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Now Peru Is Mine

Llamojha Mitma, Manuel, McCall, Grant

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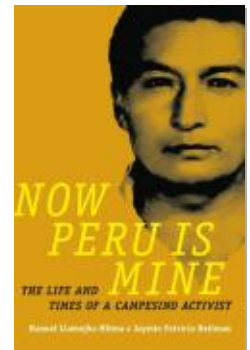
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THREE

“Jail Was Like My Home”

FIGHTING FOR CONCEPCIÓN, 1952–1961

“I was always in the struggle,” Llamojha asserted. “I didn’t abandon it, even for a day.” From 1952 until 1961, he dedicated himself to defending his indigenous community from the abuses of local hacendados and district authorities. During these years, he would often tie his typewriter to his back and walk to nearby communities to assist them in their own struggles for land. His help was sorely needed, as conflicts between indigenous peasants and hacendados were growing more and more common—and more and more heated—across Peru’s Andean sierra region during the late 1950s. Peasants in Cuzco’s La Convención Valley, for example, formed a union and then went on strike, demanding much greater control over the lands they worked. In 1959 one of the most serious land conflicts to that date exploded in the central Andean region Pasco, when campesinos seized a portion of a hacienda they felt rightfully belonged to them. Numerous other land invasions—or land *recuperations*, as sympathizers called them—followed.¹

Llamojha plunged into the work of defending Concepción by seeking election to his community’s village council. He quickly became embroiled in a series of heated conflicts with district and regional authorities and with the hacendados who encroached on Concepción’s lands. He used his talents as a writer throughout these struggles, and his enemies repeatedly tried to turn his intellectual work against him, accusing him of duplicity, forgery, and even

counterfeiting money. Until Peru transitioned back to democracy in 1956, he fought these battles in a national context of authoritarian military rule, but his experiences show that *local* authoritarianism was just as significant. He repeatedly confronted district-level government authorities who racially denigrated him and his supporters as upstart Indians, even though these authorities were themselves of rural, indigenous origins.

Llamojha's stories about the 1950s—a particularly underresearched decade in Latin American history—expose some of the painful personal costs of political activism.² Although he made many daring escapes from the police, he also endured repeated imprisonments and terrible mistreatment. He was forced to go into hiding and even had to fake his own death. And he did not bear those difficulties alone: his family was devastated each time he was jailed, his children and wife missed him terribly when he traveled away from home or was in hiding, and they suffered financially because his activist work carried no salary. Llamojha himself rarely speaks of the difficulties associated with activism, stressing instead the virtue of complete dedication to the search for social justice. That complete devotion, however, generated its own significant troubles.

Positions of Authority

In 1950, while the struggle for Jhajhamarka was ongoing, Llamojha and doña Esther witnessed the birth of their first child, Hilda.

During my wife's pregnancy, I went to work on a hacienda near here.³ When I came back, she gave birth. I wanted a little boy, but we had a girl. Two years later, my son [Walter] was born.

Shortly thereafter Llamojha moved back to Lima, and he remained there until 1955.

After three years in Concepción, I returned to Lima. I had to go back and present documents to the ministry. And I stayed in Lima, working at the central railway station. I called my wife to come, too.

I started off as a mechanic's assistant at the railway station, but then they moved me to the document reception office, and I worked there as an assistant to the secretary. I would have kept working there, except that we were in a mess with the hacendados. The struggle had started in Concepción and I was worried.

Community authorities in Concepción weren't interested. Sure, they took an interest at first, but then they got frightened by the threat of jail, and they stopped fighting. The first leaders who were named in 1944 weren't good for anything. Worse still, one of them betrayed the pueblo and joined with the Ayrabamba hacienda. Others entered the community presidency, but then they couldn't leave their chores, because to fight, you have to leave everything and devote yourself to the struggle.

That's why I came back. We were in Lima for three and a half years. Then, we went back to Concepción again. I had to come back and lead the struggle.

On his return to Concepción in 1955, Llamojha began working alongside his local allies to organize elections for a new village council (*junta comunal*). Community members would vote for the village council, and a representative from the Bureau of Indian Affairs would then ratify the election and formally appoint the chosen authorities: a community president, a secretary, and a *personero legal*, or indigenous community legal representative.⁴ The *personero legal* acted on behalf of community members in all official matters, representing the community in legal disputes and petitions for government intervention. It was the ideal position for Llamojha, given his talents for composing legal documents and writing compelling letters of protest.

The personero is the one who represents Concepción, the community. He represents them before the authorities. Back then, the ministry used to name them. The ministry would send commissions to preside over the elections for personero.

The right to elect village councils was one of the most important benefits held by officially recognized indigenous communities. In a national context of widespread disenfranchisement because of exclusionary literacy requirements, and in a highly centralized system where departmental, provincial, and district authorities were appointed rather than elected, the elections for village councils were unusually participatory in the Peruvian context. All male heads of families—regardless of their literacy—were allowed to vote.⁵ The first step in convening elections for the village council was to form a provisional directing junta to organize and oversee the elections.

I came back here to Concepción in '55, and we began the struggle. Without me, the people didn't move. The people were united. There were only three *malditos* [damned ones] who served the hacendados. I returned and organized the masses here, in the community.

The very next day after I arrived, four people came from the Ayrabamba hacienda.

They came to my house and said, "How can we possibly be so disorganized? We are going to form an association."

I said to them, "There's no need to form an organization; the community is already officially recognized. What we really have to do is get the community to name a provisional directing junta."

We signed an agreement and pledged to fight until the end. That's what we did! These people followed through, and they didn't abandon me. Once we had formed the junta, we agreed to spend one week summoning everyone. For one week, they ran about, calling on people to attend the assembly.

As Llamojha spoke about this assembly and the provisional directing junta, he offered more detail about the three men he often described as being "against the community."

These three people weren't even from the pueblo. This is the hacendados' secret. Back then, the hacendados dominated all the pueblos. They're the ones who put their people into power. Their secret agents, one could say. In collusion with government authorities, the hacendados would impose people from other places on each pueblo. These three people: Joaquín Chávez was from Huanta, Raúl Agüero was from Andahuaylas. The other one, Grimaldo Castillo, his dad was from Huamanga.⁶ They were the bosses and eternal authorities. They never left their posts: governor, judge, municipal agent. These men, not any others, were always the authorities.

They're the ones who informed to the municipalities, to the provinces. They were against the pueblo, servants of the hacendados. They were the ones who told the hacendados how many cattle there were in the community. They [Castillo, Agüero, and Chávez] informed the province so that the province could charge people fees. I didn't have even a single cow, but they reported that I had fifty-three cows! And then authorities came to charge me. That's how it was. They did all of this; they were incredible. They were really against the pueblo.

They said very clearly, "We have to screw the pueblo." That's how these three talked. That's how they were.

