

Two Paths of Agrarian Capitalism, or a Critique of Chayanovian Marxism

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I. INTRODUCTION: UNEQUAL EXCHANGE AND PEASANT ECONOMY—UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

In the ideology of “dependency” and the “world system” the preservation of a comprador bourgeoisie highly dependent on its control of the state apparatus perpetuates the condition of underdevelopment to the benefit not only of that class but also of the world capitalist system, and obviously to the detriment of the remainder of the population of poor countries (Wallerstein 1984). According to these theories, the condition of dependency is sustained also by the perpetuation of petty-commodity production and other precapitalist relationships. In his enumeration of the implications of accumulation in “socially and sectorally disarticulated economies” (that is, third world countries), Alain de Janvry, who places himself, with some reservations, in the world-system school, states that “subsistence agriculture becomes the ultimate embodiment of the contradictions of accumulation in the disarticulated economies; . . . the peasant household constitutes an articulated-dominated purveyor of cheap labour and cheap food [even though] subsistence agriculture slowly disintegrates under this domination as it performs its essential structural function under disarticulated accumulation” (1981:39). For Immanuel Wallerstein, the state-class relationship and the persistence of petty-commodity production are both features of the “peripheral condition” and explain why it is so difficult (though not absolutely impossible) in his schema for countries to graduate from his periphery and semiperiphery to the core of advanced economies. The argument runs as follows: in its expansion across the globe the capitalist world economy creates social structures and state structures that fit the needs of the core economies by establishing a ruling class in control of the state and holding monopoly power within the national economy. These relationships are particularly suitable for the provision of the primary commodities and low-productivity goods required by the core, but they also place the ruling class in a position where it can extract surplus even though its industries are unproductive and inefficient in international terms. These industries are underpinned by state subsidies and state-guaranteed monopolies. Thus the interests of every major party are satisfied: the dominant

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corporations from the core get cheap goods as inputs, and the capitalist system is not threatened by a revolt of the periphery over primary-commodity prices because the people in charge of the periphery are successfully co-opted, living as it were “on the difference” through their control of the terms on which goods enter and leave peripheral countries. (*Country* in this context refers merely to the territory defined by one state’s monopoly of legitimate violence and by no other significant economic or cultural homogeneity.) The core proletariat is likewise co-opted since it has common interests with the core corporations against the periphery, while the periphery proletariat hardly exists at all. Instead, the subordinate classes in peripheral countries are the peasantry and workers in the urban informal sector who are caught in a web of exploitation based on those very household production systems which tend to isolate them and thus deprive them of the basis for sustained solidary action.

Thus the theory of dependency is structured in such a way that it simply does not allow for the possibility that the poor countries might extract themselves, short of an apocalyptic change in the entire world system—world socialism, Wallerstein terms it, while rapidly conceding that there is no chance of it ever arising. This is a far cry from Marx’s own view of capitalist development, though that in itself need not be a basis for objection. Authors in the dependency and world-system schools clearly do not believe that “the country that is the more advanced industrially only shows to the less developed the image of its own future” (Marx 1976:91). They also depart quite seriously from Marx’s view of the state in capitalist development. For Marx, the action of the state was crucial at the stage of “primitive” or “original” accumulation; the state opened the way for capitalist relations of production with whatever violence was necessary, by wrenching the peasantry off the land and otherwise creating a “free” labour force. Thereafter, the market would look after itself. Wallerstein’s image of the state’s nonautonomous, incestuous relationship with the entrepreneurial classes as a permanent, defining feature of peripheral formations is radically different.

The important relationship in these arguments is that established between the existence of precapitalist mechanisms and the claim that they are the element that contributes decisively to the perpetuation of poverty. The implications of the work of Wallerstein and Samir Amin are that if the state did not operate in the monopolistic and almost feudal way that characterises it in the periphery, then the fruits of capitalist development would spread evenly across the globe, and also that the state cannot operate otherwise; its functioning is, so to speak, overdetermined. Likewise, it is precisely the precapitalist—or perhaps “non-capitalist”—elements in the organisation of peasant production that are both sustained by the capitalist system and also perpetuate the poverty of the peasantry. Stated thus, the thesis implies that the solution for the peasantry is not the advent of socialism but merely the lifting of the barriers to their

becoming capitalists. This is where we confront the Chinese Wall that cannot be penetrated. A deeply held assumption in the discourse concerning the peasantry is that peasants are situated at a pole opposite to capitalists on every dimension relevant to the characterisation of either modes of production or units of production, and that the “logic” or “rationality” of peasant production prevents them from becoming capitalists. When it is pointed out that this poses difficulties, say, in the case of a very small producer of coffee, or indeed of cocaine, for the world market, then all manner of embarrassment ensues. In the following paragraphs I show that one can have a viable definition of peasant forms of production without risking such embarrassment, but that an ideological shift on the part of the adherents of dependency and world-systems theories is probably required if they are to accept it.

“The costs of production on a peasant farm are lower than those of a capitalist farm producing the same crop on the same piece of land.” If there is one point on which all relevant schools of thought are agreed in their accounts of peasant economies it is this. For A. V. Chayanov (1967) this explains the survival of the “labour farm” or peasant enterprise; for Michael Lipton it is an argument for the redistribution of land (1974) or for the redirection of state-controlled resources from the city to the countryside (1977); for Amartya Sen (1966) it also explains the survival of peasant producers and the persistence of institutions such as sharecropping; for Alain de Janvry (1982) it is an element in the functional relationship between peasant production and capitalism.

In all these analyses, the low costs, translated into low output prices and the low cost of peasant labour (when it is the subject of a market transaction), arise from and are explained by the fact (or assumption) that labour in peasant production is unpaid because of its family, domestic, or household character. This is taken to imply not that it is cost-free but that it is less costly than wage labour. The wage a peasant’s labour might fetch if it were sold on the open market—its opportunity cost—is presumed to be very small because of the extremely high rates of unemployment attributed to poor agrarian economies. In contrast to peasant producers, the capitalist employer is assumed to incur additional costs of recruitment and supervision, and must pay a wage of some sort; this wage will be higher than the irreducible subsistence costs incurred by peasant household producers because it will reflect the compulsions of discipline and regularities of timetable imposed upon workers in a capitalist firm. It is assumed that these “external” constraints, like “economising” behaviour, cease to apply at the gates of the peasant farm: within a peasant household altruism, joint utilities, and internalised norms take the place of optimising behaviour (Folbre 1985).

