

THE 1970 PERUVIAN DISASTER AND THE SPONTANEOUS RELOCATION OF SOME OF ITS VICTIMS: ANCASHINO PEASANT MIGRANTS IN HUAYOPAMPA*

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INTRODUCTION

On May 31, 1970, a major earthquake struck Peru, affecting an area of some 64,000 km², killing as many as 70,000 persons and injuring at least 150,000 others. Landslides buried towns and settlements and damage was into the hundreds of millions of dollars U.S. In the following sections, I attempt to show how the catastrophe has contributed to out-migration of peasant workers from the highland region of Ancash, which was the area most destroyed by the quake, to Huayopampa, a relatively out-of-the-way small and obscure rural community some four hours' drive north of Lima, the capital of Peru. I consider how Ancash migrants have endeavored to capitalize on an economic boom in Huayopampa in order to enhance their prospects for establishing roots in the urban sector, as well as to find an immediate solution to their economic problems due to the earthquake.

THE DAMAGED REGION

The department of Ancash, located on the

central coast of the country, occupies both coastal and mountain ecozones. The total area is 36,000 km². The 1970 population was estimated at approximately 745,000 persons, and almost two-thirds of the population is rural. Poor peasants constitute the vast majority of the rural sector. They own or rent miniscule plots on which they barely manage to subsist. Huaraz, the principal urban center for the highland region on Ancash had a population of 65,321 shortly before the quake. The department also has a number of towns with populations generally far below the 20,000 mark.

More than 10,000 hectares of irrigated land were rendered unusable because of destruction or damage to irrigation channels. Mudslides completely destroyed crops on both sides of the Santa River, one of the major waterways running through the district. The hydroelectric power plant built on the Santa was paralyzed for five months, leaving several industries without electricity. Moreover, some 1,300 kilometers of road were damaged, the Chimbote–Huallanca railroad required extensive repairs, and the Chimbote steel works were badly damaged. Business losses in Ancash alone were somewhere around \$ 13 million.

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The Peruvian government declared a state of emergency for the entire region. Nine days after the tragedy, the government created a quasi-ministry, the Commission for the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of the Affected Zone (CRYRZA), under the direction of a powerful army general. Two years later, CRYRZA was succeeded by the Regional Organisation for the Development of the Affected Zone (ORDEZA). Whereas CRYRZA was charged with the task of reconstruction and rehabilitation, ORDEZA took on the job of promoting economic development. Because of the urban, Lima, bias of the members of CRYRZA and ORDEZA, they were unable to develop and carry out successfully projects that would have restored and developed the rural regions of the affected area. Their failure indirectly contributed to continued out-migration because of the frustration of the peasants' hopes for a rural renewal.

The State, through CRYRZA and ORDEZA, foreign donors and philanthropic organizations, provided assistance in relocating some of the destitute families and orphaned children, including a program of colonization in Amazonian regions. Many persons, especially single males, migrated to coastal cities to search for temporary employment or even a new place to live (the 1972 census reports a total population of 726,215 inhabitants in the department of Ancash and 279,994 Ancashinos elsewhere). A few young men eventually found their way to the thriving rural peasant community of Huayopampa.

THE HUAYOPAMPA MIGRANTS

The peasant community of San Agustin de Huayopampa is located on the right bank of the Anasmayo brook in the basin of the Chancay River. It is under the jurisdiction of the province of Huaral, department of Lima. In 1975, it had a population of about 500 inhabitants. This is a Spanish-speaking community lacking any recent Quechua tradition.

The majority of Huayopampinos earn their living working small peach and apple orchards and supplement their incomes by growing garden vegetables and raising cattle. Huayopampa is a Peruvian peasant community that has successfully made the transition from a subsistence to a market economy in the last thirty years, in contrast to most rural highland communities of the Andes. Moreover, the Huayopampinos have developed strong attachments to two nearby cities, Huaral and Lima. It is in these cities that these farmers sell many of their products, send their children for secondary and higher education, shop and go for medical treatment.

Huayopampa covers an area of 13,924 hectares. It falls into two ecologically distinct sectors, which, in turn, are separated by lands that belong to two distinct neighboring communities. These can be categorized as follows:

(a) The lowerlands, with an area of 4,009 ha., or 29% of the community territory. The altitude ranges between 1,200 meters and 2,000 meters above sea level.

(b) The higherlands, with an area of 9,915 ha., or 71% of the community area. The altitudes of this zone vary between 3,000 and 4,900 meters.

The economic mainstays, peaches and apples, are cultivated in an area of only 260 ha. in the lower zone. Only this part of the territory is irrigated and is worked intensively. No farm machinery is used other than fumigation pumps. Nonetheless, in a good year, each hectare can produce for its owner some \$ 18,000.

In the 1950s, a few members of the community with close links to Lima and Huaral decided to introduce peach cultivation to Huayopampa. They had discovered the high price that peaches commanded in the market and the availability of relatively simple methods to cultivate them. These *cunumeros* became interested in learning through observation the specific ways peaches were cultivated, especially in the Huaral area, so they visited

peach orchards there and talked with the owners. The peach innovators commented that during the first year of their experiment, their fellow comuneros mocked and teased them, but when their trees began to produce and they began to sell the fruit at Lima's market for much higher prices than the traditional products, their fellow comuneros began little by little to replace their traditional products with peach trees.

