

# CHANGING LANDLORD-PEASANT RELATIONS: THE DEMISE OF A HARVEST FESTIVAL IN THE ECUADOREAN HIGHLANDS

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## INTRODUCTION

The following article is based on two years of anthropological research (1982 and 1983) among Quichua peasants and capitalist farmers in the parish of Angochahua, in the province of Imbabura, Ecuador. The parish is located some 12 kilometers from the administrative center of Ibarra, the capital of the province of Imbabura and also an important marketplace. A one lane cobblestone road connects the parish with Ibarra and with other towns as well as with major thoroughfares such as the Panamerican highway.

This article is drawn from a larger study of changes and continuities in agrarian class relations (peasants and capitalist farmers) in the northern highlands of Ecuador (see Crain 1987). Peasant communities in the parish of Angochahua have experienced a lengthy history of hacienda domination as titles to many of the contemporary estates date from the early 18th century. Estate owners included various orders of the Catholic church as well as private families, many of whom held important ties to the Ecuadorean political arena. The recent Ecuadorean agrarian reforms of 1964 and 1973 did not lead to the dissolution of many of these large landed estates as occurred in Perú. Instead, those «modernizing» hacienda owners who established capitalist social relations of production inside their farm units and who awarded their former peasant tenants miniscule plots of *huasipungo* land were not subject to state expropriation (Barsky 1978 and Murmis 1980). As a result, many peasant units of production in Angochahua today coexist alongside the borders of large capitalist farm operations (cf. Lehmann 1982). During the past 30 years, production on the large capitalist farms has switched from a mixed agricultural and

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livestock regimen to more specialized dairy farming, due to the growth of the urban consumer market.

The larger dissertation of which this article forms a part examines these general processes of material change as they have been responded to, defended by and/or challenged by the contemporary practices of capitalist farmers and peasants of the parish. Analysis of these events demonstrates that the interpretation of this transformation frequently varies along class lines as peasants have not benefited from these material changes to the degree that capitalist farmers have.

This article examines the demise of a harvest festival, known locally as «the Uyanzas», which hacienda owners formerly sponsored for the surrounding peasantry<sup>2</sup>. Although the harvest festival constitutes a principal concern of this study, it also provides a forum for discussing related topics of equal importance. These include the effects of broader structural transformations upon the local parish communities, and changes in the nature of the capitalist farmer-peasant relationship throughout rural society. By starting with the Uyanzas festival, and regarding it as a sort of looking glass which affords insights into certain aspects of traditional landlord-peasant relations, this article attempts to convey some feeling for the effect of macro-level structural changes on everyday life in a peasant community.

This paper is divided into four parts. The first section examines the place of the Uyanzas ritual within the context of the earlier non-capitalist tenancy system which bound various types of peasantry in the region to local landowners. The second section provides an account of the Uyanzas ritual, highlighting the roles performed by both hacienda owners and the peasantry. The third section analyzes the participation of certain highland property owner in the abolition of the Uyanzas, as well as their intervention in the implementation of structural reforms of the Ecuadorean economy during the early 1960s. In the concluding portion of the article, the ideological response of both capitalist farmers and peasants to the demise of the Uyanzas ritual will be examined. In this final section, the relation between the disappearance of the Uyanzas and precipitating factors such as the expansion of the market economy will be considered in light of case studies of agrarian transformations during earlier periods of world history.

### **1.1. COMMUNITY, HACIENDA, AND THE LABOR SERVICE ERA**

The Uyanzas was an annual ritual of redistribution which was celebrated in the parish of Angochahua during the post-harvest months of August or September. Local landowners distributed foodstuffs, beverages and items of clothing to the peasantry, rewarding them for their labor contribution throughout the year, and

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2. The Uyanzas is a Quichua term referring to .... the fiestas which follow the harvest» (Rubio Orbe 1956 and Carvalho-Neto 1964). According to Rubio Orbe, «... many times the Uyanzas festivals were so big that they occurred in the patio of the haciendas... [and]... they lasted for two to three days with some including the popular bullfights» (Rubio Orbe in Carvalho-Neto 1964: 143). For Costales the term Uyanzas signifies «... agasajo o felicitación por estrenarse algo, joyas, vestidos... a party for showing off something, such as jewels or clothing... (Costales in Carvalho-Neto 1964: 143). Costales' remarks refer to the gifts which hacienda owners bestowed on the peasantry during the Uyanzas celebration. For further documentation concerning the Uyanzas in Ecuador see Parsons (1945) and Crespi (1968).

most especially for their long hours of toil on the hacienda land during the harvest. Before 1964, and the advent of contractual wage labor and agrarian reform in the parish, the local haciendas were labor-intensive and social relations of production inside the estates were non-capitalistic in form. There were several types of peasantry existing in the region, each of which had different rights and obligations vis-à-vis the hacienda. All of these peasants were entitled to participate in and receive the Uyanzas.

