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## Now Peru Is Mine

Llamojha Mitma, Manuel, McCall, Grant

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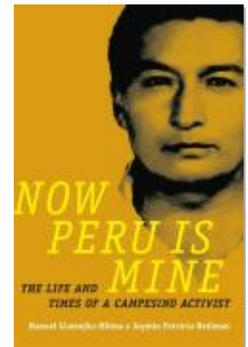
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## TWO

### “I Made the Hacendados Tremble”

**DEFENDING JHAJHAMARKA CAMPESINOS, 1948–1952**

Remembering his struggles against local landlords, Llamojha exclaimed, “I made the hacendados tremble!” This chapter considers his first major action as a rural activist: his work to defend campesinos who lived and worked on the Jhajhamarka hacienda. The Jhajhamarka hacienda, bordering Concepción, became the site of a prominent conflict between its owners and the campesinos who labored on its land.<sup>1</sup> The conflict was especially significant because of its timing; it occurred at a moment that historian Eric Hobsbawm has referred to as Peru’s “great rural awakening”—a period of peasant activism that remains decidedly understudied by historians.<sup>2</sup> Llamojha’s detractors responded to his work on the Jhajhamarka hacienda by resorting to an effective tool of political slander: they branded him a communist. Although he was not a member of the Peruvian Communist Party, his opponents cast his work as that of a communist in an effort to delegitimize his efforts to win socioeconomic justice. The year 1948 marks the start of these struggles and counterstruggles.

Llamojha’s experiences in Jhajhamarka show the abuses and degradation that many Latin American peasants endured on haciendas. Jhajhamarka’s campesinos lost community lands because of trickery; they were forced to perform servile labor; and they were subjected to terrible violence, beaten by hacendados and tied up, as Llamojha phrases it, “like pigs.” But he also chron-

icles the many different ways campesinos fought for their land and for better treatment, forming a union, going on strike, and even committing a murder. Their major push for their land rights came during the early moments of the global Cold War, with the world increasingly divided into communist and anticommunist factions, and their community's struggle was shaped by that international conflict. Hacendados, government officials, and soldiers mobilized the language of anticommunism against campesino activists, creating a strong interplay between the local and international processes of the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> Llamojha's stories also show that activists' lives are not defined exclusively by political work and struggle: 1948, the year he began working with Jhajhamarka campesinos, was also the year he met and married Esther Honorata Puklla.

### **The Return to Concepción**

After Llamojha returned to Concepción from Lima in 1948, sought out by his fellow community members to investigate Concepción's problems with local hacendados, they insisted that he stay.

**The community members wouldn't let me leave.**

**They said to me, "Stay in Concepción. Don't go back to Lima!"**

**I met my wife that year, when I was back in the pueblo. We didn't speak at first; I just saw her from afar.**

**My mom bugged me about her. "You have to marry her, no one else. If not her, then no one."**

In rural Andean communities, it was common for families to negotiate marriages. So Llamojha visited Esther's aunt, María Puklla, to ask for permission to marry.

**I fell in love with Esther and she insisted that we get married immediately. Because she was an orphan, she only had her aunt, her dad's sister. So, I went to talk to her aunt. My mom went with me. And her aunt accepted!**

**"Sure! Get married already!" her aunt said. She made us choose a date right then and there.**

**We chose a date and we got married in a civil ceremony first. We had a Catholic ceremony later.**

## **Jhajhamarka's History**

Soon after his return to Concepción, Llamojha began working with indigenous peasants from the nearby Jhajhamarka hacienda. Before proceeding with his recollections about that struggle, we need to pause and reflect on an issue of orthography. Although the name Jhajhamarka is officially spelled, using the letter *c*, as Ccaccamarca, Llamojha always uses the Quechua orthography—Jhajhamarka—and he wanted to use this spelling throughout this book. Jhajhamarka is a much better phonetic match to the name; we shared a laugh about how the name is definitely *not* pronounced, with hard *C* sounds, as “Kakamarka.” But Llamojha’s spelling is not just about sound; it is about historical accuracy, anticolonial sentiment, and an embrace of Peru’s indigenous Quechua heritage. Noting that he often changed the spelling of place-names in documents he wrote—showing Ccaccamarca as Jhajhamarka, the province of Vilcashuamán as Wilka Uma—I asked Llamojha to explain his practice. He began his explanation with Wilka Uma.

**Wilka is something sacred, sacrosanct. And it's not Huamán, it's Uma. Wilka Uma. That means “Sacred Head” [in Quechua]. Vilcashuamán was the principal region in the time of the Inka. Then, in the colonial period, they started to ruin the name. The name of the province is Wilka Uma. For Jhajhamarka, “Jhajha” means a fallen rock, from a hill. “Marka” means pueblo.**

In a 2011 document Llamojha stressed the need for the phonetic spelling of place-names and noted that “RUNA SIMI [Quechua; literally, ‘language of the people’] should be properly written and spoken, without letting oneself be dragged down by the influence of the writing and pronunciation style that the Spaniards imposed.”<sup>4</sup>

When our conversation turned to the Jhajhamarka hacienda, Llamojha extended his story all the way back to the colonial period, couching his narrative in deep historical context.

