

**Response to Mr. Cabrera's Errors Concerning Indigenous Populations
In the Petroecuador-Exaco Concession Area**

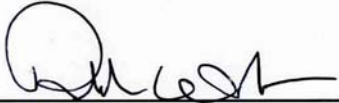
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Dr. Wasserstrom's Biographical Summary

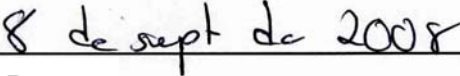
Robert Wasserstrom, Ph.D.: Dr. Robert Wasserstrom is an anthropologist with a doctorate from Harvard University (1977). Currently, he directs a group of social consultants in Houston, Texas, with long experience in Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico and Central America, as well as in Africa and Asia. Between 1977 and 1981 was a professor at the School of Public Health at Columbia University (New York) and Southern Methodist University (Dallas). Afterwards, he served as project manager at the World Resources Institute (an environmental NGO in Washington, DC) and as vice president Browning-Ferris Industries, the second largest company in the world in solid waste management. He also has advised several foundations and international development organizations, including the World Bank, the Ford Foundation, the Inter-American Foundation and the World Wildlife Fund. In Ecuador, he participated as an advisor in the creation of EcoFondo. He has published four books and more 75 technical papers in various professional journals.

Certification by Author

This attached report accurately represents my knowledge and opinions on this matter.



Robert Wasserstrom



Date

Response to Mr. Cabrera's Errors Concerning Indigenous Populations In the Petroecuador-Texaco Concession Area

Conclusions

After carefully examining the main historical, anthropological and social references that could be located, I have reached the following conclusions:

1. During the years that the Texaco-Petroecuador Consortium operated in Ecuador, we have found no evidence for the systematic extermination of a "national, racial or religious group," which the United Nations defines as genocide. Historical sources suggest that such events had indeed taken place during the "rubber boom" (1877-1920) in areas of Ecuador that were controlled by Peruvian and Colombian merchants. This finding supports an earlier report entitled "La situación demográfica de los Cofán" prepared for the Corte Superior de Justicia, Nueva Loja, on 5 April 2006 by Dr. Eduardo Bedoya.
2. Since the mid-20th Century, indigenous populations in Ecuador's northern *Oriente* (current provinces of Sucumbíos, Orellana and Napo) have grown at the same rate as the country's general population.
3. Beginning around 1950, growth rates among native groups in Ecuador have followed the same trends as indigenous populations throughout the Amazon Basin – in areas with oil production, mining and timber extraction as well as in undeveloped regions. This pattern is unlikely to have occurred if genocide had taken place in Ecuador.
4. During the Colonial period, indigenous populations in the Ecuadorian *Oriente* suffered the same demographic collapse as native groups throughout the Amazon Basin. Of the 6.8 million people who inhabited pre-conquest Amazonia, only 10% of their descendents are believed to have survived Spanish rule.
5. In his report, Mr. Cabrera suggests that Texaco Petroleum Company contributed to the disappearance of two small indigenous groups, the *Teteté* and *Sansahuari*. The Teteté were first encountered in 1913 by Capuchin missionaries, who estimated their population at 50 families. No further information is available from 1913 until 1966, except that they periodically raided Cofán and Siona-Secoya villages. The last verified contact with them took place in 1966, when two Catholic priests visited a small hamlet located between the Cuyabeno and San Miguel Rivers. Only one old woman and two old men appeared to be living there. This event took place before oil operations began in that area. Regarding the Sansahuari, no reference to them has been found in anthropological or historical sources, although they may have been a subgroup of the Teteté.

In the following report, I provide a detailed discussion of the data supporting these conclusions.

Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the demographic impacts to the native groups of the northern Oriente as a result of their most important contacts with the outside world. This study covers the time period between 1540 and 2001, from the Spanish invasion of the Ecuadorian Oriente until the national census conducted by the National Statistics and Census Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, INEC).

The study focuses on the three main ethnic groups historically located in the northeast region of Ecuador: the Cofán, Siona-Secoya and Huaorani. The lowland Quichuas and the Shuar, who have mostly migrated to the area in recent times¹, are excluded from this analysis. For analytical reasons, the study emphasizes the events occurred through 1990, the year in which the former Petroecuador-Texaco Consortium ceased its activities.

Sources

For this study, a detailed review of specialized academic sources and relevant files (for example, files at the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Farming) was conducted. Above all, historic, ethnographic and social publications have been emphasized. Also, preference has been given to publicly available works that can be reviewed by anyone. Esoteric, private, reserved, and hard to access sources have been avoided.

The main libraries consulted in this study include the following:

- FLACSO (Quito)
- Universidad Salesiana (Quito)
- University of Texas (Austin)
- Rice University (Houston)
- American University (Washington, DC)

A detailed bibliography of the references consulted for this study is included at the end of this document.

