JANE LOU COLLINS

Unseasonal Migrations

The Effects of Rural Labor Scarcity in Peru

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THE EFFECTS OF RURAL LABOR SCARCITY IN PERU

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TO MIKE

Contents

List of Figures and Tables ix

Preface xi

Acknowledgments xvii

1 · Seasonal Migration to the Tambopata Valley 3

2 · The Prelude to Tambopata: Historical Precedents for Migration 29

3 · The Opening of a New Productive Area 67

4 · Smallholder Agriculture on the Altiplano 87

5 · Peasant Diversification and Labor Scarcity 121

6 · The Ecological and Social Effects of Bizonal Production 151

7 · Conclusions 169

Appendix A · The Aymara Phonetic Alphabet 179

Appendix B · Arrival of the Adventists in Moho, 1918 180

Appendix C · Personal Accounts of Migration to the Tambopata Valley 182

Reference List 187

Index 209

Figures and Tables

Figure 1.1 Peru 5
Figure 1.2 Department of Puno 6
Figure 4.1 District of Moho, Ayllu Divisions 95
Figure 4.2 District of Moho, Communities 96
Figure 5.1 Distribution of Production Tasks throughout the Annual Cycle in Highland Agriculture 134
Figure 5.2 Monthly Labor Requirements in Highland Agriculture 138
Figure 5.3 Simplified Production Schedule for Highland Households, 1980 143

Table 3.1 Labor Required for Lowland Crop Production 72
Table 3.2 Population Growth in the Tambopata Valley, 1898-1978 74
Table 3.3 World Coffee Prices, 1948-1982 81
Table 3.4 Peruvian Coffee Exports, 1952-1982 82
Table 3.5 Size of Land Claims in the Tambopata Valley, 1951-1959 84
Table 4.1 Energy Sources Used for Farming in Huancané Province, 1972 88
Table 4.2 Labor Productivity of Land in Potato Production, Selected Regions of Peru, 1972 93
Table 4.3 Ayllus and Communities, District of Moho, 1980 98
Table 4.4 Land Cultivated per Family and per Capita, Lakeside Communities of the District of Moho, 1980 100
Table 4.5 Distribution of Land to Crops in Lakeside and Higher-Altitude Communities of the District of Moho, 1980 102
Table 4.6 Estimated Yields of Main Crops in Lakeside and Higher-Altitude Communities of the District of Moho, 1980 107

Table 4.7 Inheritance of Names in the District of Moho, 1627-1882 110
Table 4.8 Labor Obligations by Affinal Kinship Categories in the District of Moho 113
Table 5.1 Major Crops of the Department of Puno: Yields and Land in Cultivation, 1955 and 1963 147
Table 5.2 Population of the District of Moho, 1940-1981 148
Table 6.1 Landholdings in the Tambopata Valley, 1979 161
Table 6.2 Revenues from Income-Earning Activities in the District of Moho, 1980 166

Preface

SINCE THE 1970s, a number of works have evaluated the utility of the concept of "peasant" or "peasantry." Two important themes have emerged from this work. The first concerns the need for researchers to redirect their efforts away from the definition of boundaries or essential characteristics of peasants, peasant economy, or peasant community and toward the delineation of the relationships that bind small-scale producers to markets and the world economy. Such a shift turns our attention from the search for the essential qualities of peasants to the examination of the social relations that govern their access to resources, the actions taken by the state or other classes to control the way they produce, and the claims on their labor or the products of their labor exercised by members of dominant groups.

Roseberry (1983), for example, has proposed that we study processes of proletarianization, rather than "peasants," in order to capture the nature of the transitions occurring in agrarian contexts. He suggests that, rather than practicing a typological exercise in which peasants are reified as a category among various other categories, we look at the historical processes by which peasantries are formed and transformed; we must place special emphasis, he argues, on the nature of the connections among the various peoples involved in these historical processes. Following Stavenhagen (1978) and others, he suggests that historical processes of capital accumulation may "maintain" and "create" peasantries, as well as transform them into new classes. In some contexts, this requires the study of "peasantization" alongside that of proletarianization. This shift in emphasis leads researchers away from the study of empirically defined units and static portrayals of peasant social structure to the examination of more fluid relationships and the elaboration of models of agrarian social change.

