

The Trail of the Beheaded One

By Neil Steede © 2013

This article will discuss the archaeological evidence concerning the mass migration of the Ammonites and the Anti-Nephi-Lehis from Lamanite territory into the Nephite territory known as Jershon.

Alma 15:22-29 "And it came to pass that the chief judge sent a proclamation throughout all the land, desiring the voice of the people concerning the admitting their brethren, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. [23] And it came to pass that the voice of the people came, saying: Behold, we will give up the land of Jershon, which is on the east by the sea, which joins the land Bountiful; and this land Jershon is the land which we will give unto our brethren for an inheritance. [24] And behold, we will set our armies between the land Jershon and the land Nephi, that we may protect our brethren in the land Jershon; [25] And this we do for our brethren, on account of their fear to take up arms against their brethren, lest they should commit sin: and this their great fear came, because of their sore repentance which they had, on account of their many murders, and their awful wickedness. [26] And now behold, this will we do unto our brethren, that they

may inherit the land Jershon; and we will guard them from their enemies with our armies, on conditions they will give us a portion of their substance to assist us, that we may maintain our armies. [27] Now it came to pass that when Ammon had heard this, he returned to the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, and also Alma with him, into the wilderness, where they had pitched their tents, and made known unto them all these things. [28] And Alma also related unto them his conversion with Ammon, and Aaron and his brethren. And it came to pass that it did cause great joy among them. [29] And they went down into the land of Jershon, and took possession of the land of Jershon; and they were called by the Nephites the people of Ammon;"

This mass migration is not only unprecedented, but it is the largest known mass migration in ancient Mesoamerica,¹ and it is why this migration is included among the "great trends" that occurred in ancient Mesoamerica.

The most pressing question among Mesoamerican archaeologist concerning this cultural shift is, "What was the catalyst for this huge migration?" In my opinion the answer is found in the blending of two sto-

Maya Technology: The Yaxchilan Suspension Bridge

by Terry Scott

As the Maya culture expanded, there grew an ever increasing need to connect their cities together. In my recent article on 'Maya roads' (March 2013) I discussed the vast road system that links these Maya cities. Part of this *sacbe* (road) system included, bridges over canals and moats in urban areas, and streams and rivers across the land. During the rainy season that lasted up to six months the need for bridges over streams and rivers was paramount in keeping travel and transportation open during this time. You cannot simply suspend trade for six months at a time.

The Maya engineered a variety of bridge types, each customized for a specific need. They used timber, concrete and henequen (hemp) ropes to construct their bridges. Short span bridges are generally considered to span less than 3 meters (9

feet). This was done with large timber logs or corbelled arches. Medium span bridges (3 to 24 meters) required more engineering.

Figure 1 shows a short span bridge built into a stone wall at Becan. **Figure 2** shows a medium span suspension bridge made from hemp rope. **Figure 3** shows a medium span bridge at Pusalha spanning 10 meters (30 feet). The bridge deck was made from large timbers covered with concrete. The support abutments were made from

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Maya Technology: The Yaxchilan Suspension Bridge continued

Figure 1 - Corbel arch bridge at Becan



Figure 2 - Photo of Maya hemp rope Suspension Bridge (1875)



stone and concrete to keep the river from washing them away.

When it came to long spans of over 24 meters (over 79 feet) the skills of Mayan engineers were really tested. The long span suspension bridge over the Usumacinta River at Yaxchilan was made of a combination of wood, stone, concrete and hemp. This marvel of engineering had end spans of over 25 meters (82 feet) and a center span of 63 meters (208 feet),

making it the longest suspension bridge in the ancient world.¹

Let's take a closer look at this wonder of the ancient world. Yaxchilan was located in an ox-bow in the river (**figure 4**) almost making it an island. During the rainy season when the Usumacinta River could rise over 15 meters and swell to 200 meters wide, Yaxchilan would have become a virtual island, cut off from the rest of the world without their bridge. A canoe or any other type of non-motorize boat would be helpless against the raging currents.

