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## U.A.S. Newsletter, no. 47 (January 29, 1958)

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Editor: Ross T. Christensen

January 29, 1958

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Published approximately every six weeks by THE UNIVERSITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. The purpose of the Newsletter is to disseminate knowledge of recent archaeological discoveries bearing on the Latter-day Saint scriptures; also of the archaeological activities and viewpoints of the Society and its members. Subscription by membership in the Society: three dollars per year; or Life Membership, fifty dollars. (Membership also includes subscription to other publications of the Society and of the BYU Department of Archaeology.)

**47.0 THE 5TH BYU EXPEDITION: A PROGRESS REPORT.** The first project of the Fifth BYU Archaeological Expedition to Middle America--that of making a Latex mold of the Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone at Izapa--has been completed, and preparations are now going ahead in Carmen for excavations at nearby Aguacatal, according to word received from expedition member Alfred L. Bush

**47.00 At Mexico City.** On January 9, the expedition staff met in Mexico City. (Besides Dr. Ross T. Christensen of the BYU Archaeology Department, as director, the staff consists of Dr. Welby W. Ricks, Alfred L. Bush, and Carl Hugh Jones, advanced archaeology students at BYU.) At Mexico City, conferences with Sr. Román Piñá Chan, acting director of the Department of Prehispanic Monuments, and the purchasing of supplies, were compressed into less than five days. Time was also available to partake of the hospitality of President and Mrs. Claudus Bowman of the Mexican LDS Mission at the Mission Home, and to visit important ruins in the valley of Mexico (Newsletter, 28. 5).

**47.01 At Oaxaca.** By January 14 the expedition was on its way to Tapachula where the first project of its work this season, the acquisition of a Latex mold of Stela 5 at Izapa--the Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone--was planned (UAS Bulletin 4). En route, a stop of two days was made at Oaxaca City where the expedition staff were guests of the Joseph E. Vincents at Mexico City College's "Center of Regional Studies" (Newsletter, 43. 7, 46. 1). The "Centro" is housed in a magnificently-restored 17th-century colonial residence.

An important archaeological experience was the opportunity to confer with Dr. Ignacio Bernal, director of the Department of Prehispanic Monuments of the Republic of Mexico, who is now conducting excavations in the valley of Oaxaca near San Luís. The ex-

pedition staff not only was able to see this site in the process of excavation, but also discussed with him expedition plans at Izapa and in Campeche.

Expedition members shared the facilities of the "Centro" with Mexico City College students who are to excavate at Yagul this season under John Paddock (Newsletter, 38. 1). Mr. Paddock, professor of anthropology at MCC, was also at the "Centro" during the BYU visit and furnished the expedition valuable suggestions on field procedures and guided the staff about his excavations at Yagul.

After brief tours of Mitla and Monte Albán arranged by Major Vincent, the last evening in Oaxaca was spent at a lecture on Mixtec archaeology given by Dr. Bernal. At this meeting of the Anthropology Club of Oaxaca, held in the library of the "Centro" and attended by prominent figures in Mesoamerican archaeology currently in the region, the BYU expedition members were formally welcomed to the facilities of the Center by Mr. Paddock. During his introduction



Dr. Ricks and Dr. Jakeman compare the latex mold of Stela 5 at Izapa with Dr. Jakeman's drawing reproduction of the carving.

of Dr. Bernal, Mr. Paddock presented Dr. Ross T. Christensen, field director of the BYU group, to the audience and briefly mentioned the expedition. He added that one of the purposes of the Center was to bring together scholars of differing opinions, so that in the conjunction of their diverse points of view, a genuine learning experience might be possible. He explained in introducing Dr. Christensen and the expedition staff, that though he did not share all their views, he nevertheless welcomed such differences of opinion, and on the basis of conversations with them recognized them as "fully competent and objective scholars."

47.02 At Tapachula. After the stay at Oaxaca and a brief stop at Tuxtla Gutiérrez for an informal visit with Gareth W. Lowe (who guided the staff about the NWF excavations at Chiapa de Corzo), the state museum of Chiapas, and other local attractions, the group arrived at Tapachula. Negotiations for permission to make a Latex (liquid rubber) mold of Stela 5 were immediately begun. Past trouble reported from Izapa in connection with this stela (Newsletter, 32.00) had made the staff apprehensive as to how difficult such a task might be. Arrangements with the municipal president (Mayor) of Tuxtla Chico, the village closest to the archaeological zone, and the government custodian of Izapa, however, were quickly and congenially brought about. An armed escort was provided during the expedition's work at the site and the mold of the Tree-of-Life Stone was successfully made on January 18.

Dr. Welby W. Ricks, who directed this project, left the expedition for the BYU campus January 19, carrying the mold with him. It is expected that a plaster-of-Paris cast of the famous sculpture will soon be available for students and campus visitors to inspect.

