

GLYPH

Notes

PRE-COLUMBIAN STUDIES INSTITUTE • JULY/AUGUST 2007 • VOLUME 14 NUMBER 4

Excavations Confirm Book of Mormon History in the Maya Area

By Lyle L. Smith

*They were not there—then they were. . . .
They were there and then they were not....
Then they disappeared!!*

At the 2007 Maya Meetings at the University of Texas, Austin, Charles Golden, archaeologist from Brandeis University, talked about Maya population changes in the Usumacinta River basin at the end of the Preclassic (2000 BC to AD 300) and the beginning of the Classic era (AD 300 to 400). This was new and exciting information that confirms one of the three major population shifts found in The Book of Mormon.

If we believe The Book of Mormon is a true and literal account and that its history happened in the cultural area called Mesoamerica, we should look for archaeological evidence in this area to support its claims.

Let's look at these population changes.

They were not there—then they were...

The authors of The Book of Mormon chronicle three extreme population changes. To understand these population changes we have to read The Book of Mormon for its cultural history. The first population change took place in

the Yucatan of Mexico, Belize, and northern Guatemala around 600 BC. It is documented in The Book of Mormon by the Jaredites not moving as a society south of the narrow neck (what we believe to be the Isthmus of Tehuantepec) as well as the arrival of the people of Lehi and the people of Mulek into the area south and east of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec about 585 BC.

Archaeologists describe it this way.

"One of ancient Mesoamerica's great mysteries is the absence of significant human populations in Yucatan, Belize, and the Guatemalan Peten before 800 B.C.... But the entire area was very lightly settled until 600/500 BC" (Diehl 2004:150).

"Slow, uneven population growth occurred from 1000 to 500 BC. (Middle Preclassic), resulting in the proliferation of small farming communities throughout the peninsula. There are indications that this erratic population growth became an explosion after 550 BC. The reasons for the apparent jump in numbers are obscure" (Adams 1991:126).

"Scattered evidence of people in the Maya area previous to 600 BC has been found . . . but Maya urban life came into existence in the 6th century BC. The Maya appear to have arrived

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Polychrome pottery found at El Mirador, Guatemala, the largest city found in the Maya area that has been identified as having major population decline in the fourth-century AD. This matches Book of Mormon history of the fourth century. Note the scroll-wing motif on the upper piece of pottery.



Stela in central plaza at Yaxchilán. Between AD 250 and 450, many sites between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán were abandoned and never reoccupied.



Excavations (continued)

on the scene without too much antecedent... Maya civilization banged into existence in its own way and time... It is unsettling. For it violates the rules of diffusion and, even worse, the tacit rules of gradual evolution espoused by modern archaeology" (Freidel 1986:x).

"In the past two decades, exciting finds have pushed back by six or seven centuries the dating of the rise of great Maya ceremonial centers, but we have little evidence of the developments that led to these early centers" (Demarest 2004:53).

"The Middle Preclassic villages in the Maya lowlands, even those with a few public structures in the form of modest temples, were limited in scale, complexity, and architecture – in no way foreshadowing the radical transition to enormous ceremonial centers like Nakbe after 600 BC" (Demarest 2004:82).

We have known about the above quotes for some years, and they all give evidence that the land south and east of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was very lightly populated until 600 BC. Yet after 600 BC a population explosion took place in the area.

The Book of Mormon explains that the Jaredites arrived early in the Promised Land, probably as early as 3,000 BC and developed a great civilization. At a latter

did not move as a society into the land southward that would later be occupied by the Nephites/Lamanites/Mulekites, preferring to keep it as a wilderness to get game. Therefore, the Yucatan, Belize, and northern Guatemala (the Peten) were only lightly populated until circa 600 BC. This confirms the narrative in The Book of Mormon concerning Jaredite and Nephite/Lamanite/Mulekite history. The population explosion that occurred about 500 BC, now supported by ample archaeologist evidence, lines up well with the arrival of the Mulekites and the Nephites/Lamanites.

They were there and then they were not...

A second major population shift occurred in the first century AD. The Book of Mormon describes cities and inhabitants that were destroyed. *"And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, in the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land.... And the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough, and many and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and many were shook till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate" (3 Nephi 4:6 & 11).*

Scholars describe it this way. *"For reasons not yet understood, many of these cities [those in the lowlands or northern regions*

These three major population shifts as chronicled from current archaeological excavations document and support Book of Mormon history.

