

glyph notes

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A Time of Political, Economic, Religious, and Social Change

A By Lyle L. Smith
 Archaeologists working in the area called Mesoamerica (Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, and parts of Honduras) have come to recognize a time frame that some call the Transitional or Terminal Preclassic.

For years Mesoamericanists have designated the different time periods as Archaic (3000-1800 BC), Preclassic (1800 BC–AD 250), Classic (AD 250-900), and Postclassic (AD 900-1530). These dates are not *exact*. They can swing anywhere between 50 to 100 years either way. Also, the dates and names for these periods vary according to archaeologists.

The latter part of the Preclassic period and early years of the Classic (around AD 30-300) saw major changes that set this time frame apart from the Preclassic and Classic. This period, Transitional or Terminal Preclassic, had its own distinct characteristics, and they “just happen” to parallel those found in The Book of Mormon at the same time.

In Michael Callaghan’s dissertation about ceramics and economics in the Maya area, he captures much that occurred in The Book of Mormon during this transitional time.

The Terminal Preclassic period is as complex to identify and describe archaeologically as it was culture-historically. It is not nearly as materially consistent as the Preclassic and Classic periods because it is a time of . . . political, economic, religious, and social change (2008:16).

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Teotihuacan, located in Central Mexico, had over two thousand apartment complexes. The ruins of one of those apartment complexes, shown at right, are by the long straight road called the Avenue of the Dead.



Don Beebe

The people of The Book of Mormon were real people who lived their lives in a real place, at a real time in history.

A Time of Change *(Cont. from Page 1)*

Archaeologist Julia Guernsey, and many others, also state that this time frame experienced “enormous change.” The events of The Book of Mormon explain this “enormous change.”

From around AD 30 to AD 36, the people in The Book of Mormon suffered great turmoil. Because of wickedness, the central government, with elected judges who regulated and enforced the laws, disintegrated to a tribal system each with its own leader. Soon after this division, in AD 34, major physical destruction occurred when many cities were destroyed or burned, and only the more righteous part of the people remained. At the end of the thirty-fourth year, Christ appeared, teaching the gospel and giving authority to priesthood to act in his stead. This began a vigorous missionary effort, and by AD 36 “all were converted.” For almost 200 years the people enjoyed peace and prosperity until, once again, evil entered in. During AD 231 a major division of the people took place again, undoubtedly causing people to move to different cities or even to establishing new ones. Then, by 300 both the Nephites and Lamanites had become exceedingly wicked. Destructive warfare began in 321.

Disintegration (ca. AD 30)

And they did set at defiance the law and the rights of their country; and they did covenant, one with another, to destroy the governor, and to establish a king over the land, that the land should no more be at liberty, but should be subject unto kings.... Yea, [they] did murder the chief judge of the land (3 Nephi 3:35-36 [LDS 6:30-7:1]).

And the regulations of the government were destroyed (3 Nephi 3:41 [LDS 7:6]).

Tribes

And the people were divided one against another; and they did separate one from another, into tribes.... And every tribe did appoint a chief, or a leader over them; and thus they became tribes, and leaders of tribes (3 Nephi 3:37-38 [LDS 7:2-3]).

Great Destruction

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 there was also a great and terrible tempest . . . insomuch that it did shake the whole earth.... And the city of Zarahemla did take fire; and the city of Moroni

did sink into the depths of the sea . . . and there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward. But behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward: . . . And there were some cities which remained; but the damage thereof was exceeding great, and there were many in them who were slain (3 Nephi 4:6-10, 12 [LDS 8:5-12, 15]).

Archaeological evidence for moving from a central government to tribes in such a short period—about four years—may not be easily discovered. Also, archaeological evidence for the great destruction of buildings and roadways may not be discernible either, because they would have been rebuilt (4 N 1:9 [LDS 1:7]). What archaeology does point out are the dislocation of population and the abandonment of cities.

For reasons not yet understood, many of these cities [those in the lowlands, northern region of Guatemala] failed during the second half of the first century A.D. (Schele 1991:6).

For unknown reasons several of these early cities were abandoned in the 1 [sic] Century AD while others continued to flourish (Delvendahl 2008:16).

All these sites [most of the lowland Maya area such as the Mirador Basin, Seibal, Lamanai, Becan, San Bartolo, and Cival] display a primary Late Preclassic occupation followed by permanent or temporary abandonment (Estrada-Belli 2011:52).



