



FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH ON ANCIENT AMERICA

THELONA D. STEVENS, PRESIDENT / 202 SOUTH PENDLETON AVE. / INDEPENDENCE, MO. 64050

NEWSLETTER NO. 38

December 30, 1981

Dear Members and Friends,

The annual meeting of the Foundation for Research on Ancient America will be held at 3:00 P.M., January 17, in Partridge Hall of Stone Church. There will be a brief business session, which will include the election of officers for the ensuing year. The speaker will be Shirley Eakin Heater, whose subject will be "Chinese Update: New Archaeological Finds Off California."

Shirley comes well prepared to make a real contribution to (to special) research on the discoveries off the California coast, in addition to a great deal of general preparation. She is in her final year in the School of Science, University of Missouri, Columbia, working on her B.A. degree in anthropology, specializing in Mesoamerican Archaeology. She participated in an archaeological field at Nauvoo in the summer of 1978, and this past summer she spent eight weeks in Mexico, six of which were spent in study at the Universidad Ibero Americana, Mexico City. She explored ruins at Teotihuacan, Cuicuilco, Tenayuca, Chalchicomula, Monte Alban, Chichilula and Xochitlan. Shirley, long-time secretary for FRAA, has served also as secretary for the Anthropological Student Association and editor of the Students' Newsletter at the University of Missouri, Columbia.

Please plan now to attend this January 17 meeting of the FRAA.

May we remind you that with the beginning of 1982, a contribution is in order for you to retain your membership in FRAA. This is necessary for us to carry on our work. Any contribution you wish to make will be acceptable and appreciated. Of course, it is tax deductible. Please send your contributions to Fred O. Weddle, treasure, 410 Pleasant, Independence, MO. 64050. Also, please indicate if yours is a renewal or a new membership.

When Dr. Richard A. DeLong spoke at our October 18 meeting, our usual recording equipment was not available. Unfortunately, other equipment was used unsuccessfully. We noted a number of individuals with their own recorders at that meeting. We are hopeful that some good recordings were made, including the prayer of Benediction by Pastor Ron Roy E. Weddon. If you made a recording, would you be kind enough to share it with us?

-- T.D.S.

We have been especially interested in Urie Gledits since 1977, when the FRAA granted him a scholarship, making it possible for him to study a year at the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In 1978, Urie went to Mexico where he enrolled at the Universidad de las Americas in Puebla, studying Advanced Anthropology, Advanced Linguistics, Urban Anthropology, and Nahuatl (language of the Aztecs). He became an instructor there, teaching Cultural Anthropology and Middle East Archaeology. He has earned his master's degree from this university.

Thoric took up his studies at the University of Arizona in Tucson in 1980, where he is at work on the application of the teachings of the Book of Mormon archaeology, aiming toward his second master's degree. This one will be in Developmental Anthropology, which will apply toward his Ph.D.

We are proud to present the following article by Thoric Cederstrom.

ANCIENT MEXICAN COSMOLOGY AND BOOK OF MORMON GEOGRAPHY: A CAUTIONARY NOTE

A popular pastime for many Book of Mormon enthusiasts is the correlation of ancient cities mentioned in the scriptures of America with contemporary archaeological sites of today. The exercise is fun and stimulating, and it also brings to life the stories and history of ancient times. Although a rewarding activity, such efforts should be tempered by the realization that accurate correlations are difficult due to several intervening factors: a complex archaeological history, cursory descriptions in the Book of Mormon, geomorphological changes throughout the centuries, and possible different perception of the world (cosmology) by the Peoples of ancient America. All variables can potentially distort the "fit" between Book of Mormon cities and archaeological sites known today, but the difference in world perception (cosmology) offers the greatest problem.

