CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN A PERUVIAN EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY
SR. DE LOS MILAGROS IN LIMA, PERU, AND CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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When people move from one cultural environment to another, they do not automatically shed the cultural skin they acquired during their lifetimes to put on the new cultural skin characteristic of their new cultural environment. Instead, they retain some of their cultural baggage from the homeland in a manner relatively unchanged from traditional practice, re-interpret other parts of their cultural baggage in the context of their new cultural setting, and add to their cultural baggage items from their new cultural setting.

Having spent two years in Peru between 1967 and 1970 doing field work among a group of migrants to the capital city of Lima (Smith, 1971), it seemed only a logical step for me to pursue research in the expatriate Peruvian community in Chicago, Illinois. Here, my interest focused on the adaptation of Peruvians to their new cultural setting, a metropolitan setting characterized by considerable ethnic heterogeneity. In the long term, it also would be useful to compare the adaptation of small groups, such as Peruvians, with the adaptation of much larger groups (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, etc., in Chicago). In addition, in the long term, it would be useful to compare the adaptation of groups like the Peruvians to a culturally heterogeneous setting, with the adaptation of groups to a more culturally homogeneous setting (e.g., some of the recently arrived refugee groups from southeast Asia in culturally homogeneous areas of the U.S.). Another useful comparison could be made between the adaptation of urban migrants, like the Peruvians, to another urban environment and the adaptation of rural migrant groups to a foreign urban environment (e.g., the Hmong in Chicago).

However, these last three topics are beyond the scope of this paper. Discussion here is limited to the adaptation of the Peruvian community in Chicago, as demonstrated in the annual religious observance honoring Sr. de los Milagros (Lord of the Miracles).

A brief history of the procession in Lima is presented first, followed by a description of the procession there in contemporary (1968-1969) times. The paper then turns to a
discussion of the Peruvian community in Chicago, focusing on the Sr. de los Milagros observances. Cultural changes and continuities of both practical and symbolic nature in the observance of the procession will be discussed. I contend primarily that the function of this procession, originally an expression of religious devotion and concern about earthquakes and serious illness, is increasingly taking on in Chicago the characteristics of a demonstration of Peruvian national/ethnic identity.

HISTORY OF SR. DE LOS MILAGROS IN LIMA

The procession has a long history (Documental del Perú 1969, and Novena a Historia del Señor de los Milagros) in Lima, and dates to the early colonial period. In the mid-17th century, in an area then not too far outside of urban Lima, was a building used by Black slaves to celebrate their festivals. One of the slaves painted an image of the crucified Christ on the wall. An earthquake in 1655 demolished the building, except for the wall on which the image had been painted. The preservation of this wall was recognized as a miraculous event. Soon a medical cure was attributed to the image in response to offerings of candles and flowers that had been made. After people began to visit the image, a small chapel was built on the site, and the first commemorative mass was held in 1671. The devout supporters of the image increased, particularly after the earthquake of 1687 which, although it destroyed much of the city of Lima, left this wall standing and the image undamaged. The first procession took place to commemorate the earthquake. Sr. de los Milagros, as the image came to be known, became patron of the poor of the city and came under the care of the Carmelites. Subsequently, in 1749, another earthquake destroyed the church in which the image was housed, and the image was relocated to the monastery adjoining the Church of the Nazarenes where it still resides. Some of the gold and silver medals, known as "milagros," contributed over three centuries by the grateful devout in return for favors granted by the Señor have been used to make a frame for the replica of the image carried in the procession; the remainder is stored in the convent.

The procession has grown longer and is now held on two days in October, now known as the purple month because of the color of the habits worn by the most devout followers of the Señor. Highest ranking government and church officials pay their respects to the litter. A commemorative hymn to the Señor, always sung by a small group of women in a nasal tone of voice, has become an integral part of the procession. Economic activities also have been integrated unofficially into the procession: the street sale of
numerous procession-related objects (distinctively decorated candles, scapulars, pictures of the image, and white waist cords) and food (a sweet known as "turrón de Doña Pepa"), the street sale of non-procession related objects (such as balloons) and foods, and reportedly, pickpockets. Although the devout still request health related favors from the Señor, they do not seem to rely any more on the image for help in the case of an earthquake.

