



# Findings at Takalik Abaj

By David B. Brown © 2018

In early June of this year, the Hill Cumorah Expedition Team ventured to Guatemala for their Spring Expedition. The focus of this year's endeavor was to further develop our theories and understanding of the Lamanite cities who were converted to the gospel and eventually moved to the land of Jershon.

We landed in Guatemala three days after the eruption of Mount Fuego just 25 miles west of Guatemala City. The first few days in Guatemala were cloud covered, so we weren't able to see the volcano until close to the end of our time when the skies finally cleared.

We first visited the site of El Tazumal in El Salvador. Our theory states that this is the City of Ishmael where King Lamoni was the ruler and Ammon came to bring the gospel. While there is little on the site itself (at least compared to sites such as Tikal) there were many aspects of the structures and concepts in the artwork that seemed to verify the story of the conversion and movement of these people. There is an article on El Tazumal in this newsletter.

We then visited Mixco Viejo located in the mountains north of Guatemala City. Up, down and over the winding mountain roads, we made our way to a hilltop with



*A view of the active volcano Mount Fuego while traveling to the mountain site of Iximche.*

seven major plazas. This is a Post-Classic site with no known early history, but the number of plazas is either stating something about the Lamanite conversion, or it could be something about the eventual fracturing of the Golden Age when they separated into seven different groups.

Our biggest find for this trip was what we encountered at Takalik Abaj, which we believe is the Lamanite city of Middoni. It is here that the brothers of Ammon were imprisoned and then subsequently released.

*Continues on Page 2*

# El Tazumal is the City of Ishmael

by David B. Brown © 2018

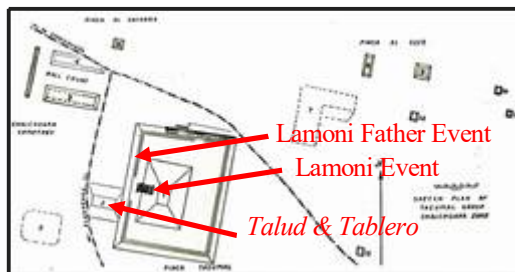
The first site we visited on our Spring Expedition was the El Salvador site of El Tazumal. In the heart of the modern city of Chalchuapa, we looked for evidences to validate stories that took place in the City of Ishmael where Ammon brought the gospel and King Lamoni was converted.

The site of El Tazumal is small with only one major structure. In walking through the museum, we noted that the city was occupied during the pre-classic period and then abandoned. Archaeologists attribute the abandonment to the eruption of a nearby volcano, and that

would make sense to most researchers. However, as Book of Mormon believers, we know that many of the highland Maya sites were abandoned in the first century BC due to cultural events. Therefore, the time period of the abandonment fits with the timeline for the City of Ishmael.

The prominent structure on the site only has features on the west side. If we read the structure as if it is a timeline traveling from south to north, we see that the first notable feature on the main structure is the intrusion of a *talud and tablero* designed pyramid extending in front of the primary pyramid. We believe this

*Continues on Page 7*



**Inside this issue:**

Findings at Takalik Abaj <i>Cont.</i>	2, 3, & 4
El Tazumal is the City of Ishmael <i>Cont.</i>	7 & 8
Adventures in Archaeology	5 & 6

## Findings at Takalik Abaj *continued*

However, also remember that Middoni is listed second in the Lamanite cities that converted to the gospel. While we don't have the story of this city's conversion in the Book of Mormon, apparently the visit by Ammon and King Lamoni had an impact on the people of Middoni.

Takalik Abaj is located on the upward western slope of the mountain range that runs along the Pacific Coast of Guatemala. It is rich land for growing coffee, bananas, mangos and many other crops that thrive in the humid and wet environment of Central America. The location tells an important story.

Takalik Abaj is also rich in ancient artifacts. It has a history that began with the Olmec trade industry at about 800 BC. It is noted that about 200 BC there is a large Mayan influence that begins to take place, although there is no evidence of a struggle. This appears to be a peaceful interaction that exacted great influence in the local culture. Much like the introduction of a new theological ideology—let's say the gospel for instance.

