

Published several times a year by THE SOCIETY FOR EARLY HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, for the dissemination among its members of information on new discoveries in archaeology throwing light on the origins of civilization in the Old and New Worlds, on the earliest periods of recorded history in the two hemispheres, and on the important historical claims of the Hebrew-Christian and Latter-day Saint scriptures; also news of the Society and its members and of the B.Y.U. department of archaeology and anthropology, of which the Society is an affiliated organization. Included are papers read at the Society's and Department's annual symposia on the archaeology of the Scriptures. All views expressed in this newsletter are those of the author of the contribution in which they appear and not necessarily those of Brigham Young University or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Subscription is by membership in the Society, which also includes subscription to other publications.

110.0 THE STORY BEHIND STELA 5. SEHA members have long shown a keen interest in the carved stone monument known as Stela 5, found in 1941 at the ruins of Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico, which is believed to represent the Prophet Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life as recorded in the Book of Mormon, I Nephi 8.

Following is a year-by-year account of how the carving was discovered, how its message was recognized, and how a duplicate of it was obtained for the BYU campus.

This information was presented in an earlier and briefer form at the Society's Eleventh Annual



The Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque, southern Mexico, as unearthed by Professor Alberto Ruz. Photographs on this page by Foto Servicio Omega, S. A., Mérida, Yucatan.



The Tree of Life carving on the sarcophagus lid of a seventh-century dignitary. Discovered beneath the Temple of the Inscriptions in 1952 by Professor Ruz.

Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures, held in 1959. (See Newsletter, 59.22; Christensen, 1963, pp. 120-122. For a brief analysis of the sculpture itself, see Newsletter, 104.2, pp. 2-3.

1939

In October C. A. Culebro, a teacher in a Mexican high school, published the first known mention of Stela 5. A line drawing of the tableau on the face of the stone appears following page 52 of his booklet (Culebro, 1939), while a brief commentary appears on page 56. He interprets the carving as a market scene, although it is not clear what commodity is in the process of being bought or sold.

Culebro's local publication seems not to have been noticed by subsequent writers, however, until nearly 20 years later.

1941

Dr. Matthew W. Stirling headed a joint expedition of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington and the National Geographic Society in the exploration of several archaeological sites of southern Mexico, including Izapa. At this ruin he discovered 20 carved stone monuments, to each of which he gave a number. The one designated Stela 5 was the largest and the most ambitious sculpture found.

1943

Dr. Stirling published a preliminary study of Stela 5 in a bulletin of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington--a page and a half of discussion, accompanied by a full-page photograph taken in 1941 (Stirling, 1943, pp. 64-65 and Pl. 52). The photograph is probably superior to any ever taken since, for the reason that the weather has gradually dimmed the details of the carving. While Dr. Stirling recognized the tree, the two beings on either side facing the tree, the six persons seated on the level of the ground, the stream of water underneath, and many other features, he did not make any attempt to interpret the meaning of the scene.

1947

Dr. Harrison Val Hoyt, professor of accounting at BYU and an early member of the SEHA, was an avid tourist of archaeological sites. On one of his trips he purchased from the National Museum of Archaeology at Mexico City a plaster-of-Paris cast of

the famous Tablet of the Cross found at the ruins of Palenque. This is a well known cruciform example of the ancient Tree of Life motif dating to the Classic Maya period, specifically to about AD 643. Dr. Hoyt's cast arrived on the campus in 1947 and was presented by him to the Department of Archaeology. (It may still be viewed in the Tree-of-Life Salon of the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in the Karl G. Maeser Memorial Building.)

1950

Irene Briggs, later Mrs. Hugh Woodford, completed her master's degree in the BYU Department of Archaeology. Her thesis was entitled The Tree-of-Life Symbol; Its Significance in Ancient American Religion. In it she attempted what virtually no other writer before her had ever undertaken: actually to interpret the meaning of this motif. After a careful comparative analysis of many examples in the art of the ancient New World, her conclusions were that the Tree of Life was a special symbol of the ancient life god or "Fair God" of Mesoamerica, called Itzamná by the Mayas and Quetzalcóatl by the Aztecs; also that it was a symbol of knowledge, and of good as opposed to evil.

1951

Rafael Orellana published briefly on Stela 5 in a Mexican newspaper (Orellana, 1951). Following Culebro, he also regarded this unusual carving as representing a market scene, but apparently neither of them had given the sculpture the careful analysis by means of which later writers have shown this interpretation to be unacceptable.

