

The Witness

The Foundation For Research On Ancient America



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Diving for Underwater Ruins

Editor

Sherrie Kline Smith

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Lyle Smith

Junior Witness Editor

Venna Stevens Johnson

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The Foundation for Research on Ancient America is a nonprofit corporation comprised of individuals who desire to advance the knowledge of Jesus Christ and The Book of Mormon. Through instructional materials, archaeological research, testimonies, and related projects, members of FRAA seek to assist in bringing forth the light that is contained in the ancient scriptures of The Book of Mormon. A contribution to the Foundation for Research on Ancient America results in membership.

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Cover...

Donald Forsythe of BYU dives into Lake Peten Itza, excavating underwater. Man-made mounds on the lake bottom have been found. See page eight. Photo by Lyle L. Smith.

Message from the President

In a complex world that is rapidly changing, we often are amazed at the cutting edge of technology unfolding before us. Yet believers in The Book of Mormon also need to be on the cutting edge of information and unfolding events that dramatically affect our understanding and witness of The Book of Mormon.

The Witness is our source of up-to-date information concerning archaeological discoveries which add to our understanding of The Book of Mormon. Articles resulting from internal research expand our knowledge of its traditions, customs, and spiritual insights.

In 1993, readers of *The Witness* will adventure to remote regions of Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize to travel on crocodile-infested rivers, walk along dark jungle paths, and discover ancient pyramids in lost cities hundreds of years old. You will read how archaeological discoveries are bringing The Book of Mormon alive.

You will take part in Book of Mormon conferences and visit congregations throughout the United States where drama, testimonies, and Book of Mormon research are brought to expectant Saints.

You will read and be touched by young people working with The Book of Mormon who are committing their lives to Jesus Christ and bearing their testimonies as they become leaders for today and tomorrow.

In 1992, *The Witness* traveled to more than 18,000 homes bringing knowledge and inspiration. This year, take the time to reserve your place on this exciting journey, and renew or begin your subscription today. Simply fill out the attached envelope, and assure that in 1993 *The Witness* will be in your home.

Michael Gatrost

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Foundation News

It already looks like a busy year for the Foundation! Most of the staff spent the first week of January on tour in Belize and the Yucatan, returning in time to prepare for The Book of Mormon Day at the Blue Springs Restoration Branch. More of these conferences have been scheduled for the next few months. See the calendar on this page for specific information.

On January 30, an all-day strategic planning meeting was held. Under the facilitation of Vim Horn (University of Missouri-Kansas City), the staff took a close look at the Foundation's reason for existing, examined where it was headed, and established priorities with short and long-term goals. The future looks exciting for FRAA as it moves to expand its activities.

The summer intern program instituted in 1992 will again be a major program for the Foundation. Eight students worked last summer on meaningful Book of Mormon projects while earning needed funds for school and college. These young leaders continue to participate throughout the year in Book of Mormon conferences around the country. With sufficient funding, it is hoped to expand the number to 12. Why not consider sponsoring a young leader? Amounts suggested are \$100, \$325, \$650, and \$1265 for a full scholarship.

New Slide Series

The FRAA staff is working to put together a new set of slides to be used in conjunction with the "Go Ye and Teach" series. It is aimed at nonmembers and explains what The Book of Mormon is. Order your set today!



In-kind Contributions

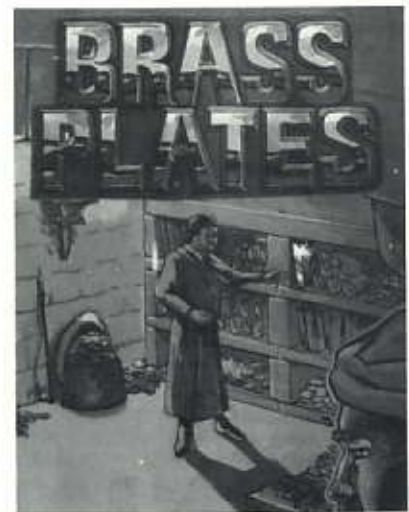
From time to time, professional people donate their time and talents to help the Foundation. We would like to thank Aaron Presler of Presler Designs who worked with the staff to create a new logo and appearance for our letterhead

and other publications. Aaron's design—the FRAA acronym engraved on plates and its incorporation into a border reminiscent of Mexican and Chinese patterns—gives FRAA a new look, one which is meaningful in relation to its mission.



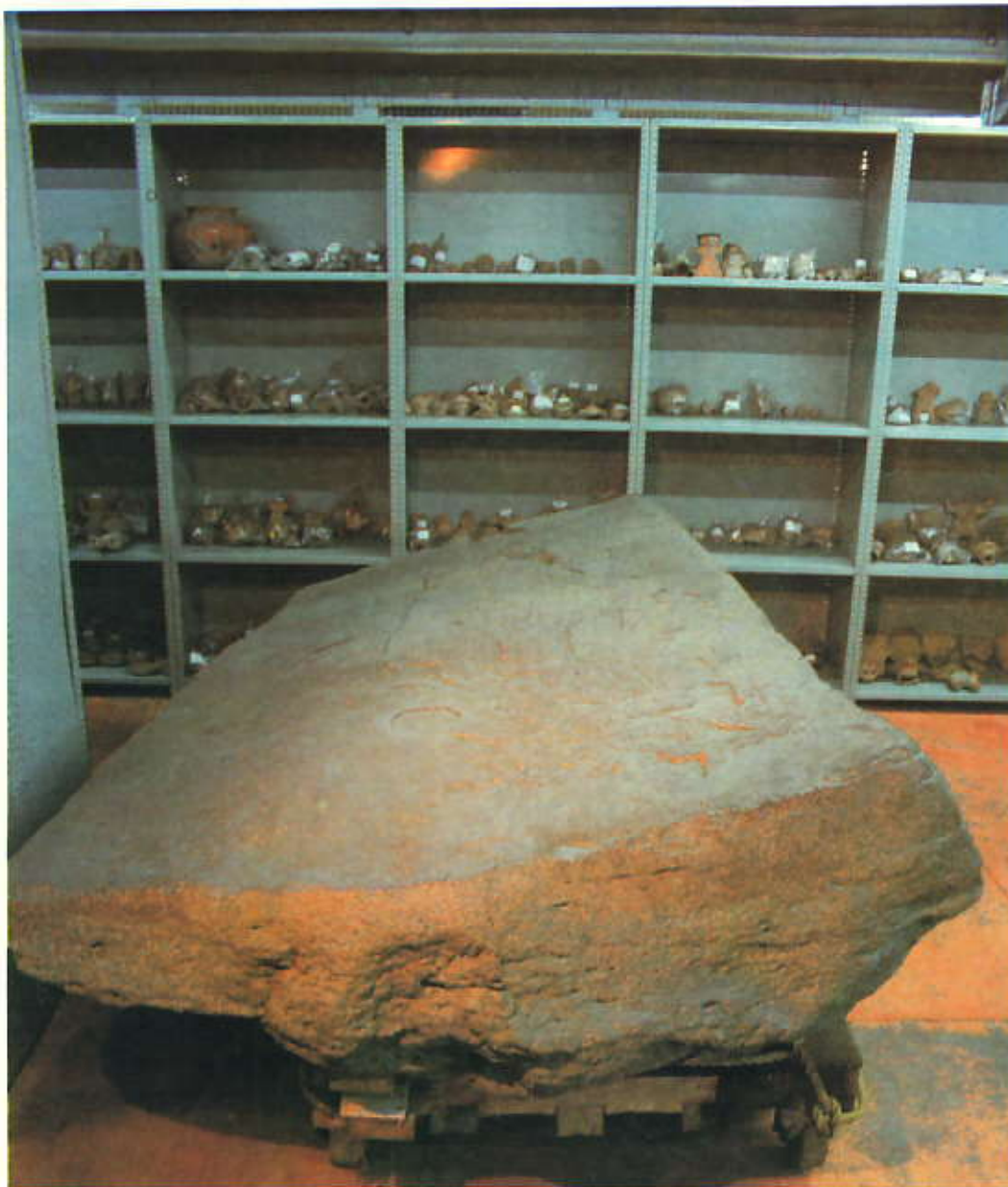
New Children's Book

The Foundation is pleased to announce the completion of *The Brass Plates*. Written by J. Edward Slauter and illustrated by J. Robert Farley, the book comes with an audiocassette of the story which children can listen to as they follow along in the book. Call 816 461-FRAA (3722) to order copies for your children, grandchildren and/or friends.