**Jhajhamarka had been a hacienda since colonial times. I'm writing its history, about how it used to be. In those times, it was an *obraje* [colonial factory, usually for making clothing] and a commercial center for slaves. Indian slaves cost 300 pesos and black slaves cost 500 pesos. The hacendados brought them there and kept them in a jail, where they punished them.**



MAP 2.1 Province of Vilcashuamán

When Llamojha shared similar details with his CVR interviewers, he told them that he had discovered all of this information while searching for historical documents in Peru's National Archive in 1958. As he phrased it,

**I read it, and that's how I know. If I hadn't read it, I wouldn't know!**

As Llamojha continued his description of Jhajhamarka, he explained that after Peru transitioned from colonialism to independence in the 1820s, Jhajhamarka's owner died without heirs and left the hacienda to the Convento de Santa Teresa (Santa Teresa Convent). Such bequests were not unusual: convents were major landowners in both the colonial and republican periods in Peru.<sup>5</sup> This convent then rented out the hacienda to different administrators, who ran it. In the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, an individual named Benigno Cárdenas became the new administrator.

**A man named Benigno Cárdenas rented the Jhajhamarka hacienda for three lifetimes. Back then, they used to lease for lifetimes, and each lifetime lasted fifty years. Benigno Cárdenas rented it for three lifetimes. Benigno Cárdenas was a really abusive man on the hacienda.**

Llamojha offered more details about Benigno Cárdenas to his CVR interviewers, using the label *gamonal*, a common Peruvian term for an especially abusive rural strongman, often—but not always—a hacendado.<sup>6</sup>

**That gamonal would sit in his doorway every day, all day long. All of those who passed by had to approach him and greet him. They came up to him, and they had to kiss his hand. If they didn't approach him as they were supposed to, right away, he would grab them right there and strike them with his whip. He whipped them and then put them in the hacienda jail.**

**The campesinos couldn't endure his abuses any more, because if any little cow, any little animal, got close to the hacienda house, he would seize it and not return it to its owner. He'd say that it was his good fortune, that God was great, and that it was his good luck.**

Llamojha continued his story about Benigno Cárdenas, framing it as an example of solidarity and activism in an indigenous community.

**The only road, the *camino real*, passed right in front of the hacienda's door. People would come from different places and pass by there to head up into the hills. Benigno Cárdenas would sit in his doorway and monitor all the travelers. He'd inspect their cargo, the things they were carrying,**

and people had to have documents from the authorities. He'd keep all the cargo and animals of those who didn't have permission from the authorities of [the nearby communities] Chumbes or Concepción.

So, the pueblo of Jhajhamarka decided to free itself from this hacendado, by any means necessary. The campesinos killed him in 1917, because they couldn't endure it any more. Nine people agreed to kill him, just those nine, so as not to compromise the pueblo. They didn't care if they went to jail or not.

One night, these nine men positioned themselves along the road, one here, another one over there.

One of these men went into the hacienda house and said, "Señor! Señor! There are nine thieves on the road, cattle rustlers! Let's go!"

The campesino got the hacendado up out of bed and they left the hacienda. From there, they went along a big path. Then, one campesino jumped out from over here, another from over there. They grabbed Benigno Cárdenas by the scruff of his neck and they killed him right there. They hung him with a sling made from llama skin. The campesinos showed me all these places, and how the killing was done. They took me to show me what happened, and how they left the hacendado hanging there.

Those nine people took sole responsibility, to protect the masses from blame. They went to the authorities and they said, "We killed him."

Only those nine people were detained. "We did it on our own," they said. These campesinos went to jail, twenty-five years in El Frontón, and they died there, in El Frontón. Only one survived. He finished his twenty-five years and got out. But a few days after he arrived at his house, he died, too. That's how things were back then.

Unfortunately, as Llamojha explained in our interviews, the abuses on the Jhajhamarka hacienda continued for two more generations.

Benigno's sons went on committing abuses. These two sons, Antonio and Alonso, one was a lawyer, the other was a doctor. These two sons, they wanted to formalize the documents. Because Jhajhamarka was the property of the Convento de Santa Teresa, they were nothing more than tenants. They wanted to purchase the property, and so they forced Jhajhamarka's campesinos to give them 130 bulls. They used those 130 bulls to buy the hacienda from the nuns of the Convento de Santa Teresa.<sup>7</sup>

One of them said to the campesinos, "I am selling my hacienda. Give me 130 bulls so that you can be Jhajhamarka's owners." But this was a trick.

The Cárdenas brothers were actually buying the hacienda and they bought it with the campesinos' 130 bulls. That's how they took possession of the Jhajhamarka hacienda.

And the people, the workers, the Cárdenas brothers treated them like slaves. The brothers rented the campesinos out to other sugar-producing haciendas, and then they took the campesinos' salaries. They didn't give those salaries to the peasant workers.

These two brothers, they each had a son. Their sons' names were Ernesto and Carlos; they were the last owners of Jhajhamarka. They were really barbarous, too. They had a room where they abused and killed peasants. This room dated all the way back to the time of slavery. In slave times, peasants were branded with irons, just like cattle, on their backs. And that still existed in Jhajhamarka; they branded the campesinos with hot irons. I learned about this, and I even saw it, too. So, Jhajhamarka's campesinos rose up in 1947. And in '48, I came back from Lima. When Jhajhamarka's campesinos found out that I was here, they came and took me to Jhajhamarka.

### **Fighting for Jhajhamarka**

I asked Llamojha how Jhajhamarka's campesinos knew that he could help them. The answer revolved around the migrant clubs in Lima.

