

ANTH 1100: Cultural Anthropology

Fall 2021

Knowledge Check

This “signature assignment” is designed to assess students’ progress in meeting the Foundational Knowledge Outcomes at the core of the General Education curriculum at Governors State University.

In particular, the signature assignment for this course has the following objectives:

- Demonstrate proficiency in the following learning outcomes:
 - FK1. Define key terms related to human cultures and the physical and natural world, both in historical and in contemporary settings.
 - FK3. Identify current economic, biophysical, and social challenges.
- Reflect critically on a case study
- Demonstrate a real-world application of disciplinary knowledge.

In the assignment, you will read an article published in a professional journal of anthropological research and learn about how the indigenous Cofán people have confronted the expansion of the oil industry within their homeland in the Amazonian region of Ecuador. You will respond to key issues raised in the article and apply anthropological concepts explored in this course throughout the semester.

Combine your responses to all prompts into a single file and submit it through **Blackboard** by **December 7th at 11:59pm**

Grading criteria for Foundational Knowledge Outcomes are standardized across the university. The relevant criteria are as follows:

Foundational Knowledge Outcomes – ANTH 1100				
	High Proficiency (4)	Proficiency (3)	Some Proficiency (2)	Limited/No Proficiency (1)
FK1. Define key terms related to human cultures and the physical and the natural world, both in historical and in contemporary settings.	Describes in detail key terms and theoretical frameworks related to the human, physical and natural worlds. Effectively articulates understanding of the interrelationships between contemporary and past challenges.	Describes key terms and demonstrates an understanding of the historical and social forces that shape human cultures, and the physical and natural worlds. Draw basic connections between contemporary and past challenges.	Demonstrates limited ability to describe key terms and theoretical frameworks related to human cultures and the physical and natural worlds. Demonstrate some awareness of the connections between contemporary and past challenges	Has difficulty describing key terms and theoretical frameworks related to the physical and natural worlds. There is little evidence that student is engaged with the topics.
FK3. Identify current economic, biophysical, and social challenges.	Clearly identifies and demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the relevant global, national, and local challenges affecting natural and human systems.	Identifies and describes current economic, biophysical, and social challenges. Demonstrates general understanding of these challenges.	Identifies but does not clearly describe current economic, biophysical, and social challenges.	Demonstrates limited ability in identifying current global, national and local challenges

ASSIGNMENT:

The objective of this assignment is to apply anthropological concepts and critical thinking skills to the case study of the indigenous Cofán people of Ecuador. Please complete the following steps.

1. Read the article attached to this assignment sheet. Take notes regarding how Cofán people encounter the oil industry, and recall the contextualizing information presented in the lecture videos you have watched during the final four weeks of the semester.
2. Based on the article, summarize in your own words the Cofán encounter with oil. Specifically, you should address each of the “three connected objects of investigation” identified by the author in the following excerpt:

“Considering the history of the oil-Cofán encounter, it appears that there are three connected objects of investigation: first, the disruption of a people’s way of life by an alien socioecological complex; second, the pragmatic means by which that complex comes to be perceived and conceptualized as a unified threat to a valued way of being; and third, the emergence of a sense of political agency that is powerful enough to sustain an overt, collective, and effective opposition.” (p. 407-408)

3. As the author explains, in the eyes of international observers, “Cofán people serve as the primary symbols of oil’s destructive power” (p. 398). However, Cofán experiences are much more complex than the symbols that circulate in global discourses about indigenous peoples and environmental destruction.
 - a. Discuss how Cofán experiences differ from international discourses about them.
 - b. Discuss why it is problematic that international discourses represent the Cofán as “passive, tragic, past tense figures” (p. 400).
4. Discuss the advantages (or limitations) of using anthropological research methods to understand Cofán people’s encounter with oil.
5. Use critical thinking skills. In a recent book, Michael L. Cepek writes, “I believe we have an obligation to know what our dependence on petroleum means for the earth’s most marginalized inhabitants.” Do you agree? Why or why not?

Grading criteria for Foundational Knowledge Outcomes are standardized across the university. The relevant criteria are as follows:

Foundational Knowledge Outcomes – ANTH 1100				
	High Proficiency (4)	Proficiency (3)	Some Proficiency (2)	Limited/No Proficiency (1)
FK1. Define key terms related to human cultures and the physical and the natural world, both in historical and in contemporary settings.	Describes in detail key terms and theoretical frameworks related to the human, physical and natural worlds. Effectively articulates understanding of the interrelationships between contemporary and past challenges.	Describes key terms and demonstrates an understanding of the historical and social forces that shape human cultures, and the physical and natural worlds. Draw basic connections between contemporary and past challenges.	Demonstrates limited ability to describe key terms and theoretical frameworks related to human cultures and the physical and natural worlds. Demonstrate some awareness of the connections between contemporary and past challenges	Has difficulty describing key terms and theoretical frameworks related to the physical and natural worlds. There is little evidence that student is engaged with the topics.
FK3. Identify current economic, biophysical, and social challenges.	Clearly identifies and demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the relevant global, national, and local challenges affecting natural and human systems.	Identifies and describes current economic, biophysical, and social challenges. Demonstrates general understanding of these challenges.	Identifies but does not clearly describe current economic, biophysical, and social challenges.	Demonstrates limited ability in identifying current global, national and local challenges

ASSIGNMENT:

The objective of this assignment is to apply anthropological concepts and critical thinking skills to the case study of the indigenous Cofán people of Ecuador. Please complete the following steps.

1. Read the article attached to this assignment sheet. Take notes regarding how Cofán people encounter the oil industry, and recall the contextualizing information presented in the lecture videos you have watched during the final four weeks of the semester.
2. Based on the article, summarize in your own words the Cofán encounter with oil. Specifically, you should address each of the “three connected objects of investigation” identified by the author in the following excerpt:

“Considering the history of the oil-Cofán encounter, it appears that there are three connected objects of investigation: first, the disruption of a people’s way of life by an alien socioecological complex; second, the pragmatic means by which that complex comes to be perceived and conceptualized as a unified threat to a valued way of being; and third, the emergence of a sense of political agency that is powerful enough to sustain an overt, collective, and effective opposition.” (p. 407-408)

3. As the author explains, in the eyes of international observers, “Cofán people serve as the primary symbols of oil’s destructive power” (p. 398). However, Cofán experiences are much more complex than the symbols that circulate in global discourses about indigenous peoples and environmental destruction.
 - a. Discuss how Cofán experiences differ from international discourses about them.
 - b. Discuss why it is problematic that international discourses represent the Cofán as “passive, tragic, past tense figures” (p. 400).
4. Discuss the advantages (or limitations) of using anthropological research methods to understand Cofán people’s encounter with oil.
5. Use critical thinking skills. In a recent book, Michael L. Cepek writes, “I believe we have an obligation to know what our dependence on petroleum means for the earth’s most marginalized inhabitants.” Do you agree? Why or why not?

