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Coplas of the Quebrada:
Performing Regional and Indigenous Identity in Northwestern Argentina

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Music

by

E. Audrey Coleman-Macheret

June 2014

Thesis Committee:
Dr. Jonathan Ritter, Chairperson
Dr. Rogerio Budasz
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The Thesis of E. Audrey Coleman-Macheret is approved:

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Dedication

To my loving husband, Michael Macheret

Whose patient support

Has illuminated my path

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Performing Regional and Indigenous Identity in Northwestern Argentina

by

E. Audrey Coleman-Macheret

Master of Arts, Graduate Program in Music
University of California, Riverside, June 2014
Dr. Jonathan Ritter, Chairperson

In the Quebrada of Humahuaca, a geographically and culturally defined region of Northwestern Argentina, an expressive musical tradition known as the copla has a long history. A hybrid of Spanish literary form, indigenous musical influence, and regional thematic content, it is experienced in various contexts. This thesis investigates how copleros and copleras, participants in copla circles, and community audiences experience coplas as a connection to their indigenous identity, a vehicle for paying homage to the indigenous mother earth deity, Pachamama, an expression of their identity as Quebradeños, and/or a tool for delivering socio-political critique.

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Introduction

In the thick of the Andean forest, dry twigs and leaves crunched under my feet as I labored to keep up with Kenti's group. We had already trekked for about a half a mile, all five of us clutching bags of food and bottles of beer and wine that were needed for the ritual. I felt lucky that at last I had an invitation to a family observance of homage to the earth mother deity, Pachamama, in the Quebrada of Humahuaca, a sparsely populated region of Northwestern Argentina. This was thanks to Ernesto Kenti Vázquez,¹ director of the Humahuaca Museum of Intangible Heritage². From our conversation at the museum a few weeks before, Kenti knew of my interest in the performance of coplas in local rituals. He had invited me to join the Pachamama observance that his friend Dario, an indigenous artist, was holding in the rural outskirts of Humahuaca. The group that had piled into Kenti's pickup truck a half-hour before included Vanessa and Cecilia, both guides for the museum, and Vanessa's five-year old daughter.

After a few minutes of hiking on a forested hill, I began to experience an aroma that reminded me of a hearty soup or stew. Maneuvering sideways down a slippery incline, we came upon a grassy clearing where a small group of people were standing around two giant cauldrons of bubbling liquid perched lopsided on rocks over a campfire. Dario walked up to greet us, smiling and shaking our hands. About forty years old with shoulder-length black hair skimming a llama-wool poncho, Dario introduced his

¹ See photo of Kenti in Appendix B.

² The museum's relatively new name reflects the Quebrada's World Heritage Site status but the institution is not officially connected with UNESCO. In fact, while a poster of the museum's new name is visible in the window, the faded sign, Museo del Folklore, still hangs above the door.

daughter, a college student visiting from the state capital of San Salvador de Jujuy, and, three indigenous male friends dressed in blue jeans and T-shirts, who appeared to be in their mid-thirties. After admonishing us not to take pictures, Dario gestured to an area a few yards away from the bubbling cauldrons and indicated that it was nearly time to begin.

A hole had been dug in the earth, about a foot wide and three feet deep. A mound of patted-down earth surrounded the hole on three sides. On top of it was an array of food offerings – plates of cooked hominy and beans, meat, different kinds of potatoes. Apples, oranges, bottles of wine, beer, and soft drinks. Coca leaves and cigarette butts. Cigarette butts? Dario³ approached me with a cigarette which I tried to decline until it was explained to me that I was to smoke it and then offer it to Pachamama by placing the butt alongside the other butts in the mound. Apparently the mother earth deity had a fondness for tobacco. Dario's daughter served us a tasty, liquidy stew that had bits of llama meat, potato and hominy in it among other ingredients. Dario told us that we could not make our offerings to Pachamama until we had eaten everything on our plates. By now it was about two in the afternoon.

One of Dario's friends knelt beside the hole and Dario picked two participants at a time to make offerings. Kenti and Vanessa were the first pair to pay homage. They knelt in front of the hole and Dario's friend handed each of them one item of food or drink at a time. With slow, deliberate movements, they dropped their offerings into the hole at exactly the same moment while Dario nodded approvingly. It took about twenty

³ See photo of Dario in Appendix B – taken after the ceremony had ended.

minutes for them to offer a bit of every item represented on the mound that curved around the hole.

Cecilia and I were invited to approach together. Dario's friend silently handed us each a portion of offering, one at a time, to drop, pour, or sprinkle into the dark hole in slow, synchronized movements. Cooked vegetables and grains. Fresh fruits and vegetables. Cooked meat. Baked goods. Wine. Coca-Cola. Homemade beer. Crows cawed up above. An automobile engine roared way off in the distance. Our last offering was a sprinkling of coca leaves.

Almost as soon as we sat down, Dario's daughter handed us a second plate of a different liquidy stew containing chicken, quinoa, and other ingredients. When everyone had made offerings, Dario intoned words of thanks to Pachamama and with slow, deliberate movements, filled the hole with earth and patted it down carefully.

Suddenly the mood changed from solemn to festive. Dario beckoned everyone to form a circle for the singing of coplas. He set the rhythm with a small drum about the size of the tambourine, the caja holding it at chest level and managing to both grasp the instrument and hit it with the mallet using only one hand. The caja resonated rhythmically as Kenti started off the singing. The rest of the group repeated each melodic line of poetry that Kenti sang. Later, Vanessa, Dario and others took the lead. As we sang, the circle or rueda moved gradually to the right. This went on for almost an hour. I recall only a few of the coplas sung. The lyrics were light-hearted and playful. There followed laughter and playful disagreement over the correct wording. None of the coplas mentioned Pachamama.

<i>Has de salir de mi casa diciendo volver mañana</i>	<i>You may leave my house saying you will come back tomorrow</i>
<i>Has de salir de mi casa diciendo volver mañana</i>	<i>You may leave my house saying you will come back tomorrow</i>
<i>Como soy mozo soltero volveré en una semana</i>	<i>Because I'm a solitary bachelor, I will come back in a week</i>
<i>Como soy mozo soltero volveré en una semana</i>	<i>Because I'm a solitary bachelor, I will come back in a week</i>

For a few seconds there was an interlude of prominent drumming along with shouting as participants competed to lead the next copla.

<i>Sauzalito de la playa, no llores agua rosada</i>	<i>Little sauza tree by the shore, don't cry pink water tears</i>
<i>Sauzalito de la playa, no llores agua rosada</i>	<i>Little sauza tree by the shore, don't cry pink water tears</i>
<i>Llorarás cuando me vaya sangre viva y colorada</i>	<i>When I leave you will cry tears of brightly colored blood</i>
<i>Llorarás cuando me vaya sangre viva y colorada</i>	<i>When I leave, you will cry tears of brightly colored blood</i>

The winter sky was hinting at sunset by the time Kenti's pickup was rumbling along the unpaved road again, taking us back to Humahuaca. I was feeling a mixture of physical fatigue and mental elation at having participated in a local Pachamama ritual and a copla circle.

In this thesis, I explore how Dario, Kenti, and a number of other individuals living in the long ravine known geographically and culturally as the Quebrada of Humahuaca in Northwestern Argentina have experienced a genre of sung poetry called the *copla*. My purpose is to reveal the personal and social meanings Quebradeños have found in the copla as *copleras/copleros*, as participants in a copla circle, or as listeners/spectators in their communities. In this region, coplas are four-line poems, each line eight syllables

long, sung in a major triad-based pattern to the accompaniment of the resonant caja drum. The Pachamama observance described above is only one of a host of occasions in which Quebradeños perform coplas. Another major occasion is Carnaval in the balmy month of February. During my winter stay in the Quebrada, I interviewed people who sing coplas to celebrate birthdays, to praise a saint, to criticize the government, to tease someone of the opposite sex or to mourn a lost love. I met copleras/copleros⁴ who compose coplas to express their reactions to daily events and their most intimate emotions. These individuals may improvise verses in the moment; some keep a notebook of coplas they have written over the years. They may perform verses from the many classic coplas that circulate in the Quebrada. It was from this common repertoire that the group at the Pachamama ceremony I attended was drawing. This study explores how individuals I encountered in the Quebrada in 2013 experience copla performance in three major, interrelated contexts: expressing indigenous identity, expressing Quebradeño identity, and expressing socio-political critique. Throughout the study, I interpolate interview material and ethnographic narrative with informational and interpretative writing.

Although it is by no means universally practiced – especially not by teenagers who are smitten by the *cumbia* – copla performance remains a significant strand in the cultural fabric of the Quebrada of Humahuaca. Because of its historic blend of indigenous and Hispanic elements, coplas are cultural hybrids that reflect hybrid identities. In an area of Argentina where the primary indigenous group, the Kolla, no longer speaks Quechua

⁴ I am using this format to indicate that individuals of both genders perform coplas. I start with the feminine form because it is generally acknowledged that a higher proportion of women sing them. Men dominate the domain of musical instrument performance while women prevail in the vocal arena.

and possesses few markers of indigeneity, copla performance is a significant marker of indigenous identity. Furthermore, the intense connection with Pachamama appears to contest a longstanding contempt for Pachamama that elements of the dominant culture, especially the Catholic Church, expressed well into the twentieth century.

The copla represents the survival of an intimate, expressive community tradition in an age of globalization. In researching this phenomenon, I encountered paradoxes: this is a centuries-old practice rarely mentioned in tourist publications or in literature pertaining to the Quebrada's status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It virtually escapes visibility alongside the much-touted archaeological ruins, otherworldly craggy landscape, and colonial architecture, not to mention the weaving tradition and proliferation of pan-Andean music ensembles. It seems to have bypassed public attention and remained very much a family or extended family practice.

I begin by presenting significant aspects of the research location. The first chapter particularly focuses on national, political, and regional efforts that propelled the Quebrada of Humahuaca to its UNESCO World Heritage Site status. Chapter Two looks at the roots of the copla genre in the Spanish *romanza* form. Chapter Three examines the indigenous connection to the figure of Pachamama and its expression through coplas. In Chapter Four I review indigenous history and the current identity issues of the Kolla. Chapter Five presents indigenous aspects of copla performance practice. Chapter Six studies how Quebradeño regional identity is linked to copla production. In Chapter Seven I present the copla as a vehicle for socio-political critique. Chapter Eight describes a municipal celebration in which the Kolla and the copla play ambiguous roles; I seek to

interpret the events based on research gathered to date. The conclusion summarizes my understanding of the ways in which Quebradeños experience copla performance. It also considers the transmission of the copla to the youth of the Quebrada, and shares reflections on my own trajectory of experience researching this topic.

In the process of interpreting research on a living tradition, I have found scholarship on dimensions of musical experience to be especially helpful. In his “Preamble to a Phenomenology of Music,” the opening essay in *Understanding Musical Experience* (1989), Douglas Bartholomew points out that phenomenology does not so much focus on the musical object as on the ways in which the object presents itself to consciousness or within lived experience: “Phenomenology is concerned with the global nature of experience and how it is that discrete sensations have meaning for us” (Bartholomew 1989:16). The above words are relevant to the copla genre, which offers multiple dimensions of experience. As a coplero or coplera, one can improvise verses or draw on the large repertoire of coplas known in the Quebrada while conforming to the local melody or *tonada* used in one’s particular corner of the region. In addition, one can participate musically without identifying as a coplera/coplero but simply by joining in a copla circle, initiating copla verses or even just repeating the verses being sung. Furthermore, as more than one interviewee stated, the copla — without being a regular part of one’s life in the present — can exist in memories of childhood as a treasured cultural building block, contributing to Quebradeño identity.

Harris Berger provides a nuanced understanding of the ways people experience forms of text or performance. Motivated by dissatisfaction with interpretive tools that

have tended to favor text over performance, he both draws and builds upon the work of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Schutz, and Todes to approach expressive culture. From his perspective, the study of the structures of experience can illuminate the relationship between the parts of experience and can show how awareness of this relationship, in turn, shapes and organizes experience (Berger 2009). Furthermore, as he elaborates elsewhere, “...musical activity constitutes both the meaning of the music in the participant’s experience and the music scene as a social group” (Berger 1999:1). While studying the copla as text and performance and as the experience of people for whom it is a living tradition, I am applying these two interrelated notions: humanistic awareness of the significance of individual experience of music and awareness that musical experience has an important social dimension (Berger 1999).

Chapter One: Location of Research

In the eastern range of the Andes in Northwestern Argentina, a long valley carved by the Rio Grande descends from the adjacent high plateau known as the *puna*, stretching from the town of Tres Cruces in the north (3,690 meters above sea level) to the capital of Jujuy province, San Salvador de Jujuy, in the south (1,260 meters above sea level).

Politically, the Quebrada straddles three departments in the province of Jujuy:

Humahuaca, Tilcara, and Tumbaya. Although each town has its municipal government, Humahuaca, with its dusty unpaved streets, is the major urban center. Decisions at the provincial level come from the capital, San Salvador de Jujuy at the south end of the Quebrada. Geographically, the Quebrada of Humahuaca extends another eleven miles to the north into the province of Salta. The length of the ravine, if driven on Route 40, is approximately 117 miles. The cliffs facing Route 40 are virtually bare of vegetation but display tan, gold, orange, and rosy hues throughout the day with the changing sunlight (Castro 2007).

The home base for my research was the town of Tilcara,⁵ midway between the two ends of the Quebrada. On a previous visit there in December 2011/January 2012, I had become friends with musician and local peña owner Miguel Llave; he invited me to stay in a room he had available at Peña Altitud, a five-minute walk from the central plaza. Down the street from Peña Altitud was the modest Tilcara tourist office where I met Juan Toccejon, the cultural attaché who connected me with three local copleras. Beyond these

⁵ Population 5,640, according to the 2001 National Census, and 12,349, according to the website citypopulation.de/php/argentina for 2010. I include figures from the latter website because they are more current than the National Census official data.

connections, Tilcara's central position in the Quebrada also made it convenient to visit other towns. I made frequent side-trips to the towns of Humahuaca,⁶ twenty-eight miles due north of Tilcara, as well as to Purmamarca,⁸ sixteen miles southeast of Tilcara, to Maimará,⁷ about five miles south of Tilcara, and to Iruya,⁸ seventy-four miles due north of Tilcara.

UNESCO World Heritage Site Campaign

In 2003 the Quebrada of Humahuaca was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the result of a decades-long process initiated mainly by the province of Jujuy. This status has dramatically increased tourism, especially at Carnaval time. As I learned more about the campaign to attain this status, I became curious as to why the tradition of the copla was not promoted as part of this process. At the time the proposal was presented to UNESCO, there were four natural criteria and six cultural criteria in the international organization's operational guidelines. The copla would have been given consideration under the third and/or sixth criterion:

(iii) To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

(vi) To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance (UNESCO World Heritage List website, 2014).

⁶ Population 2,240 2001 National Census; 3,353 citypopulation.de/php/argentina 2010

⁷ Population 2,240 2001 National Census; 3,353 citypopulation.de/php/argentina 2010

⁸ Population 6,368, 2001 National Census; 1,523 citypopulation.de/php/argentina 2010

However, the UNESCO application and its antecedent activities focused on the uniqueness of the natural landscape, colonial buildings, and indigenous archaeological sites. In UNESCO's 2012 guide to World Heritage Sites, the Quebrada de Humahuaca is listed under the category "Cultural Site," which could suggest living traditions, but the criteria for inclusion are: "Interchange of values; Significance in human history; Traditional human settlement" (UNESCO 2012:705). The guide describes the Quebrada as following the line of the Camino Inca, a major cultural route, along the "spectacular valley of the Rio Grande," which shows "substantial evidence of its use as a major trade route over the past 20,000 years (in) extensive remains of successive settlements" (UNESCO 2012:705).

Officials from the tourism industry at the provincial and national levels participated in conceiving the application for the Quebrada's World Heritage Site status. Their process reflected a preference for cultural elements that could be conveniently identified as heritage and merchandised. Already a tourist destination, the area seemed to require an intensification of its aura of cultural patrimony or heritage (Almirón, Bertonecello, and Troncoso 2006, 104). Conceiving the art of the copla as an element of cultural heritage would have demanded input from local practitioners, anthropologists, possibly literature experts, and so on. If this was even considered, it would not have added up to an easily packaged heritage product, providing that practitioners wanted to cooperate, which is not at all certain.

It is also relevant that only beginning in 2003 — the year the Quebrada obtained its status— did UNESCO strongly emphasize living culture in its world heritage site program. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was defined by Yahaya Ahmad (a Malaysian specialist in heritage architecture) in this way:

The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated there with – that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly re-created by communities and groups in response to their environments, their interaction with nature, and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (Ahmad 2006: 298 – 299).

Coplas and copleras/os of the Quebrada fit that description, but as Almirón, Bertonecello, and Tronosco point out, what is ignored as cultural heritage by hegemonic powers is as significant as what counts. The identities *not* represented—such as practitioners of indigenous-influenced cultural practices—“are rendered invisible, subsumed and destined to be forgotten” (Almirón, Bertonecello, and Tronosco 2006:106). As we shall see, copleras/os have developed their own strategies to protect the copla from oblivion.

The campaign to promote the Quebrada as a historic and touristic region began in the early twentieth century when the national government declared the Quebrada “property of the Nation” and its archaeological ruins and paleontological deposits to be of scientific interest, putting them in the custody of new university museums. The first mention of cultural practices as opposed to sites and objects as valued heritage came in 1954 when the provincial government declared the regional music and dancing known as Carnavalito de la Quebrada de Humahuaca to be officially valued heritage. The copla

tradition certainly is part of Carnaval but was not specifically mentioned. In any case, when the UNESCO heritage status came on the horizon, those in charge did not submit living traditions of the Quebrada for consideration.

