

GLYPH

Notes

PRE-COLUMBIAN STUDIES INSTITUTE • JULY/AUGUST 2010 • VOLUME 17 NUMBER 4

Textiles, Tikal, and Two as One

By Sherrie Kline Smith

April 10, 2010, was the 28th Annual Maya Weekend at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. The theme was "Maya Women: Figures of Enduring Strength and Power." This annual event consists of concurrent lectures and hieroglyphic workshops.

My initiation in understanding the mysteries of the glyphs and beginning to learn to read them began at these workshops. This was my sixth since the first one I attended in 1994.

Some of the most memorable classes were taught by the late Kathryn Josseland and her husband Nick Hopkins. I have also been privileged to attend the Maya Meetings at the University of Texas-Austin since 1992 and almost consecutively the last five years.

Textiles

This year, because the theme at the Penn Museum centered on Maya women, one of the workshops covered Maya textiles, "Women, Weaving and Wonder: Maya Weaving Is the Thread to Traditions." Several passages in The Book of Mormon mention women creating cloth.

And I did cause that the women should spin, and toil, and work; and work all manner of fine linen; yea, and cloth of every kind, that we might clothe our nakedness (Mosiah 6:23).

Behold, their women did toil and spin, and did make all manner of cloth, of fine twined linen, and cloth of every kind, to clothe their nakedness (Helaman 2:133).

With this connection to The Book of Mormon and having an interest in needlework myself, I found this morning class of great interest.

Yolanda Alcorta, with Friends of the Ixchel Museum in Guatemala City, presented the workshop with active help from Sabina Ramirez, an Ixil Maya, who demonstrated weaving using the backstrap loom. Yolanda had brought along a wealth of textiles from Guatemala that she has collected over the years to illustrate her lectures. Some highlights gleaned from the workshop include:

- Maya girls begin learning to weave at age 7.
- The most prevalent symbols woven into the cloths are ceremonial offering plates full of fruit and vegetables; a field of corn (corn is the staff of life for the Maya); tree of life (women, who create life, create weavings of the tree of life); and serpents and birds, in particular the dead turkey which marks a special occasion when turkey is eaten and the double-headed eagle.

• In the last 20 years, a great deal of change has occurred, and the meaning of the many designs and symbols has been lost. Specific patterns or designs are associated with specific Maya villages, but as the world grows smaller and American publications and tourists influence the Maya of today, the distinctions are blurring. One of the influences manifested in

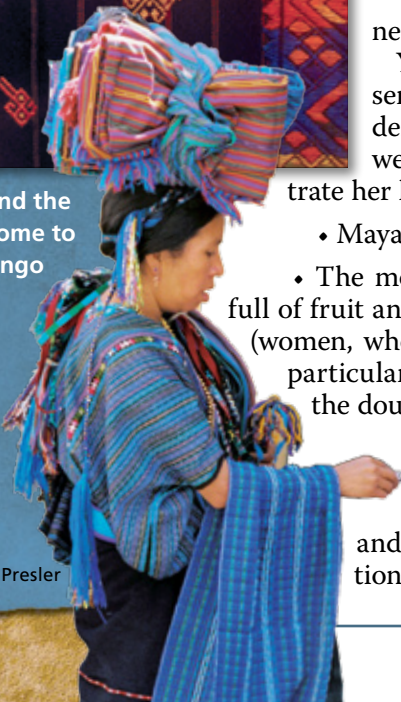
Continued on Page 2

Portion of a weaving with birds purchased by the author in Guatemala City in 2000.



Vendors around the countryside come to Chichicastenango on market days—Sundays and Thursdays—to sell their wares including textiles.

Sallie Gross Presler



Textiles, Tikal, and Two as One (Continued from page 1)

the last five years has been the exchange of the complete riot of color and pattern previously worn together for a more color-coordinated look. Younger women lack interest in and are ignorant of the cosmological elements of their traditional dress and are greatly influenced by Western fashion. Therefore it is important to continue to document what remains of their textile symbolism.