The bridge deteriorated over time leaving few clues of its existence. In 1882, Alfred Maudslay made reference to piles of stone in the river he used as landmarks to find the site.²

*"In her book, Yaxchilan: The Design of a Maya Ceremonial City (1993), archaeologist Dr. Caroline Tate describes... the ruins of the bridge pier, (figure 5) which she considered to be the remains of a flood-ravaged structure lost to the river... she actually identified the bridge approach structure on the Grand Plaza in her description of Structure 5."*²

Once evidence of a bridge was discovered, James O'Kon, an archaeo-engineer, surveyed the site from the ground and air. He found the remains of two bridge piers, 10 meters in diameter and 63 meters apart, and support structures on each side of the river. **Figure 6** shows one of the cable anchors for the suspension bridge. The Maya would have needed two inch diameter hemp ropes as

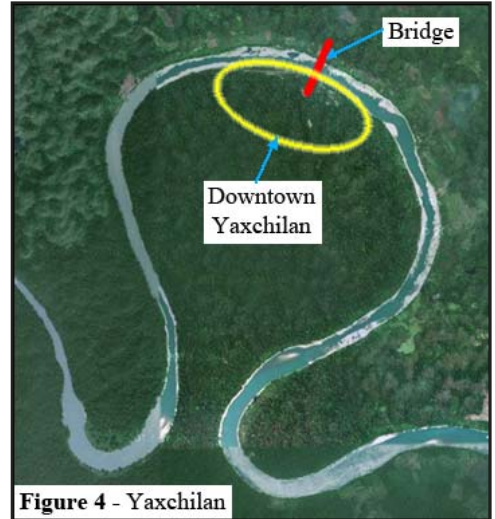


Figure 4 - Yaxchilan

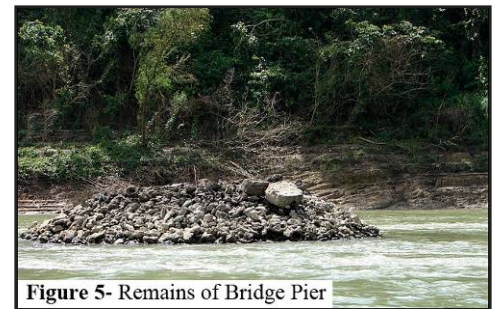


Figure 5- Remains of Bridge Pier

support cables.²

*"Hemp rope or henequen is indigenous to the Maya world. The strong fibers of this plant were collected from the sword-shaped leaves of the agave four-crocydes plant. Its strong fibers were woven into high-strength rope and used in multiple applications by the Maya. This rope had a tensile strength of 18,000 psi. In construction, rope was used as a suspension cable in bridges."*³

"The collected data was synthesized and used to develop topographic data and three-dimensional computer simulations that led to the virtual reconstruction