The absence of any representatives from indigenous communities of the Quebrada in the application process was noted in an article by Tilcara-based scholars from the University of Buenos Aires, Elena Belli and Ricardo Slavutsky. They linked the concept of “patrimonio” or heritage to hegemonic power and forms of local resistance. Examining the notion put forth that there is a universal culture to which all may belong and in the resources of which all may share, they concluded that in reality the resources deemed by international organizations to be heritage do not benefit all equally and may even be seen as a source of oppression (Belli and Slavutsky 2005). In this case, the heritage site becomes a space of struggle as much material as symbolic between groups with unequal power. Nestor García Canclini comments that the state’s investment in the protection and preservation of cultural patrimony is one of the many ways it establishes its legitimacy (García Canclini 1992: 59). As the section below recounts, the low-income and indigenous residents of the Quebrada were not the beneficiaries of the World Heritage status.

Unintended Consequences of World Heritage Status

According to provincial statistics, 109,057 tourists visited the Quebrada in 2006, more than fifteen times the number reported for the year 1994 (Fairstein 2013). This represents the success of a tourism promotion campaign that launched into action as soon as World Heritage Site was assured. The Secretary for Culture and Tourism of the

province of Jujuy, Lilliana Fellner, had conceived of the Quebrada as a “brand” that could be promoted and sold not only in the area of tourism but as a general marketing tool:

This means that, for example, that llama meat produced in this zone can be exported with its point of origin specified. The same with artisanal goods. And the same with a great quantity of products. Now we have the key... The Quebrada has to be a brand as a result of inclusion on this UNESCO list (Castro and Zusman 2007:179).

Ernesto Kenti Vázquez, director of the Humahuaca Museum of Intangible Cultural Heritage, was talking to me about preserving traditions in the Quebrada when he made a parenthetical remark that the World Heritage Site status had been “bungled” (Interview August 12, 2013). In addition, a coplero in Tilcara, Marco Lopez, commented to me: “Since the Quebrada was declared a world heritage site there’s more interest in all things Andean, but I don’t know what good that does” (Interview August 23, 2013).

It appears that while anticipating a shower of tourist dollars, the architects of the newly branded Quebrada destination did not take into account possible negative consequences of the increased demand for services. The need for tourist lodgings became so pressing so quickly that many property owners who had been renting lodgings to indigenous and/or low income *criollo* or *mestizo* families sold their properties to developers. It was said that land in Tilcara became more expensive than land in the posh Recoleta community of Buenos Aires. Some families protested that they owned their land but could not produce titles and other documents as legal evidence. So many families were displaced from Tilcara that a shantytown called Barrio Fonavi sprang up on the

outskirts of town with help from an Argentine private aid group called the Fondo Nacional de Vivienda (Fairstein 2013).

Another unintended consequence of “successful branding” was the sudden demand for exotic regional cuisine in restaurants, which pressured local farmers to provide vast amounts of crops such as quinoa and novel varieties of potatoes that campesinos had been growing mainly for subsistence. The provincial officials regarded the farmers as lucky that tourism was “rescuing” and “keeping alive” traditional foodways but did not intervene to protect their interests. When the farmers of the Quebrada could not completely meet the demand, restaurant owners began ordering not only from neighboring Salta but from Bolivia, where farmers tempted restaurant owners with lower prices. A similar situation occurred with the demand for weavings, which attracted Bolivian migrants and their goods. There were traditional artisans in Tilcara and other towns who took to machine production to satisfy the tourist market (Fairstein 2013).

Impact on Copla Performance?

Since copla performance was ignored in the process of acquiring heritage status, it stands to reason that it has not acquired a significantly higher profile since 2003. The two self-produced CDs by copleras that are available at a bookstore in Tilcara hardly constitute a campaign driven by the tourist industry. I also doubt that my difficulty finding public copla performances reflected a turning inward in response to the increased tourist presence. Pachamama observance is familial and private. Carnival is more festive and has more community-wide events. Still, one finds glimmers of commercialism aimed at Spanish speakers: As I strolled in the plaza of Humahuaca (the town located in the

region with the same name), no fewer than three children under ten approached me, offering to recite a copla for a few pesos.

Chapter Two: Hispanic Roots of the Copla

Today the poetic genre goes by many names, depending on the locality in Latin America where it is practiced: “*joi-joi, tonada, vidalita, arribeña, baguala, copla*” (Cámara de Landa 2001). In the Quebrada of Humahuaca, it is known simply as the copla. In the neighboring province of Salta, they call it the baguala. Argentine ethnomusicologist Isabel Aretz, author of *El Folklore Musical Argentino* (1952), referred to the genre as the *vidalita* for some localities outside the Northwest, but noted that in the province of Jujuy the word copla was used. She also attributed to the genre various rhyme and syllabic schemes such as hexasyllabic with assonance and pentasyllabic with assonance while acknowledging that the four-line octosyllabic form with rhyme or assonance was most commonly used in the Quebrada (Aretz 1952).

There is scholarly consensus that the copla of northwestern Argentina derives from the Spanish *romancero*, an oral genre that dates from the Middle Ages (Ramos 1996). A popular oral manifestation, it did not have the prestige of written poetry. The genre traveled to the New World at the end of the 17th century although it was rejected by the dominant classes as vulgar poetry aimed at an uncultivated mass audience. It retained that status until the 19th century when intellectuals, under the influence of romanticism, developed a hunger for the genuine from rural villages and declared these old songs to be recovered gems (Carrizo 1935).

Cesar Real Ramos, one of several scholars contributing to *El Romancero y La Copla: Formas de Oralidad Entre Dos Mundos (España-Argentina)*, links the popular copla more specifically to the oral genre of the Middle Ages known as the *lirica romanza*

folklórica. He also sees a connection in the language of the *jarchas*, quatrains with Hispano-Arabic and Hispano-Hebraic roots. *Jarchas* were generally spoken from the point of view of a woman to a silent interlocutor and were characterized by nature imagery, effusive expression of emotion, and economy of verbal resources. Ramos also sees links between the coplas and the peninsular *cantigas d'amigo*, *seguidillas* and *villancicos*. Many of these genres featured a high proportion of didactic content. An 1821 collection of popular poetry belonging to Juan Nicolas Bohl de Faber refers to *villancicos y coplas populares* (Ramos 1996). There is also an affinity between the copla and a genre known as the *refran*, which consists of pithy moral, sententious sayings of an anonymous character like maxims or aphorisms. The copla and its related forms are nevertheless concrete and personalized; they do not tend toward generalized abstraction (Ramos 1996).

In its name, the word copla is linked to the Latin word for union — *copula*. This refers to the union of two verses, the couplet. The form is accompanied musically but does not have the fully developed melody of a specific musical piece; in this respect, it differs from song. It uses poetic language, metaphor, rhyme, and, frequently, improvisation. Ramos calls the key trait of the copla “the union of form and feeling derived from its aptitude to submit to a rhythm in the sense that the word is used in flamenco” (Ramos 1996:41).

The coplas of the Quebrada owe not only form but some dimensions of content to the Spanish oral tradition. This is particularly prevalent at Carnival time, when the improvised poetic duel form of the copla, the *contrapunto*, is a popular diversion. It is

most frequently performed by a man dueling with a woman but there are instances of female-female and male-male contrapuntos (Zapana 2011). Furthermore, the copla that comments on social problems or injustice, to be discussed later, has links to its European predecessor. Ramos identifies three common elements of the Spanish copla suggesting social critique: (1) a feeling of contempt, rejection, or rebellion regarding the state of dominant society, (2) anti-institutional sentiments, and (3) the negation of structures and social values of the dominant class (Ramos 1996). Writers of the romantic era championed this social criticism, seeking to recuperate through "natural poetry" the spirit of the people in abundant *cantos, coplas, y trobas populares* (Ramos 1997: 39).

Ample evidence exists that the copla or similar genres by other names flourished in colonial Latin America. Considerable travel and trade occurred between the Quebrada and neighboring areas of Bolivia, Chile, and Peru beginning in the sixteenth century, conveying stylistic variations back and forth (Carrizo 2009 [1935]). Chronicles of 1537 in the era of Spanish conquest recount that in the camp of General Almagro, which was established in the Puna area neighboring the Quebrada, the Spanish repeated this copla:

<i>Almagro pide la paz</i>	Almagro begs for peace
<i>Los Pizarros ¡guerra, guerra!</i>	Those under Pizarro shout for war
<i>Ellos todos morirán</i>	All of them will die
<i>Y otro mandará la tierra</i>	And another will rule the land

(Carrizo 2009[1935]:122)

There is no record of the above verses being set to any sung melody or instrumental accompaniment (which does not mean that they were not).

An intellectual from Spain, Menendez Pidal, visited Peru, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile in 1905 and reported finding a *tradicion romancista* alive and well. This led to

publications of the poetry in 1912 and 1914 in Chile and in 1913 in Argentina. In a major salvage effort, Argentine folklorist Juan Alfonso Carrizo collected song lyrics in various regions of Argentina between 1926 and 1942, publishing a massive volume of material from Jujuy Province in 1935 (Carrizo 2009 [1935]). Josefina Racedo of the Universidad de Tucuman reports that, in all, Carrizo collected 4,059 coplas in Jujuy, classifying them into broad content themes but failing to provide information on the social context of performance (Racedo 1996: 184). However, sometimes the content seems so universal as to not require background explanation, as in this copla collected by Carrizo and referenced by Ramos:

<i>Dicen los sabios doctores</i>	The wise doctors say
<i>Que la ausencia causa</i>	That absence causes
<i>olvido</i>	forgetfulness
<i>Y yo me he puesto ha</i>	And I have tried to forget you
<i>olvidarte</i>	
<i>Y olvidarte no puedo.</i>	And forget you I cannot.
	(Ramos 1996:43)

The Copla and “Argentine Heritage”

In the early decades of the 20th century, Argentine intellectuals rediscovered the copla as a form of “oral patrimony” and began seeking them out in the Northwest, a collection boom that lasted until the 1950s. In most cases, coplas were published as a form of popular literature with little regard for their musical aspect, but there were exceptions. In 1965, Carlos Vega defined the copla as “the association of an indigenous tonal system with Spanish poetic rhythms” (Vega 1965:58). It is interesting that Vega’s definition acknowledges the indigenous melody, the *tonada*, but does not mention the instrumental accompaniment.

The urgency of the search by dominant classes for examples of *patrimonio cultural* coincided with an era of mass immigration to Argentina from Southern Europe, an unwelcome diversity imposed by government land development and immigration policies. The effort to make the copla an item of national culture met with resistance in the villages of Jujuy. Apparently it was difficult for middle-class, educated urbanites (not necessarily scholars attached to universities) to gain cooperation in rural communities for their collecting projects. Their presence was all the more abrasive to *campesinos* when the elite collectors arrived with the local *patrón* at their side. These difficulties motivated collectors to seek alternative sources; as a result, numerous coplas were compiled from songbooks, notebooks owned by rural teachers and school administrators as well as middle-class and elite aficionados. For this second or third-hand material of doubtful value, according to María Stella Taboada of the Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, there was no information gathered on cultural context or modes of performance and little effort to credit authors. The common belief that coplas were always anonymous coincided with the model for traditional poetry as folklore put forth by Menendez Pidal—an expression of orality, anonymity, collectivity, and traditionalism; this appeared to justify an archaeological approach to conserving this heritage. Popular singers and poets such as Atahualpa Yupanqui and Leda Valladares collected rural poetry themselves and drew freely on “anonymous sources” for their performances starting in the 1940s (Racedo 1996).

Taboada contends that the copla was not and is not an anonymous genre; rather it was “anonymized” by members of the dominant class. On the contrary, in rural villages,

certain individuals were gifted in making coplas and recognized and respected for serving the sociocultural function of performing the collective heritage.

Hence, as each singer distinguished herself/himself for a creative repertoire and her/his own style of singing, each community was known for a copla performance heritage and certain style of singing and articulating *tonadas* (melodies) (Taboada 1996: 153).

Between the 1960s and the 1980s, little scholarship was published on the cultures of Northwestern Argentina. An exception was singer and self-styled folklorist Leda Valladeras, who produced eleven audio documentaries with original voices of copleros/copleras and even provided different versions of the same basic copla for comparison purposes (Racedo 1996).

Regarding relatively recent scholarly interest in the copla, it is telling that the most massive collection and analysis effort has come from the Universidad de Tucumán, which, in 1985, established the Centro de Rescate y Revalorización del Patrimonio Cultural (Center for the Rescue and Revalorization of Cultural Heritage). Because the institutional name does not specify Northwestern Argentina, the implication seems to be that this heritage is national.

Chapter Three: Indigeneity, Pachamama, and the Copla

When I first telephoned my friend Miguel in Tilcara about visiting Jujuy in August, I asked him if there were any special festivals or rituals happening locally at that time. He responded, “We have Pachamama. That goes on all month.” I learned that ritual observance honoring the pre-Hispanic deity begins on the first of August and lasts through the end of the month. This period is considered the beginning of the agricultural cycle when the earth is prepared for later planting of traditional Andean crops, mainly corn and potatoes but also some vegetables, fruits (many of which are later dried), and flowers for the local and national markets. August is the driest month in the Quebrada and the month of greatest uncertainty; the farmers are finishing up their last reserves of grains, potatoes, charqui, and fruits. In some agricultural areas, they carry out a ritual cleansing of canals and irrigation ditches just before August in the context of offerings to Pachamama (Cruz 2010).

Of the thirty some Quebradeños I interviewed, all made a link between copla performance and Pachamama, the female indigenous goddess present in Andean cultures of Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Colombia. As mother earth, she is said to evoke nature, the maternal and other feminine aspects of the world, including the moon. In the indigenous tradition, homage to her is considered necessary for the protection of crops and livestock (Garcia and Rolandi 2000). Several copleras/os of the Quebrada quoted to me the following copla, which attests to the power of Pachamama:

<i>Pachamama madre tierra</i>	Pachamama mother earth
<i>No me comas todavía</i>	Do not consume me yet
<i>Pachamama Santa Tierra</i>	Pachamama sacred earth
<i>No me comas todavía</i>	Do not consume me yet
<i>Mira que soy jovencita</i>	See I am very young
<i>Y tengo que dejar semilla</i>	And I have to bear fruit
<i>Mira que soy jovencita</i>	See I am very young
<i>Y tengo que dejar semilla</i>	And I have to bear fruit

In *A Culture of Stone: Inka Perspectives on Rock*, Carolyn Dean refers to the connection between Andeans and Pachamama revealed in stories related on rock as well as those told to non-Andeans. These tales stress the relationship of reciprocity between the pre-Hispanic Incas and mother earth. The Inca culture interacted with the earth by means of agriculture, husbandry, and architecture. The stone-hewn stories incorporated natural features such as outcroppings into stonework walls. In the mythology of the region, agricultural activity is analogized as intercourse between humans and the earth, a process having dimensions of fertility and sexuality: “The female earth is opened in the plowing, is impregnated in the sowing, and gives birth at harvest” (Dean 2010:68). Tunnels running underground in Cuzco were conduits for human beings to encounter Pachamama as well as their ancestral spirits (Dean 2010).

Sixto Vázquez Zuleta has described the relationship between Quebradeños and Pachamama as under attack since in the colonial period. His *Indiomanual* lays bare the psychic, social, and economic legacies of the Spanish conquest and colonial rule and the damage wrought by the Catholic Church as well as other Christian denominations, particularly in the Northwest of Argentina. For example, the book recounts that after the Catholic missionaries tried to suppress Pachamama observances through re-education and

syncretism, the Protestant missionaries more blatantly condemned what they saw as pagan worship. Vázquez also cites the president of the “Centro Kolla” in the Quebrada, Asunción Ontiveros Yulquila, who stated that the Kollas of the Northwest conserved their traditions and “ofrendan a la pacha” (“offer to Pachamama”) in privacy. They would not do so publicly due to cultural discrimination by the government and the Catholic Church. For example, “many priests, when August arrives (orient) their homilies to attacking ‘acts of paganism’... This results in a veritable stigma we carry for life” (Vázquez Zuleta 1995:79, 81, 82).

Pachamama Observance at Dario’s Home

After the Pachamama observance in the forest, discussed in the introduction to this thesis, host Dario invited everyone to his house:

So Kenti along with the two museum guides Vanessa and Cecilia, Vanessa’s five year old, and I returned in Kenti’s pickup truck over the bumpy dirt road back to the town of Humahuaca and Dario’s modest bungalow. He immediately ushered us into his back yard and commanded one of his friends to dig a hole to feed Pachamama. Were we going to observe the ritual a second time? It took over an hour for the friend to do this with a hand shovel. Meanwhile, Dario urged everyone to drink wine and beer, proclaiming that by tradition no glass could remain empty. The atmosphere was informal. Whereas in the forest Dario had prohibited cameras, in the backyard we were free to video whatever we wanted. Vanessa initiated copla singing while the hole was being dug but no circle formed; people simply hung out in the backyard joining in coplas,

breaking in with new ones or following along. Soon Dario dominated the copla singing and everyone followed him.

