

Book Reviews

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DEL PINO, Ponciano, 2017, *En nombre del Gobierno. El Perú y Uchuraccay: un siglo de política campesina*, Lima and Juliaca, La Siniestra Ensayos and Universidad Nacional de Juliaca. 280 pp.

On Wednesday, January 26, 1983, eight journalists left the city of Huanta in Ayacucho on the way to the Huaychao peasant community. Some days earlier, residents of this community had killed seven members of the Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path (PCP-SL) and the journalists were interested in covering this incident. But they never arrived at their destination. On the way, they were detained by members of the community of Uchuraccay and killed with sticks, axes, and stones. The news of these killings shocked the country. Although by 1933 the internal armed conflict in Peru had already been going on for two years, this confrontation between the government and the PCP-SL had received little of the attention that the media gave to the killings. The daily *La República*, where one of the journalists worked, reported the news on January 31 under the headline: “Beasts!” (*¡Bestias!*). In addition, it stated that one of the victims had been crucified. For many Peruvians who lived outside Ayacucho, this was their first encounter with the kind of atrocities that would continue to occur one after another during the next two decades.

Ponciano del Pino uses the murder of the journalists as the starting point of his book *En nombre del Gobierno. El Perú y Ucharaccay: un siglo de política campesina*. Del Pino’s study seeks to understand the violence that marked the internal armed conflict in the high Andean communities of Ayacucho. To this end, the author combines historical research with ethnographic work, primarily in Uchuraccay. His decision to carry out ethnographic research and his Quechua language skills allows him to provide a narrative that breaks with the principal stereotypes that have often plagued research on indigenous communities in the Andes – such as, for example, that of the commission headed by Mario Vargas Llosa that investigated the killing of the journalists. The “Ucharaccaínos” (as the residents of Ucharaccay are known) presented in this book are neither merciless barbarians nor noble

savages. On the contrary, they are complex personalities who act in a radical manner in the context of extreme violence.

The book is divided into three parts: the first discusses the narratives of violence of the residents of Uchuraccay during and after the armed conflict; the second contextualizes these narratives through an analysis of historical memory and the construction of the state from 1920 to 1960; and the third analyzes the role of nature in memory and history.

The importance of Del Pino's fluency in Quechua to his research is clearly evident in the first part of the book. In this section, the author includes an analysis of the transcription of the assembly (*cabildo abierto*) that took place with Uchuraccay residents and the members of the investigative commission in 1983. Analyzing the discourse of the Uchuraccayinos during this meeting, the author demonstrates that they described themselves as a collective united in open rejection of the Shining Path, an organization that they described as an external threat. In addition, Del Pino illustrates how the peasants used the stereotype of ignorant indigenous populations in their own favor. By stressing their own "ignorance," the Uchuraccayinos were able to convince the commission that they had no links to the PCP-SL – even though some members of the community had in fact belonged to this organization – and that there had not been any communication between them and the journalists before the attack (it was later discovered that this was not true). Drawing on his fluency in the native language of the Uchuraccayinos, the author was able to identify and describe the narrative that the community successfully imposed on the meeting. It also enabled him to interview the widow of Severino Morales, who was murdered on the same day as the journalists because of his links with the Shining Path. In the interview, Mrs. Saturnina Figueroa states that she was obliged, under the threat of death, to remain silent about the murder of her husband so the community could hide some of its members' links with the terrorist organization.

It is important to stress the attention that Del Pino gives, especially in the first part of the book, to how ideas about male and female gender roles in the high Andean communities of Ayacucho influenced their experiences during the internal war. The author mentions that one of the actions that led to the rejection of the Shining Path in Uchuraccay was this group's establishment of a popular school for women. When the school disrupted the patriarchal order in the community, PCP-SL earned the mistrust of its male members. In addition, the author demonstrates how conceptions of gender function in complex ways in the Ayacucho Andes. For example, in the case of Mrs. Figueroa, the fact of her being a woman spared her life at the hands of the community and, conversely, made her someone deserving

of protection as long as she kept quiet. Unfortunately, when the author turns his attention from the armed conflict to peasant struggles during the first half of the 20th century, he leaves aside gender analysis. In the search for a historical context for understanding memories of the conflict's violence, ethnographic materials give way to archival materials, which leads to the voices and experiences of women disappearing. This underlines the need for more studies that use ethnographic tools to promote alternative voices and narratives such as those of Andean women. Only in this way can we better understand how notions of gender influences the daily experiences of these populations.

In the third part of the book, Del Pino introduces a new unit of analysis: non-human community members. Through a story about how the mountain Rasuwillca, the *apu* or principal deity of Uchuraccay, caused the crash of an airplane, the author analyzes the way in which local knowledge is intertwined with environmental changes in the Andes during the second half of the last century. According to Del Pino, stories such as that of the airplane crash seek to reaffirm the power of the deity during a time of environmental degradation. In addition, by analyzing this story, the author endeavors to call attention to the usual absence of environmental issues in studies of history and memory. As fascinating as the topic of the intrinsic relations between the men and women of the Andes with their environment may be – and it is hard to disagree with the author about the need for further research into this area – this part of the book breaks with the narrative thread given its primarily exploratory character and brevity. This issue, which the author only tangentially connects with the violence of the armed conflict, merits much more exhaustive research.

However, such criticisms in no way detract from the value of Ponciano del Pino's book. What makes this text a contribution of great quality is the ethnographic material it contains, the richness of the author's analysis, and his emphasis on the need for a detailed examination of the historical context in order to understand how the indigenous populations of the Andes participated in the armed conflict. In addition, when the author stresses the importance of ethnographic research in studies of memory, he promotes the incorporation of subaltern voices and narratives. In conclusion, *En nombre del Gobierno* is highly recommended, both for researchers studying memory as well as non-academics interested in the Peruvian internal armed conflict.

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