

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

WHM - 15
The Hacienda of Kusipata

Hotel Ferrocarril
Cuzco, Perú
August 7, 1955

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

In the days of the early Spaniards when men were men and Indians slaves, there were some three hundred haciendas in the great Paucartambo valley that stretches from high puna down to the montaña. Now there are some twenty-odd. The reason for this drastic reduction is obvious to the new generation of patrones in the valley: in the old days, hacendados (patrones or hacienda owners) could and did treat their Indians as animals; they could and did kill them off by the thousands without answering to the law for it. Under those conditions, it was easy for the patrones to realize large profits on their haciendas; they had no labor problem to contend with. However, partly because of progressively stricter laws with regard to the treatment of the Indians and partly because of a shift of economic interest to the more productive areas of the country, the haciendas of Paucartambo have dwindled away to a mere handful of sprawling estates. Figuring prominently among those estates is the 180,000 acre property called Kusipata (Quechua for Beautiful Spot) owned by a friend of mine, Augusto Yábar Ordóñez.

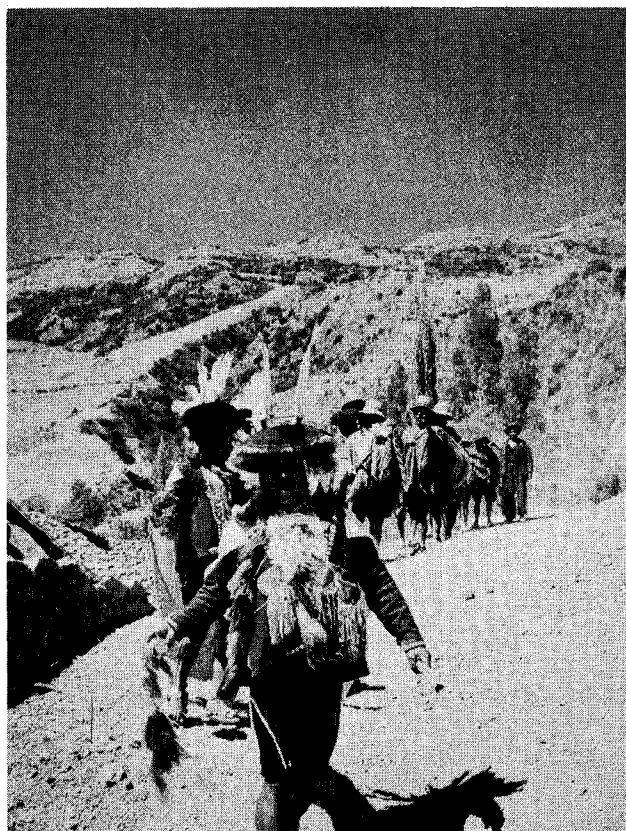
Last week Peggy and I together with our host, his brother Daniel (co-patrón of the hacienda), and his cousin Raul Figueroa made the three-hour horseback trip to Kusipata. With us went the members of a University of Cuzco scientific expedition headed for the town of Qeros (WHM-14) to study the Incaic customs still practiced there. We climbed a narrow trail cut into the cliffs of the Mapacu valley and at length turned into the canyon of the Kusipata River. On the valley floor Indians were winnowing grain, tossing the chaff into the wind with their hands and gleaning the kernels as they lay on the ground. Eagles and hawks hunted along the slopes, riding the updrafts on rigid wings. The horses moved slowly and let the pack animals set the pace, so that we arrived at Kusipata with no more bodily complaints than the usual sore thigh muscles and posteriors.

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Kusipata at dusk. Indian
porters bring up the rear
of pack train from Paucartambo
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 Sargento dancers leading
 families from a distant
 village to the fiesta

The century-old buildings of the hacienda lay in a square on a level plot of ground above the river. There were stables, warehouses, living quarters and a small chapel, all made of adobe. Closer to the river were the livestock pens and a small grist mill. The circling hills were spotted with small patches of barley, corn, wheat, quinoa, potatoes and habas (a type of broadbean). Cattle and sheep grazed in the stubble, and in the courtyard of the farm a herd of goats butted and pranced and filled the air with their sickening smell. To all outward appearances, the place was a going concern. I was surprised, therefore, when Daniel Yábar told me that of the hacienda's 75,000 hectáreas, only 5,000 were being worked. "With our sawmill and real estate in the montaña," he told me, "we don't have the time to stay here and supervise things. Still, the value of the place is double the half million soles we paid for it in 1950."



