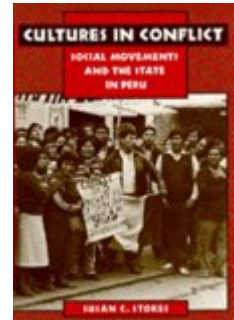


Susan Carol Stokes. *Cultures in Conflict: Social Movements and the State in Peru.*
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Reviewed by David B. Parker

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Peru's political panorama in the mid-1980s was unique in Latin America. Like many South American countries, Peru had recently returned to democratic rule, and Lima, at least, enjoyed great freedom for non-violent political and intellectual activity. But unlike countries like Argentina or Uruguay, the consolidation of Peruvian democracy was not accompanied by political moderation, pact-making, or timidity. Instead, Peru witnessed an unprecedented explosion of popular participation, with a strong and militant left rather more akin to its counterparts in Central America. The Shining Path insurgency was growing, while at the same time a coalition of legal Marxist parties had become the second electoral force in the country, able to capture several key mayorships including that of Lima. Bucking the neoliberal orthodoxy elsewhere, the Aprista government of Alan Garcia embarked on a populist economic program of price controls and wage raises, financed by his decision to make only a fraction of Peru's scheduled debt payments. And from the southern Andes to the teeming shantytowns of greater Lima, the poor had erupted onto the political scene as never before in Peruvian

history. Demanding land, demanding drinking water, demanding affordable food, and demanding to be treated for once like citizens of their own nation, Peru's poor cholo masses were no longer to be ignored.

This unique moment, in many respects now past, provides the backdrop for Susan Stokes' study of Peruvian political culture. Dr. Stokes' task is to understand why so many poor Peruvians began in the 1970s and 1980s to cast off their traditional deference and fatalism, and to embrace a militant, confrontational stand for equal rights and radical social change. She seeks to answer the question by looking at the district of Independencia, a sprawling conglomeration of shantytowns covering a series of hillsides on Lima's northern edge. Stokes spent much of 1985 and 1986 in the district, where she established good relations with its left-wing mayor (a woman), closely observed local policies, carried out extensive in-depth interviews with leaders of different political tendencies, and administered a survey of public attitudes and opinions. With this raw material in hand, she chronicles how and why a radical political culture

took root among Peru's poor, and at the same time she takes on some of the central contemporary debates in her field of Political Science.

After the theoretical introduction, the first part of the book provides a rather brief historical analysis of Peru's radicalization between 1968 and the 1980s. In simplified form, Dr. Stokes' argument is that the uniquely progressive regime of General Juan Velasco Alvarado (the so-called "Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces"), inadvertently brought about a new social consciousness when it called upon Peruvians to participate in the collective enterprise of social change but succeeded neither in controlling that participation nor in satisfying raised expectations. Readers who are unfamiliar with Peruvian debate on the legacy of the Velasco years will find this part of the book fascinating; those who already know the literature are likely to be disappointed. On the one hand, Stokes provides nice insight into how Velasco tried to build "a more participatory yet loyal political base" (p. 36) in *Independencia*, why he failed, and the result of that failure. In the process she makes an interesting point about the pitfalls of State corporatism: sponsoring one organization in a shantytown inevitably sparks the wrath of competitors, and unless you repress those competitors you are in effect fostering your own opposition. On the other hand, when Stokes analyzes Velasco's role in radicalizing the labor movement (by favoring communist unions as a foil to APRA, and by forming so-called 'industrial communities' in a futile attempt to foster class conciliation), she merely repeats a story that has already been well told elsewhere.

It is also a story that in my view is incomplete. Velasco gave an enormous, unprecedented boost to the radical politics of *reivindicacion* in Peru, but he did not create those forces out of thin air. Highly confrontational trade-unionism formed a part of the Peruvian scene as early as 1960, as Francois Bourricaud and James Payne long ago made clear, and the idea that APRA effectively fos-

tered an ideology of deference and clientelism among its rank-and-file must be treated with skepticism, given the leadership's inability to control its own membership in the insurrections of 1932 and 1948. My own suspicion is that elite hegemony in Peru is historically far weaker, oppositional ideologies far stronger and more legitimate, than most people think. The Velasco regime was clearly one key turning point, but I would not discount other potential "critical junctures" such as the occupation of Lima by Chilean troops in the War of the Pacific, Augusta B. Leguia's 1919 coup, or any one of a thousand local conflicts that forged the consciousness of people in one or another of Peru's highland villages.

