

A Conceptual Framework for the Empirical Analysis of Peasants

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To assist in the design and analysis of the many empirical studies currently conducted on peasants and their changing status in third world countries, a conceptual framework is presented and illustrated with data from Cajamarca in Peru. The framework identifies the key variables to be measured and processes to be analyzed at three levels: the organization of the peasant household in terms of production, circulation, and reproduction; the mechanisms of surplus extraction; and the class position and differentiation of groups of peasants within particular social formations.

Key words: peasants, Peru, social relations.

In recent years the economic and political significance of peasantries in the third world has received increased attention. The active role of peasants in postcolonial struggles has drawn attention to their political importance in the transformation of many third world societies. The economic importance of peasants has been highlighted by the dimensions of the food crises of the 1970s and by the recognition that they are often cheap food suppliers and a source of cheap labor for agriculture and industrial development. The consequence has been an explosion of both research and programs oriented to the peasant question: research to observe, describe, and understand the economic and political logic of peasants, as well as their changing position and functions in broader society, and programs to increase the productivity of labor in peasant agriculture and to promote political stability in spite of massive poverty. Thus, a large number of empirical studies have been conducted, frequently in the context of the search for new technologies adequate for peasant farming or the design of rural and community development projects.

The research effort has demystified many of the concepts that dominated much of the early work on peasants, such as cultural traditionalism, economic backwardness, and the autarky of subsistence production. Yet,

the absence of an adequate conceptual framework for the study of the peasantry too often has prevented these studies from isolating the key variables required for analysis and from organizing the empirical information in terms of the central processes that characterize peasant households and the forms of their insertion into the wider economy. For the economic analysis of the organization of peasant households, reliance typically has been placed on either the Chayanovian theory of utility and demographic differentiation (Chayanov, Archetti) or on strict neoclassical principles derived from the theory of the capitalist firm (the formalists in anthropology—Tax, Nash, Leclair; the new household economics—Becker, Benito). For the analysis of the insertion of the peasantry into the broader society, either a phenomenologist and cultural vision of partiality has been used (Kroeber, Redfield) or the conceptualization of specific noncapitalist peasant modes of production has been relied upon (Servolin; Vergopoulos 1971, 1978).

In this paper it is argued that the analysis of peasantries must be based on the specification of the relations of production in which peasants participate. We reject both Marxist and non-Marxist attempts to define a peasant mode of production or peasantry as a specific sociocultural or economic type and focus on the mechanisms of surplus extraction which describe the relations of production between direct producers and appropriators in class societies.

We take the situation where the capitalist mode of production is dominant in the econ-

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omy at large and focus our inquiry on the forms of integration of peasants into the social formation. This framework highlights the conditions under which peasant households become integrated into markets as suppliers of products or of wage labor. We argue that the integration of the peasantry into the labor market, as suppliers of wage labor to capitalist units of production or as buyers of wage labor in the process of capitalization, most closely characterizes the process of class formation among direct producers and, hence, their incorporation into the dominant capitalist mode of production.

The conceptual framework developed here attempts to account for the variation in the material conditions of peasants as well as for the dynamics of their transformation by interrelating three levels of analysis: (a) the organization of the peasant household, (b) the mechanisms of surplus extraction, and (c) the class position of different groups of peasants within particular social formations. The framework is illustrated with data describing the Cajamarca peasantry of the northern Peruvian sierra.

Organization of the Peasant Household

In order to highlight the interrelated social processes that characterize the peasant household, Marx's categories of production, circulation, reproduction, and differentiation are drawn upon. What distinguishes the peasant household from other domestic units (such as the household in advanced capitalism) is that the household is both a unit of direct production and a unit of reproduction of familial labor power on both a daily and generational basis.

At a given moment in time, the stock of family labor in relation to the household's access to the means of production is reflected in the particular division of labor by sex and age embodied in the household labor process. Household labor power is used in the home production process or sold as wage labor on the labor market where it participates in what is termed as the wage labor production process. A continuous spectrum of combinations between the two pure extreme types of households—purely agriculturalist and purely proletarian—can be identified.¹

Household labor dedicated to home production generates a gross product which is either retained as a use value by the household for home consumption or sold on the market as a commodity (the circulation process). Here, again, a continuous spectrum between pure subsistence household production with no marketable surplus and the pure commercial farm that is exclusively producing for the market can be identified.

The sale of commodities and the wages received from the proletarian labor process constitute the gross monetary income. This income, after deduction of the various monetary costs involved in production, generates a net income which permits the purchase of means of consumption for reproduction of the household and means of work for replacement and net investment.