<i>Si no le gusta mi modo como he venido me voy</i>	If you don't like my style, I'll leave the way I came
<i>Si no le gusta mi modo como he venido me voy</i>	If you don't like my style, I'll leave the way I came
<i>Aguacero paisaje tu no me mojes ese sombrero</i>	Rainy landscape, don't get my hat wet
<i>Aguacero paisaje tu no me mojes ese sombrero</i>	Rainy landscape, don't get my hat wet
<i>Agua no te cuesta nada, y a mi me cuesta dinero</i>	Rain doesn't cost you anything, but it costs me money
<i>Agua no te cuesta nada, y a mi me cuesta dinero</i>	Rain doesn't cost you anything, but it costs me money
<i>Si preguntan de donde soy les diré que soy de Humahuaca</i>	If they ask where I'm from, I'll tell them I'm from Humahuaca
<i>Si preguntan de donde soy les diré que soy de Humahuaca</i>	If they ask where I'm from, I'll tell them I'm from Humahuaca
<i>Orgullosa de ser india centinela de la Pacha</i>	Proud of being Indian, guardian of Pachamama
<i>Orgullosa de ser india centinela de la Pacha</i>	Proud of being Indian, guardian of Pachamama
<i>Pobrecita mi cajita retomada en Humahuaca</i>	Poor little caja, taken back to Humahuaca
<i>Pobrecita mi cajita retomada en Humahuaca</i>	Poor little caja, taken back to Humahuaca
<i>Arito de chuqui verde retazo de panza de vaca</i>	Little frame of green <i>chuqui</i> , piece of cow stomach
<i>Arito de chuqui vende retazo panza de vaca</i>	Little frame of green <i>chuqui</i> , piece of cow stomach
<i>Pobrecita mi cajita, tiene boca y sabe hablar</i>	My poor little caja, you have a mouth and know how to speak
<i>Pobrecita mi cajita, tiene boca y sabe hablar</i>	My poor little caja, you have a mouth and know how to speak

*Solo los ojos le falta para
ayudarme a llorar*

You're only missing eyes for
helping me weep

As the sun set, Dario suddenly began addressing us as a group.

La Pacha es todo. La Pacha es todo. Es todo. Yo le decía hace rato a una amiga que la Pacha es más importante que nuestros hijos porque de la Pacha nacemos y de la Pacha morimos. La Pacha nos cobija cuando nosotros somos enterrados, la Pacha nos cobija.

Hay una cuestión muy, muy, muy filosófica, que es muy religiosa, que nosotros lo sabemos—tenemos que saber cómo agradecer a la madre tierra porque de la tierra nacemos y de la tierra vamos a morir, la tierra nos cobija con su manto. Eso es todo. Eso tenemos en el mento. Y no hay religión y no hay Dios y no hay nada, no hay nada porque la Pacha nos cobija y cuando la Pacha se termina y yo quisiera ver a donde llega el hombre con su Dios, quisiera ver porque el hombre es muy egocentrista. Nacimos nosotros egocentristas y nos acostumbramos a ser egocentristas y no respetamos nuestra tierra, dañamos al medio ambiente con los carros, con todo esa porquería que nos da placer y nos da beneficios y —la Pacha— nos olvidamos de nuestra tierra pero cuando morimos la tierra nos cobija con su manto. Entonces tenemos que pensar más en la Pacha, en la Pacha, en la madre tierra, como dice la copla: Pachamama Santa Tierra, no me

Pachamama is everything. Pacha-mama is everything. That's all. I was just now telling a friend that Pachamama is more important than our children because we were born from Pachamama and we die from Pachamama. Pachamama covers us when we are buried, Pachamama covers us. There is a very, very, very philosophical question that is very religious, that we know. We have to know how to thank mother earth because from the earth we are born and we are going to die and the earth covers us with her mantle. This is all. We have this in our mind. And there is no religion and there is no God and there is nothing, nothing because Pachamama covers us. And when Pachamama is finished, I would like to see where man arrives with his God, I would like to see because man is very egocentric. We are born egocentric and we get used to being egocentric and we do not respect our earth, we damage things, damage the environment with cars, with all that garbage which gives us pleasure and benefits – and the Pachamama – we forget our land. When we die the earth covers us with her mantle. So we have to think more about Pachamama, about Pachamama, about mother earth like the copla says: Pachamama Santa Tierra, do not devour me yet. Pachamama Santa Tierra, today I bring you offerings--corn beer, wine, and water

comas todavía. Pachamama Santa Tierra hoy te vengo a challar chicha vino y agua ardiente y coplas te a cantar porque nosotros agradecemos la Pacha. Yo soy un nativo de acá de Humahuaca y agradezco mucho a mi madre tierra, más que nada a mi madre tierra. Eso lo que me enseñó mis abuelos. Yo no agradezco a otras cosas. Agradezco mi madre tierra porque mi madre tierra es la que me ha acobijado a mí siempre desde que yo nací hasta que yo me vaya de este mundo. Gracias.

and coplas to sing because we thank Pachamama. I am a native here of Humahuaca. And I thank my Mother Earth a lot. This is what my grandparents taught me. I don't thank anything else. I thank my mother earth because my mother earth is the one who covers me always since I was born until I leave this world. Thank you.

Once the hole was ready and the mound of earth around it patted down, just a few offerings were placed beside it— cigarettes (which again we smoked), coca leaves, and beverages.

During my time in the Quebrada, I learned about various customs associated with the August first observance. In preparation for the ritual feeding of the earth, families often “smoke” the interior of their homes, walking from room to room with a piece of smoking wood, as coplera Gloria Federico of Iruya explained to me: “They make smoke in the houses for purifying the home of bad thoughts, envy and other obstacles... In that way we are cleaning our energy” (Interview August 28, 2013).

The ritual of giving food to the earth is known as *la challada* or in verbal form *corpachar*. This starts no earlier than July 31 at midnight and can happen multiple times after the first of August. Those who are not farmers also observe the custom on land adjacent to their houses (Cruz 2010). After samples of all the food and drink have been sprinkled in the hole by everyone participating in the ceremony, the hole is covered with

earth. Then the family and friends partake of a fiesta, enjoying some of the food and drink prepared for Pachamama, playing music, dancing, and, very often, singing coplas (Mariscotti 1966). Coplera Titina Gaspar of Tilcara elaborated:

Pachamama is Mother Earth, the mother who protects everything and gives us everything—greens, fruit, everything. And so we open the mouth of Pachamama and offer things to her to receive the energy that comes from the depths of the earth. And we sing coplas (Interview August 25, 2013).

Musician, poet, and peña-owner Fortunato Ramos, not himself a coplero, recounted his family's tradition in which women sing coplas during the ceremony of the challada:

We make a hole in the earth, we give food and the coplera is there singing giving thanks to Pachamama. Sometimes (the coplas are newly composed ones and sometimes) we use the tunes of existing coplas. There are coplas that are very old and traditional which come from ancient times. These are classics and they are not lost... They are very private and familial (Interview August 7, 2013).

In Fortunato's peña, I twice witnessed him lecture at length in Spanish to visiting busloads of tourists from elsewhere in Argentina while they gobbled *platos típicos* and waited for the Andean music to finally begin. The word "Pachamama" came up repeatedly in his talk. Essentially, he seemed to be imploring the tourists to respect mother earth, the source of all life.

Coplera Narcisa Cruz, La Rodereña, said that the Pachamama coplas are not widely shared because of their powerful associations:

There are coplas for the Pachamama but they are performed more in people's homes. Not everybody believes in Pachamama. If they believe, then they sing coplas. Pachamama inspires coplas. Pachamama is a gift. The earth creates us and devours us. Everything we eat is cultivated in the ground to sustain us. The earth feeds us and when we die the earth devours us—Santa Tierra (Interview August 12, 2013).

Similarly, Ernesto Kenti Vázquez, the museum director who invited me to the Pachamama observance with Dario's family, described the copla in religious terms:

And in August as well we sing coplas to the Pachamama... (It is) an agricultural celebration where we thank the earth for her fruit. Generally the copla is a holy matter, so we pay homage to the Pachamama. And when the Pachamama wishes it, we are going to form a copla circle and if she doesn't wish it, we don't (Interview August 12, 2013).

This personal connection to Pachamama made through the performance of coplas was repeatedly emphasized by local copleras/os. I found coplera Maria Ramos on her tract of land on the outskirts of Humahuaca. She was standing by her herd of goats, seeming to enjoy nothing more than the gentle breeze that rustled the long grass and leafy trees around her. In the middle of our conversation about coplas, she broke into an improvised copla.

We go by the seasons of the Indian calendar and we sing different kinds of coplas, sad ones or happy ones. For example, now we are in the season of the Pachamama and our coplas are happy because we are grateful for all the fruit and flowers and we are content. (She starts to sing) *Hola, hola, Pachamama.... Hola, hola, Pachamama! Hola! Qué tal? Como estas? Hola, hola Pachamama! Hola! Qué tal? Como estas?* (Hello, hello, Pachamama! How are you?) Now in August it's very important to sing coplas every day. When we get up from the bed we⁹ are singing, when we're having lunch, singing having dinner, singing, and going to bed, singing coplas (Interview August 12, 2013).

In Tilcara, I interviewed coplera Rufina Cari¹⁰ under the sunshade umbrella of her mobile candy stand, which she parks strategically across from the elementary school before the children leave for the day. A 58-year old woman with her black hair pulled

⁹ The "we" refers to Maria and her adult daughter Karina.

¹⁰ See photo of Rufina in Appendix B.

back tightly and pinned up, she told me she has composed many coplas for Pachamama.

She shared a few between candy sales:

<i>Pachamama madre tierra de todita la Quebrada</i>	Pachamama mother earth of the whole Quebrada
<i>Pachamama madre tierra de todita la Quebrada</i>	Pachamama mother earth of the whole Quebrada
<i>Desde el primero de agosto empezará la challada.</i>	From the first of August the Pachamama ritual will begin
<i>Desde el primero de agosto empezará la challada</i>	From the first of August the Pachamama ritual will begin

Some of them had a playful tone.

<i>Mi ofrenda a la madre tierra vinito, alcohol y coquita</i>	My offering to mother earth – wine, alcohol and coca leaves
<i>Mi ofrenda a la madre tierra vinito, alcohol y coquita</i>	My offering to mother earth – wine, alcohol and coca leaves
<i>chicha, cigarro y comida que no falte la coplita</i>	Beer, cigarettes, and food with no lack of coplas
<i>chicha, cigarro y comida que no falte la coplita</i>	Beer, cigarettes, and food with no lack of coplas
<i>Para cantar he venido con mi caja y mis coplitas</i>	I have come to sing with my caja and my little coplas
<i>Para cantar he venido con mi caja y mis coplitas</i>	I have come to sing with my caja and my little coplas
<i>Todito el mes de agosto le cantaré a mi pachita</i>	Throughout the month of August I will sing to my little Pacha
<i>Todito el mes de agosto le cantaré a mi pachita</i>	Throughout the month of August I will sing to my little Pacha

Other verses link Pachamama to the joy and creative gift of inventing coplas:

<i>De mi madre Pachamama nacen las hermosas flores</i>	My mother Pachamama gives birth to beautiful flowers
------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------

<i>De mi madre Pachamama nacen las hermosas flores</i>	My mother Pachamama gives birth to beautiful flowers
<i>Y las coplas van naciendo de toditos los cantores. Y las coplas van naciendo de toditos los cantores.</i>	And all the singers are giving birth to coplas. And all the singers are giving birth to coplas
<i>Pachamama madre tierra gracias por darme este don Pachamama madre tierra gracias por darme este don</i>	Pachamama mother earth thank you for giving me this gift Pachamama mother earth thank you for giving me this gift
<i>Para concertar las coplas y cantarlas con amor Para concertar las coplas y cantarlas con amor</i>	To create coplas and sing them with love To create coplas and sing them with love
	(Interview August 7, 2013)

A number of Rufina’s original coplas appear in the book and CD she co-produced with fellow Tilcareña coplera Indalecia Alvarez Prado, a retired nurse in her eighties. Indalecia, who lives in a house at the top of a steep, multi-level staircase built into a hill overlooking Tilcara, affirmed, “Pachamama is our inspiration. We are air, sun, water, earth. Everything comes from Pachamama. So we sing special coplas for her” (Interview August 10, 2013). The copleras’ book *Coplas del corazón por copleras tilcareñas* was printed and distributed by a company called Tres Tiercos, based in the provincial capital of San Salvador de Jujuy in 2010. The CD *Copleras Tilcareñas* appears to be self-produced with engineering accomplished with support from the City of Tilcara. Although the recording is not shown as a production of the city, the copleras thank the city and the recording engineer, friends, and family “por el apoyo y aliento para continuar defendiendo nuestra identidad” (for the support and strength to continue protecting our identity).

There followed much drinking of wine and beer to honor Pachamama. I found no way to resist the wine that Kenti kept pouring into my styrofoam cup, much more wine than I was used to drinking. I tried to explain that I had reached my limit but was accused of violating the tradition to “drink everything in the house” before we would all be allowed to go out to dinner. So I forced myself to continue imbibing as I wondered what this Pachamama observance was becoming. Cecilia, one of the two museum guides, a criolla, was also wincing under this pressure to drink, and said to me under her breath, “Now you know what the Indians are like in this part of Argentina.” When it was determined that we had drunk enough to have the right to go to dinner, I joined the group of friends out on to the sidewalk in front of the house, walking carefully. I was preparing to explain to Dario that I could not go to dinner because the last bus from Humahuaca to Tilcara left at 8:15 p.m. and it was now 7:55 p.m. I remember leaning over to kiss Dario on the cheek. The next thing I knew, zoom! Three of his friends caught my descent a fraction of a second before I would have hit the pavement. I was placed upright amid whoops of surprise and laughter. I tried to laugh it off though I was dazed and just happy to be in a vertical position. Dario’s daughter was assigned to guide me to the bus station. I somehow made sense enough to buy a ticket, get on the bus, and return to Peña Altitud where I drank tar-strength black tea and scribbled field notes.

This “second” Pachamama observance revealed dynamics that contrasted the observance in the forest. Dario’s coplas spoke to an indigenous sense of pride which he connected to Pachamama. He expressed love for his Humahuaca home. Furthermore, in his declaration, he contested organized religion, avowing that only Pachamama merited

reverence. Also noteworthy, the atmosphere in his backyard was as free-flowing as the ceremony in the forest was solemn and controlled. Clearly it was meaningful for Dario to consecrate his home with some kind of Pachamama ritual. The alcohol consumption added an element that Dario, Kenti, and their male friends considered normal for the setting. Perhaps it was connected with the ritual, but there had been no emphasis on alcohol consumption during the ceremony in the forest although alcohol was available. The situation made me uncomfortable, to be sure; I experienced more keenly the sense of being an outsider as the alcohol undermined my control over my own body.

It is evident that members of the Quebrada community incorporate homage to Pachamama into their lives – be it religious, spiritual, or cultural contexts or all three, and that copla creation and performance reflect this. However, it is difficult to trace how far back this Pachamama veneration goes into indigenous history. The common belief I encountered in the region was that the August observance pre-dated the Spanish conquest. Coplera Gloria Federica of Iruya affirmed:

Things like Pachamama have been maintained during centuries and incorporate themselves in some way, and everyone does it. It's a fiesta of gratitude to the earth and within that is the music, coplas, the wind, the sun, the corn, the potatoes, everything (Interview August 28, 2013).

But a question looms: Even if Pachamama is an ancient deity, could her current veneration be a more recent development originating in a mestizo, indigenista movement? Without questioning the sincerity of those who follow it, one could ask to what extent this is an invented tradition (Hobsbawm 1983).

Contesting the Pachamama Tradition

The title of the December 2012 article in *Cuadernos de Literatura* conveys doubts about the longevity of the Pachamama presence in Northwestern Argentina and beyond: “Pachamamismo, o las ficciones de (la ausencia de) voz.” Laurence Cuelenaere and Jose Rabasa, both of Harvard University, had clearly had their fill of the “cult” of Pachamama and saw it as a Latin American essentialization of a tradition deployed for political and touristic purposes, a danger to genuine observances dedicated to the goddess. Their reasons were manifold (Cuelenaere and Rabasa 2012).

The article posits that philosophers and social scientists have attempted to correct the absence of a unified indigenous identity in Latin America through the development of ontologies, philosophies, and Andean systems of justice in need of recognition. Its position is that the superficial application of the cult of Pachamama offers powerful fictions that can be used as counter-histories against Western intellectual hegemony. An example given is the inclusion of Madre Tierra in the December 2010 Bolivian Constitution, “La Ley de Derechos de la Madre Tierra” and the ample use of the goddess’s name in tourist literature promoting mystical and shamanic experiences of “la cosmovisión andina” (Cuelenaere and Raabasa 2012:186). Apparently she is also invoked by New Age devotees and global communities based in India, Mexico, Africa, among other points of intersection.

The Harvard scholars go so far as to question the validity of Pachamama worship as an indigenous cultural tradition. They return to the descriptions of Andean life by José de Acosta in his *Historia natural y moral de las indias* (1590) and find that

Pachamama is mentioned only in passing and by no means occupies a central place in the cosmology or spiritual practice that Acosta observed. They delve into the relationship between Pachamama and the figure of Pachacamac, who may be a simulacrum of the goddess, both being connected with animistic beliefs. Their most significant historical point is that if such a deity such as Pachamama has a universal character, she is not unique in this respect. They give the example the God Cuniraya Huiracocha, called Creator of the world according to research by Duviols and Taylor (Cuelenaere and Raabasa 2012).