CURRENT CELEBRATION OF SR. DE LOS MILAGROS IN LIMA

In contemporary times, the events marked by the greatest public participation in Lima are the annual processions honoring Sr. de los Milagros. On October 18 and October 28, several hundred thousand Limeños line the procession route, most walking along at street level to accompany the litter, with a small percentage observing from rooftops, balconies or at open windows. For weeks in advance, purple cloth and white waist cords from which to sew habits, pictures of the sacred image, distinctively decorated candles, and booklets about Sr. de los Milagros are available for purchase in variety stores (e.g., Tia, Monterrey) throughout the metropolitan area. As October begins, an increasing number of persons are seen on the street garbed in the purple habit, to demonstrate their devotion to the Señor or in fulfillment of a "promesa" or religious vow. On the day preceding the procession, a map showing the precise route of the procession and an accompanying article appear in one of the major daily Lima newspapers (e.g., El Comercio).

The procession begins with an early morning mass in the Church of the Nazarenes, where the original image of the Señor is housed but not available for public viewing. The procession continues to be sponsored by the "Hermandad del Sr. de los Milagros," a religious brotherhood of Black men. Members of the brotherhood, exclusively, carry the heavy litter on which is the replica of the original image. (See Fig. 1 for a diagram of the procession as it appears in the street, extending about one block in length.)

Individual participants in the procession, estimated to be approximately 10% of the entire population of the Lima metropolitan area, are primarily "cholos," lower income people of primarily Indian ancestry and often migrants to the capital city from the provincial areas of the country where this procession is not observed. The few (perhaps 5%) somewhat more affluent participants are those who observe the passing procession from an above-ground vantage point. Perhaps as many as 35% of the participants are wearing habits, scapulars, or purple ties or other purple articles.
of clothing. Some may throw flower petals, carry lighted candles, or set off fireworks.

Institutions, such as schools and commercial establishments, participate as well, by decorating their premises along the procession route and/or by contributing two cone-shaped floral arrangements or large candles to the litter as it passes. Official support of the procession comes from the highest levels of government and the Catholic Church: the Presidential Palace contributes floral arrangements, and the Archbishop delivers a homily from the balcony of the Archbishop's Palace. The Civil Guard, a branch of the military, provides a band to play the traditional procession chant, as well as officers who demarcate the most sacred area of the procession and keep the slow procession moving.

The procession route, which varies somewhat from year to year in the old central district of Lima, always passes the new (in 1969) headquarters of the sponsoring brotherhood, the cathedral, the Archbishop's Palace, the Presidential Palace and several major hospitals. The litter is returned to the Church of the Nazarenes at the conclusion of the procession, usually about 2-3 a.m. of the following morning.

October 18 and 28 are not official holidays, and people are expected to meet their job obligations. Stores, offices and schools are open as usual, except for stores which close as the procession passes by, in order to protect their storefronts from the dense crowd. Some people accompany the procession for its entire route; others for only a few hours.

THE PERUVIAN COMMUNITY IN CHICAGO

The Peruvian community in Illinois is the fifth largest group of Peruvians in the U.S., and comprises about 5% of the total Peruvian population in the U.S. These nearly 2,500 people (in 1980) live almost exclusively in the Chicago metropolitan area. They are exclusively migrants from urban areas in Peru. Among them, 72% report Peruvian ancestry as their only ancestry.

However, this community is nearly invisible in Chicago. Among all immigrant/ethnic groups in the metropolitan area, the Peruvians represent only a tiny fraction; in fact, they comprise less than .5% of just the Spanish speaking peoples. Unlike many other immigrant/ethnic groups which are residentially concentrated in one or another identifiable neighborhood, the Peruvians are dispersed primarily in the north side of the city.
There are a few areas in which the Chicago Peruvian community has a higher than expected public profile; restaurants, participation in the annual Ethnic Fair, and a shop which sells imported Peruvian crafts. During the 1970s and 80s, there have been from one to four restaurants at a time which feature Peruvian cuisine. The three which have survived are expensive and cater to an Anglo, non-Peruvian clientele. These three have been included in widely distributed restaurants guides to the city, and one has participated in Taste of Chicago, a heavily attended summer food festival (1980-82) where the public has been able to purchase for a modest price small portions of the specialties of the participating restaurants.

