

ON THE TRAIL OF
LATIN AMERICAN BANDITS:
A Reexamination of Peasant Resistance*

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In his acclaimed synthesis of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, Alan Knight observed that “the social bandit’s career in Academe has somewhat paralleled his life under the greenwood tree. Introduced by Professor Hobsbawm, he was initially welcomed, even feted, and he put in many appearances in academic company; but then (inevitably, after such uncritical acceptance) some academics grew leery, and the recent trend—especially among experts—has been to qualify, de-emphasise and even deny his role.”¹

This essay will examine the prevailing critique of “social banditry” in Latin American studies, reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the recent literature. It will suggest that focusing too narrowly on Hobsbawm’s model, individual bandits, or bandit phenomena per se tends to remove Latin Americanists from broader, fresher discussions of peasant social action and mentality now underway for Europe, Latin America, and other Third World areas. Such comparative discourse can generate significant thematic and methodological issues that might promote a more conceptually integrated Latin Americanist scholarship on banditry and peasant resistance. In short, this essay will attempt in a modest way to respond to the challenging (and still unanswered) question posed by Friedrich Katz at a conference on rural uprisings in Mexico in the early 1980s: “What role should we assign to banditry in episodes of rural insurgency?”²

THE CRITIQUE OF HOBSBAWM’S MODEL OF SOCIAL BANDITRY

Eric Hobsbawm’s provocative, free-ranging examination of social bandits and other “archaic forms of social movement” first emerged in

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Latin Americanists have been extremely well represented in the wave of empirically grounded revisionist studies that followed Blok into print in the late 1970s and 1980s, although the Hobsbawm thesis still retains a number of staunch supporters, particularly in Latin America.¹² Billy Jaynes Chandler,¹³ Linda Lewin,¹⁴ Paul Vanderwood,¹⁵ Rosalie Schwartz,¹⁶ and Richard Slatta¹⁷ have most purposefully entered into the international debate on social banditry, endorsing Blok's core arguments and rejecting those of Hobsbawm. Vanderwood perhaps comes closest to affirming Carleton Beals's uncompromising assessment of the Latin American bandit, advanced in 1930, three decades before Hobsbawm first tackled the subject: "Despite popular sentiment the true nature of the bandit is not that of the social reformer. He is essentially selfish and has no fundamental interest in rectifying social ills."¹⁸

In contrast, Peter Singelmann, Benjamin Orlove, Lewis Taylor, and Alberto Flores Galindo have been somewhat more measured in their critiques of Hobsbawm's model. Indeed, the first three take pains to minimize the extent of disagreement between Hobsbawm and Blok.¹⁹ As Singelmann points out, "Both seem to suggest that social banditry contains elements of primitive protest insofar as it usually originates in acts of defiance, often spares the poor, and particularly as it is idealized in popular myths and ballads. At the same time, both authors agree that in its actual functioning banditry may be at least marginally integrated into an oppressive social structure and undermine class solidarity."²⁰ Ultimately, however, all four authors call into question the element of social protest, suggesting that more often than not, banditry represents an adaptation to, rather than resistance against, an exploitative regime and that in the process, it works to maintain that system.

Without question, the state-of-the-art critique of Latin American social banditry is Richard Slatta's recent anthology *Bandidos: The Varieties of Latin American Banditry*.²¹ It was intended to be "a major comparative testing of Hobsbawm's model" by a team of North American and Latin American historians and anthropologists who have done long-term research on bandit phenomena in a variety of postindependence regional contexts.²² Thus the volume stakes a claim to being the most comprehensive and sustained assault on the social bandit thesis anywhere in the world to date. In addition to "rounding up the usual suspects" (Vanderwood on nineteenth-century Mexico, Lewin and Chandler on the Brazilian *sertão*, and Slatta himself on the Argentine pampa), Slatta's distinguished line-up includes Erick Langer on the Bolivian Andes, Louis Pérez on Cuba under U.S. occupation, Gonzalo Sánchez and Donny Meertens on Colombia during the *Violencia*, and Miguel Izard and Slatta on the Venezuelan *llanos*. In addition, Latin American banditry and the Hobsbawm thesis have been examined from the perspective of modern criminological theory (Dretha Phillips) and through the distorting lens of

Hollywood films (Allen Woll). In a manner unfortunately all too rare in such multi-authored works, Slatta skillfully shapes these diverse treatments into a coherent, highly readable volume by contributing a crisply written introduction and a concluding chapter that never let Hobsbawm too far out of their sights.

Although the contributions to *Bandidos* reflect some range of thematic concern and interpretive nuance, collectively the volume constitutes a strong brief against the historical importance of social banditry in Latin America. Moreover, Slatta's editorial presentation of the new scholarship frames the case in even stronger terms: at most, genuine social bandits represented rare and colorful footnotes to history. Slatta reports that he and his posse of social scientists "have galloped in hot pursuit of bandits across several Latin American countries and through two centuries" and that the bandits they have unmasked in the criminal archives "carry visages different from the ideal type postulated by Hobsbawm."²³

Perhaps most important (and echoing the earlier findings of Blok and other European historians), the Latin American revisionists argue that "the close ties of class and camaraderie that theoretically bind social bandits and peasants together do not surface in the Latin American context."²⁴ These analysts come to other conclusions:²⁵ that the rural masses used banditry more for economic gain than for prepolitical protest (see particularly the essays by Vanderwood, Chandler, and Lewin); that when other avenues were open to them, peasants often chose those options over banditry (Langer, Pérez); that much banditry occurred in sparsely populated frontier regions lacking a settled peasantry (Izard and Slatta, Slatta); and that shrewdly negotiated elite-bandit alliances were more common than the "fundamental rage" characterizing the prepolitical peasant-bandit solidarity posited by Hobsbawm (Vanderwood, Lewin, Chandler, Sánchez and Meertens). As a corollary to this last point, the revisionists emphasize that often these elite-bandit alliances originated in longstanding family feuds—not broad class injustices—in a society where blood vengeance and individual defense of family or clan honor were common imperatives.²⁶ Based on this extensive comparative research, Slatta concludes, "The social bandit fails to emerge as a distinctive historical type in Latin America."²⁷

Slatta's posse has not returned empty-handed, however: "More types of banditry existed in Latin America than are captured with a simple dichotomy of just social bandits and common criminals."²⁸ Indeed, most of the suspects that the volume's contributors have rounded up would seem to lie somewhere between the "noble robber" and the common thief. Two other "clear types," the "guerrilla bandit" and the "political bandit," are featured prominently in the scholars' line-up.

According to Vanderwood (and, elsewhere, Christon Archer and William Taylor), bands of "guerrilla brigands" operated in Mexico during

the independence era and throughout much of the turbulent nineteenth century. As rugged individuals who were more opportunistic than patriotic or communally solidary, they profited from the partisanship and chaos of war.²⁹ Izard and Slatta note that similar behavior characterized South American contemporaries, the Venezuelan and Colombian *llaneros* and the Argentine *gauchos* who fueled a seemingly endless cycle of *caudillaje*, *montoneras*, and populist risings.³⁰ More recently, Rosalie Schwartz has advanced much the same thesis for understanding the political gangsters who played a pivotal role in the outcome of the War for Cuban Independence.³¹ Moreover, a substantial literature exists positing a similarly opportunistic role for the *klephts*, *haiduks*, Cossacks, and other rather amorphous, free-ranging bands of peasants and pastoralists who operated during the dynastic struggles and wars of national liberation against the Turks that convulsed southern Europe, the Balkans, and the Russian steppes from the fifteenth century onward.³²

Still, one wonders whether revisionist scholars of banditry may not be splitting hairs in attempting to distinguish their “guerrilla bandits” from Hobsbawm’s “haiduk” variant of social brigand. Like the guerrilla bandits, Hobsbawm’s haiduks were collections of ambitious social marginals who possessed only a rudimentary political consciousness but often drew the support of local rural communities. As Hobsbawm explains, not only did haiduks frequently liberate peasants (from Turkish or Spanish rule) but their very existence proved “that oppression was not universal, and vengeance for oppression was possible.” These “roving bands of outlaws, raiders and Cossacks [operated] on the turbulent frontier between state and serfdom on one hand, the open spaces and freedom on the other.”³³

Another “distinctive variation” of Latin American banditry touted by Slatta, “political banditry,” is plagued by similar conceptual problems. It is not clear exactly what is meant by “political,” or how “political banditry” actually improves upon Hobsbawm’s existing model. For example, Pérez shows in his essay on early-twentieth-century Cuba that traditional elite factional politics can touch off broader forms of protest, particularly social banditry—a point that would seem to support Hobsbawm’s thesis and run counter to the volume’s central thrust.³⁴ The link between political turmoil and social banditry is further explored in Sánchez and Meertens’s complex analysis of peasant participation in the Colombian *Violencia*. In this chapter and a more extensive study, these authors argue convincingly that partisan political conflict, led (and often effectively manipulated) by elite political configurations, confounded peasant solidarity, stripped bands of peasant insurgents of their legitimacy, and ultimately reduced once-popular bandits to criminal status on the margins of national and regional political life.³⁵

But if Slatta’s “political” rubric is merely meant to underscore the

relational aspects of banditry, to emphasize the shifting nature of alliances and power balances that engaged and often transformed banditry, his quarrel with Hobsbawm may well be more rhetorical than real. Hobsbawm's writings frequently address the dynamic, often contradictory dimensions of the politics of banditry. For example, in sketching the rise and fall of Eliodoro Benel, an early twentieth-century Peruvian bandit chief and regional political boss, Hobsbawm involves the reader in "a complex combination of political and personal rivalries, vengeance, political and economic ambition, and social rebellion."³⁶ Here and elsewhere, Hobsbawm undercuts the claims of his critics who would exaggerate his argument and minimize his efforts to situate the social bandit within the broader political economic context. He observes, "It is a mistake to think of bandits as mere children of nature roasting stags in the greenwood." Rather, they were closely involved with the market and political arena.³⁷

This observation prompts Hobsbawm to reflect on the essential ambiguity of the brigand's political status:

He is an outsider and a rebel, a poor man who refuses to accept the normal roles of poverty, and establishes his freedom by means of the only resources within reach of the poor, strength, bravery, cunning and determination. This draws him close to the poor: he is one of them. . . . At the same time the bandit is, inevitably, drawn into the web of wealth and power, because, unlike other peasants, he acquires wealth and exerts power. He is "one of us" who is constantly in the process of becoming associated with "them." The more successful he is as a bandit, the more he is *both* a representative and champion of the poor *and* a part of the system of the rich.³⁸

Thus, while emphasizing social bandits' ties with the poor, Hobsbawm clearly appreciates what revisionist scholars and the historical bandits themselves knew only too well: that bandits' long-term profit and survival also meant forging some kind of relationship with the elite.³⁹

In another respect, the revisionists' discussion of the "political" dimensions of banditry registers an important criticism of Hobsbawm's model by effectively puncturing Hobsbawm's conceptualization of banditry as "prepolitical" or "archaic." Once again, Sánchez and Meertens's rich work on the Colombian *Violencia* is particularly instructive. Here was a case where—for reasons having less to do with the peasantry's supposedly limited forms of consciousness and organization and more to do with the tactics and power of the dominant classes—a highly politicized form of armed agrarian struggle regressed into predatory banditry.⁴⁰ According to Hobsbawm's model, the rise of more sophisticated political activity in Colombia should have resulted in the demise of banditry, not its recrudescence. I will return to this point in a fuller critique of Hobsbawm's notion of "prepolitical" forms of protest in light of other recent literary trends.

Without doubt, the practitioners of the new social history, by

revising—or at least fleshing out—the portraits that Hobsbawm originally sketched on the wanted posters, have made a signal contribution to understanding the elusive phenomena of Latin American banditry. These revisionists argue with some force that historians should not be reductionist in interpreting Latin American criminality,⁴¹ that banditry is a complex, multivariate phenomenon governed by sociopolitical, cultural, and ecological determinants.

