

FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH ON ANCIENT AMERICA

NEWSLETTER NO. 3

February 12, 1969

Dear Friends,

The annual meeting of the Foundation for Research on Ancient America was held in the Stone Church Education Building January 19, 1969. Growing interest in the work of the Foundation was evidenced by the best attendance to date (with exception of the world Conference meeting last April), and by the generous offering of \$48.48.

All of the officers were sustained with the exception of the secretary. Because of the extended stay of Mrs. Violet Conway in California, a new secretary was named, Mrs. Gail B. (Katherine) Wilson. Thus the officers of the organization now consist of chairman, Thelona D. Stevens, vice-chairman, Chris B. Hartshorn, secretary, Katherine Wilson, treasurer, Charles Siegfried, publicity chairman, Kenneth Raveill, and chairman of manuscripts, Audrey Stubbart.

The chairman's report centered largely in four phases of work since her election in January, 1968:

1. Organization and set up of files
2. Updated and revised list of names and addresses of interested persons
3. Arranged for the meeting held at World Conference, 1968
4. Instituted the practice of sending out newsletters; edited and mailed letters No. 1, July 9, and No. 2, November 20, 1968

The report also referred to problems of immediate concern:

1. How to publicize the Book of Mormon contest for high school students
2. How to increase circulation of the newsletter

Lack of time cut short excellent talks by Roy E. Weldon, of Warrensburg, Missouri on current books dealing with the Book of Mormon, and Bruce M. Moore, a graduate fellow at Southern Illinois University, who discussed current trends in his field, archaeology. He referred specifically to new books dealing with this subject.

We again call to your attention a contest for high school youth which is being sponsored by the Foundation, with prizes of \$25 and \$15 in the form of gift certificates on Herald House for quality manuscripts. Time is growing short, as the manuscripts must be submitted by the end of October, this year. Awards will be presented at the World Conference of 1970. Please encourage youth of your acquaintance to enter into this study and writing project. Write to Mrs. Gail B. Wilson, 608 W. Farmer, Independence, Missouri 64050, for suggested topics.

T.D.S.


* * * * *

THE MASK OF XIPETOTEC

Charles M. May of Independence, Missouri writes:

"During a visit in August of 1962 to Oaxaca and the ruins of Monte Albán, it was my good fortune to locate a slide of the mask of Xipetotec, or Xipe Totec." (Brother May sent this slide, together with slides of some of the most ornate jewelry. We wish we had some means of reproducing them for our readers.) Brother May continues:

"Xipetotec, as I was told, was the 'dios de los joyeros,' or the 'god' of the jewelers; also referred to as the 'god' of the goldsmiths and the 'god' of Spring. (See National Geographic, October 1968, pp. 501 and 515.) This solid gold mask is in the custody of the Museum of Oaxaca. It was discovered in Tomb No. 7 at Monte Albán in 1932. It was made about the year 1100 A.D. By that time the inhabitants there, the Mixtecs, had become idol god worshippers. Yet they had retained apparent knowledge of ancient sacred jewels. It is most significant to us that Xipetotec is associated with jewelry, inasmuch as the most sacred of all jewels would be the Interpreters.

"Over the eyelids of the mask can be noted the design  of the Urim and Thummim, as described by some of the early days of the Restoration. The bridge across the nose of the mask is very plainly seen. Also, the outer rims are clearly distinguishable just inside the edges of the eyelids, particularly the rim over the right eye of the mask.

"I am not ordinarily very observing, but immediately upon viewing it, a very awesome sensation swept through me and the design 'leaped out at me,' so to speak. I concluded that the time had arrived for it to be noticed, although others perhaps have made the observation."

Brother May sent along with the slides a folder containing the information in Spanish, together with his translation:

METALLURGY INDIGENOUS TO MEXICO

Perhaps in the seventh century B.C. metallurgy was initiated in the Andes region, but it did not arrive in Mexico until the tenth century A.D. Here it was utilized principally for objects of personal adornment, although there were practical uses, such as for axes, chisels, needles, etc.

Gold, silver, copper, tin, and lead were the metals used. In some cases there existed alloys, such as gold with copper, copper and tin (bronze), or copper and lead.

There were two distinct techniques: the hammering and the smelting. With the first, they produced delicate sheets which were later repousséed (embossed?) to obtain the necessary decoration. The second, known as the "lost wax," is also called "false filigree." The technique is very complicated and difficult to manage and nowadays is utilized only by dentists.

Among the Mexican goldsmiths were notably the Mixtecs, who were the originators of the jewels found in Tomb No. 7 at Monte Albán, where the immense majority of pieces are: diadems, bracelets, rings, multiple gold necklaces, combined at times with beads of jade, turquoise, sea-shell, and even pearls. Although all these objects were for adorning the body, there was no lack of practical function, in the sense that, depending upon the form and the ornamental motifs, they indicated the rank of the wearer. Some perhaps were exclusively for the king, others for the high priest and others for the military chieftains.

Of the objects which one could consider of practical use, we have tweezers, sword handles, receptacles made of gold plate, silver dishes; and others were used only during the grand ceremonies and were exceedingly fragile.

When Cortéz sent some Mexican gold jewels to Europe, they brought great admiration and even Durero exclaimed that they were incomparable. Nevertheless, almost all have been given over to the crucible.

The following items are of interest to Book of Mormon students because of the reference to elephants in Ether 4:21.

