



Food security strategies in the Mantaro Valley

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Disclaimer: The following observations are based on the experiences of a non-fluent Spanish speaker in situations where Spanish was frequently the only language spoken: I would like to offer preemptive apologies in the event that I misconstrue any of the ideas or opinions of the people I encountered.

One Peru?

Living in the U.S., I have generally believed that what I have in common with others is my humanity rather than my nationality. Perhaps my lack of strongly identifying with the entity that resides between Canada and Mexico and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans allowed me to be more open to trying to understand the national identity of another people when I arrived in Peru in June of 2008. From what I had already explored of Latin America through literature and the film *The Motorcycle Diaries*, I may have even expected to encounter a unifying sentiment on a continental level. Still, after eight weeks of life in the land of the Incas, distinct national identity eluded me. Ethnically speaking, eighty-two percent of Peruvians are either indigenous or *mestizo*, having both indigenous and European heritage. Yet Peru is better described as a land of plurality than of unity.

Among other factors, geography distinguishes the varied groups of Peruvians. The two weeks I spent in the Andean cities of Cusco and Huancayo, I was in the *sierra*; the rest of the time, I experienced the markedly different culture of the *costa* in Lima and Chiclayo. Despite some cultural overlap due to migration between the three regions of Peru—the third being the *selva*, the Amazonian jungle—the three groups remain distinctive in their customs, political needs, and attitudes toward the rapid Westernization of their society. One difference between inhabitants of the coast and of the sierra can

quickly be perceived in their music preferences. In Lima, I found few people that enjoy the folkloric music of the Andes—try as I may, I could not convince the DJ at a Limeño birthday party to play a *huayno*, a dance I learned from *campesinos* in Cusco. In Huancayo, on the other hand, one more frequently hears the traditional music of the festival of Santiago and the *huaylas* dance than the Caribbean *reguetón*. At night, we danced to the music of Ayacucho, another department in the sierra to the south. Variation in clothing in the sierra and on the coast is another obvious indication of the cultural divide: women in Huancayo often wear simple traditional hats and carry their supplies in a cloth bundle on their back, while many residents of Lima are clad indistinguishably from their counterparts in other Western nations.

Agriculture is also subject to regional distinctions. While this point was significant for me as a scholar studying Peruvian agriculture, it is a reality all the more imperative for politicians: there is no single interest of the typical Peruvian farmer. Production on the coast is generally irrigated and highly industrialized, while throughout the sierra (with the exclusion of large farms in the valleys), farm work is done by hand or with animals. Hence, climatic, social, and political changes impact farmers differently throughout the country. These are subtleties that both international trade agreements and Borlaug-Ruan interns must take into account when discussing Peruvian agriculture.

Getting acquainted

Going into my internship at the International Potato Center (CIP), I was hoping to be assigned to a sociological division. I had had some experience as a hired-hand on a small Iowa organic farm and had taken a class in agronomy, so as I developed my

expectations of working in Peru, I thought I would find working directly with farmers more rewarding than lab research. What's more, in the field I would have the opportunity to directly seek out the remnants of pre-colombian ways of thinking and living. I was understandably excited when I learned I would get to work within the Consortium for Sustainable Development in the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN), an organization headquartered in the CIP compound but defined by its coordination of the fieldwork of its sixteen partner organizations. CONDESAN and its partners operate with the strategy of combining their resources to "execute and facilitate concerted actions in research, training, development and political initiatives that benefit sustainable socioeconomic advancement with the goal of contributing to the equity and well-being of the population of the Andean ecoregion" (Condesan.org, my translation).

After entering CIP's gates on my second day in Peru, I met with Miguel Saravia, the coordinator of CONDESAN. Miguel gave me two ideas of potential projects and some literature to flesh out my understanding of what exactly CONDESAN does: documents including "Andean System of Basins: Watershed Profiles," "Payment for Environmental Services," and "Breeding and Politics in the Andes." The first of the two projects Miguel described was to work with independent economist and consultant Judith Kuan in the project she is conducting with CONDESAN pertaining to the food crisis and the Andes. The second, which had yet to begin when I left Peru, was to assist Division 2 (Genetic Resources Conservation and Characterization) in germplasm collection and verification in northern Peru.