Means of consumption and means of work thus derived from both home production and purchase sustain the reproduction of the household as both a consumption and a production unit (Meillassoux). Reproduction includes both daily maintenance to restore the capacity to work and generational reproductive activities reflected in the size, age, and sex composition of the household.² The scale of this reproduction, in turn, determines the pattern of social differentiation and the consequent changing class position and composition of peasants.

The four key processes identified characterize the organization of the peasant household—home production process, wage labor production process, circulation process, and reproduction-differentiation process. They are schematized in figure 1. In the left-hand column, the stocks of means of production at a particular point in time are identified. They include raw materials (land and water), means of work (seeds, trees, animals, tools and implements, fertilizers, and fuels), and family labor (number, sex, and age of members). In the right-hand column the monetary variables that characterize the circulation process on both the supply and demand sides are presented: gross cash income from sales,

merchant trade, etc.) which might be a complement or substitute for the agricultural/wage labor duality.

² While production is ultimately the determinant of reproduction in a relative sense in that the level of the outcome of productive activities determines the household's consumption possibilities and, hence, the level of living at which family labor power can be reproduced (nutritional level, fertility, etc.), the peasant household's reproductive strategy also conditions the productive activities in which it may engage (Mamdani, Folbre).

¹ For the sake of simplicity, we abstract from the myriad of home production processes (such as artisan production, small

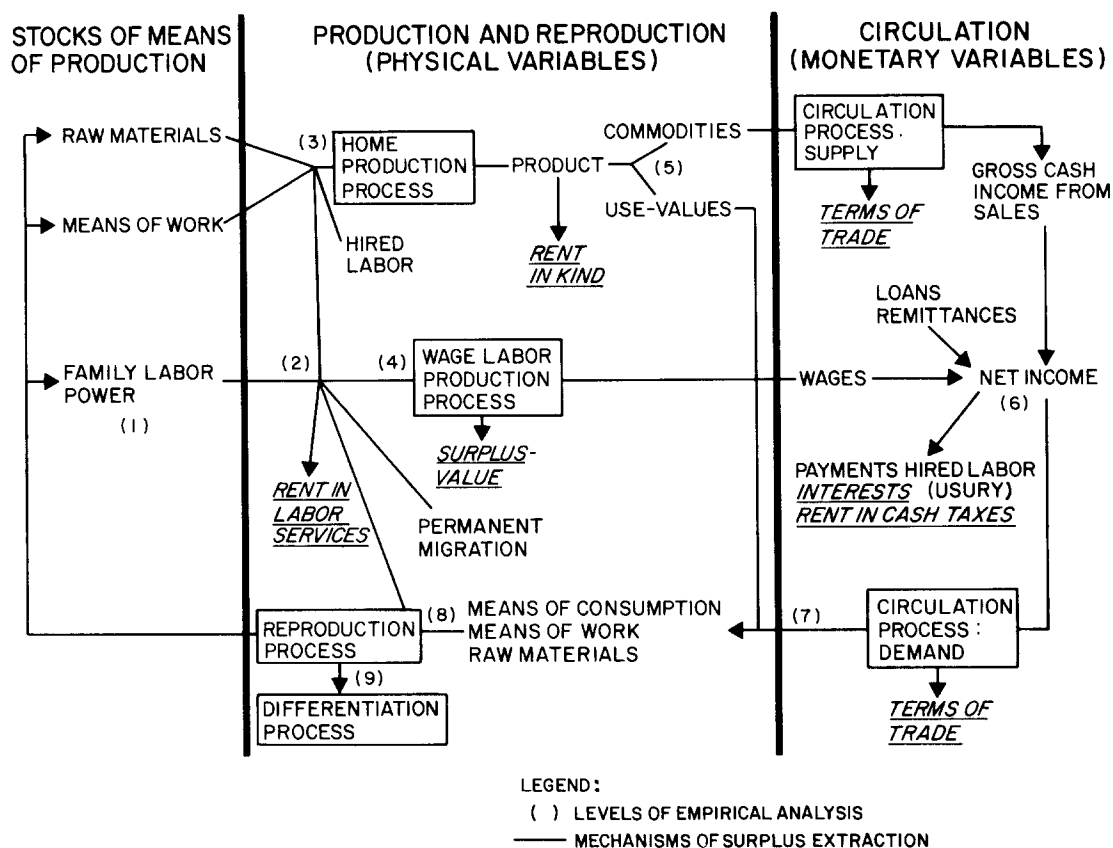


Figure 1. Organization of the peasant household

wages, net income formation, and purchase of means of consumption and work. The center column highlights the two fundamental processes of production (home and wage labor) and reproduction (of the consumption unit and of the means of work). These two key processes are partially mediated through circulation in terms of the formation and disposition of net income but also directly reflect the social relations of production.