The definition of a *peasant* (better used as an adjective, for example, *peasant producer*) shared by these writers, then, insists on the domestic and

unpaid character of labour in peasant units of production, and the consequence of this characteristic is said to be that those units supply products and even labour to the rest of society at prices cheaper than they would be if they were produced by “proper” capitalists. This consequence is elevated into a function particularly by K. Vergopoulos and by Alain de Janvry, for whom peripheral capitalism depends on a reservoir of cheap labour and has no need for the demand that improved incomes for labourers might bring about; this labour, which can be drawn on seasonally or cyclically, is reproduced by the peasant sector at little or no cost to the capitalists themselves or to the capitalist state. In addition, it is claimed that the difference between the surplus that would be transferred by capitalist agricultural producers and that which is actually transferred by peasant producers is something in the nature of a “peasant” surplus (my term). This peasant surplus is different in origin but similar in function to the surplus value extracted from wage workers.¹ For these writers, and indeed for Samir Amin, it is the hallmark of peripheral capitalism that it relies on these disarticulated mechanisms, and on pre-capitalist mechanisms of all kinds, to sustain its rhythm of accumulation. If it relied exclusively on wage labour and profit to extract surplus value it would neither survive nor fulfill its role in the world capitalist system. The others do not pursue the implications to quite such an all-embracing level, but their view of the role of the peasantry in the economy is constructed on the idea of its cheapness nonetheless. Abhijit Sen would say that the landlord benefits from the relative cheapness of labour used under sharecropping. Lipton maintains that small agricultural producers use their labour very intensively to extract unparalleled levels of productivity from their land and capital, but he does not attribute to this the cheapness of their products or their labour; to explain these he adduces discriminatory, misguided, or even perverse state policies designed to extract maximum resources from agriculture in general for the ultimate benefit of certain strata of urban consumers. He differs from such as de Janvry or Vergopoulos (1978) in believing that both peasant producers and the rest of society would benefit from the peasants’ high yields if the state allowed them to do so, whereas de Janvry would claim that in the logic of capitalist development peasant producers will use land and capital more productively than capitalists but cannot expect to obtain correspondingly higher incomes. Not merely “poor but efficient,” as Theodore Schultz (1964) would have had them, but “poor, efficient, and therefore exploited”; and even here the word *efficient* is somewhat misused because it is the intensity of the use of land and capital, at the expense of a highly *inefficient* (if market prices were applied) use of labour, which is being pinpointed. Lipton ultimately believes that a rational and benign state is at least in principle a possibility, whereas the likes of de Janvry view the state as at best the

¹ For a critique, see Harriet Friedmann (1980) and David Lehmann (1982a).

harbinger of an inevitably uneven capitalist development and at worst the agent of the immediate interests of the capitalist class.

Among those who place themselves explicitly in the Marxist tradition, who use the Marxist vocabulary self-consciously and with much care, Utsa Patnaik would say that it is not so much the domestic character of labour as the condition of mass unemployment which enables landlords to extract a supplementary or "precapitalist" rent from their tenants (1983). But she does not pursue the functionalist argument as do de Janvry and Vergopoulos, and she studiously, perhaps advisedly, avoids the word *peasant*. Henry Bernstein, writing from a more orthodox Marxist perspective than most, also avoids the functionalist formulation, but in his account he emphasises the relationship between the high productivity of land and capital among simple commodity producers (read "peasant producers") and the logic of subsistence which characterises their production as opposed to the logic of surplus appropriation which characterises full commodity production (that is, capitalist producers). He also discusses the cheapness of migrant labour and peasant products, and states that "the ability of simple commodity producers . . . to produce in the face of deteriorating terms of exchange, means that they compete effectively with capitalist enterprises producing the same commodities" (1979:429). Although he seems to have decided consciously not to enter the discussion about the relative efficacy (let alone functionality) of this capacity for capitalist development, he does state that surplus value is transferred from simple commodity producers to capital, for better or for worse. The Brazilian economist Graziano da Silva takes a similar position when he states that there is no contradiction between the claim that capitalism in certain circumstances "reproduces petty production" and the claim that it brings about proletarianisation: the former is part of the latter process, broadly construed (1981:51).

Despite their differences, it seems to me that there is an underlying common ideological element in the writings of de Janvry and Vergopoulos, Bernstein and Graziano da Silva. This element—as befits an ideological moment—is the attempt to resolve a contradiction between the observation that peasant producers are highly productive (in terms of yields) and the assumption that capitalism is at the root of all poverty (if not all evil). This notion that capitalism is at the root of poverty is not a traditional Marxist one: on the contrary, several antirevisionist writers have recently been at pains to tell us (cf. Warren 1980; Smith 1980), that capitalism is the source of most of the wealth we can observe in the world today. It is a notion which originates in Paul Baran and received its headline-hitting formulation from A. G. Frank in the mid-1960s. Now, having admitted that peasant producers are very productive and yet that they remain extremely poor, the heirs to Frank's tradition had to find some systemic, structural mechanism in the capitalist system which—operating in a law-like manner akin to the law of surplus value—would explain this. For this they turned to Chayanov.

II. THE CAPITALISED FAMILY FARM AS A WAY THROUGH THE CHINESE WALL

The outcome is the idea of a Chinese Wall that will totally prevent peasant producers from becoming capitalists. The assumed mechanisms here are derived from Chayanov and dependency theory in proportions that, though they may vary, will always leave a taste of an ill-conceived cocktail. From Chayanov is derived the concept that a peasant farm produces only up to the point where the extra unit of drudgery is not worthwhile when set against the corresponding reduction in the distance between the producer's family and their desired level of consumption. The implication of this is that peasant producers will accumulate capital only if they get a windfall. In other words, in normal times, they are not interested in such things. From dependency theory is derived the idea that the state is controlled by interests which will ensure that prices—not to speak of the political system and the bureaucracy—are consistently unfavourable to peasant producers and that therefore they will not have the slightest chance of reaching far beyond their desired consumption level even at the best of times. Thus their high-yielding labours will be exploited to the full by a treadmill manipulated by the ruling capitalist classes. And just as *dependencia* has difficulty accommodating a dynamic class of indigenous capitalists (preferring to describe them as a congeries of parasites basking in the protective shade of the state) so this intersectoral version has difficulty in accommodating the reality of farms that are clearly capitalist in their market behaviour yet employ hardly any wage labour, and certainly no permanent labour, outside the nuclear family. In the Latin American literature they are variously described as *unidades familiares capitalizadas*, *novo campesinos*, or, in Spanglish, *farmers*. They are seen as an anomaly. In this article I develop a theory that tries to dispel this anomalous status.

In an article published in 1982 I elaborated upon the idea of a capitalised family farm as a type of productive unit which is capitalist but uses little hired wage labour from outside the household. In this I was not alone. Other articles and books (such as the study by David Goodman and Michael Redclift (1981)) written at about the same time, and whose authors clearly saw themselves as bearers of a Marxist or at least a *Marxisant* tradition, were also developing similar theories, usually embellished with a ritual reverence in the direction of remarks by Lenin about the United States. Little did we know that we would have done best merely to “rediscover” and redisseminate a once-classic article by John Brewster that the *Journal of Farm Economics* published in 1950, entitled “Machine Process in Agriculture and Industry.” In that essay Brewster explains why mechanisation in agriculture leads to the preservation of family units (of production)—an argument that contrasts both with the “Leninist” prediction of their ultimate demise (allowing, it must be said, that it may arrive only in the very very long run) and with the expecta-

tion of perpetual survival with perpetually low-level technologies and living standards that we find in the work of Chayanov's *Marxisant* successors.

Brewster's argument is rooted in a simple observation: that both before and after mechanisation farm operations are widely separated by time intervals irredeemably imposed by biology and climate. In agriculture, he says, technological advance does not accelerate the functional division of labour and specialisation, since operations are not concurrent as they are in industry. Rather, it allows a family to reduce its hiring of wage labour. So long as farms specialise as single enterprises rather than diversifying, and thereby hold supervision requirements in check, mechanisation militates against the processes we now call proletarianisation.

