

glyph *notes*

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Science Supports a Book of Mormon Story

By Glenn A. Scott, Jr.

In 1966 an archaeological conference was held in Guatemala City. The theme of the conference was Maya pottery. To the archaeologist, pottery is a sort of Rosetta Stone, in that it cuts across geographical borders and defines cultures at various stages of development.

Thus, archaeologists who had been excavating various Maya sites in and around Chalchuapa, El Salvador, found a distinctive type of pottery in a pyramid called El Trapiche. It was a very thin, fine-grain pottery with a definite orange color. They carbon 14 dated it at approximately 147 BC and named it “Aguacate Orange.” They carried samples of it to the pottery conference in Guatemala City.

Strangely enough, another group of archaeologists had been excavating some 300 miles north in Belize (formerly British Honduras) at several sites including Barton Ramie, Nohmul, Poptun and Tzimin Kax. They too found a distinctive type of pottery which was also thin and orange. They named it “Floral Park.” These archaeologists also took samples to the pottery conference in Guatemala City.

When the archaeologists presented their findings, to everyone’s surprise, Aguacate Orange and Floral Park proved to be virtually identical. In fact, Robert

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We've been given an outstanding example of science furnishing evidence to support The Book of Mormon.



Chalchuapa includes several areas designated as Tazumal, Casas Blanca, Pampe, and El Trapiches Groups. The photo shows the partly uncovered mound of Tazumal. The pottery described in this article was from the El Trapiche section.

Mariordo (Mario Roberto Durán) Ortiz (See web page: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tazumal_Panorama_2.jpg)

Science Supports (Cont. from Page 1)

Sharer wrote, “The similarity between...pottery from Chalchuapa and certain ceramics of the lowlands is so close that individual shards can barely be distinguished from one another.” Sharer and James Gifford wrote, “The only reasonable explanation for a set of such close ceramic connection would seem to be that originally they were the products of a single population.” They ruled out any possibility that the Floral Park pottery was trade goods between the two regions because it was only of domestic types, not the elite quality used as trade goods. Thus, they appear to relate to two populations.


The pottery conference agreed that the Floral Park ceramics “probably represent an intrusion associated with the movement of peoples.” Archaeologists Patrick Culver and Richard Adams believe that the influence could be traced directly to El Salvador and Honduras.

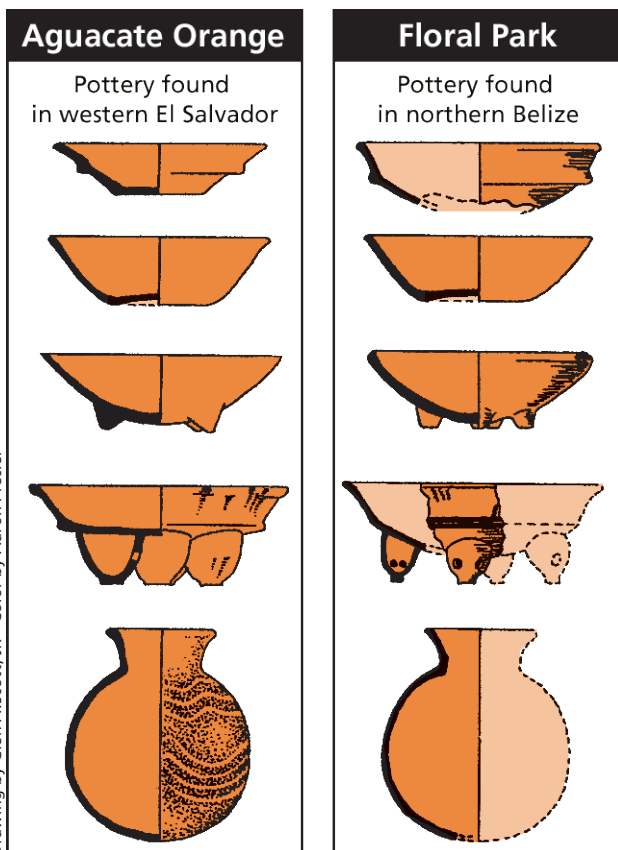
The evidence indicates that sometime after 144 BC (+/- 44), a pottery-making people who once lived in the southern highlands around Chalchuapa, El Salvador, migrated some 300 miles north into the lowlands of northern Belize . . . bringing their culture with them, including the production of their distinctive style of orange pottery, which they had made in the highlands from which they came.