The local peasantry was divided into at least three groups: the *huasipungueros* (labor service tenants), the *partidarios* (sharecroppers), and the *yanaperos* (peasants form independent communities), all of which held different relations to the means of production. It was not unusual to find a highland estate utilizing several of these labor forms at the same time. However, of these three types of peasantry, the labor service tenants were the predominant form of labor utilized by the haciendas. In the *huasipunguero* system, landless peasants were provided with use rights to hacienda resources such as a small plot of farm land, pastures and water. In exchange, these peasants were required to work 4 to 5 days per week for the hacienda. The sharecroppers cultivated small portions of hacienda land and owed the landlord a fixed rent, a percentage of the year's harvest. They usually had other labor obligations to the hacienda as well. *Yanaperos* were peasants from neighboring independent communities (that is, non-hacienda communities) who worked one day a week for the large haciendas in the parish in order to gain access to pasture land and to acquire rights of transit enabling them to traverse a portion of hacienda territory.

These traditional social relations of production were characterized by diffuse ties formed between landlords and peasants. For example, peasants might call upon a local landlord to request advice regarding a crop or an illness in the family. They frequently held ties of ritual kinship (*compadrazgo*), with either local landowners hacienda administrators and office personnel. These *compadres* (co-parents) would be more likely to assist a peasant family during times of economic hardship. Landlords also called upon the peasantry, particularly the labor service tenants to undertake many additional services for them which stretched far beyond the peasant's four-day work week. In such instances, a male head of household might be ordered to take hacienda produce or livestock to market during the weekend or he might be required to send his wife, or sons and daughters to work in *servicia* (domestic service) for a period of two months duration, in one of the many private households which the local landowning family maintained.

Although each party, landlord and peasant, enjoyed mutual rights and obligations with respect to one another, the labor service system was predicated upon a belief in the fundamental inequality inherent in traditional agrarian society. The local landowning class held a virtual monopoly over vital resources such as land, water and forests, and this concentration of natural resources helped to secure their dominance over the indigenous peasantry. Ideologies of race and paternalism were frequently drawn upon to account for both the superior economic and political standing of the landlords and the subordinate, lowly status which was the lot of the Indian peasant. But although they occupied low ranking positions within this complex social hierarchy, peasants were not without their customary rights which, if revoked or transgressed, frequently led to popular protest. Within agrarian society, one of the traditional rights which the local peasantry enjoyed was the right to receive the annual distribution of the Uyanzas.

During the course of my research, when I questioned peasant informants regarding their participation in the former labor service system by asking them to

recall any positive experiences or features associated with those relations, they frequently mentioned the tradition of the Uyanzas. Within the peasant community, popular memory bemoaned the passing of this time-worn ritual which honored not only the labor service tenants but also its *partidarios* (sharecroppers) and the *yanaperos* from the neighboring peasant communities which lined the hacienda's borders. In the words of one former labor service tenant, who had participated in some fourteen Uyanzas, the hacienda owners were obligated to distribute the Uyanzas to the peasantry. She argued that, if the year's harvest had been exceptionally poor, the landlord might vary the amount of his ceremonial expenditures but there was no way he could shirk his duty by denying the peasant community of this right.

The Uyanzas was one of several customary practices in the traditional economy of the labor service period in which hacienda owners of Angochahua were expected to contribute to the subsistence fund of their peasant labor force. As previously noted, all peasants in the parish had some sort of access to the means of production. Thus whether they were *yanaperos* and owned land in adjacent communities or were labor service tenants and sharecroppers who held use rights to hacienda land, none was divorced from some sort of customary right to land and the security which it provided. Furthermore, in times of food scarcity or crop failure due to inclement weather (such as frosts, hail or droughts), the traditions of *socorros* and *suplidos*, which were common in hacienda-dominated areas, were important mechanisms for ensuring peasant subsistence requirements<sup>3</sup>. Under the old tenancy system, *suplidos* consisted of advances of grains (wheat, barley and quinoa) tubers, beef and cloth which peasants obtained from the granaries and other storehouses of the haciendas (cf. Crespi 1969). *Socorros* were monetary advances. Although peasants did incur debts to the haciendas when these advances were made, they were assured at least a modicum of security, as these requests were seldom denied.

