

GLYPH

Notes

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Although theories abound placing Book of Mormon lands as far north as the Great Lakes and as far south as the coast of Chili in South America, The Book of Mormon supplies very specific geographical clues that continue to unlock its location.

A History of Book of Mormon Geography

W by Glenn A. Scott, Jr.

When The Book of Mormon was first offered to the world in 1830 as a new scripture, telling of God's dealings with several groups of people in the New World, it was a sensation both positive and negative. It not only offered hope of salvation to more than 200,000 believers in the first 14 years, but it also stirred up a firestorm of opposition from traditional religious denominations which felt threatened by it. At the same time, it challenged regular historians and anthropologists to reexamine their concepts about ancient American peoples, their origins, cultures, languages, and especially geography.

After the realization that Columbus' discovery was not part of the East Indies but actually a new and unknown world, these same scholars were challenged to explain the presence of mankind in this new world. Where had they come from? and when? Some religious groups went so far as to question whether these natives were even human, since the Bible said that all humans but Noah and his family perished in The Flood.

William Bourne in 1578 concluded that they were descendants of Japheth, Noah's youngest son. But how did they get here? and when?

In 1590 Padre Jose de Acosta first considered the possibility that the natives had come by sea. But then he decided that they would not have brought with them the many animals unique to the Americas, especially the poisonous snakes and the fierce jaguar; therefore, they must have come by land. Since he knew of no way they could have done that, he conjectured that there must be some unknown point where the Old World joined the New. Thus he anticipated the Bering Strait Land Bridge theory by hundreds of years.

In 1622 Edward Brerewood also concluded that the Old World and the New must be "in close proximity" and that the "rude Tartars of Mongolia" had migrated over some northern passageway from somewhere in Asia (something of an anthropological pioneer).

Thomas Jefferson in 1784 excavated an Indian mound on his plantation and found the first mastodon bones in North America. He, too, noted the similarities between the American Indians and the Mongols of northeastern Asia. In 1822 the anthropologist Alexander von Humboldt made the same observation.

In 1830, when The Book of Mormon was published, evolution was not yet a factor under consideration. The prevailing view of history was Biblical, so the theory that Indians had been in the Americas for tens of thousands of years was not even considered. But neither was the idea that any peoples had voyaged across the ocean to America hundreds of years before Columbus. Indeed, that is still the prevailing opinion of many scholars even today.

However, there were thousands who accepted The Book of Mormon account. If these converts ever thought about it didn't Joseph Smith Jr. find a record of such things on the golden plates he dug up in Hill Cumorah? And, didn't The Book of Mormon say that Lehi's colony landed in the New World just south of a Narrow Neck of Land? And, couldn't everyone

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The Book of Mormon challenged regular historians and anthropologists to reexamine their concepts about ancient American peoples, their origins, cultures, languages, and especially geography.



Although it took several years for Louis Hills' Mesoamerican model of Book of Mormon geography to find general acceptance, it has been supported by most RLDS scholars and has held up amazingly well under the test of time.

Book of Mormon Geography (cont. from page 1)

see that the Isthmus of Panama was the narrowest neck of land in the Americas? They must have landed in South America. So for them, what was there to question?

Those were the prevailing opinions for the first 87 years of the Restored church's existence. In fact at the General Conference of the RLDS church on April 6-19, 1894, a Committee on American Archaeology was appointed to prepare a map of Book of Mormon Lands, a graphic record of the ancient inhabitants of North and South America. Six maps were drawn by professional cartographer G. F. Weston of Buchanan, Michigan, and published in 1898 by Herald Publishing House, Lamoni, Iowa.

Unfortunately that committee made several easy assumptions regarding what The Book of Mormon really says about its geography. Among these unfortunate assumptions were:

- that the hill near Palmyra, New York, where Joseph Smith found the ancient record, was the Hill Cumorah where the Jaredites and Nephites were destroyed (Joseph Smith never said that),
- that the Narrow Neck of Land so often referred to in the record was the Isthmus of Panama (numerous internal references prove that was not possible), and
- that the memo written by Frederick Williams (assuming that Lehi had landed on the coast of Chile), was written by inspiration (his grandson denied that).

Consequently, the maps beautifully drawn by G. F. Weston incorporated these errors.