We started working together in Lima. They had an organization in Lima, an association [migrant club], just like we had. They always held parties, and they invited us to go. So, I met them, and they got to know me. And so when I returned to Concepción, they immediately called on me to go to Jhajhamarka.

I had a relative here, on my wife's side, whose name was Leoncio Fernández. He never abandoned me, ever. When they took me to Jhajhamarka, he went with me.

"I can't let you go alone. I have to help you," he said. So, each time Jhajhamarka called on me, the two of us went. He was really good to me; he was like my brother. He never left me. He accompanied me everywhere.

Together, the two men worked to organize Jhajhamarka campesinos. Leoncio Fernández also helped Llamojha in a crucial material way: he bought him his first typewriter.



FIG. 2.1 Jhajhamarka peasants, Jhajhamarka, 1949. Courtesy of Proyecto Especial de Titulación de Tierras, Ayacucho.

**Leoncio Fernández said, “You’ll work with this!”**

**He had bought the typewriter in Lima, secondhand. It was really old, but it served me well.**

**We held assemblies to explain to folks how they should confront the owners. After a few days, I returned to Concepción. Then the next week, the Jhajhamarka campesinos called me back. They came to Concepción with a commission, and they brought me back to Jhajhamarka on their horses, to continue fighting, to continue writing documents and complaints. Jhajhamarka was the worst hell. It was slavery! This is what we fought against.**

In July 1948, Llamojha helped Jhajhamarka campesinos form a union. Given that Peruvian government authorities and the courts failed to provide them with adequate support in their struggles against hacendados, neglecting to take punitive action or even actively siding with abusers, many campesinos began to form unions in the mid-twentieth century. They hoped that they could use their unions to defend themselves, their rights, and their lands. Sometimes these unions formed with the help of urban political ac-

tivists; often campesinos took action on their own initiative. Although the Jhajhamarka union was not the first such organization in Peru's Andean region, it was certainly one of the earliest.<sup>8</sup>

Without question, Jhajhamarka campesinos benefited from propitious timing when they founded their union in July 1948. Just a few months later, in October, General Manuel Odría seized national power in a coup. In the repression that followed, many political activists were jailed, and many organizations, including the CCP, had to cease operations. It would have been much harder to form the Jhajhamarka union under such circumstances. Llamojha described the formation of the union.

**I organized a tenants' union and we began the struggle. I started to draw up documents. I went with my typewriter. I drew up documents and got peasants to sign them. I always walked around with my typewriter, I wrote petitions, and got all the people to sign. The documents said, "a series of abuses are committed on this hacienda, so the people want the hacendados to retreat. If they don't, the pueblo will take charge." And then I took the documents to Lima myself, to deliver them to the ministry. I always did this, because the national government would readily order an investigation, whereas if you just presented your documents in Ayacucho, no one would investigate. So, I took documents directly to the ministry, to the government itself. That's what I did, to the point that I made the hacendados tremble!**

I asked Llamojha about how he drew up these complex legal documents, doing so without the aid of a lawyer.

**I worried about this a lot. From the time I learned to read, I struggled to learn how to write formal requests, memos. There was a book called *Mosaico* and it explained how to do this. There were examples of memos, requests, denunciations. That book *Mosaico* had everything, and that's how I learned to draft memos.**

Llamojha even crafted the elaborate stamps that graced the signature lines of many documents, adding authority to his letters.

**You make the stamps from rubber balls, it turns out nicely. It's easy to carve. I'd break a Gillette shaving razor into little pieces and then tie the pieces to a little stick, and then use this to carve.**

He then personally delivered these documents, unwilling to go through the regional hierarchy of provincial and departmental officials.

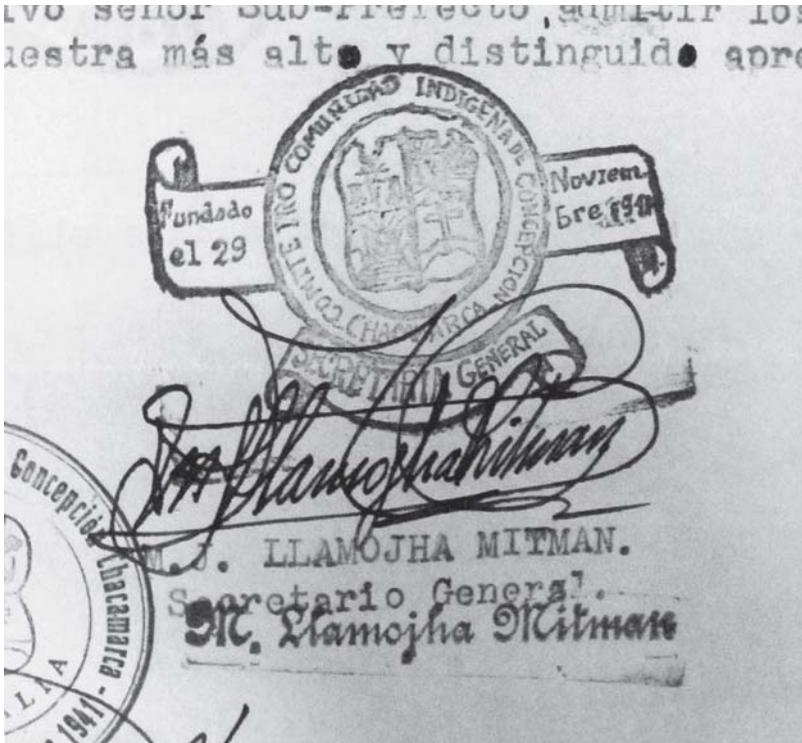


FIG. 2.2 Stamp produced by Llamojha. Courtesy of Ayacucho Regional Archive.