Calendar 1993

March 7 3:00 P.M.	FRAA Annual Meeting Waldo Restoration Branch
March 13 8:00-5:00	Youth Spend a Day with The Book of Mormon Jointly sponsored by FRAA and Restoration Camping, Inc. (RCI); held at the Center Place Restoration School
March 21 9:00-12:00 1:30-2:30	Spend a Day with The Book of Mormon Oak Grove Restoration Branch
April 25 9:00-12:00	Spend a Morning with The Book of Mormon Chilhowee Restoration Branch
September 26	Book of Mormon Day Detroit, Michigan area
December 23 - January 1, 1994	Annual FRAA Mesoamerican Archaeology Tour
March or April 1994	FRAA Tour to Israel



Donald Beebe

◀ The current director of the Xalapa, Mexico, Museum of Archaeology keeps the La Mojarra Stela in the basement because he believes the monument is not authentic. Scholars throughout the world, however, think otherwise. Its location made it difficult to photograph. In December 1991, a team of six people from FRAA went on a photographic tour of Mexico, especially to see and photograph the La Mojarra Stela 1.



Patricia Beebe



▶ The National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City displays this replica of the Tuxtla Statuette. The original is at the Smithsonian Institution. Discovered in 1902, it and several other stone fragments have the same writing system as that of the La Mojarra Stela 1.

◀ This closeup of the La Mojarra Stela 1 shows the inscriptions over the figure's head, columns F-L, as shown in the drawing on pages six and seven. The glyphs at the end of the last column on the left read, "I cut off his head, and it (or he) departed for the underworld (or died)."

The La Mojarra Stela Can it be the Coriantumr Stone?

Sherrie Kline Smith

And it came to pass in the days of Mosiah, there was a large stone brought unto him, with engravings on it; and he did interpret the engravings, by the gift and power of God.

—Omni 1:35

Since its discovery in November 1986, the La Mojarra Stela has been considered by archaeologists to be one of the most important monuments in Mesoamerica. They believe its significance lies in its potential to shed light on the development and spread of Mesoamerican writing and calendrical practices. To Book of Mormon believers, though, the stela could be an astonishing find if it proves to be the Coriantumr Stone recorded by Amaleki in *The Book of Mormon* (Omni 1:35-40).

Dredged from the Acula River, just north of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, in Veracruz, Mexico, the stela "bears the full-figure portrait of a richly-attired personage and an unusually long hieroglyphic text" (Winfield 1988:1). Most other long inscriptions come from the Maya area.

The writing system engraved on the four-ton basalt stone is not new. The Tuxtla Statuette, a jade figurine with inscriptions found in 1902 in the San Andres Tuxtla District of Veracruz, Mexico—not far from the La Mojarra site—is engraved with the same script. The discovery of the La Mojarra Stela, with its lengthy inscription, has greatly added to the already known corpus of hieroglyphic signs, providing an unprecedented database for

decipherment.

Several participants covered a variety of topics about the stela during the La Mojarra session at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in San Francisco in December 1992. One of the scheduled discussants, Richard Diehl from the University of Alabama, did not attend because he had been given approval to begin digging at the site where the La Mojarra Stela had been found and was on his way to set up for the expedition.

This was exciting news! The discovery of this magnificent stela outside a major "ruin" or ancient city has been puzzling. In Olmec territory, the La Mojarra site sits close to one of the major Olmec ruins, Tres Zapotes. The dates on the stela (see drawing on pages six and seven, columns A and M, the bottom portion) correlate to A.D. 143 and 156—too late for the Olmec. Therefore, extensive exploration of the La Mojarra site should provide more information on the cultural context of the stela, which in turn may produce a different correlation for the dates.

Decipherment

Certain conditions, such as establishing the rules of the script, must be met before decipherment can occur, but the final, most important ingredient is discerning the language (Pope 1975:187). Once the language is known, not only decipherment but interpretation can move ahead.

What is the language of the La Mojarra script?

John Justeson from SUNY-Albany and Terry Kauffman of Pittsburgh University, two well-respected linguistic scholars who have been working on deciphering the stela for several years, gave a most exciting presentation at the annual meeting. They believe the script represents the Proto-Zoquean language. Using that as a basis, they feel confident that they have established the grammatical context for more than half of the text and an analysis of the other half, which is less secure. Twenty of the signs have firm readings. Their findings are to be published in *Science*, either late February or early March.

Differences of opinion exist about where to begin reading. The pictographic elements of the portion, directly over the figure, face the center. The longer text also faces the center, creating a mirror image (Winfield 1988:12, 16). This reversal of pictographic elements of a text to form a mirror image is not uncommon in Maya and Egyptian inscriptions (Schele and Miller 1986:325; Davies 1987:12-13; Aldred 1984:113; Roehrig 1990:22-24).

Justeson and Kauffman have chosen to read the shorter portion over the figure's head first, columns A to L, returning to the center and reading the longer portion, columns M to U, both from top to bottom. Sylvia Meluzin from the University of California-Fullerton, another participant at the conference who is a well-known scholar on the Tuxtla Statuette script, reads the longer text first (columns M to U, then A to L). (See Figure 1, pages six and seven.)

Justeson and Kauffman claim they can summarize the entire narrative of the stela. The personage on the stela is a ruler/warrior. Beginning with the text over the

figure their decipherment follows. "The narrative begins on the date of a total solar eclipse with the beginning of a battle. This initial war lasted a couple of days and the war captain, who is the protagonist of the text, is said to have fought someone whose identity is not yet known. There probably was another battle thirteen years later which is followed in a few months by the beheading of a captain."

The portion to the right of the figure tells about a series of rituals, a scattering of ritual substances and the use of various authority symbols. Thirteen days later, the war captain becomes ruler.

For Book of Mormon believers, this proposed reading of the stela, along with other factors, is most thought-provoking. Knowing the potential pitfalls, I hesitate to call attention to the correlation between this monument and the large stone with engravings brought to Mosiah which related the story of Coriantumr and a short history of the Jaredite nation (Omni 1:35-39). I do so, however, to stimulate others to in-depth research and prayer concerning this stela.

Information on the stone Mosiah translated includes "an account of one Coriantumr, and the slain of his people."

It also spake a few words concerning his fathers. And, his first parents came out from the tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people . . . and their bones lay scattered in the land northward.