In the section titled “The Domestication of Forms of Life as Folklore,” they describe the figure of Pachamama as lending justification to an armed incursion in the Amazon in which indigenous inhabitants protested the exploitation of gas and petroleum on their home turf. Referring to the tourist industry, they see Pachamama conveniently representing pre-Columbian Andean identity. This they find deceptively dangerous, suggesting that domestication and folklorization of ritual sets in motion a process of “*etnosuicidio*,” that is, ethnosuicide (Cuelenaere and Raabasa 2012: 203). The authors conclude that pachamamismo has complicated the history of an Andean ideal that was once thought to be free from Western contamination. The digging up of Pachamama and the use of her fictionalized identity for political and touristic purposes can hinder emerging forms of genuine Andean cultural practice (Cuelenaere and Raabasa 2012).

Many of the points Cuelenaere and Raabasa are reasonable, especially protesting the exploitation of Pachamama’s name and aura for touristic purposes. On the other hand, trying to downplay her importance by referring to the chronicles written centuries

ago by Spanish observers of indigenous culture strikes me as unreliable evidence and an unworthy project.

Carolyn Dean touches on the controversy concerning the contemporary place of Pachamama in Latin America when she states:

(Though) it is presently often in ruins, Inka rock work today testifies that those aspects of the story that speak of intercourse between the Inka and the land are not merely or facily the results of modern nostalgia. They do not so much represent the invention of the romantic indigenous past as they do a continuation of a way of thinking about Andean land and the human beings occupy, work with, gift to, and take from it (Dean 2010: 66-67).

This is not to say that Pachamama is never given touristic treatment in Northwestern Argentina. My research did uncover a splashy invented tradition called the Fiesta Pachamama that takes place every summer not in the Quebrada but in the town of Aimacha del Valle, located in neighboring Tucumán province, south of Jujuy. The tradition has existed since 1949 as Patricia Mathews-Salazar describes in “Becoming All Indian: Gauchos, Pachamama Queens and Tourists in the Remaking of an Andean Festival” (2006). The center of the action is the main plaza of Aimacha del Valle, restored to a pre-Hispanic, Inca-inspired aesthetic configuration with terraces and river rocks. The Pachamama observance period has been moved from wintry August to the tourist-friendly summertime, conveniently coinciding with Carnival. It features a parade headed by the elected Pachamama Queen, the oldest woman in the community; she is said to embody wisdom and fertility. Carried on a chariot which is pulled by a donkey and decorated with local plants and flowers, she is escorted by costumed characters associated with mountains, Carnival, and the new crops. Gauchos on horseback circle the plaza during the procession and repeatedly salute her. Following her chariot are floats

representing local institutions in town—schools, businesses, community organizations, government officials and so on. Older indigenous women of the town give public performances of coplas, often improvising wittily about local events. The Festival seeks a broader, more national appeal than indigenous observance would suggest; hence, the singing of the national anthem at the start of the Festival and an additional gaucho parade. The fiesta ends with a massive evening *baile*. Mathews-Salazar sees substantial benefits for participants in the Fiesta Pachamama, contending that the celebration challenges gender, ethnic, and social hierarchies of power. She focuses on the copleras, in particular, for emphasizing their Indianness as non-elite women performing their identity in public (Mathews-Salazar 2006).

The Quebrada does not engage in activities similar to those described above. I never had the impression or found evidence that Pachamama observance in the Quebrada was anything but a longstanding tradition with indigenous roots as opposed to a more recently invented tradition. The event most closely resembling a touristic event was the library Pachamama observance I attended.

Pachamama Observance at the Public Library

A flyer on the information table of the Tilcara tourist office announced that the local public library was hosting a Pachamama observance on July 31 from 8 p.m. until midnight to usher in the sanctified month of Pachamama. When I told my host Miguel about the library event, he immediately asked me how much they were charging. “80 pesos,” I replied. He gave an ironic grunt. I didn’t begrudge the fee; this was before I had received the invitation from Kenti to attend Dario’s observance.

That evening I entered the small one-story library building where long reading tables in the main room had been covered with brightly colored plastic tablecloths. At each place setting sat a shiny glazed earth-colored ceramic urn, about the size of a closed fist, filled with shiny glazed replicas of fruits and vegetables. Attached to one of the tiny urn's handles was a folded orange paper card which read on the front "RECUERDO DE LA CEREMONIA A LA PACHAMAMA COMISION 2013," (souvenir of the Pachamama ceremony, Commission 2013) then on the inside left panel the well-known copla "PACHAMAMA SANTA TIERRA, NO ME COMAS TODAVIA..." (the copla quoted above); the inside right panel read "LA COMISION DE LA BIBLIOTECA POPULAR BARTOLOME MITRE DE TILCARA LE AGRADECE POR SU COLABORACION" (The Bartolome Mitre De Tilcara Public Library thanks you for your attendance) and on the back panel was a pen and ink sketch showing a young woman with long braids cloaked in a poncho that was flowing in the wind against a background of mountain cliffs.

The event began with a modest multi-course meal of platos típicos served on paper plates — local cheeses, llama stew, a variety of cooked corns and potatoes, and so on. Meanwhile, a trio of three singer-guitarists performed pan-Andean pieces while I chatted with several anthropologists from Buenos Aires with whom I shared a table.

After the meal and music in the library proper, we were ushered into the dimly-lit yard behind the library building. It was evident that great care has been taken to surround the gaping hole in the earth that was the mouth of Pachamama with an array of plates of cooked and fresh foods, bottles of wine, beer, and soft drinks, and bags of coca

leaves. Two elderly ladies passed out cigarettes for us to smoke and then to stick upright in the mound of earth surrounding the hole. Then they took their places on either side of the hole and handed offerings that we participants, approaching two by two and kneeling, sprinkled into the mouth of Pachamama. Another elderly lady softly sang coplas in homage to Pachamama, accompanying herself on the caja.¹¹ There was a sense of timelessness as pair after pair of participants knelt down and received items to offer to Pachamama. I noticed a few participants cross themselves before kneeling.

I was struck by the contrasting atmosphere between what took place inside the harshly lit library reading room and what occurred outdoors behind the building. Inside, the program seemed designed to please the tourist, complete with a charming, labeled souvenirs and inoffensive pan-Andean music. Outside in the dark, the copleras were in charge and no one was explaining what was happening. The ritual went on until everyone who chose to give offerings had done so.

In my five weeks experience in the Quebrada, I did not observe the exploitation that takes place in Tucuman or the strategies described in the Harvard scholars' article. The library effort, barely advertised, hardly represents high-powered commercialism. My difficulty in locating a place to observe the August first Pachamama ritual speaks to a rather paltry local dissemination of information about Pachamama's special month in the Quebrada. It is, in fact, surprising that tourism has not made more commercial inroads into the celebration of Pachamama in the Quebrada of Humahuaca.

¹¹ Later I realized that this coplera was one of my interviewees, Mathilde Choque.

Chapter Four: Indigenous Quebrada History and Current Issues

Before further exploring indigenous influence and expression with respect to the copla, it is helpful to examine the history that undergirds it. When Spaniards first entered the Quebrada in 1536, as chronicled in the correspondence of a Padre Lozano, they encountered a tribe that they referred to not as Inca but as Omaguaca. Lozano recorded the fierceness of the people that had been conquered by the Incas; apparently the Omaguaca had been resisting paying tribute to the “Inga Paulla” (Carrizo 1935: LIV).¹² The Inca conquest had occurred in 1480 C.E. but, according to Lozano, the Omaguaca had a way of life distinct from the customs of the Inca Empire. At the time of the Spanish Conquest, it was noted that the aboriginal villages of the Northwest had a farming culture (Ruiz 1999).

That the Omaguaca resisted Spanish occupation is evident in Lozano’s notation that five Spanish soldiers who wandered away from their battalion during a march to Chile were attacked by Omaguaca who “gave three a cruel death” (Carrizo 1935: LIV). Apparently, the inhabitants of the Quebrada resisted Spanish occupation for several decades. For example, in 1575 they destroyed the buildings of the new settlement of San Francisco de Alva as described in the chronicles of Pedro Sotelo Narváez. A leader named Viltipoco apparently led battles against the Spaniards in 1586 and 1589. The Spaniards gained the upper hand in the mid-1590s with the founding of a major settlement and parish in San Salvador de Jujuy. The chief was captured and died in prison

¹² I did not find further information on “Inga Paulla” in Carrizo’s book nor mention of Inga Paulla in any other source. I take it to be the name of an Inca administrator of the region conquered by the Incas.

in Santiago del Estero after being moved from a prison in San Salvador de Jujuy. From this point on, Spanish colonists began settling the area. Parishes were founded in Humahuaca, Tilcara, and Purmamarca. The governor of the “Valle”/Quebrada parceled out land to different Spanish administrators by district (Carrizo 1935: LXI).

Regarding evangelization, Carrizo states that the Dominicans arrived in the Quebrada in 1550, but recorded no great success before 1595 when Padre Gaspar de Monrroy successfully mediated between the Spanish and the Omaguaca at San Salvador de Jujuy and converted some Omaguaca who were impressed with his courage.

By the late seventeenth century, the Quebrada and the surrounding highlands were stable regions under the dominion of the Spanish colonial system, subject to colonial policy and legislation. Colonized inhabitants, working for landowners on re-allocated land, were adjusting to new crops and animals brought from Europe. They absorbed a subaltern status, changed economy, new language, and new religion over a period of some 200 years (Occhipinti 2002). Now they were known as Kolla – sometimes spelled *Colla* or *Coya* – derived from the Quechua name the Incas gave to the area they had colonized in the Northwest.

Argentine Independence

As in many other independence struggles in Latin America, the “Indios” were urged to join the rebel army with promises of land and greater autonomy in a vague, victorious future. A commemorative celebration held every August in Jujuy, to be discussed later in this paper, virtually ignores the existence of thousands of indigenous Jujeños involved in the conflict.

After Argentine independence in 1810, national control was established in Buenos Aires, and the indigenous populations “lost whatever meager protections granted to them under Spanish law as wards of the Crown, such as limitations on the amount of labor that could be required by landowners” (Occhipinti 2002: 327). The Northwest came under increased domination by local leaders called *caudillos*, individuals who were well-connected with the local criollo elite. Hence:

Although northern highlands were largely spared the genocidal wars that Argentina waged on some segments of its indigenous population in the nineteenth century, exploitation of land and labor continued apace (Occhipinti 2002:327).

Discussing the ancestry of the Argentine population, Irma Ruiz quotes a saying well known in Latin America:

Peruvians are descended from the Incas, Mexicans are descended from the Aztecs, and Argentineans descended from the boats (Ruiz 1999:89).

The model which the dominant class held of Argentine civilized identity was associated with European roots and whiteness, both traits buttressed by massive European immigration; the elite bemoaned the fact that many of the newcomers did not possess the desired northern European pedigree. Urban culture was valued over rural culture with the exception of the idealized, revised image of the gaucho from the Pampas¹³ (Plesch 2013). In general, the uncivilized were represented by Indians, “cross-breeds,”¹⁴ and rural have-nots. These predilections contributed to the invisibility of the Indian on the national stage. Furthermore, the indigenous population was also increasingly displaced. Between 1877

¹³ The gauchos were cowboys who herded cattle on the vast grasslands known as the Pampas in the early-to-mid- nineteenth century.

¹⁴ Unlike countries such as Peru, Argentina did not have an upwardly mobile *mestizo* class that had emerged from indigenous roots.

and 1885, the government legitimated the appropriation of vast portions of aboriginal lands by whites.

In the Northwest of independent Argentina, an aggressive policy of “Hispanicization” suppressed the indigenous language, aboriginal religious rituals, and visible signs of cultural difference. Eventually the indigenous people usually were referred to as campesinos, virtually erasing their indigenous origins, and identifying them simply as workers of the land. Sometimes the term Kolla was used by whites among themselves to disparage the campesinos or to give orders to them in an offensive manner. To avoid the pervasive racism, Kolla who migrated to urban areas assimilated as much as possible into the Hispanic majority.

Being Kolla in the Twentieth Century

In her paper on indigenous identity and land struggle in Northwestern Argentina, Anke Fleur Schwittay states:

Throughout its history, the term Kolla has always retained certain derogatory overtones of stupid, lazy, and inferior, especially when used by non-indigenous Argentinians and joined with certain expletives. Consequently, many people prefer to refer to themselves in more neutral, geographically-based terms (Schwittay 2003:132).

The Kolla were pulled unwillingly into the country’s industrialization as Argentine landowners invested in the sugar industry. From the mid-1930s on, entire families were required by these sugar barons to abandon their farms and labor for six months during the sugarcane harvest in Jujuy and Salta provinces for roughly a peso a day, working from dawn to dusk under pain of the whip. Interestingly, during this period, according to Schwittay, “the dominant classes in northwest Argentina created an

idealized and romanticized image of Kollas as docile and pacific...” (Schwittay 2003:132-133).

The workers began to contest that image when Juan Perón took the helm of the Secretariat for Labor and Social Welfare. Improvements in working conditions between 1943 and 1946 had encouraged the Kolla to see Perón as their champion and to believe that it was possible to recover the land taken over long before by the Spaniards and later by the Argentine government. In August 1946, a delegation of 160 men and nine women from several villages in Jujuy and Salta walked to Buenos Aires to press the new President Perón with demands. Perón received them disarmingly, calling them noble tillers of the soil, but made no promises. A day later, under Perón’s orders, the Buenos Aires police tried to hustle the delegation on to a train back to the Northwest; the workers resisted and several were killed in the violence that ensued. The event known as the *Malón de la Paz* was memorialized as a milestone of popular labor resistance. It was invoked decades later when the Kolla took up the cause of indigenous land rights again in the 1990s.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, the term Kolla was beginning to change its connotation. The era of land claims that began in the 1990s saw some indigenous groups and individuals of the Quebrada using the name Kolla to identify their cultural and historical origins. However, the issue of language has hampered the Kolla claims. Whereas other indigenous groups such as the Chaco Indians in the Salta lowlands had preserved their language, the Kolla had lost theirs. Schwittay cites the interpretation of social scientists Martinez Sarasola (1992), Serbin (1981) and Magrassi (1982),

describing “the Kolla identity as a hybrid one, stemming from the synthesis of many local and South Andean ethnic groups... (They) have had a much longer history of cultural contact with the Spaniards and other foreigners than indigenous groups in the Chaco” (Schwittay 2003:144). This may be why the Argentine policy of Hispanization was particularly effective with them.

Seeming more assimilated and having no indigenous linguistic identity or other major cultural markers, the Kolla have sometimes been accused of fabricating their indigenous identity for purposes of land claims. These kinds of attacks have followed significant legislative successes for indigenous rights over the past twenty-five years. International pressure through the pan-indigenous movement forced the passage and, more importantly, the implementation of the Indigenous Policy and Assistance to Aboriginal Communities by 1991. Three years later, indigenous leaders influenced the language of Article 75, which makes it “the duty of Congress to recognize the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of the Argentinian indigenous peoples, to guarantee the respect of their identity and the right to bilingual and intercultural education” in addition to recognizing the validity of land claims (Internet Law Library, National Constitution of the Republic of Argentina, 1994).

Into the Twenty-First Century

Since the period of land claims, indigenous Argentines have experienced a backlash from the non-indigenous population. Sometimes Kolla are the target of xenophobic attitudes, especially in Buenos Aires, where they are confused with Bolivian migrants – “foreigners” – from the border region, who also call themselves Kolla. Both

Bolivian and Argentine Kolla women's traditional clothing use the primary colors of red, green and yellow, which correspond to the colors of the Bolivian flag. The Argentine Kollas protest that they are proud of their national identity and sometimes thrust identity cards in the faces of people who denigrate them. Still, many of them prefer to identify themselves simply as indigenous Argentines, not using the term Kolla, because the negative connotations of the name have not entirely disappeared (Schwittay 2003).

In his critical examination of the Kolla situation titled *Indiomanual* (1995), Sixto Vázquez Zuleta recounted asking numerous residents of Jujuy province what they thought of the Kolla. The answers reflected stereotypes such as robbers, dimwits, liars, and crafty types. He was told that it was a waste of time to try to teach or help Kolla since they did nothing no matter how you treated them; therefore the best thing to do was to treat them badly because that's all they understood. Another attitude he encountered was the argument that in Argentina there had existed no grand aboriginal civilization such as the Aztec, the Maya or the Inca (presumably the brief period of colonization by the Incas did not count) and so the indigenous people of Argentina were inferior. Other white persons stated with wide-eyed conviction that there were no Indios in Argentina anymore (Vázquez Zuleta 1995).

In "Being Kolla: Indigenous Identity in Northwestern Argentina" (2002), Occhipinti reported how Kolla in the town of Iruya, Salta (the northern tip of the Quebrada) had not retained memories of their indigenous culture beyond an abiding reverence for Pachamama, the earth mother deity. What they *could* remember was maltreatment by the Spanish landowners and the overbearing presence of the church.

Their feeling of identity as campesinos was bound up in their relationship with the land they did not own. This identity connection to the land was so prominent that Kolla who left their rural village to further their education in the city were treated as outsiders upon their return (Occhipinti 2002).

Occhipinti believes that the copla of Northwestern Argentina is a form of Kolla cultural expression. She reached that conclusion after several months of fieldwork in the Iruya region, which included attending a village Pachamama observance and a local copla competition (Occhipinti 2002). However, many Argentine and Spanish scholars contest this conclusion and continue to emphasize the copla's Spanish heritage.

