



FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH ON ANCIENT AMERICA

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NEWSLETTER NO. 24

November 3, 1976

Greetings, Members and Friends:

The Foundation for Research on Ancient America library project is making good progress. It is with a degree of pride that we can now announce a nice collection of books pertaining to ancient America is ready to be placed in the general church library at the Auditorium in Independence, which will be during the first week in November.

A new face has been given the church library during the summer just ended. Considerable remodeling, painting, carpeting, and rearranging of the bookshelves, with additional reading tables, makes this library highly attractive and usable. Patricia Roberts, librarian, and her assistants, are on hand to assist those who come to read and enter into research.

The Foundation is grateful that space has been granted us for our books in this inviting library, and we say with perhaps justifiable pride that the books the Foundation has contributed to the general church library is a good start toward a valuable collection. One must handle the books to appreciate the many beautiful pictures in some of them and the wealth of information in all of them.

In making selections for purchase, Maxine Wight, chairman of our library committee, has drawn somewhat upon the knowledge of Clair E. Weldon, Charles R. Hield, and Richard A. DeLong, our vice-chairman. All of these members have had much experience in Latin America, where they have gained firsthand knowledge of valuable books on subjects pertinent to our cause. The vast knowledge of Roy E. Weldon through many years of research and travel in these countries has also pointed to books of value our library can use. We add a word of appreciation for the tireless services of Linda Baker, secretary and member of the library committee. Additional assistance will now be given this committee by Dr. James T. VanBiber, Jr.

In addition to the books belonging to the Foundation now available, researchers have the added advantage of being able to use the Paul Hanson collection on ancient America, the Archaeological Society collection, the School of the Restoration collection, and other similar collections, to say nothing of the extensive list of books in the church library on a wide range of subjects. You are invited to make use of this library on every possible occasion. It is open during regular business hours.

Another library service is available through the Audio-Visual library at the Auditorium. Two sets of films purchased by the Foundation are available for loan, one on the Mayas and one on the Incas, with accompanying reading script. These may be rented for \$1.00 each for a single booking (which includes transportation time).

Your generous financial assistance through Foundation membership dues and gifts has made all this possible. Our task is not completed--only nicely begun, but we are proud of what has been accomplished so far. If you are not now a member but would like to join the Foundation, you are welcome. The modest annual membership fee of \$2.00 is all that it takes, or you may wish to make it a family membership of \$10.00--or even a working membership of \$50.00 (all tax exempt).

--T.D.S.

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BOOK REVIEW
(Submitted by Maxine Wight)

THE CLASSIC MAYA COLLAPSE, edited by T. Patrick Culbert, Professor of Anthropology, University of Arizona. Published by University of New Mexico, School of American Research, Albuquerque. 1973. \$17.50. 580 pages, photos, figures.

In this book thirteen leading scholars discuss the causes of the collapse of Lowland Maya Classic civilization in the eighth and ninth centuries A.D.

Maya civilization was colorful and spectacular. It has received a large share of attention relative to other pre-Columbian cultures, and over the years a standard body of opinion has grown up among Maya society. But in the last twenty years new fieldwork in Maya archaeology has produced many new findings. This book is based on a School of American Research Advanced Seminar in which the participants used recent discoveries to revise the image of Classic Maya civilization.

The contributors to the volume summarize previous theories, describe the archaeological record of the Classic Maya, including the evidence of ceramics, inscriptions, and sculpture, and offer new interpretations of this evidence. Their conclusions point to a revised model of the Maya collapse--a general model of sociopolitical collapse not limited to the cultural history of the Maya alone. This book is of interest to students of Mesoamerican archaeology and also a wide anthropological audience. This book is in the Foundation collection.

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In this bicentennial year, the whole question as to who discovered America is receiving much attention, being "thrown up in the air for a completely new evaluation." An article appeared in the Lubbock, Texas Avalanche-Journal, April 25, 1976 (sent by Bill Schreier), authored by Arthur Frederick, of Monhegan Island, Maine, has to do with "a few crude rock carvings on this craggy coastal island" which "could force historians to take another look at who discovered America and where the American Indians came from." It is said that the Monhegan Inscription, known and studied since 1855, along with other similar carvings in New England, have again come under the scrutiny of archaeologists and linguists. Some have advanced the theory that the Norsemen discovered America several hundred years before Columbus. Now some archaeologists, including James P. Whittall, director of archaeology for the Early Sites Research Society in Boston, feel the inscription is written in Ogam script, used by the Celts in the Iberian peninsula as long ago as 2000 B.C. Dr. Barry Fell, president of Boston's Epigraphic Society, has translated the inscription to read "Long ships of Phoenicia; cargo lots landing-quay." Frederick suggests, "If the translation is correct, it could have been a message to Phoenicians who may have landed at Monhegan long before the birth of Christ to deal in fish, furs and minerals."

