

# glyph *notes*

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## In Memoriam: Donald A. Beebe

*O* By Sherrie Kline Smith

On October 14, 2021, our dear friend and co-founder of Pre-Columbian Institute Studies (PSI), went to his eternal home. Don and Lyle Smith, the other co-founder of PSI, knew each other in childhood, and several times their families traveled together to Colorado. Later in life, Don and his wife Patricia (Pat) and Lyle and I were close friends during some of our college years. In 1987, when Lyle did an exploratory tour to the ruins in Mesoamerica in anticipation of beginning to lead tours, Don was one of the first to join the group. Don enjoyed photography and creating videos and wanted to lend his expertise in those areas. Following that first tour, Don became the “official” PSI photographer, mainly taking video footage while his wife, Pat, took still photos.

But perhaps his most loved contribution to the tours was laughter. Don delighted in laughter and having fun. He made sure each person who traveled with us on the tours felt welcomed and a part of the group. Also, as a middle school science teacher, Don could and did provide science lessons about the flora and fauna found in the rainforest jungles and provided some articles for *glyph notes* from a scientific viewpoint.

Don’s love for the Scriptures, especially The Book of Mormon, was infectious. He became excited about the evidence found in the museums and at the sites in Mesoamerica that correlated and validated that The Book of Mormon is a true historical record—and he wanted others to share that excitement.

Since the inception of PSI in 1994, Don has served at different times as president, vice president, and treasurer of PSI.



Lyle L. Smith

*Using his creative expertise, Don photographed and filmed hundreds of archaeological sites and artifacts relevant to The Book of Mormon.*

*As one of the co-founders of Pre-Columbian Institute Studies (PSI), Don Beebe enjoyed photography and creating videos and wanted to lend his expertise in those areas.*

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*In Memoriam: Don Beebe (Cont. from Page 1)*

The kingdom of God on earth was a passion for Don who served many faithful years as an elder in the priesthood of the Church of Jesus Christ. While he did not live to see the fruition of the coming forth of the kingdom of God on earth, he now is in the kingdom of God in heaven.

**High Adventure with "The Beeb"**

By Aaron Presler

My wife, Sallie, and I traveled with Don and Pat Beebe on several PSI tours of Mesoamerica. Many fond memories of my friend Don come to mind, but one unique adventure stands out. It was my second visit to Teotihuacán, a huge archeological site near Mexico City.

Before our tour had begun, I had heard of a recently discovered tunnel beneath the pyramids at the site connecting the Temple of the Sun with the Temple of the Feathered Serpent. Of course, it was strictly off-limits to the public, so I had no hope of actually seeing any part of it.

I think that Don never met a stranger in his life! So it should not have surprised me when Don introduced me to one of the site archeologist at Teotihuacán, a person he'd met and become friends with on a previous tour.

Sallie and I were invited, along with Pat and Don, to go "behind the scenes" of this new discovery. We were allowed to enter the archaeologist's lab and see first-hand many of the ancient artifacts that had been extracted from this tunnel. In fact, we actually



Lyle L. Smith


*Surrounded by carved walls, Don peers into a dark chamber intent on capturing some intriguing glyphs for future studies.*

HELD a few in our hands which terrified Sallie a little bit. She said to me later, "What if I had dropped and broken a centuries-old piece of pottery? How awful that would be!" (No, she didn't drop one.)

Although we couldn't go into it, we peered down into the opening where heavy rains had collapsed the tunnel revealing it to the world. Perhaps not quite an Indiana Jones moment, but I felt so privileged to be one of only a few to see and hold these precious centuries-old artifacts.

Yes, it actually pays to have friends in high places! I was truly honored to be counted as Don's friend, to share in this unique opportunity and so many, many more.

From seeking a video opportunity from the highest pyramid to tracking down an obsidian sword in an obscure museum, Don was an adventurer at heart. He was full of good humor and easily made friends with anyone — from an important site archaeologist near Mexico City to a humble waiter in a small town in Honduras.

