



FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH ON ANCIENT AMERICA

THELONA D. STEVENS, PRESIDENT / 202 SOUTH PENDLETON AVE. / INDEPENDENCE, MO. 64050

NEWSLETTER NO. 44

December 12, 1983

Dear Members and Friends,

You are invited to attend the annual meeting of the Foundation for Research on Ancient America at 7:30 P.M. December 29, 1983 at the Stone Church in the sanctuary. The speaker will be Neil Steede, employee of the Mexican Government, Department of Agriculture, SARH, anthropologist, president of the Latin Chapter of the Epigraphic Society, author, art historian and deacon in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. His subject: "Archaeology and the Book of Mormon."

Neil has had a leading role in a research project growing out of the excavating in 1977-1978 of 4612 bricks from what once formed the walls of a structure at Comalcalco, State of Tabasco. The excavating was done by the National Institute of Anthropology and History of Mexico, INAH (which corresponds to our federal government).

Early in 1983 Neil alerted FRAA and enlisted our assistance in advancing research on this project. We immediately responded by sending our photographer Fred Weddle to the scene, who was accompanied and assisted by volunteer Stele Bryant. The photographic work proved to be a very big task. Neil said of it: "Since we could not move over 4,000 bricks from their warehouse to where we photographed them, we hired six individuals to move them for us. Each brick was handed to this author [Neil], who looked at it and pre-classified it before passing it on to be photographed." An attempt was made to examine all sides of each brick, though some bricks were in two or more pieces.

After the camera shots were completed and the return home of the photographers, all of the pictures had to be developed and needed copies made. This required many weeks of work and much expense. The expense, however, was greatly minimized by Fred's equipment, skill, and painstaking labor.

Neil wrote,

Upon receipt of the photos of the Comalcalco bricks which were taken by Fred Weddle of FRAA (financing this project), we immediately began the seemingly impossible task of classifying all bricks. Since there are several ways to classify, the FRAA gave us three complete sets of photographs. Our first set we arranged chronologically for several reasons. . . . It was the logical order for copyrighting (all bricks have been copyrighted). This resulted in a nine volume collection.

The major classes into which the 4612 bricks were divided are:

Class I	(unidentifiable fragments)	941
Class II	(Maya hieroglyphs)	2129
Class III	(Old World inscriptions)	499
Class IV	(drawings)	735
Class V	(mixed or unknown)	308
	Total	4612

Class IV is composed of easily identifiable drawings of humans, animals, buildings, faces, ships, plus those not easily identifiable drawings of towers and miscellaneous objects.

On October 20, this year, a meeting was held at Cardenas (Neil's home town, adjacent to Comalcalco), which was attended by 350 to 450 individuals. Thirty archaeologists, who are accepted by INAH, were in attendance. They voiced their approval and support of FRAA and what we have done in advancing this project at Comalcalco. They are seeking to establish an active representation of the Epigraphic Society in this area. The only dissenting voice at this meeting was the director of INAH.

The County Representative, Mayor of Cardenas, wants to reorganize the study of the bricks, and in order to expedite this, they are planning to establish a museum and study center. This is to be started by building a story atop Neil's house in Cardenas as a temporary depository for the bricks. Work has already begun on this building, we understand. This will be the only center of its type in the world. Leaflets are being distributed at nearby Comalcalco, site of the excavation. Neil's immediate superior in his governmental work is connected with him on a Biblical study project. He is excited about the meaning of the bricks.

A letter received by Neil early in November says (according to Neil's rough translation by phone from Mexico):

Thank you very much for the insight you have given us for better understanding our history, our ancestors, and our inheritance. We invite you [FRAA] to continue to join us in our investigation and evaluation, continuing to give us financial assistance and additional incentive in our study through this project.

What you have done for us can not be by accident.

Signed by the County Representative, Mayor of Cardenas

At our meeting on December 29 there will be available duplicates, molds, and peels of some of the bricks, offered for sale as a means of raising money for this project.

Neil will present as many facts concerning all of this as can be crowded into the time allotted at this meeting.

We should mention that it is customary for us to hold our annual meeting in January but the date has been pushed up to December 29 in order to take advantage of Neil's presence in our community at this time. The annual meeting requires a brief business session, which includes the election of officers.

With the closing of 1983, our fiscal year closes. In other words, we are saying that we will appreciate your remembering that it is time for your annual offering for carrying on our work. We are dependent entirely upon your gifts and offerings. A blank is enclosed for your convenience. Thank you.

It is our hope that we may expand our membership at this time. Please note that on the enclosed form there is a request for the names and addresses of five of your friends whom you think would be interested in FRAA, our work, and our newsletters.

A reminder is again in order regarding any change of address. Your newsletters can reach you only if your address is current. Otherwise, it is lost, as bulk mail is not forwarded.

