

A stylized, grey-toned graphic of a tree with thick, angular branches and rounded, cloud-like foliage, positioned on the right side of the page behind the title.

Sources from Below: A Rebel Archive Rewrites Maritime History of Peru's *Cuarta Región*

Apollonya Porcelli¹

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how local archives offer an alternative narrative to the industrial expansion of Peru's *cuarta región*: the sea. The rise of Peru's global fishing economy in the postwar era and the parallel establishment of the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone in 1952 added the sea as a new commercial region beyond the rainforest, mountains, and coast. Over the course of the next two decades Peru's economy would increasingly depend on a small pelagic fish: the anchoveta (*Engraulis ringens*). Following the anchoveta collapse of 1973, the national economy struggled to rebound and social unrest clotted the coastline. In response to increasing state violence, scientific opacity, and censorship, one notable archive in addition to several smaller collections, emerged to support a rising tide of labor and environmental activism. Drawing from 12-months of archival and ethnographic research and interviews with key stakeholders this article joins the growing interdisciplinary scholarship on archives to develop the concept of "rebel archives": locally-sourced archives that bolster resistance movements and upend hegemonic ontologies of industrial resource exploitation. I pull from postcolonial work on "sciences from below" and political ecology to offer novel insights into human-ocean interactions in the world's largest fishery. I conclude with lessons for future scholarship on social movements, environmental knowledge, and resource-dependent economies.

Keywords: Peru; ocean; labor movements; archives; extractivism.

¹ PhD in Sociology from Brown University, MSc in Ecology from Brown University. Assistant Professor of Sociology at Bucknell University. ORCID: 0000-0001-6036-033X. E-mail: amp038@bucknell.edu

On Sunday, December 11th, 1977, a primetime Peruvian television program called “Direct Contact” aired a one-hour debate on the nation’s enduring small anchovy (*Engraulis ringens*) crisis. Ex-Minister of Fisheries Javier Tantaleán Vanini and Marxist political economist Carlos Malpica Silva took to the stage to present opposing views on the cause of the collapse. Tantaleán, with extended soliloquies and expressive gestures, emphasized again and again that the fishery was managed in accordance with recommendations by the National Oceanic Research Institute (IMARPE). It was the unexpected and severe El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) event of 1972-3, or “climatological factors,” that had caused unprecedented damage to the stock, Tantaleán argued. Malpica, however, highlighted a different cause. Citing his own report, which was financed by the largest fishery labor union at the time, Malpica claimed that the collapse was in fact man-made and the result of poor management decisions. The result, he insisted, was an ecologically debilitated fishery that had impoverished the people who relied upon it the most.

These diverging perspectives represent two competing narratives of the industrialization of Peru’s coastal waters during the latter half of the twentieth century. To modernize Peru at the end of World War II, industrialists sought to establish the sea as a fourth region, or *cuarta región*, in Peru’s economic portfolio. In contrast to the existing geographic regions that defined the nation—rainforest, mountains, and the coast—the sea was both abundant and seemingly manageable. By establishing the first-ever 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in 1947, the Peruvian state, in conjunction with local entrepreneurs, enabled a massive capitalist expansion into the sea to produce the largest processing capacity of any fishery on the planet (even today) of 16 million tons (Evans and Tveteras 2011). What resulted was a monoculture economy, singularly focused on the maximum extraction of the small anchovy, or the anchoveta as it is commonly called, and devoid of social or cultural concerns.

Not surprisingly, in 1973 after the anchoveta fishery collapsed, the sea was both depleted and recalcitrant; the fishery would not rebound until twenty years later. During that time, worker protests cropped up along the coastline and state

violence proliferated throughout port towns. Emerging from this heated political climate was a “rebel archive” created by labor activist and social scientist Hernán Peralta. Over the course of nearly five decades, Peralta collected approximately 10,000 documents spanning over a century of Peruvian fisheries history that includes testimonials, newspaper and magazine clippings, white papers, union pamphlets, photographs, and industry reports of violence. Collectively, this rebel archive refers to the material objects that emerge from and provide support to resistance efforts and offer new onto-epistemic approaches to dominant historical narratives.

In the case of the Peruvian anchoveta, the prevailing narrative celebrated the capitalist expansion of the *cuarta región* and, subsequently, witnessed the collapse as a small blip in an otherwise well-managed system, buttressed by a discourse of natural rights, utilitarian good, and political autonomy. This article also shows how a “rebel archive” offers a decolonial narrative of the *cuarta región* through the lens of a mobilized and “unmanageable” working class whereby the expansion of the fishery was not a “natural” or pre-given right, working-class people were still suffering, and Peru’s dependence on foreign capital only grew.

This article integrates the scholarship on postcolonial archives with political ecology work on extractive economies to broaden the theory on “sources from below”. While the postcolonial studies work on archives demonstrates that the experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups are often erased, ignored, or non-existent, they tend to assume that nature is singular (Foucault 1972; Said 1978; Guha 1988; 1992; Trouillot 1995; Mbembe 2002; Stoler 2009; Povinelli 2011; Mawani 2012; Lytle-Hernández 2017). Alternatively, the political ecology scholarship on *extractivismo* shows how pluralistic interpretations of nature emerge from resistance movements such as working-class struggles, which also entail collecting new archives and reinterpreting existing data sources (Escobar 2008; de la Cadena 2015; Gudynas 2015; Svampa 2015; Riofrancos 2017; Barandiarán 2018; Frickel and Arancibia 2021). Thus, I demonstrate how rebel archives can offer a “many natures” understanding of historical events. Throughout this article, I underscore the important role of social movements in narrative-making and in the material production of historical analysis.

REBEL ARCHIVES AS “SOURCES FROM BELOW”

Postcolonial scholars within the fields of history, literary studies, anthropology, and increasingly sociology have challenged the dominant historical narrative of capitalist expansion by drawing from novel texts and critiquing the archival sources from which mainstream histories are written². For instance, several scholars offered alternative readings of Indian archives under British rule (e.g. Guha 1988; 1992) and South American archives under Spanish rule (e.g. Echevarria 1998). For the postcolonial scholar that has meant writing history “from below” and reading archival sources “against the grain” (Guha 1988).

