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Wealth, Authority and Prestige
in the Ica Valley, Peru

by Eugene A. Hammel

THIS PUBLICATION is an ethnohistorical examination of the major structural features of the society of a coastal Peruvian valley from late prehistoric times to the present day. The study is primarily concerned with the differential distribution of wealth, authority, and prestige in Iquenian society, the relationships between the structuring of the three variables, and the changes that have occurred in these through time. While no regular trends characterize the structural changes in Iquenian society throughout its entire history, the process to which it has been most recently subjected and in which it still continues is one of progressive dissociation and independence of the major structural features considered. In consequence, individual mobility in the hierarchical social structure, both in advance and retrogression, can now occur relatively independently along various axes, and the opportunities for such mobility are thus greater than before. At the same time that the axes of the structure have become more independent, the relationship between component groups of the society have been characterized by increasing interdependence and organic solidarity.

The author received his doctoral degree in anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley, and has done ethnographic field research in California, New Mexico, and Peru. His principal field of interest is the organization of European and European-derived peasant societies. He is currently Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley.

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TOMB OF TWO MEN KILLED WHILE WORKING NEAR
CHLORIDE, NEW MEXICO, 1890