

Archaeology and the Book of Mormon

Since the publication of the **Book of Mormon** in 1830, both Latter-day Saint (LDS or **Mormons**) and non-Mormon archaeologists have studied its claims in reference to known archaeological evidence. Members of **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** (LDS Church) and other denominations of the **Latter Day Saint movement** generally believe that the **Book of Mormon** describes ancient historical events in the **Americas**, but mainstream historians and archaeologists do not regard the **Book of Mormon** as a work of ancient American history.

The **Book of Mormon** describes God's dealings with three heavily populated, literate, and advanced^[1] civilizations in the Americas over the course of several hundred years. The book primarily deals with the **Nephites** and the **Lamanites**, who it states existed in the Americas from about 600 BC to about AD 400. It also deals with the rise and fall of the **Jaredite nation**, which the **Book of Mormon** says came from the **Old World** shortly after the confounding of the languages at the **Tower of Babel**.

Some Mormon archaeologists and researchers claim various archaeological findings such as place names, and ruins of the **Inca**, **Maya**, **Olmec**, and other ancient American and **Old World** civilizations as giving credence to the **Book of Mormon** record.^[2] Mainstream archaeologists disagree with these conclusions, arguing that the **Book of Mormon** mentions several animals, plants, and technologies that are not substantiated by the archaeological record between 3100 BC to 400 AD in America,^{[3][4][5][6]} including the ass,^[7] cattle,^[8] horses, oxen, domesticated sheep, swine,^[9] goats,^[10] elephants,^[11] wheat,^[12] barley,^[13] silk,^[14] steel,^[15] swords,^[11] scimitars, chariots^[16] and other elements.

1 Archaeology research in pre-Columbian Americas and the Book of Mormon

A great deal of data has been accumulated over more than two hundred years of American archaeological research. While archaeology in the Americas is not as mature as **Old World** archaeology, substantial insights into pre-Columbian civilizations, technologies, movements, and history have been established. These include the **Formative Mesoamerican** civilizations such as the (Pre-Classic) **Olmec**, **Maya**, and **Zapotec**, which flourished

during the approximate period the events related in the **Book of Mormon** are said to have occurred.

Some contemporary LDS scholars suggest that the **Jaredites** may have been the **Olmec**, and that part of the **Maya** may have been the **Nephites** and **Lamanites**.^[17]

19th century archaeological finds (e.g. earth and timber fortifications and towns,^[18] the use of a plaster-like cement,^[19] ancient roads,^[20] metal points and implements,^[21] copper breastplates,^[22] head-plates,^[23] textiles,^[24] pearls,^[25] native North American inscriptions, North American elephant remains etc.) are not interpreted by mainstream academia as proving the historicity or divinity of the **Book of Mormon**.^[26] The **Book of Mormon** is viewed by many mainstream scholars as a work of fiction that parallels others within the 19th century "Mound-builder" genre that were pervasive at the time.^[27]

2 Organizational statements regarding the Book of Mormon

2.1 Smithsonian Institution

During the early 1980s, reports circulated in LDS culture that the **Book of Mormon** was being used by the **Smithsonian** to guide primary archaeological research. This rumor was brought to the attention of **Smithsonian** directors who, by 1982, sent a form letter to inquiring parties stating that the **Smithsonian** did not use the **Book of Mormon** to guide any research, and included a list of specific reasons **Smithsonian** archaeologists considered the **Book of Mormon** historically unlikely. In 1998, the **Smithsonian** revised the form letter they sent in response to this issue to take a less controversial stance, specifically replacing detailed allegations of the non-historicity of the **Book of Mormon** with a simple statement that the **Book of Mormon** has not been used by the **Smithsonian** in any form of archaeological research.^[28] Mormon scholars suggest this may have been because the earlier version of the letter contradicts some aspects of research published by **Smithsonian** staff members. Non-LDS scholars note that the **Smithsonian** has not retracted any of its previous statements and feel that the response was toned down to avoid negative public relations with **Mormons**. **Terryl Givens** suggests that the change in the statement was "in all likelihood a product of controversy-avoidance."^[29]

2.2 National Geographic Society

The National Geographic Society, in a 1998 letter to the Institute for Religious Research, stated “Archaeologists and other scholars have long probed the hemisphere’s past and the society does not know of anything found so far that has substantiated the Book of Mormon.”^[30]

3 Anachronisms and archaeological findings

See also: Book of Mormon anachronisms

There are a variety of words and phrases in the Book of Mormon that are considered anachronistic as their existence in the text of the Book of Mormon is at odds with archaeological findings. The text of the Book of Mormon spans a period beginning circa 2500 BC to 400 AD. Each of the anachronisms describes an artifact, animal, plant, or technology that critics and archaeologists believe did not exist in the Americas during this time period.

The list below summarizes the most prominent and problematic anachronisms in the Book of Mormon, as well as perspectives and rebuttals by Mormon apologists.

3.1 Old World species

3.1.1 Horses



A tapir - Some Mormon apologists believe that the word “horse” in the Book of Mormon refers to a tapir in order to explain the anachronism.

Horses are mentioned eleven times in the Book of Mormon in the context of its New World setting.^[31] There is no evidence that horses existed on the American continent during the 2500-3000 year history of the Book of Mormon (2500 BC - 400 AD). The only evidence of

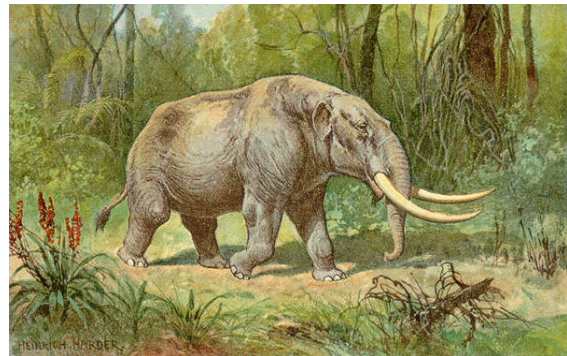
horses on the American continent dates to pre-historic times,^[32] (between 12,500 and 10,000 BC.^[33]). It is widely accepted that horses were extinct in the Western Hemisphere over 10,000 years ago and did not reappear there until the Spaniards brought them from Europe.^[34] Horses were re-introduced to the Americas (Caribbean) by Christopher Columbus in 1493^[35] and to the American continent by Cortés in 1519.^{[36][37]}

See also: Quaternary extinction event

Mormon apologists argue the following:

- Mormon apologist John L. Sorenson at FARMS claims that there is fossil evidence that some New World horses may have survived the Pleistocene–Holocene transition,^[38] though these findings are disputed by mainstream archaeologists.^[39]
- Mormon apologist Robert R. Bennett suggests that the word “horse” in the Book of Mormon may have referred to a different animal, such as a tapir.^[40]

3.1.2 Elephants



Mastodons existed in the Americas, but are known to have gone extinct by 10,000 B.C.

Elephants are mentioned twice in a single verse in the earliest Book of Mormon record, the Book of Ether.^[41] Mastodons and mammoths lived long ago in the New World; however, as with the prehistoric horse, the archaeological record indicates that they became extinct along with most of the megafauna in the New World around 10,000 BC. The source of this extinction is speculated to be the result of human predation, a significant climate change, or a combination of both factors.^{[42][43]} A very small population of mammoths survived on St. Paul Island, Alaska, up until 3700 BC,^[44] but is still multiple thousand years before the time period where “elephants” are mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

See also: Quaternary extinction event

Apologists deal with the “elephant” in much the same way as they treat the “horse” anachronism; countering with the

following arguments:

- Various amateur archaeologists and LDS authors have cited controversial evidence that North American mound builder cultures were familiar with the elephant.^[45] This evidence has long been a topic of debate with most archaeologists concluding that the elephantine remains were improperly dated, misidentified, or openly fraudulent.^[46]

3.1.3 Cattle and cows



Llamas are the only large mammal known to have been domesticated in the Americas.

