of the country. The city of Cochabamba became a nexus linking food products and artisanal manufactures from outlying towns and provinces into a regional economic system connected with national and international circuits of trade.[1] Today Cochabamba continues to be an important part of the Bolivian economy, linking the disparate highland and lowland areas of the country.[2] Although cocaine is probably the most well-known product of the region, handknit sweaters have become a significant export industry, especially important to people in the valley who depend upon knitting income.

Located approximately 55 km to the east of the city of Cochabamba in an area called the *Valle Alto* ("Upper Valley") because of its slightly higher elevation, is the town of Arani where many of the handknitters in this study live. As a consequence of

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[1]See Gordillo (1985, 1986), Jackson (1989, 1994), Larson (1988), Rivera Pizarro (1992), Rodriguez Ostria and Solares Serrano (1990), Solares Serrano (1990), and Wachtel (1982) for interesting historical analyses of Cochabamba's economy.

[2]For works on Cochabamba's contemporary economy, see Laneuville (1987) and Laserna (1984).

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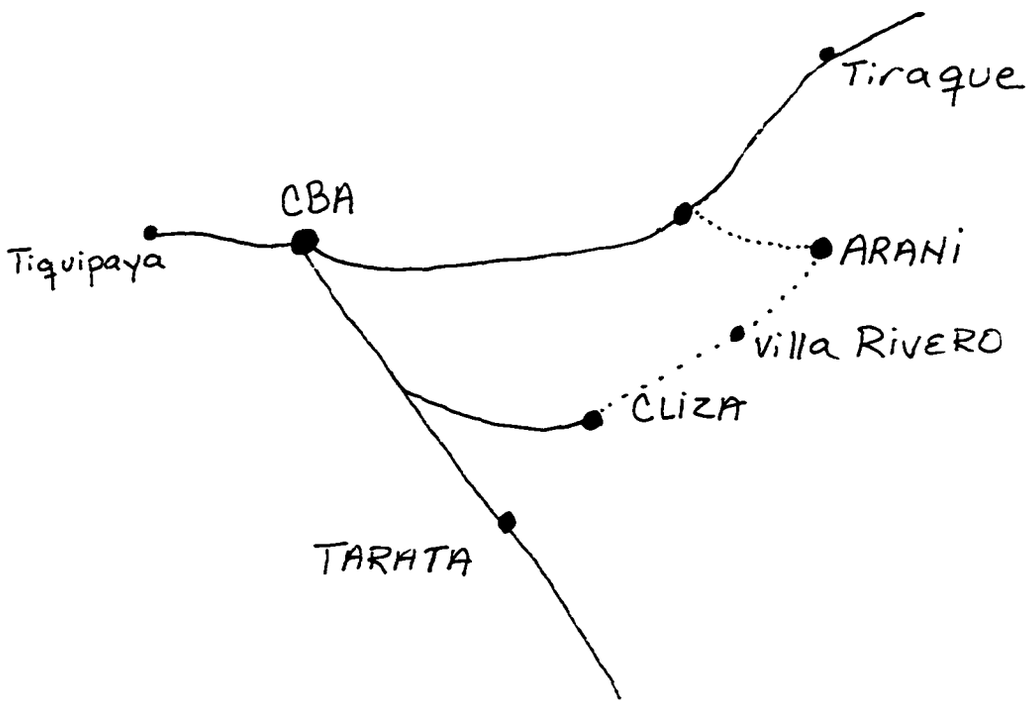
some quirk of Arani's specific location at the edge of the valley along the *cordillera* leading to the lower, more tropical Chapare region, the town is often subject to severe winds. During certain times of year the wind can howl and whip up dust all afternoon, sometimes even all day. Because of this, people joke that Arani has the nickname "*wayrani*" from the *Quechua* word, "*wayra*", for wind. Like the other towns of the *Valle Alto* (Punata, Villa Rivero, Cliza and Tarata) dating from the colonial period, Arani has a rural character based upon agricultural production and an agricultural lifestyle. Seemingly timeless adobe houses line dirt or cobbled streets, while remnants of colonial architecture serve to anchor the place in an historical period now gone by. Although these towns may have an old fashioned, rural flavor, they are, at the same time, inextricably integrated into regional and urban dynamics.



Author's Map of the Cochabamba Valley. (Not to Scale)

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While I was conducting this study, it was common for people to question my choice of a field site. My friends and informants in Arani found it difficult to believe that handknitting could possibly be interesting enough for me to have come so far to investigate, and they were usually convinced that I had come to set-up my own putting-out system for knitwear production. City folks, believing that Andean culture is a prescribed set of traits, often insisted that the *Valle Alto* is "contaminated" by external influences and that I was wasting my time. They told me that I should go to the *Norte de Potosi* ("the north of Potosi region") in order to find "Indians" with more "authentic" culture. Ethnic enclaves of the *altiplano* are considered more classical anthropological subjects. Yet Cochabamba and the knitting industry are fascinating to me precisely because they are not merely vestiges of some static ancient culture.

People's identities and lives in the *Valle Alto* of Cochabamba are in a state of flux. Much of what is considered "tradition" has shallow roots. In Arani, people's homes and tastes reflect the long arms of global consumer culture in juxtaposition with more time-honored ways of being. People store drinking water in their backyards in huge ceramic jars called *wirkis*, but they use plastic jugs made in China to bring the water from spigots located in the street. Even though a family may own a gas stove and a table and chairs, many women still prefer to prepare food squatting on the floor over a fire. Meals may be traditional Andean fare of *papas* ("potatoes"), *quinoa* ("an Andean grain"), *camote* ("a root vegetable") or *cuy* ("guinea pig"), but are almost as likely to involve pasta, or chicken raised on huge industrial-scale poultry farms. Breakfast may include *mate de coca* ("tea from coca leaves"), but dinner could be accompanied by a liter of Coca Cola. One house may have dirt floors and be constructed of adobe blocks and *paja* ("thatch"), while its' neighbor has floors made of cement, plastered walls, and corrugated tin for a roof. Adobe and plaster homes alike are topped with television antennas and electric wiring. In 1994 when Bolivia was in the *Mundial* ("World Soccer Cup") finals, practically everyone in Arani watched live as their team was defeated by Germany in a stadium in Chicago.

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Town life reflects similar contradictions. Sunday is washday and women crowd to the river on the edge of town to bathe and do laundry on the rocks by hand. They wash blue jeans and traditional *pollera* skirts alike, and both are hung to dry in the sun, draped over nearby shrubbery like enormous, garish flowers. At the bus stop near the center of town, the quintessential third world style passenger-packed buses and flatbed trucks that previously provided Arani's only form of transportation are now rarely in use, except on market day. Taxi mini-vans (called "*trufis*") and Toyota taxicab cars now leave about every fifteen minutes carrying people back and forth to the city. But although these vehicles may be new, the transport 'philosophy' is unchanged. Like the trucks and buses they replaced, *Trufis* and taxis often travel full-to-overflowing with people, goods and livestock packed-in together like sardines. In the Thursday market, handmade sandals called *abarcas* cut from used tire rubber are for sale alongside fashionable tennis shoes. At the local public telephone, it is just as common to overhear conversations in *Quechua* as in Spanish, although calls are more likely to be long-distance with Argentina or Santa Cruz than connections with nearby towns. And at night, unmarried *cholitas* ("girls who wear the *pollera* skirt") give fantastic dance parties featuring local bands using synthesizers and crooning the same *cumbias* and *salsas* heard on radio stations in Miami or Sao Paulo.

The weight of these contradictions may seem overwhelming proof that local culture is being replaced by familiar patterns from industrial and consumer society. In many ways, Hollywood fashion trends and policy decisions by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) regarding devaluation of the country's currency appear to play a more important role in most people's everyday lives than do the traditions of their ancestors. Yet what I found suggests otherwise. Although global and national culture are clearly apparent, Arani continues to have traditions that distinguish it from other places.[3] The *Valle Alto* has a distinct and vibrant culture with roots in the past which continues to compose social roles, to structure people's

[3]See Albo (1987) for an excellent discussion of what makes *Cochabambinos* unique.

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interactions, and to influence the position of *Araneños* ("people from Arani") in the global economy. In fact, as I will demonstrate in the following chapters, cultural forces with deep historical roots have affected the development of export knitting and the organizational success of grassroots knitting cooperatives.

(B) HISTORICAL CONTEXT

An Overview of Cochabamba History

Historical forces give shape to the configuration of life in Cochabamba today, impacting the way we understand contemporary patterns and circumstances. Pre-Columbian Andean peasant communities were organized into a system of *ayllus*--dispersed, territorially based kin units that maintained vertical control over a variety of ecological environments ranging from high tundra to humid lowlands (Murra 1985, 1975). This system provided communities with a sufficient supply of resources, created channels of reciprocal exchange among *ayllu* kin which accomplished redistribution of the society's resources and served as a template for social arrangements. Under Spanish rule, the vertical cohesion of the extended *ayllu* was destroyed. Kin-based exchange relations and inter-community patterns of land ownership conflicted with European notions of private property, and local autonomy threatened Spanish control. Indigenous communities were forced to settle in localized villages or *reducciones*, which disrupted trade relationships within and between *ayllus*, thus destroying the ability of communities to gain direct access to resources. In the beginning, the Spanish manipulated and exploited traditional cooperative work arrangements within the *ayllu* in order to extract surpluses formerly used by peasants to foster reciprocal relationships, later replaced by imposed tribute and work requirements. This ultimately weakened the coherence of post-conquest Andean peasant communities.[4]

However, the impact of Spanish policies and activities was not uniform. In the harsh Bolivian *altiplano*, where the wealth of Andean

[4]See Morner (1985), Murra (1984), Orlove (1985), Stern (1982), and Wolf (1982).

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mineral deposits dazzled all of Europe, driving the engine of conquest, the Spanish were not interested in forming permanent settlements. Instead, they were content to draw workers from highland communities for extractive mining activities through the *mita*, a system of forced labor based on intensifying a pre-existing Inca institution of labor tribute. *Mita* requirements and loss of control over vertical linkages, together with significant population loss from disease, further eroded *ayllu* relations. However, colonial disinterest in acquiring *altiplano* lands for settlement allowed social organization based on *ayllu* relations at the village level to maintain a certain stability. Today, persistence of local *ayllu* structures has been a central factor in the ability of communities in the highlands to organize for resistance and to maintain a coherent group identity (Albo 1987).

In the Cochabamba valley, on the other hand, *ayllu* relations did not fare so well; pleasant climate and fertile soils made valley lands appealing to Inca conquerors and Spanish settlers alike. When the Inca invaded the region, existing ethnic groups were displaced to other areas or pressed into military service (Wachtel 1982). Much of the land was redistributed to groups and individuals as part of a policy designed to create loyalty to the empire. Agricultural production was geared for state purposes, particularly the needs of the military. With the introduction of European crops and a land tenure system based on private property, the local population was further disconnected from continuity with pre-existing forms of social organization (Larson 1988). *Hacendados*[5] demanded greater control over lands and people in the valley than was required in the highlands, and relationships based on ethnic affiliation and *ayllu* structure became untenable.

Recent works clearly demonstrate the need to understand these regional differences in our analyses of contemporary patterns and relationships.[6] For example, Larson (1988) details the particular way that productive relations have been central to the

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[5]Owners of large landed estates.

[6]See Dandler (1987), Greishaber (1980), Larson (1988), and Long and Roberts (1978a & 1978b)

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evolution of life in Cochabamba. Surpluses from the valley were an essential link in the Incan system of tribute payments. Later, with the establishment of Spanish *haciendas*, Cochabamba became the "bread basket" which supplied the colonial mining center of Potosi with agricultural and artisan products. Under the Spanish, however, production demands intensified. Control over resources allowed *hacendados* to use violence and coercion to extract labor from the local population at levels which increasingly impinged upon subsistence activities. This dynamic further promoted the dissolution of ethnic and *ayllu* relations in Cochabamba and significantly influenced the shape of subsequent social structures in the region (Rivera 1987).

Historical Notes on Arani

The history of Arani is a microcosm of these regional processes. Archaeological evidence suggests *Tiwanaku*-era habitation of the *Valle Alto* by a distinct, but unidentified ethnic group (Schram 1991). Later when the Inca Tupak Yupanqui conquered the Cochabamba valley, the area was inhabited by two groups, the *Chuys* and the *Cotas*. As part of the Inca conquest strategy, both were forcibly relocated and the *Valle Alto* was appropriated as royal land belonging to the Inca.[7] Few specifics are known concerning the area which today is the town of Arani, but analysis of the origins of the name "Arani" offers some clues. We know that the neighboring Punata region became pastures for herds belonging to the Inca, and that the road which led from the Cochabamba valley over the mountains to the mines and to the valleys of Chuquisaca and Sucre passed through what today is the town of Arani (Schram 1991). Historical records indicate a place called *Aracheca* was a corral for royal alpacas and llamas used as pack animals. Today, a similarly named *Arachaca* is one of the districts of Arani. Documents also suggest that people stopped overnight to rest their animals in a place called *Saqsayjarani* ("*lugar donde se pasa la noche cuando se*

[7]See Schram (1991: 5) and Wachtel (1982).

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viaja con animales").[8] Before the Inca conquest brought the *Quechua* language to the valley, *Aymara* was spoken by many of the inhabitants.[9] "*Jarani*" is the *Aymara* word for a place of rest--"*ni*" means "place where", and "*hara*" is used to refer to a place where pack animals are unloaded (Schram 1991: 13). Arani was likely used as a stopping place in the transport of agricultural products out of the valley.

Possibly as a result of its location, during the colonial period Arani became one of the important centers of population in the valley even before the city of Cochabamba was founded in 1593 (Laserna 1984: 26-32). Although the *Valle Alto* was never part of an *encomienda* nor an ethnic enclave, Spanish settlement of the area was established relatively early (Schram 1991: 4).[10] The first Spanish inhabitants were Francisco and Juan Garcia who purchased land surrounding what later became the nearby town of Cliza. The area known as *Saqsayjarani* was bought by a Pedro Xaurex Cermeno in the 1560's. Almost immediately, a conflict arose between the Spanish settlers and the *kurakas* ("leaders") of the exiled *Chuys* who claimed to be the rightful owners of the land. Legal struggle over the area was finally concluded at the end of the 16th century when, not surprisingly, *Fray* Luis Lopez ruled in favor of the *hacienda* owners. Given the effect that Inca relocation of local ethnic groups already had on the nature of social relations in the *Valle Alto*, this ruling helped to further dislocate inhabitants from any feeling of community and to destroy local ethnic homogeneity which might have provided the basis for the maintenance of *ayllu* relations. However, a certain amount of ethnic identification may have continued. Spanish functionaries complained about *Chuy* resistance to the ruling through their use of certain hills in Arani and neighboring Muela (Villa Rivero) for their "*...ydolatrias y borracheras y estar fuera de la doctrina y vivir sin policia ni cristianidad en sus*

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[8]"a place where people stop for the night when traveling with animals" (my translation); Schram (1991: 13)

[9]See Arani Newspaper (1980) and Wachtel (1982)

[10]An *encomienda* was a grant of land and the right to the labor of the indigenous inhabitants granted by the Spanish crown in the early part of the colonial period.

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vicios..." (Schram 1991: 30).[11] Interestingly, those hills are now the site of the Arani and Villa Rivero *calvarios* with stations of the cross and hilltop chapels that draw hundreds of pilgrims each year. Later, Arani acquired more importance as the site for the establishment of the *Provincia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, an early episcopal seat in Alto Peru. The town became a political and religious hub in the colonial landscape whose influence extended well beyond the valley.

Land and Labor

Throughout the colonial period and into the twentieth century, land ownership patterns in Cochabamba continued to reflect the colonial system where control was concentrated in the hands of a few large land owners and the majority of people were forced to eke out a living with meager resources. Neither the decline of Spanish colonial power nor the triumph of Bolivian independence significantly altered the existing social structure. But the power of the *hacendados* did wane in the 19th century with the deterioration of the market for Cochabamba's agricultural exports as silver mining declined (Dandler and Torrico 1987: 336). In the *Valle Alto*, the decay of the hegemony of the *hacienda* translated into changing social relations of production. Increasingly, *hacendados* who owned the land and controlled the production and distribution of agricultural goods, subdivided their lands to *piqueros* ("small land owners") and became landlords to *colonos* ("tenant-laborers") (Larson 1988). The development of *piquería* ("ownership of small parcels of land") allowed some sectors of the peasantry to control surpluses for sale in local and regional markets. Although this helped to attenuate servile relationships in rural areas, real power in broader social, economic and political spheres continued to be held by the landed elite.

Despite loss of the *ayllu* as the basis for community organization and solidarity, and increasing social differentiation with the advent of *piquería*, peasants in the Cochabamba valley

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[11] "...idolatries and drunkenness, and being outside the Doctrine and living without the rule of Christianity in the practice of their vices." (translation mine)

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developed alternative strategies to confront the pressures of domination. In fact, it was this lack of "traditional" relations in the *Valle Alto* which created a context for the development of a political movement based upon class interests that ultimately led to confrontation over the inequality which had been a defining feature of Bolivian society.[12] In 1952 the reformist *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR--"Nationalist Revolutionary Movement") swept into power. Agrarian reform was implemented in 1953 and as a result of pressure by strongholds of peasant unionism in Cochabamba, the new government was compelled to implement a more radical program of land reform to eliminate colonial patterns of unequal land ownership than had originally been intended. People in the Valley had high expectations concerning the transformation of the existing social system. However, although *campesinos*[13] did benefit from the implementation of land reform and the dissolution of the *hacienda* system based on *colono* labor, no significant redistribution of strategic resources among rural producers actually occurred.

While land reform laws did deprive large land owners of the labor which had been the foundation of their productive activities, many large land holdings survived confiscation. Moreover, as peasants became land owners through the institutionalization of relations of private property, individual interests often superseded those of the community. Increasingly, economic differentiation within rural communities represented the entrenchment of local power structures coinciding with the interests of the dominant class. In this way, *campesino* solidarity based on group interest was undermined, and the once powerful peasant movement was effectively demobilized.

Mendelberg (1986: 48) suggests that the amount of land received by peasants through land reform was not nearly as consequential as the re-arrangement of work relations and time available to *campesinos* with the discontinuation of servile

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[12]See Dandler (1977), Lagos (1994), MacEwen (1975)

[13]rural people or peasants

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obligations. These changes allowed small producers to intensify the exploitation of the their holdings, which they now owned outright. Freedom from the *hacendado* also provided the opportunity for some members of the household to diversify their activities to obtain cash. Although in the short run, the new arrangements which developed as a result of the land reform proved beneficial to some sectors of the peasantry, the redistribution that did occur did not necessarily create long-term sustainability. What were originally family-size plots or *minifundios*, rapidly ceased to be viable. This process is referred to as "*minifundization*" in Bolivia, but is found throughout Latin America and the third world. The size of family farms has been whittled down with the passing of each generation, until today most families lack the amount of land necessary for subsistence (Rance 1991: 31-2).

Painter (1998: 30) suggests that the development model pursued by the Bolivian government following 1952 reinforced these conditions, creating a continuing stagnation of the agricultural economy in Cochabamba. In particular, the promotion of agro-industry in Santa Cruz and the conscious lack of investment in highland agriculture and economy created an export-oriented elite in Santa Cruz, dependent upon state subsidies while maintaining a large rural population unable to subsist through agricultural production, yet equally unable to find waged employment. The power relations upon which this volatile social order rested depended upon economic, political and eventually military support (in the form of the war on drugs) from the United States. However, U.S. assistance had the effect not only of more deeply entrenching the interests of industrial agriculture in the lowlands at the expense of highland interests, but further disrupted and eroded the already weak agricultural economy of the highlands through the use of "food aid" and aid to finance food imports which overcompete with local production (p. 37).

Moreover, as family holdings have diminished in size and productivity through subdivision, over-exploitation, soil erosion and drought, the relative worth of agricultural products has fallen with respect to the cost of manufactured goods and necessary farm

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inputs. The few people who are able to produce on their own land do not derive sufficient income to be able to afford either the materials necessary to maintain production (fertilizers, seed, pesticides, labor, etc.), nor essentials of modern life (medical care, school uniforms and books, transportation costs, electricity, running water, etc.). To make matters worse, dynamics in the global economy have increased people's "need" for many goods, while simultaneously eroding their ability to satisfy those needs through home production or exchange. This process of impoverishment within the rural sector has been intensified by a series of natural disasters and political-economic processes leaving both the land and people's incomes unable to recover. The need for cash often forces families to sell the things they produce even when there is no surplus, to intensify their production beyond the capacity of their labor and natural resources, or to migrate.

The *Chicha* Economy

During the colonial period Cochabamba was a principal producer of corn for export to the mining centers and to other areas of the southern Andes. Larson (1988) and Gordillo (1985) have demonstrated the seminal role played by this nexus in the historical development of the Valley. However, Rodriguez Ostria and Solares Serrano (1990: 28) argue against overstating the extent to which Cochabamba was linked to and reflected fluctuations in the mining economy.[14] They suggests that internal market processes based on local corn production and sales, and *chicha* manufacturing and sales were of central importance. But as Larson shows, in the late 19th century, decay of the external market for corn forced many of the Valley's large landowners to sell off significant parts of their holdings, consolidating the emergence of an influential class of small holders called *piqueros*. Small holder production fortified Cochabamba's internal economy revolving around a system of traditional regional market days. *Chicha* production expanded in

[14]See Jackson (1989,1994) and Larson (1988) for lively debate on the historical parameters of agrarian transformation in CBA

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response to the new market conditions and became a key factor in the region's economic development.

Chicha production and sales did create the basis for a unique internal market articulation in the Valley. The Bolivia Bulletin (1987a) writes that "*Chicha*, for Cochabamba, has the same importance as oil for Santa Cruz...and minerals for Oruro and Potosi..." Corn grown in the *Valle Alto* was used to brew beer for local consumption (especially on market days) and for sale in urban *chicherías*. Rodriguez Ostria and Solares Serrano (1990) call *chicha* the "*otro comercio*" (p. 66), arguing that the economics of these transactions organized productive space in the Valley, and became the center of Cochabamba cultural life (p. 139). *Chicha* taxes were also the principal source of municipal funds for the city of Cochabamba at the beginning of the century. In a rather ironic twist, this peasant beer financed modernizations of Cochabamba's infrastructure, primarily benefiting the upper class (p. 97).

Arani was an important part of the Valley's *chicha* economy. When market conditions for agricultural production from Cochabamba were changing in response to the demise of external markets at the beginning of this century, the region's elites attempted to stem economic decline by increasing the accessibility and interconnection between different parts of the Valley. The Arani-Vinto railroad line was constructed during this period, linking together the *Valle Alto* and the *Valle Bajo* (Rodriguez Ostria and Solares Serrano 1990: p. 28). As the furthest stop in the *Valle Alto*, Arani's Thursday *feria* became an key regional market for corn produced in more distant rural areas. In addition to corn sales, local vendors found that grinding corn into flour was a way of adding value and improving income. This was especially true since *chicha* brewing was developing into a major activity in neighboring Punata. At the turn of the century, an Arani *hacienda* owner named J. Mariano Urquidi built a mill on the mountainside at *Escaipata*, his Arani *finca* , the first in the Valley to be operated by the vertical pressure of the water (Solares Serrano 1990: 150). This innovation proved profitable and helped to enhance the importance of flour in Arani's economy.

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By mid century, however, Arani's *feria* declined in importance. A disastrous train wreck destroyed the track outside Arani. The wealthy investors who had promoted intervalley rail connections at the turn of the century were no longer capable of or interested in financing repairs.[15] , Following the 1952 revolution economic dynamics in the *Valle Alto* began to change and the train itself became irrelevant. Prior to 1952 *haciendas* controlled the much of the sale of agricultural products. Access to external markets was limited to those wealthy enough to use train transport. With agrarian reform and the eradication of large *haciendas* in the Valley, access to the market became more "horizontal" (Barnes de Marschall and Torrico 1971: 153). The number local markets proliferated, eclipsing the *feria* in Arani (pp. 142 and 147). Despite these changes, however, Arani remained an important part of the Valley's *chicha* circuit into the 1960's.

(C) RECENT TRENDS

The Impact of Structural Adjustment

Already impoverished rural households in Bolivia have been further hurt by the impact of national politics. Following the demise of the MNR, a series of repressive military dictatorships in the 1960's and 70's left behind a legacy of falling incomes, spiraling inflation, and a government plagued by corruption and by the stultifying effects of a bloated and incompetent bureaucracy. One of the most conspicuous and perhaps subsequently influential consequences of this period was the ballooning of the national debt. Loans generated by a flood of dollars to international banks from OPEC countries during the global oil crisis provided "easy money" to countries like Bolivia. The government borrowed heavily for projects designed to promote political agendas or to bolster private

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[15]The wreck occurred during the feast of the *Virgen La Bella* in Arani's church. Hundreds of prigrims and vendors had converged on the town to celebrate. A packed train derailed, crushing and killing many of the riders. At the time, the people said that the *Virgen* had caused the train to wreck because she was angry because one of the pilgrims had stolen something from the church. Others said it was because with the festival, the train had been overloaded.

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interests, with little concern for improving people's lives. The repercussions of this spate of corrupt borrowing went beyond other equally heinous forms of political chicanery when in the mid-1980's powerful foreign lenders demanded compliance with debt repayment. As a result of pressure by the U.S. to avoid default, Bolivia was the first country to initiate "neoliberal" policies designed to decrease government spending and maximize government revenues. Most notorious was "Decree 21060" enacted by the government of Paz Estensorro in 1985, but similar measures have been pursued by subsequent governments.

The impact of these policies at the local level in Arani was dramatic.[16] A series of radical, overnight currency devaluations reduced the value of people's wages and savings, while simultaneously making the relative cost of imported goods and manufactured products unreasonably expensive. Many people had savings or investments in cash, often stored or hidden in their homes. When the currency lost its value from one day to the next without warning, savings were worth only a fraction of their previous value. After this happened a number of times in the early 1980's, some people learned to speculate by paying close attention to government pronouncements regarding devaluation, and investing in value-retaining goods such as construction materials or livestock. However, the vast majority were left without recourse. Perhaps equally significant in the long run has been the "dollarization" of the economy. Since 1985 most goods of any value have been priced in dollars, and people no longer hold more than small sums of money in the form of *Bolivianos* sufficient for immediate spending. Instead, Aranenos and even some more rural folk keep savings hidden in the form of U.S. twenty, fifty and one hundred dollar bills. In fact, dollarization has become so widespread that money changing is now a profitable profession.

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[16]The focus here is on Arani. Buechler and Buechler (1992) present an excellent study of the consequences of the debt crisis on small-scale entrepreneurs in the La Paz region of Bolivia, many of whom are involved in knitwear production, and Buechler and Buechler (1996) present a poignent view of how economic crisis affected the life of one woman in the autobiographical account of Sofia, a *Paceña* market vendor.

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Government efforts to "liberalize" trade in line with IMF directives opened markets in Bolivia to a flood of cheap imported products and luxury goods which overcompete with local production and tantalize consumers. Many products such as cloth (*"bayeta"* handwoven wool fabric and *"tucuyo"* handwoven cotton fabric), clothing (*polleras*, blouses, jackets, pants), hats (such as the typical *Cochabambina* white stovepipe hats), shoes, blankets, baskets, and pottery which may previously have been produced within the household or by local artisans are no longer available. It has ceased to make sense for people to expend their labor in the production of use-values as the opportunity cost for earning cash income by working in other activities has risen. And not insignificantly, people's tastes have also been affected by greater exposure to national and international fashion and trends. A walkman or a pair of sneakers may be "necessities" in Arani just as they are in the United States. Even "traditional" products have been transformed as, for example, it is no longer "cool" or even respectable to wear a *pollera* made of old-fashioned handloomed *bayeta*. Instead, *cholitas* engage in fashion warfare worthy of Seventh Avenue as they vie for status through the consumption of the latest *de moda* ("in style") imported fabrics--of course, now that these attitudes are in place, this process is increasingly driven by the ever-more-rapid appearance of new fabric designs and the frequent "out-moding" of earlier purchases.

Part of the government's strategy to generate revenue for debt repayment included the imposition of "austerity" measures. These policies have been severely criticized because of the disproportionate impact that they have on the poor. This approach eliminated many essential social services and proposed "privatization" of others in order to reduce the size of government. Schools and hospitals were closed, and workers in Bolivia's nationalized mining industries were laid-off in a contagion of "white massacres." Throughout Bolivia these policies resulted in massive unemployment. The urban *barrios* ("low class neighborhoods") and slums of Cochabamba and other cities swelled with "relocalized" miners and their families, and others left to

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their own devices by the government's austerity program. Given the already-existing paucity of permanent, waged positions in Bolivia, this increase in the number of unemployed means that rural migrants from towns like Arani find it almost impossible to obtain work. And what is more, increased competition among vendors in informal markets for locally-produced goods and services makes it increasingly difficult for people to earn a living on their own.

More recently, the institution of the *Ley de Participación Popular* ("Popular Participation Law") in 1994 redistributed tax revenues to provide greater power over resources at the local level in order to promote "development". In Arani, the immediate impact of this plan was significant. Almost overnight, the budget of the *Alcaldia* ("municipal government") went from $30,000 collected from the taxes on *chicha*, potatoes and transport, to nearly $300,000 a year! This allowed the *Alcaldia* to implement a series of "improvements" to local roads, irrigation ditches, parks and schools. The Regional Development Corporations which had previously been in charge of development spending and orchestrating development projects in rural areas were displaced by policies designed to implement development through NGO's. Suddenly, the possibility for access to resources on a large scale seemed a reality. The promise of financial reward promoted a sort of gold rush mentality with everyone trying to get in on the act. The ex-mayor told me that Arani "needed to get some of those NGO's"--he said he didn't know what one is, but Mizque had twenty and look at how they are booming. The current Mayor told me that he had only recently realized how important knitting was to the economy in Arani and he had been thinking about how great it would be to get funding to start their own NGO to market sweaters so that the women wouldn't have to be exploited by middlemen. He suggested that the *Alcaldia* ("municipal government") would be very interested in running such an organization. It remains to be seen what the outcome of these policies will be for *Aranenos* and other Bolivians.

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Drought

As if the burdens of economic crisis were not enough, a reduction in the amount of rainfall which has plagued Bolivia since the 1950's has become especially severe over the past 15 years. This *sequía* ("drought") has greatly affected productivity in Arani and the *Valle Alto*.[17] *Doña* Justina and *Doña* Paulina, two Arani sisters in their 70's lamented the change in the area since their youth, saying

> *"...había pues bastante lluvia...harto fruto había..frutas también surtidas...hacía no mas...una hermosura era pues...cuando estuvimos ninas. Teníamos, en la huertita había duraznál...grandes frutas lindas, uvas, manzanas...huerta era pues...ahora ya no...maíz, papita, alfita...eso no más."*

> "...there was a lot of ran then, you know...there was alot of fruit...fruit of all types...the land just produced, that's all...it was beautiful, you know, when we were girls. We had a small garden with a peach tree...the big fruit was pretty, the grapes, the apples...and it was just a small garden, you know...but not anymore...corn, a few potatoes, a little bit of alfalfa, that's all..." (translation mine)

Given that the vast majority of families in the Arani are smallholders, dependent upon their own production for a significant amount of household consumption as well as for the generation of cash through market sales, the impact of drought has been notable. Dolores, one of my principal informants, told me,

> *"mucho nos ha afectado, feo pues...ántes producía avas, todo. Este méz--abríl--era semilla de avas y arbejas. Ahora hace 7 años que no hemos sembrado. Antes había agua mucho. Antes cosechabamos en agosto hasta Todos Santos vendíamos y sembrabamos."*

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[17]Drought conditions have finally lessened somewhat. In fact, in 1997 rainfall was significant and even caused flooding in some areas. According to my informants, they were able to plant more than in recent years.

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> "it's affected us a lot, you know, in an ugly way...before we grew broad beans, everything. In this month of April we planted broadbeans and peas. Now it's been 7 years since we haven't been able to plant. Before there was a lot of water. Before we harvested in August all the way until All Saints' Day we sold and planted." (Translation mine)

For Dolores, equally damaging has been the impact of the *sequia* on the family's cows. Typically the *chala* ("corn stalks") are dried and gathered after the corn has been harvested, providing food for cows during the winter months. Lack of rain has made it impossible for many families to plant enough corn to produce the quantity of *chala* necessary to sustain cattle. In 1983 Dolores had to sell four of eight family cows because the drought had made it impossible for her to find the food and water to maintain them. Things did not improve, and in 1990 she sold two more. In the *Valle Alto*, dairy cattle are an central part of the family economy and especially important for women's income. According to Dona Teresa,

> *"...la sequía era muy fuerte...y aquí antes producía en una hectaria de cultivo de maíz, se recojía hasta 12, 13 camiones de chala y con esa chala en toda la epoca de invierno, mantenían su ganado...por la sequía no ha producido ni medio camion de chala de una hectaria, no ha producido nada...o sea que ha gastado en semillas, en arrados, en comido para quien esta trabajando y no se ha dado eso...ha sido una perdida total por varios años...no ha sido un año ni dos años...casi ha sido 7 años!...vacas lecheras era su ganancia de la mujer...tenían sus vaquitas y ellas ordeñaron a sus vacas y hacían el queso y eso vendían a las panaderas, como Arani se caracteriza por un lugar panaficador...hace los mejores panes también...entonces vendían sus quesos las campesinas a la panadera. A las panaderas les dieron ese queso para hacer los panes, las empanadas, y se vendía de Cochabamba, hasta Santa Cruz...a donde la gente cambinaba, llevaron en cienes por donde fueron para llevarse los panes de Arani...y ya con la sequía ya no había chala para las vacas y no había leche y no producía*

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queso...entonces ya no había de que comer en caso de los campesinos y todos..."

"...the drought was very severe...and here with one hectare of corn you used to be able to get up to 12 or 13 truckloads full of *chala* ("dried corn stalks") and all winter people would use that *chala* to maintain their cattle...because of the drought you can't even get half a truckload of *chala* from a hectare now, nothing grows...that is, people wasted their money in seed, in plowing, in food for the laborers and it didn't produce anything...it's been a total loss for various years...and it hasn't been just one or two years, mind you...but almost 7!...before milk cows were a woman's bread and butter...a woman had her few cows and she would milk and make cheese which she would sell to the bread makers, since Arani is known as an area where they make bread. Bakers use the cheese to make the bread, especially the *empanadas*, and they sell them in Cochabamba, or all the way to Santa Cruz...where ever the people go they bring Arani bread by the hundreds...but with the drought there hasn't been enough *chala* for the cows and so there hasn't been enough milk and they don't produce cheese...as a result there isn't enough to eat for the *campesinos* or for anyone." (translation mine)

Diversification of the *Campesino* Household Economy

In the Cochabamba valley where population density is high, the repercussions of *minifundization*, liberalization and drought have been quite severe. In 1994 in rural areas of the Department eighty-seven percent of families had less than five hectares of land, and as much as ninety-five percent of cash income was derived from off-farm activities.[18] As a result, although farming and raising animals may continue to be central to the self-concept and identity of rural people, in the Cochabamba valley the economic importance of agrarian activities has long since been overshadowed by the development of artisan production, small business, market sales,

[18]See Gisbert, et. al. (1994)

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and wage labor to ensure the continued functioning of the peasant economy.

In Arani these processes have been particularly acute, such that reliance on agriculture as a way of life has become increasingly tenuous. The average family has only 1.5 hectares of land, household income is below one thousand dollars per year, infant mortality is as high as one in four, and a 1992 census showed that seventy-eight percent of its one thousand seven hundred and four households live in poverty.[19] Moreover, the lack of opportunity in the local economy has forced so many people to leave that almost twenty-five percent of Arani's houses are currently unoccupied, and migration, temporary or even permanent, has become a necessary fact of life for many people.[20]

The diverse range of economic activities sustaining Cochabamba households is a manifestation of economic processes at work in the region.[21] Larson (1988) sees diversification of the Cochabamba peasant household economy to include petty commodity production and the development of regional peasant markets as forms of resistance with historical depth. In the past, the hegemony of *hacendados* in the Valley was weakened by the ability of peasants to engage in exchange relations outside the control of colonial institutions. Today, the capacity of the Cochabamba peasantry to avoid incorporation into urban patterns which replicate capitalist relations of production hinges upon the maintenance of an agrarian lifestyle with a modicum of household autonomy. By avoiding dislocation from their lands, *campesinos* have been able to escape much of the alienation that accompanies proletarianization. However, insufficient access to land and resources has meant that in order to remain *campesinos*, peasant households must incorporate

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[19]See COTESU (1990), CORDECO (1994), INE (1992), Mendoza, et. al. (1991)

[20]See INE (1992) and Mendoza, et. al. (1991).

[21]Buechler and Buechler (1992) and Buechler, Buechler, Buechler and Buechler (1998: 85) describe how the simultaneous pursuit of multiple occupations is equally important for small-scale entrepreneurs in La Paz. In a less optomistic study from rural Ecuador, McKee (1997) suggests that pursuit of a "multiple resource strategy" can have the effect of increasing gender assymmetry by rendering women's labor invisible.

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other activities. Sage (1991) and Lagos (1994) describe how Cochabamba households construct social networks extending beyond the household as part of this process. Deere (1991) and Paulson (1992) show the importance of women's work in the functioning of these networks. Women maintain the agricultural base (albeit diminished) which provides not only resources, but a focus and a sense of identity for increasingly disbursed and disparate families. Deere's analysis suggests that the gendered division of labor is a key factor in a household's success under these conditions. However, Paulson's findings imply that the continuing erosion of the bases of women's rural identity is undermining the long term success of extensive diversification within the current context.

Changing Times

Despite the decline of the agricultural base of the rural economy, *Cochabambinos* (people from Cochabamba) continue to associate towns like those in the *Valle Alto* where knitters live with cultural hallmarks of a rural lifestyle--with speaking *Quechua*, with the *pollera*-style dress worn by *cholitas*, with *chicha* drinking--all regarded as elements of the *campo*. Many of the residents of Cochabamba were raised in these towns. Selective memory allows them to forget the reasons they may have left and focus on more pastoral, idyllic images of rural life.[22] Middle class people have a more limited experience of these places--mostly through weekend outings to have lunch and admire historic colonial churches. They often hold stereotypical ideas about life in rural towns, although positive valuation tends to be reserved for the tastiness of the food and the *chicha*, and the beauty and tranquillity of the landscape rather than for the character of its inhabitants. In Arani, people are adamant about how much purer the air, the food and the water are in the *campo* than in the city. A measure of this difference is that people say that when you go into the city for the day, you come home and the snot you blow from your nose is black from the exhaust-polluted urban air, while in Arani the snot in your nose may be dirty-

[22]See Albro (1999a: Chapter 9) for a discussion of a social movement based in the *Valle Bajo* that elaborates on these themes

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-but it is just the adobe color of the blowing dirt. This is a particularly interesting reversal given the common belief by city folk that the *campo* and its inhabitants are "dirty."

But life in the *Valle Alto* is changing dramatically. When I initially visited the town in the winter (June) of 1990, it seemed like a sleepy backwater. On any day other than market day (Thursday), the only way to reach the town was to take a van, bus or truck to the neighboring town of Punata and then switch to one of a handful of old, broken-down taxi station wagons (together with about 10 other passengers) operated by local drivers. By the following year, a new direct *trufi* ("minivan") service had been established and quickly grew to include more than 25 vehicles, making the trip from Arani to Cochabamba much more immediate and accessible. That same year, an ENTEL[23] telephone office with international connection was opened in town. In 1991 a USAID project began to cobble roads in the *Valle Alto*. The improvement of the road between Arani and Punata resulted in an increase in traffic between the two towns (and on to Cochabamba) and made it possible for less rugged vehicles to make the trip. The travel time from Arani to the neighboring highland town of Aiquile was reduced from 12 to 4 hours! During my last stay in Arani in July 1995, it became possible to have photocopies made at the home of a man who owned a bicycle repair shop, and the *alcaldia* was in the process of cobbling local streets and building cement sidewalks and curbs, drastically changing the old-fashioned appearance of the place.

But these changes are more than cosmetic. They reflect larger processes at work in Cochabamba and the *Valle Alto* where vestiges of a colonial past blend with contemporary forces. In rural towns like Arani, the spread of modern technologies (such as telephones and photocopy machines) and the globalization of items for consumption (such as minivans) are undergirded by inherited patterns of social and economic inequality. At the same time that more and more "stuff" is available, and that Arani is beautifying it's appearance for the first time in recent memory, the ability of people

[23]ENTEL is an acronym for the *Empresa Nacional de Telefonos* or the Bolivian National Telephone Service

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to make a living has become increasingly precarious. Arani households have traditionally incorporated a diverse range of activities in order to make ends meet, but agricultural production was always the fulcrum of the family economy and the basis for people's identities. As reliance on agriculture as a way of life becomes a less and less tenable alternative for many people, *Araneños* are forced to find new ways to define themselves.

Arani: The Local Economy

The strategy of diversifying the type and range of a household's economic activities requires a certain amount of innovation and initiative, given that in the local economy there are few ways for people to actually make money. Not surprisingly, the sale of agricultural products is one principal source of income. People in Arani like to sell their goods in the Thursday market to avoid the cost of transportation, but on Tuesday many people go to the larger regional market in neighboring Punata, or on to the vast Cochabamba urban marketplace known as "the *Cancha*" ("the big open field"). In general, the sale of agricultural products occurs according to season: when peaches are ripe, people bring their peaches for sale; when corn is being harvested, people bring their corn to sell. Of course, the upswing of this sort of market dynamic is that competition is fierce. When one person has corn, it is likely that everyone else does too. This tends to further drive down already low rural earnings. Things like *tuna* ("cactus fruit"), figs or peaches that grow in quantity without the need for direct inputs are almost given away when they are in full season and can usually only be exchanged in the *trueque* ("barter") section of the market.

In Arani, the Thursday market is dominated by women. Women do most of the buying and selling. In the Andes, women are famous for their entrepreneurial skills in local markets.[24] In rural areas like Arani some women sell goods they have produced themselves. Women I knew sold mostly after harvesting. Others were *revendedoras* ("resellers") who were permanent sellers of a

[24]Babb (1989), Buechler and Buechler (1971, 1996), Bunster and Cheney (1989), Seligmann (1989)

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particular product. Reselling in the potato market, a significant part of Arani's market day economy, is a well-known enterprise. Of course, *revendedoras* are famous for "buying cheap and selling dear." Potatoes are principally grown by people in more distant areas of the province where the entire local crop is often bought by resellers because producers are unable to finance the cost of transporting the goods to market.[25] A number of women buy products in the Arani market for resale in Punata, Cochabamba or Santa Cruz. This sort of re-selling is often done by women from families that own a vehicle.

The cost of transporting produce to market can be prohibitive, but for townspeople like the *Araneños* in this study, the relative entry cost of market selling remained low.[26] However, escalating problems of *minifundization* and the effects of the neo-liberal policies pursued by the Bolivian government dramatically increased competition in local markets.[27] With many products, especially agricultural goods, the ability of market sellers to obtain a fair price was destroyed by the flood of impoverished people willing to sell their wares for almost nothing. Besides, many of the women I interviewed in Arani expressed a derogatory view of market sales as a profession because of the long hours involved, and especially because it involves being out of the house all day, exposing children to "the wrong type of people," and reducing a woman's ability to complete or supervise household tasks for which she is responsible.

Although almost everyone with land sells some of what they produce, in order to make ends meet women in the *Valle Alto* tend to patch together earnings from a wide range of small-scale activities. Most women keep some animals--a few chickens, a pig or two, a sheep, a few cows, and hutch of *cuys* ("guinea pigs") and rabbits. The sale of a eggs, milk and cheese provides a continuous supply of

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[25]In recent years, work in the cocaine industry has provided previously unobtainable income for residents like those from potato growing regions. In Arani, people I knew complained that it was no longer easy to get a good price for reselling potatos because the *campesinos* now had their own trucks. See Lagos (1994) for a discussion of the politics of transporting produce to market.

[26]Farthing (1991) describes the conditions surrounding entry into market selling in the current economic crisis

[27]See Farthing (1991), Rance (1991)

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small change. The price received for a rabbit or a couple of guinea pigs can cover the purchase of small items of clothing or school supplies, or serve as a meal for visitors. Larger animals are reserved for more significant expenses or important occasions. Of course, all of these animals require food and water, and maintaining animals is a time-consuming part of a woman's day.

Since women bear primary responsibility for the care of animals, for the proper functioning of the household, for preparing daily meals, and for raising children, operating a home-based business is an attractive avenue for a woman to diversify her activities. For example, making and selling corn beer called *chicha* is a relatively lucrative enterprise, although the competition is great. I knew at least 25 or 30 *chicheras* myself, but there are 177 *chicherías* in Arani and it's surrounding area registered with the *alcaldía*! *Chicha* is usually a pretty good business because it tends to get used up quickly, but the brewing process is lengthy (about seven days) and requires a considerable initial investment for the large ceramic receptacles where the *chicha* is stored and to construct a hearth appropriate for heating large vessels. The raw materials are also expensive. Corn (plus the expense of milling the corn into flour), *chancaca* ("a raw sugar product"), sugar and cane alcohol (to spike it) are all costly inputs.[28] In addition, *Chicha* requires a large amount of wood for the fire (which must be purchased) and water during brewing (about 24 20-liter jugs). Ideally the *chichera* has her own water spigot or access to one, and an inviting front room to attract customers. Once the *chicha* is ready to drink, selling is a very labor intensive activity. If the white flag is hanging out to indicate that there is *chicha* available, people can knock at the door at any hour of the day for a drink. The *chichera* has to sit with customers while they drink so that they will feel "accompanied" or they won't come back. Not only can *chicha* selling go on long into the night, but the *chichera* is often

[28]In recent years, saccahrine has become available at cheaper prices than sugar and many *chicheras* use it in their *chicha*. Many of the customers do not like the taste of saccharine *chicha* and say that it gives them a headache. They complain about the decline in quality of the *chicha* available.

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obliged to drink a good deal on a regular basis. Many women do not like these demands of *chicha* vending, and many husbands are *celosos* ("jealous") of the idea of their wives being around other men who are drinking or getting drunk, and will not let their wives sell *chicha*.

Bread making is another common activity. There are 27 bread makers in Arani. As *Doña* Teresa indicated above in her discussion of the effects of the *sequía* on cheese production, Arani is somewhat known for its bread. The different towns of the *Valle Alto* each have their own style of typical bread. *Pan de Arani* ("Arani bread") is considered one of the best, but with so many bakers, competition is fierce. As with *chicha* production, the ingredients (flour, sugar, baking soda, yeast, salt, vegetable oil, cheese and wood) for making bread are expensive, and baking requires a special large, enclosed oven. But more so than *chicha*, bread making requires the labor of the entire household to prepare the dough and to do the baking. Bread makers usually sell their product to neighborhood customers, to local dry goods dealers, or in the Thursday market. Others sell in Punata, in Cochabamba, or even make regular trips to Santa Cruz where there is less competition. One bread maker I knew had an arrangement with a local *trufi* driver to regularly pick-up baskets of bread, drop them off at a shop in Punata, and even return the empty baskets, without anyone from the baker's family having to leave the house.

Another alternative for a home-based business is the production of the distinctive clothing worn by *cholitas*. Blouses, *pollera* skirts and slips worn by *cholitas* are produced as a cottage industry for sale in the market. But work in this putting-out system is labor-intensive and poorly compensated. For women who have their own sewing machines, however, becoming a seamstress may be an attractive option. The cottage industry *cholita* clothing available from the market (already made) is expensive and often does not fit quite right, so many woman like to buy fabric and have their clothes sewn to order. A skilled *costerera* ("seamstress") can attract a clientele among her neighbors, relatives and friends. In fact, all of the seamstresses I knew had a good-sized backlog of orders and

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were unable to keep up with the demand, especially before big holidays or weddings. Another attractive option is to operate a small dry goods store. There are 30 stores registered in town tax records, varying in size from large to those which just a handful of items. However, this requires space to operate the store and the ability to obtain goods cheap enough to run a profit. Doing so often necessitates having family connections in transportation.

Given these alternatives, handknitting work has attracted many women in Arani. Although not traditionally "women's work," knitting is not completely alien to *campesino* culture, and in many ways knitting is more appealing than market selling, *chicha* vending, baking, sewing or opening a small shop. Because unlike entrepreneurship, knitting does not require a capital investment on the part of the knitter, it is also an attractive option, especially for young women. A woman can knit while carrying out a variety of household tasks, such as pasturing animals, waiting for the pot to boil, and watching the children. Many women knit early in the morning or in the evening, or while watching television. In interviews, knitters told me that they liked being able to earn money at home rather than spending all day sitting in the market selling produce or having to "accompany" drinkers. Knitters can work more or less according to the demands of the moment in their own homes. Moreover, many of Arani's knitters are skilled enough to knit while they walk, allowing the productive use of the time spent going to the fields or going to market which may represent a significant portion of a woman's day.

Today, at least a dozen knitting enterprises in Cochabamba employ more than 2000 knitters, with a particular concentration in Arani and the *Valle Alto*. The data I collected suggest that the wages women receive from this activity represent a primary source of cash income for many households. Almost one hundred percent of married knitters surveyed from three different knitting organizations had husbands who work outside of Arani. This figure clearly reflects the high number of men who migrate, but it is also indicative of the extent to which sweater-knitting serves to buffer families from disruption in household earnings brought about by the

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widespread occurrence of male out-migration in the region (which is discussed in more detail below).

Miles (1997) describes how male out-migration from one region of Ecuador has made women who are left behind more financially dependent upon remittances from their husbands. But at the same time, the act of managing the household in the absence of the husband, especially in a context where other women are in the same boat, has in itself been empowering. In Arani, where there is already a tradition of "strong" women marketers and vendors, independent access to income through knitting wages has made women less dependent upon men's remittances and more cognizant of their own earning potential. As a result, in many cases, women have been doubly "empowered" by the absence of a male partner. Many of the knitters I knew did not hesitate to stand up for themselves in the implementation of household decisions and claimed personal control over land, houses, vehicles or other material goods purchased by the household. However, I am not suggesting that either knitting income or temporary independence have been sufficient to transcend the "*machista*" model of gender relations that permeates many of the interpersonal dynamics between husbands and wives in the region.

Unfortunately, just as knitting employment does not entirely offset gender inequality in the household, nor is it a panacea for poverty. Although Bolivian handknits are uncharacteristic of third world crafts in that they are high-fashion, high-priced export products, knitters only make between US$8 and $20 for a sweater.[29] While this may appear high relative to other poorly remunerated forms of employment available to women in Bolivia, the wage knitters receive is predicated upon an undervaluation of women's skill and labor. In addition, although knitting may appear to be complementary to the rural lifestyle of *campesina* women, the development of knitting as an export cottage industry has been

[29]This is the wage earned for export knitters who produce the high-quality knitwear discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Buechler and Buechler (1992: 31) report that in La Paz, knitters producing lower-quality tourist knitwear made $4-5 in 1981 and as little as $1 in 1984 as a result of the consequences of the debt crisis on small-scale businesses in the region.

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accomplished by heaping more work on top of women's already overburdened daily lives, and by increasing control over the production process. Moreover, at the same time that knitting has provided women with an opportunity for independent income, and allowed them to increase their contribution to the household fund, total family income has declined as a result of broader political, economic and ecological forces (Nash 1988, Rance 1991). In the context of deteriorating livelihoods, handknitting does not compensate for the effects of economic crisis.

For men in Arani there are even fewer options than for women. Agricultural work does not pay well enough for most men to make a living, and the time when the most agricultural jobs are available is precisely when a man has responsibilities on his own land. A handful of men operate skilled services such as barbershops (7), bike repair (3), appliance repair (2), or carpentry and brick making (6). Another handful of those who are politically well-connected find (rather cushy) positions with the local government bureaucracy or with the local Catholic church. A few of the better-educated have opened law offices (4). For those with sufficient education, by far the most numerous profession in Arani is that of *profesor* ("teacher"). Arani has an inordinate number of teachers (180!). This statistic reflects class dynamics from the post-1952 period. As a profession teaching has prestige and benefits, but entry has always been based upon cronyisim and bribery.[30] Both men and women work as teachers, but the majority are men. Obviously, only a few of the 180 teachers can find work locally. Competition for positions in Arani and neighboring towns is vicious. As a result, the vast majority are "rural teachers" who must travel to more isolated rural areas during the week. Although teaching is a prestigious profession with a secure income, many people still complain about the salary, about the politics of the educational system, and about having to travel to undesirable rural areas.

Men with the capital to invest have a few other options. One of the more popular occupations for a man is that of *chofer* ("driver").

[30]See Gill (1998) for an excellent discussion of the current situation facing teachers in Bolivia.

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In Arani, savings from temporary work in Argentina or in Bolivia's cocaine industry have funded the purchase of vehicles used to transport people and cargo. This has become the occupation of choice for men in Arani because originally it was relatively lucrative, because of the prestige involved in owning a vehicle, and because *choferes* who work driving local routes between Arani and Cochabamba, for example, are able to spend a significant amount of time at home. In the past, the cost of buying a large passenger bus or truck was prohibitive, but since the late 1980's it has become easier to be a *transportista* ("transportationist") with the introduction of the less expensive and more convenient minivan or "*trufi*". Unfortunately, a glut of these vehicles has resulted in fare wars, significantly reducing the lucrativeness and attraction of the transportation business.[31]

In recent years, investment in musical equipment such as electric guitars, synthesizer pianos, microphones, amplifiers and speakers has become another alternative. Owners of these *equipos* ("equipment sets") manage *conjuntos* ("local bands"), renting their services out to play for weddings, parties and holiday celebrations. These groups play a wide range of *cuecas* ("traditional dance"), *cumbias*, and popular music from the radio. For local boys, becoming a musician is thought of as very "cool." Unfortunately, the allure of the musician's lifestyle is somewhat hollow because musicians without their own equipment are nothing more than employees of the band's owner. Moreover, as we have discovered in our own society, the musician's lifestyle has its own pitfalls. Being around parties and drinking all of the time can lead to self-destructive behaviors. At one *cholita* party I attended, the girls who sponsored the event were disappointed because the band not only showed-up late, but some of its members were visibly drunk even before they began to play. And even though music may once have been a novel investment, today in Arani there are nearly 20 *conjuntos* vying for contracts to play, and groups from nearby towns such as Cliza seem to have an "exotic" appeal that gives them an advantage over local bands.

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[31]For an excellent discussion of the politics and history of *transportistas* in the nearby town of Tiraque, see Lagos (1994).

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Migration

Both women and men engage in agricultural activities, but the small size of family plots creates an excess of labor. Given the lack of opportunity in the local economy, a growing number of people migrate in search of cash income. In the past, migrants were mostly men, but since the 1980's, more and more women are leaving their rural homes to find work. In some cases, "pendular" absences to Cochabamba, the Chapare or Santa Cruz are matched to the agricultural calendar, with the migrant returning to help the family plant and harvest.[32] When distant travel is involved, such as to Argentina, Brazil or even the United States, a migrant may be away for many months or even years. Almost all of the households I surveyed had members who were currently or had at one time migrated outside of Arani. In the *Valle Alto*, where *minifundization* generates superfluous labor, migration has become a way of life.[33] I had the following conversation with *Dona* Maria, one of my close informants whose husband was working in Argentina:

> ***Y ustedes que creen que va a pasar con tanta gente llendo afuera de Arani, ahora están llendo a Cochabamba, a Chapare, a Santa Cruz, a Argentina...?***
>
> *Es que aquí en Arani tambien, no hay mucho trabajo, Janet...tienen que buscar para que mantienen a sus hijos...*
>
> ***Para el sustento de sus hijos...?***
>
> *Si...estando aquí en que va a ganar?*
>
> ***Entonces que va a pasar aqui?***
>
> *Nada pues, Janet. Se queda asi, se va a quedar...*
>
> ***Se va a quedar?***

---

[32]See CORDECO nd "Seccion Municipal de Arani: Caracterisicas generales." Documents from the Files of the Municipalities Office; Cochabamba, for a discussion of "pendular migration".

[33]See Alfano (1981), Dandler (1982), Dandler and Medeiros (1985)

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Claro, lo venden su casa...otro casita se compran...porque aquí no hay trabajo, pues...por eso se están yendo...y otros, sus hijos están estudiando y no pueden estar aquí con sus hijos en Cochabamba y por eso se van.."

And what do you think will happen now that so many people are leaving Arani, that so many are going to Cochabamba, to Chapare, to Santa Cruz, to Argentina...?

It's just that here in Arani there isn't much work, Janet, they have to look for work to maintain their children...

To maintain their children?

Yes...if they stay here, how are they going to make a living?

And so, what's going to happen here?

Nothing, Janet. Everything's just going to stay the same, just like it is.

It's going to stay the same?

Of course, they will sell their house...they will buy another little house...it's because there isn't work...that's why they are going, and others, their children are studying and they can't stay here with their children in Cochabamba...that's why they are going..."

Dandler (1982), and Dandler and Medieros (1985) discuss migration as a household strategy that creates "confederated" units consisting of individuals living in different places and engaging in different activities, while continuing to maintain the rural home as a base.[34] One seeming contradiction of migration as a strategy is that in this context, rather than fraying kinship ties and unraveling the local social fabric, the importance of relationships based on

[34]For an excellent anthropological analysis of "confederated household" dynamics in Peru, see Smith (1989).

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family membership, *compadrazgo* ("ritual god parenthood")[35] and friendship is intensified. Confederated networks play a key role in the ability of migrants to find lodging, to get work and to become integrated into a community of people (often a foreign enclave of people from the same town). In the absence of key household members who have migrated (such as a husband or son), local network relations become an important support mechanism for those left behind. In a well-known anthropological theory, Murra (1975, 1985) proposed that precolombian Andean *ayllus* maintained themselves by simultaneously exploiting a variety of complementary vertical ecological zones from the highlands to the lowlands. Maclean Stearman (1978: 183) sees contemporary migration as a modern version of Murra's verticality. Families today mobilize resources by occupying several *economic* niches at the same time.

Unfortunately, the current outlook for a confederated strategy can be quite bleak. In Bolivian cities opportunities for migrants are limited by the high unemployment rate and weakness of the productive economy. Stories of easy money and good jobs abroad generally prove to be little more than tales. For family members left behind, remittances are rarely sent with any regularity and making ends meet can be a daily challenge. It is principally men who migrate and women who remain in Arani, and the incidence of poverty among female-headed households is high.[36] Moreover, migration contributes to the neglect of non-immediate agricultural tasks, such as soil and water conservation, further deteriorating the productivity of family plots.[37] And although migration may be part of a strategy for diversifying the household economy while maintaining an agricultural base, income from migration tends to be used to buy consumer goods (such as *trufis*, refrigerators, radios and clothing), make improvements to the house (such as tin roofs, cement floors and plaster walls), and to pay for education or ritual

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[35]Ritual godparenthood or "compadrazgo" is well-known in Andean and Latin American ethnography. For different views, see Brass (1986), Brush (1977), Buechler and Buechler (1971), Custred (1977), Isbell (1978), Long (1977), and Nash (1992).
[36]See Instituto Nacional de Estatisticos (INE) census figures from 1995.
[37]See Gisbert, *et. al.*, (1994)

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events (such as marriage), rather than invested in land, cattle, or agricultural machinery. Documents from the Office for Regional Development suggest that migration may be a complement to the family economy, but does not necessarily fortify it.[38]

Coca

In the last 20 years, participation in the international drug trade has become another attractive option for people from the *Valle Alto*. Bolivia and Peru are the principal producers of the *coca* plant from which cocaine is made. *Coca* is a plant with enormous historical and cultural importance in the Andes, and use of *coca* leaves in ritual and social settings has been well documented by ethnographers and others.[39] However, with the development of the illicit drug economy in Bolivia, the *coca* plant has taken on a host of new meanings.[40] The tropical lowland area of Cochabamba, known as the Chapare, has become a principal area for export-oriented *coca* production. Chapare *coca* farmers are primarily peasants escaping the crushing poverty of the highlands and mining families put out of work by the mine closures of the 1980's.

In Arani where ritual meanings of *coca* are no longer of central importance, the impact of the cocaine boom has been primarily economic. The expansion of illegal cocaine production for export in the 1980's generated a host of unskilled yet high-paying jobs for Bolivian workers. *Coca* must be planted and harvested, then the leaves are turned first into a paste, and then into the powdered final product. Sowing and harvesting the *coca* plant is low status, agricultural work performed mostly by *campesinos* from more isolated rural areas such as the potato-growing regions of Cochabamba. Residents of the *Valle Alto* have tended to concentrate in better-paying paste production jobs. The appearance of these jobs in Bolivia could not have come at a better time, fortuitously

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[38]"Seccion Municipal de Arani: Caracterisicas generales." Documents from the Files of the Municipalities Office, CORDECO; Cochabamba.

[39]For a discussion of coca in the Andes, see for example Allen (1988) and Parkerson (1989)

[40]See Healy (1986) for a discussion of "the boom within the crisis," and Painter (1998) and Malamud-Goti (1992) for studies of the "war on drugs."

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coinciding with drought conditions and the intensification of economic crisis for rural households.

In the beginning, many people from the *Valle Alto* earned "easy" money as *coca* harvesters and *pisacocas* ("*coca* stompers") in the Chapare. Although minuscule relative to the massive wealth being generated by drug traffickers, migrants returned to Arani with seemingly "vast" sums of cash in a short time, but the work was physically demanding and degrading. Despite extremely good wages relative to work in the legal economy, the potential for even more profit was clear. Ever-entrepreneurial *Altenos* ("residents of the *Valle Alto*") quickly saw that more could be made by producing the paste themselves.[41] For a time between 1984 and 1985, when increased militarization (primarily at the behest of U.S. policy) pushed production out of the Chapare, the *Valle Alto* (and Arani itself) became a center for paste production. However, a twenty million dollar USAID Regional Development Project improved roads and provided electrification throughout the *Valle Alto*, making the area more "visible" and assessable. At the same time, the military campaign targeted the region, hoping to flush-out *cocaineros* ("cocaine producers"). Eventually, with this expansion of anti-narcotics efforts, clandestine activities in the *Valle Alto* became too risky and paste production shifted to more isolated areas.[42]

Repercussions of the cocaine boom have been enormous. People made more money in a short time than they had previously imagined was possible. In Arani, *coca* dollars allowed many households to ride the storm of economic crisis, but a significant amount was used for conspicuous consumption to impress neighbors with clothing, elaborate weddings, vehicles or home improvements. In some cases, these new streams of wealth created new channels for social mobility, allowing people from the lower rungs of the social ladder to go beyond their given social station with the clothes they wear, with the houses they live in, or even with the way they now make their money (*i.e.*, some people who previously were considered

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[41]Healy (1986: 11).

[42]See Sanabria (1992) for an excellent discussion of the tactics of militarization in the lowland areas of Bolivia.

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"poor" by Arani standards bought *trufis* with their money and as *transportistas* they have leap-frogged ahead). Rather ironically, however, many people lost their precious *coca* earnings in the early 1990's in the failure of a pyramid scheme called FINSA that promised to pay outlandishly large dividends.

Yet despite the "gold rush" atmosphere and the real benefit of *coca* dollar cash flows for families in crisis, few people I spoke with had positive things to say about *coca* money. More than one informant expressed the view that the money had been too easy, saying "*coca* spoiled us--now we don't want to work." The exaggeratedly high wages of the *cocainero* are not only tantalizing in and of themselves, but in the long run experience working at this inflated rate makes anything else seem a pittance. FINSA was the perfect example--people knew that the profit rate promised on investments seemed excessive, but the enormous sums of money floating around in the *coca* economy made the whole thing seem plausible. Many people invested in FINSA (assuming that it was really a front for laundering *coca* dollars on a larger scale) as a way of "getting a piece of the pie" without having to risk directly participating in drug-related activities.

Some have seen the coca boom as a virtual cultural massacre, with the lure of quick wealth destroying the collective memory and communal values of people in the *Valle Alto*. In Bolivia I even heard it called a form of treason against the *Pachamama* for peasants to neglect their agricultural work in order to make *coca* dollars. In Arani people did not complain about disrespecting the *pachamama*, but that *coca* had "destroyed neighborliness." This sentiment reached its pinnacle during the *Valle Alto* paste production era of the mid-1980's. One informant was particularly outraged remembering how kerosene and sulfuric acid (chemicals used in paste making) were thrown into irrigation ditches. Animals became ill or would not drink the contaminated water. Given that Arani is an area where nearly everyone raises animals, this sort of behavior was unpardonable. It is one thing to neglect your own land and affairs, and another to damage others.

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Dysfunctional social dynamics generated by the cocaine economy, together with attendant problems of drug abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and consumerism that plague workers in the drug industry, have meant that in the long run, for many families the benefits of coca money have been overshadowed.[43] As pressure by the U.S. to "do something" about the cocaine trade increased tensions in the region, the illicit nature of cocaine-related activities turned everyone in Arani into "those who do" and "those who don't." Neighbor turned against neighbor. The "do's" became secretive and out for themselves, and the "don'ts" became gossips, or even worse, spies. Military sweeps through Arani in the late 1980's, barging into homes reported to contain *cocaineros* and hauling suspects off to jail were the epitome of this dynamic. Clearly, *coca* had become a dangerous option.[44]

The Changing Nature of Local Relationships

Local social metaphors reflect the changing social reality. In Arani, as in many places throughout the Andes, many people believe in a malevolent being called a "*karasisi*" who is said to roam about the countryside attacking people and stealing *graza* ("fat") from their sides causing illness and even death.[45] Traditionally the *karasiri* is depicted in the form of a *hacienda* owner or a priest. Paulson (1992: 230-1) suggests that the *karasiri* represents a generalized distrust of outsiders and is a "piercingly true representation of the experiences of rural indians in their relations with dominant outside forces". In the *Valle Alto* where the church was a common money lender and principal land owner, fear and hatred are still evident in tales of the *karasiri cum* priest. People described to me how from mid-March to mid-May when the corn is

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[43]Weatherford (1990)

[44]While the militarization promoted by U.S. policy has had little affect on large-scale drug traffickers, small *coca* farmers and peasants have borne the brunt of efforts by government anti-narcotics forces to demonstrate the efficacy of U.S. military aid. (Burke 1991, Davila 1991)

[45]Traditionally the *karasisi* is said to roam around between Easter and Corpus Christi, however in Arani, I found that fear of *karasiri's* and other *karasiri*-like beings had become generalized over the entire year.

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growing tall, it is very dangerous to walk alone in the fields. During that period in particular, *karasiris*-priests roam around looking for fat. On March 8 they fly over to the churches of Cliza and Tarata (large colonial era churches) where they use the fat they have stolen to make holy oil, host wafers and candles. One informant told me that the *karasiri* can capture your *alma* ("soul") and keep it shut up in a match box. She described her own encounter with such an attack one night when she was walking out to her field. She narrowly escaped its hypnotic grasp because she had cleverly worn her shoes on the wrong feet--a ploy known to thwart the powers of the *karasiri*.

In Arani, a malaise in local social relationships is apparent in a new guise of the *karasiri* with the neighbor as devil. Rather than some all-powerful land owner or unknown spirit, *karasiris* are often believed to be people from the community who transform themselves at night. I was told that the *karasiri* who knows you can send a fly to your home to make you come out-- and you unconsciously get up at night and go to some dark place where the *karasisi* is waiting. The next morning you don't remember what has happened, but the next time you see the person who is the *karasiri,* you feel suspicious. Some of my informants said that *karasiris* are people who beat their parents and that fat-stealing is a penance given to them by the priest--further evidence of underlying generational tensions within the household being exacerbated by the pressures of modern life in the *Valle Alto.* Crandon (1993:119-121) describes similar ideas in the Aymara town of Kachitu where in the context of a loss of *mestizo* power in the post-revolutionary period, the image of the *karasiri* went from a "dead Franciscan monk with a broad hat and long beard" to a *mestizo* looking for local people's fat to sell to factories in La Paz to make perfumed soap. These different "devils" reflect people's changing perception of the identity of their oppressors.

Yet in Arani, more likely to elicit emphatic and emotional discussion were new "takes" on the *karasiri* theme which seem to reflect a more modern condition. Many of the people I spoke with told me that the *karasiri* doesn't exist--that only backward

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campesinos believe in this myth. Instead, they informed me, it is actually *los medicos* ("doctors") who roam around looking for lone *campesinos*, and (in a very Hollywood-esque image) they drug their victims by clasping a handkerchief soaked in anesthetic to the victim's mouth. The doctors use a syringe to take not just fat, but organs and spinal fluid or *liquido* ("liquid") of some sort. They sell their human booty for millions of dollars to rich people. No one knew exactly what use the *liquido* has, but they said that it is a medicine used by the wealthy to cure incurable illness or to make themselves younger. The worst part, I was told, is that *liquido* provides only a temporary cure and that *the rich always need more to maintain them.* In a scathing critique of the Bolivian healthcare industry, and metaphor for their own social powerlessness, my informants agreed that doctors are well known for taking things from people's bodies (such as blood or organs) without permission and then selling them. They recounted a story about an important *dirigente* ("peasant union leader") who had his brain stolen while he was in the hospital (in writing this, it sounds like the punchline to a joke, but it was told to me in all seriousness). A more "female" perspective was expressed by a woman who worried about *graza* being taken from *abajo* (from 'down there'), *vaginalmente* (vaginally) and from the *nalgas* (buttocks). She said that women who have this happen to them always die.

Ideas about a black market trade in body parts are legitimized by the media. In a thinly veiled attack on the activities of the Alliance for Progress in the 1960's, the classic film *Blood of the Condor* depicted *gringos*[46] performing unauthorized sterilization's of *campesina* women.[47] This film was shown widely and had a huge political impact in Bolivia. Today, even more influential is television. One informant described a story she saw on the news of a poor kid, *sin suerte y sin recursos economicos* ("without luck or economic resources") who had an accident and was dying. At the

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[46]derrogatory term applied to Americans and Europeans

[47]It was often claimed that Peace Corps workers did the sterilizations (June Nash, personal communication) and that was the way it was depicted in the film. Also see Crandon (1993: 119-121).

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same time, another kid was born without kidneys--but *con suerte y con dinero* ("with luck and money"). The parents of the rich baby flew a helicopter to the dying child and bought the kidneys. The focus of the story is on the ability of the rich baby to obtain life's necessities and to acquire or appropriate body parts of the poor.

But even worse is the prevalent idea that baby-stealers are an ever-present danger. People are convinced that there is a huge black market for selling Bolivian babies. They told me that children are used as "mules" to transport cocaine and sold for huge sums of money to people in the United States as *crias* ("non-biological children"). In the *campo* the idea of adoption as we know it does not exist. An orphan would most likely be raised by relatives. People who raise a child that is not their own usually do it in exchange for the child's labor and do not treat the child like one of the family. Media coverage lends teeth to people's fears. Bolivian newspapers and TV news programs regularly report on rumors concerning this sort of black market. My own experience in Arani was telling. When I first arrived, children would look at me with terror in their eyes and flee when I walked down the street. Parents would watch me suspiciously when I was near their children, or use my presence to scare kids into good behavior, telling them that if they didn't behave I was going to steal them and take them with me to the U.S.[48]

These concerns with integrity of the human body appear to me to be a commentary on people's intensified sense of the precariousness in today's world. In the past, the Revolution of 1952 and the plight of tin miners provided a rallying point for a national Bolivian identity.[49] Today neither is sufficient to provide a sense of national unity for people from all over Bolivia, and much less for people from the *Valle Alto* or Arani. The way people dress, the food they eat, the things they buy, and the way they live are changing rapidly. Time-honored ways of doing things no longer seem

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[48]One of my informants laughingly told me of how when she was a child, people said that a particular cheese with an unusual texture was made of *gente* ("people")--*queso menonito* ("Menonite cheese") made by a Menonite community in Santa Cruz was said to be made of *quechuaruna* ("Quechua people"). Parents used to threaten naughty children with being sold off for cheese.

[49]Leon (1988)

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effective and there is a sense that new "rules" that have yet to be understood now apply. Even local class relations (which always seem to be written in stone) have been affected by the introduction of new streams of wealth. Increasingly, television, migration, dollarization, diversification and fashion play a role in defining who is who. For many people, it is increasingly difficult to maintain a coherence between the way things are and they way that they have always imagined things would be.

(D) THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

Cholitas and Polleras

The way people in Arani dress is a good example of the often antagonistic aggregation of old and new characteristic of life in Cochabamba. It is also a central issue in my thesis concerning the politics of identity among handknitters. About half of the women in Arani wear clothes that could be found in any mall in the United States. Wearing western-style clothes is referred to as being "*de vestido.*" The other half of the women (and a majority of the knitters) are "*de pollera*"--that is, they wear a traditional style of clothing used in many parts of the Andes. Women who are *de pollera* are called "*cholitas.*" Different styles of *pollera* are specific to different regions. The Cochabamba *pollera* is a puffy skirt with dozens of tiny pleats that falls just above the knee. Wearing the *pollera* entails the use of a particular style of blouse, shoes, hat, shawl and earrings, and women who are *de pollera* always wear their hair in two long braids. But the *pollera* is more than just a way of dressing. It is a marker of social class and an indication of cultural affiliation. Using the *pollera* means that a woman has an ethnic identity as a "*cholo*".

Bolivian society is divided into social groups, forming a classic hierarchy that is reminiscent of the colonial power structure. On top are *blancos* ("people of Spanish descent") and middle class people who may be of mixed heritage, but who are thoroughly integrated into a contemporary, urban culture. On the bottom are small-scale agriculturalists of indigenous descent who

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speak *Quechua* or *Aymara* as their first or only language, and whose lifestyle is considered to reflect traditional Andean cultural patterns. These people are generally referred to as "*campesinos.*" The word "Indian" ("*indio*") commonly used to describe these people by academics and by people from other countries, is considered derogatory in Bolivia, and the term *campesino* which was used following the revolution in 1952 has become [redacted] acceptable. In between these highs and lows in the Bolivian social landscape are people who have adopted many of the trappings of urban culture, but maintain links to their *campesino* roots. In other parts of Latin America this synthetic blend of indigenous and European culture might be called "*Mestizo*" or "*Ladino.*" In Bolivia, these are *cholos.*[50]

The word *cholo* may come from "*capichola,*" the name of a fabric commonly used to make women's clothing in the 18th century. Or, the Bolivia Bulletin (1988c) suggests that it was an Arab term used to describe "popular" sectors of Madrid prior to the conquest that was adapted for the colonial situation. While the exact origin of *cholo* is unclear, during the colonial period "*cholo*" was often used to refer to people with at least one white parent. People who adopted the characteristic "*cholo*" style of dress were attempting to demonstrate affiliation as both non-*blanco* and non-*campesino.* In the context of colonial and later Republican society, they became an important social force in Bolivia. However, the term *cholo* used to describe them carried a markedly derogatory connotation and was even used synonymously with the words for dog ("*perro*") and clown ("*chulo*"). The derivative, "*perichola*", referred to Indian women who were the consorts and lovers of Spanish men.[51] Today, *cholo* (for men) and *chola* (for women) continue to have negative meaning and (outside of academic discussion) are used mostly as a way of showing contempt. These terms imply that a person is low class and

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[50]For an excellent discussion of the meanings associated with the terms *cholo* and *indio* as essentialist constructions in popular understanding, see Lagos (1994: 151-4). For other works on ethnic identity in the Andes, see Albo (1987), Belote and Belote (1984), Godoy (1985), Rasnake (1988), Rivera Cusicanqui (1991).

[51]cited in Peredo Beltran (1993: 4)

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culturally backward, and they are commonly construed as epithets used to insult. For example, on a bus I was riding one day, the driver became angered at a woman who was *de pollera* because she was having trouble coming up with the proper fare. When other passengers began to protest the delay, the driver unceremoniously shooed the woman out of the bus and tossed her belongings onto the ground while cursing her as a "*chola*."

