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Los valles olvidados: Pasado y presente en la utilizacion de recursos en la Ceja de Selva, Peru/The Forgotten Valleys: Past and Present in the Utilization of Resources in the Ceja de Selva, Peru (review)

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Inge Schjellerup, Mikael Kamp Sørensen, Carolina Espinoza, Victor Quipuscoa & Victor Peña. **Los valles olvidados: Pasado y presente en la utilización de recursos en la Ceja de Selva, Perú/The Forgotten Valleys: Past and Present in the Utilization of Resources in the Ceja de Selva, Peru.** [Ethnographic Monographs, No. 1.] Copenhagen: The National Museum of Denmark. 2003. ii + 444 pp., maps, tables, figures, references, and appendix. \$21.95 paperback (ISBN 87-89384-99-7).

This tome's wide range of information focuses on a 90-km long zone lying within two drainage basins in the three Peruvian departments of Amazonas, San Martín and La Libertad. Chachapoyas, 50-100 km. to the northeast, is the urban reference point of note. High rainfall (2500-3000 mm) and humidity characterize the Huambo and Jelache valleys that, ecologically, are part of the *ceja de la montaña*. Constant drizzle, crop rot, strong currents in bridgeless rivers, dense bamboo thickets, and an abundance of *viboras ponzoñas* and zoonotic diseases, are some of the human challenges for both the inhabitant and the researcher. All along the eastern front of the Andes, the difficulties of carrying out field research in such an environment explain in good measure the dearth of studies. Project coordinator Inge Schjellerup, who has conducted studies in the wilds of northern Peru for almost 25 years, organized the research agenda in this roadless area, secured the funding and necessary permits, translated text, and wrote several sections.

Above all, the book presents a repertoire of diverse knowledge about the zone. Those looking for grand theorizations will be disappointed: the data is not shoehorned here into some preconceived framework. Its emphasis on the empirical is a refreshing change from the compulsive, almost pathetic, search for paradigmatic novelty. The book starts with the area's prehistory as revealed mainly in the descriptions of 26 surface sites, several of which were discovered by the main author. Partial excavation of a selected few of them allowed for fuller description. Stone constructions represent several periods; the last one is that of the Inca after ca. A.D. 1450. In the history chapter that follows, archival documents were used in conjunction with published chronicles to reconstruct the human presence in the region during the colonial and republican periods. From there, the book moves to the contemporary life of peasant inhabitants. Interviews and participant observation garner information on house types, education, folk beliefs (many brought from the highlands), religion (noting especially the growing influence of Pentecostalism), nutrition, health, livestock raising, crops, soils, trade (mostly coffee), and household economy. Three life histories provide authentic voices testifying to the challenges of living in this remote part of Peru. Other chapters are on vegetation, based in part on GIS analysis, and on plant use, whose identifications were backed up by hundreds of dried plant specimens,

The rich array of data provides answers and raises questions. It clarifies how the "in-betweenness" of the *ceja* environment, which converges the temperate and tropical, offers an intriguing overlap that helps to explain, for example, the presence of 77 different crops. The book's diachronic approach to human colonization contrasts the relatively dense Inca occupation during which stone terraces were used on which to grow maize and perhaps coca, and the sparse population that used swidden methods following the

Conquest. Most of the land was then largely abandoned and not until the latter part of the twentieth century was it reoccupied by Highlanders. Newcomers to the zone have altered much of the ceja vegetation in the valley. Soil erosion has become rampant. Settlers from the highlands have no deep folk knowledge or experience of how to use the land without harming the resource base. Another issue that the data raise is the meaning of isolation in a Andean peasant society. Remoteness from markets and services is born with equanimity, an Andean pattern of isolation that in North America has always been judged to be intolerable.

Beyond the information provided, I was struck by seven aspects of this book: (1) By bringing together an array of factual information on a defined area, the study enriches the characterization of place; (2) It has made me appreciate that, when dealing with little-known places, hard-gotten empirical facts are more valuable than facile pet theories or a priori assumptions; (3) By integrating past and present land use, one's understanding of both the nature of a place and the landscape changes that have occurred there are enhanced; (4) Personnel and institutions from North and South (two Danes and three Peruvians) can successfully collaborate in both research and publication; (5) A bilingual text potentially broadens readership to include not only academics, but also development agents and other interested members of the Peruvian public; (6) A lavish iconography, some of it polychromatic, vividly captures life and landscape; and (7) Books filled with factual information need an index, which this one lacks, to facilitate usefulness to a variety of readers.

Even for geographers not concerned in the least with northern Peru, *Los valles olvidados* provides perspectives to ponder. In an age of armchair lucubration, the book is a needed reminder that large parts of Latin America remain poorly known, and the fieldwork on regions remains the basis for understanding lands and peoples. It demonstrates how determined researchers—even a blond foreign woman—can take charge of a rural research agenda in the farthest reaches of the South America without vehicular transportation, electricity, climate records or detailed maps. It also shows how, in contrast to the narrow specialist focus that now dominates geographical studies, a wide-eyed Sauerian approach with an emphasis on history and inductive knowledge is still the best way to “push back the twilight” about our world.

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Tourrand, Jean-François and Jans Bastos da Veiga (eds.) **Viabilidade de Sistemas Agropecuários na Agricultura Familiar na Amazônia.** Belém: Embrapa Amazônia Oriental, 2003. 468 pp., maps, tables, figures. Paper (ISBN 85-87690-18-3).

In environmental studies and many other cross-cutting areas of research, terms like “multidisciplinary,” “cross-national collaboration,” “policy-relevant science” and others are frequently employed to describe what we need to do more often. I happily grant that such approaches are indeed needed, but they are easier said than done. Indeed, they raise hard questions about disciplinary cultures, sensitivity to contrasting needs among collaborators from different countries, and the political environment surrounding the