I know Don continues his great adventure in a wonderfully "high place." I can imagine him still seeking photo opportunities and saying, "Just a little more to the right, sir. Okay, angels, say cheese!" 



Aaron Presler

*At the site of Teotihuacán, Don requests and receives permission from archaeologist Sergio Gómez Chávez (left) and an assistant to explore "behind the scenes" of a recently discovered tunnel.*

**We apologize for not being able to publish the Oct/Nov/Dec 2021 issue of *glyph notes*.**

# Rare Purple Dye: Evidence of Mulekites in the New World?

By Lyle L. Smith and Sherrie Kline Smith

*In October 2021, the Bible History Daily (Blog of the Biblical Archaeology Society) reported a “unique discovery” at the site of Timna, in Israel’s southern arid Negev region. Researchers working at Timna “recovered a wool fabric not only dated all the way back to the tenth century B.C.E.—but also dyed purple.”*

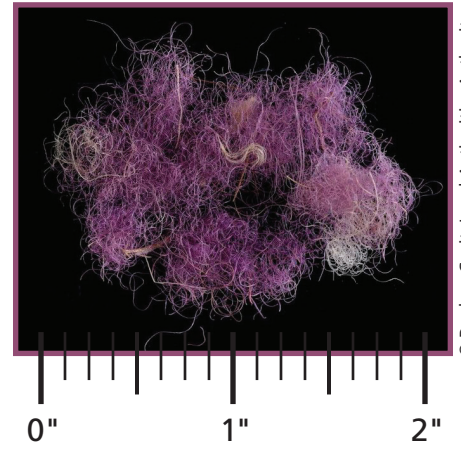
This find was unique for two reasons: 1) textiles rarely survive in the archaeological record because of their organic nature; and 2) “the fabric has been dated by radiocarbon to the late 11th—early 10th centuries B.C.E. (early Iron Age), which places these fragments in the early days of the biblical kings David and Solomon” (Sauter 2021). Finding cloth this old *and* dyed purple is indeed rare. Analysis of the fragments revealed they were dyed true purple, known historically as the “royal purple” obtained from murex snails in a complicated process.

Why would this be of interest to our readers? Because of the probable connection to the Mulekites in Mesoamerica where the use of sea snails for purple

dye continues to this day on the south coast of Mexico. Where did the indigenous people of Mexico get this knowledge for using sea snails for a natural purple dye? This is best answered by quoting Verneil Simmons, whose extensive study and research for classes she taught about The Book of Mormon provided the foundation for her seminal book *Peoples, Places, and Prophecies: A Study of The Book of Mormon*. This work greatly impacted the lives of many students of The Book of Mormon.

The book is divided into sections, i.e., the

*Cont. on Page 4*



*These wool fibers dyed with royal purple (shown at actual size) date from 1000 B.C. and were found at a site in the Timna Valley, Israel.*

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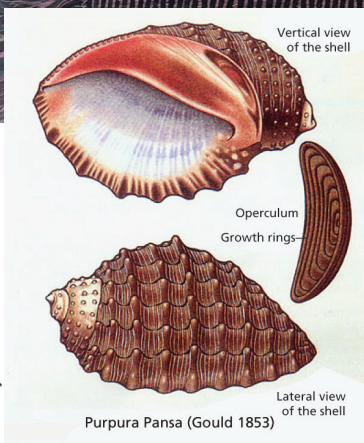


*Purple thread detail of placemat fringe*

Sherrie Kline Smith

Sherrie Kline Smith

Courtesy of manos-de-oaxaca.com



*Several species of mollusks produce purple dyes. The two middle shells (above) are Murex brandaris that provides Tyrian purple. The other two shells, far left and far right, are Murex trunculus that produce a blue purple. The other shell (far left), the Plicopurpura pansa, found on the Pacific Coast, is sometimes confused with Plicopurpura patula on the Atlantic side, both commonly called Purpura and both provide Tyrian purple. Another species, the Thais haemastoma (not shown) gives a reddish purple. (The shells are from the authors collection.) The placemat in the photo was a gift to the authors from the members of the 1993 Central Mexico tour.*

Rare Purple Dye (Cont. from Page 3)

Jaredites, the Nephites, the Mulekites, etc. There is a chapter called “Sidonians” in the Mulekite section in which Simmons provides good logical reasons that a portion of the Mulekite colony included some Phoenicians. One of those reasons was the use of sea snails for purple dye.

