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The Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
& Mormon Studies

# INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

1991, No. 2

"...by study and also by faith." D&C 88:118

March

## Exciting Research in an Easily Readable Form

Every student should have a copy of the newly completed *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*. It is the kind of book that F.A.R.M.S. subscribers have been asking for: exciting new discoveries about the Book of Mormon made by LDS scholars, presented in a form accessible to all readers. No special background is required to appreciate these twenty-three brief essays—just a desire to rediscover the value of the Book of Mormon by learning new things about it.

*Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* will be released on April 1, published jointly by F.A.R.M.S. and Deseret Book. The essays it contains focus on one type of recent research: studies that show meaningful and complex patterns not recognized before in the Book of Mormon—patterns of style, ideas, history, and actions. Once these patterns are detected and displayed, they help us appreciate better the power of the book and its messages. In this sense these essays help readers "rediscover" the Book of Mormon.

They are also strong evidence for the authenticity of the book. Hugh Nibley has observed that the Book of Mormon describes Nephite civilization "with due attention to all the complex factors that make up an exceedingly complicated but perfectly consistent picture" (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 8:225). He has argued persuasively that one evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon is that it interweaves dozens of complex stories and patterns with an uncanny consistency that is never

caught in a slip or contradiction. The essays in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* help to make some of these patterns clear.

For example, in one of the first pieces, Grant Hardy discusses the observable effect that Mormon had on the Book of Mormon in his role as editor. By his choices of what to include, and also what to leave out, Mormon shaped the book decisively. Once we see the patterns in what Mormon did as he edited, we understand better how he desired the book to affect us.

John Tvedtnes shows new examples of an intriguing linguistic pattern; he identifies traces of the Hebrew language that were left behind when the book was translated to English. He discusses dozens of places where awkward English phrases give us clues that Joseph Smith translated these "Hebraisms" literally.

These are just two examples of the two dozen essays that make *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* a fascinating companion to your study of the Book of Mormon. Contributors include S. Kent Brown, Richard D. Rust, Eugene England, Robert L. Millet, Victor L. Ludlow, Avraham Gileadi, Terrence L. Szink, Blake Ostler, Noel B. Reynolds, John L. Sorenson, Stephen D. Ricks, and John W. Welch.

You may order your copy on the form in this issue, at the usual discount for F.A.R.M.S. subscribers. There is an additional discount for orders of ten or more copies, in case you want to use this book to supplement a study group or youth class.

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies is a nonprofit research and educational organization dedicated to the study of ancient scripture. Your tax-deductible contributions enable F.A.R.M.S. to sponsor and coordinate a wide range of research projects that enhance our understanding of these sacred writings.

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# F.A.R.M.S. UPDATE

The Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies

Number 75

March 1991

## New Discoveries in Mexico on the Jaredite Period

The fact that data on early civilization in Mesoamerica has been skimpy has held back attempts to shed light on the period of the Jaredites. Newly reported research confirms that the roots of better-known, later cultures like the Maya go back a very long time and thus that much of what is known about the later peoples applies to their predecessors also. The more such connections that are found, the more we will know about the Jaredite period.

For example, study in the state of Guerrero, Mexico, has uncovered a tomb, dating to between 1000 and 700 B.C. It has a corbelled arch—an arch constructed of flat stones, each one projecting inward a bit more than the one below until the gap has been covered. The Maya culture, 1500 years later, has hitherto been noted for these arches (R. M. Reyna R., p. 67 in *El Preclásico o Formativo. Avances y Perspectivas*. Museo Nacional de Antropología, México City, 1989). The discovery of this arch in a much earlier tomb indicates that Maya culture had connections with a much older culture.

Ether 9:23 mentions “mighty cities” among the Jaredites. Yet evidence for genuine cities in the period of the Jaredites has been slim until recently. Now, however, we have evidence of at least three such cities during the “Olmec” period, which may correspond to the time of the Jaredites. Rebecca B. González L., who has worked for a number of years salvaging information from what is left of the ravaged Olmec site of La Venta, Tabasco, concludes that that center was a 500-acre metropolis (“urbe”), a real city, not simply an isolated ceremonial center (*El Preclásico o Formativo*, p. 84).

Furthermore, González, who now knows the data better than anyone else, concludes that “the inhabitants of La Venta constructed [their] buildings very similar in form” to the early Maya (pp. 85-86). Again we see evidence that the later, better-known Maya culture had connections with an older culture that dates to the period of the Jaredites.

