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A cura di Paula F. SARAVIA

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13/ RECENSIONE: Rocío SILVA SANTISTEBAN (ed.), *Indigenous Women and Climate Change*, Lima, IWGIA, 2020, 154 pp.

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Climate change affects indigenous women in Latin America at a fast and steady pace, impacting their immediate material life, putting at risk their survival. However, despite their subaltern positions, indigenous women respond to environmental threats by taking leadership in organizing their communities, engaging in political mobilizations and disputes at local, national, and international levels.

Indigenous women and Climate change presents a multivocal collection of essays that address the contemporary environmental crisis of climate change as part of structural conditions of inequality that affect indigenous women. This edited volume, originally published in Spanish, argues that extractivism and accumulation are the underlying cause of environmental unbalance expressed in multiple forms of violence, affecting mostly women. Furthermore, the book describes climate change as a symptom rather than a cause of gender inequity, contributing to the current debate on the feminization of environmental struggles and violence. In this regard, the authors in this book bring extractivism and settler colonialism to the forefront of the current climate crisis, thus expanding our knowledge on specific ways in which global economic processes and market-oriented policies are impacting local indigenous entanglements.

The editor, Rocío Silva Santisteban, does an outstanding job organizing the chapters of the book. The coherence of the different chapters facilitates the overall understanding of the main argument and investigations. The book takes the reader from a much needed academic critique to extractivism and Western anthropocentric views of nature, to a profound questioning of the sustainability of the current international and national climate policies from the point of view of indigenous women activists. The book's introduction is well-grounded in each chapter, presenting the book's overview and summary while helping the reader appreciate each chapter's diversity. The book is composed of seven chapters, and it includes two interviews that provide a glimpse of indigenous women's lived experiences in Peru.

Each chapter contributes to the analysis of colonialism and extractivism in producing structural vulnerability layers among indigenous women in the Global South, particularly in Peru.

While the book offers an exciting array of multidisciplinary theoretical perspectives on the relationship between post-capitalism, extractivism, and colonialism, the scope is not limited to an academic discussion. On the contrary, the book also provides a relevant analysis of current environmental laws and an insightful ecofeminist perspective that could inform necessary climate policymaking in Peru and beyond.

One of the book's essential features is the historical and ethnographic approach to climate change as a process, rather than a collection of unfortunate "events". Hence, the rich discussion of climate change from a political ecology perspective considers the environmental distribution of risk and vulnerability among populations exposed to environmental degradation, pollution, or plain abjection. The book demonstrates the close relationship between colonialism, the expansion of capitalism, indigenous land dispossession, and the exploitation of indigenous bodies. Consequently, the book analyzes the detrimental consequences of extractivism, which often result in the increased precarity of indigenous women. As stated by Majandra Rodriguez Acha in her chapter:

We recognize that climate change is a product of a system of extraction and exploitation of both nature and people – and that the dichotomy between “nature” and “people” is artificial, itself at the root of a system that categorizes life into the *dominated* and the *dominant*¹.

Authors in this book call for attention to the long-term impact of climate change among indigenous women, who are usually neglected by the nation-state and its institutions. Hence, indigenous women face the double burden of discrimination and neglect based on gender and race. Climate change is a process that is intertwined with structures of domination that perpetuate the subaltern position of women. Author Jelke Boesten is very eloquent in characterizing the current environmental crisis as linked to systems of violence towards women and girls:

Echoing the authors in this book, the environmental crisis can therefore only be addressed if that gendered and racialised organisation of power, informed by ideas of a binary gender order grounded in natural sex differences and, hence, natural racial difference, is unsettled, subverted and transformed. [...] An intersectional feminist perspective, understood as a perspective that urges us to unpack those power relations beyond crude binaries and across

¹ RODRÍGUEZ ACHA, Majandra, *Climate Justice Must be Anti-Patriarchal or It Will Not be Systemic*, in SILVA SANTISTEBAN, Rocío (ed.), *Indigenous Women and Climate Change*, Lima, IWGIA, 2020, pp. 105-112, p. 105.

social, economic and political spheres and differences, helps to better understand prevalent violent configurations and ways to resist².

Beyond the obvious and most immediate violent threats to indigenous women, Boesten is very explicit about examining the power relationships that sustain the exploitation of indigenous women's bodies and the violence against women who resist or confront said power structures. This is also part of Alberto Acosta's thorough examination of patriarchy and colonialism as underlying structures that sustain violence against women.