Chapter Five: Indigenous Copla Performance Practices

Anthropologist Josefina Racedo uncovered references to indigenous singing in chronicles from the early years of the Spanish conquest in Northwestern Argentina. They mentioned collective singing accompanied by percussion instruments in farming villages. Racedo cites such traditions as possible roots for much later traditions of singing coplas for the marking of the cattle (Racedo 1996). Her research may also explain the readiness of the indigenous population to embrace the Spanish copla form once they had absorbed the language.

Folklorist Juan Alfonso Carrizo's *Cancionero Popular de Jujuy* cites chronicles attesting to a tradition of poetry in what Carrizo calls Quichua¹⁵ that existed at the time of the Spanish conquest. In the 1920s he also collected coplas that were composed in Quechua or in a mixture of Spanish and Quechua. Here is one:

Quechua	Spanish	English
<i>Acaso noccaca</i>	<i>¿Acaso yo soy</i>	Am I so easy to
<i>Cualquiera</i>	<i>un cualquiera</i>	possess that for
<i>achucani</i>	<i>que con pan dulce o con</i>	sweet bread or
<i>Tantahuan</i>	<i>sopa</i>	soup one can
<i>miskihuan</i>	<i>se lo tiene?</i>	have me?
<i>Sopanacho cany</i>		

(Carrizo 2009 [1935]: 508)

In addition, Carrizo cites scholar Eric Bolman who collected poetry in Quechua in Jujuy in 1904. Bolman described these as remnants of poetry and was not certain that they had originated in Jujuy since the Quebrada and the neighboring Puna regions of Jujuy had

¹⁵ The language is not Quichua but Quechua, according to Professor Jonathan Ritter's reading of the lyrics. Quichua, a dialect of Quechua, was spoken much further north in present-day Ecuador.

strong ties to Bolivia. Carrizo references the Inca taqui (ceremonial songs) as influential on Quechua poetry and songs of planting and harvesting in the Northwest, which are mentioned in *The Incas of Peru* by Sir Clements R. Markham, an English geographer, explorer, and writer (Carrizo 2009 [1935]: CXXVII-VIII).

Carrizo also refers to the content of many coplas as indications of indigenous influence, what he calls “pantheistic identification of authors of coplas with their landscape, the actual earth, and the humble things that surround them arranged for a deep and moving dialogue...” (Carrizo 2009 [1935]: viii).

<i>Las nubes están</i>	The clouds are heavy,
<i>cargadas,</i>	
<i>Parece que va a llover,</i>	It looks like it is going
	to rain,
<i>Algún aguacero suave</i>	Some soft downpour
<i>Around dawn.</i>	Around dawn.

(Carrizo 2009 [1935]: 203)

The importance of coplas for Kolla poet, musician, and folklorist Fortunato Ramos is obvious from gazing at the street-side wall of his popular *Peña de Fortunato*, a restaurant-folk music venue which is a five-minute walk from Humahuaca’s central plaza. The texts of two classic coplas are painted in ornate black script side by side on the white-washed wall just below the orange clay roof shingles:¹⁶

<i>Una sola vida tengo</i>	I have a single life
<i>Dositas quiero tener</i>	Two little lives I would like to have
<i>Una para vez en cuando</i>	One for from time to time
<i>Y otra pa permanecer</i>	And the other for all the time

¹⁶ See Appendix B for photo of wall of Peña de Fortunato and a photo of Fortunato Ramos.

*Soná cajita, por Dios
soltá toda tu carrero
que se quiere divertir
un gusano de la tierra*

Sound, little caja, for God's sake
let loose and race
so that a worm of the earth
can have fun

The reference to a “worm of the earth” evokes the humble origins of the Kolla coplero who works the land. Fortunato sees coplas as an integral part of life in the Quebrada:

For the wind in August, we sing coplas. For pain and suffering or when we lose someone we love, we make coplas. For Carnival, in which there is happiness, we make coplas. And for winter, summer, and different times, the copla expresses different emotional states. Coplas have different tonadas. For example, in Carnival, the copla is livelier. And during Easter, the copla is slower and expresses pain and sadness...in the text and the music. And during the winter the copla expresses sadness too and the music is slow. Human beings create the coplas according to their emotional states. The copla is anonymous. It emerges because or someone created it and established it. Generally it emerges in a moment and could be lost. Most of them have disappeared. (But) some of them are preserved... (Interview August 7, 2013).

Apart from these anonymous coplas that he quotes on the wall, Fortunato is much beloved in the region for his gentle portrayals of the Kolla in verse. His most famous poem, “No te rias de un Colla,” (Don't laugh at a Kolla) portrays a Kolla man in various situations – tending a herd of goats, scurrying across the street, bundled up in wool against the winter wind, walking silently by the river, chewing coca leaves “por su Pachamama,” selling his leather and woven goods in the local market, and cultivating his beans on tracts of land in isolated areas. The poem leaves us with an unmistakable marker of indigenuity: “*asi sobrevive con su Pachamama*”/ this is how he survives with his Pachamama (Ramos 1985). A pair of girls in the Humahuaca plaza recited this poem for me on their own initiative after performing a copla in return for a few pesos.

Cámara de Landa has analyzed the content of numerous coplas and detected common themes. He regards the genre as a significant element of community life in the Quebrada:

(It is) a vehicle of great communicative power, by which emotions are expressed, individual and social tensions are neutralized, relationships are secured and renewed as kinship, the effectiveness of certain rituals is guaranteed, the affiliation with a locality and a subculture is reaffirmed, the verbal and sonorous aspects of the language are practiced, anti-social behaviors are compartmentalized, institutional norms are confirmed, one's vocal and memory endowments are exhibited and valued by outsiders, aesthetic enjoyment is experienced, there is the fusion of the individual in the group, (and) the differentiating functions of gender and age are confirmed (Cámara de Landa 1997:2).

The above commentary virtually classifies the copla according to its social functions in the culture. Cámara de Landa also acknowledges copla performance as demonstrating the creative musical and literary powers of their composers, talents that are valued in the community.

Familial Associations and the Oral Tradition

An article by anthropologist and coplero Rene Machaca, one of my interviewees in Tilcara, discusses copla performance as he experienced it growing up in the Quebrada. In addition to Pachamama rituals in August and coplas linked to Carnival time, he remembers coplas being performed for the rural rituals of the marking of the animals in the spring; members of the community would arrive at the house hosting the *marqueada* and initiate yells and cries while the coplero circled the barn three times to the rhythm of the caja, greeting the animals that were the “honorees” (Machaca 1996).

Talking with Rene¹⁷ over coffee at the Tilcara bookstore-café Ma Koka, I learned more about the connection between the copla and indigenous life in the Quebrada:

Fundamentally the copla tradition is found in the Kolla pueblos – that’s the name given to the indigenous groups in Salta and Jujuy – and this is the region of the copla. The Kolla used to speak Quechua but since the presence of schools, they lost the language and it’s only spoken in the border of Bolivia. So coplas are in Spanish mainly but with some indigenous words as well as linguistic structures, syntaxes that are indigenous expressed within the Spanish-language. For Carnaval we started in January to practice the ritual of thanks to Pachamama for the bounty and protection of the cattle, then the actual Carnaval is in February. And in August we sing coplas for Pachamama at family gatherings (Interview August 20, 2013).

Rene contends that an indigenous poetic tradition influenced the development of the copla:

The literary form is Spanish but before the conquest the indigenous population here had a form of poetry known as *harawi* or *yawari*. These were Quechua poems (4) in pre-Hispanic culture son in the manner of singing coplas. Over the centuries Spanish literary form was re-adapted by the indigenous people. They accompanied the sung poetry with an instrument known as the *tinya*, a precursor of the *caja* (Interview August 20, 2013).

These coplas have roots in the rich orality of the Quebradeño culture. Diego Sajáma,¹⁸ thirty-ish owner of Ma Koka, expressed what the genre meant to him:

Coplas were part of my childhood. My grandmother, my mother sang coplas and played the *caja*. They sang coplas to put me to sleep, wake me, to make me know the community, to celebrate birthdays, for Carnaval... It was a way we connected with one another. For me, the copla is the feeling of music from the heart, from the Kollas – the original music – the Kollas (Interview August 20, 2013).

The above testimony and research strongly suggest a vibrant indigenous component in terms of texts and contexts in the copla genre performed in the Quebrada.

¹⁷ See photo of Rene in Appendix B.

¹⁸ See photo of Diego in Appendix B

Nevertheless, it bears mentioning that, as recently as 2011, a book called *La canción criolla*¹⁹ *argentina: antecedentes y evolución* by Augusto Berengan devotes eight of its 257-page survey of song genres to the copla of Jujuy, barely mentioning any indigenous component beyond the caja and some aerophones. The melodies are characterized as rural, popular or local, which, in some cases, is probably code for indigenous. In an earlier section dealing with regional musical trends, Berengan briefly mentions two pre-Columbian genres, the Harawi and the Cashua, which he associates with the Inca Empire. He also mentions the “Huaino” as a native couples dance. These genres are depicted as part of a distant past. Interestingly, whereas for other regions Berengan names tribes that were influential such as the Mapuche and the Toba, the Kolla population of Northwestern Argentina is not named.

Omissions and oversimplification in the representation of indigenous heritage is not coincidental, according to Sixto Zuleta Vázquez, Kolla writer, founder of the Humahuaca Folklore Museum²⁰ and the Instituto de Cultura Indígena in Humahuaca, and, more recently, consultant to UNESCO.

Folklore purports to crystallize us at one stage in our evolution... It does not take into account its evolution or outside influences. It has created a “folk” man, a “folk” community and there it has hibernated us giving us this “folklorismo” that everyone views with a certain benevolence (and) curiosity, which serves one end: to provide us with roots of identity that are picturesque and, above all, inoffensive (Vázquez 1995:14).

¹⁹ In this case, *criolla* refers to Argentine-born whites and not *creole/mestizo* as it sometimes does.

²⁰ It was later renamed the Museum of Intangible Cultural Heritage and is currently directed by Sixto’s son Ernesto Kenti Vázquez.

Adding, caustically, that the ultimate result is “folkloricidio” (Vázquez 1995:15), Vázquez goes beyond warning against the fossilization of vital elements of culture through their appreciation as folklore. He is suggesting that the dominant class, in the guise of benevolence, has the power to render a subaltern culture invisible. With respect to the copla and the Kolla, there appears to be a dilemma here. Rendered virtually invisible in their country, the Kolla are not given credit for this rich aspect of their culture. On the other hand, exposing the copla genre to the dominant culture could endanger it by converting a treasured form that has ritual underpinnings into a type of entertainment. Possibly the relative rarity of public copla performances in larger centers such as Tilcara and Humahuaca results partly from a reluctance—or ambivalence—on the part of copleros/copleras of the Quebrada to expose the copla to the kind of folklorization that Vázquez decries.

The Caja

One of the most important performance elements that complements copla singing is the instrumental accompaniment of the caja. Rene Machaca has identified the small drum that copleros of the Quebrada use to accompany themselves as a signifier of indigenous identity, noting that the Incas called it *wankar* or *wankara* in Quechua. Now known by its Spanish name *caja*, the same instrument is played in Bolivian *conjuntos* under the name *bombo-wankara* (Machaca 1996). It is noteworthy that during August, the month venerating Pachamama, copleras/os of the Quebrada only accompany themselves on the caja whereas in other regions of the Northwest one sometimes hears

pinkullos and *erkenchos*. These wind instruments are sometimes used to accompany coplas in the Quebrada at Carnaval time, however.

In his review of percussion instruments of South America, Oscar Escalada attests to the pre-Columbian origins of the *caja* in the area now known as Northwestern Argentina. While the *bombo* may have been copied later from the war drums of the Spanish army:

... (in) the same region, the *caja*, a small home-made drum with head of lamb, goat, or other animal skin, is played with stick or mallet as accompaniment for the *baguala*, *vidala*, *vidalita*, and *carnavalito*. The drum's construction shows pre-Columbian origin (Escalada 1999: 3).

According to Machaca, there are three main parts to the *caja*: the *aro* or ring, the *parches*, meaning the side which is hit, and the *charlera*, a cord placed on the unplayed side. The *aro* is usually made from a wood that permits good resonance such as cedar or another wood known as *pacará*. The *parches* is made of skin from a goat's, sheep's or cow's stomach. This is attached to some double loops that are placed in the ring and finally join in the middle of a cord that holds it tethered at intervals; this produces tuning of the *caja*. The *charlera* is a thread made from several hairs from a horse's mane twisted together. It is stretched across the middle of the instrument and tied on both sides. When the drum is hit, the thread produces a vibration, a sound that is particular to the *caja* as played in the Quebrada and in the neighboring Puna region. The stick used to hit the *caja*, the *guastana*, is usually made from shrubbery of the area or *caña*. Its tip is covered in lined wool or *maza*. In the Quebrada and the Puna, one *guastana* is used in performance whereas in other parts of Northwest Argentina sometimes two are used.

Coplera Gloria Federico, who lives in Iruya, Salta, at the north end of the Quebrada, showed me her caja:

One side of the caja is sheepskin. That's the part that is struck by the mallet. The other side is made from the interior part of the *cabra* – goat stomach. The red thread that is attached across the goatskin with tension is what gives the caja its resonance. How it is going to sound depends on how I hit it, too. It has a tinnier sound when it faces the floor and a higher sound when it is held up high. The lacing is an indigenous material called *watana* (Interview August 28, 2013).

Manager of her family's hotel, the oldest in Iruya, the jean-clad attractively-coiffed woman in her late fifties demonstrated different ways of holding the caja – grasping it in one hand and striking it with the mallet using the other hand or holding it in one hand, hanging with a loose wrist and striking it with the mallet using the same hand. She also performed several coplas composed by her late mother, a prolific coplera and whom she described as indigenous (Interview August 28, 2013).

Rene Machaca recounted that many copleros believe that for a caja to have good sound, one has to put inside the drum a “bell” or *cascabel* of the poisonous snake; it makes a sound similar to a metal bell. When the viper is introduced, the caja becomes enchanted or *endiablada*. He noted that the snake is associated with the devil and that one can see metal bells adorning Carnival costumes in the Quebrada (Machaca 1996). Rene quoted a local copla about the caja:

<i>Esta cajita que toco</i>	This caja that I play
<i>arito de pacará</i>	Little frame of pacara wood
<i>que mis pagos son alegres</i>	That my offerings are happy
<i>como serán por acá</i>	How will they be here

The copla texts cited from Rene Machaca's article had no punctuation; however the final line of the above copla implies a question as it does in the copla below.

*Esta cajita que toco
tiene arito de cedro
de qué me sirven los tragos*

si con ella yo me alegre

This little caja that I play
Has a little frame made of
cedar

Why would I need liquor
If I am happy with my caja
(Machaca 1996)

Undoubtedly the caja is an essential element of copla performance in the Quebrada. This may explain why a number of coplas I heard in the Quebrada depicted the caja as having a personality; lyrics indicated the coplero/a addressing the caja or the instrument speaking to the coplero/a. Often it was referred to in the diminutive — *cajita*. In the copla performances I observed in Humahuaca, Tilcara, Maimará, and Iruya the caja maintained a regular rhythm for the singing of coplas, usually duple meter. In a rueda or copla circle, typically one or at most two copleras or copleros would play the caja while singing the text. I was told that this applies to staged performances as well. Copleras/os mentioned subtle differences in pacing depending on the different localities of the Quebrada where coplas were performed. Josefina Vilte of Maimará, a tiny community a fifteen-minute drive from Tilcara, commented that when she performed coplas, her caja sounded a similar in its pacing to that of Tilcara, but that in Purmamarca, the pace was considerably more rapid (Interview August 25, 2013).

Tonada

The other major indigenous element in copla performance is the tonada or melody in which the copla is sung. It was easy to determine from listening to performances that this is usually built on a major triad. The coplas performed by Dario and Ernestina, which I recorded, are based on the arpeggiated chord in root position, but the melody of a verse often starts on the fifth and moves down to the third and the root; in later verses, possibly

for purposes of variety, there was a sort of B section in which the verse started on the root, moved to the fifth and then down to the third. In my experience, tonadas sung in the Quebrada, except for the area near Salta, rarely have intervals greater than a fifth apart. By contrast, tonadas performed in Salta Province feature dramatic octave leaps. Gloria Federico of Iruya demonstrated this (Interview August 28, 2013) as did Matilde Choque, a Tilcara resident who grew up in Iruya and said she had retained her Iruya tonada (Interview August 3, 2013).

Isabel Aretz affirmed coplas as indigenous music largely based on the tonadas although she did not use that term:

(The) roots of these songs must be indigenous, judging from their characteristics and from their current locations of practice. Earlier, studies like those of Adán Quiroga and Juan B. Ambrosetti who collected in the mountains of the West at the end of the last (nineteenth) century, mentioned these Vidalitas that the highlanders intoned... Ambrosetti persisted in believing that they always sang the same melody but in reality there are hundreds of melodies that a single primitive singer will use (Aretz 1952).

While Aretz's limitations in her conception of the indigenous performer are obvious, her contention carries weight. Aretz does not mention a specific indigenous language.

Enrique Cámara de Landa points to the possible origins in the use of the tritonic form that hark back to a number of ancient tribes, including the Omaguaca, under which heading he includes the Tilcara, Purmamarca, Maimará and other peoples of the Quebrada (Cámara de Landa 1995).