Indeed, in a fundamental way, the essays in the Slatta volume challenge Hobsbawm's conceptualization of the countryside, which was inspired primarily by his familiarity with Mediterranean and European societies. Hobsbawm's model of social banditry seems most plausible when applied to remote rural sectors of enduring peasant communities and distant lords. By contrast, the revisionists collectively reconstruct a Latin American social matrix that is considerably more heterogeneous and complex. These scholars demonstrate that such a varied landscape of agrarian structures and social relations embraces diverse groupings of rural cultivators who have had recourse to a broad range of social options.⁴²

It is hinted throughout the Slatta collection, and explicitly invoked in the piece by Chandler, that Marxist historian Hobsbawm's failure to fully appreciate such historical diversity may be related to his ideological motivation for examining bandits:

He was not, it appears, much interested in the field for its own sake, in the actual lives of bandits, in the complexities that plague historians and frequently render generalizations problematic. His purpose, it seems, was to establish a history of revolutionary activity. Leftist intellectuals in the mid-twentieth century, losing faith in Marx's industrial workers as vehicles of revolution, began searching for a broader tradition. Hobsbawm contributed bandits, but they did not fit well. They did not realize that they were social rebels; they sought no basic changes in the structures of their societies. Hobsbawm recognized this, but since they practiced violence against property and lives, they were, in his view, making a political, or rather a "prepolitical," statement. This conclusion did not proceed so much from a sound factual base as from fitting skimpy and often questionable data into a preconceived framework.⁴³

These are rather strong words, but it is also significant that Hobsbawm has been challenged in similar fashion by independent leftist critics. They accuse him of burdening his account with a teleological, unilinear view of working-class history that presumes that every form of resistance must ultimately be superseded by a more "modern" form until a mature Marxist-Leninist expression is achieved.⁴⁴ Yet apart from the question of whether banditry can be fitted into a broader tradition of social protest, revolutionary or otherwise (the main theme to be addressed in the second half of this essay), Hobsbawm and his defenders have at times been rather cavalier in attributing "social content" to the diverse operations of bandits over the centuries. Some writers have facetiously juxtaposed

biographies of individual bandits with generalized depictions of societal injustice in a way that precludes determining whether the author has made a case for social banditry or committed the crime of ecological fallacy. Certainly, a line must be drawn between “avengers” and genuine thugs among the poorer classes, who prey upon the have-nots more than they threaten the haves. If no distinction is made, Chandler warns, historians will find themselves on a slippery slope where all banditry might ultimately be deemed social, “involving as it does, relations between people.”⁴⁵ Thus the attempt in this revisionist literature to establish a more rigorous standard for interpreting social protest provides a useful corrective to the excesses of the Hobsbawmians.⁴⁶

The new social historians have also made an important methodological contribution. More problematic than Hobsbawm’s ideological predisposition (although perhaps related to it) is his choice of historical evidence. Hobsbawm’s use of literary sources and popular tradition, however creative (and pragmatic, given the chronological and global sweep of his undertaking), does not compensate for a lack of documentary evidence in national and regional archives. All sources have their limitations, and Hobsbawm’s critics are correct in suggesting that many of the heroic folktales and ballads that he relied on may reflect the poor’s idealized aspirations rather than historical reality. Moreover, as maintained by Slatta for Argentina, Lewin and Chandler for Brazil, and by Schwartz and French scholar Maria Poumier-Taquechel for Cuba during the independence era, such literary sources frequently reflect the views of romantic, ideological, or commercially motivated urban writers rather than peasant folk tradition.⁴⁷ In an earlier article on northeastern Brazil, Lewin masterfully traces the often complex cultural and political histories of such “popular traditions.” For example, the Brazilian *literatura de cordel* (literally “clothesline books,” or chapbooks) promoting the legend of bandit-hero Antônio Silvino was originally generated by dissident, déclassé elites with their own agendas. Only later were such cultural motifs appropriated and refashioned by the popular classes and their left-wing ideologues.⁴⁸

As will be shown, “official” police and judicial records are freighted with bias and present problems of their own, but their extensive use by revisionist writers provides an essential complement to the “popular” sources utilized by Hobsbawm. As Barrington Moore pointed out some thirty years ago, an adequate strategy for researching banditry would require a blend of both types of sources and substantial cross-checking to mitigate the limitations of each.⁴⁹ Unlike police and criminal records, popular traditions have limited value in documenting the actual behavior of bandits (or other historical actors). They nevertheless hold great potential for examining contending definitions of crime and the social, political, and cultural contexts that shape such discourses of power.⁵⁰

A QUALIFIED DEFENSE OF HOBBSBAWM'S MODEL

As valuable as the new revisionist scholarship is, it evidences certain limitations. In arguing that the social bandit has failed to emerge as a distinctive historical type and in discounting the possibility of real solidarity with the rural masses, these revisionist writers have surely gone too far. To paraphrase Knight, the social bandit may no longer deserve to be feted, but it is certainly premature to show him the door.⁵¹

In *The Mexican Revolution*, Knight himself makes a strong case for the importance of banditry as a significant "surrogate form of popular protest" during the Porfiriato and at key junctures of the Revolution of 1910. He asserts that at certain times and places, "the kinship between social banditry and popular rebellion was . . . so close that the two can scarcely be differentiated."⁵² In arguing for the social content of banditry particularly during periods of revolution and social upheaval, Knight lends support to Hobsbawm and also echoes a strong tradition in European social history. For example, according to Richard Cobb, during the French Revolution, "banditry was never purely criminal; it always took on political [that is, social] overtones."⁵³

For Knight and a host of British and European social historians, the problem is not whether social banditry existed but rather how to distinguish it from other localized, often inchoate forms of rural protest.⁵⁴ Like the revisionists, but unlike Hobsbawm, Knight does not argue that bonds of class were essential in cementing peasant-bandit relationships. Constructing a concise "ecology of banditry and popular protest," Knight shows that in revolutionary Mexico, such "horizontal" ties predominated in areas where free villagers enjoyed great numerical strength and often mobilized agrarian insurgencies (like Zapatismo) that subsumed and successfully incorporated bandit elements. Elsewhere, however, in Mexico's remote sierras and in underpopulated expanses where haciendas and *ranchos* dominated free villages, vertical divisions took precedent over horizontal ones. There social bandits like Pancho Villa and Pascual Orozco might lead entire communities against enemy "outsiders," often cultivating and relying on the support of local elites.⁵⁵

In the process, aspiring bandits might well enhance their own social and economic position, in the manner of Vanderwood's "profiteering bandits" of the nineteenth century. Typically, they became the new revolutionary *caciques*, and in some cases powerful *caudillos*. Yet Knight stops well short of Vanderwood's characterization of banditry as an almost classic expression of individual enterprise and "modern" initiative. The Mexican bandit may not have been a Robin Hood, but he was no closer to being a Henry Ford: "It is mistaken to regard most bandit careers as the result of deliberate, individual choice, a release from boredom into excitement, rather than as an existence compelled by circumstances. . . . Most

bandits . . . had banditry thrust upon them."⁵⁶ For Knight, a measure of upward mobility, although not particularly forward-looking, was eminently compatible with social banditry in Mexican peasant society, provided that the bandit kept faith with the shared struggle against intruding authority and common foes.

In other words, it is the existence of "popular support," whether articulated through class or clientelist bonds, that Knight regards as the defining characteristic or hallmark of social banditry. His insistence on the pervasiveness of this support, at least during revolutionary episodes, places him at odds with the general interpretation advanced by the revisionists. According to Knight, popular support "gave bandits their 'social' function, assimilated them . . . [in]to rural protest movements more generally and . . . set them apart from their professional colleagues."⁵⁷ But Knight adds the important caveat that such popular support was "relational" rather than inherent and could change without any necessary alteration in the bandits' activities: "Just as prerevolutionary, professional banditry, overtaken, swallowed up, and thus politicised by the popular revolution, thereby acquired 'social' attributes, so too social banditry could be professionalised (or 'de-socialised') as the revolution ebbed, leaving it stranded without the popular support and sympathy which maintained and defined it. . . . The social bandit of 1911 became the terrorist of 1917; the social bandit of one valley crossed the mountains and terrorised another."⁵⁸

Here Knight reestablishes some common ground with the revisionists. Despite editor Slatta's rather uncompromising conclusions, several of his anthology's regional case studies document close ties between bandits and peasant communities (e.g., Pérez's essay on Cuba during the "Chambelona" insurrection and Sánchez and Meertens's study of the Colombian *Violencia*),⁵⁹ while others at least recognize that given the proper historical circumstances, no "insurmountable barriers" stand in the way (see Chandler, Langer, and even Iazard and Slatta).⁶⁰ Like Knight's work, these essays demonstrate implicitly the relational, circumstantial character of social banditry. Collectively, they lend much support to Knight's contention that perhaps more than underlying motives, levels of political sophistication, or even methods of operation, it was popular support—however transitory (as in the case of the *Violencia*)—that most determined the "social" content of banditry. Such support, in turn, depended on the larger historical conjuncture—on the correlation of forces that frequently lay beyond the control of bandits and the peasantry.

Rosalie Schwartz, however, injects a note of caution regarding Knight's conceptualization of popular support. If social banditry merely represents a relationship between a bandit and the rural population, do historians not risk diluting the concept to a point where it loses its value as an analytical category for problems of popular protest? For example,

Schwartz wonders whether in a peasant area where intervillage or inter-familial feuds are common, each side boasts its own “social bandits” who commit depredations against their factional rivals.⁶¹ Alberto Flores Galindo’s work on the bandits of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century coastal Peru—predominantly poor negros and *castas* who spared blacks but regularly robbed *serrano* Indian communities as well as the rich—raises much the same question in interethnic terms.⁶² This thorny problem of gauging communal or popular support for banditry (and other forms of rural social action) will be addressed in the second half of the essay within a broader conceptual framework.

**BEYOND THE MODEL: PEASANT CONSCIOUSNESS,
BANDITRY, AND REBELLION**

If the revisionists go too far in categorically indicting Hobsbawm’s model, they may not go far enough in other respects in their explanation of bandit phenomena. Historians have now reached a point where continued focus on the Hobsbawm thesis—once a useful centering device and a prod to empirical investigation—has become constricting. As suggested above, recent attempts in the Latin American field to distinguish between professional and social bandits and among subcategories of social bandit have frequently led to rather inconclusive taxonomic debates.⁶³ In sum, it is time to get on with exploring the broader issues related to the social history of rural crime.

Indeed, in other areas of the world, social science treatments of banditry have moved beyond the Hobsbawm model and even beyond criminality *per se*. Discussions of bandits regularly proceed within the context of larger themes, such as forms of peasant resistance and social control, which now involve a more sophisticated examination of peasant consciousness. Moreover, the application of semiotics and discourse analysis to both “official” and “popular” sources has greatly expanded the utility of each.

Unfortunately, much of the new revisionist literature on Latin American banditry, while documenting the relationships that individual bandits forged with elite actors and encouraging Hobsbawm’s followers to attend to such linkages, has tended to dismiss “the peasant connection,” particularly the rural population’s attitudes and perceptions toward bandits. This tendency has resulted because revisionists have relied mostly on police reports and other official sources, which are heavily biased and rarely focus on the questions relating to group composition and motivation that need to be answered in order to determine whether or not a particular gang or individual was truly an exponent of popular protest (a “social bandit”). Consequently, the revisionists have made their main contribution to an “elite historiography” of Latin American banditry, a

history of individual bandits and their incorporation into, or subordination by, the world of power and interests. Hobsbawm has consistently asserted in a provocative general manner the primacy of bandits' connection with the peasantry, but he has never empirically documented either the substance or the mental realm of that partnership. Thus in order to write a more "popular" history of Latin American banditry, scholars must begin, as one rural historian recently suggested, "to integrate the lower sectors back into bandit studies by going beyond the simplistic dichotomy between elite collaboration and peasant rebellion that some students of banditry, intent on demolishing Hobsbawm, are posing."⁶⁴

How can social scientists place peasants at the center of bandit studies without marginalizing elites? And what inspiration and models does recent comparative discourse provide? The remainder of the essay will tap several currents in the global literature on peasant social action and mentality in an effort to identify promising thematic and methodological departures for research on Latin American banditry. Particular attention will be given to two broader themes: first, how the relationship between banditry and the law (or the way in which social groups define criminality and perceive social deviance) provides a window on forms of social control and popular resistance in the countryside; and second, how banditry and other strategic peasant options reflect the dynamic larger social environment.

In essence, the newer conceptualizations of banditry and related social phenomena, which are only beginning to be applied to Latin America, are guided by the assumption that greater attempts must be made to address social behavior from the perspective or "consciousness" of the participants themselves. Consciousness becomes the central theme "because it is not possible to make sense of the experience [of peasant action or resistance] merely as a history of events without a subject."⁶⁵ A second assumption is that forms of peasant consciousness are enmeshed in the dynamic process of history, shaped by identifiable social and political forces, rather than being the product of an ontologically "pre-political" mentality. The social historians' task is to locate the sources and methodological tools needed to decode "popular knowledges"—that is, to make sense of the aspirations and moral criteria that inform social action.⁶⁶

But to acknowledge peasants as the conscious subjects and, in a real sense, the makers of their own history, one need not make inflated claims about the "sophistication" of peasant politics. Although modalities of peasant resistance were not "spontaneous" or "unthinking" as Hobsbawm suggested, they were often inchoate and diffuse. They frequently aimed to destroy or undermine, actually or symbolically, the dominant class's authority but proposed no blueprint for its replacement. Yet this tendency does not place them outside the political realm. Indeed, peasant resistance was all about politics—but popular, rather than elite, politics.