Analytical methodology

1. For the historical analysis, the standard methodology was used, which consists in reviewing all the available publications and subsequently assigning a relative weight to each publication based on the credibility of their original sources. This approach is the result of 25 years of experience in writing about the history of the Amerindian populations. The guiding principle is: What interpretation best reflects the expert opinion about a specific topic?
2. For demographic calculations, a greater weight is assigned to direct counts than to estimates, anecdotes, personal testimony, recollections, etc. These counts must follow the

¹ An excellent source on the origins of the lowland Quichua is the book by Blanco Muratorio, *Rucuyaya Alonso y la Historia social y económica del Alto Napo, 1850-1950*, Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1987. Also refer to Udo Oberem, *Los Quijos. Historia de la transculturación de un grupo indígena en el Oriente ecuatoriano (1538-1956)*, Madrid: Memorias del Departamento de Antropología y Etnología de América, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Madrid, 1971; Theodore Macdonald, Jr., *De cazadores a ganaderos*, Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1997, and Paul Little, *Amazonia. Territorial Struggles on Perennial Frontiers*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2001.

optimum sociological methodology: assigning each home a sequential number; recording the names, gender, and age of each resident, understanding their relationships with the other members of the household, etc. The relative weight of each study is evaluated based on the accuracy of these criteria. For example, there is a 1947 Cofán household census. This enumeration (later cited in a PhD thesis) is considered as a “baseline” in my subsequent calculations. Later, data gathered directly from the field is preferred. When in doubt, the more general methodology among experts is followed: calculate various different “scenarios” (usually low, medium, and high) and present the results for the reader to decide.

3. Finally, it is worthwhile mentioning that this document highlights academic works and sources due to a very pragmatic reason: supposedly, these documents were reviewed by a group of renowned specialists. Thus limiting the problem of having to present a doubtful or biased interpretation.

Analytical results

Demographic collapse during the colonial period

Prior to 1540, according to historian Linda Newson, the indigenous population of the Ecuadorian Oriente reached approximately 250,000 inhabitants, distributed among 25 distinct ethnic groups along the Napo, Pastaza, Curaray rivers, among others.² Apparently, these groups — with periodic changes caused by their confrontations, resettlements, etc. — occupied their territories for 2,000 years before the Spaniards’ arrival.³

As is well known, although the Spanish invasion took 20 years to directly reach the Amazon basin, it had a catastrophic effect on the native populations.⁴ Of the 6,800,000 people who lived there at the beginning of the XVI century, only 10% remained at the beginning of the XX century.⁵ According to the anthropologist Eduardo Bedoya, citing Piedad and Alfredo Costales, 57 per cent of the pre-Columbian groups disappeared during the colonial period.⁶

The indigenous populations of the Ecuadorian Oriente followed the same trend. Of the 250,000 people who inhabited the region in 1540, Newson calculates that less than 45,000 people survived through 1600.⁷ At least ten ethnic groups — including the populous Omagua (25,000 people), Gae (8,000 people) and the Yameo (10,000–12,000 people) — completely disappeared or were absorbed by neighboring groups.

The greater the population decline, the more pressure the Spanish placed on them to pay taxes, perform forced labor, etc. This is the case of the Cofán. In 1540, together with their Coronado

² Linda Newson, *Life and Death in Early Colonial Ecuador*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995, p.341.

³ Jorge Trujillo, *Enigmas Amazónicos*, Quito: in print; Jorge Trujillo, “Colonización en la región amazónica ecuatoriana,” Quito: report prepared for Entrix, November 2007.

⁴ For a cartographic definition of this region, see the maps in Frank Salomón and Stuart B. Schwartz, *The Cambridge History of Native Peoples of the Americas. Volume III. South America, Part 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

⁵ Pierre and Françoise Grenard, “Equatorial America,” in Serge Bahuchet, ed., *The Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Tropical Forests*, Brussels: Centre d’Anthropologie Culturelle, Université Libre de Bruxelles and Paris: Laboratoire de Langues et Civilisations à Tradition Orale, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris, <http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/Sonja/RF/Ukpr/Report.htm>, 2000, p. 10.

⁶ Eduardo Bedoya, “La situación demográfica de los cofanes,” report submitted to the Superior Court in Nueva Loja on April 5th 2006; Piedad and Alfredo Costales, *Amazonía: Ecuador, Perú y Bolivia*, Quito: Sucúa: Mundo Shuar, 1983.

⁷ Newson, *Life and Death*, p. 341.

and Omagua-Yété neighbors, they totaled 28,000 inhabitants residing mainly in the Aguarico and San Miguel river basins. Soon they were forced to pan for gold in the rivers and streams of this area. By 1630, their population had been reduced to 4,000 people, of whom only 1,000 were Cofán and Coronado. And by 1700, only 2,000 people among the three groups remained.⁸

The Siona-Secoya (known at the time as the “Encabellados”) suffered a similar fate. According to Newson, 6,000–8,000 Encabellados lived on the Napo and Putumayo river basins, which are nowadays divided among Ecuador, Peru and Colombia.⁹ Even during the mid XVII century, there were so many of them that they attracted Spanish “entradas” looking for slaves.¹⁰