Paul Hansen wrote, "The church was wise in anticipating facts the future might disclose . . . the committee was doubtlessly pleased [?] . . . officially endorse [their] ("Book of Mormon Geography," *Saints Herald* [29] 5, 1951). Although those maps were never officially endorsed by the church, they made a lasting impression that has taken many years to correct. The above-referenced original conception has been referred to as "the Hemisphere model."

Sometime before 1917, a serious RLDS Book of Mormon scholar, Louis E. Hills, noted that many of the physical features of Central and South America do not agree with the geographical references in The Book of Mormon. Examples include:

- Several groups of people traveled from the City of Nephi to the City of Zarahemla in a few weeks (not possible in the

Hemisphere model),

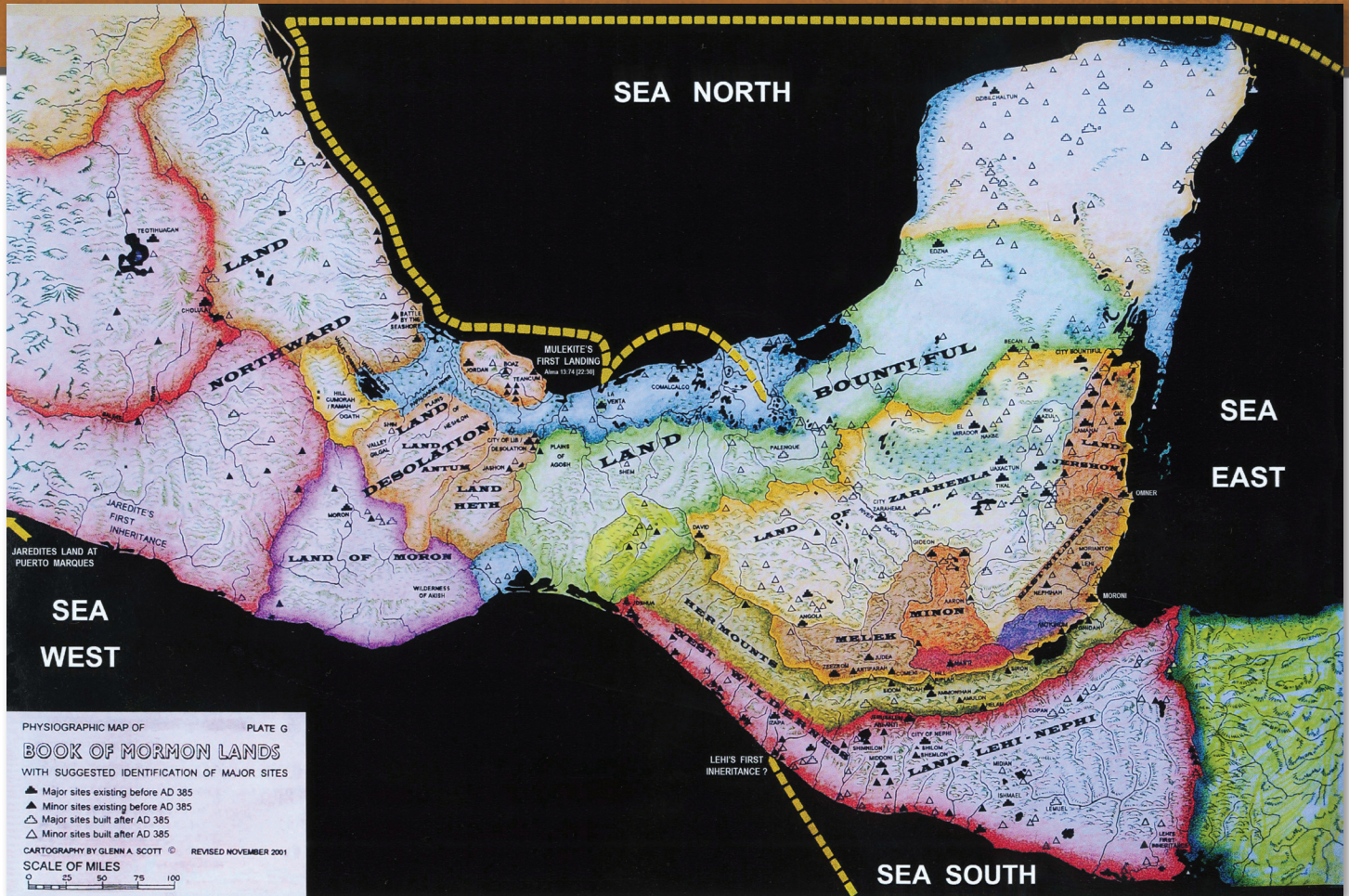
- Alma 13:77 [22:32] says the lands of Nephi and Zarahemla were "nearly surrounded by water" (not possible in the Hemisphere model), and
- Joseph Smith wrote in 1842 that "the city of Zarahemla . . . stood upon this land (Guatemala)" [sic] (*Times & Seasons* 3:23:917).