Within its melodic framework, the tonada Quebradeña exhibits nuances according to the locality of the coplera/o. Coplera Narcisa Cruz, who performs coplas at festivals under the stage name La Rodereña (a local flower), told me that coplas are known by

their local rhythms and tonadas and that it would be easy for her to distinguish a copla from Tilcara from one originating in Humahuaca (Interview August 12, 2013). Similarly, coplera Titina Gaspar of Tilcara, a frail woman in her mid-seventies, concurred that different Quebrada communities use different tonadas, noting that she write(s) in the style of Tilcara” (Interview August 25, 2013). Tonadas are also seasonal, according to Josefina Vilte, who specified that those for winter differ from the other seasons. Several other copleras/os mentioned this as well (Interview August 25, 2013). Poet, musician, and peña owner Fortunato Ramos locates the inspiration for the tonada in nature:

(The melodies) could be pre-Hispanic, but they come from the wind, natural sounds, bird songs, the connection with nature. (They come) especially in happy occasions, for example with the sounds of the quena and erquenchos during Carnival and in gusts of winter wind in August. With all these elements, the original coplero could express emotional states... Each place differentiates itself and for the musical tones they are different from one village to another. Some of are fast-paced, others are slower, others are jumping... There are a lot of variations in coplas. There are many differences (in tonadas) between towns that are five kilometers apart. If a person listens to coplas from Coctaca, Cianso, Palca de Aparzo, Ucamazo, Carlete, Uquia, they are small towns and each of them has its own (tonada). It’s very rich (Interview August 7, 2013).

So connected with nature himself, it is not surprising that Fortunato recommended I visit coplera Maria Ramos, who often composes coplas on the natural beauty of the Quebrada. She spends most of her days outdoors tending her herd of goats on her family’s tract of land and many of her evenings teaching weaving to adults and the art of the copla to young people.

Copla indigenous performance practice, then, is tied to the two pillars of rhythm and melody. The caja, for which the coplera/o shows affection as to an old friend, expresses distinctive local micro-cultures as does the tonada, which also incorporates

sounds of the natural environment.

Chapter Six: Regional Identity Expressed through the Copla

Clearly, there is a connection between indigenous identity and Quebrada identity although it also appears that one can feel an allegiance to the Quebrada without identifying oneself as Kolla. It can be argued that the copla is an indigenous form of expression but, again, it is not regarded as uniquely Kolla. Not all my interviewees — even those who, to me, looked indigenous — identified themselves or the copla Quebradeña as Kolla or, more generally, indigenous.

Coplera and municipal cultural liaison Karina Paniagua of Humahuaca, who lives with her mother, coplera Maria Ramos, commented that both the tonada and the pace of the caja make the copla reflect a sense of place:

The copla is really about this place we are from. There are many tonalities, differences in the singing of the coplas. For example, those of us in the Quebrada sing the copla a bit more slowly those in the Puna zone where they do their songs more rapidly (Interview August 12, 2013).

As shown in Rene Machaca's quoted copla mentioning both Kolla and the "pride of the Quebrada" regional and indigenous identity often are intertwined. However, the emphasis is frequently on one's roots in the Quebrada.

Tomás Lipán²¹, a folksinger known throughout Argentina for passionate songs extolling the beauty of the Quebrada, grew up in the small town of Purmamarca and still lives there when he is not touring Latin America. Now in his early sixties, he links coplas with cherished childhood memories as Diego does, but with more musical and spiritual associations:

²¹ See a photo of Tomás in Appendix B.

The copla was my first singing tradition. As a child of three, four, five years I heard coplas and nobody taught them to me. It was a natural transmission. I listened to my mother, my father, my older brothers, their friends at Carnaval time when they performed coplas in the house or houses. . . . We didn't have records, radio, television, cassette recorders, we had no medium of communication, only oral communication. The copla is the first expression of man. I believe that the copla has great spiritual significance for the spirit of the person, man. It's a man's friend, the friend of the campesino, of the Quebrada, the hills, the laborer on the land, the pasture of the goats, of sheep, for the solitude on the hill, that's what the copla is for. It strengthens the spirit. "Chewing on" a copla, one encounters one's own spirit. If one is sad, there are coplas of sadness. If one is alone, there are coplas of solitude. If one is in love, there are coplas of love. If one is religious, there are religious coplas. Whether you are old or young. . . there is a copla for every circumstance of life. Like a wide path, a copla gives you knowledge, a path of life. A copla gives to each person what he needs spontaneously! And the copla is played with a caja. Distinct places have distinct tonadas. . . . But the copla essentially is poetry. That is true everywhere" (Interview August 2013).

Tomás's stance toward the copla is one of intimacy, affection, and spiritual connection even if he is not the person performing the verses.

Walter Raul Apaza²², director of the Tilcara Sculpture Museum and a well-known coplero in the Quebrada, expressed an intimate relationship with the genre along with a sense of its social significance. He told me that he enjoyed performing classic and often comic coplas for his extended family. "There is bond (when you) sing for someone who will respond and share," he said, "It's a medium of expression. Here's one I like:

<i>Yo no me quiero casar</i>	I don't want to get married
<i>Yo no me quiero clavar</i>	I don't want to get nailed
<i>No quiero poner un clavo</i>	I don't want to drive in a nail
<i>Que no lo puedo sacar</i>	That I won't be able to remove

²² See photo of Walter in Appendix B.

He continued: “There are coplas that are (humorous), classic, old, historic – sung generation after generation. They can talk about emotions of pain, about happiness.”

When asked about the importance of copla in the Quebrada, his voice took on urgency:

It’s very important. It is part of the identity of the person from the Quebrada. His soul, his life, his body. Yes, the identity of the Quebradeño can be felt when one sings a copla. If you just had a child, you are going to sing for that child. If you buy a house, you sing about the house...And that’s where the person living in the Quebrada has his happiness, to put things into song (Interview August 2013).

In phenomenological terms, Walter is expressing intentionality and his relationship with the copla genre is part of his way of being in the world. In fact, he feels comfortable representing his fellow Quebradeños in saying it is their way, too. During our interview, he showed me a thick notebook of handwritten coplas he had composed, some for his eyes only.

Dueling with Coplas

Walter is highly esteemed for his skills performing the copla subgenre known as the *contrapunto*. An improvised verbal duel, usually between a man and a woman, it is frequently performed at Carnival time and is enjoyed by visitors and by Quebradeños. The opponents playfully goad one another while remaining within the local tempo and tonality. Off-color insults and sexual innuendos abound. Traditionally, the *contrapunto* is performed in a copla circle although there now are occasions where it takes place on a platform or stage. While the verses are generally improvised, there are classic *contrapuntos* that are part of collective memory in the Quebrada and have been published. Copla scholar Marcelo Fortunato Zapana, a resident of Humahuaca, has recorded hundreds of *contrapunto* exchanges. In his notations, he includes reactions of the

audience. The most highly praised copleros and copleras are those that build on the text of the opponent and turn it against him or her; success in this regard is easily discerned from cheers, shouts of praise, and applause.

Mujer

*Áhi viene el aguacerito tapando cerro
chiquito
Áhi viene el aguacerito tapando cerro
chiquito
¿No te animarás, mocito, taparme con
tu ponchito?
¿No te animarás, mocito, taparme con
tu ponchito?*

Varon

*Yo no quisiera querer mucho menos a
usted
Yo no quisiera querer mucho menos a
usted
Usted ya está viejecita no podrá
corresponder
Usted ya está viejecita no podrá
corresponder*

Woman

Here comes a little rain shower
blocking the little hill
Here comes a little rain shower
blocking the little hill
Won't you cheer up, my love, cover
me with your little poncho?
Won't you cheer up, my love, cover
me with your little poncho?

Man

I don't want to love, much less you.
I don't want to love, much less you.

You are already a little old lady and
you won't be able to reciprocate
You are already a little old lady and
you won't be able to reciprocate

“The audience yells and applauds the answer of the *contrapunteadora*” (Zapana 2011: 47-48). Clearly this exchange is not only an expression of gender relations but a sparring match between generations.

Mujer

*Viejita vos me has dicho, vieja pero
poderosa
Viejita vos me has dicho, vieja pero
poderosa
Te ofrezco carne gordita con la colita
sabrosa
Te ofrezco carne gordita con la colita
sabrosa*

Woman

You have called me an old
woman, old but powerful
You have called me an old
woman, old but powerful
I offer you little fat meat with a
delicious little behind
I offer you little fat meat with a
delicious little behind

Zapana refers to the situation above as “ritual spontaneous contrapunto,” the original form that take place in the community. On the other hand, when such coplas are collected, transcribed, and published, “the particular qualities of orality of the original form are eliminated and then they are sold” (Interview August 12, 2013).

Also applicable to the performance situation I just described is Berger’s discussion of affect and the host of qualities it includes. Within the cultural context, copleras/os may approach the contrapunto with concerns for maintaining a victorious reputation, with pleasure at engaging with a coplera/o they know well, with trepidation at facing an unknown opponent or with other emotions or mixtures of emotions. Members of the audience are equally involved in affect, for example, championing the opponent of their own gender, listening with the pleasurable expectation of comical dialogue, or even worrying that the verbal conflict will spin out of control and lead to genuine enmity (which happens on occasion).

Christianity and the Copla

The Catholic Church is a strong presence in the Quebrada community and, without encouraging indigenous traditions, it does not appear to contest them as fiercely as it once did. This I learned from Josefina Vilte of Maimará, who composes coplas on Catholic themes. The fragile-looking elderly lady ushered me into a room in which walls were plastered with clippings and flyers from her copla performances in various provinces of Argentina. She gave me a typed page of coplas that honor the patron saint of Maimará. She performed this one for me:

*Virgen de la Candelaria
florcita de maravilla*

Virgin of Candlemas,
little miraculous flower

*Virgen de la Candelaria
florcita de maravilla*

Virgin of Candlemas,
little miraculous flower

*Así concebió María
y volvió a quedarse doncella
Así concebió María
y volvió a quedarse doncella*

Thus Maria conceived
And remained pure
Thus Maria conceived
And remained pure

*Patrona de Maimará
Virgen de Candelaria
Patrona de Maimará²³*

Patron saint of Maimará
Virgin of Candlemas
Patron saint of Maimará

Josefina honors the patron saint in addition to observing August Pachamama rituals and composing coplas for Carnival, as well as for birthdays and other occasions of friends, family, and community. She says the priest of her parish supports her combined loyalties to the town's patron saint and to Pachamama. In short, Josefina experiences coplas both as a Catholic and a Quebradeña:

I am a coplera because it's our culture, it's our tradition, and it belongs to our ancestors... I go to the festivals. In Purmamarca they conserve the tradition.²⁴ It's very beautiful (Interview August 25, 2013).

However, coplera Gloria Federico of Iruya told me that evangelical sects that are gaining traction in Quebrada towns adamantly oppose homage to Pachamama and coplas in her honor. In fact, on the same street as the Tilcara bookstore, I often heard stern-sounding sermons and fervent hymns coming from a tiny building whose door was open – so I could catch a glimpse of the preacher at a lectern and some twenty or so participants facing him in straight-backed chairs (Interview August 28, 2013).

²³ In the copy Josefina gave me, the copla ended here, whereas normally there would be an additional verse.

²⁴ Josefina refers to the annual *Encuentro* (Encounter/Festival) of coplera/os held in Purmamarca.

Coplera Titina Gaspar of Tilcara adamantly identified the copla as indigenous and entirely apart from Christian traditions.

The copla is ours. . .It is the most important manifestation of identity that we have, the indigenous manifestation of the harvest...Sometimes people mix Pachamama with religious figures, but it's not that way. It's a thing that's completely apart. For example, when we open the mouth of Pachamama, there are people who make the sign of the cross, but that cannot be because it isn't (Christian). We are receiving the energy that comes from the depths of the earth. Pachamama, Madre Tierra . . . (Interview August 25, 2013).

Titina experiences the coplas in homage to Pachamama as an expression of her connection to her indigenous ancestors and she is not about to make concessions to the religion of Hispanicization.

Engaging Tourists with Coplas

Tourists are part of life in the Quebrada community. The Quebrada does not receive as many tourists in July and August as it does during Carnival time in February. I encountered none from the US or Canada. Still, I noticed small numbers of winter tourists from other areas of Argentina and Latin America. On the afternoon I arrived at Peña Altitud, Miguel warned me that increased tourism had led to an increase in pickpockets preying on outsiders. Although most tourists gravitate towards archeological ruins, sun-kissed cliffs, pan-Andean music, artisanal displays, and local cuisine, sometimes Spanish-speaking tourists take an interest in coplas. Josefina Vilte has composed coplas to welcome tourists who visit Maimará. She gave me a copy of this one:

<i>Le daremos la bienvenida y a los señores turistas</i>	I welcome you And the tourists
<i>Le daremos la bienvenida y a los señores turistas</i>	I welcome you And the tourists

<i>Ha llegado a mi pueblo donde se respira aire puro</i>	You have arrived to my town Where you breathe pure air
<i>Ha llegado a mi pueblo donde se respira aire puro</i>	You have arrived to my town Where you breathe pure air

<i>Maimareña soy señores de la provincia de Jujuy</i>	I am a Maimará woman, sirs From the province of Jujuy
<i>Maimareña soy señores de la provincia de Jujuy</i>	I am a Maimará woman, sirs From the province of Jujuy

<i>De los cerros que aparecen En el medio vivo yo</i>	From the hills that appear I live between them
<i>De los cerros que aparecen En el medio vivo yo</i>	From the hills that appear I live between them

I had occasion to experience the copla as a tourist commodity on my visits to Humahuaca. Young children—generally under the age of ten—approached me, offering to perform coplas for money. One little girl, Celesta, let me video her. This is one of the coplas she performed which she said she learned from her mother:

<i>Aguacero paisaje no me mojes mi sombrero</i>	Rainy landscape, don't get my hat wet
<i>Aguacero paisaje no me mojes mi sombrero</i>	Rainy landscape, don't get my hat wet

<i>Agua no te cuesta nada, y a mi me cuesta dinero</i>	Rain doesn't cost you anything, but it costs me money
<i>Agua no te cuesta nada, y a mi me cuesta dinero</i>	Rain doesn't cost you anything, but it costs me money

I recognized the verses from those that Dario had recited in his backyard. This confirmed to me that they were both drawing on community repertoire. Walter Apaza commented:

“In Humahuaca there are kids who sing coplas for money. I’ve heard them and they really know their coplas” (Interview August 14, 2013).

By speaking with various Tilcareños such as artisans in the central plaza, the owner of the tiny, crammed *supermercado*, and the clerk at the local bakery, I came into contact with the meaning of coplas for people of the Quebrada. Sometimes I encountered contradictory understandings. For example, a vendor of weavings in the Tilcara plaza told me passionately that the art of the copla was in *improvisation* and that simply performing known coplas was not doing justice to the art. On the other hand, respected coplero Marco Lopez, whom I met through Claudia, who works in the bakery, stated flatly that he does not have the facility to improvise coplas but draws on the classic repertoire (Interview August 23, 2013).

The Annual *Encuentro*

One particular event represents, and, in some measure, explains the resilience of the copla as a tradition in the Quebrada. It is the Encuentro (Encounter/Meeting) that has occurred on the second Saturday of January in the town of Purmamarca for the past thirty-one years. Several copleras/os I interviewed expressed sympathy for me that I would not be in the Quebrada to experience this event. Supported by the volunteer labor of local copleras and without commercial underwriting, the event attracts hundreds of copleras and copleros from all over the Northwest. The organizers don’t like to call it a festival because it revolves around the relationship among copleros/as. The Encuentro gets local press coverage but is extremely low-key compared to the glitzy, high-tech Cosquin Folk Festival in the province of Cordoba (which features both folklorized

“traditional” and hybrid kinds of music). The event is, however, described in English and Spanish on an Argentina travel website under the link *Festivals and Celebrations at the Humahuaca Ravine*:

On January’s second Saturday, Purmamarca invites copleros from the ravine, the Puna and also from the Valleys to a huge human circle where men and women present their coplas full of poetry, humor and protest. The “*contrapunto*” is a competition between two copleros. It starts early in the afternoon and it may last till dawn.”²⁵

The reason the copla performances do not start until the afternoon is that the participants enjoy a huge breakfast together in morning. No outsiders are permitted. No souvenirs may be sold in the encuentro space. When the copleras/os begin performing, onlookers have to put up with conditions inhospitable to typical tourists: the organizers proudly disallow microphones, do *not* use a raised stage but instead have participants assemble in the central plaza, and lastly, the participants perform in large, traditional *ruedas*, facing *one another* rather than facing the onlookers.

“We come together as copleros from different places but with no commercial interests or political positions...only to conserve our culture. That is why it attracts so many participants,”²⁶ volunteer coordinator Selva Vilte told a local on-line news reporter in January 2014, “because it is something authentic, made with love from the earth and from our culture.”²⁷

The rueda of the copleras/os in the Encuentro provides an appropriate metaphor expressing the position of the copla quebradeña. The participants in the circle are turned

²⁵ www.argentinatravel.com

²⁶ www.jujuyalmomento.com

²⁷ www.jujuyalmomento.com

inward to see one another. What happens outside the rueda is unimportant. The traditional performance of coplas is about people expressing themselves to one another, sharing in communal identity, appreciating their treasured vehicle of communication. It is the opposite of folklorization.

Chapter Seven: Coplas Delivering Socio-Political Critique

*Las coplas no se las vende
las coplas no se las graba
las coplas son de los Coyas
orgullo de la Quebrada*

Coplas are not for sale
Coplas are not for recording
Coplas belong to the Kolla
Pride of the Quebrada.