The site is situated on hilltops with steep ravines around it, much like the Post Classic sites of Mixco Viejo and Iximche. This makes defense of the city much easier. And, there are a total of ten terraces in this city.<sup>1</sup> However, the ten plazas are divided into two elevations. Three are higher up, and the other seven are down on a lower elevation. This division of three and seven fits the Lamanite story. Seven cities are converted while three were fighting against that conversion. From the pages of the Book of Mormon we find the following report:

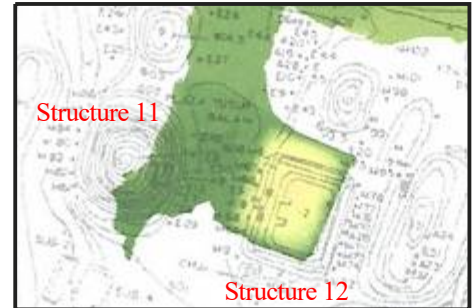
Alma 14:13 *"Now these are they who were converted unto the Lord: the people of the Lamanites who were in the land of Ishmael, and also of the people of the Lamanites who were in the land of Middoni, and also of the people of the Lamanites who were in the city of Nephi, and also of the people of the Lamanites who were in the land of Shilom, and who were in the land of Shemlon, and in the city of Lemuel, and in the city of Shimmilon. [14] And these are the names of the cities of the*

*Lamanites which were converted unto the Lord; and these are they that laid down the weapons of their rebellion, yea, all their weapons of war; and they were all Lamanites."*

Alma 14:21 *"And it came to pass that the Amalekites, and the Amulonites, and the Lamanites who were in the land of Amulon, and also in the land of Helam, and who were in the land of Jerusalem, and, in fine, in all the land round about, who had not been converted and had not taken upon them the name of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, were stirred up by the Amalekites and by the Amulonites to anger against their brethren;"*

These last two quotes from Alma indicate the division of three and seven found in the ten plaza design of Takalik Abaj. The three on the higher plateau are the three cities who did not convert and whose population stayed in the highlands. The seven on the lower elevation are the seven cities that converted and whose populations eventually relocated to the lowland area of Jerushon which we have identified as modern-day Belize. As an additional identifier that the seven plazas are the converted cities, this is validated by a natural spring that opens in the ravine in the middle of the seven plaza elevation to

indicate that these seven cities received "the waters of life that flow freely, welling up from within."



The true find of Takalik Abaj is what we encountered in Terrace 2 of the site. Structures 11 and 12 face one another across a plaza. Structure 12 is low-profile and well developed in its restored form. It is oriented along the north/south axis with the long-side exposures on the west and east. The west side has a set of steps in the center, in front of which stands Stela 5 with an altar at its base. Then, there are three small monuments on the north, and three small monuments on the south.

First, Stela 5 is the monument we previously reported that records the horrific event where the converted Lamanites prostrated themselves on the ground in front of their attackers and praised God while 1,005 of them were killed. Finally, the attacking Lamanites were "stung" by the gravity of act they were committing and they threw down their swords. The Book of Mormon records it this way:

Alma 14:49 *"Now when the people saw that they were coming against them, they went out to meet them, and prostrated themselves before them to the earth, and began to call on the name of the Lord; [50] And thus they were in this attitude when the Lamanites began to fall upon them and began to slay them with the sword; and thus without meeting any resistance, they did slay a thousand and five of them; and we know that they are blessed, for they have gone to dwell with their God. [51] Now when*



*A model of Takalik Abaj demonstrates the layout and defensible design. It also highlights the division of the upper and lower plazas.*