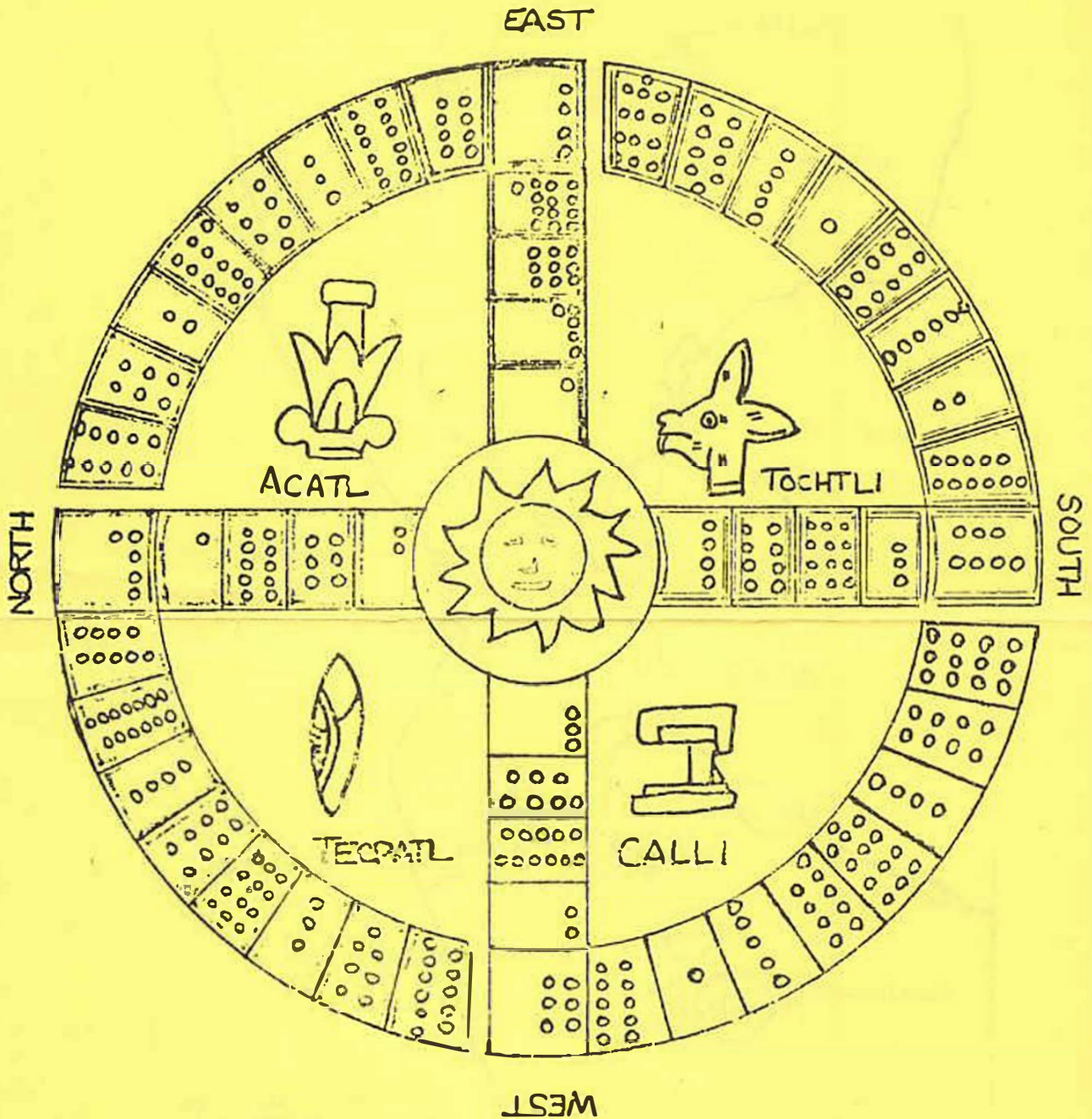
Western man (i.e., European) has traditionally perceived the world with the direction north at the top. Although no inherent reason exists for depicting north as the "right-side-up", sixteenth century European mappers found it both convenient and gratifying to have their "civilized" countries above the lesser "savages" below them. This ethnocentric practice continues today, though more out of custom than for any racist motive. Anthropological data suggest that some other peoples perceive their directions differently with other cardinal points on top or facing upward on their maps. The ancient Mexicans were one such group.

The Mexican world was divided into four sections with the sun (Tonal in Nahuatl--the Aztec language) at the center. (See illustration.) Acatl, or east, was conceived always at the top for it was here that the god, Quetzalcoatl, the supreme deity, lived. It was from this direction they awaited his return. From the Acatl, Cortez arrived with his men and conquered ancient Mexico. North, at the top of the western maps, was called Mictlan, land of the dead, where Mictlan Techtli, lord of death, reigned. Death was not considered an adequate deity to rule at the top of the world. Ancient Mexico, then, was not drawn as we draw it today with the north at the top, but rather the east. (See map.) This contrasts sharply with world perception of the 1830's.