A seven-year project directed by H. Gómez R. has yielded a description of the little-known Olmec center of Las Limas (half way across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in southern Mexico). It too proves to be a city. It had at least 2000 inhabitants in the community itself and many more nearby. Habitation areas were so packed with houses that Gómez considers the area at a “saturation level” of use of the available space (*El Preclásico o Formativo*, p. 93). Upon examining 22 Olmec sites, he further concludes that La Venta was the “super-center,” markedly bigger and more important than San Lorenzo or Las Limas, thus agreeing with González (p. 97).

In recent years, some LDS scholars have proposed that San Lorenzo, the Olmec site on the Coatzacoalcos River 25 miles downstream from Las Limas, qualifies as the city built by the Jaredite king Lib “by the narrow neck of land, by the place where the sea divides the land” (Ether 10:20) (see, for example, Norman, “San Lorenzo as the Jaredite City of Lib,” F.A.R.M.S. NOR-83; Palmer, *In Search of Cumorah*; Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*). This proposal sprang in part from the fact that San Lorenzo sits at the “hinge” of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec which indeed “divides the land.” More importantly, the site’s founding

had been put at around 1400 B.C., appropriate for Lib’s reign.

But now we know that La Venta, which is in the same area, was also settled around 1500 B.C. and its peak glory was 1300 to 900 B.C., the same as San Lorenzo (González, p. 85; W. Rust and R. Sharer, *Science*, vol. 242, 7 Oct. 1988, pp. 102-4). La Venta may thus also qualify as Lib’s noteworthy city.

The Maya have been popularly labeled “the Greeks of the New World” because they developed an artistically and philosophically “Classic” era that appeared to stand at a level of sophistication well above what was then known for its neighboring cultures. Recent research has demonstrated, however, that the Greeks were not the fountainhead of civilization. They actually borrowed extensively and fundamentally from their predecessors in the eastern Mediterranean and Near East.

Now we are learning that the Maya did the same; their equivalent to the Minoans and Mycenaeans were the bearers of what we call Olmec culture, among others. As we learn more about what the Maya borrowed from their predecessors, we learn more about Mesoamerican civilization at the time of the Jaredites.

Based on research by John L. Sorenson.

## Figurine Volume Published

We are pleased to announce the publication of volume 1 of the New World Figurine Project by the F.A.R.M.S. Research Press. This first of a projected six volumes contains more than a dozen scholarly essays that illustrate and analyze ancient American human figurines.

Archaeological research is currently hampered by a lack of high-quality illustrations and by a decentralization of data. The New World Figurine Project will overcome both problems for figurines. From its inception in 1987, the project has been designed to compile and publish comprehensive illustrated data on New World figurines. An ultimate objective is to trace interactions that cannot be established with other artifacts. The project also promises to serve as a vehicle for discussing theories of cultural process.

Although none of the essays directly addresses the relationship between these figurines and the Book of Mormon, they all shed light on ancient America, and thus may enhance our

understanding of the times and peoples of the Book of Mormon.

Early reviews have been very favorable. Terry Prewitt, professor of Anthropology at the University of West Florida, believes that "the New World Figurine Project ushers in a new era of archaeology. A central source of data is long overdue. . . . Volume 1 creates a new avenue of communication for scholars of New World anthropology. I was impressed with the range of theoretical interpretations in this volume."

Robert L. Carneiro, Curator of the American Museum of Natural History, has also praised this work. "This volume demonstrates very nicely how from one small segment of a culture—figurines—it is possible, with painstaking work, sympathetic insight, and a little daring, to project a much larger picture of the culture and its associations."

Copies of this ground-breaking archaeological study may be ordered using the order form in this issue.

## Temples of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean World

The F.A.R.M.S. Temples Bibliography, made available in 1989 as a study aid, has been published by the Edwin Mellen Press of New York. Entitled *A Bibliography on Temples of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean World*, the work is arranged by subject and by author.

Specific categories of works cited include "Temples of Israel," "Temples of Egypt," "Temples of Mesopotamia," "Priesthood," "Ritual, Liturgy, and Worship," "Sacred Space," and more. The articles and books cited deal with the cosmic associations of the temple, the temple as the locus of kingly authority, the role of the priesthood in the operation of the temple, and sacrifice

and other priestly rituals. They demonstrate the manner in which the temple was the central feature on the religious landscape in the ancient Near East, and one of the most important on the political landscape as well. The maintenance of the temple and the rites associated with it were viewed as essential to the well-being of the society in which the temple was built.