47.03 At Carmen. The remaining three members continued by plane to the Island of Carmen where they arrived on January 21. After necessary arrangements are made at Ciudad del Carmen, the staff will depart for the jungle ruins of Aguacatal, where perhaps six weeks will be spent in excavation. Dr. M. Wells Jakeman, BYU archaeology department chairman, has identified Aguacatal or one of the neighboring sites as very probably the original Tulan or 'place of abundance' of the early chronicles and the city Bountiful of the Book of Mormon (Newsletter, 22.02). Excavations were last made there in 1948 by an expedition under his direction (UAS Bulletin 3).

47.1 CAMPUS CHAPTER ELECTIONS. Eric Brodin, Gothenburg, Sweden, was re-elected president of the Campus Chapter at a recent meeting. Luana Collett,

Kaysville, Utah, was re-elected vice-president, and Darryl Kristjanson, San Diego, California, was named secretary. These officers will serve during winter quarter.

Campus Chapter activities for winter quarter include: "The Book of Mormon as Literature; a lecture by Dr. Robert K. Thomas, Monday, February 3, 1958; "The Dead Sea Scrolls," a lecture by Dr. Lewis M. Rogers, Monday, February 17, 1958; and a report by Dr. Welby Ricks, on the progress of the 5th BYU Expedition to Middle America, as well as a showing of the latex mold obtained from Stela 5 at Izapa, and slides of the expedition.

47.2 STUDIES ZAPOTEC UNITS OF MEASURE, David Vincent, an entering freshman at Mexico City College, has found what he believes to be the basic unit of linear measure used by the Zapotec architects



David Vincent studies pottery fragments at Mexico City College.

--Courtesy - Marilu Pease

of Yagul, Oaxaca.

The son of UAS member Major Joseph E. (Gene) Vincent, who is the director of the College's Centro de Estudios Regionales in Oaxaca and a faculty member of the Department of Anthropology of the College (Newsletter, 43.7), David has had unusual opportunities for working at Yagul, the nearby site which the College is excavating in cooperation with the Mexican government. In his leisure hours he has spent a great deal of time taking measurements and studying the structure of the buildings. Being intensely interested in mathematics and in the physical aspects of the edifices, he determined that he would find out if possible the system of measurement used.

Careful measurement of the outside dimensions

of the buildings surrounding Patio 1 revealed an unusual regularity: All seemed to be a multiple (usually x 5) of 17 inches. The same regularity was found in the placement of the offering boxes inside the buildings. By further checking of the physical characteristics of the present-day Zapotec inhabitants of the region, David found that 17 inches is a fairly good average of the distance from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow, the same measurement which in the Old World was called the cubit. However, he has hesitated to use the term as this might imply to some students an Old World connection.

In all the buildings measured David found but very little error, and concluded that this slight error might be due to the difference in arm length of the individual measurer. Although his work is by no means conclusive as yet, he hopes to be able to prove or disprove his theory by further measurements, both at Yagul and at nearby Mitla during his weekends home from Mexico City College.

47.3 TIKAL'S FIRST TEN YEARS, an abstract by Robert K. Wilardson from a recent publication, Tikal (University Museum Bulletin, Vol. 20, No. 4, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, December, 1956; 45p., 39 illustrations; \$1.00).

47.30 "The Tikal Project," by Froelich Rainey. In 1948 the University Museum set up a tentative plan for the exploration of Tikal, the largest, and probably the oldest, of all the great Classic Maya cities of Middle America. At that time Tikal was a "lost" city, buried in the dense tropical jungles of northern lowland Guatemala. However, it was not until the spring of 1956 that the first preliminary season of work was begun. The field director was Edwin Shook (on leave from the Carnegie Institution for five years), and the major objectives were searching for sub-surface water, "bushing", and building a camp for the future.

The water problem is still unsolved. Five miles of roads through the ruins were cleared and many new structures were discovered. The area of the ceremonial courts and buildings is now estimated at more than six square miles.

The area of Tikal has been declared a National Park, and it will not be invaded by the oil rigs which are expected to appear all around it. The University Museum is aiming at a ten-year program, which will include consolidating the masonry of the New World's tallest and most beautiful temples. After a thousand years these temples are still magnificent, but much repair is needed soon, as some of them are in danger of sudden and complete collapse. Also, the buried levels of Tikal are to be probed for information on its origins of perhaps 2500 years ago and on the growth of Maya civilization thereafter.

47.31 "Maya Dates on Stelae in Tikal 'Enclosures'," by Linton Satterthwaite, Jr. During the 1956 season at Tikal a fine new carved stela (#22) and altar were discovered by Dr. Shook. The new stela-altar pair is the fifth to be found at Tikal within an "enclosure." These enclosures with their monuments, are now believed to be individual elements in a larger single pattern.

The placement of Maya stelae indoors occurs very rarely elsewhere, and certainly only at Tikal is there evidence for a series of such placements. One stela and one altar appear in each enclosure. The placing of the stela-altar pairs within "enclosures" seems linked with katun markings, for all four of the known dates are at katun-ends. One suspects that the enclosures were built primarily for the monuments. If so, we have a series of dated similar masonry structures, as well as monuments, extending through about 80 years of time, from 9.14.0.0.0 to 9.18.0.0.0 in the Maya Long Count. The new stela, number 22, was an important link in the series, its dedicatory date being 9.17.0.0.0, or 1,418,400 days after the base date of the Maya Long Count, and may correspond to January 22, A. D. 771.