Now, let us refer back to Mosiah 12:1-3 (LDS 1-2), which relates that the sons of Mosiah II chose to go as missionaries to the

Lamanites; and in Alma 14:9 (LDS 23:5), which tells that thousands of Lamanites were brought to

a knowledge of the Lord and took the name Anti-Nephi-Lehis to distinguish themselves from their unconverted Lamanite brethren. Shortly thereafter, Alma 14:21-22 (LDS 24:1-2) and 48-50 (LDS 24:21-22) also tells how the unconverted Lamanites, considering the converts to be traitors for adopting the religion of their enemies the Nephites, slew more than a thousand of the converts. Alma 14:25-26 (LDS 24:5) and 15:5-21 (LDS 27:4-20) then explains how Ammon and his brothers, concerned for the safety of the converts, appeal to the Nephites for help. The Nephites agreed to set aside the land of Jershon which was “on the east by the sea...on the south of the land Bountiful...for an inheritance” (Alma 15:23 [LDS 27:22]), and, in Alma 15:29 (LDS 27:26), that the Lamanite converts took possession of the land of Jershon.

The close parallel here between archaeology and The Book of Mormon account seems obvious. In both cases, a people living in the southern highlands (Lamanites) until approximately 100 B.C., migrate north to the lowlands, adjacent to the east coast, bringing their culture with them, including their own distinctive style of pottery. Thus, we have been provided with an outstanding example of science furnishing evidence to support a Book of Mormon story. 



Drawing by Glen A. Scott, Jr. - Color by Aaron Presler



Map by Glen A. Scott, Jr. - Color by Aaron Presler

Baked Dirt and What It Tells Us

By Lyle L. Smith

Excavations of the ruins of Nakbe, located in the northern area of Guatemala called the Peten, began some years ago. One of the foremost conclusions resulting from this dig was that Nakbe, although having earlier beginnings, emerged as a fully developed city between 600 and 400 B.C. Described by scholars as surprising and exciting, the discoveries documented the emergence of an elaborate Maya civilization with large cities, including monumental architecture, political organization, and sophisticated ceramics, as far back as 600-400 B.C. The generally held belief that advanced Maya civilization began about A.D. 250 had to be abandoned.

This revision of the concept showed advanced Maya society beginning around 600 B.C. mainly resulted from the study of the ceramic sequence at Nakbe. Pottery, made of earth or clay, can last forever. Archaeological digs are synonymous with pottery, and archaeologists spend an enormous amount of energy analyzing these ceramics. Because pottery provides clues to archaeologists about the people who made and used it, the study of ceramics is a major vehicle used to identify groups of people, their migrations, and changes in their societies.

Dr. Donald Forsyth, with the Anthropology Department of Brigham Young University, conducted the analysis of the ceramic sequence found at Nakbe. His report, "The Ceramic Sequence at Nakbe, Guatemala" was published in the journal *Ancient Mesoamerica* in 1993. To me, his article reveals four major areas of correlation between the Maya and the people of The Book of Mormon.

Complex Societies ca 600-500 B.C.

Forsyth's research established that complex Maya society began from 600-400 B.C., not A.D. 250. The prevailing view had been that people during the period called the Middle Preclassic (900-300 B.C.) lived in small-scale villages, lacking monumental architecture and political organization.

According to Forsyth, "[It] seems questionable, at least at Nakbe . . . the ceramics are very well

made and show considerable sophistication in both manufacture and decoration" (Forsyth1993:31). The earliest ceramic complex at Nakbe, designated as Ox, is "definitely associated late in the period (around 600 to 500 B.C.) with large-scale architecture" (Ibid:40). These observations add credence to what David Freidel wrote about the Origins of the Maya. "Maya civilization banged into existence in its own way and time.... But it is unsettling. It violates the tacit rules of diffusion and, even worse, the tacit rules of gradual evolution espoused by modern archaeology" (Freidel1986:x, emphasis added).

This certainly calls to mind an event in Book of Mormon history. The Mulekites who arrived in the New World shortly after 586 B.C., were emigrants from an advanced civilization in the Middle East. They did not evolve gradually, but rather "banged on the scene" in the Land of Promise with a full-blown culture.

This high quality of ceramics in the later part of the Ox phase (600 to 500 B.C.) is perplexing to those who follow the evolutionary model, which dictates that earlier pottery should be simpler in style and composition than later pottery. Yet, if these ceramics represent the first one to two hundred years of the Mulekite civilization, then more than simple ceramics should be expected. The Mulekites came from the Jerusalem area where good pottery was well in use by that time.