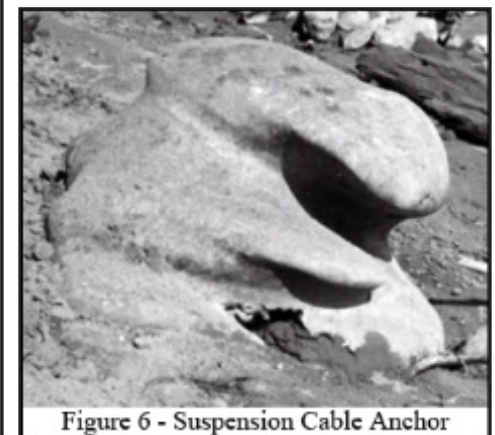


Figure 6 - Suspension Cable Anchor

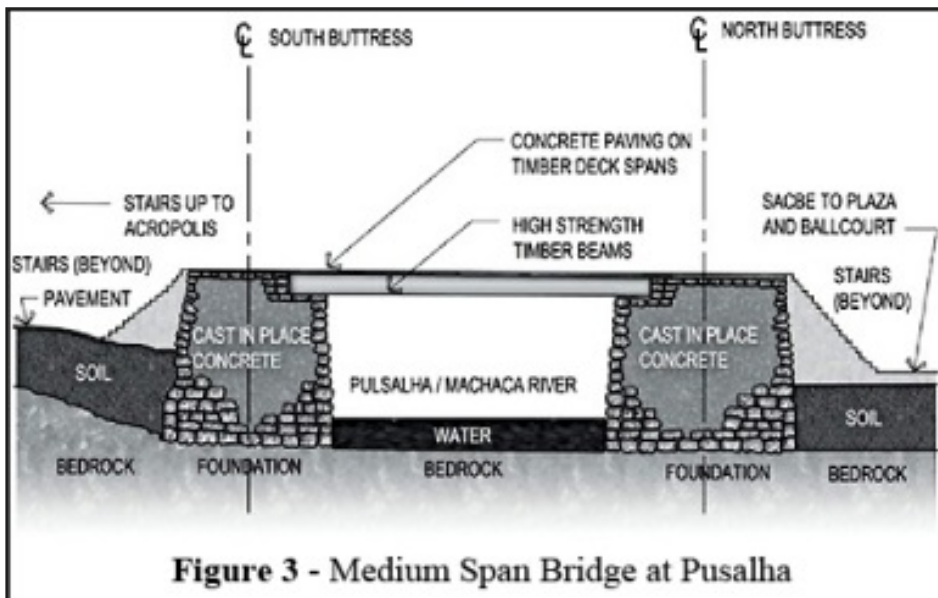


Figure 3 - Medium Span Bridge at Pusalha

The Trail of the Beheaded One continued

ries that come to us through two different sources.

The first is the Ammonites story found in the Book of Mormon. This story describes the mass movement of the Ammonites and the Anti-Nephi-Lehis² from Lamanite territory to the land of Jershon in Nephite territory.³ The Book of Mormon story only claims that they requested Ammon to ask Alma II for the permission to make this move after these Lamanite converts had their conference in the City of Ishmael.⁴ The Book of Mormon gives no specific explanation as to why this move was requested, yet the archaeological record seems to provide several clues as to why this request was made. This archaeological record begins with the San Bartolo Murals.

We have demonstrated that the San Bartolo Murals are the testimonies of the father and mother of King Lamoni,⁵ and that after his father's retirement from kingship he appointed his son King Anti-Nephi-Lehi as his successor. We are then told that the retiring father king died a short time later. From that point forward in the story nothing is written concerning King Anti-Nephi-Lehi.⁶ However, it becomes apparent that the older brother of King Lamoni and King Anti-Nephi-Lehi was also a vassal king from the city of Dos Pilas which is the City of Zeezrom from the Book of Mormon. This older brother wanted the Lamanite throne and thought that because he was the older brother that he had the official right to claim the throne. To obtain his rightful crown he chose to eliminate his competition by slaying his younger brothers. Because the father had died and King Anti-Nephi-Lehi had taken his place, the older brother attacked the city of Antiparah (Tikal) where he beheaded his younger brother King Anti-Nephi-Lehi⁷ and the City of Ishmael where King Lamoni sat as the other possible heir to the throne.

In the Book of Mormon we are only told of the attack on the City of Ishmael. There the army slaughtered 1005 converted Lamanites as they lay prone on the ground before the Lamanite army. The soldiers became sickened by the slaughter they were committing and were halted by their conscience. They did not obtain their objective of killing King Lamoni and Ammon.⁸ The archaeological evidence for this slaughter abounds in several locations in Mesoamerica. I will mention several of

these locations in this article. I will begin with San Bartolo.

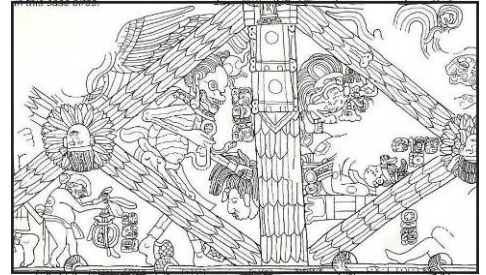
San Bartolo is located in the Petén of northern Guatemala and it is a suburb of Tikal. This is the site where a set of murals were discovered that are drastically changing the landscape of Mesoamerican archaeology. The murals are Christian.⁹ However, this aspect is only important to the extent that the murals depict that the King of Tikal had accepted Christianity. The murals also imply that this new religion had originated from the Yaxchilan area.¹⁰ These murals were preserved because an opposing force arrived shortly after the murals were created and buried the structure that housed them while also slaying the Royal family.¹¹ The slain family was found in a small courtyard just outside of the connected pyramid.¹² This slain king was beheaded. His headless body can be found in a tomb at Tikal.¹³ This act of beheading his younger brother was considered an atrocious act by most of the Lamanite kingdom. Therefore, it is depicted as a “defining event” by the Lamanites. During the Golden Age the descendents of those Lamanites went to great lengths to preserve the story of the beheading of King Anti-Nephi-Lehi at all of the pertinent locations in Mesoamerica. This was done in a variety of ways. At San Bartolo the severed head was left at the site. At other locations that relate to the story other types of historical monuments concerning this beheading were created. I will now review these other locations, though not in particular chronological order because the precise chronological order of the events are unknown.