Despite their rejection of Hobsbawm's subpolitical interpretation of social banditry, exponents of this new approach to peasant protest and mentality share with him a fundamental concern with forms of oppression and control that are never absolute and are always contested. Ranajit Guha, an Indian social historian and theorist influential in this emerging tradition that he and others refer to as "subaltern studies," sketches in broad strokes the thematic contours of the new approach:

The oppression of the peasantry and the latter's revolt against it figure again and again . . . not only as intermingled matters of fact but also as hostile but concomitant traditions. Just as the time-honored practice of holding the rural masses in thralldom has helped to develop codes of deference and loyalty, so has the recursive practice of insurgency helped to develop fairly well-established structures of defiance over the centuries. These are operative in a weak and fragmentary manner even in everyday life and in individual and small-group resistance, but come into their own in the most emphatic and comprehensive fashion when those masses set about turning things upside down and the moderating rituals, cults and ideologies help no longer to maintain the contradiction between the subaltern and superordinate at a non-antagonistic level. In their detail of course these larger structures of resistance vary according to differences between regional cultures as well as between styles of dominance and the relative weights of dominant groups in any given situation. But since insurgency with all its local variations relates antagonistically to this dominance everywhere . . . , there is much to it that combines into patterns cutting across its particular expressions.⁶⁷

Guha's research deals with peasant revolts in colonial India, but he has compared his data with the vast literature on European peasants and attempted to identify the "common forms" of peasant consciousness that underwrite protest and insurgency. In the process, he has incorporated banditry into a broader, distinctly political spectrum of peasant protest, which places the element of class at its core. Although Guha refers in passing to "everyday" forms of resistance at an individual or small-group level—livestock theft, pilfering, arson, and sabotage (offenses often grouped together in standard notions of banditry)—he does not systematically examine such everyday phenomena in his major writings. Nor does Guha concern himself with more complex twentieth-century revolutions in which peasants played a pivotal role because such analysis would greatly transcend local agrarian class relations and mentalities.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Guha argues that both peasant insurgency and certain kinds of rural crime have an "inversive function"—they turn the social order upside down—a quality that has occasionally led authorities (and historians who utilize official sources) to mistake peasant insurgency for rural crime. Guha contends that a sharp increase in rural criminal activity and violence (including forms of social banditry), which occurs frequently in times of scarcity, usually signals a "lowering threshold of the peasant's tolerance" of his conditions of life and often inaugurates a peasant re-

volt.⁶⁹ During this so-called “twilight phase,” a “switching of codes” takes place among the peasantry, a cognitive rite of passage that transforms bandits or criminals into insurgents.

Ordinarily, Guha explains, “the social order derived its stability from a firm and traditional if tacit agreement between the rulers and the ruled on a mutually acceptable code of dominance and subordination.”⁷⁰ Why, then, do conservative peasants, who are usually so peaceful and perhaps at other times have even been preyed upon by bandits, ultimately join them in rebellion? To begin with, Guha points out (and here he is as influenced by Michel Foucault as by Hobsbawm), the peasant’s own perception of crime differs greatly from that of his class enemies (the landlords, bosses, and government officials): whereas they would tend to lump all forms of defiance of the law as crime, the peasant is normally tolerant of crimes of indigence and often regards acts of defiance against authority as justifiable protest. During the “twilight phase,” when codes switch,

peasants tend to invest disparate attacks on property and person with new meaning and rephrase them as a part of a general discourse of rebellion. Consequently, each of these acts acquires an ambivalence: wired at the same time to two different codes—the code of individualistic or small-group deviance from the law where it originates and that of collective social defiance which adopts it—it bears the twin signs of a birth-mark and a becoming. It is precisely this duplex character which permits it to be interpreted one way or the other depending on the interpreter’s point of view.⁷¹

Thus, Guha suggests, the “official mind” of the state, as reflected in the police and judicial records that serve as the basis for much of the existing revisionist historiography on banditry and rebellion, might be inclined to view and most certainly would portray such social phenomena as criminal deviance. By contrast, peasant rebels (and probably historians who are able to read such official sources critically and thereby “decode” peasant consciousness) would tend to interpret such behavior as clear-cut social protest.

Here Guha and the “subalternists” wrestle constructively with the unresolved definitional problem that lies at the heart of bandit studies and has often muddied the debate between Hobsbawm and his critics.⁷² Rather than attempt to distinguish bandits from social bandits and speculate on the relative incidence of each “type,” Guha performs what he regards to be a logically prior task: addressing the nature of the category itself, particularly the circumstances surrounding its application and perception in different sectors of society. Here his analysis reinforces the work of anthropologists like David Moss, Paul Winther, and Deborah Poole, who are concerned with the genesis and maintenance of social and symbolic boundaries in relation to banditry and other criminal phenomena.⁷³ Such work not only taps a venerable Anglo-Saxon literature on the

sociology of deviance, particularly the interactionist theory of labeling, but also draws inspiration from the recent linguistic turn in critical inquiry and the social sciences associated primarily with French scholarship.⁷⁴

Thus, Guha and others have argued, scholars play the state's (and the dominant classes') game when they define banditry solely along traditional legal lines—as revisionist scholars of Latin American and global banditry have been wont to do.⁷⁵ Invariably, such writers have identified bandits according to some variation of the following common denominator: groups of men who attack and rob, typically to steal property or rustle livestock.⁷⁶ Yet, as Moss has observed, while states have traditionally applied the term to indicate rather precisely defined legal offenses, in practice they have consistently expanded or transformed the notion of banditry to meet specific political needs or challenges. In this sense, the term *banditry* has been used “not to designate a particular offense, but to group together a set of offenses, some of which may over time appear in or disappear from the set.”⁷⁷ Thus much like the modern concept of “terrorism,” “banditry” became more a part of the “meta-language of crime” than a specific crime itself. It was used in this manner by the state to “mark” certain kinds of violent or potentially violent behavior by “dangerous classes” in society. Indeed, even banditry's etymological origins (coming from the Latin *bannire*, meaning to banish) suggest this process of exclusion, in which a boundary was created between the bandit and society (the process is cast in even bolder relief in the case of the analogous term *outlaw*).⁷⁸ Consequently, Guha and others contend, it is important to maintain the distinction between the social label “bandit” and the events it signifies. The actions of “bandits” may often be difficult to distinguish from those of other criminals and rural insurgents, but the label itself has often served at strategic junctures to crystallize images, recast allegiances, and mobilize public sentiment. In the hands of the state, the label has been employed to “normalize deviant behavior” (that is, to “regulate defiant behavior”), thus depriving it of legitimacy. In the hands of insurgents, who have broken with the rules and interests served by such labeling and have set about inverting them, the label itself has been refashioned into a badge of honor.⁷⁹

Guha's provocative thesis and methodology deserve to be tested in Latin American and other rural contexts. At a minimum, Guha challenges historians to reexamine their characterizations of bandits as well as their handling of official sources. His caveat that modalities of resistance vary according to differences in regional culture and structures of domination cannot be emphasized too strongly. For example, despite its comparative dimension, Guha's work focuses on India, whose highly exploited but village-based peasantry still had substantial cultural resources and tactical mobility during the nineteenth century under the British Raj. Many other groups of peasants have had far fewer cards to play, and hence the

progression from banditry to generalized rebellion was often beyond the realm of possibility. Such was certainly the case for many of Latin America's tightly controlled estate-based or plantation-based societies, where "routine" or "everyday" forms of resistance were more feasible.⁸⁰

Indeed, it may be that Guha's analysis of peasant insurgency takes too little account of the sectionalism of peasants and rural workers. As C. A. Bayly, one critic of the "subaltern studies" approach, has pointed out, "Down almost to the very bottom of society every subaltern was an elite to someone lower than him."⁸¹ Nevertheless, stressing the agency and relative autonomy of peasants, as Guha and the "subalternists" have done, has the virtue of curtailing the more mechanistic and abstract tendencies in agrarian historiography. Yet Guha and his colleagues run the risk of exaggerating the peasantry's historical propensity for rebellion and insurgency. As Bayly cautions, "It is not at all clear that resistance, let alone violence, is a defining characteristic of the poor or exploited. This may be an unfortunate fact, but it is not one that historians can ignore."⁸²

These reservations notwithstanding, a fruitful comparative discussion appears to lie in the offing. Guha's semiotic analysis of elite and peasant discourses on rural insurgency would seem to support the recent findings of British social historians who have sought to refine Hobsbawm's original model of social banditry. Examining crime and society in eighteenth-century England, these historians have identified a variety of smugglers, poachers, armed foresters, and rioters, who are said to represent intermediate types on the spectrum of social protest, sharing similarities with "social bandits" and "agrarian rebels" but identical with neither.⁸³ Nevertheless, as E. P. Thompson points out, "all of these actions were . . . seen by the authorities within one common blur, as outrages."⁸⁴ Yet, although the state classified the perpetrators according to a familiar and convenient code, the evidence shows that the common people who often sheltered and supported them did not regard them as "criminals."⁸⁵ After the experience of reading official criminal records, replete with references to "bad characters" and "criminal elements," these British historians warn that it is deceptively easy to appropriate contemporary labels of "deviance" and criminal "subculture."⁸⁶

Although these Indian and British scholars have resisted the pull of the official mind, their warnings regarding the pitfalls of official sources might have been better heeded by the revisionist historians of Latin American banditry, particularly Slatta and his colleagues. None of his anthology's contributors discuss the challenges that official sources pose. Instead, they invoke or assume their analytical superiority over Hobsbawm's folkloric materials and report their documentary findings straightforwardly. A "balanced handling" of sources seemingly mandates little more than the checking of problematic literary and folk materials against authoritative police and judicial records.⁸⁷

It is therefore not surprising that these official sources occasionally seem to command the writers' own views of peasant protest. For example, when editor Slatta observes that in Cuba during World War I, "elite-led political revolt . . . quickly degenerated into banditry," he not only misinterprets the thrust of Louis Pérez's more sensitive portrayal of what had become a popular grass-roots insurgency but also sounds eerily like the U.S. consul, whose contemporary report referred to forces that "have now degenerated into groups of bandits headed by notorious characters having no political significance."⁸⁸ Scattered references to "social deviance" and criminal "subcultures" throughout the collection underscore not only the authors' reliance on official sources but also the likelihood that occasionally their voices may have been allowed to merge with those of the contemporary officials who prepared the criminal reports. Indeed, Dretha Phillips's essay suggests that "a theory of subcultures" may be particularly fruitful for future criminological research on Latin American banditry.⁸⁹

The value of official sources as a staple of historical research is beyond dispute. They provide a corrective to the bias found in oral and written folklore, and in terms of sheer volume and accessibility, they overwhelm it. The discourse on peasant insurgency is predominantly a discourse of power, an outcome attributable to literacy levels as well as to the vested interests of the state and the dominant classes of society in monitoring gestures of defiance of authority.

How, then, do social historians tap into a consciousness of protest and insurgency when access to it is often impeded by a discourse of social control and counterinsurgency? Guha and other students of peasant consciousness argue that the task is challenging but not insurmountable. Apart from critically reading folkloric sources (which contribute to our knowledge about popular attitudes toward "crime" or resistance), historians can gain access to a peasant discourse of insurgency that is often embedded in the official documents themselves. First of all, peasant consciousness makes its presence felt directly in a variety of ways, mainly in the reporting of insurgent messages and proclamations that are intercepted by the authorities and in the personal testimonies of peasants interrogated by the police or the courts. But such documentation is fraught with interpretative problems, as William Taylor, Allen Wells, and I have discussed elsewhere.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, because this kind of documentation was gathered to assist the state in controlling diverse forms of social protest, its usefulness in that regard seems a measure of its authenticity as a window on peasant consciousness.

