

Chile. In addition, the author offers suggestive reflections on Chile's recent political history, which has been framed by intense mobilizations for rights and an unprecedented constitutional process, focusing on the ambivalent ways in which the middle classes have taken part in politics. In sum, this is a fascinating book for anyone interested in understanding how middle-class groups form their identity by participating in different markets and the ethical, symbolic, and political implications of such involvement.

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EXTRACTIVISM, INFORMALITY, AND THE COLOMBIAN GOLD BOOM

Shifting Livelihoods: Gold Mining and Subsistence in the Chocó, Colombia. By Daniel Tubb.
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Daniel Tubb examines gold mining in Colombia's Pacific coast rainforest at three levels: within the household, on small mechanized teams, and within corporations. Tubb also follows gold as it moves from the Chocó region's eroded riverbanks through many hands and markets to be transformed into different kinds of currency, laundered, and again banked. He also examines fictive gold or the use of so-called reserves and speculative futures to pump up stocks in companies with no intention to mine. In this sense, the title sells the book short; yet, Tubb's heart is clearly with the subsistence farmer-hunter-hawkers who pan gold close to home, people he lived with and learned from during fieldwork starting in 2010. Tubb chronicles how gold mining fit into their shifting livelihoods and how this changed with the gold cycle of the early 2010s.

Tubb centers on *rebusque*, a word with many connotations, from prospecting to street hustling. As a "shifting" gig, mining gold by hand in the world's wettest jungle requires strength, stamina, and skills, techniques passed down from the era of slavery in the case of Tubb's teachers. Tubb explains how tough it is just to pan for gold without letting it slip away, much less to locate paydirt in the jungle. Indeed, it is the facility at which the mostly Afro-Colombian families he lived with extract gold from minor diggings that shines through in Tubb's account. Household mining is a family affair, habitual if not casual, an extractive supplement enabling market participation. These part-time miners self-identify as *libres*, "free people," and Tubb argues that gold mining—when practiced on their terms—ensures freedom.

But Tubb is no romantic. He graduates to so-called small-scale mining, which entails tearing down trees and laying waste to large swaths of rain-soaked earth with backhoes

and hydraulic hoses in order to wash a few ounces of gold dust trapped by mercury in a sluice. A dozen men can accomplish in weeks what families could scarcely manage in several lifetimes. Tubb explains how cooperating with the so-called *retreros*, or excavators, entails a deal with the Devil, pitting family property claims against communal ones and guaranteeing environmental devastation, gold or no gold.

Yet, these small-scale miners are not all poachers as described by Tubb. They are ordinary folks, including locals. But most are migrants from Colombia's northern Antioquia Department. They work for wages and a cut of the production, but few such operations make money, which leads Tubb to explore how cocaine profits are used to buy gold abroad. This gold is then smuggled *into* Colombia to be presented as mine yields, an old trick. Tubb compares public records with fieldwork and is stunned by the scale of gold-for-drugs laundering. The final chapter treats speculative mining projects floated by foreign companies, which prove socially and environmentally consequential even when legal and political wrangling far outweigh gold extraction.

At all these levels, and from all these perspectives, from that of the riparian forest-dwelling family to the "all-seeing eyes" or satellite view of the transnational firm, gold plays different roles, and people tell different stories about it. Tubb shows how international price spikes drive periodic rushes and speculative bursts that produce multiple, cascading side effects, including resistance in several quarters, from Afro-Colombian and Indigenous locals to foreign environmental and peace activists. All the while, the great Atrato River bisects and drains the Chocó; the river was designated as a legal "person" in 2016.

Tubb writes with sparkling clarity, and he encapsulates big issues in brief biographical vignettes. He is gentle with technical matters, and adept at simplifying complex processes, a reflection of deep immersion in the business of mining (plus hunting, subsistence farming, and petty commerce). Nevertheless, when the book comes to what Tubb calls the dual-household economy vs. the cash (or rentier) approach to mining, the analysis thins. Instead of pushing into or against the works that he cites on similarly "ruined" spaces, Tubb prefers to counter popular suppositions about victims and perpetrators in the Colombian Chocó by offering close observations. This is a vital task, done well here. Actions that strike outsiders as self-defeating or illogical make sense at the local level. But this is true of many extractive situations and even of many ordinary livelihoods.

This is a book about a gold rush and yet it is not. It is about another pulse in a long series of pulses, a short cycle that coincided with myriad political currents just as fluid as global markets. High prices created urgency. Did they make history? Maybe gold does, maybe cocaine did, as Tubb hints. But so then do the mules and backhoes, the mercury and the diesel fuel, the Christmas lights and the jars full of bubble gum, the stacked-up speakers straining to drown out their generators, the wooden gold pans, the avocado trees, the peach palms, and of course, the guns and ammo. Chasing the wily *paca* with

hosts and the hunting dog Guapi, Tubb ably animates this sad and beautiful world of towering trees and personified rivers, a land of freedom born of slavery.

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