—Omni 1:36-39

For the full story, it is necessary to turn to Ether. Here, Moroni abridges Ether's record of the Jaredite nation and tells in chapter six about the final days of

Coriantumr and the events surrounding the nation's downfall.

Correlations between the La Mojarra Stela and the Coriantumr Stone

1. The personage on the La Mojarra (LM) Stela is a ruler/warrior. Coriantumr was king and many "mighty men" rose up to destroy him (Ether 6:16). He "studied himself in all the arts of war, and all the cunning of the world, wherefore he gave battle unto them who sought to destroy him" (Ether 6:17). Coriantumr was a ruler/warrior.

2. Thirteen years separate the two major dates on the LM Stela.

In the year Ether was cast out and "dwelt in the cavity of a rock," a great war began among the people (Ether 6:14-16). The time frame from the beginning of this war to when the ruling families were all killed and the Jaredite civilization ended equals 13 years.

3. Perhaps one of the most startling similarities between Kauffman's and Justeson's preliminary translation, though, is the phrase at the end of the text above the figure's head. It reads or translates as, "I cut off his head, and it (or he) departed for the underworld (or died)."

Coriantumr "smote off the head of Shiz . . . and after that he had struggled for breath, he died" (Ether 6:104-105).

4. Another translation of a glyph on the LM Stela is "speaks or shouts." In The Book of Mormon, when Amaleki tells about the stone, he writes that "It spake" (Omni 1:38). When Moroni tells about the 24 gold plates, he uses this language also. "And as I suppose that the first part of this record, which speaks . . ." (Ether 1:3).

5. Martha Macri, a professor at the University of California-

Figure 1.



Drawing by George Stuart, used by permission.



Davis who teaches Native American Studies and World Writings Systems also participated in LM session of the conference. She believes several glyphs on the LM Stela represent a parentage statement. The Coriantumr Stone speaks about his first parents (Omni 1:38-39).

6. A translation of one of the more frequent LM signs is an opening phrase, like "Behold" or "And now"—a literary pattern frequently found in The Book of Mormon.

7. Kauffman and Justeson say the inscriptions tell that bloodletting occurs. They translate one of the signs as "scattering" or "scattered," which to Mayanists refers to blood. Could it be "bones" are "scattered"? In Amaleki's account about the large engraved stone, he relates that "the severity of the Lord fell upon them [Jaredites] . . . and their bones lay scattered in the land northward" (Omni 1:39). How did he know bones lay scattered on land northward unless it was related on the stone? Ether's record had not yet been discovered by the people of Limhi.

Or could the scattering refer to people at the time of the great tower when the Lord confounded the language? When he "swear in his wrath that they should be scattered upon all the face of the earth; and according to the word

of the Lord the people were scattered" (Ether 1:7) (emphasis added). This information is on the Coriantumr Stone.

8. One of the LM Stela glyphs indicates a place or location name

that is associated with water and a hill. The last Jaredite battle took place in a land of many waters near Hill Ramah.

9. The La Mojarra site sits close to the area of Cerro Rabon which many Book of Mormon scholars believe to be Hill Ramah/Cumorah.

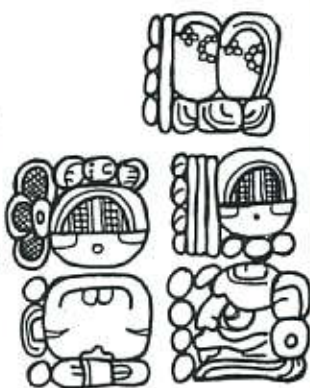
10. A major problem in correlating this stela with the Coriantumr Stone, however, centers on the accepted reading of the stela's dates, which are A.D. 143 and 156. These do not agree with the end of either the Jaredite nation or Olmec civilization.

The date on the Tuxtla Statuette—A.D. 162, only six years later than the stela—follows the same form as that on the La Mojarra Stela. Jacques Soustelle, author of *The Olmecs*, suggests that the date on the statuette should not be judged by the Maya system (1984:165-168). He points out that the calendar Long Count glyphs on the statuette lack the accompanying period glyphs, i.e. baktun, katun, etc., found in most Maya inscriptions. The La Mojarra Stela also lacks these components. (See Figure 2.)

Perhaps more important, though, he asks, "Should we necessarily grant that the zero date of the Long Count is everywhere the same, and identical to that of the classic Maya chronology?" (1984:166). The Muslim calendar, which has the same notation style as ours, has a different starting date—622 years later than ours. So it is not out of the question to have a different zero date for different groups of Mesoamerican peoples.

Soustelle believes the Long Count on the statuette (and thus it would affect the stela too) would be around 400 years earlier. This places both the statuette and stela

The Maya kept a continuous day count from a beginning date of 3,114 B.C. They recorded these days with numerals (a dot equaled one and a bar represented 5) and time period glyphs (baktun-144,000 days, katun-7,200 days, tun-year of 360 days, uinal-month of 20 days, and kin-a day). See *The Witness*, Winter 1989, No. 67, pages 10 and 11.



0 katun 9 baktun
2 uinal 19 tun
 4 kin

Figure 2
Illustration by Connie Smith

Diving for Underwater Ruins

Lyle Smith

While in San Francisco at the AAA meeting, I heard from a friend that Dr. Donald Forsythe of BYU (a former speaker at the 1988 Book of Mormon Day in the Auditorium), was in Guatemala with an underwater archaeological team. Under the direction of Richard Hansen of UCLA, the team was exploring the depths of Lake Peten Itza in the Peten of Guatemala. This was exciting news for me as I was headed for Guatemala the following week.

On arrival in Guatemala, I contacted the team by telephone and was invited to come up and visit them in their exploration of the lake bottom. When I arrived, and after arranging gear and making sure all equipment was in order, we went from the local hotel in Santa Elena via the causeway to the island of Flores. As well as investigating the lake floor, this exploratory group was digging test pits on the island. In one test pit, I saw the skeleton of a child. In



another pit they found a stone wall some ten or twelve feet under the level of the present ground.

After looking at the progress being made in the pits, we went to the boat *Canek Rey*, named after the last Maya king.

Underwater diving is a complicated business and for the archaeologist even more so. The team was equipped with underwater lights and underwater video capability. The day I was there, the team was making a trench in the silt on the bottom of the lake.

Previous to my visit, they had found mounds on the bottom of the lake which they believe

were man-made. They also recovered thousands of pieces of pottery dating from the Preclassic (about the time of Christ) up to the present.

This dig is short-term, lasting only six weeks. Now that it has been established that man-made remains are underwater in the lake, further investigations need to be done—investigations that need money and the right people with special skills.

Other lakes run east from Lake Peten Itza in an east/west line that also need exploring. Two of these lakes almost surround the small mountains/hills which are crowned by the ruins of Yaxha about 30 miles east of Lake Peten Itza.

Of the many questions that remain unanswered, perhaps the most obvious is why are these ruins underwater? One reason proposed is that the level of the water in the lake was lower in past centuries. Another answer, more in keeping with Book of Mormon history, is that this land sunk during the destruction at the crucifixion of Christ. Only further exploration will give us clues to the right answer. Nevertheless, it was an exciting time for me.



The La Mojarra Stela

Continued from page 7

more firmly in Olmec chronology and matches more closely the archaeological record, although little excavation has been done yet at the La Mojarra site. Soustelle's idea, which has merit, would create almost a perfect match with our understanding of the collapse of the Jaredite nation—257 B.C. and 244 B.C.

