

Aguirre, Carlos and Walker, Charles (eds) (1990), **Bandoleros, abigeos y montoneros: Criminalidad y violencia en el Perú, siglos XVIII-XX**, Instituto de Apoyo Agrario (Lima). 393 pp. \$15.

Studies of banditry in Third World areas have proliferated since the publication of Eric Hobsbawm's widely influential books *Primitive Rebels* and *Bandits* some 30 years ago. Hobsbawm argued that capitalist penetration into rural areas created new tensions in traditional societies that led to increased incidence of violence. This gave rise to 'social bandits' who robbed from the rich and gave to the poor and became heroes to the lower classes. Hobsbawm's model has come under attack in recent years by historians who have argued that many bandits robbed rich and poor alike, formed alliances with political leaders and landlords, and were roundly hated and feared by the lower classes. Still, the endearing image of the social bandit has not completely faded away, and Hobsbawm must be credited with (once again) inaugurating an important debate.

The volume under review presents 11 essays on banditry, theft, and rural violence in Peru from the mid-eighteenth century to the 1970s. The book combines previously published work by established scholars with several contributions by younger historians, including the editors. Carlos Aguirre's essay demonstrates the linkages between the decline of African slavery, the increased incidence of slave runaways, and the growing importance of banditry in the Lima region during the first half of the nineteenth century. Aguirre shows that slaves took advantage of the wars for independence and the ensuing political turmoil to escape from plantations in record numbers. Some estates lost from 50 to 80 per cent of their bondsmen, and labour shortages contributed significantly to the decline of coastal agriculture. Many runaways joined the bandit gangs that preyed on travellers in the region and periodically invaded haciendas. These were not social bandits who sought to redress previous injustices, but fugitives who viewed banditry as a way to survive in a hostile and chaotic environment. This is an important essay that successfully ties together several key topics in the social and economic history of the period.

Charles Walker's essay focuses on alliances between private armies (*montoneros*) and the liberals during the civil wars of the 1830s. He argues that *montoneros*, whose rank-in-file consisted of blacks and *castas*, sought acceptance as citizens which led them to side with the liberals against the conservatives. Walker also explains that conservatives viewed *montoneros* as criminals who should be punished, while liberals welcomed them as military allies. He may be right that ideology played a more important role in these civil conflicts than previously believed. However, more evidence is required to prove conclusively that *montoneros* fought more for civil rights than for plunder and the kind of political influence that comes from the barrel of a gun.

Ward A. Stavig's essay discusses robbery and society in rural Cusco at the end of the colonial period. In an overwhelmingly Indian and poor society, thieves were universally hated for stealing livestock and other possessions crucial for survival. Stavig argues that the Inca had stern penalties for theft, and that their descendants used every means at their disposal to capture and punish criminals who put *comuneros* at risk. This essay evokes the image of a tightly knit peasant society with little toleration for deviancy. The argument is convincing, if not very electrifying.

Additional essays of note include Benjamin Orlove's study of stock rustling in Cusco, Erick Langer's discussion of different forms of peasant protest in Bolivia, and Lewis Taylor's analysis of the origins of banditry in Cajamarca. In sum, this book

represents a good sampling of the diverse forms of rural violence found in the Andes and is recommended to anyone interested in bandit studies.

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Mario Samper (1985), *Generations of Settlers: Rural Households and Markets on the Costa Rican Frontier, 1850–1935*, Westview Press (Boulder), xvii + 286 pp. £18.95.

In the last few years, a number of important books and articles have been published taking issue with the myth of nineteenth century Costa Rica as an egalitarian rural paradise based on yeoman farmers, homesteaders and an absence of urban centres. This book, by the noted Costa Rican historian Mario Samper, is very much in this new revisionist tradition and builds on the pioneering work by Lowell Gudmundson (*Costa Rica Before Coffee*).

Samper's focus is on the north-west central valley in the *meseta central* which now has Alajuela as its main urban area. As the best lands around San José were planted to coffee after the 1830s, a slow migration took place towards various frontiers in the central valley until the frontier was finally pushed over the mountain peaks earlier this century. The north-west central valley was an important frontier because of its proximity to San José, the quality of its lands and its access to the Pacific port of Puntarenas.

Using an extraordinary wealth of primary sources, including parish records and probate inventories, Samper gives us a very detailed picture of the economic and social transformations taking place in this part of Costa Rica after 1850. He shows us not only the extent of social differentiation from an early date in the north-west central valley, but also the process under which it was affected by the markets in land, labour and capital.

There are times when one is almost overwhelmed by the level of detail. Yet the microscopic treatment of social relations is not without its amusing side. We learn, for example, that real estate transactions were sometimes sealed by each party pulling out a whisker of hair (p. 190) rather than by signing any papers. This incident, like many others in the book, is derived from oral history which the author uses to flesh out details for the last years before the study ends (1935).

Economists will be disappointed by the absence of information on the transfer of technology, the relationship between farmers and foreign merchants and any estimates of price elasticity of supply. These factors, it is safe to assume, also had an important bearing on the social and economic differentiation which did indeed mark Costa Rican society by the beginning of this century. Yet the author is to be congratulated for the thorough investigation given to the analysis of factor markets and the crucial role played by a shortage of capital.

Samper, following Gudmundson before him, compares the experience of Costa Rica with a number of other Latin American republics—especially those with important coffee-growing areas—in a concluding chapter. It is at this point that one wonders whether revisionist Costa Rican history has not been taken too far. Despite all the evidence of social and economic differentiation, Costa Rican society remains far more egalitarian than most other societies in Latin America.

This is a fine book with a wealth of scholarship and detail. Mario Samper has demonstrated that the absence of primary sources is more apparent than real for nineteenth