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# HUMAN FREEDOM AND GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY


## Abstract

Travel outside Vicos, especially to cities and to coastal plantations with modern, industrialized patterns of living, increased markedly among Indian inhabitants of this Andean mountain estate as one consequence of their liberation from serfdom by a joint program of Cornell University anthropologists and Peruvian government technicians.


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Recent analyses of Cornell Peru Project census data from Vicos, Peru,[1/] provide quantitative, contemporary evidence of an increase in geographic mobility produced by an increase in human freedom. This deliberately sought increase parallels on a small scale the great movement of Quechua-speaking Indians over the central Andes during the decades following the Spanish conquest which freed them from Inca controls over population movements.[2/] Vicos was a traditional Andean highland hacienda, a manor-like estate worked with Indian serfs with restricted freedom of movement[3/] until 1951 when the Cornell Peru Project intervened to transform the authoritarian patronal institution into a democratic decision-making one with its power diffused among the Indians, as well as to teach the Indians modern agricultural practices. Since 1957, Vicosinos have been de facto self-governing operators of a community farm enterprise that purchased the estate lands in 1962.[4/]

The total volume of travel outside Vicos by its inhabitants (counting only one trip per traveler to each locality visited, not all trips made) increased by forty-one percent between 1951 and 1963. While the number of Indians one year of age or older increased by twenty-four percent, the number that had ever traveled to eight types of areas outside Vicos increased by thirty-nine percent. Truly striking differences in patterns of external travel resulted from the newly acquired freedom of choice. Taking travel experience up to 1951 as equal to 100, journeys by Vicosinos to Conchucos, a farming and stock-raising region on the eastern slope of the Cordillera Blanca even more

isolated than Vicos which lies on its western slope, diminished relatively and absolutely to ninety-six. Travel to Vertientes, an area of rural villages and haciendas on the western slope of the Cordillera Negra, dropped even more to only thirty-two. Travel to Marcará, the Mestizo trading village and district capital six kilometers down-river to the west from the lower boundary of Vicos, rose in proportion to the general increase in external travel to 138. Trips to Carhuaz, the Mestizo trading town and provincial capital thirteen kilometers down the valley increased in 133.

Travel by Vicosinos to Huaraz, the departmental capital city thirty-five kilometers up the valley where wholesale purchasing is possible and credit has become available to Vicosinos, rose more than proportionately to 147. One completely new pattern of Vicosino travel within the Callejón de Huaylas emerged between 1951 and 1963. According to the Cornell Peru Project 1951 census, no Vicosinos had then journeyed north beyond Carhuaz. By 1963, in contrast, 169 Vicosinos reported having traveled to the lower part of the valley, mainly to Yungay and Huallanca. Thirty-four kilometers downriver from Vicos, the provincial capital of Yungay boasts a large market where both highland and coastal products are sold. Huallanca is the railhead of the line rising from the Pacific Coast at Chimbote, with repair shops and large hydroelectric generators that furnish the Chimbote steel plant with power. Most Vicosino visits there resulted from schoolboy excursions.

Vicosino trips to plantations, which function as transculturative[5/]

institutions where many Sierra Indians learn modern work and life-ways,[6/] and towns on the Peruvian coast more than doubled between 1951 and 1963 to an index of 213. The most important change in Vicosino travel experience, in terms of exposure to modern urban life and customs, occurred in trips to large coastal cities -- Lima, Chimbote, Trujillo, and Chiclayo -- which quadrupled between 1951 and 1963. Many trips to Trujillo and Chiclayo involved Vicos army conscripts serving two years there.

At the same time that the experiential horizons of the ex-serfs of Vicos have broadened through increasing travel to more modern rural and urban areas of Peru, internal social and economic development within Vicos has attracted back thirty families (6.7 percent of the households in 1961) that had previously migrated to coastal plantations,[7/] an apparently unique reversal of the prevailing high-land-to-Coast internal migration pattern in the country.

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