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HIDDEN RESISTANCE AND POLITICAL PROTEST IN HIGHLAND ECUADOR**

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University of Waterloo

Forthcoming in: *Journal of Peasant Studies*

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**WEAK WEAPONS, STRONG WEAPONS?
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Tanya Korovkin

Department of Political Science

University of Waterloo

Waterloo, ON N2J 4J1 Canada

Tel: (519) 888-4567 ext2143

Email: tkorovki@watarts.uwaterloo.ca

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ABSTRACT

The article critically applies the theory of everyday forms of peasant resistance (EFPR) to an analysis of land struggles in Ecuadorean Andes. It explores the effectiveness of weapons of the weak used by indigenous peasants in conflicts with the haciendas. The relationship between hidden resistance and the rise of political organization is also examined. Special attention is paid to the structural context and cultural underpinning of both covert and overt peasant action.

Introduction

Few social theories have produced as much controversy as that of everyday forms of peasant resistance (EFPR), developed by Scott, Kerkvliet, and Adas on the basis of rural experiences in Asia.¹ Its focus on peasant resistance to the expansion of the market economy and hidden or, to use Scott's expression, "Brechtian" forms of struggle [Scott, 1986: 7] earned many foes among students of peasant movements, even though few of them took the trouble to support their theoretical critiques with careful historical or empirical data. Moreover, the critics also seem to ignore the body of literature on the Andean, largely Peruvian, peasantry that supports some of the everyday resistance tenets.

Below, I will examine the EFPR approach in the light of Andean peasants' hidden and open struggles for land. The focus will be on the relations between indigenous peasant communities and haciendas (owned by whites and mestizos) in the canton of Otavalo, Imbabura province, Northern Ecuador. Part one examines the theory of everyday forms of resistance in relation to the literature on the Andean (mostly Peruvian)

¹Tanya Korovkin, Department of Political Science, University of Waterloo, 200 University Ave.E, Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 3G1, Canada; tkorovki@watarts.uwaterloo.ca. Field research for this article was conducted between 1993 and 1995, in collaboration with Imbabura's Indigenous and Peasant Federation (FICI) and Imbabura's Provincial Board of Bilingual and Inter-Cultural Education. The analysis draws on information gathered in six Otavalo communities: Carabuela, Peguche, Chuchiqui, Pijal, San Francisco de Cajas and San Agustin de Cajas. I would like to thank people who live in these communities and work with indigenous organizations for their generous support for the study. My special thanks to Vidal Sánchez, Carmen Imbaquingo, José Isama and Francisca de la Cruz. Funding for the project was provided by Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada (SSHRCC).

peasantry in general. Special attention is paid to the cultural underpinnings of hidden peasant resistance and its social and political implications.

Part two explores the relations between Otavalo's indigenous peasant communities and hacienda owners prior to Ecuador's land reform, which accelerated the process of capitalist agricultural modernization. It is argued that hidden peasant resistance, largely of ethnic origin, was an important factor behind the sale of large portions of hacienda land to indigenous peasant families. Part three is focused on the factors behind the transformation of hidden peasant resistance into open political struggle and the linkages between the two. In conclusion, it is argued that a careful and historically specific application of the EFPR theory, with its focus on contending cultural values and unorganized spontaneous action, is indispensable to our understanding of the dynamics of rural political change.

Everyday Forms Of Peasant Resistance In Comparative Perspective

One of the main strengths of the EFPR approach lies in the attention it pays to long periods of apparent political calm, which are largely ignored by students of peasant movements. Nevertheless, it is precisely these uneventful years and decades that provide a key to our understanding of the roots of peasant political mobilization, for this is when peasants' grievances are vented and their objectives are sometimes achieved in an unheroic and inconspicuous way. Unable or unwilling to resort to open political protest, they often become involved in everyday forms of resistance: small covert acts of defiance against local elites. EFPR theorists argue that these acts reflect peasant refusal to accept the legitimacy of the existing structure of domination even in the absence of organized protest movements [Scott, 1986: 6; 1990: 79-82]. In the literature on the Andean peasantry, these views are echoed by Stern [1987: 10] who also calls for greater attention to peasant

resistance and self-defence during the apparently tranquil periods.

Some common forms of hidden peasant resistance include trespassing, unauthorized utilization of privately owned land, and, generally speaking, a refusal to recognize large landowners' property rights. These forms of behaviour have also been documented widely in the literature on Andean haciendas and indigenous peasant communities. Back in the 1960s, Baraona [cited in Martinez Alier, 1977: 45] coined the phrases "internal siege" and "external siege" to describe a systematic encroachment by hacienda service tenants upon hacienda land. Building on Baraona's work, Martinez Alier [1977] pointed to the persistent incapacity of many hacienda owners in the Peruvian Andes to curb the growth in the numbers of peasant livestock illicitly grazing on hacienda pastures. More recently, Smith [1989], Sylva [1986] and Thurner [1993] discussed similar practices on service-tenure commercial haciendas in Southern Peru and Ecuador.

One of the most contentious issues, of course, is whether such forms of action should be considered as resistance at all. Thus Joseph [1990:34] warns of the danger of indiscriminately equating poorly documented self-interested acts with resistance, which in his opinion blurs the distinction between delinquency and protest to the point where both lose their analytical value. Joseph is certainly right here.

While most acts of resistance among subordinate classes or groups include an element of self-interest, not all self-interested acts directed against privileged members of local society can be described as resistance. EFPR theorists seem to agree, however, that to qualify as such, acts must be backed by a consensus among a significant sector of the local population - admittedly difficult to measure - on the moral legitimacy of certain social practices. Kerkvliet [1993: 486-87] argues that in the case of the land take-overs in the Philippines, for example, there was a consensus on the existence of entitlement norms, according to which "land should be farmed in a manner that benefits local people who desperately need

livelihood," and not merely for profit. In a similar vein, Martinez Alier [1977: 159] points out that Andean peasants justified their encroachment on hacienda land in terms of their customary systems of rights and obligations, which were often violated by modernizing landlords.

To be sure, if a consensus behind small acts of peasant defiance develops at all, its content and manifestations are likely to vary depending on historical and cultural conditions. Nevertheless, it seems that in many instances it is related to peasants' resistance to proletarianization in the context of the capitalist transformation of agriculture. Combined with agricultural mechanization and high rates of urban unemployment and underemployment, it is increasingly associated with economic marginalization, the prospect of which spurs peasant struggles for land, overt or covert. These struggles, as well the preceding processes of capitalist expansion, have been extensively documented not only in the EFPR literature but also in Wolf's seminal study of peasant movements and numerous analyses of Andean agrarian politics [Wolf, 1969; Scott, 1985; Smith, 1989; Mallon, 1983; Handelman, 1975].