*Continues on Page 3*

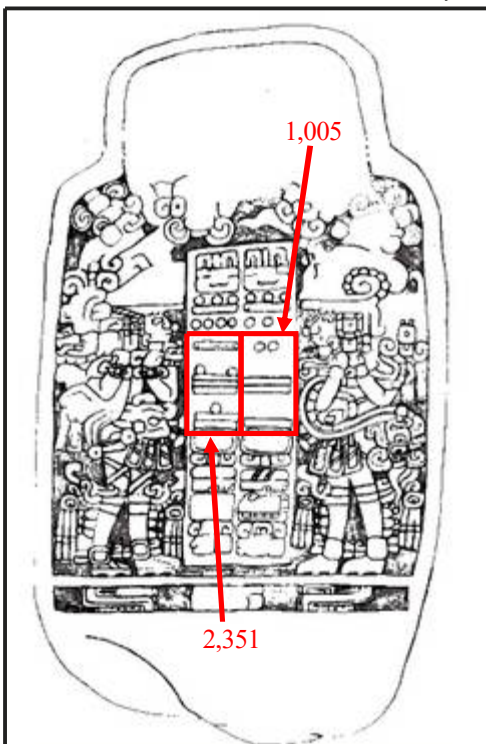


## Findings at Takalik Abaj *continued*

the Lamanites saw that their brethren would not flee from the sword, neither would they turn aside to the right hand or to the left, but that they would lie down, and perish, and praise God even in the very act of perishing under the sword--now when the Lamanites saw this, they did forbear from slaying them; [52] And there were many whose hearts had swollen in them for those of their brethren who had fallen under the sword, for they repented of the things which they had done. [53] And it came to pass that they threw down their weapons of war, and they would not take them again; for they were stung for the murders which they had committed; and they came down even as their brethren, relying upon the mercies of those whose arms were lifted to slay them. [54] And it came to pass that the people of God were joined that day by more than the number who had been slain; and those who had been slain were righteous people; therefore, we have no reason to doubt but what they are saved."

Stela 5 honors those who gave their lives, and those who repented and were converted to the church that day. Seeing Stela 5 in its context with all the

*Stela 5 found on Structure 12 of Terrace 2 in Takalik Abaj records the 1,005 who were killed and the 2,351 who were converted that day.*



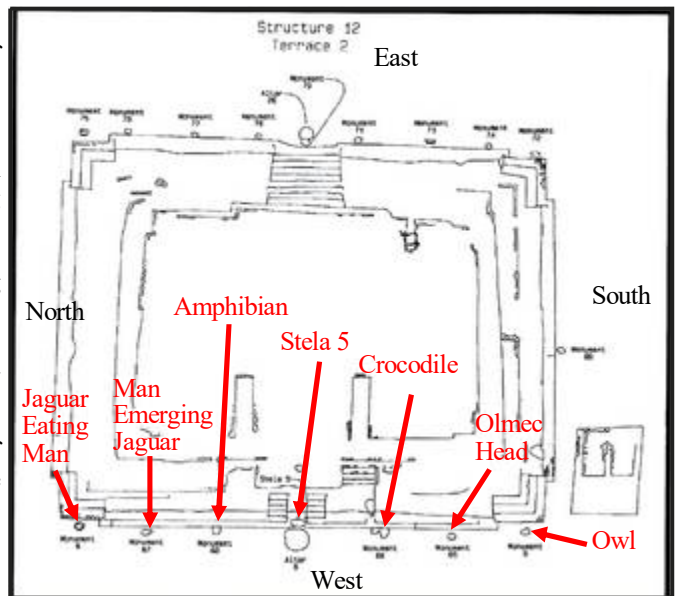
other aspects only confirmed the accuracy of the first report we developed in September of 2016. Here are the aspects that affirmed the story of this being the Lamanite conversion story.

In the line drawing of Structure 12 we will illustrate the story being told. North of Stela 5 are three small monuments that demonstrate the series of events that created the momentum leading to the confrontation recorded on Stela 5.

