



BOOK OF MORMON CENTRAL

<http://bookofmormoncentral.org/>

Type: Newsletter

U.A.S. Newsletter, no. 31 (December 9, 1955)

Editors(s): Ross T. Christensen, Loyce Partridge, and Roberta Hansen
Published by: University Archaeological Society, Brigham Young University

U. A. S. NEWSLETTER

Number 31

Editor: Ross T. Christensen

December 9, 1955

Assistant Editors: Loyce Partridge, Roberta Hansen

Published approximately every six weeks at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, by The UNIVERSITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY. Its purpose is to disseminate knowledge of recent archaeological discoveries bearing on the Latter-day Saint scriptures; also, of the Society and its members. Subscription by membership in the Society: three dollars per year; or Life Membership, fifty dollars.

-
- 31.0 New Discoveries in Mesoamerican Calendar Research. In the November 8 Newsletter (30.3), announcement was made of the recent printing of No. 1 of the BYU archaeology department series (Publications in Archaeology and Early History), entitled The Ancient Middle-American Calendar System: Its Origin and Development, by M. Wells Jakeman. Of a technical nature, this publication presents a number of findings of special interest to UAS members as bearing upon the claims of the Book of Mormon. In response to a request from the editor of the Newsletter, the author has submitted the following non-technical summary of his paper:
- 31.00 Early Features of the Mesoamerican Calendar. The principal contribution of the paper is a reconstruction of the successive steps involved in the development of the main "Maya" version of the ancient Middle American calendar system. As shown by hieroglyphic and other evidence, the earlier of these steps all took place in the so-called "Pre-Classic" period of ancient Mesoamerican history, dating to the first millenium BC and first three centuries AD (i.e. the period of the second or Israelitish Nephite civilization of the Book of Mormon). Several of these earlier steps were discovered to duplicate features of the ancient Israelite calendar indicated by the Book of Mormon to have been that of the Nephite people of Mesoamerica in this "Pre-Classic" period--among them a cycle of seven days, which is the period in the Israelite-Nephite calendar called the week(!). This constitutes an important addition to the growing list of trait-correspondences between the ancient American and Near Eastern civilizations confirming the claims of the Book of Mormon.
- 31.01 Date of an Ancient Migration into Mexico. Another noteworthy result of this study is that of calendrical and hieroglyphic evidence fixing the time of the final migration from Central America into Mexico of the original "Tulteca" or "Ulmecca-and-Xicalanca" of the Chronicles (i.e. the ancient urban-theocratic people of Mesoamerica in the "Pre-Classic" period, the followers of the Life God "Quetzalcoatl," who correspond in time and character to the Nephites of the Book of Mormon). This migration occurred sometime between about the dates 8.13.0.0.0 and 8.16.0.0.0 of the Maya chronological era, or 297 and 357 AD of the Christian era (in the 11.16.0.0.0 or Thompson correlation of these eras). This agrees closely with the Book of Mormon date of the final migration of these people--i.e. the Nephites--from the "land southward" or northern Central America into the "land northward" or southern and central Mexico, viz. c. 327 AD (Morm. 2:3 et seq.; it will be noted, in fact, that the mean date from the calendrical evidence is also c. 327 AD!).
- 31.02 Beginning Point of an Ancient Time-Count. Still another contribution, which should have great interest to both Book of Mormon and New Testament

students, is the identification of the beginning point of one of the ancient time-counts of the Middle American calendar system, namely the day 7.18.0.0.1 of the Maya era, whose equivalent in the European-Christian calendar is the day April 6, 2 AD. Since there is no special calendrical or astronomical reason for the adoption, by the ancient Mesoamerican calendricists, of this particular day as the epoch of a new chronological count, the reason for this must have been historical. That is, some event of such great political or religious importance occurred on this day, that the ancient Mesoamericans thereafter considered it the beginning of a new era in their history. (This event may, in fact, have been the mysterious "Dawn" frequently mentioned in the native histories as an early event apparently connected with the religion or history of Quetzalcoatl, the Life God of the ancient Mesoamericans, when, it is stated, "a new world dawned for them" /Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel, ed. and trans. by Ralph L. Roys, Washington, 1933, p. 102/.) Now it will be recalled that the Book of Mormon indicates that its ancient Nephite calendricists of Mesoamerica (like the early Christians in the Old World) adopted a new time-count whose beginning point was the birth of Christ, the Life God of the Nephites (3 Nephi 2:5-8). That great event is dated in the European-Christian calendar to the early spring of the year 1 AD (or, according to New Testament evidence, a year close to 1 AD); and was apparently revealed by the Lord Himself to the Prophet Joseph Smith as having occurred on the day April 6 (Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 20 preface and v. 1)! This remarkable calendrical correspondence presents, of course, important further support for the Book of Mormon, as well as new evidence for solving the long-time problem of the actual date of the birth of the Savior.