The notion of peasant resistance has been extensively criticized by marxist scholars, relying on Lenin's analysis of the rise of agrarian capitalism in Russia. Thus, Brass [1991: 174; 1977: 173-205] describes Scott as a Chayanov style neo-populist who, along with Wolf, became infatuated with the idea of the land-bound and backward-looking middle peasant, the middle peasant who had long disappeared as a result of peasant socio-economic differentiation. However, even though Scott and Kerkvliet actually write about peasant resistance, it is not the middle peasant, as in Wolf's writings, who is its protagonist, but rather impoverished and semi-proletarianized peasants largely dispossessed of land.ⁱ Moreover, not all students of peasant resistance see peasants as "backward-looking." While Scott [1976, 1977] emphasizes the importance of "traditional" elements in the

cultural underpinnings of peasant resistance (such as norms of reciprocity, the right to subsistence and millenarian beliefs), Kerkvliet [1990] is more inclined to see consensual EFPR as a product of modern cultural influences, associated with notions of citizenship and nation-state. While acknowledging that peasants may draw upon cultural values and norms rooted in the past, Kerkvliet argues that peasant struggles in the Philippines were informed by the notion of basic rights: rights to human dignity and a decent standard of living, as distinct from the subsistence rights of any "traditional" moral economy.ⁱⁱ

The situation is even more complex in the Andes with its largely indigenous peasantry, formed as a result of the forced homogenization of a culturally diverse and socially stratified precolumbian population. In Andean societies, where representations of a precolonial past exert a powerful cultural influence, peasant resistance is intrinsically intertwined with the ethnic question.ⁱⁱⁱ Thus, Flores Galindo points to the persistence of what he calls the Andean utopia: an idealized vision of Inca rule, intertwined with modern political values, including the marxist ones embraced by the Shining Path.^{iv}

Clearly, we need a better understanding of the complex cultural universe of the impoverished and semi-proletarianized peasantry, as well as of the origins and political implications of this complexity. Moreover, it is plausible that under certain conditions the process of socio-economic differentiation may give rise to local political leadership rather than undermine peasant solidarity. This is especially the case of indigenous peasants, bound by ethnic loyalties and sharing the experience of ethnic discrimination. Thus, in many areas of the Ecuadorian Andes migratory work and access to formal education contributed to the emergence of a new generation of indigenous leaders who played a crucial role in the of the land struggles of the 1970s and 1980s [Korovkin 1997a].

This brings us to the second set of criticisms with regard to the EFPR theory: its alleged neglect of political organizations and

social change. Brass observes [1991: 176] that Scott concentrates on EFPR *instead* of revolutionary struggles. Similarly, Gutmann [1993: 87] suggests that Scott's theory is a "conservative one. It does not expect or explain change." Nevertheless, whether it is collective political struggles only that generate structural change is an open question. While it is doubtful that hidden resistance is likely to generate economic and social change on its own, it can certainly do so in combination with other factors.

Scott [1986: 8] argues that "individual acts of foot dragging and evasion, often reinforced by a venerable popular culture of resistance, and multiplied many-thousand fold, may, in the end, make an utter shambles of the policies dreamed up by their would be superiors in the capital," a statement that strikes a responsive chord among many students of Latin American land reforms, who have documented peasants' amazing ability to deflect, manipulate and in some cases defeat government policies [Colburn, 1986; Montoya, 1982; Korovkin, 1990]. Scott [1987] documents peasants' success in reducing or nullifying the clergy's material claims, while Orlove [1991] points to similar success in relation to the state bureaucracy.

As for any relation between hidden defiance and open forms of struggle, we remain almost completely in the dark. Existing studies seem to point in different directions. In his analysis of colonial experiences in Asia, Adas [1986: 82] suggests that the "denial protests" (foot dragging, feigned incompetence, fleeing to remote areas) serve as a safety valve for social discontent, leaving the peasantry even more fragmented and vulnerable to repression. Protests of "retribution" (destruction of crops, arson, etc.) are more likely, in his opinion, to lead to open political struggles. But also in this case, argues Adas, the limited organizational skills and ideological sophistication of the participants generally work against them. For a political protest to happen, external political leadership is necessary.

A similar view was generally adopted in older studies of peasant politics in Latin America, which saw urban-based political leadership as a prerequisite for the transformation of peasant unrest into a political - nationalist or left-wing - movement [Hobsbawm, 1973-74; Landsberger, 1974]. This may be the case, but more recent studies of guerrilla movements in Latin America in general, and Peru in particular, also point to numerous and sometimes tragic misunderstandings between left-wing political leaders and their would-be peasant supporters [Brown and Fernandez, 1991; Wickham-Crowley, 1991; Berg, 1992; Isbell, 1992].

Similarly, Burdick [1992] describes the internal weaknesses of many Christian based communities in Brazil which, although headed by progressive clergy, fail to express the needs and sentiments of the less progressive and less sophisticated local residents. At the same time, Smith [1989] attributes the success of the political struggle of Huasicancha peasants in the Peruvian Andes to a local culture of resistance and community-based leadership. In his view, everyday forms of peasant resistance including trespassing, pilfering and the covert use of hacienda pastures, were intrinsically linked to peasant political mobilization. This view is congenial with Kerkvliet's study of land invasions in the Philippines. Indeed, Kerkvliet [1993: 481] argues that small acts of defiance can prepare the ground for organized land takeovers, and also emphasizes that these were led not by external organizers but by local leaders.

If the presence of urban political activists is not a crucial factor behind the transformation of hidden into open resistance, what is? Kerkvliet [1993: 471] believes that, in the Philippines, the single most important reason for this transformation was the end of Marcos' rule. This started a process of national political democratization which offered minimum physical safety to peasant leaders and provided them with interlocutors in the local and national government. Greater political openness has also been seen as a catalyst of peasant political struggles in Latin

America, while Scott argues that fear of political repression, along with social fragmentation and the availability of economic alternatives, such as migration, is one of the major considerations that force peasants to opt for hidden rather than open forms of resistance [Eckstein, 1989; Scott, 1986].

So what are the relationships between processes of political democratization, the collapse of customary rights and obligations, and the tactics of peasants in defence of their rights? And what kind of rights are we talking about here? In the following sections, I discuss the nature and effectiveness of indigenous peasant hidden resistance in Otavalo at different historical stages and in different structural contexts. I also analyse the relationship between hidden and open forms of indigenous peasant struggles, as well as their cultural underpinnings.

Otavalo: From Defeat To Hidden Resistance

Peasant resistance in Otavalo has unmistakable ethnic roots. It can be traced back to the defeat of the 1777 ethnic uprisings and forced peasantization of the Quichua-speaking population of Otavalo and Cayambe ethnic origins. The uprising, along with subsequent attempts on the part of some hereditary chiefs (*curacas*) to protect indigenous lands continues to form part of the present-day community lore, eagerly told to newcomers and incorporated in the local system of bilingual education.^v By the first half of the twentieth century, however, ethnic leadership had virtually disappeared while most of the indigenous population had been transformed into bonded labourers on private landed estates (*haciendas*), often combining agricultural and textile production.

To escape labour tribute and/or avoid prison for debt, an increasing number of impoverished indigenous people looked for the "protection" of powerful hacienda owners with whom they also incurred heavy debts. The legal abolition of imprisonment for debt (put into

practice in 1918) ended this system of debt peonage, while the growth of plantation agriculture and urban manufacturing created an increasing demand for wage labour. Still, many peasants preferred to stay on the haciendas, in effect opting for a new system of bonded labour. Working six days a week for the owners, they would receive a subsistence plot of land (*huasipungo*) within the hacienda boundaries along with access to the hacienda pastures, water and firewood.^{vi} The unwillingness of hacienda peasants to join proletarian ranks caused dismay among Ecuadorean liberals and socialists who were quick to attribute this to the inherent backwardness of the indigenous peasantry.

One of the most important reasons [why the majority of *huasipungueros* refused to leave the haciendas] is the exaggerated sense of nostalgia that the Indian has for his own plot of land, even though it may only be a *huasipungo*. This is why he would put up with injustice [on the hacienda] and forsake the higher wages that he could have received as a free labourer [Oberem, 1977: 28].

