Migration and the Mantaro Valley: Central Peru

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Photographs taken by Michael Stieber
Introduction

Migration from the Mantaro Valley in the Central Highlands of Peru to coastal areas, namely Lima, may not have direct biological effects on a person but have a wide variety of affects on the culture or towns of respective migrants. The Mantaro Valley comprises sixty-four rural districts with only a few larger towns, such as Jauja or Huancayo existing in the valley and all are located within a two hour drive (Romero 2001).

Migration from these towns and villages to bigger cities brings about many socio-cultural adaptations that are a necessary part in a continuous cycle of change in an ever increasing capitalist society. Some of these adaptations have to do with property ownership or inheritance rights, lack of hands to work the crops during harvest season, and over all loss of a person and to what extent a person should be able to retain his or her rights as a citizen of that community or whether the person forfeits that right once he or she migrates permanently. Migration is not a new phenomenon to the Mantaro Valley region. Over the centuries, the people have been able to make the necessary adaptations while still maintaining their localized peasant communities and local traditions in tact.

Several articles and books have been written on migration and the Mantaro Valley and the purpose of the paper will be to examine these studies as examples of the effects of migration on the valley and offer a basis of criticism, or at least a voice of modernity to the data through the first hand experience I have from doing field research in the Mantaro Valley during the summer of 2004.

A Brief History of the Mantaro Valley

The Mantaro Valley (see map 1 on page 3) has a deep history that goes back to the arrival of the Spaniards in the valley in 1533. This valley is where the Spaniards set up their first capital
in the city of Jauja. The areas residency previous to Spanish influence consisted of people who considered themselves Wanka (Huanca). The Wanka were then conquered by the Inca and forced to live under subjugation to their rule. The Wanka were proud of their independent heritage and did not like living under Incan control. When the Spanish came, they were able to find an ally in the Wanka to fight the Inca. This has been suggested as a reason that the land of the valley has remained in the communities’ hands, rather than being gathered and redistributed as the Spanish had done in other areas of Peru, such as the coastal areas (Romero 2001). Because of the elevation and the distance from the coast where the Spanish ships would land, the capital was moved from Jauja by Francisco Pizarro to Lima in 1535, thus giving the people of the Mantaro Valley their autonomy back (Barret 2003).

Map 1: The Mantaro Valley and its Main Districts

The Mantaro Valley’s fertile lands are used to produce a large amount of produce, which thanks to the addition of railroads and modern roads to the region, makes the produce easier to get to the markets in Lima. The valley’s floor is located between 10,500 to 12,000 feet above sea level. Crops that are sown here include wheat, barley, oats, along with the traditional
growing of Andean tubers and maize. Herding is also practiced in the region with animals consisting of llamas or alpacas, cattle, mules, sheep and some other animal such as goats to a lesser degree (Hastorf 2001).

**History of Migration in the Mantaro Valley**

Although migration from the valley can be traced to before the Guano boom of the 1830s and 1840s, it was not until the 1860s-1950s when major forces of capitalist production can be seen emerging (Mallon 1986). Migration boomed during this period due to strong agricultural and mining sectors that required seasonal migration in order to find the appropriate amount of workers (Mallon 1986).

Manuel Pardo, while staying in Jauja in 1858, saw the lack of transportation in the area that limited the valley’s ability to get its produce to the urban market. In 1872, Pardo became President of Peru and began to push for the expansion of railroads, thus beginning the attempt to connect rural areas to the larger cities (Hunefeldt 2004). The railroad expansion created a need for an adequate number of workers to complete the necessary work.. The first railroads in the Central Highland area connected the major mining centers together, with a track stretching from Huancayo to Lima being completed in 1914 at the height of international demand for wool (Hunefeldt 2004).

