The Name *Mormon* in reformed Egyptian, Sumerian, and Mesoamerican Languages

by

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After obtaining the golden plates, Joseph Smith stated that once he moved to Harmony, Pennsylvania, in the winter of 1827, he "commenced copying the characters of[f] the plates." He stated:

> I copied a considerable number of them and by means of the Urim and Thummin I translated some of them.[1]

In the mid 1830s, Oliver Cowdery and Frederick G. Williams recorded four characters that had been copied from the plates and Joseph Smith's translations of those characters; one set of two characters was translated together as "The Book of Mormon" and the other set of two characters was translated as "The interpreters of languages" (see figures 1 and 2). Both of these phrases can be found in the original script of the current Title Page of the Book of Mormon. It clearly includes "Book of Mormon," mentions "interpretation," and infers the language of the Book of Mormon. It is reasonable therefore to assume that these characters came from the Title Page.
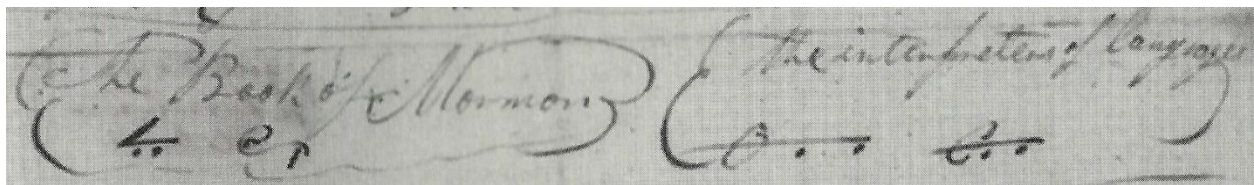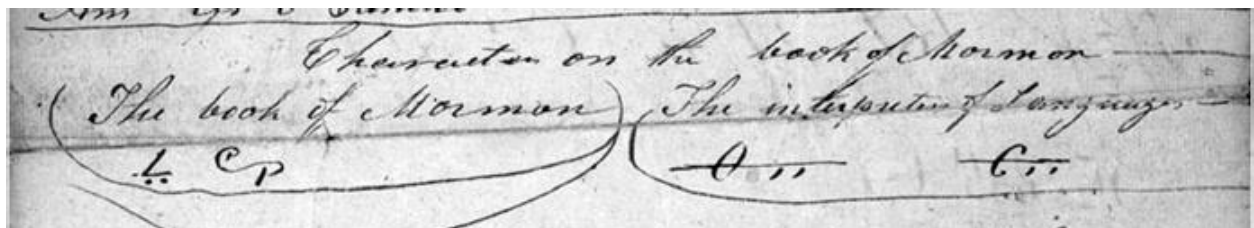
Figure 1. Book of Mormon characters copied by Oliver Cowdery, circa 1835–1836

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[1] Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whittaker, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers: Histories, Volume 1* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2012), 1:240.

Figure 2. Close-up of the Book of Mormon characters copied by Fredrick G. Williams, circa February 27, 1836 (MacKay et al. 2013, 137)[2]

In a 2015 publication, I successfully translated all four of these characters from known hieratic and Demotic Egyptian glyphs.[3] The name *Mormon* (second glyph of the first set of two) in the "reformed Egyptian" is an interesting case study. "Reformed Egyptian" is the name by which the characters on the plates are referred to anciently by Mormon in the Book of Mormon (Mormon 9:32). Figure 3 is the character for the name *Mormon* from the Oliver Cowdery source.
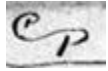

Figure 3. *Mormon* name glyph copied by Oliver Cowdery

Lazy-S Motif in Mesoamerica

Having some familiarity with Mesoamerican iconography, I recognized the *Mormon* glyph as a form of the "Lazy S" or curlicue glyph that is found in Olmec and Mayan iconography. I am currently involved in extensive research into the Sumerian sources of Jaredite names in the Book of Mormon, and it is clear that many if not most of the names in the Book of Mormon have multiple levels of meaning in Hebrew and in Sumerian and, as my translation of the *Mormon* glyph showed, also in Egyptian.

Academics involved in Book of Mormon geography generally associate the Olmec culture with the Jaredite culture. Although there is debate about exactly where the Nephite lands were located in Mesoamerica, most agree that there was some contact between Nephites and the early Maya. As the *Mormon* glyph is present in both Olmec and Maya iconography—with the time period of the Jaredites consistent with the Olmecs and the later Nephite time period consistent with the early Maya—the *Mormon* glyph will be discussed in each of these contexts.

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[2] Michael Hubbard MacKay, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, and Robin Scott Jensen. "The 'Caractors' Document: New Light on an Early Transcription of the Book of Mormon Characters," *Mormon Historical Studies* 14, no. 1 (2013.): 137. Images of the full documents can be seen at http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/appendix-2-document-2-characters-copied-by-oliver-cowdery-circa-1835-1836?p=1 (Oliver Cowdery); and http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/bc-jsp/content/jsp/images/content/library/images/Ills-D1-page-363-Williams-Characters.jpg (Frederick G. Williams).

[3] Jerry D. Grover Jr., *Translation of the "Caractors" Document* (Provo: by the author, 2015), 145, 201–2, www.academia.edu/19655755/Translation_of_the_Caractors_Document_Final_Printed_Publication_. As an independent researcher of scientific and linguistic topics involving the Book of Mormon, most of my research has involved topics that are data or graphically intensive, and therefore publication of the research is more amenable to books than to articles. However, my recent research involving specific glyphs from the reformed Egyptian can be presented in a brief article. The reader will find that I don't spend much time pontificating or speculating. Coming from a scientific background, it has been my practice to present data and to try not to let the analysis and conclusions get out too far ahead of that data.

Mayan Lazy-S

In the Mayan hieroglyphic classification system, the Lazy-S glyph is more formally identified as T632.[4] A typical drawing of a glyph containing the Lazy-S is shown in figure 4.
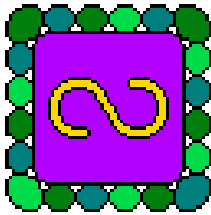

Figure 4. Lazy-S glyphs T632: top is reproduced drawing from monuments (www.pauahtun.org/MayanGlyphs/thompson.html 2016); bottom is from page 11 register b of the Madrid Codex (Wikipedia Commons 2016, www.upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/43/Maya_Hieroglyphs_Plate_29.jpg).

It should be noted that the *Mormon* glyph actually consists of a mirror image of the Lazy-S, which is not an atypical representation in either Mayan or Egyptian glyphs. Figure 5 shows an example of mirroring of the Mayan glyph T714 TZAK as it occurs on the underside of Yaxchilán Lintel 25.

Figure 5. Glyph mirroring from Yaxchilán Lintel 25[5]

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[4] Martha J. Macri and Gabrielle Vail, *The New Catalog of Maya Hieroglyphs,* The Codical Texts Volume 2 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 140.

