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## Who Were Jaredites?, Part 1: Could They Be the Olmecs?

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# Who Were Jaredites?

## Part 1

### Could They Be the Olmecs?

Many of the prominent Book of Mormon geographers have suggested that the Jaredites were the ancient Olmecs. In addition, those that subscribe to the general Tehuantepec Geological theory consider the Olmecs to be an essential component to the overall Book of Mormon model. The following segments will evaluate critical aspects of the Olmec nation and its possible association with the Jaredites:

#### Population Considerations:

Utilizing population growth calculators and a conservative population growth rates the Jaredite nation could reach hundreds of millions, however, with constant wars, droughts, high infant and mother mortality rates and all kinds of pestilences it is obvious that their population numbers would be much lower. Some Book of Mormon researchers put the estimated population at the time of the final battles at 40 to 80 million [1]. A more realistic number is more like 20 million.

According to some scholars the Olmec population never even reached a million (...even major Olmec centers had only about a thousand residents, with perhaps a few thousand more in the immediate hinterlands. (Although, the total Olmec heartland population of about 350,000 people could have produced a sizable army...of up to 7,648 soldiers.)[2] This so called sizable army does not compute with the two million (Ether 15:2) warriors that were killed before the final Jaredite battle.

“Like all the known Olmec sites, San Lorenzo is much less impressive than the Mayan cities that dot the Yucatan peninsula to the east. One reason: it supported only a few thousand people, rather than 100,000 or more. The major buildings and plazas were little more than earthen mounds covered with grass, lacking any sort of masonry facade and probably topped with pole-and-thatch houses.” [14 Lemonick]

Another indication that the Olmec population was limited is the fact that San Lorenzo, the Olmec capital, was abandoned by the ninth century BC. La Venta, the new capital, came to an equally mysterious end around 400 BC. [13] It appears that the population levels at La Venta only reached a population level of 18,000. [8]

Assuming a conservative population number of the Jaredites at 10 million and an optimistic number of 500 hundred thousand for the Olmecs, the ratio is still 20:1 which is totally unacceptable. It could be as high as 50:1.

### Time Frame Considerations:

Establishing exact time frames during the Tower of Babel is very difficult so there needs to be latitude when considering certain events that are associated with the Jaredite travel. It appears that the time of the confounding of tongues happened sometime between 3000 and 2000 BC with a common belief that it happened sometime around 2,300 BC [3][4][9]

According to Mike Xu the Olmec culture began around 1100 BC. [5] Other scientists suggest that it started around 1200 or 1300 BC. [6] Therefore, the Olmec origins were approximately 1,000 years after the Tower of Babel.

According to Richard E.W. Adams,[11]there are practically no published settlement pattern date for the central and northern Veracruz Formative period pg. 232. This would eliminate any Jaredite activity during their first one thousand years of existence while they were expanding in the promise land.

### Facial Characteristics:

The facial characteristics of Olmec figurines are clearly Asian. This would be a major disqualifier since the Jaredites came from Mesopotamia.



Olmec Masks



### The Body Size of the Olmecs

Limhi sent forty-three men to search for Zarahemla, instead they found Jaredite records and breastplates that were large which implies that their bodies were also large.

Mosiah 8:10 *...they have brought breastplates, which are large...*

Ether 15:26... *And they were large and mighty men as to the strength of men.*

Dr. Cyper, who spent several years in Mexico excavating Olmec ruins, discovered that their bodies were not very large and similar to the small frames that are typical of Asians. [8]This is further evidence that the Olmecs were not from Mesopotamia.

## Religious Beliefs

The Olmecs practices Shamanism and child sacrifice, beliefs that were not mentioned in the Book of Ether. Evidently Shamanism originated from Asia which provides additional evidence that the Olmecs came from Orient. [10][7]

## Near First Landing

It is interesting that David Palmer, author of “In Search of Cumorah” made the following statement: “Archaeological site consistent with a trans-Atlantic crossing in 2700 BC is El Cuello (An early Mayan city) on the coast of Yucatan or Santa Luisa in Veracruz”. [8] The El Cuello site has a number of specifics that would make it an excellent candidate for the Jaredite first landing such as: (1) favorable ocean currents, (2) matching the Tower of Babel time line, (3) numerus nearby formative period settlements that would complement and expansion scenario, (4) compatibility with the Hill Ramah location and (5) a logical Jaredite travel route from Mesopotamia to the promise land.

