

Cumorah Messenger

Places, People and Trends

By David B. Brown © 2013

Neil Steede first traveled to Mexico in the late 1960s where he attended the University of the Americas. There he came in contact with instructors who provided him with a unique vision of ancient Mesoamerican culture. Since that time Neil has endeavored to piece together the fragments of information that archaeology provides, and what has emerged is a comprehensive perspective of ancient global culture that is far more connected than ever imagined. Forty years of archaeology and ten years of intense studies has unveiled some incredible revelations in Book of Mormon archaeology.

One of the first sections of the Mesoamerican puzzle that came into focus was the designation of the Maya site of Yaxchilan as the city of Zarahemla. Based on the unique king

list found in Yaxchilan and comparing it to the Mosiah, Benjamin, Mosiah kingship that then converts to judges, Neil was able to find a beginning point for his Book of Mormon geography. From this location, he was able to then identify Chinkultic as the City of Nephi, Palenque as Bountiful, Calakmul as the City of Judea, Tikal as Antiparah, Bonampak as the City of Melek, Tonina as Ammonihah, Tenam Puento as the City of Jerusalem, LaVenta as the City of Desolation, the Rio Bec Culture is the Land of Antionum, Kaminaljuyu as the City of Lehi-Nephi, and on and on.

These cities were not just chosen because they "kinda fit," but it was a process of making tentative identifications and then doing extensive research on items found at

each site. The items might be stela, murals, skeletal remains, or any other historical information that can be gleaned to provide a validation of the events that happened in that particular ancient city. In every case there is some form of validation that is found to confirm the hypothesis set forth.

In Tonina we find skeletal remains of people who were burned, others whose bones were crushed, and yet others whose bones were marred by cutting utensils. This is entirely consistent with the believers who were burned in an effort to get Alma and Amulek to recant their preaching, crushed bones for the lawyers and others who were caught in the prison collapse when Alma and Amulek walked free, and finally the cut bones

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Maya Technology; The Maya Road System

By Terry Scott

For many years archaeologists assumed the Maya road system was isolated to parts of the Yucatan and dismissed the rumors of a vast road system. Finding 1500-

2000 year old sacbes (meaning *white roads*), in 125,000 square miles of mountains, rugged hills and dense forest has always been a challenging task. But "*research of*

historical chronicles, journals and reports by observers indicated that sightings of the sacbeob (plural for sacbe) have been have been reported for centuries at various locations across the breadth of the Maya domain."¹ There was thousands of miles of roads

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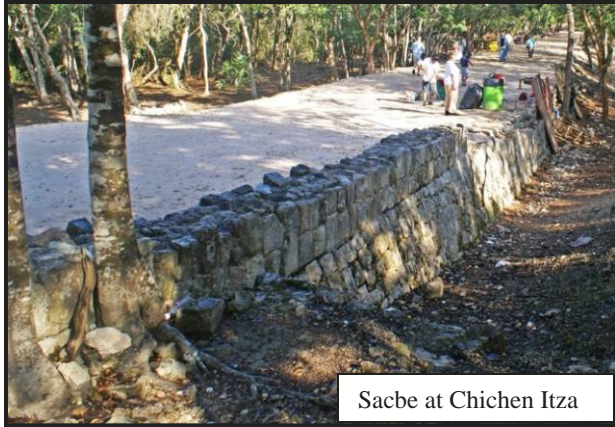


Aerial view shows line in the forest where Maya road is located

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Maya Technology; The Maya Road System *continued*



Sacbe at Chichen Itza

The first formal study of a sacbe came in 1934 when Alphonso Villa surveyed the 100-kilometer road between Yaxuna and Coba for the Carnegie Institute.¹ In 1995, and again in 2000, archaeo-engineer James O'Kon re-surveyed the Yaxuna to Coba sacbe. This time the latest ground and aerial survey equipment was used. Digital transits, laser levels and GPS devices all verified

designed for heavy rainfall. They too were crowned for water run-off, but they were also built one meter above ground. This allowed bearers and other travelers to make good time even during the rainy season which would otherwise have been impossible due to the very muddy ground.

