Aztec Method of Recording History

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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

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)

Port of a Cotton Codex showing wave and method of joining the strips.

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.

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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'edek.

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.)

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(See page 618 for order form)

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