

GLYPH

Notes

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An Account of Those Ancient Inhabitants: Jaredites

by Lyle L. Smith

Many believers in The Book of Mormon want to know about the ancient civilizations that once occupied the Americas. Is there evidence that these pre-Columbian peoples are the same as those found in The Book of Mormon?

To answer this question as it relates to the Jaredites, three major requirements must be met.

1. The archaeological record must agree with The Book of Mormon timeline.
2. Major cultural aspects need to match.
3. Evidence of writing should be found.

The right geography is another requirement, but it will be defined when these three correlate.

In an earlier article (*glyph notes*, July/Aug. 2011), I provided a timeline covering 1,000 years with 12 major parallels between the Nephite/Lamanite/Mulekite people and the Maya cultures. This article provides a timeline for the Jaredites, the first major group of people recorded in The Book of Mormon.

First it should be noted that diverse groups of Native Americans have lived in the Americas. *The Book of Mormon is not a history of all of them.* The promise in The Book of Mormon is that only those who are led by the hand of the Lord will come to the Land of Promise (2 Nephi 1:8-11). This promise was given after the Flood. There may have been other groups led to the Americas by the hand of the Lord in addition to the Jaredites and the people of Lehi and Mulek.

Archaeology often uncovers major events in the cultural/linguistic/geographical history of an area and its people. By using today's proven methods correctly, archaeologists throw light on authentic cultural history of the periods in question.

Our search for the three requirements mentioned above—historical timeline, culture, and writing—begins with The Book of Mormon because *it is our primary source*—not what others have written about it. Although information about the Jaredite civilization in the Land of Promise is somewhat limited—about 2800 years of history are condensed into only 46 pages and many of those pages include spiritual not historical information—there are enough key points to compare with archaeological evidences to equate the Jaredites with the people known in Mesoamerica as the Olmecs and their predecessors. Also,

Cont. on Page 2



Sherrie Kline Smith

In October 2010, the author attended the symposium "Olmec: Colossal Masterworks of Ancient Mexico" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. (See "glyph clips" on page 7 in the November/December 2010 issue of glyph notes.) The stone sculpture, called Monument 34 from San Lorenzo Tenochtitlan, dates from 1400-1000 B.C. and is thought to represent a ruler in his role as a ballplayer. The sculpture was missing its head and arms. Because of the unusual socket holes, it's believed the arms may have been moveable. The round object on the chest may represent a concave iron-ore mirror.

Our search for the three requirements—historical timeline, culture, and writing—begins with The Book of Mormon because it's our primary source—not what others have written about it.



Patricia Beebe

La Venta, ca. 900-500 B.C., covers a large swamp island about six miles from the Gulf of Mexico. Among the several large complexes of earthen architecture, the La Venta pyramid, shown here, is one of the earliest large pyramidal structures built in Mesoamerica. Recent testing showed that the entire structure is earthen. Although the gullies caused by erosion made it smaller, it was still a hard climb for the tour group in 1990.

Jaredites (Cont. from page 1)

because the civilization existed so long ago, the archaeological record is scanty in the beginning years. “The enormous temporal distance, three millennia, that separates us from the Olmec yields less information about this group than other, later cultures” (de Guevara 2010:25).

Working with these limitations, we will build a timeline by first looking at the history of the Jaredites as written in our primary source, The Book of Mormon, and compare it with major events that took place in Olmec history as found in current archaeological research.

These archaeological references come from well-known, current archaeologists. These are *not* my theories or ideas. These scholars tell the same account as found in The Book of Mormon even though they do not acknowledge it nor may not even realize it. The accepted study of archaeology is based on the theory of evolution and does not include belief in God and His dealings with mankind. This means that most archaeologists will never see or agree with the information presented here that supports the belief that the history of The Book of Mormon took place in Mesoamerica. Don't expect them to!