I asked Augusto Yábar about the number of Indians living on the hacienda. "There are close to 200 families here," he said. "Each family has a hut in one of our four villages where they can store their belongings. In reality, though, you find them scattered over the whole hacienda, building a shelter wherever their animals are grazing."

"These Indians are well off," Daniel broke in. "They have their own land, and some of them own more alpaca than the hacienda does. Alpaca wool sells for ten soles a pound or more, and there are several Indians who own over a hundred animals, each one yielding about 12 pounds of wool. That's at least 12,000 soles worth of income. Then their expenses are small - they make their own clothes and grow their own food - so a good many of them have a lot of money. In 1950 when the hacienda was put up for sale, a group of Indians tried to buy it for themselves," he added with a laugh.

Rather than ask the pertinent but embarrassing question of why the Indians did not become the owners of Kusipata in 1950, I turned to Raul Figueroa, the young patrón of an hacienda farther up the valley, and asked him whether the Indians used money in their barterings with one another. "The only use they have for money," he said, "is when the merchants come in from Paucartambo to sell them necessities - salt, sugar, coca, alcohol, or other things they may need. In trading with each other, they barter animals for corn, wool for potatoes, etc."



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Slaughtering goats
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a few weeks after the discontinuance of the practice, the hacienda would be deserted.

Daniel Yábar summed it up this way: "In this hacienda we treat the Indians well, and they want to stay here. If we tell a man to leave because he's a bad worker or a trouble maker, the very next day that man will come around with a cow or, perhaps, some chickens as a present to us and beg us to let him stay. In other haciendas where the patronos treat their Indians badly, they have to bribe them to stay and work for them. That costs a lot of money. We prefer to give our people their coca, and perhaps send them a jug of chicha if they're working on a hard job, to keep them happy. In the long run, it pays off."

Back in the courtyard, Augusto Yábar was giving orders for the next day's fiesta (to be given in our honor). He had already sent his four mestizo mayordomos out on the trails leading back to their remote villages with orders to round up as many Indians as possible and bring them to the courtyard on the morrow. Now he was supervising the slaughtering of three goats, whose final shrieks as the knives sliced their throats were not particularly conducive to strengthening our appetites. A great 125 pound tun of aguardiente stood in the shade together with sacks of coca. The fiesta might not be spontaneous,

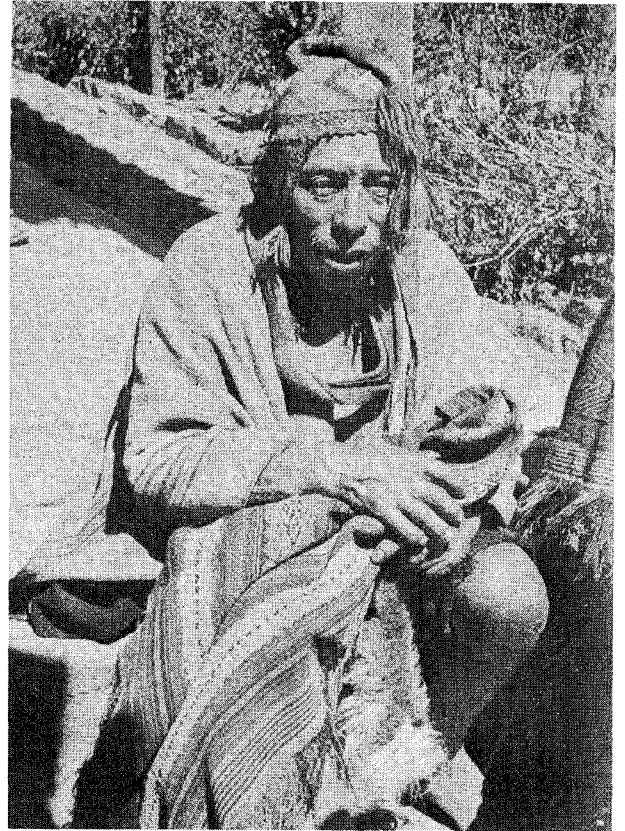
Figueroa and I continued talking as we inspected an abandoned apple orchard. In response to a vague question of mine concerning coca and alcohol consumption among the Indians, he suddenly grabbed my arm and began to talk excitedly. "Coca and aguardiente are killing these people. After years of chewing and drinking, they have no wish to better themselves. And, you know, one of the worst offenders in the cultivating of a taste for these things in the Indian was the Church; every religious festival meant a day or days of getting drunk and doped. Now we have to give coca and alcohol to them or else they will leave. In the old days, you could prevent an Indian from leaving, but not now. If we tried such a thing, we would all go to jail. So we have to give them the stuff on fiesta days and on working days too."