The Loss of Oil: Constituting Disaster in Amazonian Ecuador

By

Michael Cepek

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

R E S U M E N

Existen pocos objetos que provocan tanta discusión de finales radicales que el petróleo, la materia prima industrial más importante del mundo. En este artículo, examino la pérdida asociada con el petróleo a través de una exploración de la medida en la que su extracción llega a ser “desastrosa” para las vidas y las tierras de los pueblos que habitan las regiones productoras de petróleo. En Ecuador, país miembro de la OPEP, el símbolo más visible del poder destructivo del petróleo es el pueblo cofán. Varios artículos, documentales, sitios web y juicios representan al territorio cofán como una tierra ecológica y socioculturalmente devastada. Para contrarrestar el espíritu derrotista y el cierre analítico de las narrativas de la asolación, propongo un marco conceptual alternativo que reconozca la presencia indeterminada del petróleo en el discurso y la práctica del pueblo cofán. Mucho más que una historia sencilla de pérdida, una fenomenología cofán del petróleo combina la realidad de la destrucción con una serie de elipsis, contradicciones y oportunidades que permiten que los cofanes nieguen su destrucción mientras que también la prevengan. [ecología/medio ambiente, desarrollo, pueblos indígenas, política, antropología social]

A B S T R A C T

Few objects elicit more talk of radical endings than oil, the world's most important industrial commodity. In this article, I examine oil-associated loss by exploring the extent to which its extraction becomes “disastrous” for the lives and lands of peoples who inhabit oil-producing regions. In the OPEC nation Ecuador, the most visible symbols of oil's destructive power are indigenous Cofán people. Numerous articles, documentaries, websites, and lawsuits portray Cofán territory as an ecological and sociocultural wasteland. In order to counteract the defeatist spirit and analytic closure of narratives

The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 393–412. ISSN 1935-4932, online ISSN 1935-4940. © 2012 by the American Anthropological Association. All rights reserved. DOI: 10.1111/j.1935-4940.2012.01250.x

of devastation, I propose an alternative conceptual framework that acknowledges the open-ended presence of oil in Cofán discourse and practice. Much more than a simple story of loss, a Cofán phenomenology of oil combines the reality of destruction with a set of ellipses, contradictions, and opportunities that allow Cofán people both to deny and to prevent their destruction. [ecology/environment, development, indigenous people, politics, social anthropology]

IT WAS A CLOUDY afternoon in 2001. Mimi, a Cofán man from the village of Zábalo, had paddled us up a narrow, blackwater stream that meanders through the community's territory in far northeastern Ecuador. I stood at the edge of an oxbow lake, trying unsuccessfully to catch a few of the small catfish that are common in the area. We had been wandering the forest and river for hours. After what seemed like an eternal silence, Mimi called to me. I jogged to where he stood and watched an excited grin spread across his face. His eyes scanned back and forth, and it was clear that he was listening to something. In a gleeful tone, he whispered in A'ingae,¹ *Ña asi'ttaen munda* (I think it's white-lipped peccaries). He described the noise as a low, constant grunting. Although I heard nothing, I was surprised. My Cofán friends had told me that an enemy shaman had assumed jaguar-form and attacked Zábalo's peccary herds long ago, terrifying them into a swift and permanent exit.

Mimi led me through the underbrush, continually uttering, "I think it's peccaries." After hacking through the forest for fifteen minutes, he stood still, straightened up, and considered a new possibility: *Pozo tî?* (Is it an oil well?). Unconvinced, he persisted with his first impression, and we pushed on. But after another half hour, and despite his best wishes, Mimi relented and offered a final, if uncommitted, statement: neither peccary herd nor oil well, the sound appeared to be a helicopter. I asked who would be flying in such a remote part of the jungle. He shrugged and guessed, *Companiambi tî?* (Might it not be an [oil] company?). His uncertainty both intrigued and troubled me. I had come to Cofán territory nearly three years earlier, intending to document the sensuous presence of oil in a land that supposedly had been destroyed by it. Yet this was its first appearance in an everyday forest encounter, and it was unclear what, if anything, Mimi had detected.

At the very least, Mimi's perception revealed an apperception, an awareness that if oil wasn't in Zábalo yet, it soon might be—or, if there already, it was hidden deep inside the *Mauritia* swamps. Such a subtle and rare appearance, however, contradicted everything I once thought about the relationship between the oil industry and the Cofán, an indigenous people of the Ecuadorian-Colombian border region whose suffering at the hands of petroleum companies has made

them famous. Documentaries, articles, and websites portray Cofán life as undeniable evidence of oil's destructive power. Activists accuse oil companies of transforming Cofán territory into a "rainforest Chernobyl" composed of contaminated rivers, poisoned soil, blackened air, and denuded landscapes. Currently, the Cofán are plaintiffs in a \$113 billion class action suit against the corporation Chevron.² Indeed, the facts are overwhelming and indisputable: led by Texaco, which later merged with Chevron, the petroleum industry set up shop in north-eastern Ecuador in the 1960s, radically transforming the socioecological landscape of the Cofán homeland. Today, it seems impossible to write about Cofán people without focusing on oil, which serves as the protagonist in a story that figures Cofán lands and lives as little more than the tragic waste products of industrialized capitalism.

As my experience with Mimi demonstrated, however, oil is often an implicit, uncertain, and ambivalent phenomenon for the Cofán. In this article, I offer a set of reflections on oil's peculiar presence in Cofán life. I argue that narratives of cultural devastation hinder attempts to understand how people both deny their destruction and actively prevent it. I do not reject accounts of oil's impacts on Cofán people's culture, health, and territory. Rather, I intend to supplement their causal clarity with an analysis that emphasizes the diverse processes by which Cofán people constitute the presence of oil as a unified, threatening, and resistible phenomenon.

By working to understand oil from a Cofán perspective, I hope to shed light on the complex relationship between the cultural production of socioecological disaster and the efficacious expression of cultural loss. The Cofán case suggests that the most visibly "damaged" peoples may question the character and inevitability of their destruction. Moreover, the oil-Cofán encounter holds important lessons for analysts who hope to understand the conditions in which a collective political subject emerges to confront a crisis that puts its existence in doubt. Cofán resistance followed a strange trajectory: nearly thirty years of oil production passed before the Cofán mobilized to shut down the well that sat inside Dureno, their largest community. Appreciating the significance of this fact, I suggest that cultural continuity can both complicate and provoke a response to the forces that threaten it.

My conclusions are based on approximately three years of immersed ethnography with Cofán people (from 1994 to 2011). My oil-related fieldwork consisted mainly of interviews and participant observation in Zábalo and Dureno. I conducted the majority of my research in A'ingae,³ although I spoke English with Randy Borman, a Zábalo resident and an important Cofán leader who was born in Amazonian Ecuador to North American missionary-linguists⁴. Although this article explores Cofán experiences of oil, much of my fieldwork focused on broader

issues of Cofán culture and politics. In the near future, I hope to begin a new project that will provide a deeper analysis of the oil-Cofán encounter.

I begin with a review of the oil industry's operations in northeastern Ecuador, focusing on the ways in which various commentators describe their devastating impacts on Cofán lives. In the next section, I provide an ethnographic overview of Cofán experiences of oil. I conclude with some reflections on the cultural constitution of disaster, the history of Cofán resistance, and the performance of cultural loss. I highlight the difficult situation faced by peoples who must offer simultaneous expressions of their cultural continuity and their cultural devastation.

Before beginning, I wish to clarify an important point. By exploring the subtleties of Cofán experiences of oil, I in no way intend to question the discourse of Cofán activists. I do not speak to the technicalities of the Chevron case, and I offer no data that contradict the plaintiffs' claims. At a time when Chevron lawyers are obtaining a documentary maker's raw footage in hopes of showing how the plaintiffs' legal team is tampering with evidence and witnesses,⁵ there are high stakes involved in publishing an article that explores complexity rather than denies it. I wish to state that I unequivocally support the Ecuadorian citizens who are suing Chevron.

