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Out of the Dust

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This article details three topics. First, Oliver Huntington was an early LDS pioneer who wrote or dictated numerous reminiscences, including on his association with Joseph Smith. On 16 February 1895, he wrote the names of the three Nephites who “do not sleep.” Historians find that some of what he recorded does not square with other reports. Without corroborating statements from other sources, we cannot know if he is correct.

Second, Monument 6 near Palenque, Mexico, prophesies the descent of the god Bolon Yokte K’u. This monument allows confidence that the practice of prophesying future happenings was going on within a few centuries after the end of the Book of Mormon period.

Third, two landmark publications raised the profile of the long-debated question about transoceanic contact. The article also briefly mentions a report about research that uncovers evidence of an Atlantic crossing.
Names of the Three Nephites?
Late in his life, Oliver Huntington, an early LDS pioneer, wrote or dictated a shelf full of reminiscences, including those concerning his youthful association with Joseph Smith.

Historians find that some of what he put down does not square with most other reports. The discrepancy may have to do with inaccuracies in recall because of age, still perhaps Huntington did remember facts that others forgot.

Under the date of 16 February 1895 he writes without further elaboration: “I am willing to state that the names of the 3 Nephites who do not sleep in the earth are Jeremiah, Zedekiah, Kumenonhi.” Of course in 3 Nephi 28:25 Mormon reports that he was forbidden by the Lord to record the names of the three disciples, yet that limitation might not have been imposed on Joseph Smith or other early church leaders. Had Huntington heard this startling information from early associates of the Prophet? Without corroborating statements from other sources, we cannot know more.

An Apparent Maya Prophecy for Our Day
Those who have read “Prophecy among the Maya” in a previous FARMS publication¹ are aware that native Mesoamericans at the time of the Spanish Conquest had prophets.

Documents written by descendants of the Maya during the century after the conquest have furnished us with sketchy details of how and what they prophesied.

Prophecy was a feature also of inscriptions on certain Maya monuments of the Classic era (approximately A.D. 300–800), although almost all of the inscriptions exclusively refer to impersonal events that are safely predictable, such as future completions of a given calendrical period.² Recently, however, a prophecy of a more specific event has been identified on a Maya monument that was erected around A.D. 670. It points to a definite future event. At the site now called Tortuguero, about 35 miles west-northwest of Palenque in southernmost Mexico, Monument 6 bears an enigmatic inscription.³ An event is mentioned that was expected to take place on the Maya date 13.0.0.0.0 4 Ahaw 3 K’anki’in; following the generally accepted correlation of their calendar with ours, that would fall on Sunday, 23 December 2012. (Some modern interpreters have spoken of this date as “the end of the world,” although there is no explicit basis for that idea in Maya lore.)⁴ At that time the god Bolon Yokte K’u was prophesied to “descend,” presumably from a heavenly realm to earth (erosion damage...
of a key glyph makes the reading of the verb somewhat uncertain).

This monument allows us to be confident that the practice of prophesying future happenings was going on within a few centuries after the end of the Book of Mormon period, and since the custom of recording prophecies continued for at least a thousand years into Spanish colonial times, probably Monument 6 is not the earliest manifestation of the pattern that will be found. Such prophesying thus could have been going on from before Mormon's day.

Did Ancient Voyagers from the Old World Reach America?

Two landmark publications have recently raised the profile of this long-debated question about transoceanic contact to new levels. The first, by Marc K. Stengel, is the most evenhanded and informative treatment of the topic to appear in the mainline press in the United States in the last fifty years.5

More significantly, a major professional journal, Ancient Mesoamerica, published by Cambridge University Press, has printed a technical article reporting what the author calls the "first hard evidence" for an ancient voyage. Archaeologists Romeo Hristov and Santiago Genovés describe their efforts to locate and test a purported Roman figurine head found in Mexico in 1933 but in recent decades reported to be "lost."6