The young hacendado obviously meant what he said. In talks with the other men, I found that all of them agreed in the main with Figueroa. The excuse for giving coca and alcohol to the Indians - and a valid excuse at that - was the fact that within



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A regidor with standard equipment of pututu and vara (conch and staff of authority). Poncho is in style of ceros, is of alpaca.
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The sargento band from one of the districts. Drum, snare and flute are standard equipment of Paucar-tambo region
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A community elder sunning himself Alpaca fleece bag dangling between his knees holds coca. Visible at left is black tail of his unqu
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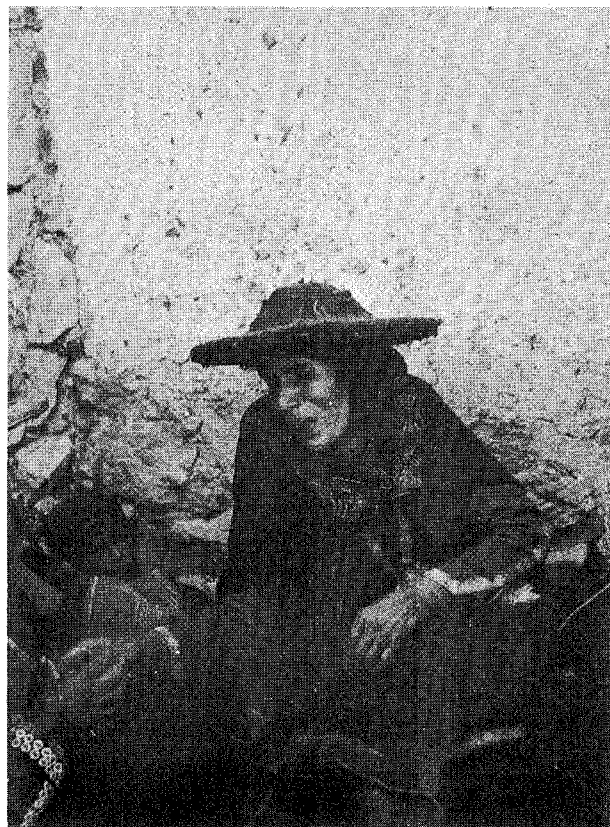
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Indian mother in dress typical of Kusipata region. Note coca cud in her right cheek.
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Drinking chicha from wooden cup
or qero. Man is wearing unqu.
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This young girl is trying to keep
her man from being sick. Experiment
was unsuccessful.



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In the afternoon, the women drank aguar-
diente, although taste made them wince
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Gentleman in background passed out ex-
actly thirty minutes after his first
drink of aguardiente.



Yábar apologized to us, but it would be a fiesta nonetheless.

Rather than disturb our host in the bustle of preparation for the holiday, I hunted up his brother and asked him to describe the organization by which the patron governs his Indians. Daniel told me that the hacienda's business is managed by the four mayordomos. Matters of local government are handled in each village or sector by a mandon or sub-prefect (a political office, and therefore a powerful one). One rung down the ladder is the alcalde, the mayor of the town. Beneath him is a regidor or vice-mayor and, at the bottom of the heap, are two or more alhuasiles or general assistants of the mayor. All four positions are filled by Indian appointees chosen by the patrón on the basis of their loyalty to him. The mayordomos, being mestizos, are given land and a monthly salary of 300 soles. The local officials, however, are not salaried, receiving compensation for their labors from the social prestige that goes with their positions. As it is up to these officials to pay for the annual fiesta celebrating the ceremony in which they swear allegiance to the sub-prefect of Paucartambo and to their patrón, it is only reasonable that they should remain in office for one year only. Further tenure would break them financially.