Oil as Devastation

Ecuador is an OPEC nation, and petroleum revenues cover a large portion of its federal budget. The great majority of its crude is found in its Amazonian region, 65 percent of which is zoned for petroleum production (Finer et al. 2008). Ecuadorian Cofán live in the northernmost Amazonian province of Sucumbíos, and the oil industry operates throughout their homeland. Their population numbers approximately 1,200 individuals and is spread over thirteen communities in five legalized blocks, which cover more than 430,000 hectares of Andean and Amazonian forests. The historical epicenter of Ecuadorian oil extraction is the provincial capital of Lago Agrio, where Texaco established a camp in the 1960s. The city sits on top of what was once the small Cofán residential site of Amisacho, and it is a short bus ride from Dureno, the most populous Cofán community. Today, Dureno's 9,500 hectares of legalized territory are an island of forest in a sea of colonist farms, oil company installations, and agribusiness plantations.

The Ecuadorian Cofáns' relationship with oil began in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1921, the Leonard Exploration Company, a front for Standard Oil, responded to fears of a world petroleum shortage (Schodt 1987:99) by obtaining a 2.5 million hectare concession to "study, explore, and exploit" oil deposits in Amazonian Ecuador (Martz 1987:46–47). Nevertheless, it was not until the 1937 granting of a 45-year, ten million hectare concession to the Anglo-Saxon

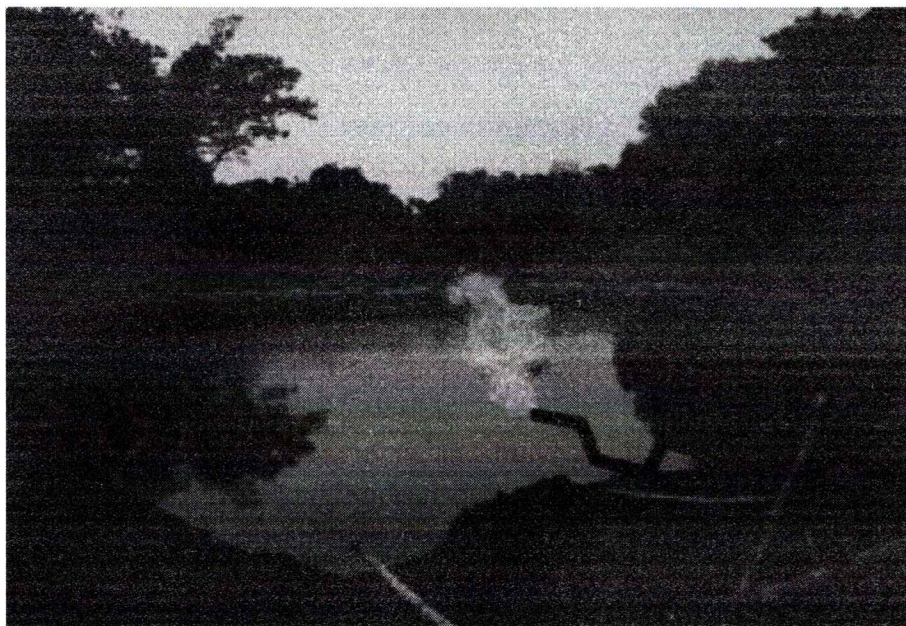


Figure 1 *Dureno Uno waste pit in 1998 (Photo by author).*

Petroleum Company Ltd., a front for Royal Dutch Shell, that an all-weather road was constructed from the highland city of Ambato to the lowland town of Mera (Schodt 1987:102). Although the road opened eastern Ecuador to small-scale colonization, the true invasion of Amazonian territory did not begin until Texaco (in a consortium with Gulf Oil until 1977) discovered large deposits of high-quality crude beneath Cofán territory and began commercial extraction in 1972 (Schodt 1987:105). Texaco drilled one of its most productive wells inside the boundaries of Dureno. By 1988, the well, “Dureno Uno” (Figure 1), had produced nearly one million barrels of oil (Kimerling 1991:47).

In order to move its equipment and build a pipeline, Texaco constructed a highway between Ecuador’s Andean capital Quito and Lago Agrio. Colonists flooded the lowlands both spontaneously and under government programs. After ten years of commercial extraction, half of the region’s population was born outside of the lowlands (Serrano 1993:14–15). By 1990, two thirds of Ecuador’s Amazonian residents were non-indigenous (Uquillas 1993:68). Ecuador achieved the dubious honor of exhibiting the highest rate of deforestation in South America (Little 1992:76). Cofán people watched as colonists cleared much of their homeland for coffee farms and cattle ranches.

In 1991, the environmental lawyer Judith Kimerling published *Amazon Crude*, which alerted the world to the ecological consequences of oil extraction in eastern Ecuador. With careful research, Kimerling describes oil’s transformation of the Amazonian environment. Oil production begins with seismic testing, during

which workers cut a grid of trails and heliports through a concession and detonate explosives at regular intervals in order to map the subsurface. Seismic testing involves deforestation, the disruption of wildlife, and the entrance of workers who often hunt illegally. If results are promising, a company constructs exploratory wells. Exploratory drilling involves deforestation for building materials, uncontrolled burning of oil and natural gas, and the construction of unlined waste pits. Workers direct excess oil, drilling chemicals, and formation waters into the pits, which overflow and spill their contents into streams and rivers. If exploratory wells produce evidence of a rich field, a company drills a whole series of production wells, which are joined to flow lines, separation stations, the Trans-Ecuadorian Pipeline and Heavy Crude Pipeline, and an ever-expanding road system.

Oil extraction entails profound transformations of the social and ecological conditions of eastern Ecuador. Without even considering the effects of the following two decades' production, Kimerling writes a startling account of the environmental consequences through 1991:

Accidental oil spills from the Trans-Ecuadorian Pipeline alone have dumped an estimated 16.8 million gallons of oil [fifty percent more than was spilled during the Exxon Valdez crash] . . . Hundreds of oil wells generate more than 4.3 million gallons of toxic wastes every day, virtually all of which are spilled or discharged into the environment without treatment, contaminating countless streams and rivers—often the only sources of water for surrounding communities. Burning of oil and gas contaminates the air, along with volatile organics that enter the air from oil-covered waste pits and roads, and unremediated spills (Kimerling 1991:31).

Oil contamination presents alarming risks for human health. A series of studies note correlations between residence in Ecuador's oil-producing areas and a set of medical problems, including increased rates of malnutrition, cancer, birth defects, developmental disorders, miscarriages, skin and respiratory ailments, and diarrhea (Centro para Derechos Económicos y Sociales 1994; Hurtig and San Sebastián 2002, 2004; Kimerling 1991; San Sebastián, Armstrong and Stephens 2002; San Sebastián and Hurtig 2004). For the region's indigenous people, contamination-related health problems are exacerbated by the changes in subsistence patterns that result from the takeover and deforestation of large portions of their territory.

As the original inhabitants of what has become the center of Ecuador's oil industry, Cofán people serve as the primary symbols of oil's destructive power. Over the last two decades, dozens of works have described the consequences of petroleum production by highlighting the plight of the Cofán. Authors portray the Cofán as a defeated, acculturated, and disappearing fragment of what was once a proud and powerful nation. In the popular book *Savages*, Kane (1996) describes "what is left of the Cofán nation" (1996:192) as a "listless and defeated bunch" (1996:183) who live in "what can be described only as abject poverty"

(1996:194). In the documentary *Trinkets and Beads* (Walker 1996), the Cofán serve as a warning to Ecuador's Huaorani people, who are facing the entrance of oil companies onto their land. After watching scenes that depict idyllic life in Huaorani communities, the viewer sees footage of highways, oil workers, and two Cofán men in traditional tunics standing next to a waste pit in bare feet. The screen reads, "For the last 20 years, the Huaorani have witnessed the impact of oil drilling on Cofán land." A more contemporary media outlet, the continuously updated site www.chevrontoxico.org, states that "the damage Chevron has done to the social fabric of traditional communities can never be repaired," and that "Cofán culture is in danger of extinction."