From figure 1, nine key sets of variables can be identified for the empirical analysis of the peasant household. These variables correspond to the different nexuses which indicate that either a process of choice and decision making is taking place or that an accounting identity can be established. They are (1) the stocks of means of production at time t ; (2) division of labor by sex and age in the household process; (3) choice of activities (products and technologies) and allocation of resources in the home production process; (4) choice of activities and job search in the wage labor production process; (5) disposition of the product between sale (marketing) and retention for home use; (6) the formation of net

income (sources of income); (7) effective demand—disposition of net income; (8) reproduction of the consumption unit (family labor) and of the means of work, acquisition of raw materials; and (9) the level of stocks of means of production at time $t + 1$ which provide the basis for the analysis of social differentiation.

Organization of Peasant Households in Cajamarca

The Cajamarcan peasantry is a *mestizo*, Spanish-speaking peasantry resident in the most populous Peruvian Sierra Department. As table 1 illustrates, access to the means of production among the peasantry is highly unequal.³ Some 72% of the total number of rural

³ The data presented herein were derived from two sample surveys representative of the distribution of land ownership in 1972. The 1973 Cajamarca Income Survey was carried out by the Socio-Economic Study Group of the Cajamarca-La Libertad Project under the direction of Ing. Efraim Franco. The survey included 1,500 observations on peasant households in 13 districts of the provinces of Cajamarca and Cajabamba. The data presented herein is restricted to 1,050 households in the province of

Table 1. Stocks of Means of Production According to Social Strata

Social Strata (Total Land Used by Each Household)	Distribu- tion of House- holds	Average Amount of Land Owned ^a	Frequency of Oxen Ownership	Average Number of Oxen	Mean Value of Means of work ^b	Mean Value of Total Assets ^c	Average Number of Persons in Household
	(%)	(hectares)	(%)		----- (US \$) -----		
Landless peasants (0-0.25 hectares) <i>n</i> = 140 ^d	13.3	0.16	15	0.2	50.33	172.69	5.6
Smallholders (0.26-3.50 hectares) <i>n</i> = 619	59.0	1.33	36	0.7	127.86	255.72	5.6
Middle peasants (3.51-11.0 hectares) <i>n</i> = 177	16.9	5.83	57	1.2	261.77	520.12	6.1
Rich peasants (11.01-30.0 hectares) <i>n</i> = 81	7.7	15.86	82	2.1	461.02	1,146.60	6.5
Farmers (30-100 hectares) <i>n</i> = 33	3.1	47.81	79	2.3	545.28	2,414.19	7.9
Total <i>n</i> = 1,050	100	4.52	41	0.9	178.90	425.79	5.9

Source: Derived from the 1973 Cajamarca Income Survey for the province of Cajamarca.

^a The correlation coefficient between land held in property and total land used is .9822.

^b The mean value of the means of work includes the present value of tools and equipment and the market value of work animals (donkeys, mules, horses, and oxen). Valuation is in 1973 dollars.

^c The mean value of total assets includes the present value of buildings and equipment and land in pasture as well as the total stock of animals.

^d *n* indicates the number of observations.

households have access to less than 3.5 hectares of land each, the minimum—given the ecological and technical conditions of production—that is required for a peasant family to be able to produce its full subsistence requirements. Middle and rich peasant households with sufficient land to be viable agricultural units constitute only 25% of the total number of rural households; their landholdings average 6 and 16 hectares, respectively. The commercial enterprises of the farmers make up only 3% of the total number of units and, when added to the large landholdings in the area (over 100 hectares), control more than 50% of the total land surface.

The highly unequal pattern of access to land is also reflected in the unequal distribution of other resources. The majority of peasants do not own oxen, the principal draft animal in the area. The average middle peasant household owns one ox, whereas only rich peasants and farmers own an average of two oxen, the

number required for plowing. The unequal ownership of draft animals is reflected in the data on the average value of the means of work and in the value of total assets of the different social strata. Finally, there is a positive relationship between the household's access to resources and the average household size.

Household composition and structure interact with a given stock of the means of work to determine not only the division of labor by sex and age within the peasant household but the number and composition of activities in which a given household may engage. The specific division of labor by sex and age will vary over the family life cycle and according to the range of activities which the household may pursue (given their access to the means of production) as well as with the social valuation of male and female labor. Tables 2 and 3 give a static picture of the division of labor by sex in productive activities and the differing rates of household participation by social strata in a series of income-earning activities.

