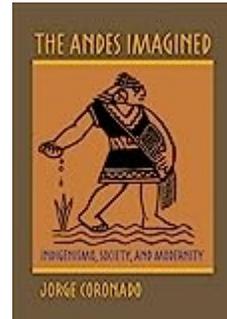




Jorge Coronado. *The Andes Imagined: Indigenismo, Society, and Modernity.* Pitt Illuminations Series. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009. 256 pp. \$26.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8229-6024-9.



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Indigenismo

Indigenismo broadly refers to representations of Indigenous peoples by non-Indians. Although arguably this intellectual trend dates back to the beginnings of the Spanish Conquest with Bartolomé de las Casas's defense of Indigenous rights, it reached its high point at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Andes and Mexico, home to highly developed pre-Columbian civilizations. *Indigenistas* were commonly white, educated urban dwellers who often celebrated these ancient histories while lamenting the deplorable and impoverished situation of their contemporary descendants.

Indigenistas from this period of classical indigenismo that runs roughly from 1900 to 1940 fell into many different categories. For example, archaeologist Manuel Gamio reconstructed Teotihuacán in Mexico in 1909. In art, the famous Mexican painters Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo created representations of Indigenous life. Novelists, such as Rosario Castellanos, depicted Indigenous realities in books, such as *Balún-Canán* (1957). Sociologist Pío Jaramillo Alvarado similarly wrote about Indigenous life through a nonfiction lens in *El indio ecuatoriano*

(1922). Institutionally, Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas organized the First Inter-American Indigenist Congress in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, in 1940, which led to the formation of the Instituto Indigenista Interamericana (III) with national branches in many American countries. What all of these expressions of indigenismo had in common was that educated outsiders, including archaeologists, anthropologists, theologians, novelists, artists, philosophers, politicians, political activists, and others, examined Indigenous realities from their elite, privileged perspectives.

In *The Andes Imagined*, literary critique Jorge Coronado examines one specific manifestation of indigenismo in Peru. Through a series of studies of José Carlos Mariátegui, José Ángel Escalante, Carlos Oquendo de Amat, Mariátegui's working-class newspaper *Labor*, and Martín Chambi, Coronado analyzes a variety of literary expressions of indigenismo. Rather than limiting his literary criticism of indigenismo to novels and short stories, as is often the case, Coronado also delves into an examination of poetry, essays, letters, newspapers, and

photography. The result is a rich, valuable, and broad ranging study of many of the contradictions inherent in various expressions of indigenismo.

Coronado's study begins where many studies of Peruvian indigenismo begin, with the work of the famous Peruvian Marxist Mariátegui and his writings on the revolutionary Indian. Coronado steps us through European influences on Mariátegui's thought and his perspectives on *mestizaje*. From there he broadens the discussion to other authors, including César Vallejo and his views on hybridity. Coronado broadly engages themes of representation and the relationship of indigenismo to unequal power dynamics in the Andes.

From Mariátegui, Coronado then moves on to a discussion of a much more conservative indigenista, Escalante. Coronado frames his discussion of Escalante in the context of a famous 1927 polemic over indigenismo that commonly has been framed as a conversation between Mariátegui and Luis Alberto Sánchez. Coronado shows that an examination into newspapers and other periodicals from the era reveals that in reality the debate was much broader, richer, and longer than previously believed. The polemic also included conservative members of Augusto Leguía's government that was then in power. Escalante was one of these politicians, an upper-middle-class intellectual from Cuzco who interestingly presented himself as a marginalized highland Indian while engaging in red-baiting against Mariátegui and other leftist opponents of the Leguía dictatorship. In a very broad-ranging discussion, Coronado contrasts Escalante's views with those of the anarchist Manuel González Prada (1848-1918) who is often considered to be the founder of indigenismo in Peru, and then compares them with the reactionary attitudes of Mario Vargas Llosa (1936-) who lost Peru's 1990 presidential election to Alberto Fujimori in 1990. Curiously, Escalante led the Peruvian delegation to the Pátzcuaro conference in Mexico in 1940.

From Mariátegui's and Escalante's essays, Coronado then moves on to a study of other expressions of indigenismo. First, he analyzes modernity and tradition in the film and poetry of Oquendo. In particular, Coronado explores *5 metros de poemas* (1927) to examine a hybridization of modernity and tradition. Oquendo published the poems on accordion-style paper that appeared as a filmstrip when opened. Coronado connects this to the strong incursion of films from the United States into Peru in the 1920s.

The following chapter comes back to Mariátegui through the lens of his newspaper *Labor* that he launched in 1928 as a working-class counterpart to his more famous journal *Amauta*. Although there is a huge cottage industry of publications around Mariátegui, very little has been written about this newspaper, which makes this one of the most valuable contributions of this book (unfortunately, Coronado misses David Wise's 1980 article in *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, one of the few works on the subject). Coronado notes that while *Labor* was significantly cheaper (and shorter, I might add) than *Amauta* or his famous book *7 ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (1928), it began with a similar type of "high-brow" content rather than more standard journalistic fare, which seemingly would be more appropriate for a proletarian readership. As the newspaper proceeded to publish, however, it began to include more of what Coronado characterizes as Indigenous testimonial voices. In this way, the newspaper opened up a path to Indigenous literature that Mariátegui had previously advocated.

The book concludes with a chapter on Chambi's photographs, taking Coronado's literary analysis of indigenismo into the visual realm. Coronado moves beyond Chambi's well-known and standard "indigenista" photos to focus instead on images that challenge standard representations of indigenismo. Coronado pairs a fascinating set of images. The first has a white bride in the center with an Indigenous attendant disappearing into the background, hardly noticeable until Coronado draws our attention to the figure. A second photograph features a group of Indigenous peasants at the center of the photo staring resolutely into the camera. They are in court on charges of killing a landholder, and this time it is the white representatives of state power who disappear into the background shadows. Coronado contrasts Chambi's visual images with Mariátegui's representations of revolutionary Indigenous leaders.

A central concern with indigenista actions is that of who has the right to represent Indigenous peoples, and this is a key issue that runs throughout this book. Coronado argues that indigenista literature is not actually about Indigenous peoples, but instead about competing notions of how to think about modernity. Coronado draws on José Antonio Lucero's innovative and important work to point to a significant shift from outsiders representing Indigenous peoples to subalterns representing themselves. Coronado sees this shift not as the realization of a utopian dream, but as an important response to indigenismo's politics of representation.

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