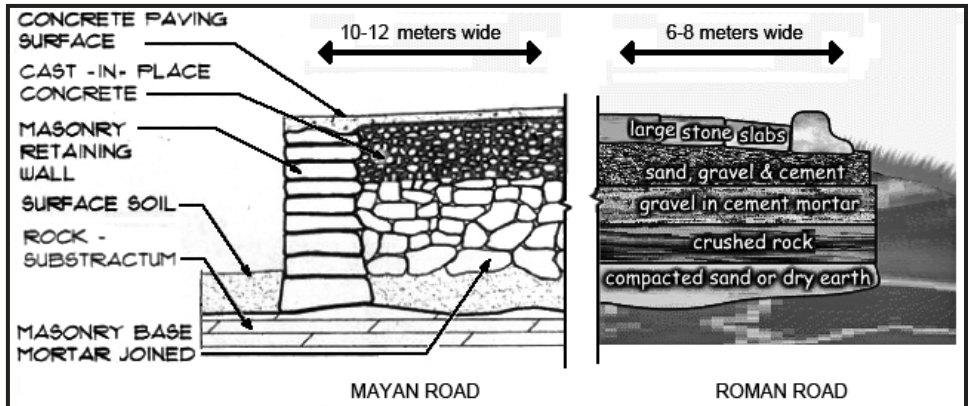
Bearers carried goods from one city to another using a tumpline. The tumpline was a strap that attached to the load and supported by the head allowing them to travel with very heavy loads. A bearer typically carried a load of 125 pounds and traveled 25 km per day.² A standard size building stone weighed approximately 125 pounds.² The tumpline was also used in Africa, Nepal and India.² Notice the glyph in the upper left of the illustra-

stretching across the Yucatan during the classical period. "By comparison, only 114 miles of paved roads had been built in the United States before 1914."¹

Alphonso Villa's original findings.

Ancient Roman roads have long been considered 'the way' to build a lasting road. Many of their roads still exist today. Mayan roads have also

The first records of Maya roads were by colonial explorers. In 1562 Bishop Diego de Landa (yes the same evil man who ordered all the codices burned) wrote about a 62 km (kilometer) road from T'hó (Mérida) to Izamal. In 1610 Bernado de Lizana wrote about four roads radiating out from Izamal "which reached to the ends of the land and passed to Tabasco, Guatemala and Chiapas."¹ In 1688 Diego Lopez wrote about several highways that ended at the eastern shore by Cozumel.¹ Over 200 years later John Lloyd Stevens (of the Stevens and Catherwood expedition) wrote about a 10 to 12 meter wide paved road that went from Coba possibly all the way to Chichen Itza.¹ In 1883 Désiré Charnay, a French explorer, was recording a portion of the east-west 'fabled sacbe' across most of Yucatan, from Mérida to Puerto Morelos, some 320 km.¹

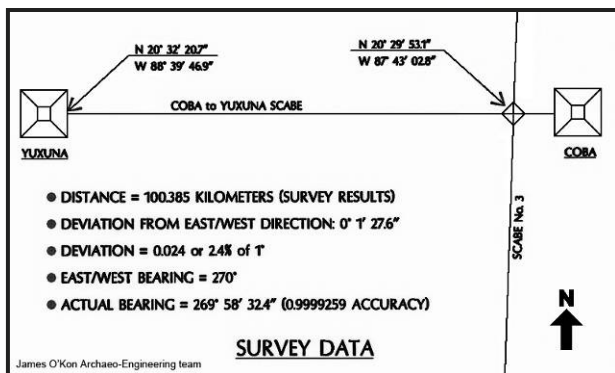


stood the test of time. Their first roads date back to 300 BC.¹ Roman roads were 6-8 meters wide while Mayan roads were 10-12 meters wide and modern 4-lane roads are 12 meters wide. The wide Mayan roads were open to the sky allowing for travel by moon light. Mayan roads were designed for two lanes of traffic going each way with slower traffic using the outside lanes.