Information about the Santa Luisa location is essentially non-existent. Therefore it is very difficult to tie a first landing scenario with the Olmec nation.

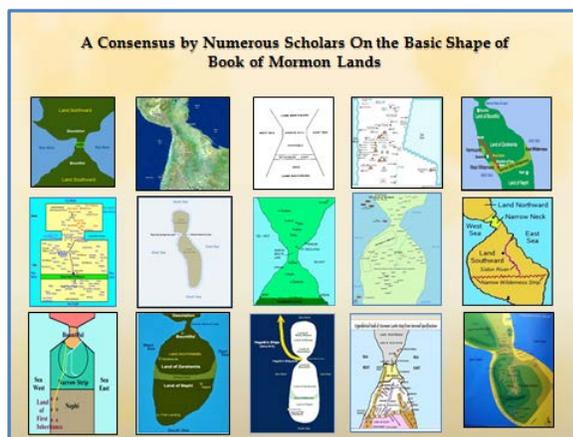
## Olmec Annihilation

The circumstances surrounding the final battles are very speculative; however it is interesting that the fall of the Olmecs coincides the fall of the Jaredites. Vaugh G Hansen speculates that it is possible that the Olmecs were caught up in the final war with the Jaredites and could have possibly been the aggressor. [10 pg49] Shiz, a general that fought against Coriantumr, has an Asian sounding name which may cause some to speculate about the Olmecs being the aggressor.

In addition, Christopher Minster also suggests that war could have been the cause of their demise. “...warfare between the Olmecs and any one of a number of local tribes could have contributed to the society's downfall.”[12]

## Hour Glass Configuration

There is a strong consensus amongst Book of Mormon scholars that the geographical makeup of Book of Mormon Lands should have a configuration similar to an hour glass. This concept has strong scriptural support of hundreds of directional inferences that point to a land that is in the north and a land that is in the south with a restriction in the middle. There are no directional inferences of going east or west. Therefore, the Olmec nation cannot conform to the Hour Glass configuration.



## Narrow Neck Complex

In Ether 10:20 we learn about the Jaredite connection to the “Narrow Neck” when the ruler Lib built a “great city” by the narrow neck. It is also understood that the land Desolation that is mention in conjunction with the land of Moron is also associated with the “Narrow Neck”. This is clarified in Ether 7:6, Mormon 3:5, Alma 22:29-32 and Alma 63:5. Therefore, the essential part of the Narrow Neck Complex is:

1. A narrow neck that is no wider than a day’s journey of a Nephite (less than 20 miles)
2. A place where the sea divides the land or where there are seas that separate the land northward from the land southward except for a narrow neck of land. This would require an east sea and a west sea on either side of the narrow neck.
3. A narrow passage that is associated with the fortification of the narrow neck.

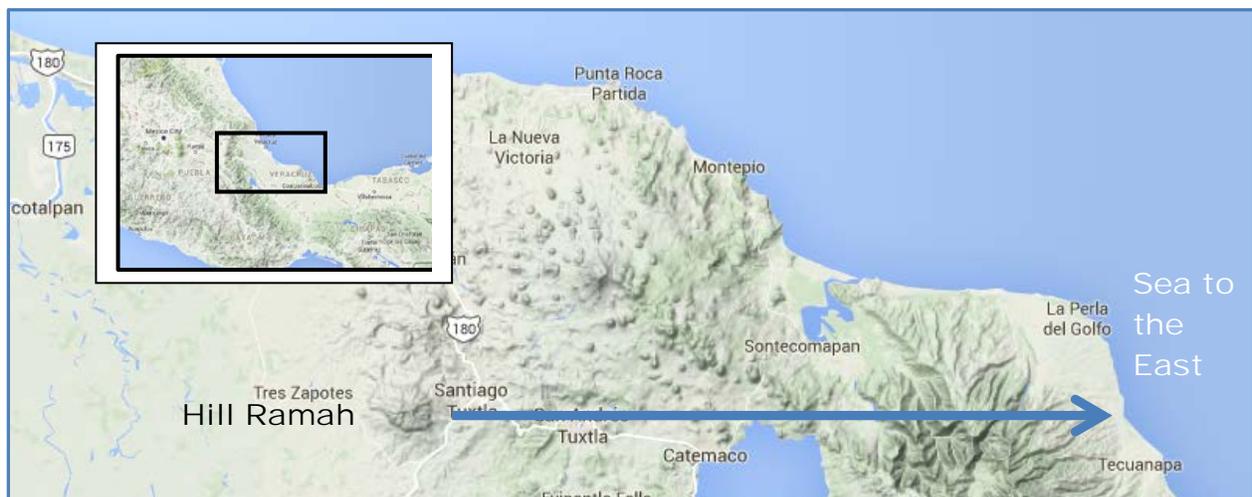
The Olmec nation will not qualify for these requirements due to the following;

1. There is not a narrow neck (less than twenty miles) in the vicinity of the Olmec nation.
2. There are no east and west seas that are in the vicinity of the Olmec nation.
3. There are no fortifications with a narrow passage way in the vicinity of the Olmec nation.