This bibliography, by Donald W. Parry, Stephen D. Ricks, and John W. Welch, contains more than 2700 entries. The paperbound book contains 311 pages. Both student and scholar will find this work useful for their research on temples of the ancient Near East. See the order form in this issue.

## BYU Studies and the Book of Mormon

The Summer 1990 issue of *BYU Studies* is dedicated solely to Book of Mormon thought and "offers a sample of recent scholarship on the Book of Mormon," says Kent P. Jackson, guest editor of the volume. Jackson adds, "It is intentionally diverse and includes a variety that ranges from doctrine to history and from ocean currents to wordprints."

F.A.R.M.S. has obtained copies of this special issue to make available to our subscribers who do not regularly receive *BYU Studies*. They may be ordered on the order form in this issue.

Articles featured include "The Mulekites," by John L. Sorenson; "The Doctrine of the Resurrection as Taught by the Book of Mormon Prophets," by Robert J. Matthews; an explanation of Ether 3:15, by Kent P. Jackson; "Allegory of the Olive Tree, An Explanation," by Paul Y. Hoskisson; "Wordprint Studies—Book of Mormon Authorship," by John L. Hilton; and "The Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," by S. Kent Brown.

## Book of Mormon Bibliography—Volunteers Needed

A mammoth task is now underway: with added emphasis on Book of Mormon scholarship the past few years, it has become necessary to improve, update, and annotate the 1986 F.A.R.M.S. *Bibliography of the Book of Mormon*. Donald W. Parry, who will oversee this project, notes that during the past five years, several hundred students and scholars have realized the usefulness of this bibliography.

Many volunteers have agreed to write annotations, but many more are needed. If you are willing to assist in this endeavor, please contact the F.A.R.M.S. office.

## ORDER FORM

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S&T-91	Sorenson, John L., and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., <i>Rediscovering the Book of Mormon</i> 292 pp., F.A.R.M.S. & Deseret Book, paperback, to be released April 1. If you purchase ten or more, use these prices: \$8.25, \$7.00 (-15%), or \$6.60 (-20%)		\$8.95 \$7.60 (-15%) \$7.15 (-20%)	
NWF-91	Stocker, Terry, ed., <i>New World Figurine Project</i> , vol. 1, 178 pp., Research Press		\$23.00	
PRW-91	Parry, Donald W., Stephen D. Ricks, and John W. Welch, eds., <i>A Bibliography on Temples of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean World</i> , 311 pp., Mellen Press, paperback (\$69.99 retail), special offer		\$25.00	
BYS-91	<i>BYU Studies</i> , Summer 1990, special issue on the Book of Mormon, 144 pp.		\$4.00	
S&R-91	Sorenson, John L., and Martin H. Raish, <i>Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography</i> , on computer disks; specify size and format desired: 3 1/2' or 5 1/4' WordPerfect (MS-DOS) or ASCII or Folio*		\$19.00	
S&R-90	Sorenson, John L., and Martin H. Raish, <i>Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography</i> , 2 vol., 1250 pp., Research Press		\$89.00	

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## Thanks to Many Who Support Book of Mormon Research

One of the reasons the Foundation is able to continue its work is the generous support it receives from subscribers and friends. During the past year many people and organizations have made significant contributions. We thank the following for help in editing, reviewing, recording, and translating:

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Because of these contributions and many others, we will publish as many as eight books this year plus several shorter publications, including two or three volumes in the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* and the books featured in this issue of the Newsletter.

## Fund-raising Committee Is Expanded

Much of the fund raising necessary to carry on the work of F.A.R.M.S. is done by the Foundation Endowment Committee. This committee is directed by Brent Hall as the Foundation Development Director and consists of some great friends of F.A.R.M.S., including David Reeves, Allen Hill, Merrill Bateman, and Ed Pinegar.

President Pinegar has recently joined the Endowment Committee, after his release as president of the MTC in Provo. He brings with him a wealth of experience and great enthusiasm for the Book of Mormon and the mission of the Foundation. He has long been a supporter of F.A.R.M.S., but he tells us that F.A.R.M.S. materials were especially invaluable to him during his service as President of the London Mission and during his time at the MTC.

The Endowment Committee is seeking volunteers in all parts of the world who would enjoy donating some time and effort to help fund the continuing work of F.A.R.M.S. Please let us know if you would enjoy being part of this effort.

