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LAND TENURE, RURAL EMIGRATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHLAND ECUADOR*

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The views in this paper are solely personal.

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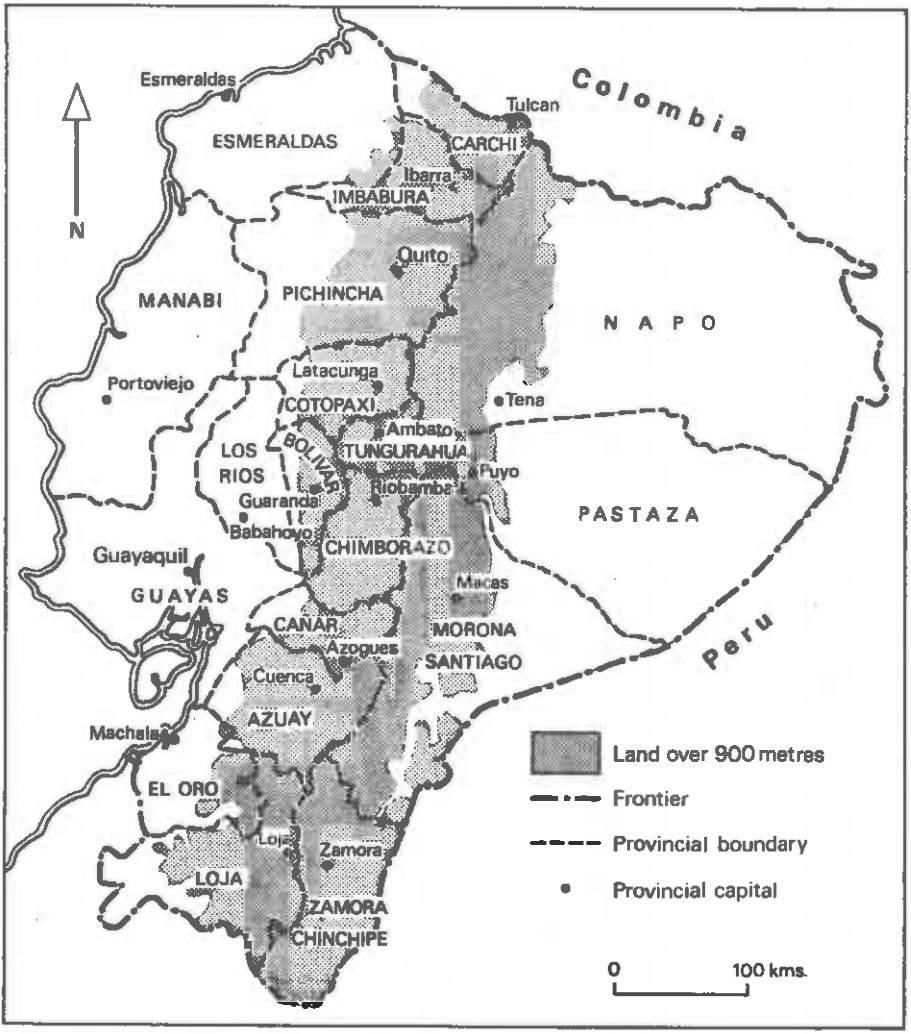
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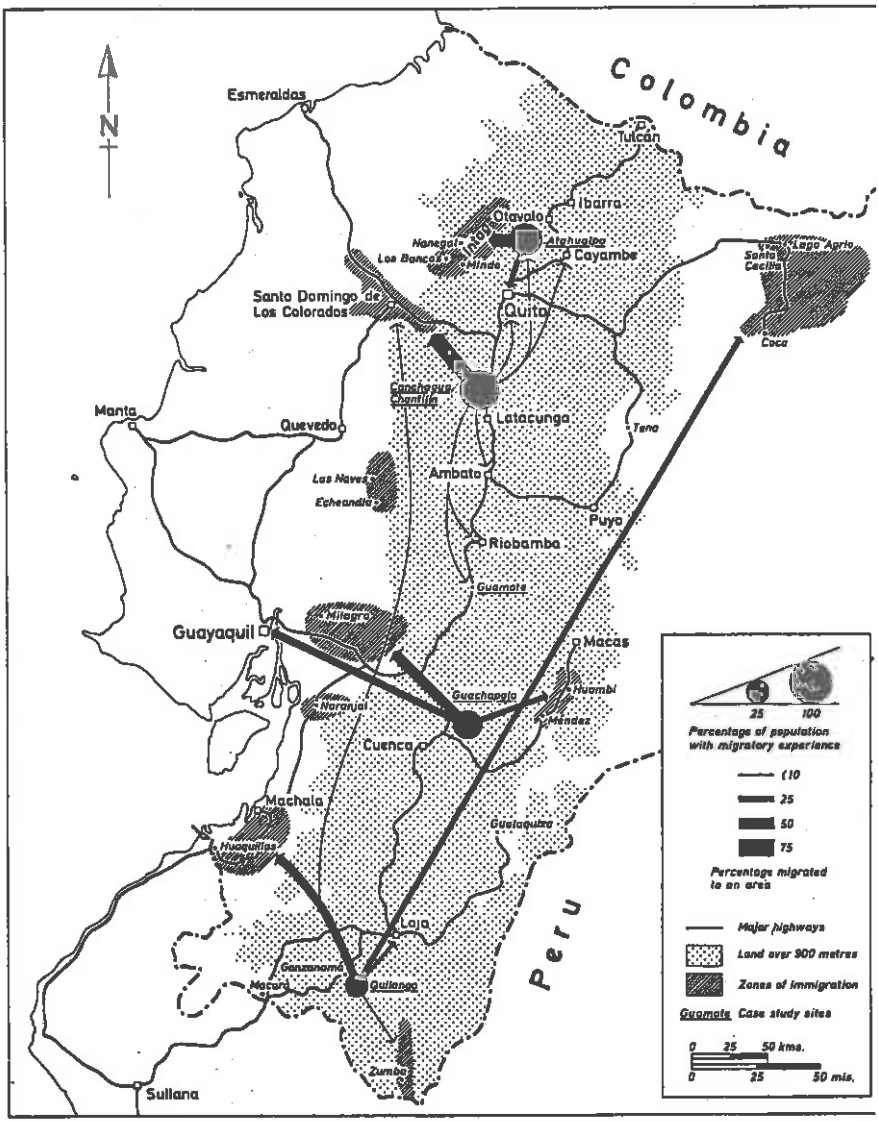
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The existence of demographic decline in rural areas is commonplace in much of the industrialised world under both socialist and capitalist economic systems. The existence of rural areas of declining populations is less widely known but evidence from Latin America suggests that, in a number of rural areas, population is decreasing in particular since mid-century (see for example Wilkie, forthcoming; Williams and Griffin 1978). The rural population decrease comprises a loss of population from both urban areas within rural zones and from the rural population itself. Even taking into account the inadequacy of population data for some rural areas there seems little reason to doubt the existence of widespread population decline.

