



Type: Magazine Article

Old America - Ancient Ruins (2)

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Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 10, No. 12 (12 June 1875), pp. 142–143

Published by: George Q. Cannon & Sons

Abstract: Series of articles dealing with archaeological, anthropological, geographical, societal, religious, and historical aspects of ancient America and their connections to the Book of Mormon, which is the key to understanding “old American” studies.

Old America.

BY G. M. O.

ANCIENT RUINS.

(Continued.)

AT the base of the Eastern Mountains, some fifty leagues north from Vera Cruz, in the heart of fertile savannahs constantly watered by streams from the neighboring hills, a country remarkable for fertility, is located an Indian village, which has scarcely a white inhabitant. The name of this town and the region surrounding is Papantla. Although only fifty miles from the coast, this has remained almost an unexplored country. Humboldt has alluded to the beautiful and lofty pyramid and extensive ruins found in this forest, but so little interest have they created that the neighboring Indians even have scarcely seen them; and it is almost impossible to find the path leading to the remarkable relics hidden in the wild and tangled forest. M. Nebel, a few years ago, was the first to describe and give us a drawing of the pyramid, which consists of seven stories, each following the same angle of inclination, and each terminated, as at Xochicalco, by a frieze and cornice. The whole of this building is constructed of sandstone, neatly squared and joined, and covered to the depth of three inches with a strong cement, which, from appearance, was at one time covered with paint of various colors. The pyramid measures precisely one hundred and twenty feet on every side. Nebel does not give the elevation, but says there are fifty-seven steps to the top of the sixth story, each step measuring one foot in height. These steps ascend from the front, divided in three places by small box-like recesses or niches two feet in depth; and the frieze is likewise perforated with similar apertures. The stairway terminates at the top of the sixth story, the seventh appearing, although in ruins, to have been unlike the rest, and hollow. Here, most probably, was the place of worship, or shrine. The facing of the stones on this building is decorated with hieroglyphics, carved in relief. The first story contains twenty-four niches on each side, in the second are twenty, in the third sixteen. There are three hundred and sixty-six of these openings on the whole pyramid, and twelve in the stairs.

It is known that other important ruins exist in the forests of Papantla and Mesantla, which have never been described. The ruins called Mitla are in the Mexican State of Oaxaca, about twelve leagues east from the city of Oaxaca. They are situated in the upper part of a great valley, and are surrounded by a vast uncultivated desert. At the time of the conquest they were old and much worn by time and the elements, but a very large area was covered by the remains of ancient buildings. At present, six, only, of the decaying edifices, and three ruined pyramids remain, the others being reduced to the last stage of decay. These important ruins were not described by Stephens and Catheywood. Captain Dupaix in his work gives some account of them. Mayer (1847) a brief description, and Charnay photographed some of the monuments in 1860. Four of the standing edifices are described by Dupaix as "palaces," and these, he says, "were erected with lavish magnificence. They combine the solidity of the works of Egypt with the elegance of those of Greece. But what is most remarkable, and interesting in

these monuments, and which alone would be sufficient to give them a first rank among all known orders of architecture is, the execution of their mosaic reliefs, very different from plain mosaic, and consequently requiring more ingenious combination and greater art and labor. They are inlaid on the surface of the wall, and their duration is owing to the method of fixing the prepared stones into the stone surface, which made their union perfect." These ruins are so remarkable that all who have seen them speak of their perfection much as Dupaix speaks of the admirable design and finish of the work and beauty of the decorations. Their beauty, says Charnay, "can be matched only by the monuments of Greece and Rome in their best days." Speaking of the structure, he says: "It is a bewildering maze of courts and buildings, with facings ornamented with mosaics in relief, of the purest design." By antiquarians these buildings are called the "sepulchral palaces of Mitla." According to tradition, they were built by the Zapotecs, and intended as places of sepulture for their princes, the vaults beneath the building being used for that purpose. Another tradition devotes the buildings to a sect of priests, whose duty it was to live in perfect seclusion and offer expiatory sacrifices for the royal dead who reposed in the vaults beneath. The village of Mitla was formerly called M'guitan, meaning a "place of sadness," and Izoa, "the tomb." The principal building has a length of one hundred and fifty feet. A stairway leads to a substantial apartment of about one hundred feet in length, by thirty in width, the walls of which are covered with beautiful mosaic work, similar to that which adorn the exterior walls, resembling very much the figures found on Etruscan vases.