The Book of Mormon states that the Amulekites “stirred up” the Lamanites to anger against the Mosiah Boys and their new religion.¹⁴ Evidence of this event is commemorated by a large statue which was ceremonially beheaded at that site. It



is believed that this beheaded statue was located at this site during the Golden Age to portray where the original concept of beheading King Anti-Nephi-Lehi had originated.

In the city of Tonina is a stucco plaster wall referred to as “The Frieze of the Dream Lords.”¹⁵ It is known that this city suffered a larger massacre. In the freeze the culprit of this massacre is shown to be the one who “severed the head.”



The Book of Mormon states that the Lamanite King was driven to anger by the Ammonites and attacked and slaughtered the people of Ammonihah. Therefore, we suppose that the same Lamanite King who had beheaded his brother was the force behind the order to attack Ammonihah. The freeze demonstrates that the skeleton involved in the beheading was connected to this death event. In other words, “the specter of death that visited Tonina (Ammonihah) was the same one who beheaded the king.” This seems to confirm our supposition. We are told in the Book of Mormon that the same king involved in the Ammonihah slaughter later decimated the City of Jerusalem (Tenam Puente) and the Amulekites. This event can also be demonstrated to have occurred at that site.¹⁶

There are several expressions of this event portrayed in Tikal. There is the tomb with a headless body, but there are also several stelae that depict events surrounding the beheading. One stela shows King Anti-Nephi-Lehi attempting to “fill his father's shoes.” In this depiction it is clearly demonstrated that the throne has been passed from King Lamoni's father to King Anti-Nephi-Lehi. (Next page)

Another stela depicts King Anti-Nephi-Lehi with a severed head close by as he attempts to unify the 10 Lamanite cities within Lamanite territory. (Next page)

At Dos Pilas (city of Zeezrom) is where the older brother of King Lamoni and King Anti-Nephi-Lehi lived. It is

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trance into Lamanite territory to the mass migration to the City of Melek. Among the images shown is that of the beheaded King Anti-Nephi-Lehi. (Below)



Another supporting artifact from Bonampak (City of Melek) is the large stela that shows that the Nephite Army is standing in protection of the Ammonites and the Anti-Nephi-Lehis against the one who had beheaded his brother. (Below)



Finally, in Kaminaljuyu a rendition of Amalickiah slaying of this older brother can be found. This depiction shows the older brother and identifies him by hanging a severed head from his belt.

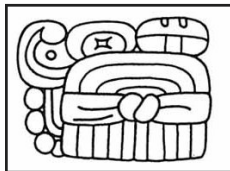
By following the “severed head” motif we can follow a trail that seems to clearly show a single incident of royal beheading. However, the impact of this single event was so far-reaching and profound that it was referenced many times and in many

places. Today Mesoamerican archaeologists believe that all of these depictions are portraying different events; this perception of separation is due to the concept that Mesoamerica was a conglomeration of small city-states and not a unified empire. This view will change in the near future as more and more information begins to develop to more fully support the interconnectedness of these polities and the events that impacted them all.

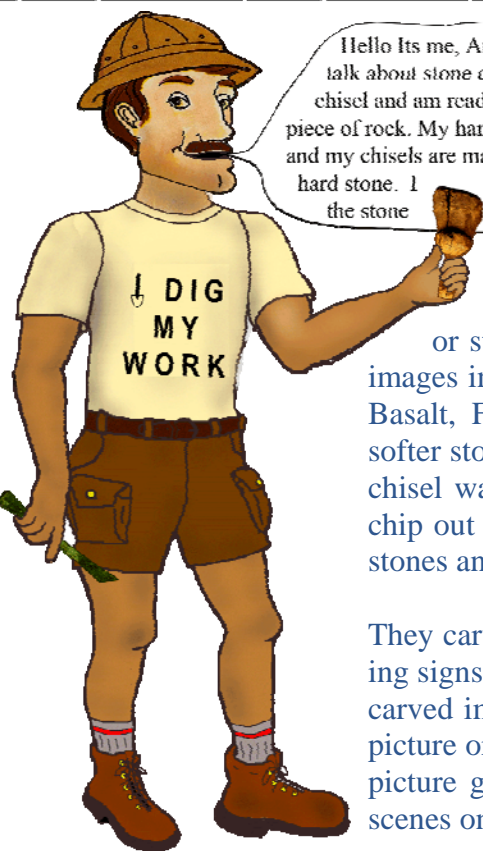
Footnotes:

1. Though other large migrations have occurred in ancient Mesoamerica, this particular shift is the largest that some estimate took place as early as 150 to 100 BCE. The late Dr. Mario Perez Campa referred to this mass migration as “the great Mayan brain drain” because it shifted such massive amounts of affluent classes from the Maya Highlands to the Maya Lowlands.
2. It is now apparent that the Ammonites and the Anti-Nephi-Lehis considered themselves separate groups from the evidence found in the Bonampak Murals. They are common in that they moved at the same time from Lamanite territory to the land of Jerushon in Nephite territory.
3. Steede, Neil; New Book of Mormon Archaeological Evidences, Vol. 1, Chapters 5-7, Spring, 2013, ESRS, PO Box 4175, Independence, MO 64051.
4. Alma 14:25-27 Community of Christ 1908 AV
5. See: Steede, Neil; Book of Mormon Archaeology: Artifact-by-Artifact, 8 Volumes, 2008, ESRS, PO Box 4175, Independence, MO 64051. *And*, Steede, Neil; New Book of Mormon Archaeological Evidences, Chapters 5-7, 2012, ESRS, PO Box 4175, Independence, MO 64051. *And* Steede, Neil; “The San Bartolo Murals”, 2013, ESRS, PO Box 4175, Independence, MO 64051.
6. It is believed that no comments are made concerning the fate of King Anti-Nephi-Lehi because the Book of Mormon authors considered that story to be Lamanite history as opposed to being Nephite history.
7. Neil Steede, opinion cited.
8. This story is included in the Book of Mormon because it is directly related to Ammon who was a Nephite.
9. Kelley, David, (see Kelley on website at www.earlysites.org). *And* Steede, Neil; “The San Bartolo Murals”, opinion cited.
10. Neil Steede, opinion cited.
11. National Geographic, 2003, (Gary Woods).
12. *Ibid*.
13. Martin and Grube; The Chronicles of the Mayan Kings and Queens, London, 2000.
14. The sons of Mosiah the younger. Their names were Ammon, Aaron, Himni and Omner.
15. Tonina has been demonstrated to be the city of Ammonihah. See: Steede, Neil; New Book of Mormon Archaeological Evidences, Vol. 1, Chapter 4, ESRS, PO Box 4175, Independence, MO 64051.
16. Neil Steede, opinion cited.
17. Steede, Neil; New Book of Mormon Archaeological Evidences, Vol. 1, Chapters 5-7, opinion cited.

known that he took the city glyph of Tikal and claimed it at Dos Pilas. However, the next King denied that claim.



The single best source for the full Ammonites/Anti-Nephi-Lehi story is found in the murals of Bonampak (city of Melek).¹⁷ Here the story of the Mosiah Boys is clearly shown from their en-



Hello Its me, Arty again. Today I am going to talk about stone carving. I have my hammer and chisel and am ready to carve a nice picture on a big piece of rock. My hammer is made from very hard wood and my chisels are made out of hardened copper or very hard stone. I need very hard chisels to cut into the stone I want to carve a picture on.

The Maya made their own tools. There were no hardware stores like we have. They made their own hammers and chisels so they could carve images in stone. They used hard wood or stone hammers to strike copper or stone chisels to chip out images in stone. The stone chisels were made from hard stones like Basalt, Flint, Granite, Jade, Obsidian and Quartzite. They used softer stone like Limestone or Sandstone to carve on. As long as the chisel was harder than the stone they were working on they could chip out shapes and pictures. They used large chisels to shape the stones and smaller chisels to carve detailed images.

They carved images of people and animals. They carved free standing signs called Stela. They made alters and thrones out of stone and carved images and glyphs on them. Remember a glyph is a special picture or shape that means a specific word or idea. They used these picture glyphs to tell their stories in stone. They carved elaborate scenes on the walls of their pyramids and temples.



Carved Stone Throne



Carved Stone Alter



Carved Stone Owl

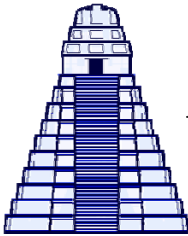


Carved Stone Stela with a man on the front and glyphs on the side telling a story.



Name the type of stone carving for each picture.
Use the provided list of words below to help you:

- Alter
- Animal
- Figurine
- Glyphs
- Pyramid
- Stela
- Throne
- Wall carving



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

Find and circle
the Mayan carving
words listed below:

- BASALT
- CARVING
- CHISEL
- COPPER
- FLINT
- GRANITE
- HAMMER
- JADE
- LIMESTONE
- MAYA
- OBSIDIAN
- QUARTZITE
- SANDSTONE
- STONE
- TOOLS
- WOOD

http://www.teach-nology.com/teachers/lesson_plans/science/archaeology/

http://research.history.org/Archaeological_Research/KidsPage.cfm

<http://www.smm.org/sln/ma/index.html>

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/pyramids/>

<http://archaeology.la.asu.edu/teo/>

<http://www.digonsite.com/drdir/mesoamerica/15.html>

<http://www.precolumbianweapons.com/>

For questions e-mail me at tscott75@sbcglobal.net

Reading With the Holy Spirit A Testimony by Scott Norwood

I have not shared this testimony very widely through the years, but as I have read the recent Book of Mormon subject books by Alan Tyree and Dale Luffman it has occurred to me that others might receive some encouragement from my experience.

Beginning in the late 1970s I read a number of books and articles that made strong arguments for the Book of Mormon being a 19th Century work rather than an ancient text. I did not have answers for these arguments. After praying about it I received a sense of peace and set the issue aside for future consideration.

In 1979 I studied for a Masters in Library Science at the University of Missouri—Columbia. One of the requirements for the degree was a major research paper. I decided to write a historical essay on books about the Book of Mormon. This necessitated a trip to Utah to visit the library at Brigham Young University and the library at the Latter Day Saints (LDS) headquarters building in Salt Lake City. When the staff at the LDS library learned what I was writing about they offered me a photocopy of the papers that were presented at the Sidney Sperry Symposium on the Book of Mormon that took place less than a year before. I read all the papers with interest except one with a title that did not capture my curiosity; “The Writing Boards of Ezekiel and What They Mean” by Keith Meservy. I packed these papers away in a box and forgot about them.

In the early 1980s I worked as a live-in counselor in a group home for mentally handicapped adults. My responsibility as a live-in counselor was to spend five overnights a week in a small apartment where I could be available to the residents if the need arose. My time spent at the facility was generally quiet and I made it a habit of reading most evenings. I had read everything on the shelves in my apartment and began digging through a box of stored materials when I came across the Sperry Symposium papers from Utah. I saw the Meservy paper and

decided it was past time to finish reading the collection.

I read with fascination concerning the choices that the ancient prophet Mormon and to a lesser degree his son Moroni made as editors of the record called the Book of Mormon. Working from a library of records that encompassed the history, lineage, politics, warfare, and religion of three different groups over a period covering many centuries, an abridgement was produced the length of our modern book. I was thrilled to read this essay that emphasized the prophetic nature of the selection of stories, sermons, and others materials that would speak to the recipients of this book when it would “speak forth from the dust” and thereafter. After finishing this article I went to bed feeling I had my answer concerning the question as to why 19th century issues were found with what was purported to be an ancient work.

“I was thrilled to read this essay that emphasized the prophetic nature of the selection of stories, sermons, and others materials that would speak to the recipients of this book when it would ‘speak forth from the dust’ and thereafter.”

The next day before going to work I picked up the Meservy paper to review it again. As I was thrilled with the content the night before, I was eager to spend some time mulling it over point by point. But, what I now read did not resemble what I experienced the night before. Instead, the article focused on how the King James translation of “stick” in Ezekiel 37:15-20 could be better translated as “writing boards” and how this understanding changed the prophetic interpretation of these verses. I cannot explain how it was I read very different content off these same pages the night before. At the time I first read them that evening I did not sense I was having any kind of experience out of the ordinary. I put the paper down as I

went to bed and when I read it again the next morning the subject matter was different.