In November or December, the city sponsors a heavily attended Ethnic Fair where immigrant/ethnic organizations sponsor booths featuring ethnic artifacts on display, the sale of ethnic foods, and the sale of ethnic and/or other crafts, records, etc. The complementary Peruvian associations the Peruvian Arts Society (for the more affluent and socially higher ranking Peruvians) and the Centro Peruano, ordinarily not known outside of the Peruvian community, both sponsor booths. Each has a booth selling Peruvian foods. In some years, one or the other group also sponsors a booth in one of the other categories. This is a fund raising activity for the participating organizations and caters to the entire city population.

CELEBRATION OF SR. DE LOS MILAGROS IN CHICAGO

Since 1979, the Chicago Peruvian community, under the auspices of a sponsoring local brotherhood, has held a procession in honor of Sr. de los Milagros. Beyond regular year round participation in the activities of the Peruvian Arts Society, the Centro Peruano, and a soccer team, this is the single major annual rite of intensification for the Peruvian community. It is the only Peruvian activity in which all local Peruvians can participate. Participation has grown steadily from about 250 in 1979 to 600 in 1983.

In 1979 and 1980, the procession was held from Our Lady of Lourdes Church, a diocesan church in a modest neighborhood on the north side of Chicago. From 1981 to 1983, the procession (see Fig. 1) has been held from St. Ignatius Church, a Jesuit church and formerly Irish parish on the far north side of the city where the local replica of the image is now permanently housed. Both churches are bilingual Spanish/English churches. The concelebrated high mass which preceded the procession (1981-1983) was the regularly scheduled Spanish language mass for the parish.
A comparison between the traditional Lima celebration and the new one in Chicago reveals four clusters of changes and continuities: 1) changes which are practical adaptations to the Chicago environment, 2) changes which are symbolic, 3) continuities which are practical, and 4) continuities which are symbolic.

Many of the observable differences between the Lima and Chicago processions reflect practical adaptations to the Chicago context. In the first place, the procession is held only once a year and on the Sunday afternoon closest to October 18. To expect people to be absent from school or work on the 18th would inhibit participation. In fact, the ceremony in which the image was formally dedicated in its permanent niche at St. Ignatius Church, held on a week day in the evening (October 27, 1981), was attended by only 150-200 people, approximately 1/3 of the people who had attended the procession earlier that month.

The sponsoring brotherhood of 90 men has very different membership in Chicago. There do not seem to be any Peruvian Blacks in the Chicago Peruvian community, so that the membership is made up entirely of Peruvians of mestizo and European ancestry. The men and boys in the brotherhood wear the traditional purple habit. In 1979, it was somewhat of a shock to see all of the men wearing identical brand new habits sewn at home from apparently the same bolt of purple polyester cloth - until I realized that these men probably would not have worn habits to the procession in Lima, nor would they have been members of the brotherhood; consequently, all of them needed to acquire habits at the same time. There are also 18 male and female "promoters" of the ceremony. Their status is marked by a lapel decoration or by a heavy rectangular metal medallion hanging from a ribbon around their necks.