## 1.2. THE ENACTMENT OF THE UYANZAS

The Uyanzas always followed the completion of the harvest but it was never associated with any precise date. Several members of the dominant class explained that during the period following the harvest, the staff always took stock of the hacienda's inventories of grains, tubers and livestock and paid any outstanding bills and overhead costs. Preparations were also made to market a certain percentage of these agricultural commodities. Following the settlement of these accounts, the hacienda personnel were then instructed to notify the peasant community of a date which was to be set aside for the Uyanzas celebration. Preparations began at least a week in advance in order to process all the foodstuffs which the *patrones* would later distribute to the community. Hacienda personnel took *costales* (bushel bags) of wheat, barley and corn as well as various tubers, such as *ocas*, *mellocos* and potatoes, from its storehouses and entrusted these to some ten peasant households. It then became the responsibility of several peasant women to mobilize kin and neighbors to aid them in the task of cooking enough food to feed both the

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3. *Socorros* and *suplidos*: Both are Spanish terms. The first, *socorro*, can be translated as «help» but it has a different connotation from the word «ayuda», which also signifies help. *Socorro* implies a greater sense of urgency, frequently arising in an emergency situation. For example, if a person was drowning, and called out for help, s/he would probably shout *socorro*, and not *ayuda*. The second term, *suplido*, stems from the Spanish verb *suplir*, which means to supplement or to make up for.

immediate community of Quimsa as well as the *yanaperos* who hailed from the neighboring settlements.

On the morning of the Uyanzas, a *mayoral* (steward) of the hacienda, acting as town crier, was dispatched to cover all the hillsides and crannies where the peasant holdings were scattered. Blowing into his *churos* (conch shell) <sup>4</sup>, he shouted forth the message: «Come, enter the hacienda to receive the Uyanzas.» Then he called out the names of the various foodstuffs that were to be awarded that day: «*Chicha, mote, aicha, tanda, champus...*» As the peasants flocked towards the large stone gates of the hacienda, they heard the sound of the band playing in the courtyard.

Once a large crowd had assembled in the courtyard, the *patrones* and the hacienda's administrator appeared and began to call out the names of each peasant, asking that he or she step forward to receive their share of the *boda* (ritual meal) <sup>5</sup>. Individual peasants received some four or five large loaves of bread (*tanda*) several pounds of meat (*aicha*), as well as *mote* (boiled maize), *quinoa* and *champus* (a stewed drink or porridge made from oats or cornmeal). In addition, the *patrones* awarded annually one to two of the following items of apparel: *ponchos*, boots, shawls, *bayeta* (homespun cloth), *huallicas* (imitation gold beads), overalls and *anacos* (woolen skirts). Some of the older peasants who had taken part in at least ten Uyanzas, boasted about how they had acquired their entire wardrobe of clothing as a result of the hacienda's gifts. In addition, the small group of salaried employees of the hacienda, the administrator, a scribe, an accountant, a chauffeur, the *mayordomos* (foremen) and a veterinarian, received foodstuffs along with a cash bonus on this occasion.

Following the rewards of both apparel and bonus pay, the real fiesta got underway, with food and *chicha* (maize beer) flowing to the tune of the band which the hacienda had hired for the occasion. According to several informants, it was particularly at this point that the celebration evoked a feeling of fraternity among peasants

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4. *Churos*: a musical wind instrument, popular amongst indigenous groups. Traditionally, *churos* were large marine conch shells which served as musical accompaniments or loudspeakers, being important both as a mode of communication and for festive occasions. More recently, Rubio Orbe (1964) reports that «... *churos* are fashioned of bull horns and they resemble a trumpet in appearance. *Churos* are ... used for certain purposes in native communities, for *mingas*, for planting and harvesting, and in the festival of San Juan» (Rubio Orbe in Carvalho-Neto 1964, 181). Carvalho-Neto (1964) notes: «... In the province of Cañar, in the southern highlands of Ecuador, an announcement of the beginning of the harvest is signalled by a robust Indian, taking the *churos* into his hands, and in response to his long, hoarse cry, the inhabitants of the surrounding hills, as well as the *patrón* and his family assembled» [Carvalho-Neto 1964, 182].

5. *Boda*: The *boda* consists of a ritual meal held only during festive occasions in native communities. Sponsorship of *boda* may be performed by either indigenous *priostes* (*capitanes* of a fiesta), or by other *patrones* (i.e. hacienda owners, merchants, labor contractors) Moya states that

... the *boda* or [ceremonial] table is a tablecloth some 20-30 meters in length that is placed on the ground. On top of the cloth all sorts of cooked food are placed, including *mote* [boiled maize], peas, potatoes, *cuyes* [guinea pigs], chickens, and *chicha* (maize beer)... The *boda* is presided over by the *capitán*, [or *prioste*] who blesses the meal...

(Moya 1981, 56-57)

For further description see Carvalho-Neto (1964, 143).

and landlords, along with a shared identification with the local community which united them. As one informant reminisced: «It was a great *fiesta* then... We all drank and danced with the *patrones*. Yes..., that was when we had *unión*... when we were all united.»