Maya women spread their woven textiles and handmade dolls, dressed in traditional clothing, on the ground waiting for a sale.

Tikal Inscription

The afternoon workshop provided the opportunity to analyze some Maya inscriptions. John F. Harris taught the Intermediate Maya Hieroglyph Workshop Based on Structural Analysis of Maya Inscriptions which he called “Elite Maya Women in Classic Maya Inscriptions.”

Harris, now in his twilight years, is a terrific example of the non-professional making contributions to glyph decipherment. He is a retired chemist (Ph.D. University of Pennsylvania) whose interest in Maya hieroglyphic writing began with the early Maya Weekends at the University. Together with Steve Stearns, Harris authored *Understanding Maya Inscriptions: A Hieroglyph Handbook* (1992, 1997) and is also the author of numerous publications on Maya hieroglyphic topics.

A small class of only four, we were introduced to several Maya inscriptions fea-

Elin Danien, Maya Weekend Coordinator for the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, wrote the following about Harris and Stearns in the Preface to the first edition of *Understanding Maya Inscriptions*. It could also apply to many others not associated with academia that have made contributions to glyph decipherment.

Today, where once only a mere handful of scholars pored over the glyphs in dedicated and oft-times fruitless study, there are dozens whose brilliant deductions build on painstaking investigation to produce a body of work that may soon reveal the entire history of the Maya as it was recorded by their scribes. This situation exists because a few scholars reached out to the public with an inclusive embrace that invited all who were interested to attend, to question, to strive, and to contribute to the bubbling pot of Maya hieroglyph studies. This book, written by two men whose professional lives are far removed from academia, exemplifies the close cooperation between professional and amateur in the field of Maya epigraphy (1992:ix).

turing women, and then, following the break, we each chose an inscription to analyze. I chose Tikal Altar 5. I selected this one because the inscription has two “muluk” day sign glyphs.

The iconography of the altar includes two figures standing on either side of a skull lying on top of a pile of bones. The inscription of this “tombstone” relates that the Lord of Masuul (the site of Naachtun) caused the woman Ixtunte, who died on a certain date, to be buried or interred at “9 Lord’s House” on March 24, 703. Although the altar was found at Tikal, it does not talk about people from Tikal. This inscription clearly relates events that happened after the end of The Book of Mormon, AD 420, but it provides a good exercise in learning to read the glyphs.

Two as One

Mark Zender taught the Sunday morning advanced glyph workshop “Seen But Not Heard? Women in Classic Maya Writing and Art.” Zender is a research associate with the Harvard University Peabody Museum’s Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions Program (CMHI) & Mesoamerican Laboratory. He replaced David Stuart when Stuart became Director of the Mesoamerica Center at the University of Texas-Austin. Zender has been a frequent teacher at the Maya Weekends in Philadelphia, and I’ve been fortunate to attend at least three or four of his in the past nine years. See “glyph clips” in this issue for more about CMHI.

Discussion in Zender’s workshop reviewed the few art works that feature Maya women. Some of the sites that portray women are Piedras Negras, Yaxchilan, Bonampak, Calakmul, and Naranjo. Two points from this workshop stand out in my mind. The first is that Piedras Negras Stela 3 depicts the queen and her three-year old daughter. To date this is the only known portrayal of a mother and daughter together.


The second is the dual male/female concept. Male and female equal one. At present, scholars are not sure if male and female begin as one and separate into two – or begin with two and become one. One of the participants in the class was archaeologist Karen Bassie-Sweet, author of several books and numerous articles, who made the comment that when someone asked the wife of the Guatemala



president what she did, she replied, "I am the president." The Maya male and female roles function as one.

While at workshops like these, I have an opportunity to look at new books and reports. On sale that weekend was Bassie-Sweet's newest book, *Maya Sacred Geography and the Creator Deities*. In this book she goes into depth about the "male/female principle of complementary opposition" as talked about in the advanced workshop. I'll try to do a book report on this in an upcoming issue.