--T.D.S. * * * * *

Michael Gatrost, FRAA director, Kansas City, Missouri, reviews The Changing Wind, by Karena Shields: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York. 1959. (This book was chosen partly because of its setting in Tabasco, in the general area of Comalcalco.)

B O O K R E V I E W

THE CHANGING WIND

By Karena Shields

"Here the earth from which we are first born first spoke aloud to me."

So begins the true account of the experiences of Karena Shields* in The Changing Wind, a child of three years growing to maturity on a rubber plantation in the jungles of Mexico. Living among Indian tribes during the turbulent Mexican Revolution, her memories record for us through the eyes of her youth, an engrossing story of the rigors of living among the native Mexicans, but also of her experiences with the Karivís, a mysterious Mayan tribe, who travel the ancient trails of the Mayan Empire.

It is her experiences with the Karivís that will especially interest Book of Mormon readers. For it is here, around charcoal embers and flickering fires that a child "looking for God" begins to be taught of the ancient beliefs of the Mayan people.

"Where do you come from?" she had asked.

"We are the Maya. We came from the east, we come out of the morning, to the beginning of a new place. We lighted a new fire, we began. Hunab Ku, the All-God, was the only one who knew. He saw, and sent Itzamná his son to earth to teach man how to use his right hand, how to make the corn and cacao and myriad good things of the earth come into being, how to build out of stone the monuments to the Great Belief. Itzamná was made into child and then man, with a right hand that blessed, and in turn the earth blessed him."

In the short years that she knew them, the Karivís taught her traditions strikingly similar to passages recorded in the Book of Mormon.

The following accounts as told by the author give the reader an opportunity to compare the heritage and traditions of a people who had passed down through generations their beliefs, and the Book of Mormon. (Book of Mormon references are added in parentheses.)

On one occurrence, the Karivís told her "that all things moved in rhythm, the sun, the moon, the seasons, and when she desired to show them Saturn through a telescope, they laughed and drew rings and named the colors. "Old Wisdom," they said. ("All the planets which move in their regular form doth witness that there is a Supreme Creator." - Alma 16:55.)

Upon questioning, "Who was Itzamná?" she was answered, "I-ixh, the morning star." ("And behold, there shall be a new star arise, such a one as ye never have beheld." - Helaman 5:59.)

Once she was given a gourd from which to drink, and was told, "This is the drink of the new corn. This is only from red kernels, never from white. It is the blood of harvest, blessed." (Communion? III Nephi 8:28.)

Another time, the Karivís fashioned a little pyramid of stones and earth and on the smooth place on top put three crosses, with the largest cross in the center of the pyramid. "The center cross is perfect. That is the Spirit, the flame. That must stand free, for it is Hunab Ku, and it never will belong to your body, although your body may harbor it. Each smaller cross is yourself." ("And I, Nephi, saw that he was lifted up upon the cross." - I Nephi 3:87.)

The passages involving the Spiritual beliefs and insights of the Karivís are reminiscent of Nephi or Alma speaking.

"How did the earth come to be?" Karena had asked.

"There would be four creations, each in a different dimension. Each would be destroyed, one by drought, one by flood, one by man, and the fourth by fire, even when man is consumed."

And to the question, "And then what happens to the people? Will they all die?" They answered, "The people would become ashes or light as Hunab Ku chose."

Her inquiry into sickness brought the response that there are three kinds of sickness: of body, of mind, and of the soul. "And man can die more easily of the last than of any, even though his body stay alive. Each time you forget Hunab Ku, you die a little."

One of the more memorable statements made in the book is significant to all members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,

"Itzamná has not forgotten us. The promise that buried with his hand, the torch, will live. We will build cities of stone once more, build them upon the bodies and the promises of those who walk with Hunab Ku, and there will be beauty and laughter on earth, and sorrow we will not, not again."

* Dr. Karena Shields, a Roman Catholic, made two startling statements while lecturing to an R.L.D.S. congregation. The first was her personal opinion that Jesus Christ had appeared to the Mayan culture in Palenque at some time. The second was her description of the gold plates she has seen and examined herself while on research study for ten years among the Mayan groups. She has an extremely close relationship with the Karivís. Her description of the binding of these plates was amazing. She said they are usually bound by either leather or metal rings. These plates are sacred and the translation is known only to the Mayan people.

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Newly released:

N E V E R A L O N E

A biography of the Weldon family, in warming Restoration experiences, testimonies, and anecdotes, beginning with Elder Sam Weldon, 1860, through 1982.

\$3.00. School of Saints, 520 W. Maple, Independence, MO 64050.

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Correction: In our last newsletter, when we cited an article, "Evidence That Omecs Are Jaredites and That San Lorenzo Is the City of Lib," inadvertently part of the address was omitted. Interested persons should write to Newsletter and Proceedings of the SEHA, Number 153, June 1983, University Station, P. O. Box 7488, Provo, Utah 84602.