Hristov's sleuthing located it in the national museum in Mexico City. Classical archaeologists have pronounced it unquestionably Roman in style, and when it was tested by the thermoluminescence dating method at a prestigious laboratory in Germany, it turned out to date to around A.D. 200. Hristov even searched out the original excavator's unpublished notes for the dig that produced the head. They demonstrated that the piece had been found beneath three unbroken plaster floors at an Aztec site that unquestionably dated before the arrival of the Spaniards. No one has any idea, of course, how or when the little piece reached the site—almost 200 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. At least three other Roman figurines have been reported found in Mexico but none are available at this time for careful reexamination.

Incidentally, Genovés, with a Ph.D. in anthropology from Cambridge University, accompanied both "Ra" reed rafts built and sailed by Thor Heyerdahl on the Atlantic Ocean. Hristov has lectured at BYU under FARMS's auspices and works closely with John Sorenson in research on problems of early transatlantic voyaging. (A journalistic summary of the Ancient Mesoamerica article appeared in New Scientist Magazine, 12 February 2000, online at www.newscientist.com.)

Finally, British archaeologists at work in Libya have uncovered new evidence of an Atlantic crossing. David Mat-

tingly reports on digging at a large oasis in the Sahara 700 miles south of Tripoli, Libya. There lived the Garamantes people, whose heyday was the first to fourth centuries A.D.
vision is from third person to second per-
son, to second-person plural.
8 This verse presents many difficulties. The
above translation reflects the suggestions
discussed in *Genesis/Hebrew Grammar, 462.
Though one may question the valid-
ity of this reading, enclisis is still attested
in the movement from third to second
person.
9 As noted above, the pattern seems to be
too sweeping to be labeled as either acci-
dence or textual corruption.
10 Sidney B. Sperry, *Our Book of Mormon*
(Salt Lake City: Steven & Wallis, 1948), 110.

Paul Henning: The First Mormon
Archaeologist
Robert W. Fullner

1 M. Harvey Taylor, "Paul Henning, Early
Latter-day Saint Archaeologist," in Papers
of the Fifteenth Annual Symposium on the
Archaeology of the Scriptures, ed. Ross T.
Christensen (Provo, Utah: Society for
Early Historic Archaeology, 1964), 90-93;
W. Ernest Young, "A Curriculum of
Readings in the Field of Religious
Education from Spanish American
Sources Designed for Seminary Students."
(master's thesis, Provo, Utah: Brigham
Young University, 1935), 122-25.
2 Letter to B. Cliff Jr., 20 June 1982, University
Presidential File, Chief
Collection, Box 8, Folder 3, Letter
A6-8-12, Brigham Young University
Archives.
3 Among Henning's most important publica-
tions are *Apuntes sobre la Historia del
Chichihualt en America* (Mexico:
Secretaría de Fomento, 1911); with oth-
ers *Tamazunchel, Estudio Arqueológico e
Historia* (Mexico: Museo Nacional de
Arqueología, Historia y Etnología, 1912); *Estudios Mayas*, 2 vols. (Mexico: Müller,
1919).

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1 See "Prophecy among the Maya," in
*Revealing the Book of Mormon*, ed. John
W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992),
6-65.
2 Stephen Houston and David Stuart, "Of
Gods, Glyphs and Kings: Divinity and
Rule among the Classic Maya," *Antiquity*
3 See Berthold Riese, "La inscripción del
Monumento 6 de Tortuguero," *Estudios de
4 Linda Schele and Peter Matthews, *The
Code of Kings: The Language of Seven
Sacred Maps: Temples and Tombs* (New
5 Marc K. Stengel, "The Diffusionists Have
Landed," *Atlantic Monthly* (January
6 Ronald Hristov and Santiago Genoves T.,
"Mesoamerican Evidence of Pre-
7 David Mattingly, "Making the Desert
Bloom: The Garamantian Capital and Its
Underground Water System," *Archaeology*