For the first several weeks, I researched the global food crisis, compiling a bibliography of resources on key causes: biofuels, the increased demand of China and India, and speculation in food commodities. Though those are the topics on which I focused, an understanding of rising food prices also requires a consideration of climatic factors, global trade patterns, and the increased cost of oil. I came across information from the World Bank, Chinese newspapers, and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, as well as from interest groups such as Biodiversidad en América Latina and Via Campesina—diverse sources with respectively varying agendas. The more time I spent researching, the less sure I could be of the truth of what I had found. After meeting with economist Miguel Ordinola of PapaAndina, a CIP partnership program, and further reflecting on what I had discovered, I was able to make two conclusions: the causes of ongoing food scarcity are a complex web, formed by the interests of the nations of the South and North alike; and the most important considerations regarding the food crisis in the context of the Andes are that higher prices hurt those who buy greater quantities of food from external sources and can benefit those who grow crops that are not commodities.

Encuentro in Cusco

At this point, Miguel Saravia presented me with the opportunity to attend the *Primer Encuentro Internacional: Saberes y haceres de los pobladores rurales andinos* (First International Meeting on the Knowledge and Ways of Rural Andean Inhabitants) in Cusco. In leaving Lima and CIP for a week, I was able to emerge from the world of theory into one of practice. The conference, put on by the Red de Agroindustria Rural

del Perú (REDAR-Perú), was fascinating for both its participatory structure and because of the producers and processors that came from all over South America to share their experiences. A woman from the jungle in the Junín department of Peru came with her husband and son to tell the story of their coffee liqueur production. A woman from northern Chile described a group of women in her region that produces natural dyes. One of the members of the Cauca, Colombia, contingent explained the struggles of his community to retain their land rights in the face of privatization. What all participants held in common was a conviction in the value of *campesino* knowledge and practices as a means of attaining sustainable livelihoods.

In terms of my research, the most important outcome of going to Cusco may have been seeing agriculture directly while we drove between tourist sites on the final day of the conference. The fields, or *chacras*, were divided into small plots, and the most complex machinery was pulled by animals. With an idea of Andean agricultural modalities, I could begin to comprehend the constant motif of the Cusco dialogues, *la cosmovision andina*. More than just a catchphrase conceived to attract New Age tourists, the Andean cosmovision is a paradigm characterized by recognition of the unity of Nature. As Andean artist and folklorist Josué Sanchez Cerrón later told me in Huancayo, Andean beliefs often have a practical basis. He explained that, after a German engineer introduced metal plows into the Mantaro Valley region, the *campesinos* quickly switched back to their wooden plows, stating that metal hurts the earth and that wooden plows produce more standardized rows. While some may view traditional agriculture as an impediment to productivity and lower food prices, many *campesino* practices—such as

the five- to seven-year fallow in the highlands—are highly adapted to the harsh conditions of the Andes.

Preparing for the field: methods and hypothesis

Upon returning to Lima, I devised a strategy to unite the two branches of my research: the food crisis, a global phenomenon, and Andean agriculture, which typically exists on a scale no bigger than the farm and the market of a nearby town. I narrowed my focus to the valley of the Mantaro River, a region marked by the city of Huancayo and by a huge variety of agricultural activity, including industrialized production of trout, potato, and artichoke, as well as organic farms and alto-Andean communities with communal plots of native potatoes. My objective was to compare communities of subsistence farmers with farm families that have access to markets: how each group attains food security and to what degree they have been affected by rising food prices. Working with social scientists Edith Fernández-Baca and María Scurrah of CIP and Dr. Nilda Varas of the National Agrarian University of La Molina, I composed a general questionnaire for both groups of farmers, designed to determine such factors as:

- relative social class of the producer
- level of technology used
- principle economic activities
- number and varieties of crops and animals (to identify biodiversity)
- degree of market articulation
- primary strategy of acquiring food

Before heading into the Andes, I posited that the increased income that can come with production for markets raises farm families' standard of living, in the sense that they are able to buy foods produced elsewhere without a significant loss of value; and that as subsistence producers situated at higher elevations face greater impediments to market articulation, their hope for a more stable food source depends on diversification of crop and animal assets, as well as increased trading within the community and region.

