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### Review of V. Garth Norman, *Izapa Sacred Space: Sculpture Calendar Codex*

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**Abstract:** This book is the culmination of fifty years of research by one of the foremost scholars in the field of Pre-Classic Mesoamerican studies, particularly focusing on the important site of Izapa, located on the southern Pacific coast of Mexico near the border of Guatemala. Archaeologist V. Garth Norman began his work at Izapa in 1962 and continued to work at the site for two decades on behalf of the New World Archaeological Foundation, resulting in the publication of his *Izapa Sculpture: Album* in 1973, *Izapa Sculpture: Text* in 1976, and *Astronomical Orientations of Izapa Sculptures* in 1980, a pioneering contribution to the important field of archaeoastronomy. Izapa is the largest and most important Late Formative (500 BC–AD 200) center in the region, with large pyramidal structures constructed around a number of plazas dotted with sculpted monuments placed at key points. More than eighty carved monuments are known from the site, an unprecedented wealth of art and a key resource to our understanding of ancient Mesoamerican society and theology. Norman begins with the premise, first proposed by Vincent Malmström in 1973, that Izapa's latitude makes it the perfect candidate for the origin of the two most important ancient Mesoamerican calendars.



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*Izapa Sacred Space: Sculpture Calendar Codes*, by V. Garth Norman (Sunhew Press, 2012).

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But Norman goes well beyond this important finding by asserting that the positions of the Izapa monuments constitute a massive system for calendric interpretation. In so doing, he convincingly asserts that these monuments must be studied and interpreted as a whole, rather than to read them individually or out of context. In addition, he masterfully demonstrates that the

complex artistic symbolism of the Izapa monuments is just as highly developed a system of communication as the hieroglyphic texts of the Maya. Norman's profound understanding of the underlying Mesoamerican theology of Izapa and related cultures adds much-needed blood and flesh to what otherwise would be a lifeless corpse of mathematical and astronomical data. He uses the myth narratives of the Popol Vuh and ethnographic sources creatively, showing that the Izapans were not just interested in the dance of planets and stars in the heavens but also in what these movements say about the cycles of life itself.

This book will surely prove to be of great interest to anyone interested in the art, science, and culture of ancient Mesoamerica.

—Allen J. Christenson

*Exploring the First Vision*, edited by Samuel Alonzo Dodge and Steven C. Harper (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 2012).

This book sets out to do exactly what the title says it does—explore the First Vision. For most readers, that exploration will take them places they have not yet seen. Writings by many well-known Church scholars are brought together to give a broader and deeper meaning to the genesis event of the Restoration. Contributors include scholars such as James B. Allen, Richard Lloyd Anderson, Milton V. Backman Jr., Steven C. Harper, Dean C. Jessee, Larry C. Porter, and John W. Welch. Their qualifications, research, and insights are impressive, and they have strived, in an evenhanded and rigorous way, to achieve the “coupling [of] historical study with faith” (xviii).

This volume includes foundational, classic scholarship in previously published articles, such as “The Earliest