

OPEN LETTER TO COLLEAGUES IN THE INSTITUTE OF ANDEAN STUDIES FROM
Clair Patterson

[Read at 17th Annual Meeting of the Institute of Andean Studies]

I consider the work I am doing a form of archaeological research, and I consider archaeology in its truest sense to be the scientific discipline of greatest importance to man today. The reason for this is that Homo sapiens sapiens today, because of excessive development of engineering technology, have worked themselves into a terrifying situation. I don't believe that people will manage to extricate themselves successfully until first, they know of the continuous sequence of human activity that led to this present state, and second, that they recognize what were the crucial factors which led to or determined these human activities. True archaeology is confined only to the first part of this knowledge, but that is enough to challenge the best scientists among us. My studies of the growth of lead technology and its influence on human cultures and health during the past 8000 years have instilled in me a profound respect for the significance of the work of archaeologists, and I wish to convey to you, my colleagues in the Institute of Andean Studies, my kindest regards and best wishes, and regrets that I could not attend this meeting. Let us hope that someday financial support for archaeological research will reach the high level it merits.

[signed] Clair Patterson
Jan. 1977

Clair Cameron Patterson, Ph.D. Chicago 1951, is a specialist in physical chemistry, doing research on lead pollution at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. He has extended his work to studies of ancient Andean metallurgy, and is a valued collaborator of the Institute of Andean Studies. In the July, 1971, issue of American Antiquity he published an article entitled: "Native copper, silver, and gold accessible to early metallurgists." The title is too modest. It is a broad comparison of the early development of metallurgy in the Old World and the New.

JHR

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