My assumptions were that I could guarantee the veracity of the information I would receive and that social class and the other factors could be inferred through a series of basic questions.

Realities in the Valley

In the department of Junín, CIP has an experimental station located in El Tambo, a district smaller and more rural than its neighbor Huancayo, a city of half a million. Arriving at CIP, I was warmly received by agronomist Carolina Bastos, who quickly drew up a schedule that warranted me a wide variety of field contacts, from the president of an alto-Andean community to vegetable producers in the valley. To get a sense of the local markets, I visited the weekly market in nearby Huayucachi and the permanent wholesale market in Huancayo. I asked potato vendors if they had native or ecological potatoes, as I had heard that there was a niche in Huancayo that supported the anomaly of organic producers in a developing country. Nearly everything I found was improved potato grown with pesticides and fertilizers. Evidently, the preference of urban consumers for large, blemish-free produce dictates the widespread use of chemicals.

Colpar

I began my formal interviews the next day in the highland community of Colpar. Guided by a local producer who works with the NGO Grupo Yanapai, an entomology student from CIP and I met with people from five different households, one of whom, as previously mentioned, is the president of the community. The interviews confirmed much of what I had earlier read of Colpar: families generally subsist on a wide variety of crops and animals, use traditional implements like the *chakitaklla* (foot plow) and a bull-pulled plow, and have varying degrees of access to private lands around the community and communal lands at a higher elevation. Supplementary income comes through labor outside the community, whether in nearby cities or in the mines, and through the sale of traditional crafts, lamb and guinea pig meat, manure, and rentals of llamas as pack animals.

The crops mentioned by the producers I met included maize, barley, fava beans, grass, and Andean tubers, such as potato, olluco, mashua, and oca. What families grow depends on where they hold land. Potato cultivation occurs in the communal plots, several hours' hike above the town, where the community maintains 118 native varieties. In the lower-lying fields, producers may grow maize and other more monetarily valuable crops. There, too, exists enormous biodiversity: one woman told me she had 78 varieties of fava bean and had had more than 50 types of maize until this year's frost destroyed the majority of them.

Field locations may also determine a family's social class.. If a family is able to grow more cash crops or has a sufficient number of animals, it can sell or barter with

them in Huancayo or the nearby town of Quilcas. The president said that each year, her family travels two days to exchange lamb for maize from the Ceja de Selva region. Level of education is another indication of relative class: the one man I spoke with who had studied a year in the university also had the greatest number of sheep—150, three times the holdings of the next-most-prosperous respondent.

In Colpar, the only apparent departure from subsistence is found among the young people who go to work in the mines and return desiring non-traditional foods such as rice. I was told that cancer rates are higher among this group because their new preferences for more exotic and robust foods lead them to produce treated with chemicals.

Most of the interviewees said they purchased some combination of rice, sugar, flour, and oil, but still identify the vast majority of their food as what they grow themselves. They continue to buy those four products—rice, sugar, flour, and oil—despite the recent increase in prices. Rising prices of fertilizer, however, have ensured that everyone I met strictly uses manure and other farm-produced substances as opposed to costly synthetics. The man that had attended the university told me that elevated costs of medicine for his animals have been another significant set-back for him.

My understanding of the problems of Andean food production and my hypothesis, as initially conceived, failed to account for what revealed to be the greatest challenge to the producers of Colpar: the climate, specifically the brutal frost and scarcity of water. While a farmer is relatively defenseless from both, the lack of water is not merely a natural curse. Quilcas, the larger town situated below Colpar, owns the slopes above Colpar and has planted eucalyptus trees there. The densely planted trees constitute a

reforestation project that produces wood for the mining industry, income for Quilcas, and a major environmental problem for Colpar. As our local guide told us, the trees drink heavily from the water that would otherwise flow from the mountains into the community. The subsequent lack of water precludes greater crop diversification by restricting the growth of such crops as linseed and *tarwi*, an Andean legume. Just as quickly as the president and other producers identified the problem of water scarcity, they presented a solution: *aylizu*, a local tree with minimal water usage and leaves that serve as forage for livestock. Though *aylizu* may not have market potential, its function as farm-produced livestock feed makes it one example of the integrated strategy of self-sufficiency of an economy with minimal market orientation.