Dureno's reputation for devastation is so extreme that NGOs bring celebrity activists to the community for brief lessons on the consequences of oil. While visiting in 2007, I noticed a team of cameramen following a tall blond woman. She turned out to be Hollywood star Daryl Hannah, who came to the village to perform a photo shoot. In *Crude* (Berlinger 2009), lawyers involved in the Chevron case bring Trudie Styler—a well known activist and wife of the musician Sting—to Dureno to learn about oil-related destruction. Before they arrive in the community, a lawyer explains to her:

"We are going to a town called Dureno, which is a town where the Cofán people live. The Cofán are an indigenous group that, 30 years ago before Texaco came, had about 15,000 people who lived in this whole area. When the oil was found around here they got displaced. And out of 15,000 there's now only a few hundred who live in this town. They're the only Cofán left on their ancestral territory⁶. . . [W]e can't quite figure out how to compensate indigenous groups for something that probably can never be recovered, which is their culture and their land."

What outsiders learn on their visits is an open question, as the majority of Cofán people offer little in terms of direct reports. In *Crude*, an Ecuadorian activist supplements Styler's observations of Dureno life with a laptop full of typical images of oil's medical consequences: deformed children, malignant tumors, ulcerous skin rashes, and the emaciated bodies of people plagued by respiratory illnesses, gastrointestinal complications, and metastatic cancer. (None of the photos are of Cofán people, to the best of my knowledge.) Visibly moved, Styler addresses the Cofán with the aid of translators. She tells them that their "knowledge must not be lost," and that she stands "in solidarity" with them and will take their "message" to the United States.

Crude, which received critical praise and a substantial audience, is a powerful and largely accurate portrayal of oil's history in northeastern Ecuador. Its release has done more to draw public attention to the Chevron case than any other media event. The film's message, however, would lose much of its power were it not framed around the plight of the Cofán. After the opening credits, the film begins

with an image of a black mass slowly spreading over a map of northeastern Ecuador. The movie immediately shifts to footage of a Cofán woman in traditional dress. She speaks in A'ingae about how the Cofán are neither as strong nor as healthy as they used to be. Then, she sings a lament about “the company” (i.e., Texaco, now Chevron), which ends with her pondering the future of her people.

A key figure in *Crude* is Emergildo Criollo, a Cofán leader from Dureno who is one of the main spokespeople for the plaintiffs in the Chevron case. A particularly interesting segment features lawyer Steven Donziger coaching Criollo on how to speak about the Cofán situation at a press conference in Houston. Criollo reads Donziger his prepared remarks, which mention the “unknown diseases” from which his people are suffering as well as the compensation and cleanup that they deserve. Unsatisfied with Criollo’s statement, Donziger suggests strongly that he present a slightly different story, which stresses his long journey (“by foot, by canoe, by bus, by airplane”) from Dureno and the real danger: “[I]t is possible that in a few years, the Cofán nation will no longer exist.” The film concludes, as it began, with footage of the Cofán. A canoe overloaded with Cofán people in traditional dress precariously crosses the Aguarico River, and the woman who first appeared in the movie applies *Bixa orellana* paint to her face. Her lament plays in the background.

To reiterate: I do not deny that oil has brought severe, undesired changes to Cofán people. Nevertheless, the story of oil’s destruction of Cofán culture and territory conveys a sense of political and analytical closure that characterizes Cofán people as passive, tragic, past tense figures. Moreover, commentators present oil’s devastation in a form whose extreme clarity leaves observers with a sense of critical surprise as to why the Cofán stood by quietly as companies destroyed them for decades. Finally, describing the Cofán as a people on the brink of extinction denies the continuity of their culture and their struggle to create a secure and satisfying position for themselves in a world that has left them for dead.

The Uncertainty and Ambivalence of Oil

Employing a diverse array of methods, a growing number of scholars are investigating relations between the oil industry and eastern Ecuador’s native inhabitants. William Vickers (1994, 2003) explores the encounter between petroleum and Siona-Secoya peoples, who are neighbors of the Cofán. Multiple authors (Doughty et al. 2010; High 2007; Rival 1993, 2000, 2010; Ziegler-Otero 2007) describe shifting ties between Huaorani people and the companies that blanket their territory with oil-related infrastructure. The most in-depth account, Suzana Sawyer’s *Crude Chronicles* (2004), is a nuanced study of corporate manipulations of community dynamics and ethnic politics among Quichua-speaking people. Although these

works describe a shared history of suffering, Cofán experiences of oil are unique in terms of their temporal depth and their material intensity, especially with regard to contamination and dispossession. Cofán people's position stems from oil's long history in their homeland, which has served as Ecuador's primary production center for more than 40 years.

Anthropologists have proposed a number of theoretical frameworks for analyzing the means by which a cultural group appropriates an alien object as a meaningful and potentially threatening phenomenon. Scholars such as Jacques Chevalier (1982), June Nash (1993), Michael Taussig (1980), Terence Turner (1986), and Eric Wolf (1982) describe how peripheral societies experience the power of capitalism as an impinging, destructive force. Marshall Sahlins writes about "exogenous event-construction," or the transformation of an incident that originates outside of a cultural system into a significant product of the system (2000). Bruno Latour analyzes the failed stabilization of quasi-objects—phenomena that operate discursively, socially, and materially to transform the nature/society articulations that compose collectivities (1993). Ethnographers of contamination explore the means by which people discern, conceptualize, and confront the toxins that pervade their bodies and environments (Auyero and Swistun 2009; Checker 2005; Petryna 2002; Waldman 2011). Anthropologists of disaster investigate relations between the culturally constructed experience of calamity and the media, state, and corporate discourses that reframe its meaning and shift its consequences (Button 2010; Hoffman and Oliver-Smith 2002; Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999). Whether building on the insights of political economy, structuralism, science studies, or phenomenology, these analysts question the natural coherence and assumed power of novel objects. The Cofán experience of oil confirms their conclusions.

Cofán people admit serious confusion concerning the petroleum industry's structure and consequences. Over the past four decades, they learned to make partial sense of oil and the threat it poses to their lives. Nevertheless, the oil phenomenon continues to exhibit a myriad of conflicting qualities. It can appear to be dispersed, unified, invincible, resistible, fleeting, permanent, detrimental, or even beneficial. Many of its aspects, such as the sicknesses it causes, take years to emerge. They might remain "invisible" forever, or they might be impossible to disentangle from other socioecological dynamics. Cofán knowledge of oil depends upon biography, age, community affiliation, idiosyncratic interest, and level of association with outsiders. Describing the gradual development of a more generalized certainty, one middle-aged man explained in 2002:

"Now we know. Now we think about how it affects everything. 'Yes, yes. That's how it will happen. That's how animals will disappear. The *compania* enters and *mestizos* come and they steal Cofán land. And our game disappears.' Now we think about

