



Governing Indigenous Territories: Enacting Sovereignty in the Ecuadorian Amazon

By Juliet S. Erazo

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Governing Indigenous Territories illuminates a paradox of modern indigenous lives. In recent decades, native peoples from Alaska to Cameroon have sought and gained legal title to significant areas of land, not as individuals or families but as large, collective organizations. Obtaining these collective titles represents an enormous accomplishment; it also creates dramatic changes. Once an indigenous territory is legally established, other governments and organizations expect it to act as a unified political entity, making decisions on behalf of its population and managing those living within its borders. A territorial government must mediate between outsiders and a not-always-united population within a context of constantly shifting global development priorities. The people of Rukullakta, a large indigenous territory in Ecuador, have struggled to enact sovereignty since the late 1960s. Drawing broadly applicable lessons from their experiences of self-rule, Juliet S. Erazo shows how collective titling produces new expectations, obligations, and subjectivities within indigenous territories.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Governing Indigenous Territories* is a beautiful ethnography, a compelling contribution to contemporary debates about sovereignty in Latin America. The story that Juliet S. Erazo tells is about not just Ecuador or Latin America but larger political, economic, social, and ecological histories, practices, and ideologies. This is contemporary ethnography at its best."—**Paige West**, author of *From Modern Production to Imagined Primitive: The Social World of Coffee from Papua New Guinea*

"*Governing Indigenous Territories* is a superb work. Through rich ethnographic descriptions, Juliet S. Erazo breaks through essentialized notions of Amazonian Indigenous communities, capturing the dynamic, complex, changing nature of human experience. At the same time, she tells a global story of territoriality and resource use, a story involving local and federal governments, social movements, and nongovernmental organizations. This landmark book will appeal broadly across disciplines and provide a basis for future research."—**Marc Becker**, author of *Indians and Leftists in the Making of Ecuador's Modern Indigenous Movements*

"*Governing Indigenous Territories* is an exceptional case study of the complicated issues surrounding concepts of 'indigenous territory,' 'indigenous sovereignty,' and 'territorial citizenship.' It is a sharp, insightful analysis of the extraordinary obligations that modern nation-states often place on indigenous residents who wish to maintain what was previously theirs."—**Jean E. Jackson**, coeditor of *Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation, and the State in Latin America*

"Juliet Erazo's *Governing Indigenous Territories* is a thoughtful ethnography of indigenous politics and 'territorial citizenship' in the space of Rukullakta... Ultimately, the case study that this book encompasses is an excellent lens for understanding the political space of encounters between Amazonian Kichwa and the Ecuadorian state and non-state actors...."

(Veronica Davidov *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*)

"This clear, well-organized book traces the 40-year ethnographic history of a self-governing autonomous region, Rukullakta Territory, in lowland Ecuador, providing a well-documented case study of how a community emerges.... Recommended."

(D. B. Heath *Choice*)

[A]n important book that should have wide appeal among geographers."

(Karl Offen *Journal of Latin American Geography*)

"An insightful study of indigenous sovereignty enactment in the Ecuadorian Amazon as an exercise of continuous cultural and societal negotiation."

(Ileana Baeza Lope *AmeriQuests*)

"*Governing Indigenous Territories* effectively reminds us of the ambiguities of identity categories and

explores how people mobilize identity to push the limits of and remake the categories through which life is governed. Erazo's narrative is attentive to how these flexibilities are part and parcel of how Rukullacta evolved as a territorial entity—what she calls 'everyday forms of territorial formation.' "

(Gabriela Valdivia *American Anthropologist* 2015-09-01)

"*Governing Indigenous Territories* is a significant contribution to the literature on Ecuadoran and Latin American indigenous politics. It is well-suited for teaching, and will be appreciated by specialists."

(Bret Gustafson *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 2016-03-23)

About the Author

Juliet S. Erazo is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Florida International University.

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