Don Beebe



Former tour group crossing the bay from Corozal to the ruins of Cerros on the coast of Belize. Cerros is one of the cities that had a major fourth-century AD population decline.

time, probably around 2000 BC to 1500 BC, according to Book of Mormon chronology, they built great cities, at least one of them near a narrow neck of land. Their population/society lived northward from this narrow neck of land, also described as a place where the sea divides the land. Their society covered the face of the land northward. We do not know why but they

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of Guatemala] failed during the second half of the first century AD" (Schele 1991:6).

We use this reference because it is a very clear example of population shift or decimation. There is much in the archaeological literature about the ups and downs of the Maya or the rising and falling of their civilization. It sounds like the cycles of prosperity or disaster so common in the Nephite record.

Then they disappeared!!

This third example of extreme population change described in The Book of Mormon begins at the end of the Preclassic and beginning of the Early Classic (AD 300 to 400). This was the timeframe of Golden's report. His excavations revealed new fortification evidence and a major population shift around AD 250–400.

Golden has been working and surveying in the Usumacinta River Basin between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán. The primary goal for this work was to achieve a better understanding of political integration in Classic period (AD 250-800) Maya society, especially as it pertained to the relationship between primary rulers and the subordinate nobility who governed the frontier settlements between competing kingdoms. In carrying out this investigation, though, Golden's team found evidence that fits the population changes around AD 250-400 found in The Book of Mormon.

He reports it this way: *"Data from the 2006 field season also furthers our understanding [that] settlement was widely distributed throughout the region during the Late Preclassic [300 BC–AD 250] . . . however, sometime during the Early Classic a major settlement shift occurred. The abandonment of La Tecnica and Zancudero at the end of the Preclassic or during the Proto-classic reflects a wider pattern seen throughout our study area"* (Golden and Scherer 2006:13).

While this published report mentions only two cities, in Golden's presentation he showed many sites between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán that were abandoned and never reoccupied. Later, around AD 500 or so, new settlements occurred in the area.

Of further interest from Golden's presentation and in his article in The PARI Journal about his excavations was the discovery of a defensive wall at the site of Zancudero. It is at least 800 meters long and at times four or five meters tall. It surrounds about three-quarters of the hill where Zancudero was situated. The rest of the site is surrounded by swamp,

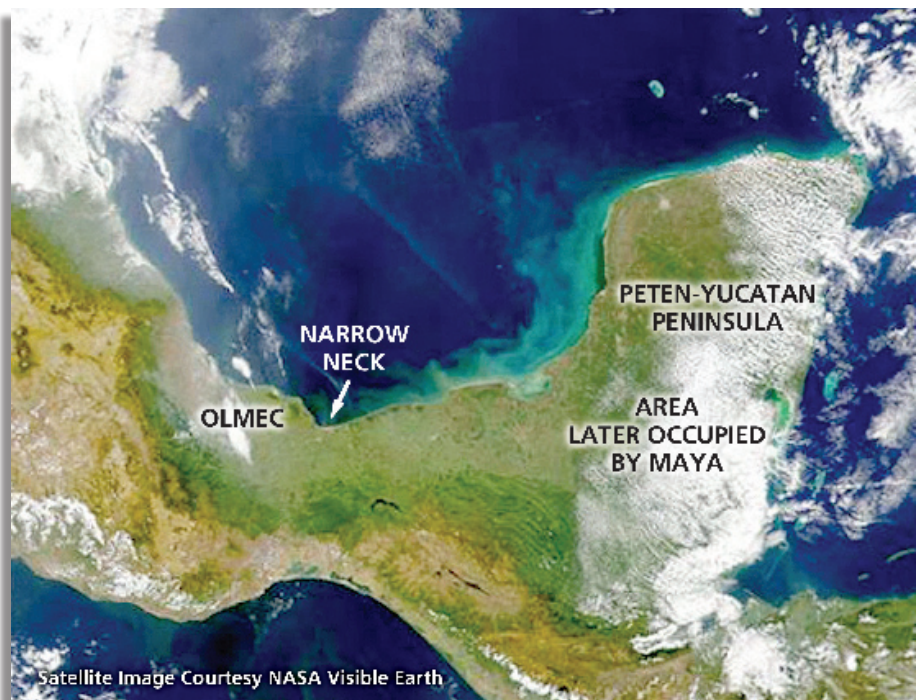
making it an easily defensible site. Zancudero's major occupation was during the Preclassic, and it is likely that the wall as well as the site was built before AD 300. This makes it a contemporary of the moat and wall around the site of Becan as well as numerous others at this time period. Zancudero gives additional evidence of the growing picture of the Usumacinta as a highly contested region during the late Preclassic.