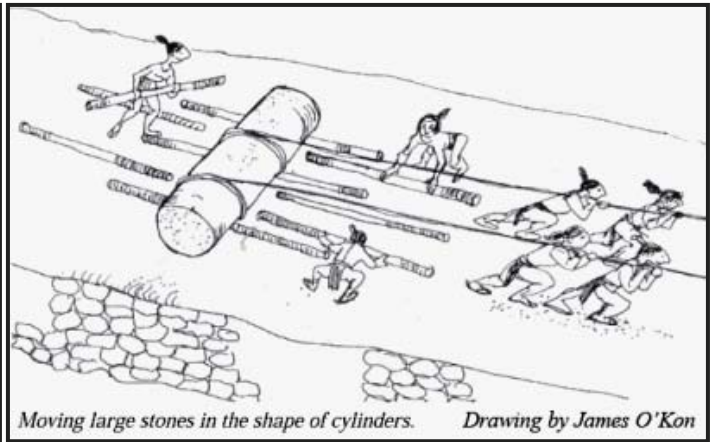
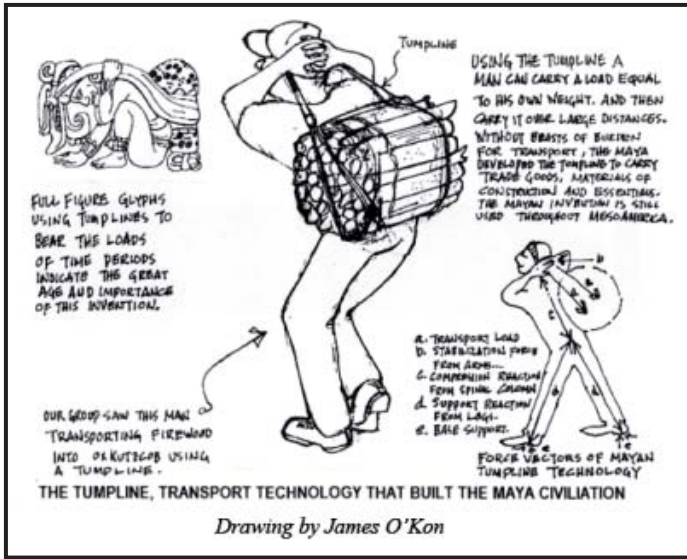


Ancient tumpline bearer from mural at Calakmul. Photo by James O'Kon

In the 1934 survey, Alphonso Villa, photographed stone mile markers, culverts and ramparts.¹ Sound familiar? Roman roads and our modern roads are crowned (higher in the middle) for water run-off with a shoulder slightly above the ground. Mayan roads were



Maya Technology; The Maya Road System *continued*



the string line with the laser level.

Another similarity to our modern road construction is the use of a road roller to compact and smooth out the fill. We use a large motorized vehicle constructed of steel. The Maya used a large stone cylinder rolled by ropes and pulled with man power. The stone cylinder in the photo below is believed to be one of these road rollers. Alphonso Villa recorded finding a stone cylinder 4 meters long back in 1934.



The sacbe was used to handle heavy traffic between cities for trade and military support, with mileage markers, rest stops and military garrisons along the way.¹ The Maya road system linked many cities together and was as heavily used as Roman roads and our own interstate highways today, "and there were many highways cast up, and many roads made, which led from city to city, and from land to land, and from place to place."³ The more we learn about the Maya, the more we realize just how advanced they were. Their technology was as advanced as any ancient culture. Today we cannot build a road that lasts more than 50 years.

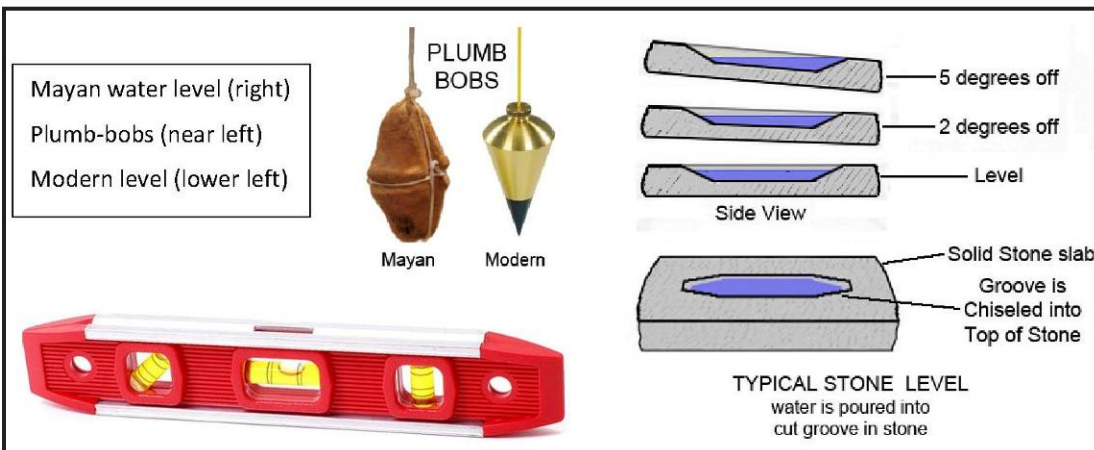
One final thought: The Maya built roads similar to the Romans, used a water level like many ancient cultures, and used a tumpline like those found in Africa, Nepal and India. Did they independently develop all these, or was there transoceanic contact; a sharing or borrowing of ideas?