In my 1982 article I suggest that the capitalist transition in agriculture in today's low- and middle-income countries follows two main paths: "both the dominance of capitalized family farms and the 'involved' dualistic pattern are possible in long-settled areas where peasantries survive" (1982a:158). The word *involved* is used to refer to areas where large- and small-scale units of production continue to coexist conflictively, with a modernisation of the former and a rapid proliferation of the latter. The term *capitalised family farm* is used to refer to units in which capital is used far more than the popular image of a peasant farm would lead one to expect, and labour is hired only in small quantities or for brief but intense periods such as harvest, much as Brewster would have it. The article is essentially speculative, drawing on strands in the literature to develop an hypothesis about the range of possible patterns of agrarian structure that might develop as capitalism advances in agrarian societies. It is also an attempt to break out of a methodological straightjacket which has recently been well described by David Booth (1985): where much previous literature (especially that which placed itself broadly in the Marxist tradition) had been struggling under the weight of the idea that a theory was worthwhile only if it was a theory about the inevitable,² it expressly outlined two possible polar paths of agrarian capitalism, with the implication that there was a range of possibilities between the two poles. It did not attempt to define the prior historical and structural conditions under which one or the other path might occur. The present essay pursues and develops these ideas and, with the help of our observations in the Ecuadorian province

² In order to satisfy the requirement that the inevitable consequence of capitalist penetration in a peasant economy was the emergence of two opposed polar classes, despite the observation of proliferating peasant enterprises in many poor and middle-income countries, authors came to redefine migration as a form of proletarianisation, and also to describe peasant producers as "wage-labour equivalents" or like terms (cf. Bernstein 1979). These formulations had more than a grain of accuracy; migrants do become proletarians (at least intermittently), and frequently peasant producers are either part-time wage labourers or subject to various controls over their use of their lands. But to lump all these variations together is to miss the opportunity of detecting variations in processes of change and thus of explaining the changes observed.

of Carchi, offers an account of some of the mechanisms that come into play in the transition to an agrarian structure dominated by capitalised family farms.

Before entering into detailed discussion it is important to note that the contrast between the two paths cannot and must not be reduced to a contrast between peasant enterprises and capitalised family farms at the enterprise level. It is a contrast between agrarian structures and the dynamic forces of change within them—conditioned to varying degrees by the political economy of the larger society and of the world system. The contrasting agrarian structures are characterised as dominated by modernised estates (in the involuted path) and capitalised family farms (in the path which bears that name), but there is no reason why peasant producers or capitalised family farm producers should not be present in both. A distinction is therefore drawn between presence and dominance, and between agrarian structures and units of production—the agrarian structure being defined as a particular combination of type of class structure and the inner workings of production units within a region.

III. LABOUR RECRUITMENT AND CONTROL ON PEASANT FARMS AND ON CAPITALISED FAMILY FARMS

The capitalised family farm (CFF) is a unit of production that, like the commonly held stereotype of a peasant farm, relies principally on kinship ties in the recruitment of labour, but unlike that same stereotype, also uses fixed and variable capital in accordance with its endowments and with the opportunities offered by the market. Whereas the common view, accurate or not, is that peasant farms rarely hire wage labour because it is not “in their nature” to do so, I argue, with reference to the CFF, that it does without wage labour because of the cost and that it invests in capital if necessary. The CFF therefore takes fully into account the market cost of the labour it does not hire and makes a capitalist profit even without hiring any wage labour. It recruits primarily not so much from among a network of kin but from within the nuclear family, whereas the peasant farm recruits from both and, even when it pays wages, recruits through a (wider) network of primary relationships. We therefore have a series of contrasts that confound common stereotypes: a *family* farm which is clearly capitalist but recruits hardly any wage labour, and a *peasant* farm which is perhaps not capitalist, yet which may recruit wage labour, doing so through the kinship network rather than the open market. The only common dividing factor that combines and separates these features correctly and resolves the anomaly previously alluded to, is their insertion in the labour market: they seem to operate in different segments of the labour market. Whether the one or the other is definitively capitalist or not is academic; both can be taken to exist in societies where the capitalist mode of production prevails.

The crucial feature that distinguishes peasant producers is that they are

more likely to recruit labour among groups and for periods not available to the labour market as a whole: women able and prepared to spend half a day working for a kinsman, but not longer, and not for an unknown person; children who spend their mornings in school; fellow farmers who have an odd day or two to spare. The labour retains its family character because, whether or not a wage is paid, the labourers are recruited through the activation of a range of primary relationships that are usually either kinship ties or ritual kinship relationships such as *compadrazgo*. The terms *family* and *household* should not be misunderstood. To Western ears, and certainly to the Russian writers of the turn of the century who fathered the theory of peasant economy and the concept of a peasant family economy, these mean a nuclear family or at least a group of people closely related to each other, living under the same roof and eating out of the same pot. From this stems the triple preconception—that the family farm (or “labour farm” in Chayanov’s usage) uses only family labour, that family labour must come from this “one-pot, one-roof” social unit, and that it cannot be paid in money (cf. Shanin 1973–74).

These consequences need not follow; only a highly ethnocentric concept of family would restrict the categories of people covered by the term *family labour* to the members of the nuclear family, and only an equally ethnocentric concept would presume that family members are unpaid (in wages—profit shares or product shares apart). The analytically significant point about these relationships, which indeed has not passed unnoticed by many followers of Chayanov and others influenced by him—from neoclassical economists like Lipton (1977) to Marxists or Marxisants like Vergopoulos (1978) and de Janvry (1982) and others like Amartya Sen (1966)—is their effect on the price of labour, namely, to cheapen it, explicitly or implicitly.

The authors mentioned above make various claims: (1) that since the productive unit pays no money wages it has no labour costs (Chayanov), (2) that since it employs family labour it has lower labour costs than capitalist units (de Janvry, Vergopoulos), (3) that it has low labour costs because it exists in a sea of unemployment, and indeed survives because it provides the last minimally secure refuge against that unemployment (Amartya Sen). The commonly held but never explicit assumption underlying these theories is that people work for low wages or low returns within the family or household either because they love their families—which they often don’t—or because they automatically obey their fathers and husbands—also subject at least to doubt. My claim is that the labour is cheaper on a peasant farm than on a capitalist farm because peasant producers have access to those parts of the labour market that others cannot reach, because it can employ people for “peculiar” periods, because it uses kinship and parakinship ties, in particular ties of patronage and personal dependency, to keep the costs of labour down. It follows from this, and in the light of Abhijit Sen’s (1981) account of sharecropping and market failure, that landlords and capitalist farmers will

take advantage of these characteristics through a range of tenancy and sub-contracting arrangements with peasant producers. This image of a peasant farm is based on a more concrete and realistic theory of “peasant motivation” than that which underlies the models of Chayanov and his followers. Their theories depend on notions which we tend to accept only because they ascribe to peasant producers and their families the motivation that Western ideology—not Western reality—ascribes to families in industrial societies. The irony is compounded when we recall that these ideas originate with populists hostile to, or distrustful of, the consequences of industrialisation.

