Peru - Andean Pan Pipes

By Vanderbilt Center for Latin American Studies

The Andes Mountains make the longest aboveground mountain chain in the world. It runs along the western edge of South America and passes through Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. The ancient cultures that lived in the Andes Mountains, like other ancient cultures, use music as a part of daily life and religious rituals. Before the Europeans arrived in Peru, the ancient people used instruments that they could play by blowing air into the instrument.

One common instrument was called *zampoña* in Spanish or pan pipes in English. It is called pan pipes because it is made of hollow reeds found near lakes in the Andes Mountains in Peru, a country on the western coast of South America. The reeds are cut into different lengths and tied together to create a variety of notes. Traditionally, the *zampoña* has two separate halves that make different notes. In order to play all of the notes, two people play the *zampoña* at the same time, one person playing each half.