Part Two, "Social Movements and Political Culture," presents the heart of Stokes' research, and is clearly the stronger part of the book. Here she tries to explain not the historical emergence of a radical class-consciousness on the part of Peru's poor, but rather, why some Peruvians have embraced that new revolutionary orientation and others have not. While many of *Independencia*'s leaders adopted ideas of class struggle and a confrontational political style, many others continued to promote the far more traditional, deferential, clientelist vision of political action: if you want something, you respectfully petition those in power, cultivating personal bonds of loyalty and obligation. You don't march in the streets, you don't make waves, and you don't demand or expect to be treated like the equal of the people to whom you are appealing. Militant *clasismo* on the one hand, and deferential clientelism on the other, are the two 'cultures in conflict' that give the book its title.

Chapter Five, "Clients and Radicals," is based on in-depth interviews with *Independencia* community leaders of both tendencies, and underscores the deep differences between them. Here Dr. Stokes does an excellent job of documenting the extent to which each ideology provided its adherent something approaching a comprehensive

world view. Radicals saw a society inherently divided between the exploiting rich and the exploited poor, while clients did not; radicals identified themselves with the poor, while clients aspired to middle-class "respectability;" radicals fostered broad participation among shantytown dwellers, while clients saw themselves as privileged and self-sacrificing intermediaries; radicals couched their demands in a language of rights and citizenship, while clients invoked a discourse of charity and self-help. A leader's "objective" class position did not determine his or her orientation: some radicals were by no means poor, and some clients clearly were. Nor were age, gender, or region of origin as significant as some might imagine. In Chapter Six, Stokes surveyed a large sample of Independencia residents, correlating evidence of radical or deferential attitudes with several demographic and socioeconomic variables. She found that the two best predictors of radicalism were prior experience with labor unions (particularly for men) and a relatively high level of education (particularly for the young). Ironically, however, these findings, which ring very true indeed, call into question Stokes' historical argument in Part One of the book. Think about it: if union experience and education are the proven keys to radicalism, then it would seem that any historical study of the emergence of radicalism should look at what was going on in Peru's unions and schools in the 1960s and 1970s (if not before), rather than focusing on the Velasco regime's shantytown policies.

But this criticism should be considered a minor one, because Stokes' point lies elsewhere. Her main and overriding objective is to prove that the differences between *clasismo* and clientelism cannot be boiled down to a simple tactical divergence, whereby each side acts as it does out of a rational calculation of potential costs and benefits. Nor, in her view, does clientelism inevitably mask a disguised undercurrent of resistance, as subalternists like James Scott would have it. By pointing out that two entirely different cultures

(or subcultures) co-exist among Peru's poor, one militant, the other deferential, Stokes is trying to engage essential theoretical questions about when and why people accept the elites' explanation of oppression and inequality, when and why rights-conscious movements of opposition appear; in short, when and why people submit or rebel.

In showing that under a given set of circumstances the poor are capable of formulating two diametrically opposite ideological responses, Stokes makes the case that ideas do matter, and that hegemony very clearly exists. She argues that the champions of clientelism sincerely believed in the idea of a God-given hierarchical social order, where each person knew his or her place and acted accordingly. They eschewed confrontation not because they instrumentally deemed it ineffective, but because they believed it wrong. Similarly, she argues that radicals were also motivated by basic beliefs in right and wrong when they promoted a politics of confrontation and struggle. Where did those ideas of right and wrong come from? In Stokes' view, the clientelist vision reflected, in an entirely Gramscian manner, the poor's internalization of an elite ideology diffused over generations by the church, the press, the schools, and the government. The radical vision reflected the ideological changes of the Velasco era:

The rise of the "classist" labor movement, the injection of the "critical idea" of Peruvian history and society into public school curricula, the arrival in the shantytowns of legions of outside organizers with new messages about the source of poverty and possibilities for change-- all of these, direct or indirect results of military government policies, transformed the world views of large segments of the urban poor (p. 116).

Dr. Stokes' conclusions are, for the most part, smart and well-supported by her evidence. Political scientists will, for that reason, find the book useful and illuminating. Historians will also find a great deal of good in *Cultures in Conflict*, but many will be put off by the amount of effort that

Stokes devotes to satisfying the conventions of her discipline. For example, the "compound path analysis" diagrams that appear in Chapter Six obscure far more than they reveal, and jargon renders Stokes' discussion of corporatism on pages 113-115 three times longer than necessary. When she contrasts her hegemony model against the arguments of other schools, Stokes often gets infected by her adversaries' vocabulary, with very mixed results. On the one hand, her critical discussion of James Scott (pp. 120-124) is clear and filled with wonderful insight; on the other hand, her face-off with "rational choice" theorists like Michael Taylor (pp. 115-120) borders on unreadable. On balance, then, this short book provides an insightful analysis of contemporary Peru, by someone who knows her subject inordinately well. But many subscribers to H-Net are likely to be bothered by the book's comparative lack of historical depth and its firm rooting in the method and vocabulary of an often distant sister discipline.

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