Whatever lingering doubts we might have about the presence of Phoenicians in Mesoamerica disappear when we discover that the ancient art of dyeing cloth with the famous purple dye of the Tyrians was well known in Mesoamerica. In the Isthmus of Tehuantepec the Indians know how to extract the dye from the sea snail, in the same process developed in Phoenicia centuries ago, and they obtain the same royal purple color (Simmons 1986:99).

Simmons was referencing a description by Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias about the process of dyeing threads purple, which would then be woven into expensive and special occasion clothing (Covarrubias 1954:253-254).

In coloring textiles today [1946], as was probably the case in ancient times, the thread itself is dyed and not the finished fabric.... Perhaps the most highly prized of all the native dyes was a deep purple obtained from a kind of mollusk found along the Pacific Coast (*Purpura patula*, Linnaeus and Lamarck), a relative of the Mediterranean mollusk which gives the famous “royal purple of Tyre” (Morley 1946:409; see also Endnotest).

Although the snails used for dye in the Mediterranean are different than those of the Pacific area, both are from the same muricidae family, and both expel a mucus that eventually turns purple on exposure to sunlight.

The earliest archaeological evidence for true purple

dye anywhere in the world might date to the 19th century B.C. at Minoan sites on the island of Crete. The Phoenicians, who lived on the Mediterranean coast, however, became known as the producers and sellers of purple (Sauter 2021). In Acts 16:14 the Apostle Paul records that “a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us.”

What about Mesoamerica? The earliest known example of cloth dyed purple from the murex snails is one of three textile fragments discovered in a sealed jar in a cave in the Mexican state of Chiapas not far from the Guatemala border. In an analysis made of the textile fragments from the cave in Chiapas, the author Irmgard Weitlaner Johnson stated, “Noteworthy is the beautiful arrangement of colors and their astonishing degree of preservation. The possible use of cochineal and shellfish dye (*Purpura*



Sherrie Kline Smith



Courtesy of manos-de-oaxaca.com

(Left) First, threads are created from cotton. On our last tour, February 2020, we visited the village San Juan La Laguna on Lake Atitlan in Guatemala. A women’s weaving cooperative in this village gives demonstrations on creating textiles—from spinning cotton into threads (shown above), to dyeing the threads with natural dyes, then boiling with bark from the banana tree to make the threads colorfast, to weaving the threads to create cloth from which many items are made. The purple shellfish dye was not used here. The red powder in front of the woman is dye from the cochineal insect.

(Right) The threads are then taken to the sea to be dyed. Light pressure on the *Purpura* releases a fluid that dyes the skein of cotton purple. The men of Pinotepa de Don Luis are experts at milking the glands of the *Purpura*, trading or selling the dyed cotton to their village weavers.

*patula*) is of particular interest” (Johnson 1954: 144).

Although difficult to date, it is believed these fragments belong “to a period not long before the Spanish Conquest, and possibly immediately after it” (Johnson 1954:145). A valid reason for not finding royal purple cloth—or any cloth—dating earlier in Mesoamerica is not only because of the organic nature of textiles, but also the tropical humid climate (Naegel 2004). Mesoamerica’s rainforest and jungle differ greatly from the arid desert of the Middle East.