Hills compiled an exhaustive list of every geographic term found in the record. From this information, carefully cross-indexed, he tested a number of narrow places in the long Isthmus of Central America and Mexico as possible alternatives to Panama as the Narrow Neck of Land. After testing and discarding several of these, he came to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. To Hills' delight all geographic references just snapped into place. There really IS a great river (Usumacinta) flowing north into the sea (Gulf of Mexico). There really IS a Narrow Strip of Wilderness (mountains) running from the West Sea (Pacific) to the East Sea (Caribbean), which divides the southern highlands (Land of Nephi) from the northern lowlands (Land of Zarahemla); and, the bulge of land forming Guatemala and Yucatan really ARE "nearly surrounded by water." And perhaps most important, there really ARE the remains of many great ancient cities, just as The Book of Mormon describes them.

From this research and analysis, Hills drew a new map of Book of Mormon lands. Between 1917 and 1924 he published a series of booklets illustrating and explaining his rationale. In spite of the skepticism that initially met his new model—considering the vague knowledge of Central America at that time—Hills must have been inspired, because his concept has held up amazingly well under the test of time and the scrutiny of many scholars. However, it was not until 1951 that Apostle Paul Hanson wrote:

Location of the Narrow Neck of Land [is] of great importance as a key to the geography of The Book of Mormon. The Isthmus of Tehuantepec appears to meet the requirement.

Although it took several years for Hills' Mesoamerican model to find general acceptance, it has been supported by most RLDS scholars including Conrad Booton (1947), Harold Veldt (1949), Paul Hanson (1951), Verneil Simmons and Frank Frye



Glenn Scott

(1968), Neil Steede (1973), Raymond Treat (1980), and Aric Turner (2004), among others.

Also, numerous LDS scholars have come to support the Mesoamerican model including Wells Jakeman (1946), Thomas Ferguson (1950), Gareth Lowe (1960), Bruce Warren (1961), Garth Norman (1966), David Palmer (1981), John Sorenson (1985), and Joseph Allen (1989).

While LDS scholars were generally slow to give up the Hemisphere model, John Sorenson cites a remark, supposedly made in 1900 by Benjamin Cluff, of a theory of Anthony Ivins, that “the Narrow Neck is Tehuantepec” (from a 1976 BYU publication). If that claim is true, it apparently was not followed up. In fact as late as 1922 LDS historian Brigham Roberts wrote: “The LDS must deal with an entire-hemisphere map.” And in 1925 he wrote: “the general opinion is that Lehi landed on the coast of South America, 30 degrees south latitude.”

In that same year Willard Young (a son of Brigham) together with Russell Driggs, broke with the old LDS orthodoxy of the Hemisphere model and presented a variation of the Mesoamerican model, but with the Narrow Neck as the Bay of Honduras and the Ulua River in Honduras as the River Sidon.

By 1940 L. C. and H. J. Layton (LDS) accepted Tehuantepec as the Narrow Neck and the Usumacinta River as Sidon, but still believed Cumorah was in New York state.

Wells Jakeman, who taught archaeology at Brigham Young University from 1946 to 1976, was the first LDS archaeologist to fully accept the Mesoamerican model with the Usumacinta River as the River Sidon. Interestingly, he also viewed Copan, Honduras, as the City of Nephi, just

as Louis Hills had done thirty years earlier (this latter view has since been discredited in favor of Kaminaljuyu, Guatemala).

In 1950 the LDS lawyer Thomas Ferguson (who later founded the New World Archaeological Foundation), together with Milton Hunter, accepted a Mesoamerican model except for believing that River Sidon was the Grijalva and that Cumorah was in the Tuxtla mountains of Mexico, a view still common among many LDS today.

By the 1960s, largely from Jakeman’s influence, many prominent LDS students had accepted the Mesoamerican model as the only plausible candidate. Even Sydney Sperry, a longtime defender of the Hemisphere model finally changed his mind.