Llamojha's description of these three men reflects a common experience in rural Peru during the twentieth century. Unlike the elected indigenous community authorities, positions of formal government authority at the district

level—posts like that of governor, lieutenant governor, justice of the peace, and municipal agent—were all appointed rather than elected posts until 1963.⁷ The department prefect placed individuals in power, often ignoring community members' desires, and it was in his power to appoint individuals from outside the local district, as frequently occurred. More often than not, these appointed district authorities were among the wealthiest residents of the area. Even though they were commonly of rural, indigenous descent, their marginally greater wealth, their literacy, and their privileged position of power led them to self-identify as “non-Indian” and pejoratively racialize average community members as “Indians.” Complaints against highly abusive district authorities fill Ayacucho's archives, but provincial, departmental, and national authorities rarely paid attention to these protests and frequently re-appointed the same men. Campesinos' frustration with these abusive district authorities stands out as one of the key features of twentieth-century politics in rural Ayacucho.⁸

Llamojha recalled how Concepción's three abusive district authorities, Castillo, Agüero, and Chávez, angrily resisted community members' efforts to elect a new personero legal:

In the first assembly, we gathered and we asked them to come, but they didn't want to go.

They said, “We haven't called this assembly! Why would we go to an assembly of Indians?”

Well, fine. We gladly carried out our meeting. After that, we named our provisional directing junta. Then, with the new provisional junta, we formally requested that the election of a personero legal be carried out by ministerial order.

We communicated with Lima, and the ministry replied, saying, “On this day, this date, the inspector of Indian affairs will come. He will preside over the election.”

The Ayacucho inspector of Indian affairs communicated with us, answering from Ayacucho. His letter said, “This memo has reached us. The Ayacucho inspector of Indian affairs is going to come on such-and-such day.”

Because he was governor, Agüero got the letter.

“Who do you think you are, calling the inspector?” he asked. “There's no chance he will come, no chance he'll pay attention to you! I am the one who has to call him to come! He is going to stay at my house. You don't even have a place to house him!”

He read the memo, threw it on the floor, and started to crush it with his foot. He started to stomp on the memo! I left. That night, I informed the provisional junta in an assembly. Demetrio Gutiérrez was there. He was an employee of the Ayrabamba hacienda, but he fought for Concepción. He was really gutsy!

“Caramba! How could the governor do this? We have to denounce the governor,” Demetrio Gutiérrez said. Then he said, “I have a house! We are going to have the inspector stay there. How could that damned governor say we don’t have a house?”

On the appointed day, we sent a delegation to Pampa Cangallo to meet the inspector. On the way here, the delegation told the inspector what these three district authorities were like.

Because the inspector had been told about what life in the pueblo was like, he said, “I will have our authorities, the *envarados* [customary indigenous authorities who enforced moral order in indigenous communities], here alongside me.”

The *envarados* were the local police, the pueblo’s police.⁹

The next day, the inspector was eating breakfast with the *envarados* at his side. The *envarados* were there with their *bastones* [ceremonial staffs of authority]. When they were eating their breakfast, these three authorities came through the front door.

“Mr. Inspector! How can you be here in this house? You should have come to my house!” the governor said.

“Mr. Governor, I am in a house; I’m not in the street. I’m in a house, with my police at my side. So, Mr. Governor, please wait for me outside, because I am going to finish my breakfast.”

The inspector then went the town hall, accompanied by the *envarados*. It was lovely! They got to the town hall and they started to put the names of the candidates for personero legal on the chalk board. There I was, number one. Governor Agüero came from his house when I was leading the vote.

He said, “Mr. Inspector! I cannot permit this Indian to become the legal representative! This Indian doesn’t know how to read, he isn’t even from the pueblo. I don’t know where he came from.”

The inspector told him to go to hell! “Mr. Governor! You are in charge in your house, not here! Go home!”

So, the governor left in a rage. He entered his home and he grabbed a chair, threw it to the ground, and started to stamp his feet in rage. The inspector had put these three authorities in their place.

This is how the election was. I won the election, as legal representative. Those three men were enraged.

In many communities, these kinds of abusive district authorities ranked among the wealthiest local peasants, owning larger plots of land than their neighbors or melding agricultural work with other forms of paid employment, like teaching positions or store ownership. When I asked Llamojha if this was the case with Castillo, Agüero, and Chávez, he said no. Instead, what set these men apart from their neighbors was their schooling.

It was that they had an education—Agüero had a high-school education, Chávez just had elementary, and Castillo had just four years of elementary. Castillo thought of himself as being like God around here, as being of a superior race. He thought he was better than all the people from here, and that’s why he treated us like Indians. He thought ill of us, and that’s why the pueblo didn’t get along well with him, or with the three of them.

Noting his frequent mentions of anti-indigenous prejudice, I asked Llamojha if racism was a major problem in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

Yes, it was serious, both here in the pueblo itself and on the haciendas. The dominant ones, the hacendados, treated us in the worst way, insulting us.

“Indians! Outlaw Indians!” they’d say. That’s how they treated us.

They always said that we were of different blood, of a different race.

Llamojha also explained that such racist ideas even worked their way into his own family. He described his sister Donatilda:

She was very cold.

She would say to me, “What are you involved in? The people, the Indians, what are they going to do for you?”

“You’re Indian, too!” I’d say.

She was white, really white-skinned. When she was little, my dad really liked her, he didn’t ever want her to cry. That’s why she lived so proudly. She didn’t even want to look at us.

Despite the concerted opposition of Concepción’s three abusive district authorities, Llamojha began serving as Concepción’s personero legal in 1956. He described his duties:

As personero legal, I had to represent the community and go to the authorities, to the ministries, bringing reports about the community, because

it was in a fight with neighboring hacendados over our borders. I complained that the authorities shouldn't support the hacendados who had taken over sixteen hundred hectares of land belonging to Concepción. I always acted in defense of all the pueblos that belonged to the province of Vilcashuamán; I walked around everywhere.

As personero, I started to fight against the hacendados' abuses. I presented the denunciations myself. I didn't need a lawyer, because I had trained myself well. Buying books, reading the laws, I learned everything and I composed the documents myself.

As personero legal, Llamojha actively defended Concepción's indigenous peasants in their conflicts with the neighboring hacendados Elodia Vassallo de Parodi, her son César Parodi, Alfonso Martinelli, Juan Echegaray, and Abel Alfaro. Each of these hacendados encroached on Concepción's lands, forced Concepción's campesinos to work hacienda lands and labor in hacienda homes without payment, and unjustly seized community members' animals. The kinds of abuses they perpetrated were commonplace among hacendados of the era. Llamojha had much to say about these landowners. Note that Llamojha mentions campesinos referring to these hacendados as papá (father) and, in Elodia Vassallo de Parodi's case, mamá (mother). Those labels reflected long-standing patterns of deferential respect and, more important, indigenous peasants' attempts to evoke feelings of paternalism (or maternalism) in hacendados and thereby limit abuses.

Elodia was the principal leader of the hacendados, the strongest force. Eight days after my first election as personero, she sent me a letter from Ayrabamba saying, "Now that you are legal representative, we are going to come to an agreement. First, you have to go to Lima and sign a document."

She had made the first two Concepción personeros sign a ministerial document promising to send people to work on the Ayrabamba hacienda for free for one month. The whole community, all the community members, had to work. The women had to go and do domestic service in the hacienda's house. These papers in the ministry said all of this. The personero who started new in the post had to sign this document. Elodia sent me a letter saying this.

She also tried to buy me off. She sent that letter with a bag of oranges and six bottles of *aguardiente* [sugarcane alcohol]. And she promised to buy me a house and find me work in a government ministry.