The word *cholita*, on the other hand, has positive meaning and is used descriptively by women who are *de pollera* to refer to themselves or to other *cholitas* without offense.[52] In La Paz the quintessential woman *de pollera* is the skilled, self-confident market vendor, while in Cochabamba the *cholita* is associated with the image of a beautiful, buxom peasant girl. In fact, the *cholita*-as-sex-symbol is a sort of regional cultural icon, expressing both a romanticization of rural life and underlying power relations concerning indigenous women and sexuality. These ideas are evident in everyday discourse. For example, when city taxi drivers (often from the *campo* [53]themselves) would discover that I lived in Arani, the most common response was for them to sigh and make longing remarks about the sweetness and beauty of the *campo*, its air, its *cholitas* and the *Quechua* language. As more and more people have migrated to the city, such romantic notions have become increasingly popular.

In recent years caricatures used by promoters of various harvest or beer festivals have capitalized upon the allure of *cholita* symbolism. Posters for these events are designed to attract middle-class city people for weekend outings to the towns of the *Valle Alto* and *Valle Bajo* surrounding the city of Cochabamba. They inevitably depict a Barbie doll-figured *cholita*, bewitchingly toting a basket of tumescent peaches (for the peach festival in Tarata) or suggestively perched on top of a huge ceramic jug of *chicha* (for the *chicha* festival in Quillacollo). The scantily-clad cartoon peasant girl with her absurdly mini *pollera* and bursting blouse is an enticing

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[52]Also see Lagos (1994: 152)

[53]"rural area"

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image and a shrewd marketing ploy that plays upon entrenched social symbols.[54]

Deconstruction of the concept of *cholo* and its attendant symbolism has become a focus of recent research, but *cholo* identity itself has been a subject that has intrigued people for many years.[55] While analyses may differ in emphasis, most have tended to see "*cholification*" as an interface between Spanish and indigenous Andean worlds.[56] The product of this convergence is a hybrid and discordant identity--one rooted in Andean lifeways which are simultaneously denied by the embrace of first Spanish, and now national Bolivian culture. The politics of ethnicity associated with the development and maintenance of this identity is a defining characteristic of "*lo cholo*" (Lagos 1994: 151-4). Lagos (1992, 1993, 1994), Gill (1993, 1994), and Buechler and Buechler (1996) have written about the multifaceted meanings associated with the terms in which Bolivians identify themselves. Among Cochabamba's *cholita* knitters, sustaining a self-identity based upon traditional notions of class and gender while producing crafts for export or participating in grassroots cooperatives is a constant balancing act.

The hallmark of *cholo* culture, the puffy *pollera* skirt, is a perfect example of this antagonism. It is considered by many to be a "traditional" Andean costume, but was actually a product of dress codes imposed upon the indigenous population during the colonial period.[57] The Spanish were concerned with maintaining distinct social categories in the colonies and rules regarding the way a person was supposed to dress became a method of determining and enunciating social status. But these statuses were not as fixed as the Spanish had bargained on. Indian men and women began to manipulate the system, discarding native costume in order to avoid

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[54]See Albro (1999a and 1999b), Gill (1994), and Paulson (1992) for discussions of symbolic meanings of the *cholita*.

[55]See Barragan (1992) and Platt (1987),

[56]See, for example, Albo (1985, 1986); Barragan (1990), Buechler and Buechler (1996), Lagos (1993, 1994), Murra (1975); Peredo Beltran (1993), Platt (1987); Quijano (1980).

[57]See Barragan (1992), Bolivia Bulletin (1988c), Peredo Beltran (1993), and Weismantel (1988) for a discussion of the origins and usages of the *pollera*.

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paying tribute. Following a pan-Andean uprising in 1781, Spanish authorities prohibited the use of precolonial Andean designs and styles altogether, fearing that they would remind people of past loyalties.[58] The costume that replaced indigenous garb was a form of dress mimicking Spanish peasant clothing. Over time, certain groups elaborated upon the basic parameters of this style. The *pollera*, an exaggerated and ostentatious fashion of skirt based upon these designs, became closely associated with the rise of an Indian elite bent upon assimilating into Spanish culture. Female attire became a particular symbol of differentiation within the indigenous population, distinguishing *cholos* from those classified as *indios* in the region. Gill (1993: 78-9) discusses how the *pollera* as the epitomization of the indigenous elite is an illustration of subaltern groups creating new cultural forms and giving other ones different meanings--thereby appropriating dominant practices and transforming them into something new.

In the context of the colonial social hierarchy, the *pollera* was a contradictory symbol.[59] In La Paz, it became an emblem of urban affiliation and relative prosperity. In Cochabamba, rural towns like Arani were dominated by *cholos* who considered themselves culturally and economically superior to the more culturally traditional *indios*. The *pollera* and it's accouterments were a visible sign of this hierarchy and *cholitas* were known for their sartorial finery. At the same time, although in urban environments the *pollera* demonstrated what was considered a more "civilized" demeanor than Indian garb, at the level of national society it remained a clear symbol of low social status. Consequently, although resistance to Spanish dress codes may have made it possible for a certain amount of social mobility for *cholos*, especially at the level of town social dynamics, Barragan (1992: 113) reminds us that it is important to remember that such appearance of fluidity masks a concrete reality in which possibilities for action remained limited.

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[58]For historical analyses of the *pollera*, see Barragan (1992), Bolivia Bulletin (1988c) and Gill (1994).

[59]See Peredo Beltran (1993: 119, 121)

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Clearly, the process of *cholification* was not merely the emergence of a style of clothing. The use of the *pollera* represents the creation of new identities rooted in an implicit marriage of tradition with modernity. The resulting hybrids are both indigenous and non-indigenous at the same time--a union which has often been tumultuous at best (Barragan 1992: 110). Today in Arani and the other towns of the *Valle Alto* where *pollera*-clad *cholitas* are easily spotted in the streets and fields, the strength of the *pollera* as a marker of a woman's sense of identity is apparent. In these places the *pollera* remains an important cultural icon and continues to play a prominent role in the way that women construct their own concepts of self--although as Lagos (1992, 1993, 1994) and Buechler and Buechler (1996) so aptly advise, these concepts of self may be multifaceted, ambiguous or even contradictory.[60] As in the past, the *pollera* is considered a sort of luxury--despite increasingly fierce social pressure for women to abandon aspirations to the *pollera* in favor of western-style clothing. *Dona* Justina and *Dona* Paulina, two *Aranena* women born in the 1920's to a notable family, recounted to me how they felt when their mother decided that they would be *cholitas* (translation mine):

> ***Y tu mama y tu abuela, ellos estaban gente con plato, o ???... Ilustra? cómo era tu familia?***
>
> *Gente ilustrada había sido nuestra abuelita, nuestros tíos tambien...no?...*
>
> ***eran patrones?***
> *no, no, no son patrones...*

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[60]Buechler and Buechler (1996: xxxvii and 220) are critical of Lagos (1993) because they believe that her approach is a dualistic one which views of upwardly mobile groups in terms of domination relations, obscuring aspects of status dynamics from which people may derive a sense of identity apart from particular forms of domination. Although Lagos does tend to focus on unequal relationships between competing groups and classes, I have always found her analysis to be anything but dualistic. In fact, my own reading of her (1993) treatment of the cult of Urukupina was that she was arguing exactly the opposite--that forms of "alterity" such as those represented by identity politics can only be understood in a processual and dialectical way in relation to specific historical moments and to the structural transformations underlying social relations.

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no.

Menos que patron?
sí, menos que patron...

por eso...

solamente un poco iludstraditos...

sí...

entonces, han tenido sus tierras y un poco más que otra gente?
claro...

sí...

y que quería decir cuando tu mama les colocaba pollera?
a nosotras nos hemos puesto pues...alegres pues...(laughing)

a sí? Porqué?
porqué? porque pollerita para nosotras...

sí, sí...

And your mother and grandmother, were they wealthy? What was your family like?
Our grandmother was well-off, out uncles and aunts too, right?

Were they land owners?
no, no, no, they weren't land owners...

no

Somewhat less than land owners?
Yes, less than land owners...

that's why...

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only a well-off, not wealthy...

yes...

So, did that mean that they had a bit more land than other people?

that's right...

yes...

And what did it mean for your mother to decide to have you wear the *pollera*?

we were so happy

(laughing)...

Oh really, why?)

why? because we got to wear the cute *pollera.*

yes, yes

For *Doña* Paulina and *Doña* Justina, as for many women, the *pollera* represented ascendancy into a locally-sanctioned elite womanhood--a womanhood and an elite status that announces itself through beautiful clothing.

Because of the importance of clothing in this respect, women who are *de pollera* go to great expense to don proper *cholita* attire. Because of its many pleats, the *pollera* requires an extensive amount of material (at least 2.5 meters) and is a costly piece of clothing. Gill (1993, 1994) and Buechler and Buechler (1996) describe the expense and fashion of women from the La Paz region of Bolivia who are known for their costume. There, the total outfit can cost over US$200. In Cochabamba, *cholita* clothing is considerably less expensive. *Cochabambina polleras* (skirts found in Cochabamba) are significantly shorter than the ankle-length *paceña pollera* (skirts found in La Paz) and generally cost under US$50. But *Cochabambinas*

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(women from Cochabamba) are equally elegant. In Arani, it is not uncommon to see *polleras* of velvet, of shimmering brocade, or of silk-like fabric on a daily basis. Even the poorest woman I knew had an outfit that she used for special occasions. At parties and weddings, *cholitas* jazz up their best *polleras* with special dangling gold "*cholita*" earrings that can cost anywhere from one to three hundred dollars. Although in general, married women wear more ragged *polleras* as their everyday clothing, unmarried girls are careful to dress nicely all the time. My friends told me that once a woman is married she must spend her money on her children and can no longer dress as well. In fact, because of the high value placed on the symbol of the sacrificing mother, a married woman who dresses like a single girl would be criticized. Before marriage a girl tries to acquire a good selection of *polleras* as a trousseau. Many of my informants have between 6 and 16 *polleras*!

One of the best times to see a lot of finery in Arani is market day. Every Thursday a sizable market takes place in an open area called the *playa* ("wide open space"). Hundreds of vendors come to sell everything imaginable--salt, tomatoes, pigs, bed frames, radios, plastic jugs--you name it, and you can probably find it on market day. Most important for the regional economy are vegetable and livestock sales. The Arani potato market is particularly significant. On market day, people come from all over to buy and sell, and to socialize. Women wear their nice clothes. The *pollera*, once an indicator of elite local status, is now worn by women across class categories.

A number of factors have helped to bring about this transformation. The availability of fabric in a wide range of colors and prints has increased dramatically over the past twenty years, mostly as a result of the relaxation of government regulations on imports. At the same time, changes in the social structure of towns following the implementation of land reform in the 1950's and 60's altered local class relationships, affecting the ability of women to afford the *pollera* and it's accouterments (See Lagos 1994). As I show in Chapter 4, in the town of Arani and it's immediate outlying areas, knitting income and the structure of productive relationships

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in export knitting, both helped to shift the *pollera*-wearing population to include women from poorer households and younger girls. More recently, improvements in travel and communication, and migration from rural households for wage labor in the *coca* fields of the Chapare or in the construction boom in Argentina, have influenced the way more rural women dress. *Campesinas* now have *polleras* as nice as the *Aranenas*.

Dona Justina and *Dona* Paulina seemed to lament that the *pollera* had lost much of its status value for defining one's position in the local social landscape[61] (translation mine) :

sí, cholitas hemos sido pues...

y en este entonces...ahora no...las jovencitas ponen finas aretes...era igual en este?

igual

igual

igual era

ahora se ponen todas las del campo también igual, no más estamos más mejor que las cholitas se visten, no?

entonces, antes las cholitas eran del pueblo y chicas de las alturas otro?

sí...

eso era pues...un poco bajo ya

ah, sí...se han llenado las de las alturas...ahora viven aquí

hasta Punata, hasta Cochabamba están yendo...a Santa Cruz

Aquí! hasta Cochabamba..

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[61]Gill (1994: 108) found similar sentiments in La Paz where women complained that outsiders no longer see the difference between high class *cholas* and peasants.

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Porqué este gente se están yendo...?
sí, porqué están yendo ésta gente pues?

nos están bajando de las alturas

Y éste esta cambiando el ambiente aquí en Arani o se queda igual sino que otra gente...?
Claro que cambia, cambia siempre pues.

Como cambia?
bueno, más atrasadas...

Translation:
yes, we were *cholitas*

And at that time, did young girls wear such fine earrings as they do today?
the same...

the same...

it was the same...

But today girls from the *campo* use them as well, it's no longer the case that the girls from town dress better.

So, before there was a difference between girls from town and girls from up in the rural hill areas?
yes...

that's it, but n0ot so much anymore...

ah, yes...people from the hills have flooded Arani, now they even live here.

they are going all the way to Punata or even Cochabamba and Santa Cruz now

Here! and all the way to Cochabamba!!

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Why are these people going?
Yea, that's the question...why are they going?

they are flooding us out here

And is this changing the atmosphere here in Arani or is it the same, only with other people now?
Of course it's changing, certainly it is.

How is it changing?
Well, it's more backward now..

Today, the *pollera* no longer symbolizes the separation between elite towns people and their more rural neighbors in the same way that it did in the past. On the contrary, as western fashions and consumer goods have flooded the markets of even the most isolated rural areas, in some respects, the *pollera* has become a type of counter to the influence of urban culture. In rural towns in the Cochabamba valley, for example, women now wear *pollera* as a statement about their identity as women in local culture. In many ways, *cholita* fashion exists in parallel to western styles of dress and wearing the *pollera* allows a woman to compete for status in local terms rather than starting from the assumption of inferiority associated with the position of rural people in the broader social milieu.

Lagos (1994: 154) writes that "local constructions of identity are further elaborated and manipulated in specific arenas that are meaningful only insofar as the audience is regionally based." Gill (1993, 1994) discusses *pollera* fashion among rural immigrants to La Paz as an arena of cultural contestation where the parameters of 'womanhood' are defined outside the explicit control and domain of elite society (except, of course, when employers dictate or manipulate the type of dress used by their domestic employees[62]). Buechler and Buechler (1996:183) present one woman's experience in choosing to adopt the identify of a *chola paceña* in the context of a

[62]See Gill (1993:83) for examples of the ways that upper class women dilute and devalue the *pollera* as a symbol through the use of maid's uniform *polleras*.

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local provincial festival. This choice demonstrates the extent to which she chose mobility within local terms, highlighting how local prestige can become an outlet for upward social mobility. Given the exclusive nature of elite social circles where western fashion prerogatives are displayed and defined, many people in La Paz and Cochabamba recognize ways in which the *pollera* is representative of an alternative status system.[63]

Ironically, as western style clothing has become more ubiquitous and available in Cochabamba, even in more isolated rural areas, and as the *pollera* has come into use outside of provincial towns, in many respects the *pollera* is now associated with the rural life for which it once created disdain. Of course, I am not suggesting that differentiation no longer exists between groups at the regional level, but rather that the labels people use and affiliations they assume reflect new categories and alliances. Lagos (1994: 218) demonstrates "how identities transform and evolve over time rather than fitting neatly into one particular framework." She writes about the "ambiguities inherent in local representations of self" (p. 153), for example,

> "'*campesino*' became an inclusive category that unites members of different factions--wealthy and poor, *vecinos* and *campesinos*--to mobilize against the state in order to protest any state policies that are detrimental to all. The local definition of *campesino* is thus ambiguous, and its meaning is often negotiated and contested in public areas." (p. 151)

When juxtaposed with the *vestido* and with urban society, in Cochabamba the *pollera* has become an emblem of rural cultural and class affiliation. In fact, the *pollera* is one of the central symbols found in the writings, musing and political discourse of the regional cultural movement called *Itapayu*.[64] As such, women's clothing now

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[63]Buechler and Buechler (1996: 184) found that *de vestido* market women in La Paz say that *cholas* belong to a different prestige system and this is how Sofia, the *de pollera* protagonist of their autobiographical account sees it herself (p. 221).

[64]See Albro (1999a and 1999b) for an excellent discussion of this movement and the political salience of *pollera* symbolism.

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provides a symbol of connectedness between *cholos* and the *campesino* class (both of which are discriminated against by the dominant society) much in the same way that it represented differentiation in the past. Today in Arani, women who are *de pollera* often use their costume as a means of identifying themselves as *campesinas*.

Yet as a symbol of a woman's identity, the *pollera* continues to convey a variety of meanings. Most obviously, use of the *pollera* implies that a woman has the wealth to be able to afford this style of dress--although this is much less significant in the Valley than the overt investment represented by the *pacena pollera*. Also in contrast to La Paz where the *pollera* has come to be associated with an upwardly mobile merchant class[65], in the *Valle Alto*, a woman who wears *pollera* signals that she possesses the knowledge and skills associated with maintenance of an agricultural household. Preparing food, cooking country-style meals, making a fire, caring for domestic animals, planting, harvesting, and the ability to carry a heavy load are all considered within the purview of the *cholita*--skills that city women and women who are *de vestido* would not necessarily possess. According to my informants, the role of the *de pollera* woman is relatively fixed compared to women who wear the *vestido*. Her reason for being revolves primarily around the family and domestic work. Her energy and time oscillate between family, agriculture and marketing or craft work. Her ability to make decisions about her own life is limited by her responsibilities in the household and her affiliation with the family, leading to such sacrifices as abandoning school. In contrast, women who are *de vestido* are said to have more opportunity to pursue independent strategies (especially through studying).

Of course, this is merely one ideal of local womanhood. Even though most of the *de pollera* women I knew claimed to subscribe to this model of womanly behavior, plenty of *cholitas* I knew would have been hard pressed to fit into this idealized mode. In fact, as Gill (1993) has demonstrated for the national elite ideal of

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[65]See Gill (1993, 1994) and Buechler and Buechler (1996)

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womanliness, images of self imposed by society rarely go uncontested. In Arani, even local ideas about womanhood were everyday undermined by *cholitas* who go too often to the *chicheria*, by those who spend too much on clothing and jewelry (while their children go without shoes), by the high percentage of women in the region who have (for a variety of reasons) remained single--some defiantly so--rather than marrying and raising a family, and most recently, by women who migrate to the city or even to Argentina to find work (as men have been doing for some thirty plus years), leaving children behind with relatives. One of the knitters I knew had a reputation for just these sorts of social foibles. When she suffered a late-term miscarriage, people whispered in accusatory tones that it was because she had not really wanted the baby. When her young husband tragically hung himself, rumors had it that she had actually killed him and made it appear to be suicide so that she could cavort more freely with her lovers.

Despite the ongoing and vigorous contestation of meanings associated with being a *cholita* in Arani, the "core" symbolic message of the *pollera* lies in its association with a woman's role in the functioning of the agricultural household. Albro (1999b) shows that this notion of the "*cholita* as producer" serves the purposes of people with a variety of political agendas. Grassroots knitters themselves capitalize on this image, especially in their dealings with funders, clients and politicians. Bucolic ideas concerning the serenity and simplicity of rural life, even its exoticness as a manifestation of "traditional" indigenous culture, are commonly just below the surface in the way that outsiders view women who are *de pollera*. But beyond the political implications of this identity, women who are *de pollera* in Arani derive pride and a sense of self from the skills that identify them as rural women. In fact, I argue in the following chapters that this *cholita* self-image has been an important factor at work in the emergence of a worker consciousness among knitters that led to cooperativization, and in the internal dynamic of grassroots knitting organizations.

However, none of this is meant to suggest that the these more positive meanings are the only ones at work in *pollera* symbolism. A

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number of authors (e.g., Buechler and Buechler 1996: 180; Gill 1993 and 1994) argue against a unitary approach to understanding the meanings associated with the *pollera*. Despite positive connotations associated with *cholitas* and their skirts in certain local arenas, as a symbol of rural culture in a country where everything pertaining to *campesinos* and rural life is devalued, the *pollera* is simultaneously a mark of backwardness. For example, *cholitas* of some status in Arani still receive very poor treatment from the people who work in banks, stores, and hospitals, or from employers. In middle class residential neighborhoods, a woman who is *de pollera* is assumed to be someone's maid and is regarded as a sort of second class citizen.[66] Being a *cholita* is also considered an indication that a woman lacks a formal education. As a result, people who have gone to school often adopt a very condescending manner toward *cholitas*. Teachers (who are always *de vestido*) do not permit students to wear the *pollera* in school since it is considered old-fashioned and uncivilized. Girls who go to school wear western style clothes. As in many other parts of the world, it is common for parents to take girls out of school after only a couple of years because they are needed to help with the work at home. This is especially true in households with agricultural tasks, large families, or some type of family business that requires many hands. Girls who drop out of school often start to wear the *pollera*, further reinforcing existing informal dress codes.[67]

As a result, while it may not always be the case that a *cholita* has had very little schooling, the general attitude toward the *pollera* was expressed to me by one of my *de vestido* informants, *Doña* Teresa:

> *"...aquí pollera ponen desde muy temprano edad a las chicas que practicamente no van a la escuela o han ido hasta primero, segundo, tercer año máximo! Después ya no, hacen quedar a su casa para que auyde con sus*

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[66]See Gill (1993, 1994) for examples of the stigma attached to the *pollera* in certain circles of urban culture and in public places.

[67]See Gill (1993, 1994) for another example of how the educational system can structure women's dress.

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hermanos menores que ayude a llevar la vaca a comer pasto, a traer tantas cosas, no? que ayude a la mama...entonces esta mujer de pollera ya indicada de que no ha pasada muchos cursos en la escuela...que ella ha sido educado para el campo...en cambio la chica, hija de pollera que ya se pone vestido es que ha estudiado más, entonces va a la escuela, termina el intermedio, termina el medio y luego si dios quiera, si tienen posibilidad, muchos campesinos la mandan a la universidad a sus hijas si tienen posibilidad...esa es la diferencia...en que la de pollera ha ido mucho a la escuela ya la hija de vestido ha cursado más todavía, sí..."

"...here girls begin wearing the *pollera* from a very young age since they practically don't go to school or they just go until first, second, or at the most, third! After that they don't go, their mothers make them stay home to take care of younger brothers and sisters, to help with taking the animals to pasture, to fetch things to help the mother, no? Therefore the *de pollera* woman indicates that she hasn't had much schooling, that she has "studied" agricultural work...on the other hand, the daughters of a *de pollera* women who wear skirts, it's because they have studied more...they go to school, they finish primary and middle school and then, if they want and if they have the opportunity, many *campesinos* send their daughters to the university if it is possible for them to do so...this is the difference...even when de *pollera* girls have gone to school more, those who wear skirts have usually studied even more, yea..."

Girls who go to school, even for a couple of years, now grow up with *de vestido* clothing. The influence of television and western fashion, combined with the increasing availability of inexpensive clothing (and the concomitant expense of the *cholita* clothing) means that fewer and fewer girls begin to wear *pollera* when they are no longer in school. The distinctive *pollera* is becoming increasingly scarce in areas with close links to urban centers. Consumer culture has made vast inroads, affecting people's tastes and the clothing they choose to wear. Many women in rural towns and urban slums now cut their

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hair and dress in western-style clothing. By Bolivian standards this is considered a superior costume.

In Arani, young girls are now less and less likely to become *cholitas*. Even women I knew who were adamantly proud of their own *cholita* status did not want their daughters to be *de pollera* or for their sons to marry a *de pollera* girl.[68] A *cholita* friend of mine told her daughter that if she didn't start doing well in school she would have to become a *cholita*. Her tone of voice indicated that this was a threat. Gabriela Toranza, one of my most intellectual and eloquent informants, is a knitter and is *de pollera* (Gabriela is a central character is the case study presented below and in the following chapters). She believes that the *pollera* is being lost. The strength of western fashion in places like Arani is so great that to Gabriela it seems that, "the influence of other cultures is making us lose even our identity." A bit less poetic, *Doña* Teresa put it that:

> *"...poco a poco se está perdiendo la pollera, pero no muy veloz, lento, muy lento, pero poco a poco...incluso con lo que la gente está yendose a la Argentina... entonces para irse a la Argentina se saca la pollera, se ponen vestido...hay algunas de pollera que se van allí, están estudiando corte y confección..."*
>
> "...little by little the *pollera* is being lost, not rapidly, but slowly, slowly, little by little...this includes the women that go to Argentina...because in order to go to Argentina you have to stop wearing *pollera* and put on a skirt...there are some who are *de pollera* who go there to study hair cutting and styling..."

But the trend in costume choice is not unidirectional. At the same time that rules of the educational system (many of which are imposed by teachers' own biases rather than from the school system

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[68]According to Nash (personal communication), during the period she studied in the mines, men expressed a preference for wives who were *de pollera* because they believed that *cholitas* were easier to control and more submissive than women who were *de vestido*. This contrasts with what Gill (1993, 1994) found to be the case in the La Paz migrant community where being *de pollera* gives women a certain amount of liberty, in part as a result of the occupations that *pacena cholas* are able to pursue.

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itself), migration, television and cheap consumer goods encourage the use of western fashion, all of my *cholita* friends and informants have chosen to adopt the *pollera*. A couple of girls I know became *cholitas* even after completing all of their schooling. Buechler and Buechler (1996: 182) discuss the adoption of the *pollera* under the auspices of becoming a "*chola refinada*" as an attractive option for some women in La Paz. This is especially true for women with close ties to provincial towns and for those who participate in the market union structure where the display of wealth demonstrated by the use of *chola* clothing gives them the ability to vie for position and prestige in the local status hierarchy to an extent that would never be possible in western fashion terms.[69]

However, in Arani I encountered attitudes that I have not seen discussed in other studies. Hilda, one of my close informants, explained to me that in Arani no one wears *pollera* before the age of sixteen because of school rules and because of the expense. But to her--as it was to *Doña* Justina and *Doña* Paulina years ago-- wearing the *pollera* continues to be something special that a girl can look forward to as a positive source of personal identity. This seemed to be the case for the daughter of *Doña* Albina, another *cholita* I knew. While I was living in Arani, *Doña* Albina's husband went to Argentina to work, leaving her to take care of the house, the fields, the couple's six young daughters, and her own *chichería* business. Not long after the husband left, the oldest daughter who wasn't doing

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[69]In their autobiographical account of the *pacena* market vendor, Sofia, Buechler and Buechler (1996: 182) discuss her decision to change to the *pollera* as part of a purposeful occupational strategy, representing upward mobility. Their data demonstrate the positive view that Sofia takes of her switch and supports the valuable contention that in certain circumstances the *pollera* represents a positive and attractive option rather than something that women of less means or education must "settle for." However, in making this argument, they contrast their position with what they see as Gill's (1993: 83) "negative characterization" of the *chola refinada*. However, in my own reading of Gill, I did not find that she was characterizing the *pollera* in negative terms as a general rule, although this may have been the attitude being expressed by one particular informant (Nora). Instead, I found that Gill's argument concerning the contestation of ideas and symbols of womanhood demonstrated the great value that many women place on the *pollera* as a source of positive female identity, although depending on the context and the perspective, the *pollera* remains an ambivalent symbol. This interpretation of Gill seems to me to dovetail with the position of Buechler and Buechler rather than to contradict it.

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well in school, dropped-out to devote herself to helping her mother. Immediately she began using *pollera*. When I would see her on the street getting water, she would giggle in coy pleasure at her new clothes. Although allowing her daughter to leave school and become a *cholita* got my friend, *Doña* Albina, a beating and a berating from her brother (according to him, he was acting on behalf of her husband in his absence), the girl remained *de pollera*. Clearly, there is positive meaning associated with the *pollera* in rural towns that continues to make some young girls aspire to *cholitahood* despite seemingly daunting cultural pressure (and even physical coercion, as my friend's brother demonstrated so clearly) to the contrary.

But whether or not a woman uses *pollera* is not a permanent state of affairs and can change at different points during her life. Many girls stop using *pollera* after they get married at the behest of a mother-in-law or husband. Girls make this change to higher status clothing even though in a rather contradictory way, many people (including the husband himself) may consider the *pollera* to be a more attractive way of dressing. This was the case with one girl I knew who got married, moved to another town, and immediately stopped wearing *pollera*. As a *cholita* in Arani she had been considered very good looking and was quite popular. When she returned *de vestido*, people joked about her transformation, saying that the new style of dress didn't suit her heavy-set figure like the *pollera* had. Another girl, one of my close informants, was planning to marry an older, more cosmopolitan man. She had not told anyone about the marriage when she informed me in confidence that in accordance with her new position, she was going to wear a western-style wedding gown and would be *de vestido* from the moment of the wedding ceremony. However, as luck would have it, my friend continued as a *cholita* when the relationship ended abruptly before the wedding (it turned out that the man was already married).

Although the trend seems to be toward changing from *pollera* to *vestido*, the reverse is also true, but less common. *Cholitas* who go to Argentina to work stop using the *pollera* while they are away, but may use it again when they return. This occurs with increasing regularity as more and more women migrate. Transformations of

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this sort are viewed as an economic necessity and my friends who were *de pollera* felt sorry for women who have to change the way they dress as part of a work strategy. But there are also locally-generated occurrences of costume shift. Rob Albro, who did field research in the nearby town of Quillacollo recounts a case he knew of a well-connected *de vestido* woman who decided to open a restaurant and suddenly began to be *de pollera*.[70] It would appear that the woman was capitalizing on the symbolic association of the *cholita* with conviviality--in rural towns, women who are *de pollera* are often the proprietors of popular eating and drinking establishments (especially those that serve the locally-produced corn beer, *chicha*--like that which belonged to *Doña* Albina). Even more interesting, in this case the *cholita* clothing that the woman wore did not appear to be new. Instead, it looked to Albro as if clothing that had been stored away--suggesting that prior to her *de vestido* status, the woman had been a *cholita*.

While most people I spoke with respected a woman's right to change between *pollera* and *vestido*, especially if it is at the wish of the woman's husband, there are cases which are criticized. People who switch back and forth are often labeled *disfrazada* (in costume) because their lack of adherence to one identity is seen as false and manipulative. Women who put on airs when they adopt the higher status western-style dress are called *pintada* (painted) because they use makeup, and the epithet *chota* (the *de vestido*-equivalent of *chola*) is used by women who are *de pollera* to insult women who are *de vestido*. My friend Hilda had a neighbor who changed from *pollera* to *vestido*, and according to Hilda, this girl began to act "snotty." Because she was incensed at the girl's attitude, in her conversations with me Hilda called the girl a *chota*, saying that she had no reason to act so superior. Hilda seemed especially indignant that without more formal education than girls in town who were *de pollera*, the girl had no right to even become *de vestido*.

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[70]personal communication

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Conclusion

The historical, economic and cultural forces described above help to create the context in which this study of export handknitting is embedded. They come together in everyday life in Arani in an often antagonistic blending. The historical role of Cochabamba, the *Valle Alto*, and Arani in the regional economy contributed to a rather specific set of social arrangements with the weakness of *ayllu*-based ethnic affiliation, the wretched conditions of life for workers on the *hacienda*, and the rise of a *piquero*, small-holder class. The specifics of these arrangements led to the development of a strong, class-based peasant union movement which provided the impetus for agrarian reform under the auspices of the "revolutionary" MNR government in the 1950's.

The impact of land reform was significant, if not for the amount of land distributed to individual landholders, then certainly for the resulting transformation of the local social landscape as *piqueros* were displaced from their relative position of local dominance. A new local elite rooted in political cronyism and based upon maximization of new economic conditions created by the development of the regional economy (especially people involved in transportation) emerged to dominate local political and social arenas. However, the decline of the rural economy as a result of *minifundization*, drought, government policy, and deteriorating terms of trade made traditional life in rural towns like Arani increasingly unsustainable. Although agriculture remained central to people's sense of identity, households diversified to include a broad range of productive and money-making activities.

The diversification of the household economy had a particular impact on women because they were the ones who were responsible for many of the non-agricultural tasks and because women play such a prominent role in marketing and sales of any type in Bolivia. The appearance of export handknitting in the 1950's and 60's offered women a new option for employment that seemed to fit well with local ideas about the proper roles for women. The labor force for handknitting was comprised primarily of women from rural towns who wore the *pollera*. The self-identification of knitters as

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"*cholitas*" played an important role in the way women came to view their work and in the way that they incorporated export knitting into their lives. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, over time many of the meanings and identities associated with *cholita* handknitters evolved as a result of broader social, economic, political, and cultural forces. In particular, I argue that the *cholita* identity provided a sense of shared culture among handknitters that became the basis for a level of consensus that gave strength to their grassroots mobilization. Local *cholita* culture provided not only a stepping stone for a grassroots movement to identify with their origins, it also advanced an exoticized image in project funding circuits and in the international market to which high priced items must find a niche. In the long run, however, the basic tenets of the identity itself proved to be a disadvantage. These transformations are rooted in many of the pre-existing patterns described here.

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Chapter 3
Local and Global Experiments in Cooperative Knitting

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of different aspects of knitting in Bolivia. The first section discusses the historical origins of knitting in the Andes. The second section describes contemporary Andean knitwear and knitwear production. While it is true that this study is not about the sweaters *per se*, it is essential to understand the type of handknits being discussed here. Different sweaters require extremely different materials or amounts of labor and skill. Dramatic variation exists between systems of production or with regard to the relationship of knitters to the market. These differences have important implications for my thesis that grassroots movements and development projects are constrained by the cultural conditions promoting the identity of the knitters. In this sense, the sweaters themselves matter to the extent that they embody the production process.

The third section of the chapter examines the evolution of the export knitting industry in Bolivia. Networks for export knitting were developed on a large scale in the 1960's and 70's by institutions espousing a philosophy of cooperativism. The development agencies responsible for initiating these production "cooperatives" intended them to challenge the existing structure of the private market for knitwear production where middlemen controlled knitters through putting-out relations that were often exploitative. Much to the dismay of those involved, this benevolent cooperativism was unable to create a viable alternative to work in the private entrepreneurial system.

Yet the data I collected suggest an interesting twist. I propose that although the cooperative movement failed to produce structural change with respect to the position of handknitters in the industry, it did change the way knitters think about themselves. As a result of the predominant influence of the "quasi-cooperatives" in

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knitwear production, knitting became associated with a sort of cultural and economic revindication through worker participation and control. Women learned to value knitting skills considered to reflect Andean tradition, and they developed a sense of themselves as artisans rather than merely handworkers. At the same time, educational programs sponsored by the "quasi-cooperative" knitting institutions taught knitters about human rights and about the intrinsic abilities people have as individuals. These new ideas were internalized by some women and proved to be powerful catalysts for change.

Knitting Sweaters

Sweater knitting is a seemingly uncomplicated activity. Handknit sweaters conjure romantic images of a woman knitting peacefully, often by a fire or in some rural setting. Rarely do we think about how knitting actually fits into that woman's life. The simplicity and beauty of handmade things deceives us. Such is the case in Bolivia, where a thriving handknit export industry has developed. Since the 1950's, Cochabamba has become a center for the production and export of high quality alpaca handknits. The extensive putting-out systems for producing these garments are very different from previously existing forms of textile production for home use or for sale in local markets. But little attention has been paid to understanding why handknitting has emerged as an important part of the economy or to the impact that knitting has had on the lives of knitters. Consumers of Bolivian handknits, development agencies eager to fund projects to promote handknitting as a form of employment for women, and even knitters themselves, rarely consider the implications of the growth of export knitting. Instead, knitting is perceived as a continuation of some primordial Andean tradition and assumed, unproblematically, to complement the roles and activities of rural women. In reality, knitting is neither of these things.

Part of our ignorance about the production of knitwear stems from the homey, individual quality most people in our society associate with a handknit sweater. A wife knits a sweater for her

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husband; a sister knits for her brother; a mother for her children; a grandmother for her grandchildren. This association of knitting with intimate, family ties makes us forget to wonder about the social relations in which a sweater is produced, even when the sweater is for export. Moreover, popular notions of knitwear production as "women's work" or as a "spare-time" activity contribute to a tendency to view knitting as something of little consequence. As a result, knitwear is rarely attributed with the same social and economic significance as more elaborate forms of textile production such as rugs, tapestries, or intricate woven cloth.

In the Andes, woven textiles and textile production have long been recognized as embodiments of complex social processes.[1] In fact, Franquemont (1986: 83) suggests that "for over 4000 years, the history of Andean civilization has been embedded in fiber." Prior to the Spanish conquest, textiles played a central role in economic and political life as bearers of cultural symbols, as markers of status and power, and ultimately as metaphors for the social relations of empire. During Spanish colonial rule, cloth remained important under the semi-industrial *obraje* system created by colonists to extract labor from the indigenous population. Today, Andean weavings continue to hold importance as reflections of regional cultural identities, as commodities in a thriving tourist trade, and more recently as part of an ongoing struggle to reclaim and recreate political and cultural voices. Although little attention has been paid to knitted garments, I believe that it is appropriate to locate contemporary handknitting as part of the Andean textile tradition--though not as fossilized Incan culture, but rather in the sense that knitting reflects contemporary social relationships.

The knitted garments discussed here are not "vehicles of communication" in the same way that woven textiles, embedded in local cultural practice, convey meaning through their design, production and use. On the contrary, contemporary export knitwear is produced with the express purpose of catering to the tastes of the

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[1]See Adelson (1983), Cahlander (1985), Cason and Cahlander (1976), Conklin (1983), Lobo (1991), Medlin (1983), Murra (1989), Rowe (1946), Stern (1982), and Wasserman and Hill (1981).

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consumer market rather than as part of the maintenance of cultural themes or traditional relations. Even the two-needle knitting technique employed by export knitters may not have Andean roots. Although a type of "knotted netting" did have an indigenous origin, most accounts trace current knitting practices as having been introduced to the Americas during the colonial period.[2] But like weaving, knitting is constituted by, and impacts upon, a series of social relationships which themselves become vehicles for constructing meaning and for producing the contours of a social landscape. Just as weaving can be understood to reflect certain aspects of imperial society in the Incan and colonial periods, it is possible to view the current production of handknits as a microcosm of social relationships which have emerged in the context of local, national and global economic processes. In fact, analysis of the relationships involved in the knitwear industry yields important insights precisely because contemporary knitting is part of a modern commodity economy, and not simply the remnant of an apparently bucolic past.

(A) HISTORICAL NOTES

Knitting as Andean Tradition?

Sweaters are so well suited to the Andean context that many people believe that knitting is a skill with Incan or pre-Incan roots--and concomitantly that the sweaters sold today are contemporary expressions of some ancient Andean tradition. These are not unreasonable ideas. The exquisite handmade textiles of the region are well-known. Archaeologists, historians and museum-goers do not cease to marvel over the beauty and quality of Andean woven cloth. Colorful, handmade clothing continues to be worn by people in parts of the Andes today. What is more, the cold Andean climate makes the idea of knitwear seem not only reasonable, but essential. The sweaters themselves often promote these ideas. "Ethnic" patterns and the use of unique local yarns make handknits seem

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[2]See LeCount (1993), Rutt (1987), Turnau (1991)

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timeless. Sweaters made of alpaca inspire visions of Incan royalty, while the bulky, handspun Ecuadoran wool currently so popular has a "rustic" quality that fits with our ideas about Andean peasant technology.[3] But like much of common wisdom, appearances can be deceiving: Knitting was introduced during the colonial period and is *not* some primordial Andean skill.

Precolumbian Antecedents and Colonial Knitting

Because of the apparent congruence of knitting with the Andean environment and culture, it is surprising that knitting is not a "traditional" Andean art. I was skeptical of supposed "authenticity" of the sweaters which are called "traditional," but it was still somewhat of a shock to discover that knitting was not among the documented precolombian Andean textile techniques. Of almost equal surprise was the difficulty I had finding out *anything at all* about the roots of today's Andean knitwear.

Very little has been written about the history of Andean knitting. Cynthia Gravelle LeCount's (1993) Andean Folk Knitting provides the most complete account. Her focus in this volume is on the contemporary use of knitted hats common throughout the Andean region. Like me, LeCount (p. 1) was frustrated by the lack of historical information available. The archaeological record from the Andes shows the existence of two types of fabric structure related to modern knitting. A technique known as "cross-knit looping" was used on the elaborately worked figures found on certain *Paracas*, *Nazca* and *Chancay* textiles, and on the well-known four-cornered caps which date from the *Huari* culture. Various types of knotting were also employed to produce tufting. However, as LeCount indicates, these are antecedents to knitting, and

> "the lack of knitting needles and knitted cloth in tombs indicates that knitting as we know it did not exist in Peru and Bolivia before European contact." (p. 26)

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[3]Gladhardt and Gladhardt (1981) describe the introduction of rustic yarns as an innovation that knitters found to be incredibly ugly, but one that appealed to the ideas of tourists.

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The earliest record of knitting in the Americas that LeCount uncovered comes from Potosi in Bolivia (p. 25). In the late 1600's a chronicler named Arzans mentions hand-knitted items brought to the new world for sale in the city's booming mining economy. Yet LeCount suggests that it is reasonable to presume that even the earliest Spanish and Portuguese explorers may have introduced the technique:

> "The tradition of the male knitter was well-established in knitting guilds in medieval Europe. Iberian sailors headed to "the Indies" probably knit to replace worn-out socks and caps on the long sea voyages." (p. 26)

The arrival of European women to the colonies almost certainly helped to further spread or introduce knitted items. Beaded knitting and lace knitting were fashionable in Europe at the time, and the ability to knit accessories such as gloves and coin purses was considered a basic feminine skill (p. 26). Although the specifics of the genesis of knitting in the Andes remain clouded by history, it is clear that,

> "Spanish and Portuguese settlers introduced knitting to a people who were already excellent spinners and textile artists, familiar with exacting fiber techniques and manipulation, whose cultural tradition was based on textiles. It is natural that they would excel at knitting and produce some of the finest in the world." (p. 25)

LeCount (p. 26-7) found that one reason it is difficult to ascertain when knitting actually became common is because chroniclers were often ignorant about the distinction between different types of textile techniques, and used the term "knitted" very loosely. But eventually knitting did become adapted by indigenous people in the Andes for their own purposes. For example, around the turn of the century it was fashionable among *chola* women to carry knit purses and bags. I found a reference from a description by a traveler in 1870 who notes that,

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> "women are very clever at dyeing their wools and also in knitting, and at their fairs often bring for sale curious bags and purses in the form of llamas, turkeys, etc..." (Forbes 1870: 262)

Similar knit bags in the shape of whimsical human and animal figures, or decorated with old coins are still used in parts of Peru and Bolivia today.[4]

Some groups also used knitted fabric to accent traditional hand-woven cloth, especially during festival celebrations. Knitted masks were used as an essential part of costumes in certain rituals. Intricate knit sleeves and leggings provided warmth in the cold mountain environment and offered the opportunity for expression of ethnic and cultural affiliation. Some of these usage's have become part of local tradition and continue to have meaning today. Much of the regional variation in the contemporary use of knitted items reflects colonial patterns of ethnic or community affiliation (LeCount 1993: 27). For example, colorful, 5-needle, stockinet stitch sleeves are worn by men in the Huancavelita department of central Peru. These "*maquitos*" or "*mangas*" have become even more complex and elaborated in the recent decades, and are now, more than ever, a source of ethnic pride.[5]

But perhaps the most common application of knitting techniques among indigenous Andean groups has been to hats and caps. The most well-known type of Andean hat is a style worn by men with a pointed top and distinctive earflaps. One of the early anthropologists in the Andes wrote,

> "...one textile art at which Aymara women are surpassingly clever is knitting. The commonest example of this skill is the well-known Aymara knitted bonnet with large ear flaps."[6]

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[4]See LeCount p. 30-32 for beautiful examples of knit bags and coin purses.
[5]Rasmussen Noble (1995); Gibson-Roberts (1995)
[6]Le Barre (1948: 111)

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Of course, the writer was referring to the Aymara knitted "*ch'ullu*"--unfortunately his anthropological skills were in need of some refining, since it is not women, but rather men who generally knit these garments. LeCount's study catalogues an extensive variety of contemporary knitted "traditional" Andean headgear, and highlights the incredible skill and beauty embodied in these garments. Like the *maquitos* in Peru, but more widespread, knitted hats such as the *ch'ullu* are part of local or regional costumes and continue to be important ethnic markers.

(B) CONTEMPORARY ANDEAN KNITWEAR

Functional Wear and Tourist Fare

Sweaters are also produced for home use today, but not as part of an ethnic costume as are *ch'ullus* and *mangas*. Instead, the sweaters knit by people in the Andes are a functional sort of wear for protection from the cold mountain temperatures. The most common style is a fitted, waist-length, solid color cardigan without decoration, except possibly cables.[7] Some men wear pullover sweaters, especially for work in the fields, but women seem to prefer the open style. In general, these garments are basic, run-of-the-mill sweaters lacking a particularly "Andean" character. In fact in many places, functional, homemade knitwear has been replaced by store-bought equivalents. A reflection of growing interconnection within the global economy, the increasing availability of relatively cheap industrially-produced sweaters has made home knitting seem too arduous and time-consuming, in terms of both effort and opportunity cost. Moreover, despite the current popularity of handknits and natural fibers in industrialized countries, in the Andes people are attracted to synthetic machine knits. Synthetic yarns are bright, colorful and lightweight, and compared to wool or alpaca, can be more easily and quickly washed and dried. And just as important, purchased clothing often conveys

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[7]Rasmussen Noble (1995: 46) describes this type of sweater among people of the Peruvian sierra and this was most common type of sweater I observed in use throughout Bolivia.

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the wearer with a heightened status relative to devaluation of handmade items associated with rural life or peasant culture.

In contrast to these plain, functional sweaters, and to the intricate and regionally specific accouterments such as *ch'ullus* and *mangas*, are the handknits with llama designs and geometric patterning sold ubiquitously in tourist markets throughout Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. These Andean "hippie" sweaters, with their stylized "traditional" designs are rarely worn by local people. Still, it seems clear that such designs are similar to those found on Andean woven cloth, and in that sense may reflect an adaptation of existing textile techniques and images. This type of invented tradition may have roots in the colonial period. According to a number of my informants in Bolivia, their mothers or grandmothers knew how to knit, and some believe that the type of sweaters sold to tourists are similar to those they remember from when they were young. However, the specific styling of the sweater which is today considered "traditional" has yoke, cuff, and waistband patterning suspiciously similar to traditional European sweater designs. Moreover, the relative lack of detail in the elaboration of the design compared with other forms of Andean textile production would suggest that this sort of Andean sweater is not equivalent to one that would be made for personal use. It may be the case that these traditional sweaters are poorer quality imitations of designs which were more common a number of decades ago. Today's knitwear "tradition" has become little more than tourist kitsch.

Interestingly, however, in the minds of most people in the United States and Europe, it is this knitwear produced primarily for sale to "hippie" travelers and "granola" tourists who frequent the craft markets of Cuzco and La Paz which has come to typify "Andean" knitting. These sweaters can be knit up in a couple of days and require little skill on the part of the knitter.[8] Many are made of low quality handspun alpaca yarn with designs such as llamas to

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[8]This is not to say that some of the knitters who knit for the tourist market are not highly skilled, especially if they knit regularly. However, skill is not a necessary component of these sweaters and most do not reflect a skilled effort on the part of the knitter.

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give them an "Andean" flavor.[9] Style and sizing are entirely arbitrary, and often the fit of these garments is quite poor. The quintessential alpaca handknit has sleeves which are too long, a body that is too tight, and a neckline that is just slightly "off." More recently, with the fashion rage for ethnic handknits in the 1980's, "Andean" has also come to be associated with cheap sweaters produced in the Otavalo region of Ecuador. Capitalizing on the growth in the appeal of ethnic crafts, Ecuadoran merchant-entrepreneurs managed to expand beyond the national tourist market into stores and malls throughout the U.S. and Europe. The brightly colored, wool sweaters they sell are inexpensive and popular. Otavaleño sizing and quality are an improvement over other tourist sweaters, but the thick, bulky wool which gives them their "handmade," ethnic quality also means that they are extremely easy to knit. A good knitter could easily whip one of these sweaters up in 1 to 3 days.[10]

In Bolivia, while it is possible to find both "hippie-" and "Otavaleño-" style sweaters for sale in tourist markets, many of the garments which are produced today for export are an entirely different product. The export knitwear discussed here is of superior quality and entails highly skilled knitting and finishing. The fine-gauge needles used on many of these garments require hundreds more stitches than a bulky knit. An experienced knitter needs at least 2 weeks working full-time (50+ hours) to produce an export-quality product.[11] The yarn used in export knitting also gives these sweaters a more luxurious feel than the general tourist fare. Although a few groups have found a niche producing with selected handspun wool or alpaca, most export sweaters are made of industrially dyed and spun alpaca yarn. The fineness of this yarn

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[9]Although vendors always claim that their sweaters are pure alpaca, many are made with an alpaca-llama mixture or even an alpaca-synthetic blend.

[10]For excellent discussions of knitwear producers in Ecuador, see Gladhardt and Gladhardt (1981), Meier (1984), and Meisch (1996).

[11]A study in La Paz found that knitters work anywhere between four and sixteen hours a day, approximately 303 days a year--although much of this work is done under the control of small-scale entrepreneurs rather than the large scale cooperatives more commonly found in Cochabamba (Cueto 1986: 33).

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results in garments which drape beautifully and which feel soft and elegant. Recently, high-quality pima cotton has also been used by some groups in an attempt to expand beyond cold weather knitwear and gain a foothold in the even larger cotton knit market. In contrast to more folksy, "ethnic" handknits, Bolivian sweater exports are generally "fashion" products utilizing styles, designs and colors produced by professional designers and reflecting current fashion trends. While there are a small number of high-end tourist shops where these handknits can be purchased in Bolivia, most are exported for sale at expensive prices in exclusive boutiques and specialty catalogues in the U.S. and Europe.

The Organization of Production

The structure of the export knitting industry in Cochabamba stands in contrast to the development and maintenance of more artesanal forms of production among Otavaleño knitters. According to Lynn Meisch, despite the huge expansion of the Ecuadoran sweater industry in recent years, control over production continues to be maintained by family-based merchant-entrepreneurs who manage localized putting-out systems and coordinate contact with the market (Meisch 1996). In Bolivia, locally-sold tourist knitwear is produced in similar family-owned putting-out systems, often utilizing the labor of relatives, fictive kin and community ties. This is especially the case in the area around La Paz.[12] Buechler and Buechler (1992) present a fascinating study from the region where knitting sweaters is one of a diverse range of occupations that small scale businesses and individuals pursue in an attempt to piece together a living in the context of economic crisis in Bolivia (p. 57). Knitters commonly combine knitting work with other income-generating tasks since knitting pays so poorly that it is difficult for

[12]A study of knitters in La Paz found a predominance of individual workers (82%) over those affiliated with institutions (18%), in contrast to Cochabamba where most knitters have an institutional affiliation. In La Paz there are 21,651 artisans involved in the production of knitted garments, all of whom employ other family members (Cueto 1986: 21-22).

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an individual knitter to rely on knitting wages alone (p. 59).[13] Migrants to El Alto and La Paz from rural areas provide cheap labor to small scale entrepreneurs and family-run businesses (p. 85-6). Much of this production is done by hand-operated knitting machines known as "hand-looming" (p. 53, 58, 68) and therefore entails a different pattern of relationships regarding the ownership of the means of production and control of raw materials than that found in Cochabamba. The Buechlers' (1992: 112) informant, *Doña* Flora, operated one such business. Although in the example of *Doña* Flora we see that she was attempting to export some sweaters via her son in Australia, in general, small-scale entrepreneurs have difficulty exporting (p. 203-210). As a result, the bulk of export production in Bolivia, and especially in Cochabamba is controlled by institutions whose composition and organization cannot be understood as purely "artesanal."

The export knitwear industry in Bolivia is essentially divided into two forms of production: privately-owned business and cooperative association. Few of these "cooperatives" may be referred to as "grassroots" organizations, managed primarily by knitters themselves. Differentiation also exists within these two categories in terms of size and scale of production, the type of interaction which exists between owners and knitters, and the nature of integration into the market. These differences will be discussed below in the history of export knitting and in individual descriptions of knitwear producers. In general, however, all export production in Bolivia shares an industrial putting-out system quality and a certain amount of centralized control in the production process. Of course, high quality handknit garments require the arduous attention of a skilled, professional knitter who may or may not be considered an "artisan." Yet various levels of integration separate the knitter from much direct control over the productive process. This uniformity of operational dynamic and structure can

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[13]Buechler and Buechler (1992: 27, 118)--Knitters were among the poorest artisans studied and have been drastically hurt by decreases in tourism since the early 1980's and by a decline in export sales as a result of exchange rate problems encountered by exporters.

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make it difficult to determine the real nature of work in the knitting industry.

Producing export-quality knitwear has a number of distinctive features. Whereas the women who knit Otavaleno and hippie sweaters may be able to exercise their own creativity to a certain extent as they interpret stylized designs and patterns according to their own tastes, the design and color of upscale export knitwear is dictated by the exigencies of "the market." This may mean that the client who places an order for the sweaters already has a specific design selected and is merely looking for an institution with the skilled labor to implement production. In other cases, the knitting institution may employ its own "designers" to develop a line of products in response to the tastes of the consumer market. The capriciousness of fashion means that these designs are constantly changing. Rarely does the knitter have any "intellectual" input into the color, pattern or style of the garment being knit. Nor does the knitter have contact with, or really any understanding of the market for the garments being produced. Clients such as boutique owners and department store buyers who purchase large quantities of exclusive and expensive handknits generally have little interest in knowing about or interacting with Bolivian women who knit sweaters.

Export knitting also requires more rigorous control over the process of knitting itself and over the quality of the finished product. The most common system of production in both private and cooperative organizations is based on a form of putting-out which can be called the *"FOTRAMA" system*, after one of the oldest and most influential knitwear producers in Bolivia.[14] The system pioneered by *FOTRAMA* consists of a centralized headquarters that establishes contact with the market and coordinates production in response to customer orders. Stocks of yarn appropriate for the completion of these orders are maintained in the central headquarters. Production is organized via a network of knitter

[14]FOTRAMA is an acronym for the *Cooperativa de Fomentación al Trabajo Manual* (Cooperative for the Promotion of Handwork). It is an institution run by the Maryknoll order of the Catholic church in Bolivia.

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"leaders" who make regular or periodic visits to the central headquarters in order to receive instructions and raw materials for a particular order. More comprehensive information regarding clients and orders is controlled by the central headquarters. Specific amounts of yarn are weighed and signed-out to each leader according to the specifications dictated by the style, size, color and quantity for a particular order. The importance of the leader's role in putting-out production is one of the factors influencing knitters' attitudes toward their position in the industry and played a significant role in enabling knitters to break away from existing institutions to form their own organizations. However, lack of access to the market has become a stumbling block for greater success at the grassroots level.

The "leader" is an experienced knitter. She takes the order and distributes it among a group of knitters under her coordination and direction. In some cases, the group has been organized by the leader from among her relatives, neighbors and friends. In other cases, the group is part of an already existing network within which the leader has risen from the ranks and "inherited" her position. Knitters come to the leader's house to receive yarn and instructions. The leader receives design patterns drawn out on graph paper. Many knitters copy the designs into their own graph paper notebooks to be used at home. If a new stitch or technique is required, the leader teaches it to the knitters. Generally, the work of knitting is done at the knitter's home. When export knitting first began in the 1960's knitters tended to work at a central location (See Chapter 4). Today, knitters come to the leader's house primarily only when necessary, although once a knitter has made the effort to come to the leader's house, she may stay for the rest of the morning or afternoon in order to visit with the other knitters. In some cases the house of the leader or the home of one of the knitters will become a rendezvous point for a number of women who like to chat and have company while knitting.

In general, sweaters are knit in pieces (front, back, sleeves, etc.). When the pieces are complete, the knitter brings them to be inspected by the leader. Mistakes such as slipped stitches, failure

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to follow the pattern, or incorrect sizing are penalized. Knitters can be fined or they may have to unravel the piece and re-knit it from the point where the mistake was made. Not only does this mean that the knitter has to do twice the work, but re-knitting can often be more time-consuming than the original knit. Re-threading a complicated stitch or color combination onto the needle is very difficult and can result in more mistakes. Once the completed pieces are approved by the leader, they are sewn together with a blind knit stitch. Some institutions require the knitter to do the sewing before turning-in the sweater. In some cases it is the leader's responsibility. Still others have specialized "finishers." Once the pieces are joined, the sweater must be washed and dried. This process cleans the sweater and helps to even-out the tension of the stitches. When the sweater is dry it must be ironed with a damp cloth. A certain amount of variation in sizing can be corrected during the washing and ironing stage.

The Materials: Alpaca, Wool and Cotton

Alpaca yarn is one of the things that makes Andean knitwear unique and exportable.[15] The alpaca is an animal that to most people would be indistinguishable from the llama. Both animals are indigenous to the Andes. The Inca had special rules regarding who could wear garments woven with alpaca (Murra 1989). The fiber of the alpaca is soft and luxurious, drapes beautifully, and because of its high lanolin content, has qualities of warmth and water resistance superior to those of sheep's wool. Today, alpaca is also one of the things that makes Andean knitwear expensive. Because alpacas are raised by rural farmers in relatively small quantities, the supply of alpaca fiber is not well-regulated. This means that the availability of high-quality alpaca yarn in Peru and Bolivia is often erratic. A small number of companies have come to control so much of the market that they have developed virtual monopolies. Certain natural colors, such as pure black or pure white, are both less available and more in demand than mottled browns and grays. In

[15]Officially, alpaca is a fiber and not a "wool" since all wool comes from sheep.

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Bolivia the problem has been particularly acute because of the higher price paid for raw wool in Peru. As a result, Bolivian wool producers have found ways to evade customs controls in order to sell their product at the higher going rate across the border. This has made the supply available in Bolivia inadequate, and much of what is available has been re-imported as industrially-spun yarn at an inflated Peruvian price.[16]

In Cochabamba there is now a medium-sized yarn factory run by *FOTRAMA*. This has provided access to high-quality natural and dyed yarn for many groups in the area which previously would have been forced to travel to La Paz or even to Peru to purchase the yarn they need. Yet *FOTRAMA* lacks a sure supply of raw fiber and availability in Cochabamba continues to be erratic, and when there is a dearth or a delay in supply, groups not directly affiliated with *FOTRAMA* are forced to wait. In addition, unaffiliated groups must purchase this wool at the export market rate which is currently about US$27-35 a kilo. This price reflects the dramatic inflation from the economic crisis of the past decade.[17] In 1984 a kilo of alpaca went for about US$8.60. One year later the price had gone up by almost 350% to US$29.00 (Self Help World nd). As if the difficulties of dealing with such rampant inflation alone are not enough, the exorbitant expense now required to purchase raw materials for knitwear production has exacerbated an already problematic financial situation for many knitwear producing groups. Although private entrepreneurs can secure loans to capitalize production, grassroots knitting organizations have difficulty securing credit.[18] Financing the purchase of raw materials to fill any substantial order received from abroad without a cash advance

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[16]Buechler and Buechler (1992: 150-152) describe the problems that small family firms encounter in procuring raw materials for knitting, as opposed to the priveledged status of foreigners (p. 104).

[17]Buechler and Buechler (1992: 153) discuss the problem of the increasing cost of alpaca yarn for family-operated knitting firms in La Paz.

[18]See Buechler and Buechler (1992: 142) for an example of the difficulties small enterprises face obtaining credit versus the ease with with large firms gain access to capital.

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can be problematic, if not impossible. Needless to say, cash advances are hard to come by.

Some knitwear producers have experimented with locally-produced handspun alpaca or sheep's wool in an attempt to keep costs down and to maintain more control over the supply of raw materials. In the past, small-scale sweater producers, especially those geared toward the tourist market, used local yarns in order to minimize cost. However, this yarn was often of a very poor quality and frequently contained pieces of grass, scrub, or even human hair. Recently knitwear exporters have found a demand for handspun garments in certain upscale markets. Garments made with high-quality handspun yarns are not only in demand, but can bring high prices. In addition, current interest in natural dyes has created yet another niche for Bolivian knitters who are able to produce naturally dyed yarn. Unfortunately, although handspinning and natural dyes reduce costs, both present major challenges when implemented as part of an export production apparatus. Spinners tend to be men and women who live in more isolated rural areas than knitters. The distance negatively affects communication and supply, while the lack of rigorous time-scheduling in rural culture means that it is difficult to get handspinners to work in accord with a production timetable. Natural dyeing results in yarn of beautiful, subtle colors, but the dyeing process is labor intensive and every dye batch comes out with a distinct hue. This makes the uniformity of color necessary for most export markets impossible. Few clients are willing to order a garment without being able to specify the exact color.

In recent years, the more savvy knitwear producers have begun to offer a line of cotton knits. Since 1990 it has become increasingly possible to obtain high-quality pima cotton yarn imported from Peru. Using cotton helps to solve the problem of seasonality in knitting employment by providing year-round work for knitters. This is especially attractive since the production period for cotton knits (July-January) coincides with the down time for agricultural work in Cochabamba when women have fewer responsibilities. But knitters are not necessarily thrilled at the

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prospect of working with cotton. They complain that knitting with cotton is more difficult to work with because cotton yarn has less elasticity, making stitch tension harder to maintain and causing friction on the fingers. And although the market for cotton knitwear is much larger than that for alpaca or wool (making it appear to represent more potential clients), in reality the cotton knit market is viciously competitive. Producers from around the world and especially Asia offer inexpensive, relatively high-quality cotton handknits with which Bolivian knitters cannot compete.

Sweater Design

When most people think of Andean alpaca sweaters they picture the traditional poor quality, "hippie" tourist sweaters. In fact, Andean sweaters are of such notoriously bad quality that in order to get customers to even consider looking at the sweaters, some exporters are forced to refer to them as being made of a "very soft wool," rather than mentioning that they are made of alpaca. With inroads by entrepreneurs and knitting groups into upscale markets over the past few years, this situation is beginning to change. Many customers now understand that there is a wide range of quality available. This can be advantageous to some cooperative knitting organizations, since it gives them the opportunity to emphasize extremely high-quality knitting, and because the beauty and luxury of the alpaca becomes a selling point rather than a liability.

Sweaters with llamas and other motifs usually identified as "traditional" Andean designs are still produced and sold by these groups. The difference is in the high quality of the material and the craftsmanship, rather than in the design. However, these sweaters appeal to a sort of "ethnic" market that is very narrow in the U.S., and only somewhat larger in Europe. There is a limited market for higher priced "traditional" sweaters among people willing to pay more to support third world artisans, but in general ethnic market knitwear sells for a much lower price. In Bolivia, there have been a number of attempts to develop fashionable designs and appropriate marketing techniques to give producers the possibility of entering

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upscale, luxury markets where prices are high. To do this requires garments which are exclusive and "high" fashion. Designs may incorporate "traditional" Andean symbols, patterns and colors to give a sweater an "ethnic" flavor, but in a way that is contemporary and fashionable rather than distinctly ethnic.

For grassroots knitting organizations run by rural Bolivian women, such as the one discussed in this case study, the problems of designing high fashion sweaters are obvious. Not only do Andean knitters have little understanding of ephemeral consumer tastes in industrialized countries, but the vicissitudes of changing fashion trends require continuous and immediate contact with the consumer market. Moreover, knitters cannot realistically expect to compete with professional designers in this market price range who can earn over $80,000 for a single collection. Oxfam Trading, a non-profit organization that supports third world artisans does print a "Fashion Forecast" guide for cooperative producers which includes information about the basic shapes and colors in vogue for each season. Knitwear design, however, involves a subtle combination of color, shape and texture which requires more sophisticated analysis to keep up with the latest fashions.

(C) THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HANDKNIT INDUSTRY

Export Knitting

Although many of today's knitwear exports are expensive, high-fashion designs and not rustic handknits with llamas, condors or other Andean motifs, export knitting in Bolivia has its roots in existing skills and designs found in rural areas. The first export enterprises appear to have been inspired by just the sort of sweaters from the childhood memories of my informants in the *campo* which today are available for tourists. Beginning in the 1950's, knitted garments previously associated with the peasant class became the basis for establishing putting-out systems for export production. In the 1950's and 1960's, despite a disdain for the trappings of rural culture among middle class Bolivians, there was growing recognition of the potential of the export craft market.

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The post-war global economy had demonstrated that a demand for artisan products existed in industrialized countries. At the same time, conditions in Bolivia seemed propitious for the success of a craft industry that would provide jobs for rural and "unskilled" labor. To individuals interested in making a buck, organizing a putting-out system for handknit production appeared to offer a lucrative opportunity--especially for people with ties to the *campo* enabling them to attract knitters as labor. According to my informants, a slue of small-scale merchants set up distribution systems for sweater knitting similar to putting-out networks for sewing *cholita* clothing or producing *chicha* already functioning in rural areas.

Nevertheless, in most cases success in the industry proved more elusive than expected. Knitting wages were low, so knitters rarely felt any sort of loyalty or responsibility to the work or sense of pride in the product. Worker continuity was difficult to maintain as knitters came and left according to their own needs. Without stability of the workforce, knitters were not properly trained and it was not possible to achieve standards of quality control necessary for export production. Moreover, lacking design input and contacts in foreign markets, local middlemen were not able to produce garments with appeal to foreign consumers or to develop a client base necessary for long-term viability.

Superficial understanding of the intransigence of these production, design and marketing challenges allowed entrepreneurial middlemen to believe in the potential for easy profits that sweater knitting seemed to promise. This belief proved false and most of these small-scale operations were ultimately unsuccessful and short-lived. Still, despite the vagaries of privately-owned putting-out networks, these export businesses provided a needed source of income for knitters. Women who took up needles and yarn within these systems did so as part of personal economic strategies in the context of the rural economy of the era. Few saw this work as any different from the other jobs available for women in the *campo*, and certainly no less exploitative. However, these views about knitting

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began to change with the appearance of new forms of production and the politicization of ideas about rural women and their labor.

As the knitting industry expanded in the post-war economy, a certain amount of differentiation occurred between institutions interested solely in generating private profits and those with more socially-oriented organizational objectives. The focus of non-profit knitting operations in the early years of export production was not on the lucrativeness of crafts, but rather on the social welfare role that knitting employment could play. The concept of knitting as a vehicle for development took root among people and institutions interested in socio-economic change. Knitting appeared to be complementary with women's agricultural activities and seemed appropriate according to accepted cultural roles. As I discuss in Chapter 2, *minifundization* was having an severe impact on rural life. Families were finding it increasingly difficult to make a living off of the land, or for that matter, to produce even the essentials to satisfy home-consumption. The resulting displacement of women from the agricultural sphere left a growing wake of under-employed women with few skills that could be translated into earning power. Sweaters were seen as the ideal palliative for these problems.

A number of organizations espousing "community development" began to promote sweater knitting as a means of providing employment for women. Socially-minded business people, charitable institutions, churches and even governments got into the act. Knitting operations established during this period were often touted as "development" institutions benefiting poor knitters or as "cooperatives" which would generate economic prosperity through the participation of local people. But in spite of good intentions, and a rhetoric promising socio-economic development, these initiatives rarely lived up to expectations. For women who worked as knitters in the burgeoning industry, the growing philosophical distinction between private sector and non-profit approaches did not necessarily result in a meaningful alternative.

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The 1950's: The Era of the Benevolent Entrepreneur

In the mid-1950's (approximately 1956-1958) an Austrian woman named Elena Alesca began a craft business called **ANDEA**. This appears to be the original export knitting operation in Bolivia and was certainly the most noteworthy venture of the time. One of my informants says that Mrs. Alesca worked for USAID (which would have coincided with the establishment of USAID in Bolivia); another source would seem to imply that she was the wife of a U.S. diplomat (IAF Document #1 1984: 2). Whatever the nature of her status in the expatriate community, Mrs. Alesca was apparently able to make a convincing argument for her craft production enterprise, and procured a loan from the U.S. Foreign Aid Mission to start her business as a private sector development project in Cochabamba.

My sources put the amount of the loan somewhere between US$20,000 and $170,000. Unfortunately, the USAID archives in Washington, D.C. do not contain sufficient detail from this period, and I was unable to find any official record of the ANDEA loan. The scanty documentation I did uncover elsewhere suggests that the idea behind the loan was that knitting could become a vehicle for socio-economic development within the scope of the private sector (IAF Document #1: 1984). Under the benevolent direction of Mrs. Alesca, ANDEA would provide employment and income for unemployed women in the Cochabamba Valley by reviving and promoting "traditional" Bolivian designs and skills. Although as a private-sector project, Mrs. Alesca's funding was part of an initiative to spur economic "development" through the financing of individual entrepreneurs and not a "development project" in the sense commonly understood today.

In order to make her craft operation function, Mrs. Alesca needed someone with contacts in the *campo* to organize production groups in rural areas. She enlisted the services of Zacarias Coca, a weaver from the town of Villa Rivero in the *Valle Alto* ("Upper Valley"). Villa Rivero was known for its weaving, and Zacarias was a young man with an entrepreneurial character. He became Mrs. Alesca's self-described "right-hand man." ANDEA functioned as a centralized putting-out system with Mrs. Alesca in control of

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decision-making, and Zacarias responsible for implementing production in the different communities according to her specifications.

Mrs. Alesca's vision of the marketability of Bolivian crafts proved accurate and ANDEA became quite successful. People recall ANDEA's handknit sweaters, ponchos and bags, and its woven carpets and wall hangings as charming. Zacarias takes pride in remembering the things they produced, saying that Mrs. Alesca used the same designs she found in the *campo-- "de memoria la gente sabia...no me han ensenado disenos."* [19] But at the same time, Mrs. Alesca had an American couple--Mary and Edgar Hernelstein--who did design work for her, suggesting that ANDEA products used existing patterns and designs, but that the specific combination of elements was most likely manipulated in order to appeal to foreign markets. This would have been in keeping with the project's stated mission to utilize "traditional Bolivian" skills to produce a product with market value.

It appears, however, that there were problems--both in terms of ANDEA's operational dynamic as a business, and with its mission to promote development in rural areas. By all accounts, Mrs. Alesca's management style was overbearing and autocratic. Her son and his wife were involved in ANDEA's operations and their family squabbles spilled over into the business, interfering with the everyday functioning of the organization. The Hernelsteins and Primo Ovando, one of ANDEA's administrators, also quarreled with Mrs. Alesca about her treatment of the workers and eventually left to work for *FOTRAMA*, a new knitwear operation with more of a social welfare philosophy. Zacarias Coca complains that the *campesinos* employed by Mrs. Alesca were difficult to work with because of their wily tactics. He says that they used tricks to steal small amounts of ANDEA's alpaca yarn. They would turn-in damp sweaters or yarn in order to make the final weight of the garment coincide with the measured amount of wool distributed before spinning or knitting, or they often switched the good quality alpaca for a poorer substitute mixed with llama. He lamented that, *"la*

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[19]translation: "the people knew these from memory...no one taught me the designs..."

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gente del campo no siempre es honesta.." [20] But at the same time, he corroborates the accusations of exploitation against Mrs. Alesca. He recounts that he knew that they were paying very little to the producers-- *"se pagaba poco...se explotaba a la gente."* [21]

After so many years, it would be difficult to substantiate such accusations against ANDEA, or against the workers in the *campo*.[22] Yet while such specifics are difficult to ascertain, it is clear that the benevolent entrepreneur approach was flawed. ANDEA's experience highlighted the uncomfortable marriage between knitting as a tool for bettering the lives of the poor, and the reality of knitting as private enterprise. Whatever her motivations may have been, the centralization of power in the hands of Mrs. Alesca did not result in any significant socio-economic improvement for knitters, weavers and spinners, but rather created the conditions for worker resistance.

The 1960's: The Emergence of "Quasi-Cooperatives"

By end of the 1950's, Mrs. Alesca was not the only one interested in Bolivian handknits. Entrepreneurs and development agencies alike were beginning to see potential in sweater production. Idealistic missionaries, Peace Corps volunteers and international development agencies, among others, were inspired by the seemingly limitless potential of "progress" and "development" within the context of the post-war economy. The concepts of integrated community development and "cooperative" management were in the air -- would-be prescriptions for curing the blight of poverty in the third world. As one of my informants put it, everyone wanted to get on the cooperative bandwagon. People interested in Bolivian handknitting were no exception. As a result, the structures for sweater production which emerged during this period (and which came to dominate the industry) were "cooperatives," based on the concept of nonprofit organizational support for handknitting through

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[20]translation: "country people aren't always very honest..."

[21]translation: "the pay was low...the people were being exploited..."

[22]especially since many of the principles, including Mrs. Alesca and her son are now deceased

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which women could obtain fair remuneration for their work. Details of sweater design and marketing were orchestrated by a core of management professionals and workers employed by the organizations, including both foreigners and Bolivians. Knitters continued to be involved primarily through handknit production, but the operational logic was explicitly geared toward benefiting knitters rather than an orientation based upon the generation of profits.

Two large-scale knitting institutions were organized with just these ideas in mind: Participation and cooperation would allow knitters to break the grip of rapacious middlemen, creating the conditions for a more comprehensive socio-economic development. In 1961 ***AMERINDIA*** began production as part of ASAR (the *Asociación de servicios artesanales y rurales*[23]), a broader integrated rural development project in Cochabamba established by the Dutch. AMERINDIA's knitwear production was based on the use of local materials with the idea that knitting would have positive ramifying effects on the local economy.[24] The rustic sweaters in handspun yarns and natural dyes sold for US$15 to $20, and appealed to the folk art market. At one point, *AMERINDIA* employed more than 310 spinners in the *alturas* (mountainous regions) of Cochabamba, and had more than 30 knitting groups employing over 800 knitters in the *Valle Alto* and the *Valle Bajo* ("Lower Valley").

That same year, ***FOTRAMA*** began operations. In the late 1950's, Father Gerald Zeitengeist (*Padre Geraldo*) had become interested in the concept of cooperativism. As a Maryknoll priest in Bolivia for many years, and the pastor of a church in the district of *Cala Cala* in the city of Cochabamba, *Padre Geraldo* had seen the effects of economic hardship confronting the lives of rural agriculturists and the urban poor. He became convinced that the skills of spinning, weaving and knitting possessed by people in the

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[23]translation= "The Association of Rural and Artesanal Services"

[24]Today AMERINDIA representatives are explicite in stating that their organization is NOT meant to be a cooperative or to be participatory. However, this stance seems to be in response to criticism, rather than a reflection of the original philosophy of the Dutch project.

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campo and recent migrants to the city could provide the "natural" centerpiece for a production cooperative. In 1961, he organized the *Cooperativa Artesanal de Fomento al Trabajo Manual* (Artesan Cooperative for the Promotion of Handwork), commonly known as *FOTRAMA*, and began to open production centers in Cochabamba and its surrounding towns. Garments produced by *FOTRAMA* knitters replicated the "traditional" Andean designs, but emphasis was placed on the quality of the work and of the raw materials. Delicate, skilled stitching and the use of high quality alpaca yarn gave *FOTRAMA* sweaters a more luxurious and elegant character than other export knitwear. During its hey-day in the late 60's and early 70's, the organization employed more than 5000 knitters (with particular concentration in the *Valle Alto*) and became the principle handknit sweater exporter in Bolivia.

Both of AMERINDIA and *FOTRAMA* were much larger operations than ANDEA, and could not rely on one person like Zacarias Coca to coordinate production. Instead, a variety of managers and employees were involved. Because they consciously focused on "development" and "participation," knitters were given more responsibility and incorporated into their productive structures somewhat beyond the level of anonymous handworkers. In *FOTRAMA*, for example, knitters who demonstrated particular artisanry at knitting were trained as group "leaders" in a series of leadership training workshops. Leaders were responsible for implementing production among knitters in a localized group. Similar to Zacarias Coca at ANDEA, leaders were links in a putting-out system that connected the institution with the knitters. Yet there was a certain amount of difference in the way the system operated under the nonprofit philosophy. Because leaders were local women, the production dynamic and relationships within the groups were more intimate, and often more positive than those which tend to develop with outside promoters like Coca.[25] The fact that leaders attained their positions of authority as a result of their achievements as knitters

[25]On the other hand, the local and more intimate nature of these relationships also generated certain negative dynamics which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

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conveyed a sense that other people recognized the knowledge and skill necessary to be a good knitter. This, in turn, also helped to create a certain appearance of mobility within the organization. These ideas were supported by the encouragement *FOTRAMA* gave all knitters to participate in a series of workshops about a variety of topics, including learning about the philosophy of the cooperative workplace. And even more notable, the organization contributed to subsidized health care and dental services for knitters and established a profit-sharing plan as a savings incentive.