Use of the term *unión* here refers to a sense of belonging together, albeit in a hierarchical community which included the landlords as well as peasants. In this context, *unión* does not imply, «we're all equal here» or «we're all the same», as peasants are quick to point out the social differences that existed between themselves and the traditional landlord class. Other occasions in which the term *unión* was frequently used by peasants included a series of parish political meetings, in which they gathered to air their grievances and to discuss certain political and economic objectives. There were no capitalist farmers present at these meetings, and peasants outlined strategies for acquiring access to nearby hacienda land to alleviate the growing demographic pressure on their existing land base. Throughout the course of these meetings, peasants reiterated that one of the most crucial problems facing them was: «No hay *unión* entre nosotros» («There's no unity among us»). In this case *unión* has a different connotation; it refers to the peasantry's consciousness of their lack of organization and solidarity as a class or other interest group, which deters their ability to win concessions from the large capitalist farmers.

If we look at language use in its social context, the term *unión*, when used by peasants in reference to the Uyanzas *fiesta*, assigns a positive valuation to the earlier landlord-tenant elation. However, when *unión* was invoked by peasants within the context of their political meetings, a different evaluation of the capitalist farmer-peasant relation emerges and it is one which casts this unequal relationship in a less favorable light. This diminished solidarity with members of the dominant class, which was apparent during the meetings, manifested itself in several ways. First, the fact that peasants made a conscious decision to exclude the large capitalist farmers from these community-wide gatherings indicates a desire on their part to restrict the notion of community, moving it away from a sense of belonging together based on vertical patron-client ties, and towards an alternative notion of community based on horizontal ties established among fellow peasants. These meetings also generated a great deal of resentment towards the local hacienda owner. This antagonism was initially provoked by a series of long labor testimonies by former labor service tenants, in which the exhausting labor of their years of service for the hacienda was contrasted with the *patrón's* failure to comply with his promise to reward them with individual plots of land, which they argued were their due. Following these testimonies, various peasants outlined a range of political options, both legal and illegal, which they might pursue in order to gain some private farm land for community members. In the midst of this dialogue, peasants also articulated an awareness of their own dilemma, centering around the difficulty both of establishing and maintaining *unión* among themselves.

These contextual variations in the nuances of meaning ascribed to the term *unión* serve to illustrate the ambivalent and contradictory nature of peasant attitudes regarding their current situation and their political aspirations. The political meetings indicate that if the peasants had *unión* (which they presently do not), they would act in some manner against the capitalist farmers. However, many objectives frequently aired by peasants, such as the desire to obtain more rural jobs, higher wages and some redistribution of private hacienda land, are all limited by a number of cross-cutting and asymmetrical ties. Initially formed in the workplace, these ties are later concretized in ritual settings and in ongoing relationships such as *compadraz-*

go (co-parenthood)<sup>6</sup>. These ties continue to encourage the allegiance on the part of many individual peasants to local *patróns* (cf. Alavi 1973 and Turton 1984).

To return, then, to a discussion of the Uyanzas, I would argue that the Uyanzas drama, when analyzed as a symbol complex, contained counterposing or contradictory elements. On the one hand, the ritual appears to have reaffirmed the justness of elite rule and domination in the hierarchical agrarian society. By establishing a shared sense of community among peasants and *patrones*, the festival aided in the overall reproduction of the vertical ties of patron-clientage. However, the Uyanzas symbol complex also contains, as part of its symbolic practice, the imagery that society could be otherwise (cf. Davis 1965 and Babcock 1978). During the brief hours of spontaneous gaiety in which drinking, dancing and gift-giving occurred, a world was created in which class and status distinctions were temporarily levelled, and peasants and landlords could engage in revelry and joking in a more egalitarian manner with one another (Turner 1969).

### 1.3. CAPITALIST FARMER INITIATIVE AND THE ABOLITION OF THE UYANZAS

During the early 1960s, capitalist farmers in the parish of Angochahua discontinued the Uyanzas ritual. Local people attribute the demise of the Uyanzas to several factors. One version points to the conflicts within the festival itself. It is recalled that although the hacienda *patrones* rewarded all peasants with food and drink during the festivities, they limited their gift-giving of apparel to those labor service tenants who were *fieles y responsables* (the faithful and trustworthy ones) and disregarded that minority who were considered untrustworthy or irresponsible on the job. This latter group of tenants became resentful towards the landlords and also envious of other workers, and they demanded that they receive equal treatment. According to a few informants, the landowner's decision to discontinue this ritual was partly due to their fear of any sort of retaliation arising from this group of disgruntled workers.