Footnotes

¹O'Kon, James A, *The Lost Secrets of Maya Technology: Chapter 9 The Maya Interstate Highway system*, The Career Press, Pompton Plains, NJ, 2012.

²O'Kon, James A, *The Lost Secrets of Maya Technology: Chapter 11 Maya On The Move*, The Career Press, Pompton Plains, NJ, 2012.

³ Book of Mormon, 3rd Nephi 3:8

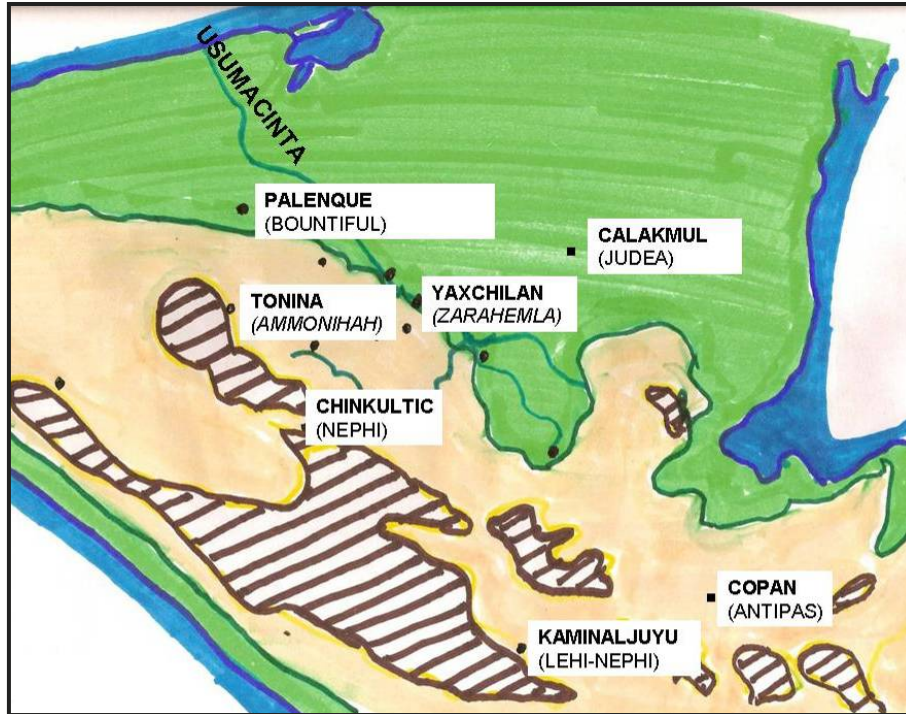


Places, People and Trends *continued*

for the slaughter that occurred when the Lamanites attacked Ammonihah and completely destroyed everyone in a single event. Not to mention that someone named Jaguar Bird came here from Yax-

ing used in the Book of Mormon and it is an illustration of what makes Chinkultic the City of Nephi.

At Yaxchilan we find a history of eleven kings when they are visited by a



chilan and was held prisoner, denied food and water, but he was then set free. We identify this visiting person as Alma I who left the city of Zarahemla and traveled to Ammonihah by way of the City of Melek to preach to the people of Ammonihah.

Or, there is Chinkultic where we find a priest who is burning and gesturing to the king that he will receive a similar death as his reward. This is the story of Abinadi who was put to a fiery death by King Noah who was himself later burned to death.

There is also an unmistakable “pass” located behind the temple at the high point of the site. This “secret pass” is hidden from all points in the rest of the city and it is consistent with the logistical description required for the people of King Limhi to escape undetected from the Lamanites. Not to mention that traveling from Chinkultic to Yaxchilan requires a person to go down in elevation, therefore, anyone traveling from the City of Nephi would “go down” to the city of Zarahemla. This is consistent with phras-

man who comes from the highlands, he marries the daughter of the king and then he is appointed as king. Add to this that his son and grandson both follow in his footsteps as kings and then the city transitions to judges. This is consistent with the Book of Mormon story of Mosiah bringing his people from the City of Nephi down to the city of Zarahemla. Mosiah is then appointed king, turns his kingship over to his son Benjamin, followed by his son Mosiah who cannot find anyone to take the kingship after him so the culture transitions to judges. This and so much more is found in Yaxchilan that identifies this city as Zarahemla.