Another archaeologist, Arthur Demarest, who has also worked in the general area especially at Dos Pilas and Aguateca, states, *"At the beginning of the Early Classic between AD 250 and 450, there was an apparent dramatic reduction in population and constructional activities at many lowland centers. Nakbe, El Mirador, and other northern Peten sites have reduced occupations, and a similar decline is observed at sites as distant as Seibal on the Pasion River to the west, Komchen in northern Yucatan, and Cerros in Belize.... It is certain that in some zones there was a real fourth-century population decline"* (Demarest 2004:103).

Why are these new findings of interest for believers in The Book of Mormon?

In the year AD 231, a great division takes place among the people. They divided according to their beliefs, and the two major groups became the Nephites, or the true or the true believers in Christ, and the Lamanites, who rejected the gospel (4 Nephi 1:39). War broke out in AD 321, and in AD 350 the Nephites made a treaty with *"the Lamanites and the robbers of Gadianton, in which we did get the lands of our inheritance divided..."* (Mormon 1:60-62). The final battle recorded takes place in AD 387.

Continued on Page 4



Excavations (continued)

Hundreds of thousands, probably millions of people were first displaced and then killed.

Linda Schele and David A. Freidel give further support for these great divisions and population shifts. “*While the impact of warfare on Maya commoners remains to be elucidated archaeologically, there is positive epigraphic and iconographic evidence to identify the advent of conquest warfare among these people at the close of the fourth century AD*” (Schele and Friedel: 1990:442).

These three major population shifts as chronicled from current archaeological excavations document and support Book of Mormon history. The Book of Mormon was translated in 1829-30 before the Maya civilization was at all known in North America. The history in it can not change, although our understanding may expand. The narrative includes three major population changes spanning more than a thousand years of history. The first, in the centuries around 600 BC, and the second in the first century AD, and the third taking place in the fourth century AD. How is it that Joseph Smith in 1830 was able to accurately relate all of these cultural happenings now documented by archaeology in the 21st century?

JOY *Line* By Joy Muir

Testimony of Barbara Wilkinson who is a third-generation member of the RLDS church. She was born in Independence, but also lived in San Francisco, California and the Bay area until around 1963. Barbara holds a Master Degree in Home Nutrition. An author of three books, *Exercises in Growing Spiritually*, *What Do The Scriptures Say?* and *Word of Wisdom, God's Nutritional Plan*, Barbara is currently working on a book concerning, “What to Do to Receive the Power of the Holy Ghost.”

I have an on-going testimony of The Book of Mormon. By that I mean, each time I read through The Book of Mormon, I ask the Lord to show me another witness of the divinity of the book...and He does.

I first read through it in the early 1970's and have reread it almost every year since then. One thing I've learned is that it is an abridgement, so you have to READ EVERY MINUTE DETAIL to get the picture.

One of my favorite testimonies is how long it took Amulek, under the endowed ministry of Alma to be endowed himself. I noticed there were dates all along and I'd been taught to watch for dates; they are in there for a reason. By using the dates given, I narrowed it down to something less than three months, which I thought was fascinating. Then while reading through the book again

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for maybe the 30th time, *I just happened to notice*, “**Therefore, I went on rebelling against God in the wickedness of my heart, even until the fourth day of THIS seventh month, which is in the tenth year of the reign of judges**” (emphasis added) Alma 8:9. Alma explains that an angel of the Lord told him to return to his house because he would host and feed a prophet of the Lord. He met Alma on 7/4/10 and noticed he was out preaching an endowed sermon in THIS SAME MONTH. One little word let me know it was LESS THAN ONE MONTH for him to be endowed when he was taught by an endowed minister. It was impressed on my mind that we, in this day and age, too can be endowed in less than a month when we have even one endowed minister among us.

In my most recent reading, I noticed that during a famine among the Jaredites, the flocks fed from poisonous serpents “**...toward the Land Southward, which was called by the Nephites Zarahemla**” Ether 4:36. The Jaredites could not follow because of the snakes, thus God protected the land of the Nephites from being invaded by the Jaredites. This was many generations (maybe 10 generations) before Lehi and the Mulekites came over. A prophet of the Lord, told the Jaredites they must repent or they would be utterly destroyed and that God would bring another people to possess the land Ether 113.