The focus of the activities honoring Sr. de los Milagros has shifted from a short (relative to the length of the total celebration) mass in which relatively few participate followed by a long (at least 15 hours) procession in which the bulk of the devout participate - to a relatively long (nearly 2 hours) mass to which all devout attend followed by a short (perhaps 2 hours) procession in which fewer participate. Weather in Chicago in October varies from balmy (1979) to frosty (1981). As the Chicago procession slowly winds its way around the block and especially in inclement weather, participants drop out of the procession and wait in the church basement for the procession to end. Consequently, both symbolic elements, the mass and the procession, are retained, but the route is shortened and held (1980-1983) exclusively on side streets, unlike Lima where the procession blocks several main downtown streets.
The procession is followed, in Chicago only, by a meal of typical Peruvian cuisine which is served in the church basement. However, the single food item associated with this celebration in Peru, the "turron de Doña Pepa," is not served in Chicago. The food is sold at modest ($0.50 - $2 per item) prices. This, the collections taken during the mass, and prior fund raising are the only economic activities associated with the procession. In addition, the holy cards normally sold in Lima by street vendors during the procession are given away by the brotherhood in Chicago to those who attend the mass.

In Lima, the crowd of participants is made up largely of strangers. A person will attend the procession with one or a few friends or relatives, but they probably will not see other people they know (with the exception of some members of the brotherhood who do know each other). In Chicago, on the other hand, the mass and procession is an opportunity to be with a group of fellow Peruvians, "paisanos," and friends. People attend in larger family groups. The half hour before the mass begins, especially, is a period of animated greeting of a large groups of friends. This is reinforced during the meal in the church basement following the procession.

In Lima, the active roles in the mass and procession are very few relative to the crowd of participants. In Chicago, the active roles for the Peruvians are many in comparison. Including the approximately 45 adult male members of the brotherhood (who take turns standing by the image during the mass and carrying the litter and the cord defining the sacred area of the procession), the altar boys, the women singers, the choir, and the other participants in the mass (who read aloud passages from the Bible, make announcements and speeches, etc.), perhaps 70 people, more than 10% of all those who attend, have an active role. In addition, beginning in 1983, three Peruvians were awarded large framed reproductions of the image in recognition of their help in procession preparations. This high level of active roles is possible only because the total Peruvian community in Chicago is small. This would not be possible in the largest expatriate communities in New York and California, nor in Lima itself.

The image is detachable from its base, so that it can be disassembled in order to get it in and out of the main front entrance of the church and for it to be displayed in its year-round niche in St. Ignatius Church. The Peruvian image may also be detachable, but it is not publicly seen in that condition, a rather awkward and undignified one.

At the conclusion of the procession, the image is taken back into the church and placed in its niche along the
south wall. Flowers donated by devout supporters are arranged around it. Numerous participants gather around with their cameras to photograph the image and the priest as he blesses objects brought by the participants. This blessing of objects and close-up photos with the priest is also possible only because the number of participants is relatively small.

A number of other changes may reflect the fact that the procession has a short history in Chicago. Each year, the event is becoming more elaborate. For example, 1983 was the first year in which there was a succession of floral offerings; some participants in the procession carried armloads of flowers which were placed periodically on the litter. In previous years, it had been obvious that the several floral arrangements had been contributed by different groups or individuals because they were so different from each other, but all fit on the litter at the same time. In addition, 1983 was the first year in which an elaborately embroidered banner preceded the litter and in which the litter was adorned with silver Sacred Hearts. In future years, additional elements may be added. For example, the procession does not yet include a group of incense-burning older women. Neither is the litter adorned with appropriately decorated candles. There is no reason to conclude at this time that the omission of these elements reflects a symbolic change in the way the Peruvians perceive the procession.

Quite a few of the observable changes in the procession are symbolic. Some of these reflect what appears to be a gradually increasing emphasis on the procession as a demonstration of Peruvian identity and successful adaptation to Chicago, rather than only religious devotion.

