



Making Ecuadorian Histories: Four Centuries of Defining Power

O. Hugo Benavides



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In Ecuador, as in all countries, archaeology and history play fundamental roles in defining national identity. Connecting with the prehistoric and historic pasts gives the modern state legitimacy and power. But the state is not the only actor that lays claim to the country's archaeological patrimony, nor is its official history the only version of the story. Indigenous peoples are increasingly drawing on the past to claim their rights and standing in the modern Ecuadorian state, while the press tries to present a "neutral" version of history that will satisfy its various publics.

This pathfinding book investigates how archaeological knowledge is used for both maintaining and contesting nation-building and state-hegemony in Ecuador. Specifically, Hugo Benavides analyzes how the pre-Hispanic site of Cochasquí has become a source of competing narratives of Native American, Spanish, and Ecuadorian occupations, which serve the differing needs of the nation-state and different national populations at large. He also analyzes the Indian movement itself and the recent controversy over the final resting place for the traditional monolith of San Biritute. Offering a more nuanced view of the production of history than previous studies, Benavides demonstrates how both official and resistance narratives are constantly reproduced and embodied within the nation-state's dominant discourses.



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