By the time of Columbus, dying threads purple with the secretion of the murex snail was being practiced up and down the Pacific coast of Central and South America, which suggests it had been in Mesoamerica for some time before the Conquest. While documenting the presence of using sea snail purple before the time of Columbus is difficult, the consensus

of the earliest accounts agrees that the process had been going on for many years prior to pre-Columbian contact. In the Old World, the use of dyes from sea snails slowly declined between A.D. 800 to the 1400s and was eventually lost until fairly recently (Sterman and Sterman 2012:10-11; Nuttall 1909:376).

Zelia Nuttall, an anthropologist during the late 1800s and early 1900s, wrote an article published in 1909 called “A Curious Survival in Mexico of the Use of the *Purpura* Shell-Fish for Dyeing.” She saw first-hand the process and interviewed those involved in the production of purple clothing, from the dyeing to the finished garment. She concludes her article by confronting the argument of whether it was independently developed or transmitted by “strangers.” She twice asserts the fact that, “throughout America, the aborigines

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E-mail Address: [precolumbiansi@gmail.com](mailto:precolumbiansi@gmail.com)

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Send to: Pre-Columbian Studies Institute  
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Rare Purple Dye (Cont. from Page 5)

unanimously disclaim all share in their production and assign their introduction to strangers of superior culture from distant and unknown parts” (Nuttall 1909:383).

Nuttall reports about the curious association of the practice of using sea-fish, as she calls them, for purple dye with other customs like pearls, shell trumpets, mining, and several other cultural traits. She concludes:

It seems almost easier to believe that certain elements of ancient European culture were at one time, and perhaps once only, actually transmitted by the traditional small band of possibly lost or shipwrecked Mediterranean seafarers, than to explain how under totally different conditions of race and climate, the identical ideas and customs should have arisen (Nuttall 1909:382-383).

Mulek was the son of a king who lived quite

close to Phoenicia. It seems probable that he could well have had servants who knew the process of obtaining royal purple from the murex snail. At the time of the destruction of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar (ca. 600 B.C.) many of the skilled “craftsmen and smiths” were taken to Babylon (2 Kings 24:16). Although not mentioned in the Bible, “Jewish legend . . . has it that, after sacking the Temple and exiling the inhabitants of Israel, Nebuchadnezzar left behind the snail catchers and . . . dyers to continue their craft, the proceeds going to the Babylonian king” (Sterman 2012:47).

Perhaps some of these dyers became part of the Mulekite group that came to the new land, and the knowledge they possessed continues to this day.

Purple was an extremely important color in early Israelite history. (See “Purple in Scripture” in this issue.) Since the Mulekite group included the son of

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glyphquotes

By Eric English

*And now, I, Alma, do command you in the language of him who hath commanded me, that ye observe to do the words which I have spoken unto you. ~ Alma 3:107 (LDS 5:61)*

Are you a volunteer or a servant?

In the third chapter of Alma, we see a prime example of the cycle that the Nephites repeatedly go through in their history. They had been blessed by God but had begun to allow pride and wickedness to enter their hearts and lives, even those in the church. Conditions among the Nephites had reached such a point that Alma stepped down from being the chief judge to focus on preaching throughout the land to encourage the people to repent and turn their hearts back to the Lord. The third chapter of Alma’s book is a message preached to the Nephites in Zarahemla before Alma began his missionary trips to the rest of the Nephite lands. His words are a direct chastisement of their sin and a call to remembrance and repentance.

At the end of his sermon, he reminds those in the church of their relationship to their Creator with a common analogy. He is the Shepherd. We are his sheep, and we shouldn’t allow wolves into the midst of the flock. Then Alma shares that he’s giving the message by way of command and not suggestion to those believers just like his Shepherd had commanded him (Alma 3:107-108). It’s an important distinction that we lose sight of sometimes.

We often think of our relationship to God and our involvement in the church as a volunteer activity.

We can be involved as much or as little as WE want. WE can follow the easy commandments and bend the harder ones. WE can feel satisfied when we do the smallest of good deeds but not feel compelled to do the more difficult things that the Lord may call us to.

