



Type: Magazine Article

Aztec Method of Recording History

Author(s): Charles E. Dibble

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 49, No. 10 (October 1946)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

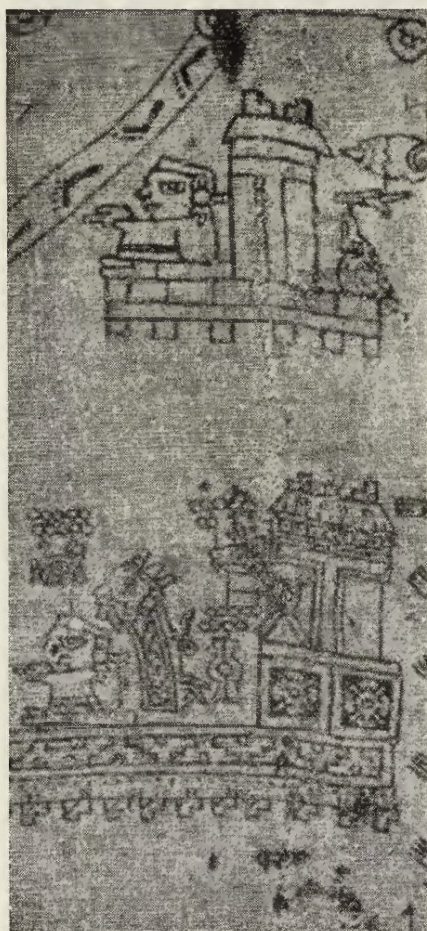
Page(s): 613, 649

Abstract: A series of brief comments in which the author presents archaeological findings, architectural notes, and myths and legends that deal indirectly with the Book of Mormon. Dibble discusses the wheel, ancient irrigation methods, metals, Mexican and Mayan codices, Quetzalcoatl, ancient buildings, and numerous other related items. The thirtieth part covers Aztec recordkeeping.

Aztec Method of RECORDING HISTORY

By DR. CHARLES E. DIBBLE

MAN'S efforts to record what he saw and experienced have a long history. It has been a three-fold problem: a method of writing, a writing instrument, and a surface to receive the



Part of a Cotton Codex showing weave and method of joining the strips.

thoughts of man. Perhaps the oldest and most universal surface has been a smooth rock on the face of the cliff or in a cave shelter. Early man in Spain and France recorded on the rock wall of his cave—a practice which continues down to the present, as anyone can attest who has noted the names and dates scrawled in places of scenic and historic interest.

Papyrus was the writing medium of the Mediterranean; the Chinese developed true paper from the disintegrated fibers of the mulberry. Many cultures, once they perfected a writing system, recorded, upon occasions, on wood, pottery, parchment, shells, bone, and metals.

(Concluded on page 649)

OCTOBER 1946

THE BIGGEST JOB *of his life!*



HE'S just a little fellow. But he works hard from the very day he comes into the world. Every minute he's awake, those tiny arms and legs are busy. They have to be for he has to do the biggest growing job of his life during his first 12 months. He provides his own exercise. He has to depend on you to see that he has the food he needs.

Of course, the chief item of his food during his first year is milk. And it must be *good* milk. Being sure about that used to be a problem. It isn't any more. Doctors recommend Sego Milk for babies—because it is uniformly rich in the food substances of whole milk, because it is easy for babies to

digest, because it's as safe in its sealed container as if there were no germ of disease in the world.

Potent reasons those. But there's one more. Now this extraordinary form of milk is fortified with a new, pure form of vitamin D—the very same kind of vitamin D that bright sunshine would provide for babies and children if they could get enough sunshine. It's the combination of vitamin D and the minerals of milk that help a baby to grow, to have a well-developed body, sound teeth, and bones that are straight and strong.

Sego Milk is the only evaporated milk fortified with this newest form of vitamin D. Ask your doctor about it.



This seal certifies that all statements made here have been accepted as true by the Council on Foods and Nutrition of the American Medical Association.



This seal certifies that the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation makes periodic tests to determine that Sego Milk diluted with an equal amount of water always gives you 400 units of vitamin D per quart.



THE STANDARD OF HIGHEST QUALITY FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS

To get your copy of the 64-page baby book and Mary Lee Taylor's newest recipe book, write:

SEGO MILK PRODUCTS COMPANY, Salt Lake City, Utah
Originator of Evaporated Milk in the Intermountain West
Plants in Richmond, Utah; Preston and Buhl, Idaho

MELCHIZEDEK?