At Kusipata, the work obligations of the resident Indians are surprisingly light when compared to other haciendas in the region. Eight Indians must serve as domestic servants each month, not an oppressive levy when you consider the number of Indian families. In times of harvest, everyone - men, women and children - must work for the hacienda. For two or three months starting in May, nothing matters except getting in the ripe grain and potatoes. If the harvest occurred in all areas at the same time, it would be disastrous for the personal crops of the Indians. Planting is arranged, however, so that one district reaps and threshes while the others are relatively free to tend to their own affairs. Of the seven working days, the Indian must spend four of them in the service of his patrón. Monday through Thursday are "hacienda" days and Friday through Sunday are "free" days. Perhaps it is because of the shortage of working hours necessary to tend private crops that the Indians are herdsmen rather than farmers. While the men work for the hacienda, the women can follow the alpaca, llamas, sheep and cattle into the high places where the kunkana (favorite food grass of the alpaca) is found in abundance. Whether practiced through necessity or not, however, stock raising has proved to be a financial blessing to the Indian.

In the late afternoon, while the University of Cuzco expedition was searching in the hills for the ruins of a pre-Incaic town, we sat in the last of the sunlight and listened to the sounds of the river and the laughter of the Indians in the cookhouse. The Yábars talked about the Quechua language and the meanings of some of its more complicated phrases. They were completely at home among the gutterals and broken words and took great delight in my tongue-twisted attempts to pronounce them.

"Would you like to make a recording of one of my Qeros Indians?" asked Augusto Yábar. Without waiting for a reply, he shouted an order in the direction of the cookhouse. A little man dressed in the unqu (black tunic of Incaic times) and beautifully worked poncho of the Qeros district appeared at the door, twisting his chullo (stocking cap) nervously in his hands. Yábar led him to the recording machine and told him to say something. The indio stood silent until Daniel

Yábar asked him what he thought of the coming fiesta. Immediately the words came rolling off his tongue, accompanied by much laughter. According to the Yábars, this is what he said: "Tomorrow I am going to get drunk and dance with a woman all day long and eat a lot. Surely as there is a God, I am going to get very drunk tomorrow. My wirakoca (patrón, great caballero) will give me aguardiente and coca and food to eat."

By six o'clock the sun had dropped like a stone behind the hills. By seven, the incredibly brilliant mountain moon filled the courtyard with a thin, white light. We sat around the dining table downing shots from a dusty bottle of Mr. Alexander's Finest Scots Whiskey and listened to the wailings of a flute outside in the night. The talk swung around from the folklore of the montaña - the hoopsnakes, milk snakes, venomous dragonflies, pumas and jaguars - to the customs of the hacienda. Daniel Yábar told us that in the not too distant past, it was the duty of the padrino - the godfather chosen to bless and finance a marriage ceremony - to sleep with the bride on the wedding night. That practice has almost died out now, but others persist. There is, for instance, the ceremony of the malgocisga (the first flight of the pigeon), the rite by which a boy comes of age. In the dawn of a working day, the relatives, padrinos and friends of the boy form a group behind him and march him to the fields, singing and chanting as they go. All day long the boy must keep up with the men - excel them if possible. If he succeeds, he is accepted into the circle of adults.