Given the processes of collecting, formalizing, and maintaining state archives, as well as the priorities of those in power, archives often employ concepts that are inadequate for thinking about the realities of marginalized social groups (Sahlins 1985; Chakrabarty 2000; de la Cadena 2015; Lytle-Hernández 2017). According to Povinelli, the task of the archivist is not merely to collect histories. “It is also to investigate the compositional logics of the archive as such: the material conditions that allow something to be archived and archivable” (2011, p. 153). It is through the process of grappling with political and cultural conditions surrounding the archive that new historical concepts and frameworks can emerge. For de la Cadena, the archive is not merely “a repository of information but a specific historical production itself” (2015, p. 12), which can be linked to uprisings, rebellions, and revolutions.

While much of the literature on postcolonial archives is based on revisiting existing archives, a small subset involves drawing from and engaging with clandestine archives, or sources that had been kept hidden from state authorities; these archives are often borne out of resistance efforts to document or, ideally, upend governmental

² This is a vast and interdisciplinary body of work with an expanding range of empirical foci. In an early critique of the archive, Foucault (1972) wrote that the archive is not “the sum of all the texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents attesting to its own past.” Rather, it is “the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events” and a “system of enunciability” (p. 129). Archives are, therefore, both a form of governance and a mode of articulating the past that include journal entries, tax documents, merchant ledgers, and photographs (Mawani 2012). The power of these documents reflects a “family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective” (Said 1978, p. 42). As these scholars show, archives are power-laden and designed to serve those who already hold power and justify their (past, present, and future) actions to maintain it.

Much of the early postcolonial work on archives centered on recuperating the past with a focus on marginalized voices, such as religious and ethnic minorities, descendants from the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, and Indigenous peoples (Asad 1987; Wolf 1997). In the mid to late 1980s there was a marked shift away from merely “retrieving” the past and towards critiquing the archives themselves (e.g. Spivak 1985). With this goal in mind, “subaltern and postcolonial studies have questioned what suffices as evidence and what counts as history” (Mawani 2012: 342). Since this turn in the literature, there has been a host of studies that highlight the silencing of marginalized groups, such as subaltern women (e.g. Spivak 1988; Trouillot 1995; Stoler 2009). This institutionalized silence is rooted not only in the content, but also in the material production of archives, as some imperial governments gave formal directions regarding the writing and storage of official documents (Joseph 2004).

oppression (e.g. Lytle-Hernández 2017). As Mbembe writes, “the power of the state rests on its ability...to abolish the archive and anaesthetize the past” (2002, p. 23). Efforts to achieve literacy, translate scientific texts, or document grievances are often met with swift backlash from authorities. For Lytle-Hernández, a rebel archive composed of “broken locks, secret codes, handbills, secret manifestos, and songs” (2017, p.4) demonstrates how incarceration has been used over centuries to “eliminate” people of color from their own history³. Such rebel archives can be hard to find, but when unearthed, they can offer a brand new understanding of taken-for-granted historical events.

In this paper, I examine the formation of an initially clandestine rebel archive during the postwar era in Latin America, a time period defined by *extractivismo*, or the extraction of both non-renewable mineral and fossil fuel resources and renewable forest, oceanic, and agricultural resources, all destined for commodity export (Gudynas 2015; Svampa 2015; Riofrancos 2017; Barandiarán 2018; Frickel and Arancibia 2021). To facilitate the expansion of extraction-based corporations in Latin America, state governments began to introduce neoliberal policies in the 1960s and 1970s that privatized large swaths of territory and ushered in new geographic visions of extraction. For instance, in the Peruvian Andes glaciers became a commodity for water-scarce cities along the coastline. “The ‘glaciers as vanishing water towers’ narrative contributed to the transformation of glaciers from natural hazard to natural resource” (Carey 2010, p. 149). Carey adds that “what had for entrepreneurs and ruling coastal classes been ‘vacant’, ‘frigid’, or ‘white’ lands has become organized, classified, and ordered space from which to extract natural resources” (p. 156). While

³ For example, in response to the violence of Peruvian landowners in the 1920s, and specifically the 1926 abduction of an Indigenous (Quechua) resistance fighter, Quechua community leaders began a campaign to record landowners’ violations of state and regional law (de la Cadena 2015). Over the course of four decades, Mariano, a Quechua shaman leading the charge, had collected more than four hundred documents.

“The documents were diverse in shape, content, and writing technique. They included very formal, typewritten official communications; scraps of paper with handwritten personal messages between wife and husband, lawyer and client, or landlord and servant; school copybooks; pieces of paper on which Mariano practiced his signature; hotel receipts from his sojourns in Lima; minutes of peasant union meetings; newspaper clippings; and leftist pamphlets” (de la Cadena 2015: 117).

The archive was also more than just the sum of the documents themselves. “In addition to keeping the documents, they also had to oversee the lawfulness of their production—an activity referred to as *queja purichiy* or ‘walking the grievance,’ in the sense of making it go somewhere or making it work” (120). Initially the production of the archive was clandestine, however, it became public once its value for Quechua peoples had disappeared. Despite the efforts of Mariano and other Quechua leaders, the archive was ineffective in fighting against the landowners.

This example of a “rebel archive” reflects not only an alternative perspective on land reform in Peru during the mid-twentieth century but also offers a new ontological understanding of the land and, specifically, the Andean mountains in the Ocongate region, east of Cuzco. These “earth beings,” as de la Cadena (2015) coins them, exceed the paradigm of the Western capitalist treatment of nature as commodities to be bought and sold. Instead, the mountains of Ocongate are part of a living landscape, animated by language and discourse, and entangled with a long history of Indigenous resistance.

repurposing Andean glaciers as water reserves for a growing urban population primarily served the coastal elite, it neglected those most marginalized by glacial flooding: rural, Indigenous communities.