The following is a list of locations Neil has identified from the Book of Mormon along with their Mesoamerican names.

City of Nephi—Chinkultic
 Zarahemla—Yaxchilan
 Bountiful—Palenque
 Ammonihah—Tonina
 City of Melek—Bonampak
 City of Desolation—LaVenta
 City of Judea—Calakmul
 City of Jerusalem—Tenam Puente

Antiparah—Tikal
 City of Lehi-Nephi—Kaminaljuyu
 Antipas—Copan
 City of Ishmael—Chalchuapa
 Lamoni—Lamanai
 Land of Antionum—Rio Bec Area
 Jershon—Modern-day Belize
 River Sidon—Usumacinta River
 Narrow Pass—Isthmus of Tehuantepec

Once the city locations were established, Neil was then able to develop a list of Mesoamerican names that paralleled with the Book of Mormon names. The list goes something like this:

Mulek—Yoaat Balam I
 Zarahemla—Knot-eye Jaguar II
 Mosiah the Elder—Itzamnaaj Balam II
 The wife of Mosiah—Lady K’uk
 King Benjamin—Yoaat Balam II
 Mosiah Younger—Itzamnaaj Balam III
 Alma I — Bird Jaguar III
 Alma II — Bird Jaguar IV
 Captain Moroni — Captain Kan Tok
 Amalickiah — K’inich Yax K’uk Mo’
 The King Men—The Sun Kings
 Gadianton Robbers—White Dogs

One of the interesting aspects of this list is the manner in which modern archaeology fills in previously unknown information because it is not provided in the Book of Mormon. The multiple authors of the Book of Mormon history repeatedly inform us that what they are providing on these “plates” is the spiritual history of the people therefore we are not provided the historical details that are not directly related to the stories being told. An example of that information can be found at Yaxchilan.

The Book of Omni provides this passage; [Omni 1:19] “Behold, I will speak unto you somewhat concerning Mosiah, who was make king over the land of Zarahemla: [20] For behold, he being warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi, and as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord, should also depart out of the land with him, into the wilderness. [21] And it came to pass that he did according as the Lord had commanded him. [22] And they departed out of the land into the wilderness, as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord; and they were led by many preachings and prophesings. [23] And they were admonished continually by the word of God: and they were led by the power of his arm, through the wilder-

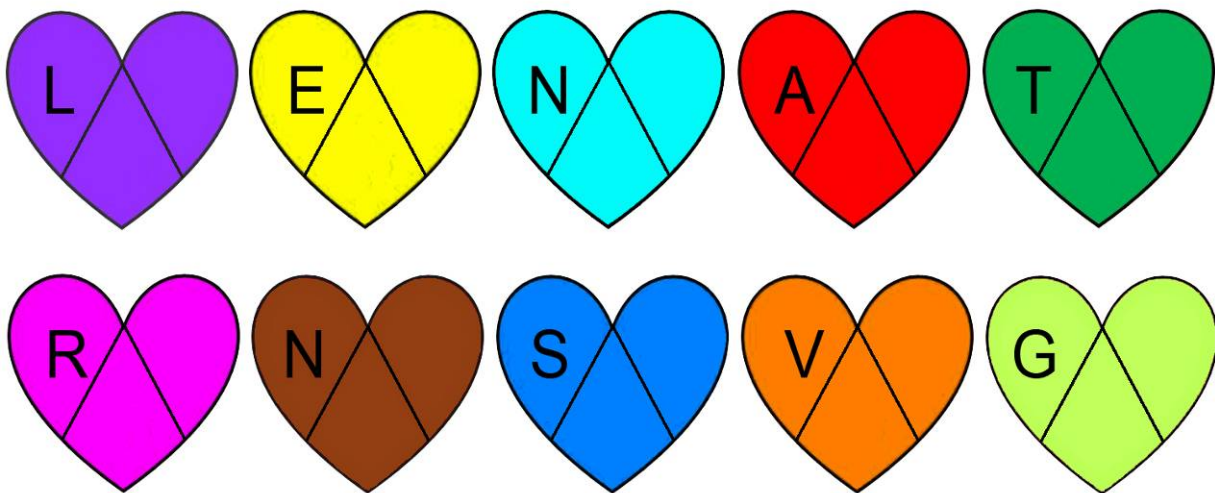
Alma plants a Church

Alma fled from King Noah and hid in a place called the Waters of Mormon. During the day he would hide and in the evening he would go and teach those who were willing to listen. He taught them the words that he had written down from Abinadi and from other prophets that he had learned about as a priest. He taught them to have faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

