

Part II.I Peru .

In the days of my youth I was captivated by those twin classics, Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico" and "Conquest of Peru," and, when offered a chance to go to Peru, I accepted between one tube station and the next. Of the two civilisations my youthful preference was for that of Peru. The Incas seemed to me a gentler people than the Aztecs, more interested in the welfare of the general population and less bloodstained by human sacrifice. To the Aztecs it might seem an honour to be sacrificed to the terrifying gods they had invented for themselves, it might even offer a rich reward in some future life, but I could not help wondering whether the people really liked it. To add weight to my choice the empire of the Incas, stretching from Ecuador in the north along the Andean range to Chili in the south, was enviably adjacent to the Amazonian jungle which was my ideal of really "wild" country. Peru was high on my list of places to visit and still is.

Tradition has it that the Incas materialised suddenly in the Cuzco area, won ascendancy over their neighbours and established themselves as a ruling casté. This has led to a good deal of speculation as to where they came from, but the more picturesque theories seem to have been largely discarded in favour of a fairly local origin. They superimposed their culture on those already existing, and began to extend and consolidate their territory. For this communications were important, and they became great road builders. Their roads tunnel through spurs of the mountains, cross swamps on causeways, and at times become flights of steps. Deep gorges, carved out by rivers, intersect the raised peneplain, and over these the Incas slung their frail rope suspension bridges. We came on one of these, or rather a modern version of it, at a place called Sondondo. The mules had to climb down into the gorge and ford the river, but some of us crossed by the bridge to see what it felt like. It was a dizzy experience. Gripping a rope rail in either hand you stepped onto the treadway, also of rope, and descended abruptly to

to the inevitable sag in the middle, where you swayed alarmingly in the wind. The view up the ravine was superb, but the gulf beneath your feet was enormous, and it was not without relief that I climbed up the other side of the curve and stood once more on firm ground.

Even with modern techniques Peru is not the easiest country in the world in which to construct and maintain roads, and, when I was there in 1932, road systems were only seriously developed round main centres of population. A great road building programme had been planned, but funds had given out, and we came on one stretch of excellent motorway, which had been started in the middle and consequently began nowhere in particular and ended nowhere in particular. It was firmly ignored by the local population who preferred to follow the old mule tracks as we did ourselves. Wonderful trails that led over the bare puna, dipped into deep valleys and toiled out of them again, and were cut out of steep hillsides so that you proceeded giddily with a cliff on one side of you and a precipice on the other. Rocky trails to test the sure-footedness of your mule. Mine did not seem to me sure-footed at all, and I was relieved when I was given a horse to ride. It was a large, amiable animal that the muleteers had bought as a speculation. It was much cherished since they hoped to make a lot of money selling it, and I was only allowed to ride it ~~since~~<sup>because</sup> I was obviously the lightest weight in the party. I grew fond of that horse. When I got off he stood still, instead of bolting to join his companions as the mules did, and the only thing that bothered him was corduroy roads. Here the mules scored heavily, which was hardly surprising since they had made them. A track covered with deep mud, a succession of mules each stepping delicately in its predecessor's footsteps and in time you had a corduroy road. But my horse's feet were larger and his step longer, and he did not care for corduroy roads. He did, however, boast a bridle instead of the rope halters which gave the mules such an advantage in disputes with their riders. It was rather a simple minded bridle, lacking brow and cheek strap and, when flies were troublesome and he shook

his head, it fell off. Nevertheless it was a real bridle with a bit. One of the stirrups also fell off at intervals, being tied on with string, but these little misadventures were easily remedied with so patient an animal. My youthful dreams had pictured a journey of this kind as an endless whirl of excitement, but in sober fact much of it is a patient plod with a weary rider urging on an even wearier steed with whose desire to stop he has the utmost sympathy.

An election was pending in Peru before I left England and I spent some time trying to discover the policies of the various parties so that I could listen with a reasonably intelligent air to political discussions. Except to the expert, foreign politics are always difficult to follow, but my private impression was that none of the parties had any policies worth mentioning, <sup>and</sup> ~~but~~ were fighting the election entirely on personalities. The deposed President Leguia had been languishing in jail for some time without being brought to trial. His supporters were indignant and his health was deteriorating. When it became sufficiently precarious, they let him out, but he did not survive for very long, and we landed in northern Peru on an archaeological jaunt to Chan-Chan, capital of the Chimu people, to find that another revolution had broken out. It seems to have been rather a bloody revolution, but most of the fighting took place in the north and the only shot I heard fired was during a student riot in Cuzco. Two of us were placidly examining Inca masonry when a shot whistled past our ears and went ricocheting down the street. Not wishing to be bumped off by accident in someone else's revolution, we bolted to the shelter of our hotel. Next day all was quiet.