In response to the imprinting of neoliberal ideologies, technologies, and policies, various civil society groups, such as labor unions, Indigenous groups, and non-profits began to align. “The hegemony of neoliberal policies allowed for this provisional alignment of social movement organizations with distinct political trajectories and positions on extraction” (Riofrancos 2017, p. 278). These hybrid coalitions used various knowledge claims to counter the singular neoliberal vision imposed upon forests, mines, fisheries, and the peoples that rely most on those ecosystems (Escobar 2008; de la Cadena 2015; Li 2015; Graeter 2017).

To upend dominant approaches to extractive development, Harding (2008) proposes incorporating “sciences from below” or the standpoints of “the oppressed and disempowered” (p.14). Her words echo the sentiment of the Peruvian historian of science, Ernesto Yepes, who in 1986—at a time of increasing neoliberal policy-making—, argued for drawing upon the “specific, aggregated, and age-old experience” of Peruvians with the land and sea. As Yepes suggests, these epistemological efforts are not necessarily “non-scientific” or “non-theoretical”, but are rooted in a long history of chronic social and environmental challenges. Writing a history of the sea that draws from such “sciences from below” is therefore contingent on finding and generating “sources from below” which can include archives, ethnographies, and oral histories⁴.

For social movement groups and other marginalized peoples, rebel archives can offer a “many natures” perspective on socio-ecological crises that disrupt the dominant capitalist discourse; the case of the anchoveta provides the ideal opportunity to do so. Because of the great enthusiasm for the expansion of Peru’s maritime economy and the growth of the anchoveta fishery throughout the 1950s and 1960s, there was little pushback at first. Industrialists, the state, and workers were all relatively aligned in the making of the *cuarta región*. However, after the collapse,

⁴ This idea has long been championed by Latin American academics and activists (e.g. Arguedas 1971; Sulmont 1977; Ballón 1992) who have used the term *desde abajo* (from below) to refer to both worker-led, grassroots resistance and the non-Western epistemologies of a culturally heterogeneous and hybrid working class (Drinot 2011).

workers began to protest and voice their concerns about the management of the fishery. Importantly, fisheries workers saw themselves as the future of a modern and maritime Peruvian economy and the collapse therefore signaled a break in the singular vision of modernizing Peru's *cuarta región* for the sole purpose of exploiting anchoveta.

In the next section I trace the making of the *cuarta región* from the perspective of industrialists, after which I examine its unmaking through social movements, and conclude with the remaking of the sea through the rebel archive.

MAKING OF THE CUARTA REGIÓN

The making of the *cuarta región* as a political, economic, and conceptual space began in the wake of the California sardine fishery collapse in the mid-1940s when the search for a new, cheap protein source began; Peru's anchoveta emerged as the prime candidate (Wintersteen 2021). The small pelagic fish was a likely choice because of its abundance, ease of catch, and high protein content. When anchoveta are in season, massive schools roll their way along Peru's coastline, ranging from five to twenty miles off-shore (Cushman 2014). They tend to remain in shallow waters, staying within one hundred feet of the ocean's surface. Because of these features, anchoveta are easy to catch for predators of all kinds—fisherpeople, pelicans, or sea lions. In addition, anchoveta are high in protein (approximately 19%) and omega-3 fatty acids (approximately 30%) (Ayala et al. 2003). When reduced into fishmeal or fish oil, anchoveta offer a quick supply of high calorie nutrition, making them an ideal addition to hog and swine feed for industrial farms throughout North America.

The seemingly endless supply of anchoveta owes to the ecology of Peru's coastal waters. The Humboldt Current, which follows the western South American coastline from north to south, is home to one of the most biologically rich marine ecosystems on the planet, contributing 18-20% to the total worldwide marine fish catch (Chávez et al. 2008). Coastal upwelling pushes cold waters from the bottom of the ocean to the surface, bringing nutrients that stimulate increased biological activity. Upwelling within the current is not continuous, being strongest off the coast

of Peru, where surface temperatures can be as low as 60°F (Chávez et al. 2008)⁵. While awareness of Peru's anchoveta-rich waters and unique upwelling system were known to global technocrats, industrialists did not see it as an opportunity for global or national investment until the collapse of California sardine fishery.

In the postwar era, Peru's economy was struggling to transition away from guano, which had been its primary export for the early part of the twentieth century (Cushman 2014). Frustrated with the lack of natural resource development in other parts of the country, Peruvian industrialists were eager to capitalize on the richness of the nation's oceans. One of the most well-known was Luis Banchero Rossi, a fisheries magnate who drove the expansion of nation's fishing economy. At a conference for the Fisheries Advisory Committee in 1971⁶, he explains the importance of the ocean as an opportunity for new avenues of economic exploitation given Peru's "challenging" terrestrial geography.

"Anyone who knows [Peru] would describe it as a challenge to man. It has a desert strip from south to north, along the entire coastline. This desert is one of the driest areas in the world, with very poor mining and agricultural opportunities. In addition, Peru has one of the most rugged mountain regions on the planet: the Andes...and in the most inaccessible, scattered and remote places, we have the highest mining centers in the world. Our third region is the Peruvian jungle...which is impenetrable...defined by the most voluminous network of rivers... Faced with this abrupt territory, or perhaps, despite these three geographical regions, we are compensated with one of the most generous seas on earth, which...has been classified as the fourth natural region of Peru" (1972a, p. 55).

According to Banchero the only way to maximize production of the ocean was through the occupation of the ocean, which meant the rapid development of an industrial fishing fleet and fishmeal reduction factories. In so doing, Peruvian developers would be able to keep out foreign industrialists from the US and elsewhere.

"We know that borders are no longer barbed wire. Instead, borders are the economic presence of the native population. In other words, we Peruvians have to fully occupy the [ocean], we have to fully exploit [it]. We cannot be naïve in thinking that we can leave all these riches untapped for ever and ever."

⁵ This is highly unusual for tropical waters, which tend to average around 77°F, and represents the ideal temperature for pelagic forage fish like anchoveta, sardines, and jack mackerel. There are only four other upwellings of this kind on Earth, together totaling just 5% of total ocean area but contributing at least 50% of the ocean's total productivity.