Nahuatl Song

Translated by Michael D. Coe

*And they called it Teotihuacan
because it was the place
where the lords were buried.
Thus they said:
“When we die,
truly we die not,
because we will live, we will rise,
we will continue living, we will awaken.
This will make us happy.”*

—Coe 2013:118

Major economic, cultural, and political changes occurred following the destruction. All were converted to the Lord and for the next almost 200 years the people enjoyed *peace and great prosperity*.

Time of the Children of Christ

In the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another.... *And the Lord did prosper them exceedingly*, in the land: . . . And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God: . . . they were in one, the children of Christ (4 Nephi 1:3, 9, 19-20 [LDS 1:2, 7, 16-17]).

And how blessed were they, for the Lord did bless them in all their doings; yea, even *they were blessed and prospered*, until an hundred and ten years were passed away (4 Nephi 1:21 [LDS 1:18]).

The Book of Mormon suggests that the period of the Children of Christ took in most of Mesoamerica (land northward and land southward). Later after the period of peace and prosperity, the final dislocation and abandonment included only the land southward, the former Nephite/Lamanite territory.

Because this is a relatively short time period, archaeologically speaking (about 200 years), the dates by archaeologists and those in The Book of Mormon are not an exact match. As I wrote in a former article, however, archaeological dates *closely* match The Book of Mormon timeline (Smith 2013:2). These comments by archaeologists about the prosperity at the time of



Lyle Smith and Aaron Presler

the children of Christ fit remarkably well.

It is possible that the period following AD 100 represents the beginning of a period of unprecedented prosperity at Tikal (Estrada-Belli 2011:61).

What is remarkable is that so much time, labor, and energy were expended on permanent dwellings for the population rather than primarily on palatial structures. This may reflect the growing wealth, political power, and integration of the population [at Teotihuacan] (Paszatory 1988:61).

Teotihuacan . . . was a society that did not glorify any specific aristocratic individuals, but the community as a whole. Its art expresses values that are impersonal, corporate, and communal (Paszatory 1988:50).

Religion undoubtedly was of enormous importance throughout the life of the city [Teotihuacan] (Cabrera Castro, Sugiyama, Cowgill 1991:78).

Looking at the wider picture, 300 BC-AD 300, it appears a triadic pattern of architecture was prevalent in Mesoamerica.

Typical also of this intriguing period in Maya

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A Time of Change (Cont. from Page 3)

culture history is the “triadic” pattern of architecture found here [Mirador Basin] and at other similarly early lowland sites: this consists of a principal pyramid, plus two other ones which face each other, with all stairs leading from a central plaza. Richard Hansen suggests a mythological basis for the pattern, *perhaps a triad of gods* such as we find much later at the Classic city of Palenque (Coe 2005:82; emphasis added).

As many as 15 complexes at El Mirador repeat the Triadic arrangement (Estrada-Belli 2011:49).

Interesting parallels exist in Maya art to the early art and architecture of Teotihuacan. Three-temple layouts have been found in Late Preclassic and Early Classic sites, including Tikal, raising the possibility that a three-temple cult may have been more widely distributed (Pasztory 1988:75).

Why did Mesoamerica have the pattern of building three temples together? It could have been two temples or four temples, but the pattern was to build three together. There were many cities that had three temples grouped together. One wonders if these three temples were built to honor God, his son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Archaeology indicates that the temples built at this time were not in honor of kings. After AD 300, considerable archaeological evidence documents that temples were built in honor of kings and sometimes were their tombs, but temples were not built in series of three.

Many scholars agreed that the Lowland Maya lacked several important characteristics of ‘civilization’ prior to AD 300. The most important was the non-existence of kings.... Many felt forced to conclude that the Preclassic Maya must have had forms of rulership that did not include individual kings until the end of the Preclassic period. *It was thought that these people were probably ruled by a class of religious leaders (theocracy) such as the one postulated to have ruled over Teotihuacan* (Estrada-Belli 2011:55; emphasis added).

Wickedness and Destructive Warfare

The disintegration of the time of the Children of Christ resulted in the people dividing once again into different groups and social classes. They no longer had things common, Christians were persecuted, and eventually all became wicked. This led to warfare that began AD 321.

