

*Librería*  
***Bonilla y Asociados***  
*desde 1950*



**Título:** Aztlán And Arcadia: Religion, Ethnicity, And The Creation Of Place

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**Precio:** \$450.00

**Editorial:**

**Año:** 2014

**Tema:**

**Edición:** 1ª

**Sinopsis**

**ISBN:** 9781479850648

In the wake of the Mexican-American War, competing narratives of religious conquest and re-conquest were employed by Anglo American and ethnic Mexican Californians to make sense of their place in North America. These "invented traditions" had a profound impact on North American religious and ethnic relations, serving to bring elements of Catholic history within the Protestant fold of the United States' national history as well as playing an integral role in the emergence of the early Chicano/a movement.

Many Protestant Anglo Americans understood their settlement in the far Southwest as following in the footsteps of the colonial project begun by Catholic Spanish missionaries. In contrast, Californios\_Mexican-Americans and Chicana/os\_stressed deep connections to a pre-Columbian past over to their own Spanish heritage. Thus, as Anglo Americans fashioned themselves as the spiritual heirs to the Spanish frontier, many ethnic Mexicans came to see themselves as the spiritual heirs to a southwestern Aztec homeland.