⁶ Following Banchero's death, the National Fisheries Society (SNP) transcribed several of his lectures and voice recordings from conferences throughout the 1960s into a published document titled *El Pensamiento de Luis Banchero* (1972a).

He added: “occupation is a national ‘obligation’” (p. 26). In effect, Banchemo’s motto of “let’s occupy the ocean!” was a rallying cry for all Peruvians—from politicians to the working class—to develop a new national “fisheries consciousness” (p. 27) and to be a part of a new phase of the nation’s economic history. To put Banchemo’s vision into practice, however, required securing exclusive use of the ocean through enclosure.

In 1947 Peru created the first ever 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone when the Minister of Foreign Relations, Enrique García Sayán, signed an executive order certified by then-president José Luis Bustamante y Rivero. The strength of this order rested on cooperation from neighboring countries and enforcement capabilities under international maritime law. Thus, five years later on August 18, 1952, in Santiago, Chile, representatives from Peru, Chile and Ecuador collaborated to form the Permanent Commission of the Southeast Pacific (CPPS), a research and policy institute dedicated to the protection and health of the Humboldt Current upwelling system (Wintersteen 2021), which secured EEZs for all three nations under the UN Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Despite some reservations, Peruvian politicians and industrialists were hopeful that the EEZ would enable Peruvian-driven development of the sea. According to twice future Peruvian president (1963-1968; 1980-1985) Fernando Belaúnde Terry, the 200-mile EEZ and the larger ethos of occupying the ocean “widened the jurisdiction of the Peruvian flag to the waves of the Pacific” (1972b, p. 53)⁷. While the *cuarta región* (and more specifically the enclosed region within 200 miles of Peru’s shoreline) was certainly an opportunity to improve the nation’s struggling economy, the driving narrative was more complex and hinged on three factors: ecology, utilitarian good, and political autonomy.

In the minds of industrialists like Banchemo, the 200-mile EEZ was not an arbitrary delineation, but rather, rested on “natural and economic foundations” allowing for the country to “subsist and exist”; thus, the zone was a “perfectly defined geographic area” (1972a, p. 42). Ecologically, the 200-mile zone enclosed Peru’s most

⁷ After Banchemo’s passing, there was an outpouring of newspaper and journal editorials on his legacy. In order to prevent this “wealth of affection” from being “left scattered in the archives” (p. 3) his holding company OYSSA compiled these reflections into an edited volume titled *El Hombre Y El Mar* (1972b).

lucrative fishery at the time—tuna—with the one with the greatest future potential—anchoveta. Based on seasonal differences in the upwelling system that fed the two fisheries, the size of the EEZ ultimately ended up being 200 miles. “In the spring-summer season the equatorial water normally warms along the coast of Paita...It is because of the conditions that tuna, mainly yellowfin and skipjack, approach the coast of Peru as close as 20-30 miles offshore in pursuit of prey, typically anchoveta.” During the autumn and winter months, however:

“The Peruvian (Humboldt) Current is noticeably extended. The upwelling phenomena then approaches and at times exceeds the 200-mile limit, maintaining a barrier on its outer edge for tunas, bonito, and horse mackerel...The change in the current explains why bonito, a normal inhabitant of the edge of the stream, approaches the coast in the summer, facilitating large catches while moving away in the winter allowing for very little or no fishing.”

In other words, as the upwelling shifted, so did the fisheries and thus the EEZ should accommodate such fluctuations. In addition, the extension of the 200-mile EEZ linked multiple fisheries together, allowing for predators and non-industrial fisheries to also be subsumed under national jurisdiction. “In this ecosystem the fishing resources that can be exploited on an industrial scale are of vital importance. Those that are not, should not be considered isolated but, on the contrary, intimately related” (p. 43-44). Based these ecosystem dynamics, industrialists like Banchemo argued that the Peruvian state had a “natural” or pre-determined and pre-given right to exploit its coastal waters.

Champions of the EEZ and the growth of Peru's maritime economy also justified the enclosure of the ocean and its rich ichthyological resources as a potential response to the public health crisis gripping the nation. In the postwar era, malnutrition affected approximately one-third of the population (Sifuentes 2012). Rural mountainous regions like Apurímac and Huancavelica and newly urban coastal areas like Ancash (home to the nation's largest fishing port, Chimbote) had higher rates of malnutrition, anemia, and infant mortality than any other provinces in the country (Sifuentes 2012). To make matters worse, Peru struggled to feed Peruvians with Peruvian food. In lamenting the lack of domestic agricultural opportunities Banchemo writes, “most of the agricultural lands that are economically exploitable are located on the coast, whose valleys are nothing more than small oases in a vast sand

desert” (1972a, p. 42). Given a growing population and the expensive engineering works required to turn the coastal desert into arable land, the ocean offered a stable and relatively cheap food supply, high in protein: the anchoveta.

In addition to resolving a public health crisis and being a “natural” right, industrialists justified the 200-mile EEZ as a necessary protection against the threat of foreign exploitation. In a critique of the colonization of the sea, Banchero argued that developed countries like the US are able to occupy the world’s oceans through three mechanisms: foreign investment, boycotts, and the precedent of “historical fishing traditions”. In response, Banchero claimed that developing coastal nations like Peru are forced to establish their own maritime economies out of “necessity” and garner international support through doctrines and law (p. 44). The EEZ therefore created the opportunity for a Peruvian maritime economy to develop, and gave the state the right to evict the “voracious jaws of foreign capital” (1972b, p. 68).

By reducing the threat of US economic imperialism over Peru’s oceans, the 200-mile EEZ thus ensured that the Peruvian ocean would be exploited by Peruvian private industry. Given the incipient notion that foreign industry would want to develop Peru’s lucrative anchoveta fishery, the state sought to protect the existing relationship between Peruvian shipowners and fishers by offering them property rights, and most importantly, continued use of the ocean. Thus, to occupy the ocean meant to use the ocean, and to use the ocean meant private and domestic capital. The writer, Isaac Salazar León wrote,

“The [200-mile] region was and is ours, but it is necessary that we exercise sovereignty over it. The ichthyological wealth has to be exploited, but not with the simple plowing of its marine waters but with the extraction of its products, the production of fishmeal, and the foundation of its coasts as sites of great industrial potential” (1972b, p. 82).