The initiation of the events is demonstrated on the northernmost monument which is the head of a jaguar engulfing a man from behind. The symbolism here is of a man unknowingly being engulfed in the words of the cultural power structure. Jaguars are symbols of those people holding power in the culture, either civic or religious. And, the man being swallowed from behind indicates that the ones being influenced by the words of the jaguar were not aware that they were being swallowed. This fits with the story leading up to the events recorded here:

Alma 14:21 "And it came to pass that the Amalekites, and the Amulonites, and the Lamanites who were in the land of Amulon, and also in the land of Helam, and who were in the land of Jerusalem, and, in fine, in all the land round about, who had not been converted and had not taken upon them the name of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, were stirred up by the Amalekites and by the Amulonites to anger against their brethren; [22] And their hatred became exceeding sore against them, even insomuch that they began to rebel against their king, insomuch that they would not that he should be their king; therefore, they took up arms against the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi."

Those who weren't converted were "stirred up to anger" by those who served to benefit from this conflict. Therefore, the jaguar (people of power) swallowed the unconverted Lamanites with their words. Then, the next monument from the north illustrates a man



emerging from the mouth of the jaguar with something like a rod in his hand. They had been angered to the point of action and were now doing the work of the jaguar (those people in power). But at the point of conflict, those performing the work of destruction are changed. Therefore, like the frog, they transformed into a new creature.

By contrast, the three monuments on the south speak to the events that led the converted to their actions on the day of conflict. The southernmost monument is an owl, a symbol of both wisdom and foreboding. The next monument is an Olmec-like head, with royal bands to indicate that this is a royal figure who influenced the people. We know that it was the wisdom and command of King Anti-Nephi-Lehi that they should bury their swords for peace and allow themselves to be killed if they must. When the conflict took place, these faithful converts prostrated themselves on the ground and allowed

*Continues on Page 4*

## Findings at Takalik Abaj *continued*

themselves to be sent back into the waters of creation, therefore, they were like the crocodile who willingly submerged back into the river of life. Stela 5 records the result of this conflict; the dead on the southside of the stela, and the newly converted on the north side.

Because of the uniqueness of this story being told here at Takalik Abaj, we believe that the event of the 1,005 deaths were somehow attached to this city.

We believe that Takalik Abaj is the Book of Mormon city of Middoni. Middoni is the second city listed in the group of Lamanite converted cities. And, we believe that the Book of Mormon listing of the converted cities is the order in which the cities were converted. It goes as follows:

1. Ishmael (Lamoni)
2. Middoni
3. Nephi (Lamoni's Father)
4. Shilom
5. Shemlon
6. Lemuel
7. Shimmilon

Because of the dialogue found in the Book of Mormon, we had a hard time understanding why this was being illustrated at Middoni and not at Ishmael or Nephi.

Alma 14:23 *"Now the king conferred the kingdom upon his son, and he called his name Anti-Nephi-Lehi. [24] And the king died in that selfsame year that the Lamanites began to make preparations for war against the people of God. [25] Now when Ammon, and his brethren, and all those who had come up with him saw the preparations of the Lamanites to destroy their brethren, they came forth to the land of Midian; and there Ammon met all his brethren; [26] And from thence they came to the land of Ishmael, that they might hold a council with Lamoni, and also with his brother Anti-Nephi-Lehi, what they should do to defend themselves against the Lamanites. [27] Now there was not one soul among all the people who had been converted unto the Lord that would take up arms against their brethren; [28] Nay, they would not even make any preparations for war; yea, and also their king commanded them that they should not."*

Once King Anti-Nephi-Lehi is placed upon the throne and the King of all the Lamanites passes away, the powers who oppose this conversion

movement see their opportunity to act. The converts feel the building tensions and notice that war preparation is taking place. The missionaries of Ammon, Aaron, Omner and Himni met in Midian (yet unidentified, but somewhere near Cancuen) and then they go south to El Tazumal in El Salvador. Here is where the decision to bury their swords took place and the king's command goes forth. But, the scripture states in Alma 14:48 *"And it came to pass that their brethren, the Lamanites, made preparations for war and came up to the land of Nephi for the purpose of destroying the king, and to place another in his stead, and also of destroying the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi out of the land. [49] Now when the people saw that they were coming against them, they went out to meet them, and prostrated themselves before them to the earth, and began to call on the name of the Lord;"*

