

Introduction:

MOVING CHILDREN IN AYACUCHO



“This child is abandoned,” argues a legal document filed in Ayacucho’s family court at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Its filer, a lawyer for the Peruvian state’s adoption office, took pains to spell out the details of the abandonment. The “progenitrix” has mental problems, he argues, and cannot responsibly care for her offspring, so the child has been placed in an orphanage (and note, *por favor*, the woman has other institutionalized children too). The lawyer clarifies: a woman in her sixties, living in an adobe house, has been caring both for the mother and the child and promises to continue to do so once the child is a little bit older. Her nephew, the woman claims, is the child’s father. But, writes the lawyer, nowhere is this paternity recorded, so this elderly woman is outside the equation—and certainly not a legitimate caretaker. Furthermore, neither her age nor the condition of her home is appropriate for her to care for this minor. And the progenitrix is at risk of irresponsibly procreating other children, putting this little girl in danger. Finally, it’s clear that the mother intends to leave the child with the sixty-year-old, evidencing a “lack of care about her upbringing and future education that proves the progenitrix’s lack of moral and mental qualities.”¹ These are the reasons, concludes the lawyer, for which the toddler—now nearly two years old—should be legally declared “abandoned” and therefore be made available for adoption.²

In the year’s worth of adoption files I read while doing fieldwork in

Ayacucho, I found many documents like this one. Abandonment proceedings like this little girl's produce children who are legally adoptable, delighting the hundreds of waiting families eager to embrace their future children. But the lawyer's language oversimplifies the complex and intricate details of the little girl's "abandonment," disregarding the many reasons that such legal interventions are possible, and for whom they might be desirable.

Two themes have motivated my interpretation of files like this little girl's. First, adoptions need to be understood in the context of the global political economy. In political terms, international adoptions move children from Third World sites of tragedy—of war, civil unrest, or disease—to First World parents in an unbalanced exchange (Briggs n.d.; see also Kapstein 2003). In economic terms, adoptions often resemble a shifting of the resource that is children from poor people, or poor countries, to wealthy ones. This is an imbalance that does not go unnoticed by young Peruvians like my teenaged goddaughter Olivia, who remarked, "Here, in Peru, almost no one adopts because they have their own children. Instead, they give in adoption to others."

Just as important, and perhaps more unsettling, is that adoptions are produced—as is clear from the file described above—against another set of relationships that an adoption lawyer must conscientiously define as inadequate. But those relationships—in this case, ties of affection, residence, responsibility, and kinship between the little girl, her "progenitrix," and her purported paternal great-aunt—are socially legitimate, and many impoverished Peruvians rely on such connections both for sheer survival and as they strive for social and economic mobility. In other words, the clarity envisioned in this lawyer's well-meaning but life-changing statement does not map neatly onto the complex and creative world of kinship and childhood that I found in Ayacucho. I'll return to the little girl's abandonment narrative at the end of these pages and revisit it in light of this social world.

CHILD CIRCULATION: AN AHISTORY

Reading between the lines of the abandonment file described above, it's clear that a child has been multiply relocated. She was first cared for by her paternal great-aunt and was then placed in an orphanage, in what was probably meant to be a short-term arrangement, before finally leaving

Peru via international adoption. The mobility of the young—their placement into the homes of relatives, state institutions, and adoptive families—grounds important social relationships between and among individuals, their communities, and the Peruvian state.

The little girl's first relocation—her reception by her purported father's aunt—exemplifies a kinship practice that has been labeled “child circulation” by anthropologists working on similar kinds of relationships (Fonseca 1986: 15). In child circulation, as a child physically moves into a new home, material, moral, and relational responsibilities are also transformed. Young people accompany (*acompañar*)—or are taken in by (*recoger* or *acoger*)³—their elders. Their transfer also provides children with access to instruction, education, shelter, or affection. The hallmark of child circulation is co-residence, a physical closeness coupled with sharing the daily tasks of the home: cooking, sweeping, combing hair. In this book, I focus on child circulation as an active process leading to the formation, and transformation, of relatedness and sociality. The importance of child circulation to building up social worlds in the Andes should be better understood before it serves as the foundation for declaring a child “abandoned.”