[5] Mallory Matsumoto, "Reflection as transformation: mirror-image structure on Maya monumental texts as a visual metaphor for ritual participation," *Estudios de Cultura Maya* 41 (2013): 102.

The central curlicue that comprises the main element of the Lazy-S/T632 glyph was interpreted initially by Mayanist David Stuart as a "blood scroll".[6] Shortly thereafter Stuart and Houston also determined that the T632 glyph can also be read in the Maya language as *muyal* meaning "cloud."[7] On Page 68a of the Dresden Codex, a pre-Columbian Maya book of the eleventh or twelfth century of the Yucatecan Maya in Chichén Itzá, streams of water fall from a T632/Lazy-S onto one of the pair of Chacs that are seated on a skyband. The water can be seen continuing to fall into the space below the skyband indicating that the Lazy-S is functioning as a raincloud (see figure 6).

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[6] David Stuart, "Blood Symbolism in Maya Iconography," in *Maya Iconography*, ed. Elizabeth Benson and Gillett Griffin (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1988), 203–4.

[7] Stephen D. Houston and David Stuart, *Classic Mayan Place Names* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994), 44.

Figure 6. Portion of page 68a of the Dresden Codex (image courtesy of the British Museum www.britishmuseum.org 2016)

It has been noted that the Lazy-S occurs as an iconographic element in the headdresses of Maya deities and rulers, and this "cloud diadem" has been linked specifically with the headdress worn by the Maya

rain deity Chac. While the Lazy-S motif is the central element of glyph T632, it also occurs without the surrounding dots in a variety of Mayan iconographic settings, including over the doorway of Structure 22 at Copan, in Maya art on thrones, on women's costumes, and as women's body paint. The Lazy-S motif also is linked to period-ending events and to the celestial location of royal ancestors.[8] In its function as a time marker, the Lazy-S is referred to as the "reversal sign," and in its representation in the Dresden Codex, Herbert Spinden has indicated that it represents the reversal from the dry season to the wet season. Also in relation to the Dresden Codex, V. Bricker and H. Bricker indicate that the sign may refer to solstices and equinoxes, based on interpretation of other tables in the Codex.[9]

Examples of the Lazy-S motif are found on objects from the Early Classic Maya. One example is shown in figure 7, a bar pectoral known as the Cleveland Plaque that has been stylistically dated between 400–500 AD, closely corresponding to Mormon's time frame. Notably, each cartouche on the Cleveland plaque mentions the name of an individual royal personage, so the Lazy-S glyph in the upper cartouche is attested here as being used in the context of the name of an individual. Please note that there is no implication here that this object has any specific relation to Mormon.

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[8] Andrea Stone, "The Cleveland Plaque: Cloudy Places of the Maya Realm," unpublished paper presented at the Eighth Mesa Redonda de Palenque, 1993, 5–6; www.precolumbia.org/pari/publications/RT10/Cleveland.pdf.

[9] Macri and Vail, *New Catalog of Maya Hieroglyphs*, 140.

Figure 7. The Cleveland Plaque (Cleveland Museum of Art, www.clevelandart.org, CMA 50.377, 2016)

Olmec Lazy-S

The Lazy-S motif is found in Olmec style during the Formative Period (1200–500 BC). One example of the motif from the Olmec heartland is visible on the side of the headless feline statue known as San Lorenzo Monument 7 (see figure 8).
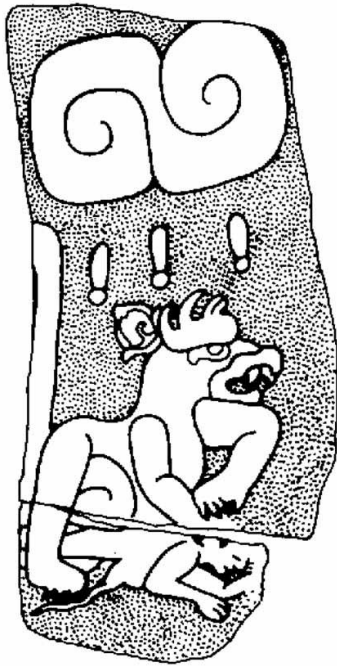
Figure 8. San Lorenzo Monument 7 (www.tibolon.blogspot.com/2013/10/photographs-of-olmec-sculptures-large.html 2016)

Further from the Olmec heartland, at the site of Chalcatzingo, the Lazy-S motif is found on Chalcatzingo Monument 31 (see figure 9).

Figure 9. Chalcatzingo Monument 31 (Wikipedia Commons 2016,
www.upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/92/Chalcatzingo-stela.jpg/220px-Chalcatzingo-
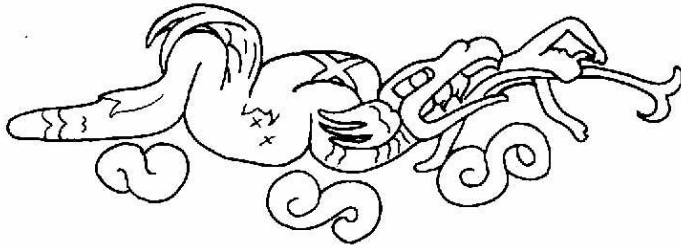stela.jpg)

Monument #31, Chalcatzingo

Figure 10. Rubbing of Monument 31 from Chalcatzingo
(www.anthropology.ua.edu/Faculty/knight/images/CHALCATZINGO/Monument%2031.jpg 2016)

Among the Olmec (like the Maya), the Lazy-S motif indicates a rain cloud, and also is associated in three instances with a ferocious feline, and in two of those instances the feline is mauling a person. This mauling (and analysis of other depictions of the Lazy-S) has been linked to the association of the Lazy-S in the Maya with blood or bloodletting.[10]

