



Type: Magazine Article

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## The Book of Mormon Land - V. The Ruins of Today

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Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 23, No. 23 (1 December 1888), pp. 354–355

Published by: George Q. Cannon & Sons

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**Abstract:** A series of articles containing commentary on important Book of Mormon issues, such as the language of Nephi, Reformed Egyptian, the journey from Jerusalem to the promised land, Lehi's landing on the coast of Chile, and the possible route of Nephi's flight from his brothers. The geographies of Chile, Columbia, and other South American locations are examined in light of the Book of Mormon.

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It is astonishing how much reverence is shown to the king and how attentive those surrounding him are to his every wish implied or expressed. He is continually shielded by a gaudy umbrella, which is one of the emblems of royalty. Should the slightest moisture appear on his face it is delicately removed with a fine cloth by one of his wives. A sneeze from him is the signal for all who hear it to break out in prayers for his welfare and safety. When he drinks, two female attendants spread a white cloth before him, while others hold the royal umbrellas to protect him from the gaze of those who may be near; everyone who has a gun fires it, bells are sounded, and amid the confusion which attends this indulgence in the liquid element, the courtiers bend with their heads to the ground.

In approaching the king no one does it in an erect position—he either wriggles along like a snake or crawls on his hands and knees into the sovereign's presence. Before rising the subject prostrates himself flat upon the ground and with his hands throws the dust all over his person. He kisses the ground and in doing so gathers on his lips as much dust as possible, because his respect for royalty is measured by the amount of dust he is able to retain on his body and clothes.

A message from the king to a subject, though the latter may be in reach of the monarch, is never communicated direct, but is first imparted to a woman of the court called the Dakro, who in turn gives it to another person, and thus continues until it has passed by perhaps five or six individuals, before reaching the petitioner. In giving information to the king the order of procedure is reversed, and when the Dakro receives it she falls on all-fours, and whispers the message into the ruler's ears.

Every year the "Customs" of Dahome are celebrated at the cost of numerous lives. The victims who are selected by the king, are secured before the festivities commence, and are given full opportunities of seeing all that takes place during the four days preceding their execution. They are also richly fed and carefully tended by their guards, and seem to enjoy, without thought of the fate that awaits them, the singing, dancing, processions, etc., which form a part of the ceremonies of the sacrifice.

The evening of the fourth day is known as the Evil Night. It is then that the king, accompanied by the executioner and a select retinue, proceeds to the market-place and witnesses the death of the hapless victims who have already been chosen for sacrifice. On this night unlucky is the native who ventures from home, as any who are thus captured are hustled away to the place of execution and serve to increase the number of messengers to the other side.

Before the death penalty is inflicted the king, it is said, addresses the captives in a mild way and gives them messages to convey to his dead father; they are charged to inform him that his memory is revered, his many noble acts are remembered, and that his successor has sent these new attendants to wait upon him. The king then strikes the first blow, after which the executioner steps in and does his duty. It is generally conceded by those who are somewhat informed in regard to these "customs" that during this fatal night some thirty men are usually slain, and that during other nights and days while the ceremonies are in progress some fifty other persons of both sexes are murdered in the king's dwelling by the blood-thirsty Amazon warriors—a body of women who serve as the king's body-guard. In these latter instances the king also gives his instructions to those expected to convey them to

the deceased king, after which the soldiers fall upon the defenseless beings and beat them to death with maces.

Many of those who are thus slain are prisoners who have been captured in war, or criminals who instead of being promptly despatched are reserved for this annual celebration. While awaiting their doom they are treated with the greatest consideration and their every want is supplied. In fact it would be very unwise, according to their ideas, for the king to treat them otherwise than good, for fear they might feel inclined to communicate wrong messages to the dead king.

Every trivial matter that occurs within the kingdom is considered of sufficient importance for the despatching of a messenger to the great beyond. The advent of a white man into the country, the change of residence of the king, the severe illness of any of his household, or even the making of a new drum are items which it is supposed will interest the dead and the information is not long withheld from him.

One portion of these terrible "Customs" is represented in our accompanying engraving. King Gozo who lived in the year 1818, after repeated attempts, succeeded in conquering the warlike Oyos, whom he drove from their own country and whose chief city he made his own capital. In honor of the event he decided to institute an annual celebration at which a number of human sacrifices are made. These, when dead, are dressed as were the conquered Oyos, and placed in a sitting or standing position on platforms varying in height from ten to forty feet. In their hands are placed calabashes containing oil, grain and other products of the land which are devoured by the vultures and turkey-buzzards, which, because of the reverence given these birds by the natives, abound in great numbers. At this celebration, any criminals who may be handy are executed in numerous ways to vary the monotony. One method is illustrated—that of hanging with the head downward until life is extinct. The bodies of those who thus die are left a prey to the birds which, as may be seen, flock around to fatten on the carcasses.

These are some of the ways in which the savages of Dahome find comfort. The shedding of blood seems to be an almost daily necessity, and no event of importance can be celebrated to their entire satisfaction without the sacrifice of life.

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## THE BOOK OF MORMON LAND.

### V.—The Ruins of To-day.

BY HAGOTH.