I answered the letter saying, "Ma'am, we do not live on the hacienda. We live in our community. No one is going to go to work for free. You have to pay. You have to follow through with your duty. In addition, you should not carry out hierbaje. This has been prohibited," I said.

So she presented a denunciation against Concepción, saying that the Indians of Concepción and Jhajhamarka had invaded Ayrabamba to destroy it. She claimed that the house was completely gone and that there was no sugarcane left, that we had burned everything.

It was a lie. So, I went to Lima to present a denunciation against Ayrabamba. When I was about to return, I found out there was an order for my arrest. There were all sorts of checkpoints with orders to arrest me, so I couldn't go back to Concepción. So I sent a telegram to my mom, to my wife, and to a relative who was in Ayacucho, saying that I had died. They believed it was true!

I sent that telegram in order to be able to travel freely! Here in Concepción, they rang the church bells for my death and they held a wake with my clothing [a traditional Andean religious practice known as the *pacha vela*]. I had a cousin in Ayacucho, he got my death announced on the radio. All the court authorities found out and they believed that I was dead, so they lifted the order for my arrest! So I came back in peace. You have to carry out these kinds of intrigues!

When I arrived, those three people who were against me, they informed Ayrabamba, the hacienda.

They said, "The dead man has been resuscitated!"

"Ask the authorities to capture him!"

So, they presented a document to the authorities in Vischongo, saying that the dead man had come back to life! Vischongo then informed the Cangallo subprefecture, saying that the dead man had been resurrected! Elodia likewise filed a complaint against me, denouncing me for actions against the public faith.

The denunciations from the hacendada Elodia Vassallo de Parodi were so serious that Llamojha had to contact lawyers, an action that cost him a significant amount of money. He recalled that the lawyers told him:

"There is an order for your capture! The situation is grave! You have to hide in Lima for seven years!" they said to me.

"Why would I hide for seven years? I haven't done anything."

"But your mamá Elodia has denounced you, saying that you have de-

stroyed the hacienda house. So, you have to go into hiding for seven years. We can't get you out. Anyway, the court is closed until the 18th of March," they said. "So, if you want to turn yourself over to the court, you have to hide until they reopen."

So, I went to Huanta.

After a few months of hiding in the northern Ayacucho city of Huanta, Llamojha went to the city of Ayacucho to present himself before the courts. The story he narrates of this experience reveals his frustration with Peru's notoriously slow criminal justice system. It was not unusual for trials to drag on for years, and court inaction sometimes left accused individuals stuck in wretched jails for extended periods, even years, without convictions.¹⁰ Llamojha tried to circumvent a long preliminary wait in jail by simply going straight to the courts.

When they opened the court, I went to turn myself in. The denunciation was serious.

"I've come because of the denunciation." I said.

"Go turn yourself in at the police post!"

"But here is the denunciation. The arrest order came from here, so that's why I've come."

"Go turn yourself in at the police post, so they can arrest you!"

I didn't want to go. I went to the court daily, for four or five days, but nothing happened! They didn't want to take my statement.

"Go to the police post! Go to the police post," they said to me.

It was a Friday afternoon; it was five o'clock and everyone was getting ready to leave. I entered the court and said, "Please take my statement. Today is Friday, and I have to leave the city."

"Go on, go turn yourself in at the police post."

"Why would I turn myself in there, when I have the denunciation right here?"

Because they didn't want to do it, because they were getting ready to leave, I said, "Fine, then, sir. I am going to leave a deposition, please allow me to use the typewriter." So, I sat down at the typewriter and put in the paper to write a deposition.

"You! Who are you grab the typewriter?"

"You won't attend to me, so I have to do it myself!"

"Fine. Go and get your lawyer."

I went down and got my lawyer. He started to take my statement in

relation to the denunciation. I gave my statement about the invasion of Ayrabamba. It took a long time, from five until eight o'clock at night. I explained what had happened with the false denunciation about the destruction of the Ayrabamba hacienda. I clarified all of this. After that, it was eight at night, and they sent me to jail.

As Llamojha continued his story, he highlighted his own morality and honor, stressing that he did not evade imprisonment despite his obvious opportunity to do so.

Because it was already nighttime, they sent me to look for the police.

"Go, look for police who can take you to the jail!"

So I went and looked. There weren't any close by. I found a police officer down at the corner.

"Come! They're calling for you in the court," I said.

"What are they calling me for?"

"I don't know," I said.

At the court, they said, "Take this young man to jail." They gave him a document and he took me to jail.

Then the policeman said to me, "You came and got me for this! Why didn't you escape?"

"Why would I escape?"

Llamojha remained imprisoned for a month, and he returned to Concepción on his release, probably in early 1958.¹¹ To get back to Concepción, he needed to find a vehicle headed in that direction, or he would face a very long, grueling walk that would take several days to complete. As he told the story of his return, describing a subterfuge involving Elodia Vassallo's son, César Parodi, he emphasized both his cunning and the helpful collaboration of others, two key themes that run through many of his stories.

I was in jail a month in the Ayacucho prison. They went and investigated, but they didn't find any evidence of an invasion in Ayrabamba. Instead, they found that everything was in order—the house and the cane fields were still there—so I was set free.

I left the jail to come back to Concepción, but there was no way to get back home. Ayrabamba's chauffeur was in Ayacucho, and he saw me and asked me, "What are you doing here?"

I said to him, "I'm leaving jail, but I don't have any way to get back. The car left without me."

"Here's the Ayrabamba car. Let's go," he said to me. But the owner [César Parodi] was there.

"The owner is going to see me!" I said.

"He won't see you. You'll ride on top and I'll cover you with a canopy. He's going to go inside the car so he won't see you."

So, I climbed up and they took me to Ayrabamba. When we arrived in Ayrabamba, the owner got out and then I came down from on top of the car. He didn't see me!

After the conflict with Elodia Vassallo de Parodi, an even more serious dispute erupted in April 1959 with the hacendado Abel Alfaro, owner of the Mejrada hacienda. Llamojha described Alfaro:

He was really liked by the pueblo. Everything was very good and the pueblo was fine with him. But then he started to plant a piece of land that belonged to Concepción. He wanted to take over the terrain from this zone, so he plowed it with seven teams of oxen and planted wheat. The whole community rose up.

The women were the bravest. The women immediately got involved and demanded that the people uproot this planting. We uprooted it and planted barley. So Alfaro started a lawsuit, accusing us of an armed attack.

Alfaro brought five police officers to his hacienda. That night, one of the hacienda workers came to warn me.

This worker came and told me, "Alfaro has brought police; they're going to come and capture you tomorrow."

In the morning, while I was watching, the police came down to Concepción on horseback. Back behind this house, there is a big tree, a *molle* tree, and I climbed it. The police entered our house, looked around, got the kids out of bed, and the kids started crying, screaming. The police broke everything that they found. Everything. They even threw the table onto the floor. They climbed the hill to look for me, but they couldn't find me.

They went from house to house, they went all the way up the hill, but I was hidden in my tree. At three that afternoon, they left the governor's house and they entered a store on the corner and started drinking.

I was really angry, so I climbed down from my tree and went to go and ring the church bell, so that people would come out of their homes and start to gather. I turned up the street and a woman saw me.

"Here he is! He's escaping!" she said.