The preliminary interpretation of the stela appears to provide many parallels with the Coriantumr Stone. They may be coincidences, and some major issues still need resolving, but the

progress made to date toward deciphering the La Mojarra Stela 1 gives much food for thought. We eagerly await reports from the team which is beginning excavation at the site, hoping it will provide a more firm cultural context (dating) for the stela. The La Mojarra Stela 1 could indeed prove to be a most significant find for Book of Mormon believers.

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See also *The Witness* February 1989, No.

64, pp. 4-6 and Spring 1991, No.

72, pp.9-10.





The Junior Witness

SPRING 1993 Foundation for Research on Ancient America NUMBER 24

God's Promise Fulfilled

by J. Edward Slauter
Illustrated by Rick Farley

A mighty wind had tossed eight barges upon the waves of the great sea. For 344 days the Jaredites, a group of God's chosen people, had endured hardships during a courageous voyage to a new home. Had it not been for their complete trust in the Lord, the Jaredite families would have perished in the depths of the sea. They had steadfastly obeyed the commandments of the Lord. He had heard their prayers. The Promised Land would soon be theirs to inherit.

Everyone inside the Brother of Jared's barge was hard at work. Pagag awakened early to do his daily chores of cleaning stalls and feeding the livestock. As he filled the manger with tender, sweet hay for the sheep and goats, Pagag found a pair of newborn twin lambs underneath the manger. Rebecca, his younger sister, scattered grain for the ducks and geese while two doves perched on her shoulders. Their mother was busy preparing breakfast for her hungry family. The Brother of Jared had just checked the interior of the barge for leaks. Quietly he sat down and continued his written account of their voyage to the Promised

Land.

"Come, my children. It is time to eat," Mother called out in a happy voice. "Hurry, we have much to do today."

Responding to his mother's command, Pagag dashed up to the loft steps leading to the family living quarters. Everyone was gathering for breakfast. Although Pagag was hungry, he was very anxious to talk to his father.

"Father, when do we arrive at the Promised Land?" Pagag boldly asked as he sat down beside his sister within the family circle.

"We must be patient, my son!" the Brother of Jared replied with a twinkle in his eyes. "Let us pray. Then we will talk about the Promised Land."

"Almighty God, thank you for hearing our prayers and keeping us safe during this long journey. Grant us strength this day and may your blessings be upon our humble meal. Be with the families in the other seven barges. May we all soon arrive safely upon the shores of the Promised Land. In the name of our Lord. Amen."

"Listen to the mighty wind blowing against the great sea," the Brother of Jared said to his family. Everyone paused for a few moments to hear the wind blow. "From the very start of our voyage, the Lord commanded the wind to push our barges toward

the Promised Land. For 344 days, it has never ceased."

"Yes, Father, I hear the wind," Pagag replied, "but Father, when will we arrive?"

"Our destiny is in the hands of God!" the Brother of Jared proclaimed. "When the wind stops, we will be able to see the Land of Promise."

As the Brother of Jared spoke, the Spirit of God touched the hearts of everyone present. They knew their lives were in the hands of the Lord.

Pagag glanced at his mother. With a finger to her lips, she silently motioned to him not to ask any more questions. Heeding her advice, Pagag quietly ate his breakfast. He could hardly wait to step out of his barge onto solid ground and run and play with his dog Kush. His mind was filled with thoughts and questions about the Promised Land.

What would it look like? Would it be a wilderness? Would it be beautiful, grassy valleys between huge mountains? Would this new land be inhabited with wild, dangerous animals? Would Aaron and Sarah, his cousins, arrive at the same time in Uncle Jared's barge? Could they be lost? Would they land in a far distant place? Would they arrive at all? Pagag could only have faith that they, too, would arrive at the Promised Land.

As the family sat in a circle eating their morning meal, the two stones that had been touched by the hand of the Lord began to shine brighter and brighter. Their light was so intense that it illuminated every corner within the barge. Something wonderful was happening.

"Father!" Pagag yelled out excitedly, "I don't hear the wind!"

Everyone sat listening. Even the animals grew still.

"Yes, the wind has stopped," whispered Rebecca.

Without saying a word, the Brother of Jared stood up and walked to the huge door of the barge. Carefully, he loosened the seal and with his strong arms, pulled on the door.

As the door opened, fresh air rushed inside. Streams of pure sunlight filled the barge.

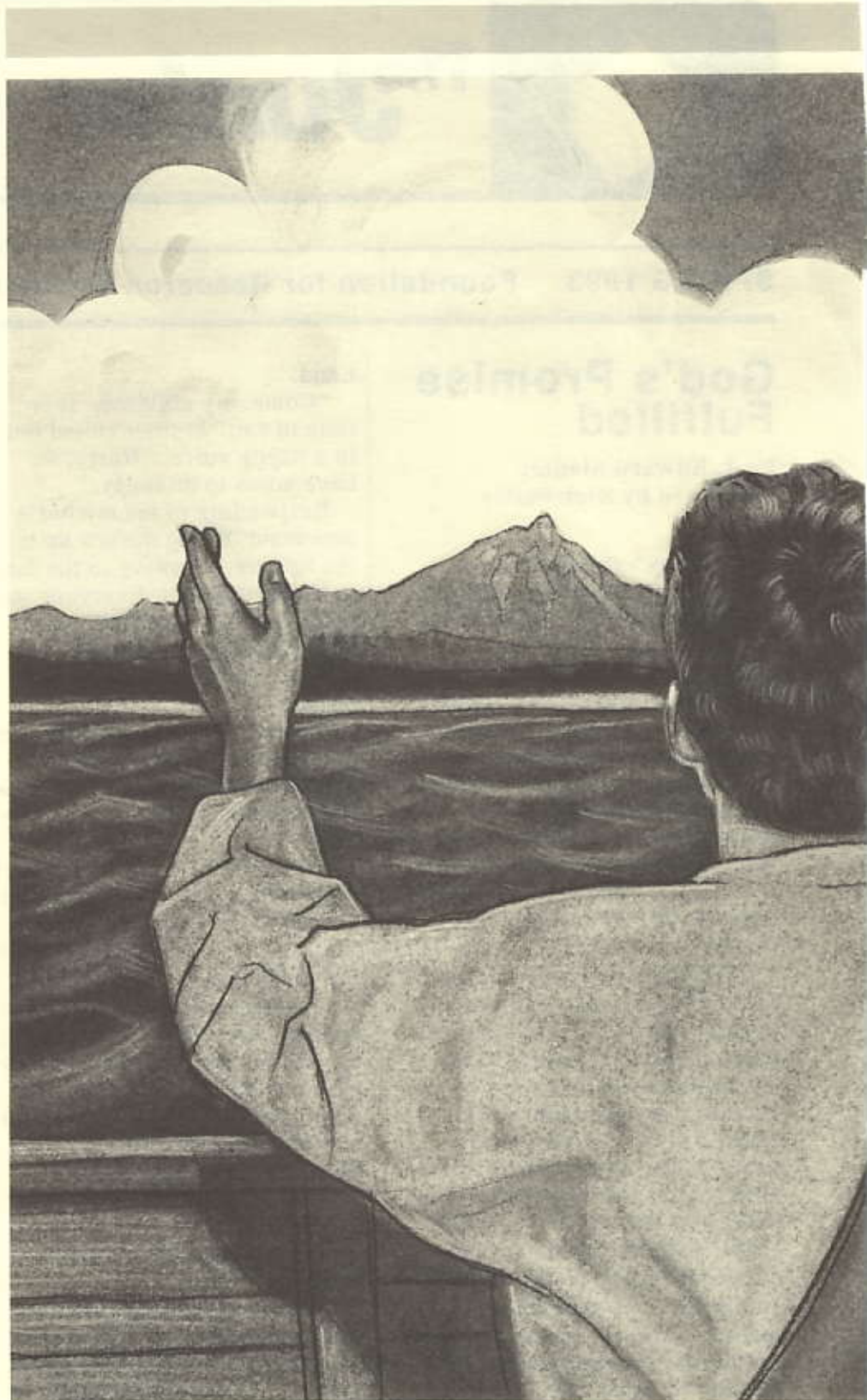
The Brother of Jared stepped out on the deck of the barge. His eyes focused on the long-awaited scene—a beautiful, sandy shoreline studded with trees. Hundreds of sea gulls circled overhead, singing praises unto the Lord.