Joseph Smith, a product of Western education and acculturation of the 1830's, naturally would have conceived the world with north at the top. A possible hypothesis exists: If, in the translation process, Book of Mormon terms (e.g., Acatl, Mictlan, etc.) for the cardinal points appeared as top, bottom, right side, left side, or in some other manner where the prophet could have substituted our perceptions of north, south, east, west, then such references to cardinal directions in the Book of Mormon could be off by 90 degrees. The testing of such a hypothesis would need to control for other factors: archaeological history, Book of Mormon descriptions, and geomorphological changes. Cosmological conception probably most seriously affects reconstructions of Book of Mormon geography. Book of Mormon philosophy needs no such reconstruction. It is clear and to the point.

Ancient American spiritual conception of the world was one of love and brotherhood. There are no distorting variables to cause misunderstanding of this message. With a sick and hungry world crying out for peace, love, and happiness, our energies should be directed toward applying the teachings of the Book of Mormon in our lives and acquiring knowledge (languages, agriculture, health, community development, etc.)

necessary for starting Zionie endeavors. As Joseph Smith, Jr., so adeptly perceived, our Lord, who is the "top" of our universe, commands us to move upward (not north, east, Acatl or Mictlan) and build Zion.



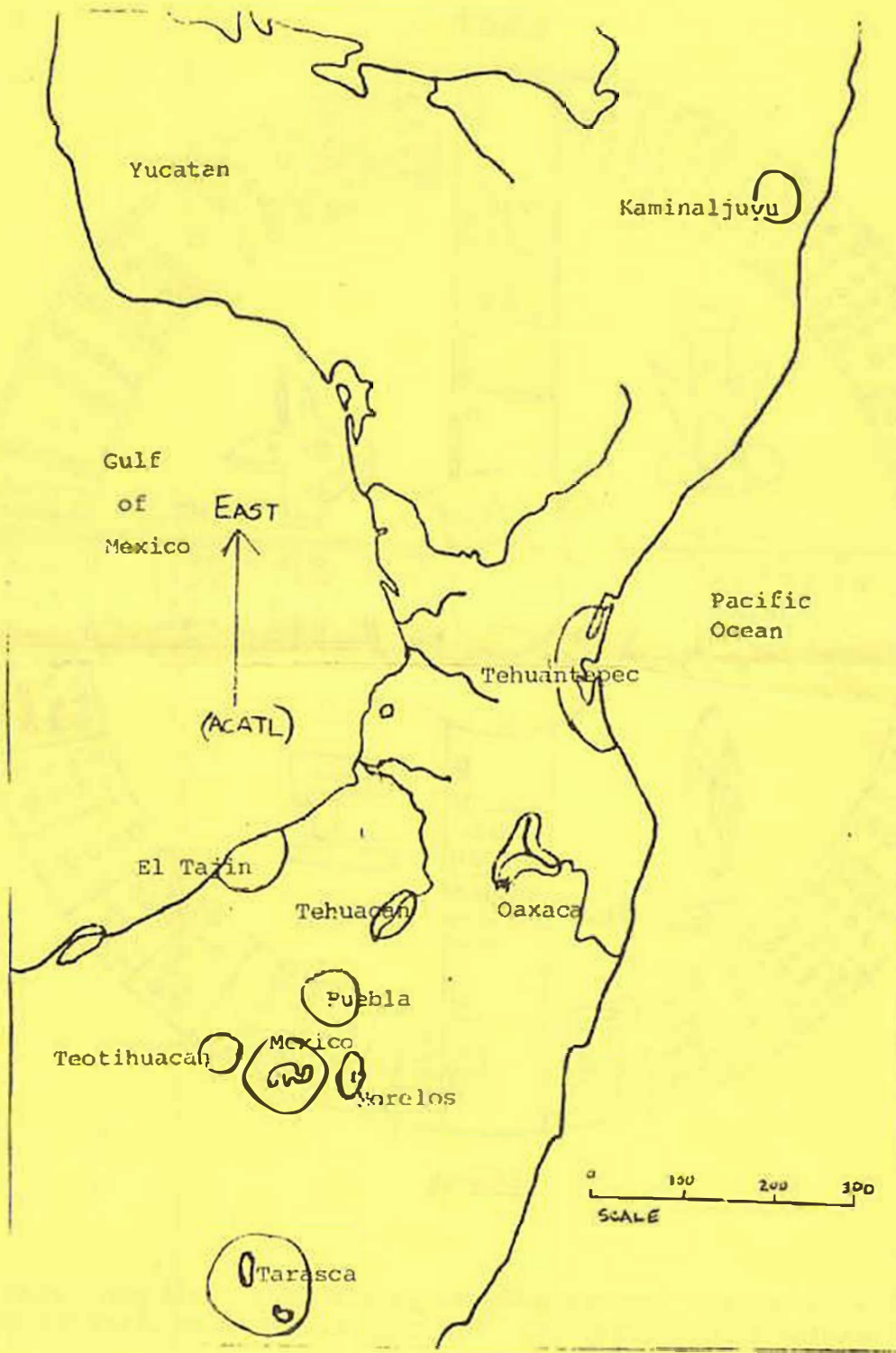
The Aztec cycle of 52 years. The cycle begins in the center with one ° Acatl and proceeds counterclockwise to the north, two °° Tecpatl, and so on until 52 years have been completed and the cycle begins over.