Also at Chalcatzingo is a rock carving identified as Monument 5, which depicts a snake mauling a human while sitting on top of three Lazy-S motifs (see figure 11).
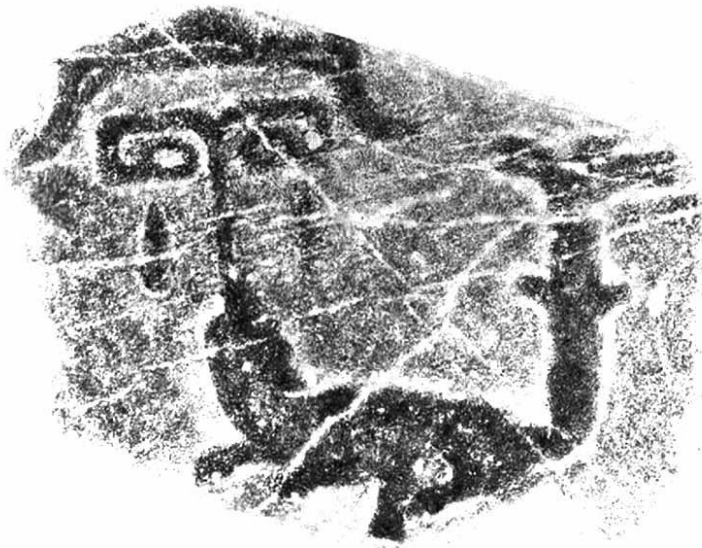
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[10] F. Kent Reilly III, Eighth Palenque Round Table, 1993, 1; www.mesoweb.com/pari/publications/rt10/LazyS.pdf.
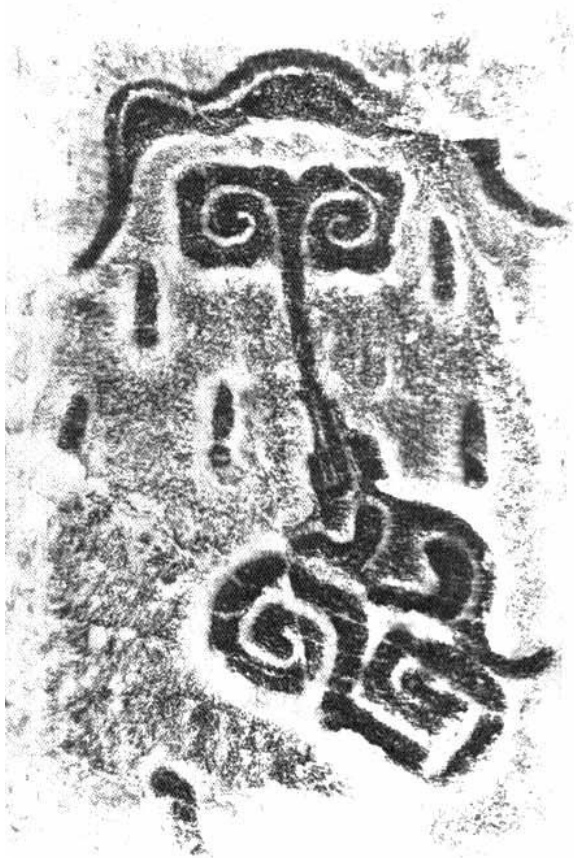
Monument #5, Chalcatzingo

Figure 11. Snake mauling a human
(www.anthropology.ua.edu/Faculty/knight/images/CHALCATZINGO/Monument%205.jpg 2016)

In addition, rock carvings at Chalcatzingo identified as Monuments 11, 8, 14, 15, 7, and 6, (which Reilly refers to as the Water Dancing Group), depict saurian supernaturals perched atop Lazy-S symbols and below rainclouds. In the case of three of these saurian supernaturals, double scrolls emerge from their closed mouths (see figure 12).

Monument #8, Chalcatzingo

Monument #14 (from a rubbing), Chalcatzingo

Figure 12. Rubbings of Monuments 8 and 14 from Chalcatzingo showing a saurian supernatural with Lazy-S and double scrolls
(www.anthropology.ua.edu/Faculty/knight/images/CHALCATZINGO/Monument%208%20rubbing.jpg 2016; http://anthropology.ua.edu/Faculty/knight/images/CHALCATZINGO/Monument%2014%20rubbing.jpg 2016)

The depiction of the Lazy-S motif on Chalcatzingo Monument 1 has also been surmised to be indicative of vegetative fertility.[11]

Olmec and Sumerian (Jaredite) Etymological Associations Involving the Lazy-S Motif

That *Mormon* was originally a Jaredite name should be a surprise to no one familiar with the Book of Mormon. After all, the name is similar in form to *Moron*, the name of a Jaredite land and king. Mormon was apparently born and raised to the age of eleven in the land northward when he then was taken by his father to the land southward (Mormon 1:6).

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[11] F. Kent Reilly III, *Eighth Palenque Round Table*, 5.

In my current research (yet to be published), I have found that all of the Jaredite personal and geographic names in the Book of Mormon have Sumerian root etymologies, as do the Nephite names that are derived or originate from Jaredite names.

Not only is Sumerian now a dead language, it probably was not being spoken even during the period from which most Sumerian texts date. From 2500 BC until 1600 BC the language gradually changed from a spoken language to an exclusively literary language.[12]

Sumer was an ancient civilization located in southern Mesopotamia, modern-day southern Iraq. It is not certain when the Sumerians had initial contact with the Akkadians, which were generally located to the northwest of Sumer, but indications of contact seem to be as early as 3000 BC. It is likely that there was a long period of contact, at least in the shared boundary areas, although there are no written attestations until 2600 BC. Some 2600 BC Sumerian texts include Akkadian personal names, and the scribes of some texts also have Akkadian names. A few loan words appeared at that time.

There appears to be from 2600 to 2400 BC a large number of bilingual persons in the northern part of Sumer. The Akkadian language was thus probably spoken in the north while the populations of the southern part primarily spoke Sumerian.

During the reign of Sargon (2334 BC–2279 BC), the official language of Sumer was principally Akkadian, with royal inscriptions, religious texts, and year dates being bilingual. Elsewhere however, Sumerian is found only in Sumer proper, so it is surmised that the Sumerian language began to vanish. However, during the third dynasty of Ur (2112–2004 BC), the use of Sumerian increased in official documents, and was almost exclusively used in royal inscriptions, juridical and administrative documents and correspondence, though the use of Sumerian as a spoken language was very limited.

During the Old Babylonian period (2000–1600 BC) Sumerian is considered a dead language and Akkadian is the spoken language, even though Sumerian was still used as an official and literary language. Sumerian may have been spoken by scholars and scientists. The death of a language is not a uniform or simple process, so there may have been pockets of Sumerian-speaking people, especially in the south.

Since Sumerian was a dead language at the time of the Akkadians, much of the knowledge of how Sumerian was actually pronounced comes from lexical texts from the Old Babylonian period where the scribes took care to represent the full phonology of the Sumerian words being written. There are a few limitations to our understanding of Sumerian pronunciation, the first being that the texts represent the pronunciation of Sumerian as filtered through the Akkadian phonological system, and second, that the texts we have appear to be practice exercises as part of a scribal training process and so exhibit some errors.[13]

When looking at the transliteration Book of Mormon names in Sumerian, it must be recognized that the Romanized dictionaries for Sumerian do not include the English letter "O". It has also been argued among some Sumerian academics that a letter "O" phoneme might have existed, a fact that would have

[12] Marie-Louise Thomsen, *The Sumerian Language, An Introduction to Its History and Grammatical Structure* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1984), 15.

[13] Eric J. M. Smith, "[ATR] Harmony and the Vowel Inventory of Sumerian," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 59 (2007): 19–38.

been concealed by the Akkadian transliteration which does not distinguish it from the letter "U".[14] For my collection of etymological possibilities from Sumerian, both "A" an "U" will be considered for the presence of the letter "O" in the name *Mormon*.

