

calendar still used by the Jews), a month has twenty-nine or thirty days (with months of twenty-nine and thirty days usually alternating.) In the Ugaritic alphabet, each of the necessary twenty-nine letters could stand for the minimal twenty-nine days of the month, with the extra š available for that extra thirtieth day in the long months.

NEW VISTAS

We are entering a new era in the study of civilization. Old World history is so much better known that it will provide opening wedges for deciphering the languages and dispelling the mysteries of ancient America. But increasingly, as time goes by, the ancient New World will elucidate Old World history.

What we call Western Civilization is not the creation of one people, one race or one region. It is the product of intercontinental stimulation maintained to a great extent by traders who traversed the seas since the Bronze Age. We must get over our conceit that only modern Western man (whatever that means) was capable of noteworthy achievement. The seminal foundations of the exact sciences (such as mathematics and astronomy) as well as the humanities (such as the alphabet, the Ten Commandments, and Homeric Epic) are rooted in antiquity. The role of the merchant is much more significant and noble than most of us realize. Traders need international peace if they are to flourish. Solomon's commercial empire in the tenth century B.C. exposed Israel to contacts with the world at large and paved the way for the universal doctrines of the Prophets whose message unfolded during the subsequent centuries. One of their doctrines was that the world would not become a place fit to live in until "nation would no longer lift sword against nation, nor study the art of war anymore" (Micah 4:3). Israel learned this in the First Early Iron Age from her traders, including those who sailed the oceans with the merchant mariners of Hiram. But Israel was a late comer in Near East antiquity. In the tenth century B.C. she was catching up with the lessons that her Bronze Age predecessors had learned two millennia earlier.

BOOK OF MORMON ARCHAEOLOGY: THE MYTHS AND THE ALTERNATIVES

Dee F. Green

Church members, from some General Authorities to some Sunday School teachers, are generally impressed with and concerned about "scientific proof" of the Book of Mormon. As a practicing scientist and Church member, I am singularly unconcerned about such studies — in fact, when it comes to such matters, I am hyper-conservative. To suggest that Book of Mormon archae-

ology is largely useless — even a delusion — and that there are far more important things for Church anthropologists to worry about is not currently popular in the Church. Nevertheless, the conservative position needs a hearing.

My task is to assess the past and current status of Book of Mormon archaeology and point some directions for the future. This assessment is admittedly critical, but I hasten to assure everyone that the criticism represents my differences of opinion with regard to individual's ideas and positions and not with regard to their personalities nor their testimonies. I should also like to point out that I do not feel that we are dealing here with matters of doctrine. As far as I am concerned, "proving" (or "disproving") the historicity of the Book of Mormon will in no way change the atonement of Christ, or the plan of salvation.

The three periods — past, present, and future — can perhaps best be characterized by three approaches to Book of Mormon archaeology. These are the Geographical-Historical Approach, which has been popular all through the history of the Church and while, in my opinion, largely sterile, still commands a large following; the Back-Door Approach which, as nearly as I can tell, is the current "official" approach of the Church; and the Anthropological Approach, which has not yet been tried.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL-HISTORICAL APPROACH

Since the early days of the Church, some interest in both the geography of the Book of Mormon and its historical authenticity has been apparent. A special interest was generated in 1841 with the publication of John Lloyd Stephen's book, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*, which resulted in articles in the *Times and Seasons*.¹ Attacks on the Book of Mormon itself, as well as on Joseph Smith's account of its origin, resulted in various apologists arising in the Church to defend the book on internal as well as external evidence. However, as far as the use of archaeology was concerned, statements on both sides were naïve, since the Church has not had a professionally trained archaeologist until recent years,² and little of any scientific validity was known of New World archaeology until the 1930's.

The last few decades have seen Church members focusing on two related topics: the *geography* of the Book of Mormon and *trait comparisons* between either the Book of Mormon and the New World or the Old World.

¹October 1, 1842.