However, at the end of that same century, according to the Franciscan missionaries, the Siona-Secoya suffered the devastating impact of the epidemics that ravaged the region.¹¹ When the Jesuits priests arrived in 1695, they found them scattered, far from the rivers, over an enormous territory that extended from the Shushufindi River to the confluence of the Santa Maria and Napo rivers (*i.e.*, an extent of approximately 200 km).¹² Newson calculates that their population reached 4,000 people.¹³

Eventually, between 1709 and 1769, the Jesuits founded 17 missions in this region, where they tried to “reduce” (resettle) the Siona-Secoya who were living scattered in the jungle. According to the anthropologist William T. Vickers, who investigated this ethnic group intensively since 1973, the Jesuits, to a great extent, fulfilled their objective – although later they were unable to stop the indigenous people from leaving the missions.

This detail helps us to estimate the size of the Siona-Secoya ethnic group during the mid XVIII century. According to Newson and other researchers, the missions typically gathered 15 to 30 relatives who followed one or two leaders. A total of 510 inhabitants is estimated by multiplying the 17 missions by approximately 30 inhabitants each. If this figure represents only half of the total ethnic group, then the Siona-Secoyas were close to 1,000 at the time.

Although this calculation must be used cautiously, it provides an indication of the catastrophic effects of the measles and smallpox epidemics, the Spanish and Portuguese enslaving raids, and other ravages suffered by the ethnic groups of the Upper Napo. Perhaps the best example is that of their closest neighbors. The Omagua, a powerful ethnic group that traditionally occupied the main rivers and basins in the area, completely disappeared by 1700. The last survivors escaped downstream, towards the central Amazon region.

On the other hand, the Siona-Secoya evidently chose a different survival strategy. After the collapse of their main settlements, they took refuge deep inside the jungle in small hamlets or family groups. Since their traditional production methods and commercial networks had disappeared, they reestablished a simplified economy based on hunting, gathering and rotating

⁸ Newson, *Life and Death*, pp. 332-33.

⁹ Newson, *Life and Death*, pp. 102-107.

¹⁰ Newson, *Life and Death*, p. 328.

¹¹ Newson, *Life and Death*, p. 329.

¹² William T. Vickers, “The Jesuits and the SIL: External Policies for Ecuador’s Tucanoans through Three Centuries” in Soren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby, *Is God an American? An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics*, Copenhagen: IWGIA and Survival International, 1981, pp. 53. See also William T. Vickers, *Los sionas y secoyas. Su adaptación al ambiente amazónico*. Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1989.

¹³ Newson, *Life and Death*, p. 333.

crops.¹⁴ Jorge Trujillo, Laura Rival and other anthropologists have described how this same strategy has been implemented among the Amazonian groups, mainly after the catastrophic changes created by the European invasions and the rubber “boom”.¹⁵

In his comparative study on Ecuador and Brazil, anthropologist Paul E. Little presents the following summary of the collapse of native colonial populations:

There were three main causes of massive dying among the Indians: warfare, the slave system, and disease. Warfare produced high mortality rates through direct clashes between the European invaders (and their indigenous allies) and indigenous societies. The slave system killed large numbers of indigenous peoples in a relatively short time because “the high density settlements found within the Amazon River floodplain were particularly easy prey for the slavers and these populations quickly succumbed”. Indigenous lives were lost in the brutal process of capture; through slave labor itself because of abuse, overwork, brutal punishments, and subhuman living conditions; and through the hasty, forced migrations of indigenous individuals, groups, or entire societies seeking to escape the plight of slavery.¹⁶

It is noteworthy to mention that the Huaorani were unknown and that they were first recognized in the 1860s. They are possibly descendants of the *Abijira*, although their linguistic family cannot be confirmed.

Impact of the rubber industry (1877–1925)

The rubber trade entered a boom period in 1877.¹⁷ Initially, the merchants focused their activities in Brazil, but after a few years they reached the Putumayo river basin. From there, they periodically extended their activities to the Aguarico river and the Upper Napo.

Rubber was not cultivated but collected in the jungle. Due the scarcity of permanent workers, the merchants relied upon involuntary labor: indigenous laborers that were indebted or “enganchados”. Usually, these merchants demanded that the indigenous groups buy metallic tools (axes, machetes, etc.) at inflated prices, which could only be paid with rubber. The ones who resisted these tactics (“enganche”) were often severely punished or in some cases even assassinated.¹⁸

¹⁴ The best description of this process in the Amazonia can be found in a publication by Anne Christine Taylor, “The Western Margins of Amazonia from the Early Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century” in Salomon and Schwartz, *The Cambridge History of Native Peoples of the Americas*, pp. 188-256.