Sumerian writing never attempted to render the language phonetically correct, exactly as it was spoken. The very first stages of writing as attested in Uruk and Ğemdet Naṣr (about 3000 BC) were pictographic or ideographic in nature, thus rendering only the most important words like the catchwords of an account or a literary text. . . . The ideographic writing system without phonetic signs for grammatical elements means that the identification of the language behind the written records is not immediately evident.[15]

Sumerian was a mnemonic language, utilizing rebus principles, and operated primarily as a memory aid. Even when utilizing the maximum of phonetic symbols created for its signs, exact renderings of the pronunciation did not occur. Sumerian glyphs were not always written in the order they had to be read. Thomson[16] has indicated that reconstructing the complete spoken Sumerian is probably impossible. Thus texts cannot be taken at their face value as a detailed grammatical description of the language. Before the language death, the Sumerian script was thus mainly an aid to memory, rendering the most important words in an ideographic way, leaving out many things which were not thought absolutely necessary for the understanding of the text. As a result, not a lot is known of the early Sumerian grammar.

Structurally, Sumerian features a word structure called agglutination, which by simplistic explanation consists of "gluing" different morphemes (simple structures contained in a word) and word modifiers together to form a single complex (often long) word. Another feature of Sumerian (and other languages) is the compounding or combining of individual words to form a "compound word." In the case of Book of Mormon names, since one does not contemplate a full sentence as a name, the main function of the construction of names is compounding, where different nouns/verbs/adjectives are placed together, something like green and house becoming greenhouse.[17]

This method of compounding different words to make a name is found in Mesoamerica. For example, the typical way to form an Aztec place name is to combine nouns, typically by dropping a portion of one or more of the nouns, and also by sometimes adding a place particle at the end. Book of Mormon place names do not appear to have a place particle included, but this may be an artifact of translation where the particle is replaced by the English form or word such as "city" or "land." For example, the Aztec place name Acamilixtlahuacan is translated as "where are level fields of rushes." The name is a compound of *aca**tl*** (reed), *mil**li*** (field), *ixtlahua**ca*** (level expanse), and *can* (place particle). The letters in bold are the letters that are dropped from each word when it is compounded.[18] An example of an Aztec place name that doesn't have a definitive place particle is Teocalhueyac, translated as "in the high or upreared temple," consisting of *teocal**li*** (temple) and *hueyac* (high, prolonged). Personal names in

[14] Piotr Michalowski, "Sumerian," in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages,* ed. Roger D. Woodard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 29-30.

[15] Thomsen, *The Sumerian Language*, 22.

[16] Thomsen, *The Sumerian Language,* 24.

[17] Graham Cunningham, "The Sumerian Language," in *The Sumerian World*, ed. Harriet Crawford (New York: Routledge, 2013), 96.

[18] Frederick Starr, *Aztec Place Names—Their Meaning and Mode of Composition* (Chicago, IL: by the author, 1920), 3.

Nahuatl (language of the Aztecs) are typically compound names as well. For example the Nahuatl name Kozkakuahtli consists of Kozka**tl** (necklace) and Kuauhtli (eagle).

Many Mayan names are compound names as well. For example the Mayan name Sachihiro, consists of *'sachi*, which means "happiness," and *'hiro* which means "vast." Zoque place names are typically compound names; some also have place suffixes like the Aztec.[19] Mixe names are also compound names such as the name of a Mixe god, *Naaxwiiñ*, which consists of *naax* (earth) and *wiiñ* (face, surface).

When considering the possible construction of Book of Mormon names from Sumerian, it is not necessarily a requirement that we find any of these names attested to in Sumer or Mesopotamia. As has been discussed, the syntax and grammar of early spoken Sumerian cannot be accurately constructed from the Sumerian logograms. In addition, the translation of the Caractors document indicated that one change that occurred in reformed Egyptian was that adjectives preceded nouns. Mormon indicated that modification in the syntax of Egyptian was to be expected:

> Mormon 9:32–33
>
> 32 And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.
>
> 33 And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.

There are a variety of compound constructions from Sumerian for the name *Mormon*, all of which exactly or very closely match the Olmec meanings of the Lazy-S *Mormon* glyph as found in Mesoamerica. All Sumerian definitions are from the University of Pennsylvania ePSD Sumerian Dictionary.[20] For the final compound word, shared letters are indicated in bold, with a dropped letter in parentheses. The correlations are as follows:

Sumerian	Olmec meaning

mu: to crush, mangle
ur: lion
  ur-ra, ur-a, ur-re, ur-e, ur-re$_2$, ur-am$_3$, ur-im (form of *ur*)
urmah: lion
umun: blood
 	
    Compound Word construction: *m**u**r(u)mun*
	ferocious feline

[19] William L. Wonderly, "Zoque Place-Names," *International Journal of American Linguistics* 12, no. 4 (1946): 217–28.

[20] Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary, www.psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd1/index.html, 2006.

muru: rainstorm; mist; drizzle *umun*: blood 　　　Compound Word construction: *mur(u)mun*	rain cloud, blood

mur: fodder; (to be) fat 　*mur-ra* (form of *mur*) *mu*: to grow 　mu_2-*a*-am_6 (form of *mu*) *u*: grass, herb; pasture, plants 　u_2-*ni*, u_2-*ne*, u_2-*na* (form of *u*) *un*: to arise; (to be) high 　　　Compound Word construction: *murm**un***	vegetative fertility

mah: (to be) mature *mah*: (to be) great 　*mah-a*, *ma-ha*, *mah-ra* (form of *mah*) *mu*: good, beautiful 　mu_5-*a*-*na* (form of *mu*) *un*: to arise; sky; (to be) high 　　　Compound Word construction: *mahr(a)m**un***	heavenly ancestors

mir: a mythical snake *umun*: blood 　　　Compound Word construction: *mir(u)mun*	supernatural snake/saurian mauling

Maya and Egyptian Etymological Associations Involving the Lazy-S Motif

In order to provide context for the discussion of connections between Maya and Egyptian, it would be appropriate to include here the translation from Egyptian of all of the Williams/Cowdery characters, including the *Mormon* glyph. The identification numbers I have assigned to the four characters are OF1, OF2, OF3, and OF4.

Egyptian Translation of Oliver Cowdery and Frederick G. Williams Characters

OF1: Book

Using the interpreters (Urim and Thummim), Joseph Smith translated this character as "book" and that is a fairly straightforward translation from Egyptian. The word for "papyrus roll" or "book" or "bookroll" or "divine literature" in Egyptian is *mdȝt*[21] and is represented in the hieroglyphs by hieroglyph Y-1 and in the associated hieratic.
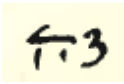
Egyptian hieroglyph:

Y1: , Y1a:

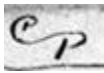*Egyptian hieratic:*

Möller Number 538, Bd. I-23-76, pg. I 534-540b[22]

Egyptian Demotic

A very similar character is found in the Egyptian demotic for "bookroll":

Demotisches Glossar[23]

Of course the "book" referred to in the translation by Joseph Smith is not a "bookroll" but is the book of plates, so the use of the left portion of demotic (as confirmed by the hieratic) related to "book" is perfectly appropriate.