There are six references to *cattle* made in the Book of Mormon, including verbiage suggesting they were domesticated.^[47] While the Book of Mormon may follow the common Biblical precedent of referring to all domesticated animals as cattle, there is no evidence that Old World cattle (members of the genus *Bos*) inhabited the New World prior to European contact in the 16th century AD.^[48] Further, there is currently no archeological evidence of American bison having been domesticated.^[49] It is widely accepted that the only large mammal to be domesticated in the Americas was the llama and that no species of goats, deer, or sheep were domesticated before the arrival of the Europeans to the continent.

Mormon apologists argue the following to deal with this anachronism:

- Some Mormon apologists believe that the term “cattle,” as used in the Book of Mormon is more gen-

eral and does not exclusively mean members of the genus *Bos*. Thus, they claim the term “cattle” may refer to mountain goats; llamas; or the ancestor of the American bison, *Bison antiquus* (of the sub family Bovinae).^[50]

3.1.4 Sheep

“Sheep” are mentioned in the Book of Mormon as being raised in the Americas by the Jaredites between 2500 BC and 600 BC. Another verse mentions “lamb-skin” worn by armies of robbers (~ AD 21)^[51] However, Domestic sheep are known to have been introduced to the Americas during the second voyage of Columbus in 1493.

Mormon apologists argue the following to deal with this anachronism:

- One apologist cites the discovery of some charred wool cloth in a grave during a dig in central Mexico in 1935.^[52] However, the discovering archeologists noted their uncertainty in determining if the grave was pre-Spanish.^[53]
- Some suggest that the word “sheep” may refer to another species of animal that resembled sheep such as Big horn sheep or llamas.^[54] Critics point out that Big horn sheep have never been domesticated by humans.

3.1.5 Goats



Brocket deer - Some LDS apologists believe that “goat” in the Book of Mormon refers to brocket deer in order to explain the apparent anachronism.

Goats are mentioned three times in the Book of Mormon^[55] placing them among the Nephites and the Jaredites (i.e. between 2500 BC and 400 AD). In two of the verses, “goats” are distinguished from “wild goats” indicating that there were at least two varieties, one of them possibly domesticated or tamed.

Domestic goats are known to have been introduced on the American continent by Europeans in the 15th century,

1000 years after the conclusion of the Book of Mormon, and nearly 2000 years after goats are last mentioned in the Book of Mormon. The aggressive mountain goat is indigenous to North America. There is no evidence that it was ever domesticated.

Mormon apologists argue the following to deal with this anachronism:

- Apologist Matthew Roper of FARMS points out that 16th-century Spanish friars used the word “goat” to refer to native Mesoamerican brocket deer.^[56]

3.1.6 Swine

The Book of Mormon suggests that swine existed and were domesticated among the Jaredites.^[57] There have not been any remains, references, artwork, tools, or any other evidence suggesting that swine were ever present in the pre-entrada New World.

Mormon apologists argue the following to deal with this anachronism:

- Some apologists argue that the word “swine” refers to Peccaries^[58] (also known as Javelinas), an animal that bears a superficial resemblance to pigs.
 - Critics rebut that there is no archeological evidence that peccaries have ever been domesticated.^[59]

3.1.7 Barley and wheat



Wheat was domesticated in the Old World and was introduced on the American continent by Europeans.

"Barley" is mentioned three times in the Book of Mormon narrative dating to the 1st and 2nd century BC.^[60] "Wheat" is mentioned once in the Book of Mormon narrative dating to the same time period.^[61] The introduction of domesticated modern barley and wheat to the New

World was made by Europeans after 1492, many centuries after the time in which the Book of Mormon is set.^[62]

Mormon apologists argue the following to deal with this anachronism:

- FARMS apologist Robert Bennett argues^[63] that the words “barley” and “wheat” in the Book of Mormon may actually be referring to other crops in the Americas, such as *Hordeum pusillum*^[64] (though *Hordeum pusillum* was unknown in Mesoamerica and only found to be domesticated in North America). Most *Hordeum pusillum* has been found in Iowa, dating back to around 2,500 years ago.^[65]
- Bennett also postulates that words may refer to genuine varieties of New World barley and wheat, which are as yet undiscovered in the archaeological record.

Additionally, apologists such as Robert R. Bennett also note that the Norse, after reaching North America, claimed to have found what they called “self-sown wheat”.^[66]

Critics reject the notion that *Hordeum pusillum* was the “barley” referred to in the Book of Mormon. They also note that the earliest mention of barley in the Book of Mormon dates to 121 BC.^[67] which is several hundred years prior to the date given for the recent discovery of domesticated *Hordeum pusillum* in North America.

3.1.8 Silk

The Book of Mormon mentions the use of silk six times.^[68] “Silk” is commonly understood to mean the material that is created from the cocoon of the Asian moth *Bombyx mori*.

Apologists argue the following to deal with this anachronism:

- Mormon apologist John Sorenson believes that there are several other materials which were used in Mesoamerica anciently which could be the “silk” referred to in the Book of Mormon, including material spun from the hair of rabbit’s bellies, the pods of the ceiba tree, or an unidentified wild silkworm.^{[69][70]}

3.2 Old World artifacts and products

3.2.1 Chariots or wheeled vehicles

The Book of Mormon contains two accounts of chariots being used in the New World.^[71]

Critics argue that there is no archaeological evidence to support the use of wheeled vehicles in Mesoamerica, especially since many parts of ancient Mesoamerica were



Chariots depicted in a Mesopotamian relief circa 2500 B.C. Evidence of wheeled vehicles has not been found in the Americas.

not suitable for wheeled transport. Clark Wissler, the Curator of Ethnography at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, noted:

"...we see that the prevailing mode of land transport in the New World was by human carrier. The wheel was unknown in pre-Columbian times."^[72]

A comparison of the South American Inca civilization to Mesoamerican civilizations shows the same lack of wheeled vehicles. Although the Incas used a vast network of paved roads (see [Inca road system](#)), these roads are so rough, steep, and narrow that they appear to be unsuitable for wheeled use. Bridges that the Inca people built, and even continue to use and maintain today in some remote areas, are straw-rope bridges so narrow (about 2–3 feet wide) that no wheeled vehicle can fit (see image and technology at [Inca rope bridges](#)). Inca roads were used mainly by [chaski](#) message runners and llama caravans.

Some Mormon apologists argue the following to deal with this anachronism:

- One apologist has suggested that the *chariots* mentioned in the Book of Mormon might refer to mythic or cultic wheeled vehicles.^[73]
- Some apologists point out that pre-Columbian wheeled toys have been found in Mesoamerica indicating that the wheel was known by ancient American peoples.^{[74][75]}
- One LDS apologist argues that few chariot fragments have been found in the Middle East dating to Biblical times (apart from the disassembled chariots found in [Tutankhamun's tomb](#)), and therefore wheeled chariots did exist in ancient America and it is not unreasonable that archaeologists have not discovered any evidence of them.^[76]
 - Critics counter that although few fragments of chariots have been found in the Middle East, there are many images of ancient chariots on pottery and [frescoes](#) and in many sculptures of Mediterranean origin, thus confirming their existence in those societies. The absence of these images among pre-Columbian artwork found in the New World, they state, does not support the existence of Old World-style chariots in the New World.

- Finally, one apologist speculates that the word “chariot” in the Book of Mormon may refer to a non-wheeled vehicle.^[77]

3.2.2 Iron and steel



Aztec warriors brandishing *maquahuil*, which are made of stone. From the 16th century *Florentine Codex*, Vol. IX.

Steel and iron are mentioned several times in the Book of Mormon.^[78] No evidence has been found in North, Central, or South America of iron being hardened anciently to make “steel”.

Though researchers have shown that primitive metallurgy existed in South America, metal production was only used for adornment purposes. The very earliest metal working there dates to 200 AD with the [Moche](#) culture. This dates thousands of years after the [Jaredite](#) civilization is alleged to have existed and 800 years after the alleged beginning of the [Nephite](#) civilization in the Book of Mormon. Metallurgy spread to Central America by 800 AD (long after the Book of Mormon record closes).