Moving a child from one house to another is described throughout the Andean region with emphasis on the active “social work” done in or by the transfer.⁴ For example, the Aymara term for transferred children focuses on the process of raising them: *wila wawat uywasta* (“raised since birth”) (Arnold 2002: 100). The Quichua term used by the Napo Runa in lowland Ecuador is *apasha ñachina* (“to take and rear”) (Uzendoski 2005). Urban indigenous people in Ecuador use the Spanish terms *prestar* or *mandar*, borrow/loan or send respectively, to refer to a similar practice of transferring children that bridges the rural-urban divide and is linked to begging (Swanson 2007). Adoption officials occasionally called such unofficial child-raising *prohijamiento*, or making-into-one's-child. The practice I am calling “child circulation” is explicitly contrasted with *adopción*, a legal, documented procedure. In my field sites, however, the moment of moving to another household was usually described in a straightforward fashion, often with the phrase “went to live with,” *fui a vivir con*, so “child circulation” is a concept that I have imposed—for analytic and comparative reasons—on the various local terms and interpretations for children's mobility.

Child circulation in Peru is also “a black statistic,” or a complete unknown in terms of numbers, as a highly placed official in Peru’s Ministry of Women and Human Development (Ministerio de la Mujer y del Desarrollo Humano, or MIMDES) remarked to me. Our conversation was structured around the official’s primary concern, the far more sinister modality of child trafficking, of removing children from their natal homes for destinations unknown. But even for the more morally ambiguous or socially creative movements that I am calling child circulation, there are no reliable statistics indicating its frequency across Peru. I can say that I chose to study it because of the frequency with which I was offered babies on one of my first trips to the region, and also that I found near-ubiquitous confirmation of the practice in Andean ethnographies (e.g., Isbell 1978; Ossio 1992; Van Vleet 2008).⁵

Although child circulation is neither labeled with a discrete term nor quantifiable with censuses or surveys or other instruments of population control, it is nonetheless a widely observable and understandable practice. Producing children as mobile beings whose movements between households can achieve a number of important ends, child circulation is a deliberate method of strengthening social ties, building an affective network that will remain key as a child matures into a world of poverty and distinction, and redistributing both the pleasures and constraints of parenting and being a child. Given the importance of family connections and the felt urgency of educating one’s children among rural-to-urban migrants, there is an unsailable cultural logic to this practice.⁶

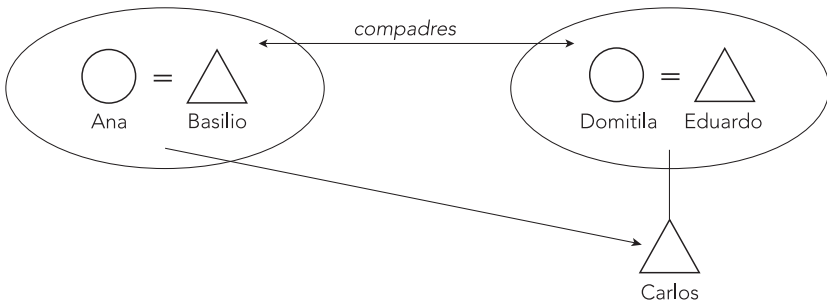
“Cultural logic” here implies that child circulation be seen as part of what Andeanists have held up as *lo andino*, practices of regional longstanding that, while always adapting to the historical moment, share some common ethic (Gelles 2000: 12).⁷ I suspect that child circulation has been part of the fabric of Andean lives, both pastoral and agricultural, both rural and urban, for centuries. The notion of the *ayllu*, the Andean family-based community that has largely faded from scholarly attention (Weismantel 2006), is one basis for imagining a large, flexible network within which children move. Child circulation within the *ayllu* would be invisible; it is only when communitarian groups begin to falter, fractured through their entrance into the political economy of the colony, the republic, or the contemporary neoliberal state, that such practices become marked. But

they are largely undocumented and can be difficult to extract from the historical record.