By ZECHARIAH N. DECKER

better. I would suggest to them and all who err that they read the fifty-eighth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verses 26 to 33 inclusive. Some things that are said there gave me the incentive to write this.

It is strange that, notwithstanding the many ways we have by which to learn the correct use and way to pronounce the English words in our schools and colleges and all reference books, that our kind Heavenly Father would be so good and thoughtful of us frail mortals that he has revealed the correct name to us through his servants. "... whether [it be] by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same." See Doctrine and Covenants, section 1, verse 38; also section 68, verse 4. Will any Latter-day Saint deny that Elder Talmage was inspired by the Holy Ghost in his compilation of the combination book? And there are witnesses that Charles Hart and John A. Widtsoe each told a large gathering of priesthood members that Melchizedek is the correct name of the Higher Priesthood. Will any deny that these men were influenced by the Spirit of God in the performance of their duties? "... In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." (II Corinthians 13:1.)

I am wondering why we have gone on and on so long mispronouncing the name of the Holy Priesthood. From now on let's pronounce it correctly: let's say Mel-chiz'-e-dek.

Aztec Method

(Concluded from page 613)

The Aztecs developed three favored materials upon which they recorded their written history: deer skin, a fibre paper known as "amatl," and woven cotton. Regional skill in making "amatl" paper is revealed in the lists of tribute paid to Montezuma. Towns from the region of Oaxaca were renowned for their paper-making skill.

When the whole story was to be recorded on one surface, the Aztec wove long strips of cotton material which they sewed together to form a large cotton cloth many feet square. Upon the not too smooth surface the Aztec artist recorded his story. Due to favorable circumstances of preservation some few prehistoric cotton codices have survived in Mexico City for our study.

(See illustration, page 613.)



From the pen of DR. MILTON R. HUNTER ...

● UTAH INDIAN STORIES—Dr. Hunter's newest book

Here is a rich volume of Indian stories and legends—the kind too seldom told, and rarely written. They are brought to us now by an authoritative historian and skilled story teller, whose years of research have opened up to him a rich vein of Indian lore and early-day stories. Your shelf of young folks' books will be particularly enriched by this new, authentic collection. \$2.25.

● THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE AGES

Textbook for Priesthood Quorums . . . a handbook of information for the missionary, investigator, and others who seek a better knowledge of the Plan of Salvation. Subjects discussed include the eternal nature of God, the meaning of the gospel, universal quest for salvation, the gospel dispensations, and many special topics, such as "Men May Become Gods," "The Immortality of Man," and the "Story of the Earth." This beautiful book is a choice gift. \$1.30.

● BRIGHAM YOUNG, THE COLONIZER

Authentic story of a man of inspired vision and high courage . . . an epic of the conquest of the wilderness. This is a history of the settlement of the Great Basin by Mormon pioneers under the leadership of Brigham Young. So skillfully has the writer woven his material that the reader seems carried away to play a part in the fast-moving drama. \$3.00.



Also ---

FIVE GREAT COMPILATIONS—By N. B. Lundwall

● DISCOURSES OF ORSON PRATT

Orson Pratt was one of the great men of his generation. Here are 600 pages of his finest writings and discourses—priceless for home, ward, or quorum library. Price, \$3.00.

● THE EXODUS OF MODERN ISRAEL

Here is original source material taken chiefly from the diary of Orson Pratt—giving a first-hand, day-by-day account of the Mormon migration from Nauvoo into the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. Brief . . . authentic . . . fascinating! Price, \$1.00.

● TEMPLES OF THE MOST HIGH

A compilation of descriptions, dedicatory prayers, and faith-promoting incidents connected with the L. D. S. temples. Beautifully illustrated. Price, \$2.00.

● ASSORTED GEMS OF PRICELESS VALUE

Choice thoughts on 165 gospel themes, drawn from the writings of many thinkers, writers, and inspired leaders. Price, \$2.00.

● THE VISION

A compilation of finest quotations from L. D. S. Church authorities—and from other world leaders. Price, \$1.25.

(See page 616 for order form)

BOOKCRAFT

1186 South Main

Salt Lake City 4, Utah