About the same time Dr. M. Wells Jakeman, a BYU archaeologist who had been the chairman of Mrs. Woodford's master's-thesis committee, discovered what is apparently the true significance of the carving: it is no less than a depiction of Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life as given in the First Book of Nephi in the Book of Mormon, together with that prophet in the act of recounting the vision to the members of his family gathered beneath the Tree!

Thus, while it was Dr. Stirling who discovered the monument in the field, it remained for Dr. Jakeman to successfully interpret its meaning ten years later.

1952

In December Professor Alberto Ruz, director of archaeological explorations in the Maya zone under

the Mexican National Institute of Anthropology and History, made a discovery at the ruins of Palenque that was perhaps the most spectacular of the year. Beneath the Temple of the Inscriptions--in fact, more than 72 feet below the superstructure and more than six feet below the level of the surrounding plaza--he encountered the jewel-laden tomb of a seventh-century Maya dignitary.

Who this personage was, or whether he was a king, a priest, or a prophet, is not known, but the discovery is nevertheless exciting from two points of view: (1) the placement of a tomb within or beneath the pyramid is a generalized Egyptian-like trait and raised the possibility of Old World contact; and (2) the heavy stone lid of the sarcophagus was carved with what is perhaps the most beautiful depiction of the Tree of Life motif in the art of ancient America. (See Newsletter, 12.2; Christensen, 1963, pp. 109-110; Life, April 27, 1953.)

1953

An interpretation of Stela 5, Izapa, by Dr. Jakeman, together with a condensation of Mrs. Woodford's thesis, appeared in No. 4 of the Society's bulletin (Jakeman, 1953; Woodford, 1953). The enthusiasm engendered by this publication caused the SEHA membership to increase by several hundred per cent during the next few years.

1954

On behalf of the Department of Archaeology, Dr. Jakeman conducted the Third Brigham Young University Archaeological Expedition to Middle America. One of his undertakings was to make a first-hand study of Stela 5 at the ruins of Izapa, where he found it lying face up exposed to the weather (Newsletter, 22.03, 28.7; Christensen, 1963, p. 174).

Upon Dr. Jakeman's return to Mexico City he proposed to officials of the National Institute of Anthropology and History that the monument be removed to the National Museum, there to be protected from further weathering and vandalism (cf. Newsletter, 83.14) and also to be available for student and tourist inspection. He pointed out evidence of Old World influence in the sculpture and convinced them of its unusual importance. An agreement was worked out whereby the Mexican government, through the agency of its Department of Prehispanic Monuments, would effect the removal, the expense to be borne by the Society for Early Historic Archaeology, of which he was then the president.

While Dr. Jakeman was in the field in Mexico,

Professor Alberto Ruz (see 1952, above) was in Utah. He lectured on March 16 and 17 in Salt Lake City and Provo before audiences totaling approximately 1800 persons on the subject, "The Mystery of the Maya Temple; Palenque and Its Royal Tomb." Both lectures were co-sponsored by the SEHA. (Newsletter, 18.5, 19.2)

It was during these lectures, illustrated with beautiful color transparencies, that Professor Ruz stated his opinion that the Tree of Life carving on the sarcophagus lid was clear evidence of a connection in ancient religious belief between this sacred symbol and the hope of the resurrection.

1955

Early in the year a photographic expedition consisting of three SEHA members visited a number of ruins in Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras, including Izapa (Newsletter, 26.0). Dr. Milton R. Hunter of the LDS First Council of Seventy was the leader; José O. Dávila of Puebla, Mexico, was the guide; while Otto Done, later to become president of the Society (Newsletter, 61.1), was the photographer. After completing their pictures the group, with the assistance of local citizens, constructed a temporary shelter over the stone to protect it from the elements. This was later burned down (Newsletter, 83.14).

During this year Dr. Jakeman prepared an actual-size facsimile drawing-reproduction of Stela 5. This was accomplished by projecting the 1941 Smithsonian photograph upon his medium and tracing the outlines, and was enhanced by comparing the notes and photographs of his own expedition of 1954 (see above). The drawing was exhibited and explained to the Society membership at its Fall Round Table, held on November 21 (Newsletter, 31.11).

The expense of removing Stela 5 from the ruins of Izapa to the National Museum in Mexico City, undertaken by the SEHA in 1954 (see above), was met by taking up a special collection of contributions from loyal Society members (Newsletter, 29.0, 30.2). Payment was made to the Mexican government in September, 1955, through the agency of Otto Done, director of the Society's Mexico City Chapter (Newsletter, 27.1), who represented the SEHA in these arrangements.