Broader structural changes also discouraged the continuation of the Uyanzas. Political pressures, stemming from such international arenas as the Alliance for Progress, called for the abolition of all the archaic practices associated with the *latifundio-minifundio* system in Latin America (C.I.D.A. 1965). The Alliance's north-south dialogue, couched in the ideology of reform now to stem the tide of revolution tomorrow, did not fall upon deaf ears in Ecuador. One liberal group of Ecuadorean landowners, realizing that the pressures for change were real, finally threw their weight behind the Alliance and endorsed the drafting of agrarian reform legislation. In supporting this initiative, these landowners were able to exercise a certain degree of control over the types of reforms which were eventually implemented (Murmis 1980, Barsky 1978 and cf. Petras 1978). The first agrarian reform of 1964 called for an end to all precarious forms of labor, such as sharecropping, *yanaperos* and labor service tenancy, to be replaced with the wage contract system. Labor service tenants, who had served the same hacienda for a period of ten years or more, were awarded legal title to the small plots of hacienda land to which they had already held use rights for generations. But while agrarian reform in Ecuador entailed very little

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6. Many ideological schemes, representations and practices characteristic of earlier relations of production, such as patron-clientage and *compadrazgo* ties are still maintained today as aspects of the new class relations.

redistribution of landholdings beyond these transfers of title, there were significant changes in the social relations of production. Traditionally, the majority of the economically-active members of the peasant community worked in one capacity or another for the large haciendas of the parish. Non-capitalist practices such as usufruct rights to land, water and firewood, along with redistributive obligations that included sponsoring the Uyanzas and the festival of San Juan (the patron saint of the parish) acted to remunerate the peasant employees. The agrarian reform legislation instituted wage labor as the sole standard of payment for all services rendered, and capitalist farmers had to start paying wages to their labor force.

One result of this agrarian transformation has been a drastic reduction in the number of employees per capitalist farm. One owner of 600 hundred hectares (1,500 acres) of farm land in the parish, pointed out that during the harvest period before agrarian reform it was not unusual to see three hundred men and women dressed in their bright red *ponchos*, cutting a wheat field by hand. Under traditional relations of production, in which there existed an almost unlimited supply of servile labor, it made little sense for this landowner to invest large sums of money to purchase imported agricultural machinery. Today, however, due to labor costs and the recent mechanization of many agricultural operations, his capitalist farm employs only 20 to 25 workers.

I asked one informant who had participated in several Uyanzas for other explanations which would account for the disappearance of the Uyanzas. She assessed the capitalist farmers' decision to abolish the ritual by stating:

Before, there were no laws. The laws came with the agrarian reform and at that time the Uyanzas also ended. By then, the hacienda had nothing to do with us... Before, all of this..., our land, was hacienda land. In those days, the hacienda participated with the people (the peasants). The *patrones* participated.

It is interesting to interpret the preceding statement according to peasant understandings of the social change which has occurred, by examining differences in attitudes towards the old days and the present period. From the vantage point of this peasant, the old days refers to the period before the laws came or the period before the advent of agrarian reform, when labor service tenancy was still predominant. In the old days, there was no contractual agreement binding peasants to landlords, and peasants did not hold legal title to the hacienda land which they cultivated. The landlord-peasant relation constituted a private world in which tradition dictated the nature of that relationship and the obligations and duties of each party vis-à-vis the other. Peasants grew up expecting to serve the *patrones* of the Plaza Lasso family as their father's father had done. The relation was a highly personalized one and peasants assumed that in return for their work, the landlords would provide for them and protect them. In this era, peasants were bound to the personal authority of the *patrón*. For peasants, he was the law. The peasant world was to a great extent circumscribed within the *patrón's* domain of power, and peasants had limited knowledge of the fact that they were subjects not only of a local *patrón* but also of a larger state. Feder describes the omnipotent role of traditional landowners in their reign over the peasantry as follows:

Estate owners at times doled out physical or other punishments to peasants either directly or through their representatives, the administrators or *mayordomos* [foremen] or by calling on the police or military forces. This made the estate owner at times accuser, judge, jury and enforcement



agent, all at once. As a result, fear and sometimes terror became a component of the lives of many *campesinos*.

(Feder in Shanin 1971, 91)

In contrast, in the contemporary post-agrarian reform era, the state has entered as arbitrator with a corpus of laws which regulate the peasant-capitalist farmer relationship. This intrusion of the state acts as a double-edged sword, articulating at various points particular peasant interests as well as the interests of highland capitalist farmers. In certain instances the state has acted as an ally of the peasantry, by accepting «de facto» land invasions or by introducing certain forms of legislation which impose limitations on the tendency of the capitalist farmer to monopolize the best highland farm land. Legislative measures such as the requirement that large capitalist farms must meet «the social functions of property» or else they may be subject to expropriation, offer peasants a degree of protection against the personal and political power of the large farmers in the rural zones (Redclift 1978 and Costales 1971)<sup>7</sup>.