"It is land!" the Brother of Jared cried out. "It is the Land of Promise!"

Pagag, Mother, and Rebecca could wait no longer. They rushed to Father's side on the deck.

As a gentle breeze blew through his dark, wavy hair, Pagag cast his eyes on the shores of the Promised Land. For a few moments, he stood speechless. At times when his faith had begun to waiver, Pagag would look at the light-filled stones brightly sending rays of light throughout the barge. They reminded him of the author of their voyage, the Lord himself. Pagag had dreamed of this first sight of land. How could he have ever doubted.

"Oh Father, it is beautiful!" Pagag uttered in astonishment. "The Promised Land is far more beautiful than I had ever





imagined!"

"Yes, my son. The Lord has prepared this land for us and our children," his father said. His bearded face glowed with happiness. "The Lord has been faithful to us. This is indeed the Land of Promise."

"Father, look! I see another barge!" Pagag shouted as he looked across the bay. "There are Aaron and Sarah standing with Uncle Jared on the deck of their barge. They made it! They are alive!"

Uncle Jared's barge was floating within the peaceful waters of

the Promised Land. Behind them, six other barges were scattered along the horizon as they finished the long voyage.

As the Jaredites "set their feet upon the shores of the promised land, they bowed themselves before the Lord, and did shed tears of joy before the Lord, because of the multitude of his tender mercies over them.

"And it came to pass that they went forth upon the face of the land, and began to till the earth." Ether 3:14-15



Answer Step Puzzle

*

In the Book of Ether (3:1-14), Moroni continued the record of Jared and his brother and their trip to the Promised Land. The barges had been built. The Brother of Jared had prepared sixteen stones he had moultened from rock. He asked God to touch them with his finger. Then the Brother of Jared placed one stone at each end of the eight barges.

The Lord caused [1] stones to shine in the darkness, to give light unto men, women and children, that they might not cross the great waters in darkness.

And it came to pass that they prepared all manner of [2] food, that thereby they might subsist upon the water, and also food for their flocks and herds. . . .

And it came to pass that when they had done all these things, they got aboard of their vessels or [3] barges, and set forth into the sea, commending themselves unto the Lord their God.

And it came to pass that the Lord God caused that there should a furious wind

blow upon the face of the waters, towards the promised land; and thus they were tossed upon the waves of the sea before the wind. . . .

And it came to pass that the [4] wind did never cease to blow towards [5] the promised land, while they were upon the waters. . . . And they did sing praises unto the Lord. . . . And thus they were driven forth; and no [6] monster of the sea could break them, neither whale that could mar them; and they did have light continually, whether it was above the water or under the water. . . .

And when they had set their feet upon the shores of the promised land, they [7] bowed themselves down upon the face of the land, and did humble themselves before the Lord. . . because of the multitude of his tender mercies over them. [Numbers and encircling of words added.]

Turn the page for the puzzle.

*Step 5 will give you a clue to the title.

Climb the Answer Steps

See if you can climb the seven answer steps after you have read the above scriptures (Ether 3:1-14) by filling in the missing letters at the beginning of each step. If you need a reminder, look at the encircled words.

7. _____ What the people did to show their thanks to the Lord.
6. _____ A huge creature of the sea.
5. _____ The place the Lord wanted these people to live.
4. _____ It blew towards the new land.
3. _____ The people traveled in eight of these.
2. _____ The flocks, herds, and people needed this to live.
1. _____ These gave light in darkness.

Pagag and his family waited a long time for the promise of the Lord to be realized in regard to their new home in the Promised Land. How happy they were to be on land after their long sea voyage. Can you think of a time when you prayed and waited in faith for an important promise or pledge to be fulfilled?

Please send your testimony to *The Junior Witness* Editor, 210 West White Oak, Independence, Missouri 64050.



Mexico Trip: An Answer to Prayer

Mike Moores, Woodbine, Iowa

During my first two years at Iowa State University, I was the only student who believed in the Restoration gospel. I began to hunger for the fellowship of other youth of similar faith.

One afternoon, between classes, I sat down at an empty table in the cafeteria to eat lunch. Soon, the table filled with other students. They all knew each other and, by their conversation and silent prayers offered before eating, it was evident they were Christians. As we talked together, I learned one of them was an architecture major like myself.

They shared about their fellowship group, inviting me to come along. Although they were not part of the Restoration, some of these students became very good friends. I feel meeting them was an answer to prayer.

In the fall of 1991, I visited with one of the leaders of the fellowship group about my recent call to the priesthood. That made his ears perk up, and we scheduled weekly meetings to discuss my beliefs in the church restored by Joseph Smith, Jr. He was concerned about me because he felt I was being deceived. I never stopped defending what I had always believed in, but because he was better versed in the Bible and had more confidence, he managed to put doubt in my mind. This, though, was a blessing from God.



It caused me to study more than ever before, and I realized I needed to have my own personal testimony to support my belief in the Restoration and The Book of Mormon. I couldn't continue to rely on others to fight my battles concerning my beliefs. It was necessary to find out for myself *why* I believed the way I do. This man related to me the usual criticisms of The Book of Mormon that I could handle, but he had others which I had never heard of that I had a hard time dealing with.

In all this confusion, a person I cared for very much ended our yearlong relationship mainly because of my belief in The Book of Mormon and Restoration movement. This was the second time that a relationship of mine had ended for the same reason. I began to wonder if God was giving me hints that the things I had always believed in were not necessarily true. I was torn.

Then I remembered the scripture Moroni 10:4-5. "And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost." If I have ever asked the Lord anything with a sincere heart and real intent, I did that evening. I wanted to *know the truth!*

A few days later I received a phone call from my Uncle Francis Harper. He told me Frank Frye, a relative of ours, was taking a group of students on a trip to Mexico to study Book of Mormon lands. He said there was room on the bus, would I like to go? Yes! So we both decided to be a part of the group. This would be a good opportunity to get my questions answered.

On the tour, I had occasions to visit with knowledgeable Book of Mormon scholars, climb the

pyramids, see many tangible evidences, and hear testimonies concerning the truth of the Nephite record. I also made some great friends.

In spite of all this, I still wanted one special experience that would take all doubt away, one which could never be denied. I began to pray for this on the second to the last evening.

Hill Rabon, known as Hill Cumorah South, was on the schedule for the last full day I was with the group. When we arrived, I witnessed one of the most beautiful sites I had ever seen. At the base of the hill, in the pasture, we had a service led entirely by the Spirit. The service became one of prayers and testimonies. When I began to pray, I felt the Spirit as never before. With my eyes closed, I saw a light brighter than when my eyes were open. The words to pray were freely given to me.