Between 2004 and 2007, a [Purdue University](#) archaeologist, Kevin J. Vaughn, discovered a 2000-year-old hematite mine near Nazca, Peru. Although hematite is today mined as an iron ore, Vaughn believes that the hematite was then being mined for use as red pigment. There are also numerous excavations that included iron minerals.^[79] He noted:

“Even though ancient Andean people smelted some metals, such as copper, they never smelted iron like they did in the Old World...Metals were used for a variety of tools in the Old World, such as weapons, while in the Americas, metals were used as prestige goods for the wealthy elite.”^[80]

Apologists counter that the word “steel”, as used in the Book of Mormon, likely refers to a hardened metal other than iron. This argument follows from the fact that the Book of Mormon refers to certain Old World articles made of “steel”.^[81] Similar “steel” articles mentioned in the King James Version of the Bible are actually hardened copper.^[82] It has been amply demonstrated that much of the terminology of the English Book of Mormon, parallels the Authorized King James Bible.^[83] Ancient mound

building cultures of North America are known to have mined and worked copper, silver, gold and meteoric iron, although few instances of metallic blades or of deliberately alloyed (or “hardened”) copper have been uncovered from ancient North America.^{[84][85]} Examples of ancient copper knife blades have been found on *Isle Royale* and around Lake Superior.^[86]

3.2.3 Metal swords, which had “rusted”

The Book of Mormon makes numerous references to swords and their use in battle.^[87] When the remnants of the Jaredites’ final battle were discovered, the Book of Mormon narrative states that “the blades thereof were cankered with rust.”^[88]

Apologists counter that most references to swords do not speak of the material they were made of, and that they may refer to a number of weapons such as the *Macuahuitl*, a “sword” made of obsidian blades that was used by the Aztecs. It was very sharp and could decapitate a man or horse.^[89] However, this does not deal with the mention of the Jaredite swords, because obsidian (volcanic glass), cannot rust.

3.2.4 Cimitters

Scimitars (‘Cimitters’) are mentioned about ten times in the Book of Mormon as existing hundreds of years before the term was first coined.^[90] The word “cimiter” (Scimitar) is considered an anachronism since the word was never used by the Hebrews (from which the Book of Mormon peoples came) or any other civilization prior to 450 AD.^[91]

The word cimiter (scimitar) has at different times referred to a long curved sword used by the Persians and Turks, a smaller curved knife similar to the *kopis* of the Turks, or *makhaira* of the Greeks.

Apologists argue the following to deal with this anachronism:

- Apologists *Michael R. Ash* and *William Hamblin* postulate that the word was chosen by Joseph Smith as the closest workable English word for a short curved weapon used by the Nephites.^[92]

3.2.5 System of exchange based on measures of precious metals

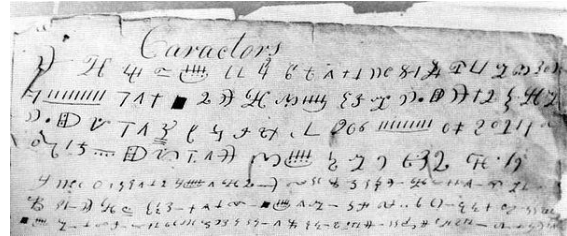
The Book of Mormon describes in detail a system of weights and measures used by the Nephite society.^[93] However, the archaeological record shows that the overall use of metal in ancient America appears to have been extremely limited. But the Book of Mormon makes no mention of what materials were used for weights and mea-

asures. A more common exchange medium in Mesoamerica was cacao beans.^[94]

3.3 Knowledge of Hebrew and Egyptian languages

See also: *Linguistics and the Book of Mormon*

The Book of Mormon describes more than one literate



The “Anthon Transcript”, which shows characters transcribed from the Golden Plates (the source of the Book of Mormon). These characters are claimed to be from an unknown language called *Reformed Egyptian*.

people inhabiting ancient America. The Nephite people are described as possessing a language and writing with roots in Hebrew and Egyptian, and writing the original text of the Book of Mormon in this unknown language, called *Reformed Egyptian*. A transcript of some of the characters of this language has been preserved in the *Anthon Transcript*.

Archaeological evidence shows that the only people known to have developed written languages in America were the *Olmecs* and *Maya*, whose written languages have no resemblance to Hebrew or Egyptian hieroglyphs. Additionally, professional linguists and Egyptologists do not consider the *Anthon Transcript* document to contain any legitimate ancient writing. Klaus Baer, Egyptologist at the University of Chicago, called the characters of the transcript nothing but “doodlings”.^[95]

The Smithsonian Institution has noted, “Reports of findings of ancient Egyptian Hebrew, and other Old World writings in the New World in pre-Columbian contexts have frequently appeared in newspapers, magazines, and sensational books. None of these claims has stood up to examination by reputable scholars. No inscriptions using Old World forms of writing have been shown to have occurred in any part of the Americas before 1492 except for a few Norse rune stones which have been found in Greenland.”^[96]

Additionally, linguistic studies on the evolution of the spoken languages of the Americas agree with the widely held model that *homo sapiens* arrived in America between 15,000 and 10,000 BC. According to the Book of Mormon, immigrants first arrived on the American continent about 2500 BC (the presumed time period of the biblical Tower of Babel). Mormon apologists argue the following to deal with this anachronism:

- Some apologists argue that the Book of Mormon may not describe the original settlers of the Americas, but a subset of a larger population who settled in a limited region, and that evidence of the knowledge of Hebrew or Egyptian is too sparse to be found.

3.4 Systems of measuring time (calendars)

All chronologic dates given in the Book of Mormon are stated in terms of the Nephite calendar. The system of dates used by the rebellious Lamanites is not stated, though the Book of Mormon indicates that Lamanite converts strictly observed the Israelite calendar; inextricably tied to the Torah or Mosaic Law. The highest numbered month mentioned is the eleventh, and the highest numbered day is the twelfth, but the total number of months in a year and the number of days in a month is not explicitly stated^[97] Even so, it is evident that Book of Mormon peoples observed lunar cycles, “months”,^[98] and that the Nephites observed the Israelite Sabbath culminating a seven-day week.^[99]

Most North American tribes relied upon a calendar of 13 months, relating to the yearly number of lunar cycles. Seasonal Rounds and ceremonies were performed each moon. Months were counted in the days between phase cycles of the moon. Calendar Systems in use in North America during this historical period relied on this simple system.^[100]

One of the more distinctive features shared among pre-Columbian Mesoamerican civilizations is the use of an extensive system of inter-related calendars. The epigraphic and archaeological record for this practice dates back at least 2,500 years, by which time it appears to have been well-established.^[101] The most widespread and significant of these calendars was the 260-day calendar, formed by combining 20 named days with 13 numerals in successive sequence ($13 \times 20 = 260$).^[102] Another system of perhaps equal antiquity is the 365-day calendar, approximating the solar year, formed from 18 'months' \times 20 named days + 5 additional days. These systems and others are found in societies of that era such as the Olmec, Zapotec, Mixe-Zoque, Mixtec, and Maya (whose system of Maya calendars are widely regarded as the most intricate and complex among them) reflected the vigesimal (base 20) numeral system and other numbers, such as 13 and 9.

