

mejores libros que hemos leído en los estudios culturales del cuarto mundo. Un trabajo soberbio que explica un tema que de por sí no es nada sencillo.

**Maximiliano E. Korstanje** *International Society for Philosophers, UK*  
*University of Palermo, Argentina*

BOESTEN JELKE: *Intersecting Inequalities: Women and Social Policy in Peru, 1990–2000*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.

Many social scientists have recently called for studies of marginalized people's interaction with 'the state' in particular contexts. While the role of state apparatus in perpetuating gendered, racial and class-based inequalities is a popular topic of theoretical discussion, analyses of the minutiae of subjects' daily engagements with state power, in the form of bureaucracy, development programs and grass-roots organizing have been less common. Boesten undertakes such a study in *Intersecting Inequalities*, examining the structural and ideological inequalities that characterized poor women's relationships with the Peruvian state in the 1990s. She provides a refreshing mix of historical, anthropological and political science-influenced methods, drawing on interviews and participant observations conducted with women's organizations in Lima, Huancavelica and Ayacucho, as well as on unique historical documents such as women's organizations' minutes, medical self-diagnoses and political speeches and brochures. She argues that policies and NGO initiatives ostensibly designed to improve the situations of poor women are often ineffective due to the ingrained inequalities structuring them and structuring such women's lives. Her analyses of three case studies of poverty reform, population control and policies against domestic violence, highlight tensions between "theory and practice, rights and access, equality and marginalization, emancipation and development, and maternalism and empowerment" in Peru (p. 43).

Boesten's history begins in the Fujimori era. Echoing Rousseau (2006) and others, she finds that Fujimori's pro-women rhetoric was contradictory. His view of women as maternal, morally superior and self-sacrificing allowed him to use women's organizations to provide social services while ignoring women's rights. The state focused on reducing poverty with women's help rather than addressing the causes of existing gender inequalities. Women's organizations were thus pushed into increasingly clientelistic relationships with the state, as Boesten's food-aid examples demonstrate, reducing their effectiveness and scope

and fueling divisions between popular organizations and middle class, urban feminist organizations. Food aid was in many cases petitioned for and administered by the *Clubs de Madres* which had been developed to combat poverty and violence during the 1980s. These groups were given new responsibilities as the state withdrew from social services, but had to negotiate the pigeonholing effect of the maternalist discourses directed at them, along with claims of corruption and abuse. Boesten provides a nuanced discussion of the complexity often subsumed under the term ‘corruption,’ describing the complicated relationships navigated by women in the clubs, balancing their own motivations with broader community demands and state manipulations, including attempts to encourage dependency and downplay women’s work. Despite these difficulties and the conclusion that food aid ultimately failed to alleviate poverty, she finds that such programs spurred the development of further women’s groups that were sometimes able to reappropriate the discourses of maternalism used to control them, and increased women’s “social citizenship” by encouraging political participation (p. 73).

In her discussion of population control, Boesten analyzes feminist NGOs’ attempts to improve highland women’s access to healthcare and combat racism in the medical system. Population control programs implemented in the 90s were directed at poor women, based on the assumption that they were producing too many children. These programs were abandoned when US funding agencies realized that a quota system was being used to encourage sterilization. Boesten finds that local physicians were often bribed into performing sterilizations, but also acted on ingrained prejudices. To examine highland women’s more recent engagements with medical establishments, she analyzes self-diagnostics created with feminist NGO Manuela Ramos’ program Reprosalud. Descriptions of *machismo* and violence are prevalent in the diagnostics, as are shame over pregnancies, fears of menstruation, childbirth, and the side effects of birth control, and a general lack of knowledge or communication about women’s bodies. Boesten finds that Reprosalud has been successful in educating women about these issues, but ultimately fails to work productively with rural doctors. This confirms a key point in the book—that NGOs have been unable to satisfactorily replace state services in the neoliberal era.

The third part of Boesten’s study tackles women’s options for dealing with domestic violence. Women in the highlands are expected to address abuse through a local mediator, often a god-parent. They may eventually go to the police, but there they face a kind of brutal indifference and practical difficulties including language barriers. While the system subjects these women to neglect and racism, promoting preservation of the family over women’s well-being, in some cases Boesten finds that participation in women’s organizations influences women to

condemn one another's tolerance of violence at home. She concludes that while women's grassroots organizing may, in such examples, lead to limited changes in gender ideologies (primarily, presumably, for participants), such organizations have also been forced to promote pacification and collaboration in mediating between women and the state. In a final chapter, Boesten goes back to visit women she worked with years earlier, finding that many are now involved in partisan politics. While they have become ambitious leaders, their political work is divorced from the women's movement and divides them. Despite very hopeful moments, then, *Inequalities'* lingering impressions are somewhat negative for the impacts and longevity of women's organizing.

This is an excellent and timely study. My only criticism is that I would have liked to see more about women's re-possession of the maternalistic discourses used against them, and possibly further discussion of the differences among poor women that the lens of intersectionality allows us to recognize. While we can glean different aspects of women's experiences in Lima and the highlands, we do not get Boesten's take on the different ways that urban or rural communities welcome women's organizing or much on the inequality within and among women's groups. Nevertheless, Boesten masterfully demonstrates here the many ways in which state institutions have reflected the intersecting effects of racism and sexism in Peru and illustrates the difficulties generated by the NGOization of state services, positioning women's organizations at the challenging junction of clientelism, service provision and a continued desire for gender equality at an ideological level. This book will be of great interest to Andeanists as well as to scholars investigating women's citizenship and the mechanisms of intersectionality in perpetuating gendered inequality.

**Ella Wilhoit**

*Northwestern University*

MERCEDES NINO-MURCIA, FRANK SALOMON: *The Lettered Mountain: A Peruvian Village's Way with Writing*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

A tiny town in the Peruvian highlands of Hurochiri, a day's drive from Lima, Tupicocha, is on its way to becoming famous. Tupicochanos display a collection of patrimonial *kipus* once a year that seem to hold the key to understanding "Inca writing." In *The Cord Keepers* (2006), Frank Salomon offered a dazzling, original interpretation of Tupicocha's *kipus* as records of labor and reciprocity deployed by Andean agro-pastoral communities to adapt to their local rugged