

INVESTMENT OF MIGRANT REMITTANCES:
SOME EVIDENCE FROM ANTHROPOLOGY

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
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ABSTRACT

International migration for employment has strongly influenced the economic development of many countries. Much of the policy-oriented research on the effects of migration has used the intellectual frameworks of neoclassical economics to analyze changes in economic structure and output. This paper reviews a broad sample of anthropological case studies of the effects of migration on labor-sending communities in order to suggest ways to broaden the economics frameworks. Focusing on the particular question of how migrant remittances are used in the home communities, it explores the significance of expenditures on education, land and agricultural improvements, business investments, and traditional social activities including rituals.

The paper concludes that migrant expenditure decisions are influenced by many factors which have not been incorporated into the economic models. The economic analyses attempt to formulate generalized abstract models and use empirical evidence to test them. The anthropological research aims to interpret behavior in particular places, and would apply its theories across cultures only as a heuristic device. The choice between frameworks depends on the uses to which a particular study is to be put, and on the *a priori* beliefs of the researcher about the existence and value of general theoretical models of human behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Work in the field of international labor migration has stimulated much discussion of how remittances and earnings brought home upon return affect the sending countries. The impacts may be felt at many levels; by the migrants' families, by their home villages, or in the regional or national economy. The issues involved have been framed within -- and across -- a number of disciplines, perhaps foremost among them economics, political science, and anthropology. This paper looks at one particular question on migrant remittances; whether, and under what circumstances, they are used for economically productive investments. It is an attempt to cross disciplines, asking how the data available from anthropological studies relate to the theory suggested by economics. I am interested in two issues in making this link. The first is the extent to which the empirical evidence substantiates or refutes the theory, and thus suggests modifications in it. The second is whether the individual case study data generated by anthropologists suggest broader ways of framing the issues, which could give a fuller picture of the determinants of migrant behavior.

The use of remittances for productive investments is important at two levels. At a macroeconomic level, obviously, investment will lead to growth of GNP, the standard indicator of economic development. At a micro level, productive investments seem to offer a mechanism by which short-term migration could provide long run benefits to people in the sending community. While increased consumption by the household receiving remittances is unquestionably good (at least within the framework of conventional economic theory), it is only available for as long as the migrant remains abroad and sends money home, or engages in cyclical patterns of migration. If, however,

the foreign earnings can be channelled into something which will lead to improved earning ability or increased security of income at home, then this may be self-sustaining without repeat migration. It is therefore important to see what kinds of investments are made by returned migrants (or the families to which they send their earnings), the circumstances under which they are possible, and the constraints which limit investment in many places.

The analysis of anthropological data in this paper is intended to generate a broad picture of factors which affect migration investment decisions. The outcome is not a detailed analysis of any one sending country, but an overview of issues which are important in a number of places, but which are not generally incorporated into economic models. This overview provides a framework within which to consider an individual country, in order to suggest the ways we may expect a strictly economic analysis to be incomplete.

THEORY

Macro-economic theory suggests that migrant earnings could be integrated into the sending economy in several ways.⁽¹⁾ Remittances constitute a significant and, in a sense, exogenous increase in household income. This could be saved by the migrants and channelled into productive investments leading to growth of aggregate output. Moreover, migrants are paid in foreign currency, which is often severely limited in labor-sending countries. If the government could control currency exchanges and thus gain access to this

(1) In using the terms "sending economy," "sending community," and "sending household," I will be referring throughout to the migrant's place of origin; that is, to the place sending *migrants* rather than to the place sending *remittances*.

resource, the currency could be used to ease bottlenecks on national development; for example by permitting import of capital goods or raw materials.

Alternately, remittances could be used by the recipient households to increase consumption. The consequences of consumption increases are uncertain. At the level of the household, they will obviously benefit the consumers. If the sending households are at the low end of the income distribution, this could be highly progressive. If the increased consumption is of domestically produced goods, then it will serve as a stimulus to increased investment. to the extent that the intermediate goods are also domestically manufactured, this will lead to economic growth. However, if demand rises faster than the ability of producers to increase supply, then the result will be inflation and substitution of imported goods for domestic ones. The inflation in turn will force more people to migrate, simply to maintain a constant standard of living. Moreover, to the extent that the increased demand is for imported goods it will not stimulate the domestic economy, but will lead to a dependence on imports which could be a problem if migration slows down.

STATISTICAL EVIDENCE

Aggregate data on the use of migrant remittances with which to answer these questions are scarce. To the extent that they are available, they suggest that the income is used most often for increases in household consumption, purchases of land, and purchases or construction of housing. Smaller amounts go to repayment of debts, education, health care, establishment of small businesses, and so on.

Suzanne Paine (1974, p. 133) has looked at the case of the Turkish workers in Europe. She estimates that about 50% of migrant savings are spent on consumption goods, including housing. She does not give figures for the amount invested in producer goods, but reports that it is very low. This is the case despite a Turkish government project to develop cooperative agricultural investment schemes relying on savings from migrant remittances. Paine attributes the failure of this project to lack of managerial expertise among the returned migrants and to their unwillingness to put their earnings into cooperative ventures.

Oberai and Singh (1980) have looked at uses of remittances by rural households in the Indian Punjab. They found that most households were increasing consumption, but only a few were putting anything into productive investments or education (see table below). Of those making productive investments, almost all were in agriculture. Unfortunately, the data from this study provide only the number of households making each type of expenditure, but not how much they spent.

