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Review/Reseña

José Antonio Lucero, *Struggles of Voice: The Politics of Indigenous Representation in the Andes,* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008.

Revisiting the Politics of Indigenous Representation in Bolivia and Ecuador

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The question of representation has received little attention in the literature of indigenous politics, with the exception of must-read books by Donna Lee Van Cott (2005, 2008) and Deborah J. Yashar (2005). Lucero's book helps deepen our understanding of the way in which indigenous people construct and reconstruct their patterns of representation in Latin America. In this excellent work, Lucero disentangles the political and cultural conjunctures of Bolivia and Ecuador that proved crucial in determining patterns of representation for indigenous peoples.

The approach Lucero utilizes is not only constructivist, but also comparative and historical, as it analyzes the configuration of Indian-state

relations in different periods and looks at national, sub-national and regional cases of representation in the cases under study. At first glance, Bolivia and Ecuador show notable differences, specifically in regard to the internal cohesion of indigenous movements. Bolivia presents a more fragmented scenario in terms of indigenous mobilization while Ecuador reflects a united indigenous movement, especially with the creation of CONAIE, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador.

However, Lucero warns us that, strikingly, these scenarios have not followed the same pattern in regard to electoral politics and the role of the indigenous movements in representative democracy. While the indigenous population in Ecuador hardly has been successful in reaching out in national politics and garnering a significant percent of the electoral vote (usually below 5 percent at the national level), the situation is different in Bolivia; in spite of a lack of cohesion, an indigenous-inspired social movement, the MAS (Movement Towards Socialism), was able to attract 53.7 percent of the national vote in 2005, marking a turning point whereby national elections were decided in the first round.

One hook that Lucero uses to engage readers in his book is the claim that a debate over representation issues will shed light on the role and impact of social movements in shaping state-society relations. His view of representation involves two dimensions, cultural and institutional: the cultural dimension deals with the processes of internal and external construction of certain political subjects; the institutional side refers to the "routinized processes" of selected constructions linked to larger political entities (18).

One point that Lucero emphasizes is the long-standing patterns of "uneven state formation" (19). Although this pattern certainly has been a challenge for the construction of indigenous representation, it also has provided opportunities for these identities to form and challenge the state in varied forms.

The main research question of Lucero's pragmatic constructivist approach to indigenous representation is: "*Why and how do certain [indigenous voices] emerge as representative of the complex and variegated social group that the label "indigenous people" has come to*

include in Latin America?" (21). In other words, considering the varied and multifaceted indigenous groups, why and how are certain voices more able to become representative of indigenous people while others fall short in this enterprise. To unravel the book's main research question, Lucero presents three propositions to explain indigenous representation: 1) multi-scalar identity construction; 2) political opportunity structures; and 3) structured contingencies.

Building on extensive and thorough field research on the cases under scrutiny, the author explores the conformation of indigenous movements in Bolivia and Ecuador. Lucero makes clear from the outset that the "Indian problem" has been approached differently at the regional level (highland/lowland) in the two cases, which has influenced the patterns of representation. By acknowledging that during the nineteenth and early twentieth century's, indigenous people were not considered capable of representing themselves in post-colonial Latin America, the late twentieth century marked an inflexion point in indigenous politics. This period signals remarkable transformations in patterns of recognition of the indigenous people and representation, led by the articulation of both regional and national organizations. Lucero underscores—as authors such as D.L. Van Cott (2005) and D. Yashar (2005) also have noted—that since the late 1990s globalization, transnational relations, and neoliberal regimes have intersected with multiculturalism, reshaping and opening new avenues for Indian-state relations in many countries of Latin America. Bolivia and Ecuador have not been the exception to this trend, and instead have been staples of these new relationships. As Lucero adds the caveat that social actors are works in progress, he stresses the need to understand how subjects are made to understand fully how they become politically represented. After examining the theoretical debate on notions of representation, Lucero warns against a principal-agent view of representation in favor of a broader understanding in which "politics and culture play equally important roles in producing, organizing, and ordering political subjects" (36).