This experience gave me my personal testimony and assured me that The Book of Mormon is *truth!* All my doubts vanished.

I have learned that once you try to do something for the Lord, Satan is bound to discourage or even deceive you. In my priesthood calling, I was told that it wouldn't be easy, but God would always go with me if I would just sincerely ask. This is exactly what he has done for me. I know God hears all prayers, and I thank him for the stumbling blocks that cause me to grow spiritually.

We all need to be prepared to answer any questions a non-believer may ask, as well as have our own testimony. I encourage all who have not yet received one, to pray for that personal testimony from God which bears witness of the truth of The Book of Mormon. May God bless you always.





BREAKING THE MAYA CODE:

A Book Review

Sherrie Kline Smith



Breaking the Maya Code. MICHAEL D. COE.

Thames and Hudson, 1992. 304 pp., photographs, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index, \$24.95 (cloth).

The publication of this book should lay to rest "the most damning [question] to Book of Mormon claims" (Hainsworth 1988:12). Many readers will remember the article "Egyptian and Maya Hieroglyphs: The Same Writing System" published in *The Witness* (Summer 1991, No. 73). This presented principles currently accepted in linguistic circles concerning the Maya writing system as compared to Egyptian hieroglyphs. It was concluded that both writing systems worked internally the same way.

Michael Coe confirms this hypothesis in his new book. Most importantly he maintains that Maya writing worked like the writing systems of the Old World. This is a milestone for Book of Mormon believers.

Book of Mormon Claims

Since 1830, The Book of Mormon account has been that two of the three migrating peoples in the record came from the land of Jerusalem, bringing with them a knowledge of Egyptian and Hebrew (1 Nephi 1:1, Mosiah 1:3-6, and Mormon 4:98-100). And since 1830, a major criticism of the book has been that lack of evidence of these Old World writing systems in the New World proves that the book is false.

Nephi's familiar words in the first verse of The Book of Mormon speaks of their writing.

I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.

—1 Nephi 1:1

Later Moroni clarifies this by telling the reader

We have written this record according to our knowledge in the characters, which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.

—Mormon 4:98

Characters means the script or writing system, NOT the language. Americans use an alphabet system to write English, as do the French, Spanish, and German. Egyptians and Mayas used hieroglyphs to write their languages. The Hebrews had another script.

Hebrew, and other Semitic languages, and Egyptian had similar conventions, though, like not writing vowels. Thus Egyptian writing could easily be used with Semitic languages (Coe 1992:35; Gelb 1952:147; F.A.R.M.S. 1992:2; Smith 1991:10; Naveh 1982:117).

It is clear Book of Mormon peoples knew both Egyptian and Hebrew. If they came to the New World, the writing systems and literature here should show evidence of similarities to these systems.

Coe's Claims

Coe's book is replete with comparisons of Maya hieroglyphs and scribal practices to those of Egyptian, as well as other Old World scripts. Writing for the lay person, Coe eloquently and passionately tells the history of the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphs, one of several writing systems found in

Mesoamerica.

In the first chapter, he gives a technical overview of different kinds of writing systems and a quick summary of the process of decipherment of Old World scripts. Coe details Champollion's efforts decoding Egyptian hieroglyphs and chastises New World decipherers by relating that Champollion's work is

The story [of]. . . an object lesson in how to go about things the right way, when faced with a writing system of some complexity, a lesson that would-be decipherers of the Maya script ignored (to their detriment) for over a century.

—1992:35

Coe then poses a pertinent question. He asks, "Why did would-be Maya decipherers pay no attention to what had been done along these lines in the Old World?" (1992:45).

After this introductory chapter, he reviews the different Maya languages, knowledge of which is essential for decipherment. He also gives a short synopsis of the archaeological history of the Maya area with an emphasis on the inscriptions. Coe parallels Egyptian practices to Maya.

As among the pharaohs of Egypt, the hereditary rulers and their families and ancestors were celebrated in these inscriptions and in the relief pictures described by the associated texts.

—1992:65

In chapter three, Coe relates

the discovery of the ruins and inscriptions in the nineteenth century, focusing on the explorers, would-be archaeologists, artists, and photographers and their roles in the decipherment process. Here are introduced John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood, the famous duo who first brought to the attention of the world the magnificent ruins lying buried in Mexico and Central America. Stephens believed the inscriptions would reveal historical information about the people who had built the cities. His insightful comment was virtually ignored for a hundred years.

One thing I believe, that its history is graven on the monuments. No Champollion has yet brought to them the energies of his inquiring mind. Who shall read them?

—1992:94

Who Indeed Shall Read Them?

In the following chapters, Coe portrait-paints the people who have read the Maya hieroglyphs. He does so with gusto and intimacy. Coe was/is personally acquainted with many of the key scholars and gives—albeit from his perception—sketches of the great personalities involved: Sylvanus Morley, J. Eric Thompson, Tatiana Proskuriakoff, Heinrich Berlin, Yuri Knorosov, Floyd Lounsbury, David Kelley, Linda Schele, and David Stuart.

Coe believes the Russian Knorosov fulfilled the role of Champollion with the Maya hieroglyphs. "If it is a hero you are looking for, then it is Knorosov who most closely approximates Champollion." Knorosov's success stemmed from the fact that he took a "comparativist approach"; he "was as 'at home' in Egyptian hieroglyphs and Chinese characters as he was in the signs of the Maya monuments and codices"

(1992:261).

Sumerian, as well as Chinese and Egyptian are logographic scripts (1992:27), and "Yuri Knorosov showed that . . . the Maya script was typically logographic" (1992:261). Coe also informs us that Maya logograms, "like their Egyptian equivalents, are often remarkably pictorial and thus more immediately informative than a series of abstract phonetic signs" (1992: 264).

Maya hieroglyphs, though, like Egyptian, were not just picture writing. It was a mixed system.

Principles and Scribal Practices

According to Coe, Maya scribes operated with certain principles similar to those of other hieroglyphic systems.

1. Signs can have more than one function, that is, a single glyph may sometimes be phonetic, or, at other times, represent a morpheme (the smallest unit of meaning).
2. The writing order may be inverted for calligraphic purposes, a principle known to Egyptologists since Champollion's day.
3. Phonetic signs may be added to lessen ambiguity in the reading.

—1992:148

A major area of dispute about Maya hieroglyphs concerned phoneticism, but by 1984 this was no longer questioned.

No Mayan linguist who has seriously looked into the matter any longer doubts the phonetic hypothesis as originally framed by Yuri Knorosov.

—Campbell 1984:11

Other parallel practices dealt with the artistic requirements of the writing system. "Just as in ancient Egypt, texts have the ten-

dency to fill all spaces which are not actually taken up with pictures (1992:264)."

To meet aesthetic demands, signs could occasionally be switched around within the glyph blocks, changing their order as Egyptian scribes had done millennia before along the banks of the Nile.

—1992:263

Another correlation with Egyptian practices is the signing of art works. In our civilization all artists sign their works, but this was not commonly practiced among ancient peoples. According to Coe

prior to the Greeks, only in ancient Egypt do we find signed works, and these rare examples have only architects' signatures.

