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Comment on David Guillet's "Toward a Cultural Ecology of Mountains: The Central Andes and the Himalayas Compared"

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The continual rediscovery in cultural ecology of the importance of political-economic forces and history is striking. Guillet's paper comparing the social organization of Central Andean and Himalayan peasants points us toward these issues, and for this we are indebted to him. His model is better than a "crude formulation," but it falls short of a major advance on Rhoades and Thompson's seminal 1975 paper.

While I have some ethnographic quibbles—e.g., failing to connect the outstanding terraced irrigation agriculture of southwestern Peru (Donkin 1979:101) with that noted for the Himalayas, or limiting plow agriculture to the Lake Titicaca basin when it is widespread in the maize and agropastoral zones of Arequipa, Moquegua, Tacna, and beyond—I will limit my brief comments to issues of more general interest.

Avoidance of an explicit incorporation of these "extraneous" political-economic and historical forces (as if ecological forces, like monsoons, were only local or internal) leads to some needless oversights. Long-distance trading in the Himalayas, for example, is not simply a result of growing energy-inefficient barley, but intimately related to the historical transmontane trade between the hydraulic states of China and the Gangetic plain. This is a fundamental difference between the Himalayas and the Central Andes that should be incorporated into any such comparative model.

The halting proletarianization observed in the Central Andes is notable and warrants extended treatment. This is a most exciting part of Guillet's paper, for we begin to see dimly the sought-after "overall framework." In Arequipa, however, proletarianization among agriculturists is limited not because of a limited resource base, but because the costs of reproduction passed on to the peasant household by a monopsonistic agroindustrial firm are *in turn* passed on to an impoverished immigrant labor force. Arequipa smallholders neither accumulate nor undergo proletarianization (Love n.d.a). The organization of labor by households is intimately tied to the character of the crop being produced but powerfully shaped by the larger forces loose upon the landscape; it's not one over another set of factors, but *both*.

Significant advance in our understanding of sociocultural similarities and differences among montane peasantries will come about only when cultural ecologists meet political economists head-on (see Wolf 1982:75). A "de-Althusserianized" (forgive me) articulation-of-modes-of-production framework (Montoya 1978, 1980; Montoya et al. 1979; Love n.d.b) would contribute greatly to the desired elaboration of this fruitful initial model. "Superstructural" forces would not be needlessly dismissed, and history and power variables would be explicitly incorporated along with the cultural ecological processes well outlined in Guillet's contribution.