



FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH ON ANCIENT AMERICA

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NEWSLETTER No. 27

September 15, 1977

Greetings, Members and Friends,

You have requested more frequent meetings of the Foundation. May 1, when we met last, you voted for a meeting in the Fall. Accordingly, Sunday afternoon, October 2 at 3:00 we shall meet at the Stone Church, Floor A, Partridge Hall, when Dr. Richard A. DeLong will present an illustrated talk on the ruins of Palenque, its rulers, and decipherments of its hieroglyphic texts. Evidence will be presented that may link the site of Palenque with the capital city of Zarahemla. According to the Book of Mormon, the river Sidon ran by the land Zarahemla. Numerous references are made to people going down to and coming up from the land Zarahemla. About A.D. 34 the city of Zarahemla caught fire and its inhabitants were burned. Sometime during the twenty-five years that followed, the city was rebuilt. Mormon, who was taken by his father into the land Zarahemla about A.D. 322, reported that numerous buildings and many people were there. About the same time, warfare between the Nephites and the Lamanites began in the borders of Zarahemla by the waters of Sidon. Dr. DeLong will talk about these things. You will not want to miss his exciting, informative lecture and his excellent slides.

On May 1, the Foundation met in the main sanctuary of the Stone Church, where a large, responsive group participated in the setting apart (not an ordination but a special blessing) of Thoric Cederstrom for his year of study and work in Israel. The special prayer of blessing was pronounced by Seventy Charles R. Hield, assisted by Evangelist Roy E. Weldon. God's attesting Spirit witnessed to us all during that prayer.

The check to assist Thoric in this big undertaking, made possible by your generous contributions, was presented at this meeting. Thank you all for helping this worthy youth to realize his ambition to study in Israel.

Thoric arrived in Jerusalem July 16, and wrote:

I arrived here early Thursday morning. Later in the day I registered for Hebrew school. These language courses last until the end of October. If I am able to reach the intermediate level . . . I can take regular courses in the University. I have contacted the person in charge of our group of students and I shall soon become involved in actual fieldwork.

Last night our group of students went to the old city of Jerusalem and to the Wailing Wall. It was a beautiful experience! The people here are beautiful. Right now I am living in a dorm with a lot of American students.

I am grateful for the help the Foundation has given me. When regular studies begin and I have time to study and do research, I'll be sending information and material which I feel is relevant to the Foundation. However, it should be clear that everything I do will be carefully researched and well founded. Also, perhaps I should have told you before I left, I have the feeling, from my work in Mexico, that the relationship between Ancient Mesoamerica and the Middle East

is not evident on the visual level. In other words, no proof will be found in similar art forms or architectural styles. I believe that the relationship goes much deeper. I think (I don't know yet, that's why I am here) that the connection is one of ideology, that of cognition. I think that most of our research has been on the line of "Well, this pottery looks like this pottery, so there must be a connection," when it is not necessarily true. That is why the scientific world does not accept such claims. Perhaps it is time for another approach. This is what I plan to try."

One reason for the designation of October 2 for our Fall meeting is consideration of the Indians who will still be in Independence at that time. The first American Indian Peoples Ministry National Conference will be held at the Auditorium for three days, ending October 2. As their conference will be just over at the time of our meeting, we are extending a special invitation to them to meet with us for Dr. DeLong's illustrated lecture.

Increased rates make guaranteed return postage prohibitive. Incorrectly addressed newsletters are now discarded by the Post Office and we don't even know that you are not receiving your copies. Please keep us informed as to address changes.

---T.D.S.

In our newsletter dated February 2, 1977, there was a call for research sources on Serpentology, in support of Book of Mormon claims. In response to this invitation to participate in research on this subject, Wendy Bacon, undergraduate student at the University of Pennsylvania, recommended Karl W. Lockett's Olmec Religion, A Key to Middle America and Beyond. Copyright 1976, by University of Oklahoma Press. Wendy's comment was, "The author treats the jaguar and serpent cults in Olmex religion in a very interesting, illuminating way."

Roy E. Weldon rates as "top priority for research students on the Book of Mormon "Gods of the Great Cataclysm, by Hugh Scott, 1976. Harpers Magazine Press, New York.