(Machaca 1996: 195)

The copla above, collected by Rene Machaca, references Kolla (using the spelling *coya*) identity and pride and contests the materialism of the dominant power structure. In rural Jujuy, where adult literacy began making inroads only at the turn of the twentieth century, coplas could transmit messages about hard economic and sociocultural realities. For campesinos, working as peons on vast ranches, the production of coplas documented processes of domination and resistance that rural/indigenous communities had suffered for 500 years. This oral-tonal literature was particularly strong in the neighboring Jujuy communities of the Puna and the Quebrada and survives in some measure even when it is disengaged from its original social context of production and manifestation (Taboada 1996). Taboada cites another such copla:

*Al rico le ponen silla
al pobre le ponen banco
y ahí se queda el pobrecito
como tronco medio' el
campo*

They give the rich a chair
To the poor they give a bench
And here sits the little poor man
Like a trunk in the middle of a
field. (Taboada 1996: 148)

Rene Machaca recalled other anonymous coplas that express the rich-poor dichotomy:

*El rico vive del pobre
el pobre de su pobreza
lo único que yo tengo
es dolor de cabeza.*

The rich live off the poor
The poor from their poverty
The only thing I have
Is a headache.
(Machaca 1996: 194)

Rene emphasized the importance of the oral dissemination of such coplas even today in a society where there is still limited writing and not much use of the Internet. Taboada has enumerated the elements of the copla that fit what she terms a model of collective memory and resistance (Taboada 1996: 144).

- (1) An oral production originating from an indigenous person/campesino,
- (2) Linked closely to concrete, socio-historical experience of subjects that produce it,
- (3) Dialectical and open in its modes of production
- (4) Capable of multiple meanings ... in its mode of social significance,
- (5) Pointing to an equally dialectical dynamic between subject and community,
- (6) Sustained by a vast oral memory constructed historically,
- (7) Whose manifestation always is articulated with a form of song,
- (8) Currently in a process of crisis and transition.

While Taboada's presentation deserves serious consideration, I find the above elements too encompassing of the genre. For example, I spoke with a number of copleras/os who made no mention of indigenous identity. Some recounted composing coplas for the festival day devoted to godparents, for birthdays, and other occasions one would not classify as "socio-historical experience." Furthermore, the dialectic stated in (3) and (6) is not sufficiently developed to support the conclusion. Certainly there is a dialectical effect going on in presenting contrasts between the rich and the poor, the haves and have-nots, but I would assume the subject/coplero/a would be aligned with his/her community rather than placed in opposition to it. My field research suggests that points (4), (6), and (8) have validity. The way classic coplas circulate in the community and are frequently performed and the number of coplas collected by Juan Alfonso Carrizo do suggest a vast common repertoire. Some of the coplas critical of government action and inaction make use of multiple meanings to cloak their critique. I cannot fully agree

with (7), that coplas are always sung, since copleros Walter Apaza and Rene Machaca quoted coplas to me as spoken poetry.

To illustrate that the copla of resistance represents an unbroken tradition, Taboada cites coplas that circulated during the 1990s such as:

<i>En mi pueblo de Argentina todos se buscan trabajo pero al gobierno de turno no le importa ni un carajo</i>	In my village in Argentina Everyone's looking for work But the government in charge Doesn't give a damn (Taboada 1996: 154)
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Walter Apaza composes coplas on a variety of subjects and has his antennae out for new ones that are “going around,” relishing those that challenge the status quo. “Now for example, we’re having elections in Argentina, he told me. “And there is a copla going around about the elections:

<i>Que año eleccione Yo me voy a presenter Quiero conseguir un cargo Ya no quiero trabajar</i>	What an election year I'm going to run I want to get a position I don't want to work anymore
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“And this is a parody, an irony that people express,” Walter added with enthusiasm. His stance in relation to the politically-tinged content of the copla is distanced and ironic yet in the interview I also sensed his excitement that this copla was alive; in fact, he stated, “These are more modern, more current creations that are going to reactivate the copla” (Interview August 14, 2013).

Coplera Rufina in Tilcara told me that if I wanted to talk to copleras who were “not afraid to use politics in their verses – I don’t do that,” Rufina assured me – I should speak to Ernestina and Candelaria Cari (Interview August 7, 2013). Among the best-known copleras in Humahuaca, the elderly Cari sisters are both retired teachers.

Candelaria could only stay a short time, so I got to know Ernestina better.²⁸ She taught at rural elementary schools for the provincial government for over thirty years. This involved visiting indigenous communities to encourage parents to send their children to school. From the start, she was interested in the rural culture:

I held meetings to introduce myself in their communities, I attended their fiestas and I became accustomed to the rhythm of the fiestas. They taught me to sing coplas and I started to sing with them. Well, but before that my own parents sang coplas and that was for fiestas, too (Interview August 21, 2013).

She shared that when she was younger, coplas were not normally performed publicly in urban centers but were part of rural community life. However, stimulated by what they were learning from the communities they served, Ernestina and Candelaria started performing coplas in public. In her backyard, Ernestina performed a copla criticizing the government:

*Hasta mi libro de copla
lo quieren privatizar
Culpa de este gobierno
no se cansan de robar*

Even my book of coplas
They want to privatize
The government is at fault,
they don't get tired of stealing

*Pobrecita mi cajita
no quiere dar su sonido
Me ha dicho vos no sos
mi dueño, vos sos un
desconocido*

My poor little caja
doesn't want to give her sound
She has told me: "You are not
my owner, you are a stranger"

*Que haremos compañerita
con tanta gente sentada*

What will we do, my little
friend,
with so many people sitting
around?

*Parecen _____²⁹ helado de
la cosecha pasada*

They seem like a frozen (crop?)
from last year's harvest

²⁸ See photo of Ernestina holding her caja in Appendix B.

²⁹ From the context, the mumbled word I could not decipher seemed to refer to a local crop.

*Metas nuevas, metas nuevas
como _____ en la cueva
Si no saben cantar coplas
siquiera la boca muevan*

New goals, new goals
like _____ in the cave
If you don't know how to recite
coplas,
at least move your mouth

In the space of eight distinct verses, Ernestina has poked fun at privatization, accused the government of stealing, of sitting around doing nothing, and of having nothing of value to say. Unfortunately I could not decipher her comparison to something “in the cave.” It seemed to refer to a myth or legend. The reference to “new goals” might be mocking the government’s ambitious but hollow promises of change. The third line from the bottom appears to be referencing a local crop but was unintelligible; my understanding was a parallel between the lifelessness on the part of leaders and a frozen crop from last year’s harvest.

Ernestina told me that she and her sisters delivered caustically critical coplas during the Dirty War (the 1976-1983 brutal dictatorship) and got away with it:

What happens here in our country concerning education, politics, the economy, agriculture – all these subjects we’ve spoken about. We pull out all the things that aren’t working well in society. But we tell it in a funny way so it comes to the public with laughter. Nobody bothers us, knowing us as Kollas, indigenous people that we are (Interview August 21, 2013).

Ernestina’s final sentence implies that government officials would not feel threatened by mere, powerless Kollas. The Cari sisters compose and improvise verses on a variety of subjects and have attracted the interest of folklorists from outside Argentina:

At first people were critical of us, but we kept on doing it, singing what the rural people really sang, not what the urban people interpreted. Visitors from the outside became interested and we actually went and sang coplas in many countries – Switzerland, Mexico, France, Spain, Israel – showing what was really the copla, the indigenous music (Interview August 21, 2013).

Ernestina also performed tamer coplas for me, but I still noticed an edge:

<i>Un gato y un abogado dentro de un pozo se cayeron</i>	A cat and a lawyer fell into a hole
<i>Como los dos tienen uñas a fuerza de uñas salieron</i>	Since both have claws, they both clawed their way out
<i>En la falda de aquel cerro suspiraba aconsejar</i>	At the base of that hill, he sighed his advice
<i>El suspiro decía "hago nada y cobro igual"</i>	The sigh said, "I do nothing and I charge the same"
<i>Hecha la mano afuera que me quiero despedir</i>	Put your hand out, I want to say goodbye
<i>Mis compañeros se han ido, yo también me quiero ir.</i>	My companions have left, I, too, wish to leave.

Evidently people in the Quebrada enjoy poking fun at lawyers as much as their urban counterparts do. Certainly themes of contesting or mocking the dominant culture are evident in coplas. Relevant to this are some written copla verses I discovered on the outskirts of Tilcara while searching for a musical instrument maker's house. Painted in large uneven black letters on a grey concrete public wall, the effect was angry and the words bore this out. Beside the copla was a painting of three indigenous faces contorted in agony. Beside these were images of a pile of skulls and a caja. Large capital letters above the copla and images stated:

<u>NO</u> A LA MINERIA A CIELO ABIERTO	No to open pit mining
<u>SI</u> A LA VIDA, A EL AGUA	Yes to life, to water

This is the pair of coplas:

<i>Esta copla hoy le canta</i>	Today this copla is sung to
<i>el viento a la cordillera</i>	you by the wind in the mountain range
<i>La minera a cielo abierto</i>	Open-pit mining
<i>nos mata el agua y la tierra</i>	Kills our water and land
<i>Cantan las aguas del rio</i>	The waters of the river sing
<i>También él vino a coplear</i>	It too comes to sing coplas
<i>Con la minera de afuera</i>	That foreign mining companies
<i>Ni agua ni vino e'i tomar</i>	Aren't here for water or wine

Having no camera with me to capture the sight of this message (and unsure if I would ever find the spot again), I copied down the words and notated the images that accompanied them. My host Miguel later told me that there was a conflict over foreign-owned open-pit mining site some miles from Tilcara, but I was not able to find out what group or individual was responsible for the message. How interesting that this poetic and typically musical genre so connected with orality was used to deliver a written message of protest. My thought is that the writer wanted to use a medium that identified with the Quebrada community.

While coplas obviously can serve as conduits for socio-political critique and even protest, I do not see evidence that all coplas questioning authority always do so from an indigenous point of view, as Taboada contends. Nor do I agree with her position that protest defines the copla. Protest is an important dimension of this multi-faceted phenomenon which also includes homage to Pachamama, playful contrapuntos, verses extolling nature, and sung poetry for various other ritual and secular occasions.

Chapter Eight: Seeking Coplas in a Municipal Celebration

One morning in mid-August when I checked in at the tourist office for news of festivals, Juan Toccejon, the jovial cultural liaison who had connected me with local copleras, greeted me jubilantly, “On August 22 you are going to see our three great copleras perform—Mathilde, Indalecia, and Serafina!” But in a hurry, as usual, he told me that this would happen for the Jujuy Exodus celebration starting at 6:00 p.m. in the plaza. A few days before the event, I saw a few posters around town advertising *El Éxodo* with a painting of a noble-looking military commander atop a white horse. By that time I thought I had pieced together the historical side of this celebration, a municipal event celebrating a regional/provincial drama.

The hero on horseback was General Manuel Belgrano, Commander of the Revolutionary Army of the North during the Argentine War of Independence. He was with his troops near San Salvador de Jujuy when news arrived that Cochabamba, an important city in the Viceroyalty, had fallen to royalist forces. It appeared that the royalist army’s next objective was to invade the Jujuy region. With orders from the Argentine Revolutionary Triumvirate, General Belgrano swept through San Salvador de Jujuy and the nearby towns in the Quebrada and Puna districts, commanding people to abandon their homes, pack what they could, and walk south to the province of Tucumán to take refuge. His orders from the Triumvirate were to burn their towns, a scorched earth strategy. The celebration of the Exodus gives the impression that the brave people of the Jujuy area, inspired with revolutionary fervor and loyalty to the cause, obeyed their general and trudged south to Tucumán, caravan-style, shepherded by General Belgrano

on his snow white steed. The general later led his troops to victory over the Spanish royal forces and helped launch the independent nation of Argentina.

The patriotic account omits a detail I found in documentation at the Tilcara library: any residents refusing to vacate their homes and head south were to be executed on the spot (Ministerio de Educación 2010:12). It also fails to acknowledge the sizeable indigenous population that would have participated in the Exodus.

On August 22, equipped with an audio recorder and video camera, I arrived at plaza of Tilcara well before six, eager to land an advantageous spot from which to video the copleras. The plaza was deserted except for a few artisanal vendors who were breaking down their stalls. A modest mobile stage platform faced Avenida General Belgrano, Tilcara's main street; a large pile of logs sat in the middle of one of the streets running alongside the plaza. After a few minutes I noticed that a block away, a narrow stream of people was walking past the plaza. I asked someone where everybody was going. To the bridge, I was told. A few minutes later, approaching the bridge, I heard the amplified voice of a city official through a bad P.A system, intoning about the brave people of Jujuy and the Exodus we were memorializing. The scene was chaotic. Roughly 100 people dressed mainly like 19th century lower class criollos (whites)--long dresses and bonnets for the women, leather vests and boots for the men--were standing by wagons, some of which were covered with arched tops protected by cowhide. There were groups of men playing panpipes, oblivious of one another and the dissonance. I noticed a few donkeys here and there and a lone llama. People were gabbing and laughing and generally ignoring the solemn words coming over the PA system. A snow-white horse

carrying a dashing silver-locked gentleman in nineteenth-century military regalia clopped among the crowd. General Belgrano, no doubt. As night fell, streams of onlookers arrived from all parts of town and pressed down the hill leading to the riverbed, where, illuminated by floodlights, six flimsy wooden huts shook in the wind. To one side, was a larger hut with a crude wooden cross sticking out from its roof. Eventually, a man bearing a torch darted out among the huts and set fire to one after the other. The crowd cheered. "Viva Jujuy!" yelled the voice at the microphone, and the crowd echoed him. "Viva Jujuy!" "Viva Tilcara!" "Viva Argentina!" And so on. (I noticed that there was no "Viva la Quebrada de Humahuaca!") Then the amplified voice rhapsodized about the "patria" and the sacrifices of so many while the noisy crowd moved on to the street and headed back toward the plaza. The costumed groups and wagon-pullers were buzzing around one another, trying to get into a specific order.

It's difficult to say when the actual parade began. Clusters of people were marching down Avenida Belgrano as General Belgrano on the white horse galloped back and forth. Eventually, the costumed "Exodus population" began to arrive, waving at the crowd and sometimes having trouble making their wagon wheels turn. The llama and donkeys behaved themselves. A pair of men bearing a third, bandaged man on a stretcher had a mishap or else deliberately created great comic relief when the bandaged man fell off the stretcher and was left behind for a few paces. He yelled after them, they stopped, and he ran over to the stretcher and lay down amid laughter from the crowd.

Interspersed with the "Exodus population" were a few brass bands and some local community groups. This included a delegation of several indigenous women

representing the Centro Indigeno Artisanal, a government-sponsored weaving cooperative with a shop located on Avenida Belgrano. Holding up a simple cloth sign that spanned the street and looking affable if not enthusiastic, the women were not in any sort of costume but instead were wearing jeans and tee-shirts³⁰.

Seated on the curb surrounded by crowd, I watched the parade for over half an hour, hoping that the copleras that Juan Toccejon promised would materialize. General Belgrano galloped back and forth as the official at the microphone proclaimed repeatedly that the hero of Jujuy was leading his flock to safety. Finally the procession petered out and people wandered in various directions. I drifted with a group to the plaza.

Approaching the center of the plaza, I saw under a spreading oak what could have been a mirage: a gaping hole in the ground surrounded by plates of food bottles of wine, beer, and soft drinks, and bags of coca leaves. A double line had already formed in front of the mouth of Pachamama and copleras Indalecia Prado, Serafina Sajáma and Matilde Choque were handing out ceremonial cigarettes. The tantalizing aroma of a stew filled the air as it bubbled in an immense cauldron over fiery logs in a large barbecue nearby. Video-ready, I decided to stand apart from the line of participants just in case copla singing started. The people in the line--there couldn't have been more than fifty--looked solemn in contrast to the general mood of the parade. The only exception was a drunken man who was babbling about Pachamama and making the people around him

³⁰ At the Centro's shop on Avenida Belgrano, one can buy llama ponchos officially labeled "authentic," which means, a weaver explained to me, that they have no synthetic fibers and are not from Bolivia. They also sell cute stuffed llamas. Anthropologist-coplero Rene Machaca is an educational consultant to the Centro cooperative.

look uncomfortable. As in Dario's first ceremony and the ceremony at the library, a person was kneeling by the hole, handing offerings to two participants at a time and directing them to synchronize their movements. Every so often a person crossed himself or herself while kneeling before the mouth.

There had been no PA announcement about the Pachamama ceremony.

Everyone in the line made an offering but each person was just given two or three items to offer to Pachamama. Then Indalecia knelt down by the mound of food offerings and said, "Permiso, Madre Tierra... (I didn't catch all the words) en esta ceremonia." She covered the hole with earth.