An examination of the decade of the 1960s demonstrates the failure of the dominant class of capitalist farmers to exercise effective hegemonic leadership, that is, to win the active consent of the governed with respect to the agrarian reform question<sup>8</sup>. As previously noted, the drafting of the 1964 agrarian reform bill was primarily a procedure initiated «from above» in which a sprinkling of liberal landowners, members of Ecuador's aspiring middle class and military men all gathered to

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7. According to the 1973 agrarian reform bill, capitalist farmers must meet «the social functions of property, «which means that large property owners may be required to prove the following: 1) that they are involved in the direct management of their properties, 2) that they are providing rural laborers with employment and their labor force is composed of wage laborers and not outlawed forms of tenancy such as sharecropping or the *huasipungo* system, 3) that they are cultivating at least 80 % of their farm land and; 4) that their agricultural yields are «adequate» (Redclift 1978). In theory, this legislation gives the state the right to intervene on properties which do not meet these specifications, and expropriate them on behalf of the peasant sector. Redclift (1978) argues, however, that this legislation has only been loosely applied.

8. Buci-Glucksmann (1982) commenting on Gramsci's concept of hegemony states, «° hegemony is not force, and the more the element of force dominates, the less hegemony there will be» (Buci-Glucksmann 1982, 120 and cf. Mouffe 1979). According to Sassoon's interpretation, Gramsci used hegemony.

... in the sense of influence, leadership, and consent, rather than the alternative and opposite meaning of domination. It has to do with the way one social group influences other groups, making certain compromises with them in order to gain their consent for its leadership in society as a whole.

(Sassoon 1982, 13)

The Ecuadorean case described above bears more similarities to Gramsci's concept of «passive revolution» than to hegemony. Sassoon (1982, 15) comments on the term «passive revolution»:

This is a notion derived from the conservative tradition of Edmund Burke who argued that society had to change in order to stay the same, i.e., to preserve its most essential features. Gramsci uses it to describe both specific historical developments... and a style of politics which preserves control by a relatively small group of leaders while at the same time instituting economic, social, political and ideological changes.

collaborate in its execution (Barsky 1978). A military dictatorship was ultimately required however, in order to put the first agrarian reform legislation into effect. Launched within a populist discourse, the reform bill was executed in the name of the people even though mass participation was not encouraged. This attempt at exercising control by a small coterie of influential figures recalls the maxim that «... the lot of the poor should be regulated for them, not by them» (Mill in Newby 1978, 27 and cf. Pivens and Cloward 1971). This restriction of peasant participation in the formulation of the agrarian reform legislation was followed by a surge of peasant political activity during the next twenty years. Increasingly, both government bureaucrats and capitalist farmers have come to view counter-hegemonic strategies such as illegal land invasions as well as the formation of peasant syndicates and «pre-cooperatives» as not uncommon occurrences in the Ecuadorean countryside (cf. Redclift 1978, 32 and NUEVA 1983). During this same period, peasants have sought recourse to outside counsel, by contacting lawyers as well as political activists in order to obtain advice and to discuss their grievances with them.

#### 1.4. THE UYANZAS SYMBOL COMPLEX: CONFLICTING INTERPRETATIONS

With the advent of new conditions of production in the post-agrarian reform era, capitalist farmers argue that the Uyanzas ritual is simply «a wasteful ceremonial expenditure» and «just another excuse for the Indians to get drunk at the farmer's expense»<sup>9</sup>. One peasant informant who had served under the old tenancy system summed up the new circumstances by noting:

When the machines came, we were no longer appreciated or worth anything to the landowners... And now that the capitalist farmers have to pay, they don't want to give anything away.

Capitalist farm owners who have rationalized production also point out that fiestas such as the Uyanzas as well as patron saint celebrations, contribute either to worker absenteeism or carelessness at work as: «... drinking until the wee hours of the morning detracts from efficient use of time on the job». From the vantage point of local commercial farmers who must adjust both to opportunity costs and to an increasing specialization of their production for the commercial dairy market, the continuation of the Uyanzas makes little sense.