(The Narrow Neck Complex will be completely covered in another segment)

## What about the sea to the east and the city of Ablom

It is true that it is possible to conjure up a scenario where there could be a travel route to the east, however, it does not seem reasonable. In addition, there are no sites that would match the time from of the city of Ablom. Therefore, the scripture in Ether 9:3 where it describes Omer’s journey to the sea has little or no application to the Olmecs.



## The Resettlement of Jaredite Lands

Evidently, the Olmecs just disappeared without leaving a trace. In addition, their cites were never resettled until approximately 500 years later. The 500-year delay in resettlement does not coincide with the Book of Mormon text where the empty Jaredite cites were quickly resettled with Nephites and Lamanites.

## The Resettlement of the Olmec Territory

When the Olmec territory was resettled around 200 AD it appears that it was under the influence of the Teotihuacan Empire. This was especially true during the reign of Spearthrower Owl. [15] Therefore, Spearthrower Owl's occupation of the Tabasco and Veracruz regions is in serious conflict with the Book of Mormon "north countries". These countries are associated with the Tehuantepec Geographical models. This would mean that the Nephites that were living in Desolation and the norther countries would be under the control of Spearthrower Owl during the time they were living under the 350 AD Treaty and just prior and or during the final battle. This creates serious doubts about the definition and location of the "land northward" as it pertains to the land of the Olmecs.

## Hill Ramah Correlations

The following chart is an evaluation of the strengths and weakness of the two proposed Hill Cumorahs. The Hill Vigia has a significant advantage of the New York Hill Cumorah; however it still has some serious deficiencies.

A Comparative Analysis of Different Hill Cumorah Proposals	Cumorah	Hill Vigia
Prominent Hill	15	15
Triangulates with Desolation, Boaz and Jordan	5	5
Has rivers, fountains	5	10
Has major caves	5	5
In vicinity of Jaradites "First Landing"	5	5
Sizable hill that can view an extensive area	15	15
Has defensive features	10	15
Must have fertile land to sustain millions of people	10	10
Must be close to a sea	-5	15
The sea must be to the east	-5	10
Must have a large water system to the north	5	15
Must be located in a temperate zone	-5	15
Must be evidence of a horrific destruction	-5	10
NY Cumorah should be far from BoM Cumorah	-5	15
Cities that match the Nephite/Jaradite time frame	-5	5
It should be on an ancient trade route	5	10
	<b>50</b>	<b>175</b>

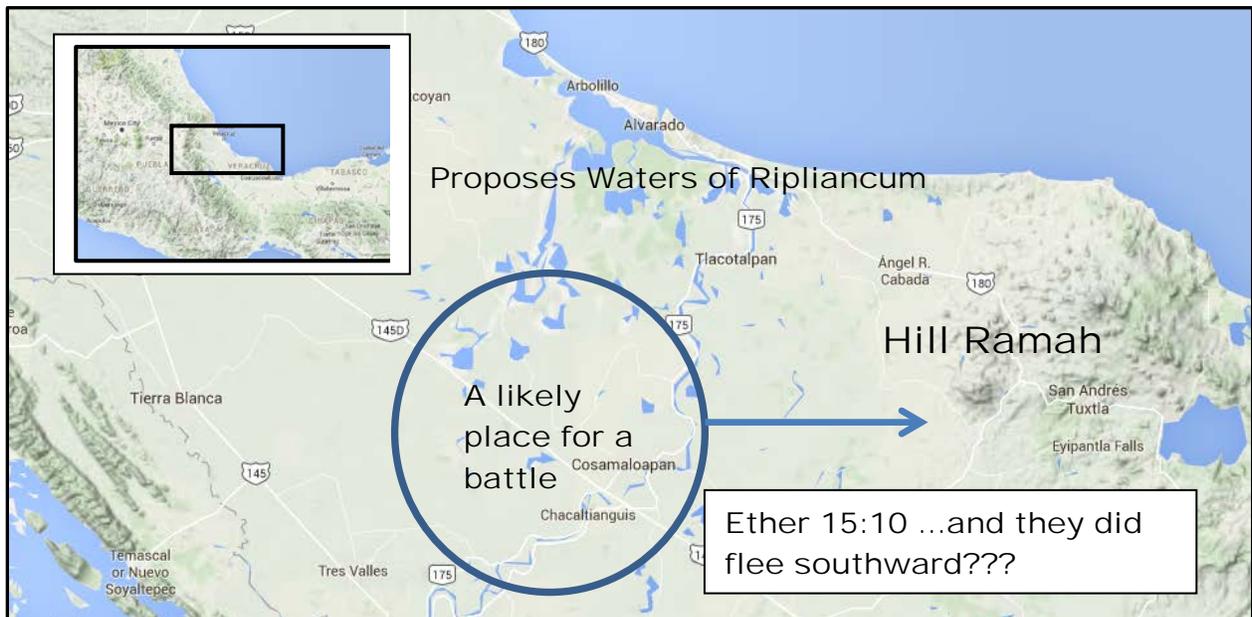
## The Geographic Land Area of the Olmecs