¹⁵ Jorge Trujillo, *Enigmas Amazónicos*; Jorge Trujillo, “Colonización en la región amazónica ecuatoriana.” Laura Rival, *Hijos del sol, padres del jaguar*, Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1996; see also her book in English, *Trekking through History* New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

¹⁶ Paul E. Little, *Amazonia. Territorial Struggles on Perennial Frontiers*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2001, p. 22

¹⁷ This description is primarily based on two works: Michael Edward Stanfield, *Red Rubber, Bleeding Trees*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998; and Jonathan Hill, “Indigenous Peoples and the Rise of Independent Nation-States in Lowland South America” in Frank Salomón and Stuart B. Schwartz, *The Cambridge History of Native Peoples of the Americas*, pp. 746-757. Also see the work by Jorge Trujillo, “La Colonización en el Ecuador” in Pierre Gondard, ed., *Transformaciones Agrarias en el Ecuador*, Quito: CEDIG, 1988, pp. 59-70; Pilar García Jordán, coord., *La construcción de la Amazonia Andina (Siglos XIX-XX)*, Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1995; Muratorio, *Rucuyaya Alonso*, chapter 7; and Little, *Amazonia*, pp. 48-50.

¹⁸ Stanfield, *Red Rubber*, p. 206. An important original source is Roger Casement, *Putumayo. Caucho y sangre. Relación al Parlamento Inglés (1911)*, Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1985; W. E. Hardenburg, *The Putumayo. The Devil's Paradise*, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1921.

In 1907, this system — which often resembled slavery — was denounced in the British Parliament (the most important commercial rubber firm was registered in London). But the practice continued until 1920 or 1925, when Asian plantations were able to cultivate rubber at a lower cost.

In order to avoid slavery, many indigenous groups fled to the deep jungle or left their ancestral territories. For example, this was the case, with many families or clans in Peru, who were later misidentified as “non-contacted.” The Huaorani in Ecuador seem to have made a similar decision.

In contrast, the Záparo, the predominant group in the Upper Napo, experienced both processes: some emigrated, while others fell into the hands of the rubber merchants. Taking advantage of their migration, beginning in the 1870s, the Huaorani left their hiding places in the Tiputini River in order to invade the Záparo territory (from the Napo to the Pastaza river).¹⁹

In one way or another, it appears that the remaining ethnic groups in this area — Quichuas, Teteté, Cofán, and Siona-Secoia — participated as “enganchados” in rubber collection or in the emergent farms (livestock farms, cotton farms, etc.) which replaced rubber collection along the Napo river. But they avoided the worst abuses. When the rubber merchants left, these groups scattered over the areas that they currently occupy, and recreated a subsistence economic system that seemed “primordial” to the observers who arrived afterward.²⁰

Finally, it is worthwhile mentioning the missionary activities of this time period. In 1896, a group of Capuchin priests reached the Cofán town of San Miguel in order to establish a new mission among the indigenous people of the upper Putumayo. However, they had to leave in 1923 when a measles epidemic killed half of the population in a few months.²¹ The epidemic soon expanded to the Siona-Secoia and other groups, causing devastating effects to the indigenous population. Between 1869 and 1924, anthropologist Blanca Muratorio claims that 18 epidemics were registered in the official and Jesuit archives.²²

The Cofán people

At the time of the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors, the Cofán inhabited the flanks of the Cayambe volcano, probably in the vicinity of the upper Aguarico. Just like their neighbors, they were grouped in localized “clans” which included up to several hundred individuals directed by a leader.²³ Newson calculates their pre-Columbian population was around 100,000 people, but most of them rapidly fled from the Spanish invasion or were enslaved.

The Cofán, Coronado, and Omagua-Yété located nearest the sierra experienced more intense contact with Spaniards during the early colonial period. Some were allocated in encomiendas, larger numbers were enslaved, and others were brought under missionary control, although not for extended periods. In the 1620s maybe 500 were under the control of encomenderos at Alcalá del Rio and

¹⁹ Jorge Trujillo, *Enigmas Amazónicos*; Jorge Trujillo, “Colonización en la región amazónica ecuatoriana,” Muratorio, *Rucuyaya Alonso*, chapter 7; Paul E. Little, *Amazonia*, pp. 49-50.

²⁰ For a discussion of this phenomenon, see the essays published in William Balée, ed., *Advances in Historical Ecology*, Nueva York: Columbia University Press, 1998, mostly the articles by Anna Roosevelt and Laura Rival.

²¹ Scott S. Robinson, *Hacia una nueva comprensión del shamanismo Cofán*, Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1996, p. 30.

²² Muratorio, *Rucuyaya Alonso*, pp. 200-201.