## Referrals Always Welcome

Since you are enjoying the benefits of your involvement with F.A.R.M.S., it is likely that some of the people you know might also. You are our best means of reaching new people with the information and the services that the Foundation can provide. Please send us the names of your friends who you think might be interested in the work of the Foundation. We will send an introductory packet to each person whose name you send us. This material explains F.A.R.M.S. and extends an invitation to subscribe.

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## Astons Report Latest Findings in Oman

Michaela and Warren Aston of Queensland, Australia, have sent to F.A.R.M.S. a preliminary report on their third trip to the Arabian peninsula to search for Lehi's land Bountiful. Despite political tensions in the area, they accomplished more in the three weeks they spent there than on any previous trip. They completed their survey of the coastline and took numerous photographs.

They believe that they have now

eliminated all possible sites for Bountiful except the ones they identified before. Of these, the Wadi Sayq emerges as fitting the criteria best. They conducted extensive research there, including examining the area on foot and taking water, soil, and leaf samples for analysis. They discovered a mound that appears to be the remains of an artificial structure and drawings and inscriptions on a rock face; both may prove to be important finds, although

further research is needed to determine their age. The Astons are preparing separate, extended papers on Nahom and Bountiful, which F.A.R.M.S. will publish when they are completed.

For now, we can report that all possible sites along the Arabian coastline have received a first-hand examination by LDS researchers and that there *does* exist a location in Arabia that conforms very well to the profile of Bountiful given in 1 Nephi.

## Brown Bag Seminar Continues to Explore New Research

The first presentation of the Fall 1990 semester was an illustrated report on the progress of research by Warren and Michaela Aston on possible sites for the original Bountiful. John Sorenson and Mel Thorne used slides and information provided by the Astons to brief the seminar participants on the state of the Aston's research. (See the article above.)

The next presentation was by David Honey of the Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages at BYU. He discussed his work in progress on Book of Mormon historiography, focusing on First Nephi.

John Pratt presented an argument from astronomical history for dating Herod's death. He focused on attempting to establish the most likely timing for the eclipse that occurred between the birth of Christ and the death of Herod. He concludes that the eclipse of December 29, 1 B.C., best fits the astronomical evidence. This would make it likely that the Christ was born in 1 B.C., which Pratt sees as consistent with the treatment of his birth in the Book of Mormon. The paper from which Pratt's presentation was taken was offered as a reprint in the last Newsletter.

Allen Christenson discussed his path-breaking ethnographic study of Mayan religious festivals. He traced those festivals through time and noted Book of Mormon parallels. He presented more of this same material in the Fourth Annual F.A.R.M.S. Book of

Mormon Lecture on February 27. We will report on his lecture in more detail in an upcoming issue and make available a printed version of his text.

George Rhodes, professor of Economics at Colorado State University, joined us for the next seminar session to discuss the law of consecration in the Book of Mormon. He focused on what he sees in the Book of Mormon as necessary connections between material and spiritual equality, Book of Mormon teachings about how the law of consecration will assist the redemption of Zion, and what the Book of Mormon and modern prophets say about when this law will be restored.

Geography was the topic of the next presentation. John Sorenson discussed with seminar participants "150 Years of Book of Mormon Geography: A History of Ideas." He reviewed the positions taken since the publication of the Book of Mormon concerning where in the Americas the events it relates took place. This presentation was taken from a much longer work that F.A.R.M.S. has since published in preliminary form (see the last Newsletter).

The final presentation of the Fall Semester was made by Bill Hamblin. He focused on teaching methods, specifically on using HyperCard on a Macintosh computer in the classroom to teach the Book of Mormon. Using university classroom equipped with the proper computer and projection equipment, he illustrated the power of

this technology for conveying information to students.

Jack Welch, Don Parry, and Gary Gillum started off the Winter Semester's sessions with a report on the F.A.R.M.S. Book of Mormon Bibliography project (see article on page 3). Welch also discussed the ways in which the different experiences of Book of Mormon prophets influenced what they emphasized as they expressed their testimonies of Christ.

The next presentation was an update by Royal Skousen on his work on the original text of the Book of Mormon, including his conclusions about the authenticity of purported fragments of the original manuscript recently given to the Church.

The seminar continues to meet on alternate Wednesdays during the Winter Semester, and all interested parties are welcome to attend. For further information, contact Noel Reynolds, at 378-2391, or the F.A.R.M.S. office.

## Sorenson and Raish Bibliography Available on Disk

In accordance with requests from readers, we are making copies of John Sorenson's and Martin Raish's *Pre-Columbian Contacts with the Americas across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography* available on computer disk. See the order form for details.