The week after the Maya Weekend at Philadelphia, Dennis and Shirley Heater, my husband Lyle and I attended the 75th annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology. Members of PSI realize that most of our readers are unable to attend these types of workshops and depend on us to provide reports and updates about current thinking of research in the realm of Mesoamerican archaeology, linguistics, and culture.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or thoughts you have. We welcome your comments! 



Lyle Smith

Tikal Altar 5, found in what is called the Twin-pyramid Complex N located between Temples 3 and 4, is basically a "tombstone inscription" for a woman called Ixtunte. The inscription begins with the date glyphs 1 Muluk (sometimes transliterated as Muluc) followed by 2 Muwaan and taken together correlate to November 25, 691. There is a second Muluk glyph farther in the inscription. Muluk is a day name like Monday and was identified by a Maya shaman to the Spanish Bishop Diego De Landa in the sixteenth century. See "More on Muluk: Epigraphers Reconsider Yaxchilán's Emblem Glyph" in the May/June 2007 issue of *glyph notes*.

More on "All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things."

By Sherrie Kline Smith (In *glyph notes*, March/April 2010, page 3.)

Inadvertently the correction statement below did not get in the last issue of *glyph notes*. I was sorry for that, but, just as the scripture says, "All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things."

My sincere apologies to Connie Spivey. It was she, not Connie Smith, who brought the statement "All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things" (2 Nephi 1:114) to our class' attention. The mistake was unintentional, and I have asked Connie Spivey's forgiveness for not checking my facts before publishing.

Since then, Connie Spivey bore her testimony at a Wednesday evening prayer service telling how this scripture came to mean so much to her. I asked her to write it so we could print it along with my apology. Here is her testimony.

About a year after my Mom and Dad gathered to Independence, my Mom had a stroke. Her entire left side was paralyzed, and it totally changed her personality. She could no longer walk or take care of herself, nor could I talk with her and ask for counsel or advice about anything. She became more like a child, and my "Mom" was gone.


She was in a nursing home for 13 years before she passed away in January 2009. As we watched her deteriorate year after year, my sisters and I struggled

at times with why she lingered for so long in this condition, but tried to leave her in the Lord's hands for his will to be done. But from time to time, I would still have thoughts about *why*.

My sisters and I decided to read through the Scriptures this year beginning with The Book of Mormon. I vividly remember that day in mid-January when I read 2 Nephi 1. I was sitting at the kitchen table, and it was a bright, sunny day with about 12 inches of snow on the ground. I came to 2 Nephi 1:114, and the scripture just jumped out at me.

Why had I never noticed this scripture before? I had read 2 Nephi and studied it in Sunday school classes many times. It said, *All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things*.

What a blessing this has been to me! I no longer wonder about why my Mom lingered, because now I know that *All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things*. My mom was a woman of great faith and mighty prayer. Her favorite expression was "this too shall pass." I miss her dearly each day, but know that she is with her Lord and Savior.

I printed a copy of this scripture and have it on my refrigerator door so that when times of trouble or trials come, I can read it again and know that *All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things*. 

GLYPH *Quotes*

It shall be a land of liberty.... —2 Nephi 1:12

By Ron Lidberg

By the time you read this article, our nation will have celebrated its 234th birthday. On July 4, 1776, representatives of the Continental Congress adopted the United States Declaration of Independence, and though the words were written long ago, one particular phrase still rings true today: *“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”*

As I reflect upon these words and what they mean to me today, my mind is drawn to The Book of Mormon and the words of Lehi whom the Lord God led out of Jerusalem to this land of promise more than two millennia ago. Lehi testifies of God’s covenant with him that this land should be a land of inheritance for him and his seed forever and “also all those who should be led out of other countries, by the hand of the Lord” (2 Nephi 1:7-9). Lehi went on to prophesy “that there shall none come into this land, save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord. Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring” (2 Nephi 1:10-11).


Lehi’s prophecy, however, does not end there. A conditional promise was specifically given regarding those whom the Lord would bring to this land.