It follows from my view that in peasant societies (a term used here to refer to those societies which observers would intuitively describe as such, rather than to any rigorously defined groups) producers do not necessarily rely exclusively on kin for labour, and certainly not on close kin, and that even when they do recruit kin they may well pay them a wage. But this does not by any means exclude the possibility that the recruitment of labour through these ties makes it cheaper to employ than labour recruited on the open market, if such exists. The activation of kinship ties in the recruitment of labour makes labour cheaper in the short run for this purchaser than it would be for an impersonal capitalist operating a small unit with no links to the network of relationships in which the workers move.

The two provisos—the “short” run and the “small” unit—reveal key aspects of the argument about cheap labour. Although cheap in the short term, the labour purchased may prove more expensive than it appears at first sight if in the long run it involves the purchaser in a web of costly or time-consuming commitments to return favours or to dispense patronage. The small size of the unit is relevant because it is on small units in particular that labour is required in small and irregular quantities, and it is precisely these sorts of requirements that can be fulfilled (without incurring the excessive costs usually associated with small transactions) by the activation of primary loyalties such as kinship, as mentioned at the beginning of this section. The owner or manager of a large unit would have little use for the dribs and drabs of labour time that a small unit needs. Such a person might well find a bevy of hangers-on something of an irritation—though it is worth recalling how the movie moguls of Hollywood’s Golden Age littered their payrolls with relatives near and far. Even so, the contention that peasant producers obtain labour at cheaper average unit costs than capitalist producers, and that this is due to their access to a web of primary loyalties (which is part of the definition of a peasant producer) remains. Whether it follows from this that the smaller unit is actually thereby transferring surplus out to the rest of society, or to particular social classes, is extremely debatable, since the relatively low productivity of this labour must be taken into account in making such claims.

Inevitably the small size of the unit has entered into the definition of the peasant producer or production unit. At first sight this is unsatisfactory, for it

seems to be a criterion more or less arbitrarily fixed according to the requirements of any particular analysis. But in a manner analogous to the usage commonly made of the term *subsistence*, it can be adduced with the explicit proviso that its specification be left to the circumstances of each case, since the size of unit that can be worked without recourse to labour beyond the "peasant labour market" will obviously depend on circumstances.

The implicit opposition between family (or community) and wage labour is not limited to the language of the observers. In contemporary Andean societies we observe forms of labour recruitment which are described as reciprocity by anthropologists and in nonwage terms by those involved, and which are embedded in multistranded relationships such as personal dependency and kinship, or both combined, or in ritual kinship such as *compadrazgo*. Yet they often turn out to be wage relations, in which the wage is cheaper than it otherwise would be on account of these primary relationships. This can be seen by comparing the studies of the neighbouring valleys of La Convención and Yucay, situated at different, but interacting, ecological levels in the Department of Cusco, Peru, by Tom Brass (1983) and Antoinette Fioravanti-Molinié (1982). Taken separately, they seem to reach different conclusions, but in reality they complement one another and should be read together. Similarly, Cesar Fonseca, a strong defender of the social functions of such relationships in a precapitalist society, seems to be caught between two opposed and irreconcilable interpretations: the one explains *minka*—a notionally rotating work party performing services for each member in turn and receiving only ritual payments of drink and cigarettes—in terms of the pressure of the community as a whole to redistribute surpluses, while the other represents it as "the extraction of surpluses from the poorest for the benefit of the wealthiest and even of the *mestizos*" (1974:108).

Similar doubts apply to community as well. The books by Norman Long and Bryan Roberts (1978, 1984) can be interpreted as variations on the theme of how "communal resources, such as pastureland and community institutions such as the *faena* [communal work party] or fiesta system, provided the means by which local entrepreneurs could expand their resources through mobilizing the political and economic potential of the village" (1984:42). And the recent work of Florencia Mallon (1983) gives a graphic description of the way in which *comunidad* institutions have provided a framework for original accumulation, with all its accompanying violence and chicanery.

It is usually assumed—implicitly rather than explicitly—that these forms persist merely as cultural lags, that peasant farms have an original form as family farms and inevitably lose their family character, and the cooperation that goes with it, as a result of the spread of capitalist markets. Although it is recognized that the loss of such characteristics may proceed unevenly—hence the lags—few doubt that in the long run they do disappear under these influences. My claim is a different one, namely, that different aspects of these

family relationships may be reinforced by different patterns of capitalist development in agriculture. In the involuted path, the mechanisms of labour recruitment just outlined may be reinforced, as Rodrigo Sanchez has eloquently argued (1982), while in the capitalised family farm, those relationships conventionally associated with precapitalist family farms—by, for example, Shanin (1973–74)—are not only reinforced but also operate as dynamic factors in the emergence of capitalised farming.

IV. STRUCTURAL CONCOMITANTS OF THE INVOLUTED PATH: PATTERNS OF MIGRATION AND LABOUR CONTROL

The involuted path is one in which small-scale units proliferate while the large units preserve their dominant position. They preserve it even though they also reduce their average size, shedding marginal land by distributing it to former employees or selling it off; they even preserve their dominance when converted from landlord's estates to peasant-run co-operatives. In addition, they raise their capital-labour ratios often with the support of cheap public-sector credit. The large units also tend to choose lines of production that demand the least labour, above all, permanent labour. Seasonal labour is drawn from neighbouring or distant smallholding areas. Correspondingly, the labour force in neighbouring smallholding areas faces poor local opportunities for regular employment but intense demand for their labour at seasonal peaks.³

With this pattern goes a concomitant pattern of migration to cities, to frontier areas, or to other rural areas. Coming from relatively poverty-stricken areas, migrants from these involuted regions will often be too poor to gain a secure foothold in the city or to establish themselves as independent farmers in frontier areas. Migration, it should be recalled, is not a cheap option open to anyone irrespective of means. The poorest often depend on labour contractors to pay even their fares (on credit) from their villages of origin, in which case they migrate only seasonally and to work in periods of peak labour demand on plantations; if they go to a city, migrants from areas where the involuted path has dominated—such as Riobamba in the highlands of Ecuador south of Quito (Burgos 1977)—tend to work in the extremely insecure construction industry or in domestic service. The difficulty of obtaining secure employment deters them from selling their land, the small security they can fall back on. Thus land markets tend to freeze and intergenerational transfers exacerbate fragmentation and subdivision of holdings.