Percent distribution of households by items on which remittances were spent -- Indian Punjab

Item of Expenditure	% of Households
1. Productive investment	6.1
2. Children's education	1.0
3. Debt repayment	3.8
4. Ceremonies (incl. weddings)	9.6
5. Food and clothing	75.9
6. Housing and household goods (incl. luxuries)	25.1
7. Consumption (4+5+6)	92.7

Source: Oberai and Singh 1980, p. 237

Chandavarkar (1980) reviews a number of other studies which touch on use of remittances, with much the same results. In a study of the Indian state of Kerala, remittances went first to the repayment of debt; some sixty percent of migrants owed money before they left. The preferred assets among the Kerala migrants were land, buildings and jewelry, but the study does not tell us how much money went towards them. Another study, this one of remittances to Pakistan, found that the money was "frittered away in personal consumption, social ceremonies, real estate and price escalating trading."⁽¹⁾

ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Aggregate statistical approaches to the use of remittances are useful to the extent that they provide some indication of macroeconomic data. However, as a way of understanding the behavior of migrant households they are limited because they do not allow us to observe or understand political or cultural influences, and so do not help us understand causality or motivations. For this reason, it is important to consider the evidence offered by micro-level studies which place migrant behavior in a broader social context and thus provide some insight into the actual determinants of particular actions. Accordingly, I consider a range of case studies of the impacts of migration on sending countries, looking at how migrants spend their money, and seeking to understand the strategies underlying their decisions in the face of varying constraints.

(1) Perwaiz, Shahid, "Home Remittances" Special Report, *Pakistan Economist* September 1-7, 1979. Cited in Chandavarkar, 1980.

As the aggregate economic data indicate, we observe three broad -- and frequently overlapping -- patterns with respect to the use of remittances. In all of the case studies they are used to increase consumption of everyday items like food and household items, thus directly increasing standards of living. In most places they are also used for "conspicuous consumption" of goods which outsiders often judge not to contribute in essential ways to the standard of living, but which clearly mark the consumer as a person of wealth or high status. Usually, such status is conferred through a connection with the world beyond the immediate village, for example by consumption of western goods. However conspicuous consumption may also be understood to include expenditures on rituals or social events which affirm status within the indigenous social system. Although commonly used, the category of "conspicuous consumption" is actually highly ambiguous, because many items so labelled may also be understood as investments or stores of value. For example, electrical appliances or transistor radios may be resold to raise quick cash; and status in the home community may translate into marriage prospects for one's children. The third pattern for use of remittances is what I loosely term "investment," by which I mean any expenditures which can provide a permanent improvement in the migrant's ability to make a living in the home community.

The discussion which follows identifies the general areas in which investments are or could be made. By comparing cases in which each occurs and cases in which the studies specifically mention why such investments do not occur, I draw general conclusions about some of the non-economic factors determining migrant decisions.

EDUCATION

In neo-classical economics, expenditures on education are understood as investments in human capital, which will be made if the present discounted value of expected increases in lifetime earnings exceeds the costs of the education. The anthropological evidence suggests that economic concerns do not play the major role in decisions about education. In fact, the only places in which migrants' children were found to be educated were ones where education was free, so it is hard to draw any conclusions about the value of returns relative to costs. However, in at least one place young people opted for education despite the fact that skilled white-collar jobs paid less than the alternatives. This suggests that we must look beyond income incentives to understand decisions about education.

Education plays an important role in the migration behavior of people from the southwestern Iranian district of Larestan. (McIntire, 1982) Since the 1940s, Laris have been migrating to Kuwait and the other small oil-producing states of the Gulf. Although some migrants were selling their labor, most were operating small retail businesses which supplied the local population, particularly other migrants, with food, clothing, housing, furnishings, and other necessities. The pattern has involved stays in Kuwait of eighteen months to three years or more, with visits back to Larestan of no more than six months. However because of the cost of living and the Kuwaiti immigration policies, few migrants bring their families or stay as permanent residents. Instead, they support their families in Iran with remittances; McIntire reports that by the 1970s these had become the "mainstay of the ... economy." (*Ibid*, p. 20)

In the 1940s and 1950s, few Lari families sent their sons to school for more than a couple of years. Public schools in Larestan were few and charged tuition, so instead of pursuing an education the boys migrated with their fathers to learn the family business. In the 1960s, however, the Iranian government instituted mandatory schooling, increased the number of schools, and made them free. With these changes, boys began to stay in school instead of migrating. Those who completed high school could find high status white collar jobs as teachers, government servants, or clerks. These paid less than work in Kuwait but were preferred to the migratory life -- both by the boys themselves, and by girls who frequently would refuse marriage to migrants in favor of husbands who would stay in Iran.

Since education in Larestan was free after the 1960s we cannot draw clear conclusions about how it is valued in economic terms. Moreover, without knowing the government's ability to enforce the mandatory schooling law, we cannot determine the significance of the elimination of tuition and increased availability of schools in the trend for boys to remain in Iran rather than migrating. The evidence that they prefer to work for lower salaries in Iran than to migrate -- and perhaps more to the point, that women prefer to marry non-migrants -- is a clear reflection of the negative values placed on migration. There is another dimension to this shift, however. The white collar jobs frequently involve moving to a larger city, thus becoming a more less permanent part of a different cultural group from the home community. Thus instead of representing an investment which will improve social position within the original culture, education becomes a decision to move into a different cultural group altogether.