4 LDS efforts to establish Book of Mormon archaeology

4.1 Early attempts

Commencing in the early 1840s, Latter Day Saints sought to support *the Book of Mormon* with John Lloyd Stephens'

bestseller *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*. Stephens' two-volume work was promoted by church members as an essential guide to the ruins of Book of Mormon cities. Archaeological endeavors stemming from this tradition have led to disappointment and confusion among the faithful. In the fall of 1842, an unsigned Mormon newspaper article appearing in *Times and Seasons* alleged that the ruins of Quirigua, discovered by Stephens, were the very ruins of Zarahemla or some other Book of Mormon city.^[103] It is now known that these Central American ruins date more recent than Book of Mormon times.^[104] Other unsigned articles followed, including one published shortly after the death of Joseph Smith. Every Latter Day Saint was encouraged to read Stephens' bestseller and to regard the stone ruins described in it as relating to the Book of Mormon.^[105]

Additionally, Latter-day Saints have based some of their conclusions regarding archaeology and the Book of Mormon on unproven archaeological data which looked promising at the time but has since been found to be either erroneous or fraudulent.^[106] In recent years, this has caused LDS scholars to take a very critical approach to the work of other LDS researchers on this subject. Mormon scholar John L. Sorenson states that “LDS scholars themselves have attacked the same shoddy scholarship that makes Book of Mormon archaeology a playground for hobbyists.”^[107]

4.2 New World Archaeological Foundation

From the mid-1950s onwards, the Church-owned Brigham Young University has sponsored (under the banner of the New World Archaeological Foundation, or NWAFF) a large number of archaeological excavations in Mesoamerica, with a focus on the Mesoamerican time period known as the Preclassic (earlier than *c.* AD 200).^[108] The results of these and other investigations, while producing valuable archaeological data, have not led to any widespread acceptance by non-LDS archaeologists of the Book of Mormon account. Citing the lack of specific New World geographic locations to search, Michael D. Coe, a prominent Mesoamerican archaeologist and Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Yale University, wrote,

“As far as I know there is not one professionally trained archaeologist, who is not a Mormon, who sees any scientific justification for believing the historicity of the Book of Mormon, and I would like to state that there are quite a few Mormon archaeologists who join this group”.^[109]

In 1955 Thomas Ferguson, an LDS member and founder of the NWAFF, with five years of funding from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, began to dig throughout Mesoamerica for evidence of the veracity of

the Book of Mormon claims. In a 1961 newsletter Ferguson predicted that although nothing had been found, the Book of Mormon cities would be found within 10 years. In 1972, Christian scholar Hal Hougey wrote Ferguson questioning the progress given the stated timetable in which the cities would be found.^[110] Replying to Hougey as well as secular and non-secular requests, Ferguson wrote in a letter dated 5 June 1972:

“Ten years have passed... I had sincerely hoped that Book-of-Mormon cities would be positively identified within 10 years — and time has proved me wrong in my anticipation.”^[110]

During the period of 1959-1961, NWAf colleague Dee Green was editor of the *BYU Archaeological Society Newsletter* and had an article from it published in the summer of 1969 edition of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*^[111] in which he acknowledged that the NWAf findings did not back up the veracity of the Book of Mormon claims. After this article and another six years of fruitless search, Thomas Ferguson published a 29-page paper in 1975 where he concluded,

“I’m afraid that up to this point, I must agree with Dee Green, who has told us that to date there is no Book-of-Mormon geography...”^[112]

In 1976, referring to his own paper, Ferguson wrote a letter in which he stated:

“...The real implication of the paper is that you can’t set the Book-of-Mormon geography down anywhere — because it is fictional and will never meet the requirements of the dirt-archeology. I should say — what is in the ground will never conform to what is in the book.”^[113]

Ferguson’s archaeological efforts failed to garner complete support from all prominent LDS scholars. Author and LDS Professor of Biblical and Mormon scripture Hugh Nibley published the following critical remarks:

“...Book of Mormon archaeologists have often been disappointed in the past because they have consistently looked for the wrong things... Blinded by the gold of the pharaohs and the mighty ruins of Babylon, Book of Mormon students have declared themselves “not interested” in the drab and commonplace remains of our lowly Indians. But in all the Book of Mormon we look in vain for anything that promises majestic ruins.”^[114]

Though the NWAf failed to establish Book of Mormon archaeology, the archaeological investigations of NWAf-sponsored projects were a success for ancient American archaeology in general which has been recognized and appreciated by non-Mormon archaeologists.^[109] Currently **BYU** maintains 86 documents on the work of the NWAf at the **BYU NWAf website** and these documents are used outside both **BYU** and the LDS church by researchers.

4.3 Modern approach and conclusions

As noted above, there is a general consensus among non-Mormon archaeologists (and even some Mormon archaeologists) that the archaeological record does not substantiate the Book of Mormon account, and in some ways directly contradicts it.^[115] Due to the difficulties that beset Mormon archaeology, most Mormon apologists now take a different approach: analyze archaeological findings for parallels and correlations with information found in the Book of Mormon. Although LDS scholars have found no indisputable proof of the book’s historicity, they have accumulated a large amount of research which they use to support their conclusions. These correlations are disputed by non-Mormon archaeologists who see no such parallels. Non-Mormon scholars, historians, and archaeologists have concluded that the body of evidence found does not substantiate the conclusions of Mormon apologists and the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon itself.^[116]

An example of the mainstream archaeological opinion of Mormon archaeology is summarized by historian and journalist **Hampton Sides**:

“Yale’s Michael Coe likes to talk about what he calls “the fallacy of misplaced concreteness,” the tendency among Mormon theorists like Sorenson to keep the discussion trained on all sorts of extraneous subtopics... while avoiding what is most obvious: that Joseph Smith probably meant “horse” when he wrote down the word “horse,” ...”^[117]

4.4 Old World Mormon archaeology

Some Mormon archaeologists and researchers have focused on the Arabian peninsula in the Middle East where they believe the Book of Mormon narrative describes actual locations. These alleged connections include the following:

- One Mormon apologist believes that an ancient tribe known to have existed on the Arabian Peninsula with a similar name to that of the Book of Mormon figure **Lehi** may have adopted his name.^[118] Other Mormon scholars have not reached this conclusion, as there is “far too little is yet known about early

Arabia to strengthen a link with the historical Lehi, and other explanations are readily available for every point advanced.”^[119]

- The Wadi Tayyib al-Isim is considered to be a plausible location for the Book of Mormon River of Laman by some LDS researchers.^[120] This is disputed by other LDS researchers.^[121]
- Some Mormon apologists believe that the Book of Mormon place name "Nahom" correlates to a location in Yemen referred to as "NHM".^[122] This link is disputed both by other LDS researchers and mainstream archaeologists.^[123]
- LDS scholars believe they have located several plausible sites for the Book of Mormon location "Bountiful".^[124]
- One Mormon apologist believes that an ancient Judean artifact is connected with the Book of Mormon figure Mulek.^[125]
- Several Mormon apologists have proposed a variety of locations on the Arabian Peninsula that they believe could be the Book of Mormon location "Shazer".^[126]

4.5 New World Mormon archaeology

Archaeological studies in the New World that tie Book of Mormon places and peoples to real world locations and civilizations are incredibly difficult since there are generally no landmarks defined in the Book of Mormon that can unambiguously identify real world locations. Generally non-Mormon archaeologists do not consider there to be any authentic Book of Mormon archaeological sites. Various apologists have claimed that events in the Book of Mormon took place in a variety of locations^[127] including North America, South America,^[128] Central America, and even the Malay Peninsula.^[129] These finds are divided into competing models, most notably the Hemispheric Geography Model, the Mesoamerican Limited Geography Model, and the Finger Lakes Limited Geography Model.

4.5.1 Hemispheric Geography Model

The Hemispheric Geography Model posits that the events of the Book of Mormon took place over the entirety of the North and South American continents. By corollary many Mormons believe that the three groups mentioned in the Book of Mormon (Jaredites, Nephites, and Lamanites) exclusively populated an empty North and South American Continent, and that Native Americans were all of Israeli descent.