Table 2 presents the data on the principal family member that is charged with the re-

Cajamarca. The 1973 survey provided the population for a follow-up survey of 105 households; the 1976 Peasant Family Survey, focusing on the familial division of labor by sex, was carried out by the authors.

Table 2. Division of Labor by Sex and Age: Familial Activities According to the Principal Family Member Responsible for the Activity, All Households

Processes and Activities	Mother's Principal Responsibility	Father's Principal Responsibility	Children's Principal Responsibility	All Family Members' Responsibility ^a	Total
----- (%) -----					
Home production process					
Agricultural work					
<i>N</i> = 102	5.7	64.5	7.6	22.2	100
Animal care					
<i>N</i> = 92	61.9	4.4	22.9	10.8	100
Agricultural processing					
<i>N</i> = 105	93.4	0	1.9	4.7	100
Artisan production					
<i>N</i> = 101	66.7	18.4	11.5	3.4	100
Wage labor production process and commerce					
Proletarian wage work					
<i>N</i> = 23	13.0	43.5	30.4	13.1	100
Semiproletarian wage work					
<i>N</i> = 51	9.8	47.1	17.7	25.4	100
Commerce					
<i>N</i> = 28	85.7	10.7	0	3.6	100
Reproduction process					
Cooking, <i>N</i> = 105	93.4	0	2.8	3.8	100
Washing clothes, <i>N</i> = 105	93.3	0	4.8	1.9	100
Hauling water, <i>N</i> = 105	78.3	1.8	10.3	9.6	100
Collecting wood, <i>N</i> = 105	58.1	16.2	9.5	16.2	100

Source: 1976 Peasant Family Survey.

^a Includes cases where mother and father share responsibility for the activity, where other family members carry out the activity, and where parents and children carry out the activity with equal responsibility.

sponsibility for directing and carrying out the series of household activities aggregated over all social strata. Mothers, principally assisted by daughters, carry out the myriad of activities which are required to reproduce familial labor power on a daily basis. But women also play an active role in home production activities. In the majority of households, women are charged with animal care in addition to agricultural processing and artisan production. Men, in contrast, are the principal agriculturalists. In the majority of households that participate in the labor market, fathers and/or sons are the wage workers. However,

commerce is an off-the-farm activity that is generally in the female domain.

As table 3 indicates, there is significant variation in the composition of income-generating activities in which different strata of the peasantry engage. Whereas the overwhelming majority of peasant households participate in direct agricultural production or in animal-raising activities, the salient feature of the table is the different degree of participation in the labor market by social strata. Whereas the majority of landless and smallholder households have at least one labor market participant, only one-third of the upper strata of

Table 3. Choice of Income-Generating Activities: Percentage of Households Participating in the Activity by Social Strata

Social Strata	Agri-cultural Production	Agri-cultural Processing	Animal Activities	Rental of Resources	Artisan Production	Wage Labor	Commerce	Migrant Remittances
----- (%) -----								
Landless peasants	95.7	1.4	70.0	4.3	31.4	71.4	8.6	13.6
Smallholders	99.0	1.0	79.5	8.4	28.6	55.7	8.6	13.9
Middle peasants	99.4	1.7	85.9	13.0	32.8	41.8	9.6	6.2
Rich peasants	97.5	1.2	95.1	21.0	33.3	34.6	8.6	6.2
Farmers	93.9	6.1	90.9	18.2	36.4	30.3	6.1	6.1
Total	98.4	1.3	80.9	9.9	30.4	53.1	8.7	11.8

Source: Derived from the 1973 Cajamarca Income Survey for the province of Cajamarca.

peasant households engage in the sale of wage labor. The differing access to the means of production is also reflected in the rental of productive resources and in animal-raising activities.

While the majority of peasant households engage in agricultural production, there are significant differences by social strata in the purpose of production (use values versus commodities) and in the magnitude of the activity in terms of the composition of net household income. As table 4 illustrates, an insignificant portion of the agricultural production of landless peasants is sold on the market. Even among smallholders and middle peasants, less than one-third of the total imputed value of agricultural production is sold on the market. Only the rich peasants appear as principally agricultural commodity producers. The farmers are primarily commercial dairy producers. For all strata of the peasantry, cash income from the sale of animal products is relatively more important than that from agricultural production.

While the bulk of agricultural production of the poorer strata of the peasantry is dedicated to use value production, the Cajamarcan peasantry certainly cannot be characterized as "subsistence" producers divorced from the wider economy. Over 80% of the total gross income of the landless and smallholder strata is in the form of monetary income generated by their participation in the product and labor markets. Only the middle peasants exhibit any important degree of "self-sufficiency," although only one-third of their total gross income is derived from home production activities. The data indicate the importance of the integration of the peasantry into capitalist commodity relationships.

