



Autos and Progress: The Brazilian Search for Modernity

Joel Wolfe

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Autos and Progress reinterprets twentieth-century Brazilian history through automobiles, using them as a window for understanding the nation's struggle for modernity in the face of its massive geographical size, weak central government, and dependence on agricultural exports. Among the topics Wolfe touches upon are the first sports cars and elite consumerism; intellectuals' embrace of cars as the key for transformation and unification of Brazil; Henry Ford's building of a company town in the Brazilian jungle; the creation of a transportation infrastructure; democratization and consumer culture; auto workers and their creation of a national political party; and the economic and environmental impact of autos on Brazil. This focus on Brazilians' fascination with automobiles and their reliance on auto production and consumption as keys to their economic and social transformation, explains how Brazil--which enshrined its belief in science and technology in its national slogan of Order and Progress--has differentiated itself from other Latin American nations. *Autos and Progress* engages key issues in Brazil around the meaning and role of race in society and also addresses several classic debates in Brazilian studies about the nature of Brazil's great size and diversity and how they shaped state-making.

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