Thanks to the political autonomy and maritime sovereignty afforded to the state by the EEZ, Peru became the largest exporter of fishmeal and fish oil by the mid-1960s (Thorp and Bertram 1978). Approximately two-thirds of the total annual output in 1968 was generated from Peruvian-owned companies (Abramovich 1973, p. 57).

Because of the success of the industry, the radical transformation of Peru’s coastline, for many, was seen as a sign that the vision of *cuarta región* was taking root

and would lift up the nation's economy. Jorge Donayre, writer and musician, documents the change in port towns such as Chimbote. He writes, these port towns “are not sad coves with piles of twisted and rusted iron, a few mat huts, and abandoned boats” anymore. Instead, they are marked by “high chimneys that stand out in the distance, flooding the beaches and neighboring fields (and even whole cities) with black and gray smoke, heavy and peculiar in the sky.”

With this new landscape came workers who would help to grow the industry and develop the new cities (or *pueblos jóvenes*) that would support the industry. Most of the migrants to Peru's booming port towns were Indigenous (Quechua) peoples from the Andes; a smaller subset included *criollo* people from other areas along the coast, Afro-Peruvians, and immigrants from East Asia (Wintersteen 2021). Donayre describes this heterogeneous constellation of migrants as “a new hardworking and strong class that works hard from dawn to dusk at sea, and continues to do so in the city.” Through their labor, “the Peruvian coastline turned from a long, narrow, sandy surface into a belt of sweat, workshops, wealth and prosperity” (1972b, p. 36-37). The *cuarta región*, as a manageable ecological space, was therefore inextricable from the creation of a manageable working class.

Such unfettered enthusiasm was short-lived. On January 1, 1972 Banchero died under suspicious circumstances and only a few months later the anchoveta fishery collapsed. These two events marked the unraveling of the industrialist vision of the *cuarta región*, although a very different narrative of the sea had been brewing a few years before.

UNMAKING THE CUARTA REGIÓN

While the Peruvian anchoveta fishery achieved the largest processing capacity of any fishery on the planet, a rising tide of worker discontent and anti-capitalist ideology began to spread throughout port towns. Three factors in particular contributed to the unmaking of the capitalist narrative of the *cuarta región*: a nationalized fishery, strong union organizing, and pervasive leftist ideology.

In 1968, General Juan Velasco led a coup that usurped the democratically elected president and installed a left-leaning military dictatorship (Thorp and Bertram 1978). A central component of his economic regime was the anchoveta, which led him to create the first-ever Ministry of Fisheries, headed by the infamous Javier Tantaleán Vanini. In fact, one of Velasco's political slogans was "the March towards the West", referring to the Pacific Ocean. Fearing incursion from foreign capital, Velasco nationalized the fishery in 1973 (Thorp and Bertram 1978). While the Velasco regime did little to challenge the *cuarta región* as a highly extractive and exploitative space, indirectly however, his policies did lead to its unmaking.

Though it was not an explicit policy goal, Velasco's regime was responsible for the proliferation and strengthening of unions (Manky 2011). In seven years, the number of recognized unions in the country doubled, from 2,343 in 1968 to 4,330 in 1975 (Sulmont 1977, p. 224). By the mid-1970s, trade union infrastructure was complex, with unions in major ports defined by worker-type and with several overarching bodies. For instance, the Peruvian Fishermen's Federation (FPP) served as an umbrella union for dozens of unions and represented over twenty thousand members (Clarke 2017).

These unions formed the base of a leftist movement that emerged in the late 1960s. The movement was characterized by its ideological heterodoxy, an emphasis on nationalism, and its support for political revolution (CVR 2003, p. 160). There was "a budding insurgency in the left; determined and compelled to consolidate its stance against the state and finding it in the union struggle" (CVR 2003, p. 165). Despite the breadth of leftist political factions throughout Peru during Velasco's regime, within the fisheries there was one party that had a monopoly on coastal workers: the Revolutionary Vanguard (VR), which formed in 1965 and grew out of the leftist maelstrom within Peruvian universities. With the merging of intellectuals and political professionals from the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP) and influenced heavily by Trotskyism, the VR established itself primarily in the mining and fishing industries and grew to be one of the largest and most influential leftist groups of the 1970s (CVR 2003).

Hernán Peralta, the founder of a rebel archive that forms the basis of this analysis, was one of the VR's politicized university students. He initially went to the University of San Marcos in Lima to study medicine, but was quickly caught up in the political climate at the time. "I was following the fishermen, going to their rallies. I was a student working during the days and studying at night. But I loved listening to the rhetoric of the fishermen—they were fierce" (January 25, 2017). After switching his major to sociology and graduating a few years later, Peralta moved to Chimbote to begin working for the VR.

"So, I went to Chimbote and...I bathed in the bay full of grease. Then I dried myself off and, reeking of fish, I go to the union, which was the [US-based] Starkist *atunero* union (tuna fishermen)." He embedded himself in the fishery. "I got to know the industry, I lived in the fishermen's houses, they fed me, they got angry if I didn't go to lunch, but of course I didn't have a car. Sometimes I would walk like...8km to spend time with them" (January 25, 2017).

Coincidentally he arrived only months after the 1970 earthquake, one of the largest natural disasters in Peru's recent history. "At that time Peru was in a moment of contradiction with capitalism, oppression, and imperialism," he explained. The wreck caused by the earthquake only underscored this contradiction and validated his choice to enter a life of politics, which meant going underground as a guerilla political activist. For ten years, until the elections in July of 1980, Peralta lived in secrecy, coordinating protests, organizing events, and hoping to incite a political revolution amongst unions in the nation's port towns.