Education was also found to be a vehicle for permanently leaving the home community in a study of migration from the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia. (Bennett, 1979) The island of Brac and the coastal town of Sutivan have been sources of migration for almost a hundred years. Since the Second World War most of the migration has been to Yugoslavian cities or to western Europe. By 1970 the migration patterns included a substantial number of young people moving to Split, a nearby city of about 200,000, to pursue their educations beyond the eight years required by the law. By and large, migration to Split for education leads to permanent departures from the home community. Some educated people residing in Split built second homes in their home community, highlighting the change in their social situations before and after migration. A few who returned did so to take on new economic roles in the tourist industry which was growing in the coastal towns. Like the second home construction, the emergence of this industry indicates a major shift in the economic and social structure of the home community.

This evidence suggests that in Yugoslavia, as in Iran, the role of education cannot be understood simply in economic terms. Rather, at least in these cases, investment in education places the educated person in a different sector of society, and does not merely change his or her position within the community or origin. Moreover, in both countries the choice of this strategy must be understood as a (possibly unintended) consequence of deliberate government policies which made education an option. In Iran this was a decision to make education free, accessible, and mandatory. In Yugoslavia, it was a result of the eight years of compulsory education and the development of a higher education system which allows for considerable internal mobility.

These two cases suggest that, in thinking about education, one must ask not only whether it pays off in economic terms, but how government policy is affecting its availability and viability as a route to social mobility.

Brettell's depiction of the experiences of northern Portuguese migrants to the Paris region reinforces this point through contrast. (Brettell, 1979) She describes the social structure of the sending community as extremely rigid, characterized by a sharp and largely inviolable distinction between lower and upper classes. Within this structure, she finds that the educational system is designed to offer a very high level of training to the few who can afford it, but does not serve as a vehicle for upward mobility. Cultural prohibitions on low-status work for those entering high-status professions prevent poor students from working part time to fund their educations, thereby limiting altogether the access of low-income people to the university system. Here broad social values and the lack of countervailing government policy, rather than simple economic motivations, are contributing to the migrants' decisions against education for their children.

LAND AND AGRICULTURE

The issues involved in expenditures on land and on agricultural improvements are complex and must be considered in relation to each other. There has been considerable debate on the impact of migration on agriculture. One scenario suggests that by siphoning off surplus unskilled labor, migration will lead to increased marginal product of land and agricultural capital. This will encourage investment in agriculture, which is made possible by the availability of remittances. (Paine 1974, p. 47) It is also suggested that decreased labor supply will lead to consolidation of fragmented land holdings because the

remaining labor must be used more efficiently. (Kindleberger 1967, pp. 103-106) In an opposing scenario, migration depletes the rural areas of skilled labor, causing increased agricultural wages and decreases in agricultural output and land under cultivation in response to the increased wages. Migrant households do not invest in agriculture, but abandon it in favor of living off remittances, since migration is more lucrative than agriculture could ever be. Moreover the decreased agricultural output and increased cash incomes would combine to generate increases in consumption of imported foods, with predictable negative consequences for balance of payments, inflation, and so on. (Paine 1974, pp. 47ff)

In analyzing economic impacts, we must separate expenditures on land from those on capital or labor which increase its yield. Expenditures on land alone do not constitute productive investments. Rather, they shift of existing means of production from one owner to another. The impact this shift on total output will depend on what the seller does with the money s/he receives and how the buyer uses the land. Expenditures on improvements to land, however, should clearly be viewed as productive investments, since they generate increases in output. Thus the economist only interested in maximizing total output would look at migrant expenditures on agricultural improvements, but would not be interested in land purchases which did not involve any changes in production levels or techniques. The economist who is concerned with the distribution of income as well as its total level would be interested in both issues.

The anthropological evidence suggests that the buying and selling of land may be understood in ways which are not captured by the economic analysis. Migrant behavior with respect to land may be affected by changes in

attitudes towards manual labor; in a number of places sharecroppers feel that migration increases their social status, and are reluctant to resume their old occupation upon return. In some places the ownership of land -- even if it is not cultivated -- is a mark of social status or a way of holding a place in the home community, which motivates migrants to make purchases. Moreover, land reform and other government policies are influencing migrant use of land, as are larger economic shifts caused by migration itself.

Under some circumstances, land provides a viable outlet for migrant earnings, and can be purchased in sufficient quantities to enable the returnee to marry and support a family. This has been the case for migrants returning to the Ilocos Norte province of the Philippines after working as contract laborers on the Hawaiian sugar cane plantations. (McArthur, 1979 and Griffiths, 1979) Historically the Ilocano villagers have been divided between holders of small farms and sharecroppers on a few large estates. Population pressures dating back at least a hundred years have led the sons of smallholders to migrate to other parts of the country, in order to leave more land for their siblings to inherit. In 1919 the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association began recruiting laborers for three-year contracts in the cane fields. By offering round trip air fare to anyone completing the contract, they were able to hire both small holders and sharecroppers, who couldn't afford to migrate within the country.

The two studies of Ilocos Norte look at people who went to Hawaii before the Second World War and stayed for anywhere from three to more than forty years. The migrants planned to save enough cash to buy a farm, which would serve as their dowry or enable them to support their families. It seems that they were in fact able to do this. Although they could not save

enough to buy more land than they could work themselves -- and thereby become landlords -- they were able to be comfortably self-sufficient after their return. Migrants who stayed overseas for longer periods of time could build homes with their savings, and were well off enough to invest in agricultural equipment and to take the risk of experimenting with new rice varieties. Once the viability of new strains of rice had been demonstrated, their use quickly spread to the other farmers who couldn't take the risk of pioneering. Thus migration is associated with shifts in the ownership of land as well as increases in its productivity which in time spread throughout the community.