Cont. on Page 4



Lyle Smith

This photo shows early pottery from a Guatemala burial as displayed in the National Museum of Anthropology in Guatemala City.

Baked Dirt (Cont. from Page 3)

Not a lot is known about the people of Mulek. The Book of Mormon says they did not bring records with them (this does not mean that they could not write), but they were, in part, servants of a king. It seems fair to believe, then, that the Mulekites' perception of government would include court rule, a system far removed from simple village life. This means definitive political organization and the technology that went with it such as writing and the making of pottery and the use of domesticated crops.

Major Transition in Pottery Style

Around 300-200 B.C., the ceramics at Nakbe exhibit a major transition in style. According to Forsyth, this ceramic sequence change corresponds closely to what occurs at other sites in the Peten as well. What caused the major change in ceramic styles that occurred in Nakbe and her surrounding cities between 300-200 B.C.? The Book of Mormon sheds light on this question.

Mormon, the abridger of the records, relates that King Mosiah and a group of Nephites migrated down from the highlands (southern Guatemala) into the lowlands (northern Guatemala). The influx of this group of people, who had a different ceramic tradition as well as a different religion,



These broken remains of early pottery were found at the immense site of El Mirador, a neighbor city of Nakbe.

Courtesy of Donald Forsyth

as documented on written records on metal plates, seems to have had a profound effect on the Mulekites (Omni 1:19-34 [LDS 1:12-19]).

Archaeology documents just such an influence coming into this area (the Peten, which includes Nakbe) from the southern Guatemalan highlands in the same timeframe (300 to 200 BC). David Freidel and Linda Schele theorized that cities in this area “borrowed certain highland religious concepts,

along with iconographic elements and the idea of hieroglyphic writing” (Friedel and Schele 1985:4).

We now know that the Mulekites had writing before Mosiah arrived. Not long ago (2005), a stone block with writing, formerly part of a building wall, was discovered at San Bartolo, located in the northeast corner of Guatemala in the lowlands. Because this block was part of a controlled excavation, the date is fairly secure as being between 300 and 200 B.C. To date, it is the earliest example of writing found in the lowlands where the Mulekites resided.

Pottery Figurines

With the dramatic change in pottery style, the making of figurines—believed to have been religious idols—ended with the beginning of this era (300 to 200 B.C.). Would not the arrival of King Mosiah with the Law of Moses, and what appears to be a major acceptance of the religion because of the records Mosiah brought with him to the Mulekites, put an end to graven image production, and produce a society with more constant values?

An interesting stela (Figure 1 at right) was discovered in Nakbe. Reconstructed from many fragments, it “shows two important personages facing each other; details of costume link this relief in time and style to the Miraflores granite stela from Kaminaljuyu, which must have been exerting a potent influence on the lowlands during this era of nascent Maya civilization” (Coe 1999: 77-78). Could this stela depict the meeting of Mosiah with King Zarahemla of the Mulekites?

Major Pottery Reduction

Although the Kan ceramic period, 250 B.C. to A.D. 150, carries through A.D. 150, little pottery was found after A.D. 1, signifying a major population



Lyle Smith

Another piece of early pottery displayed at the National Museum of Anthropology in Guatemala City.

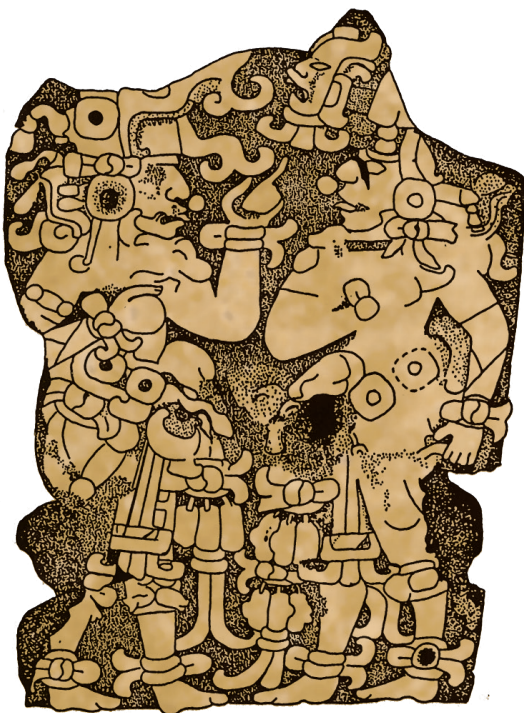
reduction in Nakbe in the first century A.D. Nakbe ceramics are exceedingly rare from A.D. 1-600, reappearing only again in Late Classic times (A.D. 600-900). Linda Schele noted that “For reasons not yet understood, many of these cities [those in the lowlands of the northern regions of Guatemala] failed during the second half of the first century A.D.” (Schele 1991:6) The Book of Mormon relates an event that reasonably explains what happened at this time. It says that many cities in the Land of Promise were destroyed in A.D. 34 at the time of the crucifixion (3 Nephi 4:6-40 [LDS 8:5-9:12]).