"Politics," one of the Professors at Lima University told me, "Are the plague of our lives. Students so much prefer the excitement of a revolution to the monotony of serious study, and every new government <sup>falls</sup> ~~falls~~ in honour bound to neglect reforms put in hand by its predecessor, so that progress is slow."

Lima was quiet when we reached it apart from an abortive attempt to assassinate the President, a fire down our street, an

earth tremor so minor that at first I thought an exceptionally heavy man was bouncing about in the room above me, and a carnival. From a purely selfish point of view the carnival was much the most trying of these events. I went about trying to preserve the air of gay good humour required on these occasions, but it wilted when a youth leaped lightly onto the bus in which I sat in the back row and threw a whole pailful of cold water down its length. Most of it went down my neck.

Lima struck me as a pleasant city with a sunshiny air due perhaps to the <sup>golden</sup> colour of <sup>50%</sup> many of the buildings. Enormous Motor cars passed up and down its streets and a battered relic, placed as a monument along the road to the port, warned motorists of the results of careless driving. The hotel I stayed in had been an old colonial mansion. The rooms on the upper floors, one of which I occupied on my return to Lima, were small. Probably they had been occupied by staff. The rooms on the lower floors were stately apartments. Mine had an antechamber with rows of upright chairs placed stiffly round the walls, and an inner chamber with three beds and seven spittoons. Why seven? Surely two per bed would have been adequate.

South of Lima the desert engulfed us, a desert that runs ~~along~~ the whole Pacific coast of Peru and is due to the cold water of the Humbolt current. Onshore winds passing over this current are chilled and reheated when they encounter the sunbaked land and, since the saturation point of warm air is greater ~~if~~ than that of cold air, the tendency ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> to extract more moisture <sup>from the air</sup> rather than to precipitate moisture as rain. Following a seven year cycle the Humboldt Current moved further out to sea, and then some rain falls. We were there in one of these wetter years, but the amount of rain that fell was negligible. I am one of those who are fascinated by the beauty of deserts and the Peruvian coastal strip is particularly colourful, the vividly stained rocks weathering into sands that repeat the colouring in more delicate hues, gold, silver, pink, or pale purple with a bloom like that on the skin of a ripe plum. Where a river came down from the Andes providing water for irrigation the desert blossomed into an

an oasis which returned to desert as abruptly as if it had been trimmed off with a knife. When irrigated the soil is fertile and there were some sizeable haciendas with immensely hospitable owners, who had often been educated in France or England. Air services were well developed along the coast even for agricultural purposes and we rose one morning at dawn to watch a plane skimming low over the ground spraying the cotton crops, a contrast ~~the~~ to the terraced cultivation of the mountain valleys, where you could still see an ox and a mule yoked to that most ancient of agricultural implements, the stick plough.

We drove south over a rather sketchy road with diversions <sup>across</sup> ~~over~~ the desert where no road was, and I grew increasingly conscious of driving amongst the bones of antiquity, bones reverently laid to rest by past civilisations and irreverently scattered abroad by modern grave robbers. The government was trying to put an end to grave robbing, but there were still those who would offer you an ancient pot for a consideration. Already a good deal of archaeological material had been collected, research having received a new impetus from the work of Dr Tello, whom we met in Lima, but much of the theorising was still very tentative, ~~and~~ Those interested in the subject will find a very readable summary of recent research in G.H.S. Bushnell's "Peru" in the Ancient Peoples and Places Series published by Thames and Hudson.

For a time we made our base at Nazca, centre of an important culture of The classic period in the first century A.D. We had to find mules for the second stage of our journey from Nazca to Cuzco, and it was essential to obtain mountain mules since the coast bred animals would not withstand the high altitudes. When we left England there was a motorable road running part way along our route, but by the time we reached Peru this road no longer existed. Heavy rains in the mountains pouring in a torrent down the arid valley had reduced it to a dried stream bed. We picked our way amongst huge boulders, one of which had struck another with such force that it had produced a radial crack such as you see in glass. As we climbed vegetation began to appear,

cactus and stunted bushes, and we camped in a natural rock garden such as might have turned a gardener green with envy.

We had had some difficulty in obtaining mules. Our envoy had found a muleteer easily enough, but had found it difficult to induce him to make up his mind. There were difficulties. His wife owned two of the mules and some of the harness that he required for the journey. She was willing to hire them but expected to be paid the full sum her husband received for their hire. This, he said, was nonsense. She was not coming on the journey and consequently not doing any of the hard work. She gave in reluctantly, and there arose the problem of her son, whom old Apayco wished to take with him as mule boy. (Apayco is as near as I can get to his name) The difficulty here was that the lad was at the moment languishing in jail. He was ~~extraeted~~ extracted, I don't quite know how, and Apayco, still a little hostile and suffering badly from the heat and low altitude of the coast, made his appearance in Nazca with the mules. He was a little cheered by being asked to make his mark on a written agreement and given a fountain pen to do it with. He found the pen most intriguing, but about one thing he was adamant. He would take us half way to Cuzco, but after that we entered notorious brigand country, and he was not going to risk his mules. We had to accept his decision.