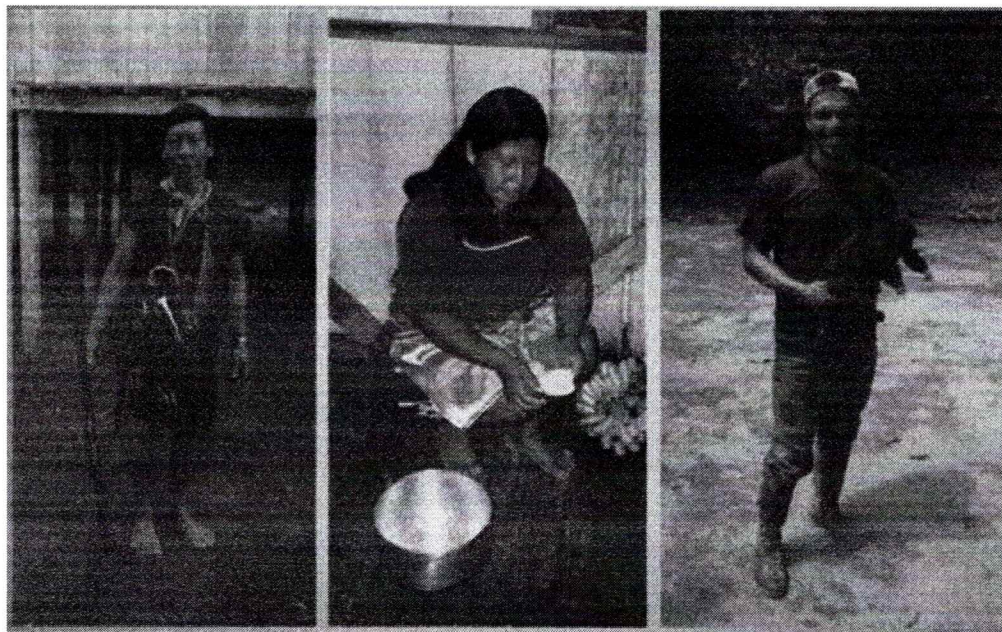


Figure 2 Residents of Dureno in 1998 and 2002 (Photo by author).

this. But that happened recently, very recently. That's how the Cofán became the enemies of the *compania*."

I first heard about the oil industry's impacts on Cofán lands and bodies in 1993, when I worked as an undergraduate activist with the Rainforest Action Network. Having read so much about the destruction, I was shocked the first time I visited Dureno in 1998. I stepped off the oil road, walked to the Aguarico River, and shouted to the other shore, where the Cofán live. A young boy heard and poled a canoe to my side, bringing two women with him. As they came closer, I saw the women's *foño*, hand-sewn skirts that are a marked form of Cofán dress (Figure 2). They chatted back and forth in A'ingae, and the boy explained that they were monolingual. I knew the name of the president of the Cofán ethnic federation, and I asked to be taken to his home. As I walked through the village, a man emerged from the forest with a shotgun and a string of monkeys slung over his shoulder. His young wife carried a land tortoise in a woven bag. When I arrived at the leader's house, I sat on a split-palm floor as he faced me from a hammock, wearing a feather crown. His wife served me a steaming plate of fish and a drink made from ripe plantains.

Although dugout canoes, hunted monkeys, and feather crowns might seem like cliché indices of Amazonian life, they clashed with my preconceived notions of contaminated Dureno. I expected toxic slicks, dying children, and an extinct language. Instead, I found an indigenous community with a way of life that had yet to disappear. The word *petroleo* rarely emerged in everyday discourse. Sickness

and colonization were impossible to deny, but I began to wonder whether people gave these social, ecological, and medical phenomena the name “oil.” Even if they did, their everyday lives represented a bold denial of the narratives that positioned them as nothing more than sad symbols of globalization’s darkest consequences.

By the time I began my fieldwork, only elders remembered the days when Texaco’s predecessor, Shell, explored Cofán territory in the 1930s and 1940s. A few of my oldest consultants actually worked for Shell, cutting trails and transporting technicians by canoe for seismic testing. Shell, however, left Ecuador before it extracted any crude. An incipient awareness of oil’s true power emerged with the entrance of Texaco in the mid 1960s. Many Cofán remember visiting the company camp at Lago Agrio in order to trade feathers, spears, and meat for salt and other commodities. Others recall watching workers bulldoze a highway through the forest. Sometimes, the outsiders would let the Cofán eat their leftover rice, which individuals recount with descriptions of naïve joy. One man said, “We were children. We didn’t know what would happen in the future. Because we didn’t know how things would change, we were happy eating their food. It was nice.”

In the community of Duvuno, slightly upriver from Dureno, the initial entrance of Texaco was more dramatic. Ecuadorian workers and North American engineers arrived in the late 1960s to build a camp for seismic testing. A Duvuno man described how the company erected huge tents in the middle of the community and made trails next to Cofán houses. After running the entire operation out of the village for two weeks, helicopters came and retrieved the workers to bring them further into the forest for the next leg of trail cutting. Rather than recounting the scene with a sense of anger, the Duvuno man laughed and proclaimed, “Old-time Cofán didn’t know.” He said that people were happy. They thought the company was *ñotssi* (good) because it gave them rice, cookies, sugar, and salt—even though it offered no real payment or compensation of any kind. After the workers left, Cofán people trekked through the forest to collect the wire that was used to detonate explosives. It became a favored material for constructing baskets, fishing leaders, and clotheslines. Many people were pleased with the large, clean trails that cut straight through the jungle. Until they closed up with new vegetation, the paths made perfect avenues for hunting.

Some Cofán recall significant damage from seismic testing. In Zábalo, a round of exploration from the late 1980s and early 1990s involved trails running over known salt licks—which are important hunting sites—and explosions next to lakes, which left hundreds of fish dead. All Cofán report that animals are frightened by the detonations, which cause them to flee the area. Nevertheless, seismic work’s reach and intensity is matched by its chaotic, fleeting nature. Waves of helicopters and motorized canoes pass by communities for months at a time. Compass-straight trails emerge from the middle of the forest to transect a village, a garden, or a stream. “It’s extremely disruptive, but it’s extremely short lived,” Randy Borman

explained. "It's a massive invasion, but a few years later you can't find any sign, any trace of what really happened here. Except for occasional big stands of *Cecropia*⁷ where a heliport was put in."

Exploratory drilling, too, can be a mysterious phenomenon. Companies use helicopters to place rigs deep in the forest, far from villages or navigable waterways. Sometimes, the only detectable sign of exploratory wells is a faint, low humming. To untrained ears, the sound does not exist. For such forest people as the Cofán, however, it might be mistaken for a herd of white-lipped peccary, as Mimi hoped in the incident that opened this article. Of course, if a company places a well next to a village or river, it is impossible to miss, with its tall tower, its clanking drill, its large heliport, and its team of dozens of workers, who occupy the site for weeks on end. If exploratory drilling comes up dry, however, the camp can be dismantled in a flash. The forest will reclaim the site and cover what residues remain.

For the Cofán, oil became impossible to ignore after commercial extraction began in the 1970s. During the production phase, petroleum becomes a fixed material presence. The number of wells multiplies; their output skyrockets; wastes spill and burn; and crude travels precariously through pipelines that snake along new roads. All of my Cofán consultants voiced an awareness of contamination's origin and consequences during commercial production. Nevertheless, contamination, too, is a multi-faceted and uncertain phenomenon. Its visibility and power depend upon one's way of life, one's sensory faculties, and one's beliefs and knowledge regarding the causal chains determining such phenomena as ill health and ecological change.

Cofán people know that the main source of contamination is overflow of toxic chemicals from waste pits, which drain into streams and rivers. The two words that occur most frequently in A'ingae discussions of contamination are *ámundetssi* (dirty) and *da'ñoñe* (to damage). When I asked my interviewees if they knew what *contaminación* meant, they said that it is something that *ámundiañe* (makes dirty). Contamination, however, is typically invisible. It is often impossible to detect directly in rivers, even for people who maintain a fine-tuned awareness of their environment. Long after commercial extraction began, Cofán people drank from waterways. Years passed before they decided that rain was a safer source.