Yet despite such inclusive organizational policies and work dynamics, decision-making and control remained centralized. Positive estimation of knitters' skills did not extend beyond the view of women as artisans. Knitters were not incorporated into the management structure of these organizations in any meaningful way. As a result, management policies, business decisions and even the nature of cooperative activities and benefits did not necessarily reflect the vision or interests of the knitters. To make matters worse, the hierarchy created between middle class managers and knitters replicated the power dynamics of the broader Bolivian society in which rural, *cholitas* occupy a very low rung on the social scale. Interactions between knitters and management were often humiliating to knitters, or patronizing at best.

Larrazabal (1988: 35) has labeled these organizations "quasi-cooperatives" as a result of their failure to live up to the ideals of cooperativism, participation and development they espoused. Similar to Mrs. Alesca, "quasi-cooperative" institutions like *AMERINDIA* and *FOTRAMA* believed in their own benevolence. Yet over time, conflicts arose over important issues such as wage rates. Although management's approach may have been justified by the realities of the export market for knitwear, the policies which were being pursued often appeared arbitrary or unfair to knitters and to others not privy to information concerning sales, profits and expenses--especially when implemented by condescending managers. Knitters' sense of injustice was further heightened by the incongruence between their understanding of what "cooperatives" or "development projects" were supposed to be, and the actual

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experience of working in them. With every new disagreement, the contradictions mounted and the perception of exploitation increased. Emphasis had been placed on the contrast between these institutions and private middlemen, but when it came down to it, the experience of the knitting work was no different. There had been a lot of talk about participation, but in the final analysis, knitters remained excluded from organizational circuits of power.

The 1970's: Discontent and the Advent of "No Apologies Capitalism"

Despite the problems plaguing the nonprofit knitting movement, and attempts to transform knitting into a vehicle for socio-economic development in the *campo*, the lure of windfall profits from handknit sweater production continued to entice entrepreneurial individuals in Bolivia and the United States. In the 1970's, a number of companies began to operate putting-out systems for knitting with more success than previous ventures. For example, one of the most illustrious private knitwear enterprises in Bolivia today dates to this period. ***Casa Fisher*** ("The House of Fisher") is owned by an American, Jerry Fisher, and his Bolivian wife, Ana. The business began with handknits in the 1970's when Jerry Fisher was in Bolivia working for *Casa Hispania*, a craft importer from the United States. Over the years, the Fishers have been very adept at marketing their product, which today is designed with bold, "ethnic" colors for a young, contemporary shopper. These sweaters now sell for US$150 to $350 in stores and boutiques in the U.S. and Europe, or for US$80 to $120 in their shops in Cochabamba and La Paz. According to the Fishers, in 1994 the business made over a million dollars. Today, *Casa Fisher* has begun to diversify production to include high quality machine knits and the number of handknitters they now employ is below 500. However, at the height their involvement in handknit production at the end of the 1970's, the Fishers employed more than 1000 knitters--mostly concentrated in Cochabamba, but also including production groups in Oruro, La Paz and Potosi.

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The success of operations like *Casa Fisher* testifies to important differences between previously existing knitwear institutions and those which began during and after the 1970's. In contrast to earlier private sector initiatives. the new businesses were owned and controlled by people who were more solidly middle class, and who therefore enjoyed greater access to capital and markets. As a group, these new owners were better situated to take advantage of the industry's potential because of their ability to obtain credit to finance production, their knowledge and understanding of the tastes of U.S. consumers, and their increased competence at making and maintaining contact with foreign buyers. These advantages allowed for production on a larger scale and higher sales prices for the sweaters, translating into greater profit margins.

Moreover, the economic context for sweater production was also changing. Relative impoverishment of the rural sector was becoming more acute. Between 1967 and 1977 *campesino* income fell significantly (Zuvekas, Jr. 1977). In 1974 large increases in the price of rice, sugar and other staples led to an uprising in the *Valle Alto* that was put down by force (Laneuville 1980). The effects of minifundization continued to erode modest improvements in the standard of living which had occurred following the implementation of Agrarian Reform, and the value of agricultural production was decreasing, as was the productivity of the land. At the same time, the need for inputs requiring cash expanded. Given the high population density in the valley, agricultural production was increasingly unable to absorb available labor (Camacho Saa 1966: 16). Although male out-migration was steadily increasing, households with numerous individuals were still left with a labor surplus. For women, these processes accentuated the need for sources of cash income.

Through the influence of the nonprofit knitting movement, especially *FOTRAMA*, knitting work had acquired an element of prestige and was now the occupation of choice for many women and girls in rural towns. A decade of extensive training in export knitting techniques for leaders and knitters alike had spawned a

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large number of highly-skilled handknitters and myriad networks through which knitwear could be produced. At the same time, shifts in consumer tastes and the continuing inadequacy of markets beyond church or welfare-based clientele made it difficult for nonprofit knitwear institutions to stay afloat. Even large operations like *FOTRAMA* were reaching an impasse. With the market for knitwear sales becoming more competitive, many difficult decisions had to be made and implemented. Rancor and animosity developed between workers and management in the nonprofits, and as relationships worsened over time, factions developed. While some knitters remained loyal to the quasi-cooperative institutions, others were becoming increasingly politicized over issues of worker participation. Although the number of politically conscious knitters may actually have been very small, the impact of the discontent was significant. Many knitters tired of the charged atmosphere. Some feared involvement in a political struggle or the loss of income. Others disliked taking sides in the dispute. But for almost everyone, there was disillusionment with the cooperativism and developmentalism which had been blandished about as alternatives to exploitative capitalism.

These conditions created the perfect opportunity for private business. Given the failure of the alternative model to live up to expectations, it became possible for private entrepreneurs to attract knitters from the pool of skilled workers who had been trained within the nonprofit sector. The "*FOTRAMA*-style" production system, based on a contingent of "leaders" in charge of groups of knitters in local areas had proven successful and was adopted by private knitting companies as a way to mobilize rural labor--often using the very same leaders and their networks. The new privately-owned operations were established as for-profit companies which did not masquerade as social welfare institutions and knitters were clearly "employees." Without the facade of "participation" promoted by earlier benevolent entrepreneurs and quasi-cooperatives, it was difficult for workers to make demands concerning managerial policy, but production was often achieved with more efficiency and less conflict.

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In light of the emphasis which had been placed upon the exploitative nature of private knitting operations and the need for worker input, it may appear contradictory that knitters would be willing to accept the power dynamics dictated by the private enterprise system. Yet since few knitters had found that the new model made any real difference in their lives, many now saw work in a privately-owned operation as preferable to the increasingly conflictive working environment in the nonprofit sector. This was especially true as the success of private entrepreneurs in securing profitable markets allowed them to offer steady work and a wage that was equivalent, if not a few cents more. Knitters began to ask, what good is fighting to participate in a coop when you can make a better wage elsewhere? For many women, those few cents were enough to make other issues seem irrelevant.

In the long run, however, the salience of concerns about power re-emerged. The dynamics of work in the private sector reinforced the subordinate position of handknitters and reduced their ability to make claims concerning wages or working conditions. For example, In order to set the pace of production, to exert greater control over workers, and to reduce labor costs, successful entrepreneurs began to segment the production process beyond the separation of spinning and knitting into discrete tasks. Because of differences in stitch tension, however, it is difficult for parts of the same sweater to be knit by more than one knitter. Instead, women were told to knit the sleeves and body of a garment, but to bring them disassembled to a centralized workshop where finishers could join the pieces, add the buttons, and wash and iron the completed sweater. But by doing this, an amount for finishing could now be discounted from the knitter's wage. Knitters felt that this amount was disproportionate, relative to the amount of time and skill they devote to knitting. Many knitters would rather knit and assemble the whole sweater to receive the full wage, but since knitting requires more skill, employers find it cheaper to pay the finisher than to pay the knitter. Management developed a tendency to discourage women from finishing the sweaters themselves. Apparently, only rarely were <u>actual</u> restrictions placed on knitters, since this would bring into

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focus the resulting decrease in real knitting wages relative to other organizations. Instead, women complained that the amount of time they were allowed to complete each sweater became "exaggeratedly short," and that when they brought in assembled garments, the person in charge of quality control would inevitably find fault with the work and make them disassemble it. One informant said,

> *"Los empresarios engañan a la gente...vienen a hablar a las tejedoras...tengo un pedido, les voy a pagar diciendo, no? Ya la lider se hace tejer, lleva las chompas alla, entonces ya no le paga los 50 Bolivianos que ha prometido, si no le paga la mitad no más...siempre tienen que poner pretexto que la chompa está mal tejido, tiene que hacer arreglar...todas las empresas privadas..."*
>
> "The owners deceive people...they come and talk to the knitters... "I have an order, I will pay you, no? Then the leader has the sweaters knit up, she brings them there, and then they don't pay the 50 *Bolivianos* they promised, instead they pay about half...they always have do it under some pretext that the sweater is poorly knit, that they will have to have it fixed...all the private companies..."

Rather than fighting the system and having to re-do their work, most women acquiesced and delivered the disassembled pieces to the finishers.

Interesting parallels exist between the evolution of the private knitting industry in Bolivia and the development of putting-out systems in the textile industries of 18th century England, suggesting that this process is not unique (Schlumbon 1981). Shifting production to a centralized location gives the entrepreneur greater control over the lives and productive activities of workers. In England, urban guild artisans initially had the power to defend their interests and prevent further penetration of capital into the realm of production. Still, merchants eventually undermined the base of guild strength by playing rural and urban producers off of each other. Given the precarious position of producers in this type of game, the cards are almost always stacked in favor of merchants

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who have the ability to control large amounts of capital. In Bolivia, increasing levels of poverty together with the continuing inability of nonprofit institutions to establish a real alternative to the model offered by private industry left knitters at the mercy of capital, without a collective voice or the support of artisanal associations to defend their position.

Collective Action and "Autodevelopment"

By the end of the 1970's, discontent among knitters in the ranks of both private and nonprofit knitting enterprises was pervasive. Conditions throughout the industry had become such that there began to be new momentum for change. Perhaps it is significant that during this same time, the protest activities of women from the Bolivian mining communities had become a focus of international attention, generating a sense of national crisis.[26] In fact, a hunger strike staged by a group of women in La Paz in 1977 became a principal catalyst for the ouster of General Banzer from his position as dictator. The unlikely spectacle of a group of seemingly powerless women--many of them *de pollera*--overtly influencing political agendas was an inspiration to knitters, contributing to the growing sense of their own potential for action. Furthermore, the demands for social justice being articulated by miners, *campesinos* and workers in the context of the political opening created by the decline of the Banzer regime resonated with knitters. Even though institutions like *FOTRAMA* and *AMERINDIA* had not yielded significant structural change, ideas about worker participation in an industry defined by the skill of *campesino* women had become internalized by knitters. For many people, especially women working as handknitters, there was now an inherent and obvious connection between what was seen as a "traditional" Andean art and the right of knitters to control the fruits of their labor.[27] Recognition of the exploitative nature of relationships

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[26]See Ardaya Salinas (1986) and Nash (1988)

[27]In a study of embroidresses in Mexico, Cook (1990: 114) found that ongoing experience with exploitation increases the possibility of the development of worker consciousness among women who previously would not have identified with group efforts

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within the knitwear industry which had provided a backdrop for the ideology of nonprofit knitting institutions now became a rallying point.

As a response to the continuing system of exploitation some knitters began to organize and a number of groups broke away to form their own organizations.[28] The new cooperative institutions which emerged during this period differed from existing organizations in important ways. The model for nonprofit knitting activities which had been implemented up until this point was developed by aid agencies and charitable institutions in recognition of the plight of poor artisans caught in the web of exploitative middlemen. Yet the impetus for implementing change and the specific methods of confronting existing power relationships within the industry had both been initiated from the outside rather than by knitters themselves. In contrast, the new initiatives of the late 70's and early 80's were a sort of "autodevelopment" representing the frustration and determination of people from the grassroots. Lessons from national politics, together with the ideals of cooperativism now associated with export knitting taught that knitters had the capacity to make changes in their situation. Using the productive activity of handknitting as a unifying force, the new grassroots groups oriented themselves toward promoting a heightened awareness of knitters' rights, and creating a base for mobilization to challenge more structural relations of power. But what was also clear was that affecting any real change would depend upon giving more than lip service to participation and cooperation--a daunting task.

One of the organizations which appeared during this time is the *Centro de Servicio Artesanal y Rural La Khochalita*, a 500 member association which was founded in 1978 by workers

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to resist oppressive working conditions. He writes, "increasing subordination of women's labor by merchant putting-out capital in industries like embroidery seems to be accomplished by inchoate but empirically demonstrative changes in consciousness of exploitation."

[28]For example, *Señor de Mayo, K'antati, La Khochalita, La Imilla*

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disgruntled with AMERINDIA's top-down management structure.[29] The stated purposes of *La Khochalita* are to provide income and employment to the rural and urban poor, to increase their standard of living, and to promote their integration into the modern economy. Official documents of the organization define the process of achieving these stated goals to include participation, self-realization, social awareness and liberation (IAF Document #2: 1985: 2). The move to create a separate cooperative was based on the idea that the artisans themselves were capable of autonomy in managing the enterprise through participation of its members at the grassroots level.

Soon after splitting off in 1978, *La Khochalita* obtained a loan from a local bank for $5,000. This was possible because Demitrio Zurita, the organization's principle founder, had been in a position of management at *AMERINDIA*, and although he was born in the *campo*, he had a college education. The loan provided the capital necessary to orient production to the export market where the potential for increased sales and profit was higher than sale to local tourists. In 1981, *La Khochalita* received a grant from the Inter-American Foundation for $98,000 and by 1982 exports climbed to $185,000. Unfortunately, devaluation of the Boliviano ate away at this figure and by 1984, exports fell to $15,000 (IAF Document #2: 1985).

Despite the economic crisis of the early 1980's, *La Khochalita* was able to make numerous long-term advances. Members learned to place much more value on their own labor, contributing to the development of their identity as artisans (IAF Document #1 1984: 5-6). Design and quality of the knitwear improved, and the resuscitation of techniques to utilize natural dyes and hand-spinning gave *La Khochalita* the advantage of a unique, environmentally friendly product. Through the coop, artisans and their families also had access to free health care at a health clinic staffed by a full-time husband-wife doctor team, and were encouraged to participate in classes offered on nutrition, disease, injury and preventative

[29]Documents of *La Khochalita* list 500 as the number of members, however other sources (*e.g.*, IAF Document #1: 1984: 35) and my own interviews suggest numbers of approximately 200 are more realistic.

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medicine. A consumer store was established to provide members with bulk-rate prices for a handful of staples, including cooking oil, rice, sugar, beans and noodles. In the mid-1980's *La Khochalita* began to experiment with cooperatively worked agricultural lands, and later had success in producing and exporting dried fruits.

Yet *La Khochalita* was unable to avoid replicating problematic aspects of private industry. Although the impetus for change did not come from outside, *Don* Demetrio was not a knitter himself, but part of management. Moreover, I found that his analysis of the problems confronting knitters and their families which provides a philosophy for the organization is a "culture of poverty" style approach which focuses on the ignorance and weakness of individuals caught in the grip of backward "tradition," rather than recognizing their position as fully integrated in a modern system based on inequality. As a result, while education is ostensibly *La Khochalita's* prescription for changing individual lives, little apart from technical training workshops has been attempted, and the position of knitters in the power hierarchy of the organization remains relatively unchanged. A study of the organization's performance record produced for the Inter-American Foundation as part of an inquiry to decide whether to further fund the cooperative's agricultural ventures, also suggests that the organizational structure of *La Khochalita* continues to promote dependence (IAF Document #3: 1988). Although the rhetoric upon which the cooperative was founded spoke of participation and consciousness-raising, on both a personal level and within the community, participatory development has been thwarted by centralized control of upper-level decision-making in the hands of the organization's charismatic leader and a small number of his confidants. Ironically, it is only the greater "benevolence" of *Don* Demitrio which makes *La Khochalita* different from other benevolent entrepreneurs and quasi-cooperatives.

In a recent article, Kevin Healy (1996) suggests that *La Khochalita's* experience is a double-edged sword. The group has had considerable success compared to other grassroots craft cooperatives, especially in terms of producing a viable product. Yet in many ways the structure of the organization has come to mirror

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relationships within the private sector rather than creating a substantial alternative for knitters. Power relations within *La Khochalita* are particularly problematic given the prominent role played by Demitrio's family members in running the organization. Healy questions the extent to which the organization has actually become a family business rather than a cooperative. In light of *La Khochalita's* relative market success, it may appear quibbling to emphasize these issues of power within the organization, but as Healy points out, entrepreneurial success has come at the expense of *La Khochalita's* social welfare orientation. The health, consumer and educational programs which once distinguished *La Khochalita* from other knitting institutions have fallen victim to the realities of budgeting and competition in the marketplace. Although Healy acknowledges that it may be that these measures have been necessary for keeping *La Khochalita* afloat, he wonders if the price may be too high.

Export Knitting and the Limits of Existing Private and Nonprofit Models

In the 30 years between 1950 and 1980, export knitwear production in Bolivia was transformed and in turn, impacted upon the lives of people in the Valley. The nonprofits were responsible for organizing putting-out systems on a large-scale. These remain some of the primary networks for knitting in the Valley today. The system of "leaders" they instituted, in which local people are in charge of local production, proved a successful method for harnessing rural labor. Learning to knit or acquiring the level of skill necessary for export knitting became an acceptable and appreciated form of women's work. Large numbers of knitters developed skills and a sense of quality control appropriate for export markets. Handknitting provided a much-needed source of cash for women, creating a notable difference in women's access to disposable income.[30]

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[30]This was especially crucial for certain categories of women. More detailed analysis of the significance of wages earned through handknitting is presented in Chapter 4. My data

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However, benevolent cooperativism failed to produce any structural change. Not only was the non-profit philosophy unable to improve upon the remuneration offered for knitting work, but the "cooperative" institutions themselves were incapable of creating a tangible alternative to work in the private sector by confronting the barriers which impose limits upon women working as handknitters. The rhetoric of "participation" espoused by these organizations conflicted with the reality of hierarchical management practices, and the continuing divide between the spheres of production and management meant that knitters remained little more than dependent handworkers in a putting-out system over which they had little control or even understanding, and which was often perceived of and experienced as exploitative.

Perhaps ironically, one of the most profound legacies of this period was intellectual rather than structural. As a result of the predominant influence of the operations and rhetoric of the "quasi-cooperatives" in knitwear production, knitting became associated with a sort of cultural and economic revindication through worker participation and control. The experience of handknitting for export transformed knitters' attitudes regarding the work they were doing, and possibly more importantly, regarding their own lives. The knitting abilities which many women had acquired through export work and through training received from knitting institutions became appropriated by knitters as part of their own repertoire of skills and knowledge. In the context of the ideology of "traditionalism" surrounding handknitting as an Andean art, these new skills provided a sense of connection with the past. Even if such conceptualization was based on a mythohistorical understanding of the roots of Andean knitwear, the positive valuation of both tradition, and of women as artisans affected knitters' perceptions of their relationship to export production.[31] These attitudes were further solidified by the success of knitwear

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suggest that the appearance of export handknitting affected local class relations and certain household dynamics.

[31]See Hanson (1989) for an excellent example of a similar sort of "mythohistoric" invention among the Maori.

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exports and the seemingly high prices consumers were willing to pay to obtain Bolivian handknits. Export production gave knitters the opportunity to recognize their capacity to create a product which could be highly valued by other people. For many women, these revelations contributed to an appreciation of the value of their own labor.

Senora Maria Julia Garron was director of *AMERINDIA* for 14 years during the 70's and 80's. She says that she watched knitters evolve. In the beginning, peasant women were submissive. They did exactly as they were instructed--if you told a woman to knit a sweater with no hole for the neck, she would do it without question. None expressed their opinions and no one attempted to innovate. Over time, however, this changed. They began to argue, to have opinions, to understand more about the industry. They developed the ability to qualify and analyze their own work. Much of this change was fostered by the non-profit knitting organizations like *AMERINDIA* and *FOTRAMA*, which through their educational programs, made it possible for women to see the possibility of challenging accepted ideas about themselves. As an activist from the civil rights movement in Mississippi from the 1960's once put it--you can't imagine what you can't even dream about.

However, as women were developing this sense of self-appreciation, they were also becoming increasingly aware of the de-valuation of their labor through exploitative wages. Women began to know how much they should earn for their efforts, and to calculate such wages based on other relationships within the industry, such as the amount that management and salaried employees earn, or the sales price of the sweater to the consumer. Although diversification of women's activities to include knitting may have been part of a survival strategy that allowed women and rural families to maintain a modicum of independence, the incorporation of knitters into a system of handicraft production for export has principally benefited middlemen and consumers. "Quasi-cooperatives" and private industry alike, have taken advantage of the dire circumstances confronting peasant families in order to extract skilled labor from women at low cost. The development of the

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identity of the artisan-knitter provided a sense of dignity to the work but it was not sufficient to generate a change in working conditions and relationships within the industry. Unfortunately, the hallmarks of "autodevelopment" envisioned by Bolivian knitting organizations for the most part remained elusive will-o'-the-wisps.

The *Asociacion de Tejedoras "Tipay Warmi"*

Yet one group was able to break out of the mold. The *Asociacion de Tejedoras "Tipay Warmi"* is a small organization, founded by a group of rural knitters at the same time as *La Khochalita* at the end of the 70's. Since 1979, *Tipay Warmi's* success has been striking and despite its small size and inauspicious origins, the group has become an important fixture in the Bolivian knitwear landscape. In 1991, *Tipay Warmi* produced and exported over 2000 sweaters with a market value of over $100,000. The ability of a group of rural, *Quechua*-speaking women to produce and export sweaters did not escaped the notice of other knitters and knitting institutions, and of development funders. The very existence of this group contributed to a growing consciousness among knitters of the value of their work which, in turn, helped push-up the wage for knitting. In addition to raising the consciousness of knitters about their relationship to labor markets, and providing an alternate, cooperative framework for production, *Tipay Warmi* also conducts educational activities and workshops with its members. Topics covered by the group over the years have included literacy and math skills, nutrition, women's rights, ethnic identity, and even local politics. These qualities have made *Tipay Warmi* attractive to development agencies and the group has received significant funding. Today *Tipay Warmi* boasts more than 18 years of operation and maintains its position as a "beacon" among grassroots organizations in Bolivia. This case study presented in the following chapters explores the implications of this success.

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Conclusion

In the United States, knitting is one of those charming, though out-of-date skills associated with "grandma" and "apple pie". However, as "handknit" has become a selling-point for exclusive, high-priced sweaters imported for Asia and Latin America, such an uncomplicated perspective on knitting fails to capture the complexity of relationships found within the global knitwear industry. In Bolivia where this case study of handknitters is located, textile production and handwork have a history that extends into the pre-colonial period. Pre-Columbian Andean woven textiles are renowned for their beauty and quality. It is common for people to assume that knitting was also part of the repertoire of textile skills that existed prior to the conquest, however historical studies have demonstrated that knitting was, in fact, introduced during the colonial period. Yet despite the fact that knitting was not an Andean "tradition," it has become ensconced in the fabric of rural life in Bolivia.

Sweaters and hats are functional parts of Bolivian rural dress and stylized "Andean" motif handknits are sold in quantity to tourists. More recently, middle class entrepreneurs and development projects have organized putting out systems for the production of high-fashion garments for export. Handknitting for export began in Bolivia in the 1950's with an approach I have labeled, the "Benevolent Entrepreneur", because the profit motive of private business was cloaked in rhetoric promoting socio-economic development. In the 1960's, cooperativization became extremely fashionable in "development" circles and a number of institutions began "cooperative" knitting operations on a large scale. Unfortunately, these efforts were little more than "quasi-cooperatives" because they did nothing to change the productive relationship of knitters to the market and because they did not live up to the view of cooperation they were espousing. They did, however, have an enormous impact on knitters' perceptions of themselves and of their work, later contributing to worker mobilization.

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In the 1970's, as a result of discontent with the "quasi-cooperatives", together with improvements in the global market for handknits, middle-class entrepreneurs began to have renewed success in sweater sales. In what I describe as the "advent of 'no apologies capitalism'," knitters trained by the nonprofit "quasi-cooperatives" decamped to work for private business at better wages. But in the long run, the exploitative nature of the work and of the relationship between knitters and managers proved no better than what knitters had been accustomed to in the past. By the end of the 1970's, this led knitters to form their own collective organizations. Although there were a number of inspiring examples of collective action from this period, the *Asociacion de Tejedoras "Tipay Warmi"* stands out. *Tipay Warmi* was an inauspicious group of *Quechua*-speaking women, but as a result of transformations in their own identity which will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, they made organizing around sweater production into the basis for a broader political mobilization. This "autodevelopment" challenged relationships at local, national and global levels in previously untested ways and created possibilities for even deeper personal change among women active in the organization.

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Chapter 4
"...somos mujeres, queremos tejer...": The Roots of Autodevelopment in *Cholita* Culture in Arani

Introduction

The case study presented here describes what happened in Arani, a town that became a hub for knitwear production. Export knitting came to employ hundreds of women in the *Valle Alto* in the 1960's and 70's. Knitters were primarily women from rural towns who wore the *pollera* and many were very young girls. The large-scale quasi-cooperative knitting institutions appeared at a time when existing forms of work for women in the rural economy were in decline. Agrarian reform had intensified the connection between rural people and the market economy, increasing their need for cash income. But at the same time, stagnating agricultural production and minifundization reduced the need for labor in the rural household. The negative repercussions of these economic trends were especially pernicious for women as a group. Women's role in the artesanal production of cloth, clothing and household goods was being displaced by the introduction of manufactures. Cultural restrictions on the types of activities considered appropriate for females and lack of education discouraged women from joining men in migrating for wage labor. Moreover, as male out-migration intensified, many women were left without access to a steady source of income.[1]

Changing employment patterns within the regional *chicha* industry also had an important impact upon the make-up of the labor force for handknits. Women from poorer, low-status households became knitters in large numbers, attracted by the lure of cash income. Many of these women had previously worked producing *mujk'u*, one of the ingredients in *chicha* corn beer. The development

[1]Recent statistics from 1990 (Caro, *et. al.* 1991: 11) show that more than 20% of all households in Arani are headed by women and that women typically only have half the case income of men.

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of new techniques for beer brewing was making *mujk'u* obsolete and export knitting appeared rather serendipitously when *mujk'u* work was in decline. But when knitting replaced pre-existing work patterns, there were social consequences at the local level. The flow of resources created by the incorporation of these women into export knitwear production helped to create a new category of people in the local social landscape. Working conditions in export production and knitting income affected the position of *cholita* knitters in Arani, subverting the existing local class hierarchy. Knitting work brought together women from across class boundaries on a daily basis, impacting interactions in local social arenas. These dynamics affected local class relationships and influenced the subsequent character of women's identity politics associated with knitting. Moreover, knitters were predominantly young, unmarried girls who used their earnings to purchase *cholita* clothing and to sponsor *fiestas* ("parties"). These factors affected generational dynamics in knitters' households and fueled the elaboration of an alternative *cholita* identity.

But although some women gained local status through their work in export knitting, this prestige was not sufficient to allow knitters to break out of structures of inequality emanating from outside the town. Despite initial enthusiasm with knitting, over time working conditions, the continuing decline of the rural economy, and increased awareness on the part of knitters regarding their rights, led to disillusionment, protest and confrontation. By the end of the 1970's, shifts within the local status hierarchy generated by broader social and economic processes had begun to affect women's sense of who they were. At the same time, transformation of the global market for craft products created an opening for cooperative producers. In this context, knowledge and experience gained from work in quasi-cooperatives and export production animated some individuals to mount new challenges to existing power structures in local, national and global arenas. A new wave of collective action based on more fundamental participation of women at the grassroots level emerged in the wake of earlier "quasi-cooperative" knitting institutions. This

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mobilization was undergirded by the strength of the identity of the *cholita* artisan knitter which had developed and become fortified during the preceding years. Using the personal histories of the Toranza sisters who were principal informants for this study, I show how a group of women from Arani mobilized to challenge the subordinate position of handknitters in the knitwear industry, first at the level of production and later in the global economy.

How Knitting Fit in with Local Conditions

In 1960 FOTRAMA opened its doors in Cochabamba and began recruiting workers from the *Valle Alto*. In the towns of Cliza and Tarata where handspinning for sale in local markets was common, FOTRAMA began to produce yarn. Villa Rivero, which was known for its skilled weavers became a center for FOTRAMA's production of woven rugs, wall hangings and ponchos. But FOTRAMA's real focus was handknitting. Although FOTRAMA's knitters came from towns throughout the *Valle Alto* and the *Valle Bajo*, there was a particular concentration of knitters among *Araneños*. Many of FOTRAMA's production leaders were from Arani or were trained there. Arani became a sort of production hub and developed a renown for high quality knitting. Of course, spinning, weaving and knitting were skills with a long tradition in rural Bolivia.[2] Handmade cloth, blankets and knitwear were an essential part of rural life and culture. Arani seems to have established a reputation for knitting through the production of knitted garments for the Bolivian army as early as 1903.[3] However, reputation was not the only factor at work in the town's burgeoning role in export knitting.

When I asked why FOTRAMA established its rural headquarters in Arani, most people told me that it must be because knitters in Arani were better than anywhere else. When I asked FOTRAMA's founder, *Padre* Geraldo, he considered the issue for a moment and said he had never really thought about it in those terms and that he wasn't sure why, except that the women in charge of FOTRAMA's

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[2]Refer to Chapter 3 for a history of knitting in the Andes.
[3]Rivera Pizarro (1992: 34)

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production, Epifania Arispe and Trifonia Sejas, knew the town and had contacts there (not unlike the role of Zacarias Coca in ANDEA). Later in the conversation he remembered another significant detail concerning the building that became FOTRAMA's Arani production headquarters. A woman in Arani who owned a big, colonial house just off the plaza offered it to FOTRAMA to use for their activities as a way of trying to avoid expropriation. In the early 60's, people with sizable property holdings were afraid of land reform policies being implemented by the government. Although the woman had apparently always promised that the Church would inherit the house, she had resisted transferring the title. As a result, *Padre* Geraldo said she died leaving a legal mess over ownership of the building that continued to be unresolved in 1995 when I was in the field.

People in Arani with whom I spoke agreed that women were happy when FOTRAMA appeared because they had few other options for employment. In the past, much of women's work in the *Valle Alto* centered around the agricultural household. However, in 1960 the agricultural sector upon which rural households depended was in decline. Although there was an initial increase in family income following the implementation of agrarian reform, within one generation the size of individual holdings was significantly reduced. Overworked soil and drought decreased productivity. Farmers had less and less to sell. At the same time, the market price for rural products was falling relative to the cost of living. Necessary agricultural inputs and manufactured goods were becoming prohibitively expensive while the value of crops declined.

Problems of rural farm production were exacerbated by social and economic processes set in motion after 1952. Implementation of agrarian reform freed peasants to sell their own surplus. More of the harvest became destined for market and many families became involved in artisan production of things like hats, bread, clothing and *chicha* for sale. However, direct access to concentrated urban and regional markets remained a problem for rural producers. Even though in general, in the years following the Revolution families had more disposable income because of their increased participation in the market, people involved in transportation and *rescate* (reselling)

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made disproportionate gains.[4] In Arani the situation was exacerbated by the proliferation of new *ferias* after 1952.[5] The development of markets in the more distant towns of Mizque, Aiquile, Vacas and Rodeo meant that the Thursday market in Arani was no longer a principal link between more isolated areas and the urban market network, while explosive growth of the Tuesday market in neighboring Punata further eclipsed Arani's role as a regional market center.

In 1960 these processes were affecting life in the *Valle Alto*. As the agricultural economy was increasingly unable to absorb previous levels of labor, extended family households became superfluous. Men responded to the lack of local employment by migrating to urban areas or even to Argentina, Brazil and Chile in search of wage labor--a phenomenon that escalated dramatically during the 1970's and 1980's.[6] But for women in the 1960's, migration was not seen as a realistic option. Restrictions on the types of work considered appropriate for women in rural culture and women's lack of education militated against a woman leaving her place of birth. Instead, women tended to look for jobs within the context of rural town life, even though the remuneration for this work was poor. However, since it was women who were traditionally responsible for making many of the household goods that were being replaced by manufactured items, women's labor was becoming especially redundant.[7]

One remaining viable option for rural women was market-selling. The prowess of *Chola* market vendors has been well documented in different parts of the Andes.[8] Towns in the Valle *Alto* are linked to each other and to the urban market of Cochabamba through a network of weekly local markets. Ninety percent of the agricultural production in the valley is sold in these markets and

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[4]Dandler (1984:154), Mendelburg (1986: 52)

[5]Albo (1987: 147)

[6]See Dandler and Medieros (1985)

[7]Larrazabal (1988) for examples of artisan production surviving today in Cochabamba (basketry, blanket weaving, bread making, roof tiles)

[8]Babb (1989), Buechler and Buechler (1996), Gill (1994), Seligman (1989)

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77% of the vendors are women.[9] Some sell their own crops, others are *rescatistas* or *re-vendedoras* (resellers) who specialize in a particular item. In 1960, *Araneños* were finding new market opportunities in the newly-settled lowland Chapare region of the Cochabamba Valley. The government was promoting settlement of the lowlands as a way to reduce land pressure in highland areas. Yet despite the vitality of the regional market system and expansion into lowland markets, the lucrativity of selling was being undercut by the same forces creating crisis in the rural economy. Moreover, expansion of the market greatly increased competition. For vendors, the risk of financial loss involved with dealing in perishable goods, the inconvenience of travel and transport, and cutthroat competition detracted from the attractiveness of relying on selling for income.

As a result, when FOTRAMA appeared many women who previously had no choice but to depend upon the vagaries of market sales were more than happy to take up knitting. One woman said,

> *"...comerciantes eran antes las tejedoras...pero era mejor tejer porque ganan pues...antes ganan mucho en FOTRAMA...cada 15 agaramos bonos..."*
>
> "...before knitters used to be vendors...it was better to knit because you could make money that way...before they used to earn a lot in FOTRAMA...every 15 (sweaters) we got a bonus..."

My informants described their experiences to me:

> **Dolores Toranza**: *"Hasta chapare iba yo pues, Janet!...en esta epoca yo iba hay veces cuando no vendí en Punata la harina yo llevaba hasta Chapare ...queso, fideos, zanahorria, lechugas, estas cosas...y con mi tía traíamos del Chapare....una tía que ya se ha muerto...ella me llevaba si no hemos vendido la harina vamos a llevar al Chapare...llevabamos y regresabamos...2 días...3 días nos tocaba...de aquí a Cochabamba un día...de Cochabamba esta tarde íbamos toda la tarde...al día siguiente llegabamos y*

[9]Dandler, *et. al* (1987: 69)

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después regresabamos, trayíamos naranjas, así arroz...agarraba azucar...cualquier cosa...entonces desde que he entrado a FOTRAMA no he ido a ninguna parte..."

"I went all the way to the Chapare, Janet!..back then there were times when I couldn't sell my flour in Punata, so I took it down to the Chapare...cheese, noodles, carrots, lettuce, all those things...and with my aunt we brought stuff back from the Chapare...she has since died, but she took me when I couldn't sell the flour. She would say, we'll take it to the Chapare...we went and came back...it took us 2 or even three 3 days. From here to Cochabamba it was one day. That same afternoon we would go on and arrive the next day, and then we would come right back with oranges, rice...we got sugar...whatever we could get...Then, since I entered FOTRAMA I haven't gone anywhere.

Dona Felipa Rodriguez: *"...antes no había FOTRAMA...así he ido con burros y traía papa y así realizaba en Cochabamba...y después ha empezado la FOTRAMA, me dice la Señora Epi ha venido así buscando...y a mi me han anotado...quieres tejer, Señora? me han dicho...Sí, quiero tejer...quería saber tejer...y así tejíamos, pero yo sabía tejer siempre, no? esas muñequitos en bolsa yo tejíaba, eso yo tejía siempre, después yo he primerito esos dibujitos yo he empezado con Señora Epi hemos enseñado a las chicas...yo he ayudado, yo he enseñado, hemos sacado dibujos...y después hemos tejido...hemos sido harta...la Irma, Doña Liliku, Doña Doralika, hartos hemos sido, no?...Después en vela hemos empezado, no en luz.....después han traído lámpares recién...después hemos tejido y hartos han venido, de Collpa, de Collpa arriba, de Collpa abajo, de ...toditos han venido, harto...hemos tejido, así hemos sequido, trabajando...con Doña Epi siempre hemos tejido, Doña Trifonia...con Señorita Angelica, se había muerto ya...pero ha tejido con nosotras, Señorita Angélica...así cada méz, 3, 4, 5 entregaba...cuando ellas ya andando...hemos entregado 10, no?...hartos hemos*

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entregado entre nosotras con mis hijas mas...hartos entregaba yo."

"...before there wasn't FOTRAMA...so I used to go by burro and bring potatoes to sell in Cochabamba...and after that I began with FOTRAMA when they told me that the *Senora* Epi had come looking for people...and they inscribed me...Do you want to knit, *Senora*? they asked me...Yes, I want to knit...I wanted to know how to knit...and that's how we began knitting, but I always knew how to knit though, no? I knit little bags in the form of dolls, I always knit those, and then I was one of the first to learn to knit patterns with *Senora* Epi when she taught the girls...and then we knit...there were a lot of us... Irma, *Dona* Liliku, *Dona* Doralika...we were many, isn't that right? Then we began to knit by candlelight, not with light...and after than they brought (oil) lamps...then we knit and many came from Collpa, from Upper Collpa, from lower Collpa, from...all the girls came, a lot of them...we knit, that's how we continued working...with *Dona* Epi we were always knitting, with *Dona* Trifonia...with the *Senorita* Angelica, but she died...but she knit with us, the *Senora* Angelica...every month I turned in 3, 4, even 5 (sweaters)... when my girls began to go too we turned in ten between us, no? Between me and my (3) daughters we turned-in a ton!

Another woman said,

"Me gusta tejer. En mi casa no más gano y no tengo que ir a ningún lado."

"I like to knit. I earn money just staying at home and I don't have to go out anywhere."

Knitting attracted many women who had been or would have been involved in market vending. Although it was not uncommon for women to continue to sell at different times of the year when there was a surplus from the harvest, knitting reduced the number of women dependent on market sales and reselling as a primary source of income.

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'Aranenas Mujk'ulakas'

The first knitters were, according to local standards, from relatively well-off town families. Many of these early knitters became "leaders." There is some indication from my informants that these women attempted to regulate participation in knitting work by selective admission into the groups they directed. One woman told me,

> *"...ellas fueron ricas...cuando mi hermana quiso entrar a la FOTRAMA, ellas no la quisieron aceptar diciendo "cómo ella va a entrar?"*
>
> "...they were rich...when my sister wanted to enter FOTRAMA, they didn't want to accept her, saying, "what? How is she going to enter?"

The incorporation of new knitters tended to follow along the lines of kinship networks. However, these networks included family and friends with varying levels of resources and fictive kin. Because relations created by *compadrazgo*[10] often involve clientelistic ties between people with different class status, inclusion of leaders' *aijados*[11] and *comadres*[12] promoted an unevenness of class affiliation among knitters. In addition, FOTRAMA's basis as an organization of the Catholic church (ostensibly employing "anyone"), and the rapid expansion of FOTRAMA'S operations in the early 1960's, led to the incorporation of knitters from a diverse range of households. In fact, the reality of the work itself undermined any pretensions toward an elite monopoly.

Although one of FOTRAMA's strategic aims had been the idea that women's supplementary income would be used to improve the lives of children, export knitting proved too labor-intensive for many married women and women with children. Instead, the vast

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[10] *compadrazgo*= "ritual godparenthood"

[11] *aijados*= "god children"

[12] comadres= "ties created between women as a result of ritual *compadrazgo*"

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majority of handknitters were single women and teenage girls.[13] And because girls in school (who were required to be *de vestido*) were unable to knit and still keep-up with their studies, the workforce for handknitting became dominated by young, unmarried girls who were *de pollera*. One informant described how she used to be responsible for pasturing the family's sheep while she went to school. However, her mother could no longer pay for her to stay in school and she dropped-out after grade school and began to knit:

> **Dona Maria**: *"Yo llevaba ovejas...siempre llevaba ovejas y he ido a la escuela hasta segundo intermedio...después ya me ha salido de la escuela porque mi mama ya no tenía plata para que estudie...quería estudiar yo y no tenía mi mama la plata...en allí entonces ya me he salido y con las ovejas andaba...después me he entrado a un tejido...un tejido particular, así...para aprender no más, no?...entonces he aprendido tejer, he hecho...y viendo la plata entonces más quería...a mi mama le daba...todavía no me compró nada de polleras, nada...después he entrado a la FOTRAMA y he estado hasta más jovencita y ya así con esa plata...ropas...pero siempre le daba a mi mama...no tenía mi plata de mi...en FOTRAMA era bien no más...nos daban aguinaldo...en ese tiempo el pago era 25, 15, hasta 14..."*
>
> "I used to pasture the sheep...I pastured the sheep and went to school up to junior high...after that I dropped-out of school because my mother didn't have the money to pay for me to keep studying...I wanted to study, but my mother couldn't afford it...after I left school I still took the sheep around...and then I began to knit...for a private company at first that is...just in order to learn, you know? And then I learned, I did it...and seeing the money I could make knitting, I wanted to learn more. I gave the money I made to my mother...at that time I still didn't buy *polleras* or anything...but then I entered FOTRAMA and was there until I was a teenager...an with the money I made there....I bought clothes...but I always continued to

[13]This was true in the 1960's before the enormous increase in male migration for wage labor.

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> give some to my mother...it wasn't really my own money...It was OK in FOTRAMA back then...they gave us bonuses and at that time the pay was between 14 and 25 *Bolivianos*...

The make-up of the labor force for handknitting was also influenced by transformations in Cochabamba's *chicha* corn beer industry. The dynamics of the regional market with respect to rural land and labor were affecting the important regional activity of beer making. *Chicha* production had been a key economic activity throughout the *Valle Alto* and the entire Valley since the 19th century. As a peripheral market to the Cochabamba urban nexus, many *Araneños* were involved in the production of balls of corn flour paste called *mujk'u* used as a fermenting agent in brewing *chicha* rather than in the production of beer itself. *Mujk'u* was made by chewing ground corn. The break down of corn starch into sugar produced by saliva promotes fermentation when added to brewed corn. Earlier this century, *hacienda* owners whose income depended upon the sale of *chicha*, required tenant farmers to make *mujk'u* in large quantities. Whole families became involved in order to keep up with quota requirements. In Arani, *piqueros* used their independent resources to get into the act by mobilizing extended kin networks to produce *mujk'u* for sale.

Making *mujk'u* was such a significant economic activity in the *Valle Alto* earlier this century that revenues from *mujk'u* sales played a key role in the construction of the Arani railroad. And even when my informants were growing up, *mujk'u* continued to be so important in Arani that it became a part of local folklore. At the time, people from the towns in the *Valle Alto* were all known locally by *Quechua* nicknames said to reflect characteristics of their inhabitants. The people from Cliza were called "*burutintus*," implying that they are cunning or even thieves--the story goes that a *Clizeño* stole a burro (*buru*) and dyed it (*tintu*) a different color in order to avoid detection. The people from Tarata were "*kaytu waykus*" (cooked skeins of yarn) because of their tradition of dying yarn. *Punateños* were "*chojru rosquetes*" (hard cookies) referring to

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hard, round, white cookies made in Punata and sold throughout the region, especially on holidays or during special occasions (and an obvious pun concerning the "hard" personalities of *Puñateña* vendors). Women from Arani were called "*Arañenas mujk'ulakas.*"

Following the Revolution of 1952 *mujk'u* production continued to play an important role in Arani's economy. The number of *chicherias* in towns throughout the Valley grew with the proliferation of local *ferias* where people drink heavily (Barnes de Marschall and Torrico 1971: 142). Describing the expansion of *chicha* production in the neighboring town of Cliza, Barnes de Marschall and Torrico (pp. 156-7) write,

> *"según los informates de los pueblos, la producción de chicha aumentó extraordinariamente después de la reforma agraria debido en parte al aumento de la actividad comercial, pero también porque ya no existe restricción de la hacienda referente a la chicha.....el negocio de la chicha era bién rentado en los primeros años de la revolucion...viendo este negocio, todas las casas de Cliza se convertieron en chicherías...después se convertieron en principales elaboradores....."*
>
> "according to informants from the towns, there was an extraordinary increase in *chicha* production following the agrarian reform, in part a result in the expansion of commercial activity, but also because there were no longer restrictions from the *hacienda* owners about *chicha*...as a business, *chicha* was very profitable in the first years following the Revolution...seeing the business they were doing, all the houses in Cliza were turned into *chicherias*...and later they became principal producers..."

In Arani, newly situated local elites involved in transport and re-selling found *chicha* a convenient complementary activity. Social networks for *mujk'u* production that had been established prior to the Revolution evolved to accommodate the new market conditions. People with wealth put-out flour to be made into *mujk'u* by families with less resources. A common way to produce large quantities of *mujk'u* quickly was through a traditional Andean form of cooperative

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labor called *ayni*. In exchange for their work, *mujk'u* makers received an allotment of some product like oranges, bananas, bread or *api*[14] (things which at the time were considered a sort of luxury). When it was done by a group of people in *ayni*, making *mujk'u* took on the trappings of a social event. This was especially true for young men and women for whom cooperative *mujk'u* parties became prime opportunities for courting.[15]

Although both men and women participated in these *aynis*, individual *mujk'eadoras* were primarily women.[16] Households in rural areas immediately adjacent to the central town were disproportionately involved in *mujk'u* production. One informant said,

> *"...del campo ellas vivian con mujk'u, pues..."*
>
> "...rural women lived off of *mujk'u*..."

Mujk'u production by individual households was usually done under the auspices of kinship or patron-client obligations, and often outside of the *ayni* party atmosphere.[17] This was particularly true for women from families with few resources or without land. These women chewed large quantities of *mujk'u* in their homes. In this context, *mujk'eando* became drudgery and hard work. People believed that using up so much saliva undermined the integrity of an individual's health. People described *mujk'eando* as

> *"dificultoso es, pues, hacer en la boca con la saliva."*
>
> "it's tough, you know, making it in the mouth with saliva."

---

[14] *api*= a warm beverage made from ground corn

[15] Cardenas (1985:190) describes *hurkas* (unpaid mujk'u sessions to produce mujk'u for the hacienda) as fiestas where many marriages originated.

[16] Cardenas (1985:190) also found that *mujk'eadoras* were primarily women in other parts of Cochabamba.

[17] Cardenas (1985:192) describes *mujk'eadoras* as "*humilde.*" (humble, poor)

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Moreover, the work itself was considered low status, and payment in kind was becoming less and less appealing as people's lives became more integrated into the cash economy.

But by 1960, dislike of *mujk'u* work was becoming irrelevant since the demand for *mujk'u* was declining. Growth in the number of *chicheras* following the Revolution had initially stimulated the production of *mujk'u*. However, competition in the *chicha* industry was fierce enough to induce changes in the way that beer was brewed. As is common in other cottage industries, *chicheras* complained of pilfering and laziness among *mujk'eadoras*, and maintaining the social networks for *mujk'u ayni* required elaborate social commitments on the part of the *chichera*. As a result, a process for fermenting *chicha* used in other parts of the Andes was increasingly being adopted by Cochabamba *chicheras*. Sprouted corn called *wiñapu* dried and ground into flour provides the sugar necessary to ferment the boiled corn brew into an alcoholic beverage without chewing. Using *wiñapu* thus sidestepped many of the social costs involved in brewing with *mujk'u*, while at the same time, enhancing profits through expedited *chicha* production.

This trend was reinforced by changing public attitudes. Drinking a beverage made from something that someone else has chewed had become increasingly distasteful to a population influenced by ideas about modernization and hygiene.[18] Even though everyone I spoke with agreed that *chicha* made with *mujk'u* was superior, the economics of *wiñapu* displaced traditional production techniques. One informant told me, "...before I used to make *mujk'u*...there wasn't any place else to work...that was when I was young...now there is no more..." Another said,

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[18]See Rodriguez Ostria and Solares Serrano (1990:97) and Solares Serrano (1990:97-102) for an excellent discussions of the impact of ideas about cleanliness and modernization on 19th century chicha production and class politics. The following quote from the time is suggestive, "*Era un sabado y de todas las aldeas de la placie dirigaianse los campesinos a la capital para el mercado del domingo. Caminabamos escoltados por un interminable procession de bueyes y carneros. De vez en cuando una bandera indicaba la existencia de la horrible "chicha" repulsive bebida de maíz masticado y fermentado y sin cual los habitantes de las provincias de Cochabamba no podrian vivir.*"

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Dolores Toranza: *"...el mujk'u se perdió--ya no hacían la chicha...no elaboran de mujk'u. Mujk'u se llamaba...de eso elaboran las chicheras chicha...entonces apareció el wiñapu y ya no compraban el mujk'u...se ha perdido la harina tambien...las Pocoateñas no mas ya hacen de wiñapu y traen aquí..."*

"...*mujk'u* is gone now--they no longer use it to make *chicha*...*Mujk'u* it was called...that's what the *chicheras* used to make *chicha*...then *wiñapu* appeared and no one bought *mujk'u* anymore...the flour to make *mujk'u* is gone too...today it's only the *Pocoateñas*[19] who make *wiñapu* and bring it here..."

When FOTRAMA began hiring women in Arani, the transition to *wiñapu* was in progress and income from making *mujk'u* had already become inconsistent and unreliable. Karen Tice (1995: 64) describes a similar situation among Kuna *mola* makers in Panama. In the 1960's when an international market for *molas* was developing, a major shift in the organization of local economic relations was in progress. Coconut, the principal income-generating crop in the region was in decline at the same time that the market for *molas* was expanding. Tice found that the confluence of these trends had an enormous impact on Kuna households and influenced people's desire to become involved in *mola* production. In Arani, the development of handknitting work for the export market coincided with the transition away from *mujk'u*. As a result, women from low status households who had been *mujk'eadoras* were particularly eager to become knitters. *Doña* Justina y *Doña* Paulina said,

"...y ésa gente...allí vivían...serviendo al patron...toda ésa gente ha entrado a la Fotrama...sus hijos, los que mujk'eaban."

"...and those people...there they lived, serving the landowner...all those people entered FOTRAMA, their children, the ones who made *mujk'u*..."

---

[19]women from the nearby town of Pocoata

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According to another informant,

> **Daniela Toranza**: *"Antes de FOTRAMA haciámos mujk'u pues...la mayoría de la gente pobre solo viviámos con esto...porque anteriormente hacían chicha pues...se elabora buena chicha con mujk'u..."*
>
> "Before FOTRAMA we made *mujk'u*...the majority of the poor people lived off of this...because before they used to make *chicha* this way, that is...they brewed good *chicha* with *mujk'u*..."

Mujk'eadoras greeted handknitting work as an attractive alternative. Not only was the knitting wage relatively good in comparison to other jobs (especially *mujk'eando*), but export knitting paid cash and that was seen as an enormous boon.

More Than Just a Job

Beyond the lure of cash income, FOTRAMA lent prestige to knitting work itself. Religious affiliation provided the institution and the work with an added distinction that had been lacking in previous knitting enterprises. Husbands and parents derived a sense of security knowing that their wives and daughters were working for *el Padre*, and the organization's cooperative orientation was greeted with approval. As part of the Catholic Church, FOTRAMA had the ability to mobilize resources from a variety of sources, providing capital for the immediate establishment of operations on a previously unimagined scale. In addition to extensive spinning, weaving and knitting networks in Arani and other towns, FOTRAMA imported 1000 alpaca to the Cochabamba highlands of Tunari to be raised by the *campesinos* there in a system of cooperative labor called *compañía*.[20] It seemed obvious to people in Arani that an

[20]In *compañía* for potatoes, for example, a person with capital but not enough land (such as an *Araneno* from town) will provide the seed and part of the labor for planting and harvesting. A *campesino* with land but insufficient capital will provide the ongoing labor and inputs such as water to grow the crop. Each party receives a percentage of the harvest. In the past, people with money generally did much better with this system than the *campesinos* who were said to be exploited. See Lagos (1994) for an analysis of

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enterprise of this scale would require an enormous amount of wealth and power. Patron-client relationships were part of the established social fabric and many people calculated that association with FOTRAMA would be an asset.

The mystique of being a FOTRAMA knitter only intensified when groups of women were brought to the city for educational and training workshops that lasted days, or even weeks:

> **Dolores Toranza:** *"...después sugerió que hagan los cursillos así para que capaciten las señoras, cholitas, todo...todas las socias...entonces aceptaron pues los de FOTRAMA...Padre Geraldo aceptó...entonces de allí comenzaron a llevar a los cursillos...de diéz en diéz...entonces diéz una semana, diéz otra semana...diéz una semana, diéz otra semana...así..."*
>
> "...then it was suggested that they do courses to train the women, the *cholitas*, everyone...all of the knitters...then the FOTRAMA people accepted that idea...Father Geraldo accepted it...then they began to take the girls to the courses...ten by ten...that is ten one week, ten the next...ten one week, ten the next...like that."

Knitters with promising technical ability were invited to attend workshops where they could learn to become production "leaders." All of the knitters were given classes on a variety of topics:

> **Ema Toranza:** *"...he ido a las capacitaciones...era cooperativismo, alfabetizacíon...yo sabía ya leer y escribir en la escuela porque estaba hasta 5to curso, no? pero con el correr de tiempo me estaba olvidando. Allí recordé y desde allí empezé a traducir también, porque allí también trudcía yo...[ademas habia cursos de] relaciones humanas donde nos han enseñado a saludar a la gente, a los...que se llama, profesionales, jefes, así...entonces nos enseñaban donde hay que escupir, como hay que comer, como hay de sentar en la mesa, todo*

---

compania in the nearby town of Tiraque. In the context of changing power dynamics in the *Valle Alto* as a result of the flow of cash from Argentina and the Chapare, *Aranenos* I know complain about how "uppity" the *campesinos* are these days, and that the *campesinos* take advantage of people without land.

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eso...después religion nos han enseñado también...católica...y cocinar...cosa que me gustó tambien, esto de cocinar porque en este entonces yo no sabía nada, nada siempre, entonces nos han enseñado a cocinar y allí es donde también he aprendido yo a...lo que he sido mujer...porque hasta entonces yo no sabía...yo sabía que era mujer pero yo no sabía para que...o sea, con un profesor nos enseñaba, no? como conocer a nosotras mismas, como eramos mujer y hombre, que tipo de relacíon íbamos a tener...de donde nacía wawas, todo esto..."

"...I went to the capacitation classes...there was cooperativism, reading...I knew how to read and write from school because I was there until fifth grade, no?...but with the passage of time I had begun to forget. There I remembered it all and after that I began to be able to translate (between *Quechua* and Spanish) as well, because I did the translating there...what's more, there were courses about human relations where they taught us how to properly greet people...bosses, professional people and such...and they taught us where we should spit, how we should eat, how to sit at the table...all that...and then they taught us religion too...Catholic...and how to cook...that's what I liked...the part about cooking because back then I didn't know anything about it, nothing, and when they taught us to cook...and that's also when I learned about how it is that I am a woman...because until then I didn't know...I knew that I was a woman, but I didn't know what that meant...that is, there was a professor who taught us all this, no?...how we could know about ourselves, how we are women and men, what type of relationship that men and women have...where babies come from...all this..."

Although some of this may sound silly, a number of my informants were very clear about the fact that they believe that they benefited greatly from these courses. One woman told me that she feels that she would have been socially backward if it had not been for FOTRAMA.

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As was clear from the descriptions of women's work discussed earlier, in the 1960's it was not uncommon for women from Arani to go as far as Santa Cruz when buying and selling produce. But few had experience beyond the pressured type of travel that accompanies market vending, and even fewer had ventured outside of urban neighborhoods inhabited by relatives and people with similar class status. The opportunity to stay in comparative luxury at FOTRAMA facilities in a more posh part of Cochabamba, and at the same time to temporarily escape from household responsibilities was appealing. Moreover, since many of the knitters were *de pollera* and had been unable or unwilling to attend school in Arani, the majority were eager to learn things through the courses offered by FOTRAMA. "Study" through these workshops became a way for *cholita* knitters to subvert the exaggerated prestige accorded to people with schooling. In fact, knitters were envied by the very same school children who were their supposed social superiors. The "camp-like" atmosphere of FOTRAMA retreats appeared much more fun than school. Topics like cooking and human sexuality covered in the workshops were infinitely more interesting than the rote memorization of information such as past presidents of Bolivia (of which there are many) which was commonly required by Bolivian teachers.

Educational and status benefits associated with knitting in FOTRAMA were not the only attractions. Working conditions in export knitting were preferable to agricultural labor or market vending. Knitting did not necessarily displace other tasks since women could knit while walking or waiting for the soup to boil. Working during "off" hours (early in the morning or late at night) when other household chores had been completed allowed women to use the "double day" to their own advantage. As a cottage industry, much of the work could be done at home when necessary, and knitters could take on more or less sweater orders, depending upon variations in their responsibilities within the household. In a system where reciprocity remained a defining feature of local labor relations, it was often unacceptable for a family member to be absent from pre-existing obligations in order to do knitting work.

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The flexibility to accommodate the ups and downs of planting and harvesting, and the demands of preparing for important social events such as weddings and funerals made knitting extremely complementary to a rural lifestyle. In fact, given the confluence of export production with cultural ideals concerning what work is appropriate for women, knitting came to epitomize rural womanhood. This is captured well in the phrase "*somos mujeres, queremos tejer*" ("we are women, we want to knit") that I heard over and over while I was in the field.

Moreover, although extension workers for the Church who directed FOTRAMA production activities were not all *de pollera*, or for that matter even women, knitting was dominated by *cholitas*. Knitters could earn money among women like themselves in an atmosphere somewhat reminiscent to *mujk'u ayni*. As a result, knitting for FOTRAMA became a social scene as much as a work place. The house off the plaza where FOTRAMA activities were based had a colonial-style enclosed patio where knitters could congregate to knit. In the beginning, since many women required intensive supervision in order to develop export-quality knitting skills, it was not uncommon for them to spend long hours knitting at the FOTRAMA building. But even after most knitters had become proficient enough to continue on their own, the idea that women needed to be physically present for the knitting work was seen by most people as somehow natural.

"Nouveau Cholitas"

As FOTRAMA expanded production and incorporated more and more knitters, social consequences of export knitting began to appear. Knitting employment developed in Arani in a number of rather specific ways. Leaders, many of whom came from upper strata town families, incorporated their mothers, sisters, daughters, cousins and fictive kin into production groups. However, FOTRAMA quickly expanded beyond merely replicating the personal networks of individual knitters. As discussed above, young girls and ex-*mujk'eadoras* became knitters in disproportionate numbers. As a

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result, knitting work brought together women from different households in an uncharacteristic manner.

In their discussions with me about the impact of knitting on women in Arani, my informants focused on the extent to which FOTRAMA brought together high class town *cholitas* with girls from Arani's immediate outlying rural area who they referred to as "*campesinas*" (many of whom had been *mujk'eadoras*). In their view, girls from low status households "*se refinaron*" (refined themselves) through daily interaction with women from a higher social class. Most likely, equally important in affecting knitters' behavior were the opportunity to go to town everyday and the unique experience of being part of a group. Because girls seldom went to school beyond second or third grade, they had little opportunity to develop skills appropriate for group settings or to deal with people other than family members outside the context of market selling (a skill which most girls become proficient at, even though many said they did not like or were not good at vending). Although even in the early 1960's when wages and benefits from FOTRAMA made knitting relatively lucrative, it was rare for knitters to invest in buying land, animals or productive equipment with the potential to affect their class position through the accumulation of capital. However, the daily workplace for export knitting became a social "classroom" where many women and girls developed self confidence and savvy considered incongruent with their ascribed social rank.

Clothing became the principal medium for this contestation of class status. Although knitters who were older or married used a significant portion of their wages to support household expenses, the vast majority of knitters were young girls who used the lion's share of their income for items of personal consumption. Blouses, *polleras*, shawls, hats, shoes, slips, earrings--knitters bought it all. In fact, girls tried to outdo each other in a miniature fashion war, justifying the purchase of 10 or more *polleras* as a way to build up a *trousseau* before marriage. *Don* Hugo, the caretaker of the FOTRAMA building in Arani, and his wife *Doña* Lola who was a leader, were quick to recognize the market potential of such a concentrated group of women with money and saw the opportunity to use their position

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to do business. They brought gold "*cholita*" earrings, cloth for blouses and *polleras*, and even fancy women's underwear from the city to sell in FOTRAMA. The *cholitas* proved an eager market with the newly discovered purchase power of their earnings.

Informants told me,

> **Doña Justina:** *"...bién han ganado...ayyy! bién han agarrado la plata...entonces con esta plata se pueden vestirse de ropa..."*
>
> "...they earned well...ayyy! they really got ahold of money...and then with that money they were able to dress themselves with clothing..."
>
> **Doña Laura**: *"...cambió mucho la vida después de la reforma agraria...cambian puni, ya no había hacienda...antes no había esa clase de ropa...siempre había arretes, pero solamente para la gente con plata...cambió con FOTRAMA...las chicas de familias pobres también pueden poner ropa fina."*
>
> "...life changed a lot after the agrarian reform...it totally changed, there were no longer any *haciendas*...before there wasn't any of this type of clothing [indicating *polleras* of fine cloth]...there had always been earrings, but only for rich people...that changed with FOTRAMA...the girls from poor families were able to have nice clothes."

In Arani, knitters became known for being fancy dressers. In an ironic social twist, they were envied by girls who were *de vestido*. For example, one of my informants described how when she was a girl she wanted desperately to wear beautiful *polleras* like the knitters. Her parents had her in school, but she didn't want to study, she wanted to quit school so that she could knit and have money like her sister who was *de pollera* and a leader in FOTRAMA. Her sister was secretly teaching her to knit, but her parents found out and made her stay in school.

The baroque elaboration of *cholita* costume throughout areas of Bolivia where the *pollera* is used has been commented upon by a

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number of authors. Most tend to see the *pollera* as an ethnic marker and a counter to the hegemony of western culture. Gill (1994: 106) suggests, for example, that the way that *cholitas* dress in La Paz approximates clothing used in "exclusive circles of white ladies" while at the same time creating distance between themselves and the *campesino* class. Seligman (1989: 290) writes,

> "...*cholos*, in their exaggerated display of wealth, costume and generosity, consciously use carnival to construct a class structure that simultaneously places a socio-economic distance between themselves and the peasantry, and threatens the position of the real upper class."

In Arani, knitting fueled the existing parallel *cholita* fashion culture, but it also affected the rules of who played the fashion game. Knitting wages provided a way for poor women to dress as well as the local elite, masking the outward appearance of class differences and allowing a certain amount of leapfrogging ahead in the local social status hierarchy. Moreover, with an independent source of income, women from poorer households became less dependent upon traditional kin and fictive kin ties, and less beholden to wealthier patrons.

Not surprisingly, many people in Arani found the appearance of these "*nouveau cholitas*" irritating. Agrarian reform had already drastically altered local social relations, displacing *piqueros* from their position of local political dominance, but social status continued to be tied to more traditional reins of power. Now knitters were antagonizing the fixity of social positions in local sensibility. The transformation of "country bumpkins" into respectable *cholitas* challenged local class boundaries by creating a strata of young women who acted as if they were from a higher rung on the social ladder and had the ability to dress the part. But there was little that could be done by the local elite to keep these women in their place. FOTRAMA's hiring practices were initiated and controlled from outside the town and in the 1960's, FOTRAMA was seen as the "goose that laid the golden egg." Knitting work was

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attractive as a "womanly" occupation, wages were relatively high, payment was in cash, and knitters gained access to a variety of benefits. Women from high status families who wanted to knit were rarely willing leave FOTRAMA in protest over the social implications of knitting work. Instead, knitters behavior became the focus of local commentary. Talk about how knitters "*quieren aparecer que son mejor*" ("want to appear as if they are better than they are") and how they "*coquetear*" ("flirt") became topics of discussion over family soup pots and in *chicherias*. Gossip became the weapon of choice to check the "*nouveau cholita*" assault on local social boundaries.[21]

Personal Independence: The Dynamics of Gender and Generation

Although knitting income improved the social standing of knitters from low status households, rumors about knitters' behavior undermined pretensions toward more dramatic social change. To a large degree, this gossip was effective because of the impact that knitting was having on generational and gender dynamics in the town. The vast majority of knitters were unmarried women, some as young as twelve, who became integrated into export production as individuals rather than as part of a household. A number of authors have discussed what happens to rural households when social and economic processes promote individualization through wages or access to education. Meier (1984) writes about the town of Carabuela, Ecuador where people make rustic "Otavaleño-style" sweaters. He suggests that income from sweater production has affected generational dynamics in the area and that the coherence of households has been undermined by the individualized way that some workers are integrated into the market (pp. 440, 442). Traditional *poncho* production required the labor of everyone in the family. Older people and children spun the wool, and

[21]Nash (1993c: 264) describes how successful women artisans in Amatenango del Valle, in Chiapas Mexico are gossiped about as being loose and having questionable morals. Their access to government officials through party sponsored trade outlets promoted political aspirations that resulted in the assination of their leader who ran for mayor of the town.

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men and women worked as a team weaving the garment. Households where people spin yarn for sweaters continued to function as a unit of production. But knitting mainly employs young women and they earn wages as individuals. The knitter's household is reduced to a mere unit of consumption, creating age-based differences in productive employment (p. 439). In her work in Mizque in a more distant part of the Cochabamba valley, Paulson (1992:195) found that with the increasing importance of individualized wages, education and work outside the family context, the significance of affinal relations was being replaced by *compadrazgo* ties and extra-family networks. Young people have access to income and the ability to establish relationships with *padrinos*, giving them the ability to break away from the reins of the family and even to start their own families at an earlier age. According to Paulson, this contributes to the atrophy of the rural household (p. 180).

Similar processes are at work on a general level in Bolivian society, but they were brought to a head in Arani by export knitting in the 1960's. The elegantly clad *"nouveau cholitas"* who challenged local class structures also clashed with existing ideas about the proper demeanor for young women. Gill (1994: 103) suggests that the elaborate clothing worn by *cholitas* in La Paz is a "visual symbol of wages freed from control of family members." This was certainly the case in Arani. Knitters' fine clothing became an external symbol of independence from their families and a public display of the extent of their newfound wealth. Knitters bought what they wanted, when they wanted it. They spent money on clothes and jewelry; they could afford to buy refreshments and sweets like *rosquetes* during public fiestas; they had money for *chicha* and *chicharones* (chunks of fried pork traditionally sold with *chicha*) when they went to the Thursday market; knitters even began to pool their money to sponsor dance parties featuring live music. They did not have to consult with anyone or ask for money.[22]

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[22]Nash (personal communication) recounts that good potters in Amatenango del Valle in Chiapas, Mexico were even less likely to marry because of their independent access to income.

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Prior to the existence of export knitting, young girls had access to money primarily at the discretion of their parents. For example, a girl who helped sell the family's corn in the local market might be allowed to keep a small portion for herself. Or, a girl might make some money accompanying other family members when they traveled to more distant markets, but teenage girls were generally not permitted to make trips alone. A few girls worked in putting-out systems for sewing *cholita* clothing, but that often required access to a sewing machine and the pay was low relative to knitting. Wages from knitting were higher and more consistent than anything else available to women in general, but certainly so for those who were young and unmarried.

As a result, almost overnight young women who were knitters seemed to have a great deal of disposable income. As discussed above, much of this money was used to purchase items of personal consumption. One informant told me, "most knitters contribute something to their home...if they didn't contribute, *no les darían de comer* ("they wouldn't give them anything to eat")...but its still their money and they use it mostly for clothes." The general youth of knitters exacerbated this tendency. But the implications of young women having access to their own money went beyond fueling local fashion wars and deeper than defiance of local class boundaries. Knitters were no longer totally dependent upon family and kin in the way that they had been in the past.

To a certain extent, people applauded these changes. They thought it wonderful that their daughters, sisters and cousins could dress well and enjoy themselves during outings. Everyone was impressed by the dance parties. People came from all around to hear the music and watch the young people dance. The *cholitas* in their new finery made a wonderful spectacle. But in other ways, knitters' independence did not sit so well with people. It did not take long for people to notice changes in the attitude and behavior of girls once they became knitters. Knitters developed an air of independence and a level of self-confidence uncharacteristic for girls that age. To many, this was seen as a threat to parental authority. They said that *cholitas* no longer had the proper respect for parents, relatives

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and *padrinos*. Moreover, knitting reduced a girl's integration into the household and negatively affected her ability to take on household responsibilities and tasks. Other family members had to pick up the slack with chores, cooking, shopping, and daily care of animals and crops in order for a knitter to be able to devote enough time to her work. And even more irking, girls who knit became finicky about the types of household chores they wanted to do, saying for example that chopping onions or plucking chicken made their hands smell, and that working in the field made their hands rough. People said that knitters had begun to think too much of themselves.

If knitters' behavior at home was irritating to parents, their behavior in public was even more troubling. Because girls came and went to FOTRAMA on a daily basis, there was ample opportunity for secret rendezvous and unescorted meetings with boyfriends. People said that they paraded around town in their fancy outfits like *coquetas* trying to entice all of the local boys. To make matters worse, because knitters had their own money, they could stop off at the *chicheria* where one drink always leads to another. And although people were impressed with the new *cholita*-sponsored dance parties, girls began to stay out later and later at night. Rumors recounting antics of promiscuous knitter-*cholitas* were rife. Common wisdom had it that *cholitas* were becoming different--that they were no longer "*delicada*" ("delicate") like they used to be.

The Toranza Sisters

Although the personal histories of the principal informants for this study are in many ways unique, they exemplify these trends. The four Toranza sisters--Dolores, Gabriela, Ema, and Daniela--became involved with FOTRAMA during its early years. Their father, Hernando Toranza, came from a well-off Arani family, but their mother, Asunta Murillo, had been a *pongo* house servant for one of the local *hacendados*. The Toranzas disapproved of the match because of Asunta's low social status, and refused to sanction the union. However, Hernando had a mind of his own.

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Daniela Toranza: *"Mi papa era hijo de gente rica..como hacendados...mi mama era servienta de los hacendados y por esa razon le desprecia a ella y su familia. No quisieron cojernos a nosotras...a nosotras nos dijeron que eramos hijas de una empleada que no pertenecíamos a ese familia rica..."*

"My father was the son of rich people...like *hacendados*...and my mother was the servent of the *hacendados* and that's why they hated her and her family. They didn't want to acknowledge us...they told us that we were the daughters of a maid who had nothing to do with their rich family..."

Ema Toranza: *"Mi mama era servienta donde el Nemecio Mariscal y no tenía ni un poquito de terreno. Por eso no la quería. Y mi papa tenía harto, o sea, sus papas de mi papa tenían hartos terrenos. Por eso le odiaba...Sus papas de mi mama no tenían ni un poquito de terreno para repartir a sus hijos que también eran más o menos seis o siete, no requerdo bien. Entonces por esto era mal visto mi mama. Después ella murió más o menos cuando yo tenía seis o siete años, no requerdo. Y después viví sola con mis tres hermanas."*

"My mother was a servant for Nemecio Mariscal and she didn't have one little bit of land. That's why they didn't like her. And my father had a lot, that is, his parents had a lot of land. That's why they hated her...my mother's parents didn't have any land to divide among their children and they had about 6 or 7, I can't remember too well. So for that they took a poor view of my mother. After that she died when I was 6 or 7, I can't recall exactly. And then my three sisters and I lived alone."

When Asunta died following the birth of her fifth child (a son who died as an infant), Hernando was left to care for the children with little support from his relatives. One year later, the household was again disrupted. Andres' family was facing expropriation of some of their land holdings with the implementation of agrarian reform following the revolution. Hernando, always one to speak his mind,

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was vocal in his support of the *Falangista* party that opposed this sort of expropriation. Given the explosive political climate surrounding these expropriations, Andres' position proved dangerous and he was forced to flee to Argentina, abandoning the four girls.

> **Ema Toranza**: *"Escapando de la policía según que yo un poco recuerdo, parece que le querían quitar los terrenos a sus papas, que todavía estaban vivos, a ellos no les convenía. No tenían mucho, pero tenían más que los otros campesinos, más que todo, o sea más que los otros campesinos tenían pero ígual le querían quitar, según...pero después él se estaba con...que se llama...Falange...sí este día por ejemplo antes de escaparse había...estaba en la chichería él, y se encontró con su...con otros campesinos...que estaban quieriendo repartirse el terreno y se habían encontrado y le habían dicho, tú eres Falangista. "Sí!! y Qué??? le había dicho. Nos puedes vivar a Estonsoro le habían dicho y él de borracho como era, como conoces ahora viejito todavía, ha dicho, "Sí! Abajo Estensoro!!! Había dicho. y de esta dice que esta noche tenían que quemarle vivo. Entonces de esto él se escapo. Yo solamente ví a mi papa entrarse dentro de las maizales, y al día siguiente dije va a salir en qualquier momento...va a salir, va a salir, va a salir...nunca ha salido...Nunca. Se perdió allí en...después por 8 años estaba allí..."*
>
> "According to what little I remember, he was escaping from the police. It seems that they were trying to take away his parents land, they were still alive then, and it wasn't a good thing for them. They didn't have that much land, but they had more than other *campesinos*, more than...that is more than other *campesinos* had but still they wanted to take them away, according...but after that he was with, what do you call it? the Falange party...yea, that day, for example, before he left, he was at the chicheria and he met up with his, with other *campesinos*...the ones that wanted to divide the land between themselves and when they saw him they said, you are a Falangist. "Yea!!! and What of it??? he said to them. You better say "Long Live Estensoro," they said to him and because he was drunk, as you know he still does

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> as an old man, he said, "Yea, Down with Estensoro!!! He said that. And because of that they say that night they were going to burn him alive. And so he had to escape because of that. I only saw him enter into the corn field and the next day I kept thinking he's going to come out at any moment...he's coming out, he's coming out, he's coming out...but he never came out...never... He disappeared then...for 8 years he was there..."

Although the four children were left without parents, none of their relatives wanted to take them in. The Toranzas continued to be ashamed of the girl's mother, and neither side of the family was willing to take responsibility for feeding the mouths of four children too young to contribute to a household. Tragically, Dolores, the oldest of the four at 10, suddenly found herself mother to her three younger siblings.

In my field research, it was common for people I interviewed in Arani to call themselves "orphaned" when they would describe the death of their mother or father. In some cases, the informant was already an adult when the death occurred and it was the fact of being left without a parent that was being emphasized. During funeral processions and wakes family members wail in loud voices, calling out in *Quechua*, "Papa why have you abandoned me?" or "Oh mama, you left me here all alone." But for the Toranzas, the abandonment was real and visceral. As young children they were confronted with loss from their mother's death and the abrupt disappearance of their father, only to be left entirely to their own devices by relatives who disdained them. The fear, poverty, humiliation and rejection that they suffered during this period were emotionally and physically traumatic. Yet surviving this hardship also left all four with an unusual internal strength and a desire to fight against broader social forces that generate poverty and injustice.

> **Daniela Toranza:** *"Hijas de servientas nos decían...entonces con ese pensamiento nosotras hemos hablado las 4 y hemos decidido que ellas están diciendo*

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esto y nosotras nunca vamos a ser servientas para poder salir adelante pues, y así hemos salido adelante."

