

DEL ÁGUILA, Alicia, 2013, *La ciudadanía corporativa. Política, constituciones y sufragio en el Perú (1821-1896)*, Lima, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos. 327 pp.

The period that started in 2000 with the fall of Fujimori and which is still ongoing constitutes a critical moment for those who study the history of voters. On the one hand, we have witnessed a rare period of political stability, perhaps the longest in our republican history, with orderly presidential succession since 2001. In practice, this has meant continuous electoral activity, which expanded as a result of municipal, regional, and recall elections. If this were not enough, all the presidents during this period were in the second round of elections, thus further expanding the ritual of voting.

At the same time, in the 2000s there was an academic boom centered on research related to electoral history. During a period lasting almost eight years, dozens of researchers (including this writer) delved into archives to try to reconstruct the history of the vote. It was a period of intense activity during which theses, articles, and books were published that explained previously little-researched aspects of the political culture of Peru, such as diverse forms of voting and popular mobilization, the reactions of the elite to the new tools of political power that had been obtained by social groups, who could vote and who could not, and even how those who were not allowed to vote did so.

*La ciudadanía corporativa*, Alicia del Águila's new book, lies at the intersection of two phenomena: a democracy strongly associated with the vote and a group of researchers who sought to unravel the dynamics of this vote in a scenario as complex as Peru's. To be more precise, the book gives expression to these two spaces at a time of intensive activity of the former and the apparent decline of the latter. The purpose of the book is to trace the trajectory of the delicate juridical manipulation that Peruvian authorities employed in the 19th century as they tried to control the number of citizens with the vote while simultaneously trying to maintain their legitimacy by incorporating diverse corporative groups who had crossed the threshold of the republic. Of these, indigenous communities were the group that presented the most complex challenges in the dual dynamic of inclusion/exclusion. These challenges were not always resolved through legal cunning but sometimes through other practices that varied from place to place.

Thus, the history of the 19th century was characterized by the tension between the legitimacy to which the new republican order aspired and the (not very successful) efforts of authorities to turn inhabitants into a group of citizens, which meant erasing all traces of corporativism inherited from the colonial period. It entailed an effort that was primarily directed at transforming members of indigenous communities into individual property holders and

postponing the dissolution of collective links within other institutions such as the clergy and the army.

But, in contrast to studies that consider these decades as being characterized by permanent exclusion, this book echoes more recent research and emphasizes the permeable role of legislation that permitted electoral participation through a range of possibilities and criteria so that the indigenous majority could play a role, though this signified the exclusion of other groups such as women, minors, and the illiterate, which persisted until the mid 20th century.

The book is organized chronologically into three sections. Each has from four to six chapters and covers different stages in the conception of citizenship. The first covers the period from 1821 to 1834, which the author refers to as a transition from «the liberal illusion» to corporative «realism». The second section is devoted to explaining the equilibrium that existed between 1830 and 1860, which coincided with a period of state stability and economic prosperity deriving from the exploitation of guano. Finally, the last three decades analyzed in the book correspond to the «crisis and end» of corporative citizenship.

Various archives and repositories were consulted during the research for this book. The most important of these was the Peruvian National Library and a resource that has been little consulted in the past: the Archive of the Peruvian Congress.

There are two aspects of this book that I would like to emphasize: its comparative vision and its overview of the issue of suffrage during an extended time period. The author deliberately positions her analysis within the context of Latin America; however, I would have liked to see a more interactive dialogue throughout the book between national and Latin American contexts in order to better evaluate differences and changes in access to suffrage, though the tables at the end of the text are helpful in this respect. After all, the granting of suffrage to sectors of the population – not necessarily indigenous people – was a task also undertaken by many countries with a common colonial background.

The second aspect is the time frame chosen. While many essays published during the previous decade aspired to reconstruct particular electoral situations, this book attempts to cover eight decades, from the establishment of the republican regime to the reforms of 1896, which restricted the vote to men who could read and write (thus eliminating the majority of the rural indigenous population) and thus displaced political power based on the demography of the vote to the Pacific coast.

There are two observations I would like to make: one about the approach and the other about editorial matters. In the first place, I would have liked to see a more social perspective, in which the voices of those who fought for the vote are heard, those who ended up losing the war, despite the small battles they won. I know that it is difficult to incorporate everything one would like and the book is quite ambitious in this sense, but it is always worthwhile to include this personal dimension in studies about citizenship. Second, the organization of the book could have been improved with one change: maintaining the structure of a thesis in a book directed to a different public can be useful in terms of clarifying issues, but it can also be a two-edged sword because of the number of chapters and subchapters. This organization does not diminish the quality of the book, which is very readable, but the elimination of these divisions or their revision could have made for more fluid reading.

*La ciudadanía corporativa* has been very well received, as should be the case with such an original and daring text. For those of us who have worked on electoral issues, it constitutes a breath of fresh air on a subject that we had considered already closed despite everything that we still needed to do (take a closer look at specific situations during the 20th century, suggest theories, move away from judicial-legal analyses, write the social history of the vote, and start to compare with other countries, etc.). The book by Alicia del Águila invites us to reexamine previous studies, their achievements and their limitations, in order to reformulate a history of the vote, not as a ritual or an occasional activity but as the backbone of citizenship. At a historical moment such as this, when social movements on a global level seem to be the most direct form of exercising citizenship, it is a good idea to turn our attention to the structuring of citizenship and see what can be learned from it.

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