And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of *liberty* unto them; Wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity: if so, it shall be because of iniquity: For if iniquity shall abound, cursed shall be the land for their sakes; But unto the righteous, it shall be blessed for ever (emphasis added; 2 Nephi 1:12-15).

Lehi prophesies further that if they reject the Holy One of Israel, God “will bring other nations unto them [other than those led out of Jerusalem], and he will give unto them [the other nations] power, and he will take away from them [those who reject the Lord] the lands of their possessions, and he

will cause them to be scattered and smitten” (2 Nephi 1:24). Mormon’s abridged record of the history of his ancestry and the more recent history of the European nations who settled on this Promised Land reveal that Lehi’s prophecy was indeed fulfilled but not in the manner he so dearly desired.

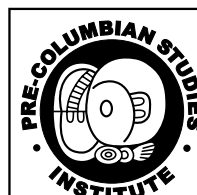
As citizens of this great nation we are truly blessed to live in “the land of the free.” For this wonderful privilege we have much to be thankful. Moreover, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ restored in these the latter days, we are also privileged to be invited to assist in the building up of the New Jerusalem. Indeed, each one of us should continually be seeking ways that we can assist in the establishment of the cause of Zion.

To that end, we would do well to remember the counsel Lehi gave his sons before he went on to his eternal reward. “I desire that ye should remember to observe the statutes and the judgments of the Lord” (2 Nephi 1:30). Remember, it is to the “righteous” that this land is promised to be “blessed for ever.” We see from the annals of history how the liberties that we and our fellow countrymen now enjoy are ensured only when we individually and collectively obey the laws of God. 

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GLYPHNotes

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Nephite/Mulekite Lands

Annual Book of Mormon Archaeological Tour February 3 – 13, 2011***



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GLYPH Clips

Breaking News in Maya Archaeology!

New Tomb Discovered at El Zotz

<http://news.softpedia.com/news/Archaeologists-Discover-Mayan-Royal-Tomb-147962.shtml> and <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/07/100716222231.htm>

Reported by *Softpedia* and *Science Daily*, the discovery of a well-preserved tomb at the small site of El Zotz has potential for supporting the account of the ending years in *The Book of Mormon*. The tomb dates from AD 350-400 and was discovered in May by a team of archaeologists with Brown University led by Stephen Houston.

After removing the many layers of tightly packed stones, "They lowered a bare light bulb into the hole, and suddenly Houston saw 'an explosion of color in all directions -- reds, greens, yellows.' It was a royal tomb filled with organics Houston says he'd never seen before: pieces of wood, textiles, thin layers of painted stucco..." The construction of the tomb allowed these "artistic riches" to be "extraordinarily preserved from a key time in Maya history."

"When we opened the tomb, I poked my head in and there was still, to my astonishment, a smell of putrefaction and a chill that went to my bones," Houston said. "The chamber had been so well sealed, for over 1600 years, that no air and little water had entered."

The principal occupant of the "tomb appears to be an adult male, and because of the tomb's position, time, richness, and repeated constructions atop the tomb, we believe this is very likely the founder of a dynasty." Bones of six children, probably sacrificed at the king's death, were also in the tomb.

El Zotz is located in Guatemala 12 miles west of Tikal. It's directly south of Nakbe and is the western point of a triangle with Uaxactun to the northeast and Tikal to the southeast. In the 1960s looters removed a carved wooden lintel from El Zotz which ended up in Denver, but has subsequently been returned to Guatemala. Carved wooden lintels are rare; only three — at Tikal, Dzibanche, and El Zotz — have been discovered so far.

A great deal of work remains in assessing and studying this new find. PSI will try to keep you updated on further announcements about the contents of this tomb.

Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions Program (CMHI)

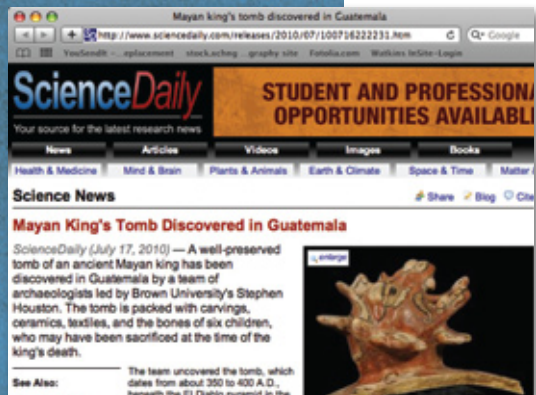
<http://www.peabody.harvard.edu/> and <http://140.247.102.177/CMHI/>

The Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions Program at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology was founded in 1968. It is an Active Research Archive and on-going Recording Program of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, devoted to the recording and dissemination of information about all known ancient Maya inscriptions and their associated figurative art. The CMHI publishes its detailed original line drawings and photographic documentation in a unique series of folio volumes and makes its material available to researchers through its archive and via the Web. This website is an excellent one for images of inscriptions from some of the sites.

Oldest Known Pyramid Tomb in Mesoamerica

The New York Times (May 17, 2010) and *National Geographic News* (May 18, 2010)
<http://tinyurl.com/27czyp7>

Archaeologists working in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas at the ancient site of Chiapa de Corzo discovered a tomb in a 30-foot-tall pyramid that dates to around 700 BC. The tomb's contents are described differently by the *Times* and *Geographic*. The *Geographic* relates that two rulers were found in the pyramid-top tomb and both "had been coated head-to-toe in sacred red pigment.... On their waists were jade beads shaped like howler monkeys, crocodiles, and gourds. Seashells inlaid with obsidian formed tiny masks for their mouths, which in turn held jade and pyrite ornaments." The other tomb accoutrements included iron-pyrite mirrors among other items.



What culture do they represent? Dr. Bachand, with BYU, “noted that many artifacts in the tomb were similar or identical to those found at the imposing Olmec ruins of La Venta, in Tabasco.” Other aspects about the burial, however, differed from the Olmec culture. The “tomb’s stone and clay walls and wooden ceiling represent a unique Zoque style that persisted at Chiapa de Corzo for centuries.”

Also noteworthy is that the pyramid, with its long, terraced platform, resembles the classic Maya “E” group layout as first identified at Uaxactun. E groups have buildings aligned with the sunrise on solstices and equinoxes. This pyramid appears to be the earliest E group in Mesoamerica and also the earliest tomb in a pyramid found to date.

Sometimes new discoveries like this one produce more questions than answers as archaeologists try to interpret their findings in a quest to understand obsolete cultures. See photos online at <http://tinyurl.com/2ctju66>.

Tak’alik Ab’aj in the News Again

On May 10, 2010, *The Guatemala Times* reported another spectacular find at Tak’alik Ab’aj. An offering of 50 jadeite mosaics that when put together comprise a miniature ceremonial head. Celt-like plaques hang underneath the chin and are reminiscent of celts worn as “part of the ceremonial waist belt of the rulers as seen in many Maya stelae from Preclassic to Classic times.” The article says the offering dates to the Early Classic (150-300 B.C. Phase Alejos), but this should be A.D. Most Maya timelines put the Early Classic beginning at A.D. 250.

Located in the southwest section of Guatemala in El Asintal, Department of Retalhuleu, the archaeological site of Tak’alik Ab’aj ranks as a premier site in the study of Olmec and Maya cultures. Its long history endured 1700 years, from 800 B.C.–A.D. 900.

[Tak’alik Ab’aj is] situated on the well-watered flanks of the mountainous chain that runs along the Pacific littoral of Guatemala. It occupies a strategic point where a natural pass cuts through the mountains and leads up to the highlands. Such a location must have been deliberately selected to enable Tak’alik Ab’aj to function as a critical link within the predominant commercial network of the era, for the site soon evolved as one of the most important economic and cultural centers of Pre-Columbian times.

