

Minds reminds us of the enormity of the task that Confederates had before them during the Civil War. Not only did they have to conduct a military effort and create a new political entity; they also had to create a new cultural identity in order to coalesce as a true nation. Bernath's work shows us how the failure of these first two tasks helped to lead to the failure of the third.

–Angela F. Murphy

FLEEING LEVIATHAN

James C. Scott: *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. Pp. xviii, 464. \$35.00.)

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For students of society across the *longue durée* who are eager for a readable and challenging approach to understanding the ways in which the social organization of lowland states and that of upland communities have interacted across history, James Scott's latest book, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, is a veritable feast, alike for specialists of Southeast Asia and for nonspecialists. Borrowing Willem van Schendel's concept of Zomia, or the area of mountainous Asia that spans seven nation states, Scott argues that groups living in these highlands are not any sort of survivals of primitive "pre-state" peoples, but rather are groups that have escaped the taxes, corvée, conscription, and other ties that would otherwise bind them to state-building projects in the valleys. If Scott's influential works were an LP record, *The Art of Not Being Governed* would be the flip side to *Seeing Like a State*. This is a major argument that goes against Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*: it is not the nature of society to become subordinate to a state-building project, but rather there are many instances in which groups will flee these very projects in favor of adopting other modes of social organization. As Scott puts it, "virtually everything about these people's livelihoods ... can be read as strategic positionings designed to keep the state at arm's length" (x).

Scott does, however, make the caveat that this is no longer the case, since emergent technologies of transportation, communication, and surveillance preclude the possibility of groups escaping the state. For the peoples of Zomia, escaping the state is hardly a political endeavor alone; this project also entails technologies and modes of production that lend themselves to political organization, including illiteracy as well as certain foodcrops that need not be harvested en masse. As Scott argues, the concept of Zomia is an attempt to push the limits of "area" studies in that it is the result neither of national boundaries nor of strategic conceptions; in this sense, the

concept is a breath of fresh air for those caught in the “nation = people = culture” trap of area studies of the twentieth century, and offers new paths for students new to area studies as well.

The Art of Not Being Governed is divided into ten chapters (including a “Chapter Six and a Half”), starting with the conceptualization of Zomia and moving on to chapters on geographic spaces, governance, farming and modes of production, notions of the savage and the civilized, the social geography of hill areas, culture and modes of production that resist state appropriation, oral histories, and ideas about literacy. Prior to publication, Scott spent considerable time on the lecture circuit giving academic audiences a sneak preview of the book's major argument, and the historical richness and incredible breadth of data presented is clearly the result of years of careful work and revision. Since the book's publication, numerous scholarly panels and discussions have been formed to apply and critique Scott's arguments, making the book perhaps his most influential monograph to date.

One of Scott's central arguments is that hill peoples are not a primitive antecedent but rather a group of peoples that escaped lowland civilizing projects—or, as Scott writes, “the dichotomy between hill and valley is established by the historical fact of flight from the lowland state by a portion of its population” (136). This claim is challenged by archaeological evidence of Hoabhinian sites found at higher elevations, long before valley sites are to be found (Schepartz et al., “Upland Resources and the Early Palaeolithic Occupation of Southern China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Burma,” *World Archaeology* 32, no. 1 [2000]: 3). Of course, this does not preclude the possibility of groups of people fleeing state-building projects; perhaps some populations were never subservient to states in the first place.

Finally, as the book makes many nods at notions of anarchy, it could have benefited from more explicit engagement with the latter. It often requires considerable effort to live beyond the state; it does not just happen naturally. On a smaller scale, and based on years of ethnographic fieldwork in upland Southeast Asia, Edmund Leach presents a compelling argument regarding hill-valley interrelations in his classic *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (LSE, 1954), where individuals, depending on their needs and the season, can oscillate between lowland Shan feudal societies, modes of production, language, and systems of kinship, and shift to those of the upland Kachin.

Overall, *The Art of Not Being Governed* offers a wonderfully broad analysis of *longue durée* upland history and a rich and challenging introduction to a new way of conceptualizing history in the region. It would benefit any student of area studies, history, anthropology, or political science to read this volume, and it could profitably be used in courses in any of those disciplines.

—Jane M. Ferguson