"Daughters of servants they called us...so with that in mind we talked among the four of us and we decided that they were saying this, and that we were never going to be servants in order that we could get ahead, and that's how we got ahead."

Ema Toranza: *"...Yo creo que todo ese sufrimiento es que nos ha llevado también. Yo pienso que si no hubieramos sufrido así, no hubieramos también trabajado así...era tanto nuestra sufrimiento, decíamos que por lo menos algo vamos a hacer en esta vida para que la gente se supieron un poquito."*

"...I believe that all this suffering is what motivated us. I believe that if we hadn't suffered in that way, we wouldn't have worked as we did...so deep was our suffering that we said at least let us do something in this life so that other people will know just a bit."

Amazingly, for the next four years the four young girls lived all by themselves with no word from their father. Barely able to make ends meet, they often went hungry. Gabriela painfully recounted to me how they were forced to steal food, even from their grandmother in order to eat. Their cousins and other neighborhood children taunted them about the ragged clothes they wore. Life was humiliating and brutal. But somehow, the girls survived and learned to take care of themselves. Dolores became a clever and skilled market vendor and began making trips with an aunt to the Chapare. Gabriela did some hand sewing for a seamstress. All of the girls made *mujk'u*. Only then did relatives begin to take an "interest" in their welfare, using the excuse that as "young women" it was now inappropriate for them to live alone and unsupervised-- "why, some man could come in and then what would happen?" This argument frightened the girls and for a time they went to live with different

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relatives. However, they also saw through the ruse of concern and recognized that the primary interest was in their labor.

> **Daniela Toranza:** *"...de allá hemos vivido solas...yo hasta mis 7 años he estado junto con mis hermanas y después una de mis tías me llevaron a su casa porque yo ya sabía llavar ropa, cocinar y entonces...me llevaron...yo he vivido más o menos hasta quinto curso de la escuela con esas mis tías...y de allí yo estaba ayudando. Ya para entonces a mis hermanas, ellas ya aprendían a trabajar...la gente pobre hicieron el mujk'u..nosotras así también hemos vivido...antes en las noches hasta las doce de la noche hacíamos mujk'u, al día siguiente nos despertabamos a las 4 de la mañana para hacer mujk'u también, entonces hacíamos y con eso también vivíamos pues...y mi abuela recien nos llevó a su casa...solamente a hacernos trabajar, cuando eramos pequeños nadie nos decía ni nos daban un plato de comida...cuando ya aprendimos a trabajar...ya, rápido nos llevaron. Por ejemplo, esa, mi tía, era elaboradora de chicha entonces de ella no faltaba chicha yo ayudaba a vender chicha, por eso me llevó mi tía para que ayude a vender, para que prepare su afar de la novia ...para entonces se le daba una cama completa a los novios...había que regalar las frazadas completas...tenían que ser así hechas a mano, colorados...para todo eso hilaba yo y me llevó para vender chicha también... Y entonces para eso nosotras después de venirme de donde mi tía hacíamos pues mujk'u...en la mañana, en la tarde, así..."*

> "...from then on we lived alone...until I was 7 I lived together with my sisters and then one of my aunts took me because I already knew how to wash clothes, to cook, and so, they took me...I lived more or less until fifth grade with my aunts...and there I helped out. And then, my sisters had already learned how to work...poor people made *mujk'u*...and that's how my sisters and I lived...before in the evenings until 2 in the morning we made *mujk'u*. The next day we would get up at 4 in order to make more *mujk'u*, then we made it and that's how we lived...and only then did my grandmother take them into her house...only to make us work, when we were little,

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> nobody said a word to us or gave us a plate of food...when we learned how to work...ya, they took us in really quick. For example, I had this aunt, she was a *chicha* maker and she was never without *chicha*, I helped her to sell her *chicha* and that's why they sent me to live with her, to help her make *chicha*, to help her prepare the *trousseau* for her wedding...back then they had to have everything made up....they had to give all the bedding, blankets, everything... they were made by hand then and dyed...I had to spin yarn for that and they made me sell *chicha* too. And that's why after I came back from living with my aunt we made *mujk'u*...in the morning, in the evening..."

After four more years, their father returned from Argentina and all four girls came home.

About that time, Gabriela began to knit for a local entrepreneur who had a knitwear business called *Conchitas*, and she developed an excellent stitch. Her friends told her that she should try to get into FOTRAMA where the pay and benefits were better. But skill was not all that she would need since their cousin, Beatrix--one of their childhood nemeses--was part of the first group of knitters FOTRAMA recruited and had become one of the leaders in Arani. Despite the animosity however, Gabriela was eventually able to get her foot in the door and almost immediately, people noticed her. She distinguished herself in terms of the quality of her knitting, but it was her personality that really made her stand out. She had a way with people. She could teach even the most clumsy girl how to knit, she had an excellent rapport with older women and she charmed the FOTRAMA workers who came to Arani. When I first met Gabriela in 1990 it was clear that she was one of those rare individuals that anthropologists refer to as "charismatic." In FOTRAMA she quickly rose through the ranks to become a leader and developed close personal friendships with FOTRAMA's director, Primo Ovando (who, as I indicated in Chapter 3, had previously worked for ANDEA), and some of the people in the administration.

Nothing in the girls' childhood had seemed to augur that they would be able to escape from poverty and misery in their adult life.

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Yet between force of will and income from knitting, things were becoming very different for the Toranza sisters. *Mujk'u* and reselling ceased to be a part of their household economic strategy. Gabriela was a leader in FOTRAMA, Dolores and Ema were knitters, and Daniela went to the FOTRAMA factory in Cochabamba where she started out as a maid but quickly advanced to the position of quality control. In an unusual move for knitters in Arani, the sisters pooled their money to build a house. They bought a number of dairy cows, giving them more income from the sale of milk and cheese. They bought a gas stove, a refrigerator, nice beds and even went to the dentist for gold fillings. They no longer wore the ragged *polleras* that had caused such derision when they were younger. They bought nice clothes and danced at parties. One informant said, "*Las Gabrielas fueron POBRES! y ves como son ahora! Antes sus polleras fueron como trapos*" (Gabriela and her sisters were POOR! and you see how they are now! Before their *polleras* used to be rags!") Through FOTRAMA, the sisters also developed a network of people they could rely on among the other knitters and leaders, and in Cochabamba, since they did not have close relations with their kin.

In Arani there were some, especially among the girls' relatives, who continued to think of the sisters as lower class individuals, not deserving of material improvements in their living conditions and dress. Some people said that they acted "snooty." Rumors began to circulate that the sisters had gotten their wealth, not from knitting, but through sex. Gabriela was usually singled-out as the culprit. People pointed with suspicion at the close relationships she had with a number of FOTRAMA administrators, including FOTRAMA's Director. Yet even this sort of talk was not enough to smother the sisters' very real success. In fact, their rather overt wealth attracted appeals for them to become *madrinas* for a number of weddings and baptisms--marking their official entry into respectable higher class status in local opinion. They became *cholitas* that others could envy.

For many girls in Arani, the goal of knitting was to achieve "*nouveau cholitahood*" with elegant *polleras*, the prestige of being a *madrina*, and the ability to work at home. But for the Toranza

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sisters, and especially for Gabriela, this was not enough. In the rest of this chapter and in those that follow, I show how the sisters were at the heart of a grassroots mobilization of knitters in Arani, challenging not only the structure of export production, but also the subordinate position of women in local culture, of indigenous women in Bolivian society, and the nature of relations for artisans in the global economy.

Problems and Disillusionment

Despite initial local enthusiasm, and the good intentions of *Padre* Geraldo, by the end of the 1960's all was not well with FOTRAMA. Life in the *Valle Alto* was changing. The sensation of economic prosperity that had accompanied the eradication of servile *hacienda* relations and the implementation of agrarian reform, was quickly evaporating as the reality of the *minifundio* became evident. Moreover, transportation, *rescate* (reselling) and political clientelism had allowed the consolidation of a new local elite who profited at the expense of the majority of the people. The entire agricultural sector was entering into a state of crisis that would intensify during the following decade, with real income in the *Valle Alto* declining 26.1% between 1969 and 1976 (Laneuville 1980: 13).

In addition to changes in the economic situation, knitters' vision of their own condition was evolving. At first most of the knitters had been content with the opportunity to work, and were pleased by the working conditions, the benefits, and the idea of the cooperative workplace. One knitter told me that in the beginning they were giddy girls, enamored with knitting and with the workshops. They didn't know what a cooperative was, but it sounded good: once a year there was an assembly for the knitters to "participate" and FOTRAMA arranged an outing to the *Taquiña* beer factory. They were given beer and *salteñas*[23] and they raised their hands when everyone else did, but they had no idea what they were being asked to vote on. At the time it just seemed fun. But some of the women began to question the way that FOTRAMA was being run,

[23] *salteñas*= "savory pastries"

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the treatment and wages they were receiving, and the lack of any real mechanism for knitter participation in the organization. They began to realize that *FOTRAMA* was a cooperative in name only, and that the discourse of cooperation upon which FOTRAMA was founded was not supported by the organization's decision-making structure or by the attitudes of many of its middle class managers.

The majority of knitters were able to work in their homes or at FOTRAMA's center in Arani without having to interact with anyone other than the local women in charge of production. But leaders went back and forth between the city and the town with yarn and sweaters, and it was their negative contact with FOTRAMA administrative workers that came to define the situation. The antagonism which developed between management and knitters had both interpersonal and structural dimensions. Despite the idealism of FOTRAMA's founding ideology, the interaction between knitters and FOTRAMA management developed along typical Bolivian social lines, with the people in salaried positions acting superior to the *cholita* knitters. A number of women described to me the humiliation they felt at being treated like inept children or like "*otra gente.*" Class, ethnic and gender factors were clearly at work in creating this dynamic since management was composed of people who were more likely to be educated, *de vestido*, or male.

But it was not just perceived discrimination that was causing knitters to become unhappy with the conditions at FOTRAMA. Equally significant in the way these relationships developed were entrenched interests within FOTRAMA's administration. Like any large bureaucracy, FOTRAMA had developed its own internal politics. Over time, knitters became increasingly aware of the extent to which the people who worked in management positions seemed to manipulate policies and situations to promote their own agendas and interests. For example, a number of knitters described to me how individuals in charge of production clandestinely encouraged them to take amphetamines in order to meet production quotas and deadlines. Knitters who did not understand what they were taking, were given pills that made some of them feel sick. Although this sort of abuse may be a shocking revelation, even more pernicious was the extent

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to which FOTRAMA's approach did nothing to transform the condition of knitters to be more than cogs in the larger system of knitwear production.

One of the biggest complaints that knitters have is that they were not provided with information about how FOTRAMA was being run. Some people said that FOTRAMA received "donations" and gifts for the knitters from people and institutions abroad, but that management kept these things for themselves. Rumors began to circulate that the sweaters were being sold at high prices which made knitting wages seem extremely low. FOTRAMA's tight lip policy also created animosity with outside researchers interested in studying the productive relations of a "cooperative" or the dynamics of *artesanía* exports. As a result, FOTRAMA is described in a number of theses from the time as harboring "*secretos de empresa*" ("business secrets") and operating with "*hermetismo*" ("hermetism"), serving to heighten the sense that they were hiding something (Zapata Cusicanqui 1978: 111). At the same time, many of the features which had set knitting at *FOTRAMA* apart from other low-paying jobs were being rescinded. Workshops concerning anything beyond the technical aspects of knitting were discontinued, and medical and dental benefits disappeared. The only explanation seemed to be that people in FOTRAMA were skimming profits off the top and not passing on what was rightly due to the knitter as the actual producer.

It is feasible that management's view of knitters as needy children made them unable to imagine that it was necessary to provide the women with more information since it was likely that they never even considered the possibility that the women could understand complicated aspects of running an export business. On the other hand, it is equally likely that people in management protected their own positions by purposely keeping knitters in the dark concerning the discrepancy between wages and earnings. Most of the knitters I interviewed continued to view *Padre* Geraldo as *muy bueno ("a good man")*, and believed that he founded FOTRAMA out of a concern for "*la gente*" ("the people"). But they also suspect that he was duped by the people who worked in FOTRAMA's offices--that

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they pulled the wool over his eyes in order to make FOTRAMA function for their own benefit rather than for the benefit of its knitters. As the "middleman" in cottage industry knitting, FOTRAMA stood to gain from keeping wages low. Yet this was ostensibly one of the evils that FOTRAMA been established to combat.

According to *Padre* Geraldo, by the end of the 1960's the problem was that there were too many knitters. The market for Andean handknits had remained finite, regardless of FOTRAMA's improvements in product quality. Most of FOTRAMA's business had been obtained through religious channels, but these orders were insufficient to employ the number of women who had been trained in FOTRAMA's workshops and incorporated into the organization's production structure. *Padre* Geraldo spoke to me of the problems that FOTRAMA faced in this respect. For marketing Bolivian handknits beyond religious circuits, FOTRAMA depended upon the services of *amigos* (friends) who agreed to take on the work out of commitment to doing good works to help the poor. Unfortunately, although these people usually agreed to work for a nominal sum or even to fund the expenses of marketing from their own pockets, FOTRAMA's "friends" were not trained in marketing. It is difficult for such amateurs to survive the choppy waters of the apparel market in the U.S., and FOTRAMA's collaborators had been unable to stay afloat.

Because FOTRAMA's U.S. representatives had little first-hand knowledge of Bolivia, they were not familiar with how the products were actually made and tended not to understand the problems of manufacturing handmade goods. As a result, they often attempted to sell FOTRAMA products in inappropriate markets. For example, one representative took an order for 5000 woven belts, when the belts were made by only two or three women in Villa Rivero. Another representative accepted an order for 600 sweaters for Lord & Taylor Stores and then told the buyer that it would be possible to change colors in the middle of production when knitters had already been knitting with the original design. Without attempting to argue here that the wage knitters were making at the time was commensurate with their contribution to production, anger concerning markup of

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the sales price in relation to wages may or may not have been deserved. The fact that the sales price seemed high from the knitter's perspective may indeed, reflect the expensive costs of exportation and marketing. But of course, the hierarchical relations between knitters and management, and the lack of information made it possible for rumors to stay alive and fester.

Protest and Confrontation

By the late 1970's workers had become so disgruntled with the situation in FOTRAMA that they began to demand change. Ironically, it was the very workshops sponsored by FOTRAMA that gave knitters the tools to question their own position as workers in a cottage industry. Lessons they had been given about self-esteem and the philosophy of the cooperative workplace had not remained merely ideas on paper. Much to the dismay of those in charge of production, Roberto Carbajal, FOTRAMA's education program coordinator, played a key role in helping knitters make the connection between abstract ideas about social justice and the reality of their situation as workers. Many of my informants say that they experienced a sort of epiphany as a result of what he taught them. The Toranza sisters, in their thirst for vindication from haunting childhood memories of poverty and feelings of worthlessness, drank deeply from this cup of knowledge:

> **Dolores Toranza**: *"Hemos salido por la explotación pues...porque nada no sabíamos...nada no nos avisaban...este Roberto Carbajal nos dijo pues ..allí es lo que hemos aprendido lo que nos dijo pues este Roberto Carbajal...que nos avisaron cuanto se ganan, donde expo...donde hacen llegar...todo...nunca no sabíamos siempre, Janet...despues allí es lo que decía pues...todo, todo pues...lo que hay, como se vende...todo se contaba...hay ganancias, harto se gana en las chompas y ustedes no saben...tienes que trabajar...hablen, hablen ustedes nos dijo...entonces, de allí hemos empezado a reclamar pues."*

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"We left because of the exploitation...because we didn't know anything...they didn't inform us about anything...Roberto Carbajal told us...that's where we learned what he told us, that Roberto Carbajal...he told us how much they make, where they export...where they send them...all of it...we never knew any of it before, Janet...then, that's were it was told...all, all of it...what there was, how they sell...all of it was revealed...there are profits, they make a lot from sweaters and you aren't even aware...you have to work hard...speak up, speak up he told us...then, that's when we began to complain."

Ema Toranza: *"...o sea, en aquel entonces nos decían que era una cooperativa, FOTRAMA era una cooperativa y que era de nosotras nos decía pero de allí...el señor Carbajal nos decía que se es una cooperativa, debemos de saber...en cuanto estan vendiendo las chompas, cuanta lana entraba, que porcentage de mano de obra nos estabamos agarrando...donde estaban vendiendo, a que precio, todo esto nos decía que tienen que saber si es una cooperativa. Sabían que es cooperativa o es una empresa? así nos decía. Entonces de allí hemos empezado a preguntarnos y averiguar a como estaban vendiendo, todo eso, porque en aquel entonces FOTRAMA era el unico empresa artesanal que exportaba. Y no había otras como hoy tanta competencia, era el único, entonces las exportaciónes hacían en grandes cantidades también. Entonces allí es donde nos hemos dado cuenta de que había una explotación, si es que había, si estaba exportando tanta cantidad, había muchísimo ganancia también...no sabíamos nosotras con exactitud donde estaba yendo las ganancias, no sabía...nunca informaban cuanto se ganaban, así, simplemente en las assembleas anuales íbamos y decían esto ha de ser tal, esto ha de ser tal...nosotras Bravo! Bravo! Aplaudíamos, sin saber, sin entender nada."*

"...that is, back then they told us it was a cooperative, FOTRAMA was a cooperative and it was ours they told us. But then Mr. Carbajal explained to us what a cooperative was, that we had to know...how much they sell the sweaters for, how much wool it takes, what percentage

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> of the price goes toward labor costs...where they are sold, at what price, all of these things he said that we should know if it were a cooperative. He asked if we knew what a cooperative was or a private business. Then, that's when we started to ask questions and to investigate how much they were selling for, all of that, because back then FOTRAMA was the only artisan business exporting. There weren't others like all the competition that there is today, it was the only one and it exported in large quantities too. Then that's when we began to realize that there was exploitation going on, that there was, that they were exporting such a quantity and that there was so much profit...we didn't know exactly where the profits were going, we didn't know...they never informed us how much they made, that type of thing, we just went to the annual assemblies where they said this is how things are, this is how it should be....and we yelled Bravo! Bravo! We applauded without really knowing, without understanding anything."

The situation changed following a tragic and fortuitous accident. Primo Obando, FOTRAMA's director, and Roberto Carbajal, the educational coordinator, were on their way to visit FOTRAMA's alpaca herds in Tunari when their car went off one of the precarious mountain roads, killing Carbajal and paralyzing Obando. Knitters told me that the new director after the accident, Nelson Rios, was a different sort of man--that he was evil and that he was just out for himself and his cronies. They said that the accident was "suspicious" and "mysterious," implying that Rios and others in FOTRAMA involved in an internal power struggle were responsible for tampering with the vehicle.[24] They said that after Rios took over, the situation got much worse for them. "Benefits" disappeared and knitters were no longer even permitted to enter the office. Because the Toranza sisters had been so close to Carbajal and Obando, and because Rios' approach conflicted with existing policies, they became especially bitter in their opposition to him.

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[24]Of course, apart from this gossip, there is no reason to believe that the wreck was anything other than an accident of the sort that are unfortunately commonplace on Bolivia's treacherous mountain roads.

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Things came to a head when Gabriela and more than half of FOTRAMA's leaders attempted to form a *sindicato* (union) to give knitters legal rights. Since the 1940's the Bolivian political landscape had been dominated by workers' *sindicatos*. In Cochabamba, in particular, the establishment of *colono* relations under the *hacienda* system had made organizing around more traditional community structures impossible. While in the *altiplano*, ethnic identity based on *ayllu* membership was the blueprint for collective action, in the Valley union organizers appealed to class interests.[25] In fact, *sindicato* membership became an integral part of *campesino* identity. A knitters' union seemed the logical way to present women's demands to management, and FOTRAMA employed so many women that the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (COB) had become interested in incorporating knitters' demands (or at least in appropriating knitters' plight as an appendage of their own struggle). The relationship of knitters to export markets found an excellent fit with traditional Bolivian anti-imperialist politics and with the condition of tin miners in the export economy of the 1970's. Moreover, with women playing a seminal role in collective action, taking up a "female" cause such as that of the knitters' union was undoubtedly good politics.

However, unionization did not prove an effective way for knitters to organize. Unlike mining communities where physical isolation from the rest of the country and dependence on the company store create a consciousness of class interests (Nash 1992), knitters experience exploitation as individuals. The same qualities of flexibility and autonomy which make cottage industry appealing to knitters also contribute to worker isolation. Putting-out not only permits firms to control access to raw materials and markets, but the separation of workers into individual, often competing households, deprives them of a context for conceptualizing their position within the system--a perspective necessary for mobilization. Being women, knitters are a particularly vulnerable group in this respect. Because many women

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[25]See Albo (1987), Dandler (1977), and Rivera (1987)

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lack formal education and are monolingual *Quechua* speakers in a Spanish-dominated society, they are easily exploited and have difficulty organizing.

In addition, the specific conditions at FOTRAMA aggravated the already difficult task of creating a union. Knitters contributed a percentage of their wages (about 5 to 10 Bolivianos a month) to a savings plan. Each knitter was given a little book (*libreta*) where these contributions were recorded so that they could see the growth of a little nest egg. FOTRAMA promoted this savings plan as a policy reflecting the "development" orientation of the organization, and knitters were supposed to regard it as a fringe benefit of FOTRAMA membership. However, as the problems within FOTRAMA escalated, some knitters came to see the *libreta* as a mechanism for coercion that one of my informants described as a "lock to keep knitters in." FOTRAMA's control over knitters' savings had a dampening effect on the development of a spirit for challenging management--women were afraid they might lose their savings if they made waves. And of course, although knitters with seniority were some of the most skilled and best positioned to make demands, because they had been contributing to the savings plan longer, they had the most to loose in a confrontation.

Similarly, the "leader" system of production contained fault lines that splintered the coherence of worker solidarity. Contrary to popular belief, membership in FOTRAMA as a "cooperative" only included salaried workers, and knitters were actually excluded. Leaders were "employees" who received a wage from FOTRAMA that was only partly dependent upon productivity. Knitters were viewed as "*eventuales*" or part-time piece-rate workers, and were not considered "employees." As a result, leaders and knitters did not have the same interest in organizing to promote change. This structural rift was conveniently magnified when management attempted to placate the unionists by deciding to increase leaders' pay to include 5% social security deductions. *Padre* Geraldo says that the women were young and that they didn't understand that this was a good faith effort to confront the situation within the constraints of FOTRAMA's capacity. Gabriela and the others argue

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that they had no right to make this sort of change without consulting the leaders. According to Daniela,

> *"parece que a ella le habían llamado a la oficina y que a ella le han ofrecido aumento de sueldo para entonces como ellas eran líderes entonces su sueldo tenía que aumentar...y la Gabriela ha reclamado para las tejedoras y entonces porqué a mi me van a aumentar...si me aumentan a mi que aumentan a las tejedoras ...como ellas son las que trabajan en realidad no son nosotras no trabajamos tanto como ellas, y entonces a ella le dijeron que ella era comunista que ella estaba reclamando por la gente que ella no debía hacer esto y entonces la sacaron...y hacía una vida imposible ..."*
>
> "it seems that they called her into the office and offered her an increase in her salary because she was one of the leaders and so she should get a raise...and Gabriela argued on behalf of the knitters and questioned why should I be getting a raise...if they give me one, they should give one to the knitters as well...since they are the ones who in reality are doing the work and we don't work like they do, and they called her a communist because she was complaining on behalf of the other workers and that she shouldn't do this and then they kicked her out...they made it impossible for her to stay..."

Ultimately, management prevailed and the union movement lost momentum. While Gabriela and the others were not fired, it became impossible for them to stay. Although her sisters continued to work with FOTRAMA since it was the household's primary source of income, in February 1979, Gabriela and 5 other leaders left FOTRAMA. However, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, they continued the struggle in new ways.

Conclusion

The development of export knitting in the town of Arani at the beginning of the 1960's found a fit with local economic conditions, coinciding with changing employment patterns for rural women. The particular way that knitting became inserted into Arani's economy

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had a profound impact, shifting class boundaries and transforming generational relations. Income from export production created a group of "*nouveau cholitas*" who had the ability to approximate an ideal of local womanhood. Clothing became the outward manifestation of this as many young, unmarried and poor knitters used their wages to buy items of *cholita* fashion. At the same time, the nature of the work itself, the institutional character of FOTRAMA as an employer, and the relatively high wages gave knitting a sort of prestige. These dynamics contributed to the elaboration of a *cholita* identity that allowed local women to compete with the consumer economy and the national culture on their own terms.

However, although the appearance of knitting work had originally been applauded, in the long run, relations of production in the industry did not prove beneficial to handknitters. Attempts to cooperativize through large-scale nonprofit institutions like FOTRAMA failed to create a viable alternative that would allow knitters to escape from domination by middlemen, and institutions involved in export were unable to tap into new markets for Bolivian handknits. By the end of the 1970's, knitters had developed a new level of self-esteem and knowledge through their work in export production, giving them the wherewithal to begin to question the structure of the industry. In response to worsening working conditions and an increasing sense of exploitation among knitters, a group of women from the town of Arani challenged the authority of middle class managers and of FOTRAMA as an institution. These women broke away from mainstream export production, and as I will show in the following chapter, they attempted to create a real alternative in the form of a knitting cooperative, controlled by knitters themselves. Ultimately, it was the positive valuation of their own abilities and of themselves as *cholitas* that created the foundation for a unity of vision which was the underpinning for this grassroots mobilization. Ironically, the seeds of this positive attitude were born in the quasi-cooperative system that they would struggle to overturn.

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Chapter 5

Qayna Chisi Runtu, Kunan Chilvi:[1]
The Rise of the *Asociacion de Tejedoras "Tipay Warmi"* and the Place of Grassroots Handknitters in the Global Economy

Introduction

The previous chapter explored consequences of the development of cottage industry handknitting in Arani. Production under the auspices of the large, "quasi-cooperative" institution, FOTRAMA, did not significantly transform the balance of power in the knitwear industry in favor of knitters. Nor was FOTRAMA able to expand the market for Bolivian knitwear sufficiently to absorb the labor of all of the women who wanted to knit. Export work did, however, become incorporated into the local economy in a way that affected social relationships in the town and generated the impetus for knitters to demand greater social change. Status and prestige attained by *cholita* knitters, and an increasing consciousness of knitters' rights as workers became the roots of a more genuine "autodevelopment" through grassroots mobilization.

Gabriela Toranza, her sisters and a group of women from Arani broke away from FOTRAMA on the faith that it was possible for them to create an alternative and independent structure for knitwear production. Animosity from those in power was not enough to overcome the strength of this belief. Intense commitment and skilled leadership allowed the group to defy the odds and form their own knitting cooperative, the "*Asociación de Tejedoras 'Tipay Warmi'*". External support from a variety of NGO's and concerned individuals played an essential role in the rise of their cooperative venture, giving momentum to and solidifying the women's own efforts. The inspiring history of how, out of the failed attempt at unionization in FOTRAMA, *Tipay Warmi* rose from the ashes to

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[1] Last Night an Egg, Today a Chick

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become a beacon among Latin American grassroots organizations is appropriately captured in the *Quechua* saying, "*qayna chisi runtu, kunan chilvi*" (last night an egg, today a chick).

The existence of a knitter-controlled structure for production subverted power dynamics in the Bolivian knitwear export industry, goading others to thirst for change and pushing wages up. Exporting gave knitters in *Tipay Warmi* independent access to capital and increased their control over their own labor, effectively overturning the position of Bolivian handknitters and challenging the structure of the global marketplace. Given the disadvantages that third world women artisans face in entering export markets, the success of the women of *Tipay Warmi* as entrepreneurs was striking. Yet equally significant, craft production also provided a basis for broader forms of political engagement. In particular, the Association conducted educational activities and programs to give members empowering knowledge and skills. These programs questioned the validity of gender, class and ethnic relations that contribute to keeping women in Arani dependent and poor.

Not surprisingly, there was opposition to *Tipay Warmi's* triumph. The challenge to male dominance created by the entrepreneurial success of a women's organization, by the group's feminist ideology, and by it's educational activities that teach women's rights created hostility with local men. Financial success provoked envy and competition from competing knitting institutions and among knitters not affiliated with the cooperative. The ability of members of *Tipay Warmi* to associate with foreigners and people of professional status chafed local sensibilities about appropriate behavior for *cholitas*. Politicization of economic and cultural issues through the group's education programs antagonized local political bosses and attracted suspicion from government authorities. But the depth of commitment on the part of the *Tipay Warmis* and the skill and strength of their charismatic leader got them over these hurdles.

Although the group was able to redefine the limits of these relationships, they were not able to erase boundaries in the global economy. Despite the fact that the *Tipay Warmis* were exporting

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sweaters, the structure of the international market for handknits remained impliable. By the mid-1980's it was becoming clear that changes would have to made in the way that the Association went about selling its' sweaters. In the past, affiliation with NGO's and "project" funding had assisted the *Tipay Warmis* in their bid to become more independent, but their ongoing relationship with a group of nonprofit institutions that support craft producers around the world had become a dependent one. Reliance on these institutions to sell their sweaters created a type of dependence that not only undermined the institutional foundation of the organization, but threatened to erode its grassroots orientation. However, triumph in the global arena would require independent access to upscale market clients. To do this *Tipay Warmi* would have go beyond mobilization at the grassroots level and develop new strategies to confront structural relations in the global economy.

...and From the Ashes... *'Tipay Warmi'*

In 1979 it had become clear that forming a knitters' union was not going to work. Knitters lacked the power to force management to acquiesce to their demands. There was no hope that FOTRAMA could be transformed into the type of "cooperative" where knitters actually have a role in running the institution or participate in its decision making structure. However, knitters were no longer the naive country girls they once had been. As can be seen in previous chapters, knitting wages and the prestige of export work improved knitters' self-esteem and heightened their sense of a self-identity as "*cholitas*." FOTRAMA's workshops had taught them about their rights as workers, as women and as people. The work itself demonstrated the value of their labor. Gabriela and the others had come to see themselves in a new light. It was no longer a given that they needed to wait for outsiders to intervene in their lives in order to create work beyond the rural economy.

The social, economic and cultural context was also dramatically different from that which existed when FOTRAMA opened its doors nearly twenty years earlier. Rural towns like Arani had become more directly linked to external forces. Through

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migration, the influence of television, and the increasing availability of consumer goods, for example, *Aranenos* had become more connected to and aware of life outside of Cochabamba. Moreover, political convulsions wracking the soul of Bolivia as a nation at the end of the 1970's led many people to believe that change was again a possibility. The seemingly invincible authoritarian rule of military dictator Hugo Banzer was in pieces. With the success of the opposition movement in which workers and *campesinos* played an active role, people were rethinking ideas about the intransigence of existing power relations. This was especially true given the very visible role in dangerous public protests played by women from the *Comites de Amas de Casa* (Housewives Committees) in the mines who were *de pollera*.[2]

So when Gabriela was forced to leave FOTRAMA in 1979, she, her sisters and a group of other knitters from Arani decided to form their own group, working from the Toranza sisters' home.[3] According to Gabriela,

> *"'Tipay Warmi' la fundamos en 1979 un grupo de 25 mujeres que decidimos no aguantar más la explotación a la que estabamos sometidas en las empresas artesanales en las que trabajamos. Nuestra asociación nació con una caracteristica que nos diferenció, desde sus orígines, del resto de las empresas del tejido, cual es la autogestión, es decir que su administración y gestión dependen exclusivamente de nuestras decisiones como grupo." (Opinion Cochabamba Newspaper: Tuesday, April 28, 1987 p. 4)*
>
> "A group of 25 of us founded *Tipay Warmi* in 1979. We had decided that we could not tolerate the exploitation that we were suffering in the artisan businesses where we worked. Our association was born with a characteristic that from the beginning has made us different from the other knitwear businesses. That

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[2]Nash (1990), Leon (1990)

[3]Dolores, Emma and Daniela continued to work in FOTRAMA despite the problems that their sister had, and their participation in *Tipay Warmi* was clandestine during the first couple of years.

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> something is "autodevelopment," that is the administration and running (of the organization) depend exclusively upon decisions that we make as a group.

Association documents state:

> *"Formamos 'Tipay Warmi' por los malos tratos y la marginación que sufrimos trabajando para empresas privadas de artesanías donde no nos dejaban participar. Nuestras experiencias y viendo la situación economica y social de la mujer nos obligó a organizar nuestra propia fuente de trabajo y que solo así podemos seguir adelante. Vimos que los tejidos nos ofreció la oportunidad de aumentar los ingresos de las familias campesinas dentro de una organización cooperativa con el objectivo además a capacitar a la mujer campesina. Esta capacitación es posible por la forma collectiva que define nuestra organización."*
>
> "We formed *Tipay Warmi* as a result of the poor treatment and marginalization we suffered working for private craft businesses where they did not allow us to participate. Given our experience and seeing the economic and social situation of women, we were obligated to organize our own source of employment and it is only this way that we can advance. We see that knitting offers us the opportunity to increase the income of *campesino* families who are part of our cooperative organization with the objective of informing and training rural women. This training is possible because of the collective form that defines our organization."

Like the Toranzas, many of the original members of *Tipay Warmi* were from marginal or low status households in Arani, and as women, all of them were in a subordinate position. Forming *Tipay Warmi* was a challenge to the local class hierarchy and to male domination as much as it was resistance against exploitation in the workplace and rejection of the *status quo* in the knitwear industry. On April 11, 1980 against seemingly insurmountable obstacles, the "*Asociación de Tejedoras 'Tipay Warmi'*" became a legal entity.

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Like the effort to establish their own organization, the choice of a name was, in itself, an act of resistance. They believed that throughout Bolivia attempts to establish cooperatives had been characterized by corruption and exploitation rather than cooperation or participation. So instead, *Tipay Warmi* was established as an "association," which the members told me is a more participatory form of organization. By purposely evading the use of the word cooperative, *Tipay Warmi* was able to define the terms of member participation and to avoid co-optation by remaining outside of the control--and thus, the politics--of the state-sponsored regulatory system for cooperative organizations. In addition, the word "*warmi*," which means "woman" in *Quechua*, is commonly used in Bolivia as a derogatory term applied to women in domestic service, signaling ignorance and subordination.[4] Recognizing that the original meaning of "*warmi*" in *Quechua* was not the ugly one that it had come to represent, the women decided to take it back. A brochure for the organization explains,

> *"el nombre de La Asociación de Tejedoras 'Tipay Warmi' que significa mujer tejedora en quechua, representa el orgullo que tenemos de nuestra cultura y nuestro idioma, ademas que nos identifica como mujeres integrantes de la fuerza productiva de nuestro país"*
>
> "the name of the Association of Knitters '*Tipay Warmi*' which means 'woman knitter' in *Quechua*, represents the pride we have for our culture and our language, moreover, it indicates that we identify ourselves as women who are productive members of the country's work force."

The philosophy of participation and control from below that the group was attempting to implement would break new ground in the Bolivian handknit industry. According to *Tipay Warmi's* bylaws, members participate directly in all aspects of the organizacion. Knitters told me,

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[4]The name used here is a pseudonym and "*warmi*" is not actually viewed as so negative, but I tried to capture the meaning and revindication embodied in the real name of the coop studied.

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"Aquí nosotros decidimos de todo, lo participamos todas...tambien el pago decidimos."

"Here we make all the decisions, all of us participate...we even decide about wages."

Elected committees of three members each are responsible for the ongoing functions of Production, Commercialization, Education, and Administration. Positions of responsibility rotate and ideally, each individual is expected to take a turn.[5] The entire Association convenes at least once a month and elected "Executive Committee" members hold weekly meetings.

However, a number of factors hindered the ability of the *Tipay Warmis* to control and operate their own business. Members of the group had very little formal education. Few could read or write, much less have knowledge of complex financial and managerial aspects of knitwear production and export. In fact, at the time most did not even speak Spanish. Equally challenging, the women from Arani did not have the capital to finance the purchase of wool for their new venture.[6] Capital is a major problem for rural people, especially women. From the perspective of the banking establishment, they are considered ignorant, backward, and bad financial risks (Sternthal 1990). But these obstacles were not sufficient to dampen the spirits of the group. Convinced of their own rights and abilities and with the charismatic leadership of Gabriela and her sisters, the women of *Tipay Warmi* forged ahead with their plan to create an alternative.

In order to obtain the necessary funds, in January of 1980 twelve of the twenty-five women joined an agricultural cooperative with a revolving loan fund in the neighboring town of Punata and

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[5]The ideal of participation envisioned by the group during their founding was approximated in some ways, but as will become clear in Chapter 8, participation remained an elusive goal.

[6]See Buechler and Buechler (1992: 142) and Buechler, Buechler, Buechler and Buechler (1998) for examples of the problems faced by small-scale knitting entrepreneurs in obtaining capital. Buechler and Buechler (1996) presents an excellent personalized account of one woman's struggle.

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were able to take out personal loans. Investing personal loans in the collective venture was done at great risk to the financial security of their families, since titles to small family plots were held as collateral. Despite the risk, they pooled the loans to purchase wool and began to knit. Because *Tipay Warmi* was not bound by the exorbitant overhead expenses *FOTRAMA* had developed, they were able to offer the same product as *FOTRAMA*, but at a cheaper price. Dolores described to me the amazement she felt when she approached a tourist coming out of *FOTRAMA's* Cochabamba store and was able to sell a scarf for what seemed to her to be a fortune! This experience convinced the women that they could compete. Without access to markets for export, the group began by selling to small tourist shops in La Paz and Cochabamba. The export-quality knitwear they offered caught the attention of shop keepers and tourists accustomed to the cheap handknits displayed in heaps by market vendors.

However, despite the group's confidence in their own abilities and their hard work, for a time it seemed unlikely that *Tipay Warmi* would survive. Doing business was difficult, not only because of the language barrier, but because of racist attitudes prevalent in Bolivia. Middle-class shopkeepers who sold sweaters to tourists treated the *Tipay Warmis* as if they were ignorant children. Their insulting manner not only made doing business unpleasant, but at every turn they attempted to take advantage of *Tipay Warmi's* inexperience. In 1982 when a drastic devaluation reduced Bolivian currency to a tiny fraction of its worth over night, the group lost all of it's capital. Sweaters they had in consignment were priced in the old currency and even though store owners began to sell their items at prices in terms of the new currency, they refused to give the *Tipay Warmis* anything above the old price--which had become a meaningless pittance.[7] The *Tipay Warmis* had no recourse against these ruthless tactics. They were even swindled by a local man who they had thought was an ally. Under the pretense of helping them out, he went around to stores in La Paz to collect money from sale of

[7]Buechler and Buechler (1992: 195) describe the general difficulty that small-scale entrepreneurs have in collecting money from goods left on consignment

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sweaters that the *Tipay Warmis* had left in consignment. But after he returned, he claimed that he had not gotten paid. Making their alternative system work was proving to be a daunting task.

Bomb Scare

While the group in Arani was struggling to get *Tipay Warmi* on its feet, conditions at FOTRAMA began to fester. Even with Gabriela gone, they continued to have complaints. Local attitudes toward knitting had changed in the twenty years since FOTRAMA first arrived and the mystique and prestige of FOTRAMA's early days had evaporated. As a group, knitters no longer enjoyed good reputations. As discussed in Chapter 4, some girls had used their knitting work as a ruse to sneak away for rendezvous with their boyfriends. *Don* Hugo, the caretaker of the FOTRAMA building was said to have raped or seduced one of the most beautiful and eligible young *cholitas*. Rumors circulated about how FOTRAMA administrators and even *Padre* Geraldo had sexual relations with knitters. The three Toranza sisters who still worked at FOTRAMA, because of the friendship they had developed with some of the administrators and because of their situation as women living alone, had become the targets of this gossip. Parents now began to have qualms about letting their daughters work at FOTRAMA. My informants told me that mothers took their daughters out of FOTRAMA and that increasingly,

> *"ya no iban las tejedoras a tejer allí, si no llevaban las chompas a sus casas...iban a recojer lana no más..."*
>
> "knitters no longer went there to knit, instead they brought the sweaters to their homes...they went to get wool but nothing more"

Rumor and innuendo, together with more concrete work-related complaints by knitters and their supporters in the COB concerning wages and working conditions gave fodder to local opposition to FOTRAMA. Teachers were annoyed that so many young girls still chose to drop out of school in order to become *cholitas* and knit when these were supposed to be inferior choices according to

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accepted local standards. As noted in Chapter 2, Arani has a high concentration of teachers (many of them work in rural schools during the week but reside in Arani and return on the weekends) who play a major role in local politics. According to one of my informants,

> *"de la escuela se salían a tejer...de eso una vez el Alcalde de Arani venía a reclamar...muchas se están entrando a tejer no más...no tiene que agarrar...tienen que limitar...tienen que estudiar...por eso reclaman...desde allí agaraban de 15, desde 14 a 15 años después allá...los profesores no quisieron"*
>
> "they (girls) leave school to knit...that's why one time the Mayor of Arani went to complain, saying...they're all going into knitting and nothing else...(FOTRAMA) shouldn't take them...there has to be a limit...they must study...because of this, people are complaining...they took 15 year olds and up, even fourteen...the teachers didn't want this..."

It was reported that the *Alcalde* ("Mayor") was also mad because he is supposed to have said that if FOTRAMA wanted to do business in Arani then they should pay a local tax. But the teachers and the *alcalde* had their own political agenda and neither actually joined forces with the knitters in their work-related demands against FOTRAMA. Gabriela's rhetoric of women's rights and worker participation was more radical than the anti-imperialist ideology that formed the substance of leftwing Bolivian politics.

Despite the more generalized rancor that FOTRAMA had begun to engender, Gabriela remained the most visible and outspoken critic. The conflict was common knowledge in Arani. Working with people from the COB, from an NGO on human rights, and one interested in women, she continued to fight with FOTRAMA even after she left. All of these efforts, including starting an alternative knitting association, ruffled the feathers at FOTRAMA and were implicitly seen as attacks. This unusually assertive behavior for a *cholita*, together with her "radical" ideas, labeled Gabriela as a

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"communist." So, one night in 1981 when a bomb went off in Arani, people were quick to point the finger at Gabriela. Someone had placed dynamite in the doorway of the FOTRAMA building and tossed around leaflets saying something about "down with slavery and conquest," that the *empresarios* ("owners of businesses") are exploiting the people, and that the *Padre "esta chupando sangre, esta engañando a la gente."*[8] Apparently some of this rhetoric sounded like what Gabriela and the others had been saying. Although there was no other evidence linking Gabriela, the Toranzas or members of *Tipay Warmi* to the bombing, people were convinced that Gabriela had done it. The police came to the Toranza house and arrested Gabriela and her brother-in-law, Edgar. Things looked pretty bleak for Gabriela with so many people convinced that she was guilty, but at the last minute, the *alcalde* from Arani showed-up and insisted that she was innocent. Dolores described the incident:

> *"Un militar era de alcalde aquí, Villareal pues, de como van a llevar a estas mujeres, si están haciendo su propio trabajo, que dejen que se hacen su propio trabajo, se van a trabajar, hasta cuando van a explotar a nuestra gente estes desgraciados diciendo ha ido a Cochabamba sabiendo que estabamos yendo nosotras, entonces el...al Edgar y a la Gabriela estaban haciendo declarar, no? y allí es lo que ha entrado él y dijo yo me guarantizo este gorro y mi grado más, este gente no son terroristas ni comunistas...sé en mi pueblo, yo conozco a todos los...yo estoy de alcalde...de alcalde estaba...entonces no han llevado a ninguna parte, han sueltado..."*
>
> "A military guy was the Mayor here then, Villareal was his name. He said...how can you haul off these women if all they are doing is organizing their own work group? Leave them be so they can work, how much longer must the people be exploited, you assholes, and so saying he went to Cochabamba because he knew that's where they were taking us...and then just when they were making Edgar and Gabriela testify, no? that's when he arrived and said, "I guarantee my (military) cap and my

[8]translation = "is sucking the people's blood"

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> (military) grade too, that these people aren't terrorists or communists...I know them, they are from my town, I know everyone...I am the Mayor...he was the Mayor then...and they let them go and didn't take them anywhere else."

On the faith of the *alcalde*, Gabriela and Edgar were released, but for six months Gabriela remained under house arrest! When no other evidence was found the matter was eventually dropped.

In reality, the evidence did not suggest that Gabriela was the bomber. For one thing, although the leaflets that were strewn around the bomb site vilified FOTRAMA and *Padre* Geraldo, they also denounced *cholita* knitters as whores. Three girls were mentioned by name, and one of them was Daniela Toranza. It seems unlikely that Gabriela would have chosen such a public diatribe against her sister, with whom she had a close relationship. Moreover, that same night three other bombs had gone off in different parts of Cochabamba--one at *Padre* Geraldo's residence, one at a radio station on the street *24 de Mayo* and one in the neighborhood of *Puka Orko.* The scope of the attacks alone suggests political involvement. At the time, groups affiliated with the *Tupak Katari* movement were active in the area. The rumors blackening knitters' reputations which had been circulating at the time might have inflamed the racial ideology of *Katarista* followers. Yet more interesting to contemplate, is the possibility of local political motives. Consider the *alcalde* who came to testify to Gabriela and Edgar's innocence. Some people suggested to me that it was unusual that he would have come to their rescue since he was neither a friend or an ally. He was, however, from *Puka Orko* (where one of the bombs went off), and his military affiliation might have given him knowledge about and access to dynamite.

When I asked Dolores if they had been involved in the bombing, she said:

> *"...nos hicieron llevar a nosotras a la policia! Cuantos veces nos hemos ido nosotras!! Diciendo que han dinamitado, han dinamitado...qué clase de dinamita???*

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No...hasta ahorita yo no conozco esa dinamita Janet!!!...ellos mismos se han hecho, Janet....yo, yo, yo analizo ellos han hecho."

"...they hauled us off to the police station! How many times we have had to go! They said that we set off dynamite...that we dynamited...but what is this "dynamite"? No, even today I don't know what dynamite is like, Janet!!! They did it themselves, Janet, that's what I think, that they did it."

She added that she believes that "the FOTRAMA people did it themselves in order to blame us. They paid the people in Arani to say that Gabriela did it--or at least the people said it out of fear of losing their savings." Daniela laughed when I posed the same question to her,

"No han encontrado nada...no había nada Janet, qué cosa van a encontrar? Nos dijeron comunistas pues, saben manejar dinamitas...al Edgar han llevado a la prefectura (laughing)...ellos mismos hicieron para disimular...con el Nelson Ríos...vinieron a mi casa para citarnos para una declaración...pero a la Gabriela le pusieron detención en su casa!"

"They didn't find anything...there wasn't anything to find, Janet, what were they going to find? They called us communists, saying that we knew how to use dynamite...They took Edgar to the Municipality building (laughing)...they did it themselves in order to blame us falsely...with that Nelson Rios...they came to my house to get our testimony, but they even put Gabriela under house arrest!"

One day, after I had known Gabriela for a number of years, I asked her about it, point blank. I suggested that back when she was young maybe she had a wild hair and set the bomb. She looked me straight in the eye and said, "*Qué piensas tú, Janet? Piensas que yo podía*

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hacer esto?[9] Of course, she was right. I didn't believe that she would have had done it.

Things Fall Together

Following the devaluation debacle, the embezzlement and the accusations about the bombing, *Tipay Warmi* and it's members' hopes were in shambles. Even Gabriela was disheartened. Yet people she had met in a variety of NGO's and organizations over the years continued to have faith in her. During the 1970's an organization run by the Methodist church in Bolivia sponsored workshops with a sort of 'liberation theology' approach, and a number of knitters had been invited to attend. Gabriela was quickly recognized as a person with unique leadership qualities, and her skill, intelligence and commitment made an impression on the institution's organizers. When they offered her a scholarship to attend regional workshops in Panama, Gabriela, her family and the members of the Association were ambivalent. At the time, it was almost unheard of for a *cholita* to travel by airplane or to attend an international gathering, so it was definitely both a personal honor and a momentous step. But because the situation with *Tipay Warmi* was so uncertain, there was a sense among everyone, Gabriela included, that she was deserting the others. For the Toranza sisters, haunted by fears of abandonment from when they were children, there was also fear that Gabriela might never return from such *tierra incognita*.

But Panama turned out to be a watershed for *Tipay Warmi* as an organization. During the workshops, Gabriela had once again stood out from the rest of the group, overshadowing even experienced political organizers from other countries. Everyone there was taken by her abilities and charmed by her charismatic personality. Representatives of the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO--the Canadian version of the Peace Corps) which had helped to sponsor the Panama meetings were particularly impressed and wanted to do something to help the *Tipay Warmis* make their

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[9]translation = "what do you think, Janet? Do you think that I am capable of doing that?"

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organization work. Following her return from Panama, they made Gabriela a national affiliate. This gave her a salary that allowed her to work full-time as the *Tipay Warmi's* coordinator (a rare and important thing for a grassroots organization) and funded the group's continued functioning as an organization.

In Panama, Gabriela had likewise been impressed with the CUSO volunteers she met. When she returned to Arani, she convinced the others that if they were going to compete at selling sweaters in Bolivia, and if they had any dream of exporting, they needed help getting started and that a CUSO volunteer was the answer. In response to a petition from *Tipay Warmi*, CUSO sent two volunteers from Canada. "Maya" came for ten months in 1983-1984. When I interviewed her, she told me that she believes that her most significant contribution was in helping the group develop "life skills" and conflict resolution techniques, and building their confidence to see that they could deal with foreigners. She lived with the Toranza sisters and interacted in an intimate way with all of the women from *Tipay Warmi* and with many people from the town. Prior to her stay in Arani, no one imagined that a "*gringa*"[10] could be so personable and friendly. But she also aided the group in more concrete ways. She showed them how to develop standardized production techniques, she helped produce a brochure that they could give to customers, and she put them in contact with the export market, which until then had been elusive.

For the *Tipay Warmis*, if organizing and production were challenging, exporting was even more problematic. After the devaluation in 1982, the fluctuating exchange rate in Bolivia made it difficult for anyone to sell outside the country because goods lost their value. Although black market exchange rates were much more amenable, regulations requiring export income to be converted through the official banking system made exporting unprofitable. For the *Tipay Warmis*, the situation was exacerbated because, aside from financial considerations, they had no idea who their clients might be and no way to contact them. They lacked designs for their

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[10] *gringa/gringo*= "derrogatory term applied to North Americans and Europeans in Latin America"

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sweaters that would appeal to foreigners beyond the tourist market, and the "unofficial" costs of working with corrupt and bureaucratic Bolivian export officials made the whole idea of exporting seem impossible. So it was an important step when Maya introduced the *Tipay Warmis* to a nonprofit craft importer. Self-Help Crafts, an organization run by the Mennonite Central Committee in Pennsylvania, bought handmade goods from third world artisans for sale in a network of craft stores they operated in the U.S. and in a mail order catalogue they produced, and for wholesale distribution for resale by other stores and institutions. Self-Help was one of a handful of nonprofit organizations referred to as "Alternative Trade Organizations" (ATO's)--part of a burgeoning movement intent on establishing some sort of alternative to mainstream markets where goods produced cooperatively could be sold.

People from Self-Help came to Arani to discuss the possibility of importing sweaters--a seminal moment for the *Tipay Warmis*. According to interviews I conducted with Self-Help representatives, they were so taken by the group and by Gabriela that *Tipay Warmi* became a sort of "pet" or favorite among the cooperative producers with which they worked. During the next few years, as the exchange rate stabilized, Self-Help went out of its way to offer support, to buy sweaters and to help *Tipay Warmi* make contacts with other importers. Through these contacts *Tipay Warmi* developed a reputation in "alternative trade" circles and found other buyers for their sweaters with groups like Oxfam Trading. These "alternative trade" customers became the "life blood" of the organization, without which the *Tipay Warmis* would have had no real chance of entering the export market.

"Nos Hemos Dado Cuenta"

Success with sweater sales, especially through exports, allowed *Tipay Warmi* to pursue non-production related activities in line with their "alternative" approach. Recognizing that to a great extent, exploitation is made possible by women's lack of formal education, *Tipay Warmi* began to conduct workshops designed to inform and instruct. Unique among cooperative producer groups,

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Tipay Warmi took the idea of education further to include the discussion of women's rights, of culture and history, and of local, national and international economic and political issues which affect the lives of knitters and their families. This, more than anything else, set *Tipay Warmi* apart. Understanding these broader issues gave the women of *Tipay Warmi* a new perspective --*"nos hemos dado cuenta"* ("we came to realize") --which is not only informative, but empowering. According to Gabriela[11],

> *"...además de la producción en lo que se refiere a tejidos, la Asociación se preocupa de brindarnos capacitación en diversos aspectos como ser: alfabetización en quechua, cursillos de administración, explicación de eventos nacionales...lo que nos proporciona la posibilidad de comprender el funcionamiento del sistema en el que estamos inmersas."*
>
> "...beyond knitwear production, the Association is involved in providing training in a diverse array of topics: literacy in *Quechua*, courses in administration, explanation of national events...the things that give us the possibility of understanding the functioning of the system in which we are immersed."

Eliana, the second CUSO volunteer who came to Arani for a two year period after Maya left, played an important role in showing the group how to develop an accounting system, but she also helped organize their educational agenda, implementing workshops and activities. Gabriela's old friends, the Methodists, came and spoke about social justice. One knitter told me that from them she learned what it meant to be exploited and discriminated against. Gabriela says that through these workshops and the popular education program of the cooperative, she became more and more aware that she was not inferior to city people or professionals. She tells about one time when she was making a transaction at a bank for the cooperative of a type that would be unusual for a woman who was *de pollera*. There was some bureaucratic snafu and the bank workers

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[11]quoted in *Opinion* (1987: 4)

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were not doing much to resolve it. Undoubtedly, the fact that the customer was a *cholita* was not an incentive for them to go out of their way. But Gabriela finally got some action when she began to demand professionalism in a seemingly uncharacteristic manner. When the bank workers finished the transaction, they asked her where she had learned so much. She left them all dumbfounded when she responded that she had studied in the "university of the *campo*." Her sister describes a time when a bank receptionist asked her to wait outside, implying that other people in the bank might be bothered by having a *cholita* waiting inside. Ema says that she was able to refuse because through *Tipay Warmi* she had realized that the receptionist did not have the right to make such a request.

Tipay Warmi's educational workshops also examined racism and injustice in Bolivia's history, and taught knitters to question the devaluation of rural culture. Gabriela told me,

> "with the sweaters we make in cooperative production and the products we buy with our earnings, we are supporting the capitalist economy...now even the cloth for *polleras* is no longer made in Bolivia...it used to be of locally made *bayeta* (wool cloth) and *toqullo* (cotton)...Through popular education we are trying not to lose these things...At least in *Tipay Warmi*, we are conscious of what we are leaving behind (i.e., the *campo* as a way of life)."

A poster displayed on the wall of the Association's meeting room during my field work read,

> *NUESTRA CULTURA VALE TANTO COMO OTRAS,*
> *VALOREMOS NUESTROS IDIOMAS Y TRADICCIONES.*
>
> OUR CULTURE IS WORTH AS MUCH AS ANY OTHER,
> LET'S VALUE OUR LANGUAGE AND TRADITIONS.

The *Tipay Warmis* tried to make their educational program more concrete by linking lessons to specific things influencing their own lives. In the mid 1980's when illegal *coca* paste production for the

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international cocaine trade became commonplace in Arani and other parts of the *Valle Alto*, *Tipay Warmi* adopted a cultural interpretation of what was going on.[12] They took the position that the dynamics of these illicit activities and the "dirty" money they generated contradicted the traditional values associated with Andean culture and promoted an "unneighborly" atmosphere in the town. This was an unpopular and even dangerous position to take. *Coca* leaves and paste paraphernalia were left on the Toranza's doorstep in an attempt to implicate the sisters and the coop in the drug economy.

When Arani was scheduled to hold a mayoral election, the *Tipay Warmis* began to discuss what local political issues were really important. They organized a debate and invited all of the local candidates and a representative from the University's *Quechua* radio station that has a wide listening audience in Arani and other rural areas. To prepare themselves for the frightening prospect of having to stand up and ask questions of the candidates in public, they each memorized a question that reflected a particular issue. Their preparation paid off, and everyone was impressed with the level of their political consciousness. Candidates were made visibly uncomfortable by the substance of the questions the *Tipay Warmis* asked, embarrassed at being upstaged by a bunch of *cholitas*. Two of the main candidates who had snubbed the debate, thinking that it was nothing but "ignorant women", and not realizing that it was being covered by influential members of the press, received scathing reviews by the reporters who were there.

Women from the *Instituto de Fomento Feminino y Institutional* (IFFI) worked with the *Tipay Warmis* on educational issues related to women's rights and cultural revindication. According to Gabriela[13], the feminist orientation of *Tipay Warmi's* education program helped members to understand their condition as rural women,

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[12]This was a difficult period for *Tipay Warmi* because some of its members became involved in illicit *coca* production and transport, but the organization as a whole remained opposed.

[13]quoted in *Opinion* (1987:5)

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"antes no nos dabamos cuenta que el trabajo de la mujer en la agricultura valía, pensabamos que era una ayuda nomás. A partir del trabajo en la Asociación hemos visto de que nuestro trabajo en la agricultura también vale. Ahora me siento más fuerte y capáz de otras cosas."

"before we didn't realize that women's agricultural work was worth anything, we just considered it to be "helping out." As a result of our work in the Association, we see that our agricultural labor is also of value. Now I feel stronger and more capable of doing other things."

Later, the *Tipay Warmis* became part of a larger literacy project sponsored by IFFI. Using materials developed especially for work with rural women, members of the group with more education taught other members how to speak, read and write in Spanish, and how to do basic mathematical calculations. The idea was that these skills are necessary in order for each individual to be able to participate fully in the functioning of the organization, and that they empower women to reject subordination.

This is precisely the sort of education which knitters' husbands and other local men find threatening. *Tipay Warmi's* entrepreneurial prowess and the critique of gender relations offered in group discussions taught women to value themselves and to question the dominant social position of men. At the same time, local folklore stigmatizing the moral character of knitters, and rumors concerning the alleged behavior of the Toranza sisters, lent teeth to men's fears of social emasculation by the Association. Although over time, men's opposition was tempered by their desire to derive some benefit from or to appropriate the group's success, the early years of the organization were marked by a distinct male animosity to their efforts. Attempts by men to reiterate their dominance commonly resulted in family arguments about a woman's membership in *Tipay Warmi* or even in domestic violence. Knitters' black eyes were often the visible manifestation of these family tensions.

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For women who were members of *Tipay Warmi* during these years, the ideas that women are equal to and can compete with men, and that they have rights were especially novel and provocative. Many of the women who participated in the Association's popular education program were deeply influenced by what they learned and began to stand up to their husbands. One woman, in particular, stands out because of the level of physical and verbal abuse that she used to endure at the hands of her husband (who was later convicted of raping and killing another woman). I was astonished when she was able to come out to the *chicheria* with a group of us one night--something that jealous husbands in Arani usually do not permit. When I questioned her about it, she gave me a heartfelt little disquisition on her rights as a person and as a woman, demonstrating the extent to which she had really internalized what she had learned through the Association.

The distinctly "feminist" tone and "politicized" tenor of *Tipay Warmi's* rhetoric and activities evoked opposition and occasionally confrontation in local arenas dominated by men and controlled by party politics, yet these same qualities made *Tipay Warmi* especially attractive to development agencies and NGO's. Knitters were quick to recognize the importance of representing their group in a certain way to outsiders. Making "friends" with NGO workers and obtaining project "moneys" became part of a strategy for nurturing a network of political support and for mobilizing economic resources. Playing the "funding" game, as much as the grassroots experience itself led the women to a more self-conscious construction of the group's identity as *cholitas*, as artisans, as *campesinas* and as women. This self-consciousness, in turn, contributed to the group's success. The ability of *Tipay Warmi* to receive money from aid donors and ATO sales subverted the ability of local unions and political parties to subordinate or control knitters and their fortunes.

In 1986, international attention and support forced local authorities, *albeit* begrudgingly, to give more importance to the Association. Film makers for a BBC documentary series were producing a video on the debt crisis in Bolivia through the eyes of

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women. Under pressure from the IMF and the United States, the Bolivian government had implemented a series of policies designed to decrease government spending and generate revenues which could be used to repay the country's enormous national debt.[14] These policies had devastating repercussions on the Bolivian economy and especially on the majority of people who have few resources. The video, entitled "Hell to Pay," used interviews with laid-off teachers, with women from the Housewives Committees (*Amas de Casa*), with members of *Tipay Warmi*, to explore complicated aspects of international political economy and to present poignant tales of the impact that abstract economic policies have on people's lives. Gabriela's searing analysis of what was happening in Bolivia was the centerpiece of the documentary:

> "...The rich countries are also to blame...knowing the country is in debt, why do they go on lending? They are still giving money away. There is also the fact that they are lending to countries where the governments have not been elected. They have come to power through *coups* and by murdering our poor brothers and sisters. We didn't elect them and yet they are giving the money away as if it were a reward...Now, the lenders of the IMF should know what they are lending for. They are demanding that we repay the debt and to make us pay they insist on this and that decree. And what do they do for us? All they do is make our country poorer...Capitalist countries have benefited from our foreign debt. They have charged high interest rates to the poor countries. I think that we have probably already repaid what was originally borrowed through the interest that we poor countries pay...They think we are ignorant, but we are not so ignorant that we don't realize what is going on. For instance, I read in a book that the interest we pay to the IMF is being spent on arms...that is what the interest is being used for. And what do we need arms for, but to kill each other? Do we really need to kill each other? Why do they lend money to build armies and weapons?...Finally I would like to say to all of the people in Latin America, to all the poor

[14]See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the debt crisis in Bolivia.

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> Bolivians and Latin Americans, stop the payment of the foreign debt, Enough! We can't pay. We can't go on starving...Enough! Let the world know that we poor people are not asleep, we aren't ignorant about the foreign debt. We know that it exists in Latin America. Better said, we want the world to know we have opened our eyes. We know we have never benefited from this debt."

The video demonstrates the appalling effects of the debt crisis, but even more impressive were the images of Gabriela and the women from *Tipay Warmi.*[15] The eloquence of what they had to say and the depth of their understanding of the debt crisis contrasted with the image that most people had of rural Bolivian women. As a result of publicity generated from the video, shown on the BBC and later on PBS stations in the U.S., people in Arani were forced to think differently about an organization that had previously seemed to be nothing but an 'uppity', but innocuous bunch of *cholitas.*

The BBC video was a pinnacle for *Tipay Warmi.* Audiences around the world were introduced to their inspiring struggle to form a grassroots cooperative. The depth of their knowledge and understanding of the debt crisis showcased the group's educational program and gave a platform for their political agenda. Their appearance in the film created legitimacy for the group with outsiders. Yet perhaps more significantly, it demonstrated the extent to which their own self-legitimacy had been consummated. As a result of worker consciousness and improvements in self-esteem generated by export production and knitting wages, the women who founded *Tipay Warmi* had the courage to strike out on their own and to believe that they could succeed. This positive self-valuation enabled them to overcome obstacles at the local level, including problems obtaining credit, ridicule, opposition from family and friends, and even accusations of terrorism. The subsequent experience of mobilization at the grassroots further transformed the way that the *Tipay Warmis* defined themselves. The video represented the evolution of the personal and political identities of

[15]This is always the response from my students who see the film.

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the group's members from local "*nouveau cholitas*" to actors on a global stage.

The collective voice of the women of *Tipay Warmi* crescendoed in the debt crisis video as they demonstrated their ability to verbalize the relationship of commodity markets to tin miners and the impact of neo-liberal economic restructuring. But it was no coincidence that Gabriela and the others were increasingly aware of the extent to which abstract economic and political forces influenced their lives. In a rather poetic way, power relations between the global economy and people at the local level depicted in the film mirrored the situation facing the *Tipay Warmis* in trying to become successful knitwear entrepreneurs. Redefined self-identity made it possible for them to restructure productive relationships on the ground in Bolivia and to challenge local social boundaries. However, neither cooperative production nor political mobilization were sufficient to bring about a concomitant redefinition of their relationship to the global market.

Exigencies of the International Sweater Market

Exporting handknits is much more complicated than most people realize. There is more to it than knowing how to knit a pretty sweater. Successful exporting requires access to capital for the purchase of raw materials, a skilled work force, systematic and rigorous production, fashionable designs, a way to find buyers and to sell products, a mechanism for dealing with the responsibilities involved in exporting and importing goods, and of course, prompt and accurate invoicing in order to expedite payment. As is characteristic of other areas of the apparel market, competition in sweater sales is fierce. In fact, during the 1980's handknitting became a "sweat shop" industry in parts of the third world (especially China) where people (mostly women) are forced by economic necessity to perform highly skilled handwork for such low wages that handmade products could undersell machine knits. These dynamics made the international market for knitwear particularly cut-throat.

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Let's consider the general case of what is necessary for *anyone* to export sweaters from Bolivia to the United States. First, a firm must have capital to purchase the raw materials. "Traditional" Bolivian knitwear did not require much investment because it was made with inexpensive handspun yarn. However, as I indicated in Chapter 3, while there are a few exporters that have experimented with developing a supply of export-quality handspun, Bolivian export knitwear generally uses high-quality, industrially spun and dyed yarn, and much of it is imported from Peru. At current prices, it can cost between $25 and $35 for the yarn to make an adult-sized sweater. As a result, capitalizing the production of any quantity of sweaters is extremely costly. Given the vagaries of the export market, the risks of financial loss are high.

Next, a firm must have workers capable of producing export-quality handknits. Although knitting was a skill familiar to rural Bolivian women, techniques appropriate for export were only introduced on a broad scale in training programs offered by FOTRAMA and the other "quasi-cooperatives" in the 1960's. Knitters learned an array of different stitch patterns, ways to incorporate numerous colors, methods of forming buttonholes, necklines, cuffs, borders, and pockets, and fine-touch finishing to turn a handknit into a luxury garment. Once a woman mastered these skills, it was easy for her to teach them to her friends and relatives, further broadening the base of the existing labor pool. To some degree, access to workers was mediated ("controlled" would be too strong here) by the experienced knitting "leaders" because they knew who the good knitters were and had the ability to mobilize their labor. When knitters became disgruntled with the quasi-cooperatives in the 1970's and 1980's, it was easy for private entrepreneurs to acquire a descent-sized work force with little more than an attractive offer to an experienced "leader" who would defect with an entire existing work group.

Once the labor is contracted, a systematic method of production must be implemented. Stocks of wool must be carefully stored, keeping separate not only yarns of different quality, width and color, but also different dye batches. Yarn dyed at different

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times can develop a slightly different hue. It is crucial to knit an entire sweater from the same dye lot or what may seem a minuscule color difference between two skeins of yarn can be magnified in the twisting of knitting stitch to produce an obvious and ugly flaw. Strict account must be kept of the amount of wool given out to knitters, to avoid pilfering. Detailed records must be kept regarding the design, color, size and person responsible for knitting each of the sweaters for an order. The leader is given a quantity of wool that she is responsible for allocating to knitters in her group. She is expected to teach her knitters any new stitches or techniques and to keep track of their progress. Finished products must be inspected for flaws and for proper sizing. Garments not up to the export standard must be fixed by the knitter, by the leader or by a quality control team.

But even a perfect sweater is not worth anything unless it is produced and delivered on time. Clients in the export market are extremely particular about having orders arrive on schedule. Stores and boutiques organize their sales in order to have complementary lines of clothing displayed together. Delivery dates are scheduled with this in mind. Clients whose orders arrive late are unlikely to order again since late delivery can disrupt the clothing "concept" they plan to market for a particular season. Yet there are bigger risks to late delivery than merely losing a customer. Clients commonly over-order on purpose in order to make sure that they have enough stock. When sales are strong this is good for everyone, but when they are weak, accepting all of the merchandise ordered becomes a liability. Lateness, even by one day, gives the client the justification to refuse to accept delivery. When this happens, the firm not only loses the sale, but must cover the cost of transportation and customs bills involved in returning the goods. And once the garment is returned, it may well represent dead capital since each sweater is made to order and it can be difficult to find another client who wants the exact same sweater. In Bolivia, handknitters tend to be women from rural areas where adherence to strict time schedules is not common in local culture. As a result, exporters face the constant challenge of producing on time.

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There is still more to successful sweater sales than quality and on time performance. In order to attract customers, sweaters must be "fashionable." In the 1960's and 1970's, Bolivian export knitwear continued to be based on "traditional" Andean motifs and styles. These sweaters did not appeal to a wide range of consumers, were inexpensive and sales were limited. In the 1980's Bolivian handknits became more popular, especially in upscale markets. Two tendencies were developing in "boutique" knitwear sales where both prices and profits are high. Some customers wanted handmade garments but were not interested in "Andean" designs. Instead they wanted "classic" styles and knits. Others wanted the designs to retain an "Andean" flavor while still being chic and fashionable. This "pseudo-ethnic" market appealed to people with cosmopolitan tastes who were often willing to pay high prices for an exotic look. Private knitwear companies recognized that they could improve sales by using non-traditional designs.

But knowing how to attain the proper mix of "andean" and chic, or recognizing what makes a garment "classic" requires a subtle understanding of the esthetics of fashion. A certain comprehension of this aesthetic is necessary for the people who run a firm to make design choices appropriate for a given market. This has been one of the factors influencing the success of a number middle-class knitwear entrepreneurs in Bolivia, including *Casa Fisher*, *Milma*, *Artesanias Sorata*[16] and *Asarti*. In fact, the owners of *Milma* are an American couple who authored a book on traditional Andean textile designs before they began their sweater business. They told me that they have a definite aesthetic in mind when they produce sweaters and they believe that this is what makes their sweaters unique.

In upscale markets targeted by knitwear exporters, passing knowledge of current fashion is rarely sufficient to produce salable garments. As a result, all of the most successful Bolivian knitwear companies use the services of professional designers. The cost of these services is extremely expensive, with at least one company

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[16]*Artesanías Sorata* is a privately owned business, but Diane, the owner, runs the operation in many ways as if it were a cooperative and encourages workers to participate in many areas of production uncharacteristic for the private market.

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spending nearly $80,000 a year solely on design. Designers of this caliber develop an entire "line" or "range" of at least 12 different sweaters based on some underlying design "concept." The "design" of each sweater involves a complex synthesis of not only color and pattern, but also involves the shape of the garment (*i.e.*, blousy, boxy, cropped, etc.), the styling of things like necklines and cuffs, and the type of stitch being used (*i.e.*, "textured" and "nubbly" stitches were "in" during the period of this study). Because fashion is a capricious and ephemeral animal with all of these elements subject to change, designing fashionable sweaters requires an intimate knowledge of current trends and taste shifts. Although some designs might be updated by simply changing colors, in general a range is season specific and it is necessary to have new designs every year. This means that the cost of design is continuous and not a one-time expense.

Once a firm has developed a line of designs for the season and had a set of sample sweaters knit-up, the next problem is making contact with customers.[17] In the private market, buyers for stores and boutiques expect a sales representative to show them merchandise. In general, buyers are known for being an exacting and image-conscious bunch. The representative has to be a person with the right personality and "look" to be able to finagle an appointment in the first place, and then to be able to "hit it off" with the buyer in order to make a sale. When the buyer examines a range of sweaters, she might decide to order two or three designs or colors. Often the buyer asks to change some aspect of the design, such as combining aspects of two different sweaters, or requesting a change in the color. For example, the buyer may want a cable-stitch pattern from one sweater with the folded collar neckline shown on another, or a slightly darker shade of purple than one that was used in the sample. The representative needs to know whether it will be possible for the firm to comply with these changes before taking an order. The process of placing an order can take days or even months

[17]See Buechler and Buechler (1992: 76) for a discussion of the importance of personalized foreign connections in allowing Bolivian entrepreneurs (especially small-scale ones) to be successful at exporting.

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as the buyer makes up her mind. During this process, the sales representative is a crucial link between the Bolivian firm and the client.

After a sale is made, the sweaters need to be knit up according to the specifications of the client. Strict quality control and coordinated production are necessary. When an order is complete the goods must be properly packaged for shipment. In Bolivia exporters are required to have certain documents and licenses, and there is a good deal of paper work and bureaucracy involved every time something is shipped. In the past, the tedious Bolivian bureaucracy made exporting more time-consuming than necessary, and rampant corruption among state workers who oversee exports significantly increased the cost. In recent years, although both of these remain potential problems for almost any transaction in Bolivia, the exigencies of doing business have streamlined the export apparatus somewhat.

In the United States, goods can only be received through customs by a licensed importer. If the client does not have its own importer (only large-scale operations like mail-order catalogues tend to have their own importers), then the Bolivian firm must contract with one. After the sweaters are released to the importer, there must be a system for making sure that they are disbursed to the proper customers in a timely manner. Once the goods are delivered to the client and accepted, the firm is responsible for sending out invoices. While this may seem like an obvious detail, trying to evade payment for goods already received is a common tactic in the garment industry. Many stores operate in the red until the merchandise is sold. If sales are slow or "off", creditors may be forced to wait for payment. Prompt invoicing and a sales representative who "stays on top of" the client's accounting staff give a firm a much better chance of receiving moneys owed than some anonymous Bolivian company.

Any firm trying to export knitwear from Bolivia must take all of these factors into account, regardless of the form of production. In the end, coops, "quasi-cooperatives", "benevolent entrepreneurs" and "no-apologies capitalists" all experience challenges producing a

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quality, salable product and finding interested buyers. When the *Tipay Warmis* struck out on their own at the beginning of the 1980's, the international market for handknit products was bullish. Receptivity to Bolivian handknits was growing, private knitwear businesses were expanding their client base, and improvements in communication and transportation made the interconnection between producers in one country and buyers in another seem that much more immediate. When *Tipay Warmi* successfully produced export quality handknits, people in the industry were intrigued. When they began to export, many people including knitters themselves, were surprised. Could a grassroots knitting cooperative actually compete with private industry in the global market?

***Tipay Warmi*, the Global Market and ATO's**

In light of the exigencies of the international market for handknits, it is instructive to examine the rise of *Tipay Warmi* as a grassroots sweater cooperative. In the BBC video, Gabriela and the women of *Tipay Warmi* acknowledged the disparate power relations that exist between the market and producers like themselves, but their rhetoric remained defiant. Their success at organizing and at exporting was offered as evidence that it was possible to challenge the global structure of power and win. Yet a closer look at their experience raises serious questions about the nature of grassroots cooperatives in the global economy, especially in light of weaknesses and problems faced by the group during the 1990's that will be discussed in Chapter 8. In reality, most of *Tipay Warmi's* triumphs had to do with mobilizing themselves, with establishing a system of production, with overcoming local opposition, and with developing self-confidence to forge ahead. To a certain extent, all of these are local level battles which do not reflect gains in the global arena.

It is important to make clear that I am not suggesting that the very real successes of *Tipay Warmi* were at all trivial. The contrary is, in fact, true. Their achievement of independent sweater production flew in the face of common wisdom about what rural women were capable of, the group's educational activities had a

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deep and lasting impact on the lives of individual women, and the political engagement engendered by the group's ideology and approach to mobilization had a subtle, but long-term impact on the expectations for action by women and women's organizations throughout Cochabamba. In addition, Gabriela and a number of other women in the group developed into skilled, articulate leaders. However, the expansion of the Bolivian knitwear industry into upscale markets during the 1980's was occurring almost exclusively through the entrepreneurial system *Tipay Warmi* had hoped to supplant. By mid decade it was becoming clear that the Association was failing to find a way to translate their successes into more concrete gains in the form of sweater sales, threatening even previously established accomplishments.

Unfortunately, the structure of the international market does not work in favor of grassroots producers. The nature of the knitwear industry as a putting-out system isolates workers and creates conditions ripe for exploitation by middlemen who control access to the market. "Benevolent entrepreneurs" and "quasi-cooperatives" became involved in Bolivian knitwear production as a way of mediating between knitters and entrepreneurs. Later, the *Tipay Warmis* formed their own cooperative organization in order to achieve even more control. However, success in establishing an alternative structure for production did little to improve prospects for actually selling knitwear products. The goal of liberating knitters from the entrepreneurial system of exploitation did not create a mechanism for the group to achieve independence.