The historical evidence that can be marshaled is spotty. Frank Salomon surmises that native political subunits in the north Andes, under Inca rule, “were linked by a web of nonhierarchical, symmetrical alliances in which such human transactions as exogamy and child loan paved the way for material transactions and, conceivably, military alliance” (1986: 137). The sixteenth-century chronicler Juan de Betanzos wrote that among the Inca, inopportunistly born or abandoned children were reimagined as *çapçi churikuna* or “sons of the community,” raised by women whose children had died and trained to work in the community’s coca fields (1996 [1551]: 102–3). The historian James Lockhart indicates that during the early colonial period, Spanish women living in Peru were expected to raise *mestizo* “orphans” whose Spanish fathers, concerned with their own lineages and responsibility to kin, did not want them raised by their Indian mothers (see also Burns 1999: 16). Such children, called *criadas* or “raised,” were often treated affectionately and well, but many were viewed as servants (Lockhart 1968: 185).⁸ In eighteenth-century Peru, elite children born under socially disapproved circumstances were similarly labeled “orphan” or “abandoned” as a strategy to avoid public shame, then were integrated into the family (Twinam 1999). Nara Milanich’s impressive archival work locates child circulation in late-nineteenth-century Chile, where elite orphans were raised by relatives, but “poor children were often nursed, reared, apprenticed, and ‘rented’ for service in the households of others” (2004: 313; see also Milanich 2002).⁹ No archival smoking gun documents the longevity of child circulation in the Ayacucho region or in Peru more broadly, however, and it remains open for empirical verification.

THE TRAFFIC IN CHILDREN: COMPADRAZGO AS SOCIAL ANALOGY

An analogous social form found throughout Latin America and Europe, rooted in both precolonial and Catholic morality, is that of *compadrazgo*, or coparenting.¹⁰ *Compadrazgo* was historically described as “fictive,” rhetorically distinct from “real” kin, but is now understood as a highly significant and very real way of growing and fortifying one’s kindred. In *compadrazgo*,



1. Simple diagram of *compadrazgo*.

two families—two houses—are linked through a public commitment and a kind of unbalanced reciprocity. For an illustration, consider the fictional family diagrammed in figure 1.¹¹ When Ana and Basilio become godparents (*padrino/madrina*) to Carlos (their godchild, or *ahijado/ahijada*), represented by the unidirectional arrow in the diagram, they also become co-parents (*compadre/comadre*) with Carlos's parents, Domitila and Eduardo, represented by the bidirectional arrow. Certainly, Ana and Basilio should spiritually parent Carlos and provide him with occasional gifts, but the most important ties created in this process are those between the *compadres*, the adults involved.

In an essay entitled “The Traffic in Women,” Gayle Rubin, following Lévi-Strauss, brilliantly argued that men who exchange women in marriage are at base creating relationships between the distinct groups of men (1975: 174).¹² In *compadrazgo*, the conduit between two groups—the “traffic”—is in children.¹³ In the diagram (figure 1), Ana, Basilio, Domitila, and Eduardo have entered into kinship with one another. The forms of address they use with each other will change, and so will the material implications of their relationship. An advantage of invoking *compadrazgo* as a tool for alliance building, over the marriages Rubin and Lévi-Strauss describe, is that *compadrazgo* is a nonexclusive relationship. Women (except in cases of polygamy) only enter one marriage at a time, limiting marriage as a tool for alliance. *Compadrazgo* relationships, on the other hand, can be formed on more than one ritual occasion. For example, in Ayacucho, the same couple may baptize a child, cut her hair for the first time, sponsor her first communion, and stand beside her at her marriage, strengthening their relationship

through each event. Alternatively, people may choose different godparents for each occasion, broadening their web of relationships. In either case, a kinsperson's *compadres* may also be treated as kin (Delgado Sumar 1994), so the tie is not limited to the two adult couples and child.

As is typical for foreigners in the region, my partner and I were frequently called upon to become godparents—for first communions, middle-school graduations, and other such events—so we became incorporated into these kinship networks as well. On one such occasion, we agreed to baptize two little Ayacuchanas who lived in Lima. Their parents were kin to our *compadres* in Ayacucho, so it would have been difficult to say no—but upon agreeing, our Ayacuchana *comadre* laughed that we had gotten ourselves into a mess, because the girls are terrors!¹⁴

At first it was difficult for us to grasp why we would be asked to be godparents by near-strangers, since my understanding of *compadrazgo* emphasized periodic visits and continuing social relations, something that would be hard to engage in across the miles. But we eventually came to realize that to “take advantage” of a foreigner in this way was part of the normal course of godparenting and was not immoral—for who could criticize parents for wanting their child to be connected to a godparent in a foreign land? For the Ayacuchanos we knew, acquiring a foreign godparent actualized the sharp class differentials between them and us—but this was a perfectly appropriate strategy. The anthropologists Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf divided *compadrazgo* into the horizontal (or between relative equals—e.g., asking a neighbor or cousin to sponsor your marriage) and the vertical (across classes—e.g., the extremely common requests for teachers in small towns to become their pupils' godparent) (1950). In vertical *compadrazgo*, the child being godparented facilitates social relationships between adults that would otherwise be impossible (compare Schildkrout 1978). The relationships we entered into would be locally interpreted as uncomplicatedly vertical, owing to our privileged status as foreigners. Although we were often anxious about how little we felt we could provide our growing collection of godchildren, we received a great deal from our various *compadres*, from irreplaceable local connections to plate after plate of lovingly prepared, steaming food.