In 1980, Ralph Lesh (RLDS) produced a map published by Zarahemla Research Foundation but had a problem locating City Bountiful.

In 1990 John Sorenson (LDS) published a collection of scores of Book of Mormon maps, both external and internal, produced by various LDS and RLDS scholars over the years from 1830 to the time of his publication, and from which much of the information on LDS scholarly activities for this article was derived.

In 1996 Glenn Scott (RLDS) wrote, illustrated and published a Book of Mormon commentary, *Voices from the Dust*, accompanied by a 24 by 36 inch color map of Book of Mormon Lands.

In 2004 Aric Turner (RLDS) produced a very fine, full-color map of Mesoamerica with various Book of Mormon sites indicated, accompanied by a 367 page rationale.

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Book of Mormon Geography (cont. from page 3)

In 2008 Garth Norman (LDS) published a full-color map of Book of Mormon Lands (reviewed in July/August, 2008 *glyph notes*) which agrees in many details with the RLDS Mesoamerican model illustrated here. Many points of agreement include:

- The Narrow Neck of Land as the Isthmus of Tehuantepec
- The Usumacinta River as the River Sidon
- The Narrow Strip of Wilderness as the mountain range running east and west from the Sea West (Pacific) to the Sea East (Caribbean) separating the Maya highlands (Land Nephi) from the Maya lowlands (Land Zarahemla)
- The City of Nephi as the ancient site of Kaminaljuyu
- The Jaredite landing on the Pacific coast of Mexico
- The Lehite landing on the Pacific coast of Guatemala/El Salvador
- The Mulekite landing on the Gulf coast of Mexico

In this map, however, Norman (in company with several other LDS and RLDS scholars) faced the common problem of locating City Bountiful. He, like these others, had no doubt read Alma 13:73-76 [22:29-32] and perhaps 22:12 [50:11] and 30:6 [63:5], all of which indicate that Land Bountiful is near the Narrow Neck. And thus they assumed that City Bountiful was also near the Narrow Neck. However, all of them failed to recognize that Alma 13:78, 15:23, and 23:34 [22:32;27:22;51:38] make it clear that Land Bountiful extended from the Narrow Neck on the west, all the way across the north of Land Zarahemla to the Sea East, and that City Bountiful is near the City of Mulek which was on the east coast. It was at City Bountiful that Teancum stopped the Lamanite invasion after they had conquered all the Nephite cities on the east coast. Amazingly all of those Book of Mormon scholars attempted to solve their dilemma by distributing the cities (which Alma 23:27-32 [51:22-26] lists as being on the east coast) across the base of the Yucatan peninsula, (as though it did not exist) and along the north coast of Tabasco, just to be able to locate City Bountiful near the Narrow Neck.

Ralph Lesh was perhaps the latest RLDS scholar to struggle with that seeming anomaly, and Garth Norman was the latest LDS scholar to be stumped by the same problem. Even Louis Hills made the same error. Only Conrad Booton (RLDS) in 1947 and Joseph Allen (LDS) in 1989 seem to have solved it.

Through the years some pretty weird alternative models of Book of Mormon lands have been proposed. One of the first was Walter Stout who in 1950 and James Warr in 2001 located all Book of Mormon lands in Nicaragua and Costa Rica. In 1954 Norman Pierce, and in 1997 Vaughn Hanson, proposed vaguely Mesoamerican models, apparently before the great upheaval in AD 34, with the land so distorted as to be unrecognizable. In 1983 Vernal Holley, and in 1988 Delbert Curtis, and in 2000 Rob Meldrum, proposed Book of Mormon lands around the North American Great Lakes so as to locate Hill Cumorah in New York state. In 2009

Lynn and David Rosenvall proposed the Baja California Peninsula as the place. And, of course, as late as 2007, diehards were still holding out for South America. In 1977 Stanford Robison, in 1988 Charles Quilter, and in 1994 E. L. Peay all proposed Mesoamerican models with the Land Northward in the Yucatan. Surprisingly in 2001, RLDS scholar Gaylord Shaw proposed the same model, assuming that Northward meant the same as north, rather than meaning generally north.

To sum up, a reasonably clear picture of Book of Mormon Lands has emerged with RLDS and LDS models becoming very similar, with the exception of River Sidon which some (but not all) LDS scholars believe was the Grijalva, and Hill Cumorah which most LDS scholars believe was Cerro Vigia in the state of Vera Cruz, Mexico. Most current RLDS scholars believe Hill Cumorah to have been Cerro Rabon in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. Interestingly, both of these sites are in Mexico and only about 75 miles apart.