It seems clear that the event of the death of the converted Lamanites took place in the Land of Nephi. Why then is the honoring of these dead recorded at Middoni (Takalik Abaj)? We believe it is because the contingent of attacking Lamanites who traveled to the land of Nephi (Kaminaljuyu, modern Guatemala City) was from the area of Middoni. Therefore, the purpose of Structure 12 is to demonstrate that these 2,351 converts were from Middoni (Takalik Abaj) and they are telling their conversion story by honoring the 1,005 lives that were the means whereby they were converted.

Even the order of the structures in Terrace 2 fits this concept. Structure 11 is a large partially-restored pyramid in front of which are several monuments and a stela with an altar. The stela is broken with only the base still existing. This stela is Izapan style artwork that indicates to us it is Aaron and his brothers. The feet are positioned to indicate this individual is walking and he appears to use the base of a pole to poke a hole in the ground to plant seeds. Therefore, Structure 11 might well be representing the introduction of the gospel into the land of Middoni to which the people of this city were initially opposed. Stela 5 and its accompanying monuments are across the plaza from Structure 11 where they stand in opposition to the stela that appears to be the gospel missionaries.



The fact that the act of opposition is portrayed on the west side of Structure 12 indicates that this opposition was done in darkness, because the west indicates the dying of the light at the end of the day. It was their spiritual darkness that led them to be duped by their leaders and to senselessly kill their brethren.

This concept is further developed on the east side of Structure 12. The east is the direction of the dawning of the day and new beginnings. On the east side there are a total of nine monuments, the centerpiece of which is a frog to provide us with symbolism to denote transformation to new creatures with the metamorphosis represented by the frog and birth represented by the number nine. Therefore, this city was involved in the drama of some being converted in advance of the attack, but was totally converted when the 1,005 gave the last full measure of their love for their fellow man.

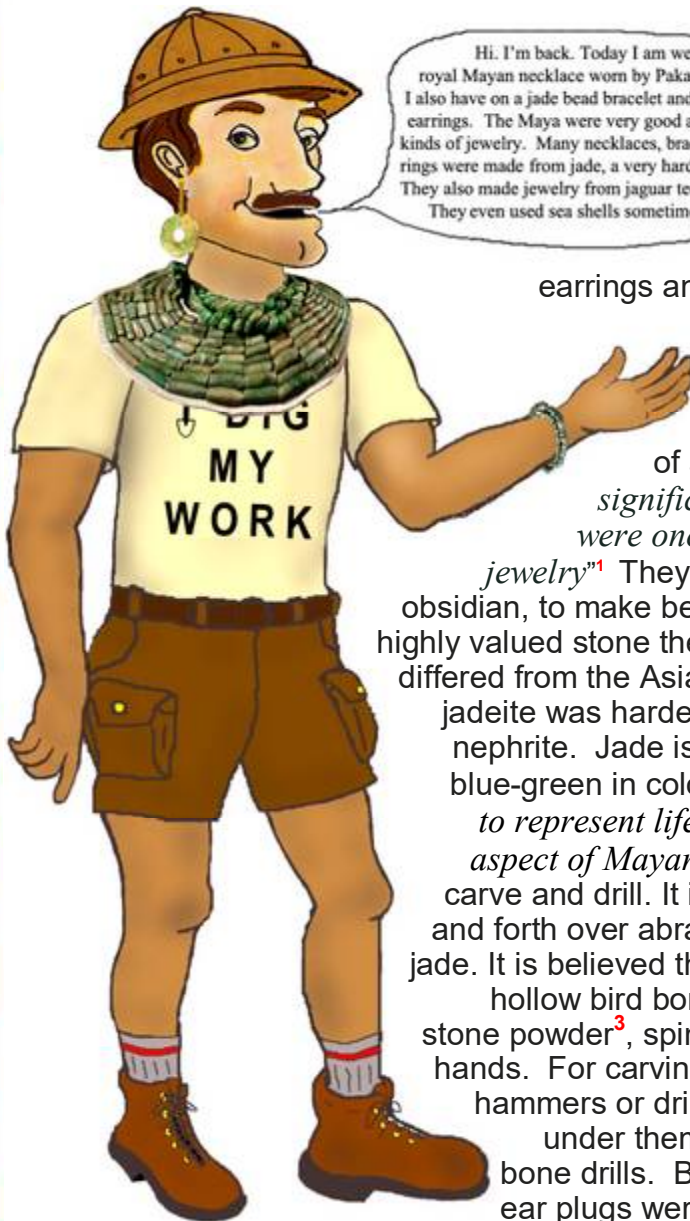
Takalik Abaj is rich with many monuments and symbolic structural designs, even a Mayan burial tied to the city of Tikal. All of this fits the gospel-missionary story of the Sons of Mosiah. We believe there is greater confirmation to be found at this site as we continue to research the details of symbolism and architectural/geometrical relationships. Even celestial relationships come into play as there are clear evidences of stellar alignments here. More will be coming in the future.