OF2: Mormon

The Book of Mormon Onomasticon lists a wide series of possibilities for the etymology of *Mormon* and then adds as an afterthought:

> Less likely is EGYPTIAN *mr* (> Nubian and Coptic *mur, mor*), "bind, girth"[24]

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[21] Sir Alan Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar, 3rd Edition revised* (Oxford: Griffith Institute 1957), 533; Chicago Demotic Dictionary 2014, https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/publications/demotic-dictionary-oriental-institute-university-chicago, CDD M 10:1 pg. 299; E. A. Wallis Budge, *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary in Two Volumes* (1978 edition; New York: Dover Publications, 1920), 1:337.

[22] G. Möller, *Hieratische paläographie*, 1909-1936, Neudruck der 2. verbesserten Auflage (Leipzig: Osnabrück, 1965).
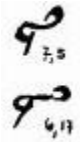
[23] Wolja Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar* (Kopenhagen: Munksgaard, 1954), 194.

In fact, I believe this least likely etymology to be the correct one. The determinative Egyptian hieroglyph for "bind" is Gardiner Number V-12.[25]
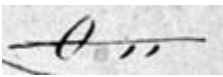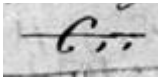
Egyptian hieroglyph:

V12:

Egyptian hieratic:

Möller Number 522, Bd. I-23-76, pg. I 522-532[26]

The V-12 glyph also constitutes the simplest form of the Egyptian word *arq*[27] meaning "the last" or "the end," which is very descriptive of Mormon. *Arq* also means "to be wise." In addition, as the glyph represents a band of string to bind rolls of papyri, the V-12 glyph is typically associated with and included in Egyptian words related to records, such as *art* "roll of papyrus," *TAw* "book," *Sat* "document," *pr mDAt* "library," *hrwyt* "journal," *snn* "copy (of a document)," *mdw nTr* "written characters, script," *sxrt* "roll (of papyrus)," *gnwt* "records, annals," *wD* "(written) decree, dispatch," "inscription," and "stela," *wDt* "command, decree," *Hbt* "ritual book," and *mDAt* "papyrus – roll".[28] Of course, the relationship to Mormon and records and recordkeeping is another clear descriptor for Mormon.

OF3:

OF4:

[24] Book of Mormon Onomasticon, www.onoma.lib.byu.edu/onoma/index.php/Main_Page.

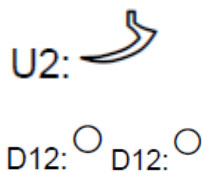[25] Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar,* 523.

[26] Möller, *Hieratische paläographie*.

[27] Budge, *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*, 1:131.

[28] Paul Dickson, Dictionary of Middle Egyptian in Gardiner Classification Order, December 1, 2006; http://www.pyramidtextsonline.com/documents/DicksonDictionary.pdf, pages 25, 92, 153, 160, 170, 187, 192, 274, 254, 255, 257, 288.
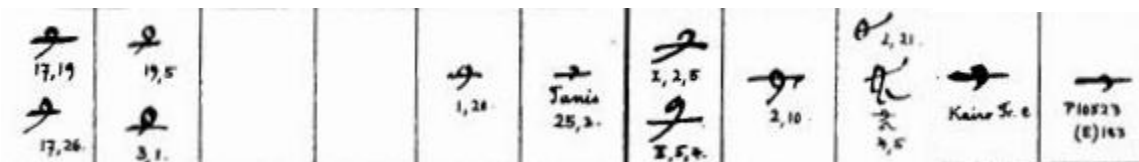
Again using the interpreters, Joseph Smith translated both of these glyphs together as "The interpreters of languages." Like the above translation of "book," this translation in Egyptian is fairly straight forward.

The Egyptian word *m ꜣꜣ* has been translated as "to see," "to examine," "to inspect," "to perceive," "to look at" or "regard," and "look upon."[29] The identical phonetic equivalent of the word is the divine title of *Maa* meaning "Seer."[30] The simplest construction of the word consists of three Egyptian hieroglyphs U-2, D-12, and D-12.
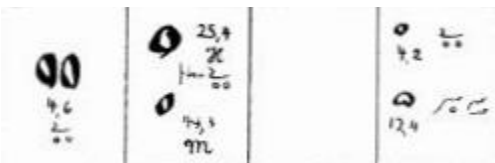
Egyptian hieroglyph:

Egyptian hieratic:

Each of the two lower hieroglyphs is derived from the pupil of the eye.[31] In the hieratic, the glyphs are as follows:

Möller Number 519 (Gardner Number U-2), Bd. III-32-72-Taf, pg. III 518-526; Bd. I-23-76, pg. I 513-521 (Möller 1965)

Möller Number 88 (Gardiner Number D-12), Bd. II-1-30, pg. I 80c-89[32]

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[29] Dickson, Dictionary of Middle Egyptian, 236; Scribd.com., *Ancient Egypt Dictionary*, https://www.scribd.com/doc/38027056/Ancient-Egypt-Dictionary, 2010.; Bill. Petty, *Hieroglyphic Dictionary, A Middle Egyptian Vocabulary* (Littleton, CO: Museum Tours Press 2012), 61; Budge, *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary,* 1:266.

[30] Budge, *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*, 1:267.

[31] Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 451.

[32] Möller, *Hieratische paläographie*.

The hieratic construction of both of the Cowdery/Williams OF3 and OF4 glyphs is just as displayed; there are versions of the hieratic that contain a circle and versions that contain the "C" on the line. The two underlying dots in the hieratic are slightly different in that they are hollow; however, the Egyptian Demotic version of the word simply has dots instead of hollow dots.

Egyptian Demotic

Demotisches Glossar[33]

This set of glyphs (OF3 and OF4) was designed to be graphically operative, meaning that the item to be translated would appear between the two glyphs (as indicated by the term for Jaredite plates in the Caractors document).

Egyptian and Maya Correlations Involving the Lazy-S Motif

The correlation between the Lazy-S Maya "blood scroll" and the Egyptian meaning of *Mormon* as "scroll" is quite direct, especially when considered in combination with the Sumerian meaning of "blood" previously mentioned. The Egyptian meaning of *Mormon* as "the last" and "the end" is entirely consistent with the Maya correlation of the Lazy-S with period-ending events. This takes on added significance when one considers that Mormon's role and place in the Book of Mormon was to compile a record of 1000 years of his people and create a period-ending record.

Mormon was also a geographic location mentioned in the Book of Mormon—a land located in the larger land of Lehi-Nephi where $Alma_1$ fled for refuge with his followers. Mormon mentioned that he "was called after" this "land of Mormon" (3 Nephi 5:12). The name was also used for a place in the forest in the same land "having received its name from the king, being in the borders of the land having been infested, by times or at seasons, by wild beasts" (Mosiah 18:4). There was also in Mormon "a fountain of pure water" called the "waters of Mormon" (Mosiah 18: 5, 30).