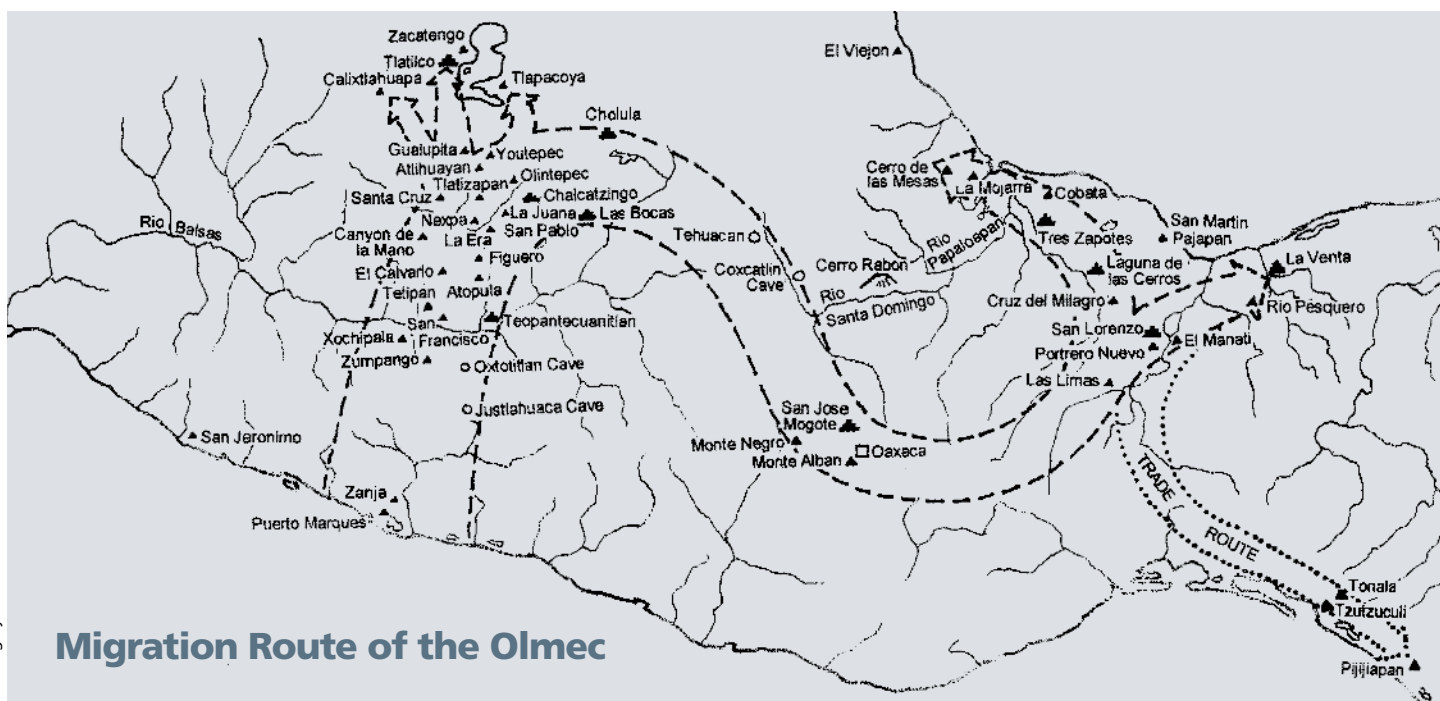
This material is primarily for the believer, to help us accept that The Book of Mormon is intellectually true and that it describes real history of a real people. When we understand the evidence, we *convert our minds* as well as our hearts by realizing that *current archaeology confirms the same history as found in The Book of Mormon*.

JAREDITES IN THE LAND OF PROMISE

The Book of Mormon

The people of Jared migrated from the “great tower,” which evidence shows was in modern-day Iraq. The narrative in The Book of Mormon would indicate the Jaredites traveled across Asia to the eastern coast of what is now known as China. From there they were “driven forth by the wind” (Ether 3:6-10) in the currents across the great ocean in barges, landing somewhere on the south coast of Mexico.

“And thus they were driven forth, three hundred and forty and four days upon the water; and they did land upon the shore of the promised land” (Ether 1:13). This implies a Pacific Ocean crossing in one of the “paths of



Drawing by Glenn Scott

Migration Route of the Olmec

the sea” (Psalm 8:8). The paths, or currents, in the Atlantic would take less time. See Don Montel’s testimony about how this particular scripture in Ether convinced him of the truth of The Book of Mormon (*The Witness*, Fall 1993, pages 10-11).

When did the Jaredites arrive in the Land of Promise? The Book of Mormon does not give us this information. The former 2200 B.C. date printed in The Book of Mormon was added by a committee to later printings and was based on the now discredited Usher chronology. Based on archaeological evidence in Mesoamerica and Sumer (what is now Iraq) and the timeline in The Book of Mormon, I propose they arrived around 3100 B.C.