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The Universidad de las Americas, Puebla, Mexico, is offering a very special three-course program on archaeology for \$800, beginning in June, six weeks. If interested, more information may be obtained by writing to Dorie Cedersstrom, 1347 No. 5th Ave., Tucson, AZ. 85705.

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Map



Mexico as perceived by ancient Mexicans and possibly peoples of the Book of Mormon. (Note East is the direction to Jerusalem.)

AN OBSERVATORY FOR ANCIENT AMERICANS?

Observation and speculation have been proceeding for over thirty years, since a giant man-built octagon was discovered near Epps in northeast Louisiana. This octagon is composed of six concentric eight-sided figures, expanding from the central one with its 900-foot segments to the outer circle with its eight approximately 1350-foot segments. The entire figure extends nearly a mile in diameter. Each of the circles was built of mounds of soil which remain an average of six feet in height after erosion through the centuries. Each circle of earth is about 75 feet in width--a tremendous earth-moving task!

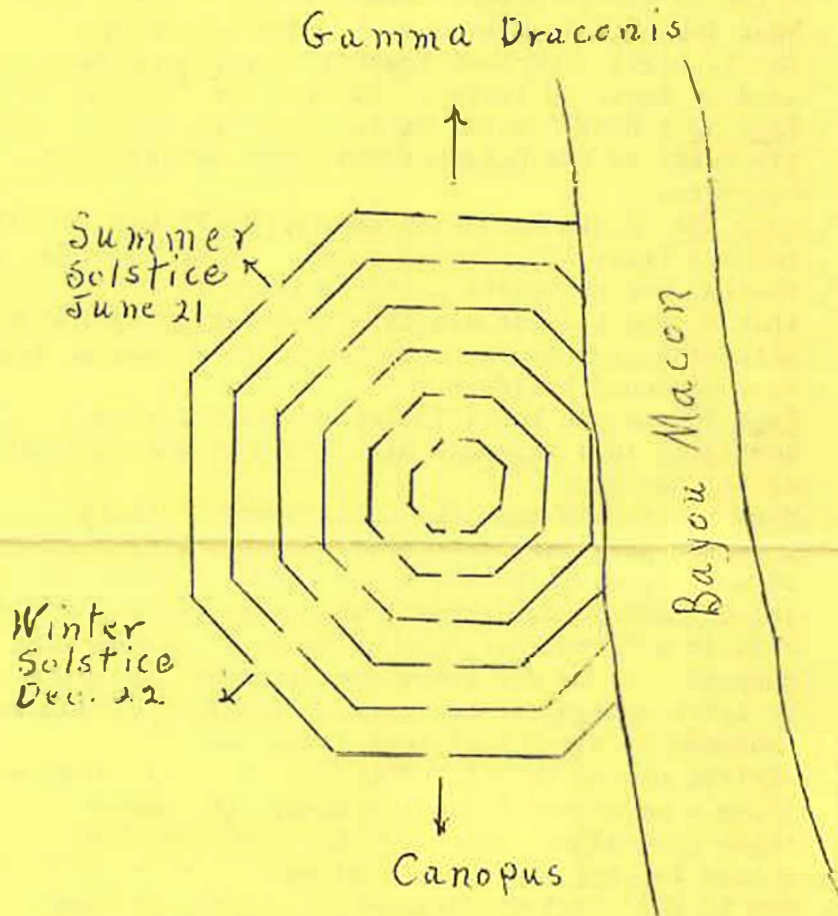
It is estimated that some 500,000 cubic feet of earth was moved to build the octagon, "possibly one of the most dramatic archaeological finds in North America." It is so immense it was difficult to recognize the shape from ground level. Also, erosion from the Bayou Macon River has cut away a slice of the eastern side, destroying a portion of the three outer mounds.