God is "making bare His Holy arm" as these witnesses from the Book of Mormon Golden Age continue to "speak from the dust."

### Footnotes

1. Most reports state there are nine plazas, but our guide told us there were ten.





Hi, I'm back. Today I am wearing the royal Mayan necklace worn by Pakal at Palenque. I also have on a jade bead bracelet and colorful stone earrings. The Maya were very good at making all kinds of jewelry. Many necklaces, bracelets and ear rings were made from jade, a very hard green stone. They also made jewelry from jaguar teeth or claws. They even used sea shells sometimes.

## Mayan Jewelry

The Maya were master jewelry makers. They made necklaces, pendants, bracelets, earrings and ear plugs. They also decorated their headdresses with jewelry. They made jewelry from animals, stone and even sea shells. They used the bones, claws, teeth and even feather of animals. "Since jaguars carried a lot of significance in Mayan mythology, jaguar teeth were one of the most preferred items for making jewelry"<sup>1</sup> They used colorful stones, such as jade and obsidian, to make beads and pendants. Jade was the most highly valued stone they used. The jadeite used by the Maya differed from the Asian jade known as nephrite. The Mayan jadeite was harder and less translucent (semi clear) than nephrite. Jade is harder than steel and usually green or blue-green in color. "The Mayans considered green color to represent life and growth and so it was an important aspect of Mayan jewelry."<sup>2</sup> Jade was very hard to cut, carve and drill. It is believed they used cords pulled back and forth over abrasive wet sand to slowly wear down the jade. It is believed they drilled holes in their beads by using hollow bird bones filled with wet sand or another hard stone powder<sup>3</sup>, spinning the bone back and forth with their hands. For carving, they used stone chisels with wooden hammers or drilled with stone rods with a wet abrasive under them, spinning them back and forth like the bone drills. Both men and women wore jewelry. The ear plugs were often so heavy they stretched out the ear holes<sup>4</sup> Jade jewelry was highly valued, because it took so much time to create, only leaders and the rich wore jade jewelry.