The disappearance of the Uyanzas ritual in this localized context finds its parallel throughout the world in those social and economic histories that document the uneven and awkward transition from a largely pre-industrial, agrarian way of life to an emergent capitalist, industrial society. For example, much of the literature documenting the transformation of agrarian Europe and the onslaught of industrialization and urbanization there, has noted the waning of such traditional practices as harvest and planting rituals which were tied to the seasonal rhythms of peasant society (c. Thompson 1967, Huggett 1975, Knapp 1976 and Stearn 1967). In instances where these agrarian rituals associated with a former way of life still coexisted with newly emergent world view and practices, advocates of the new ethos often launched vitriolic attacks against individuals who continued to pursue what were

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9. See the article (1974) by Martínez-Alier which describes similar attitudes on the part of a «modernizing» hacienda owner in highland Perú during 1915-1930.

now identified as pagan customs (Bauman 1984 and Thompson 1963). In European society in the seventeenth century, the rise of a modern, Protestant ideology inspired followers of this new view to voice strong condemnation of agrarian festive behavior, with its drinking, feasting, dancing and sexual indulgences (Weber 1958 and Thompson 1963). Bauman cites Christopher Hill (1964), who followed Weber (1958) in capturing some of the principal economic implications associated with the advent of Protestantism (Bauman 1984). According to Bauman, Hill (1964) suggested that «... the extensive festival calendar of traditional, agrarian Europe was ill-suited to the need of the emergent capitalist economic system for regular, disciplined labor and the rational accumulation of capital» (Bauman 1984, 133).

The disdain towards festival articulated by many Angochahua capitalist farmers, as well as their concern for «efficient use of time on the job», is also mirrored in the distinction frequently drawn between independent producers and proletarians. Independent producers, such as peasants and artisans, who work for themselves hold different orientations towards time than proletarians who must work for others. As E. P. Thompson so aptly points out:

Those who are employed experience a distinction between their employer's time and their «own» time. And the employer must use the time of his labour, and see it is not wasted; not the task but the value of time when reduced to money is dominant. Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent...

(Thompson 1697, 61)

This preoccupation with time and efficiency which is characteristic of commercial dairy farmers in highland Ecuador can be fruitfully compared with the attitudes which prevail among nearby peasant agriculturalists (cf. Bourdieu 1977). On the non-capitalist units of production in which peasants still retain some control both over production and over the allocation of their time, time is still «passed» rather than «spent», and no radical disjuncture between «labor» and «leisure» or «work» and «life» results (cf. Thompson 1967, 6 and Hugget 1975, 34). For example, today on the peasant *huasipungos* (plots of land) small harvest celebrations continue among members of a *minga*, the predominant mode of organizing a harvest labor force in peasant farming<sup>10</sup>. In Angochahua, the harvesting time on an average size *huasipungo* of 1 hectare 2.5 acres), follows the sundial and can be accomplished during a long day, from dawn until dusk, utilizing some 8 to 10 male and female *minkados*. One's *minga* typically includes kin, friends and neighbors and a festive atmosphere prevails in which drinking, eating, joking and fooling around are all appropriate behavior while on the job. Bawdy jesting and other forms of verbal play were commonplace at the Angochahuan *minga* of Mama Anacleta Sandoval, in which four men (her three brothers and her husband), six women (her sister, her three daughters and 2 sisters-in-law) and four children, participated at Jesús de Gran Poder during July 1983. On her sloping hillside plot, the wheat was cut by hand and later bundled and brought to the *parva* (haystack). Mama Anacleta, the senior woman

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10. *Minga*: A *minga* is a pan-Andean term of Quichua origin and refers to a collective non-wage work party that involves reciprocal obligations in which the sponsor of the *minga* owes certain rights or goods in return for the labor contribution of his or her coworkers. In Angochahua, *minkados* (members of a *minga* team) received food, drink and a *ración* (a determined portion of the harvest) from the sponsor. For literature on the Peruvian *mink'a* tradition see Orlove (1977), Fonseca Martel (1974) and Mayer (1974).

of the *minga*, called out in a playful manner, hoping that several men might succumb to her jest:

*Tuqui lulun charin, pampac jalcaman purichic.*

Anybody that's got eggs (balls), better take the higher reaches of this field.

By hinting at either the presence or absence of virility among the male *minkados* who were present that day, this female leader ensured that several men scurried to gather the wheat bundles from the higher reaches of her field, leaving the lower-lying gathering, in close proximity to the haystack, for herself and her *comadres* (female co-parents).

To return to a discussion of the attitudes commonly held among the Angochahuan peasantry, one of the principal questions which the Uyanzas narrative raises is: What accounts for the recurrence of the Uyanzas symbol in the popular memory of the peasantry?<sup>11</sup> I would argue that, when viewed from the vantage point of the local peasantry, the disappearance of the Uyanzas along with the former hierarchical agrarian social order within which it was embedded, has not been offset by new gains under the wage contract system. The explanations which I will offer to support this tentative conclusion all deal with the over-arching peasant concern for security and survival (cf. Scott 1976 and 1985 and Berger 1979).

