

STELA 5, IZAPA
CHIAPAS, MEXICO

*A Major Archaeological
Discovery of the New World*

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STELA 5, IZAPA, CHIAPAS, MEXICO

A Major Archaeological Discovery of the New World

Detailed Commentary on the Carving

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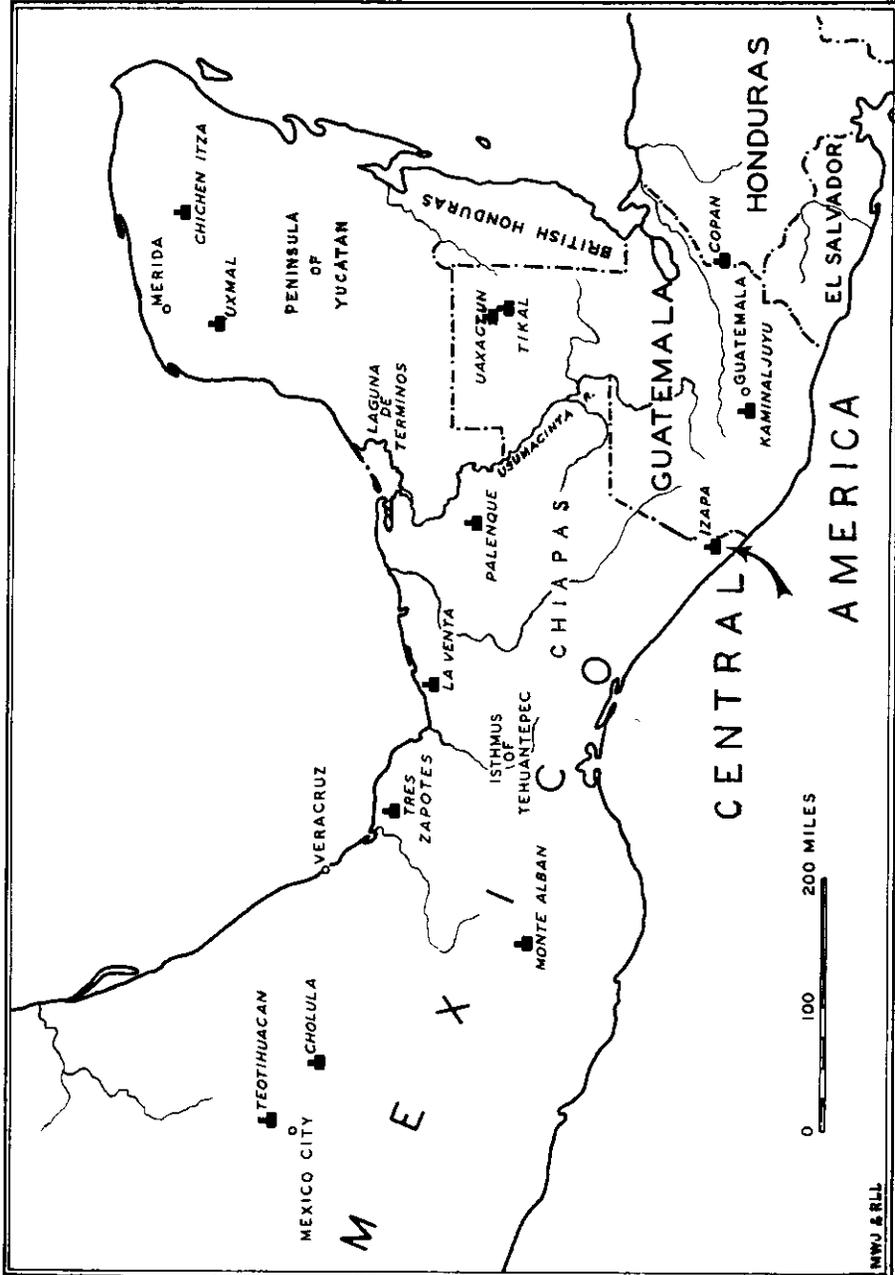


PLATE 1. The Archaeological Area of Mesoamerica, and Place of Finding of the Ancient Monument Studied in this Paper.

INTRODUCTION

SOME YEARS AGO there occurred a little-publicized discovery in American archaeology, that now promises to surpass in importance all the other findings made to date in this field of study. This was the unearthing of a great stone monument at the ancient ruined city of Izapa in the State of Chiapas, Mexico (i.e. in the southern part of the central archaeological area of the New World called Mesoamerica; see map, Plate 1), that has on one side a sculpture showing several human and humanlike figures gathered around a fruit-bearing tree—a representation (as will be seen) of the Tree of Life, one of the prominent symbols in the ancient religions and arts of the Old World.

Previous Evidence of the Tree-of-Life Symbol in Ancient America

Before discussing this major Izapa discovery, however, it should be noted that for a long time references to a certain "Tree of Life" symbol in the religion of the ancient civilized peoples of Mesoamerica have been known, in the early Indian and Spanish writings of that area; also representations of such a symbol, in the religious arts of those peoples, especially in the Classic Maya art of northern Central America (c. 375-900 A.D.). The art representations show a fruit-bearing tree or maize plant¹ in the center, conventionalized into the form of a cross (hence often miscalled "crosses"), with two personages standing facing it on either side in an attitude of worship, and a bird perched on top (depicted, in some Maya examples, as a quetzal-bird with a serpent's head, therefore undoubtedly a symbol of *Quetzalcóatl* ['Quetzal-bird or Precious-feathered Serpent'], the famed Life God of ancient Mesoamerica;² see Plate 2, upper figure). These Mesoamerican

¹The staple food plant of ancient America, consequently an appropriate typification of the Tree of Life.

²For a further discussion of the evidence connecting the symbol of the Tree of Life in ancient Mesoamerica with the god Quetzalcóatl, see Irene Briggs Woodford, "The 'Tree of Life' in Ancient America; its Representations and Significance," *Bulletin of the University Archaeological Society*, Provo, Utah, No. 4, March, 1933, pp. 1-18.

references and representations bring to mind, of course, the familiar story of the Tree of Life in the Old-World (Near Eastern) Book of Genesis, describing a tree bearing life-giving fruit and guarded by two personages called cherubim, i.e. guardian spirits or genii. They also resemble representations of this holy tree in the ancient arts of the Near East, especially that of Assyria in Mesopotamia, in which a fruit-bearing tree³ is shown in the center, with two personages standing facing it on either side in an attitude of worship or guardianship (generally identified as the cherubim or genii of the Genesis story), and a winged sun-disk hovering above it (see Plate 2, lower figure⁴).

Now these references to, and art representations of, a Tree of Life symbol in ancient America, with the latter resembling rather closely the ancient Near Eastern representations of the Tree of Life, naturally constitute some evidence in support of the theory of an Old World—more specifically a Near Eastern—origin of the ancient American civilizations.⁵

They cannot, however, be considered *decisive* evidence in support of this view. For the similarities to the Near Eastern representations of the Tree of Life are generally not sufficiently *arbitrary* (i.e. unexpected) as well as *close* to rule out the possibility of their being accidental, i.e. the possibility of the similar features in these ancient American representations having been worked out independently, without any knowledge of the Near Eastern representations. Thus the idea itself of a fruit-bearing tree or plant as a symbol of life is not unexpected, and could have been hit upon independently by ancient peoples of the Old and New Worlds. Further, the two personages always seen with the tree in these ancient American portrayals do not resemble very closely the cherubim depicted in the Near Eastern representations; although they stand facing the

³Depicted as a firlike—i.e. evergreen or ever-living—date-palm, the date-palm being the principal tree of sustenance in ancient Mesopotamia.

⁴In some Assyrian representations, as the one reproduced here, four personages are depicted. In these cases the cherubim are the two outer, winged, figures, while the two inner are representations of a king (shown on each side like the cherubim, for artistic symmetry).

⁵This is evidence additional to other suggestions of such an origin, e.g. sculptured figures of bearded men with Caucasoid features (mostly dating, significantly, from the earlier civilizations); also suggestions of an Old World origin without specification of the Near East, e.g. botanical evidence, recently brought out, that some of the cultivated plants of the American agricultural civilizations were related to some of those of the Old World.

tree on either side in an attitude of worship like the Near Eastern cherubim, they are never bird-headed and winged as are often these Near Eastern figures, and may therefore be priests rather than guardian spirits or cherubim. (On the other hand, the bird seen perched atop the tree in the Mesoamerican portrayals does present a rather close and arbitrary correspondence to the winged sun-disk above the Assyrian tree, since not only is it also a winged element placed above the tree, but in the Maya examples there can be seen a sun-symbol hanging from its tail feathers.)

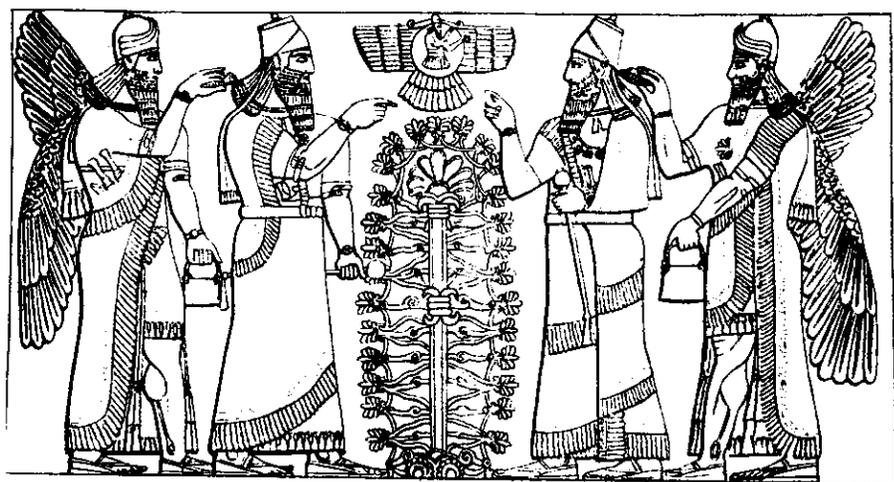
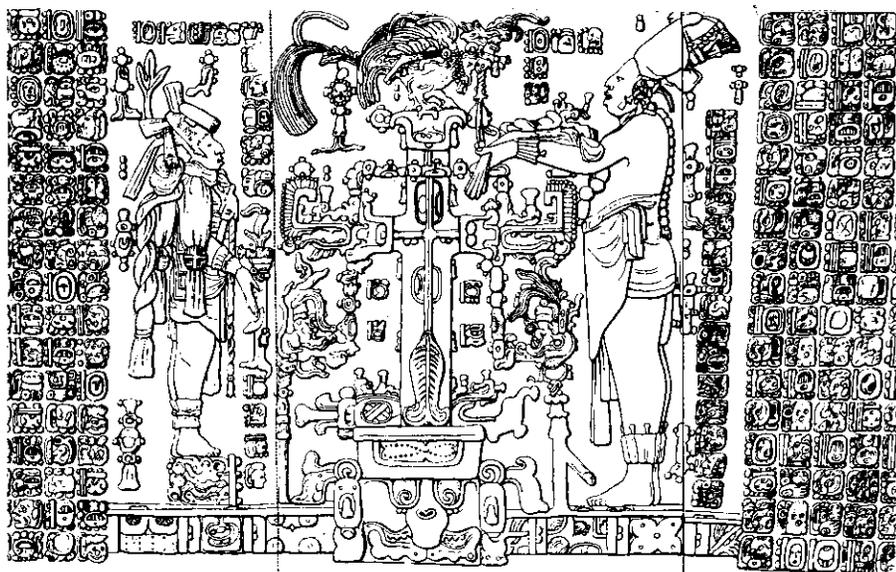


PLATE 2. Ancient Representations of the Tree of Life. *Upper*: from a Maya monument (the so-called Tablet of the Cross, Palenque) in the National Museum of Archaeology, Mexico; *lower*: from an Assyrian monument in the British Museum (after Layard, *Monuments of Nineveh*).



PLATE 3. Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico. Photograph from the National Geographic Society-Smithsonian Institution Archaeological Expedition to Southern Mexico. Courtesy of the National Geographic Society.

SOME SPECIFIC SIMILARITIES OF THE IZAPA
CARVING TO THE ANCIENT NEAR-EASTERN
REPRESENTATIONS OF THE TREE OF LIFE⁶

LET US NOW RETURN to the recently discovered Izapa representation of the Tree of Life, and the reasons for its special importance. (This representation, it should be mentioned, is a sculptured bas-relief on one side of the largest monument so far discovered at Izapa [measuring approximately eight feet high, five feet wide, and two feet thick], designated archaeologically as Stela 5 and unearthed in a central part of that site, north of the principal mound. The sculpture itself is in an earlier art style than the previously-known Mesoamerican portrayals of the Tree of Life. The first published notice of this more ancient Izapa representation is found in a local work on the archaeology of Chiapas, dated 1939.⁷ The site of Izapa was visited in 1941 by an expedition of the Smithsonian Institution and National Geographic Society, and an excellent photograph obtained of the carving, which was published in 1943.⁸ The following detailed commentary—present and next section of this paper—is based upon this 1941 photograph [see Plate 3] obtained before the considerable weathering of and some other damage to the monument that has occurred since then; and upon a first-hand examination of the carving by the writer at the site in 1954.)

First of all, we find that in this new but earlier portrayal from ancient America the Tree of Life is shown naturalistically, as a fruit-bearing tree, more like the Near Eastern representations than

⁶This and the remaining sections of this paper comprise a revision of a previous study of the Izapa carving by the writer ("An Unusual Tree-of-Life Sculpture from Ancient Central America," *Bulletin of the University Archaeological Society*, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, No. 4, March, 1953, pp. 26-49), published here under convenient separate cover, particularly for use as an explanatory manual to accompany a large-scale drawing reproduction of this sculpture prepared for publication as No. 3 of the present series.

⁷C. A. Culebro, *Chiapas Prehistórico: Su Arqueología*, n. p., Chiapas, Mexico, Folleto No. 1, October, 1939, p. 56 (the monument is here designated Stela 2).

⁸Matthew W. Stirling, *Stone Monuments of Southern Mexico* (Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, *Bulletin 138*), Washington, 1943, pl. 52.

the conventionalized cruciform maize plant of previously-known representations from ancient America.

Further, the two guardian personages (in this portrayal identified as the two largest figures seen standing facing the tree) are here depicted much more like the two guardian personages seen in the Near Eastern portrayals than those seen in the previously-known American representations: They are not only standing facing the tree on either side in an attitude of worship, like the Near Eastern—particularly the Assyrian—personages or cherubim, but they each seem to be *bird-headed*, as often likewise the Assyrian cherubim! (Compare Plate 4, upper figure.) The one on the left of the tree, moreover, appears to be winged, as usually also the Assyrian cherubim; indeed, the correspondence seems to extend even to the arrangement of the wings—one wing outstretched (seen between the personage's head and the tree), and the other hanging down the back. Observe also that these Izapa figures have the same stance as the Assyrian cherubim: face more or less in profile, shoulders in full front or three-quarters view, but the legs and feet again in profile and in tandem, one advanced before the other.

But the specific similarities do not end here. It will be noted that the personage on the right of the tree also appears to hold a tasseled baglike object with each hand; while the one on the left holds a pointed object raised towards the tree. In the Assyrian representations of the Tree of Life the guardian personages are usually also shown as holding a baglike object and a pointed object raised towards the tree. (Again compare Plate 4, upper figure, also the lower figures in plates 2 and 4. Various interpretations of these objects held by the Assyrian personages have been given. The baglike objects [seen held by a cord- or strap-handle] are either bags for the fruit of the Tree of Life, or water-bags. The pointed objects are either—according to one view—the fruit of the holy tree which the cherubim are plucking, or—according to another view—pinecones with which the cherubim are sprinkling water from the bags on the tree [which is depicted as a date-palm]. In other cases—as in the lower figure in Plate 4—the pointed objects seem to be stamens with which the cherubim, by manual pollination, are fertilizing the tree [which is again depicted as a date-palm, a tree that requires this method of fertilization].)

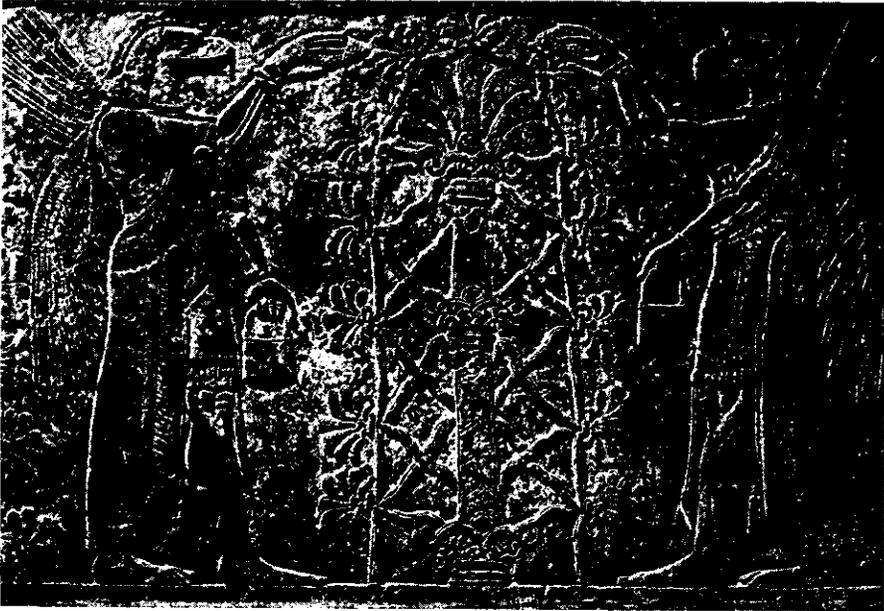


PLATE 4. Additional Ancient Representations of the Tree of Life. *Upper*: from an Assyrian monument in the British Museum (after Contenau, *Manuel d'archéologie orientale*); *lower*: from an Assyrian cylinder seal in the Morgan Collection (after Jastrow, *The Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria*).

FURTHER INTERPRETATION OF THE IZAPA CARVING

AND STILL MORE NEAR-EASTERN SIMILARITIES

THERE REMAIN to be explained, however, the many other unusual features in the Tree of Life scene of Stela 5, Izapa, such as the several human figures gathered around the tree, and what appears to be a river of water flowing by it. For this further interpretation we must turn to a little-known account of the Tree of Life occurring outside the annals of archaeology—an account that will be found to correspond to and explain *in full detail* the ancient Izapa portrayal.

THE "LEHI ACCOUNT" OF THE TREE OF LIFE

This similar treatment of the Tree of Life theme is found in an early purported history of ancient America, the work called the Book of Mormon (published in western New York in 1830, i.e. well before the occurrence of the Tree of Life symbol in ancient America had become known to archaeology). Here is recorded a remarkable "dream" or "vision" of the Tree of Life, in which the latter is depicted as a fruit-bearing tree, with (in this case) several persons gathered around it, and a river of water flowing by it—just as in the recently discovered Izapa representation. It is related to have been experienced by the leader of one of this history's ancient Near Eastern colonies to the New World, a certain Israelite prophet named Lehi.¹² According to the Book of Mormon, this dream or vision came to Lehi at one time during the migration of his party

¹²As already familiar to its readers, the Book of Mormon purports to be a translation of ancient records, giving the history of certain groups of ancient Near Easterners who migrated to the New World and developed there advanced civilizations (apparently, according to internal indications, in the central Mesoamerican area)—the first group migrating from Mesopotamia in the third millennium B.C., and developing the first civilization of Mesoamerica and the New World; and two later groups—one of them that led by Lehi—from Palestine near the beginning of the sixth century B.C., from which developed the second civilization, which flourished down to the fourth century A.D.

to the New World;¹³ and was recorded on the plates of the Book of Mormon by one of Lehi's sons named Nephi. In order to prepare the reader for the discussion to follow, we reproduce here the full account of this similar Tree of Life scene described in the Book of Mormon, as given in the words of Nephi and those of Lehi recorded by him.

It came to pass that while my father [Lehi] tarried in the wilderness he spake unto us [his sons], saying: "Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision. . . . For behold, methought I saw in my dream, a dark and dreary wilderness. And . . . I saw a man, and he was dressed in a white robe; and he came and stood before me. And . . . he spake unto me, and bade me follow him. And . . . as I followed him I beheld myself that I was in a dark and dreary waste. And after I had traveled for the space of many hours in darkness, I began to pray unto the Lord that he would have mercy on me, according to the multitude of his tender mercies. And . . . after I had prayed unto the Lord I beheld a large and spacious field. And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy. And . . . I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.

"And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceeding great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit. And as I cast my eyes round about, that perhaps I might discover my family also, I beheld a river of water; and it ran along, and it was near the tree of which I was partaking the fruit. And I looked to behold whence it came; and I saw the head thereof a little way off; and at the head thereof I beheld your mother Sariah, and Sam, and Nephi;¹⁴ and they stood as if they knew not whither they should go. And it came to pass that I beckoned unto them; and I also did say unto them with a loud voice that they should come unto me, and partake of the fruit, which was desirable above all other fruit. And . . . they did come unto me and partake of the fruit also. And . . . I was desirous that Laman and Lemuel¹⁵ should come and partake of the fruit also; wherefore, I cast mine eyes towards the head of the river, that perhaps I might see them. And it came to pass that I saw them, but they would not come unto me and partake of the fruit.

"And I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree by which I stood. And I also beheld a straight and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood;

¹³While the group was encamped in "the wilderness" near the Red Sea, c. 597 B.C. At this time it had come to consist not only of Lehi and his family, but also of others who had joined Lehi in his migration into "the wilderness."

¹⁴The two younger sons of Lehi at this time.

¹⁵The two older sons of Lehi.

and it also led by the head of the fountain,¹⁶ unto a large and spacious field, as if it had been a world. And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood. And . . . they did come forth, and commence in the path which led to the tree. And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceeding great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost. And . . . I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree. And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed. And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth. And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceeding fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit. And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.”

And now I, Nephi, do not speak all the words of my father. But, to be short in writing, behold, he saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree. And he also saw other multitudes feeling their way towards that great and spacious building. And it came to pass that many were drowned in the depths of the fountain; and many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads. And great was the multitude that did enter into that strange building. And after they did enter into that building they did point the finger of scorn at me and those that were partaking of the fruit also; but we heeded them not.¹⁷

Nephi then goes on to record that after his father Lehi “had spoken all the words of his dream or vision, which were many,” he expressed fear for his sons Laman and Lemuel, who had refused in his dream to partake of the fruit of the tree; and exhorted them to “hearken to his words, that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them, and not cast them off”; and “did preach unto them . . . , and also prophesied unto them of many things. . . .”¹⁸

But Laman and Lemuel did not understand their father’s words, either those of his dream or those of his prophecies. On their ques-

¹⁶I.e. the river of water.

¹⁷*Book of Mormon*, 1 Ne. 8:2, 4-33.

¹⁸1 Ne. 8:36-38.

tioning Nephi as to the meaning of the dream, he undertook to explain it to them:

The tree that their father had seen "was a representation of the tree of life," "the fountain of living waters," "whose fruit is most precious and most desirable above all other fruits";¹⁹ which tree of life, in turn, was a representation of "the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men, wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things," and "the greatest of all the gifts of God"—this "love of God" ("which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men") being personified by the "Lamb" or "Son of God," i.e. the Messiah, who should go forth at a future time "among the children of men" and be slain in payment for their sins (thereby gaining for them everlasting life).

The "rod of iron . . . was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away unto destruction."

And "the great and spacious building was the pride of the world," "vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men," "the world and the wisdom thereof";

While the "river of water . . . was filthiness," a "fountain of filthy water," "and an awful gulf, which separated the wicked" who were in the "great and spacious building" from "the tree of life, and also from the saints of God. And . . . it was a representation of that awful hell, which . . . was prepared for the wicked." "And the depths thereof are the depths of hell."