PEOPLE *and* PLACES

22nd Annual Book of Mormon Archaeological Tour

Jan. 26–Feb. 5, 2008

Sponsored by

Pre-Columbian Studies Institute

Tour Leaders: Lyle and Sherrie Smith of PSI Tours, LLC

PROPOSED ITINERARY (Subject to Change)

Saturday, Jan. 26th: Travel

Fly from Kansas City to Cancun, Mexico, in the morning. Transfer to bus at Cancun Airport and drive south to Chetumal for the night.

Meals Provided: D

through the ancient city and becomes a wonderful waterfall deep in the rainforest next to former residences.

Meals provided: B&D (If so inclined, you can purchase lunch at a small restaurant at the site.)

Sunday, Jan. 27th: Dzibanche, Kohunlich, Chicanna

Close to Chetumal are two impressive sites: Dzibanche and Kohunlich. Dzibanche was named for the hieroglyphic writings found there including a hieroglyphic staircase. Kohunlich is known for its large masks flanking the stairway on one of its major buildings. These two sites may be part of the line of cities built along the east seacoast referenced in Alma 23. We continue on to the ruins of Chicanna at the village of Xpuhil where we spend the night.

Meals provided: B & D

Friday, Feb. 1st: Edzna

Leave Palenque and drive to the ruins of Edzna in the State of Campeche. After visiting the ruins drive on to Campeche for the night. Edzna has an unusual building of five-stories that combines features of palaces and pyramids. "Aerial reconnaissance has disclosed that Etzna is surrounded by a complex system of canals and reservoirs, and that a square, fortress-like structure is encompassed by a moat.... While most of what one sees at Etzna is Late Classic in date, it is noteworthy that at least some of the canals go back to the Late Preclassic." (Michael D. Coe, *The Maya*: 1987)

Meals provided: B&D

Monday, Jan. 28th: Calakmul

Calakmul sits way off the highway deep in the Maya rainforest. Exciting discoveries have come from this site including numerous jade masks (displayed at the museum in Campeche), a mummy, wall paintings and frescoes, and over 100 stelaes. Return to Xpuhil for the night.

Meals Provided: B&D

Saturday, Feb. 2nd: Uxmal, Sayil, Labna

Drive from Campeche to visit the ruins of Uxmal, Sayil, and Labna (these three ruins are close together) then drive on to Merida for the night. Although these three ancient cities were built after The Book of Mormon period, they are worth visiting for the architecture and motifs found there. Uxmal's acoustics are so perfect that symphony orchestras perform there.

Meals provided: B&D

Tuesday, Jan. 29th: Becan

Visit the ruins of Becan before we head southwest to Palenque, a three-hour drive. Becan is an important site because its fortifications are clearly visible. It's also a fun-filled site because of its many tunnels and passageways.

Meals provided: B&D

Sunday, Feb. 3rd: Merida

This morning is time for some shopping in Merida, followed by a drive to the hotel at the ruins of Chichen Itza.

Meals provided: B&D

Wednesday, Jan. 30th: Yaxchilán and Bonampak

Be prepared for a long but rewarding day as we travel by bus then river boat down the Usumacinta River—watch for crocodiles!—to Yaxchilán. First we will stop for breakfast in the jungle and a short visit to the ruins of Bonampak with its famous frescoes or murals. Continue to the village of Fonterra Coronal where we board the river boats for the trip to Yaxchilán. Late afternoon we return to the hotel in Palenque.

Meals provided: B&D

Monday, Feb. 4th: Chichen Itza

Spend the morning at the vast ruins of Chichen Itza to see the Pyramid of Kukulcan and the observatory, and one of the largest Maya ball courts that has the carved portrait of the Bearded White God in a building at one end of the court. Around noon leave for Cancun.

Meals provided: B&D (If so inclined, you can purchase lunch at a restaurant at the site.)

Thursday, Jan. 31st: Palenque

We will spend all day at Palenque, a beautiful and important site. Its numerous inscriptions bear witness of a knowledge of the Lord and his creation. A small river runs

Tuesday, Feb. 5th: Travel Home

Leave hotel mid-morning for transfer to Cancun airport.