Whittall explains, "When these inscriptions were found along the New England coast, some tried to apply them to the Norsemen because some of the symbols are the same. They forced the symbols into a Norse translation, so scholars ended up calling them a fraud. They never studied Iberian script, because it then was very little known and not translated. . . . with the Norse . . . there is a close similarity between Iberian and Norse runic script. . . ."

History has established that the Phoenicians built up an extensive empire in Lebanon and later set up sister cities in Carthage and Tunisia, while their chief shipping port was in Cadiz, Spain on the Iberian peninsula, which "started around 1100 B.C. and lasted until about 250 C.D., when the Romans destroyed it," Whittall points out.

Frederick observes, "Perhaps the most significant aspect of the new translations is the influence of the Ogam language, and the possibility that the Western Hemisphere was discovered as much as 2000 years earlier than anyone thought. Whittall said the Ogam language also pops up in some Indian languages, indicating that some American Indians may have come from Europe rather than across a narrow band of land from Asia into Alaska.

"We've been working on stone chambers all over New England. And, in all probability, it was the Phoenicians who were having extensive contact in North America. . . . They probably introduced the Celts into this area," is the opinion of Whittall, who further says that although some have held to the idea that the Celts did not have a navy, "if you study Caesar you see they had a very good navy."

Whittall then referred to the Algonquin Indians, "whose language was very similar to the Ogam language used on the Iberian peninsula 4000 years ago. . . . In all probability, some of the Indians even the Algonquins, were Indo-European, and a lot are probably descendants of early European contacts. The Algonquin language is absolutely filled with Celtic words."

Whittall then concludes: "They are going to have to completely rewrite our knowledge of the American Indian in the United States. . . . This is going to rewrite history books."

We add: Although history books may have to be rewritten, the Book of Mormon will stand the test of it all. These findings only substantiate the Book of Mormon.

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Also quoted from the Lubbock Avalanche Journal (October 17, 1976) the following is quoted from an article by Willard Bascom, mining engineer associated with the University of California at Berkeley, who observed:

"Columbus was not the first European to cross the Atlantic. . . . We do not know who the first outsiders were to reach America or when they came, but there is considerable evidence that the Atlantic was crossed often in ancient times. . . . thousands of small clay heads have been found in Central America, so carefully sculptured there is no doubt they represent specific people. Of those dated before the Christian era, many decidedly are Semitic (Phoenician?), Oriental (Japanese?), or Negroid with detailed tribal scars (West African?). Few resemble native Indians.

"In Brazil a commemorative stone was found in 1872; that seems to record the wreck of a Canaanite ship there in the reign of Hiram III (553-533 B.C.). A Roman statue head was found by archaeologists in situ in a Mexican pyramid, and Jewish coins of the second century A.D. have been found in Kentucky and Tennessee (in 1823 and 1932).

"When the first Europeans reached the west coast of the U.S., they found Japanese, whose fishing boats had drifted across the Atlantic in rubber boats, outrigger canoes, rowboats, and even six-foot sailboats to prove that nearly any kind of a boat can make it. Clearly, a great many did."

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From the inside covers of Before Columbus, by Cyrus H. Gordon, 1971, Crown Publishers, Inc., New York, the following is quoted:

"Before Columbus--Links between the Old World and Ancient America. A revolutionary treatise by one of the world's most eminent scholars . . . provides startling new evidence linking ancient Mesoamerica with the civilizations of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Thoroughly documented, the culmination of a lifetime of research, the book vividly demonstrates that transoceanic travel across the Atlantic and Pacific to the New World was taking place as long as five thousand years ago. Drawing on many previously overlooked sources, Dr. Gordon constructs his theory from a variety of cultural manifestations: sculpture; historical references; Egyptian, Babylonian, and other recondite literatures; Greek classics; the Bible; ancient maps; linguistic history; and archaeological discoveries.

"Mesoamerican sculpture before A.D. 300 that portrayed Far Eastern, African Negro, and Caucasian races indicates that 'long before the Vikings reached America around A.D. 1000, Mesoamerica had been the scene of the intermingling of different populations from across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.'

"In the writings of the ancient Greeks--Aristotle, Plato, and various historians--Dr. Gordon finds references to a land mass that could be only America. Reconstructing the maritime view of the world held by the ancients until Roman times, he discusses the voyages of Minoan and Phoenician ships to America made during the Bronze and early Iron ages against the background of classical literature, starting with Homer, and of newly discovered inscriptions.

"Before Columbus probes the relationship between the Aztec tradition of 'The Plumed Serpent' with similar legends found in the Bible, in Babylonian and Athenian culture, and in an Egyptian novelette, The Shipwrecked Sailor, showing the communications between the Old and New Worlds fostered common beliefs. The discovery of the Metcalf Stone in Fort Benning, Georgia, reflects a relationship between the Yuchis, an American tribe, and the East Mediterranean milieu of the Late Bronze Age. Dr. Gordon interprets the significance of a Canaanite inscription discovered in Brazil in 1872, telling of a Near Eastern ship that landed there in 531 B.C. . . .