This consciousness is at times validated more subtly by key indices within elite discourse. Often, words, phrases, occasionally even extended passages of official documents are devoted to indicting characterizations of the perpetrators of rural violence and unrest as well as to

denunciations of their deviance from the legal order. Read carefully, these passages can frequently mark out the difference between two mutually contradictory norms or perceptions of society.⁹¹ Thus often by reversing the terms of elite discourse, one implicitly picks up on the terms of peasant discourse. For example, references to a “bandit village” might not describe a nest of thieves but indicate instead that much of the population of a pueblo is resisting state forces. Repeated mention of “regional contagion” might reveal more about solidarity and enthusiasm among a variety of groups within an area than about the rapid spread of deviance. Similarly, official references to “lawlessness” might tell more about collective defiance of what had come to be regarded as bad laws or administrative practices than about rampant, wanton criminality. As Guha has trenchantly observed, “The pressures exercised by insurgency on elite discourse force it to reduce the semantic range of many words and expressions, and assign to them specialized meanings in order to identify peasants as rebels and their attempt to turn the world upside down as crime. Thanks to such a process of narrowing down it is possible for the historian to use this impoverished and almost technical language as a clue to the antonymies which speak for a rival consciousness.”⁹²

Need it bear repeating, neither Guha nor I is suggesting here that the “official mind” of the state consistently “‘misreads’ the codes locked up in collective behavior.” To do so, as Eric Van Young correctly observes, would be to “paint the State and its servants as slavering idiots, an assumption no more reasonable for this group than for peasants and other rural protesters.”⁹³ I would agree with Van Young that, more likely, a “*realpolitik* of reflexive regime self-defense” operated here, for in defining as crime what it knew to be protest, the state sought to strip the insurgents’ actions of any claim to political legitimacy. Indeed, the use of the “standard manipulationist vocabulary”⁹⁴ (such as “brigand-infested lairs” and “criminal contagion”) for the purpose of criminalizing popular protest may have been particularly necessary in the Latin American context. As Richard Morse and others have shown, doctrines of immanent popular sovereignty dated from at least the sixteenth century and grew in tandem with a highly porous absolutist state.⁹⁵ Criminalization of popular protest and resistance was therefore essential to nullify protesters’ claims to political legitimacy under the aegis of such doctrines.⁹⁶

BEYOND THE MODEL: EVERYDAY FORMS OF PEASANT RESISTANCE

Recently, James Scott, Michael Adas, and other Asianists have helped to expand further the conceptual framework for studying peasant protest and consciousness. They have focused their attention on “everyday forms of peasant resistance” that make no headlines and rarely even

surface in official administrative records.⁹⁷ Like Guha's findings, their principal data come from Asian societies, but their conceptual frameworks are typically informed by wide reading in the social history of Europe and the Third World. Also like Guha, they posit a continuum of popular resistance "ranging all the way from petty individual acts focussed on the here-and-now to highly organized, durable movements of broad ideological purpose."⁹⁸ Yet whereas Guha gives greatest attention to peasant rebellions and the liminal, ambiguous historical junctures that usher them in, these scholars are primarily concerned with social forms and mentalities at the beginning of the continuum—with peasant resistance that proceeds without overt protest and with little or no organization. Collectively, they argue that such "routine" resistance has historically lain at the core of peasant politics. As Scott observes, "Much, if not most, of the prosaic but constant struggle of the peasantry to thwart those who seek to extract labor, grain, taxes, rents, and interest from them takes forms which cannot satisfy [the] definition of a social movement."⁹⁹ Although it is impossible to do justice to these authors' rich, historically nuanced arguments in a few paragraphs, by focusing primarily on Scott's work (the most visible and polished statement of what now constitutes a vital current in peasant studies), I can suggest how their analysis of "everyday forms of peasant resistance" can contribute valuable insights to a broader conceptualization of Latin American banditry.¹⁰⁰

Scott argues on historical grounds for a broadly inclusive definition of peasant resistance, which he understands as "any act . . . intended either to mitigate or deny claims made on [peasants] by superordinate classes . . . or to advance peasant claims (e.g., to land, work, charity, respect) vis-à-vis these superordinate classes." Such a definition makes no requirement that resistance take the form of collective action, let alone overt protest. Moreover (and here Scott's judgment has already begun to generate controversy even among students of "everyday resistance"), the intent to resist is "built into the definition."¹⁰¹

Casting the problem in these terms, Scott argues that most peasant resistance has always proceeded on a day-to-day basis, outside the bounds of organized movements. By "everyday forms," Scott means the full range of "ordinary weapons" that have been used for centuries by peasants and other relatively powerless groups such as slaves:¹⁰² at a minimum, foot-dragging, dissimulation, and false compliance; and somewhat more aggressively, slander, poaching, theft, arson, and sabotage. Collectively, these forms of resistance are "Brechtian" (or better, "Schweikian") forms of struggle, the "small arms fire of the class war."¹⁰³ Such tactics share certain common traits: they require little planning, represent forms of self-help, and typically avoid any direct (and likely costly) confrontation with powerful elites or state authorities. Their execution requires only a modicum of room to maneuver and a supportive climate within the

peasant community. As Scott and resistance scholars observe, these historical conditions have obtained minimally in even the most oppressive plantation societies, while free peasant communities—even “open” stratified ones—have often benefited from “deep subcultures of resistance to outside claims.”¹⁰⁴

Scott concedes that “the noisier events of agrarian history”—peasant jacqueries and rebellions, as well as extensive bandit operations (social and otherwise)—were almost invariably doomed to eventual defeat, even massacre. He argues, however, that “this more clandestine, undeclared war beneath the surface” had much greater success over the long run in mitigating claims by the powerful on the peasantry.¹⁰⁵ After all, Scott contends, given peasants’ pragmatic and truly conservative bent, “the goal . . . of the bulk of . . . resistance is not to overthrow or transform a system of domination but rather to survive—today, this week, this season—within it.”¹⁰⁶ Or, as Hobsbawm aptly observed, the aim of peasants has always been to “work the system to their minimum disadvantage.”¹⁰⁷

Such “routine resistance” is little noticed in official state records because it does not generate the programmatic remarks, violent encounters, and public demonstrations that tend to rivet the state’s attention. Indeed, the goal of the perpetrators is precisely to avoid drawing attention to themselves. Moreover, state bureaucrats have little interest in publicizing incidents of peasant insubordination because doing so would acknowledge unpopular policies and the limits of hegemony in the countryside and perhaps risk dismissal or something worse.¹⁰⁸ With good reason, then, do Scott and his colleagues argue that the historiography of class struggles has been “statolotrous.” Minor, doomed revolts that have left an impressive paper trail continue to preoccupy social historians disproportionately to their impact on class relations, while “unheralded acts of flight, sabotage, and theft that may be of greater long-run significance are rarely noticed.”¹⁰⁹ Thus the priorities of agrarian history must now be recast. Such routine forms of resistance were probably more effective, certainly safer, and particularly appropriate for a diverse peasantry scattered across the countryside. Peasants, who are often isolated from outside allies and internally differentiated according to relations of production, have historically confronted formidable obstacles to mobilization, let alone to organized collective action.¹¹⁰

Theft, the more generic and neutral term that Scott prefers to banditry, dovetails with his focus on individuals and the smallest, most informal of groups. It is therefore a crucial component of his schema of everyday forms of peasant resistance. A closer examination allows teasing out some of his thesis’s most interesting and controversial notions.

In itself, rural theft is “unremarkable,” a regular feature of agrarian life whenever and wherever the state’s agents cannot or will not control it.

Yet, "when such theft takes on the dimensions of a struggle in which property rights are contested," Scott views it as resistance.¹¹¹

Herein lies the difficulty. How do scholars know when class struggle lies at the heart of the matter? For example, poaching was the crime of choice among the poor in England and France for centuries. Emile Zola observed accurately in *The Earth* that "every peasant had a poacher inside of him." Eighteenth-century poachers were intent on pressing their own traditional agrarian rights when they resisted the gentry's exclusive claim to property in wild game, but they also had an abiding interest in rabbit stew. Nineteenth-century Maya villagers felt the loss of common lands and resented the trampling of their *milpa* by the cattle of neighboring haciendas. Yet their rustling also put meat on the table.¹¹² In each case, which of these inextricably fused motives should analysts assume was the controlling one? For Scott, more is at stake than petty semantics because on this question hinges the interpretation of a variety of activities that, he contends, "lie historically at the core of everyday class relations."¹¹³

As has been shown, British social historians have made a strong case for the political and class meaning of certain collective forms of poaching. Indeed, it would be difficult to assign a clear-cut economic motive to the "Hampshire Blacks," armed foresters who traversed the eighteenth-century countryside administering folk justice to the English gentry. "Blacking" could hardly be interpreted in terms of subsistence needs or involvement in the illicit venison trade because the deer the Blacks killed were often left to rot in the parks. Without entirely dismissing economic factors, E. P. Thompson has concluded that "other [political] motives were dominant."¹¹⁴ In this regard, Guha's interpretation that such popular acts of violence were invested with an inversive function, undermining the gentry's authority by destroying its symbols, appears to be right on the mark. But what of the many "free-lance" actions that the Blacks precipitated by poachers, venison dealers, smugglers, and others with whom the Blacks had no direct contact? Clearly, on our spectrum of peasant resistance, the more an action shifts away from crime toward rebellion, the more it is marked by political rather than economic intentions. But the problem of common acts of theft remains to be resolved.

Scott makes an impressive effort to wrestle with this thorny problem. Essentially, he defends such individual (or small-group) acts of theft as peasant resistance even when it is difficult to test for intent or definitively establish social approval. Moreover, acts of theft-as-resistance need not necessarily be directed at the immediate source of elite appropriation. Because the perpetrator's objective is typically to meet pressing household needs in as safe a manner as possible, Scott argues that the act of resistance may likely follow the path of least resistance.¹¹⁵

These are controversial propositions. Do such self-interested, informal episodes constitute genuine acts of political struggle by subordi-

nate classes? Scott's advocacy is often spirited and generally compelling. Regarding the issue of "immediate self-interest" as opposed to "principled collective action," he argues vigorously that whether one is talking about peasant rebellions or petty theft, "to ignore or relegate to some lower realm the self-interested element in peasant resistance is to ignore the determinate context of peasant politics. We need assume no more than an understandable desire on the part of the peasant household to persist . . . to identify the source of its resistance."¹¹⁶

Indeed, Scott points out that the social historian is unlikely to penetrate much further on the question of motivation. Everyday resistance depends for its effectiveness and safety on secrecy and the appearance of conformity. He also contends that "intentions may be so embedded in the peasant subculture and in the routine, taken-for-granted struggle for subsistence as to remain inarticulate." In other words, just as "the fish do not talk about the water," so peasants themselves may not be able to determine clearly which of the two intimately related motivations—subsistence or resistance—is the more powerful for them.¹¹⁷

Ultimately, in the absence of abundant documentary or oral evidence, historians must assess the local setting and infer intention (that is, peasant consciousness) from the social behavior itself. Where the material interests of the dominant class are directly in conflict with those of the peasantry (as in issues of access to land and water, rents, wages, and employment), acts of rustling and theft against the haves by the have-nots can be presumed to be resistance. But Scott's insistence on the presence of resistance even in cases where the act of theft is not directed at the peasant's immediate landlord or employer is obviously more problematic. Resistance here is easier to justify where evidence exists of significant regional participation or a mood of popular complicity—such as apparently occurred in eighteenth-century England, India under the Raj, and nineteenth-century Prussia and Corsica with the massive poaching of wood. Such supporting evidence, however, is generally rare.¹¹⁸

Scott seems on firmer ground in questioning the superiority of organized, collective action (presumed by liberal and Marxist scholars alike) over forms of individual or small-scale self-help. He points out that organized political activity is primarily the politics of elites, who have traditionally monopolized institutional skills in rural societies: "It would be naive to expect peasant activity to take the same form." Moreover, rural options and responses, including theft, have historically been limited by the prevailing structures of control and repression: "More than one peasantry has been brutally reduced from open, radical political activity at one moment to stubborn and sporadic acts of petty resistance the next." In short, Scott and other resistance scholars are justifiably leery of allowing the structure of domination to define what is and is not a legitimate form of resistance.¹¹⁹

Scott argues that theft and other routine forms of peasant resistance are fundamentally popular because they tap into a folk culture that underwrites, legitimates, and even celebrates them. Thus while separate acts of resistance proceed in the absence of formal organization, they represent more than an aggregate of individual actions. Here, too, an elite conception of organization derived from institutionalized settings provides little understanding of social action in small rural settlements with vital informal networks and structures of ritual and community.

Several of Scott's Asianist colleagues are reluctant to go as far as he does on the related questions of intent and popular support. While all concur that intention is crucial in identifying everyday resistance, significant debate continues as to what is required to identify motivation or exactly how one distinguishes "routine resistance" from a variety of survival strategies. For example, Scott's flat assertion that resistance is whatever peasants do to deny or mitigate claims by appropriating classes or to press their own claims vis-à-vis those dominant classes includes a broader range of activities than Christine White or Brian Fegan are prepared to grant in their work on rural social action in Vietnam and central Luzon (the Philippines), respectively.¹²⁰ Fegan argues that resistance requires not only the intention to withhold services from powerful appropriators but also that fellow peasants concur that it is right to do so, a level of consensus that cannot always be presumed. Benedict Kerkvliet, who has also worked with Tagalog villagers in central Luzon, similarly underscores the need for a popular conception of justice to underwrite acts of resistance, but he stops short of demanding the consensus required by Fegan. Kerkvliet argues with Scott that it is naive to expect such an embracing consensus in modern "open" peasant communities where class contradictions are rife.¹²¹ In an interesting development, historian Michael Adas's position on "avoidance protest" (his own term for "routine" forms of resistance) has also recently moved closer to Scott's rather broad understanding of intent. Whereas Adas once required documentary proof akin to the proverbial "smoking gun," insisting that such protests have detrimental consequences known by both the resisting peasants and their elite targets, he is now more comfortable reconstructing motivation circumstantially, through an in-depth analysis of the surrounding context.¹²²

Adas and Andrew Turton highlight the significant methodological task of specifying as finely as possible the structures of domination if the routine forms of resistance embedded within them are to be identified and assessed. Adas emphasizes the need to conceptualize "whole" social, political, ecological, and ideological systems "rather than concentrating on peasant conditions and responses to vaguely delineated and caricatured elites."¹²³ Inspired by Foucault, Turton cautions that this task of "specification" requires attention not only to institutional and physical

forms of control but to the exercise of power in manifold local “capillary forms of domination,” which include more subtle practices of intimidation and cooptation that are often accomplished through surveillance and the labeling of “deviant” behavior. Yet like Guha, Turton contends that the strategic application of physical and discursive forms of power by the dominant classes engenders analogous (“capillary”) forms of struggle—a kind of “microphysics of resistance.”¹²⁴

The argument by Scott and these other Asianists that routine forms of resistance, such as theft and rustling, drew support from solidary bonds even within internally differentiated peasant communities raises questions regarding Erick Langer’s and Slatta’s flat assertion that Latin American banditry was invariably a “weaker strategy,” a tactic of last resort. They argue that unlike mestizo areas, which lacked strong corporate identities and were prone to banditry, structurally cohesive Indian communities typically opted for rebellion when litigation and other non-violent strategies (including migration) failed to stem elite encroachment and abuse.¹²⁵ Only painstaking microhistorical research (of the kind that Langer, Benjamin Orlove, and Deborah Poole¹²⁶ have done for the Bolivian and Peruvian Andes) will resolve this larger question of peasant options and strategies across time and regions. But certainly, less drastic and more routine forms of protest woven into long-term patterns of pragmatic resistance, while challenging to document,¹²⁷ should inform conceptualization of the problem.