I saw both vertical and horizontal *compadrazgo* in Ayacucho, and child circulations could also go either way. Note, though, that *compadrazgo* (like

child circulation) is never vertical in the “other direction”—the *padrinos* are always of an equal or higher social status than their new *compadres*. If they are of a higher social status, the child or parents may perform specific chores or labors for the *padrinos*, and the *padrinos* may give financial assistance and social guidance to their *ahijado*’s family. (These are “shoulds”—certainly, not all *compadrazgos* continue to be meaningful relationships.) But most of all, as Blanca, a teacher with four godchildren herself, informed me, “I have more family, the family grows, it gets bigger, I now have someone who says to me ‘*Comadre*, this, that, and the other.’” For Blanca and the other Ayacuchanos I knew, *compadrazgo* is a key producer of social life.

In a similar way, the fluid movement of a child from one house to another enacts a social relationship between those houses. The movement is not typically memorialized as is *compadrazgo*, via a church or civil ceremony,¹⁵ but the transfer of a child—a socio-geographical transfer rather than an entirely spiritual one—is deeply meaningful nonetheless. Unlike the relations of adoption—where children must be legally severed from their natal families before their incorporation into a new and approved family can take place, in what the sociologist Sara Dorow calls a “‘serial monogamy’ of national / familial kinship” (2006: 209)—in child circulation, two families are brought into, or articulated more deeply into, kinship with one another.

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELATEDNESS

Over the history of anthropology, “kinship” has been a central trope, one of our most valued tools for discerning how small-scale societies are organized. Early anthropologists drew careful lines demarcating biologically determined genealogical kinship (“blood”) from other kinds of relatedness, which are variously classified as “fictive” or “ritual” kinships. Similar to early attempts to theoretically distinguish gender (or the cultural differences between masculine and feminine) from sex (or the biological differences between males and females), kinship studies were grounded in the belief that blood ties are objective difference, and social ties are layered, as culture, on top of this biological and factual basis. In the 1970s, anthropologists began to reconnect the parts of culture that these theoretical distinc-

tions had wrenched apart (Carsten 2000: 2), even as the anthropologist David Schneider informed the field that “kinship,” far from an objective tool, was in fact nothing but Euro-American ideas about family, blood, sex, and biology dressed up as theory (1984: 154).¹⁶ Only in the 1990s did anthropology return to questions of relatedness, or the network of relationships individuals draw on in the course of their daily lives, couched now in terms of choice, reproduction, and political economy. Now we’re interested in how people conceive of their relatedness to one another, what that relatedness is made to do, and how it is embedded in global ideologies of reproduction (Ginsburg and Rapp 1995).

There is a tension between kinship as simultaneously “a theoretical concept and a social category” (Franklin and McKinnon 2001: 1), which is a source for creativity in theorizing relatedness. “Andean kinship” is a further narrowing of the category, already done skillfully in two key edited volumes (Bolton and Mayer 1977; Arnold 1997). By drawing attention to the specificities of Andean kinship, I hold “kinship” in play as both a locally meaningful notion and an analytical category. “Kinship” here means Ayacuchanos’ sense of relatedness as simultaneously given and created, as both unconditional and fallible, and as thoroughly moral. For anthropologists, this book will contribute, above all, to kinship literature. It outlines a sense of becoming kin, over time, that involves the kindling and reinforcing of some interpersonal relationships, and the lessening or divesting of others. The analysis shifts between individuals’ emotions and families’ goals to the involvement of the state and international bodies, most poignantly portrayed in the adoption stories reconstructed here.

Adoption is a family-formation method that is familiar to many North American readers.¹⁷ As I write this introduction, celebrity adoptions are splashed across the covers of the magazines at the supermarket checkout. The dramatic stories of the rich and famous—and overwhelmingly white—descending upon countries devastated by war, disease, and poverty underscore, like nothing else, the tight fit between adoption and the political economy. Yet adoption may also be familiar to readers from the lives of their own families or friends. Adoption, both transnational and domestic, is a method for creating the most intimate forms of relatedness, yet it is one that is explicitly framed and structured by global relationships, in particular the political and economic relations between countries and regions.