The correlation between Mesoamerican meanings for the Lazy-S and meanings of the word *Mormon* related to rain ("pure water") and the ferocious feline ("wild beasts") is quite direct.
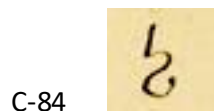
Maya Period-ending Lazy-S correlation with the Jubilee Year glyph

In translating the Caractors document, I discuss a form of the Lazy-S glyph that is related to a period-ending event in relation to the Jubilee year.[34] That glyph is also related to Mormon in that it was his birth year.
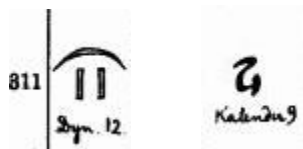
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[33] Erichsen, Demotisches Glossar, 147.
[34] Grover Jr., *Translation of the "Caractors" Document*, 105-106.

There is also an Egyptian month glyph discussed in the Caractors document (relating to King Benjamin) that has the rotated form of the hieroglyph for the second Egyptian month. The character is designated C-84:
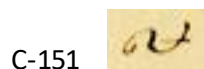

C-84

The glyph in the Egyptian hieratic is:

Möller Number 311, Bd. I-23-76, pg. I 310–19 [35]

Character C-151 is also a permutation of this glyph, as it is rotated to the horizontal:

C-151

(rotated Dresden example)

This sign, although originating from the Egyptian sign for *month*, is actually the indicator sign for the Jubilee Year in the Nephite/Hebrew calendar, and so should be considered a year sign. These two glyphs match iconographically the Lazy-S glyph with the addition of a small line.

The Jubilee Year is celebrated every 49 years under Hebrew tradition. The glyph for *Mormon* is a mirror image of the Jubilee glyph (C-151 and C-84). This glyph (including *Mormon*) is a version of one of the glyphs for an Egyptian month. A later analysis will show that, in fact, Mormon was actually born on a Jubilee Year, which would have been an important genesis for his name.

Book of Mormon Jubilee Years

John W. Welch and Terrence L. Szink previously presented evidence of the presence of a festival calendar within the Book of Mormon.[36] This inquiry will not go into all of the liturgical detail of the elements of the Jubilee, but will address the elements that are indicated in the Caractors document and evidenced in the Book of Mormon.

The ancient Hebrews considered every seventh year a sabbatical year, which involved a variety of practices such as leaving agricultural land fallow and releasing debts. Every seventh sabbatical year was considered a Jubilee year, which means that every forty-ninth year would be a Jubilee year. A Jubilee

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[35] Möller, *Hieratische paläographie*.

[36] John W. Welch and Terrence L. Szink, "King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals," in *King Benjamin's Speech Made Simple* (Provo: FARMS, 1998), 193–99.

year was considered something of a super-sabbatical. There is some disagreement as to whether the Jubilee would take place on the fiftieth year (meaning essentially two sabbatical years in a row), which would place it after the sabbatical year, or whether it coincided with the forty-ninth sabbatical year.[37]

The Jubilee legislation is contained in Leviticus 25 in the Old Testament. The primary features were:

1. Liberty was proclaimed to all of the inhabitants of the land
2. No sowing was to take place in the land; the fields were to lie fallow and their yield was left to the poor
3. Property was returned to its hereditary owner
4. It was a time of peace[38]

Perhaps the most important theme of the Jubilee is freedom, and Ezekiel refers to it as the year of freedom (Ezk. 46:17).

Scholars have debated whether the Jubilee existed prior to the exile; the Caractors document translation puts an end to that speculation. The Caractors document text is also most consistent with a Jubilee on the forty-ninth year. The Caractors document contains glyphs that represent the year of Jubilee. The Jubilee glyph occurs in the Caractors document in conjunction with King Benjamin relinquishing the kingship to his son Mosiah and in conjunction with the defeat of the Gadianton robbers after being under siege.

King Benjamin Jubilee

Based primarily on elements of his speech, Welch and Szink suggested the probability of the Jubilee year occurring at the time of the transfer of kingship from King Benjamin. In fact, the Caractors document also documents a Jubilee year at that time with a Jubilee glyph (C-84). It is oriented vertically, which is probably an indication of the order of the Jubilee year (discussed below).

There is no Jubilee glyph occurring in the first section of the Caractors document except the one related to King Benjamin. A Jubilee glyph would be expected forty-nine years earlier, which would have fallen within the chronology of the first section of the Caractors document. This would seem to indicate that the Jubilee glyphs were not included unless they corresponded with significant Book of Mormon events.

The year can be calculated in the case of King Benjamin, as Mosiah "did cause his people that they should till the earth" (Mosiah 6:7) just after the death of King Benjamin, which was 479 years after Lehi's departure. The Caractors document indicates (if translated correctly) that the Jubilee Year was 2 2/3 years prior to the death of King Benjamin, which death occurred in the 479th year. It appears that the Jubilee year was probably in the 477th year.

17th Year of the Reign of the Judges Jubilee Year and the 66th Year Jubilee Year

Szink and Welch also note the apparent presence of a Jubilee year described at Alma 30:2–5, in the sixteenth and seventeenth year of Reign of the Judges and forty-nine years after King Benjamin's speech. If the 477th year is correct for the King Benjamin Jubilee Year, then the Jubilee Year here would

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[37] David L. Baker, "The Jubilee and the Millennium Holy Years in the Bible and Their Relevance Today," *Themelios* 24, no. 1: 48.

[38] Welch and Szink, "King Benjamin's Speech," 195–96.

be in the seventeenth year. The description of these two years seems to imply is that there was a practice of a Sabbatical year followed by a Jubilee Year. This time frame does not fall within the time frames of the Caractors document text so could not be verified.

The next Jubilee Year would have then been approximately in the sixty-sixth year of the Reign of the Judges; the Book of Mormon does indicate that in the year prior that there was "great joy and peace" and "much preaching and many prophecies." But, in what would have been the Jubilee Year, the chief judge and his son were murdered and then the people began to be wicked again at the start of the sixty-seventh year (Helaman 6:14-16). While not definitive, the description is still consistent with a year of Jubilee.

Gadianton Robber Defeat Jubilee Year

The Caractors document does indicate a Jubilee year for the next cycle in conjunction with the siege and ultimate defeat of the Gadianton robbers (3 Nephi chapters 3–4). The Book of Mormon scriptural record would certainly be consistent with this occurrence as all the elements occurred in relation to the Jubilee—namely, the people were set free from the siege, they were able to return to their lands which had lain fallow during the time of siege, and it instituted a time of peace and righteousness (however brief).