Steve Stern insists on this point in a recent essay formulating methodological suggestions for the study of peasant resistance and consciousness in the Andean world:

Only by asking why, during what period, and in what ways earlier patterns of “resistance” and defense proved more compatible with and “adaptive” to the wider structure of domination, and perhaps even its partial legitimation, do we understand why resistance sometimes culminated in violent collective outbursts against authority. . . . In some cases “resistant adaptation” may have included occasional acts of violence, and the necessary analysis would therefore include study of transformations in the uses of violence, rather than imply a pure or simple transformation from nonviolent to violent forms of resistance.

Thus rebellion, when seen in this context, becomes “merely a short-term variant within a long-term process of resistance and accommodation to authority.”¹²⁸

Certainly, peasants’ recourse to routine forms of resistance, including theft and rustling, or to more coordinated acts of banditry and rebellion depended at any given juncture on a variety of exogenous factors that transcended peasant strategies and cultural resources. Such external factors included the state’s capacity for social control and enforcement as well as strategies of appropriation by the state and the dominant classes. Adas’s work on south and southeast Asia during precolonial and colonial

times complements the essays in Stern's recent edited collection on the Andean world by providing a wealth of documentation on how state power and elite repression strongly influenced peasant consciousness and tactical options.¹²⁹ Adas's work is particularly valuable in showing how the character of Asian banditry was dramatically transformed as the colonial state consolidated itself. As state power advanced, large-scale bandit operations were increasingly perceived by the authorities as potential political threats and were severely persecuted. Full-time professional gangs then gave way to a proliferation of "part-time avengers." Because they kept a lower profile, were not harassed by the state, and did not have to prey on villagers in the neighborhood, these "part-timers" could more easily maintain their accustomed roles in the peasant community. This conclusion leads Adas to observe that social banditry may indeed have been more a part-time or even a one-shot activity than the full-time career that Hobsbawm suggests, a shrewd insight that lends nuance to Hobsbawm's venerable model.¹³⁰

Why, then, should scholars necessarily assume that peasant villagers would eschew theft and banditry for rebellion? As noted, analysts like Guha and Adas argue plausibly that some forms of banditry shared the same inversive function as revolt and often evolved into it. Hobsbawm himself recognized "the significant coexistence of banditry with more ambitious or general movements of social insurrection."¹³¹ Following the logic of Scott's argument, one would expect to find something of an escalation in protest forms, from the least to the most risky. After all, peasants did not take risks easily, and the overriding goal remained survival. Pursuit of this goal might require more dramatic and violent strategies that could lead peasants far beyond individual and small-scale robberies, assaults, and other routine measures of resistance. Yet Scott argues persuasively that peasants ordinarily prefer ameliorative, incremental strategies to insurgency or bold revolutionary claims.¹³² After all, merely by "working the system to their minimum disadvantage," peasants have often been afforded opportunities to thwart the material and symbolic claims of superordinate classes.¹³³ Not surprisingly (and like the higher profile "bandits" who also issued from their social milieu), peasants' efforts have been routinely denigrated in elite discourse. Such descriptions as "pilfering," "truculence," and "deceit" have all been used to "label . . . the many faces of [routine] resistance."¹³⁴

Nevertheless, Scott, Adas, Stern, and other students of "everyday forms of resistance," "avoidance protest," and "resistant adaptation" (the nomenclature varies with the author) are all careful to emphasize that resistance is not merely whatever peasants do to survive. Most of the time, they accommodate and adapt. Moreover, when survival comes at the expense of other peasants, appropriation by the dominant classes is aided, not resisted. Scott views the extent to which peasants are reduced

“to purely ‘beggar-thy-neighbor’ strategies of survival” as central to a social system’s hegemonic capability: “Certain combinations of atomization, terror, repression, and pressing material needs can indeed achieve the ultimate dream of domination: to have the dominated exploit each other.”¹³⁵ Here Scott and other students of routine resistance would support the position taken by several of the revisionist scholars of banditry: that modern Latin American history provides ample, well-documented evidence of peasant bandits who profited handsomely by leeching on their own class, frequently in alliance with local elites or the state or both. But the incidence of such behavior does not negate what these scholars regard as another powerful and perhaps ultimately deeper current running throughout agrarian history: the persistent, day-to-day efforts of peasants to defend their fundamental material and physical interests and to reproduce themselves.

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

This essay has attempted to expand existing analytical frameworks for studying Latin American bandit phenomena. Unfortunately, as has frequently been the case in Latin American social history, conceptual and methodological developments in other fields and disciplines have filtered rather slowly into the literature on Latin American banditry.¹³⁶ Latin Americanists are still debating in earnest the merits of Hobsbawm’s model of social banditry twenty years after its more mature statement, and more than a decade after British social historians began to distinguish among various forms of “protest crime.”¹³⁷ Meanwhile, newer innovative approaches to the broader themes of peasant resistance and consciousness, emanating largely from other Third World agrarian contexts, have only slowly begun to make an imprint on the research agenda.¹³⁸

The new perspectives offered by Ranajit Guha and the “subalternists” on the one hand and by James Scott and students of everyday resistance on the other deserve critical reading and testing by Latin Americanists. Both approaches reiterate that forms of peasant resistance must not be understood in essentialist terms but historically. Peasant political strategies were “traditional” in the sense that their roots could be traced back in time and they emerged from long-standing, but hardly static, relationships to the land and systems of production. By no means were they “archaic” in the sense of being outmoded or prepolitical. Moreover, together with the more established literature in British and European social history, such new literary currents underscore the methodological as well as conceptual possibilities that the study of crime and resistance continues to offer for a more adequate social history of Latin America from below.

Nevertheless, dangers inhabit an approach that attempts to gener-

alize about social trends and class tensions largely on the basis of criminal phenomena. As the recent "revisionist" mood in British social history indicates, criminal data can be notoriously unreliable. Chronic under-reporting of certain crimes renders such evidence highly problematic as a barometer of social life or class dynamics. Moreover, an obsession with "protest crime"—actions in defense of peasant moral economy—risks relegating "normal" crime "to the status of unintelligible counterpoint."¹³⁹

Similar cautions should be entertained by students of Latin American agrarian societies. Indiscriminately equating poorly documented, self-interested acts of theft and destruction of property with resistance risks blurring the distinctions between crime and protest to the point where neither serves as a useful analytical category. If resistance is to be inferred from the social context, historians should be prepared to make a compelling, if not gilt-edged, case. In this regard, several of the Latin American revisionist critiques of Hobsbawmian social banditry make convincing historical arguments, particularly Lewin's and Chandler's studies of the Brazilian sertão. Like their British counterparts, empathetic Latin American historians should guard against the temptation to exaggerate confrontations between large landowners and the laboring classes, perhaps excluding in the process middle sectors that were at once particularly vulnerable to actions against property and well-placed to broker or actually lead them.¹⁴⁰

Bandit studies will advance as a more nuanced social history of the Latin American countryside continues to emerge. By focusing on the internal organization of the rural sector and its links with external loci of power, the best revisionist work demonstrates how an interest in bandits contributes to a better understanding of rural communities and vice versa. Still, one has to wonder to what extent Hobsbawm's seductive but monochromatic portrait of a traditional peasantry seized by "fundamental rage"—a depiction inspired largely by Mediterranean experience—has served to delay serious inquiry into a variety of social themes that historians of Latin American banditry are only now beginning to investigate.

For example, in addition to documenting a rather diverse set of social backgrounds for the region's most visible bandit chieftains,¹⁴¹ scholars are beginning to reassess the social composition of brigand gangs. In the process, they are challenging Hobsbawm's notion that bandits were recruited disproportionately from the ranks of the rural unemployed or underemployed and were typically "young and single or unattached."¹⁴² Ethnohistorical research on the social fabric and political culture of village and hacienda communities in Mexico and the Andes has begun to reveal the active participation of older smallholding peasants with dependents in a variety of bandit operations. Such studies have also raised new questions about the role of women, families, gender relations, and wider networks of kinship and patronage in banditry.¹⁴³ Frequently, such exten-

sive factional networks facilitated bandit operations and alliances in towns and cities, blurring the conventional distinction between rural and urban life.¹⁴⁴ Only when these leads are tracked down by the next generation of bandit scholars and particularly when issues of gender, household, and faction are more successfully integrated into studies of banditry and rural social action will Latin American historians really be able to speak with any degree of authority or nuance about “peasant moral economy” (or “rational choice”) and “subcultures of resistance.”¹⁴⁵

Finally, Latin Americanists need to know more about the development of judicial systems across the region, as well as about the state’s historical relationship with superordinate classes in general. Might it be an exaggeration to reflexively identify criminal law and the courts with a ruling class that is viewed as a mirror image of the criminal classes, such that law-as-social-control invariably confronts crime-as-social-protest?¹⁴⁶ Does “limited autonomy of the state” only apply in twentieth-century contexts?¹⁴⁷ Even if the law predominantly performs a hegemonic function, historians need a more sophisticated analysis of its relationship to other state functions and agencies, as well as to groups and institutions in civil society.¹⁴⁸ In other words, even as we ponder the intriguing conceptual formulations of writers like Guha and Scott, we must guard against sociological generalizations and learn more about the distribution of power, the nature of the state, and the role of law and the courts in the recent Latin American past. An adequate social history of bandits and of peasants in general will be crafted only when a history of protest and resistance from below is effectively integrated with a history of power and interests from above.¹⁴⁹ Hobsbawm, for one, is heartened by such an expansion of the research agenda. Thirty years after the publication of *Primitive Rebels*, he observed, “the serious historical study of banditry is only just beginning.”¹⁵⁰

NOTES

1. Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1:353–54.
2. Friedrich Katz, “Rural Uprisings in Mexico,” manuscript, 1981.
3. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester, Engl.: Manchester University Press, 1959), esp. 13–29; and Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (New York: Pantheon, 1969; rev. ed., 1981).
4. For a critical discussion of these variants, see Linda Lewin, “The Oligarchical Limitations of Social Banditry in Brazil: The Case of the ‘Good’ Thief Antônio Silvino,” in *Bandidos: The Varieties of Latin American Banditry*, edited by Richard W. Slatta (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), esp. 67–69, 91 (quotation). Lewin’s essay was originally published in *Past and Present*, 82 (Feb. 1979):116–46. Hobsbawm also posited a third, less clearly defined variant of social bandit, the haiduks or primitive guerrilla fighters. Haiduks were groups or entire communities of free armed men who became involved in—and often led—movements for national liberation, typically in frontier or peripheral zones. Their relevance to the debate on Latin American banditry is discussed in a subsequent section of this article.

5. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 5.
6. The quotation comes from Billy Jaynes Chandler, "Brazilian Cangaceiros as Social Bandits: A Critical Appraisal," in Slatta, *Bandidos*, 100.
7. Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 132 (all citations from this work refer to the 1981 revised edition).
8. Stendhal as cited in Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2d rev. ed. in 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 2:745.
9. Slatta, *Bandidos*, "Introduction," 2; and "Conclusion," 191, 196.
10. Two paradigmatic illustrations of this pervasive Latin American tradition in Peru convey a sense of the genre: Alberto Carrillo Ramírez, *Luis Pardo, "El Gran Bandido": vida y hechos del famoso bandolero chiquino que acaparó la atención pública durante varios años* (Lima: n.p., 1970); and Enrique López Albújar, *Los caballeros del delito* (Lima: Juan Mejía Baca, 1936; 2d ed., 1973).
11. For the now-celebrated 1972 debate, see Anton Blok, "The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14, no. 4 (Sept. 1972):494–503 (quotation, 496); and Hobsbawm's "Reply" in the same issue, 503–5. Blok went on to develop his critique of social banditry in *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village, 1860–1960* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), esp. in chaps. 1 and 5. Other notable revisionist studies include Pat O'Malley, "Social Bandits, Modern Capitalism, and the Traditional Peasantry: A Critique of Hobsbawm," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 6, no. 4 (July 1979):489–501; David Moss, "Bandits and Boundaries in Sardinia," *Man*, n.s. 14 (1979):477–96; Richard White, "Outlaw Gangs of the Middle Border: American Social Bandits," *Western Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (Oct. 1981):387–408; *Banditry, Rebellion, and Social Protest in Africa*, edited by Donald Crummey (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books, 1986); John S. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece, 1821–1912* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Ruth Pike, "The Reality and Legend of the Spanish Bandit Diego Corrientes," *Folklore* 99, no. 2 (1988):242–47; Stephen Wilson, *Feuding, Conflict, and Banditry in Nineteenth-Century Corsica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Phil Billingsley, *Bandits in Republican China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988); Cheah Boon Kheng, *The Peasant Robbers of Kedah, 1900–1929: Historical and Folk Perceptions* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Claire B. Potter, "Guarding the Crossroads: The FBI's War on Crime in the 1930s," Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1990.
12. For example, Rui Facó, *Cangaceiros e Fanáticos*, 2d ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1965); Amaury de Souza, "The Cangaço and the Politics of Violence in Northeast Brazil," in *Protest and Resistance in Angola and Brazil*, edited by Ronald L. Chilcote (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 109–31; Robert J. Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest: "The Sacred Right of Self-Preservation"* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); Jean Meyer, *Esperando a Lozada* (Guadalajara: El Colegio de Michoacán and CONACYT, 1984); Louis A. Pérez, Jr., "Vagrants, Beggars, and Bandits: The Social Origins of Cuban Separatism, 1878–1895," *American Historical Review* 90, no. 5 (Dec. 1985):1092–1121; Pérez, "The Pursuit of Pacification: Banditry and the United States' Occupation of Cuba, 1889–1902," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 18, pt. 2 (Nov. 1986):313–32; and Pérez, *Lords of the Mountain: Social Banditry and Peasant Protest in Cuba, 1878–1918* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989). Braudel's treatment of brigandage in Spain and the Mediterranean world during the sixteenth century also supports Hobsbawm's argument. See Braudel, *The Mediterranean* 2:734–56.
13. Billy Jaynes Chandler, *The Bandit King: Lampião of Brazil* (College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1978); "Brazilian Cangaceiros as Social Bandits," in Slatta, *Bandidos*, 97–112; and Chandler, *King of the Mountain: The Life and Death of Giuliano the Bandit* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1988), esp. chap. 12.
14. In addition to the work by Linda Lewin cited in note 4, see Lewin, "Oral Tradition and Elite Myth: The Legend of Antônio Silvino in Brazilian Popular Culture," *Journal of Latin American Lore* 2 (Winter 1979):157–204; and Lewin, *Politics and Parentela in Paraíba: A Case Study of Family-Based Oligarchy in Brazil* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987).
15. Paul J. Vanderwood, *Disorder and Progress: Bandits, Police, and Mexican Development* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981); see also the special issue, "Social Bandit-

- ry and Spanish American Independence," which Vanderwood edited and introduced, in *Bibliotheca Americana* 1, no. 2 (Nov. 1982).
16. Rosalie Schwartz, *Lawless Liberators: Political Banditry and Cuban Independence* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1989).
 17. Richard W. Slatta, "Rural Criminality and Social Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Buenos Aires Province," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 60, no. 3 (Aug. 1980): 450-72; and Slatta's edited volume, *Bandidos*, to which he contributed the introduction, conclusion, and two essays (see note 30 below).
 18. Carleton Beals, "Brigandage," in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, 15 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 2:693-96 (quotation, 694).
 19. Peter Singelmann, "Political Structure and Social Banditry in Northeast Brazil," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 7, pt. 1 (May 1975):59-83; Benjamin S. Orlove, "The Position of Rustlers in Regional Society: Social Banditry in the Andes," in *Land and Power in Latin America: Agrarian Economies and Social Processes in the Andes*, edited by Orlove and Glynn Custred (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980), 179-94; Lewis Taylor, *Bandits and Politics in Peru: Landlord and Peasant Violence in Hualgayoc, 1900-1930* (Cambridge: Centre of Latin American Studies, Cambridge University, 1986); and Alberto Flores Galindo, *Aristocracia y plebe: Lima, 1760-1830* (Lima: Mosca Azul Editores, 1984), esp. chap. 5.
 20. Singelmann, "Political Structure and Social Banditry," 60.
 21. See note 4.
 22. Slatta, *Bandidos*, "Introduction," 2.
 23. *Ibid.*, "Conclusion," 198, 191.
 24. *Ibid.*, "Conclusion," 192.
 25. These findings are formally stated in Slatta's *Bandidos*, "Introduction," 8.
 26. On this point, also see Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz, *Os Cangaceiros* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1977), which was originally published in 1968 in French as *Cangaceiros: Les Bandits d'honneur bresiliens*; Lewis Taylor, *Bandits and Politics*, esp. chap. 1; and Deborah A. Poole, "Landscapes of Power in a Cattle-Rustling Culture of Southern Andean Peru," paper presented at the 46th International Congress of Americanists, Amsterdam, 4-8 July 1988. Also compare Wilson, *Feuding, Conflict, and Banditry*.
 27. Slatta, *Bandidos*, "Conclusion," 193.
 28. *Ibid.*, 191.
 29. Vanderwood, "Nineteenth-Century Mexico's Profiteering Bandits," in Slatta, *Bandidos*, 11-31; Vanderwood, *Disorder and Progress*; Christon Archer, "Banditry and Revolution in New Spain, 1790-1821," *Bibliotheca Americana* 1, no. 2 (Nov. 1982):59-90; and William Taylor, "Bandit Gangs in Late Colonial Times: Rural Jalisco, Mexico, 1794-1821," *Bibliotheca Americana* 1, no. 2 (Nov. 1982):29-58.
 30. Miguel Izard and Slatta, "Banditry and Social Conflict on the Venezuelan Llanos," in Slatta, *Bandidos*, 33-47; and Slatta, "Images of Social Banditry on the Argentine Pampa," in the same work, 49-65.
 31. Schwartz, *Lawless Liberators*.
 32. For example, see Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause*.
 33. Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, chap. 5 (quotations, 80-81).
 34. Louis A. Pérez, Jr., "'La Chambelona': Political Protest, Sugar, and Social Banditry in Cuba, 1914-1917," in Slatta, *Bandidos*, 131-47. This essay was originally published in *Inter-American Economic Affairs* 31, no. 4 (Spring 1978):3-28.
 35. Gonzalo Sánchez and Donny Meertens, "Political Banditry and the Colombian *Violencia*," in Slatta, *Bandidos*, 151-70; and Sánchez and Meertens, *Bandoleros, gamonales y campesinos: el caso de la violencia en Colombia*, 2d ed. (Bogotá: El Ancora Editores, 1984). For a partisan account that graphically details the marginalization and pursuit of such bandit gangs, see Evelio Buitrago Salazar, *Zarpazo the Bandit: Memoirs of an Undercover Agent of the Colombian Army* (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1977; originally published in Spanish in 1968).
 36. Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 93-95. In *Bandits and Politics*, Lewis Taylor develops his more detailed analysis of Benel's career along the very lines suggested here by Hobsbawm.
 37. See, particularly, Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, chap. 6 (quotations, 85).
 38. *Ibid.*, 87-88 (Hobsbawm's italics).

39. For an incisive examination of this paradoxical identity in the case of twentieth-century Chinese bandits, see Billingsley, *Bandits in Republican China*; also compare Blok's rich discussion of the domestication of Sicilian brigands by well-entrenched *mafiosi* in *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village*, esp. chap. 5.
40. This theme of peasants preying on each other will be considered in my subsequent discussion of James Scott's recent work.
41. But as suggested before, at times the revisionists are the ones who verge on reductionism in exaggerating or simplifying elements of Hobsbawm's thesis, which is often more nuanced than they convey. Blok himself candidly refers to "the widespread vulgarization of Hobsbawm's model [by critics and supporters alike] that tends to see virtually all brigandage as a manifestation of peasant protest." See Blok, *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village*, 101n. Be this at it may, close attention to Hobsbawm's progressive refinements of the model since the publication of *Primitive Rebels* reveals something of the subtlety (and wiliness) of the old master. The closer one looks for a clear-cut "model," the harder it is to find. Indeed, Hobsbawm never actually defines social banditry (nor do the majority of his critics, an issue I will take up later in the essay) but rather presents a number of traits that the social bandit tends to display. Moreover, Hobsbawm's writings are filled with disclaimers that among the various kinds of bandits in history, by far the most common are garden-variety thugs and criminals. Thus in a certain sense, when the revisionists attempt to pin Hobsbawm down and marshal a detailed brief against his "model," "they wrestle where none contendeth," to quote one of his defenders. See Arnold Bauer's review of Slatta's *Bandidos* in the *Journal of Social History* 22, no. 3 (Spring 1989):562. In this regard, one Europeanist critic of Hobsbawm noted with a certain amount of frustration that "Hobsbawm frequently acknowledges [the] aspects of banditry highlighted by his critics but gives them little emphasis in his general interpretation." See Wilson, *Feuding, Conflict, and Banditry*, 507.
42. The structural diversity of the countryside and its impact on forms of social action over a long time span is the theme of Friedrich Katz's new edited collection, *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution: Rural Social Conflict in Mexico* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).
43. Chandler, "Brazilian *Cangaceiros*," in Slatta, *Bandidos*, 103; also compare the same author's similarly antitheoretical remarks in *King of the Mountain*, 215.
44. For example, see James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), 233.
45. Chandler, "Brazilian *Cangaceiros*," in Slatta, *Bandidos*, 109; also compare Judith Ewell's review of Slatta's *Bandidos* in *The Americas* 45, no. 1 (July 1988):131-33.
46. For a rigorous revisionist analysis of *capoeira*, the Brazilian social phenomenon that some writers have portrayed as an urban variant of social banditry, see Thomas H. Holloway, "'A Healthy Terror': Police Repression of *Capoeiras* in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 69, no. 4 (Nov. 1989):637-76.
47. From Slatta's edited *Bandidos*, see Slatta, "Images of Social Banditry"; Lewin, "The Oligarchical Limitations of Social Banditry"; and Chandler, "Brazilian *Cangaceiros*." See also Schwartz, *Lawless Liberators*, esp. 9-13; and Maria Pournier-Taquechel, *Contribution à l'étude du banditisme social à Cuba: L'Histoire et le mythe de Manuel García* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1986).
48. See Lewin, "Oral Tradition and Elite Myth." Compare Koliopoulos's discussion of the deft manipulation of myths about *pallikar* and *klepht* (brigand) heroes by the ruling class of postindependence Greece. See *Brigands with a Cause*, esp. chap. 11. In addition to research remaining to be done on flesh-and-blood bandits and their social and mental worlds, much work has yet to be undertaken on the care and grooming of their myths, particularly the reasons why idealized images of brigands emerge at some historical conjunctures and not at others. For an interesting study of modern U.S. banditry, which relates representations of bandit myth to watersheds in the process of state building, see Potter, "Guarding the Crossroads."
49. Writing about nineteenth-century Chinese banditry, Moore cautioned, "It is necessary to be aware of romanticizing the robber as a friend of the poor just as much as of accepting the official image." See Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship:*

- Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1968), 214. Drawing on both criminal archives and popular lore, Lewin comes as close as any Latin Americanist scholar to achieving an understanding of the bandit as historical actor and transcendent symbol. For a commendable Asian study in the same vein, see Cheah, *Peasant Robbers of Kedah*, especially chap. 3.
50. For a balanced assessment of the value of folkloric sources, see James A. Inciardi, Alan A. Block, and Lyle A. Hallowell, *Historical Approaches to Crime: Research Strategies and Issues* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1977), chap. 2.
 51. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution* 1:354.
 52. *Ibid.*, 1:122–23.
 53. Richard Cobb, *The Police and the People: French Popular Protest, 1789–1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 93.
 54. The relevant work of British social historians such as E. P. Thompson, Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, and Cal Winslow is discussed further on in the article.
 55. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution* 1:123–26, 352. Drawing on his own research on the late nineteenth-century “Kelly Outbreak” in Australia, O’Malley’s “Social Bandits, Modern Capitalism, and the Traditional Peasantry” also emphasizes the potential for social bandits to galvanize rural communities of heterogeneous class composition “where there exists a commonly shared experience of . . . exploitation” (p. 492). In the process, O’Malley questions Hobsbawm’s insistence that communal unity depends on the existence of a solidary “traditional peasantry.” Knight’s ecological analysis acknowledges a debt to Constancio Bernaldo Quirós’s pioneering but little-cited study, *El bandolerismo en España y en México* (Mexico City: Jurídica Mexicana, 1959). Other works that show great sensitivity to the ecological determinants of bandit phenomena include López Albújar, *Los caballeros del delito*; Lewis Taylor, *Bandits and Politics*; Orlove, “The Position of Rustlers”; and the Slatta anthology *Bandidos*, although Slatta surely overstates his case in discounting the “social” content of banditry in remote or frontier areas that lacked a high concentration of peasant villages. For examples, see *Bandidos*, 4–5, 191–92.
 56. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution* 1:123, 354; compare Vanderwood, “Nineteenth-Century Mexico’s Profiteering Bandits,” and *Disorder and Progress*, esp. xv–xviii, 14–15, 56, 95–96. See also Claudia Gerdes, *Mexikanisches Banditentum (1821–1876) als sozialgeschichtliches Phänomen* (Saarbrücken: G. Breitenbach, 1987), which demonstrates that however enterprising such bandits might have been, social and racial barriers in nineteenth-century Mexican society typically thwarted their attempts to gain social mobility.
 57. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution* 1:354.
 58. *Ibid.*, 1:355. In *Primitive Rebels*, Hobsbawm had noted that “one sort of bandit can easily turn into another” (p. 13); see also *Bandits*, 56. Compare similar observations by Fernand Braudel, “Misère et banditisme,” *Annales* 2 (1947):129–43; Blok, “The Peasant and the Brigand,” 496; and particularly the following passage by Wilson on nineteenth-century Corsican banditry: “Driven from his own territory, separated from his network of support, the bandit of honor would be forced to attack travellers, to prey on local people, in order to survive. Even if he did stay in his own region, he might be caught up in a web of crimes . . . in defending himself against his enemies or escaping the pursuit of the authorities.” See Wilson, *Feuding, Conflict, and Banditry*, 357.
 59. Here one finds an interesting parallel with Donald Crummey’s anthology, *Banditry, Rebellion, and Social Protest in Africa*. Although the editor rather straightforwardly dismisses the validity of “social banditry” in the African context, several of the volume’s essays document organic ties between brigands and peasant communities.
 60. For example, see Chandler, “Brazilian Cangaceiros,” 102. Indeed, Chandler’s new study of the renowned Sicilian bandit, Salvatore Giuliano, *King of the Mountain*, itself documents close ties between Giuliano and the local peasantry.
 61. Schwartz, *Lawless Liberators*, 255.
 62. Flores Galindo, *Aristocracia y plebe*, 142–58.
 63. Compare Moss, “Bandits and Boundaries,” 480.
 64. See Catherine LeGrand’s review of Slatta’s *Bandidos* in *American Historical Review* 93, no. 4 (Oct. 1988):1145.

65. Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 11.
66. Several younger anthropologists working on northern Mexico, who have combined extensive archival research with ethnographic and oral history strategies, have already done much to advance this approach among Latin Americanists. For example, see Ana María Alonso, "The Hermeneutics of History: Class Struggle and Revolution in the Chihuahuan Sierra," manuscript; María Teresa Koreck, "The Constitution and Deployment of Popular Knowledges: From Colonists to Colonized to Revolutionaries," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, forthcoming; and the essays by Alonso, Koreck, and Daniel Nugent in *Rural Revolt and United States Intervention in Mexico*, edited by Nugent (La Jolla: Center for U.S.–Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1988). Historian Eric Van Young has creatively employed psychoanalytical concepts to tease out an understanding of popular ideologies in the Wars of Independence. See Van Young, "Millennium on the Northern Marches: The Mad Messiah of Durango and Popular Rebellion in Mexico, 1800–1815," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28, no. 3 (July 1986):385–413; also Van Young, "To See Someone Not Seeing: Historical Studies of Peasants and Politics in Mexico," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 6, no. 1 (Winter 1990):133–59. See also notes 128 and 138.
67. Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects*, 11–12. In addition to having published this major work, Guha edits and contributes to *Subaltern Studies* (published by Oxford University Press in Delhi), a journal dedicated to questions of working-class resistance and consciousness in South Asia. For a selection of some of the best early work in the journal, see *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, edited by Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982).
68. Political sociologists, anthropologists, and social historians continue to debate the relative importance of and relationship between internal and external determinants of peasant social action in twentieth-century revolutions. Analysis of such discourse lies beyond the scope of this essay and has been carried out elsewhere. For example, see John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750–1940* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986). The first chapter assesses recent contributions by Barrington Moore, Theda Skocpol, Charles Tilly, Eric Wolf, Jeffrey Paige, James Scott, and others.
69. Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects*, 76–108; compare Billingsley, *Bandits in Republican China*, and Michael Adas, "From Avoidance to Confrontation: Peasant Protest in Precolonial and Colonial Southeast Asia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, no. 1 (1981):217–47. At points, Guha's neat correlation of worsening economic conditions and mass discontent comes dangerously close to the now-discredited notion of a "J-Curve" and other variants of the "volcanic theory" of popular movements. For a critique of such thinking, see Rod Aya, "Popular Intervention in Revolutionary Situations," in *Statemaking and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory*, edited by Charles Bright and Susan Harding (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), 318–43.
70. Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects*, 106.
71. *Ibid.*, 107–8.; compare Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977; originally published in French in 1975), esp. 75–87, 274.
72. Braudel observes that banditry is "an ill-defined word if ever there was one." See Braudel, *The Mediterranean* 1:102. Only one example of an informative case study that is appreciably undermined by its failure to define or conceptualize banditry is Richard L. Maullin, *The Fall of Dumar Aljure, a Colombian Guerrilla and Bandit* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 1969).
73. Moss, "Bandits and Boundaries"; Paul C. Winther, "Contemporary Dacoity and Traditional Politics in South Asia," *University of Oklahoma Papers in Anthropology* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1977):153–66; and Poole, "Landscapes of Power."
74. Michel Foucault's most influential work on "deviance" and "labeling," *Discipline and Punish*, is cited in note 71. Representative of the Anglo-Saxon sociological and criminological literature are *The Other Side: Perspectives on Deviance*, edited by Howard S. Becker (New York: Free Press, 1964); Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of*

- Deviance* (New York: Free Press, 1963); David Matza, *Becoming Deviant* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969); Donald Black, *The Behavior of Law* (New York: Academic Press, 1978); Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology* (Somerset, Engl.: Open Books, 1982), esp. chap. 9; David Downes and Paul Rock, *Understanding Deviance: A Guide to the Sociology of Crime and Rule-Breaking* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); and George B. Vold and Thomas J. Bernard, *Theoretical Criminology*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), especially 47–107.
75. For example, see Eric Van Young, "Mentalities and Collectivities: A Comment," in *Rebellions in Mexican History*, edited by Jaime E. Rodríguez O. (Los Angeles: Latin American Center, University of California, Los Angeles, forthcoming).
 76. For example, see Slatta, *Bandidos*, 1; and Wilson, *Feuding, Conflict, and Banditry*, 38–39; compare Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 17.
 77. Moss, "Bandits and Boundaries," 480. Compare Cheah, *Peasant Robbers of Kedah*, 8–9; and Ann Laura Stoler, "Plantation Politics and Protest on Sumatra's East Coast," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 13, no. 2 (Jan. 1986):124–43. Stoler argues persuasively that "'criminality' became newly defined by whatever it was that *potential* workers did to keep themselves independent of [Dutch] colonial cash cropping commitments, plantation and mining jobs, that is, by working as forest foragers, hunters, squatters, scavengers and thieves" (p. 140, Stoler's italics). Also see Jack Goody's discussion of the law as an elite discourse of power that changes according to the requirements of that elite, in Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society*, chap. 4, "The Letter of the Law."
 78. Moss, "Bandits and Boundaries," 480–81; compare Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 274–77; and Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 165.
 79. In addition to Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects*, 78–106, and Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 178–85, see Goody, *The Logic of Writing*, 133–35, and Andrew Turton, "Patrolling the Middle-Ground: Methodological Perspectives on Everyday Peasant Resistance," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 13, no. 2 (Jan. 1986):36–48.
 80. James Scott and Michael Adas make much the same point in their discussions of forms of rural protest in South and Southeast Asia. For citations of Scott's and Adas's principal works, see notes 44, 69, and 97.
 81. C. A. Bayly, "Rallying around the Subaltern," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 16, no. 1 (Oct. 1988):110–20 (quotation, 119).
 82. *Ibid.* O'Malley also emphasizes the internal differentiation of the peasantry and the rural working class but is more sanguine about the poor's propensity to resist and their capacity to submerge sectional differences in the face of common experiences of exploitation. See "Social Bandits, Modern Capitalism, and the Traditional Peasantry."
 83. See especially E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (London: Allen Lane, 1975); and E. P. Thompson, Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh et al., *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Pantheon, 1975); also see Hobsbawm's and George Rudé's earlier account of the 1830 "Swing Movement," *Captain Swing* (New York: Pantheon, 1968). A comparable study on British India is Ramachandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil, "State Forestry and Social Conflict in British India," *Past and Present*, no. 123 (May 1989):141–77.
 84. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters*, 145.
 85. For example, see *ibid.*, 64; and Cal Winslow, "Sussex Smugglers," in Thompson et al., *Albion's Fatal Tree*, 119–66, esp. 159.
 86. Preface to *Albion's Fatal Tree*, 14.
 87. See Slatta, *Bandidos*, 3, 191. Compare the similarly uncritical revisionist posture toward "official" sources in Inciardi et al., *Historical Approaches to Crime*, and Kolipoulos, *Brigands with a Cause*, viii, 279. For another insightful critique of how such sources have been abused by historians and anthropologists, see Renato Rosaldo, "From the Door of His Tent: The Fieldworker and the Inquisitor," in *Writing Culture*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 77–97. In a recent paper (which I heard after this essay went to press), Slatta briefly acknowledges the bias inherent in official sources: "Banditry as Political Participation in Latin America," paper presented at the meeting of the American Historical Association, San Francisco, 29 Dec. 1989.

88. Slatta, *Bandidos*, 6; also Consul H. M. Wolcott as cited by Pérez in " 'La Chambelona,' " in Slatta, *Bandidos*, 141.
89. Dretha Phillips, "Latin American Banditry and Criminological Theory," in Slatta, *Bandidos*, 187–89.
90. William Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1979); Gilbert M. Joseph and Allen Wells, *Summer of Discontent, Seasons of Upheaval: Elite Politics and Rural Insurgency in Yucatán, 1890–1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, forthcoming); also compare Rosaldo, "From the Door of His Tent." Despite problems of interpretation, Wells and I have found criminal court testimonies invaluable in reconstructing peasant participation in and perceptions of revolts and other forms of resistance in Yucatán during the late Porfiriato and early years of the Mexican Revolution. For example, see Joseph and Wells, "The Rough and Tumble Career of Pedro Crespo," in *The Human Tradition in Latin America: The Twentieth Century*, edited by William Beezley and Judith Ewell (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1987), 27–40.
91. Here, the Comaroffs' notion of a "rhetoric of contrasts" is illuminating. See John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, "The Madman and the Migrant: Work and Labor in the Historical Consciousness of a South African People," *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 2 (1987):191–209; compare Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects*, 16–17.
92. Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects*, 17; also see Winther, "Contemporary Dacoity," for the British colonial authorities' characterization of Indian dacoits (bandits).
93. Van Young, "Mentalities and Collectivities."
94. The phrase is borrowed from Billingsley's discussion of the Chinese state's depiction of brigands in *Bandits in Republican China*, xiv.
95. Richard M. Morse, "The Heritage of Latin America," in *The Founding of New Societies*, edited by Louis Hartz (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1964), 123–77, esp. 151–77; and Van Young, "Mentalities and Collectivities."
96. Van Young, "Mentalities and Collectivities." For documentation of a significant historical case of such criminalization of popular protest, see Leon G. Campbell, "Banditry and the Túpac Amaru Rebellion in Cuzco, Peru, 1780–1784," *Bibliotheca Americana* 1, no. 3 (1983):164–80.
97. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, "Resistance without Protest and without Organization: Peasant Opposition to the Islamic Zekat and the Christian Tithe," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, no. 293 (July 1987):417–52; Scott "Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 13, no. 2 (Jan. 1986):5–35; Michael Adas, "From Avoidance to Confrontation"; Adas, "From Footdragging to Flight: The Evasive History of Peasant Avoidance Protest in South and Southeast Asia," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 13, no. 2 (Jan 1986):64–86; and Adas, "Bandits, Monks, and Pretender Kings: Patterns of Peasant Resistance and Protest in Colonial Burma, 1826–1941," in *Power and Protest in the Countryside*, edited by Robert P. Weller and Scott E. Guggenheim (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1982), 75–105. See also the remaining essays in the special issue edited by James Scott and Benedict Kerkvliet, "Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance in South-east Asia," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 13, no. 2 (Jan. 1986):1–150; Cheah, *Peasant Robbers of Kedah*; and Resil B. Mojares, "Nonrevolt in the Rural Context: Some Considerations," *Philippine Studies* 31 (1983):477–82.
98. Scott, "Resistance without Protest," 419.
99. *Ibid.*
100. As will be shown presently, however, this literary current includes interpretive shadings and some points of disagreement.
101. Scott, "Resistance without Protest," 419; for a more elaborate justification of this definition, see his *Weapons of the Weak*, chap. 7.
102. Significantly, the field of comparative slave studies—like peasant studies—is also witnessing something of a shift in emphasis from rebellions to more "routine" forms of resistance.
103. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, chap. 1. Scott is obviously influenced here by Jaroslav Hasek's and Bertold Brecht's fictional character, Joseph Schweik. "The good soldier Schweik" is the archetypal "little man" practiced in the art of dissimulation and footdragging, whose tactics repeatedly confound the master plans of his superior