I began this introduction with the legally enshrined narrative of a little girl's abandonment, and though these archival details are all that are available to us, the files show that she would go on to be adopted by a couple who waited for her for many months and who welcomed her into their lives with joyful tears. Adoptions from Peru bring children to developed countries in North America and Europe and are carried out with reference both to domestic law and international treaties and conventions. Despite, or perhaps because of, the dynamics of this one-way flow of children, debate over international adoption engages both supporters, who argue that such adoptions help institutionalized and endangered children, and opponents, who interpret the relations produced in terms of colonialism, genocide, and exploitation (Freundlich 2000: 94). The findings of my ethnographic research in Peru complicate this dichotomy: through an examination of child circulation, the local meanings of institutionalization and the pointed critique of inequalities in adoption are grounded in a sense of this "sending country's" own historic tensions and debates.

STRUCTURAL AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE: HISTORIES OF RACE AND CLASS

Above all, these are debates about the future of Peru. The following chapter goes into more detail on the historic divisions in the country, tensions that can be traced at least back to the Spanish conquest of Peru in the sixteenth century, a colonial period marked by a contest over the cultural legitimacy of Andean beliefs and practices. The struggles that ensued would, under a different form, continue into the early part of the twentieth century in more scientific, even eugenic guises (Stepan 1991). From extirpation to stirpiculture, the history of Peru can be read as layer upon layer of overt and covert oppression of indigenous people.

It's difficult to define indigeneity in Peru, however, for two principal reasons. First, race and class closely intersect: "Indians" are poor. They have been poor ever since they were colonized by the Spanish, forced to labor on the colonists' vast land holdings even as they found their own fields ever shrinking and more marginalized. In 1969 President Velasco officially transformed *indios*, Indians, into *campesinos*, peasants—effectively sealing the link between indigeneity and mode of production (García 2005: 74). This

strategy was meant to counteract historical racism; framing them as a class would call attention to the structural inequalities—Indians' position vis-à-vis the land and the national economy—that produced their poverty. Instead, the result was that prejudices and ethnic markers previously related to Indians were transferred to peasants, so that *campesino* became (and remains) a coded term for an indigenous person. While the state engages in some official promotion of indigenous cultures (for instance, maintaining traditional dance performances as part of the public school curriculum),¹⁸ both urban *mestizos* and upwardly mobile indigenous youth eschew the *campesino/indio* subject position. Because it is a position so closely associated with poverty, talk about money and social class often implicates race without discussing it.

Following the link between indigeneity and mode of production formalized by Velasco and still retaining an important discursive role for the Peruvians I knew, in these pages I will refer to my interlocutors sometimes as indigenous and sometimes as working class or peasants. More often, however—and still following this deeply ingrained link—I refer to them as poor. Although race is muted, rarely addressed head-on, in the area where I worked, poverty is on everyone's mind. Although I will go on to interpret child circulation relative both to poverty and to racial mobility, it is worth noting that the Ayacuchanos I spoke with linked it most directly to poverty. In this interpretation, child circulation is partly an effort to build the layers of kinship and connectedness necessary to endure the challenges and tensions of growing up poor and indigenous in Peru. Kinship in Ayacucho, for poor and indigenous people immersed in isolation, indifference, and the violence of the civil war, was and is in no small part about surviving (Medick and Sabeau 1984: 13).

A second reason indigeneity is a slippery category is that race and class markers—the visual, auditory, and communicative cues Peruvians use to situate others within everyday hierarchies—are locally defined, relational, evaluated contextually, and changeable over time (Orlove 1998: 202; Romero 2001: 29–30). Phenotypical markers—particular facial features, hair texture, and skin color—are part of this complex, although they cannot easily be read. For example, members of the urban *mestizo* elite in Ayacucho (*huamanguinos*) may appear based solely on phenotypical cues to be indigenous, yet are not locally evaluated as such. Within Peru, their perceived

indigenous features only take precedence over other class markers in the context of relatively white Lima. By contrast, my interlocutors in Ayacucho were primarily rural-to-urban migrants, although in general they migrated from towns rather than rural villages. Most of them would have been evaluated as *campesinos* by urban *mestizos* (though would not have defined themselves in this way), because they bore various locally understood markers of indigeneity. Geographical origin isn't the only determinative feature here: clothing, language, food, the identification of kin, and a host of other criteria are evaluated by interlocutors to determine the social position of another. And in the pages that follow, I will occasionally refer to some of these markers in an effort to situate readers in the position of locals evaluating the ethnic position of the person described.

