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## Parentage of Ancient American Art and Religion

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**Abstract:** This series discusses the Babylonian and Israelite people who established Book of Mormon civilizations. Brookbank suggests that the Jaredites were Semites. The ancient ruins left in America have distinct Babylonian and Assyrian influence. The Nephite-Israelite people of the Book of Mormon have also left their mark upon civilization. The fourth part discusses painted sculpture, enameling, terraces, circular structures on rectangular foundations, and adjunct buildings.

## PARENTAGE OF ANCIENT AMERICAN ART AND RELIGION.

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### 18. PAINTED SCULPTURE.

In Babylonia, sculpture was not produced so abundantly as it was in Assyria, and the people of the former country made up for this deficiency in ornamentation by brilliant paintings traced on the walls of their buildings. Assyria, as an imitator of Babylonia, also used paint extensively, and applied it sometimes where one would not naturally expect to find it; for the artists of that land combining an ornamental feature of the respective countries sometimes painted their sculptured work. Some of those two miles of carved slabs, of which mention has heretofore been made, and which were devoted to ornate and inscriptive purposes, were decorated with colors, according to the *American Encyclopedia Britannica*; and the Assyrian bas-reliefs were colored here and there to heighten the effect.

Ancient American inscriptions sculptured in rock, and then painted or varnished, are found in a ruined temple at Cinacamecallo. The chambers in a lofty edifice now in ruins at Chichen-Itza, were very elaborately decorated, mostly with sculptured designs, which seem to have been painted, and there are indications that painting was generally used by the aboriginal builders, even on their sculptures. "Ancient America," pages 124, and 142-3. The painting of sculpture was considered sufficiently distinctive by Mr. Baldwin to justify a particular reference to it; and it was practiced by both the Assyrians and the aborigines of this country.

### 19. ENAMELED WORK.

The period when the art of coating objects with an enamel, either as a glaze applied to different non-metallic substances, or as a true enamel to metals, first became known, is not yet determined by archaeological savants, but specimens found in Babylonia, Assyria, and at Ur in Chaldea, indicate quite clearly that the art was practised in early times by the people of the Mesopotamian regions.

Researchers among the old ruins in this country have not brought to view many specimens of enameled work; but we have the authority of Fuentes for the statement that at the bases of the pyramids surrounding the great "Circus" at Copan there were enameled figures of both men and women, which still retained their original colors in A. D. 1700, and a statuette twelve inches high, has been discovered at that same ruined city, whose surface is smooth, as if coated with enamel.

## 20. BUILDINGS ON TERRACED PLANS.

The terrace plan of constructing foundations for super-structures, has already been noticed. We find, however, that terraces were not restricted to foundations; for the respective people in view went beyond this limit, and the design of terraced buildings proper was executed by them. The temple of Belus at Babylon was a structure of several stories, built one above the other, each of which decreased regularly in size, so that the whole structure somewhat resembled a pyramid in form. In these different stories were many large rooms. The chief use to which the edifice was devoted was the worship of Belus, and several other Babylonian gods, and consequently a multitude of chapels were provided for in different parts of the temple.

At the ancient American city of Kabah, whose ruins indicate great age, there are still standing the remains of several important edifices. One of them particularly attracted Mr. Stephen's attention as being, in his estimation, the most imposing structure in Kabah, when it was erected. It is one hundred and forty-seven feet long by one hundred and six feet wide, and had three distinct stories, each successive story being smaller than the one below it. The pyramidal plan of this building in America and of the temple of Belus in Babylon are architectural coincidences that can scarcely be attributed to chance.

Whether the American structure was designed for religious purposes or not, is unknown; but be that as it may, the similarity in pyramidal plans remain.

At Palenque the same design was carried out in the roof of a temple, which is built of stone gradines so as to be, in fact, a continuation of the similarly planned pyramidal base on which the temple stands. In Baldwin's *Ancient America*, page 239, there is, further, a description of a terraced or pyramidal temple or tower whose base is three thousand six hundred feet long and five hundred and sixty feet broad. The height was altogether three hundred feet. It, like the temple of Belus, was provided with a large number of rooms or chapels. Its remains are found at Cuelap in northern Peru.

## 21. CIRCULAR STRUCTURES ON RECTANGULAR FOUNDATIONS.

According to the *American Encyclopedia Britannica* the Assyrians sometimes erected circular structures on rectangular bases. Representations of such designs are carved on the ornamental slabs at Kouyunjik. Among the ruined works of the Mound-Builders are also found the remains of octagonal and circular structures; but more particular attention is directed to other and better preserved remains that occur in Yucatan and elsewhere in that portion of our country.

At Mayapan there is a circular stone building twenty-five feet in diameter, which stands on a rectangular, pyramidal foundation

thirty-five feet high. Another circular building is found at Chichen-Itza. It is built on the top of a double terraced platform. Other circular structures are found among the remains in various places; but the form of the foundation is not mentioned in the works at hand.

## 22. ADJUNCTS TO MAIN BUILDING.

McCabe's descriptions of the harem in Sargon's palace reads thus: "The harem was adjoining the khaznah, or treasury. It was a building of moderate extent, containing three courts; the walls of one of them covered with the richest decorations in enameled bricks; many long galleries, intended no doubt for feasts or festivals: and lastly a large number of rooms for habitation. This harem was shut in as closely as possible; all communication with the outer world was intercepted, and the women must have found themselves in a real prison. One single vestibule guarded by eunuchs gives access to it; this (vestibule) had two issues; one communicating with the great court of the offices, was the entry by which people came in from the outside; the other opening on a long, narrow court leading to the inhabited apartments of the seraglio; through which the king had access to his harem without being seen by the public. Behind the harem was an enormous tower, or pyramid in seven stages, nearly fifty yards high."

Whoever will now examine the plan of the great palace at Palenque, as given by Stephens, and the text of his works, will find that that part of it which occupies the south-west quarter, so completely corresponds in every respect except one or two, with the plan of the harem buildings connected with Sargon's palace, that there can be little doubt, OR NONE, that the plans of these respective buildings—one in Assyria and the other in America—were derived from a common source. A similarity of such a remarkable character, covering as it does several unique features at once, could not, with any probability, arise from chance.

*(To be continued.)*

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## TO MY MOTHER.

Deal gently with her, Time: these many years  
 Of life have brought more smiles with them than tears.  
 Lay not thy hand too harshly on her now,  
 But trace decline so slowly on her brow  
 That (like a sunset of the Northern clime,  
 Where twilight lingers in the summer-time,  
 And fades at last into the silent night,  
 Ere one may note the passing of the light)  
 So may she pass—since 'tis our common lot—  
 As one who, resting, sleeps and knows it not.

JOHN ALLEN WYETH.