A second theme that has emerged from the reexamination of the peasant concept emphasizes that former "typological"

models of peasantry do not fit well with the economic and social heterogeneity observed among small-scale producers in rural areas. The recognition of heterogeneity begins with an appreciation of the many kinds of work performed by rural families and the diverse contexts in which they perform it (Deere and Wasserstrom 1980; Figueroa 1984). It goes beyond this, however, to describe the role complexity that such diverse work arrangements imply—the variety of ways in which peasants participate in labor and commodity markets and interact with members of dominant classes. Friedmann (1980), Bernstein and Campbell (1986), de Janvry (1981), and others have developed models describing several of the more important conditions under which peasants have been incorporated into markets, relating these arrangements to the dynamics of uneven capitalist development in the contexts in which they occur.

This volume examines a particular process of peasant market participation in southern Peru. In this area, peasants travel long distances to produce coffee for sale, but they do so seasonally and in conjunction with continued self-provisioning cultivation in their home communities. This "piecing together" by peasants of diverse kinds of production has a long history in colonial and neocolonial contexts; it intensifies in response to certain kinds of economic crises (such as declining prices and wages) and it appears to be becoming more prevalent in many parts of the world today.

In the chapters that follow I attempt to account for the fact that the highland peasants who produce coffee in the Tambopata Valley of southern Peru have not moved there permanently; instead, three generations of migrants have continued a pattern of traveling seasonally to the area. Focusing on the district of Moho in Huancané Province, on the northeastern shore of Lake Titicaca in the department of Puno (see Figure 1.2 below), I review the history of the migration and examine the social relationships existing in the highlands that make such migration both necessary and possible. I then show how migration has altered highland productive regimens, and how continued food production in the highlands affects migrants' use of resources in the lowland coffee region.

The research on which this book is based began in 1977, during a three-month period when I was gathering data for a master's thesis on southern Peruvian communities. My research goal at that time was to determine the effect of agrarian reform measures on peasant communities on the north side of Lake Titicaca. In preparation for my fieldwork, I read *Las migraciones altiplánicas y la colonización de Tambopata*, a book by the Peruvian anthropologist Héctor Martínez. I was fascinated by his account of migration to lowland valleys and by the differences between his description of the production of coffee by highlanders in Tambopata and what I knew of more "traditional" Andean patterns of resource use at both high and low altitudes. After talking with Professor Martínez about his research, I left for Huancané, hoping to be able to learn more about the migration.

I began the project on agrarian reform, establishing myself first in the village of Vilquechico. According to Martínez, this community was not heavily involved in the migration, but I took every opportunity to ask people what they knew about the Tambopata Valley. Initially, I learned very little, but one day, as I returned from interviews in a nearby community, I was offered a ride in a truck carrying a number of people back from the valley to Vilquechico. I climbed in the back and saw a man carving part of a foot plow from a hardwood not found in the highlands. Then I noticed the smell of fruit—the riders offered me oranges and pointed to a bundle of ripe pineapples. They had sold their coffee to the cooperative in the valley and were bringing back fruit, for their children and other relatives, and lowland varieties of hardwood, from which they would fashion a variety of agricultural implements. Their accounts convinced me that the migration bore a crucial relationship to the attempts of the Aymara to break their economic dependence on the elite classes of the region, and that it would provide an interesting case for the investigation of a number of theoretical issues related to the transformation of peasantries.