Migration to frontier areas is hardly a realistic alternative for people from these involuted areas. The prospect of selling their lands to go and seek others in frontier areas must seem daunting, especially in the light of the risks and

³ Examples of the involuted path include the northeast of Brazil (Lehmann 1982), the Cayambe Valley of northern Ecuador (see text below for further details), the Department of Cajamarca in northern Peru (Taylor 1979); the southern highlands of Peru (Figueroa 1982; Sanchez 1982).

costs involved in the migration process itself: the hiring of a lorry to transport people and possessions and the dangers of bandits, thieves, and confidence tricksters, all dissuade the very poor from such an adventure. This can be well illustrated from the Brazilian Amazon region. Migrants moving to that region from the south sell their southern land, hire a vast lorry (*pau-de-arara*, or parrot's perch), and go to a place where they have contacts and some expectation of a piece of land far bigger than the one they have sold. These people often even make an exploratory trip before finally setting off, something the poor smallholder could rarely afford to do. In contrast, the poor and landless tend to migrate alone, without families, in busloads, in search of whatever employment they can obtain. These features of Brazilian migration to the frontier indicate the differentiated nature of migrant experience. The study by Wayne Cornelius (1978) of migration from villages in the region of Jalisco, in Mexico, to the United States offers a striking illustration of the importance of the costs of migration in determining who can migrate and under what conditions; it shows that these costs are so high—ranging as they do from transport fees to bribes for frontier officials and payments to helpers or smugglers—that only the upper strata of the villages can afford it. Poorer villagers no doubt also migrate, but to less distant, and less lucrative, places and jobs.

Outward migration from involuted areas, then, is a more periodic, seasonal affair than elsewhere, and there is also more return migration than one might expect from the jeremiads about rural poverty provoking excessive urban growth. A recent study of southern Peru by Daniel Cotlear (1984) emphasises the relationship between the insecure rights offered by communal tenure and both the impermanent nature of migration and the phenomenon of return migration. My interpretation is that it is the involuted character of agricultural development in the region which offers the explanation, and that the communal tenure is but an epiphenomenon. Cotlear explains the return of migrants to their villages by reference to the insecurity of their inheritance; my claim is that this would not matter to them if they had a secure urban base, given the usually paltry amounts of land involved. The persistence of communal tenure—with all the insecurity which it implies and which Cotlear rightly⁴ em-

⁴ This is important because of the layers of ideological obfuscation that surround the use of the term *comunidad*. To many people of varied political persuasions it evokes an image of security and arcadian togetherness and solidarity. In particular, there is a very widely held belief that this institution protects rights in land. Yet we know that the institution was created by the Inca colonial state, and later re-created in the same image by that state's Spanish successor, in this part of the world, as a basis for the provision of tribute labour. Furthermore, the role of the chiefs of these base institutions has always been subject to the conflicting pressures of a state—which co-opts them—and a community of people who press them to defend their lands. The latter do not always win out (*cf.* Spalding 1973; Murra 1977; Sempat 1982; and Sanchez-Albornoz 1978). This line of analysis of indigenous communities, emphasising the role of their leaders as agents of the state and the internal conflict they contain, has been pursued with some vigour by Samuel Popkin against the purported romanticism of certain interpretations of Vietnamese revolutionary nationalism (1981) and against James C. Scott's concept of the "moral economy" of the peasant

phases—is itself a consequence or concomitant of the persistent coexistence of large estates and areas of tiny peasant holdings. The fact that an agrarian reform has transferred ownership of those estates to peasant co-operatives seems to make no difference. Cotlear's evidence, therefore, provides some support for the idea that an involuted pattern of development goes together with nonpermanent migration. This pattern may follow an annual, seasonal cycle or a more long-drawn-out one stretching over an individual's life span.

Migration from areas where the involuted path prevails, then, tends to be more seasonal, more intermittent, than migration from the countryside as a whole. It tends to stimulate rather than stem the proliferation of smallholdings, intensifying rather than relieving the pressures on the land precisely in the areas where unequal distribution is most acute and where therefore that pressure has the most serious consequences.

Under these conditions of involution, "peasant" practices in labour recruitment and control, far from declining under the impact of capitalist development, may well increase, as rich peasants take advantage of networks under their control to hire from the pool of underemployed labour. Involution is accentuated, as the estates develop their productive forces and the richer smallholders find that they can expand production by recourse to the recruitment of labour via primary relationships rather than by capital investment or increasing capital-labour ratios.

One frequently observed feature of these rich peasant enterprises is their involvement in a diversity of product markets: in agriculture, in dairy production, in cattle breeding or fattening, in trade, in transport (*cf.* Smith 1984). They use networks of contacts and deals, and their economic activity is marked by a seamless web of pay-offs and favours. They do not build up a centrally managed business with a clear objective of extracting a return on a given amount of capital. They may strike it rich, but always in the context of a network of primary relationships that mobilize both capital (through various forms of sharecropping, sharetrucking, sharefishing, or short-term credit) and labour (through their access to the peasant labour market.) Theirs is a *bricoleur* capitalism, but its peculiar character arises from their access to the peasant labour market rather than from a peculiar "rationality" different from that of any other capitalist. (If they had a different rationality or logic would they even so be human?)

The temptation facing those writing about peasant economies is to search for a critical distinction between peasant enterprises and capitalist enterprises in terms of an immanent characteristic of what is sometimes called their rationality or their mode of calculation. This poses serious difficulties if only because the task of identifying the different rationalities of individuals is both daunting and most likely impossible. Such a distinction can never offer a

(1976). Not that Popkin's rampant individualism offers the solution to all these problems

reasonable method of classifying units of production because it excludes a priori the possibility that out of a peasant society there might emerge capitalist farmers. Thus wherever rich peasants or small capitalists arise confusion abounds. In this essay a solution is adopted which some might label evasive: the distinction being drawn is between types of agrarian structure and rural labour markets, not between enterprises. Thus the *bricoleur* capitalism of rich peasants is a feature of regions with particular structures and markets, and is not linked to any immanent features of the producers themselves.

V. STRUCTURAL CONCOMITANTS OF THE RISE OF CAPITALISED FAMILY FARMS

There is little hope for the capitalised family farm if the great estates retain their dominant position; they must therefore enter into or be pushed into a period of decline, either by their internal collapse or by an agrarian reform. Our research in the Ecuadorian province of Carchi revealed an unexpected process of this kind, for what is interesting and instructive about Carchi's recent history is that, when contrasted with better known and more publicised agrarian reforms, the region illustrates the consequences of a redistribution of land in which the official apparatus charged with implementation of the reform played an indirect noninterventionist role.

The great estates of the province have essentially disintegrated under the weight of their own internal inanition. The whole highland region of the province along the *callejón andino* (Andean corridor) was once dominated by the Hacienda El Vicundo, said to be the largest estate in Ecuador, but it was dismembered in the 1930s. This dismemberment occurred under two sets of pressures, the death of an owner who left no direct heirs and the pressures exerted by a local group, few of whom seem to have been in any sense "indians," who claimed that a portion of the estate's lands actually belonged to an indigenous community. Many of those involved were probably migrants from over the border in Colombia. The pressure on the hacienda was increased by the intervention of the government—at that time run by a reformist military group—itself pressed by people from the area. Finally, a large stretch of high, forested land was sold to a group of purchasers at a cheap price and on concessionary terms. This was to become the Colonia Huaqueña, renowned for its potato production. At the time, the land seemed to be worthless, but when it was eventually cleared and planted, and above all when fertilizers were introduced in the 1950s, it turned out to be extremely fertile and especially suitable for potato production. In Carchi province as a whole, potato output has multiplied seventeen times between 1961 and 1980, and the harvest of broad beans five times. During the 1960s and 1970s potatoes became almost a monocrop in the area, while barley and wheat faded away, leaving only dairy cattle to compete with the tuber for land. By 1980 even very small producers reckoned to spend some U.S.\$1,500 per hectare of potato production in labour, chemical fertilizers, and (much abused)

pesticides. The potato has, without doubt, provided the base for the rise and expansion of a stratum of middling farmers who now have displaced the *hacendado* families from their positions of dominance in the province's high-land areas and can therefore no longer strictly be called middling.