Mining became an important part of Peru’s economy in the 19th and 20th centuries, and the mining company Cerro de Pasco was created at La Oroya after Cerro de Pasco bought out several smaller mining companies. This company has had major effects on the Mantaro Valley ranging from loss of residents due to the need for permanent work in the mines and to the ecological effects that the refineries have on the environment (Hunefeldt 2004, Romero 2001).
Silver was the main product being mined as well as gold, copper, lead, and zinc in the mines of Cerro de Pasco.

The process of migrating from the valley increased from people looking for seasonal work, to people choosing permanent jobs and becoming residents in the towns set up by the mining corporations, to lastly the people migrating from the valley altogether and making their way to Lima in search of a new start. Massive migration from rural to urban areas began with the first shanty towns appearing in Lima around 1945 (Hunefeldt 2004).

**Problems and Questions as a Result of Migration**

When discussing migration and the Mantaro Valley, several problems and questions arise. The majority of fertile land in the valley belongs to the communities and the families that have continuously lived in these communities for generations. Work such as planting, maintaining, and harvesting crops has been the responsibility of the family. Members of a related family might help another relative when additional hands are needed, with the helper knowing he or she can count on the relative to pay back the labor if or when help is needed.

Harvest time was also a time of community celebration. In order to thresh (see photograph 1) wheat or barley, a land owner would hire a group of musicians and hold a threshing party that would occasionally last all night long. This work was done by young men and women and was a time of great enjoyment for all, while also getting necessary work done at the same time. Different songs were played throughout the night and had accompanying dances that would allow the young men and women to behave in a different way than everyday life and have a festive night mingling with each other (Romero 2001). The dancing that took place between the participants was on top of the grains, thus while dancing work was getting accomplished.
Photograph 1: Man at work threshing grains in Chongos Bajo

Another problem that arises, and can be examined by looking at migration, is the transition of maintaining an Indian identity versus gaining a *mestizo* identity. *Mestizo* is a racial term used to designate a person of Spanish and Indian heritage. Harris states the process of becoming a *mestizo* is, “connected with increased participation in markets, a shift away from subsistence production to forms of trade, employment of the labor of others, or waged employment…” (1995). A word that closely relates to *mestizo* is *cholo*. *Cholo* is an ethnic term applied to rural Indian peasants that move into the major cities and adopt urban habits and values (Romero 2001). The difference between *mestizo* and *cholo* has to do with the heritage aspect of the definitions. While both the *mestizo* and *cholo* try to utilize modern goods, services, and values, it is the *mestizo* that has mixed heritage.

With migration and the process of becoming a *mestizo* the problem of social identity appears in society. From my personal experience in Lima, I was able to witness some aspects of the social order. *Límenos*, those who were born in Lima from parents who had migrated at an
earlier date, look down upon the *mestizos*, who in return look down upon the newly migrated Indians. At the center of these generalizations and stereotypes is financial stability. *Limenos*, generally speaking, hold better jobs and will employ a live in housekeeper/maid, usually a *mestizo* or Indian. At the other end of the financial ladder are the Indians who hold the lowest paying jobs if they can find one at all. Many have to resort to hawking goods on the street.

A cultural aspect of society that is often overlooked in anthropological research has to do with the topic of music and the role music plays in a particular society. Migration causes many adaptations to take place in the area of music. This process first started with the coming of the Spaniards to the valley along with the later arrival of the mining industry. As new people arrive in the area, new instruments and musical styles are adopted or rejected. This also takes place when a family member migrates to an urban area and returns to his or her original community for a visit. The migrant has more than likely been exposed to different styles and traditions of music and may transport these new styles back to their original community. This process also happens the other way around, with migrants from the valley bringing their traditions to the urban areas with them and thus changing or at least altering the urban music scene.

Some instruments that have been introduced in the Mantaro Valley include saxophones, clarinets, flutes, and violins among others. These instruments are not native to the area, but have been accepted and incorporated into the tradition of the valley in the form of *bandas* and the most common groups known as *orquesta tipicas* (see photograph 2).