The people of the coast were of very mixed descent. After the Spanish Conquest the Spaniards had intermarried freely with the Amerindians as had also more recent immigrants, Negro and Asiatic, and these had also intermarried with each other. In the isolated mountain valleys on the other hand we were dealing with pure blooded, Quechua speaking Indians such as had formed the subject population of the Incas. We had not always heard these people spoken of with favour. They had been described as "surly, inhospitable, inquisitive, dirty, dishonest and ~~d~~isobliging." I cannot refute all these charges from my own brief experience. Inquisitive they certainly were. The appearance of strangers in their villages was an event and they made the most of it. If they appeared surly and suspicious they had a long history of a ill treatment to offer them an excuse. They were certainly acquiitative,

anything we threw away, however trivial, being immediately pounced upon. They also showed a guileless tendency at times to ask for anything that took their fancy from a gold watch to a clinometer. But, whatever losses other travellers may have experienced, we never had anything stolen from us.

Their ideas of hygiene were not up to modern standards, but neither were their facilities. A runnel of water ran down the centre of the village streets and was used as a rubbish dump and, times, as a latrine. Sanitary arrangements were apt to be exhausting, but uncomplicated. You just took a country stroll. If a mule was so inconsiderate as to die in the middle of a street, it was left where it was till the village dogs had disposed of it, to the great distaste of our live mules. Fortunately the pure, cold mountain air kept the villages remarkably free from offence. Water was plentiful, but bathing in that climate was chilly, and I doubt if the local inhabitants wasted much time on ablutions. Accumulated dirt no doubt helped to keep out the cold. Fleas were plentiful, and, since I hate fleas, I was apt to groan when we were offered the hospitality of a building in place of our nice clean tents. There were fleas in the hotel bedroom I occupied in a provincial capital, fleas in the house reserved in a village for the visiting priest, and, more understandably, fleas in the local jail where I spent a miserable night. I was not incarcerated in jail for any infraction of the law. I was politely invited to occupy it for reasons of propriety. We had supped with the municipal authorities on the roomy veranda of their office building, and, since it was late when we had finished, they invited us to occupy the veranda for the night to save us putting up our tents.

"The Señores," they said, "Will be very comfortable here. For the Señorita we must of course find other accomodation."

Only there was no other accomodation. Impasse! Then someone had a bright idea. The municipal lock-up was untenanted and, since it occupied the top floor of the same building, the Señorita would be well protected by the Señores on the veranda below and the proprieties would be observed. Casting envious

glances at the Señores in their airy sleeping apartment, the Señorita allowed herself to be led upstairs. The lock-up consisted of a long, low room, windowless to prevent the escape of prisoners, and furnished with precisely nothing. The Señorita spread her sleeping bag upon the floor and shared it with the fleas the prisoners had left behind them.

The house reserved for the visiting priest was the usual two roomed building. The windows, as was customary, were unglazed, and there was no fireplace, fuel being much too scarce to waste on merely keeping warm. It was reserved for cooking, which took place in an outhouse. The sittingroom was furnished with a wooden table, a luxury where timber was so scarce, and a bench of hard packed earth along the wall. In the bedroom there was a platform of packed earth on which to spread your bedding, and that was all. The "cura" was not pampered as he toiled round his enormous parish.

Official hospitality was generously extended to us, and the people of this area, poor though they were, did not seem to me to be inhospitably inclined. On one occasion two of us made a diversion which took longer than we had expected and, as night drew near, found ourselves still a considerable distance from the proposed camping site. Our mules were hungry and exhausted and it seemed good policy to rest them and give them something to eat, so we stopped at a house and asked if we could buy some maize stalks. They were produced without question, and, while the mules ate, the householders invited us to share their evening meal. It consisted of potatoes, broad beans and tender green maize, (three staple foods, in the mountains), all boiled together to a mush. We found it tasty, and, while we ate, my companion kept our hosts in roars of laughter at his attempts to speak Quechua. Apart from any mistakes he may have made, he had learned his Quechua in the north and it sounded odd in their ~~southern~~ southern ears. When we offered payment they accepted it for the maize stalks for which we had asked, but refused it for the supper at which we had been their invited guests.