Another source of pressure on the estates came from the prospect, and later the reality, of agrarian reform in the early 1960s. Unlike the landlords of Riobamba, who resisted or gave up only reluctantly, those in the northern highlands of the country either actively co-operated or took pre-emptive action. In the area of Cayambe, which lies between Carchi and Quito in the same province as Quito, landowners were quick to accept the reform, hand over marginal plots to their *huasipungueros*, or dependent labourers, and concentrate and modernise their activities on dairy farming on the valley bottom. They in effect created a model of the involuted path, and the purported beneficiaries of the reform have suffered as might be expected. The beneficiaries were not helped by the government's repressive manipulation of the reform in that area after the stirrings of unionism organized in the 1950s by the Communist Party (Salamea 1980). In Carchi, still further to the north, the grass-roots pressure came from what one might call the petite bourgeoisie of the townships, not from the dependent peasantry on the estates. Artisans, muleteers, barbers, carpenters, and even the supervisory employees of the estates themselves, both pressured the estates and offered to pay for plots of land. They obtained credit from banks for the purpose, and the owners, glad to be freed of the threat of government-imposed reform in a peaceful way, allowed easy repayment terms. In some cases the owner was the Catholic Church, in the shape of the local bishopric, or the Curia, as the people described it, which took a lead in making its land available to prospective purchasers, though it was clearly not in the business of making outright donations. In other cases the owners were in any event losing interest in the properties, buying elsewhere, or moving into professional activities in the capital city, Quito. The outcome has been a redistribution of land favourable to the middling farmer—as our survey data show—but offering very little to the former *huasipungueros* for whom the reform was originally designed and who have hardly protested at all. The beneficiaries first organized themselves in co-operatives for the purpose of buying and paying for the land, but as soon as they had paid off the debt, or a sizeable portion thereof, they divided the land into private parcels, in which there is now an active market despite the often dubious legality of the title.⁵

⁵ This is the result of the unwillingness of the Agrarian Reform Institute (charged with implementing the reform) to permit the parcellisation of these lands. The initial distribution was to a cooperative because this enabled purchasers to obtain certain exemptions and also speeded up the procedures. Unfortunately, it also restricts the purchasers' freedom of manoeuvre somewhat, but invariably they proceed regardless, and there are, as far as we could see, no disputes among them about legal aspects of land tenure.

Our survey covered two areas, one the parish of Huaca, the other El Angel, comprising the parishes of San Isidro and La Libertad. The disintegration from within of the great Hacienda El Vicundo had its impact in Huaca, while the agrarian reform had its impact in El Angel at a later date. Our data from the cadastre show that between 1920 and 1980 the category of medium-size⁶ holdings rose from 32.7 percent to 41.6 percent of units in the two parishes near El Angel, that this category's share in the total value of units rose from 21.5 percent to 37.6 percent. In that period, the absolute number of large units rose from thirteen to twenty-seven, but they fell from 4.4 percent to 3.0 percent of units, and their share of value dropped from 70.4 percent to 58.4 percent. In Huaca the data are not quite so striking; in the distribution, the share of both units and value in the medium-size category remained almost unchanged, while the small-size category, which rose only from 58.3 percent to 60.0 percent of units, increased its share of the land from 15.5 percent to 20.0 percent. The share held by large-size farms has remained more or less constant at about 1 percent of units and 20 percent of land. Although it may appear that Huaca has not changed at all, these figures probably mask a massive turnover within the medium category. The absence of immiserization can be gauged by comparing the ratio of the average value of small units to the average value of medium units in 1920 and in 1980. An average medium-size unit was worth 18 times as much as a small one in 1920, but only 4.6 times as much in 1980. In El Angel, where the data on land distribution showed the emergence of a middling stratum so well, the data on values show only a small change in ratios: the medium units were worth on average 5.1 times as much as the small ones in 1920, and 6.6 times as much in 1980.

The pressure from below in this region has not come from the poorest of the poor. Indeed, there is some evidence that the petite bourgeoisie displaced indigenous communities from their lands, later to emerge as "peasants" needing land from the agrarian reform! By the early 1980s, ecological deterioration was beginning to tell, the result of massive deforestation and excessive one-crop concentration during the previous two decades. Those who had the means to do so were shifting out of potato cultivation because of its enormous and increasing risks from blight, unsuitable weather, highly volatile product prices, and soaring labour, fertilizer, and pesticide costs. They were shifting into dairy farming, which required far less labour and offered a secure income, benefitting from both subsidized credit for the purchase of cattle and an officially fixed price for milk—though it may be a mistake to regard these subsidies as a permanent arrangement. Obviously, most farmers were not

⁶ For the sake of simplicity we divided the strata of landowners as follows: small—up to 5 hectares, medium—5–100 hectares, large—more than 100 hectares. Although this division would be too crude for detailed cross-section analyses (as in the sharecropping analysis in Lehmann (1986) where a much more complex criterion is used), such simplicity is a virtue when comparing data of variable quality across a long time period.

going to establish capital-intensive dairy farms, but it seemed that the agrarian structure would be dominated by this type of unit, and this expectation justified the description of Carchi as in transition to a structure dominated by the CFF.

The contrast between this agrarian reform and those announced and applied with more bombast in Chile and Peru, or indeed the same legislation applied differently elsewhere in Ecuador, merits at least a passing comment. In Chile and Peru the beneficiaries did not purchase directly from the landlords; instead, governments imposed compulsory purchase and then created production co-operatives on the expropriated estates. Their motives were several: to preserve the economies of scale attributed to the estates; to save on the cost of delimiting and fencing in large numbers of smallholdings; to maintain some sort of political control; and perhaps to see that the benefits of reform were equally distributed among the beneficiaries. In both cases the economic performance of the expropriated units was disappointing (Lehmann 1974; Kay 1982). In Peru the overwhelming majority of the rural poor were smallholders who were left out of the land redistribution although in Chile they did benefit from a massive expansion of credit, technical assistance, and social mobilization. The eventual, indirect—and, it must be said, much debated—political consequences in Chile were nothing less than the destruction of electoral politics by a vengeful and threatened military and their allies, while in Peru it is not entirely fanciful to suggest that *Sendero Luminoso*, with all its indigenous integralism, is a consequence of the attempt by the military to impose technological and managerial change by bureaucratic means during the period 1968–75. Finally, when all is said and done, these reforms have led to the expansion of the rural petite bourgeoisie—a result that could have been achieved just as easily with less bombast, less political risk, and for that matter less risk to human life.