Thus the myth of the passive Indian among politicians and academics, who often portrayed indigenous people as mistrustful and melancholic, burdened by an inferiority complex, and unable to join "progressive" urban and rural struggles for socialism [Aguiló, 1992; Zamosc, 1989; Velasco, 1979]. A closer look at relations between the hacienda and the indigenous peasantry, however, promptly dispels this myth. In Otavalo, at least, these relations were much more complex and conflict-ridden than the supporters of the passive Indian thesis seem to be willing to admit. Refusing to leave the hacienda areas, which they considered as their ancestral lands, Otavalo's indigenous people were not eager to engage in *huasipungo* relations either.

Generally speaking, the importance of the *huasipungo* in Andean labour relations seems to be grossly overemphasized. Clearly, Ecuadorean haciendas were more effective in controlling land

than they were in controlling indigenous labour. According to the 1954 agricultural census (the first in Ecuador), landed estates over 100 hectares contained the bulk of national farmland. In Imbabura they constituted only 1.07 percent of the total number of holdings but controlled 64.26 percent of the land. While the hacienda sector's dominance over land relations is beyond any doubt, this was not the case of labour relations.

Despite all the attention that *huasipungo* relations have received in the academic literature and political debates of the day, only a small proportion of the total rural labour force - 8 percent in Imbabura, or the same as the average of Ecuador's ten Andean provinces taken together - worked on haciendas as *huasipungueros* [INEC, 1954, Table 4]. Moreover, the proportion of *huasipungueros* was higher in rural areas with relatively high levels of capitalist development and acculturation. Thus in Pichincha province, the administrative and economic heartland of the Andean region, *huasipungueros* constituted 23 percent of the total number of landholders, as compared to only 12 percent in Chimborazo and 8 percent in Imbabura, the two Andean provinces with the largest proportion of Quichua-speaking population [INEC, 1954: Table 4; Zamosc, 1995].

The relatively low incidence of *huasipungo* labour in Imbabura does not have a simple explanation. It is associated with the predominance of extensive cattle-raising in contrast to more labour-intensive food crop production in Pichincha, with its proximity to Quito's markets. But market constraints alone cannot explain the preference of Imbabura's landowners for extensive livestock production. Other and probably equally decisive factors were the inability of hacienda owners to completely displace indigenous communities from their land and the continuous refusal by the local indigenous population to recognize the legitimacy of hacienda claims, a sign of stand-off rather than of a clear-cut hacienda victory.

While growing demographic pressure on land in communities pushed their members towards economic relations with haciendas, the

result was not *huasipungo* but *yanapa* ("help" in Quichua). Under *yanapa* arrangements, families worked for two days a week for hacienda owners in exchange for access to hacienda pastures. In other words, they continued to live in their communities, conducting their usual activities and obeying their communal authorities - rather than hacienda managers - for most of the time.^{vii} While *yanaperos* enjoyed much more decisional and cultural autonomy than *huasipungueros*, the relations of both categories of labourers with hacienda owners were fraught with hidden conflicts which resulted variously in the demise of haciendas or further tightening of hacienda labour discipline. The contrasting experiences of Quillcapamba, Pinsaqui, and Cajas illustrate the point.

Hacienda Quillcapamba was founded at least a century ago on the slopes of Imbabura mountain, then covered by trees and bush, while the fertile lowlands around San Pablo Lake remained under the control of local indigenous communities, now known as Huaycopungo and Chaquiopamba. The name of the hacienda presumably came from its first owner's habit of pulling a feather (*quillca*, in Quichua) from any nearby chicken in order to write down the names of indigenous families offering their services as *huasipungueros*. These were notoriously few. Local families were not eager to work for the "mishu" (mestizo, in Quichua).

The first *huasipungueros* seemed to be social outcasts who had fled their communities after breaking their marriages and choosing a new partner. The frontier-style, quasi-egalitarian atmosphere in Quillcapamba, where nobody had proper marriage arrangements and the owner rose at three o'clock in the morning to join his workers in the field, represents a striking contrast to conventional images of the hacienda. Apparently, Quillcapamba was self-sufficient in everything except alcohol. This was brought from the city which also provided a market for cattle. Hacienda cattle were apparently sold in relatively large numbers (even though nobody at the hacienda had proper arithmetic skills; the owner

himself, according to the lore, could count to 40, using a *taptana* - a precolumbian counting board - for larger numbers; others could not count at all).

The hacienda work force grew as a result of demographic pressure on land within the neighbouring communities. This turned out to be a mixed blessing for the hacienda owner. On one hand, he himself did not have to work in the fields any more. On the other, he had to confront his workers' mounting requests for land within the hacienda boundaries. These requests were announced in an especially uninhibited way during the annual hacienda celebration: Catholic *corpus cristi* for the hacienda owner; precolumbian *abagos* (the meaning of which has been largely forgotten) for his Quichua-speaking workers.

During this celebration the owner would set aside status considerations (that had increased in importance along with the growth of the hacienda labour force) and drink and dance with his workers in their ritual dances. At one of these celebrations, dancers apparently staged such a belligerent performance that the owner's son, visiting the hacienda, privately begged his father to put a ban on hacienda celebrations for the sake of his physical safety. This was not easy though: annual celebrations - when ritual drinking and dancing eroded the established hacienda hierarchy at least temporarily - became part of the established arrangements along with *huasipungo* and grazing rights.

After the years of "siege," the owner sold most of the hacienda for what was described to me as a symbolic price. After his death, his heirs finished off the job, selling the rest of the hacienda to hacienda workers and their relatives. By the 1950s, Quillcapamba had disappeared, engrossing family holdings in the older indigenous settlements and giving rise to a new community known as Chuchuqui. At approximately the same time, a similar fate befell two other hillside haciendas, Pilchibuela and San Javier.

To protect their newly acquired domains from the competing claims of urban dwellers, an increasing number of indigenous communities availed themselves of the 1937 Law of

Communes, electing community councils (*cabildos*) and obtaining legal recognition. The result was a significant transfer of Otavalo's hillside hacienda land to community control. It is worth noting that this happened without any overt collective action or government intervention, which points, among other things, to the amazing ability of these peasants to achieve their goals by using hidden pressures in the overall context of white-mestizo domination.

In the cases of Quillcapamba, Pilchibuela and San Javier, peasant pressures conspired with low land fertility to provoke the demise of haciendas.^{viii} On the fertile lowlands, this demise had to wait for land reform legislation passed in 1964 and 1973 by progressive military regimes. Due to various factors, it was implemented in a curtailed and diluted fashion, adding fuel to the lingering conflict between haciendas and communities and forcing some of the former to sell their lands to the latter.^{ix} This was the outcome, for example, for Hacienda Pinsaqui, located on the lowlands in a densely populated indigenous area.

For decades prior to land reform, Pinsaqui had been the site of a tug-of-war between the owners and the neighbouring indigenous communities whose members worked on the hacienda mostly as *yanaperos*. As was often the case in this area, Pinsaqui *yanaperos* clearly took pride in challenging the hacienda order. Some ingeniously avoided their labour service while others grazed their cattle on the owner's pastures or used hacienda woods and springs without the mayordomo's permission. Hacienda managers retaliated, using whips and dogs or confiscating peasant livestock and personal belongings. An additional instrument to ensure compliance was the excessive use of cheap alcohol, known locally as *guarapo*. As in the case of Quillcapamba, this could easily turn into a double-edged sword during annual celebrations. In Pinsaqui, however, drinking seemed to become part of the labour process and its control:

He [the hacienda owner] always had a lot of booze for us [a former hacienda worker recalls as he laughs]. When we had to do the weeding, there was *guarapo*; cutting barley, *guarapo*; harvesting maize, *guarapo*; planting, *guarapo*; making ditches, *guarapo* again! [field interview]

As such, alcohol was mostly devoid of any ritual or political significance, blunting workers' capacities rather than pushing them into action.