First, I would point out that the peasantry's subsistence rights were more readily guaranteed under the former hierarchical system. The celebration of the Uyanzas should be considered in conjunction with *socorros* and *suplidos* (hacienda advances of foodstuffs and money) as practices that local landowners formerly sponsored which secured the local peasantry's subsistence. Peasant farming in the parish today, in contrast to production on the capitalist farms, remains oriented towards securing a subsistence first. In discussing their subsistence rights, peasants argue that today, as in the past, they continue to have rights to glean the fields on most of the capitalist farms in the surrounding area. This is important within the peasant economy as it enables them to collect grain and fallen seeds which they can then introduce as new varieties on their own plots. They can also graze their own animals on the stubble left in these areas after harvest. Nevertheless, peasants point out that, as regards gleaning rights, they prefer the old tenancy system in which the wheat and barley crops were all cut by hand, as this left much more of the crop remaining in the fields. In contrast, harvesting and threshing machines employed on most capitalist farms today are more efficient than human labor and leave less seed and stubble for the peasants to collect.

Disappearing practices such as the Uyanzas also have an enduring meaning for peasants in the parish who find that meeting their subsistence needs is more difficult each day. The advent of agrarian reform resulted in the severance of many

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11. As this paper has attempted to indicate, peasant memories of the past in the present «imagine» a past in which hacienda owners (in comparison with today's capitalist farmers), were more generous and the peasantry's subsistence requirements were not ignored. It is difficult to demonstrate empirically whether such secure conditions in fact ever existed for all peasants under the former labor tenancy system and instead the possibility that peasants may have romanticized «the good old days of a bygone era» must be acknowledged. What does seem clear is that popular memories of events, such as the Uyanzas, provide us with a compelling critique of contemporary socioeconomic conditions in operation on the nearby capitalist farms (for further discussion of these important points see the Popular Memory Group 1982, Bloch 1977, Scott 1985 and Taussig 1980).

of the customs of noblesse oblige in which landlords, abiding by the standards of conduct of a hierarchical society, were expected to provide mechanisms for maintaining their peasants. As Pierre Bourdieu has noted.

... above all wealth implies duties... and the rich not only pay the largest share of ceremonial exchanges but must also make the biggest contribution to the maintenance of the poor and to the organization of festivals.

(Bourdieu 1977, 18)

In the period following agrarian reform, capitalist farmer-peasant ties have diminished. The average size of landholdings per peasant household compound ranges from 1.5 to 2 hectares of hilly, eroded and frequently unirrigated land. A semi-proletarianized peasantry has been created which is incapable of reproducing itself on the peasant parcel alone (cf. Meillassoux 1981). Thus a second explanation for the peasantry's clinging to the meaning of the Uyanzas may be related to the fact that in the old days of tenancy, many peasants were assured a job on the haciendas. Today in contrast, the number of jobs in the parish has diminished and there are signs that this trend will only continue in the future. Formerly, being attached to the hacienda at least insured that a family might be able to eat each day. As Taita Sandoval, an informant of 74 years, whose work history has straddled both the tenancy and wage contract eras reminisced:

Before, there was no money, but there was always something to eat. And nowadays money isn't worth anything.

In many respects, the Uyanzas ritual lauded the work force in an era in which there was work for all, and it also made a statement about the peasant's right to work. In fact, a revival of the Uyanzas on the part of any of the capitalist farmers in the parish today, would most certainly raise questions concerning the peasant's claim to labor on the large farms of the parish (cf. Hobsbawm 1974 and Rudé 1980). Since the early 1960's, many members of peasant households have been forced to seek the scant wage work available on local capitalist farms, or else they must migrate outside the parish, primarily to Quito, in search of employment.

Finally, the abolition of the Uyanzas, which served under the tenancy system as one of the forms of redistributing goods from the landlord class to the peasantry, has not been balanced by any new government aids or credit programs allocated for the peasant sector. In fact the temporary increase in state-financed credits and low-interest loans which occurred during the decade of the 1970s, largely as a result of the new oil export revenues, went overwhelmingly to the capitalist farmers, to encourage the modernization of agriculture, by facilitating the importation of machinery, livestock, fertilizers and hybrid grains (Redclift 1978, Barril 1980 and Archetti 1981).

In conclusion, capitalist farmers of the parish, no longer beholden to labor-intensive operations on their properties, have dismissed the Uyanzas as a wasteful ceremonial expenditure. For them, this practice has been drained of all its former symbolic power and meaning. In contrast, some twenty years later, the peasant community has not let the memory of the Uyanzas ritual fade away. It remains a central feature in the telling of the peasant community's oral history. Rejecting the logic of the expanding capitalist relations associated with commercial dairying in the parish, peasant households, in their identification with the tradition of the Uyanzas, continue to privilege subsistence first.

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