Huamanguinos hold all the cards when at home in Ayacucho and are particularly skilled at reading race and class of those around them. One *huamanguina* friend told me in a confidential manner about how when people come from the *chacra*, “which is what we call places like Socos,” patience is essential in the face of their ignorance. Her new maid, from the countryside, had—the *huamanguina* said with kind understanding—urinated into the drain hole in the middle of the bathroom floor, rather than in the toilet. She had had to clean the floor together with the maid, instructing her in the ways of middle-class hygiene and actually sitting on the toilet to demonstrate: “When you are done, call me, and I’ll show you how to make it all disappear” (on the interrelations of disgust and “moral hygienics” of the Indian in the city, see Weismantel 2001: 45 *passim*). Only a few months later, when I met the *huamanguina* in the marketplace, she told me that the “chica” was no longer with them—slowly folding her fingers into a fist in the signal connotative of thievery and accompanying it with a menacing frown. Such are the subtle violences done in the name of distinction.

In a system of vertical *compadrazgo* such as that described above, the new social relations created are unidirectional rather than reciprocal. So for instance, a resident of a small rural village might turn to a rural-to-urban migrant in his quest for a well-positioned godparent for his child. However, that migrant would be more likely to look to one of her children’s teachers, or a muddling anthropologist—that is, someone she has evaluated as hierarchically superior on the complex race-class continuum. Yet, once again,

the ethnic markers taken into consideration when selecting a *compadre* are not verbalized; these important decisions are never expressed in overt race or class terms. Preferences in *compadrazgo* or in child circulation are framed as opportunities for the child—a chance to become educated—in an association, between education and class, well documented elsewhere in the Andes (and one which will be taken up in chapters 1 and 5). And in this sense, race is mutable: becoming educated is a chance to divest oneself of some of the features that others could use to ascribe indigeneity.

Because these evaluations of race are made reflexively, quickly, without verbalization of the process, race is difficult to talk about and tricky to define. There are times when race does appear discursively, however—during rare moments of reflection, when intellectuals use the terms in self-identification, or, most frequently, in the context of criticizing others. The president of Peru during my fieldwork was Alejandro Toledo Manrique, a man with perceived indigenous features and a storied childhood as a shoeshine boy who had risen to success via a Stanford advanced degree and a stint at the World Bank. Yet not long after his election victory had been hailed as a key symbolic marker in the incorporation of indigenous people into Peruvian mainstream society, his approval rates bottomed out and citizens disparaged him as an incompetent Indian or *cholo*.¹⁹ In other words, my description of race and class as “relational,” above, is materialized when a *relationship* like that between the people and their president is expressed, negatively, in racial terms.

Pejorative references to race do many things, but one of their most insidious effects is the concretization of the idea that opportunity and success are linked to not being indigenous. The other side of this coin is that social mobility²⁰ partly depends upon sloughing off the ethnic markers described above, the markers that others can use to place someone as Indian. María Elena García has argued that shedding the Quechua language is seen in this way, which is one reason that rural parents reject bilingual education programs that are intended to empower (García 2005). During my time in Ayacucho, I learned that child circulation often engages ideas about social mobility. When a child relocates to a more centrally located home where porcelain toilets are used and only Spanish is spoken, she has made a contextual move toward securing opportunity and, necessarily, divesting herself of certain claims to indigeneity.



Map 1. Peru. Cartography by Douglas Fast, University of Manitoba, 2007.

A NOTE ON METHODS

I first flew into Ayacucho's small airport on a preliminary field trip in the summer of 2000. Generous funding meant I could live for nearly two years in Peru, from September 2001 to July 2003, with follow-up visits in the summers of 2004 and 2006. Though I spent some time visiting small towns, and a few months in Lima, the city of Ayacucho is my ethnographic home away from home. It boasts a famously beautiful colonial center, more than thirty-three churches admired by all during Holy Week, a friendly small-town feel, and an ever-expanding edge of outlying neighborhoods. Ayacucho is large—125,000 and growing—and is connected to other cities and towns near and far by a complex network of buses, an increasing number of paved roads, and the wires linking Telefónica's green-and-blue boxed phones and dozens of Internet cafés.