It wasn't the police who came, but Alfaro himself. He came with his horse. I

had gone into the church tower to ring the bell, and he climbed up the tower behind me. Inside the tower, he pulled me from behind when I was climbing up the stairs. He pulled me down, and he grabbed me, kicking me. Then, he got on his horse and he started to trample me. At that moment, three women appeared. They pulled him off me. They defended me, these three women.

From there, I ran over to the cornfield. I thought to myself, "If I hide here, they're going to find me."

I decided to go over the fence but as I was climbing up it, two police came. I got down off of the fence and I stayed there.

"They're going to grab me," I said.

The police turned around, they passed me, and I greeted them. They passed right in front of me, because they didn't know who I was!

So many police were looking for me, going from house to house. Everyone got mad.

"Why do you have to come in here?" they said to the police. "He doesn't live here. He must be in Lima." The women said this. Women are the ones who always participate in the struggle. Without the woman, there can be no triumph!

Women not only participated in this 1959 dispute with the hacendado Alfaro, they were also targeted for arrest by police forces.

A total of thirteen women and three men were jailed. Alfaro accused them of armed attack. The police were pursuing me in the pueblo, and because they couldn't find me, they started to seize the women.

The arrested included Llamojha's mother, his wife, Esther, and his two-year-old son Herbert.¹² In a letter Llamojha wrote to an Ayacucho senator, he described how police officers broke into numerous peasant homes at three o'clock in the morning. When they found women sleeping alone in their homes, the officers attempted to rape them. The officers next seized fourteen people: seven women and five men, a baby and a toddler.¹³ Ten of those detainees—including doña Esther and the very young Herbert—were then transferred to the city of Ayacucho, forced to walk there on foot, "carrying their bags and children on their backs." The officers subjected the detainees to "beatings and kicks," and several elderly women fell down as they struggled to walk. All of the detained were accused of "attack by armed force."¹⁴

Following these arrests, Llamojha wanted to meet with his fellow community members to decide on an appropriate response to this police violence,

but it was difficult to arrange such a meeting without attracting the police's attention. He credited a local female peasant with finding the needed solution.

I was hidden in the hills with the community president and we decided to go to Lima. We had to meet with the rest of the community, but there were forty police officers in Concepción, and they wouldn't let anyone go out at night. But there was a woman who always intervened bravely in Concepción. Celia Cuba.

She took action. Caramba! We couldn't hold a meeting in the pueblo, so she decided to carry out the meeting in the cemetery. It was a trick!

She went to the police and said, "A baby has died, and we're going to bury him at night."

The tradition here is to hold a burial with music, with a harp, a violin, and the ringing of the church bells. The police agreed, and so everyone came out for the meeting that night. The community president and I were hidden in the puna, and we came down to the cemetery. They came, carrying a coffin and singing. They'd prepared a baby's coffin. The police didn't intervene. She'd left a case of beer for the police to drink!

We held the meeting in the cemetery and I consulted with the masses. After that, the community president and I left for Lima.

We had to go on foot, because we couldn't pass through the police checkpoints on the road. My brother Emilio went with us. He brought his little horse to carry food for the journey. We had to walk for fifteen days to get to Ica.

Llamojha, his brother Emilio, and the community president had very little money between the three of them. They were forced to abandon Emilio's horse as they walked, unable to bring the animal along once they made the decision to catch a ride on a passing truck.¹⁵ By the time they got to the department of Ica—the halfway point of the journey—they had only enough money to send one man on to Lima. Llamojha made that trip while his brother Emilio and the community president remained behind, finding temporary work that would finance their trip back home to Concepción. Llamojha explained that they arrived first in Ica.

The next day, I left for Lima. Once I arrived in Lima, I started to run around, presenting documents. My complaints were published in newspapers, in *El Comercio*, in *La Crónica*. And that's how we got the female prisoners out of jail.

Llamojha's ideas about women deserve close attention, for he expressed contradictory ideas about gender and women's roles in our interviews. He staunchly opposed his wife's desire to find paid employment outside the home, and he even jokingly threatened her with physical violence. Yet throughout his stories he voiced tremendous respect for women. He recognized Elodia Vassallo de Parodi as the leading force among local hacendados, and he routinely celebrated the role of women as rural activists. Referencing women's reactions to a canceled meeting in 1962, Llamojha remembered peasant women saying:

"You men, why are you retreating? Why? You are cowards! You don't have pants! Lend us your pants and we'll put them on, and we'll make them respect us!" The women gave us courage.¹⁶

Certainly, some of that praise may have been related to the fact that his interviewers, Alicia and I, were female. But Llamojha also made such declarations in highly public settings. In a public speech in November 2011, he recalled the work of two women who pressed the village council to fight for Concepción's legal transformation into a provincial district, a feat accomplished in 1954:

They were the ones who were the driving force. They were like mothers to all of us guys who were dawdling, pulling us by the ears. My ears hurt to this day! Back in those times, women were the ones who made the village council move forward, who made us fight and work for the creation of the district.

Llamojha's descriptions of female activists reflected the fact that campesina women often took a prominent role in rural politics during the mid-twentieth century. Andean women routinely marched at the forefront of the groups of peasants who seized hacienda lands—a strategy based on the calculation that soldiers and police would be less likely to use violence against women than men—and they voiced strong opinions about their communities' problems.¹⁷ Yet women in Peru's rural Andean communities also faced terrible problems of domestic violence and systematic subordination in community affairs.¹⁸ Sexism and respect often operated simultaneously, and Llamojha's stories reveal as much.

Personal Costs

After hearing about Llamojha's activities in the 1950s, I asked him what his happiest times were in those years. He answered:

I didn't have any happy moments in those years, because I was pursued all the time. From the moment I started, I never relaxed. I didn't give up. Other authorities started to struggle, but they stopped when they were threatened with jail. But not me. I continued, doing what I felt like. Why would I give up?

I followed up by asking what his most difficult moments were during the 1950s.

When the police started chasing me, defending the hacendados. Because of the hacendados' complaints, the police pursued me. I could never stay here in the house, hardly at all, because I was always running. I never gave up. Each year I went to jail two or three times. Jail was like my home! The hacendados denounced me, and I was hunted everywhere in Peru. The police came at every moment to look for me, to take me prisoner.

One of the many denunciations Llamojha faced related directly to the events of April 1959. The hacendado Abel Alfaro informed Ayacucho's prefect that the police had entered Concepción to investigate death threats that Concepción residents had made against him. By Alfaro's telling, Llamojha then goaded Concepción residents into an armed attack. Alfaro wrote:

The community, under the instigation of the ringleader don Manuel Llamocca Mitma, rose up against the Police Commission, numbering more than 150 people, surprising the four members [of the police], mistreating them, detaining them for more than twelve hours. In this same circumstance, the community members yelled out and decided to kill me. . . . They lamented that I hadn't gone with the commission, because they would have killed me immediately, but they decided to do that on the first opportunity.¹⁹

Although the hacendado's version of events had little basis in fact, Peruvian authorities heeded it, and Llamojha had to go into hiding once again. Numerous documents from the latter half of 1959 describe him as a fugitive wanted on charges of "attack by armed force."²⁰

Although Llamojha evaded arrest for a time, he was eventually captured

and placed in jail. *Sierra*, a Lima newspaper written by Andean migrants in the capital and attentive to issues involving Peru's southern Andes, forcefully denounced this arrest in a story titled "Imprisoned for Defending His Pueblo." After outlining the groundless nature of the charges against Llamojha, *Sierra's* writers made a public call to Ayacucho's political, judicial, and police authorities: "Your support for the unjust pretensions of the hacendados against the rights of an entire pueblo like Concepción is stimulating a deep resentment among the indigenous population, whose results could be bloody. . . . It is time to intervene and fulfill your duty, in keeping with the law, to act in favor of the humble and destitute pueblo, pressing for justice."²¹

Conditions in jail were extremely difficult, and Llamojha told of being tortured in prison.