The LDS church's view of the issue has shifted slightly over time, with Joseph Smith and early Mormon leaders

taking the traditional stance.^{[130][131][132][133]} This model was also implicitly endorsed in the introduction to the Book of Mormon, which noted that Lamanites are the "principal ancestors of the American Indians."^[134] More recently the church has not taken a strong position on the absolute origin of Native American peoples.^[135]

Some Mormon apologists believe the following archaeological finds support this theory:

- Additionally, some Mormon apologists note that on June 4, 1834, during the Zion's Camp trek through Illinois, Joseph Smith stated that the group was "wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasionally the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as proof of its divine authenticity..."^[136]

Criticism of the Hemispheric Model

- Critics have noted that the assumption that Lamanites are the ancestors of the American Indians are wholly unfounded in current archaeological and genetic research.^[137]

4.5.2 Mesoamerican Limited Geography Model

Main article: [Limited Geography Model \(Book of Mormon\)](#)

The Mesoamerican Limited Geography Model posits that the events of the Book of Mormon occurred in a geographically "limited" region in Mesoamerica only hundreds of miles in dimension and that other people were present in the New World at the time of Lehi's arrival. This model has been proposed and advocated by various Mormon apologists in the 20th century (both RLDS and LDS).^{[138][139][140]} Geographically limited settings for the Book of Mormon have been suggested by LDS church leaders as well,^{[141][142]} and this view has been published in the official church magazine, *The Ensign*.^[143]

Mormon apologists believe the following archaeological evidence supports the Mesoamerican Geography Model:

- Some Mormon apologists argue that there is only a single plausible match with the geography in Mesoamerica centered around the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (current day Guatemala, the southern Mexico States of Tabasco, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Veracruz, and the surrounding area).^[144] This region was first proposed as the location of Zarahemla (ruins of Quirigua) in the anonymous newspaper article of October 1, 1842 (*Times and Seasons*).
- Mormon apologist John L. Sorenson cites discoveries of fortifications at Becán, Tlaxcala, Puebla,

Teotihuacan, and Kaminaljuyu, dated between 100 and 300 AD, as evidence of the Book of Mormon's account of large-scale warfare.^[145]

- Some apologists, and church leaders (including Joseph Smith) believe that the Maya ruins on the Yucatán Peninsula belonged to Book of Mormon peoples^[146] LDS efforts to relate anachronistic Mayan ruins to Book of Mormon cities, owes much of its origins to an infatuation with archaeologists Stephens' and Catherwood's discoveries of Mesoamerican ruins, made public more than a decade after the first publication of the Book of Mormon.^[147] These findings were cited by early church leaders and publications as confirming evidence.^[148] This correlation is clearly problematic however, since conventional archaeology places the pinnacle of Mayan civilization several centuries after the final events in the Book of Mormon supposedly occurred.
 - Critics note that according to *Mormon* 6:5, Nephite civilization came to an end near the year 384 AD. Copan, Quirigua, and sites in the Yucatan visited by Stephens and Catherwood, contain artifacts that date more recent than Book of Mormon times. It has not been shown that any of Stephens' artifacts date to Book of Mormon times.

Criticism of the Mesoamerican Geography Model

- The Limited Mesoamerican Geography Model has been critiqued by a number of scholars, who suggest that it is not an adequate explanation for Book of Mormon geography and that the locations, events, flora and fauna described in it do not precisely match.^{[149][150]} In response to one of these critiques in 1994, Sorenson reaffirmed his support for a limited Mesoamerican geographical setting.^[151]
- Establishing connections between ruins of the Mayan civilization (for example, Quirigua, Kaminaljuyu, and Tikal in Guatemala, and Copán in Honduras, and Palenque in Mexico) and the cities and civilizations mentioned in the Book of Mormon has been difficult for Mormon apologists on a number of fronts, the most significant issue being dating. Conventional archaeology places the pinnacle of Mayan civilization several centuries after the final events in the Book of Mormon supposedly occurred.
- Among apologists, there have been critiques - particularly around the location of the Hill Cumorah, which most Mormons consider to be definitively identified as a location in New York. In a Mesoamerican Limited Geography model, this would require there to be two Cumorahs (which some consider preposterous^[152]).

4.5.3 Finger Lakes Limited Geography Model

Some Mormon apologists hold that the events of the Book of Mormon occurred in a small region in and around the Finger Lakes region of New York. Part of the basis of this theory lies on statements made by Joseph Smith and other church leaders.^{[153][154][155][156][157][158]}

Mormon apologists believe the archaeological evidence below supports claims that authentic Book of Mormon sites exist in the Finger Lakes region of New York:

- Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley, drew attention to mound builder works of North America as “an excellent description of Book of Mormon strong places”.^[159]

5 LDS cultural belief regarding Book of Mormon archaeology

5.1 Archaeological evidence of large populations

LDS scholars estimate that at various periods in Book of Mormon history, the populations of civilizations discussed in the book, ranged between 300,000 and 1.5 million people.^[160] The size of the late Jaredite civilization was even larger. According to the Book of Mormon, the final war that destroyed the Jaredites killed at least two million men.^[161] The Book of Mormon describes peoples that were literate, had knowledge of Old World languages, and possessed Old World derived writing systems.^[162]

From Book of Mormon population estimates, it is evident that the civilizations described are comparable in size to the civilizations of Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, and the Maya. Such civilizations left numerous artifacts in the form of hewn stone ruins, tombs, temples, pyramids, roads, arches, walls, frescos, statues, vases, coins, etc. The archaeological problem posed by the earth, timber and metal working societies described in the Book of Mormon was summarized by Hugh Nibley (prominent LDS professor of ancient history):

“We should not be surprised at the lack of ruins in America in general. Actually the scarcity of identifiable remains in the Old World is even more impressive. In view of the nature of their civilization one should not be puzzled if the Nephites had left us no ruins at all. People underestimate the capacity of things to disappear, and do not realize that the ancients almost never built of stone. Many a great civilization which has left a notable mark in history and literature has left behind not a

single recognizable trace of itself. We must stop looking for the wrong things.”^[163]

5.1.1 Existing ancient records of the New World

The National Geographic Society has noted, “Reports of findings of ancient Egyptian Hebrew, and other Old World writings in the New World in pre-Columbian contexts have frequently appeared in newspapers, magazines, and sensational books. None of these claims has stood up to examination by reputable scholars. No inscriptions using Old World forms of writing have been shown to have occurred in any part of the Americas before 1492 except for a few Norse rune stones which have been found in Greenland.”^[96]

Losses of ancient writings occurred in the Old World - in deliberate or accidental fires, in wars, earthquakes, floods, etc. Similar losses occurred in the New World. Much of the literature of the Pre-Columbian Maya was destroyed during the Spanish conquest in the 16th century.^[164] On this point, Michael Coe noted:

Nonetheless, our knowledge of ancient Maya thought must represent only a tiny fraction of the whole picture, for of the thousands of books in which the full extent of their learning and ritual was recorded, only four have survived to modern times (as though all that posterity knew of ourselves were to be based upon three prayer books and *Pilgrim's Progress*).^[165]

The Maya civilization also left behind a vast corpus of inscriptions (upwards of ten thousand are known) written in the Maya script, the earliest of which date from around the 3rd century BC with the majority written in the Classic Period (c. 250–900 AD).^[166] Mayanist scholarship is now able to decipher a large number of these inscriptions. These inscriptions are mainly concerned with the activities of Mayan rulers and the commemoration of significant events, with the oldest known Long Count date corresponding to December 7, 36 BC being recorded on Chiapa de Corzo *Stela 2* in central Chiapas.^[167] None of these inscriptions make contact with events, places, rulers, or timeline of Book of Mormon.^[168]

One LDS researcher uses as supporting evidence, ancient Mesoamerican accounts that appear somewhat to parallel events recorded in the Book of Mormon.^[169]

5.1.2 The Jaredites and the Olmec

See also: Olmec alternative origin speculations

There is no archaeological evidence of the Jaredite people described in the Book of Mormon that is accepted by mainstream archaeologists. Nevertheless,

some LDS scholars believe that the Jaredites were the Olmec civilization,^[170] though archaeological evidence supporting this theory is disputed and circumstantial.