Following the first season of low anchoveta landings (November 1972 to February 1973), trade unions began in April of 1973⁸ to stage a series of marches, hunger strikes, and work stoppages which had the effect of making public the anchoveta collapse and, at the same time, strengthening a cohesive labor movement throughout Peru. "It was an era of 'taking the factory' and revolutionary slogans, in which strikes and work stoppages were the norm" (Manky 2011, p. 121). The workers' movement was both highly visible and well-organized, extending throughout various sectors of Peruvian society.

⁸ Although fisher strikes increased in quantity and size following the collapse, there were many prior strikes and work stoppages calling for better working conditions and pay. Most notable was the 1966 strike to garner insurance for out-of-work fishermen (Sulmont 1977).

Chimbote was hit hardest by the collapse and became a major site for political activity, and in particular strikes, work stoppages, and protests. Clarke writes that these mobilizations reflected the “anxiety the state had over the development of Chimbote and the growing discontent of the masses” (Clarke 2017, p. 284), much of which was rooted in the numerous informal settlements around the city. (See Figure 1 below.)

Figure 1. Informal settlement outside Chimbote.



Source: Denis Sulmont personal archive.

A former FPP union leader and *anchovetero* explains his motivation to become a political activist in an interview: “We have to defend the fishery. How do I talk to my family about it? I say to my kids and grandkids, ‘I am defending your bread, your survival.’ I do not want to die just talking, but protesting so that the [anchoveta] species doesn’t go extinct” (February 8, 2017). To make matters worse, the lack of accountability by governmental officials exacerbated tensions between out-of-work coastal workers and the state. In a later conversation (October 15, 2017) the same interviewee elaborates on this point, stating: “everybody harvests from the ocean, but nobody sows it. Who’s going to sow it?”

Two major strikes took place in the aftermath of the collapse: one in 1973 and another in 1976. The 1973 strike, commonly known as the Chimbotazo “took the veneer off the government” and served as an “inflection point” (Clarke 2017, p. 284) in the relationship between the state and fisheries workers.

Amid continued economic turmoil, Francisco Morales Bermúdez became president in 1975 and issued three new decrees that escalated the labor movement confrontations in Chimbote⁹. These measures were met with swift resistance by fishermen. In his memoir, Gil Farias Mogollón describes the collective response by fisheries unions to combat them: “[U]nion organizers and political revolutionaries opened up the possibility for the formation of a vast front that would...coordinate and unite the struggles throughout the country” (1989, p. 142).

To push against governmental decrees, the FPP issued a communiqué in August of 1976, which served to kickstart the “spontaneous revolution” along the coast (Farias 1989). On October 18th, 1976, the FPP announced an indefinite strike, and on the 26th the government declared a state of emergency and imposed a curfew in Chimbote. During the strike, the government replaced protesting *anchoveteros* with mechanics, security guards, and retired fishermen. “Thousands were fired. Workers were incarcerated, tortured, and all their rights violated” (Farias 1989, p. 147). In reflecting on the 1976 strike one *anchovetero* remembers the pervasive fear among union leaders: “everyone had to protect themselves. Nothing could be at home. Your house was practically abandoned, because if [the police] were going to look for you they would go to your house first...So that’s what we did. Alternate addresses...and no one used their own name.”

This hostile climate laid the foundation for a period of intense repression by the state: threats, kidnapping, arrests, port closures, and property destruction—actions that, Farias claims, resembled terrorism. In addition, the policies that the regime had implemented stayed in place and had the effect of turning fishers into

⁹ The first, DL 21558, was issued on April 26th and reprivatized the industrial fishmeal fleet that had been nationalized under Pesca Peru. (Factories, however, remained under the charge of Pesca Peru until 1992). The second decree, DS 009-76-TR, issued by the government on July 21st, canceled certain compensations, including salaries during fishing bans, medical and sick leave pay, and health insurance—a tactic to destabilize the labor movement during a time of increased resistance to reprivatization. The third decree, an addendum to DS 009-76-TR, created the PEEAS (Small Anchoveta Extraction Businesses) as a means to appease fishermen by allowing them to create cooperatives so as to buy back fishing vessels from the government.

“permanent migrants in search of work” (p.151). For instance, after spending nearly a month in prison during the 1976 strike, the president of the Federation of Artisanal Fishermen of Ancash was released without his fishing license, preventing him from returning to work. He sought out a local lawyer known for defending worker’s rights but was refused. “I was told that nothing could be done. And even if I reported it [the violence and the loss of his license], it would only make things worse.” This sense of helplessness against state violence reverberated throughout packed union halls and the empty loading docks along the Peruvian coast.

REMAKING THE CUARTA REGIÓN

While social movements contributed to the unraveling of the vision of the *cuarta región* espoused by industrialists during the 1950s and 1960s, a counter-narrative started to emerge in the 1970s: that the collapse was not natural, poor people were still struggling, and the state was more dependent on foreign capital than before. Sociologist Alejandro Maguiña Larco, known commonly as Maguñito, wrote in the leftist magazine *El Diario de Marka*:

“It is not alarmist to tell the Peruvian people to be vigilant. Alerting the people is justified if only for two reasons: the fact that the Minister of the Economy, Dr. Barúa, confirmed in his last TV presentation that the lack of anchoveta is because of ‘natural’ reasons; and that because of this, he predicts a significant recuperation of the fishery by 1976” (1976, p. 19).

Despite the confusion and lack of a confirmed explanation for the collapse, the government was issuing false promises to the Peruvian people, saying that just as the collapse was a natural event, so too would be the recovery. In fact, 1976 was named the “Year of the Anchoveta Return” by the Ministry of Fisheries. But, by “becoming vigilant,” workers began to mobilize and, alongside social scientists, write a different account of the crisis.