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Gleanings by Roy E. Weldon from

THE MYSTERY OF THE MAYAN HIEROGLYPHS *

By Richard Lueston with Pablo Balam

Richard Lueston, British scholar, has opened up a new approach to Maya hieroglyphic decipherments. Outside of dates and names, Mayan writing can not be read.

Lueston says, "In the Temple of the Cross, . . . are inscribed . . . hundreds of undeciphered glyphs. . . . The great majority of signs remain charmed and enchanted riddles beyond our powers of explanation" (p. 164).

[A peek behind the curtain: The Indians were eager and quick to learn the Catholic world view. Merely eight priests, for example, baptized over twenty thousand Mayans in the first year of their "missionary endeavor."]

Bishop Landa and some of the first Franciscan priests were taught how to read the Mayan hieroglyphs. However, this knowledge was hushed, and the keys to the system were not preserved. After the shamans revealed what was written on the Maya texts, Bishop Landa embarked on a crusade to stamp out all that had to do with their ancient religion as the work of the devil. The shamans were tortured and killed, or fled into the forests. "Jacinto Canek, Mayan rebel, theologian and shaman, in 1660s tells us that the Spanish authorities had precise knowledge of what they were attacking --shamanism" (p. 175).

Lueston says, "Bishop Landa actually learned enough about Mayan writing to realize that they contained ideas more advanced than most of Europe, most . . . notably it could be seen that the Indians had a prior knowledge of the word of God, and the Christian way and that they had known in advance of the coming of the Spanish" (pp. 174, 175).

Even Bishop Landa confessed, "Baptism is not found anywhere in the Indies save here in Yucatan, and even with a word meaning to be born anew or a second time, the same as the Latin 'renascer'" (p. 175).

The Maya shamans have to this day preserved the knowledge of how to read the hieroglyph texts. Richard Lueston has cut a new path through the forest--a new breakthrough based upon several months' living with Shaman Pablo Balam and winning the confidence sufficiently for a shamanic interpretation of some of the Maya texts.

[Glimpses behind the hieroglyph curtain: Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions date from 100 to 1000 A.D., thereby including the Nephite "golden age." Contents of undeciphered texts should certainly contain Nephite clues.]

Shaman don Pablo revealed to Lueston that he could see the hieroglyphs as the last known "common denominator between highland and lowland Maya . . . common Mayan knowledge looked forward to a time "when the truth is revealed, when the time arrives for the writing to appear again."

Lueston said, "I was silenced by this. Like don Miguel [another shaman], he had stated that the writing had a future destiny, a reappearance to come. More than this, he had said that the fragments we had been given were put there for a

* First U.S. Edition, Harper & Row, San Francisco. 1981.

Originally published in London by Rider and Company, under the title Mayan Dream Walk. 1981.

reason, were there to prove something yet to come" (p. 184).

Richard Lueston, who admits being turned off by Christianity by the rich gold adorned cathedrals in the midst of untold squalor and poverty, nevertheless closes his book as follows:

Again I marvelled at the frugal lives of these people--how little one actually needs, in a material sense, . . . this man and his family could in a few moments notice have bundled all their material belongings into light, small loads and collectively vanished down forest trails, leaving hardly a trace of their presence. But what Invisible Ones knew, what they understood of the mysteries of God and human life, would astonish the richest and most learned amongst us.

What a wondrous day to be alive. The signs and portents of the final drama of all time are beckoning us on to the temple, to ZION, and the precious presence of our Savior in our midst. * * * * *

Frequently the news media, especially during 1983, has brought many accounts of the dangers of pollution in various parts of our own country as well as throughout the world. This comes as no surprise to those familiar with the Book of Mormon, however, for Mormon warned of a day whenthere would be many destructive forces at work, "a day when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth" (p. 708, verse 38).

One newspaper account (sent in by Berenice Fleming), the Tulsa World, March 31, 1983, tells of a hazy pollution which builds up every winter over the North Pole. It is stated, "Scientists were surprised to find the haze extending as high as 18,000 feet." It was explained that soot and other pollutants absorb heat from the sun. Particles darken the snow and the cloud cover, both absorbing more radiation and heat. research team found that two primary components of winter haze were perchlore a chemical commonly used in dry cleaning solutions and hydrocarbons from fossil such as coal and oil, carried from Europe and northern Asia. These pollutants thought, could raise temperatures enough to change the world's climate.

"Huge quantities of pollution aerosol are released in the central Soviet Union, according to Kenneth A. Rahn of the University of Rhode Island and Glenn E. Shaw of the University of Alaska, who claim that "there is a very efficient transport path (air flow) from this region."

The National Center for Atmospheric Research, the Desert Research Institute, the Naval Postgraduate School, the Department of Energy and several colleges are engaged in research regarding the problem, which includes the glacial northern region of Norway.

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CENTER STAKE OF ZION HEADQUARTERS
200 NORTH DELAWARE
INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI 64050