1956

In January Professor Armando Duvalier, a Mexican government archaeologist, visited Izapa in an attempt to remove Stela 5 to Mexico City as agreed

(see 1954, above). Because of the attention given to the monument by scholars from the outside world, however, a zealous proprietary interest in it had awakened among the local citizenry, and Professor Duvalier was unable to effect its removal. He did, however, build a second shelter over the stela, then discontinued his project (Newsletter, 83.14).

During his visit to the site in connection with Stela 5, it may be added, he made another remarkable discovery, that of the "Decapitated Warrior" stela.

In February, during the Fourth Brigham Young University Archaeological Expedition to Middle America, Dr. Jakeman presented a photograph of his actual-size drawing of Stela 5 to Dr. Eduardo Noguera, director of the Mexican Department of Prehispanic Monuments, in behalf of the SEHA. Dr. Noguera agreed that the stone was an extremely important discovery and was intrigued by the Near Eastern parallels which the BYU professor pointed out (Newsletter, 33.01).

1957

By this time C. A. Culebro appears to have thought better of his original interpretation of the carving on Stela 5 as a market scene, for in a second publication he recognized it as having a religious significance and as symbolizing the "genesis of the race." He now referred to it as the "tree of humanity." (Culebro, 1957, pp. 79-80.)

Dr. Clyde E. Keeler, professor of biology at the Georgia State College for Women, also issued a publication which included reference to Stela 5 (Keeler, 1957, page 33). He agreed in his article that the tree in the carving was the Tree of Life, but chose to interpret it according to the mythology of the Cuna Indians of far-away Panama. He regarded it as a depiction of the birth scene of the Earthmother deity and identified certain details of the carving with anatomical features of this scene. (For a refutation of Dr. Keeler's views, see Newsletter, 104.2, pp. 7-8.)

It became increasingly apparent that it would be impossible for the time being to remove Stela 5 from its original location as agreed in 1954, even though government archaeologists had undertaken the project in good faith and had put forth an earnest effort to complete it. This was due to the hostility and resistance of local citizens. As 1957 drew to a close, efforts to remove the stone were discontinued, and plans were made for a substitute measure to be taken during an expedition of the following year.

1958

In January the Fifth Brigham Young University Archaeological Expedition to Middle America left for the field. Ross T. Christensen, expedition director, was accompanied by three advanced students of archaeology from BYU: Welby W. Ricks, Alfred L. Bush, and Carl Hugh Jones (Newsletter, 46.0, 47.00).

The first task of the expedition was to obtain a latex (liquid rubber) mold of Stela 5 at the ruins of Izapa. The purpose of this was so a plaster cast could be made from it, thus preserving the details of the carving in complete accuracy in the event that the original should suffer misfortune, and also making the cast available for study on the BYU campus.

The latex mold was made under the direction of Dr. Ricks on January 18. The next day he was on board an airplane with the mold, on his return journey to the Provo campus, while the other expedition members remained in the field to continue previous investigations at Aguacatal (Newsletter, 22.02, 47.02).

The cast of Stela 5 was completed in time for display in the Carl F. Eyring Physical Science Center during the Society's Eleventh Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures, which was held during the week of June 23 as a special feature of the 35th Annual BYU Leadership Week (Newsletter, 50.01, 51.3).

1959

Dr. Jakeman's principal publication on Stela 5 came off the press about April 1 (Jakeman, 1958a). On April 2 an overflow crowd attended a special meeting of the Society at which the author reviewed his work and explained the newly discovered hieroglyphic elements interpreted as the names Lehi and Nephi (Newsletter, 57.0, 58.0).

1960

A second monograph by Dr. Jakeman, this one prepared expressly for the archaeological profession, appeared (Jakeman, 1958b).

(Both this publication and that of 1959 actually bear the date 1958. In each case the printing was delayed because of technical reasons.)

The 1960 monograph tells all about Izapa Stela 5 without, however, mentioning Lehi or the Book of Mormon, or making explicit reference to any scriptural connection. In addressing the Americanist profession the author believed it wiser to emphasize the numerous New World-Old World parallelisms to be found in the



Dr. Welby W. Ricks (1), member of the BYU expedition of 1958, shows Dr. M. Wells Jakeman the latex mold of Stela 5 brought by him from the ruins of Izapa. Dr. Jakeman's drawing-reproduction may be seen in the background.

carving, which raise the presumption of actual historical contact between the two hemispheres. When such a foundation had first been laid, he felt, it would then be appropriate to open the question of a possible Book of Mormon explanation of such Old World contact. (See Newsletter, 69.2.)