In looking at the cases under study, Lucero notes that Ecuador never underwent a social revolution such as Bolivia did in 1952, though it

suffered from political unrest aimed at challenging traditionalism at the core of society. Although Ecuador did not engage in a full-fledged corporatist regime as Bolivia did, Indians were seen as a problem in both countries, representing elements of colonial orders. Interestingly, Lucero contrasts the early acquirement of universal suffrage for Bolivia's popular sectors in 1952 with the later franchise for indigenous Ecuadorian peoples in 1979. Yet, communal units were recognized legally by the Ecuadorian state and enjoyed some local representation and their own legal framework. Noting the late return to electoral democracy in both countries–Bolivia in 1982 and Ecuador in 1979—Lucero underscores that the structures of intermediation for indigenous groups were to be found outside the party system. Specifically considering the inability of both countries' weak party system to represent indigenous people, Lucero stresses the focus of parties in distributing state resources, along with a powerful network of patrimonial relations that existed in the Bolivian state after the democratic transition. With fewer patrimonial features than Bolivia, Lucero still highlights the entrenching clientelism that has flooded Ecuador's political and power structures and acknowledges that both cases display powerful "patron-client dynamics and linkage failures" (42). Building upon Chalmers et al.'s concept of associative networks, the author argues that indigenous social movement organizations have become key actors in current networks of representation in Latin America. Therefore, from early mobilization during the 1970s in Bolivia and Ecuador, organizations have protested uneven assimilation into the nation-state. Rescuing the influences of Marxist thought and religious doctrines aimed at preserving indigenous practices, the author stresses the reach of these social movements, from the local and regional level to the national level.

Lucero structures his analysis in three major historical periods: the first period looks at communities, contention processes, and patterns of representation from the 1860s to the 1960s; the second period examines how "Indianness" has been articulated at both regional and national levels from the 1960s to the 1990s; and the third period analyzes the encounters between neoliberal regimes and multiculturalism characteristic of the 1990s to 2005. The division in time periods holds some advantages and

limitations. On one hand, it allows for temporal comparisons of indigenous representation patterns in Bolivia and Ecuador, identifying evolution and development processes as well as featured components of the way in which indigenous identity has been shaped. On the other hand, this approach presents some limitations worth noting. It prevents the reader from gaining a more comprehensive understanding of each of the cases under scrutiny, especially in regard to the evolution of mobilization patterns, electoral gains, and institutionalization of indigenous representation. Although Lucero is very successful in conveying his analysis to the reader and makes the caveat that his study would be historical and comparative from the outset, certain repetitions of arguments could have been avoided by looking more comprehensively at each case under scrutiny.

In his analysis, Lucero emphasizes the fact that the challenges faced by nation-builders in both Bolivia and Ecuador included the need to create new forms of representation. He also notes that the transition from colonial/communal categories to liberal/individualist ones has been and continues to be remarkably uneven. Therefore, the fragmentation of indigenous lands by colonial hacienda agriculture coexisted in many cases with the provision of space for the survival of indigenous community forms. In addition, Lucero notes that the weak ethnic administration in Bolivia, the strong ethnic administration in Ecuador, and state corporatism encounter Indian or peasant cultural images that were "coupled with new state-society articulations that reflected hegemonic understandings of the place of indigenous communities" (75). Looking specifically at state corporatism, Indians were re-baptized as peasants, and unionizing and social rights struggles for rural reforms became means to "incorporate" indigenous people in national structures. Wisely turning around Hanna Pitkin's formulation of representation as "making present [of] something absent," Lucero stresses that the politics of renaming Indians as peasants meant "rendering absent something that was all too present," referring to indigenous people (75). This feature was true particularly in the case of Bolivia, and it also accounted for more contentious indigenous politics in the negotiations of their terms of recognition vis-a-vis the state.

While emphasizing the link between political and cultural landscapes in the forging of indigenous political projects, Lucero draws attention to the articulation of Indianness between the 1960s and 1990s. He notes that the agrarian reforms of the mid-twentieth century challenged the dominance of haciendas and generated new mechanisms for the incorporation of Indians, rebaptized as peasants. Lucero argues that ethnicity and class, both of which involve the cultural process of positioning/being positioned, were rearticulated by indigenous movements with close relation to the way in which political power was distributed in the cases under scrutiny. Lucero argues that although indigenous movements emerged with considerable power, much remained fragmented in terms of a unified discourse and leadership. On the other hand, not without internal struggles, Ecuador was able to maintain a powerful national indigenous organization, CONAIE, representing at the same time indigenous people of the lowlands, coast, and highlands regions of the country.