A second aspect that I would like to highlight is the book's firm stance on indigenous women's positionality as part of intricate systems of care where women face everyday challenges and resist harms associated with climate change and other forms of domination, such as patriarchy. For example, in her chapter, Luisa Elvira Belaunde shows the impact of settler colonialism and deforestation in indigenous communities' family structures in the Peruvian Amazon, where kinship structures and land care responsibilities are changing given corruption and violence around deforestation practices. In this chapter, we learn about exogenous forms of deforestation as «a systemic neglect of the indigenous connections to the Amazon» (i.e., the anthropogenic forest).

The idea of an anthropogenic forest is part of a theoretical discussion about the *ecological entanglements* and the possibilities and impossibilities of translating indigenous relationships of *being and belonging* into a Western framework. Marisol de la Cadena presents a thought-provoking analysis of the relationship between indigenous women and their environment in her chapter, as we learn about the case of Máxima Acuña de Chaupe and her struggles to stay in a land threatened by extractivism. De la Cadena's theoretical perspective and her notion of *ontological disagreement* inspire other chapters in this book, thus deepening the book's discussion on indigenous knowledge and indigenous environmental struggles. In this sense, this book offers the reader the possibility to embrace a new way of thinking about environmental conflicts, further advancing modes of interrogating the indigenous struggle of being and belonging in the context of rapid climate change.

Finally, by integrating perspectives and indigenous voices from the Global South, the book contributes enormously to the current debate on climate change and ecofeminism.

This especially true for the last two chapters of the book are interviews with indigenous women activists. Although short, these interviews are well connected to the ideas developed in the book, for example, women's invisibility in the institutional frameworks and the lack of

² BOESTEN, Jelke, *Gendered Violence, Destruction and Feminist Struggles*, in SILVA SANTISTEBAN, Rocío (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 64-76, p. 74.

support for women leaders who are resisting or reducing the harm associated with centuries of extractivism. The last pages of the book shed light on the lived experience of vulnerability and political engagement of indigenous women who are also leaders and environmental activists. Her voices are vehement and quite explicit in signaling the necessary steps for thinking about the current climate crisis. In her interview, Quechua congresswoman Tania Pariona refers to indigenous women's role in the social response to the climate crisis. She also offers a caveat to the portrayal of indigenous women as vulnerable:

In my opinion, women are in a state of vulnerability because of a lack of attention, a lack of institutional presence. Women have to overcome a set of barriers... institutional barriers that are neither friendly nor accessible nor in line with our world vision. This situation combines with other issues: environmental, productive, water, and other social issues too³.

Indigenous women and climate change is not a book about the immediate health impacts of environmental threats. On the contrary, it is an opportunity to situate climate change as part of the socio-economic crisis that generates and perpetuates conditions of looming inequality and risk, especially for indigenous women. Simultaneously, and even though indigenous women's situation is appalling, these chapters allow us to see women who are active, engaged, and self-aware of their roles as caretakers, leaders, and defenders of their communities and kin.

This book's scope is comprehensive and presents an analysis that includes several layers of complexity regarding the impact of long-term extractivism. The book contributes with a robust theoretical framework, suggesting novel socio-political research of climate change as a sedimented historical process that challenges indigenous women and their communities' livelihoods and survival.

In my opinion, the book is a bold effort to assemble dialogue and collaboration among academics from different disciplines, activists, and indigenous leaders. This book would be of interest to students, scholars, and experts working in the fields of political ecology, environmental anthropology, environmental history, as well as environmental activists interested in learning about ecofeminism and extractivism.

³ PARIONA, Tania, *Combating climate change without women would be a serious misreading of indigenous reality*, interview by Sol UNIVAZO and Rocío SILVA SANTISTEBAN, in *ibidem*, pp. 137-150, p. 137.

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Paula F. SARAVIA studied social anthropology at Universidad de Chile (1995-2000), where she specialized in medical anthropology. She worked on poverty reduction programs in Chile, and also taught at Universidad de Chile as a Lecturer. In 2006 she received an Erasmus Mundus grant from the European Union to study in the interdisciplinary Master's program "Phoenix Dynamics of Health and Welfare". Her dissertation research focused on understanding modes of engagement and tuberculosis illness experiences within Aymara communities in Bolivia and Chile. Her current research is oriented towards understanding the mental health impact of environmental precarity among indigenous communities in Northern Patagonia, Chile. Since September of 2017 she has been a lecturer for the Global Health Program at UC San Diego.

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