

## **Neoliberal Reform in Machu Picchu: Protecting a Community, Heritage Site, and Tourism Destination in Peru. By Pellegrino A. Luciano**

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Source: Mountain Research and Development, 39(2)

Published By: International Mountain Society

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1659/mrd.mm237>

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## Neoliberal Reform in Machu Picchu: Protecting a Community, Heritage Site, and Tourism Destination in Peru. By Pellegrino A. Luciano

Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017. Hardcover: US\$ 90.00, ISBN 978-1-4985-4594-5. Softcover: US\$36.99, ISBN 978-1-4985-4596-9. E-book: US\$ 35.00, ISBN 978-1-4985-4595-2.

Pellegrino A. Luciano's book is a timely and important ethnography of the community of Machu Picchu, an iconic heritage site and first-class international tourism destination in Peru. It is a welcome contribution to Andean studies and to our understanding that heritagization processes that turn places into destinations through tourism development cannot be untangled from larger economic dynamics driven by the forces of neoliberalism and globalization. It is also a good example of how these forces reshape the relationships of power among different actors in Machu Picchu, as well as the conditions of life of the residents under pressures imposed by authorized heritage conservation and management imperatives.

In the introduction, the author establishes many of the main ideas and arguments that reverberate throughout the text. Basically, he tells us how the construction of Machu Picchu as an icon of the Peruvian identity has run parallel to its designation and implementation as a World Heritage Site, and that this combination of national identity and heritage has been couched into the language of neoliberalism in terms of a profit-making resource. Thus, the different governments have made Machu Picchu into a major place for attracting international investors. In this large-scale marketing strategy, based on the premise of the famous

Inca ruins in a supposedly pristine and harmonic natural space untouched since pre-Hispanic times, there is no place for contemporary local peasants and their current environmental practices, neither of which fit within this idyllic image of a natural sanctuary construed for international tourism.

Chapter 1 informs us of the new valuations of Machu Picchu acquired under neoliberal policies and materialized through a double process of patrimonialization: first, through its designation in 1981 as a sanctuary—that is, an intangible national (natural and cultural) resource subject to a rationale of conservation and protection; second, in 1983, by means of its inclusion in the World Heritage List. As a result, the district jurisdiction was encroached on, and the way was paved for processes of dispossession of land rights.

Chapter 2 illustrates how notions of the public good invoked by the state and embedded in the figure of the sanctuary usually conceal dynamics that tend to favor private interests and run contrary to demands for private property exercised by the residents. These, in turn, deploy resistance or adjustment tactics designed to mitigate the negative effects on their livelihoods that stem from the current hegemonic order.

Chapters 3 and 4 connect land struggles with neoliberal policies and address issues of class among the villagers. Two cases are highlighted. The first is the case of Perurail, the private railway company that holds a monopoly over the transportation system between Cuzco and Machu Picchu. The other is that of the Sanctuary Lodge, which in turn holds a monopoly over the craft sales at the entrance of the citadel. In chapter 4 specifically, the author accounts for the difficulties residents face in navigating the ambiguous legal and bureaucratic framework of neoliberalism.

Chapter 5 focuses on Machu Picchu and the witnessing world. It shows how, from the point of view of capital investors and tourism, it is important not only to maintain an image of a pure state of nature but also to keep the place free from protests and conflict. It also stresses the tensions between a state that sells off the national heritage to be in line with a global circulation of capital and the citizens for whom this heritage defines their social identities.

In chapter 6, the author explores the connection between the protests led by the residents and memories of fear and violence rooted in the recent armed conflict between the Peruvian state and *Sendero Luminoso*, the Maoist terrorist organization. Finally, in chapter 7, he deals with what he sees as the contradictions of the residents who, on one hand, confront corporations but, on the other, long for market opportunities and economic growth. He blames a neoliberal ideology that cultivates a desire for wealth, exacerbates opportunities across class differences, and fosters fear and distrust among the people for the lack of union across social classes and actors.

The book privileges an ethnographic approach to illuminate the links between patrimonialization processes, neoliberal ideology, and tourism development in Peru. However, at times ethnography is overshadowed by theory. Perhaps more space could have been devoted to framing the discussion within a larger history of social movements in the southern Peruvian Sierra, an aspect not sufficiently explored. In this regard, greater engagement with the Peruvian literature on social movements and land struggles would have been desirable. More generally speaking, the author criticizes the anthropological grand narratives that fail to foreground the subjectivity of local actors and the contradictions they experience under neoliberal policies. Yet the book retains part of that same grand narrative that

presents neoliberalism as a totalizing category and overwhelming force under which the lives of the Machupiccheños are subsumed. In this regard, the author does not sufficiently emphasize that, historically, Andeans, and indigenous peoples in general, have regularly engaged with capitalism in its various forms and phases and have seized the opportunities it provides. What the author sees as contradictions would probably be better explained in terms of accommodations and appropriations. Something similar

applies to his analysis of everyday realities in peoples' lives, such as dispossession, fear, distrust, ambition, and so on. There is no doubt that these may be exacerbated under neoliberal pressures, but these are realities that Andeans had to cope with well before the advent of globalization and neoliberalism and that, to a large extent, respond to long-standing, customary dynamics in communities across the Andes. The same is also the case with the author's view of conflict, which is explored in terms of class and structure, when a

more intersubjective, micropolitical, and diachronic approach would have been opportune.

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