

# A&M ethnic expert studies Indians, collects cultural data from Acapulco

By Sarah Granberry  
Reporter

Two ceremonial masks guard the door to his office. His bookshelves are sprinkled with remnants of Mexican Indians and his books are stacked on the floor.

Dr. Norman Thomas sits behind a computer at his desk, surrounded by primitive artifacts.

Thomas is an ethnologist with the Texas A&M anthropology department.

For 38 years, he has been studying four Indian groups in Mexico: the Tzotzil Maya, the Huastec, the Zoque, and more recently, the Pame.

"I study contemporary Indian societies, collecting cultural data from them by traveling, living and visiting with them," Thomas says.

Thomas studied the Pame last summer with A&M archaeologist Dr. David Carlson.

Nothing has been published in English about the Pame, Thomas says, but some data has been written in Spanish.

"Some newspapers picked up on it and claimed I had found a lost tribe, which wasn't true," Thomas says.

Thomas says the Mexican government also knows about the Pame. Mexico's organization which handles Indian affairs — Instituto Nacional Indigenista — is trying, along with the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, to soften these people's entrance into the modern world, he says.

"The Pame were settled by a group of Roman Catholic priests who set up a series of missions," he says.

"The Pame turned into typical meso-American Indians," he says.

Thomas says the Pame still rely heavily on agriculture.

They live in the mountains north of Mexico City where their main agricultural crops are corn, beans and squash.

The poorest of them still gather wild food because a recent drought has hurt their corn production, he says.

The Pame, who were studied by Thomas in Santa Maria, Mexico, had to go six or seven miles to get water from a well, he says. They carried the water in big plastic bottles either on their backs or on burros, he says.

"While I was there, that well dried up and the Pame had to go six or seven miles in the other direction to get water from the river," Thomas says.

Because of the drought, he says, young Pame men have been forced to go north to help supplement their family income.

"Well over 50 percent of the young men between the ages of 18 and 35 have come to the United States as illegal workers," he says.

The Pame's chief source of money comes from making palm-leaf mats called petates, he says, which they sell to merchants for about 350 pesos each.

"There are about 1,020 pesos to the dollar now," Thomas says. "A bag of corn to last a family for a month costs about 12,000 pesos. It takes them three days to weave one petate."



Dr. Norman Thomas displays a palm-leaf mat.

Photo by Doug La Rue

## A&M seeing major drop in hiring of students

By Rachel Cowan  
Reporter

As a result of recent budget cuts, Texas A&M has experienced more than a 50 percent drop in student hiring, an A&M student financial aid administrator says.

In December and January of the 1985-1986 school year, A&M hired 2,259 students. During that same period in 1986-1987, only 1,095 student employees were hired.

The budget cuts have left A&M less money to spend on student employees, says Lynn Brown, student financial aid administrator for scholarships and employment.

Because the government pays 80 percent of the wages, the departments want to hire work-study employees, but the allotted work-study funds are being used up.

"With work-study, employers can hire five students for the price of one employee," Brown says.

The College of Engineering, which hires its own workers, also will spend less money on wages this fiscal year than last year.

From August 1985 to August 1986, it spent \$501,579 in student wages.

Quilla Toliver, business administrator for the college, says the projected employment spending for this fiscal year is \$376,908.

The entire budget for the department was cut from \$23,500,505 last year to \$22,749,584 this year.

Brown says the financial aid office can't accurately determine how many students are looking for work, but that more students are seeking employment this year.

"Because of the tight economy, parents are struggling to put their children through college," Brown says.

She also pointed out that the number of new students hired doesn't take into account students who kept their jobs from the fall semester.

Ed Janosky, manager of Budget and Payroll Services, says, "It could be that more students are hanging onto their jobs because of the bad economy."

Since Texas Employment Commission figures don't differentiate between students and non-students, student employment at local businesses can't be measured.

Hamp Patterson, a Texas Employment Commission representative, says that because students don't file for unemployment, they aren't represented in unemployment figures.

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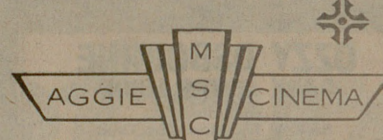
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