From a chronological standpoint, forty-nine years from the previous Jubilee would place this Jubilee year at the twenty-fourth year after the coming of Christ. The Book of Mormon is not exactly specific as to the time of defeat and liberation; it indicates that in the sixteenth year they were instructed to gather together, and that by the end of the seventeenth year they had gathered. The Nephites had left their land desolate (3 Nephi 4:3). In the twenty-first year the Gadianton robbers laid siege (3 Nephi 4:16). The next time reference is after the defeat of the robbers, preaching to the robbers in prison, and putting to death those that would not repent. The verse is not precise, but the year of Jubilee could have occurred on the twenty-fourth year within the time frame given.

> 3 Nephi 5:7
>
> And thus had the twenty and second year passed away, and the twenty and third year also, and the twenty and fourth, and the twenty and fifth; and thus had twenty and five years passed away.

Also of note, the prior sabbatical year (eight years earlier) would have been the sixteenth year, during which all of the fields would have laid fallow. When the robbers came out of the mountains to battle at the end of the eighteenth year the Nephite lands were "desolate" after three years of laying fallow. We cannot quite tell from this particular description whether the Jubilee Years were being measured after the birth of Christ under the Nephite Civil Calendar (365 day year) or under the Nephite Common Lunar Calendar (354.367 day year), as the Jubilee Year twenty-four years after the Coming of Christ is too short a time to differentiate a separate year—the calendar difference would have been around eight months. The Book of Mormon reference here is not specific enough.

This Jubilee Year was identified in the Caractors document as being the twelfth complete Jubilee Year period within the 1000 Year Calendar. Going back in time from this Jubilee, the previous dates of Jubilee would be (in years after Lehi's departure): 575, 525, 477, 428, 379, 330, 281, 232, 183, 134, 85, and 36. The Jubilee Year prior to 36 would have taken place in the Old World at or around 600 BC. Prior to King Benjamin, there is no indication in the Book of Mormon of a Jubilee Year; however, Nephi indicates that

the first temple was constructed prior to thirty years after Lehi's departure so would have been available for the first Jubilee Year in the New World.

The 600 BC projected date of the Old World Jubilee Year does not seem to align with the guesses of academics as to the ancient Jubilee Year dates (many believe that the Jubilee was not even practiced prior to Lehi's departure). Since this article is limited to an analysis of the Lazy-S glyph, and since there is no reliable independent confirmation of this translation from the Old World, I have chosen not to delve into that issue here.

Mormon's Birth Jubilee Year

As has been noted, Mormon's name glyph is a mirror image of the Jubilee Year glyph. It would suggest that Mormon's birth year of 309 years after the coming of Christ must have been a Jubilee Year. Mormon was "about 10 years of age" 320 years after Christ under the Civil Calendar as indicated in 4 Nephi 1:48 and Mormon 1:2; having completed his tenth year he would have been in his eleventh year. Assuming that the Common Lunar Calendar was used continuing under the prophetic 1000 Year Calendar, the Jubilee Years would have occurred in 624 (which coincides with the Jubilee Year when the Nephites were under the siege of the Gadianton robbers), 673, 722, 771, 820, 869, and 918. If we convert Mormon's birth year of 309 years after the coming of Christ to the Common Lunar Calendar, it is equivalent to the Common Lunar Calendar Year of 918, so his birthday did occur in a Jubilee Year.
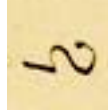
At this juncture, it is also possible to see what is happening with the orientation of the Jubilee Year glyph, as it is rotating 90 degrees counterclockwise with every Jubilee Year. For example, the Jubilee Years from the King Benjamin Jubilee to the Gadianton Robber Jubilee would be as follows:

King Benjamin Jubilee 477 years

17th Reign of Judges Jubilee 526 years

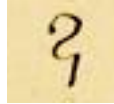66th Reign of Judges Jubilee 575 years

Gadianton Robber Siege 624 years

This would also be consistent with the calendar premise that there are only four Egyptian month glyphs so every four years one would have a reoccurrence of the same glyph alignment. In the early Egyptian calendar system the year is divided into three subdivisions (inundation, winter, and summer) and these three subdivision are further subdivided into four months each. Continuing with this counterclockwise rotational sequence (arbitrarily utilizing both Caractors Jubilee glyphs):
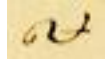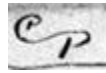

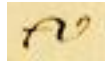673 years

722 years

771 years

820 years

869 years

918 years   Mormon's name glyph

Mormon's name glyph is a mirror glyph to the Jubilee Year glyph that occurred in his birth year, another excellent example of "glyphnastics" that occur with names in the Book of Mormon. Unlike the glyph I have projected here (using the Gadianton Robber Jubilee glyph) the actual glyph that represented Mormon's Jubilee Year probably had the "tick mark" on the end of the line of the glyph just like his name glyph did. There are other correlations with the V-12 Mormon glyph and the Jubilee Year in Egyptian as the V-12 glyph constitutes part of the Egyptian words *mnq* "come to an end", *arqy* "last day of the month", and *wnf* "be joyful."[39]

It is also useful at this point to look to the Sumerian language to see if there is any phonetic and etymological support there to show that *The Jubilee Year* is another potential meaning of the name *Mormon*. In fact there seems to be reasonable support for this proposition.

Sumerian

mu: year
  mu-ra, mu-na, mu-ni (form of mu)
u: peace
mu: good, beautiful
  mu$_5$-a-na (form of *mu*)
 	
    Agglutinized construction: *mur(a)mu(a)n(a)*

[39] Dickson, Dictionary of Middle Egyptian, 287, 31, 52.

Origination of the Lazy-S Glyph

Since there is etymological evidence tying Sumerian to the Mesoamerican meaning of the Lazy-S glyph, the next question to ask is whether the glyph itself was developed in Mesoamerica or whether there is a possibility of a Sumerian genesis.

According to my current research, the likely time frame for arrival of the small Jaredite party is somewhere around 2600 BC and the written language that they were utilizing was some form of Sumerian proto-cuneiform. Since Sumerian proto-cuneiform is a text that is still undeciphered (except for some of the numbers and glyphs related to the metrological systems (measurement)) it will not be possible to do an etymological comparison. However, it would be useful to examine the undeciphered Sumerian proto-cuneiform to at least see if this is a possibility.

Various proto-cuneiform sign lists were consulted and there are some possibilities as identified below. With such a deep time depth from (2600 BC) and considering that the sign is not extremely complex, no conclusion should be reached other than that a Sumerian genesis cannot be ruled out. However, the Lazy-S Glyph may very well be a glyph form with Mesoamerican origin. If Mesoamerican in origin, it is clear that the Sumerian etymological meaning played some part in the development and representation of the glyph in Mesoamerica.