AT the south end of Lake Titicaca is a little valley walled in on three sides by mountain ridges. In this valley, on the eastern side, about fifteen miles from the lake and near the village of Tiahuanauco are found extensive ruins of ancient buildings, the workmanship of which show that the builders were better skilled in their art than were the builders of other cities found elsewhere in South America. These ruins are of very remote antiquity. When the Spanish visited them over three hundred years ago they found them about as they are now. The Peruvian civilization knew concerning their origin. The Indians told the first Spaniards that they existed before the sun shone in the heavens. Tradition is silent concerning them. Travelers speak of them as the oldest in South America, and all agree that they are the most imposing. Squires says of them:

"That as regards the Inca civilization they are as much out of place as they would be in New York Central Park or Boston Common. They have excited the admiration and wonder alike of the earliest and latest travelers, most of whom, vanquished in their attempts to penetrate the mystery of their origin, have been content to assign them an antiquity beyond that of the other monuments of America, and to regard them as the solitary remains of a civilization that disappeared before that of the Incas began, and cotemporaneous with that of Egypt and the East. Unique, yet perfect in type and harmonious in style, they appear to be the work of a people who were thorough masters of an architecture which had no infancy, passed through no period of growth, and of which we find no other examples.

"I may say once for all, carefully weighing my words, that in no part of the world have I seen stones cut with such mathematical precision and admirable skill as in Peru, and in no part of Peru are there any to surpass those which are scattered over the plains of Tiahuanaco."

Approaching the ruins the first thing that attracts the attention is a large, irregular mound, four hundred and fifty feet wide, six hundred and twenty feet long and fifty feet high. It has been much disfigured by treasure-seekers who have dug into its sides and made excavations from its summit until now it resembles a large, unnatural heap of earth rather than the work of human hands. It was formerly terraced and held in place by walls of hewn stone, and the whole surmounted by structures of stone, parts of the foundations of which are still to be seen. That it was erected for defensive purposes there is no doubt, though it appears to have been more a place of refuge in case of a surprise than a regular fortress.

The mound or fortress is surrounded on all sides by buildings of hewn stone, of one of which we will make particular mention. This building stands near the mound, is a rectangle three hundred and eighty-eight by four hundred and forty-five feet, the walls of which were of rough stone pillars, partly shaped by art. These stones are from nine to fourteen feet long, two to four feet broad and about thirty inches thick. They are placed erect with one end in the ground, and stand about fifteen feet apart. The space between was formerly walled up with smaller stones, most of which have now disappeared. Within this enclosure, on the the western side, was another rectangular structure one hundred and ninety feet wide and two hundred and eighty feet long. This was joined to the outer wall on the west, leaving an open court on three sides, which was elevated eight feet above the level of the plain by being filled up with earth. The inner walls were of rough stone rising above the courts, but are now in ruins. It would appear that this building had been erected of wood or other perishable materials that have long since disappeared. At the front of the inner building, and between it and the outer wall, stands a great stone doorway thirteen feet five inches long, seven feet two inches high above ground and eighteen inches thick. A doorway is cut through its center, above which on the outer side or front and extending the whole length of the stone are four lines of sculpture in low relief "like the Egyptian plain sculptures," and a central figure immediately over the doorway sculptured in high relief. On the reverse side the doorway is surrounded by friezes or cornices, and above it on each side two small niches, below which also on either side is a single large niche. "The stone itself is a dark and exceedingly hard trachyte. It is faced with a precision that no skill can excel. Its lines are perfectly drawn and its right angles turned with an accuracy that the most careful geometer could not surpass. Barring some injuries and defacements and some slight damages by weather,

I don't believe there exists a better piece of stone-cutting, the material considered, on this or the other continent."

The central figure represents an image holding a scepter in each hand; the upper end of that in the right hand represents a key and the lower end the head of a condor. That in the left hand at the upper end represents two staffs surmounted by two condor heads which unite in one just above the hand and terminate at the bottom as the other, with a condor head.

The head of the image is surrounded by what may be termed rays, terminating in twelve circles and four heads of some animal. Below the chin there are also five rays and circles smaller than those above. On either side are three lines of squares containing winged, human-headed and condor-headed figures, kneeling to the center figure and holding before it a scepter or staff.

Besides these there are other figures and representations that I will not attempt to describe. This is the only sculpture work found in the ruins, and nowhere else in South America do we find anything similar to it. That the figures have some symbolical meaning, there can be no question.

One peculiarity is noticeable: the building faces the east as did Solomon's temple of old, and, in fact, the plans of the two buildings are very similar. It will be remembered that Nephi modeled his temple after that of Solomon. The stones for these buildings were brought from a quarry on a peninsula of Lake Titicaca, forty miles distant. This is evident from the fact that similar blocks of stone are now found between the quarry and the lake and the lake and the ruins. This would necessitate the use of ships, and that of no mean dimensions, as some of the stones in the ruins measure twenty-six feet long, seventeen feet wide and over four feet thick, one measures forty feet in length and of proportionate width and thickness and must weigh upwards of six hundred thousand pounds.

It is folly to suppose that rush boats or balsas could be made to carry such weights the distance of twenty-five miles across the lake. If ships were built, which seems probable, whence came the timber, as there is now none suitable for such a purpose within the whole valley of the Desaguadero? Another peculiarity is that no mortar was used in the buildings, but the stones were fastened together by a sort of T clamp and by means of grooves and shoulders similar to our mortise and tenon and were held in position by copper pins or bolts which passed through them. There were formerly columns and stone images in the ruins, but they have been carried away to La Paz and the surrounding towns, as has also many of the hewn stones. In fact, the ruins have served as a convenient quarry for the Spanish, (where stones could be had without the trouble of quarrying or dressing them) for more than three hundred years.

WHICH will you do, smile and make others happy, or be crabbed and make every body around you miserable? You can live among flowers and singing birds, or in the mire surrounded by fogs and frogs. The amount of happiness which you can produce is incalculable, if you will only show a smiling face, a kind heart, and speak pleasant words. On the other hand, by sour looks, cross words, and a fretful disposition, you can make hundreds altogether miserable.