I presented all the denunciations against the hacendados, against the abuses they committed, directly to Lima. I would go to the government itself, to the presidential palace, and leave the denunciations at the document reception office. Or I'd go to the ministries. I'd never present a denunciation in Ayacucho to the lower authorities, because they never paid attention, they never brought justice. I'd go directly to Lima instead. From Lima, they'd order the prefect or the subprefect to investigate the abuses the hacendados committed.

Llamojha's comments reflect the realities of Peru's highly centralized political system. With political power concentrated in Lima, it made sense for him to skip over relatively powerless regional authorities and take his complaints directly to the Lima-based ministries and government offices that had the authority to order investigations. In addition, many regional authorities were so closely connected to Ayacucho hacendados—by friendship, family ties,

shared social status—that they were unlikely to take action against even the most abusive landowners.<sup>9</sup>

Most of Llamojha's writings about Jhajhamarka are hidden from view: he helped the hacienda's residents compose letters, but he didn't affix his own name to these documents. For years, he kept his own personal archive, retaining a copy of every document he prepared. But soldiers seized that archive of invaluable papers during the violence of the 1980s, and it has almost certainly been destroyed. So the historian can only guess which of the many letters of complaint filling Ayacucho's archives were written by Llamojha. One such document probably—but not certainly—written by him was a March 1948 letter to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.<sup>10</sup> In this lengthy letter, a number of Jhajhamarka campesinos complain that they are treated “as if we were slaves.” They describe the unremunerated labor burdens placed on young children, women, and the elderly; they denounce the paltry salaries men receive; and they detail the hacendados' routine seizure of tenants' livestock. As the letter phrases it, “the wealth of these hacendados continues to increase, under the inhumane and slave-like exploitation of the Indians.”<sup>11</sup> The letter also decries the hacendados' violence against campesinos and asks that the hacienda's lands be distributed among its tenants.<sup>12</sup>

Whether or not that particular letter was written by Llamojha, it is clear that he wrote most of the documents that were sent from Jhajhamarka during the late 1940s and the early 1950s. Even those unsympathetic to Llamojha stressed his role as a scribe. One police investigator wrote that Llamojha “was the one in charge of drafting memos or any other document that would be directed to the authorities.” The investigator added that as only Llamojha and another activist named Moisés Ayala were literate, they alone knew the contents of the letters Llamojha typed. As such, Llamojha was able to make “completely unfounded complaints” and accused Ernesto Cárdenas of “completely absurd things.”<sup>13</sup> Those complaints fit into a much larger pattern of hacendados and regional authorities blaming “indios leídos” (literate Indians) for stirring up trouble over landownership and indigenous peasants' rights in the early twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> Driving home the importance of Llamojha's writing, the investigator confiscated Llamojha's documents as well as his pencil, his stamps and stamp pad, and, of course, his typewriter.<sup>15</sup> Llamojha recalled:

**The typewriter remained with the judge in the Gangallo court. When I got out of jail, I asked for my typewriter back. They said, “Bring us the receipt!” They wanted proof that I hadn't stolen the machine.**

**Leoncio Fernández had to go to Lima to ask for the receipt, and then we went together to Cangallo to claim our little machine.**

**Leoncio said, “We always have to go together, damn it! I am not going to let you go alone.”**

Jhajhamarka campesinos had many reasons to look to Llamojha for help. His literacy and knowledge of Peru’s governing system were invaluable resources for them. By serving as a scribe for largely illiterate Jhajhamarka campesinos, Llamojha enabled them to engage a political and legal system that was otherwise closed to them. It was not unusual for literate campesinos to assume such roles in their communities, composing petitions and letters for their neighbors and relatives.<sup>16</sup> A letter signed by seventeen Jhajhamarka campesinos explained: “Manuel Llamocca, even though he is not a tenant on the hacienda, helps us with our complaints . . . and we sought him out because, as the majority of us are illiterate, we always need educated people who can write for us.”<sup>17</sup> The same letter decried the fact that Llamojha had recently been arrested and badly beaten.

While most of the documents Llamojha wrote do not bear his name, one of the most important documents produced in Jhajhamarka does: he authored and signed the “Act of the Foundation of the Sharecroppers Union of the Ccaccamarca (Jhajhamarca) Hacienda,” which recorded the establishment of the Jhajhamarka tenants’ union in 1948. This document is worth quoting at length:

In the pueblo of Huampurque, part of the Jhajhamarca estate, the sharecroppers of said hacienda gathered in the home of Mr. Benedicto Prado. They utilized the abilities granted by Article 62 of the National Constitution with the goal of reaching a unanimous agreement to incorporate all of the sharecroppers of the Jhajhamarca hacienda who live as victims of abuses and long orphaned from light and justice under an inhumane and cruel yoke, without knowing the path of liberty and social justice enjoyed by men in Peru. Gathered together, the Indian sharecroppers stated that they yearn for justice and man’s right to live free from the chains of oppression.