²Strange as it may seem, the first active Church member who can really be called an archaeologist with a Ph.D. degree and professional standing is Ray T. Matheny, whose degree was awarded in 1968. Others who may claim priority are clearly not archaeologists. They may be historians or dilettanti; they may think and talk about archaeology; but they have never been through the whole process of being trained as archaeologists. Nevertheless both Bruce Warren and Gareth Lowe, while lacking advanced degrees, have been highly respected as Mesoamerican archaeologists for a number of years and both are in the process of finishing graduate work.

The geographical interest has centered primarily on internal re-construction, followed by speculation as to geographic placement on the Western hemisphere of places mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Two points of view have been widely expressed. The more traditional, equating the Book of Mormon's "narrow neck of land" with the isthmus of Panama, may be reviewed in Reynolds and Sjordahl.³ The second position is that which for over twenty years has been championed by M. Wells Jakeman and was strongly identified with the former Department of Archaeology at Brigham Young University. While most L.D.S. archaeologists agree very broadly with Jakeman in identifying Mesoamerica as the region in which Book of Mormon events most likely transpired, attempts to arrive at closer identification have been hampered by Jakeman's failure to publish his long-awaited geography of the Book of Mormon. Jakeman's core ideas with regard to Book of Mormon geography were known over twenty years ago. Nothing new has come out of L.D.S. scholarship since then except for one abortive attempt to identify the Book of Mormon city Bountiful,⁴ a few wildly speculative suggestions by such individuals as José Dávila, and a modicum of knowledgeable and reasonable but private correspondence by Sorenson, Lowe, Warren, and others. Furthermore, the University Archaeological Society (now the Society for Early Historic Archaeology), which provides the house organ for the Jakeman position, has consistently refused to conduct a symposium on Book of Mormon geography, despite the fact that such a symposium has been suggested to its officers a number of times by a number of people in the past ten years. A great deal of interesting progress could now be made on the question of geography except that dialogue is not possible, and other approaches are preferable.

The second topic, that of trait comparison, which has been of interest to L.D.S. students of the Book of Mormon, has suffered from two problems. The first is related to geography in that if one wishes to compare Book of Mormon traits with New World archaeology, one must first locate the proper area of the New World in order to make such comparisons. The uninformed Mormon might assume that essentially the whole New World is Book of Mormon country, so that traits from anywhere in the hemisphere are all right as long as they fit. This assumption, based as it is in our folklore and not on analysis of the Book of Mormon itself nor an understanding of New World archaeology, has, together with the second problem, that of unsophisticated comparison techniques, already produced what John Sorenson has rightly

³George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjordahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1958), Vol. III.

⁴Thought by Jakeman to be the site of Aguacatal in Campeche, Mexico, and defended by Christensen on various occasions (see UAS Newsletter 22.02, 46.0, 47.3, and his numerous public declarations at Leadership Weeks). After excavating at Aguacatal in 1961 and conducting the only study yet made of the artifacts and data recovered, Ray Matheny, then a graduate student at BYU, privately demonstrated that Aguacatal is not Bountiful. The UAS Newsletter has never recognized Matheny's contribution. Jakeman has also identified the site of El Cayo on the Usumacinta River in Southern Mexico as Zarahemla. Others who have visited the site find it too small, and some preliminary archaeological testing shows its main occupation to be too late in time for such an interpretation.

called "kooky" results.⁵ Some of the results which are more popularly known among Mormons bear a few words of comment.