Interestingly, the success of these migrations from the point of view of accomplishing the migrants' goals appears to owe something to the United States' colonial policy in the Philippines. U.S. policies emphasized education and political participation, which created new opportunities in politics and the professions for the Ilocano estate owners. Consequently, at the time that the migrants were returning to purchase land, the large landowners were interested in selling their estates in order to fund their own ambitions to work in Manila. Thus land was available for purchase, and this particular combination of circumstances led to its redistribution from the landowners to the returned migrants.

In some places, migrants purchase land to provide themselves with a "nest egg" in the home village, but they do not rely on the income from it. This pattern prevails on the island of St. Vincent in the West Indies. (Rubenstein, 1979) Savings from migrant remittances are frequently put into agricultural land which is held in the expectation that the migrant will someday return. The family may make some effort to farm the land, but

frequently they can live off of remittances more comfortably, and prefer to consider farm labor below their status. Often the land is taken out of cultivation altogether, and is used as a house plot, thereby decreasing the total supply of agricultural land. Migrant purchases are also causing fragmentation of land holdings, making the plots less economical to farm. Moreover, the cash flooding the market has inflated the price of land beyond the reach of non-migrant households interested in farming.

Brettell observes some of the patterns in northern Portugal. (Brettell, 1979) In the vilage she studied, she found that migrants disdain the peasant life and the "dirty" work of agricultural laborers. They migrate in order to move up the social ladder, and accordingly do not want to invest remittances in the agricultural sector. Moreover, the construction of large houses is eating into the supply of agricultural land, thus contributing to the erosion of the area's traditional economic base and necessitating continued migration.

The experiences of North Yemen illustrate the problems of land price inflation and land as a source of prestige. (Swanson, 1979 *Emigration and Economic Development*) Swanson, studying three villages outside Taiz in the southern Hijaz mountains, reports that migrants who return to their villages are eager to buy land because it conveys power and prestige within the traditional culture. However, the option of migrating as a way to meet sudden cash needs means that no landholders are really hard pressed to sell. Prices have skyrocketed as a result; between the early 1960s and the mid 1970s the cost of good agricultural land increased by a factor of ten. In 1976, Swanson reports the sale of prime irrigated land for nearly \$70,000 an acre. (p. 71)

The land-use picture in Yemen is further complicated by larger shifts in the economy. The increases in remittances have been accompanied by increased demand for goods, which is generating rampant inflation. The inflation, together with the manpower shortages caused by migration, has caused wages to rise precipitously. All else being equal, wage increases would provide incentives for farmers to invest in labor-saving machinery. However, many labor saving techniques can not be applied in the Yemeni highlands because the terraces are too narrow to permit introduction of the available machinery.

Increased incomes have also changed the patterns of demand for agricultural goods. Food imports have risen sharply, and they are in competition to domestic products. At the same time, demand for *qat*, a mildly narcotic leaf chewed socially by all Yemenis, has increased enormously, as has its price. Since returns from *qat* have increased relative to other products and it requires little labor, farmers are shifting from production of food to growing the leafy bush. *Qat* requires the high quality irrigated land whose prices have risen so quickly; farmers purchasing this land cannot afford to use it for other less profitable plants. Similarly, investments in irrigation systems require the high returns from *qat* in order to be profitable. At the same time, marginal fields are being taken out of cultivation in response to labor shortages and, as Al-Kasir (1983) reports, total outputs of grain and export crops are dropping. The decreased viability of agriculture (except for *qat*) is forcing those who haven't worked overseas to migrate to the cities in search of work which will enable them to keep up with inflation.

Overseas migration is generating substantial increases in demand for land. However because of increased wages and shifts in the prices of

agricultural commodities it is not usually profitable to invest in improving its productivity if it is not suitable for *qat* production. The result is broad shifts in agricultural patterns and a spiral of interactions between migration and changes in the rural economy.

The experiences of the Spanish village of Alcudia have in many ways paralleled the Yemeni ones. (Rhoades, 1979, pp. 65ff) The town has relatively good agricultural potential, especially in comparison with neighboring villages; the land is fairly flat, the soil fertile, and access to regional markets good. Moreover, the initial distribution of land ownership was fairly even. Consequently, even the largest landowners lacked the power to prevent migration in order to hold onto their supply of cheap labor. Returning migrants were eager to buy land, the price of unirrigated land rising more than fifteenfold between 1961 and the mid 1970s. However, the plots held by most returnees are too small to support a family. Moreover the cost of labor, driven up by the unwillingness of migrants to do agricultural work, is too high to be covered by the value of the produce. A number of migrants have purchased imported tractors which they rent to others in the community; however low demand for tractor time and high costs of maintenance and fuel meant that this market was very quickly saturated. Other investment in new technologies to increase farm yields has been limited. Rhoades concludes that, as in Yemen, the real forces behind migrants' land purchases have been a desire to establish themselves in the community and a lack of more profitable investment opportunities.