I remember that once, before they took me to Lima, there were around twenty of us imprisoned in the police headquarters. An official was hitting us. They threw us on the ground and they walked around, beating us with a stick. They even walked on top of us, while we writhed in pain.

But Llamojha rarely dwelled on his own persecution during our interviews. Wanting to stress his triumphs as an activist, he instead answered questions about imprisonment with stories about his own ingenuity or the solidarity of police and prison guards. He cast himself as an affable trickster, able at times to earn the sympathies of those paid to punish him. As he continued his answer to the question about his most difficult moments in the 1950s, he spun his reply into one of these ingenuity/solidarity tales.

The police who didn't know who I was couldn't catch me.

They'd arrive in the community and ask me, "Do you know Manuel Llamojha?"

"Yes, but he's not here," I'd say. "He must be over there, walking around in the hills. He's out with his sheep."

And so they'd take me along! "Let's go! Help us look for him. You know him," they'd say.

I went up into the hills with the police, to search for myself! And when we looked in the bushes, we didn't find me!

"He's not here anymore! Where could he have gone? He must surely be in another pueblo, because he walks around in other towns," I'd say.

The hacendados always denounced me, and they made the police hunt me down. But then the police realized what was going on, and they didn't

pursue me as much. The police received arrest orders to come and capture me. Sometimes they got lazy about coming here, and they'd send me a telegram from Cangallo!

"There is an arrest order against you. Turn yourself in," they'd say to me.

"Turn yourself in! If you don't, we'll come and get you."

I would go, I'd show up, and they'd let me sleep in their houses. The next day: to court.

"Here. We've captured him," they'd say.

Each year, I'd go to jail three times. The police knew who I was, and so they were actually considerate. At night, they'd let me out of prison.

"Go on! Go for a walk in the streets," they'd say.

They'd let me out at nine, I'd leave and go for a stroll in the streets, and then, at eleven at night, I'd return to go to sleep in the jail.

I have sacrificed much for my pueblo. Always imprisoned; every year in jail. But the hacendados didn't manage to frighten me. They didn't scare me.

Llamojha's stories about jail also emphasized how he turned prisons into sites of activism. As he described his monthlong imprisonment in 1958 over the fictitious assault on the Ayrabamba hacienda, he commented:

I arrived at the jail, and all those imprisoned, all the convicts, they already knew me and so they greeted me with applause! When I was in jail, I helped them with their documents, their requests, and that's why all the prisoners knew me. This time, too, I arrived and they clapped. The next day, they asked me to draw up their papers, their documents, requesting their release.

The conditions in Peruvian jails were abysmal. Prisoners suffered from severe overcrowding and poor sanitation and were dependent on family and friends to provide them with enough food to allow their survival. Even basic necessities, including water, were often in short supply.²² Prisoners generally lacked the financial resources needed to hire good lawyers, making Llamojha's services as a scribe all the more valuable to them. In response to questions about conditions in jail, he again replied in a way that minimized his own suffering and instead highlighted his continuing activism.

In jail, sure, there is mistreatment against those prisoners who behave badly. And in the jail, if you don't have family, there is no one to bring you food. I never suffered for lack of food, because I always wrote up doc-

uments for the prisoners and so they'd make me eat. I prepared defense documents. And the judges, the police, they started to complain.

They'd say, "He wants to be in control here!"

Documents stored in Ayacucho's archives similarly show the ways Llamojha continued his struggles from jail, lobbying for prisoners' rights. He penned a lengthy letter of protest while imprisoned in March 1957.²³ The letter demonstrates his jail activism just as it exposes the horrific conditions prisoners endured, as well as the realities of the corruption in the Peruvian judicial system. A portion of the letter read:

Our situation as prisoners grows more terrible and deplorable each day, because in addition to being deprived of our liberty, we find ourselves deprived of basics like water and other primordial life necessities . . . our stomachs should not be punished in this inhumane way because of the lack of water in the jail. Because of this, many of us have fallen ill.²⁴

The letter further charged that three prisoners had died of starvation and urged the president of Ayacucho's Supreme Court to ensure that prisoners' basic needs were met. Not stopping there, Llamojha's letter went on to accuse a provincial court judge of corruption, charging that he kept some individuals imprisoned unjustly while he released other prisoners after they paid him hefty bribes.²⁵ Such corruption was far from unusual in the Peruvian justice system.²⁶

Llamojha also used the discussion of prison to highlight campesinos' enduring support for him. Rather than emphasizing his own victimization and suffering, his jail stories stress peasants' devotion. He told his CVR interviewers that while he was imprisoned,

three people from Santa Rosa de Cochamarca [a community in the district of Concepción] came to the court.

They said to the judge, "Lock us up instead! We need him in our pueblo, let him go!"

The judge said, "Why would I lock you up? You haven't committed any crime."

"He has work to do in the pueblo! Let him out!"

They came from [the nearby hacienda of] Pomacocha, too. They took turns coming to see me in jail, when I was detained in the province. They brought me food. The campesinos never abandoned me.

The consequences of Llamojha's activism stretched beyond his constant imprisonment. Some of the costs of his struggles were more literal: his work as an activist did not bring a steady income. I asked him how he earned a living during his years as an activist.

Working in the fields, nothing more. But I didn't have much time to work, because they took me prisoner all the time, all the time.

It was also difficult for Llamojha to find temporary paid employment on nearby haciendas—something many Concepción campesinos relied on for money. He explained:

The hacendados didn't trust me. They'd throw me out. Ayrabamba was the worst; they didn't let me work there.

When I'd go out to travel around the countryside, my wife was always here [in Concepción] with the kids. I'd come back and sometimes, the pueblos would have given me food and I'd bring it to my family. Sometimes I'd be given a little goat and I'd bring it home. That made her happy.

Llamojha was sometimes able to earn money by getting casual office work in the city of Ayacucho.

I worked from time to time. They always gave me work, as a casual job. There were several lawyers who always gave me temporary work in their offices.²⁷ Because I was a typist, they gave me papers to copy.

I often worked for a man who was a congressional deputy; he's dead now. I don't remember his name. When I came to Ayacucho, they always gave me a little bit of work, even if it was just for a week, sometimes for a month.

An additional factor complicating Llamojha's life involved travel. From the time he began working with Jhajhamarka campesinos in 1948, his dedication to indigenous peasants and their struggles meant that he was frequently away from his home and his family. He helped campesinos in other communities organize, he assisted them in preparing letters of protest and legal documents, and he traveled to Lima to petition government officials on their behalf.