In the absence of liquid assets, the residents of Colpar have retained traditional principles of cooperation. When one *comunero* falls ill, the community as a whole sells what it must to buy medicine. Of course, this spirit has also survived in the preservation of communal lands and native potato varieties. Here arises a theoretical conflict: does development through articulation to markets merit the sacrifice of invaluable traditional practices? In communities like Colpar, however, the relevance of this question is minimized by the infeasibility of market access with existing infrastructures.

To contrast the situation of farmers in Colpar, I remained in the valley the following day to speak with farmers who grow primarily for markets.

Conventional farms in Chupaca and Chongos Bajo

A student of rural economics from Lima and I traveled around the valley with a French student of horticulture, visiting several farms in Chupaca and Chongos Bajo

where he had spent five weeks researching farmers' responses to vegetable diseases. We also interviewed numerous producers protesting outside the Chupaca slaughterhouse, where a congregation of locals was attempting to remove a negligent manager on allegations that she had allowed cattle blood to enter the water supply. All respondents stated that agriculture is their primary economic activity.

Several fundamental differences between agriculture in the valley and the highlands quickly became evident. Rather than lacking water, fields in the lowlands are often plagued by diseases caused by an overabundance of moisture. To confront a different set of problems and meet the greater yields demanded by a market orientation, valley farmers utilize more modern technologies than their highland counterparts: improved seed, irrigation, pesticides, and mechanized implements. Still, farm activities such as insect control and chemical application are primarily done by hand.

On the selected farms, crops included potato, quinoa, linseed, fava bean, maize, alfalfa, and vegetables, such as celery and carrots. Most farms also had a few animals, in some cases allowing for small-scale dairy production. Each farmer we encountered had at least four hectares—massive holdings compared with the 0.5 to 1.0 hectares farmed by each *comunero* in Colpar*.

As expected, these producers had far greater access to markets, selling to intermediaries and directly to consumers in cities like Huancayo and Lima. Those producers who planted vegetables emphasized their higher market value. One man said

* Fernández-Baca, E.C. 2006. *Modernization and development as part of the globalization process: Holistic participatory community development in a community in the Mantaro Valley, Peru*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

that, in addition to selling celery and other vegetables, he takes about 80 percent of his potatoes to market and sells small amounts of milk to PRONAA, the National Food Assistance Program of the federal government's Ministry of Women and Social Development. Farmers diversify both what they grow and where they sell it.

Fortunately for me, Ursula, the Peruvian economics student, was researching a topic relevant to mine. For her doctoral work at the University of Wisconsin, she was investigating farmers' responses to changes in the prices they receive for various crops. Though one farmer said he decreased his planting of carrots because of the increase in transportation costs, we generally found little correlation between changes in prices and what farmers choose to plant. For example, Ursula noted that maize prices have increased more rapidly than potato prices over the past fifteen years, yet farmers have continued to plant the same proportion of maize to potato. This could be attributed to traditional crop rotations that do not allow for major adjustments, or perhaps it is an attempt to minimize risk.

For the farmers we met, increases in fertilizer and chemical prices have outpaced the augmented prices they receive for their crops and are more troubling than the rising cost of purchased food. While most respondents said they buy rice, pasta, sugar, coffee, and/or salt, all stated that they retain a portion of what they grow for their own consumption. In developing my hypothesis, I had not anticipated that market-linked producers would acquire much of their food in the same way as the subsistence farmers of Colpar; the relationship between the global food crisis and food security in the Andes proved even more complex than I had thought.