Those volumes which most flagrantly ignore time and space and most radically distort, misinterpret, or ignore portions of the archaeological evidence are the popular Farnsworth volumes.⁶ Also inadequate, from a professional archaeologist's point of view, are the well intentioned volumes by Milton R. Hunter⁷ and a number of smaller pamphlets and works by various authors. On a slightly more sophisticated plane is Ferguson's *One Fold and One Shepherd*, but while he is conscious of the geographic and time problems, he gets caught in the trait comparison snare. His list of 298 traits⁸ (most unreferenced) are at times so generalized that the list could just as well prove that Book of Mormon peoples wound up in Southeast Asia. His knowledge of New World archaeology is better than that of either Farnsworth or Hunter but still too shallow to avoid getting him in trouble. Much the same can be said for a variety of authors and articles published in the various symposia of the University Archaeological Society on the archaeology of the scriptures.⁹

New World - Old World comparisons have been less popular but equally fraught with problems. The best known examples are the two volumes by Nibley which suffer from an overdose of "Old Worlditis."¹⁰ In Near Eastern philology and history, Nibley has no peers in the Church - and probably few outside it - but he does not know New World culture history well, and his writing ignores the considerable indigenous elements in favor of exclusively Old World patterns. Part of this is also due no doubt to Nibley's not unjustifiable concern over the state of New World scholarship in the Church.

A final warning should be issued against Jakeman's *Lehi Tree of Life Stone*,¹¹ which has received wide publicity in the Church and an over-enthusiastic response from the layman due to the publication's pseudo-scholarship. The question which should really be asked about Izapa Stela 5 is "Did the artist or artists have Lehi's vision in their minds when the stone was sculptured?", a question which, I submit, cannot be answered short of talking with the artist. The next question, then, is what are the *probabilities* that

⁵See Sorenson's article, this Roundtable, footnote 2.

⁶Dewey Farnsworth, *The Americans Before Columbus* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 3rd Edition, 1965), and *Book of Mormon Evidences in Ancient America* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company), 1953.

⁷Milton R. Hunter, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1956), Vol. I, and *Christ in Ancient America: Archaeology and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1959), Vol. II.

⁸Thomas Stuart Ferguson, *One Fold and One Shepherd* (San Francisco: Books of California), pp. 57-72.

⁹See especially papers of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth annual symposia published by BYU Extension Publications and a review of the fifteenth symposium volume by John Sorenson in Vol. 1, No. 1 of *Dialogue*.

¹⁰Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), and *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952). See also Bruce Warren's review of this latter volume in UAS Newsletter 27.0 June 1, 1955.

¹¹M. Wells Jakeman, *Stela 5, Izapa Chiapas, Mexico: A Major Archaeological Discovery of the New World* (University Archaeological Society, Special Publications No. 2, 1958).

the artist had Lehi's vision in mind when he carved the stone. I don't know the answer to that one either, but then, neither does Jakeman, and his publication is more of a testimony as to what is not known than to what is known about Stela 5. As Nibley has pointed out¹² in his own inimitable style, Jakeman errs at every turn in the publication. The basis of Jakeman's evidence is his own hand-drawn version¹³ from a photograph of the stone. He makes unsupported assumptions about the canons of ancient art; he fumbles over elements of the dream which are not included and items on the stone which have no place in the dream; he displays ignorance of his linguistic data and most unfortunately reverses the scholarly method by presenting his data with a rash of "evidentlys," "probablys," "appears," and "apparentlys" — but offers his conclusions as unarguable facts. As Nibley so appropriately puts it:

Science does not arrive at its conclusions by syllogisms, and no people on earth deplore proof demonstration by syllogism more loudly than real archaeologists do. Yet Mr. Jakeman's study is nothing but an elaborate syllogistic stew. The only clear and positive thing about the whole study is the objective the author is determined to reach. With naïve exuberance, he repeatedly announces that he has found "exactly what we would expect to find." Inevitably there emerges from this dim and jumbled relief exactly what Mr. Jakeman is looking for.¹⁴

Sorenson's article in this Roundtable, while partaking of the trait comparison syndrome, is considerably more sophisticated than those endeavors listed above. In the first place it is not the "trait" but rather the "trait-complex" which is looked at, and, secondly, Sorenson's work is more for a belling of the Near East-New World diffusionist cat than a representation of his approach to Book of Mormon studies. Those of us who know him well also know that his ideas are much broader, and Sorenson himself has warned against uncontrolled trait comparisons.¹⁵

¹²In a privately distributed review of Jakeman's Stela 5 publication.

