



Type: Magazine Article

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## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon, Part I: Tour of Book of Mormon Lands

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Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (April 1955)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Page(s): 229, 280, 282

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**Abstract:** This series is a comprehensive compilation of archaeological artifacts in Mesoamerica that relate to Book of Mormon places and peoples. It is copiously illustrated with photographs of buildings, pottery, statues, and carvings. The series includes evidences of Christ's appearance to the Americas and reviews ancient Mayan writings, including *Title of the Lords of Totonicapan*, the *Popol Vuh*, the *Annals of the Cakchiquels*, and the *Works of Ixtlilxochitl*. The author also discusses white and dark people in ancient America. The first part constitutes a record of the author's trip to Central America.



President Milton R. Hunter, tour director, holding a stone rams head, an ancient relic housed in the Merida Museum, Merida, Yucatan.

## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

by Dr. Milton R. Hunter

OF THE FIRST COUNCIL OF THE SEVENTY

### I

#### TOUR OF BOOK OF MORMON LANDS

ON THE wall of one of the buildings at Chichen Itza, Yucatan, plainly visible to tourists and archaeologists, what appears to be the representation of a horse, is depicted. Since archaeologists claim that these buildings were erected approximately 1000 A.D.—Dr. J. Eric S. Thompson placing the dates of the erection of New Chichen Itza from A.D. 968 to 987<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Sylvanus Griswald Morley stating that Chichen Itza was reoccupied in 968 A.D.<sup>2</sup>—in all probability this representation of a horse was carved over 500 years before Columbus discovered America. This representation constitutes what might be considered by truth-seekers a noteworthy evidence to sustain the claims regarding horses made by the Book of Mormon.

"By the gift and power of God," the Prophet Joseph Smith translated from the Jaredite account a statement which claims that those ancient Americans during the days of King Emer "... had horses ..."<sup>3</sup> Several other statements scattered throughout the Nephite period make it clear that

the Nephites and Lamanites also possessed horses throughout the entire course of their history.<sup>4</sup> Thus, this record of the inhabitants of ancient America contains the foregoing facts in direct opposition to the claims that have frequently been made by some historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, and other scientists that there were no horses in America at the time of its discovery, nor had there been during man's sojourn here. Therefore, the fact that a picture of what appears to be a horse was carved on a wall of one of the ancient American buildings many years before the Spaniards came to this land with their horses supplies new and important evidence to further sustain the truth-

that country—therefore the one best qualified to show our people around Mexico, who informed me as to the location of the likeness of this carved horse. Since it was he who directed me to it, I wish to acknowledge this fact.

We first saw the depiction of the horse a little over a year ago while Sister Hunter and I were touring the Mexican Mission in company with President and Sister Claudious Bowman. While traveling throughout the mission, we visited several of the archaeological sites such as Teotihuacan, Cholula, Monte Alban, Mitla, Chichen Itza, Uxmal, and Kabah, the latter three being located in Yucatan and the other four within 250 miles of Mexico City. We took photographs of the things of interest at the various archaeological sites, including a picture of the horse.

Unfortunately, my picture of the horse was taken shortly before sundown, and upon my arrival at Salt Lake City I found that it was a very poor one. I suppose that my being over-excited at seeing what could be new Book of Mormon evidence caused me to be a little over-anxious and turn too much light on my camera. During the following several months' time I tried in vain to get others visiting Yucatan to take the photograph for me. Finally in the fall of

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fulness of statements in the Book of Mormon relative to horses.

It was José Dávila, five and one-half years a branch president of the Puebla Branch, Mexico, and the only registered Latter-day Saint guide in

<sup>1</sup>Enos 1:21; Al. 18:9-10, 12; 20:6; 3 Ne. 3:22; 4:4; 6:1; 21:14.



—Photographs by Otto Done

José Dávila, the guide, showing the touring party members the cement which was made many years ago at Teotihuacan, Mexico. Temple of the Sun in background. Members of touring party (left to right): Milton R. Hunter, José Dávila, Alice Redd, Rebecca Ostler, Estella Johns, Elmer Elkington, Florence Elkington, Inez Moody, Dr. Rex D. Stutznegger, Helen Stutznegger, M. Ward Moody, Herman Pedersen, Fawn Pedersen, Alex F. Dunn, Carol Dunn, Geraldine Callister, Louise Callister, Leland Redd, Mary Hatch, Dr. Henry Ray Hatch, Moroni H. Ostler, Vernald W. Johns.

<sup>1</sup>J. Eric S. Thompson, *The Civilization of the Mayas* (Chicago, Ill., 1953), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Sylvanus Griswald Morley, *The Ancient Maya* (Palo Alto, Calif., 1947), p. 81.

<sup>3</sup>Ether 9:16-19.

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## ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

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1954, at the suggestion of a friend who is the resident manager of a travel agency, I was invited to direct a tour to Mexico during my Christmas vacation and take the picture of the horse myself. He volunteered to outline the tour. This opened a wonderful possibility. Thereupon the details of the arrangements were completed and I invited twenty people who I thought would be interested to accompany me in touring Book of Mormon lands.