This situation changed during the hacienda festival, known in Pinsaqui as *uyanzas*. Historically, *uyanzas* had been celebrated in indigenous peasant communities at the end of the harvest, with more prosperous families sharing their crops with those who helped them work in the fields. The hacienda celebrations imitated community and family festivals, at the same time reaffirming the dominant position of the hacienda. As in Quillcapamba, however, Pinsaqui workers took advantage of this opportunity to test and question - under a festive guise - the hacienda's dominance. Among other things, they "took over" a corn field assigned for this purpose by the owner (and against the will of the mayordomo who saw this as disrespectful and potentially dangerous). After collecting the corn, women workers, with corn cobs wrapped in their shawls, "broke" into the hacienda house which they normally entered only as servants. Having "chased" and "captured" the owner, they tied a shawl with cobs around his waist and took him triumphantly to the porch, where he had to distribute the cobs to his jubilant and jeering workers. It is hardly surprising that many local landowners tried to avoid organizing hacienda celebrations, as they also tried to avoid providing all their workers with access to land. In addition to putting the owners into an awkward and ambiguous position, these celebrations interfered with production by encroaching upon the limited time and space available for the haciendas' agricultural activities.^x

While the Quillcapamba and Pinsaqui cases illustrate hidden conflicts between haciendas

and adjacent communities, and the final victory of the latter, they differ considerably in terms of their historical and structural context. Contrary to Quillcapamba, Pinsaqui survived well into the 1960s when land reform legislation tilted the local balance of power, albeit only slightly, in favour of the indigenous communities. Furthermore, Pinsaqui's *yanaperos*, especially those living in the community of Carabuela, combined family agriculture with artisan production. As a result, they benefited from the commercial expansion of Otavalo's indigenous textile crafts that took place in connection with the post-war economic boom and growth of tourism.

Spinning, weaving ponchos, and knitting sweaters for sale left Carabuela's *yanaperos* with little time for, or interest in, continuing labour service on the hacienda. Moreover, as their monetary income increased considerably, so did their interest in purchasing land. Caught between the continuing animosity of their workers, the threat of government intervention in the process of land reform, growing labour shortages, and escalating indigenous offers to buy their land, the owners of Pinsaqui opted to subdivide and sell the hacienda. By the 1970s, its land was absorbed by Carabuela and other local communities.

Both Quillcapamba and Pinsaqui were located in densely populated indigenous areas with an ancient ethnic culture and exceptionally strong communal traditions, characteristics absent in Cajas, a mountainous area on the border with Pichincha province. Unpopulated prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, it was colonized by indigenous migrants from Pichincha, probably in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.^{xi} Hacienda expansion took place at approximately the same time, largely through the extension into Imbabura of the famous Pichincha haciendas, owned by powerful families firmly integrated in national economic and political circuits.

Contrary to the situation in Quillcapamba or Pinsaqui, the Cajas haciendas relied on *huasipungo* relations, with most *huasipungueros* brought, unsurprisingly, from Pichincha province.

Hacienda owners in Cajas had almost absolute power over their *huasipungueros* who could be uprooted and moved by their patron from one hacienda to another, according to production needs, or even "lost" and "won" (along with the land on which they lived) in gambling. While enjoying access to relatively large subsistence plots (by community standards), they had to work on the hacienda for six or seven days a week, experiencing daily humiliation and abuse. To select the chiefs of work gangs, for instance, mayordomos were known to organize mock fights among the workers. The winners were promoted and losers whipped. Drinking competitions were also encouraged, with the losers also whipped. Drinking and fighting generally reached its peak at San Juan, a local festival in Cajas tightly controlled by Catholic priests and hacienda owners.

All the *huasipungueros* and *yanaperos* had to "*pasar el gallo*" [sponsor the San Juan celebrations, which among other things involved a symbolic offering of roosters - *gallos*, in Spanish - to hacienda owners]. People agreed to do it because the priest convinced them that if they did so, ... in the other life, after death, the rooster would flap its wings to put out the flames in which they would burn. ... The patrons would also encourage the mayordomos, and for no good reason at all, they would say to workers who had grudges against other workers: "damn it, San Juan is coming. If you are men, beat the shit out of them! Kill one at least!" That's how they manipulated the people [field interview].

To be sure, there were signs of hidden resistance on the Cajas haciendas too: stories were circulated about unscrupulous priests who, long ago, had stolen the fertile lowlands from the indigenous people; the church statues of saints had to "compete" with peasant ones, dressed in ponchos and jealously guarded in Pijal houses, etc. However, this resistance failed to develop into a hidden counter-offensive that ended in the sale of hacienda land, as in Quillcapamba and Pinsaqui.

While the land reform ended *huasipungo* relations in Cajas - as it did in other areas of Otavalo - it was not accompanied by significant sales of hacienda land to peasant communities. Lacking an artisan tradition, Cajas peasants did not benefit from the commercial boom of the 1960s. Their participation in the commodity economy was reduced to work for minimum or below minimum wages, which generally precluded saving [Korovkin, 1997b]. Moreover, firmly grounded in the aristocratic tradition, Cajas hacienda owners refused to sell land to their indigenous workers even when they had enough money to buy it.

The only exception in Cajas was Hacienda San Agustin, owned initially by the Catholic Church. After the 1909 liberal revolution, San Agustin, along with many other Church-owned haciendas, was brought under state control [Bustamante and Prieto, 1985]. These exceptional circumstances account for the greater scope of the land reform in San Agustin. After transferring *huasipungo* plots to hacienda workers in the early 1960s, the Ministry of Agriculture proposed to transform the centrally-managed area into an agricultural production cooperative, named Mojanda Cooperative. To the dismay of public officials, few if any of San Agustin's former workers showed interest in joining the cooperative, which they perceived as an alien and hierarchically structured body. As one of them pointed out later, "[m]ore than anything else, there seemed to be no need for a cooperative. Perhaps what people thought was: how much longer are we going to live under the patrons' law? ...That's why nobody was really interested in joining the coop [field interview]."

A cooperative was eventually formed by a small group of workers who accepted the Ministry's initiative in order to obtain access to additional land, even though they disliked and resented the cooperative organization. Since the cooperative incurred sizeable debts with the Ministry as a result of the land transfer, all important production decisions were controlled by government officials, which, in the eyes of San

Agustin peasants, amounted to continuation of "the patrons' law."

Even worse was the fact that the cooperative's statutes did not allow the creation of new family holdings for members' children out of the "scientifically" managed cooperative property. New family plots were carved out in the cooperative area anyway, with its administrative council turning a blind eye to this practice. Even though council members agreed that this practice eroded cooperative profits, the need to ensure subsistence for all members of local families was seen as paramount.^{xii} Thus, like private haciendas, the cooperative also found itself under siege, though this time a siege mounted by its own members.