That the Classic Maya were an exception to this rule began to be apparent from David Stuart's reading of *dzib* compounds on the clay vessels; the word means both "writing" and "painting," the Maya not distinguishing these perhaps because both were executed with a brush pen (there is evidence that the monumental texts were originally laid out on the stones as ink drawings, as in ancient Egypt).

—1992:249

Hebrew and Maya Literature

These few quotes from Coe's book have so far detailed the many likenesses of Maya to Egyptian, but Coe also points out the similarity of narrative Maya texts to Hebrew literature. He credits Floyd Lounsbury with identifying a

pattern of parallel couplets, a rhetorical device widespread in the indigenous cultures of the Americas, and in the Old World as

well; the Psalms are filled with such literary devices, for example:

'He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs'.

—1992:213

The literature of The Book of Mormon has been shown to be full of Hebraic literary forms (Crowell 1982, 1986; Parry 1988; Tvetdnes 1991; Smith 1989; Welch 1969, 1981; Welton 1979). If the hypothesis of Book of Mormon peoples living in Mesoamerica is true, then literary patterns found in the book should also be found among the Maya inscriptions and writings. Space prohibits going into this further, but a great deal of confirming evidence exists (Christensen 1988; DeLong 1986; Josserand 1991; Smith and Smith 1992; Trimble 1987).

One would think with all these correlations that *some* mention would be made about contact with the Old World, but Coe makes no such suggestion in this text.* While he goes so far as to say, "Hieroglyphic Hittite, the Bronze Age script of central Anatolia (modern Turkey) . . . is structurally almost identical with Maya writing" (1992:261), he gives no explanation for such a good fit. It is simply that hieroglyphic systems work the same.

RLDS Linked with Lunatic Fringe

Breaking the Maya Code will be a landmark text and read by hundreds of people. Because of this, it is unfortunate that Coe chose to relate a conversation of 32 years ago by which he relegates the RLDS to the lunatic fringe.

The Maya, both ancient and modern, have had

many curses laid upon them, and fantastic theorizing by the lunatic and near-lunatic fringe is one of them. The Temple of the Cross relief has been a frequent target of crackpot notions; back in 1956, my wife and I sat in a Merida cafe next to an American who first identified himself as an Apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Reorganized), and then assured us that Jesus had returned to Earth after the Crucifixion and preached to the multitudes from the Temple of the Cross.

—1992:194

That Jesus should return to Earth should not be surprising since it is this miraculous event that dominates the New Testament. During his ministry, Jesus also clearly tells his disciples in Israel that he has other sheep he will visit (John 10:16).

Coe's main objection to what he remembers the Apostle saying, however, probably deals with Christ preaching from the Temple of the Cross at Palenque. Because of modern dating methods and because of recent translations of the Maya hieroglyphs, including those of the Temple of the Cross, Coe now knows this pyramidal structure was built about A.D. 700.

So, while Coe links the RLDS with the lunatic fringe because of a remembered conversation, his research strongly supports Book of Mormon history by identifying the writing systems and scribal practices of the Maya with Old World systems like Egyptian.

Conclusion

This book is an excellent source not only for the history of the deciphering of the Maya hieroglyphs and the personalities

involved, but also for actual readings. A syllabic chart and glossary aid the reader, and the Further Reading and Bibliography list gives sources for those wishing to study this topic in-depth.

With the publication of this text, one can no longer claim, like Barbara Hainsworth, that

the question of writing is the most damning to Book of Mormon claims. If the glyphs of Central American and Mexican cultures were related in any way to Egyptian or Hebrew, then a working knowledge of the Old World systems should at least provide some clues to help decipher the New World writings. However, this is far from being the case.

—1988:12

Coe's book refutes this viewpoint and validates that Maya and Egyptian hieroglyphs work the same and that their scribes employed many similar practices. It confirms that our faith in The Book of Mormon has not been in vain.

References. on p. 14

The Foundation plans to hold a workshop in Independence on learning to read Maya hieroglyphs. The teachers would be Kathryn Josserand of Florida State University and linguist, tour-leader Nicholas Hopkins. Before making arrangements, we would like to have an approximate idea of how many people would attend. Please write or call to let us know if you would be interested in this one-day workshop.

*In 1987, Coe revised his classic text, *The Maya*, to include several statements absent in previous editions about transoceanic contact. He writes, "The possibility of some trans-Pacific [sic] influence on Mesoamerican cultures cannot, however, be so easily dismissed" (45). He gives examples of parallels between Old World and New World civilizations that are more than mere chance and says the idea of transoceanic contact is no longer "idle speculation along the lines of the lunatic fringe" (46).

Also, at the XVth Maya Hieroglyphic Workshop, University of Texas-Austin, March 1992, Coe's presentation dealt exclusively with similarities between the Old and New Worlds. Once again he said, "I think independent invention is really stretching things a little bit too much."

BREAKING THE MAYA CODE

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Jesus Christ — Why I Believe in The Book of Mormon

Dale Godfrey

When I was about fifteen, during a Sunday evening preaching service, my mind was drawn away to reflect upon Jesus Christ. For a few moments, a window opened to me, and I was allowed to glimpse one of those eternal truths God blesses us with from time to time. I saw the truth of and witness borne by the name Jesus Christ.



Rita Godfrey

Jesus is the name of a man—not an uncommon name for a man in his time. Christ is the name or title given to the divine being, the Only Begotten, the Son of God. The name Jesus Christ then, is, in and of itself, an affirmation that the man Jesus is the Christ, the divine and only begotten Son of God.

In those brief moments, I was given not only this single, profound understanding, but the Spirit also bore witness that this was truth—Jesus is the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. This knowledge and testimony has stayed with me through the years.

About a year and a half ago, at a FRAA Book of Mormon conference in Oklahoma, a friend said to me, "Tell me your testimony of The Book of Mormon." I quickly searched my mind but was at a loss for what to say. I believed in The Book of Mormon, but I couldn't explain, even to myself, why I had such a conviction that the book was true. Since then, the question has never been far from my mind.

In December, I was privileged to go on the yearly FRAA tour to Mesoamerica. One day while we traveled to the ruins which witness of the people who lived in that land during the time of Christ, my boyhood testimony of The Book of Mormon suddenly returned

with great force and clarity. I now understand why I so unquestioningly believe in the truth and divinity of that book. It reaffirms who Jesus Christ is.

The title page of The Book of Mormon includes this statement regarding the book's purpose: "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations." Christ is the central theme. The Book of Mormon writers refer to Christ nearly 4,000 times in the book.*

I believe in The Book of Mormon because it testifies of Jesus. I had been given at age fifteen a witness of the divine nature of the man Jesus—that he is Christ, the Son of God, and because The Book of Mormon bears witness to this truth, it confirms the truthfulness of the book to me. I testify to you that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and The Book of Mormon is a divinely inspired witness of this fact.

**Finding Christ Through The Book of Mormon* by Susan Easton Black, Deseret Book Co., Salt Lake City, Utah, 1987.





The Tablet of the Scribe from Palenque dates from approximately A.D. 700. Curiously, this same scribal pose and writing instruments are found in an Egyptian tomb from Saqqara of 2400 B.C. The line drawings show the similarities more clearly.

Ancient Egyptian and Maya scribes were alike in numerous ways. Both played primary roles in setting dates for major celebrations (Coe 1992:67).

A unique comparison of Egyptian and Maya scribes concerns what Coe terms the "cult of monkey scribes."