Clearly there is no path of development in which all of today's 'peasants' can become tomorrow's 'farmers'; proletarianisation does occur in the transition to a CFF system, albeit in forms different from those observed in the involuted path, and the existence of an agrarian structure with relatively egalitarian distribution of land during a particular period does not imply that in the generations and decades leading up to that time no producers were marginalized, or that no families lost their land. If anything the contrary is the case; the disappearance of the peasantry may be far more radical in this case than in the involuted path. In that path, the process of proletarianisation was observed in the growing dependence of independent peasant producers on income from wage labour. Although they preserved some of their independent status, their underlying position was more and more akin to that of pure wage labourers. In the rise of the CFF, the fate of many peasant producers is more drastic; they lose their land completely because competition makes it impossible for marginal producers to survive. There are two sides to a dynamic

process—some prosper, while others are driven to the wall. In this case the dynamism puts pressure on labour costs either directly or by reducing the period between agricultural cycles. This last forces the pace of mechanization, making survival difficult and occasionally almost impossible for those who cannot afford adaptive new technologies. A well-known case of this sort of process is that of southern Brazil, especially the state of Paraná, where the combined effect of frost and changing technologies has forced vast numbers of small coffee growers out of production and indeed out of the region, sending them off to new areas in Amazonia or to employment in the cities of the south (Lehmann 1982b:255–57). In the same region the establishment of an annual cycle of soybean and wheat cultivation, with a rapid turnaround between the harvest of the one and the planting of the other, has meant that those who cannot mechanize must sell out, because the turnaround is not possible without machinery.

A second mechanism of proletarianisation, more violent, is the simple expulsion by force of an autochthonous population to make way for immigrant farmers, as occurred in the Argentine Chaco between 1880 and 1911 (Carrera 1981:242). There is some indication of this in Carchi as well in the disappearance of indigenous communal institutions of land tenure in the early decades of this century.

VI. THE PROBLEM OF MOTIVATION IN FAMILY LABOUR: PERSONAL DEPENDENCY AND PARTNERSHIP

As mentioned earlier, the CFF is a family farm in a much stricter and narrower sense than is the peasant farm described above. It is a family farm because it uses almost exclusively the labour of members of its owner's nuclear family, and it is capitalist because it must deal with the price of wage labour and allocate resources accordingly. But there is more: where the peasant household "socialises" commodity relations, the CFF commoditises kinship relations. Where the one cheapens wage labour by persuading the labourers that they are performing a service to a primary community of which they form a part, the other retains loyalty of the household members by giving them a quantifiable stake and proportionate rewards in a partnership. These contrasting characteristics are a concomitant of the different constraints and opportunities offered by the agrarian structures within which they exist.

A striking illustration of the difference between areas where the CFF is rising to a dominant position and those where the involuted pattern prevails is to be found if we examine the usage of certain terms and the meaning of certain practices usually identified as peculiarly Andean. We have seen how the anthropologists describe reciprocity in central and southern Peru, and I have presented an interpretation of that relationship in terms of its possible inequalities. Needless to say, when we went to do our research in the Ecuadorian province of Carchi we looked for these characteristic Andean prac-

tises, and we found an institution known as *el día prestado*, borrowing a day's work. This is a form of delayed and illiquid payment for a day's work, quite common in stereotypical peasant economies; but here it seemed to be rather rare, and it did not seem to be embedded in a web of relationships of personal dependency. Third, it seemed that the advantage in the deal lay not with the person who delayed the payment of the day's work—since this usually constituted only a tiny proportion of his labour requirements—but rather with the other person, who, by requesting a day's labour in payment rather than a money wage, was securing for himself a worker for a date in the future when the labour market might be very tight. The ready acceptance of a peon sent in lieu of the debtor himself—who might be busy that day—illustrates the relatively unimportant role of personal dependency in the relationship, as well as its transitory character: once the transaction had been completed that was the end of the story.

A similar contrast can be found if we compare communal labour levies in the Ecuadorian province of Carchi with those described for Peru (see, for example, Winder 1978). In Carchi they are (confusingly) called *mink'a*, while in Peru they are called *faenas* (literally, "tasks"). Now in Peru the impression given is that under the cover of *comunidad* organisation a clique or cabal of richer peasants succeed in having work carried out which is of particular if not exclusive benefit to themselves. An irrigation channel has to be cleaned or built, a road built or repaired, or—above all—a *fiesta* organised with all the attendant ritual and edible paraphernalia. The literature shows that such activities are of disproportionate, though not necessarily exclusive, benefit to a small minority of *comuneros* (see, for example, the monographs on various communities in the Chancay Valley, such as Celestino 1972; Fuenzalida *et al.* 1968; Grondin 1978). In Carchi, in contrast, such public works are organized not by an independent corporate community but by a *cabildo*, which is the lowest rung of the administrative hierarchy of territorial units into which the country is divided (ascending through cantons, provinces, and the nation). The *cabildo* has no full-time officials. Its real effectiveness obviously varies enormously, and it would be absurd to claim that its actions embody some high ideal of social equity. The crucial difference with respect to the Peruvian model of a corporate *comunidad*, of which there are plenty in Ecuador as well, is that it does not control land and only builds or repairs installations, such as roads or a church, which are clearly public goods. The cleaning of irrigation ditches or canals would be the business of the direct beneficiaries and the *cabildo* certainly has no jurisdiction over land. Its activities are mostly undertaken in conjunction with the state. Thus, if a small road is to be built, the *cabildo* is committed to providing the necessary labour from among its members on a rotation basis, while the state provides the materials and machinery. Richer residents might provide a day's wage or some refreshment in lieu, but not necessarily. The practise in Carchi suggests that there is no

necessary conflict between the fulfilment of an individual's obligation through a paid worker and the public benefit of the works in question.⁷

The instinctive reaction of most observers is to take an extremely dim view of such deals—wage labour undermining the solidarity of the community and all that. But it is equally plausible to argue that the monetisation and relative anonymity of such obligations goes some way to prevent the rich from taking advantage of positions of authority within the community to use for their personal enrichment the work of the poor.

Now this can hardly be a question of the difference between Peru and Ecuador as countries or states. Innumerable *comunidades* in Ecuador are no doubt in the hands of small cabals who use them to get work done on projects of personal interest as if they were of public benefit. The essential point is that these *comunidad* institutions are privately appropriated above all where the involuted path is sustained, where relationships of personal dependency play an important part in labour recruitment and penetrate and sustain the “public” façade of communal institutions.

As against the “personalisation of commercial relations” which we have pointed to in peasant economies and in the involuted path, Carchi exhibits what might be termed the commercialisation of family relationships. Against the authoritarian and arbitrary exercise of paternal authority that seems to prevail in the Chayanovian model of peasant economy, the picture offered here is of a family farm in which certain devices exist to match the returns to individual members against their contributions. The women not only milk the cows; they also retain control over the income from sale of the milk. When sons leave school they do not work for free on their fathers' land; rather, they sharecrop with him. In such an arrangement there would be a lot of cost sharing, and, according to our data, the contracts between fathers and sons did not exhibit any systematic differences as compared to those between nonkin. These were not exploitative relationships in the sense commonly connoted by the idea of sharecropping (Lehmann 1986). A similar grasp of a capitalist concept of equity is observable in inheritance. Women have equal rights to both their parents' property, as stipulated by Ecuadorian legislation, but not as practised in areas of Ecuador where the involuted path prevails, where women are at a clear disadvantage in inheritance. Not only is a woman entitled to acquire her equal share of her parents' property, she also, like her husband, passes most of it on to her children, not to her spouse, at her death, or earlier if she likes. Before the reader gains the impression that this is some sort of

⁷ It may be relevant in this context to note that the Ecuadorian *cabildo*, as the lowest level of territorial administrative unit, is an institution that does have some status in law, unlike the Peruvian *comunidades*, each of which has its own idiosyncratic *modus operandi*, land tenure provisions, and rotation of offices. It is not, therefore, an autochthonous institution; but then many would question whether the *comunidad* is autochthonous in any meaningful sense, having been created or shaped by the Inca and the Spanish to serve their needs for tribute and taxes in a role akin to that of a subcontractor.

feminist valhalla, or that I believe it is, this image of equality, or at least of matching bargaining power, needs to be qualified, for once the CFF is fully developed, things may change for its women. If, as is common in the Andes, they have tended the cattle (and kept the revenue therefrom) in a mixed agricultural and dairy unit, they may lose their exclusive control over those cattle when their spouses switch into specialised dairy production. The insidious bourgeois family takes over.