Meals Provided: B

Join us for an adventure you won't forget and let The Book of Mormon come alive for you!
BUT, remember! We travel where the unpredictable happens. It's part of the adventure!



PEOPLE *and* PLACES

22nd Annual Book of Mormon Archaeological Tour

REGISTRATION FORM

COSTS: Tour cost per person — \$2,495
Single Supplement — additional \$400

INCLUDES: All airfare from Kansas City; all ground transportation; hotel accommodations based on two persons in a double room; meals as indicated on itinerary: B-breakfast, L-lunch, D-dinner; entrance fees; service charges; and tips.

NOT INCLUDED: Personal items such as a-la-carte orders; room service; laundry; meals; and other items not specifically mentioned as included.

LIQUOR or TOBACCO: Please refrain from using either when our group is together.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE: \$400 deposit per person due NOW.
Deposits refundable until Nov. 15, 2007, when final payment is due.

***** PASSPORTS REQUIRED *****

RESPONSIBILITY: *Pre-Columbian Studies Institute, PSI Tours, LLC and/or Lyle and Sherrie Smith act only as agents for other tourist agencies, and accept no responsibility, or shall not become liable for delays, losses, damage or injury to persons or property, theft, mechanical defects or failure of any equipment, or substitution of hotel or carrier equipment beyond their control, and shall not be liable for any additional expenses incurred thereby.*

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GLYPH *Quotes* By Clyde Noren

GOD MADE THEM ALL—2 Nephi 1:95

God created all things. Nephi declared in The Book of Mormon, "For there is a God, and He has created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that are in them; both things to act, and things to be acted upon." (2 Nephi 1:95). God's creative ability was first established by the word of His power and His voice as recorded in Gen. 1:3 (I.V.). This power enables God to be present in all things in the universe, in our world and in our everyday life. God's power is beyond our ability to comprehend. It brings to our minds questions; "where did we come from?" and "what is my purpose on earth?" Our only conclusion is that, "we came from a power not our own."

Our Lord Jesus was also credited as co-creator when God said, "And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning, Let us

make man in our image, after our likeness; and it was so." (Gen. 2:27 I.V.)

The scope of God's creativity ranges from majestic physical constructions, like the earth's mountain ranges or our beautiful Grand Canyon, to the minute unseen world of the animal and plant world and to the structure of the atom.

All this, God's creativity, is His stewardship of love to us because He wants mankind to receive His best. He has given us beauty through our senses, colors to see, music to hear, taste of food, the smell of the flowers, and softness of the touch of a new baby's skin. In Gen. 1:33 God said, "And I, God, saw everything that I had made, and, behold all things which I had made were very good."

The conclusion that we must draw is that we owe God and His Son, Jesus, all our love and a sacred response in fulfill-

ing the stewardship of life that They have afforded us through Their creation.

Cecil Frances Alexander shared her knowledge of God's creation through a poem and hymn which we all know:

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colors,
He made their tiny wings.

The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden,
He made them every one.

He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell,
How great is God Almighty
Who has made all things well.

From OUR READERS

Want you to know how much I appreciate the interesting articles, testimonies and research being done by those dedicated to [producing] glyph notes. I especially enjoyed the Sept/Oct 2006 issue with Shirley Heater's presentation. I also enjoyed the Nov/Dec 2006 issue just received with Sherrie Smith's account of new discoveries. Pray you will continue to be blessed in your work.

Doris N. Gabriel

Our congregation, The Rocky Mountain Restoration Branch, has a practice of contributing a memorial when family members of any of our congregation pass away. Recently, the mother of Jan Havener, 78 Lone Elk Road, Loveland, Colorado pass away in Independence. Her mother, Pat Eisler, was a strong supporter of your

institute and was an avid reader of glyph notes. As a memorial in behalf of Pat Eisler, I am enclosing a check from our congregation.

Gilbert Howard, Pastor

Pat Eisler was a member of the Blue Springs Restoration Branch, Independence, Missouri along with Clyde and Margaret Noren (PSI officers) when both were active in that branch. The Norens recall many good activities with Pat, in children's work, at family pot-lucks, Golden Ager's meetings, and, of course, worship services. We all will miss Pat.

Another of our family in the Independence area will be deeply missed. Juanita Bessmer, whose love for The Book of Mormon was shared throughout her life, passed away on July 29 and was laid to rest on August 4, 2007.