The bulk of the social science literature on internal migration pays special attention to the movement of population into urban areas, especially the large metropolitan centres. There is thus a tendency to assume that much of the rural population movement is directed towards the major cities whether or not one subscribes to theories of stage or step migration. Data relating to case study and census material for Ecuador suggest that this is not necessarily true and that the actual pattern of movement is more complex. In this paper I want to demonstrate the importance of rural emigration in highland Ecuador and to show what impact this loss of population may have on the distribution of land available for farming. Finally the relationship between emigration and rural development will be discussed in order to demonstrate that only limited agricultural change results from emigration and a major change in the rural population's view of agriculture will be necessary before small-scale farmers will invest in practices which will increase output and enable improvement in the quality of rural life.

Migration direction and importance

Although considerable information with respect to migration was collected in a series of case studies in highland Ecuador at a parish level in 1975-76, a volume of valuable data exists at a provincial level in the 1974 census where the previous residence of the population is recorded according to urban or rural area and the province of origin and destination. It is therefore possible to detect the movement of the population as a whole through provinces and between urban and rural places. Urban places are defined as towns or cities that are capitals of cantons or provinces. Data referring to four provinces are contained in Table 1.

Table 1 Migration Streams 1974 (percentages)

Stream	Province of destination							
	Azuay		Loja		Guayas		Pichincha	
Rural-urban	22.9	(15.5)	18.6	(10.7)	14.7	(8.8)	18.6	(16.2)
Rural-rural	24.2	(10.3)	29.3	(12.1)	14.5	(11.6)	13.5	(10.9)
Urban-rural	16.1	(15.3)	26.3	(27.3)	18.5	(13.3)	16.8	(13.8)
Urban-urban	36.8	(60.0)	25.8	(50.9)	53.3	(66.3)	51.1	(59.0)

Figures in parentheses refer to migration streams excluding intra-provincial migration.

Source: III Censo Nacional de Población, 1974.

A comparison of the importance of different migration streams referring to all migration and inter-provincial migration shows that, while much of the rural emigration is within the province, the stream which is consistently the numerically most important is that between urban centres except in the case of Loja in southern Ecuador where intra-provincial urban-urban migration

seems very important. In the case of the two provinces containing Ecuador's two metropolitain centres: Guayas (Guayaquil) and Pichincha (Quito) the importance of urban-urban migration is proportionately greater, accounting for around two-thirds of the inter-provincial migration and over half of all migration. Migration from rural areas comprised less than half of migration in the two provinces not containing a metropolitain centre and 30 per cent of migration in Guayas and Pichincha. This measure of migration provides no evidence to show that rural emigration accounts for even half of all migration and demonstrates that rural migration to urban centres comprises 10-20 per cent of migration.

Two possible explanations exist for different parts of these striking data. Firstly, if migration takes place in stages and rural migrants migrate to small towns and then to larger urban places, since rural areas are only one of the stages, more moves will involve urban places. This could partly explain the predominance of urban-urban movements. Secondly, as we shall show later, urbanward migration for the rural population has become more important in the past decade but the census records "previous residence" which may represent many moves made long ago when urbanward migration by rural people was less common. Provincial level data for the 1974 census, a full set of which has only recently been published, will be analysed more fully in the future.

At a case study level satisfactory data were collected in three of the five cases studies which represent a sample of the migration patterns of the non-indian population. The case study locations were selected to represent the range of ecological and economic conditions in areas of

rural emigration in highland Ecuador. Within each case study area -- which usually comprised a single civil parish with a central village containing maybe one quarter of the population and the remainder was located in scattered homes -- a random sample of 20 per cent of the occupied houses was taken and the sample households were interviewed for data relating to the adults and children, their migration experience and farming and landholding status. Additional data regarding absent migrants were gathered from either school registers or lists of recorded births and, with the help of local people, the present location of these people was identified with little difficulty.

From these data various measures of emigration were calculated, which are represented in Table 2.

Table 2 Measures of Emigration (percentages)

Parish	1	2	3
Quilanga	38	60	42
Guachapala	49	...	57
Atahualpa	39	59	...

... data not available

1. Informants' children aged over 14 living elsewhere in 1975-76.
2. Children in parish centre school in about 1960 living elsewhere in 1976.
3. Children born in 1950 (Guachapala) or 1954 (Quilanga) living elsewhere in 1976.

This shows that 40-60 per cent of the two samples has left the case study

areas but that nearer 60 per cent of those born in about 1950, now mainly married and with children and in the most mobile period of their life, have left these rural areas. However many of the population ~~actually~~ interviewed had actually returned after living elsewhere for a time after marriage and 41 per cent of the population interviewed in all five case study areas had previous migratory experience. A more detailed analysis of the migration data may be found elsewhere (Preston, 1978) but it should be noted that migrants moved to a series of areas of tropical and subtropical agriculture on the western side of the Andes and, in some cases to areas of recent colonisation on the edge of the Amazon basin. Those going to urban areas moved to the regional provincial capital or to one or other of the major metropolitan centres. While some 70 per cent of informants with previous migratory experience had returned from other rural areas the children of informants had largely gone to urban areas and only 39 per cent were living in rural areas. There seems to have been a recent swing of preference of informants towards urban destinations and while 93 per cent of those who had migrated in the 1920 - 50 period had been to rural areas 48 per cent of those who had migrated in 1974-76 had been to towns or cities.