I was Concepción's representative and I was a union representative for various haciendas. The campesinos from the haciendas, they always came and took me to their communities. Sometimes on horse, sometimes on foot. They named me as their representative, and I went from place to



FIG. 3.1 Manuel Llamojha (left), Ayacucho, date unknown. Photo courtesy of Manuel Llamojha Mitma.

place this way. The peasants didn't leave me alone. Campesinos called me everywhere, because of the haciendas' abuses. So I went around with my typewriter. Wherever I arrived, I prepared complaints, documents, and presented them to department authorities and to the government itself. Sometimes, I traveled to Lima and presented these documents in the government palace. The government palace was my home!

Llamojha also spent a great deal of time preparing maps for communities in the Vilcashuamán region, as they were required to present detailed maps of their territory before they could receive government recognition as official indigenous communities. They also needed those maps for use in court, to defend their lands against encroachment by surrounding haciendas.

You make maps with special paper, and it has to be with India ink. All the pueblos asked me to make their maps. I measured with a rope, so that all

of the distances would come out exactly right. I'd walk around the entire community and up all the hills using a ten-meter-long rope, showing how far it was from the ground to the top of the hill, all of that. That's why all of the communities got their recognition easily. No authority rejected my maps, because they were done exactly the same way engineers would do them.

Llamojha recalled that he was taking measurements in one community when three delegates from another community approached him.

"Can you come to our community and draw up a map?" they asked me.

"Sure. You name me and I'll go."

They returned to their community and informed a community assembly that I would be making the map.

"What's he going to do?" asked some other community members. "He doesn't know how to do it. He doesn't have a helmet, he doesn't have boots [the standard gear of agricultural engineers]!"

So they hired a teacher from Vilcashuamán instead. He agreed to make the map in exchange for a bull. But he made the map like a schoolboy would, a doodle on cardboard, nothing more. He also prepared the memo himself, requesting recognition for the community, but he didn't do it the way lawyers would. They presented the request to the ministry and the ministry rejected it. So they came back to me.

I went and I spent two days walking across all the hills. You have to measure the distances, the elevations, the paths, all of that, the way engineers do. I followed all of these rules and the community got recognized. I got recognition for all of the communities that belong to Vilcashuamán.

Llamojha's work with campesinos from other communities carried a significant personal cost: it meant that he was regularly away from home and his family had to make do without him. The dual realities of his time away from home—time when he could have been laboring on the family's agricultural plots—and his unpaid work as an activist placed significant financial burdens on his wife and children. I broached the subject of family finances by asking him whether or not his wife, Esther, found paid employment when the family lived in Lima during the early 1950s.

No, not at first. Then something happened and she left and went to work in a house. I was looking for her. She came back after a month.

"Where were you? Should I hit you?" I asked.

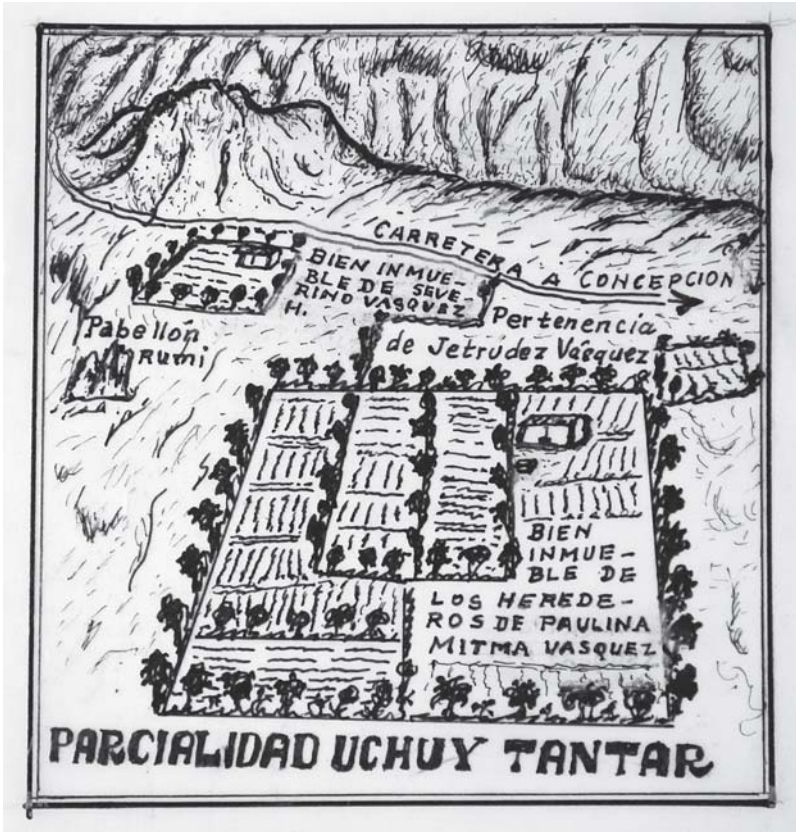


FIG. 3.2 Map drawn by Llamojha.

"I was in a house, working." When she came back, she'd brought me some underwear that she had purchased.

"I brought you some underwear. Put it on."

"But what were you doing in another house? Who took you there?" I asked.

"I looked for the job myself."

"But why would you look for it, when you have a life here at home?"

"I wanted to work."

"You escaped!" I said.

She worked for three months in that house. She only came back home once a month. But after three months, she didn't go back to work.

"I'll stay here now." And that's how we spent our life. We understood each other.

I met doña Esther Puklla only once, just over a week before she died, suddenly and unexpectedly, from an aneurysm. She struck me as a woman of sharp wit and quick intelligence. There was much affection between husband and wife. When Llamojha tried on a new hat I had brought him as a gift, doña Esther commented that he looked very handsome and laughingly wondered if some other woman would now steal him away from her.

But in our brief conversations, she noted the hardships she suffered because of her husband's activism. He was absent from their home for long stretches, whether because he was in prison, in other parts of the country working with peasants, in hiding, or even—in 1965—abroad. He was routinely away for months at a time, leaving her alone with their five children. Two of his daughters later told me that they did not see much of their father during their childhood and that their mother was the one who essentially raised them. Llamojha's daughter Hilda recalled, "We almost didn't see him. He'd come and go, come and go. We practically didn't see him; we were just with my mother. He'd always disappear. Sometimes he'd come after a year, after six months, he'd appear. It was like he was a visitor. One day he was here then the next he disappeared."²⁸

Doña Esther's life was rendered even more difficult by the family's financial hardships. Besides the brief stint of domestic service Llamojha describes in this chapter, she worked in the family's fields and sold agricultural goods to the nearby Ayrabamba hacienda. Their children also had to work from a young age, something that was not unusual among impoverished Peruvian families, in both the countryside and cities. When my research assistant Alicia Carrasco asked Llamojha's son Walter what his father had done for a living, Walter answered, "My dad spent more of his time organizing people. My mom had a lot of patience with this. We worked with my mom in the fields, we lived doing this. From the time I was a little boy, I went to work on other peoples' fields, to work with harvests, with plantings. That's how we lived." He later added, "We always had trouble with money."²⁹