SPECIAL THANKS TO SOME VERY SPECIAL PEOPLE:

First, to Kim Muir of Bates City, Missouri, who developed the design format for glyph notes from its beginning in 1994. Kim is employed by Hallmark Cards in the Marketing Department. She was willing to continue to assist PSI over the years even though her daily work was not in graphics design. Her work was exemplary. Distance and time constraints for publication were the basis for bringing the newsletter to a closer source for publication.

Second, Aaron and Salle Presler of Signature Marketing Group who have taken on the responsibility of design layout for glyph notes and contracting for the printing.

"WOW!" has been the most prevalent comment upon receiving the past issue. One individual said, "well this is going to definitely cost me more." NO, the production cost of glyph notes did not change with the addition of artful design with full color. Aaron and Sallie graciously agreed to donate much of their skill and talent to hold the price to the current rate.

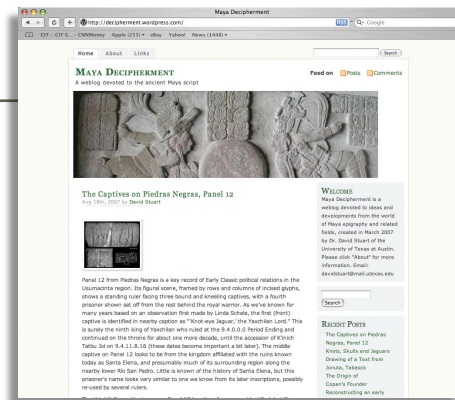
We at PSI are so thankful for all, who like Kim and Aaron and Sallie, have given of their time and talents that the testimony of The Book of Mormon might go forth.

GLYPH *Clips*

New Maya Decipherment Blog

Beginning in March 2007, Dr. David Stuart of the University of Texas at Austin initiated a "Maya Decipherment" blog devoted to ideas and developments from the world of Maya epigraphy and related fields. It is an effort to disseminate serious discussions of ideas on Maya hieroglyphic decipherment. This should prove interesting for the lay person to keep up-to-date with what's happening with decipherment.

<http://decipherment.wordpress.com/> From *Mexicon*, April 2007, page 45.



An aerial view of the the hilltop compound of Herodium near the West Bank town of Hebron.

King Herod's Tomb Discovered

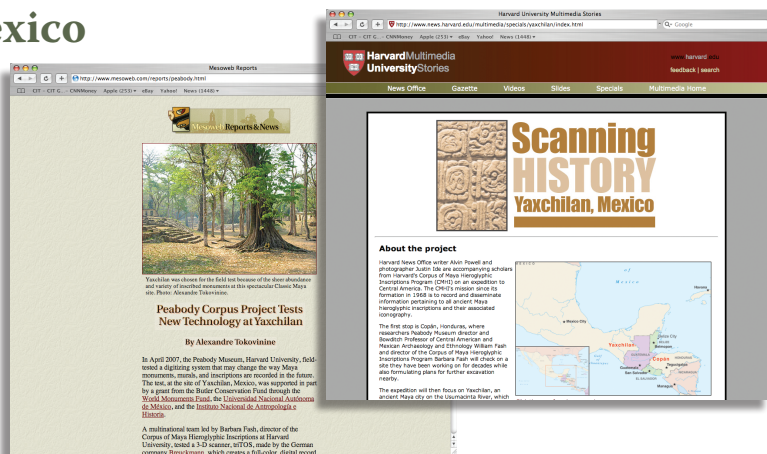
Archaeologist digging at the desert site of Herodium discovered what they believe to be King Herod's tomb. Although the tomb was shattered and empty, leaders of the Israeli team hope to find other artifacts establishing the identity of the tomb's former occupant. Herod was the Jewish proxy ruler of the Holy Land under Roman occupation from 37 BC. He ruled for about 34 years.

Reported by Associated Press in *The Kansas City Star*, May 9, 2007:A8.

Scanning History — Yaxchilán, Mexico

Harvard University has a new multimedia Web page about their projects. The link below leads to a report about testing a new technology at Yaxchilán to preserve images of monuments. Clicking on the multimedia links brings up short video clips about the project and has some good photos of Yaxchilán and some of its monuments. <http://www.news.harvard.edu/multimedia/specials/yaxchilan/index.html>

You can also read about the project on the Mesoweb pages: <http://www.mesoweb.com/reports/peabody.html>



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