In summary, then, from Forsyth’s article on the ceramic sequence at Nakbe, we see lasting (pottery) evidence that supports The Book of Mormon record.

First, the considerable sophistication of ceramics during 600-300 B.C. as well as the presence of large-scale architecture and political organization, bring evidence that the people were far more advanced than a simple village culture. The arrival of the Mulekites during this timeframe with a full-blown culture could explain this sudden appearance of a well-developed civilization.

Second, the major change in ceramics between 300-200 B.C. suggests that there was a highland

Figure 1: Drawing of broken stela displays two kingly persons greeting each other; perhaps memorializing the meeting of King Zarahemla and King Mosiah.



R. D. Hansen, Regional Archaeological Investigation of the North Peten, Guatemala (UCLA)



Lyle Smith

Skillfully crafted pottery bowl with three “legs” and topped with a lid having the image of fowl is also displayed at the National Museum of Anthropology in Guatemala City.

to lowland spread of concepts that brought along an influx of a new religion and a new writing system. The Book of Mormon provides a solid possibility for this change—the migration of the Nephites from the Highlands to the Lowlands under the leadership of King Mosiah.


Third, the major change in ceramics between 300 to 200 B.C. also suggests that clay idols were no longer used because of the new religion introduced into the area.

Fourth, the great decline that took place in Nakbe and numerous other cities in the first century A.D., documented by the lack of ceramics, is recorded and amplified by Book of Mormon history. In A.D. 34,

a great and widespread destruction occurred in the Land of Promise.

We believe the pottery found in Nakbe in the northern Peten of Guatemala provides lasting evidence of The Book of Mormon narrative. Yes, it is possible that scholarly opinions may change, but pottery is one of the few things made by man that will last if properly cared for. After all, it is baked dirt and the same evidence it showed years ago is valid now. It is fascinating that baked dirt tells the story as found in The Book of Mormon.

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Underwater Pottery

By Lyle Smith

While in San Francisco at the American Anthropology Association meeting, I heard from a friend that Dr. Donald Forsythe of BYU (a former speaker at the 1988 Book of Mormon Day in the Auditorium,) was in Guatemala with an underwater archaeological team. Under the direction of Richard Hansen of UCLA, the team was exploring the depths of Lake Peten Itza in the Peten of Guatemala. This was exciting news for me as I was headed for Guatemala the following week.

On arrival in Guatemala, I contacted the Forsythe team by telephone and was invited to come up and visit them in their exploration of the lake bottom. When I arrived, and after arranging gear and making sure all equipment was in order, we went from the local hotel in Santa Elena via the causeway to the island of Flores. As well as investigating the lake floor, this exploratory group was digging test pits on the island. In one test pit, I saw the skeleton of a child.



Courtesy of Donald Forsyth

Very early sherds (pottery) from El Mirador showing style and color. It is with regret that we do not have photos of pottery found in Lake Peten Itza.

In another pit, they found a stone wall some ten or twelve feet under the level of the present ground.

After looking at the progress being made with the pits, we went to the boat Canek Rey, named after the last Maya king.


Underwater diving is a complicated business, and for the archaeologist even more so. The team was equipped with underwater lights and underwater video capability. The day I was there, the team was making a trench in the silt on the bottom of the lake.

Previous to my visit, they had found mounds on the bottom of the lake which they believe were man-made. They also

recovered thousands of pieces of pottery dating from the Preclassic (about the time of Christ) up to the present.

This dig was short-term, lasting only six weeks. Now that it has been established that man-made remains are underwater in the lake, further investigations need to be done—investigations that need money and the right people with special skills.

Other lakes run east from Lake Peten Itza in an east/west line that also need exploring. Two of the lakes almost surround the small mountains/hills, which are crowned by the ruins of Yaxha about 30 miles east of Lake Peten Itza.