To do so meant compiling data in order to write a counter-narrative of the industrialization of the *cuarta región*. Shortly after the collapse, Peralta began to amass a trove of documents from colleagues at the National Oceanic Research Institute (IMARPE), in addition to union organizing documents, and financial records of fishmeal factories to support the workers’ struggle. For many workers, the collapse of the anchoveta was not incidental, but rather part of the very political ideology at

the time that had not accounted for, or rather deliberately ignored, the ecological *and* social impacts of existing management practices. For example, an excerpt from an FPP report reads: “the biological cycle is broken because the political system is bankrupt” (1974). To justify their arguments, however, fisheries workers needed to better understand what was happening under the sea surface, which was a difficult task.

Under the military dictatorship (1968-1980), there was little, if any, communication between the state and non-state actors regarding the ecology of the fishery. In an effort to try and make sense what was happening out in the ocean, Peralta taught himself. “I had to learn biology because it was kept secret from us. I had friends in the state and in IMARPE and in the Ministry [of Fisheries]. They had their point of view and I had mine, so we would educate each other (*nos retroalimentábamos*) and discuss, but because there was no documentation. It didn’t exist” (October 19, 2017). While documentation did exist within state-run institutions (including IMARPE and the Ministry of Fisheries), it was not public. As a result, newspaper and magazine articles published by social scientists like Peralta, Maguiña, and Malpica (and others, oftentimes under pseudonyms) served as a means of creating scientific documentation for the public.

In the process of teaching himself biology and translating it to the public, Peralta’s archive began to grow. When asked about the origins of the archive, he answered:

“Because of the corruption at the time. Today you can access [IMARPE’s] archives, but who had the archives before? Because the SNP [national fisheries lobbying group] financed the research they gave the companies copies of the scientific bulletins, but when the military government arrived, they became secret. As an ordinary citizen, if you approached IMARPE and asked for a copy of a report they would not give it to you” (October 17, 2017).

Even after the Peruvian government returned to democratic rule in 1980 and IMARPE’s archives slowly became more public, Peralta laments that the state continued to espouse a revisionist history of the sea that celebrated the expansion of Peruvian capital investments along the coast, praised the state-run management of the anchoveta, and claimed the collapse was a small blip in an otherwise well-run and well-researched fishery. Peralta’s self-ascribed “critical vision” of IMARPE and the

Peruvian state writ large, was in part aimed at the global technocrats involved with the CPPS who helped to build the fishery in the first place. He exclaimed: “they knew what would happen! They saw what happened to the sardines in California.”

In addition to documenting the ecology of the collapse and the decades long recovery, Peralta's archive served to support the union activity of fisheries workers, showing that working class were still struggling: not only were they unemployed or underemployed, but they were also victim to rampant health problems such as malnourishment, asthma, and gastrointestinal diseases. To make matters worse, state violence continued to tamp down activism.

As the state began to adopt a series of neoliberal policies that reopened the fishery to private industry, the archive became a resource for mobilized fisheries workers. For example, the scholar and politician Carlos Malpica, mentioned at the beginning of this article, collaborated with Peralta on a report that countered the dominant narrative espoused by the government.

“There [at the union hall] we had the first meetings [about the report] with Malpica. Because he looked at things from the outside, and he was also a leader, no one could tell him what was good and what was bad...He also had the unconditional support of the union leadership...Well, we were able to contribute and the report came out, which was a response to the military government on the situation of Pesca Peru [the national fisheries corporation] and the sale of the fishmeal companies” (March 22, 2017).

Funded by the FPP, *Anchoveta and Sharks* (1976) used financial records from fishmeal companies to expose the massive amount of debt inherited by the state during the reprivatization of fishmeal factories in 1975. The report was especially important for fisheries workers because the state refused to acknowledge the economic conditions of fishery, which had direct impacts on their pensions, salaries, and insurance. Since many fisheries workers were supportive of the initial nationalization of the fishery in 1973, reprivatization—to any degree—was not only a disappointment, but seen a return to economic dependence on foreign capital.

In 1982, after a decade working in Chimbote with the VR, Peralta became president of the research non-profit, the José María Arguedas Institute, where he led a study team devoted to the socio-environmental problems plaguing the coastal working class. Even though he left the clandestine life of political organizing, his

archive continued to serve the needs of fisheries workers. In describing his work at the Arguedas Institute, Peralta said, “we edited books, we paid people well. We had that profile so that we could support the union struggle (*la lucha*). We were the ones who sustained the demands. Here [in the archive] you can find many documents that support their demands.”

In the mid-1980s one of the most pressing demands was reducing contamination from fishmeal factories in Chimbote's Ferrol Bay. In fact, in one of Peralta's first memories in Chimbote he swims in the “greasy” bay, full of *sanguazo*, a combination of fish blood and fish oil. For decades the red bay and smell of fish elicited the mentality of “when it smells, it pays,” however, as chronic ailments such as asthma, rashes, and stomach aches continued to plague those families living closest to the bay and the factories, the prevailing sentiment changed (Sueiro 1994). In response to the void of scientific knowledge and the growing presence of community concern, Peralta's archive began to accumulate reports from other local NGOs and research entities similarly interested in the contamination of the bay and its related health effects, such the Chimbote Association of Medical Students (ACHEM).

In addition to research conducted by other research non-profits, or *centros*, Peralta was able to support the ongoing union struggle and, at the same time, build out his archive through connections with Congresspeople like Malpica (who became a Senator for the United Left party in 1980). “We [at the Arguedas Institute] had a relationship with Congress, so we would go and propose the laws that defended the fishermen and ourselves. There were thirty Deputies and Senators who were from the left, and APRA [a populist political party] too, so we had fifty people there and I was the advisor to all of them” (March 29, 2017). Under a favorable populist government (1985-1990), Peralta's archive and his “study team” at the Institute informed a host of policies, such as first federal policy to reduce contamination in the bay (DL-757, 1989), and a new general fisheries law that protected worker's rights (DL-24790, 1987).

Because of his Congressional colleagues, Peralta was able to collect confidential transcripts from Congressional meetings; one of the most notable transcripts was taken during the 1983 week-long impeachment of then-Minister of Fisheries Fortunato Quesada Lagarrigue. The transcript details the debate over the

ongoing reprivatization of the fishery and demonstrates the palpable fear among leftist politicians that continuing to adopt neoliberal policies in the fishmeal industry would increase dependency on foreign capital, foreign science, and foreign governments.