The Yábars did not ridicule these customs; they accepted them with the same understanding which they exhibited in their dealings with the Indians themselves. This is not to say that equality of any sort is evidenced in the hacendado-indio relationships at Kusipata. The patrón is still an absolute monarch, and his orders are obeyed without question. The Yábars, however, possess one trait which makes their monarchy a benevolent one: a true and very deep sense of responsibility toward the Indians. They consider their workers to be human beings, albeit childish human beings - innocent children who look up to and depend upon their papay, their master-father for protection and advice. The Yábars are modern hacendados in the sense that they have broken with the time-honored rules of the whip. Five years of ownership, however, have not been sufficient to erase the old attitudes of the Indian

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Agusto Yábar and mandon

toward his patrón. Several times during the day I saw an Indian approach Agusto Yábar, take off his chullo and begin to kneel on the ground before him. This was the proper method of addressing the hacendado in the old days, and the Indians are slow to change their methods. Yábar hates this genuflecting and grovelling, but it is too deeply ingrained in his people for him to do much about it.

In the first light of the morning, the people from the various parcialidades (districts) began to come into the courtyard, their approach heralded by the pututus (conches) blown by their alcalde and his staff. In front



of each straggling group danced the sargentos - young men wearing fine greencoats and pie-shaped hats plumed with the dessicated bodies of egrets. Behind them came the officials, each carrying his vara or silver-mounted staff of authority. The the men, then the women and children of the district. Behind each group rode the mayordomo.

As each group of officials entered the courtyard, they marched straight to the spot where the Yábars were sitting and bowed stiffly before them. Augusto Yábar would put his hand on a mandon's shoulder and the two of them would talk seriously about conditions in the official's district. Then the mandones, alcaldes, regidores and alhuasiles would hunker in the sun-warmed earth and stare at the cameras of the gringos. The womenfolk of each parcialidad crouched along the courtyard walls, nursing their babies and visiting with relatives, while the men stood nervously in small groups. As this was not a regular fiesta but one cooked up in honor of the visiting firemen, the Indians were waiting to see what developed. The sargentos whooped and danced in the center of the square, but the rest of the menfolk stood and stared.

The waiting and staring did not last long, however. Yábar barked an order, and the great tun of aguardiente was broached. Household servants shuffled through the crowd carrying pails of the stuff, pouring it into glasses or into the wooden mugs (qeros) carried by some of the men. The drinking began - a drinking different from anything I had previously experienced. The average man in the United States or elsewhere drinks for the moment of exhilaration; the Indian of Kusipata drinks to become sodden drunk, to pass out in as short a time as possible. As he drinks, he becomes more and more like a child, crying and fighting at the slightest provocation. Thirty minutes after the metal cask of straight alcohol was broached, a half dozen Indians were sprawling unconscious and the rest were weaving and staggering around the square. The patrón, of course, was the target for the affection of the staggerers. They wheeled up to him, hugged him, gabbled in his ear about their troubles. Yábar would smile, nod his head in sympathy and gently send them tacking off on a new course.

At first, only the men drank. Later in the morning, however, the women joined in with a vengeance. They gulped down the fiery stuff, winced as it stung their throats, and then went after another shot. By noon, the better part of 124 pounds of aguardiente had disappeared into the gullets of less than one hundred Indians. The flutes and drums of the sargento bands kept up a monotonous huayno dance, and a few men shuffled out the steps in the hot sunlight. The life of the fiesta, however, remained in the places where it was born - in the lines of men and women squatting in the shade of the courtyard walls. They were the audience and we papays were the actors. Members of the audience occasionally staggered forward to ask to have their pictures taken or to present the patrón with a gift of a few eggs, then went back to their seats to take in the rest of the show.

Hoping to buy one of the brilliant Qeros ponchos and perhaps an ungu, Peggy and I went from Indian to Indian asking for a fair selling price. Drunk or sober, the reply was always the same: "Papay, this is my poncho made for me by my woman. I don't want to sell it." One ancient condescended to sell a poncho for a high price, but said he first had to confer with his wife about the sale. The woman came over



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Luis Barrera recording a chant
from the Qeros region
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to us and gave her husband a tongue-lashing the meaning of which would be obvious in any language. The old man literally shook under the verbal blows, and we forgot about souvenirs for the moment. Figueroa had translated for us in our short-lived buying spree. Not once did he attempt to force an Indian to sell. "A poncho to them is like a shirt to you," he said.