ZATU788, Late Uruk Period, Full list of proto-cuneiform signs (CDLI:Wiki www. cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=late_uruk_period 2016)

Signs 864 & 865, Late Uruk Period [40]

The second question that needs to be asked is whether there is a possibility of an Egyptian origin. It does not appear that the Lazy-S symbol in Mesoamerica could have an origin from any Egyptian brought by the small Lehite group, as the examples at Chalcatzingo are too early and too far removed geographically (50 miles south of Mexico City) from any area the Nephites would have been as they were in the land southward during the time frame of the Chalcatzingo glyphs. However, there are others

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[40] A. Falkenstein, Archaische Texte aus Uruk (Archaische Texte aus Uruk 1, Berlin-Leipzig, 1936).

who have postulated other earlier Egyptian contacts[41] so an Egyptian source could not be completely ruled out.

It is possible that the fact that the Egyptian glyph matches a pre-existing Mesoamerican Lazy-S glyph is a result of the variability in Egyptian hieratic of the glyph for *Mormon*, meaning that one hieratic form was selected in the reformed Egyptian over another for the name *Mormon* in order to more closely match the existing Mesoamerican glyph. Figure 13 shows the various forms of the Egyptian hieratic glyph for *Mormon*. Figure 14 shows the various Egyptian hieratic forms for the Jubilee glyph.

The hieratic glyphs shown in the figures are from different time periods and places, so all these forms were probably not known to the Nephites; however, we do not know what records were available to or brought by the Lehite group.
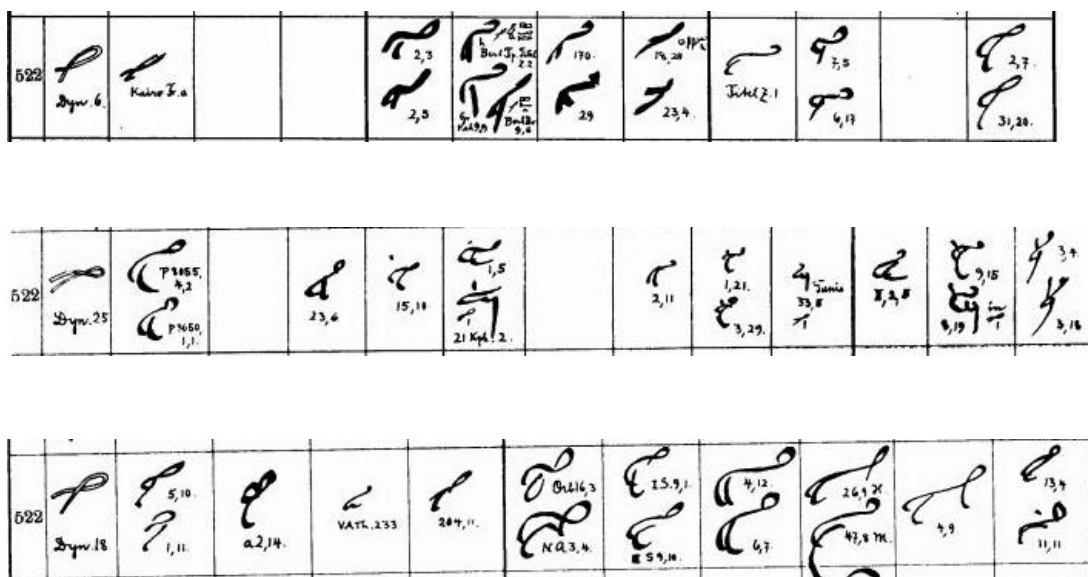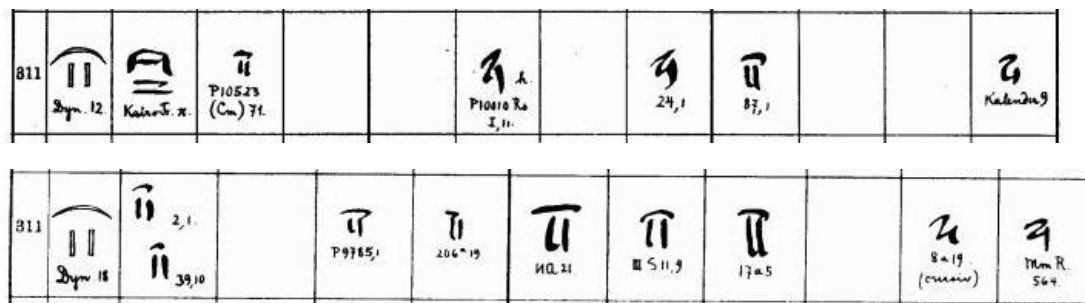

Figure 13. Examples of the Egyptian hieratic glyph for *Mormon* (Moeller 1965)

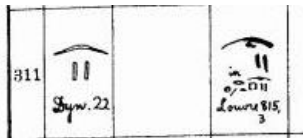[41] S. C. Compton, *Exodus Lost* (San Bernardino: Book Surge LLC, 2010).

Figure 14. Examples of the Egyptian hieratic glyph for the Jubilee glyph (Moeller 1965)

It is of some interest to note that the proto-cuneiform Sumerian glyph identified above has been postulated to be the predecessor for the Sumerian cuneiform word *erin*, which means "to yoke" (see figure 15).

Figure 15. Sumerian cuneiform word *erin* (Pennsylvanian e PSD Sumerian Dictionary, 2016)

It would be difficult not to infer a connection between the Egyptian meaning of the glyph "to bind" and the Sumerian meaning of the glyph "to yoke" based on the similarity in the two meanings. This may be an indication that the selection of the name glyph for Mormon may have been influenced by the similar form and meaning in Egyptian (Nephite derived) and Sumerian (Jaredite derived).

Conclusions

The name *Mormon* in the reformed Egyptian is found in hieratic Egyptian with meaning matching the Book of Mormon prophet Mormon. The glyph (Lazy-S) is found in the ancient Olmec and Maya cultures concurrent with Book of Mormon time frames. The meanings and depictions associated with the Mesoamerican Lazy-S glyph are consistent with the etymological meanings for the phonetic word *Mormon* found in Egyptian and Sumerian. Book of Mormon descriptions associated with the geographical locations identified as *Mormon* are consistent with the Mesoamerican meaning of the Lazy-S glyph. The Mesoamerican *Mormon* glyph may have originated in Sumerian proto-cuneiform.

Abstract

In the mid 1830s, Oliver Cowdery and Frederick G. Williams recorded four characters that had been copied from the plates and Joseph Smith's translations of those characters. Egyptian translations of these glyphs have been deciphered. One of these glyphs, the name *Mormon* in the reformed Egyptian, is

found in hieratic Egyptian with meaning matching the Book of Mormon prophet Mormon. The glyph (Lazy-S) is found in the ancient Olmec and Maya cultures concurrent with Book of Mormon time frames. The meanings and depictions associated with the Mesoamerican Lazy-S glyph are consistent with the etymological meanings for the phonetic word *Mormon* found in Egyptian and Sumerian. Book of Mormon descriptions associated with the geographical locations identified as *Mormon* are consistent with the Mesoamerican meaning of the Lazy-S glyph. The Mesoamerican *Mormon* glyph may have originated in Sumerian proto-cuneiform.