Such is the dilemma of the knitting industry. How are grassroots knitters in rural Bolivia supposed to contact customers in other countries, or much less understand what type of product would appeal to foreign tastes? Not only are there language and cultural barriers to successfully identifying and negotiating market contacts, but competitor knitwear exporters are middle-class Bolivians or foreigners with a fuller understanding of the sweater market and of consumer tastes, as well as a greater capacity to contact and relate to clients. Grassroots organizations are at a further disadvantage because they generally lack telephone, fax and

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electronic mail computer equipment. These have become essential business tools, without which many transactions are impossible. And in reality, many vendors find it more profitable and easier not to work with organized groups that may have the ability to command higher wages or demand improved work conditions.

Rather contradictorily, *Tipay Warmi* was successfully exporting without really having to deal with these issues. The group was able to sidestep their structurally weak position in export sales through the patronage of Self-Help and a number of other not-for-profit organizations. These institutions are not part of the private market, but rather a parallel market concerned as much with the social welfare of knitters and their families as with the production and sale of artisan goods. These organizations are commonly referred to as "ATO's", or "Alternative Trading Organizations" because they are associated with an international movement to promote fair trade. The underlying philosophy of this movement is the recognition that one of the root causes of poverty is the dependence of small-scale producers on exploitative relations with middlemen (Coote 1992: 66). ATO's generally attempt to circumvent this situation by buying products directly from third world artisans, and through special support services for groups operating with cooperative principals. There is even an initiative to create a label, similar to the "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval" or the "green" mark, which would identify products which are produced in a "people friendly" production process and which provide an acceptable remuneration to the producer. To date, this initiative has yet to gain momentum beyond the rather limited alternative trade market.

Working with ATO's offers a number of important benefits to grassroots groups like *Tipay Warmi*. Through sales to ATO's, grassroots knitters gain access to a clientele which they would otherwise not be able to reach. Many of the customers in this market purposely consume ATO products in order to support the philosophy of cooperative production and fair trade. Interest in the artisan means that ATO consumers are less focused on "fashionable" or "chic" designs and more willing to buy whatever it is that the artisans produce. ATO's have strong allegiance to a group once

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relations are established, and knitters can be assured of continued patronage from their ATO clients. Because ATO's come in search of cooperative groups, supplying the ATO market allows a group to avoid the significant costs involved in marketing and sales required for operation in the private market. In addition, ATO's tend to be much more flexible and understanding with the problems of production and supply often encountered by artisans in the third world, and will not cancel an order if it fails to arrive on time.

The downside of working with ATO's is that they are not strong in knitwear sales and have difficulty selling items as expensive as alpaca handknits. ATO's lack the specialist retail outlets necessary to market upscale knitwear products. Expensive sweaters, as a rule, are items that people purchase for their own use, while ATO catalogues and stores are often geared toward the gift trade. Although catalogue sales of high-priced goods are on the increase, alpaca sweaters are too often marketed together with cheap artisan products from around the world, creating an inappropriate context for high-fashion garments. The $100-150 price range charged for cooperatively produced Bolivian handknits in ATO venues is already high for sweaters in this market and attempts to increase the price have not been met with success. This means that even well-intentioned ATO's have been unable to match private market prices, making it impossible to raise the wage being paid to the knitter much above the current rate of $8-16.

Although the logic of the ATO's is to benefit poor artisans by providing them with a link to the market, there is always the danger of too much of a good thing. Ideally, Fair Trade Association network customers will buy only up to 30% from any one producer group in order to avoid creating dependency (Coote 1992). In reality, however, because of the difficulty in gaining access to other markets, groups like *Tipay Warmi* rely almost entirely on ATO clients. This creates problems in that ATO customers represent a very marginal consumer market which is easily saturated with a particular item. ATO markets cannot possibly absorb the production capacity of Andean handknitters, and reliance on ATO customers

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means relatively low-volume, low-priced orders which limit the potential for women to find employment in export knitting.

In addition, working with ATO's is not the same as dealing with private market clients. Working relationships are benevolent rather than profit-oriented, and many of the costs of production, communication, export and sales are subsidized. Knitting organizations working exclusively with ATO's do not develop the skills and rigor necessary to operate in the open, competitive market. They come to believe that all clients will be as understanding with late, incomplete or mistaken orders as their ATO friends--a belief which is quickly disproven when put into practice. ATO orders also create unrealistic expectations. Competing in a subsidized playing field leads knitters to overestimate their own ability to compete with other firms and to operate in the global market in general. Moreover, ATO subsidies for a variety of essential services are rarely made explicit to cooperative groups. This creates a dynamic in which it is not necessary for a group to acknowledge the value associated with these subsidies, and in the end, knitters undervalue the cost and relevance of these services at all--making it difficult for them to understand the need to pay for these services when attempting to deal with private market clients.

For the *Tipay Warmis*, ATO clients (like Self-Help) had been crucial in permitting them to export. In the long run, however, the downside dynamics of the ATO market gained the upper hand. Rather than merely greasing their entry into more rigorous markets, ATO patronage kept *Tipay Warmi* in a dependent position. Although most of the *Tipay Warmis* had no real understanding of the problematic side of ATO's, as Gabriela became more experienced and more conscious of the structure of the global market, she began to recognize this dependency and the limitations of relying on ATO orders. Not only did dependence on ATO sales inhibit the development of knowledge and skills necessary for the Association to operate beyond the ATO market and limit their ability to increase wages, but it contradicted the philosophy of independence upon which the group was founded. Moreover, by the beginning of the 1990's it became clear that the problem went beyond the fact that

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reliance on ATO clients was not a viable strategy...it was no longer even possible.

Fluctuation in the international market for handknits was undermining ATO knitwear sales. Interestingly, the growing popularity of handcrafts in the U.S. did not result in an automatic improvement in ATO sales. On the contrary, a glut of crafts produced through exploitative middlemen and putting-out systems hurt ATO's just as it threatened artisan groups themselves. Most people who buy handmade goods are unaware of the conditions in which many crafts are produced and others just do not care. At the same time, crafts available through these middlemen were selling at much lower prices than those being offered by ATO's because the artisan's well-being was rarely a consideration in the calculation of wages. ATO's were unable to compete in this market since for many consumers, the disparity between the cost of cheap imports and ATO products made the ATO price seem unreasonable. Even for the person willing to pay more to help the artisan, the availability of similar goods at cheap prices decreased the value of owning an artisan product. As a result of this market transition, a number of ATO's were forced to rethink knitwear sales. Many of the clients *Tipay Warmi* had come to count upon stopped placing orders and those that were still interested in buying sweaters were asking for more fashionable designs.

Further complicating things, during the 1990's competition for ATO clients intensified. In Bolivia, economic crisis, together with the vast influence of "projects" and "project aid," led increasing numbers of women to organize groups with the idea of knitting for export.[18] Because few knitters understood the nature of the knitwear market in the U.S., they saw capturing ATO patrons as their primary objective. This situation led to the development of a somewhat perverse dynamic as poor women began to compete with each other for attention from the relatively few ATO clients. Each new knitting organization laid claim to a greater level of poverty

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[18]See for example, Buechler and Buechler (1992: 216) and Buechler (1998) for discussions of how individual knitters have been impacted by economic changes and by the influence of external institutions interested in organizing women for export knitting.

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and oppression than the others, attempting to demonstrate need of ATO patronage. ATO's found themselves in the position of spreading their resources and attentions more and more thinly. In this context, the ATO market was even less adequate to absorb increasing knitwear production or provide sufficient income for knitters.

By the latter part of the 1980's the limitations of the ATO market were already becoming painfully obvious. Private entrepreneurs selling in upscale markets had begun paying higher wages than the Association was capable of offering--a change from the recent past when *Tipay Warmi* paid more than any group around. The *Tipay Warmis* began to understand that to sustain their cooperative alternative, they would have to do what they had previously been unable to--enter non-subsidized, private markets. The future of grassroots cooperation in the Bolivian knitwear industry was at risk. But just how would they do this? Expanding sales by entrepreneurs were predicated upon the creation of sophisticated sweater designs and aggressive marketing strategies. Yet these were precisely the areas where *Tipay Warmi* was weakest. In fact, the structural reality of their situation was that as rural Bolivian women, they were "disconnected" from streams of elite fashion and from contact with exclusive boutique customers. To overcome this structural inequality, they would have to virtually re-invent their relationship to the market.

Challenging the structure of the global market was not something that they could do on their own. Clearly, it would not be possible without some form of intervention. As the preceding ethnographic account of *Tipay Warmi's* history demonstrates, throughout its existence the group received aid and support from a number of institutions and individuals that mediated between them and the outside world. These services were essential in allowing the Association to become established. Funding from the *Metodistas* and from CUSO functioned as "seed money" in lieu of finance capital commonly obtained by entrepreneurs to initiate private ventures. CUSO volunteers and *Tipay Warmi's* affiliation with institutions like IFFI provided training for the women to develop start up skills that,

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given their educational and cultural background, they would have had no other way of getting.

This aid received in the early years was intended to be "short term" to allow the women of *Tipay Warmi* to develop the capacity to finance their own operation and to take responsibility for making it function by themselves. To a large degree, these interventions worked. When the Association began to export, it became self-sufficient in terms of paying the salaries of its own leaders according to the dictates of the group's members--a rare accomplishment for a grassroots organization (many coops continue to depend on outside funding to maintain administrative salaries). The *Tipay Warmis* already had the skills to knit export-quality garments, but with the systematization of sweater production organized by Maya and the implementation of accounting procedures established by Eliana, they developed an understanding what it takes to produce knitwear in a businesslike and ongoing way. With training, they learned the ropes of how to deal with a variety of necessary institutions such as banks, international couriers and export agencies. They also learned how to go about purchasing raw materials, to receive and send faxes, to transport goods back and forth from the city, and to interact with a variety of outside individuals.

These experiences proved to the *Tipay Warmis* that contrary to what they had always been taught they had the capacity to develop the skills to be independent. So when they began to think about finding private market clients, this was the approach they had in mind. All they needed to do was to learn how to design their own sweaters and to find a way to connect with the market for expensive handknits. They knew that doing these things would require help, as had past hurdles. The challenge would be how to move beyond subsidized, ATO markets while maintaining their hard-won independence. What they needed was to find a vehicle for entry into the private market that would serve as a stepping stone and not merely lead to new forms of dependence. In the following, I describe what happened with different approaches to re-drawing the lines of power in the global market.

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Conclusion

Contrary to expectations about the efficacy of rural women's organizations, the *Asociacion de Tejedoras 'Tipay Warmi'* overcame a variety of local obstacles and defied the hierarchical structure of the handknit industry to become an independent knitwear producing organization. With income from export sales and support from development institutions, *Tipay Warmi* went beyond merely augmenting household income to actively confront social and cultural forces that subordinate women. The ideological focus and participatory philosophy of the organization became mechanisms for social change, challenging the *status quo* on a number of different levels: knitting high-quality sweaters in a context of participatory production challenged a system which exploits and alienates women's labor; attention to women's rights challenged established gender relations; financial and political independence challenged local political power structures; and educational programs revaluing Andean culture challenged accepted constructions of history which form the basis for racial and ethnic inequality in Bolivia.

In the 1960's and 1970's, export-oriented handknitting in Bolivia had been controlled by private companies which provided a structure for organized production and a connection to markets in other countries. *Tipay Warmi* demonstrated that with strong leadership and organization, knitters could compete with private business in the production of high-quality handknits. Yet, although grassroots organizing provided an alternative structure for production, the inability of knitters to redefine their relationship to the market continued to inhibit their greater success in overthrowing the old system. Making the transition from "alternative," nonprofit clients to more upscale, private markets became a necessary, if difficult step for maintaining the viability of grassroots production and women's political and cultural mobilization. Not only would private market orders have the potential to provide more employment at higher wages, but moving beyond the subsidized, ATO markets would allow the *Tipay Warmis* to become less dependent. And perhaps even more crucial, moving

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into the private market had become an issue of organizational survival, given the current state of the industry.

In many respects, *Tipay Warmi's* cooperative model worked. Grassroots organizing did produce a breach in the coherence of existing power structures. The *Tipay Warmis* did redefine relationships in the Bolivian handknit industry; in local class, ethnic and gender dynamics and in terms of knitters' own self-identity. But despite the inspiring history of grassroots mobilization in Arani, the picture of women's agency drawn by this case study remains qualified. Redefining these boundaries merely shifted frontiers of power rather than erased their existence. This recontouring generated new limitations, threatening to overwhelm the very real gains already won by the *Tipay Warmis*. As I demonstrate in more detail in the following chapters, knitters continued to launch new challenges, but their success remained circumscribed by the structure of the global market for knitwear and ironically, by the internal dynamics of the cooperative endeavor itself.

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Chapter 6

Linking Bolivian Handknitters to Global Markets: USAID's Approach

"Development is really a non-issue...who really cares?...not the American public...there are loads of examples of USAID projects like this, but no public will do anything...there is absolutely no accountability in government...people don't give a shit...no one in USAID lost their position as a result of ADAM--rather they were promoted."

Arthur Tracht, MILMA

"It seemed as if it were going to eat all of the small *artesanías*."

Padre Gerardo, FOTRAMA

Introduction

This chapter highlights the extent to which the structure of the global market ultimately becomes a limiting factor for grassroots organizations like *Tipay Warmi*. Neither their skill at knitting, their ability to create a coherent organization, nor the extension of their mobilization to include educational, cultural and political goals, was sufficient for overcoming the difficulties involved in designing fashionable products that appeal to consumers, or accessing markets in industrialized countries. Although grassroots groups face special problems designing and marketing sweaters, the inability of Bolivian knitwear producers to link up with the market for their sweaters has been an issue since the 1950's. A number of "development agencies" and NGO's have attempted to address these problems through funding for "marketing and design" projects.

As part of a broader strategy for promoting socio-economic development in Latin America, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) became interested in the possibility of establishing some sort of an "umbrella" organization

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to mediate between Bolivian knitwear institutions and the market. *Artesanías Americanas* was an intra-regional craft marketing project created in the 1960's to expand the production and sale of handmade goods, including sweaters, from a variety of Latin American countries. The *Asociación de Artesanía y Moda (ADAM)* was a national-scale effort in the 1980's to transform "traditional" Bolivian handknits into fashionable garments appropriate for upscale apparel markets in the United States and Europe, and to provide "marketing" services to institutions involved in knitwear production in Bolivia.

The general philosophical and political approach advocated by USAID was reflected in way that both projects were conceptualized and structured. The underlying idea in both cases was that it would be possible to create a umbrella organization capable of providing otherwise inaccessible professional marketing services to knitwear producers in a cost-effective way. USAID funding would be a subsidy for start-up costs, but the objective (in line with 1960's Liberal and 1980's Neo-Liberal economic theory) was that these institutions would eventually become private, for-profit institutions operating in accord with the exigencies of the market. Similarly, both projects relied upon the services of experts and professionals in a manner typical of USAID's "developmentalist" orientation. People with professional training, skills and education in areas of marketing and design were brought in to make the new institution function, but it was not intended that any of this knowledge would be diffused down the line to knitwear producers.

Although both projects received significant levels of funding and input from a wide variety of professional consultants, neither one succeeded in creating an ongoing, viable mechanism for connecting Bolivian handknitters to the market. The strategy engendered by USAID's ideology was a top-down approach that did not coincide with the needs and interests of knitwear organizations, nor did it transform structural relationships in export handknitting. Instead, USAID funding merely subsidized the creation of another intermediary. Both projects actually institutionalized the separation of knitwear producers from the market, while at the

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same time retaining disproportionate profits. Moreover, although businesses exporting knitwear or even the handknitters themselves were the ostensible targets of this "development," the politics of the funding process made powerful Bolivian and American elites the real beneficiaries.[1]

Artesanías Americanas: Bitter Medicine

For a brief period of time in the mid-1960's, it seemed like USAID might have the key to solving the problems Bolivian knitwear producers face in gaining access to global markets. The project, ***Artesanías Americanas***, was an umbrella organization for improving, marketing and promoting Latin American crafts. Bolivian knitwear exporters and other artisan producers had quickly discovered that success depended upon more than producing nice sweaters. In fact, finding buyers for their products was often a more intractable problem. The issue was not so much a lack of consumer interest in crafts, but rather the inability of producers to design specific products to appeal to the tastes of foreign markets, to contact and communicate with potential clients, and to guarantee delivery of the merchandise through existing export channels. At the time, institutions interested in the welfare of third world countries, such as the Catholic church, played a role as intermediaries in procuring markets for crafts produced by groups like FOTRAMA. But this market was very limited and therefore incapable of supporting expansion of the industry or providing a price margin on the sale of craft products necessary for maintaining decent wages to the producers.

From the perspective of people interested in socio-economic development in Bolivia, what was needed was a stable, systematic way of marketing the crafts already being produced, ostensibly in a

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[1]Similar outcomes have been documented in two excellent studies of the dymanics the "drug war" in Bolivia, Malamud-Goti (1992:98) shows how U.S. policy has actually promoted the personal interests of Bolivian and DEA officials contravening the broader public interest of effectively controling or erradicating the drug economy, and Painter (1998: 45) demonstrates how as a "result of these interests, poor people are the targets of repression in the name of war on drugs and politically powerful people involved in drug trafficking are seldom arrested or convicted."

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manner that would ensure a reasonable return to artisans and their organizations. Frost and Myers (IAF Document #1 1984: 2-4) describe how USAID collaborated with five Central and South American governments in setting up a crafts marketing organization associated with *Artesanías Americanas* in each country. The Peace Corps and a number of other organizations provided managerial and administrative support, and expert consultants were brought in to assist with more technical aspects of production and marketing. The project was large-scale. A centralized marketing structure with a headquarters in the Empire State Building was created to promote the products in the U.S.; wholesale showrooms in the 225 5th Avenue Trade Center in New York displayed crafts from the 5 countries; *Piñata Party* (the most important craft distributor at the time) was responsible for warehousing and distribution; and there were even two pages in the Sears Roebuck catalogue devoted to the project.

Unfortunately, the effort was beset by major problems from the start. The idea had been to help poor artisans by supporting the institutions involved in production--benevolent, quasi-cooperative or otherwise--with professional marketing services. According to Frost and Myers, the logic for this project grew-out of the success of craft exports from Asia. Following World War II, the U.S. had become involved with the revival of Asian craft industries through support for large-scale private sector importers on the West Coast. Enormous marketing structures associated with the development of the Asian craft export industry emerged in response to the unique cultural, economic, political and historical context of post-War Asian craft production. *Artesanías Americanas* was an attempt to transplant the success of industrial and semi-industrial Asian production systems to the Latin American craft industry, which by the 1960's had already become substantial. Governmental organizations and development agencies saw potential for development projects to promote further growth of the industry. Unfortunately, cloning the sort of massive private sector marketing structures which may have made sense in the Asian case was

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inappropriate for Latin America where crafts continued to reflect a more artesanal system of production.

Nonetheless, at the time the project was hailed as the great savior for Bolivian craft producers. One of my informants worked in the U.S. foreign mission during the 1960's. He describes how impressive the project seemed and what high expectations everyone had regarding its success. A parade of high-profile experts and the project's glitzy packaging lent an air of cosmopolitanism to involvement in artisan production and to the crafts themselves. Yet whatever initial success *Artesanías Americanas* may have enjoyed was ultimately more a reflection of the image created by the project's design than by it's accomplishments. In an uncanny foreshadowing of USAID's involvement in the Bolivian handknit industry 20 years later (see the ADAM project described in the next section), producer organizations complained that *Artesanías Americanas* was attempting to function without respect to their needs, objectives and capabilities. "Benevolent entrepreneurs, " and "quasi-cooperatives" got a taste of their own medicine as centralization of power in the hands of business and marketing experts excluded not only knitters, but the organizations themselves from participating in the decision-making process regarding the disposition of products and profits--thus replicating in the sphere of marketing, important aspects of the power dynamic at work between knitters and management. This resulted in egregious miscalculations regarding production and delivery which negatively affected marketing and sales performance. Although knitters had little direct contact with the project, the people in charge of Bolivian knitwear organizations were embittered by this taste of domination, and the relationship between the project and the producer organizations became confrontational--further exacerbating existing production problems. Although it is tempting to see poetic justice in this arrangement, it was a short-lived form of vengeance. When *Artesanías Americanas* "collapsed as a colossal failure" (IAF Document #1 1984: 3) at the end of the 1960's, few people were really surprised.

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Although *Artesanías Americanas* represented an early recognition of the important role "marketing" can play in bridging the gap between knitwear producers and clients, the project was not designed to offer a real alternative. Just as *FOTRAMA* and *AMERINDIA* essentially reproduced the structure of productive relationships found within the private sector, the project failed to create mechanisms for altering the dependent and subordinate position of Bolivian artisan organizations in the global economy. Frost and Myers (IAF Document #1 1984: 4) state that

> "being denied such an alternative model, the public and nonprofit sectors have been unable to significantly improve upon the benefits provided artisans by the private for-profit sector. The public and non-profit sectors have merely adopted the structures and systems applied by the private, for-profit sector, rationalizing that by "eliminating exploitation" and by the force of their good intentions, the artisans would reap enormous benefits...such has not been the case..."

***ADAM:* USAID Tries Again**

For a brief period during the mid-1980's it appeared that the problems knitters face in obtaining markets would be resolved. USAID launched the *Asociación de Artesanía y Moda "ADAM"*, which was promoted as a marketing and technical training service for existing knitting organizations in Cochabamba (USAID 1985a). With a project budget of US$6 million, ADAM became the talk of the town and was touted by USAID as a "model" development project. However, persistent rumors hinted at trouble. Then, amid what seemed to be a great deal of secrecy and commotion, abrupt announcements informed that ADAM was to cease functioning and that it's assets would be liquidated (*Los Tiempos* May 9, 1990). Newspaper editorials extolled the achievements of the project in opening new markets for alpaca knitwear and raising the standard of living for poor knitters. A slick booklet, pretentiously entitled, *ADAM: Centro de Tejido y Fuente de Trabajo para las Areas Rurales:*

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Una Experiencia Positiva[2] circulated in Bolivia. Its pages were filled with paeans such as

> *"...en medio de una crisis generalizada, que tiñe de gris la realidad cotidiana de nuestro pueblo surgen como oasis en el desierto, algunas iniciativas de gran relieve que suscitan admiración y respeto..."* [3]
>
> "...in the midst of a generalized crisis which gives a gray hue to the everyday life of our people, some initiatives appear like an oasis in the desert to bring relief and command our admiration and respect..."

Regrettably, ADAM was actually an enormous failure, and it is difficult to see how the project's experience could be interpreted as "*positiva*". Not only are ADAM's claims of raising knitters' standard of living false, but ADAM did not provide the promised marketing and technical services. Involvement with ADAM resulted in chaos, dissolution, and financial ruin for a number of previously successful organizations which ADAM was ostensibly created to aid. A USAID official in La Paz admitted to me that it would have been better if they had just handed-out the money to knitters. Indeed, it would have been.

Project Conceptualization

In the mid 1980's, the problem of access to markets was being well-articulated by Bolivian knitting organizations and businesses, providing impetus to USAID funding. At the same time that knitters were crying out for clients, the increasing market potential for alpaca handknits was beginning to be recognized. The impressive success of *Casa Fisher* and *Milma* with what appeared to be an easily produced, low-tech product captured the attention of more than a few observers, and a parade of entrepreneurs and cooperative organizations were entering into the production of handknits. The

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[2]translation: ADAM: Knitting Center and Source of Income for the Rural Areas: A Positive Experience.

[3]ADAM Document: *Revista Informativa* (1985-1989: 23)

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initial project paper which launched ADAM notes that sweater imports into the U.S. in 1982 amounted to $102,961,000. This figure is used to demonstrate the enormous size of the market for knitwear and suggests that Bolivian knitters could take advantage of such huge demand.[4] The increasing popularity of handcrafts in the U.S. would create the perfect niche for Bolivian handknits, and with the marketing services provided by ADAM, Andean handknitters would gain access to markets which would be difficult or impossible to enter on their own. In particular, the upscale, luxury apparel market for fine handknits could command prices which would improve the wages paid to knitters. Using the $6 million investment, ADAM was supposed to aid knitters in standardizing sizing and improving the design and quality of their products to be more appropriate for the U.S. market. According to USAID documents,

> "The strategy behind the project was to transform the approach being followed by Bolivian artisan knitwear organizations from one of producing traditional, low-quality knitwear for unknown local tourists and export markets to a market-oriented approach directed to more profitable overseas markets where the markets are identified first and high quality products are designed and produced in response to market tastes and sold through reliable channels."[5]

The potential of this strategy was viewed as so great that by year 4 the project paper projected that profits would be above $2 million.[6]

The handsome scenario presented in the Project Paper was also well-suited to the existing political climate for USAID funding.[7] Appealing to the cocaine-centricity of U.S. policy in

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[4]ADAM Document: #AID/LAC-P-254 Creative Associates (1988)--what the project paper fails to address is that this huge number represents not only enormous market potential, but also tremendous competition

[5]ADAM Document: #TI/L001/92 (January 9, 1992: 3)

[6]USAID Document (1985a: 106)

[7]See Eckstein (1983: 125)--foreign capital played a role in directing away from revolutionary goals, USAID to 1974 had been instrumental in building up of agr cap class after rev--1974 decides to focus on small farmer--late 70's econ began to deteriorate--need to expand support of econ base.

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Bolivia, knitting was promoted as a way of providing women in Cochabamba and the surrounding region with a source of income which would be an alternative to, and disincentive from migration to the Chapare.[8] As was discussed in Chapter 2, Cochabamba and especially the *Valle Alto* had become important nexes in the cocaine industry. Similar arguments painted expansion of the knitting industry as a means of creating employment for relocalized miners' wives. I found the following narrative in a draft for a press release among the ADAM documents that I studied:

> *"La historia de Maura Quispe es una de estas...al sobrevivir la liquidación de una gran mayoría de los centros mineros por su improductivitdad...Maura movilizó sú familia, conformada a más de sú marido...por cinco hijos y uno en camino. Con otras familias escogieron su ubicación en un sector aledano a la cuidad de Cochabamba...Allí, instalándose en precarias viviendas hechas en su generalidad de adobe...[encontró] la afortunada presencia de la Asociación de Artesanía y Moda...Gracias a éste apoyo, la familia de Maura Quispe tiene para cóstearse el pan diario. El esposo, bueno para nada, vive buscando trabajo y de vez en cuando logra cumplir alguna faena simple para ganarse algunos pesos. Como Maura Quispe, hay otras mujeres, esposas tambien de "relocalizados," que trabajan para ADAM, tejiendo diferentes modelos de chompas..."*
>
> "The history of Maura Quispe is one of these...having survived the closure of the mining centers as a result of their unproductiveness...Maura mobilized her family, which in addition to her husband consists of five children and one on the way. Together with other families they chose to make their home in one of the areas surrounding the city of Cochabamba...there, having installed themselves in precarious houses of adobe...she had the fortune to encounter ADAM...thanks to this support, Maura's family has enough money to pay for their daily

[8]As was noted in Chapter 2, the assumption that women's employment in the knitting industry would reduce male migration to the Chapare was mistaken. My data demonstrate that the opposite is true--knitting provides women with essential income while their husbands are away, possibly *allows* men to migrate.

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> meals. Her husband is a good-for-nothing who lives looking for work and occasionally succeeding in earning a few pesos from doing odd jobs...There are other women who like Maura are the wives of "relocalized" miners who have found work with ADAM knitting different models of sweaters..."

Privatization of Bolivia's nationalized mining industry as part of the mid-1980's structural adjustment program was another key focus of U.S. policy in Bolivia. The radical history of mine workers, together with the simmering social unrest surrounding the closure of the mines and "relocalization" of miners, made any scheme to relieve the growing pressure attractive.[9]

In addition to complementing specific USAID policy objectives in Bolivia, the market orientation of the project found a perfect fit with the emphasis being placed on "free market" approaches to "development" under the Reagan and Bush administrations. ADAM was launched through the Private Sector Division of USAID and documents promote the idea that with the project,

> *"...está surgiendo...un modelo opuesto al anterior en el sector artesanal. Para está a la moda, un "otro sendero" para ayudar a miles de artesanos en el establecimiento de pequeñas empresas. El caso es de la ADAM de Cochabamba. Es una sociedad sin fines de lucro que contribuye, con absoluto desprendimiento, a capacitar technologicamente pero sobre todo empresarialmente, al pequeño empresario para despegar generando su propio desarrollo."* [10]

> "...now emerging is an alternative to the previous model in the artisan sector... an "other path," to use a fashionable phrase, which will help thousands of artisans establish themselves as small businesses. The case is that of ADAM in Cochabamba. It is a non-profit

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[9]June Nash and Rosario Leon went to the USAID Office to try to get a knitting coop going in the mining centers of Oruro and Siglo XX but the officer in charge said that they were putting all their money into paying the indemnity due to laid off miners because they wanted them out of the mining camps (personal communication).

[10]ADAM Document: *Revista Informativa* (1985-1989: 19)

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> organization which contributes with complete selflessness to the technological capacitation of small business owners, with a particular emphasis on the private sector, so that they can generate their own development."

This quote clearly demonstrates that ADAM's "entrepreneurial" approach was held up as an alternative to the "cooperative," social welfare-oriented model represented by the "*FOTRAMA*" tradition in Bolivian knitwear production. Particularly interesting is the use of the phrase "*otro sendero*" which calls attention to the political implications of USAID policy. This phrase was popularized by Peruvian author Hernando De Soto in his book *El Otro Sendero: La Revolución del Sector Informal* (1988)[11] in which he explains how the explosive growth of the "informal sector" normally treated as a problem by third world governments and analysts, is really a manifestation of the inherent entrepreneurial spirit of the people at the grassroots level. The ideological climate of the mid-1980's provided fertile ground for De Soto's message and its conscious play on the different levels of meaning in the phrase "*otro sendero*" ("other path"). Rather than seeing structural forces as the cause of poverty, De Soto blames excessive government regulation for holding back small businesses and stifling the natural forces of the market. If only this momentum can be set free, the "informal sector" will become an alternative "path" to social revolution and to support for left-wing political movements, such as Peru's *Sendero Luminoso* ("Shining Path").

The allusion here to De Soto, in reference to ADAM, is suggestive. During the 1970's and 80's women in Bolivia were increasingly visible in the public sphere previously dominated by political movements controlled by men. The *Amas de Casa* played an important role in bringing the Banzer era to an end, and the Bartolina Sisa Peasant Women's Union was becoming a force to be reckoned with. The imposition of austerity measures in the 1980's challenged basic survival in ways that compelled women to become further

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[11] translation: *The Other Path: The Informal Revolution.*

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involved in political debates.[12] Nash (1990: 339) argues that "women's activities ensuring domestic production are becoming central arenas for the development of consciousness and action for revolutionary change in the present crisis of capitalism." At the same time, the termination of food donations by CARITAS which had attracted women to participate in large numbers in "mothers' clubs" where members were given allotments of *alimentos* ("food stuffs") created sort of a vacuum for channeling women's energies.[13] Women and grassroots organizations were no longer held captive to *donaciones* ("donations") and more radical forms of participation had begun to emerge. Many of my informants expressed the belief that a principle motivation for USAID to sponsor ADAM was as an attempt to control women's participation and to demobilize women's popular movements which might breed challenges to the *status quo*. Most are convinced that ADAM explicitly set-out to destroy their autonomy and the independence of their organizations.

Project Design

Funding for ADAM began in 1985 with an explicit mandate to operate in a "businesslike manner" and avoid a "welfare approach."[14] Despite a good deal of rhetoric about "participation" in the proposal, this mandate translated into a top-down management structure. Although knitwear organizations were led to believe that ADAM was created for them, and that they were to participate in its operations, the project proposal explicitly states that the knitter organizations would not be allowed to take part of the decision-making structure of ADAM.

> "a jointly managed cooperative service organization with a representative of each artisan organization was rejected because it was judged inadvisable to try and get

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[12]Nash (1988, 1990), Leon (1990)

[13]personal communication, Blanca Leon--also see, Dandler, et. al. (1987: 146), Arellano (nd: 19), Bolivia Bulletin (1987b), CERES (1986), Jimenez and Soruco (1989: 34)

[14]USAID Document (1988a)

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naturally competing organizations to cooperate in a joint venture."[15]

"...artisan organizations will not co-manage the Association (creates dependence)...instead, they must simply be sufficiently satisfied with the services they receive to continue to abide by the decisions of the Association's Board."[16]

Instead, at the apex of ADAM's operational structure was a Board of Directors consisting of five prominent Cochabamba business people who, it was stated, had "an interest in developing Bolivian handcrafts":[17]

Joaquin Aguirre	Industrialist
Guido Quiroga	President Bank of Cochabamba
Yolanda E. de Rivera	VP Bank of Cochabamba and owner of Molino San Luiz
Raul Artero	Large Appliance manufacturer
Hugo Galindo	Ford Dealership owner and President, Cochabamba Business Federation, Congressman

ADAM propaganda paints the Board of Directors as individuals who,

"...se interesan por prestar su ayuda a este sector encargado de promover una actividad tan importante como la exportación de nuestra artesanía."[18]

"...are motivated to lend their service to this sector and are charged with improving such an important activity as the export of our *artesania*."

What representatives of ADAM failed to make clear to knitters was that the management of ADAM --with an investment of $1000 apiece--would eventually become full owners of the infrastructure

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[15]USAID Document (1985a: 17)
[16]USAID Document (1985a 67)
[17]USAID Document (1988a: 3)
[18]ADAM Document: *Revista Informativa* (1985-1989:.6)

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established with USAID funding.[19] The language of the proposal is ambiguous and convoluted. Constant references to "participation" and "member" organizations cloak the hierarchical power structure being created and make it difficult for anyone reading the project to realize the implications of a few, key stipulations. For example, the project proposal specifies that for the first four years ADAM was to operate as a non-profit organization with the goal of aiding pre-existing groups to function better, but after that time, ADAM would then become a for-profit enterprise. None of the knitters and groups with whom I spoke were aware of the fact that the Board of Directors were actually "investors" or of ADAM's long-term for-profit objectives. They believed instead, that the objectives for establishing ADAM had been to help knitwear organizations improve the technical quality of their sweaters and to aid in linking Bolivian knitters with international markets.

From the outset then, there were conflicting understandings about how ADAM was to be organized and about its goals. *Tipay Warmi* and a number of other groups that had participated in preliminary discussions with USAID refused to sign the contract when it was presented to them. Because they had not been allowed to participate in designing the terms of the contract, they became suspicious about ADAM's intentions. Interestingly, however, ADAM documents continued to list *Tipay Warmi* as one of the participating organizations. The consultant who did the feasibility study for the project had been very impressed by the *Tipay Warmis* and felt that it was important that they participate.[20] Citing *Tipay Warmi* sweaters as an example of a high quality product, ADAM planned to use their productivity level as a guideline for ADAM knitters. The *Tipay Warmis* told me that while ADAM had contacted them during the planning stage, they refused to join, even when ADAM representatives promised them that they would be the *hijas mimadas* ("spoiled children") of the Association. The *Tipay Warmis* said that they had been shut out of the process when ADAM

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[19]USAID Documents (1985a, 1985c, 1988a, 1988c)
[20]ADAM Document: Bonie Biddix (1985)

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management "*hicieron el Directorio entre ellos*,"[21] and that their history had taught them to be wary. One knitter said they were afraid that "*nos iban a hacer cumplir con chicotazos*"[22] if they agreed to enter the project.

In addition to groups like *Tipay Warmi* that became disillusioned before signing-on with ADAM, lack of access to and inclusion in the decision-making process within ADAM led the other producer organizations to question the nature of their relationship with the Association. One knitter told me that "not even our opinions mattered." The pyramid structure dictated by the private sector for-profit model came into conflict with the cooperative focus of many of the organizations and there was disagreement over the policies and tactics being pursued by ADAM. The arrangement was not what the groups had envisioned from the way the project had been presented to them. In 1988 the producer organizations working with ADAM published an open letter in the newspaper denouncing the project, saying that they were receiving no benefit from ADAM and that they disagreed with its management policies. They announced that they were summarily withdrawing from the Association. ADAM continued operation alone, but with USAID funding until 1990.

Marketing Strategy

Proposal documents which helped to navigate ADAM through the labyrinthian bureaucracy and often Byzantine politics of USAID funding, portray the project as a revolutionary approach to modernizing the Bolivian handknit industry. Central to the project's strategy was the idea of "professionally" marketing alpaca

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[21] "They formed the Board of Directors among themselves."--*Tipay Warmi* is listed as one of the production groups selected by ADAM to participate as a founding member. *Tipay Warmi* says that ADAM begged them but that they never participated. There is reasonable evidence to suggest that the group did some contract knitting for ADAM without actually becoming a member organization. However, *Tipay Warmi* continues to appear in ADAM's list of member organizations through 1989 but no production is shown. An evaluation report prepared that year failed to question why no production statistics were listed for *Tipay Warmi*, even thought they had been cited as such a productive group in the original proposal. No knitters were interviewed for that report.

[22] "they would use a whip to make us work"

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handknits in order to "open new markets" and capture a share of the multi-billion dollar sweater sales in the U.S. Given the $6 million allocated to the project, USAID was apparently convinced by this scenario. Yet in light of the project's subsequent abysmal performance, these objectives appear to require more pragmatic scrutiny. Early in the project's development red flags were already being raised. The consultant who authored the original market analysis and feasibility study for the project warns that all of the marketing and fashion experts interviewed were very negative about the prospects for Andean handknits and that NO ONE wanted to be involved.[23] Not even the project's generous budget could entice them to participate. Overall, the project was deemed "ill-defined" and lacking a coherent marketing strategy.[24] But these misgivings appear to have had little impact because, rather than being reconsidered for funding, ADAM gained momentum and support.

The key marketing component of ADAM's operation was supposed to be achieved by obtaining the services of a professional marketer in the U.S. to be responsible for representing Bolivian knitwear and expanding the client base.[25] Congressional regulations for USAID funding required that the marketer be selected through an "open" bid process. Of the few bids received, two were given serious consideration.[26] "MATUS" was a small, family-owned enterprise run by a couple who had worked for a number of years with FOTRAMA. While the company was a for-profit business from which the couple earned the income off of which they lived, religious sentiments and a desire to contribute to improving the economic condition of handknitters played a strong role in MATUS' operational dynamic. Given the negative reception that the ADAM idea had received from industry professionals, and the problems inherent in attempting to re-orient handknit production for the rigorous demands of the export market, the consultant advises that,

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[23]ADAM Document: Bonnie Biddix (1985)

[24]ADAM Document: Bonnie Biddix (1985: 12, 30)

[25]A legitimate question also arises over what "ADAM" was being paid so much to "do" if the producer groups were to knit the sweaters and the marketing was to be contracted-out.

[26]four are listed (ADAM Document: Bonnie Biddix 1985)

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> "this unique market situation indeed takes a special brand of U.S. marketer. A socially aware one; a patient one. And one sized appropriately so as not to overwhelm the producing entity with an order so large as to kill current and future sales."[27]

She "strongly recommends" that MATUS is the only viable candidate for the bid. In the end, however, neither the results of the study nor the recommendations of the consultant held much sway, and instead, the contract was given to "Global Exchange International." Apparently, Global Exchange had much more important credentials than MATUS for obtaining the bid through USAID: political connections.

Among the USAID documents I examined, I uncovered a series of letters which shed some light on the selection of Global Exchange to market ADAM knitwear. During the period when USAID was soliciting bids for the marketing service contract, the Vice President of an organization called the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, contacted the Chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee about Global Exchange, a "minority-owned" Ohio company interested in the contract. The following are excerpts from that letter:

> "Just how this company can be helpful to the interests of the Republican party and the current administration is not exactly clear to me, except that I have a strong feeling the possibilities are very real."

> "If you find ways or have ideas of how Global Exchange as an 8A company controlled by a minority interest can be helpful, I'm sure they would be glad to hear from you. A personal interview with Keith Meyers or one of his key associates might best develop what interactions would be productive between the Republican Administration and this unique organization. Would you be willing to arrange

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[27]ADAM Document: Bonnie Biddix (1985 15)

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> such a dialogue with either yourself or "the right person.""

The letter indicates that a carbon copy was forwarded to Ohio Republican Headquarters. A later communication from August 20 implies that the Ohio Farm Bureau is an investor in Global Exchange--an interesting state of affairs, given the $2 million dollar three-year contract that ADAM subsequently signed with Global Exchange. The political intrigue suggested by these documents is well beyond the scope of this study. They do, however, create the impression that Global Exchange was chosen over MATUS for reasons other than the characteristics identified as salient by the original market analysis. It is not surprising then that Global Exchange was unable to fulfill its responsibilities in marketing alpaca knitwear.

ADAM became USAID's pet project in Bolivia and ADAM management cultivated a positive image for the project within USAID and in the Bolivian media.[28] Newspaper editorials praised ADAM's beneficial work for the poor and told of export prizes being won, and published photos showed grateful *cholitas* shaking hands with ministers and businessmen.[29] The inauguration of a building purchased by the project was pompously celebrated by a visit from "Miss Bolivia 1987," Brigitt Ellefsen, who tried on ADAM sweaters and proclaimed them soft and beautiful.[30] Yet trouble lay just beneath this seemingly placid surface. By the end of the first year, relations between ADAM and Global Exchange had become strained. Earlier estimates expected the project to "produce 380,000 pieces with an export value of $15 million."[31] Later projections ranged from 28,000 pieces for 1986 to 132,000 for 1989.[32] Unfortunately, although Global Exchange had been paid $700,000, (including

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[28]Accusations that ADAM "planted" stories in the media have been made and at least one journalist for a major newspaper alledges that he was asked to write a bogus story praising ADAM's success.

[29]*Los Tiempos* (1-23-90); ADAM Document: *Revista Informativa* (1985-1989)

[30]The anti-indigenous, eurocentric message is implicit in the figure of the leggy, blond, Scandinavian Brigitt Ellefsen chosen as the quintessential representative of the Bolivian standard of beauty.

[31]ADAM Document: Joseph Thomas and Tamara Tiffany (1988: 1)

[32]ADAM Document: Joseph Thomas and Tamara Tiffany (1988: Annex 3)

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$118,000 for glitzy New York and Boston showrooms) they had only managed to sell 220 sweaters![33] With ADAM thus unable to come anywhere near expected sales targets, the golden reputation which had been so cleverly constructed was jeopardized. When low numbers attracted attention from USAID, ADAM complained that it was unable to achieve projected goals because Global Exchange had failed to comply with their contractual agreement and had not provided the expected marketing services. In 1988, ADAM terminated the relationship with Global Exchange, retained MATUS as the project's new marketer,[34] and managed to create the illusion that everything else was going along fine. Amazingly, despite having achieved only a tiny fraction of sales goals, a 1988 USAID project evaluator was still able to find that project performance had been "impressive"![35]

As the original study had suggested, MATUS was a much more appropriate marketer for ADAM knitwear. During the first year, MATUS sold almost 8000 pieces (including 5000 old model FOTRAMA sweaters without commission), an impressive increase over Global Exchange's achievements. Yet the relationship between MATUS and ADAM had also begun to sour. Even with 8000 sales, ADAM remained significantly below the still exaggeratedly optimistic revised sales targets of 22,000 for 1988 outlined in project documents.[36] But MATUS argued that the problems lay with ADAM itself. At the end of 1988, MATUS informed that even with the return of personal capital to the business, ADAM sales had left their accounts in the red. They identify two principle reasons that sales failed to be self-supporting[37]:

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[33]USAID Document (1988a)

[34]ADAM Document: *Aporte de ADAM a las organizaciones artesanales gestion 1987*

[35]USAID Document (1988a)--Malamud Goti (1992) offers a perspective which potentially sheds light on why this might have occurred. He found that "shared irregularities" (p. 98) and "deliberate inaccuracies" (p. 99) were common within the "drug war" bureaucracy where officials attempt to "optomize their own situations" (p. 99), often at the expense of broader public interests and success of a particular project or exercise.

[36]ADAM Document: Joseph Thomas and Tamara Tiffany (1988: 6)

[37]ADAM Document: #AID/LAC/-P-254 Creative Associates (1988)

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1) ADAM was incapable of completing orders adequately and on time--this led to last minute cancellations, increasing MATUS inventory

2) Lack of samples for representatives makes it impossible to sell

Production problems were clearly plaguing the project. Orders of any substantial size were anywhere from 33 to 90 percent incomplete. The nature of these problems will be discussed below, but for MATUS the ramifying effects on their marketing responsibilities were unacceptable. MATUS proposed that they would come to Bolivia to supervise production "*bajo llave.*"[38]

The clear implication of MATUS' analysis was that blame for the inability of ADAM to meet targets was shifted away from the marketing agent and onto the shoulders of ADAM management. Not surprisingly, ADAM rejected this explanation and the indictment of management implicit in any such focus on production as the source of trouble. Instead, ADAM's ex-Executive Director, Rolando Kempff, says that MATUS lacked aggressiveness. He told me that he believes that the couple was just too old for the challenges of the position. Furthermore, ADAM was not pleased at the prospect of having MATUS come to Bolivia to "supervise" production. Not only was this idea an unacceptable affront to management authority, but as will be discussed below, ADAM had become involved in a series of shady investment schemes to broaden the base of knitwear operations to include yarn production and camelid husbandry. Undoubtedly, details of these business dealings were not designed to be shared. Communications between the two institutions became increasingly antagonistic.[39] ADAM rejected MATUS' arguments, responding with the specious claim that "ADAM is producing with real costs and competing with other businesses in the environment without subsidy...MATUS should do the same..."

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[38]translation= strict supervision under "lock and key"

[39]ADAM Document: #AID/LAC/-P-254 Creative Associates (1988)

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Oversized Overhead

Subsidy and the issue of "real cost" are important aspects of the ADAM story. As the quote above demonstrates, ADAM was fond of presenting the project as a prime example of the operation of the free market--shrewd business skills succeeding in a highly competitive environment. To construe the experience in this fashion was in keeping with the free market ideology used to conceptualize the project. Original project documents specify that "the Association will specialize and keep its staff small, projected at 5,"[40] and during the early phase, Kempff writes that "*los gastos se han efectuado con estrito sentido de austeridad.*"[41] This was not what actually happened. Instead, ADAM used the "subsidy" provided by the project budget to create a bloated and top-heavy bureaucratic structure. The number of employees seemed to increase inversely to productivity, given the low production and sales figures demonstrated by the project's books. Estimates at the number of employees, not including knitters, range from 75[42] or 80[43] to 144.[44] A corporate-like management structure was being instituted to dominate the system of artisanally produced knitwear.

It would be difficult to find accepted business principles to justify this structure, the design of which bore no relationship whatsoever to the actual production and sale of alpaca sweaters. Imagining the sum of money necessary to support the salaries of this many professionals and employees makes the system seem ridiculous and extravagant. When viewed in the context of the miserable wages paid to knitters in the handknit industry, this extravagance is revealed to be a travesty. Kempff later defended the gargantuan structure to me, saying that the idea was to "train" a lot of people.

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[40]USAID Document (1985a: 12)

[41]"spending has been carried out with a strict sense of austerity"--ADAM Document: Joseph Thomas and Tamara Tiffany (1988: 3)

[42]ADAM Document: Coopers and Lybrand, October (1989 1)

[43]*Los Tiempos* (5-9-90: 5)

[44]ADAM Document: Contract-*Convenio de Asistencia*

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To complement this enormous bureaucracy, ADAM quickly increased overhead spending. The project rented and then purchased a beautiful, spacious colonial building near the center of Cochabamba for it's managerial headquarters. A large tract of land in an outlying rural area of the *Valle Bajo* was acquired with the intention of building a factory to house knitting machines to increase production through hand-looming. And to make these facilities functional, the project imported sewing and pressing machines designed for use in industrial garment production, and outfitted management with computer equipment for their offices and vehicles for moving about the city in style. The price tag for these acquisitions surpassed $1 million of the project budget. The fabulous, glitzy facilities served to impress visitors and helped to fuel the media campaign praising the project's "obvious" success.

To all appearances, ADAM was doing an amazing job. But fundamental aspects of the project's operations had not been resolved. Over time, problems began to fester. At the same time that ADAM was failing to uncover new markets, the disruptive manner in which the project operated in Bolivia was causing a rift between ADAM and participating knitting groups. To meet the envisioned demand of production which would accompany the boom created through project sales, ADAM purchased almost a half a million dollars in yarn stocks. Knitting organizations were encouraged to similarly increase their stocks of raw materials to be able to produce for the expected increase in sales ADAM would provide. Loans made available through ADAM affiliation allowed the groups to capitalize these purchases. When the project failed to reach even one tenth of the projected sales, knitters were left repaying loans they could not afford and a number of groups were driven into bankruptcy. Of course, "excessive purchases"[45] of yarn stock did not drive ADAM under because, unlike the groups, the project was underwritten by such a large operating budget.

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[45]ADAM Document: Coopers and Lyband (1990: 2)

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Co-optation

Even more derisive were charges leveled against ADAM that rather than promoting the knitting organizations, ADAM had entered into the production of its own line of sweaters and was now competing with the other producer groups. USAID's final evaluation of the project identifies this as ADAM's "most notorious" and "glaring" deviation:

> "...as clearly stated in the original project proposal, there was never an intention of creating a commercial/productive association. ADAM was designed to be a service organization, providing technical assistance to artisan associations."[46]

> "As project implementation proceeded, it became increasingly clear that ADAM would be unable to reach its targets. In order to keep the project on course, the emphasis of ADAM slowly changed from that of helping artisan knitwear organizations produce and sell their products overseas, to being a producer in direct competition with them. This deviation from the original concept was probably the key factor in the project's demise."[47]

Despite the project's inability to uncover new markets or to come even close to projected sales targets, ADAM claimed that producer organizations were unable to provide sufficient quantity and quality of sweaters for ADAM's orders. ADAM's management convinced USAID that it was necessary for ADAM to become directly involved in production. With the $6 million of public funding as a subsidy for production, ADAM was easily able to undercut the selling prices other groups needed to operate. Subsidies gave ADAM the power to keep profit margins high and production costs low. This advantage effectively undercut the ability of the other organizations to match such a low price without drastically reducing the amount paid for the labor. Instead of using USAID funds to create a viable long-term

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[46]ADAM Document: #TI/L001/92 (January 9, 1992: 8)
[47]ADAM Document: #TI/L001/92 (January 9, 1992: 4)

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marketing structure or even to maintain a decent wage for knitters, ADAM passed the subsidy on to the buyer, offering a sweater worth $50 or $75 for only $25 or $30.

Although ADAM later took credit for "opening the American market," analysis of ADAM's list of clients demonstrates that almost no new customers were added:

Summary ADAM Export Orders 1987-1988[48]

Buyer	# sweaters ordered
MATUS	3924 + 811
Pavo Real	832 + 611
Peter Whalen	1382
Milma	1398
Svenosen	54
Vanesita	60
Misc.	42

Milma, *Pavo Real* and Whalen had all been involved in the alpaca knitwear industry for many years and ADAM really played no role in "creating" this market. Instead, ADAM basically just sold sweaters to clients who were already buying alpaca knitwear--only now they could switch to the cheaper product offered by ADAM. As part of the original operating agreement between ADAM and the knitting organizations, ADAM gained access to lists of knitters and clients already developed by the groups. According to the organizations whose leaders I interviewed, the loss of clients who decamped to ADAM deprived them of the principle market which had allowed them to be independent, and many were no longer able to survive. The USAID official I spoke with in La Paz lamented that many of the organizations were doing just fine until they hooked-up with ADAM.

To make matters worse, knitwear organizations charged that ADAM did not create its own production groups, but instead began producing with the same people already employed in the industry. Using the list of knitters provided by the organizations, ADAM was able to lure away the best-trained women with an incentive program based on percentages. ADAM instituted "a system of bonus and

[48]ADAM Document: Joseph Thomas and Tamara Tiffany (1988: Annex 7)

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incentive payments...to provide capacity to production."[49] A more blatant description found in ADAM documents demonstrates what was entailed by that approach:

> "...technical difficulties and natural resistance which can be anticipated in *applying concepts* to knitting organizations...need to initiate pilot projects which would *overcompete*...use bonuses and profit centers where discrete operational units compete."[50] {emphasis added}

Attracted by the bonus system, the most skilled knitters became "promoters" or links in a putting-out system where other knitters worked under their direction for piece-wages. Promoters did not teach knitters how to assemble and finish sweaters, and thus, knitters were kept dependent. The promoter would assemble the pieces and increase the percentage earned per sweater.

This system of independent home-work production groups linked directly to ADAM through individual promoters may appear to reproduce the existing system of knitwear production, but actually differs in significant ways. The "*FOTRAMA*" production system used by most knitwear organizations in Bolivia creates a network of "member" groups which receive some level of benefit from association with the umbrella organization beyond the wage received for knitting. With the underlying profit orientation of ADAM production, knitters were not "part" of the organization, but rather piece-rate hand-workers. The logical outcome of such a transformation of the production system is evidenced by Waterbury's (1989: 126) study of the Oaxaca embroidery industry where "self-employed" producers become increasingly dependent upon "buyers-up." The organizations claim that ADAM purposely promoted this type of dependence by refusing to include any margin in the sweater price to provide for the maintenance of the participating groups as independent entities. Instead, ADAM just

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[49]USAID Document (1988c)
[50]USAID Document (1988a: 25)

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bypassed the groups and paid promoters directly, making their institutions appear superfluous. This system allowed ADAM to "overcompete." When ADAM management was eventually forced to respond to these charges, they argued that the organizations had failed to pass on wage increases to the knitter.[51]

Super-Exploitation

Like the 18th century merchant capitalists discussed by Schlumbohm (1981), ADAM was attempting to centralize control over the production of sweaters away from the independent groups. This shift in control gave ADAM the power to keep profit margins high and production costs low by driving the price paid for knitting down. Although one of ADAM's principal stated objectives[52] was to increase women's income from knitting, any benefits which trickled-down to knitters through the hypothetical increase in available employment were, in fact, incidental. Because knitwear organizations signed separate contracts with ADAM for marketing their products, ADAM was able to play the producer organizations off of each other to maintain the price paid for labor at a lower cost than was being demanded by the knitters. Official evaluations attributed ADAM with the responsibility of having raised the income of knitters from US$1.50 to $12.00 per sweater.[53] The data I collected challenge this claim. The $1.50 ADAM claimed was being paid for a sweater in 1985 was not for a high quality sweater with difficult stitching and a combination of colors, but for a cheap, loose-stitch sweater with virtually no sizing or quality control. These sweaters could be knit in one or two days and sold to tourists in the local market. The sweaters being demanded by the international market took anywhere from 1-3 weeks to knit, with extremely complicated patterns and stitching.

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[51] If ADAM was paying the wage with no institutional margin for the organization, if the organization withheld an amount from the wage to cover expenses, even a good wage would be diminished. (USAID Document 1988a)

[52] USAID Document (1985a)

[53] USAID Document (1988a: 5) and *Los Tiempos* (5-22-90)

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Because of the exigencies of the quality control system for export, knitters often were forced to re-knit portions of a sweater to correct small irregularities, or were fined an amount subtracted from the original wage for the sweater. For example, a sweater with a wage of 30 *Bolivianos* might be reduced to 27 or 25 after subtracting out fines for quality control. Knitters believe that ADAM quality control personnel were instructed to purposely find as many flaws in the sweaters as possible, and would find fault where the knitter says there was none. Knitters point out that they are not machines and that a handknit sweater will never appear as regular as a machine knit garment, in fact that is what many people who purchase handmade sweaters like about them. It is therefore misleading to equate wages for sweaters that require extremely different amounts of labor.

Moreover, while in 1985 ADAM was claiming that knitters made $1.50 per sweater, records of other groups who were knitting for export demonstrate that knitters were already actually making approximately $8.00 for a high-quality, exportable product.[54] Nor is there evidence to suggest that any increase in the average $8 wage which may have occurred during the period when ADAM was in operation can be attributed to the project. Instead, it is more likely that a combination of economic and sociological forces which were independently promoting the expansion of the handknit industry, together with the positive influence of cooperative organizations like *Tipay Warmi*, acted to create upward pressure on knitting wages.

As with most handcrafts, the devaluation of women's labor is an important factor in maintaining profits.[55] Hence, the very design of ADAM as a hierarchical, profit-making venture which explicitly disallowed participation from below meant that it was possible for management policy to try to keep production costs low by reducing wages for knitting.[56] The above quoted "applying concepts" refers to this process of reducing the cost of production, elsewhere

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[54]IAF Document #1 (1984)
[55]Berik (1989)
[56]USAID Documents (1985a, 1988a)

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explained by ADAM as the need to "de-bug" the system by "changing mentalities."[57] Although the original Project Paper indicates that "as sweater sales increase and administrative overhead declines, retained earnings will increase, thus enabling artisan organizations to pay their knitters even more," later mis-application of this same concept of "diminishing marginal return" is used to justify lowering the wage paid for knitting a sweater. The principal impediment to ADAM's success, according to the proposed analysis, was the inability of knitters to understand

> "the inverse relation between productivity and earnings. They feel that as they produce higher quality, more difficult designs, earnings should increase in proportion to the quality and level of difficulty. In fact, in order for ADAM to become more competitive in the international market, it will have to lower the cost of its products to overseas buyers. This means that as the knitters become more productive, they will receive less per unit, but greater total earning..."[58]

ADAM evaluators suggest that like mechanized, factory-produced goods, a "diminished per unit margin" on the wage paid for each sweater "implies a greater total profit" to the knitter through increased volume sales.[59] What this analysis fails to recognize, however, is that handknit sweaters cannot be equated with machine-made ones. Women are not machines; their homes are not factories. With mechanized production, capital investment in machinery makes the price of each product high if the factory is producing below capacity. As volume of production increases to capacity, no further capital investment is necessary and the price per unit can fall, while total profits will rise.

For an artisan, this is not the case. Overhead costs are fixed at a low level in the form of the artisan's home. In addition, each article produced contains a fixed amount of labor and raw materials.

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[57]USAID Document (1988a: 24, 26)
[58]USAID Document (1988a: 26-27)
[59]USAID Document (1988a: 13)

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If an artisan can produce one sweater at a cost of $8, the labor cost involved in producing 20 sweaters will still be $8 apiece. In order to maintain the knitter's wage at an acceptable level, any decrease in unit cost would have to come from the ability of the cottage industry supplier to reduce overhead expenses, for example through buying raw materials in bulk at a lower price or through spreading the cost of administration more widely over the individual sweaters produced. Indeed, it was difficult for knitters to accept the idea that as they become more productive, they would receive less wage per unit, but more profit in total. At the same time that ADAM expenditures for upper level management, bureaucracy and equipment were overtly expanding, knitters were being asked to tighten their belts. Knitters did not have to be "rocket scientists" to understand the contradiction.

Whether out of ignorance or malice, this misuse of the concept of "diminishing marginal return" allowed ADAM to appear to promote one of the central assumptions of the growth-oriented, free market ideology upon which ADAM was based--attempting to correlate low productivity with women's poverty. The argument was that knitters were "unproductive" because as a result of a lack of sweater orders, each knitter was unable to knit full-time. Full productivity appears to have been calculated at 26 sweaters per year (52 weeks--2 weeks per sweater).[60] The envisioned rise in productivity would occur as a result of the increase in work available from the new markets to be opened by the project. Not only does this argument ignore the fact that given the miserable wages paid for knitting, even with "increased productivity," knitters will still be poor, but it is based upon a flawed understanding of women's labor. Many knitters are working at or near their own capacity already. Women often knit 7 or 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week, the bulk of which is done late at night or in the early hours of the morning by candlelight. In addition, women in rural households have many other tasks and responsibilities which may take precedence over their knitting, despite the importance of the income gained from the sale of a

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[60]USAID Document (1985a: 49)

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sweater. This failure to identify the variety of productive activities which occur within the household allowed project design to focus solely on the productivity of sweater-knitting as income-generation and treated other activities as superfluous, when in fact, they may be integral to household subsistence. Instead, the model took advantage of the increasing level of poverty being generated by neo-liberal government policies which forced women to seek to increase productivity in all spheres of activity, beyond those related directly to the money economy. Treating knitting as something that women can increase in their "free time" misconstrues the realities of women's lives.

Investment, Speculation and Monopoly

It became increasingly clear to many observers that ADAM's objectives were other than those originally presented to the knitwear organizations.[61] In 1988, an Oxfam Trading representative surveying Bolivian handicraft producers suggested that

> "it is an enormous pity, better said a scandal, that there is currently a significant process of disorganization being undertaken by the new North American-sponsored business."[62]

In fact, knitter organizations became convinced that ADAM was trying to control the entire production process, including the supply of raw materials. According to a 1989 USAID evaluation, ADAM's management had begun what the report calls an "ambitious" plan to control vertical linkages.[63] ADAM and its directors were speculating with project funds on the potential of ADAM to increase the market for alpaca and llama garments. Using their connections to government institutions and project funders, ADAM became

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[61]Allegations that ADAM was involved in cocaine trafficking and money laundering were also made by a number of my informants. I have no specific evidence to support these claims, but in the context of charges against people in the upper echelons of Bolivian society, including ex-Presidents Garcia Mesa and Jaime Paz Zamora, and the shady activities of the project's management, nothing would seem too farfetched.

[62]Millard (1988: 13)

[63]USAID Document (1988a: 27)

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involved in a scheme to corner the market for camelid fiber and create a private monopoly in the supply of raw materials for knitting exports.[64]

The original Project Paper which served as a sort of feasibility study for the ADAM project points out that Bolivia is the source of 70% of the world's llama production and suggests that this would be a good resource to exploit to promote economic development in the country.[65] Of the three million camelids in Bolivia, 2,700,000 are llamas, while only 300,000 are alpacas.[66] Llama fiber tends to be rough and scratchy compared to the softer alpaca currently used in export knitting. However, a little known fact is that llamas have a mixed coat which includes two types of hair. Using industrial "de-hairing" equipment it is possible to extract the softer fibers and produce yarn which is softer than alpaca, and almost as fine and valuable as cashmere.[67] Llama and alpaca fiber also come in fourteen natural colors, the greatest natural range available for knitwear production. With the increasing interest in natural and undyed fiber for the growing "green" market, the potential for llama fiber production was apparent. Although subsequent documents rarely discuss this aspect of the project, according to USAID officials I interviewed, a basic premise of the funding was that ADAM would develop a de-haired llama fiber industry. This was supposed to promote the exploitation of an underutilized resource in Bolivia and create ramifying effects in the socio-economic development of rural areas where llama herding is a primary activity. In addition, the greater availability of llamas in Bolivia would provide a supply of cheap raw materials for the knitting aspect of the project. After ADAM was already in operation, the cost of the industrial de-hairing machinery turned-out to be prohibitive and USAID's intention to develop a llama yarn industry was abandoned.

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[64]USAID Document (1988a)
[65]USAID Document (1985a: 55)
[66]ADAM Document (January 1987: 13)
[67]ADAM Document: *Revista Informativa* (1985-1989: 35)

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Attracted by the prospects, however, ADAM management did not give up the idea of expanding the project to encompass a broad sphere of activities. Rolando Kempff told me that ADAM *"quería desarrollar toda la questión."*[68] Braggingly, he added that they were able to do this because they had "contacts." Projected figures for ADAM knitwear production indicated that ADAM would need approximately 90,000 to 100,000 kilos of alpaca by 1989.[69] Given the high price of alpaca yarn, most of which must be imported from industrial spinneries in Peru, ADAM used this envisioned increase in demand to justify pursuing a cheaper and more stable source of raw materials. Using the rhetoric of "promoting development" and the influential "connections" of the project's Board of Directors, ADAM became involved in a series of "joint ventures" with the European Economic Community, the World Bank and the *Junta del Acuerdo de Cartegena*. Investments included a dyeing plant, a spinnery, a factory to process camelid hides, an alpaca yarn stock bank, and even a camelid husbandry project with 200,000 animals in the highlands of Cochabamba.[70]

USAID evaluators criticize ADAM for being overly ambitious.[71] With such poor performance in sweater production and sales, it did not make any sense for ADAM to devote so much energy to increasing the scope of its activities. The evaluation offers the pragmatic recommendation that ADAM focus on making the knitting project work before pursuing other involvements. Yet the evaluation fails to discuss crucial details of ADAM's investment campaign which make the deals much more problematic than poor management. These investments attempted to capitalize on ADAM's role as a "development" project to attract cooperation and financing from institutions involved in promoting socio-economic development in the Third World. One informant told me that ADAM wanted to obtain the aborted $6 million Viacha spinnery project from the World Bank

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[68]translation= "wanted to develop the entire question"
[69]ADAM Document: (January 1987: 13)
[70]ADAM Document: #ADAM/089/88 (1988), and ADAM Document: *Revista Informativa* 1985-1989.
[71]USAID Document: (1988a: 27)

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for only $500,000.[72] Kempff indicated that he expected the hide processing factory to be "donated" to "promote development." However, ADAM was actually using the guise of the project and project funds, to speculate and create private investments. The legalities of these deals were being orchestrated to operate as private businesses,[73] and the secret of ADAM's eventual transformation into a privately owned enterprise really meant that any investment made by the project would inevitably become the private property of the "investors."

Meier (1984: 442-3) writes that "...merchant capital can subordinate independent producers only if it is able to monopolize access to raw materials, credit, expertise or the market." The implications of ADAM's expansion into camelid husbandry and yarn production are clear. Monopolizing all aspects of the production process would effectively shut-out the smaller producers and at the same time, decisively destroy the cooperative and non-profit organizational structures around which many of them were organized. Affiliation with the project and the disorganization among producer groups caused by that association allowed ADAM to appropriate the system of production which knitters had developed through their own efforts. Centralizing control of key inputs would allow ADAM to further force the wage paid to knitters down and more thoroughly co-opt productive structures already established by the groups. USAID funding effectively socialized the entry costs for Bolivian elites into artisan activities and export markets while providing an opportunity for speculation, threatening to allow control over an even broader base of activities and make it too expensive for small producers to compete.

Closing Down: "A Total Whitewash"

But ADAM's aspirations were not to be realized. USAID terminated the project before the investment process was able to

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[72]The Viacha spinnery had been a World Bank project which was abandoned when the project went over budget. (ADAM Document: USAID memo--Ulla Ulla Rural Development Project)

[73]For example, ADAM Document: *Junta del Acuerdo Cartegena--JUNAC* (1988: IX-5)

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crystallize. Ironically, in the end the project was not closed over incompetent management, lack of production and sales, competing with artisan producers, or even misinvestment of project funds. It was only when ADAM began to step on the toes of people who have more power and influence than its "member" Bolivian knitting organizations that the project was reined in. According to Arthur Tract, the co-owner of *Milma*,

> "We subcontracted a big order for one sweater that was having a lot of success with ADAM...Instead of producing for us, they produced our design and sold it directly to the same client for less--we saw the invoice...USAID Bolivia wouldn't listen to us because ADAM was their pet project--a showcase for development--so we took our case to DC...a couple of renegade USAID people helped us...We had more clout than some of the other people who were already complaining about how ADAM operated...We entered a lawsuit but settled out of court."

ADAM had attempted to employ the same tactics with *Milma* which had proven so effective in dealing with the knitwear organizations. But as U.S. citizens, the owners of *Milma* were protected under a clause which stipulates that it is illegal to use USAID funds to compete with a U.S. business. The inspector general was called in to investigate *Milma's* charges and found that "allegations of product dumping were in fact true."[74] Kempff defended ADAM's actions saying that the design *Milma* was claiming that they stole was "altered" before they sold it to the client, and besides, it was from a previous year. He said that ADAM was forced to close because other sweater producers were "jealous" of ADAM's success.

Few people are aware of *Milma's* charges or of the out-of-court settlement. Kempff's version of ADAM's closing is the one which is well-known in Bolivia, even within USAID. When the project was shut-down, a barrage of congratulatory publicity appeared, including the slick *ADAM: Una Experiencia Positiva* booklet

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[74]ADAM Document: #TI/L001/92 (January 9, 1992: 12)

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and numerous praise-filled editorials. Calling the closing "a total whitewash," Arthur Tracht says that

> "They canned the project and sent down someone from the Inspector General's office but never really sent us any evaluation or anything. But then a laudatory letter faxed around, congratulating Rolando Kempff on a job well done and saying that ADAM was closing because it had achieved its goals."

Even a USAID official I interviewed referred to the whole thing as "a farce." A revealing quote from the USAID final evaluation demonstrates that these characterizations are not exaggerations:

> "...in June 1990, mission officers met with ADAM's Board of Directors and agreed to the closing of the project. This agreement included conditions under which press releases could be made, and face-saving comments authorized by the mission in order *to hide the real reasons behind ADAM's closing*, (i.e., poor management) which ultimately placed ADAM's closing in a better light."[75] (emphasis added)

Balancing the Books?

But the story did not end with ADAM's closing. Although the official Price-Waterhouse examination of the project's finances provides "a clean opinion on the balance sheet,"[76] details of the audit leave lingering doubts. At the very least, the audit uncovers glaring incompetence and mismanagement in the operation of the project. A sampling of the management errors includes, the failure to obtain payment guarantees from customers, export taxes were not paid for 1986, and the determination of the sales price of ADAM's sweaters was "not in accordance with generally accepted accounting

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[75]ADAM Document: #TI/L001/92 (January 9, 1992: 12)
[76]ADAM Document: Coopers and Lybrand (1990: 2)

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principles because certain production costs are not included."[77] More troubling is that

> "...the audit disclosed that the contractor (ADAM) and the subcontractor (Global Exchange) had not complied with applicable laws, regulations, and agreement terms and that not all contract costs claimed were reasonable, eligible and allocatable. In addition, the contractor's books and records were generally inadequate, causing a lack of internal and financial controls to account for project costs."[78]

Analysis of Global Exchange's books showed that

> "GEI lacked adequate financial and internal controls, a proper accounting system in place and appropriate books and records to account for AID project funds. There was no conventional ledger or similar record and financial data was summarized in miscellaneous forms and worksheets...GEI billed excessive salary and personal transfer costs, billed airfare and health costs that were not reimbursable under the contract, salary and benefit costs were sometimes claimed twice and entertainment and non-compliance housing costs were claimed."[79]

Examination of ADAM's affairs reveals similar voids and weaknesses. For example:

> --accounting practices not in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles[80]

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[77]ADAM Document: #TI/L001/92 (January 9, 1992: 12)

[78]ADAM Document: #TI/L001/92 (January 9, 1992: 9)

[79]ADAM Document: #TI/L001/92 (January 9, 1992: 11)--Given the political intrigue involved in GE's selection to market knitwear, the incompetence demonstrated in carrying out marketing activities and the subsequent discrepancies found in the company's books have also led some people to allege that the company was really just a front to obtain money for a "slush" fund for financing covert political activities in the U.S.

[80]ADAM Document: Coopers and Lybrand (1990: 3)

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--$9,211 and $80,306 are questionable costs, but since they actually represent such a small percentage of the multi-million dollar budget, they are "not considered significant"[81]

--no accounting documentation for $43,177.72 in 1986

--$31,324 missing in bad accounting of raw materials and changing valuation of Bolivian currency

--$295,431 to Global Exchange not registered in books[82]

The original argument for placing the project in the hands of prominent business people rather than designing it as an NGO was in order to take advantage of the benefits which would accrue to the project from the business skills and experience of the private sector.[83] Very little in the way of "business skill" was passed-on to knitters by giving millions of dollars in public funds to an institution lacking even the most rudimentary system of accounting. Arthur Tract said that when the project closed, "Jerry Fisher [the co-owner of *Casa Fisher*] and I sat down and tried to figure out where the millions went, but couldn't make it balance even with imaginary expenses." In light of these discrepancies, it seems reasonable to question the "clean" opinion of project books.

Liquidation

But even with the project's official closure, the saga continued. Knitting organizations which had been involved with the project believe that at the very least, the "remains" of the project should have been put to use in benefit of Bolivian artisans. But according to the bylaws of the project agreed to when the project was initiated, in the event that the project was to cease functioning, all assets would be liquidated and the receipts would be transferred to the *Fundacion Simon Patino*. The Foundation is a non-

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[81]ADAM Document: Coopers and Lybrand (1990: 3)
[82]ADAM Document: #AID/LAC/-P-254 Creative Associates (1988)
[83]USAID Document (1985a: 18)

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profit, educational institution which was established from the estate of the Bolivian tin baron Simon Patino earlier this century. The Foundation is based in Europe but operates cultural and educational activities through the *Centro Cultural Portales* in Patino's refurbished Cochabamba mansion. No one I spoke with seemed to know exactly why this institution was selected to receive the funds. The most reasonable explanation is that *Portales* is the most reputable non-profit institution operating in Bolivia that could realistically absorb the large sum of money involved if ADAM assets would have to be liquidated.

Nevertheless, individuals I interviewed from the Foundation told me that they were not aware of the bylaw stipulation through which they were slated to inherit ADAM funds. Representatives of *Portales* and the Foundation told me that there had never been any formal relationship established with ADAM, *"más bién su actividad estaba muy vago...se desconfió."*[84] No one really knew the story behind ADAM and its closing, but two rumors had circulated at the time. One suggested that operation of the ADAM project was to be transferred to the Foundation. Because the Foundation is an educational and cultural institution without experience in production and marketing, this appeared as both unusual and a bad idea. The second rumor was more complicated. It was said that ADAM assets would be liquidated and used to establish an office in CORDECO (the regional development "corporation" of the Bolivian government). This office would administer a fund to provide loans for artisans and small industry. The Foundation would be a member of the Board of Directors and a small percentage of the interest earned from the loans would be passed on to *Portales* for its educational and cultural activities.

People at *Portales* thought that this was a "rare" sort of "donation" and that it failed to make much sense. None of these rumors were followed up by any sort of formal communication from ADAM. According to one of my informants, since no one knew much about ADAM or was interested in tainting the Foundation's

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[84]translation = "better said, ADAM's activity was very vague...we didn't trust it"

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internationally known reputation for independence by getting "mixed up" with the "politicized circus" at CORDECO,

> "we just let it go. We had asked for more information, but there was silence, no more communication. We didn't say yes, but neither did we say no..."

One representative of the Foundation lamented that had they known that it was really to be a "donation," and that the assets included the plot of land which had been purchased for the knitting factory, they would have been thrilled to have accepted it. The Foundation would have used it for a hospital that they subsequently built on another location--it would have been *"una belleza."*("a thing of beauty"). No one believes that ADAM ever seriously intended to turn-over the liquidated assets to the Foundation -- "to turn it over with those conditions was nothing less than absurd." Instead, they believe that the whole thing was what one informant called "*un teatro*" ("an act or show"),[85] designed to make sure that the Foundation would not be interested in accepting the "donation."

According to USAID documents, "due to delays in the Foundation's acceptance of the transfer, the ADAM Board of Directors rescinded this arrangement in January of 1991...and instead amended the bylaws to transfer the funds to a private sector initiative,"[86] the *Fundación Nataniel Aguirre*. This transaction was approved by the USAID mission on June 11, 1991. In fact, the *Fundación Nataniel Aguirre* was legally founded on April 29, 1991, just a few days before being approved by the Mission, and was obviously created with the express purpose of receiving funds from ADAM's liquidated assets. The Board of Directors of the *Foundation Nataniel Aguirre* consists of what one informant called "big fish"--influential business people from Cochabamba. Functioning as a sort of private sector charitable organization, the principal activity of the Foundation has been to sponsor the "Bolivian Private University" by combining donations from The Federation of Private Businesses in

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[85]"an act," "a show"

[86]ADAM Document: #TI/L001/92 (January 9, 1992: 2) and ADAM Document: *Revista Informativa* (1985-1989)

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Cochabamba with funds received from ADAM's liquidation. Of course, construction of a University is not an "evil" act, and Bolivia could admittedly benefit from an institution of higher education, yet the amendment of the bylaws in this manner is questionable.