²³ Newson, *Life and Death*, p. 85.

another 500 in the Jesuit mission of San Juan de los Omaguas. Nothing is known of the numbers existing in the surrounding region, but the fact that slave raiders were looking further afield to the Omagua, Abijira, and Encabellado suggests that local Cofán and Coronado populations must have been exhausted or at least fairly small.²⁴

Citing the Colombian historian Juan Friede, anthropologist Scott S. Robinson (who worked with the Cofán since 1968) states that they were forced to pan for gold in the Aguarico and San Miguel rivers. In 1560 another Cofán group attacked the Spanish miners and forced them to flee, freeing them.²⁵

However, epidemics and forced labor had a disastrous effect on the indigenous population. As mentioned earlier, by 1611 only around 15,000 Cofán survived.²⁶ The historian affirms that, in 1630 “of the estimated 28,000 Cofán, Coronado, and Omagua-Yété present at the time of the Spanish conquest, perhaps only 4,000 remained.”²⁷ By 1700, the three groups combined had only about 2,000 individuals.²⁸

Starting in the 1590s, the Cofán also confronted the Spanish missionaries. The Franciscan Fr. Pedro Ordóñez de Cevallos established eight villages with 4,000 indigenous people on the banks of the Aguarico River.²⁹ But these efforts were suddenly abandoned in 1611, when a missionary was assassinated by a Cofán group. Until the end of the XIX century, the indigenous communities in this area were only visited sporadically by the Franciscan priests located upstream in Colombia.³⁰

Apparently, the Cofán did not suffer the impact of the rubber “boom” as much as the groups located further east. However, from time to time, rubber merchants (probably from Colombia) arrived in order to demand latex in exchange for axes or fishing hooks.³¹

Even years later, they were not totally free. Robinson states:

... the sons of a rubber merchant returned to the upper Aguarico in order to establish an orchard in 1932, descending through the old path from the Carchi province in the Ecuadorian side and through the Carmelita Mission. This family established a highly profitable business of alluvial gold washing, first using Cofán forced labor and then importing Quichuas from Quijos in the southern Napo region. The Cofán were encouraged to wash gold in exchange for practical things such as shotguns, gunpowder, ammunition, hats, machetes, etc. payable each year. The amount of work invested in the “purchase” of these articles was never agreed upon or recorded. The white settler family set the conditions for the exchange, but after a while the Cofán did not want to work anymore under these conditions, as one of the settler’s sons told me. The Quijos were equally

²⁴ Newson, *Life and Death*, p. 332.

²⁵ Robinson, *Hacia una nueva comprensión*, p. 25.

²⁶ Newson, *Life and Death*, p. 114.

²⁷ Newson, *Life and Death*, p. 332.

²⁸ Newson, *Life and Death*, p. 333.

²⁹ Newson, *Life and Death*, p. 325.

³⁰ Robinson, *Hacia una nueva comprensión*, p. 25-32; Newson, *Life and Death*, pp. 325-326.

³¹ Alba Moya, *Ethnos. Atlas Etnográfica del Ecuador*, Quito: Proyecto de Educación Bilingüe Cultural, 2000, p. 110.

unsatisfied and eventually fled to the San Miguel River, where many of them live nowadays.³²

In the recent Ecuadorian ethnographic atlas, the researcher Alba Moya presents the following summary of the factors that hounded the small Cofán refuges:

In any case, the a'i [Cofán] experienced, during the rubber boom, a demographic catastrophe, primarily due to the crowding situation imposed on children and youngsters, as they were concentrated in educational institutions, which made them more vulnerable to diseases, especially measles, smallpox, and respiratory diseases. Terrified by these circumstances, particularly by the measles outbreak from 1923, the Cofán abandoned the town of San Miguel el Nuevo, founded in 1918 in the Teteyé river mouth, and searched; once again, in more isolated places. The majority settled in the Aguarico and in remote places of the San Miguel and Guamués.³³

In 1947, the protestant missionary David Cooper conducted a detailed survey —house by house— of the Cofán population. He counted 517 individuals on the Ecuadorian side of the border (some families also resided in Colombia).³⁴ The majority of the Cofán inhabited disperse hamlets or small towns along the river banks of the Aguarico, San Miguel and their tributaries. In both countries they lived as their neighbors from other ethnic groups: from hunting, shifting cultivation, and gathering of wild products.

As stated in Robinson, the subsistence economy still existed in 1968:

Nowadays, about 580 people speak and/or understand the Cofán language. They live in extended family groups, irregularly settled along both banks of the rivers and their tributaries. These towns, as I decided to call them, house from thirty up to one hundred people who live in homes bounded by marital ties. Normally, there is one shaman per each community. There are four towns in Ecuador along the Aguarico River: Caven, Duwino, Pusino, and Dureno, from east to west. Other four Cofán towns are located at both sides of the San Miguel river, which defines the border with Colombia: the towns of upper San Miguel, Santa Rosa de Sucumbíos, Abusié, and Conejo. Two of them are comprised of only three homes along the Colombian border³⁵

From the Cooper survey (1947) to the Robinson survey (1968), the Cofán population only increased at an annual rate of 0.55%, which is insufficient for guaranteeing their survival as an ethnic group. In contrast, after 1968, the growth rate reached 1.8%, almost equal to the national rate of 1.9%, calculated by the World Bank (see table).

This change was probably the result of the medical services that were available to many of the Oriente communities beginning in 1971 (the year in which the road between Quito and Lago Agrio was completed). This conclusion is consistent with the results of the recent investigation published by Professor Teodoro Bustamante and his collaborators at FLACSO, who found out that the health indexes in the Oriente often exceed the ones from other regions.³⁶

³² Robinson, *Hacia una nueva comprensión*, p. 32.