The Olmec nation's land mass does not come close to accommodating the many millions of Jaredites. It is true that there are a number of fragmented settlements scattered around Central America. Would it have possible to gather them up in a central location and have those involved in the war? Even if that were possible, the numbers would still be woefully short.



## What is the Directional Relationship Between the Waters of Ripliancum and the Hill Ramah? (Ether 15:8-11)

It would be difficult to come up with a scenario where they would be retreating to the south from the Waters of Ripliancum. Therefore, the Olmec, battles is likely somewhere else.



## The Limhi Expedition

It is likely the men that were sent to find Zarahemla probably followed the wrong river to the north. This is problematic for the Olmecs because there is not a second river of any consequence and the search party would have to travel east instead of north.

## The Discovery of Coriantumr

It is not certain as whether the Coriantumr found the Mulekites or whether the people of Mulek found him. In any event the distances and territory between the two had to be relatively close. In other words, the distance between Zarahemla and hill Ramah had to be less than a few hundred miles. This scenario also leads one to believe that the Mulekites and Jaredites were aware of each other. It appears that the hill in Tuxtla mountains (proposed Hill Ramah) would be too far to accommodate these requirements.

## Summary

It appears that the Olmecs were involved with the Jaredites, but only on a limited basis. This due to the following:

- The Olmec population numbers are only a fraction of the Jaredite numbers.
- Their emergence was approximately 1000 years after the Tower of Babel.
- Their facial features are Asian and not Mesopotamian.
- Their first landing specifics are non-existence
- The Olmec annihilation closely matches final time frame of the Jaredites
- The location of the Olmec nation does not conform to the “hour glass” configuration.
- There is a minimal relationship between the Olmec and the “narrow neck complex”.
- Omer’s travel eastward toward a sea is problematic.
- The abandon Olmec cities were not resettled for approximately 500 years. This does not conform to the Nephites moving northward.
- The Limhi expedition to find Zarahemla is full of inconsistencies if they go to Olmec territory
- There are many geographical problems associated with the hill Vigia, hill Ramah in Olmec territory.
- The resettled Olmec territories (now Nephite territories) at some point would have had to been under the control of the rulers from Teotihuacan. Not possible.
- The basic land mass that is required for tens of millions of Jaredites is woefully inadequate.
- The scriptural requirement to go southward from the Waters of Ripliancum is problematic.
- Triangulating with the proposed Jaredite and Nephite sites is challenging.
- The distances between the location of Coriantumr’s last battle (near hill Vigia) and other proposed locations of Zarahemla are too long.

The only correlation between the Olmecs and the Jaredites is the fact that they were annihilated at the same time.

It is quite obvious that one of the reasons that the Olmecs received so much attention was the need to have the various Book of Mormon models conform to the Tehuantepec Geography approach. Based on these sixteen considerations it is difficult to justify the inclusion of the Olmecs in the Jaredite hypothesis. However, they may have been an integral part of the Jaredite culture especially between 1000 BC and 400 BC. And were likely involved the final war and may have been the aggressor.

Part 2 of “Who are the Jaredites?” evaluates the Maya. In addition, there is Comparative Analysis that uses a scoring system to compare the Olmec and the Maya.

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