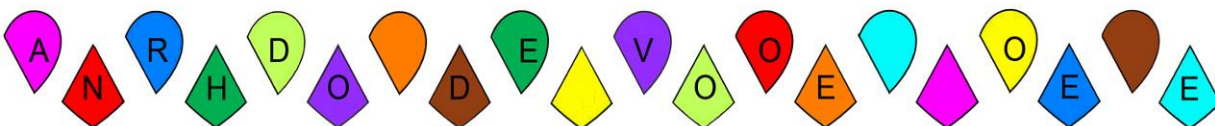
The people listened to Alma, believed his words and began to gather at the Waters of Mormon. Their hearts were converted and they wanted to follow God and keep his commandments. Alma asked the people if they wanted to be part of the fold of God; to love one another, care for one another, comfort those who were mourning and stand as witnesses of God at all times. The people agreed it was the desire of their hearts to be part of the Gods fold.

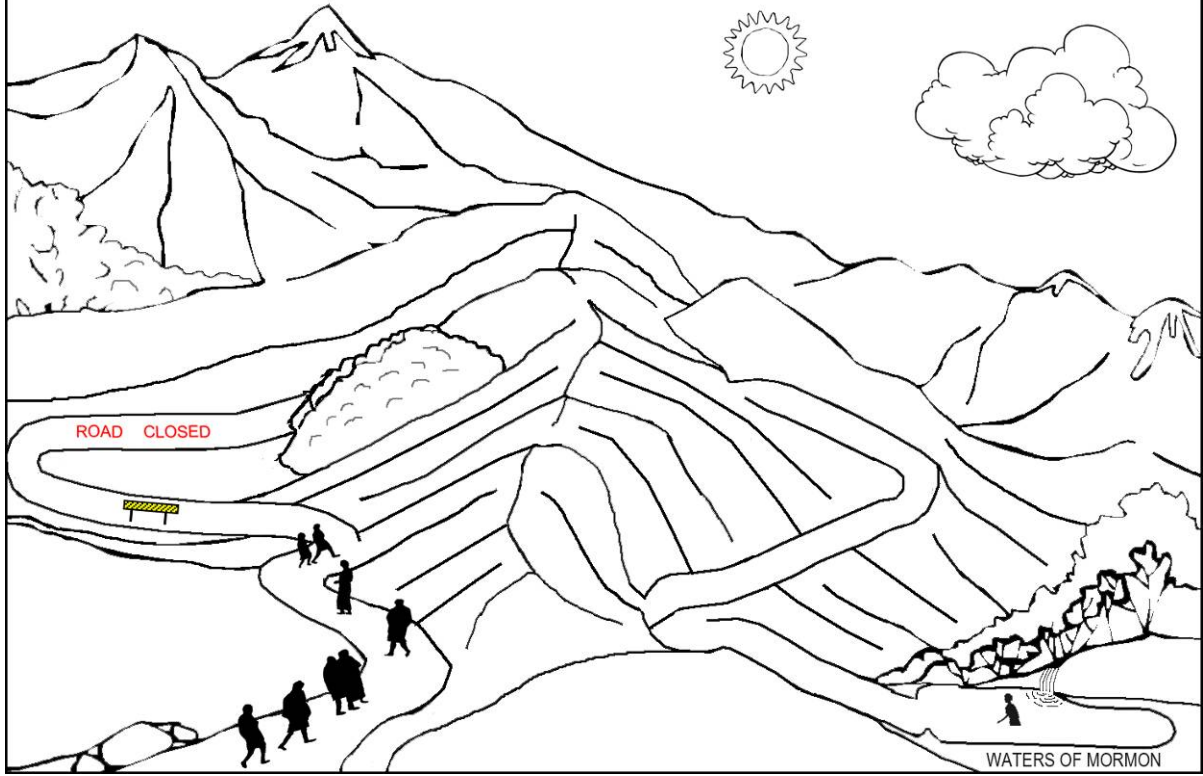
Alma began to baptize those who wanted to make a covenant to serve God. He baptized Helam first. Alma and Helam went down into the waters. They came out of water filled with the Holy Spirit. Then Alma baptized two hundred and four more souls in the Waters of Mormon. They were called the Church of Christ from that time forward. The promise of the Holy Spirit was with them.