³³ Moya, *Ethnos*, pp. 110-111.

³⁴ Robinson, *Hacia una nueva comprensión*, p. 33.

³⁵ Robinson, *Hacia una nueva comprensión*, pp. 23-24.

³⁶ Teodoro Bustamante, editor, *Detrás de la cortina de humo*, Quito: FLACSO and Petroecuador, 2007.

Cofán Population, 1947–2001

Year	Population	Source	Annual growth rate (% from 1947)
1947	517	Cooper in Robinson, p. 33	--
1968	580	Robinson, p. 22	0.5
1997	627	Ruíz, “El pueblo Cofán”	0.3
1999	750	Fitton, low calculation ³⁷	0.6
1999	875	Fitton, medium calculation	1.3
1999	1000	Fitton, high calculation	1.8
2001	1044	INEC, Censo de Población y Vivienda	1.8

The Siona-Secoya people

The Siona-Secoya are descendants of the Tucano Occidental lineage, whose ancestors settled in the small tributaries of the Napo and Aguarico rivers in Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru. Nowadays, they have three main towns located in the river banks of the Aguarico and the Shushufindi. A fourth settlement is found inside the Cuyabeno Fauna Reserve.

According to the historian Newson, there were around 6000–8000 Siona-Secoya (called Encabellados back then) at the beginning of the colonial period, although the Jesuit chroniclers have exaggerated this number to a great extent.³⁸ During the XIX and XX centuries, they worked as laborers in the estates that extended along the Napo and its tributaries. The Siona and Secoya who escaped physical labor, were often “hooked” to gather rubber and other wild products.³⁹

At the end of the XIX century and beginning of the XX century, the Siona-Secoya suffered a series of epidemics that ravaged the region. One of the witnesses was the North American engineer W. E. Hardenburg, who traveled to the Siona territory in 1907, before publishing a very well known condemnation of rubber slavery.⁴⁰ The historian Michael Stanfield mentions other important outbreaks in 1889, 1890, 1895, 1901, and 1923.⁴¹

From 1973 to 1975, when visited by the anthropologist William Vickers, the Siona-Secoya population had been reduced to 374 people, including two Secoya groups that migrated from Peruvian territory between 1941 and 1974.⁴² At the end of 1982, according to the sociologist Jorge Uquillas (who was at the time a staff member of the agricultural reform group) the population had incremented to 414 people.⁴³ Since then, the population increased until reaching 750 people.⁴⁴

³⁷ Lori J. Fitton, *Is Acculturation Healthy? Biological, Cultural, and Environmental Change Among the Cofán of Ecuador*, Columbus: Ohio State University, Ph.D. thesis, 1999, p. 39.

³⁸ Newson, *Life and Death*, pp. 102-07.

³⁹ Vickers, “The Jesuits and the SIL,” p. 55; Moya, *Ethnos*, p. 69.

⁴⁰ Hardenburg, *Putumayo*, p. 92.

⁴¹ Stanfield, *Red Rubber*, pp. 72 y 90.

⁴² Vickers, “The Jesuits and the SIL,” p. 51-61 and “The Modern Political Transformation of the Secoya,” in Norman Whitten, Jr., *Millennial Ecuador*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003, pp. 46-72. See also his book “Los sionas y los secoyas. Su adaptación al ambiente amazónico, Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1989.

⁴³ Jorge Uquillas, “Informe para la delimitación de territorios nativos siona secoya, Cofán y Huaorani,” Quito: Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería, Comisión Asesora Interinstitucional, 1983, pp. 5-18; “Indian Land Rights and Natural Resource Management in the Ecuadorian Amazon,” in Theodore Macdonald, Jr., *Native Peoples and Economic Development. Six Case Studies from Latin America*, Cambridge: Cultural Survival, Inc., 1985, pp. 87-103.

⁴⁴ Vickers “The Modern Political Transformation of the Secoya,” p. 48; CODENPE - <http://www.codenpe.gov.ec/siona.htm>; <http://www.codenpe.gov.ec/secoya.htm>.

This increase seems to have occurred during the 1980s. According to the Vickers and Uquillas surveys, this was not the case before then: between 1973 and 1982, the population only increased by 1.1% annually, barely enough for guaranteeing their ethnic survival. But from 1982, citing Vickers data, the growth rate increased to 2.6% per year, above the national rate of 1.9%.

Siona-Secoya Population, 1973–2001

Year	Population	Source	Annual growth rate (% from 1973)
1973	374	Vickers, "The Jesuits and the SIL," pp. 51- 61	--
1982	414	Uquillas, "Indian Land Rights and Natural Resource Management in the Ecuadorian Amazon," p. 92.	1.1
1999	755	CODENPE, http://www.codenpe.gov.ec/siona.htm ; http://www.codenpe.gov.ec/secoya.htm	2.6
2000	750	Vickers, "The Modern Political Transformation of the Secoya," p. 48	2.6
2001	544	INEC, <i>Censo de Población y Vivienda</i>	1.3

The Huaorani people

From at least the mid XIX century, the Huaorani occupied an extensive territory (approximately 2 million hectares) between the Napo and Cononaco rivers. They lived in small family groups that periodically migrated inside a defined territory.⁴⁵ They cultivated their orchards, hunted some animal species, and gathered other resources from the forest.