After dealing with many myths of the Northwest coast and comparing the things which "primitive" people worshipped, the author quoted from The Royal Commentaries of the Incas, Part I, p. 31 (Austin Univ. of Texas Press, 1966): "There was no beast too vile and filthy for them to worship as a god . . . But we need not be surprised that such unlettered and untaught people should have fallen into these follies, . . . it is well known that the Greeks and Romans, who prided themselves so greatly on their learning, had thirty thousand gods when their empire was at its height." Then Mr. Scott cites a "myth" of very different nature, quoting from Pedro de Cieza de Leon, The Incas (Norman, Okla. Univ. of Okla. Press, 1959, pp. 27-29):

Before the Incas came to reign in those kingdoms or were known there, these Indians tell a thing that far exceeds all else they say. They state that a long time went by in which they did not see the sun, and that they suffered great hardship from this lack, and that they made great prayers and vows to those they held to be their gods, imploring of them the light that had failed. When things stood like this, there emerged from the island of Titicaca, which lies in the great lake of the Colla, the sun in its splendor, at which all rejoiced. And after this had occurred, they say that out of the regions of the south there came and appeared among them a white man, large of stature, whose air and person aroused great respect and veneration. And this man whom they saw in this guise had great powers, making plains of the hills, and of the plains,

high mountains, and bringing forth springs in the living rock. And when they saw his power, they called him the Maker of all things, their Beginning, Father of the Sun, for aside from these, they say he did other even greater things, for he called into being men and animals. . . And this man, so the Indians say who told me this which they had heard from their forefathers, who, in turn had heard it in old songs that had come down to them, took his way to the north, working and doing these wonders, by the route of the uplands, and they never saw him again.

Our thanks goes to John E. Hobart for sending a copy of The Lamp, Standard Oil Company (New Jersey), Vol. 46, No. 1, which carries an article, "Oil and the Buried Past," pp. 22-24. This article claims that through the use of new scientific techniques, "more has been learned about our prehistoric forefathers than in all the previous centuries of civilization."

Oil geologists and drillers, making investigations around the world, have come up with some interesting discoveries of the past. It is in the Western Hemisphere that they have made their most significant finds. A pipeline company, laying a line to carry crude oil, discovered in Four Corners, the region where Colorado, Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico converge, encountered rich remains of Indian cultures underground. At their own expense, the pipeline company engaged archaeologists to accompany the diggers. They traced a high level of culture dating to about A.D. 900. The article states that long before this date (A.D. 900):

Great empires had arisen in Central and South America, including that of the Mayas, whose fine arts and magnificent roads, causeways, temples, government centers, and ball courts have long been admired. But their origins, and the reasons for their sudden collapse a few hundred years before the arrival of the Spaniards, are still in dispute. Alone in ancient America, the Mayas had developed a written language, but their libraries were burned by the Spaniards. Scholars have learned to decipher their numerology; in mathematics, having discovered the zero which makes it possible to compute in many thousands, the Mayas surpassed the ancient Greeks. Many dates on their monuments are thus known, but the events they signify must remain mysteries until more of the hieroglyphs can be found and, slowly and with difficulty, interpreted. Scholars have long known that the heartland of the ancient Mayas lies largely buried beneath the almost impenetrable undergrowth of the Department of Peten in Guatemala. The terrain, until a few years ago, had discouraged both archaeologists and oilmen. In 1956, however, the University of Pennsylvania Museum sent an expedition to the large, unexcavated city of Tikal, in northern Peten, which could be reached by air from Guatemala City. Here they have made some exciting discoveries--the earliest recorded Mayan date, for instance, which according to one reckoning corresponds to A.D. 32. There were indications that the city abandoned about A.D. 1400, was settled by 500 B.C.--or possibly much earlier. [These dates correspond amazingly with Book of Mormon claims.--T.D.S.] Proof was also found in early contacts with the old civilizations of Mexico, where it is now believed mankind turned from hunting to agriculture 9,000 years ago--about the period when the first settled societies began in the Middle East.