The archaeological record reflects major disturbances and changes in the Maya economic and political landscape. The Terminal Preclassic saw the downfall of a number of Preclassic powers, with some centers being abandoned altogether.... The causes of these changes were complex and may never be fully known (Sharer 2006:286).

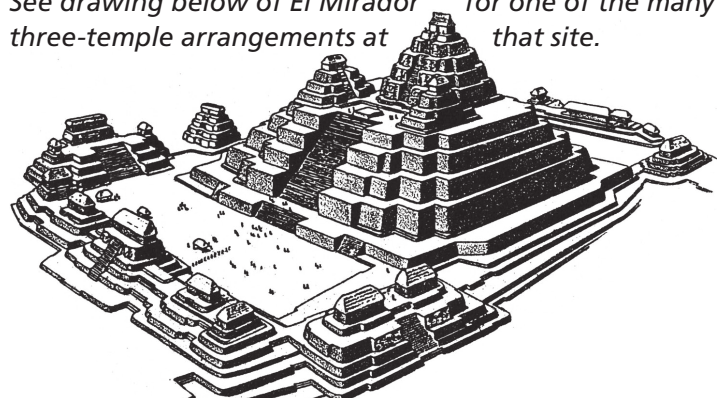
What does archaeology show? Dunning and Garrison identify defining change in the San Bartolo-Xultun territory as being from AD 150-300. They indicate it is the first major transitional period for which there is significant archaeological data. They talk of *site abandonments or settlement pattern shifts* in sites such as San Bartolo-Xultun territory, the Mirador Basin, the Holmul Basin, Cerros and Rio Azul (2009:539, 545). “The findings at San Bartolo underscore the *severity of disruption* that accompanied the Preclassic-to-Classic transition in some parts of the Maya lowlands (Garrison and Dunning 2009:540; emphasis added).

Preclassic epicenters at many sites . . . suffered a crippling population decline, and never fully recovered after the Terminal Preclassic period (Callaghan 2008:15).



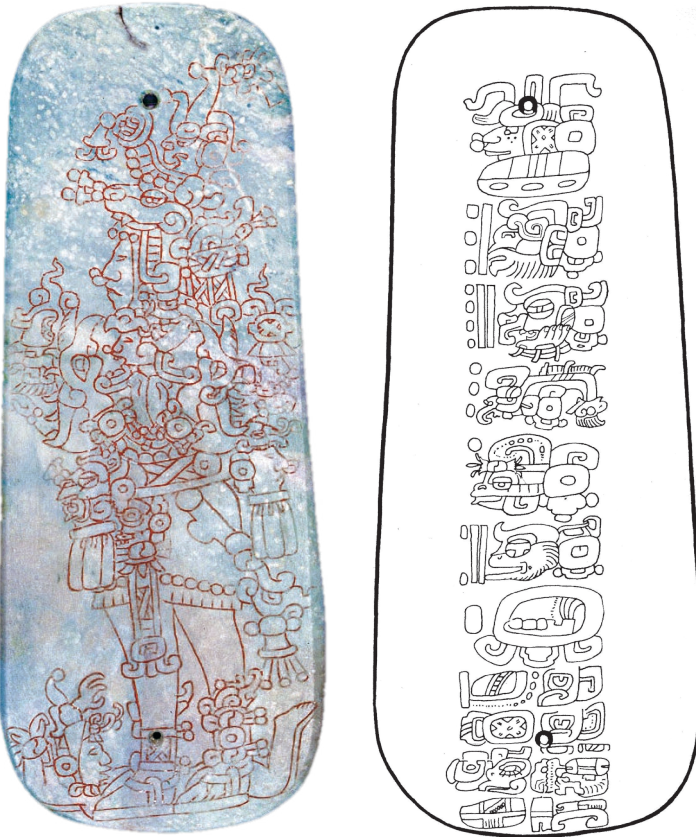
Don Beebe

The Temple of the Moon at Teotihuacan is flanked in front by two facing building platforms, the bases for former temples no longer there. The three-temple arrangement is found throughout the Maya area also. See drawing below of El Mirador for one of the many three-temple arrangements at that site.



Archaeological evidence shows that the Terminal Preclassic period was a time of great political turmoil. Correlates of political unrest include signs of warfare such as earthworks, moats, or palisade walls.... The last and most significant evidence of potential political unrest was the collapse and complete abandonment of Late Preclassic period centers (Callaghan 2008:17).