47.4 A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE POPOL VUH, a book notice by Alfred L. Bush. Popol Vuh (Quiche text from the copy of R. P. F. Ximénez; Spanish translation by Dora M. Burgess and Patricio Xec. Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, 1955).

It is a valuable book, indeed, that would merit a persistent search of some twenty years to be discovered. But a lost version of the sacred history of the Quiche Maya, the Popol Vuh, has abundantly repaid its discoverer by far surpassing in historical and literary significance his most exaggerated expectations. Many years ago, during his earliest years in Guatemala as a Protestant missionary, Mr. Paul Burgess had heard suggestions of the existence of such a book. The longer he stayed the more he was convinced that this version of the ancient Popol Vuh could be found. The search was begun. It was a quest which took him over much of the world, not only Latin America, but Europe and the United States as well.

Strangely enough, the work was finally discovered, after twenty years of searching, in the Newbury Library in Chicago. A copy of the Quiche text of the Popol Vuh, made by the Spanish priest Ximénez, had been bound into the back of an unimportant historical study which had been purchased by the Newbury Library. Its existence within the same binding was unknown even to the personnel of the Library. The discovery of this early copy of the Popol Vuh was unquestionably one of the most important finds on ancient America.

The Burgess' contribution to the ancient history of Guatemala did not end with this discovery, however.

Mr. Burgess stayed on in Guatemala with his wife to continue their missionary efforts. In Quetzaltenango, at the small missionary school which they directed, the Ximénez copy of the Popol Vuh was introduced into the curriculum. It was used in cooperative reading classes, much as the Burgesses used the Bible. The problem now, however, was not in transferring an understanding of the book to the Indians, but of both Indians and missionaries working cooperatively together to acquire an understanding of this book which was written in the ancient Quiche tongue. Whenever the Burgesses came upon an obscure Quiche word in the reading of the Popol Vuh in the classroom, they would ask the students if they were familiar with the word. Frequently some of the older Indians were immediately familiar with the meaning. At other times they could suggest differing local modern meanings.

This slow and persistent process of being taught by the Indians while teaching them, has meant that the Burgesses have received perhaps the finest understanding of this ancient book of any of its modern translators. In 1955 Mrs. Burgess' translation of the Popol Vuh was published privately in Quetzaltenango. Each page of the Spanish translation is published opposite the Ximénez Quiche copy discovered by Mr. Burgess. Thirty-five years of missionary experience among the Indians of Quetzaltenango is an educational background in Quiche which will be difficult to match. Such a background demands that this new translation be given serious consideration. It is likely that it is the most accurate translation that will be made for a long time.

47.5 A QUESTION FOR THE EDITOR. It is the intention of the editor to respond to a question on an archaeological subject in each issue of the Newsletter. Please address inquiries to: Editor, UAS Newsletter, Department of Archaeology, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

47.50 The Horse in Ancient America.

Sir: I have been told that the horse was unknown among the American aborigines until the coming of the Spaniards. Yet actual remains of ancient horses are supposed to have been found at the La Brea tar pits, in Tierra del Fuego, etc. Could you straighten me out on this point? ---LBD

It is true that the horse was unknown in aboriginal America at the coming of the Europeans. The Indians were generally terrified by these strange four-legged beasts out of whose backs seemed to grow man-like figures. But horses soon escaped from the Spaniards, and it was not long after the Discovery until such groups

as the Plains Indians of North America and those of the Argentine pampas became expert horsemen.

It is also true that actual remains of horses have been found at numerous ancient sites such as La Brea in California, Tierra del Fuego on the southern tip of South America, and Lagoa Santa in Brazil. These were often found in direct association with human remains, thus demonstrating the contemporaneity of the two. But these human groups invariably possessed a simple hunting type of culture and are believed to date to a very early time horizon--before the rise of the agricultural civilizations. Moreover, these early hunters did not ride the horses or make them pull loads; they simply hunted them and ate them.

A crucial question in New World prehistory is whether the horse existed and was domesticated by man during the time of the advanced pre-Columbian agricultural civilizations. But in our present state of knowledge, no fully satisfactory answer can be given. It is generally believed, however, that the horse disappeared from among the native American fauna with the disappearance of the damp post-glacial environment in which the early hunting cultures thrived. But actually, the extinction date of the horse cannot be unequivocally established. If the horse did die out at this time, this would mean that it did not exist in America contemporaneously with the advanced pre-Columbian civilizations, that is, say, between 3,000 B. C. and 1500 A. D. But at this point at least a few shreds of contrary evidence have come to light: for example, a wheeled toy vehicle from Oaxaca in the possession of the American Museum of Natural History, showing a man mounted on an animal, possibly a horse. Actually, very little is known about the fauna of the earlier stages of New World civilization. I do not believe that anyone has ever made a comprehensive study of the animal life associated with the pre-Classic cultures of Mesoamerica. --RTC.