I spent most of my time in Ayacucho, but I also accompanied friends back to their villages and to Lima (see maps 1 and 2) and met their family members and village-mates who had remained behind or migrated ahead. I use these spatial metaphors intentionally—migration is concretely visualized as an evolutionary trajectory out of one's village and into the most advanced land of opportunity available, whether it be the city of Ayacucho, Peru's capital, or some faraway land. The rural-to-increasingly-urban migrants I spoke with were a "population" in social scientific terms, not because they all came from the same town or moved to the same city, but because they shared a relationship to jam-packed minivans rattling down dirt roads, and to hasty changes from urban jeans-jacket to old sweater suitable for rural tasks and back again.

My fieldwork methods closely mirrored local methods of communication and interaction, a happy coincidence that made the research a pleasure to carry out and, more importantly, meant that I was able to access everyday kinship practices in a locally understandable and "natural" fashion. For example, I met "subjects" through what network scholars call "snowball sampling" and what my interlocutors saw as introducing one friend to another. And the ethnographic method par excellence, participant-observation (analytically, watching while doing—sharing activities, but taking mental notes at the same time), was extremely effective for informally attending to the quiet realities of family making. Out of these



Map 2. Ayacucho and its environs. Cartography by Douglas Fast, University of Manitoba, 2007.

initial and long-term ruminations, I eventually produced interviews and surveys, seeking individuals' interpretations of their life courses to back up my own impressions. Recorded interviews usually took place at my apartment, but everyday conversations might happen anywhere, from sunny rural cornfields to the roof of an unfinished brick house in a Lima shantytown, while my interlocutor ground bright red peppers or insisted I eat cold corn kernels with white cheese or shooed a guinea pig away from my feet.

As other ethnographers have pointed out, the Andean region is very much divided by gender, and it was simpler (and made more sense to my informants) for me to speak primarily to women. The vast majority of my interlocutors were also young: with some exceptions, they were almost all in their early teens to their mid-twenties, by which point some had had children of their own. Meanwhile, twenty-five when I came to Peru and

twenty-seven when I left, I was of an age that, had I been a rural migrant to Ayacucho, I might well have had children already. My childlessness was particularly inexplicable to many acquaintances because, in Ayacucho, I lived with my partner, an ethnomusicologist researching local music. For many Andeans, childlessness sparks pity; as a foreigner, my childlessness was somehow less painful for others, since I was already recognized as anomalous. A serious explanation for my childlessness—a desire to get established and become financially secure first—resonated strongly with many of the young women I spoke with, who also hoped to finish their studies before reproducing. But with older interlocutors I adopted a more humorous tack. After the first few interrogations, I quickly learned to present my body in agricultural and pastoral terms. “My ‘field’ is no good,” I would say, “my guinea pigs don’t reproduce, my cow doesn’t give milk.” And out of a blend of pity and longing, I received my share of offers—some joking, some seemingly serious—of other peoples’ children. I ended up accepting exactly nine of these offers—not, of course, of children to take home as my own, but of godchildren.

My fieldworking relationship with almost everyone who graces these pages was one of friendship. Throughout, I often refer to my interlocutors as friends. Some were close confidants with whom I shared laughter, tears, and dozens if not hundreds of plates of food. Some became relatives through *compadrazgo*. I still e-mail, telephone, send money, and visit, and I miss them all. Anxious about misrepresenting them or compromising them, I have used pseudonyms for everyone except institutional representatives. More seasoned anthropologists of the Andes have set a powerful example by rejecting the protective use of pseudonyms as patronizing—for example, Linda Seligmann’s writings on Peruvian market women express her deep desire to make readers understand that her interlocutors are *real* and “we live in the same world” (2004: 11). Although I, too, share this tendency, my reluctance to expose my friends to any sort of harm outweighs it.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book can be read in two halves, each composing one broad stroke explaining the phenomenon of child circulation in the Ayacucho region. The first part is made up of chapters 1–3; it inserts child circulation into