Mosiah 9:32-49

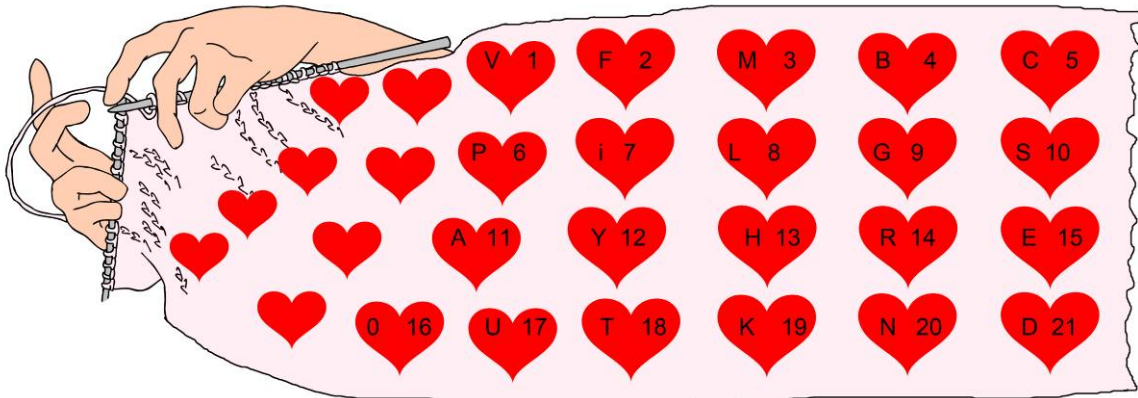


Use the heart parts below to help you write in the missing letters in the above hearts to complete the secret message.





Find the path to help the people of Nephi find Alma at the waters of Mormon.
 You can also color the picture if you like.



Use the hearts from the quilt above to help fill in blanks to reveal the hidden message.

19 20 7 18 12 16 17 14 13 15 11 14 18 10 18 16 9 15 18 13 15 14 7 20
 18 13 15 8 16 14 21 18 13 14 16 17 9 13 14 15 6 15 20 18 11 20 5 15
 2 11 7 18 13 4 11 6 18 7 10 3 17 20 7 18 12 11 20 21 8 16 1 15

Mosiah 9:54

Places, People and Trends *continued*

ness, until they came **down** into the land which is called the land of Zarahemla.” This passage is then followed by this statement; [Omni 1:34] “And it came to pass that the people of Zarahemla, and of Mosiah, did unite together; and Mosiah was appointed to be their king.” Mosiah was appointed to be their king, but how did that take place? How does someone come into a new land with a sitting king and, without an army in tow, become appointed king? The Book of Mormon provides no explanation of this statement, but archaeology does.

Research done on the inscriptions at this site tells us that a king comes down from the Highlands and marries the daughter (Lady K’uk) of the Yaxchilan king. This union is alluded to in the scripture above when it says that the people of Zarahemla and of Mosiah did unite together. Archaeology tells us that the union was through marriage, therefore as the husband of the daughter of the King, Mosiah is then “appointed” to become King of Zarahemla. We are also provided some insight as to the difficulty the Lady K’uk encountered in her decision to marry Mosiah. A lintel found at Yaxchilan illustrates that Lady K’uk was in prayer to her God about this decision that she needed to make when she received a visitation from her ancestor that founded



Lady K’uk is visited by her ancestor who confirms that she should marry Shield Jaguar II.

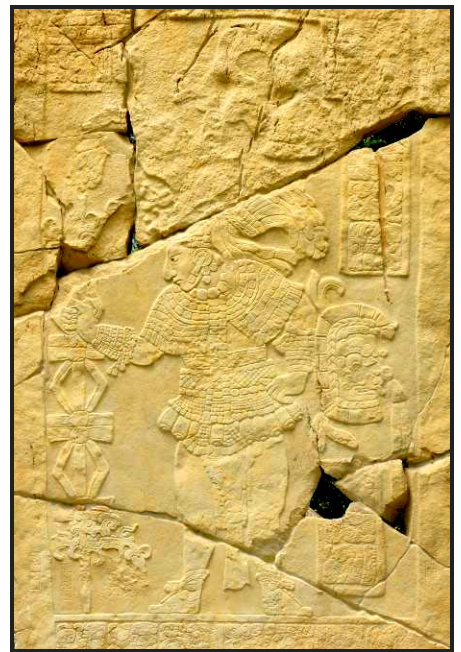
the people of the Lowlands (Mulek). He confirmed to her that he approved of her marriage to Shield Jaguar II (Mosiah).