Some of the most visceral encounters with contamination come from caught fish. Cofán say that some fish are *tssu'jutssi* (stinky), reeking of oil. Often, the stench becomes apparent when the fish are gutted. At other times, the smell only reaches consciousness at the point of consumption. A number of people shared tales of landing large catfish from the Aguarico River. When they cooked them, the flesh smelled of oil. Nevertheless, especially in the early years, Cofán people sometimes ate the meat anyway. Today, they smile as they recount such incidents, laughing about how they "did not know."

Even as contamination manifests itself in the presence of certain animals, it also appears in the absence and displacement of others. One man told me that

it became difficult to hunt pacas (*Cuniculus paca*) near the most contaminated streams. According to him, the animals do not approach the water, where they are easy to spot and kill, especially at night. Instead, they opt to remain in the cleaner environment of the forest, where they are difficult to find. Another informant laughed about an extremely easy kill involving an animal that people typically hunt in riverine environments. A capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) had fallen into a waste pit, and he pursued it by following its trail of black tracks in the forest. In short order, he located and dispatched the animal, which he fed to his family. He told me that the oil was just on the fur. With a grin and a shrug, he said that he assumed the meat itself was clean.

A less common but more striking appearance of contamination comes from pipeline spills, which have occurred repeatedly over the last forty years. Cofán people have seen great slicks of crude on the region's streams and rivers. The oil covers the fur, feathers, and scales of animals. Unable to breath, fish die and float to the surface. Smaller spills can pass unnoticed in the night. Nevertheless, people see their remains the next day on blackened shores. One older Dureno resident told me about hunting on an island that appeared in the Aguarico after a flood receded. The small piece of land was littered with the corpses of acouchis (*Myoprocta pratti*) and armadillos, which were smothered by a spill. He collected the animals and brought them home to eat.

Periodically, waste pits and oil spills catch fire, creating phenomena that can be both striking and subtle. The largest oil fires rage for days, causing gigantic billows of black smoke to rise into the sky. On a return trip from Zábalo, Randy Borman videotaped a spill that caught fire and spread from a broken pipeline into the Aguarico and over the surrounding forest, with clouds that climbed for hundreds of meters. Multiple documentaries feature the footage, which supplies one of the most potent expressions of oil's destructive power. On other occasions, burned oil finds less explosive ways to enter the Cofán sensory field. Having learned the dangers of consuming river water, many Cofán now drink rainwater that runs off their roofs into tanks. Sometimes, after a storm, people discover that the water has a dark tint, which they interpret as the detritus of oil that has burned, mixed with clouds, traveled from its source, and fallen down on their community.

Whether in water, flesh, or air, Cofán people realize that they have been ingesting oil waste for decades. When I asked if contamination causes sickness, my informants replied in the affirmative. In addition to noting the many years that they consumed poisoned water without realizing its dangers, they said that children still take gulps as they play in the river, which causes stomachaches and diarrhea. Furthermore, they claimed that bathing in the Aguarico and its tributaries causes itchy rashes and skin fungus. A few people told me about relatives who died from *cáncer*, which they believe to be caused by the *seje'pa* (poison) of oil contamination. Their belief accords with the warnings issued by doctors and activists. Before they

received outside counsel, the Cofán assumed that people *a'qquia pa* (died without cause), an initial diagnosis that often led to shamanic identification of human agents as the real culprits. Even with their recently gained biomedical perspective, Cofán people still hold sociogenic models of illness and death. Furthermore, they realize that it is impossible to individuate the effects of oil contamination at a time when colonists dump garbage, sewage, and pesticide into the region's waterways.

Many Cofán people suggest that the most damaging aspect of oil production is not contamination but colonization. The majority of Cofán communities are bordered by non-native settlements. People now refer to Dureno as an *anttepo'cho* (island). The early workers told the Cofán that the highways would make them happy, as they would allow easy access to plentiful, cheap goods. Instead of receiving a cargo of miraculous products, the Cofán saw the newcomers claim their land, clear it for farms and pastures, and prohibit natives from entering. Even today, colonists traverse Dureno's boundaries in order to hunt or to plant fields on Cofán land. When Cofán people try to hunt on land held by mestizos or Afro-Ecuadorians, they often face irate owners with machetes and shotguns.

Interestingly, although many anti-oil activists claim that the region's indigenous people face rape and ridicule from oil workers and other newcomers, most of my informants denied the accusations. Instead, they stressed land loss, anxiety over incursions, and their inability to wander peacefully through lands that once were theirs. In communities close to the most heavily colonized areas, people restrict their subsistence activities to tiny fragments of their original range. Game populations are dwindling. People now hunt at night, which is a dangerous activity that has resulted in at least one accidental death. Many rely upon such purchased foods as rice and tuna. With little income, however, it is difficult to maintain a proper diet.

In addition to periodic hunger and potential malnutrition, declining animal populations complicate a social ideal of generalized reciprocity. In Dureno, there is not enough meat to go around. Individuals who are lucky enough to have a successful hunt often refuse to share their catch with other households. Sometimes, they even sell it to other residents. Failed reciprocity represents an unwelcome cultural development. In such situations, people are more prone to steal and to fight. Conflicts proliferate, and peaceful conviviality cannot be maintained. In Dureno, the overburdened resources and stressful social relations have led the community to split into four population centers. Although some of my consultants had little to say about contamination, they would talk for long periods about stinginess and tense sociality as the true cost of life with oil.

Colonists are not the only newcomers. Workers and company officials, too, populate Cofán territory. Most Cofán people have limited contact with workers, and language problems make direct interactions difficult. Cofán roundly claim that company *na'sundeccu* (bosses) lie about the true scale and impacts of their projects.

Feelings about regular workers, however, are more ambivalent. Most Cofán realize that the men who cut trails and drive canoes are simply poor Ecuadorians. Sometimes, work crews are composed of indigenous people, too. A few Cofán people told me stories about receiving advice from engineers, who urged them to fight off the colonists that follow new roads. One Dureno resident related a strange story in which he encountered a seismic crew in the forest. They spoke for hours. The workers gave him large sacks of tuna, lentils, noodles, oatmeal, rice, and sugar. In return, he gave them fresh paca meat. "To me, they are not bad people," he concluded. The only truly negative report came from a Duvuno man who worked for Texaco in his youth. He told me that the workers are *ega a'i* (bad people) who drink, fight, and insult and command each other. Being part of these rough interactions convinced him never to work for the company again.

Even though Cofán people associate oil with a murky though overwhelming negativity, it also represents significant promises. The great majority of Cofán have never worked for oil companies, but employment remains a potential benefit. Most Cofán oppose the presence of oil companies on their own land. Nevertheless, they are open to considering work in other people's territories. Even the lowest paid trail cutters earn three times the average wage for manual labor on colonist farms.⁸ In 2002, one Zábalo man with a high-quality canoe and motor earned \$1,450 a month⁹ transporting seismic workers in an upriver concession. In addition to considering employment, many Cofán wonder about the possibility of a payout. In the present political climate, companies cannot cut trails or drill wells without compensation. For the Cofán, who view Western health care and some commodities as necessities, a settlement represents a real temptation. Some individuals dream of monthly payments, outboard motors, schools, and medical centers. Many feel that if they cannot stop oil production, they at least should get something for the inevitable damage.

In general, oil has been many things for the Cofán. Their way of living, thinking, and speaking in Amazonian Ecuador has allowed them to view its various aspects with uncertainty, surprise, curiosity, fear, fatalism, anger, disappointment, humor, and desire. The image of oil as an instantly apparent and overwhelming power does not correspond to Cofán experiences. After assembling decades of diffuse and ambivalent encounters into a coherent danger, however, Cofán people realized that they needed to oppose oil's presence if they wanted to maintain a desirable life in northeastern Ecuador.