What effects does this have on community bonds and traditions? Is the adoption of new instruments and styles a good or bad transition for the communities of the valley? These points will be discussed in further depth below.
Specific Study Results

Problems of maintaining ties to a person’s original community and how many rights a person should be allowed to claim becomes a significant issue when dealing with migration. When major mining companies such as Cerro de Pasco first came to the valley region, migration was utilized as a seasonal supplemental income. Migrants would work their land or the family land, go off to work in the mines for two or three months at a time, and then return to their community in time to help for the harvest (Mallon 1983). As time went on workers began to set up housing and stay at the mining refineries for longer amounts of time. Gradually, the refineries that were located in remote areas became communities of their own.
Two main problems occur when looking at this aspect of migration and the effects it has on the communities. The first issue has to do with municipal work. The communities of the Mantaro Valley do not have paid laborers to install sewage pipes or erect electric lines, etc. It is the community’s responsibility to furnish the workers and work for these types of projects. Mallon (1983) mentions this aspect and I was able to witness this type of work being conducted while in the Mantaro Valley. If people migrate permanently, right away there is a loss of manpower. If people migrate seasonally, they may not actually be in the community when municipal projects take place. Can a person who is away working and not contributing to community projects still be viewed as a member of the community, and if so, to what extent?

The other dilemma that occurs as a result of migration also deals with the issue of loss of manpower. The mines in this area are very primitive and lack adequate safety equipment (Mallon 1983). Accidents occur frequently and often end with loss of life or permanent damage taking place to an individual. Add to the accidents the daily inhalation of toxic fumes that although do not kill immediately, more than often result in death leading to additional loss of manpower.

A significant issue that derives from migration has to do with the process of becoming a mestizo. Harris (1995) claims, “The shift from Indian to mestizo within an individuals lifetime would … involve migration- a break with one’s place of origin in order to work at the lowest level of unskilled labor in cities, mines, or plantations or as domestic servants”. A change would also be visible in a person’s clothing, diet, and language (Harris 1995). Differences between these types of classification can be measured by economic means.

Music can relate a great deal about a culture and through migration, numerous influences can be examined. Music has a long tradition in the Mantaro Valley with numerous fiestas taking
place throughout the year. These *fiestas*, which number around 50 per year, range from public religious ceremonies to private familial ceremonies for animals, etc (Romero 2001). In all of these *fiestas*, no matter what type they may be, music plays an important and central role.

Instruments are a good place to start when looking at how migration has influenced and continues to influence music. Native instruments to the region include the *cacho* (*wakrapuku*), a spiral shaped cattle horn trumpet (see photograph 3).

![Photograph 3: Cacho (wakrapuku) made from cattle horns](image_url)

Other instruments native to the region are the *pincullo* and the *tinya* (see photograph 5 below). Both of these instruments are Andean, with the former being a flute like instrument and the latter a small drum. The *charango*, a small mandolin like instrument is also native to this region. The *charango* used to be made from the shell of an armadillo, although this is now illegal (Romero 2001).

The *orquesta típica*, now the most popular ensemble in the valley, is a recent adaptation that has appeared within the last 40 to 50 years. Saxophones, trumpets, and cornets have
replaced the *cachos* (see photograph 4), flutes have replaced the *pincullo*, and modern drums and violins have replaced the *tinya* and *charango* in these ensembles (Romero 2001).

**Photograph 4: Brass instruments during festival in Chongos Bajo**
A First Hand Account

I spent the summer of 2004 in Peru doing ethnomusicology fieldwork for the Center for Andean Ethnomusicology. While music was the main focus of the work I did, it did not stop me from witnessing other aspects of culture that coincide with music.

The problem of maintaining ties to the community was an issue that was easily visible. An example of this can be seen by a ceremony I attended in Masma. The group I was with was invited to the house of a family in order to film, record, and participate in this private ritual. We arrived at the house at 4:30am, the time when the Luci Luci ceremony is performed. The
household consisted of an older married couple and one of their daughters. For this ceremony the family had the more traditional music form consisting of 2 cacho players, a violin player, and 2 tinya players. The Luci Luci ritual is performed in order to cleanse the animals, cattle and sheep, in order to prepare them for the herranza or marking of the animals ritual that was to take place later in the day. Present at this ritual was the group of 4 I was with, the family of three, and the five musicians.