<sup>1</sup><http://mayansandtikal.com/mayan-clothing/mayan-jewelry/>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.incamayanaztec.com/ancient-mayan-jewelry.html>

<sup>3</sup><https://ambergiscaye.com/museum/digit2.html>

<sup>4</sup><http://ancient-jewelry-history.com/Ancient-Civilizations-Jewelry/Ancient-Mayan-Jewelry.shtml>



stone necklace and bracelet



stone bead necklace showing drilled holes



earring plugs





Jade necklace and pendant



Jaguar tooth necklace



bone rings



Human tooth necklace

K Z A U G R E E N N Q M P E V  
 A P W N Z K S S G M A Y A N D  
 Y E B H I Z Q Y F V Y F F A C  
 P N R U E M N E C K L A C E U  
 W D A P J A A C S S Q Y S N T  
 U A C Q T P D L J I B W S C O  
 B N E Y R M H D F E A T H E R  
 T T L H I J J W R Q L M R V C  
 O Y E M N G A E N E H C B W S  
 J H T M G O C D W J S N E Q T  
 E A R R I N G D E E R S A X O  
 J A G X G I H R V I L Q D B N  
 W U S U F Q K I H P T R S O E  
 U B J F A T S L O G K E Y N V  
 X E A B R R H L G V B A L E X

**WORD SEARCH**

Find and circle the words from the story:

- Animal
- Beads
- Bone
- Bracelet
- Cut
- Drill
- Earring
- Feather
- Green
- Headdress
- Jadeite
- Jaguar
- Jewelry
- Mayan
- Necklace
- Pendant
- Ring
- Stone

Come visit our web site for back issues of the Newsletter at [www.hceti.org](http://www.hceti.org) or [www.hillcumorahexpeditionteam.com](http://www.hillcumorahexpeditionteam.com)

**OTHER SITES OF INTEREST**

- [http://www.teach-nology.com/teachers/lesson\\_plans/science/archaeology/](http://www.teach-nology.com/teachers/lesson_plans/science/archaeology/)
  - [http://research.history.org/Archaeological\\_Research/KidsPage.cfm](http://research.history.org/Archaeological_Research/KidsPage.cfm)
  - <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/08/maya-rise-fall/map-interactive>
  - <http://www.digonsite.com/drdig/mesoamerica/15.html>
  - <http://www.smm.org/sln/ma/index.html>
  - <http://archaeology.la.asu.edu/teo/>
- For questions e-mail me at [tscott75@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tscott75@sbcglobal.net)

# El Tazumal is the City of Ishmael *continued*



structure is placed here to represent the Lamanite involvement with the Olmec trade culture whose primary route runs down the Pacific Coast of Mexico and Guatemala, and then inland to the highlands. Therefore, the location of this intrusive pyramid on the west face of the primary pyramid indicates that the Olmec trade culture connection became the “face” of the people here, although their “foundation” is not the same as the Tehuacán Valley culture. But, on the timeline, this connection with Central Mexico came first.

Moving North, next is a sacred structure with holes for incense located on the highest levels of the pyramid. We believe that this feature represents the conversion of King Lamoni who is on the highest level of this structure because he is the highest authority of this city. But, the highest point also has to do with the spiritual conversion experience. This incense-burning house symbolically indicates what he witnessed while he was “struck down” in the Spirit; it was the purity of King Lamoni’s heart that was a sweet offering unto the Lord.

Further northward along the west side of the pyramid, we come to an opening with two pillars, but there are a total of ten pillars represented in the façade of this lower level. We believe that this represents the conversion of the King of all the Lamanites because he was King over a total of ten cities, represented by the ten pillars.

We have chosen to read the face of this pyramid from south to north be-

cause that is the historical motion of this city. The conversion of the Lamanites began here in the farthest south Lamanite city. The next event attached to this city was the conversion of Lamoni’s father in the City of Nephi (Kaminaljuyu) which is the next major city north of El Tazumal.

In the plaza on the north side of pyramid is a stairway that leads to...nothing. Is this telling us that the people of this city journeyed north when they vacated this region as they moved to Jerusha (Belize)? The historical record of the City of Ishmael is from south to north and the structures here seem to reflect that chronological and directional movement.