Constituting a Threat

Considering the history of the oil-Cofán encounter, it appears that there are three connected objects of investigation: first, the disruption of a people's way of life by an alien socioecological complex; second, the pragmatic means by which that

complex comes to be perceived and conceptualized as a unified threat to a valued way of being; and third, the emergence of a sense of political agency that is powerful enough to sustain an overt, collective, and effective opposition. Despite uncertainties and hesitations, the Cofán have succeeded in constituting oil's presence as a unified, threatening, and resistible phenomenon. Aided by the interventions of activists and lawyers,¹⁰ Cofán people are becoming increasingly opposed to oil's manifestations, which they now confront directly.

Although some of my Cofán collaborators noted oil's ambivalent promises, all expressed a generalized hostility to its presence. In another article (Cepek 2008a), I explore the importance of the word *opatssi* in Cofán value discourse. The metaphorically elaborated term expresses a socioexistential ideal of equality, generosity, satiation, health, strength, and calm. To be *opatssi* is to live in a state of ingenuous fearlessness, in which one remains at a secure distance from the troubling consequences of violent otherness. Not surprisingly, the word occurs frequently in Cofán descriptions of life with oil. One Zábalo resident said, "I hate the company. I hate it. I want the forest, so that everything will be *opatssi*." A man from Dureno stated, "It's not like the old times, when we were truly strong and truly happy. It's really hard to live *opatsse*¹¹ now." In perhaps the clearest statement, a Zábalo leader explained:

"The company will enter and the land will be damaged. It will be damaged forever. There will be no *opatsse* way of living. Then we will live by suffering. In the future, our children will not be able to live *opatsse*. They will struggle to live. But if we continue to live with what we have now, if we continue to prohibit [the company from entering], we will live. Our land will exist."

As the Cofán case demonstrates, the meaning and experience of loss are culturally mediated. The Cofán may agree with some of the activists who lament the destruction of their bodies, their culture, and their territory, but they maintain their own discourse on the crisis that faces them. They stress oil's production of unequal relations, failed generosity, tense sociality, poor health, and an unstable forest-based existence. When the possibility of losing their valued way of life became impossible to ignore, they demonstrated their willingness to confront their new enemy.

Although recent, the record of Cofán resistance is impressive. Two decades after exploratory drilling began, the Dureno Cofán blockaded a road that Texaco attempted to build through their community. Four years later, Zábalo residents apprehended two crews of seismic workers who entered their land without permits.¹² In 1993, the community prevented the company Petroecuador from building a well on the Zábalo River. Later that year, a contingent led by Randy Borman took over an exploratory well deep inside the forest and successfully pressured the company to shut it down. Finally, in 1998, hundreds of people from all Ecuadorian Cofán

communities occupied the Dureno Uno site. After a standoff with the Ecuadorian military, Petroecuador agreed to close the well.

Although companies continue to *noña'ngiañe* (bother) Cofán communities to allow drilling, the Cofán appear to have the upper hand, at least for the moment. I recorded the narrative below from a Zábalo man who was in Dureno when company representatives tried to negotiate a new round of drilling in the community, which supposedly holds enough reserves to justify the construction of 18 wells:

“The Cofán said no. ‘We prohibit you from entering. Our food, the places where the game animals live—you’ll make a road, and where will they live? That’s bad. That’s why we don’t want this.’ But the company official disagreed. ‘We don’t want to make your rivers dirty again. We’ll drill the land and take out gasoline. And we’ll make a big hole in the forest. We’ll throw all of the bad stuff from the petroleum into that. It won’t go into the river.’ But the Cofán still said no. Then, the company said, ‘Whatever you want, ask for it. If you want money, televisions, chainsaws, or outboard motors, think about it. And ask for it. We’ll help you with that and then we’ll enter and work here. Companies can’t just enter without concern now.’ That’s what they said. Some of the Cofán considered it. Others disliked it. Then someone said, ‘If the company enters, what will you hunt and eat? There won’t be anything.’ The others agreed, and the company gave up.”

Cofán people’s realization that they can say “no” represents an important shift. In the early years of the encounter, they expressed confusion and wonderment, and they did not recognize the desirability of keeping oil at a distance. During the buildup to the initial acts of resistance, they pondered state force and military violence, and they feared the consequences of mobilization. After a set of important victories, many Cofán believe that they now have true power. Their felt agency is the result not only of the internal development of a militant, generalized opposition. It also represents a realization that they have sympathizers, including activists, the media, and some segments of the Ecuadorian state. Considering the situation, some Cofán say that they no longer fear the companies. In a radical reversal, they believe that the companies now fear them.

Conclusion

From any perspective, petroleum production is a dynamic beast with a complex structure and myriad consequences. Armed with Western science and Western commonsense, it is easy for us to draw the connections and pinpoint the problem. As I demonstrated in this article, however, the Cofán faced unique opportunities to determine the presence of oil in their practices, their bodies, and their forests. Equipped with particular social, practical, and epistemic powers, they took their

own road to realizing that oil was the thing that troubled them, and they acted accordingly.

The clarity with which concerned outsiders view the oil-Cofán encounter is still alien to many Cofán people. It was foreign to *all* of them during the first two decades of extraction. In our attempts to understand how and why people respond to disasters, it is necessary to consider the power of culture. Moreover, we must recognize that a socioecological complex as powerful as oil has multiple, conflicting, and shifting appearances. For people who are unfamiliar with its structure and consequences, oil can be an uncertain danger, an ambivalent promise, and an unpredictable—as well as uncontrollable—historical transformation. In our attempts to understand why Cofán people waited three decades before their most definitive act of resistance, we would do well to remember that oil moves in mysterious ways, especially for people who have witnessed its transformation from the dream of strangers into an industrialized production system that is changing their region, their country, and their world.

As a final reflection, I suggest that the most complex predicament facing such peoples as the Cofán is not the successful performance of cultural difference, but the successful performance of cultural loss. Cofán people must walk a fine line. If they and their lands look as if they are “too devastated,” they will no longer appear as a distinct people with a perduring culture and a chance at resurgence. If they do not adequately express their loss, however, they will have a hard time eliciting essential forms of external support, including financial compensation. Avoiding the pitfalls of quietism, hyperbole, and surrender, the Cofán are struggling to articulate their position in a way that expresses both the seriousness of their situation and their realistic hope for surviving it. Cofán leaders are pursuing an ambitious vision of territorial recovery, environmental conservation, and political-economic empowerment (Cepek 2008b). They need allies who will help them to achieve their goals. They do not need supporters who mourn their past, lament their present, and dismiss their future.

Acknowledgments

For their encouragement and insight, I thank Chris Ball, Laura Graham, Bret Gustafson, Javier Auyero, Andrew Canessa, and three anonymous reviewers. For their financial aid, I thank the University of Chicago, Macalester College, the University of Texas at San Antonio, the Field Museum of Natural History, the National Science Foundation, the Fulbright Commission, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and the Tinker Foundation. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to all of my Cofán collaborators in Quito and eastern Ecuador.

Notes

¹A'ingae, which remains unclassified, is the native language of Cofán people. It continues to be the main means of communication for Ecuadorian Cofán.

²For background on the case, known formally as *Aguinda vs. Chevron*, the website www.chevrontoxico.org serves as a useful clearinghouse of information.

³Unless otherwise noted, all Cofán quotations are my direct translations from A'ingae.

⁴In other publications, I have written extensively on Randy Borman's cultural and political position in Cofán society (Cepek 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009).