¹³The author was present during much of this drawing period and can personally testify that plate 5 in Jakeman's Stela 5 publication was drawn from a photograph of the monument and not from the monument itself. That Jakeman's drawing is not accurate can be shown by careful comparison with the photograph (Plate 3) in his own publication and by comparison with drawings made of the stone itself by unbiased draftsmen. For example, Figure 14 in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, Vol. 2, (Robert Wacoupe, General Editor, University of Texas Press, 1965); also, a photograph of an artist's rendering in my personal collection and various drawings and detailed photographs in the possession of Mr. Garth Norman, who is completing a detailed analysis of the Izapan stone monuments for publication by the BYU-NWAF. Do not compare photo 109 in Ferguson's *One Fold and One Shepherd* nor the plaster reproduction of Stela 5 in the BYU Archaeology Museum since Ferguson's photograph is of the cast and the cast itself has been altered by Jakeman after his interpretation.

¹⁴See footnote 13.

¹⁵See Sorenson's *What Archaeology Can and Cannot Do for the Book of Mormon*, mimeographed for private distribution, in which he cites the German scholar Kugler "who collected 17 pages of 'striking parallels' between the history of Louis IX of France and Gilgamesh, the Babylonian mythological hero. Surely this was enough to 'prove' that the two were identical if comparisons alone could turn the trick."

The gist of these overly brief reviews is that the Geographical-Historical Approach has proven to be essentially sterile. Among the morass of archaeological half-truths and falsehoods which we have perpetrated in the name of Book of Mormon archaeology, only Jakeman's suggestion of a limited geography and Sorenson's insistence on a cautious, highly controlled trait-complex approach are worth considering. The ink we have spilled on Book of Mormon archaeology has probably done more harm than good.

I am not impressed with allegations that Book of Mormon archaeology converts people to the Church. My personal preference in Church members still runs to those who have a faith-inspired commitment to Jesus Christ, and if their testimonies need bolstering by "scientific proof" of the Book of Mormon (or anything else for that matter), I am prone to suggest that the basis of the testimony could stand some re-examination. Having spent a considerable portion of the past ten years functioning as a scientist dealing with New World archaeology, I find that nothing in so-called Book of Mormon archaeology materially affects my religious commitment one way or the other, and I do not see that the archaeological myths so common in our proselytizing program enhance the process of true conversion.

THE BACK-DOOR APPROACH

What I have chosen to call the Back-Door Approach is characteristic of the Brigham Young University New World Archaeological Foundation, an organization begun in the middle 1950's by Thomas S. Ferguson. It was eventually taken over by the Church and based at BYU, with a special Church committee under the direction of Elder Howard W. Hunter given jurisdiction over its direction and finances. Considerable embarrassment over the various unscholarly postures assumed by the geographical-historical school resulted in the Church Archaeological Committee's attitude that interpretation should be an individual matter, that is, that any archaeology officially sponsored by the Church (*i.e.*, the monies for which are provided by tithing) should concern itself only with the culture history interpretations normally within the scope of archaeology, and any attempt at correlation or interpretation involving the Book of Mormon should be eschewed. This enlightened policy, much to the gratification of the true professional archaeologist both in and outside the Church, has been scrupulously followed. It was made quite plain to me in 1963 when I was first employed by the BYU-NWAF that my opinions with regard to Book of Mormon archaeology were to be kept to myself, and my field report was to be kept entirely from any such references. I welcomed the instruction as refreshing after my earlier days at BYU when everything the archaeology department did had to be "scripturally" related.