The delegation of the community of Concepción de Chakamarca, which went to said place after being invited by the aforementioned sharecroppers, having clearly heard these Indians’ unanimous statement, proposed the formation of a *sharecroppers’ union*. The union would be the central base for supporting all the community members or sharecroppers of said hacienda against the injustices committed by the hacendados Carlos and

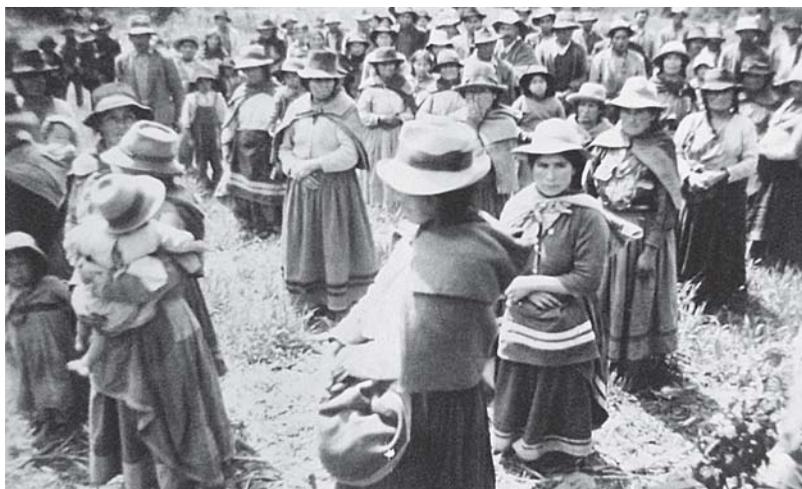


FIG. 2.3 Jhajhamarka peasants, Jhajhamarka, early 1950s. Courtesy of Proyecto Especial de Titulación de Tierras, Ayacucho.

Ernesto Cárdenas who, without any sort of consideration, inhumanely usufruct the Indians' work. Those in attendance were in agreement with the Concepción delegates' proposal, and they felt it advisable to establish the union immediately.<sup>18</sup>

This document is revealing in many different ways. Its reference to a specific article of the Peruvian constitution is a common feature of many of Llamojha's writings. He explained:

**I always walked around with the Peruvian political constitution. And I had the civil and penal codes. When I wrote documents, I always had to mention the key articles. I always had to write, "This article says this; it protects the peasantry." That's how I pestered the authorities.**

A second feature of the document that demands attention is Llamojha's use of the term *yanaconas* (sharecroppers). At first glance, Llamojha's use of the label seems a curious choice: the term was most commonly used for workers on large commercial plantations, usually on the Peruvian coast. Campesinos like those in Jhajhamarka—indigenous peasants who held lands in usufruct in exchange for unpaid labor on a hacienda—were usually referred to as *colonos* (tenant farmers).<sup>19</sup> Even a police investigator sent to Jhajhamarka commented that "the condition of sharecropping does not exist

on said estate, but rather tenants.”<sup>20</sup> Yet the decision to label the organization a “sharecroppers union” was no accident. Using the term *sharecroppers* allowed Llamojha to insert Jhajhamarka peasants into the framework of the new Ley de Yanaconaje (Sharecropping Law). This 1947 law protected sharecroppers from eviction, promised better working conditions, and made written contracts mandatory.<sup>21</sup>

Llamojha’s work with Jhajhamarka campesinos garnered much attention from the hacendados Ernesto and Carlos Cárdenas and from regional authorities sympathetic to the landowners. A police investigator sent to Jhajhamarka charged that Llamojha, “in his eagerness to cause every sort of difficulty for the hacienda’s owners, made the Indian tenants believe that they would obtain the possession of the estate by forming a Sharecroppers Union. To that end, he gathered all the people of Jhajhamarka together and proceeded to form a supposed union.”<sup>22</sup> The investigator insisted that such an act was illegal, as the campesinos had neither sought nor received authorization from the proper authorities.<sup>23</sup> He accused Llamojha of cheating Jhajhamarka campesinos of money by means of a “visibly malicious” claim of collecting funds for the hacienda’s purchase.<sup>24</sup> A civil guard corporal, in turn, accused Llamojha and his fellow activist Moisés Ayala of threatening the lives of the Cárdenas brothers and using intimidation “to usurp their lands.”<sup>25</sup>

Many of the documents I encountered—including the letter quoted above—mentioned Moisés Ayala, a peasant activist from the nearby La Colpa hacienda. I asked Llamojha to tell me about him.

**Yes, Moisés Ayala. He’s the one who started to organize the struggle in Jhajhamarka, in 1947. In ‘48, with me, we continued the fight together. But when they started to take us prisoner, he backed down. He wouldn’t get involved.**

Llamojha also spoke at length about the repression that led Ayala to retreat. It was both brutal and dehumanizing, treating Llamojha, Ayala, and Jhajhamarka campesinos like animals rather than people.

**We began the struggle in January, and in the month of May, the police came here and detained me; they arrested fifteen people. The hacendados had made a written denunciation against me, saying that I had threatened their lives. The police arrived when we were in an assembly. But they didn’t grab us right then; they came at night instead. The campesinos had fallen asleep, because they’d started to drink after the assembly. I**

was tipsy, too, and I fell asleep, using my typewriter as my pillow! When I woke up, they had taken my typewriter, and they were tying me up with straps used for pigs. They grabbed me by the neck and then they took me.