For example, only at the procession in 1979 was the history of Sr. de los Milagros recounted during the mass. Since then it is assumed that everyone knows it. But 1981, the historical background merited only two sentences in the homily. Also in 1981, the homily included an appeal to attract other non-Peruvian Latin Americans to participate, but that appeal was absent from the following year's homily; very few non-Peruvians attend. In 1983, the homily cited the Peruvians' faith as an example for all Catholics in Chicago. Verbal references during the mass are to the Peruvian participants and to the few guests who are assumed to be non-Peruvians. In addition, floral arrangements on the litter, once multicolored, are now largely red and white, the Peruvian national colors. Furthermore, the only food associated with this procession in Lima has been replaced by exclusive consumption of year-round secular Peruvian foods. Finally, since this is the only Peruvian
activity open to all members of the community, cutting across the socio-economic distinctions between the Peruvian Arts Society and the Centro Peruano, and the specialized interest groups (the soccer teams), it is not surprising that the procession attracts a larger percentage (close to 25%) of the entire Peruvian community than the procession does in Lima. Participation in Chicago reinforces Peruvianness; in Lima, lack of participation, participation as a rooftop observer, or ground-level participation reinforces distinctions among Peruvians.

There are additional observable changes which reflect a demonstration of the successful adaptation, particularly in economic terms, of the Peruvians to the Chicago area. Peruvians arrive at St. Ignatius Church in their cars dressed in their "Sunday best." This is definitely a more prosperous group of participants than the bulk of those in Lima. Ordinarily very status conscious Peruvians have selected as their most important ritual an event most closely associated in their homeland with a very low income urban group. The Chicago procession is becoming an audio-visual event in that in each succeeding year, increasing numbers of Peruvians record the event with their own 35 mm. and videotape cameras. Furthermore, each year the procession in Chicago becomes more elaborate. A large expensive stereo tape player on the rear of the litter replaced (in 1982) the band playing the traditional procession music. In the long term, the tape player will save the brotherhood money and eliminate the band as one element of non-Peruvian participation. A substantial sum of money, approximately $14,000, has been spent on improvements to the litter: a silver veneer with low relief design covers the base, four large silver angels have been set on the bases of the litter, and a silver covering has been placed over the loin cloth and other parts of the image.

There are also a few changes in the Chicago procession which reflect religious importance. The red velvet canopy used in the procession in Lima to symbolically shelter a few leaders of the brotherhood has been used in 1979, 1980, and 1983 in Chicago, but to shelter the participating priest and bishop. In Lima, priests do not accompany the procession on its route; in Chicago, the priest always accompanies the procession. In Lima, with the exception of small children passed over the heads of the crowd, no one is allowed close enough in the procession to touch the litter. In Chicago, all of those who care to can crowd to the center aisle of the church to touch the base of the litter as it is being carried out of the church. In addition, the Chicago procession seems to lack what one might call in Lima the publicly most devout, those who are fulfilling very
serious religious vows and/or are permitted to participate within the defined most sacred area of the procession by carrying a heavy wooden cross, by participating barefoot, or by being in a group of women burning candles and praying. It is possible that Chicago has its publicly most devout who have fulfilled their religious vows by making substantial financial contributions to the adornment of the litter. Furthermore, an increasing number, but still few women wear habits in Chicago, although it is the most common way to demonstrate fulfilling a vow in Lima. Finally, the move from a diocesan to an order affiliated church should be noted.

There are few noticeable continuities which are practical. The brotherhood continues to perform the vital function of sponsoring the procession. However, the brotherhood in Chicago has less resources than its large land-owning counterpart in Lima. The Chicago police participate, but only for traffic control. They are not needed to demarcate the most sacred area of the procession because the crowd is not large. The Chicago celebration continues the traditional Peruvian practice of having migrant groups aid those from their home town by raising money which is sent home; in 1982, a second collection was taken during the mass for the benefit of the residents of an old squatter settlement in Lima, El Agostino. In 1983, the collection was to benefit people living on the north coast of Peru who were suffering as a consequence of the "El Niño" climate and recipients of unspecified social works in Chicago, as well as the El Agostino residents.

The procession in both Lima and Chicago continues to relate to the medical curing resulting from faith in the Señor. In Lima, the procession always passes by several large public hospitals where floral offerings are made. In Chicago in 1983, a severely handicapped young man was brought to the procession as it began. The Peruvian's wheelchair was pushed through the crowd to a position near the side of the litter. The litter turned to face him for about a minute until he was pushed to a position in front of the litter under the purple canopy sheltering the priests. He continued to participate in the procession for approximately 15 minutes.