⁵The film is *Crude* (Berlinger 2009). Chevron lawyers subpoenaed the director to obtain his footage, and a U.S. District Judge sided with them. After a round of appeals, Berlinger handed over the footage to the defendants' legal team.

⁶The lawyer's statement is an exaggeration. Dureno is not the only community in ancestral Cofán territory. Furthermore, Ecuador's Cofán population numbered less than 1,000 when Texaco arrived.

⁷*Cecropia* is a native species that is often the first large tree to colonize forest clearings.

⁸Currently, the majority of Cofán people live a subsistence-based lifestyle with no stable work of any kind. Probably the greatest single source of Cofán employment is the Cofán park guard corps, a group of approximately 50 legally accredited Cofán rangers who patrol the entirety of Cofán territory.

⁹The amount did not cover the equipment or its wear and tear. The man received the job through a tip from a non-Cofán friend. Very few of these positions are open to Cofán.

¹⁰National indigenous activists and progressive Catholic missionaries advised the people of Dureno on their 1987 road blockade. Moreover, Cofán leaders have been in conversation with the activists and lawyers organizing the suit against Chevron since its first filing in 1993.

¹¹*Opa* is a stem. *Opatssi* is its adjectival form, and *opatsse* is its adverbial form.

¹²Zábalo is located inside the Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve, and any development must proceed with permission from Ecuador's Ministry of the Environment.

References Cited

- Auyero, Javier and Débora Alejandra Swistun. (2009) *Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Berlinger, Joe, dir. (2009) *Crude*. 104 min. First Run Features. New York.
- Button, Gregory. (2010) *Disaster Culture: Knowledge and Uncertainty in the Wake of Human and Environmental Catastrophe*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.
- Centro para Derechos Económicos y Sociales. (1994) *Violaciones de Derechos en la Amazonía Ecuatoriana: Las Consecuencias Humanas del Desarrollo Petrolero*. Quito: Abya-Yala.
- Cepek, Michael L. (2006) *The Cofán Experiment: Expanding an Indigenous Amazonian World*. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago.
- (2008a) Bold Jaguars and Unsuspecting Monkeys: The Value of Fearlessness in Cofán Politics. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14:331–349.
- (2008b) Essential Commitments: Identity and the Politics of Cofán Conservation. *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 13(1):196–222.
- (2009) The Myth of the *Gringo* Chief: Amazonian Messiahs and the Power of Immediacy. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 16(2):227–248.
- Checker, Melissa. (2005) *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town*. New York: New York University Press.
- Chevalier, Jacques M. (1982) *Civilization and the Stolen Gift: Capital, Kin and Cult in Eastern Peru*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Doughty, Caitlin, Flora Lu, and Mark Sorensen. (2010) *Crude, Cash and Culture Change: The Huaorani of Amazonian Ecuador*. *Consilience: The Journal of Sustainable Development* 4(1):13–32.

- Finer, Matt, Clinton N. Jenkins, Stuart L. Pimm, Brian Keane, and Carl Ross. (2008) Oil and Gas Projects in the Western Amazon: Threats to Wilderness, Biodiversity, and Indigenous Peoples. *PLoS ONE* 3(8):e2932. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0002932.
- High, Casey. (2007) Oil Development, Indigenous Organizations, and the Politics of Egalitarianism. *Cambridge Anthropology* 26(2):34–46.
- Hoffman, Susanna M. and Anthony Oliver-Smith, eds. (2002) *Catastrophe & Culture: The Anthropology of Disaster*. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press.
- Hurtig, Anna-Karin and Miguel San Sebastián. (2002) Geographical Differences in Cancer Incidence in the Amazon Basin of Ecuador in Relation to Residence Near Oil Fields. *International Journal of Epidemiology* 31:1021–1027.
- (2004) Incidence of Childhood Leukemia and Oil Exploitation in the Amazon Basin of Ecuador. *International Journal of Occupational Environmental Health* 10(3):245–250.
- Kane, Joe. (1996) *Savages*. New York: Knopf.
- Kimerling, Judith S., with S. Jacob Scherr, J. Eugene Gibson, Glenn Prickett, Jennifer Gale, and Lynn Fischer. (1991) *Amazon Crude*. New York: Natural Resources Defense Council.
- Latour, Bruno. (1993) *We Have Never Been Modern*. Catherine Porter, trans. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Little, Paul E. (1992) *Ecología Política del Cuyabeno: El Desarrollo No Sostenible de la Amazonía*. Quito: ILDIS, Abya-Yala.
- Martz, John D. (1987) *Politics and Petroleum in Ecuador*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books.
- Nash, June. (1993) *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Oliver-Smith, Anthony and Susanna M. Hoffman, eds. (1999) *The Angry Earth: Disaster in the Anthropological Perspective*. New York: Routledge.
- Petryna, Adriana. (2002) *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rival, Laura. (1993) Confronting Petroleum Development in the Ecuadorian Amazon: The Huaorani, Human Rights and Environmental Protection. *Anthropology in Action* 16:14–15.
- (2000) Marginality with a Difference: How the Huaorani Preserve Their Sharing Relations and Naturalize Outside Powers. In *Hunters and Gatherers in the Modern World: Conflict, Resistance and Self-Determination*. Peter Schweitzer, Megan Biese, and Robert K. Hitchcock, eds. Pp. 244–260. New York: Berghahn Books.
- (2010) Ecuador's Yasuni-ITT Initiative: The Old and New Values of Petroleum. *Ecological Economics* 70:358–365.
- Sahlins, Marshall. (2000) *Culture in Practice: Selected Essays*. New York: Zone Books.
- San Sebastián, Miguel and Anna-Karin Hurtig. (2004) Oil Exploitation in the Amazon Basin of Ecuador: A Public Health Emergency. *Pan American Journal of Public Health* 15(3):205–211.
- San Sebastián, Miguel, Ben Armstrong, and Carolyn Stevens. (2002) Outcomes of Pregnancy among Women Living in the Proximity of Oil Fields in the Amazon Basin of Ecuador. *International Journal of Occupational Environmental Health* 8(4):312–319.
- Sawyer, Suzana. (2004) *Crude Chronicles: Indigenous Politics, Multinational Oil, and Neoliberalism in Ecuador*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Serrano, Fernando. (1993) *The Transformation of the Indian Peoples of the Ecuadorian Amazon into Political Actors and Its Effects on the State's Modernization Policies*. M.A. thesis, University of Florida.
- Schodt, David W. (1987) *Ecuador: An Andean Enigma*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Taussig, Michael. (1980) *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Turner, Terence. (1986) Production, Exploitation and Social Consciousness in the "Peripheral Situation." *Social Analysis* 19:91–115.
- Uquillas, Jorge E. (1993) La Tenencia de la Tierra en la Amazonía Ecuatoriana. In *Retos de la Amazonía*. Pp. 61–94. Quito: ILDIS, Abya-Yala.
- Vickers, William T. (1994) From Opportunism to Nascent Conservation: The Case of the Siona-Secoya. *Human Nature* 5(4):307–337.
- (2003) The Modern Political Transformation of the Secoya. In *Millennial Ecuador: Critical Essays on Cultural Transformations & Social Dynamics*. Norman E. Whitten, Jr., ed. Pp. 46–74. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Waldman, Linda. (2011) *The Politics of Asbestos: Understandings of Risk, Disease and Protest*. London: Earthscan.
- Walker, Christopher, dir. (1996) *Trinkets and Beads*. 53 min. Faction Films. New York.
- Wolf, Eric R. (1982) *Europe and the People Without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ziegler-Otero, Lawrence. (2007) *Resistance in an Amazonian Community: Huaorani Organizing Against the Global Economy*. New York: Berghahn Books.