The cult of monkey or monkey-man scribes was widespread over ancient Mesoamerica, and was found not only among the highland Maya but also in Yucatan at the time of the Spanish conquest. Likewise, among the Aztec, the monkey was patron god of the artisans, musicians, and dancers. . . The Maya elevated them to a godlike status, just as the Egyptians took the baboon-god Thoth as patron of their scribes and the art of writing.

—1992:226



Barbara Schneider



Notes and News from the FRAA Research Library

Sherrie Kline Smith

What an exciting year this has been for the information center/library! The move from boxes piled on a floor in a room of an old school to a lovely renovated facility with a special collections room, books on shelves, study tables, and a computer center is such an improvement!

More important, though, is the role the information center plays in the lives of people. How can a value be placed on being able to answer a particularly puzzling problem with *The Book of Mormon*? (See Mike Moores' testimony on page 9.) As we study and grow in the knowledge of the Scriptures, how well we are able to convey this message to others depends not only on our testimony, but the quality of information we have. Armed with material from reputable sources enables us to be better witnesses for Jesus Christ and *The Book of Mormon*.

To illustrate, certain criticisms arise again and again concerning *The Book of Mormon*. The information center of FRAA is able to help provide answers to these, as well as other questions. In-depth study materials on *Book of Mormon* related topics, theological as well as archaeological, are also available.

College students frequently request information from the library. One student reported:

Thanks again for the material you sent. It has really helped me, and I have had some very nice talks with my professor. At the moment, he has a copy of *The Witness* that you sent. He said he would be interested in reading "anything" relating to the Maya. He also stated that he did not know as much about *The Book of Mormon* as he would like. What an invitation!

Comments like this encourage us to continue building the resources available for research.

This year more than forty families have contributed books, magazines, manuscripts, journals, art work, photographs, maps, paintings, and ephemera to the information center. The present holdings include approximately:

- * 2,600 monographs in the preliminary computer database;
- * over 320 unpublished manuscripts (papers from the University of Texas hieroglyphic workshop, F.A.R.M.S., etc.);
- * approximately 100 serial titles (of which the library subscribes to only 14, depending on donations for the others, thus many are not complete series);
- * maps;



- * thousands of photographs, slides, and graphics;
- * several computer resources including World Atlas (a geography program), Word Cruncher (the three Scriptures program), three Maya calendrics programs, and Inmagic, the library catalog computer program;
- * archival papers of the Foundation, Thelona Stevens, and Charles Field.

This is a good beginning, but to become a center recognized as a premier research library, a major commitment must be made to purchase the resources and procure the personnel needed to oversee the acquisitions and processing.

In order to increase the research value of the library and for it to be

a first-rate resource center, a number of committed people are needed to provide necessary funds. This means *several hundred thousand dollars*. We're looking for individuals with vision, people who recognize the value of what the FRAA information center can become, who are willing to contribute to this project. If you are such a person, please call (816) 461-3722.

At the end of 1992, an anonymous donor contributed \$1,000 for items on the Wish List in the last issue of *The Witness*. Many thanks for these monies which allowed us to purchase preservation supplies and some high cost books and reports on sites in Mesoamerica.

Latest Additions

(not a complete list)

Pre-Columbian American Religions by Walter Krickeberg, 1961.

A Glimpse at Guatemala, and some Notes on the Ancient Monuments of Central America by Anne Cary Maudslay and Alfred Percival Maudslay, reprint 1992.

Latin America in Basic Historical Collections: A Working Guide by Russell H. Bartley and Stuart L. Wagner, 1974.

Wish List

- * A recently published encyclopedia set, preferably Americana or the money to purchase \$ 750
- * Shelving \$1,000
- * Books \$4,000

(A list of titles and prices are available upon request if you would like to contribute toward a specific item(s). This list comprises only a small beginning of the resources needed.)

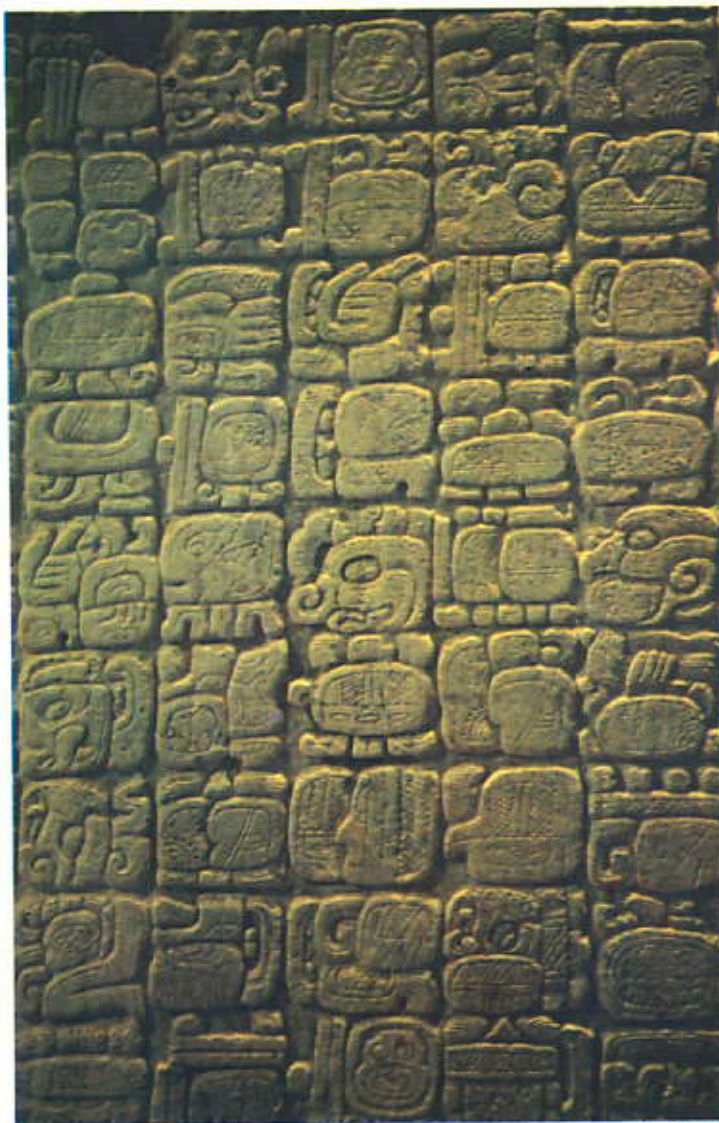
Call FRAA Information Center/Library if you can help with any of these projects. Thanks!
816 461-FRAA (3722)

Since John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood focused the world's attention on the jungle-shrouded, stone-inscribed ruins of a magnificent civilization, scholars have tried to decipher this writing. The prevailing opinion, which lasted for almost a hundred years, was that the pictographic glyphs contained nothing but calendric and astronomical data of a mystic nature that only Maya priests could read.

In the 1950s, the Russian Yuri Knorosov began to dispel this myth by proposing that the hieroglyphs were more than just pictures—they were also phonetic. Although it took almost twenty years for the idea to gain wide acceptance among scholars, great strides since then have been made in "breaking the Maya code."

*Michael Coe, in his new book *Breaking the Maya Code*, which tells how it was done, writes, "The ancient Maya scribes could have written everything expressed in their language using only the syllabic signary—but they did not, any more than did the Japanese . . . or the Sumerians and Hittites . . . or the Egyptians . . ." (1992:264).*

This landmark text for Book of Mormon believers is reviewed inside beginning on page 10.



Sherrie Smith

The Witness

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