Archaeologists and the oilmen have been working together in Guatemala, and the Esso men have made some of their own discoveries. Several of the geologists were "enthusiastic amateur archaeologist," but while strictly in line of duty as they pursued their unsuccessful search for oil, they came up with some of their major discoveries. Esso Guatemala had its concessions photographed from the air, and according to the American

Museum of National History, the air surveys have led over the years to hundreds of important archaeological discoveries. "Esso also made use of the magnetometer, suspended from a plane. This device reports any significant changes in the magnetic field of the earth caused by rock formations that might interest geologists. These and other tools employed in the search for oil--including core drills, spray drills, and the seismograph--are now being adapted to the search for buried civilizations."

In Guatemala yet another instrument has been in use, the gravity meter, which registers minute differences in gravitational force caused by underground rock structures. It was in the course of the geological mapping of a grid in the southern concession during 1958 that an Esso geologist, Russell Dorsey made the expedition's first firm archaeological discovery. A number of discoveries have been made in this area, and archaeologists from the Peabody Museum, who have been working at other sites in the vicinity, think it likely that a great complex of Mayan centers extends for miles along the high escarpment where Esso's discoveries lie. One geologist, Larry Vinson, found elaborately carved stones and several large unmarked stelae in upright position. It is theorized that perhaps a sudden invasion or other disaster had interfered with the ornamentation on four uncarved stones.

Mention is made of the use of scientific tools in modern industrial laboratories, one of which is Carbon-14, the radioactive isotope of carbon. Archaeologists may also make spectrographic analyses of material used in ancient metal tools or weapons. By this means they can define the chemical content of the objects without destroying them.

The Foundation for Research on Ancient America recommends The Aztecs, Maya, and Their Neighbors, Archaeology of Mesoamerica, by Muriel Porter Weaver, 1972, Harcourt, Brace, & Jabanovich, New York, 347 pages. The author prepared this text "to give readers and students a single volume that will cover the archaeology of both central Mexico and the Ma a area." It is a synthesis of many works to bring a vast amount of information into one comprehensive study.

It is prepared as chronologically correct as possible, beginning at about 38,000 B.C. (?) and ending with the Spanish in A.D. 1519. It is written in textbook style, but will give readers the thinking of current archaeologists, giving a basis for further study in more specific areas of research.

Some of the earliest archaeological findings are still among the most interesting and challenging discoveries in support of the Book of Mormon. A book written by Stephen Denison Peet, Ph.D., 1892, Office of the American Antiquarian, is now a rare book but one which may be found in some libraries in this country, one of which is the Berkeley Public Library, Berkeley, California.

In dealing with discoveries made in Dakota, Illinois, Ohio, and along the Mississippi River, the author gives this account:

We would next refer to the evidence as to the succession of races. The works on the North Fork of Paint Creek, on the Hopewell farm, illustrate this. Here is a group of mounds, which has been explored by Warren K. Moorehead, under the auspices of the World's Fair. Some remarkable relics have been taken out. One mound was very large, 500 feet long, 190 feet broad, 24 feet high. Near the top of this mound were stone effigies resembling those in Dakota. At the bottom of the mound were a number of skeletons, lying upon the base line . . . in domeshaped cavities, four to five feet in height. One skeleton was called the king; . . .

In the same mound were several skeletons, covered with a large quantity of copper, and adorned with most intricate and beautiful designs. These are classified into anklets, bracelets and wristlets, and ornaments for various parts of the body. The bracelets were solid throughout, and formed by bending a tapering bar of copper into a circle . . . and richly ornamented with repousse work. There were thin plates, cut in the form of fishes; others into diamond forms, with geometrical figures inside the rings. Most curious of the whole collection are two pieces of cane inside, evidently intended to be worn on the wrist as protection from the bow. Many of the pieces have attached to them a curious texture, resembling matting, made out of wood fibre; while several were plated with silver, gold, and meteoric iron . . . The five skeletons were also found lying side by side,--two of which were covered with a layer of copper, six by eight feet. The copper had been worked into many forms. There were sixty-six copper belts, ranging in size from one and one-half inches to twenty-two and one-half inches in length. A large thick copper ax weighed forty-one pounds. This exceeds any specimen ever found in the United States. There were traces of gold on it. The cutting edge is seven inches broad and is very sharp. A number of smaller copper axes attended this. Thirty copper plates, with Mound-builders' cloth on them, overlapped the axes. The average size of the plates was ten by six inches. A great copper eagle, twenty inches in diameter, wings outspread, beak open, tail and wing feathers neatly stamped upon the copper surface, etc., covered the knees of one of the skeletons. This is one of the most artistic designs ever found in copper. Remains of a copper stool, about a foot in length and several inches in height, lay near one of the skeletons. The stool was made out of wood, and had been covered with sheet copper.