Migration-related wage increases affect overall agricultural patterns in the Caribbean as well. (Philpott, 1978) Migration has been an option on the island of Monserrat for over a century, but it didn't become really important until

transportation to Britain became easy in the 1950s. At the same time a new political system was encouraging the growth of trade unions on the island. With migration available as a fallback, the sharecroppers organized and were essentially able to drive up wages enough to cause the collapse of the large estates which had been the foundation of the island's agricultural system. Unlike the Filipino case, however, the migrants did not then buy the land for their own use. Instead, households receiving remittances were generally unwilling to engage in agricultural labor. This suggests either that migration was still more lucrative than agriculture despite the wage increases, or that status considerations with respect to agricultural work were stronger than economic ones. Unfortunately, Philpott does not pursue this issue, so we cannot determine which of these hypotheses is more likely.

The experiences of the migrants from Larestan (Iran) to Kuwait (McIntire, 1982 p. 29) suggest how government policies may interact with migrant values about agriculture. McIntire gives several reasons why Lari migrants chose not to invest in agricultural land in Iran. To start, government land-reform policies restricted total holdings of a family to an amount too small to be profitable. Moreover, national credit policies and subsidized food imports made domestically produced food less competitive on national markets. The problems were compounded because, as long as migration to Kuwait was an option, it was hard to recruit laborers at an affordable price. From the perspective of the migrants these factors "ruined" agriculture as an economic activity. At the same time they came to view it as "regressive" and "simple-minded," and preferred to invest in urban areas and live an urban life. (*Ibid*) What happened to the agricultural land when they left is unclear; McIntire seems to suggest that it remained in the hands of former

sharecroppers, but that they could not farm it profitably because of the government policies which discriminated against domestic agriculture, and higher returns available from migration.

These studies suggests several important impacts on land and agricultural investments which are not captured by the economic analyses. Perhaps most important are the roles of land ownership and farm labor in determining social status in many societies. In these studies social status factors play a significant part in migrant decisions independently of economic motivations. They also play into and off of the local economy. For example, the values placed on land, which influence the demand curve in ways not anticipated by an economic perspective, interact with and in fact create significant supply constraints in many places. This drives up land prices and thus determines patterns of investment in agriculture. The studies also indicate the role of government credit and food policies on the profitability of agriculture, an issue not considered in the predictions that remittances will be invested in agricultural equipment.

BUSINESS INVESTMENTS

Theorists about international migration often suggest that returnees will invest their earnings in productive enterprises. Several arguments are involved here. One is that the migration experience will develop a spirit of entrepreneurship thought not to exist in the traditional sending communities. Another is that migrants will learn new skills which they will be able to use profitably upon their return. A third suggests that the bottleneck to investment has been the availability of capital, which will be alleviated by remittances.

Several patterns run through the anthropological data on such investments. Many migrants try to find niches within the "traditional" economic structure of the home community in which to open businesses. However, because these communities are small and demand more or less fixed, the markets for the services of migrant firms are quickly saturated under most circumstances.

This experience has been demonstrated in many places. In discussing returnees to Alcudia (Spain), Rhoades documents migrants investing in bar-restaurants, small grocery stores, service shops like hairdressing salons and repair shops, and transportation services. (Rhoades, 1978 p. 142; Rhoades, 1979 p. 64) Rhoades also observes one type of enterprise which is responding to changes in the structure of the town's economy; a few families which had owned shops before the recent migrations sold them to returnees, and opened lucrative furniture and appliance stores to meet the new demand generated by remittances. The migrant businesses are in very close competition with each other in Alcudia. Thus, for example, where the town had three bars in 1970, by 1977 it had nine, and their owners were installing special features like color televisions in an attempt to draw customers. Even the migrants themselves are realizing that a town of two thousand can not support nine bars, five grocery stores and a supermarket, six bakeries, and so on. Their desire to open the shops nevertheless is apparently related to returnees' resistance to resuming work in the fields. Migration is seen as a way to pull themselves out of farm labor. If they can't accomplish this at home as entrepreneurs, they reemigrate, and then return to live off their savings until the next trip.

Rhoades mentions that in some cases "it has been reported that the entrenched middle class entrepreneurs and authorities simply refuse to

cooperate in allowing (business) permits to migrants.” (Rhoades 1979, p. 64) Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on this; however it suggests that the migrants would invest their sometimes quite substantial savings in more lucrative enterprises than small shops, but are prevented from doing so by more established entrepreneurs who fear competition. The concentration of migrants in a few domains, therefore, may not actually indicate the full potential for investment in the home village to permit a self-sufficient way of life.

The lack of opportunities for profitable investment in the home community shows up in North Yemen as well. (Swanson, 1979 *Emigration and Economic Development* pp. 73ff) Aside from the investments in land and (to a limited extent) agricultural equipment discussed above, the principle investments in rural areas are in milling and local transportation. However as in Alcludia, these markets are quickly saturated. Swanson suggests that in the Yemeni case, one limiting factor is that no individual migrant has enough capital to invest in anything radically different, but there are no institutional mechanisms for pooling resources to generate a significantly larger supply of capital.

In only one case, that of Yugoslavia, do we see returnees investing in non-traditional activities in the home community. (Bennett, 1979) The national government is promoting the Adriatic coast as a tourist area and special legislation allows private business enterprises such as *gostione* (tourist homes), restaurants, and even discos. Of fifteen large *gostione* in the village of Sutivan, eight were financed with foreign earnings. Multiplier and spillover effects from the development of tourism are being felt in other sectors of the local economy, in increased demand for everyday goods, expansion of the construction industry, and so on. In this case, national government policies

changing the economic base of the region are the variable permitting productive investment of migrant earnings in the home community.