As soon as Mojanda Cooperative cleared its debts with the Ministry of Agriculture and obtained formal property rights, most cooperative land was subdivided into small holdings to accommodate young families. Along with older cooperative members, the new generation of San Agustin residents organized a new indigenous peasant community, San Agustin de Cajas. Among the advantages of community organization, they generally mentioned the distribution of land holdings to young families and a more democratic and inclusive form of government with the community assembly attended by all residents rather than by heads of household only, as in the cooperative. No less importantly, they also pointed to the versatility and political strength of communal organization.

Contrary to the cooperative, which dedicated itself almost exclusively to production matters, the community leadership was able to obtain governmental and, most importantly, nongovernmental funds for infrastructural projects such as roads, electricity, schools, and a medical post. In the post-reform neoliberal period - with the Ministry of Agriculture on the defensive and community organization on the rise nationally - the idea of state-sponsored cooperative agriculture had clearly lost its clout. Once again, the old and the new - indigenous pressure and a new economic and political climate -- combined to complete the

transfer of former hacienda land to indigenous communities.

Otavaló: From Hidden Resistance To Organized Political Action

Hidden resistance to hacienda dominance in Otavaló evolved into open political protest in the 1970s and 1980s, as indigenous peasant and nonpeasant communities developed local and provincial inter-communal organizations, represented at the national level by Ecuador's Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE) [Chiriboga, 1986; Ibarra, 1992; Selverston, 1994]. The role of national political leadership in indigenous struggle should not be overestimated though. One of CONAIE's major political assets was its unprecedented ability to build on local cultural practices and longstanding covert struggles, which distinguished it from two other national organizations that had claimed indigenous peasant support, FEI and FENOC. FEI (Ecuador's Indian Federation) was organized in 1944 by the Communist Party with the objective of incorporating indigenous peasants into the struggle for socialism. FEI leaders focused their organizational efforts on the *huasipungueros*, whom they identified as the incipient agricultural proletariat. Prior to the land reform, FEI-sponsored rural unions and associations gained considerable influence in Pichincha and Chimborazo, that they later lost to indigenous federations affiliated with CONAIE. FEI never had a significant presence in Imbabura, not even in Cajas which was structurally and culturally similar to Pichincha. The main reason is probably the relatively low incidence of *huasipungo* combined with strong ethnic tradition in the core Otavaló area. In other words, what was interpreted by many observers as Indians' political backwardness was more likely a sign of indigenous cultural and political autonomy.

In the 1960s, FEI was joined by the National Federation of Peasant Organizations

(FENOC). Linked to the urban trade union movement of socialist and progressive Catholic persuasion, FENOC's leadership shared FEI's assumptions about the class nature of indigenous peasant struggles. Over time, however, FENOC incorporated ethnic elements into its political ideology and gave rise to a sister organization, FENOC-I ("I," for indigenous, National Federation of Peasant and Indigenous Organizations). In Imbabura, both FENOC and FENOC-I had strongholds in the indigenous peasant communities of Cotacachi Canton, neighbouring on Otavaló Canton. In Otavaló, however, FENOC was able to gain influence only among the *yanaperos* of Hacienda Quinchuqui in the vicinity of Pinsaqui.

In the 1960s, Quinchuqui's association of *yanaperos* demanded wage payment in accordance with existing labour legislation. It is probable, however, that, as in the case of Chimobrazo's *huasipunguero* political mobilization, what was actually at stake was land [Sylva, 1986]. In the 1970s, the association took over the hacienda which, after several years of struggle, was transformed by the Ministry of Agriculture into the Quinchuqui Agricultural Production Cooperative, similar to Mojanda in Cajas. And, like its Cajas counterpart, Quinchuqui was eventually subdivided, under pressure from its members, into family holdings which were absorbed by neighbouring communities.

FENOC's influence in Otavaló, limited as it was, was soon challenged by a new generation of indigenous political leaders. Unpersuaded by the mystique of proletarian revolution, they turned to indigenous land and cultural rights as the centrepiece of their new ideology. In the 1970s, a group of indigenous intellectuals from the core Otavaló area and community leaders from Cajas created the Indigenous and Peasant Federation of Imbabura (FICI). Along with provincial indigenous federations from Chimborazo and Pastaza Provinces, FICI played a crucial role in the organization of CONAIE.

As in Imbabura, some CONAIE leaders came from relatively well-off indigenous families

and had many years of schooling. Others were of peasant background, skilled in peasant arts of resistance. Despite their obvious social differences, both groups of leaders had - or were remembered as earlier having - kin in peasant communities. Despite reservations inspired by their relative prosperity, education, and/or political skills, they became seen by many of Otavalo's indigenous people as "their" political leadership, probably for the first time since the disappearance of the *curacas* (see note 7). The growth of indigenous leadership in Otavalo coincided with, and to some extent was a product of, nation-wide economic and political changes. The 1964 and 1973 land reforms, in combination with the oil boom of the 1970s, shattered service-tenure relations in the countryside and triggered a series of covert and overt confrontations between indigenous peasant communities and a new class of capitalist farmers in dairy production and the cut-flower industry. These confrontations were especially intense in Cajas where the hacienda system had successfully survived earlier periods of hidden counter-offensive and land reform. The owners of three Cajas haciendas - Clemencia, San Francisco and Cruz de Cajas - opted for selling parts of the hacienda land to outsiders, ignoring the offers of their workers who, in many cases, were ready to pay only a "symbolic" price for what they considered their land.

The owners of Clemencia, for example, sold part of their land to middle-class families from the neighbouring town of San Pablo. Historically, these urban families had been involved in administration and trade but in the 1960s, in a climate of state-sponsored market expansion, they were willing to try their fortunes in dairy agribusiness.^{xiii} In 1967, under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, they formed the Social Justice Agricultural Cooperative on former Clemencia land. Even though this sector of the hacienda had been used mostly as pasture for the hacienda cattle, *yanaperos* from local communities had also used it to obtain drinking water, cut grass for their domestic animals, and collect herbs for their own meals. The former

owner did not mind any of these activities, as he did not seem to mind *yanapero*-owned cattle sometimes grazing on his premises either.

What appeared to the new owners as administrative laxity was in fact a tacit agreement between the former owner and *yanaperos* who in a sense agreed to disagree about property rights. Legally, it was the hacienda's land; by custom it also belonged to the *yanaperos*. Such subtleties were not part of the cultural repertoire of the new cooperative members who insisted on enforcing their legal property rights and confiscated peasant livestock grazing on their property along with their owners' much valued personal belongings against fines in the form of labour service. Clemencia *yanaperos*, most of them from the community of Huaycopungo, fought back, forming the Huaycopungo Agricultural Association. Assisted by FICI and CONAIE, the Association filed a land claim with the Ministry of Agriculture. When this legal action failed, Association members took over the disputed land with the support of Huaycopungo and other local communities. They also organized several protest marches. Accompanied by musicians and dancers, the protesters carried San Juan roosters, not as a traditional sign of respect for the hacienda and church authorities, but as a new symbol of their own strength.

The Clemencia conflict developed over the 1970s and played an important role in helping FICI to define its political identity as both an ethnic and a class-based organization. In the 1980s similar conflicts were reported in San Francisco and Cruz de Cajas. Tired out by the tug-of-war with *yanaperos* and lured by skyrocketing land prices, San Francisco's owner subdivided the hacienda and put it on sale. The *yanaperos*, organized in the San Francisco Agricultural Association, offered to buy part of it, but the owner asked for the market price, far beyond the Association's ability to pay. This appeared an outrage to Association members. Virtually all of them formed part of San Francisco Community, created from the former *huasipunguero* settlement after the abolition of *huasipungo*. Even though

most of their ancestors came from the hacienda owner's properties in Pichincha, they claimed the hacienda as their ancestral land:

It was our fathers and grandfathers who worked the hacienda, for more than one hundred years. And now they want to sell it, some people say, to a foreign company. ... [If the company wants to buy it,] it can pay whatever it feels like paying. But as for us, we have the right to a discount price, because this land is ours, and we have worked on it for a long time [field interview].