Apayco still ~~had~~ <sup>had</sup> brigands on his mind. We came to a particularly picturesque village with its rose pink tiles climbing steeply up the mountainside. Apayco said gloomily that it had a bad reputation, and that, for protection, he would have to hire two of the bandits to keep their fellow bandits from stealing the mules. This done, he retired to slumber peacefully throughout the night. Unfortunately the hired watchmen also slumbered peacefully throughout the night, and we woke to find that our mules had broken into the village maize patch and done considerable damage. Negotiations as to compensation were entered upon, the brigands proving remarkably reasonable, we took photos of their poncho clad figures standing in the village street, bade farewell in an atmosphere of mutual goodwill, and found them chasing us with a farewell present of cooked beans. A most aimable set of bandits, but brigandage was not a figment of Apayco's imagination. Cattle and mules were stolen and salt caravans were attacked from time to time. We had not however yet reached the more brigand infested part of our journey, which was supposed to begin after we left the little valley town of Cabana. Here our contract with Apayco ended, but he agreed to carry on the rest of the way to Cuzco, accepting our proviso that he should hire some more help than a man and a boy, so that we could make an earlier start in the morning. At this point his wife took a hand.

We had met her a day or two previously, also bound for Cabana, with a small train of donkeys. It was Easter and there was a trade fair as well as a fiesta in the town. The argument as to the hire of the mules was resumed. The lady had lost the first round but her spirit was unsubdued, and, when Apayco refused to agree to her terms, she vanished during the night taking with her her mules, her harness and her son, the mule boy. When we asked Apayco whether he had no authority over the boy, he said,

"He is her son. He is only my stepson. That," he added, "is a bad wife. The one I have at the other end of my muleteers route is much better."

He now had a good excuse for backing out of the agreement, but instead he set to work to hire fresh mules and muleteers, and ~~he~~

took us safely to Cuzco. He was a good muleteer, careful of his mules, but he certainly had brigands on the brain. Our next encounter with a village of doubtful reputation was at a point where two villages faced each other across a deep gorge. One was "good"; one was "bad". The good village kept the steep track leading down to the river in a state of permanent disrepair, and we had to wait while they made it passable for our mules. After which, presumably, they reduced it once more to a state of disrepair. It must have made existence very laborious for them. A more critical situation arose at a place where a recent robbery had taken place. Apayco was seriously worried when he found that he could not hire any of the local inhabitants to act as guards. He wanted some of us to stay up all night firing off shots at intervals to show how wide awake and dangerous we were, and when ~~when~~ we refused, he got his own back by crawling into our tents in succession to borrow our torches so that he could count his mules. He got no sleep and the mules, herded together, got no real chance to graze.

We were not attacked and I am sure Apayco attributed this to the fact that he had previously persuaded two of the party to wear such lethal weapons as we possessed conspicuously displayed on their persons. Unfortunately this display of force led one village to the conviction that we were a gang of revolutionaries smuggling arms to Cuzco, and, as good citizens, they felt it their duty to send a telegram warning the provincial capital of our approach. This was not a simple matter. A runner had to be sent to the nearest telegraph office, which was so remote that we and the telegram arrived simultaneously, and two of us, having mislaid our companions, wandered into the plaza of the little town to find an armed posse, literally with their feet in the stirrup, setting out to arrest us. Misled by our harmless appearance they told us kindly to wait till they had accomplished their mission, after which they would make enquiries as to our missing party. Alas for drama, our refer<sup>ences</sup> were impeccable and our wooden boxes contained nothing more lethal than rock specimens and geological hammers.

As we wandered we picked up scraps of local politics, a minor revolt against an unpopular mayor, talk of a few bad hacienda owners whose system of employment was virtually forced labour, and of good hacienda owners considerate towards their employees, but of the revolution we heard very little. It did not directly affect this part of the country and revolutions were no novelty. There was talk too of ~~what~~ the future of the Indian population of these isolated valleys and of the high puna where the llama flocks grazed. Obviously the children should be educated, but we could see for ourselves the difficulties, the long distances between villages, the difficult nature of the country, the absence of suitable buildings, the scarcity of teachers, and, above all, the shortage of funds. It would come in time.

As we drew near Cuzco we entered the world of well made roads and motored the last stage of the journey. Cuzco has been described so often that my sketchy impressions can add nothing. I was impressed like everybody else by the great fortress of Sacsaihuaman, which contains stones over twenty feet in height. Like everybody else I tried to run a penknife into the cracks between blocks and admired the way in which their polygonal shapes dovetailed into one another, and like everybody else I took a photo of someone standing by one of the larger blocks to give an idea of its size. We began to make preparations for the last, disastrous, section of our journey down the Urubamba River. If there are inaccuracies in this account it is because I lost all the notes I took on this early stage of the journey and write from distant memories.