As in Colpar, the farmers of Chupaca and Chongos Bajo readily noted environmental adversities. Though the valley is home to the Mantaro River, one producer said he still lacks sufficient water. The valley farmers also share the threat of frost with those at higher altitudes. For the former group, however, the devastation caused by agrochemicals is more immediately visible than it is in Colpar. Highly toxic pesticides that are illegal in developed nations are applied widely, often by workers without the appropriate suits for protection. Chemicals such as Tamaron have killed off the wild trout population and risen human cancer rates. Several respondents expressed their desire to grow ecologically, but for many, organic production is not economically viable.

Having been informed of the presence of a small, yet dedicated, group of ecological producers in the valley, I traveled to Chupaca and Chupuro to see how this tenuous strategy could be implemented successfully.

Organic farms in Chupaca and Chupuro

In the economic realm, organic farming mandates several differences from conventional agriculture. Feasibility depends on drastic diversification, increased labor to compensate for the lack of chemicals, and the value added through production and processing. Besides diversifying their crops, many producers must also diversify their sources of income. The organic farmer I met in Chupaca receives most of his income from the pension he has from thirty years of teaching. In the case of the family I visited in Chupuro, the father is employed in Huancayo, but the farm apparently generates a sufficient amount of income to sustain itself.

In addition to interviews, both farm visits featured an extensive tour of the terrain. In Chupaca, rosemary, artichokes, potatoes, maize, beans, lentils, barley, and wheat are planted in the field, and a wide variety of Andean plants grow along the perimeter. The Chupuro farm, called a “*biohuerto*” (bio-orchard), consists of a garden of roses, rosemary, thyme, marjoram, apples, pears, plums, and Andean crops such as sauco, arracacha, rocoto, aguaymanto, nispero, and cedrón. In addition, the family maintains fields of maize, potatoes, quinoa, linseed, wheat, kiwicha, and barley.

The farmer in Chupaca indicated that produce sales are of secondary importance to the profits he receives in selling cuys, known to North Americans as guinea pigs. He explained that he sells his products to acquaintances; it was unclear whether these were friends who buy for their own consumption or intermediaries who transport the products to urban markets.

For the *biohuerto* in Chupuro, on the other hand, processing and direct marketing are as vital as the planting and harvest. I was told that organic production alone adds at least 30 percent to crop values; on-farm processing further increases the market value. Herbs are dried and packaged as tea and potpourri, tubers and grains are baked into cakes, and fruits are processed into jams and *mazamorra*, an especially viscous pudding, typically made with purple maize. Family members sell these products at the weekly ecological market in Huancayo and occasionally at a fair-trade festival in Lima. From January to May, garden produce is the farm’s primary enterprise; the rest of the year, maize and tourism take on a greater role. Each July, international tourists are drawn to Chupuro for its hang gliding festival and stop by the *biohuerto* to camp or eat

pachamanca, food cooked underground or in a rock oven. The energy each family member applies to producing and marketing quality farm goods has made possible the farm's success.

Manuel, the uncle of the young woman that led me around the *biohuerto*, brought up some of the same environmental difficulties mentioned in the other communities: insufficient irrigation, frost, and pests, one of which is a disease believed to have originated in the valley's artichoke monoculture. To combat biotic problems like insects and bacteria, Manuel applies a mixture of manure and black salt. He said that he has taught this simple procedure to other organic producers, and they have generally integrated it into their own practices.

While organic farmers receive a higher price for their produce and are unaffected by rising pesticide costs, the primary motivation for chemical-free production cannot be economic. In Peru, a nation with an urban poverty rate of 73 percent, according to World Bank figures, a relatively small group of consumers can afford organic products. Without economic incentives, producers' enthusiasm for their laborious career often comes from concerns for health and the environment. The farmer in Chupaca told the story of a neighbor, who chemically treated his field without a protection suit and got skin cancer across his entire torso. He presented this anecdote as a reason for his transition six years ago from conventional vegetable farming to organic production. Likewise, the family in Chupuro has been organic since the grandfather died of stomach cancer after years of farming with chemicals. Though many other farmers in the valley

would also prefer to abandon the use of chemicals, the French student told me he believes economic realities preclude any widespread transition.

