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Cement, Earthworms, and Cheese Factories: Religion and Community Development in Rural Ecuador

Jill DeTemple

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Cement, Earthworms, and Cheese Factories examines the ways in which religion and community development are closely intertwined in a rural part of contemporary Latin America. Using historical, documentary, and ethnographic data collected over more than a decade as an aid worker and as a researcher in central Ecuador, Jill DeTemple examines the forces that have led to this entanglement of religion and development and the ways in which rural Ecuadorians, as well as development and religious personnel, negotiate these complicated relationships.

Technical innovations have been connected to religious change since the time of the Inca conquest, and Ecuadorians have created defensive strategies for managing such connections. Although most analyses of development either tend to ignore the genuinely religious roots of development or conflate development with religion itself, these strategies are part of a larger negotiation of progress and its meaning in twenty-first-century Ecuador. DeTemple focuses on three development agencies—a liberationist Catholic women's group, a municipal unit dedicated to agriculture, and evangelical Protestant missionaries engaged in education and medical work—to demonstrate that in some instances Ecuadorians encourage a hybridity of religion and development, while in other cases they break up such hybridities into their component parts, often to the consternation of those with whom religious and development discourse originate. This management of hybrids reveals Ecuadorians as agents who produce and reform modernities in ways often unrecognized by development scholars, aid workers, or missionaries, and also reveals that an appreciation of religious belief is essential to a full understanding of diverse aspects of daily life.

"*Cement, Earthworms, and Cheese Factories: Religion and Community Development in Rural Ecuador* examines the relationship between development and religion and the ongoing negotiation of this relationship in Ecuador. Jill DeTemple argues for an important revision to previous work that portrays contemporary religious movements as resistant to modernity, showing instead that what is happening is a reformation of what modernity and development mean." —**Barry Lyons, Wayne State University**

"In this book, Jill DeTemple explores the origins of modern ideologies of progress and development and the deep, continuous interplay between religious concepts, practices, and communities and development activities in contemporary Ecuador. Only by focusing on this interplay can we understand the concrete dynamics of development. At the same time, DeTemple's innovative and nuanced work richly illuminates the broader cultural vitality and mobility of contemporary religion." —**Randall Styers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

"Jill DeTemple examines the ways in which people negotiate religious and development discourses, using ethnography as well as historical, religious, political, and economic analyses. She explores how ‘lived religion’ and local conceptions of development combine in ways that challenge both the hegemony of Western development discourses and the view that modernity is marked by increasing secularization. This book is a timely and valuable contribution to the growing field of studies in religions and development, and it will be of interest to scholars and students as well as development practitioners." —**Emma Tomalin, University of Leeds**

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