Finally, the Terminal Preclassic period also witnessed a change in iconography and potentially ideology as evidenced in monumental art and architecture . . . toward an emphasis on individual rulers and royal dynasties (Callaghan 2008:15).



Latin American Studies

Discovered in 1864 by workmen digging a canal near Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, the jade Leiden Plaque shows a Maya king standing on a subdued captive. The inscription on the reverse side of the plaque includes a date of AD 320. According to epigraphers, it was around 300 AD that engravings on small objects like this, as well as stone monuments, began to portray rulers as "warrior kings." Mormon records in AD 321 that wars began between the Nephites and Lamanites, and a few years later noted the name of the first Lamanite king. The archaeological discovery of "warrior kings" emerging at the same time as those recorded in *The Book of Mormon* is truly a strong building block supporting our faith that *The Book of Mormon* account is true!

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 A.D. (Schele and Freidel 1990:442).

Conclusion

The period from AD 30 to 300 was a very significant time in the history of *The Book of Mormon*. About AD 30 the rule of judges was destroyed because of wickedness. The Nephites moved from a central government into tribal associations. In the thirty-fourth year a great storm arose; great earthquakes and apparently great volcanic eruptions destroyed many cities. The more wicked people were destroyed. A time of great peace and prosperity followed which lasted for about 200-250 years. Then, again, because of increasing wickedness, there was political and religious division and major upheaval. The people became Nephites and Lamanites again. This brought conquest warfare and the destruction of the Nephite nation and people.

This same story is written about the Maya civilization in what is known as Mesoamerica today. Current archaeological textbooks taught in our major universities today outline this same history. In the Maya area, great destruction happened in the first century AD that destroyed many cities and many people. Following the destruction, the remaining people had a society led by religious leaders. It became a time of great prosperity for the Maya and surrounding nations for about 200 to 250 years. After this period of prosperity, archaeology reveals there were dislocations of people and decimating warfare and that the Maya turned to kings for leadership.

Some 2600 years ago Nephi said, "Behold, my soul delighteth in *proving* unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ" (2 Nephi 8:7 [LDS 11:4]). Today when one of our modern gods seems to be the pursuit of knowledge, there is need for us to *prove* to ourselves that *The Book of Mormon* is true *intellectually* as well as *spiritually*. The people in *The Book of Mormon* were not something dreamt up by Joseph Smith, but *real people* who lived their lives in a *real place*, at a *real time* in history. Our hearts and our minds must be in agreement to provide the best witness.

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For more about dating methods and time periods see the following articles.

Shirley R. Heater

2015 Archaeology 101—Part One and Archaeology 101—Part Two (*glyph notes* 22(3):1-4 and 22(4):1-5)

Frank Fry

2012 Radiocarbon Dating—Just How Reliable Is It? (*Quetzal Codex* 3:8-11)

To Our Supporters

Fall has become my new favorite season of the year.

The flowers of Spring and Summer give way to the emergence of rich hues of red, yellow, purple, black, orange, pink, magenta, blue, and brown. Once again I become aware of the greatness of our Heavenly Father. The miraculous blessings given to man by nature lift my spirit and impel me to give thanks for the gift of life. It also reminds me that it is time to express thanks to YOU, our supporters, for your contributions and support, which keeps *glyph notes* going to press and provides opportunity to publish new resources.

Although contributions for the year have been decreasing, we feel most fortunate that so many of you have not only continued your support, but also

that some have increased the amount of your gift. Thank you for making Pre-Columbian Studies Institute a priority in your budgeting. Few have escaped the effects of a "tentative" economy and have, out of necessity, had to curtail spending on all but the barest of needs. We extend a special thank you to those who have increased their giving which makes it possible for PSI to send Book of Mormon faith-building information to those who desire to receive *glyph notes* even though they may feel unable to subscribe.

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Patricia J. Beebe, Vice President 

glyph quotes

Have ye received his image in your countenances?

~ Alma 3:28 [LDS 5:14]

By Eric English


There has been a lot of discussion in the United States in recent weeks about some of our monuments erected to memorialize events in our history. At the heart of it are debates on slavery, the Civil War, and appropriate or inappropriate ways to remember historical figures from that era, especially those who were involved with the Confederacy. Public outcry and an incident of vandalism even drove an organization in Kansas City to decide to proactively take down a statue that had been erected many years ago to remember fallen Civil War veterans from the south. This statue had been placed in a public park, and the organization chose to move it to an unknown location to hide it and avoid further backlash or desecration.