different globalized histories, from a Peruvian history of racial conflict and violence in chapter 1 to an international story about children's rights, adoption, and orphans in chapters 2 and 3. In chapter 1, I sketch out the "ethnographic setting," the place under study, beginning with a wide-angle lens for a tour through Peruvian history, and narrowing to explain Ayacucho, both region and city, and how it evokes painful memories and stories of discrimination. In foregrounding the adoption process in chapter 2, I want to engage readers who are familiar with adoption from their own lives, friends, or common knowledge. Chapter 2 takes up not only the adoption process, and the complicated ways that parent and child are mutually produced for one another, but also some of the critiques—such as that of a Peruvian anti-child-trafficking NGO, itself also supported by funding and theory from the developed world. Coupled with the third chapter's description of the workings of local orphanages, chapter 2 shows how familiar understandings of how families are formed in the First World leave many angles of children's stories unconsidered. Finally, the idea of "orphan"—*wakcha*, an Andeanist keyword—is, in chapter 3, shown to be a complicated placeholder that traces a long history and a social definition of solitude. The orphanages in Ayacucho demonstrate that "orphans," just as in many parts of the world today, rarely have deceased parents but instead are the products of poverty, bureaucracy, and a decathecting of social relations.

The second half of the book consists of chapters 4–6, which hold fine-grained ethnography, detailed descriptions, and interpretations of the individual histories that intersect with the global narratives described in the book's first part. Each chapter takes up a keyword or two, a concept which I retain in the original Spanish and which I use to explore different angles on child circulation. Thus, in chapter 4, I approach child circulation from the receiving adult's point of view, showing how companionship (*compañía*) wards off a deeply feared solitude. I also address some of the tensions produced as relationships of child circulation begin: the economics of it, and the slowness of getting accustomed (*acostumbrando*) to a new life and a new positionality. The kinwork described in chapter 4 can be read against the prospective adopters' narratives of their desire for children, recounted in chapter 2, as well as against the unidirectionality of the orphanage, which in chapter 3 is described as nonreciprocal and therefore almost amoral. Next is chapter 5, which deals with the notion of *superarse*, a self-overcoming that

should be read in conjunction with a sense of the poverty and structural violence described in chapter 1, and the race relations sketched out above. It is a theme that animates young people's (and their natal families') narrations of their own circulation. Finally, chapter 6 considers Ayacuchanos' interpretations of identity and belonging, *pertenecer*, based on paired assessments of documentation (or knowledge) and emotion. Tugging at themes already introduced in the explanation of abandonment proceedings in chapter 2, this chapter explores how Ayacuchanos know who they are, and where they fit into different social fabrics.

The book concludes with a short essay—chapter 7—that weaves together these disparate threads: violence and postwar poverty (chapter 1); the system of adoptions and orphanages and the specters of child traffic and labor (chapters 2 and 3); and Ayacuchano practices of child circulation, expressed through local theories about the production of relatedness, self-improvement, and their articulations with the Peruvian state (chapters 4, 5, and 6).

I tell two parallel stories throughout the book and return to them both in the conclusion. One is about child circulation as a meaningful social practice for the poor and indigenous both in Ayacucho and more widely in the Andes. Children's mobility is a strategy, though one not without its tensions and ambivalences, and the transfer of children achieves real and important social ends for everyone concerned. The other story is about the ways in which the state, NGOs, and the international arena critique and intervene in the practices I am calling "child circulation."

In the first story, child circulation is a way for receiving households to recruit labor, for sending households to negotiate the economic pressures of childrearing, and for young people to contribute to family goals and to mediate, forging dense and valued connections, between social groups. Child circulations occur within and help to shape the Peruvian political economy: buffeted by violence, aggressively globalizing, criss-crossed by migrants, overlaid with a wash of social connections meant to be drawn on in both good times and bad. The stories of individual children and their movements trace the broader history of the recent civil war, the interpersonal affections that tug at young people as they undertake new lives, the tensions of parental expectations, and the larger narratives of socioeconomic, racial, and geographic progress.

Running parallel to this ethnography is a second story, one in which the Peruvian state ignores, tolerates, or condemns child circulation. The history of race and class relations in the Andes, recounted above, makes the state's underlying motivation very clear. Child circulation is a practice endemic to Andean households—in this, it is one of the markers signaling “poor Indians.” This is true even though child circulation binds together the rural indigenous poor and their urban kin or social patrons, and even though (or especially because) child circulation is perceived as a strategy to emerge out of the Indianness of poverty. In other words, child circulation is associated with the kind of people that the state has routinely mocked, despised, or slaughtered, most appallingly in its response to the Shining Path uprising. The kinship I take up in this book has been irrevocably colored by the material presented in the following chapter: Ayacucho's colonialist history, its economic isolation, and most recently its central role in the devastating civil war.