Some of my colleagues and students, both in and out of the Church, have wondered if perhaps the real reason for the Church's involvement in archaeology (especially since it is centered in Mesoamerica with emphasis on the Preclassic period) is to help prove the Book of Mormon. While this may represent the individual thinking of some members of the Church Archae-

ological Committee, it has not intruded itself on the work of the foundation except to limit its activities to the preclassic cultures of Mesoamerica. Regardless of individual or group motives, however, the approach of the BYU-NWAF has been outstandingly successful. My numerous non-Church colleagues in Mesoamerican archaeology hold high regard for the work of the foundation and for most of its staff. Gareth Lowe, director of the BYU-NWAF, is as good a Mesoamerican archaeologist as there is in the country, and the foundation's outstanding publication series (which never mentions the Book of Mormon) consistently received good reviews in the professional literature.

Just how much the foundation is doing to advance the cause of Book of Mormon archaeology depends on one's point of view about Book of Mormon archaeology. There have been no spectacular finds (from the Book of Mormon point of view), no Zarahemlas discovered, no gold plates brought to light, no horses uncovered, and King Benjamin's tomb remains unexcavated. But the rewards to the Church of the foundation's work, while a little elusive to the layman and the "seekers after a sign," will prove to be considerable in the perspective of history.

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

In assessing the future relationship of the Book of Mormon to archaeology, one must first consider how long it will take us to rid ourselves of the unfortunate myths we have built up around the relationship. For the general Church membership my prognosis is unfortunately pessimistic. However, some rays of hope can occasionally be seen, and perhaps a mention of what I consider to be the areas which most need changing will help.

The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists. Titles on books full of archaeological half-truths, dilettanti on the peripheries of American archaeology calling themselves Book of Mormon archaeologists regardless of their education, and a Department of Archaeology at BYU¹⁶ devoted to the production of Book of Mormon archaeologists¹⁷ do not insure that Book of Mormon archaeology really exists. If one is to study Book of Mormon archaeology, then one must have a corpus of data with which to deal. We do not. The Book of Mormon is really there so one *can* have Book of Mormon studies, and archaeology is really there so one can study archaeology, but the two are not wed. *At least they are not wed in reality since no Book of Mormon location is known with reference to modern topography.* Biblical archaeology can be studied because we do know where Jerusalem and Jericho were and are, but we do not know where

¹⁶Fortunately now changed to the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, with such qualified men as Merlin Myers, Ray T. Matheny, and Dale Berge giving students a sound and realistic education in anthropology.

¹⁷With the single exception of Ross T. Christensen, no individual ever educated in the former BYU Archaeology Department considers himself a Book of Mormon Archaeologist. In fact, most of those who graduated have not pursued careers in anthropology nor its sub-discipline archaeology, and those few of us who have become professionals have consistently found our early BYU training highly inadequate and the points of view expressed there largely uninformed and sterile.

Zarahemla and Bountiful (nor any other location for that matter) were or are. It would seem then that a concentration on geography should be the first order of business, but we have already seen that twenty years of such an approach has left us empty-handed.

Another myth which needs dispelling is our Lamanite syndrome. Most American Indians are neither descendants of Laman nor necessarily of Book of Mormon peoples. The Book itself makes no such claim, and there is ample evidence in the archaeological record to show that this hemisphere was widely populated by peoples of Asiatic stock crossing the Bering Strait long before Book of Mormon peoples were supposed to have arrived on the scene. Furthermore, how many other kinds of peoples (see Cyrus Gordon's article in this Roundtable) may have reached the New World is unknown. Actually, the current usage of the term "Lamanite" by the Church membership is most unfortunate. It has racial overtones, subtle though they may be, and is coupled with a general meaning denoting cultural and spiritual inferiority. The term is rightfully resented by American Indians in or out of the Church. Technically, if we stick to Book of Mormon usage of the term, especially in the closing centuries of that record, we find that it applies to those individuals who were not partakers of the gospel. Hence, it was the equivalent of our term, gentile. An American Indian, therefore, who is a member of the L.D.S. Church cannot be a "Lamanite" since he has presumably accepted the gospel, and genealogically there is no assurance that he is a descendant of Laman. After all, many who were not genealogical descendants of Laman survived the last battle.¹⁸ Early in the Book of Mormon account the terms Nephite and Lamanite had genealogical significance, but they soon dropped that meaning for a cultural one meant to separate members of the ancient church from anyone else, regardless of his parentage. Our continual misuse of the term has unfortunately helped perpetuate myths about the cultural heritage of the American Indian.