As this portion of the observance came to an end, I noticed Rene Machaca, dressed in a red wool poncho and tan felt brimmed hat, standing by the tree; he was holding a caja in one hand. Serafina and Matilde tried to form a circle with the people near the tree. It took several minutes for it to come together, sort of, especially as the drunk man was now drawling coplas which no one seemed to want to repeat. Eventually Indalecia, Serafina and Mathilde managed to nudge people into the semblance of a circle and Rene started to beat the caja. But when Serafina tried to sing, the drunkard drowned out her voice. Rene then took charge and sang copla lines that the group repeated, following the rhythm of the caja, which he held at waist level and played with one hand. The flow was short-lived. Now a drunk woman clutching a wine bottle entered the circle and shouted intermittently. The word "puta" (whore) was audible at one point and Indalecia chided her to have respect. Here are coplas and fragments of coplas I was able

to catch during the somewhat chaotic rueda. The first copla seems to be commenting on the “misbehavior” that was occurring:

*Asi soy cuando yo quiero,
cuando yo quiero así soy
Así soy cuando yo quiero,
cuando yo quiero así soy*

I am like this when I want,
when I want, I am like this
I am like this when I want,
when I want, I am like this

*De la pena me retiro
y a la diversión me voy
De la pena me retiro
y a la diversión me voy*

I leave pain behind
and now I am going to enjoy myself
I leave pain behind
and now I am going to enjoy myself

*Ayer te mandé una carta
y dentro de la carta hay una foto
[inaudible]*

Yesterday I sent you a letter
and in the letter was a photo
[Drunk man shouted over second line.]

*Todos las vidas son buenas,
la mejor es del casado
Todos las vidas son buenas,
la mejor es del casado
Tiene la cama caliente
y el puchero asegurado
Tiene la cama caliente
y el puchero asegurado*

All lives are good
but the life of a married man is the best
All lives are good
but the life of a married man is the best
He has a warm bed
and soup guaranteed
He has a warm bed
and soup guaranteed

*Todos las vidas son buenas,
la mejor es del soltero
[inaudible]*

All lives are good,
but the life of a bachelor is the best
[Drunk woman drown out lyrics of next
line.]

*Pobrecita mi cajita,
no quiere dar su sonido
Me ha dicho “vos no sos mi dueño,
vos sos un desconocido”*

My poor little caja
doesn't want to give her sound
She told me “You are not my owner,
You're a stranger”

I recognized the copla about “the life of the married man” and “the bachelor’s life” as well as the one about “my poor little caja” from Ernestina Cari’s backyard performance.

After a few minutes, I saw Rene, Mathilde, Serafina and Indalecia nod to one another;

they slowed down the final verse of a copla in deliberate unison. It was over. People who were in the rueda shook hands with the copleras, Rene, and one another, then wandered off into the chilly night. Some of us headed in the direction of the aromatic soup that two women were ladling from a cauldron into styrofoam cups.

Were the challada and rueda that took place in the plaza a part of the Jujuy Exodus celebration as Juan Toccejon had implied? It did not feel like it to me. The observance was not announced on the P.A. It was not part of the official celebration. Yet those who were invested in paying homage to Pachamama seemed to know that it was going to take place.

After I returned to California with my research and began ploughing through recordings to determine what I would transcribe, I did not think I would “use” the August 22 event for this thesis. Watching the videos of the Jujuy Exodus parade and the challada and rueda in the plaza troubled me. In December 2013, after numerous telephone attempts, I reached Juan Toccejon in the Tilcara tourist office, reminded him who I was, and asked him if the Jujuy Exodus celebration was followed by a Pachamama challada and rueda in the plaza every year. He told me that they had been including it for about twenty years. Before I could ask him why the Pachamama observance had not been announced, he had to rush off.

Left to my own resources, I looked at the event in the context of what I had experienced in the Quebrada, what my interviewees had shared, and what the texts of coplas as well as scholarly research suggested. I began to view the status of the observance after the parade as emblematic of the status of indigenous culture in Jujuy. No

Kolla Quebradeños had participated in the costumed re-enactment of the Jujuy Exodus, the “story” part of the parade. I don’t think they were viewed as part of the Argentine historical narrative. I suspect that the women representing the Centro Indigeno Artisanal, who were wearing jeans and tee-shirts, probably walked in the parade because government grants support the Centro weaving cooperative and shop; their presence gave some measure of visibility to the Kolla and also showed the public that the dominant power structure was doing right by the Indians. I suspect that the Pachamama observance in the plaza served a similar purpose.

This had been a practice for some twenty years. Twenty years ago indigenous visibility had been increasing with land claims from groups in the Northwest and elsewhere in the country. By inviting—or allowing—indigenous community leaders to organize a *challada* in the plaza after the Exodus event, Tilcara officials might have been acknowledging this raised profile. At the same time, this “inclusion” in the Exodus event without an official announcement represented the ambiguous place of indigenous culture vis-à-vis the dominant culture—quietly acknowledged yet invisible to the majority.

The *copla*, too, while cherished in the Quebrada, has an ambiguous status in the larger cultural arena of Jujuy and Argentina.

Conclusion

In the previous eight chapters, I have emphasized the interrelated roles of indigenous and Quebrada identity which give rise to coplas that pay homage to Pachamama, animate community celebrations, and contest the dominant power structure. As I have shown, for some Quebradeños, coplas provide a profound link to indigenous ancestry and cultural heritage. Dario and Kenti, who performed them at Dario's family observance, were enacting their Kolla identity. Copleras Rufina, Indalecia, Titina, Ernestina, Matilde, and Josefina spoke reverently of Pachamama and performed coplas in homage to her that indicated a deep connection. Coplero-anthropologist Rene's earliest associations to the genre were the coplas sung for the festive marking of the cattle in the Kolla community of his childhood. Diego recalled his Kolla grandparents in happy memories of coplas they sang for him. Incorporated into their personal experience of coplas was identification with both indigenous identity and the Quebrada community.

My research also led me to conclude that a sense of Quebradeño identity does not always imply indigenous ties. Walter and Tomas spoke of copla production in a broader community context. Performing contrapuntos at Carnival time and for other occasions rallies the community around the verbal talents of copleras/os, articulating and poking fun at gender and even generational tensions.

Another way of experiencing the copla is to use it—or enjoy it—as a tool for criticizing the dominant culture. Ernestina and Candelaria Cari verbally skewer the powers-that-be with comic bravado and experience some sense of agency telling things as they are. Walter feels satisfaction hearing and transmitting jibes against the government,

the latest coplas “going around.” Rene enjoys classic ironic coplas about haves and have-nots. The well-known coplas about the gulf between the rich and the poor give agency not only to the original composer of the copla but to everyone who shares it. Sometimes viewed from the outside as quaintly traditional, the copla has become a structure for quietly contesting the hegemony of the dominant culture.

But how enduring is the copla tradition? It may already be evident that my interviewees were mainly over forty. When I asked them about the future of the copla, most expressed concern over the lack of transmission to the younger generation. Rene Machaca blames the schools:

Schools sometimes promote coplas in some celebrations but it’s like a folkloric event--superficial, folklorized, removed from the original context, without historical explanations so that the children don’t get an idea of its value (Interview August 22, 2013).

Ernesto Kenti Vázquez also complains that schools in the Quebrada ignore local culture.

They don’t teach us to sing coplas, they don’t teach us to give thanks to the Pachamama because the curricula are standardized . . . So we learn about the rest of the world — Asia, Africa, Europe — but not about our own (regional) culture. So this element results in children and adolescents who grow up with different concepts and don’t value or recognize their own culture. Some adolescents . . . like to sing coplas . . . mostly in festivals and contrapunto competitions. Then the other . . . adolescents – the majority – are not interested (in coplas), are embarrassed about it (Interview August 12, 2013).

Kenti introduced me to one of the most active young copleras in Humahuaca. Jéscica Quispe,³¹ aged seventeen, told me she had learned to sing coplas from her parents and grandparents. Growing up, she heard and sang coplas at family fiestas and participated in

³¹ See a photo of Jéscica in Appendix B.

her first competition when she was thirteen. She feels a responsibility to pass on the tradition even though most people her age show little interest in it. They prefer the cumbia:

I feel that at my age it is difficult to rescue our culture, but I do it because of all the work our grandparents did for many years. I sing coplas at school . . .for all my friends and for all the children at the college . . . I don't care what some people think because I find that our culture is being lost because children don't value it . . .They care more about music from other cultures (Interview August 16, 2013).

Jésica showed me a thick notebook, leafing through the pages and commenting:

I copy down coplas. There's one from my papa . . .There are coplas on everything that happens in Argentina . . .I always like singing them to children. I use this one in contrapuntos; this one is on the weather; these are coplas I learned for competition . . . (Interview August 16, 2013).

In Tilcara, a coplera more than five decades older than Jésica also keeps a notebook. Titina Gaspar is teaching her two granddaughters to sing coplas. She plans to pass the notebook on to them as a legacy. Another Tilcareño, Marco Lopez, age thirty-four, has learned hundreds of coplas from his grandparents and performs for special occasions in his extended family. He has no coplero friends his age and did not share the practice at school. Josefina Vilte of Maimará told me, "Now I teach it to young people who want to learn because they don't teach it in the schools."

Taped to the the darkly-grained wooden door of Maria Ramos's house in Humahuaca are two type-written sheets, one advertising free weaving classes and the other giving contact information for the Centro de Documentación, Información y

Conocimiento Yachay Tawantisuyu³², the organizational umbrella for Maria's youth group. The adolescents spend a significant part of their meeting time learning coplas from Maria. During our outdoor interview, she told me that her group was leaving for Mexico the next day to perform coplas in an international festival:

People will say that the coplas are being lost. But . . . we have a kind of group of young people so that it isn't lost. They are organized and have their own president and vice president. There are youth and children who sing coplas. I have my grandson of six years old and he sings coplas (Interview August 12, 2013).

Maria is always featured prominently as a performer at the annual Encuentro in Purmamarca, perhaps the most ambitious undertaking to safeguard the copla. Selva Vilte, the event's 2014 coordinator, told a local reporter, "These days the copla is in danger of being lost; young people are ashamed to sing coplas because (of) foreign cultural (influences) . . . These encuentros serve to demonstrate the value of our culture."³³

But isn't anybody trying to modernize, to *hybridize* the copla? So far I have found little evidence of this. When I was searching for recordings of copla performance in Ma Koka, owner Diego recommended a CD of coplera Mariana Carrizo from Salta Province. The cover was arresting: in black and white, the face of an indigenous woman in her twenties, her hair pulled back tightly and, across the bottom edge, sun-burnished golden cliffs. In relatively small dark red script was the title: *Coplas de sangre*. Coplas of blood? I paused. The title seemed to sensationalize coplas. Diego coaxed me into buying it: "She does really great things with the copla."

³² The "Yachay Tawantinsuyu [Quechua for "Inca Knowledge"] Center for Documentation, Information and Knowledge"

³³ Local news website www.jujuyalmomento.com

It was true. Carrizo's lush, supple voice, the dramatic Salta tonada with its wide interval leaps, the clearly resonating caja, and her use of rubato made for riveting music. The addition of guitar and/or flute backup in some of the copla performances gave them a more contemporary flavor. The CD interspersed these renditions with Argentine folk songs such as *zambas*. A telephone interview with the singer confirmed to me that she had been steeped in the tradition since childhood and conveyed her sincere respect for the genre (Interview August 22, 2013). But Mariana did not sing coplas in the Quebrada tonada although her CD was for sale in a Tilcara bookstore. While her performances might represent the genre in general, deftly hybridized, and popular at the high-profile Cosquin Folk Festival where she is often featured, they were not based on coplas of the Quebrada.

In the process of conducting field research, reading, interpreting, and writing, my own understanding of the tradition has changed. When I learned of the genre, I first treated it as a musical object to be tracked down and studied. Participating in a rueda, I discovered the copla as a communal experience. Performance situations were elusive because performing coplas is still more of a ritual, familial and/or community practice. With some half dozen folk music peñas in Tilcara and more in Humahuaca, I never once saw a copla performance advertised. Traditional Andean music, yes. Panpipes, quenenas, erkes, and erquenchos abounded. Coplas, no. People conversant with the tradition told me it was too bad that I would not be around for the great Purmamarca Encuentro or for Carnival when you are more likely to hear the contrapuntos performed in public. Apart from the observances I attended, I depended on coplera/os to perform coplas for me to

record or video, but it was understood that this was out of context; they described the context to me as best they could. On the other hand, coplera Maria bursts into a copla anywhere, anytime; daily life is her context for copla making. My quest for contexts in which I could experience coplas continued until my last day in the Quebrada of Humahuaca.

Copla performance continues as a living tradition, beloved of the Quebrada community and known by those who work in tourism, but mainly left alone. It coasts below the radar of the dominant power structure and escapes the notice of most tourists, especially the non-Spanish-speaking ones. The copleras and copleros of the Quebrada do not seek the attention of outsiders in the manner of Aimacha del Valle in neighboring Tucuman province, where they elect a Pachamama queen and mix coplas with gaucho roping tricks. Periodically, the copla Quebradeña surges up for the occasional public celebration or the Encuentro, but it quickly returns to its ambiguous status--only audible, visible, and valuable to those who experience and nurture it.

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Appendix A: Map of the Quebrada of Humahuaca³⁴

³⁴ Map by ©OpenStreetMap contributors (openstreetmap.org) modified to show relevant towns.

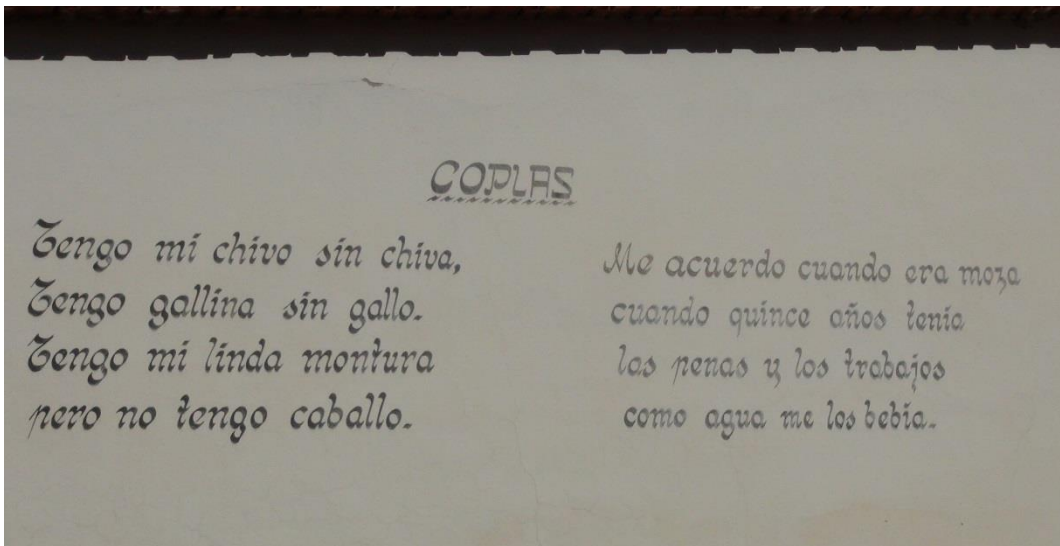


Appendix B: Photos

Humahuaca



Poet, musician, and peña owner Fortunato Ramos



Coplas are painted on the outside wall of Peña de Fortunato.



Dario Castro hosted a family Pachamama observance on the outskirts of Humahuaca. This photo was taken shortly after the copla circle ended. No photography was allowed during the ritual.



Ernesto Kenti Vázquez directs the Humahuaca Museum of Intangible Heritage.



Seventeen year-old coplera Jésica Quispe shows her personal book of coplas. Some she has collected; others she has composed.



Ernestina Cari holding her caja, performed coplas in her back yard at the request of the author (right).



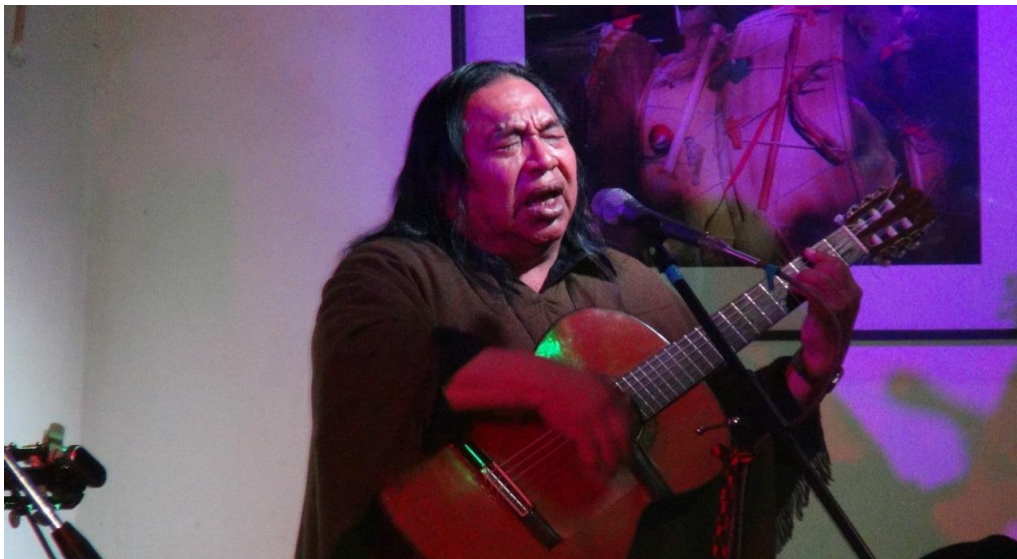
Diego Sajama, seen here with his son, owns the bookstore-café Ma Koka.



Coplero-anthropologist Rene Machaca is an educational consultant to the weaving cooperative in the Quebrada.



Rufina Cari has self-published a book of her coplas and a CD with another coplera from Tilcara.



Folksinger Tomás Lipán, shown performing at Peña Altitud, often sings about the natural beauty of the Quebrada .



Coplero Walter Apaza directs Tilcara's Museum of Sculpture.



This vendor in the Tilcara Plaza declared adamantly that the art of the copla lies in improvisation. Anything else is mere imitation, he said.