Despite their isolation and their warlike reputation, there are good data regarding the Huaorani population. In 1958 two young woman from this group lived with missionaries from the Instituto Lingüístico del Verano (ILV) in Tihueno, located in the western border of the indigenous territory. Less than 20 years later, 85% of the Huaorani population (around 500 individuals) lived in Tihueno. It was estimated that only 100 people occupied the remaining ancestral land.⁴⁶

In 1976, the ILV realized that this was an unsustainable situation. The population continued to grow, lacked provisions and it was totally dependant on the foreign missionaries, and suffered periodic epidemics. The institute then relocated the Huaorani in 25 towns scattered over a "protectorado" granted by the Ecuadorian government. Even now the missionaries have close ties with these groups and provide them with medical services, boat engines, and other assistance.

According to the existing data, it seems that the Huaorani population has been growing since 1958. They are now distributed in 32 scattered towns; their annual growth rate reaches 2.2–3.2%. This situation is probably the result of better access to medical services and fewer internal conflicts.

⁴⁵ This description is based on the anthropologist Laura Rival work, *Hijos del sol* and *Trekking through History*.

⁴⁶ The most important source about the ILV and the Huaorani is the book by David Stoll, *Fishers of Men or Founders of Empire?*, London: Zed Press and Cultural Survival, 1981, pp. 278-318. Also see James A. Yost, "Veinte años de contacto: los mecanismos de cambio en la cultura huao," in Norman Whitten Jr., et al., *Amazonía ecuatoriana. La otra cara del progreso*, Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1989, pp. 261-286.

Huaorani Population, 1958–2001

Year	Population	Source	Annual growth rate (% from 1958)
1958	600	ILV cited in Rival, <i>Trekking</i> , p. 16	--
1980	658	ILV cited in Rival, <i>Trekking</i> , p. 16	0.4
1982	715	ILV cited in Rival, <i>Trekking</i> , p. 16	0.7
1990	1200	Rival, <i>Trekking</i> , p. 16	2.2
1993	1000	CONFENIAE	1.5
1999	2200	CODENPE, "Diagnóstico de la Nacionalidad Huaorani," http://www.codenpe.gov.ec/waorani.htm	3.2
2001	1534	INEC, <i>Censo de Población y Vivienda</i>	2.2

The Teteté and Sansahuari people

The Teteté appear in documented sources for the first time in 1913, when a superior Capuchin missionary calculated their population in 50 families settled in the confluence of the Singue and San Miguel rivers. Years later, a linguist from ILV was able to establish that their language was related to the Siona, within the linguistic family of the Tucano Occidental.

The last concrete account with regard to this group can be found among the documents of the Vicariato Apostólico del Aguarico, published in 1989⁴⁷. This entails an interview between Father Miguel Cabodevilla and Mr. Rogelio Tangoy, a former seismic exploration worker. Mr. Tangoy at that time could not remember the date in which he came upon a Teteté town, but it is known that petroleum exploration in that zone was terminated in 1967 or 1968.

This is the description of the Teteté settlement, according to Mr. Tangoy:

There were about ten big houses built on the ground; they were enclosed by fences made of guadua and they had clean patios. The inside of the houses was dark because the thatched roofs reached almost to the ground; there were many hammocks of chambira hanging and fires burning. We knew they were the Tetetes; there were many of them, but they didn't come near us; they wanted to steal some things from us but they never tried to attack us.⁴⁸

Various sources indicate that the Teteté were famous among the neighboring communities for their aggressiveness. For example José Martín Urure, a former capuchin missionary recounts that:

In my visit to the quichuas, cofanes and chusmas of the Aguarico river and its tributaries, in the year 1965, I had the opportunity to hear accounts, full of blood and attacks, which evidenced the existence of the famous teetetes, more fearsome than the aucas, who attacked the banks of the Río Napo. Footsteps, broken branches, remains of provisional dwellings, abandoned plantations, and even strange noises likely made by indigenous, that the hunters had seen and heard.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Vicariato Apostólico de Aguarico [compiled by P. Miguel Angel Cabodevilla], *Memorias de Frontera. Misioneros en el Río Aguarico (1954-1984)*, Quito: CICAME, 1989, p. 23.

⁴⁸ Vicariato Apostólico de Aguarico, *Memorias de Frontera*, p. 23.

⁴⁹ Vicariato Apostólico de Aguarico, *Memorias de Frontera*, p. 191.