While these studies suggest that it is the exception rather than the rule that the home community offers opportunities for profitable investment, several studies have shown migrants investing in larger cities after returning from abroad. This has been the case with the Larestan migrants to Kuwait. (McIntire, 1982, 1984) Returned Lari migrants invest primarily in urban real estate and in wholesale or retail businesses. Those with less savings would return from Kuwait to open businesses in Lar; however, as in other places, competition was intense and profits low. Those with more capital, therefore, would invest in larger Iranian cities outside the province of Larestan, in some cases moving there permanently as they became established. For these people, temporary migration to Kuwait becomes a route to social mobility which involves a permanent departure from the home community.

The case of North Yemen shows a variety of migrant investments in larger cities. (Swanson, 1979 *Emigration and Economic Development* pp. 81ff) Swanson discusses several kinds of investment which migrants were making in Taiz, San'a', and elsewhere. The favored urban investment is in buildings, usually new structures with one or more shops at the ground floor and an apartment above. Although this was very popular, even by the time of Swanson's study the prices of urban land and the costs of construction had risen enough to put it beyond the means of most returnees. A second popular urban business was the emigrant agency; however by the mid-1970s this market had been pretty well saturated and was very hard to break into. Retail businesses have also been tried; however as elsewhere the competition is intense and many firms fail. The fourth type of investment which Swanson

observed observed was transportation. Because of growth in Yemen's road system, the field for such investments has not yet been crowded out; however Swanson is pessimistic about the long-run income generating potential of these investments as well.

Swanson also observes that the only returnees making urban investments are those who migrated not to the Gulf states, but to the Americas. He explains this by the fact that they have more capital to invest than migrants who stayed closer to home. If this explanation is valid, it suggests that under most circumstances migration may not provide enough capital to permit profitable investments in the absence of mechanisms to facilitate pooling of resources.

Meyer and Al-Kasir have portrayed a slightly different picture of Yemeni migrant investments in the cities. (Meyer, 1983; Al-Kasir, 1983) Meyer found that many returnees move to San'a' to invest in the construction and building materials industries, which have boomed due to migrant demand for housing. In his study, about two thirds of the managers of firms producing building materials had worked abroad, and many of these had learned their vocational skills while away. These people dominate the production of non-traditional materials like concrete blocks, iron gates and aluminum doors. On the other hand, the production of traditional building elements like wooden doors is not dominated by international migrants. This case shows clearly how changes in consumer demand of migrant households is stimulating economic growth and, at the same time, how migration is providing both the capital and the skills to meet that demand. This trend is having repercussions for the rural areas as well as for San'a'. The proprietors of these firms prefer to hire their relatives or others from their own villages. Thus a steady stream of

rural-urban migration has been generated as a by-product of international migration.

Al-Kasir has found similar patterns looking at a broader sample of businesses in San'a'. Over half of the firms he looked at had been established by returned migrants. As in the Meyer study, these were concentrated in new area like welding, aluminum shaping, automobile repairs, and manufacturing cement building blocks. Again the owners tended to hire people from their home villages. This is providing poor people from rural areas, who lack the capital to go abroad, with opportunities to increase their incomes within the country.

These examples suggest that migrant investment in business ventures -- like any such investments -- will be economically most productive when they are in growing sectors of the economy. At present, however, most rural areas do not offer many opportunities for growth, even when capital constraints are alleviated by the availability of remittances. Where opportunities do exist for investment they are part of larger changes in the economy -- in some cases generated by migration -- and, as with educational opportunities, they require the migrant to move more or less permanently out of the home community. The Yemeni case highlights this, showing how the changes in way of life generated by migration are drawing in groups far beyond the international migrants themselves.

TRADITIONAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RITUALS

In a number of places we observe migrants putting significant assets into ceremonies or social activities which establish or raise their social standing within their home communities. In terms of national economic

growth this appears to be totally unproductive. However, at the local level, it serves a variety of functions, some of which resemble investment and others of which should be considered conspicuous consumption.

For some of the Lari migrants to Kuwait, expenditures on traditional activities contribute to the migrant family's ability to establish itself in the home community. (McIntire 1982) McIntire compares two readaptation paths taken by returned migrants. The education route, discussed above, brings returns to the migrant family through the employment of the educated younger generation in government or education, and frequently involves moving to a larger city. The other route is to devote funds to religious good works such as public buildings, giving to the poor, and sponsoring religious ceremonies. McIntire's study suggests that those who pursued the second strategy were easily accepted by the community and, in particular, had no trouble finding desirable spouses for their children. Those who did not engage in traditional status activities or participate in gift giving or exchange networks were not accepted, and she cites the case of such a man who had to pay a very substantial dowry to obtain even a lower class bride for his son.

Participation in traditional organizations meets an economic need for some of the Ilocano migrants from the Philippines as well. (Griffiths 1979) Griffiths finds that the wealth provided by migration allowed the returned migrants to form two *sociodades (sic)*, mutual aid societies whose members contribute to help each other pay the costs of marriages and funerals. To attract members, one of the *sociodades* sponsored a fiesta, an important event in other parts of the Philippines, but rare in the Ilocos region because people were too poor to afford them. A fiesta queen is elected on such occasions,

in a contest where the votes are monetary. The girl for whom the most money is contributed is the winner, and the money pays for the feast and for a village project chosen by the *sociudad*. Traditionally, the *sociodades* and the fiestas have provided an opportunity for members of the community to express reciprocal obligations. The sponsorship and election of fiesta queens has also become a vehicle for migrants to establish status in the home society. Many of the queens are in fact backed by migrant funds. Some very wealthy returnees -- the so-called *pensionados*, who retire in the Philippines on American social security benefits -- would sometimes obtain a young girl as a wife in return for sponsoring her as the fiesta queen. (McArthur, 1979) (The girls acquiesce to such marriages because they will receive the pension after their husband's death, and their children will receive dependent benefits until they are eighteen years old.) It seems, therefore, that participation in the *sociodades* and the fiestas meets several needs for the migrants; it is a form of insurance, a way of establishing a position in the society, and for some a way of obtaining a wife.