This public debate has caused me to reflect on our own lives and the question which Alma the Younger posed to the Nephites in the Land of Zarahemla: "Have ye received his image in your countenances?" Numerous times in this passage, Alma counsels the people to look back and to remember. He invites them to recall their own personal guilt, wickedness, and times of deliberate disobedience. He even suggests that they remember from history the captivity of their fathers. However, he then turns to the positive, and he points them to remember God's mercy, longsuffering, and the act of

deliverance of their souls from hell.

The imagery that Alma draws upon for us to consider whether we are reflecting God's image in our own countenance is a powerful way to draw our attention to the decisions that we make every day regarding our behavior, words, and actions and whether they are a reflection of Christ or not. It can help us to reflect on what we are memorializing in our lives; just like our society has been examining what Civil War era monuments memorialize. Are we attesting of and remembering Christ's death and resurrection in our own lives and actions? Have we allowed him to stamp his image in our lives, and do we stand as a monument to him?

If we continue this modern-day analogy, are we willing to accept public vandalism towards what we stand for? Are we willing to let others denounce us, picket and cry out against what we believe, even threaten us because they don't like the message that we stand for or the person of Jesus Christ whom we serve? Do we want to leave the public eye and go and hide somewhere to avoid further conflict? Or are we willing to stay where we are and accept whatever ramifications our stance may bring in order to stand for Jesus Christ?

Let us use this current debate to reflect on an even more important question and to consider if we have Christ's image in our lives every day. 



In Memory*

Shirley Renshaw Heater 1943-2017

By Sherrie Kline Smith

The world of Book of Mormon scholarship lost a bright and shining star with the passing of Shirley Heater. Her dedication and knowledge about all areas of The Book of Mormon were outstanding.

Shirley once shared with me how she became interested in archaeology. She grew up in Council Bluffs, Iowa, where she attended the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. At a young age, when The Book of Mormon was taught in Sunday school, she became excited about this precious record. The classes must have included

archaeological evidences. She was determined to study archaeology when she went to college. This dream was accomplished, but not as soon as she had hoped. She received her degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia (MU) in 1981.

A few years ago, at an archaeology conference, I met her mentor and advisor from MU, Richard Diehl. When I told him I was a friend of Shirley's, he immediately remembered her and praised her as one of his outstanding students. From all of his students' papers, one of Shirley's was so good that he kept it, hoping to have it published.

Shirley was not only knowledgeable in archaeology and how it could be a tool to support the account in The Book of Mormon, but also in its writing and language. In addition, there was her monumental work in comparing all the surviving manuscripts of The Book of Mormon.

About 20 years ago, Shirley and her husband

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*More details of Shirley's life were given in *The Witness*, Winter 2016-Spring 2017, pp. 14-15.

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In Memory

*Shirley Renshaw Heater
1943-2017*

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Shirley Renshaw Heater *(Cont. from Page 7)*

Dennis began attending church where I did. Our relationship grew in mutual respect for our work with The Book of Mormon. We would discuss ideas and ask each other's opinions about new discoveries or understandings that had come to light. I would send my articles to her for her critique. Several times, she and Dennis and my husband Lyle and I attended archaeological conferences together, and once, Shirley and Dennis went with us on one of our tours to Mexico. We became close friends.

Shirley's unexpected illness took all of us unaware. Pat Chadwick wrote these words in *Zion's Path* (newsletter of the Oak Grove Restoration Branch) about Shirley's last week of illness.

She told Dennis to be sure to give me her whole file on humility. I promised her I would teach another class using her material. I was amazed at her zeal to impart her knowledge of the Lord to others even upon

her deathbed. She told Dennis to give different materials to different people, dispatching her knowledge to others who she thought would share it. I am humbled by her dedication, spirit of service, and her love of God which was made so evident in her last hours.

When she realized she would not live, she also asked Dennis to read to her chapter three of Alma, which he did for several days before she passed away March 21st. This scripture became the basis for the remarks at her memorial service. The chapter, with its simple yet beautiful language, counsels about mortal and immortal life; how our choices will determine the immortal one. Her desire was that all of us would study these words and take them seriously.

A humble, gracious, woman who bore much fruit, Shirley must have heard the Lord say to her, "Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the words of righteousness upon the earth" (Alma 3:32 [LDS 5:16]).