Table 5 illustrates that the majority of the peasantry relies on nonfarm sources of income to reproduce their livelihood. Only the middle strata of the peasantry and the commercial farms of the rich peasants and farmers rely on farm activities for a majority of the net mean annual income. The importance of wage income for the landless and smallholder strata is evident and correlates with the high degree of labor market participation of these strata. The data support the proposition that access to the means of production is a key to determining the form of integration of the peasantry to the wider economy: the majority of peasant households with insufficient access to land are increasingly integrated as proletarians, whereas only among the upper strata of the peasantry with their greater control over the means of production is commercial farming a viable activity.

There are important differences in the levels of income generated by different strata of the peasantry. The estimated median net income by social strata is presented in the last column of table 5. The greatest disparity in income levels characterizes the rich peasants and the farmers at one pole and the landless peasants and smallholders at the other pole. The gross median income of the farmers is 22% greater than that of the rich peasant strata, 99% greater than that of the middle peasants, 158% greater than that of the smallholders, and 116% greater than that of the landless peasants.

In 1973 the median net income was on the order of U.S. \$156. If the legally defined minimum wage is taken as an indicator of the "moral and historical" minimum subsistence requirement of a worker, the magnitude of rural poverty becomes clearly apparent. In

Table 4. Disposition of the Product: Monetary Income as Percentage of Gross Income by Social Strata

Social Strata	Agricultural Production	Agricultural Processing	Animal Production	Subtotal	Artisan Production	Total
				All farm Activities		All Sources of Income
				(%)		
Landless peasants	10.3	98.3	40.6	36.4	84.8	84.8
Smallholders	26.3	87.8	62.9	41.3	72.9	81.7
Middle peasants	29.4	97.0	61.1	43.8	66.5	67.2
Rich peasants	51.1	100.0	130.8 ^a	75.8	54.4	81.0
Farmers	27.1	94.3	97.5	73.6	1.7	75.3
Total	35.5	92.0	85.1	59.9	72.1	78.6

Source: Derived from the 1973 Cajamarca Income Survey for the province of Cajamarca.

^a Monetary income exceeds gross income from animal production (calculated as the value of change in animal inventories plus gross income from animal products) in this case indicating disinvestment in animal stock.

Table 5. Sources of Household Income: Composition of Net Income by Source and Social Strata

Social Strata	Agricultural Production	Agricultural Processing	Animal Production	Rental	Subtotal		Artisan Production	Wage Labor	Commerce	Remittance	Median Total Net Income (US \$) ^a
					All Farm Activities (%)						
Landless peasants	1.0	0.1	18.8	0.4	20.3		9.2	55.5	10.3	4.7	165
Smallholders	10.0	0.2	10.0	3.4	24.0		7.1	48.6	12.5	7.5	138
Middle peasants	19.6	0.1	27.0	8.7	55.4		4.1	23.5	10.4	6.6	179
Rich peasants	42.0	0.2	24.4	15.4	82.0		2.1	11.4	3.6	0.9	292
Farmers	26.1	0.1	62.1	1.3	89.6		0.7	5.7	3.3	0.7	356
Total	17.6	0.2	23.6	5.4	46.7		5.2	33.8	9.2	5.0	156

Source: Derived from the 1973 Cajamarca Income Survey for the province of Cajamarca.

^a Based on 1973 dollars.

1973 the minimum legal daily wage in rural agricultural employment in the district of Cajamarca was U.S. \$1.00. A full-time proletarian working 250 days a year would earn approximately 60% more than the annual net median income of the peasantry. Only the rich peasants and farmers earn income above that socially defined minimum required to reproduce the labor force. The other 89% of the peasantry falls below this threshold.

The implications for the development of the home market are clear. While most of the net income of peasant households is generated in monetary form, the low absolute income level restricts the magnitude of effective demand. For the overwhelming majority of the peasantry, net income is destined for the purchase of means of consumption to reproduce their level of living. Aggregated over all strata of the peasantry, the composition of consumption expenditures is dominated by the expenditure on processed foodstuffs (cooking oils, sugar, and flour) followed by expenditures on fuel (kerosene, candles, matches, and wood) and clothing and then on education and health and, finally, on housing and household equipment. Only among the rich peasants and farmers is investment in new means of production significant, primarily in increasing the size of animal stocks.