Criticism of the transaction can be twofold. First, the Private University is symbol of the ideology and burgeoning power of the *"nueva burgesía"* ("new bourgeoisie") in Bolivia which owes its fortunes to windfalls from the politics of dictatorship, the New Economic Program, and the cocaine boom. The pretension of creating an "elite" university in Bolivia is predicated upon the advantages of the few who can afford to pay for this sort of education, and is seen by many as an attack on the public education system. Even a memo from the USAID official who prepared the final evaluation of the ADAM project observes that there is an overt "incompatibility of philosophies" embodied in the transfer of funds originally meant to benefit poor artisans to the pockets of wealthy students, and recommends that the situation merits "more profound analysis before authorizing this transfer."[87]

Second, my informants from the artisan sector expressed the opinion that the change in ADAM's bylaws was affected so that ADAM's Directors would not lose control over the money from the project, or even to cover up the fact that some of the assets to be liquidated did not even exist. They believe that it was really just a symbolic transfer of money "from one pocket to the other, but in the same pair of pants." The USAID memo notes that it is not a coincidence that the President of ADAM Board of Directors is also the grandson of Nataniel Aguirre, the Republican figure honored in the title of the Foundation, and even five years later, in 1995, at least one of ADAM's Board of Directors, Hugo Galindo, was still on the Board of the Foundation. Reservations expressed in the memo go on to question the very ethics of this transfer, asking *"no parecería ser esto un conflicto de interés?"*[88] Others at USAID obviously did not think so, since the change ultimately went through with the

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[87]ADAM Document: Memorandum from Julio Patino

[88]translation = "Doesn't it seem to be a conflict of interests?"

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Mission's blessing. In light of the history of the ADAM project presented here, it somehow seems an appropriate yet sad end.

Conclusion

The emergence of alternative, collective forms of production in the knitwear industry represented a challenge to the individualistic, private sector model of development sanctioned by the dominant capitalist ideology. Cooperative knitwear production provided a powerful example of how rural women can operate without the "benefit" of middle class professionals. The success of such groups threatened to rob private entrepreneurs of their low-wage labor force by empowering knitters to question exploitative wages and production quotas, and to challenge their subordinate position in the industry. Despite such empowerment however, the inability of grassroots groups to access markets in industrialized countries and the difficulty of designing products which appeal to customers, limited their growth beyond the ATO market. But at the same time, the increasing popularity of handcrafts in industrialized countries meant that the market potential for handknit alpaca sweaters was expanding.

Not surprisingly, private capital recognized this potential and was conscious of the challenge implicit in the development of alternative forms of organization for production. At the same time, the weaknesses inherent in the position of grassroots producers were apparent. In fact, their need for markets became a "loose thread," offering the perfect opportunity for private capital to attempt to unravel the organizational success of alternative producer groups, and to appropriate the production structures they had developed. Not coincidentally, these goals coincided with the interests of the proponents of neo-liberal policies in Bolivia. Not only did collective organization and not-for profit enterprizes conflict with private sector approaches to development, but the political mobilization of women around economic issues during the 1970's and early 1980's had become alarming to people in circuits of power. Controlling women's participation was part of the

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strategy for ensuring the maintenance of the *status quo* and the position of the dominant class.

The reality of ADAM's experience was very different from the picture painted by official evaluations of the project. The result of USAID's development strategy was to destroy a number of institutions which had previously provided work and other services to knitters in Cochabamba. Some organizations were left with insurmountable debt, others suffered from a loss of clients and knitters. Attempts to monopolize raw materials had a negative impact on the supply available to many groups and individuals involved in producing camelid fiber garments. The liquidation of ADAM's inventory at below even subsidized prices further disrupted markets for export. Families who had come to depend on income from knitting were left in crisis. ADAM's activities had no perceptible impact on reducing migration to the Chapare. In the end, groups and knitters throughout the region were left with a bad taste in their mouths for the efficacy of development schemes.

Needless to say, this project was not only a huge waste of money that could have been used effectively, but caused chaos and hardship for many knitters and their families. Reasons for the glaring failure of ADAM are legion, not the least of which was incredibly poor management. Beyond that, with the private sector/for-profit design of the project, there was never any incentive for ADAM to accomplish its stated goals. Rather, ADAM's policies were designed to turn artisan knitters into a sweater industry through super-exploitative production quotas made possible by further fragmenting the labor process and by controlling access to raw materials and markets--classic capitalism at its best. In the context of the mid-1980's free market euphoria, ADAM documents laud the idea that with USAID funding, "all the elements of a profit-making business are in place."[89] This appears particularly contradictory given the "no risk" subsidy obtained by ADAM management from the pockets of U.S. taxpayers. The experience of ADAM is a perfect example of the fiction of the free

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[89]USAID Document (1988a: 25)

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market which forms the basis of neo-liberal policy. In a speech at an annual meeting of the IMF and the World Bank, George Bush stated that "the key to economic growth is setting individuals free--free to take risks, free to make choices, free to use their initiative and their abilities in the market place."[90] Unfortunately, this growth-oriented perspective ignores the power relationships which structure market interactions--in the real world, some people are more "free" than others.[91]

At the same time that USAID mandated that knitters function "in a businesslike manner,"[92] upper level management was not held to "real world" standards of skill and professionalism. A USAID evaluation explains ADAM's failure as the result of an "unfocused and poorly developed marketing strategy,"[93] yet suggests that "it is *unrealistic* and basically *unfair* to expect the ADAM board and staff to achieve the goals and objectives of the project without critical professional marketing and technical expertise which the project was designed to provide."[94] Successful artisan groups find it difficult or impossible to obtain loans to capitalize their operations at a level for export, yet elites with no experience in producing or marketing sweaters easily obtained $6 million of public funds to finance private investment, risk free. USAID's treatment of ADAM's directors as "ghosts in the machine" (Allen 1987) who would promote the development of the Bolivian knitwear industry without pretensions to personal gain, ignored real conflicts of interests between knitters and Bolivian elites. The attitude expressed by a U.S. State Department Official who said that "a lot of people are poor because they don't have the talent, skills or IQ to get out of poverty" (Helmore 1987) demonstrates the failure of U.S. policy to acknowledge the significance of political influence and access to capital, or the impact of political and economic forces

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[90]USAID Document (nd-a:1)

[91]See Orlove (1989) regarding the failure of a fisheries project--issue state agencies in influence economic activity and favoring certain classes

[92]USAID Document (1985a)

[93]USAID Document (1988a: 15)

[94]USAID Document (1988a: 32)--emphasis added

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which favor elites while denying the majority of people an escape from "underdevelopment."

The neo-liberal policies of the IMF which produced the New Economic Policy being pursued by the Bolivian government greatly increased unemployment and inflation.[95] Rural producers and artisans were especially hurt by the resulting artificially-low prices for agricultural products, combined with inflated costs for inputs, and competition from cheap manufactured imports which undersell locally produced artisan goods. Economic woes were compounded by drought of natural disaster proportions. In the face of economic crisis, rural households were forced to increase domestic labor and the diversification of household activities, while at the same time, decreasing family consumption. USAID funding for ADAM came at a crucial time when it was politically expedient to address problems of small land holders and urban slum dwellers. Rural families were flocking to city slums where they competed for the few low-wage jobs with unemployed miners and their families who had been "relocalized" by the employment policy of the NEP. In this chapter, I demonstrate discrepancies in USAID's evaluation of ADAM's success with respect to knitters' wages. Because of the staggering impact of NEP policies, I would go further to suggest that even if wages had been increased by the amount claimed, many families would still have fallen below previous levels of consumption. Basically, the effect of the strategy pursued by ADAM was to create more low-paying jobs without any of the prospects for personal growth and change found within the cooperative structure of local producer organizations. At the same time, USAID funding for the project offered a free lunch to well-connected individuals within the Bolivian elite.

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[95]See Nash (1988, 1990)

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Chapter 7

The Complex Evolution of A White Elephant: COTESU and the Construction of a Knitting Center in Arani

Introduction

In the late 1980's, despite the foreboding outlook of the market for cooperatively produced handknits and the failure of ADAM, *Tipay Warmi* continued to broaden its grassroots initiative in both productive and political terms. However, evidence that the organization and its leaders might have begun to exceed the vision of other women in the group and that expansion of the group's activities may have begun to outstrip realistic levels of functioning for a grassroots knitting cooperative had begun to emerge. *Tipay Warmi* was participating in a small sweater design and marketing project to move beyond subsidized ATO markets (that will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8), reversing the trend of declining sweater orders and necessitating the incorporation of a larger number of knitters. In addition, as Gabriela and the others developed their political consciousness, *Tipay Warmi* became increasingly active outside of Arani. In this context, having a permanent physical space that they could call their own seemed a logical next step for the Association and its members.

Below I describe what happened when the Swiss development agency, *Cooperación Técnico Suiso* (COTESU), decided to fund the construction of a knitting center to house *Tipay Warmi* and its activities. The project was like a "dream come true" for the *Tipay Warmis*, giving the group a building beyond anything that they would have imagined possible for themselves just a few years earlier. Moreover, the ability of the *Tipay Warmis* to obtain COTESU financing strengthened the position of the Association and its members in the local power hierarchy and further established *Tipay Warmi* as a player in national and international arenas. This prestige fit with the evolving self-identity of Gabriela and the group's leaders, and contributed to their sense that grassroots

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mobilization had the power to contravene established social and economic boundaries.

But obtaining the funds was only the beginning of the struggle. Competition from local political bosses, from local elite women, and from rival knitting organizations threatened to thwart the *Tipay Warmi's* hopes even before construction began. And even victory over these local foes did not guarantee the outcome. Ideological biases and personal self-interest on the part of middle-class Bolivian professionals in charge of the project tinged everyday interaction on the construction site and resulted in a series of power struggles. The failure of the *Tipay Warmis* to come out on top in these battles undermined the group's ability to control how the project was implemented and the use of its funds.

But even these problems paled in comparison with underlying weaknesses in the way that the *Tipay Warmis* themselves had conceptualized the project. The building constructed with project funding was inappropriately large and the design lacked any coherent relation to the actual activities and functioning of the organization. *Tipay Warmi* became saddled with a large structure for which they had no use but which they then had to maintain. The increase in overhead expenses threatened their ability to compete in the market for knitwear exports and disallowed other spending more in line with their philosophy. A recurrent rumor (which seemed to have some basis in reality) was that the Mayor and the Town Council were planning to expropriate the building and put it to "good" use in the community. With the building sitting half-empty, this remained a threat, and unfortunately, given the structure's large size, it was difficult for the group to utilize all of its facilities. Even more troublesome, instead of consolidating institutional development around a physical structure, the construction project had a negative impact upon the ongoing organizational processes of the group.

The Need for More Space

The increase in orders from the marketing and design project (which is discussed in Chapter 8) generated enthusiasm within *Tipay Warmi.* The hustle and bustle of keeping up with the new demands of

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production made knitters feel upbeat about their work and about the group. *Tipay Warmi* now had fifty six members and another fifty part-time knitters. Participation in the Association's educational activities was also high, even among knitters who were not particularly interested in the broader goals of grassroots mobilization. In addition, the BBC video had provided a new level of legitimacy to *Tipay Warmi's* struggle and they were now players beyond the local arena. With funding from a variety of institutions in Bolivia and abroad, the group was expanding the scope of its internal educational activities and interacting more with other women and women's organizations.

The *Tipay Warmis* had become increasingly active on regional and national levels, promoting the establishment of a Peasant Women's Union in Cochabamba that would be a corollary to the larger 'Bartolina Sisa' Peasant Women's Movement based in La Paz. Gabriela believed that *Tipay Warmi* provided a model for grassroots mobilization that could spearhead a social movement for peasant women in the *Valle Alto*. Her vision was that this would not only improve the economic condition of handknitters, but it would create the opportunity for *Tipay Warmi* to further extend the impact of its economic and educational alternative to include other women. Since the early 1980's Gabriela had dreamed about moving on to broader, more political forms of mobilization and with the crystallization of the Cochabamba Peasant Women's movement, she was even more anxious to move on to yet another level of organizing.

But increased activity also made clear *Tipay Warmi's* need for a larger and more permanent space. Dolores was always haunted by the fear that housing the activities of the Association in her home could result in some sort of backlash against her personal property from jealous neighbors, angered local authorities, or even the military. She had vivid memories of attempts to implicate them in the bombing and in cocaine production. But more than anything else, she was tired of people traipsing through her home at all hours of the day. With the new level of activity that accompanied production for orders being generated by the marketing project, she began to demand that the group find new accommodations.

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For a number of years, Gabriela had been aware of the crucial role that a physical structure could play in strengthening the organization and consolidating its evolving identity. Owning a building would make *Tipay Warmi's* success more concrete in everyone's eyes, and would provide a foundation for extending the activities and influence of the Association. These dreams had been intensified when *Tipay Warmi* became involved with the Cochabamba Peasant Women's Union, the *Movimiento Bartolina Sisa*. The new building would become the hub of this activity. With the collaboration of people at a number of NGO's in Cochabamba, the *Tipay Warmis* had developed a proposal for a building project that had obtained provisional acceptance by a Bolivian funding institution. About the same time that the *Tipay Warmis* were embarking on the new marketing and design project, the Swiss development agency COTESU signed "Bolivia 21," an agreement with the Bolivian government to cooperate on a series of infrastructural projects in rural areas with the underlying philosophy of "empowering" people.[1]

According to oral accounts, a relative of the Toranza sisters worked at COTESU in Cochabamba. He was present at a meeting where they were discussing the disposition of COTESU funds and attempting to identify projects in the *Valle Alto* which would merit consideration. This relative knew of *Tipay Warmi's* building project and put the Association in contact with COTESU. According to further accounts, the Director of the COTESU projects in Cochabamba, Carlos Sanchez, recognized Gabriela from a peasant union meeting where he had seen her speak years earlier and vividly remembered how impressed he had been with her strength and character.[2] *Tipay Warmi's* accomplishments as a grassroots organization, together with this positive impression conveyed by their President, made the group an attractive candidate for COTESU financing.

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[1]See Grunenfelder-Elliker (1998) for more detailed information about COTESU.

[2]any critique of Carlos' role in the project presented here should in no way be taken as a personal attack on him because it is not intended as one

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As critics of project funding have pointed out, development funders are fond of organizations like *Tipay Warmi.* A group's success is appropriated by the development agency through the funding process and instead, becomes a reflection of the institution's own achievement's--a feather in their cap, useful for end-of-the-year reports to the board of trustees. Although Carlos vehemently denied that this sort of reasoning was at all a factor in COTESU's interest in the project, it would seem naive to believe that nowhere in the decision-making process is the way a project will reflect back on the agency taken into consideration. However, Carlos rightly pointed out to me that there is an important flip-side to this argument. Contrary to representations of passive victimization made by the current critique of development, *Tipay Warmi* also stood to benefit in a similar way through association with COTESU. Financing for the project was actually extremely attractive to *Tipay Warmi* and not only because of the obvious gain to be made in obtaining a building. Garnering support from an institution with the stature of COTESU would represent an important triumph for a small organization run by peasant women. The *Tipay Warmis* told me that they believe that

> *"ahora Tipay Warmi está percebida en Arani como una organización bonita--modelo. Antes no creían que iba a seguir...solamente las Toranzas estaban haciendo...más de todo por la construcción y los problemas nos respetan."*
>
> "Now *Tipay Warmi* is seen in Arani as a really neat organization--a model. Before no one believed it would even last...that it was just the Toranzas doing it...more than anything it's been the construction and the problems we had that have made them respect us."

The significance of such a *coup* cannot be disregarded if we are to paint a realistic picture of the dynamics of grassroots organizations and the politics of development funding. Acknowledging this contradiction contributes to our theoretical understanding of the complexity of the development context, even if it tends to weaken the ideological force of the critique.

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For *Tipay Warmi*, however, entering into a relationship with COTESU was, at the same time, inherently problematic. COTESU's stipulated manner of functioning in Bolivia was in conjunction with the government. One frequent consequence of this relationship is that the funding process can easily become distorted in favor of vested, often political interests. In fact, this sort of politicking and corruption are so endemic to development projects in Bolivia as to be seen as the normal way of operating. However, assurances from Carlos and from COTESU that the project would not become a channel for political manipulation, combined with the prospect of obtaining financing for the building of their dreams, convinced the *Tipay Warmis*. In fact, the stakes involved in the project were raised as the controversy discussed below unfolded. The ability of *Tipay Warmi* to successfully overcome the tide of opposition would demonstrate organizational independence and contribute to elevating the group's status in local opinion. Obtaining and maintaining control over the project would legitimize *Tipay Warmi's* role from the perspective of outside institutions and the state. Given Gabriela's vision of expanding the Association and her own role beyond the limits of Arani, these more abstract issues were crucial considerations.

Implementing the COTESU Building Project

Through *Desarrollo de Comunidades*,[3] the development institution of the Bolivian government working in conjunction with "COTESU 21," the project provided the non-local materials for the construction, and the skilled and the professional labor. *Tipay Warmi* contributed the land and the local materials, and paid the wages of the unskilled labor--not an insignificant expenditure for a group of rural knitters. Interestingly, the building for *Tipay Warmi* was not typical of COTESU's development financing in Bolivia, a fact which would later fuel the conflict which arose over control of the project. COTESU's mandate in operating through *Desarrollo* was to provide funding for projects which would serve an entire community,

[3]The Office of Community Development

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such as four other infrastructural projects which COTESU was simultaneously sponsoring in the town of Arani. Although outsiders like to focus on the uniqueness of *Tipay Warmi* as a women's grassroots organization, from the perspective of most locals, *Tipay Warmi* was a small, closed group of women whose activities only promoted the interests of its member knitters. This conflicted with COTESU's community-oriented mandate.

In order to sidestep these problems, the project proposal designed by Carlos stipulated that the knitting center would benefit 1110 families and have a cross-community impact since knitters are scattered throughout the Arani area.[4] This statistic reflects the recognition that knitters contribute to family income, and is based on a contingency of the proposal which states that one use of the new facility would be to train fifty new knitters every six months.[5] Accordingly, the positive qualities of *Tipay Warmi* as an organization were combined with the idea that the building would be used to expand its base of activities. In this way, the proposal construed the beneficial impact of the project in a way so as to be broad enough to meet the criteria for COTESU/Desarrollo funding. In fact, Carlos became such an enthusiastic advocate for the *Tipay Warmis* that the project not only made it through the COTESU review process, but instructions were given for a sort of *carte blanche* in terms of project spending. The original version of the project was budgeted at approximately $40,000, but in the end the actual cost exceeded $100,000. With such enthusiasm from the "boss" and the dynamic nature of the *Tipay Warmi* as a grassroots cooperative, the knitting center quickly became the "pet" project for the Arani project team.[6] Despite these auspicious beginnings, problems immediately began to appear.

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[4]COTESU (1990) Project Proposal: *Desarrollo de Comunidades* (2-11-90)

[5]See section below entitled "Project Conceptualization and Goals" for a critique of this contingency

[6]numerous authors have noted the nature of the *cholita* as a cultural symbol in Bolivia...*Tipay Warmi* appears to have different symbolic or underlying meanings for different funding institutions. Foreign development agencies tend to see the *cholitas* of *Tipay Warmi* as the embodiment of poor yet exotic women who epitomize the project beneficiary of the 1980's and 1990's. Among Bolivian development agencies and workers, however, another dimension seems to enter in a significant way--the *cholita*

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Conflict and Control

While the *Tipay Warmis* worked diligently to fill orders from the marketing project, construction plans got underway. News of the project spread in Arani. Members of *Tipay Warmi* were proud and excited about their good fortune, and carried information about the building to their families and friends. Details of the project became a common topic of discussion in Arani's *chicherias*. Yet more importantly, news of the project did not fail to reach the ears of local politicians. *Desarrollo de Communidades* was not neutral ground for doing good works to help the poor but rather, a totally politicized context for the implementation of project funding. The institution itself and all of its employees owed allegiance to the ruling MIR (*Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria*) party, and many of its professionals were active MIR enthusiasts. The thoroughly partisan internal politics of *Desarrollo*, together with COTESU's involvement in sponsoring a series of community-oriented projects in Arani, meant that it did not take long for local officials to become aware of the *Tipay Warmi* project, of it's large budget, and of the fact that, if the project were to be implemented as planned, they would see no local political gain.[7]

In an attempt to derail the project, politicians from the MIR-controlled *Alcaldia* in Arani promoted dissension in the town by playing on the contradiction between COTESU-Desarollo's stated mandate to fund "community-oriented" projects and *Tipay Warmi's* position as a small, independent organization benefiting from financing ostensibly meant to serve the entire community.[8] MIR officials promoted the idea that the *Tipay Warmi* building was really meant for all of the knitters in Arani. The political spin in their argument was the need to form an umbrella organization to bring

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as a symbol of sexuality and a sex-symbol for middle-class *Cochabambinos*. See Paulson (1992: 398) and Albro (1999a: Chapter 3) and (1999b).

[7]Not coincidentally, at that time local Arani politics were also controlled by MIR which swept into power throughout the country in the previous elections. Of course, these conditions of party hegemony create the perfect context for the operation of a political machine and the maintenance of a patronage system with its own dynamic.

[8]Which to a certain extent was true.

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together all of the knitters into a type of union. No thought was given to whether the formation of this sort of group was either desirable or possible from the point of view of the knitter, but of course, doing so would provide political capital for the Party as a result of having obtained financing to "give" to the knitters.[9] Such an association would then serve as a way to mobilize women for political purposes in the future. For many years local politicians had been trying to figure out how to obtain the political patronage of women as a block, with the independent *Tipay Warmi* as their nemesis. Knitters are an especially attractive group from the perspective of party politicians. The relationship of knitters to export markets via their labor makes for excellent rhetorical fodder in the context of traditional anti-imperialist politics in Bolivia. More immediately, the existence of such an association would provide justification for transforming the COTESU project into a town-based knitting center rather than a building controlled by *Tipay Warmi*.

Carmen Valderama became the perfect agent for implementing this strategy.[10] Carmen's mother had been a knitter for thirty years, one of the first to work at FOTRAMA. Carmen herself knit before going to the city to study. Carmen was also an active *MIRista* and was at the time working in the *Alcaldia*. While Carmen's reputation in town varied, many people had very good things to say about her and she had established an excellent rapport with many of the knitters not associated with *Tipay Warmi*.[11] So, with the support of local politicians, Carmen, her sisters, and a number of other prominent women in the town formed their own association of knitters which they called *Tejedoras de Arani*. Arguing that COTESU projects were meant for the entire community, they maintained

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[9]Numerous authors have described the patron-client relationships underpinning Bolivian political institutions. In one nice example from nearby Tiraque, Lagos (1994: 146) shows how local political factions vied for control over food stuff "donations", giving each faction the opportunity to "demonstrate vis a vis the opposite faction, its efficiency in obtaining and delivering goods."

[10]Sadly, Carmen passed away following an illness in 1995.

[11]In the group which Carmen founded, she was the uncontested leader to whom everyone looks for direction. Interestingly, one of her sisters "cracked the whip" for production, leaving Carmen's role as amiable and motherly.

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their right to not only participate in the project but, claiming a membership of 500 knitters,[12] they pushed to enter as a controlling force.

Of course, significant yet unstated in the way that opposition to the project took form, were local ethnic and class dynamics. The fact that *Tipay Warmi's* members were almost exclusively *cholitas* with their long braids and puffy *pollera* skirts was an asset for the group when interacting with foreigners and NGO's. The image of the *cholita* embodies the exotic-ness of Andean culture which is given positive value by outsiders. In terms of local society, however, the *cholita* status of the group was a liability. As discussed in earlier chapters, the *pollera*-style of dress is disdained by the dominant, urbanized culture increasingly being embraced by people in Arani. The idea that a group of *cholitas* could interact with outsiders, obtain financing and control an export enterprise conflicted with the devalued status accorded to the women of *Tipay Warmi* as individuals. The knitting center building threatened to become a permanent and concrete symbol of this contradiction, the symbolic weight of which was not to be ignored.

Notably, the women who were most active in opposing the project were *de vestido* and from relatively elite families in Arani. *Doña* Gladis was the wife of a prominent businessman with a history of participation in local politics and a large office in the neighboring market town of Punata (a social step up from Arani). *Doña* Rosenda owned a butcher shop and at the time her husband was an elected official in the Arani town government. Carmen was educated in the city, was extremely active in local Party politics, and she and her sisters were all *de vestido*. *Doña* Beatrix is not *de vestido*, but is from a family with stature and connections outside of Arani, and not coincidentally is the better-to-do cousin of the Toranza sisters. The fact that most of the protagonists of the opposition were *de vestido*, in contrast to the *cholitas* of *Tipay*

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[12]This appears to be based on a figure which includes all knitters in Arani rather than a literal membership of 500. The idea seems to have been that their association would inherently represent the interests of anyone who knits. A more realistic assessment yields a count of 30-50 knitters.

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Warmi, was an underlying theme of opposition to the project--clearly demonstrating the strength of the project's challenge to existing class and ethnic relations through which local status is normally defined. Furthermore, prior to the appearance of COTESU on the scene, *Doña* Rosenda and *Doña* Gladis were not involved in knitting. As I outlined in Chapter 4, in the past knitting as employment in Arani was associated with the *cholita*. It was only when the COTESU building project offered the potential for elevated status, together with the political support which would thrust them into positions of power as "management" that these women developed an interest in becoming involved in the knitting industry.

Detailed planning for the project had already begun when this opposition surfaced. A vitriolic struggle ensued as the *Alcaldia* attempted by any means possible to challenge the *Tipay Warmis*, including insinuations that they would use violence against the building or even against the knitters themselves. More concretely, however, the town refused to issue building permits for construction to begin and backroom politicking flourished. The old accusation that Gabriela and the *Tipay Warmis* were communists resurfaced, and opponents now argued that the group would use the building for spreading their ideology among local women. Rumors about the loose morals of the women of *Tipay Warmi*, and especially of the Toranza sisters circulated freely. Cross-cultural evidence of personal attacks against women who attempt to challenge the *status-quo* controlled by men, suggests that this form of gossip is not coincidental but rather, rooted in the strength of existing gender ideology.[13] As indicated in previous chapters, the moral character of women and girls who knit in the export industry has consistently been a topic of local concern, with the successful productive and organizational activities of *Tipay Warmi* setting its members and in particular, the Toranza sisters, apart for special criticism and speculation. However, during this conflict over the building, innuendo seemed to reach a new level.

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[13]Nash (1993: 147), Eber and Rosenbaum (1993: 172-3)

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Rumors caused problems within the Association when parents of knitters were alarmed by accounts that engineers of the project were being "given" young *cholitas* for sexual purposes. Then, in July of 1991, a fetus (or the body of an infant--this remains unclear) was found buried in the Arani cemetery. The box containing the corpse was tied with a piece of high-quality alpaca yarn of the sort used only for export production. Although at least half a dozen knitting organizations and businesses had knitters in Arani, town authorities immediately charged that one of the *Tipay Warmis* had either illegally induced an abortion, or otherwise acted in a manner which led to the death of her infant. Incredibly, Gabriela was told that a gynecologist would have to come and examine all of the women in the group in order to discover which woman had recently given birth! No one showed up to administer these examinations, and not surprisingly nothing ever came of the accusation, based solely on the piece of yarn. But of course, all politicians are aware of the power of calumny on public opinion.

At the very least, Carmen and the others charged the *Tipay Warmis* with being selfish and egotistical, and demanded that the project be expanded to include their group. Through networks of political influence at other levels of the MIR-controlled government, pressure was brought to bear on COTESU to widen the scope of the project. Needless to say, the *Tipay Warmis* were not supportive of this effort. They saw the move as a combination of politics and personal self-interest on the part of the opposition. From the beginning, organizing their grassroots knitting cooperative had been an uphill struggle. As women, the *Tipay Warmis* had faced both skepticism that they could succeed in a productive endeavor, especially one producing for export, and animosity from the patriarchal power structures in their homes and in the town. As an organization, they incurred the wrath of local politicians by engaging in educational activities where they discussed politics and the effects of political issues on their lives, while vehemently refusing to participate in partisan politicking, and jealously guarding their independence. In Bolivia, the history of the manipulation of women and women's organizations by male-

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dominated politics has been well documented in the literature.[14] Most blatant is the case of the *Barzolas*, but even the experience of the *Amas de Casa* demonstrates that women's participation in the political process can result in the creation of new mechanisms for subordination. Knitters clearly understood the implications of involvement in the local political arena and were careful to stay above the fray.

Given the strong support of COTESU for the *Tipay Warmi* project, together with the transparently political nature of the opposition, there was little likelihood of transforming the project as Carmen and the others had envisioned. However, the power of MIR party politics within *Desarrollo* was robust enough to begin to impact upon decisions about funding ostensibly made by the Swiss. Opposition became so intense that COTESU was forced to respond. It became necessary to ascertain what level of support the *Tipay Warmis* actually enjoyed in the town, to investigate the charges that people in the community were dissatisfied with the prospect of *Tipay Warmi* receiving the building project, and allegations that the Association was a political group with an agenda of promoting communism. A survey conducted by COTESU demonstrated that contrary to the picture painted by the opposition, Gabriela and the *Tipay Warmis* were quite popular, especially in the outlying areas of the town. In addition, a Swiss COTESU representative came to Arani for a meeting with the *Tipay Warmis* in which he straight forwardly asked them about their political ideology. Feeling quite defensive about having to justify themselves in order to "receive" the project, Gabriela boldly retorted that if being a communist meant providing employment to 50 women, well then she was one. And even more remarkable, when the Representative had finished his questioning, Hilda Gonzales, at 16 one of the group's youngest members, stood up and said that now that he had learned of their political beliefs, she wanted to know what political ideology was motivating his actions, what party he was affiliated with and what were his political

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[14]For examples of manipulation women's organizations: Leon (1990), Nash (1972), Ardaya Salinas (1986), and Barrios de Chungara (1978)

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intentions. The Representative was impressed, if somewhat dumb-founded, at the audacity and spirit of the group, and he too was converted into an enthusiastic ally.

At the same time, the *Tipay Warmis* were busy mobilizing local supporters. *Don* Sergio, the local *albañil*[15] who had been contracted to be in charge of the construction was an influential man in the community and was known for being a devout evangelical Christian, and very honest. Interestingly, rather than being threatened by the feminism espoused by the group, as are many local men and officials, he was impressed and amused. With his help, when the opposition appeared to be getting the upper hand and the project was in danger of being canceled, the *Tipay Warmis* were able to get other people actively involved on their behalf. According to *Don* Sergio, "when politicking threatened to stop the project, we went door to door and the people of the town rose up and went and knocked on the door of the *Sub Prefecto*."[16] Carlos bolstered this apparent support for the *Tipay Warmis* by threatening that COTESU was prepared to halt all of the projects in Arani if the *Alcaldia* continued to block the *Tipay Warmi* project. Among the large number of people who stood to benefit from the other projects, few really felt strongly about the opposition's argument against the *Tipay Warmi* building. Given the possibility of losing the other projects, support for the *Tipay Warmis* swelled.

In the end, the *Alcaldía* was incapable of sufficiently demonizing the Association and its members in public opinion, and the *Tipay Warmis* were able to prevail against the opposition. The project went ahead as planned. Carlos' unwavering support was a crucial factor in maintaining a strong link between the development agency and the grassroots organization. Contrary to representations made by current critique of development literature, it was the coincidence of interests between these two points, and not a hegemonic power play on the part of the agency which created the momentum to push the project through. Despite all of the political

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[15]adobe mason

[16]local official in rural areas

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strings being pulled, the reality of the situation was that financing for the project was coming from the Swiss who were beyond the reach of influence by Arani politics. Of course, the efforts and sacrifices of the women themselves created the initial impetus for establishing a grassroots cooperative to challenge the exploitative relationship of knitters to the market. Yet, it was only through their connections outside of Arani, and ultimately Bolivia, that it became possible for *Tipay Warmi* to overcome the domination of local ethnic, class and gender hierarchies in obtaining financing for a building.

Those who had promoted opposition to the project remained bitter about the outcome and continued to threaten to maneuver a take over of the building. Rumors that the *Alcaldia* planned to expropriate the building continued to recur with frequency. Yet most people, including the ex-officials of the *Alcaldia*, admitted that individuals in the opposition had seen the knitting center as a way to promote their own personal agendas. When I first met Carmen in 1993, she continued to be a strong opponent, but by the following year she had begun to temper her rhetoric, and on occasion had begun to engage in somewhat civil relations with the *Tipay Warmis*. She even admitted that she had been manipulated by politicians and by other women. Carmen told me that she had come to recognize that the *Tipay Warmis* obtained the project and the support of COTESU with their own hard work and sacrifice, and that it would not really have been fair for the others to take over.[17] But she also blamed the *Tipay Warmis* for continuing to harbor bad feelings when, as she put it, more could be gained by working together--and as I will show, that was unlikely to happen.

Building Construction

Unfortunately, resolution of the political drama over control of the project did not guarantee success. From the beginning, the actual construction of the building was problematic. One crisis

[17]Part of Flora's change of heart could be attributed to the "white elephant" appearance of the *Tipay Warmi* building and the criticism it attracted--the opposition was no longer as interested in trying to "take over" the building.

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after another hindered advancement of the physical structure. Appreciable fissures opened-up in the concrete foundation which had been poured. The clay/concrete mixture for making the bricks was not holding-up properly, and a number of walls were blown over like child's toys by strong winds. At the same time, management of the project was plagued by corruption, incompetence, and internal power struggles. In the midst of this imbroglio, the relationship between the *Tipay Warmis* and the project team soured.

As elsewhere, in Bolivia the status of "professional" conveys prestige and authority. But in Arani "professionals" have the reputation of using their titles as an excuse to lord this status over others. A virtual apotheosis of "professionalism" among middle-class development project workers, and *Araneños* who aspire to attain this status, creates an atmosphere of paternalistic contempt for rural culture and lifestyle which *campesinos* have come to resent. Despite such resentment, however, everyone seems to understand the underlying power of the purse-strings and rarely are the decisions of professionals in charge of administering project funds challenged. As a result, professionals at *Desarrollo* were not accustomed to having their judgment questioned, especially not by *campesinos* and particularly not by women. But the *Tipay Warmis*, wary of the well-known penchant for incompetence and corruption in the administration of development projects in Bolivia, were determined not to be patronized. They demanded a role in overseeing the construction. Dolores was elected by the *Tipay Warmis* as the head of a construction oversight committee. This was a big job, involving coordination of all aspects of the *Tipay Warmis'* participation in the project. Rotation schedules had to be implemented for the members to take turns sleeping over at the construction site to guard the materials against thieves or to throw water on newly poured concrete to protect it from drying too quickly in the oven-like Arani sun.[18] But the *Tipay Warmis* also made Dolores responsible for vigilance over the construction which

[18]Of course, the fact that the *Tipay Warmis* took turns sleeping three at a time at the construction site contributed to local gossip about knitters having sex with the project engineers.

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included monitoring *Desarrollo* to make sure the "professionals" were doing their jobs and keeping their hands out of project fund coffers.

To the predominantly male project team from COTESU and *Desarrollo*, the unusually strong personalities and confident demands of the *Tipay Warmis* were perceived as "troublesome." At that time, Lindaura was an architectural student from Potosi who had used her MIR party affiliation to obtain an internship at *Desarrollo* for her Master's thesis. In her, *Desarrollo* saw a way of placating what were construed as the "feminist" sensibilities of the *Tipay Warmis* which they believed to be causing conflict in the project. Placing a woman in charge of the project was undoubtedly also attractive to the upper echelons of the Swiss COTESU. Given the lack of women in construction professions in Bolivia, combined with the low acceptance of women in positions of authority by "*machista*" power structures, it was unlikely that a woman would be chosen to direct other COTESU projects.[19] At the same time, Lindaura's youth and lack of experience promised, in reality, the maintenance of existing power dynamics in the implementation of the project. Thus, selecting Lindaura to design and run the *Tipay Warmi* project appeared to be the perfect solution.

Of course, such simplistic treatment of the situation did not rectify the problems which had developed. Ultimately, the *Tipay Warmis* were much less concerned with female management of the project than with ensuring that the construction was being implemented properly. As the Director of COTESU in Cochabamba and civil engineer for the project, in the beginning Carlos had a great deal of authority over how Lindaura managed the project. The *Tipay Warmis* recognized that while Carlos was around things ran smoothly. The sentiment shared by many was summarized nicely by one informant-- "Sanchez *era bueno* ("He was a good man")...he had a huge heart for the people...he made the people move." Yet as construction was just getting underway, Carlos was transferred by COTESU to Potosi and his replacement was less than effective.

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[19]See Salinas Borga (1994: 29) for statistics demonstrating lack of women in all professions, but particularly absent in construction-related industry

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Without Carlos' vigilance from above, the situation rapidly deteriorated. For example, receipts for construction materials consistently charged the project for high quality products, while the materials which were brought to the site were substandard.[20] The *Tipay Warmis* were aware of Lindaura's party connections and that she had been chosen in order to "give" them a woman Project Director, rather than for her architectural skills. As work on the project progressed, it became clear that Lindaura was merely a puppet for entrenched interests within *Desarrollo*, and her persistent failure to respond to complaints by the *Tipay Warmis* or to do anything about these discrepancies gave the appearance of complicity.

To make matters worse, continuing set-backs and delays in the project made the *Tipay Warmis* scrutinize Lindaura's ability to perform the architectural and management duties incumbent upon her as Project Director. Her only previous experience had been designing a water tank, and a series of complications in the actual construction and design of the building now hinted at incompetence. Later, senior people at *Desarrollo* seemed to take pleasure in heaping on her all of the blame for anything negative that could be said about the project. This struck me as an easy evasion since Lindaura was not a permanent employee at *Desarrollo* and as a result, such criticism did not "tread on anyone's toes." It also conveniently relieved the real "powers that be" within the institution of responsibility, while providing the felicitous opportunity for a poorly veiled attack on the ability of women in general to undertake professional and managerial roles. Yet clearly, Lindaura's acknowledged inexperience and the fact that she had not yet received her professional degree call into question the judgment of her superiors in placing her in a position for which she may not have been qualified, and then further leaving her to operate without the support and supervision of senior and ostensibly more qualified staff.

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[20]This discrepancy suggests that a deal was cut with the materials purveyor to provide false receipts--allowing embezzlement of the difference--a common trick.

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As the work progressed *Don* Sergio, who had years of experience as an *albañil* in Arani and with construction crews on sky scrapers in Buenos Aires, came to the *Tipay Warmis* with concerns that Lindaura's specifications did not seem quite right. As noted above, there were a variety of problems with the construction. Knowing how the strong, seasonal winds whip down from the *cordillera* giving Arani the nickname "*Wayrani*" from the *Quechua* word "*wayra*" for wind, *Don* Sergio recognized that the way that the walls were being constructed was too weak. But his warnings were ignored, according to him, because self-important professionals refuse to believe that "a mere *albañil*" might know more than they did. When the walls were inevitably blown over, Lindaura and the engineers added a series of buttresses which were supposed to give the structure more support. But *Don* Sergio continued to have misgivings because the iron rods they brought him for the buttresses were thin and cheap. Together, *Don* Sergio and Dolores surreptitiously exchanged the single width iron rods to be placed inside the buttresses for double ones to give the walls the stability necessary to withstand the fierce Arani winds. They also experimented with mixtures to improve the clay/concrete ratio in the bricks and improved upon the strength and consistency obtained using project specifications for brick production.

Although attempts were made by both project engineers and *Don* Sergio to compensate for the fissures which opened in the foundation during construction, large cracks appeared in the floor before the building was even one year old. Engineers at *Desarrollo* later told me that the *Valle Alto* suffers from micro-seismic activity for which it was not possible to compensate given the project's budget. Independent engineers and architects who examined the floors and with whom I discussed the problem, believe that the cracks were occurring simply because the foundation was not poured wide and deep enough. Given such a short, shallow foundation, the building has begun to settle unevenly. Since I have seen many buildings built by local *albañils*, without the benefit of architectural and engineering training, to be standing without a

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single crack after many years of hard use, the latter explanation seems more convincing.

According to members of the project team at *Desarrollo*, the difficult working relationship which developed in the project occurred because the *Tipay Warmis* "*se creyeron mas capaces que nosotros.*"[21] One of the principal engineers admitted that the fighting had become so unavoidable that in order to avoid the unpleasantness, they just stopped going to Arani to check on the progress of the construction--an indicting decision given Lindaura's inexperience. In a paternalistic tone, he told me that the underlying problem was that they didn't know how to say "no" to the *Tipay Warmis* and that the project would have come out alright if they had just proceeded the way they saw fit rather than trying to cater to the increasingly "unreasonable" demands of the women. According to the *Tipay Warmis*, however, their attempt to "*controlar bastante*,"[22] was not because they were nagging or spoiled or interested in gratuitous power, but in order to combat the corruption and incompetence which they believed were ruining the project. It was only when inconsistencies began to appear that they began to fight with *Desarrollo*.

To even the casual observer, the building is not worth its US$100,000 price tag, and it is easy to imagine the rampant corruption which plagued the project.[23] When the building was finally turned over to the *Tipay Warmis* at the beginning of 1993, the project had gone over budget and many of the finishing touches were not completed. For instance, the building lacks a transformer and therefore remains without electricity. This fact alone has a number of implications. Most obvious is that the building has no lights. This is an important detail because it means that no one can work after dark and that the family paid to watch over the structure has to live by candlelight. It also has implications because as the

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[21] "They believed that they were more capable than us."

[22] "strict control"

[23] One of my informants in Arani, *Dona* Marta, had built her own new house. The house had two sections each approximately the size of one of the *casitas* of the new *Tipay Warmi* building. The house was well-constructed with plastered walls, cement floor and a tin roof. The entire cost for both sections was less than $2000.

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watchman told me, "*hay demasiado puertas.*"[24] Without light or a wall around the perimeter of the complex, the potential for theft is quite high. And even more absurdly, without electricity no one can iron--one of the basic tasks in finishing export-quality knitwear. The Association has a huge new building, yet members still have to run back to Dolores' house to iron!

Carlos later acknowledged that there had clearly been mismanagement following his transfer, but blamed the *Tipay Warmis* for not accepting offers from COTESU to provide funding for a series of projects to finish up incomplete aspects of the building and to make it function as envisioned. The *Tipay Warmis* told me that they were sick of being scorned by a bunch of corrupt professionals and that they would rather have the unfinished building stand as a symbol of the incompetence and corruption of COTESU and *Desarrollo* than continue to be involved in a series of projects they had no assurance that they could really control. They said that like newlyweds, they would complete the complex little by little (a fork or spoon at a time). Unfortunately, conditions internal and external to the Association which will be discussed in the following chapter had a significant impact on the ongoing processes of *Tipay Warmi* as a grassroots organization, making completing the new building in this fashion difficult if not impossible.

Prevailing against the opposition in the political struggle for control of the project was a separate battle from the challenge of controlling the way the project was actually implemented. As long as the intermediary (Carlos/COTESU) was benevolent, the situation appeared rosy. But as soon as the intermediary (*Desarrollo*) began to pursue a course of action which conflicted with the stated goals of the project and the real interests of *Tipay Warmi*, problems emerged. The contentiousness of the experience which is clearly recognized by both *Tipay Warmi* and *Desarrollo* is, in fact, a testament to the tenacity of the women in attempting to protect the hard-won fruits of their contest with the political opposition. However, at this juncture in the life of the project, funding

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[24]"There are too many doors"

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processes did not link knitters directly with the Swiss-controlled COTESU, but instead placed them at the mercy of intermediaries from *Desarrollo* with their own ideological and financial agendas. This created ample opportunity for corruption, mismanagement and incompetence for which *Tipay Warmi* had little recourse.

Building Design

Today, the product of these hard-fought struggles sits along the highway on the outskirts of town. The structure is a complex of six separate buildings, arranged in two parallel rows. In the stark, rural landscape of Arani, the uniform, white-washed walls of the *casitas,*[25] capped with their clean, terra-cotta tile roofs call attention to themselves. Taken separately, the buildings are similar to the neat, plastered houses now being built by people throughout the Valley which are outward manifestations of robust processes of class formation occurring mostly as a result of male out-migration for waged labor.[26] Yet the unusual number of identical buildings, all lined-up, appear strange and somewhat out of context. Perhaps more striking than the buildings themselves, is the fact that even after a number of years of use, the place seems desolate and empty. The activities of *Tipay Warmi* now centered at the building do not seem capable of filling-up the space. Although the *Tipay Warmis* inaugurated their new building with great ceremony, including honored guests, music, buckets of *chicha*, Champaign toasts and a meal--all of the elements of a *fiesta* in the *campo*--months after the inaugural party, the remnants of streamers and empty Champaign bottles are still strewn about, and in some areas of the complex they are the only evidence of use. Rather than symbolizing the happy celebration, these vestiges contribute to the appearance of abandonment which has kept rumors of expropriation alive and spawned common use of the epithet "white elephant." And of course, this state of affairs only goads the opposition into believing

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[25] cottages

[26] Income from wage labor in Cochabamba, the Chapare or Argentina has affected who has wealth in Arani, often conflicting with more traditional local class standing. It has been common for families with access to income to make improvements to their homes.

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that they had been right all along, and that if only they, rather than the *Tipay Warmis*, had been given the project, it would have been successful.

From the beginning, it was clear to many observers that the design of the building complex was problematic. Locals were surprised and impressed by the relative grandiosity of the *Tipay Warmi* building, and it was the large size of the project which originally tantalized the appetite of the opposition. But the size and design of the complex were plainly inappropriate for *Tipay Warmi* and many people who knew the *Tipay Warmis* could only shake their heads, while privately fearing the ramifications such a structure could have for the group.[27] Carlos defends the project and COTESU's role, clearly believing that the design was everything that the *Tipay Warmis* had asked for, and more. Instead he blames the Association and it's current leadership for being unable or unwilling to make the building function. He acknowledges that the knitting center now appears "*absurdo*," but maintains that given the context in which the project was conceived, the structure was appropriate. Yet even the members themselves seem shocked by the building and almost invariably when asking for visitors' impressions, they betray their own opinions-- *no crees que es muy grande?...Hay muchos baños, no?...No te parece que hay demasiado puertas?* [28]

The plans for a building which *Tipay Warmi* had already developed with the aid of their network of friends in NGO's before becoming involved with COTESU were for a for a simple, two story structure on a 90 square meter plot of land. But according to knitters, COTESU rejected these plans allegedly because the lot bordered the cemetery, and this was seen as an inappropriate location for a knitting center. COTESU also appears to have wanted more input into conceptualization of the design. Carlos is even reported to have said that he had plenty of money and wanted to

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[27]This sentiment was expressed to me by a variety of individuals while the construction was going on and after the building was completed. Some of them discussed their fears with Gabriela and the *Tipay Warmis*, but with little effect--the project was already underway.

[28]"Don't you think it's really big?...There are an awful lot of bathrooms, aren't there?...Doesn't it seem like there are too many doors?"

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make something really grand. So instead, *Tipay Warmi* purchased a 4000 square meter site which fronts the highway near the entrance to the town. Both the larger size and the more conspicuous location of the new lot were undoubtedly more appealing, but Carlos later complained that the shape of the plot negatively affected the design. Because of the rather chaotic parcelization of land ownership in rural Bolivia, the plot has a long rectangular shape with only a relatively narrow width along the road. But it is not the unusual shape of the plot or the unattractive parallel-strip design of the structure which are in question. Ugliness was not a significant factor in the ultimate success or failure of the project, or in determining whether or not the building serves its intended purpose. Rather, it is the underlying design "idea" used to conceptualize the entire project which was flawed.

The procedure at *Desarrollo* for developing COTESU projects was for the proposal to be written by a team, combining sociological and technical expertise with the input of the people the project is designed to benefit. Professionals at *Desarrollo* complain that the proposal was drafted and pushed through by Carlos alone, without the input of the sociological study which had been conducted by the team. Members of *Tipay Warmi* say that the project was developed by COTESU and *Desarrollo* without their participation--that the "professionals" at COTESU did it all. Given the many problems with the project, these objections would seem to be justified, at least in part. In particular, oral accounts of the project history, together with a review of the proposal indicate that the project was, in fact, drafted by Carlos. On the surface, this revelation lends weight to current deconstructionist critiques of development which highlight unequal power relations construed as dictating the terms of development project design. Yet further investigation provides a more complicated picture because by most accounts the *Tipay Warmis*, and especially Gabriela, were actually closely involved in the planning process, and interviews indicate that the group was consulted about and participated in developing plans for the building.

It is easy to imagine that the architectural drawings used by COTESU were unintelligible to the women of *Tipay Warmi*, and that

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"seeing" the plans did not necessarily mean understanding them. According to one knitter, even though they were shown the plans, they just did not realize how big it would be. And besides, knitters have admitted to me that at the time their attitude was really "the bigger, the better," and that "they had stars in their eyes" and "had their heads turned" with the project. Still, while Carlos may have authored the proposal document, and although Carlos and Lindaura are responsible for designing the physical lay-out of the structure, the conceptual foundation for the project was based on the vision articulated by Gabriela and the *Tipay Warmis*. Thus, despite reflecting many negative aspects of the development funding process, the knitting center project does not fit the black and white characterization of the hegemonic agency and the powerless poor depicted by the critique, and is better understood as reflecting a mosaic of voices. Given this mottled constitution, it would therefore be incorrect to lay all of the blame for the problems which resulted onto the shoulders of the development agency. Clearly, *no one* involved, including the *Tipay Warmis*, gave any real thought to the implications of the structure and it's design.

The complex consists of six separate *casitas*. One contains a store front and two small offices for administration; two are identical, large meeting halls; one has a medium-size storage room, a kitchen and a dining hall; another has space for a daycare center with separate nursery and playroom; and the last has six bedrooms, each with it's own bath. A number of problems exist with this set-up, and it could be argued that the group would have been better served by a simple building with two to three multi-purpose rooms, and an enclosed patio. One of the central criticisms which could be made is the lack of well-designed space for the principle productive activity of the group--producing and exporting knitwear. None of the spaces provided is really very appropriate for storing and distributing the wool, or processing finished products. The storage area for the wool is inconveniently located next to the kitchen, all the way to back of the complex. No space exists where the wool can be stored in a secure way, but at the same time be accessible to a working production team distributing weighed amounts to knitters,

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and measuring and indicating sweater size and design. The office designated for use by the marketing committee where all of the finished products are supposed to be stored and where the final quality control is performed, is too small to actually accommodate these activities, and its location near the front of the complex limits crucial interaction between production and marketing. A very useful innovation would have been the construction of built-in shelves or cabinets for sorting and storing the wool and finished sweaters. Making such storage out of cedar would have helped control moth pests which damage wool stocks. Given the $100,000+ spent by COTESU, even the cedar would not have been out of reach of the project budget.[29] Having this storage area adjacent to the larger meeting room yet separated by a large window and counter-top would have provided security for wool stocks while allowing space for production activities in the open area which would, when necessary, also serve as a meeting hall. Instead wool storage and knitwear production and exportation seem mere afterthoughts in the design of the building.

At the same time that the structure lacks provisions for efficiently accommodating the primary activities of *Tipay Warmi* as a knitting cooperative, a large amount of space is designated for uses which are problematic and not well thought-out. The daycare area is a perfect example. Having a place to care for the knitters' children is a laudable idea, and when discussing it, both the knitters and COTESU always construe this aspect of the center as a huge benefit "for the children." When I first visited Arani in 1990, there were many knitters with infants and toddlers and it was common for them to bring their small children along when they came to *Tipay Warmi*. Although with the current make-up of the organization there are fewer women with young children, this situation is constantly fluctuating and the issue remains relevant. Having to care for small children while trying to knit or pay attention at a meeting is

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[29]Ema later told me that she understood that the project specified that the rafters were to be built with cedar, but believed that they had not been. Carlos informed me that building shelves and storage facilities were meant to be part of future projects and were not possible within the project budget.

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difficult, and it could easily be argued that the situation is equally tedious for the children. Thus, the idea of having a separate space where children could be cared for was greeted with approbation. However, there are a number of problems which have prevented the successful use of this space in the new building.

First, it has not been possible to resolve the issue of who would care for the children and what would be the compensation. If one or two people are employed in this capacity, the wages they are paid must come either from other project funding or from the money earned with the sale of a sweater. Relying on financing to make this service functional would create the type of dependency for which project aid has been excoriated, and since knitting wages are already low relative to the amount of labor involved, it is difficult to calculate a budget which would allow for this extra expense. Nor is it likely that knitters would be willing to contribute an extra amount to receive this service. Women can easily continue to care for the children themselves and having to pay for child care would be an extreme luxury. In an interview with Carlos, he suggested that the daycare area would function with the care givers "lending" their service on a rotating basis. This is also a difficult scenario to imagine since not all of the women have children and those without would resist "lending" service when they receive no benefit. Within *Tipay Warmi* there is a division between married and single women, similar to the relations which Isaac (1995) documented for a women's pig-raising coop in Mexico.[30] Imposing mandatory service for child care would undoubtedly increase this tension. And finally, the reality of the situation is that mothers often don't want to leave their small children in a daycare area. *Señor de Mayo*, another knitting coop in La Paz obtained project funding to pay for child care, but has had surprisingly little success convincing knitters to use the service, even for free. The custom of breast feeding on demand, together with the cultural taboo against allowing a child to

[30]Isaac (1995)--the separation between married and single women within the Association is similar to that described by Isaac, where the housewife ideology of married women gave them dominance. However, the relationship between these two factions in *Tipay Warmi* seems to be more balanced, with younger, single girls now actually predominant.

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cry in public for any perceptible period of time and the fear of "*miramiento*" ("watching others with an eye to gossip or criticize"), make any sort of care apart from the mother untenable. A more appropriate design might have included an enclosed courtyard with a sandbox-like area where small children could safely *entertain themselves*--allowing their mothers to work, while always remaining within view.

Equally problematic are the kitchen, dining room and six bedrooms which reflect Gabriela's growing interest in emphasizing external relationships. The argument for these facilities in the project proposal was based on the idea that at the time there were knitters from a long distance away who often had to spend the night, and that they needed a comfortable and respectable place to stay.[31] However, in my research I discovered that Gabriela, the *Tipay Warmis* and Carlos all envisioned that the structure would become a sort of conference center which could be used by NGO's and grassroots organizations for meetings, gatherings, *encuentros*, and workshops where participants could enjoy the freedom and fresh air of the country. The knitting center was to offer a unique context, combining the symbolic attraction of "*lo campesino*" which remains a strong ideological force among sectors of Bolivian society, with the romantic lure of the grassroots cooperative *Tipay Warmi* (and of its "beautiful *cholita*" members). *Tipay Warmi* would host these events by providing accommodations[32] and cooking meals for a fee--thereby making the new building "pay for itself" and at the same time, elevating the *Tipay Warmis* to a new status more like that of an NGO than a grassroots organization. There was also talk of using the kitchen to cook soups and prepared meals to sell in the local market or at *fiestas*, and later of building an adjacent gas station in

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[31]Of course, no analytical treatment is given to this situation--although it could reflect the fact that at the time *Tipay Warmi* was working with women who had to come from far away, but more often it reflects problems in production and the fact that knitters find themselves knitting like crazy at the last minute and often staying up all night in order to complete an order on time. This situation deserves more scrutiny than it was given in the proposal.

[32]Also problematic is the idea that six single rooms would be sufficient to house people who might wish to come for an *encuentro* lasting more than one day.

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order to generate further income. Unfortunately, these strategies would require a great deal of organization, planning and mobilization, not to mention the leadership necessary to implement them. More realistically, however, without income from increases in knitwear sales which were expected to be generated as a result of the sweater design and marketing project, subsidiary activities such as these become irrelevant. As I will explain in Chapter 8, during the course of the COTESU construction project the internal dynamics of the Association were transformed and the expansion of the market for sweater exports did not evolve as planned. Thus, aspects of the building's design which depend upon strong leadership and increasing the scope of the group's activities now appear absurd.

In addition to problems with the number and intended use of the rooms, the styling and design of the complex are also controversial. I questioned Carlos about the logic of having six bathrooms in a town where most people do not have running water or toilet facilities in their own homes, and about the landscape design of the complex which is dependent upon extensive flower beds along the paths between the buildings to provide a unifying appearance. He defended both, suggesting that my question implied that I did not believe that *campesinas* were somehow deserving of the better things in life. (Although all six bathrooms were in the private bedrooms to be used by visitors and the only one which had been planned as a "public" bathroom for use by the knitters themselves was deleted from the design when the project went over budget). I pointed out that my question was not about whether the women "deserved" these things, but rather, about the appropriateness and sustainability of design choices made by the project.[33] Given the decade of drought which has ravaged agricultural productivity in Arani, and the frequent lack of water for even basic cooking and washing, it seems reasonable to question planting flowers which require daily watering. Even if through the COTESU project the *Tipay*

[33]There are many beautiful flowering cactus and succulent plants, some of which produce quantities of edible fruit, while requiring little water. But these plants are seen to represent the *campo* and thus have low status, when the intention of the *Tipay Warmis* and COTESU was to create a modern, city building.

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Warmis obtained access to enough money to build a well, does this give them the "right" to use scarce water resources in this way?

Regarding the design of the entire complex, including the bathrooms, the sociologist from the *Desarrollo* Project team told me (rather surprisingly) that he believed that the overall project could be considered "one of their best." However, he agreed that the building was a "white elephant" in the sense that it appears out of place--it's a city building in the *campo* which intentionally breaks with what he called "the *campesino* world view and ethos." When *campesinos* come to the building they will inevitably be confronted with the symbolic attack on their own way of life as represented by the structure. One informant told me that "Sanchez *siempre dijo si no han acomodado la vida moderna hasta ahora, él les iba a llevar*,"[34] and Carlos explained to me how the *Tipay Warmis* "*tenían que evolucionarse*."[35] He argued that the building was not intended to make them feel bad about their own situation, but rather to make them see it and want to replicate its elements in their own homes. If only one knitter decides to go home and install a toilet, then the design would be a success. To me, this attitude seemed to lack respect for cultural norms while ignoring the reality of people's economic circumstances in Arani, not to mention the scarcity of water--an essential element for both flower gardens and toilets. Carlos' explanations served to reinforce my sense that the design has less to do with providing the knitters with a space for their productive activities than with pursuing an ideological project intended to have a deeper impact, including affecting people's bathroom habits.

Further evidence of this ideology can be seen in the compartmentalization of the building as a complex of separate *casitas*. According to Carlos, this separation into discrete spaces was an intentional element of the design--"to make them independent." In the past, all of *Tipay Warmi's* activities operated out of one large room and a storage area. The project design

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[34]"Sanchez always said that if they hadn't accomodated the modern life yet, he would drag them in"

[35]"They have to evolve"

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reflects a Lamarkian belief that separation of functions reflects a more "developed" state of being for an organization, and that by explicitly creating the space of the building in this way, *Tipay Warmi* could be "pushed" into that next "higher" state. Unfortunately, the resulting design does not reflect the way that the Association actually operates, and the new building has come to have a negative impact on the group dynamic. Participation is the underlying philosophy of *Tipay Warmi*. The organization was founded on this basic idea and integration of members in all aspects of the organization's functioning has been an essential element in the group's success. The discrete "spaces" created by the new building do not resonate with this approach. Instead of bringing about a "new level" of organizational evolution, separation has served to fragment operations. Delays and disorganization in sweater production which have plagued the Association in recent years are, in part, attributable to the effect of the space in which the group now operates. While chaos within the leadership of the group has certainly been the principle factor in production crises, the situation has been exacerbated by the separation of activities which accompanied the new building. Having the production area separate from administration and marketing has reduced the number of people actively aware of the day-to-day details of production, creating the conditions for mistakes to be made and left undetected.

Yet perhaps more destructive, has been the conflict created between a philosophy of "participation" and the spatial separation of decision-making and power apart from the rest of the group. The previously integrated nature of the group dynamic has been fragmented now that internally elected officials of the organization operate out of their own office. The "office" is a foreign, urban form which members often have difficulty feeling connected to, and giving individuals in power the rights to such a separate space has promoted an increasing sense of hierarchy within the group. This is significant in that *Tipay Warmi's* stated mission is to address the humiliation that peasant women are made to feel in Bolivian society. As the group's internal power structure has become more independent, members indicated to me that they have begun to feel

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"humiliated" by their own organization. A sense has emerged that the administration has become a sort of cabal, implementing its own agenda apart from the will of the rest of the group. Of course, this internal dissent is not directly *caused* by the new building, as will be discussed in Chapter 8, yet these sentiments are heightened by the closed door meetings which now take place in the administration office.

The alienation that many members have begun to feel can be seen in a number of ways. Even in inclement weather members now seem to prefer to sit outside and knit rather than going inside. And more telling, is the increasing incidence of theft by the knitters themselves. In the past, when the Association operated out the home of the Toranza sisters there seemed to be a sense of common ownership over the few materials which belonged to the group, and a certain amount of respect for the fact that the organization operated out of "somebody's" house. Although there have always been small incidents in which a pair of scissors or a bar of soap would, as Dolores put it, "develop legs and walk away," since the group has begun to occupy the new building these incidents have become common. Not only has the group lost a significant amount of wool through pilfering of small quantities by individual knitters, but all manner of objects now seem to disappear. People who really feel that they are the owners of an operation would be unlikely to steal in this way from themselves. Of course the argument could be made that people who feel themselves to be owners are more likely to feel the "right" to walk off with things. Yet given the context of dissent in which the incidence of theft has increased, it is better understood as part of the existing dynamic. Even if individual knitters do steal things as a way of asserting ownership over objects, when stealing becomes the only way for an individual to exercise power or to challenge institutional hierarchy, it is a reflection of the individual's feeling of inconsequence within the organization and real lack of power. The disconnection evident in this type of theft is symptomatic of the growing sense that the Association is becoming an anonymous institution which, like the building they now occupy,

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has the quality of seeming to exist apart from its individual members.

Project Conceptualization and Goals

Clearly, the issues involved in analyzing this project are complex. However, as I alluded to in the discussion above, the problems inherent in the ultimate ineffectiveness and failure of the knitting center project are not related solely to politics, ineptitude, corruption, shoddy construction, poorly conceived layout, or even to ideological biases reflected in the design. While these are certainly important concerns, as the forgoing analysis in this chapter has demonstrated, the key to understanding why the building has become a "white elephant" instead of the intended hub of productive, educational and organizational activity, lies in the problematic vision forged by Gabriela and the *Tipay Warmis*, and seized upon by Carlos and COTESU. This vision defined the underlying goals of the project and provided the foundation for conceptualizing the project's overall design. It is this vision which was flawed.

The proposal[36] for the construction project submitted to COTESU was predicated upon the idea that women of *Tipay Warmi* are poor and that in an attempt to subvert the control of intermediaries, they organized a productive cooperative, yet they lacked space for materials and meetings. The success of the group and their stated need for a building to support the activities of the organization would rightly have provided sufficient argument to legitimize a building project. However, the proposal goes well beyond this in its objectives.

The stated goals of the project are:

1) to train fifty new knitters for the group every six months
2) to increase the production of garments
3) to increase the annual income of knitters by 200%
4) to increase the monthly wage to 270B with a 2-3 hour work-day
5) to neutralize the role of intermediaries

[36]COTESU (1990) Project Proposal: *Desarrollo de Comunidades* (2-11-90)

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6) to consolidate a central location and a market

From the outset, then, the project was conceived of with a much broader scope than would have been necessary for the construction of a space for *Tipay Warmi's* operations, and the actual design which was implemented goes even further. Instead of conceptualizing the building around the already existing achievements of the group, the legitimation used to "sell" COTESU on the project was through the aggrandizement of the grassroots experience. In other words, the construction of the building for *Tipay Warmi* was to provide a physical structure which would create the conditions for expanding the organization, catapulting *Tipay Warmi* into a new role as the vanguard of what the proposal calls a "*vocación industrial.*"[37] This expansion, centered at the new building, would allow knitters to "neutralize" the role of intermediaries and consolidate their labor. *Tipay Warmi* would be the spearhead of a grassroots knitting movement which could provide employment to women all over the *Valle Alto* and benefit 1110 families. This role, together with the convention center function of the new building discussed above, would further elevate *Tipay Warmi* to the status of a grassroots-based NGO, combining the real life experience and knowledge of "the people" ("*bases*") with the authority and prestige normally reserved for "professionals." Unfortunately, these objectives were not based upon a realistic reading of the dynamics of the knitwear industry, nor of *Tipay Warmi* as a grassroots organization.

The market for knitwear exports circumscribes and defines the place of knitters in the industry. Processes internal and external to *Tipay Warmi* during the period under consideration had deep consequences for the evolution of the COTESU project. The idea of expanding the organizational base of *Tipay Warmi* by continuing to train and admit *socias* lacked any understanding of the position of knitters in the world market and did not reflect any realistic system of production. Of course, at the time the proposal for the building

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[37]"industrial vocation"

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was developed, the *Tipay Warmis* were attempting to open new markets through the marketing project. However as Chapter 8 will show, expanding the export market for cooperatively produced knitwear is a process fraught with contradictions and the marketing project did not evolve as envisioned. Basing the conceptualization for the building on such a difficult and risky effort was an invitation to future problems.

Similarly, the logic that the knitting center building would consolidate the labor and organizational activities of women beyond the immediate members of *Tipay Warmi* has been shown to be problematic. The proposal is vague about how this consolidation was to occur, but suggests that the *Tipay Warmis* would somehow direct an effort at expanding knitters' control in the industry through cooperative production groups and become the driving force in the creation of a broad-based knitting movement. A sociologist at *Desarrollo* suggested that the center would best function with some sort of a *Directiva* or Executive Committee made-up of women from all of the participating groups. Interestingly, this is quite similar to the vision espoused by Carmen and the women of *Tejedoras de Arani*. In that fact alone, the contradiction becomes clear. The notion that the *Tipay Warmis* could manage and administer a knitting center which brings in new groups seems to take no account of the ethnic and class conflicts which were so dramatically visible during the initial stages of the project. It would be difficult to imagine that the *Tipay Warmis* could retain their independence, much less play the role of vanguard once they abdicated any amount of control to other groups through some sort of participatory *Directiva*.[38] The control of *Tipay Warmi* by its *cholita* knitters is dependent upon the maintenance of independence from arenas of local power. It would be silly to believe that these existing conflicts would not manifest

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[38]The refusal by the *Tipay Warmis* to become involved with rival knitting groups in Arani or to allow certain "strong" women to enter drew heavy criticism from sources in *Desarrollo* and other institutions that work with *campesino* group. Yet, even if outsiders failed to recognize the danger inherent in this move, the *Tipay Warmis* themselves clearly did. Instead, the expansion of the organization at the time was occurring through the incorporation of groups from more distant communities in Sacaba, Tiquipaya, Cochabamba, Villa Rivero, etc., who were not direct players in the Arani arena.

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themselves within the new institution, or that by virtue of the *Tipay Warmis'* past experience, they could manage to sidestep the class and ethnic dynamics in which that success is embedded.

Moreover, in reality the knitters of *Tipay Warmi* were not willing or able to play the role demanded by the COTESU proposal. The image of *Tipay Warmi* continuing to admit members or allowing other groups to participate in their knitting center and in their success, ignores the real conflicts of interest which exist between knitters as individuals. Without extreme expansion of the market for handknits, the knitters of *Tipay Warmi* would have no real interest in sharing their production facilities and techniques or clients. In fact, the competition and individualism which exist in Bolivian society at a more general level have been exacerbated in Arani in recent years by the influx of money from the cocaine economy.[39] As was discussed in Chapter 2, new streams of wealth from coca production and migration which give select individuals the ability to challenge existing class structures have created an aggressive context exaggerating the involution and drama of small town life. And as I discussed previously, conditions in the global economy have made competition in the sweater industry more severe. Only an artificial and romanticized view of *Tipay Warmi* as a grassroots organization could ignore issues of personal self-interest which motivate knitters as much as other *Aranenos*.

Conclusion

The history of the knitting center project demonstrates the contradictions which arise when we look at "development" situations. The complexity of factors at work in this example belies any attempt to simplify a discussion of project funding into neat black and white characterizations. Given the problems that small-scale producers face in gaining access to capital which have been discussed in previous chapters, the only real chance for the *Tipay Warmis* to obtain financing for a building (or as we saw in earlier chapters, to gain access to export markets) was by "escaping" from

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[39]and not incidentally, project aid

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their ascribed low standing in national ethnic and class terms, and from their position of relative powerlessness in the local milieu. This was accomplished as a consequence of the attractiveness of their grassroots initiative to external sources of funding.

COTESU, although clearly encumbered by its own internal dynamics and restricted in certain respects by political relationships with institutions of the Bolivian government, was outside the domain of the local power hierarchy in Arani, and of strictures of ethnicity and class emanating from within Bolivian society. This allowed *Tipay Warmi* to play the funding game in terms more reasonably attainable for a women's knitting cooperative. However, despite a certain coincidence of interests between COTESU and *Tipay Warmi*, the trenchancy of local forces of domination bent upon appropriating the Association's resources and success very nearly prevailed. Details of the political battle over control of the building project demonstrate the importance of contacts with outside "agents" (such as development institutions) in allowing grassroots organizations (especially those run by women) to transcend local and national barriers.

At the same time, this project's history highlights the fragility and ambiguity of these relationships. As we saw, *Tipay Warmi* may have triumphed in retaining local control of the project, yet winning this battle hardly won them the war. Personal self-interest on the part of individuals and institutions involved in implementing the construction shaped the outcome of the project in ways *Tipay Warmi* was unable to contravene. Equally significant were personal biases reflected in the actual design of the structure and in the way that the project was originally conceptualized. And it is here that the real intricacy of what transpired becomes apparent.

Carlos' personal input was a crucial link in allowing the women of *Tipay Warmi* to gain access to COTESU financing for the building and to succeed in their struggle to retain control over the project. However, his ill-conceived ideas about how the project would best be implemented, together with his disproportionate influence in the process had negative results. Some of Carlos'

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misconceptions were merely reflections of ideas prevalent among the Bolivian middle-class, yet more significant for the outcome of the project, were his chimerical notions concerning the Association. These ideas were based upon the flawed self-interpretation presented by Gabriela and the *Tipay Warmis* themselves. In fact, if we move beyond specific moments of the funding and project implementation process, and beyond particulars of the structure's design, in the larger scheme of things, this problematic conceptualization of the Association and of the goals of its members becomes the cornerstone for understanding the project's failure.

The knitting center failed because, rather than providing the group with a structure which would serve the basic needs of their organization, the project became a grandiose attempt to resolve all of the contradictions of artisan production in the global economy through the construction of a building--serving the interests and self-view of the *Tipay Warmis* as well as the ideological and fiscal concerns of the funding agency. The structure was not designed to function in relation to *Tipay Warmi* and its success as a small grassroots cooperative controlled by local women. Instead, new functions were being created. These new functions failed to develop because they were predicated upon a series of dependent and contingent relationships. The exaggeratedly large size and inappropriate design of the building complex were dependent upon subsequent project financing to finish the building and to provide the details necessary to make it functional. The broader vision of expanding production was dependent upon the success of the marketing project.[40] And most critically, the ability of *Tipay Warmi* to mobilize itself and other groups for the purposes envisioned by the proposal was contingent upon the unity of the knitters themselves in wanting to pursue this path of action.

In the end, the project was based upon a flawed understanding of the Association and the aspirations of its individual members as interested in pursuing a broader field of action for the organization's political and cultural agenda, and in expanding the

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[40]which itself was dependent on subsidies for marketing and design--see Chapter 8

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group's productive activities to include not only more members, but other organized groups. This view emanated from a particular vision articulated and constructed by Gabriela and endorsed by the group as reflection of specific internal dynamics (which will be explored in detail in the following pages), rather than reflecting some inherent evolution of *Tipay Warmi* as a grassroots organization. This is not to say that others in the organization did not share in, or help to create this vision. On the contrary, the goals of the project were ideals which held extreme importance for certain individuals, particularly Gabriela's sister Ema who became President of the Association following Gabriela's departure. Yet in the final analysis, the goals of the project conflicted with the self-interest, and ultimately with the self-definition of individual knitters. Although it is possible that these goals could have been achieved despite this faulty vision, had the organization not become fragmented and bogged down with internal politics, as will be discussed in Chapter 8. In this volatile context, Gabriela was the only person within the organization who might have created the consensus necessary to implement such inherently conflictive strategies. Unfortunately, without Gabriela's charismatic leadership, the COTESU building project was destined to become a "white elephant."

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Chapter 8
The Limits of "Autodevelopment"

> "Grassroots enthusiasm and commitment, although a vital ingredient, are not sufficient for success."
> (Mayoux 1992: 109)

Introduction

This chapter describes a different approach to tackling the problem of connecting knitters with the market. With the support of a number of ATO's and the collaboration of a British sweater designer, beginning in 1989 (prior to and simultaneous with the circumstances surrounding the construction of the building described in the previous chapter) *Tipay Warmi* participated in "Andean by Design," a small project aimed at improving sweater design and expanding sales beyond subsidized ATO markets. Compared to ADAM, this project was a local level initiative based on the idea that different groups of knitters could come together under the umbrella of the project and be able to afford design and marketing services that none of them would have the money to pay for separately. For *Tipay Warmi* as for the other groups, this would give them the opportunity to replace their declining ATO market with better paying "boutique" customers.

The project made a number of significant gains in design, sales and increased wages, but greater success remained elusive. Although the structural position of Bolivian handknitters in the global market was an enormous hurdle that had to be overcome in order for them to achieve their goal of entering the upscale, private market, in the long run, the project failed for reasons more directly related to the internal dynamics of *Tipay Warmi*. Over-dependence on Gabriela for running the organization and for creating the group's larger vision resulted in conflict when Gabriela eventually attempted to move on to work as the project's coordinator. Tensions arising out of this situation became intertwined with sibling

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hostility between Gabriela and her sisters, and the relationship between *Tipay Warmi* and the project soured.

A central issue in the antagonism between the two institutions was "control." When knitters were producing sweaters which were considered "*artesanía*" ("handcrafts" or "folk art"), they were in control and their grassroots approach was viable. The more that their sweaters became "high fashion" knitwear, the less control they had over their own productive activities, making grassroots cooperation insufficient and inappropriate for accommodating the demands of doing business. The *Tipay Warmis* had difficulty accepting this loss of control, which conflicted with their own vision of themselves as independent and self-sufficient. Their reticence was exacerbated by competition and jealousy between the groups involved with the project, making cooperation impossible. Even in the face of evaporating ATO orders, the *Tipay Warmis* were unable to accept the conditions for operating in the upscale market which would require relinquishing some level of control to the project.

At the same time, mistakes made by the administration of *Tipay Warmi* and weaknesses in the group's participatory philosophy created conflict among the group's knitters. Especially problematic was the rise of an elite within the organization who, by virtue of their greater role in running the organization, were becoming increasingly disconnected from the majority of the knitters. Yet because these women occupied positions of power within the administrative and decision-making structure of *Tipay Warmi*, the direction taken by the organization tended to flow from the vision that they had for themselves and for the group. These tendencies were exacerbated by collaboration with outside individuals and institutions promoting their own agendas. Since organizational policies being enacted no longer necessarily reflected the interests and concerns of the other members, the internal coherence of the organization was becoming increasingly tenuous. Following Gabriela's departure, no one was able to create the type of consensus which in the past had made *Tipay Warmi* an exemplar

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organization. These dynamics had an even further corrosive effect on the functioning of the marketing project.