San Francisco's owner ignored his workers' protestations and sold the disputed land to a local capitalist farmer who intended to use it for dairy farming. As a first step, the new owner fenced the land and banned the livestock of former *yanaperos* from the hacienda, claiming, as one of the respondents later recalled indignantly, that their animals "were sick, that they had parasites, that they had worms!" Deprived of customary access to land, the Association took over the disputed pastures, filing a lawsuit in the Ministry of Agriculture (as in the case of Clemencia).

A third open confrontation took place in Cruz de Cajas, whose owner also put a portion of his land up for sale. The *yanaperos*, mostly from Pijal Community, organized an association (named after an indigenous hero, Ruminahui) and, as in the other two cases, offered to purchase the land collectively. The owner, however, sold it to a Colombian cut-flower company, apparently for a price considerably below the market rate. According to former *yanaperos*, he sold it so cheap to somebody else "because he was mad" at them. What first appeared to the management of the Colombian company as a bargain, quickly turned into a nightmare. When Association members saw company workers bringing construction materials for green houses, they decided it was time to act.

We saw them coming, with their engineers, topographers, security guards: all of them,

coming here, to our land. So we got the community together and said: what shall we do? The people said: well, let's evict them! There were three hundred of us, more or less, all in favour of kicking them out. We left [for the construction site] at 11 p.m. ... The security guards were there, asleep. We tied their hands while they were still sleeping. They had their firearms with them, but we took them all away. Then we carried tools, bricks, everything, to the community store, with the security guards stumbling along with us. And then we dug a ditch across the road. Don't you ever step on our land here! Don't you ever step on our land again! Don't you even try to step on our land again! [field interview]

After several rounds of negotiations, the company decided to pull out of the area, reselling the land to the Association for the same price they had paid. The story, however, did not end here. Emboldened by their success, Association members took over another sector of the hacienda in retaliation against the landowner who, in their opinion, had violated the customary rights and obligations they continued to respect:

We told them [the hacienda owners]: our commitment was to you. And you, why did you do this to us? Why did you trust those people [the Colombian company] more than us? [field interview]

The moralistic overtone of this statement, as well as the indignation of the *yanaperos* of Clemencia y San Francisco with what they considered unethical behaviour by the hacienda owners, recalls peasant responses to the capitalist modernization of large-scale agriculture in other parts of the Ecuadorean and Peruvian Andes [Crain, 1989; Handelman, 1975; Smith, 1989] and seems to provide support to Scott's moral economy argument. Still, the notion of moral economy does not adequately describe Andean cultural and structural realities.

As the previous discussion makes clear, in Otavalo, at least, relations between communities

and haciendas reflected profound ethnic and class antagonisms. In the 1940s and 1950s, this antagonism failed to develop into open confrontations partly because of the repressive political environment and partly because of customary rights and obligations that provided indigenous peasants with minimum economic security, no matter how much they might despise and resent their oppressors. Over the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, this customary system was increasingly dismantled by modernizing landowners. The local and national political climate also changed. In the countryside traditional hacienda owners who ruled their domains, whip in hand, were replaced by relatively polite and infinitely more distant capitalist farmers. Moreover, in 1979 the military regime gave way to a political democracy. None of this precluded the periodic use of repression against organized peasant action, of course.

The land conflicts in San Francisco and Clemencia, for example, involved the use of force by hacienda owners.^{xiv} Nevertheless, the land reform and transition to democracy created a favourable climate for organized rural political action. In effect, Otavalo's land take-overs became part of a nation-wide wave of land seizures, which culminated in 1990 in a week long national indigenous uprising, coordinated by CONAIE. In many cases, land seizures were triggered by the collapse of customary arrangements in processes of capitalist restructuring of the hacienda. Indigenous organizations, however, did not seek to restore such arrangements but (in addition to cultural demands, advanced mostly by new indigenous intellectuals) they sought legal access to hacienda land and support for small agricultural producers in the context of communal organization [Rosero, 1990; Almeida et al., 1993]. The evolution of the three agricultural associations that emerged from of the land conflicts in Clemencia, San Francisco, and Cruz de Cajas illustrates this point. In the 1980s and 1990s, with the Ministry of Agriculture trimmed and restructured along neoliberal economic lines, much of the funding for collective

land purchases in Otavalo came from a fund created as the result of a debt-for-development swap between Holland and Ecuador. The fund was managed by FEPP (Ecuador's *Populorum Progressio* Fund), a Catholic-based nongovernmental organization which also provided technical assistance to indigenous peasant communities and associations. FEPP's institutional commitment to the idea of sustainable grassroots development contrasted with the Ministry of Agriculture's state-centred and market-oriented developmentalist ideology. FEPP was also much more sensitive to the peasants' cultural and political concerns. Thus, the three associations, supported by FEPP, formed part of local communities and worked in coordination with FICI and CONAIE.

In tiny San Francisco, there was no difference between the association and the community, with one member of the community council in charge of the association management. In Pijal, with several thousand residents, Ruminahui Association included only a small segment of families. The Association leaders, however, explicitly recognized the superior authority of the communal council and assembly. As one of them put it, using a characteristic kinship metaphor:

[w]e respect the community. We take care of both, the association and the community. To us the community is like a father. That is, we feel like we're its sons. When something has to be done in the community, we put on hold what we are doing in the association and give a hand ... with the roads, or schools, or community houses. It's us [the association] who start all these things in the community. That's the way it is: we start things here [field interview].

The acceptance of communal authorities was rooted not only in a common culture and shared experiences but was also a product of practical necessity. Since Pijal community leaders were active in the organization of FICI and

CONAIE, community councils were also able to provide the Association with legal and political support. Moreover, due to their dual membership, Ruminahui families enjoyed access to the community-controlled social and physical infrastructure: schools, roads, electricity, and running water. On the other hand, involved in collective agriculture providing a relatively steady source of cash income, Ruminahui could cover some of the communal expenses, notably those of the San Juan festival. In the 1990s, the Association took part in a province-wide event organized by FICI and known by its prehispanic name, Inti-Raimi, to symbolize the end of the era of Catholic priests and hacienda owners. Attending the San Juan mass in church became a question of personal preference. The centre of celebrations moved to Pijal's community plaza, and the symbolic offering of roosters now circulated between the new centres of local power: community council, community schools, and agricultural associations.

Conclusion: Some Reflections

Turton [1986: 41] is right to note the importance of the specific social contexts of hidden struggles.^{xv} Outside such contexts, the concept of EFPR is little more than an umbrella for phenomena that are superficially similar yet substantially different. Combined with adequate historical and structural analysis, however, EFPR provides a useful tool for the study of rural politics in general and rural political protest in particular.

One of the historical specificities of peasant resistance in Otavalo, as probably in many other Andean areas, is that it was (and remains) peasant and ethnic at the same time. This was often overlooked in Ecuador's academic and political circles, enamoured with a narrow version of class analysis, until the rise of ethnic-based indigenous organizations in the late 1970s and 1980s demonstrated the limits of their approach. The new indigenous movements also suggested

the role of hidden resistance as a basis of (subsequent) organized political action.