This archaeological phenomenon is thought to date to 1000 B.C., possibly as an observatory. Extending from the center, four passages are cut through each of the rings. One extends west-northwest. An observer standing in the center would observe the setting sun on June 21, the summer solstice. Looking down the west-southwest avenue, he would observe the setting sun on December 22, the winter solstice. The other two avenues point nearly, but not exactly, to the north and south, respectively. This puzzled present-day scientists. It was noted, however,

that the northerly avenue pointed to the star Gamma Draconis, which was used by early astronomers in the ancient Mideast as a night-time "clock" as this star travels in a small semicircle in the northern sky. By noting the position of the star, the approximate time could be told. The southern avenue points to the second brightest star in the sky, Canopus.

Poverty Point Octagon, as this site is called, could have been an observatory to the ancient Americans who built it. Or it could have been used for ceremonial purposes, scientists think. It is thought the original builders of Poverty Point Octagon may have been ancestors of Indians, but where the builders came from is unknown at present. The Poverty Point Octagon is the largest such observatory ever found, much bigger and more clearly defined than the 300-ft. diameter bronze age Stonehenge in England.

--Information taken from the Omaha-World Herald, October 7, 1981,
by Emily Dunsdon, Tabor, Iowa.



Ethel V. Forbes, Coldwater, Mich. has done some research, which she shares with our readers, taken from Michigan--A Guide to the Wolverine State. Compiled by the Michigan Writer's Project (a WPA project) Pub. by Oxford, 1941.

Page 27: A Michigan custom, scarcely encountered north of Mexico, was the crephunting of skulls. Most of the specimens discovered show it to have been performed after death. There is in the University of Michigan a specimen showing evidence of a well-advanced healing process around the edges of the opening that could have gone on only during life.

Page 404: Rowe's Island in the Kalamazoo River, near Augusta, Mich. The island was the scene of Indian tribal ceremonies, and many burial mounds and gardens remain intact. Near the huge diamond-shaped mound in the center of the island (285 ft. long and 10 ft. high) have been found a copper spearhead and other relics, unrelated to the type used by American Indians, but similar to those of the Maya of Central America.

Page 502: Near Charlevoix, Mich. six miles north of Coldwater, mounds of prehistoric origin exist in the neighborhood where the skeletal remains of very tall men have been uncovered.

Page 504: North Leslie on Rice's Creek; part of the village of Leslie. Indian mounds cover a tract of 15 to 20 acres. Among the bones unearthed were a human skull so large that no hat in Leslie could be found to fit it, and a thigh bone 3 inches longer than that of the tallest man in the village. In the vicinity are rectangular earthworks, with entrances at the ends, possibly thrown up for defensive purposes by the vanished race of mound builders.

Page 30: As you know, Indian mounds are found all over Michigan. Most of them are concentrated in a triangle with its base the Indian Ohio boundary and its apex is the head of Saginaw Bay.

More remarkable than the mounds were Southern and Western Michigan's garden beds, all of which have been destroyed by agricultural operations. These consisted of low ridges of soil about 18 inches high, arranged in almost perfect geometric patterns, and covering as much as 120 acres. They were given their distinctive name because they resembled beds in a formal garden, but there is no evidence of their having been used for that purpose. It is not known whether they had ceremonial purpose or were intended simply as artistic designs to be contemplated from an adjacent hill. No implements, pottery, arrowheads or pipes have been found near them. Certainly they were abandoned before the arrival of the French. There are a few in Indiana and Wisconsin.

(From a magazine--I can't remember the name-- comes this:) There are still traces of these low ridges, which can be seen only from the air. The latest theory about these ridges is that they were Indians' solution to the late and early killing frosts common to this region. Vegetables planted on these ridges were not frost killed. I believe there is some experimenting being done on this now.

There is an iron kiln at Christmas, Michigan, which is in the Upper Peninsula, north of Munising.

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