The Serendipitous Origins of "Andean by Design"

For *Tipay Warmi*, the end of the 1980's were both the best of times and the worst of times. The Association was riding the wave of attention occasioned by the appeal that their grassroots initiative held for NGO's, project funders, political organizations, and even anthropologists. The COTESU knitting center project was the embodiment of this success. But at the same time, ATO sales were clearly down. The buyer from Pueblo to People, a Houston-based non-profit craft seller told me that the mid-1980's fascination with Latin America in the United States which had been fueled by conflicts in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru had dissipated. Without physical conflict, people lose interest. Conditions in Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa had taken center stage. Moreover, the exotic quality of Guatemalan weavings, Peruvian baskets and Bolivian sweaters which used to promote sales in "Alternative" circles had evaporated as cheap craft products had flooded the market. In every mall in America, you could find products similar to those sold in Alternative stores and catalogues, but for a fraction of the cost. For the *Tipay Warmis*, sweaters were their "bread and butter" and unless they could find a way to escape this downward spiral of the ATO market, their entire strategy would be in jeopardy. But the question was, what should they do? ADAM had clearly not been the right approach.

Then, in 1989, something happened to change the situation. British sweater designer, Judy Bristol contacted the British ATO "Oxfam Trading" about obtaining information on Andean knitters and weavers in preparation for a trip she was planning to Peru to do research for a book on traditional Andean textile designs. Judy was a graduate of the Royal College of Art and had her own designer label that was being sold in stores like Harrods and Bloomingdales, but she had become disillusioned with her life in fashion design and frustrated by the pressures of work in the high-fashion business. She thought that the Peru trip and writing the textile design book

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would give her a new perspective on life and possibly help her figure out how to use her design skills in new ways. Oxfam Trading recruited her to give a series of "design workshops" with the idea of giving women from a number of knitting groups in Lima and Cuzco some basic skills that would allow them to start designing more appealing garments.

As luck would have it, while Judy was with one of the groups in Peru, she happened to meet representatives from Self Help Crafts. They put her in contact with *Tipay Warmi* and a number of other Bolivian knitting groups and offered to send her to Bolivia for a period to work with them. Judy conducted a series of workshops in Peru and Bolivia, working closely with knitters from different groups who were eager to learn these new skills. Unfortunately, it quickly became apparent to her that despite the high hopes of Oxfam Trading and the other ATO sweater customers, the design training she was providing was not going to be a "magic bullet." The designs produced by women in the workshops were things that they found appealing themselves, but apart from one or two simple floral patterns, nothing from the workshops was appropriate for the export market. The aesthetic, cultural and educational rift was too enormous to be bridged in a few training sessions.

While the original idea of the women doing their own designs was not going to work out, Judy was terribly impressed with the skill of the knitters as they worked and with the quality of the sweaters being produced by some of the groups. From her professional experience designing and marketing high fashion knitwear she knew that quality was the foundation for a salable product. It was clear to her that the groups needed design input and a mechanism to connect them with the type of boutique customers that had sold her own designer label garments. She believed that selling in this upscale market where sweater prices are high would offer the best margin of return on knitters' labor, allowing an increase in the amount paid to the knitter. But she also knew that entering this market was an extremely precarious business and that it would not be easy.

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Judy discussed these problems with all of the groups, but she had lengthy conversations with the women of *Tipay Warmi*. While she taught the workshops in Arani, she lived in the home of the Toranza sisters and worked on a daily basis with the whole group. Judy found *Tipay Warmi's* philosophy of grassroots participation, feminism and political engagement attractive since it fit with her own political views. All of the knitters liked her, and she and Gabriela developed a special rapport, becoming close friends. The *Tipay Warmis* learned more and more about the dynamics of the market and Judy came to understand the special needs of grassroots knitters. Out of this collaboration, the bold idea of attempting to break into the boutique market took root. Judy would work with them, doing designs, setting up a marketing structure with a U.S. representative and helping them get established with clients. Judy was enthusiastic about finding a way to utilize her design skills in a manner more in line with her own political views, and the *Tipay Warmis* were enthusiastic about having access to the type of designs ATO clients were demanding and to potentially better paying customers. Although in many ways, the initial idea for this venture was Judy's brainchild, born of her professional expertise in the fashion world, the *Tipay Warmis* and especially Gabriela, participated in creating the vision for how it would operate on the ground.

Judy took the idea to Oxfam Trading and they agreed to fund a sweater design and marketing project that would include four of the groups Judy had worked with that she felt had the potential to produce export quality garments:

1) *La Khochalita*--a much larger Cochabamba-based organization[1]
2) *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*--a large coop from the *El Alto* sector of La Paz
3) *MINKA*--a Peruvian organization with knitters from rural areas in the central highlands and in the city of Lima

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[1]see Chapter 3 for more detail concerning *La Khochalita*

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4) *Tipay Warmi*

But even with financing, making the whole thing work was going to be a challenge. Tensions and rivalries between the groups went beyond competition as sweater producers. For example, *La Khochalita's* college-educated and male leadership disdained the abilities of the other groups, making cooperation difficult, and ethnic tensions between the *Aymara* knitters of *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* and the *Quechua* knitters of *Tipay Warmi* were an underlying source of conflict. And even nationalistic sentiments seemed to color MINKA's interaction with the Bolivian-based project.

In the end, enthusiasm for entering upscale markets was strong enough to temporarily overcome these rivalries, but coordinating production remained problematic. While conducting her work in Bolivia, Judy had met a "granola" German fellow in La Paz and the two of them had gotten married. They bought a rustic house from some *campesinos* in Tiquipaya, a town in the *Valle Bajo*, about a half hour the other side of the city of Cochabamba from Arani. Out of necessity, the project began operation out of Judy's home. She rigged up a drafting table to work on her designs and used project money to purchase a "dinosaur" of a computer that dated from the early 80's, but their house was on a dirt road three miles from the center of Tiquipaya and they lacked funding to install a telephone, making communication difficult.

Despite the hurdles, however, the response to the designs Judy supplied to the project was immediate and positive. ATO orders increased dramatically, and in line with the project's goal of expanding into the upscale market, Judy put the groups in contact with her old customers. At the beginning of 1990 she had planned to make a trip to New York to show project's new line of sweaters and to look for a local representative, but ended up being unable to travel because of the birth of her son. Yet even without the trip, the groups were seeing a reverse in the trend of declining orders. A quote from an Oxfam Trading evaluator stated,

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> "In truth there are not many Judy Bristols. An expert who is prepared not only to work for much less than her market value is worth but also to live in the community and who is able to integrate wholly into the groups is rare enough. One who is prepared to stake her professional reputation and make available free of charge her market knowledge, by putting the beneficiaries in touch with her customers from when she had her own business is probably unique. Judy would have a great deal to lose if this project did not move toward self-sufficiency."[2]

The following year enthusiasm from the groups and from customers continued to be effusive. Judy knew that the New York trip would now be crucial in establishing their success. Gabriela had been selected by *Tipay Warmi* as their representative to the project. Judy felt that Gabriela would be a good choice for the project's coordinator. She knew that Gabriela would be able to grasp the dynamics of the export market and as they worked together it became apparent that she would be more capable than anyone from the other groups of simultaneously conveying this information to knitters in terms that they could understand while waylaying fears and animosities stemming from inter-group rivalry. So in January 1991, Judy and Gabriela and Judy's one year old son traveled to New York for two weeks to show that year's new line of sweaters. During their trip they stayed with me and my husband in our apartment in Queens.

The New York trip was a resounding success. Practically everyone who saw the line placed an order, and with a contact from a friend and more than a bit of luck, they found a representative. Marlene Rigby was a former Australian television journalist living in New York. For a couple of years she had been representing an Australian designer whose forte was with cotton sweaters in bold colors, and Marlene felt that the subtle, earthy colors of the alpaca range would complement those she was already showing. In addition, she fell in love with Judy's designs and was supportive of

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[2]Ed Millard (1992) Oxfam Trading Project Evaluation Report.

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the social goals of the project. She agreed to work on the basis of a 10% commission to be placed on top of the export price, but understood that the first year there would be little in the way of earnings.

However, Marlene was concerned about having sweaters from four different groups with four different labels. She argued that from her experience she believed that it would be difficult for customers to understand that the groups were part of a single project. She pointed out that it would be better for them to associate the designs she was showing with a single label. Judy and Gabriela agreed with Marlene that the project needed a name that would provide a unifying marketing concept for its sweaters. Brainstorming, they came up with the name "Andean by Design" to serve as an umbrella for Judy's designs produced by the four groups. The label on the neck of each sweater would read "Andean by Design," but the individual groups would still attach production tags along an inside seam.

They also agreed that it would be a good idea for Judy to design an "Andean by Design" swing tag with a blurb about the project. A well-designed tag can catch the eye of both socially-committed and fashion-conscious consumers. Private sweater companies use swing tags to emphasize alpaca sweaters as exotic handknits. One label (*Casa Fisher*) described the knitters as "400 handknitters located in remote villages in the beautiful Cochabamba Valley high in the Andes"; another (*FOTRAMA*) claimed that their sweaters were "produced with the skill of their ancient Incan ancestors"; while a third (*Casa Fisher*) emphasized that alpaca was used to produce clothing for the Inca elite and that by purchasing an alpaca sweater, you can "add that touch of Incan royalty to your fine wardrobe." Andean by Design would use the swing tag to emphasize the luxury quality of alpaca while drawing attention to the social and economic condition of the producer.

Still, there were problems to be overcome. Marlene could not import the sweaters into the U.S. because she was not a licensed customs agent. Considering how expensive and complicated it is to contract with a private agent, Judy felt it would be more

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advantageous if they could get one of the ATO's to act as the project's importer. Judy and Gabriela traveled to Pennsylvania where they met with representatives of Self Help Crafts. After a good deal of negotiating, Self Help agreed to act as the importer for the project, adding 17% to the price of the sweater to cover their costs. Their agreement to distribute orders to clients and to be responsible for invoicing was an amazing deal. But Self Help went a step further and offered to advance 50% of the sales price to the groups upon delivery to help them cover immediate costs. This was an enormous coup since raw materials are so expensive and because customers often delay making payment for months.

Judy and Gabriela returned to Bolivia to apprise the others of their good fortune with finding customers, a representative and an importer. But for Gabriela there was more to it. She had been deeply affected by the trip itself. While Judy and Gabriela were in New York, my husband and I had noticed that Gabriela was uncharacteristically quiet and withdrawn. Later she explained to me that she had been overwhelmed--but less by the surprising size of the United States, the American standard of living, and intensity of life in New York than by the realization of how the market for sweaters really operates and what it would take for the *Tipay Warmis* and the other groups to succeed in their new venture. In fact, her experience in New York made her question the extent to which the group had ever really been independent and the efficacy of grassroots craft production. She returned determined to convey this knowledge to the others so that they might understand that they <u>had</u> to make the Andean by Design project work.

However, when Gabriela and Judy presented the "Andean by Design" concept to the groups after the New York trip, there was some resistance. The organizations were still wary from the ADAM debacle. They were concerned about losing their "autonomy" if they used Andean by Design labels and if they cooperated too closely with the other groups. *Minka* refused to work under the new conditions and pulled out of the project. *La Khochalita* continued to grumble, but recognizing the benefits of having access to designs and orders, gave provisional approval to the new plan. In reality, there were

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more than enough orders to keep *La Khochalita*, *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* and *Tipay Warmi* happy. Marlene had done a smashing job bringing the sweaters around to customers and taking orders. Through her cotton line she already had her foot in the door at some of the exclusive boutiques and big department stores, allowing her to show the sweaters to clients that are normally impossible to get in to see. Her enthusiastic personality landed many sales with otherwise tentative and wary buyers.[3] The project seemed to be taking off and Gabriela's misgivings about the nature of the market itself were assuaged. Luck really seemed to be in their favor.

Betrayal

When I arrived for a three month field stay in June 1991, the atmosphere in the *Tipay Warmi's* headquarters in the Toranza house was extremely positive and there was an almost palatable sense of group unity apparent in everyday interactions among members. The COTESU building project was underway and the *Tipay Warmis'* triumph over local forces of opposition described in the previous chapter improved their standing in local opinion and their clout in local arenas of power. Orders from the Andean by Design project provided a consistent source of work at improved wages. Gabriela was able to afford to travel by plane to Sucre and back for a meeting--an act of personal defiance against the discrimination suffered by *cholitas*, and a source of pride for the *Tipay Warmis*. Moral was very high. Yet things were not necessarily as rosy as they seemed.

As with many efforts at cooperative development, the moving force behind much of the organization's success had always been the charismatic leadership of Gabriela (and her sisters). Despite a level of real participation from the other knitters absent in most groups, Gabriela was the principal broker between the group and outside contacts, and it was her visionary zeal for change which edged the group forward. Although everyone I spoke with agreed that Gabriela had always insisted that others participate, after a decade of

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[3] I also believe that Marlene's Australian accent gave her an "exotic" quality which helped her with sales to U.S. customers.

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operation only a handful of women developed the skills to run the organization. Some of *Tipay Warmi's* members were still afraid to take on responsibilities, but the majority were merely lackadaisical about participation because they knew that Gabriela or one of the others from the core group of leaders would be willing to pick-up the slack. Daniela commented that,

> *"...ella siempre quería que aprenden todas...pero la gente siempre decían que...las socias decían que ella no más tiene que ser porque ella no es casada, ella es soltera y entonces a nosotras nuestros maridos no nos dejan y entonces a ella quién le va a quejar..."*
>
> "...she always wanted everyone to learn...but the others always said that...the members said that it could only be her because she wasn't married, she's single and we have our husbands that don't let us do anything and who's going to yell at her?"

By the middle of 1991, Gabriela had become increasingly dissatisfied with her role in *Tipay Warmi* and felt that the others were taking advantage of her in their failure to take on greater levels of responsibility within the group. She began to resent the fact that everyone always expected her to do everything. She had other, bigger things that she was interested in pursuing and felt it was time for the *Tipay Warmis* to take over. This feeling was exacerbated by her growing involvement with the nascent Cochabamba Peasant Women's Union and by changes occurring in her personal life. As can be seen in Daniela's statement, through the years Gabriela's lack of personal attachments had freed her to focus all of her energies on making *Tipay Warmi* work.[4] But this began to

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[4]Buechler (1997: 80) describes how a woman leader in La Paz felt it necessary to stay single in order to do the work of political organizing and how another regretted marrying (p. 83). In Cochabamba, many of the individuals in positions of power in women's organizations that I spoke with were single and often without children. However, similar to the growing dissatisfaction exhibited by Gabriela with respect to her personal life, Florinda, the President of Cochabamba regional Peasant Women's Union, Bartolina Sisa (who had previously been one of the *Tipay Warmis*) lamented her single status to me, saying that she and Gabriela and some of the others had not realized how difficult and unrewarding life would be without personal attachments as they grew old. The lack of

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change when Gabriela became personally involved with Carlos Sanchez, the director of the COTESU project. Over the years, the cultural importance of children and family, together with her own growing desire for a relationship had made Gabriela question her own situation as a single woman and even to resent the Association for usurping all of her attentions. She felt that she had never had a life of her own. Finally finding a viable partner only accentuated her feeling that the personal sacrifices she had made for the good of the organization had been beyond the call of duty.

Unfortunately Gabriela's evolving sense of self was not well-received in Arani. The *Warmis* ignored Gabriela's admonitions and failed to make her role in the organization more equitable by sharing some of the responsibilities. In reality, no one believed that Gabriela was <u>really</u> that unhappy with the state of affairs. She had always yelled at them for not participating more, but they knew that she relished her role as leader. What they didn't realize was that things were really changing. They did not comprehend the extent of her increasing involvement with the Peasant Women's Union and only a couple of people in Arani had anything more than suspicions about Gabriela's relationship with Carlos (it was rather controvercial for a *cholita* to become involved with a middle class engineer). By the end of the summer however, her sisters knew that something was going on. Daniela, the youngest, was happy for her sister, but for a variety of personal and social reasons, Dolores and Ema did not approve.

Then, in October 1991, things were forever changed. At the annual Congress of the Cochabamba Peasant Women's Union, Gabriela was emerging as the clear choice to be the next Union President, fulfilling her dreams of moving on to a new level of political engagement. But when news of what was happening at the Congress reached the *Tipay Warmis* and the Toranza sisters, they sent a large contingent to vote against her. On the floor of the congress they justified their vote, making an apparently salient argument that Gabriela still had unfinished business as President of *Tipay Warmi*

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children in a society which places a great emphasis on family and in which people rely heavily on children for support in their later years was especially regrettable.

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since they were in the middle of the construction project. The voice of the *Tipay Warmis* swayed the members of the Congress and another woman was elected as President. Gabriela was given a lower post. But things would never be the same again.

Although the *Tipay Warmis* may have won the battle over the disposition of Gabriela's energies, their efforts to control her ultimately lost them the war. Everyone at the Congress was stunned by what had occurred, but no one more so than Gabriela. How could members of her own organization, and even of her own family have made such a humiliating public display? And more than that, she felt that they had no right to prevent her from moving on when she had given so much of herself to the organization already.[5] The vote was a decisive moment. Gabriela accepted the edict of the Congress and of the *Tipay Warmis*, but made it clear that they could no longer rely on her to always pick up the slack. She agreed to finish out her responsibilities related to the building construction and with Andean by Design, but advised them that she had plans that did not include continuing with *Tipay Warmi* indefinitely.

For the Toranza sisters as a family, the vote was also decisive. Gabriela believed that her sisters had orchestrated the opposition to her election as Union President. She felt that they had used the Association and arguments about the construction project with the explicit purpose of thwarting her personal happiness and ambitions. She believed that they associated her rise to power outside of Arani with her relationship to Carlos and that the vote was a manifestation of their hostility. Gabriela had always been the dominant one in the sibling relationship among the four sisters, but Ema and Dolores had always resented Gabriela's rise to power. While much of Gabriela's success could be attributed to her charismatic personality, she also had the luxury of having a "housewife" in Dolores and a "right had woman" in Ema (the women behind the "man"?). Dolores says that she never wanted to just stay

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[5]The leader of another Bolivian peasant women's association describes a similar experience in her autobiography: "*Te has capacitado a traves de nuestra organizacion, has sido Presidenta inclusive...no puedes ir a ninguna parte...*" (Translation: "you have been trained as a result of your participation in our organization, you were even president...you can't go anywhere") (Condori 1988: 174)

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home, but that Gabriela treated her like a servant girl. She says Gabriela made her stay home to watch *Papi* Hernando and that she "had to do everything" before she was allowed to go out.

Ema and Dolores had always felt that Gabriela had unfairly dominated over them not only in family matters, but by limiting their participation in the Association. Ema says that Gabriela never wanted her to participate, except when she needed a "secretary." But despite these feelings, her presence was still important to them both psychologically and in terms of the future of the organization. They thought that Gabriela could be made to see that she was moving in the wrong direction with her aspirations to leave *Tipay Warmi* and with her personal involvement with Carlos. They feared what would happen to the Association if she left, especially during the construction, and I believe that they also suffered from a subconscious fear of abandonment from their childhood as orphans, intensifying their misgivings about Gabriela's new intentions.

Following the Congress, the relationship between the sisters deteriorated and animosity from the rift dividing the family began to seep into internal Association dynamics which were already strained. Arguments and disagreements among the sisters over aspects of organizational policy became more and more public and emotional. Gabriela devoted her energies to her role as the Andean by Design coordinator, requiring her to spend most of her time away from Arani. As things at home became increasingly unbearable for everyone, Gabriela accepted an offer from Judy to stay in an extra room at their house in Tiquipaya. Public pronouncements justified the move as necessary in order for Gabriela to keep up with the demands of the workload from Andean by Design, but anyone with personal knowledge of the situation understood that the family disagreement and disillusionment with the organization were behind Gabriela's decision to move out.

In January 1992, Gabriela's forewarnings about her own role in the Association came to pass. She refused to place herself in the running for re-election as the group's President, agreeing to continue for the time being only as the Andean by Design coordinator. The logical choice to replace Gabriela was her sister, Ema. Over the

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years, Ema had accompanied Gabriela in many of her travels as President, she knew the people that Gabriela knew at institutions in Cochabamba, and she understood what it would take to make the organization function. In fact, Ema had always felt unfairly overshadowed by her charismatic sister and relished the idea of taking on more responsibility in the organization. She had always been extremely devoted to the ideal of participation that *Tipay Warmi* was founded upon and now continued to "live for" the organization in a way that Gabriela had ceased to do. When finally given the chance to be in charge by Gabriela's departure, the lesser "intensity" of her personality made her, in many ways, a more democratic leader than Gabriela. But Ema's election as President was bittersweet given her feeling that Gabriela was abandoning her at a time when she could have benefited from her sister's more experienced counsel.

The 1000 Sweater Debacle

In 1992 Andean by Design was faced with a difficult situation. The first three years of the project had produced significant gains, raising the sales price of the sweater from $24-$37 to $59-$65, but it was clear that becoming permanently established with upscale market clients was a process that would take more work. Still, Judy, Gabriela and the others felt sure that they were succeeding. There was an enormous feeling of disappointment then, when they heard that funding from Oxfam Trading was being discontinued. It was not clear how they would be able to afford to maintain even the "bare bones" operations that they had been functioning with. The groups paid 5% of earnings to Andean by Design and the idea had always been that the project would eventually become self-sustaining and not need outside financing. But with the current level of sales, 5% was still entirely insufficient to support all the costs of Andean by Design operations. However, commitment to the endeavor was so intense that Judy, Gabriela and even Marlene continued to work without pay for more than half of the year. Unfortunately, not wanting to boast, neither Judy nor Gabriela

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considered making this explicitly known to the *Tipay Warmis*--a fact which would later come back to haunt them.

Tensions were high with the uncertainty facing the future of Andean by Design, and with Gabriela and Ema now the principal intermediaries between Andean by Design and *Tipay Warmi*, the relationship between the two organizations quickly devolved. Production problems began to emerge as the sisters were no longer able to communicate or interact in a civil manner. Gabriela blamed Ema for mismanaging orders. Ema was giving her new role as President her best effort, but was continually humiliated for her shortcomings by Gabriela's often public beratings. Then in July, Ema was begrudingly forced to admit that despite her assurances to Judy and Gabriela throughout the preceding months, *Tipay Warmi* was terribly behind in production for Andean by Design orders. In fact, they were going to be nearly 1000 sweaters short for orders due the following month! Many of these orders were with important new boutique clients that were very specific about delivery dates. What on earth had happened?

It seems that in order to guard the new building that was being built with COTESU financing, *Tipay Warmi* had instituted a fee from each knitter that would be subtracted incrementally from knitting wages. The fee was a set amount and the more a woman knit, the faster she could pay off the fee and return to receiving the entire wage. Although knitters were not particularly happy about the deduction, they were also extremely proud of their new building and understood the need to pay to maintain it. Thus, problems arose, not from the institution of the maintenance fee *per se*, but from a policy set in motion by Ema and other members of the *directorio* ("executive committee"). The policy instituted in January 1993 stipulated that only the sweaters a woman knit herself would count toward the fee. This caused great consternation within the Association, since knitters routinely take out knitting through the cooperative for their friends and family which they turn in under their own name. What the new policy meant was that knitters rebelled and stopped taking out knitting to put out in other households. They only knit what they themselves could produce.

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Some even began clandestinely knitting for other organizations. This occurred precisely at a time when they were supposed to be knitting orders that Marlene had taken from a number of exclusive shops in New York.

In order to deal with this production crisis, the *Tipay Warmis* and Gabriela began to recruit more knitters. Using contacts they had from the Peasant Women's Union, the *Tipay Warmis* organized sub-contracting groups in Tiraque and Aramasi. Gabriela used contacts she had to single-handedly organize another half dozen groups in other areas of the valley. IFFI started a knitting group with relocalized miners' wives in urban slum areas. A significant portion of the sweaters originally meant for production by *Tipay Warmi* was turned over to *La Khochalita* (fueling their sense of superiority). In the end, the orders to the most demanding stores were sent off more or less on time. But long-time ATO clients were forced to wait as much as two months. This significantly affected the ATO, Pueblo to People's sales that season, since few customers are willing to buy a relatively expensive sweater that has been placed on indefinite back order. Even a key Macy's order arrived without enough time for the window dressers to organize a display of Andean by Design garments which had been planned.

IAF Funding

Although there was still enthusiasm for the project and a belief that they could make it work, 1992 had not been a good year. So, when 1993 began with the news of a new source of funding, things again appeared to be looking up. I had put Judy in touch with the InterAmerican Foundation (IAF). I knew that the IAF funds small projects with groups like *Tipay Warmi* and I was friends with the Foundation's Bolivia Representative, Kevin Healy. Kevin had been the one who had originally put me onto studying the ADAM project, and the Foundation was a long-time supporter of *La Khochalita*. As I had suspected he would be, Kevin was very interested in what Andean by Design was trying to do. The IAF agreed to fund the project with $183,035 over two years--a much higher level of funding than they had from Oxfam Trading. Everyone was ecstatic about the news.

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At the last minute, however, when the project had already been approved, somebody noticed that Andean by Design was not an independent legal entity in Bolivia and as such, could not receive Foundation funds. Up until that moment, legal status had never been an issue and it had never occurred to Judy or Gabriela to do anything about it since it would have cost money and taken up time dealing with bureaucracy and paper work. But now it was too late since the IAF needed to make an immediate decision for budgeting reasons. As a way to get around this problem, Gabriela suggested that *Tipay Warmi* could accept the money for the project. She presented the idea to the *Directorio* and they gave the go ahead. IAF ultimately agreed that funding would be channeled to Andean by Design through *Tipay Warmi*. Although *Tipay Warmi* was the receiving entity, the funding agreement clearly stipulated that the money being provided was meant for the Andean by Design project for the costs incurred in marketing and designing sweaters. Foundation support was slated to cover administration expenses, design costs (Judy's salary) and travel (specifically a yearly sales trip). With the new funds, the project rented a small office space with a store front for a small boutique. They hired a bilingual secretary named Ana Maria who had a great rapport with the knitters. They employed Daniela Toranza (who had remained neutral in the dispute between her sisters) as a quality control and production coordinator, a position she had previously held at FOTRAMA. They bought a fax machine and other basic pieces of office equipment and Gabriela now became the Project Director. Once again, things really seemed to be looking up.

Unfortunately, IAF funding actually became a source of conflict. *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* and *La Khochalita* were very upset that money for the project was being channeled through *Tipay Warmi* because despite clear language to the contrary in the funding agreement, they felt that this gave the *Tipay Warmis* a disproportionate amount of control over project funds--even if that was only on paper. It was already irritating to them to have to deal with Gabriela as the Project Director since to them she was nothing but a knitter from a rival group. Judy had imagined that Gabriela would be able to smooth over inter-group rivalries, and she did have

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an excellent rapport with knitters from other groups, but the competition was too deeply ingrained for her to develop a good relationship with the groups' leaders. Eventually *La Khochalita* withdrew from the project. Judy declined an offer from them to pay her to do designs apart from the Andean by Design label.

Nuestra Señora del Rosario wanted to continue to work with Andean by Design, but on their own terms. They argued that now that the project had financing, they should no longer have to pay the five percent fee. Judy and Gabriela reminded them that the goal of the project was to become self-sufficient and not to need "financing." In order to do that they could not cease to help support the costs of marketing and design because that would make them more dependent. Besides, although the financing sounded like a lot of money, there were many expenses involved in what Andean by Design was doing that would not be covered by the IAF grant. *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* refused to pay the fee, but still insisted that they had a right to stay in the project. However, when they received attractive orders from other customers, they neglected production of Andean by Design's sweaters.

These problems with *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* caused a series of serious delays in Andean by Design's production during April and May, but even more problematic was the way *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* behaved at Andean by Design meetings. Periodically, representatives of all of the groups--which now included *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*, *Tipay Warmi* and the small production groups created the previous year--were supposed to get together to discuss details of production. According to all of the informants I interviewed, the meetings were dominated by fighting between *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* and *Tipay Warmi* over financial matters related to *Tipay Warmi's* role in channeling the funds to Andean by Design. One informant described what she believed to have been an absurd meeting where *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* and *Tipay Warmi* spent the entire time arguing about who would get the office furniture and the fax when the project ended--because of the way that the IAF had written the contract, *Tipay Warmi* was listed

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as administrator of the funds and as beneficiary in the event that the project shut down.

The representative of *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* goaded Ema, insisting that if the funding had come in their name, then it was really the *Tipay Warmi's* money. They asked her why *Tipay Warmi* didn't have the fax that the project had funded (the clear implication of which was that Andean by Design was usurping Equipment meant for *Tipay Warmi*) and said that because *Tipay Warmi* really controlled the project, Ema should be able to override policies such as the institution of the 5% fee. Eventually, Andean by Design notified *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* that they were no longer part of the project, which of course, did not sit very well with *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*. They accused Andean by Design of "using" them to get funding. But informant accounts of the meetings and production figures tend to support Andean by Design's account of what happened.

The Problem of Participation

Even with *Nuestra Senora del Rosario* out of the picture, things at Andean by Design continued to deteriorate. The *Tipay Warmis* began to complain more openly about the way that Andean by Design was functioning. They said that they wanted Andean by Design to be more "participatory," but they were unable to define exactly what they had in mind by this. At the heart of their demands was the desire to be more included in decision-making processes and to be more in control. Unfortunately, this was a problematic request. Not only did many decisions about designs and marketing require specialized knowledge, but the structure which had been created to allow for participation had completely broken down.

Infighting between the groups had significantly affected the level of participation by knitters in Andean by Design. Meetings where knitters should have had a certain amount of input were interrupted and even pre-empted by the power struggle between *Tipay Warmi* and *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*. But equally destructive to any sort of real participation was *Tipay Warmi's* jealousy of the other groups. In the past, the *Tipay Warmis* had always enjoyed an

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advantage over other knitters, groups, and leaders through their development of an image and a political language which ATO's, documentary film makers, project funders and anthropologists all found appealing. The idea of expanding *Tipay Warmi* or at least replicating its success had been attractive to everyone involved. By incorporating more women, the *Tipay Warmis* would extend their reach over these resources. In conversation with me, members clearly expressed the importance of this expansion for allowing knitters to defend themselves like a union against the exploitation of middlemen and entrepreneurs. The provision in the COTESU proposal for using the new knitting center building to capacitate fifty new knitters every six months discussed in the previous chapter emphasized this approach.

With the "1000 sweater debacle" *Tipay Warmi* had courted and organized satellite groups. However, it had quickly become apparent that *Tipay Warmi* did not have the capacity to absorb these groups. The reality of the relationship between *Tipay Warmi* and their productive base was that the market was not readily expandable to accommodate such growth in the number of knitters. Seligman (1998) describes how forces created by neoliberal government policies have fractured Peruvian market women's interests, decreasing the possibility for unity and making existing marketing organizations less inclusive. In the case of *Tipay Warmi*, the neoliberal approach being pursued by the Bolivian government was negatively affecting their ability to maintain a stable market base with the ATO's as more and more women formed knitting groups and became interested in obtaining a piece of the already diminishing ATO pie.

Rather ironically, the Andean by Design project was attempting to capitalize on aspects of the neoliberal project which would normally only benefit large-scale, capitalized producers by tapping into a previously unobtainable market for cooperative handknitters. If anything, the serendipitous union of *Tipay Warmi*, Andean by Design, Judy, Marlene and Self-Help seemed to offer a rare opportunity for knitters to get their foot in the door of a market which is exclusive but not contracting. If anything, the market

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itself was in the process of expansion as a result of economic and fashion trends at work in the economy of the United States and Europe. However, broadening their base to include satellite groups required increasing the levels of responsibility and management by *Tipay Warmi*--skills which the *Tipay Warmis* already lacked, and relinquishing the "exclusive" position of the Association as a unique grassroots organization--neither of which were related to the imposition of neoliberal measures by external forces beyond knitters' control. Ultimately, when the new groups remained separate, it fomented rivalry and competition rather than solidarity and cooperation. This competition plagued relationships within Andean by Design and stymied the effort to create an umbrella structure for marketing and design from which various groups might benefit. The *Tipay Warmis* complained that Andean by Design gave the others "preferential treatment" because since they were less experienced knitters, they were often given the "easier" designs (which did pay a bit less). Furthermore, they said that Andean by Design was paying the other groups more money. Andean by Design was actually paying the same rate to all of the groups, but *Tipay Warmi* was the only group deducting organizational overhead--so their wage ended-up being lower. The *Tipay Warmis* argued that they needed to be paid extra to cover their organizational costs. At one point, they even demanded that they should be paid more than the other groups merely because they were "*Tipay Warmi*" and had more experience.

In addition to competition between the groups, the scope for a participatory structure in Andean by Design was limited by dynamics from within *Tipay Warmi*. At the same time that the *Tipay Warmis* were demanding greater participation, no one was willing or able to actually take on more responsibility. In a conversation with Kevin Healy, even Ema told him that she did not have time. Although Ema's comment to Kevin might be better explained as an attempt to further avoid the conflict with Gabriela, the Association was constrained as much by a general lack of time and personal autonomy among women in local culture, as by a lack of desire to engage in the tasks required for greater participation in the functioning of their own

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organization. Most of the knitters had no interest in participating in meetings or in making decisions, as long as they got a good wage. It seemed that the "need" for power and control was being driven by Gabriela's disdain for her sisters and the feelings of inadequacy that it engendered within *Tipay Warmi's* leadership. For the base, participating in meetings and making organizational decisions were not part of the repertoire of skills knitters cultivated as part of their own self-identity as "*cholitas.*"

The Wage Issue Problem

The issue of power became even more apparent when, despite the production debacle of the year before, the *Tipay Warmis* attempted to put up the price that they said Andean by Design should charge for the sweaters by another $20. Many of the knitters believed that Andean by Design's funding should cover the increased amount they paid the groups for sweaters. Moreover, Ema and her Vice President, Lupe, had been hearing all over the place that *Casa Fisher* and *Milma* and other private entrepreneurs charge $80, $90, even $100 or $150 for their sweaters in their store. They felt that Judy wasn't charging enough to the customers. But Judy refused to further raise the price, believing that the *Tipay Warmis* did not grasp the dynamics of pricing in the knitwear market (including the distinction between retail and wholesale pricing) and that it would not be possible to sell the sweaters at such an inflated price. Instead the *Tipay Warmis* had to be satisfied with only a relatively modest increase. But they were not happy with what they perceived to be nothing more than Judy and Gabriela's caprice. Given the bad blood between Ema and Gabriela, *Nuestra Señora del Rosario's* arguments about "control" had touched a tender nerve. *Tipay Warmi's* inability to dictate wage rates now began to seem as if they no longer "controlled" their own destiny and that Andean by Design had become an intermediary with the power to dominate them. These sentiments were exacerbated by the nature of the interaction between the sisters in which Gabriela's dominant sibling role began to be embodied more and more in the relationship between Andean by Design and *Tipay Warmi.*

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Gabriela and Judy were convinced that the market would not bear the higher prices being demanded by the *Tipay Warmis* and that it would be suicide to charge so much. They argued that it was crucial at this initial stage of the project not to lose ground by appearing to be too expensive, especially since they still had production problems that often resulted in delays. But what Judy and Gabriela had not realized was that the *Tipay Warmis'* insistence on a higher price was not just them wanting a bigger piece of the pie. There were problems with *Tipay Warmi's* internal finances driving knitters to demand that Andean by Design pay more. The problem had roots in back in 1991 when Ema had taken over the Presidency. Many of the policies implemented during Gabriela's long tenure as the *Tipay Warmis'* President remained in effect following her departure, including a designation that 10% of the price of each sweater would be retained by *Tipay Warmi* to contribute towards capitalizing the organization. These funds went directly to pay off a $15,000 low interest rate working capital loan that the group had obtained in order to purchase wool and to pay for their portion of the construction.

When Ema took over, she had not really understood what capitalization was and even though the debt had recently been paid off, *Tipay Warmi* continued to subtract this amount from the wage on each sweater. In and of itself, this would not have been a bad thing. The group could have benefited from "capitalizing" itself to avoid having to borrow money to purchase raw materials in the future. Unfortunately, without Gabriela's greater understanding of more complex aspects of the group's finances, no one really understood that this is what "capitalization" meant. Part of the problem was that "capitalization" had become a catch word for many of the policies being implemented by the administration of President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada. A number of free-market strategies were being applied to nationalized industries and to local government budgets under the auspices of "capitalizing" them. Most people seemed to think that this was just another word for "profit" or "money" to make an organization function, but did not understand the subtle difference between everyday "operating capital" and

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"capital" funds used to make more long term investments (such as the purchase of machinery or raw materials)--with the idea that the money would be recuperated through increased productivity. This perspective could also be a negative byproduct of the relationship between groups and project aid--money is not seen in relation to work or costs because it comes from outside. Money therefore always remains abstract, not as directly related to expenses.

This was definitely the case for the *Tipay Warmis*. With the 1000 sweater production debacle, they had incurred many more expenses than normal, running around the city between production groups, faxing and phoning back and forth not only to Cochabamba, but to ATO clients, and express mailing already late orders in piece meal fashion in order to get as many sweaters to the client as soon as possible. Moreover, while Gabriela had been able to handle many organizational matters that necessitated travel to the city by herself, Ema often required that the *Tipay Warmis'* treasurer, Lupe or others accompany her. Because the Association provided a *per diem* for day trips and paid for bus and taxi fares, a good deal of money was being spent going and coming. This expense grew following the "1000 sweater debacle" because as Ema became more and more disgruntled with Andean by Design and with what she perceived to be the unfair treatment that they were getting, she began to spend a good deal of time seeking advice from "friends" and having meetings about the situation in different institutions like IFFI.

With these increases in group expenses, money from the "capital fund" was being used up. However, since no one in the group really understood that this was not what was supposed to happen with capital funds, it was not really cause for alarm. However, despite the fact that Andean by Design had increased the amount that *Tipay Warmi* received for a sweater by $20 (from $47 before the project to $67 in 1993), *Tipay Warmi* had continued to pay the same wage to the knitters. Instead of a small percentage being held back for capitalization, the group was now keeping more than $20--almost 30% of the price of the sweater!

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Unfortunately, no one seemed to realize that this was happening. When the *Tipay Warmis* balanced their budget at the end of the year they had not been taught to analyze their expenses, deciding where they might be spending too much and where they might have excess. Instead what was spent in each general category was summed up and presented to the *asemblea* ("assembly") as "this is what we need to operate." The rhetoric of "our" money used by the *Tipay Warmis* contributed to knitters' attitude that the "*caja*" ("till") was the Association's money but not in relation to their own earnings. There was no sense that what "we" spend comes from "my" pocket. The "*caja*" was both bottomless and fixed--that is, it wasn't seen as related to wages, but was "ours" in the sense of "ours to spend." Of course, with the added expenses of production problems, together with a generally "spendthrift" attitude toward travel, communication and participation in educational and political events, it appeared that they needed quite a bit to function. But no one sat down and examined how the funds had actually been spent. To make matters worse, *Tipay Warmi* did not separate administrative wages from knitting wages, making it impossible for them to have any idea what they really spent on overhead. My analysis of their spending showed that during the previous year the percentage of wages paid out each month for administration was often as high as 95%.

At the same time, the sweaters that the group were knitting for Andean by Design were much more demanding than the sweaters that they had previously produced. Judy's designs for the boutique market were more complicated and sizing was significantly larger and baggier. Knitters had been complaining that they weren't making enough money. Ema and the *Directorio* blamed Andean by Design for not increasing wages and when they received the news that Andean by Design had refused to raise the price they would pay to what *Tipay Warmi* was demanding, knitters stopped taking out orders to knit--later aptly described by Judy as the *Tipay Warmis* going on strike against themselves. Once again, this caused *Tipay Warmi* to begin to experience production problems. Marlene had obtained a number of large orders for the *Tipay Warmis* when they unexpectedly

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informed that they were already behind and could not accept any more production. Gabriela says that when she figured out what was going on, she offered to come and help sort things out. Ema says that she constantly asked Gabriela to explain things to her, but that Gabriela got mad or gave cursory explanations that Ema couldn't follow. Maybe given the sibling relationship in which Gabriela had always been dominant, it was impossible for Ema to go any further asking for help. But as time went on, the problem festered.

For the *Tipay Warmis*, if the wage was not commensurate with what they thought that they should be being paid, then it was exploitation, pure and simple--just like in FOTRAMA. As the tangled wage issue became enmeshed in an often ideological power struggle between Ema and Gabriela as representatives of the two organizations over control of Andean by Design, knitters' perception of exploitation increased. Judy argued that the *Tipay Warmis' overhead was too high and that if the pay had been what it should* have been all along, then no one would have had the feeling of exploitation. But the wage issue remained unresolved. Ema insisted that there was no way they could conceivably reduce expenses, although in reality the group lacked a systematic method for analyzing what they spent. Moreover, in my discussions with Ema and members of the *Directorio*, it was clear that while clarifying things for the *asemblea might have been the more democratic* and participatory approach to solving the entire problem, the very idea of limiting spending was too painful for them to consider. In Arani, people began to blame Gabriela, saying that she was no longer "one of us." Ema and Dolores contributed to this perception, offering veiled accusations against Judy and Gabriela, often with insinuations of corruption, but then back-stepping by qualifying *their comments as what they had heard said but that they didn't* really believe these things themselves. Still, the seeds of doubt were being planted concerning Judy's intentions, concerning the role of Andean by Design and concerning Gabriela's loyalty to the group.

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Crumbling Edifice

All of these problems with Andean by Design's operations in Bolivia were not occurring in a vacuum. Although each year Marlene had excellent success selling the sweaters, she felt constantly thwarted and frustrated by recurrent production problems, delays and miscommunication. A majority of the orders she had taken had suffered from some problem or other, and many of the clients she had worked hard to cultivate had not re-ordered. Macy's had been "on fire about the range" and told Marlene that there was a "real future for Andean by Design sweaters with Macy's" but after the delayed delivery that prevented the window display, Macy's never wanted to order again. Even getting the proper sample garments was a hassle. Andean by Design had sent off samples and swatches without keeping adequate records of colors and styles, leading to a number of mistakes in the production of orders. Another time they were unable to obtain the same (natural) dye lot for a beautiful, subtle mustard color and the yarn they used to knit the order was a garish yellow that the client refused to accept. An important boutique customer, *Pavo Real*, was interested in seeing a swatch for a slightly different color pattern. It took two months for the swatch to be sent to Marlene, and even then it was the wrong combination.

Marlene was upset that even after three years, she still only made less than $1500 for a year's work. She felt that she was putting a lot of time and effort into sales that were meaningless since most of the large orders had been returned, and even worse, she felt that she was losing credibility with the clients. No one believed her anymore when she quoted a price, a color, a style or a delivery date. Her professional reputation was at stake. By August 1993 she became convinced that the situation was not going to improve and she paid to have a resignation letter translated to send to the groups. In the letter she laid out all of the problems she had because of the production mistakes and delays. Unfortunately, because Andean by Design had failed to properly inform the assembly about Marlene's role, the significance of her leaving the project was lost on most of the knitters. After the letter was read out loud to

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the assembly, a number of knitters asked "Who is Marlene? Is she a new client?"

But Marlene was not the only one who was disgruntled. Self Help had found that they were having a terrible time with all of the returned orders. They had agreed to advance the groups 50% upon delivery, and so it was difficult for them to send sweaters they had already partially paid on back to Bolivia. In some cases they had tried to sell the sweaters through their own catalogue and stores, but sweater sales were not doing very well in these venues. Self Help found that they were losing a significant amount of money through their collaboration on the Andean by Design project, even with the 17% that they were receiving. In September, Self Help notified Judy that as of January they would no longer be able to continue in their capacity with the project.

The *Tipay Warmis* received all of this news rather lightly since they had no comprehension of what was really at stake in losing these relationships. Judy and Gabriela, on the other hand, felt the real weight of these blows. Marlene had been an excellent sales representative because of her ability to land sales, as much as because of her commitment to the goals of the project and her friendly relationship with Judy. Although Andean by Design eventually contracted with Julietta, another professional agent in Manhattan who had her own showroom, their relationship with her was not the same as it had been with Marlene. They had to be on their toes, recognizing that Julietta was unlikely to be at all understanding with the types of problems that had been plaguing the project. And without Self Help acting as the project's importer, they would have to spend money to obtain professional import services.

But things were not going well for the *Tipay Warmis* either. Although Andean by Design had refused to raise the price of the sweaters, the *Tipay Warmis* had informed their ATO clients of the new $85 price tag that their sweaters now carried. Since most of the ATO's were experiencing a certain amount of difficulty selling sweaters anyway, few were willing to pay the new price. Even long-time customers like Self Help and Oxfam Trading were unable to

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place any sizable order. The *Tipay Warmis* were left with few, if any, ATO orders and a crumbling relationship with Andean by Design, their only link to non-ATO markets.

***SEMILLA* Fumbles the Ball**

As problems dragged out over months, the relationship between the organizations and between the sisters continued to deteriorate. Andean by Design had repeatedly requested help from *SEMILLA*, an institution in La Paz charged with overseeing IAF projects, but with no response. Finally, during an evaluation trip to Bolivia in August, Kevin Healy became aware that there was a problem--although because of the convoluted nature of the problem and because of the "he said, she said" going on between Andean by Design and *Tipay Warmi*, he did not entirely understand the details of what was going on. Only then did *SEMILLA* finally send a representative to investigate. Unfortunately, this intervention ended up further complicating the situation and worsening the problem.

There seems to have been a certain amount of resentment from the people at *SEMILLA* that the initial contact for the project had been established between Judy and Kevin Healy, rather than going through *SEMILLA*, which would have been the normal path for IAF project funding in Bolivia. This may explain why *SEMILLA* ignored Andean by Design's requests for help. But the representative that was eventually sent to deal with the dispute, Enrique Aguilar, also seems to have had his own personal agenda. In my discussions of the events with him, he struck me as extremely partisan. According to the director of *SEMILLA*, Aguilar took sides with *Tipay Warmi* and they had to take him off the case. Apparently Aguilar had told Judy that Kevin wanted her to make certain changes to accommodate all of the *Tipay Warmis'* demands, conflicting with what Kevin had told Judy when he was in Bolivia. When she called Washington to find out why Kevin had changed his mind, it became clear that Aguilar had been lying in order to promote his own vision of how the problem should be resolved in favor of the *Tipay Warmis*.

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Aguilar pushed Ema and the *Tipay Warmis* further toward believing what *Nuestra Senora del Rosario* had been saying about the project being "theirs". He convinced them that according to the contractual agreement with the IAF, Andean by Design had no right to do the things it was doing and that the *Tipay Warmis* should have full control over the project. He told them that Judy and Gabriela were taking advantage of them. When the full extent of his bias became clear, he was taken off the project, but the damage had already been done. If *SEMILLA* had intervened in a more timely manner, maybe the problems between Andean by Design and *Tipay Warmi* could have been resolved. When Aguilar came, he did not try to work things out, but instead, promoted his own ideological interpretation of events--which only served to feed the fire.

At one point during my field work, I happened to be in La Paz at the same time that Ema and Lupe had gone there on a button-buying trip. While there, they met with Aguilar, who despite being removed from the project, had continued to say that he could help them. When they told him that I was an anthropologist who lived with them in Arani and that I was interested in talking to people on both sides of the issue, he told them that he wanted to talk to me-- "to find out what I was really doing." In an interview I conducted with Aguilar, this is how he explained the situation to me:

> He said that he was *SEMILLA's* monitor of the *Tipay Warmis'* IAF project. He said that he was bringing the groups to a conciliation until Kevin Healy went to Judy without consulting him (Aguilar's tone was very insulted) and took her side.
>
> He told me that the *Tipay Warmis* had made the original solicitud to the IAF saying that they needed the technical support of a designer to make their own organization grow. But then, Judy traveled to DC and convinced Kevin Healy that the money should be diverted to her salary and to develop market contacts. He said that the *Tipay Warmis* no longer had direct contact with the market-- the project was supposed to put them in direct contact, but instead it became an intermediary.

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> He insisted that Andean by Design must return the clients they had stolen from *Tipay Warmi*. He told me that from the beginning, Judy came to Bolivia to set-up her own business by exploiting the knitters. Once she began the project, she obviously realized how demanding the market was and began to expect an exaggeratedly high quality standard from the knitters. He repeatedly suggested that Gabriela was a good *campesina* who had been duped by Judy. He said that she had become a traitor and accused her of using NGO money meant for the *bases* to promote herself.
>
> He said that he told the *Tipay Warmis* that even though he had been taken off the project, he would help them get a fax and a room for an office in Cochabamba.
>
> He told me he wanted to publish the details of his experience with this project.

What Aguilar did not realize is that I had more knowledge of the situation than he did. I knew that Andean by Design and not *Tipay Warmi*, had submitted the original project proposal to IAF--I was the one who put them in contact. I had also spoken with people in Washington at the time that the decision was being made to channel funding through *Tipay Warmi*--they called me as a reference. As a result, I knew that Aguilar's version of the *Tipay Warmis'* relationship to IAF project funds as was incorrect. I also understood enough about the handknit export market and *Tipay Warmi's* previous ATO client base to know that the way he was construing *Tipay Warmi's* relationship to Andean by Design's clients did not properly represent reality. And finally, Aguilar did not understand that I was friends with people on both sides of the argument and knew them well. His characterizations of the *Tipay Warmis* as poor, victimized *campesinas*, of Gabriela as the 'changeling', and of Judy as the Machiavellian capitalist only recently beginning to understand the knitwear market were all

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grotesque and inaccurate.[6] But of course, Aguilar's interpretation fit conveniently with the *Tipay Warmis'* perspective that they were being exploited.

The Pie Chart Fiasco

At various points, Gabriela and Judy had suggested that they would come to Arani for a meeting with the *asemblea* to clarify the situation, but Ema and the *Directorio* had resisted. I believe that over time, Ema had begun to understand the wage issue problem and feared that knitters would accuse her of "stealing" their money. Infighting over wages and production had eaten away at much of the *Tipay Warmis'* solidarity as an organization. To make matters worse, knitters had suffered an embarrassment in July when COTESU turned over the new building to them in an unfinished condition, making *Tipay Warmi* the butt of local jokes. There were murmurings that "if only Gabriela were still President, she would have gotten it done" and if Gabriela had direct access to the *asemblea*, knitters might rally around her. Ema was constantly being forced into a defensive position.

In September, Ema traveled to Guatemala to a Conference on Indigenous rights sponsored by Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu. Gabriela wanted to use Ema's absence to get access to the *asemblea*. Any member of *Tipay Warmi* can call an *asemblea* with the support of two other members. Judy was worried that calling a meeting while Ema was away would be bad politics and convinced Gabriela to wait. But when Ema returned, the *directorio* continued to put-off the meeting. Finally, after much insistence by Judy and Gabriela, the meeting was set for the last Saturday in October. Ema assured me

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[6]My own sense of Aguilar and his agenda was that he was a bitter, resentful man with a megalomaniacal and manipulative personality. He liked conflict and was drawn to the ugliness of this one as a means of serving his own purposes. The more he could interpret the terms of the conflict to serve his own ideological purposes, the more attractive the whole thing became. Moreover, I believe that he wanted to become the *Tipay Warmis'* patron, allowing him to appropriate their political/indigenous message for himself. I came to this conclusion during Aguilar's visits to Arani various times over the next year. His behavior reflected an exaggerated paternalism often found in the relationship of agency intermediaries with grassroots organizations. Each time he visited, the entire place reeked with opportunism of some sort.

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that she did not realize that this date would conflict with both potato planting and with preparation for *Todos Santos*. Turn-out for the meeting was conveniently low.

Yet despite low attendance, the meeting proved to be a seminal moment. Failing to realize either the depth of the wage issue problem or the extent to which Gabriela's influence within *Tipay Warmi* had dissipated, Judy and Gabriela miscalculated the assembly in their approach to the meeting. They chose not to attempt to resolve the misunderstanding over wages by carefully explaining the capital fund, using concrete figures about what the organization had earned through Andean by Design's orders and in terms that the women could understand. Instead they began the meeting by reiterating a vague statement that had been bandied back and forth for months regarding the fact that Andean by Design was paying a fair wage and that if the knitters felt exploited it was an internal problem with *Tipay Warmi*. They would have to analyze their own "*costos*" ("costing structure") to rectify the situation. From there, Judy and Gabriela moved on to present the parameters of what they had determined would have to be new operational guidelines for Andean by Design beginning in 1994.

Their argument was that Andean by Design would not be able to continue operating under existing conditions. Judy said that they had lost their clients, their agent, their importer and various knitting groups. Their funding was finite. They had to make changes. Accordingly, Andean by Design had applied for legal status as an independent NGO. They told the *Tipay Warmis* that they should think of Andean by Design as if it were an ATO. These changes were not applauded by the *Tipay Warmis*. Although no one, including members of the *Directorio* seemed to have a clear understanding of what an NGO was, there had been a good deal of political rhetoric circulating concerning "the way that NGO's do little more than employ middle class professionals at fat cat salaries using money meant for the people" (which is often an accurate characterization). The fact that Andean by Design was going to "become one of those NGO's" was cause for great alarm. A number of women asked suspicious questions about what this meant and about what an NGO was.

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Unfortunately, Gabriela and Judy failed to grasp the nature of the questions and their responses did little to clarify things. In fact, their inability to coherently explain the changes only served to heighten suspicions about their motives.

Gabriela also explained that Andean by Design would also be starting a "wool bank" to stockpile wool for orders. Because Andean by Design would buy much larger quantities than any individual group, the price would be more economical and a greater portion of the price of the sweater could go for other things. Although this may have seemed like good business, it was a clear threat to *Tipay Warmi's* autonomy. In the past, the *Tipay Warmis* had always bought their own wool. They were very proud of this fact. It gave them a feeling of independence in running their own business and being able to buy wool had been an important milestone in their development as a grassroots cooperative. With the new system, they would merely retrieve wool from Andean by Design for each particular order. The *Tipay Warmis* argued that this would be no different from working for FOTRAMA and suggested that maybe they could buy the wool from Andean by Design for each order. Unfortunately, Gabriela and Judy failed to see beyond the efficiency economics of the wool bank to recognize the symbolic importance that control over raw materials held for *Tipay Warmi* and were recalcitrant about accommodating the *Tipay Warmis'* wish to purchase the wool.

But the real clincher came when Gabriela and Judy displayed an enormous pie chart graph representing a breakdown of how the money from each sweater would be used. The figures were based on a sweater selling for $68 and on projected sales of 1,400 pieces for 1994:

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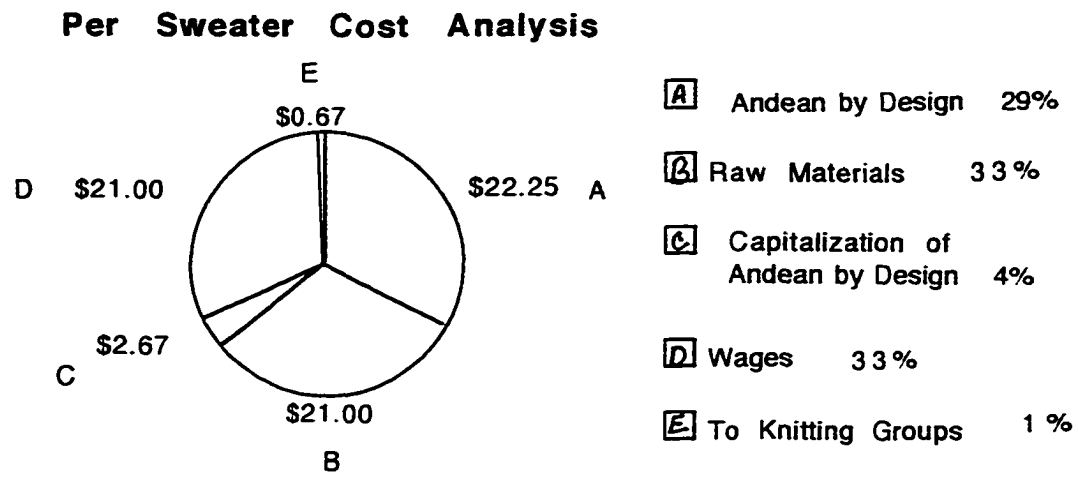

Judy said that she realized that there wasn't much left over to go for organizational overhead, but that the costs of marketing and designing the sweaters had to be covered by the price of the sweater alone. But she said, this costing structure would only apply to upscale market orders. If the *Tipay Warmis* wanted to work independently with ATO clients, as long as they did not use Andean by Design designs, this was perfectly within their rights. Or, Andean by Design would still handle *Tipay Warmi*'s ATO orders for the 5% fee, but *Tipay Warmi* could keep the rest of the percentage that would normally be taken by Andean by Design. The idea was that the *Tipay Warmis* could gain clients in both the ATO and the upscale market, providing knitters with work at good wages, but that they would have to make-do with what they made off the ATO orders for organizational expenses. (According to my calculations, based on a very conservative estimate of 300 ATO orders together with 300 Andean by Design orders for 1994, the total that the group could expect to make toward organizational costs was approximately $6000.[7] Of course, it was likely that Andean by

[7]Andean by Design's orders would yield $25 apiece to *Tipay Warmi*, of which $21 would go toward wages and the other $4 could be contributed toward overhead. ATO orders would yield $64.60 apiece to *Tipay Warmi*, of which $21 would go toward wages, and $16.60 would go toward organizational overhead.

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Design would sell more than 300 pieces for the *Tipay Warmis*, in which case the figure would be somewhat higher. Although the difference between working with Andean by Design or not was relatively small in terms of organizational overhead income, the amount that knitters could expect to earn in wages would more than double.

Ema was incensed that they were now presenting this information directly to the *asemblea* without informing her and the *directorio* first--somewhat in contradiction to her insistence on the importance of "participation." Gabriela had calculated that presenting this new scenario directly to the *asemblea* would circumvent the power of her sisters and the *Directorio* to turn knitters against the idea before they could really understand it. As she knew would happen, the $21 proposed wage really grabbed knitters' attention. In the past, Andean by Design had been paying $16 to $19 dollars in wages for each sweater, but more than $3 of this had been held back by *Tipay Warmi* for the capitalization fund. As a result, the "real" wages that knitters had been accustomed to earning were $13 to $16, making a $21 wage seem an enormous increase.

However, the proposed 33% for Andean by Design, with another 4% for capitalization was also a significant increase. In the past, the 5% that Andean by Design had charged was merely a token payment toward "self-sufficiency" rather than covering the real costs involved in design and marketing. Judy and Gabriela had seen how difficult it had been to get funding and both of them had worked for months without pay before the IAF grant came through. The IAF money had been a lucky break, but they knew that they could not continue to count on financing and needed to become self-sufficient. This meant that all of the real costs needed to be borne by the producers, as would be the case in any business. All of these things had been discussed over and over again in meetings with Ema and other representatives of the groups, but none of this information had been filtered back to the base. Not surprisingly then, in the context of antagonism and suspician generated in the *Assemblea* setting, the

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idea of raising the percentage that would go to Andean by Design was not well received by the *Tipay Warmis*.

Ema argued that the 1% allotted to go to the groups under the new plan was entirely insufficient to allow *Tipay Warmi* to continue to function. Judy pointed out that they would be getting the entire percentage from ATO orders and that Andean by Design would only occupy a portion of *Tipay Warmi's* productive capacity. Ema said that this was a ruse because ATO orders were down. Judy said that ATO orders had been up with the new designs until *Tipay Warmi* had so many mistakes and delays. She insisted that they could re-coup their ATO market if only they could stop having production problems. Gabriela interjected that the *Tipay Warmis* were welcome to subtract whatever they wanted from the $21 wage to go for organizational overhead because that was their prerogative. But Ema argued that the other groups would not be deducting these costs and it would be unfair for the *Tipay Warmis* to make less money. And although she did not say it publicly, Ema was concerned because by presenting the pie chart directly to the *asemblea* instead of to the *Directorio* for approval, the *base* knew that the proposed wage was $21 and would now be unwilling to agree to deductions.

A big part of the problem that everyone was having was a result of the pie chart itself. Although to middle-class Americans a pie chart may seem a very basic tool, to knitters who do not have any understanding of "percentages", it becomes a meaningless, but mysterious symbol. Although dollar amounts were indicated in the graph, during the presentation, Gabriela continued to talk in terms of percentages, totally confusing most of the *asemblea*. Equally problematic was the language that she employed to explain what the different portions were to be used for. In response to questions, Gabriela repeatedly referred to "the 33% for Andean by Design" rather than finding some other way to explain that the money would be used for specific expenses involved in marketing and designing sweaters. Saying it was "for Andean by Design" made it seem like it was "their" money. Similarly, by designating the portion paid to the groups for the sweaters specifically as "wages" rather than

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something like "amount to groups", Andean by Design seemed to be dictating internal group decisions.

The *Tipay Warmis* were divided over what to think of the proposed changes. As Gabriela had correctly calculated, the $21 wage became the focus for many of the knitters, making them want to continue with Andean by Design, regardless of the other changes. But during the meeting Ema and the *Directorio* prevailed in their charge that the terms of the changes were unacceptable for *Tipay Warmi* as an organization. No one wanted to openly contradict the powers that be within the Association, but following the meeting a splinter group of knitters worked behind the scenes to orchestrate a victory for Gabriela and Judy. In the end, the situation was a stalemate and the *Tipay Warmis* remained completely divided over what to do next.

Suspicion

Although Gabriela and Judy had good reason for making changes, in the context of mistrust which had grown up around the wage issue, the presentation of the pie chart and the other new policies only served to heighten suspicions concerning the nature of Andean by Design as an organization, and of Gabriela's and Judy's motivations. It was easy for people to be suspicious of Judy. She was an outsider, a foreigner, a *gringa*. What did they really know about her? It seemed obvious that she must be making a large salary at Andean by Design--it was said that all the middle class professionals at NGO's made enormous sums. They believed she was making a lot of money...isn't that why everyone is trying to get into the sweater export business these days...why else would she want to work at Andean by Design? Of course, the idea that she was doing the work for under $15,000--a fraction of what she was making in England--out of some sort of altruistic idealism was really inconceivable. The weight of their own poverty made it impossible for them to conceptualize motivations borne in the lap of middle class luxury or to understand how $15,000 could be considered a small income.

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But what Gabriela and Judy had entirely failed to realize was the extent to which it had become just as easy for the *Tipay Warmis* to wonder about Gabriela--their noble founder. Despite the vituperous nature of much of the interaction between Andean by Design and the *Tipay Warmis*, Gabriela continued to believe that the animosity in Arani came principally from her sisters and was not real. But the resentment against her had grown beyond a family dispute and its attendant loyalties among a handful of *comadres* on one side or the other. When Gabriela moved out of Arani, her ties to the local community became increasingly tenuous. Her life, which had previously revolved around *Tipay Warmi* and her sisters, was now focused around her new family (Carlos and their two young sons), around her work at Andean by Design and around her friendship with Judy. Because of the family quarrel and the difficulty of traveling with an infant and a toddler, Gabriela rarely came to Arani anymore. To many people, it seemed clear that she had moved on to something bigger and better. The fact that she had a salaried position with Andean by Design was common knowledge. What Gabriela saw as an exercise of her own personal autonomy, many of the *Tipay Warmis* viewed as using skills and training obtained at their expense for personal gain.

While I lived in Arani, I heard many people comment on how Gabriela had become "another class of people." They pointed out that now she had a *sueldo* ("salary"), that she traveled by plane, that she used disposable diapers on her two sons, and that she had a domestic employee to watch them so she could work. They said she undoubtedly lived in a fancy house in Cochabamba (which was not the case--she had moved into an adobe house similar to those found in the *campo* in one of the urban slum neighborhoods). At an *asemblea* meeting, one of the *Tipay Warmis* made the spurious accusation that Gabriela no longer spoke *Quechua* and that she was not allowing her sons to learn to speak it --a charge that shocked the *asemblea*. Is she a *campesina*? I asked. One informant replied that "she dresses like one, but she no longer thinks like one...maybe she has become *civilizada*." Even before the meeting, the following comments were commonplace:

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> "Gabriela now believes herself to be a big *empresario* ("business owner") and treats everyone like dirt--as if we didn't know shit"
>
> "Gabriela comes and yells and then when we ask her things she says she didn't come to discuss that and leaves in a huff"
>
> "Gabriela likes to say its a personal problem, but we are an organization and not her cousins or *comadres* and so why should she say this? Shouldn't she solve her personal problems at home? But instead she uses them as an excuse."

For the *Tipay Warmis*, these things were evidence that Gabriela was different--that she was no longer "one of them" and as such, was not to be trusted. One informant used the humorous adage, *"no hay confianza ni en la camisa"* ("you can't even count on your own shirt") in reference to my inquiries concerning the state of Gabriela's relationship to the Association. So, in reality, the pie chart fiasco only served to reinforce the *Tipay Warmis'* sense that Gabriela was no longer concerned with the welfare of the Association. In the end, this became the underlying logic for how the *Tipay Warmis* responded to the idea of a new relationship with Andean by Design.

And herein lay the problem. Gabriela had failed to make them understand the realities of the market she had discovered on her trip to New York or that they had to make their prices reflect the real cost of operation because Andean by Design was no longer going to be able to depend on subsidies and grant money. Rather than explaining these things, she tried to rule by authority as she had always done--but she now had no basis for authority with the grassroots. She needed to persuade and convince (skills that she had always been more than adept at) rather than yell. But lacking a perspective on her own increasing "cosmopolitan-ness" and "separateness", Gabriela failed to recognize how much she had lost touch with life in Arani. Unfortunately, somehow along the way, she had lost the ability to relate to the knitters and to understand what

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it was that they needed in order to understand these issues. This inability further eroded her support with the *bases*.

"Domination"

Although much of the "exploitation" that the *Tipay Warmis* were experiencing was more perception than reality--because of mismanagement within their own organization--the restructuring proposed at the "pie chart" meeting transformed the nature of the issue. During the meeting I could see a combination of great relief and incredulity in Ema's eyes--great relief that the meeting was not going to focus on the wage issue and on mistakes she might have made--and incredulity over the nature of the new guidelines being presented. In a split second, with the presentation of the pie chart, the whole situation had changed. The wage problem was no longer the main issue. In fact in many ways, it ceased to matter. What became central were the parameters of the new operational guidelines for Andean by Design. The fact that Judy and Gabriela appeared to be dictating new terms that would be less beneficial to *Tipay Warmi* made all of the accusations and suspicions that had been building in the previous months appear justified.

The dispute between *Tipay Warmi* and Andean by Design had developed principally as a result of negative personal dynamics between the Toranza sisters. When the personal problem entered into the interaction between *Tipay Warmi* and Andean by Design, it left a lot of room for misunderstanding--both intentional and unintentional. The *Tipay Warmis* recognized the conflictive relationship between the sisters, but no one else had the skill, the courage or the desire to lead. Like the "emperor who had no clothes", the *Tipay Warmis* knew that the situation was problematic, but no one was willing to admit it. In this context, the relationship between Andean by Design (Gabriela) and *Tipay Warmi* (Ema) evolved to be more and more an embodiment of sibling dominance. But although Ema and Dolores may have had to accept Gabriela's dominance when it was a family thing, Gabriela was no longer part of the household or even for that matter, considered part of the family. Moreover, Gabriela now had a separate institutional

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affiliation from her sisters and from the other *Tipay Warmis*. Importantly, that institution had a "structurally" higher position than *Tipay Warmi*. For many of the knitters, the sisters' animosity became translated into a political position concerning power relations between *Tipay Warmi* and Andean by Design. The restructuring of power between the groups turned the issue of sibling rivalry among the Toranza sisters into one of institutional conflict. As a result, although Gabriela continued to deny it, the problem did become a political one--demonstrating how the personal does invade the organizational.

Internal Dynamics

At the same time that the relationship between *Tipay Warmi* and Andean by Design was becoming more problematic and politicized, *Tipay Warmi's* own internal dynamic was also becoming increasingly conflictive. Organizing a grassroots cooperative is a process fraught with contradiction. The competing self-interests of members of a group always threaten to undermine the collective effort. Individuals may have a variety of different reasons for joining a grassroots mobilization--related to specific experiences, a set of beliefs, self-identity or a personal agenda. Fulfillment of such a diverse range of visions rarely occurs. Inevitably, some members come to feel at cross-purposes with the direction of the rest of the group.

For *Tipay Warmi*, these contradictions and the conflicts they generate had remained peripheral to the overarching common purpose that brought knitters together to form their organization. The exploitation that members had experienced working with FOTRAMA or other knitwear producers, their common experience of subordination as women in rural society, their relatively uniform social status, and their shared culture created a cohesiveness which, in the beginning allowed them to overcome divisive tensions. Gabriela's skill as a leader was also key in maintaining unity of vision within the organization. She had a unique ability to convince a room full of people to set aside personal self-interest in order to

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pursue collective goals--from which individuals might benefit in the long run.

In addition, the social, political and economic context had changed. *Tipay Warmi* had been unique. At the time the organization emerged at the end of the 1970's, participation was completely inhibited by the politics of authoritarianism.[8] The *Tipay Warmis* were "renegade" in establishing a really "participatory" structure. They won a space for themselves in local and international arenas, challenging the boundaries of local social, economic and gender relations and redefining their role as women. They were an elite. But times had changed. The political culture was now very different. "Participation" was no longer as "alternative" as in the past. Development institutions and even the government itself jumped on the "grassroots" bandwagon with the *Ley de Participacion Popular.* As a result, *Tipay Warmi* lost it's unique, "elite" status, even becoming "suspect" as just one of many money-grubbing groups. But although the "climate" had changed, *Tipay Warmi* continued to use the same strategy they had always used. They were living in the past, even though that process was over.

Knitters' lives were also very different than they had been fifteen years earlier and in Arani, women's sense of self was affected by these changes. The influence of television and consumerism alone drastically altered people's aspirations. Women also had much greater access to education than in the past. The baseline educational level of the new generation was significantly higher than that of *Tipay Warmi's* founders and many of the younger girls finished school, and some even went on to study at the University. In general, women had more options than they had in 1979. Before, it was men who had migrated while women had stayed home, but by the 1990's women were migrating--to Cochabamba, to Santa Cruz, to the Chapare, to Argentina--in increasing numbers. During my stay in Arani I knew a number of women who migrated to Argentina to work. Some of them were knitters who left the organization when they left town. The owners of *Casa Fisher*

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[8]See Leon (1988: 8)

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lamented to me the fact that it was increasingly difficult to find handknitters because so many women were now migrating. As a result, they were in the process of switching to semi-industrial machine knits. The competition for knitters and the increased level of wages paid by private entrepreneurs also reflect the fact that exploitation within the industry was not the same either.

As time went on, *Tipay Warmi* and its members also changed. Many of the women who founded the organization--including some of the 12 who pooled their own money--eventually moved on to do other things. Most got married and began to have responsibilities that conflicted with intensive knitting work and with participation in *Tipay Warmi's* activities. Some moved away from Arani. Others became involved in the *coca* economy or decided to open a *chicheria*. Some just lost interest. Even Gabriela herself was not so centrally involved any more. The women who joined the organization in later years did not share the same experiences as the original members. Many of the new knitters were young and had not been with FOTRAMA. They had no perspective on the sort of exploitation to which knitters had been exposed before *Tipay Warmi* existed. One informant told me,

> *"No es igual de haber vivido ésto, solo para ganar han entrado al directorio."*
>
> "Its not the same not to have lived through it, now they enter the *directorio* purely to earn money."

Another said:

> *"Antes eramos más una sola edad y la humillación y sufrimiento era igual."*
>
> "Before were all the same age and the humiliation and suffering we had experienced was equal."

At the same time, a variety of forces (such as migration and *coca* dollars) were promoting the further elaboration of *cholita* identity as a counter to the hegemony of the dominant culture, so younger

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knitters did not share an understanding of how export knitting had affected the self-identity and consciousness of local women. Increasing internalization of "feminist" ideas about women's rights, in part as a result of the influence of television, made some issues the *Tipay Warmis* stood for seem irrelevant. Younger women, who tended to have a higher level of education than the previous generation, were less adamant about fighting to gain a space for themselves as women since they already believed that they had one.

These differences had an impact on the dynamics of *Tipay Warmi* as a grassroots organization. According to one informant, the new members were not as "*conscientes*" ("conscious"). Although it is certainly true that there were always different levels of commitment among *Tipay Warmi's* members, in the past the *Tipay Warmis* had a unified political vision that stemmed from their own experience. This vision was manifest in the nature of their activities and workshops, and in the way they spoke of their own history. But over time, this vision had become increasingly disjointed. For all but a few of the more zealous, the political project of the group had lost its relevance. This disjuncture between the organization and it's base was magnified by the extent to which institutions and "*amigos*" ("friends") who collaborated with the group influenced or even dominated discourse within the organization. Group activities and workshops increasingly seemed to be imposed rather than arising out of the specific concerns and interests of the knitters. The "*pactos de interés*"[9] ("pacts of self-interest") which had previously held together the multiple motivations and viewpoints of *Tipay Warmi's* knitters were no longer binding as the group ceased to share the same "utopia."

Yet even more pernicious than divergent life experiences or contrasting organizational goals, these differences had begun to translate into hierarchy within the organization. One knitter told me that before there was no differentiation within the group--they were all the same. But she said,

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[9]I would like to thank Rosario Leon for suggesting this phrase to describe some of what I saw occurring.

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> *"algunas que han entrado se sienten mas grande, prepotente y las viejas ahora se sienten abajo."*
>
> "some of those who have entered feel themselves to be big, and self-important and the older members now feel below them."

Another informant said that newer knitters, especially the younger ones, treated some of the older women with disdain because they couldn't read or write. Others said that those who held office in the *directorio* had begun to act as if they had the right to dictate things to the rest. These were exactly the sorts of attitudes that many of the *Tipay Warmis* thought they would be escaping by joining the organization. Over time, internal relationships within *Tipay Warmi* were becoming increasingly predicated on this sort of hierarchy rather than on the parity which had once been a given.

Ironically, financial success itself threatened the group's emphasis on equality, paralleling the situation documented by Gladhardt and Gladhardt (1981) in the development of sweater knitting in Otavalo, Ecuador, and the experience of a women's self-help group in Kenya (Mutiso 1987). Like Otavaleño knitters, women from *Tipay Warmi* became jealous of their success and attempted to limit membership in the group, using the lack of markets for their products to justify keeping others out. While this may have been a valid argument, many knitters purposely took on work which they could not or did not intend to complete themselves. Instead, they became links in a putting-out system by farming the order out to family members,. relatives and *comadres* who often worked for low wages or for free. Limiting membership kept these women from entering the organization where they might have a voice. Moreover, like women in Kenya whose cooperative organization was weakened by changes in group goals occasioned by the acquisition of land, as indicated in the previous chapter, *Tipay Warmi's* ownership of the new knitting center negatively affected the internal coherence of the group.

The dissolution of the group's unity brought about by these changes was exacerbated by weaknesses and unresolved

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contradictions in the philosophy of participation upon which *Tipay Warmi's* mobilization had been based. As the challenges of marketing their sweaters were becoming more intense and the conflict between the Toranza sisters remained unresolved, the failure of the group to orchestrate deeper levels of participation among its members further undermined the increasingly tenuous unity of the organization. Despite the emphasis on being "*de base*" ("grassroots") and on participation, few of the *Tipay Warmis* actually participated in running the organization. This was particularly clear in the constant re-election of the same individuals to positions of power.[10]

Most of the knitters simply had no desire to become more involved, suggesting an even deeper level of contradiction regarding the group's philosophy of grassroots participation. Yet a number of knitters told me that they would like to hold office or be given responsibility, but over and over again, either no one nominated them or they would lose out in an election to one of the "core" group. Others said that they would like to participate, but that they were afraid because of what the others say if you make a mistake. When I asked one woman if she wanted to hold office, she phrased it,

> *"...no...porque la gente es grave...sí podemos entrar, pero critican siempre, pues."*
>
> "...no...because the others are hard on you...yea we could enter, but they always criticize us, *pues*."

