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A Future For Ia: Randy Borman And CofÃin Environmental Politics



Synopsis

Blending ethnography with a fascinating personal story, *A Future for Ia* is an account of a political movement that arose in the early 1990s in response to decades of attacks on the lands and peoples of eastern Ecuador, one of the world's most culturally and biologically diverse places. After generations of ruin at the hands of colonizing farmers, transnational oil companies, and Colombian armed factions, the indigenous Cofãjn people and their rain forest territory faced imminent jeopardy. In a surprising turn of events, the Cofãjn chose Randy Borman, a man of Euro-American descent, to lead their efforts to overcome the crisis that confronted them. Drawing on three years of ethnographic research, *A Future for Ia* begins by tracing the contours of Cofãjn society and Borman's place within it. Borman, a blue-eyed, white-skinned child of North American missionary-linguists, was raised in a Cofãjn community and gradually came to share the identity of his adoptive nation. He became a global media phenomenon and forged creative partnerships between Cofãjn communities, conservationist organizations, Western scientists, and the Ecuadorian state. The result was a collective mobilization that transformed the Cofãjn nation in unprecedented ways, providing them with political power, scientific expertise, and a new role as ambitious caretakers of more than one million acres of forest. Challenging simplistic notions of identity, indigeneity, and inevitable ecological destruction, *A Future for Ia* charts an inspiring course for environmental politics in the twenty-first century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"It is a well-crafted and nicely combined account of an ethnographic study with the personal story of

Randy Bormanâ it is a must read for all those who want to understand the ecological sustainability efforts of indigenous people around the world in general, and the success story of the CofÃn in ia in particular." (Indigenous Peoples, Issues, and Resources 2013-07-10)"We must thank Michael Cepek for an ethnography that not only sheds light on indigenous cultural resistance, but also allows us to imagine such questions." (Journal of Latin American Studies 2013-07-01)"Whatâs the fate of the âs ecology and indigenous people? Is cultural and biological destruction inevitable? This may be the predominant message we hear emanating from the global discourse, but, as we read in Michael Cepekâs lively and richly textured account of the CofÃn people of eastern Ecuador, we may have reason to be more optimistic." (American Ethnologist)"It is exciting and always refreshing to read an ethnography that, as Cepek puts it, uses empirical investigation of an existing liberatory project to help us conceptualize alternative futures of hope and possibility." (American Anthropologist)"A Future for ia is ideal for those in search of a rich, readable, ethnography that provides a remarkably rich account of an ian indigenous people and how they have developed the political capacity to take on multinational oil, negotiate the Ecuadorian state, and secure a future that is at least partially hopeful. In short, this book makes an argument for why ethnography remains important for understanding much of what defines Latin America, from natural resource extraction and imperialism to indigenous movements, the âNGOizationâ of political life, and the broader struggle for cultural and economic survival." (Anthropology and Humanism)"This book will be of interest to environmental anthropologists for its depiction of divergent cultural models of environmental conservation and ecological cosmovisions, and to scholars in Latin American studies for its analysis of indigenous social movements and their complex relationships with states and transnational NGO networks. It also makes important contributions to the emerging field of NGO studies by examining how the adoption of the NGO form entails the transformation of community identities and practices. Nonetheless, its greatest value lies in the way it challenges anthropologists to examine the cultural tools used by people to refashion their ways of living in order to secure some measure of control over their future in a complex and often unpredictable global context." (Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute)"Cepek has done a marvelous job in documenting and explaining the nuances and narratives of the CofÃn story. . . . The book, which is easy to read and very well written, is highly recommended, especially for anyone working in International Development, Development Education, Government, Conservation, or Anthropology. The larger value here is that Cepek provides a pragmatic vision, gained through his sustained relationship with Borman and the CofÃn, which might help the world with its problem of maintaining biodiversity. It is a real life story, implemented and worked on by real people, not just a

utopian vision. The accomplishments of the 'Cofãjn experiment' deserve to be carefully studied and debated" (Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology)"One of the best Latin American ethnographies I've read in a decade. . . . The reader comes away from this work with a strong sense of a people who are not ^timeless indigenous others^ but thoughtful individuals struggling to keep their social world afloat against formidable odds. Cepek brings extraordinary ethnographic texture to his account and raises our understanding of indigenous survival to a new level." (Michael F. Brown, Lambert Professor of Anthropology and Latin American Studies, Williams College)"Brave . . . original. . . . A thought-provoking and sensitive account of the complexities of Cofãjn life in a global age. Written with clarity and commitment, this book will surely unsettle assumptions." (Bret Gustafson, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Washington University)

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Well written and fascinating story about the struggle to preserve an endangered culture.

Great for an introductory anthropology course

Overall it was a good book. Cepek wrote too much on so many things. He kept re-telling the same story. It was very descriptive though. He seemed to be very concerned with accuracy reliability of his findings. This story was great, and how he tied in Borman's little analogies with theory made it rather interesting.

Good edition, fine handling of order.

ugh I had to read the entire book...I am illiterate :(

This book is so strong because it weds deep ethnographic analysis to questions of political mobilization, conservation environmental politics, and resource extraction (all of which are often not thought of as "cultural" even though, of course, they are). Because this is a book that is so attuned to Cofan indigenous logics and forms and practices of meaning, it renders the question of "what does it mean to create an NGO? What does it mean to "conserve nature?" much more complex and thick than is often the case in other ethnographies of environmental politics. It is also supremely clear in its writing and ethical in its goals - to produce a hopeful account of environmental politics in the age of ecological disaster. I recommend it very highly, also for teaching on an undergraduate level!

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