- 31.03 Free Copies to Members. UAS members may obtain a copy of this paper free of charge, as one of the three past publications to which they are entitled per year of membership in addition to the current Society publications and The Biblical Archaeologist.
- 31.1 Significant Discussions Heard at Annual Round-Table. The 1955 Widtsoe Memorial Award and an actual-size drawing-reproduction of the Lehi Stone featured the annual UAS Fall Round-Table, held this year on the BYU campus, November 21.
- 31.10 Widtsoe Award. This year, the John A. Widtsoe Memorial Award was presented to Gareth W. Lowe (photograph below), former graduate assistant in the Department of Archaeology and former editor of the UAS Newsletter, for his paper, "The Life Work of William E. Gates." The award was received on his behalf by his wife, Mrs. Hope D. Lowe. (Mr. Lowe is now absent in Mexico as assistant field director of an archaeological expedition; see November 8 Newsletter, 30.8. The Widtsoe Award is an annual cash gift made by the faculty of the Department of Archaeology to a BYU student for an outstanding contribution to the science.)
- A condensation of Mr. Lowe's paper was read by Victor W. Purdy, serials librarian of the Heber J. Grant Library of BYU. The heroic labors of William E. Gates in discovering, purchasing, and studying nearly all known Mesoamerican linguistic documents, were recounted. The major part of the invaluable Gates Collection has been in possession of the BYU archaeology department since 1946 and gives the University the potentiality of becoming one of the world's great centers of Mesoamerican research. Mr. Lowe's paper, it is expected, will be published in extended form in

a future issue of the Society's Bulletin.

- 31.11 Facsimile of the Lehi Stone. Dr. M. Wells Jakeman, Society President and specialist in the ancient civilizations of Mesoamerica, presented his actual-size, facsimile drawing-reproduction of the stela discovered at the Izapa ruins, southern Mexico, and identified by him as a sculptured portrayal of the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life, as recorded in 1 Nephi 8. This heavy stone monument is being transported to Mexico City by the Mexican government for preservation and display in the National Museum under an arrangement whereby the UAS has assumed the cost of the transfer (see August 10 Newsletter, 28.7). It is regarded as the most direct and striking evidence bearing on the claims of the Book of Mormon yet to come forth from the science of archaeology. Dr. Jakeman's drawing, now on display in the Department of Archaeology, BYU, is based upon the original Smithsonian photograph, as well as his own examination of the Stone in 1954 (see April 12, 1954, Newsletter, 19.1). (See the Society's Bulletin No. 4, March, 1953, for the full story of the Lehi Stone.)

Souvenir gifts were presented to those who contributed to the fund for the transfer of the Lehi Stone to Mexico City. The gifts were the colorful folding plates and explanatory booklets recently published by the Carnegie Institution of Washington, entitled, "Ancient Maya Paintings of Bonampak, Mexico." Each copy was accompanied by a letter of appreciation signed by the Society president. Contributions were sufficient to complete payment for the transfer (see November 8 Newsletter, 30.2).

- 31.12 BYU Expeditions, Past and Future. Dr. Jakeman told of his 1954 expedition to the middle Usumacinta valley of Central America (see Newsletter of August 23, 1954, 22.03), and of his return expedition to be put into the field in January, 1956. This will be discussed more fully, it is expected, in the next issue of the Newsletter.

- 31.2 Annual Business Meeting. Elections of officers and a new Honorary Member, and six amendments to the Society's constitution, were effected at the Annual Business Meeting, held November 21 in connection with the Fall Round-Table (see above, 31.1). A summary of minutes follows:

- 31.20 Amendments. The following amendments to the UAS constitution proposed by the Executive Committee were ratified:

(1) That general business meetings of the Society shall henceforth be held only when called by the Executive Committee; that elections of officers shall be held only once every three years, except that an election shall be held in 1956; and that other general business of the Society shall be effected by mail whenever decided by the President.

(2) That all general Society business requiring the vote of the members shall be effected by means of printed ballots distributed through the mail, unless effected in a general business meeting called by the Executive Committee.

(3) That no person may be elected to the office of the President of the Society for two successive terms.

(4) That the office of General Secretary-Treasurer must henceforth be filled only by a staff member of the Department of Archaeology of the Brigham Young University.

(5) That a special membership category be created called Research Patron, to include all those members of the Society who annually contribute ten dollars or more to the Research Fund of the Society in addition to the regular membership fee, such persons to receive special

Society honors.

(6) That all General Officers of the Society must be Research Patrons in order to continue in their office.

