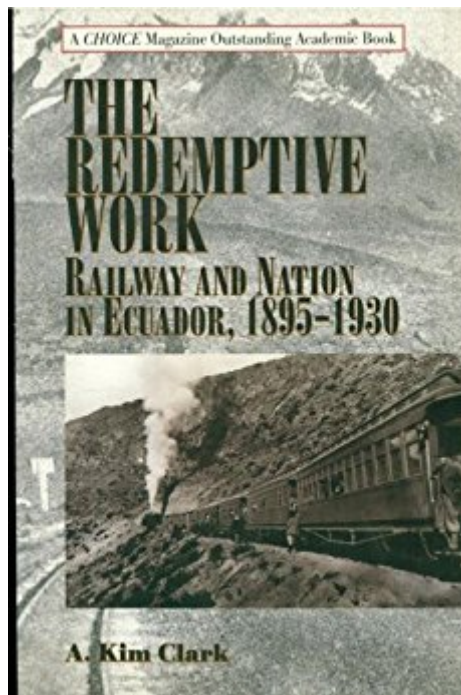


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The Redemptive Work: Railway And Nation In Ecuador, 1895-1930 (Latin American Silhouettes)



Synopsis

A CHOICE Outstanding Academic Book! Professor Kim Clark explores a time period and country for which little has been published in English. By studying the dimensions of politics and culture as one, Professor Clark argues that the local railroad case served as a demonstration of some of the problems that were most important during the liberal period. At the turn of the century, diverse political, economic, and social conditions divided Ecuador. During the construction of the Guayaquil-Quito Railway, the people of Ecuador faced the challenge of working together. The *Redemptive Work: Railway and Nation in Ecuador, 1895-1930* examines local, regional, and national perspectives on the building of the railway and analyzes the contradictory processes of national incorporation. Rather than examining the formation of Ecuador's national identity, Professor Clark analyzes the methods of two groups working on the same project but with opposing goals. The elite landowners of the highlands were concerned with the transportation of their agricultural products to the coast, while the agro-export elite of the coast were more interested in forming a labor market. Because the underlying objectives were contradictory, only a partial consensus was reached on the nature of national development. This tense agreement channeled the conflicting opinions but did not eliminate them. The *Redemptive Work* is the first text to deal with these complex issues in Ecuador's history. The *Redemptive Work* is useful for undergraduate and graduate courses in Latin American history, social history, anthropology, political science, and nation and state formation.

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Customer Reviews

Geographically Ecuador has a long coast with a narrow coastal plane. Moving eastward, high mountains restrict access to the Alto Plano and the jungles beyond accentuate climate variations. Large indigenous populations share a common Inca heritage and historically Ecuador was a Spanish colony. As Ecuador was transformed and modernized in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, elites envisioned national reform. The discourse was about how a railroad could tie the country together. Historically, it should be noted, railroads are marked as the quintessential icon of modernity in Latin America. A. Kim Clark traces the development and construction of the rail link between Guayaquil, a port city on the coast and Quito, the capital in the interior. The railroad was seen as redeeming because it represented "for Ecuador, her moral resurrection and emancipation as a people." (43) Differences between the "principal dominant groups in Ecuador - the landowning elite of the highlands and the agro-export elite of the coast" (2) were overcome as each group perceived an advantage from the railroad. The insular land holding elite in the interior were tempted by expanding markets for their crops and livestock. Coastal elites, on the other hand, badly need labor to produce cocoa for export. The railroad alone was a technological achievement, but more significantly it served as a unifying link for nation building. Clark notes three important aspects of the railroad in Ecuador: "First, the construction of the railway was associated with important political-economic transformations in Ecuador.... Second, the railway, and the broader discourse of movement and connection that surrounded it, allowed for consensus about the nature of national development...."

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