The ruins of Mitla are distinguished from other ancient architecture of Mexico by six columns of porphyry placed in the centre of a large saloon, and supporting the ceiling. They have neither base nor capitals, and are cut in a gradually tapering shape, from a solid form more than fifteen feet in length. M. De Laguna has discovered among the ruins some curious paintings of war trophies and sacrifices.

Two miles from the great fires mentioned, are the ruins of the "castle of Mitla." It was built on the summit of an isolated and precipitous hill of rock, which is accessible only on the east side. The whole levelled summit of this hill is enclosed by a solid wall of hewn stone, two yards thick and eighteen feet high. This wall has a silent and retiring angle, with curtains into pool, and on the east side it is flanked by double walls. Within the enclosure are the remains of several buildings. These hundred years ago the field of these ruins was very large, and undoubtedly included this castle.

In this part of Mexico, Dupaix discovered a peculiar ruin: an isolated granite rock, formed artificially into the shape of a pyramid, with six hewn steps facing the east. The summit of this structure is a platform or plane. This monument was undoubtedly used for astronomical observations. On the south side of the rock are sculptured several figures having reference to a zodiac. The most striking figure is that of a man in profile, standing erect and directing his view to the rising stars in the sky. He holds in his hand and to his eye a tube or optical instrument. Below his feet is a frieze, divided into six compartments, with as many celestial signs carved on its surface.

Finely-wrought "telescopic tubes" have been found among the remains of the Mound Builders, and also in ancient Peru, where a silver figure of a man in the act of using such a tube has been discovered in one of the old tombs.

Latrobe, on page 144 of his "Rambles in Mexico," relates that some workmen, in excavating for a canal at Chapingo (a village near Tezcuco), reached, four feet below the surface, an ancient cau-way. The cedar piles by which the sides were supported were still sound at heart. And three feet below the edge of this ancient work, they discovered the entire skeleton of a mastodon, imbedded in the clay. The diameter of the tusk was eighteen inches. Wherever extensive excavations have been made on the table-land and in the valley of late years remains of this animal have almost always been found. In the foundation of the Church of Guadalupe, four leagues to the south of St. Nicholas, in the province of Guadalupe, portions of the skeleton of this animal have been discovered. Mayer wisely enquired: "Had the ancient inhabitants of America some means of taming the elephants into laborers for their gigantic architecture?" and we quote from the Book of Esther (Book of Mormon), page 533, an answer: "and they also had horses and asses, and there were elephants and curelons, and camions; all of which were useful unto man, and more especially the elephants, and curelons, and camions."

Old ruins, of which but little is known, exist in Guatemala, Henlmas and San Salvador. Mr. Squire mentions the ruins of Ojico, in the last named place, which cover nearly two square miles, and consist of vast terraces, ruins of buildings, circular and square towers and subterranean galleries, all built of beautiful cut stone. Remains of immense works exist in the district of Chantale, near the northern shore of Lake Nicaragua; and the pottery ware found in this vicinity equals the best specimens of Mexico and Peru. Don Jose Urrutia describes a great ruin on a mountain near Camapa, of an oval form. Within the enclosure the streets and roads may be traced. Many ruined buildings constructed of stone and cement remain. Besides the *bas-reliefs*, these stones bear hieroglyphics painted with a red varnish which still remains unimpaired.

THE CONVERTED BOOT-JACK.

IN one corner of the magistrate's office stood a boot-jack, grumbling discontentedly.