The report reached the BYU campus that several of the carved stone monuments of Izapa, including Stela 5, had been stolen by local profiteers. The police actually caught the culprits in the act of loading one of the monuments (Stela 22) onto their truck. Two or three of them were found in a warehouse at nearby Tapachula in August. It was later learned, however, that Stela 5 was not among them. Apparently it had not been disturbed by the thieves. (Newsletter, 83.13.)

1961

In November the BYU-New World Archaeological Foundation began major excavations at the ruins of Izapa in the hope of finding additional information bearing on Stela 5 or perhaps other sculptures in the same style (Newsletter, 83.12). Since that time many additional stelae have come to light, making a total of more than 60 such monuments found at Izapa. So far, however, none of these other stelae is known to have any connection with a Book of Mormon scene or event.

1962

The plaster cast of Stela 5 in the possession of the BYU Department of Archaeology (see 1958, above) was removed in February from the old archaeology classroom, Room 205 in the Eyring Physical Science Center to the Tree of Life Salon of the new Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, located on the first



The bearded figure in the lower left-hand corner of Stela 5, as photographed in 1962.



Dr. Ross T. Christensen engaged in his 1962 study of Stela 5 at the ruins of Izapa.

floor of the Maeser Memorial Building (Newsletter, 80.0). This was in line with the removal of the Department to its new location in the Maeser building the preceding autumn (Newsletter, 77.3).

In March and April the editor of this newsletter spent eight weeks in southern Mexico engaged in a survey of current archaeological field work, especially that financed by BYU funds (Newsletter, 83.1). Included was an additional study of Izapa Stela 5. He took a series of 19 close-up color photographs of the monument, most of them from a distance of three or four feet, and concluded as a result of his study that Dr. Jakeman's drawing-reproduction had been a remarkably faithful one (Newsletter, 83.12).

1963

When observed in 1954 and again in 1958 (see above) Stela 5 was lying on its back, sloping downward into a shallow pit, no doubt made by some unknown treasure seeker. The sculpture had been fashioned in the first place, however, to stand upright. In 1963 the BYU-New World Archaeological Foundation restored it to its original position, thus partially protecting it from further weathering and vandalism (cf. Newsletter, 83.14).

1965

Susan W. Miles published a paper in which she referred briefly to Izapa Stela 5 (Miles, 1965, pp. 258-259). The purpose of her article was to identify various styles of ancient stone sculpture in Chiapas and Guatemala and to determine their distribution in time and space. No attempt was made to interpret the meaning of the scene carved on Stela 5, although some

miscellaneous observations on its various features, some of them at variance with Dr. Jakeman's, were included. She thought, for example, that the figure in the lower right-hand part of the carving, interpreted by him as a scribe (actually Nephi of the Book of Mormon) with stylus and plate, was instead a sculptor with chisel and block of stone. She agreed with him, however, as to the approximate date of the carving, i. e. around the time of Christ.

1967

On October 14 Dr. Jakeman made a major contribution to the literature of Stela 5 at the Society's Seventeenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures (Newsletter, 104.0); namely a detailed rebuttal of some attacks which had been made on his interpretation of the carving as a depiction of the Lehi tree-of-life story of the Book of Mormon. This rebuttal was published in full in the November 29 issue of the Newsletter and Proceedings (Jakeman, 1967).

1968

Fourteen years have passed since Dr. Jakeman proposed removing Izapa Stela 5 to the National Museum. Still it has not been moved, nor can we tell whether it ever will be. Ten years have gone by since the plaster cast was made as a substitute for the actual stone. The cast has become and is still the principal exhibit in the BYU Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.

But Stela 5 itself may be visited by tourists without any great difficulty. It is located about a 20-minute drive from the city of Tapachula, in an archaeological park which has been created by the Mexican government to protect the ruins and monuments of Izapa. Tapachula itself can be easily reached from Mexico City by plane, car, or train.

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110.1 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE SEHA, 1965-1968. By Claudia R. Veteto. The three-year administration of Virgil V. Peterson and Richard L. Anderson as President and Vice-President, respectively, of the SEHA, came to a close with the fourth Triennial Election Meeting, held October 12, 1968 (Newsletter, 109.2).

The Peterson-Anderson administration was outstanding for the regularity with which meetings of the Society's Executive Committee were held. Under the direction of President Peterson, the Committee met four times annually, without fail, to plan and conduct SEHA business.