- officers. For an interesting illustration of such "Schweikian" forms of resistance in contemporary Latin America, see Forrest D. Colburn, "Footdragging and Other Peasant Responses to the Nicaraguan Revolution," *Peasant Studies* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1986): 77–96.
104. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 300; see also Scott, "Protest and Profanation: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition," *Theory and Society* 4, no. 1 (1977):1-38, and 4, no. 2 (1977):211–46.
 105. Scott, "Resistance without Protest," 420. But compare Christine P. White's much more pessimistic assessment of the efficacy of such routine resistance in capitalist societies in "Everyday Resistance, Socialist Revolution, and Rural Development: The Vietnamese Case," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 13, no. 2 (Jan. 1986):49–65.
 106. Scott, "Resistance without Protest," 424. Here Scott draws on *Annales* scholar Marc Bloch's *French Rural History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), 170. Scott and Adas cannot (and do not) take full credit for focusing attention on "quiet" forms of struggle that do not result in insurgency. Their work obviously builds on previous studies by scholars working in other areas on similar agrarian themes, such as Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1972); Thompson et al., *Albion's Fatal Tree*; and Allen Isaacman, *The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976).
 107. Hobsbawm, "Peasants and Politics," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1, no. 1 (1973):12.
 108. Adas documents that in Southeast Asia, evidence of misrule often brought imprisonment and in some instances execution. See Adas, "From Footdragging to Flight," 67–68.
 109. Scott, "Resistance without Protest," 422; compare his *Weapons of the Weak*, chap. 7. Scott points out, for example, that the accumulation of thousands of individual acts of tax evasion, theft, or desertion can seriously disrupt elite establishments and even destabilize regimes.
 110. My research on Yucatán provides a classic example of the obstacles to mobilization in a region where the peasantry was isolated and internally differentiated. It is not surprising that in the decades prior to the radicalization of the Mexican Revolution in the peninsula (circa 1915), the Yucatecan peasantry was essentially reduced to everyday forms of resistance. See Gilbert M. Joseph, *Revolution from Without: Yucatán, Mexico, and the United States, 1880–1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982; rev. paperback edition published by Duke University Press in 1988), chap. 3.
 111. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 265.
 112. Zolá, as quoted in Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*. See also José Arturo Güémez Pineda, "Everyday Forms of Maya Resistance: Cattle Rustling in Northwestern Yucatán, 1821–1847," in *Land, Labor, and Capital in Modern Yucatán: Essays in Regional History and Political Economy*, edited by Jeffrey T. Brannon and Gilbert M. Joseph (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, forthcoming); also Orlove, "The Position of Rustlers"; and Daniel W. Gade, "Ecología del robo agrícola en las tierras altas de los Andes centrales," *América Indígena* 30, no. 1 (Jan. 1970):3–14.
 113. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 291.
 114. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters*, 160–61.
 115. Compare Gade, "Ecología del robo agrícola."
 116. Scott, "Resistance without Protest," 450.
 117. *Ibid.*, 452.
 118. Peter Linebaugh, "Karl Marx, the Theft of Wood, and Working-Class Composition: A Contribution to the Current Debate," *Crime and Social Justice* 6 (Fall-Winter 1976):5–15; Wilson, *Feuding, Conflict, and Banditry*, 349; and Ramachandra Guha and Gadgil, "State Forestry and Social Conflict in British India."
 119. Scott, "Resistance without Protest," 451.
 120. C. White, "Everyday Resistance, Socialist Revolution, and Rural Development"; Brian Fegan, "Tenants' Non-Violent Resistance to Landowner Claims in a Central Luzon Village," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 13, no. 2 (Jan. 1986):87–106.
 121. Benedict J. Triak Kerkvliet, "Everyday Resistance to Injustice in a Philippine Village," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 13, no. 2 (Jan. 1986):107–23.

122. Adas, "From Footdragging to Flight"; but see also his "Bandits, Monks, and Pretender Kings," 159ff, in which he makes an unassailable case for theft-as-resistance in colonial Burma based on a series of surprisingly candid police reports.
123. Adas, "From Footdragging to Flight," 65-67 (quotation, 66).
124. Turton, "Patrolling the Middle-Ground."
125. Erick D. Langer, "Andean Banditry and Peasant Community Organization, 1882-1930," in Slatta, *Bandidos*, 113-30; and Slatta, "Conclusion," 194. But compare Knight in *The Mexican Revolution*, who argues against ethnicity as a predominant factor in mobilization and peasant revolt (1:115-16, 281n).
126. Langer, "Andean Banditry" and *Economic Change and Rural Resistance in Southern Bolivia, 1880-1930* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989); Orlove, "The Position of Rustlers"; and Poole, "Landscapes of Power."
127. Apart from oral tradition (and inference from the social context), routine forms of resistance are periodically captured in district- or local-level administrative and criminal reports, as bureaucrats seek to explain to their superiors fluctuations in the incidence of crime (see note 122 above), shortfalls in tax receipts and *leva* quotas, labor flight, and similar matters.
128. Steve J. Stern, "New Approaches to the Study of Peasant Rebellion and Consciousness: Implications of the Andean Experience," in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World, 18th to 20th Centuries*, edited by Stern (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 3-25 (quotations, 11).
129. Stern, *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness*; and Adas, "From Avoidance to Confrontation," and "From Footdragging to Flight." See also the essays in the anthology by Weller and Guggenheim, *Power and Protest*, particularly the editors' introduction, "Moral Economy, Capitalism, and State Power in Rural Protest," 3-11.
130. Adas, "From Footdragging to Flight," 80; compare Mojares, "Nonrevolt in the Rural Context." Hobsbawm and several of his critics continue to debate whether social banditry has (or will) become extinct in the face of preponderant state power and police technology, or whether it is eminently adaptable to modern settings and technologies. For example, compare O'Malley, "Social Bandits, Modern Capitalism and the Traditional Peasantry," and Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 150-64.
131. Hobsbawm, "Social Banditry," in *Rural Protest: Peasant Movements and Social Change*, edited by Henry Landsberger (London: Macmillan, 1974), 142; also compare William Taylor, "Banditry and Insurrection: Rural Unrest in Central Jalisco, 1790-1816," in Katz *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution*, 205-46; and Gerdes, *Mexikanisches Banditentum*.
132. On this point, see Flores Galendo, *Aristocracia y plebe*, chap. 5. Another case study that supports Scott's argument and runs counter to Langer's thesis on the role of banditry in Indian communities is Güémez Pineda, "Everyday Forms of Maya Resistance."
133. Stern and several of the other contributors to *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness* stress formidable external constraints on social action and the overriding importance of subsistence to Andean peasants. For example, see Florencia Mallon, "Nationalist and Antistate Coalitions in the War of the Pacific: Junín and Cajamarca, 1899-1902," 232-79. But they caution constructively against "straitjacketing" the category of peasant consciousness. Andean peasant aspirations, they suggest, frequently transcended parochial obsessions with land, subsistence, and autonomy and on occasion embraced efforts to forge a new macro-level polity that would be more responsive to local peasant needs.
134. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 301.
135. *Ibid.*, 302.
136. For a provocative discussion of the consequences of this "lag" for Mexican regional historiography, see Paul J. Vanderwood, "Building Blocks But Yet No Building: Regional History and the Mexican Revolution," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1987):421-32; compare Van Young in "Mentalities and Collectivities," who points up the slowness with which Latin Americanists have begun to consider seriously questions of *mentalité* and culture.
137. The term *protest crime* comes from George Rudé, *Criminal and Victim: Crime and Society in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
138. But see notes 66 and 128 above. Several recent landmark historical studies do not focus

- on banditry but treat problems of peasant resistance and consciousness from perspectives informed by other fields and disciplines. Rebecca J. Scott borrows insights from the comparative slavery literature to weave "routine" forms of resistance into a challenging explanation of slave emancipation in *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860–1899* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986). The following studies have all effectively combined anthropological tools and archival sources to examine the variety of strategies employed by peasant villagers in Mexico and Peru to defend subsistence and a way of life: William Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion*; Nancy Farris, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); Steve Stern, *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of the Spanish Conquest: Huamanga to 1640* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); and Florencia Mallon, *The Defense of Community in Peru's Central Highlands: Peasant Struggle and Capitalist Transition, 1860–1940* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).
139. For example, see Joanna Innes and John Styles, "The Crime Wave: Recent Writing on Crime and Criminal Justice in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of British Studies* 25 (1986):380–435; Peter C. Hoffer, "Counting Crime in Premodern England and America: A Review Essay," *Historical Methods* 14, no. 4 (Fall 1981):187–93; and Rudé, *Criminal and Victim*, which provides the quotation (p. 397). Regarding the unreliability of Latin American criminal data, compare Lyman Johnson and Julia Kirk Blackwelder, "Estadística criminal y acción policial en Buenos Aires, 1887–1914," *Desarrollo Económico* 24, no. 93 (Apr.–June 1984):109–22.
 140. In this regard, compare Bayly's critique of the "subaltern studies" school ("Rallying around the Subaltern"), Blok's analysis of upwardly mobile elements in bandit and mafia phenomena (in *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village*), and the monographic studies by Vanderwood (*Disorder and Progress*) and Schwartz (*Lawless Liberators*). In our forthcoming book, Allen Wells and I give particular emphasis to the roles played by middle sectors on both sides of the law in a congeries of revolts and other violent rural episodes. See *Summer of Discontent*.
 141. See especially Lewin, "The Oligarchical Limitations of Social Banditry," in Slatta, *Bandits*; Chandler, *The Bandit King*; Vanderwood, *Disorder and Progress*; and Schwartz, *Lawless Liberators*.
 142. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 17–18.
 143. For example, see Lewis Taylor, *Bandits and Politics*, Poole, "Landscapes of Power," and Joseph and Wells, *Summer of Discontent, Seasons of Upheaval*. The traditional view was that women were "conspicuously absent from the band and the world of bandits in general," as observed by Koliopoulos in *Brigands with a Cause* (p. 283). This conclusion is now being challenged in the global literature. See, for example, Hobsbawm's most recent statement, "Women and Banditry," in the revised edition of *Bandits* (pp. 135–37); see also the sophisticated examination of female bandits, gender, and family relations in Billingsley, *Bandits in Republican China*; and Potter, "Guarding the Crossroads."
 144. See, for example, Lewis Taylor, *Bandits and Politics*, 6–7.
 145. For example, in "Landscapes of Power," Deborah Poole begins to examine how gendered forms of domination have confounded class solidarity among peasant rustlers in highland Peru. Chumbivilcano peasants are thus "caught in the contradictions of a system of male power, honor, and self-made justice which implicitly reinforces the *gamonal's* [landowner's] hold on local 'culture.'"
 146. Compare Van Young's recent critique of Ranajit Guha and the "subalternists" in "Mentalities and Collectivities": "Good as [their] advice is, if we take it too far we are at peril of falling into a sort of Foucaultian romanticism in which everything protesters say is honest and true, and everything the authorities and the powerful say is self-serving and duplicitous."
 147. The powerful, prevailing leftist current in North American legal scholarship, "Critical Legal Studies," has drawn on Foucault and other social thinkers to effectively critique instrumentalist Marxist notions of the law, even as it has mounted its greatest opposition against mainstream liberal interpretations of legal discourses. For an introduction to the scholarship of the "Crits," see Mark Kelman, *A Guide to Critical Legal Studies*

- (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); and Robert W. Gordon, "Law and Ideology," *Tikkun* 3, no. 1 (1987):14-17, 83-86.
148. See William Taylor's helpful discussion of the need for "the historical study of the operation of the law in relationships of inequality," which recommends the application of a variety of important theoretical and comparative works to the Latin American case. Taylor, "Between Global Process and Local Knowledge: An Inquiry into Early Latin American Social History, 1500-1900," in *Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History*, edited by Olivier Zunz (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 115-90, esp. 162-64 and 185-87. Also suggestive for conceptualizing the problem are Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 24-49 ("The Hegemonic Function of the Law"); Goody, *The Logic of Writing*, chap. 4; and Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985). The last cited work is a penetrating analysis ranging over eight centuries of the state's involvement in defining and regulating British law and social life.
149. Stern's rich collection on the Andean world, *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness*, focuses on peasant social action but also represents a pioneering effort in its related examination of state and elite structures of domination.
150. See Hobsbawm's review of Slatta's *Bandidos* in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 68, no. 1 (Feb. 1988):135-36.

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