"And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost."²⁰

Sometime later, as previously indicated (or perhaps at the time of the narration itself), Nephi recorded the words of his father in writing, doubtlessly with a stylus or sharp-pointed writing instrument, on one or more metal plates or tablets.²¹ This account was preserved by the Lehi people through the centuries of their occupation of the New World (apparently the Mesoamerican area); and was eventually incorporated by one of their last historians

¹⁹Since it gives *everlasting* life, according to the Genesis account of this tree in the Garden of Eden, or center of the biblical earth.

²⁰1 Ne. 11:21-36; 12:16-18; 15:2, 21, 23-24, 26-29, 36.

²¹Either copying from a previous record of the vision made by Lehi himself (see 1 Ne. 1:16-17); or writing from his own memory of Lehi's words, or recording them at the actual time of the narration (see 1 Ne. 8:2, 29-30; 9:1; also 10:1-2, 15-17).

(Mormon, c. 311-400 A.D.) in a collection of inscribed plates from which the Book of Mormon is claimed to have been translated (from which in turn, finally, we have reproduced it here).

*Possibility and Probable Method of Ancient Art
Representations of the Lehi Account*

In view of the preservation of this "Lehi account" of the Tree of Life among the people of Lehi in ancient Mesoamerica, and the importance of the Tree of Life symbol in their religious thinking,²² it seems reasonable to conclude (i.e. if the Book of Mormon record is true and these people actually did once exist in Mesoamerica) that occasional sculptural or other art representations of this symbol were probably made and left behind by them in this region—perhaps even of the special Lehi version featured in their records. (The representation of religious symbols in various art media—plaques, figurines, cylinder seals, etc.—including palms [probably representing the Tree of Life, as in Mesopotamia] and cherubim, was a practice of the ancestors of the Lehite people in Palestine,²³ that was doubtless carried on by them, at least to some extent, in the New World.)

Such representations would have been a simple matter in the case of the symbol as given in the Genesis story: The holy tree and the guardian cherubim would have sufficed, as in some of the representations in the ancient arts of the Near Eastern homeland of these people. To portray the special Lehi account, however, in view of its many additional features—including several persons and various movements—in complex interrelationship, would have been a real problem, especially if attempted in stone. How would their artists have gone about it? The best method, probably, would have been for them to select a point in that account when most of the features were stationary; i.e., not the vision itself in actual progress,

²²Besides the numerous references in Nephi's record and explanation of the Lehi vision, there are eleven other references in the Book of Mormon to this symbol. By contrast, the symbol of the cross is mentioned only six times.

²³See, e.g., A. Reifenberg, *Ancient Hebrew Arts*, New York, 1950; André Parrot, *Samaria, the Capital of the Kingdom of Israel* (Studies in Biblical Archaeology No. 7), New York, 1958, p. 66 (representations of winged sphinxes among the ivory plaques found in the ruins of Ahab's palace at Samaria, which were a prototype of the cherubim as depicted in later Assyrian portrayals of the Tree of Life, and which were frequently also represented in the Temple at Jerusalem).

but the *occasion of its telling* by Lehi to his family—these six persons being shown engaged in a discussion, with the Tree of Life (and guardian cherubim to identify it as such?) depicted in the center of the carving as the subject of the discussion, and possibly also some of the other features of the vision, in proper directional relationship to the tree—i.e. those that could be represented without too great difficulty, such as the river of water. They would also, probably, have included some definite indication of the identity of the six persons. This could best have been achieved, of course, by recording the actual names of these persons near the figures representing them—or at least the name of the principal one among them, the prophet Lehi. (Either their names could have been recorded *phonetically*, i.e. written out, in an inscription in one of the two writing systems used by the people of Lehi, namely in Old Hebrew-Phoenician or in “reformed” [i.e. modified Demotic?] Egyptian, giving their form or *pronunciation*; or they could have been recorded *symbolically*, by means of a “name-glyph,” i.e. an Egyptian or other symbol, giving their *meaning* or *derivation*.)

DETAILED COMPARISON OF THE ANCIENT CARVED TREE- OF-LIFE SCENE DISCOVERED AT IZAPA IN CENTRAL AMERICA WITH THE LEHI TREE-OF-LIFE ACCOUNT FOUND IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Let us now return again to the ancient carved Tree of Life scene discovered at Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico, in Central America.

Studying the photographic reproduction of this scene (Plate 3), we find that this carving constitutes exactly what we should expect in the way of an ancient art representation of the special Lehi account of the Tree of Life found in the Book of Mormon. First of all, it will be observed that the several human figures that make this particular ancient American portrayal of the Tree of Life so unusual, and their depiction in various attitudes in relation to the tree, suggest that this carving was an attempt on the part of the ancient artists of Izapa to portray an actual event featuring the holy tree, like that related above from the Book of Mormon (i.e. the occasion of the prophet Lehi’s narration of his vision of the

Tree of Life to his family gathered around). Moreover the Tree of Life itself, as also expected, is shown in the center of the scene, as a fruit-bearing tree; and it is identified as the Tree of Life—again as expected—by two guardian personages standing facing it on either side, closely resembling (as previously shown) the cherubim in the ancient Near Eastern representations. Still further, one of the seated figures on the left of the tree clearly represents an old man, who seems to be saying something about the tree to the other persons seated nearby, just as we should expect ancient Nephite artists to have portrayed the prophet Lehi of the Book of Mormon event (an old man—at least relatively speaking, as the father of several grown sons—who narrated his vision of the Tree of Life to his family gathered around!); while one of the seated figures on the right of the tree evidently represents a younger person, who holds what appears to be a stylus or sharp-pointed writing instrument in one hand²⁴ and may therefore be in the act of recording what the old man is saying about the tree, just as we should expect ancient Nephite artists to have portrayed Lehi's son Nephi in the Book of Mormon event (a young man, who—undoubtedly with a stylus—recorded his father Lehi's account of his vision of the Tree of Life!).

Other striking correspondences between the Izapa scene and that described in the Book of Mormon also immediately meet the eye; for example—as already noted—the river of water shown flowing by the Tree of Life, in the Izapa carving (the wavy double line with volutes²⁵), and the river of water seen by Lehi flowing near the Tree of Life, in the Book of Mormon account; also the broad line that begins suddenly and runs along near the river design straight to the tree, in the Izapa carving, and the “rod of iron” that “extended along the bank of the river” to the tree, in the Book of Mormon account.

A detailed comparative study reveals still other correspondences—even including what appears to be a typification of the “mists of darkness” seen by Lehi as arising and blinding the eyes of the children of men (an action feature we should expect to have been too

²⁴As noted by Stirling, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

²⁵Undoubtedly the meaning of this design element, as also noted by Stirling, *loc. cit.* (the wavy double line representing the body of the river, and the volutes, wavelets).

difficult for ancient Nephite artists to depict in any portrayal of the Lehi Tree-of-Life story). These correspondences are listed and described here along with those already noted (so far as possible in the order of mention of the features involved, in the Book of Mormon account; compare with these features, as indicated in quotations from that account, the features of the Izapa scene as indicated by number in Plate 5).

The Actual Episode of Lehi's Narration of his Vision
of the Tree of Life (*after the vision itself*) and of
its Discussion and Recording

CORRESPONDENCE I

Nephi in the Book of Mormon: *"It came to pass that while my father [Lehi] tarried in the wilderness he spake unto us [his sons], saying: 'Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision. . . .'"* [He then spoke "all the words of his dream or vision, which were many," concerning a tree that he saw—the "tree of life"—and how he himself, his wife Sariah, and two of his sons, Sam and Nephi, partook of its fruit, but not his two other sons, Laman and Lemuel; after which he exhorted Laman and Lemuel to hearken to the teaching of this vision; and Nephi, on their request, explained it to them—besides recording his father's account on one or more metal plates.]

Izapa scene, Features 1 to 6: Six human figures, probably representing six actual persons involved in the apparent event depicted here (note that they appear to be seated on the ground [Feature 7; see also below], or on cushions on the ground, in contrast to the other human or humanlike figures in the scene, which appear to be standing in the air and to represent symbolic personages or spirits). Their clothing seems to consist of robes or robelike apparel. One of them has a long, full beard. Finally, they appear to be engaged in some discussion concerning the central tree feature (observe the gesturing with the hands, in conjunction with the central importance of the tree).

These match in (1) number and (2) apparent activity, the six persons doubtless involved in the Lehi episode of the Tree of Life

recorded in the Book of Mormon (i.e. the prophet Lehi and his four sons Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi, as explicitly indicated, also Lehi's wife Sariah although she is not explicitly brought into it; in other words, the six named persons of Lehi's family at the time of this episode, and the six named persons in the vision itself). The long, full beard worn by one of these six figures, it may be added, strongly suggests that they represent persons of *Caucasoid* race, like the six persons in the Book of Mormon episode.

Feature 7: A large, rectangular, horizontal panel, on which the six persons are seated and from which the tree is growing (note the roots of the tree in it); hence doubtless represents the ground where the event here depicted took place.

CORRESPONDENCE II

Feature 1 (specific correspondence and identification): An old man (clearly, in view of the long full beard and hunched back). He has a repoussé nose, and wears long ear-pendants and a high pointed turban or mitre. Obviously the principal person in the event here depicted, he sits apparently cross-legged oriental-fashion, on a cushion, with an emblem of some kind held above him. Facing the tree, he is evidently saying something concerning it to the five other persons seated nearby (or at least to the one directly facing him. He was very probably a man of special religious learning, since the tree he is evidently speaking about is the Tree of Life (as definitely shown later), one of the most sacred religious symbols of ancient America; and also of priestly authority, since he appears to be making while he speaks (or to have made just before speaking) a burnt offering upon an altar (see also below, discussion of Feature 8).

This person corresponds, in both character and role, to Lehi of the Book of Mormon Tree-of-Life episode. As many as five detailed points of similarity may be noted here: (1) Lehi also was an old man (at least relatively), at the time of this episode; (2) he also was probably bearded (in view of his age and Israelite *Caucasoid* race); (3) he also was the principal person in an event involving the Tree of Life; (4) who also spoke concerning this tree, to five

other persons gathered around (or at least to four, his four sons); and (5) he also was a man of special religious knowledge—an ancient Israelite prophet, learned in the Hebrew scriptures—as well as of priestly authority. Still a sixth agreement is brought out in the following discussion of Feature 8; and even still others, of special importance, further on after a discussion of Feature 9.

The high pointed turban or mitre worn by this person, it will be noted, closely resembles the high pointed turban or mitre worn by ancient Judean Israelite priests (and to a less degree that worn by the Assyrian kings), even appearing to be draped with folds of cloth parted in front, just as the ancient Near Eastern mitres.²⁶

Feature 8: A small portable altar or incense-burner; apparently flames are shown, and ascending columns of smoke or incense. The old bearded man seems to be making a burnt offering upon it, while engaged in (or just preceding or preparatory to?) the discussion concerning the central tree feature.

Although such an altar and offering are not mentioned in the Book of Mormon account of the Lehi Tree-of-Life episode, Lehi is stated to have “built an altar of stones, and made an offering” upon it “unto the Lord,” on one occasion just before this;²⁷ so that he may well have done so again during or preparatory to his telling of his vision of the Tree of Life to his family (since this telling dealt with a sacred subject, and merited a proper ceremonial introduction or accompaniment), just as depicted here. Moreover, Lehi and his people are identified in the Book of Mormon as ancient Israelites of the Near East, a ceremonious people who frequently made burnt offerings upon altars; in fact small, portable, incense altars called “tables of offerings,” somewhat like the altar shown here, were especially common in Israelite families at the time of Lehi.

CORRESPONDENCE III(?)

Feature 2 (specific correspondence and identification): Another of the six probable actual persons involved in the event concerning the Tree of Life here depicted. He or she appears to be seated cross-

²⁶See e.g. Lucy Barton, *Historic Costume for the Stage*, Boston, 1938, pp. 27-41 and figs. 12c and 27.

²⁷1 Ne. 2:7.

legged oriental-fashion, on a cushion (actually a cushioned stool?), like the old bearded man; wears long ear-pendants and a tall horned tiara; and seems to be speaking along with the old man, and to be in attendance upon him—sitting directly behind him and holding above him some kind of emblem.

This figure suggests Lehi's wife Sariah. In the first place the position and role of the person represented, seated directly behind the old man corresponding to Lehi and in attendance upon him (and speaking along with him, in support of his words?), are much what we might expect ancient artists among the descendants of Lehi to have given Sariah, in a portrayal of the Lehi Tree-of-Life episode—Sariah seated with or directly behind and in attendance upon her husband, Lehi, as he told about his dream of the Tree of Life to (as specified in the Book of Mormon account) their four sons. Secondly, only this person and the old man, among the six, are shown seated on cushions; which strongly suggests that this person, with the old man, was one of the two elder members of the group, just as Sariah with Lehi. Still other reasons for proposing this correspondence are brought out in the following.

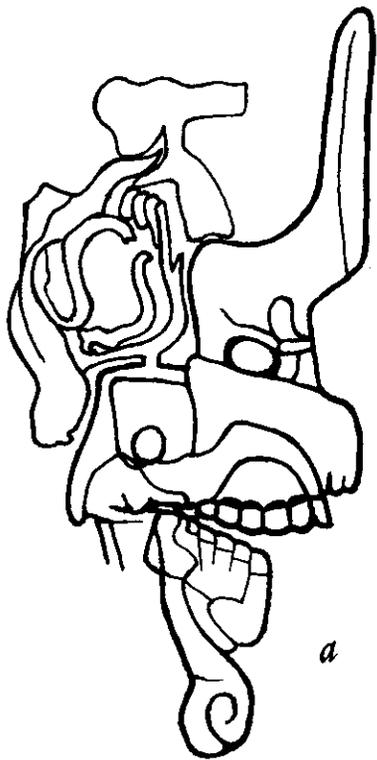
FURTHER ESTABLISHMENT OF CORRESPONDENCES II AND III

Feature 9: A standard or emblem of some kind, held upright by the person with the horned headdress. Its lower part is shaped as though made from a small jagged tree-trunk. The upper or emblematic part consists mainly of the side of a huge face: a large upper jaw is seen, with six great teeth in place, and a forward snout-like projection; also—faintly—a smaller lower jaw, again with several teeth in place; an eye; and a long upward extension above the eye. There are also discernible a scroll-like element below the lower jaw, suggesting the compressed fore-leg of an animal; and a complicated design above and connected at one point with the upper jaw, suggesting a symbolic headdress of some kind. This peculiar emblem hangs above the old bearded man, which strongly indicates that it is a hieroglyph recording his name.

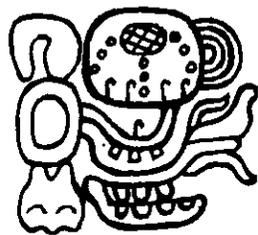
Now this emblem—apparently a name-glyph—is unquestionably the *cipactli* or 'crocodile' symbol of ancient Mesoamerican hieroglyphics, which is sometimes the entire body of the crocodile



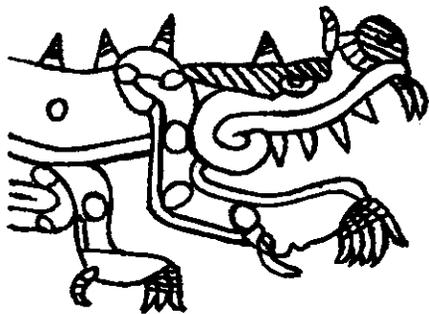
PLATE 5. Features of the Izapa Tree-of-Life Scene. Drawing reproduction by the writer, based upon the photograph obtained by the National Geographic Society-Smithsonian Institution expedition in 1941 (see Plate 3) before the considerable weathering of and some other damage to the monument that has occurred since then, also upon a first-hand examination of the carving by the writer at the site in 1954, and upon a cast in the Department of Archaeology, Brigham Young University, made from a latex mold of the carving obtained by the Brigham Young University Archaeological Expedition to Middle America of 1958. (The irregular dark patches in this drawing represent gouged or damaged places already in the carving when found; compare the 1941 photograph.)



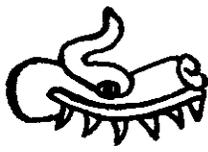
a



b



c



d



e

PLATE 6. Versions of the *Cipactli* Glyph. *a*: Feature 9 of the Izapa carving; *b-e*: later stylized versions (*b*, crocodile head with Imix headdress from a Maya monument, Stela 7, Yaxchilán; *c-e*, *cipactli* glyphs from a late central-Mexican hieroglyphic manuscript, Codex Nuttall, pp. 36, 47, and 75).

but usually only its head or face in profile (or its head with a fore-leg), with both jaws (or only the upper jaw, with three to six teeth in place), the snout, an eye, a prominent elongate eyebrow, and occasionally—among the Maya examples—the equivalent Maya *imix* symbol as a headdress (compare the later stylized versions reproduced in Plate 6).²⁸ (Although this crocodile symbol—in its single upper-jaw variant—is one of the traits of the ancient Mesoamerican civilizations recently noted as indicating a transoceanic influence from southeastern Asia [along with screen-books, the game of *parcheesi*, etc.], it also constitutes evidence of some connection of these civilizations with *southwestern* Asia or the Near East. This arises from the fact that in the cosmogony of the ancient Mesoamericans, the earth was believed to have been formed from a great crocodile-dragon—just as in the cosmogony of the ancient Mesopotamians of the Near East, the earth was believed to have been formed from a great dragon, *Tiamat* [probably the prototype of the dragon called *leviathan* by the Israelites and Book of Mormon peoples, which was evidently a crocodile; see Job 4:1; Ps. 74:13-14; Is. 27:1].)

In Mesoamerican iconography and hieroglyphics, this crocodile symbol was used not only to signify the earth (as in Maya representations of the Tree of Life, where the latter is shown growing out of a crocodile's head viewed in full front; see e.g. Plate 2, upper figure), but also to record the first day of the Sacred Almanac or religious calendar of ancient Mesoamerica (*Imix* in the Maya calendar, *Chilla* in the Zapotec, *Cipactli* in the Aztec). In addition, it was employed as a rebus hieroglyph for the name of a certain old man of ancient times called by the Aztecs *Cipactónal*, who was held by them to have invented the calendar, with the help of his wife, an old woman called *Oxomoco*.²⁹ In an Aztec stone relief found near Cuernavaca, Morelos, in 1900 (the "Stone of Coatlán"),

²⁸See also, e.g., Alfred M. Tozzer and Glover M. Allen, *Animal Figures in the Maya Codices* (Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Vol. IV, No. 3), Cambridge, Mass., 1910, pp. 319-321 and Pl. 13 (figs. 2, 6, and 8 of this plate reproduced as figs. c-e of Pl. 6 of the present work).

²⁹Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, 1946 ed. (Mexico), T. I, pp. 338-339; T. II, p. 308; see also Enrique Juan Palacios, "Cipactonal y Oxomoco," in Emma Hurtado, ed., *México prehispánico*, Mexico, 1946, pp. 429-438.

this ancient couple is portrayed, seated facing each other, with the *cipactli* or crocodile name-glyph of Cipactónal behind the head of the old man, who is shown inscribing on a stone the Aztec calendrical sign for "day" and "light."³⁰ They are also depicted in one of the Aztec hieroglyphic books (Codex Borbonicus, Plate XXI), again seated facing each other, with the *cipactli* name-glyph behind the head of the old man.³¹ They also appear in one of the Maya hieroglyphic books, the Codex Tro-Cortesianus, in the scene called the "Tableau of the Bacabs," with the head and upper body of a crocodile (i.e. the *cipactli* monster, this time with the lower jaw) in front of one of them, and surrounded by the signs of the twenty named days of the Sacred Almanac.

In fact, as a rebus glyph for the name Cipactónal, this *cipactli* symbol must have had a *multiple* application. For there were several famous old men called Cipactónal—with their wives called Oxomoco—in Mesoamerican tradition; indeed these names (and their equivalents in the Quiché Mayan traditions of highland Guatemala, *Ixpiyacoc* and *Ixmucané*) appear to have meant simply an old couple, an 'old man' and 'old woman.'³² Thus, the original ancestral pair in Mesoamerican religious belief, the associates of the Gods in the creation of man, who under their direction formed or engendered mankind beginning with a race that was nearly destroyed in a "great flood," also were called Cipactónal and Oxomoco or Ixpiyacoc and Ixmucané (distinguished, in the Quiché book called the *Popol Vuh*, from later old couples of the latter names, by the additional appellations *Hunabpú-Utú* or *Camul Qabolom*, 'Twice Father,' and *Hunabpú-Vuch* or *Camul Alom*, 'Twice Mother,' or "Grandfather" and "Grandmother," i.e. as the *original* parents of mankind).³³ The next famous old couple of whom we hear seem to have been a certain old man and woman who, according to a tradition recorded by the early Spanish author Bartolomé de las Casas, populated the Guatemala Quiché region after "the flood,"

³⁰See Palacios, *op. cit.*, pp. 431-435 and figure on p. 432.

³¹See Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, *Descripción, Historia y Exposición del Codice pictórico de los Antiguos Náuas*, Florence, 1898, pp. 92-93.

³²Codex Borbonicus, gloss on Pl. XXI (see *ibid.*, p. 92); *Annals of Cuauhtitlán*, 1945 ed. and trans. (Mexico), p. 4; see also Adrián Recinos, trans. and annot., *Popol Vuh; las Antiguas Historias del Quiché*, Mexico, 1947, p. 87, n. 4.

³³*Popol Vuh*, ed. and trans. *cit.*, pp. 85-103; see also, e.g., Palacios, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

and were called "the great father and the great mother."³⁴ These later ancestral parents are doubtless to be identified with a certain *Ixpiyacoc* or 'Old Man' and *Ixmucané* or 'Old Woman' at the beginning of the Quiché traditions of Guatemala, distinguished in the *Popol Vuh* from the original ancestral pair of those names by the appellations *Zaqui-Nim-Ac* and *Zaqui-Nimá-Tziis*, and as the immediate parents of *Hunabpú* (also called *Hun-Hunabpú*) and *Xbalanqué* (also called *Vucub-Hunabpú*), two sons who became the first warrior heroes of the Quiché Mayans.³⁵ Perhaps after these come the old man *Cipactónal* or *Ixpiyacoc* and old woman *Oxomoco* or *Ixmucané* held to have invented the calendar (as well as astrology and medicine), with the help of two other "wise ones," in the ancient city or land called *Tamoanchán*, long before the time of the Toltecs,³⁶ and portrayed—as has been noted—on the Stone of *Coatlán*, in the *Codex Borbonicus*, and in the *Codex Tro-Cortesianus*. (These last two were also deified as personifications of the day and the night, of light and darkness, and of the sun and the moon, respectively. The original ancestral couple were likewise held to be gods, as doubtless also the second ancestral couple of the Quiché traditions.³⁷) Still another old pair called *Cipactónal* and *Oxomoco* are mentioned in the Aztec *Annals of Cuauhtitlán*, as having been in charge of the calendar among the late Chichimec invaders of central Mexico, and as having been (unless these were still another old couple so named) the grandparents of *Ce-Acatl Quetzalcóatl*, the famous king of the Toltecs in the late tenth century A.D.³⁸

Features 1 and 2 (still further correspondence and identification, in light of Feature 9). Returning now to the Izapa scene, it is evident that the *cipactli* glyph held above the old man portrayed here is meant to identify him as one of the famous old men in ancient Mesoamerican tradition called *Cipactónal* or *Ixpiyacoc*. And this in turn,

³⁴Bartolomé de las Casas, *Apologética Historia de las Indias*, 1909 ed. (Madrid). Cap. CCXXXV, p. 620 (cited by Recinos, *op. cit.*, p. 103, n. 56).

³⁵*Popol Vuh*, ed. and trans. *cit.*, pp. 120, 104-119 (especially 108).

³⁶Bernardino de Sahagún, *ed. cit.*, T. II, pp. 307-308.

³⁷Along with their two warrior sons, first heroes of the Quiché people (*Popol Vuh*, ed. and trans. *cit.*, pp. 104-105: "These were truly gods").

³⁸*Annals of Cuauhtitlán*, ed. and trans. *cit.*, pp. 3-4; Palacios, *op. cit.*, p. 434.

surely, identifies the person seated behind this old man and in attendance upon him, holding the *cipactli* or "Cipactónal" sign above him, as one of the famous old women in ancient Mesoamerican tradition, the wife of Cipactónal or Ixpiyacoc, called Oxomoco or Ixmucané.

But which of the ancient old couples of these names were this old man and woman of the Izapa carving? A partial answer to this question is found in the fact that this scene does not appear to have anything to do with the ancient Mesoamerican calendar, but instead with the symbol of the Tree of Life. In other words, the old couple "Cipactónal" and "Oxomoco" portrayed here were neither the third nor the fourth of those listed above (whose fame lay in their connection with the calendar), but rather were either the first or the second (who were venerated, instead, as ancient progenitors, an appropriate symbol for whom would therefore have been the Tree of Life).

For a final identification the evidence is divided. Thus on the basis alone of the connection with the Tree of Life, we should have to favor the identification of this Izapa pair as the *first* old couple of Mesoamerican tradition, the original parents of mankind according to that tradition. For this Tree of Life connection results—as doubtless already noted by the reader—in a striking correspondence to the ancient Genesis story of the Near East connecting the first old couple or original parents of mankind according to that account, Adam and Eve, with the Tree of Life (the fruit of which, however, they were later kept from eating, by two guardian spirits or cherubim, who also appear with the Tree in this Izapa representation). Indeed, this curious Near Eastern correspondence becomes even more striking when it is pointed out that, just as here we see an old couple seated facing a tree, with one of them wearing what appears to be a horned tiara, and with a serpent rearing up above them (Feature 22), so also on the famed "Temptation" seal from Babylonia we see a couple—generally identified as the first parents, Adam and Eve, of the Genesis account—seated facing a tree, with one of them wearing a horned tiara, and with a serpent rearing up beside them!³⁹

³⁹This scene is reproduced by Albert T. Clay, *Light on the Old Testament from Babel*, 2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1906, p. 83; also by Woodford (after Clay). *op. cit.*, Fig. 5.

These resemblances to the Genesis story of the Tree of Life, however, and to the Babylonian "Temptation" scene, are only partial. In the first place, our Izapa pair are apparently shown discussing the Tree of Life with another or other persons, which differs from the Genesis story, in which the Tree of Life was removed from the lives of its pair before any other persons came to be with them. Secondly, in the Babylonian "Temptation" scene the tree—since a serpent is associated with it—was probably not the Tree of Life, like the tree in the Izapa scene, but the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil also spoken of in Genesis. Thirdly, the serpent in the Izapa carving represents, as will be seen, not temptation and evil as the serpent in the Babylonian-Genesis story, but the earth. These are differences sufficient to rule out the identification of our Izapa couple as the original "Cipactónal" and "Oxomoco" or original parents of mankind, in so far as this identification is suggested by the *general* resemblance of the Izapa scene to the Genesis story.

We are left, then, with the identification of this "Cipactónal" and "Oxomoco" of the Izapa carving with the *second* old couple of ancient Mesoamerican tradition—the "great father" and "great mother" reported to have been the ancestors of the ancient inhabitants of the Guatemala Quiché region after "the flood," i.e. the old man "Cipactónal" or "Ixpiyacoc" and old woman "Oxomoco" or "Ixmucané" also called "Zaqui-Nim-Ac" and "Zaqui-Nimá-Tziis," the immediate parents of two sons who became the first warrior heroes of the ancient Quiché Mayan people of highland Guatemala. And this identification, in turn, presents us with our *seventh* and *eighth* agreements between the old man of the Izapa Tree-of-Life scene and the old man Lehi of the Book of Mormon Tree-of-Life episode, as well as our *fourth* and *fifth* agreements between the person seated behind the old man in the Izapa scene and Sariah associated with Lehi in the Book of Mormon episode (the *third* between the latter two being, of course, the identification of the person in the Izapa scene as "Oxomoco" or "Ixmucané," i.e. as an old woman, like Sariah). For Lehi and Sariah of the Book of Mormon were also, in that account, the ancestors of the ancient inhabitants

of the Guatemala highland region;⁴⁰ and *also* the immediate parents of two sons (Laman and Lemuel) who became the first warrior heroes of these people!⁴¹

Strengthening this last agreement, the *Popol Vuh* describes the first and greatest enemy whom these two hero sons of "Ixpiyacoc" and "Ixmucané" fought—a certain person or being called, in Quiché, *Vucub-Caquix*—as a ruler, "vain-glorious of . . . his riches," "very proud of himself," "vain" and "arrogant," whose "only ambition was to exalt himself and to dominate"; all of which seemed to the two hero sons as "very evil" and greatly angered them, so that they set out to bring him down to defeat and ruin, and to slay him and his children, because of his "assumed greatness" and "the harm which [that] arrogant one had done and wished to do."⁴² Exactly so also did Laman and Lemuel, the two eldest sons of Lehi and Sariah of the Book of Mormon, regard *their* first and greatest enemy, namely their younger brother Nephi: Because this young Nephi set himself up as ruler over them, his elder brothers, and the others of Lehi's group, they likewise regarded him as sinfully proud and arrogant, with his only ambition that of exalting himself and dominating them; which also greatly angered *them*, so that they also set out to slay this enemy; and their descendants or people the "Lamanites" continued to hate him *and his* children(!), as well as his people the "Nephites" through many generations.⁴³ In other words, Lehi and Sariah of the Book of Mormon not only had two warrior sons as did "Ixpiyacoc" and "Ixmucané," the old couple in the Izapa carving according to the above identification; but these two warrior sons—again like those of "Ixpiyacoc" and "Ixmucané" or the Izapa couple—had as their principal enemy a person who had assumed rulership over them, and whose children they also sought to slay. This is a detailed additional similarity that leaves little doubt as to the validity of the last agreement brought out tending to establish the correspondences between the old man and woman of the Izapa scene and Lehi and Sariah of the Book of Mormon account.

⁴⁰I.e. the "Lamanites" of the "land of Nephi," the southern highland region of the Book of Mormon area, which in the geography of the Book of Mormon was apparently the southern highland region of Mesoamerica (southern Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador). (The other people descended from Lehi and Sariah, the "people of Nephi" or "Nephites," although at first settling in this highland region—hence the name "land of Nephi" given it by the Nephite historians—eventually came to occupy only the northern and generally lower part of the "land southward," called "Zarahemla"—i.e. the northern and generally lower part of northern Central America—and the "land northward" or southern and central Mexico—northern Mesoamerica—beyond the Isthmus of Tehuantepec or "small neck of land.")

⁴¹Laman and Lemuel, the principal ancestors of the Lamanites, were also their first leaders in war against the Nephites (the descendants, in part, of Nephi, a younger brother of Laman and Lemuel), whom they eventually expelled from that region.

⁴²*Popol Vuh*, ed. and trans. cit., pp. 103-106 et seq. Much of this passage is mythological, or represents a considerable folk-lore corruption of some ancient tradition of war and conquest at the beginning of Quiché Mayan history. For instance, its characters and events are dated back to the time of "the flood"; and two named sons of "Vucub-Caquix," whom the Quiché heroes also fought, are described as beings capable of moving mountains.

⁴³2 Ne. 4:13; 5:2-4, 14; Mos. 10:12-17; etc.

CORRESPONDENCE IV

Feature 3 (specific correspondence and identification): One of the four persons seated in front of the old bearded man, apparently discussing the tree shown in the center—evidently a young man, since—from a close study of this figure with a magnifying glass—he seems to have a small beard (probably a young man of large stature and/or considerable importance, since he is shown larger than any of the other five; note especially the great size of his arms). He wears ear ornaments, and a complicated headdress with what seem to be leaves projecting backward and hanging down the back; and holds in his left hand a long pointed object, evidently a stylus or writing instrument, with which he appears to be recording what is being said about the tree. At the same time his right arm and hand are extended, in an apparent speaking gesture, towards one of the three other persons seated in front of the old man; while above him is held, by one of these other persons, what is quite clearly an umbrella or parasol.

This person corresponds in character and role to Nephi of the Book of Mormon account. Thus

- (1) Nephi was one of the four sons of the old man Lehi, who listened to "the words of his dream or vision"; this person is one of four seated in front of the old man corresponding, as we have seen, to Lehi and shown saying something to them
- (2) Nephi was a young man at this time (the youngest son of Lehi); this person appears to be a young man
- (3) But Nephi was also large in stature, probably the largest or tallest of the family of Lehi;⁴⁴ this person is the largest of the six persons in the carving who correspond to Lehi and his family
- (4) After (or while) hearing his father Lehi's "words of his dream or vision," Nephi recorded them, with—undoubtedly—a stylus, on a plate or plates; this person appears to be recording the words of the old man who corresponds to Lehi (or whatever is being said about the tree shown in the center; note the styluslike implement in his left hand)
- (5) Nephi also, after his father's account, explained it to two of his brothers, on their request; this person also has an arm and hand extended, in an apparent speaking gesture, towards two of the three others seated in front of the old

⁴⁴"I, Nephi, being exceeding young, nevertheless being large in stature . . ." (1 Ne. 2:16); "I, Nephi, being a man large in stature" (1 Ne. 4:31).

man and therefore corresponding to two of the three other sons of Lehi (or at least towards one of the three others, the one directly facing him).

Feature 10: A rectangular object, resting upon the ground panel in front of the large young man with the stylus. Its shape and position (with the stylus pointing towards and almost touching it) strongly indicate that it is a plate or tablet, upon which the young man is writing. This completes the fourth agreement listed above under "Feature 3," tending to establish the correspondence of this person to Nephi of the Book of Mormon account (Nephi, as there noted, wrote the words of his father *on a plate* or plates).

Feature 11: Clearly an umbrella or parasol, held, by one of the six seated persons, above the head of the person with the stylus. The purpose of this, at first thought, might have been to show the young man being provided with shade while he recorded what was being said about the tree. The umbrella, however, was a symbol of rulership in ancient Mesoamerica. Consequently, the more probable purpose was to indicate that the young man was not only the recorder of the discussion depicted here but also—surprisingly—a ruler (rather than, contrary to what we might have expected, the old priestly personage represented by figure 1).

Turning now to the Book of Mormon history, we find that Nephi—the person in the Book of Mormon Tree-of-Life episode corresponding (as we have shown by other similarities) to the person with the stylus in the Izapa scene—was a ruler! (Although the prophet Lehi in the Book of Mormon account—who corresponds, as we have seen, to the old man in the Izapa carving—was the leader of the group whose history is recorded therein, from the beginning of the migration to about the time of his Tree of Life vision, and remained its nominal head until his death, the actual leader or—explicitly—"ruler" from about this time was the recorder of his vision, his younger son Nephi—this assumption of rulership on Nephi's part resulting in the lasting enmity of his two eldest brothers, Laman and Lemuel.⁴⁵)

Here, then, is a *sixth* agreement in support of the correspondence of the person with the stylus to the recorder Nephi of the

⁴⁵1 Ne. 10:1a; 16:36-38; 2 Ne. 5:1-19; Mos. 10:15. See also above, p. 24.

Book of Mormon episode—an agreement perhaps even more striking or arbitrary than those previously brought out.

The umbrella, incidentally, was also a symbol of rulership in the ancient Near East⁴⁶ as well as in eastern Asia, in the Old World. Since the Near East was the homeland of the Book of Mormon peoples, and this use of the umbrella was therefore probably known to them, this must be regarded as still another indication in support of the correspondence here advanced.

An Additional Detail of Feature 3, Further Establishing this Correspondence. The above probable identification by the Izapa artists, by means of the umbrella, of the young man with the stylus as a ruler, brings us to still another and very arbitrary similarity to the ancient Near East or homeland of the Book of Mormon peoples. Further study with a magnifying glass reveals that from the forehead of this probable ruler there projects what appears to be a serpent. Now in ancient representations of Egyptian kings we also see, projecting from the forehead of the ruler, the figure of a serpent (the uraeus).

How is this apparent duplication, in an ancient Central American carving, of a peculiarly Egyptian symbol of rulership to be explained? Surely the most likely explanation—especially in view of the several other Near Eastern-like elements already noted in this carving—is that the latter is the work of an ancient Near Eastern people in Central America, such as the “Lehites” of the Book of Mormon—if not indeed the “Lehites,” since these people were almost certainly acquainted with this Egyptian symbol (having been heavily influenced by Egyptian culture; compare above, page 13). This, therefore, is yet another indication in support of the correspondence we have been discussing.

CORRESPONDENCE V(??)

Feature 4 (specific correspondence and identification): Another of the four persons seated in front of the old bearded man. He (or she) appears to wear an orientallike turban; and seems to be in

⁴⁶See, e.g., Jastrow, Jr., *op. cit.*, Pls. VII, Fig. 1, and LV, Fig. 2.

attendance upon the large young man with the stylus seated immediately in front of him, holding what is clearly an umbrella or parasol above the young man's head (probably to identify him as a ruler; see above, discussion of that feature).

This person corresponds somewhat to Sam, third of the four sons of Lehi in the Book of Mormon account to whom Lehi narrated his vision of the Tree of Life. For Sam in that account is indicated to have supported Nephi in his rulership of the colony, in contrast to their two elder brothers Laman and Lemuel;⁴⁷ while this person in the Izapa scene is shown supporting, in a way (i.e. by holding the umbrella rulership-symbol above him), the rulership of the young man corresponding—as we have seen—to Nephi (in contrast to the remaining two of the four seated in front of the old man, who correspond somewhat to Lehi's two eldest sons, Laman and Lemuel; see also below).

CORRESPONDENCE VI(?)

Feature 5 (specific correspondence and identification): Another of the four persons seated in front of the old bearded man. He (or she) wears a high pointed turban that has a pendant neck cloth at the back, is seated apparently cross-legged oriental-fashion with back to the tree, and has his mouth open and hands extended as though discussing something with the old man.

This person corresponds rather closely to Laman in the Book of Mormon episode: Note that Laman was a comparatively young man at the time of that episode, and was the first or eldest of the four sons of Lehi in that account; while this person in the Izapa scene is also evidently a comparatively young man, and is the first of the four, corresponding to those four sons, that are seated in front of the old man corresponding to Lehi—the logical position of the eldest son in such an episode as recorded in the Book of Mormon. These two agreements, of course, are not a sure indication of the identity of this person according to the Book of Mormon account. An additional slight indication, however, may be seen in the fact that he is seated with back to the tree, as also the second

⁴⁷1 Ne. 2:17-18; 7:6; 2 Ne. 5:6; Al. 3:6.

of the four persons seated in front of the old man, i.e. these two of the six persons have their backs to the Tree of Life; which recalls Lehi's declaration that Laman, as also his second son Lemuel, refused to partake of the fruit of the tree. Observe also that this person, and again the second of the four, are the two smallest of the six seated persons; just as we might expect *Nephite* artists to portray Laman and Lemuel, the ancestors of the Lamanites, the people of the Book of Mormon who were the enemies of the Nephites.

The turban worn by this person, it will be noted, closely resembles a type of turban or headdress often worn in the southwestern Asiatic homeland of the Book of Mormon peoples, in its having a pendant neck cloth at the back.

CORRESPONDENCE VII(?)

Feature 6 (specific correspondence and identification): Another of the four persons seated in front of the old bearded man. He (or she) also wears a high pointed turban that has a pendant neck cloth at the back, like the person just discussed, is also seated apparently cross-legged oriental-fashion with back to the tree, and also has his mouth open and hands extended as though discussing something—in this case, however, facing and apparently conversing with or questioning the large young man with the stylus.

This person corresponds rather closely to Lemuel in the Book of Mormon account: Note that Lemuel was the second eldest of the four sons of Lehi in that account, while this person in the Izapa scene is the second of the four, corresponding to those four sons, that are seated in front of the old man corresponding to Lehi; also that Lemuel (with Laman), not understanding the words of Lehi respecting the tree he saw, questioned Nephi the recorder of the vision as to its meaning, who then explained it to them, just as this person may be seen questioning the large young man with the stylus—i.e. the apparent recorder of what is being said about the tree—who is shown with arm and hand extended as though explaining something to this person seated in front of him. (Additional indications in support of this correspondence and identification are the portrayal of this person with back to the tree and as one of the two

smallest of the six seated persons; see also preceding discussion of Feature 5.)

ADDITIONAL AGREEMENTS, OR POSSIBLE AGREEMENTS, IN SUPPORT
OF CORRESPONDENCE I OR THE BOOK-OF-MORMON IDENTITY
OF THE SIX PERSONS SEATED AROUND THE TREE

Feature 12: A small standing figure in human form, facing one of the persons seated against the tree. Although much smaller than any of the other human or humanlike figures in the carving, it evidently represents an adult personage rather than a child, since it has a high Roman nose and a long mustache and beard (or is wearing a mask with these features). It has a turbanlike headdress; and seems to be bundled, with the arms bound to the sides. Undoubtedly it represents a small image of some kind, possibly an idol.

This figure may be compared with the *teraphim*, small ancestor images or idols of household gods, common in Israelite families from the time of Jacob (see Gen. 31:30-35) to that of Lehi. Its bundled or bound appearance suggests that it may have been an image that was carried about, as often also the Israelite *teraphim*. Although no mention is made in the Book of Mormon account of a *teraph* being involved in the episode of Lehi's narration of his vision of the Tree of Life, one may well have been, since Lehi and his family, being Israelites, may have carried *teraphim* with them in their migration to the New World, and since the setting up of one of these ancestor images on this special religious occasion would have been quite appropriate (like the making of a burnt offering, also depicted; compare above, discussion of Feature 8). On the other hand, this image or idol may have been inserted here by the Izapa artists merely as a ceremonial object to counterbalance the altar—Feature 8—on the other side of the tree, completing the symmetrical arrangement of this part of the sculpture.

Feature 13: Four triangles in the ground panel, pointed upward. These do not present any obvious correspondence to a feature of the Lehi Tree-of-Life episode as recorded in the Book of Mormon. It is not impossible, however, that they are intended to represent

the tents of Lehi and his people, as they tarried in the wilderness at the time of that event.⁴⁸

SOME FINAL COMPARISONS RELATIVE TO THE IDENTITY OF THE SIX PERSONS SEATED AROUND THE TREE

In the preceding pages, numerous agreements have been brought out between the ancient scene carved on Izapa Stela 5 of six persons seated around a representation of the Tree of Life, apparently engaged in a discussion of that symbolic tree, and the Lehi episode recorded in the Book of Mormon of six persons gathered around in a discussion of the Tree of Life, all of which—taken together—strongly tend to identify these two groups of persons. There remain to be made some final comparisons between these two groups relative to this question of their identity.

These are comparisons suggested by one of the postulates of the Book of Mormon account.

In a previous section it was noted that in any portrayal of the Lehi Tree-of-Life episode the people of the Book of Mormon may have made, it is likely that they would have included some definite indication of the identity of the six persons shown gathered around the tree; and that this could best have been achieved by their recording the actual names of these persons near the figures representing them (or at least the name of the principal one among them, the prophet Lehi)—either *phonetically* in an inscription (Old Hebrew or “reformed” Egyptian), giving their form or pronunciation, or *symbolically* by means of a name-glyph (an Egyptian or other symbol), giving their meaning or derivation (see above, page 13). In view of this likelihood, let us now examine the similar Izapa scene specifically to discover whether such a name inscription or hieroglyph occurs in this scene with or near any of the six persons seated around the tree; and if so, whether it records a name for that person *that is the same as or resembles, in either form or meaning, the name of the corresponding person of the Lehi episode.* (The

⁴⁸Although only one tent is mentioned by Nephi at this time, that of his father Lehi (and his family), other families, presumably with their own tents, are indicated to have now been in Lehi's group. At any rate, “tents” are referred to soon after this (1 Ne. 16:12, 13, 17; 17:6).

discovery in the Izapa scene of such a name-recording of Book of Mormon form or meaning will, of course, constitute a decisive addition to the list of agreements tending to identify the six persons of this scene as the six persons of the Lehi episode.)

The Name-glyph and Personal Name of the Old Bearded Man. We should begin this further study with a feature already identified as a name-glyph, i.e. Feature 9, seen above the old bearded man.

It has been shown that this feature is the Mesoamerican *cipactli* glyph and the general name-glyph "Cipactónal," which identifies the old bearded man as one of the famed old men of Mesoamerican tradition called Cipactónal by the Aztecs and Ixpiyacoc by the Quiché Mayans—specifically, in light of other indications, the *second* old man of those names, the reputed ancestor of the ancient peoples of northern Central America (see above, pages 18-23).

But in this earliest known application of the *cipactli* or "Cipactónal" glyph it may also, more particularly, be a glyph-recording of the actual *personal* name of this ancestral old man "Cipactónal" portrayed here. Indeed, in view of the correspondence previously brought out between this ancestral personage and the ancestor-prophet Lehi of the Book of Mormon account, and the likelihood noted above that an inscription or hieroglyph to identify him by giving his name would have been placed by the Book of Mormon people with any portrayal they may have made of Lehi, we must conclude that the *cipactli* glyph here is not only the general name-glyph "Cipactónal," but more specifically a glyph recording the personal name of this particular old man "Cipactónal"—symbolically, by depicting its meaning—as *the Book of Mormon name Lehi*.

This in fact is found to be the case. For the meaning of the name Lehi is the jaws—especially the upper jaw—in side view, i.e. 'cheek.'⁴⁹ And we have already noted that Feature 9, the *cipactli* glyph held above the old bearded man, mainly depicts a pair of huge

⁴⁹This Book of Mormon name Lehi is undoubtedly the Hebrew name Lehi of an ancient place in Palestine mentioned in the Old Testament. A modern Hebrew dictionary (Reuben Grossman and M. H. Segal, *Compendious Hebrew-English Dictionary*, Tel Aviv, 1946) has the word *lēhi* (from which comes the place and personal name) as meaning 'jaw,' 'jawbone,' or 'cheek,' in biblical Hebrew. However, Paul Haupt has shown that the only meaning of this word in biblical times was the side of the face

jaws (those of the crocodile)—especially the upper jaw—in side view, i.e. a great cheek! That is, this glyph is essentially a portrayal of what the name Lehi means. It therefore constitutes—*whether intended or not*—a symbolic recording of that name. (Here then is a *ninth*, and most important, indication of the identity of the old bearded man of the Izapa carving and the prophet Lehi of the Book of Mormon account.)

That Feature 9 is an *intentional* glyph-recording of the name Lehi appears, however, to be the only possible conclusion. For the coincidence of symbol and meaning occurring here seems much too peculiar to be accidental. (The chances of such a symbol as a cheek being associated accidentally, i.e. without reason, with a figure identifiable on other grounds as a person whose name had this same peculiar meaning, must be extremely remote.) It should also be pointed out that the simplest, most direct symbolization of the name Lehi by ancient artists would, of course, have been the depiction of a cheek. This direct pictorial symbolization, moreover, would have been rendered most strikingly by the great cheek or jaws of the crocodile. Indeed the use of the *crocodile's* cheek, or jaws in side view, as a symbol of the name Lehi would perhaps have seemed doubly appropriate to Book of Mormon people who may have had occasion to portray their ancestor Lehi with some such indication of his identity; for the name given the crocodile in Hebrew—the language of the Book of Mormon people of Lehi—was *leviathan* (see above, page 19), which nearly reproduces phonetically in its first part the name Lehi; i.e., the crocodile's cheek, or jaws in side view, would have been both a striking illustration of the *meaning* of the name Lehi, as well as a partial rebus giving its *sound* or pronunciation. It is therefore an additional coincidence in support of the conclusion that Feature 9 is an intentional glyph-recording of the name Lehi that this feature consists mainly of the cheek, or jaws in side view, of the crocodile. (It is true that the great teeth, snout, an eye, an elongate eyebrow, and apparently a fore-leg of that animal are also seen in this glyph, i.e. more than called for by the meaning of Lehi's name; but these—or at least the great teeth and elongate eyebrow—were necessary of course to make clear what the cheek was, i.e. that of the crocodile, the most striking and appropriate symbolization of Lehi's name.)

In view of this further interpretation of Feature 9, as a glyph recording in particular the name of the prophet-ancestor Lehi of the Book of Mormon peoples, we are brought to still another conclusion; namely, that this was the *original* use of the *cipactli* symbol

below the eye including both jaws, especially the upper jaw or cheekbone, i.e. 'cheek': while the lower jaw alone was known by another word, *lōa'* ("Heb. *lēhī*, cheek, and *lōa'*, jaw," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 33 [1914], pp. 290-295; reference from Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert . . .*, Salt Lake City, 1952, p. 44).

in ancient Mesoamerica (Lehi consequently being the *first* of the famed old men to be called "Cipactónal," i.e. the first old man of the *cipactli* glyph—which, it will be noted, implies in turn that this original use of this symbol was not confined to the present occurrence on Izapa Stela 5, but must have been well established in Mesoamerica by the end of the Book of Mormon or preclassic period).⁵⁰ Only in post-Book of Mormon times, according to this interpretation, did it come also to be used as the name-glyph of other famed old men therefore also called "Cipactónal," e.g. the *first* ancestor or original parent of mankind, and the old man who, with his wife and two other ancient "wise ones," invented the calendar in the land of "Tamoanchán." In fact, the further use of this glyph as the sign of the first day Cipactli or Imix of the Sacred Almanac, in the invention of this calendar by the last mentioned "Cipactónal," may *also* have resulted from its original use arrived at here. For according to an ancient Chiapan tradition, the twenty named days of the Sacred Almanac were so named by this "Cipactónal" and his associates in "Nachán" (i.e., very probably, "Tamoanchán") after twenty ancient "lords," the first of whom was "Mox" (or "Imox" or "Imix," i.e. "Cipactónal"), evidently the ancestor of the ancient peoples of Chiapas;⁵¹ i.e., the name of this ancestor and first lord was adopted as the name of the first day of the religious calendar, which day became known as Imox (Imix) or Cipactli, "Crocodile," because the sign already connected with the name of this ancestor and first lord (and therefore adopted along with it for its recording in the calendar) was the *cipactli* or crocodile glyph, mainly the jaws in side view or cheek of the crocodile. And since Lehi of the Book of Mormon was the ancestor and first "lord" of the ancient peoples

⁵⁰Note also the archaic appearance of the glyph here, in conjunction with the fact that the lower as well as upper jaw is shown (although smaller and more faintly, suggesting that the variant without the lower jaw [see above, p. 19 and Pl. 6, c. d] was already developing at this time).

⁵¹Francisco Nuñez de la Vega, *Constituciones dioecesananas del Obispado de Chiappa*, Rome, 1702, pp. 9, 10. On p. 10 of his work this author gives the name of the first ancient "lord" as Mox (i.e. "Cipactónal"), while on p. 9 he states that in Chiapas the "worship" of the day Imox by the native peoples "alludes to the ceiba [tree]. . . . They hold it for very certain with regard to the roots of that ceiba that it was through them their lineage came." Note that this confirms evidence previously brought out (above, p. 20) that one of the famed old men in Mesoamerican tradition called "Cipactónal" was the ancestor of the peoples of northern Central America.

of northern Central America according to that account, whose name was or could have been recorded—as we have seen—by the *cipactli* or crocodile glyph, we are justified in concluding that it was the name of *Lehi*, and hence also his *cipactli* name-glyph, that were adopted for the name and sign of the first day of the Sacred Almanac—the Book of Mormon name *Lehi* being eventually replaced, however, by the name given the *glyph* or *sign* of this day in the later Indian languages of Mesoamerica, i.e. (principally) *Imix* or *Imox* (Mayan) and *Cipactli* (Nahuatl or Aztec).

A confirmation of this reconstruction is found in the fact that the name *Mox* (pronounced *Mosh*, the letter *x* in Mayan orthography having the sound of English *sb*) given the first lord or ancestor of the ancient peoples of northern Central America in the Chiapan tradition, and the name *Imox* (*Imosh*) or *Imix* (*Imish*) given the *cipactli* or crocodile symbol of this first lord and also his calendar day in the Maya and Quiché Mayan languages, duplicate very closely in form and exactly in meaning the Egyptian word *msh*, 'crocodile!' (vowel between the *m* and *s* in this Egyptian word unknown, but may well have been *o* or *i*). In other words, the Mayan name for the crocodile name-glyph and day-sign, which replaced the Book of Mormon name *Lehi* of the first lord and day in the above reconstruction, is actually (according to this evidence) the Egyptian name for the crocodile, only slightly modified—just as in fact we might have anticipated, since the people of *Lehi* (the sculptors of the Izapa monument in this reconstruction) were acquainted with the Egyptian language and therefore may well have called the crocodile glyph, which they fashioned to symbolize the name *Lehi*, by the Egyptian word for 'crocodile,' *m(o?)sh* (as well as by the Hebrew word *leviathan*).⁵²

The Name-glyph and Personal Name of the Person Seated Behind and Attendant Upon the Old Bearded Man. In the preceding, our expectation of finding an inscription or hieroglyph in the Izapa carving associated with the figure of the old bearded man "Cipactónal," recording his personal name as the Book of Mormon name *Lehi*, was strikingly fulfilled by the *cipactli* name-glyph above his head. This increases the likelihood that a name-glyph (probably of Egyptian type; see above, page 13) also occurs with

⁵²Indeed, not only the *name* of the crocodile glyph but the *glyph itself* may well be Egyptian in origin. For it is conceivably an abbreviation of the Egyptian ideograph for 'crocodile,' a full-figure representation of that animal; i.e., an abbreviation to—mainly—the jaws in side view, required to convey the meaning of the name *Lehi*, 'jaws in side view' or 'cheek.' In other words, the crocodile name-glyph of the old bearded man turns out to be a symbol of Egyptian or at least possible Egyptian origin, just as expected in light of the postulates raised on page 13.

the figure of the person seated behind and attendant upon the old bearded man—Feature 2—*recording this person's personal name as the Book of Mormon name Sariah* (since this person has been shown to have been of almost equal importance to the old bearded man—in fact his consort, the famed ancestress “Oxomoco” of Mesoamerican tradition; see above, pages 19-23—and to correspond to ancestress Sariah of the Book of Mormon, the consort of Lehi). Let us, therefore, examine more closely the vicinity and figure of this second important person among the six seated around the tree, for the discovery of this expected Egyptian symbol recording the name Sariah.

No indication of such a glyph can be found in the vicinity of Feature 2. Turning to the figure itself, however, it will be observed that this person wears a headdress that is most unusual for known Mesoamerican art representations: a tall crown or tiara, consisting of two contiguous roll- or band-like elements at the base, probably encircling the head, and what appear to be two tall feathers (or leaves?) rising upward therefrom side by side, enclosed (held in place?) at the bottom and sides by a pair of long horns. Turning next to the general Near Eastern homeland of the Book of Mormon peoples, we find that this crown or tiara closely duplicates a certain crown seen in ancient Egyptian representations, consisting of a band (which has somewhat the appearance of two contiguous bands) at the base, encircling the head, and two tall feathers rising upward therefrom side by side, enclosed or held in place at the bottom and sides by a pair of long horns(!), and which identifies the wearer as a queen or princess (e.g., as seen worn by the young wife of King Tutankhamen, in the latter's tomb [see Plate 7, *right*]; and by the last Queen Cleopatra, in a carving on the temple at Denderah).⁵³

⁵³This is also the identifying crown of the Egyptian goddess Hathor or Isis, who was worshiped by the Egyptians as the goddess of the sky and of beauty and love, as the consort of Osiris the king of the afterworld (hence she as the *queen* of the afterworld), and as the prototype of the faithful wife and of motherhood. (The only noteworthy difference between this crown worn by the Egyptian queens and queen-goddess and the one worn by the person in the Izapa scene is that the former also has the sun-disk symbol at the bottom of the feathered part, within the horns. We should expect, however, that a simplification of this crown in any later representation might well have consisted of the omission of this element.) That this crown, incidentally, signified a princess as well as a queen seems indicated by the fact that two tall feathers or plumes upright side by side (the central element of this crown) served in Egyptian hieroglyphic writing as an ideogram for the word *shwtj*, 'double plumes,' which word must have brought to the minds of the ancient Egyptians (or itself been suggested) by their word for princess, *swtwns't*.

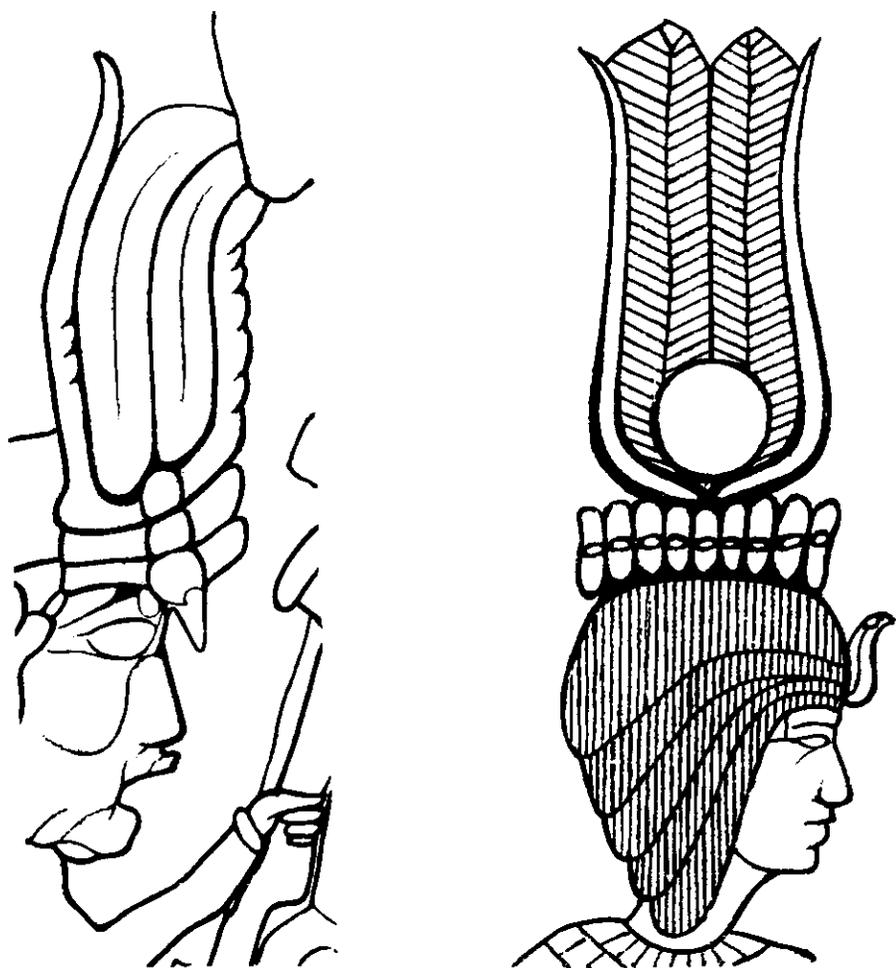


PLATE 7. Horned-and-Feathered Crowns. *Left*: horned and feathered crown worn by figure 2 of the Izapa carving; *right*: the ancient Egyptian horned and feathered crown signifying 'queen' or 'princess' (this example is the crown seen worn by the young wife of King Tutankhamen, in a scene on the back of a throne found in the latter's tomb).

Now there is little doubt that the Book of Mormon people of Lehi were familiar with the various crowns and other royal insignia of ancient Egypt (having been heavily influenced by Egyptian culture, even to the point, for example, of often using a form of Egyptian writing in preference to their own Old Hebrew-Phoenician script), and therefore may well have employed these crowns or insignia in their own art representations whenever appropriate for identifying a ruler. The apparent depiction here of one such Egyptian crown, that identifying a queen or princess, is therefore of considerable significance when the Izapa carving is viewed in the light of the Book of Mormon account. It constitutes, in the first place, a Near Eastern-like motif in the carving, of an arbitrary nature, additional to those previously noted (above, pages 6 and 27) tending to establish this sculpture as the work of a Near Eastern people such as the Book of Mormon people of Lehi. Secondly, it confirms the indications brought out earlier in this study that the person shown wearing this crown was a woman (the second old woman "Oxomoco" or "Ixmučané" of Mesoamerican tradition), as was the corresponding person of the Book of Mormon account, Sariah the wife of Lehi. Thirdly, its apparent identification of the person wearing it as not only a woman but a *queen or princess* is not improbably in further agreement with the Book of Mormon, since the corresponding person of that account, Sariah, may well have come to be regarded as a queen by the people of Lehi (having been the wife of Lehi, their first leader or ruler).⁵⁴ Finally, its signification of 'princess' closely agrees with the *name* of this corresponding person Sariah of the Book of Mormon account. For the meaning of the basic part of this person's name, Hebrew *sārāh*, is also 'princess'! (*Sariab*, 'Princess of Yahweh'). In other words, this crown can be considered as actually a kind of name-glyph (derived from an Egyptian symbol, just as expected), giving the name of the person wearing it as the Book of Mormon name Sariah. (This constitutes the *sixth* and, of course, the most important agreement between the person of the

⁵⁴Cf. the Mesoamerican tradition of the famed old man "Cipactónal" or "Ixpiyacoc" who was the ancestor of the ancient peoples of Guatemala and Chiapas and their *first lord* or king (see above, p. 34), and whose wife the old woman "Oxomoco" or "Ixmučané" was therefore their first "lady" or queen.

Izapa carving seated behind the old bearded man and Sariah of the Book of Mormon account.)

The Name-glyph and Personal Name of the Large Young Man with the Stylus. We have now seen that two of the six persons shown seated around the Tree of Life in the Izapa carving are accompanied by identifying name-glyphs of Egyptian or Egyptian-like type,⁵⁵ and that these glyphs record the actual personal names of these two—i.e. symbolically, by giving their meaning—as the Book of Mormon names Lehi and Sariah.

But if Lehi and Sariah of the Book of Mormon Tree-of-Life episode are thus found apparently identified by name-glyphs of Egyptian type, among the six persons around the Tree of Life in the Izapa carving, should not Nephi—the third important person among the six in this episode—be also found so identified in that carving among the six persons there depicted? (Note that in some respects Nephi must be ranked second in importance only to Lehi in this episode.) In other words, if the Izapa carving is in truth a portrayal of the Lehi Tree-of-Life story of the Book of Mormon, there should also be an Egyptian-like glyph in this carving accompanying the figure of the large young man with the stylus, symbolically recording the Book of Mormon name Nephi.

Before examining the carving for an element that may constitute such a glyph, it will be advisable first to discuss the meaning of the name Nephi. Unfortunately this has not yet been definitely established. One explanation that was proposed several decades ago is that *Nephi* is a rendering of the Hebrew word *nāvî* or *nēvî*, 'prophet.'⁵⁶ (It should be noted that the original pronunciation of the name Nephi was undoubtedly close to the Hebrew word *nēvî* [very probably "Nēphee," with the *ph* pronounced as aspirated *p* rather than as *f*], not the Anglicized pronunciation "Neefy" in use among readers of the Book of Mormon; compare the original pronunciation of the name Lehi—pronounced "Leehy" by Book of Mormon readers—as "Lēhee" [see above, page 32, note 49].) To this etymology, however, it may be objected that Lehi would not likely

⁵⁵For the possible Egyptian derivation of the *cipactli* name-glyph of the old bearded man, see above, p. 35, n. 52.

⁵⁶J. M. Sjodahl, *An Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon*, Salt Lake City, 1927, p. 227.

have named a new-born son 'Prophet'—this was a distinction that could only be earned in later life. There is also negative evidence from the Old Testament against such an application of the word 'prophet' among the Hebrews. In fact, there does not seem to be any acceptable *Hebrew* meaning or derivation for this name.

There remains, however, the possibility that *Nephi* is ancient Egyptian in origin. This would not, in fact, be an unexpected derivation. For according to the Book of Mormon, the Israelite Lehi and his people were greatly influenced by ancient Egyptian culture (even, as previously noted, to the extent of their often using Egyptian writing). Indeed the names of many of the descendants of Lehi as recorded in the Book of Mormon are clearly Egyptian in origin (e.g. *Ammon, Helaman, Korihor, Paanchi, Pachus, Pahoran*), or at least are closer in form to ancient Egyptian names than to Hebrew. Even more significant in the present connection, the name of one of Nephi's own brothers, Sam—for which likewise no Hebrew origin can be found—is also a good Egyptian form.⁵⁷

In accordance with these indications (and the absence of an acceptable Hebrew etymology), an Egyptian derivation also for the name Nephi has recently been proposed; namely, that it is from "*Nihpi*," asserted original name of the Egyptian god "Pa-nepi."⁵⁸ Unfortunately, this particular Egyptian derivation so far suggested is not admissible, for the reason that the name of the god referred to here was not "Pa-nepi" but *Panepi* (if hyphenated, *Pan-epi*), of which the original form was not "*Nihpi*" but very probably *Pahen(i)h*⁵⁹-*epi* ('Ox of Epi,' i.e. the "Apis-bull").⁶⁰ It may be

⁵⁷Cf. Nibley, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁵⁸Nibley, *op. cit.*, p. 29. This writer also notes the resemblance of *Nephi* to *Nehi*, the name of an Egyptian nobleman, and to *Nfy* (probably pronounced *Nefy*), "the name of an Egyptian captain" (more accurately, the Egyptian word for 'ship's captain'); but favors a derivation from "*Nihpi*" because of the latter's inclusion of the *p* sound. (A derivation from the name of the Egyptian nobleman *Nehi* is even less likely in view of the fact that this *Nehi*—an official under the pharaoh Thutmose III—lived over eight hundred years before the time of Lehi, making it extremely doubtful that Lehi would have known his name. A derivation from the Egyptian word *nefy* is also improbable, not only because of the absence of the *p* sound but because of the meaning of this word, it being extremely doubtful that Lehi would have named his son 'Ship's Captain'.)

⁵⁹Rendered *Pan-* in the Greek inscription from which the name *Panepi* is known, the Egyptian sound *h* (guttural *h* as *ch* in Scottish *loch*) not being recordable in the Greek script.

⁶⁰W. Spiegelberg, "The God *Panepi*," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Vol. XII (1926), pp. 34-37.

added that besides the mistaken etymology given here for the Egyptian name Panepi, another reason for rejecting this particular Egyptian derivation of the Book of Mormon name Nephi is that it is not likely that Lehi, an Israelite prophet who emphasized the teachings of Moses, would have named his son after this Egyptian *animal* god Panepi, the "Apis-bull" (a "Nile-god" of fertility and the animal representative of Ptah, a god of the dead).

There is, however, a defensible Egyptian derivation that has not previously been noted. This is that the name Nephi (very probably—as pointed out above—pronounced "Nēphee," with the *ph* an aspirate *p* rather than an *f*) is Lehi's rendering of the Egyptian name of the personification or "god" of grain in Egyptian belief, N(e) pri (from *n[ē]pri*, the Egyptian word for grain).⁶¹ We arrive at this from the fact that an alternative contracted form of the name of this grain god of the Egyptians was *N(ē) pî*, as established by the additional fact that in the representation of this god in the tomb of Seti I (where he is depicted as a young man⁶² wearing two ears of wheat or barley upon his head), both "*N(ē) pri*" and "*N(ē) pî*" are recorded in hieroglyphics by his head, the latter form immediately under or following the former; and as further indicated by the fact that the name of the female counterpart of this personification or god of grain in Egyptian belief, N(e) prit (from

⁶¹For this little-known deity of the Egyptian pantheon, or rather personification of grain, see E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians, or Studies in Egyptian Mythology*, London, 1904, p. 332 (Nepri mentioned in the long list of gods in the Theban Recension of the *Book of the Dead*); G. Maspero, *History of Egypt*. . . ., London, n.d., Vol. I, pp. 51, 54 (Nepri mentioned in the *Hymn to the Nile*, a hieroglyphic text of the Empire period, and in two or three other texts of different periods, and represented in a mural in the tomb of Seti I at Thebes dated c. 1292 B.C.); Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar; Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs*, Oxford, 1927, pp. 472, 546; Jaroslav Černý, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, London, 1952, p. 58. It should be noted that the proper transliteration of this name from the Egyptian hieroglyphics is *Npri*; for the vowel sounds of Egyptian names and words are not recorded in the hieroglyphic writing, or only partially recorded by semi-vowel signs (as in the present case, in which the sign for a semi-vowel, *iy*, occurs at the end where—since it supplies the vocalization of an open [consonant-vowel] syllable—it becomes the long vowel *i*). All that can be said at the present time is that the vowel sound between the consonants of the closed (consonant-vowel-consonant) syllable *Np-* must have been a short vowel. (In ancient Egyptian, open syllables had a long vowel, closed syllables a short vowel; see Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 423). In vocalizing the first syllable of the name *Npri* with the short vowel *ē*, the writer follows the practice of Gardiner (*op. cit.*; see *ibid.*, pp. 18-19).

⁶²He is shown with only a short straight beard, whereas all other male anthropomorphic gods of the Egyptian pantheon are shown with a long curved beard.

N[ě]prî plus the Egyptian ending *t* for a female name), also occurs in the hieroglyphic texts as *N(ě)pit* (*N[ě]pî-t*).⁶³

Now the explanation of this contracted form *N(ě)pî* is the circumstance that in ancient Egyptian *r* was a weak consonant, susceptible to change (to the semi-vowel *îy*) or else to the complete omission of a recorded sound at this point.⁶⁴ Note, however, that when such a change or omission occurred in the case of an *r* immediately following a *p*, as in the present form *N(ě)pî*, it was first a change from *r* to *îy*, in the sound of the expulsion of breath involved in the pronunciation of the *p*—either to the consonantal *y* rendering of the new *îy* sound or to the vowel *î* rendering. In cases where this new sound remained audibly distinct from an immediately following sound, it was necessarily recorded. But when it happened to be followed immediately by the same or nearly same sound, as in the present case, the Egyptian scribe usually left it unrecorded (as also in the present case). Nevertheless, it may have continued to be given some vocalization in actual speech, or at least the aspirate which it had vocalized after the *p* may have been retained in the speech. (That *p* in Egyptian forms was often pronounced with aspirate following, i.e. as *ph*, though the aspirate does not appear in the hieroglyphic recording, is indicated by ancient foreign renderings of Egyptian names containing *p*; note, for example, the following: Egyptian *P[e]rää*, Greek *Pharaô* [Pharaoh]; Egyptian *Petpa-Râ* or *Pabotep-Râ*, Hebrew *Potiphera*; Egyptian *Peleset* or *Pelisetu*, Hebrew *Pelisetim*, Greek *Phulisticim* [Philistines]; Egyptian *Ha'abre'*, Greek *Apries*, Hebrew *Hophra* ["Pharaoh Hophra".]) Consequently the Egyptian name *N(e)pi* would not improbably have been pronounced and written by the Israelite Lehi and his people of the Book of Mormon as *N(e)pî*; and therefore constitutes a completely acceptable etymology for the name of Lehi's son.

This derivation of Nephi's name from the name of the young Egyptian grain god Nepri or Nepi brings us in turn to a further conclusion. This is that the descendants of Lehi and Nephi in the New World, in any portrayal of Nephi such as in the Lehi Tree-

⁶³See Maspero, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 108. (For the change of the long vowel *i* to short vowel *î* in this name see near end of n. 61, above.) The goddess *N(e)pit* or *N(e)pit* is represented in a bas-relief in the temple of Denderah, with her headdress a sheaf of grain.

⁶⁴See Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

of-Life episode, may well have used—as a convenient name-glyph for identifying him therein—the *Egyptian* symbol (already at hand and doubtless known to them) of this young grain god Nepi whose name he bore; i.e., a representation of a young man wearing ears of grain or a grain plant on his head.⁶⁵

Let us now return to the Izapa carving, to ascertain whether the ancient Izapa artists, in their portrayal of the similar Tree-of-Life scene on Stela 5, included therein a symbol identifiable with this Egyptian grain-god symbol, thereby indicating that the name of the person with the stylus corresponding to Nepi of the Book of Mormon episode was in fact the Egyptian and Book of Mormon name Nepi or Nephi, the name of the Egyptian grain god. (Note that this should constitute a rather decisive test of our identification of that person as Nephi of the Book of Mormon.)

Examining the 1941 photograph of the carving (Plate 3), no separate feature can be discovered near the person with the stylus that could be this expected name-symbol of Egyptian type, connoting the Egyptian-Book of Mormon name Nephi. A clue as to where it might be found, however, is provided by the apparent fact that the name-glyph of the person seated behind and attendant upon the old bearded man, identifiable as an Egyptian symbol recording the name of this person—a woman—as *Sariab* (or at least having the basic meaning of that Book of Mormon name), is comprised by her unusual headdress. May not the expected Egyptian name-glyph of the large young man with the stylus, recording *his* name as *Nephi*, be likewise found in the unusual headdress he also is shown wearing?

A close study of the 1941 photograph, with a magnifying glass, reveals that this headdress of the young man consists of two sections, lower and upper. The lower—seen immediately above his eye, directly behind the serpent projecting from his forehead—is quite clearly a human face in profile, with what seem to be leaves projecting backward from it and hanging down the young man's back. The upper section is seen to be a plant rising above this human face;

⁶⁵In view of their partly Egyptian culture, it is difficult to see how the Lehi-Nephite people would not have known of this symbol of such a common Egyptian belief as the personification of grain. In other words, a glyph for symbolically recording the name Nephi was already at hand to them, making unnecessary the invention of a new one.

note that it has two parts, a lower consisting of a mass of small leaf-like elements that curl outward only slightly or not at all, and an upper consisting of other leaflike elements, with two groups of leaves curling widely outward in opposite directions, and what seem to be other leaves or pointed growing parts extending upward between them, partly over the foot of the kilted human figure seen standing above. (Compare the drawing reproduction in Plate 5.)⁶⁶ Specifically, the human-face section of this headdress is very probably intended to represent that of *a young man*, and the plantlike section rising above it, *a young maize plant*. For in Maya art (which, as will be shown later, was related to the art of Izapa) is occasionally seen what is essentially the same peculiar combination: a human face or figure—that of a young man—with the face in profile and a plant rising above it as a headdress or growing out of it (or the leaves of the plant framing the face; compare the leaf-like elements projecting backward from the face in the Izapa headdress), the plant in these representations now known to be a young maize plant, or else clearly shown to be an ear of maize with leaves curling outward from it. (See Plate 8, *b-d*.)

Now the reader has doubtless already observed that this peculiar headdress worn by the person with the stylus—very probably a young man's face in profile with a maize (i.e. Indian corn or *grain*) plant rising above it as a headdress or growing out of it (and the related Maya representations of a young man's figure with the face in profile and an ear of maize [i.e. grain] rising above it as a headdress or growing out of it)—essentially duplicates the representations of the ancient Egyptian grain god Nepri or Nepi seen in Egyptian art, i.e. a young man's figure with the face in profile and ears of wheat or barley [i.e. grain] rising above it as a headdress or growing out of it. (Again see Plate 8; compare especially figures *d* and *e*.) In other words, this headdress is in fact the name-glyph we were expecting to find!—a symbol connected with the figure of the young

⁶⁶That the upper plantlike section is a part of the headdress of the person with the stylus, and separate from the umbrella (occupying the space where the latter's left end would have been), has been verified—initially by one of the writer's students in archaeology at Brigham Young University, Carl Hugh Jones—in an examination of a cast of the Izapa monument now in the Department of Archaeology, prepared from a latex mold of the carving obtained in the course of the Department's Middle American expedition of 1958.

man with the stylus and identifiable with the Egyptian grain-god symbol,⁶⁷ thereby indicating that his name was that of the Egyptian grain god, Nepri or Nepi (latter form, as we have shown, probably pronounced with the *p* aspirated), i.e. that he was the corresponding young man Nephi of the Book of Mormon. (This constitutes the *seventh* and, of course, the most important agreement between the large young man of the Izapa carving and Nephi of the Book of Mormon account. Note that this grain-god headdress does not—as might at first be thought—identify the young man of the Izapa carving as the grain god himself, since for this significance the grain plant would have been shown rising immediately above the face of the young man [instead of above *another* face above *his* face, that is the actual representation of the grain god]. This leaves only two possibilities: Either [1] this grain-god headdress-glyph identifies the young man as a *priest-representative* of the grain god, or [2]—the conclusion required here by his detailed correspondence in character and role to Nephi of the Book of Mormon—it signifies that he *bore the name* of that god, i.e. it is a *name-glyph*, recording his name as the name of that god.)

This essential duplication in the Izapa carving of the Egyptian grain-god symbol is sufficiently remarkable to render the explanation of *accident* highly improbable,⁶⁸ and therefore to establish the above interpretation of the headdress of the young man as very probably correct. Making this interpretation even more likely, however, is the fact that other apparent duplications of an Egyptian symbol—as brought out in preceding pages—also occur in the Izapa carving. A still further confirmation is the fact that the similar young-man-with-grain-plant-headdress symbol in Maya and Aztec art and hieroglyphics represented a grain god as did the Egyptian—who was, moreover, apparently identical to the Egyptian god: This Mesoamerican grain god, besides being symbolized by the figure of a man with a grain-plant headdress, was the *personification* of growing grain, is

⁶⁷The fact that this young-man-with-grain-plant-headdress symbol discovered in the Izapa carving and that seen in Maya art differ *stylistically* and in one or two details from the grain-god symbol of the Egyptians is not significant, since these representations are from ancient peoples widely separated geographically, which makes such differences inevitable between traits of the same origin. Among the differences thus accounted for is that in the particular grain shown: The maize plant or ear of maize in the Izapa and Maya representations differs of course from the ears of wheat or barley in the Egyptian, because maize was (or had become) the staple grain of the Mesoamerican peoples.

⁶⁸Note the peculiarity of the concept involved in this symbol, that of a man with a grain plant on his head; and the additional fact that the duplication occurs in relation to the only person among the six in the carving who corresponds to the only person among the six in the Book of Mormon account whose name could have been recorded by this symbol.

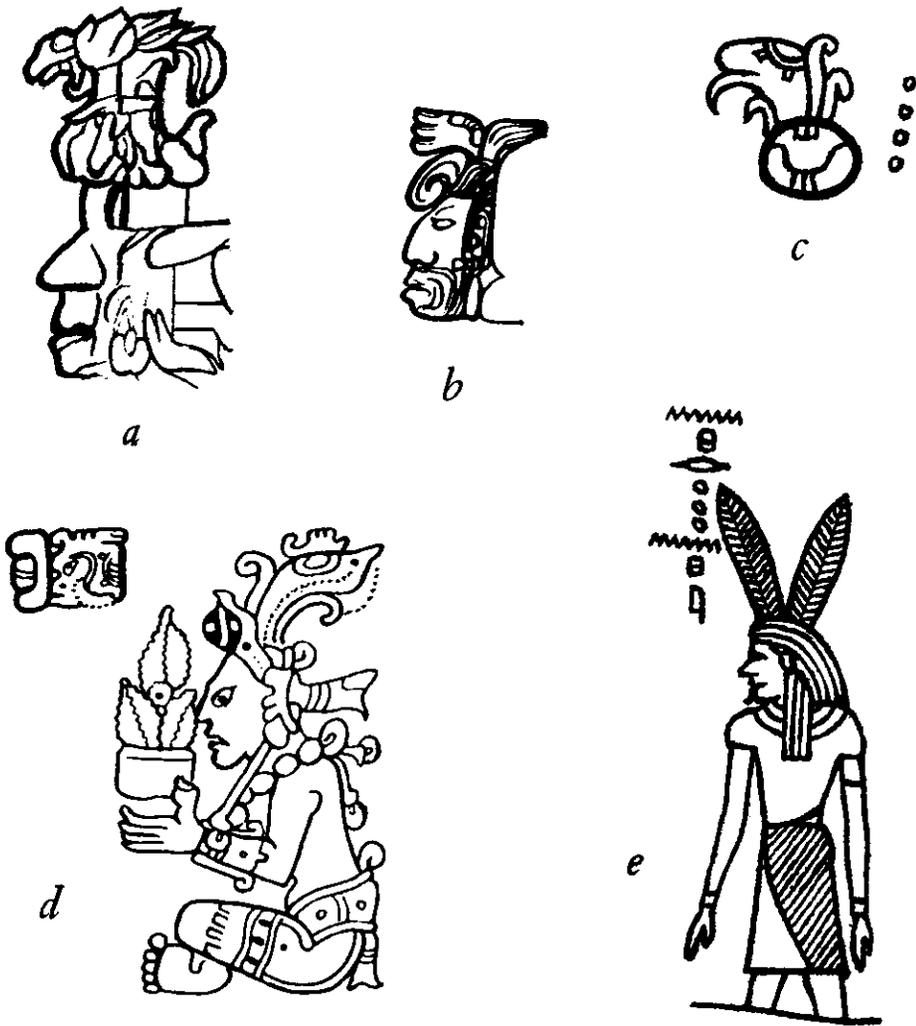


PLATE 8. Versions of the Young-man-with-grain-plant-headdress Symbol. *a*: Face with grain-plant headdress, worn as a headdress by the young man with the stylus in the Izapa carving; *b*: example of the symbol of a face with young maize- (i.e. grain-) plant headdress seen in Maya hieroglyphics (face-sign for number 8; after Bowditch, *The Numeration, Calendar Systems, and Astronomical Knowledge of the Mayas*, Pl. XVI); *c*: another method of rendering the maize plant in Maya art (ear of maize with leaves curling outward, growing from the Kan or maize sign, with kernels of corn at the side, Codex Tro-Cortesianus, p. 28); *d*: example of stylized full-figure representations of the "Young Corn or Grain God" in Maya art, with the grain-plant headdress an ear of corn with leaves curling outward (Codex Dresdensis, p. 12); *e*: example of stylized full-figure representations of the young corn or grain god Nepri or Nepi in Egyptian art, with the grain-plant headdress two ears of wheat or barley (after M. G. Lefébure, *Les Hypogées Royaux de Thèbes. Première Division: Le Tombeau de Sèti 1er* [Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission Archéologique Française au Caire, 1882-1884, T. II], Paris, 1886, Quatrième Partie, Pl. XXXI).

always represented as a *young* man, and had a female counterpart, the grain goddess,⁶⁹ exactly like the Egyptian deity. In other words, there was a grain god in the ancient religion of Mesoamerica who *conceivably* derived from the Egyptian grain god, and whose young-man-with-grain-plant-headdress symbol therefore conceivably derived from the similar symbol of the Egyptian deity; which would be explained by the original use of that symbol in Mesoamerica as a means of recording the *name* of the Egyptian grain god, Nepri, Nepi, or Nephi, in accord with our interpretation of the headdress of the young man in the Izapa carving.

Still Further Comparisons Bearing Upon the Identity of the Six Seated Persons. The discovery, in the above extended examination of the Izapa monument, of name-glyphs in the carving apparently recording the names of three of the six seated persons as the *Book of Mormon* names Lehi, Sariah, and Nephi, constitutes of course a rather decisive confirmation of the many indications of their Book of Mormon identity brought out in previous pages. Nevertheless, there are still further comparisons to be made between the Izapa carving and the Book of Mormon account of the Tree of Life, that should definitely settle this question of their identity. These are comparisons of the many remaining features of the carving with the many features of the actual Lehi vision of the Tree of Life as narrated by Lehi to his family gathered around, in the Book of Mormon account. That is, if correspondences also occur between these *remaining* parts of the Izapa and Book of Mormon treatments of the Tree of Life theme, there can be no doubt left that the six persons depicted in the Izapa carving are indeed the six persons of the Lehi Tree-of-Life episode recorded in the Book of Mormon. These further comparisons are undertaken next.

The Vision Itself, as Narrated by Lehi and Recorded and Explained by Nephi

CORRESPONDENCE VIII(?)

Lehi in the Book of Mormon, speaking "the words of his dream or vision," as quoted by Nephi: "*For behold, methought I saw in my dream, a dark and dreary wilderness. And . . . I saw a man, and he was dressed in a white robe; and he came and stood before me.*"

⁶⁹See, e.g., Sylvanus G. Morley, *The Ancient Maya*, Stanford, 1947, pp. 225-226; George C. Vaillant, *Aztecs of Mexico*, Garden City, N. Y., 1944, pp. 178-179.

And . . . he spake unto me, and bade me follow him. And . . . as I followed him I beheld myself that I was in a dark and dreary waste. And after I had traveled for the space of many hours in darkness, I began to pray unto the Lord that he would have mercy on me, according to the multitude of his tender mercies. And . . . after I had prayed unto the Lord I beheld a large and spacious field. And . . . I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy. . . .

Izapa scene, Feature 14: A mysterious, humanlike figure in a long tunic or robe, with the head concealed by a large hood (which seems to have a tassel pendant from the top down the back). It stands in the air (or at least above the ground panel, in contrast to the six seated persons), in the direction of the tree from the old man, facing the tree with arms outstretched towards it.

This figure corresponds rather closely, in character and role, to the man in a white robe that Lehi saw at the beginning of his dream or vision, as recounted above from the Book of Mormon: (1) Its apparent standing in the air and humanlike form, and the concealment of its features, indicate that it was a supra-mortal personage or spirit of unknown identity, like the mysterious personage—doubtless an angel or spirit—that Lehi saw; (2) it is shown in the direction of the tree from the old man, facing the tree—i.e. the Tree of Life—with arms outstretched towards it, in agreement with Lehi's statements indicating that the personage he saw guided him—i.e. the old man in the Book of Mormon account—to a tree, later identified as the Tree of Life; and (3) it wears a long tunic or robe, also like the personage Lehi saw. (It is true that this robe is not shown as white, like that worn by the personage seen by Lehi. This is not, however, a significant difference; for it may well have originally been painted white as required. In fact ancient sculptures of both the Old and New Worlds were usually or often painted, in one or more colors; but of course any ancient paint on the Izapa sculpture would probably have long since been weathered away.)

It must be acknowledged that no correspondences can be found in the Izapa scene to some of the other features or occurrences of the Lehi vision indicated in this quotation: namely, the "dark and dreary wilderness" or "waste" through

which the robed personage guided Lehi to the tree (unless this is signified by the triangles in the ground panel on this side of the scene, which possibly represent mountains⁷⁰); the coming and speaking of this personage to Lehi before his guiding him; Lehi's following this personage and traveling "many hours in darkness" in the wilderness or waste; and his praying to "the Lord," before finally seeing the tree. The absence of these features, however, cannot be considered significant, since their depiction would have presented special difficulties to the ancient artists—particularly the third, Lehi's traveling "many hours in darkness." In view of the limitations of space, ancient Nephite artists attempting to portray Lehi's vision in stone might well have been satisfied with indicating only the *conclusion* of this series of occurrences involved in Lehi's discovery of the tree, by showing his guide, the robed personage, finally at or gesturing towards the tree, like the robed personage in the Izapa scene—Lehi himself already being depicted in the subsequent act of narrating the vision. Correspondences to the remaining features mentioned here, however—i.e. the tree itself that Lehi finally saw and a "large and spacious field," are established in following discussions.

CORRESPONDENCE IX

Lehi in the Book of Mormon: *"And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy. And . . . I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen. . . ."*

Izapa scene, Feature 15: A representation of a living tree, with eight branches spreading out at the top, on which are leaves and fruit; note also the roots in the ground panel, and the indications of bark on the thick trunk. It comprises the central feature of the sculpture.

Feature 16: A bird, apparently eating of the fruit of the tree. This indicates—whether intended or not by the ancient artists—that the fruit of this tree was edible.

Feature 15, the tree, corresponds of course to the tree of the Book of Mormon account: (1) It is depicted as a living tree, like the tree seen by Lehi in that account; (2) it bears fruit that (as indicated by Feature 16) was edible, also like the tree that Lehi

⁷⁰Instead of the tents of Lehi as previously suggested, above, pp. 30-31.

saw; and (3) it was evidently the central feature of the event depicted by this sculpture, just as the tree that Lehi saw was the central feature of the Book of Mormon episode. (It is true that there is no indication in the carving that the fruit of this tree, like that of Lehi's vision, in addition to being edible was "most sweet" to the taste and "desirable to make one happy," and very white in color; or of the old man, like Lehi, partaking of this fruit. But these are not significant absences of agreement that nullify the correspondence. For there was hardly any way by which the ancient artists could have indicated in stone that the fruit of this tree was "most sweet," beyond showing it being eaten, as already by means of Feature 16. Moreover, the rounded bosses representing the fruit may well have originally been painted white as required, which paint, however, would probably have long since been weathered away. Finally, as to Lehi's partaking of the fruit of this tree, the absence of a portrayal of this can easily be attributed to lack of space and/or the fact that a person corresponding to Lehi—the old bearded man—was already depicted in another act. In any case, the correspondence of Feature 15 to the tree seen by Lehi in his vision is brought very close by two additional agreements, of an arbitrary nature, brought out in the following.)

Nephi's explanation of the tree that Lehi saw: *This tree "was a representation of the tree of life . . . , whose fruit is most precious and most desirable above all other fruits" [since it gives everlasting life]; which tree of life, in turn, was a representation of "the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men," as personified by the "Lamb" or "Son of God," i.e. the Messiah, who should go forth at a future time "among the children of men" and be slain in payment for their sins [thereby gaining for them everlasting life].*

Features 17 and 18: Two personages, the largest of the human and humanlike figures in the scene, standing facing the tree on either side, as though worshiping or guarding it. They are very probably guardian spirits or genii, since they are apparently standing in the air, and are much larger than the six human figures seated on the ground panel. As brought out previously, they closely re-

semble the two guardian spirits or genii seen in ancient Assyrian representations of the Tree of Life in the Near East. Like the Assyrian genii or cherubim, they stand facing a tree on either side, in an attitude of worship or guardianship, in a conventionalized stance consisting of the face more or less in profile, the shoulders in full front or three-quarters view, but the legs and feet again in profile and in tandem, one advanced before the other; also like the Assyrian cherubim, they are bird-headed; and again like the Assyrian cherubim, they hold baglike objects, and a pointed object raised towards the tree (see also above, page 6).

Further on Feature 17: The larger of the two personages. As just noted, this figure has a Mesopotamian-like (also Egyptian-like) stance; and seems to have the head of a bird (or to wear a bird's-head mask) like a Mesopotamian (specifically Assyrian) cherub, with a long bill projecting to the tree. It wears an animal skin around the waist (note the tail)—probably a jaguar skin, which is often shown in ancient Maya art as worn by hieratic personages, identifying them as representatives of the Rain or Life God (see also below, discussion of Feature 19); also a bead necklace; and an elaborate headdress, the upper part of which is a mask with a long curled nose like an elephant's trunk—the mask of the "Long-nosed Rain God" of Maya art, again identifying this personage as a representative of that deity. Finally, as also noted, this personage seems to hold with each hand a tasseled baglike object, recalling the baglike objects held by the cherubim in Mesopotamian (Assyrian) representations of the Tree of Life.

Further on Feature 18: The smaller of the two personages. This figure also has a Mesopotamian-Egyptian-like stance; and likewise appears to have the head of a bird (or to wear a bird's-head mask)⁷¹ like a Mesopotamian (Assyrian) cherub, with a short bill. It is, moreover, apparently winged—still another similarity to the Assyrian cherubim; indeed, as previously brought out, one wing seems to be outstretched (seen between the personage's head and the tree), and the other hanging down the back, just as in the case of the Assyrian cherubim. This personage wears a short fringed tunic; and, as also noted, holds with one hand a pointed object raised towards the tree, recalling the pointed objects raised towards the tree by the cherubim in Assyrian representations of the Tree of Life. (For the various interpretations that have been given of these similar objects held by the Assyrian cherubim, again see above, page 6.)

Now it can hardly be denied that these similarities of the two personages here described to the cherubim in the Assyrian representations of the Tree of Life are not only sufficiently close but

⁷¹First noted by Stirling, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

also sufficiently arbitrary and in sufficient number to identify, to a high degree of probability, the tree that these two personages are facing in this Izapa scene *as also a representation of the Tree of Life*. This identification is further established by the circumstance that in the Maya representations of the Tree of Life, one of the two personages standing facing the holy tree or plant on either side in an attitude of worship is shown larger than the other, as also here; and is definitely established by other features of the Izapa carving itself, as brought out in the following discussions. Moreover, this tree represented in the Izapa sculpture, the Tree of Life as thus established, was not merely a symbol of life itself but more specifically *a symbol of the ancient Rain and Life God of Mesoamerica*, as the bringer of life. This is indicated by two of the accoutrements of the larger of the two personages accompanying the tree, as brought out in the separate discussion of Feature 17. It is also indicated by the fact that in the Maya representations (see e.g. Plate 2, upper figure) the larger personage holds the "Manikin Scepter,"⁷² long known to have been a symbol of the Rain and Life God; and by the additional fact, already noted, that above the tree itself in these representations is depicted a serpent-headed quetzal-bird, essentially a name-glyph of the Mesoamerican Life God as known by the name *Quetzalcóatl*, i.e. 'Quetzal-bird or Precious-feathered Serpent.' (It should be noted here that the original name of this god—the most important deity of the ancient Mesoamericans, whose worship dates back to the Preclassic age—is unknown. In the Postclassic or Militaristic age, however, he was worshiped under various titles, designating various personifications of his different aspects that had developed by that late time [i.e. almost separate gods], the principal being *Quetzalcóatl* and *Tlaloc* in the Aztec writings and *Itzamná* and *Chac* in the Maya⁷³—the first title in each of these pairs of names designating him as God of the Sky and [under the additional title *Ebecatl*] of the rain-bringing winds, and also of the life-giving rains themselves [*Itzamná*, for example, is stated to mean 'The Dew of Heaven'], as well as the god of health, wisdom, civilization, and peace, and as the son of the Supreme

⁷²A small humanlike figure or short staff surmounted by the head of a tapir, a large water animal of tropical America.

⁷³See also above, p. 7, n. 9.

Creator God [Aztec, *Tloque Nabuaque*; Maya, *Hunab Ku*] and associated with Him in the creation, particularly the creation of man; and the second in each pair designating more specifically the personification of his aspect as God of the Rains or life-giving water, and therefore also of agriculture.⁷⁴)

Feature 19: Two horizontal panels, framing the tree and the rest of the scene above, and containing conventionalized elements of the "jaguar mask"⁷⁵ (the face of the jaguar; here the nose of the jaguar is represented by the three elements in the central part of the upper panel, while two curved tusks of this animal are distinguishable in the outer parts of the lower panel). In ancient Mesoamerican iconography, the jaguar or jaguar mask seems to have been the oldest and most popular symbol of the Sky, Rain, and Life God (i.e. Quetzalcóatl or Itzamná; see above). The placement here of a jaguar mask above the tree appears to be a further indication, therefore (i.e. additional to that presented by the two cherubimlike personages previously discussed), that this tree was connected with that god, i.e. was the Tree of Life and one of his symbols.

That the Tree of Life in ancient Mesoamerican religion was a symbol specifically of this chief god Quetzalcóatl or Itzamná, like the quetzal-feathered serpent and the jaguar,⁷⁶ is well attested both archaeologically and in the early writings. Part of the archaeological evidence has been brought out in the preceding discussions and on page 1. Two of the rather explicit indications in the early writings may be mentioned here. One is a reference of the Aztec historian Ixtlilxochitl to a certain ancient priest of Mexico called "Quetzalcóatl" (one of several such priests known to have borne the title of the god Quetzalcóatl, as his chief representatives), stated to have been "the first who sanctified and set up the Cross [i.e. the Tree of Life; see above, page 1], which they [the Aztecs] called *Quiaubtzteotl chibabualizteotl*, and . . . *Tonacaquahuítl*, which means God of the Rains and of Health, and Tree of Sustenance or of Life."⁷⁷ This definitely iden-

⁷⁴As one of many indications of this original identity of Quetzalcóatl or Itzamná and Tlaloc or Chac, we may here mention the alternation of the feathered-serpent symbol of Quetzalcóatl with the jaguar symbol of the Rain God on the same temple, namely the First Temple of Quetzalcóatl at the ruined city of Teotihuacán in central Mexico.

⁷⁵Cf. Stirling, *loc. cit.*

⁷⁶Still another of his symbols being jade, a semi-precious stone that, like the feathers of the quetzal-bird, has the green color of growing vegetation, i.e. the color signifying life, and was a symbol of life-giving water.

⁷⁷*Obras históricas de Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, ed. by Alfredo Chavero. Mexico, 1952, T. I, p. 20.

tifies Quetzalcóatl, the god of this priest, as the Rain God—though better known in this aspect as Tlaloc—and the “Cross” or Tree of Life as the symbol of this god. The other reference we may cite here occurs in a prophecy of the famed Maya *chilám* or ‘prophet’ Balám to his people the Maya Itzás (the ancient ruling people of Yucatán, whose patron god was Itzamná, the god of the Maya pantheon equivalent to Quetzalcóatl of the Toltecs and Aztecs), in which that people are exhorted to worship the *Yax Cheel Cab* or ‘Green [i.e. Living] or First Tree of the World,’ the “raised wooden standard” with a bird surmounting it—undoubtedly the Tree of Life of Maya religious art; compare above, page 1—explained as “the sign of Hunab Ku” or “sign of God,” which—the prophet advises the Itzás—will come or be raised up (again?) at the coming (i.e. return?) of Itzamná “our lord,” “our elder brother.”⁷⁸ This *Yax Cheel Cab* or Green (or First) Tree of the World referred to by the Maya prophet Balám is clearly the same as the *Tonacaquabuitl* or Tree of Sustenance or Life spoken of by the Aztec historian Ixtlilxochitl. It appears, incidentally, to have always been worshiped by the Itzás of the Petén region of southern Yucatán. Thus when the Spaniard Avendaño y Loyola visited these people in 1697, he found them worshipping a column which they called the “*Yax cheel cab*, which means in their language ‘the first tree in the world.’” This tree, Avendaño goes on to indicate, was the Tree of Life, for “it is understood in their [the Itzás’] old songs—which few people understand—that they wish to have it known they worship [this tree] because it was the tree of whose fruit our first father Adam ate, who in their language is called Ixanom.”⁷⁹

Feature 20: Two fish, hanging head down from the jaguar mask panels. They are probably an additional symbol, with the jaguar mask, that the tree or central feature of the sculpture was connected with the Rain, Water, or Life God, i.e. was the Tree of Life. (In the Maya hieroglyphic books, representations of fish have definitely been interpreted as symbols of “God B” or Chac,⁸⁰ i.e. the Rain or Water God aspect of Itzamná or Quetzalcóatl.)

As previously brought out, this fish symbol of the Rain or

⁷⁸*The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel*, ed. and trans. by Ralph L. Roys (Carnegie Institution of Washington, Pub. No. 438), Washington, 1933, pp. 61-62, 167-168. Here Itzamná is called *Itzamná Kauil* (in which the additional title *Kauil* appears to designate him as the divine patron of the crops and provider of food); also *ca yum*, ‘our lord,’ and *ca zucun*, ‘our elder brother’; and seems to be identified with his father the Supreme Creator God, Hunab Ku or “God,” or to have shared with him the symbol of the Tree of Life.

⁷⁹Andrés de Avendaño y Loyola, *Relación de los dos entradas que hizo a la conversión de los gentiles Ytzaex*, as partly published in Philip A. Means, *History of the Spanish Conquest of Yucatan and of the Itzas* (Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Vol. VII), Cambridge, Mass., 1917, p. 135.

⁸⁰Paul Schellhas, *Representation of Deities of the Maya Manuscripts* (Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Vol. IV, No. 1), Cambridge, Mass., 1904, p. 17.

Water God in ancient Mesoamerican religion, especially as seen in the Izapa carving associated with the Tree of Life and cherubim-like personages, has an interesting correspondence in the ancient religious art of Mesopotamia in the Near East. For in representations of the Tree of Life in that art, the two guardian personages or cherubim are sometimes shown wearing the body of a fish, identifying them as representatives of the Assyro-Babylonian Water God, Ea.

Feature 21: Several birds (additional to Feature 16), apparently pelicans (definitely four and possibly seven can be distinguished). Since pelicans are fishing and water birds, these may be interpreted as still another signification that the tree was connected with the Rain, Water, or Life God, i.e. was the Tree of Life. Note also the location of these pelicanlike birds in the composition, under the right end of the jaguar mask panels, corresponding symmetrically to the two fish hanging from the left end; in other words, if the above interpretation is correct, these water birds serve to complete the pattern of symbols above the tree (and on either side of it, in the cherubimlike personages) identifying it as the emblematic tree of the Water or Life God. This interpretation is further confirmed by the fact that in the Maya sculptures of the region, the pelican is associated with the "Long-nosed Rain God,"⁸¹ i.e. "God B" of the Maya codices or Chac, the Rain or Water God aspect of Itzamná.

Feature 22: Conventionalized representations of the heads of a two-headed serpent,⁸² which appears in Maya symbolic art as a variant of or related to the "Two-headed Dragon," a monster having the body of a crocodile with a crocodilelike head at each end (the heads, however, with serpentlike jaws and fangs), and which has been identified with the crocodile earth-monster of Aztec symbolism.⁸³ The heads are elaborately modeled, with bared fangs, and face inward towards the tree. Note that they frame the central

⁸¹Herbert J. Spinden, *A Study of Maya Art; its Subject Matter and Historical Development* (Memoirs of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Vol. VI), Cambridge, Mass., 1913, pp. 78-79 and Fig. 79.

⁸²Cf. Stirling, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁸³See Spinden, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50, 53-56, 59-60; Thomas A. Joyce, *Maya and Mexican Art*, London, 1927; J. Eric Thompson, *The Civilization of the Mayas* (Field Museum of Natural History, Anthropology Leaflet 25), Chicago, 3rd ed., 1936, p. 35; also above, p. 19.

tree feature on either side. Is this intended to indicate that the tree represented as growing between them—which we have now amply shown to be the Tree of Life—grew in the center of the earth? This is borne out by the fact that in the early Maya *Book of Chilám Balám of Chumayel*, the *Yax Cheel Cab* or Tree of Life is spoken of in one place as the *Yax Imix Cbe* or 'Green Tree of Abundance' that "was set up in the center of the world."⁸⁴ Moreover the modern Maya believe that the *Yax Cheel Cab* or Tree of Life (held to be a giant ceiba-tree) grew in the exact center of the earth.⁸⁵

In conclusion, the foregoing interpretation of features 17 to 22 fully establishes, first of all, that the central tree feature of the Izapa sculpture is a representation of the Tree of Life of ancient Mesoamerican (as well as Near Eastern) religion, i.e. a tree whose fruit provided sustenance or life beyond that provided by the fruit of an ordinary tree, and which grew in the center of the earth. Turning now to the Book of Mormon account of the Lehi vision, it is recalled that the tree that Lehi saw in his dream or vision is explained by his son Nephi as having *also* been, first of all, a representation of the Tree of Life—"whose fruit is most precious" since it gives everlasting life (and which grew in the Garden of Eden, the center of the biblical earth). Here we have, therefore, an additional agreement between the tree in the Izapa carving and the tree seen by Lehi in the Book of Mormon account (the *fourth* such agreement; for the three already brought out, see above, pages 47-48).

Secondly, our interpretation of features 17 to 22 of the Izapa sculpture has shown that the Tree of Life as represented in this carving was a symbol not only of life but more specifically of the Rain, Water, or Life God of ancient Mesoamerica (known in later times under the titles *Itzamná* [Maya writings] and *Quetzalcóatl* [Toltec-Aztec], or—in his major Rain or Water God aspect—*Chac* and *Tlaloc*), and held to be the son of the Supreme Creator God (*Hunab Ku*, 'The One God,' or simply "God"; see also above, pages 50-51).

⁸⁴*Book of Chilám Balám of Chumayel*, ed. and trans. cit., pp. 32, 100.

⁸⁵Alfred M. Tozzer, *A Comparative Study of the Mayas and the Lacandones*, New York, 1907, p. 154.

Turning again to the Book of Mormon account, we find that Nephi goes on to explain that the Tree of Life represented by the tree that Lehi saw was in turn *also* a symbol of a Rain, Water, or Life God, who was held to be the son of the Supreme Creator God! (It was a symbol of "the love of God," as personified by the "Lamb of God" who should come and be sacrificed for the sins of the world, i.e. the Messiah; who was worshiped by the Book of Mormon peoples not only as the Lord of Life [specifically of the Resurrection] but also as the God of the Rains⁸⁶ or life-giving water,⁸⁷ and as the Son of God.) This constitutes, then, still a *fifth* detailed agreement between the tree in the Izapa carving and the tree seen by Lehi in the Book of Mormon account, and completes the correspondence between these trees.

It should be noted that this correspondence is established not only by its completeness (and by the arbitrariness of these last two agreements), but also by the several close similarities the tree and associated features in the Izapa carving present to representations of the Tree of Life in the ancient Mesopotamian arts of the Near East, the general homeland of the Book of Mormon peoples—as many as nine, in the writer's count; see above, pages 6-7, 14, and 48-49. Moreover, although the associated features presenting such Near Eastern similarities—namely the guardian spirit-personages facing the tree, the birds seen near and also facing the tree, and the fish—have no correspondences in the Book of Mormon account of the Lehi vision, two of them, the guardian spirit-personages, may well have been a part of that vision and included in Lehi's narration (among "all the words of his . . . vision, which were many," but skipped over by Nephi in the latter's summary account⁸⁸), since Lehi must surely have been familiar with them as a standard part of the Tree of Life symbol (considering that they are mentioned in the Genesis story known to him from the scriptures, and were—as previously noted—among the religious symbols depicted in ancient Israelite art); and do present a correspondence to other references to the Tree of Life in the Book of Mormon, in which these personages are explicitly mentioned (Al. 12:21; 42:3). They may,

⁸⁶On two widely separate occasions, a great dearth or draught is recorded in the Book of Mormon as having been caused by the withholding of the rains by "the Lord" (the deity chiefly worshiped by the Book of Mormon peoples, identified with Yahweh or the Lord of the Israelites and the Messiah of the Israelite and Book of Mormon prophets), and as having then been terminated by his again sending the rains upon the earth (He. 11:3-17; Eth. 9:28-35).

⁸⁷The Tree of Life which symbolized him is also spoken of by Nephi as the "fountain of living waters."

⁸⁸Nephi, it will be recalled, confesses that he does not speak "all the words" of his father, in order to be "short in writing."

therefore, be listed as a *sixth* agreement between the tree in the Izapa carving and the tree seen by Lehi in the Book of Mormon account.

CORRESPONDENCE X

Lehi in the Book of Mormon: "*And as I partook of the fruit [of the tree] it filled my soul with exceeding great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit. And as I cast my eyes round about, that perhaps I might discover my family also, I beheld a river of water; and it ran along, and it was near the tree of which I was partaking the fruit. And I looked to behold whence it came; and I saw the head thereof a little way off. . . .*"

Izapa scene, Feature 23: A wavy double line with volutes above it. As previously noted, this feature undoubtedly represents a river of water—the wavy double line representing the body of the river, and the volutes, wavelets (note also the dots within both the double line and the volutes, suggesting the sparkling of water). It runs along close by the tree representing the Tree of Life, with its beginning or head a little way off on the right edge of the monument. Curiously, the direction of flow appears to be reversed in its lower part. This suggests that this river was not a clear-flowing stream but a somewhat stagnant course of water. Observe also that its lower part runs *under*, not on, the ground represented by the large panel.

This feature, as already pointed out, closely corresponds to the river of water seen by Lehi in his vision: (1) That river likewise ran along near a tree representing the Tree of Life; and (2) its head or beginning also was a little way off. Moreover, Lehi's son Nephi indicates that this river seen by his father was not a clear-flowing stream but a river of "filthy water" or "filthiness," just as the river in the Izapa carving appears to be—which constitutes a *third* (and quite arbitrary) agreement. Indeed, this river was "an awful gulf, which separated the wicked" from "the tree of life," and was "a representation of that awful hell, which . . . was prepared for the wicked," and "the depths thereof are the depths of hell"—which further explanation possibly constitutes still a *fourth* agreement;

for the depths of this river representing "the depths of hell" may conceivably be indicated in the Izapa carving by the location, as we have noted, of the lower part of the river in that scene *under* the ground panel, at the bottom of the carving.

CORRESPONDENCE XI(???)

Lehi in the Book of Mormon: *"And at the head [of the river of water] I beheld your mother Sariah, and Sam, and Nephi; and they stood as if they knew not whither they should go. And it came to pass that I beckoned unto them; and I also did say unto them with a loud voice that they should come unto me, and partake of the fruit, which was desirable above all other fruit. And . . . they did come unto me and partake of the fruit also. And . . . I was desirous that Laman and Lemuel should come and partake of the fruit also; wherefore, I cast mine eyes towards the head of the river, that perhaps I might see them. And it came to pass that I saw them, but they would not come unto me and partake of the fruit. . . ."*

Izapa scene, returning to Features 1 to 6: As already brought out, features 1 to 6 represent six persons involved in some discussion concerning the Tree of Life. If this scene is a portrayal of the Book of Mormon episode of six persons—Lehi and his family—discussing the Tree of Life, *after* Lehi's experiencing of his vision (see above, pages 12-13), this of course largely precludes any correspondences in the scene to the *previous* positions and actions of these six persons in that vision, as recounted above by Lehi.

Nevertheless, some slight correspondence may be seen between the individual positions of the six persons in the Izapa scene and the attitudes, towards the fruit of the tree, of the six persons in Lehi's vision as recounted by Lehi. Thus the four persons in the Izapa scene corresponding to Lehi, Sariah, Sam, and Nephi of the Book of Mormon account (features 1 to 4) are seated *facing* the tree representing the Tree of Life, suggesting the favorable attitude of these four of the Book of Mormon account towards the fruit of the tree representing the Tree of Life in Lehi's vision, as recounted by Lehi; while the two persons in the Izapa scene corresponding somewhat to Laman and Lemuel of the Book of Mormon account (fea-

tures 5 and 6) are seated *with back* to this tree, suggesting the unfavorable attitude of these same two of the Book of Mormon account towards the fruit of the corresponding tree in Lehi's vision, as also recounted by Lehi.

CORRESPONDENCE XII(?)

Lehi in the Book of Mormon: "*And I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree by which I stood. . . .*"

Izapa scene, Feature 24: A broad, straight line within the ground panel, beginning suddenly, on the side towards the beginning of the river of water represented by Feature 23, and extending along near the river design to the tree representing the Tree of Life.

This corresponds rather closely to the "rod of iron" seen by Lehi in his vision of the Tree of Life recorded in the Book of Mormon. In the first place, it is the very sort of line—broad or heavy, straight, and beginning suddenly—that we might expect ancient artists to depict to represent a rod of iron. (It is true that for a fully realistic representation of a rod of iron, the broad or heavy line should have been in relief rather than cut as a groove. This does not, however, seriously lessen the agreement.) Secondly, it begins on the side of the tree towards the *beginning* of the feature representing a river of water, just as the rod of iron seen by Lehi began on the side of the tree of his vision that was towards the beginning of a river of water also seen by him (as brought out in the continuation of the Book of Mormon account; see below). And thirdly—completing the correspondence—it extends along near the feature representing a river, to the tree representing the Tree of Life, just (or almost) as the rod of iron seen by Lehi "extended along the bank" of a river to a tree representing the Tree of Life!

This rod of iron apparently thus represented, according to Nephi's explanation in the Book of Mormon, was a symbol of "the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish" (i.e. they would not fall into the river of "filthy water" that represented the "depths of hell," but would succeed in reaching the Tree of Life).

CORRESPONDENCE XIII

Lehi in the Book of Mormon: "*And I also beheld a straight and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood; and it also led by the head of the fountain [i.e. river of water]. . . .*"

Izapa scene, Feature 25: A complex of narrow lines, in the right-hand part of the ground panel with the broad line, and between the seated person designated Feature 4 and the river of water designated Feature 23. Among these additional lines will be noted (with the help of a magnifying glass) a connected group of narrow lines, "a," the main part of which, that in the ground panel, is a straight and narrow *double* line running horizontally, parallel to and by—just below—the broad line, all the way to the tree (here one of the roots of the tree). A single line of this "a" group cuts slightly upward from the double line through the raised right-end border of the ground panel and continues on at an increased angle until its further course is blocked by a projecting part of one of the volutes of the river design. (This line is only faintly discernible. Another faint single line seems to duplicate this diagonal course above it—perhaps an attempt to straighten it, or possibly the original cutting for this diagonal part of the "a" group, with the one first described being the attempted improvement.) Curving around this obstruction, the single line then turns upward again a short distance and meets another, horizontal line, at a point where still another begins to diverge slightly upward from it. This latter pair of narrow lines (group "c") runs straight a short distance to the right—in its latter part with the two lines parallel, i.e. in the form of a *double* line—ending at another volute of the river design. (Possibly this "c" group represents an attempt to continue the "a" series after getting around the volute obstruction, as again a straight double line.) Still another narrow line ("b") runs to the left from the beginning of this "c" pair and slightly downward to the ground panel. Reaching the ground panel, this line "b" cuts through the raised border of the panel and, after a downward and then brief upward jog, continues straight on horizontally through the upper part of the panel towards the tree, above and parallel to the broad line. (In most of this

horizontal part, this line "b" seems to be a double line, like that running through the lower part of the panel.) This horizontal part, however, ends before reaching the tree. Finally, from the "c" pair of lines, before these latter lines reach the volute of the river design to the right, still another pair of narrow lines—parallel, i.e. in the form of a *double* line—runs upward at right angles, in the narrow space between that volute and Feature 4. (Actually these two pairs of lines cross each other slightly, i.e. the one does not continue neatly from the other at this right-angle turn, but overlaps it slightly as though the cutting here was done carelessly.) This upper vertical group of lines ("d") continues as a narrow double line upward through the constricted space between features 4 and 23, slightly curving back and forth with the curving of this space (and becoming especially narrow in one part where it does not entirely avoid Feature 4), and—as a single line—apparently on past the beginning of the river design, beyond which it disappears in another major feature of the carving (Feature 30, to be discussed later).

The series of connected narrow lines in Feature 25 designated "a," "c," and "d" closely corresponds—as doubtless already noted by the reader—to the "straight and narrow path" that the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi, in the above quotation, says he next saw in his vision of the Tree of Life: (1) It is straight (i.e. wherever possible), like this path seen by Lehi; (2) in its greater part it consists of a *narrow double* line, the closest possible representation of a narrow path; (3) it comes along by the broad line (though also near the river design, it is nearer this broad line), just as the path that Lehi saw "came along by the rod of iron," the feature of his vision corresponding to the broad line; (4) it comes all the way to the tree that represents the Tree of Life, just as the path that Lehi saw came "even to the tree" that in his vision represented the Tree of Life; and (5) it also (apparently) runs by the beginning or head of the river design, just as the path that Lehi saw "also led by the head of the fountain" or river in his vision! (The continuation of this line above that point was prevented, as indicated, by the interposition of another major feature of the carving. The significance of the other group of lines, "b," in this complex of narrow lines,

in the light of the Book of Mormon account, will be brought out later in this commentary.)

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi explains this "straight and narrow path" thus apparently represented by the "a," "c," "d" series of narrow lines, as the path of righteousness by which the children of men—provided they seize and hold fast to the word of God symbolized by the rod of iron—are able to find their way to the tree whose fruit gives everlasting life.

CORRESPONDENCE XIV(??)

Lehi in the Book of Mormon: *"And [this path] . . . led by the head of the fountain [or river], unto a large and spacious field, as if it had been a world. . . ."*

Izapa scene, Feature 26: A plain, largely rectangular area, set off by relief, on the side of the tree towards the beginning or head of the river design.

This feature suggests the "large and spacious field" that Lehi, in the above quotation, also says he saw in his vision recorded in the Book of Mormon—the first thing, in fact, seen by him after his prayer (see above, page 9); that is, it suggests this "large and spacious field" if we keep in mind the lack of sufficient space in the carving for depicting such a field much larger than this. It is also, it will be noted, on the required side of the tree with respect to the beginning or head of the river design. Other indications supporting this correspondence are brought out in a following discussion.

It should be acknowledged that no extension of the line corresponding to the "straight and narrow" path said to have led past the head of the river to the "large and spacious field" can be discerned in the part of the carving between the river design and this rectangular area. This has little significance, however, in view of the preemption of this space by other major features of the carving. (The "straight and narrow path," incidentally, is explained by Lehi as having led to the "large and spacious field" that he saw, "as if it had been a world." This indicates—especially in light of his mention further on of also seeing in his vision a "great and spacious building" that represented the present or mortal world [particularly

the wicked part of this world]—that this “large and spacious field” represented the *pre*-mortal world of spirits. In agreement with this, the rectangular area in the Izapa carving is placed apparently in the air, high above the earth panel.)

CORRESPONDENCE XV(?); ALSO CORRESPONDENCE XIV(?)
AS FURTHER INDICATED

Lehi in the Book of Mormon: “*And I saw [in the large and spacious field] numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood. . . .*”

Izapa scene, Feature 27: A human figure, standing facing the tree on the side towards the beginning of the river design, close by the rectangular area designated Feature 26 (in fact it appears to be connected with that area, by a vertical element in front). It has the same Mesopotamian-Egyptian-like stance as that of the two guardian spirit-personages standing in front of it nearer the tree; wears a pleated tunic or kilt and a turbanlike headdress; and holds up a long stalklike object in front and another such object over the shoulder.

This figure suggests a person that ancient Nephite artists, endeavoring to portray the Lehi Tree-of-Life story of the Book of Mormon, might well have depicted (because of lack of sufficient space) to represent the “numberless concourses of people” that Lehi, in the above quotation, says he saw in his dream, apparently in the “large and spacious field,” many of whom were pressing forward to reach the path he also saw leading to the tree by which he stood. In the first place, it is found (like the adjacent rectangular area) on the required side of the tree with respect to the beginning or head of the river; for—as already noted—the path to the tree mentioned by Lehi as being the objective of these people is stated by him to have passed by the head of the “fountain” or river that came near the tree. Secondly, it is connected with the rectangular area designated Feature 26, just as the “numberless concourses of people” in Lehi’s vision were connected with the “large and spacious field” corresponding somewhat to this rectangular area. Thirdly, its posi-

tion apparently high in the air, like the genii in front of it, suggests that it represents one or more non-mortal persons or spirits, like them, as evidently were the concourses of people seen by Lehi—an interpretation confirmed somewhat by the fact, brought out in the preceding discussion, that the adjacent rectangular area may well be a representation of the world of pre-mortal spirits.

It should be observed that the depiction of the figure, Feature 27, as apparently connected with the rectangular area, and in turn the suggested correspondence between this figure and the “numberless concourses of people” seen by Lehi, *at the same time tend reciprocally to increase the correspondence* between the connected rectangular area and the “large and spacious field” of Lehi’s vision connected with these “numberless concourses of people.” This latter correspondence (No. XIV)—and reciprocally also the former, No. XV—is still further established by a *fourth* and rather conclusive indication. We have noted that the figure, Feature 27, holds objects that have very much the appearance of stalks of grain. This can only signify that the connected rectangular area represents a field!

CORRESPONDENCES XVI AND XVII(?)

Lehi in the Book of Mormon: “*And . . . they [who were pressing forward in the field to obtain the path] did come forth, and commence in the path which led to the tree. And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceeding great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost. . . .*”

It is obvious that one of the important action features of the Tree of Life vision of Lehi in the Book of Mormon that ancient artists would have had special difficulty in indicating in a sculptured portrayal of this vision, is the rising of the “mist of darkness” that Lehi mentions in the above quotation, and its causing those people whom he saw commencing in the path that led to the tree, to wander off and be lost. Nevertheless in two features of the Izapa sculpture, in conjunction with Feature 22, we actually find what appears to be an attempt to indicate this action feature of the Book of Mormon account (as previously mentioned above, bottom of page 14).

Before discussing these features, it should first be observed that Nephi, in interpreting his father's vision, uses the plural term "mists of darkness"; and explains that these "mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men" (i.e. the inhabitants of the earth), and are "the fiery darts of the adversary," which "overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away unto destruction."

(Correspondence XVI)

Izapa scene, Feature 28: Two hummingbirds,⁸⁹ standing on the head and shoulder of the smaller of the two guardian spirit-personages. Strangely, they are depicted as probing into the eye—i.e. evidently piercing or blinding the eyes—of the two-headed serpent or Earth Monster.

Considered by itself, this peculiar feature of the carving has no apparent explanation. In the comparison of the carving with the Lehi Tree-of-Life account in the Book of Mormon, however, it is immediately seen to constitute a most striking correspondence to the above action feature of that account! For no better device could have been hit upon by ancient artists to indicate "mists of darkness" arising or "the fiery darts of the adversary" that fly in the air, blinding the eyes of the inhabitants of the earth, than that of showing a pair of hummingbirds (which are noted for their brilliant coloring and swiftness of flight—truly fiery darts of nature), high up in the scene or in the air, piercing or blinding the eyes of a figure symbolizing the earth, as seen here in the Izapa sculpture! (Note that although no actual mists or darts are shown, the three other required agreements are provided by this symbolism; i.e., more than one "fiery dart," the implied appearance of these darts in the air, and their blinding of the earth or its inhabitants.)

(Correspondence XVII[?])

Izapa scene, Feature 25, b: A number of lines, in the complex of narrow lines designated Feature 25, which branch off from the connected series "a," "c," "d" that runs from (apparently) just above the beginning of the river design all the way to the tree. As

⁸⁹Cf. Stirling, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

previously noted, the beginning of these branching lines is a line, "b," running from the "c" lines to the left and slightly downward to the ground panel. At one point two other lines appear to branch off in turn from this line. Reaching the ground panel, this first line cuts through the raised border of the panel and, after a further downward and then brief upward jog, continues (apparently in the greater part as a *double line*) straight on horizontally through the upper section of the panel towards the tree, above and parallel to the broad line. This horizontal part, however, ends before reaching the tree (apparently blocked from reaching the tree by a rise in the stone and apparently a number of fine lines running in various directions).

This "b" group of lines in Feature 25 may be explained by the conclusion of the action feature in the Book of Mormon account under discussion, namely that "they who had commenced in the path did lose their way [because of the mists of darkness or fiery darts of the adversary that blinded them], that they wandered off and were lost." For these lines branching from the "a," "c," "d" series (which corresponds, as we have seen, to the straight and narrow path), *and failing to reach the tree*, may conceivably represent the paths whereby these people "wandered off and were lost"; i.e., the "strange roads" that Lehi mentions further on in his account, which apparently were paths that (1) branched from the straight and narrow path and (2) failed to reach the tree, so that the multitudes coming along the straight and narrow path, being blinded by the mists or darts of the adversary and wandering into these branching paths or "strange roads," could not reach the tree and "were lost from his view."

CORRESPONDENCE XVIII(??)

Lehi in the Book of Mormon: "*And . . . I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth [in the straight and narrow path] and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree. And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast*

their eyes about as if they were ashamed. And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth. . . ."

Two of the additional features of the Lehi vision mentioned in this further quotation are action features, the first of them complex: (1) the pressing forward of other people in the large and spacious field, their coming forth in the path, their catching hold of the end of the rod of iron and pressing forward through the mist of darkness clinging to it, their reaching the tree and partaking of its fruit, and then their looking about as if ashamed; and (2) Lehi's also looking about, and seeing a "great and spacious building." For obvious reasons these have no correspondences in the Izapa scene. The third, however—a stationary feature—may have such a correspondence, as shown in the following.

Izapa scene, Feature 29: A fairly large element of the carving, high on the right edge of the monument, above and slightly beyond the river design from the tree. Weathering or other damage has rendered the design of this element unrecognizable.

This feature, although unrecognizable, corresponds somewhat to the "great and spacious building" that Lehi, at the end of the above quotation from the Book of Mormon, says he also saw in his vision: (1) It is a fairly large element of the carving, thus agreeing somewhat in this respect with Lehi's description of the building he saw as "great and spacious"; (2) it is located slightly beyond the river design from the tree representing the Tree of Life (in fact as far beyond as physically possible), somewhat as the "great and spacious building" of Lehi's vision was on the other side of a river from a tree representing the Tree of Life; and (3) it is apparently located in the air, being high above the earth panel, exactly like Lehi's "great and spacious building" which he describes as standing "as it were in the air, high above the earth." Although the first of these agreements is of little significance, the third is highly arbitrary as well as very close, and consequently (in combination with the second) establishes at least a partial correspondence between these features. (The second agreement also has some significance. Note

that the requirement of the building being "in the air, high above the earth," would have made it exceedingly difficult if not impossible for ancient artists to depict it *actually* on the other side of the design representing the river, or even on the other side of the *beginning part* of this design that did not have to be placed in or below the representation of the earth, running by the tree—especially if the scarcity of space resulted in locating this beginning part of the river close to the edge of the composition, as here in the Izapa carving. About the best that could be done would have been to place it exactly as Feature 30 in this Izapa portrayal.)

This "great and spacious building" is explained by Nephi as a symbol of "the pride of the world," "vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men," "the world and the wisdom thereof."

CORRESPONDENCE XIX(?)

Lehi in the Book of Mormon: "*And [this great and spacious building] was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceeding fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit. And after they [the latter] had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.*"

Izapa scene, Feature 30: The head and upper body of a large human figure in profile, near Feature 29. It faces in the direction of the tree, and has an arm upraised in that direction (the hand, however, is not shown, as the space in this crowded part is taken up by the head of the figure designated Feature 27). Its headdress evidently consists of a turban, with a large plumed appendage (or plumed apparatus under or by it).

This figure suggests a person that ancient Nephite artists, endeavoring to portray the Lehi Tree-of-Life vision of the Book of Mormon, might well have depicted (because of lack of sufficient space) to represent the many finely dressed, mocking people of all ages and both sexes that Lehi, in the above quotation, says he saw in his dream, filling the "great and spacious building" that was high in the air and represented the world and the pride of the children

of men. In the first place, it is near Feature 29 (and nearer it than any other element of the carving), which from the preceding discussion was found to correspond somewhat to the "great and spacious building" in which Lehi saw these many people. Secondly, it has an arm upraised in the direction of the figures near the tree, which agrees rather strikingly with Lehi's statement that the people in the building "were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit" of the tree. Finally, it seems to wear an elaborate headdress featuring a large plumed appendage (or has a plumed apparatus under or by its turban), with the long plumes apparently hanging down its back. In the Classic Maya art of this region, elaborate headdresses with long plumes are seen worn by important personages and were evidently a perquisite of the ruling priest-class or aristocracy, hence also an indication of wealth and elegance. The long plumes in these headdresses, moreover, seem to have been — whenever possible — the green feathers of the quetzal-bird, which in ancient Mesoamerica were regarded as precious things, and signified fineness or preciousness. This strongly indicates, therefore, that the present figure in the Izapa sculpture, in view of its being shown wearing such a headdress, or shown with long plumes like quetzal feathers, must represent a person or persons distinguished by his or their wealth and elegance, or by fineness or the possession of fine or precious things. This, it will be noted, closely agrees with Lehi's description of the people in the building as having a "manner of dress" that was "exceeding fine."

The other feature of the Lehi vision mentioned in the above quotation, a complex development—the shame, because of the finely dressed people in the building who were scoffing at them, that came upon those from the large and spacious field who had partaken of the fruit of the tree, and their falling away as a consequence "into forbidden paths" and becoming lost—has no correspondence in the carving; but this is expected, in view of the extreme difficulty that would have been involved in its depiction.

CORRESPONDENCE XX(?)

Nephi in the Book of Mormon: *"And now I, Nephi, do not speak all the words of my father. But, to be short in writing, behold, he*

saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came [along in the path] and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree. And he also saw other multitudes feeling their way towards that great and spacious building. And it came to pass that many were drowned in the depths of the fountain; and many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads. And great was the multitude that did enter into that strange building. And after they did enter into that building they did point the finger of scorn at me and those that were partaking of the fruit also; but we beeded them not."

The several complex action features of Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life in the Book of Mormon narrated in the above conclusion of his account as given by his son Nephi, have no correspondences in the Izapa carving (with one partial exception, as brought out in the following discussion). This again, however, has little significance, for obvious reasons (note especially that the depiction of all these further action features would have been quite impossible because their places in the scene would have already been preempted by portrayals—if such had been possible—of the movements of the previous "multitudes" in these places.)

Izapa scene, Feature 31: An almost obliterated feature of the carving, but definitely a human figure, standing well above the ground panel—i.e. apparently in the air—on the left side of the tree above Feature 14, and facing the left, with back to the tree and feet in tandem. It has a very prominent nose—large, high-bridged, and convex (outline of the tip only faintly discernible)—and seemingly a full beard; and wears loose robelike clothing (one end of which appears to hang down and drag behind at the feet), and a simple turban. One hand is outstretched, holding a small roundish object carved in relief.

This figure strongly suggests a person that ancient Nephite artists, endeavoring to portray the Lehi Tree-of-Life vision of the Book of Mormon, might well have depicted (because of lack of sufficient space) to represent the *still other* "multitudes" of people that Lehi saw (according to the quotation from Nephi's account)

also pressing forward in the large and spacious field, coming along in the straight and narrow path, and—by holding fast to the rod of iron—reaching the tree and partaking of its fruit; i.e., these other multitudes as now having reached the tree, *after* the journey from the field, at the more stationary and hence more portrayable point of their standing by the tree partaking of its fruit.⁹⁰ In the first place, it appears to hold in the hand what may well be a fruit from the tree under which it is standing, as though about to eat it; which agrees with one of the requirements for the correspondence above suggested. Secondly, it apparently stands in the air; i.e., it is apparently to be distinguished as to its status from the six persons seated on the ground panel who correspond to the six actual persons of the Lehi Tree-of-Life story—another requirement for this correspondence, since all the human or humanlike figures in that story except these six persons were merely representations of spirits or of *classes* of people. And finally, although it stands with back to the tree, it also stands with back to the figure designated Feature 30 and shown in the preceding discussion to constitute a rather close correspondence to the many finely dressed, mocking people of Lehi's vision; which completes the correspondence, since this is perhaps the best means ancient Nephite artists could have used to show, in a portrayal of Lehi's vision, that the "other multitudes" who came to the tree and partook of its fruit did not—along with Lehi, Sariah, Sam, and Nephi, in accordance with Nephi's account—pay heed to those finely dressed people in the "strange building" who were pointing "the finger of scorn" at them.

⁹⁰Nephi's expression, "fell down," in describing how these additional multitudes, on reaching the tree, prepared to partake of its fruit, is probably a conventional euphony not to be taken literally.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

IN THE COMPARATIVE STUDY of the carving of Izapa Stela 5 now completed, two sets of correspondences have been brought out: (1) correspondences between this carving and ancient Old World—Near Eastern, particularly Assyrian—representations of the Tree of Life, and other ancient Near Eastern art conventions; and (2) correspondences between this carving and the special Lehi account of the Tree of Life in the Book of Mormon, a work claimed to come from a purported ancient people (the “Nephites”) of Near Eastern origin in the New World.

Correspondences between the Izapa carving and ancient Old World—Near Eastern, particularly Assyrian—representations of the Tree of Life, and other ancient Near Eastern art conventions:

1. The tree in this ancient American representation of the Tree of Life is shown naturalistically, as a fruit-bearing tree, as is often the tree in the ancient Near Eastern representations (instead of as a cross-shaped maize plant, as usually in the previously known American representations)
2. Two personages stand facing the tree on either side in an attitude of worship (probably spirit-personages, since they apparently stand in the air), just as in the Near Eastern representations (in which the two personages represent guardian spirit-personages or genii, i.e. the cherubim of the Genesis story of the Tree of Life)
3. These two personages have the same stance as the cherubim in the Near Eastern representations: face more or less in profile, shoulders in full front or three-quarters view, but the legs and feet again in profile and in tandem, one advanced before the other
4. They are also bird-headed, as again often the Near Eastern—specifically Assyrian—cherubim
5. One of them also appears to be winged, like the bird-headed Assyrian cherubim
6. One of them holds baglike objects, again like the Assyrian cherubim
7. The other holds a pointed object raised towards the tree, also like the Assyrian cherubim

8. Two fish are involved in this Izapa representation of the Tree of Life, probably signifying that the tree shown was a symbol of the Life God as also Rain or Water God; which is another correspondence to some Assyrian representations of the Tree of Life, in which the two cherubim guarding the tree are depicted wearing the body of a fish, identifying them as representatives of the Assyro-Babylonian Water God, and therefore the tree also as a symbol of that god
9. Several birds are also seen in this Izapa representation, near and facing the tree, as also in some Assyrian representations
10. The Tree of Life is apparently shown here growing in the center of the earth (see above, pages 53-54), like the Tree of Life in the biblical story of the Near East
11. Among the human or humanlike figures in this scene, definitely two (those numbered 14 and 31) and possibly most (i.e. also those numbered 1 to 6) are depicted wearing robes or robelike clothing, as often seen worn by human figures in ancient Near Eastern art, and known from biblical references to have been worn by ancient Israelites of Palestine
12. Two others of these figures (those numbered 18 and 27) are depicted wearing tunics, as known from biblical references to have also been worn by ancient Israelites of Palestine
13. Clearly five (those numbered 1, 5, 6, 12, and 31) and probably three others (those numbered 4, 27, and 30) are also depicted wearing turbans, again as known from biblical references to have been worn by ancient Israelites of Palestine (note that the turbans of figures 4, 12, 27, 30, and 31 appear to be round turbans of the Afghan-Indian type, while those of figures 1, 5, and 6 are higher and pointed, resembling the pointed turbans occasionally seen in ancient Near Eastern art, worn by ancient Mesopotamians, Syrians, and Israelites; also note that those of figures 5 and 6 have a pendant neck cloth at the back, as often turbans of southwestern Asia and the head-cloths of Judean Israelite shepherds and Arab nomads)
14. Most if not all of the six seated persons appear to be seated cross-legged (the figures numbered 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6; also possibly 3), i.e. oriental-fashion, as occasionally seated persons in ancient Near Eastern representations
15. At least four of the human or humanlike figures in this scene (those numbered 1, 3, 12, and 31) are or seem to be bearded, that numbered 1 having a *long and full—i.e. definitely Caucasoid—*beard; the depiction of bearded persons is a characteristic of the arts of the ancient Caucasoid peoples of the Near East (and Europe)
16. The heavily bearded person, who has been identified as a priest, is also shown wearing a high pointed turban or mitre, which closely resembles the high pointed turban or mitre worn by Judean high priests and Assyrian kings

17. The person seated behind this bearded personage, who has been identified as the consort of the latter—i.e. as an important female personage, the “old woman” heroine of ancient Mesoamerican tradition—is shown wearing a tall horned and feathered crown; in the ancient Egyptian art of the Near East, a very similar horned and feathered crown identifies the wearer as an important female personage (specifically as a queen or princess or a certain goddess)
18. Feature 8—a small portable altar or incense-burner, on which the bearded personage appears to be making a burnt offering—recalls similar altars on which burnt offerings were made, in the ancient Near East, as by ancient Israelites of Palestine
19. Feature 12—a small adult human figure that seems to be bundled, with the arms bound to the sides, and undoubtedly represents a small image of some kind, possibly an idol—recalls the *teraphim*, small ancestor images or idols of household gods, common in ancient Israelite and Aramean families of Palestine and Syria
20. The depiction, in this carving, of writing equipment and the act of writing (note features 3 and 10) constitutes still another correspondence to ancient Near Eastern civilization and art representations
21. The person with the stylus appears to be identified as a ruler, by the umbrella or parasol held above his head (this being the significance of the umbrella in ancient Mesoamerica); so also in ancient art representations of the Near (as well as Middle and Far) East, rulers are identified by an umbrella or parasol held above the head
22. From the forehead of this person with the stylus—a ruler (see preceding)—seems to project the figure of a serpent; so also from the forehead of rulers depicted in ancient Egyptian art there projects the figure of a serpent (the uraeus, one of the symbols of rulership of the pharaohs)
23. The headdress of this person apparently consists of a human face in profile with a plant rising above it (very probably, in light of a similar peculiar combination in Maya and Aztec art, the face of a young man with a grain-plant headdress, representing a certain deity in ancient Mesoamerican religion, the “Young Corn or Grain God” or personification of grain); in ancient Egyptian art are seen representations of a young man with face in profile and a grain-plant headdress—the young grain god Nepri or Nepi, the personification of grain in Egyptian religion.

Correspondences between the Izapa carving and the special Lehi story of the Tree of Life in the Book of Mormon (a work claimed to come from a purported ancient people of Near Eastern origin

in the New World), with an estimate of the degree of correspondence in each case:

- I. The six persons seated around the representation of the Tree of Life: correspond to an extreme degree to the six persons of the Tree of Life episode of the Book of Mormon; note that there are as many as thirty-eight (possibly thirty-nine) points of agreement making up this correspondence—seven (possibly eight) presented by the six persons considered as a group (i.e. the three brought out on pages 15-16, the first and possibly the second brought out on pages 30-31, and the three general Near Eastern similarities numbered 11, 13, and 14 in the preceding list of correspondences), and thirty-one presented by the six persons considered individually
- II. The old bearded man: corresponds to an extreme degree to Lehi of the Book of Mormon episode (nine agreements or indications, the last three very important, the ninth apparently being an actual agreement between the name of this old bearded man and that of Lehi)
- III. The person with the tall horned and feathered crown and in attendance upon the old bearded man: corresponds very closely to Sariah of the Book of Mormon episode (six agreements or indications, the last three very important, the sixth apparently being an actual agreement between the name of this person with the crown and that of Sariah)
- IV. The large young man with the stylus: corresponds very closely to Nephi of the Book of Mormon episode (seven agreements, the fourth, sixth, and seventh very important, the seventh apparently being an actual agreement between the name of this large young man and that of Nephi)
- V. The person holding the umbrella, in attendance upon the large young man with the stylus: corresponds somewhat to Sam of the Book of Mormon episode (only one agreement noted; but this correspondence also supported by the fact that this person is the only one of the six that, by process of elimination, can reasonably be compared with Sam)
- VI. The first of the four persons seated in front of the old bearded man, with back to the tree: corresponds rather closely to Laman of the Book of Mormon episode (four agreements)
- VII. The second of the four persons seated in front of the old bearded man, with back to the tree: corresponds rather closely to Lemuel of the Book of Mormon episode (four agreements)
- VIII. The robed and hooded figure apparently standing in the air, with arms outstretched towards the tree: corresponds rather closely to the man in a white robe seen by Lehi in his dream, who guided him to the Tree of Life (three agreements)

- IX. The central tree element, a representation of the Tree of Life and a symbol of the Life and Rain God of the ancient Mesoamericans: corresponds very closely to the tree also seen by Lehi in his dream, a representation of the Tree of Life and a symbol of the Life and Rain God of the peoples of the Book of Mormon (six agreements; this tree does not duplicate exactly the tree Lehi saw, *in its appearance* [at least in the present condition of the carving; see page 48]; but does duplicate it exactly *in its significance* [fourth and fifth agreements; see pages 49-55])
- X. The design element undoubtedly representing a river of water: corresponds closely to the river of water also seen by Lehi in his dream (four agreements, the first and third very important)
- XI. The individual positions of the six seated persons in relation to the tree: correspond slightly to the attitudes, towards the fruit of the tree, of the six persons in Lehi's vision (one general agreement)
- XII. The broad straight line, beginning suddenly and extending along near the river design to the tree representing the Tree of Life: corresponds rather closely to the "rod of iron" also seen by Lehi in his dream (three agreements, the third rather important)
- XIII. The straight (wherever possible) and narrow double and single lines "a," "c," and "d" in Feature 25: correspond closely to the "straight and narrow path" also seen by Lehi in his dream (five agreements, the second, third, and fourth quite important)
- XIV. The plain, rectangular area (Feature 26): corresponds rather closely to the "large and spacious field" also seen by Lehi in his dream (although this area is not actually large and spacious in comparison with some other features in the crowded composition, four agreements have been noted between it and the field seen by Lehi, one of them—the fourth—being an important indication that it indeed represents a field; see page 63)
- XV. The figure close by the rectangular area and holding what appear to be stalks of grain: corresponds rather closely to the "numberless concourses of people" that Lehi, in his dream, saw in the large and spacious field (although only one figure is shown here that could represent these "numberless concourses," four agreements have been noted between it and these concourses seen by Lehi, one of them—the fourth—being an important reciprocal indication in support of this correspondence)
- XVI. The two hummingbirds probing into the eye—i.e. apparently piercing or blinding the eyes—of the two-headed earth serpent (Feature 28, in conjunction with Feature 22): correspond closely to the "mists of darkness" or "fiery darts of the adversary" that Lehi, in his dream, saw arise or in the air, blinding the eyes of the inhabitants of the earth (three

agreements—actually the only ones possible in the carving—the third especially important)

- XVII. The lines "b" in Feature 25 that branch from the lines marked "a," "c," "d": correspond somewhat to the "strange roads" by which many people, of the multitudes seen by Lehi coming along the straight and narrow path, wandered off and failed to reach the tree and were lost to his view (two agreements)
- XVIII. The element of the carving designated Feature 29: corresponds somewhat to the "great and spacious building" also seen by Lehi in his dream (although unrecognizable, it presents three agreements with that building)
- XIX. The figure with the raised arm (Feature 30): corresponds rather closely to the many finely dressed, mocking people that Lehi, in his dream, saw in the great and spacious building (three agreements, the third important)
- XX. The robed and turbaned figure designated Feature 31: corresponds rather closely to the still other multitudes that, in his dream, Lehi saw reach the tree and partake of its fruit, and who—with Lehi himself and those of his family who also partook of the fruit—payed no heed to the finely dressed, mocking people in the great and spacious building (three agreements).

What may we conclude from these two sets of correspondences?

1. First, it cannot be denied that the Izapa carving presents not only a resemblance—in view of the first set of correspondences—to the ancient Near Eastern symbolism of the Tree of Life, but also a resemblance—in view of the second set of correspondences—to the special Lehi account of the Tree of Life in the Book of Mormon.

2. Moreover, these two resemblances *cannot easily be explained as accidental* (i.e. as due to convergence of independent developments). For as pointed out by Dr. Alfred L. Kroeber, a leading authority on anthropological theory and method, a resemblance

must not be too close if independent development is to be the explanation. A complex device⁹¹ used in two or more parts of the world suggests a connection between them in very proportion to its complexity. A combination of *two* or even *three* elements might conceivably have been repeated independently. [But] a combination of *five* or *ten* parts serving an identical purpose in an identical manner must necessarily appear as impossible of having been hit upon more

⁹¹A term including designs or scenes depicted in art or described orally or in writing, as in the present cases.

than once. One thinks almost under compulsion, in such a case, of historical connection.⁹²

Since the complex scene in the present two resemblances consists, in the first case, of a combination of *ten* elements or parts "serving an identical purpose in an identical manner" (see pages 71-72, the ten listed correspondences of the central Tree of Life section of the Izapa carving to the ancient Near Eastern symbolism of the Tree of Life), and in the second case, of a combination of as many as *twenty* elements or parts "serving an identical purpose in an identical manner" (or in a manner as nearly identical as possible, the scene being presented in different media, one in stone sculpture and the other in written description; see pages 74-76, the twenty listed correspondences of the Izapa carving to the special Tree of Life story in the Book of Mormon), this means, on the basis of the above second "rule of correlation,"⁹³ that both these resemblances are almost certainly too close or detailed to be accidental; i.e., are almost certainly the result of historical connection.

It is true that some of the ten correspondences comprising the first resemblance are of only a general nature, or incomplete. The tree in the Izapa carving, for example—though depicted naturalistically and therefore listed as a correspondence to the tree in the Mesopotamian and Syro-Palestinian representations of the Tree of Life—differs as to species. Moreover, only one of the two cherubim-like personages facing the tree—instead of both as in the Mesopotamian representations—is shown winged, and only one holds the baglike objects, and only one holds the pointed object raised towards the tree. We should bear in mind, however, that *some* differences from the Near Eastern symbolism must be expected in a representation of the Tree of Life—even if produced by a people of Near Eastern origin—so far removed geographically from the Near East as the Izapa carving. Further offsetting such minor differences is the fact that this carving also presents as many as *thirteen additional* correspondences to Near Eastern art conventions (those numbered 11 to 23 on pages 72-73).