This trip we named "A Tour of Ancient America and Book of Mormon Lands" with no thought in mind that Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Yucatan constituted the only places where Jaredites, Nephites, and Lamanites had lived. But since we felt that at least some of the Book of Mormon peoples and their descendants had resided in this section of the country and archaeological evidences were abundant there, we gave our tour the foregoing title.

A three weeks' tour was planned. After making the itinerary, it was found that there were a few places in which I have been intensely interested for years to which the regular airlines did not go; for example, Bonampak, discovered in 1946 in the extreme southern jungles of Mexico, where likenesses of dark and light peoples were painted on the walls of one of the buildings, had been of extreme interest to me. I wanted to see these paintings which could be interpreted as an indication of Nephites and Lamanites having once lived in Ancient America. Also, I was very anxious to visit Palenque where the cross of Palenque and other crosses have been found, which connote that the inhabitants of that ancient city had been worshipers of the "White-Bearded God," which tradition claims had visited their ancestors. Mormons identify him as Jesus Christ. The belief in this God is often indicated by a cross to be found among the archaeological ruins. Since Dr. Alberto Ruz discovered the Egyptian-type burial at Palenque on June 15, 1953, my urge has been intensified to go there and study firsthand those great discoveries.

Thereupon plans were made for me to remain in Mexico and Central America after the members of the touring party returned to Salt Lake City, to take José Dávila with me,

and to visit these and others of the archaeological sites. Our purposes were to take pictures of various archaeological remains and bring them back for Church use and also to write a series of articles for THE IMPROVEMENT ERA. Following the return of the touring party members at the close of the three weeks' tour, the decision was made to take Otto Done, an expert photographer, with José Dávila and myself to all of the principal archaeological sites in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Yucatan for the purpose of taking moving pictures for the Church to which sound could be attached.

We contacted Dr. Eduardo Noguera, Director of Pre-Spanish Monuments in Mexico, and secured letters authorizing us to visit and take photographs at the major museums and archaeological sites in Mexico. In fact, the government officials and museum directors in Guatemala and Mexico (including Yucatan) gave us complete freedom to take pictures of anything we desired. Their graciousness could not have been surpassed.

Otto Done, José Dávila, and I headed south by plane from Mexico City to visit the stone at Izapa, situated in the extreme southwest corner of Mexico, on which is recorded, according to archaeologists,<sup>5</sup> the Tree of Life, which Dr. M. Wells Jake-man<sup>6</sup> of Brigham Young University suggests may represent Lehi's dream as recorded in the Book of Mormon.<sup>7</sup>

We continued our journey to Guatemala City and there rented a small, private plane in which we headed for the jungles. Elder Toby Pingree accompanied us in visiting Copan, Honduras, and Flores, Tikal Uaxactun and Huehuetango, all four places located in Guatemala. After flying to Yucatan and taking pictures at Chichen Itza, Uxmal and Kabah, Otto Done, José Dávila, and I again engaged a small private plane to carry us to Bonampak—the temples of the painted walls, located in the extreme southern jungles of Mexico. We then flew to Palenque and thereafter went to numerous other archaeological sites in Mexico. In fact, we visited thirty-four archaeological sites

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<sup>5</sup>Matthew W. Stirling, *Stone Monuments of Southern Mexico* (Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, Bulletin 138), Washington, 1943, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup>Dr. M. Wells Jakeman, *Bulletin of the University Archaeological Society*, Provo, March 1953, pp. 26-49.

<sup>7</sup>Ne. 8:1-38.

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## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

(Concluded from page 280)

and museums and took still pictures (35 mm.) for projection purposes and also moving pictures, all of them for Church use. I feel that our trip was very successful, educational, and certainly enjoyable.

Finally my wife wrote to me, informing me that there were some archaeological ruins in our back yard, and so after six weeks and two days' time I came home to see them—an unusual but effective way to bring a husband home.

A series of articles will follow in the ERA in which an account of our tour will be given and an evaluation of the Book of Mormon evidences made.

## Long Night Moon

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The light changed, and Vicki jabbed the accelerator. The car squealed around the curve and climbed the slope to White Cottage.

That night Wanda wrote a letter to her mother telling of her happiness. Long after she had finished, and her roommates were in bed, she sat in the darkened room and watched the lights of the town shining through the pine trees. *What will you wear—a red velvet gown, and a feather in your hair?*

Wanda smiled bitterly remembering the night she and Mother made her red velvet dress. The long envelope from Woodlawn had finally come that day, and she had been accepted! Mother opened the old trunk in the corner, and brought out the full-gathered, dark-red velvet skirt—the skirt Grandmother had worn when she visited the Indian Bureau in Washington.

"It will make you a beautiful dress," Mother said, holding up the shapeless garment. "Let's see what magic our fingers can work," and Mother's hand trembled a little as her scissors began to rip the seams.

They ripped and stitched, and before they went to bed they had finished the dress. What a beautiful dress it was! Full sweeping skirt, gathered at the waist under a wide, soft belt! Its color brightened the rich amber of Wanda's skin and kindled a glow in her dark eyes.

Mother's weather-worn face shone with pride. Roughened fingers touched

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA