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The Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
& Mormon Studies

# INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

1992, No. 5

*"...by study and also by faith."* D & C 88:118

September

## F.A.R.M.S.-Sponsored Team Will Examine Arabian Site

A team of researchers, sponsored jointly by BYU and F.A.R.M.S., will examine a likely site for Old World Bountiful, where Nephi's family built the boat that carried them to their promised land. Over the last few years, Warren and Michaela Aston have surveyed the coast of southern Arabia for possible sites for Bountiful. Their research has identified a site at Wadi Sayq as the most likely candidate, matching in great detail the criteria that the Astons have identified from the account in the Book of Mormon.

F.A.R.M.S. has helped to sponsor the Astons' research and has published their developing results. The Foundation is now pleased to join with BYU to sponsor a team of scholars who will test the Astons' findings. David Johnson of the BYU Department of Anthropology is the team leader. He will be assisted by Warren Aston; Paolo Costa, an archaeologist from Italy; Ali Ahmed Ali Al-Shahri, an epigrapher from Oman; Paul Cox, a botanist from BYU; and William Christiansen, a geologist from Salt Lake.

Starting in late September, the team will spend 10 days at the site. They will conduct a detailed survey of sites in the wadi mouth, perform test excavations (including carbon 14 sampling), examine geological data, gather samples for mineralogical analysis, and analyze all epigraphic material at the site. They will also create a photographic record of the area and their work on it.

This expedition has been made possible by the generosity of F.A.R.M.S. donors. The findings of the expedition will be published in scholarly journals and will be reported and reprinted by F.A.R.M.S.

## Nibley Will Address Annual F.A.R.M.S. Banquet on October 17

The annual F.A.R.M.S. banquet, to be held at BYU on Saturday, October 17, will feature an address by Hugh Nibley. Brother Nibley will speak about some of his current research. The program will also include recognition of individuals who have given outstanding service to the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies and to the Book of Mormon research it sponsors. Members of the F.A.R.M.S. board of directors will report on on-going projects and work that has been completed during the last year and will present plans for future projects and activities.

Past banquets have given many subscribers, volunteers, researchers, donors, and other participants in F.A.R.M.S. projects the opportunity to get better acquainted with each other and to share ideas about the purposes and directions of the Foundation.

The dinner will be held at 7:00 P.M. in room 375 of the Wilkinson Center at Brigham Young University. Ample free parking is available in a lot directly east of the Wilkinson Center (the Law School parking lot—accessible from both Ninth East and East Campus Drive). Reservations are required and may be made using the order form in this issue or by calling the F.A.R.M.S. office.

Don't miss this opportunity to share a pleasant evening with many of the other people that make the work of F.A.R.M.S. possible and to hear the most up-to-date reports and plans.

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies is a nonprofit research and educational organization dedicated to the study of ancient scripture. Your tax-deductible contributions enable F.A.R.M.S. to sponsor and coordinate a wide range of research projects that enhance our understanding of these sacred writings.

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# F.A.R.M.S. UPDATE

The Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies

Number 84

September 1992

## The Decline of the God Quetzalcoatl at Teotihuacan

Some Latter-day Saints have long been struck with the similarity between certain characteristics of the god Quetzalcoatl, as known from native traditions in Mexico and Guatemala, and Jesus Christ, whose visit to Lehi's descendants is described in Third Nephi. In the book, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (1985), the dramatic decline of the god Quetzalcoatl in the period around A.D. 200 at the giant city of Teotihuacan near Mexico City was discussed in comparison with Fourth Nephi. The book relied on a study by Mexican scholar Enrique Florescano ("Quetzalcoatl: espiritualismo del México antiguo," *Cuadernos Americanos* 105/4 [1959]: 127-39). A new study now presents even clearer parallels. (See Rubén Cabrera C., "La secuencia arquitectónica del edificio de los animales mitológicos en Teotihuacan," in *Homenaje a Román Piña Chan* [México: UNAM, 1987], 349-72.)

The face of what Mexican archaeologists term "the old Temple of Quetzalcoatl" at Teotihuacan has been photographed by innumerable tourists. Dramatic symbolic representations of Quetzalcoatl as a serpent dot the facade of this impressive structure. Additional mapping, ceramic study, and excavation have definitely established that this building was constructed at the same time as the huge Pyramid of the Sun—between A.D. 150 and 200 (Cabrera, p. 364, reports a new carbon-14 date of A.D. 148). As visitors clearly see, the original building was later covered

over with another structure bearing very different symbols.

In Book of Mormon history, this half century was the golden age following the appearance of the resurrected Jesus to the Nephites in Bountiful; however, 4 Nephi gives only two brief verses about this period (see 4 Ne. 1:19-20). (Of course we do not positively know that Teotihuacan was one of the cities of the Nephites or Lamanites, but the change in deities that Cabrera reports is so striking that we may at least speculate that worship of Jesus Christ, under the name translated by the later Aztecs as Quetzalcoatl, prevailed there.)

Cabrera's picture of the transition between the two sacred buildings is interesting: "the Plumed Serpent [representing Quetzalcoatl] . . . acquired for this period of time a preponderant force in the political and religious aspect of Teotihuacan. This is shown by the ostentatious, sculpture-decorated structure, which to construct required enormous labor . . . making it one of the great glories of Teotihuacan." But what was the reason, the author goes on, for them to mutilate many of the enormous plumed serpent heads and then construct a new edifice of lesser quality covering the first one? The change was not simply one of architectural style. More likely it had to do with changing political and religious power.

Cabrera continues, "the band or group of priests representing Quetzalcoatl held power at Teotihuacan from at least the time when the first structure was erected,

before A.D. 200. But then other religious groups arose who were represented by the symbolism of jaguars, coyotes, birds and fishes along with other mythological beings." Priests or followers of this new religious persuasion eventually gained control of the city; the date for the change is not known precisely but is usually considered after approximately A.D. 300. Paintings and sculptures of jaguars and other symbolic animals are found widely throughout the sacred portion of the metropolis thereafter.

Fourth Nephi 1:26-41 reports the rise of new "churches" rivaling "the church of Christ," and which eventually came to dominate the society. This took place about A.D. 210 to 260, a reasonable approximation to the scholars' estimate of A.D. 300.

Cabrera concludes with questions about this "period of social crisis whose causes are unknown": "Do the phenomena mentioned represent other Teotihuacan groups, or groups coming in from elsewhere, intent on establishing at Teotihuacan their own religion?" Or, "what was going on in Teotihuacan society in the area of religious and political organizations in the interval between A.D. 200 and 350?"

Those who read the Book of Mormon as authentic ancient history will feel they already have a useful explanation. But we too would like, in the author's final words, "better information, to establish more exact dates of these social events and determine their causes."

Based on research by John L. Sorenson.

## New Bibliographies Help Answer Questions about Animals and Metals in the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon mentions animals and metals that do not seem to fit into the conventional scholarly view of animals and metals in the New World. Two new study aids prepared by John L. Sorenson and available through F.A.R.M.S. provide information that will help students of the Book of Mormon examine and perhaps resolve these problems.

### ANIMALS

How animal names in the Book of Mormon are to be understood is not clear. Two names are used that apparently have no English equivalents. In other cases, although English words are used, the precise equivalents for them in modern zoological terms are problematic. Moreover, scientists studying the natural history of the New World usually suppose that certain animals seemingly identified in the Book of Mormon were not present in ancient America during the period when the scriptural account refers to them.

*Animals in the Book of Mormon: An Annotated Bibliography* presents information previously not available to apply to these problems. Linguistic materials are cited that suggest novel alternatives to our understanding of ancient labels for animals. Information in some of the sources cited indicates that zoological experts have missed important but obscure facts about the presence of certain animals in ancient America.

The information presented allows for better questions and answers about these and other questions:

- What may the Book of Mormon mean when it talks about various uses of animals?
- What may be learned by referring to the usage of animal terms in Semitic and Mesoamerican languages?
- What actual animals were used in ancient America?
- When and where were which species present?
- What information is available that tells us about cultural processes involved in managing animals in this area?

### METALS

The text of the Book of Mormon refers many times to metals, ores, and metal processing. There have been three kinds of problems involved in interpreting those statements: (1) What do the words mean? How are they to be translated into modern languages? (2) Conventional scholars say that

no metals were used in Mesoamerica during the period of Book of Mormon history and that metals indicated by the text are not found in the archaeological remains. (3) The Near Eastern metallurgical background of Book of Mormon peoples, as represented in scholarly sources, does not square with the text.

*Metals and Metallurgy in the Book of Mormon Text* contains information that will advance understanding about these problems:

- A summary of statements in the Book of Mormon about metals.
- Annotated bibliographies of sources on Old World metallurgy and New World metalworking.
- A table listing metal specimens from the archaeological record that may come from the right place and time to be relevant to the Book of Mormon.

## Donation Makes Wide-Margin Edition Available at Reduced Price

Eldin Ricks, a long-time friend of F.A.R.M.S. and student of the Book of Mormon, has made a generous contribution to support Book of Mormon research. He has donated to F.A.R.M.S. all of his remaining stock of his wide-margin edition of the Book of Mormon, both so that it can be sold less expensively and reach more people and so that the

proceeds from the sales, instead of coming to him, can be used to support further research.

This edition of the Book of Mormon has wide margins to allow for copious note taking and is printed in sections that are convenient to take to Sunday School class. An attractive binder is included to protect the sections.

## Electronic Databases Speed and Enrich Your Scripture and Gospel Study

As part of our service to students of the scriptures, we have arranged with Infobases, Inc., to distribute some of their electronic databases of gospel materials to F.A.R.M.S. subscribers at significant savings. These databases help you find verses of scripture and passages of text much faster than by hand, using verse or page number or key words or phrases, and they open up connections between passages in new ways.

Except for the Gospel Infobase Library on CD-ROM, which is available for both PC and Macintosh, all of the Infobases offered here require the following computer hardware and software:

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## Broadcast of Nibley Book of Mormon Class Begins in CA

The Hugh Nibley Book of Mormon class that is being broadcast in Utah by KBYU (channel 11 at 5:00 P.M. on Sundays) is now available in Orange County, California, on Dimension Cable (channel 48 at 8:00 P.M. on Mondays). This public service by Dimension Cable makes available to a new audience a weekly broadcast of Nibley's insights into the Book of Mormon.

This broadcast is the result of efforts by Don Sessions, a friend of F.A.R.M.S., and the Laguna Niguel Stake public communications council, who worked with Dimension Cable to arrange for broadcast time. The F.A.R.M.S. office has also received inquiries from other supporters who wish to make similar arrangements with local broadcasters. F.A.R.M.S. will make broadcast masters available to any broadcasters who are willing to make TV broadcast time available as a public service.

Viewers in Utah and California who are now able to enjoy these broadcasts are strongly urged to express their appreciation to KBYU or Dimension Cable. Letters of appreciation are important in keeping this public service at times that are convenient for viewers. Write:

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## Book News

Those of you who ordered copies of *Temple and Cosmos* should have received your orders by now. Manufacturing problems experienced by Deseret Book delayed the release of this new volume in the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, but we think you will agree that the final product was worth the wait. Already we are receiving enthusiastic comments about the quality of the illustrations and the depth of Nibley's analysis. If early trends are any indication, this should be one of the most popular volumes in the series.

Now available from Aspen Books is Daniel Peterson's *Abraham Divided: An LDS Perspective on the Middle East*. It provides a clear analysis of Islam and of the conflicts between the peoples of the Middle East. In addition, Peterson discusses the history of the LDS Church in the Middle East and compares Islam and Mormonism, the Book of Mormon and the Koran. See the enclosed flyer and the order form for details.

Aspen Books has also made available on the same flyer *Joseph Smith: A PhotoBiography*, by Susan Evans McCloud. This biography, which is aimed at young readers and contains numerous historical photos and prints, contains a good chapter on the Book of Mormon and its translation.

## Price Change Required

Since the publication of the last Newsletter, Deseret Book has changed the retail prices on two books featured there. *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* is now \$9.95 (instead of \$10.95) and *Temple and Cosmos* is now \$24.95 (instead of \$21.95). If you purchased *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* at the higher price, you may request a \$.75 credit on your next order.

## Price Reduced on Nibley Pearl of Great Price Videos

BYU Continuing Education has reduced the price of the Hugh Nibley Pearl of Great Price Class on Video from \$250 to \$200. We are offering the set for a limited time for only \$189. This is a great opportunity to get your own copy. Thirteen videotapes (with workbooks) contain two semesters of Nibley's extraordinarily insightful, line-by-line analysis of the Pearl of Great Price, bringing this university classroom experience to your home.

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WEL-92	Welch, John W., ed., <i>Reexploring the Book of Mormon</i> , 320 pp., Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., softbound, retail \$9.95 ( <b>Price change—see back of order form</b> )			-15% = \$8.50 -20% = \$8.00	
N-12	Nibley, Hugh W., <i>Temple and Cosmos</i> , vol. 12 in the Collected Works, 600 pp., Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., hardbound, retail \$24.95 ( <b>Price change</b> )			-15% = \$21.25 -20% = \$20.00	
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