Analysis: constraints and significance

With one week in the field, I was only able to visit with each producer once. This limited my findings in that I did not have time to earn the confidence of the respondents and be assured that their answers were not influenced by the dynamics of the interview process itself. For instance, the group of farmers we visited with outside of the slaughterhouse in Chupaca claimed to only work their land and not have outside income. From what the French student had experienced, many farmers base their pride on their *chacras* but must earn supplemental income, whether from helping out on neighboring farms or working in the city in the off-season. Furthermore, the information most necessary for concluding on my hypothesis—the respondents' relative degree of poverty and hardship—could not be gathered through explicit questions because I did not want to alienate the respondents with insensitivity. In place of direct questions, more time would be needed to make observations and inferences on these factors.

As my results were thus limited, I could not make a sound evaluation of the scope of the impact of the global food crisis on the households I visited. Instead, climatic and agronomic factors appeared to pose a more immediate threat to food security. Whether these are in fact of greater significance than the effects of the food crisis cannot be determined given the constraints I had in collecting evidence regarding the latter.

The interviews I executed in that week and the reflection that followed resemble the preliminary research a graduate student would undergo to determine how a project

should take shape in a specific locale. At CIP-Huancayo, I was given a copy of a report a German graduate student had recently completed on my topic. She had more scientifically narrowed her demographic to households headed by women and had spent several months in the field. Afterward, she ran her results through a computer analysis. As I did not have sufficient time to achieve this degree of scientific precision in my project, my qualitative conclusion—that farmers cannot be clearly divided into market-oriented and subsistent categories and that local environmental and agronomic difficulties outweigh macroeconomic issues—is based on the interviews I was able to conduct and what I heard from experts. CONDESAN could use the observations I was able to make for a background for the on-line forum Ms. Kuan is creating on the topic of the food crisis and the Andes.

If I had been able to continue investigating, I would have worked to determine which means of technological transfer are most culturally acceptable in the region. As noted earlier, the man at the *biohuerto* in Chupuro said his peers implement his use of black salt to fight pests after he trains them in the practice. The Ministry of Agriculture, however, has been largely unsuccessful in its campaign to encourage farmers to wear protective suits when administering dangerous pesticides and fertilizers. The innovation that comes from another farmer is accepted, while that which comes from outside is not. When I walked through the outskirts of Chongos Bajo with Sergio, the CIP entomology student, on my last day in the field, we encountered one farmer in the field and one in the road and questioned them about their agronomic practices. Both said they use Tamaron, the most infamous chemical of the valley, purportedly the cause of the stomach cancer

epidemic. Sergio recommended a non-toxic alternative, Bulldock. The farmers showed interest in switching to Bulldock, but the slightly higher price might preclude a transition. Observing this dialogue, I understood the need for agronomists and other experts; the farmer-expert relationship is most beneficial to both parties when the information exchange goes both ways. In a land where farmers have honed their techniques over five thousand years, they indeed have plenty of knowledge to share.

Cultural considerations and thanks

In Lima, I lived with more than a dozen members of the family of Ida Bartolini in the district of San Isidro. Ida, who once worked at CIP and is now employed next door at Senasa, a division of the Ministry of Agriculture, lives with her husband, Erwin, and daughter, Milena, adjacent to the larger house, where I lived with the rest of the family. With the addition of several relatives who came and went, this includes Ida's mother (also named Ida); Ida's brother-in-law Lucho and his sons, Donovan and Óscar; Ida's sisters Maria Luisa and Jackeline; and Jackeline's husband, Percy, and daughters, Cristina, Sol, and Maya. Another one of Ida's sisters, Charo, lives a couple blocks away with her son, Gabriel. I also got to know Charo's boyfriend, Pedro, and the family of Ida's brother Óscar, who live on the coast in the north in the city of Chiclayo.

While I became acquainted with Peruvian culture in traveling around the country, the avenue for learning I valued most was interaction with my host family. Most of the adults in the family are professionals in a wide range of fields, from Maria Luisa who had worked as an economist for the World Food Programme, to Charo and Pedro, who are professors of anthropology and literature, respectively, at the Catholic university in Lima.

