

# A&M anthropologists study ancient life in Peru

SCOTT PENDLETON  
Battalion Staff

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onomic base.

"About eight years ago the Peruvian government began recruiting Andean peasants to come to Lima," Weir said. The government sought international financing to establish some light industries around Lima. A larger available work force was a requirement for the loan, he said.

"Instead of thousands, they attracted two to three million," Weir said. The loans were never made. Now the government must resettle the peasants back on the land to relieve the pressure on the urban areas of the central coast.

As part of this effort, the lomas will be repopulated. But before this can be done, the anthropologists must discover how earlier inhabitants could live there.

What happened to the original inhabitants of the lomas areas? "They destroyed their environment," Weir said. He said that overhunting of animals and overuse of trees and grazing land made the lomas uninhabitable.

Making the lomas habitable once again will be a long-term project. Weir said that the government will start pilot communities in a few years and increase the population gradually as resources permit. He estimates that there will be a substantial number of inhabitants in 20 years. Some of the areas will have to undergo reforestation.

"Lomas are actually very fragile environments," Weir said. They are moist areas surrounded by a very arid region, somewhat like oases in a desert.

The problem is that all of the moisture comes from fogs called garuas. These fogs occur only during the winter when the cold water of

the Humboldt current meets warmer surface air and water. Weir estimates that the lomas receive several centimeters of water per square meter from the fog each night. In the spring there is some runoff, but this dries up in the early summer.

During the summer, what moisture remains is contained in the soil at the root level. Weir said there hasn't been any substantial rainfall on the central coast since 1936.

"The ancient residents were seasonal," Weir said. They only lived in the lomas during the winter. In the summer they returned to the Andes or to the coast, he said.

In order to permanently settle these areas, new residents will have to practice "sophisticated conservation," Weir said. Some methods for gathering water will be the same as the ancient inhabitants used. Modern technology will also do its part, he said. The Peruvian government will have to drill deep wells and promote other methods to provide water for the summer months.

The government wants the new inhabitants to raise crops such as corn, beans, squash, and possibly cotton during the winter, and poultry, which require little water, during the summer. This would add significantly to the economic base of Peru, which relies heavily on fishing and mining.

Weir is interested in the lomas because they are the sites of some of the first agriculture in the New World. That early farming was done on such a small scale that Weir prefers to call it "horticulture." Yet it does represent a departure from the hunter-gatherer lifestyle.

The lomas' most ancient residents, the ones that concern Weir, lived in the pre-ceramic period about 6,000 years ago. During his last six-week stay in Peru, Weir studied several dozen lomas and gathered data about crops, population size, and technology.

Though a lot of the evidence they searched for was organic, and therefore subject to decay, much had been preserved by the dry climate.

"Fantastic amounts of early plants were preserved at the sites," Weir said.

The scientists studied ancient pollen contained in the soil and the plant remains to determine what the inhabitants were using and growing. Corn, primitive potatoes, wild tomatoes, beans, squash, and later, cotton were grown by the ancient inhabitants. The artifacts Weir and Stearns found include basketry of all kinds, nets, shellfish, and fire hearths, and grinding stones called batans. They have even found the remains of wooden houses, although there are no trees in the lomas today. Weir speculates that trees were once abundant, but were used until none remained.

Not all of the information gathered has been analyzed, but several conclusions have already emerged:

— early settlements without exception were associated with the lomas.

— different lomas were centers for different early plant crops.

— perhaps the most important result, Weir speculates, is pinpointing the lomas as the site of the earliest food production on the coast.

"This is the interesting thing that

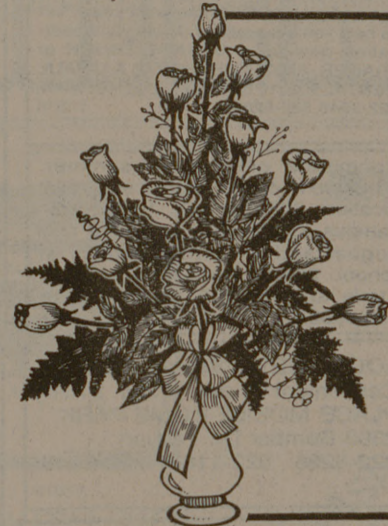
we weren't sure of up to this point," Weir said. "Everyone thought food production first occurred in the highlands. In fact, it appeared about the same time as in the highlands."

The study of the lomas is a two-year project in which the Peruvian government, the National Agrarian University of Lima, the Center for

Investigation of Arid Zones, Texas A&M University and the University of Missouri at Columbia are partners. The project is being funded by a \$90,000 grant from the National Science Foundation.

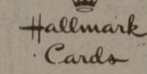
Weir is planning to return to Peru next summer for three months, and several graduate assistants will stay

for a year. They will start a massive campaign of collecting modern plants and pollen and the remains of fish, shellfish, and animals. They want to compare the distribution, amount, and kind of food resources — plant and animal — that were available in ancient times to what is there today.



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## Aggie students, faculty, staff asked to participate in Wadley Blood Drive

By FLAVIA KRONE  
Battalion Campus Editor

at 300 Texas A&M students, and staff are expected to do good in the Aggie Blood Drive on Thursday, Audrey Boone, government secretary, said. Gamma Phi Alpha and Alpha Phi service organizations are joining the blood drive in conjunction with student government as A&M. It will be held in 224 and 212 in the MSC from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

se times each year Wadley Medical Center of Dallas, Texas, collects blood from Texas students, faculty and staff.

Admission to the blood collection by Wadley is used for re-University students.

alumni, personnel and their families all benefit from the blood drive, Boone said.

If a student, alumni, faculty or staff member or their families need blood, they can obtain it free from Wadley, Boone said. "Texas A&M is one of Wadley's largest donors," Boone said. "We have had professors here who have undergone open heart surgery and received their blood free from the Wadley blood bank."

Persons receiving blood from Wadley do not have to live in Texas. "Wadley can transfer blood credits anywhere in the United States," Boone said.

Participation in the blood drive is not required to be eligible for free

blood, Boone said. "However, we are urging everyone, especially faculty and staff members, to donate blood," Boone added.

Donating blood takes about 15 minutes, Boone said.

Volunteers are screened before they can donate blood. Most donors give a pint of blood, Boone said.

"After drawing blood, the volunteers are given orange juice and graham crackers and then they're on their way," Boone said.

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