Not only did the lack of participation conflict with the group's organizational philosophy and *razon de etre*, but it began to affect the way that members felt about the organization itself. The growing inequality within the group made the majority of knitters feel more and more left out. Only the handful of women who "liked" to hold positions of responsibility developed a real understanding of the functioning of the organization and of broader issues affecting

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[10]The problem of re-election of the same individuals has been discussed by a number of authors, most relevantly here are Healy (199?) and by Buechler and Buechler (1992:222).

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Tipay Warmi and the lives of knitters. Power was entrenched in the hands of a few women who, by virtue of their ever-larger role in running the organization, were becoming more and more disconnected from the ideas and interests of the rest of the women in the group. In fact, rather ironically, the emphasis being placed on sweater production and operating the Association by the group's leaders actually devalued the unpaid household and agricultural duties for which women in Arani are generally responsible and from which most women derive personal satisfaction and a sense of self. Weismantel (1997) describes how conflicting conceptualizations of women's energies between wage labor and subsistence production can have the effect of devaluing women's everyday activities (although in Ecuador it may have also increased the importance of certain ritual moments which project a positive valuation of women and their activities). For knitters, the irony was that *Tipay Warmi's* stated purpose was to counteract this sort of negativity by "revaluing" indigenous culture and women's labor. However, as the group's leaders became increasingly focused cultivating a broader field of action for the Association and for themselves, the implicit devaluation of what remained of central importance to the majority of knitters exacerbated the growing disconnection between the organization's leadership and it's base.

This disconnection was reinforced by the disproportionate influence that these women had on the direction of the organization and by the frequency with which they were always the ones sent to participate in outside political and educational activities or to seek outside help in resolving internal problems. The *Tipay Warmis* called these women "*más capacitadas*" ("more experienced or trained"). The result of this "capacitation" was that these women were developing entirely different levels of experience and skill than the rest of the group. This divergence had negative repercussions in terms of real participation within the organization. When it came time to tackle other internal matters, the majority of the knitters were unable to participate in the next level of decision-making because only the few who had been at the meeting with some "*amigo*" in Cochabamba understood the process of how things had

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been accomplished in the past. Gabriela's "cosmopolitanization" was only a more exaggerated version of what was happening to Ema and the other members of the *directorio*. Their disconnection could be seen in the increasing tension between the group's productive activities and its social and educational programs. As *Tipay Warmi*'s leaders became more and more divorced from the reality of knitters' lives as women in Arani, the organization and it's goals had become even more dissociated from the concerns and interests of the women who formed the base.

In many ways, although knitters had been happy to be associated with the success of *Tipay Warmi*, the vision of the group as an international player did not coincide with knitter's views of themselves. The ideal of local womanhood centered around rural life and family which was embodied in the rise of the "*nouveau cholita*" in the 60's and 70's, clashed with the skills and experiences being acquired by the leaders of *Tipay Warmi*. Although for the leaders themselves, their increasing "cosmopolitanness" was cause for personal pride, most of the knitters *did not envy* their lives, their participation in meetings in Cochabamba, or the rapport they had with outsiders. In fact, having meetings with funders and running workshops were not skills that the majority were interested in acquiring.

A study (Sostres 1991: 189) published by the *Centro de Promoción de la Mujer, Gregoria Apasa*, an Institution that works with women in *El Alto*, describes similar sentiments among women there, which are described as "*rechaso vincularse con la cuidad*" ("rejecting becoming linked to the city"). These women were much more inclined to choose local level interactions with "people just like us" where they have "no need to feel humiliated" by the implicit comparison between themselves and outsiders. For the *Tipay Warmis*, the organization had gone beyond what they had envisioned for themselves. If there were some who wanted to take on these responsibilities, that was fine, as long as the majority could just be local *cholitas* with an income. But what this disjuncture between knitters' visions of themselves and the reality of running a grassroots knitting coop meant was that developing the skills

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necessary to run the organization was at odds with what women saw themselves as doing. The result was a new form of internal dependency on a small governing elite.

As inequality and contradiction came to dominate group dynamics, the efforts of the internal elite to advance their own vision and to create new "selves" through further "cosmopolitanization" began to generate a backlash. In private, a number of women expressed the same sorts of concerns about lack of information, secrecy and self-interest of those in charge that had been at the heart of the conflict with FOTRAMA. With the advent of secret meetings and closed-door conversations surrounding the wage issue problem and the ongoing battle with Andean by Design, there was a growing sense of alienation and marginalization among knitters. And with the increasingly "spend thrift" attitudes which seemed to have taken hold after Gabriela left, the *directorio* appeared to be benefiting disproportionately from group spending on lunches, *refrescos* (soda pop), travel, and through their wages charged for the long hours of work they clocked in. One knitter told me,

> "We don't know what they (the *Directorio*) do in the city or why they go so much."

Suspicions and inquietudes had begun to infiltrate knitters' ideas about their own organization. Lack of consensus was increasingly being replaced by antagonism.

IFFI--Turf Wars

In the months and weeks following the pie chart meeting the *Tipay Warmis* neither accepted nor rejected the proposed changes. In part this was because there was no consensus as to what they should do. But it also reflected the nature of the diversified economic culture of the *Valle Alto*, where people are accustomed to hedging all bets and playing the field in order to make ends meet, making it rare for anyone to consciously burn any bridge. And to the *Tipay Warmis*, Andean by Design still held a glimmer of hope. But

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with the murmurings of the splinter group, morale within the organization was low. Many members stopped coming to meetings. ATO orders were scarce, but completing even small orders (such as a 12-piece order for *Pueblo to People*) was difficult because of inefficient production and delays. Judy told them to take some time off and consider the issues, and then to decide whether to accept or reject the changes.

The *Tipay Warmis* did not want to break off with Andean by Design. They said that they wanted to continue, but under their view of the original terms in which they could buy wool, set the wage and "participate" in administering Andean by Design. They did not see why things had to change. Trying to figure out how they could get the upper hand and force Gabriela and Judy to accept their terms, Ema and Lupe contacted everyone they could think of. They had meetings with this person and that person, looking for encouragement and moral support that their position was the correct one. Of course, the highly charged and political language that they used to describe the "exploitation" that they were experiencing easily convinced most of their friends who had no independent knowledge of the situation.

Some of the most sympathetic ears were those in IFFI, although not responding exactly out of moral outrage. In 1992, following the "1000 sweater debacle" IFFI had organized relocated miners' wives with whom they were working into a number of groups to knit for Andean by Design. Seeing the success that Andean by Design was having, they had decided to pursue knitwear production groups on a larger scale. The following year, IFFI's existing groups continued to work directly with Andean by Design and to contract out from *Tipay Warmi*, but IFFI also received financing for a broader "Women and Textile Production" project from the United Nations. One of the principal objectives of the project was to empower women through "job training", a phrase enjoying particular appeal among project funders in the context of neo-liberal restructuring. Under the auspices of this project, IFFI proceeded to train more than one hundred women in export-quality knitting.

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Unfortunately, in the drive to come up with catchy project ideas, no one at IFFI considered what the implications of this sort of training might be. In reality, given that knitters do not work independently, that work through Andean by Design at ostensibly more equitable wages was limited, and that even jobs in private industry were not that easy to come by, "job training" did little more than increase the number of skilled workers available to middlemen--a situation that generally tends to drive wages down. At the same time, by training more and more women with project funds rather than at the expense of entrepreneurs, IFFI's project contributed to the devaluation of export knitting as a real skill. Such conditions not only depress wages, but serve to bolster the existing ideological view that knitting is a "natural" ability of *campesinas* which can be "tapped into" for labor, rather than a highly skilled, modern occupation.

Even more problematic for IFFI than such broad, analytical concerns, was the reality of raising women's hopes that they were learning a skill that could translate into income. Although in many ways the export knitwear industry was booming, there was really not enough work to keep all of these women happy. Moreover, conditions in private industry were not as appealing as working with IFFI. The UN project had provided funding for IFFI to have a rather cushy set-up for their knitters. The project paid for administrative overhead and secretarial work, and provided a salary for a full-time professional coordinator for the project. Yet most damaging in the long run was a decision by IFFI to subsidize the wages knitters were making from Andean by Design to equal $32! Although the wage subsidy may have been a sincere effort to provide a viable level of income to women from poverty-stricken households, I believe that it may also reflect the inclusion of unrealistic projected earnings in their project proposal to the UN--promised earnings of $32 would have been much more attractive to funders than the $19 that other knitters were making. And just as IFFI failed to think through the "job training" aspect of the project, the wage subsidy had a number of pernicious effects.

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Other groups, and especially the *Tipay Warmis*, were extremely resentful of the fact that IFFI knitters were making more money for doing the same work. It seemed totally unfair, but there was nothing they could do about it. But when IFFI knitters needed technical help with the knitting, the more experienced *Tipay Warmis* refused to help them, saying that IFFI had a "professional" working for them that they should look to. Exacerbating the situation was the fact that the first groups organized by IFFI and the ones that were working with Andean by Design and *Tipay Warmi* were relocalized miners' wives who were mostly *de vestido*. Class and ethnic dynamics were clear whenever the groups got together. The *Tipay Warmis* told me that the IFFI knitters were big, painted *chotas*[11] who felt themselves to be superior because they were accustomed to the luxury of their husbands' *sueldos* in the mines and had never had to work. IFFI knitters complained that the *Tipay Warmis* were stuck-up *campesinas* and blamed them for being such slave drivers that their husbands got mad at how much they had to work and beat them up.

But the problem of the subsidy went deeper than creating resentment among knitters. Even though IFFI tried to argue that their groups wanted to become self-sufficient and that the women understood that they would not always be able to earn the subsidy, the inflated $32 wage that IFFI was paying served to "spoil" knitters' appetites for lower salaries. It is extremely difficult for anyone to accept less money for the same work, and after IFFI knitters became accustomed to earning $32 for a sweater, it barely seemed worth their while to knit the same sweater for $10 less. As a result, knitters had no incentive to become independent of IFFI funding by developing the skills necessary to run their own organization. By providing the women with overhead to pay other people to make the group function, knitters were conveniently able to avoid taking on any responsibility within the group and remained totally dependent. In fact, the way that IFFI enacted their knitwear production project destroyed the logic of grassroots organizing and

[11] *Chota* is a derrogatory term used by women *de pollera* to describe women who wear western-style clothing. (See Chapter 2).

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self-sufficiency that they claimed that they were attempting to promote.

The *Tipay Warmis* charged not only that IFFI knitters did not really want to be independent because it would mean having to do more work and receive less in wages, but that IFFI itself did not really want them to become independent. This argument was based on their critique of IFFI as an NGO that received financial support through project funding. The *Tipay Warmis* believed that IFFI needed the knitters to remain dependent in order for them to keep receiving funding for the project that paid their own salaries. While this may have been an oversimplified analysis of what was going on in IFFI, there was a certain amount of truth in what the *Tipay Warmis* were saying. IFFI did not intend to let go of some role in grassroots knitwear production--which had proven to be attractive to project funding institutions. But IFFI was up to something bigger than merely running a couple of production groups--they wanted to get into marketing.

The relationship between Andean by Design and IFFI had been strained from the beginning. Judy charged that IFFI was territorial in its "claim" over *Tipay Warmi* and over working with women's groups in general. This is a charge that was reiterated to me by a variety of people in other institutions and NGO's in Cochabamba, and fit with my own experience while I was in the field. Especially irritating to the people at IFFI seemed to be Gabriela's relationship with Judy and her role as Andean by Design's Director. In the past, Gabriela had been their "golden girl" and the *Tipay Warmis* were their star group. IFFI could always count on *Tipay Warmi*, and especially on Gabriela to impress visitors and funders and to carry the ball in workshops with other women. But when Gabriela began to have a life of her own, apart from *Tipay Warmi* and out from under their wing, the people at IFFI were irked. I was shocked when one IFFI informant commented that "we made Gabriela...and now we question our work with her." So when Ema and the *Tipay Warmis* began to complain about Gabriela and Andean by Design, using highly politicized language of "exploitation" and "lack of participation", IFFI was only too glad to take up the sword. In fact, this gave them

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the perfect excuse for trying to supplant Andean by Design altogether.

Although IFFI had repeatedly assured Judy that they had no plans for a marketing and production project that would compete with Andean by Design, just such a project was already in the pipeline. Judy got wind of what was going on from Daniel Hinajosa, IFFI's UN project coordinator--a man that one informant described as "slippery". Unlike most of the other people in IFFI, Daniel had a business background. Apparently there was a certain amount of conflict over how he was approaching the project and disagreement over where IFFI should go from there. Because of his disgruntlement in IFFI, he showed up at Judy's house in Tiquipaya on a Sunday afternoon and secretly "tattled" on the project that they were planning. Daniel claimed that he wanted to leave IFFI and join Andean by Design and that he had some innovative ideas. He said that he was expecting to get a micro-enterprise grant from the World Bank that they could use to buy knitting machines. They could produce high quality machine-knits (like *Milma* and *Casa Fisher*) that they could sell in much greater quantity--and the profit from the machine knits would pay for the administrative overhead to keep the handknitting part going. Judy was extremely irritated over the disclosure of what IFFI was doing, but she was mildly interested in Daniel's proposal--although she did not really trust him. However, after Marlene resigned, Daniel seems to have gotten scared that Andean by Design was not doing as well as he had calculated and he stopped contacting Judy. Later, Judy told me that she suspected that he was likely manipulating both sides, trying to get the best deal for himself.

But whatever Daniel's motivations, the revelation of IFFI's intentions was borne out over the next few months. In October, IFFI had a secret meeting with *Tipay Warmi*, inviting them to participate in a new project that they were inaugurating with the production of a catalogue. But IFFI had not realized the extent to which their relationship with the *Tipay Warmis* had suffered as a result of the resentment over the subsidized wage. Ema was all for the idea, but at that point, despite the growing conflict, the majority of the *Tipay*

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Warmis still believed that they had the most to gain by staying with Gabriela and Andean by Design. Much to IFFI's dismay, the *Tipay Warmis* rejected their invitation. Yet IFFI was convinced that they could eventually get the *Tipay Warmis* on board, especially if Andean by Design went under, and plans for expansion of IFFI's role continued apace.

In addition to clandestine meetings and secret plans, IFFI was also expanding its role in more overt ways. IFFI had come to Andean by Design with the idea of starting the "wool bank" to be able to have stocks of wool purchased at wholesale prices. In the end, the idea failed, primarily because of competition between the two groups. IFFI argued that the wool bank needed to be "decentralized" so that Andean by Design would not control the market and the raw materials. Not surprisingly, IFFI proposed that they would be the best ones to run the wool bank. Andean by Design was resisting this idea, but the whole thing fell through when it became clear that the savings from wholesale purchases would not be passed on to Andean by Design, because IFFI said that they needed to have money to run the bank. Andean by Design was going to be paying basically market prices for wool controlled by IFFI. Judy and Gabriela decided it would be better to do their own wool bank and this was the idea that they presented at the pie chart meeting.

The relationship between the two organizations was already on tenuous footing with the covert and overt attempts by IFFI to muscle in on Andean by Design and it's operations. Then, in 1994, things took a turn for the worse. Following the pie chart meeting, Ema and the *Tipay Warmis* had increasingly sought advice and support from their old friends at IFFI. The IFFI's were pleased to have the *Tipay Warmis* back in the fold. In January, two women from IFFI (Gilda, the Executive Director and Soledad, the Projects Manager) secretly went around in their jeep with Ema and Lupe to all of the small groups affiliated with Andean by Design in an attempt to foment an uprising against the new policies. The four were convinced that the others felt just as exploited and would relish the opportunity to join forces.

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Once again, however, they miscalculated. Judy and Gabriela had told the *Tipay Warmis* that the other groups had complained about the way that they always dominated Andean by Design's production meetings, and about the treatment that they received from *Tipay Warmi.* The other groups felt that the *Tipay Warmis* acted aloof and superior, and some that had done sub-contracting work for the *Tipay Warmis* complained that they had not been paid the full wage. Although the *Tipay Warmis* had insisted on being represented in the *Directorio* of Andean by Design and on being paid extra for their organizational costs, they did not offer such options to the groups working for them. When the *Tipay Warmis* subcontracted work they did not pay the other groups overhead, only *mano de obra.* (wages). This meant that sub-contracting knitters were paying for *Tipay Warmi's* organizational costs that they neither benefited from nor had a voice in. Beyond the regular organizational overhead, and even beyond deductions for the capitalization fund, the *Tipay Warmis* included an "instruction" charge to cover the expense of overseeing the putting out work which more logically should have been covered by the administrative charge. Of course, to the other knitters, all that mattered was that the wage had been lower than promised.

So, much to their surprise, when Ema and Lupe and the IFFI's came around to convince the women to rise up against Andean by Design, the response was very cool. In fact, many of the groups were angry at what they saw as another attempt by the *Tipay Warmis* to dominate the situation and they vehemently defended Gabriela who they saw as their champion. Ema and the others construed their failure to rally the groups as evidence that the groups lacked organizational maturity and grassroots initiative, and that Andean by Design was taking advantage of this fact to dupe them into accepting exploitative work relations. But loyalty to Gabriela and Andean by Design was high and news of the clandestine meetings quickly reached Judy and Gabriela. It is not an exaggeration to say that they were outraged that the others were waging such a covert war. Judy told the *Tipay Warmis* that if they did not like the policies, then they had every right to come and discuss it in the

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open. The working relationship between IFFI and Andean by Design was terminated.

Despite their inability to undo Andean by Design through fomenting worker conflict, IFFI continued in its bid to take over the market function that Andean by Design served. Daniel contacted Marlene in New York and unsuccessfully tried to convince her represent IFFI's sweaters. In addition to wanting her to work for them, he asked her for all sorts of favors. IFFI was sending Daniel to the states on a selling trip and he had no idea how to contact prospective clients or possible agents. He wanted to know if Marlene "would mind developing a list of agents and clients", set-up appointments for him, and receive IFFI merchandise. Of course, these were enormous tasks that he was asking her to undertake and she politely explained that she was not interested and did not have time. However, somehow he got the idea that she would be willing to work with them and a huge box of sweaters arrived at Marlene's apartment sometime later.

When his attempts to enlist Marlene failed, Daniel started calling and writing to Andean by Design's new agent, Julietta. The relationship between Andean by Design and Julietta was much more businesslike than the one they had with Marlene. Julietta was not particularly interested in the social aspects of the project and was merely representing the sweaters as a fashionable line because she liked Judy's designs. When Judy found out that IFFI was "bugging" Julietta, she worried that Julietta would think them all totally unprofessional and become irritated enough to drop Andean by Design. Judy called IFFI and told them to "bug off." She pointed out that there were hundreds of agents and clients and that there was no reason for IFFI to try to steal away the people that Andean by Design had already cultivated--unless, of course, IFFI was either incompetent at doing the marketing or were attempting to drive Andean by Design under. Given all of the backroom politics that IFFI had been engaging in and later when Andean by Design's Administrative Secretary, Ana, decamped to IFFI, the latter seemed most likely.

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But Judy's questioning of IFFI's competence was not entirely off key either. As one of my informants once put it, "every ignorant asshole thinks they know something about marketing sweaters, and that just isn't the case." IFFI was suffering from the same problems that had thwarted small-scale entrepreneurs and even FOTRAMA and ADAM--the export knitwear market is much more complicated than most people realize. Andean by Design was having a certain amount of success, mostly because of Judy's designs and because of her experience and understanding of the way things work in boutique circles. IFFI had thought that it looked easy, but they were finding out that producing and exporting high fashion sweaters was much more difficult than they had expected.

IFFI's attempts to gain access to the market via Andean by Design's coattails were not only pitiful, they were ultimately unsuccessful. Daniel and the others had no idea how to go about finding buyers for their sweaters on a sales trip. As a result, IFFI became convinced that the best way to get into the market was through "*ferias.*" There had been a lot of publicity and talk about the success of a few Bolivian knitwear producers like *Asarti* through participation in well-known international knitwear shows and fairs. In particular, this idea was being promoted by a representative of the German Chamber of Commerce who was giving a series of workshops on marketing textiles for Bolivian entrepreneurs. The German Chamber of Commerce was offering grants to a few selected companies to come and participate in a prestigious knitwear trade fair in Germany.

Unfortunately, IFFI failed to realize that not all international "fairs" are alike. Only a few attract buyers from boutiques and stores where high-priced handknits are sold. So in March, 1994 when IFFI somehow discovered that there was to be a "fair" associated with the World Cup Soccer Finals (the *Mundial*) in Chicago, they were very excited. As in most places in the world apart from the US, the *Mundial* is one of the most important and watched events of the year. It seemed obvious that this fair would be a great place to sell IFFI sweaters. But the cost of participation was $10,000 in addition to travel expenses. IFFI came to the *Tipay*

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Warmis, offering them the "opportunity" to participate in the fair with IFFI if they would pay $5000, plus a percentage on all orders. For the *Tipay Warmis*, this was an impossible request--they would have to sell 300 pieces just to cover the expenses of the fair. Lucky for the *Tipay Warmis*, they declined, because for IFFI, the fair was a fiasco. Not only was the fair held at the Chicago Convention Center which is not conveniently located for soccer fans (even assuming that people in town for soccer would be interested in the fair), but it turned out that the fair was not the trade-show type championed by the German Chamber of Commerce. Instead it was just a larger scale version of the type of craft fair held in malls through the United States, with "country kitchen" *chachkas* and tee shirts. IFFI sold virtually nothing.

Cabinet Crisis

When the attempt to get Andean by Design's knitting groups to rebel failed, the *Tipay Warmis* were forced to retrench. They had few orders to keep knitters' pockets full and membership was continuing to fall. GEPA and ESSA, two important European ATO clients had complained to Andean by Design about the late delivery and the poor quality of recent orders they received from the *Tipay Warmis* and said that because *Tipay Warmi* had put their prices up so high, they would not be ordering any more. Although hardly anyone was willing to speak out publicly against Ema and the *Directorio*, many of the knitters were candid with me about their feeling that the organization had changed. The optimism I encountered when I arrived in 1991 had been replaced by a lack of enthusiasm, even pessimism, and infighting. In this context, the *Tipay Warmis* were unable to move forward one way or the other in terms of their relationship to Andean by Design. Instead, they decided not to decide, but to form a commission to study the issues, but then no one wanted to be on the commission. To a great extent this was a reflection of the fact that no one was willing to go up against Gabriela, and their awareness of how every meeting inevitably deteriorated into a yelling match between Gabriela and Ema and Dolores. The situation was getting worse.

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Then, in February things again began to heat up. Organizational elections within *Tipay Warmi* became a battleground for the Toranza sisters. Much to the dismay of the *Tipay Warmis*, Ema removed herself from renomination as the group's President, saying that she could no longer tolerate her family problems getting in the way. Since few others had the desire, the self-confidence or the qualifications to be President, this put the group in a bind. During the elections, Ema and Dolores and a number of others attempted to keep the same power structure in place despite Ema's departure from the Presidency by nominating Lupe (Ema's right-hand woman), who would have been very happy to have won. But Lupe was not that well liked within the group and there were some who had resented her rapid rise to power. In her own bid for power and influence, Gabriela nominated Juana Ricaldes, who had been one of the younger generation of knitters during *Tipay Warmi's* early years. Juana had all of the qualities to make a good President (except self-confidence), and even though they rarely talked anymore, she had always been very close to Gabriela.

Although in the end, Gabriela prevailed in getting Juana into the Presidency, Ema, and Lupe were elected to other positions in the *Directorio*, destroying Gabriela's attempt to alter the balance of power within *Tipay Warmi*. Knitters saw their interests to lay more with Ema and Dolores than with Gabriela, who was now "an outsider." But even Gabriela's hopes that Juana might bring a clear head to the situation went unfulfilled. Juana was overwhelmed by the complexity of the situation. She implicitly trusted Gabriela, but many of the policies Andean by Design was promoting seemed to jibe with the sharp rhetoric being used by Ema and the others. As it became clear that Juana was avoiding dealing with the issue, the others in the *Directorio* began treating her like the "boy king" that they had to coddle and counsel. As things continued to deteriorate, Juana became less and less confident in her own abilities. It was rumored that Lupe helped this process along by "failing" to pass on important messages and information, making Juana seem that much more inept. In May, Juana stepped down and at the same time, a number of other members of the *Directorio* also resigned for one

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reason or another. In a moment of wry humor, Dolores referred to it as a "cabinet crisis"--not only were people resigning, but no one wanted to step up to fill the open positions. However, in the end, Lupe became the new President and all of the positions were begrudgingly filled.

Outside Intervention

But these changes did not help the *Tipay Warmis* to bolster their flagging organization. Attendance at meetings was so low that Ema was forced to cancel some educational activities that she had scheduled. The old enthusiasm that had once defined *Tipay Warmi* as an organization seemed to have evaporated. Even Ema, who sincerely believed in the efficacy of *Tipay Warmi* and of *grupos de base*, was afraid because of what she saw happening. She decided that they needed to be reinvigorated and that the way to do this was by bringing in help from outside. Unfortunately, the outsiders who were brought in offered little more than politicized rhetoric and a glorification of *grupos de base* totally disconnected from the events and issues which had been cleaving *Tipay Warmi's* group spirit. Even Ema seemed overly focused on the need for them to ensure that they continued to have an organization and that they were *de base*, rather than remembering that they had originally organized to accomplish something.

The *Tipay Warmis'* old friends, the Methodists, were the first to come. Ema began the workshop with an attempt to get the *asemblea* to understand why it was so "terrible" that Andean by Design was becoming an NGO. But the Methodist agent's theoretical lecture on the nature of NGO's was entirely unrelated to what was going on at Andean by Design and did nothing to help the *Tipay Warmis* understand what an NGO was. His explanation included a discussion how *empresas* ("private businesses") are run by *patrones* ("owner-masters")--and working for them is like slavery. When one of the *Tipay Warmis* asked whether an NGO was an *empresa*, he said yes, but later qualified that to be "empresarial-like"--further confusing everyone who was listening.

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In fact, the simplistic analysis being offered made things more convoluted when the *Tipay Warmis* were told that no one in NGO's makes less than $50,000 and that only five to ten percent of the money given to NGO's for projects "goes to the people". (There were murmurings of surprise because no one had realized that Gabriela and Judy were making that much!) While there was some truth to the critique of NGO's being presented, his analysis not only misrepresented the situation at Andean by Design, but it entirely glossed over the real value of work done by professionals in NGO's that might cost much more on the open market.

Following the lecture, the representative of the Methodists told the women that "they seemed to have lost the desire to organize and that they didn't understand the benefits of organizing." He had them do a play-acting game to try get them to think about the value of their organization. The game consisted of giving out a pair of cheap earrings and play money, saying that the earrings were gold and that the women should play-bid on them. The subsequent bidding war was enormous fun and everyone was having a wonderful time. In the end, when one of the women had won the bid, it was disclosed that the earrings were not really gold! Everyone laughed uproariously at how they had all been duped into bidding for something that was worthless.

Ema was exceedingly pleased with the way things had gone, believing that the point had been made. She said, "See, we know that *vendedoras* ("sales people") often lie, but we are drawn in by the shiny beauty of the gold earrings"...in other words, everything that glistens is not gold. The lesson was supposed to demonstrate how the $21 wage being offered by Andean by Design was not all that it seemed. Ema tried to make the connection by bringing in how private industry is always so exploitative and that if they work for Andean by Design under the new conditions they would lose their organization. Unfortunately, the entire workshop was problematic in that it was not clear how this lesson fit in with the earlier discussion of NGO's, and since private industry was currently offering better wages than *Tipay Warmi*. The benefits of organizing remained cloudy.

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The next people who came to speak to the *asemblea* were a man and woman. The man said nothing the entire time he was there, but the woman explained that he was a Ph.D., an M.D. and an indigenous herbal healer. This, of course seemed very impressive. The woman was a Bolivian who was currently residing in Switzerland and working with a "think tank." She proceeded to display a chart with two columns, "collective" versus "private business." She asked the *asemblea* what the difference between the two was. No one answered. She proceeded to explain private business, again using the word "*patron*" or "master." The column labeled "private business" was filled with entirely negative characteristics. The column labeled "*colectiva*" was filled with only good things. At the bottom, the chart said that Andean by Design was a private business and that *Tipay Warmi* was a *colectiva*. Later on a number of knitters pulled me aside and asked me what an *empresa* was anyway.

After the chart was presented, Ema gave a hand-out with a critique of Neo-Liberal policy in Bolivia and its effects on the poor, together with a list of the characteristics of private businesses. The language used in the handout about Neo-Liberalism was very difficult for the *Tipay Warmis* to understand and it was not at all clear how any of it related to the discussion of private business and collectives presented earlier. No one seemed to have much understanding about what all this disjointed and complicated information meant. From there, the woman proceeded to give a very simplistic critique of NGO's, using OXFAM as an example. She said that OXFAM is exploiting the people. For example, they show pictures of the *Tipay Warmis* over the television and ask for money to send for cholera victims in Bolivia--and neither the *Tipay Warmis* or cholera victims ever see any of that money. Instead, OXFAM sends spoiled food or things even a pig won't eat to kill poor Bolivian babies. (Food donations are rarely "spoiled" food but more likely explained as a subsidy to first world agriculture--suggesting that a much more complicated analysis would have been in order).

This was shocking news since all of the *Tipay Warmis* had high regard for OXFAM Trading, one of *Tipay Warmi's* longest standing customers. Not only did no one appear to give much credence to

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these accusations--one woman commented to me that they had never sent their picture to OXFAM--but no one really seemed to have any idea what all of this had to do with Andean by Design or with them. The woman told the *Tipay Warmis* that they should stop trying to export to the United States and Europe--that Latin American countries had to stick together. Rather contradictorily, she continued by saying that she had contacts with the *Proyecto Cultural Los Andes* which was made up of South American professionals working in Europe and the United States and that she was sure that they would "help" the *Tipay Warmis* sell their sweaters. Or she said, it would be better to sell their sweaters by going to fairs in Brazil and Argentina where the economy was more developed and people had more money.

It was not clear to me whether this woman was merely promoting some ideological platform or whether she was attempting to manipulate the situation somehow to serve her own interest, but her suggestions to the *Tipay Warmis* were extremely misguided. Not only would the idea of limiting the sale of high-priced handknits to solely within a pan-Latin market be poor business, the suggestion of attending fairs in Argentina and Brazil took no account of the real interests of knitters in *Tipay Warmi*. It was difficult enough for the organization to cajole anyone to go into Cochabamba for the day, much less La Paz. Who was going to want to travel to fairs in other countries? Moreover, saying that "we should just sell our products here in Latin America" supposes a non-existent "imagined community" with nationalist overtones. Her suggestion ignored racial and class-based divisions within and between countries. In the case of sweater exports, as the experience of ADAM clearly indicated, local interests are often stronger and more at odds with those of alternative producers than are foreign ones. In addition, the extremely anti-European bias of her presentation begged the question of why she and the other professionals associated with the *Proyecto Cultural Los Andes* were living and working in Europe.

But workshops and presentations were not the only ways that Ema was attempting to reconfigure the consensus within the organization. In a highly secret move, the *Directorio* had approved

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bringing in some lawyers to review the *Tipay Warmis'* rights in relation to the IAF contract. When the lawyers came to address the *asemblea*, they immediately began speaking of "irregularities" at Andean by Design and alluding to illegal activity. What the lawyers were saying had more impact than any of the educational activities because the idea of people using their position tc obtain more than their share of the money was something that everyone was familiar with, and because corrupt business practices were an accepted way of doing things. However, what the lawyers were suggesting went too far and scared Ema and Dolores. They had not meant for things to get that out of hand and they knew that these new accusations were unfounded. But now that there were open accusations of corruption, it would be difficult for them to take a stand defending Gabriela. People would think that the whole very public family dispute had been a ruse between previously inseparable sisters in order for them all to benefit from stolen funds. In the end, nothing came of the accusations, but the meeting with the lawyers definitely affected the tone of things in Arani.

In addition to all of these invited guests, some representatives of Self Help, including Lloyd Kuhns who had worked with the *Tipay Warmis* for many years, were in town and they came to find out what was really going on with Andean by Design. Until recently they had been collaborating as the project's importer and were wondering what, if anything, they should do next. An *asemblea* was called. The discussion went something like this:

> **Lupe**: Judy has become like a *dueña* (owner). She dictates the designs. She told us that the sweaters would sell at this price until we entered the upscale market. Three years have gone by and the price hasn't gone up.
>
> **Lloyd Kuhns:** But are you making more *mano de obra* (wage)?
>
> ***Asemblea***: Yes.

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Lloyd Kuhns: I would like to see the *costos* (cost structure) you are basing your prices on.

Ema: We haven't done last year's yet, but we have one from the year before. We presented it to Andean by Design last year and they rejected it.

Lloyd Kuhns: I would like to see it.

Lupe: Uh, uh...I didn't save it in our files

Lloyd Kuhns: How do you know you need $12 in overhead per sweater?

Lupe: Umm...according to other years.

Lloyd Kuhns: Twelve dollars is 18% of the total price of the sweater. Other artisan groups we work with around the world generally need 6-10%, with 10% being very high.

Asemblea: *...silence.....*

Lloyd Kuhns: What value do you place on the work that Andean by Design was doing?

Asemblea: *...silence...*

Dolores: We don't like the way it operates. *No somos tan inutil* (we aren't so useless)--we can do the designs if you send us the pictures.

Tomasa: Yes, Judy also copies stitches from a book, she doesn't really do the designs.

Later I discussed the situation with Lloyd. The following is a synopsis of our conversation:

> He said that he believed that much of the problem stems from the fact that the impetus for design input came from the ATO's--they were interested in a service that they wanted. The knitters never totally understood

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this dynamic. We thought we were doing them a favor by paying for design and for the marketing project, but like so many other projects, it's not necessarily a good thing--just another form of dependence. Now the knitters don't understand that someone was paying for all this. Since they didn't shop for it, they think it's free. They needed to use Judy as a resource and compensate her accordingly. She obviously has some renown in textile design--this would not be the most logical way for her to go about making her own business if that was her intent--it is better understood as altruistic motives.

He told me that Self Help now believed that they had tried to push people too far, too fast. The idea to enter the upscale market was maybe from Judy. The upscale market requires relatively sophisticated management, production and facilities. It seems clear that in order to do this, a group like *Tipay Warmi* needs to be attached to another organization. Unfortunately, this created two levels of control and control became the central issue. In order to work with Andean by Design they had to give-up some part of the control. The *Tipay Warmis* felt that they had lost control, they felt separated from the market. (*But it was a market they never controlled or were in contact with in the first place.*) With the new structure, they became a producing unit, and not a marketing unit--which they perceived themselves to be.

Moreover, it was difficult for groups to work together at that next level. (It is often easier to unite or feel solidarity with groups that are far away, like the *cocaleros* (coca producers) or the miners, than with local women.) He told me that they had met with Judy and Gabriela and with the other groups working with Andean by Design. A number of the groups had recounted how they had done farm-out work for the *Tipay Warmis* and had not been properly compensated. He said it sure sounded like exploitation. He said that it seemed clear that *Tipay Warmi* had used its success to their own benefit rather than spreading that success beyond their own group.

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As the situation continued to deteriorate, the *Tipay Warmis* accepted an offer I had made repeatedly over the previous months to bring in an outside mediator--someone who would be neutral. Blanca Leon was a friend of mine who had a great deal of experience working with grassroots organizations and women's groups. She had gotten a group of local political bosses from Punata to resolve their seemingly intransigent differences over an irrigation project. She agreed to mediate and with a bit of convincing, Judy and Gabriela agreed to participate in negotiations with the *Tipay Warmis*--although they refused to admit to any wrong doing on their part.

Unfortunately, the mediation occurred too late to bridge the enormous gulf that now separated the *Tipay Warmis* from Andean by Design. Part of the problem was that Blanca had agreed to do the mediation in her spare time without compensation, and her real work was already overwhelming in its consumption of her energies and time. The situation was further complicated by the fact that Judy was on complete bed rest with complications of her second pregnancy and was unable to leave her home in Tiquipaya. But Blanca did give it her best effort. She met independently with both sides on various occasions. After reviewing the situation, Blanca came to a similar conclusion as had Lloyd Kuhns in terms of what had occurred. She saw no way of salvaging a working relationship between the two organizations. But she went further to suggest that regardless of who had been at fault, allowing the situation to fester was more damaging to *Tipay Warmi* as an organization. She recommended that they should cut their losses by getting out of the relationship entirely--considering it one of those situations where "you lose a few."

The End of an Era

Following this series of outside interventions, things seemed to cool down somewhat in Arani. People were tired of even thinking about the situation with Andean by Design. The *Tipay Warmis* continued to "consider" Blanca's recommendations, but nothing new seemed to be happening on that front. Ema was increasingly

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concerned about what was happening inside the organization. She told me,

> *"...en Tipay Warmi antes había más comprehensión, todas nos apoyabamos y tuvimos las mismas pensamientos y inquietudes--ya no saben porque nos hemos organizado."*
>
> "...in *Tipay Warmi* there used to be more comprehension, we all supported each other and we had the same thoughts and concerns--now they don't seem to know why we organized ourselves."

She lamented the fact that knitters used to care about education, but after the money for the literacy project ran out, all they want to do is just knit. She said that before they had formed the organization with the idea of organizing and moving forward, but today they just want to earn money. She decided to have another educational workshop, but this time just with member of the Association.

She began the workshop by castigating the assembly for their recurrent failure to show up for planned educational activities and told them that "if we don't do these workshops, then *Tipay Warmi* will disappear." She passed out a questionnaire asking the group to rank their level of *autogestíon* ("autodevelopment"). But like the catechism exercise of one Bolivian school child I knew that posed questions like, "The world will advance through hate and lies--true or false?", Ema's questionnaire was designed to elicit certain responses. Moreover, many of the things on the form were not necessarily good indicators of "*autogestíon.*" But even with this seemingly fail-safe guide, many of the women were giving the "wrong" answers and Ema was not getting the responses she was looking for. Ema had said that if they didn't do the workshop then the organization would disappear. Had they organized to serve the organization or was the organization supposed to serve them? The logic seemed to have changed. The reasons for organizing were now so unclear that it was difficult to find any sort of consensus. Their "utopias" were now unconnected with what the organization was supposed to be doing.

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Then in June, when the woman who was serving as the *Tipay Warmis'* Secretary had to resign unexpectedly, things again began to evolve. In a clear attempt to further stack the *Directorio* in their favor, Lupe lobbied hard to get Dolores elected as Secretary. Dolores' low level of literacy was common knowledge within the group, and Dolores herself strongly resisted the nomination, begging the others not to put her in because "how would she be able to do it since the principal job of the Secretary is to take notes at meetings"? But the temptation to abdicate responsibility to the Toranza sisters (everyone knew they "liked" to do these jobs!) was too great for the *Tipay Warmis* and they made Dolores their new Secretary.

With Ema, Dolores and Lupe now serving on the *directorio*, the writing was on the wall. In July, Lupe presented a motion to the *Asemblea* to expel Gabriela from the group for failing to show up at meetings. Gabriela had complained that she only missed them because no one ever notified her about the meetings, but she had always paid the fine for every meeting she had missed. There was a great deal of tension within the *asemblea* and a good deal of discussion ensued among the more outspoken members of the group. Many of the knitters sat quietly, expressing no opinion. The vote was taken, going around the room and requiring each person to publicly record their choice. The motion to expel Gabriela was accepted almost unanimously--including many of Gabriela's known supporters and allies, but after the meeting many of the knitters told me that they had been afraid to speak up or to vote against the others. But the deal was sealed--Gabriela was out. News of the expulsion did not take long to reach Cochabamba. Although Gabriela acted outwardly as if it did not matter and refused to discuss any of it anymore, I did have the opportunity to talk with her about all that had gone on. She was angry, but mostly she was hurt. For her, *Tipay Warmi* had been "her baby" and she could not understand how things could have gotten so distorted and out of hand.

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Changing Times

Expelling Gabriela was an enormously important moment, but in everyday terms, it did not really change much for the *Tipay Warmis*. Over the next months they continued to have very little in the way of orders and morale was worse than ever. Some of the *Tipay Warmis* began openly knitting for other groups even when they came to meetings. Although the group still liked to say that they had 35 members, a more realistic count would have been about 20--and even that may have been generous. Only the most committed and involved members were sticking it out. Andean by Design was continuing to function on its own, but they too were having problems. Most of the clients that they had gotten through Marlene had been lost as a result of delays and mistakes, and the new agent did not seem to be as successful in getting new orders.

In October 1994 when I left the field, this was basically the state of things, but the following year when I returned, the situation had become even more bleak. For the *Tipay Warmis*, a year had passed without many orders and nothing had been done to finish or improve the building. Ema had submitted proposals to various funding agencies for projects to complete the building, but without any luck. Funders were wary about picking up the pieces of COTESU's "white elephant," and the *Tipay Warmis* had submitted unrealistic requests for support, proposing to do things like plant trees and teach the women about environmental issues, and asking for expensive office furniture, faxes and computers. Andean by Design was not faring much better. Although everyone seemed to agree that Judy's new designs were exquisite, they didn't seem to be selling. Judy asked Marlene to stop by Julietta's New York show room to check the situation out and Julietta had all of Andean by Design's sweaters put away in a cabinet. It appeared that she had lost interest. Judy and Gabriela had landed a number of small orders from nonprofit organizations and ATO's but as had been clear from the outset, this was not a sustainable market. And, despite my personal hopes that time would resolve the conflict between Gabriela and her sisters, nothing had changed to improve the relationship.

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When I returned to Arani, I was struck by the transformation which had occurred. In the past, the *Tipay Warmis* had been the ones demanding workers rights and social justice, but the family who had been caretakers of the knitting center and a day laborer who had done some work on the new building had lodged formal complaints against the *Tipay Warmis*, saying that they had not been properly compensated. Although there was still little open dissent among the remaining members of *Tipay Warmi*--most of the knitters who were disgruntled had merely left--many of the knitters I spoke with in private expressed extremely negative attitudes about the organization, sadness and even animosity. One informant told me,

> "*...diferente es...se ha cambiado...ahora Tipay Warmi es diferente...mira, con la Gabriela la gente también muy, no sé, su caracter era fuerte, La Gabriela, no?...entonces hacíamos caso, hacíamos tejer rápido...eso era...y ahora las tejedoras no se hace caso...no se porque será...ahora no hay entendimiento...no sé, Janet!...todas se han salido, las antiguas...no sé porque sera...*"
>
> "...it's different now...it's changed...now *Tipay Warmi* is different...look, with Gabriela everyone was, I don't know, she had a strong character, Gabriela did, no?...so, we made ourselves pay attention, we made ourselves knit quickly...that's how it was...and now the knitters don't pay attention...I don't know why...now there's no understanding between people...I don't know, Janet...everyone has left, the older members...I don't know why it is..."

Other, more vehement comments included

> "They (the *Directorio*) just decide things among themselves"
> "They (the *Directorio*) are the only ones with a voice"
> "They (the *Directorio*) make us feel worthless (*despreciado*)"
> "They (the *Directorio*) no longer speak in *Quechua*."
> "They (the *Directorio*) think themselves more capable (*capaz*)."

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"They (the *Directorio*) don't let us participate."
"They (the *Directorio*) have made themselves the owners." ("*Se han puesto duenos*")
"They (the *Directorio*) are just out to take advantage of us." ("*Son aprovechadores*")
"the Toranzas think themselves to be so big--but we can't stand them. They are bad people."
"The Toranzas aren't *campesinos* anymore."
"I just want the *Tipay Warmi* to end so that we can all go and work for Andean by Design."
"It would be better if the whole thing just closed."

But despite the growing resentment and dissatisfaction of many of the group's members, few were willing to go up against the power of those in office. Most of those who felt that the concentration of power in the hands of the *directorio* was excessive eventually just left. But even committed members had to leave because over the next three years the group continued to have almost no orders. Funds from the capitalization deduction provided a safety net for the group to fall back upon in hard times and they continued to be able to pay their bills, to support the wages of a limited *directorio* schedule and even to install a telephone in the new building, but their funds were quickly being depleted. The future did not look very bright.

To make matters worse, *Pueblo to People*, one of the only ATO customers that had continued to place small orders for sweaters, closed as a result of incompetent management, owing money to the *Tipay Warmis* and to dozens of other Latin American craft production coops. The *Tipay Warmis* had not received payment from Pueblo to People for $7000 worth of merchandise delivered in three separate orders, dating back more than a year. Although they recouped $1000 as a result of a conversation that I had with the pro-bono Director in the fall of 1997, soon after that, *Pueblo to People* was forced to declare formal bankruptcy by some large U.S. creditors who were seeking full repayment of debts. As of October 1998, the matter was still under litigation, but it was clearly unlikely that the *Tipay Warmis* would get more than five cents on the dollar out of the bankruptcy proceedings--if they got anything at all. At the time of

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this writing, the outlook for the Association remains extremely precarious.

Conclusion

What happened with the Andean by Design project is instructive in a number of different ways. First, it demonstrates the continuing difficulty that Bolivian handknitters have in accessing clients in upscale markets and in keeping up with the exigencies of production, design, delivery and quality required to remain viable players in the high fashion knitwear market. Although during the 1980's there was an "opening" in the upscale, boutique market for handknit Alpaca sweaters as a result of shifts in consumer tastes, improvements in communications and the increasing availability of high quality alpaca yarns, these changes did not necessarily translate into greater access to the market for handknitters and cooperative knitting organizations. The women of Tipay Warmi continued to struggle with their position of relative powerlessness in the global market hierarchy.

Moreover, Andean by Design was a risky undertaking. It exposed women to a demanding market that was not like the ATO's that they were accustomed to dealing with. Success required a level of sophistication that the knitters of *Tipay Warmi* were unable to grasp. This made them indifferent to the irreparable effect that production problems and delays were having on their ability to maintain relationships with clients that they had already cultivated and on their ability to establish new ones. It also led them to believe that they did not need the "professional" services that the project was providing, as they jealously attempted to control all aspects of the operation. But the reality was that without the project's aesthetic input and intermediary function, the *Tipay Warmis* had no way to maintain any sort of connection to the upscale market.

The Andean by Design story also says something about "participation." It would probably not be out of line to suggest that Judy and Gabriela may have overstepped their authority in the way that Andean by Design was operating. Although their intentions

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undoubtedly stemmed from their sincere desire to see the project succeed, because Andean by Design was a project that was supposed to stem from knitters themselves, the case could be made that Judy and Gabriela did not really have the "right" to make some of the changes that were made. As difficult as the idea might be, in some ways it would have been more appropriate for the project to have conceded to some of the demands of the *Tipay Warmis*, even if it would have meant that the project would have failed. This would have meant that the women themselves would have had to share in responsibility for that failure and suffer the consequences, rather than convincing themselves that all of the problems stemmed from the "domination" that they believed to be coming from Andean by Design. But even more importantly, it is possible that closure of the project might ultimately have had a less destructive effect than the ugly and personal battles that plagued its operations.

But at the same time, despite the discontent expressed by the *Tipay Warmis* with the way that the project was being run, the problem with Andean by Design was not so much a lack of participation--there was a structure for participation--but inability of the "participating" members to overcome personal and institutional envy in order to cooperate at the next, higher level. The Toranza sisters were unable to transcend their own sibling rivalry so that they might put the interests of the organization first. As representatives of the two institutions, they were unable to communicate with each other or to work together at solving the inevitable problems that arose in making the project function. There were certainly ways that the *Tipay Warmis* could have been more included or informed that would not have detracted from the efficacy of Andean by Design's operations. But as long as the sisters were the go-betweens, the relationship continued to be mired in negative personal dynamics. The *Tipay Warmis* were also unable to set aside competition and hostility that they felt toward other knitting organizations in order to work together toward a common goal. Their inability to cooperate made the underlying idea of an "umbrella" project untenable. As long as the interaction between

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Tipay Warmi and Andean by Design was a power struggle, "participation" remained an elusive dream.

But while "participation" may not have been at the heart of the failure of Andean by Design, it was central to *Tipay Warmi's* internal conflict. The wage issue problem, for example, would not have been resolved through more participation in Andean by Design, but necessitated a more general level of participation by the *Tipay Warmis* in the functioning of their own organization. However, the failure of the organization to live up to its own ideal of grassroots participation is not best understood as a reflection of the shortcomings of the members of the group or of its leaders. These were merely peripheral factors affecting the way that events unfolded. Instead, I believe that the internal conflicts plaguing *Tipay Warmi* as an organization during their association with the Andean by Design project reflect a deeper contradiction-- that the process of organizing itself generated dynamics which conflicted with the *cholita* self-identity of *Tipay Warmi's* members, weakening the internal coherence of the group, undercutting it's participatory philosophy, and endangering the sustainability of its alternative approach.

Most of the women who joined *Tipay Warmi* did not want to become "*dirigentes*" ("union leaders") or activists, nor were they necessarily interested in learning about the structure of the global economy. They merely wanted to be able to work at a job with pleasant conditions and a reasonable remuneration, and to strive toward an ideal of local womanhood represented by the *cholita*. But running a grassroots production cooperative to create the working conditions and the income that would allow these women to approximate this ideal required that some members have a broader set of skills to make it all happen. Moreover, the process of grassroots organizing itself generated new skills and new self-identities among an elite group who were becoming what I have referred to as "cosmopolitanized". Over time, these personal transformations led *Tipay Warmi's* leaders to develop an agenda that in many ways clashed with local ideas about appropriate and

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desirable roles for women, making them even more out of step with the rest of the group.

As visions within the group diverged, it became increasingly difficult to reach a consensus over what they should do or about the goals of the organization. In James Fernandez' (1965) classic study of a "Fang Cult" in Gabon, informants had different interpretations of the meaning of the cult's ritual, but integration and "social consensus" was achieved by virtue of the ritual itself. The *Tipay Warmis* were similarly combined in a common task without a symbolic consensus, but in the past, common experience as handknitters in an exploitative putting out system, a uniformity of social standing, age and marital status, together with Gabriela's charismatic leadership gave the group an internal coherence which had made *Tipay Warmi* an exemplary organization. Although the majority of knitters may not have had any interest in running the organization or in the peripheral, more esoteric concerns that seemed to interest Gabriela, her sisters, and the group's other leaders, they were only too happy to go along with them as long as the knitting work was attractive. I am not suggesting that knitters were "lazy" (although I am sure that some were--as is the case in most group endeavors) or that what transpired was their "fault" *per se*. But rather, I suggest that as a result of broader processes involved in producing for the export market and in organizing at the grassroots level, together with broader transformations in the social, economic, political and cultural forces at work in knitters' lives, the Association and the approach being pursued by its leaders ceased to address issues of central relevance to its members in ways that members found to be meaningful. In return, knitters did not participate in meaningful ways. Although this dynamic is understandable, in the long run, abdication of responsibility contributed to a loss of symbolic consensus over the meaning and goals of the organization as the group's leaders became increasingly alienated from the interests and concerns of the majority of the knitters. *Tipay Warmi's* "autodevelopment" reached a limit, not only in terms of the market, but in terms of the internal dynamics of their own grassroots organizing.

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Chapter 9
Conclusion: Redefined Boundaries and the Challenge of New Limits

Overview

Since the 1950's the production of handknit sweaters for export has become a multimillion dollar industry in Cochabamba, employing several thousand women. Handknitters have primarily been *cholitas* from rural towns. Although income from handknitting became a meaningful part of many women's personal economic strategies, middlemen tended to profit disproportionately from knitters' labor. This was true in private enterprise putting-out systems as well as in networks for handknitting established by social welfare institutions attempting to construct alternative, "cooperative" production structures. The international market for expensive handknits requires greater knowledge and expertise than these organizations were able to mobilize. Moreover, although the ostensible purpose of these "quasi-cooperatives" was to transform productive relationships within the industry to the benefit of handknitters, hierarchical operational dynamics thwarted pretensions to any real change. Yet through the nature of export work itself, knitters began to develop a positive self-identity as artisan knitters. And while the quasi-cooperatives failed to reshape knitters' position in the economic power structure of the knitwear industry, educational programs and workshops they sponsored gave knitters a new perspective on their rights as workers and as women. In conjunction with knitters' increasingly positive self-valuation of their own artisan skills, this knowledge proved a powerful catalyst for further personal change.

In the town of Arani which has a high concentration of *cholita* handknitters, this process was further influenced by the specific way that export knitting work dovetailed with local economic, social and cultural conditions. Circumstances specific to Arani led to the employment of a disproportionate number of young women and

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women from low status households as knitters. The lion's share of knitting income was spent on items of personal consumption related to a pre-existing, alternative *cholita* culture, allowing knitters to dress and act as if they were from families with local status and to sidestep parental authority. I have referred to these knitters as "*nouveau cholitas*," able to compete with the trappings of the dominant, national culture on their own terms through the elaboration of their own identity as women in local culture.

The ability of these women to have access to relatively significant levels of income offered a challenge to local sensibilities concerning proper behavior for young women and appropriate consumption patterns for people from different classes. Yet in the long run, although many women derived a new sense of self-confidence and self-identity from improvements in status at the local level, the transformation of social boundaries was in many ways, primarily cosmetic. Prestige in local arenas had no affect on the nature of external, structural power relationships influencing the more general social and economic circumstances of knitters' lives. Moreover, gossip and innuendo concerning knitters' behavior kept the *nouveau cholitas* from gaining more lasting gains in the local status hierarchy. However, in the broader context of the development of the identity of the artisan knitter and knitters' increasing consciousness of their condition as workers in an exploitative industry, the specific status-related identity politics that emerged in association with handknitting in Arani contributed to the development of a more radical approach to transforming the industry.

Under the charismatic leadership of a local knitter, and with the support of a number of NGO's and politically committed individuals, a group of women in Arani broke away from mainstream knitwear production institutions to form the *Asociación de Tejedoras 'Tipay Warmi'*, a grassroots cooperative where knitters have more control. The defining quality of their organization was it's participatory philosophy, challenging existing notions about the ability of handknitters to run their own productive organization. But *Tipay Warmi* also used sweater production as a foundation for

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supporting educational, cultural and political activities with its members that gave the organization a larger relevance. As one knitter put it, through the knowledge and understanding gained in this grassroots mobilization, "*nos hemos dado cuenta*" ("we came to realize"). *Tipay Warmi* was more than just a sweater knitting coop, it was an inspiration and a template for broader forms of political mobilization.

Yet although grassroots organizing provided an alternative structure for sweater production and a platform for a variety of non-economic activities, the success of cooperative knitwear production remained circumscribed by knitters' inability to effectively transform their relationship to the market. Design and marketing were key aspects of this relationship. For grassroots organizations there has been no simple path for entering into export markets. Peasant women from Bolivia encounter innumerable difficulties in attempting to design high-fashion garments and find clientele among the exclusive boutiques where high-priced knitwear can be sold. Over the years there have been numerous attempts to find a way to link handknitters to these markets, but the majority have been top-down approaches that ignored issues of structural inequality within the industry and promoted the development of yet another level of intermediary where profits are retained. The case of ADAM is only a more exaggerated example of why this sort of initiative has tended to fail.

As a result of the inability of grassroots organizations to find a way to access the upscale market, the principal clients for cooperatively produced knitwear developed from a network of not-for-profit or "alternative trade (ATO)" institutions. Unfortunately, the ATO market is not really appropriate for selling high-priced knitwear. It is difficult to sell $200 alpaca sweaters alongside relatively cheap imports like the Guatemalan cloth napkins and placemats which became popular ATO items in the 1980's. Many of the ATO's that previously provided a client base for *Tipay Warmi* ceased purchasing knitwear in the 1990's. At the same time, the number of grassroots knitting groups grew (in part as a response to economic crisis resulting from the Neoliberal approach being

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pursued by the Bolivian government), making competition for the few remaining not-for-profit customers even more fierce. In this context, *Tipay Warmi's* dependence on the ATO market became a liability and a threat to their bid for greater autonomy.

Other, more primordial challenges to the success of *Tipay Warmi's* grassroots approach came from within the organization itself. After nearly 20 years of operation only a handful of women developed the skills and knowledge to actually run the organization. The same women tended to be "elected" into administrative positions year after year. Certain individuals, for a variety of reasons, liked to take on these *cargos*, and their eagerness sat well with the majority. Real "participation" remained elusive because members continued to be afraid to speak up or to take on responsibility, and more importantly, many did not want to participate--they just wanted to knit. They had no desire to go to meetings, to attend workshops on political or cultural topics, to run back and forth to the city, or to interact with city people and foreigners. Participation in these sorts of activities actually conflicted with knitters' sense of who they saw themselves to be and how they wanted to spend their time and energies. Over time, these contradictions had a deleterious effect on the group dynamic.

In the beginning, knitters' common experience of exploitation in the industry and their emerging sense of positive self-valuation as artisans, as *cholitas* and as women provided a basis for a broad consensus regarding the nature of their grassroots mobilization. Skillful leadership consolidated knitters' competing motivations into "*pactos de interés*" through which individuals felt a connection to the organization. However, over time, changes in the broader social and economic context, and in the membership base of the organization influenced the nature of knitters' self-identity. It became increasingly difficult for knitters to feel a sense of attachment to the grassroots mobilization which had previously seemed to have such compelling meaning in their lives. Given this state of disassociation, outside intervention by NGO's and committed individuals, which in the past had strengthened the

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organization and its base, often proved to be incoherent and even destructive.

Rather ironically, these tendencies were aggravated by the group's success. Access to a variety of forms of project funding (such as the COTESU building project and the Andean by Design design and marketing project) as a result of the appeal of the group's political message in NGO political circuits generated a sense of elitehood that had a negative impact on the organization's ability to cooperate or interact with other women. As competition for resources intensified with the decline of the ATO market and the transformation of the political context through the institution of the *Ley de Participación Popular*, the principles of autonomy, participation and social justice which had been defining features of their grassroots mobilization were increasingly overshadowed by self-interest. Moreover, the few women occupying positions of power, as a result of their experience working for the organization, became *desclasado*, or what I have referred to as "cosmopolitanized" --leaving them outside the bounds of local society and making them incapable of relating to local ideals or to the other members of the group. This disjuncture created a rift within the organization's once coherent identity and purpose. In the context of these dynamics, it was not possible for the group to effectively participate in making Andean by Design function and the project floundered.

There were, of course, structural barriers limiting *Tipay Warmi* in entering the boutique export market. Yet I suggest that the particular dynamics described here were merely a symptom of the broader, more intrinsic problem of participation. As the distance between the self-identities of the group's leaders and those of the base grew, antagonisms and internal power struggles intensified. Increasingly, the organization's leaders had difficulty generating consensus. Especially divisive were thorny debates over wages and levels of participation, and disagreement about the importance of non-knitting activities, such as literacy training and forms of "popular education" promoted by development agencies and NGO's, and supported by the leaders of *Tipay Warmi*. Yet even more

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pernicious, was an emerging sense of hierarchy within the group itself. As the internal power structure became more segmented, some members indicated to me that they had begun to feel "humiliated" by their own organization. This was significant in that *Tipay Warmi's* stated mission was to address the humiliation that peasant women are made to feel in Bolivian society and it was the positive self-identity of themselves as *cholitas* and as artisans which had given impetus to their mobilization. A sense emerged that the women in positions of power were different from other local women (even that they were becoming "outsiders") and that they had become a sort of cabal, implementing their own agenda apart from the will of the rest of the group. As this sentiment became further entrenched through the conflict with the Andean by Design project, *Tipay Warmi's* grassroots initiative lost the momentum which had been the driving force behind its success.

Autonomy and Identity

The details of this study of handknitting in Bolivia provide us with insights concerning both the nature of cooperative craft production and of women's grassroots organizing. Although a great deal of attention has been paid to the negative impact of the global economy on the world's poor, in some cases the globalization of markets for handmade goods has created new opportunities for the emergence of creative forms of collective action among artisans involved in the production of crafts. However, the success of these actions hinges on the difficult task of establishing stable and consistent linkages between producers and the market. Numerous examples from cooperative endeavors around the world have demonstrated the importance of local control in allowing artisan groups to succeed in challenging their subordinate position in the global economy.[1] In Taquile, Peru (Healy and Zorn 1988), for example, at first weavers were able to set their own terms for the parameters of the tourist market and were therefore able to reap the lion's share of the profits. Over time, outside encroachment

[1] *e.g.*, Caughman and N'diarfe 1989), Nash (1993), Stephen (1991), Tice (1995)

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eroded the ability of locals to call the shots and negatively affected their success. In high-fashion knitwear exports, however, it is not possible for grassroots producers to "set their own terms." Exigencies of the market with respect to design and marketing require that groups operate in certain ways and establish external relationships which may improve sales but reduce their ability to control their own destiny.

In the case of *Tipay Warmi*, knitters' positive self-valuation of their skill as artisans and of themselves as *cholitas* created a unity of vision which provided the foundation for grassroots mobilization and gave knitters the self-confidence to believe that they could succeed at organizing. Yet "independence" was achieved primarily as a result of changes in knitters' perception of their own abilities rather than reflecting effective transformation of the structural position of knitters with respect to the market. While some women may have experienced significant personal evolution as a result of their participation in a grassroots mobilization, this process failed to bring about the sorts of revolutionary change suggested by the rhetoric and ideology being espoused by the cooperative and its leaders. The disjunction between rhetoric and reality ultimately undermined the group's autonomy by giving them a false sense of the extent of their own independence as sweater producers and as an organization.

The positive self-valuation which had been so important in allowing the women of *Tipay Warmi* to imagine the possibility for change became over-exaggerated through the group's association with ATO's providing a subsidized market, with NGO's promoting an idealized view of women's organizations, and through the adoption of a politicized rhetoric by the group's leaders intended to give the bases self-confidence. In the process, *Tipay Warmi's* knitters and leaders became convinced that their success in ATO markets was evidence of their own prowess, they accepted stereotypical images of women and women's organizations, and they internalized their own rhetoric. The result was overconfidence. The *Tipay Warmis* over-estimated their capacity to comprehend the workings of the export market and to administer their expansion beyond subsidized

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markets when in reality, they did not understand how the private market operated and had not totally developed the proper administrative skills to operate without ATO subsidies. They overvalued the worth of their knitting skill in market terms, pricing themselves out of the market and alienating even committed ATO clients. At the same time, they undervalued the worth of other people's work. The politics of "*del productor al consumidor*" ("from the producer to the consumer") gave meaning to their effort to circumvent the power of exploitative middlemen in the knitwear industry. But there was no sense that Judy (the British fashion design designer), Marlene (the New York sales representative), or Self Help Crafts (the importer) actually added value to their sweaters.[2] An ideology of anti-professionalism born in response to the dominant national culture which makes knitters and people from rural culture feel inferior became translated into the idea that there really are no professional skills--that the *Tipay Warmis* could do it all.

These ideas resonated with local discourse and with broad stereotypes in which "*lo andino*" is reconstituted in terms of a contemporary utopia. These stereotypes were sanctioned by the rhetoric and ideology espoused by individuals and institutions collaborating with the Association. *Tipay Warmi's* leaders, in particular, embraced such an expansive perspective of themselves and of the organization. The COTESU building project was a monument to this vision. But at the same time, such overdrawn visions conflicted with cultural definitions held dear by the majority of knitters in conjunction with the development of their own self-identities as women in rural society. Knowledge and skills necessary for making the organization's ideals of autonomy and independence a reality were stymied by a local logic.

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[2]This is ironic, given Florence Babb's (1989) analysis of Peruvian market women whose contribution to the value of products was made invisible by a similar ideology being promoted by the government. Also see Buechler and Buechler (1992: 196) for a discussion of small-scale sweater exporters whose experience shows how superior understanding of the market can actually add more value to export products than the possession of a particular set of production skills.

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Ultimately, the broader political ideology espoused by *Tipay Warmi* and its leaders failed to embrace "*lo cotidiano*" where women forge their own lives through strategies that deal with the demands of family, economy and personal fulfillment. *Tipay Warmi's* broader political approach ignored the fact that in Arani women derive power, status and satisfaction through local interaction--through their respectability as wives, through their competence in running an agricultural household and through their relationships with children and kin. In local discourse, the *cholita* with her thick braids and elegant *pollera* was the symbolic embodiment of these qualities. Income from export knitting had given many women the ability to approximate this symbolic ideal and in the beginning, grassroots mobilization had reinforced knitters' status and wealth. However, as running the productive aspect of the organization became an increasingly sophisticated affair and as the group expanded it's political engagement to include activities outside of Arani and interaction with more and more foreigners and middle class professionals, involvement in *Tipay Warmi* came increasingly at the expense of knitter's local responsibilities and relationships. "Participation" began to eat away at of the foundation of knitters' identities as *cholitas* and as women.

Although it may seem contradictory that abstract issues of "identity" could take precedence over the opportunity for women to expand control over their productive lives, Hall (1997) suggests that the construction of distinct local identities in contradistinction to homogenizing global forms is part of the current process of globalization. Villarreal (1994: 224) writes that this sort of subordination

> "...allows power to be wielded by yielding, by acceding to the wishes of the other, thus relinquishing a possible social capacity or status to acknowledge a stronger, better or more appropriate bearer. On the other hand, such yielding can emanate, not from the wishes of others, but from the 'subordinate' actors' own agency. It nevertheless speaks of a social positioning whereby the strength of a force relation is recognized and assumed,

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> though...subordination can constitute a strategic stance in social relations. Subordination then, does not imply a zero-sum process whereby those who yield are necessarily left powerless."

Kearney (1996: 148) urges us to discard the "rational actor theory" approach which treates individuals as maximizers of their desires, and instead to treat people as active transformers in creating value and power in their lives. In the end, people often "know where to put their eggs."

In Arani, *cholita* culture provided a fulcrum in generating grassroots mobilization among knitters, but it also limited development in global markets. Taking on responsibility within the organization and participating in its functioning required knitters to set aside the demands of household and family and to sidestep cultural dictates concerning appropriate roles for women in order to make the cooperative work. The social and cultural dislocation evident in the personal lives of the group's leaders was a testament to the effect that an intensified level of participation might have on others. Knitters understood that fortifying their households and approximating the *cholita* ideal were important ways that women in Arani define their relationship to society. I am not suggesting that there was some inherent incompatibility between the exigencies of participation and sweater exporting, and successfully "being a *cholita*," but rather that the way that members perceived the activities and priorities of the organization at a particular point in time did not coincide with the vision that they had of themselves.

Brush and Orlove (1995: xiv) write that "people do not cling to their cultures simply to use them as inter-ethnic strategies. They do so because it is through them that they can make sense of the world and have a sense of themselves." To have complied with the direction being taken by *Tipay Warmi* to expand production and enlarge the group's political mobilization would have forced knitters to break with the cultural traditions and dictates which gave them a foundation for their sense of who they were. Without the dignity and meaning offered by their self-identification as *cholitas* and as rural

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women, they would have been transformed into little more than "poor people." In the end, *Tipay Warmi's* political project to expand knitters' horizons not only failed to remain relevant to the lives of its members, the redefinition of cultural boundaries occasioned by successful mobilization threatened the underlying logic from which women derived their sense of self.

Closing Thoughts

Although on the surface, the experience of Bolivian handknitters in the "development" arena would seem to lend credence to the negative vision promoted by current "anti-development" critics, I believe that a closer examination of the details of this study demonstrate that a more nuanced treatment yields greater insights into the dynamics of what is entailed by the "development" process. I am not suggesting that the critique is entirely misguided in it's indictment of development schemes, of individuals involved in the implementation of development projects or even of the parameters of "development" as an ideology. Rather, I propose that given the complex choreography which develops between funding institutions, leaders of people's organizations, and people at the grassroots, the narrow focus on hegemony and domination by proponents of the critique fails to reveal the important ways that power is generated and played-out.

Miles and Buechler (1997b: 2) write that "women are not simply 'acted upon' [by structural forces]...they are social actors," a fact which I believe is neatly demonstrated in the case study of handknitting in Bolivia presented here. Knitters were clearly constrained by the dynamics of the global economy and by political, economic and cultural factors at work in Bolivia and Arani. In fact, it would be easy to explain what transpired by viewing these women as pawns of the "invisible hand" dictating the parameters of their success. However, in the end, the ethnographic evidence demonstrates the great extent to which they themselves played a central role, not only in the way that events unfolded, but in terms of drawing the lines of demarcation that set up new boundaries in the context of evolving social and economic conditions. Their

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response to these conditions was one of a wide range of options available to them, yet, they chose a direction which in their eyes constituted the most personally valuable solution to the challenges confronting them in their everyday lives.

Buechler (1997: 84) recommends a need to re-evaluate the factors which contribute to the empowerment of women, recognizing the extent to which they represent "overlapping concerns arising from activities in households, workplaces and communities or neighborhoods." I believe that this point is obviated by the choices selected by the women in this case study. Recognizing that there are other avenues for women to become "empowered," in addition to the more overt act of formal grassroots organizing, is a valuable lesson that needs to be more clearly articulated in our analytical discussions. A number of authors (e.g., Phillips 1998b) have recently advocated a re-valuation of the importance of empirical study in Anthropology as a discipline in the context of the global political project of neoliberalism and in response to certain "post-modern" approaches. This study exemplifies the extent to which empirical study of the ethnographic record can yield insights which would otherwise remain hidden.

In this particular case, the production of crafts for export in the current context of the global market provided a base around which the *Tipay Warmis* mobilized for broader social change. In the beginning their mobilization was bolstered by support they received from individuals and institutions interested in promoting grassroots development, but as the nature of their mobilization and activities evolved, the impact of such interventions began to have negative repercussions. While a critical eye can be focused on the activities and motivations of NGO's and funding institutions promoting their own agendas, in order to understand the way that events transpired, it is necessary for us to examine motivations and agendas emanating from within the cooperative itself.

In the final analysis, despite the problems and failures detailed here, collective action such as that demonstrated by the women of *Tipay Warmi* still shows us how people can negotiate their position *vis a vis* dominant groups and individuals, and within

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structures of power. But at the same time, this example also demonstrates the limitations of cooperative endeavors and cautions us against romanticizing "the grassroots experience." Cooperation at the local level is not necessarily sufficient to affect the structural position of knitters in the global market for handknits. Nor does the cooperative approach always coincide with the interests and self-identities of individuals involved in production. Even though it may be "bitter medicine" to admit that not all women will choose to be part of a social mobilization that appears to champion their rights when they are given the opportunity or even that this sort of mobilization may itself be at odds with other significant ways that women derive power and identity, if we are going to imbue women with "agency" in our analytical models, that agency cannot always be heroic.

Moreover, as is clear from the ethnography presented above, neither is participation a prescription in and of itself. In fact, my work in Bolivia has led me to wonder not only about the efficacy of the cooperative framework, but to question the extent to which we can expect "participation" to actually live-up to the idealized vision that we, and many grassroots organizations, have developed. I am not suggesting that we discard the goals of participatory organizing, but rather, that we may need to re-think what participation really means and how it must function on the ground. In the case of *Tipay Warmi*, making their organization work would have required a more intense level of participation from its members. Yet intensified participation in group activities conflicted with knitters' sense of who they were and how they imagined themselves to live their lives. The *Tipay Warmis'* "autodevelopment" gave them the ability to challenge their subordinate position in the handknit industry. To a certain extent, they redefined themselves and certain boundaries of power, especially those at the local level, but in the process this redefinition clashed with the self-identities of the group's members. The resulting contradiction created with the rhetoric and philosophy of participation being promoted by the organization ultimately undermined the unity of vision which had provided a foundation for mobilization and weakened the collective effort.

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With the boundaries for operation redrawn in the context of the current global market, knitters will have to discover new strategies for action and new bases for consensus in order to overcome the challenge of barriers which emerged in previous forms of struggle.

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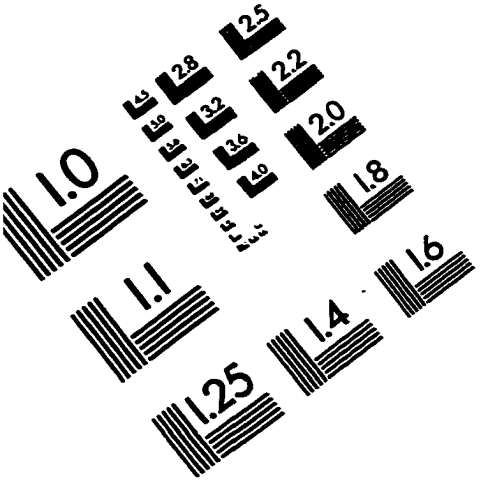

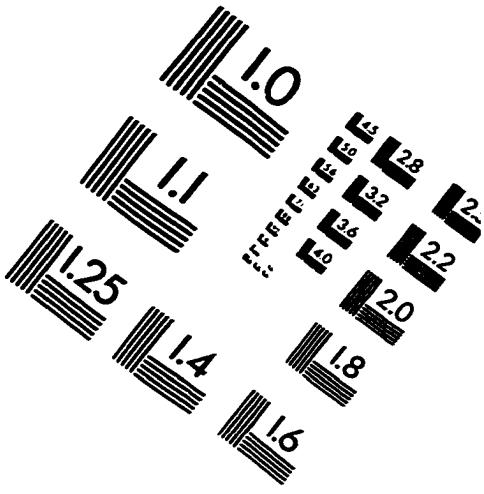

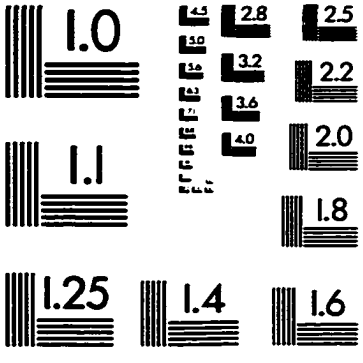

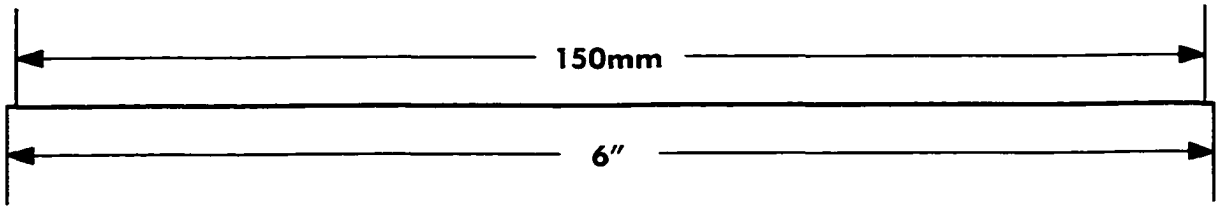

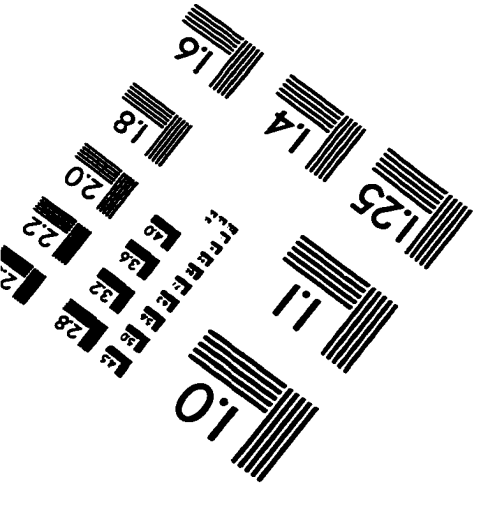

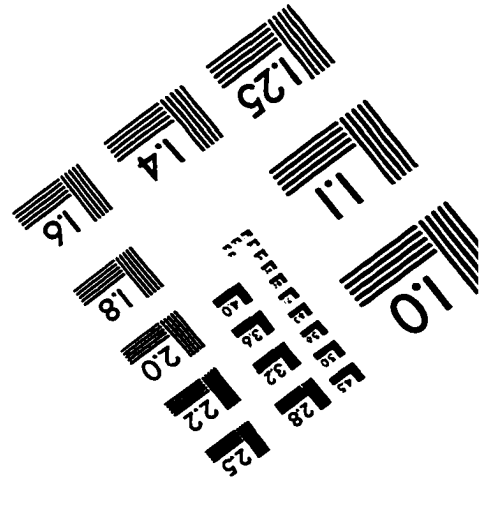

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