In comparing the indigenous movements of the lowlands in Bolivia and Ecuador, Lucero underlines that indigenous movements have been more prone to negotiating with the state, in contraposition to their highland counterparts. In the case of Bolivia, CIDOB, the Confederation of Indigenous People of Bolivia, has been more willing to negotiate, in contrast to the highland Aymara indigenous population. In the case of Ecuador, Lucero shows that the lowland indigenous organization of CONFENIAE, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, has been successful in negotiating with transnational companies and the state. Yet, Lucero stresses the historic reluctance of indigenous organizations of the Bolivian lowlands to replicate a national indigenous alliance with the highland indigenous population, as in Ecuador. According to Lucero, this distance between regions was the result of the inability to find ideological and organizational points of contact. It is worth noting how Lucero underlines the success of Ecuadorian indigenous movements in refashioning new models of indianidad through the case of nationalities. Therefore, indigenous movements in Ecuador were featured by the language of indigenous nationalities, expressed in the creation of

CONAIE as the national articulator of indigenous peoples across the country's regional boundaries. In clear contrast, Bolivia displays entrenched regional differences that continue to halt national indigenous movements. Again, making the caveat to readers in considering the cohesion of indigenous movements as an indicator of success of failure, Lucero warns that fragmentation should not be understood as an indicator of failure. The most conclusive proof has been what Bolivia saw in 2005, the landslide election of a Quechua-Aymara Indian, Evo Morales, who won "more popular support than any other candidate (indigenous or nonindigenous) in postdictatorship Bolivian history" (119).

When examining the encounter between the neoliberal regimes and multiculturalism of the 1990s to 2005, Lucero points out that after the so-called "lost decade" of the 1980s, most Latin American countries embarked on neoliberal economic reforms and adjustment policies. Yet, this period also represents the time when indigenous politics became a powerful articulator and mediator vis-à-vis the state and major indigenous organizations consolidated throughout Latin American countries. In the same line of argumentation of authors such as Yashar, Lucero contends that the paradoxical perception of neoliberalism as an immediate threat to indigenous livelihood and organization coexisted with the opening of new avenues and dynamics for indigenous movements that would have notorious consequences. Lucero also shows that the thesis of nationalities in Ecuador encountered many challenges, such as the year 2000 contestations of FENOCIN (the National Federation of Indigenous Afro-Ecuadorians and Peasants, a class-based organization) and FEINE (the Federation of Indigenous Evangelists of Ecuador, an Evangelical Christian federation) seeking equal treatment of indigenous organizations while recognizing that indigenous people also have organized around unions or churches, and not only around nationalities. Lucero claims then that one of the biggest challenges for these communities is not to achieve a national movement but to reshape the current myriad of identities and indigenous communities in both countries.

In the chapter dealing with strategic constructivism and essentialism, the author returns to the initial questions: "*Do we accept that*

representation always is contested and why do some voices become more representative and authentic than others?" To answer, he argues that representation needs to be understood within the intersection of political and cultural exchanges at the national and transnational levels. In looking at "who" speaks for Indians, Lucero finds that Ecuador has provided a sound response, in that the organization CONAIE has prevailed over other organizations. In contrast, Bolivia presents a fragmented indigenous movement scenario (with regional contrasts) whereby three organizations contest representation: CSUTCB (highlands), the Coca Grower Federation, and CIDOB (lowlands).

The last chapter brings a clear articulation of Lucero's comparative historical work between the two cases under study. By looking at the type of representation at the national level, he identifies the differences in the construction of "supralocal indigenous units," as well as the influence of regional, national, and international factors in the strength of indigenous representation. Lucero also cites the differences in relations between highland and lowland indigenous constructions in both countries, the former stressing class-based discourses and the latter adopting ethnic-ecological organizational frameworks. Differences in timing and early organizing also are part of the way Bolivia and Ecuador construct and reconstruct their political identities. Early organizing in the lowlands of Ecuador provided the necessary authenticity to negotiate equal terms with their highlands counterparts. Yet, Bolivia's strong highland federations, along with regional challenges to lowland ethnic organizations, halted a balanced negotiation and therefore, a unified movement.

Lucero concludes by arguing that social movements are national phenomena. Yet, as the cases of Bolivian and Ecuadorian indigenous movements have shown, the reach of these movements is tied closely to these countries' uneven state formation, thus determining whether they are more powerful in regional or national fronts.

In conclusion, Lucero makes an important contribution to the study of indigenous representation in Latin America. He offers novel perspectives on politics of identity, mechanisms of inclusion and indigenous mobilization in Bolivia and Ecuador. He presents a keen, thorough, and

well-informed analysis of the development and current state of indigenous movements in the Andes. There is no doubt that Lucero's assertion that indigenous movements are a democratizing force in Latin America opening the way to unimaginable developments in the region still holds true. As visible forces of the twenty-first century, they enrich and bring new understandings to the politics of representation in the complex and fascinating scenario of Latin America.

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