Unlike the Jaredites of the Book of Mormon, whose society predominantly situated in lands north of a “narrow neck” of land,^[171] Olmec civilization spread to both the east and west sides of a broad, lateral Central American isthmus (the Isthmus of Tehuantepec).^[172]

The Jaredite civilization in the American covenant land is said to have been completely destroyed as the result of a civil war near the time that Lehi’s party is said to have arrived in the New World (approximately 590 B.C.). Olmec civilization, on the other hand, flourished in Mesoamerica during the Preclassic period, dating from 1200 BC to about 400 BC. The Olmec civilization suddenly disintegrated for unknown reasons, although archaeological evidence clearly indicates a definite Olmec influence within the Maya civilization that followed (according to Coe). Although the Olmec civilization ended, there are indications that some of the Olmec people survived and interacted with other cultures.^[173]

While making allowance for the likelihood that Book of Mormon peoples migrated to Mexico and Central America, Joseph Smith nevertheless placed the arrival of the Jaredites in “the lake country of America” (region of Lake Ontario).^[174]

5.1.3 The Nephites

No Central or South American civilization is recognized by academia to correlate with the Nephites of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon makes no mention of Lamanites or Nephites erecting impressive works of hewn stone as did the Maya or various South American peoples.^[175] Some believe that LDS scripture indicates that events surrounding the Book of Mormon occurred anciently in the Great Lakes region.^[176] Numerous aboriginal fortresses of earth and timber were known to have existed in this region.^[177]

5.1.4 Warfare

Military fortifications There are ten instances in the Book of Mormon in which cities are described as having defensive fortifications. For example, Alma 52:2 describes how the Lamanites “sought protection in their fortifications” in the city of Mulek.^[178]

One archaeologist has noted the existence of ancient Mesoamerican defensive fortifications.^[179] According to one article in *The Ensign*, military fortifying berms are found in the Yucatan Peninsula,^{[180][181]} in the region appropriate to where some LDS scholars suggest that the wars described in the Book of Mormon could plausibly have occurred. Other researchers find it ironic that such great lengths would be taken to find “Moroniesque”, abo-

iginal defensive works (fitting Book of Mormon description) so far away from scriptural Cumorah,^[182] when such works are known to have existed in the State of New York and eastern United States.^[183]

5.2 Efforts to correlate ruins and artifacts

5.2.1 Artifacts

Izapa Stela 5 Main article: Izapa Stela 5

In the early 1950s, M. Wells Jakeman of the BYU Department of Archaeology suggested that a complicated scene carved on Stela 5 in Izapa was a depiction of a Book of Mormon event called Lehi's dream, which features a vision of the tree of life.^[184] This interpretation is disputed by other Mormon and non-Mormon scholars.^[185] Julia Guernsey Kappelman, author of a definitive work on Izapan culture, finds that Jakeman's research "belies an obvious religious agenda that ignored Izapa Stela 5's heritage".^[186]

Other artifacts LDS researcher John Sorenson claims that one artifact, La Venta Stela 3, depicts a person with Semitic features ("striking beard and beaked nose").^[187] LDS researchers have claimed that Copan Stela B depicts elephants; others claim it depicts macaws.^{[188][189]}

6 See also

- Biblical archaeology
- Criticism of Mormonism
- Khirbet Beit Lei
- Los Lunas Decalogue Stone
- Pre-Columbian trans-oceanic contact
- Burrows Cave
- Heartland Model

7 Notes

- [1] See for example Jarom 1:8 discussing machinery, Mosiah 8:5 and Mosiah 25:5 discussing semi-literateness of the Nephites and Helaman 3:8,16 that discusses the heavy population of the Lehite peoples. Similar references may be found about the Jaredites, for which the reader is referred to the Book of Ether
- [2] Priddis 1975; see RLDS D&C 110:20, were advanced by RLDS members: Hills 1917; Hills 1918; Hills 1924, and Gunsolley 1922

- [3] Abanes 2003, pp. 74–77
- [4] Wolverton 2004, pp. 84–85
- [5] Persuitt 2000, p. 102
- [6] "Does Archaeology Support The Book Of Mormon?". *Mormons in Transition web site*. Institute for Religious Research. Retrieved February 10, 2010.
- [7] 1 Ne. 18: 25, Ether 9: 18
- [8] 1 Ne. 18: 25
- [9] Ether 9: 18
- [10] Ether 9: 18, Enos 1: 21, 1 Ne. 18: 25
- [11] "What is Mormonism? | Book of Mormon Origin | Theology". *Whatismormonism.com*. Retrieved 2012-10-09.
- [12] Mosiah 9: 9
- [13] Mosiah 9: 9, Mosiah 7: 22, Alma 11: 7, 15
- [14] 1 Nephi 14:7
- [15] 1 Nephi 4:9
- [16] Alma 18:9
- [17] Allen 2003
- [18] See Squier 1849
- [19] See mound builder homes of "clay-plastered poles": Stuart, George E., Who Were the "Mound Builders"?, *National Geographic*, Vol. 142, No. 6, December 1972, pg. 789
- [20] See *Searching for the Great Hopewell Road*, based on the investigations of archaeologist Dr. Bradley Lepper, Ohio Historical Society, Pangea Production Ltd, 1998
- [21] See Priest, Josiah, *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*, pg. 179;
- [22] See *Mound Builders & Cliff Dwellers*, Lost Civilizations series, Dale M. Brown (editor), pg. 26
- [23] Priest, Josiah, *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*, 176; *Mound Builders & Cliff Dwellers*, Lost Civilizations series, Dale M. Brown (editor), pg. 26
- [24] See Ritchie, William A. *The Archaeology of New York State*, pp. 259, 261
- [25] See freshwater pearl necklaces, and pearls sewn on clothing: *Mound Builders & Cliff Dwellers*, Lost Civilizations series, Dale M. Brown (editor), pg. 26
- [26] Silverberg 1969
- [27] Kennedy 1994, Garlinghouse, Thomas, "Revisiting the Mound Builder Controversy", *History Today*, Sept 2001, Vol. 51, Issue 9, starting pg. 38; Silverberg, Robert "and the mound-builders vanished from the earth", *American Heritage Magazine*, June 1969, Volume 20, Issue 4