In other places expenditures on traditional ritual are more clearly a form of display. (Brettell 1979, pp. 5-6) Migrants to France from northern Portugal often return in the summer to show off their new wealth. At weddings and festivals they seek to outdo each other with lavish food and drink. If they can't return to participate, they send contributions which also serve to establish their place in the society. In Brettell's view, this kind of behavior is completely characteristic of northern Portuguese migration, which she interprets as largely motivated by a desire to improve social status in the rigid and tightly knit home community.

Volkman's discussion of the role of ritual among the Toraja raises more subtle questions. (Volkman 1984) The Toraja, subsistence farmers in the South Sulawesi highlands of Indonesia, began leaving their communities in the 1960s to work in the forests of Kalimantan. For many, migration was a way to fulfill a desire for wealth and status at home. This was accomplished in two ways. First, as in many places, they returned with watches, radios, blue jeans, and other paraphernalia of Western life. At the same time, however, they put substantial resources into traditional status-affirming rituals. This has caused considerable confusion, because the rituals they are performing evolved to affirm status categories which have lost their meaning now that anyone can become wealthy by migrating. Moreover, the rituals are part of the indigenous belief systems of their grandparents, but most of the migrants are themselves Christian. As these rituals flower with migrant money, they draw an influx of tourists, which adds to the unreality of the performances. The tourism does not stimulate the local economy enough to offer a productive outlet for investment, nor can the rituals themselves be understood as an investment which brings in tourist revenue. In the meantime, migrant earnings are not put into possibly more productive investment in agriculture, and the subsistence base of the sending community is eroding for lack of labor.

Thus the significance of expenditures on traditional events is unclear, perhaps even to the migrants themselves. From an economics perspective, they do not contribute to national growth. Under some circumstances they do provide clear benefits to the individual migrant and to his or her community. In other cases, their most important purpose is apparently to increase status. The Toraja case is most telling, because the expenditures on ritual point to

the confusion within the society as it changes in response to migration and larger pressures from the outside world.

CONCLUSIONS

Returnees from international migration may have several "assets" which may enable them to make productive investments in their countries of origin. Most obvious of these, of course, is money earned abroad. The second is a desire to get away from or improve local conditions, which probably contributed to their desire to move in the first place. The third is an increase in their human capital; trades learned abroad, new awareness of efficient ways of working, and so on.

These factors alone, however, are not sufficient to generate economically productive investments upon return. This still depends on the outcome of a rational calculus of the advantages and disadvantages of investing. This analysis has suggested that under many circumstances this calculus will come out negative, because the investments possible with returnees' capital are not profitable enough to be more attractive than living off of remittances or engaging in cyclical migration.

There are many possible interpretations of this result. We can think of migrants' capital supplies as too small to allow investments substantial enough to generate economies of scale. Then an appropriate response would be to investigate mechanisms to pool these resources, for example by developing financial institutions in the rural areas.

Alternately, we could understand the issue to be the lack of investment opportunities for returned migrants. In a sense this is not different from the first formulation, but it shifts the locus of the "problem" from the migrants

to the society. In so doing, this formulation suggests several explanations for the outcome of the cost-benefit calculus. We may ask whether any sectors of the sending country's economy are growing and, if so, where they are. In some places -- particularly Yemen -- most economic growth is occurring in the cities, and we observe migrants moving to take advantage of it. In a few places -- such as Yugoslavia and the Philippines -- there are opportunities in the rural areas, and migrants are heavily represented.

However, in many countries there either is no growth or the migrants are not participating in it. For instance, if, as Rhoades suggests, the rural situation in Alcludia resembles the Yemeni one, why don't we observe Alcludian returnees investing in large cities? This raises the possibility that investment opportunities do not exist because of characteristics of the larger economy, but are generated by the migrants themselves. The question then is why only some migrants seek out or create investments. This could depend on the migration pattern. In places where migration has existed for a long time and may be expected to continue, remittances constitute a secure livelihood for the family, which may therefore have no incentive to invest at home. Where migration is a more recent phenomenon, more precarious politically, or where the migrants are not permitted to stay in the host country for a long time -- all of which describe the Yemeni experience in the Gulf -- they may have more incentive to invest at home since they can not count on remittances for support in the long run.

The anthropological evidence shows that conventional economic considerations may not be the determining ones in decisions about where or whether to invest. This is the case with respect to land, which conveys social status in many communities even though it is not providing a means of livelihood.

The biases against agricultural labor have the reverse effect, keeping many migrants from returning permanently lest they be forced to resume work in the fields. Expenditures on ritual show similar non-economic priorities in the calculus; the status conveyed is more important than financial returns from investment.