The continuities in observance from Lima to Chicago also reflect the basic religious nature of the event, as well as precede the mass and procession in both cities. The essential format of the celebration, mass followed by procession, the essential form of the procession (see Fig. 1), and the traditional behavior of the participants remain. The men of the brotherhood carry the litter and, in Chicago only, demarcate the sacred rectangular area around the
litter. The traditional music and purple habits are found in both processions. The pace is slow, the tone serious, quiet, and reverent. People do not turn their backs on the litter. The Chicago procession increasingly incorporates official church and secular recognition as its Peruvian counterpart has done already: participation by the Peruvian consul (the highest ranking Peruvian in the city) and an American bishop who was highly regarded during his tenure in Sicuani (Peru); reading of messages of greeting from the Chicago Mayor and Illinois governor; and escorting the litter by the non-Peruvian Knights of Columbus, by a U.S. naval training color guard (in 1982), and by the Royal Chicago Scout Band (1983).

Other aspects of the observance reinforce the event as a Peruvian activity. The official Peruvian flag has been predominantly displayed. The Peruvian altar boys wear purple habits (except in 1983). Peruvian priests participate in some years (1979 and 1983). The exclusive use of the Spanish language effectively restricts the meaningful participation of outsiders.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the Sr. de los Milagros procession as it is held in Lima, Peru, and in the Peruvian expatriate community in Chicago, Illinois. Particular attention was paid to noting those elements of the procession which are similar in both places, and those elements which are different. It is anticipated that the study of activities such as this one will contribute to a better understanding of the processes by which a migrant group adapts to its new cultural setting. In this context, the most significant factor to be noted about the Sr. de los Milagros procession in Chicago is that the Peruvian expatriate community seems to be adding to an event of primarily religious devotion the opportunity to demonstrate and reinforce Peruvian identity.
NOTES


2. This paper is based largely on participant observation of the Sr. de los Milagros processions in Lima, Peru, in 1968 and 1969, and in the Peruvian expatriate community in Chicago, Illinois, from 1979-1983.

3. During most of the year, these items are available only from vendors set up in the plaza adjacent to the Church of the Nazarenes.

4. This is a good example of the operation of the dyadic contract, as described by Foster (1961).

5. After California (15,500), New York (14,000), New Jersey (7,375), and Florida (4,700). U.S. Census of Population, Table 3.


7. At least one other Peruvian expatriate community, that in Washington, D.C., also sponsors a procession for Sr. De los Milagros (Jorge Osterling, personal communication).

8. Although other immigrant groups in Chicago celebrate the independence days or other special days in their homelands with a parade, the Peruvian community does not have a parade on July 28, its national holiday.

9. The serving of food in the church basement, either for free or for modest prices, is common in midwestern U.S. churches but it is not customary in Peru.

10. It should be pointed out that non-Peruvians are always welcomed in English at the masses. None of the non-Peruvians except the priest, the anthropologist, and some of her students participate in the procession.

11. It should be pointed out that both of these officials were candidates for re-election in 1982, the first year such messages were read. Such messages may have been only part of the election campaign because none were read in 1983.

12. This group probably was included because it has a Peruvian member.
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U.S. Census of Population.
1983 Ancestry of the Population by State. 1980. Supplementary Report PC 80-S1-10, Tables 2, 3, and 3A.
Fig. 1 Sr. de los Milagros Procession: Lima, Peru (left) 
Chicago, Illinois (right)

- Purple velvet banner embroidered with the image
- Similar purple velvet banner
- Altar boys
- Peruvian altar boys
- 2 women with book
- Purple velvet banner, embroidered
- Velvet canopy over priests/bishop
- Group of women singers

Civil Guard (Y)
- Group of women with candles, singing, praying
- Most devout, barefoot, carrying cross (Z)
- Image on litter
- Members of brotherhood (X)
- Flowers
- Velvet canopy over brotherhood
- Band

Members of brotherhood (X)
- Flowers
- Image on litter

Anglo band with Peruvian boys carrying music

NOTE: Not to scale