The drinking and coca chewing went on all during the morning, continuing through the noon meal of roast goat and chicha. Then, in mid-afternoon, the fighting started. Augusto Yábar had warned me that it would. "Usually when we have a fiesta, only the people from one district are allowed to come," he said. "That way, the people are content to drink with each other without fighting. But today, because we had such a short time to prepare for it, the fiesta includes people from all the parcialidades. They will get drunk, and one man will say to another, 'We are better farmers than you' or 'The patrón treats you better than he does us,' and before you know it, you have a fight on your hands."

The first fight started and ended quickly. There was a sharp scuffle, and a young man emerged from the crowd holding a bloody nose. The women took him to a pool of water and washed his face, trying to calm him down. Five minutes later, he was after his enemy with a club. Augusto Yábar pushed his way through the crowd, grabbed the combatants and knocked their heads together hard. Then he made them kiss each other so that all could see they were friends again. Within a few minutes, the ~~ex~~-enemies were clutching each other in a drunken dance in the middle of the square.

The second fight was more serious. After several minutes of argument, an Indian smashed his aguardiente bottle against the ground and plunged the shattered base into his enemy's face. Both men jumped back and stared at each other. Then the wounded man, blood pouring from a hole in his lower lip, grabbed a shard of glass and attacked his assailant. The Yábars jumped into the fight kicking and punching, but it was several minutes before they could restore order. They punished the two weeping, fighting men savagely with their fists. Then there was the usual embracing and making up and the two Indians limped off in the direction of the chicha jug.

Such brutality on the part of the patronos would be considered inhuman in many parts of the world; in Kusipata, however, it is an

absolute necessity. Without such measures, murders among the hacienda Indians would be common on every fiesta day. The drunken Indian is nothing more than a child - one who can laugh, cry and kill in one breath. He must be treated like a child, physically punished to restore some sense of right and wrong to his mind. True, things would be much better if the use of alcohol were prohibited. But without coca and alcohol there would be no workers, no hacienda.

In the late afternoon we left Kusipata. The University of Cuzco expedition had already taken the eastern trail toward Qeros, and the patrones had fulfilled their duty of joining in the dances. Although most of the Indians had left the courtyard, Augusto Yábar stationed his mayordomos near the remaining revelers to prevent more fights. Then we rode out of the courtyard and down the steep trail toward Paucartambo. At a bend in the trail, we passed a group of sargento dancers headed for their remote district. As soon as they recognized the lead man in the train, Daniel Yábar, they began beating their drums and shouting, "Viva el Patrón Yábar! Viva! Viva!" Startled by the noise, the horses shied and broke into a run a little too fast for Peggy, who had never ridden before, and for me, who had spent seven years out of sight of saddle and bridle. We both managed to brake the beasts down to a reasonable gait - a half-trot that ate up the twisting kilometers - so that by dusk we had passed the most dangerous places in the trail. The last hour we rode in the moonlight with the horses crowded close, listening to the night birds hunting and calling on the slopes above us and watching the moon glint on the river rapids below.

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Although they are owners of an immense tract of land, the Yábars are far from being rich. After they have paid some 24,000 soles worth of income tax to the Government and after they have spent some 50,000 soles in hacienda expenses (including fiestas, coca, and aguardiente), whatever is left of their gross profit of 200,000 soles is invested in machinery and tools for their montaña ventures.

As hacendados, the brothers are a mixture of new and old. During the harvest months, they live at the hacienda, but they spend the rest of the year as absentee landlords. They drive GMC trucks to Cuzco or Qosñipata to sell potatoes or beef, respectively, but they depend upon llamas and horses to transport their produce from Kusipata to Paucartambo. They use some modern machinery in their grist mill, and yet they plant their crops according to an age-old Indian custom (potatoes and tubers during the waning quarter of the moon, wheat and barley during the waxing quarter). Both in the management of farm and Indians, they are governed by centuries of tradition. In a land where change moves at a sloth's pace, they must observe the old and honored ways. They can, however, be proud on one point: in comparison with the Indians of the colonial days of feudalistic haciendas, or even with those who are bound to the land by the absolutist patrones of today, the peasants of Kusipata are relatively free men.

Sincerely,

William H. MacLeish

William H. MacLeish