The evidence also shows many ways in which government policies can play into the investment calculus. This was important in Larestan, both in the government provision of education which generated an alternative to migration and in the food, credit, and land tenure policies which made agricultural investment unprofitable. In Yugoslavia government policies worked to encourage rather than discourage investment in rural areas, by stimulating the tourist industry on the Adriatic coast. The Ilocano case shows how policies which were apparently altogether unrelated to labor migration affected the supply side of the land market to make investments in land and agriculture profitable.

The anthropological perspective draws our attention to a range of factors playing into decisions about investment of migrants' earnings which are not allowed for in economic analyses of the impacts of migration. As this discussion has shown, if we want to understand whether or why remittances are actually contributing to national growth in any particular country, we must expand our analysis to include these variables, rather than trying to answer our questions in economic terms alone.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This discussion raises a number of other issues in the study of migration and remittances which warrant attention in further research. Some

of these fit within the general framework we have implicitly used, which seeks to explain the use of remittances in terms of economic opportunities, characteristics of the sending communities, and government policy. Others question that framework, and go beyond the study of migration to problems which underly all social science research.

One important question is whether we should expect remittances to be used differently from any other income. To the extent that they have been treated differently, it is because researchers are framing their questions in terms of the effects of migration rather than household use of income. However, it is not at all clear that the fact that money is sent by a relative working abroad should affect its use. If it does not, then remittances should be discussed within the context of a general discussion of the uses of increased income, which has been analyzed by economists and other social scientists. In their analysis, an important issue is whether income is available regularly and in predictable amounts, or in unexpected windfalls. This will be particularly relevant to the remittance discussion, since migrants vary greatly in their regularity of their remittances.

A major determinant of the predictability of remittances may be whether the migration is for contract labor or to look for work. By and large migrants on contracts will expect to return at a definite time, and their savings from foreign earnings (whether remitted or held to bring back upon return) may reflect an orientation towards using the money at home. By contrast, migrants who go for an indefinite period, and possibly do not expect to return, may have a quite different attitude towards using their earnings to support those at home. For example, they might send money home regularly at first, but as their ties weaken their remittances may

become more sporadic. It would, therefore, be useful to compare the behavior of contract laborers and their families with that of long-term migrants.

Another issue of some importance is who decides how and for whom migrant earnings are to be used--the migrant, or his or her immediate or extended family. This is related to the broader question of whether migration is an individual strategy for advancement or a part of a larger household strategy. Economists have tended to treat the migrant as an individual operating only in the context of his or her own interests. Recently, it has become apparent that in many places this is not the case, but that the decision to send a migrant is part of a household strategy to increase or diversify its income or opportunities. To some extent we can guess at the consequences of this distinction--for example, migrants who operate on their own may send less remittances or have more say in their use than those sent by their families. However, this distinction should be understood more broadly, as a determinant of the whole migration pattern which should inform any investigation of migrant behavior.

Several broader concerns have also arisen from this work. The approach taken throughout has been implicitly dualist, in the sense that the orientation has always been "the home community" versus "elsewhere," where "elsewhere" may be the place to which the migrant goes initially or a third place where s/he goes after "return." It may be more appropriate to think about the location and movement of people in terms of a network of places and social ties. One individual may have most of his or her ties in a single place--the "home community"--but also have relatives or friends in a number of other places. In deciding where to work or where to use available resources s/he may think in terms of all of these places, moving among them in different

patterns to meet different needs. What could appear to be a one-time move, or a move followed by return to the place of origin, may really be part of a more complicated pattern. By reducing migration to simple two-node movements, we may be missing much of what is going on and misunderstanding what is motivating the behavior we observe. In a sense, this makes "migration" and "remittances" inappropriate concepts; what we are really interested in is how people incorporate spatial distance and mobility into their strategies for earning and spending money. This does not so much provide a new topic for research as it provides a different framework for studying the same broad topics as we have been considering all along.

An even broader problem which arises from this work pertains to the relation between theory and reality in the social sciences. This is something of a chicken-and-egg problem; are theoretical generalizations derived from empirical observation, or is empirical work done to test abstractly generated theories? The economics approach to migration takes the latter view, constructing abstract models which may be tested against statistical data to be "proven" or "disproven." The anthropological studies which we have considered take the empirical experiences as a starting point, and engage in an interactive process of developing hypotheses or interpretations, using them to interpret the "real world," and using the real world to suggest additional hypotheses.

On one level, we could choose between these approaches based on an *a priori* belief about whether there exist abstract, "right" theories which, if sufficiently refined, would enable us to predict the behavior of individuals. If we believe such theories to exist, then we should follow the analytical methods of economics; otherwise we should follow those of anthropology.

On another level, we may want to choose an approach based not on a philosophical belief about which is right, but on the purpose to which we will put our research. For some policy purposes, it is important to be able to predict values of specific variables, for example remittances or investment in particular sectors of the economy. If this is our goal, then our concern is with accurate prediction and we need only as complete an understanding of the process by which the variable is determined as will give us our values. We may, on the other hand, be broadly concerned about the problems of the families of migrants from a particular region. To determine what a local government could do to help them, we will want to understand their situation as fully as possible in order to assess what the problems are, but we will have no use for abstract models which predict their actions. The interpretive approach will be much more valuable here, because it has more potential to provide the kind of information which will meet our needs.

This examination of anthropological studies on migration raises at least as many questions as it answers, both about migration itself and about ways of thinking about social science research. These questions are in themselves a useful result. In searching for ways to modify the approaches of neoclassical thinking, we expected to suggest possibilities, but not necessarily to produce a complete analytical framework.

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