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Historia Agraria de América Latina

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Jaime Urrutia Ceruti, Carlos Loayza Camargo & Cipriano Luján Medina, *Ayacucho: Idas y vueltas de la reforma agraria*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2020, 174 pp. ISBN: 978-612-326-014-9.

Introduced by Juan Velasco Alvarado's left-wing military government, Peru's 1969 agrarian reform is considered one of the most radical land reforms in Latin America. Yet as the authors of *Ayacucho: Idas y vueltas de la reforma agraria* note, most of the existing research has centred on the reform's application on the large latifundios of the northern coast, or on the traditional livestock-producing haciendas of the central highlands and the high planes of Puno, in the south. This book focuses on Ayacucho, a south-central department that held little strategic importance during the national roll out of the agrarian reform, but whose rural areas were nevertheless indelibly marked by the process.

Providing the first department-wide study of the agrarian reform's impact in Ayacucho, this book contributes to ongoing efforts to chart the particularities of how the agrarian reform was implemented and experienced across Peru's diverse topography and socioeconomic contexts. The study will also interest researchers working on the relationship between land reform and armed conflict, since Ayacucho was one of the departments most heavily affected by the internal war between Shining Path and the Peruvian state during the 1980s and 1990s. In tune with recent research on the political and cultural reverberations of land reform beyond the expropriation and adjudication of specific estates, the authors argue that Velasco's agrarian reform radically changed the Ayacucho countryside even in areas where there had never been any haciendas.

Figures held by the Dirección Regional Agraria de Ayacucho (Ayacucho Regional Agrarian Office) on the size of landholdings expropriated in each province form the source base for the book. This is complemented by historical information that sketches out the regional context in which the agrarian reform was applied. For this, Urrutia, Loayza, and Luján draw on documents held in the Ayacucho Regional Archive, theses produced by students of the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga (UNSH) on specific areas and estates within Ayacucho, and their own experience as longstanding scholars of the region.

The book begins by outlining the rural context that preceded the application of the agrarian reform in Ayacucho, beginning with a long *durée* account of relations between haciendas and indigenous communities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Mid-twentieth century Ayacucho was characterised by agricultural stagnation and the fragmentation of property through inheritance or sale, in contrast to other parts of the country where the latifundio was consolidated. Nevertheless, Velasco's agrarian reform was preceded by a decade of political effervescence in the Ayacucho countryside, with both peasant unions and political parties placing the demand for land at the centre of their programmes. The Provincial Federation of Ayacucho Campesinos (FEPCA) was founded in 1963 and its main leaders were UNSCH students; an early indication of the close links that would develop between university politics and local land struggles in the Shining Path era. Added to this, in 1965 Ayacucho saw the emergence and rapid repression of the ELN guerrilla movement in the province of La Mar. While these events are not explored in detail, the authors effectively convey the regional context in which the agrarian reform was inserted and allow the reader to draw connections between the agrarian reform and wider processes of change that were ongoing within and between rural communities at the time.

Chapter two provides a detailed analysis of the land reform figures relating to three subregions of Ayacucho: the northern provinces, which had the largest number of haciendas and hence where the majority of expropriations occurred; the central provinces, where the campesino community was the principal institution and consequently the intervention of agrarian reform officials was limited; and, the southern provinces, where the production of livestock was the predominant agricultural activity and the agrarian reform authorities intervened in the small number of districts where the haciendas were concentrated. By combining statistics on the transfer of property with a historical narrative that accounts for the different patterns of land use and labour relations in each sub-region, the authors build up an absorbing description of the land politics in each area, reinforcing the point that the experiences and outcomes of the agrarian reform were highly contingent on such local circumstances.

In chapter three we learn more about the dynamics of land use and land management following the application of the agrarian reform, with discussion of Ayacucho's SAIS (Agrarian Societies of Social Interest), cooperatives and campesino groups (a transitional category envisaged by the Velasco government as a kind of pre-cooperative). The SAIS was designed as a way of assigning land to campesino sectors that had been discriminated against while impeding the fragmentation of land by maintaining agricultural companies where they existed and creating cooperatives where none had previously existed. However, the significant differences within the membership of each SAIS proved highly problematic. For example, in the SAIS Huamanga divisions emerged between the *campesinos comuneros* (campesino community members) (90.9%) who were experienced in the community management of the local ecosystem, and *exfeudatarios* (former hacienda workers) (9.1%) who had suffered subordination within the hacienda structure and were little accustomed

to taking decisions regarding production and land use. Added to this was the persistence of an economic strategy focused on subsistence and food security (rather than investment in infrastructure), low levels of schooling among the former peons, and a lack of enthusiasm for the SAIS enterprise, especially following delays in the payment of wages due to the lack of an attractive market, with low prices and little finance available. Consequently, there was an increasing tendency to cultivate the land of the SAIS as family plots rather than as a collective enterprise – a *de facto* break-up of the institution that in some cases long preceded formal dissolution.

One of the book's key arguments is that while campesino communities were not a priority during the application of the agrarian reform, ultimately both the number of campesino communities and their political importance grew in Ayacucho in the decades after the agrarian reform. The number of campesino communities increased fourfold between 1972 and 1994, and the area of land occupied by such communities doubled. This was due in part to demographic changes, such as the splitting off of annex communities into new communities and migration patterns which created new population centres. Yet it was also due to the fact that ten years after the application of the agrarian reform, all Ayacucho's cooperatives and grupos campesinos had chosen to convert into campesino communities. Against a backdrop of divisive politics within the cooperatives and often successful attempts by former landowners to take back their land – in some cases by claiming membership of a grupo campesino – the campesino community was seen as the best organisational option to secure land ownership.

The violence of the internal war is dealt with only in passing, and there are moments in the book where one would have liked to hear more about it. For example, we are told that at an extraordinary meeting in February 1990 the members of the SAIS Huamanga agreed to dissolve and liquidate the company, citing its lack of administrative, business, and socioeconomic organisation “caused by the context of violence that was being experienced in the zone”, a statement which receives no further elaboration by the authors (p.132). On the other hand, the authors do discuss the differentiation that occurred within the SAIS, cooperatives and grupos campesino. In the case of the grupos campesinos, for example, land was not distributed democratically and the powerful within the group generally gained more land. As Jaymie Heilman and Miguel La Serna, among others, have shown, tensions within and between such communities could play a key part in the decision to support or reject Shining Path (Heilman, 2010; La Serna, 2012). In what is a slim volume, the authors are understandably reluctant to draw conclusions about the relationship between land reform and violence in Ayacucho, yet the information they present is a valuable contribution to future studies in this field.

In light of Michael Albertus' work on the different levels of land reform intensity in 'peripheral' and 'core' areas of land reform, it would have been interesting to hear more about the administrative dynamics of the agrarian reform process in Ayacucho (Albertus, 2020). The Dirección General de Reforma Agraria y Asentamientos Rurales (General Office

of Agrarian Reform and Rural Settlement, DGRAA), the national agency charged with implementing the reform, made the decision to divide up the department of Ayacucho between three agrarian reform zones: X (Junín), V (Ica) and VI (Arequipa). As a region that was arguably peripheral to all three agrarian reform zones was it a priority for none? To what extent did these administrative bodies overlap or collide? There is also little detail on the memories and personal reflections of those who participated in the reform process in Ayacucho, although the authors acknowledge the need for such a study. Nevertheless, by compiling data on the expropriation and adjudication of land across the department, this book sheds light on some fascinating differences in the outcomes of the agrarian reform, both within Ayacucho and between Ayacucho and other regions of Peru.

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