Beginning as an Olmec (Jaredite) outpost which later flourished as a Maya city, Tak’alik Ab’aj appears to provide evidence that people in The Book of Mormon had interaction with Jaredite remnants even though this is not recorded in the portion of The Book of Mormon we now have. This information may have been in the lost 116 pages. The investigations being done at Tak’alik Ab’aj bears watching!

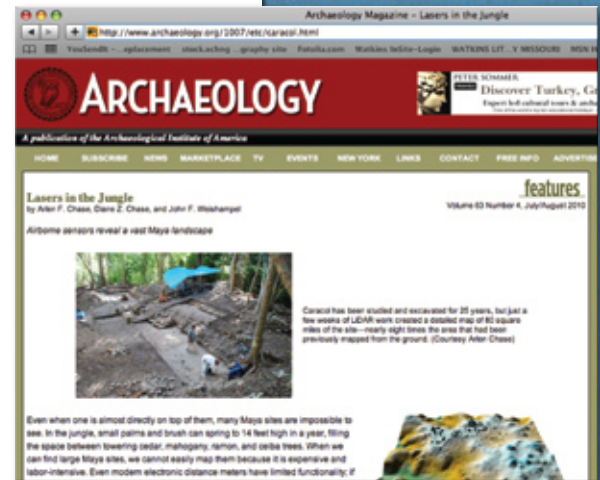
The whole article can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/28qbo63>. It works best with Firefox instead of Internet Explorer. See also the other articles about Tak’alik Ab’aj at the same website, especially “Guatemala’s National Archaeological Park Tak’alik Ab’aj.” *National Geographic*, May 2004, featured a story with photos about Tak’alik Ab’aj.

Archaeology Magazine July/August 2010

Two articles in this issue are of interest to believers in The Book of Mormon.

The first is “Lasers in the Jungle (pages 27-29),” which explores the use of LIDAR technology at Caracol. This provides a little more information about LIDAR that was reported in the “glyph clips” column in our last issue of *glyph notes*. By digitally mapping sites under jungle cover while flying over in an airplane, LIDAR will map in a few weeks what used to take years on the ground. <http://www.archaeology.org/1007/etc/caracol.html>

The second is a lengthy article called “Petra’s Sister City” (pages 20-26) about elaborate tombs carved from solid rock at an ancient site called Hegra in northwest Arabia. Buried in this article is a single photo and caption showing some ancient inscriptions carved on a cliff face at Hegra written by “Lihyanites, a culture that flourished in the area from the 6th to 4th centuries B.C.” Since the Lihy culture (formerly called the Dedanites) flourished at the time Lehi and his family were traveling in this very area, some believe that Lehi and his son Nephi may have *Continued on Page 8*



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Tak'alik Ab'aj in the News Again

Archaeology Magazine July/August 2010 articles

Palenque: Maya Engineered Water Pressure

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taught this group of people the gospel, creating such an impact that the leader took Lehi's name (Lihi). (See *glyph notes*, March/April 2006, and 1 Nephi 1:26-35 and 5:10-16 in The Book of Mormon.) Could this be another instance of "missing" information from the lost 116 pages? Or was never included in the account? The Book of Mormon does not tell that Lehi and his family met or interacted with any others on their journey through Arabia. <http://www.archaeology.org/1007/abstracts/hegra.html>

Palenque: Maya Engineered Water Pressure

A news release from Pennsylvania State University on May 4, 2010, describes a water feature, first discovered in 1999 but studied further in 2006, that appears to indicate that the Maya developed a water pressure system. Palenque has many underground water features such as aqueducts, but the Piedras Bolas Aqueduct is a spring-fed conduit made of stone located on a steep terrain. At its outlet, the pressure could have shot a jet of water 20 feet into the air. Until now it's been believed that the concept of water pressure came to the New World with the Spanish. Read more <http://live.psu.edu/story/46532> and in the March/April 2010 issue of *Archaeology* magazine, p. 10. 

The palace at Palenque has water conduits and with the ability to pressurize, the palace may have had running water.