⁹²A. L. Kroeber, *Anthropology*, New York, 1923, p. 216 (writer's italics).

⁹³The first rule being, of course, that the resemblance must be a true and not a superficial or mistaken one—a requirement met, in the present cases, in the preceding summary and conclusion.

Again, some of the twenty correspondences comprising the second resemblance, that to the special Lehi story of the Tree of Life in the Book of Mormon, are also not particularly close. Those listed as correspondences V, XI, XVII, and XVIII especially fall in this category; but correspondences VI, VII, VIII, XII, XIV, XV, XIX, and XX should also be mentioned, since adjudged only "rather close." Nevertheless, there remain in this second set as many as *eight* correspondences that must be adjudged at least quite close, in some cases extremely or very close; namely, those numbered I, II, III, IV, IX, X, XIII, and XVI; which number of close correspondences exceeds the minimum requirement of the second rule of correlation (*five* parts of a complex device or scene serving an identical purpose in an identical manner; see above quotation). If we add the twelve other correspondences in this set—which, though not very close, have considerable significance if taken together, certainly the equivalent of two close correspondences—we arrive at the number of closely corresponding parts agreed upon as more surely establishing historical connection as the explanation of a resemblance.

As a matter of fact, the number of agreements establishing the close resemblance of the Izapa scene to the Lehi Tree-of-Life account is much greater than the twenty discussed here. For most of these twenty correspondences in main features is each composed in turn of several agreements in details. And these—with the single agreements involved in two of the correspondences—total as many as eighty-two! Is it possible that such a number of detailed agreements or similarities can *all* be accidental? (Note that if only *one* of them is not accidental, historical connection is established.)

There is still another aspect of the resemblances of the Izapa scene to the Near Eastern representations and special Book of Mormon story of the Tree of Life (i.e. additional to their detailed closeness), that appears to rule out entirely any possibility that they are accidental.

It will be observed that most of the ten correspondences comprising the first resemblance (or twenty-three correspondences, if we count the thirteen additional similarities to Near Eastern art conventions), and most of the eighty-two detailed agreements comprising the second, are of a simple or non-arbitrary nature. Many of these simple correspondences, therefore, could easily be accidental.

But some of the total of one hundred and five agreements or similarities comprising these two resemblances are clearly of an *arbitrary* nature. That is, these resemblances also meet the third and final rule of correlation; namely, that for a resemblance to be definitely the result of historical connection and not accident or the convergence of independent developments, it must include correspondences in arbitrary—i.e. inessential or unexpected—parts or features.

If the resemblance includes any inessential or arbitrary parts, such as an ornament, a proportion that so far as utility is concerned might be considerably varied but is not, a randomly chosen number, or a name, the possibility of independent development is wholly ruled out. Such extrinsic features could not recur together once in a million times. Their association forces a presumption of common origin, even though it be difficult to account for the historical connection involved.⁹⁴

In the present cases this means, of course, features in the Izapa carving that are not essential or previously indicated parts of the ancient American Tree-of-Life symbol but that correspond to features of the Near Eastern representations or special Book of Mormon story of the Tree of Life, *and also* that are of a kind we should not expect to have been hit upon independently by the Izapa artists (or are not known conventions of ancient American art that they would likely have used in their depiction of that symbol).

Now among the ten correspondences establishing the resemblance to the Near Eastern Tree-of-Life symbolism, *three* of the corresponding parts or features must be considered as of an arbitrary nature, according to the above definitions; namely, those indicated in the correspondences numbered 4, 5, and 7 on page 71. (Although some of the other corresponding parts are also arbitrary in the sense of being unique for an ancient American portrayal of the Tree of Life [those indicated in the correspondences numbered 1, 3, 6, 8, and 9], four of these we should expect to have been hit upon independently by the Izapa artists [those in correspondences 1, 6, 8, and 9], while one [that in Correspondence 3] is a known convention of ancient American art⁹⁵ that they would likely have used in their carving.⁹⁶)

⁹⁴Kroeber, *loc. cit.*

⁹⁵As in the Olmec and earliest Maya stela-reliefs of Mesoamerica.

⁹⁶Since, as seen later, this carving very probably dates from the time of this convention.

Further, among the twenty correspondences in main features (or eighty-two detailed agreements or similarities) establishing the resemblance to the special Book of Mormon story of the Tree of Life, at least *fifteen* of the corresponding parts or features must be considered as of an arbitrary nature, according to the above definitions; namely, those indicated in the following correspondences:

- I (the particular arbitrary part here is the *number* of persons in this correspondence [compare the definition from Kroeber], although some of the other six agreements especially constituting this correspondence may be considered as of a somewhat arbitrary nature—at least the third noted on page 16 and listed as Near Eastern correspondence 15 on page 72)
- II (the particular arbitrary part here is the *name* of the old bearded man in this correspondence [again compare the definition from Kroeber], which the glyph held above him, Feature 9, records as *Lebi* [or at least records or illustrates the meaning of the name Lehi; see pages 31-35])
- III (the particular arbitrary part here is the *name* of the person in this correspondence [again compare the definition from Kroeber], which the crown worn by this person may indicate had the meaning of 'queen' or 'princess,' the basic meaning of the name Sariah; see pages 35-37)
- IV (three arbitrary parts are involved in this correspondence: [1] the depiction of the large young man portrayed here as in the act of apparently recording what the old bearded man is saying about the central tree element, with a writing instrument, on a plate or tablet; [2] the identification of this large young man as a ruler; and [3] the name of this large young man [again compare the definition from Kroeber], which the head-dress worn by this figure—a kind of name-glyph like the crown worn by figure 2—can be interpreted as recording the name Nephi; see pages 38-45)
- VIII (the arbitrary part here is the feature as a whole)
- XII (the feature as a whole)
- XIII (the part "a," "c," "d" of Feature 25)
- XIV (the feature as a whole)
- XV (the feature as a whole)
- XVI (the feature as a whole)
- XVII (the part "b" of Feature 25)
- XIX (the feature as a whole, in the required place in the composition; or at least the associated *ornament* of plumes symbolic of wealth or fine things; compare the definition from Kroeber)
- XX (the feature as a whole).

Of these fifteen arbitrary parts, in fact, nine must be considered *especially* arbitrary or unexpected; namely, those indicated above under II, III, IV(1), IV(2), IV(3), XII, XIII, XIV, and XVI.⁹⁷

In both resemblances, therefore, the final requirement of the occurrence of arbitrary parts among the corresponding features in order wholly to rule out the possibility of their being accidental, is definitely fulfilled. In Kroeber's words, this "forces a presumption of common origin"; i.e., a presumption that the Izapa artists had knowledge of the ancient Near Eastern symbolism of the Tree of Life, and also—and even more surely, in view of the greater number of arbitrary parts involved in the second resemblance—knowledge of the special Lehi story of the Tree of Life in the Book of Mormon.

Indeed, the second part of this presumption—that the Izapa artists had knowledge of the Lehi account of the Tree of Life—becomes quite inescapable when we note that the Izapa carving presents more or less just what we should expect in the way of an ancient Nephite portrayal of this story (compare pages 12-13). In fact, for the great majority of the latter's features (*nearly all* the stationary features⁹⁸), a corresponding feature can be pointed out in the Izapa carving (as well as apparent recordings—as also expected—of the names of some of the six persons gathered around discussing the tree in this account!). True, some of the dynamic or action features of Lehi's vision—the movements of the various characters and groups of people, etc.—do not appear (for obvious reasons). But others do; e.g., various of the mentioned activities of the six actual persons involved in the episode, and the rising of the "mists of darkness" or flying or appearing in the air of the "fiery darts of the adversary" and their blinding the inhabitants of the earth (by a most clever device; see discussion or summary of

⁹⁷Although all the other corresponding features in this second resemblance, with the exception of the tree in Correspondence IX, are also arbitrary in the sense of being unique for an ancient American portrayal of the Tree of Life, they lack the full arbitrariness of those we have listed. Two of these, for example, we should expect to have been hit upon independently by the Izapa artists, namely those in correspondences X and XI; thus in the case of that in X, it would not be surprising for the Izapa artists, after depicting a tree to represent the Tree of Life naturalistically, to add a design showing a river of water coming by this tree perhaps to water it.

⁹⁸If in some cases only partially, due to limitations of space, e.g. the apparent representation of the various multitudes of people—treated as stationary features, before or after their respective movements—by single figures.

Correspondence XVI). Such a complete fulfillment of what we should expect in the way of an ancient Nephite portrayal of the Lehi Tree-of-Life account renders even more remote the possibility that this resemblance is accidental.

Furthermore, the Izapa carving is very much what we should expect from the Lehi-Nephite people of the Book of Mormon *in view of their Near Eastern origin*: not only a portrayal of the special Lehi story of the Tree of Life as featured in their own records, but also (and almost unavoidably) a number of Near Eastern-like elements; as actually depicted,

1. Spirit-guardians of the tree like the Mesopotamian and Syro-Palestinian cherubim
2. The human and humanlike figures in the account usually shown as wearing Palestinian-like robes or tunics and Palestinian- or oriental-like turbans
3. All or nearly all the human and humanlike figures shown as either standing in stereotyped Mesopotamian-Egyptian pose with one foot advanced before the other in tandem, or else seated cross-legged oriental-fashion
4. The old man Lehi, identified in the Book of Mormon as an ancient Judean Israelite prophet and priest, distinguished from the other persons by his being shown wearing a pointed tiara, like the pointed tiara worn by ancient Judean Israelite priests
5. The old man Lehi also portrayed with a long full beard, a characteristic of old men of the ancient Caucasoid peoples of the Near East
6. Palestinian-like ceremonial objects and practices, namely the small portable altar or incense-burner, with the old man making a burnt offering upon it, and the *teraph*-like figure
7. The depiction of Near Eastern-like writing equipment and the act of writing (specifically required by the Book of Mormon account); and
8. Near Eastern symbols of rulership, for indicating that the figure with the stylus was a ruler (an umbrella above his head, and a serpent projecting from his forehead like the uraeus projecting from the forehead of Egyptian rulers)!

Some of these Near Eastern-like elements, moreover, are of a decidedly arbitrary nature, namely those indicated in the above list by numbers 1, 5, and 8 (the uraeuslike symbol projecting from the forehead of a person shown [separately, by an umbrella] as a ruler)

—all of which should be added to our previous list of arbitrary parts involved in the resemblance of the carving to the Lehi story, making a total of *eighteen* such parts in this resemblance.

Also significant, as tending to rule out accident, is the fact that there is nothing in the Izapa carving that cannot be explained in the light of the Lehi story (or in the light of Near Eastern art conventions probably known to the Lehi people of the Book of Mormon), or that *conflicts* with this story (e.g. an otherwise corresponding feature in the wrong place in the composition in relation to the representation of the Tree of Life).

Finally, we should not overlook the apparent effort of the Izapa sculptors to achieve a symmetrical composition, i.e. with as many features as possible having a counterbalancing feature opposite it; note the placement of three of the six seated persons on one side of the central tree feature and the other three on the other side, and compare features 2 and 4 (as attendant figures), 5 and 6 (both with back to the tree), 8 and 12 (counterbalancing ceremonial objects), 17 and 18 (the cherubimlike personages facing the tree on either side), 20 and 21 (counterbalancing emblems of the Water or Life God), 22 left and 22 right (the central Tree of Life symbolism framed between the two heads of the earth serpent), and 19 and 23 (this symbolism also framed between a Rain or Sky God [and heaven?] symbol above and a river of water below—the position of the latter recalling the explanation of the corresponding river of water in the Book of Mormon account as representing *depths*, specifically the “depths of hell”). Now it is not likely that such a formally patterned composition would have *accidentally* included so many correspondences to the Book of Mormon Tree-of-Life story—especially in their correct directional or spatial relationships—as actually occur in the Izapa carving. Very careful planning, in fact, would obviously have been necessary to achieve such a remarkable combination of formal design elements with special subject features. This, consequently, makes it even more certain that *intention*, and not accident, is the reason for the resemblance we have been discussing.

From the above observations we may therefore state the second and main conclusion of this study as follows: that, by all the rules

of correlation, the resemblances of the Izapa carving to the ancient Near Eastern symbolism of the Tree of Life and in particular to the special Lehi story of the Tree of Life found in the Book of Mormon cannot be the result of accident, but must be due to historical connection; and that consequently this carving is definitely a portrayal of the Lehi story—i.e. the episode of the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi's gathering his family around him and narrating to them the vision he had had of the Tree of Life, also as many of the features of that vision itself as possible, and the discussion and recording of Lehi's account by his son Nephi.⁹⁹

ADDENDUM

A number of important consequences of the above main conclusion "2" should be noted here, as supplementary conclusions of this study.

1. The first, of course, is that Izapa Stela 5 is thus the first ancient monument to be discovered as actually recording a *specifically Book of Mormon* event. The significance of this conclusion will be immediately apparent to the reader.

2. The second is that the particular identification we have given of the various features of the Izapa carving in the light of the Book of Mormon account, as warranted by the correspondences considered *separately*, now

⁹⁹The three other interpretations of the carved scene on Izapa Stela 5 so far published greatly differ from this, but are not based on a complete analysis. One, by C. A. Culebro (*op. cit.*), consists of a brief—less than one-page—commentary (p. 56), based upon a sketchy line drawing (following p. 52). It interprets the carving as a market scene. This of course is a most unlikely explanation, if the tree in the center is a representation of the Tree of Life. Apparently in realization of this fact, Culebro in a more recent publication reinterprets the carving as a portrayal of the Tree of Life instead of a market scene: The tree depicted is "the ceiba-tree of the genesis of the race . . . , the tree of humanity with its four cardinal branches . . . ; its roots in the earth quadrangle or precinct of death and all its attributes" (*Historia de Chiapas: la zona costera de Soconusco á través de su historia*, n. p., 1957, pp. 79-80). The third interpretation is advanced by Dr. Clyde E. Keeler, professor of biology at the Georgia State College for Women, in an article entitled "The Cuna Indian Tree of Life" (*Bulletin of the Georgia Academy of Science*, Vol. 15, No. 1 [1957], pp. 22-34). On page 33 of this article is a line drawing of Izapa Stela 5. The description beneath the drawing and one paragraph in the text are all that Dr. Keeler gives for his view of the meaning of the sculpture; namely, that it is a depiction of the birth of the world and of humankind as told in the mythology of the Cuna Indians of Panama. The drawing with which he illustrates or supports this interpretation, however, is inaccurate and incomplete. For example, it does not distinguish the figure on the far left, Feature 2, from the *cipactli* symbol, Feature 9; it mistakes the figure on the far right, Feature 4, for a monkey; it does not distinguish the bird head or bird's-head mask of the large standing figure on the right of the tree, Feature 17; it omits all the birds except one; it also omits the narrow lines running along by the river design to the tree; and it does not show the turbaned figure standing on the left of the tree with back thereto, Feature 31. These are errors and omissions, among others, that render this interpretation quite invalid at the start.

becomes (with the above identification of that carving as definitely a portrayal of the Book of Mormon account) even more certain or probable, as the case may be. For example, Feature 1 must surely now be considered *very definitely* a portrayal of the ancient Israelite prophet Lehi of the Book of Mormon; i.e., the degree of probability of this identification must now be considered even higher than that of "almost certain" as warranted by Correspondence II considered separately, above on pages 16-17, 18-24, and 31-35. (And this definite identification of the old bearded man as Lehi, it will be noted, in turn definitely identifies—entirely apart from any other evidence—the other five seated persons in the Izapa scene as the other five persons of the Lehi Tree-of-Life episode of the Book of Mormon.) Again, Feature 15 must also now be considered *very definitely* a representation of the Tree of Life seen by Lehi in the vision recorded in the Book of Mormon (instead of very probably, as warranted by Correspondence IX considered separately, and almost certainly, as warranted by Correspondence IX in conjunction with features 17-22, above on pages 47-56); while (for additional examples) Feature 23 must now be considered *almost certainly* a representation of the river of water that Lehi saw in his vision coming near the Tree of Life (instead of very probably, as warranted by Correspondence X considered separately, above on pages 56-57); Feature 24, *very probably* a representation of the rod of iron that Lehi saw coming to the tree along near the river of water (instead of probably, as warranted by Correspondence XII considered separately, above on page 58); and Feature 29, *probably* a representation of the great and spacious building also seen by Lehi in his vision (instead of not improbably, as warranted by Correspondence XVIII considered separately, above on pages 65-67).

3. Our main conclusion "2" also has an extremely important result for the field of American archaeology; specifically, for the solution of the fundamental problem of this field of study, the origin of the ancient civilizations of the New World.

In the first place, it more or less definitely establishes a connection between these civilizations and those of the Near East in the Old World. The view generally held among Americanists is that the ancient American agricultural civilizations had a strictly native origin, i.e. that they developed ultimately out of the primitive hunting cultures of the Americas, without any help from the ancient agricultural civilizations of the Old World; and that all the resemblances that have been discovered between these civilizations and those of the Old World are to be explained as purely accidental—or at most the result of a connection with *southeastern Asia* that seems to have occurred *after* their rise.¹⁰⁰ But in light of

¹⁰⁰Evidenced by the appearance, in the later civilizations of Mesoamerica, of such culture traits as Cambodian-like pyramid-temples and "screen books," the game of *parcheesi* (which first appeared in ancient India), and a decorative motif consisting of a dragonlike monster without a lower jaw (cf. the modified *cipactli* glyph without lower jaw) in combination with the lotus plant and human figures (first seen in the art of ancient India).

main conclusion "2," this explanation can no longer be maintained. At least one resemblance that cannot be accidental has now been established between the American civilizations and those of *southwestern* Asia or the Near East; namely, that of the central part of the Izapa Stela 5 sculpture to the ancient Near Eastern symbolism of the Tree of Life.

Here, however, a word of caution is necessary. It will be observed that this new evidence presented by Izapa Stela 5 of a connection between the ancient American civilizations and the *Near Eastern* civilizations of the Old World does not establish this connection as a *basic* one, i.e. does not establish a Near Eastern *origin* for the ancient American civilizations (the minority view of the origin of these civilizations). For this connection—in so far as the evidence above mentioned—could of course have occurred *after* the rise of these civilizations, like the apparent connection with the southeastern Asiatic cultures—perhaps even as merely an indirect connection as part of the latter contact (i.e., the Izapa Tree-of-Life symbolism and other specific Near Eastern-like traits in the American civilizations may have first been acquired from the Near East by the southeastern Asiatic civilizations, and then passed on by them intact to the American, in their apparent late connection with the latter).

4. It is at this point that the extreme importance of the Izapa monument appears. For we have seen that the *second* resemblance of the carving on this monument, its very close and arbitrary resemblance to the special Lehi story of the Tree of Life in the Book of Mormon, forces us to the conclusion that this carving is an actual portrayal of that story. And this in turn necessarily establishes a connection between the ancient people of Izapa and the Lehi people of the Book of Mormon. Indeed, the accurate and detailed knowledge of the Lehi story (and of many Near Eastern art conventions) displayed by the ancient Izapans who produced the carving on Stela 5,¹⁰¹ can be explained only by their identification as an actual group of the Lehi people of the Book of Mormon.¹⁰²

Now this, of course, means in turn that the connection between the ancient American and Near Eastern civilizations indicated by the first resemblance—that of the central part of the Izapa carving to the ancient Near Eastern Tree-of-Life symbolism—must have been, in fact, *the particular Near Eastern connection recorded in the Book of Mormon*; i.e., direct colonizations of the New World, at the *beginning* of the ancient American agricultural civilizations, by the Near Eastern agricultural peoples of the Book of Mormon. In other words, the Near Eastern connection established by the carving on Izapa Stela 5 must have been a basic one, constituting the actual origin of the American civilizations—i.e., the diffusionist or minority view of the origin of these civilizations must, after all, be the correct one.

¹⁰¹So accurate and detailed, in fact—as previously brought out, a total of eighty-two agreements occur—that their sculptors, as they planned the carving, may have had a copy of the very text of the Lehi account before them, that we now have in the Book of Mormon.

¹⁰²More particularly, as a group of the branch of that people which retained the record of Lehi's vision—along with Lehi's religion of the God of the Tree of Life—called the "Nephites."

5. We should also not neglect to consider the matter of the date of the Izapa carving, and the significances this dating may have in view of our preceding conclusions.

The first indication of the date of this carving is the naturalistic style of its representation of the Tree of Life. Since the highly conventionalized cruciform representations in Classic Maya art date from about 500-800 A.D., according to the conservative chronology of the Maya area (from about 250-550 A.D., according to a liberal chronology favored by some), this naturalistic representation in the Izapa sculpture must date some centuries earlier than c. 500 A.D.

Other stylistic traits of the carving indicate a similar dating. In fact the style of the relief work in general (the edges of the various raised features smoothly rounded, instead of angular as in Classic Maya sculptures) is identical to that of the "Classic Olmec" sculptures at La Venta and other Gulf Coast sites of the "Olmec" culture, dating to the "Late Preclassic" period of general Mesoamerican archaeological history (probably the first centuries of the Christian Era). The jaguar-mask panels and manner of rendition of the mouth of figure 2 are also distinctive "Olmec" traits.¹⁰³ Moreover, other archaeological features of the site of Izapa itself—earthen mounds, "jaguar altars," polished monochrome and dichrome pottery—establish a Preclassic-period occupation there (preceding later occupations), as required by this "Olmec" affiliation of the carving on Stela 5. Finally, the Maya-like elements in this sculpture—e.g. the *cipactli* glyph (Feature 9), the young-man-with-grain-plant-headdress symbol forming the headdress of figure 3, the Long-nosed Rain God Mask on the headdress of figure 17, the pelicans, and the Two-headed Earth Serpent—generally have an archaic or preclassic rather than classic Maya appearance. A date of around 100 A.D. for the carving and setting up of Stela 5 should not be too far wrong.¹⁰⁴

Now this dating brings to Izapa Stela 5 an additional significance in relation to the Book of Mormon. For it falls within the age of the Lehi-Nephite people of that record in Mesoamerica (c. 585 B.C.-350 A.D.). That is, it is in harmony with our previous conclusion that this monument was carved and set up by a group of the Lehi-Nephite people of the Book of Mormon. (Note that it falls more specifically in the late Nephite "United Order" period of the Book of Mormon, c. 34-200 A.D., which is closely equivalent to the "Late Preclassic" ["Classic Olmec"] period of the archaeological chronology of Mesoamerica.)

This dating of the sculpture to the archaeological Late Preclassic or Book-

¹⁰³Cf. Stirling, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-74; Philip Drucker, *La Venta, Tabasco; a Study of Olmec Ceramics and Art* (Bureau of American Ethnology, Bul. 153), Washington, 1952, especially pp. 208-209, 212; Tatiana Proskouriakoff, *A Study of Classic Maya Sculpture* (Carnegie Institution of Washington, Pub. 593), Washington, 1950, p. 177.

¹⁰⁴Most of the other discovered sculptures at Izapa, however, are in a somewhat more evolved style, characterized by increased use of scroll-like ornamental detail and by still more elaborate headdresses, and quite surely datable to the "Protoclassic" period (probably c. 200-375/450 A.D.); cf. Michael D. Coe, "Cycle 7 Monuments in Middle America: A Reconsideration," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (August, 1957), pp. 597-611.

of-Mormon United Order period of Mesoamerica has still another significance. It means that Izapa Stela 5 is not only—as we have seen—the first ancient monument to be discovered as recording a specifically Book of Mormon event, but is the first monument or other historical “document” to be discovered as presenting an actual Book of Mormon-period—i.e. a more or less contemporaneous—recording of such an event, outside the Book of Mormon itself. (A number of the events in that account have been found also recorded—or at least closely duplicated as to narration—in the early Indian and Spanish historical writings of Mesoamerica. But none of these writings is an *original* historical document dating from the actual period of the Book of Mormon.)