This marriage was a huge event that is chronicled in many ways at Yaxchilan. Mosiah brought written language and archaeologists know that Shield Jaguar II (Mosiah the Elder) was the first king at Yaxchilan to initiate the history of the site through a hieroglyphic writing system combined with bi-relief images. This knowledge helps us to understand that King Benjamin, as the son of Mosiah, was the first offspring of the combined Hebrew tribes of Judah (Mulek) and Joseph (Lehi). Knowing this bit of information adds a depth to the Book of Mormon story that is so important to us today.

Because of the enhanced knowledge we have received from the combining of Book of Mormon details with archaeological findings, we are able to understand large trends that continue to baffle those who are trying to put the pieces of the ancient Maya in context. Because we understand the cities and people involved, we know that there are events that create large cultural shifts. For example, it is the conversion of King Lamoni that causes the people from the City of Ishmael to move to Jerushon. This move is identified as the shift from Chalchuapa to Lamanai. Here archaeologists find an entire culture that seem to pack-up lock, stock and barrel and move to a new location. Pottery artifacts provide the evidence for this in that Chalchuapa is suddenly abandoned and then 300 miles to the north this same pottery is found where a new city is built at Lamanai. It is also during this time period that archaeologists notice that there is a large shift in population from the highlands to the eastern lowlands that we today refer to as the country of Belize. Archaeologists have referred to this shift as the Great Highland Brian Drain. Large cities in the highlands begin to dwindle in population while new cities begin springing up in the eastern lowlands of the Maya region. Then, almost inexplicably, the population of Belize moves to Bonampak.

At Bonampak we have validation of the Nephite commitment to protect the Ammonites and the Anti-Nephi-Lehis from further Lamanite threat. The Bonampak Murals illustrate the death of King Anti-Nephi-Lehi—he is beheaded. There is also a large stela at Bonampak

that illustrates a Yaxchilan warrior protecting the two groups who made “godly promises” from the threat of beheading.



The archaeology implies that this beheading took place at San Bartolo. It was such a huge atrocity impacting so many cities that we have depictions of this beheading alluded to in murals, pottery art and stelae from Tikal, Kaminaljuyu, Bonampak, Quirigua, and Tenam Puente. The aspect confusing most archaeologists is that they view these multiple depictions as several individual events instead of multiple depictions of the same event.

Further indication is that we actually have world-wide trade being exported from the Belize coast to Egypt and from the Guatemalan coast to Southeast Asia. Egyptian mummies with nicotine in the hair provide implications that tobacco exportation from Belize was taking place. And, there is the distinct possibility that jade/nephrite exportation to Southeast Asia was taking place, though this link needs further research and development.

This is a wonderful time in which to live as so many advances are being made in our research of the ancient Mayan culture which we understand to be the high culture of the people from the Book of Mormon. There is so much to glean from this enhanced body of knowledge that we find ourselves in awe as we comprehend how wonderfully our Lord has worked with all of his faithful throughout the millennia.

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.

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2013 Spring Expedition By David B. Brown

The Hill Cumorah Expedition Team just completed its Spring Expedition to Guatemala and Honduras with some amazing results. The team was comprised of fifteen members, some of them traveling with us for the first time.

We set the itinerary for travel to take place from April 1st thru 12th. The group flew into Guatemala City where they spent the first three days visiting two museums and the archaeological site of Kaminaljuyu. It was the items in the museum that gave us the biggest surprise as we discovered that the beheading that took place in San Bartolo had an impact as far south as Kaminaljuyu. And, it appears that the royalty who was responsible for the death of King Anti-Nephi-Lehi was then himself killed by the servants of Amalickiah. It was a realization we had not suspected and at the same time it makes sense that the one who killed to get the power was also killed by the same means; a form of poetic justice.



The members of the 2013 Spring Expedition on a hotel stairway in Guatemala City.

After leaving Guatemala City the group traveled to Tikal where we found further confirmation of the beheading. We also spent a day traveling thru the jungle to San Bartolo and mapped the site which will prove important for further research on King Anti-Nephi-Lehi.

Then the group traveled to Copan and again found themselves surprised with the amount of information that confirmed our suspicion that this was the city from which Amalickiah wielded his power as a businessman while he controlled aspects of government through his brother Ammoron.

The group spent time together in discussion of the ancient history of this land as our devotions concentrated on reading the stories we found illustrated at these sites. The travel was a success and it will bear fruit over the next several months as we process the details of the information we found and put them into words.