I returned to Huancané in January of 1980, settling in the district of Moho. With two years of Aymara language training behind me, my language skills allowed me to conduct fieldwork

without a translator. I spent the next twelve months interviewing individuals from nearly half of Moho's thirty-six communities and traveling to the Tambopata Valley to observe the coffee harvest. In addition to participant observation, I conducted various types of interviews and carefully observed and measured labor investment, consumption patterns, and resource allocation. I also consulted historical sources that might help me develop a fuller understanding of the origins of the migration. I worked with my husband, who was involved in his own research project in the region; with agronomists from the Research Center for Rural Development (Centro de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo Rural, or CIDER) of the National Technical University of the Altiplano(UNTA); and with a number of capable and enthusiastic research assistants from Moho communities who took a special interest in the project.

In Chapter 1, I outline the questions that guided my research and discuss the relationship between seasonal migration to the Tambopata Valley and more widespread processes by which peasants are transformed partially, but not completely, into commodity producers. Chapter 2 describes the processes by which the Aymara of the district of Moho began to produce for export markets in the colonial and republican periods. I briefly summarize pre-twentieth-century events and then discuss more fully the growth of exports early in the twentieth century and the class conflicts that developed as exports declined. Chapter 3 examines in detail the process by which early migrants established coffee production in a previously uncultivated frontier zone. In Chapter 4 I describe the regimen of highland production and focus on its ecological constraints, labor requirements, and the social relations that organize it. Based on these data, the discussion in Chapter 5 addresses the complex question of labor scarcity and the issue of complementarity between highland and lowland production systems. The evidence is examined for the existence of labor shortage in diversified peasant production systems that incorporate off-farm activities and for the specific case of seasonal migration to the Tambopata Valley. Chapter 6 reveals labor scarcity to be at the heart of problems of ecological decline in the lowlands and of intracommunity

conflicts and the declining solidarity of kinship networks in the highlands. In Chapter 7 I return to the effect of these developments and processes on the changing class structure of southern Peru and consider their implications for studies of migration and rural social change.

During a period when prominent social scientists "reject the notion of history as a coherent and worthwhile object of study" (Hindess and Hirst 1975:321) and at the same time question the ability of the anthropologist to represent or interpret the reality of another group of people (Tyler 1986), my approach is based on two propositions. The first is that the forces of history are not simply theoretical constructs; they affect the lives of individuals, families, and communities. The second is that, for all our biases in reading history, a materialist interpretation has explanatory power. Because these propositions have been opened to challenge, I make them explicit. They may be discarded as our knowledge increases and new ways of understanding are discovered, but for now they represent the tools at hand.

• • •

All translations from works or texts originally in Spanish or Aymara are my own, unless otherwise noted. Aymara terms are written using the Yapita alphabet, explained in Appendix A. When dollar amounts are given in the text, they are based on dollar-sol exchange rates in 1980 (except for price series data, where real values were calculated).

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During my fieldwork in Peru, Carlos Aramburú and Alejandro Camino of the Catholic University in Lima, Héctor Martínez of San Marcos University, and the late José Sabogal Wiese provided many helpful suggestions. In Puno, members of the Research Center for Rural Development (CIDER) of the National Technical University of the Altiplano oriented me to the realities of agriculture in the highlands. Víctor Bustinza, Oscar Chaquilla, Eleodoro Chahuares, and Rodolfo Machicao were especially generous with their time. Rodolfo Machicao graciously allowed my husband and myself the use of his home in Moho during the research period and introduced us to important district and community leaders. Father Domingo Llanque of the prefecture of Juli also provided assistance and hospitality.

A number of very talented individuals took time from their own studies, research, or projects to serve as research assistants in the field. Among them were Juan Lira Condori, Yolanda López Callo, and Eva Vásquez, all of the district of Moho. Their help in structuring and conducting surveys and in transcription

and translation of Aymara texts was invaluable. Yolanda López Callo, her mother Eustaquia Callo, and her daughter Golda Portillo López became my valued *comadres* and *ahijada* during my stay in the field; Yolanda and Golda returned with my husband and me to the United States, where they stayed from 1981 to 1985 while Yolanda taught Aymara at the University of Florida. I learned much about Aymara culture from them and we truly have become "spiritual kin."