In the early 1960s, according to the anthropologist Paul Little (based on an unpublished report from Jorge Trujillo), perhaps around 25 Teteté still existed.⁵⁰

Only three subsequent contacts are confirmed: In 1966, two capuchin missionaries traveled to a Teteté town, where they found the three aforementioned elderly persons (see page 2 of this report). In the early 1970s, a linguistic missionary from ILV was able to visit the same town – located 10 minutes by helicopter from the Cofán town of Dureno – where he confirmed that their language belonged to the Tucano Occidental family. Finally, in 1973, Orville Johnson, a missionary from ILV in residence among the Siona-Secoya, made a brief visit. A rigorous investigation of his story remains to be done.

Regarding the Sansahuari, no precise historical or anthropological reference has been found. However, Little located the Sansahuari oil well in the same area that he attributes to the Teteté.⁵¹ Therefore, it can be inferred that this is a sub-group or a hamlet of this same ethnic group.

The indigenous groups of the northeast in the Amazon context

The historian Jonathan D. Hill comments that: “If the rubber boom would have not declined so rapidly in the South American lowlands, it is doubtful that the native communities of this area would have survived.”⁵² In fact, an “ethno-genesis” period was triggered throughout the Amazon basin, during which the surviving groups reorganized themselves, occupied new territories, built new identities, and adopted other languages.

A key example, according to Hill, is found in the Quichua from the lower lands — an ethnic group composed of small surviving groups dispersed over a vast and almost empty territory:

In the Bobonaza-Pastaza basin, the Quichua emerged as a dominant language from a new multiethnic coalition of the Záparo, Canelos, Achuar, and Quichua, who soon learned to see themselves as a single community, the runa Canelos-Quichua.⁵³

The processes of ethno-genesis and ethnic regeneration were, in many cases, complemented by a demographic regeneration. The relative isolation from 1925 to 1970 seems to have acted as a barrier behind which the small communities could take refuge and get stronger.

In 1970, according to the French researchers Pierre and Françoise Grenard, there was a significant change in the demographic composition of the Amazon region. After studying the data from all the Amazon countries, they state that the small native communities started to grow.

We, therefore, have a total of 698,252 indigenous Americans settled in the Amazon basin. Perhaps this figure may seem too low; demonstrates in a brutal

⁵⁰ Paul E. Little, *Amazonia. Territorial Struggles and Perennial Frontiers*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 55.

⁵¹ Little, *Amazonia*, pp. 55 y 151.

⁵² Jonathan D. Hill, “Indigenous Peoples and the Rise of Independent Nation States,” p. 753 (my own translation).

⁵³ Hill, “Indigenous Peoples,” p. 741. This ethno-genesis process is described in various studies about the Ecuadorian Oriente. Besides Trujillo, see Blanca Muratiro, *Rucuyaya Alonso*; Udo Oberem, *Los Quijos. Historia de la transculturación de un grupo indígena en el Oriente ecuatoriano (1538-1956)*, Madrid: Memorias del Departamento de Antropología y Etnología de América, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Madrid, 1971; Paul E. Little, *Amazonia*, pp. 43-45; Theodore Macdonald, Jr., *De cazadores a ganaderos*, Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1997; and Norman Whitten, Jr. works cited in the attached bibliography.

way the drastic decline of the native population since the XVI century, when the population was calculated at 6,800,000 people. But this same figure indicates a drastic increase beginning in the 1950s. Even taking into account that there were few accurate censuses during that period, especially of the non-contacted groups, the increase did occur.⁵⁴

As noted, the Cofán, Siona-Secoya, and Huaroani population in the Ecuadorian Oriente followed this generalized trend.

Summary

A detailed review of the main historic and demographic sources regarding the northern Oriente yields the following conclusions:

- During the operations of the Texaco-Petroecuador Consortium, there was no incident that could be classified as genocide in Ecuador.
- On the contrary, the indigenous communities of the northeastern Amazon Region have grown at the same rate as the general Ecuadorian population.
- The growth rate of the Ecuadorian native communities follows the same general rates experienced since 1950 in the other countries of the Amazon basin. This would be an inexplicable fact if genocide would have occurred in Ecuador.
- Likewise, it is often argued that the contact between indigenous groups — especially the Huaorani — and the outside world represents “an important cause of death during the last two decades”. However, the population data analyzed herein do not support this conclusion or other similar allegations included in a variety of sources.⁵⁵
- During the colonial period, the indigenous populations of the Ecuadorian Oriente suffered the same demographic catastrophe as the other native groups in the Amazon basin. Of the 6,800,000 people who inhabited the pre-Columbian Amazon region, it is calculated that only 10% of their descendants survived the colonial period.
- Finally, the Teteté community seems to have collapsed during the 1940s or 1950s. The last documented contact between the Capuchin missionaries and a small group of Teteté took place in 1966, before the beginning of the petroleum operations in northeastern Ecuador. Regarding the Sansahuari, there is no accurate historical or anthropological reference concerning them.

⁵⁴ Pierre y Françoise Grenard, “Equatorial America,” no page number.

⁵⁵ Richard Cabrera, *Informe sumario del examen pericial*, Lago Agrio: March 24, 2008, Anexo P, p. 68 et seq.

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