We may conclude therefore that a substantial proportion of the rural population has migration experience and that, through the experience of other members of the family, most rural families will have at least some experience of the consequences of migration.

Land tenure and migration

Land tenure and the distribution of the land among the rural population is of fundamental importance in rural development. Although major inequalities in landholdings are in large measure accounted for by the presence of large estates, even small changes in the distribution of land among the majority of small and middle-scale farmers are potentially important. Our sample did not include large estates because in many cases they were not represented by occupied homes and also because they are large organisations in which the migration of the owner, often absentee anyway, is not likely to affect the running of the estate. The release of land by migrants is inevitable except when migrants are only absent during weekdays. Therefore other individuals will have access to more land as a direct consequence of migration. In the questionnaire informants were asked whether they either gave land to be worked by others or were in fact farming any land belonging to other people. We were therefore able to determine to a certain extent who gives and receives land and further questions regarding sale examined land that was sold rather than rented or sharecropped.

The process of land reform and associated influences had affected the ownership of land in several case study areas and a proportion of the small farmers had received plots of land from the estate owners for whom they had previously worked. However, while 45 per cent of informants had previously worked for an estate in some capacity, only 18 per cent had received some land; half of these received actually less land than the estate owner had previously allowed them to farm. The impact of land reform measures -- in the main through unofficial action -- on the distribution of land has not affected the access to land by many farmers, rather it has changed the

tenure with which former estate workers held land. The general tendency is for land holdings to become smaller and in one of the case studies it was remarked that what were haciendas fifty years ago now, by repeated division amongst heirs, are little more than small family farms and some are even subdivided into plots that cannot fully support a family.

Whether land released by migrants is rented or sold is of considerable importance both to the distribution process and with regard to the benefit derived by the farmer. However the two methods of disposal affect farmers in different situations. While prospective tenants require only a little capital if they pay their rental in cash and none if they sharecrop, the purchaser of the land of a migrant needs considerable capital since land in these communities is expensive. While the real restriction on rental is largely whether the prospective tenant has the time available to farm another plot and whether he estimates the yield of the area being rented is likely to justify the expenditure of time, the benefit from rental is restricted since in the majority of communities rental was one half of the harvest and rarely did the land owner share the cost of seed or fertiliser etc. In earlier work in Solano, near Cuenca, we found that plots of eroded land or on steep slopes were thought not worth sharecropping and some such land, owned by migrants, was abandoned. This was very rarely encountered elsewhere but it does emphasise the existence of a level of productivity below which rental may not be feasible even though it might be where the share of the crop paid as rent is much less.

Tabulation of the data from case studies showed that more informants had rented land (38 per cent) than had bought land (35 per cent) but that a greater proportion of rentals were made from migrants (45 per cent) than

were purchases, where only 38 per cent were made from migrants. Thus while migration is clearly a major factor in providing land both for rent and purchase among the small-scale farmers in the case study areas it is of proportionately greater importance in supplying land for rent. When a comparison is made of the amount of land held by those who have bought or rented land one can identify a further feature. Those who have rented land from migrants have less land than those who rent land from non-migrants (2.34 ha compared with 2.68 ha) which suggests that the land released for rental by migrants specifically benefits those with less land. Not surprisingly examination of those who bought land own more land than average (2.97 ha compared with the average holding of 2.71 ha) although those who bought from migrants own rather less land than those who bought from others (2.94 ha cf 2.99 ha).

Observation rather than quantitative evidence suggests that land which is disposed of by migrants is frequently given to kinsfolk or neighbours and frequently land that is sold has previously been rented by the same person for many years. There is probably a strong personal element in such transactions and the effect of such sales and rentals on the overall pattern of land holding may be slight. There is, however, very little evidence that the rental or sale of land has led to the concentration of land in the hands of wealthy individuals. The one instance where this may have occurred was in Quilanga where drought over several years in the 1960's caused many families to leave and lowered land prices considerably. This situation was unusual because in the same period the chaos following informal sub-division of a large estate had also resulted in wide disparities in the amount of land acquired by individuals.