While Quesada advocated for turning the fishmeal industry into a cannery using foreign investment, he was met with swift resistance from leftist politicians who feared that doing so would only complete a “cycle of enclosure” that served US economic interests. Quesada defended himself by saying, that “ocean has punished us and we must obey it” (p.159). According to the Minister’s position, reprivatizing the fishing fleet and transforming the fishery into a cannery would also resolve the ongoing public health crisis: “we give preference to feeding pigs and birds rather than feeding Peruvians who die of hunger everyday...feed Peruvians first, then export” (p.4). Despite his rhetoric, politicians on the left accused Quesada of being “a lackey for Yankee imperialism” and the Minister was ousted from office. This heated debate over the dependency of Peru’s maritime economy on foreign capital contrasted sharply with the mainstream discourse over the *cuarta región*, which continued to assure the Peruvian people that the sea would remain an autonomous political and economic space.

In 1989 Peralta resigned from the Arguedas Institute (which at that point had turned into the Fisheries and Mining Institute (IPEMIN)) to work in Congress as an advisor to the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP). During the course of several decades his archive continued to grow and he eventually created his own non-profit called the Fisheries Research Center in Lima, which occupied the third floor of his house and contained the archive in its entirety. See Figure 2 below.

As the value of the archive for fisheries workers as a hub of clandestine political activity ended, Peralta made the archive public. In fact, several activists and local scholars would later use the archive as a resource for developing pamphlets, white papers, and graduate student theses and dissertations. In one of my interviews with Peralta I asked what was the purpose of the archive today. He responded:

“I started this campaign to help us reconstruct history and to contribute to it with materials either given to me or in need of being organized. I have to do it...The main idea is that this [archive] is at the service of whoever is interested.

But the end goal is a personal one—that if in the course of [consolidating the archive] I die, at least it will be useful. I have already put things in motion that can develop on their own. It's simple. You already have the car, now you just need someone to drive it" (February 1, 2017).

Figure 2. Hernán Peralta's rebel archive, 2017



Source: Apollonya Porcelli.

One and a half years after this quote, Peralta passed away. At the time of publication, his archive is in the process of being formally included into national archival records.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper I have shown two contrasting narratives of the industrialization of Peru's maritime economy: first, a dominant narrative celebrates the creation and expansion of the *cuarta región* and sees the collapse as a small blip in an otherwise well-managed system, buttressed by a discourse of "natural" rights,

utilitarian good, and political autonomy. I have also shown how a rebel archive offers a counter-narrative of the *cuarta región* through the lens of a mobilized working class whereby the expansion of the fishery was not natural, working-class people were still suffering, and Peru's dependence on foreign capital only grew.

While the success of the *cuarta región* as a political-economic space is still a hotly debated topic, it is indisputable that the social activism of fisheries workers played an indelible role in the history of Peru's maritime economy, despite efforts by the state to silence, erase, or undermine their experiences. Not only did social movements produce a new narrative, they also produced the material objects necessary for supporting that narrative, which included Congressional transcripts, union pamphlets, and white papers on fisheries ecology. The process of accumulating these documents was chaotic, collaborative, and at times dangerous, reflecting nearly five decades of data collection and the many lives of the archive's founder: a guerrilla political organizer, advisor of multiple study teams at research non-profits, and a Congressional consultant.

Peralta's rebel archive, and so many others, underscore the burden of proof that falls on those most vulnerable to environmental crisis. Part of the reason that the dominant narratives of colonial bureaucrats, authoritarian regimes, or capitalist entrepreneurs persist is because of their control of the archive, and more specifically their ability to transport, house, protect, and digitize archival records. For those that live in precarious economic positions such as illiterate and oftentimes out-of-work laborers, compiling and tending to an archive is extremely difficult. The trouble with creating and maintaining a rebel archive is also compounded by the threat of floods, landslides, and heavy rains—all of which plague the infrastructure of working-class Peruvian port towns, and many others worldwide. Thus, the rebel archive at the center of this analysis presents a rare opportunity to recapture the history of the sea—easing the burden on activists, laborers, and the researchers seeking to tell their stories.

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Fuentes desde Abajo: un Archivo Rebelde Reescribe la Historia Marítima de la Cuarta Región del Perú

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina cómo los archivos locales ofrecen una narrativa alternativa a la expansión industrial de la cuarta región: el mar. El auge del Perú en la economía pesquera mundial durante la posguerra y el establecimiento paralelo de la Zona Económica Exclusiva de 200 millas en 1952 agregaron el mar como una nueva región comercial más allá de la selva tropical, las montañas y la costa. En el transcurso de las siguientes dos décadas, la economía peruana dependería cada vez más de un pequeño pez pelágico: la anchoveta (*Engraulis ringens*). Tras el colapso de la anchoveta de 1973, la economía nacional tuvo dificultades para recuperarse y el malestar social se apoderó de la costa. En respuesta a la creciente violencia estatal, la opacidad científica y la censura, surgió un archivo notable, además de varias colecciones más pequeñas, para apoyar una ola creciente de activismo laboral y ambiental. Sobre la base de 12 meses de investigación archivística y etnográfica y entrevistas con actores clave, este capítulo se une a la creciente investigación interdisciplinaria sobre archivos para desarrollar el concepto de "archivos rebeldes": archivos de origen local que refuerzan los movimientos de resistencia y dan un giro a las ontologías hegemónicas de la explotación industrial de recursos. En diálogo con los aportes de los estudios poscoloniales sobre "las ciencias desde abajo" y la ecología política, ofrezco nuevas formas de conocimiento sobre las interacciones entre humanos y océanos en la pesquería más grande del mundo. Concluyo con lecciones para futuros estudios sobre movimientos sociales, conocimiento ambiental y economías dependientes de recursos.

Palabras clave: Perú; océano; movimientos obreros; archivos; extractivismo.

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