Llamojha's constant imprisonments only added to the family's difficulties. His daughter Hilda recalled how difficult it was when her father was imprisoned. When asked what those times had been like, she answered, "very sad. We grew up alone." She recalled staying in the house with her younger brother Walter, tending to him while her mother went to the Ayrabamba hacienda to sell coca, alcohol, and fruit. "I was left to care for the animals," she recalled, "the chickens and pigs."³⁰

As already mentioned, doña Esther was herself a target of repression—



FIG. 3.3 Esther Honorata Pukla, Concepción, 2011. Photo by Alicia Carrasco Gutiérrez.

jailed when police could not find her husband. She also suffered the repeated trauma of seeing her husband imprisoned. Walter recalled, “When I was a boy, I overheard my grandmother Paulina Mitma and my mother talking. They talked and cried, asking why my father had been detained and imprisoned. And they just had to wait until he would be released.”³¹ Llamojha’s brother Emilio recalled how Manuel’s imprisonments affected their mother. “She felt it so strongly. My mother would always say to me, ‘Go visit your brother.’ She always visited him.” Llamojha’s brother Víctor similarly recalled, “The poor thing always went on foot. I’d say to her, ‘Mom, don’t go anymore.’”³²

Police harassment affected Llamojha’s children, too. Walter recalled how one evening when he was little, a community member stopped by the house and told Llamojha that the police were looking for him. “My dad said to us, ‘When the police come, you’re going to tell them that I went to Lima by airplane. That’s what you’re going to say when they come to look for me.’ And then he went and hid. The police came on horseback, they came to the patio. I looked at the police and I wasn’t scared. They started to search through the house, from corner to corner. And when they asked me where my dad was, I told them he had gone to Lima in an airplane.”³³

Llamojha’s younger siblings were also impacted by his activism. Although his sisters Natividad and Donatilda do not figure prominently in his stories or in the archival record—both women died of cancer, Natividad in 1966, Donatilda in 1997—his brothers Emilio and Víctor themselves assumed leadership positions in Concepción between the 1960s and 1980s. Emilio, four years younger than Manuel, was one of several candidates nominated for governor of Concepción in 1961 and by the middle of the 1960s was serving as Concepción’s district mayor.³⁴ As he reflected on his relationship with Emilio, Llamojha commented:

He’s my younger brother, and he never abandoned me. He always went around with me.

Llamojha had a much more complicated relationship with his brother Víctor, fifteen years his junior, and the tensions between the two men had tragic consequences in the 1980s. Víctor likewise took an active role in Concepción’s politics, serving several times as governor, justice of the peace, mayor, and community president.³⁵ Llamojha also has a half-brother, Alejandro Alarcón, born in 1944, eight years after Llamojha’s father died. Llamojha speaks with much affection about his youngest sibling. As Llamojha phrased it:

He's the best one of us all.

Despite all the familial challenges and hardships brought on by Llamojha's activism, doña Esther largely supported her husband's struggles. Walter recalled, "She understood. So did my grandmother, . . . She always understood my father's work, and she never complained. Well, sure, there were moments when she complained, but she had to understand."³⁶ Llamojha's daughter Hilda said much the same. "Sometimes she complained, sometimes she said he was doing good things. 'He's doing all this for a good reason,' she'd say."³⁷ Llamojha offered a similar perspective. When asked what doña Esther thought of his life as a leader, he replied:

She was happy, because she struggled, too. She too was taken prisoner. She agreed with the struggle because we all suffered the hacendados' mistreatment. When I was hidden in the puna, she brought me food. She always accompanied me, and she never abandoned me. That's how we spent our lives: in the struggle.

The Power and Perils of Writing

One of Llamojha's most important tools as an activist was his writing. During his years as personero, he wrote dozens of letters decrying the abuses of the hacendados whose estates surrounded Concepción. These excerpts from two of his letters give a feel for both his writing style and the substance of his complaints.

Mr. Constitutional President of the Republic, Dr. Manuel Prado. . . .

In use of the faculty conferred by Article 60 of the Political Constitution of Peru, permit me to direct myself to the Nation's Supreme Head of State, soliciting that your Dispatch dictate orders so that the Ayacucho and Cangallo political authorities give ample and true guarantees to the inhabitants of the district of Concepción, who have been and are victims of the outrages and exactions contrary to justice. Those abuses are perpetrated by the owners of the bordering landholdings, such as Mr. Abel Alfaro Pacheco of the Mejorada Estate and Mrs. María E. vda. de Parodi of the San Germán de Ayrabamba hacienda.³⁸ Trying to usurp the communal terrains of the community I represent, they seize the comuneros' animals. Mr. Alfaro commits these acts frequently, even daily, with the cattle that pasture within our demarcated lands. He does this on his whim and

caprice, with the goal of imposing fines upon the owners, without showing consideration or even compassion for the humble and defenseless Indians' tears. . . .

It is the public and well-known truth that the inhabitants of the district I represent are victims of abuses and outrages. They are lugging the crucifix of their tragedy under a black cloak of oblivion, and still the doors of justice will not open for them. For this reason, many of them, unable to continue supporting the weight of adversity that destiny has imposed upon them, have found themselves forced to abandon their lands because of their poverty and migrate to this country's capital in search of their daily bread to sustain their offspring.

As such: I implore you to accept my petition and order the respective authority to give ample guarantees to Concepción's inhabitants so that they will not be harassed by these men. Concepción's community members can no longer continue living in permanent anxiety, threatened by the storms of gratuitous suffering. This is justice.³⁹

With phrases like "the crucifix of their tragedy" and "their daily bread," Llamojha infused his letters with references to Christianity. In a letter that followed the 1959 police assault on Concepción, he wrote to the director of Indian affairs using his ideas, his words, and his typewriter to contest Peru's highly unfair political system:

The pueblo, threatened by abusive storms, presented various memos before administrative authorities, asking that they be granted personal as well as patrimonial guarantees. They also asked for the hacendado Alfaro to abstain from invading the communal lands bordering his "Mejorada" estate and unjustly seizing community members' animals in order to charge them money . . . but, unfortunately, we have not merited the grace of being protected with justice, nor have we even been provided with guarantees. Instead, today the residents of the pueblo in general are feeling harassed with hostility by the police Mr. Alfaro brought from Ayacucho. And this is the reason that compels us to appear before you, Mr. Director, in demand of justice.⁴⁰

No doubt because of the very power of Llamojha's words, unsympathetic government authorities and local hacendados tried to use his writing skills against him, routinely accusing him of writing lies or composing falsified documents. As noted, those denunciations fit into a common historical prac-

tice of regional Andean elites blaming “indios leídos” (literate Indians) for fomenting troubles in the countryside.⁴¹ These accusations also resonated with an especially common complaint voiced by indigenous peasants themselves: that *tinterillos* (shyster scribes) abused their literacy for personal gain, tricking illiterate campesinos into signing falsified documents. Those fraudulent documents cheated indigenous peasants of resources, committed them to actions they did not want to take, and slandered individuals they actually supported.⁴² Government officials and hacendados mobilized these ideas to try to discredit Llamojha.