Ether records that shortly after the Jaredites came to the Promised Land “they began to spread upon the face of the land, and to multiply and to till the earth, and they did wax strong in the land” (Ether 3:20). Centuries later, in the time of King Omer, probably about 2500 B.C., a part of them left and migrated eastward, overland, to another seashore east of where they had landed earlier (Ether 4:3-4). This puts their civilization on both the Pacific and Gulf coasts.

Archaeology

“After 3000 B.C., it is clear that lowland societies began to acquire domesticated plants...” as well as “some of the earliest, if not the earliest, pottery in Mesoamerica” has been found to date to 2400 B.C. (Adams 2005:42).

Although what is classified as the “Olmec Heartland” is on the Gulf Coast, some archaeologists believe the earliest evidence for the Olmecs is found on the west or Pacific side. See Coe and Koontz’s discussion of this in *Mexico* pages 89 through 91.

“Archaeologist John Graham of the University of California at Berkeley, who excavated Abaj Takalik in Guatemala, believes it is possible that this Pacific coast area—and not the Gulf Coast region after all—may indeed have been the Olmec heartland” (Stuart 1993:114).

“Indubitably in Guerrero there was a marked Olmec influence, to the point that Covarrubias thought that the style had been born there, before its efflorescence in Veracruz-Tabasco” (Bernal 1969:142).

The Jaredites from the Old World knew about domesticated crops and how to make pottery. That both domestication of plants and evidence of pottery occur about the same time as the arrival of the Jaredites provides a strong witness for correlating the two groups.



Aaron Presler

To the north of the La Venta Pyramid (see photo on page 2) were several important finds. One was this tomb made from basalt columns (around 900-500 B.C.). Among the offerings found in the burial was a small figurine, covered in cinnabar and wearing a hematite mirror.

DROUGHT

The Book of Mormon

According to The Book of Mormon, at the time of King Heth prophets came into the land crying repentance and that there would be a great famine in the land if the people did not repent.

Glenn Scott in his book *Voices from the Dust* has an excellent timeline of the Jaredite kings and events. He places King Heth at 2165 B.C. (Scott 2002:43).

“There began to be a great dearth upon the land, and the inhabitants began to be destroyed exceeding fast, because of the dearth, for there was no rain upon the face of the earth...” (Ether 4: 35). Even King Heth and his household perished.

Archaeology

“The higher temperatures of this period were accompanied by decreased rainfall. Authorities on ancient climate do not agree on the precise beginning and ending dates of this warm, dry spell, which is known as the Altithermal or Hypisthermal.... Higher than modern temperatures prevailed until sometime between 3000 and 1500 B.C.” (Fiedel 1987:119-120).

“Vast areas of the New World were transformed into desert wastes” and
Cont. on Page 4

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Jaredites (Cont. from page 3)

many animals disappeared like the “mastodon, mammoth, horse . . . camel, giant bison, ground sloth, and dire wolf” (Coe and Koontz 2008:26).

The drought recorded in The Book of Mormon may have lasted a few years, yet this tiny blip, sometime in the period 3000 to 1500 B.C. of the Hypisthermal, may have caused the disappearance of the various animals. While animals and humans can live with higher temperatures, no plant, animal, or human can survive without moisture.

HORSES

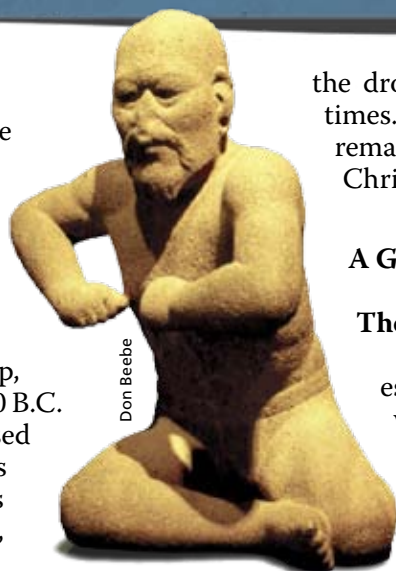
The Book of Mormon

“And they also had horses, and asses, and there were elephants, and cureloms, and cumoms...” (Ether 4:21).

Archaeology

“Among the animals that disappeared at this time [Hypisthermal period mentioned above] were the mastodon, mammoth, horse . . . camel, giant bison, ground sloth, and dire wolf” (Coe and Koontz 2008:26).