"What a miserable sort of life is this I lead, standing here in one spot all the time, and waiting on my masters, the boots, the boots! How dirty they are sometimes too, and how they ill-treat their poor servant! Even while I am drawing one off, the other one tramples on me. Ah! it is they who have the good time, traveling about to see the world. While I stay here in one place, they are walking out in the sunshine, and when they are tired, it is, 'Here, you boot-jack,' and I must pull off their honors, after which they settle down somewhere for a comfortable time."

The boots thus referred to belonged to the magistrate's clerk, who had taken them off for his own comfort. At this speech they made long legs at each other, and the right said to the left one, "Brother, we have a good time! We master! It's plain the stupid boot-jack doesn't know how lucky he is. Why the fool has the easiest time in the world, while we are driven about the livelong day, through thick and thin; in summer almost smothered in dust, in winter, frozen by snow, and when it rains, in continual danger of drowning. And the paving stones! Oh, the sharp things, how little mercy they have! I'd like to know how much skin they have robbed of

me this day. I'm really quite transparent underneath. This life of se-v'ice is a wretched one, indeed!"

The boot-jack was listening eagerly.

"For my part, brother," rejoined the left boot, "I can stand all the trampling about well enough; one gets used to that; but the brushing, with the dreadful rumbling noise, every morning and evening, is unbearable to me. I'd like to know how we can be expected to shine, when we are so miserable. Now just look at our master! There he sits, writing in perfect comfort. Oh, if one were only a clerk!"

"Just my sentiments," sighed the boot-jack.

The clerk pattered the ink out of his pen, and, leaning back in his chair, sighed also, exclaiming: "Heaven be praised, another day is over! A clerk's is certainly the most wearisome of lives. What is he, in fact, but a slave to the pen! How different to being one's own master, as the magistrate is, working only when he feels like it, and growing fatter every day! I'm absolutely sick of drudgery and poverty. If I were only a magistrate!"

So saying, he drew on his boots and put his old slippers in the pocket of his threadbare coat.

Just then the magistrate entered, saying gruffly: "You can go. Your working time is over. Little do you know what a lucky fellow you are!"

"He is surely in jest," thought the clerk, who made an awkward bow and departed, the boots creaking loudly.

Then the magistrate went back into his sitting-room, but as he left the door open, the boot-jack could see all that went on in there. The fat old fellow was growling out, in his deepest bass: "He's off! People of that sort are the fortunate ones of the world." (then he sat down to his glass of beer, and began to smoke comfortably)—"while I—there lies that work to be finished by to-morrow. What is the minister thinking of? More and more to be done all the time, and not a red cent more for doing it. Ah, if I were only my own master! The minister, now, is a happy man; he can command."

"Strong," thought the boot-jack: "this fat old man, too, is complaining."

There was a knock at the door. "Come in," called out the magistrate, and the doctor entered.

"You come in good time," said the former. "I do not feel at all well, and yet must work all night here. Oh, this service!"

The doctor felt his pulse, looked at his tongue, and said: "My good friend, you must have sleep. All you need is rest."

"Sleep! What, B?" growled out the old magistrate. "Doctor, what a fortunate man you are, in being your own master!"

At this the doctor laughed until he held his sides.

"I my own master," he exclaimed. "Ah, if it only were so! Stay, rather, all the world's servant. I've no rest by day or by night. Believe me, my dear friend, a doctor is the most bothered of beings. The more sickness there is in the city, the more masters he has, and mistresses, too, into the bargain; and I tell you that is to be tormented."

The doctor departed, and the boot-jack thought: "Another servant! I have plenty of company at any rate."

A second knock, and in came the minister, excusing himself politely for arriving so late.

The minister spoke: "My good Herr Magistrate, have ready for me, early in the morning, the papers which are specified in the list. I need them. I've just come from our prince, who is in the worst of humors, and have had a pretty hard time of it, to-day. I would gladly have tendered my resignation; then should I be my own master;" the boot-jack