The two Cárdenases were there, and one of them started to beat me on the path. Because it was night, nobody could see anything in the dark. They took sixteen of us prisoner, tied us up like pigs. On the path, the hacendado started to hit me. A civil guard—he was a really good guy—jumped to my defense.

He yelled at the hacendado, “You’re being abusive! Why do you have to hit him? He’s a prisoner! You have no reason to raise your hand against him!”

We arrived at the hacienda house and they put the fifteen others in the hallway of the hacienda house. They put me in the jail where they used to put slaves, just a tiny room. They had hooks on the wall. In colonial times, they’d hang slaves from the hooks and they’d brand them on the back with a hot iron. I saw the branding iron hanging on the wall. I thought maybe they were going to brand me! That’s where they kept me. I was detained for four days in there.

The hacendado ordered the civil guards not to give me food or a bed. But there was a really good guard, he was from Andahuaylas. At night, he brought me a mattress, food.

“Don’t worry, I’m here,” he said.

He brought me the mattress and food at eleven or twelve at night. Then, early, at four or five in the morning, he came to get the mattress back.

“Give me your mattress! The *patrón* [landlord] is going to come,” he said. I gave it back to him, and then I was left on the floor, shivering. The landlord came at six or seven. He came and he opened the window.

“And? How are you? Did you sleep well?”

“Yes, I slept well.” He didn’t know that I’d slept on a bed!

This recollection introduces us to two sympathetic policemen, or civil guards. Such figures pop up again and again in Llamojha’s life stories. There are two explanations for this recurrent theme. One has to do with his persona: he is a warm, relatively soft-spoken man, full of stories and laughter. He is also quite short in stature, even in comparison to other Andean men. It is not hard to imagine that he inspired a great deal of sympathy, even in the individuals responsible for arresting or guarding him. The second explanation has to do with politics: like many persons sympathetic to socialist ideas, Llamojha probably saw policemen as members of the working class and thus

as potential allies in the broader class struggle against the capitalist elite. His life stories thus serve to emphasize that point.

We were there [in the hacienda house] for four days, and on the fifth day, they transferred all the prisoners to Ayacucho. We stayed in the police station in Ayacucho for twelve days while they took our statements. Each statement took almost the whole day, and there were lots of us. The accusation that the Jhajhamarka hacendados made against me was that I was passing myself off as a priest, and that I walked from pueblo to pueblo, marrying and baptizing people. They had captured me in Jhajhamarka with my Latin, Spanish, and Quechua religious books. So, I was interrogated about this every day. And on the last day, they took me to the Ayacucho bishopric.

Three officials took me in chains. It was funny. Each time I remember it, it makes me laugh. They brought me before the bishop in chains!

They presented me to the bishop.

"Mr. Bishop, we're bringing you an individual who has passed himself off as a priest."

The bishop looked at me. "You passed yourself off as a priest?"

"No, not me."

"Where's your cassock?"

"I don't have a cassock!"

The bishop looked at all my books. "Why do you have these books? Where did you take them from?"

"They're my books! I'm a cantor and I play the organ. I always travel through pueblos, I play the organ. I help priests celebrate mass. That's why I walk around with my books. I walk through all the pueblos, I lead processions in fiestas," I said to him.

"You lead processions?"

"Yes, I lead processions. When there are no priests, I lead."

He thought for a moment.

He gave me my book. "All right, let's see. Read Latin!"

So, I read Latin.

"All right, sing!"

So, I sang in Latin. I read correctly in Latin, there was no problem. Then, another book.

"All right, sing in Latin!"

I sang. Then, another book, too. "Let's see, sing a mass!" I sang and I sang. Then, he took out an organ, a small, portable one.

**“Let’s see, play for me!”**

**So I played.**

**And then the bishop said to the police, “He is a cantor and a musician. Why did you bring him to me?” I had passed all the tests!**

**But they kept my books. My books are still imprisoned by the courts. When they took me prisoner in Jhajhamarka with my books, they took me with everything, and my books are still in the court. They’re under life imprisonment!**

When Llamojha talked about Jhajhamarka in our interviews, he emphasized that the charges against him centered on accusations of impersonating a priest. Those accusations are preserved in archival documents. The regional inspector for the Bureau of Indian Affairs asserted: “to attract sympathies, he [Llamojha] pretends to be the parish priest of Vischongo, he keeps a special religious book, he expedites baptismal certificates, and he makes all the Indians believe that the estate will be divided up.”<sup>26</sup> A police investigator made the same accusation, claiming that Llamojha tried to deceive Jhajhamarka’s peasants by carrying around books for mass, issuing baptismal certificates, and passing himself off as a priest. Because of these efforts, the investigator asserted, “the majority of the Indians blindly obey the instructions they receive to obstruct or somehow bring about damage to the owners of the hacienda.”<sup>27</sup>

The archives also show that these charges against Llamojha were not entirely spurious. Nested between letters and documents about the Jhajhamarka case lies a handwritten letter from “Manuel J. Llamojha Mitman, Parish Priest of the Doctrine of Vischongo, of the Vicariate of Cangallo, of the Dioceses of Ayacucho.” The letter certifies the existence of a young man’s baptismal certificate in the parish archive, and the certificate is signed with Llamojha’s name, with the word “PARROCO” (parish priest) stamped under it. If someone faked don Manuel’s looping, elegant handwriting and intricate signature, they did an exceptionally good job.<sup>28</sup> Although Llamojha’s maternal surname, Mitma, is misspelled as “Mitman,” he often added this *n* to his name during the 1940s, likely reflecting an experiment with Quechua orthography. When I shared this document with Llamojha and asked if he had ever forged baptism certificates for campesinos in need, he laughingly admitted it. He replied,

**Yes, if they couldn’t find them and urgently needed them, I’d make them. I did wedding certificates, other documents for matters with the ministry. That’s what my life was like. I saved many people this way.**

Llamojha also very much conceptualized himself as a religious man and carried out many of the roles linked with the priesthood.

**Christ fought this way, too. That's why he was crucified. He taught about the struggle, about how we should struggle. I followed that teaching. I went around to the pueblos, always teaching catechism. Like Christ, I made people pray and I led religious processions. So, the hacendados denounced me, saying I was trying to pass myself off as a priest.**

Although the archival record includes charges against Llamojha for impersonating a priest, they are overshadowed by the accusations that he was a communist. Here, context is especially important. As noted, in 1948 Peruvians found themselves living in the international situation of the Cold War, with increasing tensions between communist and anticommunist regimes and their sympathizers. General Manuel Odría outlawed Peru's Communist Party after the October 1948 coup, and anticommunism became a versatile tool in Peru. Churchmen, Peru's economic elites, and even average citizens used accusations of communism to tarnish reputations and dismiss demands for socioeconomic justice. Members of the increasingly conservative APRA likewise voiced sharp anticommunist sentiment, distinguishing themselves from communists to try to bolster their own power.<sup>29</sup> Llamojha's critics used the ideas of the Cold War against him, framing his actions in Jhajhamarka as those of a determined Communist Party militant.

A police investigator charged that Llamojha and Ayala carried out clandestine meetings on the Jhajhamarka hacienda, instructing tenants on the "hostile attitudes that they should adopt against the landlords" and misleading the tenants to believe that they would be able to evict the hacendados. The investigator stressed that Llamojha and Ayala's goals were "inspired by the 'Communist Party'" and that they were attempting to mislead Jhajhamarka's indigenous peasants, "maliciously trying to confuse Community with Communism."<sup>30</sup> The same investigator argued that the two men's "communist ideas" had led them to "inculcate subversive actions in Indians' minds, like not recognizing legal norms and absenteeism at work."<sup>31</sup>

A civil guard corporal made similar assertions, accusing Llamojha, Ayala, and a Jhajhamarka campesino named Teodoro Illanéz of "obeying orders and directives of communist bosses in Lima."<sup>32</sup> This corporal reported that he and the hacendado Carlos Cárdenas had unwittingly interrupted a meeting of over fifty Jhajhamarka tenants, led by Llamojha and a campesino named Manuel Huaytalla. The corporal reported that the meeting's participants were

drunk and reacted insolently, so he and Cárdenas quickly left. Then, the corporal reported, “they once again started to insult us, threatening to kill us, and at the same time saying *vivas* [long live!] to the Communist Party. It is known that Manuel Llamocca, Manuel Huaytalla, and Moisés Ayala are agents sent by Lima communists.”<sup>33</sup> Even the regional inspector for the Bureau of Indian Affairs levied these sorts of accusations. He characterized Llamojha as a “communist agitator and propagandist of anarchist tendencies.” He added that Jhahamarka was an “estate where communists make a pernicious labor against the rights of property and social peace.”<sup>34</sup>

There is no compelling evidence that Llamojha actually belonged to the Communist Party at this point in time. He insisted in our interviews that he never belonged to any political party. Moreover, the Communist Party was relatively weak in Ayacucho and throughout Peru during the 1940s.<sup>35</sup> The most damning “evidence” of Llamojha’s communist sympathies came from two typed letters supposedly found among his possessions.<sup>36</sup> The first is addressed to Cupertino de la Cruz, a Jhahamarka resident living in Lima. It reads:

**COPY**

Ccaccamarca, May 1st 1948

Mr. Cupertino de la Cruz:

Lima.

On a special task for our *comuneros* [community members], I am informing you that we have advanced our labors significantly, and we will soon be a pueblo, because we have named our authorities and also named our delegates, such as Antonio Prado, Bruno Prado, Modesto Lahuana, Hipólito Lahuana, Alejandro Cisneros, Marcelo Cisneros and others that I will soon send you. Now, my friend, the people are ready to act against the Cárdenas brothers in active form, for we are determined to hang them and repeat the heroic attitude of our ancestors and in this way impose our communist desires, for which the party will congratulate us. Do not forget to continue the efforts with our friends and continue the tasks. Long live our party! We will see you soon, when we receive you in our pueblo, Ccaccamarca.

(Signed)

Manuel J. Llamocca Mitma<sup>37</sup>

The next letter, dated just one week later, was addressed to Llamojha's fellow activist in Jhajhamarka, Moisés Ayala.

**(COPY)**

Ccaccamarca, May 8, 1948

Mr. Moises Ayala.

Ayacucho:

Dear brother Moises:

As you have not written me anything of the commission we have given you, we are sending you this card to find out if you have achieved what we thought about regarding Bernardina Cisneros and if you have seen our communist friends in Ayacucho. I ask because I am advancing our work a great deal and believe that within a few days, we will be yelling out a *viva* to our party with our other brothers, and already in our pueblo of Ccaccamarca.