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- [29] Givens 2002, p. 132
- [30] “National Geographic Society Statement on the Book of Mormon”. August 12, 1998. Letter from Julie Crain addressed to Luke Wilson of the Institute for Religious Research.
- [31] 1 Nephi 18:25; Enos 1:21; Alma 18; Alma 20:6; 3 Nephi 3:22; 3 Nephi 4:4; 3 Nephi 6:1; Ether 9:19
- [32] Guthrie, R. Dale. “Rapid body size decline in Alaskan Pleistocene horses before extinction”. *Nature*. Retrieved 2006-12-10.
- [33] Baker, Barry W.; Collins, Michael B.; Bousman, C. Britt. “Late Pleistocene Horse (*Equus* sp.) from the Wilson-Leonard Archaeological Site, Central Texas” (PDF). Archived from the original (PDF) on February 27, 2008. Retrieved 2006-12-10.
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- [39] Peterson Daniel C. and Roper, Matthew “Ein Heldenleben? On Thomas Stuart Ferguson as an Elias for Cultural Mormons” *FARMS Review*: Volume - 16, Issue - 1
- [40] (Robert R. Bennett, “Horses in the Book of Mormon,” *FARMS* Research Report.
- [41] Ether 9:19 “And they also had horses, and asses, and there were elephants...”
- [42] Diamond 1999
- [43] Sharon Levy, “Mammoth Mystery, Did Climate Changes Wipe Out North America’s Giant Mammals, Or Did Our Stone Age Ancestors Hunt Them To Extinction?”, *On-earth*, winter 2006, pp15-19
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- [45] Wayne N. May (editor), *Ancient American, Archaeology of America Before Columbus*, LDS Special Edition III
- [46] In *The Mound Builders, Their Works and Relics*, author Stephen Dennison Peet cites instances of exhumed mastodon remains and arguments given for why the remains were believed to be contemporary with mound builders. Stephen Dennison Peet, *The Mound Builders*, pp. 38–44. Elephant effigy pipes, of the characteristic mound builder platform style, were reported as archaeological finds in Iowa, Stephen Dennison Peet, *The Mound Builders*, pp. 11–14. see also M.C. Read, *Archaeology of Ohio*, pp 116–117 and many have readily identified the animal depicted in the shape of the Wisconsin “elephant mound,” though archaeologists question whether this is in fact the animal represented. On Elephant platform pipes and the Elephant Mound of Grand County, Wisconsin, see Charles E. Putnam (President of the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences), *Elephant Pipes and Inscribed Tablets in the Museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Davenport, Iowa*, 1885, pp. 19–20, and U.S. Ethnology Bureau, Vol. 2., 1880–81, Pg. 153; see also Charles Valentine Riley, *The American Naturalist*, American Society of Naturalists (Essex Institute), pp. 275–277. The former Iowa state archaeologist Marshall McKusick discusses the evidence indicating that the elephant platform pipes are frauds in his book on the so-called Davenport Tablets. McKusick, Marshall, *The Davenport Conspiracy Revisited*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991. ISBN 978-0-8138-0344-9
- [47] See for example Ether 9:18
- [48] Genetic Footprints of Iberian Cattle in America 500 Years after the Arrival of Columbus
- [49] Diamond 1999, pp. 165, 167, 168
- [50] See, for example, “Plants and Animals in the Book of Mormon: Possible Solutions to Apparent Problems”. Retrieved 2009-06-01.
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- [61] See Mosiah 9:9
- [62] John A. Price, "The Book of Mormon vs Anthropological Prehistory," *The Indian Historian* 7 (Summer, 1974): 35-40. Quotes:
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 - "No Native Americans made grape wine or wheat bread..."
 - "The Jaredites and Nephites are portrayed as having plow agriculture and wheat and barley" [...] "but nothing remotely resembling this kind of culture has ever been found, either archaeologically or ethnographically, in the aboriginal New World."
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- [64] Bennett cites, Nancy B. Asch and David L. Asch, "Archeobotany," in *Deer Track: A Late Woodland Village in the Mississippi Valley*, ed. Charles R. McGimsey and Michael D. Conner (Kampsville, Ill. Center for American Archaeology, 1985), 44, pg. 78
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- [68] 1 Nephi 13:7, Alma 1:29, Alma 4:6, Ether 9:17, Ether 10:24
- [69] Sorenson 1985, p. 232
- [70] Sorenson, John L (28 March 1995), *A New Evaluation of the Smithsonian Institution "Statement regarding the Book of Mormon"*, Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute, retrieved 2013-09-24
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- [77] Ash, Michael R. (2008), *Shaken Faith Syndrome: Strengthening One's Testimony in the Face of Criticism and Doubt*, Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research, p. 141, ISBN 1-893036-08-1
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- [83] http://www.fairlds.org/Book_of_Mormon/Steel_in_the_Book_of_Mormon.html article by William Hamblin on steel in the Book of Mormon
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- [91] B.H. Roberts noted: "The word [cimiter] is of oriental and uncertain origin and appears in various forms. How it came to be introduced into the speech and writings of the Nephites, and how not used in the other Hebrew literature at an earlier date, is so far as I know, unaccountable. The earliest use of the word I have found is in Gibbon, where referring to the alleged incident of finding the sword of Mars for Attila, he there calls that sword of Mars "cimiter"; but that was about 450 A.D." - Roberts 1992, pp. 112

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- [93] Alma 11
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- [120] Potter 1999
- [121] Chadwick 2005, pp. 197–215
- [122] See, for example, the documentary *Journey of Faith* produced by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies; see also S. Kent Brown, “New Light from Arabia on Lehi’s Trail,” in *Evidences and Echoes of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch [Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002], 55–125, especially 81–85, 88–90 ; S. Kent Brown (2003). “New Light: Nahom and the “Eastward” Turn”. *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies) 12 (1). Retrieved 2014-12-15.
- [123] Some suggest that either the vowels or consonants between the word *Nahom* and various derivatives of the root *NHM* do not represent an accurate correlation. Tanner & Tanner 1996
- [124] These sites include Salalah Hilton & Hilton 1996, Khor Rori *Book of Mormon Explorers Claim Discoveries*, Wadi Sayq (west of Salalah near the border of Yemen) and its associated harbor Khor Kharfot Aston 1994
- [125] Chadwick 2003, pp. 72–83
- [126] Hilton & Hilton 1996, p. 33, Potter & Wellington 2004
- [127] One book compiled by prominent Mormon scholar John Sorenson has more than 400 pages of possible location theories placing Book of Mormon events everywhere from the Finger Lakes region of the Northeast United States to Chile. Sorenson, John L., compiler. *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book* Provo: FARMS, 1992. ASIN: B0006QHZWE.
- [128] Priddis 1975, pp. 9,16,17
- [129] Ralph A. Olsen, “A Malay Site for Book of Mormon Events”, *Sunstone* (131), March 2004, 30.

- [130] This view was incorporated by Orson Pratt into his footnotes for the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon. (These geographical footnotes were later removed in 1920 and all subsequent editions).
- [131] Silverberg quotes early Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt who attempted to incorporate “ancient mounds filled with human bones” in a geographic model spanning “North and South America.” (Silverberg, Robert, *The Mound Builders*, pg. 73)
- [132] A note in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams, one of Joseph Smith’s counsellors and scribes, asserts that Lehi’s people landed in South America at thirty degrees south latitude. U.A.S. Newsletter (Provo, Utah: University Archaeological Society at Brigham Young University) January 30, 1963, p. 7. An official statement by the LDS Church discourages Church members from making too much of the Williams document. Frederick J. Pack (Chairman of the Gospel Doctrine Committee of the Church) and George D. Pyper, *The Instructor* 73, No. 4, 1938, pg 160.
- [133] Orson Pratt also speculated that the Nephite landing site was on the coast of Chile near Valparaiso, Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses* (London, England: Albert Carrington, 1869), vol. 12; p. 342; Volume 14, p. 325, 1872.
- [134] Introduction to the Book of Mormon by Bruce R. McConkie prior to 2008. See for instance 1979 edition
- [135] A 1938 church study guide asserted that “all the Book of Mormon text requires” is a “Hebrew origin for at least a part of Indian ancestry”. Berrett & Hunter 1938
- [136] Jessee 1984, p. 324 (See also Zelph)
- [137] Southerton 2004, p. 42 “For many Mormons, this is as deep as their awareness of the origin of Native Americans extends. They remain oblivious to the large volume of research that has revealed continuous, widespread human occupation of the Americas for the last 14,000 years. Such research conflicts with erroneous LDS interpretations and oral traditions and unfortunately has, until recently, been ignored.”
- [138] See Hills 1917, Smith 1997, Berrett & Hunter 1938, Sorenson 1985, Roper 2004, Nibley 1980
- [139] Sjodahl, Janne M (1927). “An Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon”. *Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press*.
- [140] “Limited Geography and the Book of Mormon: Historical Antecedents and Early Interpretations”, by Matthew Roper, section on the geographic ideas of John E. Page, BYU Maxwell Institute, 2004.
- [141] Roper 2004
- [142] Sorenson 1985, pp. 1–48
- [143] Sorenson 1984
- [144] Sorenson 1985, pp. 35–36
- [145] Sorenson, John L (2000). “Last-Ditch Warfare in Ancient Mesoamerica Recalls the Book of Mormon”. *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* (Maxwell Institute) 9 (2): 44–53. Archived from the original on 8 December 2006. Retrieved 29 Dec 2014.
- [146] *The History of the Church* proclaims the ruins were likely Nephite or belonging to “the ancient inhabitants of America treated of in the Book of Mormon”. “Did the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1842 Locate Book of Mormon Lands in Middle America?”, by V. Garth Norman - *History of the Church* Volume 5, pg 44.
- [147] Stephens, John Lloyd, *Incident of Travel In Central America*, Vol. II, pp. 442-443
- [148] Roberts, Jennifer, *The Art Bulletin*, “Landscapes of Indifference; Robert Smithson and John Lloyd Stephens in Yucatan”, September 1, 2000.
- [149] Wunderli, Earl M (Fall 2002). “Critique of a Limited Geography for Book of Mormon Events” (PDF). *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35 (3): 161–197. Retrieved 2014-12-15.
- [150] Matheny, Deanne G (1994). Metcalfe, Brent Lee, ed. “Does the Shoe Fit? A Critique of the Limited Tehuantepec Geography”. *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*.
- [151] Sorenson, John L (1994). “Viva Zapato! Hurray for the Shoe!”. *FARMS Review of Books* (Maxwell Institute) 6 (1): 297–361. Archived from the original on 25 February 2007. Retrieved 2007-01-23.
- [152] Sides remarks, “As fantastic as it may seem, Sorenson actually argues that there were two Cumorahs: one in Mexico where the great battle took place, and where Moroni buried a longer, unexpurgated version of the golden Nephite records; and one near Palmyra, New York, where Moroni eventually buried a condensed version of the plates after lugging them on an epic trek of several thousand miles...” (Sides, Hampton, “This is Not the Place!”, *Double Take Magazine*, Vol. 5, No 2; Also included in his work *American: Dispatches from the New Frontier*, 2004)
- [153] See letter from Joseph Smith published in Times and Seasons October 1842 - later canonized as the 128th section of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants. In this letter the Book of Mormon land Cumorah is referenced among other locations of significance near the Finger Lakes. See also Joseph Fielding Smith: *Doctrines of Salvation*, Volume 3, pp. 233-234; Bruce R. McConkie: *Mormon Doctrine*; CUMORAH, pg 175; Mark E. Peterson: *The Improvement Era*, June 1953, pg 423, 123 Annual Conference of the Church, April 4–6, 1953 *General Conference Report*, pp. 83-84
- [154] See also Hill 1995, p. 33 “Sir, Considering the Liberal Principles,” Joseph Smith to N.C. Saxton, editor, *American Revivalist*, and *Rochester Observer*, 4 January 1833 (from Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois] 5 [15 November 1844], 21:705-707) where Smith stated that the “Western Indians” in the United States are the descendants of Book of Mormon peoples.