A further illustration of these contrasts is to be found in a paper by Lourdes Arizpe which compares the process of migration from two Mexican villages that appear to fit roughly our opposed categories of involuted and CFF paths. In both villages migration is in some sense a family affair, but whereas, in the one, the parents keep a tight control over the urban activities of their children and the income therefrom, and bring them back to the village to work on the family holding when the season requires, in the other, migrants use family connections to set themselves up independently, though loosely connected with their kin via urban commercial networks (Arizpe 1981:119–44).

By emphasising the commercialisation of kin and other personal or multi-stranded relations that seem to be a feature of agrarian structures dominated by the CFF, and probably also a condition of a transition to such a structure, I do not mean to say that they do not employ wage labour. What counts in the contrast with involuted structures is the mechanism of recruitment of that labour. In the transition to a CFF-dominated structure the mechanism will become gradually more anonymous and impersonal and less permeated by relationships of personal dependency.

A CFF system must often have recourse to seasonal wage labour brought from other regions—especially from those where the involuted path prevails—because the cost of locally recruited labour is too high. This raises intriguing questions: the CFF system may well contribute to a preservation or intensification of the conditions of involution in those regions by strengthening a stratum of rich peasants who act as labour contractors, and who may lend the workers some money for the trip and other expenses. By offering seasonal incomes complementary to those obtained from subsistence cultivation it also perpetuates the existence of a class of semiproletarians. This observation shows us how the two paths can be related to each other, and need not be analysed only in terms of endogenous processes in the regions where they exist.

VII. FACILITATING, BUT CRUCIAL, ELEMENTS IN THE RISE OF THE CFF: MIGRATION AND SHARECROPPING

There are two mechanisms that seem to play a particularly interesting—and without doubt unexpected—role in facilitating the transition from landlord domination to a CFF system: migration and sharecropping. In contrast to the pattern of migration described earlier for areas characterised by the involuted

path, the transition to a CFF system is facilitated if the migration from the area is not only quantitatively high, but also qualitatively different; it should be permanent rather than temporary, and it should be linked with upward mobility, thus relieving pressure on the land market. A striking feature of the data we collected in Carchi is the contrast between the migration pattern observed there and that described earlier as characteristic of involuted areas. Our study shows that people from Carchi have a very strong propensity to migrate and also that they tend not to return. We carried out a survey of 100 owners of land and inquired about the occupation of their offspring. Among the children who lived elsewhere, almost exclusively in cities, the most frequent occupation was education: they were attending secondary school in Quito or the capital of the neighbouring province, Ibarra. This is not exceptional. The poverty-stricken *comunidades* of southern Peru also send children away to study, beginning at primary-school level, because of the inadequacy of local provision. But the children who are sent from these *comunidades* have to earn their way through school, by working for a relative, for example. The children from Carchi are fortunate in the quality of local primary education, and there is a very high rate of attendance at that level (more than 70 percent of children aged six to twelve attend school); and when these children go to a city to attend secondary school their parents pay their board and lodging, so they have plenty of time to study or, unfortunately, to dissipate. These children will not return to the countryside, nor are they expected to; on the contrary, the secure establishment of their offspring in an urban calling is a tremendous source of pride for parents, and it is not only the wealthy who are prepared to spend vast sums to set their children on what they consider the right path. When it comes to inheritance, these children will sell out to the heirs who have remained in the countryside. Obviously, this pattern relieves pressure on the land. This outcome is favoured by a system of land tenure that conforms to Ecuador's national laws and not to local custom, or to the manipulations of community leaders as is often the case elsewhere. The system of inheritance decrees and obtains equal shares for male and female heirs and leaves to the parents hardly any say as to how their possessions will be dispersed upon death. This is important because, as Sanchez's work shows for certain parts of Peru, and as might indeed be learnt from the agrarian history of Ireland, insecure or uncertain inheritance prospects delay the age at which the next generation can participate in the land market and make productive investments.

The more transparent, less opaque (Starobinski 1958) relationships between generations in Carchi are reflected in other more indirect and less tangible mechanisms of transmission of wealth. As I try to show in another article (1986 forthcoming), sharecropping is a practise that enables children of landowners to participate in the land market long before inheriting and, if they are lucky and shrewd, to build up substantial holdings of land. One reason for

this is that they can either sharecrop with their fathers or mothers, or they can sharecrop with others with the backing of their parents or other relatives. In this way small- and medium-sized landowners can rent land to these young people, and even advance the sharecroppers' share of costs, without fear of being unable to recoup any losses. Ultimately, as our survey shows, inherited land will make up a tiny fraction of land owned by established farmers. I do not think that this would be the case in an area characterised by the involuted path and its frozen land markets.

These sharecropping arrangements involve complex cost-sharing arrangements subject to negotiation and contracts covering one sowing only; they involve people of roughly similar social status, although there is a systematic tendency for the owner of the land to be better off than the sharecropper, and there is a systematic tendency also for those who rent in to be younger than those who rent out. The conclusion from this analysis is that sharecropping can stimulate rather than impede commercialisation because cost-sharing sharecropping contracts require careful calculation of input costs. It may even be that such practices reinforce what one might call the capitalist calculation mentality (Lehmann 1986).

In the final analysis, the question is whether these stories from Carchi constitute an exception, the product of a rare and nonrepeatable concatenation of circumstances, or whether they are an example of processes that are going on in many places but that the pessimism which is frequently a hallmark of the study of development has found it convenient to ignore. To say this is not to deny that the involuted path, with all its blocked channels, exists; rather, it is to express what some would regard as a naïve faith in the entrepreneurial capacities of poor rural producers in poor countries. It is also to say that the fate of the peasantry is not merely dictated to them by the world capitalist system or the exploiting classes and officialdom that run the countries in which they live, but is also to some extent their own creation. The problem is ideological: if we are opposed to capitalism are we therefore committed to the view that it impoverishes all of the poor, the salt of the earth? Are we thereby precluded from allowing the salt of the earth to become capitalists too? These may, at one level, be ideological problems, but who is to say that the ideological attitudes that underlie our theoretical positions are to be forever inscribed in tablets of stone? That is why we do social research.

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