Prior to land reform, resistance was directed largely, although not exclusively, at the precapitalist commercial hacienda as the dominant rural institution introduced by colonialism. Rather than becoming permanent bonded labourers on the hacienda (*huasipungueros*, often compared to slaves but with access to land) Otavalo's indigenous peasants opted for what Orlove [1991: 30], in his study of relations between Peruvian peasants and the state, described as "desistance." Unable to overturn the hacienda system, they tried to distance themselves from it, eking out their living on their tiny plots of land and limiting their interaction with the hacienda, if possible, to two days a week service (*yanapa*). In the context of white-mestizo domination, this appeared as the lesser evil: *yanapa* gave access to hacienda pastures, while permitting a relative cultural and political autonomy. Indeed, it seems that much, if not most, *huasipunguero* labour in Otavalo was provided by the descendants of semi-aculturated Pichincha *huasipungueros* rather than by local residents.

This should not surprise anybody suspicious of the "passive Indian" myth of the 1960s, that associated *huasipungo* with the Indian and both with political apathy. Not only did Otavalo's indigenous peasants preserve their relative autonomy through "desistance" tactics, they also used it to start the internal siege of the hacienda, with *yanapa* or *huasipungo* as a Trojan horse for claims to hacienda land.^{xvi} This hidden counter-offensive to the overt triumph of the hacienda system often led to the partition and sale of hacienda land to labourers from local communities, who promptly incorporated it into their communal domains.

To be sure, there were also other factors at work. Market competition contributed to the collapse of haciendas in remote and/or low-productivity areas, while land reform legislation could tilt the local balance of power in favour of the hacienda workers, albeit slightly. Market competition and land reform, however, took place

in the context of a hidden war between communities and haciendas, helping or hindering peasant efforts to (re)gain control over hacienda land. The term “war” may appear exaggerated in this context. There were no armed confrontations in Otavalo, at least not on a regular basis, but there was a multitude of covert acts of defiance reminiscent of guerrilla warfare. There were also punitive operations led by haciendas: corporal punishment and confiscation of peasant property. These continuous confrontations hardly fit Scott’s notion of a moral economy predicated on a shared culture of reciprocity and subsistence ethics.^{xvii}

The concept of patron-clientelism, used by Paige [1975] to describe hacienda relations, is not quite appropriate either. Patron-client relations presuppose economic individualism and political passivity among members of the lower classes.

This clearly was not the case in Otavalo where hacienda labourers, and especially *yanaperos*, maintained a strong sense of communal solidarity and engaged in numerous covert acts of resistance.

While the notion of everyday forms of resistance, or a hidden ethnic and class war, probably best describes relations between Otavalo’s communities and haciendas, this war remained hidden, and not only because of the highly skewed distribution of power and the threat of repression. The warring parties were also bound together by a grudging recognition of a mutual, albeit asymmetrical, dependence: hacienda owners depended on indigenous people for labour, while the latter depended on hacienda owners for access to additional land. Landowners could not rely on coercion alone to ensure an uninterrupted supply of labour during peak agricultural seasons but also had to make concessions to indigenous peasants. Most importantly, they had to bow to their demand for land and accommodate, albeit superficially, some elements of their culture. The result was an elaborate and negotiated nexus of customary rights and obligations, above all land rights and labour obligations.

Given the underlying antagonisms, both parties sought their own advantage: peasants surreptitiously expanded their use of hacienda resources; landowners abused and terrorized their workers. And yet both probably recognized that without implicit compromise, the hidden war would escalate into an open one, an outcome that both parties tried to avoid. In the context of the 1940s and 1950s and its balance of forces, any open war would probably have ended in massacre of the peasants, also incurring high costs in the form of labour shortages and material damage for the hacienda owners.

Circumstances changed with the acceleration of the transition to capitalist agriculture in Andean haciendas following land reform. Significantly, peasants’ hidden counter-offensive contributed to and, to some extent, shaped this transition. Low-productivity haciendas were subdivided and sold relatively cheaply to peasant families. Better endowed haciendas were transformed into capitalist farms, and unruly peasants - with their families, crops, and animals - expelled and replaced with more obedient wage workers disciplined by the labour market.

Indeed, in the Andean context, the figure of the proletarian with nothing to lose but his or her chains was certainly more attractive to modernizing hacienda owners than the communal peasant with his or her ancient and rebellious culture. Thus, the most important cumulative effect of hidden peasant resistance in Otavalo was socio-economic differentiation of the haciendas (parallel to socio-economic differentiation of the peasantry) in the capitalist transformation of agriculture.^{xviii} In short, “weak” haciendas were swallowed by surrounding communities while “strong” ones developed into capitalist production units, severing customary ties with the surrounding peasantry.

Scott [1986] describes a similar process in the more homogeneous social context of a Malaysian village. In his analysis, the breakdown of what he called human dependencies in the process of the green revolution resulted in a

hidden war between impoverished and marginalized peasants and well-off capitalist-minded villagers. Similar decline in relations of reciprocity following land reform and capitalist agricultural modernization in Peru is identified by Berg [1992] as an important factor in the growth of organized political violence in the 1970s and 1980s. In his study of Brazil's Contestado rebellion, Diacon [1990] also points to social crisis generated by capitalist transformation of rural economy, in that case leading to a millennial movement.

The decline of customary land and labour relations in Otavalo produced different, though equally significant, results. The hidden war between communities and haciendas, together with the emergence of a new ethnic leadership in Otavalo, was conducive to the development of indigenous political organizations which combined direct political action, such as land take-overs, with legal action and political negotiation.

This outcome can be understood only in the context of national political processes, and especially democratization, singled out by Kerkvliet [1993] as the most important factor in the transition from hidden resistance to open political struggles. The concept of democratization, however, must be used with caution. In rural Ecuador community-based organizational activities were spurred not so much by the transition to liberal democracy as by land reforms implemented under military regimes. By undermining the oppressive power of large landowners, these reforms made an important contribution to democratization in rural Ecuador. The subsequent transition to liberal democracy, however, enabled the relatively uninhibited operation of indigenous political organizations that originated with the land reforms. It also facilitated the development of a political alliance between indigenous and non-indigenous popular organizations, characteristic of the 1990 uprising.

As in the Philippines, local leadership, skilful in the arts of hidden resistance, played an important role in organized political action. But so did urban political leadership, whose importance is

downplayed by Kerkvliet in his analysis of land conflicts. What is remarkable though in Ecuador and especially Otavalo, is that this was an indigenous political leadership without any explicit party or trade union affiliation. In contrast to left-wing, largely white-mestizo organizers associated with FEI and FENOC, Otavalo's indigenous leaders of urban background had relatively little difficulty in relating to the peasantry or positioning themselves in the long history of hidden struggles between community and hacienda.

In effect, many of them came from relatively prosperous families of peasants and artisans who had been investing in trade and education for their children. Not peasants any more, these new leaders developed an ideology that emphasized ethnic grievances dating back to the conquest and colonization. Curiously, this ideology appealed to indigenous peasants who found themselves increasingly involved in migratory labour as a result of the demographic pressure on land. It is no exaggeration to note that for the first time since the demise of the ethnic aristocracy, Otavalo's peasantry embraced a leadership that they identified as their own, however much they might also criticize it. Thus, peasant differentiation contributed to the resurgence of ethnic values which in the 1980s and 1990s provided a powerful glue for the progressively proletarianized indigenous communities [Korovkin 1997b, 1998].