The level of outcome of the production and circulation processes in which different strata of the peasantry engage determines both the level of consumption possible to reproduce familial labor power as well as the family's access to means of work and raw materials in the next productive period. This, in turn, is the basis for social differentiation to which we will return shortly.

Patterns of Surplus Extraction

Appropriation of part of the product of peasants by other social groups has been identified

as a defining characteristic of peasantries by Marxists and non-Marxists alike (Wolf). Within Marxist discourse, the social relations of production in which peasants participate are, in fact, defined by the manner in which the surplus labor time of direct producers is appropriated by a nonproducing class. From an empirical standpoint, we must first identify the mechanisms through which surplus extraction occurs in order to analyze the relations of production into which the peasants enter. In this manner we can then single out different groups of peasants. The model of the organization of the peasant household presented above can be used for this purpose. In figure 1, seven mechanisms of surplus extraction are identified: three operate via rents that result from private appropriation of the land (rents in labor services, kind, and cash), three operate via the markets (for labor, products, and money), and one through the state (taxes).

(a) Rent in labor services (*corvée*): family labor is forced to provide unpaid labor services on the landlord's estate in order for the peasant household to acquire the usufruct right to land from which to produce its subsistence consumption. This type of rent characterizes semifeudal or servile relations of production.

(b) Rent in kind (sharecropping): the direct producer gives to the owner of the land a predetermined amount or a fixed share of the product in exchange for access to the land and occasionally to some means of work. Rent in kind is a direct subtraction from the gross product before the residual is divided into use values and commodities. Rent in kind also may characterize semifeudal relations of production or represent a form of land acquisition and surplus extraction among different groups of peasants.

(c) Extraction of surplus value: in capitalist relations of production, labor power is sold for a wage to those who own the means of produc-

tion. In the production process, labor generates a product, the value of which is greater than the costs of replacement of the physical capital resources and the wage labor used in production. A profit is thus generated which results from the "exploitation" of labor power in the production process. Semiproletarian peasant labor can, however, be further exploited indirectly because the wage level can fall below subsistence needs (for maintenance and reproduction) as part of these needs are provided by the family in the home production process. Cheap peasant labor, extracted through "functional dualism" (de Janvry and Garramon), is thus a major source of exploitation of peasantries under capitalism in the third world.

(d) Extraction via the terms of trade: unfavorable prices for the commodities sold relative to the commodities purchased (means of consumption and means of work) is the dominant form of surplus extraction from independent peasant producers. Once capitalist commodity relations have developed, low agricultural product prices may result from a variety of causes including competition with capitalist agriculture, international transmission of prices, cheap food policies, and monopolistic merchants capturing high profit margins.

(e) Usury: the instability of peasant agricultural production often results in peasant indebtedness to local moneylenders (merchants, landlords, and rich peasants) who charge usurious interest rates. The money market thus becomes an important source of surplus transfer.

(f) Rent in cash: with full development of a money economy, the rental of land is increasingly paid in cash. The peasant farm thus needs to be increasingly commodity-oriented and specialized. In contrast to the other forms of rents, production and price risks are shifted completely from the landowner to the peasant producers.

(g) Taxes: taxation assumes different forms—head taxes, land taxes, market taxes, export taxes, and income taxes—with differential impact upon the peasant economy. All represent important sources of fiscal revenues for the state and usually a transfer of surplus from the peasantry to other classes in the social formation.

Once the mechanisms of surplus extraction have been identified, the controversy over the economic logic of peasant households be-

comes essentially trivial.⁴ Simple reproduction of the peasant household (its inability to accumulate) is not based on a given behavioral determination (that peasants prefer to produce only their necessary subsistence requirements) but, rather, must be located in the relations of production that presume surplus extraction. What is key is the dominated class position of peasants within different social formations.

The empirical analysis of the mechanisms of surplus extraction in a given social formation necessarily requires historical analysis because distinct relations of production are maintained by a complex interaction of political, ideological, as well as economic elements. To illustrate, in the Cajamarca area the hacienda system was the dominant rural institution well into the 1950s. Peasants gained access to land on the hacienda through the provision of rent in labor services, in kind, and in cash. An important characteristic of semifeudal or servile relations of production in this area was that the various mechanisms of surplus extraction through rent were superposed, and landlord-peasant arrangements exhibited a combination of forms. Nevertheless, three groups of peasants can be characterized according to their main form of rent payment (Deere).