The first elephant story is a clipping from The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, Tenn., January 20, 1969, sent by Mrs. E. M. Neff of Mammoth Spring, Ark. The item is by AP and bears the date line, Mexico City, January 19. It is titled "Ancient Bones Unearthed," and says, "Men digging by a creek near Reynosa in Northeastern Mexico found a 440-pound tusk 7½ feet long and bones apparently belonging to a pre-historic elephant. Reports said the remains were 12 feet below the surface."

The second elephant story is to be found in National Geographic, February, 1969, under the title, "Bringing Up Bertha." This account is to be found on the second flyleaf of the issue (advertisement page), on the upper part of the page giving information about National Geographic Society membership. We are indebted to Miss Pearl Kinnaman, St. Joseph, Missouri for pointing us to this article, which gives the account in colored pictures and a brief story:

Scientists are finding Ice Age elephants at the bottom of a river in Florida. Dr. S. David Webb, assistant curator of fossil vertebrates at the University of Florida, is quoted as saying, "Strangely enough some of Florida's major rivers still meander across the lowlands much as they did thousands of years ago. When animals fell in, their remains settled gently to the bottom and were preserved under a slow accumulation of silt." Dr. Webb tells of the recent raising of the skeleton of a 50,000-year-old mammoth from the bottom of the Aucilla River, 40 miles east of Tallahassee. A National Geographic Society grant made possible the recovery of the eight-ton giant, nicknamed Bertha by its discoverers.

Two color pictures accompany the brief account. One picture shows a diver inspecting the bones; the other picture shows the lifting of a 75-pound, 3½-foot-long leg bone 40 feet to the surface beneath an air-filled plastic bag.

The promise is made, "Next year, visitors will be able to see Bertha's awesome 15-foot-high skeleton in a new museum on the university campus in Gainesville."

* * * * *

RE: THE BERING STRAITS INFILTRATION ROUTE:

"It is usual to point out that the Indians are Mongoloid and therefore cannot possibly be of the racial stock of Lehi, . . . As to this hypothesis, it is fairly well known by now that the predominant blood type among the Mongols is 'B,' a type which is extremely rare among the Indians, whose dominant blood type is 'Q,' that being found among 91.3 per cent of the pure-blooded North American Indians."--Since Cumorah, by Hugh W. Nibley, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, 1967, p. 246.

This same source quotes Carleton Beals, Nomads and Empire Builders, Philadelphia and New York, Chilton Co., p. 76: "Here is a mystery that requires much pondering and investigation."

* * * * *

"NOW WHO DID DISCOVER AMERICA?"

This is the question raised in a newspaper clipping sent by Capt. Gary Lair, of San Bernardino, Calif. The clipping is from the San Bernardino Telegram, of June 18, 1968. The question raised is the title of the article by Ellis L. Spackman, who says, "Professor Cyrus H. Gordon, Brandeis University authority of Semitic languages, asserts that the controversial Netto inscription is genuine." He then gives this explanation of the Netto inscription:

In 1872, in the state of Paraiba in Brazil, a slave belonging to a landowner named Joaquim Alves da Costa discovered a stone with a strange inscription. Costa's

son, a draftsman, made a copy of the strange markings. This was sent to Ladislau Netto, director of the national museum in Rio de Janeiro. Netto recognized the writing as Phoenician and laboriously translated it as the record of a voyage made in the 7th century B.C. from near the present Israeli port of Elath at the head of the Red Sea, around Africa and finally driven by storms to the coast of Brazil.

Mr. Spackman continues: "Everybody scoffed at the story until very recently when a letter of Netto's written in 1874 turned up with his translation and a copy of the original tracing. Much has been learned about ancient Phoenicia in the past 96 years, things that would have been unknown to any 19th century forger so that Gordon says: 'Either the inscription is genuine, or the guy was a great prophet.'"

This conclusion is drawn by the author: "So here we go again. Spain and Italy have practically been at war with Norway for years over the claim that the discoveries of the Vikings antedated Columbus. Now along come the Lebanese, the modern Phoenicians, with a well-substantiated claim that they discovered America 2,600 years ago."

We conclude: It is too bad that they don't all read the Book of Mormon.

* * * * *

Recommended publication:

AMERICAS, published monthly in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, by the Division of Cultural Relations of the Pan American Union, Organization of the American States, Washington, D.C. 20006; one year \$5, two years, \$9, three years \$12.

* * * * *

If you enjoy the newsletters and want to keep them coming, by all means be alert to items of the nature that we can use, in that they relate in some way to the Book of Mormon, for its appreciation and promotion. Please share the good things you are finding, so we may share them with others. Be sure to include authentication for all statements.

Significant news items from newspapers or magazines are welcome, but to be of value, such clippings must bear the name of the publication and the date.

* * * * *

The Foundation extends sympathy to the family of Seventy E. Robert Fishburn, who passed away at his home in Independence February 4, after an illness of more than two years. He is survived by his wife, the former Rosemary Olsen; one daughter, Rita Elaine 15, and one son, Robin Alan, 12; his mother, Mrs. Ethel Fishburn, and a sister, Mrs. Howard S. Sheehy, Sr. The church has lost a highly trained, capable, consecrated worker. We of the Foundation especially feel this loss. We appreciate the valuable intellectual contribution Bob made to our cause, and we feel sorry that the work he had in progress for us has been cut short.

Foundation for Research
on Ancient America

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
Paid
Permit No. 138
Independence, mo. 64050
Return Postage Guaranteed