For 150 years The Book of Mormon has been criticized for claiming the existence of horses in the Promised Land, which from all evidence is Mesoamerica. But now, Coe and Koontz firmly put horses and other large animals in Jaredite times. Evidently *not all* horses were destroyed in



Don Beebe

One of the masterpieces of Olmec sculpture, “The Wrestler,” sports a mustache and beard believed to be a privilege of political or religious leaders.

the drought for some remained in the land in Nephite times. Given time, archaeology may also discover the remains of horses closer to the destruction at the time of Christ’s appearing in the Land of Promise.

A GREAT NATION

The Book of Mormon

After the great drought, they were again establishing a great civilization with mighty cities within a few centuries. It is after this period of excessively high temperatures that archaeologists begin to identify the people in the area of Veracruz on the Gulf Coast as the Olmec.

The Lord promised the Brother of Jared and his people that they would become a great nation. “And there will I bless thee and thy seed, and raise up unto me of thy seed, and of the seed of thy brother, and they who shall go with thee, a great nation” (Ether 1:19-20).

“Coriantum . . . did build many mighty cities...” (Ether 4:25). “And they built a great city by the narrow neck of land, by the place where the sea divides the land” (Ether 4:68).

“And the whole face of the land northward was covered with inhabitants; and they were exceeding industrious . . . and never could be a people more blessed than were they, and more prospered by the hand of the Lord...” (Ether 4:70, 78).

Archaeology

“Because of their early achievements in art, politics, religion, and economics, the Olmec stand for many as a kind of ‘mother culture’ to all the civilizations that came after, including the Maya and the Aztec” (Stuart 1993:92).

“Olmecs were the first Native Americans to erect large architectural complexes, live in nucleated towns and cities, and develop a sophisticated art style executed in stone and other imperishable media” (Diehl 2004:12).

In San Lorenzo, “between 1800 and 1400 BC, they moved 2.2 million tons (2 million metric tons) of earth as part of the initial step in their plan to erect the first capital of the Olmec world...” (Cyphers 2010:37).

“The total quantity of the treasures uncovered in Complex A [at La Venta], only a portion of which are described here, brings to mind the royal treasures of European monarchs or pharaonic tombs” (Diehl 2004:74).

The Lord promised the Jaredites that they would be greatly prospered. The treasures found in Olmec cities such as San Lorenzo and La Venta support this. Such wealth does not come when people are only subsistence farmers. The accumulation of wealth is made possible by business, government, trade, i.e. advanced, well organized, and prosperous civilizations.



Sherrie Kline Smith

More than 900 axes in three different offerings were found at La Merced, not far from San Lorenzo. Many are made of jade in various colors; some in white. The Olmec highly prized jade and created many figures and other items of jade, requiring a great deal of skill. Jade is one of the hardest stones and not easily worked.

NORTHWARD VERSUS SOUTHWARD

The Book of Mormon

“And they did preserve the land southward for a wilderness to get game” (Ether 4:68-70). In other words, the Jaredites as a nation remained *north* of the narrow neck dividing the land southward from the land northward, although archaeological evidence indicates some farming and small settlements and trading posts south of the Isthmus or narrow neck of land.

Archaeology

“One of ancient Mesoamerica’s great mysteries is the absence of significant human populations in Yucatan, Belize, and the Peten of Guatemala before 800 BC. Earlier remains have been identified at various places in the northern Peten and Belize, but the entire area was very lightly settled until 600/500 BC.” (Diehl 2004:150).

“Slow, uneven population growth occurred from 1000 to 500 B.C. (Middle Formative), resulting in the proliferation of small farming communities throughout the peninsula. There are indications that *this erratic population growth became an explosion after 550 B.C.* The reasons for the apparent jump in numbers are obscure” (Adams 2005:132, emphasis added).

The Jaredites did not formally include the territory south of the narrow neck as a part of their empire, but it does not mean that trading posts and even small groups did not move into the area, especially along the Pacific coast

of Mexico and Guatemala. The answer to the explosion of population after 550 B.C. was the arrival of the Nephites and Mulekites not long after 600 B.C.

METALS

The Book of Mormon

Shortly after the Jaredites arrived in the Promised Land, they were using metals. “Wherefore he came to the hill Ephraim, and he did moulten out of the hill, and made swords out of steel...” (Ether 3:46)

“And they did work in all manner of ore, and they did make gold, and silver, and iron, and brass, and all manner of metals; and they did dig it out of the earth; wherefore they did cast up mighty heaps of earth to get ore, of gold, and of silver, and of iron, and of copper” (Ether 4:71, about 1500 B.C.).

