



Reinaldo Chohfi

A UCLA graduate student has discovered an ancient Incan city in the jungles of Peru, far larger than the well-known Machu Picchu site nearby.

Reinaldo Chohfi, working towards his master's degrees in archaeology and architecture, and Octavio Fernandez, an archaeologist with the Peruvian National Cultural Institute, uncovered the site, which they named Maranpampa.

Maranpampa is a combination of the Quechua words "maran," large stone mortars used to grind grain, and "pampa," a reference to the level land of the site, three miles northeast of Machu Picchu.

These agricultural references emphasize the site's importance. Most of the land surrounding Machu Picchu is steeply terraced, Chohfi said, and the level surface of Maranpampa made it especially well suited to grow crops both for Machu Picchu's use and for trade.

"The other places near Machu Picchu are on very steep slopes. They had to work hard to get arable space," he said.

Chohfi, who has studied Machu Picchu since 1978, tentatively identified the site using 30-year-old survey photos of the region before visiting it last month.

"The air photos I used were from 1956 — the site was being used by local farmers," Chohfi said. Recent photos, however, have obscured the site as farmers moved away. "Now you cannot see it."

Most of the city's ruins are obscured by dense jungle growth and mud. Its most distinctive feature is a stone wall at least 1,000 feet long, eight feet high, and six feet thick, built to protect residents from water and soil runoff from the high mountains surrounding the city.

"Scientists have known for many years that Machu Picchu was not self-supporting, but no physical evidence of other civilizations had been found," Chohfi said. "Finding this city provides more proof that Inca civilization included other cities."

Although archaeologists long suspected Machu Picchu was part of a larger network of Inca cities, "each built to take advantage of subtle changes in the mountain weather to grow the most efficient crops," Chohfi said, there was no conclusive proof, and some still held the belief that Machu Picchu stood alone.

Chohfi attributes his success to his geographical studies, which he said gave him an uncommon perspective.

"Everyone has been given a site-oriented study — they just studied Machu Picchu. I've been giving it a geographical

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approach, studying Machu Picchu and the region," he said.

Chohfi has also tentatively identified two other Incan city sites, to the east of Maranpampa and west of Machu Picchu.

"I was looking for a mosaic that would give me a bigger mosaic than my original area. When I was looking at the mosaic, there were two other sites," Chohfi said.

Chohfi came to the United States from Brazil in 1976, and received his bachelor's degree in geography from UCLA in 1985. His expedition was funded by Dr. Leo and Sharon Kenneally.

—Bill Bowmer

Bill Bowmer, a UCLA Senior, wrote this story for the UCLA Daily Bruin, the University's student newspaper. The Bruin was recognized as the best collegiate newspaper in California in 1985-86. Awarded first prize for general excellence by the California Intercollegiate Press Association, the Bruin received 10 individual awards for excellence in news, sports, opinion, entertainment writing, photography, and illustration. Senior Staff Writer Bowmer received a second-place award for best newspaper news article.