The *colonos* were the peasants who paid the predominant form of their rent in labor services; the most common arrangement called for an approximately equal division of time between labor services required by the landlord and the familial labor time left free for the family's own subsistence production. The group of peasants called *partidarios* or *medieros* were generally sharecroppers; the

⁴ Few controversies have generated less insight than that concerning the economic logic of peasants: do peasants engage in the calculus of economic maximization in the allocation of scarce resources among alternative ends or are there specific economic rules that characterize peasant economic behavior that, in particular, negate expanded reproduction? In anthropology the conflict has assumed confrontation proportions between formalists (Firth, Tax, Nash, Leclair) who assume the former position and substantivists (Polanyi, Dalton, Sahlins) who assume the latter. Agricultural economists, with their neoclassical heritage, have nearly all stood on the side of the formalists (Schultz, Hopper, Lipton).

For empirical purposes, specification of the peasant's economic objective function is indeed important, but the characteristics of the particular social formation within which peasants are inserted must be specified first. Once this specification has been made, the controversy becomes essentially trivial. Each mode of production clearly has its own ideology and economic rules which, when reflected at the level of the social formation, condition economic behavior and the economic possibilities for peasants to reproduce themselves as direct producers.

landlord provided the land and the seed and sometimes the oxen for plowing, while the peasant family provided the labor. The crop was usually divided into equal shares. The *arrendires* on the hacienda were the peasants who paid their rent in cash; this arrangement was most common for the rental of grazing land. Notwithstanding the payment of rent in kind or in cash, these latter two groups of peasants also provided labor services to the landlord which ranged from two weeks to three months of labor services per year, depending on the personalized landlord-peasant relationship as well as the labor requirements of the landlord.

Other mechanisms of surplus extraction on the hacienda focused on the landlord's control over any marketable surplus that the peasants may produce after the payment of rent. On many haciendas, the resident peasants were required to sell any of their surplus production directly to the landlord; at other times, certain specified quantities of produce or animals were to be sold to the landlord at an established price. On many of the larger haciendas, the landlord also operated a country store where peasant families were required to purchase their nonproduced necessities. These commodities were often provided on credit for payment at harvest time at prices set by the landlord.

With the dissolution of the traditional hacienda system in the 1950s and 1960s, the majority of peasants were expelled from hacienda lands and became independent peasant producers—owners of their own plots of land acquired from the division and sale of marginal hacienda lands. The haciendas themselves were transformed into large-scale commercial farms using wage labor. With the change in the relations of production, rent was no longer paid directly to the landlord, and the landlord no longer controlled the circulation of commodities. But as the peasantry became increasingly integrated in the product market, they became more dependent on the upper strata of the peasantry and the farmers who now were to serve as both the primary providers of credit and petty monopolists in rural markets. In addition, the rapid integration of the peasantry into the labor market assured that low wages would become a principal source of surplus extraction as the rural areas became the storehouse of surplus labor.

For the rural sector at large, the unfavorable terms of trade between agricultural and man-

ufactured products constitute an important source of surplus transfer. In the 1973 to 1975 period, the terms of trade were deteriorating at a rate of 8.6% per year (Acevedo). While quantitatively the bulk of commercial agricultural suppliers are found among the upper strata of the peasantry and the commercial farms, these sectors are able to face deteriorating terms of trade only due to the plentiful supply of cheap labor available from the poorer strata of the peasantry. The poorer strata are squeezed at both ends: as wage workers, they receive a wage significantly less than the value of what they produce; and, as producers, they are faced with deteriorated prices for the commodities they sell to insure cash needs.

The Class Position of Peasants and Differentiation

Having characterized the organization of the peasant household and the patterns of surplus extraction through which peasants are exploited, we move on now to locate the peasantry as a social category within the broader society of which it is a part. Doing this implies taking sides in the debate opened in Russia at the turn of the century between Bolsheviks and Populists regarding the specification of a unique peasant mode of production. This debate has been reopened actively in recent years as an understanding of the future economic contribution and the political role of peasants requires the conceptualization of their position in the economy and in society (Ennew, Hirst, Tribe).

The debate is more than rhetorical, as it leads to markedly different interpretations of (a) the economic logic of peasants and (b) the future of the peasantry. For those who argue the existence of a specific peasant (or simple commodity) mode of production, peasant economic behavior is not guided by the motive of accumulation but by the objective of simple reproduction. The usual description highlights the family labor farm as the basic unit of production and private property in land which is distributed on a relatively equalitarian basis among households who form a single class. Wage labor is generally not employed, and the production of commodities has as its ultimate goal only consumption. While Marx developed the concept of petty commodity mode of production as a theoretical abstraction in *Capital*, those who employ the concept as a histor-

ical reality (Servolin; Vergopoulos 1971, 1978; Amin; Gutelman) argue that it is observed as articulated to and dominated by other modes of production to which it is functional, surrendering a surplus. The implication, however, is that this peasant mode does have the wherewithal to reproduce itself over time, resulting from its capacity to resist internal differentiation into social classes because accumulation is presumably not a behavioral objective of peasants.