“And they did make all manner of tools to till the earth, both to plow and to sow, to reap and to hoe, and also to thrash. And they did make all manner of tools with which they did work their beasts. And they did make all manner of weapons of war” (Ether 4:74-76).

Archaeology

“Pierre Agrinier found native iron ore deposits, a workshop littered with thousands of broken and partially worked ilmenite and magnetite blocks, chert drills and other tools, and even a fragment from an iron ore mirror...” (Diehl 2004:133).

Cont. on Page 6

COMPARATIVE TIMELINE

The Book of Mormon/Jaredites	Dates	Mesoamerica/Olmec History
Jaredites arrive	ca. 3100 B.C.	Pre-Olmec people
Till the earth (seeds for domesticated crops) and knowledge of ceramics	3100 B.C. 2400 B.C. or earlier	Domestication of crops and pottery appears
Wickedness of people cause a great dearth (a tiny blip in the hypisthermal); most of the Jaredites destroyed	3000-1500 B.C.	Hypisthermal ends; deserts form
Jaredites had horses and large animals; no further mention of elephants, cureloms, and cumons	3000-1500 B.C.	Horses and other large animals many disappear
Become a great nation; build many mighty cities; are exceeding industrious and prospered by the Lord	2000-1500 B.C.	Olmec recognized; “mother culture;” large Olmec cities like San Lorenzo begin; they amass pharaonic-like treasures
Preserve Land Southward as a wilderness	1500 B.C.	Yucatan, Belize, and the Peten of Guatemala very lightly settled until 600/500 B.C.
Always had knowledge of metals	1475 B.C.	Current earliest evidence for Olmec metallurgy
Always had knowledge of writing	1000 B.C.	Current earliest evidence for Olmec writing
Jaredite civilization ends	Circa 300 B.C.	Olmec civilization ends

Jaredites (Cont. from page 5)

“Ilmenite may have been quarried somewhere near San Lorenzo, where Ann Cyphers and her colleagues uncovered two workshops containing tons of small rectangular [iron] ‘beads’ perforated with conical holes.... The sheer quantity of objects turned up by Cyphers suggests they must have had some other use as well” (Diehl 2004:93).

“Ilmenite and magnetite were used to make mirrors in Oaxaca about 1475 B.C.” (Flannery and Schoenwetter 1970:149).

“Small iron-ore mirrors, reached a height of popularity...” around 1450-1400 B.C. (Pool 2007:190).

“The most spectacular Olmec iron ore creations are large, beautifully polished, parabolic concave ‘mirrors’ made from magnetite and ilmenite.... The concavity on the front is as carefully ground as many modern optical lenses, and the optical qualities of some allow them to be used to ignite fires and project ‘camera lucida’ images on flat surfaces” (Diehl 2004:93-94).

“Although the Olmecs had a Stone Age technology, they did work the iron ores magnetite, hematite, and ilmenite into beads, mirrors, and at least one marvelous little human figurine...” (Diehl 2004:93)

While archaeologists say the Olmecs had a stone-age technology, on the other hand they admit considerable evidence of metallurgy. Why should we not assume that they could also make metal tools to “till the earth” and “all manner of weapons of war”?

WRITING

The Book of Mormon

The Brother of Jared could write (Ether 1:87-89, 92); they had brought written records with them (Ether 3:80); and Ether wrote a condensed history of the Jaredites on “plates of gold” found some years later by the people of Limhi (Ether 1:2; 5:16; 6:108-109; Mosiah 12:16). Ether most probably had written records to use in compiling their history of more than 2800 years.

Archaeology

“Mesoamerica was the *only* area of the New World that developed indigenous writing systems” (Pool 2007:290, emphasis added; see also pages 255-258).

“Prior to 2002, it was generally agreed that *pars pro toto* ‘pseudo-writing,’ in which specific elements stand for a large invisible item—for example, the ‘paw-wing’ as shorthand for the deity called the Olmec Dragon—was the closest the Olmecs came to true writing.... Then in



Don Beebe



Sherrie Kline Smith

Another discovery just north of the La Venta Pyramid was this most extraordinary offering, unlike any found in any other region of pre-Hispanic Mexico. According to archaeologists, it represents a ceremonial scene. With the 16 figures are 5 small celts made from serpentine with engraved signs over which great controversy exists. Chinese writing experts believe they represent ancient Chinese characters for particular words, but most Mesoamerican archaeologists vehemently disagree. See “The Olmec/Shang Debate” in glyph notes, Vol. 4, No. 5, Sept./Oct. 1997.