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A New "Handy" Map in the Works

by Shirley R. Heater

In "My 'Ideal' Map" (*glyph notes* July/August 2008), I said, "The ideal map I envision would overcome limitations that are naturally a part of any one map—namely the need to condense over 3,000 years of history and three groups of people through time and events in lands with shifting borders."

Thus, I began to consider how I could make this a reality. Now on the drawing board is a multi-page, full color booklet of Book of Mormon maps just the right size to tuck in the back of your scriptures! Since it will be removable, it will serve as a handy reference not only when you are reading your Book of Mormon, but other related material as well! The booklet will begin with the migrations of all three Book of Mormon

groups. Then individual maps will feature specific events with timelines following the storyline of The Book of Mormon, culminating with Moroni traveling to New York to bury the plates.

Another project is also in the works which will include even more detailed "event" maps, along with notes and commentary relating not only to Old World and Mesoamerican archaeology, but also the connection to the Bible (OT & NT), Hebrew word studies and definitions, Hebraisms, Hebrew poetry and more! The availability of the booklet "Book of Mormon Maps" is anticipated later this fall. Both of these projects will be published by Quetzal Archaeology Center for Mesoamerican Research.


<http://www.quetzalarchaeology.org> 

On the drawing board is a multi-page, full color booklet of Book of Mormon maps just the right size to tuck in the back of your scriptures!

From OUR READERS

My daughter, Lois, and I really enjoy your *glyph notes* publication. We live in the same house, so we only need one. The second \$15 is a donation. Keep up the good work. We live in an area that is void of any Restoration groups. We both are members from childhood. We hunger for any current information. Thank you for sending the *glyph notes*.
Annie

I enjoy the Book of Mormon Report, *glyph notes*, so much. I don't want to miss one! **Betty J.**

I want to say thank you to those who give more than the *glyph notes* subscription. I am widowed and living on social security, which isn't very much. You continue to send me *glyph notes* even though I can't pay for it. I look forward to getting it. **Mary J.** 

**GLYPH *Notes***

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Glimpse of Israel

To the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations (The Book of Mormon title page).

by Sherrie Kline Smith

Fourteen pilgrims journeyed to Israel under the leadership of Lyle Smith. Working with Pilgrim Tours, Smith planned an itinerary packed with places and learning experiences that enriched our understanding of Biblical times.

As we came up the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, Shlomo Ben-Asher, our guide, slipped a music CD into the player. We all fell silent as the strains of “The Holy City” fell upon our ears. It completed with “Hosanna, forever more” ringing throughout the bus as we exited a tunnel and the Holy City, Jerusalem, in all its glory and mystique, lay on the hillside to our left.

On Thursday, May 14, Jews gathered at the men’s section of the Wailing Wall to celebrate the bar mitzvahs of their sons who at the age of 13 are admitted as an adult member into the Jewish community.

Flowers in Israel bloom profusely and the many sites and churches maintain gardens and pots of flowers. This arrangement is in the courtyard of St. Anne’s Church, a twelfth-century crusader church with amazing acoustics built over the birthplace of St. Anne, the mother of Mary.

The patriarch Abraham welcomed us to his tent for dinner as we travelled back in time.

As we came out of the tunnel that runs parallel to the newly excavated Hezekiah’s tunnel which was filled with water, a choral group from The Master’s College in California also had just exited Hezekiah’s tunnel. They gathered on the steps of the Siloam Pool (where Jesus sent the blind man to wash the clay from his eyes and he received his sight, John 9) and “practiced” some of their music for their performance at St. Anne’s church the next day. What a thrill to hear the sacred music sung by these young people in this holy place.

A young Israeli girl lectured and sang for a group of school children in the Kinneret Cemetery in the Kinneret Kibbutz on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

The sun sets over the Sea of Galilee and reminds us of Jesus’ ministry among the fishermen—calming the sea, walking on water, providing a full net of fishes when the apostles had fished all night and caught nothing.



GLYPH *Quotes* by Clyde W. Noren

Called To Be A Saint--Mosiah 1:120

The word Saint(s) appeared early in the Scriptures, such as in Daniel 7:28, "And the kingdom and dominion and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the Saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." In the New Testament, Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church that those members sanctified in Christ were called to be Saints (I Cor. 1:2).