One of the major accomplishments of the past three years was the rewriting and ratification of the SEHA constitution. Because of the large number of amendments that had been added to the original document--in use since 1950--and due to the 1966 reorganization of the BYU archaeology-anthropology department and the decision about the same time to discontinue all chapter organizations, a rewritten constitution was badly needed. (Newsletter, 98.2, 99.2, 102.00.)

The revised document, which contained, however, no important change from the previous organization, procedures, and practices, was mailed to Society members in June, 1967. On July 27, it was declared ratified at a meeting of the Executive Committee, during which the ballots were counted. The membership almost unanimously favored its adoption (Newsletter, 103.0). (Extra copies of the constitution are available to Society members and will be sent free of charge upon request.)

In line with a change in the Society's name, beginning with No. 101, May 1, 1967, the name of the Society's newsletter was also changed (Newsletter, 101.0). The UAS Newsletter (University Archaeological Society) is now known as the Newsletter and Proceedings of the SEHA (Society for Early Historic Archaeology).

President Peterson's leadership in business and civic affairs and Vice-President Anderson's legal training and background in the classical civilizations were of great importance in directing the Society during the time when these new arrangements were being made.

During the Peterson-Anderson administration, three of the Society's "Annual Symposia on the Archaeology of the Scriptures" were held on the BYU campus. At the sixteenth, held on October 22, 1966, 11 papers were read. Nine papers were presented at the seventeenth symposium, held on October 14, 1967, and nine more at the eighteenth, held on October 12, 1968. (Newsletter, 100.0, 104.0, 109.1.)

Ten of the above 29 papers have been published in the Newsletter and Proceedings under the same or slightly-changed titles: "The Lebolo Mummies in the Turin Museum, Italy" (Leslie W. Bradshaw), 101.30; "A Lebolo Mummy Found in Philadelphia" (David C. Martin), 101.31; "On the Hypocephalus of the Book of Abraham" (Claudia R. Veteto), 101.32; "A Study

of the Hor Sen-Sen Papyrus" (Richley H. Crapo and John A. Tvedtnes), 109.0; "Where Was 'Ur of Chaldees'?" (Ross T. Christensen), 106.0; "Ramsay, the Seven Churches, and Early Christian Apostasy" (Richard L. Anderson), 108.0; "The Colossal Stone Heads of the Southern Gulf-Coast Region of Mexico" (Fred W. Nelson, Jr.), 103.60; "A Study of Mesoamerican Religious Symbolism" (David A. Palmer), 103.61; "Stela 5, Izapa, as 'The Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone'; A Reply to Recent Attacks" (M. Wells Jakeman), 104.2; and "Archaeological Excavations at Nauvoo During the Summer of 1967" (Henry G. Crellin), 107.1.

During the triennium just past a variety of archaeological publications have been distributed to members of the Society. Thirteen issues of the Newsletter (Nos. 96 to 108) and an index to the first 100 issues have come off the press, providing members with 126 pages of informative material. Also, 11 issues of The Biblical Archaeologist, a quarterly publication of the American Schools of Oriental Research, have been sent to SEHA members.

Three compilations from past issues of the Newsletter were reprinted by Publications Sales (formerly Extension Publications) of the BYU Division of Continuing Education during the past triennium. They are: (1) "Herod's Pleasure Palace and the Zealots' Last Redoubt: Archaeology of the Dead Sea Area" and "The 'Tree of Life' in South America and Other Topics of Andean Archaeology" (a reprint under one cover of two issues, Nos. 88 and 92); (2) "The Tree of Life in Ancient America" (articles selected from Nos. 91, 94, 99, 100, 103, and 110); and (3) "Mummies, Scrolls, and the Book of Abraham" (articles selected from Nos. 87, 95, 101, and 105).

These reprints were prepared by Publication Sales for use in connection with the BYU Education Weeks program (Newsletter, 106.8, 107.5). SEHA members may now obtain copies from the Society office. See blue list of "Publications for Sale."

110.2 MEDALLIONS MINTED ON BOOK-OF-MORMON THEME. Maya Mint of Belize, British Honduras, has recently been organized for the purpose of minting medallions of gold, silver, and other metals and later it is hoped actual coinage.

The first medallion of a "Mormon-Maya" series bearing names taken from the Book of Mormon, Alma 11:3-19, will soon be struck.

By arrangement with SEHA officers, an announcement promoting the new series is being mailed to Society members.