Ernesto's brother has arrived with two civil guards. He appeared at our location the other night, but we made him run. I mocked them and all the people applauded me, celebrating my conduct.

Send me news and some propaganda to continue my work.

Until soon, brother.

M. Llamocca Mitan

These letters are fakes. Not only do they lack the usual grace and style of Llamojha's writing; they also use the traditional spelling of Jhajhamarka.<sup>38</sup> Even more telling, the letters actually misspell Llamojha's surname. When I shared copies of these letters with him, he commented:

**I couldn't talk about politics like that. I wouldn't talk like that. Maybe it was from Castillo, or Raúl Agüero, to implicate me. Or maybe Joaquín Chávez.**

Those men were abusive authorities in Concepción, and Llamojha had protracted conflicts with them. In other documents from the 1940s, Llamojha also stressed the apolitical nature of the sharecroppers' union. He wrote that the union "at its core, does not treat questions of partisan politics, which can be the cause of divisionism in the social organization."<sup>39</sup>

The very existence of these fake letters, however, is revealing. They show

both the determination and perhaps even the desperation of the Cárdenas hacendados and their allies in their fight against Llamojha. These letters also show that his opponents felt accusations of communism were the most effective means of discrediting him; they could just as easily have composed letters describing his plans for personal enrichment and gain. “Communist” was an easy and effective accusation to hurl against him, and he faced it repeatedly over the long course of his political career. Further, by casting him and Ayala as communists, hacendados and authorities were relying on established, racialized tropes about “outside agitators” generating trouble among naïve indigenous peasants, tropes that effectively dismissed Jhajhamarka campesinos’ agency and their desires for significant socioeconomic change.

When Llamojha shared his stories about Jhajhamarka, he repeatedly mentioned a person named Luis Medina.

**Luis Medina was a person who was half deaf, but he headed the struggle. He was an illiterate man, but he was very brave. He didn’t pay attention to anyone, not even the police! He ordered the police around.**

**He was the delegate whom we sent from Jhajhamarka with petitions to present in Lima. On his way back, they detained him at one of the checkpoints and they brought him to the Ayacucho jail where we were.**

**The next day, the police freed him.**

**The police said, “Get out of here already! You’re free!”**

**But he didn’t want to leave. “I will leave with them,” he said.**

**He didn’t want to leave for anything! So the police lifted him up and threw him in the street. Two police grabbed his legs, and others grabbed his hands, taking him, carrying him in the air to the streets.**

**He came back. “I will not leave! I’ll only leave together with them!” he said.**

**We finally said, “Go! Leave! Better yet, because they’re going to take us to Cangallo, you’ll have to bring us food.”**

Llamojha’s comment about food reflected the fact that in most Peruvian jails, prisoners had to rely on outside friends and relatives to bring them their daily meals. He recalled the conditions in the Cangallo jail:

**After the bishop’s, they made me return to jail, and then they transferred all of us to the Cangallo jail. I was in jail six months, alone now. The rest had been released. They accused me of being a communist priest. That’s what it said in the accusation, in the file. “Communist priest, to be captured,” it said.**



FIG. 2.4 Luis Medina (center), Jhajhamarka, 1952. Photo courtesy of Manuel Llamajha Mitma.

**I was treated well in the Cangallo jail. There was a guard, he was like a brother to me. Right there, he brought me his table, he lent me his typewriter. Using his typewriter, I wrote up defenses for the prisoners. I wrote documents requesting their freedom. Some were in there for no good reason, because of slander. I sent these documents to Cangallo authorities, others went to Ayacucho.**

**After six months, someone came from Jhajhamarka. He got me out, paying bail. I think he paid 120 soles to get me out on bail. He got me out and took me to Jhajhamarka. There, I began to prepare more documents, I got people to sign them, and then I left for Lima. I took these papers to the ministry and presented them, so that they would come to Jhajhamarka to investigate. With this struggle, we lowered the hacendados' morale.**

The fight for Jhajhamarka wound down after an extended strike in which campesinos withheld their labor services from the Cárdenas hacendados. This strike proved a major economic blow to the landlords.

**I proposed to the campesinos that they go on strike, that nobody go to work on the hacienda. So, they carried out a strike. That strike lasted one year. The hacendados didn't have anyone to work for them, the campesinos were working for themselves. So the Cárdenas brothers withdrew. They went to Lima and the campesinos took possession of the hacienda.**

**The campesinos took it without purchasing it. The pueblo was left with the hacienda, and they have it to this day. I got a piece, too. They gave me an alfalfa field.**

The strike Llamojha described began around 1951, and he worked actively with Jhajhamarka campesinos until 1952. Although the Cárdenas hacendados effectively abandoned the Jhajhamarka hacienda in the late 1950s, leaving its tenants in control, the community's legal standing remained ambiguous and contested until 1977, when the government formally recognized its status as an official campesino community.<sup>40</sup> While the struggle for Jhajhamarka began to wind down in the 1950s, fights over land rights and hacendado abuses began exploding in other parts of Peru's Andean sierra. Llamojha was well positioned to play a leading role in those struggles because of the important experience he had gained in the fight for Jhajhamarka. His work there marked the starting point of his labors as a campesino activist.