We also found a large rough stone located on the northwest corner of this site, positioned about 100 feet from the mouth of the ballcourt. There are four rough sides to this stone, upon which are carved four individuals; one on each surface. Two of those individuals are kings with scepters, and the two kings face one another around one corner of the stone. One king is larger and stands slightly above the other. The lower positioned king is on the south face of the stone exposed to the open plaza on the west side of the pyramid. The other two individuals are on the back sides of the two kings. We believe this stone honors the two Lamanite Kings who were the first conversions among the Lamanites, and the two smaller individuals “behind” the scenes are Ammon and Aaron. The king facing the plaza is King Lamoni and the one on the east side of the stone with his profile facing south is his father who is King of all the Lamanites. It was the unforeseen meeting of these two royals that led to the conversion of the Lamanite Kingdom. And, the fact that this stone is aligned with the ballcourt indicates that this meeting led to a spiritual battle among the Lamanites.



We then found a small jaguar stone in this same area. The stone is in the shape of a frog, but the face of the stone is a jaguar. However, as our God-sent guide pointed out to us, the jaguar face is actually an artistic rendition of reproductive organs, to indicate that something was inseminated and conceived here. The gospel was introduced to the Lamanites at this location (reproductive organs), among the royals of the Lamanites (jaguar face), and it led to the conversion of the Lamanites throughout the land (frog form). This is the place where it was introduced and from which it grew.

*Continues on Page 8*



**We're on the web at  
www.hceti.org**

*The Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc is a Missouri not-for-profit corporation dedicated to the study, research and dissemination of information as it pertains to the Book of Mormon. Our primary focus is to research and assemble archaeological and other related information to help establish the historical feasibility of the Book of Mormon.*

**HILL CUMORAH EXPEDITION TEAM, INC**

***Searching for Truth***

c/o David B. Brown  
311 N Lee Street  
Buckner, Mo 64016

Phone: 816-651-6974  
E-mail: dbb92558@yahoo.com

**Contributors and Editors**

David Brown  
Children's Page by Terry and Chris Scott  
Photos by:  
David Brown  
Jennifer Brown  
Joanie Glandon  
Terry Scott

## El Tazumal is the City of Ishmael *Continued*

We were then informed that there were older structures located just a mile or so north of the El Tazumal site. After driving past the large cenote, we arrived at a site called Casa Blanca. Located here are structures built prior to the first abandonment. This is probably where the Ammon story played out with his capture and offer to become a servant of the King. Within that story is the account of Ammon defending the flocks of the king and cutting off the arms of the assailants. We felt that this story should be recorded at Ishmael in some form, but we had yet to find it. It was at the Casa Blanca Museum that the key information started to come together.

At the El Tazumal Museum we found a large ceramic figure that archaeologists have classified as Post-Classic in style and therefore it seemed disconnected with the Lamanite story of Ishmael. But, the information at the Casa Blanca



Museum provided two key pieces of information; first, in ancient times there were three cenotes on the El Tazumal plain, and second, this ceramic was found near the second cenote called Laguna Seca.

While the art-style can be tied to the post-classic Mexico valley, we believe that this ceramic human form was placed here to memorialize the Ammon event of defending the King's flocks. The right hand is fashioned to hold something round such as a club, but the left arm has a hand severed above the wrist. Note that the eyes are closed and the mouth is gaping; this indicates that he is dead. Also note that there are seven bonds on the appendag-

es; two around each leg, two on the right arm and one on the left arm.

Alma 12:89 *“And he said unto him, Is it because thou hast heard that I defended thy servants and thy flocks, and slew seven of their brethren with the sling and with the sword, and smote off the arms of others in order to defend thy flocks and thy servants? Behold, is it this that causeth thy marvelings?”*

Ammon killed seven with the sling and sword and there are seven sling-like bindings on the appendages. Then the left arm demonstrates a removed hand; this is the defensive arm for a person who would be holding his weapon in his right hand. And, this is found at the smaller cenote which would have been used for animals since the larger cenote was for the people of the city. Finally, we have an artistic display of the Ammon story!

For all of the reasons we have illustrated here, we are now convinced that El Tazumal is the City of Ishmael where Ammon met King Lamoni and initiated the conversion of the Lamanite kingdom.