- [155] See also Oliver Cowdery, "Letter Seven," *Messenger and Advocate*, July 1835 - note that Joseph Smith was the editor. In this article, Cowdery argues that the final cataclysmic battle between the Nephites and Lamanites - as well as the final battle of the Jaredites took place at the hill Cumorah in upstate New York.
- [156] Joseph Smith's published statements indicate that he taught that Book of Mormon peoples or their descendants migrated from "the lake country of America" (near Lake Ontario) to Mexico and Central America. "Traits of the Mosaic History Found Among the Azteca Nations", Joseph Smith, Editor, *Times and Seasons*, June 15, 1842, Volume 3, Number 16, pp 818-820.
- [157] In 1841 Joseph Smith read Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Central America*. Smith held Stephens' work in high regard and recommended it. Letter to John Bernhisel, 16 November 1841, *Personal Writing of Joseph Smith*, compiled and edited by Dean C. Jessee, p. 533
- [158] In his "AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES" editorial of July, 1842, Joseph Smith correlates various archaeological finds in North America, South America, and Central America with events and peoples in the Book of Mormon. See the following *Times and Seasons* editorials: July 15, 1842, Volume 3, number 18, p. 859-60. "A CATABOMB OF MUMMIES FOUND IN KENTUCKY", Vol. 3, No 13, May 2, 1842, p. 781; "Traits of the Mosaic History, Found Among the Azteca Nations", Vol. 3, No 16, June 15, 1842, p. 818; "AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES", Vol. 3, No 18, July 15, 1842, p. 858., "FACTS ARE STUBORN THING.", *Times and Seasons*, September 15, 1842, Vol. 3, No 22, p.922. Note that Smith's authorship of these articles has been challenged on some fronts. However, in the March 15, 1842 edition of the *Times and Seasons*, editor Joseph Smith informed readers, that he would endorse papers with his signature, or editor's mark "ED". Editor, *Times and Seasons*, March 15, 1842, Vol. 3, No. 9: "This paper commences my editorial career, I alone stand for it, and shall do for all papers having my signature henceforward. I am not responsible for the publication, or arrangement of the former paper; the matter did not come under my supervision. JOSEPH SMITH.
- [159] Nibley 1988, pp. 439, also Nibley, Hugh, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, pp.272-273
- [160] Smith 1997, p. 280
- [161] Ether 15:2
- [162] E.g. 1 Nephi 13:23 et. seq.
- [163] Nibley 1988, pp. 431
- [164] Laughton, Timothy (1998). *The Maya*. London: Duncan Baird Publishers. p. 26. ISBN 1-84483-016-0."In the late 1560s the Spanish bishop of Yucatan, Fray Diego de Landa, wrote of the Maya: "These people also made use of certain characters or letters, with which they wrote in their books of ancient matters and sciences. We found a large number of books written in these characters and, as they contained nothing in which there was not superstition and lies of the devil, we burned them all..."
- [165] Coe 2002, pp. 199–200
- [166] Kettunen & Helmke 2005
- [167] Coe 2002, p. 62
- [168] Hougey, Hal (1983). *Archaeology and The Book of Mormon*. Concord, CA: Pacific Publishing.
- [169] Hemingway, Donald (2000). *Ancient America Rediscovered as recorded by Mariano Veytia (1720–1778)*. Bonnevile Books. ISBN 1-55517-479-5. Among some of the myths recorded by Veytia are that seven families traveled across the ocean to northern American near the time of the confusion of tongues, and thereafter migrated to Central America (pp. 40, 49-50, 192), the belief that there was a great flood (p. 44), an account of a solar eclipse coincident with a tremendous earthquake which resulted in no human fatalities (p. 148), the arrival of Quetzalcoatl in the company of other bearded men as many as thirty years after the earthquake and eclipse (pp. 152, 154, 164), and the presence of giants in New Spain (pp. 140-141).
- [170] Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon, by Joseph L Allen PhD printed in the United States
- [171] Ether 10:20-21
- [172] Charles C. Mann, *1491 New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus*, pp. 236-38. The "Beyond the heartland" section of Wikipedia's Olmec article also contains information on the spread of Olmec culture. Unlike the broad, lateral Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Central America, "the narrow pass" which led into the Book of Mormon "land northward" is described as having water on the west and on the east of it. (Alma 50:34)
- [173] Coe 2002, p. 13 Coe states that "much of complex culture in Mesoamerica has an Olmec Origin" and states that an "active interchange of ideas" occurred.
- [174] "Traits of the Mosaic History Found Among the Azteca Nations, *Times and Seasons*, June 15, 1842, Vol. 3, No. 16, pp 818-20, Joseph Smith (ED); See also Josiah Priest, "Traits of the Mosaic History found among the Azteca Nations", pg 202
- [175] There is no indication that the "walls of stone" mentioned in Alma 48:7 were constructed of hewn stone. The remnants of massive wall piles of stone made by mound builder societies are known to exist in the eastern United States. See for instance May, Wayne N., *This Land – One Cumorah*, pp. 61–68
- [176] "BookofMormonEvidence.org". BookofMormonEvidence.org. 2010-08-28. Retrieved 2012-09-07.
- [177] Squier 1849
- [178] Alma 52:2
- [179] Coe 2002, p. 100 "Bekan in the Chenes region just north of the Peten, which was completely surrounded by massive defensive earthworks some time between the second and fourth centuries B.C. These consist of a ditch and inner rampart, with a total height of 38 ft (11.6 m), and would have been formidable...if the rampart had been surmounted by a palisade."

- [180] John L. Sorenson (September 1984). "Digging into the Book of Mormon: Our Changing Understanding of Ancient America and Its Scripture". *Ensign*: 28. Retrieved 2014-12-15.
- [181] "Becán: Aerial Photo 1". *Mayaruins.com*. 1999-09-12. Retrieved 2012-10-09.
- [182] Doctrine and Covenants 128:20
- [183] See for instance Squier 1849; May, Wayne, *THIS LAND – Only One Cumorah*, Ch. 1, "The Battlefield of Jaredites (and the Nephites) by E. Cecil McGavin and Willard Bean", pg.17, Ch.2 "Cumorah Land", pg. 31
- [184] Jakeman 1953
- [185] Clark 1999, pp. 22–33
- [186] Guernsey 2006, pp. 53
- [187] Sorenson 1990, p. 12
- [188] Smith 1925
- [189] Tozzer & Allen 2006, p. 343

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11.1 Text

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