Finally, I should like to lay at rest the myth that by scurrying around Latin America looking for horses and wheels we can prove the Book of Mormon.¹⁹ The mention of the wheel in the Book of Mormon and finding wheeled toy vehicles in Mexico is not proof of the Book. The mention of horses in the Book of Mormon and finding petroglyphs of horses (especially the ones with Spanish saddles) carved on stone in the southwestern United States is not proof of the Book. The mention of "fine linen" in the Book of Mormon and finding beautifully woven textiles in Peru is not proof of the Book. The mention of roads in the Book of Mormon and the finding of the Yaxuna-Coba *sacbe* in Yucatan is not proof of the Book. I sometimes get the depressing feeling that every member of the Church who has taken a Cook's tour

¹⁸Doctrine and Covenants, Section 3, Verses 16-18.

¹⁹See for example a recent article by Jack E. Jarrard and Paul R. Cheesman in the *Church News*, April 26, 1969. The article in general is a good example of the geographical-historical approach. It is vague where it should be positive and positive where it should be vague. It contains such obviously erroneous statements as "The culture (sic) . . . called Monte Alba (sic) . . . is a composite of Olmec, Maya, Zapotec, Mixtec, and Aztec."

to Latin America, seen three pyramids, read two travel guides, and unlimbered his 35mm camera on some unsuspecting "Lamanite" returns as an expert on Book of Mormon archaeology with pocketsfull of "proof" seen by his own eyes. Rest assured that we are not accumulating a great flood of "proof" or "evidence" which will in a few years burst the dam of secular resistance to the Book of Mormon and flood Zion with hordes of people demanding baptism. True personal commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ (even among Mormons) comes by very different avenues.

CULTURAL HISTORY: AN ALTERNATIVE

What then, ought to be our approach to the Book of Mormon? In the first place it is a highly complex record demanding knowledge of a wide variety of anthropological skills from archaeology through ethnology to linguistics and culture change, with perhaps a little physical anthropology thrown in for good measure. No one man outside the Church, much less anyone inside, has command of the necessary information. Furthermore, it isn't just the accumulation of knowledge and skill which is important; the framework in which it is applied must fit. Such a framework can be found only by viewing the Book of Mormon against a picture of New World culture history drawn by the entire discipline of anthropology. Singling out archaeology, a sub-discipline of anthropology, to carry the burden, especially in the naïve manner employed by our "Book of Mormon Archaeologists," has resulted in a lopsided promulgation of archaeological myth.

The Book after all purports to be a history of people, not of things, and archaeology recovers things (artifacts). Artifacts are made by people and as such have some things to say about the way people behave. But the interpretation of what artifacts can tell us about people is dependent on a broad, functionally integrated view of the whole way of life of a people. This is the provenience of anthropology. This is what anthropology is all about and what anthropologists care about. They seek to understand man and his culture, in all their complexity, and to arrive at generalizations about man's behavior and how it changes. Anthropologists' concerns and values are not unrelated to those of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, they are very germane.

We have never looked at the Book of Mormon in a cultural context. We have mined its pages for doctrine, counsel, and historical events but failed to treat it as a cultural document which can teach something about the inclusive life patterns of a people.²⁰ And if we are ever to show a relationship between the Book of Mormon and the New World, this step will have to be taken. It is the coincidence of the *cultural* history of the Book of Mormon with the cultural history of the New World that will tip the scales in our favor.

To trace accumulation of this trait and that trait willy-nilly around the New World is a blind alley. We are not about to uncover a sign tomorrow

²⁰Nibley is the only scholar who has ever approached this concept for the Old World portion of the record. The major effort needed with regard to the New World is represented by only four brief working papers prepared several years ago by John Sorenson.