In a 1958 letter, Cangallo’s subprefect asserted that all the complaints Llamojha had raised in a letter to the Peruvian president were unfounded.⁴³ Ayacucho’s prefect, in turn, wrote the director general of government to inform him that the complaint Llamojha had sent was “completely false” and that none of the hacendados Llamojha had denounced had committed abuses. The prefect also charged that Llamojha enjoyed living a life of ease and that whenever he fell short of money to “live lazily” in Lima, “he comes to Concepción to promote conflicts and alarm the members of the community by making them believe that the aforementioned neighboring hacendados want to take away their animals and try to make them work on their estates without the due remuneration.” Llamojha’s goal, the prefect maintained, was to encourage community members to “gather together a bag of money so that he can travel to the capital of the republic, promising them that he will denounce these ‘imaginary’ facts to the President of the Republic and to the Minister of Government.”⁴⁴

The accusations against Llamojha sometimes bordered on the absurd. In one such case he was accused of “crimes against the public faith” in making counterfeit money. The “money” in question was clearly nothing more than the drawings of a schoolchild.⁴⁵

A boy from the school was playing, making drawings. He was happy with just one color, doodles. Back then, there used to be markets where they gather cattle for sale. This boy went there and tried to pass this money off, buying something. [The hacendado Abel] Alfaro was there. He called the boy to the side and said, “Tell them that Llamojha gave it to you.”

Then Alfaro loudly asked, “Who gave it to you?”

“Llamojha gave it to me,” the boy said.

The two of us were imprisoned. I was in jail for a month. The boy for eight months.



FIG. 3.4 Counterfeit bills used as evidence against Llamojha. Courtesy of Ayacucho Regional Archive.

The counterfeit money case was only one of the forgery charges Llamojha faced. Others were legion, and they carried serious consequences. He was imprisoned for nearly seven months in 1957, charged with forgery, usurpation of authority, and crimes against public peace for forging birth certificates and municipal documents.⁴⁶ While he did—as he laughingly admitted—occasionally forge birth and marriage certificates for desperate campesinos, most of the forgery charges against him were grossly exaggerated if not entirely fictitious. The hacendado Abel Alfaro informed police in August 1959 that a letter of complaint sent by two Concepción campesinos had to be a fake, as there were no such persons in the community. Alfaro's conclusion was that the letter “must be one of so many works of craftiness and wickedness” perpetrated by Llamojha.⁴⁷

Accusations of forgery also figured in local hacendados' efforts to have national authorities revoke Llamojha's status as Concepción's personero legal. The hacendados Abel Alfaro and Alfonso Martinelli began their effort to oust him from his role as personero in June 1958. In a letter to the minister of labor and Indian affairs, Alfaro and Martinelli decried Llamojha's “lack of moral suitability” for the post of personero, calling him a “known agitator and inciter who has a long criminal record.”⁴⁸ As evidence, the two hacendados referred to his previous imprisonments and included copies of a police report claiming that he was inciting local campesinos to invade a hacienda. In addition to several other accusations, their letter also claimed that he had

forged a receipt.⁴⁹ The letter achieved its desired effect. A subsequent government letter referred to the hacendados' charges and repeated a specious police claim that Llamojha resided permanently in Lima, rendering him unable to serve as personero.⁵⁰ Action was swift: on July 22, 1958, Ministerial Resolution 251 officially removed Llamojha from his post as personero.⁵¹

I was named personero numerous times. The hacendados always tried to annul my election. They presented denunciations to get my election annulled, but the community always named me again. They only named me. The struggle is really lovely when the masses are united.

Concepción's campesinos angrily contested Llamojha's removal. In a letter to the minister of labor and Indian affairs, over one hundred Concepción peasants declared that "the whole community makes our energetic protest against the wicked maneuvers" of the hacendados Alfaro and Martinelli leading the Bureau of Indian Affairs to have "unduly dictated the revocation of the mandate of our Personero Legal the Indian Manuel J. Llamocca Mitma." The letter stressed that Llamojha had done nothing wrong and emphasized that as the community had elected him, only the community had the right to remove him. The letter further asserted that the hacendados Alfaro and Martinelli had orchestrated his removal so as to "be able to continue committing seizures of animals and usurpation of communal terrains."⁵² Passionate statements of support for Llamojha also came from Lima. Seventy-five members of the Concepción migrant club petitioned the director general of Indian affairs, denouncing the fact that Llamojha had been ousted because of a complaint "formulated by the gamonales, exploiters, usurpers, abusers" who utilized "unfounded slanders, with unreliable and untrue documents . . . because they see that [Llamojha] is moral and he doesn't permit them to perpetrate abuses against the Indians he represents."⁵³

I told Llamojha about these documents and asked him to speak some more about how local hacendados pressed higher authorities to revoke his personero status. He shared the following story about how local hacendados arranged for a new community election, hoping that Concepción's campesinos would elect someone else to the post of personero.

The high boss of the Ayacucho police, the Cangallo subprefect, and the Ayacucho inspector of Indian affairs, all of them came, and with seven police on top of that. A huge number of people came.

The plaza was completely packed with people. Demetrio Gutiérrez was

there, too. He was an employee of the Ayrabamba hacienda, but he never did anything in their favor. Instead, he acted for Concepción. He walked around the plaza talking to people, explaining to them why they should vote for me and not for others.

The hacendado from Pacamarca, Juan Echegaray, came after him. He walked among the people, telling them not to vote for me. I was in the doorway of the town hall, and he came, making insinuations. I was standing, just like this, and there was a woman sitting down beside me. The owner of Pacamarca approached her.

He spoke to the woman in Quechua, "Hey, woman! You shouldn't vote for Llamojha!"⁵⁴

The woman answered in Quechua, "That's how we're going to vote, sir."

"Listen, woman, damn it! He's worthless!"

"Well, then we'll vote for him until he's worth something!"

Enraged, the hacendado went into the town hall. The voting started, and everyone voted for me. 380. 380 voted for me, fewer voted for the others, and I ended up elected. So the hacendados presented a document requesting that my election be annulled. They annulled my victory, and once again there were elections.

Ayacucho authorities continued to use accusations of forgery and trickery to cast doubt on Llamojha's actual popularity in Concepción.⁵⁵ Despite these accusations, he continually won reelection as personero. In June 1960, Concepción campesinos once again voted for a personero legal and chose Llamojha by an overwhelming majority: 356 of 532 votes. His next closest competitor won only seventy votes.⁵⁶ The migrant newspaper *Sierra* reported Llamojha's victory, noting that it had come despite the fact that the hacendados had offered free cane alcohol for every vote against him.⁵⁷ Local hacendados, however, refused to accept the vote. Abel Alfaro Pacheco and Juan Echegaray pressed Cangallo's subprefect to hold another election; the hacendados also pressured—and even bribed—community members to vote against Llamojha.⁵⁸ Yet he won that election, too.⁵⁹

Such displays of support notwithstanding, Peruvian government officials still refused to accept Llamojha's reelection. Determined to get his reelection as personero ratified, Concepción's campesinos looked in a new direction: they petitioned Peru's largest national campesino organization, the CCP, for help. Their August 1960 letter stated that as they were "fearful of once again being victims of a cunning ploy, we turn to this great campesino institution,

begging that you protect us from this class of outrages and coercion that is being used against the sovereign will of a community.”⁶⁰ The CCP answered this 1960 petition, lobbying the minister of labor and Indian affairs to ratify Llamojha’s election.⁶¹ This letter foretold a major political turn in Llamojha’s political life: just two years later, he was elected secretary general of the CCP.