The rise of indigenous organizations in the context of capitalist expansion and political democratization reduced the importance, and changed the nature, of everyday forms of resistance in Otavalo's countryside, but did not eliminate them altogether. Their continuing prominence was suggested in the case of state-controlled cooperatives, such as San Agustin de Cajas. Even though the Ministry of Agriculture played a benign role during the land reform period, it prevented peasants from adopting patterns of production structured around household and community, which would probably have been their first choice if given a chance to

participate in drafting the land reform legislation. Given how land reform was implemented, however, San Agustín workers confronted an alien form of organization which they opposed by deploying their usual hidden weapons. The *de facto* and later *de jure* subdivision of cooperative land into family parcels and the formation of San Agustín community parallels the fate of “weak” haciendas in Otavalo. It also reminds us of the successes of peasant hidden resistance to collective forms of agriculture in other parts of the world.

While opposing capitalist modernization led by private landowners or by the Ministry of Agriculture, Otavalo’s peasants have absorbed many elements characteristic of modern capitalist economy and society. Elements of historical continuity, often emphasized by indigenous political leaders and nonindigenous students of ethnohistory, should not obfuscate profound changes in both the content and context of indigenous peasant struggles. Stern [1987] correctly points to a dialectical unity of resistance and adaptation in the Andean world, while Starn [1992: 94] insists that indigenous peasant values and protest should be seen “as being formulated from particular positions *within* the global village.” No matter how much amusement the latter term might give Otavalo’s peasants, they would probably agree with both statements. While claiming hacienda land, they availed themselves, when possible, of white-mestizo arrangements, customary and/or formal (legal). They also intertwined their social practices with those of white-mestizo cultural baggage, starting from the use of *guarapo* and ending with the election of community councils.

The full scope and implications of this amalgamation in Otavalo became visible only after the disappearance of the precapitalist commercial hacienda and the rise of indigenous organizations. Far from advocating a return to the (precapitalist or precolonial) *status quo ante*, Otavalo’s indigenous communities linked their aspirations to governmental and nongovernmental organizations that supply them with credit and

technical assistance. Having subdivided most of the cooperative land, San Agustín community members maintained their close ties with commodity economy. Under pressure from nongovernmental organizations, Otavalo’s agricultural associations also adopted a collective form of agriculture expected to facilitate the generation of a commercial surplus. Contrary to state-sponsored cooperatives, however, such agricultural associations situated themselves from the very start within the jurisdiction of communal authorities and developed a symbiotic relation with the surrounding peasant community, with its strong interest in roads and schools.

This evidence goes against the concept of moral economy as the main driving force of either everyday peasant defiance or organized political protest in the context of capitalist expansion and increasing political openness. Undoubtedly, moral outrage at the violation by modernizing hacienda-owners of customary arrangements, provided a strong impulse for peasant covert and overt action. However, there were also other values involved, those that Kerkvliet [1993], Foley [1990], and León [1994] identify as basic universal rights, such as the rights to education and a decent, not simply subsistence, standard of living, inseparable from the idea of full citizenship in a modern nation-state.

There is a certain irony in this endorsement of modern social and political values by Otavalo’s indigenous peasantry, for it came at a moment when notions of basic rights and their national political conditions were subverted by the proponents of economic liberalization and globalization. At the turn of the millennium, Otavalo’s indigenous peasant communities emerged fortified, if not exactly victorious, after decades if not centuries of hidden and open struggles with the hacienda, only to confront new and formidable political challenges.

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Endnotes

- i See Scott [1985; 1986; 1987; 1990], Kerkvliet [1986; 1990; 1993], Adas [1981; 1986]. For a critical analysis, conceptual extension, and/or application of the EFPR approach in the Latin American context, see Joseph [1990], Joseph and Nugent [1994], Colburn [1986], Edelman [1990], Gutmann [1993], Orlove [1991] and Vanderveest [1993].
- ii Scott [1985] provides a detailed analysis of peasant socio-economic differentiation as a result of the green revolution, while Kerkvliet [1993: 479] specifically points out that “participants in the Philippine take-overs have been primarily villagers without land.”
- iii Glave [1990] uses the concept of forced peasantization to describe the origins of the Andean peasantry. Stern [1987] emphasized the limits of a narrow class approach to the study of peasant movements, pointing to the ethnic underpinnings of Andean peasant politics. In the Ecuadorean case, this approach is adopted by Ramón Valerza [1987, 1990] and Thurner [1993].
- iv A similar cultural blend was described in the Ecuadorean case by Rosero under the name of the Andean Code [Rosero, 1990]. For a general discussion of the millennial underpinnings of peasant rebellions and guerrilla movements, see Desai [1990].
- v For a discussion of the colonial ethnic rebellions, see Moreno Yáñez [1976] and San Félix [1986]. *Nuestras comunidades* [1994] represents an attempt to incorporate indigenous oral history into the provincial system of bilingual education.
- vi In many cases they also received small cash wages and help in the case of an emergency. *Huasipungo*, an Ecuadorean version of service tenure, is discussed by Guerrero [1983] and Oberem [1977].
- vii In the 1950s and 1960s, communal authorities in Otavalo were represented by two sets of officials: *alcaldes y regidores*, appointed by local government officials and/or clergy, and *cabildos*, elected by community members in accordance with the 1937 Law of Communes. The difference between appointed and elected communal officials was less pronounced than might appear at first glance. In both cases communal officials came from the most influential indigenous families, often the descendants of hereditary chiefs (*curacas*), and had to mediate relations between their communities and what the latter saw as the white-mestizo system of government. For discussions of communal authorities, see Sánchez Parga [1986, 1993] and Lentz [1986].
- viii A similar process of disintegration of haciendas in the Peruvian Andes is discussed by Caballero [1981].
- ix For a brief overview of Ecuador’s land reform, see Zevallos L. [1989]. Contrasting interpretations of the consequences of the land reform in Ecuador are offered by Velasco [1979], Barsky [1988] and Korovkin [1997a].

x Crain [1989], in her analysis of *uyanzas* on Imbabura haciendas, suggests that exorbitant costs involved in the organization of traditional annual celebrations were one of the factors behind the capitalist modernization of the hacienda.

xi Pijal, the largest and oldest of the Cajas communities, has a land title dated 1720.

xii A similar practice is discussed by Almeida Vinueza [1984]. Godoy [1991] argues that one of the most important functions of common fields in Andean communities was to serve as a land fund for successive generations.

xiii For an analysis of state support for dairy production, see Cosse [1984] and Commander and Peek [1987].

xiv The owners hired armed guards who terrorized the indigenous communities. At some point, the military and the police were called in. Several people were injured, killed, or jailed, and in San Francisco, houses were set on fire.

xv White [1986] makes a similar observation in her case study of Vietnam.

xvi In a similar vein, de la Torre [1989] describes the ability of bonded labourers on Andean haciendas to manipulate debt peonage to their advantage.

xvii Scott's concept of moral economy provoked a prolonged and heated academic debate; see Popkin [1979], Paige [1983], Skopol [1992], Hawes [1990], Pripstein Posusney [1993], Lichbach [1994], among others.

xviii There exists a vast body of academic literature on peasant socio-economic differentiation in Latin America. For a brief review, see Kay [1995]; for a study of peasant differentiation in Otavalo, see Korovkin [1997b].