Though each nuclear family would eat and travel to work and school alone during the week, we would come together for meals on Saturday or Sunday afternoons and occasional parties. Moments would come when I would shiver with the certainty that I was in another country, the first such time being the festivities on Father's Day. When a mariachi band arrived on the patio, I tried my hand at accompanying them with my recently acquired charango, a 10-stringed Andean lute. Afterward, I got more comfortable with my Spanish while conversing with Charo and eating a plantain grilled with cheese, and then we all danced the *marinera* of northern Peru.

As the Peruvian winter went on, the richest experiences, those which made it hardest for me to leave, were the discussions I would have with Maria Luisa or Jackeline and her family in the kitchen, or with Señora Ida and Charo as I returned from a day at CIP. They described the slums of Lima—somewhere I heard that 80 percent of the population of the city lives in shanty towns on the outskirts—and explained the origins of their Italian grandfather and the changing national situation of household labor. I was also intrigued by the diversity of spiritual views I encountered within this Catholic household. Jackeline and Percy once took me to their Gnostic meeting, where the discussion revolved around “the geometry of sound.” While we ate dinner or sat with our late night coffee, Maria Luisa and I would exchange our beliefs on mysticism and ultimate reality. With Pedro, I traveled by *combi*—the local glorified van filled with benches—to visit more districts of Lima, including historic Chorrillos, burnt to the ground by the Chileans in a late nineteenth-century war, and the Amazonas book market in the center of the city. As we shuttled through traffic in the hands of the *combi* driver,

Pedro educated me on Peruvian literature, from his own poetry and his friends' writings to the *indigenismo* fiction of Peruvian anthropologist José María Arguedas. All the ideas I discovered were filled with a vividness I had not frequently found in the US.

It is impossible to fully synthesize all that I experienced in Peru. I visited numerous archaeological sites, as well as the hang-outs of countercultural urban youth. I observed upward mobility in Jockey Plaza, a mall near the house, as well as the paradox of rural poverty in the midst of metropolitan Lima in the Huachipa district, where Charo was initiating a training program in nutritional self-sufficiency for mothers. As would be the case in any country, opinions shared with me by some would soon be opposed by others, demanding that I constantly make judgments of value and my priorities. In terms of my own future as a professional, the most significant of these conflicts concerned economic development: how can the reduction of poverty be balanced with cultural preservation and environmental protection? The question is even more complicated in a country where a handful of families monopolize the media and political system, preventing meaningful or drastic changes. The answers I received ranged from salvation through sales of uniquely Andean products to niche markets to culturally-aware complacency—"impoverished *campesinos* are content with their lot." When I was overwhelmed with confusion, Charo gave me some hope when she said the problem can and must be broken into more manageable planes. I plan to spend the coming years in college determining which level of the issue I can best tackle, beginning by studying development and agronomy.

Besides developing new abilities to interact with all kinds of people, I gained from Peru an awareness of how I learn. Reality becomes manifest to me in pieces, and by discovering these, I move closer to a holistic understanding. Here I have only explained several aspects of Peru as I came to know it, without claiming to have any real expertise on the country. I cannot fully express how fortunate I was to meet the people I did: my host family, coworkers at CIP, and friends in the Andes stretched my perspective beyond what two months of observation alone should permit. Their experiences and insights allowed me to leave Peru free of the honeymoon sensation of a tourist or the complete disillusion of an observer with no ideology.

Thanks are in order for countless people, those who sent me to Peru in the first place, as well as those who cared for me while there, enriched my time, and forever elevated my spirit. First, I must thank Ryan Lensing and Dr. Gina McAndrews for their assistance in preparing me for the Youth Institute, which enabled me to apply for the Borlaug-Ruan internship. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Norman Borlaug, Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, and Mr. John Ruan, for allowing me to travel to Peru and build the best motivation available for a career in international development. Lisa Fleming cannot be thanked enough for her inexhaustible efforts in preparing me for my internship and ensuring my safety throughout.

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