December 2002 a fortuitous discovery established the existence of Olmec writing and calendrics by at least 650 BC” (Diehl 2004:96).

Coe and Koontz, though, report in their sixth edition of *Mexico* (2008), that, “More conclusive evidence that the Olmecs had a script appeared in 1999 at a place called El Cascajal, not far north of San Lorenzo . . . local villagers had recovered a serpentine block, one face of which was incised with hieroglyphs...” (76). They date this writing to 1000-900 B.C.

END OF A CIVILIZATION

The Book of Mormon

The prophet Ether prophesied unto Coriantumr that unless he and all his household would repent, “they should be destroyed...” (Ether 6:21-22).

“Yea, there had been slain two millions of mighty men, and also their wives and their children” (Ether 6:73).

Archaeology

“Olmec culture collapsed with the fall of La Venta, around 400 B.C.” (Pool 2007:243, emphasis added).

“Whatever environmental changes occurred, the demise of Olmec culture was ultimately a cultural process that reflected human actions and responses.... *But what happened to the people?*” (Diehl 2004:82, emphasis added).

Yes, it was “human actions and responses” that destroyed the people. The Book of Mormon describes this history (Ether 6:24-109).

REVIEW

The nine major parallels between the Jaredite and Olmec civilizations (shown on page 5) illustrates how these match to provide a solid witness that the Olmecs and their predecessors were the same people as the Jaredites. Up until a few years ago, archaeological evidence did not align with Jaredite history. Only in the last few decades has it converged so that Jaredite and Olmec histories now have parallel timelines.

The Book of Mormon has not changed. It is “an account of those ancient inhabitants” (Ether 1:1). Current archaeological evidence now confirms history in The Book of Mormon.

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GLYPH *Clips*
 by Sherrie Kline Smith

New Book about Copan

The recently published book, *The Copan Sculpture Museum: Ancient Maya Artistry in Stucco and Stone* by Barbara W. Fash, gives a good history of the site of Copan located in western Honduras just across the border from Guatemala. “Lavishly illustrated, the book gives detailed archaeological context for each exhibit in the museum, provides a comprehensive introduction to the history, art,



Lyle Smith

The Briggs family with the PSI 2011 tour flanks one of the many large stone heads discovered in the Olmec heartland.

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Hi guys! I'm kinda busy travelling with Alma right now. We're running from King Noah! I'll be back next time to tell you all about that adventure!

The Adventures of Beezrom



and culture of the ancient Maya....” Those who have traveled with us to Copan will appreciate this book and those visiting Copan will find it a great guide to the exhibits.

Cont. on Page 8

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INSIDE:

*An Account of Those Ancient
Inhabitants: Jaredites*

GLYPH Clips:


- *New Book about Copan*
- *PSI Members Attend Meetings*

Glyph Clips (Cont. from page 7)

PSI Members Attend Meetings

The first weekend in May, Lyle and Sherrie Smith attended the 30th Annual Maya Weekend at the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia. The Maya weekend was held in conjunction with the new exhibit “Maya 2012: Lords of Time” at the Penn Museum. Prior to the official ribbon cutting by the President of Honduras on Saturday, attendees were allowed to view the exhibit Friday night. The exhibit, with many educational components, presents through video screens, special lighting on inscriptions, and selected artifacts, mostly from Copan, an explanation of the Maya and their use of the Long Count calendar. Various scholars gave presentations on Saturday and Sunday simultaneously with workshops relating to the calendar and

Maya textiles. Saturday had special events in the museum to accompany the opening day of the exhibit, such as the creation of an *alfombra*, a carpet made of colored sawdust.

In late April, Shirley Heater attended sessions at the annual Society of American Archaeology conference held in New Orleans. 

Two Important Needs

PSI is looking for two or more people to learn how to process our bi-monthly mailings. They will need to live in the Independence area. Contact Pat Beebe, 816.796.4094 or patricia.beebe@gmail.com.

The second area is with the editorial committee. This person need not live in the Independence area since this work is done online. Knowledge of English and standard proofing skills required. Experience with academic papers helpful. Contact Sherrie Smith, 816.867.5057 or sksmith2@gmail.com.



Lyle Smith