Of the many questions that remain unanswered, perhaps the most obvious is why are these ruins underwater? One reason proposed is that the level of the water in the lake was lower in past centuries. Another answer, more in keep with Book of Mormon history, is that this land sank during the destruction at the crucifixion of Christ. Only further exploration will give us clues to the right answer. Nevertheless, it was an exciting time for me. 



Lyle Smith

Photo of a part of Lake Peten Itza in the Peten of Guatemala. This lake is about 22 miles east to west and 10 miles north to south. The photo is from the small island, in the lake, called Flores looking west. It was close to this small island of Flores in Lake Peten Itza that the underwater diving was done.

An Immediate Answer to Prayer ~ April 3, 2020

By Sherrie Kline Smith

As editor of the publication glyph notes, I try my best to be sure that what we publish is correct. In a previous issue [Jan/Feb/Mar 2020], during the last round of proofing and edits, I realized one of the contributions was technically incorrect. I hadn't caught it when we first put it together; but once it was laid out in the design for publishing, I saw the problem. It wasn't an easy fix. I either had to remove it totally or revise it. Removing it meant a major revision of the layout of the issue, which would take considerable time.*

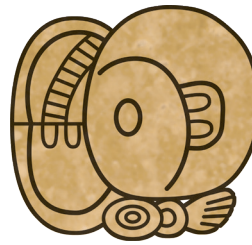
I was in a difficult situation because this contribution was a testimony by Michael Walker about something he learned while on our recent tour to Guatemala. It had to do with the Mayan glyphs that are translated as “and it came to pass.” To explain the problem would be too involved. Suffice it to say that part of my knowledge was lacking about Hebrew as well as having some uncertainty about one aspect about the Mayan glyphs. In my current understanding, the way the article was written was not correct. But since during the tour I had taught the class on the Mayan glyphs that make up “and it came to pass,” I thought I was at fault for not having made things clear.

In addition, I didn't want to tell Michael that his testimony was based on false understanding. Thus, I felt to be between a rock and a hard place. I consulted my husband. He understood the dilemma. My recourse was to pray at this time, but I needed to fix lunch, so I let it simmer in my mind for a while.

Later, after spending some time reading The Book of Mormon, I prayed out loud and was specific about what was needed. After praying, I pondered on how and what I could do.



and it came to pass
HEBREW



and it came to pass
MAYA

I thought I needed to check her thesis about the use of the word “and.” (This was the problem part with the testimony.) While searching for her section on “and,” instead I found “and it came to pass” first. And—there was my answer! It was my lack of knowledge. I thought that the Hebrew “word,” vayehee, was “it came to pass.” But vayehee is not really a word but three syllables (va-ye-hee) together that mean “and it came to pass” in English.

The “fix” for the glyph notes was now easy! I simply added “and” to the places in the testimony that read “it came to pass.”

I know this is probably not easy to understand for many, but the technicalities aren't important for this testimony; just that God heard and answered. I am so thankful. I don't think I've ever had such an immediate answer before. It has been so reassuring to me that God validated Michael's testimony.

We are repeating Michael's testimony again to accompany this testimony. See page 8.



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*Lyle Smith is now acting editor.

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And It Came To Pass

*W*hen we were asked to share our most meaningful experience during our Guatemala trip in February of this year, it was a “no brainer” for me.

My most meaningful experience was a class taught by Sherrie Smith on the Mayan glyph that was translated as “and it came to pass.” Sherrie shared with us that the breakthrough in deciphering the Mayan glyphs came when it was realized that they were phonetic. She explained that the glyph consisted of three parts. The first part is written with an “i” but is pronounced like a long “e.” The second part



Pam Walker joins her husband Michael as he photographs a Maya triad pyramidal pattern.

is written with a “u” and is pronounced as a “oo” as in blueberry. Finally, the third part is written “ti” and is pronounced “tee” as in a golf tee.

What excited me was the connection I saw with the Mayan glyph and the Hebrew word for “and it came to pass,” which is spelled in English, vayehee. Phonetically, vayehee would be broken down as va-ye-hee and pronounced “vi,” with an “i” sound. Next, the “ye” is pronounced “ya” with a short “a” sound.

And finally, the “hee” is pronounced like “he” with a long “e” sound.

Phonetically, vayehee has three syllables, va-ye-hee and also phonetically, the Mayan glyph consists of three syllables, i-u-ti. As soon as I realized this phonetic connection, I was humbled as I was flooded by the Spirit of the Lord. “O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he* is good: for his mercy endureth for ever” (Psalm 118:29). 