There are, in our opinion, two objections to the use of the peasant mode of production concept. The first is that the specific form of organization that corresponds to peasant households and the existence of mechanisms of surplus extraction are not sufficient to constitute a peasant mode. As a theoretical category, a mode of production implies the specification of a determinate set of social relations and an ideological-political superstructure that remain here unidentified. The mechanisms of surplus extraction are not immutable but, to the contrary, assume a wide variety of forms that correspond to the particular social formations in which peasants are encompassed.

The second objection concerns the observed economic condition of simple reproduction. Do peasants want simple reproduction, or is it that they cannot overcome simple reproduction due to surplus extraction that cancels accumulation? In our opinion, the fact—simple reproduction—is wrongly given explanatory capacity on a behavioral basis while the essence—surplus extraction—is omitted. Clearly, under feudal and communal modes, the possibilities of accumulation and differentiation are severely reduced by the nonexistence of labor and land markets. However, when these markets prevail (i.e., when both labor and land have become commodities under the capitalist mode), the empirical observation of concentration of the land by some peasants and increasing proletarianization of the many—whenever economic and social conditions permit retention and accumulation of a surplus—is a clear contradiction of the peasant mode concept.

For those who oppose the notion of a specifically peasant or simple commodity mode of production, peasants are conceptualized either as a class within a given mode of production (e.g., serfs under feudalism) or as elements of a class under capitalism (Marx, Lenin, Kautsky, Preobrazhensky). Under feudalism, the peasantry was the essential class of direct producers subject to the ap-

propriation of their surplus labor by a non-producing class—the lords. Under capitalism, peasants are a transitory and differentiating class in a process of decomposition and absorption by the essential classes—proletariat and bourgeoisie—of the mode of production. In the analysis of a specific social formation characterized by heterogeneous relations of production, the patterns of surplus extraction are the most revealing indicators of the elements of class: rent in labor services and kind under feudal or servile relations of production; and appropriation of the surplus through circulation (terms of trade) and labor process (wage) under capitalist relations of production.

As the development of capitalism progresses in agriculture, the feudal and communal modes decompose, releasing their peasantries which become incorporated in the capitalist mode as a highly unstable class of direct producers subject to differentiation based on their access to the means of production and the subsequent sale or purchase of wage labor. Following Lenin's characterization of the "farmer road" to capitalism, a few are able to employ wage labor and thus capitalize their production process, and become increasingly specialized as commodity producers, whereas the majority must increasingly rely on the sale of their labor power as they lose access to the means of production. In figure 1, changes over time in the levels of reproduction of the means of subsistence and work give the economic basis of differentiation.

Among the lower strata of the peasantry, the low income level continually encourages permanent migration from the household of sons and daughters old enough to capture their own opportunity cost on the labor market. In many cases the deteriorating level of income attained from the combination of home production and wage work in the rural areas or from temporary migration requires the whole family to leave for the urban environment where temporary work may be easier to find, notwithstanding high rates of unemployment. In Cajamarca approximately 2.2 households per hundred leave the rural area annually for urban centers. In many cases these households continue sharecropping their meager land parcels with neighbors or family members but, after a while, sell out.

Conceptualization of the peasantry within the capitalist mode of production as oscillating elements of class between proprietor and worker is also revealing of the political posi-

tion of peasants. The upper peasantry, with its petty bourgeois character, is tied economically to the bourgeoisie but ideologically to the mass of peasants. It thus constitutes a buffer class between bourgeoisie and proletariat in the increasingly polarized rural population. In recent years, a number of reforms promoted by the state have attempted to recreate this category for the purpose of political stabilization. Land redistribution, settlement schemes, and efforts at rural development have this significant—if not always explicit—political dimension.

In our analysis, the peasantry as a producer of commodities is thus only a transitory social stratum under capitalism. Transition does not, however, imply a particular pace. Indeed, this transition can last for a long time; and the absolute number of peasants in the third world still may increase for a long time to come under the double force of the demographic explosion and the decomposition of feudal and communal modes that eject their peasantries into the capitalist mode of production. Yet, these peasants differentiate and are reproduced increasingly as wage workers: the majority gradually lose their status of producers of commodities while attempting to maintain that of producer of use values as a necessary complement to wage earnings in insuring household subsistence. This, at least, is what the peasantry of Cajamarca is currently undergoing.

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