Others in Moho who helped in various ways were Santiago Calli of the community of Sico Pomaoca, Lucio Ticona, and Pedro, Juan, and Abdon Ticona of the community of Sullka. In all of the communities that I visited, people provided a gracious welcome and demonstrated a genuine concern with the issues that would be raised in the research. Their patience during long interviews was appreciated; I learned much about the principles of Aymara reciprocity from these experiences. The governor of the district, as well as local officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, were always willing to answer my questions. The missionary sisters of San José shared the benefits of their long experience in the region, as well as their hospitality.

I owe much to my parents, Annabelle Collins and the late Robert Collins, and my sister, Bonnie Collins Tunney, who have been consistently supportive and have often helped me see my work from a new perspective. Colleagues at the State University of New York at Binghamton, especially Catherine Lutz and Randall McGuire, provided many helpful comments and constructive criticisms of various drafts of this manuscript, as did the two excellent readers for Princeton University Press. Finally, and most important, this book could not have been written without the inspiration, help, and friendship of my husband, Michael Painter. Mike shared both the difficult and the gratifying aspects of all stages of the project: preparation, fieldwork, and writing. His insights, criticisms, and encouragement were invaluable.

Unseasonal Migrations

1

Seasonal Migration to the Tambopata Valley

Any analysis of labor migration must consider . . . the processes of disintegration and change in rural economies and societies. . . . No simplistic "background" which "disintegrates" under the impact of "capitalism" will do; there must be a more substantial analysis of actual happenings.

—Shanin 1978:280

HIGHLAND AYMARA IN THE TROPICAL FOREST

EACH YEAR Aymara families from several districts of Huancané Province, in the department of Puno in southern Peru, spend the long months of the rainy season pasturing their animals and working their small fields of potatoes and barley on the Peruvian altiplano.[1] When the rains stop and the dry season begins, some family members travel to the east Andean valley of the Tambopata River to pick the cherries of the coffee bushes they grow on the steep hillside plots there. When the migration began in the early 1930s, migrants made the eight-day journey on foot. They transported supplies on the backs of mules or on their own backs. Today they travel in trucks that take about eighteen hours to descend to the valley and twenty-five hours to maneuver the steep roads on the return journey. Year after year, families split apart in this way and later regroup, tracing paths down to the tropical forest and back to their highland

[1] The altiplano is a high-altitude plain that stretches between the eastern and western ranges of the Andes in southern Peru and extends southward into central Bolivia. It includes the basins of Lake Titicaca to the north and Lake Poopó to the south in west central Bolivia.

homes in order to maintain simultaneous production in the two areas.

The Tambopata Valley lies 130 kilometers north of the altiplano districts "as the crow flies," but the road that crosses the snow-capped eastern range of the Andes and winds down into the moist forest is 320 kilometers long (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). The valley is part of the relatively high altitude (1,000–3,000 meters) tropical and subtropical forest ecosystem known to Peruvians as the high selva, or sometimes *ceja de selva*—the "eyebrow" of the jungle or forest. The hills along the Tambopata River have slopes that are rarely less than 40 degrees—in some places they are nearly vertical. The faces of the slopes are covered with lush green vegetation interspersed with badly eroded coffee plots.

The valley contrasts sharply with the homeland of the migrants. The altiplano of southern Peru is a high, barren plain that lies some 3,800 meters above sea level. During the six months of the growing season, rain falls nearly every day, and pastures are green. In the areas near the shores of Lake Titicaca, peasant families grow a variety of high-altitude crops. During the remaining six months, however, the rains cease, and the landscape becomes gray-brown and dusty. This basic color scheme is broken only by the brilliant blue of the lake and sky and the blue-green of the eucalyptus trees that dot the landscape. It is during this period that peasant families travel to the lowlands.