"Before Columbus is a searching, provocative exposition of an idea that shatters traditional approaches to pre-Columbian history."

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In April, 1976, there appeared in American Antiquity (Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 196-205), an article entitled "The Quintessential Role of Olmec in the Central Highlands of Mexico: a Refutation," by Ronald A. Grennes-Ravitz and G. H. Coleman. This article refutes commonly held theories that the Central Mexican sites were colonial Olmec or Olmecoid. They take the position that the ceramic assemblage and radiocarbon dates from El Terror and Iglesia Vieja, Morelos, Mexico demonstrate that the Olmec presence in these areas was as early as the San Lorenzo-Vera Cruz heartland. Also, that pre-Olmec ceramics are thought to be a regional manifestation. Bernal's (1969) theory that an incipient Olmec I phase is present at La Venta and San Lorenzo cannot be supported by excavations.

In their conclusions, the authors raise this question: "If Olmec is not indigenous to the Gulf coast as now seems possible, where are we to look for the exemplar style? . . . The sudden appearance of Olmec inspired art over much of Mesoamerica around 1200 B.C. can be interpreted in the CMSR (Central Mexican Symbiotic Region) as the interpolation of a religious concept symbolized in a district iconography and a new figurine type which becomes an adscititious accretion to the pre-existing cultural core CMSR rather than the core itself as previously theorized" (p. 205).

Marian Blumenschein, Independence, Missouri sent in this item and commented: "If the builders of the first American civilization, the Olmecs, were indeed the Jaredites, we welcome this discovery. The Jaredite migration and landing (earlier thought to be about 2000 B.C. but now believed by many to have been as early as 2350 B.C.) may not have been in the Mexican Olmec area, but elsewhere.

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Clipped from the Los Angeles Times, March 7, 1976 (Part VIII, p. 3) and sent to us by John Evan Hobart, is an account under the heading "Ancient Mayan Translated by Soviet Scholar," with the date line Leningrad.

The article claims that a Soviet scholar, Yuri Knorozov, was able to translate the inscriptions of the ancient Mayan civilization by comparing them with the language of the Mexican Indians of Yucatan. "He has translated three ancient Mayan manuscripts discovered in Europe in the 19th century, probably spoils brought back by the Spanish conquistadors, and a fourth manuscript found in a private collection in New York two years ago," according to Tass. "The translations into Russian have been published in a book called Hieroglyphic Inscriptions of the Maya, published in Leningrad."

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Dick Gumerman, of Independence, calls our attention to an article, "Magnetic Turtle Points the Way," Science News, February 14, 1976 (p. 103).

The article acknowledges that before Columbus, civilizations flourished in Meso-America, but "the mystery of where and when Central American civilization got its start remains, although there are some clues." Mention is made of the complex, precise 260-day Mayan calendar, and suggests that this may have originated in Izapa, an ancient ceremonial center of the Pacific coastal plain of southern Mexico.

That the calendar may have originated with the Izapans is the theory advanced in 1973 by Vincent H. Malmstrom, of Dartmouth College, to which he now adds as circumstantial evidence some findings related to a stone sculpture of the head of a turtle. While examining astronomical alignments of various structures at Izapa, Malmstrom put his compass near the turtle's head and noticed a sharp deflection of more than 60 degrees. No matter where the compass was placed along the perimeter of the sculpture, the needle continuously pointed to the snout of the turtle. No other stones or sculptures in the area were found to have magnetic properties. Malmstrom believes this indicates that the Izapans knew about magnetism, "in that they had reserved a basaltic boulder rich in iron ore for their carving of the turtle head, and had executed it so carefully that the magnetic lines of force all came to a focus in the snout of the turtle." Malmstrom thinks that the Izapans chose a turtle because they were a sea-faring people and must have been impressed by the navigational and homing abilities of the sea turtles common to the area. He says, "Whether or not they applied their knowledge of magnetism to navigation or to anything else is unknown, but later Mesoamerican civilizations did."

Malmstrom believes the magnetic turtle is about 3,300 years old. An earlier report (Science News 9/6/75, p. 148) says that a hand-worked piece of magnetized iron ore thought to be about 3,000 years old had been found at an Olmec site. Later Mayan civilization, influenced by the Olmecs, appears to have made extensive use of magnetism in the alignment of their cities, many of which "run along an axis that is 17 degrees east of north, indicating that a magnetic compass was used.

The article concludes: "If Malmstrom's theory of cultural diffusion in Mesoamerica is correct, the Izapans were originators of at least two important ideas--the 260-day calendar and magnetism--and Izapa can be considered the cultural hearth of the New World."

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