Urban and Rural Artisans in Southern Peru

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THIS ARTICLE examines the system of social stratification in a highland province in Southern Peru, through a consideration of one economic sector, the artisanry. Peasants have been a major focus of the anthropological and sociological literature on Peru, in both English and Spanish (Martínez et al., 1969: 140–154; Matos Mar and Ravines, 1971: 297–418); in the case of the highlands, they nearly constitute an obsession on the part of researchers. Other groups, including the artisans, have been neglected, although studying them helps clarify certain debates on the nature of Peruvian society—in this case, the relative merits of theoretical conceptions based on ethnicity and on class in explaining the great social and economic inequalities in the highlands.

Since all artisans engage in similar productive activities, it might be expected that they form a homogenous, unified group, as they do in many other societies. Instead, they are split into urban and rural segments, incorporated into the urban petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry respectively. Ethnic and cultural differences between the two groups are relatively unimportant in this context. Unlike other sections of highland Latin America, it cannot be argued that the rural group is not fully incorporated into the nation-state and capitalist economy of which the urban groups form a part. The unity within each group and the opposition between the two are based on economic and political activity, organization and interest, giving an analysis based on social class much greater explanatory value.

Artisans: A Definition

The definition of artisanry presented in this article is not intended to be applicable to all societies and cultural settings. Rather, it is an heuristic one, valid for the region described in this article and in the other ones in this volume. Artisanry shall be taken to mean the economic activity in which products, whether still in natural form or already processed, are transformed on a small scale into other products for human consumption. The fabrication of new products...
articles and the repair of old ones are both included, since these two activities are practiced by the same individuals in the same setting. The various specializations within artisanry are known as trades.

Artisanry is distinguished from industrial production by its smaller scale. Ownership of the means of production is another criterion frequently used to distinguish artisans from industrial workers; its applicability to this case will be treated in another section of this article. Production for domestic consumption will be excluded from artisanry: only those individuals whose products are used or consumed primarily by people outside their families will be considered artisans.

This definition of artisan comes very close to the meaning of the word *artesano* in the Spanish of the area studied. In general, the word is used to refer to individuals who practice an oficio or trade. In a few instances, individuals who are not *artesanos* are spoken of as having an oficio. They offer services, such as musicians and choferes (professional drivers). However, barbers are included as *artesanos*, although they also perform a service, since their relations to customers and to other members of their trade resemble those of other *artesanos*. They will also be included as such in the present discussion, to avoid any discrepancy with local usage.

The Context

This study was performed in Canchis province in the southeastern part of Cuzco department¹. Although certain sections of the province are geographically isolated, the people are wholly incorporated in the cash economy. Many peasants produce much of their own food, but they are in no sense engaged in a subsistence economy. They rely on a marketable surplus to provide themselves with a number of necessities such as tools and certain items of diet (salt, sugar) and dress (sandals). Similarly, the population is integrated into the state. Remote rural dwellers as well as townsmen perform military service, come into regular contact with ministry officials, undergo government supervision of local political processes and resolve major disputes through the national legal and judicial system.

The province is divided into two ecological zones: a narrow strip of flat land along the Vilcanota River and its tributaries, ranging in altitude from 3400 to 3700 meters above sea level, and a rugged mountainous area going from 3700 to over 6000 meters. The 75,786 inhabitants and the 4902 square kilometers are unequally distributed. The lower zone has approximately 4% of the area and 95% of the population. With rich alluvial soils and abundant water for irrigation, it is devoted primarily to agriculture, with considerable cash-cropping. Most of the land is held by communities, officially recognized by the state as comunidades campesinas². Within these communities, land owner-

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1 The territorial and administrative units into which Peru is divided form a three-level hierarchy of department, province and district.

2 As is explained in greater detail elsewhere in this volume, a comunidad campesina (peasant community) is an officially-recognized entity, enjoying certain rights. Many details of