Until the early 1960s, all Huayopampa land was worked exclusively by Huayopampinos through mutual help or intra-community labor contracting arrangements. Farmers hired outside workers only rarely, and when they did, the farmhands came from neighboring peasant communities. By the mid-1960s, almost all the 150 families of this community were cultivating peaches and enjoying high profits from the sale of their produce. However, they were experiencing labor shortages under this new affluence. The shortages were prompted by the fact that families began sending more of their sons to Lima for secondary and higher level studies, a tradition that dates back to the 1920s (Osterling, 1978). And peach cultivation had high labor requirements. Also Huayopampinos traveled frequently to Lima either for family reasons, e.g., to visit their sons who were in school or for business, especially for sale and collection of payment for their products.

Around 1965, the first Ancashino workers arrived in Huayopampa. Their numbers did not exceed ten or fifteen prior to the earthquake. The majority of post-disaster migrants are single males between 15 and 30 years of age. They number around 200 at harvest time, during May to December, but approximately half return to their home villages for the remainder of the year. This pattern has continued up to the present. Those returning home participate in religious festivities and help out in the fields. Huayopampa is seen by these young men as a training ground where they can migrate temporarily in the order of

one to three years; from their Ancash communities, they learn new skills, visit Lima and in general prepare themselves gradually for the eventual permanent move to Lima.

Only five migrants indicated the earthquake as the prime reason for migration to Huayopampa. Most said they were compelled to seek employment beyond their homelands because the earthquake and mudslides intensified traditional poverty in their villages. One might expect that the Ancashino peasants sought out Huayopampa because of its prosperity or because it is located in an area ecologically similar to Ancash. And this proved to be the case, in fact. A preliminary survey revealed over half of the migrants hailed from only three Ancash districts (Pueblo Libre, San Luis and Yauya). The localities were severely damaged. To this can be added the fact that kinship and/or friendship links existed with the earlier Ancash migrants prior to the actual migration of this group of young men. Furthermore, the adventuresomeness of youth gave them the courage to try out a new lifestyle but in an area that would be less of a change from their experience of their original community. Huayopampa has a role to play in this evolving process inasmuch as it serves as a place of initial apprenticeship to an urban existence. It has a rural character, yet it is influenced by and has some of the trappings of urban living.

The Ancashino who settled in Huayopampa before the quake were well received by the community, but their successors encountered difficulties. Dovetailing with the influx of immigrants was a sharp rise in thefts, and these outsiders were the first to be suspected and accused. The comuneros further adopted a condescending attitude toward their guests, one large coastal land owners traditionally reserve for their workers of Andean origin. They were afraid that the Ancashino migrants would become so numerous that they would lose their traditional rights to their lands. Thus, as long as the Huayo-

pampino needed laborers and as long as the young Ancashinos saw themselves as merely visitors in the community, the condescending attitude was not strong enough to discourage and deter the presence of Ancashino migrants. But this conduct did discourage Ancashinos from seeking permanent residence in Huayopampa.

In part as a response to the possible enactment of the Agrarian Reform Law, two types of labor arrangements emerged in Huayopampa, as of 1970. One involves "stable laborers," men who worked exclusively under a *comunero* who pays a daily wage and supplies room and board. The other entails "free laborers." These are men who have become specialists in some aspect of fruit growing (e.g., pruning, grafting or fumigation). These workers contract themselves out, working for whatever land owner seeks their services. Free laborers earn large sums of money, but they are neither lodged nor provisioned. Huayopampinos have expressed grave concern over the growing numbers of free laborers because of the difficulties of supervising the activities of large groups of alien young men, and because they continuously demand pay hikes for their work.

This issue was brought to the Community General Assembly, and it was agreed that no Huayopampino should contract the service of free laborers nor rent houses to migrant laborers. Hence, the young temporary migrants must now work as stable laborers under the orders of a boss who is responsible to the community for the supervision and control of his laborers. Hence, "free laborers" are now very few, less than ten. These are the earlier Ancashino migrants who had already established themselves permanently with their families.

The above factors help account for the

temporary nature of Ancash migration. On the one hand, Huayopampinos appreciate the economic importance of the migrant, yet they regard his presence as a threat which they have attempted to control by minor verbal abuse and stringently regulated working conditions. Ancashinos are conscious that their future is not in Huayopampa, owing to the restricted work opportunities and chances at achieving upward mobility locally. Ownership or even sharecropping of irrigated tracts are privileges not open to the migrant, nor would they be allowed to start small businesses.

In sum, here is a case where a disaster has stimulated modernization and acculturation by forcing some of the victims to seek their fortunes within a labor economy. We can also see that the process of adaptation to new cultural demands is often a gradual one. This particular case also shows that peasants can often be innovative in responding to both indirect specific stimuli such as the earthquake presented.

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