Our evidence does suggest that the general process of rental does act to redistribute land more equitably in each community and has greatest effect in those communities with a most inequitable land distribution. The calculation of Gini coefficients as an index of skewness of land distribution (where a high value indicates inequality of distribution) for land owned and land actually farmed by informants showed the following result (Table 3):

Table 3 The Concentration of Land Farmed (Gini coefficient)

	Quilanga	Guachapala	Atahualpa
Land owned	60	49	62
Land worked*	57	45	54

*Land owned + land rented - land rented out = land worked

This reliable and accurate measure of inequality indicates conclusively that the general process of renting of land does benefit those farmers who own less land particularly where major differences in access to land exist.

Rural development and migration

Migration is to a large measure a consequence of the difference in economic and social development of one area in comparison with another and thus we might only reasonably expect any sort of development in rural areas to be a consequence of the release of land by migrants. One consequence of migration is that the community as a whole develops an awareness of other places. Since much migration is temporary, many farmers have personal migration experience (41 per cent of our sample) and the existence of these re-

turned migrants may influence at least the course of any rural development that takes place. Therefore, if we accept increased agricultural output per person employed in farming, possibly in association with the use of some new agricultural methods, as a measure of rural development then we may expect some backward linkages with migration through the investment of savings and the use of migration experience. On the other hand since the case studies were in areas fromwhich there was much emigration it could equally be argued that rural conditions that were associated with emigration will be prejudicial to change.

Several studies of migration have demonstrated the links that can exist between rural emigration and agriculture (see for example Celestino 1972, Pérez Díaz 1966 and others) where migrants return with some capital and with knowledge of new agricultural practices which are used when they return home. These innovations have a demonstration effect on the non-migratory population who may subsequently adopt at least some of the new practices. In our own field experience there was such a positive feedback in one particular community -- the central part of Canchagua in Cotopaxi Province. Here a group of men made use of the regular bus service from the nearby town of Saquisilí to travel to Quito, about 2 hours away, and worked during the week on building sites in the city. They returned each weekend with their earnings and had formed a cooperative, invested in various agricultural improvements and were considering other ways in which production could be boosted with money from their earnings in Quito. This, however, was the only instance in five case studies of agricultural change associated quite clearly with migration. The frequent returns to the home with the weekly wage packet and the weekend involvement with agricultural tasks that had not been performed during the week

probably served to stimulate the investment of some earnings in agriculture.

The analysis of family backgrounds with respect to land holding, migration history and schooling in relation to the adoption of innovations showed decisively that migration experience and migration intention were not strongly related with the adoption of agricultural innovations (Preston, forthcoming) while schooling and the area of land owned were positively correlated with innovation. Unless migration has taken place in a situation where agricultural production for cash is commonplace it is arguable that migration is most likely to be directed at, for the poor, maintaining their existence by providing money with which to buy necessities and, for the better off, providing cash which can be spent in buying goods to improve the home or to acquire services that enable the quality of life to improve -- the connection of the home to the water supply and to electricity, cementing the house floor, building an extension to the home or just buying beds, a sewing machine or even a television set. All these innovations represent improvements in status and are among those sought by rural families. They do not, however, relate in many obvious ways to agriculture and the expectation of a relationship between agricultural change and emigration in the communities was false and the consequence of a lack of appreciation for the recent history of these communities and for the priorities of rural people for personal improvement.

Neither the cause nor the purpose of migration is directly related to agriculture. Migrants include people of different levels of wealth, especially where migration has become an established pattern of life but the very poorest, for whom agriculture is most inadequate as a way of life are frequently those least able to migrate. Our informants frequently commented that they had not previously migrated and were not considering