. . . We have no doubt that the persons who were buried here, and who carried such massive axes and wore such heavy helmets and elaborate coats of mail, were . . . different entirely from the later Indians.

- pp. 50-52.

Joe C. Brandon contributed a copy of Science-News, January 29, 1977, containing an article by Robert J. Trotter, "Unraveling a Mayan Mystery," pp. 74, 75, 78, from which the following is gleaned:

The Maya civilization, according to students of archaeology, seemed to have reached its peak from the fourth to the ninth centuries, A.D. The area known as the Maya Lowlands, where civilization reached its height, covers part of Mexico and Belize (formerly British Honduras). Numerous Maya excavations during the past 70 years have pointed to the sudden appearance of new styles in artifacts in Maya Lowlands about the time of Christ. Several explanations have been offered. Research in El Salvador has now provided a clue . . . volcanic ash deposits in the highlands of El Salvador have been found. "It appears likely that the densely populated Southeast Maya Highlands were devastated by a massive natural disaster, a complex volcanic eruption, some 2,000 years ago. [This approximate date is confirmed by the Book of Mormon, which places the "great storm" in A.D. 34, at the time of Christ's death. T.D.S.]

The article continued by stating that documenting volcanic activity in El Salvador is not difficult, since it is "dominated by some 20 major volcanoes, so it is not at all surprising to find artifacts buried under ash. The first such artifacts were uncovered in the 1920's, and numerous finds have been recorded since, some dating perhaps back to 1000 B.C.

"One of the more recent highland excavations indicating volcanic activity is that done at Chalchuapa. . . . Prehistoric pottery from the site has been compared with and found to be extremely close stylistically to that found in Barton Ramie, Belize, and other

sites in the lowlands. . . sometime between A.D. 1 and 300 . . . volcanic activity almost certainly destroyed Chalchuapa, but one or even a series of small eruptions may not have been sufficient to cause a mass migration out of the highlands. One major eruption probably would have been necessary.

"The geological source, or sources, of volcanic ash burying the Preclassic materials has been much debated. This ash layer, referred to locally as the 'tierra blanca,' has been attributed to at least three separate volcanoes, but recent work by a team of German geologists indicates that the source was the caldera of Volcan Ilopango. (A caldera is a large crater formed by volcanic explosion or by the collapse of a volcanic cone.) The German geologists found the thickest deposits of 'tierra blanca' to be 50 meters near Lake Ilopango and conclude that the ash derived from a center within the Lake Ilopango depression." Having determined that tephra (volcanic ash or pumice) could be definitely related to the Ilopango eruption, since "each eruption has its own chemical identity, Sheets and his team took samples from 14 sites, and a geological analysis by the United States Geological Survey in Denver showed that the tephra shroud that blanketed the Southeast Maya Highlands, "is not a series of local unrelated events separated in space and time, but a massive complex eruption," with the conclusion that the eruption occurred in three stages, two ash-flows (glowing avalanche) and an airfall ash. The ashflows, consisting of incandescent clouds of pumice, ash and gases, rolled downhill and buried villages and forests in their paths as far as 45 kilometers from their source. Shortly thereafter, perhaps hours to weeks, the airfall ash was deposited in a more uniform blanket over the countryside."

At Barton Ramie "during the late Preclassic (between 100 B.C. and A.D. 300) a number of cultural and material events occurred at approximately the same time, and Sheets suggests that they may have been interconnected." Such evidence "does not imply that the sophisticated Classic civilization derived from the highland culture, but it does offer clues to the eventual development of one of the most highly evolved pre-Columbian civilizations."

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