Three characteristics of the migration to the Tambopata Valley have important implications for the valley's future development and distinguish this movement to some degree from other cases of new-land settlement. First, it is spontaneously initiated by the migrants and undertaken with a minimum of government assistance. This means that the costs of bringing a new region into production are borne primarily by the migrants themselves. Second, the economy of the migratory area is based on independent smallholder production and not on wage labor or cooperative forms of access to land. Thus, various types of exchange, rather than direct capitalist production, bind producers to the larger economy. Third, the migration is

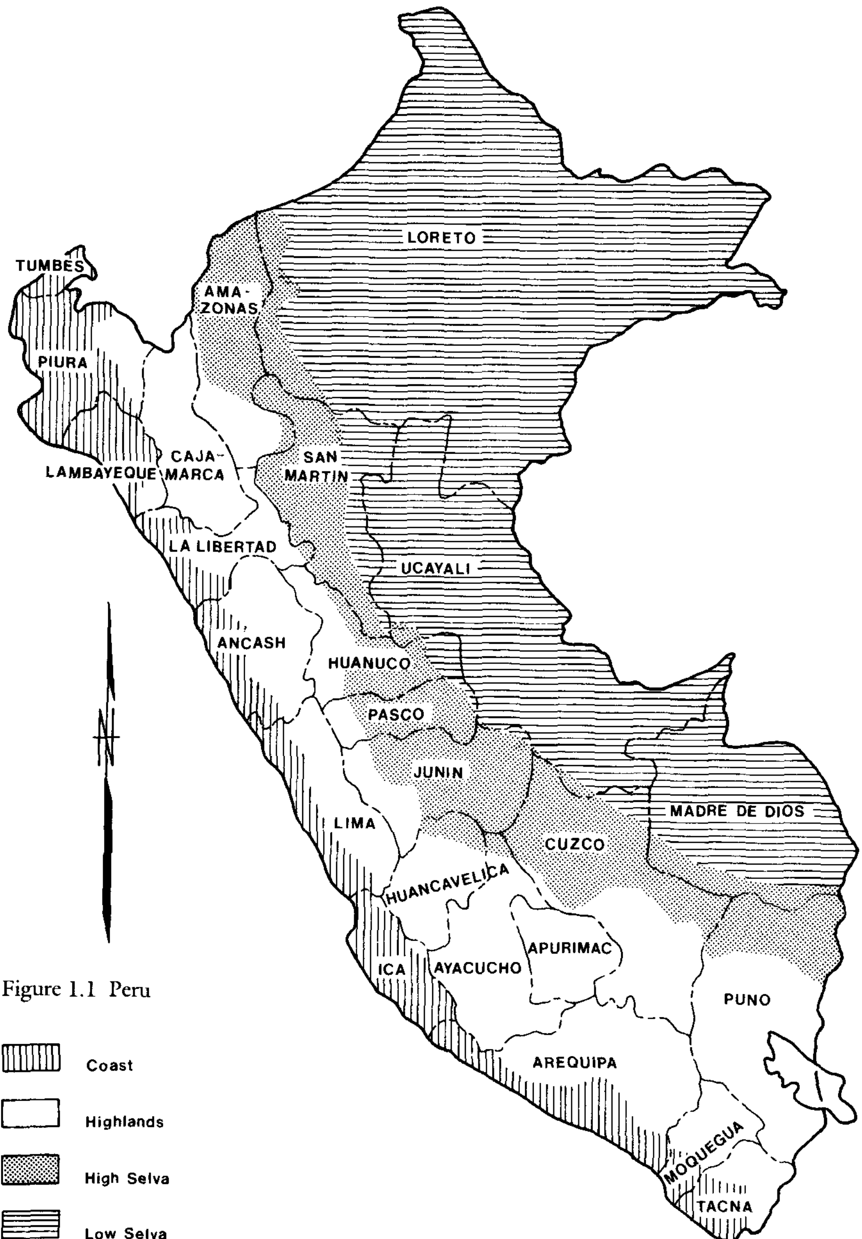

Figure 1.1 Peru