At the organization of the church on April 6, 1830, Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith Jr. were ordained elders in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This naming of the Church signifies that the body of people was to be called Saints. The name also implies that the members of the church were Saints of the latter days as distinguished from the earlier Saints.


The calling to be a saint starts with a baptism by immersion in water and confirmation of membership by the laying on of hands. The physical practice and the power of the Spirit are portrayed in Saul's (later called Paul) dramatic experience of entrance into Christ's Church. Paul was immediately called into service for the Lord. The calling of ministers into the church and their purpose is expressed in The Book of Mormon, "And we talk of Christ, and we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ" (2 Nephi 11:48).

What is the calling of a saint in these the latter days? One of the first charges to the disciples (members) was in Christ's recitation

of his prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven" (Mat: 6:11). That kingdom on earth is found in the belief of a physical and spiritual entity called ZION. All the tenets of the gospel will be incorporated in living in such a city led and guided by Christ. The Saints are told in D&C 6:3a, "Keep my commandments and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion." A previous example of such a city is given in Gen. 7:25 and D&C 36:3a that Enoch built a city that was called a city of holiness even Zion. Another distinctive trait found in this city is given in D&C 36:2h, "And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind and dwelt in righteousness."

Saints are called to witness to their neighbors as given in D&C 85:22a, "and it becometh every man who hath been warned, to warn his neighbor." This warning embodies the doctrine of Christ as written in Heb. 6:1-2.

Joseph Luff's writing in his book, *The Old Jerusalem Gospel*, summarizes best our calling as Saints. "Faith in Jesus demands renunciation of all allegiances to self and sin and a consecration of life and service to the Divine Sovereign." That Sovereign is Jesus Christ who directs us to become sons and daughters of God.

There is no greater calling on the face of the earth than to be called a Saint and discharge that responsibility of witnessing to others of living a life reflective of the life of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. 



Coba, Mexico, boasts the longest known *sacbé* [causeway] in Mesoamerica. It extends over 60 miles to the site of Yaxuná and provides strong evidence of Coba's importance as a major causeway. It "must have been extremely important for utilitarian and military purposes..." (see *Guide to Ancient Maya Ruins*, 2nd ed., C. Bruce Hunter, University of Oklahoma Press, 1986, p. 317).

GLYPH *Clips*

First freeway system located in Mirador Basin, Guatemala and southern Campeche, Mexico
<http://www2.uisu.edu/headlines/?p-1711>
 "Mayan Archaeological Studies," May 10, 2009

Scholars have labeled the Mirador Basin, northern Guatemala and part of southern Campeche, Mexico, as the "Cradle of Maya Civilization" because of the size, scale and antiquity of ancient Maya cities contained within the area. A cluster of very large and

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early ancient Maya cities are referred to anciently as the "Kan (serpent) Kingdom." The largest cities in the basin are El Mirador, Tintal, Xulnal, Nakbé; numerous smaller cities surround these sites (see "Sand of the Sea and Rising Suns," Lyle Smith, *glyph notes*, March/April 2009).

El Mirador is considered the largest of all ancient Maya cities in Mesoamerica. Richard Hansen, senior scientist in the Institute for Mesoamerican Research at Idaho State University, states

The Mirador Basin sites are among the largest in the Western Hemisphere with art and architecture . . . In addition, the sites contain structures that rank among the largest ancient pyramids in the world. The area also contains an extensive network of ancient causeways or highways, representing what Hansen terms as the *first freeway system* in the world . . . because of the concentration of such large and early centers . . . connected by a latticework of ancient causeways . . . we believe [the Kan Kingdom] to be the first economic and political state level society in the Western Hemisphere.

PSI tour members have visited many sites that were connected by ancient causeways/highways. The Book of Mormon documented the existence of these causeways long before the field of archaeology.

And it came to pass that there were many cities built anew, and there were many old cities repaired, and there were many highways cast up, and many roads made, which led from city to city, and from land to land, and from place to place (3 Nephi 3:8).

INAH Closes Archaeological Sites and Museums

Ancient MesoAmerica News Updates, April 29, 2009.

In reaction to the outbreak of swine flu (Influenza A virus subtype H1N1) the Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia in Mexico has decided to close the 175 archaeological sites and their associated site museums until further notice. Earlier INAH had closed museums in Mexico City and the surrounding metropolitan area. 