31.21 Annual Reports. The annual membership and financial reports were briefly presented. The Society had 445 members of record of all categories, which represents a 28.2% increase over the total at the last Annual Business Meeting, June 23, 1954. The Society treasury contained total assets of \$1548.08. Of the Society's income since the last Annual Business Meeting, \$1639.15 had been collected in the form of membership dues; \$398.05 had resulted from the sale of Bulletin No. 4 (Tree-of-Life issue); and \$886.26 had been netted from special functions, earmarked for research purposes (see March 31 Newsletter, 26.3, and that of July 2, 1954, 21.2).



Welby W. Ricks Gareth W. Lowe
... elected General Officers

Elections. The present administrative officers of the Society were re-elected to serve until the 1956 elections. They are: M. Wells Jakeman, president; Franklin S. Harris, Jr., vice-president; and Ross T. Christensen, general secretary-treasurer.

Gareth W. Lowe, winner of the 1955 John A. Widtsoe Memorial Award (see above, 31.10), and Welby W. Ricks, graduate assistant in the BYU Department of Archaeology for the current year (see November 8 News-

letter, 30.4), were elected general officers of the Society.

Asa S. Kienke of Salt Lake City, the sole surviving member of the Brigham Young Academy Expedition to Central and South America of 1900, was elected an Honorary Member of the Society (see below, 31.3). Mr. Kienke is the fourth person ever to receive this award.

31.23 Resolution. A resolution of the Executive Committee authorizing the spending of approximately one thousand dollars of Society funds for a UAS expedition to Central America during the coming winter, to be conducted by the Society president, was ratified.

31.24 Refreshments. Following the Business Meeting, unusual refreshments were served to Society members and visitors by a committee representing the UAS Campus Chapter headed by Donald L. Rice. (The Campus Chapter also assisted in other important ways in connection with the Round-Table and the Business Meeting.)



Asa S. Kienke
... named Honorary Member

31.3 Story of Asa Kienke Mailed to Society Members. A four-page article on the archaeological adventures of Asa S. Kienke and his award of an Honorary Membership in the UAS (see above, 31.22) has been published by the BYU Alumni Association. "Y Archaeologists Explore Ancient Ruins in 1900 on the B. Y. Academy Expedition," appeared in the November-December issue of

The Brigham Young Alumnus (Vol. 8, No. 6, pp. 8-11).

By arrangement with Society officers, copies of the Alumnus are being mailed to all UAS members. The normal circulation of the magazine is about 25,000.

31.4 Society Members to Receive Travel Literature. By arrangement with Society officers, the BYU Travel-Study Tours will mail promotional literature to the entire membership list of the UAS. Thus, Society members automatically will be kept advised of the bureau's tour offerings. Included in the itineraries are many points of archaeological interest.

31.5 Salt Lake Chapter Elects Officers. At a meeting on November 17, the Salt Lake Chapter of the UAS elected new officers. Miss Etta Rasmussen was named assistant director to take the place of Mrs. Kathrine Wilcox, re-tired for reasons of health, according to Franklin S. Harris, Jr., chapter director. Miss Onita Bendixen was chosen secretary in place of the former Miss Maxine Leigh (now married to Lt. Alvin R. Anderson and living at Duluth, Minn.). Dr. Harris has informed the editor of the excellent work of the retiring officers. He also appointed Stanford G. Robison an executive assistant.

Following elections, Dr. Harris spoke on the "Ancient Use of Metal Plates."

31.6 Campus Chapter Hears New-Testament Lecture. November 7, Dr. Russel E. Swensen, professor of history at BYU, addressed the Campus Chapter on "Types of New Testament Literature."

Near the beginning of the present century, Adolph Deissmann demonstrated that the New Testament was written in the ordinary vernacular Greek (Koine) of that period; it was not written in the classic dialect of Attica of the fifth century BC, as were most literary compositions of the time.

Despite the uniqueness of its message, much of the New Testament, upon close examination, is seen to fall into literary forms which were well known in contemporaneous non-Christian literature. Of Graeco-Roman types, letters, histories, Cynic-Stoic diatribes, Haustafeln (moral maxims), resurrection stories of mystery cults, allegories, biographies, cult tales, and possibly tragedies, all have their counterparts in New Testament literature. Of Jewish literary types, we find apocalypses, pseudepigrapha, parables, hymns, and Elijah-Elisha stories represented.

31.7 Publishes on Illinois Archaeology. Melvin L. Fowler, member of the UAS and curator of anthropology at the Illinois State Museum, is the author of an article, "Radiocarbon Dates and Illinois Archaeology, Part II," in the Journal of the Illinois State Archaeological Society, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1954 (Part I, same journal, 1952); also, "Some Fluted Projectile Points from Illinois," in American Antiquity, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 170-171, October, 1954. (See also March 31 Newsletter, 26.4).