When Marin Harris lost the 116 pages of the Book of Lehi, the Lord had already prepared the small plates of Nephi that covered the same time period. Prophetically this content was preserved (see Words of Mormon 1:8-11). I believe the manner in which the small plates of Nephi were included in the abridgement is similar in nature to how I received an answer to my prayer concerning why 19th century issues were found in the Book of Mormon. Just as Mormon was guided to include the content of these plates, he and his son were guided by the Holy Spirit to include a significant amount of material that spoke directly to the hearts and minds of those 19th century seekers that founded the Restoration Movement. My effort to seek for reasoning was rewarded by enlightenment from the Holy Spirit as my eyes poured over this Meservy essay. The Holy Spirit revealed to me how inspiration is the mechanics whereby one can view one thing with the eyes, but spiritually “understand” something in its completeness. Across the millennia my ancient authors and brothers were granting me an understanding of “how” they went about the mechanics of writing while being influenced by the Holy Spirit; the same Holy Spirit that was allowing me to understand through a mechanism of enlightenment that is beyond explanation. The Book of Mormon spoke to the issues of the 19th Century in the same manner as they speak to us today, and that they will continue to speak to all who will approach this record with the same sacredness and honor with which it was written.

The Book of Mormon continues to speak to me today. I believe it was created to assist in launching the marvelous work and wonder we know as the Restoration Movement. I hope to see the Book of Mormon reach its ultimate prophetic calling as a witness “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ.”

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Maya Technology: The Yaxchilan Suspension Bridge continued

of the bridge.”² (figure 7)

“Engineering historian Dr. Neal FitzSimons... developed a chart of the longest known bridges in the world, starting in 600 BC with a 69-foot-long bridge built by the Etruscans and extending to the completion of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883. The list includes the Maya suspension bridge over the Usumacinta River. A review of Dr. FitzSimons's records indicates that the Maya bridge at Yaxchilan, constructed in the seventh century, was the longest bridge in the world until 1377, when Italians built a fortified stone bridge with a span of 72 meters over the Adda River at Trezzo, Italy. The Maya solved a critical transportation issue for a city and found a place in world engineering history.”²

Alma 29:58 “And the people of Nephi began to prosper again in the land, and began to multiply and to wax exceeding strong again in the land. [59] And they began to grow exceeding rich.”⁴

Helaman 2:7 “And there being but little timber upon the face of the land,

nevertheless the people who went forth became exceeding expert in the working of cement: therefore they did build houses of cement, in which they did dwell. [8] And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south, to the sea north, from the sea west,

to the sea east.”⁵

Without their mastery of transportation through their roads and bridges, the Maya would not have been able to spread throughout Mesoamerica as they did. The suspension bridge at Yaxchilan stands as a testament to their engineering prowess as an advanced civilization.

Footnotes:

1. O’Kon, James A, *The Lost Secrets of Maya Technology: Chapter 3 Creating a Scientific Civilization in Tropical Isolation*, The Career Press, Pompton Plains, NJ, 2012.
2. O’Kon, James A, *The Lost Secrets of Maya Technology: Chapter 10 Bridging the Gaps in the Forest*, The Career Press, Pompton Plains, NJ, 2012.
3. O’Kon, James A, *The Lost Secrets of Maya Technology: Chapter 7 Towers in the Forest*, The Career Press, Pompton Plains, NJ, 2012
4. Book of Mormon, Alma 29:58 (lds 62:48)
5. Book of Mormon, Helaman 2:7 (lds 3:7)

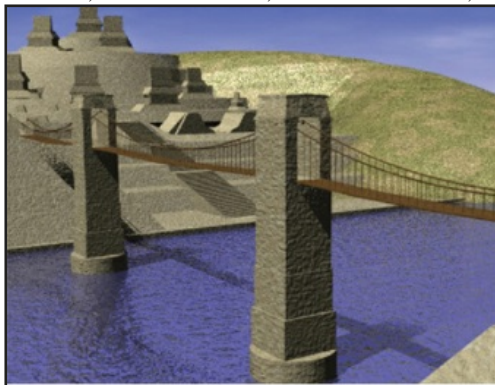


Figure 7 -
Computer rendering of Maya suspension bridge across the Usumacinta River.