As the day progressed, children of the family continued to show up at different times throughout the day. These family members lived and worked in Lima and most of their children were accustomed to urban life. Accustomed to urban life meaning they went to school, knew how to use the internet and spoke English among other things. The family members only visit for special ceremonies and do not help out with agricultural work that goes on for the rest of the year.

The question that is raised from the result of migration is what will happen to the tradition that the elderly couple continues to live? Will someone step up and continue the tradition or is the end of the traditional peasant household? This was not the only instance of witnessing a few family members, generally the older generation, remaining behind while the rest have migrated to Lima or other countries. I also came across this situation in Sapallanga where I took part in a private ceremony for the festival of Santiago. Once again the ceremony started out small with the rest of the family showing up at different times throughout the day.

Being in Peru and witnessing first hand the different roles that social status plays was a very interesting experience. When I first went to the Mantaro Valley I visited the town of Chupaca for the Festival of San Juan. Being American, the mayordomias immediately came and introduced themselves to us. The mayordomias are the people that sponsor the festivities for a
particular festival. These responsibilities include holding banquets with large amounts of food and *chicha* (beer) present as well as hiring, housing, and feeding the musicians that have been hired for the event (Cadena 2000).

This festivity is a joyous event with dancing and a fireworks show and most of the people present are having fun. However, I noticed no interaction between the peasants and the people of higher standing. It was like the stereotypical image of a school dance with guys on one side and girls on the other, with no communication between the two taking place. This is not meant to imply that either group was rude to one another, although this did happen occasionally. In that particular instance, the situation was of a drunken peasant bothering a group of people of higher standing talking with me. Indians being drunks is a typical stereotype of the region.

During my time spent in Lima I was also able to see different social roles at work. The family I stayed with while in Lima was well off and employed a live-in maid. This was typical of everyone I worked with in the field school.

A good example of the racism that exists can be seen by my experience of going to North Lima to document a music festival that was taking place. I did not see the family I was staying with for 3 days and when I returned to their house and told them I had been to North Lima they were absolutely shocked. They could not believe the school would send us to that area. North Lima is very poor and is home to a large number of migrants from all over Peru, including the Mantaro Valley.

While in the Mantaro Valley it was interesting to learn about the musical tradition of the region and how it has adapted as times have changed. The instruments themselves, however, are not the only change that has occurred in music. During festivals music is sometimes employed as a symbol of status. The ideology behind this is the bigger, louder, and more modern the band,
the better it is and the more respect a person shall receive. If one does not hire an *orquesta tipica*, then they may be talked about in the community as not having enough money, etc.

Most of the traditional instruments have been replaced in the valley. However, in Masma I was able to meet a *cacho* maker in his 80’s who was teaching his art to a student that ran a *cacho* school. It was nice to see the *cacho*, while gone in most communities was still going strong in Masma.

In Lima, through migration a new type of music labeled *chincha* has become popular in the past 30 years. *Chincha* takes traditional Andean songs and puts a new and unique twist on them. This twist takes the form of electronic instruments. I was able to attend several of these events and it was common to see electric bass and guitars being played as well as synthesizers and electronic drum kits (see photograph 6).

![Photograph 6: Musicians playing *chincha* in North Lima](image)

Visiting the Mantaro Valley and Lima allowed me to see two sides of the effects of migration. If a person migrates from the valley, not only does it have an effect in the valley, but
also to wherever that person migrates. Based on the literature reviewed for this topic I see many areas of research that can be accomplished in this area. Changes in lifestyle and an in depth look at the continuing effects of migration in the valley could serve as the basis for interesting study.

Map 2: Map of Peru with Mantaro Valley to the east of Lima
References Cited