migration because they were too poor. Roberts' findings in Peru agree with this and he further suggests that it is the poor who remain to take up opportunities created by the migration of those less poor (Roberts, 1978, 87, 100). Migration does not primarily affect those for whom agriculture is least adequate. It is a consequence of the growing perception that an enviable quality of life can most easily be attained by migration to urban places where life is more 'respectable' and where a range of services exist which are always denied to rural areas. Few well-off farmers who talked of migrating did so because of the inadequacy of farming to provide a living, rather they were leaving to seek better schooling for their children, specifically secondary schooling usually unavailable in rural areas, and because they felt urban life to be more attractive. This view of the attractiveness of urban life springs in part from real advantages in urban living, particularly the availability of services, but also as a consequence of the urban bias introduced into rural communities through communications media, commercial advertising and the conscious but often unconscious bias of teachers, medical helpers, local government administrators and agricultural extension workers towards urban living and the associated deprecation of rural living standards. If migration is engendered by this rosy view of urban life then it is logical for short-stay migrants to invest their savings, such as they are, in domestic improvements to enable the quality of their life to approximate more closely to that in the city rather than to make the longer term investment in agriculture the return on which is distant and often uncertain on account of the likelihood of disease and climatic hazard.

A successful savings and loan cooperative in northern Ecuador, 90 per cent of whose members were farmers, had made (in 1975) 29 per cent of the

loans for commercial, non-agricultural ventures, 23 per cent for home improvements and only 22 per cent for agricultural and livestock purposes (Preston and Taveras 1977) which further demonstrates the order of priorities of farmers when they have accumulated savings. Informants in the same area (Atahualpa) gave a similar account of the destination of migrant earnings -- if there were any -- and 40 per cent would usually spend the money on clothes, 20 per cent on everyday expenses such as debts accumulated at village shops while the husband was away and 32 per cent on farming, usually the purchase of livestock for fattening.

The past history of each of the case study areas included the existence of a variety of cottage industries (weaving cloth or hats, rope making, carpentry etc.) many of which have now declined as a result of the development of modern industrial production in urban centres and consumer preference for more exotic, factory-made goods. Since micro-holdings predominate in many of the areas where emigration is important -- average farm sizes varied in case studies from 3.9 to 0.9 hectares -- the domestic economy for several generations has been geared to the production of agricultural goods for domestic consumption but has relied on earnings from craft work, occasional labouring and short-term migration for the cash necessary to buy extra food and for basic necessities not produced at home -- salt, cooking oil, candles, clothes, shoes, tools. The accumulation of cash has therefore been associated not with farming but with non-farming activities often on a day to day basis. Informants in hat weaving villages have often explained that they weave a hat when they need the money to buy a specific item for the home rather than weave all the time and accumulate money with no immediate goal in

mind. In this framework it appears more logical that, when migration provides capital for investment, that families should consider the most profitable action to be the satisfaction of immediate needs and the creation of more earning power by starting a shop, buying a sewing machine to do dressmaking or a lathe for woodworking rather than the purchase of seed or fertiliser to try to improve yields from land that has previously been unable to fully support the family.

Rural development for rural families in these situations is not the development of an agriculture which seems capricious and often unsatisfactory but the satisfaction of aspirations for a better immediate quality of life in a cultural environment which confers approval on standards of urban living conveyed by communications media and by personal contact when visiting towns. Agricultural development in rural areas is accepted most readily by farmers with more than average land but many of the recommended improvements develop a reliance on goods not locally produced and which demand capital each year and whose acquisition must often be associated with the provision of credit. Where some of the changes recommended involve a greater intensity of land use, such as double in place of single cropping, the freedom of members of the farm family to migrate for a few weeks or months is impaired and thus farming can become the only source of income. To overcome the rational hesitation of farmers to commit themselves to what is often a novel way of earning sizeable sums of money , considerable effort is needed to demonstrate the potential of a range of agricultural methods for increasing yields and providing more income. Even when this is done, for many families there will still be needs for extra cash that can be satisfied only by some other activity. If migration is to become less important other sources of

local employment are necessary and new cottage industries must be developed that provide goods needed elsewhere and for which a steady demand in the future is likely.

Conclusion

We have attempted to demonstrate that to search for a simple relationship between emigration, land tenure and rural development is unrealistic. The context in which emigration takes place has to be seen as more than the scarcity of land or personal poverty or the lure of city life. Although we have demonstrated that land tenure changes do provide some benefits to a cross-section of the inhabitants of the communities which migrants leave, this is not necessarily associated with agricultural improvement. For the people in these rural communities rural development means more than miracle seeds or the use of herbicides and agriculture is only one of various ways of spending any money saved from working away from home.

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