Jesus didn’t call volunteers, he called servants. Our “volunteer” choice was to submit everything to him as our Lord and King. He is our Master, and we are indentured to him. This is what Alma was trying to get the Nephites to understand and return to. To realize that our Master has the right to command us as his sheep, and if we choose to ignore his commands, we really don’t have a relationship with him. (Subsequently, after Alma’s ministry, the names of church members who did not repent were “blotted out” (Alma 4:3-4).

As we see throughout the Scriptures, God never compels us to choose to follow him or enter a covenant relationship with him but rather invites us. When we do choose the Lord, he pours out his love and mercy and blessings to us both in this life and the life hereafter. We also willingly set aside our will to serve God as our Master. When we choose the Lord, we need to remember what type of relationship we are choosing.

Are you a volunteer or a servant? 

# Purple in Scripture

The first mention of purple is in Exodus 25 when the Lord gives Moses explicit directions concerning “the pattern of the tabernacle.” The Lord said to Moses, “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering.... And this is the offering which ye shall take of them . . . gold, and silver, and brass, And *blue, and purple, and scarlet*, and fine linen...” (Exodus 25:1-4).

Note the triple colors to be used. This combination is mentioned numerous times in Exodus. Twenty-Six of the 47 verses with “purple” are from Exodus in describing the curtains, veil, hangings of the tabernacle, the breastplate, priestly clothing, and other items. Below are a few more examples from Exodus.

And all the women that were wisehearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of *blue, and of purple, and of scarlet*, and of fine linen (35:25).

And every wisehearted man among them that wrought the work of the tabernacle made ten curtains of fine twined linen, and *blue, and purple, and scarlet...* (Exodus 36:8).

And they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the *blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet*, and in the fine linen, with cunning work (39:3).

And with him was Aholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver, and a cunning workman, and an embroiderer in *blue, and in purple, and in scarlet*, and fine linen (38:23).

This last verse is most curious because of short manuscript written by the daughter and granddaughter of purple dyers in Mexico. She—like as noted by Nuttall in our main article—states that how the knowledge of “secreting the ink got to the coast of Mexico is a mystery.” She suggests perhaps people from the tribe of Dan, one of the lost tribes of Israel, somehow found their way to Mexico. This might seem logical in light of the verse above from Exodus.†

Interestingly, the tribe of Dan is mentioned later in 2 Chronicles 2:14 after Solomon “determined to build a house for the name of the Lord...” (2 Chronicles 2:1) and sent to assist with the building, among others, “The son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre, skillful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in *purple, in blue*, and in fine linen, and in *crimson*; also to grave any manner of graving...” (2:14).

Among the three standard books of scripture, the Holy Scriptures (IV), The Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants, the word purple is only in the Bible. Below are a few other verses.

And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; besides ornaments, and collars, and *purple raiment* that was on the kings of Midian (Judges 8:26; first mention of kings with garments of purple.)

And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in *royal apparel of blue* and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a *garment of fine linen and purple...* (Esther 8:15).

She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and *purple* (Proverbs 31:22).

And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him [Jesus Christ] a *purple robe* (John 19:2).

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of *purple*, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened... (Acts 16:14).

## Endnote

†This paper, on a respected database called Academia, was without a title or date. Also, the name of the woman who wrote it, Kathy Gomez, was not directly on the paper but on the record in Academia.

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### Rare Purple Dye (Cont. from Page 6)

a king, those who came to the New World may have felt the need to have experienced dyers with them. We may never know. We do, however, agree with Simmons when she wrote “The very complicated process [of using rare sea snails to make dye for cloth] is a most unlikely candidate for independent invention” (Simmons 1977:99).

### Endnotes

For an excellent overview of the process of dyeing threads on the Mexican Pacific Coast, we highly recommend watching the short BBC video by Adrián Gutiérrez made December 11, 2019.

[tinyurl.com/ykpund2k](https://tinyurl.com/ykpund2k)

Also visit this webpage.

[manos-de-oaxaca.com/jr\\_purpera.htm](https://manos-de-oaxaca.com/jr_purpera.htm)

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